

For Class Struggle Against U.S. Capitalist Rulers!

Imperialist Occupation of Iraq U.S. Troops Out Now!

We print below a presentation, edited and abridged for publication, by comrade Don Cane at a September 13 Spartacist League forum in San Francisco.

The International Communist League opposes the U.S. imperialist occupation of Iraq. As the American section, the Spartacist League/U.S., we recognize the Iraqi people and the American working class have a common enemy—the American capitalist ruling class. Every victory for the imperialists encourages yet more military adventures; every setback assists the struggles of working people and the oppressed. What force can act against this lone superpower? We need class struggle in the imperialist centers as the chief means to act for the defense of Iraq. As we said from the beginning of the buildup to the U.S. invasion of Iraq: Every strike, every labor mobilization against war plans, every mass protest against attacks on workers and minorities, every struggle against domestic repression weakens the imperialist war drive.

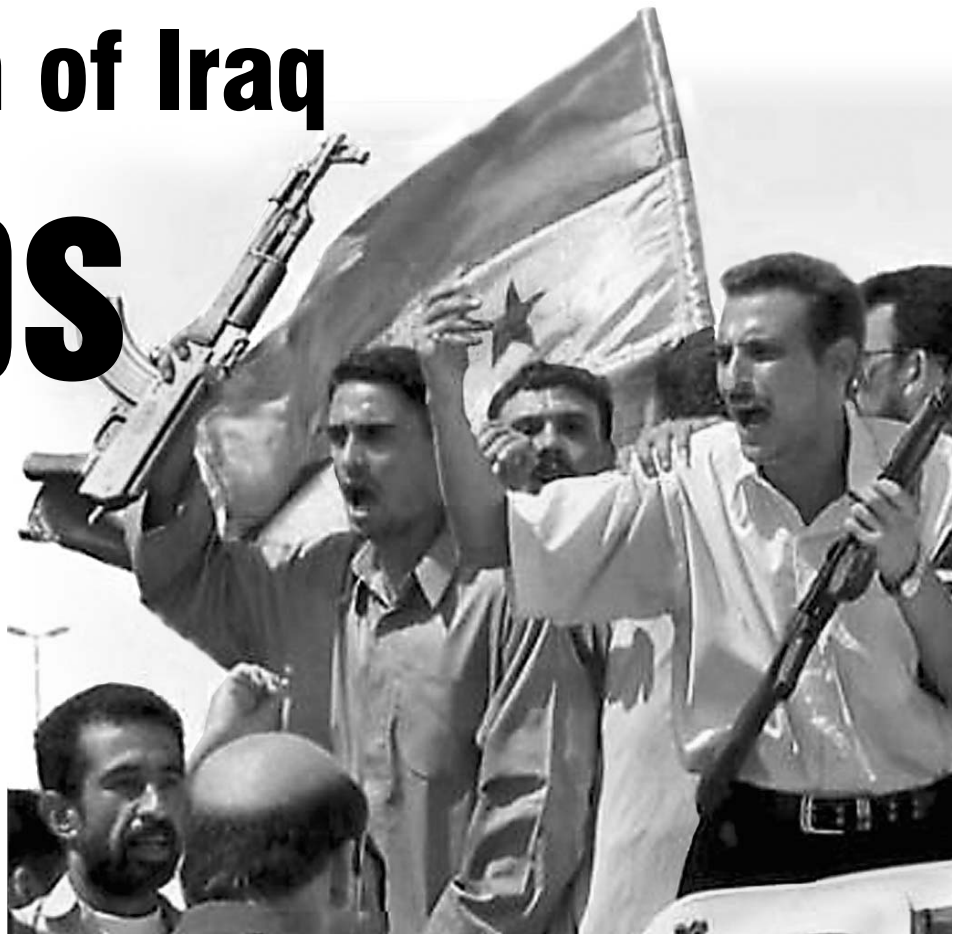
Our struggle takes place within the

“New World Order” emerging from the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. This counterrevolution, which restored the capitalist profit system, was a huge defeat for the world’s working class. The 1917 Bolshevik-led October Revolution, the world’s first and only victorious workers revolution, seized power for the working class. It was a beacon of hope for the millions of oppressed and exploited, particularly in the colonial East. Bolshevism meant resolute anti-imperialism. What we need is that kind of a revolution—not a few reforms, or a new deal with the capitalist government. The whole bastion of private property has got to go, along with the state powers that prop it up.

The Wall Street bankers and the oil cartels, the generals and colonels—we must sweep them away into the dustbin of history!

The mullahs and priests, the sheiks and landlords—we must sweep them away into the dustbin of history!

The kings and the would-be national-



Reuters

Falluja, September 13: Iraqi protesters chant anti-American slogans at funeral for eight police officers shot by U.S. troops.

ist overlords, the U.S. Congress and the imperial presidency—we must sweep them away into the dustbin of history!

In the U.S.-led imperialist assault on Iraq, the International Communist League clearly took a side. On March 19, the SL/U.S. issued a statement demanding “Defend Iraq Against U.S./British Attack! Down With U.S. Imperialism! All U.S. and Allied Troops Out of the Near East Now!” (WV No. 800, 28 March). We said:

“This is nothing but a colonial war of naked imperialist aggression to be followed by a colonial occupation of this oil-rich Near Eastern country. The U.S.

rulers prattle about bringing ‘democracy’ and ‘liberation’ to the Iraqi people—like the Zionists ‘liberated’ the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The gruesome devastation planned for Iraq is the true face of U.S. imperialism—wading in blood and dripping with filth, a roaring beast devastating culture and humanity.”

We stood for the military defense of Iraq without giving an ounce of political support to the Saddam Hussein regime. Hussein was a bloody oppressor of Iraqi workers, leftists, Shi’ite Muslims and the Kurdish people. His Ba’ath Party regime,

continued on page 4

Defend the Palestinian People! Israel Hands Off Arafat!

When Israeli vice prime minister Ehud Olmert bellowed, “Arafat can no longer be a factor in what happens here.... Expulsion is certainly one of the options, and killing is also one of the options,” the full intent of this threat was clear: the Zionist regime was announcing to the world that they were ready for a mass slaughter of Palestinians that would far overshadow the

April 2002 bloodbath in Jenin. To punctuate the message, Israeli warplanes buzzed ominously over the ruined remains of Arafat’s Ramallah compound, where he has been held under siege for nearly two years. Despite our political opposition to Arafat and Arab nationalism, we revolutionary Trotskyists add our voice to the worldwide outcry against Zionist state terrorism: **Hands off Arafat! Defend the Palestinian people!**

The threat to “liquidate” Arafat is only the most recent provocation in the Zionist state’s long history of **assassination as policy**. Such “targeted killings” of Palestinian activists have been carried out under both Likud and Labor

governments, sharply escalating over the past three years. Likud prime minister Ariel Sharon has openly expressed regret he didn’t take out Arafat 21 years ago in Beirut, when Sharon commanded the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and presided over the slaughter of some two thousand Palestinian men, women and children in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Last month, Israel assassinated a key political leader of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas, following this with an attempt on Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the group’s spiritual leader, seeking to provoke Hamas’ many supporters into a bloody confrontation. Now the Israelis are openly

threatening to assassinate the elected president of the Palestinian Authority and icon of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation.

Murderous terror and expulsion have been the program of the Zionist state since 1948, when some 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes. Over the past three years, in addition to the “targeted killings” there have been other killings of some 2,600 Palestinians, including nearly 500 children and 180 women. Thousands more have been imprisoned or rounded up in military dragnets. In April, Israeli troops loaded up to 3,000 men and boys in the West

continued on page 11



AFSCME Union Rally Demands: Rehire Charles DuBois!

Oakland—East Bay MUD

OAKLAND—More than 100 union members and supporters—immigrant, Latino, black, white—came out on September 17 in a spirited rally to defend fired black union militant Charles DuBois, as part of the continuing fight for his reinstatement. AFSCME Locals 2019 and 444, representing some 1,400 workers at the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) who provide water and sewage services, called the rally at EBMUD's Oakland headquarters under the slogans: "Defend Union Rights! An Injury to One Is an Injury to All! Reinstatement Charles DuBois!" Members of a half-dozen other local unions joined, and AC Transit bus drivers and passing motorists honked their support. Judy Goff, executive secretary-treasurer of the Alameda County Central Labor Council (CLC), brought solidarity greetings from the 126,600-strong federation. Throughout his 18 years at EBMUD, meter reader DuBois has been an active

member of Local 444, serving terms as a shop steward and executive board member, and has fought for the unions to take up the fight against all forms of oppression. Company bosses fired him in early July following a years-long campaign of harassment and bogus charges. Workers who attended the rally from every section of the District—janitors, meter readers, maintenance, pipe repair, water inspectors, water conservation, clerks, sewage treatment, engineers—came out to assert the unions' determination to defend DuBois, fired EBMUD workers Kathy Greig and Robert Mena, and all their members.

A "Call to Action" written by AFSCME union members in defense of DuBois began: "The District has once again used workplace violence policies to target and terminate an individual who is a thorn in the side of District management." An article in the June issue of Local 444's newsletter *Mainline* made available by rally organizers described how DuBois had been suspended last March under such policies: "...you can now be disciplined for telling a management official that 'I'm going to file a grievance so hard about this and you'll

Oakland, September 17: Rally in defense of Charles DuBois called by AFSCME Locals 2019 and 444 in front of headquarters of East Bay Municipal Utility District.



deserve it' (the offending words cited by management itself)." Black workers are a special target for this kind of treatment, as employers seek to use racism to divide the workers.

Rally participants cheered when Randy Kim, a 23-year Local 444 member fired in 1998 in a similar "workplace violence" frame-up despite a defense campaign by both locals, took the megaphone. (For brother Kim's story, see "Workplace Violence" Witchhunt Targets Unions, Minorities," WV No. 695, 28 August 1998.) The protesters chanted: "Workplace violence is a management attack—Bring DuBois back!" Gregg Best, the author of the *Mainline* article and an organizer of the rally, told the crowd: "'Workplace violence' witchhunts are also being used as part of the so-called 'war on terror' which in fact targets labor, blacks and immigrants—a *bipartisan* war backed by both Democrats and Republicans. National unity is a lie!" During the invasion of Iraq, the *San Francisco Chronicle* fired columnist Henry Norr for attending an antiwar demonstration. Last April 7, Oakland cops opened fire with "less lethal" weapons on antiwar protesters and longshoremen at the Port of Oakland.

Several signs at the rally called for the two locals to join in one union at EBMUD. Emboldened by the general

anti-labor climate, EBMUD had gone after concessions in contract negotiations earlier this year and succeeded in pitting one union local against another. Union members told WV that many workers felt demoralized in the outcome, and the company was pushing its advantage. The existence of separate unions is a big gift to the employers. There should be one union at EBMUD, joining together not only the AFSCME locals but the smaller Operating Engineers Local 39, while excluding management (currently organized in a bosses' "union," IFPTE Local 21).

The rally flyer reported that "At one location, District management arrogantly told workers: 'Your union is so weak it should be on suicide watch'." Local 2019 president Jay Morgan told the rally that "water conservation representatives were disciplined for exercising their free speech rights, for questioning supervisors, for wondering about workloads" at a staff meeting. Many workers saw this joint union rally as a chance to let management know the unions would fight back, seeing the firing of DuBois as an attempt to intimidate all union workers.

The entire crew of janitors at the EBMUD building, mainly immigrant women, came out to picket right in front of their bosses to defend DuBois because he fought for them when he was a union

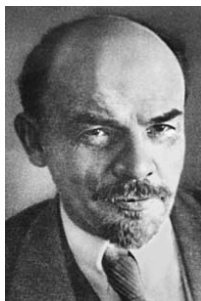
continued on page 11



TROTSKY

Democrats and Republicans—Parties of Capital

The labor bureaucracy's support to the Democratic Party "friends of labor" is a key obstacle to advancing the struggles of the working class in the U.S. In a speech announcing his presidential campaign in 1904, Socialist leader Eugene V. Debs stressed that the Democrats and Republicans are both parties of the capitalist exploiters. The chief task is to forge a workers party committed to sweeping away the whole capitalist order through socialist revolution.



LENIN

The Republican and Democratic parties, or, to be more exact, the Republican-Democratic Party, represent the capitalist class in the class struggle. They are the political wings of the capitalist system and such differences as arise between them relate to spoils and not to principles.

With either of these parties in power one thing is always certain and that is that the capitalist class is in the saddle and the working class under the saddle.

Under the administration of both these parties the means of production are private property, production is carried forward for capitalist profit purely, markets are glutted and industry paralyzed, workingmen become tramps and criminals while injunctions, soldiers and riot guns are brought into action to preserve "law and order" in the chaotic carnival of capitalistic anarchy.

Deny it as may the cunning capitalists who are clear-sighted enough to perceive it, or ignore it as may the torpid workers who are too blind and unthinking to see it, the struggle in which we are engaged today is a class struggle, and as the toiling millions come to see and understand it and rally to the political standard of their class, they will drive all capitalist parties of whatever name into the same party, and the class struggle will then be so clearly revealed that the hosts of labor will find their true place in the conflict and strike the united and decisive blow that will destroy slavery and achieve their full and final emancipation.

—Eugene V. Debs, "The Socialist Party and the Working Class,"
Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs (1948)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Len Meyers

EDITOR: Alan Wilde

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Michael Davison

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Jeff Thomas

EDITORIAL BOARD: Rosemary Palenque (managing editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, Jon Brule, Karen Cole, Paul Cone, George Foster, Liz Gordon, Walter Jennings, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alison Spencer

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

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and with a 3-week interval in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals 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.

The closing date for news in this issue is 23 September.

No. 810

26 September 2003

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

BAY AREA

Monday, 5 p.m.

September 29: **Principles of Marxism and the Nature of the Capitalist State**

San Francisco State University,
Room TBA

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: slbayarea@compuserve.com

BOSTON

Alternate Tuesdays, 6 p.m.

October 7: **Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

BU College of Arts and Sciences,
Room B25A

725 Commonwealth Avenue

(BU East/Central on Green Line B)

Information and readings: (617) 666-9453
or e-mail: bostonsyc@yahoo.com

NEW YORK CITY

Alternate Tuesdays, 8 p.m.

September 30: **Capitalist Rulers Wage War on Blacks—For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

Columbia University,
Kent Hall, Room 405

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

TORONTO

Alternate Saturdays, 3 p.m.

October 4: **Defend the Palestinians Against Zionist Terror! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!**

Ontario Institute for Studies
in Education, Room 5185

252 Bloor St. West
(above St. George Station)

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Alternate Thursdays, 6 p.m.

October 9: **Defend China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba Against Imperialism! For Workers Political Revolution! Defend North Korea's Right to Nuclear Arms!**

Simon Fraser University,
Maggie Benston Center, Room 2290
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
or e-mail: tlit@look.ca

Visit the International Communist League Web site:
www.icl-fi.org

Young Spartacus

—Zionist Censors Unleashed at Rutgers— *Break the Ban on Palestine Conference!*

In an outrageous act of political censorship, the Rutgers University administration has banned the Third North American Conference of the Palestine Solidarity Movement (PSM), scheduled for October 10-12 on the New Brunswick, New Jersey campus. We protest this ban, and stand in solidarity with the student organizers, who have vowed: “We refuse to be silenced. We will hold our conference wherever we must.” The campus president of New Jersey Solidarity-Activists for the Liberation of Palestine, Paola Rizzuto, pointed out in the group’s 12 September statement, “This is political repression—just as the Palestinian people have been repressed through history.” To ban this conference is to say that defense of the Palestinian people is out of the range of “free speech” and to legitimize the claim that Palestinian equals terrorist. The crusade to silence opponents of Zionist terror, including the murder of solidarity activists in the Occupied Territories, goes hand in hand with the escalation of murderous repression against the Palestinians themselves.

For almost as long as the conference has been planned for Rutgers, Zionist groups have plotted to crush it. Last year, the Zionists mobilized over 1,000 students from as far away as New York to protest the second PSM conference, hosted in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This year the Zionists expect 5,000 in a rally to kick off their “Israel Inspires” counter-conference scheduled for the exact same weekend as the Palestine conference.

Those taking aim against the PSM conference extend to far higher places than campus Zionist groups. The university president has “pledged his support for Israel Inspires,” according to the counter-conference Web site. He has joined with the New Jersey governor in calling the PSM conference “reprehensible,” while the co-president of the New Jersey State Senate called it “abominable.”

The only thing the Zionist state can

“inspire” is cruelty, sadism and genocide. The Israeli rulers relentlessly close in on the desperate Palestinians, sealed off behind concrete ghetto walls, their homes bulldozed, the sky over their heads ruled by helicopters raining death. It’s no accident that now, as Israeli officials shamelessly, openly discuss killing Yasir Arafat, the Rutgers administration decided to just shut down the student Palestinian conference. From the Students for Justice in Palestine group that was temporarily suspended at UC Berkeley to Rutgers, campus groups nationwide are being targeted to be shut down.

The sinister “Israel Inspires” counter-conference is an overt platform for murderous state terror: speakers include the publisher of the *Jerusalem Post*, which called for murdering Arafat. Other invited speakers are the big guns for the American imperialist invasion of Iraq and takeover of the Near East: neocons James Woolsey (former CIA director) and Richard Perle, the former assistant secretary of defense for international security

policy dubbed “the Prince of Darkness” during the Reagan years, today a close adviser to Donald Rumsfeld. Why are such major “America *über alles*” pro-Zionist warmongers (and war profiteers) being brought out to counter this student gathering? Clearly, they’re not concerned with petty bureaucratic rules on “deadlines” and administrative procedures on the Rutgers campus (the ostensible reasons for banning the pro-Palestine conference). In fact, they represent the state itself taking a firm stance against all defense of Palestinians, right down to the campus level.

As part of this campaign, on September 18 Israeli cabinet member Natan Sharansky spoke at Rutgers (getting a pie in his face from Abe Greenhouse of Central New Jersey Jews Against the Occupation). Sharansky, who later emigrated to Israel, was first made famous as a pro-imperialist dissident in the USSR. As we pointed out at the time: “Shcharansky is *guilty* of a crime against the world proletariat—transmitting military secrets of the

USSR, a degenerated workers state, to the imperialists” (“Shcharansky Is Guilty as Hell!”, WV No. 212, 28 July 1978). Today Sharansky is infamous as a Zionist former “Minister of Housing” who presided over paramilitary “settler” invasions of Palestinian land and bulldozing of Palestinian homes.

We Marxists are intransigent defenders of the Palestinians against the Zionist state. At the same time, we oppose *all* variants of Islamic fundamentalism and nationalism, from ultra-reactionary Hamas-style terrorism against innocent Israeli civilians to the PLO’s pathetic appeals to the UN and capitalist Arab regimes, who themselves oppress the Palestinians. We counterpose to this *proletarian* revolutionary internationalism. The road to the liberation of the Palestinian people lies through common class struggle by the Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers against the ruling classes of the Near East. We are for a socialist federation of the Near East, the only way that the right of national self-determination for both the Palestinian and Hebrew-speaking peoples can be realized.

Those who speak out in defense of the Palestinians have been targeted by U.S. officials and rabidly Zionist groups like the nefarious Anti-Defamation League, which just gave Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi its Distinguished Statesman Award! This campaign against supporters of the Palestinians is part of the U.S. state’s attempt to stifle dissent domestically. The racist anti-immigrant dragnet immediately after September 11 grabbed over 1,200 immigrants, mainly of Arab background, and held them in punitive detention. Lately, pro-Palestinian activists such as Faruk Abdel-Muhti have been arrested and Palestinians deported. We forthrightly defend them and call to *drop all charges against the pro-Palestinian activists! No deportations!* We call for dropping all the charges against those targeted by the racist INS dragnet. It is in the interests of all students, faculty and campus workers at Rutgers, and elsewhere, to protest this ban, which if successful will further embolden the forces of repression. We say: Break the ban on the Rutgers Palestine conference! Defend the Palestinians! Down with the U.S. imperialist and Zionist “war on terror” on campus! ■



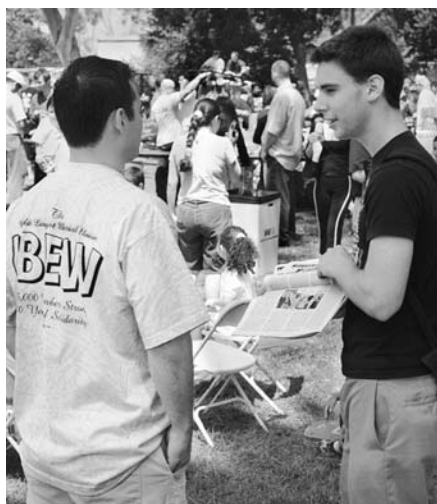
Young Spartacus

University of Illinois at Chicago: SYC raises slogan “Defend the Palestinian People!” at September 16 speakout against anti-immigrant witchhunt in U.S. and colonial occupation of Iraq.

Workers Vanguard Subscription Drive

August 28 to October 8

Local	Quota (in points)	Week Three	%
Bay Area	850	537½	63%
Boston	200	123½	62%
Chicago	500	383½	77%
Los Angeles	400	109	27%
New York	900	318	35%
At Large	250	238	95%
National Total	3,100	1,709½	55%



VW Photo

Subscribe Now!

- ☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail ☐ New ☐ Renewal
- ☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

810

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

Troops Out!...

(continued from page 1)

put in power with the aid of the U.S., defended the existing social relations in Iraq based on tribal and religious privilege extending back to the days of the Ottoman Empire. Today the American imperialists offer a sham democracy as an alternative to the Hussein regime to better mask their rape of Iraq.

“Peace Patriots” and Opportunist “Socialists”

During the period of the recent antiwar protests, the ICL intervened around the world, including with revolutionary internationalist contingents—marching in opposition to the U.S. war and counterposed to the social-patriotic programs of the protest leaderships. These social-patriotic programs consisted of a mixture of liberal pacifism and appeals to patriotism—“peace is patriotic” being a prominent slogan. These “peace patriots” opposed the war not from the standpoint of defending Iraq—a weak, semicolonial country—from a predatory attack by the U.S., an imperial power, but of safeguarding the best interests of the predator, U.S. imperialism. The best example of this attempt to “safeguard” was the appeals for United Nations approval and cover for the attack—“Don’t go alone,” they said, “it’s too dangerous.” This is like telling the alpha wolf, “Yes, your prey is wounded and ready to finish off, but the situation is dangerous, it still can bite. For your own safety wait for the rest of the pack to finish the job even if you are the leader.”

The current spectacle of the lesser great powers—France, Germany, Russia—that led UN “opposition” to the war now demanding their place at the trough of Iraqi oil and “reconstruction” is obscene. Remarking on the great power alliance that sought to militarily crush the young Soviet republic, Lenin observed in an October 1920 speech, “Property divides whereas labour unites. Private property is robbery, and a state based on private property is a state of robbers, who are fighting for a share of the spoils. Though they have not yet finished this war, they are already fighting among themselves.” The lesson here is that no imperialist alliance—UN, NATO, European Union, etc.—can stay united because they “are bound by no genuine or permanent interests.” Only the international working class is capable of united action based on common interest. The Bush administration is now beginning to heed the warnings of danger and trying to get the UN wolf pack to help it devour Iraq. Only the international working class has the interest and the power to disperse this pack in defense of Iraq.

Between our revolutionary internationalist position and the “peace patriots” stood assorted so-called socialists. Nearer to the peace patriots were the reformist socialist organizations, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Workers World Party (WWP) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), that in fact organized and led the assorted antiwar coalitions—ANSWER (WWP), Not In Our Name (RCP) and the various campus networks (ISO). Posturing more to the left were smaller groups like the League for the Revolutionary Party, which talked of defense of Iraq and voiced opposition to U.S. imperialism but joined with the reformists in promoting the class-collaborationist antiwar movement.

But the most important political force is the bureaucratic leadership of the AFL-CIO trade-union federation with its ties to the Democratic Party, a not-so-liberal capitalist party. It is in that party that America’s chosen black leadership comes into power and influence. It is here, through the Democratic Party, that the multiracial American working class, in particular the oppressed black masses, are chained to the war chariot of their own racist oppressors and exploiters.

We must examine concretely the politics of all these forces both in the context

of recent struggle and not too distant history. We must also examine the question of war and its related issues such as national oppression, women’s oppression and the class struggle concretely. This is the only way to choose a side to stand with. I want to convince you to choose the side of revolutionary internationalism.

Trotskyists Hailed Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

The history of the Near East shows over and over again the bankruptcy of the bourgeois road of deals with the imperialists and relying on the so-called “progressive” Arab nationalist bourgeoisie to break the chains of imperialism. The idea that the working class and the oppressed can move forward by pressuring the rulers to make reforms, or by joining with them in administering their state, has led to one bloody defeat after another. To overturn this system means a sharp break from such illusions in conciliation of imperialist and nationalist forces, from reliance on that den of thieves, the United Nations. We must forge revolutionary parties committed to the principles of proletarian internationalism and a Socialist Federation of the Near East; parties that fight for national equality and for women’s liberation as a motor force for revolutionary struggle. The imperialists and bourgeois nationalists are utterly hostile to women’s emancipation and the equal rights of all oppressed nations



WV Photo

Los Angeles, March 30: Workers World Party’s ANSWER coalition promotes pro-imperialist lie that American occupation forces are “our troops.”

and national minorities, which can only be achieved through a thoroughgoing socialist revolution that shatters capitalist property relations and all associated social institutions.

Imperialism has sought to drown in blood every movement for emancipation from the centuries-old chains of tradition and the exploitation of the landlords and the capitalists. In this aim, institutionalized religion has been one of their main tools and the rights of women one of the main casualties.

While there are many examples of this, probably the most glaring is Afghanistan. In the late 1970s a civil war between the Soviet-allied modernizing Kabul regime and the tribal *mujahedin* broke out. In dispute was the government’s move to introduce a few rather minor reforms—like reducing the bride price, not even abolishing it. To protect its borders from the rightist threat, in late 1979 the Soviet Union sent in the Red Army to defend Kabul, following repeated requests by the Afghan government. The Red Army’s presence was defending the rights of the women of Afghanistan. Its opponents, the *mujahedin*, were shooting schoolteachers for teaching girls how to read and throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women. And on *their* side was—the United States, arming and funding them in what was at that time the largest CIA operation in history.

We said, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and called on the Soviets to extend the gains of October to the peoples of Afghanistan. What were those gains? Just across the border, Central Asia had once been exactly like Afghanistan—a miserably backward, desolate and benighted place. But in the 1920s Soviet power came to Central Asia. In 50 years, Soviet Central Asia had moved forward ten centuries, because it had been transformed

from a backward, tribal area by a socialized planned economy.

The old Soviet Union was undermined by decades of Stalinist misrule and sold out to Western imperialism. But the 75-year experience of a planned economy and how the Russian workers took power will not be forgotten. The party of Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks, finds expression today in the International Communist League. We fight today for new October Revolutions based on precious lessons learned from it. Our opponents on the left and within the workers movement work equally as hard against new October Revolutions based on their belief that it was a “failed experiment.” But societies, with the wars and revolutions—the class struggles—that shape them, are not cooked up in a laboratory but fashioned by the human hand guided by the human mind and need.

Labor Must Oppose Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!

There is a wide chasm between our proletarian, revolutionary, internationalist program and the abjectly reformist/liberal politics of the rest of the left in the U.S. However, in times of heightened social struggle these organizations can and will posture to the left. The fight to transform the working class from a class in itself, the object of capitalist exploitation, to a class for itself, conscious of its revolutionary purpose as the agency for

pation of Iraq becomes evident.

Recently the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, under scrutiny for a \$139.5 million pay package, stated that he felt “blessed” to receive such pay. Indeed, many of his class brethren may not be as blessed, but still manage to steal more in profits in one week than the average worker sweats to earn in a year. Labor productivity, an indication of the level of exploitation within the American economy, has climbed nearly 6 percent while steady job losses have led to unemployment figures over 6 percent. Fewer workers are working harder to produce more goods and services. Here is an indicator of the living conditions of the average American worker: HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development) places the average “housing wage” (what a worker needs to earn to maintain housing) last year at \$15.21, about \$2 less than the average hourly pay. This leaves the worker \$2 for all other needs. Capitalism blesses the capitalists and damns the workers.

Many of the union antiwar resolutions simply opposed unilateral U.S. action and placed their opposition within the framework of American bourgeois democracy. They called for a UN cover. They reflect the politics of the more liberal wing of the capitalist Democratic Party. The aim is not to mobilize labor’s social power in concrete acts of class struggle against U.S. imperialism, such as political protest strikes against the war and the occupation. Their aim is to organize labor as one more constituent of a pro-Democratic Party “peace movement.”

Workers must be brought to understand that they share no interests with their capitalist bosses; that imperialist war is simply the extension of capitalism’s quest for the profits that are solely obtained by the exploitation of labor; that for the imperialists guns *are* butter; that the UN operates solely to perpetuate and enforce world domination by the major imperialist powers. Leading up to and during the war on Iraq, Scottish railroad workers and Italian metal workers showed the way forward for the international working class by engaging in concrete acts of class struggle against the war. On the West Coast, we witnessed a cop assault—the firing of blast grenades and wooden bullets, on an antiwar protest at the Oakland docks on April 7. Longshoremen who honored this peaceful picket line were also fired upon and arrested. With their union’s very existence under the gun of the capitalist state—witnessed by the coastwide employer lockout, Bush’s invoking the Taft-Hartley Act and the passing of the Maritime Security Act—the longshoremen did not actively engage in this picket line. But their sympathies were clearly with the protesters.

On February 9, 2002 those same longshoremen were the core of a united-front labor/black demonstration based on the demands: Anti-Terrorist Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labor—No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt! The rally, initiated by the Spartacist League’s fraternal organizations, the Labor/Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee, aimed to mobilize the multiracial working class against the capitalist state’s drive to legitimize its violence with “terrorist enemy within” demagoguery. We succeeded on a modest scale in driving a wedge into the cracks of the “national unity” barrage. This was the work of a revolutionary workers party in action.

Black Democrats Front for Racist Imperialism

The key to class struggle in the U.S. is black workers within the organized labor movement. The trade unions are the principal and most powerful organizations of the politically backward American workers. The black trade unionist will play a leading role in bringing the social power of these organizations to bear on behalf of all the oppressed. This is our call for the American revolution: Unleash labor/black power! It’s time to finish the

Civil War! Forward to a workers state!

American blacks constitute an oppressed race/color caste segregated at the bottom of American capitalist society. From the days of slavery to the present they have been a key component of the labor that has produced the profits of the fat American capitalist class. But in the economic ordering of things black labor has been ghettoized and white racism used as a tool to divide the American workers. The American Dream and the melting pot have always been an American nightmare and fire for black people. Our program of revolutionary integrationism means simply this: the promise of racial equality will only be achieved with an egalitarian socialist America based on a planned economy producing for human need and not profit. Those layers of the working class long oppressed at the bottom will rise to lead the fight for this workers America. This Civil War story gives meaning to this: A newly freed slave in the Union Army encounters his old master looking on in fright as his unit marches by. The former slave soldier shouts to his old master, “Bottom rail on top now, massa.” We will say the same to the masters of Wall Street who foment racism and race terror to keep black people in their place as an oppressed race/color caste.

The black Democratic Party mouthpieces, such as Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, embrace the armed forces of American imperialism as “our troops.” But the capitalist rulers spit on the black and working-class ranks of the military, who are just so much cannon fodder to kill and be killed in the interest of Wall Street. Support for the war on Iraq among blacks ran some 30 percent lower than among whites. The reasons are obvious: blacks make up 12 percent of the American population but 21 percent of military personnel and 30 percent of Army enlistees—we can also add, 44 percent of the prison population. Rich man’s war, poor man’s fight is the theme of these figures. The capitalist rulers can barely conceal their racist contempt—witness their fumbled attempt to slash the \$250 a month family bonus pay for combat troops.

Across the political spectrum, from the black Democratic Party hacks to the reformist socialist left, the slogan “support our troops” is a loyalty pledge to American imperialist interests. The international working class must militarily defend those Iraqi forces fighting the U.S. colonial-type occupation of their country. The U.S. government is not “our” government and neither is its army “our” army. This is not to say that the American ruling class does not have a problem with the current composition and morale of its armed forces despite their voluntary character. Many working-class and impoverished youths enlist in the armed forces mainly for economic opportunities and advancement rather than out of gung-ho patriotism. Thus we now see U.S. soldiers in Iraq publicly complaining that their tour of duty has been extended. Such disaffection among lower-class youth sent abroad to kill and risk their own lives for the interests of Wall Street banks and corporate America is a weakness for U.S. imperialist militarism. We say: Not one dime, not one man for the imperialist war machine!

“Left” Tails of the Democrats

If the trade-union bureaucrats of the AFL-CIO can be called “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class” within the workers movement, then the reformist and centrist socialists can be called the NCOs—the non-commissioned officers—of the capitalist class within the workers movement. Anyone who knows about military hierarchy knows that when the times get rough and the troops need to get moving or be kept in line it is the NCOs—the sergeants and corporals—who get the job done. Perhaps one day the capitalist might reward the NCO with promotion for work well done. Now I will address the politics and roles of some of these NCOs.

Within the antiwar protests, the League



Spartacist-initiated Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent at NYC antiwar protest, March 22.

for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) whined that it wanted a real united front that includes “revolutionaries—not just those who support the Democrats and other pro-imperialist liberals” (*Proletarian Revolution*, Fall 2002). Here they seek a common movement and a common program against imperialist war with representatives of the very capitalist class in whose interest such wars are waged. But the LRP’s “anti-imperialism” is even more fraudulent given their anti-Soviet credentials: howling with the rest of the pack in opposition to the Soviet military intervention against the CIA-backed woman-hating Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan in the 1980s and standing with the counterrevolutionaries who destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92.

There is another anti-Soviet outfit that is probably more familiar to you than the LRP—the International Socialist Organization. The ISO is a good candidate for the title of “State Department socialists.” If they have not achieved this job yet it is only because the U.S. State Department has no current need of them. But their résumé for the job is impressive. They embraced the Afghan *mujahedin* hailed by Reagan as “freedom fighters” and cheered the downfall of the Soviet Union. They have supported counterrevolutionary mobs in Havana, Cuba as pro-democracy demonstrations. Their political tendency was born in flight from the defense of the North Korean deformed workers state during the 1950s U.S./UN-led imperialist war effort on the Korean peninsula. They have echoed the “human rights” hypocrisy of the imperialists against the People’s Republic of China.

For the imperialists, “human rights” is the right of the human capitalists to exploit humanity’s labor and markets—Asia, centered on China, is the most prized target.

The Bush gang has made it clear that after the takeover of Iraq its next target will be North Korea. Standing behind North Korea, geographically and politically, is China, by far the most powerful of the remaining states where capitalism has been overthrown (the others being North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba). Having succeeded in their goal of destroying the Soviet Union, the American imperialists view the continued existence of the People’s Republic of China as a very large piece of unfinished business. Their goal: to reverse the 1949 Chinese Revolution in order to subjugate and exploit China. Their strategy: to combine external military pressure with internal capitalist penetration facilitated by the “market reforms” of the venal Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy.

The ICL stands for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese and North Korean bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack from without and capitalist counterrevolution from within. Especially in the present context, that means supporting the right of North Korea to develop

nuclear weapons along with the delivery system necessary to make them an effective deterrent to the Pentagon war machine. Nuclear weapons in this day of the American nuclear cowboy are the only guarantee of national independence.

The ISO is an effective NCO on the campuses across the country. Their vision of “unity” means subservience to the liberal wing of the ruling class. Having helped build a movement that was shot through with illusions in the UN, they now cynically warn against liberals who urge that the “movement that opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq should now assume the role of lobbyists for a bigger UN ‘fig leaf’” (*Socialist Worker*, 5 September). And during the 1991 Gulf War the ISO endorsed a demonstration that explicitly included demands supporting UN sanctions against Iraq. Today the ISO is again ready to build a “movement” with the enemies of the workers and minorities. While they denounce “direct action” activists for being too militant, they call for “the widest possible expressions of antiwar opposition,” including “everyone who wants to say no to Bush’s war” (*Socialist Worker*, 2 April). They welcome everyone from Democrats to Republicans, cops and those who didn’t oppose the war on Afghanistan (the U.S. revenge on the Afghan people for harboring the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, the CIA’s creations). They have proven themselves ready to hustle votes for the Green Party—a third capitalist party no less committed to the existing imperialist order than the Democrats and Republicans and which is colorblind to racism and black oppression.

The Workers World Party, the leader of the ANSWER antiwar coalition, is the opposite side of the same reformist coin of the ISO. They embrace the Stalinist bureaucracies of the deformed workers

states unconditionally and thus undermine the defense of these same states and the nationalized property forms that they are based on. They reject the call for political revolution to oust the Stalinist misrulers and to return to the internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky. The smashing of capitalist class rule is historically progressive, but the construction of a socialist society is possible only on an international scale based on a planned economy of abundance. The Stalinist mismanagers are nationalist in outlook, policing economies of scarcity. They are parasitic obstacles on the road to socialism.

While Workers World may sometimes cheer for revolution abroad, they do not work for revolution at home. They complain that the Democratic presidential candidates “are desperately trying to co-opt the anti-Bush mass movement,” as though the “anti-Bush” movement boosted by WWP is anything other than a vehicle for the Democrats (*Workers World*, 11 September). Their ANSWER propaganda echoes the labor officials and the liberals—they say (in a leaflet for a January 18 antiwar protest), “Like Dr. King did during the Vietnam War, we will demand that hundreds of billions of dollars be spent on jobs, education, housing, healthcare and to meet human needs—not for wars of aggression in the Third World.”

This sounds all very sweet. But we must inform these sweethearts that the U.S. capitalists have acquired their untold billions of dollars through the exploitation of labor and the immiseration of the oppressed. If you want to get your hands on the money, you have to break the power of the capitalists and place the means of production in the hands of those whose labor creates the wealth of society. Besides Dr. King, the Workers World Party’s favorite liberal “peace” activist is Ramsey Clark, a Democratic Party attorney general during the Vietnam War and the bloody COINTELPRO domestic war against the Black Panther Party. This makes sense—the famous Black Muslim cartoon showing Dr. King praying during the 1965 L.A. Watts rebellion, “If there is any blood spilled in the streets, let it be *our* blood,” complements Clark, who made sure that this was true with the blood of Panthers.

As we argued in the mobilizing call for our revolutionary internationalist contingents in the October 2002 demonstrations: “It is futile to oppose war against Iraq but not oppose the economic system which generates war and the ideology that legitimizes it. Moreover, pushing illusions in the reformability of the bloody American imperialist state can only result in the demobilization of the only force in capitalist society that can challenge the rule of the capitalist class: the working class.”

I simply urge you to join us in this fight for new October Revolutions by embracing a revolutionary internationalist perspective. Join us! Those who labor must rule!■

Spartacist Forums

Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution! U.S. Imperialism Hands Off!

Thursday, Sept. 25, 7 p.m.
322 West 48th St., 1st Floor
(Between 8th and 9th Avenues)
Take E or C train to 50th St. stop.

For more information: (212) 267-1025
e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

NEW YORK CITY

Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste

Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan! Down With Colonial Occupation of Iraq!

Friday, Oct. 3, 7 p.m.
Britannia Community Centre
1661 Napier St.
(off Commercial Drive)

For more information: (604) 687-0353
e-mail: tlit@look.ca

VANCOUVER

Twelve Years After Counterrevolution in the USSR

Why We Fought to Defend the Soviet Union

We conclude below an edited and expanded version of a presentation by comrade Victor Gibbons at a public Spartacist educational in New York City on April 27. In particular we have added a more extensive account of the intervention of the International Communist League in the USSR in the early 1990s which was taken from a July 12 presentation by comrade Gibbons in London. Part One appeared in Workers Vanguard No. 809 (12 September).

PART TWO

The International Communist League intervened at the crucial moments in East Germany—the German Democratic Republic (DDR)—in 1989-90 and in the Soviet Union in 1990-92. We put forward the program of proletarian political revolution to overthrow the decomposing Stalinist regimes as the *only possible way* to defeat the powerful, imperialist-backed forces of capitalist counterrevolution. Today, we need to make a special effort to put ourselves back into this period, before the defeats that followed, in order to appreciate the reality of the revolutionary opportunity that opened up, and how the ICL seized upon it.

In the summer of 1989, the Soviet Union was shaken by the miners in the first ever nationwide strike. Their strike committees resembled soviets, running whole cities. That same summer, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing and saw the Chinese deformed workers state's People's Liberation Army beginning to melt in the face of an incipient political revolution triggered by the mass protests in Tiananmen Square. Workers, soldiers and students together were singing the "Internationale." It began to look like Hungary 1956, where the pro-socialist working class had erected soviets and briefly shattered the Stalinist regime.

Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping drowned the nascent proletarian political revolution in blood. But within a few months, the spectre of political revolution was back, in East Germany. As mass protests besieged the discredited Stalinist bureaucracy, we threw our international resources into the fight for a red Germany of workers councils based on political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West.

Our daily *Arprekorr* (Workers Press Correspondence) called for the founding of workers and soldiers councils, like those in Russia in 1917. Workers from large East Berlin factories came to ask us how to do that. Because of our propaganda, units of the East German army



**3 January 1990:
Spartakist-initiated
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 election:
"No to Capitalist
Reunification!"**

Spartakist photos



formed soldiers committees, some of which circulated *Arprekorr*. It was these units the panicky Stalinists dissolved. We published internationalist greetings in several languages reaching out to workers from Vietnam, Cuba and Poland in the DDR and to Soviet soldiers and officers stationed there. ICL comrades were addressing meetings of hundreds of Soviet soldiers and officers with our Trotskyist program. (For further details, see "Revolution vs. Counterrevolution in

Germany, 1989-90," WV Nos. 730 and 731, 25 February and 10 March 2000.)

The signal event of our intervention in the DDR was the 3 January 1990 united-front demonstration against the desecration of Berlin's Treptow Park Soviet Soldier Memorial by German rightists. The demonstration was essentially in defense of the DDR workers state and against the drive for capitalist annexation by the West German imperialists, the heirs of Hitler's Third Reich. The impact of our

appeal was such that the ruling Stalinist party, the SED/PDS, was compelled to join in building this demonstration of a quarter of a million workers and soldiers initiated by us. Lothar Bisky, a leader of the SED/PDS, told us, "You have the workers."

I and another comrade were in Lenin-grad a few days later when the issues of the main Communist Party daily, *Pravda*, and the Soviet Army daily, *Red Star*, came out with coverage of the Treptow demonstration. Both papers hailed the demonstration, and the Soviet Army paper ran a prominent photo of our signed Trotskyist banner reading "Down With NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!" over our hammer, sickle and four!

The mass ICL-initiated protest awoke Gorbachev, Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze & Co. with a start from their illusion in a gradual transition to capitalism in the DDR. Here's what Gorbachev himself said in an interview on German TV on the tenth anniversary of those events:

"We changed our point of view on the process of unification of Germany under the impact of events that unfolded in the DDR. And an especially critical situation came about in January. In essence, a breakdown of structures took place. A threat arose—a threat of disorganization, of a big destabilization. This began on January 3 and [went] further almost every day.... This was, as you know, like a torrent of fiery lava: the current was flowing." [our translation from TV transcript]

Gorbachev recounts that when West German chancellor Helmut Kohl visited Moscow shortly thereafter, the Soviet leadership urged him to swallow up the DDR immediately. In his own way Gorbachev recognized and feared that *our Trotskyist program* of proletarian political revolution and socialist internationalism was beginning to attract mass support among the East German (and from there, the Soviet) working class.

It was under the impact of Tiananmen, the Soviet miners strike and Treptow that Gorbachev endorsed Boris Yeltsin's plan for a 500-day forced march to capitalist restoration in August 1990. At the same time, the terminal disintegration of the Kremlin bureaucracy also made it possible for the ICL to openly establish our direct presence in the USSR. We began massively distributing our first leaflet, "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin/Gorbachev 500-Day Plan!", and published the first issue of our Russian-language *Byulleten' Spartakovtsev* (Spartacist Bulletin), titled "What Is Trotskyism."

I'll give one dramatic example of how we fought to mobilize the Soviet proletariat on the basis of a revolutionary interna-



Peter Turnley

**The spectre of
political revolution:
Beijing workers (left)
arrive in Tiananmen
Square, May 1989.
Right: Strike by
Soviet miners in
summer of 1989
threw up incipient
workers councils
(soviets).**



TASS

tionalist program and perspective. That was at the October 1990 Soviet Coal Miners Congress held in Donetsk, Ukraine—the heartland of the mass strike wave the year before.

There were only two of us, but politically it was the ICL on the one side and, on the other, U.S. and British embassy representatives, the AFL-CIO’s Freedom House, the Russian fascist NTS and, last but not least, the scab British “Union of Democratic Miners” (UDM), an anti-Communist outfit formed and financed in an attempt to break the great British coal strike of 1984-85 led by Arthur Scargill’s National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Soviet miners had raised huge funds in solidarity with the British miners and their union during the strike. This Soviet aid was a powerful countermeasure to the red-baiting campaign against Scargill and the NUM conducted by the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher and the British ruling class in general. Now the “AFL-CIA” types were pushing Soviet miners to repudiate their past support to Scargill and demanded the NUM hand over the money to the scab UDM!

But the ICL spiked this attempt and caused a sensation. At the congress of 900 delegates, we sold over 600 copies of *Byulleten’ Spartakovsev* and we exposed the scab role of the UDM. Various delegations took back whole stacks of our bulletin. We played a crucial role in the decision of the congress *not* to pursue the UDM’s appeal to join in denouncing Scargill. The remarkable thing about this was that the bourgeoisie was represented by every spy agency and fascist around, but the proletariat’s historic stake was *represented by the ICL alone*. Our singular role demonstrated that our program had an impact vastly, even explosively, out of proportion to our tiny size. We counted on the power of our Trotskyist program to have this same explosive impact across the USSR.

August 1991: ICL on the Last Barricades

The introduction of economic competition and other market mechanisms served to intensify regional disparities between industrially more advanced and more backward areas and to embolden reactionary separatist forces in the better-off republics, like the Baltics. Openly bourgeois movements sired by Gorbachev had won elections during 1990 in Russia, the Baltics and other Soviet republics. They sought to gain as much control as they could over the local militias, armed forces and budgets. The leading figure in this camp was the head of the Russian republic, Boris Yeltsin, formerly one of Gorbachev’s chief lieutenants, who had split from the Kremlin leader to the right.

Opposing Yeltsin and the pro-Western “democrats” were the so-called “conservatives” or “patriots” of the Stalinist bureaucracy based in the military-industrial complex and CPSU apparatus. Contrary to the propaganda of Western imperialism and its Russian camp followers, the “conservatives” were *not* committed to preserving a collectivized economy, much less to restoring the old Stalinist order. Rather they wanted to preserve a USSR-wide state formation while introducing capitalism more slowly and in a way that benefited themselves. Gorbachev, now officially president of the USSR, swung between the “democrats” and “conservatives.”

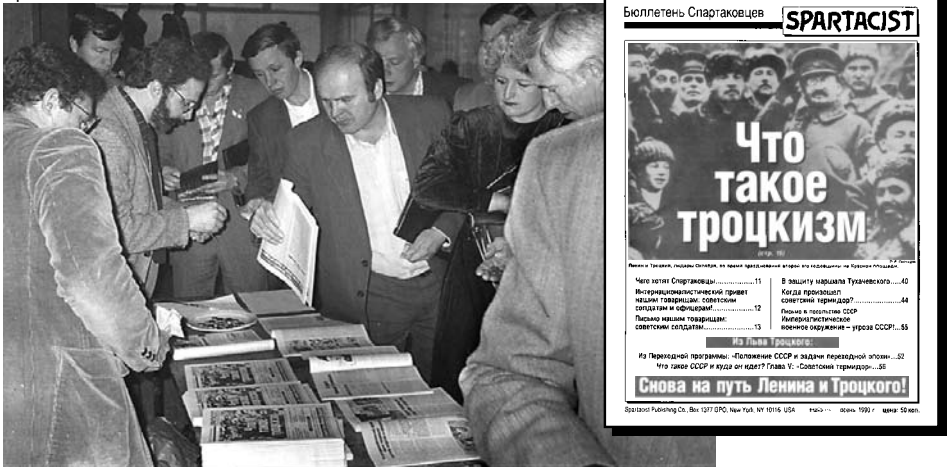
On August 20, 1991, a new Union Treaty was to be signed granting far greater control over economic policy and the armed forces to the constituent republics of the USSR. It was to prevent this new treaty that the day before a group of Gorbachev’s lieutenants declared they were taking power in the Kremlin in the name of the State Emergency Committee (EC). Throughout the day, tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled into Moscow. I went among them and talked to the soldiers. It turned out that none of them had the slightest hint of what they were there to do. As soon became evident, neither did their commanders.

Yeltsin responded by denouncing the

EC as an attempt to restore the “Communist” system and moved to organize a coup, setting up barricades around the White House, the Russian presidential headquarters in Moscow. Yet the EC made no move to arrest Yeltsin or otherwise obstruct his efforts to mobilize whatever forces he could against them. Moreover, Yeltsin was throughout in open communication with U.S. president George Bush Sr., who became the co-organizer of Yeltsin’s counter-coup.

In an effort to gain the acceptance of Western, above all American, imperialism, the EC issued a proclamation which made no mention at all of “socialism.” Rather they pledged to continue Gorbachev’s course, that is, to promote private property and to honor all of Gorbachev’s foreign policy commitments. Domestically, the EC declared martial law and told the workers to stay home.

Spartacist



Above: Miners at October 1990 congress in Donetsk bought hundreds of copies of Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin*. May 1991: ICL comrades at East German air base address 300 Soviet officers and soldiers commemorating Red Army victory over Nazi Third Reich.



Spartacist

When Bush, nonetheless, made it clear that Yeltsin was his man in Russia, the EC rapidly disintegrated. Yeltsin and his henchmen quickly moved into the resulting power vacuum.

The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin’s capitalist-restorationist forces in August 1991 was a pivotal event determining the fate of the Soviet Union. There was no longer a central Soviet government presiding over USSR state organs or over the governments of the constituent republics. These now began declaring their independence from the USSR. But the final undoing of the October Revolution was *not yet* a foregone conclusion. Only those who were politically desirous of washing their hands of the now-fractured workers state were in a hurry to immediately write off the USSR.

The ICL, on the contrary, uniquely raised the alarm, distributing tens of thousands of copies throughout the Soviet Union of our August 1991 statement, “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” This was the *first* anti-Yeltsin communist protest in all of the USSR. It began:

“The working people of the Soviet Union, and indeed, the workers of the world, have suffered an unparalleled disaster whose devastating consequences are now being played out. The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin, who offers himself as Bush’s man, coming off a botched coup by Mikhail Gorbachev’s former aides, has unleashed a counterrevolutionary tide across the land of the October Revolution.”

But we insisted that the battle was not yet over. We called upon the Soviet working class to mobilize against the still-weak Yeltsin regime before it was able to con-

solidate a new capitalist state apparatus amid the fractured state structures of the former USSR:

“While Yeltsin & Co. now see a clear field to push through a forced-draft re-introduction of capitalism, *the outcome is not yet definitively decided*.... The Soviet proletariat, whose capacity for militant action was dramatically shown in the miners strike of the summer of 1989, has not been heard from. Opposition from the factories against the ravages of capitalist assault could throw a giant wrench in the works and prevent the rapid consolidation of counterrevolution.” [emphasis in original]

In this historic statement, we said a call for workers militias “to smash the counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite demonstrations was certainly in order.” We called for the formation of workers councils to fight the plunder and destruction of the planned, collectivized economy; for soldiers and officers committees

International even crowed in its newspaper *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991) of sabotaging efforts by workers to mobilize against Yeltsin and Bush’s “democrats,” warning of

“the danger of support to the putschists by workers organizations that did not share the principles of the ‘democrats’—the rule of private property and capitalist power. And that is exactly what happened...at several factories the workers even tried to organize defense detachments in support of the putschists.

“From the morning on, all of our members explained to workers at their enterprises that the positions of the Emergency Committee did not coincide with their interests. In addition to this, they connected up with worker activists of other organizations, in order to prevent hasty actions.”

In mobilizing internationally to fight for a Trotskyist party in the Soviet Union, we acted on Trotsky’s injunction:

“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” (October 1933)

Our Lenin-Trotsky Fund, collected from around the world, made it possible for our Moscow Station to bring in reinforcements, engage in mass literature distribution and translations, secure office facilities—all in the effort to spur the proletariat to mount a political revolution against the capitalist-restorationist regime and revive the Soviet Union as a workers state. This fund also made it possible for our Prometheus Research Library to bring to the Soviet workers the first ever Russian-language version of Trotsky’s 1928 *The Communist International After Lenin*, the key founding documents of world Trotskyism in opposition to “socialism in one country.”

Our Fourth Internationalist banner was there for all to see at the Revolution Day celebration in Moscow on 7 November 1991. The demonstration was banned, but some 100,000 Muscovites—mostly workers—came out in defiance. So fearful were Yeltsin & Co. of a confrontation that the ban was lifted at the last minute. Our intervention that day was spectacularly successful. The ICL’s Moscow Station sold thousands of pieces of literature, including our call to defeat Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution. Nobody was more shocked at the turnout than the Stalinist “patriot” organizers, who cut it off midway when the ICL demanded the microphone in Red Square. The Stalinists knew about the Spartacists at Treptow!

Another important test was Yeltsin’s murderous assault on the Soviet Red Army Day march in Moscow, 23 February 1992. The elite OMON militia forces boxed in the demonstrators, beating one Soviet general to death right there in public. The pavement of Moscow’s main street ran red with blood. The message was clear: a new master was blooding his attack dogs. Partisans of the Soviet state, opponents of private property forms, could be demonstratively lynched in the land of October. We immediately issued a new leaflet calling for “Workers and Soldiers Soviets to Stop Capitalist Restoration!” We warned the moment was growing late; the would-be bosses were taking the streets of Moscow away; and that White tsar Boris was bent on a decisive massacre, a new Bloody Sunday.

It was right in this period, on 9 February 1992, that our leading spokesman in Moscow, comrade Martha Phillips, was murdered at her post. The authorities stonewalled while we tried in vain to find out who killed her. She paid the ultimate price to plant the flag of the ICL on the last barricades in defense of the gains of October.

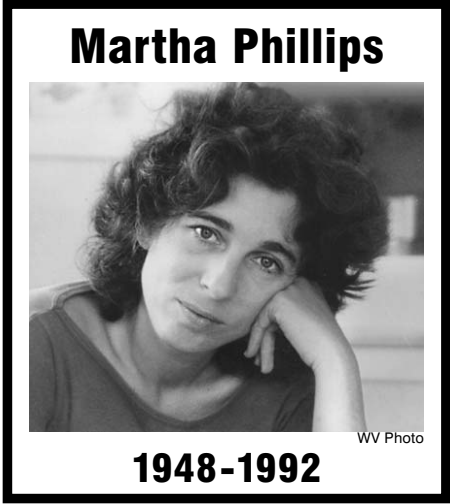
Yet working-class resistance—strikes and protests—to the Yeltsin regime, even after it had introduced economic “shock therapy” in early 1992, was sporadic and ineffective. Furthermore, the “hard-line” Stalinist opposition repulsed and

continued on page 8

Soviet Union...
(continued from page 7)

demoralized the multinational Soviet proletariat by making a political bloc with Russian fascists and other right-wing nationalists, the so-called “red-brown coalition.” We exposed these anti-Semitic Great Russian chauvinists for what they were to anti-Yeltsin workers and youth, devoting the entire issue of Byulleten’ Spartakovisev No. 3 (Spring 1992) to the fight for a Leninist party that was a tribune of the people, combatting every form of national chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry roiling the brown tide of capitalist counterrevolution. We also, uniquely, mobilized in defense of the besieged foreign students of Moscow’s Patrice Lumumba People’s Friendship University after Yeltsin’s police murdered an African student in August 1992.

When the air traffic controllers went on strike that same month, Yeltsin demonstratively launched his first full-scale, frontal attack on the Soviet trade unions. The ICL put out a leaflet rallying to the union’s defense. Tellingly, the ex-Stalinist has-beens joined their fascist-monarchist partners of the “red-brown coalition” in opposing the strike.



When by late 1992 the counterrevolution in Russia had been consolidated, we analyzed the main factors underlying the fateful political passivity of the Soviet working class:

“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....
“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.’
—WV No. 564, 27 November 1992, reprinted in Spartacist pamphlet How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled (August 1993)

The Ravages of Counterrevolution

A half decade after the counterrevolution, the desperate and despairing condition of Russian working people was movingly expressed in a letter from a rural village cited on a Russian trade-union Web site:
“We are dying in the direct meaning of the word. The collective farm is hardly breathing. For a year we have been paid no wages. No money has been found to buy fuel for sowing. Everybody sits at home depressed. Many get cancer and other diseases. We are perishing like flies.”
By 1997, the real value of the average wage in the Russian Federation had fallen by almost 80 percent, of pensions by almost 70 percent. This was accomplished by “shock therapy” freeing price controls and setting off an inflation rate as high as 20,000 percent in 1992! I

remember the horror on the faces of co-workers as the ruble lost half its value in one month. Before my eyes they became paupers. But even having a wage presumes one has a job, and who did? According to a September-October 1998 study sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency, only 50 percent of Russian adults were employed and only a quarter of the so-called “employed” got paid with any regularity.
Some 75 percent of the population of the Russian Federation was now compelled to grow some or all of their own food, moreover, in a society that was 70 percent urban. Individual garden plots sprang up along commuter train lines around every city, providing the major source of food for the urban population. Every Sunday evening the commuter trains headed back into Moscow were full of bone-tired workers, including those with college educations, hands cracked and dirty from scratch-gardening, too tired to think except perhaps when talk turned to farming tips. A nuclear power plant engineer in my neighborhood quit his job to guard his potato patch! An educated urban proletariat had reverted to scratch subsistence farming.
In the period between 1960 and 1980, a massive construction campaign had provided (for a nominal rent and utility charges) every urban family with its own apartment with modern amenities, usually including a telephone, central heating, electrical power, water, sewage and local public transport. All this was considered a right of Soviet citizenship. A truly historic achievement.
But in 1991 all municipal construction halted, and for the next five years housing rotted, looking more like dark caves than comfortable homes. Municipal water pipes began to burst, at times turning whole city intersections into boiling mud pits in which people fell to horrible deaths. The basic problem was that the service life of the heating grid was designed for only 20 years. Breakdowns have increased exponentially, and in 2010, less than seven years from now, the entire national heating grid in Russia will face complete collapse.
Many bourgeois ideologues in the West blame the unprecedented economic collapse of post-Soviet Russia on the criminal behavior of its new capitalist operators (the “oligarchs”), who looted the productive wealth of the former USSR and then transferred their ill-gotten gains to Western banks. But the basic underlying cause is the destructive logic of the capitalist system itself. As we explained in a 1994 article titled “Post-Soviet Russia: Immiseration and Chaos”:
“The employment of labor clearly demonstrates the fundamental difference between the capitalist system and a collectivized economy, even one subject to pervasive bureaucratic mismanagement and parasitism as was the former Soviet bloc. The aim of a capitalist firm is to maximize the return on the money invested in that particular company. Managers therefore seek to maximize output (if it can be sold) while minimizing the cost and employment of labor. Hence, you can see in North America and West Europe mass unemployment coexisting with brutal speedup for those workers fortunate enough to have jobs. Some people are forced to beg in the streets while others are forced to work 10-12 hours a day.
“The aim of a collectivized economy is to maximize the output of society as a whole by utilizing all available resources, both labor and the means of production. Moreover, Soviet-bloc governments prevented unemployment by not laying off workers even if their additional contribution to production was less than the wage paid them. That was far better than having them live on welfare or beg in the streets, risking unrest. As a result, industrial enterprises in East Europe and the ex-USSR were grossly overmanned by the standards of capitalist profitability....
“Now with the capitalist counterrevolution, production costs in post-Soviet Russia are being driven into line with those on the world market through a massive contraction of industrial capacity and an even greater slashing of the industrial labor force.”
—WV No. 595, 4 March 1994
Over the past five years Russia has experienced some modest economic growth, mainly as a result of the higher

Moscow, 1 December 1991: ICL organizes cleanup of Karl Marx statue defaced by Yeltsin’s mob. Banner reads: “No to the Restoration of Capitalism! Yes to the Gains of October!”



price of oil on the world market. Russia’s role in the world economy is now similar to those Third World countries critically dependent on the export of a few products. Oil, natural gas, oil products and metallic ore make up almost two-thirds of Russia’s exports by value. What little productive investment is taking place is overwhelmingly concentrated in these extractive sectors.
However, the basic economic infrastructure and manufacturing industry continues to deteriorate, starved for capital investment. In 2002, more than two-thirds of the equipment in use in the Russian Federation had been in place for 15 years and almost a third for 20 years. The average age of Russia’s industrial plant is three times that of North America’s, West Europe’s and Japan’s.
Furthermore, with capitalism based on social inequality and the need to extract ever-greater profits from the working class, the “improved” economic performance in the past few years has not mitigated the terrible impoverishment of the Russian people and its resulting social pathology. Thus the life expectancy of Russian men continues to fall while infant mortality continues to rise.
A Demographic Holocaust
In the Soviet Union, the entire population—children in school, adults at work—were required to undergo annual screenings for diseases such as tuberculosis (TB). But as a Russian journalist commented in Izvestia (16 April 2002): “The universal preventative examinations that were regarded as one of the great achievements of Soviet medicine died along with Soviet medicine itself.”
The number of HIV cases in Russia last year was estimated to be between one and two million. A recent study by the World Bank projected that by 2020, up to 10 percent of Russia’s rapidly shrinking population would be infected. Primarily spread in Russia via drug users’ dirty needles, a growing avenue for the spread of HIV/AIDS has since become prostitu-

tion. By 1999, 14 percent of prostitutes in Moscow were infected. The helpless age (10 to 14) of some of the prostitutes and the piggish johns who pay extra for unprotected sex guarantee its continuing rapid spread.
As much as poverty and drugs, a major factor behind the explosion of AIDS in Russia is the reactionary ideological filth pushed in place of health education. There is an explosion of HIV/AIDS in Irkutsk, a main Siberian city on the Afghan drug route. But the chairman of the province’s Committee on Youth Policy rails against the “moral degeneration” of “safe” sex and sex education classes.” The Russian Orthodox church campaigns against the use of condoms; fascists march against their use to promote Russian procreation. In fact, they are promoting the extermination of the Russian people.
Most ominously, the AIDS epidemic is intersecting a TB epidemic. One medical specialist warns: “When the HIV epidemic hits the pool of latent TB infections, there’s going to be an explosion of MDR-TB [Multiple Drug Resistant TB]. TB and HIV are like gasoline and a match.” Studies now find TB in 70 percent of Russia’s homeless, 20 to 30 percent of the prison population and 40 percent of refugees from the war in Chechnya and other areas. Soviet prisons were plenty brutal, but they were not hothouses for plagues. Now each year 30,000 former prisoners with active TB and 10,000 with MDR-TB are being released into the general population with little or no medical follow-up.
The Brutal Oppression of Youth and Women
The overall degradation of Russia’s populace is compounded by the special oppression of youth and women. A leading Russian pediatrician estimates that only 5 to 10 percent of children are healthy. Child malnutrition is now the norm, and by 1999 from 15 to 45 percent of children in the Russian Federation

SPARTACIST
For New October Revolutions!
Third International Conference of the ICL
Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program
Organizational Rules and Guidelines
Women and Permanent Revolution in South Africa
No. 54, Spring 1998, \$2 (48 pages)
No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91, \$1.50 (64 pages)
Make checks payable/mail to
Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

under the age of 15, depending on the province, were diagnosed as mentally retarded. As of last year, there were an estimated several million “orphans” in Russia—more than were left in the wake of World War II! These orphans’ parents are mostly still alive; they were *abandoned*. The character of Russia’s orphan-ages can be measured in the fact that one-third of those who grow up in them become alcoholics and 10 percent commit suicide within a year of leaving.

But only a third of Russia’s castaway children are even in orphanages. The others live in cellars, attics, abandoned houses and in larger cities by seeking shelter from the cold in sewer systems. Such youth are a modern-day reappearance on the Russian landscape of the *bezprizorniki*. These were the packs of wild children who emerged from the ruins of World War I and the Russian Civil War, preying in gangs on the towns and descending like wild dogs on rural villages. In 1921, the Soviet government formed a commission headed by the Bolshevik leader Feliks Dzerzhinsky to spearhead a nationwide campaign which saved several million *bezprizorniki*, giving them full lives as Soviet citizens. This chapter of Soviet power and the saving of the *bezprizorniki* remain a point of pride to this day.

Contrast this to what capitalist counter-revolution in Russia and the other former Soviet republics offers its castaway children. Petty theft by boys in Kyrgyzstan is punished by up to half a year in prison, often in solitary confinement, with no education or even parental visits. In Georgia, “repeat offender” youth can be jailed up to three years without any trial. And what does it mean for a youth to be in the general prison population? It means rape and other sexual assaults. This unspeakable barbarity is made worse by the level of AIDS among prisoners.

In 1993 *Women and Revolution* published an extensive article titled “From East Berlin to Tashkent: Capitalist Counterrevolution Tramples on Women.” Today I will limit myself to something new that has proliferated in the decade since that article was published, the international sex trade. From Russia alone it is estimated that 160,000 women each year are trafficked to Europe and Asia. They are drawn by ads offering work, or simply kidnapped. Once delivered, their passports are taken from them and they are terrorized into submission. The profits from this sex slavery out of Russia match even those of its drug business—about \$7 billion annually. The women and girls are sold several times over, each time upping their buy-out ransom. A particularly horrific example came to light late last year when Swedish police questioned a 13-year-old Russian girl who reported being kept in a locked van as a sex slave for two years, driven by Russian pimps from one city in Europe to another.

Chechnya and Other Nationalist Bloodbaths

We’ve talked about what the return to the capitalist profit system has brought. The other major catastrophe has been the reimposition of bourgeois nation-states across the territory of the former USSR.

Here it’s necessary to emphasize that the Bolsheviks came to power by championing the struggles of the scores of nationalities trapped in what Lenin called the tsarist “prison house of peoples.” This was an integral part of the Bolsheviks’ struggle for world socialist revolution leading to a communist society in which the rise of international productive forces brings about the dissolution of all nation-states. The Bolsheviks could not

have won influence over Russia’s *multi-national* working class, to say nothing of the urban petty bourgeoisie and rural peasant masses, without being the *best champions* of the just causes of the oppressed Polish, Ukrainian, Baltic, Caucasian and Central Asian peoples. This proletarian internationalism was reflected in the composition of the Bolshevik Central Committee: Lenin was a Russian, Trotsky a Jew, Dzerzhinsky a Pole, Shaumyan an Armenian, Stalin a Georgian, Stuchka a Latvian, and so on.

The nascent Kremlin bureaucracy demonstrated its first alien political impulses through the Russian-centered apparatus’s chauvinist disregard for the rights of minority peoples. Lenin launched his final political struggle in late 1922-early 1923 against Stalin’s bureaucratic abuse of the Caucasian peoples. As the degeneration of the Soviet workers state deepened, the bureaucratic caste went further toward Great Russian chauvinism as a political-ideological glue for its brittle rule.

But even this was held in check by the need to preserve the USSR as a vast multinational state. In marked contrast to capitalism, the centrally planned collectivized economy made possible an allocation of resources which brought about a relative equality between the various national republics making up the USSR. This resulted in the rapid socio-economic and cultural development of the most backward peoples of the former tsarist empire (e.g., in Central Asia) and also eased historic national tensions (e.g., in the Caucasus).

The progress of the Tajik people in Soviet Central Asia, in contrast to their ethnic counterparts across the border in Afghanistan, is only the most striking example. In the Caucasus, centuries-old blood feuds among the patchwork of geographically interpenetrated peoples were for the first time abated through the struggle to root out the sheiks, Cossack atamans, landlords and mullahs, and to establish a new life based on economic modernization and rising living standards. At the same time, Soviet industrial development created a historically new pattern of ethnic interpenetration, this time of proletarian populations in industrial and mining centers across the USSR. Workers of different nationalities frequently intermarried. They and their children began to no longer think of themselves as Ukrainian or Armenian but rather as Soviet.

The forces of capitalist counterrevolution—from Russia and Ukraine to the Caucasus and Central Asia—have used nationalism (often linked to religion) as their main political-ideological battering ram. The capitalist law of the jungle dictates that each capitalist state must have one dominant nationality. All the historic ethnic patchworks which had begun to weave together into a common Soviet pattern were now torn asunder. Over a hundred armed national, ethnic and religious conflicts have erupted across the former Soviet bloc, bringing death and destruction to millions.

By far the biggest bloodbath brought on by the capitalist counterrevolution in the former USSR is in Chechnya. Yeltsin’s colonial-style invasion in 1994 was about asserting the Kremlin’s role as regional cop in the Caucasus and gaining control of the Caspian Sea oil fields. The Chechens were also to be made an example of because of their special history of heroic wars in the 19th century against the Russian tsarist conquest of the Caucasus.

The ICL forces in Russia at the time called for the *military defeat* of Yeltsin’s colonial-style invasion without giving any political support to the bourgeois-nationalist regimes of Dudayev, and later Maskhadov, in Grozny, Chechnya’s capital. We called for the right of the Chechen people to decide their own fate, explaining the roots of the war in the capitalist counterrevolution. We also raised the urgent need to defend the peoples of the Caucasus, Central Asia and all non-Slavic foreigners against racist pogroms and police persecution throughout Russia.

Yeltsin’s invasion completely destroyed Grozny. But the Russian army was still militarily defeated by the Chechen forces. In 1996, Moscow accepted an armistice which gave Chechnya de facto independence. Then, in the winter of 1999, new Russian prime minister and soon-to-be president Vladimir Putin launched a second war against Chechnya. In part this was intended to spike the plans of the various bourgeois-nationalist regimes in the Caucasus and Caspian Sea region, acting in concert with Western oil companies, to build new oil pipelines which would exclude Russia. The second Chechen war was also an attempt to divert popular outrage in Russia and a sense of national humiliation provoked by the U.S./NATO terror bombing of Serbia, a historic Russian ally, earlier that year. Putin ran for president by reasserting Russia’s military “power” through a renewed genocidal onslaught against Chechnya. In response the ICL called for the military defense of Chechnya’s hard-won independence against Russia.

This war is still going on, and it is a ghastly picture of the barbarism capitalism has brought to the Caucasus. Whereas in Afghanistan in 1979-89 the Soviet Red Army’s presence made possible the beginnings of a modern urban infrastructure with universities, hospitals and factories built along Soviet lines, Putin’s Russian army in Chechnya has now reduced virtually every single city and town there to rubble! Russian forces have to date killed over 100,000 Chechens, that is 10 percent of the population.

For New October Revolutions!

The global toll of the USSR’s destruction must be torn from the tissue of lies of the so-called “death of communism,” and be put where it belongs: in the proletariat’s indictment of the capitalist system in its death agony. As the revolutionary Marxist leader Rosa Luxemburg said at the beginning of the imperialist epoch, mankind’s crossroads lead to *socialism or barbarism*.

The October Revolution took socialism out of the realm of theory and put its potential before us in concrete terms. The Trotskyist program of world socialist revolution is the only way that this potential can be realized, unlocking the planet’s human and material resources, opening a dawn of prosperity. And the alternative, a descent into capitalist barbarism, is now visible in far greater detail.

Consider the future effects of a counter-revolutionary destruction of the People’s Republic of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state. If the capitalist slavery, plunder, disintegration and wars that have devastated the former Soviet bloc were to descend on China with its population of over a billion, the Russian catastrophe will be multiplied many times over. All of East Asia will become an arena of a renewed struggle between the

imperialist powers—centrally the U.S. and Japan—for the redivision of markets and spheres of exploitation. More generally, if socialist revolution does not intervene, heightened interimperialist rivalry will sooner or later lead to military conflict, very possibly dragging humanity into a nuclear holocaust.

On the other hand, a victorious proletarian political revolution in China or a socialist revolution in one of the capitalist countries will have an electrifying effect on workers around the world, as did the October Revolution of 1917. The desperate and besieged toilers of Russia, who today fight for their very survival, will once again take their place in the struggle for world socialist revolution.

These are the stakes! We know that those under our banner today are few. We are but an international, revolutionary Marxist propaganda group. Our Marxist worldview and program is based on the understanding that capitalism has created its own gravedigger, the proletariat. It exploits and brutalizes the working masses, and mobilizes them for slaughter in nationalist bloodletting and imperialist wars. Billions of toilers around the world are forced to seek a way out. The demoralizing effects of defeats such as the destruction of the Soviet Union will be overcome. New generations—less schooled but also less scarred—will enter into the struggle.

The tide will turn our way again, as it did at Treptow in January 1990. Our resources in the DDR at that point were truly small. But the power of our program, its unique capacity to render the proletariat’s deepest material longings into a historically conscious force—into a Leninist vanguard party with a mass base—that program is what enabled the very small forces of the ICL to begin winning over socialist-minded workers and soldiers in East Germany. The imperialists, social democrats and Stalinists were all fearful that the proletariat had begun in the course of an incipient political revolution to rally around the ICL’s banner of a Red Germany.

The political and organizational stages that we will have to pass through in the rapids of the coming class struggles are not knowable. What we do know, and what is given, is that future workers revolutions must have a Bolshevik political arsenal; its cadres must be educated in the experiences of the October Revolution, the early Communist International, Trotsky’s Fourth International, and our own ICL. That is a fact! New gains will be won only by those who proved able to fight to defend past gains. As reformist and centrist opponents of Trotskyism seek shelter and fortune on the cheap among social democrats, Stalinist has-beens, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists and the like, the ICL tenaciously fights to uphold the banner of new Octobers. Join us! ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

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

Boston

Box 390840, Central Sta.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 666-9453

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 563-0441

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
222 S. Morgan
(Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 380-8239

Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m.
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
(212) 267-1025

Public Office:

Tues. 6:30-8:30 p.m.
and Sat. 1-5 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland

Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604
(510) 839-0851

Public Office:

Sat. 1-5 p.m.
1634 Telegraph
3rd Floor

San Francisco

Box 77494
San Francisco
CA 94107

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto

Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, ON M5W 1X8
(416) 593-4138

Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O.
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2
(604) 687-0353

CORRECTION

In “Chickens Come Home to Roost in Kiev” (WV No. 808, 29 August), we incorrectly spelled out the ITO as the “International Trotskyist Organization.” The name of the group is the International Trotskyist Opposition.

Recall...

(continued from page 12)

(who is supported by many Latinos), citing his college membership in the Chicano student group MEChA and the fact that he's backed by money from Native American casinos. But black people know him best as the racist who prompted a walkout when he used the "N" word at a February 2001 meeting of black trade unionists. Meanwhile, Austrian-born actor Arnold Schwarzenegger is a member of the advisory board of U.S. English, a national "English-only" group appealing to anti-immigrant racism. (*His* best known "English-only" remark is "*hasta la vista, baby.*") Nor is this recall going exactly as the right wing planned—Schwarzenegger may be running as a Republican but he's pro-abortion and pro-gay adoptions.

Communist Tactics in Elections

In any capitalist government election, the Spartacist League begins from the standpoint of the Marxist understanding of the state. The government is not a neutral arbiter but the executive committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. At the core of the capitalist state are institutions of organized force and violence—police, courts, prisons, army—dedicated to defending the property of the capitalist rulers. In *The State and Revolution* (1917), Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin characterized capitalist elections this way:

"To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and oppress the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics."

We have no illusions that the road to bettering the lives of working and oppressed people can be through the ballot box. Since Karl Marx first expounded the lessons of the heroic Paris Commune of 1871, a basic tenet of revolutionary socialism has been that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." The working class must seize power and establish its own government to expropriate the capitalist system.

Many capitalist politicians and newspapers nationally have called for curtailing the existing recall provision in the California state constitution as an excess that undermines "legitimate" election results. This provision, which dates from the 1911 reforms of Progressive Party governor Hiram Johnson to break the hold of the Southern Pacific Railroad, is a perfectly good democratic device that we defend, although its current application has some grossly undemocratic aspects. The recall ballot is divided into two parts: the first is a "yes" or "no" vote to recall Davis; the second is a vote for a candidate to replace him if he is recalled. Davis is not allowed to run on the second part, so he could conceivably lose the recall with 49 percent of the vote and be replaced by a candidate who wins by a mere plurality.

The 135-candidate recall "circus" so ridiculed by the capitalist media underscores the effective *disenfranchisement* of the population under the U.S. two-party system that creates huge obstacles to getting on the ballot, restricting the offerings to Democrats and Republicans and the occasional (today) Green or (historically) Progressive. (SWPer Britton himself is on the ballot as an independent.) As soon as a loophole allowed for easier entry into the race (\$3,500 and 65 signatures), a much broader spectrum of candidates emerged. All the same, news articles on the recall focus as much on the candidates' fund-raising as on the "issues" themselves—indeed, the "election" among the capitalist candidates resembles nothing so much as an auction to the highest bidder!

As Lenin wrote, universal suffrage such as exists in the United States is:

"Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the

California: Vote No on Prop 54!

California has long been a springboard for racist crusades nationwide—from the passage of Proposition 187 in 1994 denying education and health care to undocumented workers, to Proposition 209 in 1996 banning affirmative action and Prop. 227 in 1998 scrapping bilingual education. This fall another reactionary proposition, Prop. 54—cynically called the "Racial Privacy Initiative" but also known as CRECNO (Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin)—is on California's October 7 ballot to recall the governor.

In essence, this proposition would ban the gathering or publication of statistical evidence of the brutal racial discrimination endemic in racist capitalist America. Prop. 54 further supplements Prop. 209's ban of affirmative action, denying the state or other "public entities" the ability to ask about race, while allowing for exceptions in medical research and treatment, law enforcement and prison management.

Prop. 54 is being introduced by the notorious Ward Connerly, a black conservative member of the University of California Board of Regents who led

democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy, everywhere...on all sides we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor, seem slight...but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics and from an active share in democracy."

From the beginning, the U.S. Constitution was crafted for this very purpose by, for example, staggering elections and placing the selection of the president in the hands of an electoral college. The Constitution was based on the existence of slavery in half the country, while the electoral clout of the slaveowners was increased by granting them the representation of three-fifths of the slave population. The Civil War threw that provision into the dustbin of history, but the Constitution remains a very difficult document to amend—and black people still have a hard time voting (as in the state of Florida). Today intricate and expensive requirements that vary by state and city virtually forbid any but the Republicans and Democrats from running for state or federal office.

Vote for SWP's Joel Britton!

Marxists run in elections, as the Spartacist League has in the past, in order to take advantage of the heightened political interest during election time to gain a hearing for our program. But we are opposed in principle to participating in administering the bourgeois state apparatus. We run on a program for socialist revolution as the only solution to the exploitation and racial oppression inherent in capitalist society. Marxists on principle will not vote for a capitalist candidate—we stand for the complete independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. Under certain circumstances, a small communist organization might call for a vote to a mass reformist workers party, like the Labour Party in Britain, in order to show the workers with illusions in that party that once in power, it would defend the interests of the capitalists and not the workers. Lenin called this "support...in the same way as a rope supports a hanged man." In the U.S. where there is no such party, if we are unable to run our own candidates, we have sometimes advocated critical support to a candidate whose electoral program in some key way represents a break with capitalist rule. In this spirit we support Britton's candidacy.

We support Britton's statement, "Our campaign demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. forces

the campaign for Prop. 209 in 1996. Connerly and his supporters have been cynically marketing Prop. 54 as a way to supposedly introduce a "colorblind" society where race is "becoming less relevant" and would signify "an end to the indignity of classifying people." In fact, only vile apologists for racist poison try to deny that the racial oppression of blacks and other minorities doesn't exist, and that's precisely why they need to ban the evidence with Prop. 54.

From education to social services, the rights of the working class as a whole are always attacked by playing the race card first. We seek to mobilize the integrated working class to fight for jobs and free, quality education for all, particularly reaching out to the masses of unemployed minority youth and women with special union recruitment and training programs. But racial oppression can only be banished with the overthrow of private property. Our perspective is one of revolutionary integrationism: the full integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. *Vote no on racist Proposition 54!*

from Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, Africa, and elsewhere." To its credit, the SWP called to defend Iraq against the bloody American invasion. However, Britton also demands, "Bring the GIs home now!" This slogan is an accommodation to the social-patriotic "save our troops" wing of the antiwar movement that preached belief in the reformability of U.S. imperialism, begging the capitalists to "stop the war." But the struggle against war means a struggle against the capitalist system as a whole. The Spartacist League organized Revolutionary Internationalist Contingents to intervene in the antiwar movement to demand, "For class struggle against the U.S. capitalist rulers! Defend Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack! Down with the UN starvation blockade!"

Furthermore, the U.S. troops are the imperialist armed forces, the instrument of American conquest and enforcers of the capitalist system of exploitation. And "at home" they are no less the enemy of the exploited and oppressed: witness the racist crackdown in Detroit in 1967 carried out by the 82nd Airborne. What would the troops do today "at home"? Last year Bush threatened to militarize the West Coast docks to break the power of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union when it was locked out by the Pacific Maritime Association.

In the 1960s during the Vietnam antiwar movement, the SWP was despised among leftist militants for building a single-issue campaign of class collaboration with the liberal antiwar bourgeoisie. While today it stands to the left in the antiwar movement, the slogan "Bring the GIs home now" leaves open the question of pursuing a similar bloc with a defeatist wing of the bourgeoisie (which so far does not exist). This is particularly true as the SWP has never repudiated its line in the Vietnam antiwar movement, which served to channel leftist students back into the pro-Democratic mainstream.

Furthermore, in the 1960s the SWP advanced the slogan, "Withdraw the troops from Viet Nam and send them to Mississippi," calling on the federal government to "protect" civil rights activists from racist attack. As we wrote at the time, "So the bourgeois imperialist army, currently engaged in massacring peasants and workers in South Viet-nam, in burning their villages and defoliating their land, and imprisoning the people in 'strategic hamlets'—this army, says the SWP, should be transferred to the American South! To advocate sending the U.S. Special Forces into Mississippi is *treachery* to the Negro struggle" (*Spartacist* election supplement, October 1964). The

Spartacist League stood for armed black self-defense against racist terror.

Another cornerstone of Britton's campaign is "Stop Washington's economic war against Cuba! Normalize relations now!" The SWP fails to characterize what kind of society Cuba is, leaving the impression that it supports Cuba from the standpoint of Third World national liberation. But Cuba is a country in which the capitalists were overthrown, a huge advance for the workers and peasants, even though it has been ruled from its inception as a deformed workers state by Castro's bureaucracy rather than the workers themselves. The Spartacist League extends unconditional military defense against all imperialist attacks to Cuba, as we do the other deformed workers states—China, Vietnam and North Korea—while calling for political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy. The SWP is, on the other hand, utterly uncritical of Fidel Castro, whose accommodation to U.S. imperialism has led him to stab in the back countless struggles of workers and peasants throughout Latin America.

In its campaign literature, the SWP makes no distinction between Cuba and North Korea on the one hand and *capitalist* states that are the victims of imperialist aggression, Iraq and Iran, on the other. In 1979 it actually hailed Ayatollah Khomeini's assumption of power in Iran as an anti-imperialist victory! Increasingly the SWP has drifted toward enthusiasm for Third World nationalists like Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, and statements by Islamic reactionary Osama bin Laden have been published in the *Militant* (see *Militant* online, 29 October 2001, for an example). Its main public existence is through the Pathfinder book business. While it still publishes Leon Trotsky and James P. Cannon (the only remnants of its once honorable revolutionary past), its press churns out a myriad of books adulating Castro and Che Guevara as well as works by the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and the late Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso.

In his campaign statement, Britton says, "Stop INS raids and deportations—end 'no match' firings!" and in interviews has called for "supporting the fight for equal treatment of immigrants." The SWP's idea of such a fight is uncritical support to the AFL-CIO's Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, which is the union bureaucracy's vehicle for roping in the Latino vote for the Democrats. In contrast, we call for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* and fight within the unions for the mobilization of its members, independent of the capitalist class, in defense of immigrants.

134 "Lesser Evils"?

The remainder of our reformist opponents base their positions in the recall election not on the class interests of the working people but on the inherently subjective index of what's popular. Accepting the framework of capitalism means that they perforce must tail some existing political entity as an "answer," seeking to pressure the capitalist state into reforming itself. Depending on which sector of society it is interested in appeasing, each reformist group alters its position on the recall accordingly. For example, when the AFL-CIO tops circled the wagons and committed millions of dollars to defend "friend of labor" Davis to the end, the Communist Party's *People's Weekly World* (30 August) blared, "California Labor Thunders 'No Recall!'" and approvingly quoted California AFL-CIO head Art Pulaski calling Davis the "best governor for working people we've had in 100 years." A truly pitiful statement of political bankruptcy!

The AFL-CIO tops have no intention of actually mobilizing organized labor's social power to struggle for what workers really need. Instead they function as the best lackeys for the false "friend of labor" Democrats, who will throw some crumbs to the exploited while they make off with the feast (the Republicans don't bother to leave crumbs). Gray Davis did overturn some of former Republican governor Pete

Wilson’s most anti-labor moves (for example, the recalculation of overtime regulations favoring the bosses), while with the other hand he instituted mass layoffs, pay cuts and slashing of social programs. And when Bush threatened to militarize the docks during last year’s lockout of longshore workers, the Davis administration jumped into the “war on terror” by setting up the California Anti-Terrorist Information Center (CATIC) that conspired with Oakland mayor Jerry Brown in the brutal April 7 police attack against antiwar protesters and longshoremen at the Port of Oakland.

Pleading with the government to cease such attacks builds dangerous illusions that the government can be made to serve the workers’ interests. The Workers World Party correctly points out that “organizing for a no vote on the recall gives legitimacy to the Gray Davis administration” (*Workers World* online, 4 September). But in the past, the WWP has not balked at voting for capitalist politicians—witness its support for Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988. Today in California, it advocates a vote for candidate C.T. Weber of the Peace and Freedom Party (PFP), a petty-bourgeois formation. Weber campaigns to keep Gray Davis in office, saying, “Vote ‘NO’ on this flawed and dangerous recall” (undated Peace and Freedom Party campaign pamphlet). The PFP might stand for some good-sounding things, like “Free education through the university level.” But Weber’s stand for a “California run by and for working people” is just empty words—the PFP does not stand for a break with the capitalist parties and a fight for a workers government. The PFP is really just a sandbox for homeless leftists who have long since made their peace with bourgeois society. Insofar as they ever acquire influence, the role of such capitalist “third parties” has historically been to get the working class back on the road to electoralism—that is, they act as a shill for the Democrats.



Ted Mendoza

Janitors of SEIU Local 1877 rally outside San Francisco City Hall, August 5.

The 1934 gubernatorial candidacy of the author Upton Sinclair provides a useful reminder. Once described as “the Kerensky of the Progressive movement,” Sinclair won the Democratic primary on his program of “End Poverty in California.” At that point, establishment interests launched a major attack: conservatives threw their weight behind the Republicans while the liberals backed the candidate of the Progressive Party. Sinclair narrowly lost the election, but his campaign was a clear example of a bourgeois candidate attempting to pull in leftists who do not have a central commitment to the working class.

Green Party candidate Peter Camejo plays the same role today. The “progressive” stockbroker stands for a “fair tax plan” and “fiscal responsibility”—that is, he hawks himself as a better administrator and fund-raiser for the capitalist government. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) calls Camejo a “genuine progressive” and supported his gubernatorial bid in 2002. But it appears

to be split on the question of advocating a vote for him. In a letters column in *Socialist Worker* (1 August), Bay Area ISO honcho Todd Chretien came out with a crass pro-Democratic Party line, calling to “reject the Republican power grab for what it is and vote ‘no’ on the recall,” then “build a real left-wing alternative” by supporting Camejo. In *International Socialist Review* (September-October 2003), a document from the ISO Steering Committee advocates abstaining on the recall and, referring to Camejo’s candidacy, says, “If he gives an indication of running a serious campaign, we should have no hesitation about endorsing him again. But at this point, we should reserve judgment.” When ISO members are asked why they don’t support Camejo since their organization went all out for Green Party candidate Nader in his 2000 presidential bid, they reply that Camejo doesn’t have a movement behind him.

It’s clear that the ISO has no class criteria but fixes its political stands based on which way the wind is blowing. With

an ostensible socialist, Britton, running on a platform of opposition to the war and occupation and to the capitalist parties, the ISO instead toys with support for the candidate of the “progressive” capitalist Green Party.

In an article opposing support for Democratic “lesser evils,” the ISO argues that “liberals like Kucinich have an important role to play for the Democratic Party. Rather than pulling the party to the left, they pull the left into the party” (*Socialist Worker*, 22 August). The ISO plays exactly this role outside the Democratic Party. The ISO was the most fervent exponent in the antiwar movement of ever-broader coalitions that delivered outrage over the imperialist rape of Iraq to...the Democratic Party. And to what does the ISO look for an alternative? Another *capitalist* party, the Greens, which it paints as a progressive third-party alternative to the two parties of “Corporate America.”

A socialist program has to begin by telling the truth about this class society, the necessity for revolution and the task of building a workers party politically independent of the bosses’ parties. As we state in our Programmatic Statement, “For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!”:

“The shell game through which the Democratic Party—the historic party of the Confederate slavocracy—is portrayed as the ‘friend’ of blacks and labor has been essential to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. Our principal task in the U.S. is to break the power of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy over the labor movement. It is this bureaucracy—itsself a component of the Democratic Party—which politically chains the proletariat to the bourgeoisie and is the major obstacle to revolutionary class consciousness, to the forging of a revolutionary workers party.”

No vote to capitalist candidates! For a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government! For international socialist revolution to open a new period of human development! ■

Arafat...

(continued from page 1)

Bank town of Tulkarm and dumped them in a nearby camp for three days. Israeli liberal Uri Avnery called the operation “an army exercise and test to see how the world, the media, and the Israeli public would react. And there was no reaction, which proves that it can be done. The people on the trucks could easily have been taken to the Jordan River bridges”—i.e., expelled from the Occupied Territories entirely.

Arafat has repeatedly shown himself to be a pliant and willing tool of the imperialists and the Zionist rulers, not least in the signing of the 1993 Oslo “peace” accords, which he still sees as his great triumph. That cynical fraud created a Palestinian patchwork of mini-bantustans and authorized an impotent Palestinian Authority whose only purpose was to use its CIA-trained police to repress the long-suffering Palestinian masses on behalf of the Zionist occupiers. That Sharon & Co. now threaten to kill Arafat is a statement that “negotiations” and the “road map” are a thing of the past. Underlining that point, Israel last week rejected out of hand an offer of a cease-fire by Islamic Jihad and Hamas and Arafat.

Israel’s rulers are barely restrained on a loose leash by their U.S. imperialist patrons, for the time being, fearful that the elimination of Arafat would only further inflame Arab hostility to the U.S., which is already embroiled in an ongoing guerrilla war in Iraq. But while Washington mouths opposition to Israel’s threats against Arafat, it vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning moves to deport or kill the Palestinian leader. The U.S. ruling class certainly has never had qualms about assassination as a tool of its foreign policy, from the killing of Congolese nationalist Patrice Lumumba in 1961 to the repeated attempts to assassinate Cuba’s Fidel Castro and the current “global war on terror,” including the cam-

paign to murder Saddam Hussein. Such assassinations have been carried out under Democratic and Republican administrations alike. Indeed, when it comes to support to the Zionist state, the Democrats are at least as rabid as the Republicans.

Gaza and West Bank residents who have expressed their sense of betrayal by the PLO leadership for abandoning the right of return and accepting the Zionist state’s dictates nevertheless rallied to Arafat’s defense, reflecting their recognition that all their lives are at stake as well and their disgust at Israel telling them who their leaders should be. Despair fueled by the PLO’s bankrupt program of appeasement has invited anti-woman, anti-Semitic fundamentalists like Hamas to pose as fighters against the Zionist occupation. These arch-reactionaries with their program of indiscriminate bombings of civilians in Israel serve only to reinforce Zionist chauvinism among the Hebrew-speaking masses and thus help the Israeli capitalist rulers cover up for their Nazi-like policies against the Palestinians.

Today the Palestinians face bulldozed homes, barbed wire fencing, electronic sensors, guard towers, concrete walls, checkpoints and roadblocks. Gaza’s entire border has been surrounded by electrical fencing for some time, and now the West Bank is also being carved up and surrounded by a wall, turning the area into a network of holding pens and ghettos. Since 1993, the number of settlers—ultra-chauvinist armed auxiliaries of the military occupation—in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem has grown to more than 400,000. At the same time it issued its warning against Arafat, the Israeli government released seven settlers who were being held for deadly attacks against Palestinians.

Defense of the Palestinian people is the urgent duty of the international working class! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories! All U.S. and allied imperialist forces out of the Near East! ■

DuBois...

(continued from page 2)

officer. Black janitor Theresa Walker, a Local 444 E-Board member who played a key role in organizing the rally, was the emcee. The understaffed janitors have been the most under the gun, their workload constantly increased while management threatens to contract out their jobs. One-third of DuBois’ co-workers defied the intense intimidation in the meter-reading department to show their support at the rally. The alternate steward there told WV that his department was also badly understaffed. Signs and chants called for hiring more janitors and meter readers.

The rally featured a kind of debate as some union officials who did come out in defense of DuBois urged support for the Democrats. In fact, by mobilizing the unions’ own power this rally stood counterposed to the political program of the labor bureaucracy, which is to rely on Democratic Party or other capitalist “friends of labor.” Indeed, union members expressed frustration that some union officials who had been busy working to support California governor Gray Davis in the current recall election did not come to the rally.

Alameda County CLC head Judy Goff portrayed the problem as the Republican Bush administration attacking the unions because the unions mobilize votes for supposedly more labor-friendly Democrats. As she told a WV reporter, “We have people power that we put together when it comes to the electoral process.” Local 444 president Reggie Moore advocated the unions “organize at the ballot box to put Directors [members of EBMUD’s elected administrative board] in office who stand with workers and then hold them accountable.”

In contrast, Local 2019 president Morgan pointed out in his rally speech that “Washington, D.C. is not our salvation.... Republicans and Democrats rolled over and played dead with Patriot Act I. Sacra-

mento is not our salvation. The only hope for us is for workers, unions to support each other like we’re doing today.” Addressing the rally, DuBois said, “You can’t find anybody in the White Pages, Yellow Pages or anywhere else that really fights for black rights, for labor rights, except right home in our union.” Emphasizing the need for the unions to take up the cause of black freedom, he called for a workers party that unites these struggles.

For decades, the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO leadership’s purely legalistic strategy of voting Democrat and collaborating with the bosses and their government has *weakened* the ability of the unions to defend themselves. At the rally, Local 444 member Best told the truth when he said, “But like the Republicans, the Democratic Party represents the interests of the bosses. It’s an illusion to think we can pressure EBMUD’s Board of Directors or the Democrats in Sacramento to take our side.... We need our own party—not an electoral party but a fighting workers party that on a large scale organizes our strength as we have here today, to fight for the interests of workers, blacks, immigrants and women.”

Local 444 was among many unions, including longshore Local 10, which endorsed the labor-centered, united-front mobilization initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense in Oakland on February 9, 2002 under the call: “No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!” This multi-racial show of union power in defense of all the oppressed was mobilized by a political program to organize workers independent of all the parties and agencies of the capitalists. The kind of fighting workers party that does this on a large scale is the weapon we need to bring about a society where those who labor, rule. *An injury to one is an injury to all—Reinstate Charles DuBois!* ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Break with the Democrats! Forge a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

California: Vote Yes to Recall Davis! No Vote to Capitalist Parties!

OAKLAND, September 23—California's widely hated Democratic governor Gray Davis has achieved the distinction of becoming the first in the state's history to face a recall election, originally scheduled for October 7, then postponed by a federal court ruling and today rescheduled for October 7. With a personality to match his name, a penchant for bureaucratic viciousness and an obsession for venal campaign fundraising, Davis has become the focus for discontent arising from the prolonged economic crisis rocking the state. As the witty scribe Alexander Cockburn put it, "Gray Davis! There was a time once when 'lesser of two evils' actually meant something momentous, like the choice between starving to death on a lifeboat, or eating the first mate. Was there ever a man who brought the always gray phrase 'lesser of two evils' into greater disrepute?" (*CounterPunch*, 9 August).

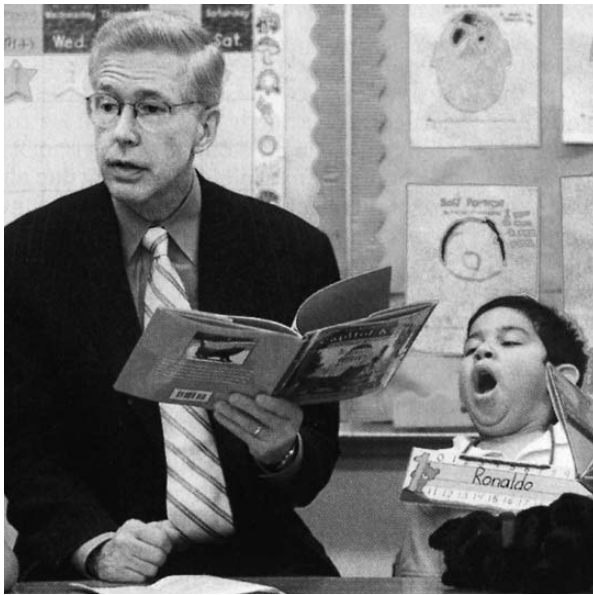
The California recall has assumed greater national importance as the two capitalist parties continue their petty bickering over chads, sex and fundraising—while they unite to stomp all over the world. The Republicans appear to be aiming for a California power-grab as a stepping stone to the 2004 presidential elections. And the Democrats have been hoping to win the recall through the courts, believing that any delay in the election will favor Davis, who is now hurrying a spate of new legislation aimed at rounding up more votes. Angling for the substantial Latino vote, he has signed legislation to issue California driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants—which may be the only good thing to come out of these elections.

The Spartacist League advocates a "yes" vote on the recall as a vote of no confidence in Democrat Davis, and a vote for Joel Britton, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) candidate, for Davis' replacement as governor, as a vote against capitalism and war. Normally, we would not consider giving even very critical support to the SWP, whose quirky reformist program and nominal existence do not make them a particularly appetizing prospect. We originally decided to abstain on the recall because we want neither to support a capitalist politician, in this case the Democratic governor, nor to implicitly support a capitalist (likely Republican) replacement. The SWP's election platform, which presents, in however crude a way, a working-class line, allows us to make concrete and clear-cut our opposition to Davis while at the same time expressing our opposition to the Republicans' attempted electoral coup.

What the working class needs is to forge, through political combat, a multi-racial, class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government. Such a revolutionary party would mobilize the workers in defense of their own class interests and in defense of the rights of the oppressed. It could unite the working



Arnold Schwarzenegger



Gray Davis

masses as a whole behind a fight for free, quality education and health care, for free mass transit, for full employment for all, for an end to racial oppression and anti-immigrant discrimination, as part of the struggle for a socialist revolution.

populous state now has the lowest credit rating of any state government, approaching junk-bond status. The one growth industry that is guaranteed financing by the near-bankrupt state government is the mammoth prison system, where predom-

venient scam designed to pit petty-bourgeois homeowners against unions and government workers. The real beneficiaries were large commercial property owners, who in San Francisco alone reaped an annual windfall of some \$600 million as a result of Prop 13."

Some bourgeois pundits are now looking to Prop 13 as a scapegoat on which to hang the crisis and are mooting a partial rollback of Prop 13 with respect to commercial property. However, the same forces that fueled Prop 13 are the motor behind the recall petition, led by the conservative, anti-immigrant, anti-affirmative action, millionaire Republican Congressman Darrell Issa (who now vows to call for a "no" vote on the recall if the Republican vote remains split among two or more candidates, threatening a Democratic victory). In gathering the two million or so signatures to get the recall on the ballot, organizers targeted rural and suburban areas using buzz words like "overspending taxpayers' money" to appeal to layers hostile to social welfare programs minimally benefiting poor, immigrant, black and Latino residents. At the same time, the recall has tapped into the broader discontent over the fiscal crisis and crippled economy, raising everything from "poor schools" to the energy crisis on which the Enron execs and the other energy companies got rich.

The recall campaign thus contains truly volatile elements of a populist revolt. Davis cried right from the start that the recall was part of a "right-wing conservative agenda" trying to overturn the results of last November's "legitimate" election. While some on the left imply to the contrary that the recall is a left-wing revolt, such inchoate populist anger can go either way, with the dividing line often being racism or anti-immigrant chauvinism. Right-wingers are whipping up hysteria over the candidacy of Democrat Cruz Bustamante

continued on page 10

Critical Support to the SWP for Governor

The SWP platform, as printed in the official state ballot, calls for opposition to U.S. imperialist military intervention; for the abolition of the death penalty; and for jobs for all at no cut in pay. Britton, a longtime trade unionist, says, "I'm for a workers' and farmers' government, which will abolish capitalism in the U.S. and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism." Fine words (except "farmers"? In the U.S., that means agribusiness!). But the SWP is not a step to the kind of revolutionary party the working class needs to fight for a workers government. In program and practice, the SWP is virtually uncritical of the trade-union bureaucracy, whose reliance on the "pro-labor" Democrats and the ballot box is the biggest obstacle to the working class exercising its power. Thus, while it calls for "a fighting working-class alternative to the twin parties of imperialist war and occupation," the SWP dodges the necessary political fight for working-class independence that will make that possible.

California Scheming

Beset by the nationwide depression sharpened by the dot.com bust, California faced a \$38 billion deficit this year. Republicans and Democrats united to close most of the gap by slashing social programs and the wages and jobs of government workers, raising fees and taxes that disproportionately target poor and working people and borrowing heavily at high interest rates. The country's most

inantly black and Latino inmates endure a living death in ever greater numbers.

The yearly state budget crisis in Sacramento is now as regular as the seasons. As *Workers Vanguard* No. 579 (2 July 1993) commented in "California Killer Cutbacks":

"In part, the current budget represents the delayed impact of the 1978 Proposition 13 ballot initiative, which put a cap on property tax increases. Prop 13 was a de facto racist referendum aimed against social programs which particularly benefited blacks and other minorities—a



Oakland, 9 February 2002: Labor-centered mobilization against Patriot Act, anti-immigrant witchhunt.

WV Photo