

In Wake of Electoral Humiliation

Yeltsin's Bloody Chechnya Massacre

"Red-Brown" Stalinist Leftovers Push Great Russian Chauvinism

Less than a month after his stinging rebuff in the December 17 parliamentary elections, Russian president Boris Yeltsin moved to shore up his authority as would-be tsar in his characteristic manner: by ordering his army to carry out a massacre. Culminating a ten-day siege that began on January 10, Russian troops leveled the village of Pervomayskoye on the border of the rebellious Chechen republic in the Caucasus with a steady barrage of artillery and missile fire extending over four days. This murderous new atrocity in the ongoing colonial-style war against the Chechen people was Yeltsin's way of kicking off his re-election campaign for the presidential ballot this spring. More fundamentally, the Chechen war aims to divert the massive discontent of Russian working people away from the immiseration caused by capitalist counterrevolution by whipping up anti-Caucasian racism and Great Russian nationalism.

Indeed, the results of the parliamentary elections were a sharp protest against the catastrophic effects of the counter-revolution. With a high voter turnout of 65 percent, the December elections to the Duma saw a humiliating defeat for the "party of power" headed by Yeltsin's prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. Despite the backing of state television, an expensive advertising campaign and untold vote-rigging, Chernomyrdin's "Our Home Is Russia" slate scraped into third place with less than 10 percent of the vote, trailing behind fascist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The dominant party in the Russian legislature is now the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), headed by Gennadi Zyuganov, which captured 22 percent of the vote and more than a third of the 450 Duma seats.

While many people supported Zyuganov's Communist Party because they lived better under the Soviet collectivized and planned economy, despite its bureaucratic deformations, the heavy vote for the KPRF does not represent a

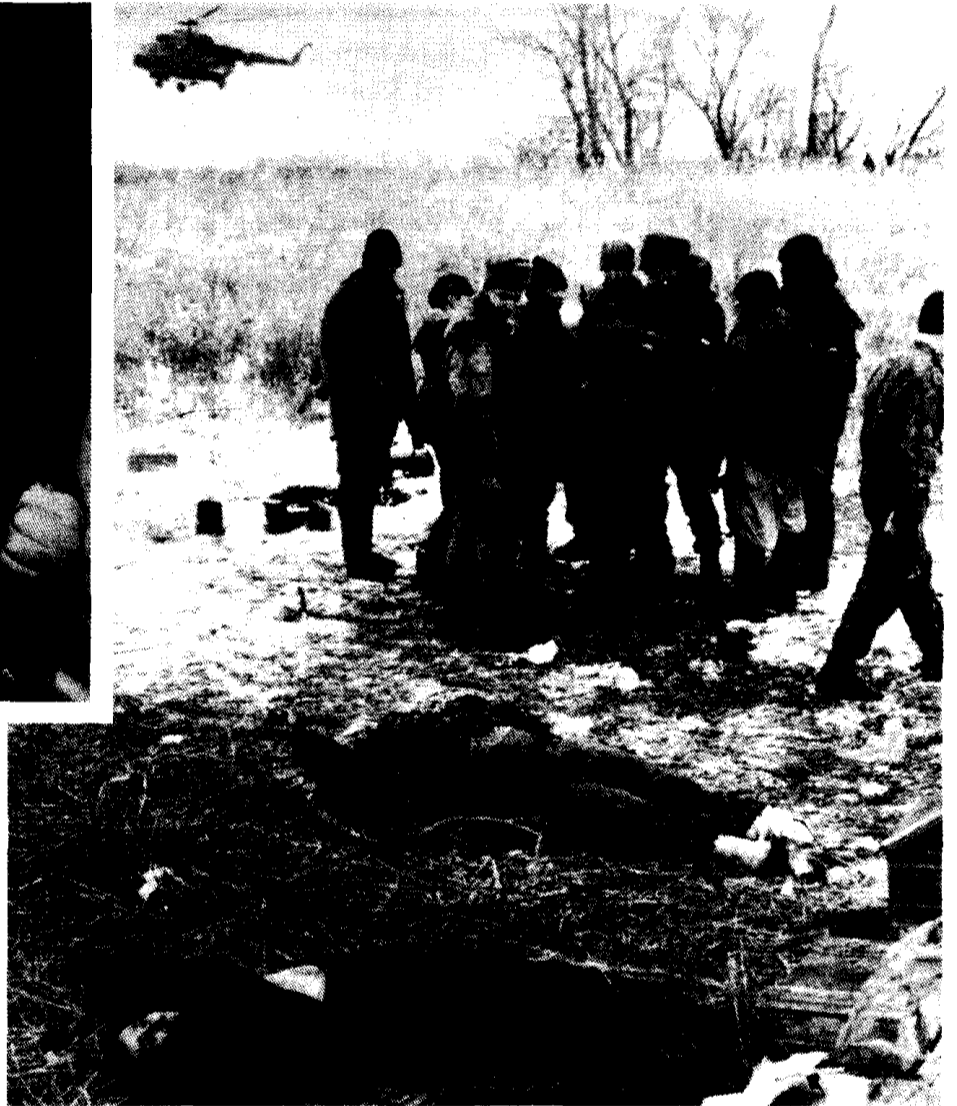


Russian president Boris Yeltsin ordered troops to level village of Pervomayskoye. Tens of thousands have been slaughtered in year-long war against Chechen people.

step forward for the working class in Russia. Despite its red flags and talk of restoring the Soviet Union, the KPRF is neither a communist nor even a reformist working-class party, but rather a bourgeois-nationalist party which promotes Russia's imperial ambitions.

Russian liberal Grigory Yavlinsky, whose Yabloko bloc was the only other party to make it over the 5 percent vote barrier for proportional representation in the legislature, remarked that the Duma has "all the power of a library reading room." Set up after Yeltsin's bloody October 1993 bombardment of the former parliament, aimed at liquidating any challenge to his high-handed rule, the Duma is an impotent talk shop. It can refuse to accept Yeltsin's budget and his nominees for prime minister and other key government positions...at the price of its own dissolution.

Even so, significant elements of Yeltsin's entourage sought to cancel the Duma contest, which was widely seen as a primary for next June's elections for president. As one of the "new Russians," a bank chairman, put it bluntly, "If people tell me that for the sake of symbolic democracy I must give up my property—well democracy is not worth



AP photos

that much to me" (*Financial Times*, 7 November 1995). Although the Russian bourgeoisie is not yet confronted with a class-conscious proletariat, the very rapid transformation of a relatively egalitarian society into one where income distribution is roughly commensurate with most Latin American countries does not lend itself readily to bourgeois parliamentary rule.

As Trotskyists, we were the most resolute defenders of the Soviet Union against the forces of capitalist counter-revolution, both the NATO imperialists from without and various reactionaries—whether anti-Communist Baltic nationalists or Russian "democrats"—from within. Today, millions of working people from Siberia to the former Baltic republics complain bitterly, "It was better under Communism." But such nostalgia for the Soviet Union, though under-

standable, can do nothing to reverse or even ameliorate the ravages of capitalist restoration. And in the mouths of Zyuganov & Co., it is but a cover for rapacious Russian nationalism whose real program can be seen in the killing fields of Chechnya.

Thus, there was no question of support to any of the slates in the Duma elections. The plight of Russia's working people and subjugated nationalities will not be bettered by replacing one set of nationalist thieves and butchers at the head of the Russian capitalist state with another. What is necessary is the reawakening of the dormant workers movement and its entry into the arena of class struggle, fighting for its interests and those of all the oppressed on the road to a workers revolution that sweeps away the new exploiters and their state. Key to this is

continued on page 8



Capitalist Counterrevolution and the Russian Stalinist "Patriots"

Why Marxists Do Not Raise the Call "Restore the Soviet Union"

See Page 3

Farrakhan and the Sudan Slave Trade

See Page 4

OCAW Workers: Strike Against All the Oil Giants!

January 29—In a large, spirited rally, members of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) and other unions massed outside the gates of the Chevron refinery in Richmond, California four days ago in preparation for the January 31 expiration of the national oil and refinery contracts covering 40,000 workers. Chanting "Dump the lump or we shut off the pumps," workers denounced the companies' demand for one-time cash payments instead of wage increases. As workers milled around the gate, one arrogant boss drove over a unionist's foot—and then quickly dis-

covered his windshield was punched in. Just three days before the rally, Amoco and Exxon announced profits of \$1.9 and \$1.6 billion for 1995. But the fabulous wealth of the petrochemical companies has only whetted their appetite to go after the unions. In "Facing the Oil Giants" (*Monthly Review*, April 1993), Michael Tanzer detailed Big Oil's labor strategy for the '90s: "a savage process of layoffs, speedups, contracting-out, and erosion of safety standards and working conditions, along with unremitting pressure on wages and benefits—all designed to squeeze every drop of blood out of labor."



Oil workers rally at Richmond, California Chevron refinery, January 25, as strike deadline approaches. WV Photo

A militant strike against the oil corporations would be hugely popular across the country. For these workers, the strength of their union is literally a question of life and death. An OCAW member at the rally told *Workers Vanguard* that in the refineries "we risk our lives every day we go to work." Meanwhile, the bloodsucking oil companies daily gouge working people at the gas pump. And to safeguard their precious profits, they send young working people off to fight their murderous imperialist wars. That's what George Bush's 1991 high-tech slaughter in the Persian Gulf was all about, as the Pentagon rained death and destruction down on the Iraqi people. Today, Clinton maintains an entire fleet of U.S. warships to protect oil interests in the Persian Gulf.

Striking Big Oil means class war. Bay Area workers remember the picket-line murder of Greg Goobic, who was run down and killed by a scab in a 1983 OCAW strike against Unocal. The industry is heavily capital-intensive, with a high level of technology and automation. In the last national OCAW strike in 1980, when the union tops allowed managers and technicians to waltz across picket lines, plants ran up to 80 percent of capacity and the strike dragged on for months.

There must be a fight for a class-struggle leadership that doesn't bow to the bosses' rules. What's needed are mass picket lines that no one dares cross. Strikers must use the tactic of plant occupations at key sites to stop production in highly automated plants. The OCAW brass dissipate the membership's strength in "selective" strikes against individual companies, but in this industry the companies routinely "swap product" and will use their offshore refineries to keep supplies flowing. Industrywide strike action is necessary to win this battle. That could lay the basis for a powerful, single industrial union for this strategic workforce, which is now divided into numerous different unions (OCAW, Teamsters, Steelworkers, etc.) with hundreds of separate contracts.

There must be an appeal to seamen

and refinery workers internationally to support the oil workers. Longshoremen, tugboatmen and Teamsters must "hot cargo"—refuse to handle—crude oil and refinery products. In the 1980 strike, the Harbor Council of unions in Los Angeles shut down the entire port in a one-day strike in solidarity with OCAW. Today, actions like these could be linked to the ILWU longshoremen's fight against non-union jobs at the huge coal terminal planned in L.A., the largest such project at any port in the country. The unions must also forge links to workers at major refineries in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

The current OCAW tops are widely known for promoting "Labor Party Advocates" (LPA). LPA exists to sucker workers fed up with the Democratic Party back into Clinton's fold by claiming to offer a working-class alternative. But as longtime OCAW official and LPA founder Tony Mazzocchi and OCAW president Robert Wages have repeatedly proclaimed, their "labor party"—if it ever comes into being—is intended solely as a tactic to pressure the racist, capitalist Democrats, to put the "lesser" back in the Democratic Party evil. The last thing Wages and Mazzocchi want to see is a sharp, militant strike in the midst of Clinton's re-election campaign. Just look at the OCAW tops' friend John Sweeney, who knifed Caterpillar and Staley strikers in the Midwest right after being elected AFL-CIO president.

As we wrote in "Why 'Labor Party Advocates' Doesn't Advocate a Labor Party" (WV No. 622, 5 May 1995) the Spartacist League uniquely fights "for labor to break with the Democratic Party and form a workers party to fight for a workers government. Only a party which opposes the capitalist profit system down the line, which acts as an organizing center for workers in struggle everywhere, which fights to uproot every manifestation of racial and sexual oppression, can truly claim independence from the parties of Wall Street. And only such a party can lead the struggles of the workers and oppressed to victory." ■



TROTSKY

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Oppressed Islamic Peoples of the East

Undermined for decades by a parasitic and nationalist bureaucracy, the Soviet Union was finally destroyed by Yeltsin's capitalist counterrevolution. Today, as the Yeltsin regime wages a war of colonial subjugation against the Chechen people of the Caucasus, various self-styled "Communist" fragments of the former Stalinist bureaucracy promote the vilest Great Russian chauvinism in the name of "restoring the Soviet Union." The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution which created the Soviet workers state was internationalist to the core, shattering what Lenin had called the "tsarist prison house of peoples." In one of its first proclamations, the Soviet republic recognized the national rights of the traditionally Islamic peoples of the former tsarist empire, linking their liberation to the struggle against Western imperialism.

Great events are taking place in Russia! An end is drawing near to the murderous war, started by the bargainings of foreign Powers. The rule of the plunderers who exploit the peoples of the world is tottering. The ancient citadel of slavery and serfdom is crumbling under the blows of the Russian revolution. The world of violence and oppression is approaching its last days. A new world is being born, a world of the toilers and the liberated. At the head of this revolution stands the workers' and peasants' Government of Russia, the Council of People's Commissars....

Moslems of Russia, Tatars of the Volga and the Crimea, Kirghiz and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tatars of Trans-Caucasia, Chechens and mountain Cossacks! All you, whose mosques and shrines have been destroyed, whose faith and customs have been violated by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia!... Know that your rights, like those of all the peoples of Russia, will be protected by the might of the revolution, by the Councils of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies!...

It is not from Russia and its revolutionary Government that you have to fear enslavement, but from the European imperialist robbers, from those who laid waste your native lands and converted them into their colonies.

Overthrow these robbers and enslavers of your country! Now, when war and desolation are demolishing the pillars of the old order, when the entire world is blazing with indignation against the imperialist brigands, when the least spark of discontent bursts out in a mighty flame of revolution, when even the Indian Moslems, oppressed and tormented by the foreign yoke, are rising in revolt against their slave-drivers—now it is impossible to keep silent. Lose no time in throwing off the yoke of the ancient oppressors of your land!...

Comrades! Brothers!

Advance firmly and resolutely towards a just and democratic peace!

We inscribe the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world on our banners!

—"Appeal of the Council of People's Commissars to the Moslems of Russia and the East" (December 1917)



LENIN

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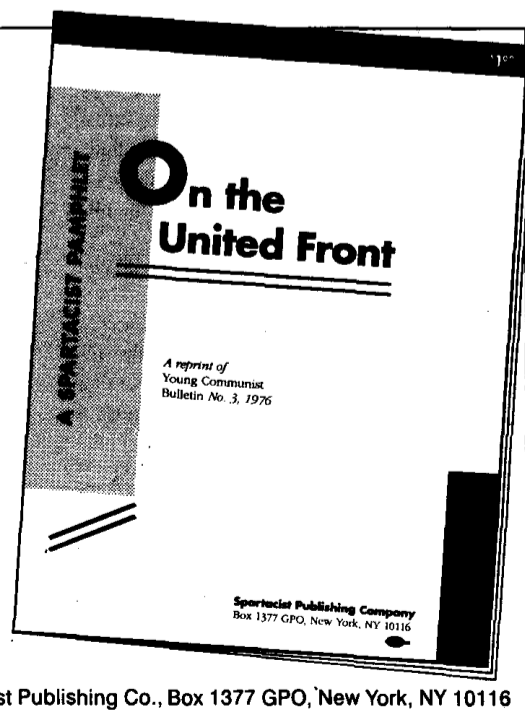
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Why Marxists Do Not Raise the Call "Restore the Soviet Union"

Capitalist Counterrevolution and the Russian Stalinist "Patriots"

Part One of Two

We print below the first part of an article translated from the Russian-language *Biulleten Spartakovtsev* (Supplement No. 12, November 1995), published by the International Communist League. It was originally written in reply to a letter from a reader in the Ukraine.

In your letter, you advocate the slogan of "restoration of the USSR," which is raised by a number of Russian-nationalist groups which originated as splinters of the defunct Stalinist bureaucracy.

There are a number of considerations, both conjunctural and historical, to be addressed in explaining why proletarian internationalists would not raise this call today. First and foremost for Trotskyists is a correct understanding of the state. Russia, the Ukraine and the other states on the territories of the former Soviet Union are bourgeois states that appeared as a result of capitalist counterrevolution. We stand for socialist revolution in these countries, that is, for mobilizing the working class under the leadership of an internationalist revolutionary party, to sweep away these capitalist regimes. This position has been in the forefront of our propaganda in the former USSR since we drew the conclusion that the counterrevolution which took the ascendancy in August 1991 had, in the absence of working-class resistance, gone on in the year that followed to destroy the remnants of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

As we explained in "How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled," responsibility for this world-historic defeat lies above all with the Stalinists. We noted that the preservation of proletarian power depends principally on the *consciousness* and *organization* of the working class. At the time of the October Revolution, this was in its quintessence embodied in the Bolshevik Party's leadership, which was imbued with the Marxist understanding that an isolated workers state—moreover, an economically weak and backward one—could only survive for any length of time by spreading the revolution internationally.

The kind of revolutionary vanguard party which Lenin built in tsarist Russia did not exist elsewhere in Europe in 1914,

when the outbreak of World War I signaled what Trotsky later called the epoch of capitalism's death agony. Reaction to the mass slaughter of the first imperialist world war combined with the inspiration of the Bolshevik Revolution

man proletariat, the strongest in Europe. The definitive defeat of the anticipated German revolution in 1923, due to the conscious counterrevolutionary policies of the Social Democratic bureaucracy and the incapacity of the Commu-



Der Spiegel
Russian Orthodox priest on Yeltsin's barricades, August 1991. Counter-revolutionary destruction of Soviet Union brought immiseration and resurgence of chauvinist reaction.

produced revolutionary turmoil throughout Europe, centrally Germany, between 1918 and 1923. However, given the weakness and inexperience of the nascent Communist parties, the European bourgeoisies were able to restore order—with the indispensable aid of the social-democratic bureaucracies.

Thus Soviet Russia emerged from the Civil War bled white—its industry in a shambles—internationally isolated and besieged by world imperialism. Many of its most conscious worker cadres had been lost on the fronts of the Civil War. Decades of Stalinist falsification to the contrary, at that time not only the Bolshevik leadership but the mass of Soviet workers understood that extension of the revolution was critical, particularly through the seizure of power by the Ger-

nist leadership, led directly to the ascendancy of a conservative and nationalistic bureaucracy in the Soviet workers state. Trotsky later explained in his 1940 "Letter to the Workers of the USSR":

"The October Revolution was accomplished for the sake of the toilers and not for the sake of new parasites. But due to the lag of the world revolution, due to the fatigue and, to a large measure, the backwardness of the Russian workers and especially the Russian peasants, there raised itself over the Soviet Republic and against its peoples a new oppressive and parasitic caste, whose leader is Stalin."

In pushing the lie that Stalin was Lenin's heir, the Stalinists are particularly wont to point to the fact that in 1921, at the Bolshevik Party's 10th Conference debate on the role of the trade unions, Lenin himself headed the opposition to Trotsky, which included Stalin. (In any case, this was a conjunctural factional dispute carried out according to the norms of Bolshevik inner-party democracy, utterly counterposed to the bureaucratic and murderous conception of "factional struggle" later imposed under the Stalin regime.) However, as increasing evidence of bureaucratism and Great Russian chauvinism in the party, directly attributable to Stalin, came to the fore, Lenin definitively shifted over to Trotsky and sought to remove Stalin from his position of power as general secretary. Trotsky was not sufficiently vigorous or programmatically decisive in picking up the gauntlet, although the increasingly ill and incapacitated Lenin urgently urged him to do so.

By the time of Lenin's death and the party's 13th Conference in January 1924, Stalin was able to impose qualitative measures in the strangulation of the Bolshevik Party. He suppressed party democracy and with it, the revolutionary vanguard, the Trotskyist opposition. This was a defeat of that very force which was key to the maintenance and renewing of the revolutionary consciousness and organization which had made

the October Revolution: revolutionary leadership. The party could have been reformed at that time, but only through the decisive ousting of the bureaucratic clique consolidating around Stalin. Instead, Stalin prevailed. This defeat of the Bolshevik vanguard was soon given unambiguous programmatic expression, as Stalin/Bukharin abandoned the program of international proletarian revolution in favor of the utopian notion of "building socialism in one country."

This anti-internationalist doctrine, which Khrushchev called "peaceful coexistence" and Brezhnev called "détente," was the political hallmark of Stalin and his successors. In the '20s, this resulted in a disastrous careening from ultraleft adventures to class collaboration. Trotsky characterized Stalin as the "gravedigger" of revolutionary struggles abroad, from the second Chinese Revolution in 1925-27 and the British General Strike of 1926 (where the Comintern amnestied the labor traitors who ran the British trade unions) to Germany, where the CP, as well as the Social Democrats, allowed Hitler to come to power without firing a shot. Stalin may not have started out plotting to become the murderous head of an anti-revolutionary bureaucracy. But after the Kirov assassination and by the time of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, the repeatedly purged gang remaining in power consciously beheaded the Spanish workers revolution, with the GPU butchering leftists who were seen as any sort of opposition to the popular-front *bourgeois* republican regime. The bureaucracy's central role in strangling proletarian revolution was a policy carried out as a "guarantee" to Stalin's then-allies, the "democratic" imperialist governments of France and Britain. And by selling out revolutionary opportunities at the end of WW II, particularly in Italy, France and Greece, Stalinism enabled capitalism in West Europe to survive.

Having initially argued for a perspective of reforming the CPSU from within, by the 1930s Trotsky believed that a *proletarian political revolution* was necessary in the USSR to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore workers (soviet) democracy (see "Stalin Drowned the Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky in Blood," *Biulleten Spartakovtsev* No. 4, Spring 1993 [translated in Spartacist Pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, August 1993]). The founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International stated:

"The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a *degenerated workers' state*. Such is the social
continued on page 9



Viktor Bulla

1920: Putilov factory workers vote for delegates to Petrograd Soviet. Under Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, soviets were organs of working-class rule. Stalin's political counterrevolution destroyed Bolshevik Party and liquidated soviet democracy.

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Faircloth/Philadelphia Daily News



Nation of Islam demagogue Louis Farrakhan (left) maintains cozy relationship with Islamic fundamentalist leader Hassan al-Turabi of Sudan (right), denies existence of slave trade there. Above: black slaves sold at market in Sudan.



Bonner/NY Times

Farrakhan and the Sudan Slave Trade

Louis Farrakhan is currently traveling through Africa, where he has met with, among others, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Farrakhan launched his "friendship tour" in order to pursue his political and social aims and projects and for evident self-enhancement, newly magnified by his leadership of the Million Man March in October. Particularly in light of the Nation of Islam (NOI) leader's heightened prominence, it behooves all those who struggle for black emancipation to look even more sharply and closely at the aims and practices of Farrakhan's movement as shown in concrete circumstances.

Through newspaper articles, conferences and demonstrations, "new abolitionists" have exposed the continuing existence of black chattel slavery in Mauritania, on North Africa's Atlantic coast, and in Sudan, Africa's largest country. When this issue hit the black press, it naturally caused an uproar among American blacks, who were

20 October 1995). We noted that despite the racist rulers' hypocritical denunciations of Farrakhan's anti-Semitic and anti-white demagoguery, capitalist politicians ranging from Democratic president Clinton to Republican Senate leader Bob Dole embraced the march's aim of making black males take "responsibility" for the conditions of their own oppression. Almost all black politicians hailed the event as they courted Farrakhan's increased following, while virtually all the black press signed on as publicity agents for the march. And much of the reformist "left" threw its support to the march while claiming to separate the "message" from its "messenger."

Many blacks who marched in Washington did so out of a desire for some, any action that claimed to fight for the rights of blacks in this increasingly vicious racist society. Farrakhan's posture as a black "leader" who stands up to the racist rulers will likely be strengthened now that he is being vilified by right-wing yahoos in Congress for secur-

Mandela by appealing for "Muslims and Christians and Jews" to "work together for the common good." Nonetheless, Mandela felt the need to distance himself from the racist NOI demagogue, admonishing him about the ANC principle of "nonracialism."

Louis Farrakhan is no fighter for black rights. He is a sinister huckster who seeks only to be an exploiter of "his" people. Farrakhan's backward worldview degrades black people themselves, not least black women, who lead a strictly segregated existence in the NOI and were excluded *en masse* from the Washington march. And his cozying up to brutal military chiefs who engage in and protect the growing market for black African slaves in Sudan gives further proof of what we have said all along, that Farrakhan is bad news for black people.

The Scourge of African Slavery Today

The Brooklyn-based black newspapers *City Sun* and *Daily Challenge* have run literally dozens of articles in the past year exposing the horror of contemporary slavery in northern Africa, notably a three-part series last February by the *City Sun's* Samuel Cotton. Others who have been active in the anti-slavery campaign include Nate Clay of Chicago's *New Metro News* and WLS radio, Washington, D.C. radio host Joe Madison, and Republican Tony Brown, whose PBS TV show aired documentary evidence. Protest meetings and debates have been held at Harlem's Schomburg Library and at black churches and schools uptown and in Brooklyn. Abolitionist conferences at Columbia University and the New York Law School have featured eyewitness reports on slavery in Mauritania and Sudan.

"As you read this," wrote Cotton, "there are Black people being bought and sold in two North African countries" (*City Sun*, 1 February 1995). Cotton continued:

"Although slavery was declared abolished three times since Mauritania's independence in 1960, it persists. Slaves are given as wedding gifts, traded for camels, guns or trucks, and inherited.... "In the Islamic Republic of the Sudan, as a result of an Islamic vs. Christian civil war, Black women and children (mostly Christian) are being captured in raids on their villages and sold as chattel slaves."

Such reports have been widely documented in recent years by a number of human rights groups, such as Anti-Slavery International in London and the Pueblo Institute, affiliated to the Catholic church.

In 1994, a United Nations special report on Sudan by Hungarian lawyer Gaspar Biro detailed systematic torture

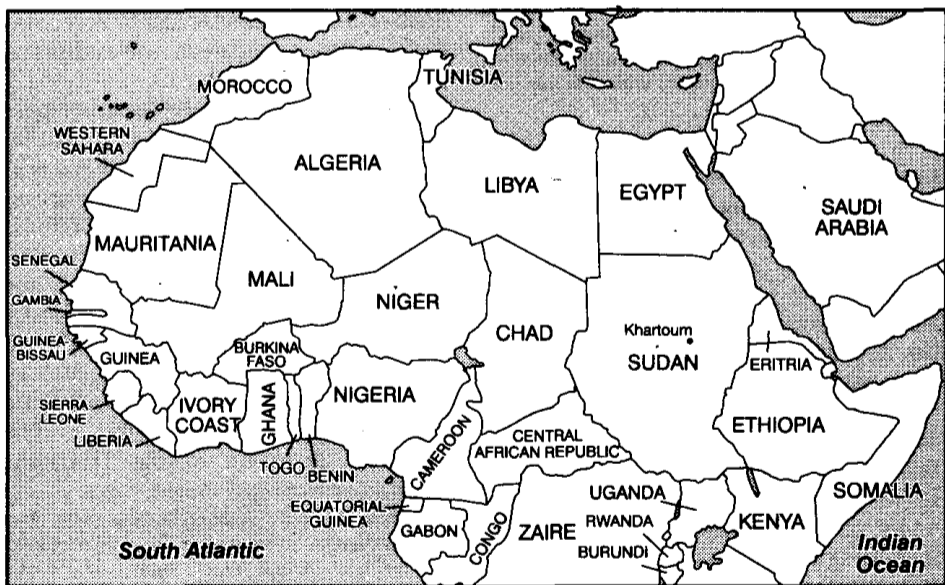
and "disappearances" of opponents of the regime and reported that women and children "are kept in special camps where people from the north or from abroad come to purchase them for money or goods such as camels." In its report, *The Tears of Orphans* (1995), Amnesty International confirmed reports of abduction and enslavement of women and children in Sudan, adding that the southern Sudanese anti-government forces have also murdered and abducted villagers, not only suspected government sympathizers but others who fell afoul of tribal and factional conflicts.

Village Voice columnist Nat Hentoff has also written a number of articles recently on the slave trade in Sudan. In one of them, Hentoff cites an account by Professor Ushari Ahmad Mamoud, who was imprisoned by the previous Sudanese regime in 1986 for his reports on the slave trade: "What usually happens is that Arab armed militias go into the Southern villages or the Nuba mountains.... They burn the villages. The men are killed if they don't escape, and the women and children are rounded up. The survivors are tied up and taken to the Arab north.... The women and children are put to work in the fields—all without pay—and are also available as slave concubines" (*Village Voice*, 12 December 1995).

Farrakhan's Sudan Connection

Enraptured by Farrakhan's new political clout, much of the American black political establishment has utterly ignored the revelations of slavery in Africa. Jesse Jackson has yet to make a statement, although both the NAACP and the head of the Congressional Black Caucus have issued condemnations, but they are seeking to refurbish the "democratic" credentials of U.S. imperialism.

African anti-slavery activists wrote to Farrakhan asking for a speaker on the subject at the Million Man March; he turned a deaf ear to them. This was no aberration: Farrakhan had already dismissed the issue of slavery in Sudan as a concoction of the "Western press." This was hardly a statement of concern for the hypocrisy and lies regularly doled out by the mainstream imperialist media. His protestations came in the form of a letter read by NOI international spokesman Abdul Akbar Muhammad to a "Popular Arab & Islamic Conference" in Khartoum last March. The conference was run by Islamic fundamentalist Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi, the power behind the Sudanese regime. The year before, Farrakhan himself had been feted as a guest of Sudanese leaders General Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi, who of course themselves deny



WV Map

emancipated from slavery barely 130 years ago with the victory of the Union Army over the slaveholding South. What particularly made this a red-hot issue for black people was the revelation that Farrakhan and the NOI are acting as *apologists for black African slavery*, stemming from their close ties to the vicious military dictatorship of Sudan, which professes Islamic fundamentalism.

Farrakhan's support to the Sudanese slave masters is yet another example of his utterly reactionary program and purpose. Last fall, *Workers Vanguard* forthrightly called his Washington, D.C. march for "atonement" a "poisonous reactionary mobilization" which was "directly counterposed to any struggle for black emancipation" (WV No. 631,

ing a promise of financial assistance from Libyan strongman Qaddafi, who was himself targeted for assassination by U.S. imperialist air strikes on Tripoli in 1986. For its part, the Justice Department immediately threatened to force the NOI leader to register as an agent of a foreign government. Yet the U.S. government didn't bat an eye over Farrakhan's embrace, during his tour, of Nigerian military dictator Sani Abacha, whose recent execution of well-known poet Ken Saro-Wiwa and seven other dissidents has provoked international outrage.

However, Farrakhan's trip got major media attention when he met with South African president Nelson Mandela. The NOI head hypocritically played up to

that slavery exists in their country.

In a venomous anti-Semitic diatribe in the NOI's *Final Call* (12 April 1995), Muhammad denounced the anti-slavery campaign as a "Big Lie," later charging that it seeks to "divert attention from the role Jews played in the slave trade" (*Final Call*, 26 April 1995). In an outraged response to this despicable disinformation campaign, which was picked up by some of the black press, black journalist William Pleasant wrote in his new weekly paper, the *Liberator* (4 January), that much of "the Black media either turned its back on the African slaves or adopted the numbskull, Jew-baiting arguments in support of the slaving regimes of Sudan and Mauritania served up by the Nation of Islam's Akbar Muhammad."

As part of its attempt to channel black anger against capitalist oppression into anti-Semitism, including in such tracts as *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, the NOI has long purveyed the absurd claim that 75 percent of slaves in the American South before the Civil War were owned by Jews. As we pointed out in "Farrakhan Is Bad News for Black People" (*WV* No. 600, 13 May 1994): "In reality, the not very numerous Jews in the South in 1860 owned a tiny fraction of the four million slaves, and only a tiny proportion of the Atlantic slave trade involved Jewish merchants." Arab merchants and black African tribal chiefs were heavily involved in the Atlantic slave trade, too. But of course Farrakhan disappears this incontrovertible historical fact.

For all of Farrakhan's hypocritical denunciations of the Atlantic slave trade, the vile bigotry of his racist demonology reveals shared social values with the contemporary slave traders in the Sudan, particularly their anti-woman fundamentalism. NOI doctrine holds, in Elijah Muhammad's words, that "the woman is man's field to produce his nation." This is no doubt music to the ears of the Islamic establishment in Sudan, which imprisons women in the veil and where the hideous practice of female genital mutilation is pervasive. The would-be exploiter of the black ghetto masses in the U.S. clearly feels at home with the heads of African dictatorships.

Despite his affinity with the Arabic-speaking Islamic fundamentalist regime in Khartoum, in the U.S. Farrakhan purveys anti-Arab and anti-Asian no less than anti-Jewish bigotry. In his infamous "bloodsuckers" speech on the eve of the Million Man March, Farrakhan ranted: "We considered them [the Jews] bloodsuckers because they took from our community and built their community but didn't offer anything back to our community. And when the Jews left, the Palestinian Arabs came, Koreans came, Vietnamese and other ethnic and racial groups came. And so this is a type and we call them bloodsuckers." This is pogromist, a recipe for all-sided race war, which could only benefit the likes of the KKK and other fascists and in which black people would be the biggest losers.

U.S./UN Imperialists: Hands Off Africa!

A number of opponents of slavery in Africa have appealed to the U.S. government or the United Nations to act to end the trade in human chattel. For example, the "Coalition Against Slavery in Africa" demonstrated outside the UN in September demanding, in the words of CASIA president Dede Ombombassa, that Sudan and Mauritania be "diplomatically, financially and culturally isolated" (*Daily Challenge*, 25 September 1995). Such calls are an invitation to continued imperialist exploitation and oppression. In Zaire in the 1960s, UN intervention was a cover for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the fight against Belgian colonial rule in the Congo. More recently, the 1993 neocolonial occupation of famine-stricken Somalia, also carried out under

the UN flag and in the name of "humanitarianism," was marked by brutal massacres like the slaughter of some 200 civilians in Mogadishu who were gunned down by U.S. troops firing from Cobra helicopters.

Today Washington labels the Khartoum regime as "terrorist." But today's "terrorist" is often yesterday's CIA "asset." During the Cold War, Turabi and his reactionary Muslim Brotherhood group were considered an "asset" by the State Department because of his vehement anti-Communism and his alliance with mullahs fighting against the USSR in Afghanistan. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. no longer needed this relationship with the Sudan regime. As *CovertAction* (Summer 1994) noted, "Throughout the Cold War, the official U.S. position was that the [southern] SPLA rebel army was simply a communist organization set up by the Eastern bloc to destabilize a pro-Western Sudan." But now American attentions have shifted south, and the U.S. "is looking



January 28: Farrakhan and South African president Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg.

for any excuse to provide more substantial assistance" to the rebels.

Historically, it was the imperialist "scramble for Africa" in the latter part of the 19th century which created the structure of Sudan today. This is the period of the British drive to create a "Cape to Cairo" East African empire linked by rail and telegraph, which the French sought to spike by creating a colonial belt across Central Africa from the Congo to the Red Sea. The Italians and the German Kaiser grabbed bites wherever they could, and the treacherous King Leopold II of Belgium carved out a monstrous regime of terror in the Belgian Congo, under which some eight million Africans died over a 50-year period—the holocaust of the 19th century. The rival imperialists tore the tribal structures and agrarian societies of the continent apart, while ensuring the survival and reinforcement of ancient tribal practices suited to the Europeans' "divide and rule" program. This is what the Dinka people of southern Sudan call "the time when the world was spoilt." As David Levering Lewis writes in his book, *The Race to Fashoda* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), by the late 19th century:

"Territorial dispossession, institutional chaos, collective panic, and disease and famine had ignited a wave of flesh-eating that spread from inveterate cannibals like Bakusa to Batetela, the Mangbetu, and much of Zande. Before the end of the decade [the 1870s], the felon interplay of raids, migrations, and animal and crop wastage would open the Interior to tsetse fly, Trypanosomiasis, sleeping sickness, would soon devastate whole peoples from the mouth of the Congo to Lake Victoria. Much of Africa was becoming as anarchic, pestilential, and brutal as the arriving missionaries, physicians, soldiers, and commissioners never tired of reminding the outside world that it had always been."

The first British attempt to control Sudan in the 1880s ended in humiliation when the forces of the Islamic Mahdi creamed the insufferable General Gordon at Khartoum. When the British finally established colonial rule in 1898, they

instituted a policy to keep the south segregated, welcoming Christian missionaries there while banning Islamic proselytizers. The "Southern Policy" kept the area economically primitive, as the British concentrated economic resources, investments, roads and schools in the north. The northern region, whose black population has intermixed for many centuries with Arab settlers, is now defined as primarily Arab and Islamic, with a mingling of Egyptians, Turks and Circassians. The south is populated mainly by black tribal groups. The educated elite in this region tends to be Christian, while many of the poorer farmers, marsh fishermen and cattle herders maintain animist beliefs.

British colonial rule was ended in 1956 after having exacerbated these regional and religious divisions in this country which encompasses peoples speaking more than 400 different languages. Since independence, Sudan has been ruled by a series of more or less eccentric and ruthless military regimes

in Khartoum, interspersed with a very few, very short periods of parliamentary "democracy." The social devastation of civil war combined with Islamic fundamentalism has intensified barbaric horrors, from punishment by flogging and amputation to female genital mutilation.

For Permanent Revolution!

Today, apologists for Western imperialism, which has brought us such barbarities as the Holocaust and the nuclear incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, pontificate about the "lack of civilization" in backward countries of Africa. While condemning such racist hypocrisy, we do not share the outlook of some liberals who, in the name of "cultural relativism," condone the inhumane legacies of the past practiced by semicolonial peoples. In many cases, this goes hand in hand with support to "Third World" nationalism.

In order to mobilize sufficient support to establish themselves as the ruling class in their own countries after gaining independence, the new bourgeois rulers had to rely on backward-looking "cultural traditions." Thus, Jomo Kenyatta, the darling of Pan-Africanists, endorsed female genital mutilation as a form of nationalist resistance to European colonial domination. Likewise, cheerleaders for the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 "Islamic Revolution" in Iran white-washed the imposition of the head-to-toe chador—which reflected the social segregation of women and their imprisonment in the home—as a symbol of opposition to Western imperialism. And what of the Indian practice of *suttee*, in which the widow is burned alive after the death of her husband? Is this, too, simply a matter of "cultural heritage"? Such heinous practices are vestiges of pre-capitalist and even pre-feudal stages of human development and are representative of the all-sided sexual, social and economic oppression of women.

Marxists are not advocates of "national culture." Even in writing about the

advanced capitalist countries of Europe and the oppressed peoples of the tsarist empire, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin remarked that "the general 'national culture' is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie," adding that socialist internationalists "take from each national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of each nation" ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," December 1913).

Industrial capitalism in the West drew women into the proletariat, and bourgeois-democratic revolutions legally and formally wiped out the more abhorrent aspects of women's oppression. But the Western "democracies" did not bring these bourgeois-democratic reforms with them into the colonial countries. The penetration of decaying capitalism into the "Third World" has fostered the most reactionary aspects of degenerated tribalism. This underscores the validity of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, that in the semicolonial countries the gains of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can only be achieved through the proletarian seizure of power and the extension of socialist revolution to the imperialist centers. This requires the construction of Leninist vanguard parties as part of the fight to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International.

Today, the fight against chattel slavery is intimately linked to the struggle against all forms of oppression and for world socialist revolution. As we wrote in "The Crime of Female Genital Mutilation" (*Women and Revolution* No. 41, Summer/Autumn 1992) in regard to Sudan and other parts of Africa:

"The banner of revolutionary socialism seems an empty reference in sub-Saharan Africa, where the Marxist conception of 'combined and uneven development' would only encompass marginal pockets of industrialization. There are oil workers in Nigeria, dock and rail workers in Kenya, miners in Zambia. They are presently isolated and politically subordinate to demagogic nationalist regimes, but they represent a strategic industrial workforce. It is the challenge of an international revolutionary party to transform this sector into a human link to the workers movements of the Near East and the industrial proletariat of South Africa. Mobilized against their capitalist exploiters, these vanguard layers can launch a struggle to emancipate the cruelly oppressed men and women throughout Africa."

This revolutionary perspective is closely linked with the struggle against black oppression in the U.S. imperialist heartland. Black workers are a strategic component of the multiracial U.S. working class. We fight to build a revolutionary workers party which will champion the cause of all the oppressed as part of the struggle for socialist revolution. This requires telling the truth about people like Farrakhan, who give aid and comfort to the murderous racist ruling class at home and to its slaving neocolonial regimes abroad. ■

80 Million Women Maimed

The Crime of Female Genital Mutilation

The only movement in Africa to challenge the practice of female genital mutilation is the Women and Revolution. We are the only group in Africa to have organized a campaign to end this practice. We are the only group in Africa to have organized a campaign to end this practice. We are the only group in Africa to have organized a campaign to end this practice.

Women and Revolution

Women and Revolution issue No. 41 (Summer/Autumn 1992), available for \$1 from Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

U.C. Students Mobilize to Defend Affirmative Action

Fight the Racist Purge, Fight for Open Admissions!

At about 7 a.m. on January 17, several hundred students at the University of California at Santa Cruz blocked the main entrances to campus to protest the UC Regents' racist decision last summer to abolish affirmative action in the UC system. The student protest was opposed by Santa Cruz "socialist" mayor and UC professor Mike Rotkin, whose riot cops participated in attacking student protesters and arresting 14. The Spartacus Youth Club demands: Drop all the charges now!

The campus action at Santa Cruz was timed to build for a protest at the UC Regents' meeting the following day in San Francisco, where motions to overturn or delay the enactment of the Regents' decision to end affirmative action were to be put forward. In addition, the faculty senates of all nine UC campuses had voted protest motions against the abolition of affirmative action. Students from Santa Cruz, San Diego, Los Angeles and other UC campuses piled into cars and buses, hoping to force the Regents to rescind their vote. On January 19, UC president Richard Atkinson issued a directive saying undergraduate students will not be affected until the fall of 1998. Atkinson's plan was made public four days later, infuriating regents like Ward Connerly and Republican California governor Pete Wilson, architects of the racist rollback in admissions in the UC system. Atkinson was bowing to widespread opposition to the axing of affirmative action, particularly among the faculty, and obviously was hoping to defuse any protest.

Opponents of the attacks on affirmative action should have no illusions in the UC administrators. At San Francisco, the Regents made it clear that they did not intend to seriously consider student and faculty protests at their "public" Regents' meeting. The majority of protesters were herded into a police-guarded bantustan where they could only hear the meeting proceedings over a sound system. Of the select few who were allowed to enter the Regents' meeting room and engage in "discussion," eleven students were hauled off by police and arrested for going over their allotted speaking time of *one* minute! Charged with "disturbing the peace," the protesters face a March 4 court hearing at the San Francisco Hall of Justice. *Be there to demand that all the charges be dropped!*

At midday during the Regents' San Francisco meeting, 300 angry UC students took to the streets in pouring rain. Trailed by a long line of motorcycle cops and squad cars, the protesters stopped traffic at intersections and chanted for over an hour despite being buffeted by driving rain and wind. A contingent of Spartacist supporters chanted, "Open admissions, free tuition, abolish the Board of Regents!" A few minutes later the crowd began chanting, "Hey, hey, ho, ho—UC Regents gotta go!" which quickly became a favorite. It is critical to understand that the millionaire-dominated Board of Regents (which includes California governor Pete Wilson) rules the UC system to serve the



Spartacist contingent at January 18 protest in San Francisco against racist rollback of affirmative action at University of California.

needs of the capitalists: carrying out a racist purge of the campuses and training an increasingly privileged few to maintain and administer their system. The Regents let stand last July's decision to abolish affirmative action both in hiring, beginning immediately, and in admissions, beginning with the freshman class of 1997, by declining to vote on the motions.

Yet it is precisely to the Board of Regents that the various coalitions in defense of affirmative action appeal for redress against the racist attacks on black and minority student enrollment! Rejecting the demand to end race and class

privilege in education through open admissions, the "Students for Social Justice" (SSJ) looks to channel student outrage over rampant racist reaction into electoral support for the Democratic Party. Dominated by student bureaucrats and supported by the ultra-reformist Committees of Correspondence, the SSJ in their leaflet to protesters urged: "The first thing to do is to register to vote."

But Bill Clinton's wimpy lip service to affirmative action ("mend it, don't end it") notwithstanding, both the Democrats and Republicans have presided over a generalized assault on immigrants, blacks, Latinos, Asians, women and the

working class as a whole. In 1994, the liberal and fake-left misleaders took the massive demonstrations of outrage against anti-immigrant Proposition 187 and subordinated them to their effort to elect Democrat Kathleen Brown (who advocated militarizing the border with Mexico as the Clinton administration is now doing) as governor. Now they seek to use opposition to the misnamed "California Civil Rights Initiative"—a racist ballot measure to eliminate affirmative action in the state—to drum up support for the Democrats in the presidential elections.

Posing as a "militant" alternative to SSJ is the "Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action by Any Means Necessary." A front group of the Revolutionary Workers League (although lately the RWL rarely acts separately from its front groups), the Coalition shares the same strategy of trying to pressure the Board of Regents, the only difference being that it calls for "Militant, Mass Action to Force the Regents to Rescind Their Vote!" Just as it can see no other vehicle for defending affirmative action than the very board of capitalist administrators who are waging the racist rollback in the UC system, the RWL's coalition fundamentally accepts the barriers to higher education set by the racist capitalist rulers. They simply seek to move the goal posts a little.

In its leaflet calling for "mass, militant" protest at the Board of Regents' meeting, the Coalition poses as its maximum strategy a fight to "win positive gains like greatly expanding affirmative action to ensure that the percentage of black and Latino students on the campuses is at least as high as their percentage in the population of the state as a whole." In other words, it's OK to impose quotas on access to university education for blacks and minorities as long as they are more "representative"!

In contrast, the Spartacus Youth Club participated in the Santa Cruz student strike and the SF protest with the perspective of fighting for free, quality education for *all*! While we oppose the racist rollback of affirmative action in college admissions, quotas are not our program, and these tokenistic measures inherently acquiesce to the racist status quo. In fact, quotas have more often been used to *restrict* groups such as Jews and Asians, rather than to enhance minority enrollment. Against the race and class bias of higher education, we fight for open admissions, free tuition and a living stipend for all students. As we wrote last semester (see "Fight for Open Admissions!" WV No. 628, 8 September 1995): "A fight for open admissions that challenges the racial oppression which is the foundation of American capitalism poses the possibility of social struggle *outside* the framework of capitalist pressure politics." Such a fight would necessarily entail mobilizing the social power of the working class in a fight against the entire system based on class exploitation and racist oppression. The elimination of affirmative action in hiring means that students have powerful allies in the workforces at every UC campus and beyond. Yet the fact that it is minority workers who will first be hit by the rollback of affirmative action doesn't even merit a mention in the RWL's leaflet. This power was dramatically demonstrated by the recent workers' strikes in France, which along with a wave of campus protest, brought the country to a virtual standstill. But from France to California, unleashing that power requires the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist party to break the chains binding the oppressed to the twin capitalist parties. This is the perspective of the Spartacus Youth Clubs. Join us! ■

Former CPer Joins SYC: Why I Came to Trotskyism

I am writing this as an application for membership in the Spartacus Youth Club. This step comes after many years of thinking, reading, and discussion.

For many years I was involved as a member and supporter of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). I left the Party in late 1992-93 over its lack of Marxist analysis of the events of August 1991 in the former Soviet Union, and because of my beginning awareness of its reformist program. I sought a Leninist-Bolshevik analysis and a party that would fight for its program, a truly revolutionary program.

Through my reading of *Workers Vanguard*, which began as a member of the CPUSA, I came to know the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club's program and Leninist-

Bolshevik politics with its Trotskyist perspective.

I came to Trotskyism through my contact sessions with members of the SL and SYC classes—Trotsky's perspective of proletarian revolution, unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and the gains of October, and the transitional program of the Fourth International. I came to Trotskyism because I want to be a Marxist Communist with a Leninist-Trotskyist-Bolshevik program and party, not a reformist hanging on the coattails of the so-called "progressive" bourgeoisie.

In short, I agree with and will fight for the program of the Spartacus Youth Clubs and will abide by its organizational discipline.

Comradely,
R.F.

Judge Orders Daughter Chained to Mother

Cruel and Unusual

In 17th-century Puritan Massachusetts, Hawthorne's Hester Prynne was ordered to wear a scarlet letter for adultery. Now in South Carolina a 15-year-old girl, Tonya Kline, and her mother, Deborah Harter, are victims of a similar Puritanical climate. On December 7, a Judge Creech ordered the girl to be tethered with a chain to her mother 24 hours a day until January 27. One Southern judge said of the case, "Maybe we ought to consider some of the old-fashioned forms of punishment" (like stocks and dunking stools?!). Since last February, 20 youths have been subjected to tethering, and Creech has ordered 15 new nylon tethers. Down with this cruel and unusual punishment!

According to the family's lawyer, Tonya and her mother initially agreed to be tethered so that she would be home for the holidays, rather than in hated juvenile detention, while she awaits sentencing on charges of truancy, shoplifting and breaking into a house. But Harter soon

found the lack of privacy and having to parade her daughter around on a leash intolerable.

Almost as sick as the treatment against Tonya, her mother Deborah was ordered not to smoke or drink in Tonya's presence and was charged with contempt of court for allegedly smoking while with Tonya at school! Here we have the repressive "anti-smoking" crusade combined with "family values" insanity, producing complete state prohibition of normal human behavior! They drive you to drink but won't let you! Finally, on January 10, the mother suffered a collapse after taking pills for anxiety.

Across the South, there's a big push in the racist legislatures to turn back the clock in the overflowing jails and prisons. The chain gang, a signature of the racist Jim Crow era, has been restored in Alabama and Florida, with Alabama now also considering *caning* for young convicts! The lawmakers can't find enough ways to humiliate and degrade prison-



Fifteen-year-old Tonya Kline shackled to her mom, Deborah Harter, by order of South Carolina judge.

ers—no smoking, no television, no weightlifting, no nothing. In South Carolina, where the Confederate flag of slavery flies over the state capitol, the "new thinking" means having to scrub public toilets for saying "nope" instead of "no, sir" to the judge!

The special backwardness of the Southern judicial and penal systems reflects their continuity with the old system of chattel slavery and the racist system of Jim Crow segregation which was installed after the defeat of post-Civil War Reconstruction. Because the liberal civil rights movement of the 1960s relied on the federal government, and accepted capitalist rule, it could not uproot the racist Good Ol' Boys network which enforced Jim Crow and still runs the halls of "justice" across most of the South.

The reactionary "family values" crusade pushed by Democrats and Republicans targets women, gays, blacks and youth, with the patriarchal bourgeois family posed as the solution to all social problems. Thus, out the window with welfare, and that will mean epidemic starvation especially for black people and women. Since women are supposed to stay in the home taking care of the kids, day-care center workers are witchhunted as "child abusers." Youth are ordered to be obedient to both their parents and the imperialist government, which is now attempting to impose a "New World Order" using American troops, tanks, bombers—and backed up by a massive nuclear arsenal.

Clinton joins the Christian Right in pushing for prayer in schools—but the fundamentalists say sex education

mustn't be taught. The state of Alabama just declared that biology textbooks must add a disclaimer that evolution is not a fact! Defend the separation of church and state! As in Tonya's case, the state wants to literally chain youth to their parents—we Marxists believe that teenagers who so wish ought to be provided the means to live independently from their parents.

Especially for black youth, life is hell today. Public education is separate, unequal, and increasingly targeted for elimination. "Paddling" and slapping kids around are preferred methods of discipline in Southern schools. Clinton's program for youth is juvenile boot camps. Students are suspended from schools for wearing hip-hop clothes or Malcolm X symbols. Last year in Union Point, Georgia, officials and merchants arbitrarily banned 21 black youths from entering all downtown stores, under the pretext of an anti-shoplifting campaign. The ban was lifted after widespread controversy and a federal lawsuit filed by 13 of the individuals.

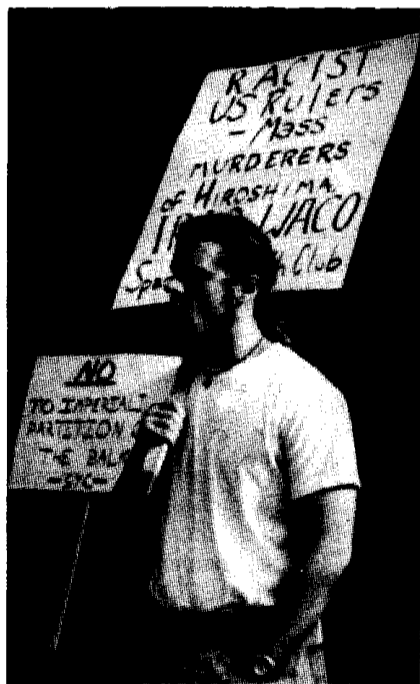
Racist repression is inherent in this capitalist system—where a tiny ruling class lives like kings while the masses sink into poverty and desperation. The return of the chain gang is a Southern signpost for the intensification of prison repression nationwide. The bourgeoisie is on a drive to imprison and execute ever-increasing numbers of youth and poor people. The only way out of a grisly future of poverty, starvation and prison for millions of youth lies in a revolutionary working-class struggle to sweep away the capitalist profit system. Fight for a socialist future! ■

SYC Speakout Against Imperialist Troops in the Balkans

Eugene, Oregon

On January 10, in opposition to the U.S. deployment of 20,000 troops to the Balkans as part of a 60,000-strong NATO force, the Eugene Spartacus Youth Club called a united-front protest against the imperialist intervention to demand "U.S./UN/NATO—Out of the Balkans Now!" This was the first political protest seen on the University of Oregon campus since the upheaval over the racist acquittal of the cops in the Rodney King case more than four years ago. It was also endorsed by James Johnston of the leftist, environmentalist campus paper, the *Student Insurgent*.

The SYC spoke out sharply against the illusions in the benevolence of the NATO forces in the region peddled by the Communist Party USA, the World Committee for Peace and other campus groups. We warned that imperialist intervention will only bring more bloodshed. As SYC speaker Julie Lawrence said, "There can be no peace through imperialism because imperialism is founded on the exploitation of the workers of the world." Taking up the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, she added, "The world capitalist order results in economic blockades and military invasions. The bombing and blockade of Iraq has resulted in the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi women and children...all done in the name of 'peace' or 'democracy.' The triumph of the capitalist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has led U.S. rulers to conclude that they can do anything they want to workers, blacks, Hispanics and the poor here at home. The CPUSA calls for removing U.S. troops, but they want to replace them with UN 'peacekeeping' troops. The UN is just a cover for imperialist intervention around the world. We are



Young Spartacus

glad that the *Student Insurgent* is here today to oppose U.S. imperialism, but point out that to consistently defend the working class, it is just as necessary to defend the struggles of striking workers in this country, which the *Insurgent* betrayed in crossing the picket lines of the OPEU [Oregon Public Employees] strikers last spring.

The bloody Balkan conflict epitomizes the need to resolve the crisis of worldwide proletarian leadership. We must build an international Leninist vanguard party which can break the Balkan masses from the nationalist demagogues on all sides, and lead the overthrow of the imperialist butchers through socialist revolution. The Spartacus Youth Clubs are the youth auxiliary to the Spartacist League, providing a training ground for young communists. We want to lead working people to victory here in the heart of the imperialist beast. U.S./UN/NATO troops out of the Balkans!

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

EUGENE

Alternate Saturdays, 4 p.m. Next class, February 17: *The Marxist Understanding of the State and Imperialism*; University of Oregon, Eugene, Chapman Hall, Room 203
For more information: (510) 839-0851

NEW YORK

Alternate Saturdays, 3 p.m. Next classes, February 17: *Principles of Communism*; March 2: *The State and Revolution*; Spartacist Public Office, 41 Warren Street (one block below Chambers Street)
For more information: (212) 267-1025

OAKLAND

Alternate Saturdays, 3 p.m. Next classes, February 10: *The Degeneration of the USSR: How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*; February 24: *Marxism and Special Oppression: The Black Question*; Spartacist League Public Office, 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor (near 17th Street)
For more information: (510) 839-0851

SANTA CRUZ

Alternate Tuesdays, 7 p.m. Next classes, February 6: *Marxism and Special Oppression: The Black Question*; February 20: *Marxism and Special Oppression: The Woman Question*; UC Santa Cruz, Student Center, M.C. Williams Lounge
For more information: (510) 839-0851

TORONTO

Alternate Mondays, 7 p.m. Next classes, February 12: *For Black Workers Power in South Africa*; February 26: *U.S./Canada/NATO Out of the Balkans!*
For more information: (416) 593-4138

VANCOUVER

Alternate Thursdays, 7:30 p.m. Next classes, February 29: *The Revolution Betrayed—The Syphilis of Stalinism*; March 14: *Forge an Internationalist, Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!*; Britannia Community Centre, 1661 Napier (off Commercial Drive), Room L4
For more information: (604) 687-0353

Yeltsin...

(continued from page 1)

the struggle for a revolutionary, internationalist party of the working class. This is the aim of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) as we fight to reimplant the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky in the former homeland of the October Revolution.

Smash Russia's Invasion of Chechnya!

The army siege of Pervomayskoye was justified as an attempt to rescue over 100 people taken hostage by Chechen separatist rebels after being forced to retreat from a nearby town in the Caucasus region of Dagestan. After initiating its assault on the village with the claim that the rebels had begun executing their prisoners, the government then lied that "practically all" of the hostages had already been killed anyway as it ordered the total obliteration of the village. But as dozens of survivors crawled out of the rubble after the firing stopped, it turned out that none of the hostages had been executed. "They never shot anyone," said one, "they didn't abuse us, they did not even swear" (London *Inde-*



Suau/Time

Yeltsin launched bloody army assault on Russian parliament, October 1993.

pendent, 19 January). Meanwhile, Moscow TV aired interviews with Russian soldiers "saying that killing Chechens—not saving hostages—was their assigned task" (*Washington Post*, 18 January).

Pitted in a desperate struggle against a massive Russian invasion force, the Chechen nationalists, many of them influenced by Islamic fundamentalism, have increasingly resorted to the reprehensible practice of seizing Russian and Caucasian civilians. But this pales in comparison with the war of annihilation being carried out by Yeltsin to assert Russia's claim to be a regional great power. To date, 30,000 people, mainly Chechen civilians, have been killed and

600,000 Chechens driven from their homes. In a Russian-language statement issued in Moscow at the start of the war last year, the ICL declared: "Smash Yeltsin's Invasion of Chechnya!" (WV No. 614, 13 January 1995). We call for the defeat of the Russian invasion forces and for the right of Chechnya to decide its own fate. The military defense of Chechnya is in the interests of the multinational working class of Russia.

Yeltsin's brazen lies and bungling over the military operation in Chechnya have provoked opposition even within Russia's ruling circles. But, typically, KPRF leader Zyuganov criticizes Yeltsin not for his regime's murderous suppression of the Chechens, but for the "inept" way in which it has been carried out. The KPRF proclaims itself "defenders of the Russian army" and denounces Yeltsin for allowing withdrawing troops to leave behind "mountains of weapons" for Chechen rebels. When a Yabloko deputy proposed a motion of no confidence in the government over the Pervomayskoye siege, the newly elected KPRF speaker of the Duma instead pushed through a resolution calling for an "adequate response" to the Chechen rebellion.

Among liberals, pacifists and many pseudo-leftists, it has become commonplace to compare Yeltsin's war against the Chechens with the introduction of Soviet troops into Afghanistan in 1979. This comparison is entirely false. The Soviet Union was a workers state, albeit ruled by a parasitic bureaucracy, and the Soviet Army intervened in a civil war to support a modernizing left-nationalist government under attack by anti-woman Islamic feudalist reactionaries armed and organized by American imperialism. But not a single Western capital today supports the Chechen rebels, even at the diplomatic level, because the imperialists all endorse the "territorial integrity" of Yeltsin's Russia.

KPRF: Anti-Working-Class Chauvinists

The KPRF is no more opposed to capitalism than Yeltsin, as Zyuganov made clear in addressing potential foreign investors at a special luncheon arranged for him in Moscow last October by the American Chamber of Commerce. Even Wall Street's Salomon Brothers investment bank described these so-called "Communists" as "bourgeois in their outlook" (*Newsweek*, 18 December 1995). Zyuganov and his fellow rump Stalinists have been hostile to every significant instance of organized class struggle by the proletariat, refusing, for example, to support the strike of starving Donetsk coal miners in the eastern Ukraine in 1993, the most significant instance of class struggle to date in what was the Soviet Union.

KPRF campaign flyers declared, "Russia was and will become a great state power." Calling for a "national patriotic government," Zyuganov initially sought an electoral alliance with



New York Times map

the Congress of Russian Communities, the party of retired General Aleksandr Lebed, a self-professed admirer of Chilean butcher Pinochet and a would-be candidate for bonapartist strongman. When Lebed's party performed poorly in the polls, the KPRF scheduled negotiations with, among others, the fascist Zhirinovskiy.

As we note in "Why Marxists Do Not Raise the Call 'Restore the Soviet Union'" (see page 3), Zyuganov himself is a virtual embodiment of the "red-brown" coalition—the bloc of Stalinist has-beens with fascists, monarchists and other right-wing Russian nationalists. His recent book *Derzhava* ("Great Power") calls for combining the "red" ideal of social justice with "the 'white' ideal of a nationally conceived state." In line with this, the KPRF paints the October Revolution—which Lenin saw as the first chapter of the world socialist revolution—as "Russia's only real chance to preserve itself as a nation-state." The perceptive and erudite Russian liberal Aleksandr Tsipko observed that "Zyuganov is neither a social democrat nor a communist in the traditional meaning of the word, but a *gosudarstvennik*—an advocate of Russia as a great power in the traditional, geo-political sense of the term."

Fake-Lefts Hail "Red-Browns"

When the Soviet degenerated workers state still existed, much of the Western left—from the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel to the centrist British Workers Power group—enthusiastically supported the imperialists and the labor lackeys. Rabochaya Demokratiya (Workers Democracy), Russian supporters of the British-based reformist Militant tendency, and other "leftists"

openly stood on Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary barricades in August 1991. In contrast, we of the International Communist League declared, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin/Bush Counterrevolution!" We pointed to the need for workers mobilizations to sweep away the Yeltsinite scum. Such actions would have marked the beginning of a proletarian political revolution.

Today, the fake-lefts in Russia and the West are seeking to distance themselves from the increasingly unpopular Yeltsin regime whose rise to power they supported. Thus, many are promoting the KPRF as a left, working-class party. While for its British audience the Militant group said, "No Choice for Workers in Russian Elections," in Russia *Rabochaya Demokratiya* ran a front-page headline screaming, "Not One Vote for the Right!" (burying any disclaimer of "political support" to Zyuganov to the fine print 29 paragraphs down). The USec's *International Viewpoint* (January 1996) carried a piece in which Mandel's favorite Alexander Buzgalin argues that "the main task of leftists today" is the formation of a "left-centrist coalition" around Zyuganov's party. This is not even a call for a class-collaborationist popular front, which ties the workers' organizations to the parties of the bourgeoisie, but rather for a chauvinist national front. And the British *Socialist Action* (October-November 1995), formerly affiliated with the USec, cheered that the KPRF's growing support represented a "massive revival of the left," dementedly concluding that Russia is in the throes of a "revolutionary situation!"

In a similar vein, Sam Marcy's Workers World Party in the U.S. painted the growing support for "Communists" as the result of a supposed burgeoning wave of class struggle while enthusing over the "revolutionary socialist platform" of Viktor Anpilov's Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP) and its "Communists—Toiling Russia—For the Soviet Union" slate (*Workers World*, 14 December 1995). If anything, Anpilov's outfit is even more grotesque than the KPRF in its adulation for Joseph Stalin and in the stridency of its Great Russian chauvinism and anti-Semitism. Where Zyuganov seeks to be the respectable, parliamentary voice of Stalino-chauvinism, the RKRP is the "party of the streets." The RKRP's *Molniya* (April 1995) advanced as slogans for last year's May Day: "Deprivatization! De-Yeltsinization! De-Zionization!" Put bluntly, that means scapegoating Jews for the ravages of capitalist restoration.

As we wrote three years ago in "Stalin Drowned the Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky in Blood," the KPRF, RKRP, et al. "are not parties based on the working class, but fragments of the bureaucracy, which had contempt for, and above all feared, the working class.... At least

KPRF head Gennadi Zyuganov embodies "red-brown" coalition uniting Stalinist has-beens and fascists behind Great Russian chauvinism and anti-Semitism, as in April 1995 Moscow protest against Clinton visit with Yeltsin.



Abramyte/Sipa



AP

Marxists...

(continued from page 3)

diagnosis. The political prognosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back into capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."

—*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (1938)

These were the alternatives facing the Soviet proletariat up to the very moment when capitalist restoration triumphed. However, more than six decades of Stalinist bureaucratic rule politically disarmed and demoralized the Soviet working class in the face of the relentless and ultimately successful drive of the imperialists to restore capitalism in Russia and the surrounding regions.

Real Soviets Are Organs for Workers Rule

So what does it mean when the degenerate Stalinist fragments of the grave-diggers of the revolution, like the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and the Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRK), claim to be for "restoring the Soviet Union"? Certainly, amidst the all-sided economic and social devastation and the wars of national fratricide which now beset the peoples of the ex-USSR, the days not long past when there was order and the factories worked can look pretty good. But such nostalgia, which today is almost universally a harking back *not* to the October Revolution but to the Soviet Union under the Stalinists, is not a program for socialist revolution. We Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union against capitalist counter-revolution as long as it existed. This was based on its class character, the fact that it was a workers state, albeit bureaucratically degenerated since 1924. But the Stalinist remnants who helped undermine proletarian power are trying to salvage only the perks they once enjoyed as cogs in the bureaucratic machine which administered the degenerated workers state. And today they couldn't care less whether their sinecures derive from a proletarian or a bourgeois state.

The reason for this is to be found in the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It was a parasitic caste that rested on the proletarian property forms of the Soviet degenerated workers state. It had a dual nature, compelled at times to defend those property forms in a bureaucratic fashion—with methods that, as Trotsky

Coal miners demonstrate outside Yeltsin's White House in April 1994 to demand back pay. Stalinist bureaucracy atomized Soviet proletariat. Now ex-Stalinist bourgeois nationalists compete to be new exploiters of Russian working people.



observed, "facilitate the victory of the enemy tomorrow" ("The Class Nature of the Soviet State," October 1933)—while simultaneously undermining them because it also served as a transmission belt for the relentless pressures of the world capitalist market and world imperialism. But with capitalist counterrevolution, the Stalinist fragments who formerly advocated "socialism in one country" have simply become outright bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists. The RKRK, KPRF, [Nina Andreyeva's] All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKPB), etc. are not parties based on the working class, even in the sense of the reformist British Labour Party, which is organizationally linked to the British trade unions. It is notable that all of the remaining Stalinist fragments on the territories of the ex-USSR are suffused with hostility to the proletariat; thus they all refused to support the strikes of the coal miners, or the strike of the air traffic controllers in August 1992.

The rump Stalinists have increasingly taken on the political coloration of the open reactionaries they tail, overlapping and interpenetrating with fascists, monarchists, the Orthodox Church and anti-Semitic chauvinists. The real content of their call for "restoration of the Soviet Union" is an appeal for a stronger Russian-dominated *capitalist* state, a modern version of the tsarist Russian empire. Gennadi Zyuganov, the chairman of the KPRF, is virtually an embodiment of the "red-brown" coalition—co-chairman with General Aleksandr Sterligov of the fascistic Russian National Sobor at its June 1992 founding, and a

prominent figure in all the actions of the "left-right" National Salvation Front from its founding in the summer of 1992 to its formal banning in October 1993. The March 1992 "Declaration on the Founding of the United Opposition," signed by all the Stalinist leftovers as well as their monarchist and fascist bloc partners, formalized the repulsive "red-brown" coalition and called for "salvation of the Fatherland...on the basis of civil peace and national trust."

One of the by-products of 70 years of Stalinist perversion of Marxism is the violence it has done to Marxist terminology. It is necessary to be clear about what we mean by words like "soviet," "internationalism," etc. One of the reasons for not using slogans like "reforge the Soviet Union" is that even many people who consider themselves Marxists do not understand that soviets were institutions for *workers rule*. Thus, in your letter you write that almost everywhere in the former USSR, except Russia, soviet power still exists, "at least formally." But this is a Stalinist myth. The soviets that came to power in October 1917 were revolutionary organizations of the working class that wielded government power. They were organized on the basis of the principle of workers democracy—election of delegates at the workplace and subject to immediate recall, the free competition of parties and platforms which did not seek the counterrevolutionary overthrow of the state—and became the realization in practice of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (for a fuller exposition of this question, see in particular Friedrich Engels' 1891 introduction to Karl Marx's

The Civil War in France).

In the course of the Civil War in Russia, on account of the collapse of industry and the fact that proletarian cadre were needed at the front and to administer the young workers state, the role of the workers soviets declined. The preservation of the regime of workers democracy was in practice embodied in the Bolshevik Party, where free discussion was not only normal and practiced, but was the very wellspring which fed the party's revolutionary fibre, notwithstanding the temporary ban on factions introduced at the 10th Party Congress in 1921. However, it was the onset of Thermidor in 1923-24 (see discussion below) which delivered the definitive blow to the soviets as instruments of the revolutionary will of the proletariat. The official "soviets," just like the CPSU and the trade unions, became in reality simply part of the bureaucratic state apparatus.

The "soviets" which remain today—the name notwithstanding—are in fact nothing other than subordinate organs of the bourgeois state apparatus, in no wise different from the sort of municipal councils which have long existed in capitalist countries in the West. To talk about taking over "soviets" today can at best only be camouflage for some kind of bourgeois parliamentarism. Our task is not to get immersed in such reformist fantasies, but to make known the lessons of the collapse of the Soviet workers state so that we can assemble the cadre for a party that can lead the masses to socialist revolution. And key to that is the struggle against all forms of nationalism.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

since 1933 on, the CPSU was basically a gang for skimming off the social surplus generated by the planned, collectivized economy" (Spartacist Pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled* [August 1993]). The KPRF was founded in February 1993 by former CPSU functionaries who had proven less adept than the Yeltsins and Chernomyrdins at plundering the remains of the former USSR's collectivized economy. As an article in the London *Financial Times* (14 January) put it, the KPRF is "the political vehicle for the least dynamic members of the old *nomenklatura*, who were left behind in Russia's economic transition and now want their share of the pie."

With a new capitalist class not yet fully cohered and consolidated, Zyuganov's party acts as the political representative of one of the numerous competing banking and industrial "clans," in much the same way as Chernomyrdin speaks for the giant natural gas monopoly. The KPRF is hostile to any conception of a workers party. Indeed, as journalist Renfrey Clarke reported in a 14 December 1995 Internet article, when one KPRF Duma deputy from St. Petersburg spoke out against the leadership's "state-patriotic positions" and argued for a "class party of working people," he

was effectively purged by being dropped to the bottom of the KPRF's electoral slate.

Russian Social Democracy Stillborn

Throughout much of East Europe, the successors to the former Stalinist ruling parties have transformed themselves into social-democratic formations akin, for example, to the British Labour Party. These labor reformists—like the ex-Stalinists who were voted into office in Poland and Hungary in protest at the right-wing nationalist regimes that were popularly identified with the introduction of capitalist hardship—function as agents of the imperialists and the national bourgeoisie from *within* the labor movement. However, various attempts to form a social-democratic party in Yeltsin's Russia have been stillborn. This was the case with both the Socialist Party of Labor of Roy Medvedev, which identified with West European "socialist" parties, and the Party of Labor of Boris Kagarlitsky, which sought to be an appendage of the ex-Stalinist Moscow FNPR trade-union bureaucracy.

But the corporatist FNPR tops preferred to maintain their close ties to the industrial managers. Indeed, it is difficult to speak of a workers movement in

Russia today even in a sociological sense. Atomized by nearly 70 years of Stalinist misrule, and now further paralyzed by the all-encompassing economic collapse, the working class of Russia has not embarked on class struggle in any significant way; what workers' actions do take place tend to be either desperate hunger strikes to demand back payment

of wages or lobbying efforts on behalf of the industrial managers aimed at pressuring the government to subsidize their factories by printing money.

In this situation, there is little place for labor reformism. Instead, the "red-brown" coalition has filled the vacuum as the main opposition to the now *continued on page 10*

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Drop the Charges Against Rena Raybon!

It isn't enough that 35-year-old Rena Raybon lost her four children and a grandchild in a tragic fire in East Oakland last October 14: now, after nearly three months of "investigation," the state wants to imprison her for being poor, black and a woman. On January 2, the D.A.'s office charged her, with five counts of involuntary manslaughter and one count of child endangerment; if convicted she could face 26 years in prison.

The fire was reportedly caused by a smoldering cigarette which ignited a couch in Raybon's apartment. Like many homes in the black ghetto, the apartment had barred windows which lacked emergency releases required by law, due to the landlord's negligence. So the resulting inferno turned the apartment into a prison of death. Melicia Raybon, the eldest child, was seen screaming for help and frantically struggling to remove the bars illegally bolted into the window sills, to no avail. Outside, her mother ran from one barred window to another in a fruitless effort to free the trapped children.

Employing their standard operating procedure that black people are guilty until proven innocent, the cops arrested Raybon immediately after the fire, but soon released her when authorities determined that the deaths were accidental.

Raybon was vindictively charged with manslaughter only after she had filed a civil suit against the city and the landlord. As Raybon's attorney said, "it is outrageous that she is being charged when the real criminal is the landlord" (*Oakland Tribune*, 24 January).

The cops and D.A. are trying to make Rena Raybon yet another victim of the racist "war on drugs." Maligning Raybon as the mother of two so-called "crack babies" and alleging that the fire was started by a marijuana cigarette, the cops tested Raybon for drugs even as she was grieving for her lost family. The vendetta against Raybon is typical of the treatment being meted out today to black women, who are the fastest-growing sector of the burgeoning prison population. Between 1986 and 1991, the number of black women in state prisons for drug offenses increased more than eightfold. Since 1992, the women's prison population has soared 275 percent, with black women seven times more likely to be jailed than white women.

And California's new "three strikes and you're out" law mandates life sentences even for petty crimes against property. For "blind" capitalist "justice," the loss of a poor black family weighs far less heavily on the scales than the

loss of rents. As it seeks to cut welfare payments to the lowest level in the state, Alameda County poses prison as the alternative to decent housing for the poor. The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP), which is rallying support for Raybon, explains that she had been forced to move from a safer apartment because she could not afford the \$800 monthly rent. So her family crowded into the firetrap that was their doom.

Raybon's black East Oakland neighborhood accounts for 25 percent of the fire deaths in Oakland, which has the highest fire death rate in California. The city sits on a stockpile of free smoke alarms that could easily prevent many of these deaths. But city officials refuse to distribute them because of the dreaded H-word, "handout"! "When you do that ... you end up giving them to people who don't really need them," the city fire chief arrogantly proclaimed (*Oakland Tribune*, 27 December 1995). The black Democratic Party front men for racist rule, like Oakland mayor Elihu Harris, ensure that handouts are only for the rich. Wealthy Oakland Hills residents received lavish assistance after the 1991 fire. But what blacks in the working-class flatlands get are insulting "educational" programs

such as "Learn Not to Burn."

In the eyes of the capitalist rulers, the ghetto masses are an expendable "surplus population." Meanwhile, the liberal "civil rights establishment" promotes the racist "war on drugs" and capitulates to the genocidal anti-welfare social agenda pushed by Gingrich and Clinton. Along with the sinister nationalist demagogue Farrakhan, the black liberals alibi the slashing of social programs with "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" rhetoric while pushing "community policing," the latest ploy designed to create the illusion that the cops—black or white—are something other than the armed fist of the ruling class.

The same "war on drugs" that targets the black ghetto masses is also used by the capitalist exploiters to regiment the working class, imposing drug testing to victimize union members. It's in the interest of the integrated labor movement, particularly the heavily black public sector unions, to come to the defense of Rena Raybon and all the victims of racist repression. Now more than ever we need a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution. Drop the charges against Rena Raybon! ■

Yeltsin...

(continued from page 9)

despised Yeltsin regime. Kagarlitsky, whose personal ambition was always stronger than his "socialist" principles, ran on the KPRF slate in the recent Duma elections. And Medvedev, who during the Brezhnev era was a pro-socialist critic of the Kremlin bureaucracy, albeit within a liberal Stalinist framework, is now supporting Russia's would-be Pinochet, Aleksandr Lebed.

Why the difference between the ex-Stalinist social democrats in Poland or Hungary and the ex-Stalinist "patriots" in Russia? The Polish and Hungarian ex-Stalinists, though also nationalist, had to define themselves in opposition to virulently reactionary forces—like Lech Walesa's Solidarność—which spearheaded the counterrevolution and equated "Communism" with Soviet domination. In Russia, Anpilov and his ilk could—and did—ally with fascists and monarchists in the name of preserving a strong Russian-centered state as the multinational USSR was ripped apart by centrifugal forces. In this they followed in the footsteps of Stalin himself, who increasingly identified "Soviet patriotism" with traditional Russian nationalism and glorified feudal state-builders like Aleksandr Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible. Likewise, the Brezhnev regime in the 1970s, whose functional ideology was not even "socialism in one country" so much as "superpowerism," tolerated and promoted reactionary Russian nationalists and vocal anti-Semites like the "village writer" Valentin Rasputin.

Today these nationalists demagogically blame the economic immiseration caused by capitalist restoration on a supposed plot by the Western powers and an "international Zionist conspiracy" to degrade the Russian nation. Thus, Zyuganov claims that Russia has become a "semicolony" of the West. In fact, every country in East Europe and every former Soviet republic—regardless of the ideological character of their current governments—has experienced the collapse of industrial production, massive unemployment and the pauperization of large sections of the population.

Most of the KPRF's left apologists

simply deep-six its chauvinist politics, instead playing up its populist rhetoric about "soviet power" and renationalization of industry. But *Socialist Action* actually lauds Zyuganov's grotesque Great Russian nationalism as a "progressive defence of Russia against western imperialism which is an absolutely necessary political position for the left in Russia." This bogus "anti-imperialism" is simply a cover for support to the Kremlin's drive for domination over the Chechens and other non-Russian peoples in the "near abroad." Nor is the increasingly strident nationalist line coming out of Moscow in any way incompatible with collaborating as a junior partner with one or another Western power in the context of widening interimperialist rivalries. The Russians have sent a contingent of troops to help enforce the imperialist-brokered "peace" in Bosnia. Capitalist Russia has sought to serve as soft cops particularly for German imperialism, while posing as the great-power protector of the Serbs as in the days of the tsars.

Within Russia, the impact of nationalism on the opportunist left is exemplified by the trajectory of the Rabochaya Borba (Workers Struggle) group of Dmitry Zhvania, variously associated with Tony Cliff's "third camp" British Socialist Workers Party (represented by the International Socialist Organization in the U.S.) and the French Lutte Ouvrière. Zhvania's outfit campaigned for Eduard Limonov's fascist National Bolshevik Party in the elections, and was congratulated for this "priceless" work in the fascists' *Limonka* (November 1995). Indeed, a scurrilous Rabochaya Borba leaflet denouncing Yeltsin & Co. as "cynical traitors" for even negotiating with the Chechen rebels was reprinted in the same issue of this fascist rag as "fully coinciding" with Limonov's own position.

Reforge the Fourth International!

There is today massive dissatisfaction with the government in factory, mining and collective-farm towns that were built up under the Soviet planned economy and are now devastated. While Yeltsin's apologists cheer that production declined

by only 4 percent in 1995, this comes on the heels of an economic collapse wiping out 60 percent of production over the previous four years. Unemployment nominally stands at 8 percent, but the reality is that a significant section of the workforce has "jobs" that pay less than the survival minimum while millions are not paid at all for months at a time. In the last year alone, real wages have decreased over 20 percent. The very economic existence of the working class is now threatened.

But the bare economic statistics do not begin to approach the magnitude of social collapse. The bulk of the former Soviet Union's towns were built up around single giant enterprises that provided virtually all social and municipal services. With their bankruptcy, whole industrial and agrarian regions are afflicted with rolling blackouts that leave families without light, heat or water for weeks and months. Diseases of poverty such as diphtheria that were wiped out during the early years of Bolshevik rule have now returned to stalk whole regions. The birthrate has plunged to barely more than half the death rate, while over the past four years life expectancy for males has dropped from 64 to 57. Despite its heavy industrial base, well-educated labor force

and huge technical intelligentsia inherited from the USSR, Russia is being reduced to the social conditions of a semi-colonial country.

But in the absence of an authoritative Leninist vanguard, massive social discontent is being channeled into reactionary populist nationalism. Marxists must wage an unremitting struggle against chauvinist and other bourgeois tendencies within the working class. That requires a political struggle not only against Zyuganov & Co., but against the various opportunists who act as "socialist" apologists for the new exploiters.

As long as the Soviet degenerated workers state existed, we continued Trotsky's fight to defend the gains of October through a program for international socialist revolution, calling for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the nationalist regime erected by Stalin and his heirs. Today we fight for socialist revolution against the blood-drenched Yeltsin government and the cutthroat capitalists it represents. Then as now, the crucial question is one of revolutionary leadership. We in the ICL strive to build a Leninist party, part of a reformed Fourth International, that will be a genuine tribune of the people, combatting all forms of oppression. ■

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NYC Building Strike...

(continued from page 12)

Workers to Build Solidarity" and lam-bastes electricians for crossing picket lines. But ISO supporters walked right through a picket line outside the New School for Social Research in downtown Manhattan in order to hold one of their advertised weekly forums. And on their way through the door, these scab "socialists" had the chutzpah to offer their "support" to the picketing strikers.

Then there is the so-called "Bolshevik" Tendency (BT). Confronted by a Spartacist League supporter after skulking out of a picketed office building, one BT supporter tried to alibi his strikebreaking with the union bureaucrats' line that the strike was not directed against his employer but against the

"building management." When put on the spot about their supporter's scabbing, BTers at a "Student-Worker Strike Support Committee" meeting organized by various left groups on January 26 cynically sputtered, "Is every one of your members honoring the lines?" Any class-conscious worker, not just a communist, understands in his guts the elementary working-class principle that *picket lines mean don't cross!* As the traditional miners song goes, "Which side are you on?"

For decades, the labor bureaucrats have made a mockery of the picket-line principle, inventing "informational picket lines" as a dodge and abjectly capitulating to the bosses' anti-strike laws. Reflecting their real class loyalties, the CLC tops find themselves on the bosses' side of the picket line, where they're joined by not a few "leftist" groups. Workers need a class-struggle union leadership forged in political struggle against the lieutenants of capital within

Scab "socialists": ISO supporters cross picket line at New School for Social Research, January 25, to hold meeting inside.



the labor movement, who bind workers to their class enemy through their ties to the Democratic Party. A revolutionary workers party must be forged to cham-

pion the cause of all the oppressed and fight for a workers government to expropriate the bosses. *Victory to the building workers strike!* ■

British Election...

(continued from page 12)

ex-miner said, "I shall vote for Arthur. It's sacrilege what's gone on here."

But the reformist program of Scargill's SLP, which tacitly accepts the framework of capitalist parliamentarism, offers no way forward for the working class. We call for abolition of the anachronisms of the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords, leading—as the relationship of forces permits—to confrontations over the institution of the House of Commons and the City of London financiers and capitalists it represents. What is needed is a sweeping social revolution culminating with the workers in power, opening a new line of historical development.

As the *Workers Hammer* supplement (28 January) reprinted below emphasizes, what is needed is an internationalist Leninist vanguard party, forged through winning Labour's working-class base to a revolutionary Marxist program. This is what the SL/B fights for.

Vote Brenda Nixon!

We strongly urge support to Brenda Nixon of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in the Hemsworth by-election because the issues she is standing on—renationalisation of the main privatised industries, repeal of the anti-union

laws and the rebuilding of the public services—speak to the felt needs of the working people of these islands. Further, she has said that the SLP will be a party of opposition to Labour.

Everyone knows that a Blair Labour government will not redress the social crimes of the Tories. Blair's "New Labour" seizes every opportunity to show their utter contempt for the working class and oppressed. They endorse everything from the hated anti-union laws to attacks on health and education and even exceed the Tories when it comes to promoting racist "law and order" in order to carry out the City's dictates. The City is making a mess of the national economy to preserve their bloody privileges and power.

The Hemsworth electorate covers key Yorkshire mining areas that have been devastated by the pit closures and ravaged by unemployment. This is an area where miners stood firm to the very end during the historic strike of 1984-85. There is a residue of bitterness and hatred not only over the years of Tory government union-busting austerity but also against the Labour bureaucracy's treachery and betrayal.

A deep gulf lies between what working people want and what Blair promises to deliver. Labour's refusal to even advocate renationalisation of the railways has aroused fury within Labour's union base, most recently expressed in the rail unions. A real fight against rail privatisation centred in the rail unions would garner widespread support.

While the demands that Brenda Nixon

has raised are clearly supportable, they cannot be achieved within the confines of capitalism. We need workers republics! Her Majesty's existing governmental arrangements are counterposed to the struggle for workers emancipation. We are for a federation of workers republics in the British Isles—for a start: abolish the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords! For the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales!

At the heart of Labourism ("new" or "old") has always been allegiance to British capitalist rule and espousal of British nationalism. Protectionism is poison to the needs of the international working class. French and South African workers' aid and support to the miners strike was invaluable. Yet the call to "save British coal" and for import controls was central to Arthur Scargill's campaign over the 1992 pit closures. Only a party which fights for international working-class solidarity across national lines can fight in the interests of the working class. That means, above all, fighting the machinations of our own imperialist rulers.

From countries as diverse as South Korea, Brazil and South Africa there have been major outbreaks of working-class struggle. Across Britain there have been a series of bitter defensive struggles going on, from the locked-out Liverpool dockers to the firefighters and postal workers. Their struggles have been encouraged by the recent massive strike wave in France against a government assault on social welfare.

The 1984-85 miners' battle galvanised

support from broad layers of British society—youth, blacks and Asians who were amongst the most active and eager supporters of the strike. This is because they saw in the miners the potential to deal a blow against the whole racist system of state brutality. What the SLP does not address, but which is vital, is the resurgence of racist anti-immigrant hysteria in this country and throughout Europe. Down with the Asylum and Immigration Bill which threatens thousands of refugees with deportation, torture and death!

During the miners strike, Scargill took militant trade unionism about as far as possible. The entire force of the capitalist state was arrayed against the miners. Their defeat was sealed by the sabotage and treachery of the Labour Party leadership of Neil Kinnock and the TUC leaders, and also by the outright refusal of the "left" leaders, especially in the railway and dockers unions, to strike alongside the miners.

But the lesson from all these struggles is that without a revolutionary Marxist programme and a Leninist vanguard party we can only succeed in frustrating the ruling class, not overthrowing it. We need the type of party that embodies what Chartist leader James Bronterre O'Brien said:

"My motto is... 'What you take you may have.' I will not attempt to deal with the abstract question of right, but will proceed to show that it is POWER, solid, substantial POWER, that the millions must obtain *and retain*, if they would enjoy the produce of their own labour and the privileges of freemen." (1837) ■

Black History Month Spartacist Forums

For a Workers Party that Champions the Cause of All the Oppressed!

Class-Struggle Road to Black Freedom

For Revolutionary Integrationism

Thursday, February 15, 7 p.m.
Guest Speaker: Bernard Branche, member ATU 308
Ida Noyes, 2nd Floor East Lounge
University of Chicago, 1212 E. 59th St.
For more information: (312) 663-0715

CHICAGO

Friday, February 23, 7 p.m.
PS 234
292 Greenwich Street
(at Chambers St.)
For more information:
(212) 267-1025

NEW YORK CITY

For Revolutionary Integrationism!

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Speaker: Diana Coleman, veteran of civil rights movement
PLUS: Update on the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Thursday, February 8, 4:30 p.m.
Student Union B112
San Francisco State University
For more information: (415) 777-9367

SAN FRANCISCO

Monday, February 12, 7 p.m.
Public Policy 1256
UCLA

For more information: (213) 380-8239

LOS ANGELES

Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste Forum

Union Misleaders Derail Strike Wave

France Workers Fight Off Government Assault

Friday, Feb. 16, 7:30 p.m.
Britannia Community Centre
Room L4
1661 Napier
(off Commercial Drive)
For more information:
(604) 687-0353

VANCOUVER

WORKERS VANGUARD

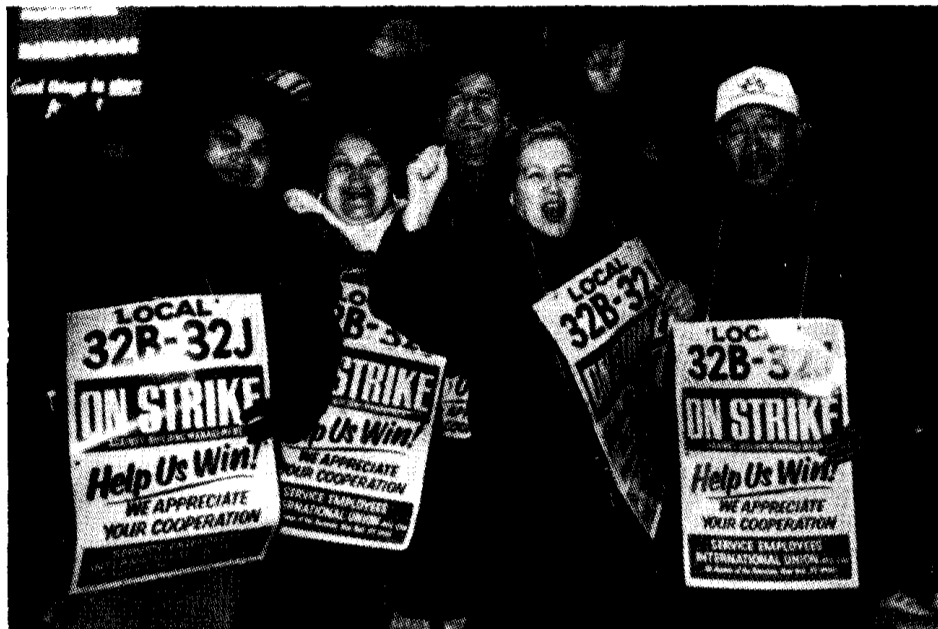
NYC Building Workers Strike

Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!

NEW YORK, January 30—The strike by over 30,000 janitors, porters, repairmen and elevator operators at commercial office buildings in New York City has now entered its fourth week. Striking members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32B-32J are picketing over 1,000 commercial office buildings in a battle against the real estate barons' attempt to impose a two-tier wage system which would lower starting wages by 40 percent. The outcome of the strike by 32B-32J, the home local of new AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney, will have an impact on labor struggle across the country.

But while the strikers remain solid, picketing and marching in snow and freezing weather, frustration and anger are mounting. The union tops have kept the membership in the dark and refused to put some muscle in the picket lines, because that would mean defying the bosses' anti-union laws. The strikers have faced strikebreakers wielding bats and guns and taken scores of arrests, as Giuliani's cops herd deliverymen and scab cleaners through the picket lines.

Strikers daily watch throngs of office workers, skilled-trades workers, delivery drivers and trash haulers walk through their picket lines. It's an outrage that



Picket-line solidarity by all unions is key to winning SEIU Local 32B-32J strike against real estate barons.

supervisors organized by 32B-32J, whose contract expires at the end of January, are still on the job! Mass pickets are needed to shut down major office towers like the World Trade Center. There is an urgent need for an elected strike committee to take control of the

strike and start playing hardball. Many Teamster-organized UPS drivers (and many unorganized Federal Express workers) aren't crossing the lines, but many other Teamsters are. Strikers and their supporters should demonstrate outside Teamsters offices to demand that

the union order *all* its members to honor their picket lines. Instead, the union tops are pursuing a dead-end strategy that can only lead to disaster.

As we wrote in our last issue, "If every union in town honored the elementary labor principle that *picket lines mean don't cross*, the strike could be won in a matter of days." After a January 10 meeting of the NYC Central Labor Council, Local 32B-32J head Gus Bevona announced that the other unions would be "honoring our picket lines." Meanwhile, the CLC tops themselves have been crossing picket lines every day at their own 386 Park Avenue South headquarters! The union fat cats even held a "strike support" luncheon on January 18 inside the struck Woolworth Building.

It isn't only the cravenly pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats who are spitting on the strikers' picket lines. The rad-lib *Village Voice* (23 January) actually ran a photo of pickets in front of its building where the paper continues to be published. Numerous groups claiming to be "socialist" are no better. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) headlines in its latest *Socialist Worker* that "It Will Be Up to Rank-and-File Building
continued on page 11

Break with Labourism, "Old" and "New"—For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

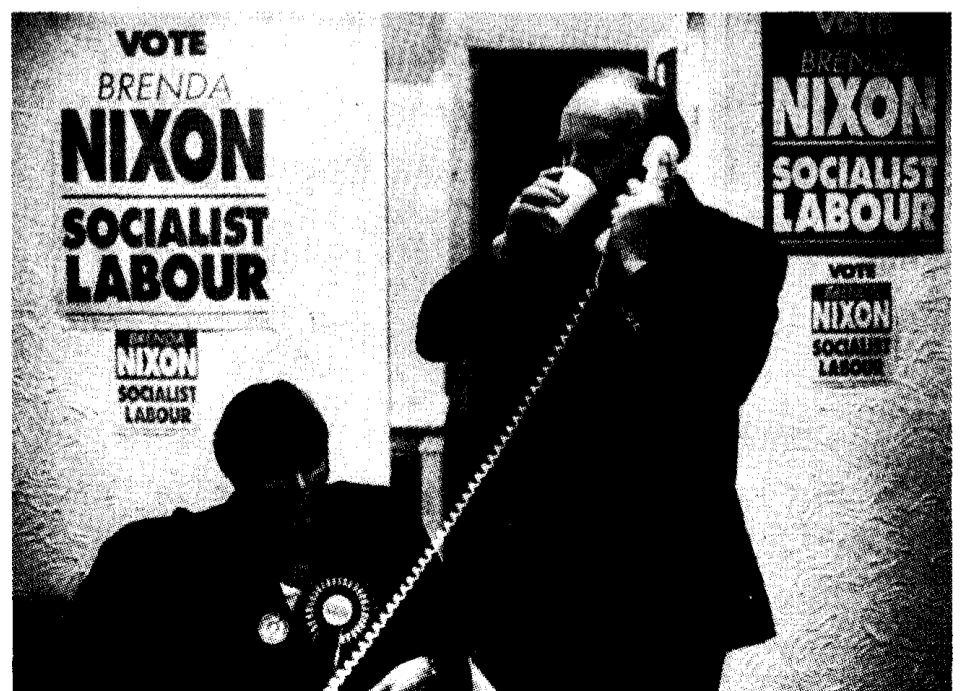
Britain: Election Challenge to Tony Blair's Labour Party

For the first time in decades, the British Labour Party's political stranglehold over the workers movement is being challenged by an important split from within. On January 13, National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) leader Arthur Scargill, who headed the militant 1984-85 coal strike, announced the formation of his Socialist Labour Party (SLP) to stand in opposition to the "New" Labour Party of Tony Blair. The SLP is now running its first candidate for Parliament, Brenda Nixon of the Women Against Pit Closures Movement, in a February 1 by-election in Hemsworth, a former NUM stronghold. Our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain have called for critical support to the SLP candidate.

Seeking to recast Labour in the mold of the openly capitalist Democratic Party in the U.S., Blair has pushed to rupture the Labour Party's historic ties with the trade unions and scuttled even its pretensions to stand for socialism. Thus, at last year's party conference, Labour abandoned its constitutional "Clause

IV," which called for the nationalization of industry. It was this which provoked Scargill into launching his breakaway party, as the miners leader denounced Blair for betraying Labour's "socialist soul" (see "International Solidarity with Liverpool Dock Strike," WV No. 637, 19 January). Yet much of the self-styled "revolutionary" left in Britain is so beholden to the Labour traitors that they denounced from the right Scargill's split.

But with or without Clause IV, Labour has always been a thoroughly *pro-capitalist* party, demonstrated not least by its open strikebreaking in league with the Conservative Thatcher government's union-busting assault on the NUM in 1984-85. This betrayal by the Labour leaders, "left" and right, paved the way for a crippling attack against the entire union movement and the decimation of the coal fields. Today, Hemsworth's Frickley colliery, which once employed 2,500 miners, is an empty shell. One
continued on page 11



Socialist Labour Party candidate Brenda Nixon with miners union leader Arthur Scargill.