

NDP, Union Tops Preach "Sacrifice" **Capitalist Crisis** **Destroys Workers' Lives**



Smith/Vancouver Sun



Cuddington/Ottawa Citizen

Vancouver protest against lack of affordable housing, December 2008 (left). Ottawa, January 21: Following bankruptcy of telecom giant Nortel, former workers line up for meeting to learn what remains of their pensions.

For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

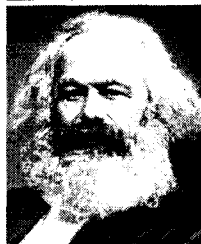
As it spreads and deepens, the capitalist economic crisis is immiserating hundreds of millions worldwide. Here in Canada, unemployment soared by 129,000 in January alone, the equivalent of over 1.5 million job losses in a year. Most job cuts were in manufacturing, already ravaged by years of plant closures and mass layoffs. From the hollowed-out industrial centers of Southern Ontario to mines and mills in B.C. and the once-booming Alberta oil industry, the capitalist rulers are making working people pay for the crisis of a bankrupt social system.

While doling out billions more in tax cuts and subsidies to big business, the January 27 federal budget continued the

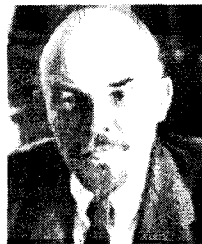
onslaught against workers and the poor. The Tory government imposed wage controls on federal public sector workers, gutted pay equity for women workers and refused to extend access to Employment Insurance payments. Only 40 percent of those without work are even eligible for the meager benefits, even as successive Liberal and Tory regimes have looted the EI fund of a staggering \$54 billion.

Some vague talk by the Tories about a "fiscal stimulus"
(continued on page 15)

Karl Marx Was Right



Marx



Lenin



Trotsky

A Salute to Charles Darwin

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin and the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth. Through his theory of evolution through natural selection, or, as he preferred to call it, "descent with modification," Darwin unshackled biological science from the chains of religion and metaphysics by providing a materialist explanation for the evolution of life on this planet through careful, meticulously recorded studies of variation within species. Yet, even as it forms the basis of modern biology, evolution continues to be an explosive issue. In the U.S. especially, it is a constant target of the fundamentalist Christian right and reactionaries, including because it eliminates any scientific basis for racism. As we wrote in a 1985 *amici curiae* brief filed by our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. and Partisan Defense Committee in the Supreme Court against the teaching of the myth of Biblical creationism in Louisiana schools: "The study of scientific evolution is fundamental to man's quest for a materialist understanding of our world and human society, not the least because it provides material evidence that we are all part of the same human race, definitively destroying the myths of racial superiority."

Charles Darwin himself was an ardent opponent of slavery. In a 5 June 1861 letter to Harvard botanist Asa Gray, a devout Protestant who arranged for the *Origin of Species* to be published in America, Darwin wrote in the early days of the U.S. Civil War: "Some few, and I am one of them, even wish to God, though at the loss of millions of lives, that the North would proclaim a crusade against slavery. In the long-run, a million horrid deaths would be amply repaid in the cause of humanity.... Great God! How I should like to see the greatest curse on earth—slavery—abolished!" And in a 17 September 1861 letter to Gray, he wrote: "If abolition does follow with your victory, the whole world will look brighter in my eyes & in many eyes. It would be a great gain even to stop the spread of Slavery into the Territories:—if that be possible without abolition, which I should have doubted."

Charles Darwin also corresponded with his friend on the question of religion, replying to Gray's defense of "intelligent design" in a 22 May 1860 letter: "I had no intention to write atheistically, but I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do...evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae [parasitic wasps] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice."

In the following excerpt from an article (written in 1919 and revised in 1922) on the renegade from Marxism Karl Kautsky, revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky compared the historic breadth of Darwin's scientific studies to Marx's study of human society, pointing out that both reveal that long periods of seeming equilibrium are periodically interrupted by tumultuous periods of rapid, revolutionary change.

The Darwinian theory of the origin of species encompasses the entire span of development of the plant and animal kingdoms. The struggle for survival and the processes of natural and sexual selection proceed continuously and uninterrupted. But if one could observe these processes with ample time at one's disposal—a millennium, say, as the smallest unit of measure—one would undoubtedly discover with one's own eyes that there are long ages of relative equilibrium in the world of living things, when the laws of selection operate almost imperceptibly, and the different species remain relatively stable, seeming the very embodiment of Plato's ideal types. But there are also ages when the equilibrium between plants, animals, and their geophysical environment is disrupted, epochs of geobiological crisis, when the laws of natural selection come to the fore in all their ferocity, and evolution passes over the corpses of entire plant and animal species. On this gigantic scale Darwinian theory stands out above all as the theory of critical epochs in the plant and animal development.

Marx's theory of the historical process encompasses the entire history of human social organization. But in ages of relative social equilibrium the fact that ideas depend upon class interests and the property system remains masked. The age of revolution is Marxism's school of advanced study. Then the struggle of classes resulting from systems of property assumes the character of open civil war, and the systems of government, law, and philosophy are stripped bare and revealed as instruments in the service of classes. Marxist theory itself was first formulated in a prerevolutionary period, when the classes were searching for a new orientation, and it achieved its final form through the experiences of revolution and counterrevolution in 1848 and the following years.

—Leon Trotsky, "Karl Kautsky" (1922), reprinted in *Portraits Political & Personal* (Pathfinder Press, 1977)

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Bountiful, B.C. Mormon Polygamists— Leave Them Alone!



Baglo/Canwest

Members of B.C. Mormon community, including arrested leader Winston Blackmore (left). Right: Mormon polygamist families in Texas rounded up by police, April 2008.



On January 7 the RCMP arrested two religious leaders of the polygamist Mormon community in Bountiful, B.C., Winston Blackmore and James Oler. After two decades of prying, successive governments could find no evidence for their claims that women and young people were being abused in Bountiful, and so they charged Blackmore and Oler under a 19th century law outlawing polygamy. The only crime here is an all-sided government attack on a vulnerable and easily scapegoated community, whose rights to voluntary marital arrangements and to practice their religion are being crushed under a state juggernaut. Anyone who doubts this should listen to B.C. Attorney-General Wally Oppal: "Some people are of the view that people of consenting age ought to have the right to enter into polygamous relationships under religious principles. I disagreed with that" (*Globe and Mail*, 8 January). Today it is the Mormons, but ultimately this witchhunt targets *anyone* who does not conform to the bourgeois sexual norm of "one man on one woman for life."

The arrests in Bountiful follow a brutal crackdown in the U.S. In April 2008, the Mormon community of Eldorado, Texas was stormed by police and other state agencies in an outrageous mass kidnapping of more than 500 women and children, based on a phone call claiming sexual abuse. The state admitted that this call was probably a hoax. The spiritual leader of the community, Warren Jeffs, was already in prison charged with "rape as an accomplice" for performing a marriage—"rape" because the young woman was underage at 14 and the groom was her 19-year-old cousin.

We Marxists have a longstanding position in defense of polygamous Mormons against state persecution. The Mormons have the right to be left alone, to practice their religion and live their private lives however they see fit. This stance, like our support for the right of gay marriage, stems from our opposition to government interference with the rights of indi-

viduals to effect whatever consensual arrangements they wish. *Leave the Mormon polygamists alone!*

The Bountiful Mormons, having breached the bourgeoisie's marital norms, are at the vortex of an intense "war on crime" and an equally intense drive to make criminals of people for their private consensual arrangements. The NDP is directly complicit in this assault on basic rights. On the heels of the Texas raid, Vancouver-area NDP MP Dawn Black wrote to the federal Tory justice minister demanding that polygamy and "statutory rape" charges be laid against the Bountiful Mormons. Saluting the Tories for placing a "high priority on the issue of crime," Black's 23 April 2008 letter stated that "a refusal to lay charges could be seen as tacit approval of or support for the activities in Bountiful."

The Bountiful community, the main Canadian branch of the U.S.-based Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), a long-established split-off from the mainstream Mormons, has long been in the government's crosshairs. Polygamy was officially renounced by the Mormon Church in 1890, as a condition set by the U.S. Congress for Utah to obtain statehood. Several factions, including the FLDS, broke from the main church in order to continue the practice of polygamy. Today an estimated 10,000 FLDS followers live in communities around the Utah-Arizona border and nearby states, and about 1,200 in B.C.

Canada's anti-polygamy law—Section 293 of the Criminal Code—was enacted in 1892 for the sole purpose of keeping Mormons out of the country. It makes illegal "any kind of conjugal union with more than one person at the same time, whether or not it is by law recognized as a binding form of marriage." Under this law, anyone entering into any kind of multiple partner relationships or long-term extramarital affairs—and all kinds of people do—could find themselves

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Zionism and Anti-Union Frenzy at York

In the wake of the savage Israeli invasion of Gaza, campus activists and trade unions are under attack for their defense of the besieged Palestinians. On February 22, 120 Zionist thugs led by the fascistic Jewish Defence League besieged a Windsor conference of a committee of the Ontario division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). They brandished banners ominously threatening to "Terminate Sid Ryan," CUPE Ontario's president, for the union's pro-Palestinian stance. Days later, Tory immigration minister Jason Kenney escalated the Zionist witchhunt, calling on the union to get rid of Ryan and raving about "a very dangerous opinion environment for many Jewish students."

Toronto's York University is at the epicenter of the Zionist offensive on the campuses, which has seen both open repression and McCarthyite thought control of student and teacher activists. On February 11, the Zionist-led campus group "Drop YFS" held a press conference to promote their goal of deposing the York Federation of Students (YFS) on the grounds that it supported a recent strike by CUPE Local 3903, which represents teaching and graduate assistants and contract faculty. Rather than face criticism from leftist activists who sought to attend the press conference, the leaders of Drop YFS barred them at the door. Cancelling their own event, Drop YFS scurried straight into the office of the Hillel Zionists, scurrilously claiming they were intimidated by "anti-Semitic" leftists. A day later, when Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) held a pro-Palestinian demonstration on the campus, they were met by a mob of Zionists sporting Israeli Defense Force paraphernalia in a sea of Israeli flags.

The Zionist witchhunt is completely intertwined with strikebreaking at York. CUPE 3903, whose leaders include well-known pro-Palestinian activists, has just come off the longest university strike in English Canadian history. Right-wing students organized anti-strike rallies on behalf of the campus administration and President Mamdouh Shoukri, as he hardlined against the union's modest demand to raise wages to a level closer to the poverty line. These reactionary students provided the provincial Liberal government ammunition to force an end to the strike.

On January 27, the teachers and their supporters protested against the Liberals' strikebreaking legislation. Toronto cops attacked their rally and arrested four people on bogus charges of assaulting police. Behind the pompous and regal ceremony of bourgeois democracy lies the armed violence of the cops against the working class. *Hands off CUPE 3903! Drop the charges!*

No Illusions in Canadian Imperialism!

CUPE Ontario's call for active labour support to Palestinian national rights marks a break with the pro-Zionist consensus that has historically dominated in the Canadian labour



Pylyshyn/Excalibur

York University, February 12: Zionists threaten pro-Palestinian student rally.

bureaucracy and especially the NDP. In standing with the oppressed Palestinians, the union has also slammed into the Harper government's uncompromising support for Israel as well as the ramped-up "war on terror" that targets the Muslim population for state repression. As we wrote when CUPE Ontario came under Zionist fire more than two years ago: "This is a frontal attack on the right of the labour movement to champion causes on behalf of the oppressed and an open invitation to union-busting by the capitalist state" ("Defend CUPE Ontario! Defend the Palestinians!" *SC* No. 150, Fall 2006).

Those leftists and trade unionists who rise to the defense of CUPE Ontario would be mistaken, however, to support its endorsement of the international "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions for Palestine" (BDS) campaign against Israel. BDS activists here call on the same Canadian corporations that exploit workers at home and abroad and the same Canadian imperialist state that wages bloody war on the peoples of Afghanistan to come to the aid of the oppressed Palestinians by severing ties with Israel. In doing so, BDS fosters the worst illusions in capitalist Canada as a "peacekeeper" and a potential ally of downtrodden people.

In particular, the demand to boycott Israeli universities appeals to the supposed morality of Canadian academic institutions and funding bodies to break their links with the murderous Israeli regime. It speaks volumes about the liberal-reformist outlook of SAIA that during the teachers strike they begged York president Mamdouh Shoukri to uphold "values that York University cherishes most" (!) and "publicly condemn" Israel's

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Zionist Bloodbath in Gaza

Defend the Palestinian People!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 927, 27 January), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League.

DECEMBER 30—"Let it be known that in the 21st century this is happening while the whole world is watching but remains silent. I wonder how cheap Palestinian blood is," stated one Gaza resident (english.aljazeera.net, 28 December 2008). Nearly 370 Palestinians have been slaughtered since Israel began bombardment of the strip three days ago, more than 1,700 wounded. The first day of airstrikes produced the highest daily death toll in Gaza since Israel occupied it and the West Bank in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, with more than *one hundred tons of bombs* dropped on one of the most densely populated spots on earth. Israeli troops and tanks are ringing Gaza in preparation for a possible invasion, while defense minister Ehud Barak of the thoroughly bourgeois Labor Party has declared "all-out war." We stand for the *military defense of Hamas against Israel* without giving this reactionary fundamentalist outfit any political support.

Populated by 1.5 million Palestinians, Gaza is little more than a concentration camp—surrounded by an electrified fence, a sealed border with Egypt and the Mediterranean—under the thumb of a genocidal Zionist ruling class. Having been starved of food, fuel and medicine by a U.S.-Israeli blockade since Hamas took it over in 2007, much of Gaza is now little more than twisted metal and destroyed lives, with barely supplied hospitals overwhelmed by the number of the injured and mutilated arriving. Even the pro-Zionist *New York Times* found that the initial airstrikes, which took place as women congregated in the markets and children emerged from schools, had "a shocking quality."

The Israeli air attacks especially targeted government buildings and other installations occupied by Hamas, which the Zionists and imperialists have long labeled "terrorist." In preparation for the attacks, Israel launched a disinformation campaign, announcing that it would open border crossings and postpone threatened airstrikes. Hamas, which had evacuated its personnel from official buildings, then, according to an Israeli official, "sent its people back in when they heard that everything was put on hold" (*Ha'aretz* online, 28 December 2008). Scores of them died under the bombardment.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, the Palestinian population has been sealed off by an apartheid wall and subjected to a deadly military occupation. A Palestinian youth participating in protests near Ramallah against the airstrikes in Gaza was shot to death by Israeli forces. *All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories!*

Israel's mass murder in Gaza was cold-bloodedly prepared months in advance. *Ha'aretz* online (28 December 2008) reported that Barak "instructed the Israel Defense Forces to pre-



Reuters

Victim of Israeli bombing of Gaza City, 27 December 2008. Israel out of the Occupied Territories!

pare for the operation over six months ago, even as Israel was beginning to negotiate a ceasefire agreement with Hamas.... Barak gave orders to carry out a comprehensive intelligence-gathering drive which sought to map out Hamas' security infrastructure." Israel effectively put an end to the unstable "cease-fire" with Hamas—on the night of the U.S. presidential election—by launching attacks in Gaza that killed half a dozen Hamas militants. The resulting (largely ineffective) mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza against nearby Israeli towns were then used as the pretext for the massive assault.

Across the Near East, protests of tens of thousands have erupted, not only denouncing the Zionist massacre but also condemning the pro-U.S. Arab regimes, not least that of Egypt. On the eve of the assault, Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni briefed Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on Israel's plans. Mubarak promptly rushed several hundred additional guards to help police the border wall separating Gaza from Egypt. As frantic Palestinians fleeing the Israeli bombardment stormed across the border, Egyptian guards opened fire. According to *Al Jazeera* (30 December 2008), "Mubarak announced on Egyptian television...that the Rafah crossing will not be fully re-opened until Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, regains authority in the territory." For his part, while condemning the Israeli attacks, Palestinian Authority president Abbas grotesquely blamed Hamas for the Israeli attack and called on them "to stop the bloodshed."

That call parallels the line of the Bush administration, which predictably announced that it "holds Hamas responsible." Meanwhile, Democratic president-elect Barack Obama made his support to Israeli attacks on Hamas clear during the presidential election campaign, stating: "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that.

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For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Annual Partisan Defense Committee Holiday Appeal

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free the Class-War Prisoners!

In December the Partisan Defense Committee's annual Holiday Appeal raised funds for our program of monthly stipends and holiday gifts to class-war prisoners and their families. Held in New York, Chicago, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Toronto and Vancouver, these benefits raised over \$10,000 after expenses.

The 2008 Holiday Appeal benefits focused particularly on the struggle to free U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man falsely convicted of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner on 9 December 1981. Also honoured were 15 other men and women singled out by the state for standing up to racist capitalist oppression and exploitation. The PDC has revived and kept alive the tradition of class-struggle defense of those imprisoned for championing the rights of labour and all the oppressed. This tradition was begun by the International Labor Defense (ILD) under James P. Cannon, a founding leader of the U.S. Communist Party, the ILD's first secretary (1925-28) and later the founder of American Trotskyism. At its first conference the ILD declared: "The workers must not be allowed to forget those who lie in prison for them, but must be stirred into action in their defense."

In Chicago, one of the sit-in participants from United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 1110 spoke about the six-day plant occupation by largely immigrant and black workers at the Republic Windows & Doors factory in Chicago. The New York City benefit, which drew more than 150 people, featured the one-man play, *John Brown: Trumpet of Freedom*, by George Wolf Reily and Norman Thomas Marshall (who performed the play). The play



COC Productions

cainmo.com

Mumia Abu-Jamal (left), Leonard Peltier: framed up for fighting against racist capitalist oppression.

honoured those who fought against slavery in the Civil War, and underlined the significance of John Brown's 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

The Toronto rally heard from Dave Bleakney, national representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, which has for many years fought for Mumia Abu-Jamal's freedom. Other speakers at the event, which drew 60 people, included PDC spokesman Debby Spector, Orlando Martin of the Spartacus Youth Club and the Trotskyist League's Miriam McDonald. A highlight was Paul Schneider's speech

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Mumia's Greetings to Holiday Appeal Benefits

We print below the taped greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the 2008 PDC Holiday Appeal gatherings.

Ona Move!

I want to thank you all for your work in support of political and class-war prisoners, whose names are almost too numerous for me to recount here.

Suffice it to say, they represent people from wide and various movements, radical, socialist, social and labor.

But as vicious and as unjust as the state has been (and continues to be) in its enmity against those of us in various movements, as these words are written we are all witnessing a relentless war against *all* workers in the midst of the current economic crisis.

Those of us who've studied these matters know that this crisis is one that is endemic to the capitalist system itself.

How could it do otherwise than create crisis?

Marx and Engels said that "the executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

Thus we see, not just repression against our movements, violations of their own "law," and the like, but we see workers thrown out of work by the millions, while banks are granted billions!

We see social injustice next to obscene capitalist rapaciousness.

This day, this time of trial and tribulation, should be seen as one of incredible opportunity, and we should build our movements stronger as this social order weakens.

Babylon is falling!

Thank you! Ona Move! Long Live John Africa!

From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal. ■

25 Years Ago: Victory Against a KKK/Nazi Frame-Up

We print below, slightly edited for publication, the remarks of Paul Schneider at the December 12 Toronto Holiday Appeal.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the beginning of a successful campaign to defend two trade-union militants who were framed up by the Ku Klux Klan. Mike Mares and I, who were both postal workers in 1983, were charged with "assault causing bodily harm" for defending ourselves and others at a labour-endorsed abortion rights demonstration in Toronto. For nine months, KKK "intelligence director" William Lau Richardson and Nazi George Graham dragged Mike and me through the courts in an attempt to have us locked behind bars.

Key to defeating this frame-up was the work of the Committee to Defend Anti-Fascist Unionists. Initiated by the Trotskyist League and militant postal unionists, this committee mobilized broad support amongst labour, minorities and all the intended victims of the labour-hating, race-terrorist KKK/Nazis.

Richardson had a 15-year history of terror, infiltration, provocation and harassment of the left and the labour movement. Born in the United States, this Klansman had worked for the CIA, U.S. Army Intelligence and had a "professional relationship" with the RCMP. After he moved to Canada, Richardson, an explosives expert, was hired by the notorious union-busting outfit Centurion Investigations Ltd. Richardson admitted under oath that while employed by Centurion he made bombs that were planted in the cars of union officials, militants and foreign workers. These actions were intended to break strikes and disrupt union organizing drives. He also bragged about collecting information on Chilean refugees.

In mid-1983, just months before he targeted Mike and me, Richardson was congratulated in the *KKK Action* newsletter for becoming a "Great Titan." He was one of the creeps hanging around our union hall targeting us and targeting our union. He and his Nazi cohort provoked, harassed and intimidated a Toronto rally in defense of abortion rights on October 1, 1983. Mike and I helped defend that rally from this scum.

Hundreds of unionists from across Canada, including 12 union locals and close to 90 union officials, supported our defense. The Ontario Federation of Labour—then representing 800,000 unionists—endorsed the demand "Drop the Charges Against Paul Schneider and Mike Mares!"

In February 1984 in the old Canadian Union of Postal Workers union hall, close to 100 people rallied in defense of Mike and me. The following July, more than 40 protesters including members of 14 different unions demonstrated outside the courthouse, demanding that the charges against Mike and me be dropped. Time and time again our supporters filled the courtroom to show their solidarity.

With counsel provided by well-known lawyers, Paul Copeland and Clayton Ruby, the defense committee sought to ensure that Mike and I had the best possible legal defense while placing no confidence in the so-called "justice" of the capitalist courts.

Central to defeating this frame-up was the mobilization of broad protest by the labour movement and minorities. This was not only an important victory but a concrete demonstration of



SC photo

Postal union militants Mike Mares (left) and Paul Schneider on Steelworkers picket line, May 1983.

the necessity of a class-struggle program to defeat capitalist reaction. A victory in court cannot stop KKK/Nazi terror—they're out to kill. What we need are labour and minority mobilizations to sweep the fascists from the streets.

The climate of Cold War II fed into the genuinely criminal activities of the right wing and the race terrorists of the KKK. The Cold War emboldened them to attempt more massacres like the 1979 KKK/Nazi murder of five anti-Klan protesters in Greensboro, North Carolina. When the KKK threatened to hold a "victory march" in Detroit days after the Greensboro massacre, comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. initiated a successful rally to proclaim "The Klan Won't Ride in the Motor City!" From San Francisco to Chicago to Ann Arbor to Vancouver, Trotskyists initiated demonstrations to stop racist reaction. In November 1982, the SL initiated the powerful 5,000-strong Labor/Black Mobilization that stopped the Klan in Washington, D.C.

During their anti-Soviet war drive, the bosses employed union-busting, racist terror and rampant social reaction to discipline the working class. Today, the bosses and their governments are fleecing working people to solve their capitalist financial crisis. The bosses and their governments are moving to keep the working class and minorities in line and will not hesitate to employ union-busting, racist terror and social reaction to achieve their goals. We must stop them. We must be prepared to defend those who fight against capitalism.

Tonight we must support the Partisan Defense Committee's program of sending monthly stipends as an expression of solidarity to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and imperialist deprecation.

Working people need their own government. Working people don't need pro-capitalist coalition governments. We need a workers government that will put an end to capitalism once and for all. Thank you. ■

Karl Marx Was Right

Capitalist Economic Crisis: Bosses Make Workers Pay



AP

Barcelona, Spain: Nissan workers protest job cuts, November 2008, as world economic downturn hits Europe.

The following is an edited, expanded and updated version of a presentation by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour given at a recent plenum of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League. We reprint it from Workers Vanguard (No. 927, 2 January).

On one occasion a Dutch banker described conditions in the London stock exchange as resembling “nothing so much as if all the Lunatics had escaped out of the Madhouse at once.” The occasion occurred almost three centuries ago, at the time when the so-called South Sea stock market bubble burst. So not all that much has really changed.

The current international financial meltdown and severe economic downturn began and is centered in the U.S. So, I want to begin by placing the crisis within the broader historical framework of the decades-long decline of American capitalism. However, it’s useful to first consider the nature of bourgeois class consciousness, especially that of the American bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is *not* a collectivist class. Both in their business practices and in the government policies they advocate, capitalists are primarily motivated by immediate self-interest, not some conception of the larger,

long-term interests of the class. To be sure, the income and wealth of all individual capitalists derive from the total pool of surplus value generated by the exploitation of labor. But in their day-to-day activities, capitalists, especially financial capitalists, are mainly motivated by increasing their own wealth at the expense of other capitalists.

I’ve been reading this book, *Traders, Guns & Money: Knowns and Unknowns in the Dazzling World of Derivatives* (2006), by a veteran derivatives trader, Satyajit Das. It’s very entertaining, really funny. At one point Das was working for an investment bank that was seeking to induce a Japanese pension fund manager to become its client:

“The bank had courted him ceaselessly for years, to no avail. It turned out the fund manager had a weakness—a clichéd partiality for very tall, long-legged, blue-eyed, blonde women. The bank assumed the woman need not be Japanese.

“A global search was undertaken and the human resources (HR) department performed admirably. The bank found a stereotypical Scandinavian woman to cover the fund manager. The woman—please don’t laugh—was called Ulrika. She was bright, pleasant and efficient, but there was one problem—she had no knowledge of derivatives. She had a background in cosmetics. The bank hired her anyway, figuring, correctly it turned out, that the fund manager wasn’t that interested in her derivatives.”

For Class Struggle Against Capitalist Rulers!

Reading this book as a Marxist, what particularly struck me was that there was no discussion whatsoever about the division of social product between wages and profits, or more broadly, surplus value, including rent and interest. The entire book was focused on the division of surplus value between financial and non-financial capitalists, and among competing groups of financial capitalists. It showed that for the most part capitalists are out to screw each other to the max. The politically decisive section of the bourgeoisie will subordinate their own immediate self-interest to what they see as the broader and longer-term interests of their class only when they feel sufficiently threatened by the working class from below or from hostile states from without. And when not, it's a Hobbesian world of all against all.

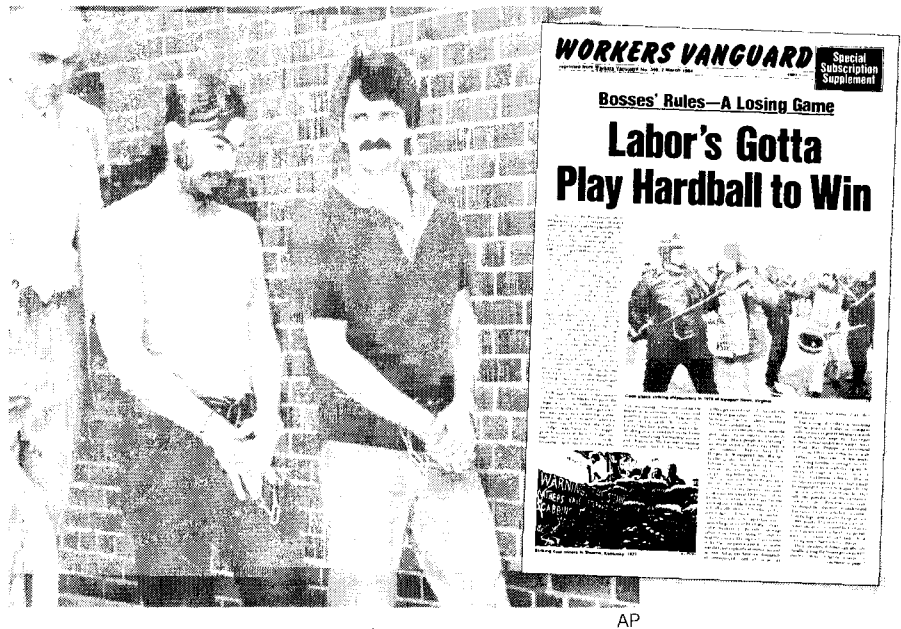
End of U.S. Post-World War II Economic Hegemony

Keeping that in mind, let's schematically view the postwar history of the American capitalist economy. For the first two decades following the Second World War, the U.S. dominated the world market in industrial products. It consistently ran very large balance of trade surpluses with almost all other capitalist countries. However, by the mid 1960s, West Germany and Japan had rebuilt and modernized their economies such that they could compete effectively with the U.S. in world markets, and also in the U.S. domestic market. So the flow of trade magnitudes was reversed. The U.S. began to run large balance of trade deficits.

Within a few years, this reversal destroyed the postwar international monetary system established at a conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944. This was called the gold-dollar exchange standard. The currencies of most important capitalist countries were fixed for long periods against one another and anchored by the dollar. Washington promised—and the emphasis here is on “promised”—that other governments could freely exchange all the dollars they had for gold at a rate of \$35 an ounce.

By the beginning of the 1970s, that was no longer objectively possible. The volume of dollars held by foreign central banks far exceeded the U.S. stock of gold at \$35 an ounce. The French government of Charles de Gaulle, who resented American international dominance and aspired to restore the “grandeur” of France, started exchanging its dollar holdings for gold. So in August 1971, U.S. president Richard Nixon closed the “gold window,” ending the convertibility of the dollar into a universal commodity of intrinsic (labor) value. After a few ineffectual international conferences, what emerged was a non-system of fluctuating exchange rates. Since then currency exchange rates have been determined by market conditions modified by occasional government intervention. The reason I'm going into this is because the regime of fluctuating exchange rates had two long-term consequences, which underlay the present financial crisis.

One: it created a large new element of uncertainty, that is, risk of loss, in all international financial transactions, especially long-term financial transactions. Hence, currency exchange rates became a major sphere of financial speculation. A large part of Das's book on derivative trading dis-



AP

Leaders of U.S. air traffic controllers union hauled off in chains during 1981 strike. Right: 1984 *Workers Vanguard* supplement underlines need for a class-struggle strategy for the workers movement.

cusses hedging against and speculating on changes in currency exchange rates.

Two: by severing the tie between the dollar and gold, American capitalism, at both the corporate and governmental level, has been able to massively increase its foreign debt, the only upper limit being the willingness of foreign governments and investors to hold dollar-denominated assets. The dollar is now worth only about 20 cents in 1971 terms. This aspect of the current world crisis was recently underscored in a commentary by Richard Duncan in the London *Financial Times* (24 November 2008):

“When Richard Nixon destroyed the Bretton Woods International Monetary System in 1971 by closing the ‘gold window’ at the Treasury, he severed the last link between dollars and gold. What followed was a spiralling proliferation of increasingly spurious credit instruments denominated in a debased currency. The most glaring and lethal example of this madness has been the growth of the unregulated derivatives market, which has ballooned in size to \$600,000bn, the equivalent of almost \$100,000 per person on Earth.”

Increasing the Rate of Exploitation

In 1974-75, there was a major, very sharp world economic downturn. Though it didn't last long, it had important consequences especially in the U.S. Coming out of the economic downturn, the American capitalist class made a concerted effort to increase the rate of exploitation of the proletariat—that is, the ratio of surplus value to wages. They demanded, and got, giveback contracts and two-tier wages from the trade-union bureaucracy. They shifted production from the unionized Northeast and Midwest to the non-union South and Southwest and to low-wage countries in Latin America and Asia.

This anti-labor offensive, which began under right-wing Democratic president Jimmy Carter, was then escalated under the even more right-wing Republican president Ronald Reagan. It was signaled by the smashing of the PATCO air controllers strike in 1981, and the subsequent union-busting during the Greyhound strike and other strikes. We addressed the

(continued on page 10)

Karl Marx...

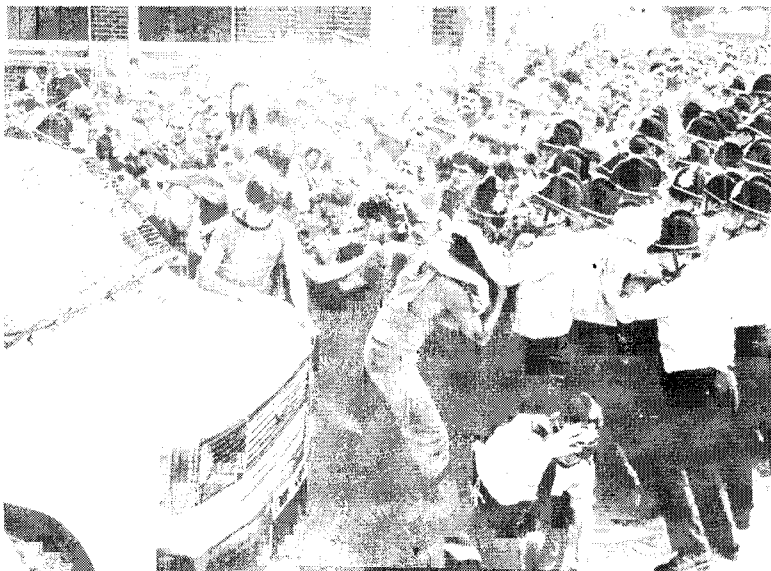
(continued from page 9)

need of the labor movement to combat the capitalist offensive at the time, especially in the piece "Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win" (WV No. 349, 2 March 1984). What we said in "Hardball," that labor can't play by the bosses' rules, remains just as valid for the U.S. labor movement today.

Here I want to emphasize an aspect of the anti-labor offensive in the early-mid 1980s that was not so obvious at the time. The ascendancy of monetarism and financial "deregulation" as a doctrine and policy in Reagan's America and also in Thatcher's Britain was in part based on and conditioned by the crippling of the labor movement. In Britain, the decisive rightward shift in the balance of class forces was the defeat of the 1984-85 miners strike. Comrade McDonald's recent note on the impact of the economic crisis in Britain pointed out that in 1986 the Thatcher government "deregulated" the City of London. It was, as they say, no accident that the unleashing of speculative finance capital in Britain took place right after the defeat of the miners strike.

In the U.S. in the 1980s, which liberals often call "the greed decade," there was a massive upward redistribution of income, combined with a massive increase in U.S. foreign indebtedness. The Reagan administration cut taxes for the rich while greatly expanding military spending in the escalating Cold War II against the Soviet Union. To finance the resulting large government deficits, a large proportion of newly issued Treasury bonds were sold abroad, mainly to the Japanese. Within the space of two or three years, the U.S. went from being the world's largest creditor nation to the world's largest debtor nation.

The upward redistribution of income and the increasing U.S. foreign indebtedness was organically tied to the deindustrialization of America. Large parts of the Midwest came to be called the "rust belt." In the mid 1960s, manufacturing accounted for 27 percent of U.S. gross domestic product and employed 24 percent of the labor force. By the early 2000s, the weight of manufacturing had been reduced to 14 percent of total output, and employed only 11 percent of the total labor force.



Sturrock/Network

Capitalist class war against workers: cops battle pickets during British coal miners strike in August 1984.

Basically, real hourly wages for non-supervisory workers peaked in the early 1970s. For most of the past three and a half decades, real compensation per unit of labor has been less than that level. Only occasionally and briefly, for example during the last phase of the 1990s economic boom, has real hourly take-home pay approached or exceeded what it was in the early '70s. Insofar as working-class families increased their income in recent decades, it was by having both husband and wife work full-time, working a lot of overtime and even two jobs, if such work was available.

However, by the beginning of the 2000s this extensive means of increasing family income was pretty much exhausted. At the same time, working people were faced with a sharp increase in certain basic expenses—housing (both buying and renting), medical care and college tuition for their children. So they had recourse to ever greater debt. By the eve of the current crisis in early 2007, average household debt was **30 percent greater** than annual disposable income. This was possible mainly because families were borrowing against the equity in their homes by "taking advantage," so to speak, of the then expanding housing-price bubble.

Dot-Com Boom and Housing-Price Bubble

To understand the housing-price bubble of the early-mid 2000s, we have to backtrack a bit and look at the so-called dot-com boom of the mid-late 1990s. This was a classic boom-bust cycle as described by Marx in *Capital*. A burst of investment mainly in new technology—in this case, computerization, Internet services and telecommunications—increased what Marx called the organic composition of capital. This is the value of the means of production (the labor time embodied in it) needed to employ living labor. In bourgeois economics, it's called capital per worker. A rising organic composition of capital drives down the rate of profit. Even if productivity rises and wages don't, increased profit per worker does *not* offset increased capital per worker.

This dynamic was clearly seen during the 1990s boom in the telecommunications sector, one of the mainstays of the "new economy" or "IT (information technology) revolution." The return on capital for telecommunications companies fell steadily from 12.5 percent in 1996 to 8.5 percent in 2000. At the time, a Wall Street analyst, Blake Bath, described in his own way the law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit with regard to telecommunications. "It looks like the sector is way overcapitalized," he judged. "Spending has grown at absurdly fast levels relative to the revenues and profits produced by that spending" (*Business Week*, 25 September 2000). Or as Marx put it in volume three of *Capital*: "The *real barrier* of capitalist production is *capital itself*" (emphasis in original).

In 2000-01, the dot-com boom went bust, ushering in a recession. Seeking to soften the impact of the economic downturn, Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve (the U.S. central bank), flooded financial markets with money. The Fed cut the interest rate charged on short-term loans to member banks from 6.5 to 1 percent by 2003, at the time the lowest rate in half a century. During most of this period, the so-called federal funds rate was less than the rate of inflation. In effect, the government was giving away money to Wall Street financiers. In late 2004, the London *Economist* warned that America's

“easy-money policy has spilled beyond its borders” and “has flowed into share prices and houses around the world, inflating a series of asset-price bubbles.”

At the core of the current crisis is a class of financial instruments known as derivatives. Traditional, primary financial securities—corporate shares and bonds—are in a formal, legal sense claims on commodities, i.e., goods and services that embody both use value and exchange value as a product of labor. Derivatives are based on, or otherwise tied to, primary securities. A typical and important type is a credit default swap. Formally, and I emphasize formally, this is a kind of insurance policy against a corporate bond defaulting. However, you can buy a credit default swap without owning the corporate bond. In that case, it's a form of speculation that the corporation will default. Imagine that 20 people hold fire insurance policies on the same building, 19 of whom *don't* own the building. Well, welcome to the world of derivatives. Moreover, you can also speculate on price changes of a corporate default swap through what are called put or call options.

The basic point is that derivatives have been piled on top of derivatives on top of other derivatives. To quantify: in 2005, if you added up the nominal market value of all derivatives in the world, they were *three times greater* than the primary securities on which they were supposedly based. To understand the extreme severity of the current financial crisis, you have to recognize the *sheer magnitude* of what Marx called “fictitious capital” generated over the last few decades. In the early 1980s, if you added up the nominal market value around the world of all corporate shares and bonds and also government bonds, they were equal to about the annual output of goods and services, what bourgeois economists call the global gross domestic product. In 2005, the International Monetary Fund calculated that if you did the same operation, the value of only primary securities to global gross domestic product was almost four times greater. And if you put on top of that derivatives, the amount of risk in the financial system has been multiplied many times over.

Charles R. Morris, a critically minded financial journalist, described how this Everest of spurious paper “wealth” was concocted:

“How could leverage get so high? In the class of instruments we've been talking about, there are relatively few ‘names,’ or underlying companies, that are deeply traded, several hundred at most. And a relatively small number of institutions, basically the global banks, investment banks, and credit hedge funds, do most of the trading. In effect, they've built a huge Yertle the Turtle-like unstable tower of debt by selling it back and forth *among themselves*, booking profits all along the way. That is the definition of a Ponzi game. So long as a free-money regime forestalled defaults, the tower might wobble, but stayed erect. But small disturbances in any part of the structure can bring the whole tower down, and the seismic rumblings already in evidence portend disturbances that are very large.” [emphasis in original]

—*The Trillion Dollar Meltdown: Easy Money, High Rollers, and the Great Credit Crash* (2008)

As the tower of debt collapses, it is relentlessly pressing down the prices of all financial assets other than First World government securities. And they, too, may soon go.

Impact on West Europe and Japan

The financial crisis has greatly exacerbated the interimperialist tensions and conflicts of interest in what is increasingly becoming the European Dis-Union. The various national bailout schemes have intensified intra-EU financial competition. Short-

term speculative money capital flows into those countries—for example, initially Ireland—in which government policies appear to make the banks and other financial institutions more secure. And then it flows right out again when other governments offer seemingly more generous bailout packages.

We've also seen an increasing rift between the two core countries of the EU and euro zone: Germany and France. The vainglorious French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who perchance also happened to hold the revolving-door “presidency” of the EU during the second half of 2008, has presented himself as the savior of world capitalism. He has pushed various ambitious financial regulatory and economic “stimulus” schemes on both an EU-wide and international basis. Needless to say, Sarkozy's posturing has not endeared him to the rulers of non-French imperialist states.

In particular, the German ruling class, represented by the coalition government of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, has rudely squelched the Frenchman's various schemes. No German *geld*, they declaim, will be spent to pay for the profligacy and economic foibles of its European “partners.” More generally, the powers that be in Berlin have insisted that it's up to other countries—read the U.S.—to fix their own economies in a way that will help Germany as well. In the words of German economics minister Michael Glos: “We can only hope that the measures taken by other countries... will help our export economy” (*Financial Times*, 1 December 2008). Dream on, Herr Minister!

Japan, which is a very big player in the international economy, has not gotten sufficient attention from the American financial press. Japan is the second biggest economy in the world. Even more importantly, it's the largest creditor nation in the world. While China has recently overtaken Japan as the biggest holder of U.S. government securities, Japan holds a far larger volume of private debt from corporations all around the world.

In 1989-90, a real estate and stock market bubble in Japan burst, and it ushered in a decade of stagnation, what later came to be known as “the lost decade.” The monetary authorities pushed interest rates down to effectively zero in order to stimulate

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Karl Marx...

(continued from page 11)

investment. As it happened, the policy worked but not in the way the government authorities intended it. The huge overhang of excess industrial capacity and “nonperforming bank loans” discouraged additional investment *in Japan itself*. So Japanese financiers and investors all over the world borrowed cheap money in Japan and then invested it in other countries where for one reason or another the rate of return was higher. In the financial press this was known as the “yen carry trade.”

The yen carry trade is now being pushed hard into reverse gear. That is, investors are selling their assets all over the world, at rapidly diminishing prices, in order to repay their loans to Japanese banks and other institutions. But this has become a *self-defeating* process. Because as this money floods into Japan, it drives up the value of the yen relative to the currencies of almost all the countries in which the debtors have invested. So that increases the real burden of their outstanding debt and future debt repayments. Imagine that you were bailing out a large tub of water and that for every bucket you threw out, a bucket and a half flowed back into the tub through an underground pipe. Well, that’s basically the situation now facing foreign and also the Japanese investors who have taken advantage of the more than a decade-long yen carry trade.

At the same time, the appreciation of the yen is driving up the prices of Japanese goods in world markets at a time of rapidly declining global demand. The core of Japanese industrial capitalism is taking a big hit. Toyota expects a loss in its auto/truck business this fiscal year for the first time in seven decades. Sony has announced it is laying off 5 percent of the workforce in its electronics division and closing down up to six factories around the world.

Global Crisis Jolts China’s “Socialist Market” Economy

So what about China—which we understand is not capitalist, but a bureaucratically deformed workers state? During the 1997-98 East Asian financial-economic crisis, China effectively offset the impact of the crisis by substantially expanding investment in industrial construction and infrastructure. And the Beijing Stalinist regime is trying to replicate that policy now. In early November, it announced a big stimulus package (equivalent to \$585 billion) centered on expanding infrastructure—railways, roads, airports, ports and the like. Subsequently, however, it was reported that the actual amount is much smaller than initially indicated. Only one-quarter of the funds will be provided by the central government; the other three-quarters are supposed to come from local government bodies and state-owned banks. But these institutions have far more limited financial resources. Stephen Green, an economist with the Standard Chartered Bank in Shanghai, commented in this regard: “With revenues falling, it is difficult to see how local governments, banks and companies can make up the rest of the Rmb 4,000bn” (*Financial Times*, 15-16 November 2008).

Comrade Markin and I have discussed the impact of the global crisis on China. And we both think that this time around, unlike in the late 1990s, the Chinese economy is not going to get by basically unscathed. To begin with, this is not a regional but a global economic downturn. And it’s centered in the U.S. and West Europe. All indications are that it’s going to be very severe and fairly prolonged. One conse-



AP

Workers occupation at Kaida toy factory in Dongguan, China, November 2008. Global economic crisis reveals downside and inflexibility of Chinese Stalinists’ “socialist market” economy.

quence is that this increases the likelihood of anti-Chinese trade protectionism in the U.S. and in West Europe.

We are going to see, and are now actually seeing, the *downside and inflexibility* of what the Chinese Stalinists call a “socialist market” economy. There are tens of thousands of factories in China employing tens of millions of workers owned by domestic entrepreneurs, offshore Chinese capitalists in Hong Kong and Taiwan and foreign corporations that produce commodities specifically geared to the advanced capitalist countries, commodities like toys, CD players and global positioning systems for cars. These factories cannot quickly and easily shift production to, say, producing household appliances for Chinese workers and peasants. And that would be the case even if the People’s Liberation Army flew helicopters over working-class neighborhoods and rural villages and dumped bundles of money for the inhabitants.

Furthermore, the Beijing regime has encouraged its own version of a housing-price bubble and a residential construction boom. The large and increasingly affluent urban petty bourgeoisie—Chinese yuppies—borrowed money to buy, build and expand houses not just to live in them but as financial investments. They expected that the market price of these would continue to spiral ever upward. Well, the housing bubble has now burst. In one upscale Beijing neighborhood, the price to purchase new apartments fell 40 percent between February and October of last year. The London *Economist* (25 October 2008) commented: “The housing market provides some nasty shocks to China’s new middle classes.” Of course, we’re not that concerned about the travails of Chinese yuppies. We are, however, very much concerned about the effect of the collapse of the housing-price bubble on *our* class: the proletariat. It’s had a depressing effect on the residential construction industry, most of whose labor force consists of male migrant workers from the countryside.

The upshot is that China, unlike almost all capitalist countries, is not going to go into a recession. But the likelihood is that it is going to experience a sharp decline in the rate of growth, which in the past couple of decades has averaged around 10 percent. Correspondingly, there’s going to be a large increase in the number of urban unemployed, both from workers, who are laid off in the private sector, and from peasants, who are coming into the cities looking for work but not finding



SC photo

Trotskyist League banner at Toronto demonstration calls for class struggle against ruling class at home, June 2004.

any. According to official figures, by the end of November, ten million migrant laborers were laid off from their jobs in urban China. And this economic distress is going to produce increased social unrest. There have already been angry protests by laid-off factory workers in the Pearl River delta, the main region in China producing light manufactures for First World markets. What we do not and cannot know is whether the increase in worker unrest will destabilize the political situation. That is beyond the scope of our current knowledge.

The Revival of Keynesianism

What's likely to happen? All indications are that this is going to be an exceptionally severe and prolonged world economic downturn, especially bad in the U.S. and Britain. At the level of ideology, and to a lesser extent, policy, we are going to see, and have already seen, a shift from the right wing to the left wing of the bourgeois political spectrum: fiscal policy based on increased deficit spending, partial nationalization of the banks and other financial institutions, attempts at expanding and tightening regulation of financial transactions and the like.

Comrade Robertson and others have observed that monetarism as a doctrine has been completely discredited and Keynesianism is back in fashion. I have seen more positive references to John Maynard Keynes in the English-language financial press in the last six weeks than I have seen in the last ten years. Comrade Blythe pointed out that it is a deeply ingrained American liberal myth that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, based on Keynes's doctrines, got the U.S. out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. No, what got the U.S. out of the Depression was the expansion of "public works" during World War II, the "public works" being tanks, fighter planes, aircraft carriers and the atomic bomb.

We have written about Keynesianism in the past, unfortunately the rather distant past in terms of our tendency's history. I recommend in particular three pieces. In the early 1960s Shane Mage, a founder of our tendency, wrote a doctoral thesis, "The 'Law of the Falling Tendency of the Rate of Profit': Its Place in the Marxian Theoretical System and Relevance to the U.S. Economy" (Columbia University, 1963). Incidentally, his thesis adviser was Alexander Ehrlich,

the author of *The Soviet Industrialization Debate 1924-1928*. Mage's work contains a section explaining the difference between Keynes's and Marx's understanding of the basic cause of economic downturns. In the 1974-75 world economic downturn, I wrote a piece called "Marx vs. Keynes" (WV No. 64, 14 March 1975), which was partly theoretical and partly empirical. And in 1997-98, WV ran a five-part series under the general heading of "Wall Street and the War Against Labor." Part Three, "The 1930s New Deal and Labor Reformism" (WV No. 679, 28 November 1997), contains an analysis of Keynes at the theoretical level as well as an empirical analysis of the U.S. during the 1930s, the actual policies of the New Deal and the economic developments during the Second World War.

I want to conclude with a couple of points where the current situation is very different than in the 1930s. As I previously indicated, the current situation is very different in that the sheer volume of nominal, legally contractual debts that cannot be repaid far exceeds, by large multiples, the financial resources of capitalist governments. Already, Britain and Italy have encountered difficulties in financing the increased budget deficits resulting from their various bailout schemes. The *Financial Times* (1 December 2008) quoted Roger Brown, a financial analyst with the Swiss bank UBS, who pointed out:

"Governments are already running into problems, which does not bode well so early after the [bank] recapitalisations and extra funding needs have been announced.

"We do have to ask whether there will be enough investors to buy the bonds, or at the very least over whether this will push yields substantially higher to attract them."

So all these bailout schemes can at most offset a small fraction of the losses.

The second is that the U.S. is going into this deep downturn with an enormous existing overhang of debt, much of which is held by East Asian governments and investors. And this puts a pretty tight upper limit on additional deficit spending. In his first post-election pronouncement, Barack Obama sought to *dampen*, not encourage, expectations that the U.S. is soon going to return to "prosperity": "I have said before and will repeat again: It is not going to be quick, and it is not going to be easy for us to dig ourselves out of the hole that we are in." Thus spake the new chief executive of the most powerful capitalist country in the world.

So what is the solution? It is, as we know, both simple and radical. The working class has to take over the productive resources of society—the factories, transport systems, electric power generating systems—from the capitalists and, through the establishment of a planned economy, use these resources in the interests of the working class and society at large. But in order to do that, you need a political party that represents the interests of the working class against the capitalist class. In the U.S., such a party would also stand for the rights and interests of the black and Latino oppressed minorities, for the rights of immigrants and all other oppressed sections of society. To build such a party, the workers have to break with, in particular, the Democratic Party—that is, the more liberal, or at least more liberal-talking, party of American capitalism. It is also necessary to oust the existing pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy and replace it with a leadership that fights for the interests of the workers, and again, of all of the oppressed. And it's only when that is done that it will be possible to realize a basic principle, namely, that those who labor must rule. ■

Zionism at York...

(continued from page 4)

attacks on a Gaza university.

Universities in Canada are no less attached to the Canadian state than Israeli universities are to the Zionist state. The governing bodies of York and the University of Toronto are rogues' galleries of the Canadian ruling class. No different from their Israeli counterparts, Canadian universities are run to benefit the capitalists, in the first place by training the administrative, technical and cultural personnel the capitalist system needs. This can range from the benign (high school math teachers, say) to the deeply malignant (military researchers, CSIS operatives or "industrial relations" strikebreakers).

The multiple attempts to muzzle defenders of the Palestinians underscores this fact. Since the start of this year alone, Ottawa's Carleton University has taken the Orwellian measure of banning a poster that depicts a Palestinian child under a descending Israeli missile. University of Toronto president David Naylor personally intervened to block room bookings for a conference about Israeli Apartheid after a Zionist reactionary tipped him off. Now U of T's administration plans to send its thought police into pro-Palestinian meetings.

Unlike the liberal BDS campaign, the Spartacus Youth Club is for *class struggle* against the Canadian capitalist class



TL banner at Toronto protest against Israel's attack on Lebanon, Gaza, July 2006. SC photo

and its agencies like the university administrations. For worker-student-teacher control of the universities! Abolish the administration! Students must look to the social power of the working class, the only social force capable of sweeping away capitalism worldwide and ending once and for all the genocidal terror against the Palestinians and all other oppressed nations. ■

Gaza...

(continued from page 5)

And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing."

A 27 December 2008 statement by Workers World Party's (WWP) International Action Center declared: "We demand that U.S. aid to Israel be cut to zero, and that this money be used instead for reparations for the Palestinian people, to ensure their right to return, and for homes, jobs, health care and education for working people in the U.S." The reformist WWP, which celebrated Obama's victory as a "triumphant step forward in the struggle against racism" (*Workers World*, 14 November 2008), promotes the lie that U.S. imperialism can serve the interests of the Palestinians abroad and working people at home. U.S. imperialism—responsible for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq—is the deadliest enemy of workers and the oppressed throughout the world. **U.S. out of Iraq and Afghanistan! Down with U.S. imperialism!**

Both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples of Israel/Palestine lay claim to the same small piece of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of national self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. The national emancipation of the Palestinians—including the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland—necessarily entails workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Syrian Ba'athist bonapartists and the capitalist rulers of Lebanon—countries that all have sizable Palestinian populations. We look to the proletariat of the region more widely, such as in Egypt, which has been a center of working-class strikes and protests over the past several

years. **For a socialist federation of the Near East!**

Israeli society is not a seamless mass of reaction but a class-divided society, with a working class exploited at the hands of its "own" ruling class. We have no illusions that it will be easy to shatter the chauvinism of the Hebrew working class. It will likely take cataclysmic events—such as military defeat or revolutionary upheavals in the region—to break the Israeli proletariat from Zionism. This task is not made easier by the criminal indiscriminate terror bombings carried out by Palestinian forces against Israeli civilians, which drive the Hebrew population further into the arms of the Zionist rulers. The key in Israel/Palestine, as throughout the region, is the forging of revolutionary workers parties that fight for socialist revolution internationally. ■

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Zionist Bloodbath in Gaza

تدفق من الدماء الفلسطينية
تفجير إسرائيل من الداخل
جماع الدم الصهيوني في غزة!

من أجل تحرير الأراضي المقدسة المحتلة

- Defend the Palestinian People!
- Israel Out of the Occupied Territories!
- For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Translated from *Workers Vanguard* No. 927 (2 January 2009)

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Capitalist Crisis...

(continued from page 1)

was enough for Michael Ignatieff's Liberals to endorse the budget, marking an end to the Liberal-NDP coalition that threatened to bring down the government in December. As we explained in a *Spartacist Canada* supplement published that month, the Liberal-NDP coalition was "an *enemy* of the interests of the working class," dedicated to maintaining capitalist exploitation at home and imperialist oppression abroad, notably in Afghanistan.

In a recent speech to the Toronto Board of Trade, NDP leader Jack Layton called on workers to have the "courage" to "take a pay cut so your friends at the plant can keep their job" (*Toronto Star*, 23 January). Leaders of the Canadian Auto Workers have agreed to reopen contracts with the auto companies, who are demanding massive

givebacks in wages and benefits. Meanwhile, the Canadian Labour Congress bureaucracy is campaigning for a "National Summit of labour, business and community leaders." According to CLC president Ken Georgetti, "We need an economy that values a healthy private sector and a vibrant public sector working together for the benefit of all" (10 February statement). The NDP and labour bureaucrats push reactionary nationalism—defense of Canadian industry against rivals abroad—thereby further tying the working class to the interests of their exploiters and oppressors.

Taking on the attacks of the capitalist ruling class requires a thoroughgoing break with this class-collaborationist perspective, and the forging of a new leadership of the working class committed to the fight to sweep away capitalist class rule. We reprint below the *SC* supplement, first published on 22 December 2008.

Liberal-NDP Coalition: Tool of the Bosses

The formation of the Liberal-NDP parliamentary coalition in early December was greeted with elation by the trade-union bureaucracy and most of the reformist left. The Canadian Labour Congress built rallies across the country with Canadian flags and signs reading "Coalition Yes—Make Parliament Work." Joining the rallies with calls to "Dump Harper," the International Socialists (I.S.) cheered, "This is an incredibly exciting moment. It shows how quickly an economic crisis can create a political crisis that can potentially sweep away the Tories" (*Socialist Worker* supplement, 6 December). The Communist Party (CP) called to "drive the far-right Harper Tory gang out of office, and replace it with a coalition government" (*People's Voice*, 1-31 December).

Far from being a step forward, the Liberal-NDP coalition is an *enemy* of the interests of the working class. The Liberal Party has been the main party of capitalist rule in Canada for more than a century. During the 1990s and the early part of this decade, the Chrétien and Martin Liberal governments carried out the most sweeping assaults on social programs in Canadian history. For its part, the NDP is what Marxists call a *bourgeois workers party*. While linked to the unions via the labour bureaucracy, it has a thoroughly pro-capitalist program of maintaining the present system, sometimes packaged in "social justice" rhetoric. The New Democrats have regularly propped up federal Liberal governments—most recently the Martin regime in 2005—and whenever they rule on their own provincially, they administer capitalism with a vengeance. In Ontario, the NDP imposed across-the-board pay cuts on government workers; in B.C., they sent the army and police against Native protesters.

Now NDP leader Jack Layton is salivating at the prospect of seats in a Liberal-run federal cabinet. The coalition parties' pledge of "fiscal responsibility" means resolving the



Wylid/CP

NDP's Jack Layton, Liberals' Stéphane Dion and Bloc Québécois' Gilles Duceppe seal deal, December 2008. NDP social democrats uphold Canadian capitalism.

economic crisis on the backs of the working class. Their promise to keep Canadian troops in Afghanistan until 2011 means continued enforcement of the brutal neocolonial occupation in that country. Capitalist exploitation at home, imperialist brigandage abroad: that is what the Liberal-NDP pact offers working people! Indeed, the installation of a "progressive" government backed by the union bureaucracy could well make it easier for the capitalists to implement sweeping attacks on the workers and poor than under a right-wing ideologue like Harper. As Marxists who fight for the class independence of the workers from the capitalists and their parties, we oppose on principle the Liberal-NDP alliance.

The current deep international economic crisis, putting at

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Down With Anglo Chauvinism—Independence for Quebec!

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risk the livelihoods of hundreds of millions, testifies to the bankruptcy of a social system based on private ownership of the productive forces and savage exploitation of the working class. Over 70,000 jobs were axed in Canada in November alone, on top of the nearly 400,000 manufacturing and forestry jobs eliminated in the last six years. Some \$100 billion in retirement funds have been wiped out in the last nine months. Social programs are starved of funds or looted like EI, even as Ottawa gives tens of billions of dollars to bail out the Bay Street bankers.

A successful fight against this ruinous social system requires a leadership that understands that the interests of the working class and the capitalist class are counterposed and irreconcilable. What is needed is a class-struggle workers party committed to smashing capitalist rule and instituting a rationally planned, socialist economy based on meeting human needs, not private profit. Such a party can only be built through political struggle against the social-democratic NDP and union tops, whose quest for “partnership” between labour and capital has shackled the workers to the enemy class and sapped their fighting power. The result has been an assault on living standards and the wholesale destruction of unionized jobs, while the capitalists “divide and rule” by whipping up chauvinism against the Québécois and racism against immigrants and other ethnic minorities.

A Wave of Bigotry Against Quebec

The parliamentary crisis brought the Quebec national question—the subjugation of the francophone Québécois in a “united,” Anglo-dominated Canada—back to political center stage. Gone was the Tories’ earlier cynical claim to be Quebec’s “true nationalists,” designed to garner votes there in the October federal election. Instead, Harper sought to salvage his minority government through a furious chauvinist campaign against Quebec.

Tory spokesmen railed that the Liberals and NDP were “getting into bed with Quebec separatists” because the sovereignist Bloc Québécois pledged to support a coalition government until mid 2010. One Conservative MP called this “as close to treason and sedition as I can imagine.” Harper’s crusade found particular traction in Western Canada, where radio talk shows spewed vitriol against the Québécois. The country is once again sharply divided on national lines, as Tory support has surged in English Canada while the coalition leads the polls in Quebec.

But it’s not just the Tories who fan the flames of anti-Quebec bigotry in the name of “Canadian unity.” It was the Trudeau Liberal government that sent troops to occupy Quebec in 1970, aiming to suppress widespread social and national struggle. It was the Chrétien Liberals who made plans to mobilize the army again if the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum had won. And it was the same Liberal regime—with the support of the NDP—that passed the Clarity Act, outlawing Quebec’s democratic right to

self-determination, i.e., to independence.

Harper’s crude appeal to Anglo chauvinism is laying the basis for a new rise of pro-sovereignty sentiment in Quebec. Following a federal election where the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc won a majority of Quebec seats for the sixth straight time, the Parti Québécois came close to upsetting the provincial Liberals in the December 8 Quebec election. For decades now, the “pro-Canada” chauvinism of the NDP and the central labour bureaucracy has helped drive the historically more militant Québécois working class into the arms of its own exploiters, represented by the Bloc and PQ. Today the Bloc and PQ’s endorsement of the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa speaks volumes about their hostility to the class interests of the Québécois workers.

As opponents of the chauvinism of “our” capitalist rulers—and of all forms of nationalism—Marxists advocate independence for Quebec. We seek to get the national question off the agenda, to create conditions where it can be clear to the workers in both English Canada and Quebec that their own capitalist exploiters are the enemy, not each other. Absent this, chauvinist bigotry against Quebec and the national antagonisms that this generates will continue to divide the working class, undermining its ability to struggle against capitalist exploitation. The palpable anger among working people against the massive job losses must be directed against the capitalist rulers, not into chauvinism and nationalism.

“Left” Props for Capitalist Rule

Our starting point is the need to win the working class to see the necessity of sweeping away the rule of capital through socialist revolution. Running for, to say nothing of taking, executive positions in the capitalists’ state is counterposed to this basic purpose. More than a century ago, in denouncing the entry of French “Socialist” Alexandre Millerand into a capitalist government, Rosa Luxemburg wrote:

“The character of a bourgeois government isn’t determined by the personal character of its members, but by its organic function in bourgeois society. The government of the modern state is essentially an organization of class domination, the regular



SC photo

Reformist left marches with the bourgeoisie. International Socialists’ signs at 6 December 2008 Toronto rally to support Liberal-NDP coalition call to “Dump Harper.”

functioning of which is one of the conditions of existence of the class state. With the entry of a socialist into the government, and class domination continuing to exist, the bourgeois government doesn't transform itself into a socialist government, but a socialist transforms himself into a bourgeois minister."

—"The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case," 1899

In preparing and organizing the 1917 Russian Revolution—the first successful working-class seizure of power in history—the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky opposed as class treason any form of support to the capitalist Provisional Government, including when it was joined by the Menshevik social democrats. The Bolsheviks fought instead for the workers supported by the peasant masses to take power through their own councils, the soviets. In the mid 1930s, the Stalinist Communist parties began seeking political pacts with so-called "progressive" capitalists under the rubric of a "popular front." Continuing the Bolsheviks' revolutionary tradition, Trotsky denounced this as a betrayal of the fundamentals of proletarian class independence. Against pseudo-leftists who presented the popular front "as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver," he explained that opposition to such class collaboration was "the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch" ("The POUM and the Popular Front," 1936).

The Liberal-NDP coalition is, in essence, a Canadian version of the popular front. Yet a host of purported "socialists" openly support it, or call to pressure it to the left, or seek merely to package it differently. Such is the logic of the reformists' "fight the right" politics, in which anyone and everyone is presented as a potential ally against the Harper Tories.

Most shameless are the CP and its youth group, the Young Communist League, which writes: "We call on all young people to hit the streets, and unite without hesitation in support [of] the coalition" ("The Political Crisis and Youth," 2 December). Others want to attach a few conditions. In its December 6 supplement, the I.S. warns of "problems" with past NDP deals with the Liberals and says the coalition shouldn't be given a "blank cheque." But its aim is only to



Governor-General Michaëlle Jean enthroned in the Senate, January 26. Abolish the monarchy and all its trappings!

Hanson/CP

pressure the Liberal-NDP coalition in the streets: "the key question is what demands we make on the Coalition, and how we mobilize to win them."

For Fightback and Socialist Action (SA), two reformist outfits ensconced in the NDP, the problem with the present coalition is that it is too brazen in its class collaboration—so they want to clothe it in more subtle hues. Fightback advises that the NDP could "have worked to impose conditions on a minority Liberal government to benefit the working class" (marxist.ca, 4 December). SA goes a half step further, calling for an NDP-Liberal "accord" modeled on the deal made by the NDP to support an Ontario Liberal government in the 1980s. "It worked in Ontario in the mid-1980s," opines an SA leaflet, "Now, truly, the stakes are higher, so it will be more difficult. But it's worth a try."

These groups say it's okay to support a capitalist government so long as you don't formally join the cabinet. The history of the class struggle has shown that, whatever the particular mechanism, "socialist" support to a bourgeois regime is utterly and completely counterposed to working-class interests. Writing in 1924, Trotsky excoriated social democracy as "the acceptance of reformist oppositional activity within the framework of bourgeois society," calling this "the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state" (*The Lessons of October*). These words could have been written against the Canadian fake left today.

Quebec and the Reformist Left

Most reformist left groups in English Canada who have commented on the parliamentary crisis treat the Tories' vile crusade against Quebec as at best a third-rate question. As "left" appendages of the NDP, they necessarily capitulate to the Anglo chauvinism that is a stock-in-trade of the New Democrats. Despite a paper position for Quebec's right to self-determination, two of these groups, Fightback and the CP, go so far as to *oppose* Quebec independence.

This is also the stance taken by the group known as the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). After issuing a leaflet (in English only) that called on Quebec workers to vote No in the 1995 sovereignty referendum, the BT was officially invited to a mass "Canadian unity" rally organized by business groups in Montreal on the eve of the referendum. When their only Québécois member quit, he protested the BT's "de facto bloc with the Canadian bourgeoisie." More recently, the BT posted on its website an October 8 presentation by its Canadian leader, Tom Riley, "On the U.S. & Canadian Elections," that managed to avoid mentioning Quebec even once. Now the BT has another statement, dated December 10, on the parliamentary crisis. This time they choke out a half sentence in which they "note with distaste Harper's crude attempts to whip up Anglo chauvinism." Reducing the need to combat chauvinism to a matter of "taste," the BT's latest statement avoids even a for-the-record mention of Quebec's right to self-determination!

While adapting to chauvinism in English Canada, in Quebec most of the reformist left tails bourgeois nationalism. Just about every "socialist" group with a presence there has liquidated into the petty-bourgeois populist Québec Solidaire. QS, which won a seat for the first time in the recent Quebec election, portrays itself as an alternative home for sovereignists repelled by the austerity attacks of the PQ

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when it was in power in Quebec, most recently from 1994 to 2003. For all its for-the-people rhetoric, QS's program does not even pay lip service to the class struggle, let alone to socialism. On taking his seat in Quebec's National Assembly, QS leader Amir Khadir made clear that, far from being "radical," his party seeks nothing more than what Barack Obama has promised in the United States (*Globe and Mail*, 18 December).

At the federal level, QS echoes its Bloc and PQ big brothers by calling to "support the formation of a coalition government" of the Liberals and NDP (quebecsolidaire.net, 3 December). One would search in vain for any criticism of this stand from most of QS's "left" publicists. In hailing as "historic" QS's first parliamentary victory, Fightback makes the absurd claim that QS "presented voters with something they had never seen before: a platform that spoke to their aspirations and their problems, without compromise, and without skirting the issues" (marxist.ca, 10 December). As for "skirting the issues," Fightback's lengthy posting manages to avoid mentioning QS's explicit backing for the Liberal-NDP coalition!

The Fraud of Capitalist Democracy

The Tory government has managed to survive until at least late January by suspending parliament and delaying the vote of non-confidence pledged by the coalition. The fact that the legal power to suspend parliament rests with the unelected representative of the English queen, governor-general Michaëlle Jean, underlines the deeply reactionary nature of this institution. Marxists call for the immediate abolition of the monarchy, the governor-general and the unelected Senate. These are not mere relics, but have long been used as a rallying point for social reaction.

In a December 5 statement distributed at a Toronto rally for the Liberal-NDP coalition titled "Canada's constitutional coup: A warning to the working class," the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) decries the "flagrant attack on parliamentary norms" by the Tories. The SEP may oppose the coalition, but they echo it in claiming: "the suspension of parliament and of

the MPs' right to defeat and replace the sitting government strikes at the most fundamental democratic right—the right of the people to choose their own government." Since when did people "choose their own government" under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie?! While worrying about "the defense of constitutional principles," the SEP *opposes* the democratic right of Quebec to self-determination. The SEP is neither socialist nor for equality—they are political pirates who will show any flag to attack any target.

An even more flagrant case of embellishing capitalist democracy is the response to the parliamentary standoff by "anti-globalization" author Naomi Klein. In an interview published by rabble.ca (3 December) under the title, "We can't lose this moment," Klein calls to back the Liberal-NDP coalition because "we now have an opportunity to see a better version of democracy and see more people represented in government."

For our part, we stand with Lenin in denouncing bourgeois parliamentary democracy as a fraud and a deception against the working people. As the Bolshevik leader explained nearly a century ago, capitalist parliaments are "*instruments for the oppression of the workers by the bourgeoisie.*" "Important questions under bourgeois democracy," he emphasized, "are decided by the stock exchange and the banks." This would be just as much the case under a Liberal-NDP coalition as under Harper's Tories.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The Liberals have seized on the delay in the parliamentary vote to dump their ineffectual leader Stéphane Dion. His replacement, Michael Ignatieff, is infamous for his earlier support to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and his apologies for Washington's use of torture in the "war on terror." While the coalition with the NDP remains intact for now, it is widely speculated that Ignatieff will junk it at the earliest opportunity, so long as Harper tosses a bone or two of "fiscal stimulus" into the next budget.

Whether or not the coalition holds together over the coming weeks, the events of this parliamentary crisis bear important lessons for the working class. In pledging to join a Liberal Party government, the NDP, with the full support of the union bureaucracy, has demonstrated with crystal clarity that it is an agency of the capitalists within the workers movement. The open or tacit support given to the coalition by the reformist left shows that they are opponents of the necessary fight for the political independence of the working class from its class enemies. And the eruption of Anglo chauvinism demonstrates again the centrality of defense of Quebec's national rights to a proletarian revolutionary perspective in Canada.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste is fighting to build the nucleus of a revolutionary Marxist party that can root itself in the working class. Taking up the cause of all the oppressed, such a party would give conscious leadership to the struggles of the workers not only to improve their present conditions but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. "Unity" with the oppressors, or with their social-democratic political agents, is the road to defeat. The only way to smash the all-sided assault on social programs, to assure free quality medical care, childcare and jobs and decent living standards for all, to end the neocolonial pillage of the Third World, is by ripping the productive forces from the hands of the capitalist class through socialist revolution and putting them in the hands of those whose labour makes society run. ■

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Gérard Le Métell, 1989-2007

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Bountiful...

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tared as a criminal. As right-wing *National Post* (9 January) columnist Colby Cosh noted wryly, “any man who has ever thrown a party for his mistress might look at section 293 and shudder slightly.”

Indeed, not everyone is marching in lockstep with this ominous campaign. A 2005 study commissioned by the federal government’s own Status of Women Canada recommended repeal of the polygamy law. One of the authors, McGill University law professor Angela Campbell, recalled what repeal of this law would mean to the Bountiful women she interviewed:

“A few women reflected on the relief they would feel to live without the stigma of being branded a ‘criminal.’ Others said they believed that decriminalization would foster broader social acceptance of their lifestyle and reduce the hostility they occasionally encounter outside Bountiful. Some women recounted having been spat on and verbally assaulted.”

—*Gazette* [Montreal], 26 July 2008

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association, in a February 9 news release, called to drop the charges against Blackmore and Oler, noting, “Literally thousands of Canadians might be captured by a strict enforcement approach to polygamy law.” And the gay rights activists at *Xtra.ca* noted, “Now the trial of two cultish leaders of a tiny conservative religious sect could very well be one of the most important legal battles of the next decade for gays and lesbians and all people who have flirted with unconventional sexual expression. Will we be brave enough to tackle it?” (“Knives out for polygamy,” 14 January). In sharp contrast, the government’s persecution of the Bountiful Mormons has thus far been met with stony silence by the reformist left.

Capitalist Rulers’ Anti-Sex Witchhunt

The persecution of polygamists is part of a broader anti-sex hysteria whipped up by the capitalist ruling class. In the 1980s and 1990s, people were force-fed the lie that there was an epidemic of child molestations and ritual abuse of children, while sexual predators supposedly lurked behind every teacher’s desk. In 2004 the federal Liberal government created a new crime of “sexual exploitation” that makes consent irrelevant. The Criminal Code now says that a relationship between someone under 18 and another in a “position of authority”—e.g., a teacher or sports coach—is by definition exploitative, a crime for which the latter could spend up to ten years in jail. Then there is the Tory government’s “anti-crime” law, passed last year with the backing of the NDP. Among many other sweepingly reactionary provisions, this law raised the “age of consent” from 14 to 16.

The state uses “age of consent” laws to oppress youth—who are supposed to go against nature and be “sexless” especially if they’re female. We oppose “age of consent” and “statutory rape” laws, which strengthen the repressive reach of the state, as well as serving as a diversion from the real brutality of this sick capitalist society. We uphold *effective consent* as the only guiding principle in sexual relations—i.e., mutual agreement and understanding, as opposed to coercion. As long as those who take part agree to do so at the time, no one, least of all the state, has the right to tell them they can’t do it. Rape and violent abuse are terrible crimes that occur in society and in monogamous as well as polygamous families. But the prosecution of the Mormons for polygamy can only force possible victims to retreat further underground in legitimate fear of the authorities.

The bourgeois state persecutes the religious practices of smaller, fringe sects or oppressed minorities to reinforce the authority of “mainstream” religions and, more importantly, the capitalist state itself. To defend their class rule, the capitalists wield their machinery of repression—the cops, the courts and the military—against working people and the oppressed, especially immigrants and other minorities. The horrific taser killing of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski by cops at the Vancouver airport in October 2007 provoked outrage around the world. Now they are killing Dziekanski all over again in a whitewash “inquiry” whose purpose is to refurbish the image of the racist capitalist state. Racist cop terror in Vancouver again made the headlines this January, when three off-duty policemen were caught in the act of brutally beating a newspaper delivery man of Fijian origin, Firoz Khan.

The Family and Organized Religion: Props of Bourgeois Rule

With revolting hypocrisy, the government is wielding its “save the children” card to more thoroughly target those it deems “deviant,” including the Bountiful community. The lie of government concern for mothers and children is worn threadbare, as Liberal, Tory and NDP regimes alike have slashed social programs, with a huge toll on the most impoverished. Even before the current economic collapse, 15 percent of children in Canada were living in poverty. In B.C., according to the government’s own statistics, the figure was 22 percent; in Vancouver 29 percent.

The institution of the family is the fundamental basis for the oppression of women and youth. The family arose with the advent of private property as the mechanism for passing property from one generation to the next, with the monogamous wife supposedly ensuring the heirs’ paternity. The family serves as the social mechanism to rear the next generation, and under capitalism serves, along with religion, to instill obedience to authority among youth. It reinforces, as Friedrich Engels put it, “the domination of the man over the woman and the single family as the economic unit of society” (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* [1884]). Engels captured the absurdity of the bourgeoisie’s claim that the monogamous family is the pinnacle of “normalcy,” writing:

“If strict monogamy is the height of all virtue, then the palm must go to the tapeworm, which has a complete set of male and female sexual organs in each of its 50 to 200 proglottides or sections, and spends its whole life copulating in all its sections with itself. Confining ourselves to mammals, however, we find all forms of sexual life—promiscuity, indications of group marriage, polygny, monogamy.”

Indeed, the sexual proclivities of a group-living mammalian species such as our own are patently ill suited to the rigid heterosexual monogamy which forms the ideological foundation of the institution of the family, reinforced by organized religion.

Certainly the family is a cesspool of frustration, coercion and abuse—whether the capitalists’ favoured monogamous family or that of the Mormon polygamists. But it is almost universally far worse to fall into the clutches of this barbaric and brutal government’s institutions. Youth who try to escape their families have nowhere to go and often end up on the streets or in detention centers. We fight for 24-hour, quality daycare and for safe shelters for youth and teens as well as for free contraceptives and abortion on demand. If they so choose, teenagers should be able to emancipate themselves from their parents, both legally

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and through real access to education, training and union jobs. These are basic measures needed to help those most in need to escape poverty and stultifying family life.

The family structure, whether monogamous or polygamous, necessarily oppresses women. However, not everybody understands the source of their oppression, and people do all sorts of things that are undoubtedly bad for them that the state still has no business throwing them in prison for.

As Marxists, we understand that the private property system, upheld by the bourgeois state, and the family cannot be "reformed" away. Only socialist revolution on an international scale can lay the material basis for the liberation of women. The working class in power would abolish the capitalist private property and inheritance system, replacing it with a planned collectivized economy based on material abundance in which child-rearing and other functions now performed by the family will be the responsibility of society as a whole.

Bourgeois Oppression, Imperialist Barbarism

In a vicious editorial saluting the Bountiful witchhunt, the *Globe and Mail* (14 January) stated that if the government had not launched this prosecution, then "everything would be up for grabs—wife assault, genital mutilation, culturally specific practices of corporal punishment, Islamic courts." Grotesquely, this equation of voluntary relationships with the most horrific anti-woman violence and oppression is echoed by the pseudo-leftists of the International Campaign Against Shari'a Court in Canada. Calling to extend the polygamy prosecutions to Muslims, Campaign leader Homa Arjomand told the *Vancouver Province* (8 January), "I am hoping one day all people who commit polygamy will face jail time."

Mormonism is one of many unusual North American religious sects (check out Christian Science and L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology) essentially chosen by their practitioners. But in many regions of the world the legacy of precapitalist social backwardness means that women are held to be little more than property, requiring struggle by communists to abolish institutionalized polygamy, as well as the bride price, female genital mutilation and other such practices. In countries of belated capitalist development, social backwardness is reinforced and manipulated by imperialist domination. For



no credit

Doukhor family in jail, Nelson, B.C., 1932.

example, the U.S. and Canadian imperialists prop up reactionary client states like impoverished Afghanistan and oil-rich Saudi Arabia, where women are forcibly veiled from head-to-toe and denied virtually any rights. At home or abroad, looking to the imperialist rulers of Canada—whose troops are currently killing innocent civilians in the brutal occupation of Afghanistan—to be liberators of women is deadly dangerous and deeply reactionary.

As for religion itself, Marxist materialism is counterposed to reactionary superstition and mysticism and we are for the separation of church and state. As Marxists committed to building a revolutionary party, we strongly opposed the proposal five years ago to give Islamic sharia courts legal standing in Ontario:

"Religion ought to be a private matter in relation to the state. People should be free to practice their religion without the state persecution and religious bigotry which has spawned centuries of repression and bloodshed. But these religious tribunals are not a matter of private religious practice. Their rulings will have the force of law, making them part of the legal machinery of the capitalist state which in turn is to be the enforcer of religious obscurantism."

—"No to Ontario's 'Sharia Courts'!" SC No. 142, Fall 2004

Religion provides moral justification for exploitation and reactionary prejudices. It deflects workers' struggles into piety and acquiescence to bourgeois power. But religious beliefs cannot be "abolished" by decree; they will only wither away when material want is overcome and the oppressed masses no longer feel the need to resort to the supernatural to provide for the hope of a better life, which is unattainable in capitalist society.

Political and religious dissenters have long sought a haven in rural areas of western Canada, and there are numerous examples of the bourgeoisie wielding the state's enormous repressive powers against them. For many decades, the Doukhobors—pacifist refugees from Tsarist repression who fled to Canada more than 100 years ago—were targeted for their communal mode of living and their refusal to send their children to public school because they did not want them indoctrinated with militarism.

Persecuted by state authorities, the Doukhobors protested in the nude and burnt buildings—both their own and those of the government. For their beliefs, they endured mass arrests in the 1930s and a campaign of hysteria and repression during the Cold War 1950s. This culminated in a vicious 1953 raid on their Kootenay community by the right-wing B.C. government of W.A.C. Bennett. The cops seized 170 children and threw them into the same fenced and guarded "residential school" in New Denver where Japanese Canadians were interned during World War II. Treated brutally, allowed only minimal contact with their parents and barred from speaking their native Russian language, many were held until 1959.

While the Bountiful Mormon polygamists may be a peculiar sect, they are not the ones wielding the massive apparatus of violence and death that is the bourgeois state. Capitalism is an irrational, destructive system that breeds racism, war and oppression. It will take a socialist revolution to end the oppression of women and youth and liberate humanity from the clutches of capitalist barbarism. This requires the working class to come to the understanding that the capitalist state with its cops, courts and military must be smashed and replaced with a workers state, on the way to building a classless communist society where social oppression based on race, gender or age will be but a dim memory of a brutal past. ■

Holiday Appeal...

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describing how the broad support of trade unions was key to defeating a Klan/Nazi frameup of himself and fellow trade unionist Mike Mares 25 years ago. An outrageous exception to this was the president of their own union, the Letter Carriers Union of Canada, one Robert McGarry, who tried to sabotage the defense and expelled them and five of their supporters from the union.

All the Holiday Appeals played taped greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal made especially for the occasion. A letter on behalf of the eight surviving members of the MOVE 9 thanked the PDC for its work "for not only this year, but all of the years in the past, as we approach yet another new administration of capitalism." The MOVE 9 were framed up on conspiracy and murder charges after a vicious police assault on MOVE's home in Philadelphia's Powelton Village neighbourhood in August 1978.

Ed Poindexter, a former Black Panther supporter and a leader of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, also sent greetings. He and his comrade Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa were framed up as part of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation under which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed.

Jaen Laaman and Tom Manning are the two remaining members of the Ohio 7 still in prison. This radical group took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings against symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late 1970s and 1980s. In his greetings Jaen Laaman expressed his gratitude for those "supporting U.S. political prisoners," and explained that as he was writing these words on 15 November 2008, he had just fully completed his Massachusetts state sentence after being in captivity for over 24 years. But, he added, "Today, I also started my next federal sentence of 53 years. In two days I

will be turned over to U.S. Marshals and transported to some federal prison to begin this new sentence." This is an outrage—free Laaman and Manning now!

Messages were also received from Leonard Peltier and Hugo Pinell. In January Peltier, incarcerated for 33 years because of his activism in the American Indian Movement, was put in solitary confinement after a brutal beating following his transfer to the U.S. penitentiary in Canaan. Pinell, a militant anti-racist prison rights leader, is the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. Despite hundreds of letters of support, Pinell has repeatedly been denied parole. Now in his 60s, Pinell continues to serve a life sentence, and, as he wrote, is being "kept in maximum custody status, totally deprived and not allowed contact visits."

The cases of the 16 class-war prisoners honoured at this year's benefits exemplify key aspects of our Marxist program. Since initiating the stipends program, we have provided support to 33 prisoners on three continents. These included fighters against black oppression in the U.S. and labour militants slapped with prison sentences for defending strikes and defending their union from scabs and thugs. We also sent a stipend to Mordechai Vanunu, the courageous Israeli nuclear technician who in 1986 was kidnapped in Italy by Mossad agents and railroaded to prison for 18 years for exposing the extent of Israel's nuclear arsenal. After the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy treacherously withdrew the Red Army from Afghanistan in 1988-89, the PDC organized a campaign that raised over \$44,000 worldwide in support of the heroic people of Jalalabad who were fighting against the U.S.-backed *mujahedin* cutthroats.

We urge SC readers to help drive the work of the PDC forward! Become a sustaining contributor! Send contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 314, Station B, Toronto, ON M5T 2W1. For more information about the class-war prisoners see: www.partisandefense.org/stipend.html. ■

Defend Tamil People...

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the streets in protest. Fifty thousand protested in Toronto on January 30, filling downtown streets for five hours on a weekday afternoon. Another 50,000 marched in London the next day. The government of India's Tamil Nadu state ordered the closure of all colleges and student hostels to prevent a threatened student strike in support of Lankan Tamils.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste of Canada has joined protests against the massacre, distributing literature in solidarity with the besieged Tamils and putting forward our proletarian-revolutionary perspective for national and social liberation. We have long upheld the right of self-determination for the Tamil people—i.e., their right to form an independent state in the largely Tamil North and East. We stand for the military defense of the LTTE against the army assault and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Lankan army from the area.

At the same time, we give no political support to the LTTE—bourgeois nationalists who, carrying out the logic of nationalism, have staged their own interethnic attacks on Sinhalese villagers and expelled Muslims from the historic Tamil city of Jaffna, the capital of the northern region, while employing murderous violence against other Tamil nationalist groups. Our perspective is the fight for Marxist

workers parties throughout the region that can unite the working people and oppressed in the struggle for workers revolutions in Lanka and throughout South Asia. That is the only road to liberation from the poverty, oppression and national chauvinism that are endemic to capitalist rule and visited with particular brutality on the masses of imperialism's neocolonies.

Roots of Sinhalese-Chauvinist Terror

The roots of the decades-long Tamil insurgency lie in systematic discrimination against the Tamil people by successive Sri Lankan governments following independence from British colonial rule in 1948. As part of its racist divide-and-rule strategy, Britain had brought elements from the largely Hindu Tamil minority into the administration of its colony, then known as Ceylon. The post-independence regime, based on the Buddhist Sinhalese majority, began to displace Tamils from government service and access to higher education. Especially with the passage of a Sinhala-only language law under the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) government in 1956, the national chauvinism of the Sinhalese ruling class led to growing communal polarization.

The grisly climax came in 1983 with government-inspired pogroms against the Tamils, many thousands of whom were murdered in wholesale massacres. Tamil homes and businesses

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Defend Tamil People...

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in the capital, Colombo, were burnt to the ground, often with the occupants inside. Following the 1983 pogroms, orchestrated under president J.R. Jayewardene of the United National Party, we wrote:

“The massive atrocity taking place in Sri Lanka marks a watershed in that island’s history. The bloodletting and the mass population transfers have set the economy back at least a decade and are forcing the separation of the peoples. J.R. has ripped the country apart, massacring many thousands and forcing the survivors into a virtual ‘bantustan’ in the barren North.”

—“Massacre in Sri Lanka,” *Spartacist* (English edition)
No. 35 (Autumn 1983)

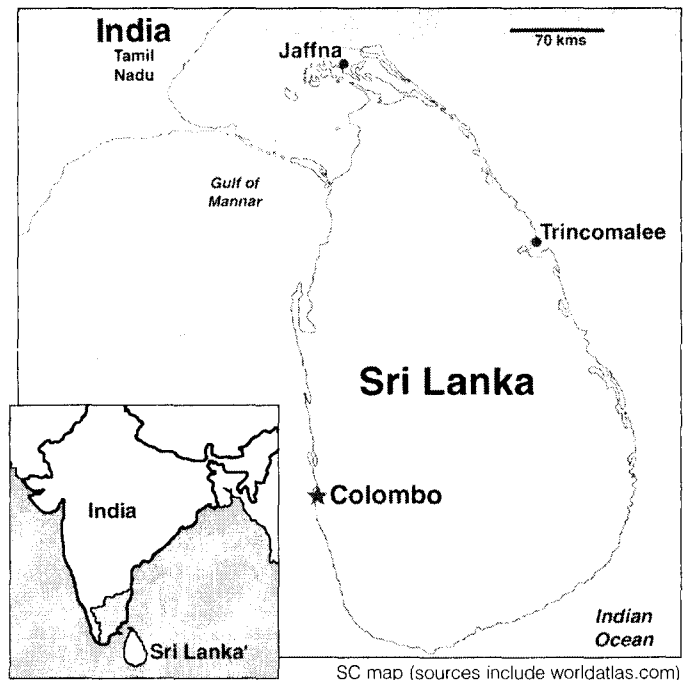
The previous economic and geographic interpenetration of the two peoples was largely severed in blood, and Tamils were increasingly compacted in the North and the East, which, while largely Tamil, had historically been a region of mixed populations, including a substantial Muslim component. The dire situation of the Lankan Tamil people today is testimony to the reactionary logic of nationalism: under capitalism, when two peoples are interpenetrated within the same territory, the national rights of one people can only be expressed at the expense of the other people. Only the overthrow of capitalism through workers revolution can lay the basis for the equitable resolution of the conflicting national claims of the peoples of Sri Lanka.

Sinhalese chauvinism, designed and instigated by the Lankan ruling class, has been wielded to assert domination over both the Tamil and Sinhalese workers and oppressed, to head off any popular revolt by preventing working-class unity. For their part, the LTTE and other Tamil nationalists have long dismissed the struggles of the strategically placed “Indian Tamil” tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka’s central highlands. The ancestors of this deeply exploited population were brought in by the British as indentured laborers starting in the 19th century.

At the time of the 1983 pogroms, our comrades initiated and joined protests in cities around the world against the massacre. Noting that the bloodbath had “catastrophically altered for the foreseeable future the prospects for common class struggle between the Sinhalese working class and the oppressed Tamil minority,” we raised the call for the **right of Tamil Eelam**—a separate Tamil state in the North—and for a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka as part of a socialist federation of South Asia.

In the 25 years of civil war that followed, at least 70,000 civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of Tamils driven into exile or squalid refugee camps. The LTTE managed to compact a Tamil mini-state in parts of the North and East and eventually signed a cease-fire agreement with the Colombo government in 2002. But the Sinhalese-chauvinist army’s provocations never stopped. After the 2005 election of hard-line SLFP president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ruled out even autonomy for Tamil regions, the government abrogated the cease-fire and then withdrew from it entirely early last year.

While its troops massacre Tamils in the North, in the South the government has cracked down on civil liberties. Tamils living in Colombo have been ordered to register with the police, and hundreds have been expelled from the city. Journalists critical of the government have been killed. On Janu-



SC map (sources include worldatlas.com)

ary 8, Lasantha Wickrematunge, editor of the *Sunday Leader*, was gunned down by armed men on motorcycles as he drove to work. The murdered journalist, who was harshly critical of the government’s conduct of the anti-Tamil war, had received a threatening call from President Rajapaksa warning that he would be killed if he continued to speak out.

Imperialist Green Light for Army Terror

The calls for the Tamil protests in Canada and Britain have featured appeals to Western imperialist governments to come to the aid of the Tamils. A protest call in Toronto, for example, called for pressure to be put on the Canadian government to “intervene immediately to stop the war.” There should be no illusions that the governments in Ottawa, London, Washington or other imperialist centers will act for the liberation of the Tamil people. In fact, the imperialist powers have overwhelmingly supported the regime’s murderous anti-Tamil offensive. Over the past 12 years, first the U.S. and then Britain, Canada and the European Union have declared the LTTE a “terrorist” organization, effectively giving the Lankan regime a green light for its attacks. The workers movement in the imperialist centers must oppose the anti-terror witchhunt, which has seen Tamil organizations banned, their offices raided and individuals railroaded to prison (see “Protest Ottawa’s Ban on Tamil Tigers!” *SC* No. 149, Summer 2006).

U.S. imperialism in particular has given clear backing to the Rajapaksa government. On January 6, the American ambassador in Colombo issued a statement welcoming the fall of the Tigers’ administrative capital, Kilinochchi, to the Lankan army and affirming that the U.S. “does not advocate that the Government of Sri Lanka negotiate with the LTTE” (*Asian Tribune*, 9 January). Soon after, a high-level delegation from the U.S. Pacific Fleet Command arrived for “discussions” with the heads of the Lankan security forces (Indo-Asian News Service, 21 January). Only after the army drove the LTTE from its final urban bases in early February did the U.S. and Britain call for a “temporary no-fire” agreement (*International Herald Tribune*, 4 February).

CPI(M) Treachery in India

31 January 2009

Dear Friends,

Though I missed the *Spartacist Canada* (No. 159), I have seen your article on Nandigram reprinted in the *Workers Hammer* no. 205. The article is informative and well-written.

The CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] and its allies support the UPA [United Progressive Alliance] government led by Manmohan Singh on the ground that it is secular. But they moved in hand in glove with the Muslim fanatics to drive out Taslima Nasrin first from Kolkata and finally from India. They have promoted the growth of madrasas and set up a new Islamic University to provide religious education to the Muslims. Thus they are trying to keep the Muslim minority permanently in the middle age darkness instead of enlightening them with scientific, secular quality education.

At a time when capitalist industrialization has become capital intensive and depriving millions of their livelihood and the motor car enterprises like Hind Motors are already in crisis, they promise jobs and expect miracles from SEZs. To what extent can they go is shown by Singur where two of their leaders convicted for the rape and murder of Tapasi Malik, a teenager activist who opposed the forcible acquisition of agricultural land for Tata's car factory. The Tatas

were forced to leave Singur on October 4, 2007 but they issued a paid ad published in all major dailies in West Bengal on October 17, 2007 asking the electorate to vote for the CPI(M) in the next elections. That reveals the class interests the Left Front serves.

The hollowness of all their anti-feudal and anti-colonial rhetoric is evident from the fact they have not departed from a single nasty practice of the feudo-colonial rulers or attempted to annul even a single repressive law of the past. Instead they have added new ones on some pretext or other.

Thus they resemble Her Majesty's loyal opposition in Britain. We need a Trotskyist party in India to end unemployment, illiteracy, starvation and repression which are inseparable from the capitalist exploitation. Trotskyism had a promising start in 1940s but entryism destroyed it in 1948. Ever since then, the Pabloites, the Healyites and their heirs misled the newcomers and hindered the revival of a real Trotskyist movement in India. It is relevant for the revolutionaries of the subcontinent to re-examine the experiences of the past six decades and to draw necessary conclusions to rebuild it anew.

Upendranath Roy

Washington's central strategic goal on the island is a stable regime that can provide access to the strategic deep-water harbor of Trincomalee in the long-contested Eastern Province. Successive Sri Lankan governments have engaged in brutal "ethnic cleansing" in the area. Hundreds of thousands of Tamils have been forced to leave, either into exile abroad or to relatively safer areas of the island. Those who remain live under a state of siege. A rare eyewitness report by a North American journalist, Stephanie Nolen of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (27 January), paints a chilling picture of the army occupation in her article, "How Can People Say This Is Peace?":

"Ninety-eight people were abducted in this area last year, snatched off the streets by the infamous white vans with no licence plates that are used by government security agencies. Eighty-five other Tamils simply disappeared...."

"The streets of Trincomalee, banded every 150 metres or so with checkpoints where Tamils are grilled about who they are and where they are going and whether they can prove they do not support the LTTE, offer a grim vision of what the north will soon be like."

Nolen describes the government's stepped-up "Sinhalaization" campaign: "Historic sites commemorating ancient Tamil kingdoms have, in the months since the government took control of the area, suddenly become memorials to Sinhalese kingdoms. Some Tamils stopped at checkpoints can no longer give the names of their home villages, because those places have new Sinhala names."

Toward a Socialist Federation of South Asia

While the Tigers appear to have suffered a decisive military setback, this by no means equals the end of the Lankan conflict. The communal divisions fostered by the regime are too deep, the dispossession and violence against the Tamils too profound, to offer a prospect of a lasting peace between

the peoples.

As Marxists, we continue to denounce Sinhalese chauvinism and defend the rights of the Tamil people, including their right to a separate state. But the hard fact is that the eradication of national oppression and true social progress for the peoples of Lanka and the region will come only when barbaric capitalist rule and the divisions inherited from imperialist domination are overturned through socialist revolution. It is crucial that the most advanced pro-working-class elements, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, draw the lessons of the present desperate pass. This includes drawing the lessons of the betrayals of the once-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), which abandoned the interests of the proletariat and the defense of the Tamil people when it entered the chauvinist SLFP government in 1964.

Above all, it is necessary to fight for class independence from all wings of the exploiters and for an internationalist perspective, looking in the first instance to the powerful and growing working class across the Palk Strait in India. What we wrote in *Spartacist* in the wake of the anti-Tamil pogroms 26 years ago remains true today:

"Today Ceylon experiences the bitter fruit of decades of betrayal and defeat in the class struggle. The early LSSP tradition of defense of the Tamil masses was destroyed by the popular-frontist accommodation of the Sinhalese 'left' to the communalist SLFP; today these parties are anathema to the Tamil liberation fighters. It is necessary to begin again in the light of all experience since the British departed...."

"What is desperately needed is to further the building of a Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka, necessarily substantially based among the exploited Tamil masses. The struggle for the national rights of the Tamil people is vital to forging such a party. Lasting national and class justice for the Tamil working people will be secured through permanent revolution—rule by the workers and peasants—and a socialist federation of South Asia." ■

Army Bloodbath in Sri Lanka



tamileelamnews.com

Toronto, January 30: Tens of thousands protest slaughter of Tamils (above). Right: Grieving relatives in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka, bury civilians killed during government assault against Tamil Tigers, January 12.



Reuters

Defend the Tamil People!

The following article was written by the Trotskyist League for Workers Vanguard and was printed in WV No. 930, 13 February.

FEBRUARY 5—Many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Tamil civilians have been killed in a murderous offensive by the Sri Lankan army, whose aim is the destruction of the Tamil mini-state in the North and East of the Indian Ocean island. At least 30 people were killed on January 22 when troops bombed a makeshift health center in Vallipunam, a village the government had declared to be in a “safe zone.” The last functioning hospital in the area came under fire in early February, killing at least 12 and forcing its evacuation.

The army has driven the nationalist Liberation Tigers of

Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been fighting for an independent Tamil state for the last three decades, out of the northern Jaffna Peninsula and from its last urban bases. Besieged by 50,000 soldiers backed by fighter jets and helicopter gunships, at least a quarter million Tamil civilians are trapped in a small area of the northeastern jungle, without access to shelter, clean water or food. The government has banned relief agencies and the media from the war zone and even threatened to expel reporters from CNN, Al Jazeera and the BBC from the country for airing video clips of the devastation.

The working class internationally must protest the murderous onslaught by the Sri Lankan government and army! Around the world, tens of thousands of Tamils have taken to

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