

No to racist state bans on Muslim dress!



HANDS OFF MUSLIM
STOP POLICE BRUTAL
TONY BLAIR CRUSAD!

Ray Tang/Rex Features

Protest (left) at police raid in Forest Gate, East London in June 2006 in which Mohammed Abdul Kahar was shot. Aishah Azmi (right), sacked with the backing of Blair for wearing niqab at work.



BBC News

Racism and the Islamic veil

When cabinet minister Jack Straw declared in October that he would prefer Muslim women not to wear the veil that covers the face (the niqab) he opened the floodgates for a torrent of racist bigotry particularly directed against Muslim women. He also unleashed a campaign for banning the niqab in certain areas of public life. This comes in the wake of the ban on the hijab (headscarf) imposed in French schools in 2004 which was followed by similar bans in some German states and now the Netherlands government proposes to ban the niqab in public places.

Straw's attack on Muslim women comes in the context of an escalation of the racist "war on terror" which seeks to brand Muslims the "enemy within". Labour ministers are trying to drum up support among the public, which is deeply opposed to the occupation of Iraq. There is also much scepticism about government "terrorism" scares, following the 2005 shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes and the police raid in Forest Gate in June 2006 in which Mohammed Abdul Kahar was shot in the chest. He and his brother were arrested although they were totally innocent. Meanwhile despite the massive "security" scare at the airports in August, no evidence whatsoever of a terror plot has been presented to the public.

In November, to whip up support for yet another tranche of "anti-terrorism" laws, MI5 head Eliza Manningham-Buller was wheeled out to give a speech that made the country appear to be awash with terrorist plots and potential terrorists. She claimed there are 30 "major terrorist plots being planned", while 1600 individuals are "actively engaged in promoting attacks here and abroad" and no less than 100,000 people "considered the London bombings to be justified" (*Guardian*, 10 November 2006).

Soon after Straw's statement a woman in Liverpool had her veil ripped off, there were arson attacks on mosques and the xenophobic capitalist

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

press had a field day denouncing the veil, and all things Muslim. Straw of course says that it is Muslims wearing the veil that "could make community relations more difficult". His opposition to the veil soon took on the status of a government-backed campaign. Tony Blair proffered that the veil could make some "outside the community feel uncomfortable". Local government minister Phil Woolas called for the sacking of teaching assistant Aishah Azmi for wearing the niqab at work; Blair backed Kirklees Council in suspending her from her job, which was in a Church of England school with a majority of Muslim pupils. When Azmi was subsequently sacked she denounced ministers who called for her dismissal, rightly saying it made her "fearful of the consequences for Muslim women in this country who want to work".

Meanwhile the city council in nearby Bradford—home to one of the largest concentrations of Asians outside London—is drawing up guidelines stating that pupils and staff should not wear veils during lessons. And in a landmark ruling, the House of Lords unanimously backed Denbigh high school in Luton in their exclusion of a pupil, Shabina Begum, for wearing the

Muslim jilbab (which covers the body but not the face). This overturned a previous Court of Appeal decision that Begum's exclusion was unlawful and that she had a right to manifest her religion.

As Marxists—and therefore atheists and fighters for women's liberation—we oppose the veil as both a symbol and an instrument of women's oppression. Nonetheless we unambiguously oppose any state or government bans and restrictions on the veil, which are racist and discriminatory against Muslims. Contrary to liberal claims that banning the veil is designed to integrate Muslims into society, bans will lead to expulsions of Muslim women from schools, universities and the workforce, which will reinforce their isolation and oppression. Bans will also fuel racism and play into the hands of the fascist BNP.

Across Europe, bans and strictures on Islamic dress are an extension of the racist "war on terror" directed in the first instance against Muslims, who are falsely and indiscriminately branded terrorist suspects as a pretext for state repression. In Europe, people of Muslim origin are mainly the descendants of immigrant workers brought

into the imperialist countries as cheap labour in previous decades to work in the lowest paid, dirtiest jobs, just like today's new generation of immigrants. In Britain, the majority of Muslims are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin and constitute the most impoverished section of the population.

The "war on terror" is a classic "divide and rule" ploy, stigmatising Muslims as an excuse for a sweeping reduction in the legal rights of the entire population. It is also aimed at the working class, intended to stifle class struggle by insisting on "national unity" against a supposed common enemy. The "war on terror" must be fought by mobilisations of the multiethnic working class, involving its immigrant component, in a struggle against the hated Blair government and against the capitalist system as a whole. This system based on production for profit is the root cause of racism and of the oppression of women in society.

Straw's provocation ignited a fierce controversy over race relations, religion and women's rights. Supporters of Labour's "war on terror" waxed venomous against the religious strictures of Islam, which in Britain is a minority religion of the most deprived and downtrodden. The British capitalist state has its own established Christian churches in England and Wales that are tied to the heart of the conservative establishment, the monarchy and House of Lords. British society at large has been relatively secular for decades, but the Blair

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**Defend, extend the gains of the
1949 Chinese Revolution!**
For proletarian political revolution!



Racism...

(Continued from page 1)

government has done its utmost to change that, by funding a huge growth in religious schools while over 40 of the 100 new "city academies" are to be run by Christians.

From Blair's crusading Christian godliness to local government minister Ruth Kelly's membership of the far-right Catholic sect Opus Dei, Christianity constantly interferes in the private lives of the population. The social consequences are all around. Creationism—once the preserve of Christian fundamentalists—is increasingly being taught in schools, repackaged as "intelligent design" while reactionaries of all stripes have been beating the drums for a reduction in the time limit on abortion. Religion ought not to have any official backing by the state and people should be free to practise their religion without state interference and persecution. **Abolish the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established churches! For separation of religion and state! For free abortion on demand! For an end to state funding of religious schools—for free, secular education!**

In the polarisation over the veil, Salman Rushdie, who supports the "war

on terror", was hailed in the racist gutter press for having said "veils suck". Labour MP Harriet Harman also denounced the veil saying "if you want equality, you have to be in society, not hidden away from it". This hypocrisy is breathtaking coming from a cabinet member in a government that is responsible for the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Try telling relatives of the countless thousands of women and children slaughtered in Iraq that they ought to be "in society"!

Imperialist butchers of Iraq will not liberate women!

Liberal journalist Polly Toynbee also backed Straw, arguing that "because some racists may jump on the bandwagon to attack Muslims, that's no reason to pretend veils are OK" (*Guardian*, 17 October 2006). In the name of secularism, Toynbee is echoing the Islamophobia being whipped up by Labour ministers. This campaign has nothing to do with secularism. It is not directed at Christianity (as can be seen in Blair's backing of a Christian airport worker's right to wear a crucifix at work) but is part of a generalised assault on Muslims worldwide. Pope Benedict gave it his seal of approval in September when he provocatively described Islam as "evil and inhuman".

This is rich indeed, coming from the head of the Catholic Church which is responsible for the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Outrageously, the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) leapt to the Pope's defence! Condemning the international outcry from Muslims that forced him into a half-hearted apology as "the effort to silence the head of the Catholic Church", Sean Matgamna opined: "If the spiritual absolute monarch of a billion and a quarter Catholics can be treated like that, the cause of free speech and freedom to criticise religion, is surely in a very bad way" (*Solidarity*, 28 September 2006). The AWL's Islamophobia is an extension of their craven loyalty to "democratic" British imperialism born out of anti-communist hostility to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Their defence of imperialist "democracy" against Islam today is a basic denial that the biggest force for terrorism on earth is US and British imperialism.

Prominent liberals from Muslim backgrounds reluctantly lined up with Jack Straw, whom they otherwise despise. *Independent* columnist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown said "Jack Straw's politics usually make me either furious or bilious", but on the veil, "I find myself agreeing with his every word". Alibhai-Brown was scathing against liberal apologists for the veil in Britain. Noting that unveiled women in Iran are imprisoned, "branded whores and beaten" while women in Afghanistan and Palestine suffer a similar plight, she complained bitterly that: "Instead of expressing solidarity with these females, sanctimonious British niqabis are siding with their foes" (*Independent*, 9 October 2006).

Also backing Straw was Houzan Mahmoud of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI) who said "I could never have imagined having anything in common with Jack Straw, but I find myself in agreement with him about how it feels talking to a woman covered up in hijab or the 'niqab' that covers women fully" (*guardian.co.uk* website, 7 October 2006). Despite the name, the WCPI is an anti-clerical reformist organisation which often looks to the imperialist powers as allies in the fight for women's rights in the semi-colonial world. Mahmoud points to the horrors of Iraq, where "the veil is being imposed at gunpoint". Yet despite the British government's role in Iraq she sees no contradiction in calling on them to defend women at home by banning the veil.

The very institutions these people look to and support are **responsible for** the bloody mess in the semi-colonial world. It is absurd to appeal to the British imperialist state, whose military occupying forces in Iraq are actively fomenting the communalist terror Mahmoud so vehemently opposes. The imperialists are perfectly capable of seizing on the oppression of women in the Muslim world and elsewhere, but only to justify colonial subjugation. It is fatal to fall for the illusion that they will actually improve the status of women.

Afghanistan today is a case in point. In 2001, George Bush cited the status of women—who are brutally oppressed—as part of the justification for a devastating military assault on one of the poorest countries on earth. Among the liberals who fell for this lie was feminist journalist Natasha Walter who visited Afghanistan at the time. On a recent return visit she was shocked by the situation of women: the majority of girls cannot go to school; women who participate in public life, including a well-known member of parliament and a TV presenter, live in constant fear of being killed by fundamentalists (*Guardian*, 28 November 2006). The *Independent* (29 November 2006) also reported on a 46-year-old

school teacher, Mohammed Halim, who was savagely killed and disembowelled by the Taliban in a series of murders of teachers who dare to educate girls.

There is nothing new in the imperialists using the oppression of women in the colonial world to justify enslavement of a weaker country. In Victorian times Lord Cromer, the Empire's chief overlord in colonial Egypt, cited the fact that women there wore veils to justify the British occupation which began in 1882. Cromer's claim was bogus, to put it mildly: so vehement was his opposition to women's rights that in London in 1910 he became president of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage! He also opposed suffrage for working-class men, seeing it as a slippery slope towards socialism.

Soviet bureaucracy's betrayal in Afghanistan

The US and British imperialists are responsible for the growth of the global network of Islamist forces, including Osama bin Laden, committed to jihad against the West. In the 1980s, the CIA organised and armed the Afghan *mujahedin* (holy warriors) who were known for throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women and shooting schoolteachers for educating girls. This massive mobilisation by US imperialism was directed against the Soviet Union and its allies in government in Afghanistan.

When the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan in December 1979, we said "Hail the Red Army!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy—for its own reasons—sent in the army at the request of the nationalist government in Kabul which was attempting to lower the bride price and to introduce land reform. These modest measures provoked the reactionary Islamic fundamentalists into a "holy war" against the government forces. The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the AWL and other reformists around the world lined up with the imperialists, howling against the Soviet troops, in the first war in modern history in which women's emancipation was a central issue. The reformists lined up with their own "democratic" bourgeoisie because what was at stake was not only social progress within Afghanistan but also the defence of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union was a workers state that emerged from the victorious October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia that overthrew the rule of the landlords and capitalists and established the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the vast peasantry. Even though Tsarist Russia was the most backward of the imperialist countries, the Russian Revolution was a beacon to workers and the oppressed in all advanced capitalist countries and of course to the oppressed masses of Central Asia. Despite the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration that took place in the Soviet Union beginning in 1923-24, it remained a workers state until counterrevolution in 1991-92.

Nowhere were the remaining gains of the Bolshevik Revolution more clearly visible in 1979 than in Soviet Central Asia. An Afghan schoolteacher looking across the northern border at that region, which two generations earlier was as wretchedly poor as Afghanistan, saw a literate, relatively modern society where women were no longer degraded slaves. The Soviet Army presence could have resulted in the incorporation of Afghanistan into Soviet Central Asia, opening up the possibility of a social

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NEP v 'market reforms'



TROTSKY

In 1921, due to the ravages of World War I, the civil war and widespread famine, the revolutionary government in the Soviet workers state was forced to introduce the "New Economic Policy". This had similarities to the "market reforms" in China today, which the bureaucracy claims will lead to communism, just as they claim to be building "socialism in one country". In contrast, Lenin regarded the NEP as a necessary and temporary retreat in the overall



LENIN

struggle to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat and extend it internationally, while warning of the dangers it posed. Especially important was that the young workers state maintained a strict monopoly on all foreign trade, unlike in China today.

The New Economic Policy means substituting a tax for the requisitioning of food; it means reverting to capitalism to a considerable extent—to what extent we do not know. Concessions to foreign capitalists (true, only very few have been accepted, especially when compared with the number we have offered) and leasing enterprises to private capitalists definitely mean restoring capitalism, and this is part and parcel of the New Economic Policy; for the abolition of the surplus-food appropriation system means allowing the peasants to trade freely in their surplus agricultural produce, in whatever is left over after the tax is collected—and the tax takes only a small share of that produce....

The issue in the present war is—who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors (and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us), or proletarian state power?...

The whole question is who will take the lead. We must face this issue squarely—who will come out on top? Either the capitalists succeed in organising first—in which case they will drive out the Communists and that will be the end of it. Or the proletarian state power, with the support of the peasantry, will prove capable of keeping a proper rein on those gentlemen, the capitalists, so as to direct capitalism along state channels and to create a capitalism that will be subordinate to the state and serve the state.

—VI Lenin, "The New Economic Policy and the tasks of the political education departments", 17 October 1921, printed in *VI Lenin Collected Works, Volume 33*, (Lawrence & Wishart, 1976)

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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The BT and the fight to free Mumia

London
7 December 2006

Dear comrades,

At Mumia events in London the dubious International Bolshevik Tendency (BT) has been insinuating that the SL and the Partisan Defence Committee are unwilling to join in united-front protests for Mumia's freedom. This lying allegation also appears in a September internet posting on their website, "On Recent Spartacist League Polemics", which complains of the SL's "apparent desire to avoid working with us in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal". A letter in *Workers Vanguard* no 876 (15 September 2006) exposed this claim as a lie. For starters, the BT's posting appeared on 1 September, one week after the PDC had informed the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal (LAC), in which the BT is a key player, of its endorsement of their 15 September rally in Oakland, California. The SL and PDC built for this rally (more than can be said for the LAC) which was based on the slogans: "Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent! For Labor Action to Free Mumia! End the Racist Death Penalty!"

But the BT's allegation that the SL and PDC are sectarian is not about the truth, or about joining genuine united-front protests. It's a cover for the BT's role in building committees that are vehicles for unity with the liberals and reformists who call for a new trial. Thus they build illusions in the "justice" of the capitalist courts which have upheld the racist frame-up of Mumia for a quarter of a century. The BT's lie about SL sectarianism goes all the way back to 1995, when they belatedly got involved in campaigning for Mumia. Their account of what happened in Britain in 1995, as retold in their September internet posting, is a masterpiece of BT distortion and falsification. It says:

"At a 21 June public meeting in Toronto (which had been billed as a PDC organizing meeting for Mumia) ICL members brusquely dismissed our proposal to cooperate in seeking to initiate another round of united action.

"This, unfortunately, is not the first time the ICL has taken such a sectarian approach. In August 1995, when a wave of demonstrations erupted around the world to protest Mumia's scheduled execution, our comrades in London approached the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) with a suggestion for initiating an emergency demonstration:

'Time is short, but it is still not too late to initiate a sizeable national demonstration before 17th August. Other groups are planning various events, but these will be fragmentary and isolated in the absence of a co-ordinated campaign. There has been considerable coverage of Mumia's case in the bourgeois press and most of the left groups would probably come on board for united action. The SL/B, of all the groups on the British far left, is probably best positioned to initiate such a united front because of the years of work by your American comrades in Mumia's defence. We pledge our fullest support in building any such action....'

— letter to the SL/B, 6 August 1995

"The ICL leadership responded:

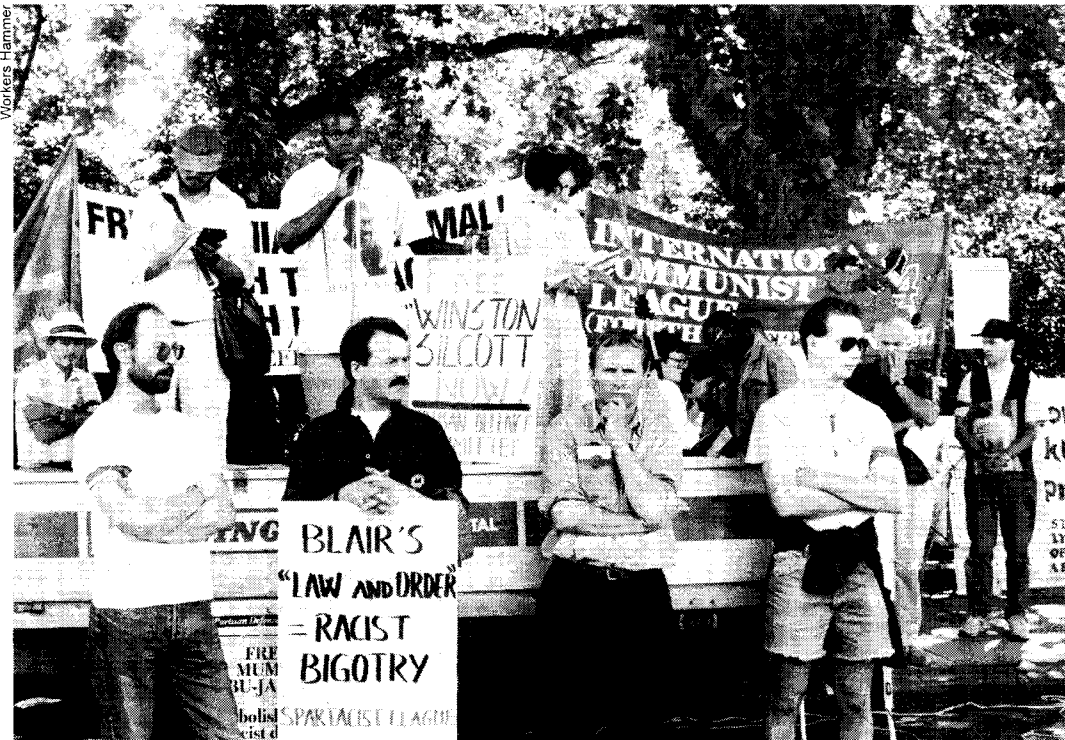
'We don't know what world the BT lives in, but we have a lot more grasp of social reality and our own social weight than to believe that a "Free Mumia Committee" of ourselves, the BT and a bunch of other small leftist organizations would be able to

rally the social forces necessary to win Mumia's freedom.'

— *Workers Vanguard* (WV) no 627, 25 August 1995"

This is a classic BT sleight of hand. The above paragraph quoted from WV was written in reply to the BT arguing that the Spartacist League has undermined Mumia's defence by not setting up a "united-front committee", not as they assert, in reply to their call to build a demonstration.

London 22 July 1995: PDC-initiated united-front demonstration for Mumia's freedom. BT's Alan Gibson (extreme right) spoke from platform.



The BT's ability to disappear facts is notable in the sentence: "In August 1995, when a wave of demonstrations erupted around the world to protest Mumia's scheduled execution, our comrades in London approached the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) with a suggestion for initiating an emergency demonstration." This letter was dated 7 August 1995 (and not 6 August as cited by the BT above). What the BT doesn't say is that just over two weeks earlier, on 22 July 1995, the PDC had initiated and organised a united-front demonstration in London. It's not as if the BT doesn't know about it, leading BTer Alan Gibson spoke from the platform! The PDC had also organised an emergency protest outside the US embassy on 8 June of that year when a death warrant was signed which was attended by about 150 people, at which the BT also spoke.

Having deliberately conflated their call for a committee and their call for a demonstration, the BT's posting continues:

"We [the BT] replied:

'it is precisely the fact that "a bunch of other small leftist [and other] organizations" all began to mobilize around the same issue at the same time, that made the demonstrations for Jamal successful. In order to build the mass support necessary for winning his freedom, it makes sense to organize this cooperation.... True, the combined forces of the left are less than massive. But is the SL suggesting that it alone is capable of mobilizing greater numbers than small groups working in concert?'

— 'For United Front Defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal!', 1917 no 17, 1996"

Possibly the reason they didn't mention the PDC July demonstration is to be found in what's left out of their quote

from WV no 627, 25 August 1995. After the piece they quote, the WV article continues:

"In any case, to argue as the IBT does in its letter to the SL/B, that the absence of such a committee kept other left organizations from really mobilizing for a PDC-initiated demonstration in defense of Jamal that was held in London on July 22 is laughable. The very same day, at the very same time, these very same 'leftists' had mobilized their forces for a pro-

"Millions for Mumia" saying: "Tonight's meeting showed there is broad support to demand a new trial for Mumia."

The BT is also capable of talking out of the other side of its mouth on occasion and arguing against the call for a new trial. A BT internet posting of 8 March 2000 about a split in the Bristol Mumia campaign by "Alan, for the IBT" concludes:

"Finally, I think it is important that MML

imperialist demonstration calling to 'Stop the Rape of Bosnia.' This was a quite conscious decision for all of these groups whose demonstration was called some time after the Jamal protest had been widely advertised. Remarkably, but not at all surprisingly, the BT has not a word to say against those whose own perceived sectarian advantage and capitulationist political priorities led them to counterpose their 'Workers Aid for Bosnia' march to a demonstration in defense of Jamal."

The BT has been a key player in the London-based Mumia Must Live! coalition which, like the LAC in the US, has a track record of organising activities on the basis of a call for a new trial. In March 1999, leading BTer Alan Gibson sent an email on behalf of Mumia Must Live! asking organisations (including the SL) to endorse an upcoming 25 April rally, and the Mumia Must Live! coalition. On the political character of the rally Gibson said: "We are hoping that this event on April 25th, as part of the international weekend of action in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, will have something of the flavour of the recent rally in New York attended by 1700 people—I attach a report of this meeting at the end of this email." The report he circulated left no doubt that the "flavour" of the New York rally was unequivocally for a new trial.

The report was of a 26 February 1999 "Millions for Mumia" rally. One of its headlines is: "Undeterred by PBA Threats, Supporters of Death-Row Activists say, 'Stop the Execution, New Trial for Mumia! All Out for April 24!'" The report continues: "Speakers said Abu-Jamal must receive a new trial and no death warrant must be signed by Gov. Tom Ridge." It quotes Monica Moorehead, a national coordinator of

does not add a call for a retrial to its basis of unity. Judge Yohn can rule that Mumia should go free — why should we demand anything less? The demand for a retrial can create illusions in the racist justice system in America. And a retrial can result in a new frame-up, as it did for Hurricane Carter. Yet while I oppose adding such a demand to the basis for unity of MML, I believe that those (like the SWP) who want to call for a new trial should be free to do so in their own name."

This is the best they can do when they decide to muster an argument for freedom for Mumia. Obviously it is not intended to destroy the liberal illusions in the capitalist justice system that the call for a new trial stems from and fosters. It is crafted in such a way as to cause no disruption to unity with the new trial crowd, which is what really matters to the BT.

The foregoing illustrates the wretched political record of a group that mouths "Trotskyist" principles while mingling happily with the most abject reformists. But there are more shady sides to them. At the height of the emergency protests against the death warrant in June 1995, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an article smearing the organisations defending Mumia, centrally going after the PDC and SL. The cited source for their slanders of the SL as a deranged "cult" was none other than the BT, a group which at the time had written a total of zero articles defending Mumia. As the PDC leaflet for the Oakland rally in September put it, "The intent of the *Wall Street Journal* in smearing Mumia's supporters was transparent enough. How and why the minuscule BT was so readily wielded as a tool for the WSJ is not."

Comradely,
Kate Klein

Racism...

(Continued from page 2)

transformation, something that did not exist before because a proletariat as such did not exist. But rather than fighting to defeat the brutal *mujahedin*, the Kremlin Stalinists under Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the Soviet troops in 1989. This was a huge betrayal of Afghanistan, especially its women. It also paved the way for handing over East Germany and the USSR itself to counterrevolution, a colossal defeat for the working masses of the entire world.

SWP extols the virtues of Islamic reaction

Today the SWP is allied with Islamic organisations in Respect and the Stop the War Coalition (StWC). In response to Straw's statement, StWC held a "People's Assembly" in London on 18 November against Islamophobia and the "war on terror". This gathering (which provided prayer rooms, as is now standard at SWP events) issued a declaration condemning the government's attack on Islamic religious prac-

tices, and the occupation of Iraq. But in keeping with the SWP's gross capitulation to Islamic forces, the declaration says not one word on the rights of women. Referring only obliquely to the veil, it does so positively, presenting the issue as if it were a lifestyle choice and a welcome example of "diversity". It said:

"In particular we condemn the statements made by government ministers designed to isolate, demonise and even criminalise Islamic religious practices, choice of dress and cultural expression. We affirm that such diversity in fact makes an important contribution to the overall development of our society."

The notion that the veil is just some "choice of dress" or a matter of "cultural expression" is liberal nonsense. Marxists reject such "cultural relativism" which serves to prettify hideous oppression in the neo-colonial world as merely "cultural differences". Often those who speak of "cultural relativism" do so in a laudable effort not to impose Western cultural standards on the rest of the world. However it can also be used to condone gruesome crimes like female genital mutilation or so-called honour killings. Contrary to such drivel, the head-to-toe veil is a walking prison that physically



Soldiers of British paratroop regiment near Nawzad, southern Afghanistan in shootout that left 21 Afghans dead.

excludes women from society. It embodies the submission of women to men and their supposed inferior status. The hijab too is a tool of oppression, covering the hair based on the notion that female attractiveness and sexuality must be suppressed and hidden, because it leads

men into "sin" and is a sign of Western "decadence". *We solidarise with the countless thousands of women who have sought to escape the tyranny of the veil, whether in the Muslim world or in the imperialist centres.*

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Workers Hammer welcomes new readers!

Subscription drive success



Workers Hammer

Comrades and sympathisers of the Spartacist League/Britain and Spartacus Youth Group spent six weeks participating in our annual subscription drive campaign, exceeding our quota of 200 points with a total of 320 points, our best result in a decade. These points represent 129 subscriptions to *Workers Hammer*, 64 subscriptions to *Workers Vanguard*, the Marxist, working-class bi-weekly newspaper of our American section, the Spartacist League/US, 57 subscriptions to *Spartacist Ireland* and 6 subscriptions to other International Communist League sectional newspapers.

Workers Hammer welcomes its new readers and greets those who renewed their subscriptions. The Spartacist League is a fighting propaganda group whose aim is to build a revolutionary vanguard party of the kind that VI Lenin and the Bolsheviks forged in order to lead the working class to power in the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia. We make a special effort to sell subscriptions to our press because it is our main tool for seeking to influence and to lead struggles and for winning workers and youth to our ranks. Our annual subscription drive is crucial to maintaining an ongoing readership and reaching out to new layers and to regions where we do not have branches. Our supporters went to Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh,

Colchester and Brighton and held stalls and sales at a number of London campuses. We also had a very successful trip to Belfast with comrades from the Spartacist Group Ireland.

Our opposition to the "war on terror" and our defence of Muslims and others targeted for repression were central to our discussions with students, youth and workers. We vehemently defended ourselves against attempts by student union bureaucrats on several campuses to censor our communist propaganda during this year's freshers fairs. At London South Bank University, our comrades fought for our right to display our placard which calls for "US/Britain hands off Iran! Iran needs nuclear weapons!" At SOAS, our comrades protested an attempt to censor our foreign-language literature under the pretext of an "English-only rule" (see article page 12).

We encountered much opposition to the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as to the bloody Zionist war on the Palestinians. Yet many believe that the imperialist bourgeoisie—which has unleashed unparalleled misery and violence on the peoples of the world—can be pressured to serve the interests of the oppressed. This illusion is nurtured by the reformist left, most of whom peddle the view that British imperialism can be persuaded to adopt a more benign foreign policy. For example, the overwhelming theme at the "Time to Go" demonstration in Manchester on 23 September was to call on Blair to resign and pressure the Labour Party to change course. A common issue in discussions with students was the search for a "lesser evil", a solution between the horrors of capitalism and the fight for socialist revolution. On several campuses our comrades engaged with students who thought that the UN, despite its bloody history in the Balkans and in the Near East itself, was the only solution to the desperate situation of the Palestinians. Our comrades emphasised instead that opposition to militarism and war must be based on a fight against the system that breeds it—capitalism.

A central part of this year's subscription drive was building the international campaign undertaken by the Partisan Defence Committee to free American death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and later an award-winning journalist and supporter of the MOVE organisation. Our subscription drive was an opportunity to introduce his case to a wider layer of students and trade unionists. We gathered a number of signatures on the PDC's statement of support for Mumia (see page 5) and held a showing of the PDC's DVD "From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal" at SOAS.

Our slogan for "Free Abortion on Demand!" created quite a bit of controversy during our trip to Scotland. In Scotland, where the left has been embroiled in moralism over the "sex scandals" surrounding Tommy Sheridan, our comrades argued that for Marxists, all sexual activity ought to be a private matter in relation to the state and that sex with a prostitute is consensual sex. Our article on "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women" in the cur-

rent issue of the ICL's international theoretical journal *Spartacist* helped explain what a true social revolution achieved for women and to concretise the revolutionary programme that working people need to fight to end capitalist exploitation and oppression.

Workers Vanguard articles published during the subscription drive explained the Russian Revolution of 1917 and motivated the Trotskyist programme in defence of the deformed workers states of China and North Korea—a programme that the ICL uniquely upholds. Our subscription drive concluded with a forum titled "Defend, extend the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution!" (see article, page 6).

Congratulations to comrade Dan who with 47 points sold the most subscriptions. Thanks to all comrades, and to our sympathisers who joined us in making this campaign a success! We encourage our readers to let us know what they think of our press and to contact us to discuss its contents and get involved in the activities of the Spartacist League and SYG.

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist Newspaper of the Spartacist League

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We demand the immediate freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's appeal is now on the "fast track" in the federal appeals court and the state is determined to carry out his execution.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man. A former Black Panther Party spokesman, supporter of the MOVE organisation and award-winning journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless", Mumia was framed up in 1982 on false charges of killing a Philadelphia police officer. Sentenced to death based on his political history and beliefs, Mumia has spent 24 years on death row for a crime he did not commit. The frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal shows what the death penalty is all about. It is a legacy of chattel slavery and a barbaric outrage, it is the lynch rope made legal.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal exemplifies the race and class bias of the US justice system against workers, black people, the poor and all the oppressed. The notorious trial judge, Albert Sabo was overheard at the time promising, "I'm going to help them fry the n----r". Racist jury-rigging, false testimony coerced through police threats, and prosecutorial cover-up were the basis for Mumia's conviction. Both the Pennsylvania state courts and the federal courts have refused to consider the reams of documented evidence that prove Mumia's innocence. Foremost is the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed the police officer, and that Mumia had nothing to do with the shooting.

We stand with the millions around the world — workers, students, death penalty abolitionists, fighters for black rights and immigrant rights, socialists — who have taken up the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal now!



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An injury to one is an injury to all! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now! Abolish the racist death penalty!

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This statement was initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee. Partial list. For full list of signatories, visit www.partisandefense.org.

The time to act is now! Join the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal now!

Contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX
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“Market reforms” exacerbate contradictions in China



Left: Steel plant in China. State owned sector is strategic backbone of economy. Above: Hu Jintao, now Chinese president, visits Wall Street, April 2002.

Defend, extend the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution!

We reprint below in edited form the presentation given by comrade James Palmer at a Spartacist League public meeting in London on 4 November 2006.

The world is a very different place from 15 years ago. The Soviet Union, the first and only workers state created in a proletarian revolution and led by a revolutionary party, no longer exists. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, the Soviet Union had been a great beacon of world revolution for the working class and oppressed. In Lenin's time, for the first time, it had been shown that the working class could take control of a society and run the economy, administering it democratically through workers councils otherwise known as soviets. A bureaucratic degeneration began in 1923-24, accompanied by the anti-Marxist dogma of "socialism in one country". Despite this, throughout its existence the Soviet Union still served as a massive military counterweight to the imperialist powers, especially the US. The Soviet nuclear umbrella had prevented the US from using nuclear weapons against Vietnam, North Korea and China itself. The USSR's attainment of such military and economic might also proved the superiority of the planned economy over capitalist exploitation.

Since the destruction of the USSR, the imperialist powers have been fixated on the destruction of the remaining workers states: Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and most importantly China. Although the bourgeois rulers have hailed the "death of communism" since the end of the Soviet Union, for them there is no such thing as the death of anti-communism. The recent furore over North Korea's demonstration of an atomic bomb is ample illustration of the

special hatred reserved for these countries where the capitalist class has had their wealth and power ripped away from them. We welcome the news that North Korea may now have a more effective deterrent against the very real threat shown by the "axis of evil" hit list. Nevertheless, China is the real prize for all the imperialists, and their economic and military manoeuvres are focused on re-conquering China to once again allow the unlimited exploitation of over a billion workers and peasants.

The Chinese Revolution of 1949 was a social revolution of world historic importance. Despite having deep bureaucratic deformations from the start, it overthrew the bourgeoisie. Hundreds of millions of brutally oppressed peasants rose up and took possession of the land. The victory of the peasant-based Red Army, led by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shattered and destroyed the Chinese capitalist state and its military apparatus. The Chinese capitalist rulers, together with Chiang Kai-shek and the remnants of his nationalist army, fled to Taiwan under the protection of American imperialism. The remainder mostly ended up in Hong Kong. In China the power of the warlords, land owners and bourgeoisie (often one and the same) had been finally destroyed. And a nation that had for a century been ravaged and divided by the Western powers was unified and liberated from the imperialist yoke.

The revolution created a workers state based on a centrally planned economy which was the basis for the huge leap forward in social progress. The new state redistributed land to the peasants, expropriated key industries and developed the state-owned industrial sector with aid from the USSR. After the Korean War of 1950-53 the remain-

ing private industry in China was nationalised and a state monopoly on foreign trade was imposed. The social effect of these changes to the relations of production after the revolution can be seen most clearly by the gains in the conditions for terribly oppressed women, who were enabled to advance by orders of magnitude over their previous miserable status, historically symbolised by the barbaric practice of foot-binding.

Nevertheless the state that issued out of the 1949 revolution was a bureaucratically deformed workers state ruled by a privileged caste headed by the Chinese Communist Party leadership. A key factor in determining the outcome was the fact that the Chinese proletariat was not mobilised for the revolution, which brought to power a nationalist, anti-working-class bureaucracy who falsely proclaimed they would build socialism in a single, very backward country. The proletariat at the time was atomised, having suffered two decades of deadly repression under both the Guomindang and the brutal Japanese occupation (which began in Manchuria in 1931 and extended to the major cities in eastern and central China after the full invasion in 1937). Moreover, this working class had been repeatedly betrayed by Stalinism, most notably in the bloody defeat of the 1925-27 revolution.

China is not capitalist

Today, we do not minimise the danger posed to the Chinese deformed workers state by the capitalist economic penetration to which the Stalinist bureaucrats have opened the Chinese economy. However, we disagree with the majority of liberals and reformist organisations who have declared the "market reforms" mean China is capi-

talist. The core of China's economy remains collectivised. Moreover, the claim that China is capitalist ignores the implacable hostility of the imperialist bourgeoisies to the People's Republic of China. The British ruling class discussed the possibility of persuading the US to mount a nuclear attack on China in the 1960s and today imperialism targets China because it remains a workers state that issued out of the 1949 revolution.

In seeking to replicate what happened in the USSR in 1991-92, the imperialists are trying to promote a political opposition in China that will rely principally on the new class of capitalist entrepreneurs. At the same time, American imperialism is increasing the military pressure on China, trying for example to encircle China with military bases, including in Central Asia. The US rulers concluded an agreement with Japan, on the pretext of defending the offshore capitalist bastion of Taiwan, and have established a common military command with the Japanese military at Yokohama against China. The Pentagon is actively developing new weapons against China's limited nuclear arsenal to allow the option of an American nuclear first strike, a strategy which has been openly proclaimed by the Bush gang in Washington.

After the creation of the joint military command at Yokohama, we published a statement titled "Down With U.S./Japan Counterrevolutionary Alliance!" and said "The U.S. and Japan will not hesitate to crush any challenge in their drive to exploit the working masses of the region".

We Trotskyists stand for unconditional military defence of China and the other remaining deformed workers states against imperialist attack and all threats of capitalist counterrevolution.

For proletarian political revolution!

In particular, we support China's possession and testing of nuclear arms as a necessary deterrent against imperialist nuclear blackmail.

China's "market reforms" have intensified the contradictions that are inherent in a deformed workers state. The rapid economic and industrial growth has created the largest single industrial proletariat in the world. This is of strategic importance internationally. At the same time inequalities within the society are stark and growing. There have been ongoing workers protests and the countryside has seen massive protests by peasants, particularly against seizure of land by CCP officials. The ruling bureaucracy is an unstable caste, not a ruling class. Currently it is divided between elements who want the economic reforms to continue unabated, those who want more state intervention to curb the ravages of marketisation and to stifle discontent, and others who seek a return to a bureaucratically planned economy. At some point, the explosive social tensions of Chinese society will shatter the political structure of the bureaucratic ruling caste. As we have said, when that happens, the fate of the most populous country on earth will be posed: either proletarian political revolution that will open the road to socialism or a return to capitalist enslavement or imperialist subjugation.

We stand for a proletarian political revolution to sweep away the oppressive and parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy and replace it with a government based on democratically elected workers and peasants councils. Such a government, under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist party, would re-establish a centrally planned economy, including reinstating the state monopoly of foreign trade, administered not by the "commandism" of a bureaucratic caste but by the widest workers democracy. It would expropriate the Chinese capitalist entrepreneurs and renegotiate the terms of foreign investment so that it served the interests of Chinese working people, insisting for example at least on conditions the same as in the state sector. A revolutionary workers government in China would encourage the voluntary collectivisation of agriculture on the basis of large scale mechanised and scientific farming, recognising that this requires substantial material aid from successful workers revolutions in the more economically advanced countries, particularly Japan.

There is a qualitative difference between the Russian October Revolution, which was carried out by the class-conscious proletariat and guided by the internationalism of the Bolsheviks, and the Chinese Revolution

that came about from a peasant guerrilla war led by Stalinist-nationalist forces. The CCP used Stalin's Russia as a model, meaning that they established a complete monopoly on power and political organisation. All working-class political activity was ruthlessly repressed, including economic struggles. Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks knew that the only way for the workers state to survive was through building socialism on a worldwide basis. They created the Third International as an instrument to extend the revolution internationally, especially to the advanced capitalist countries of Europe. However, the failure of international revolution, particularly the defeat of the 1923 German revolution, and the increasing isolation of the young Soviet workers state, combined with the devastation of World War I and the Civil War, laid the material basis for the growth of a bureaucratic caste. Beginning in 1923-24, the Soviet Union underwent a bureaucratic-nationalist degeneration under the rule of Joseph Stalin. This constituted a *political* counterrevolution, not a *social* one. The revolutionary proletarian internationalist programme of Bolshevism was repudiated for the profoundly anti-Marxist "theory" that socialism could be built in a single country, and that the Soviet workers state could "peacefully coexist" with world imperialism. The Chinese bureaucracy modelled itself on its Stalinist counterpart in the USSR.

The reactionary utopia of "socialism in one country"

The bureaucratic caste resting on top of the Chinese workers state is a mortal threat to its continued existence. Its anti-revolutionary nature can be seen historically in the Chinese bureaucracy's alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet Union, which was the logical outcome of the policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. In 1972, while American bombs were raining down on Indochina, US war criminal Richard Nixon was hosted and toasted by Mao in Beijing. This policy continued under Deng Xiaoping. Four years after the US had been defeated in Vietnam—which amounted to an enormous victory for the toiling masses of the world—China criminally invaded the Vietnamese deformed workers state. Shortly after receiving a stinging defeat by Vietnam, China gave its support to the reactionary, woman-hating, imperialist backed *mujahedin* in Afghanistan who fought against the Soviet Red Army following its 1979 intervention. Mao and Deng and the Chinese Stalinists must share the blame for the



Burke/Life



Ribound/Magnum

Above: Mao's peasant-based People's Liberation Army enters Beijing in 1949. Left: Former landlord denounced by peasant. Revolution smashed rule of landlords and capitalists.

USSR's counterrevolutionary destruction, a historic defeat for the working people of the world. China's alliance with US imperialism helped set the stage for Deng's "open door" to imperialist exploitation in the next period.

This policy of "peaceful coexistence" continues today. Hu Jintao and Co support Bush's "war on terror", the political rationale for the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and for their threats against Iran—one of China's main energy suppliers. The Chinese Stalinist regime has criminally joined the imperialist-led uproar against North Korea. On 8 October, China joined imperialist Japan in a common declaration that a nuclear weapons test "cannot be tolerated". This is despite the fact that any weakening of the North Korean workers state against imperialist militarism would also weaken China's defence. Korea is a historic invasion route into China and is adjacent to important industrial regions. We regard nuclear weapons as necessary to deter imperialist attack and defend the workers states in the region. The ability of the workers states to develop these

weapons is a historic gain of the international working class. In the face of US imperialism's unchallenged global nuclear hegemony, the only meaningful guarantee of any nation's sovereignty today is the possession of a credible nuclear deterrent.

Maoists and Stalinists reject in particular the possibility of proletarian socialist revolution in advanced capitalist countries. The Stalinist-Maoist dogma of "socialism in one country" is the antithesis of the Trotskyist perspective for permanent revolution which posits that the modernisation of China must be part of a globally integrated and planned socialist economy, following socialist revolution in the imperialist centres. This is the *only* road to the all-round liberation of China's worker and peasant masses.

The class nature of the Chinese deformed workers state

China is a deformed workers state—a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For Marxists, any state is composed of bodies of armed men

continued on page 9



U.S.A.F.



Magnum

Right: Mao greets Nixon in 1972 as US bombers rain death on Vietnam. Far right: Spartacists protest China's 1979 invasion of Vietnam, perpetrated as part of Beijing bureaucracy's anti-Soviet alliance with US imperialism.



Workers Vanguard

Racism...

(Continued from page 4)

To justify their capitulation to Islam, the SWP sometimes cites the fact that Lenin's Bolshevik Party regarded religion as a private matter. Lenin made it very clear that Marxism is based on dialectical materialism which is "absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion" and "has always regarded all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organisation, as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and to befuddle the working class". At the same time he noted that religion serves to solace the oppressed masses in a cruel world and therefore to free the masses from its yoke requires class struggle for socialist revolution against the capitalist system that gives rise to the brutal social conditions religion thrives on. However Lenin was adamant that revolutionaries "regard religion as a private matter in relation to the state, but not in relation to themselves, not in relation to Marxism, and not in relation to the workers' party" ("The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion", 1909).

The SWP's adaptation to Islam is based on the utterly false notion that political Islam is "anti-imperialist". Since counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the imperialists have sought to portray Islamic fundamentalism—exemplified by Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda—as the replacement for the "red menace" in order to justify domestic repression and imperialist military aggression. The US imperialists feel emboldened in their military adventures and are seeking to strengthen their hold on the historically-Muslim oil-rich Near East.

The dramatic rise of political Islam in this region is a result of the bankruptcy of secular nationalism and of Stalinism, forces that were once dominant among the poor and oppressed in Iraq, Iran and Egypt. Today the masses increasingly look to Islamic jihadist forces that are reactionary and hostile to any form of social progress. These forces are reacting in their own distorted way to the crimes of US and British imperialism against the peoples of the Near East, including their backing for Israel's bloody repression of the Palestinians. The fundamentalists also utilise the perceived threat by the imperialists to "Westernise" Muslim societies as a justification for the degradation of women. However this threat is

actually *non-existent*. The US and British imperialists are not about to set up secular democracies in either Afghanistan or Iraq, or anywhere else in the neo-colonial world.

Islam is not uniquely reactionary or anti-woman, in fact anti-woman bigotry is just as much an integral part of Christianity and Judaism as of Islam. However, while Christianity and Judaism adapted to the rise of industrial capitalism, Islam remained rooted mainly in those parts of the world that remained poor and undeveloped, due to the world system of capitalism. Historically and today, the development of the weaker countries has been *arrested and retarded by imperialism*. Capitalist imperialism is based on the domination of the world by a handful of wealthy states using their military might to protect their markets and spheres of influence. All religions reinforce the patriarchal family and the institution of the family is the main source of women's oppression in society. It is the mechanism for inheriting property, for socialising new generations of workers and for inculcating the moral and sexual codes of the ruling class.

Hue and cry over "multiculturalism"

The row over the veil in Britain overlaps with a controversy over "multiculturalism", a policy of voluntary cultural and racial segregation of minority communities that has been promoted by governments for decades. It has always been hated by right-wingers as a concession to racial tolerance. Now it is being denounced as "self-segregation" and Blair has declared that everyone has a "duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom". This means conform to so-called British values, or, in Blair's words "don't come here" (*Guardian*, 9 December 2006). Multiculturalism is also detested by liberal Muslims because it strengthens conservative, patriarchal and religious forces within minority communities. It was invoked to justify the government's tacit support to reactionary protests by Sikh elders that shut down the play *Behzti* (Dishonour) in Birmingham in December 2004. Written by a Sikh woman, the play was savagely critical of the oppression of minority women, including by religious elders.

We Marxists fight for *voluntary integration of all minorities based on full equality*. But we understand that the eradication of racism, women's oppression and all forms of discrimination



Soviet Central Asia, 1924: Communist cadres of Zhenotdel, Soviet commission for work among women, teach literacy. Bolshevik Revolution was a beacon to women of the East.



Afghan women in 1980 (top); Red Army intervention opened prospect of social emancipation. Soviet soldier from Central Asia fighting Islamic reaction (left). Kabul today: veiled woman begs on streets (right).

requires a revolutionary struggle, mobilising the power of the proletariat, to uproot capitalism and liberate humanity from poverty and want. Predictably, the reformist SWP defends multiculturalism. This denies that minority communities, like the rest of society, are class-divided and that the struggles of immigrant and other minority workers for jobs, unions and equal status means breaking the grip of religious and other conservative community leaders. Moreover supporting multiculturalism promotes illusions that the capitalist state can be used as an instrument to fight racist oppression. The capitalist state exists to defend class rule based on private property; it is the executive organ of the capitalist class for the suppression and exploitation of the working class.

The increased prevalence of the Islamic veil in Britain is in part due to the rise of political Islam internationally. It is also a result of relentless racism, poverty and hardship suffered by immigrant workers and their descendants under British capitalism. Two decades ago, religion had much less influence among minorities from South Asia. In 1985 the film *My Beautiful Laundrette*, based on a novel by Pakistani-derived writer Hanif Kureishi telling of a gay relationship between a young Asian man and a National Front "hard man", was hugely popular. Today an Asian gay film would cause uproar.

In so far as integration of minorities exists in this country it was not handed down by government policy, but was fought for in the streets and on picket lines. In 1958 in London's Notting Hill and in Nottingham, black and Asian residents fought back racist mobs backed by police in scenes similar to those in Oldham in 2001. Blacks and Asians have been integrated into the workforce and the trade unions and have historically played a prominent role in the class battles of this country. The Grunwick strike in 1976 in London was a landmark battle by Asian women for decent working conditions. In the great miners strike of 1984-85, the black and Asian communities provided huge support to the overwhelmingly white miners, as an

act of solidarity against the common enemy—the Thatcher government. The Heathrow airport wildcat strike that paralysed BA last year and cost them millions, carried out by the ground crews in support of over 600 sacked catering workers, was a powerful demonstration of the social power of the working class. The racially integrated workforce struck in class solidarity with the catering workers, the majority of whom were Sikh women, showing how class struggle can transcend ethnic lines.

Within the Respect coalition the SWP has dropped their reformist claim to fight for "socialism" or the working class. They have disavowed secularism and any meaningful fight for women's or gay rights in order to maintain their bloc with Islamists. In its own way, this shows the SWP has absorbed the "death of communism" myth to the same degree as Jack Straw, who argues that unlike 50 years ago when the divisions in society "were ones of class", in the post-Soviet world and especially since 9/11 they are "principally ones of religion" (*New Statesman*, 18 September 2006). This myth must be combated and shattered through class struggle. A class-struggle fight to defend the rights of Muslims and all immigrants and minorities against the racist capitalist state is in the interests of all the working class. Against anti-immigrant racism, we call for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

We are dedicated to building a multi-ethnic revolutionary workers party which will champion the rights of all the oppressed and whose task is to bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class, overcoming backwardness and prejudice in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalist class rule. The liberation of women requires successful struggle for working-class rule. This will lay the basis for an egalitarian communist society of material abundance, which alone will make it possible to replace the family, the key institution of women's oppression. This is also the only route to the eradication of racism and inequality and will open the road to the full emancipation of women. ■

China...

(Continued from page 7)

(the police, army, prison guards, courts) who are charged with defending and protecting the ruling class and its interests against the dominated classes. Karl Marx explained the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, emphasising that post-revolutionary society will need to retain a coercive state apparatus. In *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx writes: "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*."

When we say we stand for the unconditional military defence of China, we mean what Trotsky meant about the Soviet Union: "we do not

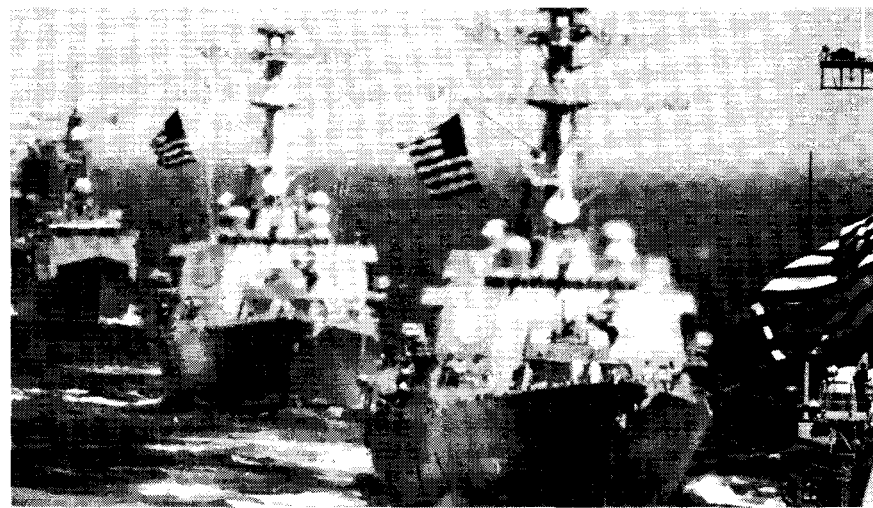
tionary "anti-Stalinist" force, from Solidarność in Poland to the Afghan *mujahedin* in the 1980s to Yeltsin's counterrevolution in Moscow in 1991, when they vilely proclaimed "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

In 1996 these reformists also sided with the political heirs of Chiang Kai-shek, who for decades ran the brutal capitalist state of Taiwan. As US warships plied the Taiwan straits in one of many provocations against Beijing, the Cliffites proclaimed that "China's claim to Taiwan is a colonialist one. We would oppose any Chinese invasion of Taiwan as an act of imperialist aggression" (*Socialist Review*, April 1996).

Ever since the counterrevolutionary nationalist army and the Chinese bourgeoisie fled to Taiwan after the revolution, Taiwan has been an outpost for US imperialism's counterrevolutionary schemes, military threats and interfer-



Beijing, May 1989: Workers defended Tiananmen student protests, opposed effects of pro-capitalist "market reforms". We called for proletarian political revolution to sweep away venal Stalinist regime.



U.S. Navy

US warships in massive "Valiant Shield" military exercises in Asian Pacific in June. US imperialism has strengthened its deployment in the Pacific Rim as part of its military pressure against China, North Korea.

lay any conditions upon the bureaucracy. It means that independently of the motive and causes of the war we defend the social basis of the USSR, if it is menaced by danger on the part of imperialism" ("Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the USSR", *In defense of Marxism*). But we also give not an iota of political support to the programme of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

SWP's rabid anti-communism

In Britain, the Socialist Workers Party of the late Tony Cliff does not claim that capitalism has recently been restored in China. For them, China has been "state capitalist" since the 1949 revolution, with the bureaucracy conveniently deemed a ruling class. The anti-Marxist theory of "state capitalism" is nothing but a fig leaf for the fact that these reformists have sided with the capitalist "democracies" against the workers states ever since the inception of this group. The Cliff tendency came into existence in a capitulation to anti-communist hysteria that accompanied the Korean War of 1950-53. In a cowardly capitulation to the Labour government which sent troops to Korea, Cliff rejected the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the USSR, North Korea and China, thus breaking with Trotskyism. As an illustration of what an enormous defeat for US imperialism the Chinese Revolution had been, it was the intervention of China's People's Liberation Army in the Korean War that saved North Korea from being overrun by American imperialism and their South Korean puppet regime.

Throughout its existence, the Cliff tendency has supported every reac-

tion in Chinese internal affairs. Taiwan has been since ancient times a part of China—it is both ethnically, linguistically and historically Chinese. We Trotskyists will stand with China in the event of any military conflict with imperialism over Taiwan. We are also opposed to the Chinese Stalinists' proposals for reunification embodied in the slogan of "one country, two systems". We call for the revolutionary reunification of China: that means a workers socialist revolution in Taiwan to overthrow and expropriate the bourgeoisie and a proletarian political revolution on the mainland, as well as the expropriation of the Hong Kong capitalists. Likewise with Hong Kong, we Trotskyists cheered as the decrepit British Empire lost its last major colonial holding with the lowering of the bloody Union Jack and the raising of the red banner of the People's Republic in 1997. As we wrote at the time in an article "Britain out of Hong Kong" (*Workers Hammer* no 109, September 1989), we are for "One country, one system—under workers rule!"

China and permanent revolution

The Cliffites maintain that the 1949 Revolution disproves Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. This is the Marxist programme for the countries of belated capitalist development and in essence it was also the programme on which the Bolsheviks led the Russian October Revolution. In Trotsky's words it says:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies

that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.

"Not only the agrarian, but also the national question assigns to the peasantry—the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries—an exceptional place in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry, the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie."

— *The Permanent Revolution* (1969)

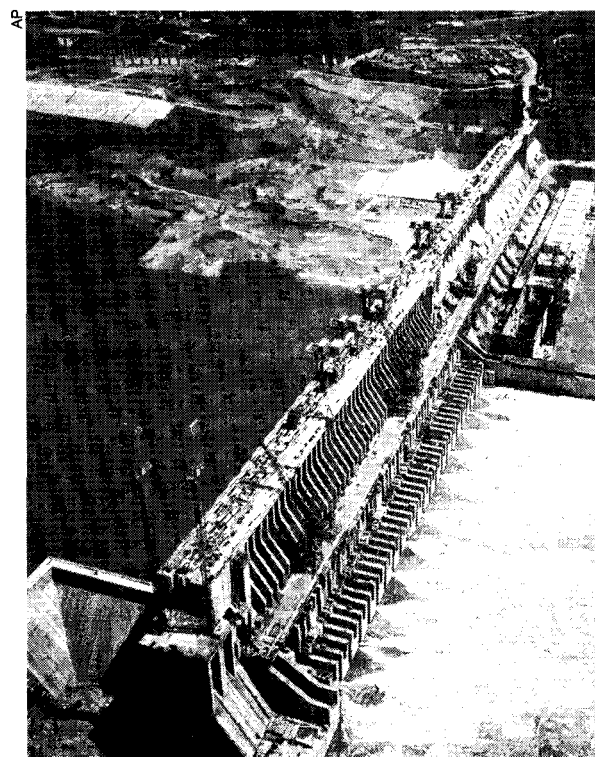
According to the Cliffites, permanent revolution was "deflected" in the 1949 Revolution, as a result of which "bureaucratic state capitalism simply replaced private capitalism" (SWP pamphlet by Charlie Hore, *China—Whose revolution?* 1987). While maintaining that the class nature of the state that emerged from the revolution was capitalist, because one bourgeoisie was simply replaced by a more nationalistic capitalist ruling class—Hore admits that "1949 was a genuine revolution, in which a millions-strong peasant army overthrew the old ruling classes, broke the power of Western imperialism and laid the basis for a new social order." The notion that the nationalist bourgeoisie in China, or any semi-colonial country, would institute a genuine social revolution and break the power

of imperialism is totally contradicted by history. It shows that the reformist SWP would have stood with the Mensheviks in Russia in 1917 in supporting the "liberal" bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks counterposed to this the need to break with the liberal bourgeoisie and to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat! The colonial bourgeoisie's true role was clearly demonstrated in the 1925-27 defeated Chinese revolution, which the Chinese bourgeoisie drowned in blood. They were aided by the treachery of Stalin under whose leadership the CCP was instructed to subordinate itself to the bourgeois Guomindang.

Permanent revolution confirmed in the negative

How could the Chinese Communist Party, based on a peasant army, ie a petty bourgeois force, establish a workers state? This presented a theoretical problem for the Trotskyists at the time and for some years afterwards, until a contribution by the founders of the Spartacist League regarding the Cuban Revolution retrospectively illuminated the course of the Chinese Revolution. In Cuba, under exceptional circumstances—the absence of the working class as a contender for social power; the flight of the Cuban bourgeoisie; hostile imperialist encirclement plus the lifeline that was thrown by the Soviet Union—a petty bourgeois movement did overthrow the old

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Massive Three Gorges Dam project illustrates power of planned economy in China.

China...

(Continued from page 9)

Batista dictatorship and eventually eliminated capitalist property relations. But Castroism or Maoism cannot bring the working class to political power.

As we have noted, even under the most favourable historic circumstances conceivable, petty-bourgeois forces were only capable of creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state, which means a state qualitatively the same as that resulting from the political counterrevolution in the Soviet Union under Stalin. In Cuba and China the results were anti-working-class regimes that blocked the possibilities of extending social revolution, into Latin America in the case of Cuba and into Japan and the rest of Asia in the case of China. To place the working class in political power and open the road to socialist development requires a further political revolution led by a Leninist-Trotskyist party. Since counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, with no readily available life-line against imperialist encirclement, the narrow historical opening in which petty-bourgeois forces were able to overturn local capitalist rule has been closed.

The experience of both of these revolutions has completely validated the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution, in the negative: only under the dictatorship of the proletariat can the colonial and semi-colonial countries obtain genuine national emancipation. To open the road to socialism requires the extension of the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries.

In drawing out the lessons of the Russian October Revolution, which was led by the proletariat, Trotsky says that: "The peasantry can either support the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, or serve as a prop to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Intermediate forms are only disguises for a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie...the peasantry can follow either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat" (*The Permanent Revolution*, 1969). Only one of the two fundamental classes in society can hold state power, ie the working class or the bourgeoisie. In destroying the army of the Chinese bourgeoisie and large landowners, the Maoist army had destroyed the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and put in place the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Our 1966 *Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League* characterised those revolutions led by petty-bourgeois guerrilla forces which came during a particular historical window of opportunity after the Second World War:

"Movements of this sort can under certain conditions, i.e., the extreme disorganization of the capitalist class in the colonial country and the absence of the working class contending in its own right for social power, smash capitalist property relations; however, they cannot bring the working class to political power. Rather, they create bureaucratic anti-working class regimes which suppress any further development of these revolutions towards socialism."

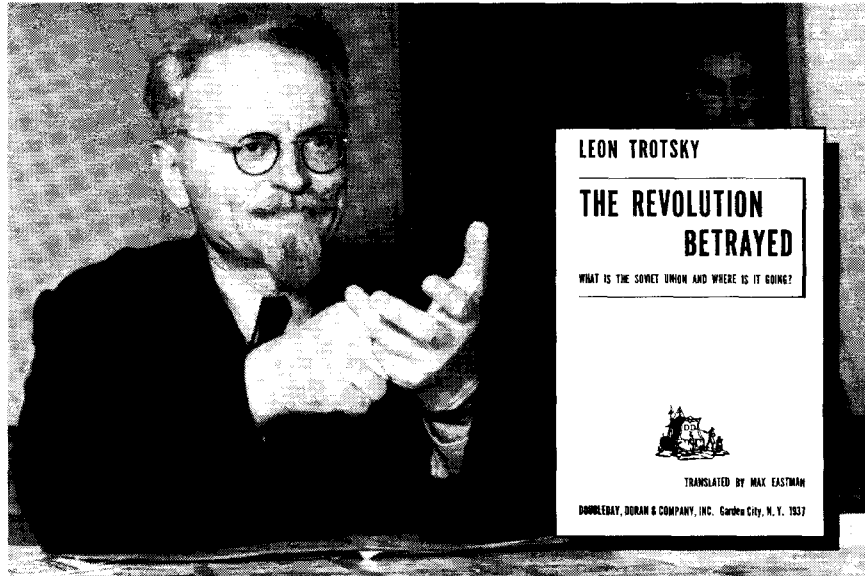
—*Spartacist* no 8, November-December 1966

I would like to say one further thing about the role of the working class in the 1949 revolution. The SWP's Charlie Hore claims that Trotsky assumed that the working class was at all times a consciously revolutionary force, and that their lack of action in 1949 also proved Trotsky, and permanent revolution, wrong. Trotsky did not make such a sweeping assertion. The proletariat is the only class in society that can, through the seizure of political power

and destruction of capitalism as a world system, lay the basis for the elimination of exploitation, scarcity and war. However, its success or failure to achieve victory depends on its organisation and consciousness, ie on revolutionary leadership. The revolutionary party is the indispensable weapon in this struggle. By 1949 the working class in China had undergone 20 years of repression and disillusionment, and was politically atomised, largely thanks to the Stalinist CCP.

Contradictions of the "reform" era

Deng's opening of the economy to foreign (and Chinese) capitalists has allowed rapid growth. It is easy to view



Leon Trotsky's 1936 *The Revolution Betrayed* presents Marxist analysis of degeneration of October Revolution under Stalinist bureaucracy which applies equally to the Chinese deformed workers state today.

the "market reforms" that Deng initiated at the beginning of the 1980s either as a total betrayal of the PRC or as the reason for its current growth level. Both of these would be false. The "market reforms" were initially an attempt to respond, within the framework of Stalinist bonapartism, to the inefficiency of bureaucratic "commandism" (poor productivity, mediocre quality, scarcity etc). As we wrote in the 1980s:

"Within the framework of Stalinism, there is thus an inherent tendency to replace centralized planning and management with market mechanisms. Since managers and workers cannot be subject to the discipline of soviet democracy (workers councils), increasingly the bureaucracy sees subjecting the economic actors to the discipline of market competition as the only answer to economic inefficiency."

—"For Central Planning Through Soviet Democracy", *Workers Vanguard* no 454, 3 June 1988, reprinted in "Market Socialism" in *Eastern Europe* (July 1988)

When Mao died, China, while having constructed a substantial, relatively modern heavy industrial sector, was still a predominantly rural, peasant country. Over three-quarters of the labour force was engaged in farming and over 80 per cent of the population lived in the countryside. Agricultural output had failed to keep pace with industrial growth and low agricultural productivity was a barrier to industrialisation. Foreign investment allowed certain areas of rapid growth that would not otherwise have been possible in an isolated and largely undeveloped workers state. Today, over 50 per cent of the labour force is employed in manufacturing, construction, transport and the service sector, while 40 per cent of the population is urbanised. From a Marxist standpoint, this is a *progressive* development. So too is the expansion of China's industrial capacity.

But while this is true, the "market reforms" have massively widened the gap in living conditions within China, impoverishing millions of rural toilers and are also creating a wealthy new class of capitalists within China who have links to the CCP officialdom as well as to offshore Chinese capitalists.

Chinese "market reforms" v NEP under Lenin

In considering these "market reforms" it is useful to make a comparison with the New Economic Policy implemented in the USSR in 1921. This was done under the revolutionary leadership of the Bolshevik party as an emergency measure in an attempt to

reasons behind it were valid—to secure the resources needed to extend and defend the revolution.

In contrast to China today, the Bolsheviks maintained a strict application of the state monopoly on foreign trade. In China the market reforms are motivated by the appetite of the bureaucracy to enrich themselves. The bureaucracy has proved more than happy to act as gangmasters for the world's bourgeoisies. Capitalist property owners are now allowed to join the CCP and it has been possible to inherit wealth, putting in place a key element for the return of the bourgeoisie as a class.

Pro-imperialist accomplices of counterrevolution

Leader of the reformist Socialist Party Peter Taaffe says:

"The present regime in China is increasingly capitalist with a peculiar amalgam of a growing capitalist economy (particularly in the export sector) together with the remnants of the Maoist-Stalinist state machine, which is also seeking to move in the direction of capitalism."

— *The Socialist*, 6-12 October 2005

Taaffe's claims that the Chinese state is "gradually" becoming capitalist is an example of what Trotsky polemicised against in the 1930s when he said "He who asserts that the Soviet government has been *gradually* changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running backwards the film of reformism" ("The class nature of the Soviet state"). Taaffe's notion that a restoration can come about through incremental shifts from state ownership to private ownership, without a counterrevolution, goes hand in hand with the SP's belief that "socialism" will come through nationalising the "commanding heights" of the capitalist economy through an "Enabling Act" in Parliament. These reformists utterly reject the idea that the proletariat must smash the bourgeois state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We insist that, like in the former Soviet Union, the decisive arena in which a capitalist counterrevolution would have to triumph is at the political level. A likely scenario will be when bourgeois elements move to eliminate CCP political power by supporting capitalist restorationist forces. In such an event the Taaffeites will be on the side of counterrevolution, just as they were in the former USSR when they supported Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolution in 1991. The Taaffeites have never stood for defence of the workers states, including China. In August 2005, six months after the American and Japanese imperialists signed a military agreement against China, Taaffe clearly declared that the CWI will stand with the imperialist forces and "democratic" capitalist Taiwan in any military confrontation with the Chinese workers state. He said:

"Nevertheless, the Chinese regime is a dictatorship. Moreover, from the standpoint of the Taiwanese masses they

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Witch hunt...

(Continued from page 12)

mirror-image of the Zionists' denial of the national rights of the Palestinians and illustrates the genocidal logic of all nationalism.

What drives the bloody cycle of Zionist slaughter and Palestinian defiance and despair is the root cause of this conflict: two peoples lay claim to the same land. There can be no equitable resolution to the conflicting national claims of the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples under capitalism. So long as the national axis is emphasised, the situation will always be bleak and hopeless. But if the *class axis* is emphasised there is at least a chance of a just solution. Against all variants of nationalism, we counterpose a programme of proletarian revolutionary internationalism. The road to the social and national liberation of the Palestinian people lies through common class struggle by the Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers against both the Israeli and Arab ruling classes, who likewise are oppressors of the Palestinians. Only within a socialist federation of the Near East can the right to national self-determination for both the Palestinian and the Hebrew-speaking peoples be equitably realised. This requires the revolutionary overthrow of the Zionist state and all capitalist regimes in the region. *For a socialist federation of the Near East! Down with the US/British occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories! UN troops out of Lebanon now!*

Protest the "war on terror" at SOAS

The extent to which the Blair government can succeed in enforcing the "war on terror" depends on the amount

of class struggle opposing it; that is whether the multiethnic working class is mobilised to defend itself, including immigrants and minorities who are in the cross-hairs of increased state repression. At the same time, racism and violent repression of workers and minorities is intrinsic to the capitalist state and cannot be eradicated short of proletarian revolution. Those students who still make it to university in this racist, capitalist society, despite tuition fees, high living costs and enormous debts, are being threatened that if you oppose the occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan or defend the Palestinians, you do not belong there. But the Achilles heel of this racist Labour government and all its armoury of state repression and violence is the exploited multiethnic working class, on which this "flexible" economy depends. Militant protest by students against the latest proposals for spying on Muslim students and political societies could be the spark for a protest by workers, against the Labour government's racist "war on terror" more generally. On 13 March 2002, the SYG held a united-front protest at SOAS against the "war on terror" in defence of Fahim Ahmed, a member of the Socialist Labour Party Youth who was detained and tortured under the Terrorism Act. The protest demanded: "Down with the Labour government's anti-terrorist laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt!". We also emphasised that "Anti-terrorist laws target immigrants, minorities, the working class and the left!". This is amply proven by the fact that the "English-only" rule for societies' literature was used against us communists at SOAS.

Through our protest in 2002 we sought to explain to youth and students that the working class must take up the fight against the "war on terror" and anti-immigrant hysteria because only

the working class has the social power and historic interest to lead the struggle to smash the capitalist system through proletarian revolution and the establishment of a socialist society. This forthright revolutionary perspective is counterposed to that being offered by the reformist left. At a 15 November 2006 SOAS student union general meeting, the SWP's Clare Solomon put a motion "to oppose the current racist and Islamophobic backlash" and "to defend the right for Islamic societies and other groups to organise politically on campuses". Not surprisingly, Solomon's motion neglected to oppose the chauvinist "English-only" rule for societies' literature, since Solomon herself is enforcing the ban! A separate motion at the same meeting opposed the ban, not because it augments the "war on terror", but because it "infringes on the school's image", and it proposed "to allow banners containing any language that we have the resources to translate". Translate for whom, Special Branch? In fact, this mere amendment to the foreign-language gag, facilitating the work of the secret police, is entirely within the framework of the new government guidelines.

Central to Solomon's motion was a call to back the Stop the War Coalition's (StWC) "Islamophobia and the War on Terror" people's assembly" on 18 November 2006. The SWP opposes Islamophobia but this goes hand-in-hand with a wholesale capitulation to Islam and religious obscurantism. This is nothing new: during the 1980s the SWP stood with the imperialists in their anti-Soviet crusade. In response to the December 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, we said "Hail Red Army!" and "Extend the gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!" whilst the SWP along with most of the left supported the reactionary, imperialist-

backed *mujahedin* cut-throats who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and shot school teachers who dared to teach girls to read.

Against the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan today, the StWC's strategy is to echo bourgeois-defeatist voices that it is in British imperialism's best interest to get out of Iraq and to be less slavish to the Bush White House, including General Sir Richard Dannatt, the *head of the British Army*, whom the StWC even invited to join their platforms. The open letter for the "People's Assembly" complained that the "disastrous 'war on terror', of which this government has been such a prominent supporter... has made Britain more vulnerable not less to terrorist attack" and argues that the government should "abandon its support for the foreign policy of the US administration, including the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan". Such craven appeals to the Blair government, butchers of Iraq and Afghanistan to introduce a kinder, gentler imperialism is what reformism boils down to. British imperialism is no less savage and brutal than US imperialism, simply weaker and more decrepit.

In contrast to the reformists and opportunists of all shades, we stand in the tradition of the Bolsheviks who led the working class to power in Russia in October 1917, taking proletarian revolution out of the realm of theory and into flesh and blood reality. As the SYG speaker at our March 2002 protest made clear:

"British imperialism is not a policy that can be changed; Blair cannot be pressured to be kinder to workers and minorities. For us imperialism is a system that must be replaced by a socialist society where all those who work, who produce the wealth of this country, must rule!"

If you want to fight against imperialist war and to see a world free from racism and oppression, join us! ■

would not wish to put themselves under its control, preferring the democratic rights, however limited, which they enjoy under a bourgeois-democratic regime, which is what Taiwan is."

—Marxists, "Taiwan and the national question" *Chinaworker.org* 26 August 2005.

Taaffe's CWI forces literally stood on Yeltsin's barricades in Russia with the rest of the counterrevolutionary rabble in August 1991, playing a direct part in the devastation that followed capitalist restoration. We fought instead to mobilise the Soviet working class to sweep away Yeltsin's barricades and fight for proletarian political revolution.

The Chinese economy today

The basic political power of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing continues to be based on the collectivised sections of the economy, which still constitute the most vital parts. The private sector (including foreign companies) is principally made up of light industry. Heavy industry—the high tech sector, steel production, non-ferrous metals, machine tools, telecommunications, electricity generation, petroleum and gas extraction, oil refining, modern armaments—are all concentrated in the state enterprises and are strategically much more important. The four largest banks in China are controlled by the state; the control exercised by the government over the financial system is crucial to state industry. This has up until now allowed the regime to effectively control the flow of finance capital entering and leaving continental China. The Chinese currency is not legally

exchangeable on the international currency markets, although the imperialists want to force the Beijing regime to revalue the Yuan and to make it totally convertible in order to open China up further to financial penetration by the banks of Wall Street, Frankfurt and Tokyo. This represents a mortal danger.

When a conference of the National People's Congress voted a constitutional amendment to "protect private property", it simply reflected reality. In legally recognising private property and the right to inherit, the bureaucracy is trying to assure its privileges. However, it is not resolutions adopted by the bureaucracy that will determine the class character of China, but social struggle. Private property in China is as unstable as the bureaucracy itself, it exists to the extent that the bureaucracy authorises it to exist. This supposedly inviolable private property could be violated by the bureaucracy under the impact of open counterrevolutionary threats, or by the working class in a struggle for political power.

Of the companies quoted on the two main Chinese stock exchanges, the government either keeps a majority of the shares or a strong minority share. The shareholders of Chinese companies do not have property rights in the capitalist sense of the term. They have the right to income from their stocks, and they can sell their shares. But they can neither determine nor influence the management of the enterprises.

The bureaucracy in China preserves state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat. The CCP's eco-

nomic policies are limited by fear of social unrest. The massacres perpetrated on 4 June 1989 in Tiananmen and elsewhere were unleashed by the bureaucracy when the Chinese working class began to mobilise. At the start, the protests were largely the result of student unrest, opposing corruption and seeking political liberalisation. The first units of the People's Liberation Army failed to put down the protests because they solidarised with them. Soon however the movement was joined by millions of workers. Protesters began to hold mass meetings and create embryonic workers councils. Fear of the working class entering the scene terrified the bureaucracy and brought forth the fierce repression, and for this, army units considered more loyal had to be brought into the city. This also illustrates a key point about the army in a workers state—it can be split *vertically* during a *political* revolution, with sections of the officer corps coming over to the workers. This is impossible to imagine in a bourgeois army, where the officer caste is always loyal to the capitalist state in a mutiny, which means the army must be split *horizontally*, along class lines.

The Chinese powderkeg

Chinese society today is very explosive and unstable. The growth rate has been almost 10 per cent a year for more than 20 years, but not all workers have benefited. One of the results of the "market reforms" has been the creation of 20-30 million unemployed, largely women. Those that do find work, mainly in the private sector, have to accept lower wages and see none of the old

benefits that state enterprises provided them with. However, salaries have grown and major industrial centres have begun to suffer a shortage of workers, which means employers are offering higher wages and better benefits to attract workers.

Restrictions on immigration from the country to the cities have been relaxed, but still exist. Migrants, many of whom are women, lack the rights of city residents, are often forced to live in segregated areas and are often looked down upon by urban workers. A revolutionary vanguard party in China today would struggle to unify all sectors of the working class and rural poor and would see the migrant workers as a potential bridge between the working class and the peasantry. Such a party would also oppose land seizures for industrial or commercial development, arguing instead that peasants should only have to give up their leases in exchange for significant compensation.

A proletarian political revolution in China would put an end to the ideological climate of the "death of communism". It would radicalise the powerful Japanese working class; serve as the spark for a political revolution in encircled North Korea and have huge repercussions amongst the masses of South Asia. A revolutionary socialist government in China would actively favour proletarian revolutions internationally. And it is for the purpose of providing the necessary leadership to the proletariat in these struggles that the ICL seeks to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International—world party of socialist revolution. ■

Anti-Muslim witch hunt on universities

The racist Labour government, with its hands soaked in the blood of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, is ratcheting up the “war on terror” on university campuses. An article in the *Guardian* (16 October 2006) revealed leaked government plans, according to which “lecturers and university staff across Britain are to be asked to spy on ‘Asian-looking’ and Muslim students”, while admitting that “universities will be anxious about passing information to special branch”, for fear it amounts to “‘collaborating’ with the ‘secret police’”. A month later Bill Rammell, minister of state for higher education, issued a widely-publicised report on universities, stating that “there is a real, credible

Young Spartacus

and sustained threat to the UK from violent extremism in the name of Islam” and issuing guidelines on “tackling extremism in the name of Islam” (“Promoting Good Campus Relations”, 17 November 2006). These “guidelines” amount to a state-sponsored witch hunt of Muslim societies. Make no mistake, this is an attempt to silence or purge any student, campus organisation or lecturer who speaks out against the brutal colonial occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan, or defends the Palestinians against murderous assault by the Zionist state, by branding them as potential “terrorists”.

Paul Mackney, joint general secretary of the University and Colleges Union (UCU) has stated that UCU members “will not be police informers” and warned that lecturers “may be sucked into anti-Muslim McCarthyism”. State repression is a daily fact of life for Muslims, blacks, Asians and other minorities. For supposedly “looking Asian”, Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes was executed by the cops in July 2005; the “war on terror” targets Muslims in the first instance but it will also be used to regiment the whole population and to repress social struggle. It is essential for students and most importantly the university unions to oppose this witch hunt of Muslim students. We say: **Down with Labour’s racist “war on terror”!**

SOAS student union bureaucrats enlist in “war on terror”

Ominously connecting foreign-language leaflets with “suspected extremist literature on campus”, the guidelines give a scenario in which “some leaflets were written in English, and others appeared to be in Arabic” and suggest that such material could “constitute a criminal offence”. However, well before these guidelines were issued, a crackdown on campus societies distributing foreign-language material was underway at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and is being enforced by student union bureaucrats and the ostensible leftists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). At the 30 September 2006 freshers fair, Spartacus Youth Group (SYG) members were informed that “all information/leaflets/handouts **must** be in Eng-

Down with SOAS “English-only” gag on societies!



Police patrol train in July 2005 in aftermath of London bombing (left). “War on terror” is pretext for increasing police powers. SYG literature that the SWP wanted to ban at 30 September 2006 SOAS freshers fair (above).

lish”. This was specified in an e-mail sent by Jack Footitt (SOAS Student Union, Co-President: Sports and Societies) to all SOAS societies. Our comrades were promptly informed by all three student union Co-Presidents, including Lauren Evans and Clare Solomon (a prominent representative of the SWP on campus) that we would have to remove foreign-language material from our literature table or leave. This included a Chinese-language placard defending the 1949 Chinese Revolution as well as literature in Arabic, Tagalog, Japanese, Polish and other languages. We vigorously protested this anti-communist censorship, an outrageous attempt to prevent the multilingual student population from reading communist propaganda. On this occasion these bureaucrats backed down.

The chauvinist “English-only” rule for societies’ literature is the thin end of the wedge of the government’s “war on terror” on universities. Zionists on campus have been acting as auxiliaries of the US, British imperialists and the state of Israel, targeting the lecturers union, Muslim students and Palestinian activists. Some months ago, the UCU faced a vitriolic Zionist backlash when the union adopted various resolutions calling for a boycott of Israel in protest against Israeli repression of the Palestinians. We defend the UCU against this witch hunt, while disagreeing with open-ended boycotts of Israel (see “Zionist backlash over ‘boycott Israel’”, *Workers Hammer* no 196, Autumn 2006).

Defend Nasser Amin!

Nasser Amin, a Muslim student at SOAS was viciously witch-hunted for an article he wrote in the March 2005 *soasspirit* entitled “When Only Violence Will Do”, advocating the Palestinian people’s right to defend themselves with violence against murderous Israeli terrorism. In an exchange with Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, Amin wrote:

“those peoples who are being denied a right to self-determination in their native soil by foreign colonialist occupations—a right their tormentors take for granted with respect to themselves—and suffer as a result, have a right to armed resistance, if no other way is available. By contrast, there is *no* right to violence if the objective is ultimately to exploit further, conquer even more and steal more land, as is the case with Israeli violence.”

This sent the handful of Zionists at SOAS into a frenzy, while revealing their well-placed connections to the right-wing gutter press in Britain and to forces connected to the Bush administration. In Parliament, Labour MP David Winnick howled for Amin to be prosecuted for incitement to racial hatred while rabidly reactionary *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips called for Amin’s article to be “brought to the attention of the police”. Amin says he received death threats and was slurred as an “Islamofascist” and “anti-Semite”. Equating criticism of the Israeli state with anti-Semitism is a standard smear of the Zionists; Melanie Phillips brands SOAS itself as the “School of Orchestrated Anti-Semitism”.

Gavin Gross, a prominent Zionist at SOAS who was instrumental in the witch hunt of Amin, was sympathetically interviewed in *FrontPage Magazine* on 27 June 2005. *FrontPage* is the mouthpiece of racist ideologue David Horowitz who is part of a reactionary cabal in the US that includes Daniel Pipes and his Campus Watch website and has orchestrated witch hunts against Middle Eastern studies departments and pro-Palestinian professors such as Joseph Massad at Columbia University. Horowitz is high in the councils of the Republican Party and Pipes is part of the neo-conservative Project for the New American Century, which has even included Vice President Dick Cheney and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Describing the intimidation he faced

as an opponent of Zionism at SOAS, in a 29 January 2006 interview with the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, Nasser Amin said:

“There has been a feeling of extreme fear and trepidation amongst all students critical of Israel at SOAS, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. People are terrified of being defamed in the media, threatened in Parliament with arrest, bullied by the British Board of Deputies with a lawsuit or being sent death threats.”

For a socialist federation of the Near East!

Key to defeating this campaign on campuses is forthrightly taking up the defence of the Palestinian people. The SYG intransigently defends the Palestinian people in their just struggle against Zionist state terror. However, as Marxists we insist that as long as the conflict remains one of nation against nation, the Palestinians can only lose out to the far wealthier, heavily armed Zionist state. The Palestinian nationalist PLO have tried nearly everything to beat the Israeli garrison state: from fighting to negotiating to appealing to the UN and Western imperialists, and it has all been futile. Despair amongst the Palestinian population has led to growing support for reactionary Islamic fundamentalist forces such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Whilst we defend Nasser Amin against the right-wing backlash, we have fundamental disagreements with his outlook. We vehemently oppose Amin’s equation of the Israeli civilian population with the armed forces. He states that all Israelis “benefit from the immoral actions of a colonial state in which they have chosen to reside” and therefore, according to Amin, Israeli civilians “cannot be considered as innocent”. This amounts to a denial of the Hebrew-speaking people’s very right to exist as a nation. It is a

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