



Ghetto Youth Upheavals Sweep France



Down With Racist Cop Terror!

AFP

Paris suburb Clichy-sous-Bois invaded by cops. Labour must mobilize against racist state terror!

The following article is based on a leaflet issued on November 5 by our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France.

PARIS—On October 27, two youth of African origin, Ziad Benna and Bouna Traoré, were electrocuted in a power substation where they had sought refuge from a police dragnet in Clichy-sous-Bois, near Paris. For over a week, immigrant and minority ghettos and neighbourhoods have been in flames. Thousands of cars as well as some warehouses and stores have burned. The unprecedented unrest in the suburban ghettos has also flared up in the center of Paris and spread to suburbs all over France and beyond. Cars were set ablaze outside the main train station in Brussels and in a working-class neighbourhood of Berlin.

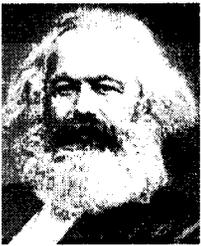
The French government continues to fuel the outrage. A state of emergency invoking sweeping police measures has now been imposed against the seething ghettos. Some 10,000 police have been deployed while more than 1,200 youth have been arrested and some have already been sentenced to months in jail. We demand *the immediate release of all the jailed youth and the dropping of all charges! Down*

with racist police terror against youth in the immigrant ghettos! We also oppose Vigipirate, a plan consisting of racist joint police and army patrols in train and metro stations and airports, which has been on “code red” for five months now.

The explosion started in Clichy-sous-Bois, a rundown ghetto with a population consisting heavily of immigrants and French youth of immigrant descent. The official unemployment rate there is 25 percent; in reality, probably more than 50 percent of youth there are unemployed. No wonder Clichy exploded. The bourgeoisie does not have much to offer these youth except police patrols, jail and death—in some prisons about 80 percent of the inmates are of Muslim background, whereas Muslims make up less than 10 percent of the population of France.

A recent sociological study documents “apartheid at school,” with racist segregation now even more intense in high schools than in housing. As a result, these youth have little to no perspective of finishing school or getting a job. And the situation has gone from bad to worse over the last 20 years, under “left-” and right-wing governments alike. Racism

(continued on page 16)



Marx



Lenin



Trotsky

Lenin on Socialism and Religion

In 1917, the Bolshevik Party led the world's first successful workers revolution, giving millions a beacon of hope for liberation and helping them to discard religious lies. The 1991-92 collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a period of ever increasing misery internationally, while the capitalist rulers trumpet the lie that "communism is dead."

This noxious combination fuels today's rise of religion, from Christian reaction to Muslim fundamentalism. Basic scientific knowledge, such as evolution, is under siege from the right while, in the name of cultural relativism, pseudo-socialists apologize for all manner of religious reaction, notably Islam. In struggling to forge a proletarian vanguard party, we seek to win the working class to the Marxist world-view of historical materialism which, as Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained, is necessarily hostile to religion, superstition and ideological backwardness.

The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But

those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

But a slave who has become conscious of his slavery and has risen to struggle for his emancipation has already half ceased to be a slave. The modern class-conscious worker, reared by large-scale factory industry and enlightened by urban life, contemptuously casts aside religious prejudices, leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois bigots, and tries to win a better life for himself here on earth. The proletariat of today takes the side of socialism, which enlists science in the battle against the fog of religion, and frees the workers from their belief in life after death by welding them together to fight in the present for a better life on earth.

Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned. Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies.... Complete separation of Church and State is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church.

—V.I. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion" (December 1905)

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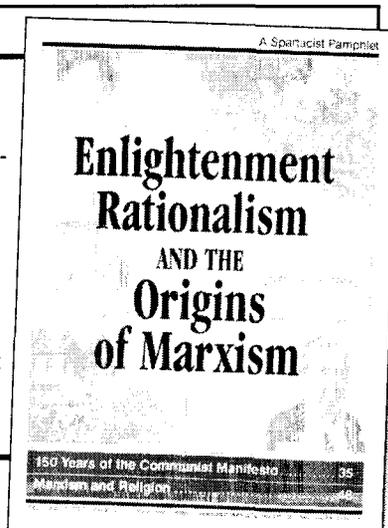
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This pamphlet reprints presentations given by SL/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour on the origins of Marxism in the French Enlightenment and in left Hegelianism. Also included are "150 Years of the Communist Manifesto" and "Marxism and Religion."

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I.S. Upholds Anti-Woman Religious Courts **Sharia “Socialists”**

What kind of “socialists” would actively back state-sanctioned Islamic *sharia* courts? That is exactly what the International Socialists (I.S.) are doing in taking up the cudgels for what they call, aping the language of the Christian right, “faith-based arbitration.” It is mind-boggling that self-styled leftists would champion a campaign by the most reactionary, anti-woman forces in the Muslim community to have their

For Separation of Religion and State!

religious law backed by the authority of the capitalist state.

Sharia is the 1,300-year-old body of Muslim canon law that regulates every aspect of life. In Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, it is synonymous with barbaric punishments such as “honour” killings and stoning “adulterers” and homosexuals to death. 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 arbitrarily divorced by the husband simply repeating three times, “I divorce you.” In many countries, *sharia* codifies the Koranic strictures dictating the seclusion of women. The head-to-toe *chador* (veil), for example, is a walking prison, physically excluding women from society. It embodies the submission of women to men and their imposed inferior status. We solidarize with the countless women who have sought to escape this tyranny, whether in the Muslim world or the imperialist centers.

In late 2003, the Canadian Society of Muslims announced plans to establish *sharia* courts in Ontario that would function under the 1991 Arbitration Act introduced by the then NDP government. Like the Ontario Jewish rabbinical courts, the *Beit Din*, *sharia* courts would deal with family law—marriage, divorce, inheritance—where the subjugation of women is most brutally enforced. Decisions would be binding and upheld by the provincial courts unless coercion was shown. This plan sparked a huge outcry, including internationally, and after over a year of protest, on September 11 Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty announced, “There will be no religious arbitration in Ontario.” His government has now introduced a law to that effect.

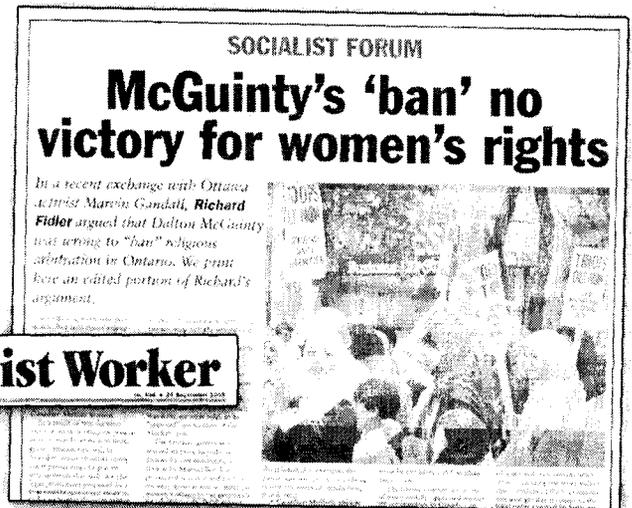
The plan for *sharia* courts with official legal standing was an outrage that could only deepen the isolation and oppression of Muslim women. As revolutionaries, atheists and fighters for women’s liberation, we were unalterably opposed to them from the start. We wrote in *Spartacist Canada* (No. 142, Fall 2004):

“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.”

Furious they can no longer claim the state’s blessing for their rulings, various mullahs and rabbis howled in protest. Joining this reactionary outcry, the I.S. sneered against “abstract ‘secularism’” and trumpeted their participation in a “spirited demonstration” in defense of the woman-hating *sharia* tribunals (*Socialist Worker*, 8 October).

The I.S.’s pro-*sharia* friends include the arch-Zionists of B’nai Brith, who also denounced the government’s decision. They want to buttress support for the *Beit Din* and are happy to see Muslims, especially women, ghettoized and oppressed by “their” religious leaders. In Orthodox Judaism, where



International Socialists’ press (24 September) champions anti-woman *sharia* tribunals.

women’s oppression is profound, a divorce is only final when the husband has served the *get* (writ of divorce) and it is endorsed by a rabbinical court. Should no *get* be served, the woman cannot be divorced. She is left in a horrific state of limbo known as *agunah*, a Hebrew word meaning “chained woman.” As columnist Anna Morgan wrote, “When asked to comment on the fate of the *agunah*, one Orthodox woman told me, ‘Are you crazy? If I speak out, no one will allow their children to marry mine’” (*Toronto Star*, 9 October). The anti-*sharia* campaign helped crack this code of silence, putting a spotlight on the suffering of women at the hands of the rabbinical courts. It is very good that religious tribunals will no longer have legal standing in family law.

Of course, McGuinty’s Liberals and their ilk are hardly champions of women’s liberation. In racist capitalist Canada, Muslim women already face multiple hurdles. Often denied access to jobs, services and language classes, many live in intense isolation, making it very difficult to break out of the

(continued on page 18)

Our comrade Elizabeth King Robertson died at home on October 12 after a six-year battle with cancer. Over the course of more than 30 years as a professional revolutionist, Lizzy excelled as an organizer, propagandist and editor. A patient mentor and inspiration for younger comrades, Lizzy provided a vital link in the fight to preserve our revolutionary heritage going back to Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. At the time of her death, she was a full member of the Spartacist League Central Committee and of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League. Her loss is incalculable both to our party internationally and to her family—Jim Robertson, Martha and Martha's children Rachel, Sarah and Kenneth—as well as her father Henry and mother Mary King and the rest of the King family.

Lizzy grew up in a large family in New York City. Following the death of her mother, Barbara, her father Henry King, a successful corporate lawyer, remarried. Mary King raised Lizzy as her own daughter, and for Lizzy she became "mom." Lizzy attended Brearley private school for girls in New York. She always valued the education she received there and many of the friendships made at Brearley endured until the end of her life. As a teenager she was sent to Miss Porter's, an exclusive finishing school for "old money" society girls. Her first-hand experience of anti-Semitism and class snobbery there played a role in her becoming a passionate fighter against racism and inequality.

Lizzy first encountered the Spartacist League in the early 1970s while a student at Boston University. Under the impact of the Vietnam War, Boston campuses were a hotbed of New Left radicalism. Lizzy was active in the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee, a group trying to defend working-class families from being pushed out of their homes as the universities expanded. She was recruited to Trotskyism, joining the Revolutionary Communist Youth, the SL's youth group in 1973. For many students, the brush with radical activism was just an episode of youthful rebellion on the road to an eventual comfortable career. But Lizzy's recruitment to the fight for international socialist revolution was for keeps.

Lizzy was accepted into party membership in July 1974. She had by then transferred to Detroit, where the SL was

Elizabeth King Robertson



Robertson Family



1951-2005

seeking to intervene among the largely black proletariat of the auto factories. She impressed comrades as the youth organizer as well as by her participation in the lively debates that took place as the party began to get more experience in trade-union work. Here she also began the difficult training to become a legal stenographic reporter, a profession in which she was active until her debilitation by cancer.

Around 1976 she transferred to New York in order to be part of the national leadership of the youth organization (renamed the Spartacus Youth League). Lizzy was elected to the SYL National Bureau in July 1976 and was a member of the editorial board of the monthly *Young Spartacus* from October 1976 through September 1978. She served for a year as the SYL National Organizational Secretary. Her experience as youth organizer and leader was crucial to Lizzy's understanding of the importance of a youth organization in the training of party cadre.

In August 1978, she resigned her leading positions in the youth organization in order to take on the job of secretary of the Political Bureau. Not only did Lizzy fulfill the demanding assignment of getting out regular and accurate minutes throughout her years in New York, but she turned the job of PB secretary into a nexus for organizing political discussions. Her close personal association with SL national chairman James Robertson began at this time, and she remained his loving companion and closest party collaborator until her death. After serving on the party Central Committee as a representative of the SYL, Lizzy was co-opted in her own right in 1979 and elected a full CC member at the August 1983 national conference. She also took charge of the subject indexing for the bound volumes of our press, which are the documentary record of our political line and our work. Lizzy transferred to the San Francisco Bay Area at the beginning of the 1990s. She tirelessly guided the local leadership, was secretary of the West Coast CC group and also took continuous responsibility for our local in Los Angeles.

Lizzy's strength was in tackling the intersection of political principle with concrete social reality, coming up with tactics and slogans to express our program. She closely followed the work of Spartacist supporters in the trade unions

and her counsel was highly valued by those involved in such work. She was a longtime member of the Bay Area Local executive committee and fought to remain on this body despite her many other responsibilities because she understood so well that making political decisions real means daily choices of “what to betray” in order to focus on the most important things; it means finding the right comrades for the concrete tasks and preparing them politically to carry out those tasks.

Lizzy was unsurpassed as a Leninist political organizer. After a party gathering, she was inevitably involved in figuring out how to shift personnel or assignments to make the political priorities just established actually happen. She had a profound understanding of how our organizational functioning corresponds to our revolutionary purpose. For decades, Lizzy was one of a handful of comrades who took initiative in formulating, refining and codifying our internal norms and practices as the party came across new situations or as problems were seen with the existing rules.

At the ICL’s Third International Conference in 1998, she gave a presentation, “On the Origins and Development of Leninist Organizational Practices.” Published in *Spartacist* No. 54 (Spring 1998) along with our revised “Organizational Rules and Guidelines,” Lizzy’s presentation educated both young comrades and experienced cadres by providing the historical background, beginning with the first Marxist organizations founded by Karl Marx himself, to enable the conference delegates to consider the Rules. In this presentation, she explained: “Living organizational rules are one of perhaps a half-dozen elements that characterize an organization; in that sense, they are political. But they are not determinate. A sound set of organizational rules is not a guard against political departures, although departures from our organizational norms are generally a signal of political problems. In the absence of Bolshevik practices, an organization is necessarily amorphous, that is, Menshevik.”

Though she rarely raised her voice, Lizzy was a powerful speaker at party gatherings. Her astute judgment and forthrightness made her a uniquely authoritative voice in the deliberations through which the party selects a leadership. Numerous times she was chosen to chair the nominating commission charged with recommending a slate of candidates to the party conference that elects the leading body (the CC in the SL or the IEC in the ICL). Lizzy was clear-eyed in seeing the weaknesses as well as the strengths of comrades, including her closest friends, and she was renowned for her fairness. This ability is crucial in a Leninist party, which aims to build its leadership as a collective that is stronger than the sum of its individual parts.

Lizzy was also her own harshest critic. Although in great pain, she authored a document on October 7 addressing her role in a political fight in the Los Angeles Local that had been marred by extreme characterizations of comrades and bureaucratic practices. Her purpose was not a *mea culpa* but a statement of conscientious regard for clarity, drawing the political lessons necessary to strengthen the party.

Beginning in early 1979, Lizzy was a mainstay of the editorial board of *Women and Revolution*, the journal of the

SL CC Commission for Work Among Women. Lizzy authored or co-authored some of *W&R*’s articles on the most sensitive subjects, defending human sexuality and exposing the barbarous cruelty of the bourgeois state as it destroys the lives of people whose only “crime” is that their sexual proclivities and needs vary from the repressive, religion-based strictures of hypocritical bourgeois moralism. She wrote articles on the AIDS crisis, the crime of female genital mutilation, the fabricated “child abuse” day-care scandals, incest and the furor over so-called “date rape.” When publication of *W&R* was suspended after the Spring 1996 issue, Lizzy continued to contribute to the articles published under the *W&R* masthead in the press of the national sections of the ICL, including *Workers Vanguard*, and in *Spartacist*. During the last weeks of her life, Lizzy was heavily involved in the editing of an article for the next issue of *Spartacist* examining the debates and discussions in the Bolshevik Party over women’s emancipation after the Russian Revolution.

The final undoing of the October Revolution in 1991-92 was a historic defeat for the workers of the world, ushering in a difficult period for revolutionists. Our difficulties in coming to grips with the new period have been expressed in political disorientation and corresponding internal difficulties (see “Spartacist League 12th National Conference—A Hard Look at Recent Party Work and Current Tasks,” *WV* No. 841, 4 February). Nobody has been immune to these problems, but comrade Lizzy played a forward role in trying to get the party out of this morass. Several times during the past five or six years, our internal bulletins have featured a document by Lizzy, submitted early in the discussion, often less than one page in length, which became a touchstone for subsequent contributions. Often her document would begin from a concrete, seemingly tactical question of a particular projected intervention somewhere, and would proceed logically to illuminate programmatic and principled issues.

After Lizzy’s cancer was diagnosed, she undertook surgery, chemotherapy and, finally, radiation. Her father ensured that she obtained high-quality care, which was ultimately unavailing. She continued to do her biweekly sales and other public political activity. In April 2003, she was wounded by a “non-lethal projectile” fired from a cop shotgun during the vicious police attack on antiwar protesters, longshoremen and port truckers at the Port of Oakland.

Her comrades, family and friends will miss Lizzy’s presence in our lives for as long as we have consciousness. We will miss her fine mind, her humor, her warmth and compassion. We will always remember her beauty and courage. Even in the midst of our grief, we celebrate her life and find comfort in knowing that she lived as she chose to and never wavered in her belief that fighting for the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed was the right way for her to live. For us, she has been a very strong link in the chain of continuity that goes all the way back to Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, and Cannon. We resolve to honor our beloved comrade Lizzy by carrying on her struggle.

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 857,
28 October 2005

Welcome to Our New Readers!

Members and supporters of the Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs held an intense but fruitful six-week subscription drive this fall, making 110 percent of our 425 point quota. This represents 224 subscriptions to *Spartacist Canada*, more than 100 to *Workers Vanguard*, biweekly press of the Spartacist League/U.S., and several dozen to other International Communist League publications, mainly subs sold in Montreal to *Le Bolchévique*, newspaper of our French section.

Comrades set up literature tables on campuses, at labour and antiwar demonstrations and in heavily immigrant areas, all with the aim of widening the readership of our Marxist publications among students and workers. Our newspapers do not just provide a commentary on events, but are the voice of a revolutionary organization that intervenes in class and social struggle here and internationally. Throughout the 30 years that we have published *Spartacist Canada* we have sought to produce a hard-hitting, controversial press that promotes and explains a Marxist worldview. While political fads have come and gone—most recently an infatuation with anarchism among activist youth—we have remained consistent in fighting for international proletarian revolution as the only road to human liberation, understanding that forging a Leninist vanguard party is essential to this perspective.

This remains a difficult political period marked by defeats for the working class and oppressed, fueling what we have termed a “retrogression of consciousness”—the widespread belief, reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, that Marxism is at best a “failed experiment.” Nonetheless, we noted increased interest in exploring Marxist ideas on several campuses this year. This was shown in the bonus “giveaway” pamphlets chosen by new subscribers: the most popular were “Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism” and “Marxism vs. Anarchism.”

Comrades made or exceeded subscription goals on our main campuses in Toronto and Vancouver, while teams fanned out to cities where we do not have an ongoing presence. Signs at our tables covered many political questions,

but we highlighted two: our defense of China, the largest of the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states, against imperialism and internal capitalist counterrevolution; and our advocacy of Quebec independence against the chauvinist Canadian rulers and their NDP lackeys. Both were, as we expected, polarizing.

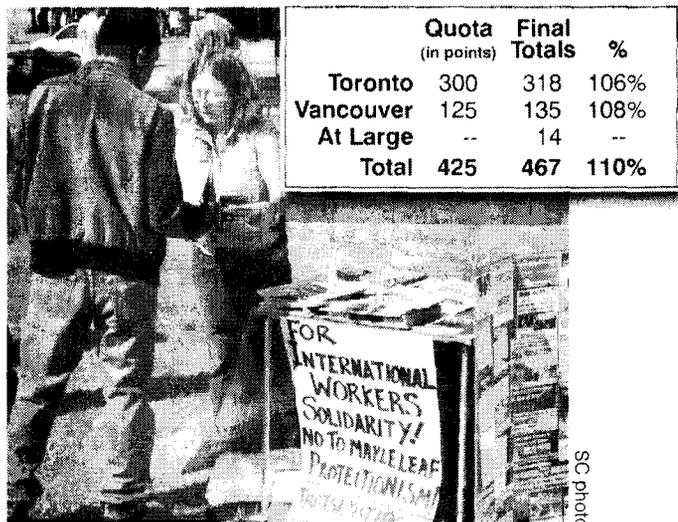
In the course of the sub drive, we had to defend our rights against petty censorship by school officials. The most blatant was a demand by the University of Ottawa administration that we submit our literature to the campus police for approval. We denounced this outrageous censorship, noting in an August 27 letter that “The conception that literature must be ‘approved’ is consonant with the rationale of a dictatorship. It makes a mockery of the academic freedom which the University of Ottawa purports to uphold.” Despite harassment from U of O cops, we made our literature available to students at a table just off campus. Also in Ottawa we sold subscriptions at Carleton University and an antiwar protest.

We were able to concretize our proletarian perspective by intervening at strikes and union rallies, particularly in B.C. For example, Vancouver comrades sold 11 subscriptions at a rally of locked out Telus workers. In Ontario, we intervened at Labour Day marches in Toronto and Hamilton, selling 17 sub points and nearly 400 newspapers, and at strike vote mass meetings of Canadian Auto Workers locals.

As well as winning new readers, comrades met with those whose subs were about to expire, including urging SC subscribers to add a WV subscription. Toronto comrades reported that a woman of African origin did so “based on her ‘hatred of Canada’; she reads SC from cover to cover when it arrives.... The most interesting discussion was with a young woman active in defense of sex trade workers—she and her partner both loved the *Women & Revolution* article in *Spartacist* [No. 58, Spring 2004] on ‘anti-sex-trafficking’ hysteria.”

We welcome our new readers—and our old readers—and hope that for many of you reading our communist press will be the first step toward greater involvement in the struggle to forge a revolutionary working-class leadership. ■

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SC photo

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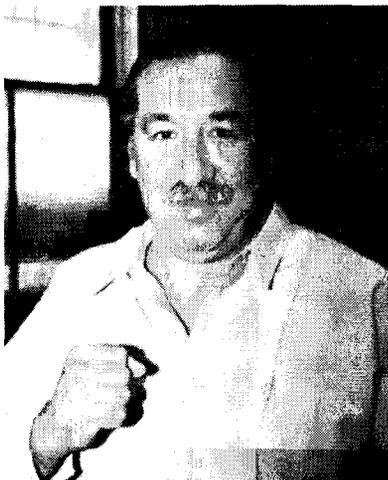
PDC Holiday Appeal

Free the Class-War Prisoners!



COC Productions

Mumia Abu-Jamal



Ben Corbett

Leonard Peltier

The cops and courts seek to ensure that those who fight the poverty and racism endemic to capitalism are "safely" housed in prison hellholes or their graves. In 1986, the Partisan Defense Committee revived a tradition initiated by the International Labor Defense (ILD) under James P. Cannon, its founder and first secretary (1925-28), of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners as an expression of solidarity. In addition to its regular monthly support, the ILD raised extra funds during the holidays for the prisoners and their families.

This year's Holiday Appeals in Toronto and several U.S. cities mark the 20th year of the PDC's program of sending monthly stipends. Today we send stipends to 17 class-war prisoners. The PDC is a class-struggle, legal and social defense organization associated in Canada with the Trotskyist League. Help build our program of monthly stipends to these victims of racist capitalist injustice.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: America's foremost class-war prisoner, former Black Panther Party spokesman, well-known supporter of the MOVE organization and award-winning journalist known as "the voice of the voiceless." On December 9, Mumia enters his 25th year of incarceration for a killing that the cops know he did not commit. Mumia was framed up for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Over four years ago, Mumia's attorneys submitted to the courts the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. But to the racists in black robes of both the Pennsylvania and U.S. federal judiciaries, a court of law is no place for evidence of the innocence of this fighter for the oppressed.

This year the Pennsylvania courts dismissed Mumia's third appeal for post-conviction relief. With the U.S. Supreme Court devoted to the racist death penalty, and with his final federal appeals in motion, Mumia remains on death row locked down in a cell the size of a bathroom. It was

because he spoke for the oppressed, such as those left to die in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, that Mumia faces the ultimate in capitalist repression: the racist death penalty. Workers, immigrants, minorities and all opponents of racist oppression must strengthen their efforts to free Mumia now!

Leonard Peltier is an internationally revered class-war prisoner in America. His incarceration for nearly three decades because of his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize the U.S.' racist repression of its native peoples, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. In 1976, the Trudeau Liberal government denied him asylum and extradited him back to the U.S. The RCMP and Canadian authorities were utterly complicit in the campaign of persecution against Peltier. Peltier's frame-up trial for the deaths of two marauding FBI agents in what

had become a war zone at the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation 30 years ago shows what capitalist "justice" is all about. As in the case of Mumia and the other class-war prisoners, Peltier's case demonstrates there is no justice in the capitalist courts. Although the lead government attorney has admitted: "We can't prove who shot those agents," and the courts have repeatedly acknowledged blatant prosecutorial misconduct, the 61-year-old fighter for Native Americans is still locked away. This year federal authorities transferred Peltier from Leavenworth to the Terre Haute penitentiary, where he was thrown into solitary and denied medicine. He was cruelly transferred again, finally ending up in USP Lewisburg in Pennsylvania. Free Leonard Peltier now!

Jamal Hart, Mumia's son, was sentenced in 1998 to 15½ years on bogus firearms possession charges. Hart was targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father. Although Hart was initially charged under Pennsylvania

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Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners



Toronto

Saturday, December 10 from 7 to 10 p.m.
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(1 block south of College at Ross St., west of Queen's Park station)

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From Berlin to Moscow: The ICL's Fight Against Capitalist Counterrevolution



Above: ICL banner at January 1990 Berlin Treptow protest: "Down With NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!" Right: ICL raised banner on Revolution Day, November 1991 in Moscow. We fought in defense of workers gains, for the defeat of forces of capitalist counterrevolution.

Spartakist

Spartakist

For New October Revolutions!

We reprint below a presentation, edited for publication, given by comrade Jane Clancy at a Spartacist League/Britain educational held in London on 21 May 2005. This article first appeared in Workers Hammer No. 191 (Summer 2005), publication of the SL/B, British section of the International Communist League.

1989 was quite a year. The events that erupted then would come to fundamentally change the entire political landscape of the world. I will give you some snapshots of what took place. In February, the last Red Army troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan. These troops had been fighting against a reactionary cabal of Islamic fundamentalists, tribal chiefs and landowners committed to the enslavement of women and the elimination of any scintilla of social progress, and who were armed and bankrolled to the tune of billions of dollars by U.S. imperialism. The withdrawal was not because the Soviet troops were losing; this was not "Russia's Vietnam" as it was portrayed at the time. Rather, the troops were withdrawn as part of a Kremlin bid to try to appease the imperialists.

In May, hundreds of thousands of students and workers rallied in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Singing the revolu-

tionary workers anthem, the "Internationale," they had come out in opposition to the corruption of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucrats and the devastation wrought by their introduction of "market reforms." In June, counterrevolutionary Solidarność—the only "union" that Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan ever supported—swept the elections in Poland. The same month, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping drowned the nascent political revolution in Tiananmen Square in blood. In July, the Soviet Union was shaken by the first ever nationwide miners strike. Provoked by the impact of market reforms on their lives and livelihoods, the miners quickly generated organisational forms of proletarian power: strike committees and workers militias.

In October, coincident with the official celebration of the 40th anniversary of the East German deformed workers state, the DDR, that country was erupting in increasingly massive protests against the Stalinist regime of Erich Honecker. On 4 November, the largest demonstration in the country's history took place as half a million people rallied in East Berlin under banners reading "For Communist Ideals—No Privileges," "For a German Soviet Republic—Build Soviets!" On 9 November, the Berlin Wall was opened.

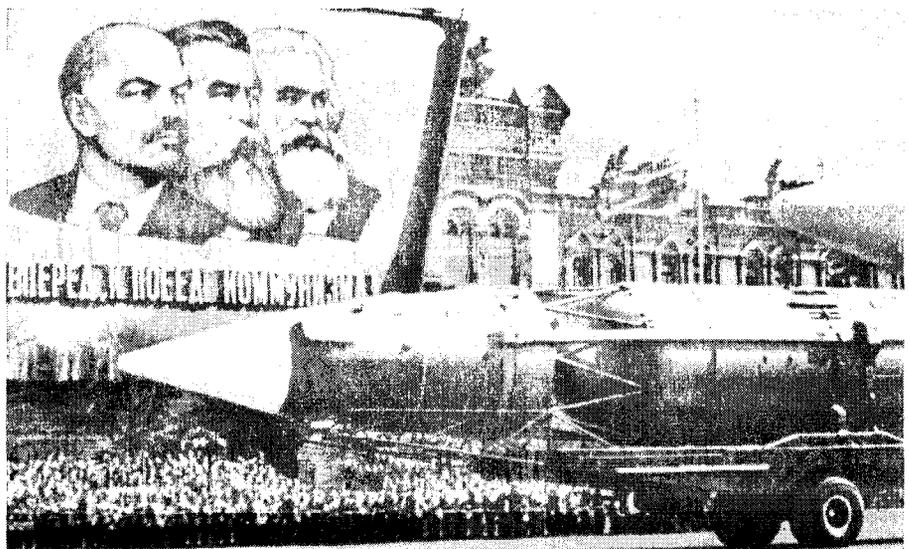
The other speakers at today's dayschool will provide

accounts of the intervention of our international tendency—the International Communist League—into these momentous events. We fought for the defeat of the forces of capitalist counterrevolution and for the defence of the gains for the working class and oppressed of the world that were embodied in the collectivised industry and planned economy of these countries, however warped and distorted by Stalinist bureaucratic mismanagement. We fought for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist traitors, whose bureaucratic stranglehold over economic, political and cultural life and betrayals of revolutionary struggles internationally in the name of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism undermined and, in the end, paved the road to the destruction of these workers states. We fought for the revolutionary, internationalist programme that animated Lenin

and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party which led the first and so far only successful workers revolution in history in October 1917. We did not prevail, but we fought!

By 1990, the forces of capitalist counterrevolution were swooping Eastern Europe. In 1991-1992 these forces would devour the Soviet Union, the homeland of the Russian Revolution. The world we live in today is the product of that world-historic defeat for the workers and oppressed of the world, out of which U.S. imperialism emerged as the world’s unrivalled “only superpower.” It is common coin now for outfits like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) [British parent group of the International Socialists] and other so-called leftists to decry the deranged nuclear cowboys in the White House as the “world’s biggest terrorists.” True enough. But these self-proclaimed socialists, who cheered the forces of counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, made their own small contribution to this outcome. Now where do they turn? To the European imperialist rulers! On the eve of the one-sided slaughter in Iraq, they appealed to the European heads of state to “give peace a chance” and stay the hand of U.S. imperialism. Now they raise the call for a “social Europe” as a counterweight to U.S. imperialism. The European rulers want a counterweight all right. They are out to increase their competitive edge, economic and military, against the U.S. To do so, they are taking it out of the hides of the working class and oppressed, savaging what remains of the so-called welfare state. The reforms collectively known as the welfare state were themselves introduced to try to piece off a combative and politically conscious proletariat and to ward off the “spectre of communism” as the Soviet Union’s authority was renewed with its defeat of Hitler’s Nazis in World War II.

Now you have this “Make Poverty History” campaign appealing to none other than the G8 to come to the aid of the impoverished masses of the so-called Third World. This is revealed as such a fraud by the fact that even Gordon Brown [Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour government] has called on people to join the demonstration in Edinburgh this July coincident with the G8 meeting at Gleneagles. The SWP thinks this is great, as long as Brown puts his money where his mouth is, which is exactly what he intends to do.



Soviet military parade in Moscow. USSR’s nuclear parity with U.S. helped stay hand of imperialism.

PBS

Brown’s tour of Africa earlier this year made clear that “Make Poverty History” is simply a cynical cover for increasing “free trade”—that is, the increased pillage and exploitation of sub-Saharan Africa. Declaring that it is time to stop apologising for the British Empire—not that I’ve noticed too many people apologising for the crimes of the empire—he saluted it as “open, outward looking and international.” I believe he made these remarks in Kenya! One need look no further than the mass graves of the tens of thousands killed by British forces during the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s for a taste of Britain’s bloody and brutal colonial heritage.

When the Soviet Union existed, the nominally independent former colonies had the breathing space to at least manoeuvre between the Soviets on one side and the imperialists on the other. No more. Now the imperialists think it’s open season. Together with the total devastation and fratricidal wars that erupted in the wake of counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, increasing imperialist depredations and military repression from Africa to Central America to Asia have forced many thousands of people to leave their homes in order to seek a better life for themselves and their families (often just to stay alive) in the advanced capitalist countries. They have been met with a backlash of racist and chauvinist reaction fomented by the capitalist rulers—as the recent electoral contest between the Tories and Labour is testament to. The capitalists are happy to use these immigrants to do the dirtiest, the most gruelling and lowest paid jobs. The purpose of their anti-immigrant campaign is to keep the working class divided, pitting one against the other and all against the “foreigner.”

To this is added the “war on terror.” Here the Islamic fundamentalists who were yesterday’s allies in the imperialists’ war against “godless communism” are today’s enemies. Of course this is no war at all in any military sense. Rather, it is a political construct aimed at strengthening the capitalist state’s machinery of repression against any perceived challenge to its rule.

It is surely not the case that the Soviet Union in its Stalinist degeneration was the beacon for world revolution that it was

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ICL's Fight...

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under Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks. Nonetheless, it was a counterweight to the untrammelled ambitions of the world's imperialists. Economically it not only demonstrated an alternative to capitalist exploitation but the superiority of a planned economy. Militarily it stayed the hand of the imperialist rulers, particularly the U.S., in the nuclear eradication of any perceived enemies. It was the military and industrial powerhouse of the states where capitalism had been eradicated. And now that it no longer exists, the imperialists have their sights aimed at the destruction of the remaining workers states—Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea; China, the largest and strongest of these states, is the big prize. All of the imperialist powers are jockeying both through economic and military means to reconquer China for imperialist exploitation.

The Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy has opened the door in whole areas of the country, the free-trade zones, to the imperialists and off-shore Chinese bourgeoisie. Their increasingly aggressive introduction of market reforms, or as they call it, "socialism with Chinese characteristics," has eroded the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Organisations like the Socialist Party and Workers Power, who joined in the chorus of Cold War anti-Communism against the Soviet Union, now simply write off China as capitalist. But that verdict has yet to be decided. It is not a question to be observed like a bug under a glass but one of real living social struggles. And there have been a lot of such struggles by the workers and peasants of China, and increasingly so.

We are not passive observers. The lessons of our interventions against the forces of capitalist counterrevolution from East Germany to the Soviet Union arm us for the fight to defend the remaining gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution against the forces of capitalism and for political revolution and the institution of the rule of workers and peasants soviets, based on proletarian democracy and revolutionary internationalism. The latter is the key, for the defence of the Chinese deformed workers state is an international one, linked to the fight for new October Revolutions in the imperialist centres.

Today we want to give you a picture of the revolutionary opportunities that existed, before the defeats that followed, and how we fought to seize on them to advance the cause of working people internationally. Looking back at these past fights is preparation for future struggles. This is particularly important today when the idea of the proletarian socialist liberation of humanity is at best considered some kind of idealist utopia. This too reflects the impact of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which unleashed an ideological offensive by the imperialist rulers that "communism is dead" and that the destruction of the Soviet Union simply proved Marxism to be a "failed experiment."

Consciousness has been thrown back to the extent that today there is little identification among workers between their struggles and "socialism," however that was previously understood. For most youth, the idea that

there even is a working class, much less the understanding that the proletariat has the social power and historic interest to bury the capitalist system, is considered some kind of antiquated Marxist notion. This is encouraged by endless gobbledegook churned out by the ideologues of the "anti-globalisation" movement who simply seek to give capitalism a more "democratic" and "humane" face-lift. And the putative "socialist" left has followed suit.

The SWP dares not breathe the word "socialism" in its Respect electoral coalition for fear of alienating its allies in the mosques. Even the mention of "secularism" is *verboten*. The Socialist Party, for whom the Labour Party's Clause IV, translated into "nationalising the commanding heights of the economy," was long presented as the epitome of "socialism," can barely even choke that out these days. It's reserved for what they used to call Sunday "speechifying," that is, when you present your "maximum" programme. Then there is Workers Power. In 1979 they saw Khomeini's mullahs as the ticket to a revolutionary mass movement. In the early 1980s, they saw Solidarność as such a vehicle, even while allowing that its aims were counterrevolutionary. Needless to say, their previous mass movements didn't work out too well. Now they look to the European and World Social Forums as the vehicle for building a new "revolutionary" international. This has all the promise of their previous endeavours. These social forums are nothing other than the vehicles for class collaboration and for various out-of-power popular frontists to get back into the business of ruling with and for the capitalist class.

The Impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution

In preparing for this presentation, I went back and re-read a speech by James P. Cannon, a founding leader of American Trotskyism, given on the 25th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 1942, amidst the carnage of World War II and following the invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler's war

July 1920: Lenin addresses Petrograd demonstration commemorating heroes of world proletariat during Second Congress of Communist International. Inset: First issue of journal of CI founded in 1919.



THE MILITANT

Leon Trotsky Defender of The USSR

By GEORGE COLLINS

The industrial workers and farmers of the Red Army and its Soviet workers and peasants in their resistance to the

TROTSKY'S WORKS LIVE ON IN HEROIC RED ARMY



Pathfinder

Trotskyist SWP of James Cannon (inset) upheld unconditional military defense of Soviet Union during World War II.

machine. He spoke to the impact of the Russian Revolution amidst another period of reaction brought on by World War I:

"I can remember the dark days of the First World War, 1914-1918. Then as now, all the hopes for humanity's progress seemed to be drowned in the blood of the war. Reaction seemed to be triumphant everywhere. The enemies of the proletariat gloated over the treachery and capitulation of the socialist parties [which had lined up behind their "own" capitalist rulers in the war]; and to many—to the great majority, I venture to say—the theory and the hope of socialism seemed vanished like a utopian dream. And then, as now...fainthearts and deserters mocked at those who continued the stubborn struggle and held on to the revolutionary faith. The whole world labor movement was overcome with depression and despair in 1914-1917.

"But the Russian Revolution of November 7 changed all that overnight. At one blow, the revolution lifted the proletariat of Europe to its feet again. It stirred the hundreds of millions of colonial slaves who had never known political aspiration before, who had never dared to hope before. The Russian Revolution awakened them to the promise of a new life."

— "The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution," *Speeches for Socialism* (1971)

The October Revolution created a workers state based on workers councils (soviets). The Soviet government expropriated both the Russian capitalist and imperialist holdings and repudiated outright Russia's massive debt to foreign bankers. It gave land to the peasants and self-determination to the many oppressed nations of the former tsarist empire. Laws discriminating against ethnic and national minorities, against women and homosexuals were eliminated. The revolutionary government declared that the state had no business interfer-

ing in the consensual sexual relations of the population whatever form they took. This statement would have the "no sex please we're British" left in this country—who go into a frenzy over our defence of Michael Jackson against the American state's anti-sex, racist witch-hunters—in an uproar.

The Soviet government proclaimed the right of working people to jobs, health, housing and education, and took the first steps to building a socialist society. But as Marx put it, "Right can never stand any higher than the material conditions on which it is based." Today there are all sorts of new "theories" that you can win without taking power, or that the road to liberation lies through the utopia of building "autonomous" zones which somehow will be free of capitalist exploitation. But the fight for the emancipation of humanity is not some kind of mental act by good-willed, right-thinking people. Nor can it be achieved while scarcity remains, which simply perpetuates the fight for survival. As Marx understood, the eradication of the exploitation of man by man must necessarily be based on conditions of material plenty.

There is great material abundance in the world, particularly in the advanced

capitalist countries. Our job is to seize that wealth, overwhelmingly created through the labour of the masses of working people, from the hands of capitalist owners who expropriate the fruits of this labour for their own profit. Only the working class has the social power—deriving from its role in production, its numbers and organisation—and the clear objective interest to eradicate the capitalist system. What it lacks is the political consciousness and revolutionary leadership to wage such a struggle. It is that critical element that the Bolshevik Party brought to the workers of Russia.

But the material conditions for the actual development of a socialist society did not exist in backward Russia, nor do they exist within the confines of any one country. From the beginning, the Bolsheviks understood that the fledgling Soviet workers state would not survive unless the revolution was extended internationally to more advanced capitalist countries. They saw the October Revolution as the opening of a Europe-wide workers revolution and indeed at the end of the war a wave of revolutionary upheavals swept Europe. The social democrats—who had gone over to the side of "their own" imperialist rulers during the war—acted to save the rule of the bourgeoisie from the working class. The newly founded Communist parties, which had been formed in response to the example of the Russian Revolution, were too weak and inexperienced to lead these revolutionary upsurges to victory.

The capitalist world surrounded and isolated the Soviet Union. From 1918 to 1920 the revolution had to fight for its very survival in a civil war, when the forces of every major imperialist power intervened on the side of the

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capitalist enemies of whatever camp.

Trotsky had predicted, and with great justification, that World War II would shatter the bureaucracy and would provoke revolutionary upsurges of the proletariat, just as had been the outcome of World War I. Stalin did bring the Soviet Union to the brink of disaster: he beheaded the Red Army and ignored repeated and desperate warnings from heroic Soviet spies like Leopold Trepper in Nazi Germany and Richard Sorge in Japan of the imminent invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler's Nazis. Nonetheless it was the Soviet Union that defeated the Nazis, at the cost of well over 20 million dead. As Cannon remarked in his 1942 speech:

"[The] economic strength of the Soviet regime, and the strength of the revolutionary tradition, are being reflected now in the military field. The whole world has been surprised and astounded by the military prowess of the Red Army. All the military experts counted upon a defeat of the Russian armies in the space of a few weeks or months.... The Trotskyists were not taken by surprise. Trotsky predicted that imperialist attack on the Soviet Union would unleash marvels of proletarian enthusiasm and fighting capacity in the Red Army. He could do that because he, better than others, understood that the great motive power of the victorious revolution had not all been expended. The Red Army that the world hails is an army created by a proletarian revolution. This revolution lives in the memory of the Soviet people. That and the basic conquests, which they still retain and upon which they stand, constitute the basis upon which the Red Army has unfolded such unparalleled capacity for defense and resistance and heroic sacrifice."

Defeating the Nazi forces in the battle of Stalingrad, the Red Army swept through Eastern Europe and straight into Berlin and smashed the Third Reich. The other regimes in Eastern Europe—overwhelmingly collaborators with the Nazis—fled to the nearest American headquarters, leaving behind a power vacuum. In the aftermath of the war, the imperialists turned on their erstwhile Soviet "allies" with the launch of Cold War I, aimed at the "containment" and destruction of the Soviet Union. In the face of this renewed imperialist offensive, the Stalinists moved to establish deformed workers states throughout Eastern Europe and in the Soviet-occupied East Germany as a "buffer zone." The ruling classes, whose power had been smashed, were expropriated. However, with the exception of Yugoslavia, where Tito's partisans prevailed in a peasant guerrilla war, these expropriations took place from without, through cold social transformations from the top down. The workers states were deformed from the outset—the mirror image of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union—as collectivised property forms predominated under the political rule of nationalist bureaucracies. The Soviet military forces were effectively the state power, and nowhere was this more true than in East Germany, which was the front-line state directly facing the imperialist West.

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the creation of deformed workers states represented tremendous gains, which we defended. But as Trotsky wrote of the earlier Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland, the central question was the impact of these social transformations on "the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones." There was no such consciousness and organisation of the proletariat leading to the social transformations in Eastern Europe. While the Soviet victory over Hitler's Nazis was testimony to the continued impact of the

memory of the October Revolution, this was increasingly supplanted by the Stalinist bureaucracy with a defencist national patriotism. Coming out of the war there were revolutionary situations in Italy and Greece and massive strikes in France, Belgium and other countries. But these struggles were disarmed, in some cases literally, and overall politically, by the Stalinist parties. These parties wielded the renewed authority which had accrued to them coming out of the Soviet victory to push the class-collaborationist programme of keeping class peace with the so-called "democratic" bourgeoisie. Thus, in terms of the central political criterion of the impact on consciousness, organisation and capacity of the proletariat to defend former conquests and fight for new ones, the role of the Stalinists confirmed what Trotsky had written earlier: "From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."

Cold War II and the Unravelling of "Socialism in One Country"

Economically, the Soviet Union demonstrated the vast superiority of a collectivised planned economy over capitalism. But this was distorted, limited and deformed under the bureaucracy and its dogma of "socialism in one country." In his 1936 book *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky analysed the vast contradictions of the Soviet degenerated workers state:

"It is possible to build gigantic factories according to a ready-made Western pattern by bureaucratic command—although, to be sure, at triple the normal cost. But the further you go, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality, which slips out of the hands of a bureaucracy like a shadow.... Under a nationalized economy, *quality* demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative—conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery."

Economic planning can be effective only when the workers identify themselves with the government that issues the plans. And to identify with the government means workers must rule through soviets. When they are alienated from the government, the plan will be subverted from the base: the formal target plans may be met, but by poor quality goods. Raw materials will be used wastefully and state-owned supplies diverted into the black [underground] economy. All of these conditions were present in the Soviet Union over the course of decades. By the late 1970s, the contradictions of "building socialism in one country" would come dramatically to the fore.

In the early part of that decade, the Soviet Union had achieved rough military parity with U.S. imperialism, which was bogged down in its long, losing, dirty war in Vietnam. The Soviet economy also got a big boost from the rising world market price of oil. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the living standards of the population increased dramatically. The states in Eastern Europe were also beneficiaries as the Soviet Union supplied them with oil at a fraction of the world market price.

But all of this began to change in the mid-to-late 1970s. Defeated by the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants, U.S. imperialism began to rearm itself, building up a huge military arsenal directed against the USSR, which had been the central target of the imperialists since the 1917 Revolution.

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ICL's Fight...

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This began under Democratic Party president Jimmy Carter and his "human rights" campaign for a whole cabal of Soviet dissidents. The aim here was the "moral rearmament" of U.S. imperialism, to overcome the American population's deep distrust of the government and to refurbish the tarnished "democratic" and military credentials of U.S. imperialism.

This renewed Cold War got red hot with the intervention of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan at the end of 1979. As we wrote in our article "The Russian Question Point Blank" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980):

"Afghanistan is a flash of lightning which illuminates the real contours of the world political landscape. It has exploded the last illusions of détente to reveal the implacable hostility of U.S. imperialism to the Soviet degenerated workers state. It has stripped away all diplomatic cover for Washington's alliance with Maoist/Stalinist China. And it has confronted the left inescapably with 'the Russian Question': the nature of the state originating in the Bolshevik Revolution and its conflict with world capitalism.

"For revolutionary socialists there is nothing tricky, nothing ambiguous about the war in Afghanistan. The Soviet army and its left-nationalist allies are fighting an anti-communist, anti-democratic mélange of landlords, money lenders, tribal chiefs and mullahs committed to mass illiteracy. And to say that imperialist support to this social scum is out in the open is the understatement of the year."

We said: "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!"

It should have been a reflexive response for any self-respecting leftist or radical to take the side of the Red Army in a war where they were fighting not only in defence of women from barbaric reaction but the defence of the gains of the October Revolution. But overwhelmingly the generation of leftist radicals who only years earlier were marching in mass protest against the Vietnam War chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh" now found themselves on the side of U.S. imperialism against the Red Army. The likes of Tariq Ali, who during the Vietnam War was the epitome of "anti-imperialist" radicalism, reportedly even the model for the Rolling Stones song "Street Fighting Man," wasn't street fighting anymore. He was buying along with the imperialists demanding the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

Here was a big change in political period. It had been somewhat fashionable to be a leftist during the Vietnam War. At the time, most radicals identified with Marxism as the road to liberation, regardless of how they might have understood that. But now the winds were blowing in a distinctly different direction, as Cold War anti-Communism was the order of the day. While the left's support for Khomeini's mullahs in the 1979 "Iranian Revolution" was the precursor to siding with the imperialist-backed forces of Islamic reaction in Afghanistan, they really went whole-hog behind counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland. After all, here was a "movement" commanding the allegiance of masses of Polish workers. How had this happened?

These were the bitter fruits of Stalinist misrule, which had come to a head under the weight of burgeoning foreign debts. As I said before, in the early 1970s the Soviet Union had heavily subsidised the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe, particularly with cut-price oil as well as other raw materials. But by the mid-1970s, the oil prices were jacked

up and the shipments cut down so that the Soviets could sell on the world market. This itself is a savage indictment of "socialism in one country." At the same time, these countries were hit by a world capitalist recession, which collapsed their export markets. To maintain employment and living standards, the East European Stalinist regimes turned to the loan sharks of Wall Street, the City of London and the Frankfurt Börse. Having mortgaged their countries to the Western banks to meet their debt payments, these regimes imposed ever more severe austerity programmes dictated by the IMF. In Poland the economic crisis drove the historically socialist Polish workers into the arms of Solidarność, which was heavily backed and bankrolled by the Vatican and the CIA.

The Gorbachev Regime

At the same time, all the contradictions, deformities and limitations of the "socialism in one country" which Trotsky had so brilliantly analysed in *The Revolution Betrayed* were also coming to a head in the Soviet Union. Under the increasing military pressure of U.S. imperialism, and trying to preserve domestic stability at home through maintaining living standards (not to mention the bureaucrats handsomely enriching themselves), economic growth had fallen by about half under the corrupt Brezhnev regime. Here again they ran up against the limitations imposed by their own bureaucratic rule when it came to the technical and scientific innovation needed for the renewal of Soviet industry. Hostile to workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism, the only means at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy to raise labour productivity was to subject workers and managers to the discipline of market competition. Coming to power in 1985, the new "modernising" regime of Mikhail Gorbachev introduced *perestroika*—"market reforms." To increase productivity, workers' wages were geared to profitability; piece rates were reintroduced, widening income differences between workers, managers and the technical elite; factory was pitted against factory, industry against industry in the struggle for resources and consumers. It fuelled nationalism and the break-up of the USSR, pitting far richer, more industrialised areas against more backward, less industrialised ones.

Underlying this growing inequality was the appetite, especially among a layer of younger bureaucratic functionaries and intellectuals, to enrich themselves at the expense of the working class. A privileged layer, many of them the sons and daughters of the bureaucracy, envied the indulgences of their counterparts in the West. This was reflected in increasingly open expressions of belief in the superiority of Western-style capitalism.

To relieve the overhead of military expenditures in the face of the increasing military build-up of U.S. imperialism, the Gorbachev regime offered a "partnership" to the imperialists. Here Afghanistan was key, and in 1989 the Red Army troops were withdrawn. Days before the last troops left, on 7 February 1989, the Partisan Defense Committee, the class-struggle legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League/U.S., sent a telegram to the Afghan government offering to "organize an international brigade to fight to the death" to defend "the right of women to read, freedom from the veil, freedom from the tyranny of the mullahs and the landlords, the introduction of medical care and the right of all to an education." We anticipated drawing into this international effort the ranks of militant fighters in many parts of the globe who would see in such a brigade the

opportunity to strike a powerful blow against the imperialist system by which they themselves were oppressed and dispossessed. We also saw that this could have a powerful effect among the Soviet army veterans who saw themselves as performing their internationalist duty in Afghanistan. This would have been an important lever for advancing the programme of revolutionary internationalism and proletarian political revolution within the Soviet Union itself.

Though our offer of a brigade was turned down, the Afghan government did ask if we could undertake a publicity and fund-raising effort for the embattled citizens of Jalalabad, then under siege by the bloodthirsty *mujahedin*. We raised over \$44,000, largely from working people and minorities, a number of whom had their origins in the region. But this campaign had greater significance. It showed that with the betrayal of Afghanistan, as well as developments in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, the absence of a communist party worth its name was acutely felt. And in 1989 we founded ourselves as the International Communist League.

The withdrawal from Afghanistan was the opening act of the counterrevolutionary tide that would engulf Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union itself. In 1992 this was

admitted by Eduard Shevardnadze, then Soviet foreign minister, who said: "The decision to leave Afghanistan was the first and most difficult step. Everything else flowed from that" (*Washington Post*, 16 November 1992). Less than a year later, the Kremlin bureaucrats would pull the plug on the East German deformed workers state, giving the green light for capitalist annexation of the DDR by the Fourth Reich of German imperialism. This will be addressed in the remarks of other speakers here today.

I will simply conclude where I began. Our fight to defend the gains that were embodied in these workers states, however warped and deformed by Stalinist misrule, and our fight today in defence of China and the remaining workers states was and is part of our struggle for new October Revolutions. As Trotsky said: "Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones." The period we live in now, one conditioned by the destruction of the world's first workers state, is deeply reactionary. But the lessons of past struggles are the ammunition for arming new cadre for the struggles that can and will break out. Out of such struggles will further be steeled the cadre for building a revolutionary, internationalist proletarian vanguard—the crucial instrument for the socialist liberation of humanity. ■

Holiday Appeal...

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laws, which would have meant a probationary sentence, Clinton's Justice Department intervened to have him thrown into prison under federal laws. He is not eligible for parole. Hart is currently confined in Ray Brook, New York, near the Canadian border, hundreds of miles from family and supporters. He has been subjected to numerous provocations by abusive prison guards, thrown into solitary and had his personal property illegally confiscated.

Eight MOVE members, *Chuck Africa, Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Janet Africa, Janine Africa, Delbert Africa, Eddie Africa and Phil Africa*, are in their 28th year of prison. They were sentenced to 30-100 years after the 8 August 1978 siege of their Philadelphia home by over 600 heavily armed cops. They were falsely convicted of killing a police officer who died in the cops' own crossfire. In 1985 they watched in horror from their Pennsylvania prison cells as eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops, many of them "veterans" of the 1978 assault.

Jaan Laaman, Thomas Manning and Richard Williams are the remaining anti-imperialist activists known as the Ohio 7 still in prison. They were convicted for their roles in a radical group that took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings in the late 1970s and '80s against symbols of U.S. imperialism such as military and corporate offices. Before their arrests in Ohio and Virginia in 1984 and 1985, they were targets of massive manhunts throughout the East Coast and Midwest. Their children were kidnapped at gunpoint by the Feds and interrogated. The government piled sentence upon sentence, intending to keep them imprisoned until the day they die.

The politics of the Ohio 7 were once shared by thousands of radicals during the heyday of the Vietnam antiwar movement and by New Leftists who wrote off the possibility of winning the working class to a revolutionary program and

saw themselves as an auxiliary of "Third World" liberation movements. But, like the Weathermen before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the "respectable" left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not a crime. As the PDC has said from the time the Ohio 7 were first persecuted by the capitalist state, these courageous fighters should not have served even a day in prison.

Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa are former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. They were victims of the FBI COINTELPRO operation launched against the Communist Party and then deployed to "neutralize" radical organizations in the 1960s, particularly the Black Panther Party, whose members were framed up and imprisoned by the hundreds while 38 were killed in cold blood. Poindexter and Mondo were railroaded to prison for a 1970 explosion which killed a cop; convicted on perjured testimony; sentenced to life and have now served more than 30 years in jail. The Nebraska Board of Pardons refuses to lessen their sentences so they can be considered for parole.

Hugo Pinell is the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. He was a militant anti-racist leader of prison rights organizing along with his comrade and mentor, George Jackson, who was gunned down by prison guards in 1971. Pinell has been incarcerated for more than 40 years, repeatedly denied parole despite hundreds of letters of support, many job offers and no disciplinary write-ups or rule infractions for over a quarter of a century. Now in his 60s, Pinell continues to serve a life sentence at the notorious Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in California.

Contribute now! All proceeds from the Holiday Appeals will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. This is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity with those imprisoned for their opposition to racist capitalism and imperialist depredations. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 314, Station B, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2W1; (416) 593-4138. ■

France...

(continued from page 1)

is inherent to capitalism, and in France it is rooted also in its colonial past: the French bourgeoisie still seethes over its defeat in the Algerian liberation struggle over 40 years ago. A consistent fight against racist oppression requires a fight to overthrow the whole capitalist system.

Riots such as these are an expression of despair by unemployed youth so marginalized that they are deprived of any means to be a factor for effective social change. The unrest has also included incidents of indiscriminate attacks on individuals who happened to find themselves in the wrong place, and has devastated the neighbourhoods these youth have to live in. Yet despite the vast energies expended and the devastation suffered, these outbreaks usually change nothing. This makes it even more important for workers to fight for better conditions for residents of these neighbourhoods. The working class is the social force that has the objective interest and power to overturn this whole system of capitalist exploitation, racism and misery, and build a workers state based on a planned economy.

Aulnay-sous-Bois is another city in the 93rd district, a heavily working-class and immigrant region outside Paris that was prominent in the recent riots. In Aulnay there is also a large Citroën auto plant where young workers, mostly of North and West African immigrant origin, carried out a winning strike this past March. Thousands of youth from the area have jobs at the nearby Charles de Gaulle Airport, one of the largest in Europe. The power of the multiethnic workforce of the area, French and immigrant, can be unleashed to fight against the terrible conditions in the ghettos and in defense of the oppressed youth. But for this to happen, what is necessary is a relentless fight against the chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy, which restrains and betrays working-class struggles because at bottom it shares the bourgeoisie's concern that French capitalism be made more "competitive" against its international rivals.

The government's vicious attack against a whole generation of youth is intended to fuel racist divisions within the multiethnic working class of this country in a context of savage attacks against the whole proletariat and growing working-class resistance. After the seamen of the Corsica-Mediterranean ferry line lost their strike, stabbed in the back by the CGT union leadership (see "Corsica and Class Struggle in France," *Workers Vanguard* No. 857, 28 October), the government, wielding an anti-strike court injunction, is now trying to break a month-long strike by Marseille transit workers. A strike has been called for November 21 by all the major unions of the SNCF railway. This makes it all the more urgent for the organized workers movement to oppose the government's racist onslaught. For the working class, it is a life-and-death question to stand united and fight off the attacks on its standard of living and on social services. As the LTF wrote in *Le Bolchévik* (September 2005):

"An attack against one is an attack against all. The whole workers movement...must mobilize in defense of its most vulnerable class brothers, the workers coming from North and West Africa

in particular, who form a strategic component of the proletariat of this country, whether in construction, auto or among the sanitation workers of Paris. What's needed is a campaign to unionize the temp workers, time-limited jobs and 'new hire contracts' [a new type of contract below union standards]. Down with Vigipirate! Down with racist expulsions and deportation charter flights! Full citizenship rights for all those who are here! French troops out of Africa!"

Neighbourhood Police and Riot Police: Guard Dogs of the Bourgeois Order

The trade-union bureaucrats and the reformist parties should be condemned for their refusal to protest the government's racist onslaught in Clichy-sous-Bois and other neighbourhoods. They mainly complain that Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy is a crazed maniac, only pursuing his career to become president. Thus they give backhanded support to his rival, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin (a close ally of President Jacques Chirac), who has even increased the level of police repression since he took over the situation after the first days of rioting. The reformists condemn Sarkozy for sending riot police on hit-and-run operations against the minority ghettos. Instead of Sarkozy's raids, they promote the so-called good old days of the "neighbourhood police" put in place by the late popular-front government of Lionel Jospin of the Socialist Party (PS) and Marie-George Buffet, the current head of the Communist Party (PCF). The PCF and the pseudo-Trotskyist Lutte Ouvrière (LO), have even attacked Sarkozy for reducing the number of police working daily in the ghettos. LO wrote in *Lutte Ouvrière* (8 July):

"In complete contradiction to his promises, the minister Sarkozy has conducted the same policy on his turf as his colleagues: playing tricks with the numbers to hide the decrease, closing police precincts, budgets without funds."

The "neighbourhood police" was a favourite concept of Jean-Pierre Chevènement, minister of police in the Jospin government, who is still widely hated by undocumented immigrants and by ghetto youth, whom he liked to refer to as *sauvageons* (little savages). He introduced new laws enabling charges to be brought against anyone found helping undocumented workers. The harking back of the PS and PCF to Jospin and Chevènement's "neighbourhood police" days is a



Reuters

Paris cops evict impoverished African immigrants from living quarters in rundown building in September.

deadly omen for immigrants and youth. It was Jospin's cops who killed Habib Ould Mohamed in Toulouse in 1998, provoking a riot for three full days in the Le Mirail neighbourhood, which was quelled by a massive mobilization of the riot police, exactly as Sarkozy/de Villepin are doing now. Again, in April 2000, a neighbourhood patrol killed Ryad Hamlaoui near Lille, provoking another wave of unrest.

The PCF issued a special statement (*l'Humanité*, 4 November) on Clichy demanding: "Place the police at the service of the whole nation, which means democratization, training, neighbourhood residency and adequate funds." LO's editorial on Clichy mentions immigration or racism only once, in order to warn that Sarkozy's antics will "encourage more repressive attitudes among the police and racism among many of its elements." As if putting a different top cop in charge and throwing a few "bad apples" off the force would create "good" French cops. All these reformists are trying to rehabilitate the police in the eyes of oppressed youth, thus promoting deadly illusions in the bourgeois Republic. The police cannot be reformed to serve the population. Promoting the lie that they can be reformed is what distinguishes reformists from revolutionaries. Like the other armed bodies of men that constitute the core of the state (prison guards, the army), their function is to protect private ownership of the means of production by the capitalists. The capitalist state has a legal monopoly on weapons in order to maintain the capitalist system: the police are the guard dogs of the bourgeoisie, not "workers in uniform." *Police, prison guards, out of the unions!*

PCF, LCR: Architects of a New "Popular Front"

In its statement, the PCF speaks accusingly of Sarkozy: "The government has shown that it is incapable of guaranteeing public order." The PS and PCF are using the current riots in order to refurbish their much-tarnished credentials and present themselves as those who are more capable of maintaining order in the largely minority neighbourhoods, and thus can be relied upon by the bourgeoisie to run the bourgeois state more smoothly.

At bottom, the issue for the PCF is to push forward a new coalition, including with bourgeois parties like the Greens, Chevènementistes and Left Radicals, to win the 2007 elections. And the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) as well as LO (albeit more indirectly) are helping them out. The "left," including the PCF and the pseudo-Trotskyists from the LCR and LO, are sharing a platform on November 8 in Paris with two little Chevènementiste bourgeois parties, MARS and MRC, supposedly against the privatization of the EDF electricity monopoly. Thus, the LCR and LO promote illusions that you can fight the capitalist onslaught by uniting with capitalist parties!

Down With the Racist Campaign "Against Terrorism"!

In early October at Charles de Gaulle Airport, baggage handlers went on strike for permanent hiring of casual work-



Clichy-sous-Bois residents march on October 29. T-shirts reading "Dead for Nothing" honour two young men who died after being chased by police.

AFP

ers and for higher wages (following the privatization of Air France under the previous government of Jospin/Buffet). The strike was broken by the government, using Vigipirate and a supposed terrorist threat posed by luggage not being sorted. This shows very concretely what we have been saying for years: Vigipirate targets all immigrants and minorities, as well as the working class as a whole. It may be wielded again in coming weeks if a major strike gets underway at the French railway.

LO has from Day One refused to oppose Vigipirate and this goes hand in hand with its leading role in pushing the racist campaign to expel young women wearing the headscarf from school. In France, Islam is a religion of the oppressed and of the ghettos. The headscarf represents a reactionary social program that confines women to the home in a position of servitude. The expulsion of Muslim girls from school can only reinforce their isolation and oppression and fuel racism against all immigrants. We oppose these racist campaigns and defend the girls who wear headscarves against the bourgeois state. Instead of that, LO welcomed Chirac's law banning the headscarf, a racist law that is part and parcel of the daily harassment against Muslims, and LO spokesman Arlette Laguiller even linked arms at a 6 March 2004 march of women from immigrant neighbourhoods with Nicole Guedj (then-Secretary of State for prison construction from Chirac's UMP party)!

LO does mobilize on behalf of undocumented immigrants, just as many bourgeois liberals do who believe the French Republic should be able to integrate those immigrants who often have been in France for years and have raised families in this country. However, racism against ghetto youth runs deep and goes to the core of French capitalism, serving to profoundly divide the working class. LO consciously evades the issue, talking only of "poor neighbourhoods," avoiding the key question of racial oppression. What is needed is to forge the revolutionary unity of the working class, starting with workers mobilizations against racist police terror. We fight to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, committed to leading the proletariat of this country in social-revolution. ■



SC photo



no credit

TL addresses 2004 anti-sharia rally. Right: Women confront Islamic fundamentalist bigot at similar protest, September 2005.

Sharia...

(continued from page 3)

web of religious oppression. Those who do so face the threat of brutal coercion or are ostracized, cut off from family, friends and community. The imams already dispense “justice” from the mosques, but if *sharia* had become part of the state’s legal machinery, the vicious, age-old, anti-woman practices which it codifies would have been legitimized and the hold of religion increased.

I.S. Gets Religion

The I.S.’s defense of *sharia* rests on a stunning apology for Islamic reaction. The September 24 *Socialist Worker* featured an article (first posted on Marxmail.org) by Richard Fidler praising former NDP attorney general Marion Boyd’s government-commissioned report in favour of *sharia*. With contemptible indifference to women’s oppression, Fidler positively quotes Boyd’s statement that “There is no evidence to suggest that women are being systematically discriminated against as a result of arbitration of family law issues.”

This prettification of Islam was embraced by *Socialist Worker* editor Paul Kellogg. “All religions are contradictory,” Kellogg averred, “Why aren’t the opponents of the use of the arbitration act highlighting those aspects of Islamic law which say it is the man’s responsibility to share in the cleaning and cooking, that gives women, along with men, the right to divorce, that mandates child-support from the estranged husband?” (8 October). This is a cruel mockery of the brutal reality of women’s oppression. For women from huge swathes of Asia, Africa and the Near East, it is not a matter of who does the cleaning, but of the right to be considered fully human, not a chattel of first father, then husband.

Contrary to Kellogg, the contradiction in religion lies in the fact that human beings created religions, only to have their creations rule over them like a Frankenstein monster. It is obscene to have to debate with ostensible Marxists whether clerical reaction should be supported. Marxists regard all modern religion as an instrument of bourgeois reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people.

Not so the I.S. Echoing the outraged mullahs and rabbis, Kellogg declares that “These third-party arbitrations have always existed, especially in religious communities, where it is often to the Priest, Minister, Iman [sic] or Rabbi that people turn when confronted with family or marital issues.” The I.S. *accepts* this domination, seeking to give it legal force.

Down With Anti-Muslim Racism!

The I.S. invokes the ruling class “war on terror” to cover its embrace of *sharia*. But for the racist Canadian rulers there is no contradiction between attacking Muslims as terrorists and nurturing the most oppressive forces in the Muslim community. Both reinforce the grip of capitalism by scapegoating and regimenting immigrants.

This is the central purpose of official “multiculturalism.” Promoted heavily by the Liberal Party as an expression of tolerance for all cultures (which is why right-wingers hate it), multiculturalism is designed to encourage the “voluntary” cultural and racial segregation of the population, ghettoizing immigrants while elevating petty-bourgeois “community leaders.” It is thus a conservatizing force for policing minorities and maintaining social peace. But the Muslim community, like the rest of society, is class-divided. The struggles of immigrant and other minority workers for rights, jobs and unions necessarily require throwing off the debilitating grip of religious and other community leaders.

Socialist Worker smears the opposition to *sharia* as “involving more than a hint of anti-immigrant and racist prejudice” and claims that leftist opponents of *sharia* are “lining up with reactionaries.” To be sure, some right-wing journalists and politicians seized on the *sharia* debate to inflame anti-Muslim racism. But Marxists’ opposition to *sharia* (and all religious law) is conditioned not by the character of others who may oppose it, but by what advances the class interests of the proletariat.

Moreover, the central organizers of the protests against official *sharia* courts in Ontario were not pro-imperialist reactionaries, but women leftists from the Worker-communist Party of Iran (WCPI)—refugees from the bloody mullah regime in Iran. The No Religious Arbitration Coalition,

which includes the Ontario Federation of Labour and many women's organizations, explicitly condemns Islamophobia and opposes *all* legally binding religious arbitration, not only Muslim. We have serious differences with the WCPI, anti-clerical reformists who all too often present the institutions of Western capitalism as potential allies against Islamic reaction (see "Iran and Women's Liberation," SC No. 141, Summer 2004). But to paint the campaign against *sharia* as a reactionary crusade that promotes anti-Muslim racism, as the I.S. does, is a slander in the service of religious reaction.

For Separation of Religion and State

In a September 15 Marxmail.org polemic on *sharia*, Fidler writes: "The traditional left speaks a language that is to a large degree alien to the cultural experience of these huddled masses. It is the language of the white European Enlightenment, redolent in abstract concepts such as 'separation of church and state'." This is a bald-faced repudiation of Marxism and its origins. The radical-democratic principles of the bourgeois Enlightenment were the ideological reflection of historic material advances over a backward, feudal society. Hardly an abstraction, the demand for separation of religion and state was vital to this social progress. Today it is an essential part of educating the proletariat as to its true class interests.

Hostile to religion, Marxism seeks to lay bare its deep social roots, which are today to be found, as Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote, in "the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism" ("The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," 1909). In fact, the full separation of religion and state has nowhere been fully realized by the bourgeoisie for the simple reason that religion has great value for the ruling class in its struggle against the proletariat.

Religious wars, persecution and obscurantist oppression are endemic to *all* religions and all serve to buttress the patriarchal family, ruling class authority and the particular sexual and moral codes of their respective societies. The institution of the family, today fashioned to serve the needs of capitalist class rule, is the main source of women's oppression. It is the mechanism for transmitting property from one generation to the next and raising new generations of workers. Family law is tightly bound up with defense of private property and women's inequality is always reflected in the legal and social codes of society.

Anti-woman bigotry for the glory of God marks Christianity and Judaism as much as Islam. Just look at the Catholic Church's crusade against abortion rights, the attacks on evolution and science by the Protestant right, or the anti-Palestinian barbarism of the theocratic Zionist state of Israel. But while in general Christianity and Judaism had to conform with rising industrial capitalism and the emergence of bourgeois nation-states, Islam did not, largely because it remains rooted in those parts of the world where imperialist penetration has reinforced social backwardness as a prop to its domination.

Today the imperialists fulminate against Muslim fundamentalism, but for decades they consciously fuelled the growth of Islamic reaction. In their drive to prevent social revolutions and destroy the Soviet Union—the state that emerged from the victorious October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia—the imperialists allied with indigenous forces of religious and social reaction against godless Communism.

We implacably oppose the imperialist impoverishment and exploitation of the masses of the neocolonial Third World, and defend immigrants from such countries against persecution in the imperialist centers. But we are not cultural relativists who prettify the horribly oppressive status quo in the Near East and elsewhere as quaint "traditions" of the oppressed. Does the I.S., in the name of siding with the Third World oppressed, defend hideous "customs" such as female genital mutilation or *suttee*, whereby a Hindu widow self-immolates on her husband's funeral pyre? Modern bourgeois law is an advance over the tribal law of the desert, or the feudal system in which the European populace was once virtually enslaved to temporal lords and priests. Put another way, what regime best facilitates struggle by the working class and oppressed—one based on the European Enlightenment or one based on 7th century religious obscurantism?

I.S.: "God is Great" Socialists

Where does the I.S.'s grotesque embrace of *sharia* come from? Most immediately, it dovetails with their political conciliation of the Muslim clerics whom they have repeatedly promoted on protests against the Iraq war and occupation. But their portrayal of Muslim fundamentalism as "anti-imperialist" and even "revolutionary" is longstanding. It is a direct outgrowth of their anti-Communist hostility to the former Soviet Union and other societies where capitalism had been overthrown. The I.S.'s British parent group was founded in 1950 by forces breaking from Trotskyism who refused to defend the North Korean and Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers states against a bloody assault by the U.S., Britain and Canada. This was a direct capitulation to the "democratic" pretensions of British imperialism (and its then Labour Party government).

In 1979, joining with the rulers in Washington and Ottawa, the I.S. openly took the side of a CIA-bankrolled Islamic insurgency in Afghanistan that fought to keep women as chattel slaves. They railed against the Soviet Red Army, which had intervened to support a besieged left-nationalist Afghan government that had introduced substantial reforms—like educating girls and reducing the bride price—to this terribly backward country. We Trotskyists declared "Hail Red Army!" and called to extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples, especially women.

Criminally, instead of fighting to win, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow withdrew the Red Army in 1989, paving
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Sharia...

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the way for the victory of Washington's brutal religious fanatics. And the I.S. was ecstatic. Hailing "the importance of the defeat of the Russian army," they claimed this would "spur the struggles of the oppressed nationalities in Eastern Europe" (Socialist Worker, March 1989). By this they meant movements like Poland's clerical-reactionary Solidarnosc, another pro-imperialist outfit backed to the hilt by the CIA and Vatican. Solidarnosc's rise to power later in 1989 brought devastating capitalist counterrevolution to Poland, which meant anti-Semitism, mass unemployment and the brutal rollback of women's rights.

The current period of ascendant political Islam opened with the rise to power of ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1978-79. The I.S., like many reformist leftists, criminally lauded the ayatollahs' "mass movement" which overthrew the blood-drenched U.S.-backed shah, headlining "The form—religion, The spirit—revolution" (*Workers Action*, February 1979). We declared: "Down with the shah! No support to the mullahs! For workers revolution in Iran!" We put particular emphasis on the struggle for women's emancipation, declaring "No to the veil!" We were not about to capitulate to Khomeini over the bodies of Iranian women! The I.S.'s support for the "Islamic Revolution"—a bloody disaster for women, the working class and the left in Iran—was a monstrous betrayal.

But the horrors of the Iranian regime didn't faze this crew. In 1998 the Trotskyist League, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and others joined with the WCPI to drive out representatives of the Iranian regime who had been given a stall at the Toronto International Women's Day fair, from which they handed out propaganda supporting the stoning of Iranian women. Contemptibly, the I.S. opposed this action, calling such protest "a concession to anti-Islamic scapegoating coming from the ruling class" (*Socialist Worker*, 25 March 1998). Then, as now, for the I.S. any left-wing protest against anti-woman Islamic reaction can only be racist and pro-imperialist.

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The Trotskyist League intervened actively in the protests against the proposed sharia courts. We addressed meetings and rallies, and sought to mobilize left, gay and lesbian groups. Throughout, we made clear that the fight against sharia is inseparable from opposition to Canada's brutally racist "justice" system and, especially, the government war on immigrants and the anti-Muslim racist backlash.

For us, the defence of immigrant rights, including the call

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Gamma Liason/Abbas

1979 seizure of power by Iranian mullahs was bloody disaster for women, workers and leftists.

for full citizenship rights for everyone in this country, has tremendous significance. A class-struggle fight to defend the rights of Muslims and all immigrants and minorities against the racist capitalist state is in the interest of all the working class. The eradication of racial oppression requires a revolutionary struggle, centered on the power of the proletariat, to uproot capitalism and liberate humanity from poverty and want.

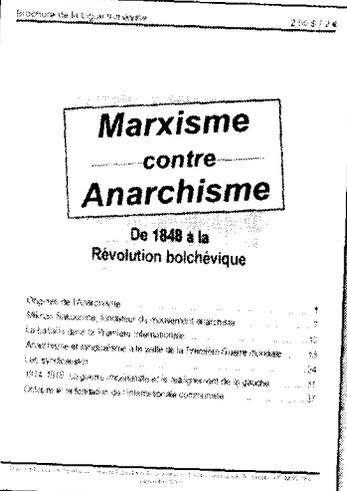
The liberation of women is inextricably linked to the workers' struggle to build an egalitarian communist society of material abundance. This alone will make it possible to replace the institution of the family, key source of women's oppression. We are dedicated to freeing workers from religion's yoke—not strengthening it, as the I.S. would do. As Marx said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world.... It is the *opium* of the people." In the future socialist society, the Bible and the Koran, with their bloody misogynist proscriptions, will be nothing more than historical artifacts, their power to torment women obliterated by victorious workers revolution. ■

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B.C. Teachers...

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accept the union leadership's recommendation to return to work on the basis of the mediator's report.

Labour Solidarity and Bureaucratic Backstabbing

The teachers strike showed the power of the labour movement to take collective action on its own behalf and that of other victims of capitalist austerity. By defying the capitalists' anti-labour laws and winning active support from other unionists as well as parents and students, the BCTF was able to fend off a major union-busting assault. This has important lessons for workers everywhere, including throughout the B.C. public sector, where most contracts expire over the next year.

As elsewhere in the country, workers in B.C. have faced an unrelenting war on jobs, union rights and social services. Thousands of workers have been thrown on the scrapheap, hospitals closed and support services for women slashed. School classrooms overflow with 30 or more students, many of whom need ESL instruction, while students, many without books or access to computers, have to sit on window ledges due to lack of desks. At the same time, the government has whipped up racism against immigrants and Native people in an attempt to keep the working class divided. Many of the victims of these attacks were on the front lines in defense of the teachers.

The Liberal government's attempt to pose as a defender of public education fell completely flat. Parents actively backed the strike by the thousands, some bringing food to the pickets, while students organized support rallies. Members of the heavily immigrant Hospital Employees Union (HEU), who staged their own militant strike in defense of jobs and public health care 18 months earlier, joined BCTF protests.

While the teachers were able to force some concessions from the government, their strike also showed the treachery of the current labour misleaders—and especially of their political arm, the NDP. The NDP governments that ruled B.C. in the 1990s began the austerity onslaught that has since been heightened under the Liberals. The New Democrats instituted public-sector wage controls and broke a strike by CUPE school workers in Vancouver. In opposition, they sometimes posture as friends of workers and the poor. But the NDP opposed the teachers strike from the outset. Standing by the government-imposed salary freeze, provincial party leader Carole James insisted that teachers "should follow the law.... People accept consequences when they don't follow the law" (*Vancouver Sun*, 18 October). Spreading panic about the 600,000 students out of class, NDP education critic John Horgan opposed the government's Bill 12 only on the cynical basis that it came down "too soon."

Leaders of the B.C. Federation of Labour spoke at several strike rallies, but behind the scenes B.C. Fed president Jim Sinclair worked to demobilize the spreading strike action. The B.C. Fed tops pulled the plug on the October 21 solidarity strike in Vancouver, leaving CUPE to act alone in support of the teachers in B.C.'s largest city. Sinclair demanded



cupe.bc.ca

Mexico City, October 14: Protest in solidarity with B.C. teachers.

that the BCTF accept mediator Ready's report even before its provisions were made public. With the top labour bureaucrats signalling that they would abandon the BCTF if the strike continued, many teachers saw no alternative but to return to work.

This is far from the first time that the labour misleaders have intervened to stop large-scale strike action against the hated Liberal government. In May 2004, as unionists throughout B.C. were set to shut down the province in solidarity with the HEU strike, the Fed worked with top HEU leaders to cook up a secret deal that sent hospital workers back to work with hundreds of layoffs, a longer workweek and the same 15 percent pay cut the government had demanded going into the strike. As furious strikers denounced this treachery, the labour tops told workers to channel their anger into votes for the NDP in the coming provincial elections. They were joined by a host of reformist left groups—the pseudo-Trotskyist FightBack, International Socialists, Communist Party and more—who lied to the workers that the thoroughly pro-capitalist NDP could be a progressive alternative to the Liberals.

In sharp contrast, in our interventions at strike rallies and pickets during both the HEU and BCTF strikes, the Trotskyist League emphasized the need for a break with the NDP and the forging of a new labour leadership that can set the workers on the path of class struggle against the capitalist system.

Capitalist Courts and Cops: Tools of the Oppressor

As teachers prepared to vote on the proposed settlement on October 21, the courts levied a \$500,000 fine on the BCTF. This was the largest civil contempt fine in Canadian history, an outrageous theft of unionists' hard-earned dues money. The judge's edict showed graphically how the courts are not "neutral." Rather they are—together with the prisons, cops and army—a core component of the capitalists' state, an institution whose whole purpose is defending capitalist "law and order" against the working class and oppressed.

There can be no "fairness" or democracy between exploiter and exploited. The illusions pushed by the labour bureaucrats that the capitalist state is something other than an enemy of the workers' cause are deadly dangerous. BCTF president Jinny Sims expressed these illusions succinctly when, faced with a media witchhunt over the union's defiance of Bill 12,

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B.C. Teachers...

(continued from page 21)

she made crystal clear that “we respect the courts.”

Respect for the bosses’ laws is a mantra that has led to the defeat of countless strikes. Unions themselves used to be illegal. It took years of hard class struggle waged in defiance of these laws—including union leaders prepared to go to jail rather than bow to strikebreaking politicians and judges—for working people to wrest what gains they have won from the ruling class. It was, for example, an “illegal” 1965 national postal strike that won the right to strike for workers in the federal public sector. Elements among the striking teachers, whose strike was deemed “illegal” from day one, understood the stakes in their struggle. One teacher in Vancouver who thanked our comrades for coming to the picket line in solidarity, bought a copy of our press and explained that he was getting materials ready “to read in prison.”

The cops who bust heads to enforce the capitalists’ laws against workers’ pickets also brutalize and imprison immigrants and Native people in inner-city ghettos like Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Yet many union leaders, joined by the reformist pseudo-socialists, embrace cops and prison guards as “fellow workers.” “Unionized” jail guards were welcomed at the October 17 mass rally for the teachers in Victoria. In Toronto on November 1, leaders of the powerful Amalgamated Transit Union actually built a union contingent for a reactionary, 4,000-strong cop rally demanding that the city government give them more money and better “working conditions.” Supporting cop “unions” is suicide for working people—cops have no place in the labour movement. Better working conditions for the police means better conditions to brutalize workers and minorities. Labour must defend immigrants and the poor against racist cop terror!

Labour Militancy and Revolutionary Leadership

Since 2001, workers have repeatedly mobilized against the Campbell government. From the HEU strike to the teachers strike, the B.C. working class has again shown that it is the most militant and class-conscious in all of English-speaking North America. Moreover, as shown especially in the hospital workers strike, over the past several decades the once overwhelmingly white B.C. labour movement has been invigorated by the infusion of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from India, the Philippines, China and elsewhere. Such workers, who remain targets for anti-Asian racism and bigotry, can form a human bridge to the struggles of working people internationally.

But B.C. labour remains hamstrung by a leadership that pushes the lie that there can be a partnership between capital and labour, and that Canadian workers share a common “national interest” with their exploiters. This was shown at rallies of the locked-out TWU phone workers, where the union tops’ calls to “keep jobs in Canada” have fostered ugly chauvinism over the outsourcing of work to India and the Philippines. The poison of nationalism, often accompanied by anti-immigrant racism, divides the working class, setting it up for defeat. What is needed is internationalist solidarity with workers abroad and defense of the rights of immigrants at home—the only road to forge fighting workers’ unity against the attacks of the ruling class.

“United Canada” patriotism and chauvinism against Quebec—a distinct nation with its own language and culture—



SC photo

Despicable anti-foreigner slogans at September 5 Labour Day rally in front of Telus building in Vancouver. Chauvinism is poison to workers’ struggle!

have further divided the working class by inflaming nationalist animosities. Anti-Quebec bigotry is especially virulent in Western Canada, thanks in large part to the NDP’s “pro-Canada” demagogy. To take on and defeat the exploiters, working people must reject flag-waving unity with their bosses and back independence for Quebec, support for which has once again surged among the Québécois amid the federal Liberals’ sponsorship scandal.

All this points to the need for a new, class-struggle labour leadership, breaking workers from the treacherous NDP. Underlining their role as enforcers of capitalist oppression at home and abroad, the federal New Democrats have until recently propped up the corrupt Liberal government in Ottawa. This included endorsing a budget centered on an increase in military spending of more than **\$12 billion**—to be used, among other things, to reinforce the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan.

Slashing jobs by the thousands; destroying medicare; starving public education of funding; whipping up racism and chauvinism to “divide and rule”; aiding U.S. military adventures: the capitalist rulers of this country are ruining the lives of workers and the poor. Their system must be swept away. But for this to happen requires forging a revolutionary party that can make the workers conscious of the need to rip power from the exploiters and create a society organized to meet human needs, not private profit. Our model is the 1917 Russian Revolution, led by V.I. Lenin’s and Leon Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party. The only way to guarantee good living conditions, jobs for all and an end to grinding exploitation and oppression is by expropriating the capitalist class through socialist revolution. As Trotsky wrote in the 1938 Transitional Program, founding document of the Fourth International:

“If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.” ■

Alberta Meatpackers Strike Shows Power of Immigrant Workers

Years of abuse of immigrant and other workers by the notoriously anti-union Arkansas-based Tyson Foods backfired spectacularly this fall during a three-week strike at its Lakeside plant in Brooks, Alberta. On day two of the strike, October 13, the strikers defended their picket line against an assault by a busload of scabs. Three strikers were sent to the hospital after being hit by the bus and punched and kicked by the scabs. But the union's mass pickets stopped production for several days thereafter and many more times during the strike. Picket Iyob Meles expressed the strikers' determination in no uncertain terms: "If they kill us, they can go in" (*Globe and Mail*, 17 October).

The strike, waged by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), aimed at winning a first contract. If ever a workplace screamed for a union, Lakeside was it. For the grand sum of \$12 an hour, its workers toiled under horrible conditions in an industry that is back-breaking and filthy. Many of the African-born strikers compared their job to outright slavery. One told a typical story: "They treat people like the cows they kill here. If somebody asks for the wash-room, they deny them, It happened to me. Even now, some people use diapers" (CBC News, 14 July).

Yet this racially integrated workforce showed that by using the power of solid picket lines it could bring the multinational giant Tyson to its knees. Lakeside's 2,300 workers, a majority of whom are refugees and immigrants from Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria, are at the nexus of Canada's multi-billion dollar beef industry, processing **40 percent** of Canada's cattle. While Tyson tried every which way to keep work going at the plant, production plummeted by as much as 85 percent during the strike. In the end, Tyson was forced to agree to a first union contract.

Tyson went all out to try and defeat this strike. On October 14, two vehicles occupied by managers and plant security forced UFCW local president Doug O'Halloran's car into a ditch, causing him injuries to the head, neck and arm. While many picketers sensibly believed this was attempted murder, the RCMP merely hit the managers with "dangerous driving" charges. For helping defend his picket line against the previous day's scab assault, O'Halloran faces two counts of willful damage and one of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose. The company also obtained a court injunction to limit the number of picketers on the line. No surprise in any of this: the capitalists and their state—cops, courts, prisons—always work hand in hand to keep the working class "in its place." **Drop all the charges against Doug O'Halloran and all the other strikers!**

Labour: Fight for Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

The UFCW reports that the violent attacks on the picket lines came complete with racist taunts, while many suspect the company of attempting to inflame racial divisions within the workforce to bust the unionization drive—a typical scheme among employers in this country. Assuming that this was nothing but a disposable, pliant workforce, Tyson lured



MacDougal/CP

Pickets stop scab vehicle, shut down production, October 17. African-born workers were key to militant strike.

these immigrants in the first place to work in hellish conditions in the middle of redneck, small-town Alberta. But the unity of the picket line—which also included many white workers, and had a notable proportion of women—enabled the Lakeside workers to overcome some of these divisions, serving as a model for workers throughout the country.

To fully unleash the power of Canada's multiethnic working class would require a class-struggle leadership that combats anti-immigrant racism and all of the bosses' "divide and rule" schemes, while fighting illusions in the benevolence of the capitalist class. But such is not the current leadership of the trade unions. Instead, it is imbued with Canadian nationalism and appeals to the bosses to be "fair." Such illusions in the class enemy, pushed by the misleaders of the UFCW and Alberta Federation of Labour, played against the Lakeside strikers. Instead of building on the militant mass pickets and mobilizing support in other key industries, the union tops appealed for "binding arbitration" and a personal intervention by the right-wing, union-hating premier Ralph Klein! As a result, the union tops agreed to a **51-month** contract with Tyson, where only in 2010 will production wages reach a paltry \$14.60 an hour.

The felt need of Alberta meatpacking workers for union representation is nothing new. In the 1980s, Lakeside workers were defeated in fighting for a union. In 1986 in Edmonton, the Gainers strike polarized the city for months. What the Lakeside workers demonstrated this time was the impact of the **social power** of workers in action—their ability to stop the flow of profit for the bosses in practically a whole industry through solid picket lines. Central to this were the immigrant workers of Lakeside. They showed that immigrants are not only key to the workings of the Canadian economy, but are often more willing to fight for the rights of all workers. We need a leadership that will tap into this powerful proletarian army and fight to overthrow the capitalist system that oppresses us all. ■

B.C. Teachers Strike Defies Liberal Government



johncameron.ca

More than 20,000 rally at Victoria legislature in support of striking teachers, October 17.

Class Struggle Can Beat Back Capitalist Attacks

VANCOUVER—When the B.C. Teachers Federation (BCTF) threw up picket lines that shut down schools throughout the province beginning on October 7, it showed how the power of organized labour can be wielded to fight the onslaught of the capitalist ruling class. Four days earlier, the provincial Liberal government of Gordon Campbell had enacted Bill 12, union-busting legislation that imposed a wage-freeze contract on the BCTF's 38,000 members. The government declared that any strike action would be illegal. But the teachers voted by over 90 percent to defy the law and launched a hard-fought strike in defense of union rights and public education.

For two weeks, the BCTF stood tough in the face of attacks by the courts and government aimed at crippling the union. The B.C. Supreme Court froze the union's assets, banning strike pay and the use of union offices to support the strike. The Campbell regime appointed a special prosecutor to consider "criminal contempt" charges against the union. But BCTF members remained unbowed, and their strike spread to other sectors of the labour movement.

The 25,000 school support workers in the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) backed the teachers from day

one by refusing to work in struck facilities. Spearheaded by CUPE, other unions then staged rotating one-day city and regional strikes. On October 17, walkouts crippled government services up and down Vancouver Island. Members of the Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU), already locked out by the Telus phone bosses, picketed bus barns to ensure transit was shut down. More than 20,000 demonstrators braved heavy rain to rally at the legislature in Victoria. Greetings were read from unions as far away as South Africa and Mexico, where a solidarity protest took place outside the Canadian embassy. The following days saw strikes from Prince George to the Kootenays.

Polls showed that over 60 percent of B.C. residents backed the teachers against the government, whose attacks on education, health care and other social services have provoked widespread anger. Faced with escalating strike action, the Liberal regime was forced to abandon its hard-line "no negotiations" stance. To cover this retreat, the government appointed "mediator" Vince Ready to "facilitate" a settlement. His report, issued on the eve of a threatened October 21 Vancouver-area walkout, called for an additional \$100 million to be paid to the teachers, largely by increasing pensions and harmonizing salaries in various regions. Ready also called on the government to consider the union's demand for smaller class sizes. While this fell short of the BCTF's demands, union members voted by 77 percent to

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