Perestroika Fuels Economic Chaos and Nationalist Upheaval

Soviet Elections: A Vote for What?

The recent elections to the Congress of People's Deputies have sent shock waves through the Soviet Union and around the world. Prominent Communist officials were defeated, even some who ran unopposed. "Leningrad boss comes last in a one-horse race," quipped one London newspaper. The commander of Soviet forces in East Germany lost to a colonel who commanded Soviet-supplied troops into Georgia trying to quell a territorial conflict between Georgians and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh--of around 100,000 inhabitants. Just a few days ago, Moscow sent troops into Georgia trying to quell a territorial conflict between Georgians and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh--of around 100,000 inhabitants. Just a few days ago, Moscow sent troops into Georgia trying to quell a territorial conflict between Georgians and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh--of around 100,000 inhabitants. 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Soviet Power vs. Bourgeois Parliamantism

The Western press has hailed the recent vote in the USSR as the ‘Freest Election Since 17 Revolution’ (New York Times). This is only in part true. There are at least two very important instances in which the working people themselves governed, through freely elected soviets, which under Bolshevik leadership took power in the 1917 October Revolution. In his classic polemic against the social democrat Karl Kautsky, Lenin exposed the illusory ‘democracy’ of even the most democratic capitalist parliamantary government and counterposed the system of soviet power. Under Stalin the ‘soviet form of organisation’ was used to suppress social democracy and gag the banks by thousands of obstacles.

The Soviet form of organisation automatically helps to unite all the working and exploited people around their vanguard, the proletariat. The old bourgeois apparatus—the bureaucracy, the privileges of wealth, of bourgeois education, of social connections, etc. (these real privileges are the more varied the more highly bourgeois democracy is developed)—all this disappears under the Soviet form of organisation. Freedom of the press ceases to be hypocrisy, because the printing-plants and stocks of paper are taken away from the bourgeoisie. The same thing applies to the best buildings, the palaces, the mansions and manor-houses. Soviet power took thousands upon thousands of these best buildings from the exploiters at one stroke, and in this way made the right of assembly—without which democracy is a fraud—a million times more democratic for the people.

—V.I. Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (1918)

Comrades:
I got news of the Fraser Memorial Meeting too late to send a message. Since then I have read all the appracations of Dick printed in Workers Vanguard. I see the Dick Fraser I knew in them but perhaps I can add a little to what has been said. I have recollections, of course, of the attempting to recruit people from his approach to me and from watching him working on others. He would give the other person the freedom that he himself was open to per­suasion in the face of a better argument than his own. Anyway, I was persuaded and joined and became the youth mas­cot of the group Dick had assemled. All of them were older than Dick except for the various periodicals of Oehlerite inclinations, like me. The other members were people

David Herreshoff: As I Remember Dick Fraser

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I was already a sympathizer of the Tendecy (as Dick always called the Trotskyists in those days) when I went to work for him. Dick and I asked him to join. I was uncertain whether the Trotskyists were far enough left for me. We had they entered the Second International, the socialist­patriots of 1914? So Dick had to argue me out of sympathy for Hugo Oehler's attack on the so-called French Turn. He was a good persuader; he knew how to listen and to consider the opinions of somebody he was trying to convince. I think I learned something about how to recruit people from his approach to me and from watching him working on others. He would give the other person the freedom that he himself was open to per­suasion in the face of a better argument than his own. Anyway, I was persuaded and joined and became the youth mas­cot of the group Dick had assemled. All of them were older than Dick except for the various periodicals of Oehlerite inclinations, like me. The other members were people

ple Dick had found in the CP milieu or they were old Wobbles.

I recall an old couple—old to me then, younng to Dick—Marge and Tony Kerrigan, a teen­

cot of the group Dick had assembled. Dick as an ally and we wound up at

WORKERS VANGUARD

3 Million Members of the CP Mojave Desert, a typical Wobbly, a veteran of the class war, the revolution, and the wobblies. Dick has long been one of the great hopes of the CP. He would give the other person the

David Herreshoff

1913-1988

Question. It was from him that I first heard about the Garvey movement and the idea of a 49th State. His musician­ship has been mentioned by others. I can add a little what has been said about the CP WPA Orchestra in which Dick was in charge. He had to argue me out of sympathy for the asking from people like Axel and New Deal. That summer he took us through Trotsky's His­

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"Hitler’s Birthday” in Hayward—A Planned Provocation

For Anti-Fascist Unity in Action

OAKLAND, April 11—David Duke’s “Populist Party” says it’s holding a recruiting meeting in the South Bay. Area on Hitler’s birthday. The fascist meeting is scheduled for the Hayward Public Library on April 20, and it looks like a carefully planned provocation for a showdown. Internationally, Nazi, violent skinhead psychos and other racists are gearing up to “celebrate” genocide on the 100th anniversary of Hitler’s birth. This year, the 20th is also the first day of the Jewish holiday of Passover, and the Hitlerites will be claiming that the Holocaust never happened. Cloaking themselves in rhetoric of “traditional American values” (while singing the Nazis’ “Horst Wessel Song”) the “Populists” will be riling against immigrants, spewing race-bate against black people, recruiting for their electoral front for lynch mob terror.

AS WE GO TO PRESS: Observers at the April 11 Hayward city council meeting report that the Populist Party may have changed its plans to meet at the public library and instead meet “privately.” This allegedly followed a proposal from the mayor that the fascists post several thousand dollars bond for potential damages.

Alameda County Populist Party chairman Bill Hubbell claims he didn’t know that April 20th was Hitler’s day when he scheduled the meeting. If you believe that, maybe you believe in the tooth fairy too. Populist Party candidate Willis Carto wrote that “Hitler’s defeat was the defeat of Europe. And of America.” Hubbell claims they’re not white-supremacists. But in the ’88 presidential elections, the Populist Party candidate was David Duke, the former KKK “Imperial Wizard” who now appears in three-piece suits instead of white sheers. Grotesquely, these fascists have chosen to meet in a library—Hitler propagandist Goebbels proclaimed the Nazis’ “new era” in 1933 amid the flames of burning books.

What’s needed in Hayward is a mass, militant, united-front anti-fascist mobilization, based on the power of the integrated labor movement and minorities. Fleeing the flames of racial hatred.

The key is anti-fascist unity in action. Yet the “John Brown Anti-Klan Committee” is wrecking this prospect of united anti-fascist action by looking for a bloc…with the police! A leaflet the fascists are distributing tells people to come to the Hayward Public Library… and Mayor Alex Giuliani (who was a local policeman for 20 years) to “demand this meeting be stopped.” Stopped by whom? It is the Hayward cops, backed up by the Alameda County Sheriff’s Department, who will be called upon to execute any order to “ban” the fascists from the library.

What the city and the cops should be encouraged to do is keep out of the way of the anti-fascists exercising their democratic protest rights. A powerful demonstration of unionists, minorities, blacks, would drive home the point that fascists’ recruiting drive is bitterly opposed and resented by thousands. A protest based on the principle of the united front—everyone has the right to bring up their own leaflets, placards, a chance to speak from the platform. But if, then the librarians could come out, and join the protest rather than being asked to carry out a fascist function as a purported expression of anti-fascist sentiment!

The question of appeasing to the state to prevent fascist meetings in public buildings is not new. In California, the “Brown Committee” is splitting in 1945 when Gerald L. K. Smith, leader of the fascist Silver Shirts, was on tour, speaking at high schools from Los Angeles to Oakland. There was a dispute among radicals at this time over pressuring the schools to refuse the fascists permission to hold meetings in the schools to refuse the fascists permission to hold meetings.

It’s about time that we demand to know who the Black Panthers are as well as the Black Liberation Organization. And on April 20, 1980, the Hayward Library director says there were hundreds of people at the library to read the Fascist literature.

The program of labor-liberal mobilization stopped Nazis from recruiting meeting in the South Bay. Here lies the power to stop the fascists through a united mobilization of all opponents of racist terror.

The growth of racist and minority populations in southern Alameda County is a recent phenomenon. Blacks first came to the Bay Area in large numbers during World War II when the labor shortage opened jobs in the shipyards to women and blacks. Fleeing the Klan-ridden, non-union South, blacks found unionized jobs, settling mainly in Alameda and northern Alameda County (Berkeley and Oakland). Crossing 110th Street from Oakland, blacks still feel like going back across the Mason-Dixon line. Black workers who tried to move into San Leandro in the ’70s are continuing on page 7
Savannah ILA Fights Scab Operator

ATLANTA—Over 1,000 angry members of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) and other unionists chanting “ILA, all the way!” marched through the streets of Savannah, Georgia on March 29. It was the largest union demonstration in the history of this port city. Black and white workers and their families turned out after a longshoreman picketing a non-union stevedoring operation was run over by a tractor-trailer driver taking scab cargo out of the port. The ILA march on city hall was joined by Boilermakers, Paperworkers, seamen, building tradesmen and Machinists striking against Eastern Airlines.

The scab outfit, Carolina Atlantic Transportation Services (CATS), is trying to extend its union-busting multi-employer agreement to the entire South Carolina-to-Puerto Rico barge service into Savannah. It is the first time ever that a non-union outfit has tried to muscle into the docks run by the state of Georgia—and longshoremen are determined to shut CATS down. On March 24 in Wilmington, 40 ILA members picketing CATS tangled with sheriff’s deputies, police, narcotics agents and North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation agents.

Three days later in Savannah, when word spread of the arrival of the first scab barge, the Tide Mar, 200 longshoremen turned out at the port’s Ocean Terminal at 1 a.m. Later that morning, after the scab barge and towboat were escorted into port by the Coast Guard, the H-wheeler with scab cargo accelerated out of the gate and ran down Bernard Cook, a second-generation member of ILA Local 1414. Cook was knocked unconscious and taken to the hospital, heavily bruised. The picket line erupted as the explosion and the worker was chased and caught 63 miles away in South Carolina by Local 1414 business manager Bob Easton.

The introduction of non-union stevedores by the Georgia Port Authority is an open challenge to the ILA and all unions in this “right to work” state. But it is not just a localized attack: in Houston, Baltimore and Jacksonville, Florida, the ILA is under attack from scab stevedoring operations and port authorities demanding giveaways on key work rules. And New York ILA tugboat men have hung out to dry in a 14-month-old strike against a 40-60 percent wage cut. The fight in Savannah comes as the negotiations with the bosses begin on the ILA contract which expires this fall. In 1986, the longshore strike was quickly squelched by the ILA tops, who had earlier imposed a union-busting two-tier wage scale on the South Atlantic and Gulf ports. During the strike, ILA organizers told the picket line to PATCO to Hormel—Too Much, Let’s Win This One!—was snapped up by hundreds of thousands of unionists and blacks who hoped the strike would crack Reagan reaction.

New York Transit: Death on the Tracks

We reprint below a leaflet published in the March 4 issue of the Worker, reprographic Fighting TWU, a class-struggle opposition in Transport Workers Union Local 100.

Two of our union brothers were killed last week by a system that substitutes workers’ blood for capital investment. Stewart Melsinker had one year left to make his pension. David Davis had a year and a half in the TA [Transit Authority] and made telephone maintainers from signal helper a month ago—he hoped he could get away from the third rail. They died on the curved tracks at Astor Place station. The train that struck and hurled their bodies had been in service more than 25 years. Melsinker and Davis had followed procedures and called Brooklyn Bridge, but the TA can’t be bothered to inform train operators that there are men on the tracks. The motorman who threw his train into emergency as soon as he saw Melsinker and Davis was taken to the hospital in a state of shock, but all the TA cared about was ordering this union brother to pins in the cup to test for drugs and a scapegoat.

The TA spends millions on technology and beakies to spy on us, but they won’t spend a dime on saving workers’ lives! Melsinker and Davis are victims of a deliberate policy. It could have been any one of us!

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Meanwhile token booth clerks are burned alive and blamed by management for not using “automatic” fire extinguishers that don’t work. Rip out the turnstiles! Turn the token booths into information booths—that’ll make them “fireproof.”

All this takes place in the name of “productivity” and there’s a vicious racist component to it too. The more blacks, Hispanics and foreign-born workers replace retiring white workers, the more booby traps the TA sets and the lower wages go. New hires are routinely told to walk the tracks their first day in service and they’re lucky if they ever make it to flagging school. Training has gone to hell because as far as the capitalists are concerned, transit workers are expendable. Before setting foot on the job, every worker should have union-run training—at full pay!

Workers must have the power to say what’s safe and to stop work when it isn’t—our lives depend on it. But the Local 100 leadership bows to the no-strike Taylor Law and it is killing us. Sonny Hall says: “Do It and Grieve it continued on page 15

WORKERS VANGUARD
Afghanistan and the Left

As the last Soviet troops pulled out of Afghanistan in mid-February, at the American Club in Peshawar, Pakistan, the "capital" of the CIA's holy war­riors, there were celebrations featuring a toothless dancing bear and a betting pool on when Kabul would fall. But after six weeks of brutal siege by Afghan reactionaries together with Pakistani and Saudi forces, the heroic defenders of Jalalabad continue to hold fast. The London Guardian (10 April) quoted one mujaheddin spokesman describing the attack as a "disaster," while another "deeply fears that the victory which seemed imminent just a few weeks ago is dissolving in the chaos of Jalalabad.

As we have said, the battle for Afghanistan is a life-or-death struggle: "Country or coffin!" is the war cry of the government faction, the PDPA. On February 7, the Partisan Defense Committee wrote to representatives of the Afghan government with an "urgent offer to organize an international bri­gate to fight to the death" in defense of the captioned social progress, which would be drowned in blood by a mullah vic­tory. (See WP No. 471, 17 February.) And on April 8, the PDC issued a call on "all defenders of women's rights, all par­tisans of social progress to materially aid the victims of Washington's bloody crusade" (see front page).

When Soviet troops went into Af­ghanistan, the battle lines were sharply drawn. On one side stood the Soviet Union and the beligerent radical­nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime. They faced an imperialist-backed onslaught by counterrevolutionary landlords, mullahs and fundamentalist fanatics fighting for serfdom, the veil, bride price, enslavement of women and mass illiteracy. The Red Army intervention opened the possibility of social libera­tion in this deep backward country, as well as defending the Soviet degener­ated workers state against imperialist encroachment on its southern flank.

The "Russian question" was posed pointblank. Swept away by the winds of Cold War, most of the left—including those who had previously enthused over the "April Revolution" in 1978—openly echoed Carter/Reagan's ultimatum that the Soviets get out. But the true Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Af­ghanistan!" and called for extending the social gains of the October Revolution. We warned that if the Kremlin ordered a withdrawal, it would be a betrayal not only of the Afghan peoples but of defense of the Soviet Union. Today, we bitterly condemn Gorbachev's pullout and we continue to call for military victory to the Kabul regime in its war against the U.S.-backed mujaheddin cutthroats.

Today, anti-Soviet "socialists" like Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party, whose American cothinkers are the International Socialist Organiza­tion, salivate in anticipation: "The Mojahedin victory will encourage the opponents of Russian rule everywhere in the USSR and Eastern Europe" (Socialist Worker, 4 February). As al­ways, this "third camp" sounds a hell of a lot like a communiqué from the CIA. In crowning over "Russia's Vietnam," Cliff tries to hide the fact that the U.S. was driven out of Indochina by a virgo­nius social revolution, while Gorbachev abandons Afghanistan in order to placate U.S. imperialism. But what does Cliff care, since he foresees an Islamic state in Afghanistan that "would be both staunchly anti-imperialist and somewhere to the right of Khomeni's Iran" (which the SWP has supported for years).

For some fake-Trotskyists, Afghan­istan greatly exceeded in explicit "third campism." Significant sections of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat openly denounced the Soviet Union as "state capitalist" after taking a cue from British USec leader Tariq Ali, who de­manded "Soviet Troops Out of Af­ghanistan!" in 1980. (All, including us, split to become an unofficial promoter of Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto. The Mandelites subsequently took up his "troops out" line.) Centrist Sean Matgamna went from denouncing the Soviet intervention to liquidating to the Labour Party. Recently, having dis­carded even vestigial lip service to defense of the Soviet Union, Matgamna's Socialists (2 February) grotesquely amnestied mujahedin atroci­ties in advance, claiming "the Islamic militants are spurred on by an under­standable thirst for revenge!"

Workers Power: The Quest for the "Third Road"

There were a few, partial exceptions to this spectrum of capitulation. The pli­able pro-Moscow Stalinists supported Soviet intervention in 1979, and now equally support Mosco's withdrawal, leaving the embattled women and left­ists of Afghanistan in the lurch. More contradictory are the Workers Power and Leninist groupings in Britain. Workers Power arose as a split from the Cliffites, using the uprooted over Afghan­istan to declare its formal adherence to Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratically degenerated worker­ers state while "condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan." (Workers Power, February 1980.) Leninist, on the other hand, came out of the pro­Moscow Stalinist milieu. Yet today Workers Power and Leninist join in denouncing Moscow for pulling out, while denouncing the Spartacists for hailing the Soviets' going in!

Afghanistan was the dividing line in Cold War II, between defense and expansion of the gains of the Russian Revolution, on the one hand, and support to imperialist-backed feudal­ist counterrevolution. The social dem­ocrats were unambiguously against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. They were emphatically for. Looking for a patch of dry ground in the middle, the wafflers come up with a "third road" united of contradictions. Thus Workers Power (February 1989) writes:

"Workers Power opposed the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. Unlike those, such as the Spartacist League, who 'hauled the Red Army' we warned that the season was counterrevo­lutionary....

"Now we call on workers everywhere to defend the imperialist retreat, despite the war-turneries of the Soviet tro­ops. Soviet and Pakistani workers must organize international aid, including military aid, to those resisting the Mojahedin."

This centrist confusionism was dis­missed by Socialist Workers Party honcho Jon Branche at a March 20 debate in London between Workers Power and Leni­nist on the question of Afghanistan. "Workers Power says it was counterrevo­lutionary to go in. Counterrevolutionaries have stayed in there and are now counterrevolutionary mujahedin, until a revolu­tionary force could take a clear position on the question of Afghanistan. This is gobalwagery...." No, it was going on in Afghanistan! But because Afghanistan is not a clear position on the question of the Soviet Union, you are split to become a third, "revolutionary," force in Afghanistan. You have never been able to produce a third road, because in Afghanistan there was no third road, but rather a split for or against the Soviet Union against imperialist domination of the Cold War."

The "methodology" of Workers Power recalls the big lie: "African Socialists. Party" honcho Jack Barnes, who back in 1980 renounced the SWP's "off base." Now, Workers Power is "off base." So, using the "anti­"Sparrt" yardstick as their guide, the "Leninists" have not even gone aloft on the question of Afghanistan, dividing the world into "supporting the war" and "supporting the peace." Workers Power and Leninist denounced the PDPA's limited reform programme, still less to carry out an East European style of social overturn, but to change the status of its buffer state. But in the context of raging civil war, to stabilize Afghanistan and "prepare bloodbath in the war-weariness of the Soviet troops. By being on the question of Afghanistan the workers party has been able to make an important contribution to strengthening the PDPA's limited reform programme, more than ever before." (Workers Power, March 31, 1980).

Workers Power complains that the Red Army went in "not to defend the Soviet Union but to save stability in its buffer state." But in the context of raging civil war, to stabilize Afghanistan and "be a third, 'revolutionary,' force in Afghanistan. You have never been able to produce a third road, because in Afghanistan there was no third road, but rather a split for or against the Soviet Union against imperialist domination of the Cold War."

Workers Power: Workers Power opposed the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. Unlike those, such as the Spartacist League, who "hauled the Red Army" we warned that the invasion was counter-revolutionary and would only serve to aid the repressive rule of the Afghan regimes. The Afghan masses, we argued, were for their national liberation, not for an Soviet occupation that was leading to a social revolution in the region.

There were, of course, some elements in the Afghan mujahedin that supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In fact, the new Popular Movement, the new Afghan government, and the Afghan regime that was established by the Soviet invasion are clearly counter-revolutionary. Workers Power would have denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan even if a social revolution were taking place. The Afghan masses, we argued, were for their national liberation, not for an Soviet occupation that was leading to a social revolution in the region.

Workers Power and Leninist denounced Socialists for hailing Soviet military intervention against CIA's holy warriors.
Jalalabad...

(continued from page 1)

Jalalabad. The U.S. and its anti-Communist allies have been poised for the kill. Their "freedom fighters" rain thousands of American rockets on this strategic city whose fall would open the road to Kabul. Bush has already named an envoy to the rebel "government," while the Afghan president, Hafizullah Amin, who was deposed and assassinated when the Red Army moved in, Leninist (17 February) de- nounced "some elements who hailed the Soviet intervention," including "the Trotskyist Spartacist League [which] declared: "We do not accept the American occupation."

The Mujahedeen, heavily armed by the U.S., organized by Pakistan and bol- stered by Saudi Arabian and other foreign forces, are inflicting terrible suffering on the population. On March 30, rockets hit a Sikh hospital in Jalalabad where several hundred Sikhs and Hindus had gathered; 22 people, most of them women and children, were killed. Recently, the Afghan government is- sued an appeal: "In order to aid the victims of these attacks a broad campaign of humani- tarian assistance has been launched on a national and international plane by the government parties and the authorities of the Republic of Afghanistan." In response to this appeal, the Par- tisan Defense Committee (PDC) has launched a campaign to raise funds for the civilian victims. We call on all workers, oppressed minorities and defenders of democratic rights to support this movement. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization; this purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

For the last nine years, Washing- ton and its allies have poured bil- lions into supporting the Afghan counter- revolution. The Taliban, international, imperialist-backed states in the region are throwing their own soldiers into the civil war. The Western media glorified the mujahedeen as they killed Russian soldiers. But now that the Soviet troops have pulled out, even Wall Street Jour- nal reporters tell of the horror facing Afghan women in Pakistani refugee camps whose husbands with their rac- ial social values prefer them to die rather than let them be examined by a male obstetrician. Even Western offi- cials call rebel Hekmatyar a "fasci- st." His thugs used to throw acid in the face of Mamee, a housewife from Kabul University who refused to wear the stigmatizing head-to-toe veil.

At an International Women's Day rally in Kabul this year, Fatima, a 25-year-old second lieutenant in the army, declared: "We are fighting but death for these bigos who only want their dollars from the U.S. and the freedom to have half-a-dozen wives each."

This war originated after moderniz- ing nationalists of the Proletarian Social Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDFPA) took power in April 1978 in a country where the working class had no social weight. They sought to carry out basic democratic measures—restructuring the political class as such had no social weight. And as soon as the PDP, and others to- implement its reforms—particularly education for girls and the lowering of the bride price in the countryside, it found itself confronted with massive popular resistance organized by the landed feudal aristocracy.

It was only the entry of the Red Army which provided an external social base for the PDFPA. And it was a kind of social revolution given the pre- feudal class structure prevailing in the country. And precisely the point at which the revolution began. The killing of Amin, was, in the West, equated with "the extinguishing of the flame of the revolu- tion." Amin had as much in common with his own insurgents as the reactionaries of the Western Establishment. Indeed, if one is to believe the plausible account by former Soviet leaders, Amin was killed in an interview in the London Observer (2 April), one of the factors that led the Kremlin to declare in October that Afghanistan was now a free and independent state. The Soviet Union had fully occupied Afghanistan in 1973, and its troops were to remain until 1989. The war ended in a fiasco, with an estimated 200,000 Soviet and Afghan casualties. The Soviet government took this offer as presently unnec- ssary, it has now asked the Pakistan Defense Committee, P.D.O. to con- tribute to the mujahedeen's campaign for an internationalist campaign of humanitaiian aid. We have whole- heartedly endorsed it and urge you to generously give your support. Every penny, every dollar collected will be channelled to Afghani- stan; all administrative expenses will be paid by the PDC.

"Take a stand with the fighters and people of Jalalabad whose lives are on the line. Give direct material aid to the women refugees and children there. This struggle is in the interests of the whole of the working people."

Partisan Defense Committee 8 April 1989

Contributions payable to the Jalal- abad National Solidarity Aid Fund can be sent to the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013.

Afghanistan and the Left...

(continued from page 5)

the Polish crisis of 1981, WP denounced the "legitimization of capitalist-revolution- ary" suppression of Solidar- noski, even while acknowledging that every reformist movement was an act of return to capitalism. Support to this Vastagboly, massively CIA-financed outfit was dictated, according to Sonnino's "Islamic Revolution" in Iran; if it's popular, tail it. But in Afghanistan, the "mass base" was under the control of the mujahedeen. So in order to avoid siding with the Soviet army, the partisans organized about a third force, calling for "the self organi- zation of the Afghan proletariat and leading elements [to] organize the own state power, independent of the Stalinis and the imperialists" (Workers Power)." Leninist: Blinded by Nationalism Leninist takes a similarly equivocal position. "In the context of Workers Power is capitalizing to the pressures of social democracy, in this case concrete and evident in the status of the "official" Communist Party.) Thus Leninist claims that a revolu- tionary dictatorship of the proletar- iat already existed in Kabul at the time of the Soviet invasion, in the form of the struggle of the PDFPA and particularly its leader Hafizullah Amin, who was deposed and assassinated when the Red Army entered Afghanistan, the fate of Afghani- stan would be "decided in Moscow, not Kabul." Their highest principle is "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries," and they criticize the USSR for "big power arrogance." At bottom they are nationalists, who can't conceive of an internationalist inter- est, not even by the revolutionary Bolshivists. Thus Leninist not only imagines a proletarian revolution in 1978 Afghanistan, but argues: "Like the Mongolian Revolution of 1921 it must be put in the same category as the October Revolution of 1917." The October Revolution was based on the highest level of organization in soviets of a sig- nificant industrial proletariat. How- ever, the analogy between Afghanistan and Outer Mongolia is highly instruc- tive since it completely refutes—indeed, demolishes—the Leninist's argument. Mongolia was the purest case imag- inable of an "internationalist revolution." Outer Mongolia in 1920-21 was even more backward than Afghanistan, with most of the population consisting of nomadic pastoralists. In early 1921 the pro-Soviet Mongolian People's Party was driven out of Mongolia by a White Russian adventurer leading a ragtag force partly officered by the Japanese. A few months later the "Mongolian Peo- ple's Government" was brought back lit- erally on the bayonets of the Soviet Red Army. In Afghanistan, the 1978 "April Rev- olution" consisted of a handful of demonstrations by restless masses of soldiers and a military coup by Khakim stan officers. The base of the PDFPA consisted overwhelmingly of the educated petty bourgeoisie, schoolteachers and students, and Soviet-trained army officers who, having some direct com- parative experience of how truly back- ward their country was, sought far-
On Sunday, April 9 over 300,000 people rallied in Washington, D.C. in defense of abortion rights. Supporters of the Partisan Defense Committee launched a campaign for material assistance to the civilian victims of Washington's war on Afghanistan. More than 25,000 leaflets with the PDC's appeal were distributed to the crowds at 2:30(p.m. as we marched with our banner proclaiming, "NO to the Veil! Defend Afghan Women! Support the Hudson Victims of CIA Cuthroats!")

The plight of the youngest victims of imperialism's war drive was featured in an article that appeared in the New York Times the same day, recounting a visit to the Mother and Child Health Clinic in Kabul:

"A morning at the clinic and a visit later to the capital's only children's hospital underscored one of the most troubling aspects of the war. In the nine months since the guerrilla fighting have been battering the Kabul Government, for control of the country, many of the worst health consequences have fallen on civilians, more than one million of whom are believed to have died. And among the civilians, many of the deaths have been due to suffering from malnutrition, lack of adequate medical care, or wounds received in the fighting.

Afghan children have the highest infant and child mortality rate in the world: almost one-third die before their fifth birthday. "Even for a Kabul child, life is hard," the writer commented, noting that the poor can't afford to buy food in the bazaars. The spectacular of starvation hangs over Kabul, which cannot receive supplies by ground transport because of the mujahedin blockades.

In Afghanistan, it was opposition to women's rights in particular that sparked the bloody opposition from Muslim fundamentalists to the Kabul regime's modernizing reforms. In the U.S., women's rights are under attack as Christian fundamentalist bigots target abortion clinics. The day of the D.C. demo, two Florida clinics were torched. And the Bush government is asking the Supreme Court to overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision which legalized abortion nationwide.

While the march organizers looked to the Democratic Party, the Spartan League carried banners declaring: "Labor: Defend Abortion Clinics!" and "Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" The same Democratic Congress which cut off federal aid for abortions for poor women (the Hyde Amendment) has sent billions to finance the CIA's Afghan warriors who send U.S. missiles crashing in on mosques and temples in Jalalabad. Our fight is worldwide. We urge you to send contributions, payable to the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund, to the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10013.

Hayward... (continued from page 3)

driven out by systematic cop harassment. And black workers getting off swing shift at Fremont GM used to make sure they had a couple of cars of friends following them on the way back to Oakland, in case they were pulled over by the cops.

Latinos and the expanding Asian population in the South Bay Area are particularly subject to attack. Immigrant labor and minorities to deport the fascists, and where you have to go up against the Democratic Party, these popular-frontists either make themselves scarce, or call on the Democratic mayor to "ban the Klan."

The ADL, peddles screech stories about the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee and its origins as an outgrowth of the New Left Weathermen. In fact, what's salient about this group is the contradiction between its provocative rhetoric and occasional antics, and its growing appeals to the bourgeois state. In both cases, they show a touching faith in the supposed benevolence of the ruling class and its minions. Here is the latter-day Weather Underground twice removed, the people who used to go around proclaiming "Death to the Klan--Stop the Killer Cops," now bringing in the same cops to ban the fascists. The putative bloc with the police is an egregious form of populism, going via a Democratic Party to the cops. But then, the Weathermen were always really "liberal" fascists, and Russian Marxists said of the Narodniks.

The John Brown Committee leaflet came out on the Hayward mayor and library to cancel the fascist meeting is ostentatiously pitched to the San Francisco popular-front crowd, featuring a picture of the Trans-America building and characterizing the Populists as "sexist, homophobic and anti-Semitic.

This leaves out the fascists' central hatred for blacks, Asians, Hispanics and Jews. The John Brown people are also pretty cavalier about what's going to happen to the people they're bringing over on the BART. In contrast, when they had an opportunity to join a real united-front, labor-backered protest against fascist Popular Duke in Chicago on March 3, they boycotted it and tried to undercut it by spreading false rumors that Duke wasn't coming to town.

Anti-fascist militants must learn the lessons of history. From the united-front mass mobilizations that stopped the Silver Shirts in the '40s, to the mass labor/black mobilizations that have spliced the KK/Skinheads from San Francisco to Philadelphia and Washington D.C. -- the key to stopping the would-be Hitlers like David Duke and his stormtroopers is united, mass militant action, forged in struggle, independent of the capitalist state.
"Remember that the musket...is better than all mere parchment guarantees of liberty. In your hands that musket means liberty; and should your constitutional right at the close of this war be denied...your brethren are safe while you have a Constitution which proclaims your right to keep and bear arms."

—Frederick Douglass appealing to blacks to join the Union Army, August 1863

America's capitalist rulers are taking aim at the fundamental right of the people to arm themselves. This right to bear arms was born of revolution, constituting a vital defense against tyranny. Naturally, despotic regimes prefer to rule over defenseless subjects: an armed people can fight back. Today, the government which sponsors counterrevolutionary terrorists and drug traffickers in a crusade against Communism wants to disarm the populace in the name of a "war on drugs and terrorism." And it is the Marxists, who championed the cause of all the exploited and oppressed, that oppose gun control from the standpoint of the struggle for workers revolution.

Currently spearheading the gun control drive is the ban on so-called "assault rifles." As usual, the gun-ban forces seized upon an emotion-packed criminal incident to fuel a campaign of hysteria—the January massacre of five Asian American schoolchildren by a racist nut wielding a semiautomatic AK-47 rifle in Stockton, California. Needless to say, the maniac might just as well have missed an ordinary shotgun for his horrible slaughter, but the fact that he used a military-type weapon was played to the hilt in the media to whip up support for a ban of this particular category of weapon.

What's new here is the active political campaigning by the country's police chiefs to disarm the civilian population. Heading them up is Los Angeles chief Daryl Gates, notorious for his racist defense of the LAPD's use of the deadly choke holds against blacks and Latinos. The campaign has been picked up by the Bush administration's anti-drug "czar" William Bennett, and the federal government has now banned imports of 20 models of semiautomatic "military-like" weapons. In Washington, D.C., cops are being imposed on youth while the president drops hints of calling out the National Guard in the name of the "war on drugs." The drift toward police bona fide in the U.S. has just lurched into a higher gear.

"I don't want that gun on the street," Chief Gates decreed (New York Times, 28 January), and he quickly received backing from police groups across the country. For the TV cameras, cops staged demonstrations of the supposedly "excessive" power of these "assault" rifles by blowing away cinder blocks and watermelons, not telling viewers that virtually anyone could buy a gun rifle could do the same thing. The police claim they are "outgunned" by drug gangs on the streets, but anyone who's seen the L.A. cops' paramilitary operations, using an arsenal of gunships, helicopters and tanks, knows that's baloney.

The guns they are talking about banning are the civilian versions of military-style rifles, such as Colt's AR-15, which is patterned after the army's M-16. They can carry large magazines of 20 or more bullets, but the civilian version is only semiautomatic, meaning a single bullet is fired with each trigger pull; in the fully automatic military version, a stream of bullets is fired as long as the trigger is pulled back. The distinction between a common semiautomatic hunting rifle and an "assault rifle" is blurry, since the former can also accept large magazines and many of them are more powerful than the military weapons. Thus the popular 30-06 manual, holt-action hunting rifle packs twice the kinetic energy of a "military-style" AKS.

Polls show that even people who favor banning "assault rifles" know it will not stop the "drug mafia" from getting their guns the same way they get their drugs—smuggling them in with the help of corrupt police departments and army commanders with friends in high places. (In the Iran/contra scandal, the Reagan/Bush/CIA team in Central America smuggled guns to the contras and returned with drugs for profit.) So the anti-gun propagandists resort to loaded questions, asking "whether there is any purpose in civilians owning military-style weapons except to kill people and why law-abiding people would want to own them" (New York Times, 28 April).

It's really not news that guns were invented to kill people. And in this class-divided society, it has more than occasionally been necessary for "law-abiding" citizens to defend themselves with violence, even against the so-called legally constituted authorities. Are memories really so short? Recall the bloody Ludow, Colorado massacre of 1914 in which 21 women, children, and farm workers were killed by the machine gun fire of the state militia, who were really Rockefeller's hired guns. But the workers were armed by the United Mine Workers, and to the bosses' horror for ten days some 1,000 strikers fought back bullet for bullet.

We also remember the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, in which five leftist civil rights workers and labor organizers were gunned down in cold blood by a Klan/Nazi group. An FBI informer led the fascists to the murder site, and an agent of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms showed them how to use and transport the semi-automatic weapons. And what about the Phillips cops, who in 1985 took the MOVE commune with 10,000 rounds in 90 minutes, using fully automatic M-16s and M-60 machine guns, and incinerated eleven black people, including five children, in a fire ignited by C-4 plastic explosive provided by the FBI. But of course none of the "concerned" anti-gun lobbyists are advocating taking away guns from the cops.

While middle-class liberals preach total pacifism from the relative safety of their condos and suburban ranch houses—they don't expect the cops to come bursting into their homes. But the ruling class does not believe in pacifism and has carefully armed its state to the teeth. The whole issue of gun control revolves around the question: do you trust this state to have a monopoly of arms? And the answer is refuted through the deepening class and racial polarization of this society. The core of the state, after all, is "special bodies of armed men," as Lenin explained in his 1917 pamphlet The State and Revolution, commenting on the theories of Marx and Engels. And this is not our state, but the capitalists'; they assert the state's monopoly of armed force in order to maintain their class rule.

The whole history of gun control is the story of the ruling class trying to disarm the population, particularly in...
periods of social struggle. The ban on assault rifles was a major issue in the national party conventions, particularly during the 1980s. Many states, including California, passed similar bans in response to public pressure and concern about mass shootings.

In New York City, a similar ban was considered in response to the 1989 Lodi mass shooting. The ban was proposed to prevent the use of assault rifles in such incidents, which were often used by gang members and drug dealers.

The ban on assault rifles was also seen as a response to the rising crime rates and the perceived threat posed by these weapons. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the New York State Police were among the law enforcement agencies that supported the ban.

There was also a concern about the proliferation of assault rifles in the hands of civilians, particularly those who were not trained in their safe use. The ban was intended to address this issue by restricting the ownership of these weapons to those who had undergone proper training and certification.

The ban was seen as part of a broader effort to control the availability of firearms in the United States, which has historically been one of the world's highest per capita gun ownership rates. The ban was also related to the ongoing debate about gun control and the right to bear arms, which is a fundamental aspect of American constitutional law.

In conclusion, the ban on assault rifles was a significant event in the history of gun control in the United States, reflecting the changing attitudes towards firearms and their role in society. The ban was seen as a necessary measure to address the growing threat posed by these weapons, particularly in the hands of untrained civilians.
Right to Bear Arms...  
(continued from page 9) individual right. As Patrick Henry summed it up, "The great object is, that every man be armed." As in any class society, there were some big, categorical exceptions to these "universal" rights. The Second Amendment assumed it was English-speaking white Protestants who had the guns, to be used against Indians, black slaves, Spanish, Dutch and French invaders and, needless to say, the British former colonial masters who continued to threaten the young republic. Nevertheless the American war of independence released a world-shaking democratic spirit, reflected in the military sphere by the arming of masses of civilians who could be trusted, out of class and sectional, to support their government in loosely controlled guerrilla-type units. As was noted by Friede in her essay, the system at least assured himself (being a heroic and able

right to bear

entitled to a long list of rights, including

for leading the famous raid on a federal

arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Mean­

guerrilla-type units. As was noted by

Abolition of

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Chief Justice Taney noted with horror

Constitution itself.

defense"

ick Douglass, a close friend of Brown's,

day for self-defense." who remained in the city were armed

was between the newly emanci­

The

Negro's Civil War (1965)

Williams

organized armed defense of
civil rights workers in Monroe, North

for the Ludlow massacre) to launch a

campaign for gun control. And the

New York Times led the pack.

Today, also, while "Punch" Sulzber­
ger has his armed guards, as well as a pistol stashed in his desk drawer, his newspaper editorializes against "Rambus Guns" (15 March) and under the name of fighting "crime," which cer­
tainly hasn't decreased in New York City: "The police have a marvellous and more of a class privilege.

The notorious example is New York State's Sullivan Law, which makes it illegal to carry a pistol self-defense, unless you're one of a handful of well­

connected people who can get a license to "carry" from the police department: people like real estate mogul Donald Trump and New York Times publisher Arthur D. Sulzberger. Sulz­

gun bans. The

had entered the imperialist club

had 300,000 people licensed to

carry firearms and another 300,000

do so illegally" (Guatemala: 300,000 people are licensed to carry firearms and another 300,000 do so illegally" (Guatemala: What Has Happened to the Workers Vanguard? New York Times Magazine, 26 March). He doesn't relate to this the fact that there have been leftist defendents of an scilla insurgency for 20 years, and an insanely savage, heavily armed army.

The Times' Casey has gone a step further by suggesting (17 March) the army be "armed with drugs," as a way of arming a "drug mili­
a." And on April 4 the paper printed a letter from a Catholic bishop explicitly calling for a "drug army." The Times' unotted goal is in all cir­
cumstances a thoroughly armed gov­
ernment and a thoroughly disarmed population.

And it's not only such mainstream imperialist spokesman, but even left groups too, which want gun bans. The Nation (3 April) front­
paged their position: "How Citizens Can Beat the Gun Lobby." And most of
the reformist left has kept mum on this issue, because they're closet liberals. After eight years of the Reagan/Bush administration, the days are gone when social activists at least made the obvious observation that "crime" is rooted in social conditions and cannot be eradicated by police measures.

In talking about who is "outgunned," the balance is, in Jeffersonian language, how many guns are in the hands of the police, versus the struggle for power in the hands of the government. Yet now the reformists are all signing up for the Democrat/Republican "Repeal and Rewrite on drugs," which is nothing but a rationale for vicious police repression of the whole population, particularly blacks and Hispanics. In fact, street crime could probably be cut in half overnight simply by decriminalizing and providing them out free to addicts. But such a measure would fly in the face of bourgeois "law and order," as one underlines the rationale for increased police powers.

Behind the renewed call for gun bans is racism; as we have said before, gun control kills blacks. With the rise of the civil rights movement, gun control again became closely associated with ruling-class fears of black liberation. Robert F. Williams, the head of the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP, was hounded out of the country for organizing a black defense squad against racist attacks. When Malcolm X tried to get around the stringent New York pistol law by carrying a carbine for self-defense; he was beaten back.

The defeat of the 1848 revolutions in Europe was followed by a bloodbath revealing the "insane cruelties" of which the bourgeoisie is capable, wrote Engels. "And yet 1848 was only child's play compared with the frenzy of the bourgeoisie in 1871; when the workers of Paris rose up and formed the Commune. One of the Communism's key decisions came on March 30, 1871, when it "abolished conscription and the standing army, and declared the sole armed force to be the National Guard, in which all citizens capable of bearing arms were to be enrolled." When the Commune fell, before the combined French government and Prussian troops in May 1871, the civilians working class was followed by a massacre of defenseless men, women and children in which some 200,000 died.

Noting the direct correlation between stricter gun control legislation and rising civil violence in West Germany, George Orwell commented in 1939: "When I was a kid you could walk into a bicycle shop or ironmonger's [hardware store] and buy any firearm you pleased. Short of a full gun, and it did not occur to most people that the Russian revolutionaries would ever want to have more than a 12 gauge, so that it was a fact of life for the ordinary German to own a gun for protection. But in 1935 they were forced by the fight against counterrevolution to build a large police and military force. That force explained in the forefront to the fifth volume of his military writings (How the Revolutionary Armed, 1921-25 [1981]) that the problem was rooted in the poverty and backwardness of Russia, wherein the "Red barracks constitutes an incomparably higher cultural setting that than to which the Red Army man is used at home." But when Stalin usurped political power at the head of a conservative bureaucracy, he made the Red Army into a community of socialist citizens arms' ranks and privileges. Trotsky denounced this: "No army...can be more democratic than the regime which nourishes it. The source of bureaucratism with its routine and strain is not the special needs of military affairs, but the political needs of the ruling strata."

"The Revolution Betrayed" (1937)

Harlan County, Kentucky, 1973: Coal miners show company goons that scabbering is dangerous to your health.

Having restored the officer caste 18 years after its revolutionary abolition, Stalin then beheld the Red Army on the eve of Hitler's invasion.

In the shadow of the oncoming world war, Trotsky's Fourth International insisted in its 1938 Transitional Program: "The only disarmament which can aver or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to do this the bourgeoisie must arm themselves." In its program for revolutionary struggle against imperialism and war it called: "Substitution for the standing army of a people's militia, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc." Its demands for military training and arming of workers and peasants under the control of workers and peasants' committees was coupled with the demand for "complete independence of workers' organizations from military-police control."

The American bourgeoisie of the 1914-18 war fought against the 2nd Amendment when there was not much wage labor, blacks were not free and a small farmers class approximated "the people." But today, in capitalism's death agony, as the economy falls apart and labor / black explosions threaten, they want to take the masses' guns away. In this atmosphere, the NRA lobby and the police magnificently disarmed in Congress, state legislatures and city councils as they plead for their "sporting" weapons while urging an even greater "War on Crime" but "in the name of the workers." (American Rifleman, April 1989). Marxists, in contrast, oppose racist gun control and demand return of labor/black armed self-defense.

Since guns are tools for killing people, a good part of the socialist world order —i.e., the abolition of society based on class division and national oppression—is that the use of guns might indeed become a mere hobby.

The guns the working people had bet­­er worry about today are those in the hands of the capitalist rulers, who want a total monopoly, at home and in the world. The former chief of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, General Carluba LeMay, called for the development of an atomic arsenal. The Soviet Red Guard workers militias fought the first battles of the ensuing civil war. Like all militias, the Red Guards were not much good at first, but in war one's strength is always relative to the enemy's, and the Whites suffered from low morale. Militiamen can become professional fighters if they survive long enough to gain experience. As the founder of the Red Army, Leon Trotsky, commented in December 1921, "In the initial stages we learnt manoeuvring from them [the Whites]." And the class struggle raged for years, eventually providing an even greater 14 imperialist/Allied expeditionary forces and the Red Guards.

Though the Bolsheviks advocated a socialist militia "in connection with the formation of classes," they were forced by the fight against counterrevolution to build a standing army. Trotsky explained in the forefront to the fifth volume of his military writings (How the Revolutionary Armed, 1921-25 [1981]) that the problem was rooted in the poverty and backwardness of Russia, wherein the "Red barracks constitutes an incomparably higher cultural setting than to which the Red Army man is used at home." But when Stalin usurped political power at the head of a conservative bureaucracy, he made the Red Army into a community of socialist citizens arms' ranks and privileges. Trotsky denounced this: "No army...can be more democratic than the regime which nourishes it. The source of bureaucratism with its rou­­­ine and strain is not the special needs of military affairs, but the political needs of the ruling strata."

"The Revolution Betrayed" (1937)

Nuclear creditability: Marshal Rodion Y. Malinovsky, Soviet defense minister in the 1960s, infuriated Pentagon by advocating and deploying nuclear forces to counter imperialist first-strike threat.

The Turning Point: 1848

As the call for a people's militia was adopted by the rising proletarian move­­ment, the bourgeoisie abandoned its own slogan that "every man be armed." As noted by Friedrich Engels, the workers' demands for social equality contained "a threat to the existing order of society": "...the workers who put it forward were still armed; therefore, the disarm­­ment of the workers was the first com­­mandment for the bourgeoisie, who were as the heart of the state. Furthermore, every revolution won by the workers, a battle and a struggle ending with the defeat of the workers."

This happened for the first time in 1848. The failure of 1848's 14 March insurrection to Marx's The Civil War in France

With the appearance of the proletariat as an independent actor on the scene, "the armed people" became archaic as the populace disarmed and learned to use military affairs, but the political needs of the ruling strata."

"The Revolution Betrayed" (1937)
market-oriented “reforms.” American Sovietologist Jan Vanous noted: “One of the most conservative elements may be the workers, who seem that, with any change, things will first get worse. That is in fact what they are seeing; their worst fears are being confirmed.” (Soviet Economy, April–June 1988)

Soviet workers want to conserve the social gains of the Bolshevik Revolution, most concretely economic security, a low and stable cost of living, and a relatively egalitarian society.

But working-class resistance to perestroika has to date remained passive, unorganized, without a political perspective. That is why the political scene has been dominated by Gorbachevite reformers. Workers have taken up a banner, in Trotsky’s words, “for a decent standard of living, for a rapid growth of production, in the great tradition of the working class against the iniquities of a most monstrous oligarchy by Yegor Ligachev—wanting to obscure the greatest of the social composition—intellectuals, factory workers, grandmothers trying to survive on meager pensions. Ligachev sponsored the notorious “Andreyeva letter” praising Stalin and denouncing the relative newfound freedom in the Soviet press and media. The bureaucratic bureaucrats are thus seen as trying to bring back police-state conditions, if not of Stalin’s day, then of Brezhnev’s.

While the old-line bureaucrats were the big losers in the elections, the result was not a vote of confidence in Gorbachev. This is especially obvious with regard to the explosive nationalities issue. Perestroika has fueled a resurgence of nationalism and national antagonisms throughout the USSR. The bureaucratic centralism of Stalin and Brezhnev acted to crudely level the economic and political conditions in the various regions. With decentralization and “market socialism” now the order of the day, the layer of the so-called national bourgeoisie is brought in from Siberia to run Moscow precisely because he was a staunch Gorbachev loyalist and ardent advocate of perestroika. He nastily assailed scores of entrenched apparatchiks while curing favor with the local citizenry with a “stylist” style. He visited hospitals and criticized the poor quality of medical care. He visited butcher shops and warned the customers that the meat was “abominable.” Of course, neither hospital care nor the supply of meat improved much. But the grand style of rewriting history of Yeltsin could blame all economic ills on the effects of the “era of stagnation.” The Conservative bureaucrats are thus locked into the “era of stagnation.” The Gorbachev loyalists of all stripes, Pamyat fascists and populist demagogues like Yeltsin, are thus locked into the “era of stagnation.” The only way to win the elections was to accept the policy of perestroika and to announce that Yeltsin had been removed as chairman of the Moscow Communist Party. It seems he had sharply attacked Ligachev—then officially the number two man in the Kremlin—for obstructing perestroika. To preserve the unity of the ruling group, Gorbachev dumped the stormy petrel. Yeltsin publicly denounced the new Stalinist method and abruptly confessed his sins: “I am very guilty personally before Mikhail Sergei­evich Gorbachev, whose authority is so high in our organization, in our country and in the entire world” (New York Times, 31 March).

On the other hand, last March, 2,000 pro-Yeltsin demonstrators defied an official ban and gathered in Moscow’s Gorky Park. As they demonstrated, the Chechens in the Kremlin, their number grew spontaneously to 10,000. They chanted “Hands off the Gorky Park.” But Yeltsin had become the new hero with the slogan “candidate of the people.” Perhaps even more important than the demonstration was its broad social composition—in­tellectuals, factory workers, grandmothers trying to survive on meager pensions. Clearly, Yeltsin is a man with something to offer for everyone.

In Estonia and Latvia, much of the nationalist agitation is directed at the large and strong leader in the Kremlin, their number grew spontaneously to 10,000. They chanted “Hands off the Gorky Park.” But Yeltsin had become the new hero with the slogan “candidate of the people.” Perhaps even more important than the demonstration was its broad social composition—in­tellectuals, factory workers, grandmothers trying to survive on meager pensions. Clearly, Yeltsin is a man with something to offer for everyone.
very fact that he is somebody they [the ruling circles] don’t like makes people fight for him.” But this purely negative explanation cannot fully account for the scope of Yeltsin’s support. Yeltsin also clearly exploited the Soviet economic crisis without pain and sacri
fice—perestroika on the cheap.

Claims to offer a solution to the economic problems facing Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan by their special shops:

The most right-wing, pro-Western elements in the Soviet bureaucracy in the face of the anti
imperialist fervor of the 1960s, Arthur Koestler wrote, exclaimed that “the most patient popUlations in the
world.”

The most serious conflagration took place in the industrial city of Novocherkassk in the Donbass region of the
Ukraine. The protest movement was spearheaded by workers from the huge Budennovsky Electrometallurgical Works and women from the textile mills. After the locomotive factory workers suc
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old system. Thus the bulk of their output
goes to fulfill "state orders" negoti­
ated with the industrial ministries which
formerly administered the plan. The
journal Sotsialisticheskaya Indus­
triya (January 1988) claimed:

"What has happened in reality? The
ministries have succeeded, without any
difficulty, in putting the old content into
the new name, and under the guise of an
order have allocated enterprises the
former plan for production." 

Sotsialisticheskaya Indus­
triya was wrong to maintain that nothing
has changed except terminology. Under
the old, centrally administered system, a
serious effort was made to match
planned inputs to planned outputs.

Enterprises received most of the raw
materials and goods-in-process from the
enterprises and ministries do not coordinate
their production decisions and orders
with one another. Say a shoe factory
contracts to supply the ministry of light
industry with several thousand pairs of
work boots. There is no guarantee it can
procure the quantity and quality of leather
it needs from various tanneries. And
there is no central agency responsi­
ble for meeting its supply needs.

Thus the Soviet press reports a
marked increase in factory down time,
wasting countless man-hours, due to
lack of supplies. In short, enterprise
"self-financing" has resulted in min­
isterial empire-building and bureau­
cratic anarchy. Moscow wit­
ns have reviled an old joke to describe the
effects of the "reform." It seems the
Kremlin leaders decided to change the
traffic system so that henceforth driv­
ing would be on the left instead of right.

Being cautious, they implemented the
reform in stages. To start with, only half
the cars would follow the new rule.

The main aim of "full profit-and-loss
accounting" is not so much to spur man­
gers to become more efficient. Rather
it is to reduce labor costs by laying off
"redundant" workers and forcing those
remaining to work harder for fear that
they, too, may lose their jobs. A leading
"reform" economist, Nikolai Shemlev,
quoted quite bluntly:

"Today in the Soviet Union
we owe disorderliness, drunken­
ness, and shoddy work largely to an
excess of self-financing. We do not
discuss fearlessly and in businesslike
terms what we could gain from a com­
paratively small reserve army of labor.

―quoted in U.S. Congress,
Joint Economic Committee,
Gorbachev's Economic Plans
(1987)

As Brookings Institution's Ed Hewitt
put it cynically but accurately: "Look,
perestroika is a very polite phrase for fir­
ing a lot of people, moving people
around and closing a lot of bad enter­
prises." (Washington Post, 6 Novem­
ber 1988.)

A closely related aspect of per­
estroika is the hard-sell campaign to
draw Western and Japanese multi­
national into joint ventures in the
USSR. A few months ago the Gorba­
chev regime announced that foreign
investors can now have up to 80 percent
ownership in such joint ventures. But
Western capitalists want more than a
bigger share of the expected profits.

They want to run Russian enterprises
like they run their own corporations.

Leading Soviet labor economist Vladimir Kostakov recounts that
an American businessman told him a
year or so ago: "You want Americans to par­
ticipate in joint ventures. Would I be
table to dismiss your workers?" (Soviet

Talk about capitalist arrogance! Here's a
man who has invested not one dime in
the Soviet economy, but he is yearning
to throw Russian workers into the streets.

But Soviet workers do not intend
to let themselves be dismissed by their
own homegrown bureaucrats, not to
speak of American, German and Japa­
nese capitalists. For Soviet workers,
a job means a lot more than just a
paycheck. The workplace is the center
of economic and, to a large extent, social
life. Large enterprises provide free
health clinics and nurseries, low-cost
housing, cheap vacations and countless
other benefits.

Even more so than stability in the
cost of living, the Soviet proletariat consid­
ers job security as their fundamental
right, as a basic attribute of the Soviet
system. Hence the Gorbachev regime is
moving very cautiously on "price
reform," layoffs and closing unprofit­
able enterprises. Nonetheless, the wors­
ening economic situation, especially
food shortages, could easily spark an
all-out rebellion from below given the inflam­
matory conditions of the Soviet Union
under Gorbachev.

TO BE CONTINUED

Mumia Abu-Jamal...

(continued from page 16)

...to the State Building. Today, 116 peo­
ple await their fate on death row in
Illinois. While the state has not executed
anyone in over 20 years, there are those
itching to dust off the electric chair.

Death row inmate Charles Walker has
given up his right to appeal, and Gov­
ernor Thompson has declared he will
not stand in the way of any executions.

Contingents at the April 8 march
came from throughout Illinois and
surrounding states and included many
high school students. A spirited 25-
strong contingent, supporters of the
Partisan Defense Committee, Labor
Black Struggle League and the Sparta­

Mumia Abu-Jamal—should be a rallying cry
in the fight against racist injustice.
Mumia Abu-Jamal—synonymous with
the fight against the barbaric death pen­
alty. Mumia's fight must become our
fight. Tell it at your workplace, union
hall, dormitory, student union, on the
airwaves and in print: "Abolish the Rac­
ist Death Penalty! Mumia Must Not Die!"

To join the urgent campaign to save
Mumia's life, write and send donations to:
Partisan Defense Committee, P.O.
Box 99, Canal Street Station, New
York, NY 10013.
the unions, the junk bond vultures move in, and a strike begins. Traveling over Eastern roads like a "ten most wanted" list of capitalist high rollers: real estate developers, hotel tycoon Carl Icahn, the corporate raider who broke the flight attendants' 1986 strike at TWA; Hyatt Hotels king Jay Pritzker; Denver oil billionaire Marvin Davis. But the board of Lorenzo's Texas Air directed Ueberroth.

Last November, four months before the strike began, IAM District 14-B president Charles Jefferson issued a leaflet to his 3,500 members, including them with autographed World Series baseball cards. C. L. Anderson, the owner of the Minnesota Twins baseball team and a member of the board of Lorenzo's Texas Air, directed Ueberroth and the union bureaucrats together.

This betrayal "gives" the unions a 30 percent stake in Eastern in exchange for the massive concessions. The whole deal is a replay of the "worker participation" scheme foisted on the workers six years ago by then Eastern chairman Frank Borman, when Charles Breyan got a seat on the board of directors, and the workers got the shaft. This union "stake" in Eastern is bought and paid for without a trace when Lorenzo took it over. As one striker's T-shirt proclaimed: "Different Flavor, Same Poison!"

Ueberroth declares, "We look at labor as our partners," and, especially comes off as a genuine friend, many Eastern workers would like to believe him. Don't be fooled! Ueberroth is the anti-labor, drug-testing millionnaire who was on the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. After he turned a cool $225 million profit in that Day of the "worker participation" scheme extravaganza, Time magazine crowned him "Man of the Year." During Ueberroth's reign as baseball commissioner he used the whip of drug testing against the players he (who was the one who suspended Dwight Gooden). He also overawed the owners' collusion against the right of ballplayers to escape their indentured servitude by means of "free agency."

Bankrolling Ueberroth is Jet America owner Thomas Talbot, who "apparently" signed off on the deals of Kirk Kerkorian, head of the MGM/UA Communications Company, according to the New York Times (8 April). In his 1985 book, Made in America, Ueberroth extolling his friend Kerkorian—"he taught me the value of taking business risks." According to David Talbot, "even Ronald Reagan, MCA and the mob (1986), Kerkorian bought MGM with his last $42 million and lost it all," and "was a long-time friend of Charles "The Blade" Toure," a top New York mobster and "brokercince of Mayor Lamsky." The unsavory cast of characters led the Washington Post (2 April) to note that "the fate of one of the largest airlines is being determined by a mogul who is involved in a casino mogul, a secretive Las Vegas financier, the owner of a travel agency, a baseball commissioner, an obtuse corporate executive and a guy from Queens."

At his press conference announcing the deal, Ueberroth paid tribute to the king of debt, Drexel Burnham junk bond executive Michael Milken, for giving Ueberroth the advice that "turned the corner so that we could get it done." Milken, currently under federal racketeering charges for insider trading, recently stunned Wall Street when the feds revealed that in a single year he earned more than half a billion dollars—more than the gross national product of many small countries. Even Trump and David Rockefeller yelled.

"The Junking of America" is a direct result of the massive anti-Soviet war buildup, begun under Document Carter and pushed through the roof by Reaganism. Capitalism made us do it! (Nation, 3 April). These are the "partners in workers' participation" that Winshipnger and the labor traitors have crawled into bed with.

Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win!

The solidarity among Eastern workers stands out in part because strikes today are going to be than ever, that they are drawn out, isolated, set up and stabbed in the back by the labor traitors. At Colt Industries in Connecticut, strikers being to the United Auto Workers (UAW) have been out since 1986. New York tugboatmen are fighting alone, their longshore union brothers are told to continue to work the docks. The Wall Street Journal (27 January) the Mine Workers used to be known as "barroom brawlers," now 2,000 Pitston miners are kept on the job for over a year without a contract, the union is run by "numbers-crunching union leaders, more at home in suits than overalls and a miner's hat." The policies of these "labor lieutenants and capitalist" (in David DeLeon's characterization of 80 years ago) have cut union membership in half since the AFL and CIO merged 35 years ago. Their new private "independent union" membership," where you pay dues and get a union card, but have no union and no contracts, is a new form of "unions" of useless consumer boycotts and to stockholders are sure death. The UAW in its collective action, protestation, along with the "team concept" and "employee involvement," has turned the union from a force to the sit-down strike into company agents in the (and the board of directors). Even as the strike continues to throttle labor struggle, the bourgeoisie is worried that the intense shortage of skilled workers means that failing unemployment rate will fuel a labor offensive. The tight labor market for skills is an important factor in the Eastern strike. Noting that real wages have fallen 15 percent since 1973, while capitalists are reaping record profits, Barron's (10 April) worries that the workers' "attitude has gone "From Give-Up to Gimme." With key union contracts coming this year in steel, longshore, tele­ phone and aerospace, Barron's warns that employers have "no other choice" but to "pay up."

But in the Midwest "rust bowl" and across the country tens of thousands of black workers have been on the street for years, thrown out of the plants two recessions ago. The falling unemployment rates trumpeted in the capitalist newspapers are a fig leaf for the workers who have been "dropped" from the workforce as "discouraged workers," or forced into part-time, non-union jobs. Black motorists imprisoned in ghetto hellholes without childcare aren't considered "unemployed."

Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win.

As one striker's T-shirt proclaimed: "Different Flavor, Same Poison!"

Later. That means "Die First and Grive It Later." Hall's first response to the Astor Place deaths was to all the bosses by saying that because of noise anything, including safety in the workplace. Train operators who took this seriously, we ran transit, we'd make it run safe! We must fight for elected union leadership, more at home in suits than overalls and a miner's hat. The policies of these "labor lieutenants and capitalist" (in David DeLeon's characterization of 80 years ago) have cut union membership in half since the AFL and CIO merged 35 years ago. Their new private "independent union" membership," where you pay dues and get a union card, but have no union and no contracts, is a new form of "unions" of useless consumer boycotts and to stockholders are sure death. The UAW in its collective action, protestation, along with the "team concept" and "employee involvement," has turned the union from a force to the sit-down strike into company agents in the (and the board of directors). Even as the strike continues to throttle labor struggle, the bourgeoisie is worried that the intense shortage of skilled workers means that failing unemployment rate will fuel a labor offensive. The tight labor market for skills is an important factor in the Eastern strike. Noting that real wages have fallen 15 percent since 1973, while capitalists are reaping record profits, Barron's (10 April) worries that the workers' "attitude has gone "From Give-Up to Gimme." With key union contracts coming this year in steel, longshore, tele­ phone and aerospace, Barron's warns that employers have "no other choice" but to "pay up."

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Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win.

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Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

200 March Against Death Penalty in Chicago

CHICAGO—An urgent campaign to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal has been launched by the Partisan Defense Committee. On March 6 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied ex-Black Panther and journalist Abu-Jamal's appeal to have his death sentence overturned. Called "the voice of the voiceless," for his Philadelphia radio broadcasts against racist injustice, Mumia is America's only death row political prisoner.

While Mumia's case is garnering national support, among those endorsing in the Chicago area are aldermen Bobby Rush and Danny Davis; Larry Regan, president of Steelworkers Local 1914 in Gary, Indiana; Henry English, president of the Illinois Black United Fund; Winston Nagan, member of the Board of Directors of Amnesty International U.S.A.; and Patricia Vader, director of the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty. The campaign has received attention in Chicago's black press and radio.

On Saturday, April 8 over 200 gathered in Chicago's Seneca Park for a march and demonstration against the death penalty called by Amnesty International and the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty. The diverse crowd marched down Michigan Avenue, calling the death penalty "voiceless," and continued on page 14.

Solid on the Picket Line, Given Back at the Bargaining Table

Eastern Strike: What's Ahead for Labor?

APRIL 11—For six weeks the Eastern workers have remained solid on the picket line. From Boston to Miami, the ranks of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), backed up by the flight attendants, pilots, and corporate raider Frank Lorenzo's plans to break the Eastern unions into a tailspin, forcing him to sell off the airline. Ever since Reagan smashed the PATCO air controllers in 1981, every significant strike—Greyhound bus drivers, Arizona copper miners, Hormel meatpackers—had been broken or weakened by massive scabbing. But not this time. The Eastern strike is widely seen as a sign of renewed labor militancy and economic clout. The business weekly Barron's (10 April) headlined: "Push for Power: Labor Flexes Its Muscle.

But what have the strikers actually gained? The announcement of the buyout of Eastern Airlines by Peter Ueberroth and his collection of shady millionaires was greeted with cheers from jubilant Machinists. But this buyout is "Made by Lorenzo" and the junk bond dealers who have raped the airline industry. As liberal Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith observed, "Whoever buys Eastern will have to add the cost of financing the deal to the company's already massive debts"—over $2.5 billion. A Wall Street analyst said that Ueberroth may end up liquidating the airline: "Right now, Eastern is worth more dead than alive." (New York Times, 10 April).

As we go to press, the buyout is before federal bankruptcy judge L. Burton Lifland, who has threatened to "knock heads" to end the strike. Lifland is set to rule on the union tops' demand that he appoint a trustee to run the airline. A likely candidate is former secretary of war and CIA heavy Frank Carlucci, a Company man if ever there was one. Once again they are going to soak the unions to pay for it. The IAM tops' deal with Ueberroth cuts wages a whopping $160 million, with another $60 million in benefit and pension givebacks from the IAM, the Air Line Pilots Association and the flight attendants in Trans- port Workers Union (TWU) Local 553. This is as much or more than the wage-cutting bastard Lorenzo demanded.

And the IAM tops are criminally silent on the jobs of the hundreds of union officers and militiamen Lorenzo hired.

IAM president William Winpisinger, who never wanted this strike and has begged for Congress and the labor boards to take it off his hands, fought to prevent the one thing that would guarantee a resounding victory: shutting down the airports by extending the strike. Rail workers, ready to honor picket lines in a secondary strike, were told to stand down. Other airline workers who were eager to join the battle and extend the strike industrywide were ordered to bow before the capitalist courts and the no-strike injunctions.

Workers across the country have poured out for demonstrations of solidarity with the Machinists—everybody saw the Eastern strike as the chance to avenge the defeats of the last decade and win big. Eastern workers repaid this solidarity, joining demonstrations of longshoremen in Savannah, marching on the health care workers' picket lines in Cleveland. But the labor bureaucracy has kept the strike narrowly focused on the justly hated Lorenzo—the last thing they and their Democratic Party allies want is an explosion of class struggle. Rip up this junk bond sellout—keep Eastern grounded and extend the strike!

The Junking of America

In March, when it became clear Lorenzo was losing the showdown with continued on page 15.