

Respect divorces SWP

Reformists in crisis in post-Soviet world

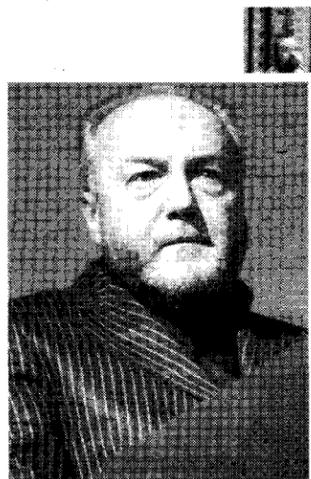
Respect, “the Unity Coalition”, was founded with great fanfare in January 2004. Hoping to cash in on the widespread hatred for Blair’s New Labour government which was up to its armpits in the blood of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis while turning the screw on the working class, poor and minorities at home, the pages of *Socialist Worker* promoted Respect as “a beacon of hope” and a “viable alternative to New Labour” (31 January 2004). For the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which rejoiced in the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union—a devastating defeat for the world’s working class—Respect was their latest desperate scheme to cash in on the collapse of Stalinism. For the SWP’s coalition partner, maverick ex-Labour MP George Galloway, Respect was a vehicle for hustling votes, particularly in Muslim communities which justly burned with hatred against the Blair government over Iraq and its racist “war on terror” witch hunt against those of Muslim origin in Britain.

In setting up Respect the SWP abandoned the Socialist Alliance, their previous attempt to create an “alternative” to New Labour by reviving a version of the old Labour politics that had historically served to tie the working class to God, Queen and country. Respect however made no pretence to be even nominally a working-class formation. On the contrary, from its inception Respect was a cross-class, popular-frontist coalition. As we wrote in our article “SWP wanted the post-Soviet world, now they’ve got it”:

“Respect purports to represent Britain’s Muslims, who are among the poorest sections of the population and are foremost targets of the government’s racist ‘war on terror’ at home. Far from representing the interests of any oppressed minority, Respect is based on a bald-faced acceptance by the SWP of racist British capitalist rule, based on the monarchy, the House of Lords, the established Protestant churches and parliament. Respect certainly does not represent the interests of the working class, minorities or women. It ought to repel young activists who want to fight to overthrow the racist system of capitalist exploitation and to liberate women from the yoke of oppression and religious reaction—whether it comes from church, temple or mosque.”

—*Workers Hammer* no 194, Spring 2006

We also noted at the time that, “for all the SWP’s opportunist adaptations, Respect does not appear to be the get-rich-quick scheme they imagined”. And this autumn it all went up in smoke, with Galloway and the SWP at each other’s throats.



eventful



Guy Smallman



Nick Horgan

Respect “unity coalition” split into Respect Renewal led by maverick MP George Galloway (left) and SWP-dominated Respect led by John Rees (right). Both organisations are politically identical.

In a letter to the Respect National Council titled “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” in August 2007 Galloway launched a broadside against the SWP, blaming it for the “steep decline” in Respect membership and for the fact that Respect is not “punching its weight in British politics”. By late October, the Galloway wing, which consists of virtually all of the Respect coalition outside of the SWP, had changed the locks on the doors to Respect headquarters. The SWP responded with a 3 November statement from its Central Committee denouncing Galloway for launching a witch hunt against the “left-wing” in Respect. This was followed by a 5 November letter from Alex Callinicos to other sections of the SWP’s putative international claiming that “the division in Respect is a political one between left and right”.

The SWP’s posture as “principled socialists” being witch-hunted by the right is downright laughable. Since the founding conference of Respect, it was SWP cadre who ensured that motions calling for the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic, for secularism and even for a “workers MP on a workers wage” were voted down! Now among the only criticisms they can summon up about Galloway is that he earns a whopping £300,000 a year and that he appeared on the *Celebrity Big Brother* show. These rank opportunists do not even offer a hint of self-criticism on the concessions they made which were controversial among the SWP’s membership, such as abandoning any meaningful fight for gay rights or

women’s liberation in order to appease the mosques as well as Galloway. Even now, the SWP can’t choke out a word of criticism of Galloway’s reactionary opposition to abortion.

The split has produced two warring organisations—“Respect” consisting mainly of the SWP and “Respect Renewal” led by Galloway and made up of pretty much everyone except the SWP. Among Galloway’s supporters are a handful of former SWP cadre who were expelled for siding with Galloway; the leading Muslim figures as well as Alan Thornett’s Socialist Resistance group which has terminated its own newspaper and is publishing a paper for Respect Renewal. Despite intense heat on both sides, there are no differences of political programme, as was seen when the rival Respect organisations held conferences in London on 17 November 2007. Both claim to be the true inheritors of the programme on which Respect was originally founded.

The SWP’s bitter complaints about Respect having been taken over by Muslim “community leaders” and “businessmen” are amusing given the extent to which these consummate opportunists bent over backwards to conciliate the mosques. In an effort to capitalise on the mammoth anti-war protests in 2003, which were led by the SWP-brokered Stop the War Coalition and heavily supported by Muslim organisations, the SWP bragged about having organised an anti-war meeting in Birmingham with a segregated seating area for women! But today Muslim leaders like Salma Yaqoob

accuse the SWP of using Muslims as “vote fodder” for elections in answer to the SWP’s claim that the Muslim wing of Respect operates on the basis of “communalism”. This refers to the fact that candidates are selected along ethnic and religious lines—people of Bangladeshi origin mainly support Bangladeshis and people of Pakistani origin support their “own” candidates, while neither supports SWP-backed candidates. The SWP would likely have been happy within Respect if only they had been allowed their “fair share” of candidates in elections.

SWP’s contribution to “death of communism”

The politics of Respect shows the extent to which the SWP is mired in the ideological climate conditioned by the prevailing bourgeois ideology that “communism is dead”. The SWP as a tendency originated out of a capitulation to the anti-communist Cold War hysteria that accompanied the Korean War of 1950-53. Its founder, the late Tony Cliff, reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union as well as the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and to the Labour government that sent troops to Korea. (See “The Bankruptcy of ‘New Class’ Theories” (*Spartacist* no 55 [English-language edition], Autumn 1999).

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For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!

Respect...

(Continued from page 1)

The SWP actually *helped create* today's political climate of post-Soviet reaction. In August 1991 when Boris Yeltsin's imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution staged a countercoup in Moscow, every capitalist ruling class was triumphant and proclaimed this as the "death of communism". The SWP joined in the jubilation, proclaiming on their front page: "Communism has collapsed", a fact that "should have every socialist rejoicing" and urging "now fight for real socialism" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

The SWP's "socialism" only ever amounted to pressuring the pro-imperialist Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy who are wedded to British imperialism and parliament. But in the programme of Respect they willingly ditched even that and relegated the mention of "socialism" to speechifying

at SWP branch meetings and to the occasional historical article in *Socialist Worker*. This is a capitulation to the predominant consciousness among today's political activists which — whether they be in "left" organisations or the "anti-globalisation" milieu — is bourgeois liberal ideology. A document appended to the programmatic statement of our comrades in the Spartacist League/US written in 2000 succinctly characterised the role of our competitors on the left, whom we today describe as "opponents of the revolutionary internationalist workers movement", noting:

"All of our party's activity is directed to organizing, training and steeling the proletarian vanguard party necessary for the seizure of state power. In contrast, the politics of the reformists and centrists consist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of bourgeois society. The latter was sharply characterized by Trotsky as 'the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state.' Such accommodation to capitalist class rule by

organizations nominally claiming adherence to Marxism is, if anything, more decisively pronounced today in a world defined by the final undoing of the Russian Revolution and the triumphal assertion by the imperialist rulers that 'communism is dead'."

— Spartacist pamphlet, *For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!* (November 2000)

The bust-up in Respect is only the latest in a wave of crises that have beset the reformist left in Britain and internationally in the post-Soviet world. In each case, support to counterrevolution in the Soviet Union was followed by lurching even further to the right to obtain the supposed dividends, but to no avail. In the 2006 split in Workers Power, one wing argued to continue their frenzied capitulation to the "anti-globalisation" milieu and the imperialist-funded social forums which they portrayed as the main arena out of which to build a "revolutionary international". The minority, now known as "Permanent Revolution", saw this as a losing proposition and instead argued to continue with their time-honoured tailing of Labour. Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) — once upheld by reformists in England as the best model for an alternative to Blair's New Labour — imploded in 2006 following moralistic allegations about its leader Tommy Sheridan's sex life. Beneath this rift was a disagreement over just how far the SSP should go in its blatant capitulation to the Scottish National Party, a bourgeois party, in the hope of becoming more of a player in the Scottish parliament.

The SWP's international tendency underwent a profound crisis in 2000 and broke with its US section for having failed the "test of Seattle", that is, for failing to match the British SWP's level of adulation of the "anti-globalisation" movement. The very notion that this movement is "anti-capitalist" is a myth. Indeed as SWP leader John Rees wrote in a 2003 fanfare for it, this movement would not have been possible without capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Rees wrote:

"The broad anti-capitalist movement encompassing the whole left save for the social democratic defenders of neo-liberalism would have been inconceivable in the Cold War. In that era the first question asked of any 'anti-capitalist' would have been, 'So does that mean you are pro-Russian?' The movement would have divided in response to that challenge. Now it no longer does."

— *International Socialism*, Autumn 2003

Having worked for and then hailed counterrevolution, the Cliffites have been constantly cheated of the benefits of the "radicalisation" they projected in its wake. The party failed to grow even out of the mammoth anti-war demonstrations in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Referring to this at the January 2006 party conference, long-time SWP hack John Molyneux pointed out that "somewhere during this period of radicalisation and outward success the party

appears to have lost up to 5,000 (50%) of its membership (without ever acknowledging that this was happening)". Molyneux stood on the SWP's support to counterrevolution, saying: "A key problem, in my opinion, was our estimation of the effects of the collapse of Stalinism. We were right to identify this as fundamentally historically progressive and to argue that internationally it created a space for genuine socialist ideas to get a hearing." He added "However, we seriously underestimated the extent to which it was perceived by millions, indeed hundreds of millions, as the defeat of socialism" ("Why I Intend to Stand", published in *Weekly Worker*, 5 January 2006).

Only those blinded by anti-communist loyalty to "democratic" imperialism, as Molyneux and the SWP leadership are, could describe counterrevolution in the former USSR and Eastern Europe as "fundamentally historically progressive". This was a defeat of historic proportions for the working masses of the whole world. It followed the tide of counterrevolution that had swept the former deformed workers states in Eastern Europe and led to the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990, with devastating consequences for the working masses of those countries. Moreover, in the "one superpower" world, US imperialism feels it has free rein to plunder neocolonial countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, while all the imperialist powers have been emboldened to grind the working class at home, as seen in the Labour government's attacks on wages, pensions and welfare provision. And as we have noted, counterrevolution in the Soviet Union has led to a profound retrogression in proletarian consciousness. Although this is uneven throughout the world, today even the most politically conscious workers in the capitalist countries by and large do not identify their struggles with the goal of socialism.

We of the ICL fought with all our resources against capitalist restoration. During the unfolding political revolution in East Germany in 1989-90, we unconditionally opposed capitalist reunification with imperialist West Germany. We fought for political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West. We initiated a 250,000-strong demonstration on 3 January 1990 in East Berlin's Treptow Park against the fascist desecration of the war memorial to Soviet soldiers who died liberating Germany from the Nazi scourge in 1945. We alone mounted a challenge to the sell-out of the East German deformed workers state by the Moscow and East Berlin Stalinists. Although we were defeated, our programme was proven correct.

In 1991 our comrades in Moscow distributed by the thousands a leaflet dated 27 August titled: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!"

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Revolutionaries in a reactionary climate

The following article was written by Trotsky in 1933 calling for a break from the Third (Communist) International led by Stalin and the formation of a new international. The fact that Hitler came to power in Germany without a shot being fired and without opposition from any section of the international showed decisively that the Third International was dead as a force for revolution. Although written in very different circumstances than we



TROTSKY



LENIN

face today, the tasks outlined for a small revolutionary organisation are apt for our tasks in the present political climate dominated by the impact of counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The fact that two parties, the Social Democratic and the Communist, which arose half a century apart and which both proceeded from the theory of Marxism and the class interests of the proletariat, could have come to such a sad end — the one through base treachery, the other through bankruptcy — can engender pessimistic moods even among the advanced workers. "Where is the guarantee that a new revolutionary selection will not suffer the same fate?" Those who demand guarantees in advance should in general renounce revolutionary politics. The causes for the downfall of the Social Democracy and of official communism must be sought not in Marxist theory and not in the bad qualities of those people who applied it, but in the concrete conditions of the historical process. It is not a question of counterposing abstract principles, but rather of the struggle of living social forces, with its inevitable ups and downs, with the degeneration of organizations, with the passing of entire generations into discard, and with the necessity which therefore arises of mobilizing fresh forces on a new historical stage. No one has bothered to pave the road of revolutionary upsurge for the proletariat in advance. With inevitable halts and partial retreats it is necessary to move forward on a road crisscrossed by countless obstacles and covered with the debris of the past. Those who are frightened by this had better step aside.

But how explain the fact that our grouping, whose analysis and prognosis have been verified by the entire course of events, is growing so slowly? The cause must be looked for in the general course of the class struggle. The victory of fascism seizes tens of millions. Political prognoses are accessible only to thousands or tens of thousands who, moreover, feel the pressure of millions. A revolutionary tendency cannot score stormy victories at a time when the proletariat as a whole is suffering the greatest defeats. But this is no justification for letting one's hands hang. Precisely in the periods of revolutionary ebb tide are cadres formed and tempered which will later be called upon to lead the masses in the new assault.

— Leon Trotsky, "It is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew", 15 July 1933, printed in Leon Trotsky *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-33)*

WORKERS HAMMER

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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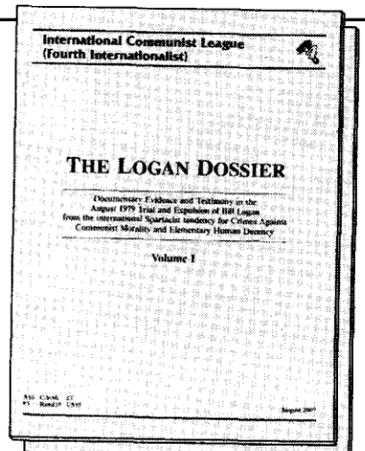
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In 1979, Bill Logan was expelled from the international Spartacist tendency for crimes "against communist morality and its substrate elementary human decency". Logan is now the leader of the "International Bolshevik Tendency". As a service to the workers movement we have published documentary evidence and testimony in the trial and expulsion of Logan.

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De Menezes execution:

“War on terror” means shoot-to-kill

More than two years since the brutal killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by police on a crowded train, the state is not even pretending that the cops responsible for killing him are likely to be prosecuted. A report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission published in November 2007 made 16 recommendations about “improving” police procedures, while a jury trial found the Metropolitan Police guilty of risking the “health and safety” of the public—and of Jean Charles de Menezes. The message from the state and the Labour government is clear: if you are deemed a “terrorist” suspect the police can shoot you dead *and get away with it*.

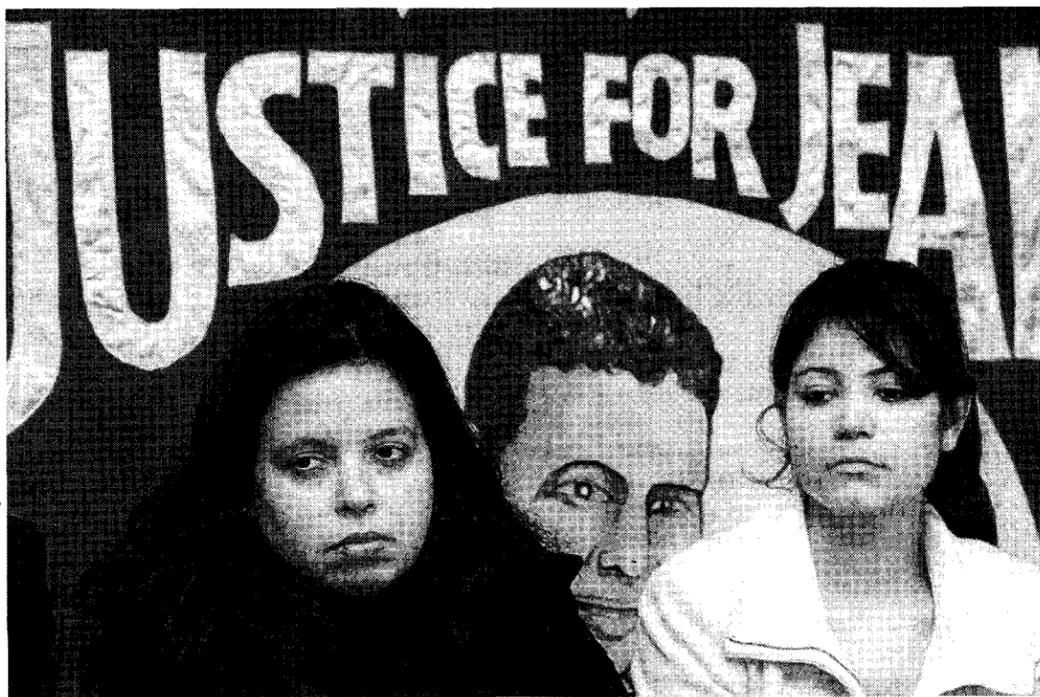
A year ago the Crown Prosecution Service ruled that no police officers were to be charged with murder or manslaughter, but the *office* of the Metropolitan Police would be charged with a violation of the Health and Safety at Work Act. Alex Pereira, Jean Charles’s cousin expressed the family’s outrage saying: “They shot at someone 11 times and said it was a mistake” adding “they knew they were assassinating someone” (quoted in *Socialist Worker*, 22 July 2006). Not surprisingly, the court case was not primarily about the “health and safety” of de Menezes, but about the capacity of the police to supposedly “protect” the public against terrorism suspects. As the *Guardian*’s Vikram Dodd explained:

“The crown’s case was that because SO19 [the firearms unit] had taken so long, the public had been put at unnecessary risk. If De Menezes had been a suicide bomber, the delay meant he had been able to ride two buses and get on a tube train.”

—*Guardian*, 1 November 2007

During the trial, police lawyer Ronald Thwaites tried to blame the victim for his own death, outrageously claiming that de Menezes “might have failed to comply with officers because he thought he had drugs in his pocket” or “because he had forged a stamp in his passport” (*Guardian Unlimited*, 1 November 2007). As Harriet Wistrich, the family’s solicitor, said: “The police defence team descended to the gutter, seeking to shift the blame onto the innocent victim for their own wrongdoing” (*Socialist Worker*, 10 November 2007). Whilst *all eight* cops who were involved in the killing claimed a warning was given, *all seventeen* passengers in the carriage remembered hearing none! Thwaites repeated the claim that the killing of de Menezes was “a terrible accident”, and obscenely reasserted that “it is not the fault of the police” (*BBC News* online, 26 October 2007).

The cold-blooded killing of de Menezes took place in the wake of the criminal bombing of the London transport system on 7 July and the 21 July 2005 bombing scare, when public fear was at its height. The London transport bombings were horrific indiscriminate attacks on civilians. As we have noted, those who carried them out share the same mindset as the imperialists, equating the population as a whole with the ruling class; the bombs were pointedly



Cousins of Jean Charles de Menezes, Patricia da Silva Armani (left) and Vivian Figueiredo (right) at London press conference, November 2007.

aimed not at the British imperialist rulers but at the multiethnic working people of London. Tony Blair’s government shamelessly used the climate of fear that accompanied this to enact further “anti-terrorism” legislation. This is what Blair had in mind when he intoned on 5 August 2005 that “the rules of the game are changing”.



Aamer Anwar reading a statement on behalf of his client on 17 September 2007 in Edinburgh, for which he faces charges of contempt of court.

The government and the police seized the chance to force the public to accept “shoot-to-kill” in Britain. This has long been the form of British capitalist “justice” meted out to Catholics in Northern Ireland. The Metropolitan Police’s policy of “shoot-to-kill” has been endorsed all along the line by London mayor Ken Livingstone, in the face of growing public outrage at the police lies and calls even from the Tories for the resignation of Metropolitan Police Chief Sir Ian Blair. Contrary to the myth that the police were simply responding to exceptional

circumstances presented by the threat of “suicide bombers”, the British capitalist rulers have never hesitated to deploy the full force of the state to crush dissent as well as class struggle. Innocent Irish people such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six were framed up and incarcerated for decades as part of the 1970s witch hunt against “IRA terrorism”, while an army of cops was sent to the coalfields to smash the 1984-85 miners strike.

In response to public outrage over the killing of de Menezes there have been calls from liberals and reformists to curb police powers. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) said that “at the very least all the senior [sic] police officers involved in the shooting should be sacked and prosecuted” and “the Metropolitan Police Authority should be disbanded” (*Socialist Worker*, 10 November 2007). While anyone with a shred of decency would wish to see the cops responsible for this heinous crime rot in jail, this has nothing in common with the SWP’s fundamentally reformist demand which means that the police should kick out the “bad apples” and be made accountable to the public. This promotes illusions in the democratic nature of the capitalist state. The police—alongside the courts and the prison system—are the core of the state which by definition is an instrument for maintaining the property and profits of the ruling class through the suppression of the working class and oppressed. For Marxists, the capitalist state must be shattered in the course of socialist revolution.

For class unity of the multiethnic working class

In today’s climate, to be a Muslim is to be a suspect. Recently a 23-year-old Muslim woman working at Heathrow Airport, Samina Malik, who dubbed herself the “lyrical terrorist” and wrote poems in praise of *jihad*, was convicted under the government’s “anti-terrorism” legislation for “possessing records likely to be used for terrorism” (*Guardian Unlimited*, 8 November 2007). Malik possessed electronic copies of publicly

available military manuals but had not attempted to carry out any actions whatsoever. In Scotland, Mohammed Atif Siddique was similarly convicted for a “thought crime” because of material found on his computer. Even more ominously, his lawyer Aamer Anwar, a prominent defender of civil liberties in Scotland, faces charges of contempt of court for a statement he read out on 17 September 2007, the day his client was convicted. It began: “Today Mohammed Atif Siddique was found guilty of doing what millions of young people do every day, looking for answers on the internet.” The statement went on: “It is farcical that part of the evidence against Atif was that he grew a beard, had documents in Arabic which he could not even read and downloaded material from a legitimate Israeli website” (Press Release, 17 September 2007). We demand: *Defend Aamer Anwar! Hands off Samina Malik! Free Mohammed Atif Siddique! Down with the racist war on terror!*

Labour’s war on terror has fuelled anti-Muslim racism. While aimed primarily at Muslims, the “war on terror” is just the thin end of the wedge: the attacks on civil liberties ultimately target the whole of the working class. At the same time as the police killed de Menezes—a Brazilian immigrant on his way to work on the Tube—they held a gun to the head of the train driver, an RMT union member. This should have been met with a determined protest by the powerful RMT as part of a fight against the racist “war on terror” and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. But this requires a political struggle against the trade union bureaucracy whose political perspective rests on accepting the inviolability of the bourgeois state.

Britain’s Muslims are among the poorest section of the working class, but Muslims are not just victims. They are an integral component of the working class, which has the social power to defend minorities and immigrants against attacks. Such power was brought to bear with tremendous impact in the August 2005 strike that paralysed Heathrow Airport, when British Airways ground crews struck in protest against the sacking of catering workers, who were mainly Sikh women. The racially-integrated workforce at British Airways recognised that their own interests and those of the Asian catering workers were the same, demonstrating the power of class solidarity to transcend ethnic divisions.

The working class has the potential power to overthrow the system of capitalism. The key task is to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will be steeled in the struggle against racism, chauvinism and every manifestation of oppression, in the fight to overthrow capitalist rule. Jean Charles de Menezes, and countless others will be avenged when the international proletariat sweeps away the machinery of capitalist state repression once and for all by victorious socialist revolution. ■

Respect...

(Continued from page 2)

which said:

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

— Reprinted in Spartacist pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled* (1993)

We fought to the end for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, while fighting for workers political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. This is the programme we apply today to the remaining deformed workers states—China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

We hailed Red Army in Afghanistan!

The SWP's capitulation to Islam did not begin with Respect. In 1994 the Cliffites published a major article by Chris Harman titled "The Prophet and the Proletariat" in their *International Socialism* journal. Their previous record includes capitulating to the reactionary mullahs who came to power in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini in the late 1970s, running laudatory headlines like "The Form—Religious, The Spirit—Revolution!" and howling along with their own "democratic" bourgeoisie over the Soviet army presence in Afghanistan.

When the Soviet army entered Afghanistan in December 1979 we said "Hail the Red Army!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy—for its own reasons—had sent in the army at the request of the nationalist government in Kabul which was attempting a series of reforms including lowering the bride price and land reform. This provoked the reactionary Islamic fundamentalists into a "holy war". At stake was the defence of the Soviet Union, the workers state that emerged from the victorious October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Despite the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration in the Soviet Union that began in 1923-24, it remained a workers state until it was destroyed by counterrevolution in 1991-92.

When the social gains of the Russian Revolution were extended to Central Asia it became a literate, relatively modern society where women were no longer 'degraded slaves'. The Soviet army presence could have resulted in Afghanistan's incorporation into Soviet

Central Asia, opening up the possibility of a social transformation. But even though they were winning militarily against the brutal *mujahedin*, the Kremlin Stalinists under Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the troops in 1989. This betrayal paved the way for handing over East Germany and the USSR itself to counterrevolution. The Cliffites in the US hailed this treacherous withdrawal of Soviet troops, undertaken by the Kremlin Stalinists in an effort to appease the imperialists, proclaiming:

"Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs."

— *Socialist Worker* [US], May 1988

Socialist Party's old Labour chauvinism

Like the SWP, Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party supported counterrevolution in the USSR and today adds its own contribution to the "death of communism" climate. The "socialism" of Taaffe's organisation—previously known as Militant Labour—never amounted to anything more than the Labour Party's Clause IV, which translated into "nationalising the commanding heights of the economy". These days the Taaffeites consider New Labour to be an outright bourgeois party and campaign for a "new mass workers party". Yet they regard even a nominally "socialist programme" as dispensable in building such a "workers" party, as their article on the Respect split says:

"Nonetheless the Socialist Party would welcome a new mass workers' party, or [a] significant step towards one, even if its membership didn't initially adopt a fully-rounded out socialist programme. Provided a new mass party was rooted in struggle, had a democratic and federal approach, and stood clearly against cuts, privatisation and war, it would represent a step forward."

— *Socialist*, 1 November 2007

The Socialist Party criticises Respect because it "has concentrated in the main on one section of society, the Muslim community, which it is important to win, but Respect has largely failed to reach out to other sections of the working class". The article contrasts the Socialist Party's own approach as "doing everything possible to encourage the unity of the working class". This concern for "class unity" has to be taken with a grain of salt coming from the Socialist Party which gave backhanded support to the government's racist "war on terror" by adopting the slogan "no to terrorism" (coupled with "no to war") at the height of the anti-Muslim frenzy that followed the criminal July 2005 London bombing. The Taaffeites apply the same "working-class unity" rhetoric to Northern Ireland to disguise the fact that they view defence of the oppressed Catholic minority as an affront to unity with the Protestant working class. They



Soviet intervention in Afghanistan opened road to liberation. Women mobilised to fight tyranny of imperialist-backed *mujahedin*.

refuse to call for British troops out and have hosted Loyalist killer Billy Hutchinson at meetings as a representative of the Protestant working class! Such catering to the most backward level of consciousness among the working class is integral to their programme of chauvinist Labourite parliamentary reformism. Labour governments have presided over the bloody partition of India, imposed racist "virginity tests" for Asian women immigrating to Britain and sent British troops to Northern Ireland.

For a Leninist "tribune of the people"

When Labour's Jack Straw launched an attack on Muslim women for wearing the veil in October 2006, vastly intensifying the level of anti-Muslim racism, we wrote: "As Marxists—and therefore atheists and fighters for women's liberation—we oppose the veil as both a symbol and an instrument of women's oppression. Nonetheless we unambiguously oppose any state or government bans and restrictions on the veil, which are racist and discriminatory against Muslims" ("Racism and the Islamic veil", *Workers Hammer* no 197, Winter 2006-2007). Labour in government has funded a huge growth in religious—mainly Christian—schools and the British capitalist state has its own established Christian churches that are tied to the monarchy and the House of Lords. Islam, which in Britain is the religion of an oppressed minority, is not uniquely reactionary or anti-woman; such bigotry is just as much an integral part of Christianity and Judaism as of Islam.

With Respect on the rocks and the SWP again in crisis, these opportunists may well return their attention to reconstructing an old Labour-type party based on the trade union bureaucracy. The SWP press is cock-a-hoop that Mark Serwotka, leader of the civil servants union PCS, spoke at *their* Respect conference while refusing to address Galloway's. Not by accident Serwotka also attended the conference of the Labour Representation Committee—the supposed "left" of

New Labour. Serwotka's record as a union leader leaves no doubt about what a rotten sell-out party he would build. His leadership of the PCS has thus far involved a crass betrayal of its members, agreeing to a deal requiring new entrants to the civil service to work *five more years* to qualify for a pension. In this he was assisted by Socialist Party members who dominate the union executive.

The multiethnic working class needs a genuinely revolutionary party, which would link the existing struggles of the working class in defence of their conditions, against war, racism, the oppression of women and of gays to the fight for socialist revolution to end capitalism. Our task is to swim against the stream of today's reactionary climate and to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary vanguard party. As Trotsky noted in his article "Stalinism and Bolshevism" (1936):

"Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions. On the one hand the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come. On the other hand the routinists, centrists, and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search of a 'New Word'."

A revolutionary workers party would infuse the multiethnic working class with the consciousness of its social power and its historic task which means destroying all illusions in the "democracy" of this decaying system, educating it in the historic lessons of the class struggle, steeling its revolutionary will and self-confidence for the overthrow of capitalist exploitation. Such a party would be what Lenin described as a "tribune of the people", fighting every manifestation of injustice, racist oppression and state tyranny. Our task remains the reforging of an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International to lead the proletariat in sweeping away the capitalist order through new October Revolutions around the world. ■

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"Socialists" embrace cops and prison guards

What kind of "socialist" organisation would invite a *prison guard*—a front-line enforcer of the bosses' brutal, racist "justice" system—as a featured speaker at its own public meeting? To anyone familiar with the history and practice of Peter Taaffe's wretchedly reformist Socialist Party—notorious for its line that police are "workers in uniform" and for its chauvinist indifference to racial oppression—the answer comes as no great surprise. Thus, those attending the Socialist Party's "Socialism 2007" weekend in London in mid-November were witness to the grotesque spectacle of Prison Officers' Association (POA) leader Brian Caton addressing an avowed "leftist" audience as a supposed "trade union" representative.

Outside the event, a Spartacist League placard protested that prison guards are not part of the workers movement. We also called for immigration cops out of the PCS, the civil service union. From the point of view of the multiethnic working class, it is a scandal that this union includes immigration police who are deadly enemies of the working class and particularly of immigrants. But the presence of immigration police and prison guards in the workers movement is perfectly legitimate for the Socialist Party, whose members form a majority on the executive of the PCS, because of the Taaffeites' position that police are "workers in uniform".

Immigration police out of the PCS! Prison guards out of the trade union movement!

When thousands of prison officers in England and Wales staged a dramatic strike over pay and conditions on 29 August 2007, defying a court injunction, the Socialist Party gushed: "This united and determined action will be applauded by socialists and trade unionists throughout the labour movement and stands as an example of how to treat the anti-union laws" (*Socialist*, 6-12 September 2007). Prison officers—like the police—are not part of the working class, but part of the armed fist of the capitalist state.

Virtually the whole spectrum of British "left" groups supported the prison officers' strike. The Socialist

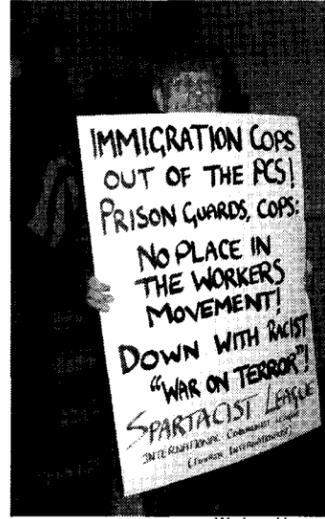
Workers Party (SWP) said in an online-only article dated 1 September 2007 that prison officers "should have the right to strike and to a union", even while stating the blindingly obvious fact that "many officers have a proven record of racism and violence". But what do strikes by prison guards mean? Better

also seized the occasion to air its very own version of the line that the cops are "workers in uniform". In a BT fringe meeting titled: "Prison Officers: 'Courageous heroes' or bosses' screws", the speaker put forward the line that Marxists seek to split the police in a revolutionary situation.

Revolution).

We have noted elsewhere (see "Social chauvinists under the skin: Dubious BT hawks its wares to Socialist Party", *Workers Hammer* no 198, Spring 2007) that the BT shares a great deal in common with the Socialist Party—both organisations are saturated with anti-communism and chauvinist indifference to racial and other special oppression. For more than four decades the Socialist Party, formerly known as the Militant tendency, and then Militant Labour, was buried deep inside the Labour Party. Throughout its history it has been characterised by social-democratic anti-communism and abject capitulation to British imperialism. Over the years this organisation has refused to call for British troops to get out of Northern Ireland and today capitulates to the Labour government's racist "war on terror". The notion that police belong in the unions goes hand-in-hand with class-collaborationist politics, as shown in the rotten sell-out deal the Socialist Party-dominated PCS Executive negotiated for its members, requiring new entrants to the civil service to work *five more years* to qualify for a pension.

Marxists understand that the state is not a neutral institution standing above society, but an instrument of class oppression. In his seminal work of 1917, *State and Revolution*, Bolshevik leader VI Lenin reiterated the Marxist understanding of the state as consisting at its core of "special bodies of armed men which have prisons, etc., at their command". Under capitalism the army, the police, the courts and prison service, as well as the state bureaucracy all exist to protect the wealth and power of a tiny minority of capitalists who exploit and live off the labour of the working masses. This state cannot be reformed or pressured into becoming an instrument of working people and the oppressed. The elimination of capitalist exploitation and oppression and the building of a classless, socialist society requires that the capitalist state be smashed through workers revolution and replaced by a workers state, based on organs of proletarian rule such as workers councils. ■



Socialist Party supports strike by prison officers (left) on 29 August 2007. Spartacist placard protests presence of leader of prison guards' "union" at "Socialism 2007" (right).

conditions to carry out their "job", which is to repress and brutalise the prison population that in capitalist society is derived overwhelmingly from the poorest, most downtrodden sections of society. In Britain the rate of incarceration is disproportionately high for blacks, Asians and immigrants.

One group peddling its wares at the Taaffeites' "Socialism 2007" event was the dubious International Bolshevik Tendency (BT). Distributing a weaselly leaflet titled "Which Side Are You On? Screws Out of the TUC!" (10 November 2007) the BT sagely counselled the Socialist Party that "the POA is not a workers' organisation" and that "it is a mistake to view their action as a blow against anti-trade union laws". A mistake? The Socialist Party's obscene courting of the most irreconcilable enemies of the working people is merely the logic of its thoroughly reformist worldview and programme. The BT

In a revolutionary situation Marxists certainly seek to split the *army* into its class components, winning the "workers (and peasants) in uniform" to the side of the insurrectionary proletariat. But in sucking up to the Socialist Party the BT wilfully obscures the gulf between soldiers, who are used as cannon fodder in the capitalist rulers' wars and the cops who hire themselves out to break strikes and to break the heads of minority youth. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described the enormous hatred of workers towards the cops in Russia during the February 1917 Revolution, saying: "Toward the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones, and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers." Later he added "The police are fierce, implacable, hated and hating foes. To win them over is out of the question" (*History of the Russian*

Letter

London
10 December 2007

Dear comrades,

The following may be of some use to you in connection with the Socialist Party's defence of the line that cops are "workers in uniform".

While we were protesting the platform given to the official of the prison guards union at the recent Socialist Party weekend, one of the SP's older hacks shouted that we should read what Trotsky said in 1923 about the significance of the German police force being full of Social Democrats. I have heard the same guy say this at least once before in response to Spartacist interventions against their line that cops are "workers in uniform" and should be part of the trade union movement.

As we all know, SP hacks have a knack for citing usually relatively little-known references of the great Marxists, which are taken out of context and distorted in order to justify whatever the rotten line of the day is to their youth and portray it as authentic Marxism.

So in the interests of combating this and

—not least—to refute the really quite offensive association of one of the greatest revolutionary leaders with the disgraceful position that cops and prison guards should be part of the workers movement, I did some research. Here is the passage I think the SP hack was referring to:

"Then there is the state police force of 135,000 men. It is made up of members of trade unions, most of whom are Social Democrats, with a Menshevik outlook. Few in number, elderly, burdened with families, they are hardly likely to be eager to fight for the cause of Stinnes and capital."

— Report to the Third Moscow Provincial Congress of the All-Russia Union of Metal Workers, October 19, 1923 cited in the *Military Writings of Leon Trotsky, Volume 5: 1921 – 1923* (Marxist Internet Archive: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1922/military/ch25.htm>)

This speech was given as an analysis of the pre-revolutionary situation and balance of forces in Germany 1923, whilst events were unfolding. The *Spartacist* no 56, "A Trotskyist critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern" article cites this speech as an example of where Trotsky incorrectly defended the entry of the KPD into the Saxony

and Thuringia coalition governments. And there is probably a case to be made that, corresponding to the disastrous position the Comintern had on entry into the coalition provincial governments with the Social Democrats, Trotsky's speech was not sufficiently hard and explicit enough on the Social-Democratic cops, leaving the above statement open to distortion.

But nowhere here does Trotsky say that the Social-Democratic cops could be won over to the workers. Rather, he is stressing the weakness of the police force to emphasise a situation that is favourable to a successful workers revolution: "Few in number, elderly, burdened with families" who would be reluctant to risk all and be on the losing side of a revolution. In other words that they could be *neutralised* by their fear of a powerful, victorious proletarian insurrection. And this is the best Marxists can expect from individual members of the police force in a revolutionary situation: that they will be paralysed by fear and a desire for self-preservation. And contrary to reformist morons such as the SP, pathetic

appeals to the cops/screws as class-brother "workers in uniform" act against producing the vanguard and consciousness needed to carry out the workers revolution resolutely directed against capitalism and its gendarme defenders.

Comradely Greetings,

Olly L

Workers Hammer replies: We thank Olly for his thoughtful letter. Trotsky's position on the police was generally much sharper and clearer than in 1923 and he was quite categorical that the police are the class enemy, even when they come from a social-democratic background. This can be seen from the following passage:

"The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker."

— "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat", January 1932, (*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*) ■



90 years after the Bolshevik October

"We are the party of the Russian Revolution"

We publish below an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Edith Goldberg at a Spartacist League forum at the University of London Union on 3 November 2007. The forum was held in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. In her talk, comrade Goldberg pointed out that while various fake socialist groups are paying hypocritical lip service to the anniversary of the Revolution, they sided at every turn with the imperialist bourgeoisie's campaign to overturn the world's first workers state and restore capitalist exploitation to the land of October. In contrast, the International Communist League (ICL) fought to the limits of our resources to defend the USSR against capitalist counter-revolution. Today it is the ICL which uniquely upholds the programme of October, to rid humanity of capitalist barbarism. As American Trotskyist leader James P Cannon explained in a 15 October 1939 speech on the "Russian question": "We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood."

* * *

We are here to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution, which was an enormous step forward in human history. It profoundly shaped the history of the world in the 20th century. We of the ICL look to the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik party as a model for the kind of party we seek to build and for our overriding goal of new October Revolutions. Above all the Bolshevik Revolution teaches us that socialist revolution is the only way to rid the world of the evils of capitalism. Under this system, neo-colonial adventures such as



Lenin addresses Red Army troops departing to war with Poland, 5 May 1920. Trotsky waits at the right of the podium.

the barbaric occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the impoverishment of the neo-colonial countries, are a necessary and permanent condition; so too is grinding poverty, the oppression of women and hideous racism, which is today fuelled by the targeting of Muslims under the so-called "war on terror".

Moreover, today's world is shaped by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the former Soviet Union and the bourgeoisie celebrates the so-called "death of communism". The real meaning of this campaign against the Bolshevik October is "never again". Never again should the working class lead the oppressed to overthrow the parasitical capitalists, landlords and their church. One of our most important tasks in the post-Soviet world is to maintain our proletarian revolutionary perspec-

tive and programme, despite the ideological onslaughts in this reactionary period. We do so by intervening as a fighting propaganda group in social struggles where our resources permit and by applying the lessons of our revolutionary forebears, particularly the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky.

For most of the 20th century, virtually every group claiming to be Marxist or "socialist" anywhere in the world felt obliged to pay lip service to the Bolshevik Revolution. Such was its immense appeal to the working masses of the world, even the parliamentarist British Labour Party was compelled to adopt "Clause IV" in 1918. This supposed commitment to "common ownership" was a conscious ploy to dupe revolutionary-minded workers into believing that "socialism" could be achieved through parliament, by electing a Labour government committed to nationalising industry while leaving the capitalist state machinery intact. The Labour Party's role in betraying the working class was clearly seen during the revolutionary upsurge that followed the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of World War I, during which British capitalism was profoundly shaken. In 1920, in opposition to British imperialism's military intervention to crush the Soviet workers state, over 350 councils of action sprang up all over the country and dual power was developing. The treacherous Labour leaders placed themselves at the head of these councils to head off the possibility of revolution and save the capitalist order.

For revolutionaries in Britain, one of the most crucial lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution is understanding that a fundamental dividing line separates Leninism from Labourite

reformism. The Labour Party was what Lenin termed a bourgeois workers party, meaning it had a mass working-class base but a pro-capitalist leadership and programme. Politically, it was the party of the wretched trade union bureaucracy. For a century the strategic obstacle to building a revolutionary party in this country has been the Labour Party's social-democratic reformism, based on peddling illusions in the "democratic" credentials of British imperialism and its vaunted parliamentary system.

The Bolshevik party was unique among the socialist organisations of its time. In the period during which it was forged by Lenin into an instrument for revolution, two key questions of programme divided revolutionaries from reformists: the inter-imperialist war of 1914-18 and the Bolshevik Revolution, ie the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the outbreak of WWI on 4 August 1914, the German Social Democracy (like most other parties in the Second International) passed definitively into the camp of social

chauvinism by supporting their "own" bourgeoisie in war. The British trade union bureaucracy and Labour leaders too were firmly in the camp of British imperialism on the war. Prominent among them was Arthur Henderson who is said to have led the cheering in the British parliament when Irish revolutionary James Connolly was executed for leading the 1916 Easter Rising.

In 1914 Lenin insisted on the necessity for a political break with the Second International and called for the foundation of a new international. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1919 the Third (Communist) International was founded and, under Lenin and Trotsky's leadership, it sought to forge vanguard parties to fight for proletarian revolutions worldwide. British Labour leaders such as Henderson and Ramsay MacDonald tried to undercut this effort by reviving the Second International, which MacDonald described as "the only real bulwark against Bolshevism short of military execution" (quoted in *Parliamentary Socialism*, Ralph Miliband, 1972). And a bulwark against communism is precisely what the British Labour Party became. One of its leading figures, Ernest Bevin, who in 1920 had placed himself at the head of the councils of action, went on to play a leading role in the 1949 formation of NATO, the imperialists' anti-Soviet military alliance. Labourite reformism combined two interrelated factors: anti-Sovietism and loyalty to "democratic" British imperialism.

Another vital lesson from the October Revolution is the need to relentlessly expose and combat the reformists and social chauvinists.



BBC Hulton

Russia, 1917: Soldiers declare support for Bolsheviks on eve of October Revolution.



Today, with New Labour no longer even pretending to be a reformist party, the role of duping workers into seeking improvements in the capitalist system by mass pressure on Parliament is carried on by reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party, both of whom have been firmly in the camp of Labour and British imperialism for decades.

Every left organisation is defined by its programme regarding not only the Bolshevik Revolution itself, but the state that issued from it, the Soviet Union. Defence of the USSR, despite its bureaucratic degeneration under the rule of the Stalinist caste, was a litmus test for all organisations claiming to stand for socialism. We Trotskyists fought to the end in defence of the Soviet workers state. Uniquely, the ICL intervened in the Soviet Union seeking to mobilise the working class against the powerful forces of capitalist restoration led by Boris Yeltsin, backed by imperialism. It is especially important to understand that many of the groups who today are singing the praises of the Russian Revolution on its 90th anniversary—including the Socialist Party and the SWP—in 1991 joined with the American and British imperialists in cheering for the demise of the USSR, a catastrophe of historic proportions.

The same test also applies today to those remaining states where capitalism has been overthrown: China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam. The imperialists are driving for capitalist counter-revolution in China and the other deformed workers states. We are unique in our fight for unconditional military defence of these states, and for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies that rule there. This is part of our fight for socialist revolution in the capitalist countries worldwide.

Defend the Chinese workers state!

The reformists who supported counter-revolution in the homeland of October today declare that China is capitalist and/or that there is nothing there to defend. This flows from their programme of promoting bourgeois democracy over the dictatorship of the proletariat and the gains of the collectivised economy. The Chinese Revolution of 1949 was not led by a revolutionary internationalist party; the working class did not play a leading role and the state that issued from it was a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Nonetheless, Mao's peasant army smashed the bourgeois state and the Chinese bourgeoisie fled to Taiwan. Land was distributed to the peasants and later collectivised. Women, who had been basically chattel for a thousand years advanced by many orders of magnitude beyond that oppression.

China today is not capitalist—the economy is still primarily based on collectivised property. It has one of the largest and most militant proletariats in the world, an industrial sector sufficiently developed to build a nuclear deterrent to the imperialists, who are intensifying military pressure on China. This makes all the more clear our duty to fight for the unconditional military defence of China and North Korea, against the imperialist powers and the threat of internal counter-revolution. As we did in the former USSR and the East European deformed workers states, we also call for proletarian political revolu-

On the eve of the October insurrection, workers of giant Putilov munitions factory exchange banners of solidarity with pro-Bolshevik Pavlovsky guards regiment.



tions to get rid of the ruling nationalist bureaucracies—whose policies undermine and weaken those states—and install governments based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

Lenin calls to turn the imperialist war into a civil war

The hoopla and chauvinist flag-waving which was seen in all the imperialist countries at the start of WWI gave way to a wave of proletarian revolutionary struggle inspired by revulsion at the butchery of war. Lenin's position on WWI, was revolutionary defeatism, meaning hostility to both sides and fighting for revolutionary upheavals of the proletariat on both sides. Lenin's main slogans were: "The main enemy is at home!" and "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!" The Bolsheviks galvanised revulsion against the war into an understanding of the need for working-class power, which required com-

the working class, peasants and soldiers. At the time of the February Revolution the Mensheviks and SRs formed the majority in the Soviets, because while the workers had overthrown the tsar, they were not yet sufficiently conscious of their historic role to actually take power. The Mensheviks helped retard consciousness with their perspective of "two-stage" revolution, according to which the revolution in Russia belonged to the bourgeoisie and the main task of the day was the establishment of a Constituent Assembly. Instead of fighting for working-class power, the Mensheviks supported the Provisional Government.

Describing what dual power means, the first Minister of War in the Provisional Government, Alexander Guchkov, complained: "The government, alas, has no real power; the troops, the railroads, the post and telegraph are in the hands of the Soviet.

Paris Commune" ("The Dual Power", 9 April 1917).

Lenin's understanding of the nature of the state was based on the key lesson drawn by Karl Marx from the Paris Commune—that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the machinery of the capitalist state and wield it for its own purposes. The capitalist state must be shattered in the course of revolution and replaced by a new state power of the working class. Lenin considered this so important that he wrote his scathing polemic *State and Revolution* in the heat of revolution; the second part was published after the revolution as *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

It would take the October Revolution to resolve the dual power situation in the interests of the working class. The Mensheviks and SRs tacitly accepted that the February Revolution had achieved the main task of overthrowing the monarchy, and now the "free people" had to defend themselves against the German Kaiser. In other words the war aims of the Russian bourgeoisie would continue under the cover of "democracy" rather than the Romanov eagle. Lenin had been in exile during the February Revolution and the subsequent month. In his absence the Bolshevik leaders in Russia began to bend in the direction of the Mensheviks. In March, *Pravda*, then edited by Stalin, Kamenev and Muranov, carried an article which declared:

"Our slogan is not the empty cry 'Down with War!' which means the disorganization of the revolutionary army and of the army that is becoming ever more revolutionary. Our slogan is to bring pressure [!] to bear on the Provisional Government so as to compel it to make, without fail, openly and before the eyes of world democracy [!], an attempt [!] to induce [!] all the warring countries to initiate immediate negotiations to end the world war. Till then let everyone [!] remain at his post [!]."

—quoted and emphasis added by Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of October* (1924)

On his return to Russia in April, Lenin led a sharp fight to reorient the Bolshevik party. At stake in this fight was the question of the working class taking power, as Trotsky noted in *Lessons of October*, saying: "The fundamental controversial question around which everything else centred was this: whether or not we should struggle for power; whether or not we should assume power."

Permanent revolution v two-stage class collaboration

The key aspects of Lenin's fight in April were presented in his "April Theses", in which he also argued for the

continued on page 8



Petrograd demonstration, June 1917, raises Bolshevik slogans: "Down with counterrevolution! Down with the ten capitalist ministers! All power to the soviets of workers, soldiers' and peasants' deputies!"

bating all illusions among the masses in the Mensheviks and the peasant party, the Social Revolutionaries (SRs).

By 1917 there were mass desertions in the tsarist army and orders were being refused. This was a key factor in toppling the tsar in the February Revolution, which opened up a period of dual power within Russia. The bourgeois Kadet party set up the Provisional Government, a capitalist government which existed side by side with the soviets, the organisations of

The simple fact is that the Provisional Government exists only so long as the Soviet permits it" (quoted in *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky, 1933). Between February and October there was continual conflict between the Provisional Government and the Soviets. Referring to the Menshevik/SR leaders of the Soviets, Lenin wrote: "They refuse to recognise the obvious truth that inasmuch as these Soviets exist, *inasmuch as* they are a power, we have in Russia a state of the *type* of the

Revolution...

(Continued from page 7)

abandonment of old slogans, including his own slogan of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". This in fact was a two-class dictatorship—a contradiction in terms. Lenin repudiated it in practice, thus arriving at essentially the same conception of the Russian Revolution as Trotsky had outlined as early as 1905, known as the theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky understood that the completion of the democratic tasks in backward Russia was conceivable only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry, and that the seizure of power by the working class in Russia would place on the order of the day not only the democratic, but also the socialist tasks. This would give a powerful impetus to international socialist revolution, which was necessary for the development of socialism in Russia.

The programme of permanent revolution for neo-colonial countries of belated capitalist development has been confirmed over and over. It is the cornerstone of our programme for countries like Mexico, India and South Africa today. It is counterposed to the Menshevik schema of "two-stage revolution", as practised by the Stalinist South African Communist Party who today use this to justify their participation in the capitalist coalition government with COSATU and the ANC. The Tripartite Alliance government has broken strikes, condemned millions to die of AIDS, while propping up the neo-apartheid capitalist order that leaves the overwhelming majority in dire poverty. The Mensheviks argued that because of Russia's backwardness the country had to experience a period of bourgeois "democracy", ie it was premature for the working class to take power. The point about the "two-stage" revolution is that the first stage is the alliance of the working class with alien class forces, and the second stage invariably sees the beheading and destruction of the workers movement by the bourgeoisie and certainly never leads to socialism.

Having handed power to the bourgeois Provisional Government in February, the Mensheviks proceeded to form a coalition government with the Kadets. This was a classic popular front government, a form of class collaboration designed to fool the workers that their concerns can be met through the bourgeois state. As Leninist revolutionaries, opposition to popular fronts is a question of principle. We fight for proletarian political independence from the class enemy. Even when a bourgeois parliament convenes with all manner of so-called socialists, it remains a capitalist government. Workers must fight for state power through their own organs.

Two months after the fall of the tsar the Kadet foreign minister Miliukov reiterated Russia's support for the imperialist war, which provoked a demonstration by armed workers under the slogan: "Down with the Provisional Government!" Now in government, the Mensheviks took on the task of mobilising for a new offensive against Germany. This was naturally very unpopular and to try and recover some credibility with the working class, the Mensheviks called for a demonstration. On 1 July the workers turned out but to the horror of the Mensheviks, banner after banner was emblazoned with the slogans of the Bolsheviks: "Down with the ten capitalist ministers!" "Down with the offensive!" "All power to the Soviets!"

The military offensive was a debacle and the German army attacked Riga in August. Petrograd was vulnerable but, given the revolutionary ferment, the Russian bourgeoisie feared its own proletariat more than the advancing armies of the Kaiser. There was a real pressure in this situation to call for defence of Petrograd as the city of the revolutionary working class. Fearing that defensive moods would turn into a defensist policy, Lenin wrote: "We shall become defensists only after the transfer of power to the proletariat.... Neither the capture of Riga nor the capture of Petersburg will make us defensists." Writing from prison, Trotsky said: "The fall of Riga is a cruel blow. The fall of Petersburg would be a misfortune. But the fall of the international policy of the Russian proletariat would be ruinous" (both quotations cited in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*).

Bolsheviks lead working class to power

In July 1917 Petrograd was in revolutionary fervour with the rest of the country lagging behind, but by October this had changed. Peasants were seizing the land in the countryside and the whole country was ready for revolution. Lenin fought hard for the Bolsheviks to seize power. Early in October—over the head of the Bolshevik Central Committee—Lenin wrote to the Petrograd and Moscow Committees: "Delay is a crime. Waiting for the Congress of Soviets is a childish toying with formalities" and a "betrayal of the revolution" (quoted in *Lessons of October*). On 10 October the Bolshevik Central Committee voted for insurrection, by ten votes to two—Zinoviev and Kamenev voted against. The workers were arming, drilling, setting up the Red Guards. Workers at the weapons factories were funnelling weapons directly to the workers.

Key to the toppling of the tsar was the mass disaffection of the peasant base of the tsarist army. Likewise, for



Triumph of proletarian revolution in Russia inspired massive wave of workers struggles internationally, including 1919 Clyde general strike.

ity from headquarters to the Military Revolutionary Committee.

On 24 October, the head of the government, Kerensky, tried to shut down the Bolshevik newspaper. This provided the spark for the seizure of power. The Military Revolutionary Committee sent in a detachment to reopen the newspaper which also seized government institutions and communication centres. Lenin was still concerned that events were proceeding too slowly and went in disguise to the Bolshevik headquarters at Smolny, where the Petrograd Soviet was located. As the Second All Russia Congress of the Soviets opened on the morning of 25th October, the gunship *Aurora* was still firing on the Winter Palace. The uprising and seizure of power was openly proclaimed by the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Lenin opened his speech at the Congress with the famous sentence: "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." The peace decree

ing to need. A new revolutionary government of People's Commissars was appointed, which over the next period proceeded to nationalise the banks, restart industry and lay the foundations of the new soviet state.

The revolutionary government granted self-determination to the many oppressed nations of the former tsarist empire and tore down the whole edifice of Russian patriarchal mediaevalism upon which the tsarist autocracy had rested. The early Soviet government not only separated church and state but poured funds into secular education and science, promoting a thoroughly materialist worldview. It eliminated all laws discriminating against national and ethnic minorities and women; Soviet Russia also eliminated all discriminatory laws against homosexuals. It was the first country of significance to give the vote to women. From the beginning, the October Revolution was seen by the Bolsheviks as only the start of what was to be a European-wide workers revolution. And the revolutionary proletariat in Russia was infused with this internationalism. On the eve of the insurrection in Petrograd, the workers of the giant Putilov munitions factory and the pro-Bolshevik soldiers of the Pavlovsky Regiment exchanged banners of solidarity. The Putilov banner read: "Long Live the Russian Revolution as the Prologue to the Social Revolution in Europe!"

Rise of Stalinism

Russia was a very backward country in which the vast majority of the population were peasants. No one in the Bolshevik party thought for a minute that you could build socialism in Russia at this time, since Marxists understand that a socialist society is only possible once the majority of the world market is torn from imperialist domination through victorious workers revolutions in the imperialist centres. The Bolsheviks did however firmly believe that the working class should take power in this backward country and use this victory to inspire the proletarians of the imperialist centres to do likewise. The Bolshevik Revolution inspired many revolutionary struggles throughout the world. However the tide began to ebb, especially in the wake of the failure of the German revolution of 1923. This defeat was tremendously demoralising for the worn-out and hungry proletariat in Russia, and left the fledgling workers state in Russia without access to desperately needed industrial goods. After seven years of imperialist aggression, first in the



East Berlin, 3 January 1990: Spartakist spokesman Renate Dahlhaus addresses 250,000-strong protest against Nazi desecration of Red Army war memorial at Treptow.

the working class to take power, a class split in the army was necessary. The mechanism for this was the Military Revolutionary Committee established by the Petrograd Soviet in October with Trotsky as its principal political leader. Through it, in what one might call a "cold insurrection", the Bolshevik-led soviet took control of the armed bodies of men out of the hands of the Provisional Government. By 13 October, the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet voted to transfer military author-

promised an end to secret diplomacy and proposed to the governments and peoples of the warring countries immediate negotiations to secure a democratic peace without annexations and without indemnities. The land decree, borrowed in its essentials from the agrarian programme of the Left SRs, abolished private property in land and provided for the transfer of all private and church estates to land committees and soviets of peasants' deputies for distribution to the peasantry accord-

interimperialist war and then through the wars of intervention and civil war, the economy was in tatters. Russia was left politically isolated, surrounded by hostile capitalist powers.

Under these conditions, a conservative and bureaucratised layer in the party and state apparatus coalesced around Stalin and came to the fore, intent on preserving its relatively privileged status amid extreme poverty, scarcity and imperialist hostility. The defeat of the emerging Left Opposition by these forces at the rigged 13th Party Conference in January 1924 marked the qualitative point in the seizure of political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Thus began the process of degeneration of the Soviet Union. It was a political counterrevolution rather than a social one, because the nascent bureaucracy hijacked the governmental apparatus but did not overturn the socialised property forms created by October.

Despite the triumph of the bureaucratic caste and the consequent degeneration of the Soviet workers state, the central gains of the revolution—embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy—remained. The gains were apparent, for example, in the material position of women. That is why we, standing on the heritage of Trotsky's Left Opposition, stood for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and for an intransigent fight against all threats of capitalist counterrevolution, internal or external. At the same time we understood that the bureaucratic caste at the top was a mortal threat to the continued existence of the workers state. We called for a proletarian political revolution in the Soviet Union to oust the bureaucracy, to restore soviet workers democracy and to pursue the fight for the international proletarian revolution necessary to build socialism.

The Trotskyist movement had long predicted that counterrevolution in Soviet Russia would enormously strengthen the forces of capitalist reaction on a global scale. For example, in 1929, a founding document of the International Left Opposition in the US forewarned:

“The collapse of the Russian revolution as the dictatorship of the proletariat would signify the retardation for decades of the revolutionary movement in Europe and America and the uprisings of the colonial peoples, whose main point of support today is the victory of the Russian October. A collapse would be followed by an unequalled reign of reaction throughout the world and would entail a restoration of world imperialist rule without precedent in the last two or three decades.”

—“Platform of the Communist Opposition”, reprinted in James P Cannon, *Writings and Speeches, 1928-31: The Left Opposition in the US 1928-31* (1981)

The retardation of the revolutionary movement is a fact of life in the post-Soviet world.

Defending the Soviet Union in the Cold War

The Stalinist bureaucracy was an unstable caste resting parasitically on the socialised foundations of the workers state, which it was at times compelled to defend. This contradictory character was evident even in the last years of the Brezhnev regime, with the December 1979 Soviet military intervention into Afghanistan against a CIA-backed insurgency by woman-hating Islamic reactionaries. From the point of view of the working class, the intervention in Afghanistan was one of the few supportable acts of the Soviet Stalinists. Regardless of their intentions, the Red Army presence was an act of defence of

the borders of the Soviet Union against the largest ever CIA covert operation **and** it posed the possibility of extending the gains of October to the benighted peoples of Afghanistan. We said: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” The intervention of Soviet troops drew a howl of rage and horror from the Labourite left, including from so-called Trotskyist groups at the time.

The bureaucracy's 1988-89 withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan under Mikhail Gorbachev, appeasing imperialism at the very borders of the USSR, was a critical betrayal, and a tip-off that the Stalinists would soon renounce any intention of defending the Soviet Union itself against imperialism. We said better to fight to defend the Soviet Union in Jalalabad than within the borders of the Soviet Union itself. We put our money where our mouth is



ICL's fight to mobilise Soviet workers in defence of gains of October Revolution. Trotskyist banner raised by ICL at November 1991 Revolution Day demonstration in Moscow.

and volunteered to raise a brigade to help defend the Afghan city of Jalalabad against the CIA's *mujahedin*. The Afghan government turned down this offer, but we raised thousands of dollars in our public work to support the defence of that city.

Incipient political revolution in East Germany

Counterrevolution in the USSR was far from inevitable, as was shown by the incipient proletarian political revolution that developed in the East German deformed workers state when the Berlin Wall came down in late 1989. Here the ICL uniquely intervened, mobilising all our resources to seize the opportunity to implement the Trotskyist programme. Again, the fake-Trotskyists lined up with the forces of counterrevolution, in particular the West German social-democratic proponents of bourgeois “democracy”. The Committee for a Workers International (CWI, to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) called for the West German SPD to go on the offensive; we rightly insisted that the SPD was the Trojan horse for counterrevolution. We intervened actively with our perspective for a red Germany of workers councils, ie for revolutionary reunification of Germany. Ours was a direct challenge for power and the **only** challenge to the sellout of the DDR to West German imperialism by the Moscow and East Berlin Stalinists.

Although shaped by the disproportion of forces, there was in fact a contest between the ICL programme of political revolution and the Stalinist programme of capitulation and counterrevolution. Ten years after capitalist reunification we received a powerful confirmation of the impact we had in East Germany and the

degree to which the Stalinists were alarmed by this, when Mikhail Gorbachev stated on German TV that the Soviet leadership changed its mind on the question of reunification after 3 January 1990. This was the date of the demonstration against the fascist desecration of the Treptow Soviet war memorial. We initiated this rally, which brought out 250,000 people because the SED feared how much our programme resonated among East Berlin workers and felt compelled to mobilise its base. For the first time since Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union, Trotskyists were able to address a mass audience in a deformed workers state. We threw our small revolutionary forces into a struggle for power. We were defeated, *but we fought*.

The events of August 1991 in the USSR proved to be decisive in the restoration of capitalism in the home-

House. The State Emergency Committee made no attempt to arrest Yeltsin or to cut off his links with George Bush Sr. When Bush declared that Yeltsin was his man, the committee quickly disintegrated and Yeltsin and his henchmen took power. This government then set about enforcing capitalist shock treatment.

The ICL uniquely raised the alarm, distributing tens of thousands of leaflets throughout the Soviet Union “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush counter-revolution!” This was the first anti-Yeltsin communist protest in all of the USSR. We sought to mobilise the working class to defend the gains of the revolution, form workers councils, return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky. In sharp counterposition to this, much of the left stood on Yeltsin's barricades. Workers Power for example wrote at the time:

“No matter what the socially counterrevolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme, no matter how many spivs and racketeers joined the barricades to defend the Russian parliament, it would be revolutionary suicide to back the coup-mongers and support the crushing of democratic rights”.

—Workers Power, September 1991

Along with the priests, yuppies and fascists, they were joined by the CWI, who went as far as boasting in their press that they intervened in factories to actively discourage workers from fighting Yeltsin. The SWP exulted: “Communism has collapsed”, adding: “It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

The greatest devastation brought about by the fall of the USSR has taken place on its own former territory. Economic catastrophe has befallen the population; the degradation of women and national minorities—seen in the slaughter inflicted by Russian occupation forces in Chechnya—is rampant. Just as Soviet progress could be measured in the figures of concrete, steel and education, so now can capitalism's return be measured in figures of ruin, disease and barbarism. In 1989, average male life expectancy was 64.2 years. In Yeltsin's Russia of 1994, it dropped to 57.6 years. This is a historically unprecedented sudden drop in life expectancy. A 16-year-old boy has less of a chance to survive to 60 in Putin's Russia than in the benighted filth of 19th century tsarism!

The economic collapse of post-Soviet Russia was unprecedented for a modern society: gross domestic product fell by over 80 per cent from 1991 to 1997; according to official (understated) statistics, capital investment dropped over 90 per cent. By the middle of the 1990s, 40 per cent of the population of the Russian Federation was living below the official poverty line and a further 36 per cent only a little above it. Millions were literally starving. Infrastructure from

continued on page 11

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Mumia...

(Continued from page 12)

mobilising the social power of the working class. We do not deceive those who would fight on Mumia's behalf by peddling the lie that pleading with the capitalist courts and political parties will bring him justice. Mumia is the victim of a racist and political frame-up. And now his fight is at a critical juncture, as he and his supporters await a decision by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals on whether to uphold his death sentence or keep him in prison for life, or alternately to grant him a new trial or further court hearings.

Over 800 individuals and organisations, including unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers, have signed a PDC statement demanding Mumia's freedom and the abolition of the racist death penalty. Titled "We Demand the Immediate Freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an Innocent Man", the statement cites the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Daniel Faulkner. As a sign of its commitment to Mumia's cause, the London Underground Engineering Branch of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union paid for the statement to run as an ad in *The Voice*. As a resolution adopted by the SUD-TMT postal sorting workers union in Paris in October 2006 stressed, Mumia's imprisonment "constitutes a real warning to all those who will one day stand up to and take on the oppressors of minorities and more widely the working class".

While supporting all possible legal proceedings on Mumia's behalf, we fight against relying on the legal system that has shown it will stop at nothing to kill him or consign him to a "life" in prison hell. Mumia was in the sights of the FBI and Philly cops from the late 1960s, when he was a 15-year-old leader of the Black Panther Party. To secure Mumia's conviction, cops and prosecutors intimidated witnesses and suppressed and falsified evidence. The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) has repeatedly threatened Mumia's supporters, leading a howling mob in July 1995 outside the 1199C hospital workers union hall in Philadelphia to stop a fundraiser for Mumia and continuing such harassment to this day, including by organising boycotts of musicians and others who have spoken out for Mumia. Judges at all levels have denied evidence exonerating Mumia, with the courts repeatedly refusing to hear the Beverly confession. With very few exceptions, the capitalist politicians, both Democratic and Republican, have abetted the cops and prosecutors, with the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passing a resolution last December condemning the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis for naming a street in honour of Mumia.

We fight for mass protest centered on the working class, whose social power lies in its ability to choke off the profits that are the lifeblood of capitalism. That power was displayed in December 2005 when New York City transit workers in Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 defied the state Taylor Law and went on strike, crippling the financial centre of world imperialism for three days. Writing in solidarity with Local 100, Mumia quoted Karl Marx's statement that the law "is but the will of one class made into a law for all". Mumia continued: "The same law demanded that Blacks take the back of the bus. The same law outlaws the right of those who labor to withhold their labor, to better their condition, and those who

follow them." Mumia has long spoken out on behalf of labour. During a lock-out of 2500 unionised ABC technicians in 1998, he refused an interview by reporters from the "20/20" TV news show, stating that he would rather die than cross the picket line.

Fraternally allied to the Spartacist League/US, the Labor Black Leagues have focused their efforts on bringing out union support for Mumia. Based on the only significant integration in racist America—the workplace and factory floor—the trade unions have the social power and potential to become battalions in the struggle against racial oppression and exploitation and to shake the foundations of this decaying capitalist system.

Mumia's case is a microcosm of capitalist class rule and the black oppression that is intrinsic to it. In the US, the barbaric death penalty is the legacy of chattel slavery, the lynch rope made legal. The road to black freedom lies in the struggle for revolutionary integrationism—the full integration of black people into an egalitarian, socialist America. The fight for black freedom is the strategic question of the American proletarian revolution. There can be no socialist revolution in the US unless the working class takes up the fight for black freedom—opposing every manifestation of racist repression and discrimination—and there can be no liberation of black people without the overthrow of this capitalist system.

If undertaken with a mobilisation of the union movement, the fight to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty would be a first, giant step towards infusing workers with the consciousness that this system must be overturned through proletarian socialist revolution. But this requires a struggle against the policies of the labour misleaders, who rarely use the strike weapon even in defence of their own members and look instead to the Democratic Party, the courts and other agencies of the enemy class. The trade union bureaucracy's pro-capitalist programme is a major obstacle in the fight for Mumia's freedom.

An international fight

When the Spartacist League and PDC first took up Mumia's defence more than 20 years ago, we brought his case to civil rights organisations and anti-death penalty gatherings, to the campuses and to left and labour organisations in the US and internationally. Aiming to make Mumia's case known to the public, we fought to get his columns published in the black press and to publicise his case in liberal journals such as the *Nation* and the *Village Voice*. The PDC also initiated united-front rallies in an effort to mobilise broad social forces, reaching out as well to prominent personalities and

Following presentation by PDC about Mumia's frame-up, RMT London Underground Engineering branch donated union funds to publicise Mumia's case by sponsoring notice in *The Voice*.

Workers Hammer graphic

JUNE 4 - 10, 2007 **THE VOICE**

We demand the immediate freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's appeal is now on the "fast track" in the federal appeals court and the state is determined to carry out his execution.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man. A former Black Panther Party spokesman, supporter of the MOVE organisation and award-winning journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless", Mumia was framed up in 1982 on false charges of killing a Philadelphia police officer. Sentenced to death based on his political history and beliefs, Mumia has spent 25 years on death row for a crime he did not commit. The frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal shows what the death penalty is all about. It is a legacy of chattel slavery and a barbaric outrage, it is the lynch rope made legal.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal exemplifies the race and class bias of the US justice system against black people and all the oppressed.

Mobilise now! Join the campaign!

For more information, literature and the DVD *From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX
Tel: 020 7281 5504; Email: partisandefence@yahoo.co.uk; www.partisandefence.org

The London Underground Engineering Branch of the Rail, Maritime & Transport Union (RMT) has sponsored this ad.

political figures. Many saw in Mumia's fight for freedom and justice a reflection of their own struggles against racism and reaction—from aboriginal people in Australia and youth of North African origin in France to black people throughout North America. By the autumn of 1990, statements of support for Mumia encompassed unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers.

These efforts laid the groundwork for the outbreak of mass protest that answered the warrant for his execution, which was signed on 1 June 1995. Over the next few days, protesters took to the streets around the world. On 19 June in Johannesburg, PDC labour coordinator Gene Herson addressed some 15,000 workers at a trade-union demonstration where the crowd chanted: "Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!" Mumia's struggle has resonated especially strongly among black workers in South Africa, where the death penalty had long served as a tool of apartheid state terror. Today, South Africa's National Council of Trade Unions and National Union of Mine-workers are among the signatories to the PDC statement demanding Mumia's freedom.

In Italy in June 1995, a demonstration for Mumia was made an official part of a larger protest in Rome of over 60,000 workers fighting against pension cuts. After a speaker from the Mumia contingent from Naples called for his freedom, one of the official platform speakers announced: "I think that I can safely say that all of us here want to express our solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal, that we all defend Mumia Abu-Jamal. Do you all agree?" The workers shouted their agreement.

As Mumia's execution date drew near, a united-front labour/black mobilisation initiated by the PDC in downtown Manhattan on 3 August drew 1000 people, including contingents from union locals representing hundreds of thousands of workers in the Northeast.

On 12 August, five days after Mumia won a stay of execution, contingents of workers marched with their union banners alongside the PDC at a protest for Mumia in Philadelphia initiated by Workers World Party's National People's Campaign.

In a column written four days after the stay was announced, Mumia told his supporters, "Let us utilise this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, to not 'stay' one execution, but to halt them all!" Mumia's case had become the focal point of struggle against the racist death penalty. His name had become a household word. Articles about Mumia and his own written commentaries were a regular feature of the US black press. Mumia's face was emblazoned on the T-shirts of student activists and youth in the ghettos; his name became a symbol in hip-hop for racist frame-up and also rolled off the lips of many union activists.

But over time, a massive movement was demobilised by a political programme advanced by liberal and reformist organisations that centered their protest actions around the call for a "new trial" for Mumia. In doing so, they hoped to attract prominent bourgeois liberals who view Mumia's case not as emblematic of the capitalist legal system but as an aberration that stains the fabric of American "democracy". This strategy undermined the very basis of the support Mumia received from masses of people who identified with his opposition to oppression and injustice, which are inherent in capitalist society.

Mumia is innocent—free him now!

The PDC's class-struggle defence strategy is rooted in the pioneering work of the International Labor Defense (ILD) led by James P Cannon, a founding leader of the American Communist Party and, later, of American Trotskyism. In

Join the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defence!

Make a contribution today, payable to Partisan Defence Committee. Write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque and mail to the address below. Every penny of such contributions is transmitted to Mumia's legal defence team via Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal in New York.

Organise protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organisations demanding Mumia's freedom. Get your union or organisation to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicise Mumia's case in your union or organisation's newsletter.

Spread the word! Distribute the *Workers Hammer* supplement, "Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" (July 2007), containing reports and speeches from the May 2007 rally in London, £1 per bundle of 10. Order from/make payable to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY.

Order the PDC pamphlet *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia is Innocent!*, detailing the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive evidence of his innocence. It is available for 70p. Get the PDC badge: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" £1 each. Order the DVD made by the PDC, *From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, £2 each. Order from, make cheques payable to Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX.

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leading the struggle to free anarchist immigrant workers Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s, the ILD constantly combated illusions in the capitalist courts and politicians sown by the reformist Socialists and labour tops of the day (see "Lessons of the Fight to Free Sacco and Vanzetti", *Workers Vanguard* nos 897 and 898, 31 August and 14 September 2007). This is no less important today as we seek to revitalise mass protest for Mumia.

On the day of the 24 April 1999 "Millions for Mumia" demonstration in San Francisco, the West Coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) carried out a port shutdown in solidarity with Mumia. Centrally initiated by Jack Heyman, an ILWU Local 10 Executive Board member at the time, this was a powerful example of the kind of social power that must be brought to bear in the fight to free Mumia. But Heyman himself undermined this action by tying it to appeals for a new trial.

The central demands of the SF protest — to stop the execution of Mumia and for a new trial — were tailored to attract support from Democratic Party politicians and other bourgeois liberals who view Mumia's case as an isolated "miscarriage of justice". Heyman, a key speaker at the rally, uttered not a word against either the "new trial" call or the Democratic Party. Heyman typifies those in the labour bureaucracy who adopt an appearance of militancy as a deceptive cover for reformist politics. The "Millions for Mumia" protests marked a high point in the number of people marching for Mumia. But within a few years, the thousands who had come out for Mumia rallies dwindled to a few hundred.

Those who call for a new trial often claim that this is "what Mumia wants" — as if Mumia has not been fighting all along for his freedom! Rachel Wolkenstein, a PDC counsel who served on Mumia's legal team from 1995 to 1999, answered this at the 5 May London PDC rally, which was also addressed by speakers from the Communication Workers Union and the RMT (see *Workers Hammer* supplement, July 2007). Wolkenstein observed that in earlier struggles for class-war prisoners, the call was not for a "new trial for the Guildford Four, or for Angela Davis, or Huey Newton" but for their freedom. Responding to comments from the floor, she observed that Mumia "knows perfectly well every word I said here. He sent greetings to this rally, brief

though they were, making the point that he was fighting for his freedom." As the French CGT Limoges railway workers union wrote in a 1 March 2007 letter: "There is no need for a new fast-track procedure in the appeals court. All the facts and evidence" of Mumia's innocence, the letter noted, "are known".

Seeking to obstruct a class-struggle fight for Mumia's freedom, the liberal writer David Lindorff and the rad-lib Michael Schiffmann claim that fewer people have turned out for Mumia recently because the PDC has pushed such "divisive" issues as the confession of Arnold Beverly — ie, the overwhelming evidence of Mumia's innocence and the state frame-up. The notion that the Beverly evidence is divisive is utterly belied by the range of prominent individuals and labour organisations that have signed on to the PDC statement containing the confession, which Beverly submitted in a 1999 affidavit that is printed along with supporting evidence in the PDC pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal — Mumia Is Innocent!*

In the US, ads with the PDC statement and signatories have appeared in the *Nation* magazine and in such widely read black newspapers as NYC's *Amsterdam News*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *San Francisco Bay View*. The ad has also appeared in the French Communist Party's *L'Humanité*, the *Morning Star* in Britain and *junge Welt* in Germany. It also ran in *Share*, Canada's largest-circulation ethnic newspaper.

Some 250 union organisations, officials and members in the US have signed the PDC statement, including four chapters of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Amalgamated Transit Union, International Longshoremen's Association and AFSCME locals and the Chicago-area United Auto Workers Women's Committee. International supporters include CGT railway workers in France, COBAS postal workers in Italy, SNTE educational workers in Mexico and hospital workers in Vancouver. A Hamburg, Germany factory stewards council of the giant IG Metall union and the Greek All-Workers Fighting Front, a half-million-strong union federation, have also signed on. Other union groups, such as the Conference of European Harbour Unions, have issued their own statements demanding Mumia's freedom. Mumia has been made an honorary

member of a number of unions, including the National Union of Journalists in Britain, which recently urged its members to mobilise for Mumia (see *Workers Hammer* no 200, Autumn 2007).

Michael Schiffmann has provided a valuable service by unearthing and publicising crime scene photos showing that much of the evidence of Faulkner's killing was doctored by police in order to prosecute Mumia. However, Schiffmann & Co have used this and all other evidence of Mumia's innocence not to argue for his immediate freedom but to press for a new trial. And in throwing mud at the Beverly confession, they **undermine** the fact of Mumia's innocence and the depth of his frame-up. Beverly's testimony is that he and another man were hired to kill Faulkner, who had become a problem for the mob and corrupt cops by interfering with the graft and payoffs involved in illegal gambling, drugs and prostitution. Lindorff, Schiffmann et al reject this powerful evidence of innocence because it shows that Mumia was the victim not of a rogue cop, bad prosecutor or racist judge but of an entire "justice" system upholding the interests of the racist capitalist rulers.

Unchain labour's power!

At a PDC-initiated rally in Harlem in October 2006, Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal questioned the PDC's labour centrality, pointing to the participation of poor and unemployed people in protests for Mumia: "They stood beside the workers. I'm saying we must give credit to all those people who worked to free Mumia." Rachel Wolkenstein replied:

"Our numbers on a street in a demonstration show our desire to stand for something... But that is not the same thing as being able to stop this system, **shut it down!** These are very different things. And that is why we talk about the power of the working class. It is not a dismissal of the good will, the heart, the needs and the oppression that otherwise exists in society. It is not a statement that those people who are unemployed are not part of the struggle. But that is the duty of the labour movement: to **organise** the unemployed, to **fight** for jobs for the unemployed, to **unionise** people across the board."

If labour is to mobilise its power on Mumia's behalf, it must do so independently of the capitalist politicians, racist cops and courts. Prior to the rally, the 300,000-strong SEIU Local 1199 added its name to the PDC statement.

However, the leadership of this union and others were busy at the time working over their members to vote for "pro-labour" capitalist politicians in the midterm Congressional elections. Wolkenstein pointed out that they "would do better, if they were here today as a first step fighting for Mumia". She won applause for saying that they should have "been prepared to bring out their membership in defending the transit workers when they were out on strike" and should "commit themselves along with every other union here, that labour will **stop** in this city until Mumia is free".

During this campaign, we have repeatedly had to fight against the notion that the capitalist cops belong in the labour movement. At the Berlin rally, Gert Julius of the Tempelhof/Schöneberg local of the DGB union federation said that one "shouldn't use the blanket label of **Bullen** [cops] for the police" and that "trade unions are for everyone". Steffen Singer of the Spartacist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League, responded: "As Marxists, we understand that being — that what you do — determines consciousness. And the task of the police is indeed to carry out, with arms, the laws of the bourgeoisie, its rule. In practice, you can see that in any strike."

Some US union officials have told the PDC that they would not officially support Mumia because of the presence of cops, corrections officers and security guards in their unions. It is the cop "union", the FOP, which has led the campaign for Mumia's execution and brutalised Mumia's supporters. How can the unions mobilise for Mumia if they are infested with the cops, the paid guardians of the racist capitalist system? Cops out of the unions!

As the hour of decision in Mumia's federal appeal approaches, trade unionists and all supporters of his fight for freedom must prepare for action. The PDC has called for emergency protests following a negative decision, as have other organisations, and a national demonstration has been called for three weeks later. Union activists: Bring out your co-workers! Spread the word! These rallies must serve as a springboard for mass protest. The kind of pressure that can have an impact on the capitalist courts is the social power of the multiracial labour movement demanding that Mumia, an innocent man, be freed now! ■

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Revolution...

(Continued from page 9)

hospitals to heating is rotting, and rates of TB and HIV infection are soaring.

The betrayals by the reformists who supported counterrevolution in the former USSR did not fall from the sky, but were conditioned by their decades-long support for the British Labour Party which maintained British imperialism throughout the 20th century, and their intransigent illusions that bourgeois democracy is the highest form of government. This led to their support to counterrevolutionary movements throughout the 1980s, from the *mujahedin* in Afghanistan to Solidarność in Poland. In this, they share the political bankruptcy of the Mensheviks in Russia in 1917.

In the post-Soviet world, we struggle to maintain revolutionary continuity with the programme of Lenin's Bolsheviks. The reactionary period we are in makes it all the more vital that we

study the lessons of the revolutionary period defined by the great October Revolution. Because as Marxists we know the situation will change, and we don't know when. A comrade's remarks at a 15 April 2006 Spartacist League/Britain dayschool in London succinctly capture the situation we're confronted with:

"Now we're in an unusually deep trough, and the experiences that are immediately available to us are not very good. So we had better make very heavy reference back to the experiences of the workers movement when it could see much further: 1918 through 1921. And furthermore, there's a quote by Lenin in January 1917. He gave a talk in Switzerland and said: 'We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution.' Now, I run into various panacea-mongers who say, what is your immediate perspective? Don't pay so much attention to your immediate perspective, because you don't know what's going to happen in February! What is your **programme**? That is the decisive question."

— *Workers Hammer* no 195, Summer 2006 ■

WORKERS HAMMER

For class-struggle defence to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

International PDC campaign

In early December the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal heated up, with protest in the US against a new book, *Murdered by Mumia*, by the widow of police officer Daniel Faulkner. Welcomed by a racist, pro-death penalty media frenzy, the book rehearses police and prosecution lies used to falsely convict Mumia for Faulkner's murder. With a decision in his case by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals due at any time, the book makes its purpose clear by centering on the call to execute this innocent man.

It is particularly crucial to campaign for Mumia in Britain given the alliance between the Labour government and the Bush regime. The combined military might of US and British imperialism makes them the most powerful force for terrorism on the planet, as seen in the barbaric occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fighting for Mumia's freedom in Britain provides an opportunity to deal a blow against the American ruling class that wants to see Mumia dead, and against British imperialism which plundered the world for centuries before handing over this role to the US. Although there is no official death penalty in Britain today, the British state carries out execution with impunity, as in the case of the Brazilian immigrant Jean Charles de Menezes (see article page 3). The "war on terror" is a pretext for state repression that is today primarily targeted at Muslims, who are among the poorest sections of the working class and are mainly descendants of immigrant workers brought here decades ago from the former colonies to do the dirtiest, lowest-paid work no one else wanted, as do new immigrants today.

There are striking parallels between Mumia's frame-up and the normal workings of British imperialist "democracy" as it was applied to the oppressed Catholics in Northern Ireland. Speaking at the London rally for Mumia organised by the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC) in May 2007, Steve Hedley of the London Underground Engineering branch of the RMT remarked how the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, where he comes from, was inspired by the black civil rights movement in the US, and that the American state's intent to kill Mumia is akin to the British state's long, murderous collusion with the police and Loyalist paramilitaries directed at political activists and also their lawyers.

In Britain, reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party have not said a word about Mumia's case for several years. The PDC and Spartacist League/Britain struggle against the politics of liberals who have taken up Mumia's cause centering their efforts *not* on mobilising mass protest but on the demand for a new trial, fomenting illusions in the "justice" of the racist rulers' courts. At



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PDC contingent at demonstration outside US Embassy in London as part of international protests to coincide with court hearings on 17 May 2007.

the 17 May 2007 protest for Mumia at the US Embassy in London, Niki Adams of Legal Action for Women promoted the "new trial" demand because it "brings in people that may not be convinced about Mumia's innocence but can see the trial was deeply unjust". A Spartacist League speaker responded that we support Mumia's use of every possible legal proceeding but that we oppose reliance on the capitalist state which is determined to kill him.

For many trade union and other signatories of the PDC's statement calling for Mumia's freedom and proclaiming that he is an innocent man, the issue is straightforward. In April 2007 the Scottish Trades Union Congress passed a motion declaring: "That this Congress believes that Mumia Abu-Jamal should be freed immediately from prison, as he is innocent, and the inherently racist death penalty should be abolished."

Campaigning for Mumia Abu-Jamal has the potential to rekindle traditions of internationalism in the working class. But what is necessary in this fight is to mobilise the power of the working class in its own interest which includes defence of Muslims and immigrants against the racist Labour government. This requires a struggle against the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy. What is necessary is not a change of foreign policy—"independence" from the US bourgeoisie—but the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism, starting here at home. The burning necessity is the forging of a revolutionary workers party uniting all the oppressed behind the power of the proletariat conscious of its historic task.

We print below an adapted and abridged version of an article from the Spartacist League/US newspaper *Workers Vanguard* (no 902, 9 November 2007) explaining our class-struggle

defence strategy in the campaign and the trade union support for Mumia internationally.

The fight to free death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is a defining cause for all opponents of the racist American "justice" system. But this struggle also bears enormous consequences for all who are in the capitalist rulers' cross-hairs. Mumia was sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit, the December 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer

Daniel Faulkner. Police, prosecutors and judges conspired to railroad Mumia—a former Black Panther, a supporter of the MOVE organisation and a renowned journalist—employing frame-up methods used to victimise countless union activists, black militants and leftists over the years. In seeking to silence this powerful "voice of the voiceless", they aim to intimidate any who would struggle on behalf of workers, black people and the poor.

With Mumia's life in the balance, the Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League/US—and its international fraternal organisations have campaigned over the past few years to rekindle mass support for his freedom. From New York City, Chicago, Oakland and Los Angeles to London, Paris and Berlin, we have initiated rallies calling to free Mumia and to abolish the racist death penalty. These rallies have brought together representatives of left, labour and civil rights organisations raising their own views on which way forward in this struggle.

In this campaign, we have focused particularly on bringing Mumia's cause to the trade unions. Our policy is that of *class-struggle defence*, based on the Marxist understanding that capitalist society is fundamentally divided between two classes—the capitalists who own the means of production and the workers whose labour they exploit. The legal lynchers must be answered by

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Prepare now for emergency protest!



Jennifer Beach

On 17 May 2007, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia heard oral arguments in Mumia's case and there could be a decision at any time.

If the Court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia's appeals for a new trial or hearing, the Partisan Defence Committee calls for protest the day after a decision:

- 5.00 pm if on a weekday
- 1.00 pm if on a Saturday

at the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1 (Nearest Tube: Bond Street).

Prepare now for emergency mobilisation! Encourage your friends, colleagues, unions and organisations to mobilise for Mumia's freedom. **For more information, call 020 7281 5504 and see the PDC website, www.partisandefense.org**

**Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man!
Free Mumia now!
Abolish the racist death penalty!**