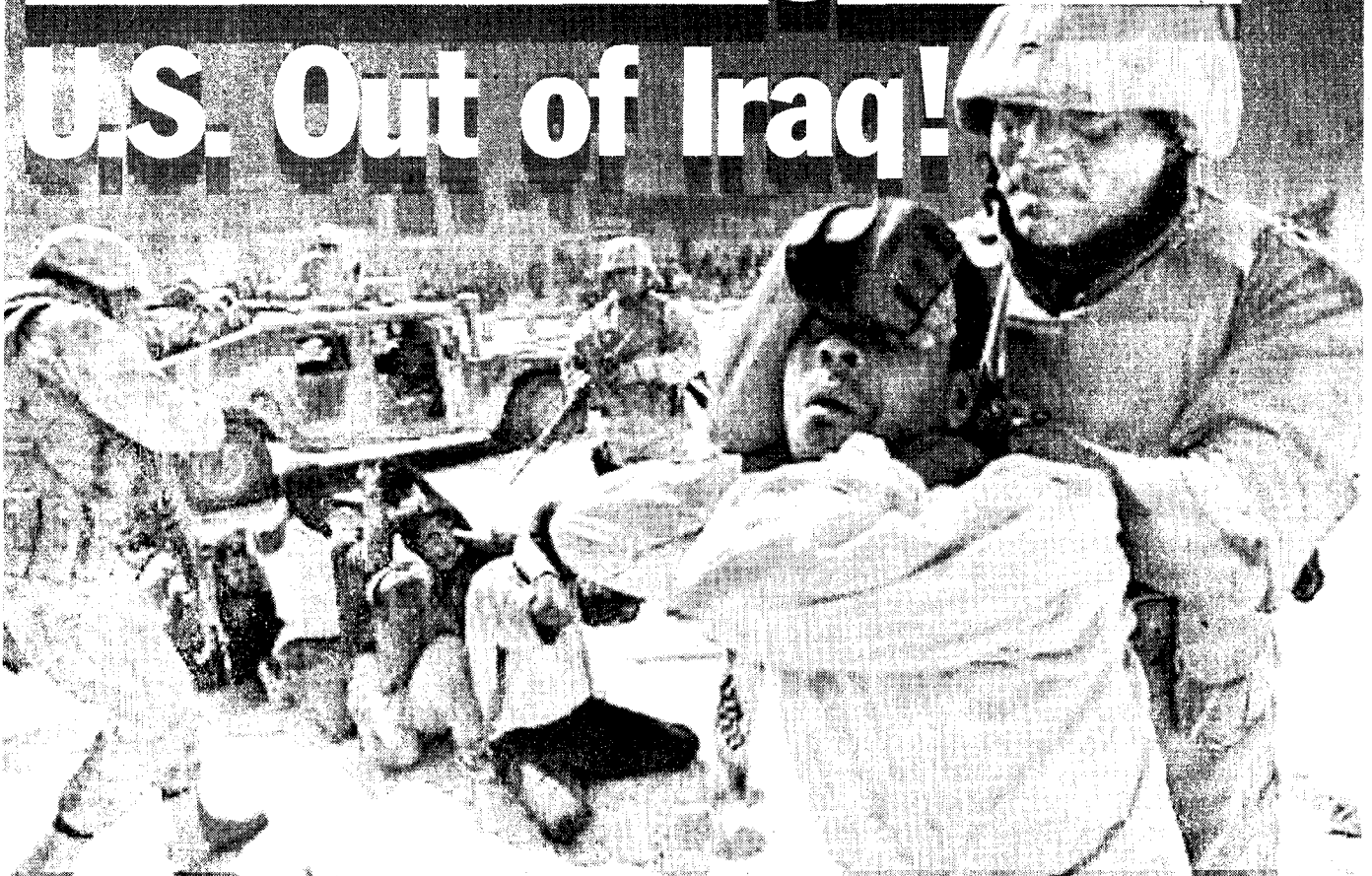


Canada Out of Afghanistan! U.S. Out of Iraq!



U.S. troops round up and brutalize population in Iraq.

AP

U.S. Imperialism's Torture, Inc.

The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., No. 826, 14 May 2004.

The grotesque photos flashed around the world from Abu Ghraib prison in U.S.-occupied Iraq have totally demolished the official Bush line that the U.S. went in to "liberate" Iraq and institute "democracy." This "liberation" is now identified with a young American woman soldier holding a groveling, naked Iraqi prisoner tethered to a leash like an animal. The photos only partially expose a small part of the terror and atrocities which in fact are meted out daily to U.S. imperialism's victims worldwide, as well as inside the U.S. itself. From the prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba to the death rows of Texas; from systematic mass murder and torture of Vietnamese liberation fighters in the CIA's "Operation Phocnix" program in

Vietnam to the death squads in Latin America; from Britain's Long Kesh prison to the basements of French colonial Algiers; from Chile's Santiago Stadium to Israel's Ashkelon; not to forget the Canadian army's murder mission in Somalia in 1993-94: an awful network of torture and death, going back in time, spans the world. These are not "aberrations." They are the conscious policies of imperialist and neocolonialist ruling regimes, who routinely and necessarily use terror and degradation as tools to maintain their power.

In the U.S., the Democratic Party is trying to exploit widespread revulsion at the newly exposed sexual abuse and torture by American troops and mercenaries in Iraq to fuel its campaign to take over the White House from Bush. In reality, the crimes and destruction for which U.S. imperialism is known worldwide were chiefly carried out under Democratic

(continued on page 15)

Pro-Palestinian Activist Expelled From York U Reinstate Dan Freeman-Maloy!

Young Spartacus

The following protest letter was sent by the York Spartacus Youth Club to York University president Lorna Marsden on May 12.

We protest the outrageous three-year expulsion of Dan Freeman-Maloy, an activist of Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights. His expulsion follows the March 16 demonstration protesting the brutal Zionist occupation, and commemorating Rachel Corrie, an activist of International Solidarity Movement who was crushed to death by a bulldozer last year for her heroic opposition to the demolition of Palestinian homes. The event, in which the Spartacus Youth Club also participated, was confronted by a screaming mob of Zionists, some wearing t-shirts bearing the chilling slogan "If I were a suicide bomber, you'd be dead by now." Freeman-Maloy was expelled, quite simply, because of his outspoken defense of the besieged Palestinian people. Your pretext—that he was using an "unauthorized sound amplification device" and being disruptive—is only pathetic window-dressing for this cowardly act of repression, which Freeman-Maloy cannot even appeal!

Pro-Palestinian student activists are increasingly targeted for repression and intimidation by a cabal of university administrations, governments, organized Zionists and the right-wing media. To be a defender of the Palestinians at York is in itself a courageous act. The expulsion of Dan Freeman-Maloy is synonymous with the reprisals taken against other pro-Palestinian leftists at schools like Concordia University where in 2002 students were muzzled by the administration for protesting the appearance of former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a blood-drenched war criminal. This is nothing less than a politically motivated campaign to intimidate and silence other pro-Palestinian activists on campus. For our defense of the Palestinians, the Spartacus Youth Club also has been smeared by the Zionists as anti-Semitic, as Nazis and as terrorists. Zionists have spit



Talotta/Toronto Star

Pro-Palestinian activist Freeman-Maloy, targeted by York administration. SYC says: Defend left-wing activists! Defend the Palestinians!

on our literature tables, destroyed our placards and made death threats against us. That Dan Freeman-Maloy happens to be Jewish punctures the lie that all Jews uphold and defend the racist Zionist state of Israel.

The York Administration expelled Freeman-Maloy after the semester ended, in order to avoid the demonstrations that would certainly have followed this disgusting act. **We demand that Dan Freeman-Maloy be reinstated immediately! Down with the repression of leftists on campus! ■**


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Fourth ICL International Conference, Autumn 2002
**The Fight for Revolutionary
Continuity in the Post-Soviet World**
PAGE 7

Forty Years of Spartacist
"Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International!"
PAGE 14

The Origins of Japanese Communism.
Debate over "Two-Stage Revolution"
and the American Occupation
Appendix: Historical Documents
* Manifesto by the Trotskyist Committee for the Japanese Communist Party (1920)
* Program of the Communist Party of Japan (1922)
* Report on Differences of the Special Organ of the Japanese Communist Party (1923)
PAGE 20

Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex:
U.S./UN Crusade Against "Sex Trafficking"
PAGE 67

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Iran and Women's Liberation

We print below, edited for publication, a presentation by Trotskyist League Central Committee member John Masters given in Toronto on March 27.

In recent protests against the brutal imperialist occupation of Iraq, the Trotskyist League's banner read "U.S. out of Iraq! Canada out of Afghanistan! For class struggle against Canadian capitalism!" That sums up our starting point concerning the difficult road to liberation for the masses of Iraq, of Iran and throughout the Near East.

We welcome any military blows against the imperialist occupiers: they are in the interest of the oppressed masses of

Islamic Reaction and the Struggle Against Imperialism

the Near East and of workers in the U.S. and Canada too. At the same time, the remnants of the old Ba'ath regime and the Muslim fundamentalists who claim to be organizing resistance in Iraq are themselves mortal enemies of working people, national minorities and women. Our perspective is the fight for a socialist federation of the Near East—for proletarian revolutions to sweep away the dictators, sheiks, imperialist stooges and Zionist butchers. Only under a planned socialist economy on a world scale can the wealth and technology of the imperialist centers be deployed to wipe out the poverty of the Third World.

The war and occupation of Iraq is the shape of the barbaric "New World Order" that emerged from the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. That counterrevolution, which restored the exploitative capitalist profit system, was a huge defeat for the world's working class, one that continues to define the world we live in. The 1917 October Revolution, the world's first and to date only victorious workers revolution, marked the seizure of power by the working class. It was a beacon of hope for the millions of oppressed and exploited. On coming to power as the leadership of the working class, the Bolsheviks proclaimed freedom for oppressed nationalities and landless peasants. They sought to bring about the full political and social emancipation of women. As much as they were able in a desperately poor country, they instituted concrete measures to make this possible, such as daycare centers and cafeterias. Activists in the Bolsheviks' women's bureau donned the veil to work among the oppressed women of the Muslim East in Soviet Central Asia.

Despite its Stalinist degeneration beginning in 1924, the Soviet Union remained the industrial and military powerhouse for every state that overthrew capitalist rule, from Vietnam to Cuba. Today, without Soviet military might to stay its hand, U.S. imperialism rampages all over the world, expanding its military presence on every continent. A further impact is widespread despair among even the most advanced layers of working people and the oppressed that a socialist road to human emancipation is possible. Yet unless we find the road to proletarian socialist revolution, the various capi-



Worker-Communist Party of Iran
Tehran, March 2003: Demonstrators defy brutally anti-woman Islamic regime by openly celebrating International Women's Day.

talist ruling classes will continue to brutally exploit the workers. They will continue to starve the masses of the Third World, degrade and oppress women and national minorities and butcher tens of thousands more through war and imperialist occupation.

So that is the sobering framework for this talk on Iran, women's liberation, religious reaction and the struggle against imperialism. Why Iran? This is the country where, more than anywhere else in the Near East, the workings of the class struggle have repeatedly produced major crises posing the possibility of proletarian class power. But from 1946 to 1953 to the so-called "Islamic Revolution" of 1978-79, these crises produced only defeat and disaster. Why? Above all, because the Iranian masses lacked a steeled revolutionary vanguard party. Instead they were led by reformists who criminally tied workers, women and restive national minorities to the class enemy—whether secular bourgeois nationalists as in the 1950s, or outright religious reactionaries as in the 1970s.

Today the Iranian masses chafe under the rule of a religious theocracy that has butchered leftists and oppressed minorities by the thousands. Last summer thousands of students once again took to the streets of Tehran chanting "The clerical regime is nearing its end" and "Down with the Islamic Republic." Fully 70 percent of Iran's population is under 30 years old; these people have effectively lived their whole lives under the Islamic theocracy. Millions hate the poverty and all-pervasive corruption. And they hate the religious police who enforce barbaric social norms.

Here's a quote from a recent BBC News report from Tehran: "In the Shah's time, people are fond of saying, the people at the top would eat their bread, and we used to get the crumbs. But nowadays people complain that some mullahs lick their plates so clean that there's not a single thing

(continued on page 10)

Bolshevik Tendency:

Kneeling Before the Body of General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham

The following exchange was first published in Workers Vanguard No. 827, 28 May 2004.

Toronto
12 March 2004

To the editor:

The 5 March 2004 issue of Workers Vanguard (WV) contains a useful report on the recent “hot carguing” of parts shipped on Canadian National (CN) trains by members of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) at Ford’s Southern Ontario plants in Oakville, St. Thomas and Windsor. They took this action in solidarity with their fellow CAW members who are on strike against CN. The 24 February issue of the union’s Railfax wrote: “Special thanks go out to CAW auto workers who placed themselves at risk yesterday in order to support their striking brothers and sisters at CN Rail.” As WV correctly observed, these courageous unionists “showed the kind of militant solidarity that’s needed to win labor’s battles.” The capitalist media has largely ignored this action, presumably because they don’t want any repetitions.

The same issue of Railfax also reported that, “CN moved over the weekend to secure injunctions in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal.” These injunctions were aimed at crippling the strike, but at least in Montreal the workers took no notice. According to a 5 March report on the Montreal website of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (montreal.cbc.ca) 75 CAW pickets blocked the entrance to the rail yards in St. Laurent for several hours and prevented trucks from entering. Eventually the riot squad appeared and attacked the workers, one of whom complained: “We have a right to go on strike, we have the right to be here, but the police are beating the shit out of us to make sure that we leave.”

The fact that militant workers in both English Canada and Quebec have been prepared to defy bourgeois legality in the course of this strike seems to us a good reason for you to reconsider the proposition that: “The recognition by the workers of each nation that their respective capitalist rulers—not each other—are the enemy can only come through an independent Quebec” (Spartacist Canada, September-October 1995). The fact is that the current CN strike fits the same pattern of joint struggle by Anglo Canadian and Quebecois workers that we have seen in strikes by rail, postal and civil service workers over the past several decades. There is no question that the Anglo-chauvinism, social-democratic reformism and petty-bourgeois Quebec nationalism pushed by the labor bureaucrats represent important obstacles to the development of a class-conscious workers’



Workers Vanguard (inset)

detail of painting by Benjamin West

Bill Logan (inset). Above: General Wolfe, British commander in Canada during the Seven Years War, lies dying after 1759 battle on Quebec’s Plains of Abraham that clinched British domination over Canada.

movement and must be vigorously combated. But the fact is, the current rail strike parallels previous ones (including the one featured on the front page of WV No. 28, 14 September 1973) in that workers on both sides of the national divide are engaged in common struggle against a common enemy.

As you know, we uphold the position initially developed by the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) in the mid-1970s in contradistinction to various ostensibly Trotskyist organizations which invested petty-bourgeois Quebecois nationalism with some inherently revolutionary dynamic. The iSt position combined a resolute defense of the inalienable right of the Quebecois to separate and form their own state with an advocacy of common working-class struggle across national lines. Contrary to the allegations of the Pabloites, there was no shred of Anglo-chauvinism in this position. The current rail strike demonstrates that the perspective of bi-national class struggle remains a valid one.

As we sought to explain in Trotskyist Bulletin No. 7, the link between the historically more militant Quebecois working class and their English-Canadian sisters and brothers (and through them the powerful U.S. proletariat) is a potentially highly significant factor in the development of revolutionary consciousness within the North American working class. We urge the comrades of the International Communist

League, on the basis of this most recent experience, to reassess your organization's position and reject the pessimistic estimation that joint class struggle is not possible prior to the establishment of an independent capitalist Quebec.

Bolshevik Greetings,
J. Decker,
for the International
Bolshevik Tendency

WV replies:

Since its creation more than 20 years ago by a handful of embittered ex-members, the group now calling itself the International Bolshevik Tendency (BT) has reviled our organization as a maniacal "political bandit obedience cult." Just a couple of months before we received the above letter, the BT's German adherents came out with an issue of their occasional press, *Bolschewik* (January 2004), which was heavily devoted to regurgitating the BT's slander of the International Communist League and our German section, the Spartakist Workers Party (SpAD), for "vulgar chauvinism" against the Kurds. Now the Canadian BT sends us this oh-so-comradely letter addressing us as serious socialists. The BT has two—counterposed—lines on the ICL. This is an acute and grotesque contradiction.

The BT salutes *Workers Vanguard* for its coverage of actions taken by members of the Canadian Auto Workers. Because workers in both English Canada and Quebec have engaged in struggle, the BT beseeches us to "reconsider" our position and join them in *opposing independence* for Quebec. No thanks. We leave to the BT the distinction of being *the* "socialists" officially invited to a Montreal "Canadian unity" rally on the eve of a 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty. It's no accident the BT was invited to this "We love Canada" rally organized by top business leaders—because the BT's leaflet on the referendum (issued only in English!) also called on Quebec workers to vote No to independence. When the BT's only Québécois member quit, he protested their "de facto bloc with the Canadian bourgeoisie."

The BT glibly claims to uphold our initial position combining "resolute defense of the inalienable right of the Québécois to separate and form their own state with an advocacy of common working-class struggle across national lines." Hardly. In the first ten years of its existence, the BT wrote all of *one sentence* about Quebec (and we really had to hunt for it!). In contrast, from its very beginnings our Canadian section, the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, *actively championed* Quebec's right to independence.

However, by 1995 we recognized that it had become necessary not only to defend Quebec's right to secede but to *advocate* its independence. We concluded that our previous perception—that national antagonisms had not yet become so intense as to make independence the only means of cutting through them—was "at best based on a superficial appreciation of the evolution of a self-conscious Quebec nation and the class struggle within it." This reappraisal was the result of extensive international discussion, study and our experience of intervention in the struggles of the working class in Quebec and English Canada. A motion adopted by the Central Committee of the TL/LT in July of that year noted:

"For Leninists, the advocacy of an independent Quebec is the means to get this question 'off the agenda,' particularly to combat the orgy of Anglo chauvinism in English Canada, but also to foil the aims of the bourgeois nationalists in Quebec who seek to tie the historically combative Québécois prole-

ariat to their coattails. This is the only road to bringing to the fore the real social contradictions between the working class and their 'own' bourgeoisie in either nation, and thereby laying a genuine basis for common class struggle in the future."

We recognized that if we had not changed our position we would have been finished as a Marxist organization in Canada. But the BT was never premised on the Marxist fight to win the proletariat to the cause of international socialist revolution. Its arid appeals to "bi-national class struggle" are merely an echo of the Anglo-chauvinist union bureaucrats who also argue that independence for Quebec would be harmful to "labor solidarity."

From the BT's letter, one would have no idea that the CN strike occurred amid the biggest outburst of anti-Québécois chauvinism in the last 15 years. This in turn is fueling a predictable rise in pro-independence sentiment in Quebec, with polls showing support for sovereignty back up to 47 percent. Most Quebec unions are quite separate from those in English Canada. Even the CN strike—one of all too few examples of common labor struggle—testified to the depths of the national divide: in English Canada, picket lines were festooned with the Maple Leaf flag; in Quebec, with the *fleur-de-lys*.

The ruling Liberals' funneling of millions in government funds to friendly advertising agencies in Quebec has produced an uproar in English Canada. When New York TV talk show host Conan O'Brien brought his *Late Night* show to Toronto, the mere mention of the word "Quebec" brought a chorus of boos from the audience. The tabloid *Toronto Sun* made a virtual anthem of O'Brien's sick "joke"—"You're French and Canadian? Then you must be obnoxious and dumb!"—after it elicited guffaws of approval from his studio audience. In Quebec, anglophones in bourgeois Westmount and the middle-class suburbs on Montreal's West Island are agitating to withdraw from the largely French-speaking city and re-establish separate, privileged enclaves. Recent revelations that the federal government was ready to send troops

(continued on page 18)



Maclean's

Chauvinist 1995 "Canadian unity" rally in Montreal, which BT was officially invited to attend.

“Respect” Coalition: British Labourite Left Bows and Scrapes to Queen and Parliament

In this country as elsewhere, elements of the reformist left have lately promoted various “unity” initiatives as pressure groups on larger social-democratic (i.e., pro-capitalist) forces. There was the stillborn Rebuilding the Left; the Socialist Project, its even less effectual successor; and the New Politics Initiative, which began as an attempt to have the NDP dissolve in favor of a more left-posturing party only to itself dissolve back into the NDP.

Some of these formations have looked for inspiration to Britain, for example to the Socialist Alliance launched by the Socialist Workers Party, parent group of Canada’s International Socialists. This has now been supplanted by the even more rightist “Respect” Coalition. We reprint below an article by our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain on this latest reformist lash-up. It was first published in Workers Hammer No. 186, Winter 2003-2004.

The Labourite “socialist” left thought that with millions of people out on the streets to protest the Iraq War, and the increasing disaffection with Blair’s Labour Party, the fortunes of a “socialist” alternative to Labour were on the rise. But they didn’t get their dividends, not even the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which ran the Stop the War Coalition. And why should they? The Stop the War Coalition was built on the premise that it was possible to stop imperialist war without opposing the system of capitalist imperialism that breeds war. The message was, all you need are mass demonstrations to pressure the Blair government to serve the interests of “the people.” So who needs a “socialist” alternative?

Indeed that seems to be the very question that the SWP is asking itself. Workers, minorities and youth who hate Labour did not exactly flock to the polls to vote for the SWP-led Socialist Alliance last year. So the SWP have now joined forces with expelled Labour MP George Galloway, sundry liberals and some Muslim leaders to launch a new electoral coalition known as “Respect.” Its founding declaration, published by the SWP, doesn’t even mention the words “capitalism” or “working class.” What’s more, that old chestnut once revered by Labourites—the demand for nationalising the “commanding heights of the economy”—has been dumped.

The kind of cross-class coalition that the SWP is now proposing would have been unimaginable during the great miners strike of 20 years ago when the country was polarised by class war as the miners, led by Arthur Scargill, heroically battled the capitalist state for a whole year. For all his great militancy and audacity, Arthur Scargill never transcended Old Labour reformism politically. But he knew where the class line was—unlike the SWP whose leader Tony Cliff publicly bragged in August 1984 that their members in steel plants were crossing miners’ picket lines; or



Andrew MacColl



www.bluffton.edu

SWP’s “Respect” coalition embraces George Galloway and channels anti-war protests into support for “Her Majesty’s” parliament.

Workers Power who wailed along with the scabherders that the strike violated “democracy” because the union hadn’t balloted the members. Even today, compared to these putative “socialists,” Scargill looks like a fire-breathing Bolshevik in television footage of the strike, demanding a fight for “socialism,” the abolition of the monarchy and promising that he could find the Queen a decent-paying job. In contrast, at the Respect founding conference on 25 January, SWP cadre led their members in *voting down* a call for the abolition of the monarchy and for a republic (not even a workers republic) and rejected a demand that an MP should be paid no more than a worker’s wage! Prior to this, at a Socialist Alliance executive meeting earlier in January, SWPers and their allies voted down a motion to urge the new coalition to “adopt a working class and socialist platform,” i.e. some variant of Old Labour.

Why on earth, one might ask, in the year 2004, are the cadre of a self-professed “revolutionary socialist” organisation trying to saddle the British working class with a programme so retrograde that it would preclude supporting the English Revolution of the seventeenth century? Three and a half centuries ago, when King Charles I was sentenced to death as part of the English Revolution, Oliver Cromwell declared: “I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown on it.” Why are today’s leftists complicit in dragging class consciousness down to a level that was surpassed by the Chartists, the independent workers movement formed in the early nineteenth century, who certainly did not bow their heads to the monarch and were not filled with awed respect for the state and its institutions. They organised mass processions with pikes and muskets in hand asserting, among other things, the right of the citizens to bear arms.

With New Labour seeking to rid itself of its working-class base (but not the union donations) there has been much debate on the left about what should replace Labour. The SWP itself does not seek to become the replacement for

Labour, but sees itself as a pressure group on a larger party of "the masses." However the formation they propose to build today would have *failed* to meet the entry criteria for the Second (Socialist) International that the nascent Labour Party managed to join almost a century ago. As Lenin wrote, Labour barely met the entry requirements, which were: "first, socialist parties which recognise the class struggle, and secondly, working-class organizations whose standpoint is that of the class struggle (i.e. trade unions)" ("Meeting of the International Socialist Bureau," 1908). At that time Labour was not even nominally socialist; it only adopted a socialist facade in 1918 in the aftermath of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution by introducing "Clause IV," a notional commitment to "common ownership of the means of production." This was a conscious ploy to deflect the working class from the path of revolution and to bolster illusions in parliament by proffering "socialism" through nationalisations enacted by parliament while leaving capitalism and its repressive state machinery intact. Tony Blair, who says that the split from the Liberals to form the Labour Party was a historic mistake, abolished Clause IV in 1995 in the aftermath of counterrevolution in the USSR as his opening shot in the attempt to turn Labour into a capitalist party. Now the SWP are following in Blair's footsteps.

The SWP today are capitulating to the reactionary political climate of the post-Soviet world, which they helped bring about. Just as the Russian Revolution thundered its verdict across the globe inspiring struggles by the working class and oppressed, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 inspired an offensive by the imperialist rulers and their social-democratic handmaidens against the exploited masses around the globe. The one-sided slaughter and imperialist occupation of Iraq is a product of the collapse of the Soviet degenerated workers state, which meant the U.S. emerged as the world's unrivalled military superpower.

The Respect founding declaration opens with a fanfare to the anti-war protests as the "greatest mass movement of our age." In fact the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was the greatest anti-war movement of our age. It ripped tsarist Russia out of World War I by expropriating the capitalists and landlords and placing power in the hands of Soviets, or workers councils. Unlike the rest of the left, who have long forsaken the fight for socialist revolution, we fight for new October Revolutions. At the same time we recognise that there is a huge gulf between our purpose and the present consciousness of youth, workers and particularly left organisations. In a climate conditioned by imperialist triumphalism that "communism has failed," it is generally believed that workers revolution is impossible and that the best you can do is try to ameliorate the hideous conditions of life perpetrated upon millions by the imperialist rulers.

The crimes of the Stalinists and the social democrats, who made a mockery of the ideals of Marxism, contributed in no small measure to conditioning the regression in political consciousness that opened the way to counterrevolution. This in turn reinforced the dramatic retrogression of consciousness that we encounter in the post-Soviet world. In the Soviet Union, Stalinist nationalism so destroyed any identification among the mass of the workers with the Bolshevik Revolution that the proletariat was disarmed in the face of counterrevolution. The social democrats, foremost among them the British Labour Party whose government ministers helped found NATO in 1949, were an anti-Communist bul-

wark for imperialism against the Soviet Union. This was a cause for which the SWP and the rest of the reformist left played their role, cheering the forces of anti-Soviet counter-revolution abroad while swearing a loyalty oath to the Labour Party at home.

From Vietnam War to Cold War

Throughout the demonstrations against the Iraq War, the left invoked the spectre of the Vietnam anti-war movement as their model. It wasn't the demonstrations that stopped that war but rather the battlefield victory of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in a social revolution that drove out the imperialist exploiters and their local lackeys. Internationally, the left grew qualitatively because there was a general radicalisation at that time. Many thousands of young radicals sided with the unfolding social revolution in Vietnam and joined organisations claiming adherence to Marxism, which back then was widely accepted as *the* road to liberation for the oppressed people of the world. In 1968 the SWP dragged itself out of the Labour Party and changed the name of its paper from *Labour Worker* to *Socialist Worker*. But the prevailing consciousness of youth at that time was to the *left* of the SWP's formal programme.

The SWP's loyalty to "democratic" British imperialism dates back to their origins in 1950 when Tony Cliff broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International by accommodating to the anti-Communist hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean War. Cliff reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and its rotten Labour Party—it was a Labour government that sent troops to Korea. But by the time of the Vietnam War, the SWP's line on North Korea meant they had to go through contortions in order to get a hearing among activists, whose consciousness was summed up in the chant: "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win!" At first the SWP avoided taking a side with the Vietnamese workers and peasants, because they were led by Stalinists. Later the Cliffites supported the Vietnamese struggle but justified it on the anti-Communist grounds that the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and China *did not* intervene directly against U.S. imperialism in the Vietnam War.

The SWP's radical posturing was short-lived. Within four years after the end of the Vietnam War the SWP and virtually the entire spectrum of the Labourite left were cheering for the victory of the reactionary ayatollahs in the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. A year later, when the opening shots of anti-Soviet Cold War II were fired by the imperialists over the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan against a CIA-backed insurgency of mullahs, warlords and tribal chieftains, these leftists were on the side of their "own" imperialist rulers against the Soviet Red Army. We proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was a prelude to counterrevolution in the USSR itself. We actively fought this, calling in 1991 on Soviet workers to defeat Yeltsin's counterrevolution that was backed by U.S. imperialism. We stood on the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and for workers political revolution against the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy that sold out the USSR to capitalism.

(continued on page 8)

“Respect” Coalition...

(continued from page 7)

This historic defeat for the working class and oppressed of the world led to a huge resurgence of reactionary forces, including all kinds of religious obscurantism in the imperialist countries and in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

From Hailing Counterrevolution to Posing as “Anti-Capitalists”

For their part the Socialist Party, Workers Power and the SWP were physically present alongside Boris Yeltsin’s counterrevolutionary forces in Moscow in 1991. The SWP crowed that “Communism has collapsed,” a fact they said that “should have every socialist rejoicing.” With the Soviet Union out of the way, the Cliffites thought that people would flock to their brand of “socialism.” As SWP leader John Rees put it recently:

“The broad anti-capitalist movement encompassing the whole left save for the social democratic defenders of neo-liberalism would have been inconceivable in the Cold War. In that era the first question asked of any ‘anti-capitalist’ would have been, ‘So does that mean you are pro-Russian?’ The movement would have divided in response to that challenge. Now it no longer does.”

—*International Socialism*, Autumn 2003

Now that they confront a generation of young activists who consider themselves “anti-capitalist” and who can see for themselves that the end of the USSR was a catastrophe, the SWP are rather modest about their history of support to counterrevolution. Our task as revolutionaries is to fight against the ideological nonsense that youth are taught by liberal gurus of the anti-capitalist movement—that Marxism is some quaint relic of the past, the capitalist system is here to stay and the working class is no longer a force with the power to challenge that system, much less replace it. For the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution, the working class in its struggles no longer identifies with the ideas of “socialism,” which means that Marxism must be motivated again. If the SWP leadership now bewail the fact they are not getting the “breakthrough” they expected, they are hoist with their own petard in a situation *they helped create*.

Respect’s Tame Critics

In response to the SWP’s Respect coalition, Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party says it ought to have an “explicitly socialist programme”...but presumably in name only because the Socialist Party “do not preclude” that the new coalition may decide to make “a compromise on the socialist content of its programme” (*The Socialist*, 17 December 2003). The Socialist Party’s answer to the question of what should replace Labour is a “new mass workers party,” which they would enter as a faction. Their origins are in the Militant tendency which for decades nestled inside Old Labour, trying to pressurise Labour to “nationalise the commanding heights” of the economy. But they have junked this as a perspective for the new party, which they describe as follows:

“A new workers’ party could play the role of uniting together, around a fighting anti-capitalist programme, all those who want to struggle against the system and its affects [sic]. It could be a vehicle for defending the interests of working class people through collective action in the workplaces, communities and society generally and could become a pole of attraction to the

most class conscious workers and youth, as well as radicalised middle class people.”

—Socialist Party pamphlet, “Resisting Capitalism—The Case for a New Workers Party” (undated, published in 2001)

The pamphlet states that said new workers party “would represent an enormous step forward for working class people, just as the formation of the Labour Party did at the beginning of the last century.” The Socialist Party invokes the fact that Engels welcomed the formation of the Independent Labour Party even though it was not nominally socialist and “advised Marxists to do everything they could to promote an independent workers’ party.” While noting that the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) took a sectarian attitude to the formation of the Labour Party, they neglect to mention that the SDF’s founder, one H.M. Hyndman, was notoriously anti-Semitic and pro-British imperialist. This omission is not surprising considering the Socialist Party’s own chauvinist positions, amply demonstrated particularly in Northern Ireland, where they have made overtures to Ulster Loyalist bigots while refusing to oppose the British Army presence.

Many of the SWP’s critics on the left argue they should follow the example of Tommy Sheridan’s Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and form one single party of the left. The SSP claims to be the replacement for Labour. Recently several branches of the rail union RMT voted to affiliate to the SSP leading Blair to throw the union out of the Labour Party.

The SSP offers nothing remotely socialist in elections. And although Sheridan’s group also has its origins in Militant, they too have discarded the commitment to nationalising the top monopolies—they run for elections on bourgeois-democratic demands and have even promised not to nationalise call centres and electronics plants belonging to multinational corporations. Interviewed by the *Glasgow Herald* (30 April 2003) Sheridan made the SSP’s commitment to capitalism absolutely clear, declaring: “What we’re saying is that in a future independent socialist Scotland we want to work on training, on skills. We want to offer a very highly skilled economy, a motivated work force for big business.”

The SSP are stridently nationalist, even to the point of chasing after a “regroupment” from the Scottish National Party—the party that aspires to represent the interests of the Scottish *bourgeoisie*. It is a travesty that the SSP now purports to represent the Scottish proletariat, who historically openly identified with Communism. During the 1980s Cold War we appealed to such sentiments by raising evocative slogans such as “Turn Holy Loch into a Soviet U-Boat pen!” and “For a Scottish workers republic as part of the USSR!” to distinguish ourselves from the anti-Communist, “Sassenach” Labourite left and to express our opposition to English domination.

Workers Power regard the existence of a mass social-democratic party as something of a historic birthright and are very critical of the SWP for committing themselves to the Respect coalition, declaring: “We think Respect’s leaders have turned their backs on socialism.” Never mind that until recently Workers Power happily joined the SWP in building Socialist Alliance—which never even managed to say no vote to Labour, or to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland. They also joined the SWP in building the Stop the War Coalition that had no “socialist” credentials at all. But now Workers Power balk at the Respect coalition and have found a niche for themselves as the lone standard-bearers of



Sturrock/Network

Strikers' flying picket squads battle scabs and cops outside coal pit in Leeds, England, 1984.

Old Labour's "socialist soul." They drew up an alternative programme for the Respect coalition that is classically left social-democratic, complete with touching faith in the capitalist state in its call to "purge racists from the police." This is crowned by Workers Power's very own equivalent of Clause IV—"nationalise transport, banks, utilities and major corporations—no compensation." Portraying 100 years of Labour betrayal as "political independence" they motivate their "alternative" saying: "Anything else will be a betrayal of the cause of the trade union movement's historic break with liberalism over 100 years ago—the cause of the working class and political independence" (*Workers Power*, January 2004).

The birth of the Labour Party was an organisational expression of class independence, which in itself was a step forward, but politically it was tied to Liberalism and to the "labour lieutenants of capital," the union bureaucracy. From its origins Labour was a "bourgeois-workers party"—working-class in composition but with a bourgeois programme and leadership and it became *the* historic vehicle for tying the working class to British imperialism. We fight to build a *genuine* socialist alternative: a Leninist vanguard party. Our strategic goal has been to split the working-class base from its pro-capitalist leadership. However the present split is not the one we envisaged. It is being propelled not by the search for a more radical alternative by the working class, but by the rightward shift of Labour and relentless attacks under Blair & Co.

The entire history of Workers Power, the Socialist Party, the SWP et al—of pressuring Labour, ostensibly to "make the lefts fight"—has taken place in a situation where Labour was the hegemonic party of the British working class. But those days are gone forever and now they are finding that recreating a mass social-democratic party in the current climate is not all that easy. The working class is disillusioned by the demise of the USSR and by decades of Labourite betrayal. Doubtless the SWP would like to rope the "awkward squad" into their new electoral lash-up, but by and large these union bureaucrats are reluctant to part company

with New Labour. Moreover, these Old Labour bureaucrats have time and again sold out their members, as seen in the firefighters strike and the recent postal wildcat strikes. Meanwhile youth are uninterested in voting, or in political parties and thus the SWP's Respect coalition is banking on getting the Muslim vote that has deserted Labour.

Asians and other minorities have been utterly betrayed by Labour and are on the receiving end of Labour's racist "war on terror." The SWP and Galloway are desperately trying to hustle for votes among Muslims, yet the Respect founding declaration can't even make a simple statement of opposition to the "war on terror," or to Labour's racist anti-immigrant laws. Instead it sticks to vague legalese like "opposition to all forms of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs (or lack of them), sexual orientation, disabilities...." Nor does it explicitly defend women's rights, or homosexual rights, for fear of upsetting the imams. Instead it offers the vapid and unintelligible call for "the right of self-determination of every individual in relation to their religious (or non-religious) beliefs, as well as sexual choices." Placing religious and so-called "non-religious" beliefs on the same plane is a sleight of hand that covers up a sort of *quid pro quo*: Muslim leader Selma Yaqoob, one of the leading lights of the coalition, seems willing to accept that the coalition will not fight Islamophobia in any meaningful way, while the SWP tolerate reactionary treatment of women. In *International Socialism* (Autumn 2003) Yaqoob enthuses over a Birmingham anti-war meeting that featured SWPer John Rees as well as an imam, and had a *segregated area for women*. But with or without the alliance with the imams, the SWP's reformism makes them incapable of offering a programme that will champion the rights of immigrants and minorities, fight against racist attacks or fight for the emancipation of women from the oppression of the family, society and religious obscurantism.

The multiethnic working class needs a genuinely revolutionary party, to defend its interests against the ravages of the capitalist economy, against racist attack and to roll back New Labour's offensive. This must be part of a fight to end British capitalism. Today's Asian youth of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent are the children and grandchildren of immigrants who worked throughout this country, from the "dark Satanic Mills" of Bradford and Oldham, to car plants in London and Birmingham, battling racism and fighting in the forefront of union struggles. The decline of manufacturing has left the vast majority of this population living in poverty. A similar fate has befallen a large swathe of the industrial proletariat—from the former coal mining areas of Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire, to former shipbuilding cities that have been devastated under the Tories and Labour alike. The British working class has been weakened by defeats in struggle, particularly the devastating defeat of the miners strike, which was betrayed by Labourite union bureaucrats, including the "lefts" of the day. Nevertheless the working class is vital to the system of capitalism and has the power to bring it down; what it presently lacks is socialist consciousness and a genuinely revolutionary party. From among the mass anti-war mobilisations many will be won to authentic Marxism. Our task is to educate and train Marxist cadre for the future, drawing the lessons of past struggles and in the course of new ones, to build the nucleus of a vanguard party. For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party! For a reformed Fourth International! ■

Iran...

(continued from page 3)

left over for the rest of us." The religious leaders live like kings in their North Tehran mansions. At the same time, real incomes for the mass of the population have fallen by *three-quarters* since the onset of Islamic rule. At least 25 percent of the workforce is unemployed and there have been repeated worker protests and strikes.

Most degraded of all are the women of Iran. Women are forced to cover themselves head to toe in the stifling veil in all public places. They are legally segregated from men in every aspect of public life. They are barred from working in occupations that might compromise their "chastity." Married women can only get jobs with their husbands' permission. Women can be stoned to death for having sexual relationships outside marriage. The government's own statistics show that only 11 percent of women university graduates can find jobs. Amid poverty and seeming hopelessness, hundreds of thousands of women are driven into prostitution, while at least two million are homeless.

In most of the Near East today, the depredations of imperialism and the evident bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism and the betrayals of the Stalinized Communist Parties have fueled a growth of Islamic fundamentalism. From Iran to the occupied West Bank and Gaza, political Islam poses as an anti-imperialist force, a savior from mass poverty and promoter of social justice through upholding the "word of god" and Islamic law. In fact, wherever Islamic theocracies have come to power they act as agents for one or another imperialist power while savagely oppressing the masses.

Karl Marx often quoted the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier to the effect that the condition of women in every society is a precise means of evaluating its degree of general social emancipation. In countries like Iran, whose economic and social development has been retarded by the global reach of imperialism, women are caught between a

rock and a hard place. *All* the dominant forces—the imperialists, domestic bourgeois nationalists, political Islam—are utterly hostile to women's emancipation, which can only be achieved through a social revolution that shatters capitalist property relations and all associated social institutions.

1979 Islamic "Revolution"—Disaster for Women, Workers

The plight of women in Iran is barbaric. But even more outrageous is that the vast majority of the so-called left in Iran and internationally *supported* the "revolution" that brought Ayatollah Khomeini and his mullahs to power. Am I exaggerating? No. I was a member of the British section of our international organization in the late 1970s when the events in Iran were a major issue on the left. I recall numerous occasions when we were assailed by howling self-proclaimed leftists for our assertion that the Islamic forces were just as much enemies of the workers, women and national minorities as the despotic U.S.-backed ruler, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

When we warned that Khomeini would reimpose the veil, symbol and instrument of women's oppression, we were accused of spreading CIA lies. Some purported socialists called the veil a "symbol of liberation," a ridiculous claim we are hearing again today. When we tried to intervene on demonstrations with slogans like "Down with the Shah! Don't bow to Khomeini! Workers must oppose Islamic reaction!" we were gooned and excluded, not by the religious fundamentalists themselves, but by pseudo-socialist organizations who were tailing Khomeini.

The International Socialists claimed that while religion was the "form" of the struggle, the "spirit" was really revolution. A British leader of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat made a trip to Tehran, and boasted on his return that he too shouted "Allah akhbar" ("god is great") in the streets. The tendency associated with Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe—their followers in Canada today are L'Humanité and Socialist

Alternative—not only claimed it was necessary to back the forces of political Islam in the streets but that these forces might well smash capitalist rule and set up a bureaucratically deformed workers state!

In Iran itself, the left, centrally the pro-Moscow Tudeh (Masses) party and the Fedayeen guerrillas, called on the workers to subordinate their struggles to the Islamic forces, who they claimed were leading a "democratic" revolution. For all their treachery, these groups soon paid the price in blood as the religious rulers jailed, tortured and executed their militants. When the mullahs staged mass executions of the remaining leftist prisoners in 1988, our organization organized urgent united-front protests in cities around the world, including here in Toronto, demanding "Stop the executions in Iran!" The stark fact is that the once powerful Iranian left was destroyed, paying the ultimate price for its political bankruptcy.

It could have been different. If there

Victims of Islamic regime's terror are hanged in Tehran, July 1980. We uniquely fought to mobilize proletariat against both Shah's and Khomeini's forces.



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For Workers Revolution in Iran!
Down with the Shah!
Don't Bow to Khomeini!

15 December 1978

had been, not a reactionary Islamic revolution, but a powerful *proletarian* revolution in Iran in the late 1970s, this would have been a tremendous blow against U.S. imperialism, already reeling from its military defeat in Vietnam earlier that decade. It would have inspired the oppressed throughout the Near East and beyond, cutting off the growth of political Islam at the knees. There would have been no Taliban; corrupt sheikdoms like Saudi Arabia would have been swept away; and surely too the oppressive Zionist state of Israel would have been shattered by joint Palestinian-Jewish class struggle. And this is not to speak of the tremendous liberating impact on working people in the imperialist world.

Instead, the outcome was disaster. We wrote in our 1998 international "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program":

"The 1979 'Iranian Revolution' opened up a period of ascendant political Islam in the historically Muslim world, a development which contributed to and was powerfully reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power in Iran was a defeat akin to Hitler's crushing of the German proletariat in 1933, albeit on a narrower, regional scale."

—*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 54, Spring 1998

By the late 1970s, the corrupt U.S.-backed Shah was hated by just about every layer of Iranian society. After 38 years of regal dictatorship, his paper-thin façade as a "modernizing" despot had crumbled, as he and his court looted the country to salt away fortunes in Swiss banks and Los Angeles real estate. No more could a technocratic Iranian middle class dream about Iran becoming a world power based on the country's oil wealth. Backed to the bitter end by U.S. imperialism, the Shah lashed out in brutal repression, unleashing SAVAK torturers and killing student and other protesters by the dozens. But it was clear to all that the despot was finished, one way or another. The question was: who would replace him, and to what end?

Not only the working class, oppressed peasants, women and national minorities bitterly hated the Shah. The powerful Islamic hierarchy went into opposition when the Shah's so-called White Revolution took away some of their lands, and in protest against the Westernized attitudes of a small layer of women in the cities who had abandoned the veil. With a social base in the mosques and among the traditional merchant bourgeoisie in the bazaars, Khomeini's forces grew in strength as the Shah's regime entered its death agony. So there was a potential contest between two counterposed forces: Islamic reaction, and the working class leading the oppressed. But thanks to the treachery of the Iranian left, the workers ended up bowing to the religious reactionaries.

Our organization, then known as the international Spartacist tendency, was largely external to the situation. Nonetheless, we fought with all our power—intervening among the substantial Iranian exile milieus, translating material into Farsi—with the aim of forging a revolutionary force that could break the working class from its disastrous alliance with Khomeini's clerical-reactionary movement. Here is an example of our warnings at the time, from an article in January 1979:

"Rather than posing a political alternative to the mullahs, the Iranian working class has been sucked into the orbit of the religious leadership in the name of class-collaborationist 'unity' against the shah.

"Again and again the Spartacist tendency, alone on the left, has warned that this false unity *poses a deadly threat to the Iranian proletariat*. The rule of the mullahs means the suppression of all working-class organizations and struggles."

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 222, 5 January 1979

Our call for the working class to enter the field of battle independently, at the head of the oppressed women, peasants, national minorities, was no pipe dream. In late 1978, amid the massive social turmoil, 37,000 oil workers staged a sitdown strike, spreading from what was then the world's largest integrated refinery complex in Abadan in Iran's far southwest. We pointed out that "The workers' strikes were the first upsurge independent of the essentially petty-bourgeois Muslims in the anti-shah movement," and emphasized:

"An Iranian Trotskyist party must join in the struggle for bourgeois democratic demands. But this is *inseparable* from an irreconcilable opposition to the mullahs' reactionary drive. The struggle for a sovereign, secular constituent assembly, land to the tiller, women's rights, smashing SAVAK and the monarchy and the right of self-determination for Iran's oppressed nationalities are impossible without the independent mobilization of the working class."

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 219, 17 November 1978

Throughout we put particular emphasis on the struggle for women's emancipation, raising the call "No to the veil!"

Iran and Permanent Revolution

The ruling ayatollahs have long used rhetoric against the American "Great Satan" to hoodwink the masses. In fact, the 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the Shah did not significantly change the basic economic relationship between that country and Western capitalism. The Iranian economy remains dependent on the export of oil purchased and distributed worldwide by Exxon, BP et al. The Shi'ite theocracy in Tehran, like the rulers in Saudi Arabia, has continued to try (with little success) to manipulate the world market price of oil through OPEC. Iran today accounts for about 10 percent of world oil exports, about the same as it did under

(continued on page 12)

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Iran...

(continued from page 11)

the Shah's pro-American regime. With the U.S. largely frozen out of new oil exploration for domestic political reasons, other imperialist powers, notably Germany and France, have moved in with new investment.

Iran is a classic example of what Marxists call combined and uneven development. Alongside millions of hideously exploited peasants and urban poor, there is a thin layer of rich capitalists tied to the Western imperialists. Most crucially, there is also a relatively small but concentrated proletariat with tremendous potential social power, above all in the oil industry. In this, Iran is reminiscent of Russia on the eve of the October Revolution.

Recognizing the unique combination of historical developments in the tsarist empire, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky developed his theory of permanent revolution, which posited that only the proletariat could lead the millions of peasants and other oppressed in successful struggle against the weight of pre-capitalist oppression and obscurantism. But such a worker-centered revolution would have to uproot the Russian bourgeoisie as well, since it was tied by a thousand threads to the tsar and Western imperialism. Trotsky understood that a successful proletarian revolution in Russia had to be extended to the more advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe in order to survive and flourish.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was vindicated when the Bolshevik-led workers came to power in October 1917. But with the degeneration of Russia's Communist leadership under Joseph Stalin, this revolutionary perspective was supplanted by a disastrous search for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. That meant selling out revolutionary opportunities abroad in the name of seeking alliances with a supposedly progressive wing of the bourgeois exploiters.

Iran provided not one, not two, but three examples of how such class collaboration leads to bloody disaster. I've talked about 1979; but there were two other revolutionary opportunities. The first came at the end of World War II. As part of its successful offensive against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Army effectively controlled northern Iran. The Moscow-allied Tudeh party had 25,000 members and led the Central Council of the United Trade Unions, which was effectively the government there, collecting taxes, providing security and judicial functions, etc. The Persian "prison house of peoples" was shattering, as autonomous republics were established in Iranian Azerbaijan and Kurdistan where, in addition to establishing national rights, significant social reforms were carried out.

The working class could have taken power, but the Stalinist rulers in Moscow criminally used Iran's workers and oppressed as bargaining chips to be played in the vain pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" with the U.S. and Britain. Soviet troops were withdrawn in early 1946, sacrificing the republics in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in the hope of obtaining oil and gas concessions. Soon after, in response to attempts by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to break the pro-Tudeh unions in the southern oil fields, a general strike was called. After the company tried to whip up interethnic tension between Arab and Persian and other non-Arab workers, Tudeh militias took over the city of Abadan. But the Tudeh leadership moved to call off the strike. As a reward



Tehran, 1953: Working-class upsurge was channeled by Stalinists into support for "progressive" bourgeoisie, then crushed by Iranian military backed by CIA.

for this treachery, three of its members were brought into the government. Once the situation had calmed, these Tudeh ministers were purged, hundreds of activists arrested and Tudeh's headquarters occupied.

Tudeh again found itself in a position to overthrow the despised ruling oligarchy in the early 1950s during the oil nationalization crisis under the regime of Mohammad Mossadeq, a wealthy aristocrat and landowner. Mossadeq's party, the National Front, was an unstable alliance of bourgeois technocrats with a religious wing led by the Shi'ite clergy under Ayatollah Kashani, temporarily united by the demand to nationalize the oil industry and by opposition to the British and the Shah.

Tudeh was initially wary of Mossadeq because of his ties to the U.S. But soon the party was forced by its combative base to lead huge strikes and demonstrations demanding nationalization, including a general strike in Abadan which involved bloody clashes with the army. Frightened by the wave of proletarian militancy, the Shah appointed Mossadeq prime minister and the oil industry was nationalized. The U.S./British-controlled world oil cartel responded by boycotting Iranian oil, slowly strangling the economy, and Washington turned its back on Mossadeq.

Revolutionary Marxists defended the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. Even if not a directly socialist measure this was, to cite Trotsky's comments on a similar development in Mexico in the late 1930s, "a highly progressive measure of national self-defense." At the same time, as Trotsky emphasized, "The international proletariat has no reason to identify its program with the program of the Mexican government"—or, in this case, the Mossadeq government in Iran. Genuine communists would have sought to mobilize the working class in independent struggle against the yoke of imperialism, advancing demands like the expropriation of all imperialist holdings and moving to set up councils of workers and poor peasants to vie for state power. Instead Tudeh led the masses into political support for Mossadeq's bourgeois National Front.

When Mossadeq resigned in protest against the Shah's refusal to grant him increased powers, Tudeh led a July 1952 general strike in Tehran to force the Shah to recall him.

Acute class polarization continued through 1953. The global oil boycott pushed the bourgeoisie and sections of the petty bourgeoisie into opposition to Mossadeq while deteriorating economic conditions drove the plebeian masses to desperation. Ayatollah Kashani and his followers split from the National Front and threw their support to the Shah. Meanwhile thousands of workers flocked to Tudeh and its union organizations in search of a revolutionary solution. Demonstrations called by Tudeh vastly outnumbered those called by the government.

In August the Shah tried to arrest Mossadeq, leading Tudeh to bring tens of thousands into the streets. Manifestly, once again, the party could have taken power. But the Stalinists looked to Mossadeq to carry through the "democratic revolution." Far from doing this, Mossadeq called on the army generals, who were working closely with U.S. military advisers and the CIA, to crack down on Tudeh. The military takeover was prepared by a mobilization organized by the religious hierarchy, who filled the streets of Tehran with their clerical fascist thugs. And after repressing Tudeh, the generals predictably turned against the Mossadeq government.

In his book *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (1979), the CIA's chief operative in Tehran at the time, Kermit Roosevelt, quotes a grateful Shah Pahlavi: "I owe my throne to God, my people, my army and to you!" "By 'you'," comments Roosevelt, the Shah "meant me and the two countries—Great Britain and the United States—I was representing. We were all heroes." This marked the beginning of a savage, U.S.-backed police state that would systematically and ruthlessly crush Tudeh as a mass party, driving it underground for more than two decades—until it re-emerged to again help lead the Iranian masses to disaster, this time by allying with the same religious hierarchy that once spearheaded its repression.

Religious Reaction and Women's Oppression

I now want to discuss more broadly the interrelated questions of women's oppression and religious reaction. I've described the reactionary political role of Islam. At the same time, we oppose the current climate of what is often termed "Islamophobia." We forthrightly denounce the repressive drive of the rulers of the U.S., Canada, France and other Western countries to crack down on Muslim immigrants in the name of an open-ended "war on terror." We actively oppose the current campaign by the French government to prohibit the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in schools, a campaign scandalously backed by various reformist left groups in France. Far from a blow for secularism, this is part of a racist offensive by the French government against immigrants, especially the country's significant population of North African origin.

The capitalist rulers fulminate against the forces of Islamic fundamentalism, but in reality it is Western, centrally American, imperialism that is largely responsible for its growth in recent decades. At bottom, the evolution and structure of world capitalism has arrested the development of North Africa, the Near East and South Asia, perpetuating the backward social and economic conditions that sustain Islamic traditionalism and have now given rise to militant fundamentalism.

Every fall in the world market price of oil thanks to manipulation by the profit-seeking Western oil companies drives millions in Iran, Iraq and other countries to starvation

and untold misery. For such people, religion—especially the belief in an afterlife—is a needed solace for the seemingly unchangeable miseries and horrors of earthly life. Marx described this well 160 years ago in his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." He wrote:

"*Man makes religion*, religion does not make man....

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

The relationship between the classes is the starting point for understanding all social developments. It is the institution of the family—which functions according to the needs of the ruling class—that is the main source of women's oppression in class society. Institutionalized religion plays a key role in reinforcing this oppression, but is not its origin.

Islam is no different from Christianity or any other religion—they all buttress the family, authority and the particular sexual and moral codes of their respective societies. Islam has no corner on savagery and anti-woman bigotry for the glory of god. Look at today's crusades by the Catholic church against abortion and gay rights, or the growth of Orthodox Judaism inside Israel and among the fascistic settlers who aim to drive the Palestinian people from the West Bank.

In the 8th and 9th centuries, while Europe was in the Dark Ages, the Muslim world was a center of modernizing civilization. That's where humanity got algebra, Arabic numbers and many other key inventions. It was the Catholic Spanish crown and Inquisition that destroyed the civilization of Andalus in southern Spain in the later Middle Ages—not only massacring Muslims and Jews of all classes, but burning thousands upon thousands of books of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, poetry. The Christians also destroyed the public baths because bathing was considered a sign of Muslim faith. Only heretics took baths, it seems.

The Spanish soldiers went on to become the conquistadors that instigated the genocide of the native peoples of the New World. In 1492, the same year Columbus came to America, the Muslims and Jews were driven out of Spain. With the advent of capitalism in Europe and the development of a modern industrial society, Christianity adapted, its ideology becoming more compliant to capitalist social relations, as opposed to pre-feudal or medieval ones. That was basically the reason for the Protestant Reformation and the breaking of the dominance of the Catholic church over much of Europe.

In the precapitalist society where Islam first developed—7th-century Arabia—there was a strategic relationship between the institution of the family, the subordination of women and primitive agricultural production, herding, land and water rights. Women were their fathers' means of exchange through the bride price and were their husbands' chattel. The polygamous (for the man) family became the mechanism by which inheritance and property was organized. For inheritance to mean anything, of course, the chief had to be sure it was his child.

The subordination of women through polygamy, the bride price, the veil—these are not "bad ideas" thought up by nasty men or even the result of religious ideology, but a means of enforcing property rights in a very backward rural society. As long as the poverty and backwardness remained, the status of women was not going to improve. If anything, it got worse in the 20th century, as the imperialists allied with

(continued on page 14)

Iran...

(continued from page 13)

local forces of social reaction to maintain their power, and as a bulwark against Communism in the crusade to destroy the Soviet Union. Indeed, John Foster Dulles, U.S. secretary of state and arch Cold Warrior, urged making common cause with the "religions of the East" against "Communist atheism and materialism."

The most glaring example of this is Afghanistan. In 1979, a civil war between the modernizing Afghan regime and the tribal *mujahedin* broke out, sparked by moves to reduce the bride price and educate girls and women. To protect its borders from the fundamentalist threat—already backed by the CIA—the Soviet Union sent in the Red Army to aid the left-nationalists in Kabul. But rather than fighting to win, the treacherous Soviet bureaucracy withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988-89 to appease the imperialists. This directly paved the way for the victory of Washington's Muslim fanatics, and opened the door to capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR itself.

We said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and called on the Soviets to extend the gains of October to the people of Afghanistan. What were those gains? Across the border, Central Asia had once been exactly like Afghanistan—a backward, desolate and benighted place. But in the 1920s, Soviet power came to Central Asia. In 50 years, Soviet Central Asia had moved forward ten centuries, transformed by a socialized, planned economy.

The planned economy is a tremendous force for revolutionary change. Because its central dynamic is to maximize the socially productive labour of all citizens, women are a necessary part of the workforce. Stalin, though no champion of the liberation of women, saw no reason why women should not be drawn into industry. The first Five Year Plans, which transformed the USSR from a largely peasant country into an industrial power, mobilized women en masse, and could not have succeeded without them. In contrast, under capitalist production of commodities for the market, the exploitation of labour for profit drives the cap-

italist to not hire women at all, or to hire them at a lower wage—because, for example, they can be more expensive to train and they tend to leave their jobs for marriage or children.

What Road for the Iranian Masses?

The last 25 years of promised "Islamic paradise" in Iran have been hell on earth for tens of millions. Unlike the rest of the Near East where the forces of political Islam continue to gain strength, the whole direction of struggle in Iran is away from Islamic reaction. With the mullah regime widely despised, the question of who will rule in Iran could soon be posed again.

Illusions in a supposed "reform" wing of the Islamic regime around president Khatami have clearly waned. Regime hardliners around Ayatollah Khomeini appear to have reconsolidated the once-fractured regime. But if young Iranian activists have lost their illusions in the Islamic "reformers," there appear to be widespread illusions that an idealized form of Western bourgeois democracy can provide an answer. But as history has repeatedly shown, there can be no stable bourgeois democracy in a country like Iran, where economic and social development remains stunted by imperialism. Under capitalism it can *never* look like Western Europe or North America. Only workers rule can begin to lift Iran from its economic and political backwardness.

The fraying of illusions in Islamic "reformers" has also provided an opening for the monarchists around Reza Pahlavi, exiled son of the former Shah. But these pro-U.S. royalists face major obstacles to winning widespread support in Iran. Iranians can look next door to Iraq and Afghanistan to see that the real face of Washington's "democracy" is naked colonial brutality.

In this light, I want to touch on the positions of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran (WCPI), which appears to be the most influential force among the Iranian left today. The WCPI denounces any idea of allying with a wing of the current regime, and is unique on the Iranian left in emphasizing women's rights, including opposition to the veil. In this city, we stood shoulder to shoulder with these comrades at the 1998

International Women's Day fair to drive out representatives of the Iranian government who had scandalously been given a literature stall, where they handed out propaganda supporting the stoning of Iranian women. The WCPI also stood with us and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty when we led a protest to throw a Canadian army recruiting stall out of the same fair.

However—and it's a big "however"—far from upholding a perspective of proletarian class independence, the WCPI are really anti-clerical reformists who foster terrible illusions in "democratic" Western imperialism. For years, the WCPI has campaigned to demand that governments in Canada and Europe shut down the Iranian embassies in their countries. They thus lend credence to the democratic pretensions of these imperialists. The WCPI has also supported the French government's campaign to ban the headscarf in schools, even writing a fawning letter of congratulations to France's right-wing prime minister Raffarin. Their



Der Spiegel

Soviet tanks in Afghanistan. Spartacists called for victory of Red Army, which fought on side of social progress, and defense of USSR.

sister group in Iraq has been agitating for a United Nations military intervention in that country—the same UN whose starvation sanctions murdered a million and a half Iraqis.

Today, the WCPI is playing a deadly dangerous game by accommodating deeply reactionary Iranian monarchist forces. Three years ago its now deceased leader Mansoor Hekmat, while rejecting “unity” with the monarchists, wrote the following:

“What can be done is to establish an official dialogue among the opposition currents demanding the regime’s overthrow. We do not have a problem with this. We invited all the opposition, from Left to Right, to our Third Congress. Not only do we not have a problem with setting up an official dialogue with any organisation opposing the Islamic Republic, we welcome it and think it necessary.”

Last summer I attended a mass rally in support of Iranian students here in Toronto. It featured a sea of monarchist and Iranian national flags interspersed with WCPI banners and placards. A WCPI representative spoke from the official platform, and their banners and leaflet avoided all mention of these royalists or of U.S. imperialism.

The forces around Reza Pahlavi are the literal heirs of the bloody Shah and his henchmen who butchered Iranian workers, leftists and minorities by the thousands. In the late 1970s the Iranian left allied with Islamic reaction against the hated Shah, with horrifying results; now the WCPI seeks “dialogue”

with the Shah’s forces against the Islamic regime! Such a perspective expresses profound political bankruptcy and would prove suicidal for a new generation of Iranian leftists.

Iran today is in the throes of a profound social crisis. The only road to social emancipation, to liberating women, to winning national self-determination for the Kurds and other oppressed nationalities, lies through the smashing of capitalist class rule. An Iranian workers revolution would send shock waves throughout the Near East, showing a way forward for the masses who chafe under the grip of imperialist occupation, Islamic theocracy and military dictatorship. It would spur struggle for working people here and throughout the imperialist world.

In countries like Iran, the question of women’s oppression is a most powerful motor force for socialist revolution. As Trotsky stated in a 1924 speech at the Communist University for Toilers of the East at the time when the Bolshevik power was bringing the perspective of women’s liberation to Central Asia: “There will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and for the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker.” We say: Down with U.S. and Canadian imperialism! Down with Islamic reaction in Iran! For women’s liberation, and the liberation of all humanity, through proletarian socialist revolution! ■

Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

Party administrations: the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the reduction of North Korea to rubble in a war carried out under United Nations aegis in the early 1950s; the napalming and systematic devastation of Vietnam; the terror bombing of Serbia under Clinton in 1999.

In the Iraq war, the International Communist League forthrightly took a side for the military defense of Iraq, without giving any political support to Saddam Hussein, against U.S. imperialism. Under the brutal U.S. military occupation today, every blow against the U.S. and its dwindling “coalition of the willing” is objectively in the interests of workers worldwide. At the same time, we steadfastly oppose the communalist violence carried out by clerical reactionaries and remnants of the Ba’athist regime. The crucial force that must be mobilized politically to strike a blow against the U.S. occupation of Iraq is the multiracial proletariat in the U.S. and other imperialist centers. Despite Canada’s claimed “opposition” to the Iraq war, the Liberal government has in fact fully participated in the “war on terror” abroad, particularly in Afghanistan where Canadian troops head up the NATO occupation force. U.S. out of Iraq! U.S./Canada out of Afghanistan!

No people ever subjugated by an imperialist army, and certainly no black person in America, could have been surprised by the widespread debasement of prisoners by American forces in Iraq. It’s no accident the killers and sadists of Abu Ghraib include former U.S. cops and prison guards, domestic enforcers of U.S. state terror against poor, black and working people and immigrants. Reports from Abu Ghraib specify that one prisoner was raped and sodomized with a broomstick—exactly like Haitian immigrant Abner Louima was in a New York City police station in 1997. One of the torturers at Abu Ghraib, Specialist Charles Graner Jr., is a guard at Pennsylvania’s notorious SCI Greene prison where

America’s foremost black political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal, is held on death row. That prison was the scene of a 1998 abuse scandal over guards beating and sadistically humiliating prisoners. In a 3 May column, Mumia writes; “The horrific treatment of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib has its dark precedents in the prisons and police stations across America.”

The American imperialist state, already a prison house for blacks, in the name of its “war on terror” has exported and vastly expanded its own arsenal of terror, now employed on a world scale without even the hypocritical pretense of “legality.” As the scandal exploded, Bush’s Secretary of State Colin Powell, overseer of the 1991 mass slaughter of fleeing Iraqi troops on the “highway of death” in the first Gulf War, compared the prison abuse to the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam in an interview on CNN, as just one of those deplorable things that happen in war. It’s obscene that this mass murderer is allowed to weep public crocodile tears for the hundreds of Vietnamese men, women and children slaughtered—after mass rape, sodomy, torture and maiming—by U.S. troops in the village of My Lai. In My Lai, the American ruling class pinned the blame on low-level “rogue” soldiers and amnestied the most senior officers involved. General Koster, the division commander in overall charge of the troops in My Lai, watched the entire massacre from the air and radioed orders to Lieutenant Calley in the village. Calley was merely as high up the chain of command as the American government was willing to go.

A major goal of the Bush administration in invading and occupying Iraq was to overcome the “Vietnam syndrome,” i.e., popular opposition to foreign military adventures as a result of the humiliating defeat of the U.S. in Southeast Asia three decades ago. But Iraq is not Vietnam and the Vietnam War was not merely horror inflicted by U.S. imperialism. The U.S. was defeated in a social revolution by the heroic Vietnamese, whose struggle freed their country from the

(continued on page 16)

Iraq...

(continued from page 15)

yoke of imperialist subjugation and capitalist exploitation.

Now a welter of politicians, Republican and Democratic alike, howl about who is "losing Iraq," as the dread words "swamp" and "quagmire" are resurrected in the media. The pictures of sexual abuse have done real damage to the Bush administration because its core constituency is the Christian right. These are the same people who pushed the Meese Commission in 1986 against pornography during the Reagan/Bush Sr. administration and tried to bring down Clinton with a "sex scandal." Now they're shocked that they're confronted with photos on the nightly news and in every tabloid of a young white woman soldier from West Virginia behaving like an actress in an S&M porno film.

While the sexual psychosis and breathtaking hypocrisy of this lot tempts one to dismiss the religious fundamentalists as kooks, they are deadly serious and their views have impact on the world. An estimated 15-18 percent of U.S. voters belong to Christian fundamentalist churches, as does Attorney General John Ashcroft and other powerful political figures. The intersection of religion and policy is driven not least by the fundamentalists' desire to hasten the second coming of Christ. There is a convergence between the Christian right and the pro-Zionist neocons on U.S. policy in the Near East, for different purposes.

Influential sections of the American ruling class—e.g., the *New York Times*—are now calling for the firing of Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld for bearing ultimate responsibility for the crimes in Abu Ghraib. Bush dressed down Rumsfeld, not because of torture in the Iraqi prison, which there had been reports of for a full year, but only because he didn't know there was photographic evidence. In his testimony before the House and Senate, Rumsfeld stated that the worst is yet to come. The axing of Rumsfeld, despite Bush's pledge to "stand by his man," could happen but would in no way change the U.S. policy of mass murder and torture in Iraq. There will be no justice served until all the war criminals and commanders, from Bush and the Pentagon chiefs to their underlings as well as their Democratic Party counterparts, are swept from power through a proletarian socialist revolution.

"War on Terror" Targets Everyone

By now the whole world has seen the photographs of naked, hooded, sexually abused detainees, subjected to practices that purposefully violate the deepest taboos of Muslim society. With great bravery, former prisoners are now speaking out, despite the great shame they experienced. "Then the interpreter told us to strip," one man told the *New York Times* (5 May) about his ordeal. "We told him: 'You are Egyptian, and you are a Muslim. You know that as Muslims we can't do that.' When we refused to take off our clothes, they beat us and tore our clothes off with a blade."

While the scandal has now become a major political issue internationally and in the U.S., in reality the torture and other crimes committed by U.S. and allied forces, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq, have long been public knowledge and we have consistently reported on it in *Workers Vanguard*. More stories and reports of abuse and killings by U.S. forces around the globe, including possible CIA killings, from Afghanistan and Guantánamo and Iraq to detention centers in the U.S., are beginning to pour out, from

former prisoners and their families, from the Red Cross, from "human rights" agencies. In this country, reports of the brutal actions of Canadian troops against Afghan villagers are also starting to trickle through the bourgeois media.

Clearly, all this is only the surface of a cesspool of consciously inflicted human misery. The U.S. has a policy of deporting prisoners to death, presumably preceded by torture, to countries such as Syria, Israel, Pakistan, Egypt and Yemen. Most famously, Canada and the U.S. colluded to deport Maher Arar, a Canadian of Syrian background, to the torture chambers of Syria for ten months, based on the flimsiest of evidence of supposed "terrorist" links. In his 2003 State of the Union address, Bush made a chilling joke of it all. "Let's put it this way: They are no longer a problem for the United States."

The new "privatized" army of mercenaries comprises experienced CIA and U.S. Army thugs. CACI International is a CIA-connected "contractor" for prisoner interrogation and counterintelligence implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal. Vance International, which provides security and guards for the U.S. in Iraq, has often been unleashed against striking labor on the home front. They terrorized and beat strikers and their families in the Pittston miners strike in 1993, the Caterpillar strike in 1994, and fractured a striker's skull in the 1995 Detroit newspaper strike. The *New Yorker* (3 May) reported that Paul Bremer's "Counselor for Iraqi Security Forces," James Steele, who trained Iraqi cops last summer to "deal with terrorists," is a veteran Reagan-era military adviser to the El Salvador regime's anti-FMLN death squads, who was involved with Oliver North's arms-to-the-Contras operation in Nicaragua, and was in Panama training cops when the U.S. invaded in 1989. The new military overseer of U.S. prisons in Iraq is the sinister former commander of the extralegal Guantánamo Bay concentration camp, Major General Geoffrey Miller.

As for Canada, the Airborne regiment which tortured and murdered Somali youths eleven years ago has now resurfaced in Afghanistan as the secretive Joint Task Force 2. Carrying the flag of the UN, Canadian Airborne soldiers brutally murdered 16-year-old Shidane Arone under explicit orders from senior officers. These Canadian "peacekeepers" burnt



Brown/Ottawa Citizen

1993 torture and murder of 16-year-old Somali civilian Shidane Arone by Canadian paratroopers.

Arone's feet with a cigar, repeatedly shoved a riot baton in his mouth and beat him for two hours before he died.

The hideous consequences of today's unprecedented assault on civil rights domestically and murderous slaughter abroad are now becoming clear for all to see. A recent lawsuit against the U.S. Justice Department by two tortured Muslim men, picked up after September 11, asserts they were repeatedly strip-searched, shackled and slammed against walls and sexually assaulted in the Brooklyn detention center. In Canada, refugees from Arab and Muslim countries are routinely locked up, abused and deported, like the victims of "Project Thread," some two dozen Pakistani and other students ensnared by the racist Canadian state last year. We have fought to mobilize labor and its allies against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and against domestic terror against immigrants, in protests and rallies in the U.S., Canada and internationally. We have opposed the extralegal detention measures from the beginning of the massive post-September 11, 2001 "war on terror" assault. In an *amicus* brief filed by the SL/U.S. and Partisan Defense Committee on behalf of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen imprisoned in a military brig, we stated that the president's power to declare a citizen an "enemy combatant" is consonant with the rationale of a police state. "Stripped of legalese, what the President asserts is nothing less than the right to disappear citizens."

Capitalism and the Atrocities of War

Capitalist society was born in blood; modern imperialism continues the brutal practices of mass murder, torture and humiliation that accompany exploitation of labor and the ceaseless struggle between competing imperialist forces to dominate the world. From the Belgian Congo killing fields of King Leopold and the massacres in the Philippines by U.S. troops in the early days of its imperialist expansion to the first concentration camps, created by the Spanish in Cuba and a little later used by the British in South Africa in the Boer War, to Japanese imperialist atrocities in China and Nazi Germany's Holocaust, imperialism has created a world in constant, cruel convulsions.

After World War II, the U.S. inherited the tattered British and French imperial mantle in the Near East, to lord over what the poet laureate of British imperialism, Rudyard Kipling, had earlier demeaned as "lesser breeds." The rulers of Canadian imperialism act as soft-cop "peacekeepers" for Washington around the world, while unleashing the army domestically against Native people and the Québécois, most notoriously in the October 1970 occupation of Montreal which saw hundreds of leftists and labor leaders rounded up and imprisoned.

Britain today, its forces in Iraq accused of brutality and killing scandals, keeps up in a reduced way its own torture arsenal, honed mainly in Northern Ireland, where the infamous Long Kesh wire cages and torture chambers were employed against Irish Republican militants. As for France, *Le Monde* (4 May) snottily front-paged a cartoon of an American boot crushing a man's face in the dirt, with the caption "Repeat after me: DE-MO-CRA-CY!" Yet the French ruling class, former colonial occupiers of Vietnam (whose defeat at Dien Bien Phu occurred 50 years ago on May 7), has its own horrible history, not only in Vietnam but in Algeria, where revelations of mass torture and murder still haunt. And the French state metes out police terror daily to the large North African population in France itself.

Some apologists for the U.S. may use this history to claim, "Well, everyone does it, it's just human nature." No, it is not human nature, it is imperialist and neocolonialist policy. It's true that Abu Ghraib itself was the dictator Saddam Hussein's own prison where opponents of Hussein were brutalized. Uganda's Idi Amin, Haiti's "Papa Doc" Duvalier, El Salvador's "Blowtorch Bob" D'Aubuisson (so named for his favorite interrogation device)—these names still have the power to shock, and they all were taught by their imperialist masters. For decades the CIA and U.S. military have trained right-wing regimes, especially in Latin America, in the techniques of torture to be used mainly against working-class militants and leftist organizers. Atrocities by capitalist and neocolonial regimes around the world abound; one example we highlighted is the arrest, imprisonment and torture of homosexuals in Egypt's prisons—see "Protest Anti-Gay Persecution in Egypt!" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 801, 11 April 2003).

But in fact "everyone" does not employ such barbaric methods. We communists denounce imperialist torture and murder as barbaric weapons of exploitation. Our goal is the liberation of the working class and all the oppressed from enforced inequality and exploitation, and we repudiate such methods. Communist military policy seeks to unite working-class and oppressed people across national boundaries, while crushing the ruling classes who drive their populations into war against each other. Marxism, a working-class, international and revolutionary political force, had its highest expression in practice so far in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The historical experience of Trotsky's Red Army under conditions of civil war and imperialist invasion is a stunning refutation that torture and other atrocities are endemic to all armies.

In 1920 the army of capitalist Poland under the nationalist strongman Jozef Pilsudski, backed by Western imperialism, invaded the Soviet Ukraine. Captured Red Army men were routinely tortured before being killed. As the Red Army launched a successful counteroffensive, Leon Trotsky, head of the Red Army, issued an order on 10 May 1920:

"From all sectors of the Western and South-Western fronts come reports of unheard-of atrocities committed by Polish White Guard forces upon captured and wounded Red Army men. They are tortured, beaten, shot and hanged.... These facts arouse justified fury and desire for vengeance in the heart of every warrior. Such vengeance is just. But it must be aimed at those who are really responsible for the dishonourable attack and the brutal atrocities—at Pilsudski's Government, at the Polish gentry and the Polish bourgeoisie. It would, however, be wrong and unworthy of revolutionary fighters to take vengeance on Polish prisoners. No, the Red Army will show magnanimity towards a captured and wounded enemy.

"To a captured Polish Legionary, be he peasant or worker, we shall explain the criminality of his ruling classes. We shall enlighten his mind and make of him our best friend and cothinker, just as we did with our German, Austrian, Hungarian, Kolchakite, Denikinite [Russian White Army] and other prisoners-of-war."

—*The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, Vol. 3 (New Park Publications, 1981)

Of course, some atrocities did occur on the Red Army side, as the writer Isaac Babel who rode with the "Red Cavalry" in the 1920 Poland campaign exposed. In his story, *Argamak*, Babel recounts: "The Cossack Tikhomolov had killed two captured officers without authorization....

(continued on page 18)

Iraq...

(continued from page 17)

Squadron Commander Baulin came up with a punishment much harsher than anything the tribunal could have inflicted—he took Tikhomolov's stallion Argamak away from him, and sent Tikhomolov off to the transport carts."

To do away with imperialist war, it is necessary to put an end to the capitalist system that breeds war. While all eyes are turned to the crimes committed by U.S. imperialism in Iraq, it is also necessary to bring sharply into focus the developing crime on the home front. In the U.S., anger and revulsion with the Iraq war is channeled by the trade-union officialdom and even ostensible socialists into the "anybody but Bush" campaign to put the Democrats back in power. And in Canada's current federal elections, the NDP social democrats are trying to channel discontent among immigrants, workers and youthful activists back into support for capitalist "Canada the good." Far from being "antiwar," the New Democrats only want a UN figleaf for the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations; far from being defenders of the oppressed, they wave the flag of Maple Leaf chauvinism against Quebec's national rights.

The whole electoralist con game is a recipe to keep the system running as it does—a system based on exploitation of labor, a system propped up by racial and national oppression, a system which breeds wars of conquest for the capitalist



SC photo

Trotskyist League contingent at March 20 anti-occupation demonstration in Toronto.

market irrespective of which bourgeois (or social-democratic) party rules. Our purpose is to forge the multiracial revolutionary workers party that will sweep the bloody capitalist class from power and put the wealth of this society into the hands of the workers who create it and to the service of humanity. ■

BT...

(continued from page 5)

to Quebec if the 1995 sovereignty referendum had carried underline again how the forcible retention of Quebec in a "united" country is a cornerstone of capitalist Canada (see "Anglo-Chauvinist Provocations on the Rise: Independence for Quebec!" *Spartacist Canada* No. 139, Winter 2003/2004). The BT makes no mention of any of this.

A Persilschein for the Father Confessor?

One can assume from the BT's letter that they are sufficiently concerned that we have caught them out on their Maple Leaf chauvinism as to sense they cannot approach us as a deranged cult over the Quebec question without inflicting further damage to themselves. On the other hand, their German branch continues the BT's slander campaign against us for "great power chauvinism" supposedly directed against the Kurds, with some new embellishments as absurd as they are disgusting. Run under a large picture of cops arresting a Kurdish protester in Berlin, their chauvinist-baiting diatribe is designed to convey a not-so-subtle amalgam between our comrades and the racist oppressors of the Kurds. Particularly in a country with a large Kurdish population, this is a blatant appeal that we should be dealt with as enemies of the Kurdish people. And this poison is spewed by an outfit that stridently *opposes* the Kurds' exercise of their right to self-determination in an independent Kurdistan and whose own revolting indifference to the oppression of the Kurdish people is captured in its headline, "Polemics with SpAD/ICL: With Love from Absurdistan."

We already shredded this chauvinist-baiting Big Lie last year, documenting the BT's role as a walking provocation against the ICL and exposing the manipulative sociopath, Bill

Logan, it embraces as its leader (see "BT: Renegades for Hire," *WV* No. 807, 1 August 2003 and "BT: A Walking Provocation," *WV* No. 808, 29 August 2003). We do so not simply for purposes of elementary political sanitation, but because a new generation of leftists must be made aware that the likes of Logan have no place in the workers' movement. It was for similar reasons that we took the unusual step of publicly releasing our three internal bulletins "On the Logan Regime" after we expelled him from our international organization (then the international Spartacist tendency) in 1979.

In late 1978, there was a fight to remove Logan as national chairman of our British section, where he had been running a brutal and nasty regime. The exposure of Logan's sadistic manipulation of comrades in Britain led to further charges against him from his former victims in the more isolated Australian section. The Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand Central Committee charged Logan "with systematic and conscious violations of communist morality during his tenure as national chairman of the SLANZ between the years of 1972 and 1977" and "with repeated, conscious intervention into comrades' personal lives as part of a pattern of calculated personal and sexual manipulation, passing off intimate managing of comrades' personal lives as a legitimate and central function of the national chairman" (see "On the Logan Regime Part III," *International Information Bulletin* No. 16, November 1983). The charges itemized 18 specific counts, including six attempts "to bring about certain sexual configurations and/or create couples through direct intervention" and three attempts "to break up certain couples through organisational/personal pressure and administrative measures." Finally, Logan was charged with "The campaign to force Vicky A to get an abortion and failing that, to foster her child (1973), using personal, social and organisational pressure."

Following a trial at our First International Conference in 1979, Logan was expelled by a unanimous vote—including those future BT members present—as a “proven, massive liar and a sexual sociopath who manipulated the private lives of comrades for reasons of power politics and his own aberrant appetites and compulsions in the guise of Marxism.” In the case of Vicky A., the trial body found Logan “guilty of inhuman torture of a mother, rendered suicidal in his attempt to destroy and take away her baby.”

These credentials were good enough for those who formed the BT, having dribbled out of our party in flight from our hard Soviet-defensist communist politics in the face of renewed Cold War in the early 1980s, to embrace the same Logan they had earlier voted to expel. In 1990, Logan (who had resurfaced as head of the New Zealand Permanent Revolution Group) emerged quite openly as the *lider maximo* of what was now proclaimed to be an “international” tendency. Last summer, nearly 25 years after we had expelled Logan, the BT came up with a quote ripped entirely out of context from one of our publicly available internal bulletins to slander us for “vulgar chauvinism.”

The quote was taken from a 1978 report by SL/U.S. National Chairman James Robertson, a founder of our international tendency, to our New York local on the fight to remove the Logan regime in Britain. In his report, Robertson criticized another leading comrade, Reuben Samuels, for absenting himself from this fight: “Criticism of Reuben: the whole time, where was Reuben? He was off in the library, studying about the Turds for his class.” Samuels had been brought to Britain to give an educational on the Kurdish question at the urging of comrade Robertson and the rest of our international leadership, a task of particular importance at the time given the recruitment of Turkish comrades to our British section. But when Samuels got to London what was posed was not a class but a hard political fight to defend our party against Logan, who viciously manipulated the internalized oppression of minority and women comrades. Samuels was later flown back to Britain a second time to give his class on the fight against Kurdish oppression—some chauvinism!

More than a hundred opinionated, argumentative young communists of many different ethnic backgrounds heard Robertson’s presentation. They understood it for what it was: a powerful indictment of the all-sided oppression of capitalist class society, and a record of the struggle against a sick character who tried to destroy comrades. In ripping apart the BT’s attempt to paint our membership as merely obedient tools, fools and perhaps racists themselves, we noted of the BT’s lies: “They can’t manage to mention that the quotation from comrade Robertson that they pulled out and twisted beyond recognition comes from a bulletin titled ‘On the Logan Regime Part I.’ How come? Why has Logan become the equivalent of that empty space on retouched photos? What is the BT hiding?” (*WV* No. 807, 1 August 2003).

Evidently, the BT left it to their German section to produce the requisite *Persilschein* (the “De-Nazification Certificate” issued to “rehabilitated” Third Reich war criminals at the end of World War II) for Logan. To this end, the German group dredges up some garbage alibis for Logan that had been gathering dust in a 1996 BT pamphlet titled *ICL vs. IBT* (which pamphlet coincidentally got posted on the BT’s Web site in June 2003, just as it launched its latest smear campaign against us). Logan was just following orders, pleads the article in *Bolschewik*, claiming that he simply

made “political mistakes...fully within the norms of the iSt in other places”:

“Everywhere in the iSt women were pressured not to have children. The leadership of the iSt, including James Robertson himself, let it be known that women who had children were, in his opinion, on their way out of politics. It was thus standard in the iSt to pressure women to decide against children and for the party. Nothing else happened in the SL/ANZ under Bill Logan.”

This is a lie as breathtaking as it is grotesque. The norm in our party, well known to Logan, was expressed in an exchange published in a 1972 SL/U.S. pre-conference bulletin (*Internal Discussion Bulletin* No. 20, “Comradely Greetings to the Delegates of the Third National Conference of the SL/US (and to comrades Bill, Adaire, Joel and Gene who are away),” November 1972). Responding to a misplaced concern by a prospective recruit over whether parents can function as disciplined communists, a woman comrade wrote: “I can think of no examples among the parent-comrades in the SL (there are several) myself included, who are parents first and communists second.... If a comrade (with a child) is carrying out the work required of party membership his contribution is as meaningful as anyone else’s.” She added, “It’s not the party’s job to monitor personal relationships.” This was very much *not* the norm under Logan in Australia.

At the very meeting in New York where Robertson gave his report on the fight against Logan in Britain, a comrade who had returned some time earlier from a year as treasurer in our Australian section gave some sense of what would soon come out about Logan’s tenure in Australia. She recalled how horrified she was to learn that the Logan regime had devised financial rules that allowed deductions from party contributions for a vasectomy but not for the upkeep of a child. “In short,” she recounted, “without making a membership rule in the organization which said that if you have a baby you’ll be expelled, they said if you have a baby you will be driven out because you will not be able to survive.”

Again relying on the BT’s 1996 pamphlet, the *Bolschewik* article also invokes Edmund Samarakkody, a longtime Sri Lankan Trotskyist with whom we had sought to fuse at the 1979 conference and who served on the trial body, intoning that “Logan never strove for personal advantages—as Edmund Samarakkody confirmed.” Jack the Ripper’s murder of prostitutes in London didn’t bring him any demonstrable “personal advantage” either! While Samarakkody had his own reasons for provoking a break in political relations with us at the 1979 conference, he is not quite the witness for the defense the BT would have him be. In his minority report of the trial body to the conference (also published in “On the Logan Regime Part III”), Samarakkody concluded: “I have not exonerated Logan, that monster. I have placed this monstrosity in the proper context. You can totally disagree with me; you can tear this and put it in the wastepaper basket. But please do not think that I functioned in the trial body as the attorney of that monster.”

As befits its arrogant, elitist contempt for the struggles of the oppressed, the BT partakes of a “Great Man” theory of history. According to the BT, it was Robertson who “had decided to topple the Logan regime” (“The Truth Hurts,” 8 August 2003 Internet posting). Logan, as a truly Great Man, cannot conceive of having been humbled, humiliated and brought down by anything other than the whim of a supposed “cult leader.” The fight in Britain had undermined

(continued on page 20)

BT...*(continued from page 19)*

Logan's grip over the comrades he had tormented in Australia and unleashed a torrent of painful testimony. It was these comrades—largely young and inexperienced but extremely dedicated—who demanded Logan's head.

Even before his expulsion, Logan spread lies to those outside our organization that he had been subjected to threats of violence. In an obituary in the BT's *1917* (1998) on Myra Tanner Weiss, a veteran of the early American Trotskyist movement, Logan is quoted openly admitting that he violated our democratic-centralist discipline while a suspended member awaiting trial. Claiming to perceive "a threat to use physical violence against me after my expulsion," Logan continued, "I broke the discipline of the Spartacist tendency. I looked up Myra in the telephone book, gave her a call, and made arrangements to have a talk with her." Whether Logan was simply being provocative or undergoing paranoid delusions, projecting from his depraved grooving on inflicting misery on others, his imputations of violence could only serve to harm and defame us.

Nor has Logan changed his sadistic spots, as was made clear some years ago when some defectors from the BT and Logan's Permanent Revolution Group (PRG) published materials regarding Logan's practices of "Communist Criticism" in his own New Zealand fief. In the minutes of a 19 January 1993 PRG membership meeting, Logan described this "Com Crit" as putting each member in the "hot seat" in turn, "to be the subject of three rounds of analysis." After *three days* of such meetings, an organizer with a child finally resigned, confessing in a 19 February 1993 report to not showing enough "vigour and consistency" because of changed "personal circumstances—I now have a demanding job and also a young baby—and so I have less time for politics" (reproduced in *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League* No. 8, "The Bolshevik Tendency: From the Snake Pit of Anti-Spartacism," July 1993).

Now Logan advertises his services as a professional "counsellor, narrative therapist and celebrant" on his Web site (bl.co.nz). The man who tried to force a young woman communist to have an abortion now provides sample texts for funerals for babies and boasts, "I've done ceremonies for Hindus and atheists, Christians and Buddhists, followers of Krishnamurthy and Christian Science."

Under the heading "Ceremony & Celebrancy," Logan intones: "Ceremony is important to our lives, from the dinner table to a coronation or presidential inauguration"—perhaps he's angling to be a "celebrant" at the coronation of the next HRH (His/Her Royal Highness). On his Web site, Logan speaks of the "Anglican and Presbyterian influences of my

childhood." Far from being inspired by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, Logan does not even look to the left wing of Protestantism during the English Revolution under Oliver Cromwell, but to the Presbyterian right wing and the monarchist Anglicans! That this man is the veritable high priest of a putatively Marxist organization should tell you just about all you need to know about the BT.

Garbage Doesn't Walk by Itself

The BT is not so much a political opponent as a sinister threat of provocation. In 1983, the BT (then calling itself the External Tendency) launched an international campaign labeling us as "violent," lying that we had assaulted one of their members—just as we were engaged in a serious legal fight against the FBI for targeting our organization as "violent"! Some years later (and numerous sinister incidents in between), the *Wall Street Journal* tried to undercut a growing international protest movement in defense of black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1995, using the BT as an authority for smears to depict the Partisan Defense Committee—the central organization that had been fighting for others to take up Jamal's case—as associated with a crazed "cult." The *Journal* (16 June 1995) wrote: "The Spartacists are led by a man named James Robertson, prompting the International Bolshevik Tendency, a group of former Spartacists, to deride their old party as 'Jimstown,' a takeoff on Jonestown in Guyana, the jungle site of mass suicide." This mouthpiece for the American ruling class certainly got the point of the BT's lurid smear of our party as an "obedience cult" and its allusion to the notorious 1978 mass suicide by an evangelical religious cult.

The BT's politics, such as they are, are fully in keeping with its hoary "darkness at noon" depiction of our communist organization as a Stalin-style gulag and personality cult. So central and intertwined are social-democratic anti-Communism and a hostile obsession with us to the BT's existence that, by its own admission, the "focal point" of the German group's fusion with the tiny Gruppe Leo Trotzki in 2002 was shared hostility to any possibility of a revolutionary outcome in East Germany in 1989-90 and to the one organization that fought to realize this, the ICL. As hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets of East Germany to demand a genuinely egalitarian socialist society, we mobilized our resources internationally in the effort to provide Trotskyist leadership to that incipient political revolution and to fight for revolutionary reunification—for a red Germany of workers councils. We didn't prevail but we fought!

The BT's "intervention" into those revolutionary events was to smear the ICL as a bureaucratic cult akin to the Stalinists and, in an article headlined "Robertsonites in Wonderland," to sneer that we had invented an "imaginary political revolution" (1917, Third Quarter 1991). Only those in thrall to the anti-Communist myth that "Stalinist totalitarianism" had rendered the workers in the bureaucratically deformed workers states mindless automatons incapable of struggle could so blithely dismiss any outcome other than capitalist counterrevolution.

The BT's abiding complaint (retailed again in the latest *Bolschewik*) is that we did not offer to provide a platform for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) at the 250,000-strong united-front protest in East Berlin's Treptow Park on 3 January 1990. That united front, initiated by us and taken up by the ruling Stalinist party, was called to protest the fascist desecration of a memorial to Soviet soldiers who died liberating

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Germany from Hitler's Nazis and was premised on defense of the workers states. What place did the openly counterrevolutionary SPD have at such a protest?!

More recently, the BT has extended its embrace of counter-revolution to take in not only the German SPD but the CIA's favored "god-king," the Tibetan Dalai Lama, arguing in the latest issue of *1917* (2004): "By agreeing that the Tibetans or Uighur have the right to control their own domestic affairs, a revolutionary government in China would signal its willingness to coexist with Tibet's traditional ruling caste and Xinjiang's mullahs as long as they retain popular support." Where the Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy promotes "one country, two systems" in maintaining Hong Kong as a capitalist enclave, the BT goes the extra mile—to "coexist" with feudalism!—or, in other words, "one country, three systems." Such respect for the devotion of benighted peoples to their religious leaders has much in common with images

purveyed by apologists for class and race oppression of an earlier era—including reactionary stereotypes of the "humble, devout" French serf before the 1789 French Revolution or the supposedly "carefree, contented" black slave in the U.S. South before the American Civil War.

From Canada to Germany, inasmuch as the BT raises political questions, it reflects the "values" of the ruling class as refracted through its own national social democracy. More provocateur than political opponent, the BT is centrally animated by subjective malice toward our party. As such they are open to anyone's bidding. Their lies and slanders are the weapons of choice for a bitter and vicious gang of renegades. Their purpose is to seal us off from thinking leftists and subjectively revolutionary youth, while giving ammunition to the forces of reaction arrayed against us. The BTs are real political garbage, and as we've said of them many times in the past, garbage doesn't walk by itself. ■

B.C. Labour...

(continued from page 24)

workers who saw that the working class as a whole was under attack, Natives targeted by the Liberals' racist crusade against land claims—all these and more knew this was a battle in the interest of all workers and the oppressed. As Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs declared, this strike "opened the door to many others to express their frustration with the way this government governs" (*Globe and Mail*, 3 May).

The same day, 800 hydroelectric dam workers wildcatted in solidarity and tens of thousands of CUPE members walked out. Pickets closed some ferry terminals as private-sector unions, including pulp mill workers on Vancouver Island and in Prince George, joined in. A member of the Ironworkers expressed the sentiment of many: unionized workers "have been going backward...in terms of the quality of our lives" and "our public health care system itself is at stake." In Vancouver, May Day was an outpouring of support for the HEU as some 10,000 protesters marked the working-class holiday. There were contingents and banners from nearly every major union in the province and calls for a general strike were prominent.

Supporters of the Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club joined the picket lines and rallies, declaring that *all labour should stand with the HEU! One out, all out!* Our newspapers, *Spartacist Canada* and *Workers Vanguard*, were well-received, as our comrades stressed that the road to victory lay in mobilizing labour's power independently of not only the bosses' parties but also of the pro-capitalist NDP, which serves the ruling class's interests so well.

CUPE's 70,000 B.C. members, transit and Hydro workers, teachers, wood, pulp, steel and rail workers were ready and expecting to pull the plug and shut down the province on May 3. Such a show of force would have sent a powerful message to the government and the capitalists they represent that it is the working class that makes this society run and has the power to make it stop!

But a general strike in solidarity with the HEU was the last thing the B.C. Federation of Labour bureaucrats wanted. The NDP set the stage for the sellout, calling for arbitration and "an orderly resumption of full health care services." In a groveling open letter to the premier, party leader Carole

James worried about "investor confidence" and called for "extending the transition period" for implementing the 15 percent wage rollback. Inside the legislature, the NDP's Joy McPhail obscenely declared that "Strikes in the health care sector benefit no one. In fact, they harm us all."

On May Day, B.C. Fed organizers tried to drown out chants of "general strike" with the empty slogan, "We won't back down!" From the podium, B.C. Fed president Jim Sinclair made his offer to Gordon Campbell & Co.: "we are ready to sit down any time with the government and look for an answer." A day later, Sinclair and top HEU leaders did just that. Cooked up in secret, their "deal" sent the HEU back to work with 600 layoffs, a longer workweek and the same 15 percent pay cut. The government's "concession" was a paltry \$25 million severance package and pay cuts that were no longer retroactive. The courts will continue to push for massive fines against the union.

Anger and shock at the betrayal ran deep. As picketers heard the news, some broke down in tears. HEU spokesman Chris Allnutt tried to sell the deal with the claim, "we have knocked the government off its privatization agenda," but angry strikers denounced him as a "traitor." Others said "the union stabbed us in the back." Picketers remained outside some Victoria-area hospitals, schools and ferry terminals the next day. A wildcat picket shut down public transit in Victoria and hospital workers marched against the deal in Kelowna and Vancouver.

Anti-Labour Offensive Targets Women, Immigrants

Despite the betrayals of their leadership, HEU members and supporters can be proud that they stood their ground on the picket lines, united in defiance of government attacks. Their strike was very popular because it was seen as a battle to defend health care and other hard-won social programs. Across the country, sweeping austerity cuts have ripped apart the living conditions and basic rights of working people, as the capitalists drive to cut their overhead in order to increase profits. In Newfoundland, a hard-fought 27-day strike of 20,000 public service workers ended in a government-imposed contract that freezes wages for two years. In Quebec, the Liberal Charest government's attacks on daycare and union rights have sparked massive labour

(continued on page 22)

B.C. Labour...

(continued from page 21)

protests. Many of the 100,000 who marched in Montreal on May Day eagerly followed the HEU battle.

Health care is one of the few areas where women, immigrants and other minorities in B.C. could get a decent union job. Here as elsewhere, immigrants are subjected to constant racist scapegoating by a capitalist government seeking to divide and rule over the workers. Yet they make up a strategic and growing component of the working class, and heavily immigrant unions like the HEU have been in the forefront of the struggles against the government's attacks. This underscores that it is in the direct, material interest of all labour to defend the rights of immigrants, including fighting for full citizenship rights.

The privatization drive hits most harshly at women, who make up 85 percent of the HEU. The purchasing power of health-care worker wages is heading down to 1968 levels and benefits are nearly nonexistent. Many women workers are painfully aware that they have nothing to lose by fighting, as layoffs will soon force them into minimum-wage McJobs or welfare. As one worker put it, "There are people losing their homes and their livelihoods. If we're going to lose it all anyway, we might as well stay out here and picket."

Cuts to social services will hit these workers again as they are forced to pay more from their shrinking wages for health care, daycare and education. Forcing immigrants and women workers into non-union jobs at near-minimum wage helps drive down wages and worsens conditions for all workers. Outrageously, Local 1-3567 of the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers (IWA) has been raiding the HEU, "organizing" newly privatized health-care jobs in pro-boss deals with private outfits like Sodexo, Compass and Aramark. In sharp contrast to the IWA's despicable behavior, the labour movement must take up the cause of such low-paid workers, fighting for decent wages and benefits as part of a drive to organize the unorganized.

Remember the Traitors!

From the start, the Campbell government had the HEU in its sights. In early 2002, tens of thousands of workers protested against the government after Bill 29 ripped up union contracts. While these one-day protests showed labour's potential social power, the B.C. Fed strategy—wait out the cuts, head off struggle and channel it into NDP votes in 2005—ensured that the Liberals' class war would largely be one-sided.

In a May 3 letter to trade unionists, BCGEU president George Heyman urged workers "to hold their anger at the government and express it fully at the ballot box next year." But on the picket lines, our comrades encountered great anger and bitterness at the NDP. Caring only to show allegiance to the capitalist status quo, provincial NDP leader James welcomed the sellout deal in a statement that utters not a word of support for the workers.

If the NDP returns to the government benches, it will rule for the capitalists and against workers and the oppressed, as it has in the past. In 1975, an NDP government passed legislation breaking strikes of 60,000 pulp, rail and supermarket workers and truck drivers. Again in office from 1991 to 2001, the NDP played the bosses' racist game, launching the biggest RCMP mobilization in history against Natives at Gustafsen Lake. When two boatloads of Chinese migrants

arrived on Vancouver Island, the New Democrats demanded the internment and deportation of refugees on arrival. Starting the cuts to education, welfare and health care that Campbell & Co. are trying to finish, they notoriously legislated CUPE school support workers back to work in 2000 and imposed 0/0/2 percent wage-control "guidelines" on public-sector workers.

In spite of their anger at the New Democrats, many workers will doubtless seek to punish Campbell's Liberals by voting NDP provincially next year. But the NDP's treacherous role in the HEU strike underscores, again, that workers have not a shred of interest in voting for these right-wing social democrats. In the build-up to the current federal election, the federal New Democrats even pledged to back a Liberal minority government if it holds a plebiscite on proportional representation. So, in practice, a vote for the NDP is a vote for yet another Liberal government in Ottawa!

This is hardly the first time the pro-NDP union bureaucrats have spectacularly betrayed major class battles in B.C. In 1983, when workers and community groups were heading towards a showdown with the right-wing Social Credit government, the IWA's Jack Munro conspired with the premier, Bill Bennett, and "Operation Solidarity" was squelched. The way to break through this cycle of betrayals begins with the understanding that the NDP and union misleaders are agents of the capitalists in the workers movement, upholding a mythical "national interest" and seeking "partnership" with the exploiters. The pretensions of the labour misleaders must be exposed and combated, as part of the necessary fight to split the working-class base of the NDP from the pro-capitalist tops.

The unions are essential organizations of economic self-defense for the working class and can form the basis to organize anti-capitalist struggle; but to do so consistently they must be led by a class-struggle leadership. The current union leadership consciously restricts its aims, and therefore its tactics, to what is acceptable to the capitalists. So the HEU leaders pushed the membership to accept cutbacks to wages and benefits, accepting the capitalist logic that cost-cutting must come from the pockets of the already struggling workers. The government and health-care employers, in contrast, are totally committed to their own class interests. The government exists to defend and strengthen the capitalist system, so they will make laws against everything the working class needs to do to survive and to win.

When the bosses decide to play hardball and demand total capitulation, workers need a leadership prepared to rip up their strikebreaking edicts and continue the fight. Strikes are won by building solid picket lines that no-one crosses, and with the solidarity of all workers and the oppressed against their common enemy. Anti-strike laws don't mean anything if the strike wins!

In the HEU strike, as in many class battles, the union bureaucracy acted as a brake on the militancy and determination of the membership. Strike committees democratically elected among workers on the picket lines could have helped to ensure that strategy and tactics remained in line with the will of the strikers. Militant tactics and working-class solidarity are not a guarantee of victory, even if the strike were led by class-struggle Marxists. But history has shown that the only way the working class can win anything—from union recognition to the eight-hour day—is through hard class struggle which doesn't play by the bosses' rules. Working

people need a force that fights for their class interests: a multiracial workers party committed to overturning the system of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression in a socialist revolution.

What Is To Be Done?

The various reformist left groups in B.C. are hostile to such a perspective. In a May 2 leaflet, *L'Humanité*, affiliated with the British-based *Socialist Appeal* tendency, acknowledges that the strike was sold out. They even invoke the statement of Leon Trotsky, a central leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, that the crisis of modern society has been reduced to the crisis of working-class leadership. And what is their conclusion? The same leaflet exults that "a movement like the health workers can galvanize the working class and give the NDP a massive election victory."

In speaking of the "crisis of proletarian leadership" in the Transitional Program (the 1938 founding document of the Fourth International), Trotsky was referring to the need to forge revolutionary vanguard parties through *breaking* the working class from its misleaders, including the pro-capitalist social democrats who he reviled as "mortal enemies of the proletarian revolution." In contrast, *L'Humanité*, whose central slogan is "NDP to power on a socialist program," aims to corral workers and restive youth back into the fold of the NDP. The New Democrats would rather walk on hot coals than embrace a "socialist program"!

The Fire This Time Movement (FTT) is more contradictory. A week after the HEU sellout, FTT joined a rally to "Repeal the Deal," and its press carried interviews with workers who opposed it. But FTT also gave HEU president Fred Muzin multiple pages of its paper to justify the sellout, claiming ludicrously that the union leaders "were able to force the government to back down." Drawing no lessons from this defeat, FTT cannot bring itself to criticize Muzin or even say that the working class was betrayed by its misleaders. Could it be that FTT's diplomatic posture toward the HEU tops is conditioned by the fact that the HEU is an endorser of Mobilization Against War and Occupation, an FTT affiliate?

The Prepare the General Strike Committee (PGSC) has for some time agitated for a general strike against Liberal union busting, centrally by calling on the union bureaucrats to implement Point 8 of the B.C. Fed "Action Plan," which authorized such action against the Campbell regime. Unlike most of the reformist left, PGSC regularly denounces the labour tops for their cowardice, and attacks the idea of waiting to elect the NDP in 2005. But the PGSC portrays the general strike as a catch-all solution. By its very nature, a general strike, by bringing the capitalist economy to a halt, poses the question of which class shall rule—the capitalists or the proletariat? In turn, this acutely poses the question of proletarian revolutionary leadership. And it is this which is glaringly absent from any of the PGSC's statements. Instead they chatter about "unity," a "network of coalitions," "effective democratic structures" and the like ("Provisional Pro-



Skinner/La Presse

100,000 workers march in Montreal on May Day against Quebec Liberal attacks on unions, social programs. Labour must defend Quebec's national rights!

gramme to Fight the Liberals," generalstrikenews.ca).

In our intervention in the HEU strike, we emphasized the need for a new working-class leadership that sets the unions on the path of class struggle against the capitalist system, warning that the labour bureaucrats and their NDP partners are the main obstacle to this. We solidarized with the desire of large sections of the working class for a general strike aimed at forcing the government to back down in its frontal assault and at throwing back the capitalist attacks that are destroying people's lives. Such a limited, defensive general strike could also have posed the possibility of bringing down the vicious anti-working-class Campbell government.

At the same time, we warned that the B.C. Fed tops had no intention of mounting the kind of struggle that was needed—indeed, they were preparing a sellout. We said that the unions that backed the HEU had to mobilize independently of the B.C. Fed traitors, swelling the picket lines across the province. And we emphasized that out of this struggle the most conscious elements had to embark on the road to forging a revolutionary workers party through a political break with the NDP and its allies in the labour bureaucracy.

Such a party would unite all of the many victims of this exploitative system by actively taking up the cause of women, immigrants, Native people and the Québécois. It would emphasize that the only way to smash the all-sided onslaught on social programs, to assure free, quality medical care and a decent standard of living for all, is to rip the means of production from the hands of the capitalist class and put them in the hands of those whose labour makes this society run. The irrationality of capitalism is such that the basic needs of life are held hostage to profit. A collectivized economy with centralized planning—in which production is for human need, not for profit—is the real solution for the working people. This is the perspective fought for by the Trotskyist League and the Spartacus Youth Club, which aim to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International as the instrument for world socialist revolution. Join us in this struggle! ■

Union Tops, NDP Sell Out HEU

B.C. Labour Betrayed



SC photo

May Day: Thousands march in Vancouver in support of HEU health care workers.

VANCOUVER—When 43,000 members of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) defied vicious strikebreaking legislation on April 29 after four days on the picket lines, workers in B.C. and across the country cheered. Accumulated anger over years of capitalist austerity and anti-union attacks by the Gordon Campbell Liberal government exploded in support for the HEU. Within hours, workers all over the province were walking off the job to join the HEU lines, and tens of thousands more were poised to join them on May 3.

Yet, having defied the government and galvanized workers across B.C., the HEU strikers were *betrayed* by their own union leaders, abetted by the NDP. In the anatomy of this struggle—both the determination and solidarity of the workers and the treachery of the union misleaders—are vital lessons for militants seeking a road forward. Posed most starkly is the necessity for a new leadership of the unions that understands that the interests of the working class and

the capitalist exploiters are irreconcilable.

The Liberals' Bill 37 was an open provocation. It mandated a retroactive pay cut of 15 percent, longer work hours and untrammelled privatization and contracting out. Union members were threatened with massive fines and jail time if they refused to capitulate. But pickets remained solid, as enraged workers with little to lose resolved to fight and HEU leaders declared they would remain out. News that the strike would continue was met with chants of "general strike."

The angry picket of 400 outside Vancouver General Hospital on April 30 was typical of many. Longshoremen, government workers, ferry workers, woodworkers, painters, electrical workers and others swelled the lines. The picket also reflected the HEU's composition: Filipinos, Chinese, East Indians, blacks, a majority of them women. Nurses and teachers earlier hit by strikebreaking laws, private-sector

(continued on page 21)

Down With Liberal Assault on Health Care! Defend the Unions!