

Democrats, Republicans, Greens: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed

For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

For the first time in U.S. history, the presumptive presidential nominee of the Democratic Party—once the party of the Southern slavocracy—is a black man, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who is set to face presumptive Republican nominee John McCain. Certainly if this deeply racist country ever saw a black president, it would be a significant development. But it would not change the oppression of black people, which forms the cornerstone of American capitalism and cannot be ended short of the destruction of the capitalist order through socialist revolution.

For all his hoopla about “change,” Obama is in fact a mainstream capitalist politician, linked to the Illinois Democratic machine, who has put himself forward as the best candidate to run U.S. imperialism and keep working people, blacks, immigrants and all the oppressed down. He promotes himself as a bipartisan candidate who can “work across the aisle” to “get things done.” We can only recall the words of the late George Carlin: “Bipartisan usually means that a larger-than-usual deception is being carried out.” To a growing sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie, Obama is more than qualified to be the chief executive of U.S. imperialism, not least in order to refurbish its waning credentials in the world arena. Obama’s aim is to be the black overseer of the whole bloody plantation.

As Trotskyists (i.e., genuine Marxists), we do not extend any political support to Obama, McCain or any capitalist politician on principle. We fight for the complete political independence of the working class from *all* capitalist parties—Democrat, Republican, Green or “Independent.” This ABC Marxist principle is regularly jettisoned by the reformist left, which, despite occasional criticisms of Obama’s positions, is working for a Democratic victory this November either through overt support to Obama (such as the Communist Party), or via the small-time capitalist Green Party, which acts as a shill for the Democrats, or through protest politics to pressure the Democrats.

Our starting point is the understanding that capitalist society is divided between two fundamental classes: the capitalist class and the working class. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production—the factories, mines and transportation systems of modern industrial capitalism; the proletariat, in order to survive, is forced to sell its labor power to the capitalists, and through its labor generates the surplus value that the capitalists reap as profit. The interests of these two classes are irreconcilably counterposed. With its hands directly on the means of production, the working class has the social

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

power and objective interest to overthrow capitalism. Only then can the material basis be laid for ending exploitation, imperialist war, racial and other forms of oppression, all of which are endemic to the capitalist system.

Thus we also do not politically support Green Party nominee Cynthia McKinney. McKinney is as progressive a capitalist politician as one will find today in the U.S., but she is a capitalist politician nonetheless, and as such a defender of the bourgeois order who merely seeks to ameliorate its worst “excesses.” She is an

opponent of the class victory of the working class—i.e., the destruction of this order through socialist revolution.

Nor would we run for executive office—such as mayor, governor or president—ourselves, although Marxists have and can run for parliamentary office as a tactic to propagate our revolutionary program and as part of the struggle to imbue the working class with the understanding that the capitalist order, including its parliamentary facade, must be overthrown through socialist revolution. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels taught long ago, the

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

The elephant-and-donkey show of American “democracy” is the means by which the bourgeoisie masks its bloody, racist class dictatorship. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin put it in his 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*: “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.” Our goal is the construction of a revolutionary multiracial workers party in this country as part of an authentically communist international. Such a party would mobilize the social power of the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed, seeking not to tinker with the racist, capitalist status quo but rather to smash the existing order through a socialist revolution that expropriates the capitalist class and lays the basis for a planned, collectivized economy in which those who labor rule. The obstacles to such a perspective are many and real, including within the mass organizations of the working class, the trade unions. This year, major industrial unions such as the Teamsters, the ILWU longshore union and the TWU transit union have endorsed Obama. What is required is a *political struggle* against the chauvinist, pro-capitalist trade-union tops and the forging of a class-struggle leadership of the unions. It also requires a ruthless exposure of the fake-socialist left, waterboys for the union bureaucrats and the Democratic Party.

The U.S. is the only advanced capitalist country in which the working class does not have its own political party, not even a reformist one like the social-democratic parties in Europe, Australia or Japan. This is in large part because the bourgeoisie—abetted by the pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats—has successfully utilized the poison of racism to divide the working class and obscure the fundamental class divisions in this society. Instead, at times of significant dissatisfaction with the two major parties, the U.S. tends to produce capitalist “third parties” whose role, insofar as they ever acquire influence, has historically been to get the working class back on the road to electoralism.

To take a historical example, the American Communist Party, then called the Workers Party, came close to supporting the 1924 presidential candidacy of Republican Senator Robert La Follette on the

continued on page 9



Corbis

Above: U.S. troops in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, January 2008. Afghanistan occupation is overwhelmingly supported by Democrats. Below: Overcrowded prison in California.

California Department of Corrections



Drop Charges Against Rebel Diaz Hip-Hop Artists!

We print below a June 20 protest letter from the Partisan Defense Committee to New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly and Bronx D.A. Robert T. Johnson. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League. On June 25, the Rebel Diaz Web site (www.rebeldiaz.com) reported that police officers with drawn guns had burst into Gonzalo Venegas' apartment early the previous morning, intimidated the residents and then left. We protest these police scare tactics, which are clearly a response to the Venegas brothers' recent witnessing of—and long-standing opposition to—police brutality.

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee condemns the brutal police assault and arrest of Rodrigo "Rodstarz" Venegas and Gonzalo "G1" Venegas on June 18. After witnessing the police harassing a street vendor in Hunts Point in the Bronx, the Venegas brothers began to videotape the incident on a cell phone camera. When they asked for the officers' badge numbers, the police responded by beating



REPHSTAR TV

and kicking the brothers in full view of other vendors and people on the crowded street. The brothers were arrested and charged with obstruction of justice and resisting arrest—bogus charges routinely leveled against victims of police brutality.

Police brutality is standard operating procedure, meted out not only to the exploited and oppressed in New York City, but also to those who witness and protest against it on the spot. One year

ago, on June 21, 2007, officers brutally beat civil rights attorney Michael Warren and his wife Evelyn and then arrested them after the couple had witnessed and protested the police beating a man in a Brooklyn parking lot.

The Venegas brothers are political activists and artists of the Rebel Diaz hip-



Party for Socialism and Liberation

hop group. They are widely known for their defense of immigrant rights, opposition to police brutality, and support for the Jena Six and Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man on death row in Pennsylvania. We demand that all charges against Rodrigo and Gonzalo Venegas be dropped immediately.■



TROTSKY

Economic Planning and Workers Democracy

While pointing to the great advances that working-class property forms brought to the Soviet Union, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky emphasized that the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy that usurped political power from the Soviet proletariat acted as a brake on the development of that society's productive forces. Writing in 1938, Trotsky underlined the need for workers political revolution in the USSR, and the return to workers democracy, as key to the defense and extension of the gains of the 1917 October Revolution. Amid hostile imperialist encirclement, decades of Stalinist misrule led to the final undoing of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat. Trotsky's analysis and program applies today to the remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

In and of itself the preservation of state ownership of the means of production is of enormous progressive significance, inasmuch as with the aid of planned economy this permits of attaining a swift development of the productive forces. True, the economic statistics issued by the bureaucracy do not merit any confidence: they systematically exaggerate successes while concealing failures. It is nonetheless unthinkable to deny the fact that even today the Soviet Union's productive forces are still developing at a tempo that was not and is not known in any other country in the world. Whoever refuses to see this side of the case, identifying the Soviet regime with fascism...throws out, as the Germans say, the baby with the dirty bath-water. The development of the productive forces is the fundamental factor of human culture. Without increasing man's power over nature it is impossible even to think of destroying the rule of man over man. Socialism cannot be erected on backwardness and poverty. The technical premise of Socialism has taken an enormous forward step in the Soviet Union in the course of these twenty years.

However, least of all is this the merit of the bureaucracy. On the contrary, the ruling caste has become transformed into the greatest brake upon the development of the productive forces. Socialist economy must by its very essence take as its guide the interests of the producers and the needs of the consumers. These interests and needs can find their expression only through the medium of a full-flowering democracy of producers and consumers. Democracy, in this particular case, is not some sort of abstract principle. It is the one and only conceivable mechanism for preparing the Socialist system of economy, and realizing it in life.

—Leon Trotsky, "Does the Soviet Government Still Follow the Principles Adopted Twenty Years Ago?" (1938), as reprinted in *Fourth International* (March 1945)



LENIN

Corrections on Tibet

In the article "Counterrevolutionary Riots in Tibet" (WV No. 911, 28 March), we stated, "The recent opening of the Lhasa-Qinghai railway, *connecting Tibet to China*, has led to economic development and an improvement of living standards" (emphasis added). This implies that Tibet is not part of China; we should have said, "connecting Tibet to the rest of China." In the same article, we also wrote:

"During the misnamed 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' that began in the mid 1960s, in which Mao mobilized millions of student youth to buttress his position in an intra-bureaucratic factional feud, Mao subjected the Tibetans to fierce Great Han chauvinism. Tibetan language and native dress were proscribed. Much of what had been at the core of Tibetan culture was simply smashed up and destroyed, although with the beneficial side effect of driving monks into actual labor."

This passage feeds into a widespread distortion promoted by the Dalai Lama camp and the imperialists that during the Cultural Revolution Mao mobilized Han student youth to "smash up and destroy" much of what had been at the core of Tibetan culture. But it was mostly Tibetan youth who destroyed many Buddhist relics and palaces. Wang Lixiong, in his very thoughtful article, "Reflections on Tibet" (*New Left Review*, March-April 2002), points out:

"The truth is that, because of poor transportation and the huge distances involved, only a limited number of Han Red Guards actually reached Tibet. Even if some of them did participate in pulling down the temples, their action could only have been symbolic. Hundreds of shrines were scattered in villages, pastures and on rugged mountainsides: no one would have been capable of destroying them without the participation of the local

people. Furthermore, most of the Red Guards who did reach the TAR [Tibet Autonomous Region] were Tibetan students, returning from universities elsewhere....

"Surely these actions are evidence that, once they realized they could control their own fate, the Tibetan peasantry, in an unequivocally liberating gesture, cast off the spectre of the afterlife that had hung over them for so long and forcefully asserted that they would rather be men in this life than souls in the next."

The Cultural Revolution inflicted tremendous human and economic damage on Tibet, as it did everywhere in the People's Republic of China. It was, in fact, anti-culture, including that of Han Chinese as well as Western art and music. At the same time, there was indeed Han chauvinism. The Tibetan language and native dress—as was the case with all minority nationalities—were attacked during the Cultural Revolution.

In the article "Mumia Must Be Freed Now!" (WV No. 913, 25 April), we printed the speech delivered by Spartacist League speaker Reuben Samuels at the April 19 Oakland united-front protest to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, in which he stated: "The extension of the Chinese Revolution to Tibet ended slavery and the status of women as beasts of burden." (A similar statement appeared in a speech by Paula Daniels, printed in the 9 May WV No. 914 article, "Join Us in the Fight for a Workers America!") This is true. But it could imply that slavery was the dominant mode of production. The dominant forms of forced peasant labor (for example, *ulag*) in Tibet were feudal in character. Peasants were not chattel, but had to regularly provide unpaid labor to the landlords/Lamaocracy. Individual slaves existed, but this was not the basis of the economy.

WORKERS VANGUARD



Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

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The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is July 1.

No. 917

4 July 2008

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Class Series

Wednesday, July 9, 6:30 p.m.
The State and Revolution

The Russian Revolution
Week of July 14, date/time TBA

Revolutionary Integrationism
Week of July 28, date/time TBA

1634 Telegraph Avenue, 3rd floor
Oakland

(Near 17th and Broadway,
1 block from 19th Street BART)

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO

Class Series

Tuesday, July 8, 7 p.m.
**The Struggle for
Black Liberation: The Key
to Socialist Revolution
in America**

Tuesday, July 22, 7 p.m.
**The Russian Revolution of
1917 and the Bolshevik Party**
222 S. Morgan Street, Suite 2C
(Buzzer 23)

(Near the UIC/Halsted stop on the Blue Line)
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
or e-mail: chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

On June 27, Robert Bryan, lead attorney for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, filed a petition to the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals for *en banc* review—i.e., for the full court to reconsider the March 27 decision by the three-judge panel of the court that affirmed Mumia’s racist frame-up conviction. That decision condemned this fighter for black freedom to either life imprisonment or a new sentencing hearing that could reinstate the death sentence that was overturned in December 2001 by federal District Court judge William Yohn. Shortly after the court’s ruling, the D.A.’s office announced it will be appealing to reinstate the death sentence.

A Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, then an award-winning journalist known as the “voice of the voiceless” and a supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization, Mumia was framed up for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. For more than 25 years, the cops, prosecutors, bourgeois politicians and their media jackals have howled for Mumia’s blood, because they see in him a voice of defiant opposition to all forms of racist discrimination, the spectre of black revolt. Our fight for Mumia’s freedom is part of our struggle against black oppression, which is rooted in American capitalism.

With its March 27 ruling, the Third Circuit joins the many courts that have discarded established precedents in favor of special “Mumia rules” in order to keep Mumia in prison hell. The panel of three judges unanimously gave license to the prosecutor’s unconstitutional argument to the jury that it could convict Mumia because he’d have “appeal after appeal after appeal.” The judges also upheld the outrageous conduct of Judge Albert Sabo during Mumia’s post-conviction relief (PCRA) proceedings from 1995 to 1997, as well as his findings. Confronted with the massive violation of Mumia’s due process rights, the court grotesquely ruled that no matter how unfair the proceedings, a federal court in a *habeas corpus* appeal is barred from ordering a new PCRA hearing. In other words, for Chief Judge Anthony J. Scirica and Judges Robert E. Cowen and Thomas L. Ambro, there are no due process rights in such proceedings.

Making a mockery of the Supreme Court’s 1986 *Batson* decision, which prohibits the exclusion of jurors based on race, the court dismissed the overwhelming proof of racist jury-rigging that marked Mumia’s 1982 trial, where the prosecution used eleven of its 15 peremptory challenges to get rid of black jurors. Enunciating a new rule—adopted from the prosecution’s arguments—the Third Circuit decision held that Mumia’s claim must be rejected because he and his attorneys failed to provide evidence of the racial composition of the entire pool of prospective jurors for the trial. This is truly Kafkaesque. Efforts by Mumia’s attorneys to develop the record on the jury’s racial composition were repeatedly blocked by the Pennsylvania courts and prosecutors. Sabo quashed a subpoena for the Philadelphia County Commissioner of Jurors. He also dismissed a motion for discovery of the name, address and race of each member of the jury pool on the spurious grounds that such discovery motions are not permitted in PCRA proceedings. The state’s successful efforts to suppress this evidence are now the basis for the court’s refusal to even consider it.

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!

New Legal Papers Filed

It was on the question of jury exclusion that Judge Ambro dissented, arguing that Mumia should receive a new hearing in federal district court where the prosecution would be required to justify its exclusion of black jurors. Ambro’s dissenting opinion, which Mumia’s attor-

Labor’s Power—For Mass Protest!” (see “Protests Demand: Free Mumia Now!” WV No. 914, 9 May).

Central to the united-front protests and Class-Struggle Contingents was the understanding that the fight for Mumia’s freedom must be based on the recognition that



Philadelphia, April 19: Partisan Defense Committee/Labor Black League Class-Struggle Contingent at demonstration initiated by International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

neys and others have hailed as “remarkable,” is the basis for Mumia’s current appeal. It must be noted, however, that Ambro accepted the same false premise as the others, that Mumia’s attorneys failed to provide sufficient proof of the composition of the jury pool. Like his two colleagues, Ambro also ignored the highly regarded studies submitted to the court that showed an overwhelming pattern of racist jury-rigging in the Pennsylvania courts at the time of Mumia’s trial.

Just as the courts adopt special “Mumia rules” to keep him locked away, they have refused to even consider the mountain of evidence of Mumia’s innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Officer Faulkner. In a separate appeal in the Pennsylvania state courts, on February 19 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court turned down Mumia’s request for a hearing to present evidence that key witnesses in his frame-up trial perjured themselves under police coercion (see “Mobilize Now to Free Mumia! Pennsylvania Court Rejects Mumia Abu-Jamal’s Appeal—Federal Court Decision Due,” WV No. 909, 29 February). Mumia’s attorneys announced they will seek review in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Immediately after the Third Circuit decision, the Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—and its fraternal defense organizations internationally held emergency protests. The PDC also called for international united-front protests under the slogans: “Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent! Free Mumia Now! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!” Protests were held in April in Oakland, London, Toronto, Sydney, Chicago, Los Angeles and Mexico City. These protests brought together individuals and organizations representing diverse political viewpoints—trade unionists, anti-racists, death penalty abolitionists, gay rights activists, leftists and others—united behind the struggle to free Mumia. The PDC and its international fraternal defense organizations also organized Class-Struggle Contingents in a number of protests called by other groups. In addition to the united-front slogans, the contingents also marched under the slogans: “There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts! Mobilize

he is innocent—the victim of a racist political frame-up. Among the numerous materials produced by the PDC to publicize the abundant evidence of his innocence and politically arm Mumia’s supporters in the struggle to revive the mass movement

necessary to win his freedom are *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* (July 2006) and the Fact Sheet pamphlet, *Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching* (January 2008). These are available at: www.partisandefense.org. A recent book by J. Patrick

O’Connor, *The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, also details much of the evidence of Mumia’s innocence. O’Connor’s book unequivocally states that Mumia is innocent of the shooting of Officer Faulkner and that he was framed up. We welcome this contribution to Mumia’s fight for freedom, which stands out from earlier books by Daniel Williams, David Lindorff and Michael Schiffmann, each of which offer that Mumia may have been Faulkner’s killer.

The power that can make the courts yield is the power of the multiracial working class, which must be mobilized independently of the capitalist state and its political representatives, whether Democrat, Republican or Green. Our strategy of class-struggle defense is diametrically opposed to that of the liberals and reformists, who promote dangerous illusions that the courts can provide justice to America’s foremost class-war prisoner. These illusions, codified in the subordination of the demand for Mumia’s freedom to the call for a “new trial,” have demobilized what was once a mass movement. Why mobilize on the streets or in the unions if Mumia can get justice from the courts?

The hundreds who mobilized for the recent protests must be turned into thousands upon thousands determined to spike the capitalist rulers’ plans to reinstate Mumia’s death sentence or bury him in prison for life. All efforts on Mumia’s behalf must be redoubled. America’s rulers must be made to understand that there will be a massive social price to pay if Mumia is not freed. **Free Mumia! Abolish the racist death penalty!** ■

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to “National Lawyers Guild Foundation” (earmarked for “Mumia”) and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.

Donations to the PDC earmarked “Mumia Legal Defense” as well as collections at PDC or other events for Mumia’s legal defense are receipted and transferred in full to the above NLG account as has been designated by Mumia’s lawyer for this purpose.

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

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

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

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

Bundles of the 4-page brochure: *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.



Partisan Defense Committee

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NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August.

Our next issue will be dated August 1.



Women's Oppression and Racist Reaction Canada: The "Honor" Killing of Aqsa Parvez

We reprint the following article from Spartacist Canada (No. 156, Spring 2008).

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

A popular grade eleven student at Applewood Heights Secondary School, Aqsa had recently moved away from home in an attempt to escape the constraints imposed by her religious family. Her death was met with an outpouring of grief from her many friends, including young black women, South Asian and white teenagers and more. Before moving

SPARTACIST CANADA

out, one said, she "just wanted to dress like we do." She would take off the headscarf at school and put it back on before she went home. Classmates told the *Toronto Star* (11 December 2007) that Aqsa had been arguing with her parents for months about wearing the *hijab*. "She didn't want to go home...to the point where she actually wanted to go to shelters," said one. "She got threatened by her father and her brother," said another. "He said that if she leaves, he would kill her."

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

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

"Honour" killings reflect the treatment of women as the property of fathers or husbands. Like most teenage girls, Aqsa Parvez wanted to make her own decisions about how to dress, what friends to have, what her future should be. But for her father this was an affront to his control of his daughter as prescribed by Islam.

A pattern among the Sikh women victims in B.C. was their relative economic independence, with jobs as teachers, nurses, software engineers, etc. Such independence clashes with traditional Sikh society, where arranged marriages and dowry are the norm. There has also been a rise in

selective abortion of girl fetuses among South Asians in the Vancouver area. In January, a Sikh man in suburban Delta, reportedly distraught at having three daughters but no sons, was charged with murdering his youngest daughter, two-year-old Rajvinder Kahlon.

These killings highlight the explosive mixture of women's oppression and anti-immigrant racism in Canada today. Sections of the bourgeois media have sought to exploit them to whip up anti-immigrant bigotry. After the Aqsa Parvez killing, right-wing *Toronto Sun* columnist Peter Worthington headlined his 14 December 2007 column, "Girl's Death Puts Islam in Hot Seat." A conservative blogger called to boycott taxis driven by Muslims (Aqsa's father is a cab driver). Others railed against multiculturalism and called for state bans or restrictions on Islamic dress.

We denounce all attempts to exploit these horrible crimes to fuel reaction against immigrants and ethnic minorities. We call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, denounce the scapegoating of Muslims under the bourgeoisie's "war on terror," and defend the rights of ethnic minorities to practice their relig-

ions. In particular, we oppose state bans on the veil or other religious dress and emblems. This would only serve to further isolate Muslim women in the home, reinforcing social backwardness, including the hold of religion and family, and deepening their oppression.

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

Many Muslim groups denounced the murder of Aqsa Parvez and demanded the prosecution of those responsible. But some claimed this was purely an issue of "domestic violence" and had nothing to do with religion. At a December 13 press conference, a representative of the Canadian Council of Imams condemned the killing, only to add that parents whose daughter abandons the *hijab* "have failed." "This girl, she refused to stay at home," he continued, "There were feelings that she is going in some wrong direction...going with some other boy or some other thing"

(*National Post*, 14 December 2007). Two women who had taken Aqsa into their home on various occasions interrupted to protest these outrageous remarks, then walked out of the press conference.

"Honour" Killings, Women's Oppression and the Family

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

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

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

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

"In order to guarantee the fidelity of the wife, that is, the paternity of the children, the woman is placed in the



CBC

**Demonstrators
at April 2007
Vancouver rally
protest attacks
on South Asian
women.**



Didlick/National Post

man’s absolute power; if he kills her, he is but exercising his right.”

Imperialist Barbarism and the Subjugation of Women

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

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

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

The liberating effects of the Soviet intervention were measured in hard statistics. In 1988, women made up 40 percent of the doctors and 60 percent of the teachers at the University of Kabul; 440,000 female students were enrolled in educational institutions and 80,000 more in literacy programs. Western dress was common in the cities, and women enjoyed a real measure of freedom from the veil and subjugation for the first time in Afghan history. But rather than fighting to defeat the CIA’s Muslim insurgency, the Kremlin Stalinists under Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the Soviet troops in 1989. This was a huge betrayal of Afghan women, workers and leftists. It paved the way for the triumph of Washington’s woman-hating cutthroats, and for handing the Soviet Union itself over to counterrevolution two years later—a colossal defeat for the workers of the world.

The Shameful Silence of Feminists and the Left

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

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

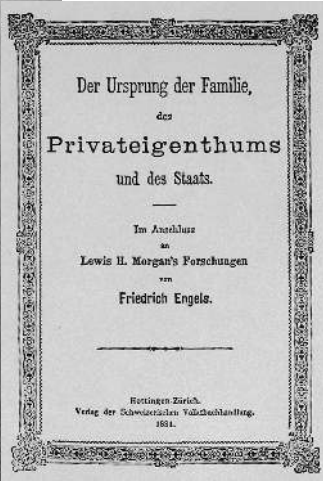
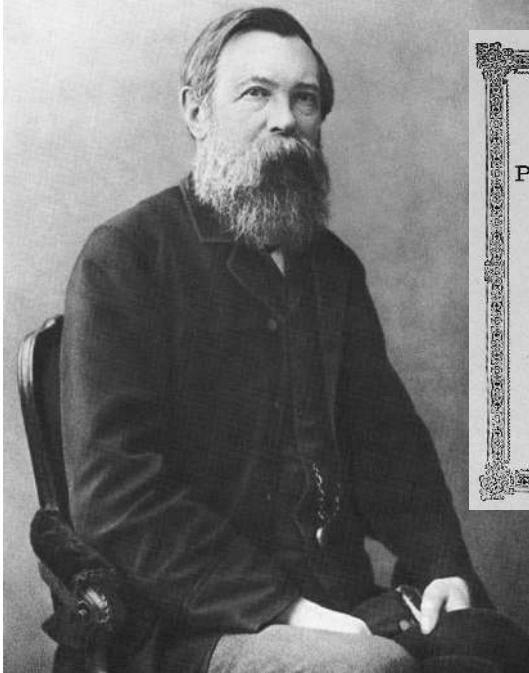
As for the reformist left, four years ago the International Socialists (I.S.) supported a campaign to give legal standing to Islamic *sharia* courts in Ontario. We opposed this as antithetical to the rights of women and the basic Marxist (indeed secular-democratic) principle of the separation of religion and state. Today the I.S., who are in an ongoing alliance with some of the most politically retrograde elements of the “Islamic community,” cannot bring themselves to utter a word about the murder of Aqsa Parvez.

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

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

Moghissi and Mojab call on “all levels of government in Canada” to “abandon their habit of listening only to the most conservative voices within the large Muslim population,” and say: “Government’s

W.E. Debenham



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

policy...should be both punitive and educational. Its firm stand will show what is not tolerated and tolerable in this country.”

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

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

For Class Struggle Against Canadian Capitalism!

The pervasive racism of Canadian capitalist society reinforces the reactionary hold of family and religion on immigrant women. And it’s not just a question of the unvarnished bigotry of right-wingers on radio talk shows and the outer fringes of the Tory party. The supposedly liberal program of multiculturalism serves to further the cultural and racial segrega-



WV Photo

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

tion of minority communities and the hold of “community leaders” with their ties to church, mosque or temple.

For the Canadian capitalist ruling class, there is no contradiction between smearing Muslims as “terrorists” and simultaneously promoting reactionary elements among the Muslim clergy. Both reinforce the grip of capitalism—through scapegoating minorities on the one hand and regimenting them on the other. A central purpose of multiculturalism is to obscure the fact that immi-

women workers in this country have real potential social power at the point of production, alongside their male and native-born co-workers. From the militant Hospital Employees Union strike in B.C. four years ago to the 2005 meatpackers strike in Brooks, Alberta, immigrant women workers have played a leading role in struggles against attacks by the ruling class and its governments. In the course of such struggles, the divisions and prejudices fostered by the capitalists to divide working people can be transcended.

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

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

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Summer 2008
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ICL's Trotskyism vs. Socialist Action Reformism

The following WV article, slightly adapted, was produced on June 25 and distributed at the June 28-29 “National Assembly to End the Iraq War and Occupation” in Cleveland, and at the Los Angeles Social Forum the same weekend.

The Socialist Action (SA) groups in Canada and the U.S. and their Mexican cothinkers, the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS), held a public conference in Toronto on May 22-25 under the title, “A World in Revolt—Prospects for Socialism in the 21st Century.” Comrades from the Canadian, U.S. and Mexican sections of the International Communist League intervened throughout the conference, which drew upwards of 125 people, counterposing the ICL’s authentically Trotskyist program to the class-collaborationist, anti-Communist reformism peddled by SA.

Also in attendance were the Freedom Socialist Party, the Internationalist Group (IG) and (briefly) the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). Their representatives were treated politely as “comrades”; the IG was even dubbed as “very sincere revolutionaries” by one SA speaker. Socialist Action reserved its venom for us, reflecting the fact that we are the only genuine communist opponents to its social-democratic politics.

the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and must have as its starting point the complete political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie.

While prettifying the Chávez regime, pseudo-Trotskyists like SA cheered on the forces of capitalist counterrevolution that in 1989-92 destroyed the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe—states where capitalist rule had been overturned. Today they take a similar stance toward China, championing imperialist-backed forces like the “free Tibet” crowd. The destruction of the USSR—the world’s first workers state, the product of the 1917 October Revolution led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky—was a world-historic defeat for working people everywhere, ushering in a reactionary political period dominated by imperialist triumphalism over the “death of communism.”

The ICL stood for the unconditional military defense of the USSR and the deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution. On the basis of such defense, we fought for workers political revolutions to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies whose rule paved the way for counterrevolution. We

liberal bourgeoisie.’ In other words, forces precisely like Chávez, as well as the right-wing neoliberals. History has repeatedly shown that such bourgeois forces are too weak, too tied to imperialism to achieve even the most basic democratic tasks. That requires proletarian revolution.”

In its rush to tail hostile class forces, SA thoroughly *perverts* Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. This is captured in a report on the Toronto conference by Canadian SA leader Barry Weisleder in the June issue of *Socialist Action*. Noting the “challenges” now facing the “revolutionary process” in Venezuela, Weisleder writes:

“According to Permanent Revolution, only by radical independent political action of the working class and its allies can genuine sovereignty, agricultural and industrial transformation, and popular democracy be achieved by the nations oppressed by imperialism.”

This claptrap about “radical independent political action” guts Trotsky’s theory of what distinguishes it from populism or Stalinist “two-stage revolution”: the need for workers revolution to smash the bourgeois state! A revolutionary workers state would expropriate the bourgeoisie and the holdings of its imperialist masters, establish a collectivized economy and fight to extend the revolutionary gains to the imperialist heartland as the only road to advance toward socialism.

Speaking from the floor during the session, Weisleder saluted the “Venezuelan revolution” and Chávez’s bourgeois-nationalist political vehicle, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Later on the round, in an implicit polemic with their Canadian comrade, American SA leaders Jeff Mackler and Gerry Foley tried to distance themselves from Chávez, claiming not to support the government or the PSUV.

But whatever criticisms of Chávez (some) SAers may put forward, they do give his regime political support. This was shown in their support to Chávez’s referendum late last year, which, as even *Socialist Action* (December 2007) admitted, would have “strengthened the repressive powers of the state.” (Both the BT and IG also refused to call for a “no” vote in this referendum.) Indeed, one of the speakers invited by SA to address the conference was an official representative of the Venezuelan government. Extending a “warm Bolivarian greeting to you all,” Consul General Mirna Quero de Peña thanked “the coordinator of this wonderful event Mr. Barry Weisleder, Federal Secretary of the Socialist Action of Canada, for organizing events of this nature that strongly support our Revolutionary Process.”

For her part, Celia Hart’s stance toward

Chávez and his regime is contradictory. On the one hand, she has associated herself with the “Bolivarian Revolution” and has described Venezuela as “advancing slowly toward socialism.” On the other hand, she criticized Chávez for “asking for permission to make the revolution,” for example through last December’s ref-



Wide World

Cuban militiaman guards U.S. oil refinery expropriated by the Castro regime in 1960.

erendum on constitutional reforms. “I’ve been a bit traumatized by all these referendums,” she said at the SA conference. “Every time I hear the word ‘referendum’ I want to draw my revolver.”

Our comrade from TL/LT noted that Celia Hart was correct that you can’t “petition to make a revolution”; the answer, however, was “not to look to pressure bourgeois forces to the left.” What is necessary is the forging of an independent revolutionary workers party that fights for the overthrow of the bourgeois order. In response to our comrade, Hart elaborated on her attitude to Chávez, saying that she supports him in the same way Trotsky supported Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s. An ICL comrade took this up, pointing out that this analogy speaks *against* political support to the Chávez regime. Trotsky defended Lázaro Cárdenas’ nationalization of the Mexican oil industry against imperialist retaliation while calling for proletarian opposition to his regime. Our comrade addressed this further in the question-and-answer session with Hart the next day, pointing out that Lázaro Cárdenas’ “role was really to build the



Kaos

Venezuela: Chávez’s troops attack demonstrator from Sanitarios Maracay workers caravan to Caracas demanding nationalization of factory, April 2007.

The two meetings that attracted the greatest interest were those on perspectives for Latin America and on Cuba, a deformed workers state where capitalist rule has been overthrown. SA and its cothinkers internationally in the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec) have a long history of giving left cover to bourgeois nationalists, with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez being only the most recent example. In sharp contrast, while we defend the Chávez regime against U.S.-sponsored moves to overthrow him (as in the attempted coup in 2002), the ICL gives no political support to this longtime military strongman, who since winning office in 1998 has ruled over a capitalist state that exists to protect the rule and profit of the bourgeoisie (see “Venezuela: Break with Bourgeois Populism! For Workers Revolution!” WV No. 907, 1 February).

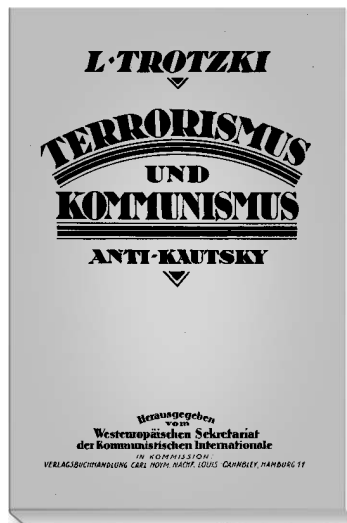
Chávez has used some of the enormous profits from Venezuela’s oil industry to finance social reforms, and his alliance with Castro’s Cuba has won him the enmity of the U.S. rulers. Nonetheless, the Venezuelan bourgeoisie is alive and kicking. Chávez’s populist measures serve not to effect but to *deflect* a social revolution, binding the working masses more firmly to the Venezuelan capitalist state. While Marxists defend Chávez’s nationalizations against imperialist sanctions, these measures in no way challenge capitalist class rule. A socialist revolution requires the shattering of the capitalist state and

take the same stance today toward the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states—China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba. In this we stand with Trotsky, who even as he was vilified and hounded into exile by Stalin, affirmed the necessity to “remain on the last barricade” in defense of the USSR (“The Class Nature of the Soviet State,” October 1933).

Permanent Revolution vs. Populism in Latin America

The first major session at the Toronto conference was on “Prospects for Socialist Revolution in Venezuela and Latin America,” with presentations by a member of the LUS and, as a featured guest speaker, Celia Hart from Cuba, a professed supporter of both Trotskyism and Cuba’s Castro regime. A comrade from the ICL’s Canadian section, the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, spoke early in the discussion. Attacking SA and the LUS for “giving left cover and political support to non-proletarian populist movements and even governments in Latin America,” he continued:

“Forces like Chávez are not a partial solution or a possible road to open up to socialism, but representatives of the *enemy class*. Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution centers on proletarian class independence from *all* wings of the capitalists. In his 1930 book, *The Permanent Revolution*, he wrote: ‘The alliance of these two classes [the proletariat and the peasantry] can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-



Terrorism and Communism (1920), written by Leon Trotsky at height of the Russian Civil War, polemicized against German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, who, like Socialist Action today, made common cause with imperialism in the name of “democracy.”

Brown Brothers



We print below, slightly edited for publication, the intervention by comrade Adrian Ortega of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the ICL, at a May 24 session of Socialist Action's educational conference titled "Was Che Guevara a Trotskyist?"

While Che Guevara was a courageous individual, his guerrilla perspective was counterposed to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution at its root. Guevara's policies were an idealist brand of Stalinism, reflecting his attempt to build "socialism" on one island, instead of fighting for the proletarian internationalist extension of the Cuban Revolution. The International Communist League, which I'm a member of, originated in the midst of struggle against those like the United Secretariat [USec], which Socialist Action came from, who praised the leadership of the Cuban Revolution as "unconscious Trotskyists." However, this goes in the face of decades of Castro's policy of selling out revolutions internationally to jockey for diplomatic advantage, helping for instance to persuade the Chilean workers down the so-called "peaceful road" under Allende's Unidad Popular in 1971-73, leading to the bloody Pinochet coup.

We said that Cuba had become a bureaucratically deformed workers state in 1960. For over 45 years, we have stood for the unconditional military de-

Che Guevara and Repression of Cuban Trotskyists

fense of Cuba against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. As part of this perspective, we stand against the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, and for the U.S. to get out of Guantánamo now. However, we have never extended any political support to the Cuban Stalinist regime. Further progress toward socialism will require a proletarian political revolution to establish a revolutionary internationalist regime based on workers and peasants soviets.

With this perspective, we were unique in defending the Cuban Trotskyist group, the POR, who had actively supported the 1959 Cuban Revolution and who stood for democratically elected workers and peasants councils. The Castro bureaucracy put them in jail more than once by 1963. When Guevara was questioned on the suppression of the Trotskyists by one of our members during a trip to Cuba in 1964, he justified it by saying that the Trotskyists were "not part of the Cuban Revolution." While we defended the POR,

the USec and the SWP [Socialist Workers Party] were overt apologists for the repression of the Cuban Trotskyists.

We stand for the right of every organization that defends the Cuban deformed workers state against capitalist restoration to organize and carry out public work. This position is completely different from the call by Socialist Action's French comrades in the LCR, who today call for "free elections," which is nothing but a call to strengthen the forces of counterrevolution on the island. Those who betray the interests of the international proletariat by siding with imperialist counterrevolution—like Socialist Action did from Solidarność in Poland to Yeltsin in the USSR—will betray again in Cuba. We fight for a reformed Fourth International, the international workers party that fights for socialist revolutions around the world. Join us if you are interested in fighting for communism around the world.

16 PAGE DOUBLE ISSUE
Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking... page 8
SPARTACIST
NUMBER 3 JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1965 10 CENTS
HARLEM RIOT AND AFTER
The months last winter and early summer the New
January-February 1965

FREEDOM FOR CUBAN TROTSKYISTS!
(The author of this article was one of several supporters of the above line militant action to liberate the best conditions of their lives, like housing and wages, and to defend the revolution against the counter-revolutionary forces.)
PSPer, was in reality a Trotskyist agent, and so on.
During a meeting this summer with the American students, one of them asked Che Guevara, concerning the jailed Trotskyists, if it would not be better if political criticism in the framework of unconditional support and defense of the Revolution, should be handled politically, rather than by suppression of views. Guevara replied, "I agree with your statement, but the Cuban Trotskyists are not inside the Revolution, but only 'divisionists.' I did not see them in any mountains, I did not see them dead in any city battle. They appeared after the revolution was over giving instructions about Guantanamo, and so on. I won't say they are CIA agents—we don't know. They have no history of support to the Revolution. They say there is a right-wing formed by the Stalinists and we (Guevara) are the left-wing."
Similar accusations were made by Blas Roca, thirty-year PSP member and professional opportunists, in an interview held for the student group

Spartacist demanded freedom for Cuban Trotskyists imprisoned by Castro regime. Spartacist supporter in Cuba in 1964 confronted Che Guevara, who defended the Trotskyists' imprisonment.

party that ruled the country for 70 years, the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party], and to subordinate the workers, their unions, to the state. That is why I was comparing Chávez to Lázaro Cárdenas, and how Trotsky at the time he lived in Mexico did *not* politically support Lázaro Cárdenas, but the *action*, the nationalizations."

Proletarian vs. Bourgeois Democracy

Our predecessors in the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were unique in maintaining that Cuba had become a bureaucratically deformed workers state in the summer-fall of 1960. The RT were militant defenders of Cuba against imperialism; at the same time they pointed to the qualitative distinction between the Castro regime and a healthy workers state, such as the Soviet workers state in its early years under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

In Cuba the working class is deprived of political power, which instead rests in the hands of a parasitic bureaucracy that is hostile to proletarian democracy. Like all Stalinist bureaucracies, the regimes of Fidel and now Raúl Castro have been wedded to the nationalist dogma of "building socialism in one country." Further progress toward socialism would require an additional revolution, a *proletarian political revolution* to sweep away the Castro bureaucracy, establishing organs of workers democracy and installing a revolutionary internationalist regime. The RT vigorously combated the false viewpoint that Che Guevara and Castro were "unconscious Trotskyists," peddled by the likes of the SWP leaders, who sought to obviate the need for a Trotskyist party to provide revolutionary leadership. (See "Trotskyism vs. Castroism—Defend the Cuban Revolution!" WV No. 915, 23 May.)

At the session on Cuba, two of the panelists, Celia Hart and Socialist Action international editor Gerry Foley, essentially sought to reconcile Trotskyism with political sympathy with Guevara. Hart was largely uncritical of the Cuban regime while Foley offered a few criticisms from a social-democratic vantage point. (The third speaker, Esteban Volkov, mainly recalled the terror meted out by the Stalinists in Mexico against his grandfather, Leon Trotsky.)

Hart sought to repel Foley's criticisms of Cuba for denying "freedom of the



Top: Presidium of Second Congress of Soviets of Northern Oblast, August 1918. Above: Putilov factory workers vote for delegates to Petrograd Soviet, 1920. Under Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, soviets were organs of working-class rule.

press" by citing Trotsky's work *Terrorism and Communism* (1920). In this work and Lenin's *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)—written while Soviet Russia was besieged by external and internal enemies—the leaders of the October Revolution exposed the anti-Communist machinations of the German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky who, like SA today, made common cause with imperialism in the name of "democracy." As Trotsky argued, the Bolshevik regime had quite justifiably repressed the bourgeois liberals as well as the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries as they became open agents of the White Guards and imperialists who sought to drown the revolution in blood during the Civil War of 1918-20.

As Trotskyists, we understand that defense of the Cuban deformed workers state and its collectivized property relations requires repressing the bourgeois class enemy, which aspires to reconquer power. We support measures taken in defense of the Cuban Revolution, includ-

ing the imprisonment of those "dissidents" who are actively collaborating with U.S. imperialism. But we give no credence to the Cuban bureaucracy's ability to clean up the counterrevolutionaries. We recognize that the Castro regime's measures of state repression, including its press laws, are directed against the workers and the left as well as bourgeois opponents (as was evident when the regime smashed the printing plates of Trotsky's *The Permanent Revolution* in 1961).

We are for *workers democracy*—the working class must exercise its rule through workers councils, elected from among parties that defend the gains of the Cuban Revolution. As a norm, all groupings which do not actively work to overthrow the workers state should have freedom of expression. How to deal with counterrevolutionary groupings must be determined by such particular factors as their nature and following as well as the international situation.

A classic example of anti-working-class repression by the Castro regime was the persecution of the Cuban Trot-

skyists, the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR, affiliated with the international tendency led by Juan Posadas), in the early 1960s. Guevara was in the forefront of the anti-Trotskyist baiting. As underscored by the ICL speaker, a comrade from the Grupo Espartaquista de México (see box), our organization vigorously defended the POR at the time, including denouncing their jailing to Guevara himself. Celia Hart wrongly sought to play down this crime, stating that "Revolutionaries make mistakes. I don't think it was a really grave error." Hart asserted that it was Che who got the Trotskyists out of jail. But the POR comrades were only released in exchange for a pledge on their part to disband their organization.

The persecution of Cuban Trotskyists was not an "error"; they were consciously targeted by the Stalinist Castro/Guevara bureaucracy because they were defenders of the Cuban Revolution who fought for workers democracy. As a POR member explained to a Spartacist comrade at the time: "We fight in order that state power may pass totally to the masses; in order that communes and soviets—which are the masses' political organs of expression—may be organized and function; in order that the masses may intervene and directly participate in all the administrative processes of economic production and distribution, thus preventing bureaucratization. We struggle for self-administration of the masses and not mere obedience of orders imposed from above" ("Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!" *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965).

Responding to Hart and implicitly also to our intervention, SA leader Foley claimed that *Terrorism and Communism* was merely an "early book" of Trotsky's, after which he "reconsidered some things" and made a "self-criticism." According to Foley, one such "self-criticism" concerned the banning of factions in the Communist Party in early 1921 which, according to Foley, was one of the "mistakes" that "fostered the development of the bureaucracy." The view that "bureaucratic excesses" in Lenin's Russia led to Stalinism is a favorite hobbyhorse of social democrats, who thereby seek to discredit communism itself. In fact, the ban on factions—implemented at the time of the counterrevolutionary uprising at the Kronstadt naval base near Petrograd—was an emergency measure taken by the young beleaguered workers state

continued on page 8

Workers Party...

(continued from page 1)

Progressive Party ticket as a “third party alliance” seeking to build a farmer-labor movement at a time of widespread agrarian crisis. Trotsky’s intervention played a central role in turning the early American Communists from this opportunist course of seeking to forge an ongoing bloc with capitalist forces. Trotsky pointed out that those who sought the “two-class” alliance were thoroughly imbued with skepticism concerning the American proletariat, seeking shortcuts around the hard political fight to win the working class to a revolutionary perspective.

In such a political fight, the question of black liberation is strategic. The oppression of black people as a race-color caste historically forcibly segregated at the bottom of society is *materially rooted* in and central to American capitalism. Chattel slavery was smashed only by blood and iron in the Civil War, the Second American Revolution. Today, due to their position as not only the most oppressed but also the most conscious and experienced in struggle, black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the third, socialist, revolution. As we wrote in WV No. 906 (“The Obama Campaign and the ‘End of Racism’ Myth,” 18 January):

“As against both liberal integrationists and black nationalists, our struggle for black liberation is based on the program of *revolutionary integrationism*. While opposing every manifestation of racist oppression, fighting in particular to mobilize the social power of the multiracial labor movement, we underline that full equality for the black masses requires that the working class rip the economy out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and reorganize it on a socialist basis. Only then will it be possible to eliminate the material roots of black oppression through the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society based on a collectivized economy with jobs and quality housing, health care and education for all.”

Race and the Elections

In contrast and opposition to our revolutionary Marxist perspective, the fake-socialist left in the U.S. has groveled ever more before the altar of the politics of bourgeois “lesser evilism.” Having built



Ray McCormick

Obama supporter removes graffiti after campaign office was vandalized by racists in Vincennes, Indiana, on May 6.

(and then demobilized) cross-class coalitions against the war and occupation in Iraq based on appeals to those Democrats who see in the Iraq quagmire a damaging “blunder” for the bourgeoisie, the fake socialists have now turned their earnest attentions to the 2008 elections. Their efforts are aimed at making the Democrats “fight” and win the office of U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief. While stopping short of outright endorsement of Obama’s campaign, a number of reformists have sought to pressure his campaign through one stratagem or another, including through support to or standing candidates for the small-time capitalist Green Party.

Articles by the International Socialist Organization (ISO), Workers World Party (WWP), et al. essentially claim that Obama’s campaign is some form of a referendum on racism because he is the first viable black candidate for U.S. president. Many black and young voters support Obama out of a desire to see this country elect its first black president, a desire often couched in talk about a “post-racial” America where racism no longer exists. But rather than fight to win such people to the understanding that racial oppression can only be ended when the American capitalist system is overthrown through socialist revolution, the fake left has cynically seized on such sentiments to seek any method to end Republican executive rule, the “Anybody but Bush” (now McCain) refrain of the fake left for years. Thus, the ISO’s *Socialist Worker* (5 June) declared that with Obama’s nomination, “U.S. politics are at

a potential turning point, in which a nation founded upon slavery, with racism ingrained in its very foundation, could finally begin to correct its hideous past.”

In reality, although it has predictably provoked elements of racist reaction, Obama’s bid for the presidency is viable precisely because he has promoted the myth of “the end of racism.” Obama got a boost in opinion polls—and a standing ovation from his black church audience—when he delivered a Father’s Day speech that pandered to anti-black chauvinism as well as to sentiments of a section of the black middle class by laying the responsibility for the horrendous conditions of the ghetto poor on the doorstep not of the racist rulers, who have ruthlessly thrown an entire generation on the scrap heap, but rather on “AWOL” black fathers. He has pandered to anti-Muslim reaction, as when his campaign removed young women wearing headscarves from a “photo op” (for which the campaign apologized) and has given short shrift to invitations to address mosques, as opposed to high-profile appearances at Christian church events. Most recently, Obama deepened his support for the death penalty when he criticized the Supreme Court decision ruling out execution for individual crimes, such as child rape, “where the victim’s life was not taken,” declaring that “it basically had a blanket prohibition, and I disagree with the decision.” It’s not easy to be to the right of the current Supreme Court, but Obama managed to do it.

An electoral primary in which a black

man and a woman vied for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party was guaranteed to lay bare the racist and sexist reality of American capitalist society as well as the putrid quality of Democratic Party “constituency” politics. The *Washington Post* (13 May) reported that several Obama campaign offices in Indiana were the targets of bomb threats and at least one was vandalized, while in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Obama campaign posters were burned along the route of the Saint Patrick’s Day parade. One phone-bank volunteer recalled how a voter had called Obama a “darky” and had said he should be lynched. Other Obama campaign workers reported that while campaigning they had often been subjected to vile racial slurs. In keeping with Obama’s “end of racism” lie, the Obama campaign has been eager to play down such attacks.

For her part, Hillary Clinton herself played the “race card,” for example declaring in an interview with *USA Today* (7 May) that she has the support of “hard-working Americans, white Americans”—i.e., for Clinton black, Latino and other workers do not fall under the category of “hard-working” people. At the same time, Clinton also faced a plethora of sexist insults, from counterdemonstrators in New Hampshire chanting “Iron my shirt” to demeaning critiques in the media of her physical appearance—her ankles (too “thick”), her voice (a “cackle”) and even her cleavage. On cable TV, she was likened to a “she-devil,” a “scolding mother” and “everyone’s first wife standing outside a probate court.” When McCain was asked in South Carolina, “How do we beat the bitch?” he laughingly called it an “excellent question.”

Now, with Obama the presumptive Democratic nominee, his wife, Michelle, is poised to get the brunt of both racism and sexism. When she affectionately bumped fists with her husband as he was about to claim the nomination, a Fox News anchor suggested it was a “terrorist fist jab.” The same network called Michelle “Obama’s baby mama,” using a demeaning slang term for an unwed mother. The other side of the coin is that Michelle Obama is seen as a new Jacqueline Kennedy by the likes of *Vogue*; her

continued on page 10



Bettmann

Counterrevolutionary Cuban gusanos present Democratic president Kennedy with brigade flag two years after 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Right: After assassination of Kennedy, front page of *Militant*, newspaper of Socialist Workers Party, quoted Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren’s eulogy, condemned assassination as “criminal.”

things, how could you ever endorse such a monster?” Our support to Mackler’s campaign was premised on the fact that, standing as an avowed socialist against the capitalist Democratic and Green parties, it drew a crude class line. “At the same time,” we noted, “clearly, the reformist, ‘Anybody but Bush’ content of SA’s program is an obstacle to revolution” (WV No. 876, 15 September 2006). Indeed, our principled campaign of critical support to Mackler gives the lie to SA’s assertion that we are “sectarian.”

Gerry Foley asserted that “Formally, we would agree on all the same principles as the Spartacist League: permanent revolution, class independence, the need to build a revolutionary party.” He continued, noting that in fact, “We have nothing in common with them, despite the apparent concordance of the principles. With Che Guevara, we have 90 percent in common with him, although there are certain essential aspects of the Trotskyism which we profess that he didn’t understand.”

Foley is right that SA and the ICL

At the Moment of Crisis There Were Voices of Sanity

‘If We Really Love This Country We Must Abjure Hatred’

The terrible and shocking events of the last week have produced some penetrating and cogent comments by serious thinkers and writers.

Chief Justice Earl Warren, in his eulogy to President Kennedy delivered in the Capitol rotunda, said:

“What moved some misguided wretch to do this horrible deed may never be known to us, but we do know that such acts are commonly stimulated by forces of hatred and malevolence, such as today are eating their way into the bloodstream of American life...”

“If we really love this country, if we truly love justice and mercy, if we fervently want to make this nation better, for those who

are to follow us, we can at least abjure the hatred that consumed people, the false accusations that divide us and the bitterness that begets violence.”

The roadside murder of civil rights crusader William Moore, the assassination of Medgar Evers and the bombing of the Birmingham children are part of the national background of the double assassination in Dallas. But in Dallas itself the atmosphere of lawlessness and violence has had a recent growth. On Nov. 26 the nation’s most respected political analyst, Walter Lippmann, wrote:

“What happened in Dallas could, to be sure, have happened in another city. But it must be said that the murder of the President was

not the first act of political violence in that city but one in a series. The man who is now the President of the United States was manhandled by his fellow Texans. The man who represents the United States at the United Nations was spat upon.

“In this atmosphere of political violence lived the President’s mother, himself addicted to the fascination of violence in his past and lonely and brooding existence.”

A report in the Nov. 26 *New York Post* gives another view of the political climate in Dallas:

“When did this hate start? “It started a day after Kennedy was elected,” said Mrs. Lawrence O. Grey, a mother of two and a

Democrat who works for her party. “They get you on the phone and they curse you. I’ve been called a Commie and a socialist...”

“My boy,” her husband interrupted, “is in high school. When the President was shot, the kids

THE MILITANT

2 December 1963

appear in the press. It said in part: “The shame all America must bear for the spirit of madness and

(Continued on Page 5)

definitively burying the last remnants of a class-struggle program in order to achieve a political alliance with bourgeois elements opposing the Vietnam War. Some years later, this popular-frontist alliance was sealed in blood as the SWP unleashed goons to expel members of the Spartacist League and Progressive Labor Party protesting the presence of Democratic senator Vance Hartke at the July 1971 conference of the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC—the model for SA’s “antiwar movement” today).

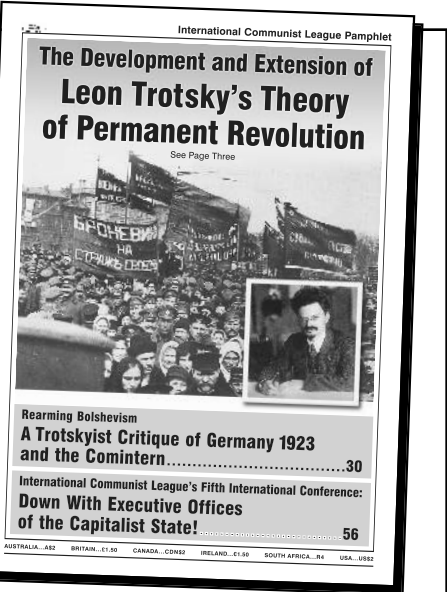
The ICL has sought to maintain the thread of Marxist continuity based on the heritage of Cannon and the revolutionary SWP, as we fight to reforge a Fourth International that Trotsky would recognize as his own. We urge youth and workers seeking a revolutionary alternative to examine our record, and join us in our struggles.■

of the imperialist chief who ordered the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba! By the mid-1960s the rapidly rightward-moving SWP had become reformist,

International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: “The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution,” “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern” and “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!” These articles together constitute an introduction to the historically founded principles and program of Trotskyism (i.e., genuine Marxism).

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Workers Party...
(continued from page 9)

appearance on the television show "The View" led to the sales of one designer's dresses being sent into the stratosphere; her appearance on the cover of Us Weekly magazine led to a big sales boost.

This election is not a referendum on racism. But should the situation reach the point of defeating rampaging racist mobs on the street or attempts from any quarter to obstruct Obama's prerogatives to stand for and assume public office, our defense of his democratic rights would in no way entail any political support to this capitalist politician, but rather the independent mobilization of the working class and oppressed. When black Democrat Harold Washington faced a vicious racist backlash after he won the 1983 Democratic mayoral primary in Chicago, which in that city is historically tantamount to winning the election, we underlined that "Washington has the right to take office with all the normal prerogatives. Blacks have a right to elect whoever they want to office" (WV No. 326, 25 March 1983). We pointed to the danger of cop riots against the black community and the newly elected Washington administration, stating that any "such naked displays of police power must be met with mass mobilization by Chicago labor and blacks" (WV No. 328, 22 April 1983). But as opposed to many on the reformist left, we refused to give one ounce of political support to this longtime machine Democrat and warned, "Harold Washington Will Betray Black Chicago." In contrast, in the mouths of the reformist left, "defense" means outright political support, and their preparation for such is well under way.

Reformist Left Sails Across the Class Line, Again

The ISO has so far restricted itself to cheering the Democrats from the sidelines, pushing for a "movement" to pressure them. International Socialist Review (May-June 2008) states:

"What is needed is pressure on whoever occupies the White House, and what history reveals is that the pressure is much less easily dissipated if activists organize independently of the Democratic Party, which is irrevocably committed to defending the existing system.

"Obama should be defended against any racist attacks, which will no doubt intensify if he wins the Democratic Party nomination. But without a strong activist movement on the ground, his election will do little to solve the problems that he himself has described." (emphasis added)

There could scarcely be a more overt statement of touching faith in the other capitalist party of war and racism! Indeed, in the 2006 midterm elections, the ISO stood Todd Chretien as a Green in the June primary elections for U.S. Senator from California. Such crass class collaborationism is the domestic reflection of the ISO's deep-seated opposition to international socialist revolution, which is most clearly seen in their visceral anti-Communist hatred of the Soviet Union and other countries where capitalist rule was overthrown. When Boris Yeltsin, backed by Bush Sr., seized power in Moscow in August 1991 and set in process the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet workers state, the British Socialist Worker (31 August 1991) cheered



Chicagoist Camp followers of Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism: ISO-led protesters unfurl banner at Barack Obama campaign rally, University of Illinois-Chicago, February 2007.

that the collapse of Communist Party rule "should have every genuine socialist rejoicing." The collapse of the Soviet Union—a world-historic defeat for the proletariat—has resulted in social catastrophe for the peoples of the former Soviet Union and emboldened the U.S. imperialists to pursue their unbridled appetite for world domination.

As Trotskyists, we fought to the end for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state and East European deformed workers states against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution. We called for proletarian political revolution to restore soviet democracy and defend the social gains of the October Revolution through their extension internationally. Today we raise this program in defense of the remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam. In contrast, as we wrote of the ISO during Chretien's Green Party campaign (WV No. 866, 17 March 2006): "The ISO has acted as an appendage of bourgeois democracy from its inception, when it made common cause with the imperialists in their drive for counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. It is fully in character with the ISO's abject reformism that it has now pitched its tent in a party of the class enemy."

More recently, the ISO has been given a run for its opportunist money by the misnamed Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) which is standing candidates for the Green Party in races for Illinois state representatives. In California, the PSL is also standing candidates for California State Assembly and the U.S. Congress on the petty-bourgeois radical-liberal Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) ticket. The PSL's erstwhile comrades in the Workers World Party, too, extended support to the PFP in 2003, and we noted at the time that the PFP does not stand for a break with the capitalist parties and a fight for a workers government; it is a sandbox for homeless leftists who have long since made their peace with bourgeois society.

The PSL's candidacy for two small-

time bourgeois parties makes a mockery of any claims to building "an independent alternative inside the electoral process" by the PSL's candidates for president and vice president (Gloria La Riva and Eugene Puryear respectively). Should there be any doubt, the PSL's online article, "Why the ruling class chose Obama" (10 June), stated explicitly:

"For many Black people especially, the prospect of simply having a Black president—regardless of his politics—is enough to arouse excitement. This is perfectly justifiable. The fact that there have been so few Black elected officials in this country is a testament to the country's deeply-rooted racism. Our campaign has absolutely no quarrel with those who have devoted their time to righting this historic wrong." (emphasis added)

So much for the PSL's verbiage about how "revolutionaries cannot be a tail on the kite of the Democrats"!

While WWP has also left the door open for outright support to Obama, it has for now elected to coyly offer support to former Democratic Party Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney in her presidential bid as a Green Party candidate. Thus, WWP honcho Larry Holmes opined in a 28 May Workers World online posting:

"For the broader movement, clearly we cannot get carried away with our criticism and exposure of Obama when mass support for him is essentially progressive and opposition to him is largely of a racist and reactionary character....

"Actually, the only way that progressives can defend Obama against racism and reaction, if and when that's necessary, is to be positioned outside of and independent of his campaign and the Democratic Party....

"It is possible that the independent presidential candidacy of former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney could serve as one of the poles to unite around."

To be sure, Cynthia McKinney stands to the left of just about any bourgeois politician in the U.S. today. This is no doubt attractive for many youth, blacks and others, who see in this black woman a radical alternative to Obama.

As a Democratic Congresswoman from Georgia, she stood defiant in her defense of Palestinian national rights against the overwhelming majority of the Democratic Party leadership, which joined forces with arch-Zionists and Republicans to get her voted out of office in 2002 (she regained her Congressional seat in 2004 but lost it again in 2006). McKinney calls for ending the racist "war on drugs," for repealing the slave-labor Taft-Hartley Law, and for granting "amnesty" to all undocumented immigrants. She is an outspoken defender of class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal and a signatory to the Partisan Defense Committee's statement proclaiming that Mumia is innocent and calling for his freedom. She not only opposes the occupation of Iraq, but also that of Afghanistan, which is overwhelmingly supported by Democrats—though it should be noted that three days after the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, McKin-

ney voted for the resolution giving President Bush the blank check for the Afghanistan invasion.

But for all her claims to stand "independent" of the Democrats, McKinney, herself a longtime Democrat, issued a statement of congratulations to Obama following Clinton's concession announcement that was clear enough:

"Coming from Barack Obama, the word 'change' did not appear as just another empty campaign slogan. It galvanized millions of people—mostly young people—to register to vote and to get active in the political system."

The Green Party provides disgruntled liberals with a way station on the road back into the Democratic Party. And as McKinney herself makes clear, her campaign stands in the tradition of pressure politics on the Democrats, of building a strong enough "left-wing" constituency in the Democratic Party that supposedly cannot be ignored. After laying out a series of demands for her "Power to the People Campaign," McKinney explicated the central task of her campaign: "I encourage the Democratic Party and its new presumptive nominee, Senator Obama, to embrace these important suggestions for policy initiatives."

More fundamentally, even if McKinney seriously stood for a "third party alternative" to the Democrats, it would not change the fact that she is a capitalist politician. A vote for even the most left-wing bourgeois candidate is, in fact, a vote of confidence in the reformability of capitalism and a vote against the need for a workers party and socialist revolution. It is a vote for perpetuating a brutal system based on exploitation, oppression and war. For the likes of WWP this is no problem; today WWP enthuses over McKinney, while in the past they supported Democrat Jesse Jackson in 1988 and other black Democrats, including then-Democrat McKinney in 2004 and New York City Council member Charles Barron in 2006.

For the reformists, the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky are old hat, not "relevant" to the current reality. By their lights, better to front for bourgeois "lesser evilism" than to fight for socialism. Against this criminal betrayal of the interests of the proletariat and oppressed internationally, a revolutionary workers party must be forged. Today, working people and the oppressed groan under U.S. imperialism's filthy wars and occupations, racist police terror, torture and lies, failing economies, joblessness, union-busting, anti-immigrant reaction, mortgage foreclosures, skyrocketing gas prices—in short, the one-sided class war waged by the rulers of both capitalist parties. It is not only time, but well beyond time, to reverse these terms of oppression, to break the proletariat from all bourgeois parties and to forge a Leninist vanguard party fighting for the emancipation of the proletariat, for new October Revolutions. ■

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Quake...

(continued from page 12)

in New York City, and again levees are bursting all along the Mississippi and its swollen tributaries. Meanwhile, FEMA shrugs and admits that there’s no federal oversight plan for levees. In the San Francisco earthquake of 1989 damage was largely man-made—the collapse of the upper deck of the Nimitz Freeway’s Cypress Viaduct, for example, which crushed dozens of people, was due to unreinforced columns popping out at poorly designed joints. And they knew in advance that such designs were unsafe. The first reaction of government authorities and cops was racist assaults on those trying to help the victims. Blacks and skilled workers were shoved aside, and in Oakland the cops pulled guns on rescuers and accused them of looting!

The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Collapsed Schools

Writing for Hong Kong’s English-language *South China Morning Post* (26 May), one author noted the contrast between the money lavished on grooming Beijing for the Olympics with the situation in the countryside: “On the one hand, the hugely expensive and strange-looking National Theatre and the CCTV building represent the ultimate examples of the government’s extravagance and wasteful spending. On the other, the rubble of the collapsed schools should serve as the most damning indictment of the government’s inadequate spending on education.” Fashionable architect Rem Koolhaas’s soaring CCTV building is certainly a marvel of steel and glass engineering, and in a nation which today produces more steel and cement than any other country, those who commission such a work know how to build a simple country schoolhouse to safety standards. But they didn’t.

The Chinese workers state emerged from the 1949 Revolution, which was led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a party based predominantly on the peasantry. Since 1949, China has been ruled by a parasitic and nationalist bureaucratic caste committed to “peaceful co-existence” with world imperialism and the Stalinist dogma of building “socialism in one country”—i.e., opposition to international socialist revolution. Hostile to proletarian political power and acting as a transmission belt for bourgeois ideology into the workers state, this bureaucracy nonetheless derives its privileges from the collectivized economy of the workers state. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stated of the Stalinist bureaucracy that usurped political power from the proletariat in the USSR: “It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat” (*The Revolution Betrayed*, 1937).

The contradictions of Chinese society are shown by the very existence of those schools that collapsed. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the central government ordered that all children be provided with nine years of compulsory education—a good thing, especially in the poor and peasant areas of China. One of the gains of the 1949 Revolution was massive advances in literacy, which today stands at nearly 91 percent, compared to 61 percent in India.

However, the building of the schools in the 1980s and ’90s was in part to enable children to support their aged parents, as the old guarantee of the “iron rice bowl,” or a job for life for workers, was being shattered. And in Stalinist bureaucratic fashion, the orders went down with no regard as to how they would be carried out, with many rotten buildings the result. And so, many parents lost their children.

“This is not a natural disaster,” said a father whose nine-year-old son died at Xinjian Primary School in Dujiangyan. His son’s school was reduced to rubble while another school, for the children of the elite, was in such good condition it was being used as a refugee center. Crumbling bricks, the lack of reinforcing steel rods (rebar), unsupported hollow concrete slab flooring, concrete with too much sand—all well-known safety issues—were pointed to by many as causes of the collapse of buildings. That many children’s lives could have been saved was demonstrated by the exceptional case of Sangzao Middle School, whose principal ran regular earthquake drills and, more

various disasters. We oppose the barbaric death penalty on principle, in China as in capitalist societies. What is necessary is a whole new kind of government to replace the privileged Stalinist bureaucratic caste. As Trotsky put it in *The Revolution Betrayed*, “It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy.” Everything from military questions to international aid, including to revolutionary struggles abroad, and domestic economic policies can only be resolved effectively when those who labor decide.

Following the massive earthquake that hit then-Soviet Armenia in December 1988, we cited the power of the Soviet collectivized economy, while also noting that shoddy construction and corruption, due to the Stalinist bureaucracy, contributed to building failures. We wrote in “Bureaucratic Mismanagement Undermines Soviet Planning: Armenian Earthquake Disaster” (WV No. 471, 17 February 1989) on the



Desperate victims of Hurricane Katrina wait for rescue at New Orleans Convention Center, September 2005. U.S. capitalist rulers left blacks, poor to die.

importantly, successfully lobbied local officials to get enough money to widen and insert iron rods into the pillars of his school, to improve balconies and fix pipes. When the earthquake hit, all 2,323 students at his school got out alive.

On June 1, Children’s Day in China, parents at a Xinjian protest wore T-shirts demanding, “Severely punish the corrupted elements in the ‘tofu dregs’ buildings” (made of useless materials like the dregs left after making tofu). While the central government in Beijing has tried to place responsibility on local officials because of its policy of “decentralization,” the Sichuan government denies any responsibility for the collapse of shoddy school buildings, laying all the blame on the natural disaster. But from the top down, government officials knew the dangers; China is laced with fault lines and this particular area has a history of major catastrophic quakes. While poor schools collapsed, many elite schools survived the quake, and the military and nuclear installations in the region appear to have been undamaged.

Police attempts to intimidate grieving parents are reprehensible. The parents’ demands for full and honest answers as to why their children died are just. But the underlying problems will not be solved by punishing individual corrupt elements, especially via the government’s policy of regularly executing a few scapegoats for

broad question of how to manage society for human needs:

“To reach an intelligent resolution requires drawing technical specialists, residents of the region, the fishermen, the agricultural workers, into a wide-ranging debate resulting in a democratic decision. And if the decision doesn’t work, constant monitoring by the producers themselves will spot imminent dangers and contribute to modifications *before* a disaster occurs. That is the essence of soviet democracy—and it will take a proletarian political revolution, ousting the bureaucracy, to get it.”

Only through the overthrow of capitalist class rule internationally, particularly in the imperialist centers of North America, West Europe and Japan, can the all-round modernization of China be achieved as part of a socialist Asia. To go forward to a society in which everyone is well-housed, in which food lines disappear, in which a socialist future is genuinely assured, requires an international division of labor based on worldwide socialist planning. It is to provide the necessary leadership for the proletariat in these struggles that the International Communist League seeks to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International—the world party of socialist revolution.

U.S. Reformists Oppose Proletarian Dictatorship

The reaction of the reformist left in the U.S. to the Chinese earthquake reveals their hostility to the need for world socialist revolution to create a communist society based on material plenty for all. Whether anti-Communist or pro-Stalinist, they are *all* deeply committed to sucking up to the bourgeois Democratic Party—which is in the forefront of China-bashing—either directly or through the capitalist Green Party.

The newspaper of the reformist, pro-Stalinist Workers World Party focused almost exclusively on the rescue efforts, as did its split-off, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, and both of them completely disappeared the protests by the grieving parents. *Workers World* (15 June) whitewashed any central governmental responsibility for the collapsed buildings, claiming “building codes in effect did not anticipate a quake of this enormous magnitude” and soothingly saying, “a government commission has been set up” to investigate.

Weighing in from another reformist

direction, the eccentric, Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) wrote in “The Capitalist Ground Shaken by the Earthquake in China” (*Revolution*, 1 June) that “since the reactionary coup led by Deng Xiaoping after Mao Tsetung’s death in 1976, China has been a *capitalist* country, dependent on and subordinate to global imperialism. And some stark things about the exploitative and oppressive nature of capitalist China have been revealed in the aftermath of this devastating earthquake.” This false line is a justification for their opposition to defending China against counterrevolutionaries who want to overthrow the workers state—as their references to China’s “reactionary regime” and “brutal repression in Tibet” and the Olympic torch protests make clear.

It also hides the fact that when an even more devastating earthquake occurred in Tangshan in July 1976, while Mao was still alive, the bureaucracy’s response was so bad that it is still recalled with great bitterness in China today: international aid was refused and attempts were made to cover up the scale of the disaster, in which at least 240,000 died, in a country then far more backward and still suffering from the disruptions of the Maoist bureaucratic faction’s “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.”

Contrary to the RCP’s myths, the world’s most populous country did not turn capitalist overnight with the death of one man. The economic autarky of Mao and the “market reforms” of Deng are in fact two sides of the same coin. While economic penetration by the imperialists has enormously strengthened the forces for internal counterrevolution, capitalists in China are still prevented from organizing themselves politically and vying for power. The core sectors of the industrial economy remain collectivized and the banking system remains effectively state-owned. Meanwhile, economic development has created a new, huge proletariat, drawing in many former peasants to the cities. There have been widespread worker protests against layoffs from state-owned enterprises, unpaid wages, pensions and benefits, and similar abuses, while the countryside is rife with angry protests by peasants, frequently involving violent clashes with the police. The multiple explosive social tensions of Chinese society will at some point shatter the political structure of the ruling bureaucratic caste. And when that happens, China’s fate will be starkly posed: either proletarian political revolution to open the road to socialism, or a return to capitalist enslavement and imperialist subjugation.

China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states of Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba wrenched their societies out of the grip of capitalism. As part of our struggle to defend and extend the gains of these societies, we fight for workers political revolution in the deformed workers states and for international socialist revolution to sweep away the bloody capitalist-imperialist system, putting control of the earth’s resources in the hands of the international proletariat. *For Unconditional Military Defense of China! For Workers Political Revolution! ■*

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The Sichuan Quake and the Contradictions of the Chinese Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State



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Du Bin/NY Times

Left: People's Liberation Army troops enter devastated city of Beichuan in Sichuan Province, part of mass mobilization of soldiers and resources in relief effort following Sichuan quake. Right: Primary school in Dujiangyan was destroyed because of shoddy construction, while surrounding buildings for the elite were barely damaged.

The earthquake that hit China's Sichuan Province on May 12 was a huge natural disaster, leaving some 80,000 dead or missing, including up to 10,000 children killed by collapsing schools, and up to five million people homeless. The quake occurred in the fault region where the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates collide, forcing up the Himalaya Mountains and causing periodic earthquakes from Afghanistan to China. It was an "extreme earthquake," as one seismologist put it, registering 8.0 on the Richter scale according to the Chinese Seismological Bureau. This is over 32 times stronger in terms of energy released and ten times stronger in terms of ground-shaking than the 1989 San Francisco-Oakland earthquake. The Sichuan quake's shallow epicenter caused severe side-to-side shaking, the worst kind of quake impact for even well-built structures.

The massive relief efforts by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the gigantic amounts of rebuilding aid by the state-owned economic sector have impressed the entire world, showing the power of the collectivized economy. At the same time, the agony and fury of parents over the shoddily built schools that collapsed and crushed thousands of children expose the deep contradictions of China today, a workers state bureaucratically deformed by the rule of a Stalinist caste. Its neglect and indifference to well-known construction standards in Sichuan, a mountainous region in southwestern China, are responsible for the deaths of many poor workers and peasants. The situation cries out for *centralized planning under workers democracy*, a government of workers and peasants councils. This requires sweeping

away the Stalinist bureaucracy through working-class political revolution, which must be based on the unconditional military defense of the Chinese workers state against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution.

China's Disaster Relief: Power of Collectivized Economy

Attempts by the reactionary Falun Gong to claim the earthquake was punishment to the Chinese Communist Party backfired. The CIA-inspired "Free Tibet" crowd, too, lost momentum as it was clear that the rescue efforts of the PLA in Aba Prefecture, which governs 13 counties including Wenchuan, the quake's epicenter, were devoted to everyone, including Tibetans and members of the Qiang ethnic group. We oppose the "Free Tibet" movement and its recent

protests as reactionary, anti-Communist and counterrevolutionary. While opposing the Chinese bureaucracy's Han chauvinism, we recognize that Tibet has qualitatively benefited from the technological progress made possible by its inclusion in the Chinese workers state.

Speaking of the Chinese government's response to the quake, the London *Financial Times* (6 June) admitted: "With its centralized power structure and ability to mobilise resources, the autocratic government excels at disaster relief operations." In fact, this is because China is a workers state with a collectivized economy, not because it's "autocratic." A comparison to the devastating Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar (Burma) early in May, leaving some 84,500 dead, proves this. Today, some 55,000 are still missing, as Myan-

mar's military dictatorship left bodies to rot for weeks.

In China, the quake region is known as "the front," and the whole country is mobilized to participate in relief efforts. The *Financial Times* outlined China's rebuilding plans: over one million prefabricated houses will be built in three months for the earthquake survivors. Food and shelter will be provided for five million homeless people, and whole flattened towns and cities will be rebuilt or relocated. Hundreds of state-owned factories have been commandeered to produce the houses, and big state companies like Baosteel have been ordered to increase output of materials needed.

Contrast this to the U.S. capitalist rulers' racist, anti-working-class treatment of the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Almost three years ago in New Orleans, water from broken levees poured into the city for two days before any significant action was taken to stem the tide, while tens of thousands of poor and black people were trapped. The government—including the city and state Democratic Party administrations as well as the Republicans in the White House—blamed the victims, demonizing an entire population, brought in the National Guard to intimidate people trying to help themselves, and dispersed the city's occupants to the four winds. As much as a third of New Orleans' population is still gone, while hard-hit St. Bernard Parish has less than half its people back. To this day, the levees have not been adequately rebuilt.

Across the U.S., systematic deindustrialization and lack of investment have resulted in a rotting infrastructure: bridges collapse in the Midwest, cranes topple

continued on page 11



Fukada/NY Times

Local leader of Communist Party in Mianzhu begs enraged parents of earthquake victims to stop their protest. The parents continued their march.

For Unconditional Military Defense! For Workers Political Revolution!