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Labor's Racist Occupation: State of Siege for Aborigines

Cops/Military Out of NT Aboriginal Communities!

For a Class-Struggle Fight for Aboriginal Rights!

Since its election to federal office last November, the Rudd ALP government has been strengthening the June 2007 racist police/military-enforced government takeover of more than seventy Northern Territory (NT) Aboriginal communities. This crude land grab, initiated by the previous Howard Liberal/Coalition government, serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, who want unhindered access to the valuable mineral reserves on vast tracts of land where Aboriginal communities were allowed some measure of self-government, albeit in conditions of great privation, since the mid-1970s.

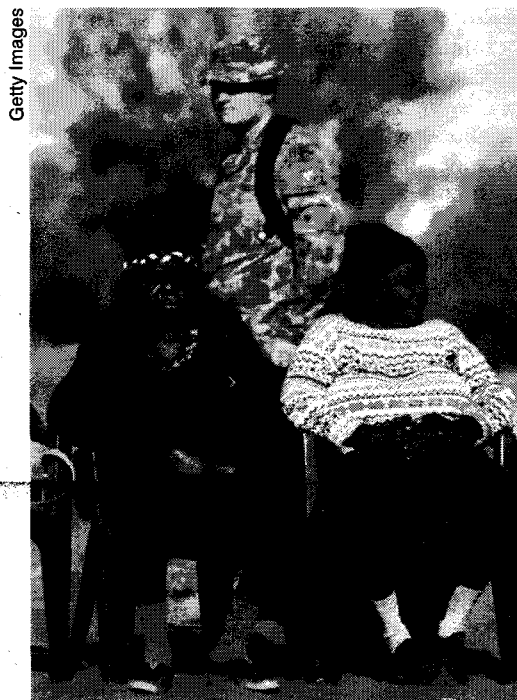
Accompanied by punitive welfare "quarantining," prohibition of alcohol and pornography, and backed by increased state repression, this occupation has brought more devastation to Aboriginal communities. Compounding over two hundred years of destruction wrought by capitalist Australia, it seeks to criminalise all Aboriginal people. More than doubling in the last 20 years, incarceration rates of Aboriginal people across the country are skyrocketing, accompanied by more deaths in custody. We Marxists fight to mobilise the proletariat in a class-struggle fight for Aboriginal rights as part of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. **Down with the government intervention! Cops/military out of Aboriginal lands!**

The NT intervention occurs in the context of a resources boom and accompanies a military build-up in the Territory that serves to help enforce capitalist "stability" and ensure the flow of imperialist profits derived from exploitation across the Asia-Pacific region. The occupation, along with talk of Aboriginal communities as "failed states," mirrors the colonial-style occupations that Australian imperialism has imposed on the peoples of the Solomons and East Timor. As part of the reactionary U.S./Australia alliance, the Australian imperialists sent troops to Iraq and now



Todd Condie/Northern Land Council

Above: Police, backed by riot cops, barred traditional owners from Xstrata's McArthur River mine site, NT, this year. Right: Aboriginal women at Mutitjulu under the military/police occupation, now enforced by federal Rudd Labor government.



Getty Images

wage bloody war against the population of Afghanistan under the pretext of the "war on terror." Promising a beefed-up military, including a better equipped navy, Rudd's recent commitment to "protect" Australia's "sea lanes of communication" in coalition with the U.S. is aimed largely against China.

The U.S. bases and other military facilities in Aboriginal-populated northern and central Australia are a key link in a chain which encircles China from South Korea to former Soviet republics of Central Asia, serving the imperialists' strategic aim of overturning the social gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution. We stand for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Cuban and Vietnamese bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. We fight for proletarian political revolution to oust

the Stalinist bureaucracies, who pave the way for capitalist restoration. As proletarian internationalists we demand: **Down with the U.S./Australia alliance! U.S. bases out now! Australian military/cops get out of East Timor, the South Pacific, Middle East and Afghanistan!**

Key to opposing the depredations of Australian imperialism "at home" and abroad is mobilising the multiracial proletariat in class-struggle opposition to the capitalist rulers. The working class, with its numbers and organisation, and its hands on the levers of production, has the social power and historic interest to sweep away the entire exploitative capitalist system and to establish an egalitarian socialist society. This requires forging an internationalist Leninist vanguard party, which will unite the working class at the head of all the oppressed in the fight for workers revolution.

Rudd's "Apology" Sugar Coats NT Occupation

After John Howard's long-standing refusal to say "sorry" to the Stolen Generations, Rudd's "Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples" in February generated elation among thousands of Aboriginal people whose families were brutally torn apart by successive capitalist governments over more than 150 years. However, the carefully crafted "apology," lauded by the capitalist media, was grossly hypocritical—yet another racist hoax foisted on Aboriginal people. Trumpeting a "new beginning," Rudd's promise to significantly reduce infant mortality and other social indices of the horrendous

oppression of Aboriginal people is tied to "practical reconciliation."

For the ruling class, "reconciliation" means absolving themselves of past and present crimes while Aborigines are supposed to forgive and forget, resigning themselves to an existence of all-sided racist oppression. Reconciliation is precisely **not** about addressing the grim reality of Aboriginal lives. It was the brainchild of former prime minister Paul Keating who wanted to cover up his knifing of land rights following the 1992 Mabo decision and soaring Aboriginal deaths in custody under Hawke/Keating Labor rule. Keating's cynical manoeuvre was also designed to clean up Australian capitalism's image in Asia where the oppression of Aborigines had been an embarrassing obstacle to the only thing the racist capitalist rulers really care about: profit.

At the same time Rudd made his "apology" speech, the government was at pains to point out that no compensation would be paid to the Stolen Generations. As Murdoch's *Australian* editorialised on 1 February, "Ideally, the much anticipated apology should allow the book to be closed on the 'rights' agenda. Once the apology is made, those who have fought so long to see it happen should also move on by turning their efforts to the pressing needs of remote communities." Indeed Rudd's "apology" served to sugar coat the NT intervention in an attempt to co-opt liberals and Aboriginal leaders. Since the occupation began the bourgeoisie has waged a concerted campaign to stifle any

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Asp photo

Melbourne, July 2007: Spartacist League at national Aboriginal Day of Action, protests racist Australian imperialism here and abroad.

Aboriginal...

(continued from page 1)

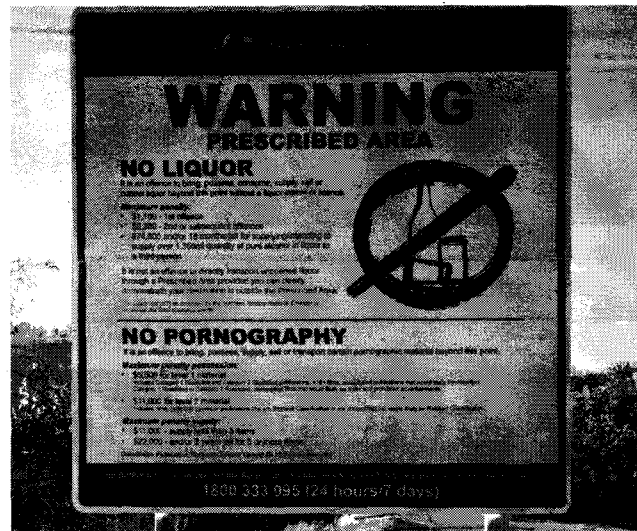
expression of opposition. A 24 June *Australian* editorial, headlined "Same old protest mob," sneered at national protests held to mark one year of the intervention, zeroing in on the call for cops and troops to get out of the NT and all black communities. They snarled "This industry thrives on emasculating those people it claims to represent by maintaining a *culture of entitlement*" (emphasis added). In other words, no-one—least of all Aboriginal people—should dare expect the right to quality housing, education, health care or even a clean water supply.

Government Witchhunting and Puritanical Prohibitions

The witchhunt for "child sexual abuse" in Aboriginal communities has stoked anti-paedophile hysteria, whipping up a climate of fear and mistrust against all Aboriginal men in the service of greater state intervention in the lives of Indigenous people. The "medical examinations" of Aboriginal youth and children escalates the bourgeoisie's intent to regiment particularly youth by demeaning and punishing all those who engage in consensual sexual activity outside the bounds of the reactionary "age-of-consent" laws. After "examining" more than 7,500 NT Aboriginal youth and children, barely 0.5 percent were assessed as "at risk" of neglect or abuse, while 40 percent were referred to specialists for poverty-related health problems.

Today's occupation of Aboriginal communities has been prepared by a years-long campaign to blame Aboriginal people for their own oppression. The very real social pathologies of domestic violence, abuse of children and drug addiction—problems which exist throughout capitalist society—are exacerbated by the enforced marginalisation and brutal subjugation of Aboriginal people. Founded on the historic near genocide, uprooting and dispossession of Aboriginal people, "White Australia" capitalism has meant relentless brutal oppression and racist state terror against the original inhabitants of this land. This is shown in the ongoing horrendous incarceration rates, drastically shorter life expectancy and appalling infant mortality rates. Terror, dispossession and degradation are now heightened under the intervention.

Accompanying the frenzy over "child abuse" in the occupied communities is the puritanical prohibition on alcohol and pornography, backed by heavy penalties, that tramples democratic rights. We oppose these bans, now enforced by the piously Christian Kevin Rudd and his ALP government, who pose as defenders of Aboriginal women and children. In August, a statement signed by six Aboriginal women from various NT communities denounced claims by former federal ALP president, Warren Mundine, that Aboriginal women feel "safe" as a result of the intervention. Mundine has "no right to speak on our behalf," they admonished,



Marked Renner

Government sign outside Northern Territory Aboriginal community lists draconian penalties of up to two years jail for breach of puritanical ban on alcohol and pornography.

"If Mr Mundine had any meaningful connection to our communities he would know that women have been leading the fight against this racist policy" (*Koori Mail*, 27 August).

Down With Attacks on Welfare, Racist "Quarantining"!

There is deep opposition within Aboriginal communities to the racist intervention and government lies. Welfare "quarantining" in the invaded Aboriginal communities has hit hard against those already struggling to eke out an existence on this pittance. The very term "quarantine," implying some kind of contagious disease, epitomises the racist character of the legislation. Imposed under the rubric of "mutual obligation," it means that half of any welfare payment can only be accessed by purchasing items at big corporate stores (like Coles or Woolworths) or, in remote communities, at the only store, where exorbitant prices for a tiny range of poor quality goods is often the norm. This punitive scheme, gutting what meagre economic power parents have, has been exacerbated by spiralling fuel and food costs.

Community leaders, courageously speaking out against the occupation, have recalled the days when Aboriginal people were forced to subsist on rations of tea, flour, sugar and offal while their wages were withheld by pastoralists and mission managers. Those still alive are still fighting to get their stolen wages. Today, many desperate Aboriginal families are forced to move to larger centres in order to use their welfare cards. Severe overcrowding in substandard housing in towns lacking adequate health care and other services has, as a consequence, created new social crises which are invariably met with severe police repression, such as the special police operation in Alice Springs on 4-5 April in which 188 Aboriginal people were rounded up and incarcerated. Aboriginal elder, Vince Forrester, from Mutitjulu condemned the occupation: "This legislation and government action is a form of terrorism used specifically against our people. They are entrenching racism with these actions" (Aboriginal Rights Coalition Media Release, 7 April).

The vicious "welfare reforms" are no longer confined to the NT. In northern Queensland, Aboriginal rightist govern-

ment flunkey Noel Pearson is trialling his own experiment in welfare "quarantining" in four Aboriginal communities. Pearson is also on a crusade to deny unemployment benefits to Aborigines under the age of 21. Grooving on punishing the poor and oppressed, Liberal and Labor MPs alike have called for quarantining welfare payments across the entire country. Now the federal ALP is trialling, in six NT communities, the suspension of welfare payments to parents who allegedly don't send their children to school regularly, with the intention of applying this draconian measure nationally.

Last year, Labor's deputy prime minister, Julia Gillard, told the Sydney Institute, "The old days of passive welfare for those able to contribute are gone." That is, the unemployed will be forced to work for their welfare pittance or starve. The ALP halted the Howard government's scrapping of the work-for-the-dole-style Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), proposing to "reform" it by introducing a "welfare-to-work" scheme that will not only enable the government to "quarantine" payments but suspend them if recipients fail to look for work. Thus many will be driven from their communities or face starvation. Meanwhile, the government taskforce running the intervention recommends branding some remote Aboriginal communities as "unviable." ALP Indigenous affairs minister, Jenny Macklin, has hastened to assure communities there will be no forced population transfers. The taskforce report proposes to deny them vital services such as education and health, a familiar method that has already led to countless deaths over years of capitalist neglect. Exemplifying racist state contempt for Aboriginal lives was the death in 2006 of 78-year-old

Julama Limbunya, one of three surviving elders who took part in the 1966 Wave Hill stockmen's strike. Almost blind, barely able to walk and still suffering from pneumonia, Limbunya was dumped at a remote NT airstrip after being released from hospital and left to die in broiling heat without food or water.

Rudd and Capitalist War on Workers and Oppressed

The marked rightward shift across the world over the last decade and a half is a product of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Encircled by the imperialists and betrayed from within by its Stalinist misleadership, the collapse of the Soviet Union has given rise to unbridled imperialist exploitation and pillage across the planet and intensified inter-imperialist rivalries, formerly held in check by anti-Soviet unity. It unleashed a global offensive against workers and the poor as the capitalist rulers seek to increase the rate of exploitation, drive down living standards, and slash welfare and social programs to gain an edge against their competitors.

Today, the Rudd government carries out union busting, attacks on welfare, racist scapegoating of immigrant minorities and shreds democratic rights under its racist "war on terror" repression. It retains the core of Howard's widely-hated anti-union *WorkChoices* legislation, including the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). Targeting construction unionists such as Victorian union official Noel Washington, the ABCC has carried out more investigations under Rudd's Labor government than under the previous Howard government.

In carrying out their high-handed violation of Aboriginal rights today, the bourgeois rulers aim to make it easier to further their attacks on the working class. Aborigines, small in number and largely excluded from the working class, are a vulnerable target. It is only by championing the rights of Aboriginal people and putting itself at the head of all the oppressed, from those framed on "terrorism" charges to African immigrants targeted by racist violence, that the multiracial proletariat can fulfil its historic role as the gravedigger of the capitalist class. *Down with the ABCC! Hands off Noel Washington! Defend the unions! Down with racist "war on terror" government repression! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Free education, free quality health care for all! Down*

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Spartacist League & Spartacus Youth Club Classes

The Russian Revolution and the Fight for Revolutionary Leadership Today

MELBOURNE

The Russian Revolution: How the Working Class Took Power
Saturday, 13 September, 3.30 p.m.

In Defence of the Russian Revolution
Saturday, 4 October, 3.30 p.m.

The Fight for Revolutionary Continuity in the Post-Soviet World

SYDNEY

The Marxist Program
Saturday, 6 September, 1 p.m.
For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
Saturday, 4 October, 1 p.m.

The State and Revolution
Saturday, 1 November, 1 p.m.

The Degeneration of the USSR—How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled
Saturday, 1 November, 3.30 p.m.

China Bar, 1st floor,
235 Russell Street, Melbourne
Information and readings: (03) 9654 4315
or e-mail spartacist@iprimus.com.au

The 1917 Russian Revolution: How the Working Class Took Power
Saturday, 29 November, 1 p.m.

Humanist House,
10 Shepherd Street,
Chippendale (off Broadway)
Information and readings: (02) 9281 2181
or e-mail spartacist@exemail.com.au

Australasian

SPARTACIST

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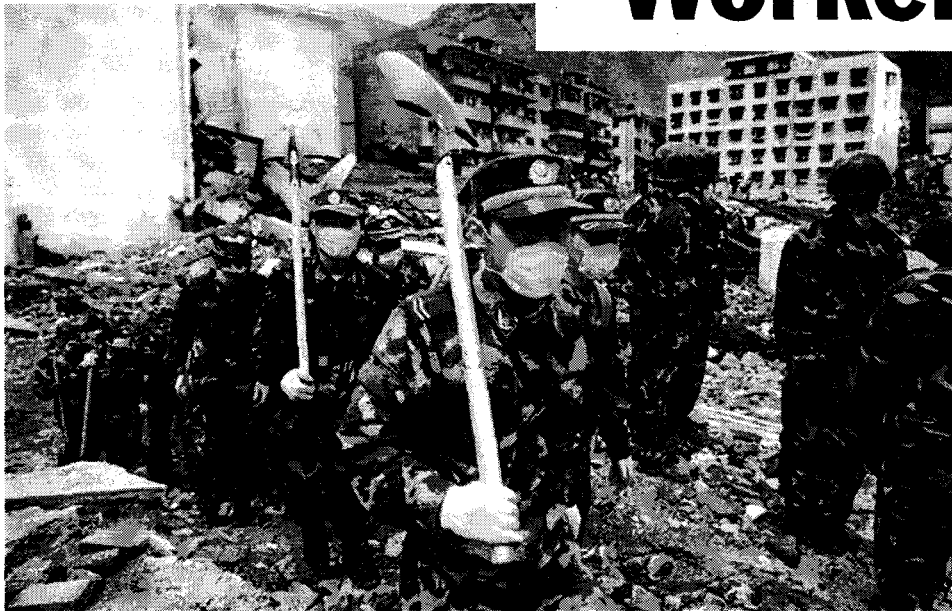
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The Sichuan Quake

and the Contradictions of the Chinese Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State



Corbis



Du Bin/NY Times

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

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 917, 4 July), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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

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

must be based on the unconditional military defense of the Chinese workers state against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution.

China's Disaster Relief: Power of Collectivised Economy

Attempts by the reactionary Falun Gong to claim the earthquake was punishment to the Chinese Communist Party backfired. The CIA-inspired "Free Tibet" crowd, too, lost momentum as it was clear that the rescue efforts of the PLA in Aba Prefecture, which governs 13 counties including Wenchuan, the quake's epicenter, were devoted to everyone, including Tibetans and members of the Qiang ethnic group. We oppose the "Free Tibet" movement and its recent protests as reactionary, anti-Communist and counterrevolutionary. While opposing the Chinese bureaucracy's Han chauvinism, we recognize that Tibet has qualitatively benefited from the technological progress made possible by its inclusion in the Chinese workers state.

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

In China, the quake region is known as "the front," and the whole country is mobilized to participate in relief efforts. The *Financial Times* outlined China's rebuilding plans: over one million prefabricated houses will be built in three months for the earthquake survivors. Food and shelter will be provided for five million homeless people, and whole flattened

towns and cities will be rebuilt or relocated. Hundreds of state-owned factories have been commandeered to produce the houses, and big state companies like Baosteel have been ordered to increase output of materials needed.

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

Across the U.S., systematic deindustrialization and lack of investment have resulted in a rotting infrastructure: bridges collapse in the Midwest, cranes topple in New York City, and again levees are bursting all along the Mississippi and its swollen tributaries. Meanwhile, FEMA shrugs and admits that there's no federal oversight plan for levees. In the San Francisco earthquake of 1989 damage was largely man-made—the collapse of the upper deck of the Nimitz Freeway's Cypress Viaduct, for example, which crushed dozens of people, was due to unreinforced columns popping out at poorly designed joints. And they knew in advance that such designs were unsafe. The first reaction of government authorities and cops was racist assaults on those trying to help the victims. Blacks and skilled workers were shoved aside, and in Oakland the cops pulled

guns on rescuers and accused them of looting!

The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Collapsed Schools

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

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

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For Unconditional Military Defence! For Workers Political Revolution!

Aboriginal...

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with the attacks on welfare! Return stolen wages to Aboriginal workers and their families! For mass union-centred protests against the occupation of NT Aboriginal communities!

The road to full equality and elementary justice for Aboriginal people and all the oppressed requires expropriating large industry, mines and agribusiness from the capitalist rulers through socialist revolution. Some Aboriginal activists have raised the demand for "self-determination" and "Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs." Opposed to a class-struggle fight for Aboriginal rights, reformists such as Solidarity have embraced these demands, fostering illusions of "justice" within the framework of capitalism. We note that in most cases under capitalism such calls can result in little more than deeply isolated, oppressed communities.

Nonetheless where Aborigines have a land base, such as in the now occupied Aboriginal communities, the Spartacist League defends whatever measure of political autonomy they can achieve, including the right to govern their land and control its resources. The SL supports any attempts by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to reclaim land stolen from them and to get whatever financial compensation they can from the tight-fisted, racist ruling class. Where Aboriginal land rights come up against socially useful developments like railways, the Aboriginal people should receive generous compensation for any deprivation of land or disruption of activity based on completely consensual agreement. Only a workers government will guarantee these conditions. We fight for jobs for all at equal wages, for massive health, housing and education programs to address the racist oppression of the Aboriginal people. Only the destruction of capitalism can hold out the possibility of voluntary integration, on the basis of full equality, for those Aboriginal people who desire it, and the fullest possible autonomy for those who do not, and make it possible to address the special needs created by more than two centuries of injustice and oppression.

Reformists Sow Illusions in Racist Capitalist State

Flushed with the victory of Labor at the polls, the reformist left tailed behind the bourgeois-liberal enthusing over Rudd's "apology." The Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) declared it "only the beginning" while Socialist Alternative (SAI) claimed that "the struggle for justice for Indigenous people is likely to get a boost" from Rudd's speech. In contrast to our Marxist opposition to the ALP and bourgeois Greens in last November's elections, reformists such as the DSP, SAI and



Brian Manning and Kalkaringi/Daguragu Freedom Day web site

Wattie Creek 1967: Wave Hill Aboriginal stockmen's strike for better pay and conditions sparked solidarity from unions in cities, opened possibility of class-struggle fight for Aboriginal rights.

Solidarity all did their bit to help elect a Rudd Labor government. They are now doing donkey work to channel opposition to the occupation back into pressuring the ALP to change course, working in the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC) which also includes various Aboriginal activists and liberals. After a recent split from ARC centred around Solidarity, a second group calling itself Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney, or STICS, has now been formed on essentially the same political platform.

Both ARC and STICS sow illusions in the very state that enforces the subjugation of the Aboriginal people, for example appealing to Rudd's government to "Implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People." Appeals to the UN are seen by some as a way to place the horrendous conditions of Aborigines under the international spotlight. However we warn that the UN is an enemy of the oppressed peoples of the world. It has shown time and again that it is nothing other than a den of imperialist thieves and their intended victims. It was the UN which sanctified the founding of Israel in 1948, a state carved out of the living body of the Palestinian people. The decade-long UN-imposed starvation sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s killed up to 1.5 million Iraqis, mostly women and children.

Underscoring its faith in the capitalist state, ARC provides a platform for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now known as the Australian Human Rights Commission), a government instrumentality. A key demand of the 12 February ARC-supported Canberra protest, heavily built by reformists such as SAI, was not forthright opposition to the occupation but a call on the Labor government to conduct an "immediate review" of the intervention. Such appeals to the capitalist state are stock-in-trade for the reformist opponents of revolutionary Marxism. The

reformists deeply believe that the state, particularly when administered by a Labor government, can be pressured into serving the interests of the exploited working class and oppressed. But the capitalist state, consisting at its core of the courts, cops, prisons and military, is a repressive apparatus that exists to defend the profits, property and rule of the tiny capitalist class.

Those current leaders of the DSP, SAI and Solidarity who were around in the 1980s all campaigned for the 1987 ALP-initiated Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This commission endorsed police and coroner verdicts in all 99 cases it reviewed—not one cop ever served a minute in prison for these crimes. It whitewashed brutal state terror. Based on a Marxist understanding of the state, the Spartacist League forthrightly opposed this government whitewash.

We put no faith in the capitalist courts but look to the power of the working class mobilised independently of the capitalist state and its parties. The case of Aboriginal community activist Lex Wotton, facing trial and possibly years in prison for raising his voice against the killing of Mulrunji Doomadgee on Palm Island in 2004 shows that we are up against a machine for the systematic suppression of the working class and oppressed. Wotton's persecution starkly contrasts with the whitewash trial of the cop, Chris Hurley, who admitted in court that his actions led to Doomadgee's death. Hurley's acquittal on manslaughter charges was a green light for deadly racist terror on the streets and in the lock-ups. Only days after the Hurley verdict, a 44-year-old man died in police custody near Mareeba in North Queensland.

It is important that unions, such as the maritime union (MUA), have come out in support of Wotton. The MUA, along with the construction union, have also reportedly gone on record to demand the repeal of the NT intervention legislation. But it is necessary to turn such statements of support into broad-based union actions, such as when Sydney building workers walked off their construction site in 1989 and formed a protective perimeter around a protest outside police headquarters against the cop killing of Aboriginal worker David Gundy. **For union/minority actions against racist state terror! Drop the charges against Lex Wotton now!**

The real allies of the Aboriginal people are to be found in the multiracial working class. When Aboriginal militants joined the maritime union pickets in 1998 they were aware that the thugs who dragged waterside workers off the docks are akin to the cops and screws who kill Aboriginal people. Over the years there have been important but too rare instances of working-class defence of Aborigines. The spectacular storming of parliament in Canberra, August 1996 by militant Aborigines, unionists and youth is one example. This action, at a 35,000-strong

demonstration protesting against the Howard government's attacks on welfare and union rights, was sparked when cops attacked an Aboriginal contingent at the head of a march of Aborigines and unionists. Building workers, minorities and others rushed to defend the Aboriginal protesters. Subsequently, the traitorous ALP/ACTU union tops collaborated with a vicious state witchhunt, fingering militants to the cops and carrying out an internal purge of the anti-racist unionists.

Break with Laborism! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

This illustrates that the main obstacle to unions taking up the cause of Aboriginal people is the pro-capitalist Laborite trade-union misleaders who form a thin bureaucratic caste at the top of the unions. Under pressure from their working-class base, they are sometimes compelled to call strikes and other actions to defend workers' interests, such as the successful nurses' strike in Victoria last year in opposition to the state Labor government of John Brumby. On the whole, however, these "labour lieutenants of capital" act to police the working class for the bourgeoisie. Thus, having campaigned for the election of the Rudd government, the union bureaucrats now work hand-in-glove with their ALP parliamentary counterparts to smother class-struggle opposition to the attacks of the capitalist rulers.

Along with their reformist left hangers-on, the union tops help sow defeat and division among the working class, deflecting the necessary fight against the racist capitalist system as a whole by preaching submission to the bosses' courts and fealty to the nation state. In response to the current jobs massacre in vehicle and other industries, the manufacturing union misleaders are pushing a protectionist campaign to maintain government tariffs. Similarly, the textile union leadership are campaigning for a tariff freeze and "industry assistance" under the slogan "Make it Well, Make it Fair Make it Here! Support Australian TCF Jobs." Far from defending jobs, such chauvinist campaigns serve to pit workers in Australia against their class brothers and sisters overseas while tying them to their bosses "at home." They also serve to undermine class unity in the face of the Rudd government's broader assaults including the racist occupation of Aboriginal lands and ongoing mandatory detention of those refugees deemed "dangerous."

In 1867, writing about the American Civil War, Karl Marx declared, "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." An uncompromising class-struggle fight for Aboriginal rights requires breaking workers from the politics of Laborism, which serves to keep them in thrall to capitalism. For this it is necessary to build a multiracial, proletarian and internationalist revolutionary workers party. This party will be built through splitting the working-class base of the ALP, a *bourgeois workers party*, from its pro-capitalist tops, centrally through a political struggle against the nationalist Laborite misleaders of the trade unions.

A revolutionary workers party will strive to transform and organise the proletariat into a conscious force for revolution. In doing so, it will emblazon on its banner the burning necessity for a class-struggle fight for Aboriginal rights on the road to the overthrow of this sick capitalist system through proletarian revolution. Only under the rule of the working class, and on the basis of an internationally planned, collectivised economy, will humanity begin to address the needs of indigenous peoples and the diversity of human cultures begin to flourish. **For a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist Asia!** ■

AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST

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Free Mumia Now!

Third Circuit Court Turns Down Appeal

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 918, 1 August), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

On July 22, the judges of the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals issued a two-sentence ruling, refusing to hear a petition filed by Mumia's attorneys less than a month earlier, on June 27. That petition, which was based on the racist jury-rigging at Mumia's 1982 trial, asked for the full court to review the March 27 decision by a three-judge panel of the court that affirmed Mumia's frame-up conviction and condemned this fighter for black freedom to either life imprisonment or a new sentencing hearing that could reinstate the death sentence (see "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now! New Legal Papers Filed," WV No. 917, 4 July). The three-judge panel's decision had upheld a December 2001 ruling by federal District Court judge William Yohn, who overturned Mumia's death sentence while upholding his frame-up conviction. Robert Bryan, Mumia's lead counsel, announced he will be filing a petition for review to the United States Supreme Court, the last legal avenue available to Mumia. The Philadelphia District Attorney's office, which had previously announced that it would be seeking to reinstate the death sentence, recently stated that it is undecided.

A Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, then an award-winning journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless" and a supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization, Mumia was framed up for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. For 26 years, the cops, prosecutors, bourgeois politicians and their media jackals have howled for Mumia's blood because they see in Mumia a voice of defiant opposition to all forms of racist discrimination, the spectre of black revolt.

That the courts would again deny justice to America's foremost class-war prisoner was clear to anyone who wished to see. Court after court has refused to consider the mountain of evidence of Mumia's innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Officer Faulkner. Those same courts have repeatedly discarded their own precedents and rules in favor of special "Mumia rules" to keep this "voice of the voiceless" in prison hell.

Making a mockery of the Supreme Court's 1986 *Batson* decision, which prohibits the exclusion of jurors based on race, the March 27 Third Circuit decision dismissed the overwhelming proof of racist jury-rigging that marked Mumia's 1982 trial, where the prosecution used eleven of its 15 peremptory challenges to get rid of black jurors. Enunciating a new rule—adopted from the prosecution's arguments—the Third Circuit decision held that Mumia's claim must be rejected because he and his attorneys failed to provide evidence of the racial composition of the entire pool of prospective jurors for the trial. Philadelphia journalist Linn Washington captured the Kafkaesque



Workers Vanguard

Partisan Defense Committee contingent at Philadelphia 19 April demonstration for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!

quality of the court's decision: "That initial rejection, for example, faulted Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial attorney for not following legal standards that the US Supreme Court did not create until 1986—four full years after that trial. That rejection faulted Abu-Jamal's 1995 lawyers for not presenting certain evidence of jury selection discrimination that the '95 hearing judge blocked lawyers from presenting even to the point of briefly jailing one lawyer for objecting to this judge's obstruction" (*CounterPunch*, 26/27 July). Indeed, Judge Albert Sabo quashed a subpoena for the Philadelphia County Commissioner of Jurors and dismissed a motion for discovery of the name, address and race of each member of the jury pool for Mumia's 1982 trial. The lawyer who was jailed was Partisan Defense Committee counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, a member of Mumia's legal team from 1995 to 1999. Along with Jonathan Piper, another attorney associated with the PDC, Wolkenstein resigned when then-lead counsel Leonard Weinglass suppressed Beverly's confession.

Since the Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—and the SL took up Mumia's case in 1987, we have advocated pursuing all possible legal proceedings. At the same time, we have always fought against any illusions in the courts of the capitalist class enemy. We have insisted that the courts could be made to respond only out of fear that executing or imprisoning Mumia for life

would exact too high a cost in social and class struggle. The power that can make the courts yield is the power of the multiracial working class, which must be mobilized independently of and in opposition to the capitalist state and its political representatives, whether Democrat, Republican or Green.

This program of class-struggle defense is diametrically opposed to that of the liberals and reformists, who promote dangerous illusions that the courts can provide justice for Mumia. These illusions are codified in the subordination of the demand for Mumia's freedom to the call for a "new trial." This has been pro-

moted for many years by the Workers World Party (WWP), International Socialist Organization, Socialist Action (SA), the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ) led by Pam Africa and the San Francisco Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal led by SA honcho Jeff Mackler, and has played a key part in the demobilization of what was once a mass movement. Why mobilize on the streets or in the unions if Mumia can get justice from the courts?

While they may have put aside their "new trial" signs for the moment, these groups are no less craven in their reliance on the capitalist state and its political representatives. This can be seen in their efforts during this year's presidential election, which are aimed at making the Democrats "fight" and win the office of U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief. While stopping short of outright endorsement of Barack Obama—a proponent of capital punishment who lambasted the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision which prohibited execution for the rape of a child—a number of reformists have sought to pressure his campaign through one stratagem or another. This includes support to Cynthia McKinney, the presidential candidate of the capitalist Green Party. On the eve of the Pennsylvania Democratic primaries and the April 19 demonstration in Philadelphia called by ICFFMAJ, a representative of the New York Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal issued an undated statement titled "No Justice, No Peace" that crassly expressed the logic behind the illusions promoted by reformists such as Workers World: "Both Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama endorse capital punishment, even though they know the system is imperfect and it doesn't deter violent crime. Let's see where they stand on Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has not had a violent past; in fact, it's quite the opposite, as you already know. It's not too late to force them to do right by Mumia and all the other political prisoners rotting in prison."

Meanwhile, Workers World has endorsed Cynthia McKinney who has spoken out on

continued on page 9



James/Philadelphia Inquirer

Mumia as Minister of Information for Philadelphia Black Panther Party in 1969.



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

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

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

A popular grade 11 student at Applewood Heights Secondary School, Aqsa had recently moved away from home in an attempt to escape the constraints imposed by her religious family. Her death was met



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

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

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

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



Toronto Star

A pattern among the Sikh women victims in B.C. was their relative economic independence, with jobs as teachers, nurses, software engineers, etc. Such independence clashes with traditional Sikh society, where arranged marriages and dowry are the norm. There has also been a rise in selective abortion of girl fetuses among South Asians in the Vancouver area. In January, a Sikh man in suburban Delta, reportedly distraught at having three daughters but no sons, was charged with murdering his youngest daughter, two-year-old Rajvinder Kahlon.

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

or restrictions on Islamic dress.

We denounce all attempts to exploit these horrible crimes to fuel reaction against immigrants and ethnic minorities. We call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, denounce the scapegoating of Muslims under the bourgeoisie's "war on terror," and defend the rights of ethnic minorities to practice their religions. In particular, we oppose state bans on the veil or other religious dress and emblems. This would only serve to further isolate Muslim women in the home, reinforcing social backwardness including the hold of religion and family, and deepening their oppression.

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

Many Muslim groups denounced the murder of Aqsa Parvez and demanded the

prosecution of those responsible. But some claimed this was purely an issue of "domestic violence" and had nothing to do with religion. At a December 13 press conference, a representative of the Canadian Council of Imams condemned the killing, only to add that parents whose daughter abandons the *hijab* "have failed." "This girl, she refused to stay at home," he continued, "There were feelings that she is going in some wrong direction...going with some other boy or some other thing" (*National Post*, 14 December 2007). Two women who had taken Aqsa into their home on various occasions interrupted to protest these outrageous remarks, then walked out of the press conference.

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

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

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

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

With classes came the development of the institution of the family, which Engels called "*the world-historic defeat of the female sex.*" The biological fact of



Dick/National Post

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

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

"In order to guarantee the fidelity of the wife, that is, the paternity of the children, the woman is placed in the man's absolute power; if he kills her, he is but exercising his right."

Imperialist Barbarism and the Subjugation of Women

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

For over a decade starting in 1978-79, the CIA organized and armed the "holy warrior" *mujahedin* against the Soviet Union and its Afghan government allies. This was the first war in modern history in which the rights of women were a central issue. While the Soviet-backed government sought to institute progressive

in literacy programs. Western dress was common in the cities, and women enjoyed a real measure of freedom from the veil and subjugation for the first time in Afghan history. But rather than fighting to defeat the CIA's Muslim insurgency, the Kremlin Stalinists under Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the Soviet troops in 1989. This was a huge betrayal of Afghan women, workers and leftists. It paved the way for the triumph of Washington's woman-hating cutthroats, and for handing the Soviet Union itself over to counterrevolution two years later—a colossal defeat for the workers of the world.

The Shameful Silence of Feminists and the Left

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

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

As for the reformist left, four years ago the International Socialists (I.S.) supported a campaign to give legal standing to Islamic *sharia* courts in Ontario. We opposed this as antithetical to the rights



ASP photo

Sydney, 11 March, 1989: Spartacist League contingent in International Women's Day march, defends Afghan women against imperialists' Afghan cutthroats, denounces withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

habit of listening only to the most conservative voices within the large Muslim population," and say: "Government's policy...should be both punitive and educational. Its firm stand will show what is not tolerated and tolerable in this country."

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

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

For Class Struggle Against Canadian Capitalism!

The pervasive racism of Canadian capitalist society reinforces the reactionary hold of family and religion on immigrant women. And it's not just a question of the unvarnished bigotry of right-wingers on radio talk shows and the outer fringes of the Tory party. The supposedly liberal program of multiculturalism serves to further the cultural and racial segregation of minority communities and the hold of "community leaders" with their ties to church, mosque or temple.

For the Canadian capitalist ruling class, there is no contradiction between smearing Muslims as "terrorists" and simultaneously promoting reactionary elements among the Muslim clergy. Both reinforce the grip of capitalism—through scapegoating minorities on the one hand and regimenting them on the other. A central purpose of multiculturalism is to obscure the fact that immigrant and ethnic minority communities, like the rest of society, are *class-divided*. The struggles of immigrant and other minority workers for jobs, unions and equal status require breaking the grip of religious and other so-called "community leaders." The fight for women's rights is explosive precisely because it presents a frontal challenge to such leaders.

Reactionary ideas take hold and grow in reactionary periods. Especially since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, prepared by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, there has been a rise of fundamentalism of every kind: Protestant fundamentalism in North America (the abortion clinic bombers, the Bush government

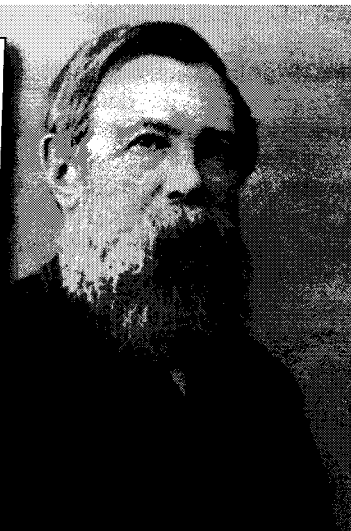
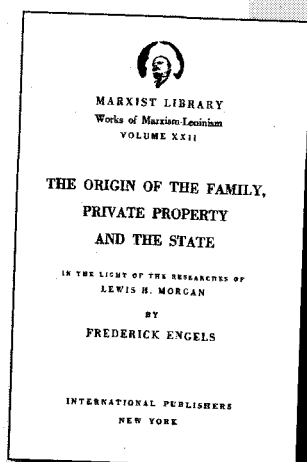
which sought to bury the scientific fact of evolution and teach "creationism" in public schools); Orthodox Jewish fundamentalism in Israel; an ever greater reach by the Catholic church into civil society in Europe; Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim countries and in imperialist centers with large Muslim populations. All the variants of the "opium of the people," as Marx called religion, are freely disseminated. The growth of this false consciousness is rooted in despair and the lie that class struggle and authentic communism are no longer possible.

Our Marxist perspective for women's liberation is rooted in the understanding that proletarian class struggle against capitalism is not only possible but desperately necessary. Far from simply being helpless victims of an oppressive, patriarchal system, hundreds of thousands of immigrant women workers in this country have real potential social power at the point of production, alongside their male and native-born co-workers. From the militant Hospital Employees Union strike in B.C. four years ago to the 2005 meat-packers strike in Brooks, Alberta, immigrant women workers have played a leading role in struggles against attacks by the ruling class and its governments. In the course of such struggles, the divisions and prejudices fostered by the capitalists to divide working people can be transcended.

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

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

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



W.E. Debenham

reforms like lowering the bride price to a nominal sum and providing education to women and girls, the CIA's Afghan cutthroats were known for throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women and shooting schoolteachers who educated girls.

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

The liberating effects of the Soviet intervention were measured in hard statistics. In 1988, women made up 40 percent of the doctors and 60 percent of the teachers at the University of Kabul; 440,000 female students were enrolled in educational institutions and 80,000 more

of women and the basic Marxist (indeed secular-democratic) principle of the separation of religion and state. Today the I.S., who are in an ongoing alliance with some of the most politically retrograde elements of the "Islamic community," cannot bring themselves to utter a word about the murder of Aqsa Parvez.

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

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

Moghissi and Mojab call on "all levels of government in Canada" to "abandon their

Quake...

(continued from page 3)

The contradictions of Chinese society are shown by the very existence of those schools that collapsed. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the central government ordered that all children be provided with nine years of compulsory education—a good thing, especially in the poor and peasant areas of China. One of the gains of the 1949 Revolution was massive advances in literacy, which today stands at nearly 91 percent, compared to 61 percent in India. However, the building of the schools in the 1980s and '90s was in part to enable children to support their aged parents, as the old guarantee of the “iron rice bowl,” or a job for life for workers, was being shattered. And in Stalinist bureaucratic fashion, the orders went down with no regard as to how they would be carried out, with many rotten buildings the result. And so, many parents lost their children.

“This is not a natural disaster,” said a father whose nine-year-old son died at Xinjian Primary School in Dujiangyan. His son’s school was reduced to rubble while another school, for the children of the elite, was in such good condition it was being used as a refugee center. Crumbling bricks, the lack of reinforcing steel rods (rebar), unsupported hollow concrete slab flooring, concrete with too much sand—all well-known safety issues—were pointed to by many as causes of the collapse of buildings. That many children’s lives could have been saved was demonstrated by the exceptional case of Sangzao Middle School, whose principal ran regular earthquake drills and, more importantly, successfully lobbied local officials to get enough money to widen and insert iron rods into the pillars of his school, to improve balconies and fix pipes. When the earthquake hit, all 2,323 students at his school got out alive.

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

Police attempts to intimidate grieving parents are reprehensible. The parents’ demands for full and honest answers as to



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

why their children died are just. But the underlying problems will not be solved by punishing individual corrupt elements, especially via the government’s policy of regularly executing a few scapegoats for various disasters. We oppose the barbaric death penalty on principle, in China as in capitalist societies. What is necessary is a whole new kind of government to replace the privileged Stalinist bureaucratic caste. As Trotsky put it in *The Revolution Betrayed*, “It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy.” Everything from military questions to international aid, including to revolutionary struggles abroad, and domestic economic policies can only be resolved effectively when those who labor decide.

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

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

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

U.S. Reformists Oppose Proletarian Dictatorship

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

bashing—either directly or through the capitalist Green Party.

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

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

It also hides the fact that when an even

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

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

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

Correction on Tibet

The article “Counterrevolutionary Riots in Tibet” in *ASp* No. 201 (Winter 2008) states:

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

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

“The truth is that, because of poor transportation and the huge distances involved, only a limited number of Han Red Guards actually reached

Tibet. Even if some of them did participate in pulling down the temples, their action could only have been symbolic. Hundreds of shrines were scattered in villages, pastures and on rugged mountainsides: no one would have been capable of destroying them without the participation of the local people. Furthermore, most of the Red Guards who did reach the TAR [Tibet Autonomous Region] were Tibetan students, returning from universities elsewhere....

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

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

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The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 914, 9 May), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

WARSAW—Professor Ludwik Hass died in Warsaw on April 8. A historian of the Polish labor movement and freemasonry, he was also known as an exponent of Trotskyism in Poland. A member of the prewar Trotskyist Bolshevik-Leninist group in Poland, he was arrested in Lwów in 1939 following the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland and sentenced to eight years in a Soviet labor camp. He later married in the Soviet Union and only managed to return to Poland, with his wife and son, in 1957. In 1965, he was arrested and spent over a year in prison, along with Jacek Kuron, Karol Modzelewski and others, for playing a key political role in influencing an “Open Letter to the Party” signed by Kuron and Modzelewski that included a call for proletarian internationalism and workers democracy. At the time, *Spartacist* (No. 6, June-July 1966) ran an article calling for defense of Hass and his comrades.

Ludwik Hass had ties with some pseudo-Trotskyist organizations in the West, notably including the United Secretariat of the late Ernest Mandel. Hass’s articles appeared in *Revolutionary History* and other pseudo-Trotskyist papers in the West. When the cadres who later formed the Polish section of the International Communist League met Hass in the mid 1980s, he opposed the anti-Communist Stalinophobia prevalent in the pro-Solidarność pseudo-Trotskyist milieu. At the same time, he accepted the notion of a “family of the left.” He used to write articles for some Stalinist papers and allowed Stalinist youth organizations to sponsor his discussion meetings. Interestingly, at one such meeting Hass said that his biggest error ever was named Jacek Kuron. At one time a pro-socialist opponent of the Stalinist regime, Kuron had become a leading element in counterrevolutionary Solidarność and served as the strikebreaking minister of labor in the first Solidarność government in 1990. We published a contribution by Hass on the 1990 Polish presidential elections (WV No. 518, 18 January 1991).

Hass played a key role in winning the founding cadres of the Spartacist Group of Poland to Trotskyism, as they then understood it. Their Young Left Movement (RML), which was established in 1988, was an amorphous “family of the left” grouping, composed mainly of members of Stalinist youth organizations. Our future members were

In Memory of Polish Socialist Ludwik Hass



known for reviving the forgotten revolutionary internationalist tradition of honoring the “3 Ls” (Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht). Thanks to Ludwik Hass, they succeeded in getting a suppressed copy of the Polish translation of *The Revolution Betrayed* by Trotsky and in having it published by the ZSMP Stalinist youth organization at the end of the 1980s.

Following discussions in 1989-90, the RML was rejected by the Stalinophobic Mandelites of the misnamed Current of the Revolutionary Left (NLR), one of the

groups that shared responsibility for supporting the forces of the capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. It was Ludwik Hass who in July 1990 introduced an RML cadre to an ICL representative then visiting Warsaw. The ICL comrade brought with him copies of the May 1990 “Letter to Polish Workers” by the ICL’s German section (translated in WV No. 504, 15 June 1990), which warned of the counterrevolutionary threat represented by the Solidarność government and called for a return to the perspective of proletarian internationalism personified by Rosa Luxemburg.

The result of that meeting and ensuing discussions with the ICL was programmatic agreement and the establishment in October 1990 of the Spartacist Group of Poland. The SGP/ICL had a difference with Ludwik Hass regarding the counterrevolutionary character of Solidarność, which was evident from the time of Solidarność’s first national congress in September 1981. At that point, we raised the call “Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!” Hass claimed that the decisive change in Solidarność’s class character resulted from the government’s later crackdown in December 1981. In reality, the imposition by the Stalinist regime of Wojciech Jaruzelski of a temporary state of emergency, which we defended at the time, spiked Solidarność’s counterrevolutionary bid for power. The SGP also rejected the notion of a “family of the left” as counterposed to the conception of a Leninist vanguard party.

Some time after the counterrevolution of 1989-90, Hass told the SGP that the ICL had been right about the class character of Solidarność. But, expressing his Polish nationalism, he said that this was simply a fluke and that “we here know better our own backyard.” But our position was the result of an analysis based on the Trotskyist program of unconditional military defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states and the struggle for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, as documented in the October 1981 Spartacist pamphlet *Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers*, which was published last year in Polish by the SGP.

Despite his programmatic revisionism, Ludwik Hass did play the role of teacher and catalyst of Trotskyism in Poland, and he contributed to the rebuilding of the continuity of Trotskyism there, broken by the Stalinist blood purges and the Nazi occupation. We will remember him for that service to the proletarian cause. ■

Mumia...

(continued from page 5)

behalf of Mumia. To many youth, blacks and others, McKinney is perceived as a radical alternative to Obama. But for all her claims to stand “independent” of the Democrats, McKinney, herself a longtime black Democratic Party politician, issued a statement of congratulations to Obama following Clinton’s concession announcement. McKinney declared: “Coming from Barack Obama, the word ‘change’ did not appear as just another empty campaign slogan. It galvanized millions of people—mostly young people—to register to vote and to get active in the political system.” The Greens are a shill for the Democrats and McKinney is a *capitalist politician*. As we wrote in “For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!” (WV No. 917, 4 July):

“A vote for even the most left-wing bourgeois candidate is, in fact, a vote of confidence in the reformability of capitalism and a vote against the need for a workers party and socialist revolution. It is a vote for perpetuating a brutal system based on exploitation, oppression and war. For the likes of WWP this is no problem; today WWP enthuses over McKinney, while in the past they supported Democrat Jesse Jackson in 1988 and other black Democrats, including then-Democrat McKinney in 2004 and New York City Council member Charles Barron in 2006.”

Immediately after the March 27 Third Circuit Court decision, the PDC and its fraternal defense organizations internationally held emergency protests. The

PDC also called for international united-front protests under the slogans: “Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent! Free Mumia Now! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!” Protests were held in April in Oakland, London, Toronto, Sydney, Chicago, Los Angeles and Mexico City. These protests brought together individuals and organizations representing diverse political viewpoints—trade unionists, anti-racists, death penalty abolitionists, gay rights activists, leftists and others—united behind the struggle to free Mumia. Central to the united-front protests was the understanding that the fight for Mumia’s freedom must be based on the fact that he is innocent—the victim of a racist political frame-up.

The PDC and its international fraternal defense organizations also organized Class-Struggle Contingents in a number of protests called by other groups. The contingents expressed our understanding that the working class must be mobilized to fight to free Mumia and with no illusions in the “justice” of the capitalist courts. In addition to the united-front slogans, the contingents also marched under the slogans: “There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts! Mobilize Labor’s Power—For Mass Protest!” (see “Protests Demand: Free Mumia Now!” WV No. 914, 9 May).

Our fight to free Mumia is part of our struggle against black oppression, which is rooted in American capitalism. The brutal state repression directed against black militants is intended to terrorize not only fighters for black rights but all those who would struggle against capitalist exploit-

ation and oppression. The segregation, discrimination, unemployment and corresponding mass imprisonment of black youth form a wedge to keep the working class divided. The struggle against racist oppression and in defense of class-war prisoners like Mumia is part of the struggle for the unity of the multiracial working class against its capitalist class enemy.

The battle for Mumia’s freedom cuts to the core of racist American capitalism and its state. We fight for Mumia’s freedom as part of the struggle for black liberation based on the program of revolutionary integrationism. We fight against every manifestation of racist oppression, a struggle which can be victorious only through the full social, political and economic integration of black people into an egalitarian *socialist* society. Won to a revolutionary program, doubly oppressed black workers will play a leading role in the fight to emancipate the black masses and all working people by sweeping away the entire system of capitalist exploitation. As we underlined in “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” which was adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. in 1966:

“The struggle of the Black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black

workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution.”

Time is short. Mumia has nearly reached the end of the legal road, and there is no reason to believe he can receive a better outcome before the neo-segregationist U.S. Supreme Court. The fight to free Mumia embodies the struggle against this system of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. This underlines the urgent need to mobilize the social power of labor in his defense. *Mumia Abu-Jamal is innocent! Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!* ■

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Georgia...

(continued from page 12)

"mixed U.S. messages" regarding its planned invasion of South Ossetia. But a photo in the same issue belied this claim. It showed five regional U.S. lackeys from Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania—long labeled "captive nations" of the "Soviet empire" by the U.S. imperialists—on an orchestrated solidarity visit to Saakashvili in Tbilisi four days after Russia counter-attacked. The U.S. military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* (9 August) reported that a NATO military exercise in Georgia, including a thousand U.S. troops, was completed on the eve of the Georgian invasion. The Georgian army was also aided by Israeli military "advisers." The well-informed Parisian satirical journal *Le Canard Enchaîné* (20 August) reported:

"The role of the American advisers was perhaps not limited to giving technical support to the Georgian artillery. If what is being said at the Joint Chiefs of Staff headquarters in Paris can be believed, it was following a suggestion by these U.S. officers that the Georgians, even before the advance of their troops, launched hundreds of surface-to-surface missiles at the Ossetian capital."

Today, capitalist Russia is no longer the economic basket case it was in the years following the 1991-92 capitalist

Capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union paved the way to the emergence of a "one superpower world," emboldening the U.S. imperialists—no longer challenged by Soviet military might—in their military adventures abroad. The U.S. has since established bases across Central Asia and elsewhere on Russia's periphery, aimed at the encirclement not only of capitalist Russia, which is still the second largest nuclear power, but also of China, the largest and most powerful of the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states. We call for unconditional military defense of China—and the other deformed workers states of Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam—against imperialism and internal counterrevolution and demand: **U.S. bases out of East Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Near East!**

The Caucasus and Central Asia are also pivotal for U.S. and West European access to Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas. The huge 1,100-mile-long Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, one of three built to supply West Europe while skirting Russian territory and possible Russian control over the oil flow, passes through Georgia. The European powers, especially France and Germany, have their own ax to grind in the region. Both countries have opposed the entry of Georgia into NATO, while French president Nicolas Sarkozy, as current head of the European Union, presided over the



WV Map. Sources: adapted from UN Cartographic Section, U.S. Department of State, and Baku-Ceyhan Campaign

opposition to the Iraq war and occupation, which is cheered by the reformist left, is directed at restoring U.S. imperialism's ability—weakened by the Bush administration's disastrous policies in Iraq—to project its military and diplomatic power globally. Obama made this clear in an article on "Renewing American Leadership" in *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2007), where he calls for a "responsible end" to the U.S. occupation of Iraq in order to redeploy and significantly escalate American military forces and operations around the world. Obama is foursquare behind the murderous occupation of Afghanistan and calls for deploying an additional 10,000 U.S. troops there. It is no accident that Obama's foreign policy consigliere is one Zbigniew Brzezinski, a veteran of Cold War II who was a central figure in the Democratic Carter administration as it launched an anti-Communist "human rights" campaign against the Soviet Union. This included massive support to Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan against the Soviet Army, which intervened there in late 1979 in defense of the USSR's southern flank and on the side of elementary human progress.

Deep hatred for the Bush gang among workers and minorities, in the U.S. and internationally, must not obscure the fact that the Democrats are the other party of imperialist war and racism. We oppose political support to any capitalist politician—McCain, Obama or the Greens' Cynthia McKinney. We stand for the complete political independence of the working class. Our aim is the forging of a revolutionary multiracial workers party that fights to overturn the capitalist system through workers revolution and to establish a workers government. **All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!**

Leninism and the National Question

In hyping Georgia's "democratic" pretensions against supposedly unceasing aggression by a timeless "Russian imperialism," the bourgeois media have been replete with historical references to the "progressive" Menshevik Georgian regime of 1918-21. The *New York Times* (10 August) referred to this as "when Bolshevik troops crushed Georgia's thrilling, and brief, first experiment with liberal rule." From the standpoint of the proletarian revolution, the suppression of Menshevik Georgia, which was neither "democratic" nor "independent," was absolutely correct and necessary.

Following the proletarian seizure of power in the October Revolution of 1917, Lenin's Bolsheviks immediately carried out their commitment to grant the right of self-determination to the myriad peoples oppressed under the tsarist prison house of peoples. The Leninist position on the national question was premised on the full equality of all nations and peoples.

The aim was to get the national question off the agenda, to counterpose to all variants of bourgeois nationalism an appeal to the workers for international unity in their class struggle.

Revolutionary Russia was subjected to a three-year-long Civil War by imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary White reactionaries and direct imperialist military intervention by 14 capitalist armies. Those countries—like Georgia, Poland, Finland and the Baltic states—that remained capitalist after achieving independence from Russia became bulwarks of reactionary terror against the working class and beachheads for imperialist intrigues against the Soviet state.

In his 1922 pamphlet, *Between Red and White* (also known as *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia 1918-1921*), Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky exposed the myth of "democratic," "independent" Georgia promoted by the imperialists and their social-democratic henchmen at the time and rehashed by the bourgeois media today, citing the Mensheviks' own words. In December 1918, the Georgian Menshevik Topuridze assured the Allied imperialists: "I assume that our republic will co-operate with the Allied countries in their fight against the Bolsheviks, with all the means at its disposal." In another example, he recounted the brutal suppression of a peasant uprising in Ossetia, quoting Menshevik leader Valiko Djugeli, who delighted at the slaughter: "Ossetian villages are burning all around us.... We will be cruel. Yes, we will." "I begin to understand Nero and the great fire of Rome," Djugeli recalled another Menshevik telling him after "gazing upon the bright flames."

When the Mensheviks, who had opposed the proletarian revolution in Russia, took power in Georgia in early 1918 they drove the Georgian Communists underground. "Independent" Georgia immediately invited in the German imperialist army and, following Germany's defeat in World War I, handed the reins to the British imperialists. Working with Armenian and Georgian nationalists, the British imperialists engineered the overthrow of the Baku Soviet of 1918—based on Azeri, Armenian, Georgian and Russian oil workers—which was the center of Bolshevik power in the Caucasus. The 26 Bolshevik leaders of the Soviet were later captured and executed in September 1918 at the behest of the British. Trotsky dedicated his pamphlet to these heroic Communists and to the hundreds and thousands of others who were persecuted and slaughtered by the Georgian and other bourgeois regimes in the Caucasus.

In February 1921, as a Communist-led uprising broke out in Georgia, the Red Army finally moved in and swept out the imperialist-backed Menshevik government, ushering in workers rule and bringing genuine national liberation. As Trotsky



August 23: Graves are prepared the day after U.S.-led airstrikes killed over 90 civilians, most of them women and children, in Afghan village of Azizabad, Herat province.

counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state. Enriched by petrodollars from the high price of oil, Putin has been able to rebuild Russia's military and make it clear that he is prepared to challenge the U.S. in reasserting Russia's role as the great power in the region. On August 26, Russia formally recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another secessionist province.

Russia's humiliating slap down of Washington's Tbilisi client provoked a frenzy of vituperation in U.S. imperialist circles. Bush ludicrously intoned that invading a foreign country "is unacceptable in the 21st century"—this only days before the U.S. occupiers carried out a bloody massacre of some 95 Afghan civilians, including 50 children! The U.S. then finalized a long-planned deal to install an anti-missile "defense" system in Poland, the first in a former Soviet bloc nation, and to deploy American troops there to operate the system. So much for Washington's claims that such an anti-missile defense is aimed not at Russia but Iran, which has neither intercontinental ballistic missiles nor nuclear warheads!

initial ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia. Meanwhile, European "military observers" are part of a UN "peacekeeping" force that has been in Georgia since 1993 along the border with Abkhazia. **UN out of Georgia now!**

Democrats, the Other Party of U.S. Imperialism

The two presumptive candidates to the post of imperialist Commander-in-Chief, Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, rushed to condemn Russia. Both called for putting Georgia on a "fast track" to NATO membership. Democratic Senator Joseph Biden demonstratively visited Georgia only days before his selection as Obama's running mate. On his return, Biden declared: "I left the country convinced that Russia's invasion of Georgia may be the [sic] one of the most significant event[s] to occur in Europe since the end of communism" (*Washington Post* online, 18 August). Biden's tirade is of a piece with Obama's July 24 Berlin speech, where he upheld the U.S. anti-Soviet crusade as a model for reasserting Washington's global interests today.

Indeed, Obama's cautious and uneven

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explained in his pamphlet:

"We do not only recognize, but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But wherever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other 'principles' of democracy perverted by capitalism."

For Marxists, the right of national self-determination is not an absolute principle. In the case of Georgia 1921, it was subordinated to defense of the proletarian revolution. Similarly in 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, the question of the rights of small nations occupied by one or another imperialist power was subordinated to the principle of revolutionary defeatism against all the imperialist combatants. Thus the revolutionary Serbian Social Democrats rightly refused to call for Serbian self-determination after the country was overrun by the Austro-Hungarian empire.

A more recent example is the 1999 U.S.-led war against Serbia, carried out by the Democratic Clinton administration in the name of stopping "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo. Much of the reformist left internationally beat the drums for "human rights" imperialism on behalf of "poor, little Kosovo," with some even supporting direct imperialist intervention. We historically defended the right of self-determination of the Kosovo Albanians, including the right to form their own state or to integrate into a "greater" Albania. But in the buildup to and during the U.S./NATO war, this question had become subordinated to our position of revolutionary defensism: military defense of Serbia without any political support to the revanchist regime in Belgrade. That remained the case when NATO forces supplanted the Serbian army as the effective state power in Kosovo following the 1999 war. As we wrote in "Balkans Tangle" (WV No. 755, 30 March 2001): "With Kosovo now a NATO protectorate, there can be no independent struggle for the national rights of ethnic Albanians or any other national minority in the region which does not first and foremost seek to expel the imperialist 'peacekeepers'."

Kosovo's sham "declaration of independence" from Serbia this February was essentially a diplomatic provocation against Serbia and Russia—paving the way for the conflict in Georgia—and a further incitement against the besieged Serbian minority in Kosovo. We defend the national rights of the Serbs in northern Kosovo, opposing their forcible incorporation into an Albanian Kosovar state. As Marxists, we oppose the poison of nationalism and fight for the class unity of the workers throughout the Balkans in overthrowing all the bloody capitalist regimes of the region. We say: *Down with the imperialist occupation of Kosovo! All U.S./NATO troops out of the Balkans now! For a socialist federation of the Balkans!*

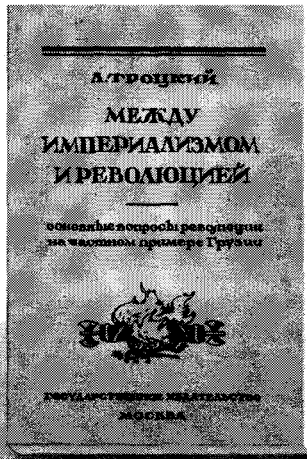
The Impact of Capitalist Counterrevolution

Particularly in areas of heavy national interpenetration, such as the Caucasus and the Balkans, only under proletarian rule could there be a just and equitable resolution to the conflicting national aspirations of the numerous peoples. The Bolsheviks, in order to accommodate the myriad peoples at different levels of national consolidation, established a variety of Soviet republics, Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics for nationalities, Autonomous Oblasts and Nationality Okrugs for various tribes. In Georgia, Abkhazians and Ossetians had autonomous regions, as did other formerly oppressed peoples such as the Chechens, Tartars and the Bashkirs in the Urals.

Many of the Bolsheviks' policies were reversed with the growth of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy that came to power

with the political counterrevolution that began in 1924. The dogma of "socialism in one country" proclaimed by Stalin later in 1924 was to become synonymous with the sellout of countless revolutionary opportunities abroad in the coming decades, while fostering the recrudescence of Russian chauvinism in the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the collectivized economy of the multinational Soviet workers state laid the basis for the equitable resolution of national conflicts and an enormous leap in social progress. This was reflected in the high levels of education and cultural development and the advancement of women and widespread

Solidarność counterrevolution!" When Russia's Boris Yeltsin, working hand in glove with the Bush Sr. White House, launched a pro-imperialist coup in August 1991, the ICL responded with the call, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" (reprinted in Spartacist pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, August 1993). We urged the multinational Soviet proletariat to return to the internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky and to forge an authentically Bolshevik party to lead the fight for proletarian political revolution and to smash the forces of capitalist counterrevolution. Our statement, translated into



Painting depicts execution of 26 Communist commissars by British-backed counterrevolutionaries in bloody suppression of 1918 Baku Soviet. Trotsky's 1922 pamphlet, widely known as *Between Red and White*, exposed imperialists and their Menshevik apologists who sought to smash the young Soviet workers state.

Painting by I.I. Brodsky



ethnic intermarriage. Moreover, the Soviet state implemented policies aimed at advancing the most backward regions of the USSR. Georgia was a case in point. An article by Göran Therborn in *New Left Review* (July-August 2007) titled "Transcaucasian Triptych" pointed out that in the decades after 1921:

"Soviet industrial developmentalism—factories, roads, railways, schools, hospitals, scientific institutions—was to transform the socio-economic landscape of the Caucasus, and a modernizing Tbilisi became the industrial, administrative and cultural hub for the South Caucasus as a whole....

"As one of the prime beneficiaries of the Soviet system, Georgia was one of the main losers from the break-up of the USSR."

Decades of Stalinist mismanagement, lies and bureaucratism prepared the way for the counterrevolutionary breakup of the USSR in 1991-92. The imperialists encouraged the growth of bourgeois-nationalist movements, particularly in the more prosperous non-Russian republics in the Baltics and in Soviet bloc states like Poland, and used these as a battering ram for counterrevolution. The restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former Soviet Union led to an unprecedented immiseration of the working masses in those countries and exacerbated communalist hatreds. The final undoing of the October Revolution was a world-historic defeat for workers and the oppressed around the world.

To the bitter end, the ICL carried out its Trotskyist obligation to defend the gains of the October Revolution. We hailed the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed Islamic insurgents. When the imperialists bankrolled the clerical-nationalist Solidarność "union" in Poland as a spearhead for capitalist restoration throughout the Soviet bloc in the early 1980s, we called to "Stop

Russian, was distributed in the tens of thousands throughout the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the reformist left internationally took its cues from the social-democratic and labor lieutenants of the imperialists, condemning the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, hailing Solidarność and cheering on Yeltsin's pro-imperialist "democrats." A prime example was the U.S. International Socialist Organization (ISO) and its then cothinkers in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, who enthused over Yeltsin/Bush's victory: "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 31 August 1991). Russian supporters of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) [represented by the Socialist Party in Australia] and Alan Woods' International Marxist Tendency did more than rejoice from afar; they actually sought to restrain workers who tried to oppose Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary barricades.

The response of much of the reformist left internationally to the conflict in Georgia has ranged from a vague pacifist neutrality—punctuated in the case of the ISO with Cold War "captive nations" rhetoric about "Stalin's prison-house of nations" (Socialistworker.org, 12 August)—to a pro-Russian tilt. The latter is exemplified by the Workers World Party (WWP), whose calling card has always been to paint various Stalinist and neo-colonial bourgeois-nationalist regimes as "anti-imperialist." In fact, WWP's "anti-imperialist" posturing has always gone hand in hand with tailing "progressive" (i.e., Democratic) capitalist politicians in the U.S. WWP rejects the class line in favor of the capitalist "lesser evil."

What support to Putin's Russia means on the ground can be seen in the grotesque position of the Russian Taaffeites. Since the counterrevolution, these reformists

have lined up with the most retrograde chauvinist forces in Russia, including the fascist National Bolshevik Party. While, typically, the CWI issued a sanitized statement for international consumption ("Georgia/Russia Conflict Brings Disaster for Working People of Region," 11 August), in Russia the group portrays the war against Georgia as a just war for Russian statehood and calls for "people's militias" to fight for Mother Russia:

"The reaction of ordinary people, who all across the country are enlisting in volunteer brigades, is entirely clear. If there are those who *want* to come to the aid of fraternal peoples (and the mass volunteer movement is inspired precisely by this—after all, the degenerates who simply want to 'shoot it up' aren't that many) then it would be entirely logical for precisely these people to replace conscripted soldiers. But a people's militia is dangerous for the authorities and capital, since a people's militia, on the strength of its elemental proletarian instinct, could act against not only external, but also internal enemies."

—"Turn the Guns on the Brass!"
www.socialism.ru (11 August)

By all accounts such "people's militias" did follow Putin's forces into Georgia, where they reportedly killed, looted and burned down the homes of ethnic Georgians. Without giving support to either side in this conflict, Marxists uphold the right of all communities to defend themselves against pogromist terror.

In the aftermath of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe, all the old crap of the pre-World War I era has returned. Ethnic cleansing, daily terror against immigrants and minorities—these are part and parcel of the triumph of the "national principle" which the imperialists pushed throughout the Cold War as a weapon against the Soviet Union. Only when the class principle—i.e., the program of world socialist revolution—prevails over the "national principle" can there be an end to imperialist war, exploitation and oppression.

Washington's imperialist triumphalism in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union has been eroded. With the global economy on the decline, tensions between the U.S. and European powers are likely to grow. The U.S. imperialists find themselves in a quagmire in Iraq and increasingly in Afghanistan. Their ambitions in the Caucasus have been openly challenged by Russia. But a wounded imperialist beast with the world's largest nuclear arsenal is an extremely dangerous creature. This underlines both the urgency and seriousness of the task faced by Marxists: the reforging of Trotsky's Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, to lead the proletariat in sweeping away imperialist barbarism. ■

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Great Power Duel in Georgia**U.S.: Democrats, Republicans
Sabre Rattle Against Russia**

Left: Hospital destroyed by Georgian shelling of Tskhinvali, capital of South Ossetia. Right: Russian troops arrive in Abkhazia, small province seeking secession from Georgia, August 10.

Russian, Georgian Workers: The Main Enemy Is at Home!

U.S. Bases Out of East Europe, Central Asia, Near East!

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 919, 29 August), newspaper of the SL/US. The Rudd Labor government has protested Russia's involvement in Georgia, threatening not to ratify a uranium export deal made last September between Moscow and the previous Howard government. Australian imperialism's support to the U.S.-backed Georgian forces is to be expected. As a junior partner to the U.S., they are ever ready to demonstrate their full commitment to the reactionary U.S./Australia alliance. This includes the network of U.S. spy bases and military installations in Australia. As proletarian internationalists we demand: **Down with the counter-revolutionary U.S./Australia alliance! U.S. bases out now!**

AUGUST 26—On the night of August 7, the Georgian government of Mikheil Saakashvili ordered its U.S.-armed and -trained army to invade South Ossetia, a small ethnically distinct province that effectively seceded from Georgia under Russian protection over 15 years ago. The next day, Russia counterattacked and, sweeping through central Georgia, came within 25 miles of its capital Tbilisi, thus demonstrating its intention to re-establish itself as the dominant power in the region. Russian forces have now withdrawn to a security perimeter in the area around South Ossetia and asserted their intention to maintain a permanent "peacekeeping"

presence in the province.

The conflict between Russia and Georgia, the latter backed by the U.S., is nothing other than pure power-play politics on both sides. Thus our position is one of revolutionary defeatism: the class interests of the workers of Georgia and Russia lie in a struggle to overthrow their respective capitalist rulers through socialist revolution. The main enemy is at home!

The conflict in Georgia is in no way analogous to the Russian invasions of Chechnya in 1994 and again in late 1999 after several years of de facto Chechen independence. In both those cases, the imperialists did not intervene militarily and the conflict centered on defense of the national rights of the Chechen people against Russia's murderous attempt to reassert its subjugation of the province. We

called for military defense of the Chechen forces and for defense of Chechnya's independence. We forthrightly declared: **Defeat Russian invasion of Chechnya! (see "Independence for Chechnya! Russian Troops Out Now!" WV No. 840, 21 January 2005).**

The situation of the Georgian government vis-à-vis Vladimir Putin's Russia today is vastly different. Saakashvili was groomed to be a puppet of U.S. imperialism from at least 1999, when he attended a State Department "leadership program" in Washington. He came to power in 2004 in one of a series of color-coded "revolutions" financed and engineered by the U.S. in order to counter Russian influence in the region and install pliant pro-American regimes. Washington has been strident in pushing its West European allies to accept Georgia (and Ukraine) as full-fledged members of NATO, and Tbilisi has the distinction of being the only major city in the world linked to its international airport with a highway named after U.S. president George W. Bush! Saakashvili's army has been built up and trained by the U.S. and its Israeli allies. And Georgia, with a population of fewer than five million, has a contingent of 2,000 troops in Iraq—the third biggest after the U.S. and Britain—that was airlifted back to Georgia by the U.S. following the Russian counterattack.

The *New York Times* (13 August) claimed in a headline that Georgia had received

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August 12: After Russian entry into Georgia, U.S. imperialism's satraps in the region—the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia—share stage with Georgian president Saakashvili in Tbilisi in show of support.