

## Union Tops Bare Union's Throat— Democrats, Republicans Wield Knife



Reuters, Getty (inset)

# Bosses Declare War on UAW Workers

The car has long been the symbol of the “good life” in America. The Big Three auto producers—General Motors, Ford and Chrysler—have been pillars of American capitalism. In the 1950s, the president of GM was quoted as saying, “What’s good for General Motors is good for the country.” GM is still the second largest auto producer on the face of the planet. But today it has become the symbol of the decimation of manufacturing industry in the U.S., driven into ruin by the greedy and incompetent capitalist rulers’ drive for profit. With the global economy tanking and car sales plummeting, the Big Three auto bosses went to Congress last month begging for another \$25 billion bailout. At their side was Ron Gettelfinger, president of the United Auto Workers (UAW).

The UAW, forged in the heroic 1936-37 Flint sit-down strike that was central to the class battles that built industrial unions in this country, was once the symbol of union power in the U.S. Now it symbolizes the devastation of the unions that has been wrought by the class-collaborationist policies of the trade-union bureaucracy, based on the lie of a “partnership” of labor with its capitalist class exploiters and their parties, particularly the phony “friend of labor” Democrats.

In his testimony before Congress, Gettelfinger bragged that the 2007 UAW contract “slashed wages for new hires by 50% [down to \$14 per hour!]. Furthermore, new hires will not be covered by the traditional retiree health care and defined benefit pension plans.” The 2007 contract gave up nearly **\$10 billion** in wages and benefits to the bosses—in addition to giving up **\$30 billion** in retiree medical benefits. Forsaking his members for the sake

## We Need a Planned Socialist Economy!

**Above: Chrysler workers assemble Dodge Ram pickup truck in Michigan plant. Inset (left to right): UAW president Ron Gettelfinger with auto bosses Richard Wagoner (GM), Robert Nardelli (Chrysler) and Alan Mulally (Ford) before Congress, November 19.**

of making “our companies competitive,” Gettelfinger boasted that “the gap in labor costs” between the Big Three and the non-union “foreign transplant operations *will be largely or completely eliminated by the end of the contracts.*” These are the bitter fruits of the labor tops’ poisonous “America First” protectionism: they rail against the “outsourcing” of jobs abroad while not lifting a finger to organize the mass of unorganized auto workers in “foreign transplant operations” largely in the American South.

An estimated three million jobs are tied to Big Three auto production, which directly involves coal, steel, rubber, rail and trucking. With the economy in a free-fall, home foreclosures taking place at a rate not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1.2 million jobs lost this year alone, many are pinning their hopes on the illusion that the coming to power of Democratic Party president Barack Obama will turn things around in favor of the working class. The trade-union tops poured a whopping \$450 million into the

2008 elections, portraying Obama, as Gettelfinger did in an op-ed piece in the *Detroit News* online (9 July), as “ready to stand up and fight for our jobs.”

It is precisely such delusions, peddled by the venal sellouts that head the unions, that have sapped the fighting strength of organized labor by shackling it to the parties of the capitalist class enemy. Obama’s policies are and will be determined by the interests of the capitalist class that he was elected to serve, as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. capitalist imperialism. Obama himself made that clear immediately upon winning, declaring the need for “sacrifice” in the interests of “national unity”—i.e., the working class and oppressed are to pay in order to restore the profitability of American capitalism. Congressional Democratic Party leaders Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid told the auto bosses and the UAW to come up with a “viable” plan to restructure the American auto industry as a condition for a bailout. In short, that means restoring profits through eliminating more jobs and ratcheting up the rate of exploitation.

### No Bailout of the Auto Bosses!

As Marxists whose aim is to build the revolutionary party that can lead the working class in struggle to sweep away the capitalist system of wage slavery, we are opposed to the bailout of the auto bosses. A government bailout will be purchased through the further destruction of the jobs and livelihoods of working people.

For their part, all wings of the ruling class smell the blood of the UAW. Many bourgeois politicians, like former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, argue that the government should “let Detroit go bankrupt” as a more cost-effective means of gutting the union. Indeed, Chapter 11 bankruptcy has long been a union-busting tool, particularly in the airline industry, allowing the bosses to rip up their contracts with the unions. Others, who worry that bankruptcy would

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Reuters

**October 2007: Striking UAW members outside Chrysler plant in Warren, Michigan.**



# Israeli Butchers Detain International Activists

Darlene Wallach, Vittorio Arrigoni and Andrew Muncie, pro-Palestinian activists working with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), were arrested by the Israeli government on November 18 while accompanying Palestinian fishermen off the coast of Gaza. The Israeli Navy seized the fishing boats at gunpoint, detaining everyone on board, including fifteen Palestinian fishermen who were held overnight. Wallach, Arrigoni and Muncie engaged in a hunger strike to protest their detention and were subsequently deported. These arrests are part of an ongoing campaign of terror in which the Israeli Navy fires at Palestinian fishing boats with automatic weapons and water cannons, confiscating the boats and detaining the fishermen, fifteen of whom have been killed since 2000. **Hands off Palestinian fishermen!**

These attacks come in the context of the ongoing, genocidal blockade of Gaza, which was imposed with the support of the U.S. after Hamas militarily took control of Gaza in 2007. The blockade was the culmination of ever-tighter restrictions imposed following Hamas's 2006

## Down With Blockade of Gaza! Defend the Palestinians!

victory in the parliamentary elections. The 1.4 million residents of Gaza are imprisoned in conditions reminiscent of the Warsaw Ghetto. Trapped between the electric fence that surrounds the Gaza Strip, the closed Egyptian border and the Mediterranean Sea, Palestinians are routinely denied shipments of food, fuel and medicine. On November 4, the Israeli government further tightened the blockade, stopping food distribution to 750,000 people dependent on food aid and ominously preventing journalists from entering Gaza. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the Palestinian population has been sealed off by an apartheid wall that cuts through Palestinian territories and a Kafkaesque series of military checkpoints and "Jewish only" roads that make travel

within the West Bank virtually impossible. In both cases, Israeli forces terrorize the Palestinians with mass arrests and shootings. **Down with the blockade! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the occupied territories!**

Darlene Wallach, Vittorio Arrigoni and Andrew Muncie sailed into Gaza in defiance of the Zionist blockade in August along with more than 40 activists from the Free Gaza Movement. This trip, which included the delivery of 200 hearing aids for children whose hearing was damaged by Zionist military operations in Gaza, was grotesquely described by the Israeli government as "supporting the regime of a terrorist organization in Gaza." This statement is nothing but a justification for repression against Free Gaza activists, who have reported receiving death threats and the sabotage of their equipment by Israeli agents.

The Israeli state's campaign of terror against defenders of the Palestinians is well known. In 2003, two ISM activists were killed at the hands of Israeli forces. Twenty-three-year-old American Rachel Corrie was deliberately crushed by an Israeli bulldozer as she tried to stop the

demolition of a Palestinian home. Tom Hurdall, a 21-year-old British photo-journalist, was shot in the head by Israeli troops as he tried to protect Palestinian children in Gaza's Rafah refugee camp. The deaths of these courageous activists must be added to the huge toll of Palestinians who have perished at the hands of the bloody Zionist state.

We stand in defense of the Palestinian people against Zionist terror, which is backed to the hilt by the Democratic and Republican parties of U.S. imperialism, the biggest enemy of working people and the oppressed around the globe. We recognize that there can be no solution to the conflicting national claims of the Palestinians and the Hebrew-speaking people within the framework of capitalism. Both peoples lay claim to the same small sliver of land; under capitalism, the exercise of national self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. What is necessary is the forging of Marxist workers parties in the Near East to fight for workers revolutions throughout the region, including the shattering of the Zionist state from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution, laying the basis for a socialist federation of the Near East. Only then will the liberation of the region from imperialist subjugation, national oppression and religious reaction begin—a liberation that will be completed only by the world socialist revolution, especially in the U.S. and other imperialist centers. ■



TROTSKY

### No Illusions in False "Friends of Labor"!

*In response to the growing economic crisis, the capitalist class is intensifying its attacks on the livelihoods of America's working people. The bureaucrats in the leadership of the trade unions have greased the skids for these assaults through giveback contracts, by pouring union resources into the capitalist Democratic Party and by pushing chauvinist protectionism, preaching the lie that American workers and capitalists share common interests. In a 1921 article,*

*James P. Cannon, an early leader of the American Communist Party and later the founder of American Trotskyism, stressed that the labor movement must not rely on false "friends of labor," but fight for a class-struggle program declaring war on the system of capitalist exploitation.*

The impression seems to be that labor's troubles in the present crisis are mainly due to a "misunderstanding" as to the aims of the labor movement on the part of some pious people who don't work for a living, but who are "felt to be working for union labor"... Civic bodies, church forums, "non-labor organizations"—the elements who go to make up such groupings are poor props for the unions to seek to lean upon. They may "feel" for organized labor, but the organized workers never feel it in the shape of substantial support in their fight.

The "open shop" campaign is one of the manifestations of a state of war that exists in society between two opposing classes: the producers and the parasites. This war cuts through the whole population like a great dividing sword; it creates two hostile camps and puts every man in his place in one or the other. Those to whom the New York unions would turn for aid are beneficiaries of the present system of labor exploitation. Their interests lie with the system and, as a general rule, people do not allow their sympathies to interfere seriously with their interests. They live in the camp of the enemy. Their material welfare is bound up with those who aim to destroy the unions....

Let the labor unions put aside their illusions; let them face the issue squarely and fight it out on the basis of the class struggle. Instead of seeking peace when there is no peace, and "understanding" with those who do not want to understand, let them declare war on the whole capitalist regime. That is the way to save the unions and to make them grow in the face of adversity and become powerful war engines for the destruction of capitalism and the reorganization of society on the foundation of working class control in industry and government.

—James P. Cannon, "Who Can Save the Unions?" (7 May 1921), reprinted in *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* (Prometheus Research Library, 1992)



LENIN



Getty

**Palestinian woman cooks on open fire outside her shack in Gaza. Israel's nearly two-year-long blockade of Gaza has reduced population to desperation.**

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# As MTA Demands Layoffs and Cuts

## TWU Local 100 Tops Sign No-Strike Pledge

With its January 15 contract deadline approaching, Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is in a tough situation. The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bosses and capitalist politicians are out for blood, and the Local 100 leadership has surrendered the union's most effective weapon, strike action, by pledging to the government never to strike again. Mayor Bloomberg and the city administration insisted on this pledge before restoring dues checkoff and as part of the reprisals against the union for its powerful three-day strike in December 2005 in defiance of the slave-labor Taylor Law, which bans strikes by New York State public employees. Negotiations on the new contract are reportedly underway, but transit workers have been kept in the dark.

With the economy teetering on the brink of a worldwide depression, the MTA is demanding heavy givebacks from transit workers, including the elimination of over 2,000 jobs. There is talk of slashing pensions and health care benefits across the board, a separate tier of inferior benefits for newer workers, and an insultingly low wage increase. The MTA's announced austerity measures include service cuts and additional fare increases, making riding the buses and subways even more hellish for riders and workers alike.

To halt these attacks against the TWU requires mobilizing the membership for hard class struggle, including strike action. The MTA's attempts to maintain or impose new tiers, which divide newer and older workers, must be answered with a fight for equal pay for equal work. If the ruling class gets away with slamming Local 100, it will bode ill for other New York State public employee unions, as Democratic Party governor David Paterson seeks to tear up their contracts. Local 100 is the powerhouse of New York City labor and can show the way to beat back the bosses' anti-labor attacks. The Taylor Law can be smashed; the key is the fighting unity of transit workers and all city and state labor, with the support of the poor and oppressed.

The 2005 transit strike could have been won. It was hugely popular among working people, blacks and Latinos and showed the way forward for labor. But the Local 100 tops refused to employ the kind of tactics needed, such as setting up picket lines to shut down the LIRR, PATH and Metro-North rail lines into and out of NYC. After 60 hours off the job, transit workers were sold out by their pro-capitalist union misleadership, who stopped the strike without a contract in hand or winning amnesty from the Taylor Law penalties. This emboldened the courts and MTA to go after the union. As Mayor Michael Bloomberg denounced the black, Latino, immigrant and white workers who make up the TWU as "thugs," city labor leaders refused to support the strike, while the TWU International openly opposed it, calling on workers to scab. For his part, after issuing the no-strike pledge, Local 100 president Roger Toussaint has taken a new position with the International.

It is an indictment of the sellout Local 100 tops that many TWU members have drawn the wrong lessons from the strike, becoming disillusioned with the union. What was needed then and is needed now is a class-struggle leadership committed to fighting for its members, based



**Transport Workers Union Local 100 head Roger Toussaint (center) with New York Democratic governor David Paterson at West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn, September 1.**

on the understanding that the interests of the capitalist class and the working class are irreconcilably counterposed. Such a leadership must be based on the program of complete political and financial independence from the capitalist bosses, their state and their parties. This is in stark contrast to the policies of the Local 100

Change to Win federations poured **\$450 million** into the 2008 elections. The massive effort to elect Obama was promoted by the union tops with the lie that labor would finally have a "friend" in the White House. But Obama's role is to be Commander-in-Chief of racist U.S. imperialism. He is gearing up to impose stark

## For a Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!

bureaucracy, which time and again has pledged loyalty to the capitalist Democratic Party.

After getting rubber-stamp approval from the union's executive board, Toussaint gave his no-strike pledge two weeks before Democrat Barack Obama was elected president. In the lead-up to the election, Local 100 tops campaigned vigorously for Obama, sending members door-to-door and mobilizing them for phone banks. All told, the AFL-CIO and

austerity on workers, blacks and other minorities. His job will also be to quash social unrest and opposition to such measures.

In return for the no-strike pledge, a state court restored Local 100's dues checkoff, the system of automatic dues deduction from workers' paychecks by the MTA that was revoked after the 2005 strike in an attempt to bankrupt the union. We vigorously defended Local 100 against all reprisals, including the capitalist court's



**December 2005: For nearly three days, New York City transit workers carried out strike in defiance of the state's slave-labor Taylor Law.**

revoking of dues checkoff. At the same time, we oppose the dues checkoff system, but it is the job of the union to get rid of it. As we warned in "State Revokes TWU Dues Checkoff" (WV No. 895, 6 July 2007): "The whole system of dues checkoff put the union's money into the bosses' hands, giving management an instrument for financial blackmail." This was borne out by the no-strike pledge. Dues should be collected by elected union reps, which would make the union leadership more accountable to the ranks and would help prepare the union for future battles. The bosses should have no hand on the union's purse.

Many embittered workers have refused to pay their union dues, equating the union with the rotten leadership. By all accounts, less than half of the membership is paid up on their union dues. All Local 100 members must pay their back dues. Not paying dues plays directly into the hands of the bosses, who want to bankrupt the union to stop it from carrying out its purpose: defending the livelihood, safety and working conditions of its membership against the bosses.

Transit workers have told *Workers Vanguard* that the union is now making an effort to encourage the several thousand members who have been paying dues via automatic bank deductions to continue to do so. Reportedly, new hires will be encouraged to sign up for this method of payment, so that it may take some **20 years**, through attrition, before everyone is paying their dues online.

The union has collected its own dues in other periods. In the days following the amalgamation of the various NYC transit companies into one in 1940-41, the union faced a drop in payments. As Joshua B. Freeman described in his history of the TWU, *In Transit* (1989):

"Neither the TWU's leadership nor its more militant members were prepared to sit idly by while the union's membership slipped away. On August 8, 1940, workers at the IRT's Livonia barn stopped working when lamp trimmer Frank Salvatore boasted that he was dropping out of the union. The stoppage ended only when Salvatore applied for union reinstatement and apologized for his actions...."

"The most serious incident involved John F. Connolly, the son of the former president of the defunct IRT Brotherhood and a worker at the IRT's 240th Street inspection barn. Connolly was refusing to pay his union dues, claiming mistreatment by the TWU in a seniority matter. On November 4, after Connolly failed to meet a deadline set for paying his dues, the 170 workers at 240th Street stopped work for two-and-a-half hours. The next morning they resumed their stoppage until Connolly finally went to Transport Hall to pay up."

Workers also picketed the homes of those who brazenly refused to pay dues. Union-loyal picketers carried signs highlighting the gains the union had won for workers, such as wage raises, paid vacations and health care benefits.

### Class Collaboration vs. Class Struggle

The union bureaucrats are wedded to the maintenance of this capitalist system. Their allegiance to the supposed "lesser evil" Democrats has, in fact, facilitated the bourgeois rulers' assaults on the working and living conditions of the American working class: the dismantling of millions of manufacturing jobs, cuts in social programs, rampant cop terror in the ghettos and barrios and the incarceration of black and Latino youth in the racist "war on drugs." It is a further indictment of the Local 100 bureaucracy that it has lined up with the MTA in pushing transit workers to serve as adjuncts to the cops in the bipartisan "war on terror," which is ultimately aimed at labor, blacks and immigrants. A fighting labor movement would mobilize in defense not only of its own members but also of black rights, immigrants and all the oppressed. For labor's power to be unchained it must break with the Democrats.

Class collaboration—the promotion of the false idea that the bosses and the workers have common interests—is also

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# IAM Tops Cave In to Boeing

## Strike Settlement Opens Door to Job Cuts

At the outset of the 57-day Boeing strike, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) District 751 president Tom Wroblewski declared: “We certainly want to prevent them [Boeing] from bringing nonunion people into the factory.” The 27,000 Boeing Machinists sure could have, but the union tops folded on the key issue of outsourcing and scuttled the walkout. After eight weeks of struggle and sacrifice, workers were handed a settlement that allows the aerospace giant to continue to contract out work as before and to give non-union suppliers access to the plants. While not a crushing defeat, the back-to-work deal was no victory either.

Here was an exceptional opportunity to land a powerful blow for all labor. The world’s largest aircraft manufacturer, Boeing is awash in \$13 billion in profits from the last five years and has a record backlog of commercial aircraft orders. In early September, 87 percent of the Machinists decisively rejected the company’s “final offer” and voted to strike, shouting union officials off the stage when a 48-hour delay was announced. After two successive concessionary contracts, Machinists were determined to fight Boeing’s giveback demands in spite of the tanking economy. Bringing production to a crawl, the strike had the bosses hurting: Boeing lost billions in revenue and its missed aircraft deliveries could cost it billions more.

But in playing by the bosses’ rules, the IAM bureaucrats handcuffed the striking Machinists. Instead of mass picket lines, the lines were kept small. Meanwhile, union officials alibied engineers, Teamsters and other Boeing workers going into the plants by invoking “no-strike” contract clauses. This made it possible for the company to ship out assembled aircraft and continue to prepare the new 787 Dreamliner for ground tests. Some 8,000 Machinists who work under a separate contract in Boeing’s high-revenue Integrated Defense Systems (IDS) military unit were kept on the job. All along, the union tops steered clear of advancing working-class solidarity by linking up with other aerospace workers, such as the striking IAM members at Vought Aircraft Industries in Nashville, Tennessee. An opportunity to stem the tide of labor givebacks was squandered.

Left to twist in the wind by the union tops, IAM members on November 1 voted three-to-one for a slightly sweetened version of Boeing’s earlier “final offer.” In a testament to the strike’s impact, the union did head off Boeing’s attempt to squeeze it for new concessions, including higher health care payments, which were instead frozen at the level of the 2002 contract. But nothing was won to advance the living standards or working conditions of the membership.

At the vote and afterwards, Machinists expressed many reservations about the settlement to *Workers Vanguard*. The wage and pension provisions were nearly identical to what was in the pre-strike offer, with janitors denied a general wage increase altogether. Significantly, the contract retains the two-tier wage structure with its six-year progression that has 4,000 members, most newer, earning less than \$30,000 annually. Such schemes divide workers by pitting them against each other, undercutting union solidarity

and struggle when there should be equal pay for equal work. We were told that many workers reluctantly accepted the deal in response to the financial distress of the new hires.

When unanimously endorsing the settlement, the IAM leadership boasted that the deal “will provide job security” for IAM members. Not likely, as the union tops opened the door to more outsourcing and job losses. The contract preserves an uneasy status quo issuing from the 2005 strike: the company’s use of contractors, rather than Machinists, to bring parts directly to the shop floor, which was a central dispute in this year’s strike. The non-union North Carolina outfit New

jobs for the other aircraft models that were given away in 2002. Instead, as IAM president Tom Buffenbarger declared from the start: “We’re trying to show them a way to run the business better,” adding, “We can save them money, or make them money” (*Seattle Times*, 7 September). Fulfilling his wishes, the settlement allows union bureaucrats to bid for jobs that the company plans to outsource to non-union contractors. Now the union can be a player in the race to the bottom.

By capitulating on the issue of outsourcing, the union tops emboldened the company to begin job-slashing. With the ink barely dry on the deal covering the Machinists there, Boeing on November 19



Corbis

**September 3: Machinists march from Boeing plant to IAM District 751 union hall in Everett, Washington, where they voted against company’s contract proposal and to strike.**

Breed will still make deliveries directly to the Dreamliner.

Posing the question of whether or not this could be declared a gain for the union, Bill Virgin of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (29 October), aptly answered: “Well, yes and no, sort of, and it depends and maybe not.” Boeing’s verdict was given by spokesman Tim Healy: “There is nothing in this contract that impairs our ability to deliver parts in the factory, including right up to the airplane” (*Seattle Times*, 29 October).

The reality did not deter the reformist left from sounding like the water boys for the labor bureaucrats that they are. After hedging its bets prior to the vote, the International Socialist Organization in its article, “Boeing Strike Ends in Union Win” (*Socialist Worker*, 4 November), declared that whatever its “shortcomings” the contract “will slow the bleeding” of jobs lost to outsourcing. In a November 14 online posting, the Workers World Party chimed in that “despite some compromises,” the settlement “advanced the cause of the workers’ right to a job.”

Actually defending jobs requires taking the fight to the bosses, but the union bureaucrats had no intention of lifting a finger to win back the Dreamliner parts delivery jobs. The union tops hid behind a newfound lack of union “jurisdiction” over this work—even though the union had in 2005 already regained the delivery

announced 800 layoffs at its IDS military aircraft modification plant in Wichita, Kansas. The next day, Boeing’s CEO issued a memo to all employees warning of job cuts in 2009, citing the cancellation and deferral of orders amid the global recession.

In general, the capitalists will exploit cheaper labor where it is available. The thousands of companies manufacturing parts for and supplying services to Boeing span the globe. Thus it is crucial for the Machinists, who assemble the aircraft, to increase their working-class allies by organizing the unorganized in the U.S. and forging bonds of solidarity with aerospace workers overseas. On strike since September, some one thousand Machinists at Vought’s Nashville plant, where parts are produced for Boeing’s main competitor, the European conglomerate Airbus, have received solidarity statements from European unions. This raises the possibility of international unity in struggle.

Standing in the way is the labor bureaucracy’s chauvinist protectionism and reliance on capitalist politicians, especially in the Democratic Party. The IAM campaigned heavily for Barack Obama throughout the strike, and District 751 leaders encouraged workers to vote for a slate of Democrats and other representatives of the class enemy. Calling off the

strike just days before the elections, the District 751 tops then hailed the results.

The November issue of 751’s *Aero Mechanic* enthuses: “President-elect Obama’s administration is much more likely to ensure American workers build American Tankers.” The controversial \$35 billion military air tanker contract was originally given to the parent company of Airbus earlier this year but was retracted and remains unawarded after Boeing protested. Machinists must beware the trap of the bureaucracy’s flag-waving chauvinism, which spits on aerospace workers in other countries as well as IAM members working for Airbus suppliers. Sold to union members with the lie that they have shared interests with their own exploiters, protectionist measures do nothing but boost the company’s profits. While Obama might be more likely to grant Boeing the contract, it is because the former Illinois Senator is supported by the Chicago-based company.

As its role in the tanker dispute shows, the bureaucracy has centered its efforts to win aerospace jobs on support for expanded military projects. It is in the interest of all workers to draw a hard line in opposition to U.S. imperialism, including the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. With Boeing increasingly exporting work to China, the IAM tops also bash China to the benefit of the imperialists, who want to overthrow the 1949 Chinese Revolution and restore the rule of capital. Workers should defend the Chinese deformed workers state against the imperialist powers and internal counterrevolution.

A first step to reversing the hemorrhaging of union jobs, and ending speculation that Boeing will move its plants to the South, is to organize the unorganized. Notably, workers at Vought in North Charleston, South Carolina, where much of the fuselage for the Dreamliner is manufactured, recently voted for IAM representation. Union activists should seize on this breakthrough in the “right to work” South to launch an aggressive organizing drive, from New Breed and other non-union suppliers in Washington state to the growing “Southern aerospace corridor.” Any serious campaign in the South, where the racist legacy of slavery and Jim Crow segregation has always served to spike class struggle, would have to take up the fight for black rights as well as the rights of immigrant workers.

The situation cries out for a hard-fought campaign. But amid meager efforts to organize Seattle-area Boeing suppliers, the District 751 tops prefer to lobby the government to get it to require an illusory “neutrality” from these companies, which is nothing but an attempt to find common cause with the Democrats where there is none. Workers are paying the price for such class collaboration. There needs to be a fight to replace these bureaucrats with a leadership committed to mobilizing labor’s power, independently of the capitalist state and politicians, in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. This is an essential part of building a multi-racial workers party to fight for a workers government. ■

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# Popular-Front Strategy Disarms Working Class in Fight Against Fascism

# Workers Revolution Will Avenge the Victims of the Holocaust

We reprint below a September 12 leaflet distributed in Berlin at the “Day of Remembrance and Warning” event on September 14 and then published in Spartakist No. 174 (November 2008), publication of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League.



We Trotskyists honor with revolutionary heart the fighters against the Nazi regime: the Jewish-Communist Herbert Baum Group, which fought in the underground; the heroic supporters of the Soviet Union such as Richard Sorge, Ozaki Hotsumi and the members of Leopold Trepper’s “Red Orchestra,” who carried out intelligence work in enemy territory; the Trotskyists like Abram Leon, who fought in the underground against Nazi occupation; and the countless other Red Army men, partisans, the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto, as well as the Wehrmacht deserters who went over to the side of the Soviets. Their heroism means for us commitment to class struggle against capitalism and its fascist henchmen. But the popular-frontist politics of the Day of Remembrance and Warning of the Berlin Association of Victims of the Nazi Regime—League of Antifascists [VVN-BdA] are counterposed to this struggle.

In their call to “Open your eyes—Don’t look away!” they say in regard to German fascism: “Millions let themselves be brought into line; the majority of Germans looked on,” thereby shifting onto the shoulders of the working class the responsibility of the German bourgeoisie for the seizure of power by the Nazis and their most horrific crime, the Holocaust—the industrial murder of the European Jews and of Roma and Sinti [Gypsies]—as well as the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and the other peoples of East Europe. It was not the working class that bore responsibility for the victory of fascism. In the face of the radicalization stemming from the world economic crisis at the end of the ’20s, the Nazis put at the disposal of the ruling class 600,000 Nazi SA thugs with paramilitary training to terrorize the entire workers movement, atomize it and smash its organizations. The Nazi takeover of power was not an accident of history but a conscious decision of the ruling class to preserve its power and prevent a socialist revolution.

**Below: Social Democratic president Friedrich Ebert smashed 1918-19 German Revolution. Right: Armed workers and soldiers demonstrate in Berlin during January 1919 Spartakist uprising.**



Staatsbibliothek, Berlin

## Germany

The many millions of German workers organized in the SPD [Social Democratic Party], KPD [Communist Party] and the trade unions wanted to fight Hitler’s seizure of power. They were shamefully betrayed by their leaderships. Due to their loyalty to the capitalist order, the SPD leadership was ultimately more afraid of setting the working class in motion against the fascists than of their own annihilation through Hitler’s seizure of power. First they supported [President] Hindenburg as a lesser evil, and when he handed over power to Hitler, they sought—in vain—to arrive at some sort of arrangement with the Nazis. The most conscious workers, those who identified with the Russian October Revolution of 1917, were led by the Communist International (Comintern) under Stalin and the Thälmann leadership of the KPD into capitulation without a struggle. This is why the Stalinists bear special responsibility for the defeat of 1933. Instead of forcing the SPD into a united front, they attacked the Social Democratic workers as “social fascists,” and declared, “After Hitler, us.”

Contrary to the lie of collective guilt, intended to chain the working class to its own bourgeoisie, Trotsky, in May 1933, named those responsible for the capitulation without a struggle: “The masses wanted to fight, but they were obstinately prevented from doing so by the leaders.... The absence of resistance on the part of the workers heightened the self-assurance of fascism and diminished the fear of the big bourgeoisie confronted by the risk of civil war. The inevitable demoralization of the Communist detachment, increasingly isolated from the proletariat, rendered impossible even a partial resistance. Thus the triumphal procession of Hitler over the bones of the proletarian organizations was assured” [“The German Catastrophe: The Responsibility of the Leadership”].

The betrayal of 1933 was followed by the no less treacherous turn of the Comintern to the popular front, which subordinated the working class to an illusory “democratic” wing of the bourgeoisie in the name of the fight against fascism. Numerous revolutions were led to defeat in this way. In Spain, the popular front defeated the workers revolution that began in 1936, paving the way to power for Franco’s fascists. It is precisely these

popular-frontist politics that dominate the call for the Day of Remembrance and Warning. The very first sentence of the call sounds like a hymn of praise to bourgeois democracy: “Seventy-five years ago the Nazis, together with conservative elites and supported by big industry, paralyzed Weimar democracy within a few weeks.” Both the capitalist Weimar Republic and Nazi rule represented the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. For the ruling class, the question was maintaining their rule. The foundation of the “Weimar democracy” praised by the VVN was the drowning in blood of the workers revolution of 1918-19 by the Freikorps, which was commanded by the Social Democrats Noske and Ebert and from which the Nazi organization arose. Along with tens

**February 1933:  
Newspaper of  
Trotskyist Left  
Opposition in  
Germany calls for  
united-front action  
of all workers  
organizations  
against Nazi terror.**



of thousands of revolutionary workers, almost the entire leadership of the young KPD was murdered. Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Leo Jogiches and Eugen Leviné were victims of this counterrevolutionary terror.

No wonder that the bourgeois Greens support the call; together with the SPD they sent Bundeswehr troops to the Balkans [in 1999]—in the name of “antifascism”—for the first time since the Second World War. In the name of bourgeois democracy, the supporters of the call are assisting the bourgeoisie with ideological rearmament for their next battle to redetermine the world. For the leaderships of the Stalinists and social democrats, the collective guilt lie that “the majority of Germans looked on” also serves to deny their own responsibility for the Nazis’ ability to come to power without a fight.

The call appeals to the bourgeois state: “Nazi-type organizations must be banned.” This is a dangerous illusion. The fascists are the reserve army of the bourgeoisie. It is this racist, capitalist state that pulls

the strings of the Nazis, not only via its agents in the leadership bodies of the NPD and other such organizations, but also via its own racist campaigns that serve as marching orders for the fascists. The campaign to eliminate the right of asylum at the beginning of the ’90s led to the pogroms of Rostock and Hoyerswerda, and Roland Koch’s campaign against youths of immigrant background this spring led to an increase in racist terror, such as the incendiary attack in Dautphetal.

Calls for bans are always utilized by the bourgeoisie and its state to launch attacks on the entire workers movement, immigrants and the left. Laws “against extremism” are always used against the left and the workers movement. Thus in 1993, when court proceedings to ban the fascist FAP were formally initiated, this was simply a cover for banning the PKK and 35 other Kurdish associations. Instead of directing powerless appeals to the bourgeois state, we Trotskyists fight for *worker/immigrant mobilizations to stop the Nazis!* This is in the tradition of the struggle by Trotsky’s Left Opposition for a proletarian united front against Hitler’s seizure of power in the early ’30s. Ultimately, capitalism—which breeds and hatches the Nazis—must be overthrown by workers revolution.

Nazi terror today is a result of capitalist counterrevolution in the DDR [East Germany]. There is not a word about this in the call. As early as 1989-90, we

warned that capitalist counterrevolution would bring with it an increase in racism, women’s oppression, unemployment and Nazi terror. The counterrevolution was wind in the Nazis’ sails. The Stalinists bear responsibility for this tremendous defeat: Gorbachev gave the green light for the annexation (*Anschluss*) of the DDR by West German capitalism. The SED-PDS [ruling Stalinist party] tops acquiesced in this betrayal, became the PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism], and made counterrevolutionary reunification their own cause.

Against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, we Trotskyists stood for unconditional military defense of the deformed workers states of East Europe and of the Soviet degenerated workers state, down to the last barricade. It was on this basis that we fought in the DDR in 1989-90 against capitalist reunification and for a red Germany of workers councils through proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy in the East and through socialist revolution to overthrow the bourgeoisie in the West. Only in this way could the breeding ground for the fascists have been finally eliminated in Germany. Today we defend the remaining deformed workers states of China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

Drawing the correct lessons from history is today more pressing than ever. The politics of the VVN-BdA organizers of the Day of Remembrance and Warning, as expressed in the call, draw the wrong lessons from the rise of the Nazis and the struggle against these murderous scum; these politics are an obstacle to the necessary proletarian struggle against fascism and against capitalism, which breeds it. Capitalism must be swept away by workers revolution. To do this we need to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, as part of the reformed Fourth International, which opposes every form of exploitation and oppression. ■



Willy Römer



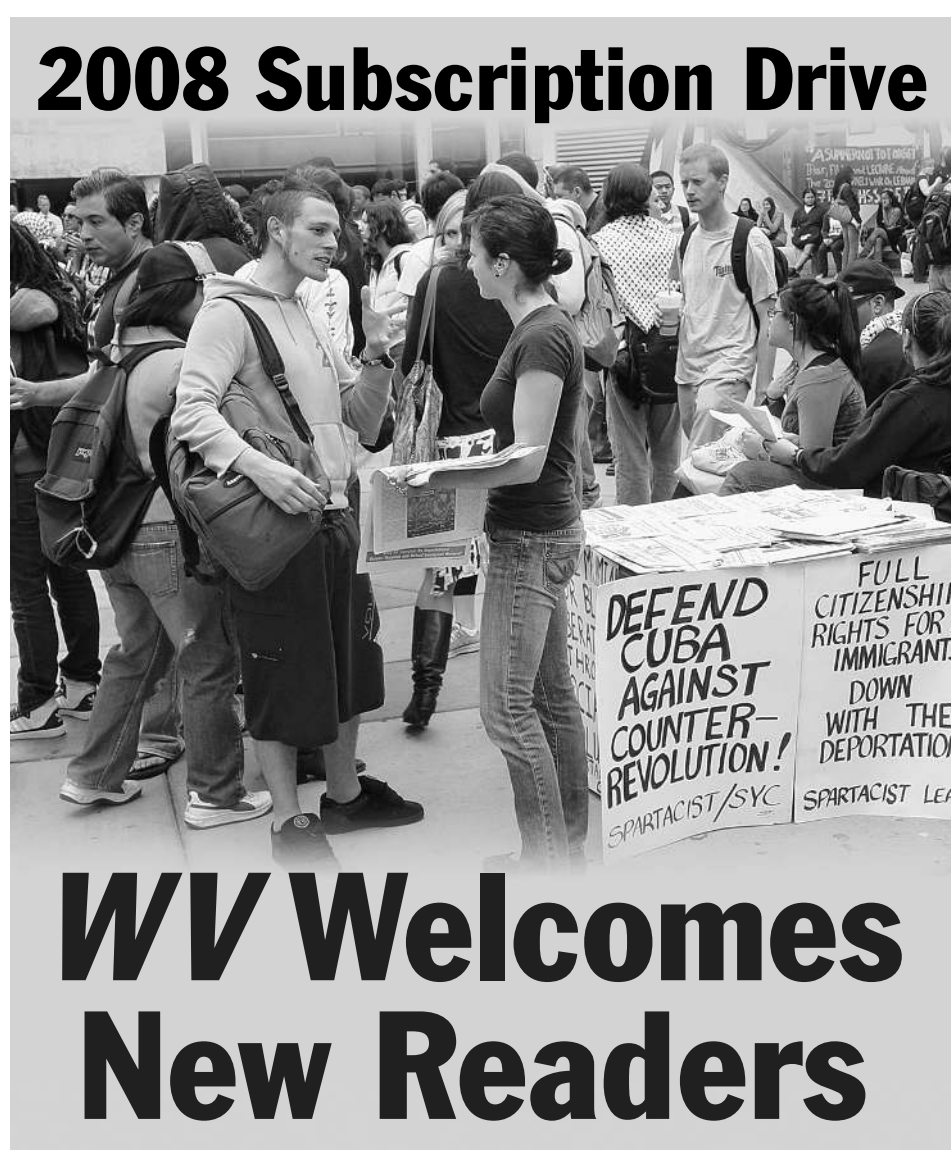
Congratulations to participants in the 2008 *Workers Vanguard* subscription drive! The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs conducted an intensive campaign this fall to widen the readership of our biweekly Marxist press. We exceeded our quota, selling a total of 2,926 points, representing 1,302 subscriptions to *WV*, 85 to *Espartaco* (published by the International Communist League's Mexican section), and 71 to the press of other ICL sections. Vancouver comrades of the Trotskyist League of Canada assisted SL/U.S. comrades on regional trips in the Pacific Northwest. Special congratulations go to comrade Laura in the Bay Area for selling the most subscriptions (136.5 points).

Our annual subscription drive is crucial to maintaining our readership and reaching out to regions where we do not have branches. Our press is our central weapon for raising consciousness of the need for a working-class vanguard party to lead the proletariat and the oppressed in the struggle for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist order and establish working-class rule. This year, discussions centered on our principled opposition to giving any electoral support to representatives of the capitalist class enemy—Democrat, Republican, Green or “independent”—and our struggle to forge a workers party.

In contrast, the reformist left, reflecting as always prevailing liberal bourgeois public opinion, worked hard to steer youth repelled by imperialist war, racism and exploitation to the doorstep of the Democratic Party. As a perfect example, at UC Berkeley the International Socialist Organization (ISO) had a sign inviting students to watch Obama's acceptance speech with “socialists,” and that issue of their paper, *Socialist Worker* (7 November), had red, white and blue as its front-page colors. In combat against such opponents, the SYCs held “Meet the Marxists” events on campuses to introduce students to our revolutionary Marxist program, especially highlighting the fight against black oppression and the struggle to free class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We also worked to maintain our readership among important concentrations of workers, including transit workers in New York and Chicago as well as port workers on both coasts, from the Port of Oakland to Charleston, South Carolina. Trips to Seattle and Portland included selling subs to ILWU longshoremen, and the teams also hit the picket lines of Boeing aircraft workers who had been on strike for nearly a month. Discussions with picketers at a Boeing site in Seattle centered mainly on our opposition to protectionism, anti-immigrant racism and China-bashing.

The widespread support for Obama was an obstacle, especially at the outset. “While this was more ‘lesser evilism’ than any kind of fevered Obamamania, the elections were nonetheless seen as *the* expression of political involvement and ‘change’ for many,” the Bay Area subscription drive report summarized. But the international capitalist financial meltdown also

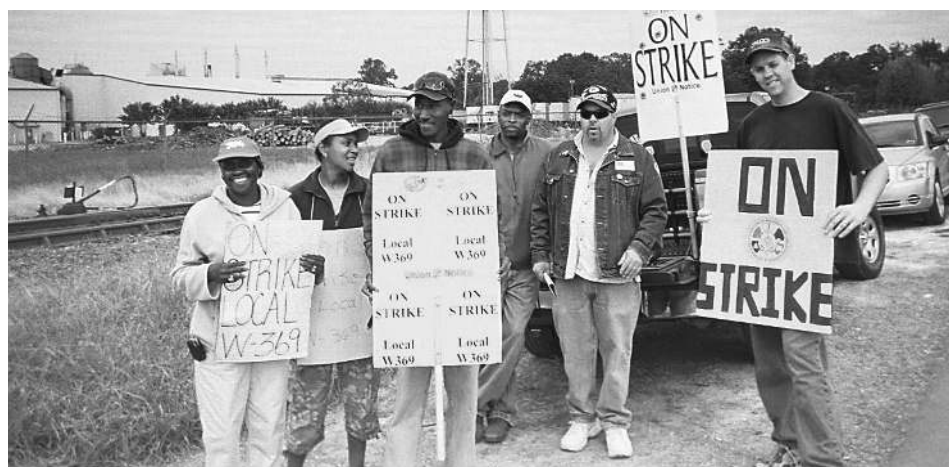


WV Photo

led to “heightened interest in a Marxist newspaper or at least an interest in some kind of alternative” or even just an explanation from Marxists for capitalist economic crises and the current financial chaos. A comrade commented about UC Santa Cruz students: “A number of students were interested in the food crisis article [“Behind the Hunger Crisis: Capitalist Profits—Imperialism Starves World's Poor,” *WV* No. 919, 29 August and *WV* No. 920, 12 September], imperialism and the workings of production for profit.” One of the best one-liners came from comrade Reuben, who sold *WV* at a radical-liberal public meeting in Berkeley, declaring, “Capitalism is on its deathbed, why would you want to vote for a guy who wants to change the sheets?”

Comrades from the Bay Area and L.A. made a successful regional trip to Oregon (163 points) covering the University of Oregon in Eugene, Lewis & Clark, Portland State and Reed College. The report on the trip noted that the capitalist economic crisis sparked greater curiosity about Marxism: “We were selling *WV* No. 921 [headlined “Wall Street Nightmare Stalks Working People”] which allowed us to point out the inherent aspects of capitalism—driven by irrationality, the deep-seated oppression of black people, etc.” But another comrade underlined the huge gulf between our authentic Marx-

ist program and popular consciousness: “A number of students expressed sympathy with Marxism.... However what they understood by ‘socialism’ was vague, ranging from some sort of social democ-



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During subscription drive, *WV* salesmen in September intersected IAM members on strike against Moncure Plywood in North Carolina.

racy to thinking Sweden was socialist to support for Obama. Our placard on Obama wanting to be Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism attracted a lot of attention, both positive and negative.”

Our placard proclaiming “Free Abortion on Demand!” drew a lot of attention on various campuses. Underlining that this supposedly available legal right is increasingly unavailable to women, especially working-class and poor women, young women approached our campus tables in several localities asking hopefully if we were providing the service!

A comrade reported on one Oregon campus where our Chinese-language slogans against the counterrevolutionary “Free Tibet” movement brought students from China to our literature table: “They agreed that the Dalai Lama was a reactionary figure and commented how many Americans didn't understand that Tibet was part of China and used to be a slave society.” *WV*'s article on the Sichuan earthquake (*WV* No. 917, 4 July) was particularly useful in pointing out the contradictions of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy, as well as helping to combat the idea that the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state is capitalist. All locals held forums on China in the lead-up to or during the subscription drive (see: “Democrats Spearhead Anti-China Crusade—Down With Imperialist and Dalai Lama Provocations! Defend the Gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution! For Workers Political Revolution!” *WV* No. 923, 24 October).

The Chicago subscription drive report underscored that, of the 557 points sold, 167 were from renewals, reflecting a core of loyal readers. “Most people we sold subs to were voting for Obama, but most were not so much enthusiastic about Obama as they wanted ‘Anybody but Bush/McCain’.” Comrades also met students who argued that Obama couldn't say what he “really” thought if he wanted to get elected: “There was a lot of pressure for the population to vote and ‘participate in the system’,” much of it coming from the union bureaucracy. The Minneapolis trip intersected the Labor Day protest of the Republican National Convention. Chicago comrades went to a Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) national conference at DePaul University. Barred from entering the event, our comrades took to the soapbox to scandalize the ISO, CAN's leading lights, for the exclusion, exposing the ISO's fear of defending their reformist politics in open debate. Amusingly, ISO supporters outside argued with us that “revolutionary politics is outside the context of what this conference is about.” Yes, indeed.

New York City comrades and supporters sold 953 points. On elite campuses such as Columbia and New York University, subscription sales were difficult, but the regional trip to Western Massachusetts sold 103 points. On a trip to Hartford, Connecticut, comrades met youth who had seen us intervene at a Toronto public conference sponsored by Socialist Action last May 22-25, as well as at an antiwar conference in Cleveland on June 28-29. To these activists we distributed our off-print, “ICL's Trotskyism vs. Socialist Action's Reformism” (see *WV* No. 917, 4 July). On many campuses we encountered students who had some experience with other left groups; often, such youth were

already dissatisfied with the tepid reformist politics of these outfits.

New York's regional trip to North Carolina yielded 118.5 points. A comrade noted that here, too, the Obama campaign proved “a litmus test for potential subscribers.” In addition to the campus work by the North Carolina team, we also sold to the Moncure strikers in the area (see “Victory to the Moncure Plywood Workers Strike!” *WV* No. 921, 26 September).

The Los Angeles Local sold a total of 426.5 points. In addition to participating in trips to Oregon/Washington and Colorado, the L.A. Local undertook regional trips to Arizona, Texas, UC Santa Barbara and San Diego. Comrades also sold at the Labor Day union gathering in Wilmington, an L.A. suburb, where three subscriptions were sold to longshoremen. A successful “Meet the Marxists” event at UCLA helped increase our subscription base there.

*WV* welcomes its new readers and those who renewed their subscriptions. We encourage you to let us know what you think of our press and to get involved in our activities. Study Marxist theory and class-struggle history at our public class series or through our literature. We are proud of our history and programmatic fidelity and offer for sale bound volumes of *WV* as well as other publications of our party. We strive to make our paper forthright, polemical and hard-hitting, basing ourselves on the work of our revolutionary Marxist forebears. ■

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# All Out to Defend Harrison and Ruffin!

## “War on Terror” Assault on Black Longshoremen

Two black longshoremen, Jason Ruffin and Aaron Harrison, from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the Bay Area, are scheduled to stand trial on December 15 on frame-up charges of “resisting arrest.” In August 2007, Ruffin and Harrison were returning to work at the Sacramento port after lunch when they were stopped by security guards who demanded to search their car, citing the maritime security regulations that are part of the government’s “war on terror.” While the two ILWU members were calling their Local 10 business agent for advice, the guards called in the notoriously racist West Sacramento police. Harrison and Ruffin were dragged from their car, assaulted, maced, handcuffed and thrown in jail on charges of trespassing and resisting arrest. The trespassing charge has been dropped, but for over a year the state has continued to press its vindictive prosecution of the two longshore workers whose only “crime” was trying to return to work and appealing to their union for help in doing so!

These charges are a deadly statement of the threat to all of labor from the “anti-terror” laws, which have been used to build up the repressive powers of the state, its cops, courts, military and security guard auxiliaries. This is not the first time that the ILWU has been lined up in the sights of the racist “war on terror,” the pretext for the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. During the union’s 2002 contract battle, the head of the Department of Homeland Security warned the ILWU International president that a strike would be treated as a threat to “national security.” Today, the implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC), which includes criminal background checks, is vastly increasing the government’s ability to police the workforce on the docks. By April, no access will be allowed to West Coast ports for longshoremen without TWIC cards. The defense of Harrison and Ruffin is vital to the defense of the ILWU as a whole and of all those targeted by the “war on terror.” All out to defend Harrison and Ruffin on December 15!

The Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense, which is fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, mobilized for an ILWU rally in defense of Harrison and Ruffin outside their October 6 court hearing in Woodland, California, with a small contingent that included workers from transit, rail and public employees in the Bay Area. The 100 people at the rally included members of ILWU Locals 10 and 34 from the Bay Area, Sacramento’s Local 17, the executive secretary of the Sacramento Central Labor Council, as well as a contingent of workers from the nearby Davis campus of the University of California who have been locked in a contract battle with the administration. Other local community activists addressed the racist treatment that the West Sacramento cops daily mete out to black and Latino youth as well as their attack on DQ University (an American Indian university) in the area. A solidarity message by black death row political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal, in defense of Harrison and Ruffin was also played at the rally.

A representative of the LBL spoke at the rally, underlining the urgency of labor fighting against the “war on terror”:

“The LBL has actively defended longshoremen Jason Ruffin and Aaron Harrison since their arrest. They are today facing prosecution under the port security laws that are part of the bipartisan ‘war

**Right: West Sacramento cop pulling Aaron Harrison from his car, August 2007. Below: Labor Black League supporters at October 6 ILWU rally in Woodland (near Sacramento) protesting arrest of Harrison and Ruffin.**



Jason Ruffin



WV Photo

on terrorism.’ Yet many trade-union officials, including ILWU, ILA [International Longshoremen’s Association] and Teamsters, have wrongly supported the beefed-up port security measures. At home, ‘war on terror’ means attacks on immigrants, blacks, trade unions, and the working class as a whole. The LBL stands for defending all victims of the so-called ‘war on terror’ and calls on the union movement to organize the unorganized, like the port truckers, and fight for citizenship rights for all immigrants. Down with the I.C.E. raids!

“The so-called ‘war on terrorism’ is embraced by the Democrats and the Republicans alike, just as Obama and McCain embrace the plundering of the working class to bail out Wall Street capitalism on its death bed, and Cynthia McKinney’s party of the little bourgeoisie is just as dedicated as the two parties of the big bourgeoisie to saving this brutal system of racist exploitation. This is all the more reason why working people need a party that fights for their class interests—a workers party that fights for a workers government. Those who labor must rule!

“In the fight to free class-war political prisoner and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, who we all heard here today, with his powerful speech, Local 10 has joined ranks with the PDC [Partisan Defense Committee] and trade unionists around the world to bring the social power of labor to free this innocent man. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Drop the charges against Jason Ruffin and Aaron Harrison!”

Clarence Thomas, a member of the Local 10 executive board, pointed to the ILWU May 1 port shutdown against the occupation of Iraq as an example of taking “action at the point of production” to “stop the attacks on the working class.” This action was a powerful display of the union’s muscle. But it was gutted of any political opposition to the U.S. imperialist rulers and their dirty wars and occupations by the red-white-and-blue

American chauvinism of the ILWU bureaucracy. The occupation of Afghanistan was disappeared and the May Day statement by the union’s International president, Robert McEllrath, promoted longshoremen as the best “loyal to America” patriots as against “big foreign corporations that control global shipping.” This was coupled with promoting Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama as the next Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism.

A “2008 Presidential Questionnaire” by the ILWU tops, directed to Obama and other Democrats, pledged the union’s service in the “war on terror,” declaring that the “ILWU workforce should be utilized as the first line of defense against maritime terrorist activities, and recognized as a natural ally by law enforcement.” This suicidal identification of the union with the strikebreaking forces of the bosses’ state was echoed at the October 6 rally for Harrison and Ruffin by the

business agent of ILWU Local 17, who portrayed the West Sacramento cops as “workers coming out and harassing and beating up other workers.”

The cops are *not* workers in uniform. They are the armed thugs of the capitalist state whose purpose is the violent suppression of working-class struggle. Security guards, like those who targeted Harrison and Ruffin, are the cops’ private auxiliaries, yet in the Bay Area, L.A. and some other West Coast ports, they are members of the ILWU! *Police and security guards out of the unions!*

The ILWU tops’ promotion of the union as “a natural ally” in the government’s “war on terror” has been brought home in their demands for more vigorous screening of the largely immigrant, non-union port truckers. This is not only an attack on these workers but undermines the very existence of the ILWU itself. A member of ILWU Local 10, Barbara Franck, who left work to join the picket lines of port truckers in Oakland last May and argued unsuccessfully for the union to pull out all of its members in solidarity, underlined the importance of fighting to organize these workers in a letter printed in the July-August issue of the union’s newspaper, the *Dispatcher*: “The ILWU now stands isolated as one of the few union links in the massive flow of commodities across the Pacific and inland.... Winning ILWU-scale wages, benefits and union organization and rights for the existing trucker workforce would be a big step forward for the working class as a whole and would strengthen our union by providing us with a powerful ally in our struggles against the shippers and stevedoring companies. For a waterfront that is 100% union!”

In 2002, Local 10 endorsed an Oakland protest initiated by the LBL and the Partisan Defense Committee in defense of immigrants and in opposition to the U.S. rulers’ anti-terror laws. Black longshoremen from Local 10 were at the core of that 300-strong protest on February 9, 2002. As the LBL and PDC wrote in the call for that protest (“Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!” WV No. 773, 25 January 2002):

“To fight for its interests the working class must stand independent of all agencies and parties of the class enemy. The trade-union misleaders who have shackled labor’s power to support for the Democrats now offer to help implement ‘security’ on the docks and elsewhere.... “There must be a political struggle within the trade unions, the only significant racially integrated institutions in segregation America, to break from the Democrats and build a class-struggle leadership which will champion the cause of black freedom and the defense of immigrant rights. The working class needs its own party—one that fights for a workers government. Those who labor must rule!” ■

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# We Are the Party of the Russian Revolution

We print below, edited for publication, the concluding part of a presentation by comrade Victor Gibbons, given in Los Angeles on 10 November 2007 in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Parts One and Two of this presentation were published in WV Nos. 924 and 925, 7 and 21 November.

## PART THREE

In early 1989, as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was capitulating to Washington by withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, we offered to organize an international brigade to defend the embattled Kabul regime against the CIA-backed *mujahedin*. After the Afghan government turned down our offer, we organized at the government's suggestion a campaign of solidarity with the civilian victims in the front-line Afghan city of Jalalabad. Around the same time, the international Spartacist tendency changed its name to the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Our Jalalabad campaign and name change signaled that the banner of communism, long trampled in the mud by the Stalinists, had its true champion in Trotskyism.

In the subsequent period, the ICL sought to mobilize its limited forces in the struggle against capitalist restoration in the DDR (East Germany), and then in the Soviet Union itself. In this, we were applying in practice the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution. At the same time, we fought for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The ICL acted on Trotsky's October 1933 injunction ("The Class Nature of the Soviet State"):

"From our standpoint, of course, the tragic possibility is not excluded that the first workers' state, weakened by its bureaucracy, will fall under the joint blows of its internal and external enemies. But in the event of this worst possible variant, a tremendous significance for the subsequent course of the revolutionary struggle will be borne by the question: *where* are those guilty for the catastrophe? Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade."

The 1990 defeat of the incipient proletarian political revolution in Germany proved to be a prelude to capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Events would show that decades of Stalinist misrule had fatally undermined workers' consciousness to the point where they did not

rally to defend the remaining gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution—centrally, the collectivized planned economy. But that conclusion was not determined in advance. As Stalinist rule broke down in the Soviet Union, the question was posed: would the nascent bourgeoisie go forward to consolidate a capitalist state or would the working class use the opportunity to fight for political power?

As the Stalinist bureaucracy strangled the proletarian internationalist traditions of October, it increasingly promoted Great Russian chauvinism. Over decades, Stalin and his heirs succeeded in imprinting their nationalist outlook on the Soviet peoples. Leninist proletarian internationalism came to be sneered at in official propaganda as an obscure "Trotskyite heresy," "export of revolution" or, at best, it was emptied of any content.

As the bureaucracy became increasingly discredited, anti-communist Russian nationalist movements were deliberately promoted as a political outlet for opposition. At first they operated under cover of cultural nativist revivalism. Thus the name of one sect, Pamyat (Memory). But this was no culture club. It was an anti-Semitic, promonarchist, Black Hundreds fascist movement, the putrid end product of what Stalin and his heirs had cultivated.

In 1987 Pamyat crawled out into the open and brazenly rallied at the gates of the Kremlin, right on Karl Marx Prospekt, demanding to meet with the then Moscow Communist Party boss Boris Yeltsin. Even more alarming was the fact that Yeltsin warmly received them and legally sanctioned them. This was a green light for the attacks that followed. From the start we warned of the mortal danger these Black Hundreds represented and called on Soviet workers, minorities, women and youth to take independent action to send Pamyat scurrying back into their rat holes.

You can read about this in "Pamyat: Russian Fascists Raise Their Heads" (WV No. 434, 7 August 1987). We did not call on the bureaucracy to crush Pamyat. We pointed out that an important component of Stalinist political rule was the weapon of anti-Semitism, which was wielded against the Trotskyist Left Opposition and others. In World War II, which Stalin presented as the "Great Patriotic War" to defend Mother Russia, the Stalinists revived the pogromist Russian Orthodox church in order to foster Russian nationalism.

The Bolshevik Revolution transformed what Lenin called the tsarist "prison house of peoples" into a multinational workers state. It was only the Bolsheviks' interna-

tionalist program—which asserted full and equal rights for all peoples, in order to secure the fullest unity of the workers of all nationalities—that made this possible. With the usurpation of power by the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, and over the course of several decades, these principles were perverted. To be sure, even under Stalin and his successors, the foundations of the planned economy laid the basis for massive advancement by the most oppressed and impoverished minority nationalities and peoples, such as those in the Soviet Central Asian republics. But the Stalinist bureaucracy simultaneously served to foster reactionary Russian nationalists like Pamyat as well as petty-bourgeois nationalist currents in many of the non-Russian republics, which sought to assert the supposed "right" of their nationality to lord it over the other peoples. Gorbachev's *perestroika*, with its appeal to decentralization and market forces, fueled the aspirations of the more economically advanced republics for an even greater slice of the pie.

The ICL did not consider the boundaries of the Soviet Union to be sacrosanct. We upheld the right of self-determination of the various nations of the USSR—i.e., the right to secede and form an independent state—except where it served as a cover for counterrevolution. Our adherence to the class line meant that we opposed pro-imperialist movements such as the Sajudis in Lithuania, whose call for "independence" was a fig leaf for counterrevolution. The Sajudis also sought to marginalize the ethnic Russian population in the Baltics. For their part, the pseudo-Trotskyists indiscriminately supported petty-bourgeois nationalists, no matter how reactionary; a gross example was Ernest Mandel's enthusiasm over the Forest Brothers in Estonia, who had fought alongside the Nazis in World War II. Without the social base of a genuine bourgeoisie, such as existed in West Germany for the takeover of the DDR, nationalism became both a key driving force for capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and much of East Europe, and a product of the counterrevolution. Thus the disintegration of the Soviet Union unleashed a wave of fratricidal national conflicts and communalist bloodletting, with a resurgence of fascist and nationalist groupings.

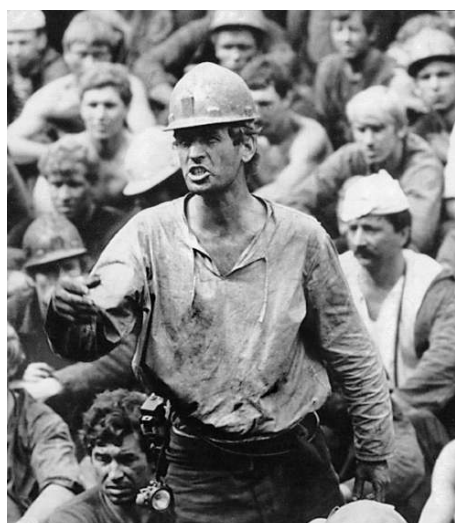
## ICL's Initial Attempts to Intersect Soviet Workers

As early as 1984, as President Ronald Reagan ratcheted up the threats against the Soviet Union, we made attempts to get our propaganda into the hands of Soviet citizens by sending a team there with our key documents. In 1989, Soviet merchant marine sailors, touring ballerinas, circus performers and many other Soviet citizens who visited the West were greeted on the docks, by a stage door entrance, or wherever else possible by a team of Spartacists distributing our "plain manila envelope."

These packets contained our cover letter and Russian-language versions of key Trotsky writings. In *Spartacist* (English-language edition No. 41-42, Winter 1987-88), we advertised in Russian Trotsky's four-volume *Bulletin of the Left Opposition* and reprinted key excerpts from the 1938 Transitional Program of Trotsky's Fourth International.



Above: ICL banner at 1991 demonstration in Moscow on anniversary of October Revolution. December 1991: ICL organizes cleanup of Karl Marx statue in Moscow defaced by Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary mob. Banner reads: "No to the Restoration of Capitalism! Yes to the Gains of October!"



Left: Soviet miners on strike, summer 1989. Right: Miners at October 1990 congress in Donetsk bought hundreds of copies of Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin* titled "What Trotskyism Is."





By the winter of 1989-90 the political arena in the Soviet Union had opened up to the point where it became feasible for us to make a trip there in the name of the ICL. During that visit, a meeting with the United Front of Toilers (O.F.T.), a group associated with working-class-based movements across the Soviet Union, was invaluable in revealing the vast gulf between outward appearances from afar and the reality on the ground. When we asked two O.F.T. leaders what their position was on the need to smash Pamyat, one of them explained that if the O.F.T. came out against Pamyat it would lose half its membership. This is what seventy years of Stalinist Great Russian chauvinism had produced! We immediately got out of the O.F.T. office.

By September 1990 the continued openings made it possible for the ICL to establish a permanent presence in the USSR, initially with comrade Martha Phillips and, later, myself. The ICL

learned of this congress to form the NPG, we took a train to Donetsk and gave the congress organizers a set of our international and Russian-language literature. They issued us guest credentials.

As the congress convened, we discovered that every agency of the bourgeoisie was there in the hopes of turning this new miners union into a Soviet version of counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarność. In the front rows were representatives of the U.S. and British embassies and the AFL-CIO's Freedom House. This cabal also included a representative of the CIA's longtime Russian "labor" decoy, the outright Hitlerite fascist National Alliance of Russian Solidarists (NTS). This despised remnant of the "Russian Liberation Army" that fought on the side of Hitler in World War II was then working within the Soviet Union with the additional public relations help of the anti-Communist, fake-Trotskyist British Workers Power (WP) group. WP had toured NTS "coal miner" Yuri Butchenko around Britain in July of that same year, knowing full well of his NTS ties. In London, Butchenko had shared a stage with the scab British "Union of Democratic Miners" (UDM).

The UDM was an anti-Communist outfit formed and financed in an attempt to break the great British coal strike of 1984-85. That strike was led by Arthur Scargill's National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). During that British coal strike, the Soviet miners had raised a huge solidarity fund for the NUM, totaling 1.5 million pounds sterling. This Soviet aid was a powerful countermeasure to the redbaiting campaign against Scargill and the NUM conducted by the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher and abetted by both the "left" and right wings of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. Five years later, "Soviet coal miner" Yuri Butchenko toured Britain in support of the scab UDM slander campaign against Scargill, spreading the lie that he had stolen £10 million from Soviet miners' donations to the NUM. In Donetsk in 1990, this "AFL-CIA" road show was pushing Soviet miners in the name of anti-Communism to repudiate their past support to Scargill. Though there were only two of us Spartacists at this conference, we played a crucial role in the decision of the congress *not* to pursue the UDM's appeal to denounce Scargill. The presidium took a set of WV articles on the UDM strikebreakers. Night after night we had spirited discussions with miners from across the USSR. As a result, delegations took back whole stacks of our bulletin to their mining regions.

To be sure, the NPG tops were later drawn into Yeltsin's machinations. But at the time of this founding congress, the base was still in flux and its leaders had to pay attention to what representatives of the labor movement from abroad had to say about scabs. The NPG was not a ready-made creature of the imperialists.

### August 1991, Yeltsin-Bush Countercoup

In 1990, the newly elected head of the Russian Soviet Republic, Boris Yeltsin, emerged as the champion of the pro-

April 1994 ICL meeting in Moscow announcing publication of first ever Russian-language edition of Leon Trotsky's *The Third International After Lenin*.



Spartacist

Western "democrats." Opposing them were the so-called "conservatives" or "patriots" of the Stalinist bureaucracy based in the military, industrial management and the apparatus of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Some of them such as Nina Andreyeva called themselves true Leninists and many of them denounced the ruinous results of market chaos. But these "conservatives" were *not* committed to preserving a collectivized economy or even the old Stalinist order. Their main difference with the "democrats" was that they opposed dismembering the centralized USSR-wide state structures. These "patriots" wanted to introduce capitalism more slowly and along channels more beneficial to themselves.

On 20 August 1991, a new trans-Soviet "treaty" was to be signed. The main change was to be a substantial transfer of political, military and financial powers from the central organs of the USSR, to the governments of the Soviet Union's constituent republics. At that point the latter were bastions of the "democrats," while the "patriots" resisted the weakening of the centralized Soviet state. At the very last minute, on the morning of 19 August 1991, a group of Gorbachev's lieutenants declared they were taking power in the Kremlin in the name of the State Emergency Committee (EC). The new pact was put on hold.

Tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled into Moscow all day. I went among them and found that neither the troops nor their commanders had the slightest idea of what they had been summoned for. For reasons I will explain in a moment, the EC never dared to issue written orders to act against Yeltsin.

In contrast to the hapless EC, Yeltsin knew exactly what to do. He organized a countercoup. Yeltsin denounced the EC as an attempt to restore the "Communist" system and set up barricades around the "White House," the seat of his Russian Presidential administration. The American Embassy was in close communication with Yeltsin.

In the evening of August 19, President George Bush Sr. issued a categorical statement rejecting the EC's services as stand-ins for Gorbachev (who was conveniently absent during the critical days).

On August 21, Bush put a call through to the EC and told them that Yeltsin was his man. That sealed the fate of the EC. They were not looking to preserve the USSR as a workers state; they were just as committed as Yeltsin to "partnership" with the West. Bush's declaration dashed their hopes. That is why they never took any military action against Yeltsin—their "coup" was over before it started.

### Counterrevolution in the Streets of Moscow

On August 19 the privileged center of Moscow was abuzz with the intelligentsia rallying to Yeltsin. Three days later, as thousands of Yeltsinite yuppies cheered, a massive crane provided by the American Embassy pulled down the statue of Feliks Dzerzhinsky, Bolshevik leader of Polish origins, and architect of the revolutionary All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage (Cheka), which was founded in 1917 after the Bolshevik Revolution.

The most obscene desecration was of the statue of Yakov Sverdlov, the central organizer of the Bolshevik Party, the first head of the Soviet state in 1917-18 and a Jew. The fascists not only dragged away his statue, they impaled its foundation with a wooden Christian cross, and burned the tree next to it down to the ground. The nearby statue of Karl Marx was also defaced with graffiti and filth.

Last but not least, the fake Trotskyists, anarchists and social democrats brought up the rear of Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution. Most were on Yeltsin's barricades only in spirit—they had no presence in the USSR—but they did what they could to cheer on this attack on the world proletariat. Rather than take the time now to detail this list of infamy, I refer you to our article "Traitors, Not Trotskyists—Cheerleaders for Yeltsin's Counterrevolution," WV No. 535 (27 September 1992).

But among the tendencies that literally were there on the Yeltsin-Bush barricades, I want to mention one in particular. At the time it was the British-based group known as the Militant Tendency, led by the late Ted Grant. Today it is represented by its two descendants: the Committee for a Workers' International,

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Tens of thousands of ICL's August 1991 Russian-language leaflet, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" were distributed in Soviet Union.

published the first issue of our Russian-language journal *Byulleten' Spartakovtsev* (*Spartacist Bulletin*) in October 1990. The lead piece was "What Trotskyism Is." This was a translation of a pamphlet (*Trotskyism: What It Isn't and What It Is!*) produced for our intervention into the DDR, in which we presented our authentic Trotskyism as the revolutionary continuity of Bolshevism in sharp differentiation from the fake Trotskyists who supported "democratic" counterrevolution in East Europe and advocated the same in the USSR. Around the same time, the ICL published our first Russian-language leaflet for mass distribution: "Soviet Workers: Smash Yeltsin/Gorbachev 500-Day Plan!" You can read translations of these materials in the bound volumes of *Workers Vanguard* of that period and in *Spartacist*, especially English-language edition No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91).

A good example of the situation in the country at the time was the October 1990 Soviet coal miners congress held in Donetsk, Ukraine. Donetsk had been a focal point of a nationwide coal strike in 1989 that Gorbachev managed to defuse. But as the planned economy was dismantled and ever greater market chaos hit the working class, the miners were again hit the hardest. It was their desperate conditions that propelled the Soviet coal miners to form a new union, the Independent Union of Miners (NPG). As soon as we



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Left: Crane supplied by U.S. Embassy removes statue of Bolshevik leader Feliks Dzerzhinsky during August 1991 countercoup by Boris Yeltsin. Center: Yeltsin addresses counterrevolutionary rabble at base of statue; graffiti reads, "Lenin butcher of Russia." Right: Alan Woods (far right) with Sergei Biets in 2002; at time of Yeltsin's barricades, both were part of Ted Grant's Militant Tendency, whose Russian newspaper *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991) boasted: "On the Barricades in Moscow..." "...And in Leningrad."

# Russian Revolution...

(continued from page 9)

led by Peter Taaffe, and the International Marxist Tendency, led by Alan Woods. Today both of these fakers swear they were nowhere near Yeltsin's White House. But in the WV No. 828 article on the Taaffeites that I referenced earlier you can read the front-page headlines of their then common newspaper, *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991), that trumpeted: "Where We Were" and "On the Barricades in Moscow."

In the course of August 19, the EC members began to drop out, check in to hospitals, etc. In the terminal collapse of Stalinist rule, not a single wing of the bureaucracy put up a fight against the Yeltsin-Bush onslaught. Just the opposite, many of the openly counterrevolutionary gangs who defended Yeltsin's White House in August had just spilled out of

Union, we wrote that workers mobilizations should have cleaned out the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's barricades. This could have then opened the road to proletarian political revolution:

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

History records that the ICL's call was the first published leftist protest against Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution. It was a message of revolutionary intransigence and a clarion call to action. And it branded those responsible for the catastrophe: "Bankrupt Stalinism Opens Floodgates to Capitalist Restoration."

We did not rush to conclude that the Soviet workers state had ceased to exist. This had to be confirmed one way or the other by events. To the extent that our meager forces allowed, we attempted to help spark working-class action against the counterrevolutionary forces and for proletarian political revolution in defense

USSR that quickly competed for a non-existent niche of a "Labourite" left bank on the "red-brown" swamp. Opposing any fight to save the workers state, they sought to pressure the "red-brown" nationalists to advocate populist-corporatist schemes, issuing appeals that avoided any mention of chauvinism or anti-Semitism.

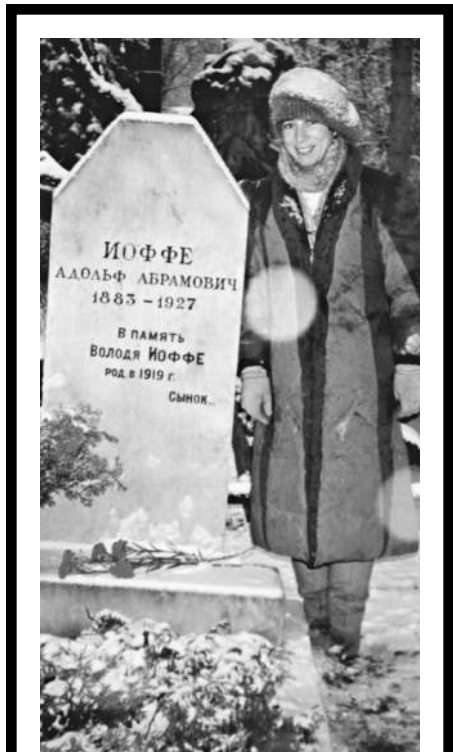
We exposed the "red-browns" by devoting an entire issue of *Byulleten' Spartakovtsev* No. 3 (Spring 1992) to the fight for a Leninist party as a tribune of the people. We politically fought against every form of national chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry that was roiling the brown tide of capitalist counterrevolution.

It was right in this period that our leading spokesman in Moscow, comrade Martha Phillips, was murdered at her post. Her body was discovered by comrades on the morning of 9 February 1992, the day of a major anti-Yeltsin rally. We launched international protests demanding a serious investigation, but to no avail. She paid the ultimate price to plant the flag of the ICL on the last barricades in defense of the gains of October. You can read—you must read—the many moving tributes to her in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 6, a special volume dedicated to three women leaders of the ICL, and in the many moving tributes to Martha presented at memorial meetings around the world. These are published in WV Nos. 546-548 (6 March, 20 March and 3 April 1992).

There was working-class resistance—strikes and protests—to the Yeltsin regime. But these were sporadic and ineffective. By late 1992 there was nothing left of the Soviet Army, or any other All-Union structures. Instead of a proletarian political revolution breaking up the nascent regimes of social counterrevolution, the dismemberment of the USSR into new capitalist states and statelets tore apart the living fabric of the multinational Soviet proletariat.

After nearly 70 years of Stalinist usurpation of political life, and now further paralyzed by CIA-supported pro-Yeltsin "free trade unions" and the virulent chauvinist poison of numerous Stalinist remnants, the multinational Soviet working class became overwhelmed by the counterrevolutionary tide. The August 1991 events (coup and counter-coup) ultimately proved to have been decisive in the direction of the development in the Soviet Union. In the absence of concerted proletarian action, the Yeltsin regime carried out a piecemeal consolidation of the counterrevolution.

Only when it was clear in the course of the next year that the working class was not going to move against Yeltsin did we



Spartacist  
**Martha Phillips at the grave of Adolf Joffe, a leader of 1917 Russian Revolution and a Trotskyist Left Oppositionist.**

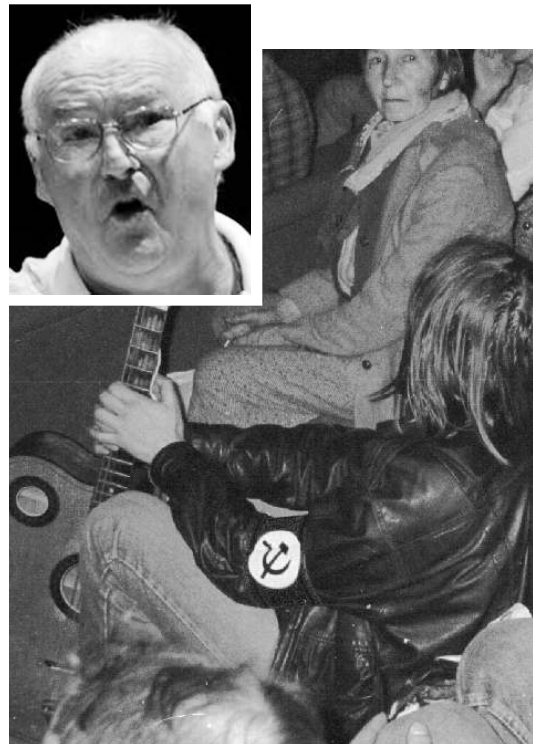
conclude that the Soviet workers state had been definitively destroyed. In the fall of 1992, the Second International Conference of the ICL determined that "the degenerated workers state of Stalin and his heirs has been destroyed" and "a capitalist state, however fragile and reversible, has been created" (*Spartacist* English-language edition, No. 47-48, Winter 1992-93).

Our programmatic conclusion was that the Soviet workers state could not be revived by a workers political revolution. A new workers state—or states—would have to be forged through proletarian socialist revolution, led by an internationalist Leninist-Trotskyist party, that would sweep away Yeltsin and his ilk.

We continued our work in the former USSR after the Soviet degenerated workers state had been destroyed. In the wake of a historic defeat it was not possible for us to recruit masses, no matter how thoroughly our program had been vindicated in the negative. But it was possible, and vital, for us to seek out the exceptional, small numbers of activist-workers and students who had gone through this experience and shared our determination to preserve its dearly bought lessons for the future.

One example is our intervention into the Donetsk coal miners strike of 1993. It was the first major labor action against one of the new capitalist regimes.

continued on page 12



socialistworld.net (inset), Spartacist



**Russian supporters of Peter Taaffe (inset) welcomed fascists of National Bolshevik Party (NBP) to 1998 May Day Moscow forum by Taaffe. Above: NBP depiction of "ideal" member, modeled after Hitler's stormtroopers.**

the disintegrating CPSU, or were still even in it. General Alexander Rutskoi, vice president of Yeltsin's openly pro-capitalist Russian government that was elected on the eve of the August counter-coup, was the head of a faction *within* the CPSU, the "Democratic Party of the Communists of Russia." Later Rutskoi and other prominent "patriots" such as KGB General Alexander Sterligov came out as opponents of Yeltsin's government. But in August 1991, they were the key White House defenders. As Yeltsin's vice president, Rutskoi broke the 1992 air traffic controllers strike. It was estimated that three-fourths of Yeltsin's government apparatus was made up of former CPSU party bosses.

## August 1991: Proletarian Political Revolution or Capitalist Counterrevolution

The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin's capitalist-restorationist forces in August 1991 was a pivotal event determining the fate of the Soviet Union. But it was not conclusive. There was no longer a central Soviet government presiding over USSR state organs or the governments of the constituent republics. The regimes in Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere did not rest on the solid foundation of coherent national capitalist classes. The new entrepreneurs were little more than party cronies, gangs of petty speculators and mafia hoods. Even though USSR state organs such as the Soviet Armed Forces, KGB and Militia were to varying degrees fractured, they were still in place. Yeltsin and Co. had not yet consolidated their own forces dedicated to capitalist rule.

In our August 1991 article, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counter-revolution!" which was immediately translated into Russian and distributed in over 100,000 copies throughout the Soviet

of collectivized property forms. Meanwhile, Yeltsin was moving to rapidly consolidate a capitalist state apparatus. The Soviet military command was purged, dismembered and recast into national armies, sworn to defend the anti-Soviet capitalist regimes.

## The Reactionary Legacy of Stalinism

On 7 March 1992 those Stalinists who lost out in Yeltsin's August 1991 coup entered into a formal bloc with Russian fascists and other right-wing nationalists in a "red-brown coalition." This was even codified in a formal "Declaration of the Founding of the United Opposition" in which they pledged to join a government of national unity for the purpose of combining "all the spiritual and cultural traditions developed at all stages of our history"! The signatories pledged to suppress any clash between "red" oppositionists and "white" monarchists and fascists.

Virtually every prominent Stalinist and social-democratic organization in Russia, from Viktor Anpilov's newly-founded Russian Communist Workers Party to Gorbachev's Socialist Party of Labor, joined with fascist, clerical and militarist "partners" in further injecting tsarist Great Russian chauvinism into the veins of the Soviet proletariat. By June 1992 the "red-brown" demonstrations reached a fever pitch. They surrounded Moscow's TV tower, chanting the traditional slogan of Black Hundreds terror: "Beat the Yids, Save Russia!"

You can read more about this in a leaflet we distributed in the former Soviet Union titled "Stalinist Has-Beens: Left Wing of Nationalist Counterrevolution" (WV No. 561, 16 October 1992). You will also find there the disgraceful record of the splinters of the Militant Tendency in the



Spartacist photos

**June 1993 rally of striking Donetsk miners in Ukraine. Slogans include, "Nationalism Shall Not Pass!!!" Right: ICL distributed Russian-language supplement titled *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled to striking miners.***





# UAW...

(continued from page 1)

rapidly lead to the total collapse of the auto industry, particularly GM, argue for using the threat of bankruptcy as a sword of Damocles over the head of the UAW to wring out even greater concessions as a condition for a bailout.

An op-ed piece in the *New York Times* (16 November) by retired Army general and former NATO commander Wesley Clark, titled, “What’s Good for G.M. Is Good for the Army,” argued for a bailout package for the Big Three as a “national security imperative.” Clark is representative of that wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie which understands that to maintain and project its military power abroad, the U.S. needs, as he put it, “a strong industrial base.” In fact, the main armament for the well-known M-1 Abrams tank was designed in Germany.

A *New York Times* (1 December) article notes that as part of presenting a “viable” bailout, the auto companies “may ask to delay the billions of dollars they planned to contribute to a health care fund” for the workers. *New York Times* (22 November) business columnist Joe Nocera put it baldly: “It is critical for General Motors to be able to break its contracts with both its unions and its dealers. It needs to dramatically reduce its legacy benefits, perhaps even eliminating health care benefits for union retirees. It needs to close plants. It needs to pay its workers what Toyota workers are paid in the United States—and not a penny more.” For his part, Gettelfinger has already declared, “We’re prepared to go back to the bargaining table.”

As a positive example for his plan to gut the UAW, Nocera points to the 1979 bailout of Chrysler, where the UAW bureaucrats shoved concessions down the workers’ throats with the threat that if they did not swallow them they would lose their jobs. Chrysler stayed open, increasing its profitability, while tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs, and those who didn’t were relentlessly driven to increase productivity. For his services, UAW head Doug Fraser got a seat on Chrysler’s board of directors. Over some 25 years, GM, Ford and Chrysler have axed more than 700,000 jobs in the U.S., reducing UAW membership from 1.6 million to 500,000, of whom only 150,000 work for the Big Three.

In our article on the Chrysler bailout, “No Government Handout for Bosses! Whatever Chrysler’s Worth—Give It to the Workers!” (WV No. 238, 17 August 1979), we wrote:

“The only way workers can hope to salvage this situation of sunk companies is to seize them. Not piracy but mutiny. What then? Either Chrysler is broke or it isn’t. If it is broke then the workers ought to democratically elect a board to liquidate Chrysler. But not a cent to the Wall Street shareholders of Chrysler! Let the stocks, bonds and bank debts go down the tubes. All the money from the sale of assets should go to the Chrysler workforce including the foreign workers.”

As we argued, this proposal would have provided more to the workforce than any government bailout scheme and represented a radical attack on capitalist property rights, pointing to the need for a revolutionary struggle for a workers government to expropriate the capitalist exploiters and direct the wealth of this country toward satisfying the needs of those whose labor produces it, not the profits of a few.

Today, it is not a single company that is facing bankruptcy. The current crisis in auto is part of a global financial meltdown. Auto sales in the U.S. have plummeted from 16 million last year to an annualized rate of 10.2 million cars. Across the globe, German, Japanese and



Reuters  
**GM workers in Strasbourg, France, protest temporary plant closures, October 28. Banner reads: “Protect Our Jobs and Salaries, Not the Shareholders’ Fortunes.”**

other carmakers are scaling back. An article in *Spiegel* online (25 November) was headlined, “German Auto Industry Facing the Abyss.” Layoffs and plant closings are threatened in France, Germany and Britain. Workers in Third World countries like Mexico, with a significant auto industry comprised of U.S. and other foreign-owned factories, will be hit especially hard.

In this context, we do not propose a workers’ auction of the auto industry, which would be tantamount to calling to auction off the entire domestic capitalist economy. The current burgeoning economic meltdown highlights the destructive irrationality that is inherent to the capitalist system. To solve this problem, what is desperately necessary is to arm the working class with a program of class struggle against the industrial magnates and financiers who have looted the economy, a program directed to the understanding that the workers’ interests lie in the destruction of this decaying system and its replacement with a rationally planned, socialist economy on an international scale.

## A “Workers’ Bailout”?

In an article titled “A Bailout for the Auto Industry?” (*Socialist Worker* online, 10 November), the International Socialist Organization (ISO) opines: “The issue is—or should become—what kind of auto industry bailout will take place.... Call the intervention what it is—nationalization. Throw out the management and use their compensation for investment—and put workers’ committees in control of production.” As a measure of its touching faith in the beneficence of the capitalist state, the ISO feigns “outrage” that “the government should finance Corporate America’s elimination of any more jobs” and proposes that “the Obama government should insist on a moratorium on layoffs and guarantees of job security.” Such reformist pipe dreams are a repudiation of the most elementary Marxist understanding that the capitalist state—its cops, courts, military and chief executive—exists to defend capitalist rule and profit *against* the working class, furthering its exploitation and violently repressing its struggles, not to provide for the workers’ well-being.

For its part, Workers World Party demands: “It’s past time for the UAW to call for workers’ control. If there is to be a bailout, let it be for us, the workers.” In the absence of the working class mobilized in a revolutionary battle against capitalist class rule, the call for “workers control”—which is dual power at the point of production during a revolutionary crisis—simply amounts to the workers “managing” their own continued exploitation under the continuing rule of the anarchic and irrational capitalist marketplace. Moreover, the idea that the sell-outs who head the UAW, who have sacrificed their members on the altar of maintaining the competitive edge and profitability of American capitalism, are going to call for “workers control” is about as likely as pigs flying.

The Transitional Program, written in 1938 during the Great Depression by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, addressed questions that are vital to the proletariat

today. Trotsky put forward a series of demands addressed to the economic catastrophe facing the working class and “unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.” In the face of mass unemployment, Trotsky called for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work, for a massive program of public works and for wages to rise with prices to guard against the ravages of inflation. To unmask the exploitation, robbery and fraud of the capitalist owners and the swindles of the banks, he argued that the workers should demand that the capitalists open their books “to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits.” Raising the call for the expropriation of branches of industry vital for national existence, or the most parasitic of the capitalist rulers, Trotsky underlined that such a demand must necessarily be linked to the fight for the seizure of power by the working class, as against the Stalinist and social-democratic misleaders for whom the call for nationalization was merely a prescription for bailing out capitalist enterprises.

In opposition to the capitalists and their reformist agents, Trotsky argued:

“If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

## No to Chauvinist Protectionism! Organize the Unorganized!

There is no simple trade-union solution to the situation that currently confronts the UAW—the crisis underlines the bankruptcy of capitalism. But there are demands that can and should be fought for to preserve and strengthen the fighting capacity of the working class and its allies. An elementary one is the fight to organize the rest of the auto industry in this country. Beginning in the 1980s, many plants, including those owned by foreign capitalists, were set up in the “open shop” South, where historically racist Klan terror has served as an auxiliary to the forces of the state to keep unions out. Any fight to organize the “right to work” South thus poses the centrality of the fight for black rights for labor’s cause. This question is all the more important for the UAW. Over 20 years ago, one in four black workers was a union member, concentrated in industrial unions like auto. As the “last hired, first fired,” these workers caught the brunt of the mass layoffs in auto which reduced labor/black Detroit, once known as the Motor City, to a dying urban wasteland.

The deindustrialization of America, beginning some three decades ago, has hit the black population disproportionately hard. Official unemployment for blacks is 11.4 percent, but according to some economists the actual jobless rate for all black people of working age is an astounding *42 percent*. In some black

and Latino neighborhoods in the Detroit metropolitan area, one out of every 20 households has been or is in the process of being foreclosed. As an article in the South African Johannesburg *Sunday Times* (26 October) put it, “Motown is now surely home to the world’s most skilled army of homeless people.” At the same time, black workers are at the core of many unions in this country and thus can potentially provide a living link to, and a class-struggle outlet for, the anger of the dispossessed in the inner cities.

Similarly, immigrant workers, large numbers of whom now labor in the South, provide a vital bridge to the working class in Mexico and other Third World countries, many of whom currently toil in the factories of American auto bosses that have been shipped “offshore.” In the face of the current economic crisis, immigrant workers in the U.S. are particularly vulnerable, as the immigration raids on plants in the South and elsewhere have driven home with a cold and calculating cruelty. Already, there have been massive layoffs in the heavily immigrant construction industry. In the fight to bring these workers into the unions, labor must demand: No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

While the auto bosses, the government and their media mouthpieces call for axing the health care and pension benefits of auto workers in order to salvage the profitability of the Big Three, the labor movement would find many allies if it were to take up the fight for socialized medicine—the expropriation of the parasitic health care and drug companies, who are an immediate threat to the well-being of just about everyone in this country. A fight to demand that the government extend unemployment benefits and guarantee the pensions of all workers, not leaving them dependent on the underfunded Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, would also garner many allies.

But the fight for such demands directly poses the question of the need for a political fight to oust the present sellout union tops and replace them with a class-struggle leadership. These “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class” see the world through the same lens as their “own” bourgeoisie and its government. Thus, like Gettelfinger, they seek to protect American industry against “foreign competition,” arguing that the bosses would then no longer be “forced” to extract givebacks in wages and benefits from the workers they employ. While decrying “cheap labor” abroad, the UAW has done precious little to take on the question of cheap labor here in this country, which abounds in non-union shops. Instead, Gettelfinger promises that UAW wages and benefits will soon be on a par with foreign-owned plants in the “open shop” South.

Pro-capitalist and nationally delimited in outlook, the labor bureaucracy views the “outsourcing” of jobs as nothing but an attack on the labor movement and U.S. industry. But from the standpoint of working-class internationalism, the growth in the ranks of the proletariat in the Third

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## NOTICE

**Workers Vanguard skips an issue in December.**

**Our next issue will be dated January 2.**

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of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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That Fights for a Workers Government!**

**For Socialist Revolution  
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UAW...

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World means the growth of international allies of the U.S. working class. This can be concretely seen in the car plants of Mexico, which are integral to auto production in North America. This fact poses the possibility of and necessity for joint labor action between U.S. and Mexican auto workers.

The economic slowdown in the U.S. has been accompanied by increasing calls for chauvinist protectionism by both Democratic politicians and the trade-union bureaucracy, with China being a particular target. In pushing trade protectionism against China, the labor tops combine anti-Communism with flag-waving national chauvinism. During the

Cold War era, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy was among the most rabid supporters of American imperialism against the Soviet Union. Today, these labor misleaders are directing their virulent hostility toward the People’s Republic of China in the name of “workers’ rights.”

China is not a capitalist but a workers state, albeit one that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. The fact that capitalist rule was overthrown in China by the 1949 Revolution, leading to the building of a collectivized economy, represents a historic gain for the working class internationally. Despite inroads of “market reforms,” the core of China’s economy remains collectivized. The aim of the U.S. and other imperialists is to destroy the Chinese workers state and restore bourgeois rule in order to turn the Chinese mainland into one gigantic

sweatshop for the generation of capitalist profits. The international working class must stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialist attack from without and counterrevolution from within. At the same time, we call for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic and nationalist Stalinist bureaucrats and to establish a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

In his 1940 article “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” Trotsky wrote: “The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the con-

trary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.” Two possible roads lie before the working class. There is the bureaucracy’s acquiescence to what is possible and “practical” under capitalism, which has led to disaster. Or there is the revolutionary strategy proposed by us Marxists. In the course of sharp class struggles and through patient education on the nature of capitalist society, the working class will become imbued with the consciousness of its own historic interests as a class fighting for itself and for all the oppressed.

Such consciousness requires a political expression. That means a class-struggle workers party, whose purpose is not only to improve the present conditions of the working class but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery.■

TWU...

(continued from page 3)

the stock-in-trade of Toussaint’s reformist opponents in the union, among them: Steve Downs, founding member of the now-defunct union-suing New Directions (ND) caucus, who is supported by Solidarity; one-time ND activist Marty Goodman, who is supported by Socialist Action; and Eric Josephson, who called for “critical” support for Toussaint in 2000 and is backed by the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP). There has been little opposition from these reformists to the union’s fealty to the Democratic Party.

Writing that it is “accepted as obvious by most people that the election of Barack Obama as this country’s first Black president would mark an historic victory against racism,” the LRP notes: “In one sense, it would,” because “choosing a

Black man” to lead the U.S. “would be an extraordinary shift” (*Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2008). Far from a “historic victory against racism,” the election of Obama will do nothing to change the nature of black oppression in racist capitalist America. As for Solidarity, it supported the small-time capitalist Green Party candidate Cynthia McKinney, whose purpose in running was simply to act as a shill for the Democratic Party.

This past June, Josephson, who distributes *Revolutionary Transit Worker (RTW)*, was elected vice-chair of the Track Division, running on a campaign statement that avoided the key questions of class independence facing transit workers. While his statement raised opposition to the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, it did not oppose the union’s endorsement of Obama, who has promised to keep troops in Iraq and send even more to Afghanistan.

In a letter to the editor, published in

the 22 August edition of *The Chief* under the headline “Resolve TWU Dues Crisis,” RTW supporters argue for a provisional dues “amnesty” to restore members to good standing (and voting rights) who promise to pay dues owed; these workers would lose that status if they fell behind again. This is a thinly veiled attempt to garner votes by pandering to backward workers who didn’t pay their dues, undermining the union. Despite militant-sounding rhetoric, RTW’s program at bottom is class collaboration. RTW urged that “Toussaint & Co. also have to fight vigorously for the restoration of our legal right to dues check-off.” With Toussaint’s no-strike pledge, RTW got what it wanted.

It is crucial to forge a union leadership that will enter the battle from the viewpoint of class war, not acceptance of capitalist exploitation and oppression. Union struggle can defeat the MTA’s schemes to pit different sectors of the

workforce against each other, including by organizing into the TWU with full pay and union rights the “workfare” recipients forced to do transit jobs to get welfare benefits. Against the capitalist politicians’ attempts to play off transit riders against workers, a class-struggle leadership would resurrect the TWU’s historic call for free mass transit. Rip out the turnstiles! The capitalist rulers are shelling out trillions of taxpayers’ money to shore up the parasites on Wall Street. The union must fight for billions to rebuild the mass transit system, which the capitalists have let decay for decades. Ultimately, to free society from the fetters of capitalist oppression and exploitation and provide a decent living standard for all, the working class must wrest the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class. For that, workers need their own party, a workers party that fights for a workers government.■

Russian Revolution...

(continued from page 10)

We got a firsthand feel of the miners’ social power. The strike committees virtually took over the city. We sent a team that was welcomed by the miners. From the countless political conversations I remember over the course of Moscow Station’s seven years, some of the most interesting and gratifying were those that our team had with the Donetsk coal miners. They had occupied the city square and maintained all-night vigils. We sat in circles, with only the miners’ helmet lamps to illuminate the ICL’s supplement: “How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled.”

The miners had been through a lot and appreciated that our propaganda was not focused on economic issues. They knew that the Donetsk coal basin was near exhaustion and that their social crisis required a political program. But what program? They knew what they did *not* want. I remember one banner in particular at a miners’ rally: “Nationalism Shall Not Pass!” You can read the dramatic story of this strike in WV Nos. 578 and 579 (18 June and 2 July 1993).

The 1993 strike opened up further ICL work in Ukraine, especially in Kiev. By 1994 our success in polarizing local leftists led to an organized circle of readers and the beginnings of recruitment from among young worker activists. This was precisely the kind of growth that we were counting on. But our successes drew the attention of the authorities who unleashed a hysterical outburst of media vilification and legal repression against us. The ICL was officially banned from Ukraine. We vigorously protested both internationally and across the former USSR. At our press conference in Moscow we presented statements of international solidarity against the new bosses’ campaign aimed at silencing all working-class and leftist activists. We staged rallies internationally in defense of our legality, and the rights of workers to fight the ravages of capitalist counterrevolution. But this was a very uneven battle. Not only was the proletariat demoralized, so-called leftists like the longtime Russian supporters of Alan Woods, the Rabochaya Demokratiya group centered on Sergei Biets, once again did their best to help the bosses. They actually sent us a revolting letter that in effect *endorsed* the witchhunters’ charges against us.

We were unable to overturn our banishment from Ukraine. This not only

deprived us of precious new recruits, it also tended to close an important window beyond the confines of Russia. At the same time, the costs of maintaining our presence in Russia became increasingly untenable. At our 21 January 1996 Plenum of the ICL’s International Executive Committee, we decided with great regret to suspend our direct presence in Russia.

The ascendancy of counterrevolution in the former USSR and East European deformed workers states was an unparalleled defeat for working people all over the world. It has created a “one superpower world” where the U.S. imperialists no longer feel constrained by Soviet military might. The victory of counterrevolution has devastated the ex-Soviet and East European proletariats ideologically and materially. Alongside mass pauperization in the former USSR, it resulted in waves of “ethnic cleansing” fratricidal wars in East European countries like the former Yugoslavia and within the former Soviet republics themselves.

China and the Deformed Workers States Today

I want to conclude by pointing out the relevance of our intervention in the DDR and Soviet Union to our tasks today. China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba are analogous societies to the former Soviet Union. U.S. politicians, particularly Democrats, tailed by the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, promote China-bashing and chauvinist protectionism. They aim to destroy the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution and to re-enslave China. That is why we hammer on the need for unconditional military defense of China and North Korea, including their vital nuclear armaments programs.

China is a volcano of social tensions and sooner or later it will erupt, shattering the political structure of the ruling bureaucratic caste. Then the choice will be starkly posed: proletarian political revolution or capitalist restoration. Already many tens of thousands of workers protests are breaking out every year. A proletarian political revolution in China, establishing a Chinese revolution-

ary internationalist workers government like Lenin and Trotsky’s, would truly shake the world. It would restore revolutionary Marxism to its rightful place in the eyes of the world proletariat and set off a revolutionary wave.

On the other hand, a counterrevolutionary destruction of the People’s Republic of China would unleash wars and devastation even worse than those inflicted on the former Soviet bloc. All of East Asia would become an arena of a renewed struggle between the imperialist powers.

These are the stakes! Today we are a small, international, revolutionary Marxist propaganda group. We do not know the political and organizational stages we will pass through. But what we do know is that the tide will again turn and that future workers revolutions will need a Bolshevik political arsenal. Their cadres must be educated in the experiences of the October Revolution, the early Communist International, Trotsky’s Fourth International, and the ICL—the *party of the Russian Revolution!* Join us in our fight for new Octobers!■

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- This subject index covers issues of *Workers Vanguard* published during 2008, from issue No. 905 (4 January) through the end-of-the-year issue No. 926 (5 December). During this time, *WV* was published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August, and skipping the last issue in December.
- The fullest listing is by SUBJECT. Subject headings are arranged alphabetically. Entries are listed chronologically with two exceptions: all entries comprising a series are listed together immediately following the first entry of the series; corrections immediately follow the relevant entry. An asterisk (\*) after the page location of an entry indicates that a correction follows.
- Entries are listed under subject heads. In some cases, subject heads are broken down into subcategories. These subcategories are listed immediately after the initial subject head and preceded by a dot (•). The numbers following each entry headline give the issue number, date and page number(s) for the article. Thus:  
Victory to the IAM Boeing Strike!, #920, 12 Sept. (12, 11)  
means the headline of the article, issue No. 920, dated 12 September 2008 beginning on page 12 and continuing on page 11.
- No entry is listed twice; refer to cross-references for guidance in locating the subject head for particular articles. Cross-references are of two types: those following the word "see" deal centrally with the subject head; those following the words "see also" are related articles. Subject heads in cross-references are separated by a semicolon, while subcategories of subject heads are separated by a comma. Thus:  
Padilla, Jose—See **Civil Liberties: Cases**. See also **Torture**.  
means that articles about Jose Padilla can be found by

going to the subject head **CIVIL LIBERTIES** and looking under the subcategory **Cases**. Related articles can be found by going to the subject head **TORTURE**.

- Individuals mentioned in articles are usually not a subject heading unless the article is primarily about the given person. Foreign political organizations are generally cross-referenced to their appropriate countries, while U.S. political organizations are listed under their organizational names.
- Articles relating to foreign countries are listed under geographical headings and not normally under any other subject heading. Articles which deal centrally with U.S. foreign policy will be found under **U.S.: International Relations** or under the relevant geographical heading. For example, articles about the U.S. occupation of Iraq will be found under **IRAQ**.
- Articles on protests or repression that take place on a campus will generally be found under the subject of the protest or repression. Repression on miscellaneous subjects will be found under **CAMPUS REPRESSION**.
- The periodic columns by death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal are listed under the subject heading **ABU-JAMAL** in the subcategory **Message from Death Row**; articles on his case and the campaign to free him are usually in the subcategory **Defense Campaign**.
- Articles under the *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* (CSDN) masthead are by the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian, legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League.
- Abbreviations used in entries are:  
C: Correction  
CSDN: *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* article  
E: Editorial Note  
L: Letter  
S: Series  
W&R: *Women and Revolution* article  
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**BLACK QUESTION**—And see **Abu-Jamal: Defense Campaign, Message from Death Row; Civil Liberties: Cases; Longshoremen; New Orleans; Quote of the Week; U.S.: Elections**. See also **Abu-Jamal: Calls to Action; Death Penalty; Economy; Gay Rights; Labor; Labor Black Leagues; Meatpackers; Police; Progressive Labor Party; Transit Workers**.

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