

Australasian **SPARTACIST**



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ALP Rules for Racist Australian Imperialism

U.S./Australia/NATO

Out of Afghanistan Now!

Cops/Military Out of Iraq, East Timor, South Pacific!

After more than seven years of imperialist military terror, leading to the loss of tens of thousands of Afghan lives, the U.S.-led occupying forces in Afghanistan are preparing to ramp up their murderous campaign. In mid-February, the new U.S. Democratic Party president, Barack Obama, ordered 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan, part of his promise to increase forces there while withdrawing troops from the Iraq quagmire. As Washington beefs up its occupation forces, U.S. military leaders are pushing for Australia to take the lead role in NATO-led coalition operations in the province of Oruzgan. This would mean at least doubling the 1,100 Australian forces, including SAS, already stationed in southern Afghanistan. While polls show that more than half the Australian population are opposed to the Afghan operation, Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd remains an enthusiast for the slaughter declaring it to be in Australia's "national interest."

Addressing an audience at the Australian war memorial last October, Rudd spoke darkly of "a global terrorism movement that roamed the world and reached into South East Asia." He went on to declare that Australia is "preventing the spread of terrorism" and "helping Afghanistan to rebuild itself into a more peaceful and stable state." This Orwellian doublespeak came amidst reports that Australian troops had locked Afghan soldiers in dog pens without food or water, and that almost 600 Afghan civilians had been killed at the hands of occupation forces in the first eight months of 2008. On 12 February five Afghan children were slaughtered in an attack involving Australian forces.

Following the January inauguration of Obama as the new Commander in Chief of U.S. imperialism, Rudd pompously declared, "As allies we share great challenges in Afghanistan and beyond. But in President Obama I say this: Australia will have a friend and ally to shoulder these challenges together." Mirroring Obama's so-called "smart" power projection and "multilateralism," Rudd has argued for a beefed-up Australian navy and air force, projecting an Australian military force capable of backing its U.S. big brother across the globe as well as enforcing Australian imperialist plunder of resources and superexploitation of the working masses in the region.



Gary Ramage

Left: Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd in Afghanistan last December greets Australian troops involved in bloody occupation. Right: U.S. military on one of their terror raids. Below: U.S. air strike in November killed up to 37 civilians in Kandahar.



AFP

The White Australia ruling class has always existed in Asia as the lackey ally of a more powerful white-Anglo Christian imperialism. Australian capitalism was founded on the massacre and dispossession of the Aboriginal population and exclusion of the Asian masses. The slavish loyalty of the Australian capitalist rulers to first the British and later the U.S. has meant joining bloody imperial adventures on far-flung battlefields for more than a century. In return, the Australian capitalist rulers have expected protection as they pursue their own predatory regional interests.

The imperialist occupation of Afghanistan has resulted in bloody warfare among tribal warlords, famine and the ongoing brutal oppression of women. The country has the highest infant mortality rate in the world, while life expectancy is just 44 years. Imperialist overseers in Afghanistan have brokered a constitution that enshrines anti-woman Islamic fundamentalist *sharia* law. Iraq also remains a hell-hole of all-sided bloodshed. Well in excess of 100,000 Iraqis have died since the imperialist blitzkrieg of Baghdad in March 2003 signalled the beginning of the ongoing neocolonial occupation. This has come on top of the tens of thousands who were slaughtered in the first 1991 Gulf War and the more than 1.5 million killed as a result of United Nations sanctions between 1990 and 2003.



EPA

Meanwhile U.S. air strikes bombarding border areas between Afghanistan and western Pakistan have led to many civilian deaths, as the imperialists threaten to extend their assault deeper into Pakistan. While there are mixed signals emanating from Washington, the U.S. also continues to threaten Iran over its purported nuclear weapons program. **U.S./Australian imperialists keep your bloody hands off Pakistan and Iran!**

In forthright opposition to our own ruling class, the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) (ICL) stood for the military defence of Afghanistan and Iraq in the lead-up to the imperialist invasions, without giving an iota of political support to the reactionary woman-hating Taliban or the capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. We

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Afghanistan...

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underlined that every military victory for the imperialists encourages more predatory wars; every setback serves to assist the struggles of the working people and oppressed around the world. We are for the defeat of the imperialists. As proletarian internationalist opponents of imperialism we demand the immediate unconditional withdrawal of all Australian military from Afghanistan, the Middle East, East Timor and the South Pacific!

When insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan aim their blows against the U.S. and their Australian and other lackeys, such acts coincide with the interests of the

international working class. But we do not imbue the forces presently organising guerrilla attacks on U.S.-led occupation forces with "anti-imperialist" credentials. The ICL has warned that in the absence of working-class struggle in Iraq and internationally against the occupations, the victory of one or another of the reactionary clerical forces is likely to come about through an alliance with U.S. imperialism and its lackeys. We are intransigent opponents of the murderous communal violence against other ethnic, religious and national populations often-times carried out by the very same forces fighting the occupation armies. And we have condemned the kidnappings and executions of foreign civilian workers.

In the epoch of imperialism, national

liberation of the oppressed peoples of the neocolonial world cannot be achieved under capitalism. It requires the overthrow of bourgeois rule. In places like Iraq this means combining opposition to the occupation with a proletarian-centred fight against all manner of bourgeois nationalism and religious fundamentalism. It poses the urgent need to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties to lead the struggles of the working people in a fight for a socialist federation of the Near East. If such revolutions are not to be strangled by imperialist military intervention and/or economic blockade or by their own inherited material backwardness, these revolutions will necessarily have to extend to the imperialist centres. This is the perspective of permanent revolution outlined by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, and which was confirmed by the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution. In countries like Afghanistan, where the working class is very weak or non-existent, there is no purely internal solution. The destiny of these countries is tied to the international class struggle, in the first instance in those countries in the region, such as Iran or Egypt, which do have significant proletarian concentrations.

As we have made clear from the outset of the imperialist attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, the key means of defending these neocolonial countries against imperialism is through *international working-class struggle*. The imperialist devastation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Australian imperialist jackbooting in tiny East Timor and the Solomons, have gone hand-in-hand with increased attacks at home against workers and the oppressed. As the international capitalist economic crisis snowballs these attacks will only increase.

"War on Terror"—Racist War on Workers and Oppressed

Rudd is an ardent supporter of the "war on terror," aggressively pushing Afghanistan as its "frontline." This "war" has served as a pretext for Australian imperialist intrigues and depredations from Indonesia to Iraq to Afghanistan. The previous Howard federal government, like capitalist governments around the world, seized on criminal acts such as the 2001 World Trade Center attack and the 2002 Bali bombings as an opportunity to also shred democratic rights and increase state repression at home. This was done with bi-partisan support from the ALP. Now in the government saddle, Rudd's ALP maintains the "anti-terror" legislation, which is in the service of suppressing potential opposition to bloody colonial occupations and stymieing class and social struggles against the exploitative capitalist system of poverty, racism, unemployment and war.

The frenzy accompanying the "war on terror" has also sought to demonise the Muslim minority and whip up xenophobia and nationalism thus serving to divide the working class and regiment the population into accepting gross violations of civil rights. In early February, Melbourne-based Muslim cleric, Abdul Nacer Benbrika, already imprisoned three years, was sentenced to a minimum of twelve years jail after being found guilty of "forming

an Australian terror cell." Six others also received jail sentences. Committing no terrorist act or even laying down plans for one, in truth, these men have been imprisoned for expressing opinions, for alleged thought crimes. Several more men arrested in Sydney in the same police operation are now facing trial.

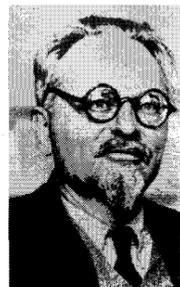
Such state-sponsored witchhunts, combined with continued anti-immigrant measures, including the Rudd government's ongoing mandatory detention of refugees and the establishment of a new deportation centre on remote Christmas Island, have emboldened racist and fascist scum. This was graphically illustrated in the northern Sydney beachside suburb of Manly on "Australia Day" this year. Reminiscent of the pogromist riots in Cronulla three years ago, mobs of white male youth, chanting sexist and racist epithets, rampaged against Asian and non-white people, assaulting some and smashing shop and car windows.

At the time of the arrest of Benbrika and the others in November 2005, we noted that the sinister raids were carefully orchestrated to occur on the eve of the vote on the then-Howard government's "anti-terror" legislation. They also occurred in the lead-up to mass union demonstrations against draconian anti-union laws. It is no accident that aspects of the subsequent legislation targeting building workers for state persecution, including the establishment of the hated Australian Building and Construction Commission, were modelled on the "anti-terror" laws. We say: **Down with racist "war on terror" government repression!** All those arrested should be released from prison immediately. From Melbourne to Iraq and Afghanistan: **free all the detainees now!** It is necessary to organise a proletarian-centred fight against all the reactionary "anti-terror" and anti-union laws.

A class-struggle fight against the capitalist rulers at home requires a political struggle against the trade-union tops, whose class treachery can be measured in the millions of dollars of workers' union dues they spent mobilising to elect the union-hating capitalist Rudd government. The Laborite union misleaders are a pro-capitalist bureaucratic layer atop the unions, bought off by the crumbs from Australian imperialism's exploitation abroad. While they can sometimes, under pressure from their worker base, be impelled to call strikes and other actions to defend workers against the capitalist rulers' attacks such as strikes and rallies against Howard's *WorkChoices* legislation, overall they act to police the working class for the bosses and are the chief means for transmitting bourgeois consciousness into the proletariat.

Potential class struggle against Australian imperialist militarism abroad has been repeatedly derailed by the social-democratic union misleaders who channelled working-class opposition to war into support to the United Nations, a tool for the imperialists, and into nationalist appeals for the Australian capitalist rulers to act more independent of the U.S. Anti-Americanism has long been a cheap

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TROTSKY

Defend the Cuban Revolution!

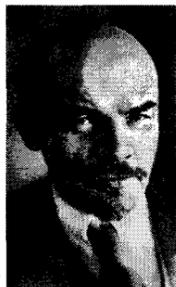
Fifty years ago, as Fidel Castro's Rebel Army marched into Havana in January 1959, the bourgeois army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista shattered. In the face of the hostile encirclement of U.S. imperialism, the Castro regime in 1960-61 expropriated the Cuban bourgeoisie as a class, creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Ever since, the U.S. ruling class has worked relentlessly to overthrow the gains of the Cuban Revolution and re-establish the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

From the time of its inception as the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, which was undergoing political degeneration toward reformism, the Spartacist League has fought for unconditional military defence of the Cuban deformed workers state. At the same time, we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy and to establish a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. The following excerpts are from a document submitted by the Revolutionary Tendency to the 1963 Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, which had given open political support to the Castro bureaucracy.

13. The Cuban Revolution has exposed the vast inroads of revisionism upon our movement. On the pretext of defense of the Cuban Revolution, in itself an obligation for our movement, full unconditional and uncritical support has been given to the Castro government and leadership, despite its petit-bourgeois nature and bureaucratic behavior. Yet the record of the regime's opposition to the democratic rights of the Cuban workers and peasants is clear: bureaucratic ouster of the democratically-elected leaders of the labor movement and their replacement by Stalinist hacks; suppression of the Trotskyist press; proclamation of the single-party system; and much else. This record stands side by side with enormous initial social and economic accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution. Thus Trotskyists are at once the most militant and unconditional defenders against imperialism of both the Cuban Revolution and of the deformed workers' state which has issued therefrom. But Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers' democracy, even if our tactical approach is not as toward a *hardened* bureaucratic caste....

15. Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for "building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries." Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerrilla road to socialism—historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers.

—Revolutionary Tendency, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (June 1963), *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9



LENIN

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SPARTACIST



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Spartacist League & Spartacus Youth Club Events

MELBOURNE

Saturday, 7 March, 2.30pm

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

New International Bookshop, Trades Hall, cnr Victoria & Lygon Sts, Carlton

Information and readings: (03) 9654 4315 or e-mail spartacist@iprimus.com.au

SYDNEY

Sunday, 15 March, 1.30pm

Bankruptcy of Capitalism: Workers Must Rule!

Humanist House, 10 Shepherd St, Chippendale (off Broadway)

Information and readings: (02) 9281 2181 or e-mail spartacist@exemail.com.au

Visit the ICL Web site: www.icl-fi.org

Unions Must Defend Immigrant Workers!

Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 930, 13 February), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S. The Socialist Party in Australia is affiliated to Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party, which was up to its neck in these reactionary strikes.

Britain

LONDON—For over a week, thousands of construction workers at oil refineries and power plants across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland staged a series of strikes demanding “British jobs for British workers.” The strikes were not intended to secure more jobs or indeed any gains for the working class as a whole, nor to defend existing jobs. They were about redividing the existing pool of jobs according to the nationality of the workers. These reactionary strikes, pitting British workers against foreign workers and immigrants, are detrimental to the interests of the multiethnic working class in Britain and those of the workers of Europe as a whole. The main strike slogan, “British jobs for British workers,” long associated with the fascists, was recently affirmed by Labour prime minister Gordon Brown at the 2007 Labour Party conference. The strikes received gushing sympathy from the likes of the virulently anti-immigrant, anti-working-class *Daily Mail* and were actively supported by the fascist BNP who churned out racist garbage, including the claim that British workers were losing out to foreigners.

The strike wave centred on Lindsey refinery in Lincolnshire, owned by French oil giant Total. Part of a construction project was subcontracted to IREM, an Italian contractor, which brought in Italian and Portuguese workers, and did not hire any British workers. A similar situation exists at Staythorpe power station in Nottinghamshire where Spanish subcontractors brought in their own crews. According to reports of the settlement, over 100 “new” construction jobs have been created at Lindsey, earmarked for British workers. The real outcome however will reverberate against foreign and immigrant workers, not least on building sites such as the 2012 Olympic projects where over a third of the workers are immigrants and where in recent months some 200 Romanian workers were removed during a clamp-down on “illegal” foreign labour. More broadly, the protectionist poison emanating from the strikes sends a chilling message to all immigrants and minorities, fuelling racism and reinforcing national divisions between workers in Britain and their class brothers in other European countries.

The responsibility for this social-chauvinist crusade lies with the Labourite leadership of the Unite and GMB trade unions, who embraced this patriotic crusade as naturally as they embraced Labour's racist “war on terror” that is directed against Muslims. Particular blame lies with Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party, which had a member on the strike committee and authored its key demands, while whitewashing its chauvinist character. Throughout what the



Protectionist rally against foreign workers at Lindsey oil refinery, 30 January.

Socialist Party calls “one of the most significant strike waves in recent times.” Italian migrant workers have been holed up in a rusting barge in Grimsby, fearing for their lives, not without reason: according to the *Times* (31 January), 40 striking construction workers from Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire—the hub of the racist strikes—visited the Italian workers to tell them to “go back to your own country.” Generalised insecurity and fear about job losses caused by the worldwide economic recession provide fertile ground for the kind of chauvinism that this strike wave has unleashed.

Trade-union leaders have been cynically banging on about British workers

and under what conditions they work. The way to undercut attempts by the bosses to “level down” the wages and working conditions, including safety standards, of all workers, by playing off one nationality against the other, is for the unions to demand: *Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work!* This poses the need for international collaboration between construction workers across European countries.

The chauvinist nature of the “British jobs” campaign is starkly obvious when viewed through the lens of workers across the channel. Indeed, protectionism cuts both ways: Italian workers (includ-

Full Union Pay for All Work!

being discriminated against. Derek Simpson, co-leader of the union Unite, addressed “the growing problem of UK workers being excluded from important engineering and construction projects” and demanded that “companies involved in engineering and construction projects give UK workers equal opportunities to build Britain's infrastructure” (Unite statement, 30 January). The Labourite bureaucracy's touching concern for “equal opportunities” for British workers stands in sharp contrast to their abject betrayal of class struggles by Britain's multiethnic working class, from the Grunwick strike by Asian women in 1976 to the Labourites' knifing of the great miners strike of 1984-85, to the sellout of the Heathrow airport strike in 2005 in solidarity with over 600 Asian women who were sacked.

The bureaucracy's claim that British workers are being “discriminated” against by foreign contractors rests on a “posted” workers directive in European Union (EU) law, under which subcontractors can supply their “own” workers to work on short-term projects in other EU countries. No British workers were fired at either Lindsey or Staythorpe. Until the workers take power, we will not be in a position to worry about the ebbs and flows of labour migration or the world economy more generally. The bottom line for the trade-union movement must not be *whom* the contractors hire, but at *what rate of pay*

ing IREM workers!), who are currently working alongside British construction workers in northeast Italy, could easily retaliate with strikes and mobilisations demanding “Italian jobs for Italian workers,” which would undoubtedly get the support of the Italian fascists. According to figures from the European Commission, 47,000 British workers were temporarily “posted” to other EU countries in 2006, which is three times more than the 15,000 foreign workers “posted” to Britain at the time (*Financial Times*, 3 February). Regarding the British strike, a spokesman for the General Confederation of Italian Workers (CGIL), Guglielmo Epifani, said, “we have to be careful, because if unemployment is used against workers from other countries” it would mean “Italians could only work in Italy,

English in England and the French in France” (Reuters, 5 February).

The capitalist system is based on the brutal exploitation of all labour, and the ruling class inflames racial and ethnic hostilities to keep the working class divided and thus ensure greater profits. When construction is booming it relies on immigrants, who in Britain were historically Irish but today are drawn heavily from East Europe. With the advent of a severe global recession, the scramble for a diminishing number of jobs is becoming more intense. This scramble is particularly acute in construction where temporary contract work and job insecurity are endemic and where the system of subcontracting drives wages down lower and increases the bosses' opportunities for divide-and-rule.

Labourite Reformism and Protectionism

Rather than wage a fight for jobs for *all* construction workers, which requires an internationalist perspective, and championing the rights of immigrants, the reformist trade-union bureaucracy pandered to the reactionary demand “British jobs for British workers,” even as they have condemned BNP incursions into the strike. On behalf of Unite, Derek Simpson issued a statement saying: “Trade unionists stand against everything the BNP stand for. We have warned union members on construction sites to remain vigilant when it comes to ultra right wing leeches,” while asserting that the industrial action was “not about race or immigration, it's about class.” But any mobilisation of workers on the basis of protectionism is poisonous to class consciousness and plays into the hands of the fascists. It serves to reinforce anti-immigrant racism and weakens the capacity of the working class to defend its own interests. The bureaucracy uses protectionism as a cover for rejecting class struggle in favour of class collaboration. What's needed is to mobilise the multiethnic working class *against* the Brown-led Labour government for jobs for *all*. This requires a political fight to replace the current union misleaders—the labour lieutenants of capital—with a class-struggle leadership. *Trade unions must oppose anti-immigrant racism! Down with protectionist poison!*

Much of the Labourite reformist left managed to take an elementary position of opposition to the reactionary strikes. In a 31 January statement, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) correctly noted that these

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London, September 2007: Kingston branch of Northern Rock during first run on a British bank in 150 years, as tens of thousands besieged branches throughout the country.



Afghanistan...

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cover for the union leadership's subservience to their own bosses. Identifying with the "national interests" of the bourgeoisie and its state, they betray the interests of the working class at home and abroad.

Today, in the face of the economic crisis, the Laborite union misleaders bellow for greater protectionism to "defend" jobs rather than taking up the fight against the capitalist rulers. Preaching the lie that workers will benefit from protecting Australian industry from overseas competitors, these nationalist misleaders act to promote loyalty to the bloody imperialist military. When the bombs began raining on Baghdad in 2003, union leaders reneged on their earlier promises of protest strike action against an attack on Iraq, arguing they did not want to disadvantage "our troops."

In 1999 it was the union tops (cheered on by the fake socialists) who were in the forefront of chauvinist mobilisations demanding Australian military intervention to "Save East Timor." The Australian neocolonial occupation of that tiny state has resulted in gun-toting Australian troops terrorising the population and enforcing abject poverty while Australia plunders the oil and gas reserves. Today, under the Australian jackboot, hunger stalks the majority of East Timorese families while women are 300 times more likely to die during childbirth than in developed countries. While the pseudo-socialists—from the Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP), to Socialist Alternative (SAI), to the Socialist Party—joined the chauvinist "troops in" marches, the SL held speakouts and forums opposing the Australian/UN intervention.

The historic role of the ALP parliamentary and trade-union misleaders is to subordinate the working class to the capitalist rulers by furnishing the lie that it is possible to have a government—particularly a Labor one—that will administer the bosses' state in the interests of workers and the oppressed. The ALP is a bourgeois workers party: thoroughly pro-capitalist in its leadership, program and outlook, while having organic ties to the working class through the trade unions. To defeat imperialist terror abroad and capitalist oppression at home requires breaking the chains of Laborism and building a class-struggle leadership in the trade unions, linked to a

revolutionary workers party. Such a party, a tribune of the people, would fight to lead the multiracial working class in socialist revolution to overthrow the racist Australian capitalist rulers.

Little Australia Reformists Plead: Bring the Troops Home

Our internationalist, proletarian, revolutionary perspective stands counterposed to any support to the various cross-class "anti-war" coalitions such as the Sydney-based "Stop the War" Coalition (StWC). Through such coalitions, reformist left groups such as the DSP and SAI have spent years treacherously pushing working-class anti-war sentiment into forging alliances with mythical "peace-loving" sections of the bourgeoisie. In contrast, we Marxists have fought for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home while demanding *not one person, not one cent for the Australian imperialist military.*

It should be axiomatic for anyone claiming to be a socialist that it is impossible to defeat imperialism in alliance with

Now!' pointed to the fact that the Australian military is already at 'home,' carrying out a vicious racist occupation of Aboriginal communities while enforcing a naked land grab. They were also very much 'at home' in Sydney this month, mobilised to help enforce the suppression of anti-APEC protests!"

Reformist groups such as Socialist Alliance call for the bourgeoisie to reorder its priorities, for example calling for aid, not occupation. But the capitalist system cannot be pressured or reformed to work in the interest of human needs. The relentless drive for profits and spheres of influence by big capitalist powers inevitably leads to neocolonial exploitation, pillage and ultimately war between rival imperialist powers. As leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, V.I. Lenin, explained, imperialist aggression and war are not "policies" that can be ended within the framework of capitalist rule—the entire system must be overturned. The imperialist rulers will not give up their military hardware for the benefit of people any more than a boss would abandon his profits in the interests of job security and a decent wage for



Kee Seng Foo

Detained Afghan asylum seekers en route to Christmas Island deportation centre. Labor government enforces racist mandatory detention of refugees.

capitalist parties like the Greens. They in principle uphold the bourgeois state, which consists at its core of the cops, courts, prisons and military and exists to enforce the rule of the exploitative capitalist minority over the working class and oppressed. The pseudo-Marxists of StWC refuse to draw a class line against their own imperialist rulers and preach the lie that imperialist war can somehow be ended under capitalism, consistently pushing bourgeois pacifist and social patriotic demands "to end Australia's involvement."

Last November, following the deaths of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan, the StWC sought to ingratiate themselves with everyone from peaceniks to returned soldiers, calling on "peace activists to dedicate Remembrance Day to victims of current U.S.-led wars." Burying the crimes of Australian imperialism, they rallied outside the U.S. Consulate in Sydney on 11 November seeking to pressure the Rudd government by pleading that "Australia should take a stand against the US's undeclared policy of spreading the 'war on terror' to neighbouring Syria and Pakistan" (*Green Left Weekly*, 19 November 2008).

Continuing their "little Aussie" nationalist appeals to the capitalist rulers, the upcoming 21 March demonstrations have been called under the demands to "Bring ALL the Troops Home" and "Prosecute the War Criminals," the latter an appeal to the imperialist butchers to act against themselves. These opponents of revolutionary Marxism act to uphold the racist exploitative capitalist status quo by sowing illusions that the capitalist rulers can fundamentally clean up their system. As we stated in our 11 September 2007 leaflet protesting state repression against anti-APEC protesters:

"While the reformists demanded 'Bring the troops home,' our placard 'Cops/Military Get Out of Aboriginal Communities

workers. Only through the working class wresting the means of production from the hands of the capitalist imperialist rulers and organising an international collectivised and planned economy can the basic needs of the billions of toilers now enslaved by imperialist exploitation and oppression begin to be met and the threat of war be ended once and for all.

Down With Australian Imperialism! Defend China!

Reformist demands to "Bring the troops home" also reflect the appetites of the ALP and Greens, who the fake socialists (including the DSP, SAI, Socialist Alliance and the International Socialists—now Solidarity) campaigned for in the November 2007 federal elections. For years the ALP and Greens have been in the forefront of pushing for a greater role for Australian imperialism in the region.

Seeking to capitalise on the euphoria surrounding Obama's election in many parts of the world, and on Obama's "promise" to the Muslim world of a new way forward based on "mutual interest and mutual respect," the Rudd government has acted quickly to sign a new statement on defence cooperation with Indonesia in areas of counter-terrorism, intelligence

and maritime security. This agreement is the latest expression of renewed ties between the Indonesian rulers and Australia following the criminal 2002 Bali bomb attack, which saw the then-Megawati regime enact sinister "anti-terror" decrees including detention without trial and the death penalty for those convicted of "terrorism." Today anti-woman Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia provides a further pretext for "war on terror" repression which will be used to crack down on dissent and target the restive Indonesian working class which faces the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs due to the world economic crisis.

While the Australian imperialists are mainly concerned to enforce an unhindered flow of imperialist profits for the likes of BHP-Billiton, Leightons Holdings and Santos, this latest defence cooperation doubtless ensures stronger Indonesian support to the Rudd government's reactionary "border control" measures which are designed to prevent refugees, including from Afghanistan and Iraq, from reaching Australia's shores. Opposing all anti-immigrant laws and regulations, we demand: *No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

Australia's role in the region—from strengthening ties with Indonesia, to policing in the southern Philippines, to the 2007 military pact with Japan—also supports the U.S.-led imperialist goal of tightening the military chain around the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state. With Obama in the White House, the targeting of China is likely to escalate. Obama represents that wing of the American ruling class who seek to extricate their troops from the Iraq quagmire in order to aim the U.S. military at more strategic and long-term targets such as China. Thus, Hillary Clinton's first overseas visit as U.S. Secretary of State was to Asia, where she attacked North Korea over "human rights" and its nuclear programs. For its part, the Rudd government, while still maintaining almost 1,000 troops in Iraq, has long been anxious to free up Australian military forces to play a greater role in the region under the U.S. umbrella.

While Obama opened his presidency promoting "Made in the U.S.A." protectionism and with verbal attacks that China is manipulating its currency, Rudd has been more circumspect. With the resource-driven economy now spiralling into recession/depression, the Australian imperialist rulers continue a policy of "constructive engagement" towards China on whose imports they so critically depend. At the same time, a nationalist backlash is developing within this country against China as it seeks to invest in Australia's flagging mining industry.

Whatever conjunctural diplomatic approach Australia's rulers may take towards China, they deeply share in the U.S. imperialists' strategic aim to restore capitalist rule in China. For this, the imperialists have a two-pronged strategy: military encirclement combined with capitalist economic penetration. Under the counterrevolutionary U.S./Australia alliance, Australia pursues its own exploitative interests in the region while

Women and Revolution
Women Workers and the Contradictions of China Today

SPARTACIST

Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!
Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics

Against Apologists for the Treachery of the POUM, Then and Now
Revolutionary Popular Fronts in the Spanish Civil War

Just Out!

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acting as the southernmost military anchor for the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific. The network of U.S. spy bases, which collect intelligence from around the world, are key to pinpointing and preparing for imperialist military strikes from Iraq and Afghanistan to China and North Korea. As proletarian internationalists we demand: *Down with all of Australia's regional military agreements! Down with the U.S./Australia alliance! U.S. bases out now!*

We Trotskyists stand for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. We also fight for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats whose appeasement of imperialism and bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption pave the way for capitalist counterrevolutionary forces that aim to return China to the imperialist exploitation and misery that existed prior to the 1949 Revolution, and which exists in many neocolonial countries today. Raising the banner of working-class internationalism, a genuinely communist government in China, based on workers and peasants councils, would spark a fight for revolutionary struggle by the workers and oppressed of Asia, from South Korea to Japan, to the Indian subcontinent to the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia.

We Said: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!

The U.S.-led imperialist terror around the world today is a direct outgrowth of the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, the world's first workers state, created by the 1917 October Revolution. Despite its subsequent degeneration under a parasitic nationalist Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Soviet Union provided a military counterweight to U.S. imperialism. Despite the rather miserable circumstances of backward Russia, it offered living proof that the overturn of capitalism and the construction of a collectivised economy could provide everyone with a job, housing, healthcare and a decent education. This is something no capitalist society has, or ever will, achieve.

The Spartacist League in Australia, as part of our Trotskyist international, fought for the defence of the Soviet Union against capitalist counterrevolutionary threats from without and within, while fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Kremlin bureaucrats. Our unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state was sharply posed in late 1979 when Soviet troops went into Afghanistan to help a left-nationalist Afghan government put down a CIA-bankrolled, Islamic fundamentalist insurgency, which aimed at jettisoning social progress and re-enslaving Afghan women.

The insurgents the U.S./NATO/Australian imperialist troops face in Afghanistan today are Frankenstein's monsters turned on their former masters. Under the banner of U.S. president Jimmy Carter's anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade imperialist aid to the Afghan *mujahedin* began in the late 1970s. This crusade was fully backed by the then-governing Liberal Party and the ALP. The Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* were in rebellion against the pro-Moscow People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which took power in April 1978. The PDPA tried to implement some minimal reforms to bring Afghanistan closer to the 20th century: land distribution, freeing women from the *burka* (the head-to-toe "veil"), reducing the bride price to a nominal sum and providing education for girls.

These reforms sparked a vicious backlash by landlords, tribal chiefs and mullahs who launched a *jihad* (holy war), burning down schools and flying teachers



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26 January 1980

Support
the
Afghan
rebels

21 February 1980

A victory to the Afghan rebels will be a blow against Russian imperialism. It will inspire further revolts by the oppressed national minorities throughout Russia's central Asian empire.



Getty

Soviet military intervention in 1979 opened road to emancipation of Afghan women (left, in Kabul march). Spartacists hailed Red Army in Afghanistan, called for extending gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples. Anti-Communist Cliffite International Socialists sided with Islamic fundamentalists' holy war to re-enslave Afghan women (right, Afghanistan 2001).

alive for the "crime" of teaching young girls to read. When the PDPA requested assistance from Moscow to quell this bloody rebellion, the Soviet Army intervened, acting to defend the USSR's southern border against the CIA-backed insurgency. This was the first war fought in modern history where the status of women played the central role.

The 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan—a country so backward that it lacked a proletariat to carry out a social revolution—was unambiguously progressive. The liberating effects of the Soviet intervention were proven by hard facts. By 1988, women made up 40 percent of the doctors and 60 percent of the teachers at the University of Kabul; 440,000 female students were enrolled in educational institutions and 80,000 more in literacy programs. Women enjoyed some real measure of freedom from the suffocating veil and subjugation for the first time in Afghanistan's history. Now this has all been drowned in blood.

A Red Army victory posed the extension of the gains of the October Revolution to Afghanistan through the country's integration into the Soviet system. The Soviet intervention cut against the grain of the Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country" and offered the prospect of reanimating the Bolshevik program of proletarian revolutionary internationalism in the Soviet Union. Highlighting the bureaucracy's capacity to betray, we stressed at the time that a genuinely internationalist perspective in Afghanistan would take a workers political revolution in the Soviet Union to throw out the Stalinist bureaucracy and return the USSR to the road of Lenin and Trotsky.

Joining the imperialists' anti-Soviet war drive, the bulk of the international left condemned what they called the Soviet "invasion" of Afghanistan. In Australia the International Socialists (IS)—forebears of today's Solidarity group and Socialist Alternative—criminally stood with their own imperialist rulers and the anti-woman Islamic fundamentalists. Such was their anti-Communist fervour, the I.S. in Australia initially lined up behind union-busting Liberal prime minister, Malcolm Fraser, to call for a *boycott* of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Indeed much of the reformist left called for trade bans and joined with the ALP to attack Fraser's Liberals from the right with the slogan "Malcolm's wool keeps the Russians warm." Today's leaders of SAIt and Solidarity who shamelessly supported the anti-Soviet Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* cutthroats have the blood of Afghan leftists, school teachers and women on their hands.

When the then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, seeking to appease imperialism, withdrew forces from Afghanistan in 1989, we denounced this as a cold-blooded crime against both the Afghan and Soviet peoples. We warned it was

far better to fight the forces of counter-revolution in Afghanistan than within the borders of the Soviet Union. In stark contrast the reformists celebrated the Soviet withdrawal, with the Democratic Socialist Perspective (then Socialist Workers Party) cheering on Gorbachev's sellout. For their part the IS unambiguously took a side with reaction declaring the Soviet withdrawal "a tremendous victory for the rebels [*mujahedin*]" (*The Socialist*, March 1989). Gorbachev's betrayal paved the way for Taliban rule and opened the road for the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state, a historic defeat for the proletariat and oppressed around the world.

While the bulk of the left internationally, including in Australia, stood on the side of capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR, we of the International Communist League fought to the bitter end in defence of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of Eastern and Central Europe. In East Germany (DDR) in 1989-90 we uniquely opposed the capitalist reunification. We called for a red Germany of workers councils (soviets) through political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in West Germany. We initiated the call for a 3 January 1990 united-front workers mobilisation against Nazi provocations at the Treptow Park Soviet war memorial in East Berlin, which was taken up by the ruling Stalinist regime. A quarter million people came out to protest this fascist desecration and in defence of the DDR and the Soviet Union.

In the Soviet Union we distributed more than 100,000 of our 1991 statement in Russian calling on Soviet workers to "Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution" and urging the proletariat to form soviets

under the program of Bolshevik internationalism. Genuine opposition to imperialism begins with defending those gains that the international working class has already won. Anti-imperialism abroad also demands a class-struggle program at home. A revolutionary fight against imperialist war must be based on the independent mobilisation of the working class which, with its hands on the levers of production, has the potential social power to challenge and in the last analysis overturn capitalist rule.

The horrors being played out in Afghanistan and Iraq are among the starkest expressions of the choice that has been posed since the advent of the imperialist epoch in the latter part of the 19th century: socialism or barbarism. It is the same capitalist imperialist rulers who are engaged in bloody war and imperialist plunder from Iraq to Afghanistan to East Timor who are now throwing millions out of work around the world, while whipping up racist reaction and enforcing strong state repression. In the course of sharp class struggle, the proletariat must become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for their own independent interests and those of all the oppressed against the brutal capitalist system. This requires the building of a revolutionary party to educate the working class in their objective and historic interests. In political opposition to Laborite nationalism and reliance on the state, the aim of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is to build such a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party dedicated to lead the overthrow of this barbaric system and to the establishment of workers rule. ■

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Socialist Alternative: God Delusional Opportunists

On Marxism and Religion

For youth repelled by the exploitative capitalist system and beginning to explore socialist ideas, organisations claiming the mantle of Marxism might seem a bewildering assortment. Reading an article in *Socialist Alternative* (Oct-Nov 2008) titled "The real story of what Marxists think of religion," you could forgive such potential revolutionaries their confusion. Eulogising religion as having the potential to be a "platform for resistance to oppression," Socialist Alternative (SAlt) contend that Marxism isn't opposed to religion at all! "What!?" such youth might exclaim, "What happened to Marxism being scientific and atheist?"

Perhaps it was one such individual who wrote to *Socialist Alternative* (November 2008), calling on SAlt to stop sugar-coating religion and observing that "Islam like Judaism and Christianity are tools of the oppressors." The letter provoked a venomous response. Three replies, including from SAlt cadre, published in the "Dec 08-Jan 09" issue denounced the correspondent as on the "elitist, atheist 'God Delusion' bandwagon" and "filled with Islamophobic shit" having "sucked up...the anti-Muslim mind poison, sugar-coated in leftism fed to you by the ruling class." While we are not uncritical of the original (edited) letter and have no way of knowing fully what the writer stands for, SAlt's unhinged response, like their article penned by Patrick Weiniger, is a bald-faced repudiation of Marxism.

As Marxist revolutionaries who want to change this world and end human exploitation and oppression, we're firmly on the side of science, which studies the natural world and validates theories by observation and experiment, as opposed to religion which asserts blind faith in an unreal, supernatural power controlling events. We are, in the words of Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin, "absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion." At the same time we oppose all forms of religious persecution and oppression. Thus our comrades in the U.S. have opposed the arrest of Mormons for practising polygamy (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 916, 6 June 2008). Comrades in France and elsewhere have protested government moves to ban the Islamic *hijab* or headscarf in schools, noting that such persecution can only reinforce the grip of religion by driving women out of secular society.

We stand opposed to the imperialist impoverishment and exploitation of the masses of the neocolonial world, but this does not mean that we are cultural relativists who prettify the horrible status quo in such countries. Thus we oppose hideous "customs" such as female genital mutilation or the head-to-toe veil. While recognising that people should be able to hold their religious beliefs without interference from the state, we oppose religion dictating the policy of the state.

Upholding the liberating ideals of the enlightenment and Marxism, we revolutionaries fight for the complete separation of religion and state! In fact, the full separation of religion and state has nowhere been fully realised by the bourgeoisie for the simple reason that religion has great value for the ruling class in its struggle against the proletariat. With its deep social roots, religion serves to buttress the institution of the family, the main source of

women's oppression, and ruling class authority. All modern religion acts as an instrument of capitalist reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people.

Our goal is to build a revolutionary party that can lead the working class in its historic task of overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with socialism. Only then will religion, which enforces mindless



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Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai with Central Asian women, drinking wine in defiance of teachings of Koran.

subordination to "higher authority" and is responsible for so much guilt and misery, quickly wither through education once its state props are kicked away.

Down With Anti-Muslim Racism!

We Marxists have been forthright in our opposition to the racist "war on terror," opposing the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan abroad and the vile racist scapegoating of Muslims at home. Struggling in the interests of the whole working class, and against Laborite nationalism, we are for a class-struggle fight to defend the rights of Muslims and all immigrants and minorities. As for SAlt, for all their "militant anti-racist" posturing, come election day they fall into line behind the Labor Party and racist capitalist rule. For example, in the 2001 elections SAlt advocated to "grit our teeth" and vote for the ALP, even as the ALP was demanding "security abroad, security at home" and trying to outdo the then-Howard government in support for the war on Afghanistan and the war on refugees.

In fact SAlt's "socialist alternative" has never extended beyond trying to pressure the pro-imperialist Labor Party. Thus, in the 2007 elections they championed a vote for the bourgeois Greens (an act of class treachery) as a means to apply pressure on Rudd's Labor Party. For our part we Spartacists declared the elections a bi-partisan war on workers and minorities, and called for "No vote to ALP! No vote to bourgeois Greens!"

Under the cover of fighting against the "war on terror," SAlt poisonously insinuate that any criticism of Islam equals support for racist anti-Muslim persecution. In fact, from their written repudiation of the Marxist attitude toward religion to

braying about their attendance at Muslim prayer meetings, SAlt foster backward consciousness among the masses, conciliating both religion and religious leaders such as the Muslim clerics involved in recent protests against Israel's murderous attacks on Gaza. This is no surprise as they and their forebears have long portrayed Muslim fundamentalism as "anti-imperialist" and even "revolutionary."

for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.*"

—"Critique of Hegel's Philosophy Of Right" (1844)

Declaring "Marx was a democrat before he became a socialist," SAlt do their best, through selective quoting, to devolve him into a "harmless" modern-day bourgeois-liberal democrat.

To expunge the taint of atheism from their fake brand of "Marxism," under the heading "Islamophobia" SAlt pick on two prominent authors who are self-identified atheists. First they cite reactionary journalist, Christopher Hitchens, as "living proof that being an atheist does not make you more left-wing." In fact Hitchens' pro-imperialist warmongering over Iraq owes more to the classless pontificating about "tyranny" versus "democracy" fundamental to SAlt's worldview than to his non-Marxist critique of religion. Hitchens, once a member of SAlt's forebear, the anti-communist Cliffite International Socialists, long ago took the logical step to bourgeois reaction.

The other target of SAlt's anti-atheist vitriol is Richard Dawkins, evolutionary biologist and writer of popular science. SAlt quote from *The God Delusion* where Dawkins gives a straightforward list of atrocities committed in the name of religion, including the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. SAlt assert "Dawkins argues that religion is to blame for war. This patently false idea provides a cover for imperialism." Never mind the fact that Dawkins protested Britain's involvement in the invasion of Iraq. False consciousness like religion and nationalism certainly *is* a powerful tool to inspire division in the working and oppressed masses, and in this epoch of imperialist reaction often provides the tripwire for the bloodiest conflicts.

Indonesia 1965-66 is but one chilling illustration. More than a million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were massacred when the Indonesian generals unleashed Islamic fundamentalist reactionaries to crush the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). In the face of this terror, the workers and peasants of Indonesia were politically, organisationally and militarily disarmed by the PKI program of "national unity," a popular-frontist alliance of bourgeois nationalists, Islamic groups and the PKI (see "Lessons of Indonesia 1965," *Spartacist* No. 55, Autumn 1999). The Australian and U.S. imperialists were up to their necks in these atrocities, promoting the mobilisation of Islamic reactionaries against "godless communism" and providing the Indonesian generals with a hit list of some 5,000 Communists to exterminate. In helping to orchestrate this massacre the imperialists were applying an imperative noted in 1950 by then-U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles: "The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it" (cited in Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*).

Hostile to the lessons of Indonesia 1965, the anti-communist opportunists of SAlt criminally encourage workers down

Their outlook is both a product of their liberal opportunism and a direct outgrowth of their anti-communist hostility to the former Soviet Union and other societies where capitalism has been overthrown. It has led them to politically embrace such vile reactionary forces as the Vatican-backed Polish Solidarność (Solidarity) and the Islamic fundamentalist Afghan *mujahedin*.

To the extent that SAlt have influence, their program has actually helped create today's post-Soviet reactionary political climate marked by all-sided capitalist brutality and heightened religious obscurantism. In August 1991 when Boris Yeltsin's imperialist backed forces of counterrevolution staged a countercoup in Moscow, every capitalist ruling class around the world celebrated. Then part of the International Socialists, SAlt cadre joined in the jubilation declaring that "Communism is dead".... It's a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*The Socialist*, September 1991).

SAlt: Haunted by the Spectre of Marx

As if to justify their anti-Marxist conciliation of religion, SAlt quote Karl Marx, who explained:

"*Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people."

SAlt piously claim, "Those who wish to present Marx as anti-religious trot out only the last sentence." One only need quote Marx's very next lines to expose this self-serving lie:

"The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand

Young Spartacus

the same blood-drenched popular-frontist path. A letter by Weiniger and Colleen Bolger published in *Socialist Alternative* (Dec 08-Jan 09) excitedly reported on the "Socialism and Islam" session they attended at a Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM)-hosted conference last November. Enthusing that "we got to debate how the Left should relate to Islamic parties in a largely Muslim country," they lauded the PSM for "eschewing sectarian dismissal of Muslim political forces." No doubt they also support the PSM standing in the Malaysian elections last year under the banner of the main bourgeois opposition, which includes Islamic fundamentalists.

SAlt Slander the Bolsheviks

SAlt would have us believe that their chasing of religious "allies" has the endorsement of the Bolshevik Party that led the October 1917 Russian Revolution establishing the world's first workers state. In a September 2006 article, "Why socialists fight for religious freedom," cadre Diane Fieldes writes: "In some of the southern republics of the USSR in the early 1920s as many as 15 per cent of party members were believers in Islam" and declares "Muslims were encouraged to join the Communist Party."

Far from conciliating religion, Soviet policy in Central Asia recognised that the path to overthrowing the entrenched power of religion, in lands almost entirely devoid of a working class, mandated admitting a fraction of the *most conscious* members of society, outside the Europeanised elite, into the Communist parties. As Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, explained:

"We will admit into our ranks those comrades who have yet to break from religion not in order to reconcile Marxism with Islam, but rather tactfully but persistently to free the backward members' consciousness of superstition, which in its very essence is the mortal enemy of communism."

—"Tasks of Communist Education" (1923) in *Problems of Everyday Life*

SAlt lyingly infer that the Bolsheviks abandoned the bourgeois-democratic separation of church and state by claiming the young Soviet state accommodated *sharia* law, the 1,300-year-old body of Muslim canon law regulating every aspect of life including enforcing capital punishment for homosexuality and "honour killings" of women and girls accused of "improper" relations with men. According to Fieldes: "A parallel court system was created in 1921, with Islamic courts administering justice in accordance with *sharia* law alongside the soviet system. Thousands of Muslim schools were set up with government encouragement." In truth, as we wrote in "Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East" (*Women and Revolution* No. 12, Summer 1976):

"...the Soviet government waged a campaign to build the authority of the Soviet legal system and civil courts as an alternative to the traditional Muslim *kadi* courts and legal codes. Although the *kadi* courts were permitted to function, their powers were circumscribed in that they were forbidden to handle political cases or any cases in which both parties to the dispute had not agreed to use the *kadi* rather than the parallel Soviet court system. As the Soviet courts became more accepted, criminal cases were eliminated from the *kadis'* sphere. Next, the government invited dissatisfied parties to appeal the *kadis'* decisions to a Soviet court. In this manner the Soviets earned the reputation of being partisans of the oppressed, while the *kadis* were exposed as defenders of the status quo."

After only a few years the *kadis* were forbidden to enforce any Muslim law which contradicted Soviet law. Soviet representatives attended all *kadi* proceedings and their approval was required for all court decisions. In the mid-1920s, when the *wafks* (endowment properties), which

had supported the *kadis*, were expropriated and redistributed among the peasantry, the *kadis* disappeared completely.

Scandalously, in 2005 SAlt's political co-thinkers in Canada, the International Socialists, supported government proposals to establish *sharia* tribunals for family law, as part of the capitalist state. Our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste actively protested against these moves. Such courts could only deepen the isolation and oppression of Muslim women (see *Spartacist Canada* No. 147, Winter 2005/2006).

Support to Counterrevolution = Support to Anti-Woman Reaction

Despite the Soviet Union's degeneration under a nationalist parasitic bureaucratic caste, which usurped political power from the Soviet proletariat in a political counterrevolution beginning in 1923-24, the proletarian collectivised property forms created by the 1917 October Revolution remained until capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. It was the elementary duty of revolutionaries to defend the gains of the revolution by fighting for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state and for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist misleaders who paved the way for capitalist restoration. We apply the same program to the deformed



Solidarność leader Lech Walesa praying in Gdansk Shipyard, 1980. Capitalist counterrevolution in Poland, with Vatican support, ushered in mass unemployment, threw back rights of women.

workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba today.

SAlt's political origins go back to the late Tony Cliff and his followers who bowed to the pressure of anti-communist Cold War hysteria during the Korean War. Capitulating to the British bourgeoisie and the then-ruling British Labour Party, they refused to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea against imperialist attack and were expelled from Trotsky's Fourth International for reneging on their revolutionary duty.

Motivated by hostility towards the Soviet Union, throughout the 1980s, as then-members of the Cliffite International Socialist Organisation, SAlt cadre supported the CIA-bankrolled Islamic Afghan *mujahedin* cutthroats against the Soviet Red Army, alongside Washington and its union-busting Hawke/Keating Labor government ally in Canberra. This was a war directly over the status of women—the tribal chiefs and mullahs went to war when the Afghan government attempted to open up education for girls and to reduce the bride price. Standing upon our unconditional military defence of the USSR, the Spartacist League took the side of social progress. We said "Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!" (see front page article).

Driven by their hostility to the Soviet Union, SAlt also hailed Polish clerical-

reactionary, anti-woman, anti-Semitic "union" Solidarność, backed to the hilt by the CIA and the Catholic Church, throughout its rise in the 1980s. When in September 1981 Solidarność came out for capitalist restoration we said: "Stop Solidarity's Counterrevolution!" Later Solidarność's program triumphed in the form of the devastating 1989 capitalist counterrevolution in Poland, which ushered in mass unemployment and the brutal roll-back of women's rights, particularly abortion rights.

Weiniger's article concludes by denouncing a July 2008 Sydney demo protesting homophobia and opposition to effective birth control by the Catholic Church. This demonstration, which we Spartacists attended, was called by the reformist Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) in response to the visit of Pope Benedict during "World Youth Day," which saw hundreds of thousands of "pilgrims" descend on the city in a "celebration" of religious obscurantism. Unable to utter a word of protest against the reactionary, anti-woman Catholic Church, SAlt instead are outraged that some protesters "thrust" condoms at pilgrims en route to pray at the pope's feet, lamenting that this could only serve to "isolate" the left from these "potential allies." While SAlt wring their hands about the sensibilities of Catholic pil-

is not a recipe to tolerate ignorance or superstition, but on the contrary an obligation to actively expose and refute religion as an obstacle to the satisfaction of human needs. As Lenin wrote:

"The dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels...applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history.... We must combat religion—that is the ABC of all materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way.*"

—"The Attitude of the Workers Party to Religion" (1909)

It will take a proletarian revolution to smash the power of capital and open the road to the egalitarian socialist society based on the material abundance needed to sweep away the basis of religion. This requires the building of a Leninist vanguard party which can lead the working class at the head of all the oppressed. Its cadres will be the most advanced fighters, including in defence of science and in opposition to religious superstition. Lenin explained:

"So far as the Party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs."

—"Socialism and Religion," 1905

This Leninist perspective stands diametrically opposed to SAlt's accommodation to organised religious movements as allies-in-waiting.

Addressing the French public in 1767, Voltaire wrote "Anyone who has the power to make you believe absurdities has the power to make you commit injustices." SAlt oppose Marx's program, not out of ignorance, but as a consequence of *their* anti-communist program, which rejects the Marxist principle that *only* the working class has both the interest and the social power to overthrow capitalism and build a classless society.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club are dedicated to freeing the oppressed from religion's yoke. As we say in the article "Marxism and Religion," reprinted in our pamphlet *Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism*:

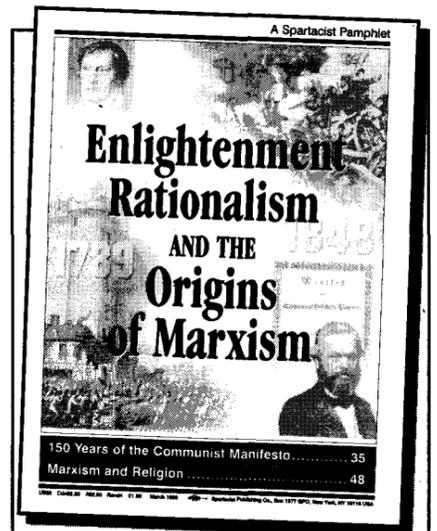
"In order to win over a new generation to the struggle for socialism, based on a materialist conception of society, socialists must ceaselessly combat religion and other forms of idealism which look to the supernatural, explaining that freedom from oppression lies in this world, not another." ■

grims, we Marxists say: Free contraception and abortion on demand for all! For the separation of church and state!

For a Multiracial Leninist Vanguard Party!

Religion at best serves to propagate and enshrine mind-numbing delusions, to lessen the pain of existence. Religious institutions help enforce the worst prejudices, oppression of women, and subjugation of youth and, along with the institution of the family, serve as a prop for the capitalist system of private property. Often, where material want is greatest, such as societies based on subsistence agriculture, organised religion exercises a monopoly over social welfare. For example, Catholic medical centres throughout regions of Africa, Asia and South America are often the sole provider of health-care services, but they use their resources to implement the Vatican's prohibition of the use of condoms, an elementary public health measure in societies ravaged by AIDS. The historic task of the international working class is to make the productive resources of the world available to all, based on need, not profit. Only worldwide proletarian revolution can lay the basis for the end of material want, the foundation of religious superstition.

The Marxist program aims at the eradication of religion, not by force of arms or law, but scientific mastery of nature. This



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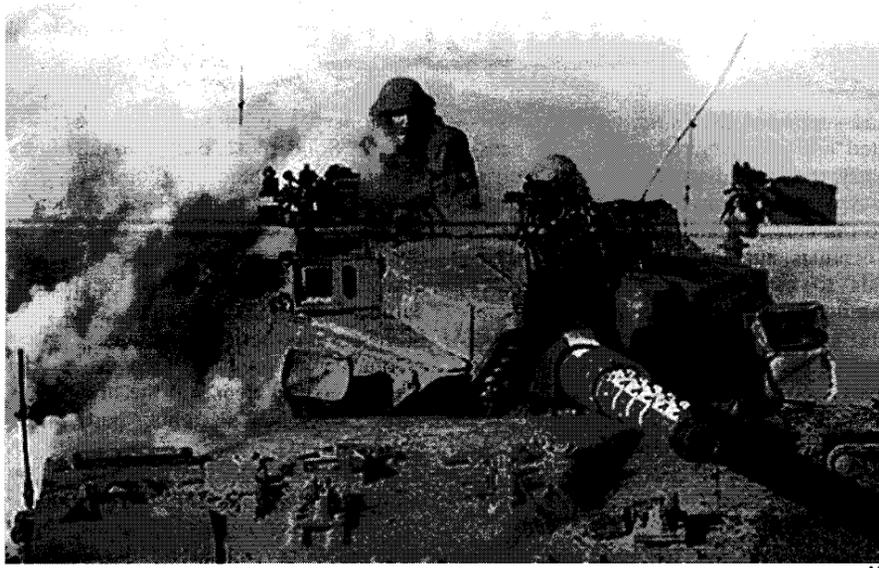
Gaza...

(continued from page 12)

diplomatically during the Cold War. As the Moscow Stalinist regime under Mikhail Gorbachev disintegrated, the South African rulers came to terms with Nelson Mandela and the ANC.

With the end of legalised apartheid what followed was the election of the ANC-led bourgeois Tripartite Alliance, a popular front consisting of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the South African Communist Party and the ANC. As a result the ANC leaders became the black frontmen for neo-apartheid South African capitalism, thus enforcing the continued superexploitation of the black masses. The 1994 election of the bourgeois ANC was praised by reformists worldwide, including the DSP and International Socialist Organisation, many of whose cadre went on to form SAIt and Solidarity. In contrast we in the Spartacist League forthrightly declared that the ANC/De Klerk deal was a betrayal of black freedom and fought to build a Bolshevik workers party to lead the fight for a black-centred workers republic.

Rather than bourgeois sanctions and appeals to the capitalist rulers the working class must be mobilised *against* their own capitalist rulers. This can include tactics such as refusing to handle military goods for Israel and organising material aid for the Palestinians. Ultimately the liberation of the deeply oppressed Palestinian people requires a fight for workers revolutions throughout the Near East and beyond. The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*



Israeli tank advances at Gaza border, 8 January.

(No. 928, 16 January), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

JANUARY 13—Some 1,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, nearly half of them women and children, have been slaughtered in little more than two weeks of Zionist terror, with over 4,300 wounded. The carnage began December 27 with round-the-clock air assaults that turned virtually all of the Gaza ghetto into ash and rubble, with streets littered with limbs of Palestinians dismembered by Israeli bombs and missiles. Under the pretext of responding to Hamas's (largely ineffectual) rocket attacks on nearby Israeli towns, the Zionist butchers—armed with U.S. warplanes, helicopters and missiles—have already slaughtered nearly

twice as many Palestinians as during the first whole year of the Palestinian uprising that began in September 2000.

A week after the December bloodbath began, Israeli stormtroopers began their ground invasion. Over 10,000 troops of one of the most highly mechanized and powerful military machines in the world have torn a swath of terror and destruction through Gaza, split the Strip in two and are now poised for an invasion of the cities. *It is vital for the international proletariat to stand for the military defense of Hamas against Israel without giving that reactionary Islamic fundamentalist outfit any political support. Down with U.S. aid to Israel!*

Israeli officials declared that there was “no humanitarian crisis” in Gaza; indeed,

Britain...

(continued from page 3)

strikes “are based around the wrong slogans and target the wrong people,” adding that “those who urge on these strikes are playing with fire.” Workers Power “unreservedly oppose” the strikes saying, “the strikers’ target is not their employers but 100 Italian and Portuguese workers” (*Workers Power*, February 2009). A leaflet (undated) issued by Gerry Downing, a member of the Socialist Fight organisation, says, “Socialist Fight (SF) unequivocally opposes the ‘wildcat’ strikes and their outcome because they were called on the reactionary basis of ‘British jobs for British workers’” and “it was on this xenophobic basis they were spread, with the assistance of the right wing media and on this basis they were tacitly endorsed by the entire Unite and GMB leaderships. And it was on this basis they were settled.”

But the Socialist Party, whose supporters were a key part of the strike leadership and which proposed the demands adopted by the strike committee, was up to its neck in this shameful campaign. The strike demands, while paying lip service for “All immigrant labour to be unionised,” do not defend job rights for foreign workers. They include the demand for “Union controlled registering of unemployed and locally skilled union members, with nominating rights as work becomes available.” In other words, jobs would be filled from “local” (i.e., *British*) applicants. This is a version of “British jobs for British workers.” In contrast to a Leninist vanguard party that fights against all manner of chauvinism, the Socialist Party is mired in it.

As part of the fight for a class-struggle leadership, the trade unions must oppose the “war on terror” and racism against immigrants and minorities. We oppose all the bourgeoisie’s anti-immigrant laws and regulations, including work restrictions on workers from EU countries

in East Europe. We demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! A class-struggle leadership in the unions would demand jobs for all, through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, and undertake a union organising drive to draw into their ranks all workers, including those in dangerous and low-paid jobs.

Workers of the World Unite!

In the face of world capitalist recession, protectionism is increasing. Thus Barack Obama included a “buy American” clause in his “rescue” package for American industry. For the bourgeoisie, “free trade” and protectionism are options they can debate, but for the proletariat, protectionism is poison. It is a classic means of channelling discontent over job losses into hostility towards foreign workers and immigrants while building illusions in the benevolence of our “own” capitalists. The global economic crisis has exacerbated tensions between capitalist governments within the EU who are jostling to “save” their own economy. The EU directive that allows contractors operating in other countries not to hire local workers has fuelled opposition to the EU among construction workers. Contrary to the trade-union bureaucracy’s pledge that EU laws can be amended to serve the interests of workers, levelling down of wages and conditions for workers is part of the purpose of the EU. As revolutionary, proletarian internationalists, we oppose the EU, an imperialist consortium designed to improve their competitiveness against their American and Japanese rivals, at the expense of the working class in Europe, including its minority component. Our programme is for workers revolutions leading to a Socialist United States of Europe.

Our programme is completely counterposed to “little England” nationalist opposition to the EU that is associated with old Labour reformism, to which the SWP, Workers Power and the Taaffeites are all wedded. Old Labour’s erstwhile claim to “socialism,” as upheld by former miners leader Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn—a

commitment to nationalised industry under capitalism—is inherently protectionist. The extensive nationalisations of industry carried out under Clement Attlee’s Labour government in the post-war period had nothing to do with socialism; rather they were a “rescue package” for British industry which was in profound decline against its rivals.

The further expansion of the EU imperialist trade bloc into the former deformed workers states of East Europe provided the European bourgeoisies with a vast supply of very cheap skilled labour. This expansion was made possible by the series of capitalist counterrevolutions that swept across East Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992 creating massive unemployment and social immiseration. This historic defeat for the workers and oppressed was supported by the Socialist Party, SWP, Workers Power and sundry other reformists. In contrast, we Trotskyists of the International Communist League fought to mobilise the working class in defence of the gains that those states embodied.

Protectionism is doubly pernicious when directed at the People’s Republic of China, where Britain, the U.S., and other imperialist powers have had as a central goal the restoration of capitalist rule. The fact that capitalism was overthrown in China by the 1949 Revolution, leading to the building of a collectivised economy, represents a historic gain for the working class internationally. We continue to fight for the unconditional military defence of China against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution, and for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy and replace it with the rule of workers and peasants councils.

The workers movement has seen many examples of trade-union solidarity against the capitalists’ attempts to use low-wage immigrant workers as a club against the unions. In Dublin in 2005, workers throughout Ireland demonstrated against Irish Ferries—and in solidarity with immigrant workers—when the bosses

to the Zionist rulers, Palestinians are nothing more than *untermenschen* (“sub-human,” as the Nazis described those whom they enslaved and exterminated). The leaflets that Israel drops warning Palestinians to flee are a cruel reminder that Gaza’s residents have nowhere to flee from what is essentially a concentration camp surrounded by an electrified fence, a sealed border with Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. Israel has bombarded schools, mosques and United Nations refugee centers—as the Zionists have done in the past. On January 6, over 40 Palestinians taking refuge in a UN school in Jabaliya were killed by Israeli bombardment. Two days earlier, Israeli military forces shelled a house in Zeitoun, southeast of Gaza City, after telling over 100 Palestinians to take shelter there, killing up to 30. Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of using U.S.-made white phosphorus shells, which burn the flesh down to the bone. Israel used white phosphorus during the 2006 war in Lebanon and the U.S. used it in Iraq during the 2004 attacks on the city of Falluja.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the Palestinian population has been sealed off by an apartheid wall and subjected to a deadly Israeli military occupation, including the shooting of demonstrators protesting the rampage in Gaza. Surrounded by 450,000 Zionist settlers who are backed up by thousands more troops, Palestinians are subjected to a series of military checkpoints and “Jewish only” roads that make travel between towns virtually impossible. *All Zionist troops and settlers out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem!*

The Zionists’ war on the besieged Palestinians is part of their drive for *lebensraum* (“living space,” the Nazi term

tried to hire East European workers at a fraction of Irish workers’ wages. Our comrades issued a leaflet calling for the power of the working class to be harnessed behind defence of immigrants, declaring: “Unions must organise immigrant workers! Full wages and benefits for immigrants!” Another example was the Heathrow strike in 2005 when, in response to the sacking of low-paid catering workers and replacing them with immigrants at even lower wages (which did *not* happen in the construction sites at power stations), the workforce at British Airways staged an immensely powerful wildcat strike that crippled BA’s international operation. But the trade-union leadership under Tony Woodley snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by ending the strike without having obtained the reinstatement of the sacked workers.

As far back as 1866, under Karl Marx, the International Working Men’s Association prevented an attempt by London master tailors, who were big capitalists, to replace journeymen tailors in London by recruiting journeymen in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Marx wrote that the secretaries of the International “published in Belgian, French and Swiss newspapers a warning which was a complete success. The London masters’ manoeuvre was foiled; they had to surrender and meet their workers’ just demands” (“A Warning,” 4 May 1866).

There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialised economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity and want. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, forged in opposition to Labourism, to overthrow the bloodsoaked British capitalist order and replace it with working-class rule. Down with the reactionary “United Kingdom”! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■

AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST

for displacing those they conquered), which threatens to engulf the entire Near East in conflagration. The *New York Times* (11 January) reported that in 2007 Israel sought U.S. "bunker buster" bombs to take out what the Israelis believed to be Iran's nuclear development sites. The *Times* said that the U.S. (for now) denied the request because it had its own program to undermine the Iranian regime. As we have repeatedly asserted, in the face of imperialist threats and blackmail, Iran needs nuclear weapons and adequate delivery systems to defend itself and deter an imperialist attack.

Predictably, the Bush administration has backed Israel's onslaught against Gaza to the hilt. For his part, president-elect Barack Obama made clear his support for Israel's attacks during the 2008 election campaign, stating during a visit to Israel: "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing." Earlier, in January 2008, Obama wrote a letter to the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations on the eve of UN discussions on Israel's blockade of Gaza since Hamas's takeover of the Strip in 2007, a year after Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections. Obama claimed that "Israel is forced" into imposing the blockade and that it "has the right to defend itself."

Behind Israeli terror stands the far greater terror of U.S. imperialism, which has slaughtered hundreds of thousands in the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama has vowed to augment the Afghan occupation with 30,000 additional U.S. troops, while maintaining American forces in Iraq and ratcheting up threats against Iran and Pakistan. Referring to Obama's "seeming reticence to comment on Gaza," the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) complained that "Israel has nothing to fear from an Obama administration" (*Socialist Worker*, 9 January). Meanwhile, the Workers World Party (WWP) declared, "Obama's Middle East policy is not fundamentally different from the policies of Bush or McCain" (*Workers World*, 15 January). Such declarations are rich coming from these organizations, whose entire political outlook is determined by what is "possible" under the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. On the night of the U.S. presidential elections, the ISO threw a party in Harlem to "celebrate the end of far too many years of republican rule" and to discuss "what can activists do to press their demands on the next administration?" WWP, in the very same issue cited above, declared that Obama's election "was a watershed moment in U.S. history because it represented a breakthrough in the struggle against racism!"

The idea that one can expect "change," including on Near East policy, from Obama and the Democrats is as obscene as it is absurd. Nearly every Democratic politician has lined up behind Israel's war. New York governor David Paterson spoke at a pro-Zionist rally in New York City on January 11, while Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi sponsored a resolution in support of Israel's onslaught—which passed by 390 to 5.

There have been protests in cities across the world against the bloodbath in Gaza—and against the pro-U.S. Arab regimes, such as that of Egypt, which has virtually sealed its border with Gaza. The Spartacist League/U.S. and other sections of the International Communist League have intervened into these protests to express our solidarity with the Palestinian masses and to put forward the only perspective—international socialist revolution—that can put an end to Palestinian national oppression. *The myriad peoples of the Near East will not know peace, prosperity or justice until bourgeois rule*

in the region is overthrown through a series of socialist revolutions.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Nearly a century ago, revolutionary Marxist leader Rosa Luxemburg declared that the choice facing humanity is "socialism or barbarism." What the world is witnessing today in Gaza is an expression of the barbaric logic of capitalist imperialism and Zionist nationalism. For more than 60 years, Palestinians have suffered under the jackboot of Zionist Israel—an oppression that has intensified since the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the USSR, which acted as a

self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. So long as the national principle prevails, the oppression of the Palestinians, the weaker side, will deepen.

The national emancipation of the Palestinians—including the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland—necessarily entails workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Syrian Ba'athist bonapartists and the capitalist rulers of Lebanon—countries that all have sizable Palestinian populations.

The Arab bourgeois regimes have always been enemies of Palestinian national liberation. When the Arab armies

With some 50 percent of the Palestinian population living outside the Occupied Territories—in Jordan, Lebanon, Israel—the national liberation of the Palestinians demands a perspective of socialist revolution throughout the Near East, including within Israel, the most powerful and economically advanced country in the region. This means recognizing the right of the Hebrew-speaking people to national self-determination. In turn, breaking the Hebrew proletariat from their Zionist rulers requires that they champion the national rights of the Palestinians. We have no illusions that winning the Hebrew proletariat to this perspective will be an easy task. Indeed, it will likely require the victory of socialist revolution in one of the other Near Eastern states to break the Hebrew proletariat from Zionist chauvinism. This task is not made easier by the criminal indiscriminate terror bombings carried out by Palestinian forces against Israeli civilians, which drive the Hebrew population further into the arms of the Zionist rulers.

The Zionist state is not only a catastrophe for Palestinians—it is also a deathtrap for Jews. As long as Zionist oppression of Palestinians continues, Israeli Jews will continue to be a target of hatred and outrage by the more than 100 million Arabs who surround them. It is only the working class of Israel—Hebrew and Arab—that has the capacity to destroy the Zionist citadel from within. Israeli society is not a seamless reactionary mass. Some 25 percent of citizens live in poverty and income disparities are higher than in Egypt and Jordan. It is the false consciousness of religion and Zionist nationalism and racism—in the face of pervasive anti-Semitism—that is the glue binding the Hebrew proletariat to its Israeli ruling-class enemy.

Even in the face of the current anti-Arab hysteria and widespread support for the Gaza war, there have been antiwar demonstrations in Israel, including a 10,000-strong rally in Tel Aviv on January 3. Sephardic Jews, though overwhelmingly under the sway of right-wing and religious parties, suffer widespread discrimination and poverty. The Palestinian Arabs, nominally "citizens" who constitute 20 percent of Israel's population, are consigned to segregated, impoverished areas and low-paid, unskilled jobs. On January 12, Israel's Central Elections Committee *banned* two Arab political parties from running in next month's elections.

It is vital to forge revolutionary Marxist parties throughout the Near East to unite the proletariat—Arab, Persian, Kurdish and Hebrew, Sunni and Shi'ite, Muslim and Christian—in struggle against imperialism and against the Zionists, mullahs, colonels, sheiks and all the other capitalist rulers. The conquest of power by the proletariat in the Near East does not complete the socialist revolution, but only opens it by changing the direction of social development. But that social development can be consolidated only through the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced, industrialized imperialist centers. Defense of those subjugated by the imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in the U.S. and other imperialist centers, pointing toward a proletarian struggle for power. The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, is committed to the fight to forge a revolutionary workers party to lead the multiracial proletariat in the struggle to sweep away U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution.

Zionist Rulers Supported Rise of Hamas

Our Marxist perspective is counterposed to those reformist socialists who reject the prospect of Arab/Hebrew workers revolution as utopian. Instead, they

continued on page 11



Above: March in Tel Aviv against Israeli assault on Gaza, 3 January. Below: Demonstrators outside Egyptian consulate in Istanbul protest Gaza attack, 5 January.



counterweight to U.S. imperialism, deprived the late Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of crucial diplomatic and financial support, paving the way for the ignominious 1993 U.S.-sponsored Oslo "peace" accords, establishing the Palestinian Authority as the Zionists' police auxiliaries in the Occupied Territories. In an article headlined "Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto" we wrote that this deal "does not offer even the most deformed expression of self-determination" and "would place the PLO's seal on the national oppression of the long-suffering Palestinian Arab masses" (WV No. 583, 10 September 1993). It was this betrayal by the secular-nationalist PLO that paved the way for the rise of reactionary Islamic groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad among the Palestinians.

Since Oslo, one "peace" accord after another has been heralded as opening the door to Palestinian national emancipation. In reality, under the rubric of the "peace process," the noose of Zionist oppression has only tightened, with ever deadlier cycles of terror against the Palestinian population.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of interpenetrated peoples: two peoples laying claim to the same piece of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of national

went to war with Israel in 1948, it was not to "liberate" Palestine but to carve it up among themselves. Between 1948 and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the West Bank and Gaza were occupied by Jordan and Egypt respectively. And the Palestinians there remained politically dispossessed and subject to brutal repression. In the decade following the 1967 war, nearly 50,000 Palestinians were slaughtered by Arab governments, including some 10,000 militants killed by the Jordanian monarchy in the 1970 Black September massacre.

The solidarity of the Arab masses with the oppressed Palestinian people must be directed toward proletarian revolution against their own Arab rulers, who, whether bourgeois nationalists or Islamic traditionalists, are fundamentally the political agents of Western imperialism. If this does not happen, the intense and justifiable hostility against Israel and its American protector will serve to further strengthen the forces of Islamic fundamentalism, which posture as the "radical" opposition to the mainly pro-Western Arab regimes. We look to the proletariat of the region more widely, such as in Egypt, which has been a center of working-class strikes and protests over the past several years. *For a socialist federation of the Near East!*

Lanka...

(continued from page 12)

social liberation. We have long upheld the right of self-determination for the Tamil people—i.e., their right to form an independent state in the largely Tamil North and East. We stand for the military defense of the LTTE against the army assault and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Lankan army from the area.

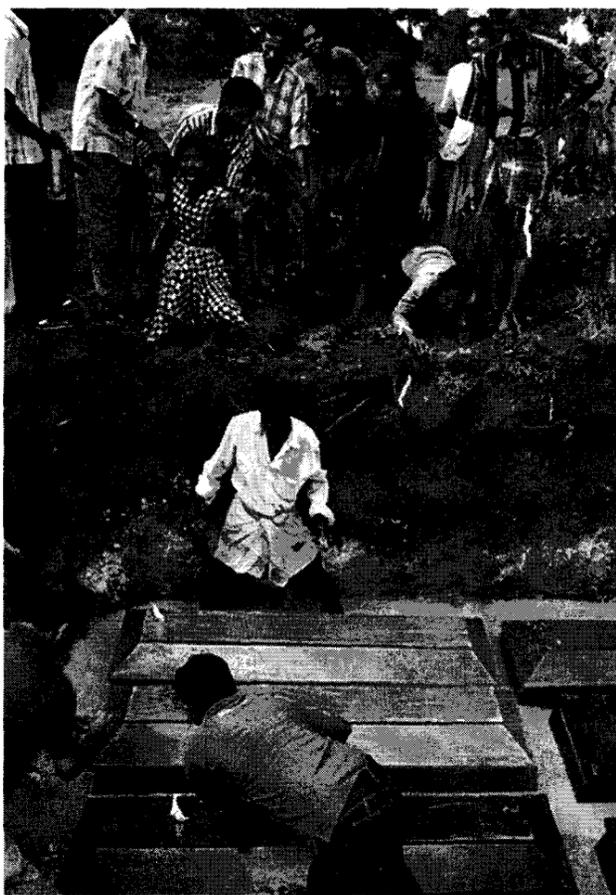
At the same time, we give no political support to the LTTE—bourgeois nationalists who, carrying out the logic of nationalism, have staged their own interethnic attacks on Sinhalese villagers and expelled Muslims from the historic Tamil city of Jaffna, the capital of the northern region, while employing murderous violence against other Tamil nationalist groups. Our perspective is the fight for Marxist workers parties throughout the region that can unite the working people and oppressed in the struggle for workers revolutions in Lanka and throughout South Asia. That is the only road to liberation from the poverty, oppression and national chauvinism that are endemic to capitalist rule and visited with particular brutality on the masses of imperialism's neocolonies.

Roots of Sinhalese-Chauvinist Terror

The roots of the decades-long Tamil insurgency lie in systematic discrimination against the Tamil people by successive Sri Lankan governments following independence from British colonial rule in 1948. As part of its racist divide-and-rule strategy, Britain had brought elements from the largely Hindu Tamil minority into the administration of its colony, then known as Ceylon. The post-independence regime, based on the Buddhist Sinhalese majority, began to displace Tamils from government service and access to higher education. Especially with the passage of a Sinhala-only language law under the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) government in 1956, the national chauvinism of the Sinhalese ruling class led to growing communal polarization.

The grisly climax came in 1983 with government-inspired pogroms against the Tamils, many thousands of whom were murdered in wholesale massacres. Tamil homes and businesses in the capital, Colombo, were burnt to the ground, often with the occupants inside. Following the 1983 pogroms, orchestrated under president J.R. Jayewardene of the United National Party, we wrote:

"The massive atrocity taking place in Sri Lanka marks a watershed in that island's history. The bloodletting and the mass population transfers have set



Reuters

January 12: Grieving relatives in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka, bury Tamil civilians killed during government assault against Tamil Tigers.

the economy back at least a decade and are forcing the separation of the peoples. J.R. has ripped the country apart, massacring many thousands and forcing the survivors into a virtual 'bantustan' in the barren North."

—"Massacre in Sri Lanka,"
Spartacist (English edition)
No. 35 (Autumn 1983)

The previous economic and geographic interpenetration of the two peoples was largely severed in blood, and Tamils were increasingly compacted in the North and the East, which, while largely Tamil, had historically been a region of mixed populations, including a substantial Muslim component. The dire situation of the Lankan Tamil people today is testimony to the reactionary logic of nationalism: under capitalism, when two peoples are interpenetrated within the same territory, the national rights of one people can only be expressed at the expense of the other people. Only the overthrow of capitalism through workers revolution can lay the basis for the equitable resolution of the conflicting national claims of the peoples of Sri Lanka.

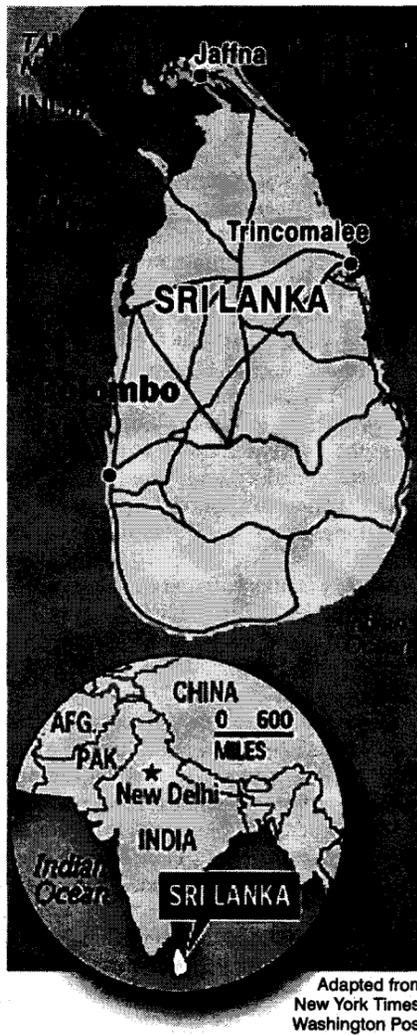
Sinhalese chauvinism, designed and instigated by the Lankan ruling class, has been wielded to assert domination over both the Tamil and Sinhalese workers and oppressed, to head off any popular revolt by preventing working-class unity. For their part, the LTTE and other Tamil nationalists have long dismissed the struggles of the strategically placed "Indian Tamil" tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka's central highlands. The ancestors of this deeply exploited population were brought in by the British as indentured laborers starting in the 19th century.

At the time of the 1983 pogroms, our comrades initiated and joined protests in cities around the world against the massacre. Noting that the bloodbath had "catastrophically altered for the foreseeable future the prospects for common class struggle between the Sinhalese working class and the oppressed Tamil minority," we raised the call for the *right of Tamil Eelam*—a separate Tamil state in the North—and for a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka as part of a socialist federation of South Asia.

In the 25 years of civil war that followed, at least 70,000 civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of Tamils driven into exile or squalid refugee camps. The LTTE managed to compact a Tamil mini-state in parts of the North and East and eventually signed a cease-fire agreement with the Colombo

government in 2002. But the Sinhalese-chauvinist army's provocations never stopped. After the 2005 election of hard-line SLFP president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ruled out even autonomy for Tamil regions, the government abrogated the cease-fire and then withdrew from it entirely early last year.

While its troops massacre Tamils in the North, in the South the government has cracked down on civil liberties. Tamils living in Colombo have been ordered to register with the police, and hundreds have been expelled from the city. Journalists critical of the government have been killed. On January 8, Lasantha Wickrematunge, editor of the *Sunday Leader*, was gunned down by armed men on motorcycles as he drove to work. The murdered journalist, who was harshly critical of the government's conduct of the anti-Tamil war, had



Adapted from
New York Times,
Washington Post

received a threatening call from President Rajapaksa warning that he would be killed if he continued to speak out.

Imperialist Green Light for Army Terror

The calls for the Tamil protests in Canada and Britain have featured appeals to Western imperialist governments to come to the aid of the Tamils. A protest call in Toronto, for example, called for pressure to be put on the Canadian government to "intervene immediately to stop the war." There should be no illusions that the governments in Ottawa, London, Washington or other imperialist centers will act for the liberation of the Tamil people. In fact, the imperialist powers have overwhelmingly supported the regime's murderous anti-Tamil offensive. Over the past 12 years, first the U.S. and then Britain, Canada and the European Union have declared the LTTE a "terrorist" organization, effectively giving the Lankan regime a green light for its attacks. The workers movement in the imperialist centers must oppose the anti-terror witchhunt, which has seen Tamil organizations banned, their offices raided and individuals railroaded to prison (see "Protest Ottawa's Ban on Tamil Tigers!" *Spartacist Canada* No. 149, Summer 2006).

U.S. imperialism in particular has given clear backing to the Rajapaksa government. On January 6, the American ambassador in Colombo issued a statement welcoming the fall of the Tigers' administrative capital, Kilinochchi, to the Lankan army and affirming that the U.S. "does not advocate that the Government of Sri Lanka negotiate with the LTTE" (*Asian Tribune*, 9 January). Soon after, a high-level delegation from the U.S. Pacific Fleet Command arrived for "discussions" with the heads of the Lankan security forces (Indo-Asian News Service, 21 January). Only after the army drove the LTTE from its final urban bases in early February did the U.S. and Britain call for a "temporary no-fire" agreement (*International Herald Tribune*, 4 February).

Washington's central strategic goal on the island is a stable regime that can provide access to the strategic deep-water harbor of Trincomalee in the long-contested Eastern Province. Successive Sri Lankan governments have engaged in brutal "ethnic cleansing" in the area. Hundreds of thousands of Tamils have been forced to leave, either into exile abroad or to relatively safer areas of the island. Those who remain live under a state of siege. A rare eyewitness report by a North American journalist, Stephanie Nolen of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (27 January), paints a chilling picture of the army occupation in her article, "How Can People Say This Is Peace?":

"Ninety-eight people were abducted in this area last year, snatched off the streets by the infamous white vans with no licence plates that are used by government security agencies. Eighty-five other Tamils simply disappeared...."

"The streets of Trincomalee, banded every 150 metres or so with checkpoints where Tamils are grilled about who they are and where they are going and whether they can prove they do not support the LTTE, offer a grim vision of what the north will soon be like."

Nolen describes the government's stepped-up "Sinhalization" campaign: "Historic sites commemorating ancient Tamil kingdoms have, in the months since the government took control of the area, suddenly become memorials to Sinhalese kingdoms. Some Tamils stopped at checkpoints can no longer give the names of their home villages, because those places have new Sinhala names."

Toward a Socialist Federation of South Asia

While the Tigers appear to have suffered a decisive military setback, this by no means equals the end of the Lankan conflict. The communal divisions fostered

International Communist League Pamphlet

Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution

56 pages, 2006

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Gaza...

(continued from page 9)

have vicariously cheered on one form or another of Palestinian nationalism. In 2002, when Israel was fighting the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and pummeling the Jenin refugee camp, *Workers World* had no criticism of Arafat or his calls for Western imperialist intervention into the region. Instead, an 11 April 2002 article enthused that in the wake of the first Intifada in the early 1990s, "Washington and Tel Aviv were forced to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization after 20 years of struggle," calling this a "victory they had won on the battlefield." In fact, the outcome of that "victory" was the Oslo accords. Today, even as Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, while condemning the bombing of Gaza, blames Hamas for the Israeli onslaught and has suppressed protests in those areas of the West Bank that his Fatah organization controls, one will find no word of criticism of Abbas, Fatah or the Palestinian Authority in the issue of *Workers World* (15 January) containing their statement, "Support Gaza Resistance!"

One will also not find a word of criticism of Hamas. In a similar vein, the British *Socialist Worker* (10 January) of the late Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party carried an article headlined, "Hamas's History of Resistance," enthusing over Hamas as the "bearer of a tradition of Palestinian resistance."

In reality, Islamic fundamentalists like Hamas and Islamic Jihad are vile anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious bigots who seek to enslave women and extirpate any manifestations of social progress. Hamas is descended from the clerical-fascist Muslim Brotherhood, which became particularly prominent in Egypt in the late 1940s. Under the slogan "communism=atheism=liberation of women," the Muslim Brotherhood mobilized a terror campaign against Communists and other secular forces. Hamas preaches the social segregation of women, the wearing of the *hijab* (Islamic headscarf) and anti-woman *sharia* law.

Far from embodying a "history of resistance," Hamas was initially supported by Israel as a counterweight to the secular-nationalist PLO. In 1978, Menachem Begin's right-wing government approved an application from Sheik Ahmed Yassin to license the Islamic Association, a front group of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. As an official charity organization, Yassin's group received funding from Israel. In 1986, the



Workers Vanguard



Le Bolchévick



ASp photo

Spartacists join international protests. Left to right: New York, Paris, 3 January, Sydney, 18 January. Sign in French reads: "Israeli Troops, Settlers Out of the Occupied Territories! Down With the American-European-Zionist Embargo Against Gaza!"

former military governor of Gaza, Yitzhak Segev, said: "We extend some financial aid to Islamic groups via mosques and religious schools, in order to help create a force that would stand against the leftist forces which support the PLO." Carrying out attacks on secularists and Communists, the Islamists engaged in neither political nor military struggle against Israel.

In the 1980s, the Yitzhak Shamir government set up conservative, tribal-based "Village Leagues" in the Occupied Territories. The Islamists became a force in these organs of collaboration. Israel's rulers helped the Islamic Association gain control of the Islamic University of Gaza and a base among the intelligentsia, while funding welfare programs to help the fundamentalists win a base among the poor.

With the beginning of the first Intifada in 1987, the Islamists feared that if they stood aside they would lose their following. Hamas was founded in the spring of 1988 as an Islamist political movement with an armed wing. Hamas sought to fuse the national struggle, previously a secular movement containing a leftist component, with reactionary Islamic fundamentalism. It was only in the fall of 1989, after discovering that Hamas killed two Israeli soldiers, that Israel broke relations with the group.

For Arab/Hebrew Workers Revolution!

Out of utter desperation, many have called on the UN or European powers to engineer some kind of cease-fire in Gaza. This has been seized upon by reformist leftists, who always promote one imperialist agency or another as a potential supporter of the Palestinians. Olivier Besancenot, spokesman for the fake-Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, denounced "the hypocrisy of the

international community that votes tons of resolutions that they never apply" (*Le Monde*, 10 January). The toothless "cease-fire" resolutions that have passed the UN so far do not even call for lifting the starvation embargo against Gaza. Meanwhile, a leading spokesman of the French Communist Party has demanded that "European intervention forces are put in place between the belligerent forces" (*L'Humanité*, 30 December 2008).

It is grotesque to appeal to the European imperialists, whose bloody legacy of divide and rule laid the basis for the continuing misery of the peoples of the Near East. Following the collapse of the Turkish Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the British and French imperialists carved up the region. From Egypt to Syria and Iraq, they bloodily suppressed one anti-colonial struggle after another. Both Britain and France joined with Israel in invading Egypt in 1956 after the Egyptian government nationalized the Suez Canal. And it was the French imperialists who played a key role in assisting Israel in its development of nuclear weapons.

For its part, the United Nations is an assembly of the imperialist powers and their semicolonial victims. The UN presided over the establishment of the state of Israel at the expense of the dispossessed Palestinian people in 1948. It was the UN that disarmed Palestinian fighters during Lebanon's bloody civil war, setting up the 1982 massacre of some 2,000 civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Christian rightist forces directed by Israeli troops under the leadership of the (now-comatose) butcher Ariel Sharon. No to UN, European Union intervention!

Every "solution" to the Palestinian national question under capitalism either perpetuates the oppression of the Palestinian Arab people or envisions a reversal of the terms of oppression, denying the legitimate national rights of the Hebrew-speaking people. The Arab nationalists and Islamists look to a "holy war" of the Arab peoples against Zionist Israel. Marxists fight to bring the class question to the fore, to mobilize the proletariat of the predominantly Muslim countries of the Near East in struggle against their

own bourgeoisies. As V.I. Lenin, founder of the Bolshevik Party which led the only successful workers revolution in history, stated in 1913, "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilized brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism."

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which laid the basis for the liberation of the tsarist empire's many subjugated peoples, was a beacon of liberation for the oppressed throughout the world, inspiring anti-colonial revolts throughout the Near East. This legacy continued despite the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR. In 1958, Iraqi workers led by the multinational Iraqi Communist Party—which included Muslims, Jews and Christians, Arabs and Kurds—fought to make a revolution and came to the brink of power. However, this and other revolutionary opportunities were betrayed by the Kremlin and the Stalinist-led Communist parties, subordinating the proletariat to an alliance with "progressive" bourgeois nationalists, who, once in power, launched a bloodbath against the Communist-led workers.

What is necessary is the forging of revolutionary Marxist parties throughout the Near East, built in opposition to all forms of nationalism and religious fundamentalism, and committed to the struggle for socialist revolution, which, on an international scale, can finally open the door to human equality and liberation. As we wrote in the International Communist League Declaration of Principles (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

"The victory of the proletariat on a world scale would place unimagined material abundance at the service of human needs, lay the basis for the elimination of classes and the eradication of social inequality based on sex and the very abolition of the social significance of race, nation and ethnicity. For the first time mankind will grasp the reins of history and control its own creation, society, resulting in an undreamed-of emancipation of human potential, and a monumental forward surge of civilization. Only then will it be possible to realize the free development of each individual as the condition for the free development of all." ■

by the regime are too deep, the dispossession and violence against the Tamils too profound, to offer a prospect of a lasting peace between the peoples.

As Marxists, we continue to denounce Sinhalese chauvinism and defend the rights of the Tamil people, including their right to a separate state. But the hard fact is that the eradication of national oppression and true social progress for the peoples of Lanka and the region will come only when barbaric capitalist rule and the divisions inherited from imperialist domination are overturned through socialist revolution. It is crucial that the most advanced pro-working-class elements, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, draw the lessons of the present desperate pass. This includes drawing the lessons of the betrayals of the once-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), which abandoned the interests of the proletariat and the defense of the Tamil people when it entered the chauvinist SLFP government in 1964.

Above all, it is necessary to fight for class independence from all wings of the

exploiters and for an internationalist perspective, looking in the first instance to the powerful and growing working class across the Palk Strait in India. What we wrote in *Spartacist* in the wake of the anti-Tamil pogroms 26 years ago remains true today:

"Today Ceylon experiences the bitter fruit of decades of betrayal and defeat in the class struggle. The early LSSP tradition of defense of the Tamil masses was destroyed by the popular-frontist accommodation of the Sinhalese 'left' to the communalist SLFP; today these parties are anathema to the Tamil liberation fighters. It is necessary to begin again in the light of all experience since the British departed....

"What is desperately needed is to further the building of a Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka, necessarily substantially based among the exploited Tamil masses. The struggle for the national rights of the Tamil people is vital to forging such a party. Lasting national and class justice for the Tamil working people will be secured through permanent revolution—rule by the workers and peasants—and a socialist federation of South Asia." ■

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Zionist Bloodbath in Gaza

Defend the Palestinian People! • Israel Out of the Occupied Territories!
For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

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دافعوا عن الشعب الفلسطيني!
لتخرج إسرائيل من الأراضي المحتلة!
حمم الدم الصهيوني في غزة!
من أجل اتحاد فدائيي أشتراكي للشرق الأوسط!
القتال حتى نرسية عربية لعقل بشرية عظيمة تخلص الشعب الفلسطيني من سيطرة العنصرية الاستعمارية من العنصرية
القوموية العنصرية والارهابية بالولايات المتحدة
٢٠ ديسمبر ٢٠٠٨ - كينغ كولوندا ان هذا يحدث في القدس والمغرب وسببا كل العالم يظن ولكنه يقبل صانعا. اني انشأناكم من رخص
الدم الفلسطيني. بل انك ستكافؤا شكاة المقاومة الفلسطينية ٢٨ ديسمبر ٢٠٠٨. ما يقرب من ٣٠٠ فلسطينيا قد قتلوا واكثر من ١٧٠٠ جرحوا
منذ ان بدأت إسرائيل تطرح خطة غزة في ٢٧ نوفمبر ٢٠٠٨. هذه الخطة تهدف الى ازالة الفلسطينيين من غزة وادخالهم الى
القطاع والحدود العربية في الحرب العربية الاستعمارية عام ١٩٤٧. انشأنا اني ان اكثر من مائة مليون من الفلسطينيين قد قتلوا على ايدي
الاشراك. انكظا بالشكاة على وجه الارض. وسببا تطرح الخطة والحدود الاستعمارية غزة استعمارية العنصرية. انهم وزر القوميين اليهود يترك الذي سبب



Defend the Tamil People!

Army Bloodbath in Sri Lanka

The following article, written by our comrades from the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste of Canada, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 930, 13 February), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

FEBRUARY 5—Many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Tamil civilians have been killed in a murderous offensive by the Sri Lankan army, whose aim is the destruction of the Tamil mini-state in the North and East of the Indian Ocean island. At least 30 people were killed

on January 22 when troops bombed a makeshift health center in Vallipunam, a village the government had declared to be in a "safe zone." The last functioning hospital in the area came under fire in early February, killing at least 12 and forcing its evacuation.

The army has driven the nationalist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been fighting for an independent Tamil state for the last three decades, out of the northern Jaffna Peninsula and from its last urban bases. Besieged by 50,000 soldiers backed by fighter jets and helicopter gunships, at

least a quarter million Tamil civilians are trapped in a small area of the north-eastern jungle, without access to shelter, clean water or food. The government has banned relief agencies and the media from the war zone and even threatened to expel reporters from CNN, Al Jazeera and the BBC from the country for airing video clips of the devastation.

The working class internationally must protest the murderous onslaught by the Sri Lankan government and army! Around the world, tens of thousands of Tamils have taken to the streets in protest. Fifty thousand protested in Toronto on

January 30, filling downtown streets for five hours on a weekday afternoon. Another 50,000 marched in London the next day. The government of India's Tamil Nadu state ordered the closure of all colleges and student hostels to prevent a threatened student strike in support of Lankan Tamils.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste of Canada has joined protests against the massacre, distributing literature in solidarity with the besieged Tamils and putting forward our proletarian-revolutionary perspective for national and

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U.S., Australian Imperialists Cheer On Israeli Terror in Gaza

Zionist Mass Murder

Having slaughtered over 1,300 people and laid waste to wide swathes of Gaza, on 18 January the Zionist rulers of Israel halted their savage three-week military offensive against this huge Palestinian ghetto. Sporadic bombing and a strangulation blockade continue, with Israel threatening to renew the all-out offensive at any time. The Spartacist League/Australia, like other sections of the International Communist League around the world, joined protests against the Zionist bloodbath. Defending the Palestinians we demanded troops and settlers out of all the occupied territories and called for a socialist federation of the Near East. Here in Australia we argued against illusions in the ALP, raising a sign at the 18 January Sydney rally which declared "Imperialist Rudd Government: Enemy of Australian Workers, Enemy of Palestinians."

In contrast reformist groups appealed to the imperialist rulers. The Democratic Socialist Perspective-led Socialist Alliance and their ex-comrades in the misnamed Revolutionary Socialist Party called on the Rudd government to condemn the slaughter and break all ties with Israel. Such calls can only build illusions in this junior imperialist ally of the U.S. As part of the U.S. alliance Australia is a staunch supporter of the Zionist state. Echoing U.S. Democratic Party President Obama, then-acting Labor prime minister, Julia



Palestinian woman weeps over dead relatives after Israeli missile strike in Gaza, 8 January.

Gillard, backed the onslaught, coldly declaring Hamas "have broken the cease-fire and engaged in an act of aggression against Israel. Israel has responded." Far from a proletarian perspective a key demand of pseudo-socialists such as Socialist Alternative (SAI) is to call for a "democratic secular" Palestinian state, i.e., a capitalist Palestine.

An increasingly popular call—initiated by Palestinian organisations, pushed by liberals and supported by social-democratic union tops, such as the Western Australia branch of the Maritime Union, and reformists—is for "boycott, divestment and sanctions" against Israel. This invokes the African National Congress (ANC)-promoted campaign for divestment

and sanctions against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s. This campaign was based on a claim that South African capitalism could be fundamentally reformed through pressuring "democratic" imperialist powers like the U.S. and Australia to economically divest from South Africa. At the time our organisation uniquely told the truth: that divestment was *at best* an empty gesture; that if foreign companies did withdraw substantial productive assets this would hurt black workers and weaken the powerful black union movement; and most crucially, that it was obscene for purported leftists to look to U.S. imperialism and its Australian junior partner as a force for "democracy" anywhere in the world.

It was not this attempt to refurbish the "democratic" credentials of the imperialists, but mass struggle by the black toilers of South Africa, particularly the powerful working class, that led to the dismantling of formal apartheid. Moreover this did not end the deep oppression of the black masses. Far from it! By the early 1990s much of the white apartheid capitalist ruling class and their U.S. and British patrons had decided to enlist the ANC in a power-sharing deal. A key factor in this was the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which had supported the ANC materially and

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Defend the Palestinian People! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!