

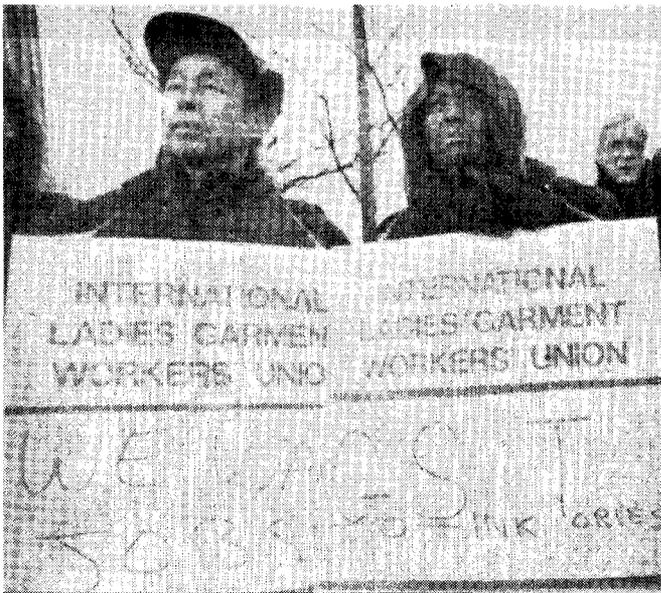
SPARTACIST

CANADA

Summer 1991 No. 84 25¢

Chauvinism, Racism and the Rise of the Reform Party

For Labor Action Against Capitalist Austerity!



Fred Lum/Globe and Mail



Bob Wilson/Colorphoto

Garment workers in Toronto, government employees in New Brunswick: workers are getting shafted coast to coast. The integrated, organized working class has the muscle to strike back.

The unemployment lines keep growing, factory after factory is shutting its gates for good, and everywhere you look there's deep disaffection with the powers-that-be in Ottawa and the provinces.

With the economy in free-fall in the worst recession since the 30s, working people are getting gouged, and gouged but good. Industrial output plummeted six percent in the last year, the steepest decline of any major capitalist country. Retail sales shrank four percent in January and again the following month. Bankruptcies are at the highest level in history. In

Ontario alone, a quarter million jobs—700 a day—were axed in the last year. In December and January, steel and auto plants closed at the rate of two a week. Unemployment has soared to an official 10.5 percent—one and a half million people. In Montreal, 13 percent are out of work. In the Northern Ontario mining town of Elliot Lake, it's 63 percent.

Behind the statistics lie desperate poverty and deprivation. No less than 600,000 people are forced to turn to food banks every month to get by and feed their kids. In Quebec, years of

(continued on page 10)

Fascist Murder in Saskatchewan

On the frigid night of January 28, 48-year-old Native trapper Leo LaChance was shot in the back as he left a gun shop in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He died six hours later of massive internal injuries. Leo LaChance's killer was the gun shop owner, one Carney Nerland, provincial leader of the neo-Nazi "Church of Jesus Christ Christian—Aryan Nations."

"If I'm convicted of killing that Indian," this white-supremacist assassin bragged to a cop, "I should get a medal, and you should pin it on me." The cops quickly declared the shooting "accidental," even though Nerland had fired two rounds into the floor at his victim's feet before leveling it at LaChance. One provincial jail guard who witnessed the shooting said nothing, while another offered to post Nerland's bail! The chairman of the local Indian-Métis Friendship Centre wondered aloud how many of the local cops and jail guards were themselves Aryan Nations members. (Many were regular customers at Nerland's gun shop, which prominently displayed a portrait of Adolf Hitler.)

Prince Albert police chief Greg McCallagh admitted Nerland had been known to the cops for years under the alias "Kurt Meyer." (Kurt Meyer was an SS general who executed Canadian POWs in Normandy after D-Day.) In 1985, "Meyer" was stopped at the U.S. border with a carload of Nazi propaganda. But McCallagh announced that the police "could find no linkage at all to suggest a motive in relation to [Nerland's] association with the Aryan Nations" (*Star-Phoenix* [Saskatoon], 1 February)! Citing this "honest belief," the Crown Attorney refused to lay a murder charge. In April, in the tradition of deeply racist Saskatchewan "justice," a provincial court gave Nerland a slap on the wrist: four years for manslaughter, with parole eligibility in *eight months*.

Of course, Saskatchewan cops themselves have never needed a special "motive" to "kill Indians," like 17-year-old Marlin Pippin, gunned down by Regina police in 1989. From the barren Treaty Six reserves to the streets of Regina and Prince Albert, deadly state terror against Native people is the distilled essence of the racist oppression of capitalist society.

Those Native people the cops or the diseases of poverty don't kill often die in jail, victims of suicide or the racist screws. In the maximum security Saskatchewan Penitentiary, 40 percent of the prison population is Indian. In the provincial



Canadian Press

Killer Carney Nerland (left) with Aryan Nations *fürher* Terry Long at Caroline, Alberta, compound.

jails the figure is closer to 80 percent. Prince Albert in particular, a town of 35,000 built on the margin of the largely Native-populated northern bush, is a grotesque monument to what Bishop Desmond Tutu called "Canada's apartheid." As much a penal colony as a city, "P.A." contains six prisons, where more than 600 white guards victimize Native inmates with impunity.

The growth in Saskatchewan of neo-Nazi groups like the Alberta-based Aryan Nations is hardly an aberration. Notwithstanding its pretentious reputation as the birthplace of medicare and the "progressive" populism of the CCF, in the 1920s Saskatchewan was the Canadian base of the Ku Klux Klan. Four thousand strong, the KKK held huge rallies and burned crosses to terrorize Catholic immigrants and Native people across the province. Anti-French bigotry also spurred the growth of the KKK, as Western Conservatives like Prince Albert's John Diefenbaker thundered for "one language, one flag, one country."

Today, the disintegration of the farm/resource-based Saskatchewan economy and the resurgence of chauvinist antagonisms have created a culture medium for organized fascist violence. Like the rural backwaters of Orange Ontario and the Alberta foothills, the northern fringe of the Prairies provides a spawning ground for small, well-financed and heavily armed fascist groups like the Aryan Nations and KKK. Native people, socially isolated and largely defenseless, become their inevitable target.

Increasingly, however, the fascist vermin have sought to penetrate major proletarian centers on the West Coast and in Ontario and Quebec. The KKK and the "Young Aryan Movement" were prominent in the pogromist mobs which rampaged against the Mohawks at Châteauguay near Montreal last summer. It is in such industrial centers, where the social power of the organized labor movement can be brought to

SPARTACIST CANADA

Newspaper of the Trotskyist League, Canadian sympathizing section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

EDITORIAL BOARD: John Masters (Editor), Jane Clancy, Marie Hayes, Asha Jugdutt, Maria Lianos, Miriam McDonald, Andrew Rodomar, Oliver Stephens, Janet Yeung

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Russell Stoker

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Peter Stevens

BUSINESS MANAGER: M. McPherson

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

Published quarterly by the Spartacist Canada Publishing Association, Box 6867, Stn. A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X6. Printed in a union shop by union labor. Second Class Mail Registration 8161. Return postage guaranteed. ISSN: 0229-5415

Summer 1991

Date of issue: June 1991

Rail Union Says: "Jamal Must Not Die!"

On June 7 the United Transportation Union—Canada, representing over 12,000 railworkers, went on record to demand, "Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!" On a motion by a delegate from Jasper, Alberta, the union's convention, held near Vancouver, noted that "Mumia Abu-Jamal faces the death penalty because of his political acts and beliefs" and that "the death penalty is barbaric and an outrage against justice and decency." The delegates, from all over Canada, resolved to "send an urgent protest to Pennsylvania governor Robert Casey demanding that he not permit the legal murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal" and to "urge our union brothers and sisters, especially in other rail and transportation unions, to join with us in this demand."

A renowned American black journalist, Jamal sits on death row in Pennsylvania's Huntingdon prison, victim of a vicious racist state vendetta. The Philadelphia cops have been after him for over 20 years—from his days as a Black Panther Party spokesman in 1968 to his support of the radical black MOVE organization as a journalist known for his defense of the poor and oppressed minorities. Now they want to lynch him "legally."

"Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!" is becoming the rallying cry of opponents of the barbaric death penalty internationally. Nearly 40,000 individuals have signed statements on Jamal's behalf, while unions representing millions more have stood up for him. In Canada union locals of postal and phone workers, fishermen, public employees, and the Metro Toronto Labour Council, along with community, black, gay and women's organizations have joined the fight. You can too! Get your organization to demand Jamal's freedom. Send letters of protest to Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey, Main Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Trotskyist League, has available a special video about Jamal's life plus tapes of Jamal speaking, posters, leaflets, petitions, bundles of *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. Get yours today! And send your much-needed donations to: PDC, Box 314, Station B, Toronto, Ont. M5T 2W1 or call (416) 593-4138.

bear, that the race terrorists can and must be met, and crushed in the egg.

The struggle against fascism, as Leon Trotsky pointed out decades ago, "begins in the factory—and ends in the street." As the murder of Leo LaChance starkly illustrates, social-democratic calls for reliance on the cops, courts and legislatures to stop the nightriders and brownshirts are patently suicidal—not least for Native people. In contrast, communists look to mass labor-centered mobilizations to stop the fascists. The forerunner of the Aryan Nations, the anti-Semitic postwar movement of Gerald L.K. Smith in California, was smashed by such mobilizations, fought for and participated in by the

then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party.

The International Communist League continues that class-struggle tradition. Most recently, on March 28, our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. joined with the Partisan Defense Committee and others to mobilize a successful 1,500-strong protest against the appearance of Louisiana Klansman David Duke in Boston. The fascists feed on the poverty, the homelessness, the racist state terror that are part and parcel of capitalism. We need a fighting workers party which can speak as a tribune of all the oppressed and lead the working people to power, sweeping the fascist killers away in the fight for socialist revolution. ■

PDC-initiated 1,500-strong demonstration against appearance of Louisiana Klansman David Duke in Boston, March 28. Labor and minorities have the social power to stop the fascists in their tracks.



Workers Vanguard

East Germany: From Political Revolution to Capitalist Counterrevolution



Der Spiegel



AP

Anti-bureaucratic mass demonstrations (left) brought down Stalinist regime. Nascent political revolution was derailed by imperialists and social democrats with money and revanchist nationalism (right).

German Spartakist Speaks at TL Educational

We print below an edited version of a talk given by Toralf Endruweit of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) at a recent educational meeting of the Trotskyist League of Canada.

Comrade Endruweit was a young apprentice mechanic in the DDR. In his talk he traces the course of events in the former East German workers state—from the eruption of a nascent political revolution against the seemingly encrusted Stalinist regime of Erich Honecker in the fall of 1989, through the massive campaign of imperialist destabilization which led to the victory of the parties of capitalist restoration in the March 18, 1990 elections in the DDR, to the consolidation of the imperialist takeover of East Germany which is being realized today in the complete leveling of the economy and destruction of every social gain that existed in the DDR.

The DDR was a *deformed* workers state where despite a planned economy, collectivized property and related social gains such as subsidized housing, day care, abortion rights and full employment, the workers were politically denied direct and democratic control of their society through the rule of their

own freely elected workers councils. A bureaucratic caste lorded over them. The bureaucracy's stranglehold over economic, political and cultural life, combined with its treacherous policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism—in this case the powerful West German bourgeoisie which loomed directly across the border—not only made a mockery of communism but undermined the defense of the social gains of the DDR.

In 1989, all of these accumulated contradictions came to a boil. Following the fall of the Honecker regime in October, an incipient political revolution swelled in a euphoric wave. Propelled by the evident crumbling of the palsied bureaucracy which was no longer able to rule in the old way, the masses had completely lost confidence in their rulers. Millions were looking for the road to fight for genuine socialism as was reflected at the time in banners with slogans like "For Communist Ideals! No Privileges!" While there was a vacuum of leadership, the sheer determination and sense of social justice which prevailed at the time was shown by the outpouring of a quarter of a million people to protest the fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial at Treptow Park in Berlin in early January.

At this point, rushing to fill the void and to derail the potentially revolutionary situation, Western imperialism, with the able assistance of its Social Democratic lackeys, launched a concerted campaign of economic and political destabilization

which led to the landslide victory of the parties of capitalist reunification in the March 18, 1990 elections. This vote reflected not only massive false consciousness and illusions in the lying promises of wealth offered by the Western capitalist parties but a deepgoing sense of disorientation and demoralization.

In the absence of an authoritative revolutionary internationalist party to mobilize the proletariat to replace the rule of the corrupt Stalinist regime with the rule of workers councils the nascent political revolution could not succeed: ultimately either the workers had to take power or capitalist counterrevolution would become ascendant. The decisive missing element in East Germany was the organized and leading participation of the working class.

Fifty years of Stalinist rule had left the proletariat atomized and with little collective experience of independent struggle. At the same time the workers experienced a profound sense of betrayal at the revelations of their leaders' corruption and mismanagement. Quickly there followed the demoralizing spectacle of the PDS (the renamed successor to the SED, the Stalinist former ruling party) simply capitulating before the imperialists' drive for capitalist restoration, which was given the green light by Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev's acceptance of the takeover of the DDR by the Fourth Reich.

The International Communist League was the only tendency which waged a concerted fight against the capitalist reunification of Germany. We warned against the mass unemployment, the attacks on women and foreign workers, the vicious anti-Communist witchhunts and the growth of fascist forces which were brought with the capitalist annexation of the DDR. The main campaign slogan of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany in the March 18 elections was, "No to Capitalist Reunification—For a Germany of Workers Councils!" As our election manifesto declared:

"Stalinism has wretchedly demonstrated its bankruptcy. But no one has the right to hand over to capital what millions have created! We must defend our social gains and our workers state. We have much to lose and everything to win!... Today a resolute struggle by workers in the DDR can be the spark for BRD [West German] workers to beat back the attacks of the bosses and open the way to real class struggle, for power: *social revolution* in the West."

Comrade Endruweit was one of many from the DDR who were won to the banner of the ICL. His first public political speech was given before the mass anti-fascist demonstration at Treptow. He was a candidate of the SpAD in the March 18 elections. He was also an SpAD candidate in the December Reichstag elections where we called for workers' resistance—East and West—to the catastrophic consequences of the imperialist *Anschluss*.

* * *

What was life like politically in the DDR, before October 1989? The Honecker regime suppressed any opposition and any independence within the factories and the unions. Anybody who wanted to do political work outside the SED ended up in the church, because the church really had the only freedom, more or less, in the DDR. I was an apprentice and pretty eager to join the working class. I thought: "Okay, we're going to do it, we're going to join a union now, we're going to change this thing here." But I found out that it was not possible to do anything independently or anything oppositionist in the union or in the factory. It was immediately suppressed by the party representatives in the factory. So I ended up going to the

church for political classes, political study groups. But I was against the church and had to leave. So I ended up alone and independent and didn't find any group.

For a while I seriously considered joining the SED. Both my parents were in the SED. There were many kids who were upset that their parents were in the party, but I was always kind of proud of the education I got from my parents. My mother and a colleague of mine were both in the party and I decided to ask them some questions to get a picture of what was going on in the SED. It was a couple of years after Gorbachev introduced "perestroika" in the Soviet Union. I asked what was being discussed inside the party about perestroika. Both said "What are you talking about?" They didn't know anything about perestroika, and they didn't discuss it at all. With that I got a picture that political life was totally suppressed in the SED and decided not to join.

The Beginnings of Protest in the DDR

On March 7, 1989 there was the last election of the Stalinist government. Of course the usual 98 percent voted for Honecker and his crew. But at that time the economy was stalling and the contradictions between how workers lived before, between what they got told in the paper and what they had in the shops, were increasing. So the movement of these petty-bourgeois religious people started to get stronger.

On the 7th of every month starting in March 1989 there was a demonstration organized on Alexanderplatz in the center of East Berlin. At that time, some people actually called it "permanent revolution." But it was always pretty mild. On the other hand you also had openly capitalist restorationist forces who would demonstrate near the Berlin Wall, screaming "Down with the Wall!"

By October 1989 the group Neues Forum was the biggest opposition group. The membership was mainly artists, religious people, intellectuals and more privileged people—petty-bourgeois simply. They organized a petition against the Honecker government calling for a "third way." I think they even talked about socialism in this petition. So they were not

(continued on page 6)



SC photo

Participants in TL educational weekend in Toronto discuss presentation on the German events.

East Germany...

(continued from page 5)

talking openly about capitalism. They were able to organize massive demonstrations. The biggest one was on October 7, 1989 the same day as one of the anti-election demonstrations, and the same day as a party celebrating the birthday of the DDR republic. There were thousands marching through the streets in East Berlin. It couldn't be denied any more that there was something going on.

Honecker was toppled, one of his followers took over but there was no change at all. So people kept demonstrating and it became bigger and bigger. But there was no independent action by the working class, there were no organized workers' contingents in these demonstrations. It was led by this petty-bourgeois religious/artistic milieu, and mainly youth attended. On November 4, one million demonstrated. The main issue in these demonstrations was the freedom to travel—to see what's outside. The main opposition was against the Berlin Wall, not against the Wall as a protection against capitalism but as a bar to traveling around to see the world.

The Stalinists finally opened the Wall on November 9. At that time nobody was openly talking about restoring capitalism or anything like that. The main thing was: "We need a third way," "We don't want what they have in the West." I also went over to the West on November 9. A couple of days later I got the first leaflet of the Trotskyist League of Germany [Trotskyistische Liga Deutschlands—TLD] which called for workers and soldiers councils and for the communism of Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg. I was pretty excited, that was exactly what I was looking for. I went immediately to the office and talked with the comrades.

There was a political revolution in the beginning. There were millions on the street in East Berlin and Leipzig and throughout the country calling for some sort of socialism, no slogans for capitalism. The International Communist League sent all available forces to Germany to participate in the struggle and try to turn it into a real political revolution, for a real workers state: for political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West, to fight for a red soviet

Germany.

We established a daily newspaper, *Arprekorr*, early in December. At that time the workers were still not an independent force in this struggle. They were used by these petty-bourgeois and other milieus. The old Stalinist hard-core clique simply vanished. They broke down, imploded. We called for the founding of Spartakist Gruppen in the East, calling for a Leninist-egalitarian party to lead the struggle.

In order to fight for a Trotskyist party to finish the political revolution, we looked to the working class and especially to the immigrant forces of the East German working class. We had greetings and propaganda in Spanish for the Cuban workers, in Vietnamese and Polish, and in Portuguese for the Mozambican and Angolan workers. We had Russian-language propaganda for soldiers and officers of the Red Army, which we saw as a force to defend the DDR.

Treptow Anti-Fascist Demonstration: The Turning Point

German nationalism was on the rise, the fascists raised their heads. Then came the fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial in Treptow in one of the last days of 1989. There was a little rally to protest against this in which we participated with the German-Soviet Friendship Society. On the last day of 1989 we went to the Central Committee house of the SED to push for a united-front protest action to protect and honor the Soviet memorial in Treptow. They said they were under so much pressure they couldn't do it. We went also to the East German trade union, and to other forces to build this united-front action at Treptow.

In the next issue of their paper *Neues Deutschland*, the SED issued a call on the front page for the demonstration. They claimed that they had called for it. But at the same time the radio was always broadcasting *our* call which said that the Trotskyist League of Germany and the Spartakist Gruppen are calling for a demonstration in Treptow, against the desecration, against fascism and to honor the Soviet army. So people knew it was us who initiated this demonstration.

Actually, we produced more leaflets than the SED did to build this united-front action. We were inside the factories trying to organize contingents of workers for the demonstration. The SED was already so discredited and so ashamed that they just stopped with a car in front of the factories and dropped some leaflets. That was their building for the demonstration. On the other hand, workers were looking towards the SED, because many still saw it as the leading force in the DDR.

A quarter of a million people came out to the Treptow demonstration after they saw the ad on the front page of *Neues Deutschland*. We Trotskyists were able to speak to a quarter of a million people in the middle of a political revolution in East Germany. We called for workers and soldiers soviets, for *revolutionary* reunification, for a red soviet Germany within a socialist United States of Europe.

There were a significant number of political organizations and groupings which spoke at that demonstration. A guy from the Liberal Democratic Party had just come from the Round Table (a semi-advisory body which was incorporated into the DDR government and included not only the decomposing Stalinist party but right-wing Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and dissident groups such as Neues Forum and the United Left). He told the masses that we have to talk to the fascists, that we have to give them a tribune so that they can

SPARTACIST CANADA

Marxist Working-Class Quarterly of the Trotskyist League

- \$2/4 issues of *Spartacist Canada* (overseas airmail \$5)
- \$10/24 issues of *Workers Vanguard*, biweekly newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.
- \$12/10 issues of *Le Bolchéviek* (surface \$8)
- \$4/3 issues of *Women and Revolution*
- \$3/10 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard*

SC and WV subscriptions include English-language *Spartacist*
Le Bolchéviek subscriptions include French-language *Spartacist*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____ Phone _____

Order from/pay to: Spartacist Canada Publishing,
 Box 6867, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X6

SC84



Berlin, 3 January 1990: 250,000 join in Spartakist-initiated anti-Nazi protest. German Trotskyist banner (top left) reads: "Down with NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!"

express their views and we can fight against these views. He got booed down.

Renate Dahlhaus who spoke for the TLD also got booed. What was the situation? The SED sent a couple of buses of Stasi members and shills. They were supposed to call for some kind of new Stasi, just with a different name, and they were supposed to boo us down. But we stayed there and presented our revolutionary program to these quarter of a million people. We sold tens of thousands of copies of literature. After our interventions some people gave back their paper. But hundreds of people came to us and bought the paper. We had a meeting afterwards where we discussed with DDR policemen, with soldiers, officers and workers. We were not just the only ones who were calling for a revolutionary reunification, for a government of workers councils: we were also the only ones who had the program to stop the fascists.

The bourgeois media in the West recognized very well what kind of threat this demonstration was. A day later they began a huge smear campaign against it. For one day, even the SED struck back. But two days later they capitulated and said, "Okay, sorry, it was a mistake." Today, anybody who participated in this demonstration, including the United Left for instance, all consider it was a mistake. It was supposedly simply a meeting to build for the election of the SED, to re-establish a new Stasi. Today nobody has anything but smears to say about this demonstration, except us. It was the biggest anti-fascist—and pro-Soviet, pro-socialist—demonstration in Germany ever. But it was a marking stone because the bourgeoisie recognized what kind of threat it was and began massively attacking. The SED bureaucracy just capitulated. They were crawling on their belly.

In January, people were still demonstrating, workers were fighting, we were intervening. We fused the most advanced elements of the Spartakist Gruppen with the Trotskyist League of Germany to form the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, to build a nucleus for a Trotskyist party of all Germany. We were the only ones who built a party to fight to unite the struggles of the East and the West German working class as one.

Stalinist Sellout of the DDR

In the middle of January, Hans Modrow (the president of the PDS "caretaker" government in the DDR) made his trip to Moscow for negotiations. He came back and called for a

currency union. He said "Deutschland, einig Vaterland" ("Germany, one fatherland"), which was the same slogan being used at that time in Leipzig, where fascists began to take over the demonstrations. This was a real turning point in the morale and in the consciousness of the people in the DDR.

I recall a sale I had the day afterwards, in the morning, at a factory in East Berlin. No one would even look at us. A couple of days before, everyone bought the paper. But the day after Modrow said "Okay, it's all over, one fatherland now," people were totally demoralized. At that time in Berlin there was supposed to be a fascist party congress. Our main call was for workers and soldiers brigades against the fascists. People thought we were from Mars or something, they didn't know what we were talking about. So I changed my pitch to sell the paper, and said: "Modrow gave the DDR away as a gift." Then everybody was saying, "What's that? What did you say?" That was addressing exactly what they were thinking about.

The PDS was calling for a confederation of East and West Germany and for a currency union—peddling the treacherous illusion there could be some kind of reunification while still preserving the social gains of the DDR. When the election campaign began the PDS' main slogan in a Rostock election leaflet was: "We are one people, 1:1" (referring to the exchange for the currency union). We had decided to run in these elections to get a platform to spread our program against capitalist reunification. We were able to get several TV appearances. We distributed over a million pieces of literature. We got platforms all over the country to campaign against capitalist reunification.

You know what happened in the elections. The majority were attracted to the idea of getting hard currency, getting a good life. And the majority voted for the Deutschmark, for the Christian Democrats (CDU).

I want to give an example of workers' consciousness at that time, a little episode. There was a strike of garbagemen in this town in the south and we sent a comrade there. First he went to the trade union office in the main factory to meet union reps there, to ask about the strike. There were still some PDS bureaucrats in the trade union office. They said: "What, you want to go to this garbagemen's strike? Don't go there, it's terrible, low consciousness." When our comrade arrived in the yard where the garbagemen were striking against the privatization of their company, they said: "We were waiting

(continued on page 8)

East Germany...

(continued from page 7)

for you, comrade. You're the Spartakists, yes? You're the first to come here. You're the only ones who are addressing us."

Our comrade pulled out our newspaper and a worker hung it on the bulletin board, beside a poster for Kohl (the head of the CDU government in West Germany). Our comrade was pretty puzzled and asked him: "What's that? What's this Kohl picture here? Why do you put *Spartakist* beside that?" So the workers said: "Well, you know, there aren't many choices. We want to have freedom and if we want to have freedom we have to vote Spartakist for workers democracy. But we would also like to have the D-Mark and in order to have the D-Mark we have to vote Kohl and the CDU."

That gives a little example of what the consciousness at that time was, and also gives a picture that we were already widely known through our election campaign in the DDR. There were actually workers who considered that the real choice, the only real left force, was the Spartakists. On the other hand there



Winkler/Neues Deutschland

Harbor workers in Rostock protest the threatened shutdown of East German shipbuilding industry.

was the offer to get a supposedly good life with the Deutschmark. Unfortunately, we were not strong enough to shift the balance our way.

These garbagemen were threatened with privatization of their company. Everything in the DDR was going to be destroyed by the Western bourgeoisie. The Stalinists did nothing except to say: "We invite you to take over. Here, take it." They didn't even sell it for a good price. There was this huge pressure of the Western bourgeoisie which just moved in without any considerable hindrance.

At the time the German bourgeoisie moved in, Nazi terror escalated. I just read an article a couple of days ago in the *New York Times* which said there was already Nazi terror in the East before, but nobody was able to write about it. This is total bull. It's true that the Stasi used the Nazis to split some oppositionist youth movements, used them to smash the punks and stuff like that. But today the Nazis are *killing* immigrant

workers, terrorizing leftists, desecrating Jewish cemeteries and Soviet soldiers' memorials.

Even the Modrow PDS government pushed anti-Polish nationalism. They didn't allow Polish people to go shopping in East German shops. The same thing happened when Polish people came to West Berlin to buy in the Aldi supermarket chain. We tried to build a united-front action against this. But we were the only ones who would demonstrate to defend the Polish people's right to go shopping in Germany.

Poland and the DDR were facing the same austerity, the same restorationist drive. We published Polish propaganda. There was a railroad strike we went to in Poland and did work there. We called for revolutionary unity of the German, Polish, and Soviet working class.

We succeeded in winning a considerable group of army officers in a little northern army town in the DDR, officers who were opposed to the right turn of the PDS, who wanted to stay communist, who wanted to fight against capitalist reunification. There was a very hard fight to break them from Stalinism, but we were able to win a considerable number of those officers. These are really very good recruits.

Don Alexander, a Central Committee member of the Spartacist League/U.S., gave a speaking tour of Germany. In this army town, we were able to draw Vietnamese and Mozambican workers to Don's forum. It was very interesting to see the Vietnamese and Mozambicans facing a black American Trotskyist—both because he was from the U.S.A., which was defeated in Vietnam by the Vietnamese workers, and because he was a black man from the U.S.A. addressing Mozambican workers in the DDR. That was a very important thing to do.

Capitalist Takeover of East Germany

Finally there came the currency union. The head of the Bundesbank, the government bank in West Germany, first said, "This is going to be a disaster, it's going to cause a crisis. We can't do this right now." They called him into Kohl's office. Two hours later he gave another press conference and said: "Okay, don't worry. We're going to do it." That was one of the steps of the counterrevolution which changed the DDR workers state into a capitalist country.

You walked down the street in East Berlin or wherever and you thought that there's a film going in reverse motion. It was strange. It was really depressing to see your own country, where you grew up and which you defended, going backwards—becoming capitalist. This was true for all East German comrades and also the West German comrades who grew up politically with a felt commitment to the unconditional defense of the DDR.

There's no date that we could name and say: "This is the date the DDR became a capitalist country." It was a process with a number of dates. There was the currency union which formally put both economies together into an all-German capitalist economy. There was the formal act of reunification on October 3, 1990. There was also the Soviet Army which got an order from Moscow not to defend the DDR. This priest, who had refused to be drafted for the East German army, became the Minister for Defense and he handed over the East German army to the Bundeswehr (the West German military).

At the same time there was workers' resistance against the drive for capitalist restoration. We were doing our work in the factories and we said, just one strike in the East, if it would spread to the West, could be the spark for a real workers' resistance East and West against capitalist reunification. Then

there was a strike in Rottleberode, a little mining town in the south. These guys didn't get a good deal with the West German bourgeoisie which was supposed to take over their mine. So they began a strike, at first a hunger strike.

They took over the offices, the telex machines, and sent telexes to all other mines in the East in order to call for support and solidarity for their strike. Immediately, there were 2,500 miners striking. We went down there right away, distributing *Spartakist*, and workers said, "The *real* left is coming now." We had political discussions and tried to convince them that they have to fight to spread their struggle to the West. A couple of hours later Modrow came and said to the workers, "Well, if you had voted for the PDS this wouldn't happen here." Then he said, "Okay, I'll go to the office now and phone De Mazière (the head of the government installed in East Germany following the March 18 elections) in Berlin. He has to come down here to do a deal, to give you your money. This strike has to be resolved peacefully and you should get what you want." De Mazière was very pleased to solve this strike, and talked to a workers delegation and promised them all kinds of money.

That was at the end of the week in September last year. Through the telexes, tens of thousands of miners had already promised to strike in solidarity with these miners if they didn't get what they wanted. They promised to start the strike the following Monday. So Modrow played his role, which every Social Democrat in the West has played to betray strikes, saying, "Don't worry, don't strike, you'll get your money."

The workers believed it and stopped striking, so there was no tens of thousands-strong miners strike in the DDR. *Neues Deutschland* published a statement: "This is a victory: the miners will get their money." Of course they didn't. Nobody would pay them. Nobody would give them more money. It was just a big fake. The PDS acted fast enough to promise them anything and to betray the strike.

In the regional paper of the PDS they said explicitly: "We are the *real* social-democratic party in Germany." They *want* to be social democrats; the only problem is that in the Fourth Reich there is no place for *two* social-democratic parties. So the PDS got witchhunted, because the Western social democrats of the SPD didn't want them. And what happens if such a party gets witchhunted? They witchhunt within themselves, against the more left wing inside their own party!

There were two PDS treasurers, Pohl and Langnitschke, who were afraid that all the party's money would be taken away. So they made a deal and sent this money to the Soviet Union to save it for the PDS. PDS leader Gregor Gysi personally was responsible for having his own comrades sent to jail. When he heard about this deal he phoned the cops in West Berlin, he phoned the prosecutor, he phoned the Minister of the Interior of West Berlin to get Pohl and Langnitschke out of his office. And he sent them to jail. We defended Pohl and Langnitschke and demanded their immediate release.

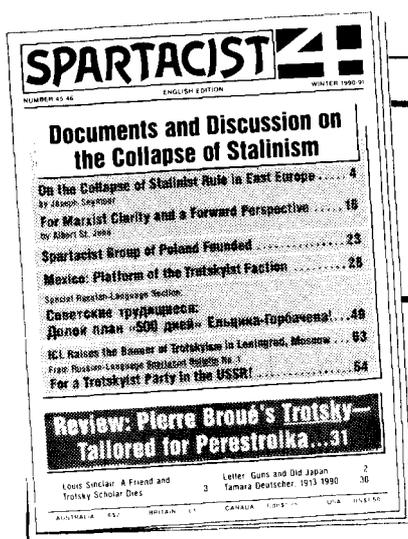
On October 3, there was the formal act of reunification. There was a pretty depressing and very quiet "celebration." People were not very happy—there were already long unemployment lines. The next elections were prepared, not for an East German government but for a Reichstag government of all of Germany. We ran once again. This time we were able to introduce our program to the West German people through TV spots. Our slogan was for workers' resistance East and West against the Fourth Reich, against the consequences of the reunification. We got hundreds of phone calls, hundreds of letters, mainly from the West.

We did a radio spot which mainly had the same text as the TV spot, which among other things said: "The PDS and Gorbachev gave away the DDR as a gift to the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz." The East Berlin radio stations banned the word Auschwitz. They put a beep over it, so it said: "The PDS and Gorbachev gave away the DDR to the bourgeoisie of beep." We ran a suit against this, which we won. You're not supposed to say "Auschwitz" in Germany (because the government, which includes many former Nazis, wants to hide the heinous legacy of the Third Reich). But the East German radio stations banned it because you couldn't say anything like that against the PDS, they were still pretty much Stalinist and PDS-influenced in these radio stations.

At that time there was some workers' resistance going on. The SPD social democrats busted the East German trade unions. They fired all the functionaries of the unions and mainly took over the membership—as an "anti-Stalinist fight." So now you're in the same union as your brother in a West German factory. But don't think your union will fight for you to get the same pay as your brother in the West.

There was a railroad cargo strike in East Germany. We were working in Hamburg trying to spread the strike to the

(continued on page 10)



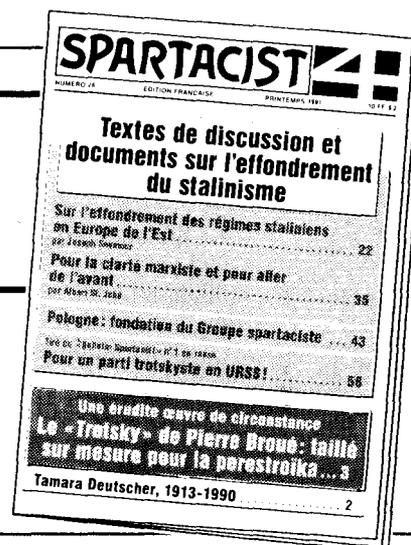
Now Available!

Spartacist No. 45-46 (English edition)
(64 pages) \$1.75

Spartacist n° 26 (édition française)
(56 pages) 2,00\$

English-language *Spartacist* is sent to all SC and WV subscribers.
French-language *Spartacist* is sent to all *Le Bolchévique* subscribers.

Order from/pay to: Spartacist Canada
Publishing, Box 6867, Station A,
Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X6



East Germany...

(continued from page 9)

West and there were some small solidarity strikes in Hamburg. But, a couple of hours before the West German unions agreed to strike in solidarity with their East German brothers, the union leadership busted the strike. They said, "Okay, it's all over, we got a deal."

In Germany, it is legally required that 90 percent of the workers have to agree in order to start a strike, but only 25 percent of the workers have to agree with the deal they finally make with the bourgeoisie. They were not even able to get this 25 percent in the first round of the vote. They had to extend the vote for a couple of hours. They went to those locals which weren't on strike in order to get the 25 percent against the strike, and finally they did. So once again workers' resistance was busted by the SPD trade union leadership with significant help from the PDS.

Conditions became worse and worse—rent, housing, jobs, for women. The Autonomen squatted in a number of apartment blocks in East Berlin. The West German police sent in three thousand cops to smash them. There was a barricade fight which was pretty hard-fought. (There were no East German cops participating in this because they couldn't mobilize them against their own people.) The massive police assault on the Autonomen squatters was a sign to everybody in Germany: this is going to happen to you if you oppose

the bourgeoisie.

There has been a more or less consistent struggle of workers against the effects of reunification. Now it's led to a real change in consciousness. People really found out what capitalist restoration means—abortion was attacked; immigrants got killed in the streets; hundreds of thousands got laid off and hundreds of thousands more layoffs were announced; women were forced to go back home to take care of cooking and children. People were demonstrating again. They learned what they had voted for. They called for the resignation of the government.

Suddenly we were not swimming against the stream any more. Suddenly we were with the masses, and we stood out as being right for what we said before. We were successful in selling our press and gaining new contacts, particularly in the south. But the PDS and the trade union leadership did everything to quell these demonstrations, and they succeeded.

Today many people are demoralized. They got betrayed by Stalinists, they got taken in by Kohl and his D-Mark, they got betrayed by the social-democratic trade union leadership. We published a leaflet in our press, asking: "Who was right? Who had the right positions and who was wrong?" This leaflet had a great impact, particularly among PDS members. There was a party, there was an International, which told the truth to the masses. There will be a day that people will recognize this party and we will hopefully then be able to lead the struggle for a real, successful workers revolution. ■

Labor Action...

(continued from page 1)

accumulated \$100-million-plus cuts in welfare mean hunger is once again endemic among children in east-end Montreal. Mulroney's regressive GST and screw-the-poor budget have been followed by one provincial wage freeze after another. And governments from Newfoundland to B.C. keep concocting new so-called "sin taxes" to inflict on the people. If owning a home in Toronto or Vancouver has long been an impossible dream, now you virtually have to take out a mortgage to buy a pack of smokes. In New Brunswick, a carton will set you back sixty-five bucks. (In neighboring Maine it's less than \$20. Add gas at barely half the price, and you'd be an idiot *not* to cross-border shop.)

Meanwhile talk of Canada itself coming apart at the seams has become a commonplace. As bigots stomp on *fleur-de-lys* flags in eastern Ontario, bourgeois nationalism is ascendant in Quebec where sovereignty of some sort seems increasingly inevitable. Literally millions all over the country are fed up, thinking that business-as-usual, the politicians, etc., are utterly bankrupt. None of the "old line" federal parties command much support, with the governing Tories about as low as you can go (though they're still ahead of the Rhinoceros Party). And the New Democrats pledge only to uphold the same capitalist system that created the mess in the first place, while in Ontario they preside over unprecedented economic collapse.

With UIC at near-starvation levels, and welfare a whole lot worse, with one in six kids living "officially" in poverty, the ruling rich are lording it over workers and the poor while running this country into the ground. The working class needs to take the power from their hands through socialist



SC photo

Postal workers picket Canada Post, 1987. A national postal strike now could spearhead a labor counteroffensive against the bosses' attacks.

revolution: we created all the wealth through our sweat and it should be ours!

For Workers' Resistance

The past two months have seen a resurgence of labor struggle against the bosses' endless attacks. Chanting "Enough is enough!" 5,000 unionists marched against New Brunswick premier Frank McKenna's public-sector wage freeze in

mid-April, in the largest demonstration in the provincial capital's history. One thousand angry protesters rallied against a similar freeze in Nova Scotia in late May. Montreal city workers have been staging rotating strikes since February. Postal workers, without a contract since 1988, are poised for a country-wide walkout this summer while 150,000 PSAC federal workers are threatening a general strike which could shut down airports, border crossings and tax collection.

In late April, 250 Canadian Auto Workers members occupied the Caterpillar plant in Brampton north of Toronto in a sit-down strike which won broad support among Southern Ontario labor. When the U.S. parent company announced it was moving operations to North Carolina (where wages are \$7.50 an hour less) the night shift occupied the plant, later joined by others as they arrived for work. On April 28, four hundred unionists rallied outside the gates in support. Union flags flew; the strikers' sign declared proudly "Under New Management." But CAW president Bob White sold them down the river, telling them to end the occupation in return for a meaningless promise of negotiations for...better severance pay.

Back in 1976 Trudeau's six and five percent wage control limits sparked a country-wide one-day general strike. Yet now the union tops are settling for far less (i.e., nothing). The labor movement is hamstrung by its nationalist, pro-capitalist misleaders who, hand-in-glove with the NDP parliamentarians, sabotage any fight which threatens to disrupt the bosses' sacred "right" to profit.

The Ontario NDP did make a few promises in its "Agenda for the People" last fall, only to rip them up when they got to Queen's Park. In B.C. and Saskatchewan they're buttonholing every three-piece suit in sight to spread the new Regina Manifesto: "responsibility," i.e., don't rock the boat. Now Michael Harcourt's B.C. NDP is criticizing the provincial Social Credit government from the right, claiming they're overtaking the corporations and the rich! Channeling widespread discontent back toward the social democrats in English Canada (and to *péquist*e nationalism in Quebec), the labor tops are a vital prop for the capitalist status quo.

Reform Party: Chauvinist, Racist, Anti-Labor

The Reform Party of Preston Manning is tapping today's popular discontent to scoop up tens of thousands of new members across English Canada. Already way atop the polls in its Alberta heartland, Reform is now even with the NDP in B.C. and second or third everywhere else west of Quebec. Surveys put its national support as high as 25 percent. Dalton Camp, former senior advisor to the Tory cabinet, writes that Reform "has a good thing or two going for it":

"The political dynamics could hardly be better arranged for the emergence of a new party: Canada is in a fever of discontent and in the throes of unsettling change.

"Not since the Great Depression...has the electorate seemed so frustrated and uncertain."

—*Toronto Star*, 19 May

The Reform Party is channeling these frustrations and uncertainties toward social reaction. Preston Manning has been refashioned from dour management consultant to "down home" cult figure, attracting thousands to revivalist rallies from the West Coast to Ontario. But Reform is no grassroots movement of "ordinary folk." Behind the populist veneer, it pushes a Reaganite/Thatcherite program of anti-working class austerity which has significant and growing support among the



SC photo
Trotskyist League opposes anti-French chauvinism at 4 July 1990 Toronto demonstration to save the life of U.S. black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Bay Street bourgeoisie.

This is a deeply racist, chauvinist, anti-labor outfit. Manning & Co. oppose "any immigration policy...designed to radically or suddenly alter the ethnic makeup of Canada." (Read: "For a white Canada.") Two years ago, Reform gained notoriety when one of its members was quoted welcoming visitors to an Edmonton rally with the words: "You're a fine white person. You know, we are letting in too many people from the Third World. The low blacks, the low Hispanics...." With its far-right program, the Reform Party has attracted Nazi and fascist elements to its ranks.

It pushes anti-French bigotry, denouncing "concessions" to Quebec and calling to end bilingual services for the nearly one million French speakers elsewhere. It demands a 15 percent cut in federal spending, which would mean massive layoffs and the elimination of social programs. Even more than the Tories, the Reform Party wants to hammer millions of poor and working people in this country—immigrant, Native, French-speaking, English-speaking.

And they're getting support from very high places. The media used to deride Reform as a gang of prairie rednecks ("friendly fascists," they called them, mockingly but tellingly, a couple of years ago). Now they treat them with due respect, as candidates for the balance of power in a hung parliament or even potential right-wing replacements for the Tories in a Canada *sans Québec*.

The Reform Party program fits neatly with the capitalists' goal of creating a "level playing field" for free trade with the U.S. by bringing down wages and social conditions. It also speaks to that growing segment of English-Canadian capitalists who no longer care about "keeping Quebec" and would rather get on with generating new markets south of the border. With the inept Mulroney steering the Tories ever closer to the rocks, the big bankers and industrialists figure they might need this Manning fellow, and perhaps sooner than later.

Last September Conrad Black, multimillionaire head of Power Corporation, hosted the Reform leader at a Toronto dinner for 50 of the country's top moneymen. In April Manning traveled south to address Wall Street businessmen at the Americas Society in New York. He's ensuring his party puts

(continued on page 12)

Labor Action...

(continued from page 11)

on a cloak of "respectability." At a recent convention in Saskatoon party leaders vowed to "weed out" what they themselves call "the loonies"—i.e., those whose racism and chauvinism is expressed too crudely.

At one level, the Reform Party continues a long tradition of right-wing prairie populism, exemplified by the Social Credit party which won mass support during the Depression of the 1930s by appealing to backward rural bigotry and anti-Semitism (against "Eastern bankers"). Preston Manning is himself the son of former Alberta Socred premier Ernest Manning. An evangelical Christian, he too gave sermons on the "Back to the Bible Hour" radio program used by his father and earlier by William Aberhart to popularize Social Credit. But, in the words of a Reform spokesman, "It's a different era.... It's a more urban movement now." The nutty "funny money" nostrums of Major Douglas are long gone, as Manning et al. hobnob with top Bay Street financiers in their office towers and private clubs.

Break with the NDP! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Working people and the poor have every reason to be worried by the ominous rise of Manning & Co. But the NDP, portrayed as the "progressive" alternative by the labor tops and most of the left, is no answer at all. While organizationally based in large part on the unions, the New Democrats are thoroughly pro-capitalist in their program and practice—and thus show absolutely no way out of the crisis. Like Socialist Party president François Mitterrand in France, or countless past British Labour and German Social-Democratic governments (or indeed the B.C. NDP government of the early 70s which smashed the strikes of 60,000 workers), they want only to "manage" a bankrupt system on behalf of the bosses.

Just look at Ontario today. The NDP talks of defending services; their May budget, with its Keynesian deficit financing, brought right-wing opposition from yuppies demonstrating for bigger spending cuts. But nine months of NDP rule in Canada's industrial heartland have brought only sharply increased unemployment and worsening social conditions. (Meanwhile Bob Rae upholds Ontario The Good by crusading against Sunday shopping.)

And the New Democrats help fuel the very chauvinism and racism which sustain the Reform Party. For decades, they staunchly opposed the elementary right of Quebec self-determination. Vowing that the "unity" of Canada is "not negotiable," Rae refused even to meet with Jacques Parizeau when the Parti Québécois leader was in Toronto. In 1987 then federal leader Ed Broadbent responded to a racist furor against refugees from the Indian subcontinent by demanding a "tougher look at all our immigration procedures" to prevent "abuse" by "quick buck artists."

Last summer, Alberta NDP MLA Ross Harvey called to jail Arab Canadians who wished to stand with Iraq against bloody U.S. and Canadian imperialism. While we Trotskyists stood for the defeat of the U.S. and their Canadian junior partners in the Gulf, the NDP called to support "our troops" who helped massacre more than 100,000 Iraqis. And the social democrats' and labor tops' campaign against free trade is quite literally wrapped in the flag of Maple Leaf chauvinism, scapegoating American and Mexican workers while seeking

unity with "progressive" Canadian bosses.

When a Bob White or Shirley Carr says the NDP is "for the workers," you'd better reach for your wallet—chances are they're about to sell out another strike in order to channel labor militancy back to the dead end of parliamentarism. Yet the bulk of the "left" merely tails along behind them. In a *Canadian Tribune* editorial (6 May) the Communist Party hails the Rae government as a "bulwark against the raw power of the multinationals." *Tribune* headlines even call for an NDP/Liberal alliance "against the right." Meanwhile the International Socialists are busying themselves building a popular-frontist "Coalition Against the Reform Party" which invites "all progressive organizations and individuals" to come together and "oppose the Reform Party's right wing agenda," while breathing not a word of criticism of the NDP. Will Bob Rae and Audrey McLaughlin be invited to join this lash-up? How about Jean Chrétien?

Such class-collaborationist alliances "against the right" are a sure road to defeat for working people. And looking to the New Democrats to lead a fightback against the capitalist parties and their programs of austerity is worse than a joke. As we warned after the Ontario elections: "Any serious fight against growing unemployment, homelessness and poverty in Canada's industrial heartland will necessarily require a fight against the pro-capitalist NDP government" (*SC* No. 82, January/February 1991). The NDP and the labor tops represent not a well-intentioned if partial step toward socialism, but an obstacle.

A genuine answer to the crisis requires forging a *revolutionary workers party*, breaking workers from their social-democratic and nationalist misleaders in the course of sharp class struggle. Such a party would stand up for all oppressed—upholding Quebec's right to self-determination and language rights for minorities throughout the country; defending the rights of Native people and demanding full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers. It would unite the working people—English-speaking, Québécois, immigrant; American, Canadian, Mexican—in common battle against their common enemies. It would lead the fight to wrest the productive wealth of North America from the hands of the rapacious capitalist rulers through socialist revolution, and begin the construction of a society where no one need live in hunger, poverty or fear. ■

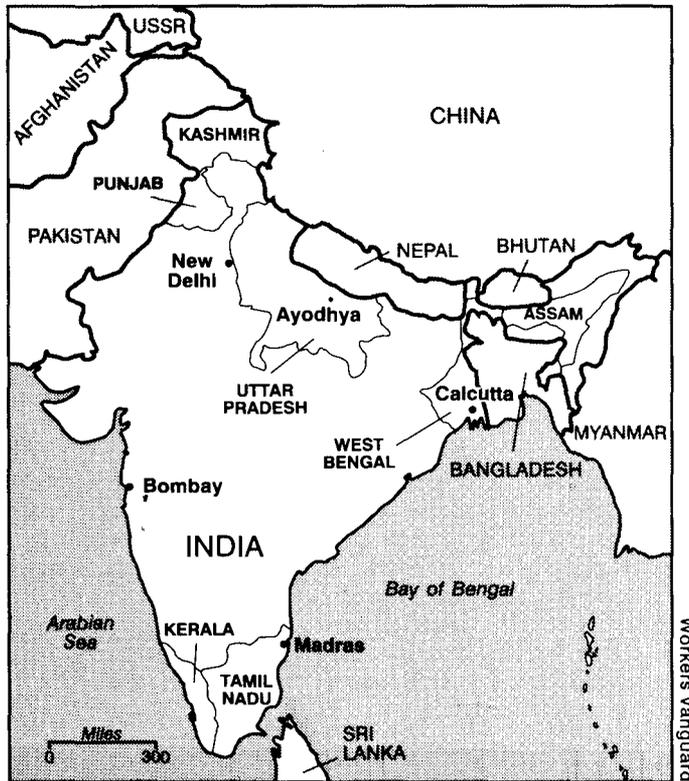
Contact the Trotskyist League

Correspondence for:	Address to:
Edmonton	PSSE P.O. Box 9605 Edmonton, AB T6E 5X3
Moncton	P.O. Box 563 Moncton, NB E1C 8L9
Montreal	C.P. Les Atriums B.P. 32066 Montréal, QC H2L 4V5
Toronto	Box 7198, Station A Toronto, ON M5W 1X8 (416) 593-4138
Vancouver	Box 2717, Main P.O. Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2 (604) 687-0353

India...

(continued from page 16)

"world's most populous democracy" and upheld it as the model of a "democratic" alternative to social revolution in the Third World. The *New York Times* (22 May) wrote, "Whoever killed Rajiv Gandhi yesterday struck at democracy itself." Erstwhile pseudo-Trotskyist Tariq Ali joined in the bourgeois breast-beating, lamenting "the tragedy of the Nehru-Gandhi family" and moaning: "In one foul blow the country's leading



secular politician has been eliminated from the race. Who will now rescue India from the prophets of hate?"

Its "secular" and even "socialist" pretensions notwithstanding, Congress ruled over India's prison house of peoples with an iron fist. Nehru presided over the grisly communalist slaughter of the 1947 Partition which created Muslim Pakistan. Indira Gandhi calculatingly played the Hindu-chauvinist card; her massacre of the Sikhs was characteristic of her long and bloody reign. And despite his "Mr. Clean" image, Rajiv followed firmly in his mother's footsteps, right from the start. As thousands of Sikhs were being hunted down and lynched following his mother's assassination, Gandhi encouraged the bloodbath, intoning: "When a great tree falls, the earth shakes." Several years later, he sent Indian "peacekeeping" forces to Sri Lanka who, under the guise of protecting the country's Tamil minority from a Sinhalese-chauvinist bloodbath, waged a war of annihilation against the separatist guerrilla Tamil Tigers.

Today the Tigers, who are also suspected of blowing away hawkish Sri Lankan defense chief Ranjan Wijeratne two months ago, are considered prime suspects in Gandhi's assassination. In retribution, the Congress party in Tamil Nadu is demanding the deportation of 200,000 Lankan Tamil refugees. But such is the squalid morass of Indian bourgeois politics that

the assassin could have come from virtually any ethnic or political direction. The states of Punjab, Kashmir and Assam are under martial law aimed at suppressing regional insurgencies. Even with 1.5 million police and paramilitary forces deployed, the elections had to be staggered over three days to allow for concentration of forces to defend the balloting, with two further dates set aside for Punjab and Assam and no vote slated for Kashmir. "Booth-capturing" by gangs of rival party thugs, who shoot their way into polling places in order to stuff the ballot boxes, alone claimed the lives of dozens during the first day of balloting on May 20.

Meanwhile, a sinister rise in anti-Muslim communalism has been registered with the dramatic growth of the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The spectre looms of a slaughter to match that of the Partition of India in 1947. Commenting on the assassination, the *Times of India* wrote: "At no time since it won freedom has India been as polarised along antagonistic lines as it is today. Caste has been pitted against caste and religion against religion with relentless fury." At no time has the need been clearer for a socialist revolution in India that sweeps away all the encrusted backwardness and hideous oppression that are bound up with capitalist rule.

Caste Hatreds Explode

Following the elections of November 1989, Gandhi's Congress (I) was replaced by a National Front government led by V.P. Singh's Janata Dal and supported from the outside by both the rightist BJP and the two main Stalinist parties, the Communist Party of India and CPI (Marxist). The immediate backdrop to the present crisis stems from Singh's decision last August to implement affirmative action measures for the country's lower castes based on a report issued ten years earlier. Designating more than 3,700 of the country's castes and subcastes as "other backward castes"—in contrast to high castes like Brahmans and "forward" farmer castes like the Rajputs, and to "untouchables" like the Harijans who are outside and beneath the caste structure—the Mandal Report called for reserving 27 percent of federal government jobs for them.

In line with an earlier 1950 provision, another 22.5 percent of government jobs were already reserved for the lowest "scheduled castes" (untouchables) and "scheduled tribes" (so called because the constitution specifically schedules them for protection). In fact these "job reservations" are effectively meaningless in undermining pervasive caste oppression. To this day, fewer than 5 percent of the elite Indian Administrative Services are from the scheduled castes and tribes, while 70 percent are high caste. Untouchables often fill their quota in the lowliest work traditionally associated with their status—like cleaning or trash collection—whether or not they have a college degree. Indeed, some 600,000 untouchable families eke out an existence solely by cleaning latrines. As one student pointed out:

"I belong to the backward caste. I have been looking for a job in vain for the last five years. What good is job reservation to me? Who will give me a job? We all know that only the children of the rich and powerful will get jobs, reservation or no reservations."

—*The Hindu*, 15 September 1990

Yet in a country with over 50 million unemployed, where even a menial position in the railways or post office may be the difference between relative comfort and utter destitution, this

(continued on page 14)

India...

(continued from page 13)

is an explosive question. In 1989, there were more than 450,000 applicants for some 4,500 jobs in the Union Public Service Commission. Moreover, even the slightest tampering with the caste system is viewed with alarm by the high castes who continue to dominate Indian society in all aspects.

Though the last census enumerating caste status was taken 60 years ago, caste prejudice and oppression remain a powerful and pernicious force, reinforced by popular culture and television epics like the Mahabharata. While the British colonialists hypocritically condemned caste discrimination, they cultivated and recruited the higher castes to their administrative and military apparatus and then tried to build up the lower castes as a counterweight to nationalist agitation, much as they used Muslim-Hindu communalism, to divide and rule. Capitalism and urbanization have impacted on old caste practices and adjusted the status and power of some castes, but the division between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, still broadly parallels that between high and low caste. Indicative of the depth of the problem is that some see progress in the fact that urban upper caste families now keep separate plates for their untouchable employees instead of throwing scraps from a safe distance.

Nowhere is the degradation inherent in this hierarchy of power and poverty more apparent than in the treatment of women. Untouchable and tribal women are routinely subjected to rape, while upper caste women are disinherited and secluded in the name of caste purity. The caste-related dowry system has led to a shocking decline in the ratio of women to men (now 929 to 1,000). This disparity is fueled by infanticide of female babies, deliberate maltreatment of young girls by their parents and murder of young brides by the families of husbands greedy for more or a second dowry—the fate of 690 women in the capital of New Delhi alone last year. “Bride-burnings...are escalating exponentially in modern, urban India, where a new wave of consumerism has spawned a greedy, growing middle class” (*Los Angeles Times*, 29 April).

One recent incident of caste/sex violence shocked the country. When the 16-year-old daughter of a Jat landowner in the town of Mehrana near Delhi eloped with her 18-year-old outcaste Jatav lover, with the help of his Jatav friend, the higher caste Jat families in the town captured the three youths and subjected them to an inquisition. When the couple refused to renounce their relationship, the two young men were tortured for hours—beaten with clubs and burned with torches in their mouths and genitals while hung upside down. Then the Jat-dominated town council “sentenced” all three to be hanged—by their own parents. When the young men’s fathers balked, they too were clubbed until they finally acquiesced.

Communal Terror Escalates

Far from being the “social revolution” depicted by the Western press, Singh’s “job reservation” proposal was purely



Dieter Ludwig

Hindu fascists of the paramilitary Shiva Sena target Muslim minority in terror attacks.

and cynically aimed at cutting into the lower-caste “vote banks” of the other bourgeois parties. But in response to Singh’s announcement, violent high-caste anti-reservation protests erupted across north India, spearheaded by students, scores of whom immolated themselves. Though none of the other parties dared to openly repudiate the scheme for fear of alienating potential voters, Singh’s opponents—including a split from his own party—seized on the uproar to move on him. On November 7, Singh resigned and a minority government headed by a split-off led by Chandra Shekhar governed precariously with Congress (I) support.

The BJP in particular responded to this attempt to divide its base by launching an ugly Hindu-communalist campaign of anti-Muslim provocations. Screaming “Break the mosque!” and “Hail the Lord Rama!” in late October BJP-led mobs stormed a 400-year-old Muslim mosque in Ayodhya which Hindu fundamentalists claim is located on the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. Anti-Muslim terror and Muslim reprisals escalated throughout the region, leaving over 2,000 dead in a matter of weeks. The scenes evoked the horror of Partition. In Hyderabad alone, 130 people were slaughtered, including 30 children stabbed or axed and burned alive. In Aligarh, the site of an old Muslim academy, Hindu thugs provocatively marched through Muslim areas and three Muslim men were dragged from a train passing through the station and butchered. A 20,000-strong paramilitary force drafted in to stop the communalist terror instead began disintegrating in the face of the Hindu mobs. By the beginning of November, some 40 cities had been placed under curfew.

The BJP’s mixture of rabid anti-Muslim communalism and mythological Hindu fundamentalism, exemplified by the title of its 1991 manifesto “Towards Ram Rajya” (the rule of Ram), has catapulted it from two seats in parliament in 1984 to 88 five years later to now being a serious contender to form the next government. Much of its explosive support has come from the growing middle class spawned by Gandhi’s economic “liberalization” in the 1980s, who live in terror at the prospect of sinking back into utter destitution. While advocating Thatcherite economic policies and a pro-American tilt, the BJP offers

them a scapegoat for the degradation and misery of Indian capitalist society in the more than 110 million Muslims and other minorities of the country, who are denounced as "ungrateful guests."

The BJP's parent organization is the fascistic RSS (it was an RSS supporter who assassinated Mohandas Gandhi). While BJP leader L.K. Advani—who is also a longtime member of the RSS—presents the party's parliamentarist face, his agitators mobilize anti-Muslim pogromists on the streets. "Moslems are like a lemon dropped into cream. They turn it sour," rants one. "What do we do with the lemon? We cut it up, squeeze out the pips and throw them away."

And while Hindu/Muslim communalism ominously escalates, threatening to engulf the subcontinent in another India-Pakistan war, as *India Today* (15 October 1990) put it, "Punjab burns, Kashmir burns." The war against the Punjabi Sikhs continues relentlessly, while the Muslims of Kashmir have been subjected to a "scorched-earth policy" of "terror and violence." "Kashmir is now beyond solution," shrugs one Indian political analyst in a *New York Times Magazine* (19 May) article by Barbara Crossette. And in February, 26,000 were arrested during a general strike in Tamil Nadu protesting against the imposition of direct rule by New Delhi.

For a Trotskyist Party in India!

Forty-four years after independence, the vast majority of the country's 850 million people live in ghastly poverty, dispossessed and effectively disenfranchised, as flagrantly corrupt politicians, capitalists and landlords amass their wealth and determine election outcomes with naked brute force. For the Sikhs, Muslims and hundreds of millions of lower-caste and "outcaste" Hindus as well as women of all ethnic and caste backgrounds, India's "secular democracy" has meant only uninterrupted and unendurable oppression. And neighboring Pakistan is no less a prison house for its minority peoples. Already ruled as an Islamic theocracy, Pakistan's rulers are now attempting to shove through an even stricter, fundamentalist "Shari'a Law."

With all the gin-and- tonic arrogance that comes so easily to it, the London *Economist* (4 May) sneers that India's misery "is largely India's own doing" and "not the fault of former colonial masters or wicked western capitalists." Calling for opening India up to even greater imperialist exploitation, this mouthpiece for the former colonial masters insists, "The changes India needs are not far short of a revolution."

A revolution is precisely what India needs, not the untrammelled imperialist exploitation envisaged by the *Economist*, but thoroughgoing proletarian socialist revolution. The small but strategic Indian proletariat, which has historically demonstrated militancy and organization, is the only social force capable of dragging the country out of the quagmire of conflicting nationalist and communalist antagonisms. The working class has a direct and immediate interest in combatting communalism. Frequently drawn from local and migrant minorities, it is often particularly the working class that is the main target of communalist terror.

Likewise, drawing behind it the agrarian masses, the proletariat is the only force capable of rooting out the deeply embedded structure of caste and sexual oppression. Even the most elementary demands against caste discrimination—like an end to all discrimination in jobs and social facilities, decent housing for the poor and safe water and sewage systems—requires sweeping away the capitalist system. And integral to

the perpetuation of the caste system is the land question. The post-independence land reforms and the so-called "Green Revolution" of agrarian development have benefited a layer of capitalist farmers, including some of the "backward" farmer castes. But half of rural households own no land, while 5 percent own well over a third of the cultivable land. Rural indebtedness is endemic, bonded labor widespread and growing.

Even the Mandal Report linked land reform to the question of countering entrenched caste privilege, but none of the bourgeois parties dare draw that connection. As the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia demonstrated, the road to agrarian revolution in the countryside lies through the seizure of power by the proletariat in the cities. Only then will it be possible to nationalize the land and expropriate large landlords and capitalist farmers. And the call for land to the poor peasants and a program of government loans and provisions for modern farming equipment can win the peasants and agricultural workers to the side of the proletariat.

The key is forging a Trotskyist party to lead the Indian working masses to power. The thoroughly reformist Stalinist CPI and CPI(M) are both mass parties, holding governmental power in several states. They have gained a certain amount of authority for steering clear of the manipulative communalism which marks all the bourgeois parties. Sikh CPI militants in the Punjab, for example, risked their lives to defend their Hindu neighbors against pogroms by Sikh fundamentalists. And the CPI(M) has been able to retain control over Calcutta and West Bengal for 13 years, largely because of its ability thus far to avert communal clashes. Even in the neighboring Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, the Communists recently scored resounding successes in the first election in 30 years.

But both the CPI and CPI(M) are wedded to the politics of coalitionism, tying the proletariat to the wheels of one or another bourgeois party in the name of democracy, and both uphold capitalist India's "unity" against "secessionists." The CPI(M)-led government of West Bengal is aggressively encouraging capitalist businessmen, including the chief minister's son. India more than perhaps any other country on the face of the earth is proof positive of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, an object lesson in the futility of seeking to fulfill the tasks of the democratic revolution in a backward country under capitalism. There has been capitalist development: the "Green Revolution" of applying science to agriculture virtually eliminated India's import of grains; the country has built up large-scale heavy industry. Yet this is combined with truly horrendous social conditions, the bride burning, caste oppression, national subjugation, hunger and grinding poverty on a mind-boggling scale—the list is endless.

As we wrote seven years ago, after the Golden Temple massacre (*Spartacist Britain* No. 60, August 1984):

"If India is not to be wracked by another convulsion of communalist slaughter in the interests of imperialism, what is needed is a mass proletarian party rallying behind the banner of Permanent Revolution the myriad minorities, the agrarian masses and the multitudinous victims of caste and sex oppression....

"The problems of South Asia are interrelated and will not be solved separately. Only the working class can guarantee the right of self-determination to the oppressed nations from the Baluchis in Pakistan to the Tamils in Lanka, the liberation of women from bondage and backwardness, and land to the tiller."

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 528, 7 June

India:

Bloody End of a Dynasty



Independent

Rajiv Gandhi's funeral pyre. Former Indian prime minister was killed by bomb during bloody election campaign.



Nickelberg/Time

For Permanent Revolution in India's Prison House of Peoples!

Late on the evening of May 21 at an election rally in the town of Sriperumbudur in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, a young woman exploded a bomb, killing herself and 16 others. The terror bombing brought the death toll in India's tenth national election to some 400 people, the bloodiest election campaign in the country's history. But this killing sent shock waves throughout India and the rest of the world. For among the mangle of dismembered bodies lying near the speaker's platform was that of Rajiv Gandhi, former prime minister, head of the Congress (I) party and scion of the dynasty which ruled India for all but 7 of its 44 years since gaining independence from Britain.

And, at least for the foreseeable future, Rajiv Gandhi's bloody end also means the end of that dynasty, founded by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi met his end much in the manner of many another Congress leader. Nehru's mentor and head of the bourgeois independence movement, Mohandas Gandhi (no relation), was shot by a Hindu ultranationalist in 1948. Only two years after Nehru died in office of a stroke in 1964, his daughter Indira assumed the parliamentary throne. When she was assassinated by Sikh members of her bodyguard in 1984, in revenge for her brutal massacre of rebellious Sikhs at the Golden Temple in Amrit-

sar, it was her son Rajiv who took over as head of Congress and India.

Rajiv Gandhi's assassination highlights the deep crisis of capitalist India. The imperialists are worried at the prospect of an already turbulent India being pushed further down the road to chaos. Even before the killing, the London *Economist* (4 May) wrote:

"The future of India looks more threatened than for many years. In recent months its government has been all but paralysed by political squabbling. The country is divided by violence over caste, religion and demands for regional autonomy. Economic growth is slowing, and poverty on a scale that defies the imagination seems beyond all remedy."

Though no longer the hegemonic party it was in Nehru's day, Congress remained the main party of a fragmented all-India bourgeoisie, with pretensions of representing all caste, religious, national and ethnic groupings. And, as an editorial in the London *Independent* (22 May) wrote, "Congress (I) was the Gandhi family." (The "I" stands for Indira, to distinguish it from the rump party of Congress bosses who fell afoul of her in a power fight.)

For decades, the imperialist press has hailed India as the
(continued on page 13)