

## No to the Veil—Defend Afghan Women!

# Support Jalalabad Victims of CIA's Cutthroats!

The following call was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee on April 8. The next day, 25,000 copies were distributed at the abortion rights demonstration in Washington, D.C.

What would happen if the "holy warriors," financed and organized by the U.S., won the war over Afghanistan? Women enslaved to the veil. Schoolteachers shot. "Adulterers" stoned. "Blasphemers" executed. Foreign po-

litical refugees murdered. Minor government officials condemned. Just look at Khomeini's Iran! We call urgently on all defenders of women's rights, all partisans of social progress to materially aid the victims of Washington's bloody crusade. Your contribution will send a message of internationalist solidarity to those who are prepared to fight to the death against the CIA's cutthroats.

Right now, the battle is being fought at  
*continued on page 6*



[London] Guardian

Afghan militiawoman proudly holds her Soviet-supplied AK-47.

## 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 campaigned for the abolition of the draft and an all-volunteer army. In Moscow Boris Yeltsin, a former Gorbachev lieutenant turned "populist" demagogue, won a landslide victory—90 percent of the vote—over a local *apparatchik*. Rabid nationalists, many demanding outright secession from the USSR, gained a majority of seats in the Baltic republics.

The Soviet Union has become a seething cauldron of political passions fueled above all by economic discontent and resurgent nationalism. When Gorbachev came to power four years ago, he promised "a significant acceleration in



Elections to Congress of People's Deputies unleashed stormy political passions. Members of the Academy of Sciences demonstrating in Moscow.

social-economic progress," doubling the output of consumer goods by the year 2000. Now the Soviet leader cannot appear in public without being accosted

with bitter complaints about shortages of food and everything else. "Recently, all you hear is perestroika, glasnost," a man wrote from a village in the Urals

to the Communist Youth newspaper. "But what has changed? Why is sugar rationed? Why are school uniforms rationed, shoes expensive and wages low?"

The Baltic republics—Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—have become hotbeds of anti-Communist and anti-Russian agitation. In the Caucasus, Armenians and Azerbaijanis have been killing one another in a fight to control a remote mountainous region—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 a small Turkic minority. In Moscow and Leningrad the nativist Russian fascists of Pamyat are terrorizing Gorbachevite intellectuals and spewing anti-Semitic filth.

Western anti-Communists think that they're seeing their wildest dreams come true. Gorbachev is waving the white flag in the Cold War, surrendering one position after another—withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, unilaterally cutting military spending on all fronts. Cold War ideologues like Zbigniew Brzezinski are predicting the death of Communism before the 21st century. They foresee the USSR being ripped apart by national conflicts, while Gorbachev introduces more and more capitalistic measures into the economy—profit maximization for enterprises, layoffs of "redundant" workers, increases in the cost of living, the decollectivization of agriculture, the growth of private entrepreneurs.

Certainly the tendencies and forces for capitalist restoration are growing ominously. But there is a lion in the path of capitalist restoration—the Soviet proletariat. Soviet working people are deeply distrustful of Gorbachev's

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## Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!

# David Herreshoff: As I Remember Dick Fraser

The speeches and messages to the memorial meeting honoring the life and work of veteran American Trotskyist Richard Fraser were printed in *WV*, Nos. 469, 470 and 471 (20 January, 3 and 17 February). The following contribution was subsequently received from David Herreshoff, an old comrade of Dick's and author of *The Origins of American Marxism: From the Transcendentalists to De Leon* (Monad Press, 1973) and, soon to be published, *The Theme of Work in American Literature* (Wayne State University Press).

Comrades:

I got news of the Fraser Memorial Meeting too late to send a message. Since then I have read all the appreciations 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 Dick going back to 1936 when he was twenty-two and I was fourteen. In the Spring of 1936 Dick organized the San Diego Local of the Socialist Party; that was when the American Trotskyists joined the SP but in San Diego they

didn't have anything to join; the Workers Party branch simply reconstituted itself as the SP.

I was already a sympathizer of the Tendency (as Dick always called the Trotskyists in those days) when I went to the SP office and met Dick and he asked me to join. I was uncertain whether the Trotskyists were far enough left for me. Why had they entered the Second International, the social-patriots 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 to and 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 feeling 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 assembled. All of them were older than Dick except for Marge and Tony Kerrigan, a teenage couple with Oehlerite inclinations, like me. The other members were peo-

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

I recall an old couple—old to me then, younger than I am now—named Beulah and Axel Johnson. We used to meet at their place sometimes. Axel was a typical Wobbly, a veteran of the class wars in the Pacific Northwest. He had worked in and struck the Montana copper mines before World War I. From him I learned that the name Wobbly began to be used after a Chinese cook in a logging camp proudly affirmed "I am a member of the I. Wobbly Wobbly." I regret that I was too young and ignorant then to learn everything about the past of the movement that was available for the asking from people like Axel and Beulah. But who had time for the past in 1936? Well, Dick, for one did. That summer he took us through Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and I learned about Miliukov and the Preobrazhensky Regiment and the analogy between the Kornilov revolt and what Franco was doing in Spain.

What a summer that was! When Dick recruited me the French general strike was on. Then a month later the Spanish Civil War broke out and the Barcelona proletariat rose and saved Catalonia from Franco. Towards summer's end the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial signalled the deepening hell-black night of Stalinism. It was a time of great hopes and fearsome omens. So that we could have our say, Dick began issuing a mimeographed weekly called *The Socialist Worker* which came out until the weekly *Labor Action* began publishing in San Francisco that fall with Cannon as editor. Dick invited Cannon down to San Diego. We hired the Workmen's Circle hall and Jim spoke mostly about the upcoming presidential election and the need for the workers to maintain their political independence from the New Deal. He pointed out that the German Social Democracy had gotten bigger concessions out of Bismarck with a policy of uncompromising opposition than the American union leaders had gotten out of Roosevelt with a policy of coalition. It is an argument I have found useful on many occasions since I first heard it.

Dick was not one of those Trotskyists who was content to analyze world events and debate political adversaries. If a chance to take part in a local class battle was offered, Dick took it. I recall cruising the back roads of San Diego County with Dick through the orchards and fields while a strike was on of Mexican harvest workers. The strikers knew Dick as an ally and we wound up at a meeting where Dick talked to the workers in Spanish. I think he took me along because he wanted to give me a taste for action. The other members of our local organization didn't get involved in that strike; they had their minds on other things. All of them were on WPA or relief. Their arena for mass work was the Workers Alliance. Some of them, since being often determines consciousness, had convinced themselves that the greatest revolutionary potential in Depression America was in the unemployed. Some were influenced by Veblenite expectations of the automatic collapse of the price system—a view which can incline people to passivity. Dick made the best use he could of the human resources at hand. He valued the stored experiences of the older members while understanding the obstacles to rousing them to action.

Already in 1936 Dick showed his deep interest in what we then called the Negro



**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 to what has been said about that. When he was in the San Diego WPA Orchestra he was in demand by other musicians to take part in private recreational performances of string quartets, and he told me that it was hard on him to have to turn down invitations to make music for fun when something else was happening like an agricultural strike. Years later it was distressing to hear that he had ruined his hands for violin playing on some industrial job in Seattle. Of Dick's recreational reading, when I first knew him I remember that he found great delight in the Irish writer James Stephens. He told me of his special fondness for *Deirdre*, Stephens' retelling of a tale from the ancient Celtic epics. He said he liked to return to that book once every year and forget about everything else for a couple of days.

The last time I saw Dick was in 1953, a couple of months before the expulsion of the Cochranites from the SWP. Despite the tense internal situation and our being in opposing factions we had a serious and friendly discussion of the issues in dispute. That was a unique experience for me in that faction fight, the only rational discussion I can remember having with a member of the majority faction of the time. On that occasion Dick was still the non-sectarian personality I had met and learned from in 1936, the one who brought to every discussion the results of close study and deep reflection, the one who entered a discussion alert to the possibility that he might learn something new. Since then I have often thought that if I saw him again we could pick up again easily, even decades later, where we left off in 1953. It is a permanent regret of mine that we never did, that we lost touch, and that now it is too late.

I admire the loyalty and responsibility displayed by the Spartacist comrades towards Dick in his later years. I know you will prove reliable custodians of Dick's literary legacy. I am curious to find out what Dick has to say in the manuscript on the Reformation he left you. I speculate that he picks up on and develops Trotsky's suggestion that Calvinism was the Marxism of the seventeenth century, the outlook of a militant, revolutionary class bent on taking power. But whatever he does with the Reformation I'm sure will be worth reading and thinking about.

Again, my appreciation for the care you took of Dick and the honor you showed him. That was well done.

David Herreshoff



**Soviet Power vs.  
Bourgeois Parliamentarism**

**TROTSKY**  
*The Western press has hailed the recent vote in the USSR as the "Freest Election Since '17 Revolution" (New York Times). They want to erase from history the only instance 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 parliamentary government and counterposed the system of soviet power. Under Stalin the "soviets" were turned into rubber stamps for the parasitic bureaucracy which usurped and betrayed the Bolshevik Revolution, and now Gorbachev is trying to turn them into a pseudo-parliament.*

The Soviet government is the first in the world (or strictly speaking, the second, because the Paris Commune began to do the same thing) to enlist the people, specifically the exploited people, in the work of administration. The working people are barred from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they never decide important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and 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)



**LENIN**

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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# "Hitler's Birthday" in Hayward—A Planned Provocation

# Travesty of Anti-Fascist Protest

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, Nazis, 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 railing against immigrants, spewing race-hate 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 birthday when he scheduled the meeting. If you believe that, maybe you believe in the tooth fairy too. Populist Party founder 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 sheets. 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, democratic and orderly mobilization, based on the power of the integrated labor movement and minorities, of all opponents of fascist terror. 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 they're distributing tells people to "call 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

## For Anti-Fascist Unity in Action

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 as the anti-fascists exercise their democratic protest rights. A powerful demonstration of unionists, minorities, socialists, would drive home that the 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 their own leaflets, placards, a chance to speak from the platform. But

it, then the librarians could come out and join the protest rather than being asked to carry out *police* functions as a purported expression of anti-fascist sentiment!

The question of appealing to the state to prevent fascist meetings in public buildings is not new. In California, the issue was fought out back 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 per-



San Francisco, 19 April 1980: Spartacist-initiated labor-centered mobilization stopped Nazis from "celebrating" Hitler's birthday.

WV Photos

instead of common action, the John Brown Committee, is splitting anti-fascist unity with its proposal to ban the meeting, driving liberals and civil libertarians into defending the "rights" of the fascists (not that they need much persuading). And once the capitalist state starts banning meetings, who's going to be next?

Now the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has jumped into the act with their usual violence-mongering *against the anti-fascists*, and claiming the fascists' strength is "exaggerated." The police then pick this up as authoritative "information," and say they're preparing for a violent confrontation on April 20 (Hayward Daily Review, 11 April). The ADL is helping set the stage for a brutal cop attack on anti-racist protesters. And the John Brown Committee might consider who are the "friendly" neighborhood racist cops they are calling on. They're the ones who through brutal intimidation have for years kept blacks from living in "whites only" towns. And can these New Leftists have forgotten People's Park, where the Alameda County Sheriff's Department shot down James Rector and hauled off hundreds of protesters to Alameda County's Santa Rita Prison Farm?

The Hayward Library director says her meeting room is open to all groups and there should be no discrimination on the basis of political or religious belief (Hayward Daily Review, 7 April). Calling on the authorities to cancel the meeting puts the librarians in the impossible position of either helping the fascists or recreating what the FBI is trying to do with its "lists" of book borrowers. If the government stayed out of

mission. The decisive opinion which emerged was:

"We are not concerned primarily with whether or not the School Board does or does not grant a permit. What we are primarily concerned with is the fascists holding the meeting...."

"The important point is that we would attempt to arouse the working class against the fascists.... What the Board does is their business not ours."

—*Bulletin of the Workers Party*, 22 March 1946

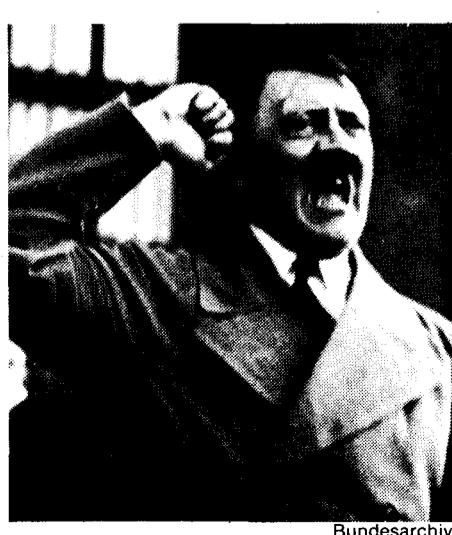
And that's what happened. In Oakland, 3,000 people massed outside Technical High School in a defiant united-front demonstration of unionists, black, Jewish and other minority groups. In Los Angeles, *Labor Action* (12 November 1945) reported that, "America's No. 1 Fascist" was left reeling on the ropes as 20,000 massed pickets outside and several hundred inside his meeting demonstrated their will to continue this struggle against native fascism to the end."

The program of labor/black mobilizations to stop the fascists has been the hallmark of the Spartacist League throughout the Reagan years. The key has been heavy union endorsements and participation. In Philadelphia last November, the united-front demonstration initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and widely supported by Philly labor spiked KKK/skinhead plans to rally at Independence Mall. In January, 3,000 workers, black youth and others turned out for the PDC-initiated protest in Atlanta against a KKK march which targeted Martin Luther King Day. And in Chicago on March 3, David Duke's appearance at a Populist Party cabal was met by a

united-front protest, demanding "No Hitlers in Chicago!"

### No "Hitler's Birthday" in Hayward!

As KKK "Wizard" in 1977, Duke organized a Klan "border patrol" to terrorize Hispanic immigrants. Today his two-bit local henchman Hubbell, an engineer at the Lawrence Livermore nuclear weapons lab, rants about "this country being flooded with people from Mexico and Central America," and calls for sealing the borders. In meetings like the one in Hayward, the Populist Party hopes to capitalize on white racist fear and the nativist anti-immigrant sentiment of the "English Only" movement that swept California. Hubbell rails against "demands by one race for



Bundesarchiv

Adolf Hitler, Nazi Führer, murderer of millions.

another to subsidize it financially or politically" (Hayward Daily Review, 7 April). Clearly he is *not* referring to the 200 years in which the black race "subsidized" the white slaveholders through slave labor.

The Populist Party fascists probably figured on a friendly reception in what was once a lily-white corridor running down the East Bay to San Jose. Historically, Hayward had a reputation as a town of mean, white, racist Southern "Okies." But today the population of Hayward is over one-third minority (7 percent black, 10 percent Asian and 20 percent Hispanic in 1980). It's about halfway between Oakland, with its large black population, and Fremont, with its 2,000-strong UAW local at NUMMI auto. Teamsters, cannery workers, warehousemen, bus drivers, BART workers are part of a powerful integrated labor movement in the East and South Bay. Here lies the power to stop the fascists through a united mobilization of all opponents of racist terror.

The growth of unions 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, black workers found unionized jobs, settling mainly in Richmond and northern Alameda County (Berkeley and Oakland). Crossing 110th Street from Oakland into San Leandro was, and still is, like going back across the Mason-Dixon line. Black workers who tried to move into San Leandro in the '70s were

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Steve Bisson Photos

Outraged black and white longshoremen march through Savannah, March 29, after union picket was run over by a scab operator.

## 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 Wilmington, North 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 deter-

mined 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 18-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 exploded in anger, and the scab trucker was chased and caught 63 miles away in South Carolina by Local 1414 business manager Bob Eason.

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 givebacks on key work rules. And New York ILA tug-boat men have been 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 scuttled 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, our *WV* supplement "From 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.

In the racist, open shop South, if the heavily black ILA is driven back, blacks and all working people will take it on the chin. The ILA in the South represents a beacon of *black labor power*—it has the muscle to lead the fight for black freedom through hard class struggle and the building of a fighting workers party. In Norfolk, Virginia the ILA mobilized heavily in defense of school busing. The Savannah ILA could likewise play a key role in the ongoing battle over integration of Chatham County schools.

To defend their union, longshoremen must play hardball. Bowing to the injunctions and pleading with the Democrats—black or white—will not keep Savannah a union port. Don't let the maritime bosses whipsaw local against local—for a single contract at the highest rates! The ILA must shut down the scab CATS operation with mass pickets that *nobody* crosses! For a port-wide shutdown—Savannah must remain all union! ■

## New York Transit: Death on the Tracks

We reprint below a leaflet published on April 3 by the Committee for a 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 maintainer 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 procedure 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 piss 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!

[TA bosses] Kiley and Gunn and their Democratic Party bosses Cuomo and Koch have made the New York City transit system a deathtrap for workers and riders. The TA uses safety rules to hang us, like they did in 1980 with Jesse Cole who was bleeding to death in his crumpled cab while management held a press conference on the sidewalk above. They blame the dead for not following safety procedures and hound the living if they try to. The day after Melsinker and Davis were killed, management forced angry signal workers in Brooklyn onto the treacherous structures in the rain: the TA said it wasn't raining, only "misting."

The whole system is rotting but the only maintenance the TA moves on is cosmetic repairs. Collisions and near misses are business as usual because signals don't work. The signal failure that caused the No. 1 to ram revenue cars on the Broadway line at 103rd Street March 3, injuring 45 riders and workers, was a direct result of a year's backlog of repairs in signal. The wiring on the subway's antiquated signals is one big patch job, but the TA has cut the number of workers in the department by 25 percent since 1987. On the structures throughout the system the boards are rotten. In the shops and barns every step could be deadly with live 600 [volts]

snaaking through open bugs and jumpers. Every breath is drawn from clouds of poisonous fumes and steel dust.

Manning scales have been cut through attrition and forced overtime. Motormen and conductors and bus drivers spend up to eight hours straight in a cab or behind the wheel. Jim Dwyer laid it out in *Newsday*: in 1988 train operators, conductors and tower operators logged 94 percent more OT than in 1986, while jobs were cut more than 6 percent. In a third of serious accidents, the worker hanged by the TA had put in more hours or had less rest between shifts than would be permitted on almost any other railroad in the country. The TA slashes jobs so it can pour millions into debt service on the bonds it has floated.

While the New York TA rattletrap system is falling apart, planes are dropping out of the sky, and the profit-hungry airline bosses push air traffic controllers and machinists far beyond human endurance to perform their precise work. American transportation is disintegrating along with the entire capitalist system. This is what the Eastern Airlines machinists have taken on in their strike which is a fight for *all of labor*. Our place is alongside them on mass picket lines, but when we raised a motion at the March UMD [United Motormen's Division] meeting calling

on the union to shut down the Train to the Plane and the bus links to the airports, we were ruled out of order. [TWU Local 100 president] Sonny Hall's idea of solidarity is coffee and donuts for the pickets!

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

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# Afghanistan and the Left

Shone/Gamma-Liaison



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 *mujahedin* spokesman describing the attack as a "disaster," while another "deeply fears that the victory which seemed so 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 soldiers in Jalalabad. On February 7, the Partisan Defense Committee wrote to representatives of the Afghan government with an "urgent offer to organize an international brigade to fight to the death" in defense of elementary social progress which would be drowned in blood by a mullah victory (see *WV* 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 beleaguered radical-nationalist 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 deeply 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 PDPA's "April Revolution" in 1978—openly echoed Carter/Reagan's ultimatum that the Soviets get out. But the international Spartacist tendency proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Af-

ghanistan!" 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 *mujahedin* 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 crowing over "Russia's Vietnam," Cliff tries to hide the fact that the U.S. was driven out of Indochina by a *victorious 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 Khomeini's Iran" (which the SWP has supported for years).

For some fake-Trotskyists, Afghanistan greased their slide into 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. (Ali subsequently 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 into the Labour Party. Recently, having discarded even vestigial lip service to defense of the Soviet Union, Matgamna's *Socialist Organiser* (2 February) grotesquely amnesties *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 Moscow'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 uproar over Afghanistan to declare its formal adherence to Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratically degenerated workers state while "condemning the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan" (*Workers Power*, February 1980). *Leninist*, on the other hand, came out of the pro-Moscow 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 extension of the gains of the Russian Revolution, on the one hand, and support to imperialist-backed feudal counterrevolution. The social democrats were unambiguously against Soviet intervention; we Trotskyists were emphatically for. Looking for a patch of dry ground in the middle, the wafflers come up with a convoluted mass 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 'hailed the Red Army' we warned that the invasion was counterrevolutionary....

"Now we call on workers everywhere to denounce the military retreat, despite the war-weariness of the Soviet troops. Soviet and Pakistani workers must organise internationalist aid, including military aid without strings, to those resisting the Mojahedin."

This centrist confusionism was dissected by Spartacist spokesman 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, counterrevolutionary to leave, the counterrevolutionary Soviet troops should have stayed in there to fight the counterrevolutionary *mujahedin*, until a revolutionary force arose that could throw out the counterrevolutionary troops. This is gobbledegook. That's not what was going on in Afghanistan."

"But because you cannot take a clear position on defending the Soviet Union, you have said that there is supposed to be a third, 'revolutionary,' force in Afghanistan. You have never been able to produce even the embryo of one, because in Afghanistan there was no third road. The question posed was for or against the Soviet Union against imperialism, the defining question of the Cold War."

The "methodology" of Workers Power recalls that of American Socialist Workers Party honcho Jack Barnes, who back in 1980 renounced the SWP's initial lukewarm support for Soviet intervention on the grounds that reading our headline "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" convinced him that the SWP was "off base." So using the "anti-Spart" yardstick as their guide, the eccentric reformist Barnesites quickly got back on base with the bourgeoisie by coming out for Soviet withdrawal (see "SWP's About-Face on Afghanistan," *Spartacist* No. 31-32, Summer 1981).

Workers Power complains that the Red Army went in "not to defend the PDPA's limited reform programme, still less to carry out an East European style social overturn, but to restore stability in its buffer state." But in the context of raging civil war, to stabilize Afghanistan as a buffer state the Soviet forces would have had to destroy the *mujahedin*. And a prolonged Soviet occupation would open the possibility of social revolution. As for East Europe, when the Red Army occupied the region in the course of defeating Nazi Germany, Stalin did not plan to carry out a social revolution there. The expropriation of the bourgeoisie in East Europe came in response to Truman/Churchill's anti-Soviet drive via the Marshall Plan. But Workers Power would have denounced the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan even if a social overturn had been intended; WP has denounced every Stalinist-led social revolution since World War II as "counterrevolutionary."

Behind Workers Power's insistence that the Soviet intervention was counterrevolutionary lies a deeply ingrained "third camp" prejudice, political baggage from their Cliffite origins. During

*continued on page 6*



**Workers Power and Leninist denounce Spartacists 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 Pakistani president has called for the federation of Afghanistan into a dominant Pakistani state. But the Afghan army and the people of Jalalabad are heroically fighting back. They have repelled the onslaught; the battle still rages.

The *mujahedin*, heavily armed by the U.S., organized by Pakistan and bolstered by Saudi Arabian and other foreign forces, are inflicting terrible suffering on the population. On March 30, rockets struck a Sikh temple in Jalalabad where several hundred Sikhs and Hindus had gathered; 22 people, most of them women and children, were killed.

Recently, the Afghan government issued an appeal:

"In order to aid the victims of these attacks a broad campaign of humanitarian assistance has been launched on a national and international plane by the concerned parties and the authorities of the Republic of Afghanistan."

In response to this appeal, the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) has launched a campaign to raise funds for the civilian victims of Jalalabad. We call on all workers, oppressed minorities and defenders of democratic rights to support this undertaking. 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, Washington and its allies have poured billions into supporting the Afghan counterrevolutionaries, and now feudal, imperialist-backed states in the region are throwing their own soldiers into the

civil war. The Western media glorified the *mujahedin* as they killed Russian soldiers. But now that the Soviet troops have pulled out, even *Wall Street Journal* reporters tell of the horror facing Afghan women in Pakistani refugee camps whose husbands with their reactionary social values prefer them to die rather than let them be examined by a male obstetrician. Even Western officials call rebel leader Hekmatyar a "fascist." His thugs used to throw acid in the faces and shoot the legs of young women at Kabul University who refused to wear the stifling head-to-toe veil.

At an International Women's Day rally in Kabul this year, Fatima, a 25-year-old second lieutenant in the Afghan army, declared: "We have nothing but death for these bigots who only want their dollars from the U.S. and the freedom to have half-a-dozen wives each."

This war originated after modernizing nationalists of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took power in April 1978 in a country where the working class had no social weight. They sought to carry out basic democratic measures—restricting the

bride price, teaching young girls as well as boys to read, land reform. In response Islamic mullahs, tribal chiefs and landlords launched a bloody civil war. In 1979 the Soviet Union was called to intervene in force to prevent Afghanistan, its southern neighbor, from falling to U.S.-backed *mujahedin*. The Spartacist League hailed the Soviet military intervention for opening the possibility of social revolution in this hideously backward country. However, under Gorbachev, the Soviet forces have been withdrawn in order to appease the American capitalist rulers.

Despite several and serious differences with the PDPA, we must find ourselves on the same side in opposing the military triumph of reaction, a position which is the basis for our overall revolutionary defensism. Two months ago, the PDC wrote to the Afghan government offering "to organize an international brigade to fight to the death" to defend elementary social progress which is in grave danger in Afghanistan. While the Kabul government took this offer as presently unnecessary, it has now asked the Partisan Defense Committee and others to participate in an international campaign of humanitarian aid. We have wholeheartedly undertaken this effort and urge you to generously give your support. Every penny, every dollar collected will be sent to Kabul, Afghanistan; 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 wounded and mutilated citizens there. This struggle is in the interests of the whole of the working people.

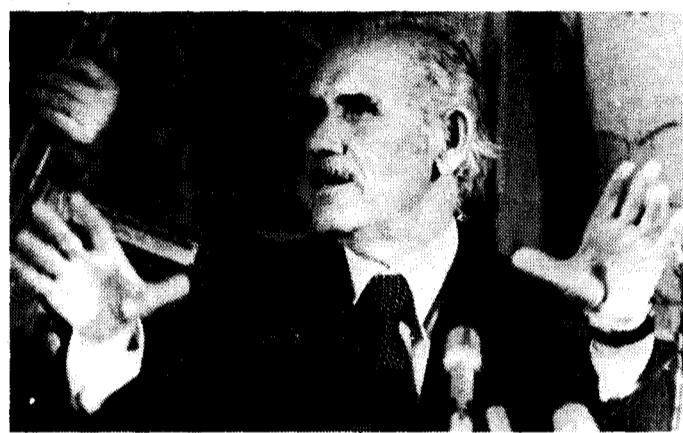
Partisan Defense Committee  
8 April 1989

Contributions payable to the Jalalabad Civilian Victims Aid Fund can be sent to the Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013.



TASS from Sovfoto

**May 1979 demonstration in Kabul honors Noor Mohammed Taraki, an enlightened intellectual who sought to embrace Marxism and founded the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.**



AFP

## Afghanistan and the Left...

(continued from page 5)

the Polish crisis of 1981, WP denounced the Jaruzelski regime for its "counter-revolutionary" suppression of Solidarność, even while acknowledging that every wing of Solidarność stood for a return to capitalism. Support to this Vatican-led, massively CIA-financed outfit was dictated, according to WP, by "the existence of a mass base." The same logic led Workers Power to support Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution" in Iran: if it's popular, tail it. But in Afghanistan, the "mass base" was under the control of the *mujahedin*. So in order to avoid siding with the Soviet army, Workers Power fantasized about a third force, calling for "the self organisation of the Afghan proletariat and feudal elements [!] to organise their own state power, independent of the Stalinists and the imperialists" (*Workers Power*, February 1980).

### Leninist: Blinded by Nationalism

*Leninist* takes a similarly equivocal position over Afghanistan. But where Workers Power is capitulating to the pressures of social democracy, in this case the inspiration is Third World Stalinism. (Indeed, directly so, since their mentors are the Turkish TKP, a split from the "official" Communist Party.) Thus *Leninist* claims that a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat already existed in Kabul at the time of the Soviet intervention, in the form of the Khalq (Masses) wing of the PDPA and particularly its leader Hafizullah Amin, who was deposed and assassinated when the Red Army

moved in. *Leninist* (17 February) denounced "some elements who hailed the Soviet intervention," including "the Trotskyite Spartacist League [which] said it secured Afghanistan's path to socialism":

"Blinded by dogma it [the SL] refused to see the PDPA as any sort of revolutionary party and thus, whatever life proved to the contrary, incapable of carrying out a revolution. Thus in its eyes Afghanistan became a 1945 Poland, socialism came with the Red Army's tanks."

The falsifications and theoretical confusions in these few sentences are manifold.

To begin with, *Leninist* equates socialism (a classless and stateless society) with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then they attribute to us a position we have never held. What we actually said was:

"Of course, the conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin did not send 100,000 troops into Afghanistan to effect a social revolution, but simply to make secure an unstable, strategically placed client state."

—The Russian Question Point Blank, *Spartacist* No. 29, Summer 1980

Moreover, we do not equate the question of "revolution from without" in Poland and Afghanistan. Poland had a powerful, historically socialist industrial proletariat which failed to conquer power in large measure because of Stalin's repetitive decapitation of the Polish Communist Party. But in backward Afghanistan, whose level of social development was somewhere between tribalism and feudalism—one-sixth of the population was nomadic—there was no internal social base for the relatively minimal reforms pursued by the PDPA, much less for proletarian revolution.

What really rankles *Leninist* is that we said straight-out that with the Red

Army intervention, the fate of Afghanistan 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 intervention, not even by the revolutionary Bolsheviks. 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..." The October Revolution was based on the highest level of organization in soviets of a significant industrial proletariat. However, the analogy between Afghanistan and Outer Mongolia is highly instructive since it completely refutes—indeed, demolishes—the *Leninist*'s argument. Mongolia was the purest case imaginable of "revolution from without."

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 People's Government" was brought back literally on the bayonets of the Soviet Red Army.

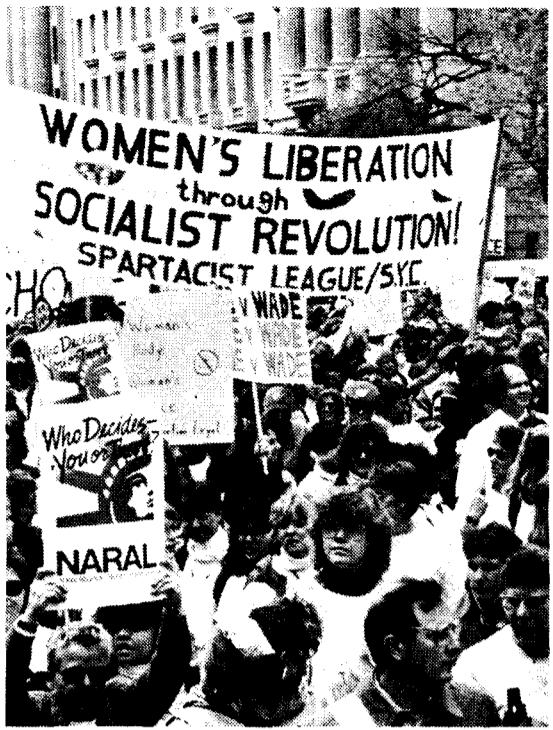
In Afghanistan, the 1978 "April Revolution" consisted of a handful of demonstrations by restless masses of students and a military coup by Khalq army officers. The base of the PDPA consisted overwhelmingly of the educated petty bourgeoisie, schoolteachers and students, and Soviet-trained army officers who, having some direct comparative experience of how truly backward their country was, sought far-

reaching modernization. The working class as such had no social weight. And as soon as the PDPA regime attempted 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 landlords and the mullahs.

It was only the entry of the Red Army which provided an external social base for far-reaching political revolution—a kind of social revolution given the pre-feudal class structure prevailing in the country. Yet, for *Leninist*, this was precisely the point at which the revolution became endangered. The killing of Amin, says *Leninist*, represented "the extinguishing of the flame of the revolution." Amin had as much in common with his despotic namesake in Uganda as with revolution. Indeed, if one is to believe the plausible account by former Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko in an interview in the London *Observer* (2 April), one of the factors that finally convinced Brezhnev to intervene was the murder of PDPA founder and historic Khalq leader Noor Mohammed Taraki by the power-hungry Amin in October 1979. Taraki was an enlightened intellectual who saw himself as Marxist from the early 1950s. He was an admirer of Lenin's October Revolution who mistakenly identified it with the Soviet Union after decades of Stalinist misrule.

### For Communist Internationalism!

Having already announced the death throes of the Kabul regime, *Leninist* (6 March) responded to our offer to organize international brigades for Afghanistan by sneering that this is "cynical posturing...all very easy to organize from the Bronx or some such



WV Photos

## At Women's Rights March in Washington PDC Launches Jalalabad Aid Campaign

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 crowd of over 300,000 as we marched with our banner proclaiming, "No to the Veil! Defend Afghan Women! Support Jalalabad Victims of CIA Cutthroats!"

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 years that the guerrilla fighters have been battling the Kabul Government for control of the country, many of the harshest consequences have fallen on civilians, more than one million of whom are believed to have died. And among the civilians, many of the hardest hit have been children 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 com-

mented, noting that the poor can't afford to buy food in the bazaars. The spectre of starvation hangs over embattled Jalalabad, which cannot receive supplies by ground transportation because of the *mujahedin* blockade.

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 Spartacist 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, NY 10013.

place." The Bolsheviks' program was world socialist revolution, its instrument the Communist International. But from international brigades to revolutionary war, they did not renounce military measures to extend the conquests of October. Thus Trotsky, then Commissar of War, wrote to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in August 1919:

"There is no doubt at all that our Red Army constitutes an incomparably more powerful force in the Asian terrain of world politics than in the European terrain.... We have up to now devoted too little attention to agitation in Asia. However, the international situation is evidently shaping in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal."

—*The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922, Vol. I* (1964)

Revolutionary war ("export of revolution"), as envisaged by the Soviet army leader Tukhachevsky, is not a tactic for any and all situations, particularly not where there is a developed proletariat. But if it ever applies anywhere, Afghanistan is sure it.

If Workers Power are classic left-centrists of the first water, *Leninist* are Stalinist-nationalists without an anchor. While Workers Power supported counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarnosc as a "lesser evil" to the Stalinist regime, *Leninist* supported the suppression of the pro-socialist 1956 Hungarian workers uprising. Today, *Leninist* finds itself simultaneously arguing for political revolution against the Gorbachev bureaucracy and praising Stalin's virtues, at one instant arguing that the Great Russian fascists of Pamiat have a legitimate place under soviet democracy and at the next mimicking our call for independent workers mobilizations to crush Pamiat.

Only the Trotskyist program of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and the other deformed workers states coupled with the perspective of proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies can provide a compass for would-be revolutionaries. While *Leninist* seeks to revive the Third International of Stalin and Workers Power disowns the banner of Trotsky's Fourth International, our struggle for the reforging of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution, is the road forward. As Gorbachev offers up one country after another in a futile drive to appease U.S. imperialism, it is the Trotskyists who mobilize for internationalist support to the Afghan peoples fighting counterrevolutionary terror. ■

history of anti-Asian racism on the West Coast is particularly virulent, dating back to riots against Chinese workers (and the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) when their virtual slave labor was no longer needed to build the transcontinental railroads.

### Labor, Minorities, Militants Can Stop the Fascists

The Bay Area is one area on the West Coast with a heavy concentration of union labor and blacks. In 1980 when the Nazis tried to "celebrate" Hitler's birthday in San Francisco, they were stopped cold by a mass labor-centered mobilization, initiated by the Spartacist League and trade-union supporters, and built against the bitter opposition of Democratic Party mayor Feinstein. Since then the fascists have been unable to mount a public provocation in San Francisco. Instead, they've shifted to working the fringes of the Bay Area, like the recent "Aryan Woodstock" skinhead rally in Napa Valley. Outfits like the John Brown Committee adopt militant postures in rural Napa County. But in the urban centers where there are the forces of labor and minorities to defeat 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 scare 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 groveling appeals to the bourgeois state. In both cases, they show a touching faith in the supposed benevolence of the ruling

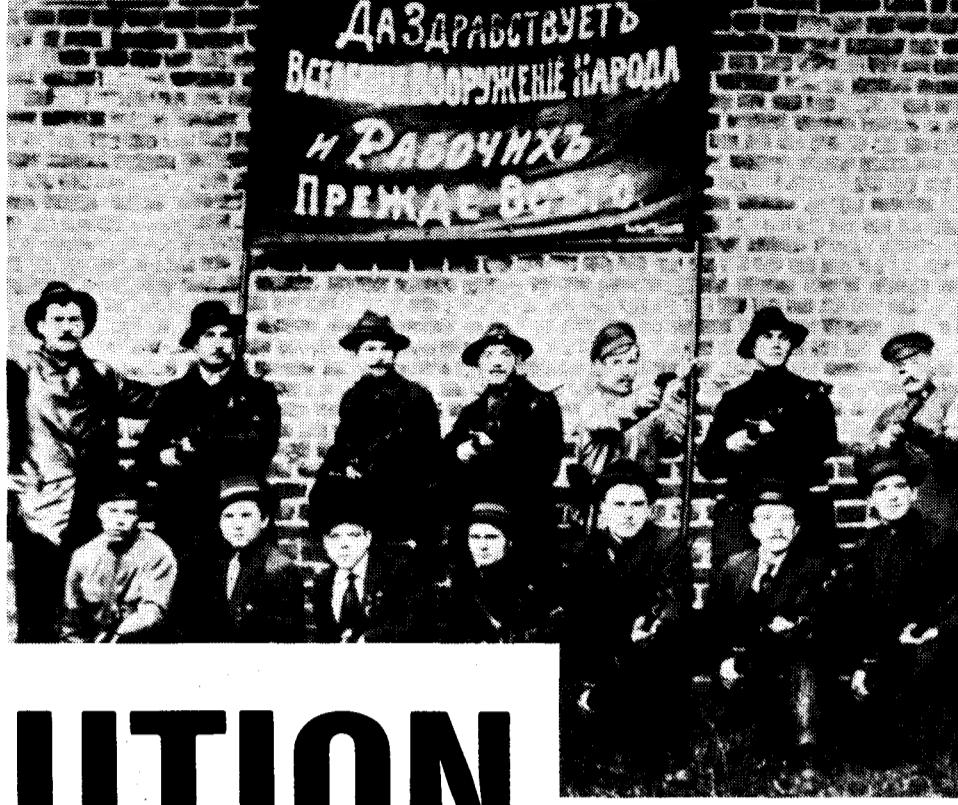
class and its minions. Here is the latter-day Weather Overground twice removed, the people who used to go around proclaiming "Death to the Klan—Stop the Killer Cops," now bringing in the same cops to ban the fascists! This putative bloc with the police is an egregious form of popular-frontism, going via the Democratic Party to the cops. But, then, the Weathermen were always really "liberals with bombs," as the Russian Marxists said of the Narodniki.

The John Brown Committee leaflet calling 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 TransAmerica building and characterizing the Populists as "sexist, homophobic and anti-Semitic." This leaves out the fascists' central hatred for blacks, Asians, Hispanics and unions. But 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-backed protest against fascist/Populist 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 spied the KKK/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. ■



The 54th Massachusetts, most celebrated black regiment in the Civil War, leading assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina.



Petrograd, 1917: Red Guards with banner, "Long Live the Universal Arming of the People and the Workers First of All."

# REVOLUTION AND THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

"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 population in the name of a "war on drugs and terrorism." And it is the Marxists, who champion 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 misused 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*

edly "excessive" power of these "assault" rifles by blasting away cinder blocks and watermelons, not telling viewers that virtually any good hunting 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 gunship

abiding" citizens to defend themselves with violence, even against the so-called legally constituted authorities. Are memories really so short? Recall the bloody Ludlow, Colorado massacre of 1914 in which 21 men, women and children, families of striking miners, 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 Philly cops, who in 1985 raked 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.

White 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 refracted 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 writings 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

## Gun Control Kills Blacks

*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 hold 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 49 models of semiautomatic "military-like" weapons. In Washington, D.C., curfews 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 bonapartism 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 suppos-

helicopters and tanks, knows that's baloney.

The guns they are talking about banning are 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, bolt-action hunting rifle packs twice the kinetic energy of a "military-style" AKS.

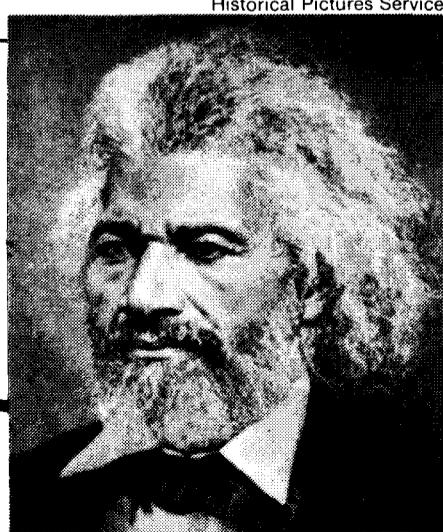
Polls show that even people who favor banning "assault rifles" know it will not stop the "drug mafia" from getting their guns the same way they get their drugs—smuggling them in with the help of corrupt police departments and army commanders with friends in high places. (In the Iran/contra scandal, the 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*, 3 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-

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

### MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS! NOW OR NEVER!

This is your Golden Moment. The Government of the United States calls for every Able-Bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for the THREE YEARS SERVICE, and join in fighting the Battle of Liberty and the Union. A new era is upon us. For generations we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, torture and wrong; our numbered host have died in their citizenship fight, and our呻吟 sons have lived, our spirits saved and comforted, and the hopes of the future are now involved in death and darkness. Now is the sole aspect of our relation to the white race is changed. Now there is no room for previous meanness. Let us back to Arms: Fall Now and Our Race is doomed or this the world of our birth. We must now make or be forever fallen. If we value Liberty, if we wish to live in this land, if we love our families, our children, our homes, we must strike NOW while the Country calls; now rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arm that we are worthy to be free-men. Our choices have made the country believe that we are ready, reward, without end, without manhood, without the spirit of manhood. Shall we die with this stigma resting on our graves? Shall we leave this infamy to shame to our children? No! At the sound then, Now! WE WILL RISE! The alternative is open us; let us rather die free-men than live to be slaves. What is life without liberty? We say that we have manhood—one is the time to prove it. A nation or a people the poorest right may be denied, but cannot be respected. If we would be regarded Men, if we would forever SILENCE THE TONGUE OF CALUMNY, of pepulism and hate; let us rise the NOW and fly to arms! We have seen what Valor and Heroism, as brothers displayed at FORT BUDWELL and at MILLIKEN'S BEND; though they are not yet from the gallant, valiant army of slavery, they have started the world by the most exalted heroism. If they have proved themselves heroes, can not we prove ourselves men? ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES? More than a Million White Men have left Confederate Homes and joined the Armies of the Union to save their Country, and to save the rest of the world, to save the hosts of the Union, to save our slaves, to save our manhood, and



Abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass campaigned for blacks to join Union Army. Armed blacks were key to Northern victory against slavery.

periods of social struggle. The ban on automatic weapons is usually linked to gangsters like Al Capone, but it never stopped them from getting their hands on Thompson submachine guns, just as the mob today has its Uzis. More to the point, the 1934 ban on automatic weapons came in the Great Depression when the spectre of working-class revolution haunted Washington (in fact, that year saw three citywide general strikes led by ostensible communists). The federal gun control act of 1968 came at the peak of black ghetto upheavals. And the perennial push to ban "Saturday Night Specials" is just an attempt to make guns more expensive and hence less accessible to the lower classes.

Gun laws are fossilized traces of the evolution of society and the state. In a recent book on Afghanistan, Pakistani leftist Raja Anwar writes: "In a society where every group and every citizen is armed, no government can possibly function" (*The Tragedy of Afghanistan* [1988]). Anwar knows whereof he speaks in his richly detailed firsthand account of this country of heavily armed tribal peoples, but his conclusion is wrong. The conclusion should be that the government must have some relation to the governed, good or bad. Thus in Nicaragua there are several hundred thousand guns in the hands of the population, and while the shooting range outside Managua is filled every weekend with people practicing their (fully automatic) AKs, these guns have been used to defend a revolution against the contra terrorists.

Today the police are concerned about "assault rifles" mainly because they are turning up in the black ghettos, at least in California. What gets cops upset is that a semiautomatic rifle might have given a Malcolm X the chance to defend himself, or might let a housing project resident fend off cop assaults when a "TNT" squad comes illegally bursting through the door. In the recent period cops have run amok across the country, gunning down people at will. And when a Larry Davis managed to defend himself against the murderous cops, and was acquitted by a Bronx jury last year, the killers-in-blue staged a massive armed demonstration of cop power.

For years, as liberals railed against every sort of firearm, opposition to gun control was led by the National Rifle Association, which brags about training police. But this time the NRA's right-wing political and cop connections were of no avail against the "bipartisan" consensus of the capitalist parties—concerned about "violence" as the economy spirals downward—to push for civilian disarmament. So in quick succession unprecedented bans have been passed on "assault rifles"—dubbed "Rambo guns" by the same media which promoted the Rambo image during the Reagan years. First Stockton, then L.A., and in March the California legislature voted a statewide ban. In New York City, which already requires strict licensing of rifles and shotguns, the city council is considering a similar ban, pushed by racist mayor Ed Koch and police chief Ben Ward.

On the national level, the day after Bennett announced the import ban, Colt Industries said it would voluntarily stop selling its AR-15 to civilians (police and military can still buy it) in order to be "consistent with U.S. Government policy." (Colt is a scabherding outfit whose workers have been on strike for over three years.) And in Congress, Democratic Senator Howard Metzenbaum, among others, is pushing a bill which would treat semiautomatic weapons like fully automatic weapons (already banned). Liberal Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy endorsed the anti-gun ban under the slogan "Support Your Local Police" (*New York*

deer or shoot at paper targets but not for self-defense. "I do not believe that an AK-47, a machine gun [sic], is a sporting weapon," was the line ex-president Reagan mouthed for the TV cameras.

### The Second Amendment's Revolutionary History

Four centuries ago the Renaissance and the Reformation combined with the "gunpowder revolution," as military historian John Keegan noted in his book *The Mask of Command* (1987). This threatened the state by putting untold power in the hands of the common man, Keegan noted, particularly

this threat by establishing standing armies "to monopolize the power unleashed by the gunpowder revolution" (Keegan). It was the struggle against these tyrannies which produced the revolutionary principle of the "right to keep and bear arms," codified by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. What's going on today is a calculated *counterrevolutionary* attack by a decaying ruling class on these constitutional guarantees.

The clear intent of the Second Amendment (ratified in 1791), as expressed in its language, was not sport or hobby but a people's militia:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The constitutional right is not about hunting or target practice; the American colonial revolutionaries wanted the whole people armed, including with military arms, in order to be able to kill British soldiers, and to forestall the threat of any standing army, which they rightly regarded as the bane of liberty and the basis of tyranny. Indeed, what triggered the American Revolution were attempts by the British army, in particular General Thomas Gage, to force colonists to surrender their arms. As noted in a recent article by Stephen P. Halbrook:

"The Revolutionary War was sparked when militiamen exercising at Lexington refused to give up their arms. The widely published American account of April 19, 1775, began with the order shouted by a British officer:

"Disperse you Rebels—Damn you, throw down your Arms and disperse."  
—American Rifleman,  
March 1989

There is a continuum between the English Civil War, the American Revolution and the American Civil War. Oliver Cromwell's English bourgeois revolution beheaded a king in 1649 and gave birth to democratic principles, codified decades later in the English Bill of Rights of 1689 when the revolution was already ebbing. As a guarantee against Catholic/royalist excesses, the English Bill of Rights listed "true, ancient and indubitable rights," including:

"6. That the raising or keeping a standing Army within the Kingdom in Time of Peace, unless it be with Consent of Parliament, is against Law.

"7. That the Subjects which are Protestants, may have Arms for their Defence suitable to their Condition, and as are allowed by Law."

—quoted in Stephen P. Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed* (1984)

Carrying forward the English tradition, the American revolutionaries expanded on this right, in light of their own experience in struggle against the British king, when they drew up the Constitution in 1787. In the state conventions which ratified it, a "militia" was understood to mean the armed people, not a "select" militia like the present-day National Guard (which can be federalized and keeps its arms stored in armories controlled by the government). The right to "keep and bear arms" was universally recognized as an

*continued on page 10*



Avenge the Greensboro martyrs! Klan/Nazis (right) gunned down five civil rights and labor activists in Greensboro, North Carolina, 3 November 1979.  
A week later, Spartacist-initiated united front (above) in Detroit stopped Klan from celebrating Greensboro massacre.

*Times*, 22 March). And sensing the political winds, President Bush, a life member of the NRA, backhandedly endorsed the "outrage" against the guns, "semiautomated [sic] weapon or automated, whichever it was."

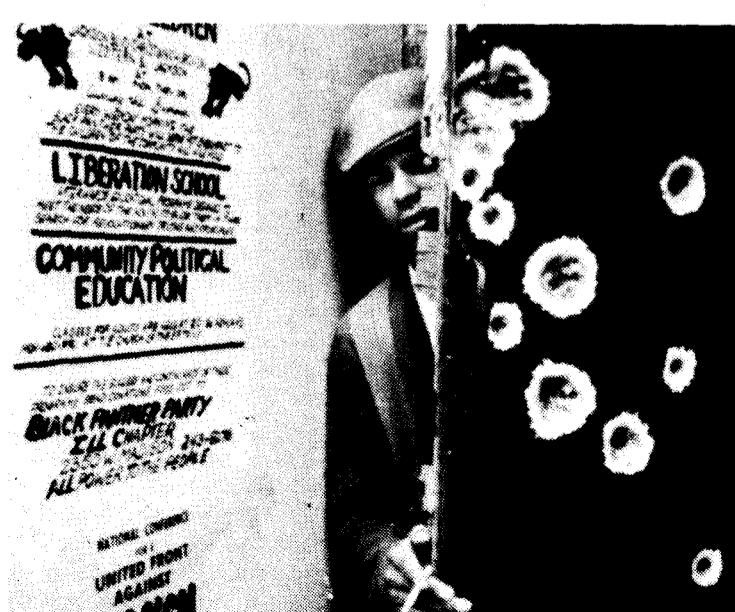
In an attempt to justify this massive assault on Americans' constitutional right to "keep and bear arms," the bourgeoisie is rewriting its own Constitution in the media. We are told civilians can own arms only if they are "particularly suitable for, or readily adaptable to, sporting purposes," as specified in the 1968 federal gun control law. A "stricter" interpretation of this act was the administration's basis for cutting off imports of the "assault" weapons. So we are told it's OK to use firearms to hunt

when combined with the proclamation of a right to bear arms, "a genuinely seditious principle." Military power could no longer be confined to a few skilled noblemen and their retinues. A precursor to the gun was the crossbow: "In seconds an amateur with a crossbow could wipe out years of costly training, to say nothing of generations of noble (even royal) breeding," wrote Robert L. O'Connell in the *Military History Quarterly* (Winter 1989).

Both the Church and the English aristocracy tried to ban the crossbow, but the rifle was a far more serious threat, particularly after the Industrial Revolution made mass production possible. The 16th and 17th century rulers in Madrid, Vienna, Paris and London met



Bullet-riddled door of office where Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed by Chicago cops and FBI, 1969 (left). Massacre of Philadelphia MOVE, May 1985: Cops opened up with machine guns, while firebomb was dropped on black commune, killing eleven men, women and children.



# 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 ideological conviction, to fight for their government in loosely controlled guerrilla-type units. As was noted by Friedrich Engels, who was no mean soldier himself (being a heroic and able officer on the revolutionary side in 1848):

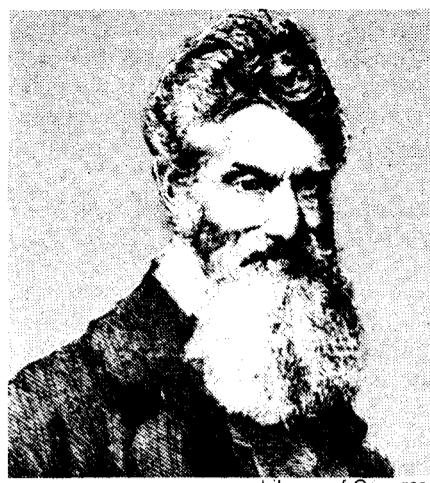
"While the soldiers of European armies, held together by compulsion and severe treatment, could not be trusted to fight in extended order, in America they had to contend with a population which, untrained to the regular drill of line soldiers, were good shots and well acquainted with the rifle. The nature of the ground favored them; instead of attempting manoeuvres of which at first they were incapable, they unconsciously fell into skirmishing. Thus, the engagement of Lexington and Concord marks an epoch in the history of infantry."

—*"Infantry,"* an article for *The New American Cyclopaedia* (1859)

## Abolition of Slavery by Arming the Slaves

But the Americans' so-called democracy accepted slavery, written into the Constitution itself. It was generally recognized that if the slaves got guns it would mean the end of slavery, so they were denied this legal right through the device, juridically approved by the Supreme Court in the infamous Dred Scott case in 1857, of claiming that "the people" meant only "citizens," and "citizens" did not include black slaves. Chief Justice Taney noted with horror that if blacks were citizens they would be entitled to a long list of rights, including the right "*to keep and carry arms wherever they went.*"

John Brown was among a small vanguard in the 1850s who saw that only force of arms would put an end to slavery, and he became a prophetic martyr for leading the famous raid on a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Meanwhile, ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, a close friend of Brown's, openly defended a man's "right of self-defense" when fugitive slaves were being hunted by agents of the slaveholders, even if this meant "shooting down his pursuers," as occasionally happened. "Slavery is a system of brute force," he



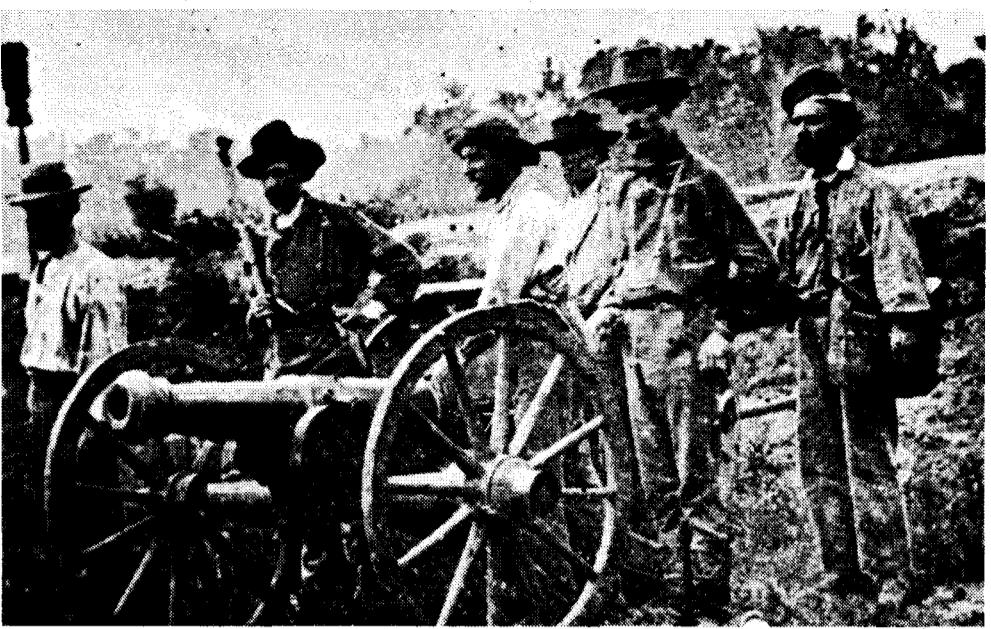
Library of Congress

In "Bleeding Kansas" during the 1850s, John Brown and other armed Free Soilers fought marauding slaveholders in prelude to Civil War.

said. "It must be met with its own weapons."

Thus when the Civil War came, and the Northern bourgeoisie became so militarily desperate in 1862-63 to crush the slaveholders' rebellion against the Union that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and agreed to the forming of black regiments, Douglass seized on this historic opportunity. "Men of Color, To Arms!" was his slogan as he campaigned for black volunteers for such famous regiments as the 54th Massachusetts. And it wasn't only in the army that blacks fought—during the racist anti-draft riots in New York in 1863, according to one black newspaper of the time:

"The colored men who had manhood in them armed themselves, and threw out



Kansas State Historical Society

ical power and the remnants of the slaveholders' government seeking to put the former slaves back "in their place." This struggle pivoted on black people's possession of arms. Hence the reactionary "black codes" passed in various Southern states tried to outlaw possession of firearms by blacks. An 1865 Florida statute, for instance, made it unlawful for "any Negro" to possess "firearms or ammunition of any kind," the penalty for violation being the pillory and the whip.

In response, the federal government's Freedmen's Bureau widely distributed circulars which read in part, "All men, without distinction of color, have the right to keep and bear arms to defend their homes, families or themselves." But the question would be

the "Second American Revolution" which was the Civil War.

## Disarming the Population

In the 19th century Karl Marx had expressed the hope that America would be one of the few countries where working people could take power more or less peacefully because the ruling class had virtually no standing army but relied on militias. Yet by the turn of the century the U.S. had entered the imperialist club and quickly developed a standing army. And over the years Second Amendment rights, supposedly inviolate, have been increasingly constricted by layer upon layer of laws which made gun-owning and armed self-defense more and more of a class privilege.

The most notorious example is New York State's Sullivan Law, which makes it illegal to carry a pistol for 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 O. Sulzberger ("Businessmen Opt to Pack a Gun," *New York CityBusiness*, 11 March 1985). The law was passed back in 1911 after a man who felt he had been unjustly fired from his city job as night watchman shot the mayor with a revolver. Hizzoner survived, but the incident was seized upon by "prominent" citizens such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (the same one responsible for the Ludlow massacre) to launch a campaign for gun control. And the *New York Times* led the pack.

Today, also, while "Punch" Sulzberger has his armed guards, as well as a pistol stashed in his desk drawer, his newspaper editorializes against "Rambo Guns" (15 March)—all in the name of fighting "crime," which certainly hasn't decreased in New York City since 1911. The *Times* has an amazing capacity for nonsensically disconnecting the question of guns from its social context. Thus Stephen Kinzer, for five years the *Times*' man in Managua, calls it a "social problem" that in Guatemala "300,000 people are licensed to carry firearms and another 300,000 do so illegally" ("Guatemala: What Has Democracy Wrought?" *New York Times Magazine*, 26 March). He doesn't relate this to the fact that there have been rightist death squads, a guerrilla insurgency for 20 years, and an insanely savage, heavily armed army.

The *Times*' A.M. Rosenthal has gone a step further by suggesting (17 March) that today the Second Amendment means nothing but arming a "drug militia." And on April 7 the paper printed a letter from a Catholic bishop explicitly calling for repeal of the amendment. The *Times*' unstated goal is in all circumstances a thoroughly armed government and a thoroughly disarmed population.

And it's not only such mainstream imperialist spokesmen, but also the radlibs and even "left" groups, which want gun bans. The *Nation* (3 April) front-paged their position: "How Citizens Can Beat the Gun Lobby." And most of



Marzani & Munsell



Charlotte Observer  
Ex-Marine and NAACP leader Robert F. Williams (inset) organized armed defense of civil rights workers in Monroe, North Carolina in 1957.

their pickets every day and night, determined to die defending their homes.... Most of the colored men in Brooklyn who remained in the city were armed daily for self-defense."

—James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War* (1965)

In the post-Civil War Reconstruction period, the central struggle in the South was between the newly emancipated blacks seeking to exercise politi-

decided by military power: the racist white state militias, aided by the private Ku Klux Klan, were already disarming blacks, whose only defense was their own arms and/or the occupying Union Army. What was going on in the South was graphically described in one letter cited in Congressional hearings in 1871:

"Then the Ku Klux fired on them through the window one of the bullets striking a colored woman... and wounding her through the knee badly. The colored men then fired on the Ku Klux, and killed their leader or captain right there on the steps of the colored men's house...."

In this case, as in many others, the Klan leader turned out to be "a constable and deputy sheriff."

While Congress adopted all sorts of paper measures protecting blacks, including the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which guarantees "equal protection of the laws," it betrayed the promise of black liberation in the Compromise of 1877, when Union troops were withdrawn from the South. Because they could not defend their rights by force of arms, black people were denied all their rights. It took a long and often bloody struggle by the civil rights movement 80 years later to restore some of the blacks' rights won in

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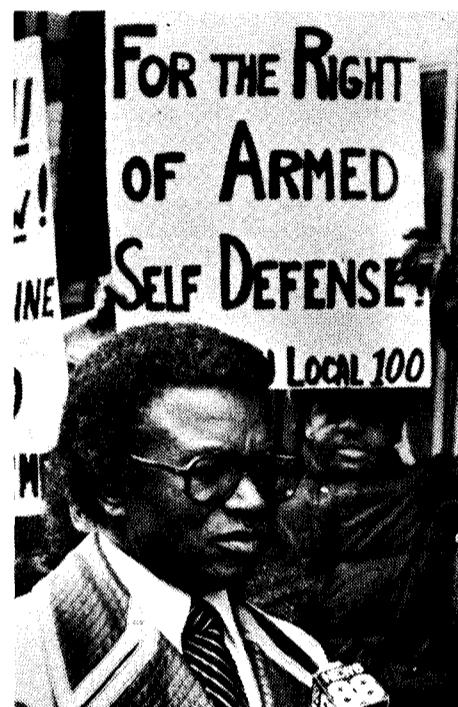
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the reformist left has kept mum on this issue, because they're closet liberals. After eight years of the Reagan/Bush administration, the days are gone when social activists at least made the obvious observation that "crime" is rooted in social conditions and cannot be eradicated by police measures.

In talking about who is "outgunned," the real balance is, in Jeffersonian language, how many guns are in the hands of the people, and how many in the hands of the government. Yet today the reformists are all signing up for the Democratic/Republican "war 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 drugs and giving them out free to addicts. But such a measure would fly in the face of bourgeois "morals," as well as undermine 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,



New York City subway clerk James Grimes. State's attempt to victimize him for defending himself with a gun was beaten back.

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, the city quickly passed an ordinance against carrying "long arms" in public. Not long after, in 1965, Malcolm was assassinated. In Louisiana and a few other Southern states in the mid-'60s the Deacons for Defense and Justice were successful in using firearms to protect the civil rights movement from Klan attack. Among the Deacons' standard weapons was the M-1 carbine, an "assault rifle" which black men had learned to use in the army in World War II and the Korean War.

While the U.S. formally upholds on paper the right to "keep and bear arms," there still are a number of capitalist countries where the right is much more of a reality because of exceptional circumstances (mainly a more muted class struggle). Switzerland has 600,000 "assault rifles" capable of full-auto operation in private circulation, and in Denmark the Home Guard militia keeps their "assault rifles" and even sub-machine guns in private homes (there are bitter memories of the Nazi occupation). Yet a total of 13 killings in 25 years have been linked to the 60,000 Danish Home Guard weapons in circulation.

#### The Turning Point: 1848

As the call for a people's militia was adopted by the rising proletarian move-

ment, 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 disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeois, who were at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers."

"This happened for the first time in 1848."

—Engels' 1891 introduction 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 population was polarized along class lines. 1848 marked the beginning of the modern world in which we still live, and the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat remains historically unresolved to this day.

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 Commune's key decisions came on 30 March 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 disarming of the working class was followed by a massacre of defenseless men, women and children in which some 30,000 died.

Noting the direct correlation between stricter gun control legislation and rising class struggle in Britain, 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 field gun, and it did not occur to most people that the Russian revolution and the Irish civil war would bring this state of affairs to an end."

While formal licensing came later, already in the 19th century (particularly following the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, in which Hussars killed and wounded hundreds at a popular demonstration in Manchester) repressive laws were passed allowing police to search for arms and prohibiting "military" training of the populace. Needless to say, after the Firearms Acts of 1922 and 1937 (directed against the IRA) the British-imposed gun control laws in Ulster, among the hardest in the world, have not dented the widespread use of arms in that never-ending fighting rooted in Britain's centuries-old oppression of Ireland.

It was an armed working class which made the Bolshevik Revolution, in accordance with Lenin's call:

"Following the path indicated by the experience of the Paris Commune of



Cinema 5  
Harlan County, Kentucky, 1973: Coal miners show company goons that scabherding is dangerous to your health.

1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, the proletariat must organise and arm *all* the poor, exploited sections of the population in order that they *themselves* should take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that *they themselves should constitute* these organs of state power."

—"Letters from Afar,  
Third Letter Concerning  
a Proletarian Militia"  
(March 1917)

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 Soviets eventually triumphed over the combined strength of 14 imperialist/Allied expeditionary forces and the tsarist White Guards.

Though the Bolsheviks advocated a socialist militia "in connection with the abolition of classes," they were forced by the fight against counterrevolution to build a standing army. Trotsky explained in the foreword to the fifth volume of his military writings (*How the Revolution Armed, 1921-23* [1981]) that the problem was rooted in the poverty and backwardness of Russia, wherein "the Red barracks constitutes an incomparably higher cultural setting than that 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 standing army into a fetish, going so far as to mimic the Western capitalist armies' 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 swank is not the special needs of military affairs, but the political needs of the ruling stratum."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*  
(1937)

PBS

Camera Press



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



Having restored the officer caste 18 years after its revolutionary abolition, Stalin then beheaded 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 avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to disarm the bourgeoisie the workers must arm themselves." Its program for revolutionary struggle against imperialism and war included the call for: "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 were coupled with the demand for "complete independence of workers' organizations from military-police control."

The American bourgeoisie of the 18th century could afford the Second Amendment when there was not much wage labor, blacks were not free and a small farmer 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 lobbyists now find themselves politically disarmed in Congress, state legislatures and city councils as they plead for their "sporting" weapons while urging an even greater "War on Crime" by the cops and the feds (*American Rifleman*, April 1989). Marxists, in contrast, oppose racist gun control and defend the right of labor/black armed self-defense.

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

The guns the working people had better 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 Curtis LeMay, called for bombing Vietnam back to the Stone Age, which the Pentagon attempted. And Washington howled against Soviet Marshal Malinovsky for declaring that the USSR must be prepared to defend itself with nuclear weapons. Yet only the Soviets' own development of an atomic arsenal has been able to deter the first-strikers in Washington who are gearing up for a final nuclear *Götterdämmerung*.

Having guns is no magic talisman, but an unarmed population faces merciless slaughter at the hands of this vicious ruling class whose state is armed to the teeth. For as Karl Marx summed it up in *Capital* (1867), "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new." ■

# Soviet Elections...

(continued from page 1)

market-oriented "reforms." American Sovietologist Jan Vanous noted: "One of the most conservative elements may be the workers, who sense 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 expression. That is why the political scene has been dominated by Gorbachevite reformers, pro-Western liberals, nationalists of all stripes, Pamyat fascists and populist demagogues like Yeltsin. An authentic Bolshevik party must be built anew in the Soviet Union, to combat not only the Stalinist betrayers of the revolution but *all* forms of nationalism and chauvinism, liberal and pacifistic illusions, and outright capitalist restorationism. Such a party would raise on its banner, in Trotsky's words, "the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918."

## Who Lost? Who Won?

When television newsmen asked one woman how she had voted, she replied, "Against what we have now." That pretty well sums up the popular mood. Much of the Western bourgeois media presents the election results as a repudiation of Communist rule. Gorbachev, however, contends the vote was a rousing endorsement of his "new thinking": "In a word, comrades, people have accepted the policy of perestroika with their hearts and minds. That, if you please, is the main political result of the elections.... Those [officials] lost who have been slow to reconstruct themselves, who haven't broadened their ties to the workers" (*Baltimore Sun*, 31 March). There is a certain validity in this last statement.

Leningrad party chief Yuri Solovyev was a member of the old Grigori Romanov gang which ran the city under Brezhnev. Romanov and his cronies are best remembered for taking Catherine the Great's dinnerware from the Hermitage Museum and smashing it in a drunken party. Solovyev & Co. are openly hostile to the Gorbachevite intellectuals and have been friendly protectors of the Pamyat fascist thugs. The Kiev officials who went down to defeat are part of the despised Vladimir Shcherbitsky regime in the Ukraine, a holdover from the Brezhnev era. No fan of glasnost (openness), Shcherbitsky locked up some Ukrainian nationalist agitators when Gorbachev visited his



Turnley/Newsweek

Lithuanians march behind flag of right-wing, bourgeois state of the interwar period (above). Greatest nationalist danger in the Soviet Union is that of Great Russian chauvinism: fascist Pamyat führer Dmitri Vassiliev agitates for anti-Semitic pogroms.



G. Neri

bailiwick in February. But while some local party bigwigs were repudiated in the elections, removing them from their bureaucratic posts is another question.

Given the worsening economic conditions, how is it that the conservative opponents of Gorbachev's new course, and not the partisans of perestroika, were singled out for defeat? The answer is twofold. First, Gorbachev and his propagandists have convinced people that the wretched economic conditions were largely inherited from the Brezhnev "era of stagnation." There is an important element of truth here. However, as we shall see, perestroika has made things worse.

Secondly, the conservative *apparatchiks*—represented in the Kremlin oligarchy by Yegor Ligachev—want above all to restore *tight bureaucratic control* over Soviet society. The Ligachev people have not claimed, even demagogically, to defend the interests of the working class against the inevitable effects of perestroika in the economic sphere—plant closures, layoffs, price hikes. Instead they have concentrated their fire against glasnost in the political sphere. Last year Ligachev sponsored the notorious "Andreyeva letter" praising Stalin and denouncing the relative newfound freedom in the Soviet press and media. The conservative bureaucrats are thus seen as aiming 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 results were 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 differences between the various regions. With decentralization and "market socialism" now the order of the day, the more advanced regions—notably the Baltic republics—see the opportunity to gain at the expense of more backward regions.

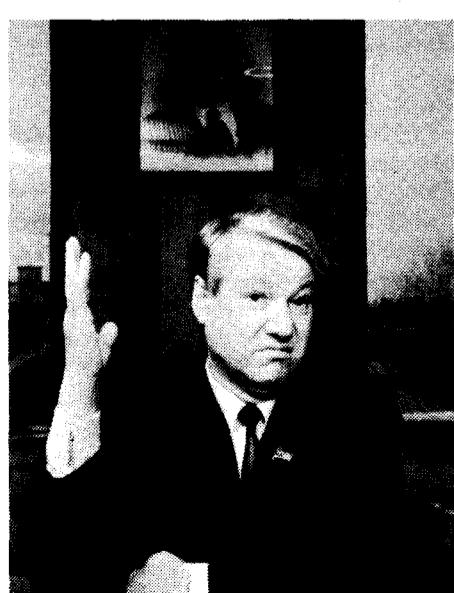
In Estonia and Latvia, much of the

nationalist agitation is directed at the large population of Russians who emigrated there, drawn by the region's booming economy. Nationalist "popular fronts" in these Baltic republics call for total economic autonomy and restrictive immigration laws as well as language laws which would reduce the Russian inhabitants to second-class citizens. These movements, and even more so the Sajudis movement in neighboring Lithuania, identify with the right-wing, bourgeois Baltic states of the interwar period.

In the elections Sajudis won a large majority of the delegates allotted to Lithuania. The Estonian and Latvian Popular Fronts won a somewhat smaller majority, in good part because the Russian inhabitants of these republics voted for the established Communist leaderships. In fact, the Russians have formed their own countermovement, the Interfront. The stage is thus set in the Soviet Baltic for the kind of communal violence we have seen in the Caucasus. Trying to quell the communalist bloodletting, Moscow imposed martial law in the Armenian capital of Yerevan last winter and imprisoned the firebrands of the Karabakh Committee. In response, Armenian nationalists called for a boycott of the elections, and many voters heeded their call. Armenia had the lowest voter turnout in the Soviet Union.

But the most potentially dangerous nationalism of all for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is that of the dominant nationality, the Russians. The spearhead of anti-Communist Russian nationalism is Pamyat (Memory), whose führer Dmitri Vassiliev declares, "the Great Russian Revolution was not great, and it was not Russian. It was organized by Jews." Pamyat's program: a pogrom against Soviet Jews, the purging of all Western influence in Russia, and a strong leader in the Kremlin like Stalin, or Ivan the Terrible. The Soviet workers must crush Pamyat!

These days, Gorbachev seems to be scrambling to keep in front of the tumultuous forces unleashed by his policies and promises: "We must not commit stupidities, attempt great leaps for-



Thai/Time

**Boris Yeltsin, Stalinist apparatchik turned populist demagogue.**

ward, or overreach ourselves because we could put the people's future at risk" (*New York Times*, 27 March). On the one hand, he has postponed for two or three years the explosive issue of raising consumer prices. On the other hand, last month he took a significant step toward decollectivizing agriculture by granting farmers lifetime leases on land, which they can bequeath.

The contradictions exposed by perestroika reflect the contradictory position of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy caught between the unrelenting pressures of world capitalism and the socialized economy created by the 1917 October Revolution. The nationalistic Kremlin oligarchy, from Stalin to Gorbachev, has driven the Soviet Union to such a condition that it cannot simultaneously improve living standards, modernize industry and agriculture, and maintain the military preparedness necessary to counter the growing imperialist threat. To achieve these goals—each necessary to defend the Soviet Union—requires a proletarian political revolution which will sweep away the parasitic bureaucracy, and restore the Bolshevik program of world socialist revolution.

## Boris Yeltsin and Populist Demagogy

That Boris Yeltsin should emerge as the most prominent oppositional figure in Gorbachev's Russia was certainly unexpected. In late 1985 Yeltsin was brought in from Siberia to run Moscow precisely because he was a staunch Gorbachev loyalist and ardent advocate of perestroika. He zestfully axed scores of entrenched *apparatchiks* while currying favor with the local citizenry with a "populist" style. He visited hospitals and criticized the poor quality of medical care. He visited butcher shops and criticized the shortage of good meat. Of course, neither hospital care nor the supply of meat improved much. But then, like his protector Gorbachev, Yeltsin could blame all economic ills on the effects of the "era of stagnation."

Suddenly, in November 1987 it was announced 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. In the old Stalinist manner, Yeltsin abjectly confessed his sins: "I am very guilty personally before Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, whose authority is so high in our organization, in our country and in the entire world" (*New York Times*, 14 November 1987). In the new Stalinist manner, Yeltsin was not shot as an "enemy of the people" but only demoted to a post in the construction ministry.

The fallen Moscow party boss, however, would not accept the role of living political corpse. He began giving interviews to the Western press, denouncing Ligachev as a closet opponent of perestroika. Then Yeltsin grasped the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies as a chance to make his political comeback. Furthermore, he ran against the manager of the Zil automobile plant which produces the handcrafted limousines for the party elite.

On Sunday, March 19, 2,000 pro-Yeltsin demonstrators defied an official ban and gathered in Moscow's Gorky Park. As they marched toward the Kremlin, their number grew spontaneously to 10,000. They chanted "Hands off Yeltsin!" and carried pictures of their new hero with the slogan "candidate of the people." Perhaps even more impressive than the size of this rally 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.

A marine scientist participating in the pro-Yeltsin demonstration stated, "The

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 claims to offer a solution to the economic crisis *without pain and sacrifice*—perestroika on the cheap.

The principal economic architects of perestroika, like Abel Aganbegyan and Leonid Abalkin, advocate increasing the incomes of engineers, technicians and managers at the expense of most workers, and encouraging private capitalist entrepreneurs. Yeltsin instead rails at the privileges of the bureaucratic elite (the *nomenklatura*), such as their special shops: "The ruble of a janitor should be worth the same as the ruble of a party leader."

While the Baltic nationalist demagogues advocate regional autonomy, Yeltsin campaigned for economic protectionism for Muscovites. He demanded that the city's factories *limit* temporary resident permits, now given to tens of thousands of workers, in order to reduce the pressure of demand for housing, food and other consumer goods. Such a reactionary and *inegalitarian* measure would enhance the *already privileged* status of legally established Moscow residents.

The official spokesmen for perestroika insist that the country's economic health can be restored only by closing unprofitable enterprises and by increasing rents and food prices. Yeltsin, however, demands, "we must... improve living standards and concentrate our resources on this, even if it means reducing investments, financial allocations or expenditures in other areas" (*Time*, 20 March). This would be to repeat the very policies which led to the so-called "era of stagnation."

Ironically, Yeltsin, who still describes himself as a strong supporter of perestroika, is now advocating the same economic policies carried out by the latter-day Brezhnev regime! Beginning in the mid-1970s, Brezhnev cut back investment in new plant and equipment in order to match the rapid American military buildup *without* reducing living standards. The planned increase in investment fell from 7.5 percent in the 1970-75 Five Year Plan to just 2 percent in the 1980-85 Plan. In this way Brezhnev & Co. undermined the economic strength and dynamism of the Soviet Union. But at least they tried to maintain Soviet military power in the face of the Cold War II offensive launched by Carter and carried forward by Reagan.

Yeltsin, however, is also calling for sharp cuts in Soviet military spending. And this over and above the unilateral cuts already made by Gorbachev! It is here that Yeltsin stands united with the most right-wing, pro-Western elements in the Gorbachev camp (and outside it). Many partisans of perestroika denounce the present level of Soviet military spending as not only economically wasteful but also provocative toward Western imperialism. Stodgy old Leonid Brezhnev is now depicted in the Gorbachevite press as some ultraleft adventurer who foolishly provoked such peace-loving types as Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan by flaunting Soviet military power. The Yeltsin campaign thus combined populist demagogic with dangerous pacifistic illusions in the benevolent nature of Western imperialism.

#### **Perestroika Makes Things Worse**

In the late 1970s, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and in much of East Europe (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia), attempted to buy social peace under conditions of declining economic growth. Thus the Brezhnev regime tried to foster the *illusion* of rapidly rising incomes by increasing money wages and salaries while freezing rents and the prices of food and other consumer goods. A kilo (2.2 pounds) of rye bread has cost about a quarter for decades, a kilo of potatoes is half that, and the Moscow subway is

still less than a dime. With money incomes rapidly expanding, state shops were quickly sold out, while the waiting lines outside them grew ever longer.

Much of the excess demand flowed into the flourishing black market (the so-called shadow economy). As a spin-off, the late '70s saw the rise of criminal gangs which Russians now call "the mafia." Most of the surplus money was salted away in bank accounts; there was simply nothing else to do with it. The growing gap between money income and real output was thus covered over by a form of *forced saving*. By the begin-

300 billion rubles in savings accounts. Probably another 100 billion is tied up in old socks or stuffed in mattresses. This amounts to *well over half* the total annual national income of the USSR! To soak up this vast hoard of monetary purchasing power, prices would have to rise 100, 200, 400 percent—god knows how much.

No wonder the Gorbachev regime wants to postpone the dread "price reform" as long as possible. Western bourgeois ideologues are disappointed that the Kremlin reformer-in-chief has not yet opted for the "free market"



**In Moscow's private markets, two pounds of tomatoes costs more than a day's pay for the average Soviet worker.**

ning of the '80s the Soviet Union had become an extreme case of *suppressed inflation*. And this condition has grown far worse under Gorbachev. Soviet savings banks are accumulating 20 billion rubles a year, *twice* the rate of the early '80s.

One factor causing this is the unforeseen economic effects of the anti-alcoholism campaign. Sales of heavily taxed vodka made up 15 percent of the state's retail trade. Now, Soviet drinkers are buying cheap moonshine vodka—about two-thirds of the total imbibed—and saving more money. But it is not just vodka that can no longer be found in state shops. Last winter the principal government newspaper *Izvestia* reported: "By turns or in combinations, towels, toothpaste, toilet paper, lotion, sugar and electric bulbs have disappeared from the shelves. Now, you cannot buy detergent and cheap soap. What will it be tomorrow?"

Why the severe and growing shortages? First, in order to maximize profits under the new perestroika rules, enterprise managers have shifted their output from cheaper to more expensive items. Hence no more cheap soap. Secondly, the rise of small-scale private capitalists (they're called "cooperatives" but this fools no one) has diverted both foodstuffs and manufactured consumer goods away from the socialized economy.

Despite a poor harvest this year, total agricultural production has *not declined* under Gorbachev. However, a March 1986 decree allowed both collective farms (*kolkhozy*) and state farms (*sovkozy*) to sell a *larger share* of their output in the rural free markets or through private traders. You can buy any kind of food in any quantity in Gorbachev's Russia if you're willing to pay the price. But who can afford it? A kilo of tomatoes selling in Moscow's private markets costs *more than a day's pay* for the average worker!

In early 1987 a new law permitted private entrepreneurs to manufacture consumer goods as well as engage in various services (e.g., repairman, hairdresser, taxi driver). The latter had long been common although illegal. But now petty capitalists are absorbing inputs for consumer goods that would previously have gone to supply the state shops. The other side of the shortages is sharply increased accumulation of unspendable money. Soviet citizens now hold about

Ukraine. The protest movement was spearheaded by workers from the huge Budenny Electric Locomotive Works and women from the textile mills. After the locomotive factory workers succeeded in driving off local militiamen, units of the army and the KGB political police were brought in to quell the protests. At one point thousands gathered in the city square. John Kolasky, a member of the Canadian Communist Party then studying in Kiev, has given an account of what happened in Novocherkassk based on eyewitness reports:

"The city secretary of the party appeared and began to address the crowd. Some tried to shout him down; others hurled objects at him. Suddenly the KGB detachment opened fire into the crowd. Shooting also began from other directions. In one area, when soldiers were ordered to fire, one officer pulled out his party membership card, tore it up, and then shot himself. Many soldiers refused to obey the command. According to reports, at least several hundred were killed. Martial law and a curfew were imposed, troops and tanks patrolled the streets and the area was completely sealed off."

—quoted in M. Holubenko,  
"The Soviet Working Class:  
Discontent and Opposition,"  
*Critique* No. 4, Spring 1975

The protests and repression over the price hikes damaged Khrushchev's popularity and weakened his political authority. This contributed to his ouster from power two years later in a palace coup engineered by Leonid Brezhnev.

The Novocherkassk events are little known in the West. But they are well known to Soviet officials, and doubtless very much on the minds of Gorbachev and his entourage these days. Imagine what would happen today if the KGB shot down Soviet workers protesting price hikes! So the regime desperately wants to buy time. Abel Aganbegyan, one of the main architects of perestroika, maintains that "price reform" will be implemented a few years hence when the supply of consumer goods has increased sufficiently to prevent runaway inflation. Fat chance! Perestroika has not led to increased productivity. Quite the contrary.

#### **Industrial Reform Produces Bureaucratized Anarchy**

Announcing the new Law of State Enterprises in June 1987, Gorbachev proclaimed the "transition of many branches of the economy to new methods of management, to full profit-and-loss accounting and self-financing" (*khozraschet*). The idea was that in order to maximize profits (or at least avoid losses) enterprise managers would reduce costs while producing better quality goods geared to consumer demand. But Soviet managers have no desire to compete for customers and have done their best to perpetuate the

*continued on page 14*

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**The Poland of Luxemburg vs. the Poland of Piłsudski**

**Memoirs of a Revolutionary Jewish Worker**

A Review....PAGE 53

This subject was discussed at the office of the journal "Sotsiologicheskaya Isledovaniya" (Sociological Research). The panel consisted of Valerii BALIN, a worker at the Proletary Institute of Sociology; Nikolai KARPOV, a member of the staff at the Institute of Sociological Research, USSR Academy of Sciences; Yuli MADOR, D. Sc. (History); and Alexei MAZURIN, Cand. of Philos. (Philosophy). Photos by Philip KOSTROV. Article: Alexander SOKOLOV. The moderator for the discussion was Albert KRAVCHENKO, Cand. Sc. (Philosophy), a consultant for "Sotsiologicheskaya Isledovaniya". Below are excerpts from the discussion, the full text of which appeared in the No. 1, 1987 issue of "Sotsiologicheskaya Isledovaniya".

## STRIKES

Are they allowable under socialism?

**WHAT DO PEOPLE STRIKE?**

Gorbachev: When we treat such industrial actions as a purely economic question, we do not have a correct understanding of them. First of all, strikes are a protest against the new economic morality and the new social order.

The question arises: who are our strike leaders? Who are the people whose power is ultimately decisive? Workers, managers, and others? We need to analyze the indirect effects of our country's economic policy on workers' morale and other areas generally.

Georgy POGOREL'SKIY: ... mainly the trade unions proved unable to negotiate interests of workers to negotiate with the administration of enterprises and to defend workers' interests. In recent years, instances of strikes have increased sharply. This is due to the frequent inability to tolerate tension between workers and management. Collective decisions instead of administrative ones are more effective. Reaction was threat, and the result was that the majority of methods was making things worse.

Reading the USSR Constitution or

Excerpted, September 1986.  
Bus drivers refused to operate their vehicles because of wage and poverty organized strike.

Photos by Sergei ALEXANDROV



26 March—2 April 1989

A socialist society used to be considered a society where there were no strikes. Now it is considered that strikes are acceptable. That would be an advantage. An example: the strike in a car plant in Gorky. An example: the strike in a meat processing plant in Moscow.

Soviet press reports strikes as workers resist speedup and layoffs which accompany perestroika (left). Gorbachev and his wife Raisa visiting a factory in Estonia.

## Soviet Elections...

(continued from page 13)

old system. Thus the bulk of their output goes to fulfill "state orders" negotiated with the industrial ministries which formerly administered the plan. The journal *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* (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 products."

*Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* 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 central supply agency Gosnab. But now there is no mechanism for matching inputs and outputs since 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 responsible 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 ministerial empire-building and bureaucratized anarchy. Moscow wits have revived an old joke to describe the effects of the "reform." It seems the Kremlin leaders decided to change the traffic system so that henceforth driving 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 managers 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 Shmelyov, stated quite bluntly:

"Today it is, I believe, clear to everyone that we owe disorderliness, drunken-

ness, and shoddy work largely to excessively full employment. We must discuss fearlessly and in businesslike terms what we could gain from a comparatively 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 firing a lot of people, moving people around and closing a lot of bad enterprises" (*Washington Post*, 6 November 1988).

A closely related aspect of perestroika is the hard-sell campaign to draw Western and Japanese multinationals into joint ventures in the USSR. A few months ago the Gorbachev 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 participate in joint ventures. Would I be able to dismiss your workers?" (*Soviet*

*Economy*, January-March 1988).

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 Japanese 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 considers 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 unprofitable enterprises. Nonetheless, the worsening economic situation, especially food shortages, could easily spark an explosion from below given the inflammatory conditions of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

## Mumia Abu-Jamal...

(continued from page 16)

to the State Building. Today, 116 people 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 Governor 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-

cist League, marched under the banner reading, "Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal!" The liberal organizers of the demonstration objected to our placard "Gun Control Kills Blacks! For the Right of Armed Self-Defense!" False viewing the bosses' government as a "neutral" arbiter of class struggle, such supporters of gun control would disarm working people and minorities in the face of capitalist state repression.

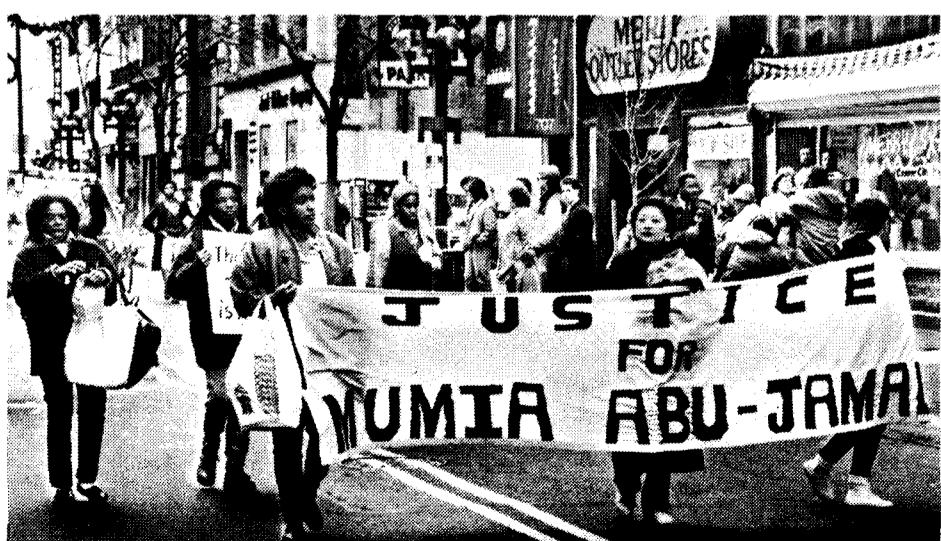
Two former death row inmates spoke at the rally—they are living testament to the barbaric institution of legalized state murder which has executed over 85 innocent people since the beginning of the century. Darby Tillis, who endured five trials and four years on death row before being found innocent, brought to the podium hundreds of petitions against the death penalty collected by

Amnesty International. Delbert Tibbs, the Chicago black writer, who had been arrested and convicted in Florida in 1974 in a blatant racist frame-up, spoke movingly at the rally. Tibbs pointed to the class nature of capital punishment when he said, "Nowhere in our history do we know of a millionaire being executed."

Both Darby Tillis and Delbert Tibbs signed letters on the spot calling to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. As the urgent appeal by the Partisan Defense Committee, "In the Name of Justice," puts it, the name of 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 penalty." 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 Racist 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. ■



At Philadelphia demonstration last December commemorating the victims of MOVE massacre, protesters call for defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal.



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# Eastern Strike...

(continued from page 16)

the unions, the junk bond vultures moved in. The roster of raiders salivating over Eastern reads like a "ten most wanted" list of capitalist high rollers: real estate megamogul Donald Trump; 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 wanted Ueberroth.

Last November, four months before the strike began, IAM District 100 chief Charles Bryan and the heads of ALPA and the TWU began secret negotiations with Ueberroth, then major league baseball commissioner, who presented them with autographed World Series baseballs. Carl Pohlad, the owner of the Minnesota Twins baseball team and a Texas Air director, brought 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 Bryan got a seat on the board of directors, and the workers got the shaft. This union "stake" in Eastern disappeared without a trace when Lorenzo took it over. As one striker's T-shirt proclaimed: "Different Frank, Same Shit."

Ueberroth declares, "We look at labor as our partners," and, especially coming after Lorenzo, many Eastern workers would like to believe him. Don't be fooled! Ueberroth is the anti-labor, drug-testing millionaire who ran the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. After he turned a cool \$225 million profit in that flag-waving "free world" 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 was the one who suspended Dwight Gooden). He also oversaw 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 represents the interests of Kirk Kerkorian, head of the MGM/UA Communications Company," accord-

ing to the *New York Times* (8 April). In his 1985 book, *Made in America*, Ueberroth pays tribute to his "mentor" Kerkorian—"he taught me the value of taking business risks." According to Dan Moldea, author of *Dark Victory—Ronald Reagan, MCA and the Mob* (1986), Kerkorian bought MGM with his Las Vegas hotel and casino profits, and "was a long-time friend of Charles 'The Blade' Tourine, a top New York mobster and an associate of Meyer Lansky." The unsavory cast of characters led the *Washington Post* (2 April) to

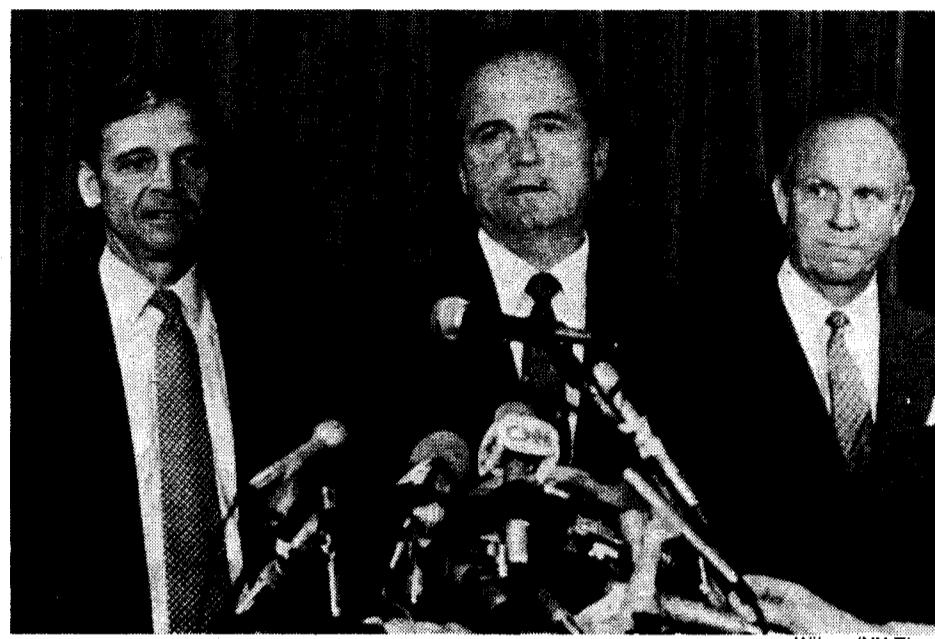
gan. The trillions of dollars invested in a 600-ship navy, MX and Star Wars first-strike weapons systems hasn't left much to put into basic industry. Manufacturing, construction and mining now account for less than 30 percent of economic output, compared with 50 percent in 1946. On Wall Street, the annual Drexel Burnham junk bond gathering of the greedy is known as the "predators ball." They are aptly described by Alexander Cockburn as "the takeover tycoons, these latter-day receptacles of the spirit of the Auschwitz

cut union membership in half since the AFL and CIO merged 35 years ago. Their new "strategy" is "affiliated membership," where you pay dues and get a union card, but have no union and no contract! The "Corporate Campaigns" of useless consumer boycotts and appeals to stockholders are sure death. The UAW bureaucracy's racist protectionism, along with the "team concept" and "employee involvement," has turned the union that pioneered the sit-down strike into company agents in the plant (and the board of directors).

Even as the union bureaucracy continues to throttle labor struggle, the bourgeoisie is worried that the intense shortage of skilled workers and a falling unemployment rate will fuel a labor offensive. The tight labor market for skilled mechanics and pilots was 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, telephone 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 exclude millions who have been "dropped" from the workforce as "discouraged workers," or forced into part-time, non-union jobs. Black mothers imprisoned in ghetto hellholes without childcare aren't considered "unemployed." Estimates of actual unemployment run to more than double the government's figure—over 11 percent, according to labor reporter William Serrin (*Nation*, 23 January).

In the last decade, the labor bureaucracy has left a graveyard of strikes that could have been won—PATCO air controllers, Greyhound bus drivers, Hormel meatpackers, International Paper workers all fought hard. But it takes more than staying power to win against this decaying, capitalist system. Once again, the Eastern strike has posed pointblank the need for class-struggle leadership. Any serious class battle must be waged politically, taking on the capitalist labor boards, no-strike laws and strikebreaking injunctions. This means a fight to take workers' struggles out of the hands of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, ousting these class traitors and forging a workers party to fight for a workers government which will undertake the socialist reindustrialization of America. ■



Shady corporate operators Frank Lorenzo, Peter Ueberroth and Thomas Talbot. Would you buy a used airline from these men?

note that "the fate of one of the largest airlines in the world could be determined by a casino mogul, a secretive Las Vegas financier, the owner of a travel agency, a baseball commissioner, an obstinate 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 yelped.

The "Junking of America" is a direct result of the massive anti-Soviet war buildup, begun under Democrat Carter and pushed through the roof by Rea-

industrial park. Capitalism made us do it" (*Nation*, 3 April). These are the "partners in workers' participation" that Winpisinger 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, if they happen at all, are drawn out, isolated, set up and stabbed in the back by the labor traitors. At Colt Industries in Connecticut, strikers belonging to the United Auto Workers (UAW) have been out since 1986. New York tugboatmen are fighting alone, while their longshore union brothers are told to continue to work the docks. The *Wall Street Journal* (27 January) gloats that the Mine Workers used to be known as "barroom brawlers," but now 2,000 Pittston miners are kept on the job for over a year without a contract, while 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 of capital" (in Daniel De Leon's apt characterization of 80 years ago) have

action" called by the Hall regime was when VP Jefferson issued a leaflet suggesting that trains should enter and leave stations at 5 miles per hour to protest scapegoating for "draggings." Train operators who took this seriously were investigated by the TA; they were set up by the union bureaucrats.

The only way workers have ever won anything, including safety in the workplace, is by wielding their power in defiance of the bosses' laws. For a few years after the winning 1966 strike, which smashed the Taylor Law of the day, transit was the best job in the city, and a hell of a lot less hazardous than it is today. *We must fight for elected union safety representatives, backed by the entire union, with the power to shut down any unsafe working condition on the spot.* We spend every day in the tunnels and barns and under the buses and cars and we know what works. Without us, the city doesn't move. You can bet if we ran transit, we'd make it run safe!

Stewart Melsinker was buried Sunday April 2nd. Several transit workers attended his funeral. The funeral for David Davis will be Wednesday, April 5th. All 37,000 of us should be there. That would go a long way toward preventing the TA's productivity drive from claiming any more of us as victims. ■

# New York Transit...

(continued from page 4)

Later." That means "Die First and Grieve It Later." Hall's first response to the Astor Place deaths was to alibi the bosses by saying that because of noise abatement programs "you don't necessarily hear the train coming as quickly." Now Hall is blustering about a "slow-down" ... on the curves. But the last "job

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

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 1014 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

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### 200 March Against Death Penalty in Chicago



At protest called by Amnesty International, April 8, contingent from the Labor Black Struggle League and PDC raises the call to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

### 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 and pilots, sent 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 scabherding. 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



Rally at San Francisco Airport, March 18. Machinists strike against corporate cannibal Frank Lorenzo won widespread popular support.

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 Transport 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 militants Lorenzo has fired.

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

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