

Venezuela:

Break With Bourgeois Populism! For Workers Revolution!



Corbis photos

30 November 2007: Demonstration in Caracas calling for “yes” vote on referendum to increase the power of bourgeois-nationalist Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez (right).

U.S. Hands Off!

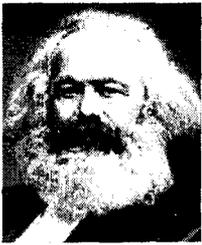
Across the political spectrum, the December 2007 constitutional referendum put forward by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez was described as an attempt to institute a “socialist state.” The narrow defeat of the referendum is now celebrated by a cabal ranging from the Venezuelan oligarchy to the Catholic church to the Bush White House as a victory for “democracy.” On the other side, it has provoked much hand-wringing among self-proclaimed Marxists and others who have promoted Chávez as some kind of “revolutionary.” As for Chávez himself, he immediately made conciliatory gestures to the right-wing opposition.

Popular illusions notwithstanding, Chávez, a former army colonel, is a bourgeois nationalist administering a capitalist state.

Far from undermining capitalism in Venezuela, Chávez’s referendum went out of its way to underline that private ownership of the means of production would be protected under the constitution. His proposed referendum was centrally aimed at strengthening the repressive powers of the Venezuelan capitalist state and concentrating increased authority in the executive office of the president. While cloaked in populist rhetoric of “people’s power” and promising some social reforms, such as a shorter workweek and pensions for the self-employed, the key provisions of Chávez’s referendum sought to increase presidential authority to declare unlimited states of emergency, to decree special military regions, to transform certain parts of the country into federal territories under direct presidential control, and to allow the president to dissolve the National Assembly.

The capitalist state—which at its core consists of the military, police, prisons and courts—is the instrument for the forcible

(continued on page 12)



Marx



Lenin



Trotsky

What Is the Permanent Revolution?

Generalizing the perspective of permanent revolution to countries of belated capitalist development in the imperialist epoch, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed that in these countries, the gains associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of West Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries cannot be achieved by the indigenous bourgeoisie. These backward countries can liberate themselves from foreign subjugation and economic backwardness only through proletarian socialist revolution and its extension to the imperialist colossus. This perspective based on the political independence of the proletariat from all wings of the bourgeoisie was borne out by the Russian Revolution of October 1917. The following concise exposition of the theory of permanent revolution is taken from the "Basic Postulates" with which Trotsky concluded his 1930 book The Permanent Revolution.

1. The theory of the permanent revolution now demands the greatest attention from every Marxist, for the course of the class and ideological struggle has fully and finally raised this question from the realm of reminiscences over old differences of opinion among Russian Marxists, and converted it into a question of the character, the inner connexions and methods of the international revolution in general.

2. With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.

3. Not only the agrarian, but also the national question assigns to the peasantry—the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries—an exceptional place in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance of the prole-

triat with the peasantry the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie.

4. No matter what the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution....

8. The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution.

9. The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such, regardless of whether it is a backward country that is involved, which only yesterday accomplished its democratic revolution, or an old capitalist country which already has behind it a long epoch of democracy and parliamentarism.

10. The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable. One of the basic reasons for the crisis in bourgeois society is the fact that the productive forces created by it can no longer be reconciled with the framework of the national state. From this follow, on the one hand, imperialist wars, on the other, the utopia of a bourgeois United States of Europe. The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.

—Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930)

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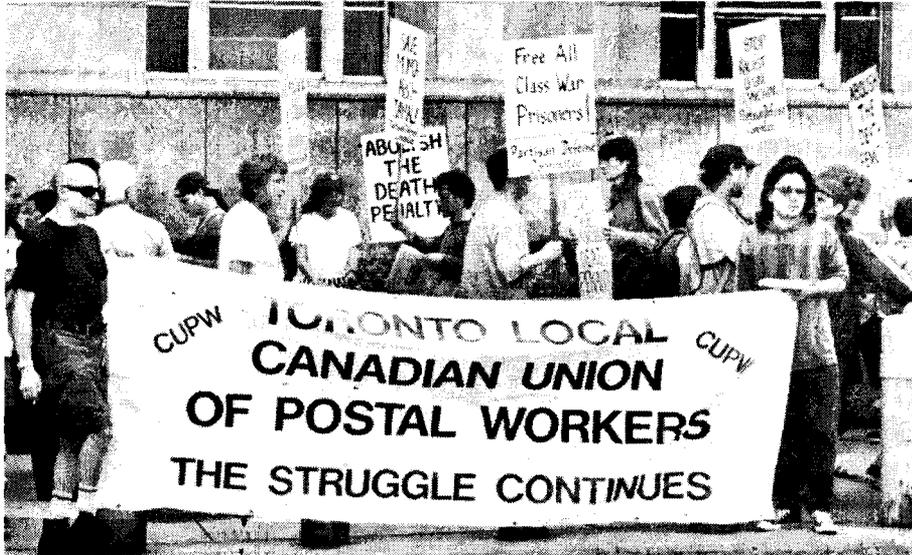
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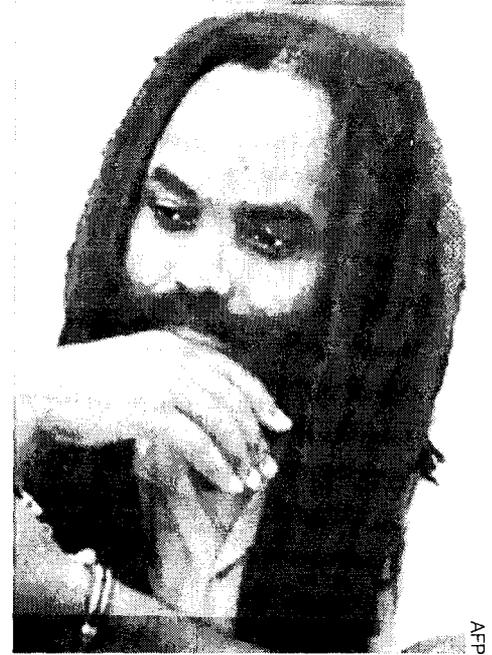


Mobilize Labour Power in Fight to Free Mumia!



SC photo

Worldwide protests won a stay of execution for Mumia Abu-Jamal in August 1995. Left: Partisan Defense Committee-organized labour-centered protest outside U.S. consulate in Toronto, June 1995. Right: Mumia in 1994.



AFP

The Partisan Defense Committee held its annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in December in Toronto and Vancouver, alongside similar gatherings in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. This year's Appeals raised over \$11,000 after expenses for the PDC's program of monthly stipends to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression. The PDC currently sends money to 16 class-war prisoners. The fight for their freedom is in the interests of the entire working class.

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste. A central focus of the Holiday Appeal was the urgent campaign to mobilize mass protest demanding freedom for U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man. While the PDC supports using every legal recourse on Mumia's behalf, we have no illusions in the capitalist court system, but look instead to the mobilization of the social power of the multiracial labour movement.

The fight to free Mumia is at a critical juncture. In May 2007, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Pennsylvania heard oral arguments in Mumia's case, and there could be a decision at any time. Maureen Faulkner, widow of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner, whom Mumia was falsely accused of killing, and right-wing radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish have recently come out with a book, *Murdered by Mumia*, which rehashes vicious lies aiming at the legal lynching of Mumia. As support for capital punishment wanes in the U.S., this tract serves as a rallying cry for the racist death penalty.

Annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

The PDC has issued a new fact sheet pamphlet, *Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching*, which lays out in detail the facts about the frame-up of Mumia, sentenced to death for his political views as a former Black Panther spokesman, supporter of the MOVE organization and journalist widely known as the "voice of the voiceless." Another man, Arnold Beverly, has made a sworn confession that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. If the court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia's appeals for a new trial or a new hearing, the PDC has called for protests the day after the decision. Go to www.partisandefense.org for more information.

Among the speakers at the Toronto Holiday Appeal were Dave Bleakney, National Representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Macdonald Scott, an activist from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and No One Is Illegal; and Kenneth Morgan, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113. In addition to the fight to free Mumia and other class-war prisoners in the U.S., speakers addressed urgent defense cases in Canada including that of Native militant Shawn Brant, who faces nine criminal charges for organizing protests for Native land rights. Kenneth Morgan spoke in particular about Gary Freeman, a black Toronto library worker imprisoned and threatened with extradition to the racist U.S. "justice" system on charges of wounding a Chicago policeman nearly 40 years ago. In January, Freeman withdrew his appeal of the extradition ruling and was handed over to U.S. authorities.

We print below, edited for publication, the speech by
(continued on page 22)

Stop Deportation of Laibar Singh!

VANCOUVER—Since December, the threatened deportation of Laibar Singh, a paralyzed Sikh man from India, has roused protests across the country as thousands have shown their anger at the racist treatment of immigrants and refugees. On December 10, more than 1,000 protesters, overwhelmingly South Asian and including women, children and the elderly, descended on the Vancouver International Airport to stop his planned deportation. A second successful mobilization, hundreds strong, was held a few weeks later to prevent Singh's removal, scheduled for 4:30 a.m., from the Sikh temple where he had taken refuge.

Laibar Singh entered Canada in 2003 seeking refugee status, which was rejected by the government. He later became paralyzed due to a spinal infection that has left him a quadriplegic. Last July, Canadian authorities issued a deportation order after rejecting his appeal to remain on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Given Singh's compromised physical condition, deportation back to India would mean certain death. *Stop the deportation! Give Laibar Singh status in Canada! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

The bourgeois media has stoked racist reaction against Singh and his supporters, invoking the "danger" that Canada's borders will be flooded with "illegal" immigrants. Singh's supporters have received hate email and phone calls, while South Asian students have seen an increase in racist slurs at schools. This comes in the context of stepped-up racism against Third World immigrants under the so-called "war on terror," a political tool by which the imperialist rulers have increased their repressive powers.

Racist hysteria against immigrants from India, particularly Sikhs, has a long history in Canada. From 1903 to 1907, 5,000 Sikhs were brought in to replace Chinese and Japanese immigrants as a source of cheap labour. Most settled in B.C., where they became victims of state-orchestrated racist terror. In 1907, when a recession hit the West Coast, Sikhs were stripped of all voting rights (which they did not regain until 1947), barred from buying public land and thrown out by landlords. Those who left to visit relatives in India were not allowed to return.

In 1914, 376 courageous Sikhs, determined to break Canada's racist colour bar against Asian immigration, sailed into Vancouver harbour aboard the *Komagata Maru*. The government refused to let them land and for two long, hot summer months the passengers were left to perish on board. Denied fresh food or drinking water, they stood down continual harassment by immigration officials and racist mobs on shore. Only after 100 police attempted to board the ship and the government threatened to blow the *Komagata Maru* out of the water did the Sikhs finally concede and sail back to India.

Outrageously, the immigration cops who have been trying to deport Singh are part of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the main union of federal government employees.



noii-van.resist.ca

10 December 2007: Rally at Vancouver airport successfully blocked deportation of Laibar Singh.

The president of their "Customs and Excise Union" complained to the *Globe and Mail* (21 January) that they are "very frustrated about how this case is being handled" by the government, adding, "not removing Mr. Singh makes us look quite impotent and we need to show the public that we do uphold the immigration laws and that we should not bow down to public protests."

This shows with crystal clarity how the cops, including immigration cops, are not workers but agents of the capitalist state, an instrument for organized repression against working people and the oppressed on behalf of the racist ruling class. *Cops, border guards and security guards out of the unions now!*

Due to its centrality in social production, the organized working class, which includes hundreds of thousands of immigrant and ethnic minority workers, has the social power to lead all the oppressed in a struggle to defend immigrant rights. But the workers are disarmed by a union leadership that pushes support to Canadian capitalism and even "organizes" cops and prison screws. As for the labour bureaucrats' political arm, the social-democratic NDP, it too binds the working class to the capitalist state. When in power, as in B.C. in the 1990s, the New Democrats are the enforcers of the racist capitalist order against immigrants, minorities, Native people and organized labour. In 1999, the B.C. NDP government whipped up a racist furor over Chinese migrants, painting them as "criminals" and calling on the federal government to detain them on arrival.

We fight to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party through breaking workers from the politics of the pro-capitalist NDP. Such a party would fight all strains of oppression and exploitation, mobilizing the social power of the working class on behalf of immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities as part of the struggle to sweep away racist capitalism through a socialist revolution. ■

Women's Oppression and Racist Reaction

The "Honour" Killing of Aqsa Parvez

On December 10 last year, Aqsa Parvez, a 16-year-old girl of Pakistani descent in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga, was strangled by her father after she refused to wear the Islamic *hijab* (headscarf). She died in hospital the next day. Aqsa's father has now been charged with murder, while her older brother is charged with obstructing police.

A popular grade 11 student at Applewood Heights Secondary School, Aqsa had recently moved away from home in an attempt to escape the constraints imposed by her religious family. Her death was met with an outpouring of grief from her many friends, including young black women, South Asian and white teenagers and more. Before moving out, one said, she "just wanted to dress like we do." She would take off the headscarf at school and put it back on before she went home. Classmates told the *Toronto Star* (11 December 2007) that Aqsa had been arguing with her parents for months about wearing the *hijab*. "She didn't want to go home...to the point where she actually wanted to go to shelters," said one. "She got threatened by her father and her brother," said another, "He said that if she leaves, he would kill her."

The killing of Aqsa Parvez follows a series of murders of Sikh women in B.C. by their husbands and other relatives. In October 2006, the charred remains of schoolteacher Manjith Panghali were found in Surrey. Her husband and brother-in-law were charged in her murder. Around the same time, Gurjeet Kaur Ghuman, a nurse, was shot in the face, blinded by her husband before he killed himself. Yet another woman, Navreet Kaur Waraich, was stabbed to death—her husband is charged with her murder. South Asian women in the B.C. Lower Mainland organized protests against these murders and attempted murders in the fall of 2006 and again last spring.

Violence against women crosses class and ethnic lines with brutal indifference. But the killings of Aqsa Parvez and the Sikh women in B.C. are something different. Like the murders of Turkish and Kurdish women by male relatives in Germany, Britain, Sweden and other imperialist countries in recent years—and countless more such killings in the Near East, Central and South Asia—these were essentially "honour" killings. These brutal killings grow out of the clash between a woman's desire for independence from "traditional" culture and the legacy of pre-capitalist social and economic norms that persist in large swathes of the world.

"Honour" killings reflect the treatment of women as the property of fathers or husbands. Like most teenage girls,

Aqsa Parvez wanted to make her own decisions about how to dress, what friends to have, what her future should be. But for her father this was an affront to his control of his daughter as prescribed by Islam.



Aqsa Parvez

Toronto Star

A pattern among the Sikh women victims in B.C. was their relative economic independence, with jobs as teachers, nurses, software engineers, etc. Such independence clashes with traditional Sikh society, where arranged marriages and dowry are the norm. There has also been a rise in selective abortion of girl fetuses among South Asians in the Vancouver area. In January, a Sikh man in suburban Delta, reportedly distraught at having three daughters but no sons, was charged with murdering his youngest daughter, two-year-old Rajvinder Kahlon.

These killings highlight the explosive mixture of women's oppression and anti-immigrant racism in Canada today. Sections of the bourgeois media have sought to exploit them to whip up anti-immigrant bigotry.

After the Aqsa Parvez killing, right-wing *Toronto Sun* columnist Peter Worthington headlined his 14 December 2007 column, "Girl's Death Puts Islam in Hot Seat." A conservative blogger called to boycott taxis driven by Muslims (Aqsa's father is a cab driver). Others railed against multiculturalism and called for state bans or restrictions on Islamic dress.

We denounce all attempts to exploit these horrible crimes to fuel reaction against immigrants and ethnic minorities. We call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, denounce the scapegoating of Muslims under the bourgeoisie's "war on terror," and defend the rights of ethnic minorities to practice their religions. In particular, we oppose state bans on the veil or other religious dress and emblems. This would only serve to further isolate Muslim women in the home, reinforcing social backwardness including the hold of religion and family and deepening their oppression.

At the same time, we solidarize with the many women who have sought to throw off the cruel strictures of religious traditionalism—including the veil, symbol and instrument of the subordination of women under Islam. The racist attacks on Muslims and Sikhs in Canada today in no way mitigate appalling crimes like "honour" killings.

Many Muslim groups denounced the murder of Aqsa Parvez and demanded the prosecution of those responsible. But some claimed this was purely an issue of "domestic violence" and had nothing to do with religion. At a December 13 press conference, a representative of the Canadian Council of Imams condemned the killing, only to add that parents

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**Break With the Democrats!
For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!**

The Obama Campaign and the “End of Racism” Myth

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 906, 18 January), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League.

The candidates of the capitalist Democratic Party say their 2008 campaigns are all about “change.” After seven years of rule by the demented Bush gang (or what’s left of its inner circle), much of the American populace does indeed want change. The widely unpopular, bloody imperialist occupation of Iraq drags on, the economy teeters on recession, the wages and living conditions of those with jobs have taken a pounding, home foreclosures are soaring, civil liberties have been increasingly shredded. The racist atrocity in the face of Hurricane Katrina is the domestic signature of the Bush administration; millions watched angrily as the poor and black residents of New Orleans were left to die or suffer intolerable conditions. From Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo Bay, the lexicon of torture has become a matter of “civilized debate” in bourgeois circles.

The trade-union bureaucrats and the black bourgeois politicians, tailed by the reformist left, seize on social discontent to peddle the lie that support to the “lesser evil” Democratic Party will serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. But the policies pursued by the Bush regime are not simply the product of a particularly vicious administration. Imperialist war, racism and repression are endemic to the capitalist system. As Marxists, we fight to break workers and the oppressed from illusions in the Democrats, the other party of war and racism, and to forge a

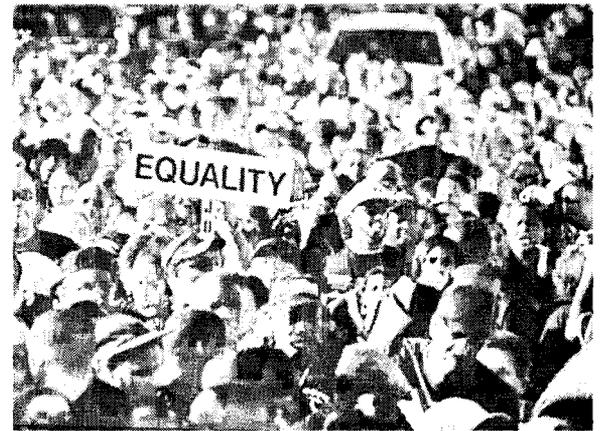
workers party that fights to overturn the capitalist system through workers revolution.

In the 2008 presidential race, the Democrats offer two front-runners who would have been unthinkable even a few years ago: a black man, U.S. Senator Barack Obama, and a woman, former first lady Hillary Clinton. Obama took the Iowa caucuses; Clinton the New Hampshire primary. The third top candidate in the Democratic Party race, former vice presidential candidate Senator John Edwards, poses as a populist out to fight the “special interests” and “corporate greed.” In stump speeches, they’re all for “healing,” “hope” and “unity.” They’re “fired up and ready to go,” not least to restore the battered image of U.S. imperialism in the world, including with some belated nods to the popular demand to withdraw sooner rather than later from Iraq.

The Democrats’ rhetoric is meant to refurbish illusions that the shell game of bourgeois electoral politics can work in the interests of the working masses. The Republicans revel in inflicting suffering on working people and the oppressed. Just look at the Republican debates where the candidates were competing over who could be the most racist and anti-immigrant bigot. For their part, the Democrats put on a more kindly face, the better to deceive the working people and give a more popular facade to the racist capitalist status quo. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin captured it in his 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*, “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real



AP



Winter/NY Times

New Orleans, September 2005: Hurricane Katrina survivors abandoned by racist capitalist rulers (left). Demonstrators from all over the U.S. rallied in Jena, Louisiana, on 20 September 2007 against Jim Crow persecution of six black youth.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!



AFP

Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama.

and Friedrich Engels taught long ago, the capitalist government is the executive committee that manages the affairs of the capitalist class as a whole. In the U.S., the president is the chief executive responsible for the most massive military power in history and for the domestic machinery of repression that maintains social oppression and exploitation. To run for executive office means to aspire to be the next Commander-in-Chief who decides who gets tortured, who gets bombed, who gets invaded (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 60, Autumn 2007).

At the time of the 2006 midterm elections, we wrote in "For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!" (*WV* No. 881, 24 November 2006):

"Our task in analyzing social discontents, including as revealed through the distorted prism of the elections, is to lay bare the irreconcilable class antagonisms at the base of this society. It is the working class, with its strategic black component, that produces the wealth of society. This is the only social force with the objective interest and potential social power to smash the capitalist system and lay the basis for the construction of an egalitarian socialist society. We stand for the *complete political independence of the proletariat from all capitalist parties—Democrat, Republican and Green.*"

Democratic Party vs. Black Liberation

Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan father and a white American mother, is perceived as a charismatic, honest politician, above the mudslinging and corruption that define American politics. He is particularly popular among college youth. And in the face of the history of black oppression in this country, the possibility of the election of the first black president, whatever his actual policies, will likely propel many even previously skeptical black people to support him. If this deeply racist country, where religious obscurantism and anti-woman bigotry are pervasive, ever sees a black or female president, it would certainly be a significant development. But it would do nothing to change the oppression of women, which is rooted in the institution of the family in class society, or of black people, which forms the cornerstone of American capitalism. Simply put, the liberation of black people and women will not happen short of the destruction of the capitalist system through socialist revolution.

In the eyes of the capitalist rulers, Obama is potentially acceptable as chief executive because his entire campaign is based on the "end of racism" lie, the claim that black oppression has been overcome. Columnist Gary Younge commented in the *Nation* (31 December 2007) that the value of black

essence of bourgeois parliamentarism."

We revolutionary Marxists do not extend any support to any capitalist politician. Nor would we run for executive office—such as mayor, governor or president—ourselves, although Marxists have and can run for parliamentary office as a tactic to propagate our revolutionary program. As Karl Marx

leadership "is, it seems, directly proportional to its distance from the black community and its experiences. Its cheerleaders desire not so much to refashion black politics as to eliminate it altogether, not so much to eliminate racism as to eradicate discussion of it." The article quotes black radical-liberal writer and former Communist Party spokesman Angela Davis aptly noting that Obama "is being consumed as the embodiment of color blindness."

In his speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama declared: "There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America." This message was recently echoed by no less a capitalist mouthpiece than the *Wall Street Journal* (10 November 2007) which headlined: "Whites' Great Hope? Barack Obama and the Dream of a Color-Blind America."

Dream on. A year after Obama's speech to the DNC, the horror of Katrina would expose (again) this present-day liberal lie for what it is. In response to this glaring racist atrocity, Obama declared that "the incompetence was color-blind." What's "color blind" about the ongoing purge of black people from New Orleans? Then when some 50,000 overwhelmingly black people converged upon Jena, Louisiana, in September to protest Jim Crow justice against six black youth, Obama said he just wanted "fairness" and claimed it "isn't a matter of black and white." Tell that to the black people outraged over the proliferation of hangman's nooses around the country after the Jena protest. Those who came out to Jena were mobilized by black Democrats Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson with the aim of funneling anger into the Democratic Party and appeals for "justice" to the federal government. Obama did not even bother to show up.

The daily reality of racist oppression can be measured in astronomical unemployment rates for blacks and decrepit ghetto housing; rampant police terror and the consignment of nearly one million black men and women to America's hellhole prisons, mainly due to the "war on drugs"; prison-like inner-city schools and the purge of black youth from higher education. Obama looks upon all this and claims, as he did in his speech in Selma last year, that the civil rights movement brought America "90 percent of the way" toward racial equality!

Certainly such a position serves Obama's career. It means blaming the oppressed for their oppression. In his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, he declares that "minorities, individually and collectively, have responsibilities as well" for their own condition. They suffer from "too much television," "lack of emphasis on educational achievement" and "the collapse of the two-parent black household." Obama lectures that black people should acknowledge that "perhaps the single biggest thing we could do to reduce such poverty is to encourage teenage girls to finish high school and avoid having children out of wedlock." And "we should also acknowledge that conservatives—and Bill Clinton—were right about welfare," a reference to Clinton's ending of welfare "as we know it," which consigned millions of poor and black people, especially women, to the scrap heap. Such is Obama's program for "change."

Contrary to the myth promoted by Obama and other liberals, black oppression continues to be the central defining feature of U.S. society. It is *materially rooted* in and central to American capitalism. As against both liberal integrationists and black nationalists, our struggle for black liberation is based on the program of *revolutionary integrationism*. While opposing every manifestation of racist oppression, fighting in

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Obama...

(continued from page 7)

particular to mobilize the social power of the multiracial labor movement, we underline that full equality for the black masses requires that the working class rip the economy out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and reorganize it on a socialist basis. Only then will it be possible to eliminate the material roots of black oppression through the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society based on a collectivized economy with jobs and quality housing, health care and education for all.

As we elaborated in "Black and Red," a key document adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League in 1966:

"The struggle of the black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution."

Black Oppression and American Capitalism

The roots of black oppression lie in chattel slavery, smashed only by blood and iron in the Civil War, the Second American Revolution. In this "conflict between the system of slavery and the system of free labor," as Karl Marx described it, some 200,000 black troops entered the fight and helped turn the tide for the Northern Union Army.

Despite the victory over the slavocracy and installation of the most democratic period for black people in American history under Radical Reconstruction, the promise of black freedom was betrayed as Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen. The Compromise of 1877 sealed this betrayal and, with the withdrawal of the remaining troops of the Union Army from the South, a new system of racist exploitation was established through the systematic repression of black people's fight for land, education and civil rights. The former slaves became tenants and sharecroppers toiling on land owned by the white propertied class, consisting of elements of the old slavocracy and a new Southern bourgeoisie with strong ties to Northern capital. Jim Crow segregation

became entrenched, enforced and maintained by Klan terror and police-state repression. Black people were effectively completely disenfranchised.

The Southern Jim Crow system made an imprint on the entire country. The capitalist rulers have long fomented ethnic and religious hatred. Well into the 20th century, the central dividing line was one which pitted "native" Protestants against mainly Catholic German, Irish, Italian and other immigrant workers. With the mass migration of blacks from the South to the industrial cities of the North, particularly during World Wars I and II, the bourgeoisie promoted anti-black racism, making the color bar a fundamental dividing line that has served to obscure the irreconcilable class divide. All this has served to retard the political consciousness of the American proletariat. The U.S. is the only industrial country where the workers have not historically had their own independent political party, even a reformist one, reflecting the interests of labor, which are counterposed to the interests of capital.

The courageous struggles of the black and white foot soldiers of the civil rights movement in the 1950s-'60s played an instrumental role in overturning Jim Crow. The creation of a Southern black proletariat fundamentally eroded the Jim Crow system of segregation. The bourgeoisie eventually acquiesced to legal equality in the South, in part because Jim Crow had become an embarrassment to U.S. imperialism's posture as the defender of "democracy" and "human rights" in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the industrial and military powerhouse of the non-capitalist world.

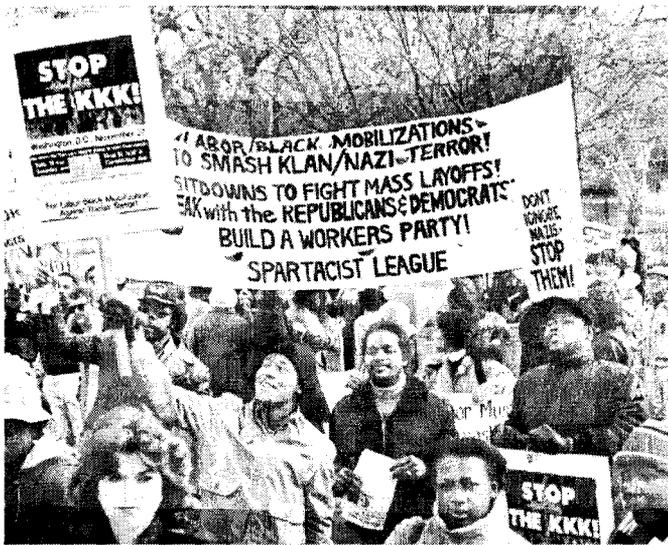
The struggle for black equality intersected growing discontent and opposition to U.S. imperialism's losing counterrevolutionary war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. The potential for an explosive and revolutionary transformation of American society was evident. But from its onset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The aim of liberal-pacifist leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. was to pressure the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to grant formal, legal equality. In the context of the current spat between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama over her claim that Johnson did more than King for black rights, it is worth recalling that King supported the suppression of the 1965 Watts ghetto revolt while Johnson dispatched federal troops to crush the 1967 Detroit upheaval.

In the 1960s, the Spartacist League, despite our small forces, put forward the perspective of a class-struggle fight for black freedom. As we stated in our Programmatic Statement, "For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism":

"In our intervention into the civil rights movement, the Spartacist League raised the call for a South-wide Freedom Labor Party as an expression of working-class political independence and the need to mobilize the labor movement to fight for black emancipation. This was linked to a series of other transitional demands aimed at uniting black and white workers in struggle against the capitalist class enemy, like organizing the unorganized and a sliding scale of wages and hours to combat inflation and unemployment. We called for armed self-defense against racist terror and for a workers united front against government intervention, both in the labor movement and in the use of federal troops to suppress black plebeian struggles. This program is no less urgent today."

The bankruptcy of the liberal program of the civil rights movement's leadership was quickly revealed when the

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Workers Vanguard

Demonstrators at Spartacist League/U.S.-initiated labour/black mobilization that stopped the KKK in Washington D.C., November 1982.

movement swept out of the South and into the North, where black people already had formal legal equality. The struggle for a fundamental change in conditions of life in the ghettos—for real equality, for jobs, decent housing and adequate schools—collided head-on with the realities of American capitalism. Many black militants, frustrated with and opposed to liberal conciliationism, turned to black nationalism, which rejects the multiracial working class as the motor force for revolutionary struggle against this racist capitalist system.

The bourgeoisie responded to growing black militancy—represented by Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party and others—with vicious repression, killing 38 Panthers and imprisoning hundreds more through COINTELPRO. Police repression along with cop riots in major U.S. cities resulted in the spontaneous eruption of ghetto rebellions across the country. At the same time, the bourgeoisie sought to and did co-opt a layer of the liberal black misleaders into the Democratic Party, reflected in the election of a number of black mayors in major American cities over the next couple of decades.

By the late 1960s, a racist backlash was already beginning, and in succeeding decades many of the gains of the civil rights period were reversed or eroded. A key turning point was the defeat of busing in Boston in 1974-75 on the streets by racist mobs and in government halls by liberal politicians. Last year's Supreme Court decision overturning school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville eviscerates the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that banned school segregation. The racist backlash was soon followed by an onslaught against the labor movement, exemplified by the 1981 smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union by the Reagan administration using plans drawn up by the Democratic Carter administration.

Barack Obama is a beneficiary of the civil rights movement. He also embodies the utter failure of bourgeois liberalism to address the needs of the black masses. A graduate of Harvard Law School, and the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*, Obama's rise to political prominence was meteoric, an effort helped in no small part by elements within the Chicago Democratic Party Daley machine. Twenty years earlier, during Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign, in

which he won 13 primaries and caucuses and got over seven million votes, we pointed out in "Jesse Jackson, Racism and the Democratic Party" (WV No. 451, 22 April 1988):

"Class divisions are sharpening within the black population, marked by the gulf between a thin layer of black professionals, who poured through the gates forced open by the civil rights movement, and the massive 'black underclass' of the permanently unemployed, swollen through the devastation of American industry in the '70s and '80s."

When Jesse Jackson ran for the Democratic nomination in 1984 as part of forming his Rainbow Coalition and again in 1988, he was attempting to exert pressure on the party, including through bringing in more voters, but had no chance of nomination. Obama's campaign today, however, poses the possibility of the election of the first black president. And he may well face attack from racist vigilantes and terrorists; threats along those lines have led to the early assignment of Secret Service protection. As a black worker in North Carolina bluntly put it: "I think he will certainly need to beef up his security, because I think there's these wackos that will go to any extent to make sure he doesn't win" (*Washington Post*, 5 January).

When black Democrat Harold Washington was elected mayor of Chicago in 1983 and faced a vicious racist backlash, we underlined that "Washington has the right to take office with all the normal prerogatives. Blacks have a right to elect whoever they want to office" (WV No. 326, 25 March 1983). But as opposed to many on the reformist left, we refused to give one ounce of political support to this longtime machine Democrat and warned, "Harold Washington Will Betray Black Chicago" (WV No. 328, 22 April 1983). And, indeed, he did, slashing jobs, services and overseeing Chicago's murderous police department.

It is the role of black elected officials to keep a lid on social struggle and administer racist capitalist rule. As former New York City Democratic mayor David Dinkins quipped when he was running for office in 1989, "They'll take it from me." A grotesque example was the 1985 bombing of the MOVE commune in Philadelphia, which slaughtered eleven black men, women and children and destroyed an entire black neighborhood. This was carried out by black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode in collusion with the Feds.

Obama and the Fake Left

The way forward in the struggle against this deeply racist capitalist system is to break the political chains that bind workers, blacks, immigrants and the oppressed to their class enemy, particularly through support to the Democratic Party. This means waging a political struggle not only against the labor tops, many of whom are leading lights within the Democratic Party, but also against the reformist left. Today, as Obama's popularity mounts especially among blacks and youth, the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) paints him as a symbol for "those who want a break with the stale right-wing orthodoxy that has dominated mainstream politics for a generation" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 January).

Despite various criticisms of Obama, the ISO made clear its stand when at an 11 February 2007 rally at the University of Illinois at Chicago campus ISO-led protesters unfurled a banner pleading: "Obama: Stand Up! Cut the funding!" (for the Iraq war). This is part of their fight to give the Democrats "a backbone," which is supposed to be provided by "a grass-roots antiwar movement that can pressure politicians from

(continued on page 10)

Obama...

(continued from page 9)

outside the established party system" (*Socialist Worker*, 2 March 2007). Of course, no less an establishment Democrat than John Kerry has endorsed Obama, who has also received significant support from Wall Street financiers.

The Workers World Party (WWP) is more blatant; the conclusion of its editorial "Behind the Votes for Obama & Rodham Clinton" (*Workers World*, 9 January) unmistakably leaves open the possibility of support to this capitalist politician:

"With an Obama candidacy, working-class and revolutionary organizations will have to stay sensitive to the impact of racism on the electoral campaign, even as the left differentiates itself from Obama as well as the Republican [sic]. The left will also have to adjust its approach should there be an active intervention of the population in the electoral process, especially if an economic or war crisis arises during the election."

Indeed, WWP supported Jackson in 1988 and other black Democrats such as Congressional candidate Cynthia McKinney in 2004 and New York City Council member Charles Barron in 2006. For his part, Barron raised the slogan: "Let's get back to Black and vote for Barack" (*Amsterdam News*, 15 November 2007).

Obama is, in fact, to the right of both Clinton and Edwards on many domestic issues. He is at one with the Clintonian "center" in support of the racist, barbaric death penalty. In the context of vicious attacks on immigrants, he wrote in *The Audacity of Hope*: "I'm not entirely immune to such nativist sentiments. When I see Mexican flags waved at pro-immigration demonstrations, I sometimes feel a flush of patriotic resentment." Along with Clinton, Obama's "patriotism" led him to support the "Secure Fence Act," mandating the construction of a 700-mile wall along the U.S.-Mexican border.

As for his international policy, in addition to a cautious and uneven opposition to the Iraq war and occupation, Obama's article on "Renewing American Leadership" in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007) is instructive. He makes clear that he wants to bring the occupation of Iraq to a "responsible end" in order to redeploy and *significantly escalate* American military forces and operations around the world. Like the other Democrats, Obama is foursquare behind the murderous occupation of Afghanistan. He is bellicose against Pakistan, as well as Iran and the North Korean deformed workers state, writing: "We must develop a strong international coalition to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons pro-

gram.... In confronting these threats, I will not take the military option off the table."

He goes on to proclaim: "To defeat al Qaeda, I will build a twenty-first-century military and twenty-first-century partnerships as strong as the anticommunist alliance that won the Cold War to stay on the offense everywhere from Djibouti to Kandahar." It is no accident that Obama's foreign policy consigliere is one Zbigniew Brzezinski, the veteran of Cold War II who, as part of Jimmy Carter's Democratic administration, worked to militarily and ideologically rearm U.S. imperialism after its humiliating defeat at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants. The Carter administration launched an anti-Communist "human rights" campaign against the Soviet Union, including massive support to Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan against the Soviet Red Army's intervention on the side of elementary human progress.

For the most part, the reformists marched in lockstep with the imperialists during Cold War II. Today, in the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, they have given up even lip service to the struggle for proletarian revolution. As revolutionary Trotskyists, we stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe while fighting for political revolution to oust the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and install regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. Today, we apply this same program to the remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

The restoration of capitalism in the USSR was a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat. Today, rapacious U.S. imperialism declares itself the superpower of a "one superpower" world, and the capitalists internationally are intensifying their class war against working people, immigrants and the oppressed. Retrograde "death of communism" consciousness has led to a number of backward offspring, from the mythology of the "end of racism" to widespread despair among working people over their ability to fundamentally ameliorate their conditions. It is a telling statement of the decomposition of the left that radical-liberal writer Alexander Cockburn is now promoting right-wing libertarian Republican Ron Paul—a fanatical proponent of "free market" capitalism—as a "principled fellow" and "a candidate leftists can and should support" (*Nation*, 21 January).

There will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black and Latino poor. It is necessary to fight for a new, class-struggle leadership in the labor movement that fights to mobilize and extend union power not only in defense of workers' livelihoods but also to combat racist discrimination and anti-immigrant attacks. Such a class-struggle leadership would fight against deportations and to organize immigrant workers, demanding full citizenship rights for all immigrants. As we wrote in our Programmatic Statement:

"Despite the destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, who have a significantly higher rate of trade-union membership than do white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, which alone has the power to shatter this racist, capitalist system. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party." ■

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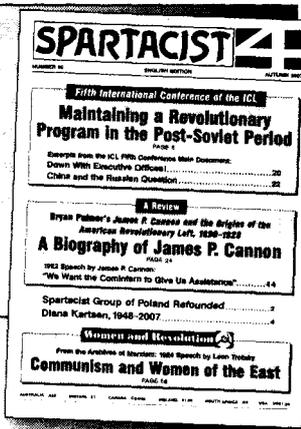
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Racist Graffiti at York Targets Black Students

On January 24, hundreds of students, organized by the York University Black Students' Alliance (YUBSA), rallied at York University in Toronto to protest racist graffiti scrawled on and around the doors of YUBSA's office. Reading "N-----s go back to Africa" and "all n-----s must die," this cowardly act was a deadly serious provocation to racist violence against blacks.

This attack takes place in the context of a series of racist provocations across the U.S., where nooses have been hung at workplaces, homes and schools to terrorize black people. Supporters of the Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club participated in the York rally, adding our voices in protest and discussing with students about articles in *Workers Vanguard* on the 50,000-strong protest against the racist frame-up of six black youth in Jena, Louisiana last September. Students were also interested in our newspapers and pamphlets on the fight to free U.S. death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

At the rally, York University president Mamdouh Shoukri attempted to take the stage, only to be rebuffed by angry students critical of the administration's failure to respond to the racist slurs. As president, Shoukri's job is to ensure that the university serves the needs of the capitalist ruling class. To this end, the York administration has targeted opponents of Zionist terror in the Near East and other political activists for repression. Immediately before the rally, a woman student, Amy Hussey, was hauled into a security office and banned from the university for 12 hours based on allegations that she tagged the slogan "White supremacists go back to HELL" on the walls of the Student Centre. We say: Abolish the administration! Those who work, study and teach at the universities should run them—for worker/student/teacher control!

There were calls from many quarters for "more security" at York. The executive director of the Student Centre said they have "given consideration to installing CCTV [closed-circuit television] cameras," while YUBSA, joined by the York Federation of Students and the reformist Young Communist League, demanded that METRAC, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, be hired to conduct a "safety audit" of the campus. METRAC, which touts itself as being an "anti-oppression" grassroots organization, is essentially an arms-length agency of "community policing." METRAC's first Board of Directors was headed by then-Police Commissioner Jane Pepino, and it boasts of working closely with the police in all its ventures. Located adjacent to the heavily minority Jane-Finch corridor in Toronto, York is already regularly patrolled by uniformed security guards, who harass black youth coming



Janique Allen

Protest at York University against racist graffiti on January 24.

onto the campus to visit their friends. Calls for tightened "security" will necessarily come at the expense of black and other minority youth. Cops off campus!

YUBSA speakers also expressed solidarity with the recent walkout of black jail guards at the Don Jail who had received vile racist death threats from other guards. Marxists oppose racist attacks regardless of what sector of society is the target. But jail guards are part of the bourgeois state—the capitalists' institution of repression against the working class, the poor and minorities. Looking to the state or its agents as a potential ally in the struggle against racism is a deadly dangerous illusion.

From the platform of the January 24 protest, the call was put forward for "black schools" to address the systemic racism faced by black students in the school system. Toronto school board trustees recently voted to approve measures that would create public schools with an "Africentric" curriculum. The idea that the everyday, grinding racial oppression faced by black youth can be addressed by an adjusted curriculum in separate schools is a reactionary utopia. The Spartacus Youth Club fights for *free, quality, integrated education for all!* To provide real access to higher education, we call for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students, and an end to the racist "tracking" system in the high schools.

The SYC seeks the mobilization of the social power of the multiracial working class against racist provocations. We fight against any illusions in the capitalist state (or the campus administration) that perpetuates the status quo, and for the forging of a multiracial, revolutionary workers party that can lead the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system of racism and war root and branch. ■



Left: Leaders of failed, U.S.-backed coup against Chávez in 2002. Right: November 2007 demonstration in Caracas organized by rightist bourgeois forces calls for “no” vote against Chávez referendum.

Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

suppression of the working class and oppressed in defense of the capitalist social order. Any augmentation of the Venezuelan capitalist state powers will be used against the working class when it struggles for its *own* class interests. As Marx and Engels put it following the experience of the Paris Commune, when the Parisian proletariat held power for nearly three months in 1871 before being bloodily crushed, “One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz. that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes’” (1872 Preface to the German Edition of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels).

As Marxists who fight for proletarian socialist revolution to smash the bourgeois state and put in its place a workers state, we were for a “no” vote on Chávez’s referendum. At the same time, we make clear our intransigent opposition to the right-wing forces that mobilized against the referendum. Chávez has provoked the ire of the U.S. imperialist rulers, Democrats as well as Republicans. In the event of a U.S.-sponsored coup, as in 2002, we stand for the military defense of the Chávez regime without giving it one iota of political support, as with Loyalist Spain from 1936-39.

The fact that most ostensible Marxist organizations either openly supported or abstained on Chávez’s referendum is testimony to both their own political bankruptcy and Chávez’s popularity. The very things that have made Chávez a thorn in the side of the arrogant U.S. rulers have made him an idol for the impoverished masses in Venezuela and for large numbers of young leftists around the world. Chávez has bitingy castigated the Bush administration and ostentatiously embraced Washington’s chief nemesis in the Western Hemisphere, Cuban leader Fidel Castro. He has condemned the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the threats against Iran and denounced the “neoliberal” economic policies promoted by the U.S. in Latin America and elsewhere. He embarrassed the Bush administration in 2005 when he offered to provide relief for the dispossessed people of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (the offer was rejected). And as the U.S. heads toward a recession, Venezuela, through its CITGO affiliate, is once again supplying low-cost heating oil this winter to poor families in 23 states in the U.S.

Chávez is a populist who has used profits generated by the

skyrocketing cost of oil to implement a series of social reforms. He has also undertaken some minimal nationalization of industry and land distribution. These measures, together with the fact that Chávez boasts of his *zambo* (mixed African and indigenous) heritage, have earned him the contempt of the lily-white Venezuelan oligarchy.

But Chávez is no socialist. And by historical standards, he is not even a particularly radical bourgeois nationalist. Mexico’s Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized that country’s oil industry, which was owned by the U.S. and British imperialists, and made significant land redistributions in the 1930s. While we defend such bourgeois nationalizations against imperialist attack, they are not socialist measures. In the case of Mexico, the subordination of the working class to Cárdenas resulted in more than 60 years of corporatism and the shackling of the proletariat to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the bourgeois ruling party until 2000.

It is a sign of the times that Chávez today is embraced as the leader of the fight for “21st century socialism.” As we wrote in “Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Proletarian Revolution” (SC No. 148, Spring 2006):

“The popularity of Chávez and his ‘Bolivarian Revolution’ among idealistic young leftists—and wizenod opportunists—must be understood against the backdrop of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Among radical youth, nurtured by more than a decade of ‘death of communism’ propaganda from the ‘left’ and the right, the October Revolution is widely perceived to have been a ‘failed experiment.’ They reject as well the Marxist understanding that the working class is the unique agency for social revolution against the capitalist order. Moreover, capitalism has, by and large, been equated with that particular set of economic policies known as ‘neoliberalism’—widespread privatization of public facilities, destruction of social welfare programs, untrammled imperialist aggrandizement.

“The recent history of Venezuela amply demonstrates that neoliberalism and populism are nothing but two faces of the same coin, sometimes carried out by the same bourgeois regime in different periods.”

Indeed, in Venezuela in the mid 1970s Democratic Action (AD) president Carlos Andrés Pérez nationalized oil and mining. Similarly buoyed by booming oil revenues, the Pérez regime also massively subsidized food, transportation, health care and education. When the boom went bust, the Pérez regime itself

then instituted brutal austerity measures beginning in the 1980s against the country's working and poor people.

Today's high oil prices, again, allow for limited reforms. But the very workings of the capitalist system ensure the continued exploitation and impoverishment of the Venezuelan masses. In fact, Chávez's referendum was narrowly defeated largely because the masses of urban poor, who poured out in the streets against the 2002 coup and were the base of Chávez's landslide victory in the 2006 elections with over seven million votes, largely sat this referendum out. As a woman from one of Caracas' wretched slums put it: "If this government cannot get me milk or asphalt for our roads, how is it going to give my mother a pension" (*New York Times*, 30 November 2007).

As against Chávez's populist nationalism, it is necessary to mobilize the proletariat, standing at the head of all the downtrodden and oppressed, in the struggle for socialist revolution against all wings of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie, which is tied by a thousand threads to the imperialist order. Only thus can the struggle for national independence and other democratic tasks be realized in such countries of belated capitalist development in the imperialist epoch. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, stressed in his "Basic Postulates" in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

"The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution."

There can be no fundamental amelioration of the plight of the urban and rural poor without the smashing of the capitalist state and the overthrow of the capitalist social order, laying the basis through a series of proletarian revolutions internationally for a global classless society in which all forms of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated. Crucially, this means linking the struggles of the Latin American masses to the fight for socialist revolution in the U.S.

Reformist Apologists for Chávez Regime

Under the Chávez regime, the Venezuelan bourgeoisie has made out very well (and foreign oil companies haven't done badly themselves). According to the World Bank, the richest

20 percent of the population continue to pocket 53 percent of all income while the poorest 20 percent are the recipients of a miserly 3 percent. While raking off massive profits, much of the bourgeoisie is taking its money out of the country as well as hoarding its products, resulting in soaring inflation and shortages of food and other basic necessities.

Workers who have occupied factories that have been bankrupted by their owners or shut down, like those at Sanitarios Maracay, have found themselves on the receiving end of the armed forces of the Chávez regime. In April 2007, as they made their way to Caracas to demand the nationalization of the company, workers from this factory were stopped by state police and army forces who fired on them, leaving 14 wounded and 21 arrested. Similarly, representatives of the public employees trade union who had gone to negotiate a contract with the Ministry of Labor in August 2007 were locked inside a room at the ministry and six days later driven out by hired thugs.

None of this has stopped self-proclaimed Marxists from cheering on Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution." Among the most shameless is the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods who boasts of his credentials as a "Trotskyist" adviser to Chávez. In the lead-up to the referendum vote, the IMT's Venezuelan section, the Revolutionary Marxist Current (CMR), issued a 30 November 2007 statement calling for "an avalanche of votes in favour," declaring that a victory "will be a new step forward for the revolution." Incredibly, the CMR claimed that the victory of Chávez's referendum would have marked "the end of the bourgeois state apparatus"!

The CMR claims that to have called for a "no" vote would have played into the hands of "the capitalists, imperialism and the bureaucrats." This line is echoed by a number of other left groups, including the Revolutionary Leftist Youth (JIR), Venezuelan section of the Trotskyist Fraction-Fourth International, a split from the international tendency led by the late Nahuel Moreno. The JIR proclaimed, "we don't support this referendum because it upholds the legal basis for capitalism, the continuity of exploitation of the workers in the city and the countryside, securing the class society framework." Nonetheless, the JIR justified its call for abstention by arguing that "the call by some left-wing sectors for a NO vote, which mixes their banners with the pro-American right, is an attack on a position of class independence" (*En Clave Obrera*, December 2007).

There is no question that the main forces behind the "no" vote were right-wing opponents of the Chávez regime. But to support or abstain on a referendum that would have strengthened the repressive powers of the bourgeois state apparatus is a betrayal of the class interest of the proletariat. The opportunist left promotes the dangerous illusion that the capitalist state can be made to serve the interests of working people and renounces the struggle for socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

(continued on page 14)



Kaos



Marxist.com

Venezuelan troops attack demonstrator from a Sanitarios Maracay workers caravan to Caracas demanding nationalization of factory. Right: Alan Woods of pseudo-Trotskyist International Marxist Tendency embraces Chávez in April 2004.

Venezuela...

(continued from page 13)

The class independence of the working class from *all* the agencies and representatives of bourgeois rule—including the most “progressive” bourgeois forces—is the fundamental starting point for the working class to struggle for its own class interests. It is essential for the forging of a revolutionary workers party that fights for the overthrow of capitalism and for liberation from the yoke of imperialist subjugation.

Fake Trotskyists Prettify Bourgeois Nationalism

In its article on the Chávez referendum (*Workers Power*, Winter 2007-08), the British Workers Power group, leading section of the League for the Fifth International, quotes Trotsky from his article “Bourgeois Democracy and the Fight Against Fascism” (13 January 1936) correctly urging, “We must vote against *all measures* that strengthen the capitalist-Bonapartist state, even those measures which may for the moment cause temporary unpleasantness for the fascists.” Workers Power immediately adds: “The presidency—no matter who occupies it—remains an institution of the bourgeois state which be it said revolutionaries are in favour of totally abolishing.” Their conclusion? To call for an abstention on measures, which by their own admission, would strengthen the powers of the bourgeois state!

Similarly, the centrist Internationalist Group (IG) argued that the referendum was “a program for a bonapartist ‘strong state’ regime” and concluded that “for socialists to approve such measures would be to renounce the program of proletarian revolution” (*Internationalist*, December 2007). And so, the IG urged “class-conscious Venezuelan workers”...“to *cast a blank ballot*” or “abstain.” So much for the program of proletarian revolution!

That neither Workers Power nor the IG, for all their orthodox-sounding disclaimers, could choke out a call for a “no” vote is sheer opportunism. Both Workers Power and the IG point to Venezuela as a bourgeois state. But they do not want to be seen as opponents of Chávez’s referendum. The bombastic cries of “class war” and “a fight to the finish against the counterrevolutionaries” by the IG serve to promote the fraud—openly peddled by Chávez’s more unabashed left apologists—that there is an ongoing revolution in Venezuela. Thus the IG’s December 2007 article called to “Impose Workers Control on the Road to Socialist Revolution” and to “Smash Counterrevolution with Workers Mobilization!” All this talk of Venezuela “on the road” to socialism is deliberately crafted to obscure the fact that Chávez is administering a capitalist state.

It is worth noting that a few years ago the IG was whistling a different tune. In the face of a 2000 referendum by Chávez aimed at busting the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), an article posted on the IG’s Web site in Spanish headlined, “Against Chávez, the Stock Market and the IMF—Venezuela: Mobilize Workers Power to Defeat the Anti-Union Referendum.” We too opposed this referendum and defended the CTV unions against government attack and control. However, the IG depicted Chávez as simply a stooge of the Caracas stock exchange and the imperialists and played down the real dangers of U.S. intervention, as well as the CTV’s organic ties to the bourgeois AD and its historic connections to the CIA’s “labour” fronts in Latin America.

As we observed in “Opportunism Makes Strange Bedfellows” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 787, 20 September 2002), “It

didn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that the U.S. imperialists had it in for Chávez. Only idiots or CIA apologists could gloss over that fact.” We also found the IG’s denunciations of Chávez something of an unnatural act: “Given its history of lining up behind ‘anti-imperialist’ nationalists from Mexico to Puerto Rico and beyond, one could have expected the IG to cozy up to the nationalist-populist Chávez.” And so it has come to pass.

Following Chávez’s landslide victory in the 2006 elections, much of the left was heralding his calls to deepen the “revolutionary process” through more nationalizations, the creation of “communal councils” and the foundation of the thoroughly bourgeois United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) as some harbinger of a revolutionary assault on the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. The IG followed suit by defending Chávez when he revoked the broadcasting license of RCTV, one of the main media mouthpieces for the 2002 coup. In “Venezuela: Battle Over the Media” (*Internationalist*, July 2007), the IG argued that “in revolutionary conditions or wars, democratic questions are subordinate to fundamental class issues.”

For Marxists, democratic questions are *always* subordinate to the class line. That said, there is neither a revolution nor a civil war in Venezuela today. For his part, Chávez made clear at a mass rally in Caracas where he announced the revoking of RCTV’s license: “We have no plan to eliminate the oligarchy, Venezuela’s bourgeoisie. We have demonstrated this sufficiently in our eight years” (quoted in *International Socialist Review*, July-August 2007).

As Trotsky wrote in a 1938 article against a campaign by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the leader of the CTM union federation in Mexico under the Cárdenas regime, “to ‘curb’ the reactionary press, either by placing it under a democratic censorship or by banning it altogether”:

“Both theory and historical experience testify that any restriction of democracy in bourgeois society is, in the final analysis, invariably directed against the proletariat!... Bourgeois democracy is of use to the proletariat only insofar as it opens up the way for the development of the class struggle. Consequently, any working class ‘leader’ who arms the bourgeois state with special means for controlling public opinion in general and the press in particular is, precisely, a traitor. In the last analysis, the sharpening of the class struggle will impel the bourgeoisie of every stripe to reach an agreement among themselves; they will then pass special laws, all sorts of restrictive measures, and all kinds of ‘democratic’ censorship against the working class. Anyone who has not yet understood this should get out of the ranks of the working class.”

—“Freedom of the Press and the Working Class,”
21 August 1938

In its article on RCTV, the IG shamelessly equates the bourgeois Venezuelan regime of Hugo Chávez to the Soviet government in Russia *after* the Bolshevik-led workers revolution had smashed the capitalist state and established a *workers state*. The IG writes:

“In a 9 November 1917 decree of the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin ordered that only those papers be shut down which ‘(1) call for open resistance or insubordination to the *Workers’ and Peasants’ Government*; (2) sow sedition through demonstrably slanderous distortion of facts; (3) instigate actions of an obviously criminal, i.e., criminally punishable, nature.’ *RCTV (and other networks) in Venezuela filled all three criteria.*” [emphasis added]

Continuing in the same vein, the IG writes in its December 2007 article on the referendum that Chávez “expresses admiration for the Russian Revolutionary Leon Trotsky, but his actual policies are far more timid.” More timid?! Trotsky was a leader



Voltaire.net

Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas announces nationalization of oil industry in 1938.

of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. According to the IG, being “more timid” is what separates the bourgeois-populist Chávez from a revolutionary leader of the international proletariat!

For all its pronouncements that Venezuela is a bourgeois state, the IG repeatedly draws analogies and makes comparisons with countries where capitalism was overthrown. The IG opines that “while Chávez may slough off pro-capitalist elements the way East European Stalinists got rid of bourgeois ministers one by one through ‘salami tactics’ after World War II, there is no Red Army occupying Venezuela to serve as ultimate arbiter and power base for erecting a deformed workers state.” This analogy is as breathtaking as it is outrageous. The East European countries were not bourgeois states after they were occupied by the Red Army following its victory over Hitler’s Nazis. Rather, the power of former puppet regimes of the Third Reich was broken when the Nazis were smashed, leaving behind a power vacuum that was filled by the Soviet Army. Confronted with the onset of the imperialist anti-Soviet Cold War, the Stalinists established deformed workers states as a “buffer zone” through cold social transformations from above.

In raising this surreal analogy, the IG’s not-so-subtle implication is that the bourgeois Chávez government is some kind of “transitional regime” that might accept or overthrow capitalism. Thus the IG consolidates its position on the left end of the spectrum of Bolivarian “Trotskyism.”

We have characterized the IG’s politics as “Pabloism of the second mobilization,” referring to the liquidationist current led by Michel Pablo that destroyed the Trotskyist Fourth International in the early 1950s. Faced with the onset of the imperialist Cold War and the creation of Stalinist-ruled deformed workers states in East and Central Europe, the Pabloites looked to non-proletarian forces and argued that the Stalinists, social democrats and Third World nationalists could be pressured to outline a “roughly” revolutionary course, denying the need for a Trotskyist vanguard party. By the early 1960s, Pablo himself became an adviser to the bourgeois FLN regime in Algeria after it won independence from French imperialism.

Referring to those who would write off the struggle against Pabloism that was led by American Trotskyist James P. Cannon within the Fourth International because of its partial quality, IG leader Jan Norden noted when he was still a

Trotskyist in the International Communist League, “This, in turn, frees the born-yesterday centrists to pursue their eclectic, anti-internationalist lashups with abandon, combining and recombining with other denizens of the pseudo-Trotskyist swamp” (“Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism,” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 4, March 1993). This aptly describes the IG. Their opportunism reflects adaptation to the retrogression of political consciousness in the post-Soviet world, leading them to an increasingly desperate search for, and accommodation to, social forces other than the proletariat and vehicles other than a Leninist vanguard party to advance the struggle for human emancipation. Enter Hugo Chávez.

The Myth of “Workers Control” in Venezuela

The IG’s call to “Impose Workers Control on the Road to Socialist Revolution” purposely confuses the meaning of workers control, which is dual power at the point of production in a revolutionary crisis. In other words, the workers have the power to veto management actions they oppose. Such a situation can only end in either the workers seizing state power through socialist revolution or in the capitalists reasserting their power through counterrevolution. Trotsky wrote in his 20 August 1931 article “Workers’ Control of Production”: “Control can be imposed only by force upon the bourgeoisie, by a proletariat on the road to the moment of taking power from them, and then also ownership of the means of production.”

The IG points to “workers committees which exist in embryonic or developed form in many plants and workplaces” in Venezuela. These committees, which mainly exist in industries that have been nationalized by the state, are in fact co-management schemes with the capitalist state in which the latter holds the whip hand. This is recognized even by the abject reformists of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who write: “Government representatives run the factory, sometimes in coordination with workers’ representatives. At the moment there are about 60 factories under some form of workers’ occupation pressing for nationalisation. Where that has occurred it has taken the form of co-management, which is a long way from workers’ control” (*International Socialism* No. 116, 28 September 2007).

Indeed, these are class-collaborationist schemes aimed at chaining the workers to the capitalist state. The same goes for the “workers cooperatives,” which no less an apologist for the Chávez regime than CMR leader Jorge Martin points out have in many cases “become an excuse for outsourcing of the *labour* force,” i.e., busting the unions. A significant factor behind Chávez’s formation of the PSUV is to maintain government control over the trade unions. As Trotsky wrote in the aftermath of the expropriation of the imperialists’ oil holdings in Mexico by the Cárdenas regime:

“The management of railways, oil fields, etc., through labor organizations has nothing in common with workers’ control over industry, for in the essence of the matter the management is effected through the labor bureaucracy which is independent of the workers but, in return, completely dependent on the bourgeois state. This measure on the part of the ruling class pursues the aim of disciplining the working class, making it more industrious in the service of the common interests of the state, which appear on the surface to merge with the interests of the working class itself.”

—“Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”
(1940)

(continued on page 16)

Venezuela...

(continued from page 15)

The IG points to the wing of the National Workers Union (UNT) headed by Orlando Chirino, which opposed entering the PSUV and called for an abstention in the December referendum, opining that the UNT “has been bedeviled from the beginning by the riddle of how to oppose Chávez’ attacks on the workers while not breaking from the popularity he enjoys among Venezuela’s impoverished masses.” This likewise bedevils the IG. Left unsaid in the IG article is the fact that the UNT was founded by *chavista* union bureaucrats who set up the federation in 2003 under the umbrella of the government. The UNT was created to break up the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, itself a corporatist union tied to the former bourgeois Democratic Action regime and with links to the U.S. imperialists. Chirino’s posture as an advocate of independent unions is belied by his loyalty to the Chávez regime. In an interview with the British SWP’s *International Socialism* (9 May 2007), Chirino boasts of his credentials as a member of “the first political organization to support Hugo Chavez’s presidential candidacy.”

In the same interview, Chirino points to China as part of “international consortia” that are “exploiting our workers more than ever.” He goes on to state that “capitalism was restored in China a number of years ago, and today it is the country where the working class is most exploited. They are modern-day slaves.” In fact, China is a bureaucratically deformed workers state where capitalism was overthrown as a result of the 1949 Revolution, a victory for the international working class. Despite the inroads made by the “market reforms” instituted by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the core of China’s economy remains collectivized. In his anti-China diatribe, Chirino takes his place with much of the reformist left, which, having hailed the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, now line up with their own capitalist rulers and refuse to defend China. This, as they sing the praises of the bourgeois-populist Hugo Chávez and his “Bolivarian Revolution.”

At the same time, numerous leftists and others have falsely compared Chávez to the Castro regime in Cuba. But, like China and *unlike* Venezuela, Cuba is a deformed workers state. When Castro’s Rebel Army marched into Havana in January 1959, the bourgeois army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship shattered. In the face of the hostile encirclement of U.S. imperialism, in 1960-61 the Castro regime nationalized U.S.-owned and domestic capitalist property, marking the expropriation of the Cuban bourgeoisie as a class. This was a social revolution. The existence of the Soviet Union was crucial in providing both an economic lifeline and a military shield that helped stay the hand of the Yankee imperialist colossus just 90 miles away.

As revolutionary Trotskyists who fought for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution, we apply this same program to the remaining deformed workers states of China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. At the same time, we fight for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats—whose dogma of “socialism in one country” serves to undermine the defense of the workers

states—and to establish regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. Those who do not defend the existing gains of the working class cannot conquer new ones. Our military defense of the deformed workers states is part of our struggle for new October Revolutions. Key to our perspective is the fight to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

For Permanent Revolution!

The difference between idealistic young radicals who look to Chávez and the wizened opportunists is that the latter try to pass off support for Chávez as Marxism. Many radical intellectuals and reformist groups peddle Chávez’s invocation of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution as good coin. In this, they turn Trotsky’s theory on its head. Permanent revolution is predicated on the understanding that the bourgeoisie in countries of belated capitalist development, however radical sounding their regimes, are too weak, too fearful of the proletariat and too dependent on imperialist foreign capital, to resolve the problems of political democracy, agrarian revolution and independent national development. Instead, as was borne out in the 1917 Russian Revolution, the accomplishment of these tasks can only be carried out under the class rule of the proletariat.

The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the socialist revolution, but only opens it by changing the direction of social development. The proletariat in power would expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class in order to establish a collectivized planned economy where production is based on social need rather than profit. But short of the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced, industrialized imperialist centers, that social development will be arrested and ultimately reversed. The efforts of U.S. imperialism to bring down the Chávez regime underline the need for proletarian revolutionary internationalism, which is at the core of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. The struggles of the proletariat in the semicolonial countries are necessarily intertwined with the fight for power by workers in the imperialist centers, not least in the U.S.

For all his populist rhetoric, Chávez is no less the class opponent of the victory of the workers and urban and rural poor than his neoliberal opponents. We seek to break the illusions of working people and the oppressed—both in Venezuela and internationally—that the bourgeois Chávez regime can be an agent of social revolution. In contrast, our political opponents accommodate and deepen such illusions. As we wrote in “Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Proletarian Revolution” (SC No. 148, Spring 2006):

“History will reserve a harsh verdict for those ‘leftists’ who promote one or another left-talking capitalist *caudillo*. The way forward for the downtrodden throughout the Americas does not lie through painting nationalist strongmen as revolutionaries and populist forays as revolutions. It lies instead in constructing national sections of a reformed Fourth International in the spirit of uncompromising revolutionary hostility to any and all kinds of capitalist rule. South of the Rio Bravo, such parties will have to be built in political struggle against widespread illusions in populism and nationalism. In the United States, the belly of the imperialist beast, a revolutionary workers party will be built in the struggle to break the proletariat from the Democratic and Republican parties of capital and to replace the pro-imperialist AFL-CIO tops with a class-struggle leadership.”

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 907, 1 February

Aqsa Parvez...

(continued from page 5)

whose daughter abandons the *hijab* “have failed.” “This girl, she refused to stay at home,” he continued, “There were feelings that she is going in some wrong direction...going with some other boy or some other thing” (*National Post*, 14 December 2007). Two women who had taken Aqsa into their home on various occasions interrupted to protest these outrageous remarks, then walked out of the press conference.

“Honour” Killings, Women’s Oppression and the Family

The subjugation of women in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan and India, as well as in immigrant communities within Canada, is not rooted in some uniquely reactionary quality of Islam or Sikhism, as some right-wing ideologues claim. The institution of the family—the main vehicle for the transfer of private property and the regimentation of society—is the main source for the oppression of women. This holds true in the imperialist and neocolonial worlds alike. Christianity too has a long, grisly history of anti-woman brutality, which continues to this day: witness the barbaric “family values” crusades of Christian fundamentalists against abortion, birth control and gay rights.

Nonetheless, the rise of capitalist property and the Enlightenment profoundly undermined backward feudal social relations rooted in agriculture, which were largely swept away as West Europe and later North America developed into advanced industrial societies. The power of the church was constrained, while the status of women improved over time through social struggle. In the Near East and South Asia, however, capitalism arrived belatedly—and it arrived with European colonialism, which allied itself with the local feudal powers. Imperialist penetration blocked the path of social and economic development. Thus the religions of the East did not have to adapt in the same way as Christianity (or Judaism), and anti-woman barbarism has remained correspondingly more profound and overt.

Karl Marx’s close collaborator Friedrich Engels explained the material roots of women’s oppression in his classic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). Under the “primitive communism” of the Stone Age, where a primitive equality prevailed, the division of labour between men and women derived from biology (women had to bear and nurse the young) and implied no subordinate social status. Technological advances, particularly the development of agriculture, created for the first time a social surplus. This was appropriated by a minority, producing the division of society into classes.

With classes came the development of the institution of the family, which Engels called “the world-historic defeat of the female sex.” The biological fact of childbearing and child rearing was henceforth tied to the social oppression of women. As a means of consolidating wealth in the hands of a tiny minority, the patriarchal family decreed monogamy of women to determine inheritance of property. The concept of “family honour,” i.e., control of the sexuality of women by the father or husband, far from being exclusively Islamic or Sikh, is connected to a mode of production where a clan—a series of related extended families—holds and works the land in common. As Engels noted:

“In order to guarantee the fidelity of the wife, that is, the pater-



Didlick/National Post

April 2007 Vancouver rally to protest attacks on South Asian women.

nity of the children, the woman is placed in the man’s absolute power; if he kills her, he is but exercising his right.”

Imperialist Barbarism and the Subjugation of Women

To this day, the rulers of the imperialist world, joined by those in the capitalist neocolonies, reinforce all that is retrograde to shore up their rule. This is shown with crystal clarity in the case of Afghanistan. The U.S. and Canadian imperialists and their apologists have used the brutal oppression of Afghan women under the former Taliban regime as a justification for the neocolonial occupation of that country. But the anti-woman Islamic cutthroats came to power in Afghanistan in the early 1990s *with the support* of U.S. and Canadian imperialism, as well as that of the NDP social democrats. And today’s U.S. puppet regime in Kabul continues and upholds the same hideous oppression of women.

For over a decade starting in 1978-79, the CIA organized and armed the “holy warrior” *mujahedin* against the Soviet Union and its Afghan government allies. This was the first war in modern history in which the rights of women were a central issue. While the Soviet-backed government sought to institute progressive reforms like lowering the bride price to a nominal sum and providing education to women and girls, the CIA’s Afghan cutthroats were known for throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women and shooting schoolteachers who educated girls.

When the Soviets sent troops into Afghanistan at the government’s urgent request in December 1979, we said “Hail Red Army!” and “Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!” Sending the army to clean out the reactionary insurgency opened a road to social liberation for the Afghan peoples. It underlined our Trotskyist understanding that the Soviet Union was a workers state, product of the October 1917 proletarian socialist revolution, despite its degeneration under a nationalist, Stalinist bureaucracy.

The liberating effects of the Soviet intervention were measured in hard statistics. In 1988, women made up 40 percent of the doctors and 60 percent of the teachers at the University of Kabul; 440,000 female students were enrolled in educational

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Aqsa Parvez...

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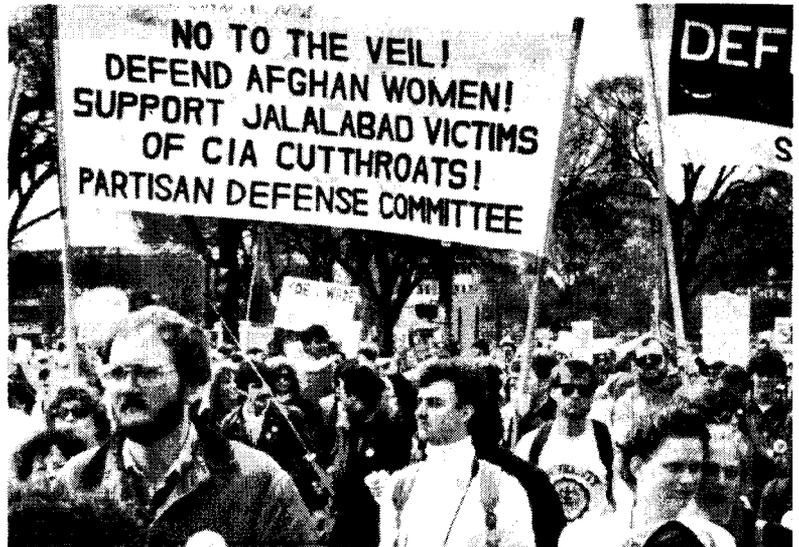
institutions and 80,000 more in literacy programs. Western dress was common in the cities, and women enjoyed a real measure of freedom from the veil and subjugation for the first time in Afghan history. But rather than fighting to defeat the CIA's Muslim insurgency, the Kremlin Stalinists under Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the Soviet troops in 1989. This was a huge betrayal of Afghan women, workers and leftists. It paved the way for the triumph of Washington's woman-hating cutthroats, and for handing the Soviet Union itself over to counterrevolution two years later—a colossal defeat for the workers of the world.

The Shameful Silence of Feminists and the Left

Beholden to their “own” capitalist rulers, throughout the 1980s the majority of Canadian left and feminist groups backed the anti-woman Islamic fanatics in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union and women's rights. Two decades on, the feminists and reformist left have for the most part met the spate of “honor” killings within Canada with disgraceful silence.

In a 14 December 2007 web posting titled “Who Will Speak for Aqsa Parvez?,” Natasha Fatah, a producer of CBC Radio's “As It Happens,” noted angrily that “Women's advocacy groups have played mute on the issue. When Canadian feminists are asked for their reaction to Aqsa's murder, they decline to respond and instead suggest that it would be more appropriate to turn to Muslim women's groups for reaction.... So far, the only ones who have spoken honestly are the young girls that attend Applewood Heights Secondary School in Mississauga.”

As for the reformist left, four years ago the International Socialists (I.S.) supported a campaign to give legal standing



Workers Vanguard

Following withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, PDC launched international campaign to aid civilian victims of CIA's Afghan cutthroats. Above: Banner at April 1989 abortion rights demo in Washington, D.C.

to Islamic *sharia* courts in Ontario. We opposed this as anti-theoretical to the rights of women and the basic Marxist (indeed secular-democratic) principle of the separation of religion and state. Today the I.S., who are in an ongoing alliance with some of the most politically retrograde elements of the “Islamic community,” cannot bring themselves to utter a word about the murder of Aqsa Parvez.

An article on the New Socialist Group website (originally published on *ZNet*) by two Toronto feminist academics, Haideh Moghissi and Shahrzad Mojab, does denounce this “horrific act of patriarchal violence and the cultural and religious beliefs behind it” (“Of ‘Cultural’ Crimes and Denials,” 8 January). It continues:

“The fact is that in Canada we are facing a very serious and growing problem of the rise of religious zealotry. Canadian multiculturalism, failing to combat racism and Muslim-phobia, is gradually moving towards adopting faith-based multiculturalism, allowing the formation of cultural ghettos immune from social and legal scrutiny against violations of human rights. This politics serves the interests of conservative Muslim leaders.”

Moghissi and Mojab call on “all levels of government in Canada” to “abandon their habit of listening only to the most conservative voices within the large Muslim population,” and say: “Government's policy... should be both punitive and educational. Its firm stand will show what is not tolerated and tolerable in this country.”

Such campaigns to pressure the racist, capitalist state to act on behalf of Muslim women falsely paint the Canadian ruling class—brutal oppressors of Native people, suppressors of Quebec's democratic right to independence—as potential protectors, if not liberators, of oppressed women. Moreover, calls for the government to take a “firm stand” easily dovetail with *reactionary* demands for state-enforced bans on the *hijab*.

This is the stance, for example, of the Interna-

Toronto Spartacus Youth Club Class

The Fight to Build a Revolutionary Workers Party in the Post-Soviet Period

U of T, Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George St., Room 2112
Monday, March 24, 7:30 p.m.

Vancouver Spartacus Youth Club Class

**Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism—
For International Workers Revolution to Defeat Imperialism!**
University of British Columbia, Student Union Building, Room 212
Wednesday, March 26, 6:00 p.m.

Toronto Trotskyist League/SYC Meeting

**Venezuela: Break With Bourgeois Populism!
For Workers Revolution! U.S. Hands Off!**
International Student Centre, 33 St. George Street
Saturday, April 26, 7:00 p.m.

Toronto: (416) 593-4138, spartcan@on.aibn.com
Vancouver: (604) 687-0353, trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com
website: www.icl-fi.org

tional Campaign Against Shari'a Court in Canada, whose founding activists are associated with the Worker-Communist Party of Iran. Their online petition states that "wearing or carrying all religious symbols, such as Islamic hijab, in schools should be prohibited." Banning the headscarf in the schools or other areas of public life would put wind in the sails of the anti-immigrant bigots, and would only deepen the isolation and oppression of Muslim women and girls.

For Class Struggle Against Canadian Capitalism!

The pervasive racism of Canadian capitalist society reinforces the reactionary hold of family and religion on immigrant women. And it's not just a question of the unvarnished bigotry of right-wingers on radio talk shows and the outer fringes of the Tory party. The supposedly liberal program of multiculturalism serves to further the cultural and racial segregation of minority communities and the hold of "community leaders" with their ties to church, mosque or temple.

For the Canadian capitalist ruling class, there is no contradiction between smearing Muslims as "terrorists" and simultaneously promoting reactionary elements among the Muslim clergy. Both reinforce the grip of capitalism—through scapegoating minorities on the one hand and regimenting them on the other. A central purpose of multiculturalism is to obscure the fact that immigrant and ethnic minority communities, like the rest of society, are *class-divided*. The struggles of immigrant and other minority workers for jobs, unions and equal status require breaking the grip of religious and other so-called "community leaders." The fight for women's rights is explosive precisely because it presents a frontal challenge to such leaders.

Reactionary ideas take hold and grow in reactionary periods. Especially since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, prepared by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, there has been a rise of fundamentalism of every kind: Protestant fundamentalism in North America (the abortion clinic bombers, the Bush government which sought to bury the scientific fact of evolution and teach "creationism" in public schools); Orthodox Jewish fundamentalism in Israel; an ever greater reach by the Catholic church into civil society in Europe; Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim countries and in imperialist centers with large Muslim populations. All the variants of the "opium of the people," as Marx called religion, are freely disseminated. The growth of this false consciousness is rooted in despair and the lie that class struggle and authentic communism are no longer possible.

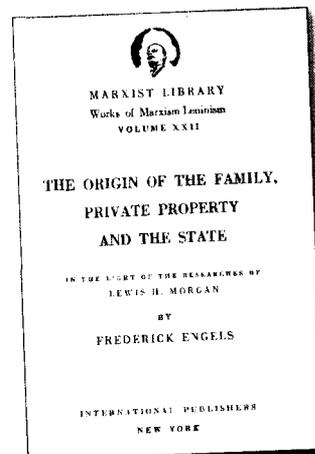
Our Marxist perspective for women's liberation is rooted in the understanding that proletarian class struggle against capitalism is not only possible but desperately necessary. Far from simply being helpless victims of an oppressive, patriarchal system, hundreds of thousands of immigrant women workers in this country have real potential social power at the point of production, alongside their male and native-born co-workers. From the militant Hospital Employees Union strike in B.C. four years ago to the 2005 meatpackers strike in Brooks, Alberta, immigrant women workers have played a leading role in struggles against attacks by the ruling class and its governments. In the course of such struggles, the divisions and prejudices fostered by the capitalists to divide working people can be transcended.

The liberation of women starts with the class struggle and



W.E. Debenham

Engels in 1888. His classic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) laid bare material roots of women's oppression.

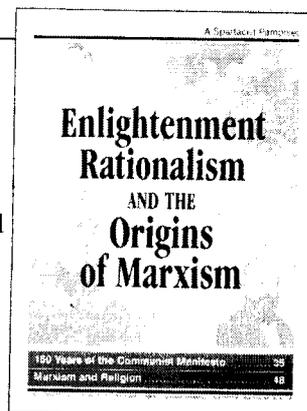


will finally be achieved when the working class takes power, laying the basis to free women from age-old family servitude and reorganize society in the interest of all the oppressed. The family cannot simply be abolished; rather, its social functions like housework, child rearing, preparation of food, etc. must be replaced by social institutions under a workers state. This perspective requires a tremendous leap in social development, which can only be achieved through sweeping away capitalist rule on a global basis and replacing it with a rational, democratically planned economy.

We Trotskyists fight to build a multiethnic vanguard party of the type built by the Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky to lead the world's first socialist revolution in October 1917. Such a party will be forged through hard political struggle against the pro-capitalist NDP and labour bureaucracy, who work to tie the workers to their "own" national capitalists. Through its daily struggles against racism and women's oppression, a revolutionary party will build the authority among the working class to mobilize it against all manner of social backwardness, including the vicious abuse of women. In a communist future, women will be fully and equally integrated into society, and anti-woman violence and bigotry, the reactionary constraints of family and religion and the repressive role of the capitalist state will be but barbaric memories of the past. ■

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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Government Repression...

(continued from page 24)

informants nobody can identify. One detainee, Hassen Almeiri, has been in solitary confinement since 2001. The other four have been released under stringent house arrest, forced to live under constant electronic surveillance and severely restricted from leaving their homes. Mohamed Harkat was recently rearrested for 72 hours, allegedly because one of his legally assigned “guardians” (his mother-in-law) had left to look for a new apartment! While none of these men have ever been convicted of anything, they all face possible deportation to torture in Morocco, Syria or Egypt.

Meanwhile, 18 Muslim men and teenagers in the Toronto area have had their lives wrecked by the Canadian injustice system after being entrapped by police informants in a massive sting operation. Charged under the “anti-terrorism” law almost two years ago amid fantastic allegations of plotting to blow up Toronto skyscrapers and behead prime minister Stephen Harper, they have had to endure detention under torturous conditions. “My whole world now is a 6 by 4 by 10 room,” 23-year-old Fahim Ahmad told the *Toronto Star* (8 November 2007) of his solitary confinement. “You wake up and know you will be in this room the whole day. There’s no hope of anything.”

The government’s “case” against these men has been unraveling from the start. The alleged “leader,” 44-year-old Qayyum Abdul Jamal, has been freed on bail. Four defendants had their charges dropped or stayed. And the state’s informants have been an endless source of embarrassment.

One, Mubin Shaikh, is a reactionary “community leader” who had earlier been prominent in the fight to impose *sharia* law on Ontario Muslims. Shaikh is so unreliable, it seems, that the government abruptly ordered the end of a prelim-



Denette/CP

June 2006: Heavily armed police surround Brampton, Ontario courthouse after court hearing of 18 Muslim men and teenagers charged under “anti-terrorism” law.

inary hearing in the case last September before defense lawyers could cross-examine him. A second, unnamed informant reportedly got **\$4 million** for his work (Shaikh got a measly \$300,000). Speaking of the charges against him, Fahim Ahmad told the *Star*: “They made no sense to me. But then when I hear how much the informers were being paid, I said ‘Hey, when you’re being paid \$4 million for something it doesn’t take too much to make up some kind of story.’ Right?” **Free the detainees! Drop the charges!**

NDP Joins “Anti-Crime” Hysteria

Attacks on the vulnerable Muslim population are only the thin edge of the wedge, as the capitalist ruling class continues to hone the repressive powers of its state—the cops, courts and prisons that enforce racist “law and order.” With the final passage in February of the Tories’ “anti-crime” act, the cops and courts now have even more power to harass, prosecute and mete out life-destroying prison sentences for “gun-related crime” or “gang affiliation.” These are code words for a war on black, South Asian and Native inner-city youth. Ultimately, and as they have done in the past, the rulers also intend to use such repressive powers against striking workers, organized leftists and any other perceived threats to the bourgeois order.

The new act erodes long-held principles of law under bourgeois democracy. It creates a “reverse onus” provision for release of alleged “violent” and sexual offenders: now the defendant must prove to the state—which arrested him in the first place—why he should not be held. It creates mandatory minimum sentencing for “gun-related” offences and establishes a “three-strikes-you’re-out” provision. Such provisions have been part of U.S. law for years, leading to a massive growth in the prison population, especially among blacks. The new law allows traffic cops to test for “drug-impaired driving” by randomly taking blood samples. And it raises the age of consent from 14 to 16.

The aim of such “crime” laws is to regiment the population even more and allow the capitalist state to jail pretty much *anybody*. If you’re young, if you’re black, if you’ve ever got into a fight, if you have friends who wear a certain type of “gang” clothes, if you have smoked a joint in the past week, if you have sex with your 15-year-old girlfriend or boyfriend, they can come and get you. Meanwhile, the real crimes of the filthy rich owners of industry and commerce—poverty, racism, run-down schools, overcrowded hospitals, promotion of fear and guilt—go unpunished, their perpetrators still at large in their mansions, yachts and limos.

The Tory “anti-crime” bill passed the House of Commons by 221 to 1 with the support of Jack Layton’s NDP, which actively campaigned for many of its provisions. The only MP to vote against it, Vancouver-area NDPer Bill Siksay, was disciplined by the NDP leadership. In backing this deeply repressive law, the New Democrats underline their thoroughgoing support for racist Canadian capitalism. Earlier, Layton hailed the police sting operation against the Toronto 18, saluting “the efforts and cooperation of our law enforcement and intelligence gathering agencies.” “We are grateful for the work they do to keep our communities and country safe,” he added.

In reality, the police are an agency for violent repression against workers, minorities and the poor on behalf of the capitalist rulers. In the name of fighting against “gangs,” guns and drugs, Toronto’s “progressive” mayor David Miller, himself a former NDPer, has unleashed a virtual cop occupation of heavily black and Asian areas like Toronto’s Jane-Finch corridor,



SC photo

Picket line during CAW plant occupation in suburban Toronto, April 2007. Immigrant workers are key component of Canadian proletariat.

where unemployment has skyrocketed amid the massive job losses and factory closures that have swept Southern Ontario.

What is needed is mobilization by the organized working class in protest against the rulers' onslaught against immigrants and minorities, including the attacks on Muslims. The labour movement must fight for jobs for all and for union-run training and skills programs, especially for ethnic minorities, women and youth. The capitalist rulers consciously foment racism against immigrants and minorities to divide the working class on racial and ethnic lines and defeat its struggles. Immigrant workers are *integral* to the class struggle in Canada today. Many have been at the forefront of the fight for union rights and against the attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions. For example, three years ago in Brooks, Alberta, African-born meatpackers at the giant Tyson plant were central to a bitter strike that won a first union contract.

For Class Struggle Against the Capitalist Rulers!

Muslims are the primary target of the rulers' "war on terror." But ultimately in the state's crosshairs are opponents of the capitalist status quo, and particularly the workers movement. Wiretapping, electronic surveillance, "no-fly" lists, increased police powers—and the billions of dollars invested in them—are not aimed at elusive suicide bombers, but at regimenting the population into accepting the "law and order" of oppressive capitalist rule as sacrosanct and inviolable.

Already, leftist organizations such as the Communist Party of the Philippines, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Colombian FARC have been made illegal in Canada under "anti-terrorism" legislation. And unionized workers, especially at the ports and in transportation systems, face witchhunting attacks in the name of heightened "security." For example, dock workers now have to undergo extensive immigration, CSIS and criminal records checks.

With its hands on the means of production—factories, mines, transport—the working class uniquely has the social power to take on the capitalist class and its state, through strikes and other forms of class struggle. And because the working class is international and multiethnic, it is also in its direct interest to

combat racism and all other forms of social oppression. But to realize this potential, the working class must mobilize independently of all agencies of the capitalist state. Any illusions that sections of the capitalist state are our allies or are here to "protect us" are suicidal.

Yet sections of the trade-union bureaucracy have joined the rulers' reactionary crusades for "law and order" and "security." In November 2005, leaders of the Amalgamated Transit Union, which organizes Toronto's 8,500 transit workers, joined a reactionary demonstration by thousands of Toronto police, many of them armed and in uniform, who carried signs reading "Get tough on crime, not tough on cops." And in a 2004 submission to Transport Canada, leaders of the ILWU longshore union quoted and endorsed their American counterparts' submission to a U.S. congressional committee on port security that read:

"Longshore workers are the front-line defense to terrorism in our ports.... The government should, therefore, enlist these

dedicated workers as partners rather than as suspects in the efforts to secure our national ports."

Enlisting workers as "partners" in the capitalists' "law and order" and "anti-terror" hysteria endangers the labour movement, disarming it in the face of the enemy class.

The capitalist class has always maintained its rule—centered on the exploitation of the working class for profit—through repression, torture and killing. Particularly since the final undoing of the 1917 Russian workers revolution through capitalist restoration in 1991-92, workers and the oppressed around the world have seen their living standards plummet and their rights trampled. Millions in the neocolonial world continue to die of malnutrition and preventable disease. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. imperialists, backed by their Canadian junior partners, have stepped up their repression at home while staging the bloody neocolonial occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. out of Iraq! U.S./Canadian/NATO troops out of Afghanistan now!

The "war on terror," the repressive "anti-crime" laws and the attendant racist backlash *can* be beaten back. The key is mobilizing the social power of the working class in a conscious fight on behalf of all the oppressed, and against the capitalist system as a whole. Winning the workers to this class-struggle perspective requires first and foremost a political battle against the nationalist, pro-capitalist politics of the NDP and trade-union tops. What is needed is the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party that fights unstintingly in defense of all the victims of racist Canadian capitalism and for united proletarian struggle against bourgeois rule. ■

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Free Mumia!...

(continued from page 3)

Trotskyist League spokesperson Miriam McDonald at the Toronto Holiday Appeal on December 14.

We fight to defend the class-war prisoners because they fought for us. It's that simple.

The war of capital against labour has produced untold victims. The Russian tsarist regime was soaked in the blood of workers and their leaders, including many Bolsheviks. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were killed by the German Social Democracy as it beheaded the 1918-19 revolution. For their opposition to World War II, James Cannon and 17 other American Trotskyists were jailed. Our own comrade Martha Phillips was murdered in Moscow where she was fighting to cohere a Trotskyist party in the face of the counterrevolutionary tide that destroyed the Soviet Union.

Everywhere, leaders of the proletariat are targeted by the capitalist class. We fight for the freedom of Mumia because we are intransigent opponents of this racist, capitalist system. Our aim is to put an end to this cycle of bloody repression through the struggle for socialist revolution.

Abroad, imperialist occupation has laid waste to Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iran is now targeted. We say: Hands off Iran! There's our banner over there—"U.S. out of Iraq! Canada out of Afghanistan! For class struggle against Canadian capitalism!"

At home, the rulers are waging their own class war. They're destroying jobs, they're attacking unions, and they're slashing social services. Capitalism, by its very exploitative nature, creates its own gravedigger in the proletariat. Because it has its hands on the means of production, the working class alone has the social power to bring down capitalism.

You don't have to look far to see this power. We have a brother from the transit workers here tonight. Just under two years ago, Toronto transit workers wildcatted. They showed the tremendous social power that is wielded by the 8,500-strong ATU local. Without their labour, Toronto, the finance capital of Canada, simply cannot function. And with

its layer of black and other minority workers, the ATU's solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal is absolutely critical.

The task is to forge a leadership that can tap into this powerful proletarian army. In fighting for socialist revolution, we confront the reality that the consciousness of the working class is very far from understanding that the need is for workers to take state power. This gulf has to be bridged, through overcoming the obstacles that the bourgeoisie places in our path.

To maintain their one-sided rule, the capitalists have their state—the cops, the courts, the army and the prisons. These exist to defend their system of capitalist private property. This class will do pretty much anything to preserve its power. No act of barbarism is too great. This is a fact that is denied by those who would tie Mumia's future to their faith in this rotten capitalist "justice" system.

Kenneth Morgan's remarks about Gary Freeman's struggle addressed a very important question. That is that the bedrock of American capitalism is black oppression, which is the legacy of slavery. Our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. fight for black liberation through socialist revolution.

The rulers are also skilled at manipulating all manner of social backwardness, for example, anti-immigrant racism. They use this to divide and to rule. Immigrant and minority workers are key to the class struggle in this country. A fighting labour movement must struggle for full citizenship rights for all, against deportations, for full asylum for refugees. Jobs for all through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay! Organize the unorganized! Fight for union control of hiring and aggressive recruitment of minorities, women, Natives!

The unions must oppose the phony "war on terror." Targeting Muslims first, the government wants the population to accept as utterly normal the most gross violations of our rights. But the ultimate targets of these draconian assaults on civil liberties are any perceived opponents of the government, above all the multiracial working class and its organizations.

A real ace in the hole for the bourgeoisie is that the working class is saddled with the pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist NDP misleaders, along with their co-thinkers in the trade-union bureaucracy. These social democrats promote a pernicious lie that workers and capitalists have a common class interest. This kind of Canadian nationalism ties workers to their bosses.

Let's take Quebec, for example. The national subjugation of Quebec is a pillar of Canadian capitalism. The NDP promotes Maple Leaf Anglo chauvinism against Quebec, inflaming nationalist animosities in English Canada. The workers must understand that defense of Quebec's national rights is key to any perspective of struggle against the ruling class. We advocate independence for Quebec as a means of getting this question off the agenda, and at the same time winning Québécois workers away from their own nationalist misleaders.

Another example I want to take up is that of protectionism as an "answer" to the massive job losses in Ontario and Quebec—some 400,000 in the last four years. The capitalists have just one goal, and that is to maximize profits. To appeal to one wing of this class against another, against their competitors, can only spell defeat.

Take the "Made in Canada Matters" campaign that is being pushed by a number of the unions. Promoting nationalism undermines labour's struggle by poisoning class consciousness and fomenting racism. It scapegoats foreign workers for the loss of jobs here, while building illusions in the benevolence of our "own" capitalists. We

Prepare Now for Emergency Protests!

On May 17, 2007, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in Mumia's case, and there could be a decision at any time.

If the court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia's appeals for a new trial or a new hearing, the PDC calls for protests the day after the decision.

Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man! Free Mumia Now! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

Toronto: Across the street from the U.S. Consulate, 360 University Ave., between Dundas (St. Patrick station) and Queen (Osgoode station)

Rally at 6:00 p.m. if on a weekday, or at 1:00 p.m. if on a weekend

Vancouver: UBC Student Union Building, South Plaza

Rally at 12:00 p.m. on a weekday.

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Join the Campaign to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" (earmarked for "Mumia") and mail to: **Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.** Donations earmarked "Mumia" as well as collections at PDC or other events for Mumia's legal defense are receipted and transferred in full to the above NLG account as has been designated by Mumia's lawyer for this purpose.

Organize protest!

Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organizations demanding Mumia's freedom. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicize Mumia's case in your union or organization's newsletter.

Get the Facts!

New PDC fact sheet pamphlet, *Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching* (available in English, French and German—\$.50 each, \$10 for 30) is a detailed refutation of the recent book *Murdered by Mumia* by right-wing journalist Michael Smerconish and Maureen Faulkner, whose lying tract is a rallying cry not only to execute Mumia but for the death penalty itself. The PDC's other Mumia pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia is Innocent!* (\$1), lays out the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and provides additional detail on the explosive evidence that shatters the decades-long frame-up of this fighter for black freedom. Both these PDC pamphlets politically arm activists in the struggle for Mumia's freedom.

PDC Button: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!"—\$1 each.

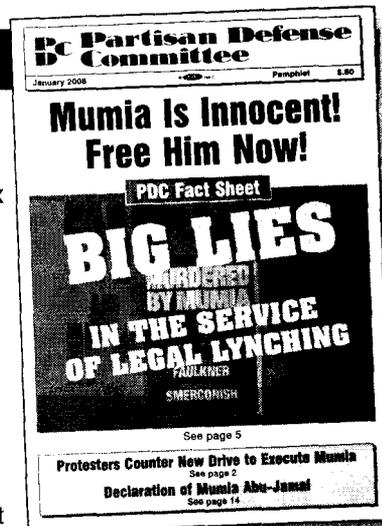
PDC Video: *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS.

Bundles of the 4-page brochure: *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies.

Order from, make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our Toronto address below.

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counterpose the international collaboration of workers against the common class enemy.

This protectionism is doubly pernicious when it's aimed at China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state where capitalist rule was overthrown in 1949, a huge victory for the international working class. The imperialists aim to restore capitalism in China, and they want to turn this country into one giant sweatshop. It's the duty of the international working class to defend China against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. At the same time, a Trotskyist party has to be forged to lead China's powerful working class to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy through proletarian political revolution.

Counterrevolution in the Soviet Union has been devastating, both for the people of the former Soviet Union and for the working class internationally, among other things throwing back the consciousness of the working class around the world. In China it would bring even deeper misery and devastation, and it would further embolden the capitalists worldwide in their attacks on workers and oppressed minorities.

The bourgeoisie pounds workers every day with the lie that communism is dead. The reason is that they don't want any more revolutions. Their purpose is to convince workers that it is pointless to struggle—we should just eat it. The reformist left backed the forces of anti-Soviet counterrevolution, and today most of these groups are so imbued with "death of communism" ideology that few of them even give lip service any more to revolutionary Marxism.

But it is possible to change things. It is possible to turn this around. We stand on the program of the 1917 October Revolution. In the struggle for socialist revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks combated anti-Semitism, Great Russian chauvin-

ism, bloody tsarist repression and, above all, the false political programs that would have brought defeat.

So we say to workers: Mumia's fight is your fight! Winning his freedom would greatly bolster the prospects of workers and the oppressed in their struggles, not only here but the world over. Our fight to free Mumia is inseparable from building a revolutionary workers party that will champion the interests of all the exploited and oppressed in the struggle for socialist revolution. I ask you to join us in this struggle. ■

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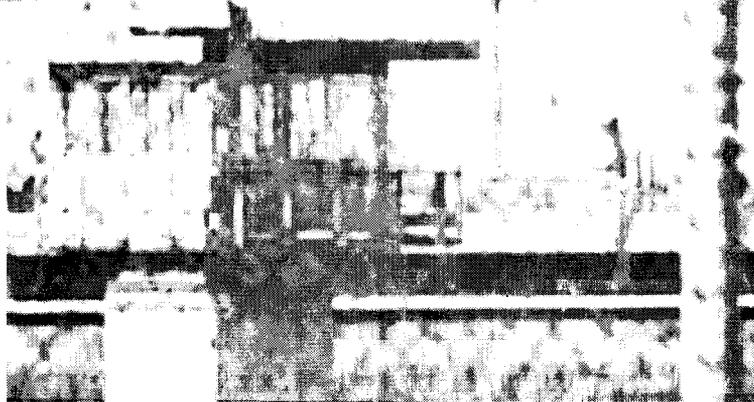
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“War on Terror,” Anti-Crime Bill Government Repression Targets All of Us!



Hanson/CP



*Mikula/CanWest News Service

Millhaven Penitentiary near Kingston, Ontario, where “security certificate” detainees have been held under brutal conditions. Inset: Former detainee Adil Charkaoui at a protest during Supreme Court hearing in 2006.

For more than six years, the capitalist rulers of this country have used the so-called “war on terror” as an all-purpose justification for neocolonial occupation abroad and repression at home. Canadian troops in Afghanistan continue to kill and maim civilians while handing prisoners over to the Afghan regime in Kandahar, where many have been tortured or executed. On the home front, a succession of Liberal and Tory governments have passed draconian “anti-terror” and “anti-crime” laws, banned foreign leftist groups, shackled unionized workers with new “security” legislation and rounded up Muslim “suspects” on the flimsiest of pretexts. And the NDP has joined in the reactionary outcry, hailing police round-ups of Muslim youth and backing the Tories’ new repressive “Tackling Violent Crime Act.”

The rulers want us to be afraid, very afraid—to accept the shredding of our democratic rights as necessary to protect us against terrorism. Yet for all their dark warnings, not one purported “terror suspect” has ever been convicted of a single crime! It is in the direct interest of the working class and all defenders of civil liberties to mobilize mass protest against this wave of state repression.

A year ago, the Supreme Court threw out as unconstitutional Ottawa’s “security certificate” law, under which non-citizens have been detained indefinitely on the basis of secret

“information” to which neither they nor their lawyers have any access. The Tory government responded by enacting a new version of the same law, with virtually all the original provisions intact.

With the reissuing of security certificates against five Muslim men, CSIS released part of its supposed “evidence,” none of which contains even a single alleged *act*. To wit: Montreal resident Adil Charkaoui was seized in 2003 after allegedly describing the brutal war on Afghanistan by the U.S., Canadian and other imperialist forces as a battle against Islam “led by the wicked and the Crusaders.” He also committed the “crime” (for a Muslim) of applying for a job with Air Canada and once allegedly told someone to “speak only in generalities.” In other words, CSIS admits to destroying this man’s life because of his *words*—for thought crimes. For good measure, the cops threw in allegations of being in Afghanistan for “terror training,” which Charkaoui vehemently denies. This is the same lie used in 2002 to send Maher Arar to be tortured in a Syrian dungeon.

The “evidence” against the other men is cut from the same cloth: dubious claims of “Al Qaeda links” based on who they allegedly talked to, words taken out of context, glances over shoulders, all based on mysterious CSIS reports, wiretaps and

(continued on page 20)