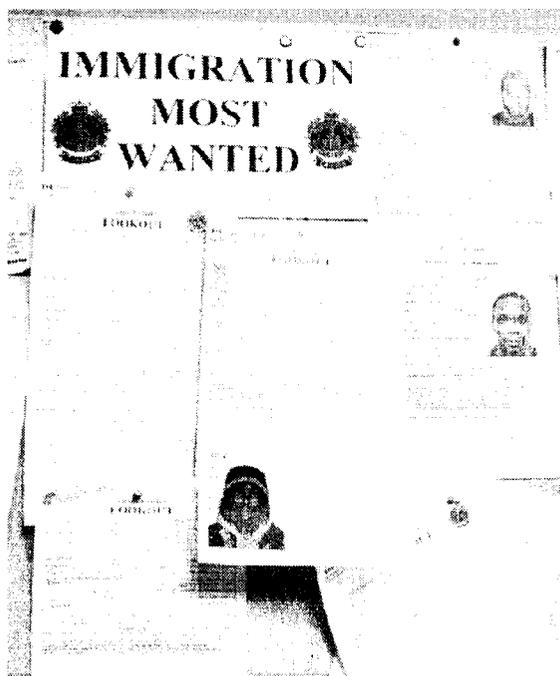




# “War on Terror” = War on Immigrants, Workers



Peter Bregg

Capitalist rulers’ “anti-terror” campaign has fueled deep-going anti-immigrant racism. Right: troops patrol Toronto Pearson airport.



Kevin Fayer/Cp

## Free the Detainees!

Three years have passed since the vast machinery of the international “war on terror” was set in motion. In Canada, hundreds have been victimized and whole communities have come under assault—not from “Islamic fundamentalists” but from the RCMP, CSIS and local police.

Dramatic examples abound, like the racist “Project Thread” a year ago, when the RCMP launched a pre-dawn round-up of 19 young South Asian men in the Toronto area. A coordinated media blitz retailed government lies depicting these youths (and five others who were seized over the following days) as an “al Qaeda sleeper cell” conspiring to wreak death and destruction on Canadian soil. The entire “case” against them was a tissue of lies that disintegrated almost instantly. Nonetheless, after months of imprisonment, 17 of them were deported to Pakistan, their lives in ruins.

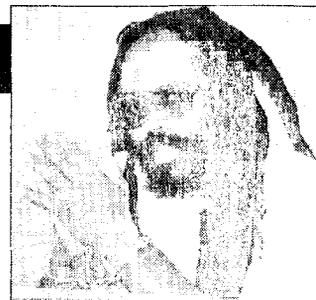
Or take the even more infamous case of Maher Arar, the Canadian citizen set up as an alleged al Qaeda member by the RCMP, seized by U.S. authorities during an airport stopover in October 2002 and then “rendered” to a Syrian jail. After a year of imprisonment and torture, through the efforts of his wife Monia Mazigh and many other supporters, Maher managed to get back to Canada, where he is still *(continued on page 16)*



page 10

## From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

# In the Shadows of Abu Ghraib Prison



The color photos coming out of the dreaded Abu Ghraib prison on Baghdad's outskirts are racing around the world, silent yet eloquent testament to what Americans really think about the people they allegedly came here to "liberate."

The photos, especially in the age of the internet, are racing through the Arab and Muslim world, and showing a side of the American character that seldom gets to be seen, especially abroad.

The photos of naked Arab men, some posed with laughing, jeering US women, is the height of humiliation, and tells everyone who can see, that Americans hold the Iraqis, and by extension, other Arabs, in utter contempt.

"This is not America," a politician huffs.

"I am appalled!," yet another exclaims.

Yet, what is truly appalling, and perhaps more chilling than the naked, human pyramids shown, is the sheer glee shown in the faces of the Americans.

The photos flashed in British tabloids, of soldiers urinating—pissing!—on naked Iraqis, tells the same baleful tale.

These are the actions of contempt, hatred, disrespect—and conquest.

Are the Americans and the British liberators or occupiers?

One need look no further than the faces in the photos of Abu Ghraib for the answer.

When speaking recently with Emory Douglas, the celebrated former Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party, and chief graphic artist of its famed newspaper, *The Black Panther*, Emory brought to mind an image that is almost lost in history.

He reminded me of a police raid on the West Philadelphia offices of the Black Panther Party, on August 31, 1970, when the police, armed with automatic weapons, stripped men in the streets.

I also thought of the infamous Charles Stuart case, from Boston, when a white man claimed a Black man killed his wife. The cops descended on Roxbury, Black Boston like a plague. They stripped men in the streets of Beantown.

Many of the Americans working in the prisons of Iraq, especially in the reserves, are cops or prison guards in their civilian lives. Indeed, one of the men identified as a suspect in the brutal mistreatment of people in Abu Ghraib, indeed a corporal in the Army, works here, at SCI-Greene!

The horrific treatment of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib has its dark precedents in the prisons and police stations across America.

Journalist Seymour Hersh, of *The New Yorker* magazine, has alleged that there have been cases of sodomy against Iraqis there at Abu Ghraib, and even killing. Does the name Abner Louima ring a bell?

If you hate someone; if you disrespect them; if you fear them, how can you "liberate" them?

As we have said from the very beginning, the Iraq Adventure is not, and never has been, about "liberating" an oppressed people. Indeed, a recent CNN/USA Today poll suggests Iraqis have come to that conclusion, with 71% stating Americans are "occupiers."

Americans may call it "liberation," but they are bringing torture, humiliation, and domination.

Nor are these events the work of people who are "untrained," "poorly trained," or the always useful, "bad apples."

As we have suggested above, many of those who are there in Iraq, and hundreds of the people working in Abu Ghraib prison, were reserves, and came from jobs as prison guards and cops in civilian life. They are perhaps better trained than the average M.P.

Don't buy it.

It is somehow fitting that these depraved acts have happened in one of the most dreadful gulags of the Hussein regime; it shows the continuity of torture and terror.

Now, let us prepare for the inevitable whitewash.

Those of us who know history are certain—it is sure to come.  
3 May 2004

©2004 Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal—former Black Panther, MOVE supporter and award-winning journalist—was framed up and railroaded onto Pennsylvania's death row for the 1981 killing of police officer Daniel Faulkner. Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man! His case is a textbook example of a classic racist political frame-up. For more information and to get involved in the urgent struggle to free Mumia, we urge our readers to contact the Partisan Defense Committee, (416) 593-4138, Box 314, Station B, Toronto, ON M5T 2W1.

Send urgently needed contributions for Jamal's legal defense, made payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" and earmarked for "Mumia" to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 130 Morningside Drive, Suite 6C, New York, NY 10027, USA.

If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370, USA. ■

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# Free Mohamed Cherfi!

*We print below an August 28 protest letter by the Partisan Defense Committee to Judy Sgro and Michelle Courchesne, respectively federal and Quebec immigration ministers, and Anne McLellan, federal minister of "Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness."*

The Partisan Defense Committee adds its voice to hundreds of labour, community and religious organizations and individuals in demanding that Mohamed Cherfi, an immigrant from Algeria and activist for social and immigrant rights, be freed and repatriated to his home in Quebec. Jailed in Batavia, N.Y. since his expulsion from Canada in March, he faces imminent deportation to civil war-torn Algeria (which he fled to avoid being drafted into the military), where his life could be in immediate danger.

Cherfi was ensnared in a vicious sting operation at his refuge in Quebec City's St-Pierre United Church last March.

Dozens of police forcibly entered the church, breaking the longstanding tradition of sanctuary, and arrested him on the bogus charge of failing to give notice of a change of address. They then released him without charges, only to have him immediately picked up by officers of the Canadian Border Services Agency, who were waiting at the police station.

Cherfi is a widely respected social activist and leader in Montreal's vibrant North African community. He had been front and center in the two-year battle against the threatened deportation from Canada of more than 1,000 Algerian refugees. For this, he was arrested, jailed and at least once burned by a Taser gun shot. The courageous actions of Cherfi and other Algerian refugees around the Action Committee of Non-status Algerians, along with many supporters, helped hundreds of Algerians to gain official immigrant status. But not Cherfi himself! Despite the enormous danger for his personal future, he continued to battle for the many who were refused status on one pretext or another. Then, last September, Cherfi was notified of the refusal to accept him as an immigrant. During a later appeal, the officer in charge explained baldly to his lawyer that his status as a "social activist" influenced the decision. In January, minister Courchesne confirmed Cherfi's rejection, forcing him to take refuge in the Quebec City church a couple of weeks later. He was arrested and deported less than a month after that.

The persecution of Mohamed Cherfi comes amid a broader offensive against immigrants and refugees, as well as left-wing activists who defend their rights, in the name of a fraudulent "war on terror." This offensive threatens the rights of the entire population, notably the organized working class. We note that one of the main Quebec labour federations, the CSN, has endorsed Cherfi's defense. For our part,



Comité d'action des sans-statut

mohamedcherfi.org

**Mohamed Cherfi (right) has been at the forefront of struggle for rights of Algerian refugees in Quebec, who escaped bloody civil war between military regime and Muslim fundamentalists.**

we will do everything we can to assist in mobilizing the social power of the working class and its allies in defense of all immigrants and refugees against racist state repression. *We demand that your governments immediately bring Mohamed Cherfi back, drop all legal restrictions on him and give him full citizenship rights!*

*The PDC has made a donation for the defense of Mohamed Cherfi and we encourage SC readers to do the same. Send a check or money order to "Fonds Mohamed Cherfi" and mail to: Fonds Mohamed Cherfi, Maison Ludger Duvernay, 82 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal QC H2X 1X3. For more information on the case, contact the Committee for Solidarity with Mohamed Cherfi at mohamedcherfi.org. ■*

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SC photo

TL/SYC joins anti-capitalist youth in June 30 Toronto demonstration. Social-democratic left, liberals opposed marching against Canadian war profiteers.

## Report on June 30 Toronto Iraq Demo

The June 30 Toronto demonstration against the occupation of Iraq split in two, as long-simmering political animosity between the direct action milieu centered on the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and the “respectable” left exemplified by the International Socialists (I.S.) came to a head. About 400 went with the June 30th Organizing Committee (June 30th OC), which mobilized anti-capitalist youth to “March south to confront war profiteers!,” i.e., Canadian corporations. A smaller group of 300 went with the I.S.-dominated Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (TCSW) on one of its standard peace crawls. The Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club organized a contingent for the anti-capitalist march, in sharp contrast to various self-proclaimed Marxist groups who marched with the I.S. and its liberal/social-democratic allies.

The June 30th OC’s mobilizing leaflet stated: “We have been standing outside the U.S. Consulate month after month, and believe we need to focus closer to home on Canadian involvement in U.S. policy, and those companies in our midst that are benefiting from the illegal and increasingly horrifying situation in Iraq. Here in Canada, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to challenge our government and the businesses they support.” In contrast, one of the speakers at the mainstream rally began by thanking the cops for “protecting us” and, in continuing, proclaimed that “we” want peace in Iraq, “like in Canada.”

The June 30th OC called for protesters to join them at 6 p.m. on a snake march south through downtown to protest Canadian corporations profiting from the war and occupation. TCSW’s response was to try to beat them to the punch

by marching north early. They tried to seed the demo for this maneuver with a chant sheet/march map that said demonstrators should keep to the “official” march route, and sent an ineffectual “agitator” to try to draw people out of the June 30th OC crowd on the basis of “unity” and “solidarity.” Some of their officials yelled at OCAP organizers that they were “not allowed” to lead protesters south. This did confuse a few youth, who were vacillating after hearing TCSW’s denunciations of the June 30th OC for “splitting” the demo. We argued with a few of these youth not to fall for it—that the march south was against Canadian capital, and that it was the TCSW that was splitting the demo in an attempt to marginalize left-wing youth. One activist got up on top of a speaker to exhort demonstrators to come with the June 30th OC, apparently after he was denied the coalition’s mike. In the upshot, the direct action milieu led a bigger chunk of the crowd away from the consulate.

The June 30th OC had led two actions earlier in the day, including a 2 p.m. picket of 40-50 people against a corporation setting up private hospitals in Iraq. We joined this picket. At 4 p.m. some 250 youth assembled to block a downtown intersection but were prevented by a heavy cop mobilization. They then marched to the main rally site, arriving with a splash, chanting “One, two, three, four, we don’t want your f---ing war; Five, six, seven, eight, stop the killing, stop the hate!” It was somewhat integrated and contained a lot of young people from the suburbs, many of them high school students.

Our contingent of 18 people went with a banner and bull-horn on the snake march, with two comrades going north with TCSW to sell and report. Our banner read “U.S. out of Iraq! Canada out of Afghanistan! For class struggle against Canadian capitalism! Israel out of the Occupied Territories!” Mostly the march dodged along, turning here and there to get around a crew of bicycle cops who sought to hem it in

and at times block it. The cops had clearly planned their response carefully and had massive reserves waiting largely out of sight while deploying smaller forces to deal with the march directly. They were filming everybody and deployed mounted cops to block the central portion of Bay Street when the march got close to it.

Chants raised by the organizers included "Bay Street's covered in Baghdad's blood," "From Iraq to Palestine, occupation is a crime" (we joined these chants), "No peace in Baghdad, no peace in Toronto," "No justice, no peace," and the "One, two, three..." chant mentioned above. Several of our chants got picked up here and there, in particular "Imperialist occupation, we say no—The whole damn system's got to go!" Comrades noted that some in the milieu around us were determined not to chant anything we raised, while others seemed to be saying to themselves, "My god, I'm chanting along with the Sparts! Have I lost all control?" Our chant, "Quebec bashing, we say no—The whole damn system's got to go!" notably drew ire from some in our vicinity, who tried to prevent it and complained that "we came to a demonstration about Iraq." But any serious fight against the Canadian rulers' attacks on the oppressed abroad has to be connected to their attacks on the oppressed at home. Elements in the direct action milieu are not exempt from the blindness to the oppression of Quebec by the Canadian state that is so rife on the left. That underlines why we need to put the question front and center.

The march stopped for a while outside the HQ of a "security" contractor in the mercenary business and then went one block north, where Bush was burnt in effigy in the middle of an intersection. Left groups on this march were pretty atomized—there were some individuals from the New Socialist Group (NSG) as well as one from Socialist Alternative and the Stalinist "Young Left."

Comrades on the northbound march thought it was pretty limp. The official chants were exclusively against the U.S. and not picked up very much. We noted the presence of individuals from the Worker-Communist Party of Iraq, a few NSGers and, notably, the entire contingent from the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). The NSGers, when queried as to why they were on this march and not the southern one, replied

that "there are many different lines in the NSG, so we are going on different marches." They have already lost a chunk of members in the direction of anarchism (the Autonomy and Solidarity group), and many NSGers are activists in the OCAP/No One Is Illegal milieu and have political views quite divergent from those of the NSG's warmed-over social-democratic founders. The BT raised the chant "U.S., UK, get out of Iraq today," but otherwise was content to chant along with some of the official slogans.

Our comrades were a highly visible component of the wing of the June 30 protest that sought to oppose the capitalist rulers at home (however its organizers understood this). We ran into people the day after who were talking about the split in the demo: one noted that the march south was chanting communist slogans like "Workers of the world unite" (that was us). The Indymedia discussion site had a slew of postings, largely denouncing the I.S. for their bureaucratic maneuvering and rightist "coalition building." One read, "Why does the I.S. insist on dominating any field it enters and trying to sabotage any alternative actions?" One can expect elements in the anarchoid milieu to put it down to the I.S.'s "Leninism." In fact, the I.S.'s behavior is the antithesis of Leninism. Their actions on June 30 aimed at policing the movement on behalf of the NDP politicians, union bureaucrats and the like who speak from their platforms, i.e., at defending the existing, pro-capitalist leadership of the working class. None of the components of the direct action milieu have the perspective to construct an alternative leadership of the working class in political competition with the open reformists, as we do. Their opposition to the I.S.'s reformism thus remains partial and largely at the level of tactical militancy. This explains, for example, OCAP's frequent refusal to polemicize against the NDP.

The march organized by the June 30th Organizing Committee represented an important, if partial, break to the left within the antiwar/anti-occupation movement. Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club comrades attended follow-up organizing meetings, putting forward our political perspective centered on working-class struggle against Canadian capitalism, and pledging to actively build for and join in future actions. ■

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## Revolutionary Marxists in Action

Rosa Luxemburg, a revolutionary leader in central Europe during the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, once wrote of the choice that faces the working people of the world: socialism or barbarism. With attempts at socialism being devastatingly defeated on numerous occasions since Luxemburg wrote those words, due in large part to the betrayals of class-collaborationist Stalinism and social democracy, the resulting barbarism of reigning capitalism is clear for all to see. From the continuing brutal colonial occupation of Iraq by the U.S. war machine to Canadian troops occupying Afghanistan; from the fake "war on terror" used as a racist excuse to imprison and torture immigrants and minorities without having any proof they committed any crime; to the war-ravaged misery of Sudan, every day hundreds, if not thousands of people die at the hands of the capitalist economic system that has been allowed to thrive and run roughshod over working and poor people all over the planet.

The Spartacus Youth Clubs are made up of young people who are sick to death of seeing people driven out of their homes by bombs and bulldozers every night on the news. We're sick of seeing people getting beaten up by the cops, sick of hearing about the latest cases of prison torture and black men sitting on death row in the U.S. We're sick of hearing about people starving, sick of the racism and poverty that permeates this class-divided society. And we're dedicated to doing something to actually change the daily realities of life in this demented "civilization."

As a training ground for young communists, the Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for a revolutionary Marxist program by intervening in social struggle from the campuses to demonstrations and picket lines. This past year, we made ourselves known as unflinching defenders of the Palestinians at York University in the face of stark intimidation by rabid Zionists who would physically provoke us and try to tear down our placards. When we intervened into a widely attended event where Norman Finkelstein spoke against Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, we denounced the heavy police presence on campus as part of our program for cops off campus. In Vancouver, at Simon Fraser University, we regularly raised the call to defend North Korea's right to nuclear weapons as part of our unconditional military defense of this and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states: China, Cuba and Vietnam.

We took this same program to the picket lines of the hospital workers in Vancouver this April as part of our perspective for student solidarity with the working class. Members of the SYC also went to support a recent Handlex ramp workers' strike at Pearson International Airport in Toronto



SC photo

**TL/SYC calls for defense of Palestinians, imperialist hands off Iraq in September 2002 Ottawa protest.**

(see page 9). Arguing against illusions in pro-capitalist forces such as the NDP and the union bureaucracy, and in contrast to the anarchists, who piously abstain from the struggle for leadership, we fight to put forward a positive program of building a revolutionary internationalist workers party that will forge the basis for smashing this imperialist system once and for all! If you too are disgusted with the injustices resulting from this hierarchical class society, join the SYCs in the fight for communism!

### What We Fight For

1. Mobilize students behind the social power of the working class! Picket lines mean don't cross! On strike means shut it down! For union-run job recruitment and training programs for minorities and women! For union hiring halls! Down with union-busting "workfare" schemes! Jobs for all at union wages! Organize the unorganized! Down with multi-tier wages, which pit younger and older workers against each other! Cops, prison guards, security guards out of the unions! Keep the capitalists' government and courts out of the unions!
2. Independence for Quebec! Down with English Canadian chauvinism! Down with the "Clarity Act" and Ottawa's other machinations against Quebec's national rights! Chauvinism and nationalism are poison to working-class struggle! No support to the bourgeois nationalist Bloc/PQ! Equal language rights for all! Down with chauvinist "English-only" ordinances and restrictive French language legislation!
3. Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Down with racist anti-immigrant laws! Down with anti-immigrant, anti-

Semitic and all racist bigotry! No deportations! No detention of immigrants or refugee claimants! Down with the government's "anti-terrorism" scare! For mass labour/minority mobilizations to stop the fascists and race terrorists! No reliance on the capitalist courts! Fascist terror is not a question of free speech! Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

4. For free, quality education for all! For an end to streaming! For open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students! Abolish the administration—the universities should be run by those who work and study there! Cops off campus! Drive army and police recruiters off campus! For a single secular school system! No prayer in the schools! For separation of church and state! Defend science against superstition and mysticism! For the right of people to be educated in the language of their choice! Defend bilingual education programs and ESL training!

5. For women's liberation through socialist revolution! For free abortion on demand! Down with parental consent laws and "squeal rules"! For free, quality 24-hour childcare! Down with attacks on medicare—for free, quality healthcare for all! For mass, labour-backed mobilizations to defend abortion clinics! Equal pay for equal work! Down with reactionary age of consent laws and all laws against consensual sex! Full democratic rights for gays! Government out of the bedroom! Down with the anti-sex witchhunt! Down with all laws against "crimes without victims" like prostitution and drugs!

6. The capitalist state—at its core consisting of the cops, courts, prisons and the standing army—is the executive committee of the ruling class, an instrument of organized violence by the capitalists against the working class and the oppressed. The state is not neutral and cannot be reformed—it must be smashed through workers revolution! Defend victims of racist cop terror and police frame-up! Down with the "war on drugs," a racist war by the ruling class against blacks, immigrants, Natives and other minorities! For mass labour protests against cop terror! Free all class-war prisoners! There is no justice in the capitalist courts! No illusions in civilian review boards or "community control" of the police! Abolish the Senate and reactionary relics like the monarchy and governor-general! No to gun control! For the right of armed self-defense!

7. Labour must defend Native rights! Abolish the racist Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs! Police and

courts keep off the reserves and other Native land! Only socialist revolution can end the deep-going oppression of Native people.

8. Down with Canadian nationalism! Defeat Canadian imperialism through workers revolution! For the defeat of Canadian imperialism in all its military adventures! Not one person, not one penny for the Canadian military! Beware the fraud of "human rights" imperialism! Canadian imperialist troops are not "peacekeepers" but bloody enemies of the world's workers and oppressed! The UN is a den of thieves, their victims and their lackeys! All Canadian/UN/NATO troops out of Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf! Down with the colonial occupation of Iraq! Defend the Palestinian people against Zionist terror! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

9. Down with anti-communist China bashing! Defend the gains of the 1949 revolution which smashed the rule of the landlords and capitalists, and collectivized property! No to imperialist penetration of China! For unconditional military defense of China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states—Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea—against imperialism and internal capitalist counterrevolution! Defend their right to nuclear weapons! For workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats and establish regimes of workers democracy based on the power of workers councils and revolutionary internationalism! Workers of the world unite!

10. Break with the Anglo-chauvinist, pro-imperialist NDP—a bourgeois workers party that upholds the rule of racist capitalism! The trade union bureaucracy is an agency of the capitalist class—for a class struggle leadership of the unions! For international working-class solidarity! Smash NAFTA through united class struggle from the Yukon to the Yucatán! Down with the chauvinist poison of protectionism! For a revolutionary, multiracial, binational workers party that fights for socialist revolution! Look to the example of the heroic, Bolshevik-led workers of 1917 Russia! For new October Revolutions! For the international rule of the working class!

*The Spartacus Youth Clubs are the youth groups of the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).*

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## Independence for Quebec!

# The National Question Returns, Again

On hearing that his obituary had been mistakenly published in newspapers, American author Mark Twain famously remarked, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." For nigh on a quarter century, the rulers of Canada have, with similar exactitude, periodically declared the Quebec national question to be resolved, merely a minor irritant or even dead as the proverbial dodo. Such was the case for Jean Chrétien as he passed the Liberal Party torch to Paul Martin late last year. "Mission accomplished," boasted the little thug from Shawinigan: "The country is more united than ever."

Yet here we are scant months later: Quebec workers have taken to the streets by the tens of thousands against the arch-federalist provincial Liberal government, fueling renewed support for the nationalist Parti Québécois; the PQ's Bloc Québécois cousin took almost every seat in francophone Quebec in the federal election; and opinion polls put support for sovereignty at 50 percent. Quebec nationalism, it seems, more resembles the phoenix rising from the ashes than Chrétien's dodo.

"Sovereignty, sovereignty!" cheered hundreds of Bloc supporters waving *fleur-de-lysée* flags as Gilles Duceppe entered a downtown Montreal meeting hall on election night. "Canada doesn't want us," said one, "Look what they say in the West. Quebec needs to be on its own." "Au revoir, Canada," said another, "You won't have Quebec to kick around any more." With the provincial Liberals under Jean Charest plummeting in the polls, Ottawa's nightmare scenario is beginning to unfold: another PQ election victory by 2007 followed by a third referendum on independence.

During the federal campaign, the Bloc—which won half the Quebec vote and 54 seats, equaling its highest total ever—directed much of its fire against federal Liberal corruption. The sponsorship scandal, which saw the Chrétien mafia funnel millions to its Quebec cronies to "fight separatism" while pocketing generous "commissions," provoked another surge of anti-French chauvinism in English Canada and widespread anger within Quebec. In the upshot, the Liberals were reduced to a rump in the province, much of it in heavily English-speaking areas. Repeating the pattern established when Brian Mulroney's Tories imploded in the early 1990s, the Conservative (ex-Reform) yahoes won the West and the Liberals only clung to power by sweeping Ontario.

A noteworthy aspect of the election was the Bloc's sharply increased support among immigrants and, especially, second-generation youth. This was once a relatively solid federalist voting base, as the Liberals played on the understandable desire of many immigrants to integrate into English-speaking



Boissinot/CP

**Gilles Duceppe, leader of Bloc Québécois, gloats over his party's sweep of Quebec in the recent federal elections. Recent wave of chauvinist provocations in English Canada fuels sentiment for independence in Quebec.**

North America, with the broader employment opportunities this would offer. Opposition to Quebec independence among immigrants was reinforced by the rantings of PQ dinosaurs like former leader Jacques Parizeau, who blamed the narrow loss of the 1995 referendum on "money and the ethnic vote."

But after three decades of provincial legislation promoting French as the primary language of work and restricting access to English schools, Quebec immigrants now overwhelmingly integrate into the dominant francophone society. Moreover, an increasing proportion of new immigrants comes from North and West Africa and other areas where French is widely spoken. The result is that youth of immigrant origin now support independence in roughly the same proportion as the rest of Quebec society.

The PQ and Bloc have also moved to repair relations with the aboriginal population, in the past another vocal opponent of Quebec sovereignty. The federal government has long sought to play the "Native card" against Quebec by portraying itself as more sympathetic to aboriginal causes (a lie, of course: while the social conditions of aboriginal people in Quebec are abysmal, they are far worse in the rest of Canada). During the 1995 referendum, Native groups held a parallel vote that overwhelmingly affirmed opposition to an independent Quebec. But while in office the PQ cancelled an unpopular hydroelectric project and signed an agreement with the Natives of Northern Quebec for common resource management. In the upshot, Quebec's first MPs of aboriginal and African descent—Innu Bernard Cleary and Cameroon-born Maka Kotto—were elected on the Bloc ticket.

These developments have provoked great consternation among Quebec federalists, who are used to taking immigrant

**Letter:****Teamsters' Airport Strike and Anglo Chauvinism**

August 9, 2004

Dear *Spartacist Canada*,

Airport ramp workers at Toronto's Pearson International Airport employed by Handlex (Teamsters 419) went on strike July 28, with higher wages being the main demand. For me, this strike proved to be a powerful example of how Anglo chauvinism divides workers despite the possibility of joint action in the same union.

The contract negotiations were carried out along with workers at Montreal (Dorval and Mirabel airports). At the union meeting, I was surprised to find that the workers argued against Montreal making the same wages as Toronto (they got \$2 an hour less previously). The new contract, though it gave Toronto a mere 15 cent raise, put Toronto and Montreal wages at the same level. A lot of Toronto workers did not want Montreal to be making as much, arguing that the cost of living is less in Montreal. The meeting degenerated into anti-French bigotry, with one worker even arguing that workers in third world countries are paid less due to the cost of living there, and attempted to justify it on that basis!

The bureaucrats tried to sell the contract by arguing for unity, noting that previous animosities existed between workers of the two cities. Ironically, they would later divide the workers by ordering Montreal to keep working while we were on strike. When the vote came out it was a split, with Montreal overwhelmingly in favour of accepting the agreement and Toronto overwhelmingly rejecting it. Despite the close results of this vote, both Toronto and Montreal were to be on strike.

The anti-French bigotry continued on the picket lines, especially since the president of the company happened to be Québécois. I heard one worker remark "Who cares about Montreal? We're not French...". Another pointed out cars with Quebec license plates for some reason, likely to

incite further anti-Quebec bigotry.

We found out later that despite the strike vote, Teamsters Canada ordered Montreal back to work, out of supposed fears the company would close. A bureaucrat came to us on the picket lines, basically telling us that it was our fault that we're on strike, because Montreal trusted the union and liked the agreement they were given. Clearly, the bureaucrats did not want this strike to happen.

On a more positive note, our strike showed that working people do indeed have the power in society, especially in strategic centers that are essential to an industrial capitalist economy, such as an airport. UPS drivers at one point refused to cross the picket lines, and we even managed to turn away a Canadian Forces truck back to its base in Kingston. We had a few incidents on the picket line, ranging from death threats with deadly weapons, to idiots speeding their vehicles through the line.

The strike came to an end August 8, with the vote being the same percentage as last time, except inverted. The bureaucrats had a hard time explaining their decision to send Montreal back to work at the meeting. Their statements that the company would lose contracts and close did not exactly fly well as it was a risk everyone took. The company even hired private couriers to personally deliver letters to our homes, threatening to close the company by a certain date if the strike did not end. The bureaucrats blamed the Toronto workers for not being on the picket lines enough, to which one worker mentioned that workers felt they were screwed either way after finding out about the decision to send Montreal back to work.

Nationalism, like racism, serves to keep the workers from uniting on a class basis and in Canada, the oppression of Quebec as a nation plays a central role which allows the bosses to keep us divided.

—Ramp Worker

and aboriginal support for granted. The English Canadian media like to portray nationalists like Parizeau as uniquely hostile to immigrants, so it's no accident that they all but ignored the grotesque racist remarks of one Jean-Paul Carrier, official election agent to the defeated Liberal MP in the suburban Montreal riding of Saint-Lambert. Following the surprise win by Bloc candidate Kotto, the Liberal spokesman told a reporter seeking a comment that he should "Go see the n----r that the people just elected."

**Quebec and the Left**

As usual, much of the reformist left in English Canada pinned its hopes on the NDP, claiming it had "moved left" under new party leader Jack Layton and was poised for an electoral breakthrough, at least in English Canada. Yet, while increasing their vote slightly, the New Democrats won fewer than 20 seats and, as usual, nothing in Quebec. These Anglo-chauvinist social democrats have long been hostile to Quebec's national rights, underlined by their support to the Liberals' Clarity Act of 2000, which seeks to legally bar Quebec's democratic right to self-determination.

In a classic example of two-faced hypocrisy, Layton tried

to distance the NDP from this chauvinist law during a campaign stop on Quebec's heavily nationalist North Shore. But, on returning to English Canada, he immediately backtracked amid a barrage of criticism from Western NDP premiers and MPs. Muttering that the Clarity Act concerned "debates of the past," Layton said dealing with it was "not a priority." The New Democrats' own verbose platform, which ran to nearly 70 pages, had all of one sentence referring to the Quebec question, calling Quebec "a nation within Canada" and adding some blah-blah about the need for "working with Quebec to obtain common objectives with equitable outcomes." We Trotskyists said: No vote to the NDP, supporters of Canadian capitalism and chauvinist opponents of Quebec's national rights!

The new left milieus that have arisen in this country in recent years, typically defined by anarchism, often have a healthy revulsion for the pro-NDP parliamentary reformism that characterizes most of the "old left." But, overwhelmingly, the anarchist and related milieus are indifferent if not hostile to Quebec's national rights. A clear example is provided by Vancouver's Fire This Time group, which publishes articles

(continued on page 20)

# Women and Revolution



## For Separation of Religion and State

# No to Ontario's "Sharia Courts"!

After a campaign of more than a decade by the Canadian Society of Muslims, in late 2003 the Ontario government authorized Islamic sharia tribunals to function under existing arbitration laws. Under the 1991 Arbitration Act, tribunal decisions will be binding and will be upheld by Ontario courts unless coercion is shown. The new sharia courts are to deal with family law—marriage, divorce, inheritance—where women's subjugation is most brutally enforced. This is an outrage that will deepen the oppression and isolation of Muslim women. As revolutionary Marxists, atheists and fighters for women's liberation, we are unalterably opposed to the new sharia courts.

We are against all intrusion of religion into an already deeply unjust legal system that exists to defend capitalist private property and is driven by Christian thirst for vengeance and punishment. Religion ought to be a private matter in relation to the state. People should be free to practice their religion without the state persecution and religious bigotry which has spawned centuries of repression and bloodshed. But these religious tribunals are not a matter of private religious practice. Their rulings will have the force of law, making them part of the legal machinery of the capitalist state which in turn is to be the enforcer of religious obscurantism.

### Sharia Law and Muslim Women

Sharia is the 1,300-year-old body of Muslim canon law that regulates every aspect of life. In Muslim personal law, women are inherently unequal (as in all organized religion); indeed they are considered less than fully human. Women may be beaten by their husbands, denied divorce, or divorced by the husband simply repeating three times, "I divorce you." Who can forget Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman who narrowly escaped death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock?

Many of the opponents of Ontario's sharia plans are women who have fled Iran. Women in that "Islamic paradise" must cover themselves in the headscarf (*hijab*); they may not work in occupations that might compromise their "chastity"; and they can be stoned to death (and many have been) for having sexual relationships outside of marriage. In 2003 three young Iranian women—Nika, Mahdis and Mahnam Nahasati—were arrested, beaten with chains and sentenced to 120 lashes for the "crime" of allegedly having boyfriends. They had to overcome multiple racist hurdles thrown up by Canadian immigration authorities in order to escape Iran. Their brother Mohsen Mofidi was less fortunate—sentenced to 80 lashes, he died of injuries inflicted by the regime.

We especially oppose the Koranic strictures that dictate



Nerio Musa

**Muslim women in Toronto. Growth of women's oppression, influence of religion is seen in increasing appearance of veil.**

the seclusion of women. The head-to-toe *chador* (veil) is a walking prison, physically excluding women from society. It is not primarily a religious statement, but an embodiment of the submission of women to men, and the permanent, imposed affirmation of their inferior status. It represents the extension outside the home of the seclusion imposed on women by reactionary sharia law. We solidarize with the countless women who have sought to escape this tyranny, whether in the historically Muslim world or the imperialist centers.

Attempting to defuse protest, both the Ontario government and would-be Muslim jurists insist that participation in the tribunals is voluntary and that their decisions will be compatible with Canadian law. This would be a "Canadianized" and "watered-down sharia," according to Mumtaz Ali, "patron-in-chief" of the new Islamic Institute of Civil Justice which aims to run the tribunals.

The insistence that participation is "voluntary" is false. To its proponents, following sharia is obligatory, as Ali made clear in a 1995 interview: "Once the parties have agreed to

## Down With Anti-Muslim Racism!

be governed by Muslim PFL [Personal Family Law], then they will be committed to it by their prior consent.... [A] Muslim who would choose to opt out at this stage, for reasons of convenience would be guilty of a far greater crime than a mere breach of contract—and this could be tantamount to blasphemy-apostasy.” Ali demands that women be veiled and that *purdah*—the enforced seclusion of women—is a necessity. He endorses a “learned author” who denounces “fornication” as a “hideous crime” and who upholds “the Shari’ah punishment” of 100 lashes because it “terrifies the whole population.”

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women, which opposes the new tribunals, fears that women will simply be coerced into taking part. Similarly, the editor of the bulletin *Women in the Middle East*, Azam Kamguian, told a March 7 Toronto meeting:

“Too many women from Muslim origin living in the west still live in Islamic and patriarchal environments where the man’s word and pressure from the community is law. It will take a brave woman to defy her husband, and to refuse to have her dispute settled under Islamic law when her refusal could be equated with hostility to the religion and apostasy.”

Women who try to break out of this web of religious oppression are shunned, ostracized and cut off from family and friends. If the capitalist courts enforce reactionary religious law, this can only worsen. While bourgeois justice is racist, anti-working class and anti-woman, it does represent a social advance over reactionary pre-capitalist and even pre-feudal institutions such as religious trials by clerics of any persuasion.

**Sharia Law and Anti-Muslim Backlash**

The debate on sharia comes amid vastly heightened anti-Muslim racism—indeed, some of the opposition to the new tribunals is fueled by this backlash. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, Islam was pronounced anathema, its adherents smeared as terrorists. On the streets, women have been humiliated, had their veils ripped off and denied jobs and services. Canadians of Near Eastern descent have been rounded up and detained; others were picked up abroad and thrown into jails in Syria and Egypt to be tortured.

It is noteworthy that for more than a decade Catholics, Orthodox Jews and Ismaili Muslims (who do not use sharia) have been using the Arbitration Act to resolve family-related

and other legal disputes, without protest. In contrast, the proposal for sharia courts provoked an immediate outcry. There is a strain here of holier-than-thou “secularism” which is little more than a cover for anti-Muslim bigotry.

There are about 600,000 Muslims in Canada today; more than half live in Ontario. Imperialist subjugation and militarism, grinding poverty, wars of conquest and depredation from Somalia to Ethiopia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan: the bloody workings of imperialism have driven untold millions to flee their homes in search of a better life or simply to stay alive. But especially with the intense anti-Muslim backlash that erupted after September 11, attacks on Near Eastern and African immigrants here, as in the U.S. and Europe, have sharply increased as civil rights are shredded along with jobs and social services. Immigrants are the last hired and first fired, and this hits immigrant women hardest. Without access to jobs, services and language classes, many immigrant Muslim women live in intense isolation.

The growth of women’s oppression and the influence of religion can be seen in the increasingly common appearance of the veil among women and young girls. For a minority, this is not only an expression of women’s subordination, but a twisted kind of defiance of anti-Muslim racism. Less visible is the barbarism of female genital mutilation or the anguish of forced marriages. In fact, these things are aggravated by restrictive Canadian immigration laws.

At a Toronto June 26 anti-sharia meeting, a high school teacher reported that many teachers are seeing their young students suddenly spirited out of the country, only to return married to a much older man in order to secure him permanent resident status. A young girl’s dowry is her citizenship. Similarly, immigrant women are trapped in abusive relationships if their status depends on their husbands. Attempts to flee or separate legally mean almost certain deportation. We demand full citizenship rights for anyone who makes it here. This is not only crucial to the lives of immigrants, but would undercut the basis for practices that are so detrimental to women.

**Religious Bigotry and the Canadian State**

Contrary to liberal mythology, Canada is not a secular state; separation of church and state is partial at best. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms invoked by some opponents

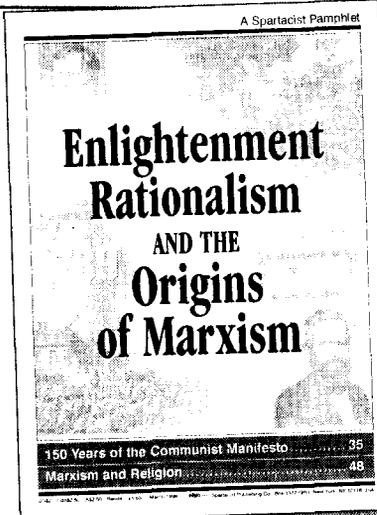
*(continued on page 12)*

This pamphlet reprints presentations given by SL/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour on the origins of Marxism in the French Enlightenment and in left Hegelianism. Also included are “150 Years of the Communist Manifesto” and “Marxism and Religion.”

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## Sharia Courts...

(continued from page 11)

of sharia states that "Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law"—not exactly a statement of human liberation. Actually, Canada was founded on the destruction of the pre-existing aboriginal societies, the subjugation of the Québécois with the triumph of the British over the French on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 and as a reactionary British redoubt against the American Revolution. To this day Parliament opens with prayers as the politicians seek guidance from the Christian god in their main endeavor—the business of rewarding their friends and robbing working people.

For much of Canada's long history of religious bigotry, anti-Catholic reaction was dominant, and it was always bound up with anti-French prejudice. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by vicious campaigns and riots against impoverished Irish Catholic immigrants fomented by predominantly Protestant rulers. Orange Ontario was deeply anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic. Run by the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Orange Order, Toronto of the 1920s and 1930s was known as the "Belfast of Canada." Here and on the Prairies, the Orange Order was heavily interpenetrated with the Ku Klux Klan terrorists whose specialty was anti-Catholic cross-burnings. After World War II, Catholic immigrants from southern European countries were the targets. Today Muslims (and Hindus and Sikhs) have largely displaced Catholics and Jews as the scapegoats of choice.

Mumtaz Ali thanks today's official government policy of multiculturalism for making sharia courts possible, declaring that "the Ontario government is the most enlightened in the world. This is the multiculturalism of my friend Pierre Trudeau" (*Toronto Star*, 22 May). Multiculturalism was inaugurated in 1971 by Trudeau in part to corral "ethnic" votes for the Liberals and as a wedge against growing support for nationalism in Quebec. The carefully crafted hype is that it is an anti-racist liberal reform—an official expression of tolerance of all cultures. Right-wing racists inveigh against it for just that reason.

In reality, though, multiculturalism, which is designed to encourage the "voluntary" cultural and racial segregation of the population, has served to ghettoize immigrant communities. Hugely successfully at buttressing the federal Liberals, with pork-barrel grants flowing to numerous cultural organizations, it has served to tie a layer of petty-bourgeois immigrant "community leaders" to the government's purse-strings.

It has in turn been a powerful conservatizing force for policing immigrants and maintaining social peace.

By actively discouraging the integration of immigrant communities, the bourgeoisie has also helped to foster racism and chauvinism against non-white populations. For the ruling class, confronted with an increasingly multiracial working class, this policy has served to divide working people.

Capitalist immigration policy is always subject to the labour requirements of the economy. During periods of economic growth, the capitalists bring in workers from other countries as a source of cheap labour. In a downturn, they whip up racism against foreign-born workers, scapegoating them for the capitalist crisis. But the ruling class always manipulates racial and ethnic antagonisms among workers as a means of weakening their ability to struggle against the bosses' attacks. Struggling for class unity, workers must oppose all the racist anti-immigration laws and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Immigrant workers are not helpless pawns, but form a vital part of capitalist production in this country—they represent a core of the social power which is key to successful labour struggle and the overturning of the capitalist order.

## Religion, the Family and Women's Oppression

Karl Marx was right when he asserted that "*Man makes religion*, religion does not make man." He concluded:

"The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against *the world* of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*.

"*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people."

— "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," 1844

Islam has no monopoly on religious savagery, and the subjugation of women is not unique to it. For years the Catholic Church has used its power in the state-funded separate school system to poison children with anti-abortion and anti-gay bigotry. The religious lunatics who spent the 1990s trying to murder abortion doctors in Canada and the U.S. were certainly not Muslim. The Catholic Church still does not allow divorce or contraception. In Jewish law the Beis Din system is a lot like sharia, intensely anti-woman. For example, women may not give testimony or sit in judgement of others; once married, women are essentially the property of their husbands.

Institutionalized religions are key to reinforcing women's oppression, but they are not its origin. The institution of the family—today fashioned to serve the needs of capitalist class rule—is the main source of women's oppression. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Friedrich Engels explained that the monogamous patrilineal family "is based on the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity." The family is the vehicle for transmitting property from one generation to the next, and the mechanism for raising new generations of workers. Bourgeois family law is thus tightly bound up with defense of private property, and women's inequality is always reflected in the

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legal and social codes of every society.

The entire fabric of Muslim family law, the subordination of women through polygamy, the bride price, dowry, the veil—these are not simply the “bad ideas” of an evil caste of mullahs. In origin, they were a means of enforcing property rights and attendant mechanisms of social control in a pre-capitalist society.

In the eight and ninth centuries, when Europe was in the Dark Ages, Muslim civilization was at its zenith. Islam gave us algebra, Arabic numbers; it preserved medical knowledge and many other key inventions. In the Spanish Inquisition of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Muslims and Jews were driven out of Spain by the crown and Catholic Church. Thousands upon thousands of books of mathematics, astronomy, medicine and poetry were burned.

Christianity and Judaism, in their many variants, also preach stifling moral codes meant to uphold the patriarchal family. But sections of Christianity and Judaism, also with roots in pre-capitalist society, had to conform with rising industrial capitalism and the bourgeois nation-states where they existed. The radical democratic principles of the Enlightenment were the ideological reflection of historic material advances over a backward, feudal society. But as a religion, Islam has not had to adapt, largely because it remains rooted in those parts of the world where imperialist penetration has reinforced social backwardness as a prop to its domination.

Capitalism came belatedly to these countries, with the European colonizers who manipulated and nurtured all that was backward and retrograde, while suppressing class struggle. And today among concentrations of immigrants in the Western imperialist countries, capitalist rule has reinforced anti-woman practices, from the barbarism of female genital mutilation to veiling marriages.

The Western imperialists fulminate against Islam. But it was these imperialist exploiters who fueled the growth of political Islam over the last half century. In their drive to destroy the Soviet Union—the state that emerged from the victorious 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia—the imperi-



Der Spiegel

**Veiled woman in Iran, where Sharia has reigned since 1979 “Islamic Revolution.”**



Reuters

**Members of Afghan women’s militia rally in Kabul just before Soviet pullout in 1989.**

alists allied with indigenous forces of social reaction to act as a bulwark against godless Communism and the Soviet Union, and to ensure the continued flow of superprofits.

Afghanistan is the clearest example. In the late 1970s when a modernizing Afghan government moved to implement modest reforms for women (lowering the bride price, instituting education) the tribal *mujahedin* erupted in insurrectionary violence. To protect its borders from the fundamentalist threat, already backed by the CIA, in late 1979 the Soviet Red Army entered Afghanistan at the invitation of the left-nationalist government in Kabul. The U.S. government spent billions to fund the *mujahedin*’s holy war against the Soviet Union in what was the biggest CIA operation in history. We declared “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan,” and called to extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples, especially the terribly oppressed women.

But this was not the Soviet Union of Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky, but a degenerated workers state headed by a bureaucratic caste intent on conciliating the imperialist order. Criminally, instead of fighting to win, in 1989 the Soviets withdrew, paving the way for the victory of Washington’s brutal religious fanatics—including the future Taliban—and opening the door to counterrevolution in the Soviet Union itself. The Taliban, Osama Bin Laden—this whole reactionary crew is literally the Frankenstein monster created by the imperialists in their war on the Soviet Union.

### Islam and the Left

The International Campaign Against Sharia Court in Canada (ICAS)—animated by the Worker-communist Party of Iran (WCPI)—is lobbying the government to remove family law from the Arbitration Act, which would remove the legal sanction for religion-based tribunals. But the website

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## Sharia Courts...

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for this campaign ([www.nosharia.com](http://www.nosharia.com)) has also published blatantly anti-immigrant, pro-imperialist poison without criticism or comment.

One such article, "Shari'a: A Threat to the Canadian Society" by Elka Enola of the Humanist Association of Toronto (HAT), projects a demented three-step scenario which culminates in a future where "Muslims now outnumber Christians, and the majority rule of democracy is turned on its head, as the majority Muslims make Shari'a the law of the land." Elsewhere, Enola raves that when leftists support "Palestinians against Israel," they are "siding with Political Islam" (*HAT Newsletter*, May/June 2004).

The ICAS website also features a statement, "Canada Attacked by Political Islam!," demanding that the racist Canadian government include as a condition on the Canadian immigration form that "the applicant will protect Canadian Secular Democracy." It further demands that the government require "all records of sermons and lectures in all religious gatherings, conferences, seminars etc [be submitted] to authority." This is not secularism but a loyalty oath that would ban some Muslim immigrants and other people as well, and a call on the government to directly police religion. It all reeks of the racist *Clash of Civilizations* garbage of reactionary writer Samuel Huntington, which pits a supposedly progressive "western civilization" against "backward Islam." It is the banner of imperialist "democracy" which has brought devastation to Afghanistan and now Iraq.

The racist Canadian ruling class simultaneously attacks Muslims as terrorists while nurturing the most repressive and conservative forces within the Muslim community. There is no real contradiction here: both are mechanisms for reinforcing the grip of capitalism through scapegoating and regimenting immigrant communities. Working people should oppose sharia courts and *all other* state-sanctioned religious interference in public institutions. The protests against sharia law must denounce Canada's brutally racist "justice" system and, especially, the government's war on immigrants.

While the Canadian left and feminists have been largely silent in the sharia debate, the Trotskyist League has intervened actively against the new sharia courts. We addressed the June 26 ICAS public meeting and we have publicized a planned protest against the sharia courts at the Ontario Legislature on September 8. Our letter urging left, gay/lesbian and other groups to mobilize for the protest made clear that opposition to sharia must be inseparable from opposition to the anti-Muslim racist backlash.

The abdication of much of the left reflects a long-standing division between opponents of the Islamic regime in Iran, and those who capitulate to it. Going back to the 1979 "Islamic Revolution"—a bloody disaster for women, workers and the left—many so-called leftists have willfully misidentified political Islam with anti-imperialism. For example, the International Socialists (I.S.) tailed the forces of Islamic reaction, running headlines like "The form—religion, The spirit—revolution" (*Workers Action*, February 1979).

In 1998, this line-up was reprised when the Trotskyist League, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and others joined with the WCPI to drive out representatives of the murderously anti-woman Iranian government from a Toronto International Women's Day fair. Scandalously, the I.S. and others



SC photo

**March 2002 Toronto protest in defense of Palestinians: TL protests attacks on immigrants in name of "war on terror."**

opposed this! More recently, the IWD feminists in Toronto have barred the WCPI from their meetings and from having display tables at IWD fairs—explicitly because these feminists viewed the WCPI's protest against the stoning, torture and imprisonment of women in Iran as a disruption that might "offend" Muslims.

Some leftists justify their reluctance to criticize Islamic reaction by pointing to the fact that the imperialists are waging a brutal "war on terrorism" through military conquest, occupations and the round-up of Near Eastern immigrants. Others push a form of "cultural relativism," a theoretical justification for accepting the horribly oppressive status quo in the Third World which actually mirrors the right-wing "clash of civilizations" cant. In fact, Islam has long been an invaluable tool for imperialist oppression and exploitation both of immigrants at home and neocolonial subjects abroad. That the government here is allowing Islamic sharia courts in the midst of an anti-Muslim backlash underscores that the fundamental divide in society is not between religions or nationalities, but between the classes.

The WCPI correctly opposes sharia law, both in Iran and in Canada. Yet, lacking a working-class axis, they end up seeing the imperialist governments—far greater enemies of the world's working class than the ayatollahs of impoverished neocolonial Iran—as potential allies. In fact, the anti-clerical reformists of the WCPI foster terrible illusions in "democratic" Western imperialism.

For example, the WCPI backs the French government's racist campaign to ban girls from wearing the headscarf in schools. Part of a broader crusade by the French rulers against the country's large North African Muslim population, this is also a gross act of state interference with personal religious belief. Our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France sharply oppose the campaign for state bans on the veil, and further point out that expelling girls from school for wearing it can only lead to greater isolation and oppression for them, reinforcing their religious beliefs.

For many years the WCPI has campaigned for imperialist

governments in Europe and Canada to close Iranian embassies in their countries. This demand has been taken up by the coordinator of the anti-sharia campaign, Homa Arjomand, who recently wrote to the Canadian government, demanding that it "break all its diplomatic relations with the Iranian regime" (*WPI Briefing*, 27 July). The WCPI has also repeatedly called on the UN to intervene on behalf of the oppressed in the Near East. With such positions, they lend credence to the imperialists' democratic pretensions and call on them to act as cops of the world. Their willingness to accommodate pro-imperialist forces in their anti-sharia campaign has not fallen from the sky.

**For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

Any perspective for the liberation of women must start with revolutionary opposition to the imperialist rulers, who exploit workers at home while subjugating and plundering entire countries in the Third World. It is necessary to generate the resources to change the material conditions of life, and that can only come from the expropriation of the capitalist class. Looking ahead to the socialist revolution, in *Origin of the Family* Engels wrote:

"With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not."

When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in 1917, they sought to carry out this program. But the resources of the new workers state, devastated by imperialist war, famine and civil war, were agonizingly slender, and this imposed harsh limits on the measures they could take. Even so, health care and education were free, and there was child care in workplaces. The Bolsheviks' earliest measures were directed at the emancipation of women. Unlike both modern bourgeois law and religious tradition, they made marriage and divorce simple matters of civil registration. The welfare of children was the responsibility of the state. They did away with the repressive laws against homosexuality and abortion.

How do we get to the revolution that alone can bring the liberation of women? And how do we address the conditions of oppressed immigrant women in this country who are caught between the stifling restrictions of their own communities and the racist walls erected by Canadian capitalist society? The working class alone has the power to sweep away this violent, exploitative system. Workers must be won to the understanding that in championing the rights of women and immigrants, they advance the interests of the class as a whole. This means opposing every hint of discrimination against people for their religion or ethnicity, while exposing the pernicious influence of all religions. It means taking up the struggle for free 24-hour child care and free quality health care as measures crucial to



Battistoni/CP

**Multiracial working class has the social power and interest to beat back capitalist assaults. Picket lines of hospital workers in Vancouver, April.**

addressing the special oppression of women.

The Trotskyist League is a small revolutionary Marxist organization, and within our capacities, we seek to give leadership to working-class struggles through the force of our program, as part of the essential struggle to forge a multiracial revolutionary vanguard party. As our comrade told the audience at the June 26 meeting against sharia law:

"As fighters for women's liberation, we oppose the introduction of the sharia laws. We are also for the separation of church and state, to which end we also oppose [the law's] application to other religions, be it Catholic, Jewish or Ismaili....

"I am a trade unionist; we believe the way forward lies in mobilizing the integrated unions to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and their families and for the full integration of women into the workforce. The brutal oppression of women is fundamental to the capitalist system and must be replaced by the rule of the working people." ■

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## War on Terror...

(continued from page 1)

struggling to clear his name.

Time after time, the allegations against those accused of terror links have blown up in the government's face. The "Anti-Terrorism Act" of 2001, which legalized an arsenal of powers that police and prosecutors could only dream of before the September 11 attacks, has not resulted in a single guilty verdict against anyone. Yet the reign of government/police terror—most immediately targeting Arab and Muslim immigrants and refugees—continues unabated.

### Ottawa's Secret Trials

In an April 7 column titled "Some Light Falls on Terror Trial," *Toronto Star* columnist Thomas Walkom noted how "government security services have chosen to deal with suspected terrorists in one of two ways—jail without trial for non-citizens, or jail (and sometimes torture) abroad for Canadian passport holders." At least five men of Muslim origin remain detained under government "security certificates," subject to secret legal proceedings under which neither they nor anyone but the prosecutors and judge will be allowed to see the purported evidence, or even learn what they are accused of.

Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, an Egyptian immigrant, has been held since 2000. A devout Muslim, he is subject to humiliating strip-searches and forced to perform his daily prayers facing his cell toilet. Mahmoud Jaballah, also from Egypt, actually had a security certificate quashed for lack of evidence by a federal court judge four years ago, only to be rearrested under a similar certificate in August 2001. He remains in solitary confinement at Toronto West Detention Centre.

This August, the government's new "Ministry of Public Safety" declared its intention to deport a third detainee, Montreal resident Adil Charkaoui, to Morocco. Immigration Canada officially admits that Charkaoui risks "torture, cruel and unusual punishment and even death" if he is deported. (Morocco is one of three destinations where the U.S. government regularly "renders" detainees for torture.) As for Canadian citizens, at least three others besides Maher Arar found themselves in the dungeons of the Syrian regime shortly after being investigated by Canadian security services.

To date, the only person to actually face formal charges under the Anti-Terrorism Act is Ottawa computer consultant Momin Khawaja, arrested by RCMP officers at his workplace in March. Denied bail, he remains in custody. Simultaneous with Khawaja's arrest, a gang of 20-30 tactical squad cops used a battering ram to smash through the front door of his family's home. "All I heard was a loud bang coming from the front door and the next thing I knew there were policemen with machine guns everywhere.... They were pointing their guns at our heads and yelling," recounted Momin's 26-year-old brother Qasim (*Orléans Online*, 30 March).

Such scenes of families being terrorized by pumped-up psychos armed to the teeth, sadistic prison abuse and Kafkaesque "trial" proceedings could just as easily come from an Al Jazeera newsclip depicting the realities of the brutal U.S. military occupation of Iraq, or Zionist stormtroopers



SC photo

Protest against racist detention of immigrants and refugees at Toronto's Celebrity Inn, February 16, 2002.

in the West Bank and Gaza. The similarities between the "war on terror" at home and imperialist thuggery abroad are anything but coincidental. The unmistakable message, not only to immigrants and refugees but to the multiethnic working class at large, is: Watch out, this can happen to you!

### "Terror" Witchhunt Targets Labour and Leftists

Canada is only one cog in the vast international "security" apparatus brought into life since September 2001. This includes a U.S.-run worldwide network of clandestine prisons, torture chambers and even a covert charter airline designated for the transfer of suspects from one secret facility to another. With U.S. and Canadian security agencies sharing information that includes lists of as many as five million "terrorist suspects," this is a deadly danger to just about everyone!

The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center using two seized commercial airliners was an indefensible act of criminal terror carried out by Islamic fundamentalists. The latter had been nurtured by U.S. imperialism for its "holy war" against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s, only to turn on their former masters when their services were no longer required after the destruction of the USSR. Another hijacked plane was crashed into the Pentagon; unlike the World Trade Center, this is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military, and the possibility of being hit comes with the territory. That recognition does not make the attack an "anti-imperialist" act, nor does it change the fact that terrorism almost always gets innocent people—in this case the airplane passengers as well as maintenance workers, janitors and secretaries at the Pentagon.

The next day, our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. issued a statement denouncing the World Trade Center attack, noting that those who perpetrated it "*embrace the same mentality as the racist rulers of America—identifying the working masses with their capitalist exploiters and oppressors!*" We warned that the ruling class would respond with repression at home and imperialist "retaliation" abroad. The USA-Patriot Act was enacted the following month, while the U.S. invaded and occupied Afghanistan and later

Iraq. Thousands and thousands of victims of U.S. aggression are dead, dying, mutilated, tortured, imprisoned. While implementing their own repressive laws, the Canadian rulers have aided Washington's terror wars, most recently by running the NATO force occupying Afghanistan.

Laws like the USA-Patriot Act and Canada's Anti-Terrorist Act are aimed at eliminating many existing legal restraints on the government's power to spy on the population, imprison political activists, and indiscriminately round up and detain non-citizens. Barely a month after September 11, capitalist politicians and police forces were throwing "terrorist" labels against everyone from striking teachers in suburban New Jersey to West Coast longshore unions to protesters from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) in Toronto.

The "terrorist activity" proscribed by Ottawa's Anti-Terrorism Act includes "an act or omission" committed "with the intention of intimidating the public, or a segment of the public, with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act." This could apply to just about any kind of political protest or workers strike imaginable! Likewise, the "list of [terrorist] entities" designated under provisions of the new law includes numerous secular political organizations that have nothing to do with even the most vaguely defined "Islamic terrorism." Groups illegalized under the act range from the Communist Party of the Philippines to the Colombian FARC and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

**Mobilize the Power of Labour!**

All this represents a dramatic ratcheting up of the legal mechanisms for state repression. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out long ago, the state is, in its essence, "armed bodies of men"—an apparatus of repression, centrally including the police, courts and prisons and a standing army, wielded by one class against another. Under capitalism, the state "serves and protects" the capitalists' private property against the working class, whose labour is the source of society's wealth, and which uniquely has the social power and class interest to sweep away the whole system of oppression and exploitation.

But sheer coercion and terror by the state would be insufficient to preserve capitalist stability in the long run if it were not also buttressed by powerful ideological tools to divide the working people and set them at each other's throats. Religion, national chauvinism, racism, sexual oppression and divisions between the native- and foreign-born are consciously fostered by the rulers to prevent the workers from wielding their immense social power in their own class interest.

The targeting of immigrants and refugees, as the most vulnerable sector of the working class, has long been a key component of the capitalists' one-sided class war on all working people. Since September 11, the racist crusade has been expanded and supercharged under the "war on terror," helping to grease the skids for multiple attacks on jobs, wages and union rights.

The capitalists' ability to carry out their repressive and anti-labour agenda is heavily conditioned by the extent of social protest and opposition, especially by the organized labour movement. Many trade unions have issued statements protesting aspects of the "anti-terror" crackdown. Leaders of

the NDP have also spoken out against the attacks on immigrants and refugees. But there has been almost no attempt to actually mobilize labour's social power against this onslaught. At bottom, this flows from the program pushed by the NDP and union bureaucrats that Canadian workers share a common "national interest" with Canadian capitalists.

The New Democrats' current posture of defending immigrants and refugees is belied by their practice when in office, while they too push support for a "national security" crackdown. In 1999, the ruling B.C. NDP whipped up a racist outcry over boatloads of Chinese migrants arriving on the West Coast, and demanded that Ottawa increase coastal military patrols and detain refugee claimants on arrival. And last fall an NDP statement against Liberal security legislation complained that it "fails to provide a comprehensive plan of action for national security."

In contrast, activist left groups such as OCAP and No One Is Illegal have organized militant protests in defense of immigrants, exposed media smear campaigns against detainees, and even temporarily succeeded in spiking individual deportations. We welcome such initiatives. For our part, we emphasize that the key force for fighting the anti-immigrant "war on terror" is the organized working class, with its tremendous potential social power. A single mass labour protest against anti-immigrant repression, or concerted action by transport unions to, for example, block the deportation of refugees, would have more impact than a thousand paper statements.

Our comrades in the San Francisco Bay Area provided a small example of what is needed in February 2002, in initiating the first labour-centered united-front protest in defense of immigrants and against the USA-Patriot Act following the post-September 11 crackdown. Three hundred protesters, centered on a core from the powerful West Coast longshore union, rallied in protest, showing on a small scale the kind of labour-centered mobilization that is needed.

Today, immigrants from Asia, the Near East and elsewhere are a strategic component of the Canadian labour movement. Their experiences in mass, militant struggles in their countries of origin can often be a boon to workers struggle here in Canada. In its own interests and those of all the oppressed, the labour movement must defend immigrant rights, demanding an end to the detentions and deportations and calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The Trotskyist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs seek to win workers to the understanding that they must sweep away the entire capitalist system, to forge through education and struggle the vanguard party of the proletariat needed to achieve this goal. Our defense of immigrant rights is vital to our revolutionary internationalist purpose. *Down with the "anti-terror" witchhunt! Free the detainees!*■

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## Exchange on Anti-Fascist Meeting:

# Lies, Damn Lies and Histrionics

July 2, 2004

To: Socialist Alternative (Toronto)

Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club supporters certainly did speak at the public meeting organized by Socialist Alternative and Young Left on June 3. That's about the only reflection of reality in your e-mail to us of June 8, which purports to be co-signed by Young Left, ARA and the Coalition Against War and Racism.

You say we "attempted to disrupt" the meeting, adding that our participation consisted of nothing but "insults and mockery" in order to "attack anti-fascists." You apparently hope to use these lies to promote a political exclusion against Trotskyists. What was the "disruption" you charge us with? During the appointed discussion period (after being duly recognized by the chair of the meeting) our comrades put forward our argument for a revolutionary, working class and internationalist program of struggle against fascism. This also meant turning a critical spotlight on the politics of Socialist Alternative and other organizations which foster illusions in the racist capitalist state.

In our remarks from the floor, we pointed to the decades-long record of the TL, the Partisan Defense Committee and the International Communist League in initiating and supporting mass actions to stop the fascists from raising their heads in major cities in North America and Europe. To illustrate this, we pointed to the successful demonstration of 3,000 workers, immigrants, youth and leftists which swept the fascist skinheads off the streets of Vancouver in 1993.

Key to the success of such actions against the fascists is that they are built on the basis of mobilizing, independently from the capitalist class, the social power of organized labor at the head of Jews, blacks, Asians, gays and all the fascists' intended victims. As we have found through experience, this means waging a political struggle against all manner of "liberal" bourgeois politicians and their social-democratic handmaidens, who will move heaven and earth—not to stop the fascists, but to spike militant anti-fascist protest. We reject any appeals to the capitalist state for "anti-hate" or "anti-extremist" laws because we know such laws will inevitably be used to target leftist opponents of capitalist rule. Russian

June 8, 2004

To the Trotskyist League,

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> we hosted a public forum on fascism in Toronto as a means of organising resistance against a recent upsurge of racist and neo-nazi activity in the city. The meeting was organised by Socialist Alternative and Young Left and had speakers representing SA, YL, Anti-Racist Action and the Coalition against War and Racism.

We were graced with the presence of two comrades from the Trotskyist League, Jesse and Andrew who, it seems, showed up with no other purpose but to sell copies of Workers Vanguard and attempt to disrupt the event. Rather than intervene in a spirit of comradely criticism designed to help improve anti-fascist organising efforts your comrade, Andrew, was incapable of making any comments other than insults and mockery directed variously at Anti-Racist Action, Socialist Alternative, Young Left as well as—distressingly—a member of the audience who had suffered in one of Pinochet's prisons.

Now, perhaps this was intended as some sort of "shock therapy" in order to strengthen the theory and practice of anti-racist organising in Toronto. We would have liked to think so except that, satiated with your efforts to insult and harangue the meeting, the Trotskyist League did not deign to send any representative to the planning meeting held on Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup> to organise a future anti-fascist protest. It seems that the Trotskyist League prefers to attack anti-fascists rather than actually put in the effort to fight fascists. For all your self-aggrandisement and denigration of others when it comes down to actually doing the work necessary to organise a mass effort against fascists in Toronto the TL is no where to be seen.

In the wake of your intervention several individuals have asked that the TL be banned from future events. We wonder what you have to say in your defence? Why should the TL be permitted to speak at future anti-fascist events when you have demonstrated no interest (let alone a capability) in engaging in anti-fascist work in Toronto but seem to have an interest only in disrupting and attacking the work of anti-fascists.

Socialist Alternative (Toronto)  
Young Left  
Anti-Racist Action (Toronto)  
Coalition Against War and Racism (Toronto)

SC graphic

**E-mailed letter received from Socialist Alternative (Toronto) threatens to exclude revolutionary Marxists of TL.**

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky codified the tactic of the united front, a concrete action of diverse political forces carried out under the watchword, "march separately, strike together." What would you have said of Trotsky's—in your words—"insults and mockery," since his writings on the struggle against the fascists were filled with scathing polemics against the Stalinists and Social Democrats whose policies allowed the Nazis to come to power.

What SA means by "fighting fascism" is something very different, as we also pointed out. To start with, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), to which SA is affiliated, claims that the cops that break the heads of anti-racist demonstrators are "workers in uniform" and supports the building of cop "unions." In the early 1990s, the CWI cheered on various and sundry fascist, anti-Soviet and anti-Communist scum

that acted as shock troops for the “democratic” capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Thus you played your own small role in advancing the restoration of capitalism which has been an unprecedented disaster for the working class around the world.

More recently, as we exposed in the article “Taaffeite CWI: From Yeltsin’s Barricades to the Augean Stables” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 828, 11 June), the Ukrainian CWI has collaborated openly with the fascists—posting on its website a joint statement signed by them and, among others, the fascist Ukrainian Brotherhood (Odessa) [Bratstvo]. The CWI’s Russian group has welcomed representatives of the fascist “Nazbol” (National Bolshevik) skinhead movement into its public meetings. Your remarkable tolerance for “Nazbols” spewing anti-Semitic filth at your public meetings in Moscow makes for a curious contrast to your threats to ban Trotskyist critics here in Toronto!

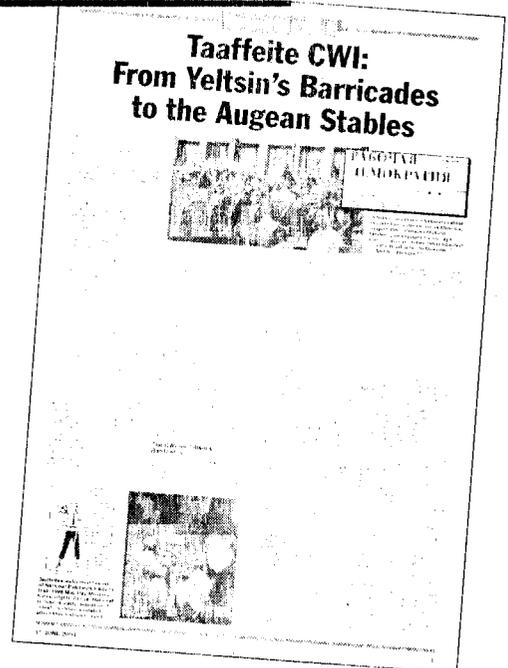
You smear our comrades for supposedly “mocking and insulting” a former political prisoner of the rightist military regime of Pinochet in Chile. What we did was use the example of Chile to drive home the bankruptcy of a program of collaborating with “progressive” elements of the capitalist class in the name of “fighting the right.” In the early 1970s, the “Popular Unity” government of Salvador Allende, supported by the Chilean Communist Party, tied the working class to the liberal bourgeoisie and the military officers, a course which—as our tendency uniquely warned—would end in disaster. It was none other than the Allende regime that elevated the future dictator Pinochet to head the Chilean armed forces. When Pinochet seized power with the backing of the CIA and the U.S. State Department on September 11, 1973, we organized international solidarity for Chilean leftists and called for worker-led resistance to Pinochet. The Stalinist line that our revolutionary working-class politics disrupt “the peoples’ unity” has historically been used not only to silence Trotskyists, anarchists and others, but to jail and murder them.

We also raised criticisms of Young Left, pointing out that one of its central spokesmen, sitting in the audience, was at the time a parliamentary candidate for the CPC-ML, whose



Trotskyist-initiated mass mobilization rallied unionists, minorities and students against attempted fascist provocation at Vancouver Art Gallery, January 22, 1993.

**WORKERS VANGUARD**



SC graphic

Order *Workers Vanguard* No. 828 (11 June) for the whole story of Socialist Alternative’s CWI co-thinkers collaborating with fascists and mobilizing for the counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union.

election statement calls for “nation-building” for imperialist Canada. We also reiterated our long-standing critique of ARA for accepting money from the city government for “anti-fascist organizing.” While we opposed any reliance on the capitalist state, the ARA spokesman at the June 3 meeting complained that the cops are “totally incompetent” when it comes to dealing with the Nazis and that “sentences are too lax.”

Your mock horror at our political criticisms is in fact a cover for advancing your own narrow factional aims. We informed you via e-mail that we were unable to attend the June 6 planning meeting, but wanted to be informed of any future events; nonetheless, you omitted the TL’s e-mail address from the notification sent out for the action against fascists in the Beaches on June 13. Such petty sectarianism is hardly an example of organizing a “mass effort against fascists in Toronto.” [SC note—SA now gripes that their e-mail was sent but bounced.]

As we have done in the past, the Trotskyist League remains ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with other militants in action against fascist provocations in Toronto and elsewhere. At the same time, we will continue to maintain that it is only the independent action of the working class, not reliance on the cops or Liberal and NDP politicians, that can stop the fascist scum, as an inseparable part of the effort to sweep away the capitalist system that breeds them.

Andrew Shilling,

for the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste  
cc: Young Left, Anti-Racist Action, Coalition  
Against War and Racism

# Quebec...

(continued from page 9)

and wages campaigns upholding self-determination for oppressed peoples on every continent...except here in Canada, where Quebec barely rates a mention.

Karl Marx once declared that "A nation that oppresses another can never be free." Radical youth and workers seeking a road to struggle against capitalist exploitation in this country have to recognize that the national subordination of Quebec is a *central pillar* of Canadian capitalism. There can be no freedom from exploitation and poverty for the working class unless it takes up the cause of all the oppressed, and that very much includes championing the national aspirations of the Québécois.

These aspirations stem from more than two centuries of national and linguistic oppression, and are regularly reinforced by waves of chauvinism from English Canada. Just open a copy of the *Toronto Sun*, *Vancouver Province* or other tabloid rag. After cheering on the anti-Quebec rants of Don Cherry and Conan O'Brien earlier this year, the *Sun* recently featured a shock-horror front page exposing Montreal judo star Nicolas Gill, Canadian flag bearer for the Athens Olympics, as a "separatist." Gill had had the effrontery to vote Yes in the 1995 sovereignty referendum, just like millions of other Québécois. In the eyes of the Anglo bigots, that makes him an object of contempt.

For all their occasional "progressive" pretensions, the PQ and Bloc are bourgeois parties whose goal is merely to be the untrammled rulers of an independent capitalist Quebec. Yet their hold over Quebec's working people is strengthened with every chauvinist outburst from English Canada. The workers of this country are, and have long been, deeply divided on national lines, severely undermining prospects for anti-capitalist class struggle. In English Canada, working people must be won to the understanding that defense of Quebec's national rights is key to any perspective of struggle against the capitalist rulers and their system of poverty and wage slavery.

There is plenty of anger among workers coast to coast against endless government attacks. This has been shown in militant strikes and mass protests from Newfoundland to Quebec and B.C. But labour's combativity and consciousness is undermined by the belief, propounded by the labour misleaders in both nations, that the workers share a common "national interest" with the exploiters, be these the Canadian ruling class or the francophone would-be rulers of Quebec.

Fighting Anglo chauvinism down the line, we Trotskyists advocate independence for Quebec as the best means to get the national question "off the agenda." This is also the only evident basis for winning Québécois workers away from the nationalist PQ and Bloc. Our goal is to forge a revolutionary, binational and multiracial workers party that champions the causes and struggles of all the oppressed. Only through unstint-

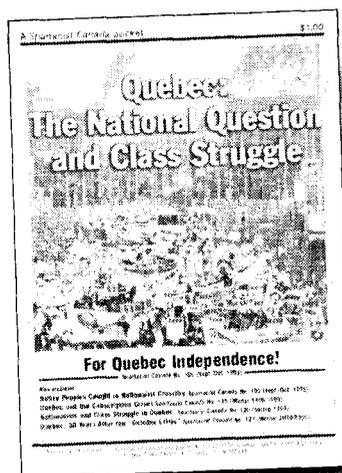


Alain Chagnon

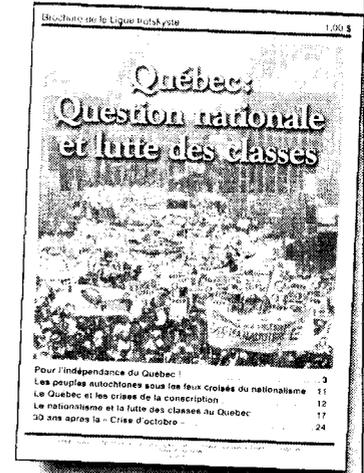
**April 14: 10,000 march on Montreal office of Liberal premier Jean Charest protesting austerity program.**

ing opposition to all forms of chauvinism, and to the bourgeois nationalism that this generates and reinforces among the Québécois, can the proletarian vanguard make clear to the workers of both nations that their real enemies are their own capitalist exploiters—not "the French," not "*les anglais*" and not immigrants or the dispossessed Native peoples. In the coming period, as the national question comes to the fore—again—as a central issue in Canadian politics, the fight for proletarian internationalist defense of Quebec's national rights will be crucial for those who seek to open a road toward socialist revolution. ■

## Trotskyist Literature on Quebec



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## Fahrenheit 9/11...

(continued from page 24)

however critical, because Bush is so damn intolerable. Behind this “anybody but Bush” enthusiasm is a fundamentally liberal—and dangerous—view of American democracy.

Moore’s vignette on the chicanery around the 2000 elections is compelling. He casts a spotlight on black oppression in the footage of black Congressional representatives rising in the Senate to protest the disenfranchisement of black voters and the fraudulence of Bush’s “victory,” only to be ruled out of order by an Al Gore unwilling to fight for his election victory because to do so would highlight capitalist America’s disregard for black people and undermine the legitimacy of the imperial presidency. That nothing changed shows exactly why the black Democrats are kept around—to head off outrage and revolt against this racist, capitalist order, particularly among black Americans, whenever it breaks out.

Moore believes that the American people have been betrayed by a small clique of reactionary thieves (the Bush administration and its corporate network) and a few spineless Democrats. In other words, he thinks it’s Bush & Co. who have violated a national unity that must be restored based on the sensibilities of the common people. In his words, a Democratic victory brings us a step closer to getting “this country back in the hands of the majority” (*New York Times*, 24 June). But there is and can be no national unity because this society is divided into social classes with mutually hostile interests. The whole of society is organized to extract profit for the minuscule class of capitalists, who own the factories, banks, transportation, etc., from the labor of those who produce the wealth, the working class.

Moore’s worldview explains some of the glaring omissions in the film. For example, his populist outlook leads him to ignore the Bush administration’s close ties to the Christian right, to take notice of which would mean

acknowledging that Bush really has a popular base. The box office figures of *The Passion of the Christ*, remember, are real. The neocons come in for personal ridicule, but not for braintrusting the Iraq invasion policy. They are closely aligned with the religious right, particularly in support of Zionist Israel. To mention this fact would get in the way of his Democratic bandwagon-building, as the Democrats are, if anything, more wedded to support of the Zionists than the Republicans. In fact, Moore himself declared in a *Los Angeles Times* (22 June) interview that “Israel is a democracy.”

Where Moore (and lots of other people) see the need to hold your nose and vote Democrat in November, we argue that a vote to the Democrats is a vote in favor of chaining the working masses to their oppressors and that the need is to fight to lay the basis for a conscious *class* break from the Democrats in the direction of political independence for the workers. The hoopla surrounding *Fahrenheit 9/11* and its “anybody but Bush” popularity is a perfect illustration of why the Russian revolutionary Lenin argued in his work *State and Revolution* that “a democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism.” As he put it, “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.”

Think about it. Through the last few years a growing number of activists have participated in struggle against the capitalist system’s madness. But then bring up the question of elections. All of a sudden, many of those who had become increasingly open to getting rid of the capitalist system as a whole now get all emotional about how much we need to fire the capitalist oppressor Bush, even if it means supporting the capitalist oppressor Kerry. Add in a few left-sounding voices to the chorus (like Moore’s) and you end up with a pretty solid array of forces working to convince everyone

that there *is* a real alternative within the capitalist framework.

In discussing some of these ideas with audiences following showings of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, we occasionally encountered something like the following argument: “There’s not a huge difference between the Democrats and Republicans, but things would have been better if Gore were president.” From Moore’s film you’d think that no American capitalist did anything about Iraq until George W. Bush met September 11. Not nearly true. While a Gore administration might not have invaded Iraq and established a colonial occupation—an optional aggression from the standpoint of the ruling class—he likely would have “merely” continued the Democratic Clinton Iraq policy, a regime of sanctions punctuated regularly by bombings that completely ravaged Iraq and killed hundreds of thousands more Iraqis than Bush’s war.

(continued on page 22)



Simon/SABA

Reuters

**Democrat Bill Clinton, imperialist war criminal: passenger train destroyed by 1999 U.S./Canada/NATO terror bombing of Serbia.**

## Fahrenheit 9/11...

(continued from page 21)

All this was accomplished under a humanitarian guise (along with his adventures in Somalia, Haiti and Serbia) and with minimal protest.

So why do the capitalists wage all these wars? As much as Moore brilliantly evokes the hypocrisies of the Bush administration's war propaganda, his explanation of the underlying motives is shallow. In line with the latest in anti-globalization ideology he offers as an explanation the incestuous web linking the Saudi royal family to the Bush family, who are in turn in bed with Cheney and a handful of similar rich white corporate profiteers. But it's ridiculous to think that the personal profit interests of a handful alone motivated either the Afghanistan or Iraq wars.

The government represents the executive committee of the ruling capitalist class, which means more than obtaining tax breaks for a bunch of robber barons. The White House and Congress must defend the strategic interests that serve the capitalist social system. So while you might see capitalist politicians bickering over tactics ("We need the UN!"—Democrats; "Screw those pansies!"—Bush & Co.), there is mutual commitment that, with the Soviet Union gone, U.S. imperialism must use its overwhelming military might to expand and solidify its grip on world resources and markets in the interest of raw profit for U.S. capitalists at the expense of their European and Japanese rivals. Controlling the world's oil faucet helps in doing this. So does dictating to your imperialist competitors what wars (or trade agreements, spheres of influence, etc.) will take place and what role they'll have in the world arena. International capitalist competition drives the ruling class of each dominant industrialized country to expand and extend its profit-making reach. In other words, imperialism is not a policy that a particular government can take or leave, but nothing other than modern capitalism itself.

If an American ruler launches a war effort proclaiming that, for example, it will "make the world safe for democracy" or "liberate the oppressed Kosovars," then 1) he is lying and 2) these lies, necessary to get working people to fight and die for the profits of their own exploiters, are not simply the product of individual moral depravity (as Moore portrays it with Bush) but are a result of the way capitalists and their representatives see their class interests, which they must pass off as the national interest.

At the end of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore says of U.S. troops: "They offer to give up their lives so that we can be free. It is remarkable their gift to us. And all they ask for in return is that we never send them into harm's way unless it's absolutely necessary." And then, referring to Bush's lies about Iraq, Moore intones of the troops, "Will they ever trust us again?" Hmmm. Have American presidents lied for war before? Well, if history is good for anything, it's to answer questions like this.

•The Spanish-American War: The sinking of the American battleship USS *Maine* in 1898 was blamed on Spain, and "Remember the Maine" became the war cry for America's first imperialist war to defeat Spain and seize its colonies in



Workers Vanguard

**Chicago, March 20: Spartacist contingent raises call to break with Democratic Party at rally protesting Iraq occupation.**

Cuba and the Philippines. It is now well established that the explosion that sank the ship was caused by faulty construction design.

•World War I: Democrat Wilson justified U.S. intervention vowing that "the world must be made safe for democracy." In fact, the war, which saw unprecedented bloodletting on all sides, served only to redivide the world among the capitalist powers, with up-and-coming U.S. imperialism coming out on top.

•World War II: This supposed "war against fascism" was, except for the Soviet Union, in reality another war to redivide the world, this time touched off by Germany's drive to reverse the results of its defeat in the First World War and Japan's competition with the U.S. over who would dominate the Pacific and East Asia. For over a year prior to Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt sought to provoke a Japanese attack to justify an American declaration of war. He got it.

•Vietnam: The Democratic Johnson administration fabricated stories of an unprovoked attack on an American ship in the Gulf of Tonkin to get Congress to pass an effective declaration of war, enabling a massive escalation of the U.S.'s dirty colonial war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants.

In fact, most of American imperialism's wars were launched under Democratic administrations (in addition to the above, the Democrat Truman initiated the Korean War under United Nations auspices, and Democrat Clinton directed General Wesley Clark, whom Moore supported during the primaries, to bomb much of the life out of Serbia). So, why have the Democrats led most of America's wars? *Fahrenheit 9/11* eloquently shows why, though Moore didn't mean to do so. In one scene Bush addresses his rich corporate friends, quipping, "This is an impressive crowd, the haves and the have-mores. Some people call you the elite. I call you my base." Who would want to fight and die for *these people*? Moore chronicles perfectly how Bush's Iraq

lies were transparent and stupid—not like the Democrats, who provide much nicer-sounding, humanitarian war lies and pose as “friends of labor.”

It is this kinder, gentler, friendlier-to-the-people image relative to the other big party of capitalism that makes the Democrats more pernicious, more deceptive, and *more effective* than the Republicans. Look at what Moore recently had to say about Kerry, a man who wants to substantially increase the American troop presence in Iraq: “He is a person of integrity whose heart is in a good place. He will never send kids off to war unless he absolutely has to. Because he’s been there himself” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 June). It is precisely for the same reason that the Democrats are able to masquerade as a lesser evil that they are American imperialism’s *preferred* party for racism and war.

Perhaps the most glaring omission in the film comes when Moore treats the “war on terror” simply as a mechanism used to instill fear of terrorists in the populace, but ignores its central use—as a racist witchhunt of immigrants, the first target of a wider war on blacks, workers and all the oppressed. Why would Moore leave out this central component of the capitalists’ cynical use of September 11? Moore in his own way echoes the Democratic politicians who argue that Bush is not prosecuting the “war on terror” effectively. In an interview in the July issue of *Playboy*, Moore advises that the U.S. should “Hire the Israelis to find Osama and kill him.”

Moore ridicules Bush for going after the wrong people—harmless peaceniks and a guy in a gym who was critical of Bush—and demonstrates that Bush doesn’t even take his own terrorist warnings seriously by showing the comically sub-skeletal police force assigned to keep Oregon’s serene coastline “safe.” But in doing so, Moore implicitly gives credence to the capitalists’ xenophobic framework of national security. Take his intimations that the Saudis control some 7 percent of the American economy and were therefore able to escape scrutiny following September 11. To begin with, it’s a joke to think that American imperialism answers to the Saudi royal family. More importantly, by saying nothing about the witch-hunt against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S., Moore plays into the still rampant government-led chauvinism that all Arabs are potential terrorists who need to be watched.

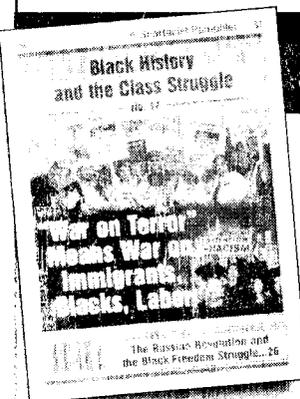
While we’re on the topic of state repression, we can’t let pass Moore’s disgusting statement in his book *Dude, Where’s My Country?* that black journalist and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal “did indeed kill that cop.” Moore willfully ignored the overwhelming evidence proving the innocence of this fighter against black oppression, put on death row in a transparent frame-up targeting him for his political views. This is the type of repression that the government wants to seriously escalate. On a case that touches America’s racist core, this statement is like a pledge of loyalty to the racist capitalist order.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* features a number of scenes focusing on the impact of war on black people in America: Lila Lipscomb’s story, the Marine recruiters prowling a mall parking lot looking for young black recruits, and the group of young black men who all raise hands when asked who has a friend or relative fighting in Iraq. These sequences powerfully evoke the economic draft, where it is those who are most ground down by the structural poverty and racial oppression of this profit-driven society who end up on the front lines of their oppressor’s wars. Moore evokes sympathy for the

plight of these working and oppressed youth sent off to do imperialism’s dirty work. Many, including Moore, take this to argue that those who oppose the war should “support the troops.” But Iraq is a clear case where it is necessary to take a side, and not the side of the U.S. or those doing its fighting—every blow struck against the American occupation forces is a blow struck against the enemy of workers and the oppressed all over the world, including in the U.S.

The capitalists’ timeless lie that there is a “national unity” must be smashed. It is essential to drive home the point that a vote for the Democrats is a vote for a democratic facade to the “war on terror” and the occupation of Iraq, which they will continue not because they’re spineless, but because the Democrats are devoted to the capitalist system. Moore’s proposed solution cannot change this reality, and more to the point, his populism, his identification with the American on the street, his awareness of racism make him especially effective in mobilizing support for the Democratic Party in a way that the Democrats cannot do for themselves. This *counteracts* exactly what is most pressing—a political break with the capitalist framework, and therefore the Democratic Party.

There is a force that can change things—the multiracial working class, the collective producers who have both the power and the need to remake society based on production for need rather than profit, and thereby lay the basis for obliterating class and therefore inequality from history. The fight to unleash that power is the fight for a workers party that is independent of the capitalist parties and based on a policy of class struggle—the mobilization of its power through strikes and other work actions—in defense of itself, blacks, immigrants and all the oppressed toward ultimately smashing the existing state power. While powerful in many ways, *Fahrenheit 9/11* expresses a worldview all too common among workers and leftist youth today—that workers are good people who form a potentially powerful voting bloc as victims of a corporate-dominated system. The key to human liberation is to understand the working class as a class with power, *the* force for change. The working class and oppressed can’t elect capitalism out of office. We need a workers revolution. ■



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# Fahrenheit 9/11

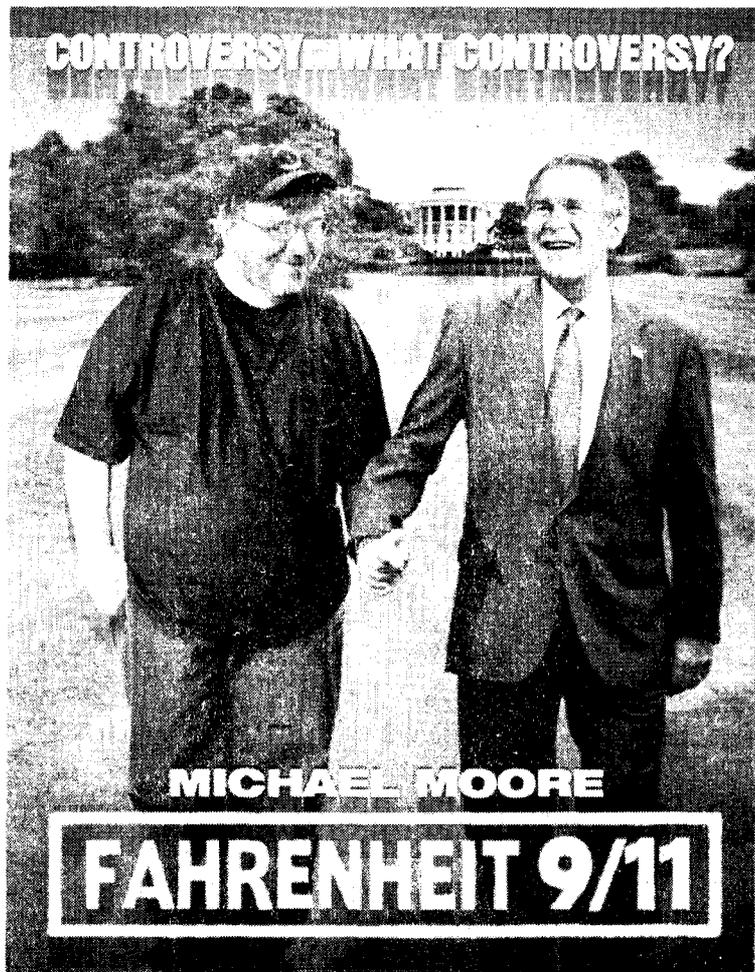
## A Marxist Review by Aman Singh

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., No. 829, 9 July 2004.

Michael Moore's powerful new documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, offers a rare commodity in this era of stage-directed "reality"—a dose of truth, conveyed in human terms. Its images of mangled Iraqi limbs and mutilated babies are rare glimpses of what happens on the receiving end of America's bombs. Where much of America sees either a faceless "enemy" or faceless beneficiaries of American "liberation," Moore gives voice to human victims, as in the Baghdad woman in agonized rage over the American military's murder of her family, or the family terrorized by U.S. troops on Christmas Eve. A black man in Flint, Michigan, sees images of war-torn Baghdad and remarks, "There's parts of Flint that look like that, and we ain't even been in a war." Wrenching stories like that of Lila Lipscomb, whose son's death in Iraq convinced her of the depravity of the Iraq war, go untold by the mass media.

The film's resonance across the country has been intense. It set the record for the highest-grossing opening weekend in documentary film history. It has caught the attention of Bush's right-wing keepers, and for good reason: Moore's raw talent as a propagandist perhaps best comes through in his portrait of the dim and banally monstrous George W. Bush, who plays golf and vacations while thousands of Iraqi people and hundreds of American troops die at his command. Fearing this, the Republican-beholden Disney corporation refused to distribute the film, which was subsequently given an R rating to deter most teenagers from seeing it. (Moore points out that this prevents those who could soon be drafted from seeing exactly what they might be doing in the armed forces.) A small group of prominent Republicans calling themselves Move America Forward has campaigned to intimidate theaters from showing the film; a parallel group called Citizens United filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission to ban advertising for it.

But there's a problem. From the point of view of *changing* the reality that Moore powerfully depicts, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is



fundamentally defective. It is a sad comment on the state of American leftist political consciousness to witness the spectacle of audiences rightfully agitated by Bush's deadly war, inflamed by the sinister Patriot Act, disgusted by the Democrats' pathetic one-ness with the White House, who then come out of the theater all pumped up and ready to...register voters. But that has indeed been all the rage. And that was *exactly* Moore's intent: he has stated that "It's my personal aim that Bush is removed from the White House" (*New York Times*, 24 June), adding that he hoped the film would "inspire people to get up and vote in November" because "We cannot leave this to the Democrats this time to f--k it up and lose" (*London Guardian*, 17 May). Moore's perspective is one shared by many, particularly those who have been out on the streets demonstrating against the "war on terror," that Kerry and the Democrats are nothing to get excited about, but that they nevertheless deserve support,

(continued on page 21)