

Workers Protests Rock Greece



Athens: Tens of thousands protest against government austerity program during May 5 general strike. AFP

Forge a Multiethnic Revolutionary Workers Party!

As part of an economic bailout package introduced by Greece's European Union (EU) partners and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Greek prime minister George Papandreou has announced a new round of brutal attacks on the standard of living of that country's working population. The austerity measures imposed by Papandreou's Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government include slashing public sector wages by 14 percent, cutting average pension benefits by 11 percent, raising the average retirement age by four years and jacking up the sales tax to 23 percent. Despite its name, PASOK is a capitalist party whose policies differ little from those of the right-wing New Democracy, which has alternated with PASOK as the ruling party of Greece but was voted out in the elections of October 2009.

These all-sided capitalist attacks would be devastating to the living standards of the Greek masses, particularly the most vulnerable sectors, such as the poor, elderly and women. But thus far they have been met with stiff resistance by the country's combative working class.

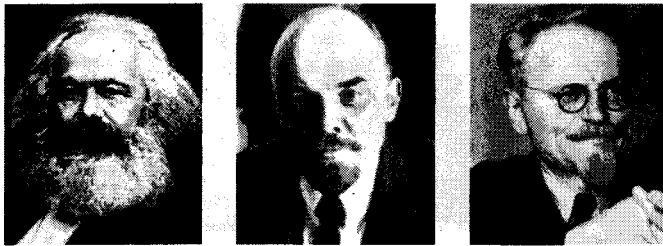
As their part of the bailout deal, the EU and IMF committed

an unprecedented sum—almost \$1 trillion—for loans to Greece, and potentially other heavily indebted EU countries like Portugal and Spain, to help them cover their budget deficits and refinance their debt. After months of blocking every proposal, the German government finally joined with other EU powers to seal the deal after growing fears of a possible default

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**Repudiating Our Position on
Haiti Earthquake
A Capitulation to
U.S. Imperialism**

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Marx

Lenin

Trotsky

Communism vs. Social-Patriotism

We reprint below excerpts from the "21 Conditions" for the admission of parties into the Third (Communist) International (CI), adopted by the CI's Second Congress in 1920. At the onset of World War I, the overwhelming majority of the leaders of the Second International went over to the side of their "own" bourgeoisies. This provoked sharp opposition from a small minority who held true to revolutionary internationalism—most significantly Lenin's Bolsheviks, who called for the building of a new international. Growing working-class opposition to the war and the inspiration of the October 1917 Russian Revolution sparked proletarian upheavals across Europe. Under the pressure of workers who looked to the leadership of the Communist International, various social-democratic and centrist formations like the Independent Social Democratic Party in Germany, the French Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Party sought admission to the CI. The "21 Conditions" were aimed at winning the genuine revolutionaries within these parties while excluding not only the open social-patriots but also the centrists who masked their treachery with Marxist-sounding rhetoric.

The Communist International is now frequently approached by parties and groups that only recently belonged to the Second International and now want to join the Communist International, although they have not in fact become communist. The Second International has been definitively smashed. The intermediate parties and the groups of the Center, seeing that the Second International has no prospects at all, try to lean on the Communist International, which is becoming ever stronger. However, they hope to preserve enough "autonomy" to continue their former opportunist or "centrist" policies....

6. Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is duty-bound to expose not only overt social

patriotism but also the duplicity and hypocrisy of social pacifism; to explain systematically to the workers that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no international courts of arbitration, no treaties of any kind curtailing arms production, no manner of "democratic" renovation of the League of Nations will be able to prevent new imperialist wars.

7. Parties wishing to belong to the Communist International are duty-bound to recognize the need for a complete break with reformism and the policies of the Center and must conduct propaganda for this among the broadest layers of the party membership. Without this, no consistent communist policy is possible.

The Communist International demands unconditionally and as an ultimatum that this break be carried out at the earliest possible date. The Communist International cannot accept that notorious opportunists as, for example, Turati, Modigliani, Kautsky, Hilferding, Hillquit, Longuet, and MacDonald should have the right to consider themselves members of the Communist International. That could lead only to the Communist International coming to resemble in large measure the ruined Second International.

8. In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of "its own" imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instill in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the laboring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country's troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.

—"Theses on the Conditions for Admission," August 1920; reprinted in *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920* (Pathfinder, 1991)

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Repudiating Our Position on Haiti Earthquake A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

The following statement was issued on April 27.

In its articles on the Haitian earthquake, *Workers Vanguard*, the newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., committed a betrayal of the fundamental principle of opposition to one's "own" imperialist rulers. In addition to justifying the U.S. imperialist troops as essential to the aid effort, these articles polemicized against the principled and correct position of demanding the immediate withdrawal of the troops. This line was carried in a number of presses in other ICL sections, becoming the de facto line of the International Communist League. Without a public accounting and correction, we would be far down the road to our destruction as a revolutionary party. *From the beginning the only revolutionary internationalist position was to demand that all U.S./UN troops get out of Haiti!*

In our article in *WV* No. 951 (29 January), repeated in subsequent issues of the newspaper, we baldly stated:

"The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity—e.g., trucks, planes, ships—to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti's population. And they're doing it in the typical piggish U.S. imperialist manner. We have always opposed U.S. and UN occupations in Haiti and everywhere—and it may become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the near future—but we are not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on."

The International Executive Committee of the ICL repudiates this betrayal of our revolutionary program. As stated in the *SL/U.S. Programmatic Statement*: "We unconditionally oppose all U.S. military intervention—and U.S. military bases—abroad, and defend the colonial, semicolonial and other smaller, less developed countries in the face of U.S./UN attack and embargo."

Even in very belatedly raising the call for "All U.S./UN Troops Out of Haiti Now!" in *WV* No. 955 (26 March), we continued to evade and reject the principle of opposition to the U.S. imperialist occupation of neocolonial Haiti. Moreover this article stated: "As we made clear in our article, 'Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation' (*WV* No. 951, 29 January), while we were not for the U.S. military going into Haiti, neither were we going to demand, in the immediate aftermath of that horrific natural disaster, the immediate withdrawal of any forces that were supplying such aid as was reaching the Haitian masses." In fact, our earlier article had not clearly stated that we were not for the U.S. troops going in nor did it even call the U.S. military takeover what it was.

The U.S. military invasion was designed to provide a "humanitarian" face-lift to bloody U.S. imperialism and was aimed at securing U.S. military control in Haiti and reassert-

ing American imperialist domination over the Caribbean, including against imperialist rivals like France. In failing to oppose the invasion, we also ignored the particular danger this posed to the Cuban deformed workers state (as well as to the bourgeois nationalist-populist regime of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela). We accepted Washington's line that the provision of aid was inextricably linked to the U.S. military takeover and thus helped to sell the myth peddled by the Democratic Party Obama administration that this was a "humanitarian" mission. Our statement that "it *may* become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the *near* future" (emphasis added) amounted to giving conditional support to U.S. military intervention. As one leading party comrade argued, the only difference between the position we took and August 4, 1914, when the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the German imperialist rulers at the outset of the First World War, is that this was not a war.

Thus we gutted the revolutionary internationalist essence of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution linking the fight for social and national liberation to the struggle for proletarian state power both in neocolonial and in more advanced countries. This means educating the proletariat in North America, and internationally, that its class interests lie in actively championing the fight against the imperialist domination of Haiti. Instead our articles did the opposite, promoting illusions in U.S. imperialist "democracy" as the savior of the Haitian people. We all but echoed Barack Obama as he dispatched imperialist combat troops, including elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and a Marine expeditionary unit. One doubts that we could so easily have taken such a position if the Republican Bush administration were still in the White House.

In its latest article, "SL Twists and Turns on Haiti" (*Internationalist*, 9 April), the centrist Internationalist Group (IG) writes: "While support to imperialist occupation is a small step for reformists, who only seek to modify imperialist *policies* rather than to bring down the imperialist system, in the case of the SL/ICL it should be harder to digest." Indeed it is. For its part, the IG treated the earthquake as an opening for revolution in Haiti, asserting: "This small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power, particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police" ("Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!" *Internationalist*, 20 January).

Instead of simply exposing the IG's Third Worldist fantasies, we concentrated in our polemics on zealous apologies

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Capitulation...

(continued from page 3)

for the U.S. imperialist military intervention, a position to the right of the IG. These centrist apologists for Third World nationalism quite correctly characterized our position as “social imperialist”—socialist in words, support for imperialism in deeds. This is a bitter pill to swallow. Only through a savage indictment of our line can we avoid the alternative of going down the road that led the founders of the IG to defect from our organization in the pursuit of forces other than the proletariat. In their case, this has ranged from remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy that sold out to imperialist counter-revolution in the DDR to Latin American nationalists and left-talking trade-union bureaucrats.

In the context of polemics with the IG, *Workers Vanguard* misused the authority of the revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in order to alibi support to an imperialist occupation. In his 1938 article “Learn to Think,” Trotsky argued that one should not always put a minus where the bourgeoisie puts a plus. He was referring not to a military occupation force but to instances where an imperialist government might send military aid to anti-colonialist fighters. Moreover, Trotsky’s reference in this article to workers fraternizing with an army called in to fight a fire manifestly did not refer to a situation like Haiti where U.S. imperialist troops were invading a neo-colonial country, an act which *Leninists unconditionally oppose on principle*.

However, neither do revolutionaries foster illusions in such non-military aid as capitalist governments may provide. In responding to the U.S. imperialist invasion of Haiti following the earthquake, we would have done well to look to the position of our Australian section in 2005 responding to the imperialist “aid” intervention in Indonesia, specifically the secessionist province of Aceh, following the tsunami. Demanding “Australian/all imperialist military/cops get out of Aceh now!” an article in *Australasian Spartacist* titled “Australian Imperialists Seize on Tsunami Catastrophe” (No. 190, Autumn 2005) indicted imperialist aid programs. The article pointed out that “whatever short-term benefit a part of them may provide to a small number of oppressed people,” such aid is “always aimed at reinforcing neocolonial subjugation of the Third World masses.”

The “Politics of the Possible”

From the time of our tendency’s inception as a left opposition within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the early 1960s, we have recognized that national isolation must in short order destroy any subjectively revolutionary formation, not least one subjected to the pressures of operating in the heartland of world imperialism, the United States. Genuine proletarian internationalism means disciplined international collaboration, without which we cannot successfully counter the powerful pull of nationalist opportunism.

The handmaiden to our embellishment of U.S. imperialist intervention was the abrogation of international democratic centralism. The role of propaganda as the scaffolding of a revolutionary party is to publish *the line of the party as decided through discussion and motions by the party leadership*. Prior to going into print opposing the call for “troops out of Haiti” in WV No. 951, the SL/U.S. Political Bureau and the International Secretariat (the resident administrative body of the IEC) abdicated responsibility by not holding an

organized discussion and vote, instead setting our line through informal consultation. However, once the line was published in *Workers Vanguard* it was picked up by many of the ICL’s other sectional presses, indicating that there was little initial disagreement.

A meeting of the I.S. on March 18 did at last vote to call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. and United Nations troops. However, the motions adopted at that meeting, which became the basis for the article in WV No. 955, reaffirmed that “we were correct in not calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.” In stating that “the particular exceptional circumstances that obtained two months ago no longer exist,” the motions also continued to insist that conditional defense of the U.S. military invasion was correct in the immediate conjuncture of a natural disaster. Moreover, while criticizing the formulation that the U.S. military was the only force on the ground with the wherewithal to deliver aid, the I.S. motions did not mandate a public correction of this statement. This kind of dishonesty was condemned by James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism. In addressing a situation where the Trotskyist SWP at its 1954 convention needed to acknowledge mistakes, he noted: “You know, the Stalinists make more changes, and more rapid and drastic changes, than any other party in history. But they never say: ‘We made a mistake.’ They always say: ‘The situation has changed.’ We should be more precise and more honest.”

Menshevism often takes the guise of “realism” and “expediency.” Looking to come up with a “concrete solution” in a situation where there was no such solution from a proletarian revolutionary vantage point, we capitulated. What our small revolutionary party had to put forward was a proletarian internationalist perspective for the liberation of Haiti, above all through opposition to our “own” imperialist rulers. In the immediate situation, the only concrete expression of such a program was negative—to demand that any and all Haitian refugees be allowed into the U.S. with full citizenship rights, to oppose any deportations of Haitians who had made it here and above all to demand all U.S./UN troops out.

Our articles distorted reality in order to justify the American military presence. We correctly criticized the reformists for spreading illusions in the imperialist governments by demanding that they provide “aid, not troops” but our own response was worse. Our articles presented U.S. military intervention as the only “realistic” way for the Haitian masses to get “aid” and claimed demagogically that withdrawal of U.S. combat troops “would result in mass death through starvation.” This was to treat the question not from the standpoint of Marxist program, but through the liberal lens of “disaster relief.” Michael Harrington—the former leader of the Democratic Socialists of America and adviser to the “war on poverty” programs of Lyndon B. Johnson’s Democratic Party administration—captured the core of such a social-democratic worldview with the expression, “the left wing of the possible.”

The “politics of the possible” is a palpable pressure in the period of post-Soviet reaction, where revolution—or even, particularly in the U.S., militant class struggle—appears remote and there is an overwhelming absence of resonance for our political views. There is a yawning abyss between what we stand for and the consciousness of the working class and young radicals, even those who claim to be socialist. As

Canadian Imperialists Out of Haiti!

Following the devastating January earthquake in Haiti, *Spartacist Canada* No. 164 (Spring 2010) reprinted two articles from *Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., which justified the presence of U.S. imperialist troops as essential to the aid effort. As the statement by the ICL's International Executive Committee printed in this issue (see page 3) notes, this was a social-imperialist line.

Alongside these articles, we printed a short companion article, "Haiti, Somalia, Afghanistan—Canada: Junior Partner of U.S. Imperialism." Neither in this article nor elsewhere in the issue did we raise the demand that the Canadian imperialist troops get out of Haiti. We failed in our elementary duty as revolutionary Marxists to oppose—when it counted—our "own" capitalist ruling class and its predatory actions. From the start, the Trotskyist League should have declared: U.S./Canada/UN, all imperialist troops out of Haiti!

Canada sent 2,000 troops to Haiti, almost as many as are presently in Afghanistan. Unlike the bloody Afghan occupation, sending troops to Haiti was widely popular. For the Canadian imperialists this was a chance to bolster their "humanitarian" credentials. Our article attacked the reformist left for pushing illusions in Canadian imperialism.



Canadian troops in Léogâne, Haiti on January 19, part of massive military invasion in wake of earthquake. AP

But by failing to demand the immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops, we ourselves gave cover to the nationalist mythology of Canada as a "kinder, gentler," more benevolent power.

—Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste Central Committee

we have noted, it has been very difficult to maintain our revolutionary continuity and very easy to have it destroyed.

The Fight to Maintain a Revolutionary Perspective

In fighting against the Cochranite opposition in the then-revolutionary American Socialist Workers Party in the early 1950s, James P. Cannon argued:

"The revolutionary movement, under the best conditions, is a hard fight, and it wears out a lot of human material. Not for nothing has it been said a thousand times in the past: 'The revolution is a devourer of men.' The movement in this, the richest and most conservative country in the world, is perhaps the most voracious of all.

"It is not easy to persist in the struggle, to hold on, to stay tough and fight it out year after year without victory; and even, in times such as the present, without tangible progress. That requires theoretical conviction and historical perspective as well as character. And, in addition to that, it requires association with others in a common party."

—"Trade Unionists and Revolutionists," 11 May 1953

The example of the degeneration of the SWP from a revolutionary party through centrism to abject reformism is instructive. The party endured more than a decade of stagnation and isolation during the anti-Communist witchhunt. Seeing their role reduced essentially to a holding operation in the citadel of U.S. imperialism, aging party cadre like those in the Cochran wing gave up on a revolutionary perspective. The SWP majority under Cannon and Farrell Dobbs fought to preserve the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism against this liquidationism. But they themselves were not immune from the deforming pressures that led the Cochranites to split.

Four years later, in 1957, the SWP supported the introduction of federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas—the end result of which was the crushing of local black self-defense efforts against the howling racist mobs fighting school integration. Painting U.S. troops as reliable defenders of black people engendered significant opposition within the party in the 1950s, particularly from Richard Fraser whose program of revolutionary integrationism as the road to black freedom in the U.S. we take as our own. But the wrong line was never corrected and the view of the U.S. imperialist army as the only "realistic" force to defend civil rights protesters in the Jim Crow South against racist terror deepened. By 1964 the SWP had adopted the grotesque campaign slogan, "Withdraw the Troops from Viet Nam and Send Them to Mississippi!" By 1965, the SWP had thrown overboard the last remnant of a revolutionary opposition to imperialism, promoting the reformist lie that a classless peace movement could stop U.S. imperialism's dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants.

The young SWP cadre in the Revolutionary Tendency who fought the party's degeneration were the founding leaders of our organization. Recognizing where the SWP went, and holding it up as a mirror of where we could go without correcting our mistakes and the outright betrayal of our revolutionary internationalist program in response to the Haiti earthquake, is part of the fight to preserve this continuity with Cannon's revolutionary party that extends back to Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks.

But the ability to make such a correction is hardly cause for celebration. It merely lays the basis for political rectification. We crossed the class line and the urgent necessity is to reassert and struggle to maintain the proletarian internationalist program of Leninism. ■

G20, Vancouver Olympics

State Repression Targets Leftists

In the wake of the police-state measures surrounding the Vancouver Olympics, the government and police forces are preparing the largest “security” crackdown in Canadian history around the G20 summit in Toronto on June 26-27. A swathe of the downtown core is to be blocked by a three-metre high fence and thousands of heavily-armed cops are being mobilized from across the country. A spokesman for the RCMP Integrated Security Unit warned: “There’s going to be a massive—absolutely massive—presence of police and security on the ground like you’ve never seen before” (*Toronto Star*, 23 March).

During last year’s G20 summit in London, England, a 47-year-old man, Ian Tomlinson, died at the hands of riot police who were rampaging against protesters. Now the capitalist media is whipping up a frenzy against the threat of militant protests in Toronto by anarchist and other groups. This follows the demonization of anarchist anti-Olympic protesters in Vancouver, who were targeted by a media witchhunt and state repression.

Grotesquely, some self-proclaimed leftist groups joined in “violence”-baiting the anarchists in Vancouver. On March 9, the Socialist Voice website published a scurrilous article by Derrick O’Keefe, one of its “contributing editors,” titled “Activists Debate Vancouver Olympic Protests.” The International Socialists’ *Socialist Worker* (March 2010) ran the same article in slightly abridged form. Denouncing the anarchists’ February 13 “2010 Heart Attack” demonstration, which saw the arrest of several protesters, O’Keefe claimed that it “served up a PR coup for the Vancouver Police and the Olympic organizers.” In the same article, O’Keefe railed that “incidents” like the smashing of bank windows during the protest are “frequently the work of unwanted intruders.” Such slanders against “outside agitators” are the stock-in-trade of social democrats who support the existence of the repressive capitalist state. Nowhere do O’Keefe, Socialist Voice or *Socialist Worker* call to defend the anarchist protesters against state repression.

From the standpoint of the working class, these activists committed absolutely no crime. At the same time, we understand that successful struggle against the multi-faceted oppressions of the capitalist system must first and foremost seek to mobilize the social power of the working class. Rejecting this Marxist perspective, the “direct action” activists can offer no alternative except the sideshow of broken windows and toppled newspaper boxes, bringing them into isolated and ineffectual conflict with the bloody fist of the bosses’ state.

As we wrote in the build-up to the Vancouver Olympics:

“These Olympics shine a spotlight on the repressive nature of the capitalist state, which cannot be ‘cleaned up,’ reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of the workers and the oppressed. It must be shattered by workers revolution. Stopping racist state terror, defending the rights of Native people and the poor—all this and more requires the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party that fights to expropriate the capitalist class and build a new, socialist society where a centrally planned economy will produce for human need, not the profits of a tiny minority.”

—“Vancouver Olympics: State Repression Against Natives, the Poor,” *SC* No. 163 (Winter 2009/2010)



Reuters

Vancouver: Cops manhandle anti-Olympics protester on February 13.

We print below a March 13 protest letter sent by the Partisan Defense Committee to B.C. Attorney General Mike de Jong following the arrests in Vancouver. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste.

We protest the state crackdown against anti-Olympics activists, a number of whom have been arrested and charged with serious crimes. From the standpoint of the international working class, the only “crime” committed here was that of heavily armed state agents repressing protesters in downtown Vancouver. The activists only exercised their right to protest, some through targeting symbols of oppressive Canadian capitalism, such as the Bay and TD Bank, without hurting anyone. In response, Guillaume Joseph-Marc Beaulieu was arrested and charged with mischief over \$5000. Charges of possession of a dangerous weapon and possession of a prohibited weapon have also been laid against Daniel Myers. Charlotte Hannah, 23, and Willow Riley, 18, are facing the very serious charge of assaulting a “peace officer.”

Canadian governments and rulers, including in B.C., have nothing but contempt for the rights, health and lives of Native people, minorities and the oppressed. The “Black Bloc” protesters sought to oppose the grinding misery and exploitation that is the daily reality of workers, Natives and the poor in this society. Having whipped up a flag-waving “national unity” hysteria around the Olympics, the government wants to intimidate all those who would protest the violence and depredations of the capitalist system.

We condemn the attack on the “2010 Heart Attack” activists and demand that all charges against anti-Olympic protesters be dropped. ■

Québec Solidaire: No Choice for Workers

Fake-Marxists Unite Behind Petty-Bourgeois Populism

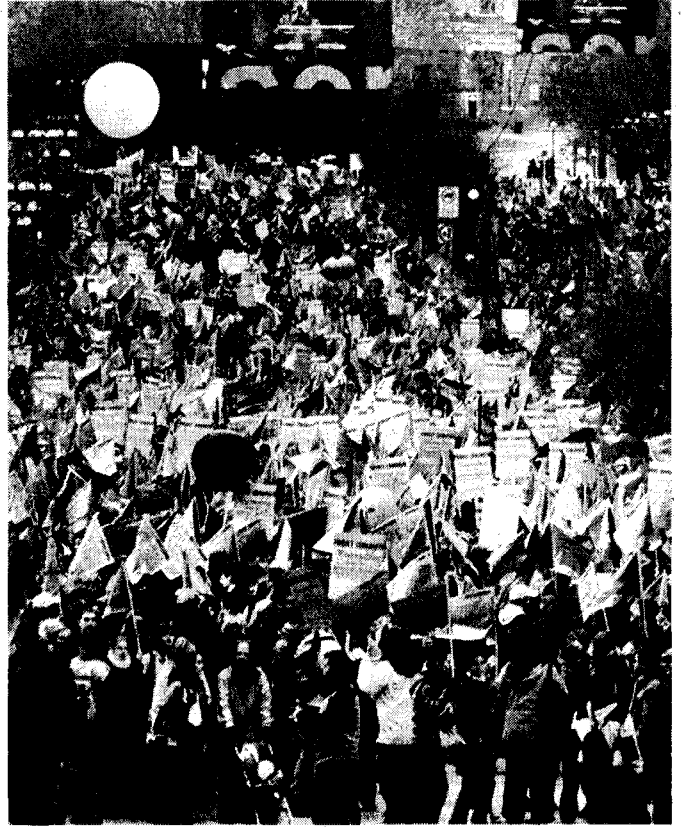
Everywhere across the country, the capitalist rulers are using the economic crisis as an excuse for savage attacks on the jobs and livelihoods of working people. In Quebec, the Liberal government of Jean Charest has tabled an austerity budget that includes a public-sector wage freeze and user fees for medical services, provoking widespread protests. More than 75,000 trade unionists demonstrated in Montreal on March 20 against the Charest government's attacks on public-sector workers fighting for a new contract. Eleven days later, 12,000 people took to the streets on a weekday afternoon to protest the budget, while 15,000 joined the annual May Day union march.

These protests have been far larger than anywhere in English Canada, even though working people there have been hit by similar austerity attacks. Indeed, whatever the particular ebbs and flows of the class struggle, ever since the 1960s working-class struggles in Quebec have generally been larger and often more deep-going than those in English Canada. These class battles have been fuelled, in significant part, by the national oppression of the francophone Québécois within a "united" Canada dominated by English Canadian chauvinism.

In Quebec as elsewhere, successful struggle against the capitalist onslaught requires a leadership that understands that the interests of the working class and the class of bourgeois exploiters are counterposed and irreconcilable. The grinding exploitation and poverty that define capitalist society will not end until the working class, standing at the head of all the oppressed, sweeps away the rule of capital and establishes a workers state, opening the road to an egalitarian socialist future. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste fights to forge a revolutionary workers party based on the program of Marxism, the essential instrument to lead this struggle.

In sharp contrast, the various reformist left groups active in Quebec have worked to tie the workers to the enemy class: championing pro-capitalist union bureaucrats, supporting bourgeois Quebec nationalists, and even in some cases standing with the chauvinist English Canadian rulers. Especially over the past two decades the left in Quebec, as elsewhere, has gone very far down the road of the "politics of the possible," rejecting even the most nominal proletarian and revolutionary orientation in favour of "realistic" projects of refurbishing capitalism.

This political retrogression has been shaped by the counter-revolutionary destruction in 1991-92 of the Soviet Union, the world's first workers state, product of the October 1917



Front Commun SISP-CSN-FTQ
Montreal, March 20: Massive union rally against Charest government attacks on public-sector workers.

workers revolution. This devastating defeat has not only emboldened the capitalist rulers to step up their attacks, it has thrown back the consciousness of working people around the world, albeit unevenly. Even the most advanced sections of the proletariat generally no longer see socialism or communism as possible or even desirable, while the vast majority of self-proclaimed socialists have moved sharply to the right in both formal ideology and practical activity.

Today, almost every self-styled Marxist group in Quebec has buried itself in Québec Solidaire (QS), a petty-bourgeois nationalist formation that poses as a left alternative to the main capitalist parties—the federalist Liberals and the bourgeois-nationalist Parti Québécois. QS held a much-publicized convention last November, a year after electing its first deputy to the National Assembly. The program discussed there stayed far away from even the most tepid challenge to the capitalist system, speaking instead of forging "a democratic, social and

(continued on page 17)

**For Quebec Independence!
Forge a Binational Revolutionary Workers Party!**

British Reformists in Action

When Militant Ran Liverpool

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 210 (Spring 2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League. The Militant tendency is the forerunner of Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in Britain, and in Canada, the Fightback group, followers of the late Ted Grant.

WORKERS HAMMER

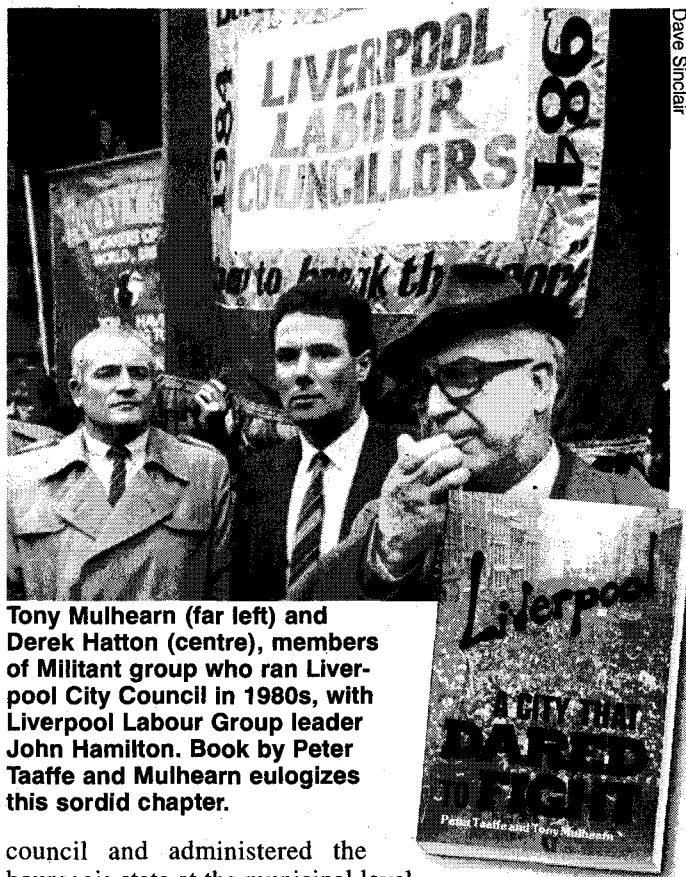
The Fifth Conference of the International Communist League (ICL) in 2007 adopted the position of opposition in principle to Marxists running for executive office in the capitalist state. Such offices include president, mayor, provincial or state governor as well as cabinet member in Britain. As we noted:

"Communist deputies can, as *oppositionists*, serve in the U.S. Congress, parliaments and other legislative bodies as revolutionary tribunes of the working class. But assuming executive office or gaining control of a bourgeois legislature or municipal council, either independently or in coalition, requires taking responsibility for the administration of the machinery of the capitalist state. The ICL had previously held that communists could run for executive offices, provided that we declare in advance that we don't intend to assume such offices. But in re-examining this question, we concluded that standing for election to executive positions carries the implication that one is ready to accept such responsibility, no matter what disclaimer one makes in advance. For self-proclaimed Marxists to engage in such activity only lends legitimacy to prevailing and reformist conceptions of the state."

—"Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State! Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics," *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 61, Spring 2009

When Marxists run candidates and seek election to bourgeois parliaments it is in order to use them as a platform for furthering the goal of proletarian socialist revolution. In the face of the betrayal of the Social Democratic leaders in Germany at the outset of World War I, Karl Liebknecht used his position in parliament to urge the German proletariat to wage revolutionary class struggle against the German bourgeoisie. As Liebknecht put it in his famous rallying cry: "the main enemy is at home." The Bolshevik Party carried out revolutionary agitation and propaganda work, even in the reactionary tsarist Duma.

Assuming executive office, however, means becoming responsible for administering the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation of the working class. The London mayor is the boss of the city's Tube [subway] workers, for example, which means carrying out attacks on their wages and conditions. As an example of why communists don't run for or take executive office, this article will look at the experience of Liverpool City Council from 1983-87, when the deeply Labourite Militant tendency, forerunner of today's Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal, gained control of the



Tony Mulhearn (far left) and Derek Hatton (centre), members of Militant group who ran Liverpool City Council in 1980s, with Liverpool Labour Group leader John Hamilton. Book by Peter Taaffe and Mulhearn eulogizes this sordid chapter.

council and administered the bourgeois state at the municipal level.

The Communist International and the Struggle Against Reformism

Our opposition to executive offices flows from the Marxist understanding that the state is not neutral but an organ of class rule. At its core the state consists of armed bodies of men and instruments of coercion—the police, the army, prison officers, the courts, etc.—committed to the defence of the prevailing property forms. In every struggle of the working class the attitude that one takes towards the state is critical. The fundamental counterposition is between the reformist strategy of taking hold of and administering the bourgeois state apparatus and the revolutionaries' insistence on the need to smash the existing state and replace it with organs of proletarian rule.

Opposition to executive office is a corollary of Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written in 1917 and 1918 respectively. In effect, these are founding documents of Lenin's struggle to forge a new, revolutionary international following the collapse of the Second (Socialist) International into social chauvinism at the outbreak of WWI in August 1914. With their

Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!

support for their “own” bourgeoisies many of the official Socialist leaders passed over definitively to the defence of the capitalist order against the working class. In rescuing the revolutionary heritage of Marxism from the reformist betrayers of the proletariat, Lenin had to reassert the fundamental lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which was, as Marx wrote in *The Civil War in France*, that: “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” The experience of the Commune enabled Marx and Engels to codify the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat vis-à-vis the bourgeois state.

The question of ministerialism—the participation of Socialists in bourgeois governments—had been the subject of a major dispute in the Marxist movement as early as 1899, over what became known as Millerandism. The French Socialist leader Alexandre Millerand joined the government of René Waldeck-Rousseau in order to help defuse the deep social crisis that had been raging over the Dreyfus affair. The anti-Semitic witch hunt of this Jewish military officer had polarised the country. Millerand’s entry into the government as minister of commerce was a betrayal which divided French Socialists.

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-Jewish revolutionary who played a central role in the struggle against this reformist rot and against ministerialism, wrote: “The entry of a socialist into a bourgeois government is not, as it is thought, a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state” (“The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case,” 1899). But the Second International compromised on the key question of socialists entering bourgeois governments. A resolution cooked up by Karl Kautsky proclaimed:

“The entry of an individual socialist into a bourgeois ministry cannot be regarded as the normal beginning of the conquest of political power but can be only a temporary and exceptional makeshift in a predicament.

“Whether in a given case such a predicament exists is a question of tactics and not of principle. Here the Congress shouldn’t decide. But in any case this dangerous experiment can be advantageous only if it is approved by a united party organiza-

tion and the socialist minister is and remains the mandate-bearer of his party.”

—*Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Paris 1900*
[*International Socialist Congress in Paris 1900*]
(Berlin: Expedition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts,
1900) (our translation)

The ICL stands on the resolutions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International (CI) which began the task of clearing out the Augean stables of Social Democratic betrayal and mainly did a good job of reaffirming Marxism on the question of the state. However, we think that the task was not fully completed and we are not uncritical of the CI during this period. In fact our position that communists should not run for executive office is an extension of our criticism of the entry of the German Communist Party (KPD) in October 1923 into the regional governments of Saxony and Thuringia, which were led by so-called “left” Social Democrats. This was a move which helped derail a revolutionary situation (see “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern,” *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 56, Spring 2001).

At its Fourth Congress in 1922, the CI incorrectly applied the term “workers government” to the *bourgeois* governments of Saxony and Thuringia. We understand “workers government” as a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat that follows the smashing of the bourgeois state. In Germany in 1923 the capitalist state was still intact and KPD participation in these governments reinforced prevailing parliamentary prejudices and acted as an obstacle to revolution.

Comintern Ambiguity on Municipalism

An example of unfinished business of the CI on the capitalist state was seen in the “Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism” at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. The theses make clear that:

“The proletariat’s task is to break up the bourgeoisie’s state machine and to destroy it, and with it parliamentary institutions, whether republican or constitutional-monarchist.”

—*Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920* (Pathfinder, 1991)

(continued on page 10)



Left: Bolshevik Duma fraction exiled to Siberia for opposing World War I, 1915. Right: Karl Liebknecht was imprisoned by German authorities for opposing imperialist war.



OGIZ

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Liverpool...

(continued from page 9)

Thesis 5 unambiguously states what the reformist left often denies, namely that municipal councils are a component of the bourgeois state apparatus which must be smashed by workers revolution:

"It is no different with the bourgeoisie's institutions of local government. To counterpose them to the organs of the state is theoretically incorrect. They are in reality organizations similar to the mechanism of the bourgeois state, which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local soviets of workers' deputies."

However another thesis, number 13, which was added as an amendment, contradicts this understanding. It reads:

"Should Communists hold a majority in institutions of local government, they must (a) organize revolutionary opposition against the central bourgeois government; (b) do everything possible to serve the poorer sectors of the population (economic measures, creating or attempting to create an armed workers' militia, and so forth); (c) at every opportunity point out how the bourgeois state blocks truly major changes; (d) on this basis develop vigorous revolutionary propaganda, never fearing conflict with the state; (e) under certain conditions, replace municipal governments with local workers' councils. In other words, all of the Communists' activity in local government must be a part of the general work of undermining the capitalist system."

While trying to draw a line against municipalism, this point is ambiguous enough that it leaves the door open for opportunism. For us revolutionaries, it is important to acknowledge the weakness of the early revolutionary CI on municipalism. But unlike the CI, the Militant tendency which ran Liverpool Council had long been a hardened reformist organisation.

The Myth of "Municipal Socialism"

A classic example of opportunist "municipal socialism" is the experience of Poplar Council in the years immediately following WWI. The term "Poplarism" is based on the "Councillors' Revolt" against the central government, which is upheld to this day by reformists of every stripe as an exemplary "socialist" struggle. In the book *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn (Fortress Books, January 1988), Poplar is cited several times as an inspiration for Militant when it ran Liverpool.

In 1919 the Labour council of Poplar in East London, led by mayor George Lansbury, began a struggle with the central government, which at that time was a coalition of the Liberals and Tories. Seeking to force richer London boroughs and the central government to assist with poor relief, the Poplar councillors refused to collect rates [taxes] other than those for the immediate benefit of the impoverished people of Poplar. As the post-WWI economy nosedived, unemployment levels were high, including among London's dockers. George Lansbury was a left-Labourite—the Tony Benn of his day—in addition to being a Christian Socialist and a pacifist. Among the Labour councillors elected in Poplar were two Communists, Lansbury's son Edgar and his wife Minnie.

The Poplar Labour councillors acted with considerable courage and were imprisoned for their stubborn campaign on behalf of the poor. However, fundamentally Poplarism revealed the futility of "municipal socialism" to provide any solution to the devastation wrought by the capitalist system of exploitation of the working class. That required workers



Robin Thompson

Limits of municipalism: Left-Labourite Poplar borough councillors in London's East End fought for minimal raise in welfare payments for poor and unemployed, 1921.

revolution to rip the means of production out of the hands of the capitalists and a collectivised planned economy in at least a number of advanced capitalist countries. All the Poplar councillors could do was to try to pressure the central authorities to provide money. Noreen Branson recounts in her book *Poplarism, 1919-1925* that councillors hung out a placard when the King and Queen visited the borough stating: "Poplar Borough Council expects this day the King will do his duty by calling upon His Majesty's Government to find work or full maintenance for the unemployed of the nation."

In contrast to the later example of the Militant in Liverpool, which did not oppose British troops in Northern Ireland and was mired in the imperialists' campaign against the Soviet Union, Poplar Council did pass resolutions calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, as well as opposing British imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union. Poplar councillors were among those who, in 1920, stopped the ship the *Jolly George* from being loaded with munitions bound for Pilsudski's nationalist forces in Poland for use against the Soviet Army. The action by London dockers against the *Jolly George* was part of the Hands Off Russia campaign which had been established for working-class action in defence of the fledgling Soviet state against imperialist intervention. (See "Hands Off Russia!" British Labour and the Wars of Intervention 1918-21," *Spartacist Britain* No. 36, October 1981.)

Militant's Record in Liverpool

Militant held executive office in Liverpool in the context where Margaret Thatcher's Tory government was waging a savage war against the working class and oppressed minorities. The coal miners were the main target but Thatcher took aim against the whole working class and had a particular disdain for former strongholds of the industrial proletariat such as Liverpool, Manchester and South Yorkshire, as well as Scotland and Wales. The Thatcher government cut the Rate Support Grant (central government funding) to cities like Liverpool, which was devastated by unemployment with the decline of shipbuilding and the docks. Militant had taken office on the basis of a programme of public spending. They

refused to increase the rates (local taxes) and put pressure on the government to make up the budget deficit. This is the substance of Militant's much vaunted struggle in Liverpool.

The Militant tendency, led by Ted Grant, was founded in 1964. While falsely purporting to be Trotskyist, they were in fact an organic part of the Labour Party. Contrary to their claim to be winning workers in the Labour Party to Marxism through their "deep entry," it was Militant who took on the political line of the reformist Labour Party, a classic case of the mask becoming the face. Militant's entire political perspective was to bring in "socialism" through gaining a majority in Westminster [parliament]. The "What We Stand For" box in their newspaper *Militant* shows what this organisation was about. In the 27 May 1983 issue they demand:

"Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80-85 per cent of the economy. This should be done through an Enabling Bill, with compensation based only on proven need."

This is parliamentary cretinism—the notion that socialism will come not through workers revolution but via the "mother of all parliaments." Militant infamously upheld the line that cops and prison guards—the armed fist of the capitalist state—are "workers in uniform." This reformist programme is upheld by the Socialist Party today. In August 2007, when thousands of prison officers staged a strike over pay, most of the reformist left gave gushing support to the strike. The Socialist Party went further, inviting Prison Officers' Association (POA) leader Brian Caton to address its "Socialism 2007" event. Grotesquely, Caton is today a member of the Socialist Party.

Characteristically, the Taaffe/Mulhearn book extols the 1919 police strike and the "union" of police and prison officers, which it says "was founded in August 1918 to fight for the interests of 'workers in uniform'." Having described only pages before the savage police assaults against striking railway workers on St. George's Plateau in August 1911, Taaffe/Mulhearn declare:

"Many workers in Liverpool had indicated that they would come to the side of the police, which showed their sound proletarian instinct. This was despite many vivid memories of the beatings and shooting they had suffered at the hands of the police in 1911."

In 1921 these cops carried out a brutal assault on unemployed workers occupying the Walker Art Gallery in which, as Taaffe/Mulhearn describe it, "workers' blood ran down the steps of the gallery." This confirms the nature of the police as described by Trotsky in an article about Weimar Germany:

"The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker."

—"What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat," January 1932 (*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*)

Labourism and Cold War

Prior to 1983 Liverpool Council was run by the Liberals and Tories, often in coalition. The desperate economic situation however produced a shift and a political vacuum into which Labour, dominated by Militant, was able to move. When Militant assumed office in Liverpool the anti-Soviet Cold War campaign of the imperialists was at its peak over the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and

the rise of Polish Solidarność in the early 1980s. The Trotskyist Spartacist League stood forthrightly for the military defence of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, and the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe against imperialism and internal capitalist counter-revolution, while fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, whose policies of conciliating imperialism undermined that defence. Today, we uphold the same programme in respect of the remaining deformed workers states—China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam. Militant howled along with Thatcher and Reagan in their anti-Communist crusade against the Soviet Union. On 14 October 1982 Militant tendency goons attempted to exclude the Spartacist League from a demonstration in Liverpool against youth unemployment. Incensed by our opposition to counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland, after announcing that our banner "had no place on the march" they attempted to tear it down.

At the time the Militant tendency was being witchhunted by the Labour leadership. Under the impact of Reagan and Thatcher's Cold War drive against the Soviet Union the Labour Party was rent by a bitter struggle between the pro-NATO, pro-CIA right wing, led by Denis Healey, and the Little England reformists around Tony Benn, whose opposition to the siting of American missiles in Britain threatened to make Labour unfit for government in the eyes of the British bourgeoisie. We defended the Militant tendency against Labour's inquisitors, while noting:

"Just as Healey is proving Labour's loyalty to the bourgeoisie by witchhunting Militant, so Militant tries by witchhunting the SL to prove its loyalty to anti-Soviet Labourism and its determination to get Labour into Parliament (with or without 'socialist policies') above all else."

—"Witchhunted Witchhunt," *Spartacist Britain* No. 45, November 1982

Like Benn, Militant truly believed that the Labour Party was a "broad church" which should function as a "party of the whole class." We sought to exacerbate this split in the Labour Party by driving out the pro-CIA Healey wing, to place Benn in a position where his reformist politics could be

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Workers Hammer

Spartacist banners at 14 October 1982 demonstration in Liverpool against youth unemployment drove Militant bureaucrats into frenzy.

Liverpool...

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exposed as a central obstacle to building a revolutionary party. Among our slogans that enraged Militant were "Kick out CIA/NATO-lover Healey!" and "Labour can betray without the CIA connection!" More than a decade later, following the defeat of the miners and counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, Tony Blair began the project of seeking to transform the Labour Party from a "bourgeois workers party"—having a mass working-class base, but saddled with a pro-capitalist leadership and programme—into an outright bourgeois party, by severing all links to the trade-union movement. This process is unfinished but Labour is now moribund as a reformist party of the working class.

Militant and the Miners Strike

Peter Taaffe, today's Socialist Party leader who was a leader of the Militant tendency with the late Ted Grant, equates Militant's stewardship of Liverpool Council with the heroic year-long miners strike of 1984-85. The first paragraph of the preface to Taaffe and Mulhearn's book says:

"Since 1979 the conditions and rights of working people appear to have been crushed by the Thatcher juggernaut. In reality, the working class has put up ferocious opposition to the Tory government. This reached its height in the titanic year-long miners' strike of 1984-5 and in the stand of the Liverpool City Council between 1983-7."

Ludicrously placing the most significant class struggle in Britain since the 1926 General Strike on the same plane as Militant's pleading with Thatcher for more money for Liverpool shows Taaffe's miserable parliamentary cretinism. Although the book is 500 pages long there are only a few passing references to the miners strike. Thatcher deployed the full weight of the capitalist state—thousands of riot cops, MI5 spies, court sequestrators, etc.—against the NUM [National Union of Mine Workers], which was dubbed the "enemy within." As Taaffe/Mulhearn acknowledge: "the miners' strike had to be 'seen off' and this was not to take place until March 1985." Thus, in July 1984, four months into the miners strike, Thatcher's minister Patrick Jenkin made a deal with the Militant-led council whereby the Tory government in Westminster would give Liverpool Council £30 million in exchange for a rates rise of 17 per cent. In his book *Inside Left: The Story So Far*, published in 1988, former Militant deputy council leader Derek Hatton recounts being told by Tory MP Teddy Taylor that "we had to tell Patrick to give you the money. At this stage we want [miners union leader Arthur] Scargill. He's our priority. But we'll come for you later."

We called for spreading the miners strike to other strategic industries, particularly the railways and the docks, which would have shut down the country. This would have immediately raised

the question of state power, of which class shall rule. Taaffe/Mulhearn say that: "Like other councils, Liverpool City Council was heavily involved in support for the miners" and cite the facilities provided by the council "for collecting cash to buy food which was delivered to the mining areas by the lorry-load." But Militant's perspective was above all to get a Labour government elected. The Labour Party at that time was led by Neil Kinnock, who was despised by militant miners, especially for his denunciations of the strikers as "violent" while they were under massive police assault. Kinnock infuriated the miners not least with his call for a ballot, which became the rallying cry of all those who sought to defeat the strike, including Thatcher and the TUC [Trades Union Congress] misleaders, and was echoed by much of the so-called "far left." Not surprisingly, in their book, Taaffe and Mulhearn repeat this strike-breaking call, stating:

"Yet as Militant has consistently pointed out, one of the fundamental weaknesses of the miners' strike was the failure of the leadership to hold a ballot which would have resulted in an overwhelming majority confirming the strike action which was in progress. The idea that the actions of a 'determined minority' can bulldoze other workers to come out on strike without discussion and a democratic vote is absolutely false."

Militant/Socialist Party: Labourite Social Chauvinism

As a city, Liverpool was built on the slave trade. The City Hall from which Militant conducted their business is decorated with stone representations of slavery; city streets are named after those who got very rich in the trafficking of black human flesh, including numerous mayors of the city such as Foster Cunliffe, Joseph Bird and George Campbell.

In 1981, rampant police brutality against minority youth sparked riots in Toxteth [in Liverpool]. As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* No. 109 (September 1989):

"Unemployment in the heavily black Toxteth area can reach up to 80 per cent. In some areas, according to another report in the *Independent* (15 October 1988) unemployment among black youth is as high as 90 per cent. 'Nowhere else in Britain are blacks so exposed to threats, taunts, and abuse if they leave an area of the city' (*Guardian*, 19 July)."

A Marxist revolutionary should strive to be, in Lenin's



Stefano Cagnoni/Report

November 1984: Mass picket of miners and transport workers. TUC/Labour leadership spiked joint class struggle, leaving miners to fight alone against massive state repression.

words, "not a trade union secretary but a tribune of the people." In other words, we fight against all manifestations of oppression in capitalist society and seek to lead the multiethnic working class in a struggle against racism in all its forms, against women's oppression, against the oppression of homosexuals, etc. The Militant tendency is a far cry from a "tribune of the people."

A furious row developed when Sampson Bond, a Militant supporter from London, was appointed as Principal Race Relations Advisor to the Liverpool Council. Taaffe/Mulhearn claim:

"Two entirely different philosophies, reflecting diametrically opposed class forces, clashed on the issue of his appointment as Principal Race Relations Officer to the Liverpool City Council. On the one side stood the class conscious approach of the labour movement. On the other side stood the race relations industry, feeling threatened to the very marrow of their being by the appointment of just one Marxist to such a potentially important position."

Militant's so-called "class conscious approach" was nothing other than Labourite chauvinist indifference to special oppression. In *Inside Left* Derek Hatton states that Militant's position "has always been that while accepting there is discrimination, the problems of the black community are part of the overall struggle. It is a class problem, and a Socialist problem, and must be solved within that wide framework." He continues, "To do otherwise is to alienate many white working-class people from identifying with the struggle."

Hatton's fear of "alienating white working-class people" is an expression of Militant's pandering to backward consciousness, including racism. Their indifference to racial oppression is of a piece with their refusal to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland and their refusal to defend the Catholic population against national oppression at the hands of the British imperialists and the Orange state. This crass Labourite social chauvinism is exemplified by an article in the 6 January 1984 *Militant* titled "Northern Ireland: Labour Must Combat Sectarianism." Militant says, "the Labour Party in Britain can and must play a significant part in helping Northern Irish workers come together in common struggle for socialist change." This is the same pro-imperialist Labour Party which led the cheering in Parliament at the execution of James Connolly; which sent British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969 and which introduced the first draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974. Of course Militant's leaders are past masters at disguising their Labourite opportunism in the language of pseudo-Marxism, claiming that they're fighting for "working-class unity."

Once the Thatcher government had defeated the miners—who were betrayed by the misleaders of the working class—Thatcher turned her attention to Liverpool. The city councillors were made personally liable for the refusal to set a rate. A total of 47 councillors were surcharged [charged a penalty], while the council tried to raise money from the Swiss banks. But in the meantime, with the money running out in a matter of weeks, Militant famously issued redundancy [layoff] notices to the council workers. As described by Taaffe/Mulhearn:

"The Labour group decided on the 'tactic' of issuing 90-day redundancy notices to the 30,000 strong workforce to gain that period as a breathing space in order to build the campaign. It was absurd to suggest, as the press and to their shame the national trade-union leaders subsequently did, that 30,000 workers were to be sacked."

They conclude, however, that "the issuing of 'redundancy notices' turned out to be a major tactical error." Derek Hatton,

in *Inside Left*, unwittingly captures the miserable spectacle of self-proclaimed "Marxists" administering capitalism against the workers:

"We argued, that by issuing redundancy notices we could also hammer home the sharp reality of our arguments: that unless more money was available to Liverpool from the central funds then jobs really were on the line. There was never ever any intention to implement a single one of those 31,000 redundancy notices."

Not surprisingly, Militant's redundancy "tactic" was bitterly opposed by the unions. Hatton bleats: "Now we were their employers, and they fought us bitterly every inch of the way. We had told them that the redundancy notices were only a tactical ploy, but they sold the idea to their members as though it was for real. 'Should we let our employers sack us—or should we stand and fight them now?' was the line they took." That is the end result of running the local state in the first place, which means becoming the bosses.

The Labour councillors were surcharged and banned from office by the courts. Militant were rewarded for their decades of loyalty to the Labour Party by being expelled by the Neil Kinnock leadership. The response of Militant to the witch hunt is explained in an appendix to the Taaffe/Mulhearn book: "When faced with expulsion proceedings in 1982, *Militant's* Editorial Board decided to challenge the NEC's [National Executive Committee] unconstitutional and undemocratic move in the courts." Use of the bourgeois courts against political opponents in the trade unions or the workers movement is a breach of the principle of proletarian independence and an attack on the labour movement's strength. Inviting the class enemy to intervene in the internal affairs of the labour movement is to promote illusions in bourgeois democracy by portraying the state as "neutral" between classes. That is the very essence of Militant's Labourite reformism.

What was the result of Militant's proud record in Liverpool? They boast that the Labour vote in 1987 was higher in Liverpool than the national average and much higher than it had been in 1983. In other words, if only that swing had been reflected nationally we would have had... a Kinnock-led Labour government! That's what you get with "socialists" holding executive office and administering the capitalist state. In its own way it's a powerful argument for why you need a workers revolution. ■

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Greece...

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by Greece, Spain and Portugal raised the spectre of a renewed, full-blown financial crisis in Europe. Greece's economic woes occur against the backdrop of the international economic crisis, which has also exposed the seething national antagonisms beneath the surface of European capitalist "unity" as embodied in the EU and the euro. In Europe, as elsewhere, each national ruling class is seeking to ratchet up the exploitation of its own working class, while simultaneously maneuvering to gain the advantage against its rivals.

The PASOK government's string of anti-working-class attacks has provoked a wave of militant strikes, including five one-day general strikes so far this year. The protest demonstrations during the May 5 general strike were the largest since the fall of the Greek military junta in 1974. More than 150,000 marched in the streets of Athens, while large protests also occurred in other cities. As the government's measures were being debated, some protesters attempted to storm the parliament building in Athens' Syntagma Square but were beaten back by the hated riot police.

The death of three bank workers who suffocated in a fire caused by a Molotov cocktail thrown during the May 5 protest in Athens has been seized on by the government to unleash a wave of police repression directed in particular against anarchist and immigrant groups. Cops ransacked the offices of an immigrant support network and raided cafes and homes in the Exarchia neighbourhood, an anarchist stronghold, detaining dozens. While Papandreou denounced the "violence" of the demonstrators, a co-worker of those killed in the fire issued a widely disseminated statement revealing that the bank workers had been threatened with firing if they failed to show up for work and then were prevented from leaving when they attempted to do so. According to this worker, the building, which had no fire certificate, no sprinklers and no fire exits, was locked and even the Internet connection was cut. We demand that all charges be dropped against the anarchists and all other leftist protesters, including those arrested during the earlier general strikes!

While the PASOK government's attacks on working people are in large part dictated by the IMF and the major Euro-

pean powers, with imperialist Germany in the lead, the Greek ruling class is not just a minion of the EU; it is using this as an opportunity to crack down on the workers. Meanwhile, the arrogant German bourgeoisie has unleashed a chauvinist campaign against the smaller and weaker European economies. German capitalists have been sneering that Greece has been living "beyond its means," while a leading spokesman for German industrialists snidely suggested that Athens cut its deficit by selling off some "uninhabited islands."

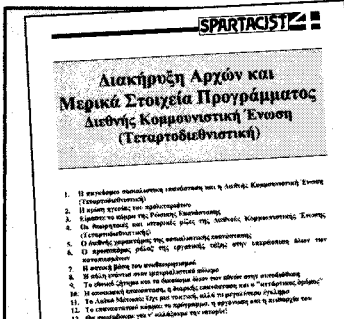
The government's threats and the repression have failed to intimidate workers. But a major obstacle to a class-struggle fight against the capitalists and their government is the Greek chauvinism pushed by the official leaders of the workers movement, including those of the Communist Party (KKE), who oppose the IMF and EU imperialist bloodsuckers on the narrow nationalist basis that they threaten Greece's national sovereignty. It is only on the basis of proletarian internationalism that the workers of Greece can be mobilized in revolutionary struggle in their own class interests at the head of all the oppressed. Today the bankruptcy of the whole capitalist-imperialist system is clear, but what is lacking is revolutionary leadership to finally end exploitation, poverty, racism and war. For a Socialist United States of Europe! For world socialist revolution to establish an international division of labour in a planned socialist economy!

We reprint below a 28 April leaflet published by our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece. It was distributed at two May Day demonstrations in Athens—one organized by the All Workers Militant Front (PAME), a trade-union federation associated with the KKE, and the other organized by the two largest trade-union federations, the private sector General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) and the Confederation of Public Servants (ADEDY), both led by PASOK. The English translation of the leaflet first appeared in *Workers Vanguard* No. 959 (21 May).

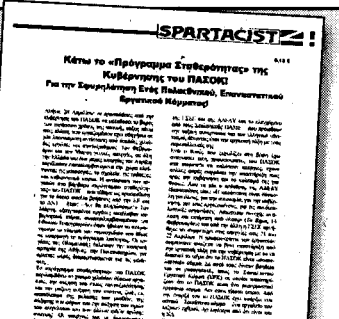
The attempts by the PASOK government to shift the bourgeoisie's massive debt burden onto the backs of the working people have led to furious resistance by tens of thousands of workers and pensioners. General strikes throughout Greece in February and March, as well as two days of strikes in April, repeatedly brought the country to a halt, closing down trans-

portation, schools, banks and government offices. The workers' response to PASOK's savage "stability program"—imposed as a precondition for any bailout from the EU and the IMF—has been: "We won't pay!" In March, angry workers occupied government buildings, including the National Printing Office, where they sought to prevent the printing of the legislation bringing the austerity plan into effect. Olympic Airways workers closed down the central Athens artery of Panepistimiou for several days in protest against layoffs.

PASOK's "stability program" involves thousands of job losses, raising the retirement age and a massive increase in the cost of



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living resulting from wage cuts, tax increases and price hikes for gasoline and other necessities. The strikes and protests have clearly demonstrated the enormous potential social power of the working class. That power can and must be mobilized in the workers' own interests, to beat back the government's attacks but also to open up the possibility of a counteroffensive against the entire capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. A major obstacle to such a fightback, however, is the official leadership of the trade unions—both the pro-PASOK leadership of GSEE and ADEDY and the Stalinist-controlled PAME—which promotes class collaboration and Greek nationalism, thus tying the working class to their exploiters.

While seething anger at the base has forced the PASOK union bureaucrats to call strikes, they have repeatedly expressed their support for the government and its calls for sacrifices. ADEDY leader Papaspyros said: "The situation is hard for all of us, for the economy, for the government, for the working people, for the trade unions. Continuous analysis and evaluation is needed from all of us" (quoted in [Athens daily] *To Vima*, 14 February), while GSEE refused to take part in the strikes on April 21 and 22. The trade-union bureaucracy seeks to rally working-class support for the government by trading on the lie that PASOK is some kind of "socialist" party. In this they are aided by reformists like the Socialist Workers Party (SEK), who claim PASOK is a reformist workers party. It is no such thing. Since its inception, PASOK has been a bourgeois-populist party—an instrument of the class enemy no less than New Democracy.

It is necessary to forge a new, revolutionary leadership of the unions based on the understanding that there are no common interests between the proletariat and the capitalist bloodsuckers. Workers must fight for what we need, not for what the bosses say they can afford. The Greek capitalist class has brought the country to the brink of bankruptcy and is now determined to make the working class pay for the economic crisis. We say no! To hell with the government's "stability program"!

The kind of class-struggle leadership that we seek to build would fight for a series of transitional demands which, as Trotsky explained in the Transitional Program written in 1938, start from the current consciousness of the working class and its daily struggles against the bosses and the government and lead to the goal of proletarian revolution. According to a 21 March article in [national newspaper] *Eleutherotypia*: "The increase in unemployment exceeded 150,000 people at the end of 2009. In fact, it is much higher if you count those that work only a few hours per week." In the same article, Labour Minister Andreas Loverdos estimated that unemployment will shoot up to 12 percent in March. In reality, unemployment is higher still. "GSEE asserts that the [government] statistic of 11.3 percent is in real terms approaching 17.5 percent and the number of unemployed is 800,000 people" ([Athens daily] *Kathimerini*, 21 April). Unemployment has hit women and youth hardest. According to the National Statistics Service, unemployment is four times higher for women and around 25.8 percent among youth.

To combat mass unemployment, it is necessary to demand the sharing of available work, with no loss of pay, and a massive program of public works. To protect even their current living standards—already among the lowest in Europe—workers must demand that wages be indexed to inflation. To unmask the



AFP

Desperate immigrants seek to reach Greek island, May 2009.

exploitation, robbery and fraud of the capitalist owners and the swindles of the banks, Trotsky argued that workers should demand that the capitalists open their books "to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits." Raising the call for the expropriation of branches of industry vital for national existence, or the most parasitic of the capitalist rulers, Trotsky underlined that such a demand must necessarily be linked to the fight for the seizure of power by the working class, as against the reformist misleaders for whom the call for nationalization was merely a prescription for bailing out capitalist enterprises.

In opposition to the capitalists and their reformist agents, Trotsky argued:

"If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

Down With National Chauvinism! For Workers' Unity Against the Bosses!

The fight to mobilize the working class in struggle for its class interests must include a struggle against all forms of discrimination. Key to forging the unity of the working class is the struggle against the racist oppression of immigrants. Immigrant workers, from Albania, South Asia, Africa and elsewhere, are a key component of the working class in Greece who must be drawn into common struggle alongside their Greek class brothers and sisters. To prevent the capitalists' scapegoating of foreign workers for the economic crisis, the workers movement must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!

The virulent racism of the Greek capitalist state was recently demonstrated at the Independence Day parade in Athens on March 25, when a Greek special forces unit was filmed chanting racist slogans against Albanians, Macedonians and Turks. The video was later posted on YouTube and led to protests by Albanians in Athens. Chauvinism toward its

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Greece...

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Balkan neighbours and toward national minorities within its own borders is used by the Greek bourgeoisie, as it is by all the bourgeoisies in the region, to keep the working classes at each others' throats and to preserve the rule of capital. In our founding declaration the Trotskyist Group of Greece noted: "The defense of the rights of oppressed nationalities and immigrants is the only means by which the proletariat, consisting of workers of different ethnicities, can be united in the struggle for socialist revolution." Recognizing that the Macedonian question is a test of the authenticity of any group claiming to be internationalist in Greece, we wrote: "The TGG defends the national rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece, including their right to set up their own state or unite with the existing state of Macedonia. *For full democratic rights for national minorities in Greece! For a Balkan socialist federation!*"

Down With the Bosses' EU! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

The PASOK government's austerity program is a taste of what the bosses across Europe have in store for the working class as they seek to drive up the rate of profit. The condition for an EU/IMF "rescue package" for the Greek capitalists is a massive attack on the Greek workers.

As Marxists we stand in implacable opposition to the EU, an imperialist trade bloc within which the conflicting interests of the major European bourgeois states are expressed. The EU is also a vehicle for the European capitalists to cooperate with each other against the working class and against immigrants. Our opposition to the EU, based on proletarian internationalism, is counterposed to the attacks by the Greek Communist Party (KKE) on the EU, which are based on gross capitulation to Greek nationalism. In a 17 April article in *Rizospastis*, the KKE blatantly expresses concern that the PASOK government might be undermining Greece's defense and worries about its borders with Turkey in the Aegean Sea, saying that KKE leader Aleka Papariga "repeated the worries of her party that the country's deeper incorporation into the imperialist organizations and their plans has prepared the ground for compromises at the expense of the sovereign rights of the country and its defense capability." She added that "now we worry additionally for the Aegean Sea." And while the KKE-dominated PAME trade-union federation raises class-against-class slogans such as "Either with capital or with the workers," it simultaneously appeals for patriotism in banners proclaiming, "Rising Up Against Impoverishment of the People Is Patriotism." Such nationalism is poisonous to class consciousness



Getty

Mytilene, Greece: Cops attack protesters during May 5 general strike.

and is counterposed to proletarian internationalism. It serves to pit workers in Greece against workers in other countries and reinforces anti-immigrant racism. Any effective struggle against the bosses' attacks must begin with the understanding that the workers have no country. What is needed is international workers solidarity across the EU against capital.

The EU was originally established as an adjunct of NATO as the U.S. sought to strengthen West Europe against the Soviet Union. Today it is an unstable adjunct to the economic, military and political priorities of the European capitalists. The International Communist League uniquely fought to the last for military defense of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. We fought for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies whose appeasement of imperialism undermined the defense of the workers states. That is today our program for the remaining deformed workers states—China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea.

The current world economic crisis is further powerful confirmation of the Marxist analysis of capitalist society and the need for socialist revolution to do away with the boom-bust cycle of capitalism and establish a rational, planned economy where production is for human need, not for profits for a handful of super-rich exploiters. No amount of tinkering with the existing system can wrench it into serving the needs of the proletariat and the oppressed.

As working people face ruin, the most that reformist groups like the SEK can put forward are pathetic appeals to the PASOK government to "tax the rich." Such schemes, advanced by reformists like the SEK, posit the possibility of radically redistributing wealth without getting rid of the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie has at its disposal cops, courts and troops—the armed bodies of men that constitute the core of the capitalist state—to wage war upon the working class in order to drive up profits. What's needed is a socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers state that will lay the basis for building a socialist society. For that you need to build a revolutionary workers party—a party like Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks—which will fight for a workers government. The TGG, Greek sympathizing section of the ICL, seeks to build such a party. ■

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Québec Solidaire...

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national alliance" with the PQ and others in support of "popular sovereignty." Since its inception in 2006, QS's rhetoric has never gone beyond left liberalism. Its founding "principles and orientation" upheld "democracy," pacifism and environmentalism—all variants of bourgeois ideology—but explicitly *not* socialism or the class struggle.

In its social composition and political orientation, QS is not all that different from the PQ in its early, pre-government years of the late 1960s and early '70s. Back then, a right-wing Quebec justice minister portrayed PQ founding leader René Lévesque as "the Fidel Castro of Quebec," while an assortment of would-be radicals and left nationalists rallied to the new party. Of course Lévesque and the PQ, despite occasional rhetoric about a new "project of society," didn't even pretend to be pro-working-class socialists. But neither does Québec Solidaire today.

This has been no obstacle for the rogue's gallery of pseudo-Marxists gathered in QS. Among them are the International Socialists (I.S.), whose Quebec leader Benoît Renaud does double duty as QS secretary general. Gauche Socialiste (GS), the Quebec section of the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel, and the Parti Communiste du Québec (PCQ), a split-off from the Maple Leaf chauvinist Communist Party of Canada (CPC), are both affiliated to QS as "collectives." More recent adherents include the International Marxist Tendency's (IMT) La Riposte group and a branch of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers International (CWI), the Mouvement pour le Parti Socialiste. The ever-opportunist CPC also works in QS. All of these groups have supported the QS leadership with no substantial criticisms.

While QS has had some tenuous links with "left" labour bureaucrats in the Montreal Central Council of the CSN union federation, it has no organic base in the Quebec working class, nor does it seek one. Some left outfits—such as La Riposte and the "Masse Critique" collective of former Maoist leader Roger Rashi—argue that QS should push for stronger connections with organized labour. But their goal is only to create a Quebec version of the NDP social democrats or, at best, a "left" reformist formation akin to France's New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA). Citing the NPA as a model (and tipping his hat to the "21st century socialism" of bourgeois-populist Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez), Rashi writes:

"These various left-of-the-left experiments must be put in the larger historical context of rebuilding left alternatives after the collapse of Soviet-style socialism and the bankruptcy of Third Way Social Democracy.... In this perspective, both the 'left-of-the-left' experiments in Western countries and the 'Socialism of the 21st Century' experiments in Latin America, take on a new significance and a new light."

—"Québec Solidaire: A Left-of-the-Left Formation?,"
The Bullet, 11 December 2009

The NPA was founded in early 2009 as the successor to the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), the USec's flagship section. Far from being the "left of the left," it represented a step to the right even for the social-democratic LCR. As our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France noted:

"To dot the i's and cross the t's, the NPA congress decided by a clear majority in favor of the name 'New Anti-Capitalist Party' rather than 'Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Party.' It wouldn't have changed anything to add the word 'Revolution-

ary,' as the fakers from the former minority of Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and other fake leftists who have joined the NPA proposed in order to cover up their own reformism. But to remove it—as well as any reference in their two founding documents to communism, to Lenin or Trotsky, or even to Marx, with the exception of two quotes from the *Communist Manifesto*—is an explicit pledge to the bourgeoisie that they are enemies of socialist revolution."

—"Death of Communism' Leftists in New Guise,"
reprinted in *Workers Vanguard* No. 934, 10 April 2009

Reformist and populist "regroupments" like the NPA and Québec Solidaire are not a "step forward" for the working class: they represent new obstacles in the fight to forge a Marxist vanguard party.

Reformism and the National Question

One of the main debates at the QS convention was on the party's stance toward Quebec independence. Based overwhelmingly on a francophone membership dissatisfied with the PQ, QS not surprisingly adopted a position in favour of independence (or, interchangeably, sovereignty). This was opposed by the CPC and La Riposte, the Quebec branch of the Fightback group in English Canada.

La Riposte intones that support for independence represents a capitulation to "the right wing," and that to focus on this question is a "crime" ("Québec Solidaire Congress 2009: Working Class Unity Needed," marxist.ca, 12 January). They even compare the national question to "questions of semantics"! While claiming to defend Quebec's right to self-determination, La Riposte is in fact arguing *against* Quebec independence and *for* an alliance of QS with the English Canadian NDP—a party that has always defended chauvinist "Canadian unity" against Quebec's national rights. Such a stance would have been anathema to the Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, who explained: "A proletariat that tolerates the slightest coercion of other nations by its 'own' nation cannot be a socialist proletariat" (*Socialism and War*, July-August 1915).

Other groups hailed QS's stand on the national question. But the approach of groups like Gauche Socialiste and the PCQ has nothing to do with Leninism and everything to do with their endorsement of "progressive" bourgeois nationalism. GS and its predecessor groups in the USec have always supported restrictive "French only" language legislation like

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La Presse

Québec Solidaire leaders Françoise David and Amir Khadir.

Québec Solidaire...

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Law 101, introduced by the first PQ government in the late 1970s. This anti-democratic law bans English-language education for the children of immigrants and heavily restricts signs in languages other than French. For its part, the PCQ has incorporated the nationalist fleur-de-lysée in its logo, and openly backed the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc Québécois in federal parliamentary elections.

Authentic revolutionary Marxists advocate independence for Quebec as part of a program of working-class struggle against *all* wings of the capitalists. In the first instance, that means fighting the dominant English Canadian chauvinism pushed by the NDP and the central labour bureaucracy. In advocating independence, we also seek to break the Québécois workers from the hold of their "own" francophone exploiters and from the bourgeois-nationalist PQ and Bloc. We oppose discriminatory language laws in both English Canada and Quebec and demand equal language rights for all including in education and government services.

The Québécois working class grew with the advent of industrialization in the early part of the 20th century, and was both a victim of national oppression and the motor force for struggles against it. In the early 1960s, displacing the old Anglo rulers of Westmount and their local satraps around the Catholic church, a distinct Québécois bourgeoisie began to congeal through state reforms including the nationalization of hydroelectricity, a process known as the Quiet Revolution. Quebec was transformed from a priest-ridden backwater into a modern capitalist society. French became the main language of daily life, public affairs and business—a sharp contrast to earlier decades when Québécois workers were told to "speak white" (i.e., English) when addressing the foreman. In part due to the new restrictive language laws, by the late 1970s the Québécois also began to assimilate significant layers of new immigrants and their children.

Throughout this period, the working class engaged in waves of militant struggle, culminating in the May 1972 general strike, which saw workers take over whole towns. Such struggles were denounced by the chauvinist leaders of English Canadian labour. While NDP leader David Lewis publicly endorsed the jailing of Quebec union leaders, Canadian Labour Congress president Donald McDonald made clear the CLC's opposition to the general strike, saying "the CLC is not interested in and will not be party to any attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government" (*Globe and Mail*, 15 May 1972). Openly allying with the rulers in Ottawa against Quebec "separatism," a CLC executive report to its convention added:

"It is, therefore, essential that the Congress and its affiliated unions oppose those elements, in any part of Canada, which advocate the destruction of Confederation or a reduction of the federal powers as a means of pursuing selfish regional aims."

This hostility, borne of the CLC tops' role as labour lieutenants of the Canadian ruling class, helped to drive the Québécois workers into the arms of the bourgeois-nationalist PQ, which won its first election in 1976. Particularly after the defeat of its first sovereignty referendum in 1980, the PQ lashed out at the labour movement through savage strike-breaking and austerity, a process which it repeated after the second failed referendum in 1995. But the Quebec labour misleaders have remained faithful to the PQ, derailing work-



CSN-CEQ

Union protest during semi-insurrectionary 1972 Quebec general strike.

ers struggle into bourgeois nationalism.

The forced retention of Quebec in a "united" Canada has sharply divided the working class along national lines, while the mutually reinforcing Anglo chauvinism and Quebec nationalism serve to tie the workers to their own exploiters and to foment racism against ethnic minorities in both nations. Quebec independence will not, of course, put an end to the exploitation and oppression that are intrinsic to the capitalist system. But it will remove the national question from the agenda and lay a basis to bring the decisive *class* questions to the fore.

Reformists and the Bourgeois State

Whether they support the Anglo-chauvinist status quo or Québécois nationalism, the fake-Marxist groups active in QS all share a deeply reformist approach to the capitalist state. While occasionally complaining that QS leaders are not focused enough on struggle "in the streets," the reality is that they all promote QS's electoralist program, which claims that fundamental social progress can be realized through elections to the Quebec National Assembly. This is a complete crock: to put an end to capitalist misery and exploitation, the bourgeois state must be smashed and replaced by a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. As Lenin explained in 1918:

"The working people are *barred* from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they *never decide* important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions *alien* to them, *instruments for the oppression* of the workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority."

—*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*

GS, the PCQ, La Riposte et al. paint the capitalist state—at its core, through its cops, courts and prisons, an organ of repression against the working class—as a potential lever

for social progress. They certainly do not oppose the substantial subsidies from the capitalist state that QS receives to fund its activities—some \$400,000 in 2008 alone. Indeed, GS's parent groups in France, the LCR and now the NPA, are similarly funded by the bourgeois state to the tune of nearly a million euros a year. We Trotskyists have always refused on principle to take any money from any capitalist state, the executive committee of the class enemy. He who pays the piper calls the tune!

Quebec's Reformist Left: The Stalinists...

To understand the political bankruptcy of the various left groups in QS, it helps to look back at their political origins. The PCQ and CPC are by-products of the Stalinist political counterrevolution in the Soviet Union that began in 1923-24. After years of war and isolation for the young Soviet workers state, and following the defeat of workers revolution in the industrial powerhouse of Germany, a bureaucracy led by J.V. Stalin usurped political power from an exhausted and demoralized Soviet proletariat. While not undoing the world-historic gains of the October Revolution—the overturn of capitalist class rule and state control of industry and foreign trade—the Stalinists rejected its internationalist revolutionary purpose. Instead, under the anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country,” they pursued a course of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

The Communist parties around the world were transformed into reformist outfits seeking the good graces of “progressive” capitalists. In Canada, the Stalinist CPC has for decades championed Canadian nationalism, and has thus been thoroughly hostile to Quebec's national aspirations. This has produced repeated splits by its Quebec affiliates who have, in turn, embraced Quebec nationalism.

The 1960s and early '70s saw a global radicalization among youth, initially based on solidarity with the struggles of oppressed peoples in Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere. Following the May-June 1968 general strike in France, which posed the possibility of workers revolution in the heart of Europe, many of these young leftists were attracted to Marxism as they understood it. In Quebec the bulk of such youth were won to the then more left-talking variant of Stalinism associated with Chinese leader Mao Zedong. By the mid-1970s, self-described “Marxist-Leninist” (Maoist) groups had

thousands of members in Quebec.

But Maoism was (and is) a variant of Stalinist class collaborationism, having nothing in common with authentic Marxism. Deeply hostile to the Soviet Union following the Sino-Soviet split, by the 1970s the Chinese bureaucracy around Mao had forged a counterrevolutionary alliance with U.S. imperialism against the USSR. This led it to back bloody U.S.-allied despots like the Shah of Iran, support the white-supremacist rulers of South Africa against Soviet-allied black Angola, and demand the strengthening of NATO.

Carrying out the logic of Stalinist class collaboration at home, the Quebec Maoists supported a “united” Canada as a supposed bulwark against the “superpowers,” the U.S. and especially the USSR. The largest Maoist group, Roger Rashi's Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist)—later renamed the Workers Communist Party—publicly campaigned to strengthen the Canadian armed forces against “the voracious appetites of the superpowers” (*The Forge*, 3 June 1976). With the onset of Washington's renewed anti-Soviet Cold War at the end of the 1970s, Quebec's large Maoist organizations crumbled under the weight of their own contradictions and soon disappeared. Today, the leaderships of Quebec's bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations are studded with housebroken one-time Maoists like QS leader Françoise David and Bloc Québécois head Gilles Duceppe.

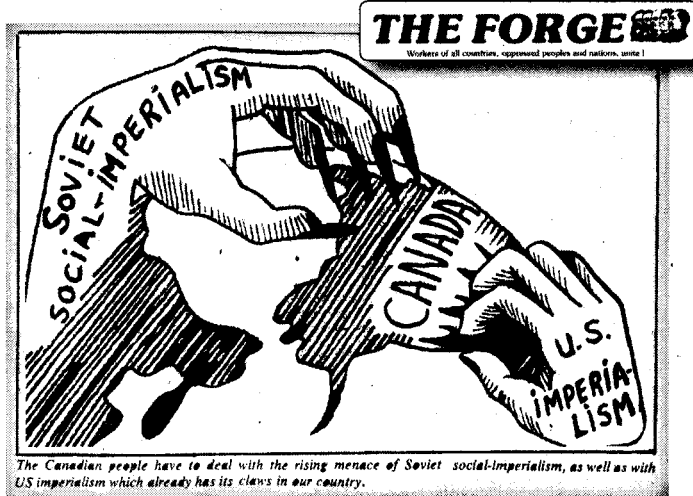
Continuing the inglorious tradition of Maoism today is the Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire (PCR). The PCR is just about the only self-styled Marxist group in Quebec that claims to oppose QS from the left, denouncing it as a “wannabee PQ” (*Le Drapeau Rouge Express*, 9 November 2008). But the PCR provides absolutely no alternative for workers and radical youth. On the national question, it upholds the Maoist tradition of opposing Quebec independence, calling this a “100 percent bourgeois project” (“Programme du Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire”). At best, such a stance ignores the reality of national oppression; at worst, it leads straight to capitulation to the “united Canada” demagoguery of the Canadian bourgeoisie and its agents in the labour movement. As we have seen, this is precisely what happened with the Maoists of the 1970s.

The PCR's class-collaborationist perspective is made explicit in its “Programme,” which claims that “the road to revolution in Canada” is “prolonged people's war.” Mao-style “people's war” is flatly counterposed to the *proletarian* perspective that is central to Marxism. Due to its central role in capitalist production—in the factories, mines, transport systems—the working class uniquely possesses the social power to sweep away the bourgeois order. While the PCR dissolves the working class into the “people,” genuine Marxists fight for a socialist revolution in which the workers champion the cause of all the oppressed.

...and the fake-Trotskyists

Following the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR, the struggle for authentic Marxism was carried forward by the forces around Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the October Revolution, who remained true to the internationalist program that animated that revolution. But the self-professed Trotskyist groupings active in QS today have long abandoned (or never upheld) the fundamental tenets of Trotskyism—most crucially,

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Cartoon in Quebec Maoist paper *The Forge* (January 1976) pushes anti-Sovietism, Canadian nationalism. Accompanying article warned of Soviet “threat” to “our country.”

Québec Solidaire...

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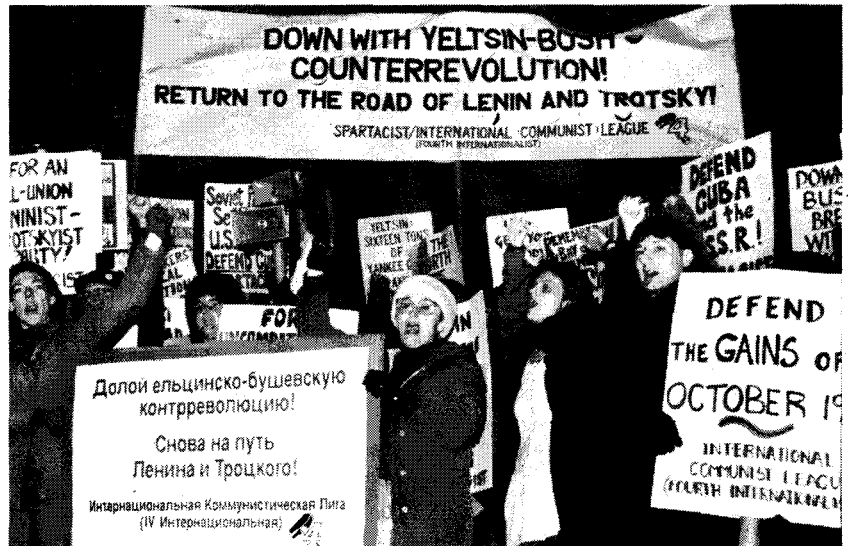
the class independence of the proletariat from all wings of the class enemy, and the defense against imperialism and counterrevolution of countries where capitalism has been overthrown, despite their bureaucratic misleaders.

The IMT and CWI originated in the Militant Tendency, a reformist outfit that buried itself for decades inside the pro-imperialist British Labour Party (see "When Militant Ran Liverpool," page 8). Gauche Socialiste and their co-thinkers in the French NPA descend from the forces around Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel who broke from revolutionary Trotskyism in the early 1950s in favour of "deep entry" into various Stalinist, social-democratic and bourgeois-nationalist parties. By the 1980s, under the impact of U.S. imperialism's renewed anti-Soviet offensive, they moved rapidly to the right, endorsing every counterrevolutionary movement directed against the USSR—from Polish Solidarność (the only "trade union" ever backed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher) to the anti-woman *mujahedin* cutthroats who were killing Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. The same stance was taken by the I.S., an anti-Communist outfit whose forebears refused to defend the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against U.S., British and Canadian imperialism in the 1950-53 Korean War.

In 1991-92, these groups cheered on the forces of "democratic" counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union. Having played their own small part in bringing about this catastrophe, today they lie to the working people that the road to social emancipation lies through building non-proletarian, petty-bourgeois outfits like Québec Solidaire.

Still Only One Solution: Proletarian Revolution

With our comrades throughout the International Commu-



January 1992: Spartacists protest in New York against visit by then-Russian president Boris Yeltsin to his Wall Street masters.

nist League (Fourth Internationalist), the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste fought to the end in defense of the USSR and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe, while calling on the workers to oust the bankrupt Stalinists and replace them with the revolutionary rule of workers councils (soviets). We hailed the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as an act of self-defense for the USSR and the only hope for social progress and women's liberation in that benighted country. We opposed the attempt at a counter-revolutionary coup by Solidarność in 1981, which would have brought Poland under the heel of U.S. imperialism and the Catholic church. And we fought against the final undoing of the USSR, calling on Soviet workers to "Stop Yeltsin/Bush counterrevolution!" Today we continue to defend the remaining deformed workers states—China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba—against imperialism and counterrevolution, while calling for workers political revolutions to establish regimes based on proletarian democracy and Marxist internationalism.

Our model remains the 1917 October Revolution, and this guides us as well in our approach to the national question in multinational states like Canada. Crucial to the Bolsheviks' victory was their defense of self-determination for the oppressed minority nationalities in the tsarist "prison house of peoples." At the same time, they opposed the ideology of nationalism as counterposed to the *internationalist* interests of the working class.

While advocating Quebec independence, we fight for the workers to break politically with both the Anglo-chauvinist NDP social democrats and the bourgeois-nationalist PQ, and to reject the ideology of nationalism and its concomitant attacks on immigrants and Native people. The necessary perspective is the fight for socialist revolution throughout North America and beyond, a crucial step toward a global communist society where each will give according to their abilities and receive according to their needs. Workers and leftist youth seeking to put an end to the violent, corrupt and bankrupt capitalist system should join us in the fight to forge a Marxist workers party that struggles for the emancipation of the working class and all the oppressed. ■

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Niqab Ban...

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support it, as do 80 percent across the country.

Bill 94 is cut of the same cloth as the laws being enacted in many European countries where the oppressed Muslim minority suffers the daily humiliations of racism, segregation and police violence. In Belgium, a bill which could become law this summer makes wearing full-face coverings in public spaces punishable by fines or jail. In an Italian city whose mayor is from the far right Northern League, a woman was fined 500 euros for wearing a *burqa*. France has banned the *hijab* (headscarf) in schools since 2004, and in May the French parliament voted a resolution against full-face coverings.

We Marxists fight for the liberation of women, and thus oppose the veil, no matter what form it takes, as both a symbol and an instrument of women's oppression. We stand with the many women who seek to escape the cruel tyrannies of religious traditionalism, from the veil to the bride price and arranged marriage. But all these government bans and restrictions on the veil are racist and discriminatory against Muslims, and we unambiguously oppose them. The claims that banning the veil will foster women's equality or integrate Muslims into society are transparently false. The reality is that these bans mean the expulsions of Muslim girls and women from schools, universities and the workforce, deepening their isolation and oppression.

Down With Anti-Muslim Reaction!

The current state-sponsored persecution of Muslim women follows the 2007 wave of bigotry against young Muslim girls in Quebec that saw several driven out of sporting events because they wore the *hijab*. Bill 94 is the Charest government's answer to the question of how far "reasonable accommodation" of religious minorities should extend. To even pose the question in this way is to invite a racist backlash.

In pushing the *niqab* ban, the Liberals, the bourgeois-nationalist opposition Parti Québécois and a range of bourgeois feminists say they are upholding secularism and women's rights. Quebec is easily the most secular part of Canada, a legacy of the struggles of the 1960s and early '70s that threw off the shackles of the Catholic church. The deep oppression of Québécois women was sharply undercut, and it was in Montreal during this period that Dr. Henry Morgentaler began his long and courageous battle to overturn Canada's reactionary abortion laws. But the forces pushing Bill 94 today are cynically manipulating the broad support for secularism and women's rights in Quebec to pursue reactionary aims.

Opposition to national oppression fuelled explosive class and social struggles in Quebec in the 1960s and '70s. Yet the outcome of these struggles was that the working class, lacking a revolutionary proletarian leadership, was drawn into the political framework of bourgeois Quebec nationalism. Like the "pro-Canada" chauvinism pushed by the labour tops and NDP in English Canada, such nationalism inevitably fosters racism against immigrants and ethnic minorities. Recognizing that the working class of this country is deeply split on national lines, undermining its ability to wage anti-capitalist class struggle, we Marxists advocate independence for Quebec. By taking the national question off the agenda, this would create far better conditions for the workers to see that their real enemies are their "own" respective capitalist exploiters—not the workers of the other nation or ethnic and racial minorities.



TVA Nouvelles

Protesters rally against Bill 94 outside Montreal City Hall, April 17.

The ban on services to fully veiled Muslim women is the most recent face of the racist crusade to keep such minorities "in their place." It has absolutely nothing to do with the separation of church and state, which we Marxists uphold. We oppose state subsidies for churches through tax breaks, as well as all state funding of religious schools and religious instruction in the public schools. When there was a move in Ontario several years ago to give legal standing to Muslim *sharia* courts we sharply denounced this (see "No to Ontario's 'Sharia Courts'," *SC* No. 142, Fall 2004). But we are also against state interference in private religious practices, which the ruling class uses to whip up hatred against minorities.

For all their professed secularism, Quebec's bourgeois parties continue to uphold various sacred "traditions" of the Catholic church. After introducing the *niqab* ban, Liberal justice minister Kathleen Weil stated that "religious signs, such as a cross around the neck of state employees, are allowed because they do not cast doubt on the neutrality of the service offered" (*Montreal Gazette*, 25 March). The PQ, which claims to stand for "*laïcité tout court*" (pure secularism), voted with the Liberals to retain a giant crucifix in the National Assembly and supports the official recognition of Catholicism as Quebec's "historic heritage."

As for Québec Solidaire, the petty-bourgeois party that is the darling of the reformist left, it too has endorsed the discriminatory and racist *niqab* ban. Asked for his reaction to the ban, QS's sole member of the National Assembly, Amir Khadir, told a March 25 press conference: "We are pretty much at ease with what has been announced yesterday for Quebec."

The danger to women's rights comes not from a tiny, vulnerable Muslim minority, but from the rule of the bourgeoisie, which upholds the reactionary institution of the family, the central force that oppresses women the world over. The family is the vehicle for transmitting property from one generation to the next, and the mechanism for raising new generations of workers. Bourgeois family law is thus tightly bound up with defense of private property, and women's inequality is always reflected in the legal and social codes of every society. Even in the advanced capitalist countries where women have

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Niqab Ban...

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achieved a measure of formal equality, women's oppression cannot be legislated out of existence. This oppression originates in class society itself and can only be rooted out through the destruction of private property in the means of production. The family unit cannot simply be abolished; its functions must be *replaced* with socialized childcare and housework in an egalitarian socialist society.

Just as Harper embraces the ban on *niqab*-wearing women, he and his federal Tory government are ratcheting up the war on abortion rights. Like true Colonel Blimp colonialists, they have announced a "foreign aid" plan ostensibly designed to improve maternal health in the Third World that denies any funding for abortion. Millions of women around the world suffer unwanted pregnancies and die in childbirth, and a major cause of female mortality is botched "back-alley" abortions. But this is of no concern to Harper and the anti-abortion fanatics, who have been emboldened by his stance. Harassment of women outside abortion clinics has increased, and on May 13 some 15,000 people rallied on Parliament Hill calling for the banning of abortion. Heavily mobilized by the Catholic church, the rally included a raft of MPs from the Tory and Liberal caucuses. Down with anti-abortion reaction! For free abortion on demand!

Imperialist Barbarism and Islamic Fundamentalism

The increased prevalence of the Muslim veil today is in part due to the rise of political Islam internationally. It is also a result of the relentless racism, poverty and hardship suffered by Muslim immigrants and their descendants in Canada and other imperialist countries. In the segregated immigrant communities, all the reactionary "traditions" are preserved through ties to the homeland. Young immigrant and minority women are trapped between the racism of these societies and oppressive, rigid family strictures. Unable to find jobs that provide financial independence, life for them is an endless



Toronto Star

Ottawa, May 13: Conservative MPs at massive anti-abortion rally on Parliament Hill. Harper government emboldens anti-woman bigots.



SC photo

Trotskyist League marches in Toronto on International Women's Day, March 1981.

saga of miseries.

We Marxists fight for the *voluntary integration of all minorities based on full equality*. The eradication of racism, women's oppression and all forms of discrimination requires a revolutionary struggle, mobilizing the power of the multi-racial working class to uproot capitalism and liberate humanity from poverty and want. This perspective is sharply counterposed to the "multiculturalism" propounded by the Canadian rulers and the reformist left, which promotes illusions that the capitalist state can be used as an instrument to fight racist oppression. This state exists to defend class rule based on private property; it is used by the capitalists for the suppression and exploitation of the working class. The supposedly liberal program of multiculturalism strengthens the hold of "community leaders," with their ties to mosque, church or temple, and it denies that 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 conservative community leaders.

To justify the persecution of Naema Ahmed, Quebec's minister responsible for the status of women, Christine St-Pierre, invoked the bloody imperialist occupation of Afghanistan: "There are people in Quebec, in Canada, and other countries around the world, who have gone to Afghanistan and spilled their blood so that these things won't be tolerated" (*Globe and Mail*, 10 March). The ban on the *niqab* has as much to do with women's liberation as the NATO occupation of Afghanistan does, i.e., nothing.

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 there in the early 1990s with the *support* of U.S. and Canadian imperialism, as well as that of the NDP social democrats. And today's U.S. puppet regime in Kabul continues and upholds the same hideous oppression of women. U.S., Canada, NATO: Get out of Afghanistan now!

When there was a real possibility of liberating Afghan women, the U.S. and Canadian imperialists were on the other side. In the late 1970s, when a modernizing Afghan government



Young Afghan women in 1980, as Soviet Red Army intervention opened prospect of social emancipation. Tass

moved to implement modest reforms for women such as lowering the bride price and instituting education, the tribal *mujahedin* (holy warriors) erupted in violence and terror. To protect its borders from the fundamentalist threat, which was already backed by the CIA, in late 1979 the Soviet Union sent its Red Army into Afghanistan at the invitation of the left-nationalist government in Kabul. The U.S. government spent billions to fund the *mujahedin*'s holy war against the Soviet Union in what was the biggest CIA operation in history.

We declared "Hail Red Army!" and called to extend the social gains of the October 1917 Russian Revolution to the Afghan peoples, especially the terribly oppressed women. Sending the army to clean out the reactionary insurgency opened a road to liberation for the Afghan peoples. It underlined our Trotskyist understanding that the Soviet Union was a workers state, product of the October Revolution, despite its later 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 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-backed fundamentalist forces, 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.

Reactionary ideas take hold and grow in reactionary periods. Especially since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, there has been a rise of fundamentalism of every kind: Protestant fundamentalism in North America; Orthodox Jewish fundamentalism in Israel; an ever greater reach by the Catholic church into social life in Europe; Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim countries and in imperialist centres with large Muslim populations. All the variants of the "opium of the people," as Marx called reli-

gion, 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.

Only Socialist Revolution Can Liberate the Oppressed!

The "war on terror" pursued by the imperialist rulers is a classic "divide and rule" ploy, stigmatizing Muslims as an excuse for a sweeping reduction in the legal rights of the entire population. It is also aimed at the working class, intended to stifle class struggle by insisting on "national unity" against a supposed common enemy. The "war on terror" must be fought by mobilizations of the multi-ethnic working class.

Workers across the country are paying for the capitalist economic crisis with their jobs, livelihoods, pensions and health care.

In Quebec, Charest has launched a large-scale assault on public-sector workers and social services, provoking large labour protests. In contrast, protests against Bill 94 have been tiny. Far from opposing the ban on public services for women wearing the *niqab*, the leadership of Quebec's largest union federation, the FTQ, publicly supports it, stating in a brief to a government committee: "The FTQ entirely endorses this policy, which seeks to ensure normality in communications between individuals, security and identification during the provision of public services" (ftq.qc.ca, 20 May).

The persecution of Muslim women—who are among the most oppressed in society—is poison to labour's battles. Struggling for class unity, workers must oppose Bill 94 as well as all the racist anti-immigration laws and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Muslims and other minorities make up a growing part of the working class in Montreal, as well as Toronto and some other cities. To win against the bosses requires defending the unity of the working class against racist demagoguery.

The liberation of women starts with the class struggle. When the working class takes power, this alone will lay the basis to free women from age-old family servitude and reorganize society in the interest of all the oppressed. As we wrote in our article "The 'Honour' Killing of Aqsa Parvez" (SC No. 156, Spring 2008):

"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 multiethnic 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." ■

Racist Scapegoating of Muslim Women Down With Quebec's Niqab Ban!



Jacques Nadeau/Le Devoir



Globe and Mail

Hérouxville, Quebec, February 2007: Village's infamous edicts aimed against Muslims sparked wave of bigotry. Liberal government of Jean Charest, right, aims to drive veiled Muslim women out of society.

The Catholic church anathematizes those who transgress its edicts. So too the Quebec government, the Canadian prime minister and the leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. They have decreed that fully veiled Muslim women are anathema, to be denounced and hounded out of social life.

On March 9, 29-year-old Naema Ahmed was dragged out of a French language exam by an official from Quebec's immigration ministry because she refused to remove her *niqab*, a

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veil that covers most of the face. The young woman, an Egyptian immigrant, pharmacist and mother of three, had enrolled in this community centre class following her earlier expulsion from Cégep St. Laurent for the same reason. Again the authorities tracked her down. "I feel like the government is following me everywhere," she said. Soon after, a 25-year-old Indian immigrant, Aisha, fell victim to this xenophobic persecution, and was driven out of a French class by the same government department that put her there five months earlier.

On March 24, Jean Charest's Quebec Liberal government codified its racist drive against Muslim women with Bill 94. This law would ban women wearing the face-covering *niqab* or *burqa* from receiving *any* government services, and would bar them from all public-sector employment. This is a green light for racist abuse. Denied schooling, health care

and perhaps even access to public transit and many other essential services, these women will become virtual prisoners in their homes—a Canadian version of *purdah*. While the number of women who would be impacted directly is small—at most a few dozen—the effects will be felt throughout the Muslim population and beyond.

There was a brief outcry in the English Canadian press against Bill 94, as bourgeois editorialists found it a convenient club with which to bash Quebec. The message, stated openly or implied, was that Quebec nationalism is uniquely intolerant, unlike the "multicultural" harmony that supposedly reigns elsewhere. Once Bill 94 was embraced by Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper and federal Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff these mostly hypocritical voices fell all but silent.

For over a decade, the capitalist ruling class has whipped up anti-Muslim racism, the domestic fuel of the "war on terror." This has seen countless frame-ups, detentions, people "rendered" to other countries to be tortured and a sustained assault on the rights of everyone. As an extension of the "war on terror," veiled Muslim women have been repeatedly scapegoated. In 2007, the all-party outcry against letting fully veiled Muslim women vote in federal elections without baring their faces was a gratuitous instance of racism. The impact of the rulers' demonizing of Muslims is shown by the broad support for the *niqab* ban: according to polls, 95 percent of Quebec residents

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