Respect divorces SWP

Reformists in crisis in post-Soviet world

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

In setting up Respect the SWP abandoned the Socialist Alliance, their previous attempt to create an "alternative" to New Labour by reviving a version of the old Labour politics that had historically served to tie the working class to God, Queen and country. Respect however made no pretense to be even remotely a working-class formation. On the contrary, from its inception Respect was a cross-class, popular-frontist coalition. As we wrote in our article "SWP's "unity coalition" split into Respect Renewal led by maverick MP George Galloway (left) and SWP-dominated Respect led by John Rees (right). Both organisations are politically identical."

In a letter to the Respect National Council titled "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" in August 2007 Galloway launched a broadside against the SWP, blaming it for the "steep decline" in Respect membership and for the fact that Respect is not "punching its weight in British politics". By late October, the Galloway wing, which consists of virtually all of the Respect coalition outside of the SWP, had changed the locks on the doors to Respect head-quarters. The SWP responded with a 3 November letter from its Central Committee denouncing Galloway for launching a witch hunt against the "left-wing" in Respect. This was followed by a 5 November letter from Alex Callinicos to other sections of the SWP's putting international calling that "the division in Respect is a political one between left and right". The SWP's posture as "principled socialists" being witch-hunted by the right is downright laughable. Since the founding conference of Respect, it was SWP cadre who ensured that motions calling for the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic, for secularism and even for a "workers MP on a workers wage" were voted down! Now among the only criticisms they can summon up about Galloway is that he earns a whopping £300,000 a year and that he appeared on the Celebrity Big Brother show. These rank opportunists do not even offer a hint of self-criticism on the concessions they made which were controversial among the SWP's membership, such as abandoning any meaningful fight for gay rights or women's liberation in order to appease the mosques as well as Galloway. Even now, the SWP can't choke out a word of criticism of Galloway's reactionary opposition to abortion. The split has produced two warring organisations—"Respect" consisting mainly of the SWP and "Respect Renewal" led by Galloway and made up of pretty much everyone except the SWP. Among Galloway's supporters are a handful of former SWP cadres who were expelled for siding with Galloway, the leading Muslim figures as well as Alan Thornett's Socialist Resistance group which has terminated its own newspaper and is publishing a paper for Respect Renewal.

Despite intense heat on both sides, there are no differences of political programme, as was seen when the rival Respect organisations held conferences in London on 17 November 2007. Both claim to be the true inheritors of the programme on which Respect was originally founded. The SWP's bitter complaints about Respect having been taken over by Muslim "community leaders" and "businessmen" are amusing given the extent to which these consummate opportunists bent over backwards to conciliate the mosques. In an effort to capitalise on the mammoth anti-war protests in 2003, which were led by the SWP-brokered Stop the War Coalition and heavily supported by Muslim organisations, the SWP bragged about having organised an anti-war meeting in Birmingham with a segregated seating area for women! But today Muslim leaders like Salma Yaqoob accuse the SWP of using Muslims as "vote fodder" for elections in answer to the SWP's claim that the Muslim wing of Respect operates on the basis of "communism". This refers to the fact that candidates are selected along ethnic and religious lines—people of Bangladeshi origin mainly support Bangladeshis and people of Pakistani origin support their "own" candidates, while neither supports SWP-backed candidates. The SWP would likely have been happy within Respect if only they had been allowed their "fair share" of candidates in elections.

SWP's contribution to "death of communism"

The politics of Respect shows the extent to which the SWP is mired in the ideological climate conditioned by the prevailing bourgeois ideology that "communism is dead". The SWP as a tendency originated out of a capitulation to the anti-communist Cold War hysteria that accompanied the Korean War of 1950-53. Its founder, the late Tony Cliff, reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union as well as the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialism attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and to the Labour government that sent troops to Korea. (See "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories" [Spartacist no 55 [English-language edition], Autumn 1989].)
Respect...

Continued from page 1)

The SWP actually helped create today's political climate of post-Soviet reaction. Boris Yeltsin's imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution staged a counterattack in August 1991 when Boris was triumphant and proclaimed this as the “death of communism”. The SWP joined in the jubilation, proclaiming on their front page: “Communism has collapsed”, a fact that “every socialist rejoices and will continue “fight for real socialism” (Socialist Worker, 31 August 1991).

The SWP’s “socialism” only ever amounted to pressuring the pro-imperialist Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy who were wedded to British imperialism and parliament. But in the programme of Respect they willingly dished even that and relegated the mention of “socialism” to specifying at SWP branch meetings and to the occasional historical article in Socialist Worker. This is a capitulation to the pre-dominant consciousness among today’s political activists which — whether they be in “left” organisations or the “anti-globalisation” or “militant” — is bourgeois liberal ideology. A document appended to the programmatic statement of our “militant” comrades in the Spartacist League/US written in 2000 succinctly characterised the role of our competitors on the left, where they today describe as “opponents of the revolutionary internationalist workers movement”, noting: “All of our party’s activity is directed to organizing, recruiting and developing the proletarian vanguard party necessary for the success of the socialist struggle. In contrast, the politics of the reformists and centrists consist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of bourgeois society. The latter was sharply characterised by Trotsky as “the actual realising of the masses to become imbued with the inevitability of the bourgeois state”. Such accommodation to capitalist class rule by organisations nominally claiming adherence to Marxism is, if anything, more decisive than today’s common definition of the end of the Russian Revolution and the triumphal assertion by the imperial rulers that “communism is dead”: “Socialist pamphlet, For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism (November 2000)

The bust-up in Respect is only the latest in a series of crises that have exposed the reformist left in Britain and internationally in the post-Soviet world. In contrast, the movement to counterrevolution in the Soviet Union was followed by lurching even further to the right to obtain protection from the denials of the more in the machine. In the 2006 split in Workers’ Party, one wing argued to continue their frenzied capitulation to the “anti-globalisation” milieu and the imperialist-funded social forums which they portrayed as the main arena out of which to build a “revolutionary international”. The minority, now known as “Permanent Revolution”, saw this as a losing cause but instead argued we should continue with our time-honoured task of Labour. Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) — once upheld by reformists in England as the best model for an alternative to Blair’s New Labour — folded in 2006 following moralistic allegations about its leader Tommy Sheridan’s sex life. Beneath this, the upsurge of imperialism over just how far the SSP should go in its blatant capitulation to the Scottish National Party, a bourgeois party, in the hope of becoming more of a player in the Scottish parliament.

The SWP’s international tendency underwent a profound crisis in 2000 and broke with its US section for having voiced the “test of Office”. This, for all intents and purposes, was the British SWP’s level of adulation of the “anti-globalisation” movement. The very notion that this movement is “anti-capitalist” is a myth. Indeed as SWP leader John Rees wrote in a 2003 fatuare for it, this movement would not have been possible without capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, Rees wrote: “The broad anti-capitalist movement encompassing the whole left save for the social democratic defenders of neo-liberalism and those who have been in some sense the Cold War. In that era the first question asked of any ‘anti-capitalist’ would have been, ‘So does that mean you are pro-Russia?’ This movement would have dovied in response to that challenge. Now it is no longer does.”

—Leon Trotsky, Academic socialism, Autumn 2003

Having fought for and then hailed counterrevolution, the Cliffeites have been constantly cheated of the benefits of the “revolution” they pretended in its wake. The party failed to grow even out of the mamon anti-war demonstrations in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Referring to this at the January 2006 party conference, long-time SWP stalwart Bill Logan was polemical pointed out that “somewhere during this period of radicalisation and outward success the party appears to have lost up to 5,000 (50%) of its membership (without ever acknowledging that this was happening).” Molyneux stood on the SWP’s support to counterrevolution, saying: “A key problem, in my opinion, was our reaction to the effects of the collapse of Stalinism. We were right to identify this as fundamentally historically progressive as it has shown ideologically it created a space for genuine socialist ideas to get a hearing.” He added: “However, we seriously underestimated the extent to which it was perceived by millions, indeed hundreds of millions, as the defeat of socialism” (“Why I intend to Stand”, published in Workers’ Worker, January 2006). Only those blinded by anti-communist rrotoloy to “democratic” imperialism, as Molyneux and the SWP leadership are, could describe counterrevolution in the former USSR and Eastern Europe as “fundamentally historically progressive”. This was a defeat of historic proportions for the working masses of the whole world. It followed the tide of counterrevolution that had swept the former (defeated) workers states in Eastern Europe to led to the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990, with devastating consequences for the working masses of those countries. Moreover, in the “one superpower” world, US imperialism feels it has free rein to plunder neo-colonial countries such as Iraq and Azerbaijan, while all the imperialist powers have been emboldened to grind the working class at home, as seen in the Labour government’s attacks on the trade unions.

We of the ICL fought with all our resources against capitalist restoration. During the unfolding political revolution in East Germany, the unconditionally opposed capitalist reification with imperialist West Germany. We fought for political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West. We initiated a 250,000-strong demonstration on 1 January 1990 in East Berlin’s Treetop Park against the fascist desecration of the war memorial to Soviet soldiers in Berlin. We supported the Socialist workers in Eastern Germany with a bourgeois party, in the hope of becoming more of a player in the Soviet parliament.

But how explain the fact that our grouping, whose analysis and prognosis have been “precisely the one through Monty Molyneux has been, ‘So does that mean you are pro­

2

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Study
For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles
For a Socialist United States of Europe
The Spartacist League is the British section of the International Communist League
First published in 1979
EDITOR: Edwin McDonald
PRODUCTION MANAGER: James Palmer
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Mark Corcoran
Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 8YW
E-mail: Workershammer@compuserve.com
Subscriptions to: Spartacist League/US & Ireland £5, overseas airmail £7
Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
Printed at Newday Ltd, 100 Stockwell Road, London SW8 3AQ. Tel: 020 7580 5000
Printed by Newsword International Ltd (trade union) ISSN 0267-8721

Special ICL bulletins
In 1979, Bill Logan was expelled from the international Spartacist tendency for crimes “against international unity and its substantive role in the revolutionary human decency”. Logan is now the leader of the “International Bolshevik Tendency”. As a service to our workers movement we publish historical evidence and testimony in the trial and expulsion of Logan.
Two volumes, £3 each
August 2007 (180 pages total)
Order from these cheque payable to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 8YW

The following article was written by Trotsky in 1933 calling for a break from the Third International to develop the formation of a new international. The fact that Hitler came to power in Germany without our enemy firing a shot and without action from any section of the international showed decisively that the Third International was dead as a force for revolution. Although written in very different circumstances than we face today, the tasks outlined for a small revolutionary organisation are apt for our tasks in the present political climate dominated by the impact of counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe:

The fact that two parties, the Social Democratic and the Communist, which arose half a century apart and which both proceeded from the theory of Marxism and the class interests of the proletariat, could have come to such a sad end — the one through base treachery, the other through bankruptcy — can engender pessimistic moods even among the advanced workers. “Where is the guarantee that a new revolutionary selection will not suffer the same fate?” Those who demand guarantees in advance should in general renounce revolutionary politics. The causes for the downfall of the Social Democratic and of official communism must be sought not in Marxist theory and not in the bad qualities of those people who applied it, but in the concrete conditions of the historical process. It is not a question of counterposing abstract principles, but rather of the struggle of living forces, with its inevitable ups and downs, with the degeneration of organizations, with the passing of entire generations into discard, and with the necessity which therefore arises of mobilizing fresh forces on a new historical stage.

No one has bothered to pave the road of revolutionary upsurge for the proletariat in advance. With inevitable halts and partial retreats it is necessary to move forward on a road circumscribed by countless obstacles and covered with the debris of the past. Those who are frightened by this had better step aside.

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

—Leon Trotsky, “It is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Army”, 15 July 1933, printed in Leon Trotsky, Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-53) — Continued on page 4
More than two years since the brutal killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by police on a crowded train, the state is not even pretending that the cops responsible for killing the Brazilian immigrant are investigated. A report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission published in November 2007 made 16 recommendations about "improving" police procedures, while a jury trial found the Metropolitan Police guilty of risking the "health and safety" of the public—and of Jean Charles de Menezes. The message from the state and the Labour government is clear: if you are deemed a "terrorist" suspect the police can shoot you dead and get away with it.

A year ago the Crown Prosecution Service ruled that no police officers were to be charged with murder or manslaughter, but the official line now is: "Metropolitan Police would have been charged with a violation of the Health and Safety at Work Act. Alex Pereira, Jean Charles’s cousin expressed the family's outrage saying: "They shot at someone at 11 times and said it was a mistake" adding "they knew they were assassinating someone" (quoted in Socialist Worker, 22 July 2006). Not surprising-ly, the police have only been recently about the "health and safety" of de Menezes, but about the capacity of the police to supposedly protect the public against terrorism suspects. As the Guardian’s Vikram Dodd explained: "The police are saying that 9/11 [the firearms unit] had taken so long, the public had been put at unnecessary risk. If De Menezes had been a suicide bomber, the delay meant he had been able to identify the threat on 5 August 2005 that "the rules of the game are changing".

Defend Aamer Anwar!

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

The cold-blooded killing of de Menezes took place in the wake of the criminal bombing of the London transport system on 7 July and the 21 July 2005 bombing scare, when public fear was at its height. The London transport bombings were horrific indiscriminate attacks on civilians. As we attacked the bombers, those who carried them out share the same mindset as the imperialists, equating the death of the innocent with the фауна of the police" (BBC News online, 26 October 2007).

The government and the police seized the chance to force the public to accept "shoot-to-kill" in Britain. This has long been the form of British capitalism’s "justice" meted out to Catholics in Northern Ireland. The Metropolitan Police’s policy of "shoot-to-kill" has been endorsed all along the line by London mayor Ken Livingstone, in the face of growing public outrage at the police lies and calls even from the Tories for the resignation of Met­ropolitan Police Chief Sir Ian Blair. Contrary to the myth that the police were simply responding to exceptional circumstances presented by the threat of "suicide bombers", the British capitalist authorities have never hesitated to deploy the full force of the state to crush dissent as well as class struggle. Innocent Irish people such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six were framed up and incarcerated for decades as part of the 1970s witch hunt against IRA ter­rorists", while an army of cops was sent to the coalfields to smash the 1984-85 miners strike.

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

For class unity of the multiethnic working class

In today’s climate, to be a Muslim is to be a suspect. Recently a 23-year-old Muslim woman working at Heathrow Airport, Samina Malik, who dubbed herself the “lyrical terrorist” and wrote poems in praise of jihad, was convicted under the government’s “anti-terrorism” legislation for “possessing records like­ly to be used for terrorism” (Guardian Unlimited, 8 November 2007). Malik possessed electronic copies of publicly available military manuals but had not attempted to carry out any racist attacks. In Scotland, Mohammed Atif Siddique was similarly convicted for a “thought crime” because a terrorist had something on his computer. Even more omin­ously, his lawyer Aamer Anwar, a prominent civil liberties lawyer, was similarly convicted for a "thought crime" (Release, 17 September 2007). We demand: Defend Aamer Anwar! Malik! Free Mohammed Atif Siddique! Down with the racist war on terror!

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

The working class has the potential power to overthrow the system of capital­ism and lead the multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will be steeling in the struggle against the reactionaries and political manifesta­tion of oppression, in the fight to overthrow capitalist rule. Jean Charles de Menezes and his murdered others will be avenged when the international pro­letariat sweeps away the machinery of the capitalist state, once and for all by victorious socialist revolution.
Respect...
(Continued from page 2)

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


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

We hailed Red Army in Afghanistan!

The SWP’s capitalism to Islam did not begin with Respect. In 1994 the Cliffites published a major article by Chris Harman titled The Internationalism which their previous record includes capitulating to the reactionary mullahs who came to power in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini in the late 1970s, running laudatory head­lines like “The Form—Religious, The Spirit—Revolution!” and bowing down with the counterfeit charismatic bourgeoisie over the Soviet army presence in Afghanistan.

When the Soviet army entered Afghanistan in December 1979 we said “Hail the Red Army!” and “Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!” The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy—for its own reasons—had sent in the army at the request of the nationalist government in Afghanistan! „Hail the Red Army!“

Socialist Party’s old Labour chauvinism

Like the SWP, Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party supported counterrevolution in the USSR and today adds its own contribu­tion to the “death of communism” cli­mate. The “socialism” of Taaffe’s old Labour Party is no more and never was. Militant Labour—never amounted to anything more than the Labour Party’s Caucus 4.0, which translated itself into “national­ising the commanding heights of the economy”. These days the Taaffeites consider Labour to be a “new mass workers party”. Yet they regard even a nominally “socialist programme” as dispensable in building such a “workers party”, as their article on the Respect split says: “Nonetheless the Socialist Party would welcome a new mass workers party, or [alter­native step towards it]. If membership didn’t initially adopt a fully­ rounded out socialist programme. Pro­viding a new mass party was not in struggle, had a democratic and federal approach, and stood clearly against cuts, privatisation and war, it would represent a step forward.”

—Socialist, 1 November 2007

The Socialist Party criticises Respect because it “has concentrated in the main on one section of society, the Muslim women.” But such a criticism is itself in­valid, but Respect has largely failed to reach out to other sections of the working class. A recent article could give the Socialist Party’s own approach as “doing everything possible to encour­age members to join the working class, e.g. this concern for “class unity” has to be taken with a grain of salt coming from the Socialist Party which gave backhanded support to the government’s racist “war on terror” by adopting the slogan “no to terrorism” (coupled with “no to war!”) at the height of the anti­Muslim frenzy that followed the criminal July 2005 London bombing. The Taaffeites apply the same “working class unity” rhetoric to Northern Ireland to disguise the fact that they view defence of the oppressed Catholics and Protestants as an “offensive”, and the Workers Vanguard with the Protestant working class. They refuse to call for British troops out and have hosted Loyalist killer Billy Hutchinson at meetings as a representa­tive of the Protestant working class. Such catering to the most backward level of consciousness among the working­class proletariat, to the degradation of chauvinistLabourite parliamentary reformism. Labour governments have presided over the bloody partition of India, imposed racist “vignity tests” for Asian women immigrating to Britain and sent British troops to Northern Ireland.

For a Leninist “tribune of the people”

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

With Respect on the rocks and the SWP again in crisis, these opportunists may well return their attention to recon­structing an old Labour­type party based on the trade union bureaucracy. The SWP press is cock­a­hoop that Mark Serwotka, leader of the civil servants union PCS, spoke at their Respect conference while refusing to address it as an official. Not an accident Serwotka also attended the con­ference of the Labour Representation Committee—the supposed “left” of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan from imperialism-backed mujahedin

New Labour. Serwotka’s record as a union leader leaves no doubt about what a rotten sell­out party he would build. The leadership of the PCS has thus involved a crass betrayal of its mem­bers, agreeing to a deal requiring new countervailing forces to be formed to replace the socialists’ “blank cheque.”

Socialist Party’s openroad to liberation. Women mobilised to fight tyranny of imperialists-backed mujahedin
workers Party (SWP) said in an online-only article dated 1 September 2007 that prison officers ‘should have the right to strike and to a union’, even while stating: ‘Many officers have a proven record of racism and violence’. But what do strikes by prison guards mean? Better still, what do prison guards do to refute the really quite incredible of the German police force being guards union at the recent Socialist Trotsky said in 1923 about the significance of the multiethnic working class, it is a scandal that this union includes immigration unionists throughout the labour movement! In a revolutionary situation Marxists certainly seek to split the army into its class components, winning the ‘workers (and peasants) in uniform’ to the side of the insurrectionary proletariat. But in sucking up to the Socialist Party the BT wilfully obscures the gulf between soldiers, who are used as cannon fodder in the capitalist rulers’ wars and the cops who hire themselves out to break strikes and to break the heads of minority youth. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described the enormous hatred of workers towards the cops in Russia during the February 1917 Revolution, saying: ‘To treat the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones, and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers’.” Later he added ‘The police are fierce, implacable, hated and fated. To win them over is out of the question’ (History of the Russian Revolution).

What kind of ‘socialist’ organisation would seek to split the army into its class components and should be paralysed by fear and a desire for self-preservation? The BT’s mischievous heroes’ or bosses’ uniform”.

Socialist Party supports strike by prison officers (left) on 29 August 2007. Socialist placards protests presence of leader of prison guards’ union” at ‘Socialism 2007’ (right).

The workers movement is perfectly legitimate for the workers’ movement is perfectly legitimate for the working people is merely a bourgeois cop, not a working to emphasise a situation that is sharper and clearer than in 1923 and he was quite categorical that the police are the class enemy, even when they come from a social-democratic background. This can be seen in the rotten sell-out deal the Socialists Party-dominated PCS Executive negotiated for its members, requiring new entries to the civil service to work five more years to qualify for pension.

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

London
10 December 2007

Dear comrades,
The following may be of some use to you in connection with the Socialist Party’s defence of the line that cops are workers in uniform”.

While we were protesting the platform given to the official of the prison guards union at the recent Socialist Party weekend, one of the SP’s older hacks shouted that we should read what Trotsky said in 1923 about the significance of the police force being full of Social Democrats. I have heard the same guy say this at least once before. The SP’s official line seems to have been well intended but it is a mistake to view their action as a blow against anti-trade union laws”. A mistake?
The Socialist Party’s obscene counting of the most irreconcilable enemies of the working people is merely the logic of its thoroughly reformist worldview and programme. The BT also seized the occasion to air its own version of the line that the cops are “workers in uniform”. In a BT fringe meeting titled: “Prison Officers: Courageous Heroes” or bosses in uniform”.

Workers Hammer

Socialist Party supports strike by prison officers (left) on 29 August 2007. Socialist placards protests presence of leader of prison guards’ union” at ‘Socialism 2007’ (right).

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

Workers Party (SWP) said in an online-only article dated 1 September 2007 that prison officers “should have the right to strike and to a union”, even while stating: “Many officers have a proven record of racism and violence”. But what do strikes by prison guards mean? Better still, what do prison guards do to refute the really quite incredible of the German police force being guards union at the recent Socialist Trotsky said in 1923 about the significance of the multiethnic working class, it is a scandal that this union includes immigration unionists throughout the labour movement! In a revolutionary situation Marxists certainly seek to split the army into its class components, winning the “workers (and peasants) in uniform” to the side of the insurrectionary proletariat. But in sucking up to the Socialist Party the BT wilfully obscures the gulf between soldiers, who are used as cannon fodder in the capitalist rulers’ wars and the cops who hire themselves out to break strikes and to break the heads of minority youth. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described the enormous hatred of workers towards the cops in Russia during the February 1917 Revolution, saying: “To treat the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones, and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers.” Later he added “The police are fierce, implacable, hated and fated. To win them over is out of the question” (History of the Russian Revolution).

Workers Party (SWP) said in an online-only article dated 1 September 2007 that prison officers “should have the right to strike and to a union”, even while stating: “Many officers have a proven record of racism and violence”. But what do strikes by prison guards mean? Better still, what do prison guards do to refute the really quite incredible of the German police force being guards union at the recent Socialist Trotsky said in 1923 about the significance of the multiethnic working class, it is a scandal that this union includes immigration unionists throughout the labour movement! In a revolutionary situation Marxists certainly seek to split the army into its class components, winning the “workers (and peasants) in uniform” to the side of the insurrectionary proletariat. But in sucking up to the Socialist Party the BT wilfully obscures the gulf between soldiers, who are used as cannon fodder in the capitalist rulers’ wars and the cops who hire themselves out to break strikes and to break the heads of minority youth. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described the enormous hatred of workers towards the cops in Russia during the February 1917 Revolution, saying: “To treat the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones, and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers.” Later he added “The police are fierce, implacable, hated and fated. To win them over is out of the question” (History of the Russian Revolution).
Spartacist League forum

90 years after the Bolshevik October

“We are the party of the Russian Revolution”

We publish below an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Edith Goldberg at a Spartacist League forum at the University of London Union on 3 November 2007. The forum was held in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. In her talk, comrade Goldberg pointed out that while various fake social- ist groups are paying hypocritical lip service to the anniversary of the Revolution, they sided at every turn with the imperialist bourgeoisie’s campaign to overturn the world’s first workers state and restore capitalist exploitation to the land of October. In contrast, the International Communist League (ICL) fought to the limits to restore capitalist exploitation to the land of October. Today it is the ICL which uniquely upholds the programme of October to rid humanity of capitalist barbarism. As American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon explained in a 13 October 1935 speech on the “Russian question”: “We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood.”

We are here to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution, which was an enormous step forward in human history. It profoundly shaped the history of the world in the 20th century. We of the ICL look to the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik party as a model for the kind of party we seek to build and for our overriding goal of new internationalism’s military intervention to crush the Bolshevik Revolution. Such was its immense appeal to the working masses of the world, even the parliamentary British Labour Party was compelled to adopt “Clause IV” in 1918. This supposed commitment to “common ownership” was a conscious ploy to dupe revolutionary-minded workers into believing that “socialism” could be achieved through parliament, by electing a Labour government committed to nationalising industry while leaving the capitalist state machinery intact. The Labour Party’s role in betraying the working class was clearly seen during the revolutionary upsurge that followed the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of World War I, during which British capitalism was profoundly shaken. In 1920, in opposition to British imperialism’s military intervention to crush the Soviet workers’ state, over 350 councils of action sprang up all over the country and dual power was developing. The treacherous Labour leaders placed themselves at the head of these councils to head off the possibility of revolution and save the capitalist order.

For revolutionaries in Britain, one of the most crucial lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution is understanding that a fundamental dividing line separates Leninism from Labourite reformism. The Labour Party was what Lenin termed a bourgeois workers party, meaning it had a mass working-class base but a pro-capitalist leadership and programme. Politically, it was the party of the wretched trade union bureaucracy. For a century the strategic objective of building a revolutionary party in this country has been the Labour Party’s social-democratic reformism, based on peddling illusions in the “democratic” credentials of British imperialism and its vaunted parliamentary system.

The Bolshevik party was unique among the socialist organisations of its time. In the period during which it was forged by Lenin into an instrument for revolution, two key questions of programme divided revolutionaries from reformists: the inter-imperialist war of 1914-18 and the Bolshevik Revolution, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the outbreak of WWI on 4 August 1914, the German Social Democracy (like other parties in the Second International) passed definitively into the camp of social chauvinism by supporting their “own” bourgeoisie in war. The British trade union bureaucracy and Labour leaders too were firmly in the camp of British imperialism on the war. Prominent among them was Arthur Henderson who is said to have led the cheering in the British parliament when Irish revolutionary James Connolly was executed for leading the 1916 Easter Rising.

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

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

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

Russia, 1917: Soldiers declare support for Bolsheviks on eve of October Revolution.
Petrougrad demonstration, June 1917, raises Bolshevik slogans: "Down with counterrevolution! Down with the ten capitalist ministers! All power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants' Deputies!"
Revolution.
(Continued from page 7)

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

Two classes, three stages

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

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

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

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

Bolsheviks lead working class to power

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

Key to the toppling of the tsar was the mass disaffection of the peasant base of the tsarist army. Likewise, for the working class to take power, a class split in the army was necessary. The mechanism for this was the Military Revolutionary Committee established by the Petrograd Soviet in October with Trotsky as its principal political leader. Through it, in what one might call a "cold insurrection", the Bolshevik-led soviet took control of the armed bodies of men out of the hands of the Provisional Government. By 13 October, the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet voted to transfer military authority from headquarters to the Military Revolutionary Committee. On 24 October, the head of the government, Kerensky, tried to shut down the Bolshevik newspapers. This provided the spark for the seizure of power. The Military Revolutionary Committee sent in a detachment to reopen the newspapers which also seized government institutions and communication centres. Lenin was still concerned that events were proceeding too slowly and went in disguise to the Bolshevik headquarters at Smolny, where the Petrograd Soviet was located. As the Second All Russia Congress of the Soviets opened on the morning of 25th October, the gunship Aurora was still firing on the Winter Palace. The uprising and seizure of power was openly proclaimed by the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Lenin opened his speech at the Congress with the famous sentence: "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." The peace decrees promised an end to secret diplomacy and proposed to the governments and peoples of the warring countries immediate negotiations to secure a democratic peace without annexations and without indemnities. The land decree, borrowed in its essentials from the agrarian programme of the Left SRs, abolished private property in land and provided for the transfer of all private and church estates to land committees and soviets of peasants' deputies for distribution to the peasantry according to need. A new revolutionary government of People's Commissars was appointed, which over the next period proceeded to nationalise the banks, restart industry and lay the foundations of the new soviet state.

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

Rise of Stalinism

Russia was a very backward country in which the vast majority of the population were peasants. No one in the Bolshevik party thought for a minute that you could build socialism in Russia at this time, since Marxists understand that a socialist society is only possible once the majority of the world market is torn from imperialist domination through victorious workers' revolutions in the imperialist centres. The Bolsheviks did however firmly believe that the working class should take power in this backward country and use this victory to inspire the proletarians of the imperialist centres to do likewise. The Bolshevik Revolution inspired many revolutionary struggles throughout the world. However the tide began to ebb, especially in the wake of the failure of the German revolution of 1919. This defeat was tremendously demoralising for the workers and hungry proletariat in Russia, and left the fledgling workers state in Russia without access to desperately needed industrial goods. After seven years of imperialist aggression, first in the

TRIUMPH OF PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA INSPIRED MASSIVE WAVE OF WORKERS STRUGGLES INTERNATIONALLY, INCLUDING 1919 CYCLE GENERAL STRIKE.

WORKERS HAMMER
interimperialist war and then through the wars of intervention and civil war, the economy was in tatters. Russia was left with a bankrupt, isolated, surrounded by hostile capitalist powers. Under these conditions, a conservative Social Democratic party and state apparatus coalesced around Stalin and came to the fore, intending to preserve this relatively improved status amid extreme poverty, scarcity and imperialist hostility. The defeat of the Social Democratic Party by these forces at the rigged 13th Party Conference in January 1924 marked the quelling of the Right Opposition and its liquidation by power by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Thus began the process of degeneration of the Soviet Union. It was a political counterrevolution not only of a camp, but of a whole system, because the nascent bureaucracy hijacked the governmental apparatus but did not overturn the socialised property forms created by October. Despite the triumph of the bureaucratic caste and the consequent degeneration of the Soviet workers state, the central gains of the revolution—embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy—remained. The gains were, for example, in the material position of women. That is why we, standing on the heritage of Trotsky’s Left Opposition, stood for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and for an intransigent fight against all threats of capitalist counterrevolution, internal or external. At the same time we understood that the bureaucratic caste at the top was a mortal threat to the continued existence of the workers state. We called for a proletarian political revolution in the Soviet Union to oust the bureaucracy, to restore Soviet workers democracy and to pursue the fight for the social revolution necessary to build socialism. The Trotskyist movement had long predicted that counterrevolution in Soviet Russia would enormously strengthen the forces of capitalist reaction on a global scale. For example, in 1929, a founding document of the International Left Opposition in the US foregrounded: “The collapse of the Russian revolution as the dictatorship of the proletariat would signify the retardation for decades of the revolutionary movement in Europe and America and the uprisings of the colonial peoples; the intermediate step between today and the victory of the Russian October. A counterrevolution could only be followed by an unqualified reign of reaction throughout the world and would entail a restoration of world imperialism with no precedent in the last two or three decades.”


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

Defending the Soviet Union in the Cold War

The Stalinist bureaucracy was an unstable caste resting parasitically on the socialist foundations of the workers state, which it was at times compelled to defend. This contradictory character was a factor in the first years of the Brezhnev regime, with the December 1979 Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan against a CIA-backed insurgency sponsored by the anti-Islamic reactionaries. From the point of view of the working class, the intervention was against all Afghan nationalism and one of the few non-supportive acts of the Soviet Stalinists. Regardless of their intentions, the Red Army presence was an act of defence of and volunteered to raise a brigade to help defend the Afghan city of Jalalabad against the CIA’s mujahedin. The Afghan government turned down this offer, but we raised thousands of dollars in our public work to support the defence of that city.

Incipient political revolution in East Germany

Counterrevolution in the USSR was far from inevitable, as was shown by the incipient proletariat political revolution that developed in the East German deformed workers state when the Berlin Wall came down in late 1989. Here the ICL uniquely intervened, mobilising all our resources to seize the opportunity to implement the Trotskyist programme. Again, the fake-Trotskyists lined up with the forces of counterrevolution, in particular the West German Social democratic pro-camp of bourgeois “democracy.” The Committee for a Workers International (CWI), to which the Socialist Party is affiliated for the West German SPD to go on the offensive; we rightly insisted that the SPD was the Trojan horse for counterrevolution. We intervened actively with our perspective for a red Germany of workers councils, ie for revolutionary reunification of Germany. Ours was a direct challenge for power and the only challenge to the sellout of the DDR to West German imperialism by the Moscow and East Berlin Stalinists. Although shaped by the disproportional forces, there was in fact a closest between the ICL programme of political revolution and the Stalinist programme of capitulation and capitulation of which the West German government and one of the few non-supportable acts of the Soviet Stalinists. Regardless of their intentions, the Red Army presence was an act of defence of the borders of the Soviet Union against the largest ever CIA covert operation and it posed the possibility of extending the gains of October to the benighted peoples of Afghanistan. We said: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” The intervention against the fake-Trotskyists drew a howl of rage and horror from the Labourite left, including from so-called Trotskyist groups at the time. The bureaucracy’s 1988-89 withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan under Mikhail Gorbachev, appeasing imperialism at the very borders of the USSR, was a critical betrayal, and a tip-off that the Trotskyists would soon renounce any intention of defending the Soviet Union itself against imperialism. We said better to fight to defend the interests of Afghanistan as a challenge for power and the liberal Stalinists to renounce any intention of defending the Soviet Union in Jalalabad than within the borders of the Soviet Union itself. We put our money where our mouth is.

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

Spartacist pamphlet in Chinese

China’s “Market Reforms”: A Trotskyist Analysis

Includes:

- The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women
- £0.70 (28 pages)

Order from make cheques payable to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 92886, London E19 1SW

WINTER 2007-2008

9
Mumia... (Continued from page 12)

mobilising the social power of the working class. We do not deceive those who would fight on Mumia’s behalf by peddling lies that if we give in to the capitalist courts and political parties will bring him justice. Mumia is the vic­tim of their injustices. Now is the time to act!

And now his fight is at a critical jun­cture, as he and his supporters await a decision by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals on whether to grant him a new trial or to sustain the death sentence or keep him in prison for life, or alternately to grant him a new trial or further court hearings.

Over 800 individuals and organisa­tions, including unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers, have signed a PDC statement demanding Mumia’s freedom and the abolition of the racist death penalty. Titled “We Demand the Immediate Freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an Innocent Man”, the statement cites the confession of Mumia’s imprisonment “constitutes a real warning to all those who will one day stand up to take on the oppressors of minorities and more widely the working class”.

While supporting all possible legal proceedings for Mumia’s behalf, we fight against relying on the legal system that has shown it will stop at nothing to kill Mumia or consign him to a life on death row. Mumia’s imprisonment “is a microcosm of capi­talism’s class rule and the black oppres­sion that is intrinsic to it. In the US, the barbaric death penalty is the legacy of chattel slavery, the lynche rope made legal. The road to black freedom lies in the struggle for revolutionary integra­tionism—the full integration of black people into an egalitarian, socialist America. The fight for black freedom is the strategic question of the American proletariat revolution. There can be no socialist revolution in the US unless the working class takes up the fight for black freedom as the first step towards every aspect of racial repression and discrimina­tion—and there can be no liberation of black people as long as the capitalist system exists”.

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

An international fight

When the Spartacist League/US and PDC first took up Mumia’s defence more than 20 years ago Mumia became a focus of rights organisations and anti-death pen­alty gatherings, to the campuses and to left national and international organisations. Aiming to make Mumia’s case known to the public, we fought to get his columns published in the black press and to publicise his case in liberal journals such as the Nation and the Village Voice. The PDC also initiated united-front rallies in an effort to mobilise broad social forces, reaching out as well to prominent personalities and political figures. Many saw in Mumia’s fight for freedom and justice a reflection of their own struggles against racism and reaction—from aboriginal people in Australia and youth of North African ori­gin in France to black people throughout North America. By the autumn of 1990, statements of support for Mumia encompassed unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers.

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

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

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

On 12 August, five days after Mumia won a stay of execution, contingents of workers marched with union reps alongside the PDC at a protest in Mumia in Philadelphia imitated by the National Party’s National People’s Campaign.

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

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

Mumia is innocent—free him now!

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

---

Join the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defence!

Make a contribution today, payable to Partisan Defence Committee. Write “Jamal legal defence” on the back of the cheque and it will be credited. Let your contributions be transmitted to Mumia’s legal defence team via Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal in New York.

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


Order the PDC pamphlet The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia is Innocent detailing the political basis of the struggle to free Mumia and the evidence against Mumia is a microcosm of western capitalism’s barbaric death penalty. It is available for 70p. Get the PDC badge: “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Death Penalty!” £1 each. Order the DVD made by the PDC, From Death Row. This is Mumia Abu-Jamal: £2 each. Order, from: make cheques payable to Partisan Defence Committee. BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XQ.

Contact the Partisan Defence Committee: partisandeference@yahoo.co.uk • Telephone: 020 7281 5504 • www.partisandeference.org
leading the struggle to free anarchist immigrant workers Sacco and Vanzetti in the late 1920s. Both were unjustly convicted and showed flagrant illusions in the capitalist courts and politicians sworn by the reformist Socialists and labour tops of the day (see “Lessons of the Fight to Free Sacco and Vanzetti”, Workers Vanguard nos 897 and 898, 31 August and 14 September 2007). This is no less important today as we seek to revitalise mass political struggle.

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

The central demands of the SF protest — to stop the execution of Mumia and for a new trial — were class issues. The ILWU’s “new trial” is no need for a new fast-track legal process in the appeals court. All the parties demanding Mumia’s freedom. The betrayals by the reformists who grated crime scene photos showing that much of the evidence of Faulkner’s killing was doctored by police in order to predicate Mumia’s innocence, and Schif­fman & Co have used this and all other evidence of Mumia’s innocence not to argue for his immediate freedom but all press for a new trial. And in throwing mud at the Beverly confession, they undermine the fact of Mumia’s innocence and the depth of his frame-up. Beverly’s testimony is that he and another man were hired to kill Faulkner, who became a problem for the mob and corrupt cops by interfering with the gut and payoffs involved in illegal gambling, drugs and prostitution. Lin­dorff, Schif­mann et al reject this powerful evidence of innocence because it shows that Mumia was the vic­ tim not of a rogue cop, bad prosecutor or racist judge but of an entire “justice” system upholding the interests of the racist capitalist rulers.

Unchain labour’s power!

A PDC-initiated rally in Harlem in October 2006, Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal ques­tioned the PDC’s labour centrality, pointing to the participation of poor and un­employed people in protests for Mumia: “They stood beside the work­ers. I’m saying we must give credit to all those people who worked to free Mumia.” Rachel Wolkenstein replied: “We must number on a PDC demonstra­tion show our desire to stand for some­thing... But that is not the same thing as being able to stop this system, shut it down! These are very different things. And that is why we talk about the power of the working class. It is not a dismissal of the good will, the heart, the needs and the oppression that otherwise exists in society. It is not a statement that those people who are unemployed are not part of the struggle. But that is the duty of the labour movement: to organise the unemployed, to do the hard jobs for the unemployed, to unionise people across the board.”

If labour is to mobilise its power on Mumia’s behalf, it must do so — inde­pendently of the capitalist politicians, racist cops and courts. Prior to the rally, the 11,000-strong Local 1199 added its name to the PDC statement. However, the leadership of this union and others were busy at the time work­ing on a campaign to back the “Reform­ist” capitalist politicians in the midterm Congressional elections. Unfortunately, they may well “do better, if they were here today as a first step fighting for Mumia’s freedom.” Politicians said they should have been “prepared to bring out their membership in defending the labour militancy that is going on out on strike” and should “commit themselves along with every other union to stop Mumia’s execution and stop this city until Mumia is free!”

During this campaign, we have repeatedly had to fight against the notion that the capitalist cops belong in the labour movement. At the Berlin rally, Gert Julius of the Tempelhof/Gesundheitsamt local of the DGB union federation said that one “shouldn’t use the blanket label of Bällen [cops] for the police” and that “trade unions are for everyone”. Steffen Singer of the Spartakist Workers Party, German sec­tion of the International Communist League, responded: “As Marxists, we understand that being — that what you do here in this city on October 2006 is a test of the task of the police is indeed to carry out, with arms, the laws of the bourgeois capitalist sys­tem.”

As the hour of decision in Mumia’s federal appeal approaches, trade union­ists and all supporters of his fight for freedom must prepare for action. The PDC has called for emergency protests following a negative decision, as have other organisations, and a national demonstration has been called for three weeks later. Union activists: Bring out your full organisation to support this campaign for Mumia’s execution and brutalised Mumia’s supporters. Can­ not be classified by the cops if they are infested with the cops, the paid guardians of the racist capitalist sys­tem!}

...珏

Subscription drive success!
Quota in points: 200 Total points sold: 229
Welcome to our new readers!

Workers hammer
Marxist newpaper of the spartacist league

- 1-year subscription to Workers hammer: £3.00 (Overseas subscriptions: Airmail £7.00; Europe outside Britain and Ireland £5.00)
- 1-year sub to Workers hammer plus 22 issues of workers Vanguard, Marxists fortnightly of the spartacist league/US for £10.00.

All subscriptions include Socialist, organ of the International Communist League (Fourth International). All subscriptions to Workers Vanguard include Black History and the Class Struggle.

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
Postcode: ____________________________
E-mail: ____________________________
Phone: ____________________________

Make cheques payable to: spartacist publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 SWY

Revelation... (continued from page 9)

Revolution...

WINTER 2007-2008

11
In early December the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal heated up, with protest in the US against a new book, *Murdered by Mumia*, by the widow of political prisoner Daniel Faulkner. Welcome to a racist, pro-death penalty media frenzy, the book nucleus police and prosecution lies used to falsely convict Mumia for Faulkner’s murder. With a decision in his case by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals due at any time, the book makes its purpose clear by centering on the call to execute this innocent man.

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

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

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

In Britain, reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party have not said a word about Mumia’s case for several years. The PDC and Socialist League/ Britain struggle against the politics of liberals who have taken up Mumia’s cause centering their efforts not on mobilising mass protest but on the demand for a new trial, fomenting illusions in the “justice” of the racist rulers’ courts. At the 17 May 2007 protest for Mumia at the US Embassy in London, Niki Adams of Legal Action for Women promoted the “new trial” demand because it “brings in people that may not be convinced about Mumia’s innocence but can see the trial was deeply unjust”. A Spartacist League speaker responded that we support Mumia’s use of every possible legal proceeding but that we oppose reliance on the capitalist state which is determined to kill him. For many trade union and other signatories of the PDC’s statement calling for Mumia’s freedom and proclaiming that he is an innocent man, the issue is straightforward. In April 2007 the Scottish Trades Union Congress passed a motion declaring: “That this Congress believes that Mumia Abu-Jamal should be freed immediately from prison, as he is innocent, and the inherently racist death penalty should be abolished.”

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

We print below an adapted and abridged version of an article from the Spartacist League/US newspaper *Workers Vanguard* (no 902, 9 November 2007) explaining our class-struggle defence strategy in the campaign and the trade union support for Mumia internationally.

***

The fight to free death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is a defining cause for all opponents of the racist American “justice” system. But this struggle also bears enormous consequences for all who are in the capitalist rulers’ cross-hairs. Mumia was sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit, the December 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Police, prosecutors and judges conspired to railroad Mumia—a former Black Panther, a supporter of the MOVE organisation and a renowned journalist—employing frame-up methods used to victimise countless union activists, black militants and leftists over the years. In seeking to silence this powerful “voice of the voiceless”, they aim to intimidate any who would struggle on behalf of workers, black people and the poor.

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

In this campaign, we have focused particularly on bringing Mumia’s case to the trade unions. Our policy is that of class-struggle defence, based on the Marxist understanding that the capitalist society is fundamentally divided between two classes—the capitalists who own the means of production and the workers whose labour they exploit. The legal lynches must be answered by continued on page 10

**Prepare now for emergency protest!**

On 17 May 2007, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia heard oral arguments in Mumia’s case and there could be a decision at any time. If the Court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia’s appeals for a new trial or hearing, the Partisan Defence Committee calls for protest the day after a decision.

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

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

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

---

**Workers Hammer**

For class-struggle defence to free Mumia Abu-Jamal! 
International PDC campaign