

“Neo-liberal” and Keynesian policies — two ends of the same stick

New Labour fleeces working people

For a revolutionary workers party!

The financial meltdown in Wall Street and the worldwide capitalist recession is having tremendous impact on the British economy, inflicting severe hardship on the lives of working people. Gordon Brown’s Labour government semi-nationalised Britain’s commercial banking system in October and brokered the takeover of HBOS (the country’s largest mortgage lender) by Lloyds TSB. Brown’s bailout of the banking system was widely acclaimed in Washington and in the rest of Europe. Both in the US and in Britain, colossal government bailouts of financial institutions have become the order of the day, as US president-elect Obama embraced the Bush administration’s plan to transfer \$700 billion of taxpayers’ money to banks and other financial institutions.

However, despite the US and other central banks having provided hundreds of billions of dollars in short-term loans to large banks—and pledged hundreds of billions more—the pinnacles of finance capital continue to totter. The US government came to the rescue of Citibank, guaranteeing \$306 billion of risky assets and injecting \$20 billion of capital into one of the world’s largest commercial banks. And so far these government handouts have done little to unfreeze the credit markets. Banks are still refusing to lend money, which means further government handouts at the expense of the taxpayer will be likely to follow.

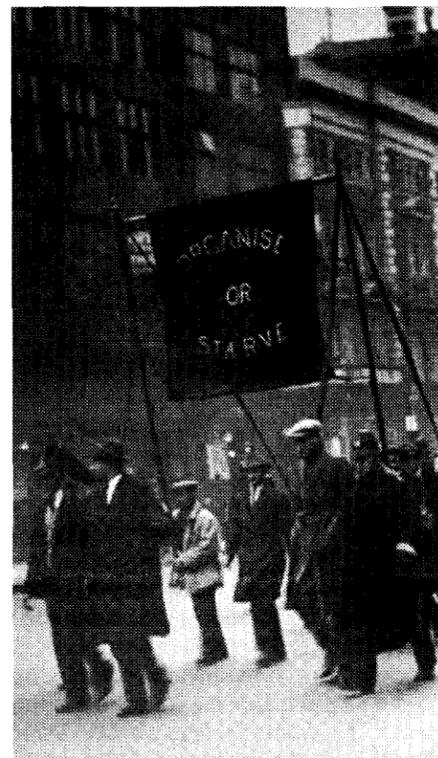
Also tottering are some of the cher-



Workers Hammer

ished orthodoxies of the Blair-Bush era, and indeed of the Reagan-Thatcher years. As Joseph Stiglitz, an economist at Columbia University in New York has written: “We are all Keynesians now. Even the right in the United States has joined the Keynesian camp with unbridled enthusiasm and on a scale that at one time would have been truly

unimaginable” (Guardian.co.uk, 5 December 2008). At one time it would have been equally unimaginable to hear New Labour leaders in Britain paying homage to John Maynard Keynes, the liberal bourgeois economist who advocated increased public spending and lower interest rates to lift the US out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Yet



Hulton-Deutsch/Corbis

City of London wealth is symbolised by Canary Wharf (left). Working people face severe hardship. London, 1930 (above) march of the unemployed.

Gordon Brown invoked the name of Keynes while visiting New York in November, and his chancellor Alistair Darling recently wrote that “It was John Maynard Keynes who said that ‘the difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from the old ones’” (*Financial Times*, 10 October 2008).

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Mass protests rock Greece

We reprint below a leaflet published by the Trotskyist Group of Greece (TGG) in response to the protests that erupted over the cop murder of a school student in Athens. The leaflet was distributed during the massive one-day general strike on 10 December 2008, which had been called by the main union federations before the killing, in opposition to the government’s anti-working-class austerity programme. The Greek government asked the trade union leadership to call off the strike but the bureaucracy feared a backlash at the base if they cancelled the strike. The unions rallied at the parliament building instead of marching through the city. The main Greek trade union federations—the General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) and the Confederation of Public Servants (ADEDY) are led by Pasok which, while often painted as a reformist workers

party by the Greek fake left, is a thoroughly bourgeois-populist formation.

Greek organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SEK), co-thinkers of the SWP, and the Xekinima (Start) group, sister organisation of the Socialist Party in Britain, tail Pasok. Their central slogan is: “Down with the government of murderers!” These reformists, as the TGG leaflet explains, aim to replace the rightist “neo-liberal” regime of Karamanlis’ New Democracy (ND) with a “left” bourgeois government. This would mean either the return of Pasok or a new popular front comprising some combination of Pasok and Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left, dominated by Synaspismos, formed out of the old “Euro-communist” wing of the CP) with openly bourgeois elements. Such an outcome would simply

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Rizospastis

Students protest in Athens against police killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

Greece...

(Continued from page 1)

create a new roadblock to the working class in its struggle against the capitalist exploiters, while nourishing the growth of fascists like Golden Dawn who have been mobilising to attack the youth protests.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which leads a significant section of the proletariat, today strikes a posture of opposition to Pasok, saying in its newspaper *Rizospastis* (11 December 2008): "ND/Pasok, same story — austerity, unemployment, terrorism", declaring "No more illusions" and posing the choice as: "Either with capital, or with the workers". However the KKE certainly does not stand for the class independence of the proletariat or for principled opposition to entering into coalitions with bourgeois parties. Quite the contrary — throughout its history the KKE has upheld the treacherous Stalinist policy of popular-front betrayal of the working class. Most recently, in

the late 1980s, the KKE participated in popular-front coalitions with both New Democracy and Pasok and will have no compunction against doing so again if the opportunity presents itself.

Grotesquely, the KKE participated in violence-baiting the anarchists and initiated a witch hunt of the tame social democrats of Syriza, falsely claiming that the latter condones the burning of shops. For its part, Syriza has emphatically stated: "Everybody knows that we don't have the slightest relationship with the practice of blind violence, nor with those who carry it out" (*Avgi*, 12 December 2008). In capitulating to the witch hunt of the anarchists that is spearheaded by the right-wing government, both the KKE and Syriza are attempting to prove to the bourgeoisie that they are reliable candidates to defend the capitalist order.

The protests against the brutal police killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos intersected planned strikes and protests by the trade unions against the impact of the global economic crisis on workers. Greece has a current account deficit

of about \$53 billion, or 15 per cent of its GDP, the highest in the Eurozone. Youth unemployment is around 19 per cent while the overall jobless rate is over seven per cent. There is massive public anger against the Karamanlis government that has attacked the living standards of the working class through privatisations, tax rises and "reform" of pensions, in a country where it is estimated that 20 per cent of the population lives in poverty. Contrary to Pasok leader Papandreou's promises of "change", a Pasok government would be just as committed to making the working class pay for the capitalist crisis.

* * *

Down with police terror!

For mass protests against state terror based on the social power of the working class



Pantelis Saitas/European Pressphoto Agency

December 9 2008: Greek police assault demonstrator before funeral of youth killed by cop.



TROTSKY

The Transitional Programme

The Transitional Programme, adopted at the founding conference of Trotsky's Fourth International, outlined strategy for revolutionary leadership in the wake of tremendous defeats of the proletariat. It is particularly relevant in today's capitalist crisis. But the programme makes clear it has nothing to do with the demands of reformists, who commonly misuse it. Outside of the perspective of the conquest of state power by the working class and the

construction of revolutionary parties, "transitional" demands lose all meaning and serve to reinforce the existing reformist leadership of the working class.

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, "structural" as well as "conjunctural", the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a *sliding scale of working hours*. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

Property owners and their lawyers will prove the "unrealizability" of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a "normal" collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. "Realizability" or "unrealizability" is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.

— *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International, 1938*



LENIN

ATHENS, 9 December — On 6 December in the district of Exarchia in Athens a 15-year-old student, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, was murdered in cold blood — shot by a police officer. Spontaneous protest demonstrations broke out in Athens and Salonika, spreading rapidly to the rest of Greece, where they are ongoing today. In what the press describes as the biggest crisis in Greece since the end of the bloody colonels' rule in 1974, demonstrators have come face to face with the brutal reality of the "democratic" capitalist state. At least 150 people have been brought before the police department, 70 have been detained and the repression continues. **We defend the anarchist and other youth protesters against state repression! We demand the immediate dropping of all charges against the protesters! For the immediate release of all those arrested!**

The Trotskyist Group of Greece (TGG), sympathising section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), solidarises with the rage that has exploded in the streets against the police terror of the capitalist state. Fury over the murder of Grigoropoulos is only the "tip of the iceberg" of popular hatred towards the right-wing New Democracy (ND) government of Karamanlis which presides over mass unemployment, financial scandals, a huge and growing gap between rich and poor, and the brutal exploitation and repression of immigrants.

The protests against the cop terror need an organised expression — one that welds the anger of the youth protesters with the social power of the proletariat. The working class must be mobilised not only to defend youth protesters against the violence of the cops, but as part of a struggle against the capitalist system itself.

The reformist left is offering its own schemes for sanitising the capitalist state and its forces of repression. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), in a statement of 7 December 2008, declared: "The responsibilities of the government of ND are large and obvious, both in general and in particular for the climate which has been cultivated and for the education of the security forces." The president of Syriza, [Alekos] Alavanos, in a question in parliament to the minister of Internal Affairs on 8 December asked: "What measures do you propose to take in

order to instil in the police concepts of tolerance, democratic behaviour and cooperation towards citizens?" The KKE and Syriza once again spread illusions that the capitalist state can be reformed and that the capitalist rulers can educate and enlighten the security forces or even be compelled to cede control of the police to the exploited and oppressed masses — the very masses cops are paid to repress.

The perspective of the KKE and Syriza is to replace the ND government with a new popular front. With crass opportunism these reformist parties hope to join with bourgeois parties in administering the bourgeois state, which will necessarily mean attacks on the working class. Support to such a popular front is also what lies behind the calls by reformists like the Cliffite SEK and DEA to get rid of the Karamanlis government.

As Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution* (1917), "A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power.... the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of 'order', which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes." The "order" to which Lenin refers cannot be changed by throwing Molotov cocktails. Although anarchists may seem "militant" to some youth, they are opposed to building the one instrument that is indispensable for getting rid of the capitalist exploiters and their state — a Leninist vanguard party.

The world economic crisis has demonstrated the bankruptcy of the capitalist system, but there are no impossible situations for the bourgeoisie. We, as genuine Trotskyists, seek to mobilise the forces of the multiracial proletariat in class struggle, not only in protests against the capitalist system but in the fight to uproot it. We fight to forge Leninist vanguard parties as sections of the revolutionary international that is required to lead the working class to sweep away the capitalist exploiters and their states and to build workers states and a global socialist society based on equality.

An injury to one is an injury to all! Drop the charges!

For a revolutionary workers vanguard party in Greece, section of the reformed Fourth International! ■

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!
For a Socialist United States of Europe!

The Spartacist League is the British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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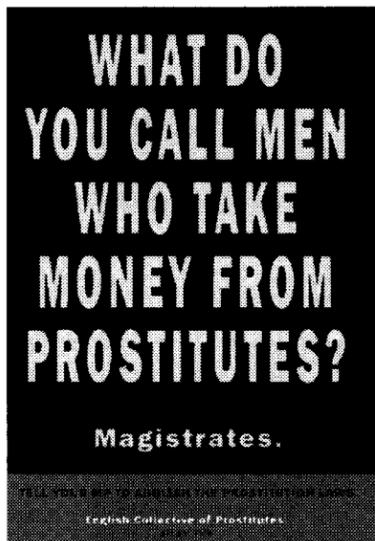
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Down with Labour's crackdown on prostitution!

In the biggest shake-up of Britain's prostitution laws in 50 years, the Labour government is proposing draconian new legislation that would make it a criminal offence to pay for sex with someone who is "controlled for another person's gain". Anyone convicted would face a fine of up to £1000 and receive a criminal record. Not knowing whether a prostitute is "controlled" will be no excuse: according to Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, "This new criminal offence of paying for sex with someone who is trafficked or pimped will apply even if the buyer claims he did not know the woman was being controlled for gain" (*Independent*, 19 November 2008). If it is deemed that the client did know, he additionally may face charges of rape, which carry a potential life sentence. This attempt to crack down on prostitution is part of a broader drive by the Labour government to increase the repressive powers of the state and to regiment society. The new measures would give police additional powers to crack down on kerb-crawling and to raid and close down brothels, arresting prostitutes, many of whom are immigrants.

The Spartacist League/Britain unambiguously opposes these measures, which if implemented, would mark a significant shift towards outlawing prostitution altogether by penalising customers. The act of performing sex for money, or of paying for sex, is not a crime, either on the part of the prostitute or the client! Currently in Britain, neither prostitution nor paying for sex is illegal, but "soliciting", advertising in a phone booth, kerb-crawling and brothel-keeping are. We are for the decriminalisation of prostitution which we Marxists regard as a "crime without a victim", like drug use, gambling, pornography, homosexual sex and "statutory rape"—activities that are generally illegal or heavily regulated under capitalist law. The government is deliberately conflating horrific crimes against prostitutes such as debt bondage, sexual assault, beatings and other kinds of coercion with the fundamentally



English Collective of Prostitutes poster (left). Sex workers organised in GMB union demonstrate for rights for prostitutes at London Mayday 2003 demonstration.



consensual act between a prostitute and her client to exchange money for sex. For us the guiding principle for sexual relations is that of *effective consent*, meaning mutual agreement and understanding, as opposed to coercion. We believe that as long as those who take part agree to do so at the time, no one, least of all the state, has the right to tell them they can't do it.

Labour's proposed legislation is being cynically marketed under the guise of "protecting women from exploitation". According to the *Guardian*, Minister for Women Harriet Harman (who has previously called for outlawing prostitution altogether) has described the flow of women brought into Britain by human traffickers as "a modern slave trade" while claiming that "to protect women we must stop men buying sex from the victims of human trafficking" (19 November 2008). For starters, the notion of this Labour government "protecting women" is obscene, coming from the very government responsible for the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan which have resulted in untold brutality against women and children. At home Labour is proposing legislation which would slash benefits for single mothers even further as part of its attacks on the working class and poor.

What Harman describes as a "modern slave trade" is largely debt bondage, where a worker is forced to pay off a large debt to smugglers and gangmasters to be taken across the border and to be able to work. Most of these workers toil in the agricultural, food processing, cleaning, healthcare, catering, and construction sectors. The British economy is highly reliant on this low-paid, "flexible" immigrant labour, both legal and illegal. The government's racist anti-immigration laws make it virtually impossible to get into Britain and compel illegal workers to live and work in the most horrific conditions. Such conditions resulted in the deaths of 23 Chinese workers picking cockles in Morecambe Bay in February 2004.

Debt bondage, rape, sexual assault and beatings are real crimes. However,

we oppose this attempt by the state to amalgamate "trafficking" and "sex slavery" with prostitution and to label all exchanges of money for sex as potential slavery. Prostitution more often than not is degrading and exploitative, but criminalisation simply forces the prostitute into a lumpen milieu where access to social services is difficult and where she or he is more vulnerable to organised crime and violence by pimps. As Marxists we warn that any intervention by the capitalist state will necessarily intensify the misery for all involved and serve as a pretext for unleashing the cops and courts in a multiple attack on immigrants, women and sex. In fact, immigrant women "rescued" by police during "anti-trafficking" raids are routinely deported. The Spartacist League calls for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!* As we wrote in "Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against 'Sex Trafficking'":

"The 'sex slavery' crusade is a cynical and dangerous business because it both legitimizes government persecution of immigrants and invokes state authority to intervene as moral arbiter in our most intimate affairs. It bolsters the anti-sex witchhunt as a whole and deflects attention from the real violence perpetrated every day against women and children under this class system."

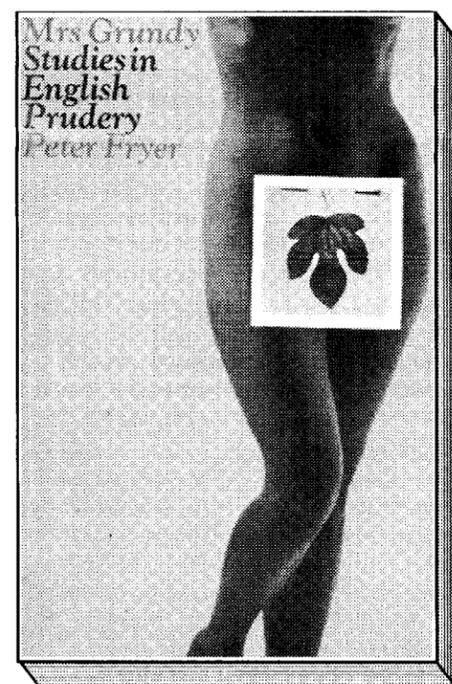
—*Spartacist* [English edition] no 58, Spring 2004

Niki Adams, speaking for the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), has aptly described the government's claim that most prostitutes are trafficked as "completely fabricated" (*Guardian*, 19 November 2008) while the ECP issued a statement opposing the new legislation saying this would lead to "more Anti-Social Behaviour Orders landing more of us in prison; more deportations under the guise of cracking down on trafficking; higher prison sentences for women working from premises" (www.allwomenscount.net). In keeping with the contempt for the "lower" classes that oozes from the top ranks of New Labour, the new legislation targets the poorer, more vulnerable and often

immigrant prostitutes likely to be working on the street or in brothels, not the escort services provided by highly paid "call-girls".

Harriet Harman has even enlisted the Women's Institute (WI)—that embodiment of middle class "Middle England"—to scour the local papers for "suspicious" ads. The traditional role of the WI is summed up in the phrase "jam and Jerusalem", meaning a woman's place is in the kitchen and referencing the patriotic hymn "Jerusalem", extolling England's "green and pleasant land". Presumably Harriet Harman and Jacqui Smith would prefer the WI stick to its traditional activities rather than its more recent claim to fame posing naked for pictures in charity calendars as depicted in the movie *Calendar Girls*.

Labour's crackdown on prostitution is part of a moral crusade targeting sexual activity that strays outside of con-



Peter Fryer's book defined prudery as "interference in other people's pleasures". Harriet Harman and Jacqui Smith are modern Mrs Grundys, but with police, courts and prisons at their disposal.

servative and religious "family values", such as "underage" sex, homosexuality and other "sins" including "binge drinking". Labour's "feminist" anti-sex warriors such as Harriet Harman stand in the long tradition of morality police brilliantly chronicled in Peter Fryer's 1963 book *Mrs Grundy, Studies in English Prudery*. An example was the 18th century "Societies for the Reformation of Manners" which were "responsible for prosecuting no fewer than 101,683 persons in the London area alone, mostly for sabbath-breaking, swearing, drunkenness, lewdness, brothel-keeping, and sodomy".

The status of prostitutes in society is

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Women and Revolution

Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against "Sex Trafficking"

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Crisis...

(Continued from page 1)

At the most fundamental level, the condition of the financial markets is governed by the state of the class struggle between the working class and the capitalists. The working class in Britain today is atomised and weakened by de-industrialisation, itself the result of betrayals at the hands of the Labourite misleaders and defeats in struggle, of which the defeat of the heroic miners strike in 1984-85 was the pivotal event. Internationally, the working class is suffering from the effects of counterrevolution in the former USSR and Eastern Europe in 1991-92. This historic defeat for the working people of the world has resulted in a profound regression of political consciousness which, although uneven, means that workers no longer identify their struggles with the need for a socialist society.

The world economic crisis demonstrates the bankruptcy of capitalism. But for the capitalist ruling class, "there is no such thing as an absolutely hopeless situation" as Russian revolutionary leader VI Lenin explained during the revolutionary upheavals of 1920. The working class, in the course of struggles against the depredations of capitalism and through the intervention of a Leninist-Trotskyist party, must be won to the programme of Marxism which led to victory in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the revolution showed the way out of the endless cycle of capitalist economic crises and imperialist wars when the Russian workers took power in their own hands, expropriating the bourgeoisie and establishing a workers state.

Boom-and-bust cycles are endemic to the capitalist system itself and cannot be prevented by government policies, Keynesian or otherwise. The key contradiction in capitalism was identified by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: under capitalism production is socialised, that is, concentrated and organised in vast corporations, but the means of production—and the appropriated, socially produced wealth—remain the private property of a few. In his 1916 study *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin described how imperialism, the system of modern, decaying capitalism, "leads directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production" under capitalism. Socialised production must be extended to socialised ownership through the producers taking control of society. We fight for international socialist revolution, for the collectivisation of the means of production and for economic planning on an international scale.

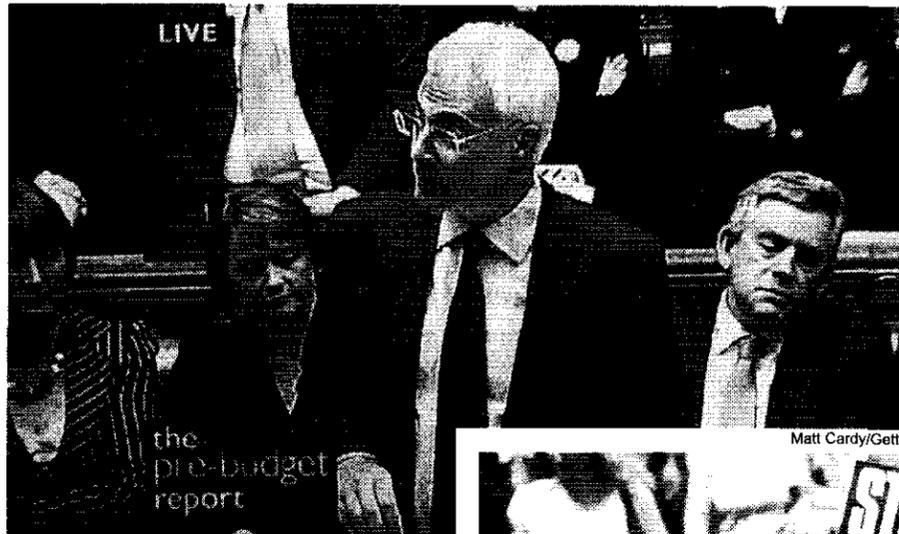
The working people need a party that fights for their class interests, a workers party committed to sweeping away the bankrupt capitalist system through socialist revolution. We fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, part of a Leninist-Trotskyist international, dedicated to the task of fighting for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist order worldwide. Socialist revolution will lay the basis for rationally planned economies based on production for need, not for profit. This in turn will allow for development of the productive forces so that poverty, scarcity and want will be eliminated thus laying the basis for the creation of an egalitarian socialist society.

Break with Labour, old and new

In Britain, a revolutionary party can only be built through opposition to all varieties of Labourite reformism, which has served to tie the working class to the

capitalist exploiters for over a century. Tony Blair's abolition of Labour's Clause IV in 1994 signalled his intention to remould the Labour Party from its original status as what Lenin termed a "bourgeois workers party". Labour had a pro-capitalist leadership and programme while its base consisted of

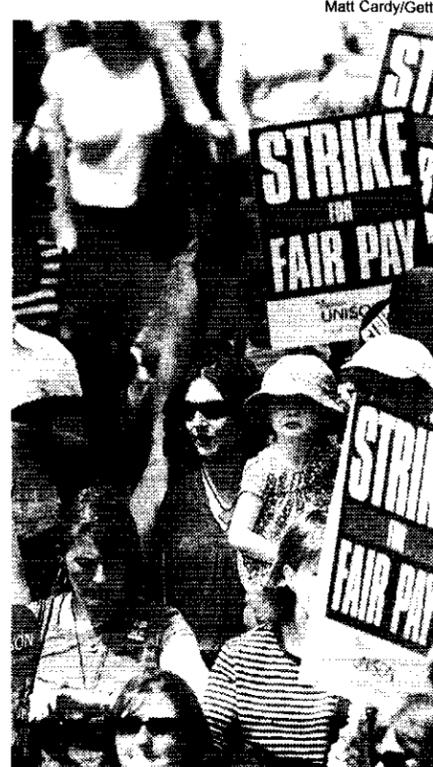
coffin". An article by Philip Stephens in the *Financial Times* said: "We are watching a bonfire of the old orthodoxies", ludicrously claiming that the Brown government "announced it would soak the rich" (*Financial Times*, 28 November 2008). Hardly. New Labour intends to make working-class



Labour chancellor Alistair Darling (above). Labour intends to make working people pay for capitalist crisis. Brighton, July 2008: up to 500,000 council workers went on strike nationally against Labour's paltry 2.45 per cent pay offer.

Britain's industrial proletariat which at the beginning of the 20th century constituted the vast majority of the population.

In November Brown and Darling announced measures in the pre-budget report, which liberal *Guardian* columnist Scumas Milne described as "the first Keynesian-style expansion programme for more than 30 years" (*Guardian*, 4 December 2008). Labour's budget centred on a massive public borrowing programme estimated at a cost of £118 billion, combined with £20 billion worth of tax cuts, including a temporary reduction in VAT and a *token* increase in income tax for those earning over £150,000 per annum, from 40 to 45 per cent.



people pay the lion's share of the cost of this capitalist crisis. Moreover, it is not as though old Labour represented the interests of the working class. All old Labour governments loyally served the British capitalist class, carrying out attacks on the working class and



John Maynard Keynes (centre) at Bretton Woods conference, 1944.

Nonetheless sections of the bourgeois press reacted as if New Labour had reverted to old Labour overnight and indeed one could be forgiven for thinking that Gordon Brown had threatened to introduce "socialism" through parliament. The right-wing *Daily Mail* headlined "The day New Labour died" (25 November 2008) while the *Times* editorial the same day was an obituary for "new Labour's tragic end" and described the increase in the top rate of tax as the "final nail in new Labour's

enforcing capitalist austerity. The last Labour government broke strikes during the "Winter of Discontent" of 1978-79 as well as introducing racist anti-immigrant measures.

Brown's new business secretary Lord Mandelson was quick to point out that reports of New Labour's death are greatly exaggerated. "It is the times that have changed, not New Labour" (*Guardian*, 27 November 2008) said Mandelson, a key architect of New Labour which, he once declared, is

"intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich". He described the new 45 per cent tax rate as "a purely practical measure" noting that there would have been "a public backlash if those who are so clearly better off and have gained so much in the last 10 years were not seen to be shouldering their fair share of the burden" (*Guardian*, 29 November 2008).

New Labour has certainly not adopted its present economic measures out of a desire to return to "old Labour". Rather, as Darling and Brown insist, the government has been forced to take "exceptional measures for exceptional circumstances". As in the US, the British government has been forced to ditch monetarism—the dominant economic doctrine of the bourgeois right since the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Advocates of monetarism maintained that economic crises could be minimised, if not eliminated, by adjusting the amount of money in the banking system along with interest rates. This today stands exposed as a myth. It is not only financial institutions, but also industrial giants such as GM and Chrysler in the US that are lined up for government bailouts. Capitalist governments are hardly likely to continue to abide by monetarism when that would mean allowing titans of capitalism to go under.

The Labour Party has gone some way towards becoming a bourgeois party, mainly by severing the party's historic links to the trade unions. This process has been stalled however because of uncertainty about finding alternative sources of party funding. With the revival of the Tory party, Labour's hefty donations from wealthy business figures are no longer assured and the party has once again become dependent on the unions for a large share of its funding. As we noted at a national conference of the Spartacist League/Britain held in the summer of 2008, the transformation of the Labour Party is an unfinished process and is thus reversible, although such a reversal would involve ousting both the Brown and Blairite cliques. This is an unlikely outcome and today's Labour Party is moribund as a reformist party.

The Transitional Programme v Keynesianism

The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) recently wrote that: "Socialists should welcome Keynesian policies only if they take power away from the rich and put it into the hands of the working class", while complaining that Gordon Brown's "vision of Keynesianism" is rather "to spend billions on replacing the Trident nuclear system, aircraft carriers, the Olympics and other such projects" (*Socialist Worker*, 1 November 2008). Lenin's understanding is counterposed to such reformist pipe-dreams of a non-military imperialism based on "welfare, not warfare". Lenin emphasised that militarism is essential to imperialism by its very nature: the monopolisation of production and the dominant role of finance capital impel the imperialist powers to divide the world as they strive to develop new markets and spheres of exploitation.

It is a myth that Keynesian economic policies based on public spending pulled the capitalist world out of the Great Depression. Keynes himself admitted that capitalist "democracy" can use its full productive capacity only when producing armaments for all-out war. As he said: "It is, it seems, politically impossible for a capitalistic democracy to organize expenditure on the scale necessary to

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De Menezes inquest whitewashes police killing

At the conclusion of the inquest into the July 2005 killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by the Metropolitan Police the jury returned an open verdict, rejecting the police claim that the Brazilian electrician was lawfully killed. Members of the de Menezes family had previously walked out of the court in disgust when the coroner instructed the jury not to consider a verdict of unlawful killing. The family has been waging a determined fight to hold the Metropolitan Police to account for this cold-blooded killing in which Jean Charles was held down and shot seven times in the head on a Tube train at Stockwell Station in South London after being targeted as a "terror suspect".

The British capitalist state has never even *pretended* that any cop would face criminal charges for the cold-blooded slaying of Jean Charles de Menezes. In fact every hearing in the case so far has annulled the police. The execution of de Menezes was perpetrated in the name of the Labour government's racist "war on terror" and the state is intent on making its message very clear: if you are deemed a "terror suspect", the cops can shoot you dead and *they will get away with it*.

Summing up the evidence at the inquest, Wright was blatantly biased in favour of the police. The *Guardian*, (3 December 2008) reports that he asserted that even if the jury found the officers had lied, they would not be able to blame them for the death: "people tell lies for a variety of reasons", including "to mitigate the impact" of what might be a "tragic mistake". In November 2007, an Old Bailey trial of the office of the Metropolitan Police imposed a fine on the Met for risking the "health and safety" of the public. At the trial, police lawyer Ronald Thwaites stated that the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes was "a terrible accident" but asserted "it is not the fault of the police" (*BBC News* online, 26 October 2007). The trial specifically exonerated Cressida Dick, the officer who gave the order to "stop" de Menezes, saying she bore "no personal culpability". The coroner at the inquest instructed the jury that their verdict must not be inconsistent with that conclusion.

Police giving evidence at the inquest once again insisted that they did nothing wrong. Cressida Dick claimed that de Menezes was simply the victim of "terrible and extraordinary circumstances" and stated: "If you ask me whether I think anybody did anything wrong or unreasonable in the operation, I don't think they did" (*Independent*, 6 October 2008). Moreover, the cops maintain that they could do it again. In response to a question by Michael Mansfield QC, representing the de Menezes family, the senior police commander in charge of the operation, Deputy Assistant Commissioner John McDowell stated: "I very much hope that this will never happen again. But at the same time, with human beings, it is entirely feasible the same tragedy may occur again just with the way that circumstances sometimes unravel themselves" (*Independent*, 26 September 2008). A year after the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, Mohammed Abdul Kahar almost *did* become another victim of the "war on terror" when he was

shot in the chest during a massive police raid on his home in Forest Gate.

Both the cops and the courts regard the execution of de Menezes as entirely justified in the name of the "war on terror". The cops seized on the criminal

notes that the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) "absorbed 14th Intelligence Company, known as '14 Int', a plainclothes unit set up to gather intelligence covertly on suspect terrorists in Northern Ireland". Appointed to

the reformist left lined up once again in support of Livingstone—including the SWP who stood their own candidate Lindsey German but gave second preference votes to Livingstone. In contrast, in our press (*Workers Hammer* no 202, Spring 2008) we said: "*No vote to Livingstone! A vote for Livingstone is an affront to the memory of Jean Charles de Menezes!*"

We Marxists do not rely for justice on the capitalist state—of which the cops and courts are a core part—but on the strength of the working class, mobilised independently of the capitalists. A mobilisation of union power against the racist scapegoating of Muslims would strengthen the fighting capacity of the working class as a whole. At the time of the shooting of de Menezes, an armed cop chased the train driver Quincy Akpesiri Oji, an ASLEF member, into the tunnel. The driver spoke at the inquest of his fear on hearing the gunshots: "I saw one of the men with a large gun shooting and I thought they were fanatics and they were shooting at people on the carriage" and recounted pleading for his life: "Please do not shoot—I am the driver."

Had the execution of de Menezes been met by a determined protest by the powerful, multiethnic London transport unions—the RMT, ASLEF members in the Tube and bus drivers in Unite and other unions—it would have given the police pause before they kill again. However, mobilising the power of the working class in its own defence and in defence of all the oppressed requires a political struggle against the misleaders of the trade unions who are tied to Labour and to the capitalist system. The failure of the union leadership to mobilise opposition to the "war on terror" has only emboldened the Labour government in its attacks on the working people.

A momentous demonstration of the power the unions in London can wield was seen barely a month after the execution of de Menezes when in August 2005 a wildcat strike paralysed British Airways and brought Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports, almost to a halt. Hundreds of BA staff organised in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU—now part of Unite) struck when the airline catering firm Gate Gourmet sacked 670 South Asian, mainly women workers. This impressive strike not only defied the anti-union laws, but significantly was launched in the teeth of the anti-terror hysteria whipped up by the government in the wake of the 7 July criminal terror bombings. It cost BA bosses £40 million in just two days and was defeated only by the treachery of the TGWU misleaders, who repudiated the strike as "unlawful" and forced a sell-out.

The Spartacist League is fighting to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will be steeled in the struggle against every manifestation of racism and oppression. Our aim is to mobilise the working class and all the oppressed in a struggle to overthrow the bloody rule of the capitalist class. Jean Charles de Menezes and countless other victims of British capitalist repression will be avenged by victorious social revolution. ■



Maria Otone de Menezes, mother of Jean Charles, in London for her son's inquest.

terror bombings of the London transport system on 7 July 2005 and the bombing scare that followed two weeks later, to legitimise "shoot-to-kill" for "terrorism" suspects. Witness statements at the inquest testified to the frenzy of the cops. Anna Dunwoodie, a passenger on the train at the time of the shooting, described the cops as "out of control"; another eyewitness, Rachel Wilson, said she thought the police were terrorists. Both refuted the cops' claim that they shouted a warning to Jean Charles de Menezes before killing him. As Michael Mansfield put it to one of the cops who pulled the trigger, codenamed C12, "What I suggest is in your mind that once you knew he was identified, that was it—you are down the escalator, on the carriage and he is dead."

Shoot-to-kill has long been the form of "justice" meted out by British imperialism to "IRA suspects" in Northern Ireland. With the pretext of the "terrorist threat", the oppression that has historically been visited by British imperialism on the Catholic population of Northern Ireland—internment without trial, no-jury courts etc—is now being brought "home" with a vengeance. In the operation that culminated in the death of de Menezes, the Metropolitan Police were assisted by a shadowy army regiment which, according to the *Guardian* (4 August 2005), was set up in April 2005 "to help combat international terrorism". The *Guardian* article

run the SRR was one Brigadier Gordon Kerr who was named in a file handed to the Director of Public Prosecutions by the Stevens Inquiry investigating collusion between British security forces and Loyalist paramilitaries in the killing of Catholics, including Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane in 1989.

Workers must defend Muslims!

Labour's "war on terror" has massively expanded the bourgeois state's arsenal of repression. Directed in the first instance against Britain's oppressed Muslim population who are indiscriminately stigmatised as "terror suspects", this state vendetta has fuelled a massive increase in racist attacks, which serves to further divide and weaken the working class. Ultimately the target of the "war on terror" is the multiethnic proletariat, which alone has the social power to overthrow the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

While the execution of de Menezes has been the signature of the "war on terror" in Britain, thus far there has been relatively little protest by the Labourite left in support of the family's campaign. This is not unconnected to the fact that the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the rest of the Labourite swamp, are ardent supporters of Ken Livingstone, former Labour mayor of London. Livingstone consistently backed the cops over the killing of de Menezes. During the mayoral elections

“Left Front” state repression in India

The Nandigram massacre

We reprint below an article from Spartacist Canada (no 159, Winter 2008-2009), newspaper of the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue trotskyste du Canada.

The Communist Party of Canada (CPC), long skilled in justifying working-class betrayals, has now taken up the cudgels for the capitalist government of West Bengal headed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). Last spring the correspondent in India for the CPC's *People's Voice*, B Prasant, claimed that the state budget of the Left Front government “prioritises the empowerment of the poor”. The government, he reported, was buying land and “handing it over to small peasants at no cost” (1-15 April 2008). The 16-31 October 2008 issue had Prasant hailing the government's “pro-employment and pro-poor industrial policy” in Singur, a rural area not far from Kolkata (Calcutta).

SPARTACIST CANADA

“Paper will put up with anything that is written on it,” as J V Stalin once wrote. Schooled for decades in the programme of Stalinist class collaboration and the lies it entails, the CPC should know. The truth is that for the last two years, far from giving land to peasants and “empowering” the poor, the CPI(M) has made Singur and nearby Nandigram synonymous with bloody state repression—murders, rapes, beatings, mass arrests and land seizures, all to serve the greater glory of capitalist profit.

In 2005, India loosened the regulations governing the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), sparking a frenzied real estate boom as central and state governments invoked the 1894 Land Acquisition Act, a relic of the British imperialists enacted to smooth the forcible acquisition of land and minimise the cost. More than 500 SEZs have been approved around the country. Highly capital intensive, the SEZs employ a tiny fraction of the vast numbers they have displaced and ruined. To ensure untrammelled profits, strikes and protests are banned inside SEZs and taxation is minimal.

Quick to cash in on the SEZ craze, in December 2006 the Left Front government in West Bengal moved to create an SEZ in Singur, forcibly acquiring land there on behalf of Tata Motors, one of India's largest capitalist conglomerates. Those who resisted were severely beaten and some 50 arrested. Reportedly led by CPI(M) spotters, houses were ransacked and haystacks burned. Later that month the charred body of a young woman activist, Tapasi Malik, 18, was found. She had been brutally raped and murdered. A full year passed before two CPI(M) workers were charged with this savage crime (Indo-Asian News Service, 7 December 2007).

Singur proved to be merely the opening act. In Nandigram, in late December 2006, villagers learned that 25,000 acres of arable land were to be taken to create an SEZ for a massive chemical industrial complex. There was an



Above: Protester wounded in bloody rampage by cops and CPI(M) thugs in Nandigram, 14 March 2007. Left: Police attack July 2007 Kolkata protest following rape and murder of young woman activist Tapasi Malik by CPI(M) members.

immediate outcry. On 7 January 2007, a protest organised by the Bhumi Uchched Pratirodh (Land Eviction Resistance) Committee (BUPC) was attacked as CPI(M) cadre shot bullets and hurled bombs into the village, killing at least five. Foreshadowing what was to come, CPI(M) State Secretariat member Benoy Konar railed, “But if they want to make things difficult for us, we are prepared to make life hell for them” (*Nandigram: What Really Happened?* [2007]).

In the early morning of 14 March, some 5-6000 unarmed residents of Nandigram assembled in an attempt to prevent government forces from entering the area. On the other side a 2000-strong police force and several hundred armed CPI(M) cadre, some in police uniform, launched an assault, blinding people with tear gas and then opening fire. The official count put the dead at 14, with over 200 injured. Others put the number of dead at more than 100. The true toll may never be known: a reporter for the civil-rights journal *Combat Law* (May-June 2007) was told by villagers that cops and CPI(M) goons hauled off bodies in trucks or buried them nearby under a newly repaired road.

What is known is that this attack was planned months in advance. Women and children, who were in the forefront of the protest in the mistaken belief that this would stay the hand of the police and CPI(M) goons, bore the brunt of the onslaught. Wrenching evidence was later given at hearings in Kolkata to a “People's Tribunal on Nandigram” organised by the All India Citizens' Initiative. Some women were raped and there were at least five cases of “sadistic sexual assault”; several women accused policemen of “forcing rod/lathi/gunbarrel into sex organs” (Executive Summary of the Report: People's Tribunal on Nandigram, 26-28 May 2007). Others were told of children being “torn apart, hurled into ponds and killed” (*Combat Law*, May-June 2007). Of 38 missing, eleven were children. This is the horrific reality that *People's Voice* hopes to hide in its lying hosannas to the West Bengal CPI(M) government.

While covering up this massacre, *People's Voice* portrays the CPI(M) as a party under siege from “elements of the reactionary right and the sectarian left” which are “using murder and mayhem”

(1-15 September 2008). In reality, Nandigram has been the site of a virtual small-scale civil war as the inhabitants have faced down repeated attacks from police and CPI(M) thugs acting on behalf of the bourgeois state.

The chemical hub in Nandigram—now on hold—was to have been built by the Indonesian Salim Group, whose founder was infamous for his close ties with the Suharto regime which killed some one million Communists and their supporters in 1965-66 following a military coup. Happy to front for such butchers, the CPI(M) says it is promoting development that will better the lives of the masses and indeed be a “weapon of class struggle”. But no amount of such Marxoid mumbo jumbo can hide that this is a *capitalist* government in a *capitalist* country. No less a mouthpiece for imperialist finance capital than the *Economist* pointed out in an article titled “The Capitalist

and caste oppression—the heritage of the pre-industrial past, reinforced and deepened by more than two centuries of British colonial rule.

Imperialist subjugation foreclosed any possibility of the Indian bourgeoisie playing the historical role of the bourgeoisies of Western Europe in liberating and developing the productive forces from feudal backwardness. The perspective for resolving the questions posed by what Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky termed “combined and uneven development” is provided by the theory and programme of permanent revolution, developed by Trotsky and vindicated by the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution (see *The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution*, ICL Pamphlet [2008]).

In a country like India where development is belated and strangled by imperialist subjugation, the weak



Kolkata, July 2006: Left Front Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya with representative of Indonesian Salim Group, infamous for its close ties with brutal 'Suharto regime.

Communist” that CPI(M) chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya “has embraced business with an apostate zeal... travelling the world and wooing foreign companies” (24 November 2007).

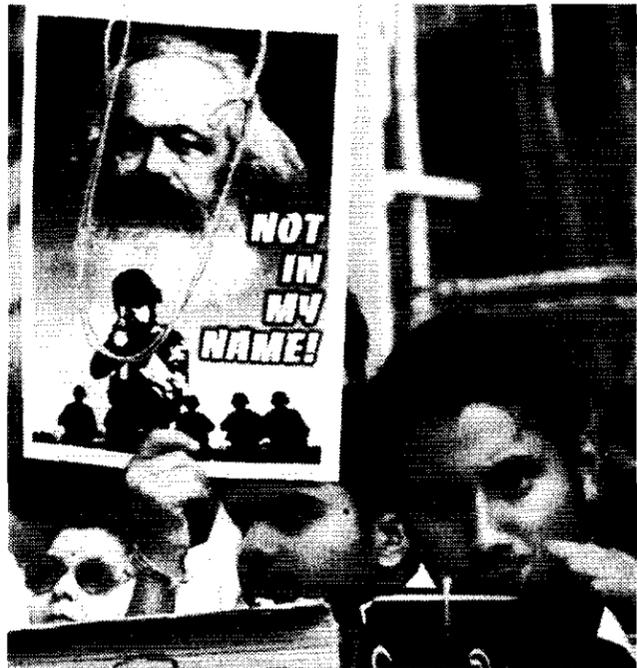
Only workers revolution will liberate the Indian masses!

The idea that capitalist development in a country like India (or anywhere else for that matter) could be other than brutal and exploitative is a lie pushed by the bourgeoisie and their reformist frontmen. India is a country of enormous social contradictions where modern industry is grafted onto a backward society marked by profound women's oppression as well as national, religious

national bourgeoisie is dependent on its imperialist masters—yesterday the British, today the US—and above all fears its “own” working class. The only road to liberation for the subjugated masses lies in the successful struggle of the proletariat for state power, at the head of all the oppressed, especially the vast peasantry, under the leadership of a revolutionary workers party. An Indian workers revolution would spark a revolutionary upsurge throughout the subcontinent, from Pakistan to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its survival and advancement would hinge on the achievement of social revolutions in the imperialist centers: Japan, North America and Western Europe.

This is emphatically not the perspective of the Indian variants of Stalinism, including Maoism. Stalinism as an ideology arose in the Soviet workers state following the defeat of the post-1917 revolutionary wave in Europe. Beginning in 1923-24 a conservative bureaucratic caste which came to be led by Stalin usurped political power from the proletariat. Among its greatest crimes against the world working class was the

Revolution" and "People's War" is no less bankrupt than that of the CPI(M) and CPI. Basing themselves on the peasantry, not the proletariat, the Maoists call for a "bloc of four classes" including with so-called "progressive" capitalists. In *The State and Revolution* and many other works, Lenin savaged the idea that the class interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat were anything other than irreconcilable.



Kunal Chakraborty

Protest in Kolkata against Nandigram massacre, 14 November 2007. Left Front's state repression has shattered illusions of many in CPI(M).

resurrection of a variant of the class-collaborationist Menshevism which had been defeated and discredited in the victorious 1917 Revolution. The Stalinist dogma of "two-stage revolution", in which the masses are tied to a mythical "progressive" bourgeoisie in a first, supposedly "democratic" stage of struggle, has brought bloody defeat to struggling workers and peasants around the world.

Over the decades, both before and after independence, the Stalinised Communist Party of India (CPI) has often given support to the bourgeois Congress Party and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The CPI(M), which issued from the CPI in 1964, continues this pattern of class collaboration. At the head of the Left Front, it has ruled West Bengal continuously since 1977, wielding the repressive powers of the bourgeois state in defence of private property and profit over a deeply impoverished population. At the all-India level, both CPs have continued to back Congress and its allies, including until recently the Congress-dominated United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in New Delhi. This is the political logic of the bankrupt programme of "revolution by stages". Whether labelled the "National Democratic Revolution" or the "Peoples Democratic Revolution", the masses remain brutally oppressed by capitalism and the supposed second, socialist stage never comes.

Many of those who have harboured illusions in the capacity of the CPI(M) to bring progress and a better life to the masses of West Bengal have been shaken by the atrocities in Nandigram. The months after the massacre saw a wave of resignations from the party, and heavy electoral losses in its former rural strongholds followed this year. Most of these losses were to the virulent anti-Communists of the Trinamool Congress, which has also been the main force in the BUPC-organised protests in Nandigram. In a rotten class-collaborationist alliance, this "resistance committee" is also supported by the Socialist Unity Centre of India, one of the country's many Maoist groups.

Another group, the CPI (Maoist), also claims to provide an alternative to the Left Front's SEZ policy. But their programme of "New Democratic

It is necessary to break with this deeply ingrained class collaborationism which has long branded India's various Communist Parties and their offshoots. The history of the international working-class struggle against capitalist wage slavery abounds with betrayals by Stalinism, whose anti-Marxist dogma of "socialism in one country" has meant pursuit of the pipe-dream of "peaceful coexistence" with world imperialism and opposition to the struggle for international socialist revolution. As well as "two-stage" betrayal, it has also meant forming and supporting popular-front governments—political blocs with capitalist parties in which the politics of the working class are necessarily subordinated to those of the bourgeoisie. Too often workers have paid with their lives for the treacherous policies of their leaders.

In Indonesia this programme brought the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965-66. The Chinese Maoists instructed the PKI—the largest Communist party in the capitalist world, with three million members and many times that number of supporters—to maintain at all costs a political bloc with the "anti-imperialist" regime of Sukarno, an ally of Beijing. The PKI adopted a policy of "national unity" with the Indonesian bourgeoisie and its military, even to the point of forcing workers to return to the capitalists the factories they had seized. With the workers politically lulled by the misleadership of Beijing and the PKI, the Indonesian military staged a coup led by General Suharto, ushering in the horrific blood-bath of Communists and their sympathisers. (See "Lessons of Indonesia 1965", *Spartacist* [English edition] no 55, Autumn 1999.)

A contemporary lesson in popular-front betrayal is found in South Africa. The South African Communist Party (SACP) has long backed the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) and participates in the capitalist ANC-led Tripartite Alliance—a nationalist popular front that came to power in 1994, signalling the end of apartheid rule. The SACP's role in South Africa in containing proletarian struggle parallels that of the CPI(M)—both are central to the administration of the capitalist government.

Through its participation in the Tripartite Alliance, the SACP has been instrumental in suppressing the struggles of the black toilers and other oppressed, while providing ministers and provincial premiers to staff the ANC-led government and its repressive state apparatus. Our comrades in Spartacist South Africa are unique in calling to break with the Tripartite Alliance and to build a Bolshevik workers party that fights for a black-centred workers government. In contrast, the activity of the reformist left is firmly within the boundaries of the Alliance, reinforcing the political chains binding the masses to neo-apartheid capitalism.

Down with US-India pact against China!

India is the imperialists' favourite "emerging giant" in Asia, one whose economic growth over the past decade or so is sometimes compared with that of China. In fact, China and India are fundamentally different kinds of states and societies.

rulers about India's supposed rapid-fire development is just that: hype. Even before the current global economic crisis, which is already sending India's economy into a tailspin, the country's per capita GDP was a minuscule six per cent of that of the US.

China is a bureaucratically deformed workers state, and has been since the 1949 Chinese Revolution overthrew capitalist/landlord rule and ripped the world's most populous country from the clutches of the imperialist powers. For good reason, China became a beacon for millions of oppressed toilers in Asia. Despite the bureaucratic parasitism and mismanagement of the ruling Stalinist Chinese Communist Party, the collectivisation of the economy has brought enormous social gains for workers, peasants and women, not least an end to centuries of chronic starvation in the countryside.

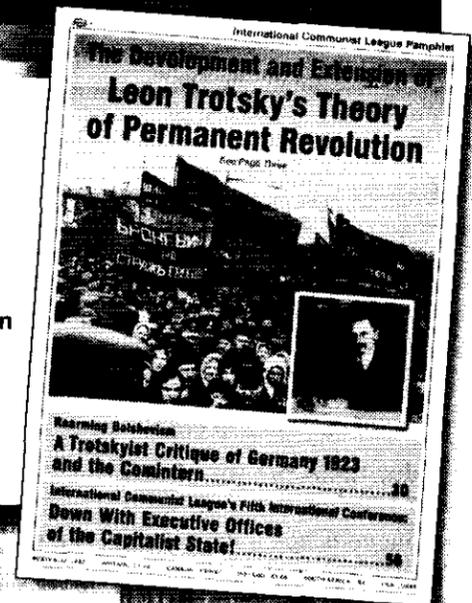
US imperialism today sees capitalist India as a strategic ally in its drive to overturn the gains of the Chinese Revolution. This autumn, Washington



Ferguson/Time

Vast slum in Mumbai next to modern airport facility (above) and March 2007 strike at Hindmotors, Kolkata (below) illustrate sharp contradictions in capitalist India. International Communist League pamphlet, right, outlines Leon Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. Only proletarian revolution will liberate Indian masses.

Pamphlet: £1.50 (56 pages)
Order from/make cheques payable to:
Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886,
London N19 5WY



no credit

India is a capitalist regional power dominated by imperialism. Its per capita gross domestic product is barely half that of China. China's poverty rate is less than half that of India's and the rate of child malnutrition three-quarters less. Female adult literacy in China is 87 per cent; in India it is just 48 per cent. India has more hungry people than any other country in the world. All the hype by the imperialists and the Indian

approved a pact for the sale of nuclear technology to India. As the *Financial Times* (28 September 2008) noted, this opens "a new chapter in relations" between the US and India that "could help counter the rise of China". The International Communist League stands for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist threats and internal

continued on page 10

Crisis...

(Continued from page 4)

make the grand experiment which would prove my case—*except in war conditions*” [our emphasis] (“The United States and the Keynes Plan”, *New Republic*, 29 July 1940). It was when the imperialist governments in Britain and the US mobilised their economies for World War II that they fully adopted Keynes’s programme of deficit spending for public works, those “public works” being battleships, bombers, tanks and finally A-bombs.

Any meaningful fight to defend jobs in the face of mass job losses on the scale we are witnessing today must be based on Trotsky’s 1938 *Transitional Programme*, the founding document of the Fourth International which asserted that: “Neither monetary inflation nor stabilization can serve as slogans for the proletariat because these are but two ends of the same stick.” It outlined a strategy for revolutionary leadership of the proletariat in the face of tremendous defeats, stating that: “Under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the meagerized life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism. They must defend their mouthful of bread, if they cannot increase or better it.” It also asserted:

“The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the politics of the capitalists which, to a considerable degree, like the politics of their agents, the reformists, aims to place the whole burden of militarism, the crisis, the disorganization of the monetary system and all other scourges stemming from capitalism’s death agony upon the backs of the toilers.”

— *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International*, 1938

“Transitional” demands are often misused by reformists to cover their capitulation to the existing misleadership of the working class, but such demands lose all meaning outside of a programme for the conquest of state power by the proletariat. Demands such as a shorter working week with no loss in pay and a sliding scale of wages and hours are designed to show that the struggle against unemployment and rising prices must be linked to the overthrow of the capitalist order.

Reformists dream of return to old Labour

The response of the Labourite left to the crisis has centred on the call for reform of capitalism through “real” nationalisations. *Socialist Worker* (4 October 2008) wrote: “Nationalisation for the public good would involve nationalising to protect jobs and to stop repossession. It would involve using the huge amounts of cash held in the banks to build affordable council homes.” Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party demanded that Labour carry out “real” nationalisations, which they also refer to as “public ownership”. This demand is the maximum programme of the declaration for a “new mass workers party” posted on their website which says: “No to the capitalist profit system. For a democratic socialist society, based on public ownership of the major corporations that dominate the economy, and run to meet the needs of all, and to protect our environment for future generations, instead of the profits of a few” (*Declaration for a new mass workers party*).

Nationalised industry under capitalism and the myth of “public ownership” is the core of old Labour reformism. It was stated in Clause IV of the Labour Party’s constitution, which nominally

committed the party to “common ownership of the means of production” and codified the myth that “socialism” could be achieved through legislation in parliament without smashing the capitalist state and without establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. The adoption of Clause IV in 1918 was an attempt to deflect the radicalising impact of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. In practice, Clause IV was simply a fig-leaf for class collaboration and betrayal. In the context of British imperialism’s loss of hegemonic power, the nationalisations of coal, steel and other industries by the Clement Attlee Labour government were in reality giant capitalist bailouts designed to help British capitalism to compete in the world market. In that sense the post-WWII nationalisations under old Labour were no more “socialist” than the bailout of the banks being carried out today by New Labour (and for that matter by the Bush/Obama regimes in the US).

Trotsky made clear that on occasion it may be appropriate to call for partial nationalisations, for example of branches of industry that are vital, such as oil, or of a particularly parasitic section of the bourgeoisie. However Trotsky’s call for nationalisation is not in any sense a means of peddling illusions in parliamentary measures to improve capitalism. Rather it is meant to be used as a bridge to working-class power:

“Nationalization can signify as in England the mines, in France the military industries—a voluntary agreement between the owners and government. The owners became participants in the nationalized property, and many of them in France, for example, became richer than before, for they were saved from bankruptcy. That is why we can use, I believe, the alternatives in our agitation, the words expropriation and nationalization, but underline the word *expropriation*. We can say to the miner, you wish nationalization. Yes, it is our slogan. It is only the question of conditions. If the national property is too burdened with debts against former owners, your conditions can become worse than now.... Now you must organize your own government in the state and expropriate them.”

—“For a Workers’ and Farmers’ Government”, 1938

For the British working class, the burden of the present capitalist crisis is

Stearns, Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley—have now ceased to exist as investment banks. Britain’s working people are already impoverished and saddled with among the highest levels of debt in the world. When mortgages are included, the average debt per head

Across Britain, the rate of repossessions of homes is rising weekly while the toll of job losses is staggering. BT has announced 10,000 job losses; Rolls-Royce will cut 2000 jobs. All of Britain’s car manufacturing plants are cutting production as part of the global crisis: Nissan in Sunderland; Ford in

Socialist Worker

6 December 2008

As the economy hurtles towards a slump

Three steps to save jobs

1 Nationalise to stop closures

2 35 hour week with no pay cut

3 Build council houses

SWP peddles illusions in parliamentary reforms, harking back to old Labour nationalisations and welfare spending as solution to mass unemployment.

amounts to 180 per cent of disposable income, “the highest proportion of any country in the G7 club of rich nations”, according to an *Observer* article (5 October 2008).

The gleaming skyscrapers such as Canary Wharf tower in the Docklands symbolise the boom years of the City of London as an opulent international centre for finance capital. Obscenely, according to TUC figures, bonuses paid out in the City for 2008 amount to £250 for every man, woman and child in the country (TUC press release, 17 October 2008). Canary Wharf happens to be in the borough of Tower Hamlets, a poor and heavily Bangladeshi area which ranks third from the bottom of 354 local authorities in England and Wales in terms of average deprivation. This is a borough where “eight-out-of-10 kids face poverty in the world’s 6th richest city” (*East London Advertiser*, 16 October 2008). The same “tale of two cities” picture of inequality is shown in a statement by Labour minister Alan Johnson that: “A man living in Kensington and Chelsea will on average live 10 years longer than a man living in Manchester. For every stop on the

Southampton and Land Rover at Halewood, while Honda in Swindon will suspend production for two months in 2009. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber noted: “The dole queue is now growing by 1,000 people a day” (*Guardian*, 13 November 2008).

To defend jobs and fight for the very existence of the multiethnic working class requires a fight against the politics of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy—not least in the car industry where they have made “sweetheart” deals with the bosses. While making false promises about extracting concessions from the Labour government, the bureaucracy kept industrial peace while the bosses further decimated the industrial proletariat through job losses.

It is vitally necessary for the unions to fight against racism. Labour’s vaunted “flexible economy” is heavily dependent on immigrant workers, who work for pitiful wages and face a climate of racist hostility. The government’s “war on terror” has led to increased racism against Muslims, who are concentrated among the poorest section of the working class. Particularly in the context of recession,



British Leyland workers demonstrating in 1977 against wage controls imposed by old Labour government of Jim Callaghan (right).

proportionally higher than elsewhere because Britain’s financial sector centred on the City of London vastly outstrips the rest of the economy. The combined assets of Britain’s main commercial banks amount to *four times* the size of the whole economy (GDP). This figure does not include the giant investment banks which dominate the City, of which New York’s five biggest—Bear

Jubilee line from Westminster to Canning Town, life expectancy goes down by one year” (*Guardian*, 9 June 2008). The headline of an article about Glasgow’s Calton area by Audrey Gillan also captures the poverty levels of the “boom” years: “In Iraq, life expectancy is 67. Minutes from Glasgow city centre, it’s 54” (*Guardian.co.uk*, 21 January 2006).

attacks on immigrant workers are increasing. The union Unite recently protested at the decision of subcontractors working at Staythorpe power station near Newark to employ only overseas workers on the job while refusing to hire any local workers. A demonstration outside the power station evoked Gordon Brown’s call at the GMB union conference in 2007 for

“British workers for British jobs”—a slogan associated with the fascists. We vehemently oppose such divide-and-rule ploys, pitting workers of different countries against each other. We say the trade unions must fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

The deadly chauvinism of the trade union misleaders of “defending British jobs” against foreign competition, including against the Chinese deformed workers state, where capitalist rule was overthrown by the 1949 Revolution, is itself a defence of the interests of the imperialist rulers against the working class both at home and abroad. As the world today is again riven by an economic crisis, rivalries among competing imperialist powers that have led to two world conflagrations are heating up. We insist that the defence of the class interests of the proletariat must be imbued with the programme of international solidarity and struggle that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels inscribed on the banner of the communist movement more than 160 years ago: “Workers of the world, unite!”

Defend the Chinese workers state!

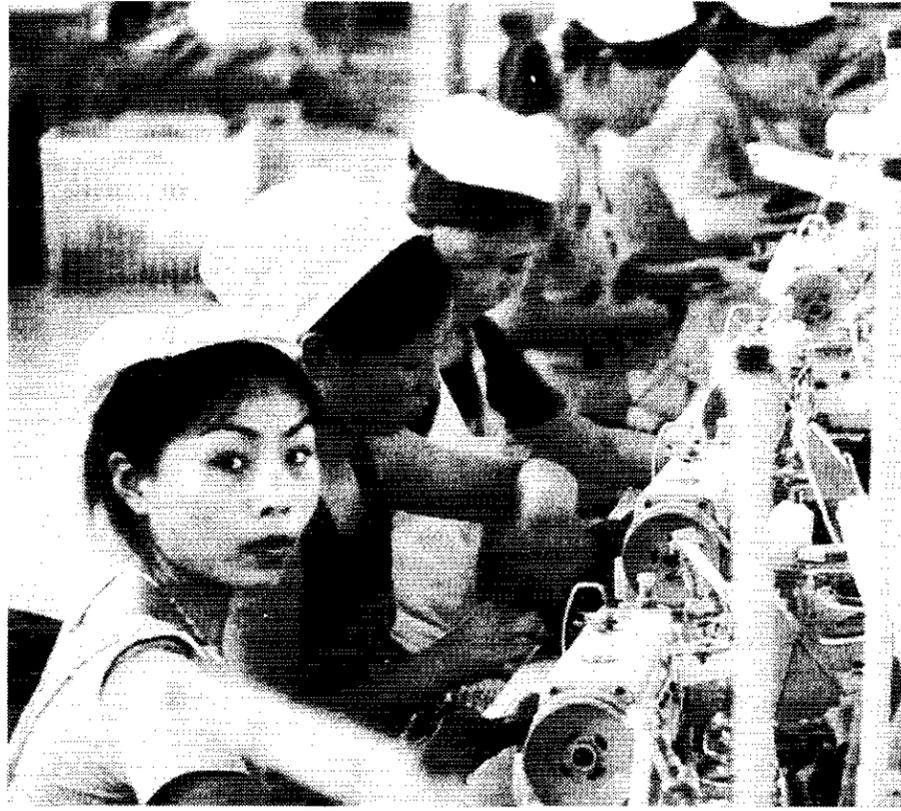
Central to a proletarian internationalist perspective today is the defence of China which is not a capitalist state but a bureaucratically deformed workers state that issued out of the 1949 Revolution. This revolution overthrew capitalist rule and led to the building up of a collectivised economy. Despite inroads made by the “market reforms”, the core of China’s economy is still collectivised, which represents a historic gain for the working class of the world.

China’s economy is dominated by the state-controlled banks and the core elements of the Chinese economy remain collectivised while state-owned enterprises are dominant in the strategic industrial sectors. China’s growth rate has been particularly dramatic in contrast to the economics of the capitalist West and Japan. However, China is by no means completely insulated from the destructive irrationality of the capitalist world market. China has vast investments in Wall Street, the City of London and elsewhere and huge balance of trade surpluses with the United States. In addition to being the world’s largest foreign holder of dollar reserves, worth almost two trillion dollars, China is now the largest holder of US government debt. The current global financial meltdown has already had adverse effects on the Chinese economy. In particular, large numbers of workers from privately owned factories producing commodities—such as toys, clothing, consumer products—geared for export have already lost their jobs.

Although economic forecasts suggest that China will maintain a growth rate of between 5-8 per cent next year, a figure which the *Economist* (13 November 2008) says most countries would still be happy with, “it has become an article of faith in China that output needs to grow by at least 8% a year to create enough jobs for the millions of rural Chinese moving to cities”. Already hundreds of thousands of China’s estimated 120 million migrant workers are being thrown out of jobs, particularly in Guangdong province, resulting in a mass return migration to the countryside. Workers no longer have the “iron rice bowl” which once guaranteed a job and benefits for workers in state owned enterprises, so workers who lose their jobs often have no source of income. Faced with growing social unrest, the Beijing government in November announced a colossal sum of almost \$600 billion for public spending.

But according to an article by Geoff Dyer in the *Financial Times* (15 November 2008) little more than a quarter of this will come from the central government and, “with revenues falling, it is difficult to see how local governments, banks and companies can make up the rest”.

Fundamentally, China remains a nationally isolated workers state with a large impoverished peasant sector. Moreover, the strategic aim of US and all the imperialist bourgeoisies in rela-



Chinese textile workers. Export-oriented industries hit by world capitalist recession are forced to throw thousands of workers out of jobs.

tion to China is to destroy the workers state and to restore capitalist class rule in this vast country. We uphold the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military defence of China against imperialist attack and against counter-revolution from within. At the same time we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy that rules in Beijing and replace it with a regime based on workers democracy, exercised through workers and peasants councils, committed to proletarian internationalism.

“Globalisation” theories go splat

British trade union leader Derek Simpson of Unite enthused that the Labour government has heralded the end of “neo-liberalism” in its November budget which is “a welcome warm up exercise after 30 years of inaction and neo-liberal economics” (Unite press release, 24 November 2008). The end of so-called neo-liberalism is also hailed by the SWP who described the US and British government takeovers of the banks as “the biggest refutation conceivable of the free market, ‘neo liberal’ language which such politicians and media commentators have inflicted on us” (SWP pamphlet, *Capitalism’s New Crisis*, October 2008).

Following the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, liberals and reformists such as the SWP—who supported this defeat for the working masses—equated opposition to the “neo-liberal” policies identified with the Blair and Bush regimes with opposition to capitalism itself. “Neo-liberalism” became shorthand for the depredations of “free-market” capitalism—the drastic “structural reforms” dictated by US imperialism via the International Monetary Fund/World Bank in underdeveloped countries as well as the

“flexible labour markets” and privatisations of public services carried out by New Labour.

Contrary to the ideology of the “anti-globalisation” movement, opposition to “neo-liberalism” does not equal opposition to the capitalist order. This system can only be eradicated through a series of proletarian socialist revolutions internationally. The conquest of power by the working class must shatter the capitalist state and replace it with a workers state, a task which requires

omics, which said: “The Irish guarantee is the most ‘in-your-face’ beggar-thy-neighbour provocation since medieval armies catapulted bubonic-plague-ridden corpses into the cities they were besieging.”

The City of London, citadel of British imperialism

Britain’s staunch military support to US imperialism such as in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan is a product of British imperialism’s long decline to the level of a decrepit third-rate power which lacks the wherewithal to defend its own interests abroad and has little choice other than to rely on the US. However, long after Britain ceded to US imperialism the role of dominant world power, London retained a position second to Wall Street as a world centre of finance capital. An article in the *London Review of Books* (25 September 2008) by Donald MacKenzie notes that, paradoxically, London’s status as a financial centre came about in part because of “Britain’s failure—crystallised in the 1957 sterling crisis—to re-establish the pound as a major international currency after the war”. MacKenzie says:

“That [failure] prompted the leading British banks increasingly to lend, borrow and accept deposits in US dollars (‘eurodollars’, as they came to be called). The Bank of England overcame its initial anxieties and came tacitly to support the eurodollar market, and the Johnson administration inadvertently encouraged it by trying to stem the flow of dollars overseas. Eurodollar operations conducted in London allowed US banks to circumvent the new controls.

“The result was that London became—and in many ways remains—the centre of the international money markets. ‘Money’ here does not mean cash, but short-term loans between banks and other major institutions; more than a fifth of international lending of this kind still takes place in London.”

The author also notes that the rate at which the world’s banks are willing to lend to each other—the LIBOR—is set in London daily. This benchmark figure, the author notes, “anchors contracts amounting to some \$300 trillion, the equivalent of \$45,000 for every human being on the planet”.

London’s international status was boosted in the 1980s under the high priestess of monetarism and the “free-market”, Margaret Thatcher, who deregulated the City in the “Big Bang” of 1986. It is not an accident that this boost for untrammelled profiteering came in the aftermath of the defeat of the miners strike of 1984-85. Faced with abject decline, the only way for British imperialism to become competitive was to enforce wage reductions on the working people, which meant breaking the power of the unions. Labour governments tried to do this during the 1960s and 1970s and met with massive resistance from the unions, particularly the miners, rail and dockers unions. Together these unions had the power to bring the country to a halt. The miners strike of 1974 indeed threw British capitalism into a profound economic and political crisis. This resulted in the election of a Labour government in 1974 which tried and failed to break the power of the unions.

Labour was replaced by the Thatcher government in 1979 which prepared a showdown against the miners, culminating in the heroic year-long strike by the miners union. Defeat in this battle was far from inevitable and was not mainly the result of the massive state repression such as the thousands of

continued on page 10

Crisis...

(Continued from page 9)

cops attacking striking miners daily in the coalfields, but of the treachery of the Labourite union leaders whose perspective did not go beyond the election of a Labour government. Particular responsibility lies with the “left” leaders of the rail unions, who failed to strike alongside the miners, and the dockers union leaders who sent their members back to work twice during the miners strike rather than mount joint strikes against Thatcher. The Labour Party “lefts” such as Tony Benn were no better, despite many speeches about solidarity with the miners, while the Labour leadership under Neil Kinnock was openly hostile to the strike.

The difficult conditions under which the British workers struggle today including the panoply of anti-union laws prepared by Thatcher and retained by New Labour—are the legacy of the defeat of that struggle and the fact that the leadership of the unions have refused to rock the boat with class struggle against the Labour government. It was the political bankruptcy of old Labour reformism that led to the rise of Thatcher and of New Labour. The deregulation of the City led to the growth in the 1990s of the new investment banks and resulted in the runaway

“free market” binge based on hedge funds, derivatives and securities. This also stemmed from counterrevolution in the former USSR. A *Financial Times* article by Tony Jackson described its effect on the markets:

“The market peaks of 2000 represented one of the biggest overvaluations of equities in history. The blame is conventionally laid on the technology bubble, and that certainly played its part. But the more fundamental factor was the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade earlier. That led to the final discrediting of socialism and central planning, the revival of globalisation and the triumph of the US as the unipolar world power.”

—*Financial Times*, 4 May 2008

The unfettered boom in the City that characterised the Thatcher years went hand in hand with the destruction of manufacturing jobs. This continued throughout Labour’s decade in office, during which *one million* more jobs were lost in manufacturing which is now a mere 14 per cent of the economy (as opposed to the “service” sector, including financial services, which is around 70 per cent).

The British capitalist order is based on the dominance of the City of London and the yuppie English Home Counties over the former industrial heartlands of the north of England as well as the national oppression of Scotland and Wales. We oppose the reactionary United Kingdom which is centred on the archaic institutions of the monarchy,

the House of Lords and the established churches. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that fights to overthrow Westminster rule and replace it with a workers government. Abolish the monarchy, the estab-

lished churches and the House of Lords! British troops out of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan! For an Irish workers republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■

Prostitution...

(Continued from page 3)

related to the status of women more generally, itself a measure of a society’s advancement. Thus the conditions faced by the prostitute vary greatly with time, place and class. The family is the central instrument for the subjugation of women under capitalism. Its historical function is to transmit private property to “legitimate” heirs through inheritance, although that function has little relevance to working-class people who generally have little to pass on. It serves to instil obedience to bourgeois codes of morality and to impose on the working class the burden of raising the next generation of wage-slaves. As we wrote in “U.S./UN Crusade Against ‘Sex Trafficking’”:

“It is the institution of the family that brings money into sexual relations. Whether it’s renting a prostitute by the hour or a wife by the lifetime, the family and the oppression of women are

founded on private property, and the religious codes of morality and capitalist law are all that distinguish the wife from the prostitute in this fundamental sense....

“Under socialism, the family will be replaced by communal childcare and housework, enabling women to participate fully in economic, social and political life.... Birth control and abortions will be free and on demand, with free, quality health care for all. Sex will be free from the snooping of preachy busybodies and corrupt cops. The liberation of the prostitute can’t be separated from the liberation of women as a whole, and prostitution will die only as the institution of the family is replaced.”

Spartacist [English edition] no 58, Spring 2004

The Spartacist League seeks to build a revolutionary party of the working class to uproot this decaying capitalist system and replace it with planned collectivised economics on an international scale, laying the material basis for the liberation of humanity. **For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!** ■

Nandigram...

(Continued from page 7)

counterrevolution. At the same time, we call for a proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist, Stalinist ruling caste in Beijing and create a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali et al rescue CPI(M)

While the Nandigram massacre wracked the left in India, the CPI(M) found voices of solidarity outside the country. Less than two weeks after yet another assault on Nandigram led by a CPI(M) militia, a statement by Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Susan George, Walden Bello, Howard Zinn and various other fake-left luminaries appeared in *The Hindu* (22 November 2007) and elsewhere. Silent on the Left Front’s brutal state repression, the authors deplored “what appear to be unbridgeable gaps between people who share similar values” and expressed “trust

that the people of Bengal will not allow their differences on some issues to tear apart the important experiments undertaken in the State (land reforms, local self-government).”

Many Indian leftists were stunned by this plea for unity between the state architects of a bloody massacre and its victims. As well, several intellectuals, including renowned writer Arundhati Roy and Bengali novelist Mahashweta Devi, issued an angry rebuttal. For our part, we were unsurprised. This is par for the course for petty-bourgeois dilettantes like Chomsky et al, many of whom have been leading publicists for the popular-frontist World Social Forums. International confabs backed by numerous capitalist governments and corporate endowments, the purpose of the Social Forums has been to ensure that those who oppose some of the depredations of capitalism do not challenge the capitalist system itself. As noted in a well-researched article in *Aspects of India’s Economy* (September 2003) shortly before the 2004 Social Forum in Mumbai, these gatherings are

funded by the likes of the “Ford Foundation, which has closely collaborated with the US Central Intelligence Agency internationally, and in India has helped to shape the government’s policies in favour of American interests”.

An article in the online version of the Socialist Workers Party’s (SWP) *International Socialism* (2 July 2007) attacked the Nandigram massacre—only to mourn the lost “unity” of the Social Forums, including in India, where the left shared a “common platform”. “After Nandigram,” they continue, “it is difficult to see where this shared space is”. According to *International Socialism*, the alternative to the CPI(M) is “a real democratic left, stripped of old dogmas” that breaks “from the dead past and stifling present”. Here the SWP is dishing out the same old anti-communist garbage in new pails.

In sharp contrast, the ICL fights for the communism of Lenin and Trotsky whose highest embodiment was the 1917 Russian workers revolution. In India today, alongside the massive peas-

antry is a small but very powerful and vibrant working class. It is this proletariat that holds the key to the future. In January 2007, and again in March, West Bengal workers carried out state-wide strikes against the bloodshed at Nandigram. More recently, in August this year, a countrywide general strike against price rises, rising unemployment and falling real wages aimed at the UPA government brought West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura almost to a standstill. The burning need is to give this immense proletarian social power the necessary leadership and programme through the forging of a genuinely revolutionary party, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

Against the class collaborationism and popular frontism endemic to the Indian left, such a party will counterpose a revolutionary programme for the all-sided emancipation of the Indian masses under working-class rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our Trotskyist forebears in the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India stood firmly in this tradition. In 1942 they declared:

“The ultimate fate of the revolution in India, as in Russia, will be determined in the arena of the international revolution. Nor will India by its own forces be able to accomplish the task of making the transition to socialism. Not only the backwardness of the country, but also the international division of labor and the interdependence—produced by capitalism itself—of the different parts of world economy, demand that this task of the establishment of socialism can be accomplished only on a world scale. The victorious revolution in India, however, dealing a mortal blow to the oldest and most widespread imperialism in the world will on the one hand produce the most profound crisis in the entire capitalist world and shake world capitalism to its foundations. On the other hand it will inspire and galvanize into action millions of proletarians and colonial slaves the world over and inaugurate a new era of world revolution.”

—“The Classes of India and Their Political Roles: A Thesis of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India”, *Fourth International*, March 1942 ■

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Welcome to our new readers!

Obama...

(Continued from page 12)

which the capitalists disguise their rule with the appearance of a popular mandate. Abroad, Obama provides an invaluable facelift for US imperialism, the main enemy of the world's working people.

Obama calls to remove "combat troops" from Iraq (while maintaining a "residual force") in order to redeploy at least another 10,000 soldiers to Afghanistan in support of that murderous occupation. He is dedicated to further machinations against Pakistan, including military incursions into that country. In his 24 July 2008 speech in Berlin before a huge crowd, he invoked the anti-Soviet Cold War to motivate US imperialism's interests, not least the restoration of capitalist rule in China. He is a staunch supporter of the "war on terror", including warrantless wiretapping and the renewal of the USA Patriot Act. His inner circle includes Carter and Clinton-era war criminals like Zbigniew Brzezinski and Madeleine Albright as well as staunch supporters of Zionist Israel like Vice President-elect Joe Biden and Rahm Emanuel, projected to be the new chief of staff. Obama is considering one John O Brennan, who was among those who created the current CIA detention and torture programmes, for director of national intelligence or head of the CIA. Brennan vehemently defended the administration's use of "rendition" in a December 2005 interview on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, calling it an "absolutely vital tool".

We say, from Afghanistan to Iraq and Guantánamo: **Free all the detainees!** As revolutionary opponents of US imperialism, we stood for the military defence of Afghanistan and Iraq in the lead-up to US imperialism's invasions of those countries while politically opposing the reactionary Taliban and Saddam Hussein's brutal capitalist regime. We called for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home. We are for the **defeat** of US forces; their every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed the world over. We demand the **immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia! US hands off Pakistan and Iran!** As against the reformist left, which has lined up with its "own" bourgeoisie, we fight for the **unconditional military defence of those states where capitalism has been overthrown**: China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea.

Domestically, working people face grinding debt and mass layoffs. And the bourgeoisie has no solution for the current economic crisis and the inevitable boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism. With auto sales collapsing, General Motors and Ford recently announced that over the past three months they burned through cash at a rate of more than \$2 billion a month; GM said that by year's end it could run out of the

cash necessary to fund its business. Even if bankruptcy is averted—or postponed—by government subsidies, as some Democrats are demanding, auto workers face massive layoffs, pay cuts and an all-out attack on pensions and healthcare.

Meanwhile, in the face of worldwide economic crisis, Obama and the Democrats embraced (with only minor modifications) the Bush administration's plan to transfer \$700 billion of taxpayers' money to banks and other financial institutions. So far, this gigantic bailout has done little to unfreeze credit markets. Last week the Treasury Department announced that even though about \$290 billion of that sum had already been allocated, the banks were still not willing to lend to consumers. Obama seeks to socialise the bourgeoisie's losses on the backs of working people, while helping the exploiters appropriate the profits for themselves.

Our class opposition to all bourgeois candidates—and to bourgeois electoralism—is based on the Marxist understanding that capitalist society is divided between two fundamental classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, whose interests cannot be reconciled. Labour needs a fighting leadership that will unleash the power of the multiracial working class in struggle for workers' economic interests and also for black rights, in defence of immigrants and in opposition to US imperialism. But the trade union bureaucracy of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win union federations promotes Democratic Party "lesser evilism" and spent some **\$450 million** of union members' dues money on the 2008 elections, rather than building up a war chest for the struggle needed to defend the workers' interests. Instead of class struggle and international working-class solidarity, the union tops push chauvinist "America first" patriotism and protectionism, promoting the lie that working people abroad, as opposed to the US capitalist rulers, are the enemies of the American proletariat.

Class and race in capitalist America

The US is a country historically defined by chattel slavery, an institution that was smashed only through the blood and iron of the Civil War. It is a country that required a massive civil rights movement, claiming many black and white martyrs, before Southern Jim Crow segregation was finally defeated. The pride among black people over Obama's election is, whatever his actual policies, a legacy of this history of oppression and enforced exclusion from the "process".

However, the condition today of the black masses, particularly those in the ghettos, is one of desperate poverty, police violence, massive incarceration. The "end of racism" myth of Obama's campaign is a cruel hoax, as is Obama's statement that the civil rights movement brought America "90 percent of the way" towards racial equality. As we pointed out in our first article on

Obama's candidacy almost a year ago, "The Obama Campaign and the 'End of Racism' Myth" (*Workers Vanguard* no 906, 18 January 2008):

"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 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 the examples of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice also show, there is now a huge class gulf between the petty-bourgeois black professionals who were the main beneficiaries of the liberal-led civil rights movement and the masses of black workers and ghetto poor. But black president or not, America is America—racist, brutal, violent. As Obama's Grant Park election night celebration was going on, Chicago cops harassed black residents cheering his victory. That same night in Staten Island, New York, a 17-year-old black youth was chased and beaten by racists who screamed "Obama!" at him. Four days after the election, Ecuadorian immigrant Marcello Lucero was fatally stabbed near the Patchogue, Long Island train station by a gang of racist teens who reportedly drove around searching for a Latino to attack.

Under the guise of being a post-"culture wars" unifier, Obama's positions on many issues are only a hair's breadth away from such stalwart reactionaries as Joe Lieberman (and we're not sure about the hair). Obama opposes gay marriage. He is a supporter of the racist death penalty, a legacy of chattel slavery in the US. This past July, Obama stated his opposition to mental health exceptions for "late-term" abortion bans with the paternalistic statement that a woman's rationale for an abortion cannot be "just a matter of feeling blue".

Reformists' Obamamania

The "Anybody but Bush" reformist left is head-over-heels over Obama's election. In opposition to working-class political independence from the capitalist rulers, they promote collaboration with the bourgeois enemy as the way forward. *Workers World* (14 November 2008) stated: "The election victory of Barack Obama will go down in history as a triumphant step forward in the struggle against racism and national oppression in the U.S." This was preceded by a 6 November piece in which Workers World Party leader Larry Holmes babbled on about the "elation" and "feeling of liberation" unleashed by Obama's win, not bothering to even mention their endorsement of capitalist Green Party candidate Cynthia McKinney (whose campaign was, as we said, a stalking horse for the Democrats). According to Holmes, "The feeling on the streets of cities large and small across the U.S. on election night was that now, anything is possible, and it is." So, it is "yes we can"—under capitalism.

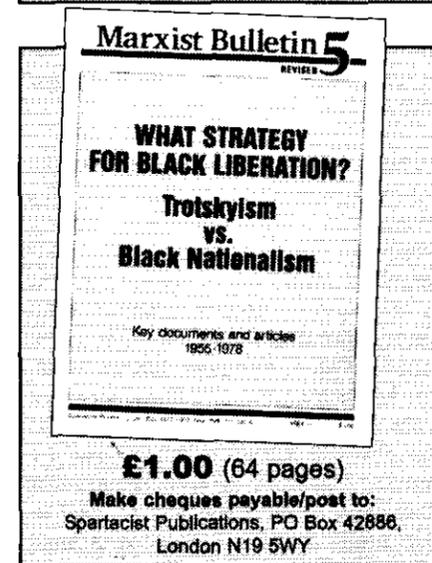
The International Socialist Organization (ISO) threw an election night party in Harlem to "celebrate the end of far too many years of republican rule" and to discuss "what can activists do to press their demands on the next administration?" The ISO's *Socialist Worker*

(7 November 2008), aping liberal buzzwords, gushed that Obama's victory was "transformative". While acknowledging that many of Obama's positions point "to a big gap between the hopes and expectations of Obama voters and the cautious, moderate program he has put forward", the ISO intones: "None of this is to say that no change is possible. Tens of millions of people want a new direction. The question is whether they can be organized to fight for it."

For its part, the eccentric Stalinist-reformist Progressive Labor Party (PL) wrote in its newspaper *Challenge* (10 November 2008) that Obama is a capitalist politician, noting that PL's "exposing and opposing Obama and the ruling class he serves may not be 'popular' at first". But actions speak louder than words: as we earlier reported, PL openly declared that it would "actively participate in Obama's campaign" (*Challenge*, 26 March 2008). One "Red Registrar" even boasted in a letter to *Challenge* (4 October 2008), printed without comment, "I helped out at a voter registration drive in my neighborhood that I found out about through BarackObama.com"! These reformists perpetuate deadly illusions that this government of the capitalists, by the capitalists and for the capitalists can be made to serve "the people".

All of our activity is directed towards forging, training and steeling the proletarian vanguard party necessary for the seizure of state power. In contrast, the politics of the reformists consist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of bourgeois society. This was sharply characterised by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in his 1924 work, *Lessons of October*, as "the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state".

We stand on what Trotsky wrote in *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (also known as the *Transitional Programme*), the basic programmatic document adopted at the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. As Trotsky put it, the Fourth International "uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task—the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—the proletarian revolution." ■



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**American Trotskyists say:
Break with the capitalist Democratic Party!
For a revolutionary workers party!**



Obama: commander-in-chief of racist US imperialism

We reprint below an article from *Workers Vanguard* (no 925, 21 November 2008), newspaper of the *Spartacist League/US*. Just as the “Anybody but Bush”-reformist left in America has expressed elation at the election of black Democrat Barack Obama as commander-in-chief of US imperialism, their British counterparts are also rejoicing.

“The Stop the War Coalition is delighted that Barack Obama has won the US Presidential elections”, proclaimed its website, while the Socialist Workers Party declared the event “a momentous achievement in a country with a long history of entrenched and vicious racism” (*Socialist Worker*, 8 November 2008). The American affiliate of the Socialist Party in Britain, *Socialist Alternative*, said that Obama’s election “could be a spark that helps ignite a new movement to fight for better conditions among African-Americans” (socialistparty.org, 12 November 2008). Particularly in response to the US and British imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, the above organisations have begged the Labour government to “break with Bush”, reflecting bourgeois concern about the damage to British imperialism’s image abroad. Their support for Obama is consistent with the fact that his presidency offers a much-needed facelift for US imperialism.

The election of Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States has aroused great expectations among working people and the oppressed around the world. Black people and others celebrated on streets throughout the country the election of the next commander-in-chief of bloody US imperialism. Michelle Obama, the descendent of slaves, will be first lady in a White House whose foundations were laid by slave labour. This is something most Americans never expected to see in their lifetime. Amid fears of a new



From Bush to Obama, imperialist war and capitalist economic crisis will continue. Marines in Afghanistan, July 2008.

Great Depression, as millions of working people are losing their homes and unemployment grows, hopes for “change” centre on the incoming Democratic Obama administration. These hopes will be brutally dashed.

As America’s next top cop, Obama will preside over the racist capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of working people at home and abroad. As against the reformists, who either explicitly or implicitly backed Obama, we Marxists fight to break working people and the oppressed from illusions in the capitalist Democratic Party of war and racism. On principle, we do not vote for, or otherwise extend any political support to, any capitalist politician—Democrat, Republican, Green or “independent”. As the front-page headline of *Workers Vanguard* no 923 (24 October 2008) emphasised: “McCain, Obama: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed”.

We Marxists also do not run for the executive offices of the bourgeois state,

such as mayor, governor or president. This is based on our understanding that the capitalist state—which at its core consists of the cops, military, courts and prisons—exists to defend the class rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. Holding executive office means administering the capitalist state. Our aim is the forging of a revolutionary workers party to lead the multiracial working class, and behind it all the oppressed, in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist order through workers revolution and establish a workers state where those who labour rule.

Immediately upon winning, Obama sought to tamp down expectations for his administration. He made his agenda of “national unity” patriotism clear when he declared on election night, before a crowd of 250,000 people in Chicago celebrating his victory, the need for “a new spirit of sacrifice”. In this, Obama is following in the footsteps of the black Democrats who have been employed as mayors and police chiefs of major urban areas—from Los

Angeles to Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and elsewhere. Their job has been to **keep working and black people down**, to oversee rampant cop terror and administer the slashing of social programmes; their **value to the racist rulers** is epitomised by the statement of black former New York City mayor David Dinkins: “They’ll take it from me.” With the US entering a deep economic recession, it will be Obama’s job to contain potential social unrest and impose austerity measures upon working people—and his current popularity may very well allow him to get away with much.

With cool “post-partisan” arrogance, Obama—wielding his own \$660 million campaign, which was supported by significant sections of the bourgeoisie—blames the oppressed for their own oppression. In his Chicago victory speech, Obama stated: “If there is anyone out there...who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.” A similar message came from McCain in his concession speech, who bluntly stated, “Let there be no reason now for any American to fail to cherish their citizenship.” As we warned in “Obama Offers Facelift for U.S. Imperialism” (*Workers Vanguard* no 920, 12 September 2008): “Obama serves as a very powerful propaganda weapon for the bourgeoisie, telling black people and the oppressed to shut up and stop complaining, because, you see, ‘the American dream’ works!”

From the standpoint of the international working class and oppressed there is **nothing to celebrate** in Obama’s victory and much to fear. Enthusiasm among large sections of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is justified. After nearly eight years of one of the most incompetent and widely despised regimes in recent US history, they now have in Obama a more rational face for their brutal, irrational system. Obama has also inspired illusions in the trappings of bourgeois democracy, the means by

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