

## ***Mass Upheaval Topples Hated Mubarak***

# **Egypt: Military Takeover Props Up Capitalist Rule**



Left: Protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square celebrate Mubarak's ouster, February 11. Right: Soldiers on guard in Tahrir Square, February 12, after military assumed power in defense of capitalist "order." AP photos

### **For Permanent Revolution in North Africa, Near East!**

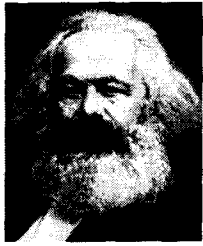
*The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard No. 974 (18 February), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.*

For nearly 30 years, he governed Egypt with an iron fist. But on February 11, after 18 days of an unprecedented upheaval capped by a wave of strikes, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was finally forced to resign as president, handing power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Mass celebrations of millions of people from all walks of life erupted in Cairo's Tahrir (Liberation) Square and in cities

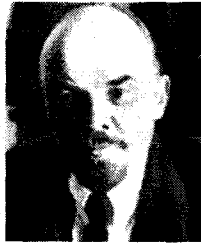
throughout the country—jubilation over the seeming end of a venal and corrupt dictatorship that ruled under emergency law, imprisoning and disappearing its opponents in Egypt's vast torture chambers.

Inspired by the uprising in Tunisia, where protesters braved severe repression to topple the dictatorship of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, Egypt exploded beginning on January 25. Protesters courageously faced down a massive crackdown by the despised Central Security Forces that left at least 300 dead. Throughout the country—from the capital to Alexandria in the north and Aswan in the south, from industrial centers like Mahalla al-Kobra, Suez and Port Said to desert towns like Kharga in the Sahara and al-Arish in Sinai—demonstrators unleashed their fury at the regime by targeting

*(continued on page 11)*



Marx



Lenin



Trotsky

## Democratic Demands and the Fight for Working-Class Power

*The democratic aspirations of the masses have been a powerful spark for struggle in Tunisia and Egypt. But to break the fetters of political despotism and economic and social backwardness, the working class must emerge as the leader of the oppressed masses. This is the only class with the social power and historic interest to overthrow the capitalist system, which is the only road to national and social liberation in the semicolonial world.*

*This understanding lies at the heart of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which draws above all on the lessons of the victorious Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the defeated Chinese Revolution of 1925-27. A Marxist working-class party must be forged in opposition to all wings of the bourgeoisie, fighting to build organs of working-class power (soviets, or workers councils) and for the workers to seize state power from the capitalist exploiters. Crucial to cementing the revolutionary gains is the extension of socialist revolution to the centres of world imperialism.*

*We print below excerpts from "Backward Countries and the Program of Transitional Demands," a section of the 1938 founding program of the Fourth International.*

Colonial and semicolonial countries are backward countries by their very essence. But backward countries are part of a world dominated by imperialism. Their development, therefore, has a *combined* character: the most primitive economic forms are combined with the last word in capitalist technique and culture. In like manner are defined the political strivings of the proletariat of backward countries: the struggle for the most elementary achievements of national independence and bourgeois democracy is combined with the socialist struggle against world imperialism. Democratic slogans, transitional demands, and the problems of the socialist revolution are not divided into separate historical epochs in

this struggle, but stem directly from one another. The Chinese proletariat had barely begun to organize trade unions before it had to provide for soviets. In this sense, the present program is completely applicable to colonial and semicolonial countries, at least to those where the proletariat has become capable of carrying on independent politics....

It is impossible merely to reject the democratic program; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a national (or constituent) assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the "national" bourgeoisie.

Then, at a certain stage in the mobilization of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise. Their historical role in each given period, particularly their relation to the national assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.

The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat's struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and, to a considerable extent, by the *degree* of its backwardness. Nevertheless, the general trend of revolutionary development in all backward countries can be determined by the formula of the *permanent revolution* in the sense definitely imparted to it by the three revolutions in Russia (1905, February 1917, October 1917).

—Leon Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (1938)

## SPARTACIST CANADA



Newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste  
Canadian section of the International Communist League  
(Fourth Internationalist)

**Editorial Board:** C. Galarneau, Arthur Llewellyn, Tynan Maddalena, John Masters, Miriam McDonald (Editor), Jonathan Roth (Editor, Young Spartacus pages), Russell Stoker (Production Manager)

**Circulation Manager:** Arthur Llewellyn

Published four times a year by Spartacist Canada Publishing Association, Box 6867, Station A, Toronto ON M5W 1X6. Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is February 27.

Printed in a union shop by union labour.

Publications Agreement No. 40050911  
Spring 2011

ISSN: 0229-5415  
Date of issue: March 2011

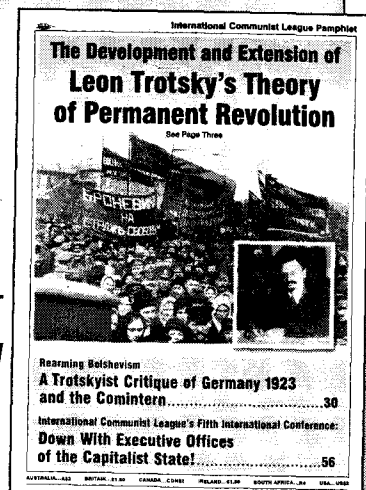
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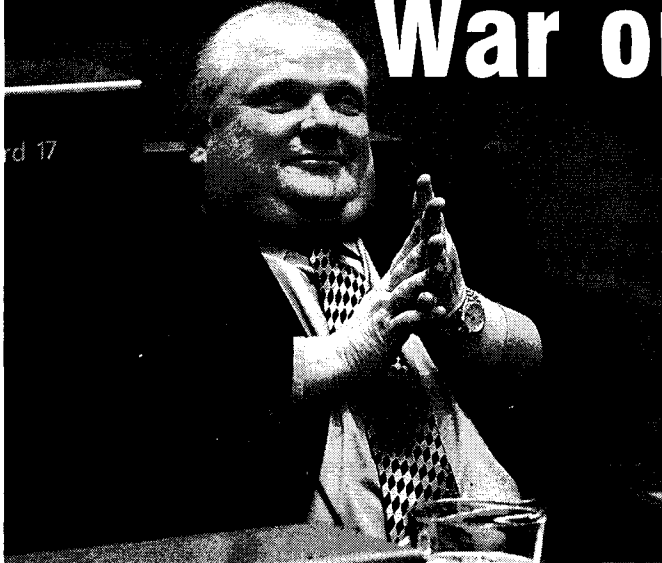
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# Toronto: Fat-Cat Ford's War on City Workers



Thompson/National Post

Toronto's new labour-hating mayor Rob Ford. Right: City workers rally in July 2009 during bitter 39-day strike.



Lynett/National Post

Toronto's new right-wing mayor Rob Ford was quick to make good on his promise to attack the city's unionized workers, starting with the Amalgamated Transit Workers (ATU) Local 113. Last December, city council voted to ask the provincial Liberal government to declare transit an essential service, making strikes illegal. The Liberals have now complied, introducing legislation that will ban all strikes on the Toronto transit system.

The outside workers of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 416 were next, as Ford served notice of the city's union-busting aim to contract out garbage removal. The new council has also targeted job security provisions, so that it can fire workers at will. Meanwhile, city hall has ordered across-the-board service cuts that will hit the poorest with the greatest force. It will take a massive fight centred on the social power of organized labour to defeat the anti-union offensive, a fight in which all working people have a stake.

Such a struggle will pose acutely the question of working-class leadership. In the 2003 and 2006 mayoral elections, the union tops delivered the votes of the powerful civic unions to David Miller. For seven years Miller, a social democrat associated with the NDP, ran the city for Bay Street, and his attacks on the unions paved the way for Ford's more sweeping anti-union drive. When transit workers were driven to a wildcat strike in 2006, Miller joined the anti-union hysteria, demanding massive fines from the union. Two years later the ATU struck again and the city demanded the province enact strikebreaking legislation, for which the provincial NDP caucus voted unanimously. In 2009, Miller & Co. targeted CUPE Locals 416 and 79 (which represents inside workers), aiming to destroy sick benefits and gut seniority rights. A bitter 39-day strike fended off most of the attacks on hard-won union gains, but

the union leadership caved in on the city's key issue and allowed the introduction of a new, inferior plan for new-hires.

Since then, it has been open season on city workers. When transit ticket collector George Robitaille, who had a heart condition, was photographed supposedly asleep in the ticket booth, there was an outburst of anti-union vitriol. Today transit workers cannot so much as take a bathroom break without some enraged petty-bourgeois creep going after them. The consequences for Robitaille—a hero who had saved the life of a passenger—were fatal. Hounded by the bourgeoisie's labour-hating crusade, he went on medical leave soon after and tragically died in November of a stroke.

Unionization gives workers the ability to organize and fight collectively to improve their lot. But far from leading the necessary struggle, ATU Local 113 president Bob Kinnear vows that the almost 9,000-strong local "will not strike or disrupt Toronto's transit system in any way during this year's contract negotiations.... In other words, we will act as if an essential services law was already in effect" (ATU Local 113 website, 3 February). This amounts to surrender in advance.

It will take some militant and hard-nosed class struggle to beat back the relentless attacks on the working class. This in turn requires a struggle within the unions to replace the "die on your knees" trade-union bureaucrats with a leadership that fights uncompromisingly in the interests of the working class and the oppressed. Looking to NDP social democrats or other "friend of labour" politicians is a dead end. Workers need their own class-struggle leadership that begins with the understanding that the interests of labour and capital are counterposed. **Hands off the ATU and CUPE Local 416! Defend the right to strike! No to union-busting contracting out!** ■

# South Korean Leftists Face Prison for Political Activity

## Free All Class-War Prisoners!

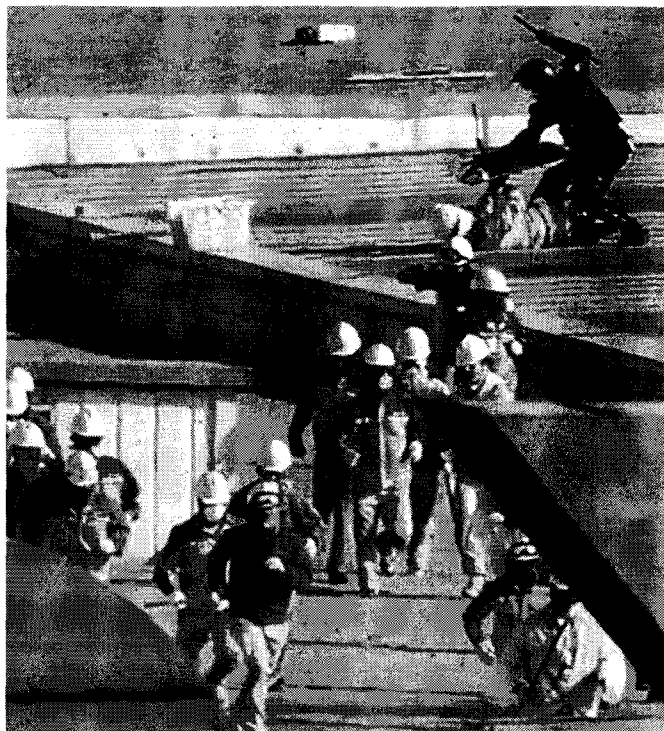
JANUARY 25—Eight supporters of the Socialist Workers League of Korea (SWLK) face serious prison sentences for the “crime” of supporting workers struggles and advocating socialist revolution. Charged in early December under the notorious National Security Law, they are due to be sentenced on January 27.

The National Security Law, enacted in 1948, has long been used to repress leftist and labour struggles in South Korea. Its sweeping provisions include a ban on forming or sympathizing with “anti-state” groups as well as the death penalty for activities in support of North Korea. Since right-wing president Lee Myung-bak came to power in 2008, his government has repeatedly tried to railroad SWLK activists to prison. It has also ramped up its suppression of labour struggles, including smashing a strike by workers at Ssangyong Motor Company in 2009.

These repressive moves come in the context of stepped-up U.S./South Korean provocations against North Korea and China, including last month’s joint military exercises in the Yellow Sea near the North Korean coast. Like a number of other South Korean left groups, the SWLK falsely characterizes North Korea and China as “state capitalist,” a characterization repeated by their spokesman Oh Sei-chull in his address to the court in December. In reality, these are bureaucratically deformed *workers states*, products of the revolutionary upheavals in Asia that followed the Second World War. The International Communist League stands for the unconditional military defense of China and North Korea against imperialism and counterrevolution, including supporting their possession of nuclear weapons to deter imperialist attack. At the same time, we oppose the privileged Stalinist bureaucracies in Beijing and Pyongyang, whose futile quest for “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism undermines defense of the revolutionary gains.

It is necessary to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party based on proletarian internationalism to lead a struggle for the revolutionary reunification of Korea: for socialist revolution against the brutally repressive capitalist regime in the South and for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats in the North. Linked to the fight for workers political revolution in China, this struggle must ultimately extend to the victory of proletarian rule in the imperialist heartlands of Japan and the U.S.

The persecution of the SWLK militants purely for their political beliefs gives the lie to the “democratic” pretensions of South Korean capitalism. Leftist and labour militants internationally must come to the defense of these activists. We print below a January 22 protest letter to the South Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C., by the Partisan Defense Committee, a legal and social defense organization



Reuters

**Riot cop assaults striking worker at Ssangyong Motors factory in Pyeongtaek, August 2009.**

associated with the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the ICL. The letter was first published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 973, 4 February.

The Partisan Defense Committee demands that the charges against members of the Socialist Workers League of Korea (SWLK) be dropped and that they immediately be released. For their defense of several strikes and their participation in demonstrations these members face five to seven years in prison for “anti-state” activities.

Oh Sei-chull, Yang Hyo-seok, Yang Joon-seok, Choi Young-ik, Park Joon-seon, Jeong Won-hyun, Oh Min-gyu and Nam-goon Won were convicted under the draconian National Security Law. This law was enacted in 1948 to suppress any support for North Korea and has been used to criminalize all political opposition to successive reactionary South Korean regimes. This is no less true of the Lee Myung-bak government which has imprisoned striking workers, launched a campaign against migrant workers and cracked down on demonstrations his administration deems to be illegal, the definition of which has expanded greatly under his administration. The prosecution of these activists is part of the continued crackdown on those who, in the face of the brutal South Korean government, stand up for basic democratic rights and is a continuation of the brutal repression against the working class and its allies.

We demand: Free the SWLK 8! Drop the charges! ■

# ***From the Cold War to the G20:*** **State Repression Targets the Left**



Blinch/Reuters



Lautens/Toronto Star

**Left: Bonapartist police mobilization for cop funeral, Toronto, January 18. Right: Police attack protest during G20 summit, 26 June 2010.**

The Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) held its 25th annual Holiday Appeal benefits in December and January, including events in Toronto and Vancouver. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League in the U.S. and the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste in Canada. The funds raised at these events go toward providing monthly stipends and holiday gifts to class-war prisoners and their families, an expression of proletarian solidarity and material support. (See “Free the Class-War Prisoners!” SC No. 167, Winter 2010/2011, for details on the prisoners.)

The PDC events highlighted the case of death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. We also honoured 16 other class-war prisoners including American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier. Greetings to the PDC gatherings from the stipend recipients, including Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jaan Laaman of the Ohio 7 and Janine Africa of the MOVE organization, were read out and displayed.

Speakers at the Toronto event, held on January 28, included David Bleakney, National Union Representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), a speaker for the Spartacus Youth Club (see article, page 7), and speakers from the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste and PDC. Mike Larsen, a managing editor for the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, spoke on behalf of the Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee. Harkat was one of five Muslim men detained in December 2002 under Ottawa’s draconian “security certificates,” which allow the indefinite detention of any refugee or immigrant whom the government considers a national security threat. Harkat was jailed without charge or trial for 43 months and was then placed under house arrest with extremely onerous conditions. The security certificates have been a cutting edge of the Canadian state’s repressive “war on terror.”

Sophie Harkat, Mohamed’s wife, also sent greetings to the event. Referring to a decision by the Federal Court in December, she wrote:

“The certificate was found ‘reasonable’ under the lowest standard of proof in a Canadian court. This decision was based on secret evidence neither Mohamed nor his public counsels could see or test for national security reasons. All that because CSIS believes, thinks, or assumes that Moe was involved or will be involved with terrorism in the past, present, or future. That position could cover any one of us at any time.”

Indeed, while the first targets of the ruling class have been the vulnerable Muslim minority, the “war on terror” has been from the beginning a political pretext to expand the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state. The fight to defend the Secret Trial Five and all those targeted by the “war on terror” dragnet is crucial to all working people. After the court’s verdict, Harkat has now been issued with a deportation order to Algeria, possibly to torture or death. From the beginning, the PDC has called to free the detainees and to abolish the security certificates. No deportations! Defend Mohamed Harkat!

We print below the speech to the Toronto fundraiser by a PDC representative, slightly edited for publication.

We’re here to honour those behind prison walls for their political beliefs. The political climate in North America never has been very receptive to those who challenge capitalist rule.

On January 18, an estimated 13,000 police took over the downtown streets of Toronto in a show of police bonapartism at a funeral for one of their own. A lone protester, not even a leftist, objected to the massive show of police power that day, holding a placard that read “No Police State” on one side and “Soldiers Die, Electricians Die and People Die” on the other. He was knocked to the ground, arrested and held

*(continued on page 17)*

# Young Spartacus

## Down With Anti-Palestinian Witchhunt at UBC!

We reprint below a January 9 statement from the Vancouver Spartacus Youth Club published in the University of British Columbia student newspaper *The Ubyssy* on January 13. Joining with Zionist witchhunters, the Alma Mater Society (AMS)—UBC's student government—had blocked a donation to Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) for the Canada Boat to Gaza. On January 26, the AMS reversed itself, allowing SPHR's donation.

In defending groups like SPHR, we make clear our stance not only against the murderous Zionist rulers of Israel, but against the immensely more powerful imperialist states, centrally the U.S., which stand behind them. We also combat illusions that Canadian imperialism, junior partner to Washington, can be anything other than the deadly enemy of the Palestinians. In contrast, in their worldview, politics and activities groups like SPHR refuse to look beyond the framework of this oppressive capitalist system. Their campaign for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" (BDS) against Israel is, at best, an ineffectual appeal to the "public opinion" manipulated in thousands of ways by the imperialist rulers (with help from their Zionist allies). Calls to pressure corporations and governments in countries like the U.S. or Canada to take the side of the Palestinians against the Israeli government reinforce the very illusions in "democratic" imperialism from which young activists and working-class militants desperately need to break.

Along with pro-Palestinian campus activists, trade unions that stand in defense of the Palestinians have also faced witchhunts. We support time-delimited actions of labour solidarity like union boycotts called around concrete demands in defense of the Palestinians. We also support standing boycotts of military shipments to Israel. But open-ended boycotts and campaigns for divestment and sanctions are counterposed to the international working-class struggle on which the liberation of the Palestinians is premised (and could prove harmful to the working class in the boycotted countries). Our purpose is to strengthen the fighting power and class consciousness of the working class in solidarity with the exploited and oppressed of the world, and in opposition to capitalist class rule in the imperialist centres.

Today, the explosion of mass revolts in the Arab world cries out for a revolutionary, proletarian leadership fighting for the perspective of permanent revolution. In the face of these historic events, young activists must surely give themselves a reality check—what does BDS have to offer the masses of Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan? Not much, to put it politely. Ending the oppression of the Palestinians requires nothing less than a series of workers revolutions in the Near East—including in the garrison-state of Israel, where Hebrew-speaking workers will need to be broken from deeply-held illusions in their Zionist rulers—and the expansion of those revolutions to the imperialist powers.

The Spartacus Youth Club protests the witchhunting, censorship, and repeated intimidation of pro-Palestinian students at the



SC photo

TL/SYC at June 2010 Toronto protest against Israeli assault on Turkish aid ship to Gaza.

hands of the Israel Awareness Club (IAC) and Hillel House. Aided and abetted by student bureaucrats at the AMS, the Zionists have launched a vicious campaign against the Social Justice Centre (SJC) and Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), vilifying them as "terrorists" and "anti-Semites." Equating criticism of the Israeli state with anti-Semitism is the standard Zionist smear of pro-Palestinian activists. As defenders of all the oppressed and opponents of racist, capitalist injustice, we say: *Defend the Palestinians! Hands off their supporters!*

Late last fall, the SJC attempted to make a \$700 donation to SPHR for the Canada Boat to Gaza, which is to sail to Gaza this spring in defiance of the Israeli starvation blockade. The AMS has sought to block the SJC donation and, outrageously, AMS officials called on CSIS to "investigate" so-called "links to terrorism" of the pro-Palestinian groups.

Serving as toadies for the Zionists, the AMS is in perfect synch with the Conservative Harper government, which stands out for its belligerent support for the Israeli Zionists' murderous campaign against the Palestinians. In this, they overshadow even previous Liberal administrations as well as the historically pro-Zionist NDP. Under Harper, the campaign of harassment, slander and threats against pro-Palestinian activists has greatly increased, and is especially intense on the campuses. The events at UBC also take place in the context of ongoing anti-Muslim bigotry, which is underpinned by the capitalist rulers' continual "war on terror." This phony "war" serves to intensify capitalist state repression against the entire population.

We communists of the Spartacus Youth Club call on students and youth to ally with the power of labour in *class struggle* against the racist imperialist rulers of the U.S., Britain, Canada and elsewhere. The working class is the only social force capable of sweeping away capitalism worldwide and ending once and for all the genocidal terror against the Palestinians and all forms of oppression worldwide. *Down with the blockade of Gaza! Israel out of the occupied territories! For a socialist federation of the Near East! Down with the witchhunt against pro-Palestinian students!* ■

# Students Must Ally With the Working Class

## SYC Speaker at Toronto Holiday Appeal

The following speech was given by comrade Orlando Martin of the Toronto Spartacus Youth Club at the January 28 Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in Toronto. It has been slightly edited for publication.

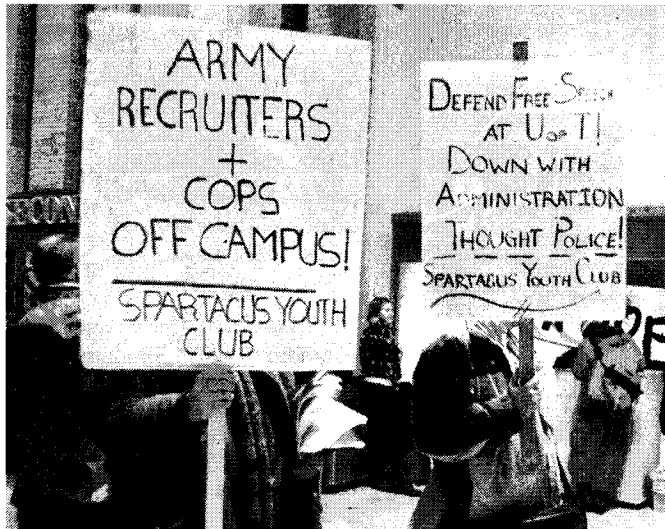
There is a video circulating online of one of many instances of state repression during the G20 summit in Toronto. In it, after forcefully grabbing a young protester, a cop demands to search his backpack. The protester, innocently expecting better treatment, says that as a Canadian, he has the right to refuse the search. So the cop simply says, "This ain't Canada right now."

What is Canada but a capitalist state and, as such, a dictatorship of the capitalist class against the working class, against the oppressed, and against anybody who dares to oppose capitalism? The G20 events were just one more example of what the Canadian capitalist state really is. The arrest of 1,100 people, the cop violence, the racist abuse of minorities, the singling out of Québécois protesters, the humiliation of women, gays and lesbians as well as the threats of rape perfectly mirror the racism, chauvinist oppression and violence that are integral to capitalist society, here in Canada and in every capitalist country.

Comrade V.I. Lenin, the great leader of the Russian Revolution, explained in *The State and Revolution* that "the state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms." Its aim is the creation of "order," which legalizes and perpetuates the oppression of one class by another. Against every other so-called Marxist or leftist group that explicitly or implicitly calls to reform the capitalist state, we emphasize that the working class needs to smash it.

A year has gone by since our last Holiday Appeal—another year of police brutality and repression against leftists. Two years ago the cops killed Fredy Villanueva in Montreal. Last year in Toronto, Junior Manon, an 18-year-old Latino youth, was brutally killed after being stopped by cops for a minor traffic offence. As expected, the Ontario Special Investigations Unit has cleared all officers of any wrongdoing. While minority youth are outraged and demand justice, they need to understand that capitalism cannot deliver justice to the working class and oppressed. Calls to jail killer cops, for the community to control the police, or for independent public inquiries, fool the working class into thinking that the capitalist state can be reformed. Even if these calls were realized they would do nothing to end the police violence that is endemic to capitalism. Junior Manon and other victims of racist cop terror will only get justice when the working class overthrows capitalism.

And then there is the brutal police violence against anti-G20 protesters in Toronto last year. What did the left do in response? Jack Layton, speaking of the smashed windows,



SC photo

SYC joins protest against military recruiters on University of Toronto campus, February 2.

railed that "the vandalism is criminal and totally unacceptable." The radical liberal Naomi Klein called on the cops to "do your goddamn job," which of course means more police brutality. And how about the fake-Marxists? Here is one example: the group Fightback, which claims to be the Marxist voice of labour and youth and also claims that cops are "workers in uniform," ran an event on June 30 that featured speakers who actually praised the cops!

Let me tell you what we did. A day after the mass arrests, on June 28, we wrote and widely circulated a protest statement that denounced in the strongest terms the brutal police violence unleashed on protesters and defended *all* victims of state repression, including the anarchists in the Black Bloc, despite political differences (see "Protest Mass Arrests of G20 Protesters!" SC No. 166, Fall 2010). We wrote: "An injury to one is an injury to all! Free all the protesters—Drop the charges!" This is what Marxists do, and what non-sectarian defense work means.

While smashing bank windows and burning police cars are not crimes from the standpoint of the working class, such isolated acts are counterposed to the Marxist fight to mobilize the social power of a class-conscious proletariat to sweep away capitalism. At bottom, anarchism is a form of radical democratic idealism and has proven to be a class-collaborationist obstacle to the liberation of the oppressed.

State repression against G20 leftists was vivid at the University of Toronto campus. During a major raid on the U of T Graduate Student Union building, at least 50 G20 protesters from Quebec were arrested. Last September, political science student and activist Jaroslava Avila was arrested by ten plainclothes cops on campus. These arrests underline the Spartacus Youth Club's call to get cops off campus and the

(continued on page 20)

# I.S. on Egypt, Iran: Cheerleaders for Class Collaboration

We print below a report by a Trotskyist League comrade on a February 8 Toronto forum, "From Tunisia to Egypt: Resistance to Revolution." The forum was sponsored by the International Socialists (I.S.), Canadian affiliate of the International Socialist Tendency of the late Tony Cliff.

The room was packed with people standing up at the back and at the entrance door. There were about 50 independents, two-thirds of them youth. Most young people seemed to be Arab and were politically raw but interested in discussing the recent events. Clearly, the events in Egypt are awakening the interest of some youth.

There were two speakers. The first, Mohammed Shokr from Mohamed ElBaradei's bourgeois Egyptian National Association for Change, did not say much but showed his "anti-imperialism" by saying that it is in the interests of the U.S. and Israel to have a democratic regime because it will be stable, given that Egypt under Mubarak is unstable. He also cheered the crowd by saying that we are witnessing a revolution made by people for people, that the Egyptian people are not divided (there are only government thugs against them), that Arabs are ready for democracy and that protesters (including his son) are "having fun" in Tahrir Square.

The other speaker, James Clark from the International Socialists, spoke much longer. As expected, there was not a word of opposition to ElBaradei or the Muslim Brotherhood, but there was a lot about building an anti-Mubarak front. He said that the movement did not come out of nowhere; it started in 2003 in protests against the war in Iraq and developed through the Cairo conferences. He praised these class-collaborationist "anti-imperialist" conferences and pointed to them as examples to emulate, including the Kefaya movement (the bourgeois Egyptian Movement for Change). He said the next stage needs to be a general strike, replicated in every workplace, and that the protests need to be escalated, for example by shutting down the Suez Canal. He added that new organizational forms will develop in which communists, socialists, Muslims, Christians, males, females are brought together.

Despite our hands being up throughout the discussion round, the Cliffites were determined to not let us speak. We had to wait until a second round and until it became embarrassing for them. Cliffite Pam Frache spoke first on independent trade unions being formed in Egypt. Another Cliffite advertised a campaign organized by the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War, so far called the "Toronto-Arab Solidarity Campaign" (they have not decided on the name yet). Its aim is to demand that the Canadian government stand with Egyptian democracy!

The Arab youth were mostly listening. Most comments from the floor were typical: "Don't tell them what to do but support whatever they do/want." The Cliffites probably anticipated that I was going to go hard against them for their support to the mullahs in Iran in 1979, captured by their headline, "The Form—Religion, The Spirit—Revolution" (*Workers' Action*,

February 1979). We had polemicized against them on this question at the demonstration last Saturday. At the end of the first round, before I spoke, James Clark said the following in response to those who bring up Iran, including a young female in the audience who was wearing the *hijab* (headscarf) and asked about people connecting Iran to Egypt:

"What they're trying to do here is create this sense of fear that there is going to be this 'Islamist' imposition on the revolution...."

"We need to know why that particular argument is being made about Iran. We should know that while the outcome of the Iranian

**The form - religion  
The spirit - revolution**

**Workers' Action**



Reza/Sipa

"Revolutionary Guards" execute Kurds in Iran, 1979. I.S. press (February 1979) portrays Islamic reaction as "anti-imperialist."

revolution was shifted by the early 1980s, it nevertheless kicked out the Shah, and actually was a pole for anti-imperialism in the region for a long time. There are still a lot of people, whether we agree with them or not, who look to Iran as an alternative to the situation that exists in the other parts of the Arab world. I'm not endorsing Iran as an alternative, but we need to know that that is a particular perspective that does exist, and that there is some popular support for what exists there, and that there are debates inside Iran about that....

"We need to be clear when we're having a discussion about this particular movement: when you attempt to compare it with Iran in 1979, in most cases it's been an attempt to create fear about Islam and the Muslim community and the participation of the [Muslim] Brotherhood in a popular revolution."

My intervention was the third-to-last. I started with Iran, making the point that the mullah-led "revolution" wiped out an entire generation of leftists—it massacred leftists, women and homosexuals, contrary to how the speaker depicted it. To the youth, I pointed out the need to learn lessons from history and a crucial lesson is that workers and radical youth need to

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# Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood

The ouster of Mubarak after years of dictatorship has lifted the lid on Egyptian society and its many contradictions. The tremendous mobilizations of unemployed youth, students, women and workers have created space for the left and working class to engage more openly in political activity—an opening that is directly threatened by the military takeover. At the same time, the upheaval has provided an opening for the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, the country’s largest opposition movement.

While many protesters say that they would oppose the Brotherhood coming to power, in the absence of a viable revolutionary proletarian alternative it could win a hearing among the desperate masses. This is not least because it provides clinics, schools, charities and other social services for slum dwellers that the bourgeois state fails to provide. A mass movement, the Brotherhood is heavily entrenched among professionals, students, peasants in rural areas and other petty-bourgeois layers as well as the lumpenproletariat of the impoverished urban slums. In the last parliament, despite state repression and electoral rigging, the Brotherhood had 88 seats compared to the 34 seats for all other opposition parties combined.

Because of its historic hostility to workers struggles, the Brotherhood has not made significant inroads into the working class. But it has found allies in its attempt to win support among workers and youth. The opportunist Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group in Egypt—heavily promoted by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, a section of the international tendency founded by the late Tony Cliff—has been fostering suicidal illusions in the Brotherhood. The RS tries to invest these obscurantist clerical forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials and has pursued alliances with them over several years. No one should be fooled by the Brotherhood’s claim to fight against “all forms of injustice, tyranny, autocracy and dictatorship,” as a statement of theirs published in the London *Guardian* (8 February) proclaims. Whether or not it is currently in any position to make a bid for power, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a deadly danger to the working class, the Coptic Christian minority, all secularists, gays and especially the brutally oppressed women of Egypt.

The RS is so fascinated by these reactionaries that it posted on its Web site a February 5 statement by the Brotherhood, complete with the Brotherhood’s emblem of crossed swords. In a reminder of the criminal betrayal by the opportunist left internationally in the 1978-79 upheaval in Iran, when these groups supported the mullahs led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the RS today is championing anti-Semitic Islamic reaction in Egypt. Capitulation to Islamic forces or any other form of religious reaction is antithetical to secular humanism, not to mention the liberating goals of socialism.

In an article titled “Comrades and Brothers,” published in *Middle East Report* (Spring 2007), Hossam El-Hamalawy, a self-described socialist journalist, boasts that the RS “pushed for close coordination” with the Brotherhood and praises its “brotherly spirit.” The RS joined with the Brotherhood to

## Cliffites on Egypt



February 5 Muslim Brotherhood statement posted on Revolutionary Socialists organization website.

form the National Alliance for Change in 2005, organizing joint demonstrations. El-Hamalawy notes: “The rapprochement between Islamists and the left continued when students from the Revolutionary Socialists’ Tendency, Muslim Brothers and some independents formed the Free Student Union (FSU) in November 2005, with the aim of acting as a parallel organization to the government-dominated student unions.”

The RS fatuously claims that the Brotherhood has “contradictions” that socialists can exploit. As our Canadian comrades wrote when the Cliffites [the International Socialists] used the same argument to support the introduction of *sharia* courts (!) in Canada, “The contradiction in religion lies in the fact that human beings created religions, only to have their creations rule over them like a Frankenstein monster. It is obscene to have to debate with ostensible Marxists whether clerical reaction should be supported. Marxists regard all modern religion as an instrument of bourgeois reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people” (see “Sharia ‘Socialists’,” WV No. 861, 6 January 2006) [also published in SC No. 147, Winter 2005/2006].

In March 2006, the RS issued a pamphlet by the Center for Socialist Studies, *The Muslim Brothers: A Socialist Perspective*. The pamphlet opens with a denunciation of the Egyptian Stalinists for characterizing the Brotherhood as “a political enemy of the left that must be fought at all levels.” El-Hamalawy’s 2007 article echoes this theme, stating: “Most independent leftist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s hewed to a line on political Islam similar to that of the Egyptian Communist Party,” which translated into an alliance “with the Egyptian secular intelligentsia—and with Mubarak’s regime.”

We Marxists reject this bankrupt reformist framework, which posits that the only two “choices” for the working class in Egypt are to capitulate either to the “secular,” military-backed bourgeois nationalist regime or to political Islam. In fact, these are *alternative ways* of propping up capitalist class rule, the system which ensures vast wealth for its rulers and dire poverty for the urban and rural masses. We look instead to the revolutionary mobilization of Egypt’s proletariat,

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standing at the head of all the oppressed, in a fight for socialist revolution, which alone can address the fundamental problems facing the masses. We oppose the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, which bolsters their credibility and also fosters illusions in the "secular" credentials of the bourgeois nationalists while buttressing the repressive powers of the capitalist state.

The RS's criticisms of the Stalinists for reliance on the state are a cover for its accommodation to the Muslim Brotherhood. For our part, we understand that bourgeois rule in semicolonial countries like Egypt, which groan under abject poverty and subjugation to imperialism, reinforces social backwardness and the hold of the Brotherhood and other reactionary religious forces.

### Muslim Brotherhood: A Reactionary Mass Movement

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, when there was widespread disappointment at the failure of the weak secular nationalist parties to secure Egypt's independence from British colonialism following the 1919 uprising. Under the slogan: "The Koran is our constitution," al-Banna preached a fundamentalist Islamism and aimed at establishing a theocratic state in Egypt. The organization rapidly grew, branching across the Islamic world from Algeria and Jordan to Pakistan.

The Brotherhood became a tool for the monarchy against its political opponents, sponsoring assassinations and mass violence against Communists and the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd party and providing shock troops to break workers strikes. After the army seized power in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser briefly embraced the Brotherhood before ruthlessly suppressing it. Anwar el-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak alternately repressed and demonized the Brotherhood or tolerated it. Sadat released Islamists jailed by Nasser and funded, armed and trained them as an effective antidote to Communists and other leftists. Emboldened by the state, Islamists

turned university campuses into *terra islamica*. "They banned, clubs in hand, anything that fell foul of their norms," writes Gilles Kepel in *The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (1993). "Couples were physically attacked for violations of upright Islamic morals; films could not be shown; concerts and evening dances could not be held."

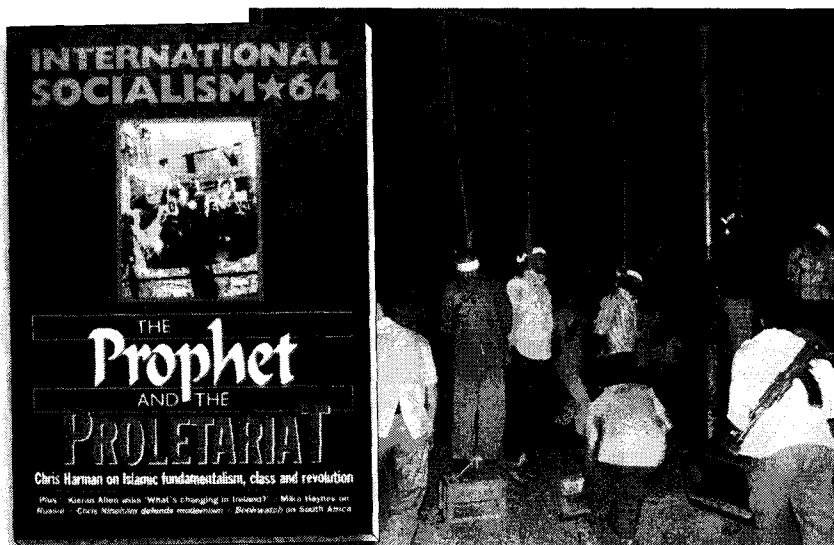
In 1992, fundamentalists shot dead Egyptian intellectual Farag Foda, a secular opponent of Islamic reaction. "The killing of Farag Foda was in fact the implementation of the punishment against an apostate which the imam [referring to the president] has failed to undertake," declared the government-sponsored religious body Al Azhar to justify this heinous crime. Renowned novelist Naguib Mahfouz, whose books were deemed "blasphemous" by fundamentalists, was stabbed in 1994, five years after a leading Islamic cleric had said he deserved to die. In 2000, Islamic fundamentalists ignited riots in Cairo in opposition to the publication of a novel that they considered "heretical" (see "Banquet for Seaweed," WV No. 770, 7 December 2001).

### From Iran to Afghanistan

The RS portrayed the Muslim Brotherhood as necessary allies in the struggle to bring down the Mubarak regime. The lesson to be drawn from subordinating the class interests of the toilers for the sake of maintaining an alliance with religious reactionaries has been written in blood by history. The International Communist League (then known as the international Spartacist tendency) warned from the outset of the 1978-79 Iranian upheaval that, absent a decisive break by the working class from the Islamic forces, the struggle would have a disastrous outcome.

In sharp contrast to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction, our program was summed up in the slogans: "Down with the Shah! No support to Khomeini! For workers revolution in Iran!" We warned that Khomeini in power would reimpose the veil, suppress national minorities and seek to crush the left and the workers movement as ruthlessly as did the Shah. Tragically, the Iranian masses paid the price. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power led to the execution of thousands of leftists, Kurds, women, homosexuals and opponents of theocratic rule in what was a historic defeat for the powerful Iranian proletariat.

During the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War of the 1980s, the U.S. imperialists massively armed and organized the Afghan *mujahedin* "holy warriors" against the Soviet Union, using as a pretext the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. We hailed the Red Army, whose intervention opened the way to the liberation of the Afghan peoples, especially the miserably oppressed women. We called to extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. In the first war in modern history in which women's emancipation was a central issue, the Red Army battled the murderous imperialist-armed and -financed Islamic fundamentalists, who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and killed schoolteachers who taught young girls to read (see "The Russian Question Point Blank," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980). We denounced the Kremlin Stalinists' 1989 withdrawal of Soviet troops as a betrayal of women



Karim/AI Akhbar

Left: Cliffite leader Chris Harman's 1994 paean to "anti-imperialist" Islamic reaction. Right: 1980 executions in Iran, as "revolutionary" Khomeini regime unleashed terror against workers, leftists, women, national minorities.

and the oppressed Afghan peoples.

From their inception as a political tendency in Britain in the 1950s, the trademark of Tony Cliff and his followers was pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, encapsulated in their slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow." In Afghanistan in the 1980s, this merged with their tailing of Islamic fundamentalist forces. They lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet Army and prettified the *mujahedin* cutthroats as fighters against imperialism. The U.S. Cliffites of the International Socialist Organization declared: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker*, May 1988). The Soviet pullout was indeed the precursor to the final collapse of the USSR itself. And, to be sure, the Cliffites cheered the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state—a historic defeat not only for the peoples of the former Soviet Union but also for the international working class.

### Myth of Islamists' Anti-Imperialism

Keeping pace with the rise of political Islam in the wake of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, in 1994 the British SWP published a major article in *International Socialism* titled "The Prophet and the Proletariat" by the late Chris Harman, a leading Cliffite theoretician. Harman coined the opportunist slogan "With the Islamists sometimes, with the state never" and treated Islamic fundamentalist "mass movements" as radical petty-bourgeois nationalist formations which "have taken up anti-imperialist slogans and some anti-imperialist actions."

The notion that the Islamists are anti-imperialist flies in the face of history. During the Cold War, the American imperialists consciously sought to harness the deeply anti-Communist

Islamic reactionaries as a force against the Soviet Union as well as secular nationalist regimes. In Egypt, Islamic reactionaries worked hand in hand with the imperialists and the Saudi monarchy to destabilize the pro-Moscow nationalist regime of Nasser. Muslim Brothers were put on the CIA payroll. And for the anti-Soviet operation in Afghanistan, the CIA's largest covert operation ever, the Brotherhood provided a major contingent of the *mujahedin*, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, now a high-ranking leader of Al Qaeda. Today, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made clear that U.S. imperialism can do business with the Brotherhood in post-Mubarak Egypt.

Tailing the Muslim Brotherhood today certainly does not prevent the Cliffites from keeping open the option of capitulating to "secular" Arab nationalism. An article in the *British Socialist Worker* (5 February) notes that "Nasser's brand of secular Arab nationalism still has many supporters inside Egypt" and eulogizes the bourgeois strongman Nasser as an anti-imperialist, writing: "As president between 1956 and 1970 he stood firm against imperialism and transformed Egypt."

Here the Cliffites are retailing the illusions in Nasser and the mythical "Arab Revolution" that the Stalinists fostered for decades. In reality, Nasser came to power largely with the aim of crushing the struggles of the combative working class. Neither the "secular" nationalism of Nasser nor Islamism can overcome the depredations of imperialism or provide solutions to any of the fundamental problems besetting the working class and oppressed in Egypt today. What's needed is a revolutionary workers party to lead the proletariat in a struggle for socialist revolution against the military bonapartists, the religious fundamentalists and all bourgeois political forces, opening the road to the emancipation of women and the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited.

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 974,  
18 February

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police and security buildings as well as those belonging to the ruling National Democratic Party.

Mubarak is toppled. But the central pillar of Egypt's bonapartist capitalist state apparatus, the military, is now directly in power. The military has announced the dissolution of Mubarak's sham parliament and the formation of a panel to amend a constitution that has never been worth the paper it was written on. As we warned in our last article on the protests in Egypt, "Make no mistake: there remains the dire threat that whatever happens to Mubarak, Egypt's bourgeois rulers will demand fierce military repression to restore and maintain capitalist 'order'" (*WV* No. 973, 4 February). Scuffles have broken out between protesters in Tahrir Square and soldiers trying to remove them. On February 14 the military issued Communiqué No. 5, which denounced strikes as leading to "negative results" and ordered workers to return to their jobs. Four days later, another military statement warned that strikers would be "confronted."

Bourgeois oppositionists—from liberal democrats like Mohamed ElBaradei and his National Association for Change, Kefaya's George Ishak and the Ghad party's Ayman Nour to the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood—have all embraced the military in the interest of restoring stability. The ubiquitous Egyptian flags waving in the protests, which

drew virtually all layers of society other than the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie, reflected a deep-seated nationalist consciousness. Born of a history of imperialist subjugation, nationalism has long served Egypt's bourgeois rulers by obscuring the *class divide* between the tiny layer of filthy rich at the top and the brutally exploited and impoverished working class.

Today, this nationalism is most clearly expressed in the belief that the military is the "friend of the people." From the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1952 Free Officers coup, which toppled the monarchy and ended the British occupation of the country, the army has been viewed as the guarantor of Egyptian national sovereignty. In fact, the military has been the backbone of one dictatorship after another since 1952. That year, it was mobilized by Nasser to shoot down textile strikers in Kafr Al-Dawwar near Alexandria. In 1977, it was mobilized by Anwar el-Sadat to "restore order" after a two-day countrywide upheaval over the price of bread. During the recent upheaval, the army facilitated murderous attacks by plainclothes cops and hired thugs of the regime against protesters occupying Tahrir Square. Despite claiming that it did not oppose the anti-Mubarak demonstrators, the military arrested hundreds, torturing many. Down with the emergency law! Free all victims of bonapartist state repression!

Together with the police, courts and prisons, the army is at  
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the core of the capitalist state, an apparatus for the violent suppression of the working class and the oppressed. Above all, the drive to “restore stability” is aimed at the working class. Amid the anti-Mubarak protests, tens of thousands of workers launched strikes, which continue to this day. These have included some 6,000 workers on the Suez Canal, through which 8 percent of world trade travels. However, Canal pilots continued to work, ensuring movement of ships. Thousands of textile and steel workers went on strike in the industrial city of Suez, which saw some of the most militant protests. According to the London *Guardian* (28 January), protesters there “seized weapons stored in a police station and asked the policemen inside to leave the building, then burned it down.” Cairo public transport workers have continued to strike, while, in the wake of Mubarak’s fall, strikes have spread to steel workers outside the capital, postal workers, textile workers in Mansoura and other cities as well as thousands of oil and gas workers.

In fighting for economic demands—against poverty-level wages, casual work and constant humiliation at the hands of the bosses—the working class is demonstrating the unique position it holds in making the wheels of the capitalist economy turn. This social power gives the working class the potential to lead all the impoverished masses in struggle against their abject condition. In a country where nearly half the population lives on \$2 a day or less and where such misery is enforced through police-state repression, the democratic aspirations of the masses are intertwined with the struggle against their economic conditions.

Elementary democratic rights such as legal equality for women and the complete separation of religion and state; agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants; ending joblessness and grinding poverty: the basic aspirations of the masses cannot be met without the overthrow of the bonapart-



**February 9:** As workers struggles erupt throughout Egypt, Suez Canal Company workers in Ismailia City begin strike demanding resignation of boss, pay raise and social equality.

ist capitalist order. The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces, from the military to the Brotherhood and the liberals who falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses. Such a party must act, in the words of Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin, as a “tribune of the people,” fighting against the oppression of women, peasants, Coptic Christians, homosexuals and ethnic minorities.

The liberation of the productive forces from the chains of imperialism and its economic and political agents in the Egyptian bourgeoisie can come only through the conquest of power by the proletariat standing at the head of all the oppressed. This was accomplished for the first and only time with the victory of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Led by the Bolshevik Party, the working class overthrew bourgeois rule, freeing the country from the imperialist yoke, abolishing private ownership of land and freeing the myriad oppressed nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire. The achievement of these democratic tasks was combined with the expropriation of the means of production by the workers state, laying the basis for the development of a collectivized planned economy.

### For Permanent Revolution!

Egypt is a country of combined and uneven development. Alongside modern industry there is a vast landless peasantry under the thumb of ruthless landlords. The country has a small layer of technologically savvy and highly educated youth together with a literacy rate of only 71 percent (59 percent for women). Medieval minarets and modern buildings vie in Cairo’s skyline, while on its streets modern cars jostle for space with herds of goats and sheep and donkey-drawn carriages. Inhuman poverty and squalor compete with grotesque displays of wealth. The obscenely affluent enclave of Zamalek looks across the Nile at the Imbaba slum, where children drink from open sewers and at times get eaten alive by dogs and rats. Popular hatred for Mubarak was driven in no small part by the enormous fortune amassed by his family,



**February 12:** Army officer tries to quell crowd in Tahrir Square, one day after Mubarak’s departure.



Grey Villet



Reuters

**Left: State-owned TV manufacturing plant, 1963. Right: Textile factory workers demonstrate at their factory in Mahalla al-Kobra, 2008. While women have faced increased oppression fuelled by religious reaction in recent decades, they have emerged as a leading force in strikes.**

estimated as high as \$70 billion.

A regional power in its own right, Egypt is nonetheless a neocolony whose brutal and murderous bourgeoisie is tied—and cannot but be tied—by a million strings to world imperialism, which benefits from the exploitation, oppression and degradation of its masses. For decades, the main prop of the Mubarak regime was U.S. imperialism, for which Egypt is a linchpin for its domination of the oil-rich Near East. Beginning with Sadat's rule, Egypt has been a strategic ally of Zionist Israel and in recent years has aided in the starvation blockade of the Palestinians in Gaza, including by sealing the border in Sinai.

Throughout the upheaval against Mubarak, the Obama administration seesawed between expressing support for his regime—especially the “reforms” promised by his vice president Omar Suleiman, who has long played a key role in Washington's “war on terror” rendition and torture program—and mouthing criticisms of the government. The U.S. has poured in \$1.3 billion a year to arm the Egyptian military. After Mubarak resigned, Obama intoned that the U.S. stands “ready to provide whatever assistance is necessary—and asked for—to pursue a credible transition to a democracy.”

To get a taste of what Washington means by democracy, one need only look further east, to the corpses of more than one million Iraqis who died as a result of the 2003 invasion and occupation, as well as to the imperialist barbarism inflicted by U.S./NATO forces upon the peoples of Afghanistan. One need only look at the sheiks, despots and strongmen that litter the Near East, who along with the Israeli rulers act as U.S. imperialism's agents. When Obama says he wants an “orderly transition of power” in Egypt, he means he wants a “stable” Egypt, with the military fulfilling its role in the region on behalf of the U.S.

Authentic national and social liberation requires mobilizing the proletariat in revolutionary struggle against the imperialists *and* the domestic bourgeoisie. A proletarian revolution in Egypt would have an electrifying impact on workers and the oppressed throughout North Africa, the Near East and beyond. Over one-quarter of all Arab speakers live in Egypt, a country of over 80 million that has the largest proletariat in the region.

Already, protests have erupted from Morocco to the U.S. client states of Jordan and Yemen in solidarity with the Egyptian masses and in opposition to those countries' own despotic rulers. In Algiers on February 12, some 35,000 cops descended upon a protest of 10,000 demanding the resignation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, arresting hundreds. Mass protests have since spread to Bahrain and Libya.

In Gaza, thousands mobilized after Mubarak's resignation, waving Palestinian and Egyptian flags and desperately hoping that a new Egyptian regime would ease their starvation. Prior to February 11, both Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank had labored to suppress any solidarity demonstrations. A socialist revolution in Egypt would open a vista of national and social liberation for the oppressed Palestinian masses, and, extending a hand of working-class solidarity to the Hebrew-speaking proletariat of Israel, would help lay the basis for shattering the Zionist garrison state of Israel from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

Crucially, a proletarian revolution in Egypt would immediately face the need to extend to the advanced capitalist countries of West Europe and North America, which would lay the basis for the elimination of scarcity by establishing an international planned socialist economy. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, underlined in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

“The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle on a national and international scale....

“The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.”

### **Break with Bourgeois Nationalism!**

The present situation in Egypt provides an extraordinary opening for Marxists to put forward a series of transitional

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demands that link the current struggles of the working class and the oppressed to the conquest of proletarian power. But virtually the entire left internationally has offered nothing but empty cheerleading for what they dub the "Egyptian Revolution." This is exemplified by Workers World Party in the U.S., which, as the military took control of the country on February 11, headlined: "WWP Rejoices with the Egyptian People."

In Egypt, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group, which is inspired by the late Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party in Britain, issued a statement on February 1 calling on Egyptian workers to "use your power and victory will be ours!" But this is not an appeal for the working class to fight for power. On the contrary, the RS dissolves the power of the working class into the classless demand for "all power to the people" and the call for a "popular revolution." While declaring "Down with the system!" the RS identifies that system as the Mubarak regime rather than the capitalist order. Left out of the statement is even the mere mention of the word "socialism." Nor is there a hint of opposition to the liberal bourgeois democrats like ElBaradei, the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood (see article, page 9) or the pervasive nationalism that serves to bind the exploited and the oppressed to the Egyptian bourgeoisie. In fact, the RS appeals to crass Egyptian nationalism, declaring, "Revolution must restore Egypt's independence, dignity and leadership in the region."

Amid rampant illusions in the military, the RS complained, "This army is no longer the people's army." The army of the *capitalist* regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak was *never* "the people's army." Now these reformists are even promoting the despised police, rejoicing in a February 13 statement that "the wave of social revolution is widening every day as new sections join the protests, such as policemen, *mukhabarin* [intelligence agents] and police officers"! So deep are the RS's illusions in the benevolence of the capitalist state that they embrace the butchers, rapists and torturers of the regime, the very forces that have long terrorized the population, that mur-

dered at least 300 protesters in recent weeks and that helped organize the February 2 assault on Tahrir Square.

### Working Class Must Take the Lead

The Egyptian youth who initiated the "January 25 Revolution" have been hailed by one and all, from bourgeois oppositionists to the state-run media that had, until the fall of Mubarak, denounced them as foreign agents. Among these mainly petty-bourgeois youth, a good number had been animated not only by their own grievances but particularly also by the restive Egyptian proletariat, which for the last decade has engaged in a wave of struggle that included over two million workers participating in over 3,000 strikes, sit-ins and other actions. These were carried out in defiance of the corrupt leadership of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which was established by Nasser in 1957 as an arm of the state.

At bottom, the petty bourgeoisie—an intermediate class comprising many layers with disparate interests—is incapable of advancing a coherent, independent perspective and will necessarily fall under the sway of one of the two main classes of capitalist society: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Among these militant youth, who showed incredible courage in taking on the Mubarak regime, those committed to fighting on behalf of the downtrodden must be won to the revolutionary internationalist program of Trotskyism. Such elements will be critical to forging a revolutionary party, which like Lenin's Bolsheviks will be founded through a fusion of the most advanced workers with declassed intellectuals.

In opposition to a proletarian revolutionary perspective, the reformists of the United Secretariat (USec) present bourgeois democracy as the pinnacle of struggle. In a January 2011 article posted on the Internet titled, "In Tunisia and Egypt the Revolutions Are Underway," the USec demands "opening a process of free elections for a constituent Assembly," presenting this as part of a "programme of a democratic government that would be at the service of the workers and the population."

There will be no government that "would be at the service of the workers and the population" without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. As Lenin wrote in his December 1917 "Theses on the Constituent Assembly": "Every direct or indirect attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal, legal point of view, within the framework of ordinary bourgeois democracy and disregarding the class struggle and civil war, would be a betrayal of the proletariat's cause, and the adoption of the bourgeois standpoint." We are for the workers and peasants driving out government rulers appointed from above. We demand an end to the ban on political parties and call for a revolutionary constituent assembly based on universal suffrage. The achievement of this demand requires a popular insurrection to overthrow the military regime. At the same time, Marxists must fight for mass, inclusive working-class organizations as embryonic organs of proletarian state power.

Our purpose is to win the oppressed and downtrodden to the side of the working class, counterposing its social power and leadership to all wings of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie and struggling to break the masses from illusions in bourgeois democracy. Throughout the strikes carried out over the past decade and during the current upheaval, workers formed strike committees and other bodies to coordinate their actions. These organs of struggle directly pose the need for trade unions independent of the capitalist state and all bourgeois forces. Today, there is a palpable basis to advance a perspective of building broader organizations of the working class. These

#### Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth Club Forum

### Uprisings Rock Tunisia, Egypt— Capitalist Dictatorships Remain

- **Against military, bonapartist rule—  
For revolutionary constituent assemblies!**
- **No to bourgeois nationalism, Islamic reaction!**
- **For permanent revolution across North Africa—  
Forge revolutionary workers parties!**

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Workers Vanguard

**Algiers, February 12: protesters shout anti-government slogans. Regime mobilized tens of thousands of cops who overwhelmed demonstrators, arresting hundreds. Right: New York protest against Mubarak regime, January 29.**

include joint strike committees, drawing in workers from different striking plants; workers defense guards, organized independently of the military, to defend against the regime's thugs and strikebreakers; popular committees based on the working class to take charge of distribution of food and goods in the face of shortages and black market corruption.

The emergence of such organizations, culminating in workers councils, would pose the question of which class rules society. Acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their struggles against the exploiters, workers councils, such as the soviets that arose during the Russian Revolution, would be organs of dual power, vying for power with the bourgeoisie. It is only when the working class comes forward as a serious contender for power that the conscript base of the army, overwhelmingly drawn from the working class and peasantry, can be split from the bourgeois officer corps and won to the side of the proletariat.

### For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

While protests in Egypt have centered on secular and democratic demands, images of the protests show repeated sessions of prayer—not only Islamic but also a Coptic prayer in Tahrir Square on Sunday, February 6, "The Day of the Martyrs." Religion is omnipresent in Egypt, promoted by Islamists, the Coptic church and the government, whose line can be summed up as: if they can't have food, let the people have God. This deep religiosity weighs like a stone on women, whose conditions of life have worsened over the last several decades. Any socialist organization that does not take up the fight for women's liberation in Egypt is a sham and an obstacle to human liberation.

The women who came out to Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt were more often than not wearing the headscarf. More than 80 percent of women in Egypt wear the headscarf—not by law but by force of a social norm based on obscurantism—much to the consternation of many of their mothers, who decades earlier fought to take it off.

Women's oppression goes to the heart of Egyptian society. Together with the prevalence of religion, it is rooted in the

country's backwardness, which is reinforced by imperialist subjugation. Egyptian law codifies this oppression. The Constitution declares, "The State shall guarantee coordination between woman's duties towards her family and her work in the society" and "the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)." Polygamy is legal, as is repudiation (in which a man can divorce his wife by simply saying, "I divorce you"). Abortion is illegal, with very few exceptions, and by law a woman is subordinate to her father or husband. Egyptian law treats adultery by a man and by a woman as two very different things, the latter being far graver.

Though illegal, female genital mutilation is rampant, and equally so among Muslims and Christians. According to the United Nations, **96 percent** of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone genital mutilation. "Honor killings" are also rampant among Muslims and Christians, although statistics are impossible to find as these murders are either unreported or reported as suicides. A brief glance at Egyptian films and television will show such barbarism to be a highly valued and well-respected tradition. Egyptian law has mitigating exceptions to punishing murder, allowing judges to reduce sentences for men who kill women as a result of "crimes of passion."

The courageous Egyptian socialist and feminist Nawal El-Saadawi has written numerous works on the oppression of women in the Near East. In her 1980 classic, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, she spoke of the entrenched obsession with "honor":

"Arab society still considers that the fine membrane which covers the aperture of the external genital organs is the most cherished and most important part of a girl's body, and is much more valuable than one of her eyes, or an arm, or a lower limb. An Arab family does not grieve as much at the loss of a girl's eye as it does if she happens to lose her virginity. In fact if the girl lost her life, it would be considered less of a catastrophe than if she lost her hymen."

At the same time, women are a crucial part of the working class, where they have played a leading role in the strikes over the last decade, especially in the textile industry. One of the most dramatic of these was the December 2006 textile strike in Mahalla al-Kobra. More than 20,000 workers went out. And it

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## Egypt...

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was the women workers who led the strike, walking out as the men continued working. Protesting outside the plant, they started chanting, "Where are the men? Here are the women!" This had the intended effect, as the men joined them, launching one of the biggest strikes Egypt had seen in years.

The Egyptian woman may be the slave of slaves, but she is also a vital part of the very class that will lay the material basis for her liberation by breaking the chains of social backwardness and religious obscurantism through socialist revolution. As Trotsky stressed in a 1924 speech, "Perspectives and Tasks in the East," "There will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and for the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker."

### The Bankruptcy of Egyptian Nationalism

Egyptian rulers have long played on the fact that, uniquely in North Africa and the Near East, the country's modern borders are similar to its ancient ones. This supposedly supports the claim that the Egyptian nation goes back to the dawn of civilization. In reality, Egyptian nationalism is the product of the modernizing work of early 19th-century Albanian Ottoman ruler Mohammed Ali, who created the first secular schools, established the first national army and laid the basis for the emergence of a domestic bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, Egypt remained in thrall to the European colonial powers.

The strength of Egyptian nationalist mythology is also seen in the adulation of the rule of left-nationalist strongman Colonel Nasser, including by many on the left. Central to the deep popular faith in the military is the fact that Nasser's regime marked the first time that Egyptians ran the country since the Persian conquest in 526 BC. Since Nasser took power in 1952, every Egyptian ruler has come out of the military.

The Egyptian army is also the only Arab army to have inflicted a black eye on the Israeli military, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (after suffering a humiliating defeat in 1967). In speaking of how the army is "no longer the people's army," the Revolutionary Socialists group wrote in its February 1 statement, "This army is not the one which defeated the Zionist enemy in October 1973" (the war actually ended in a stalemate). In fact, the 1973 war, like the 1967 and 1948 wars, was nothing more than a battle between two regional powers for their own interests, in which the proletariat had no side. In contrast, the international working class was duty-bound to militarily defend Egypt against imperialist attack during the 1956 war launched after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal.

As for Israel, there is no question that the Zionist state is the brutal enemy of the Palestinian masses, and we demand the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli troops and settlers from the Occupied Territories. But so are the Arab rulers,

who have the blood of tens of thousands of Palestinians on their hands. The social and national liberation of the Palestinians requires not only the sweeping away of the Zionist state but also the overthrow of the capitalist Arab rulers in Jordan, where half the population is Palestinian, and elsewhere in the region. We understand that it will be no easy task to break the Hebrew-speaking proletariat from the grip of Zionism. But any view of Israel that rejects the perspective of Arab/Hebrew workers revolution dooms the Palestinian masses to their national oppression.

Support to Arab nationalism has led to the bloody defeat of workers movements throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt, where Nasser came to power with the support of the Egyptian Stalinists. Upon coming to power, Nasser sought to appeal to the U.S. but was rebuffed; he then turned to the Soviet degenerated workers state for financial, military and political aid. At the same time, to consolidate his rule, he suppressed the Communists, imprisoning, torturing and killing them. But even as he brutalized them, the Communist Party continued to support Nasser, liquidating into his Arab Socialist Union in 1965.

Behind this abject capitulation was the Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution," postponing the socialist revolution to an indefinite future while in the first "democratic stage" the proletariat is subordinated to an allegedly "anti-imperialist" national bourgeoisie. History shows that the "second stage" consists of killing communists and massacring workers. Millions of workers who looked to the Communist parties for leadership in Iraq, Iran and elsewhere were betrayed by their Stalinist misleaders. In Egypt, such betrayal was sold as support for Nasser's "Arab Socialism."

In fact, "Arab Socialism" was a myth, amounting to capitalism with heavy state investment. It was designed to suppress the proletariat, which had engaged in substantial struggles in the post-World War II period, including against British occupation. The role Nasser saw for workers was captured by his statement: "The workers don't demand; we give." In exchange for the proletariat's passivity, Nasser instituted several reforms, raising wages and reducing unemployment. But eventually, state investment dried up, and there was no longer much to "give."

After Sadat came to power in 1970, the Communists sought to reorganize. Sadat responded by unleashing the Muslim Brotherhood to effectively crush them. He also expelled Soviet advisers (after having used Soviet weaponry to fight Israel in the 1973 war) and instituted the "open door" policy of economic liberalization, cutting food and other subsidies as a way to address economic stagnation. This was taken further and deeper by Mubarak and his neoliberal program of mass privatizations. Contrary to popular illusions, Mubarak did not represent a break from Nasserism, but rather its legacy. Under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt remained subjugated to the imperialist world market and its dictates. The real difference between Nasser and Mubarak is that while the former was a genuinely popular bonapartist ruler, the latter was widely despised.

If the powerful and combative Egyptian proletariat is to come to the fore at the head of the oppressed and fight for its own rule, it must be broken from its nationalist illusions. What is urgently posed today is the building of a workers party, section of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International, that will fight for a proletarian Egypt, part of a socialist federation of the Near East. ■

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# State Repression...

(continued from page 5)

for hours.

You couldn't pick up a newspaper, watch TV or listen to the radio for over a week without hearing the horrendous media campaign in the wake of the cop's death. Contrast this to what happened when four migrant construction workers died on Christmas Eve 2009, when the scaffolding they were working on broke in two and they fell 13 stories to the ground. The federal government took the opportunity to go after "illegal" immigrants—those without the right to work in this country. When Amalgamated Transit Union worker Tony Almeida died in 2007 in a subway tunnel accident due to unsafe conditions, the press and TTC bosses smeared him as a drug user. These examples highlight the privileged status accorded to the lives of cops, the guardians of private property, in stark contrast to the lives of the working class and poor, who are treated as expendable. The PDC stands with the victims of capitalist exploitation and repression and those who fight against it.

The cops are the hired guns of the capitalist ruling class. Their job is to uphold racist capitalist "law and order" through brute force: breaking strikes, rounding up minority youth, repressing social protest. The courts, to which many look for some justice, are an essential part of this murderous repressive machinery. Capitalist so-called "law and order" is based on frame-ups, lies and police violence.

Last summer during the G20 protests there was a larger, more ominous police occupation of the city. Some 1,100 people were arrested, the largest mass arrests in Canadian history. The cop rampage exposed the lie that capitalist Canada is some kind of "progressive" alternative to the U.S. Today, a host of G20 protesters face serious conspiracy charges. It is crucial that we defend them. "Conspiracy" charges are one way the state goes after perceived opponents when there is no evidence of any crime. There's a very long history of this in Ontario, going back to 1837 when trade unionists were targeted by conspiracy laws.

At previous Holiday Appeals we've heard about the

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**St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary where Communists were interned in late 1940s. Right: Cold War anti-Communist tract.**

repressive history of the Canadian bourgeoisie, including around the Winnipeg General Strike, part of the upsurge of working-class struggle that followed the victorious Russian Revolution of 1917 (see "Class-Struggle Defense in Capitalist Canada: From Winnipeg 1919 to Montreal 1970," SC 164, Spring 2010). Tonight I want to expand on this and talk about Cold War state repression starting in the late 1940s. The imperialists' Cold War was aimed at the counterrevolutionary restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. At home, it meant witchhunting anti-Communism throughout North American society. I'll begin with the so-called Gouzenko Spy Affair and what was known as the PROFUNC program, connecting these to state repression today. I'll also talk about the class-war prisoners we're highlighting tonight, including Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

In 1945, a cipher clerk at the Soviet embassy, Igor Gouzenko, defected in Ottawa, announcing he had proof of a widespread Soviet spy ring. This set off a chain reaction of anti-Communist hysteria. Fifteen people, including prominent supporters of the Communist Party, were arrested in February 1946 under a secret detention order made possible by the Royal Commission on Espionage, which the federal government instituted to track down "spies." The Royal Commission is comparable to today's security certificates. It allowed the state to secretly imprison people without charge and to hold them incommunicado for long periods, ignoring the right to engage counsel. It was one of the more thorough abuses of individual rights of the many carried out by the Canadian state.

The anti-Communist investigations surrounding the Gouzenko affair left a trail of destroyed careers and ruined lives. But they were no aberration. The capitalist class utilized the War Measures Act to imprison Canadians of German and Ukrainian descent in World War I and Japanese Canadians during World War II. Another of the state's weapons was and is the Official Secrets Act, which was designed to prohibit and control access to and disclosure of "sensitive government information."

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## State Repression...

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At the height of the Cold War, the government approved a plan to round up thousands of Canadians with "Communist links" in the event of a "national security threat" and lock them away indefinitely, simply because they were perceived to be a threat to so-called Canadian democracy. Under PROFUNC, which stands for PROMinent FUNCtionaries of the Communist Party, a list was prepared of some 16,000 suspected Communists and 50,000 sympathizers, to be monitored and interned. Under the plan, targets could be detained indefinitely, subjected to severe discipline and shot if they tried to escape detention.

The blacklist included prominent Canadian public figures—men, women and children—whose identities were kept on file, in secret, at RCMP detachments across the country. The files were regularly updated until PROFUNC's demise in the early 1980s. This paralleled developments in the U.S., where detention camps for known communists were authorized. As revolutionaries, we recognize that anti-communist victimizations are aimed above all at beheading the workers movement.

The Cold War wasn't just about getting the reds but was also waged more widely. The concern over so-called communist subversion eating away at the fabric of wholesome Christian life meant that differences based on sexual preference, gender and race were themselves signs of subversion. You did not need to be a communist to be considered a Cold War enemy; you could equally be a woman who wanted to work outside the home, a man who liked to visit gay bars or even an anti-nuclear bourgeois pacifist. The RCMP even developed the "fruit machine" to test if a man was gay. Believe it or not, they would show "suspects" photos of naked men and measure the dilation of their pupils to "determine" if they were gay!

It was only with the major social upheavals of the 1960s that the reactionary Cold War domestic climate, including the stulti-



Montreal Star/CP

**Under the War Measures Act, troops occupied Montreal during October Crisis, 1970.**

fying atmosphere of "family values," was broken. The key place that this happened in this country was Quebec. A documentary on PROFUNC that recently aired in Quebec detailed the use of the RCMP-compiled lists during the "October Crisis" in Montreal in 1970. The October Crisis was used by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau to try to smash a mass labour and social radicalization in Quebec, including growing support for independence. The government used the kidnappings of two government officials by the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) to declare martial law and send the army in to occupy the streets. Hundreds of people were rounded up and thrown in jail. Other abuses in Quebec included the RCMP burning down a barn to prevent a meeting between members of the FLQ and Black Panther Party, and breaking into Parti Québécois offices to steal their membership files.

Many youth we talk to think that the oppression of the Québécois is a thing of the past. This is at best wishful thinking. The Liberal Party, backed by the NDP, imposed the Clarity Act, which bans Quebec from exercising its democratic right to self-determination. Our opposition to the Canadian state today is exemplified by our advocacy of Quebec independence.

### Free the Class-War Prisoners!

Here I'd like to say a few words about Leonard Peltier. The labour movement must be mobilized to defend Native rights. This would be a step toward the emancipation of the working class as a whole in this country. It was important that the now locked-out Steelworkers (USW) Local 1005 sent several delegations to the occupation site of Native protesters in Caledonia. The occupation began when developers began building a residential subdivision despite a longstanding land-claim dispute. The USW flag has been prominently displayed there, along with that of the CUPW postal union, among others. Organized labour has the social power to possibly prevent further police and military attack against the Six Nations occupation.

Leonard Peltier's incarceration for his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize the racist repression of Native peoples in North America, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. It was Pierre Trudeau



Bettmann/Corbis

**Leonard Peltier, extradited to U.S. by Trudeau's Liberal government, December 1976.**

who extradited Peltier to his tormentors in the U.S. Peltier's frame-up trial for the 1975 deaths of two marauding FBI agents in what had become a war zone on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation shows what capitalist "justice" is all about. The lead government attorney has admitted, "We can't prove who shot those agents," and the courts also admitted blatant prosecutorial misconduct, yet the 66-year-old is still locked away. Last year, the U.S. Parole Commission again turned down his request for parole and shockingly said they would not look at his case for another 15 years. I'd like to quote from a prison dispatch, "Greetings from Leonard Peltier, February 2010":

"The Indian wars are not over; they just are fought more in the courtrooms and the boardrooms these days. But the issues are mostly the same—the land, resources, and freedom. Freedom to think. Freedom to live as we wish. Freedom to be who we are."

Now to say a few words about Mumia Abu-Jamal. December marked the 29th anniversary of Mumia's arrest. His case gives flesh and blood to the Marxist understanding of the state and its courts as organs of repression against the working people and the oppressed. The latest threat to Mumia's life happened on November 9, 2010 when the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia heard oral arguments on whether or not to reinstate the death penalty. It may take months for the Third Circuit to announce its decision, which will then likely be appealed to the Supreme Court.

The PDC took up Mumia's case many years ago. We're proud of our massive efforts including the groundbreaking work of our attorneys debunking the phony ballistics evidence, exposing state coercion of witnesses, detailing the constitutional violations. We were instrumental in uncovering the confession by Arnold Beverly that he shot the police officer, and that Mumia had nothing to do with it. We have always struggled polemically against the various reformists who ignored this evidence. I'd like to make the point that the Gouzenko arrestees' Communist affiliations made many of Canada's liberal "civil rights activists" cringe from defending them against the Royal Commission on Espionage. This is echoed today when "respectable" liberals steer clear of the evidence proving Mumia's innocence that was uncovered by



SC photo

PDC contingent in 1995 Toronto demonstration to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

the PDC. These liberals and the reformist left undermined the fight for Mumia's freedom by diverting protests into pleas for a "new, fair trial" and by not proclaiming his innocence. At the last Mumia rally in November called by these reformist groups, it wasn't until the PDC spoke that illusions in the bourgeois courts and the notion of justice under capitalism were countered. There is no justice in the capitalist courts!

If linked to a revived labour movement, the fight for Mumia's freedom could strike a powerful blow against this system of state terror. What do I mean by a revived labour movement? Multiracial unions internationally, representing millions of workers, are on the record in support of Mumia, but they haven't been mobilized in action. This is due to the fact that the union bureaucracy's class-collaborationist politics tie workers to their exploiters. These politics have dissipated the fighting strength of the unions. We need to fight for a class-struggle leadership in the unions, using Jamal's cause as part of the fight against the whole rotten system, replacing it with one in which those who labour rule.

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■

## Class Collaboration...

(continued from page 8)

fight independently of any capitalist politicians and religious forces. This means saying down with Mubarak, opposing ElBaradei and the Muslim Brotherhood and fighting for workers revolution. I lifted the issue of *Socialist Worker* on Egypt and said that there was not a single word of opposition to ElBaradei or to the Muslim Brotherhood. I noted the I.S. line on Iran 1979 and contrasted it to ours, encapsulated in our slogan: "Down with the Shah! Don't bow to Khomeini! For workers revolution in Iran!" I ended on the need to learn the experiences of the Russian Revolution.

After, the I.S. was quick to applaud the nationalism expressed by the only young Arab who intervened, who said (in response to me) that it is not about workers but about Arab people who have found a way to express themselves after so much suffering. The speaker representing ElBaradei's organization also spoke of Iran in his concluding remarks, saying that that "revolution" was driven by ideology but the Egyptian revolution is driven by people. Clark concluded by saying that in Canada we need to find out what the obstacles are (Canadian government) and fight them (sign petitions).

We engaged the Arab youth once the meeting ended. I was speaking to a group of Arabs about the need to oppose the Muslim Brotherhood and to create a workers party that will fight for socialist revolution. The usual response was that the Muslim Brotherhood has changed, that there are many tendencies within it and that the fundamentalists do not dominate it. I said that the mullahs in Iran did not start killing leftists right away; they waited until they were sufficiently strong. They were open to discussing with me, particularly because I emphasized the need to learn from past defeats. The key point needs to be repeated to these youth: anything other than working-class independence necessarily brings defeat. ■

# Cops Stalk the High Schools

Dear Spartacist Canada,

I was reading your article concerning the aftermath of the reactionary G20 crackdown in Toronto this past June. I found the article particularly interesting considering I attended the protests, but I had put the matter behind me by September. But it so happened that conversation in my Gr. 12 English Lit class turned to control, and lo and behold someone brought up the G20 protests. I merely stated my own opinion—which happened to coincide with Spartacist Canada's article—that no-one, including protestors using Black Bloc tactics—was deserving of the brutal and violent crackdown by Toronto Police. The protestors merely smashed a few windows of Capitalist businesses—not a crime in the eyes of the working class. Little did I know at that point that I would walk into class the next day to be confronted by the school cop, who had been brought in by my teacher to talk to the class (but really me) about the G20. I was immediately asked what I had said the previous class concerning this topic. I repeated myself, and went further to state that while I do not agree with the tactics, they serve no purpose to working class struggle, it may be understandable that their rage boils over to such an extent. I compared it to the shooting of a Nazi officer in occupied France during WWII. Immediately, a gasp let out through the classroom. The cop looked at me inquisitively, and asked: "So you're calling me a Nazi?". No, I was not. I was comparing him to a Nazi. There's a difference, but [it] was not the time to argue semantics. The cop walked around the classroom, as my classmates visibly

moved away from me (I don't know what they thought was going to happen) and I calmly stared as the cop locked the doors. My teacher had vanished from sight. Then the cop tried to debate me. But he didn't really do a very good job, he kept interrupting me, and playing on emotional triggers to gauge sympathy from the class. "Do you know how many babies have died in my arms? Do you know how many times a sixteen-year old kid has pulled a gun on me? Do you know once I responded to a call and found a woman and her mother raped and murdered inside their own home?" I didn't really care, as it was irrelevant and an obvious attempt to upstage me. He also highlighted his charity work (yes work to improve the existing system rather than fixing it; great idea) and discussed his humble beginnings living on a res. This was after simple intimidation did not force me to back down. In the end, nothing really happened but I felt it important that Spartacist Canada know of this incident.

Sincerely, K

**SC replies:** K's harrowing experience underlines the Marxist understanding that the police, along with the courts and army, are the violent and coercive core of the capitalist state. Despite our differences with the politics of the Black Bloc anarchists, we call to defend them against state repression and demand that the charges against all G20 protestors be dropped. We further raise the call for cops out of the high schools, where they harass and intimidate students, particularly blacks and other minorities. ■

## Students...

(continued from page 7)

necessity for young radicals to take up this demand.

What did the left on campus do after the G20 mass arrests? At the annual Clubs Fair, the U of T student bureaucrats allowed cops to have a table as if nothing had happened a few weeks before. What did we do? As soon as we saw this, we made a placard on the spot that read: "The SYC Says: Cops Off Campus!" We went right in front of the tables of the NDP and the reformists, denounced them for their faith in the capitalist state and sloganeered against state repression. The student bureaucrats and Ontario Public Interest Research Group organized a

little rally the month after to appeal to the university administration to renounce the cop presence. The reality is that universities under capitalism are class-biased institutions that play a role that serves the interests of capital, not the interests of workers and the oppressed. No appeal to the administration is going to stop the repression of activists on campus. We call to abolish the administration! For student/teacher/worker control of the universities! Free, quality education for all requires the overthrow of capitalism through a workers revolution.

The Spartacus Youth Club also protests the witchhunting, censorship and repeated intimidation of pro-Palestinian students on campuses. Recently, our comrades in Vancouver issued a protest statement against a vicious campaign by Zionists and student bureaucrats to vilify defenders of Palestinians as "terrorists" and "anti-Semites" (see "Down With Anti-Palestinian Witchhunt at UBC!" page 6). Each spring, organizers of Israeli Apartheid Week also face smears of "anti-Semitism." We say, *Defend the Palestinians! Hands off their supporters!*

Our message to the youth is to use their fighting spirit to ally with the working class, the only class able to emancipate itself and all the oppressed. Students by themselves cannot change the material conditions that create their oppression but the working class has the objective interest and power to overthrow capitalism.

In order to build the next Bolshevik party that will smash the capitalist state, end racist cop terror and open the road to an egalitarian communist future, we in the Spartacus Youth Club seek to win a new generation of youth to the fight for world socialist revolution. We are the training ground for future revolutionaries. Join us and be part of the struggle! ■

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## Hamilton Steelworkers...

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or even to the capitalist Liberal Party, these labour bureaucrats will not lead the kind of struggle that is needed. Sharing with their capitalist masters a belief in the inviolability of the profit system and pushing a program of Canadian nationalism, the union leaders strangle the enormous potential social power of the proletariat. The difficult task of building a class-struggle leadership in the unions to carry out the vitally necessary battles against the capitalist class is long overdue.

### Capitalist Profit and Accumulating Misery

"Most of us left parts of our bodies in Stelco when we left. I don't have any use of my left hand, I have two artificial hips," said a retired Local 1005 millwright at the January 29 protest. For the thousands of Local 1005 pensioners making less than \$1,000 per month, about three-quarters of whom are widows, de-indexing pensions will be catastrophic. Many already survive thanks only to food banks and second-hand stores.

Capitalist exploitation uses up and destroys workers. To survive, workers must sell to the capitalist their ability to work. It is from the surplus value created by their blood and sweat that the billions in profits flow into the pockets of the bosses. When workers are injured or too infirm or too old and can no longer sell their labour power, they are discarded. U.S. Steel follows this inexorable logic in its attack on the pensions of those who toiled in Hamilton's steel mills for 30 or 40 years.

In Canada as in the U.S. and Europe, governments and private capitalists alike are attacking pensions as a way to boost profits. In line with this, the federal Conservatives have just announced a private "pension" scheme that will benefit not the 11 million Canadians who have no pension plans, but the profit-bloated banks. The capitalists' campaign against the supposed "gold-plated" benefits of unionized workers is meant to prepare the ground for further attacks while fomenting anti-union sentiment.

If the harshest blows have so far fallen on workers in the private sector, the bosses are now jacking up the attacks on unionized public sector workers. Canada Post seeks to destroy both the pension and sick plans of postal workers. In Toronto, right-wing mayor Rob Ford has launched an offensive against transit workers and is making a union-busting bid to contract out garbage pickup (see article, page 3).

The capitalists' answer to the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s is that "all must sacrifice." And "all," for the ruling class, means the working class. In his great work *Capital* Karl Marx wrote: "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital." The truth of this statement can be seen in the destruction of livelihoods, lost homes, destroyed families, gutted social services, impoverished retirement and more. As for the much-vaunted "recovery," the capitalists admit that it has been "jobless." The only thing recovering is their profits.

The fight for jobs, pensions and other desperately needed benefits is the fight against the devastation of the working people. It is necessary to demand an end to layoffs by shortening the workweek at no loss in pay, as part of the struggle for jobs for all. Unemployment benefits must be greatly increased and extended to everyone who cannot find a job,



USW Local 1005

**January 29: Lead banner at Hamilton labour rally pushes reactionary Canadian nationalism.**

and all pensions must be completely guaranteed by the government. A massive program of public works at union wages is needed to rebuild roads and bridges, fix the decaying health system and schools and expand public transit.

But such basic and obviously necessary demands, the elements of which were laid out in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, will not be granted by the rapacious capitalist rulers. The capitalist state, including the cops, courts and army, exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be reformed or wielded to serve the interests of working people. The catastrophe of joblessness, threatening the disintegration of the working class, can be effectively fought only by a workers movement led by those committed to the struggle for socialist revolution and the creation of a rationally planned, socialist economy on an international scale.

### Protectionism: Joining With the Enemy Class

The Hamilton steelworkers' struggle closely mirrors the bitter year-long 2009-10 strike by more than 3,000 nickel miners at Vale Inco in Sudbury. There too, the company sought massive concessions, including gutting the pension plan. The workers of USW Local 6500 fought with all their might, but the union leadership—like the leaders of Local 1005 in Hamilton today—offered Canadian nationalism as the answer to the bosses' attacks. In the end, the Vale Inco workers voted up a contract that bars new-hires from the defined benefit pension plan.

The Sudbury USW tops held up the former Canadian-owned Inco as a positive alternative to the Brazilian-owned Vale, which took over the company in 2006. But it was Inco that slashed tens of thousands of mining jobs, and every gain Canadian nickel miners won came through struggle *against* these mining magnates. Canadian mining corporations were and are notorious for their rapacious brutality in countries like Ecuador, the Philippines and the Congo. As for attacks on pensions, look at Nortel, the Canadian telecommunications giant, which cried bankruptcy and then, backed by the courts and government, destroyed the pensions of more than 17,000 former employees.

In 1980, there were more than 25,000 workers at Stelco facilities; it was this Canadian company that ravaged the

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## Hamilton Steelworkers...

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workforce, reducing it by more than 20,000 before U.S. Steel took over. After a frenzy of international buyouts in 2006-07, the steel industry in Canada is now almost entirely owned by international conglomerates from Europe, India, Brazil, the U.S. and elsewhere. Regardless of who owns the steel plants, the capitalist exploiters will attack the working class in their drive for greater profits.

Today, reflecting the declining economic and industrial power of U.S. imperialism, U.S. Steel, while still the largest American steel company, ranks only tenth in world production. The layoffs in Hamilton, the shifts in production to the U.S., attacks on pensions: all are aimed at improving their position against their European, Asian and other competitors. The increasing centralization of the steel industry, with various international conglomerates jockeying for control, cries out not for a protectionist campaign for a "Canadian steel industry"—i.e., for home-grown exploiters—but for *international class struggle*. Above all, it points to the need for an internationally planned socialist economy under the rule of the working class.

Far from this perspective, the leadership of USW Local 1005 calls to "rebuild Stelco," and denounces U.S. Steel as "unwilling to be a participant in Canadian nation-building." The lead banner on the January 29 march proclaimed "Canadians Stand as One!" The Local 1005 tops even uphold Stelco as a "national treasure!" If these slogans have a somewhat quirky Mao-oid quality, that is not accidental, for the president of the local, Rolf Gerstenberger, is also a prominent supporter of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

But there is not a trace of communism here, only the purest nationalist bombast, and it coexists perfectly with the politics of the mainstream bureaucrats in the Ontario Federation of Labour and other major unions. In an article in the *Hamilton Spectator* (9 December), Canadian Auto Workers leader Ken Lewenza mourned the loss of "corporate icons" and "key productive jewels" like Stelco. It was Lewenza, two years ago, who agreed to unprecedented wage and benefit cuts of \$19 an hour at Chrysler and \$22 an hour at General Motors, setting the stage for the latest round of broader anti-worker attacks.

Gerstenberger and the Local 1005 leadership have repeatedly called on the Canadian government to nationalize U.S. Steel. To hear Gerstenberger talk about "the arrogance and contempt the global monopolies hold for Canadian workers, our socialised economy and sovereignty" (*Workers' Forum*, February 2011), you'd think capitalist Canada was some kind of socialist paradise.

The pro-NDP "socialist" groups that populate the Canadian left apologize for, or openly propound, the same nationalist protectionism. The Maple Leaf patriots of the Communist Party of Canada (CP) claim that the current struggle is "about having a domestic industry to produce steel for Canadian manufacturing...or Canadian sovereignty and independence by another name" (*People's Voice*, 1-14 February). The International Socialists mouth a few words against Canadian nationalism, but two years ago this group declared: "We must demand that the government keep steel production local" (*Socialist Worker*, 16 March 2009). While the CP calls to "Nationalize US Steel operations in Hamilton," the I.S. pleads for the "nationalization and retooling of factories."

Capitalist nationalization schemes have long been used by capitalist governments to pay off failing bosses and blunt

working-class discontent. The 2009 bailouts of GM and Chrysler—which amounted to partial nationalizations—came directly at the workers' expense, and thanks to them the companies are again raking in the profits.

The union misleaders sell workers the lie that a Canadian boss is better than an American (or Japanese or German), that protectionist tariffs and nationalization schemes will protect jobs, stop plant closures and maintain wages and benefits. But protectionism means joining with the enemy class to shore up their profits, profits extracted from the labour of working people be they in Canada, the U.S. or elsewhere. Moreover, nationalizing the *least* efficient capitalist operations is in a sense the exact opposite of socialist expropriation. Socialist economic planning under the rule of the working class is based precisely on appropriating from the capitalists the *most advanced* means of production. As Trotsky explained in the Transitional Program, the Marxist program of expropriating the capitalist bloodsuckers is counterposed to "the muddle-headed reformist slogan of 'nationalization'" and must be linked to the struggle for working-class power.

The entire history of the steel industry in Hamilton, going back more than a century, explodes the view that Canadian bosses are "nice guy" friends of the working people. Hamilton was long known as Steel Town and over the years the city's steel barons included William Southam, publisher of the *Spectator*, who built his newspaper empire on steel profits, and Hugh G. Hilton, the union-hating engineer memorialized in Stelco's massive Hilton Works. For decades, tens of thousands of workers toiled in the brutally hot and dangerous steel mills for the profits of a tiny group of Canadian capitalists. Far from a "national treasure," for almost 100 years Stelco brutalized its workers, denied them benefits, robbed them of their pay and fired workers, especially union militants and the foreign-born, at will.

It was the 1946 strike against Stelco that won union recognition and a 40-hour workweek. The strike was part of a broader postwar upsurge of class struggle. Proletarian solidarity as well as militant tactics were key to the union's struggle. The company moved in an army of scabs to keep the mill going. But Stelco couldn't move the steel through the picket lines. And even when the picket lines were breached and steel was loaded on to a freighter, dockers in Montreal wouldn't touch the scab steel, so it sat on the *Selkirk* until the strike was over. The company failed to drive out the union, its fundamental goal, and the strike ended in victory.

Stelco wasn't the only game in town, however. Side by side with the Hilton Works is Dofasco, originally Dominion Steel, founded in 1912. Dofasco was bought out by the European-based ArcelorMittal, the largest steelmaker in the world, in 2006, just before U.S. Steel bought out Stelco. The USW has several times tried, without success, to organize Dofasco, which remains non-union to this day. A win against U.S. Steel could mark a revival of the "spirit of 1946" and give a boost to the struggle to unionize this and other non-union plants.

### Down With Anti-Communist China-Bashing!

Leo Gerard, the international president of USW based in Pittsburgh and formerly the union's Canadian national director, works hand-in-glove with the steel companies in a campaign to "Buy American" (modified when he's in Canada to "Buy North American"). Deeply chauvinist, "Buy American" has done nothing for American workers, as shown by the dead steel plants and massive unemployment running from Pittsburgh to Buffalo and Chicago. The American capitalists' destruction of basic industry

has especially devastated the black proletariat. Deindustrialization has also pitted Canadian workers against American, and workers from both countries against working people abroad.

The USW bureaucracy's main target has been China, now the largest steel producer (and consumer) in the world. The union tops complain that Ottawa has failed to protect the Canadian steel industry from Chinese imports. This is a direct echo of the campaigns of the North American steel bosses. A recent study by a right-wing Toronto think tank, the Munk Centre, laments that Chinese steel production does not operate in a "competitive domestic market environment," but has "very close relations to government agencies" ("The Importance of Steel Manufacturing to Canada," May 2010). In its own way, this pays tribute to China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state with a collectivized economy that is not based on production for private profit.

Playing the bosses' game against China is particularly deadly for workers. The Peoples Republic of China was forged through the defeat of imperialist-backed rule in the 1949 Revolution. Thanks to its collectivized economy, it has brought hundreds of millions of workers and peasants out of dire poverty into social production and a vast advance in living standards. With their nationalist agitation against China, the union bureaucrats are making an anti-Communist alliance with the Canadian and American capitalist rulers against the gains of the 1949 Revolution.

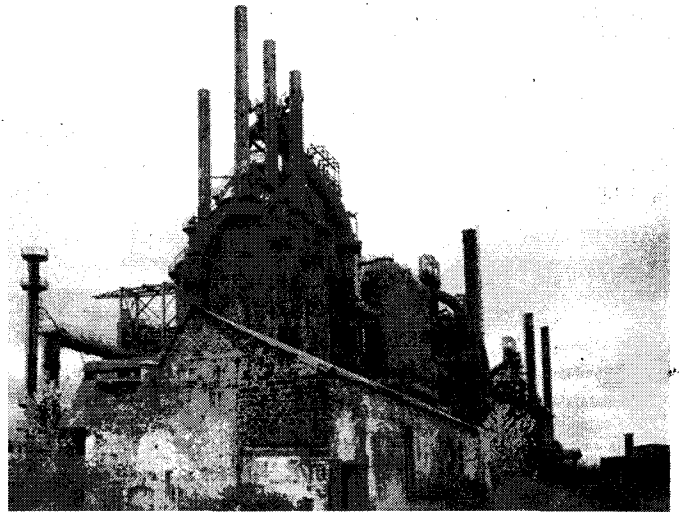
Albeit on different scales, both the industrial unions in North America and the workers state in China are the fruits of historic victories for the proletariat. One resulted from the massive struggles of the 1930s and 1940s, the other from the expropriation of capitalist class rule in the 1949 Revolution. Both must be defended unconditionally from attacks that seek to undo these gains, despite the fact that each is led by a bureaucratic layer that puts the gains in jeopardy. The bureaucratic misleaders of the unions here must be driven from their positions of leadership and replaced by a class-struggle leadership committed to the overthrow of the imperialist order through socialist revolution. The bureaucratic caste in China must be ousted by a proletarian political revolution to preserve and expand the working-class property forms established following the Chinese Revolution.

### **Workers Need Their Own Revolutionary Party!**

The 1946 Stelco strike came as the anti-Soviet Cold War witchhunt of Communist Party supporters from the unions was heating up. During the 1940s and 1950s, the labour tops waged vicious anti-red purges, in which the USW bureaucracy played a central role, that saw many of the most militant workers driven out of the unions. Integral to this, the aspirations of struggling workers were channelled into the social-democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, predecessor of the NDP.

While organizationally independent of the bourgeois parties, the NDP has a thoroughly pro-capitalist, nationalist program. When they are in power, from B.C. and Ontario in the 1990s to Manitoba today, they frontally attack the working class and the poor. Just over two years ago, the union tops were prominent supporters of the campaign for a Liberal-NDP coalition. More recently, the federal NDP has been assiduously propping up the minority government of the deeply anti-working-class and very right-wing Harper Conservatives.

To mobilize as one against the class enemy, it is imperative that the working class combat all manifestations of capitalist oppression—in defense of minorities, women's rights,



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**Crumbling Bethlehem Steel plant in Pennsylvania. Capitalists' destruction of basic industry has brought devastation to proletariat on both sides of the border.**

youth. The USW Local 1005 bureaucrats' flag-waving declaration that "Canadians Stand as One!" is the antithesis of this perspective. Most perniciously, such slogans feed into the Anglo chauvinism wielded against the Québécois, whose national subjugation remains a major barrier to united working-class struggle. We advocate independence for Quebec in order to fight Anglo chauvinism and lay the basis for making clear to the workers of both English Canada and Quebec that their enemies are their own respective capitalists, not each other. "Canadian unity" nationalism, which is particularly promoted in the labour movement by the NDP, in turn drives Québécois workers into the arms of their own class enemies, represented by the bourgeois-nationalist Parti Québécois and Bloc Québécois.

The union movement must also stand unequivocally on the side of immigrants, who often bring traditions of militant struggle into labour's increasingly multiracial ranks and are more and more under attack in this reactionary climate. A fight must be waged for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and against deportations. Such struggles can set the stage for the mobilization in common struggle of workers at home and abroad.

The fight to rebuild the unions as instruments of proletarian struggle is closely tied to the need for a multiracial, binational revolutionary workers party. That requires, above all, a political struggle against the social-democratic NDP and for a new class-struggle leadership of the unions. Against the tired and failed strategies pushed by liberals and fake socialists—from the Keynesian project of "benevolent" intervention by the capitalist state to the British Labour Party's bourgeois nationalizations in the post-World War II period—we Marxists understand that no amount of tinkering with the existing system can wrench it into serving the needs of the proletariat and the oppressed. There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialized economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity, and want. It is to this end that the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League, devotes all its resources. ■

# Victory to Hamilton Steelworkers!



United Steelworkers – Métallos

**Hamilton Day of Action, January 29: 10,000 rally in support of locked-out Steelworkers. Union's struggle to defend pensions, jobs is crucial battle for entire labour movement.**

## ***Not Nationalist Protectionism But International Class Struggle!***

On January 29, 10,000 unionized workers marched through downtown Hamilton in defense of the 900 members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1005 locked out by U.S. Steel since November 7. This was one of the largest labour protests in Ontario since the Days of Action of the mid to late 1990s—the one-day local general strikes against the then Tory provincial government. Busloads of workers poured into Hamilton from around Ontario, while others came from Quebec and the U.S. in a show of solidarity against U.S. Steel's drive to gut pensions.

The company is demanding the de-indexing of the already meagre pensions of 9,000 retirees, leaving them to be chewed up by inflation. It wants new hires barred from the existing pension plan and forced into a “defined contribution” plan. Such a divisive two-tier system would put the pensions of younger workers completely at the mercy of the capitalist stock market. Even before the lockout, the steel bosses stopped indexing pensions and shut down the blast furnace in Hamilton, stopping steel production altogether. There is speculation that the plant will not reopen.

In 2007 U.S. Steel bought Stelco's Hamilton and Nanticoke, Ontario plants and quickly shredded its toothless “guarantees” to maintain the workforce—then at 3,105 workers—

and production levels for the next three years. Sweeping layoffs and long plant shutdowns saw the shrunken workforce further decline. In August 2009, U.S. Steel locked out USW Local 8782 at the Nanticoke plant. After eight long months out of work, the local swallowed the company's demand to bar new hires from the pension plan. Having won there, U.S. Steel turned its guns on Local 1005.

This is a crucial battle for all labour, and a win for the workers of Local 1005 could help reverse the bosses' unremitting attacks. For many decades, Hamilton-area steelworkers, along with miners in Sudbury and auto workers in Oshawa and Windsor, were the bastions of the Ontario labour movement. To the extent that unionized workers have pension plans, medical benefits and health and safety protection it is in large part thanks to the hard-fought struggles of steelworkers, miners and auto workers to forge strong international industrial unions in the 1930s and 1940s.

But for years the bosses have been waging a one-sided class war against workers, as the pro-capitalist labour misleaders negotiate one giveback after another, leading to the withering of the unions and impoverishment of the working class. Loyal to the right-wing social democrats of the NDP,

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