

# Ruling Class Fleeces Working People Financial Crisis: Bankruptcy of Capitalism



Brancaccio/Windsor Star



**Global Banking Crisis**  
Asset write-downs and credit losses in billions of U.S. dollars from start of 2007 through 29 September 2008

SC Graphic, Chart source: Bloomberg, Photo: Getty

**Left: Striking workers at TRW plant in Windsor, March 2008. Workers face mass layoffs, plant closures in face of global capitalist crisis.**

The economic crisis that exploded on Wall Street over the fall has reduced some of the most powerful financial institutions in the world to twisted wreckage. As it expands and deepens, the economic crash is putting at risk the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of working people around the globe.

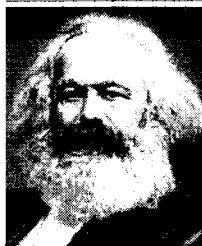
In the biggest bailout in American history, the U.S. government allocated \$700 billion to buy out the “toxic assets” of banks and other major financial institutions. Aply dubbed “cash for trash” by international bankers, under the bailout deal the government would pay a premium for “trash” on bank ledgers, centrally mortgage-backed securities that high-rolling financiers bought en masse in speculative schemes to cash in on the housing price bubble. When that bubble burst,

bankers began to sharply cut back lending to businesses, consumers and even to each other, triggering an even deeper economic crisis. Even as capitalist politicians cynically decry Wall Street “greed,” Washington has now expanded its subsidies to compensate the losses of the banking and financial looters to a staggering \$7.7 trillion.

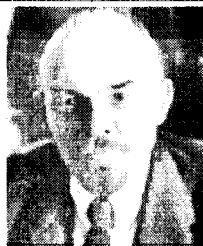
North of the border, Stephen Harper declared during the federal election campaign that “the fundamentals of the Canadian economy are sound.” Days later, the Tory government announced that Canada’s banks would also be bailed out to the tune of \$25 billion—since tripled to \$75 billion.

Raising the spectre of the Great Depression, bourgeois  
*(continued on page 15)*

## Those Who Labour Must Rule!



Marx



Lenin



Trotsky

## Capitalist Crises and the Bourgeois State

*The global financial crisis is destroying or threatening the livelihoods of millions, while capitalist governments hand over trillions to bail out the banks. Reformists and fake-leftists of every stripe are calling for further state intervention, spreading illusions that the state can "regulate" capitalism by nationalizing the banks or instituting social reforms. But this state is nothing other than the executive committee of the capitalist ruling class, whose army, police and courts are wielded to defend private property in the means of production.*

*Writing nearly 130 years ago, Friedrich Engels—with Karl Marx one of the founders of scientific socialism—explained the origin of capitalist crises and the road toward emancipation from capitalist misery through proletarian revolution, laying the basis for a global communist society.*

Commerce is at a standstill, the markets are glutted, products accumulate, as multitudinous as they are unsaleable, hard cash disappears, credit vanishes, factories are closed, the mass of the workers are in want of the means of subsistence, because they have produced too much of the means of subsistence; bankruptcy follows upon bankruptcy, execution upon execution....

In these crises, the contradiction between socialised production and capitalist appropriation ends in a violent explosion. The circulation of commodities is, for the time being, stopped. Money, the means of circulation, becomes a hindrance to circulation. All the laws of production and circulation of commodities are turned upside down. The economic collision has reached its apogee. *The mode of production is in rebellion against the mode of exchange.*

The fact that the socialised organisation of production within the factory has developed so far that it has become

incompatible with the anarchy of production in society, which exists side by side with and dominates it, is brought home to the capitalists themselves by the violent concentration of capital that occurs during crises, through the ruin of many large, and a still greater number of small, capitalists. The whole mechanism of the capitalist mode of production breaks down under the pressure of the productive forces, its own creations. It is no longer able to turn all this mass of means of production into capital. They lie fallow, and for that very reason the industrial reserve army must also lie fallow....

But the transformation, either into joint-stock companies and trusts, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies and trusts this is obvious. And the modern state, again, is only the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers—proletarians....

With the seizing of the means of production by society, production of commodities is done away with, and, simultaneously, the mastery of the product over the producer. Anarchy in social production is replaced by systematic, definite organisation. The struggle for individual existence disappears. Then for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of Nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of Nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by Nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously, make his own history—only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom....

To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism.

—Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880)

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# Obama: Commander-in-Chief of Racist U.S. Imperialism

Young/Reuters

**Obama visits White House, November 2008. From Bush to Obama, imperialist war and capitalist economic crisis will continue.**

*The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 925, 21 November), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League.*

The election of Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States has aroused great expectations among working people and the oppressed around the world. Black people and others celebrated on streets throughout the country the election of the next Commander-in-Chief of bloody U.S. imperialism. Michelle Obama, the descendent of slaves, will be first lady in a White House whose foundations were laid by slave labor. This is something most Americans never expected to see in their lifetime. Amid fears of a new Great Depression, as millions of working people are losing their homes and unemployment grows, hopes for “change” center on the incoming Democratic Obama administration. These hopes will be brutally dashed.

As America’s next top cop, Obama will preside over the racist capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of working people at home and abroad. As against the reformists, who either explicitly or implicitly backed Obama, we Marxists fight to break working people and the oppressed from illusions in the capitalist Democratic Party of war and racism. On principle, we do not vote for, or otherwise extend any political support to, any capitalist politician—Democrat, Republican, Green or “independent.” As the front-page headline of *WV* No. 923 (24 October) emphasized: “McCain, Obama: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed.”

We Marxists also do not run for the executive offices of the bourgeois state, such as mayor, governor or president. This is based on our understanding that the capitalist state—which at its core consists of the cops, military, courts and prisons—exists to defend the class rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. Holding executive office means administering the capitalist state. Our aim is the forging of a revolutionary workers party to lead the multiracial working class, and behind it all the oppressed, in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist order through workers revolution and establish a

workers state where those who labor rule.

Immediately upon winning, Obama sought to tamp down expectations for his administration. He made his agenda of “national unity” patriotism clear when he declared on election night, before a crowd of 250,000 people in Chicago celebrating his victory, the need for “a new spirit of sacrifice.” In this, Obama is following in the footsteps of the black Democrats who have been employed as mayors and police chiefs of major urban areas—from L.A. to Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and elsewhere. Their job has been to *keep working and black people down*, to oversee rampant cop terror and administer the slashing of social programs; their value to the racist rulers is epitomized by the statement of black former New York City mayor David Dinkins: “They’ll take it from me.” With the U.S. entering a deep economic recession, it will be Obama’s job to contain potential social unrest and impose austerity measures upon working people—and his current popularity may very well allow him to get away with much.

With cool “post-partisan” arrogance, Obama—wielding his own \$660 million campaign, which was supported by significant sections of the bourgeoisie—blames the oppressed for their own oppression. In his Chicago victory speech, Obama stated: “If there is anyone out there...who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.” A similar message came from McCain in his concession speech, who bluntly stated, “Let there be no reason now for any American to fail to cherish their citizenship.” As we warned in “Obama Offers Facelift for U.S. Imperialism” (*WV* No. 920, 12 September): “Obama serves as a very powerful propaganda weapon for the bourgeoisie, telling black people and the oppressed to shut up and stop complaining, because, you see, ‘the American dream’ works!”

From the standpoint of the international working class and oppressed there is *nothing to celebrate* in Obama’s victory and much to fear. Enthusiasm among large sections of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is justified. After nearly eight years of one of the most incompetent and widely despised

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# NDP: Prop for Canadian Capitalism

## Layton's Little Drummer Boys

On the left fringes of Canadian social democracy are groups that occasionally pepper their political programs and declarations with references to Marxism, the ideology of proletarian revolution. The true character of these outfits is revealed by their loyalty to the pro-imperialist New Democratic Party. This was on full display in the fall 2008 federal election campaign.

Against the illusions in parliamentary reformism peddled by the International Socialists (I.S.), Fightback and other fake-socialists, the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste fights to win the working class and the oppressed away from pro-capitalist social democracy and to the perspective of socialist revolution. As such, we said there was no party that merited the slightest support from working people in the election.

What choices did Canada's hallowed system of capitalist democracy offer? The Conservatives, the Liberals and their small-time partner, the Greens, are all parties of the bourgeoisie in English Canada; the Bloc Québécois is a party of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation of Quebec. The class that these parties represent lives off the proceeds of exploiting wage labour. It is the most bitter and direct enemy of the oppressed. Under no circumstances do workers stand to gain by offering political support to bourgeois parties.






Then there is the NDP, which Marxists call a *bourgeois workers party*. It is linked to the trade unions through the labour bureaucracy, but has the thoroughly bourgeois program of social democracy, i.e., the maintenance of the present system, often packaged in rhetoric about reforms and "social justice."

Announcing that he was applying for prime minister Stephen Harper's job, NDP leader Jack Layton campaigned for "tough action on crime, gangs, and guns" including "at least 2,500 new police officers on the streets." That means increased violence by the thugs in blue against black and South Asian youth, already viciously exploited or left unemployed by this decaying capitalist system. Under Layton's leadership, the New Democrats voted for the 2005 Liberal government budget, which included \$13 billion of new military spending centered on intensifying the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. The NDP's subsequent call to end

**NDP to Power on a Socialist Program**

**Fightback**  
Issue 122 The Marxist League of Labour and Youth September - October 2008

**FEDERAL ELECTION 2008**

**Why socialists should vote for the NDP**

**Socialist Worker**  
www.socialist.ca

**Reformist left pushes illusions in pro-capitalist, English-Canadian chauvinist New Democrats.**

Canadian participation in this brutal occupation is based entirely on protecting the imperialist military, not its victims. In any event, Layton kept all but mute on the question of Afghanistan during the election.

The fake-socialists perennially urge workers and leftist-minded youth to back the NDP. But there was utterly no reason for the working class to accord the NDP social democrats a shred of support in this election. This is underscored by the fact that the NDP is now making preparations for forming a governing coalition with the Liberals should the minority Tory government fall.

A few candidates from the remnants of Canadian Stalinism, the Communist Party (CP) and the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) (CPC[ML]), also ran in the election. The CP's call to "Defeat the Harper Tories" amounted to electioneering for the NDP as well as the bourgeois Liberals, Greens and Bloc. CPC(ML), which ran as the "Marxist-Leninist Party," waged a bizarre campaign to embellish parliament with "powerful committees for democratic renewal." Neither of these small-time reformists drew even a crude class line against the bourgeoisie; neither merited even the most critical support.

### The Fraud of Bourgeois Democracy

"To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism," said Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in 1917. The 2008 election was a contest to determine who would administer the capitalist state, which consists at its core of armed bodies of men such as police, soldiers and prison guards, who are wielded to defend

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# First Issue of Canadian Trotskyists' The Vanguard, 1932: "Bankruptcy of Social Reformism"

The article below appeared as an editorial statement in the November-December 1932 issue of *The Vanguard*, newspaper of the International Left Opposition of Canada. Until this time, the Canadian Trotskyists had no newspaper of their own but distributed *The Militant*, newspaper of the Communist League of America, of which they were also members. The central leaders of Canadian Trotskyism in 1932 were Maurice Spector and Jack MacDonald, two founding leaders of the Communist Party of Canada who had been bureaucratically expelled for seeking to maintain a revolutionary program and perspective against the CPC's Stalinist degeneration.

As the article shows, the early Canadian Trotskyists had a clear understanding that social reformism was a central obstacle on the road to proletarian revolution. Their political opposition to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), formed later in 1932, is in sharp contrast to the reformists of today, including groups like Socialist Action (SA) and Fightback who pay occasional lip service to Trotskyism even as they promote the New Democratic Party as a potential socialist alternative.

The NDP was founded in 1961 by the CCF and the trade-union bureaucracy of the Canadian Labour Congress. Today, Fightback calls for "NDP to power on a socialist platform," while SA runs an "NDP Socialist Caucus," calling for an "NDP government on a workers' agenda." The Socialist Caucus looks back fondly on the CCF's founding document, the Regina Manifesto, which they claim has a "clear class analysis." Hardly. The Regina Manifesto, as we wrote in 1974, was "an amorphous hodgepodge of pacifist, technocratic and reformist social-democratic terminology and anti-monopoly reforms" written by Fabian Labourite types in 1932 (see "Canada's New Democratic Party: Right-Wing Social Democracy" in *Trotskyism and the CCF/NDP*, Revolutionary Trotskyist Bulletin No. 3 [1978]).

We have made a few spelling and punctuation corrections to the article, and have also made minor corrections to its quotations from Engels and Trotsky to conform with the most authoritative translations of their works.

## The Twilight of Capitalism

*The Vanguard* proceeds from the conviction that the fundamental problems of contemporary Humanity flow from the dissolution of capitalist society and the development of the proletarian revolution. The platform of the International Left Opposition, to which it adheres, derives from Marx and Lenin whose principles and methods constitute the only socialism the possessing classes need fear or the working classes cherish.

The world economic crisis torturing the countless millions is an inevitable phase of capitalism in its epoch of historic decay. A social order which divorces producers from their tools, which penalizes productivity by unemployment and fetters consumption by the wage system must always be rooted in insoluble contradictions. Conceived in blood and dirt, capitalism did however once fulfill a progressive mission. Even the eruptions of periodic crises were incidents of

economic expansion. Stocks were consumed, costs were reduced and a fresh equilibrium established. The gold standard testified to stable exchanges. If the rate of profit declined in the imperialist West, it was compensated in super-profits from capital export to the colonial hinterland. The world market was, generally speaking, based on an international division of labor. Accordingly, the pre-war situation tended



First issue of Marxist newspaper of our Trotskyist forebears featured defense of Soviet workers state as part of struggle for world revolution.

towards an armed peace of the "Great Powers" and an irregular truce between the classes.

The turning point, marking the twilight of capitalism, was the imperialist war of 1914. Under the increasing hegemony of finance-capital, competition was yielding to monopoly. Productive forces adjusted to the scale of world economy and, based on highly socialized industrial technique, clashed with the confines of the national state and the title deeds of private property. The outcome of the ensuing struggle for the redistribution of the world market by force of arms was Versailles—and on the other hand, the Soviet Power.

The basic causes propelling 1914-18 are maturing a second world war. For scale and intensity, the violence of social antagonisms and the economic crisis is unprecedented. International trade since 1929 has shrunk by sixty per cent. During the first three months of 1932, the value of the exports of sixteen leading countries was two-fifths of the corresponding period three years ago. The fall in wholesale prices has been greater than in any "depression" in the past hundred years; the international credit structure of capitalism is tottering; the debtor countries stagger under an impossible load of inter-governmental war debts and reparations; unemployment throughout the world is on a hitherto unknown scale; military armaments are in excess of 1914. With characteristic penetration, Engels had visualized this situation as far back as 1886. "America," he wrote, "will smash up England's industrial

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# Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

In 1927, James P. Cannon, a leader of the U.S. Workers (Communist) Party, secretary of the International Labor Defense (ILD) and later the founder of American Trotskyism, aptly described the annual Christmas drives that newspapers like the *New York Times* hold (to this day): "The men, women and children of the working class, who have been on the rack of capitalist exploitation and are now dropped into the abyss of misery and poverty, are chosen and classified by these arch hypocrites—so their sanctimonious appeal can be made to the comfortable capitalists, to soften the bitterness of these few workers with the insult of charity, and to salve their own conscience by acts of 'generosity'" ("A Christmas Fund of Our Own," *Daily Worker*, 17 October 1927). To this "horrible farce," Cannon countered the worldwide campaign to raise a special fund for those imprisoned for the labour cause and their families as a way of "transforming the hypocritical spirit of Christmas into the spirit of solidarity with the class-war fighters behind bars.... The Christmas Fund drive of International Labor Defense is a means of informing them that the workers of America have not forgotten their duty toward the men to whom we are linked by bonds of solidarity."

For the past 23 years, in the tradition of the ILD, the Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League/U.S. and in Canada with the Trotskyist League—has been sending monthly stipends as an expression of solidarity to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and imperialist depredation. Each year we hold Holiday Appeal benefits to raise funds for this unique program. This year's Holiday Appeal benefits in Toronto and several U.S. cities will focus particularly on the struggle to mobilize the multiracial working class in demanding freedom for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The PDC calls on labour activists, fighters for the rights of the oppressed and defenders of civil liberties to join us in generously donating and building our annual Holiday Appeal. An injury to one is an injury to all! We print below brief descriptions of the 16 class-war prisoners who receive monthly stipends from the PDC.

**Mumia Abu-Jamal** is a former Black Panther Party spokesman, a well-known supporter of the MOVE organization and an award-winning journalist known as "the voice of the voiceless." The fight to free America's foremost class-war prisoner has reached a critical juncture. This past March, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Mumia's frame-up conviction, ordering



**Clockwise from top left: Leonard Peltier, Jaan Laaman with his son Rick, at Leavenworth prison in 1999, Jamal Hart (left) with son Jamal Hart, Jr.**

a hearing to reinstate the death penalty or entomb him for life. His lawyers are appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has turned down prior appeals for Mumia in 1990, 1999, 2004 and earlier this year. In an ominous new development, the Philadelphia district attorney's office has advised the U.S. Supreme Court that it is seeking Mumia's execution.

9 December 2008 is the 27th anniversary of Mumia's arrest for a killing that the cops know he did not commit. Mumia was framed up for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Mountains of evidence proving Mumia's innocence, including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner, have been submitted to the courts. But to the racists in black robes, a court of law is no place for evidence of the innocence of this fighter for the oppressed.

Mumia faces the racist death penalty or life in prison because he has always spoken for the oppressed. Time is getting

*(continued on page 12)*



# Philadelphia D.A. Seeks Death for Mumia Abu-Jamal

## Free Mumia Now!

There is an ominous new development in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man who has been on Pennsylvania's death row for 26 years, framed up for the killing of a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. Since his youth in the Black Panthers, Mumia, a MOVE supporter and eloquent journalist, has been targeted by the racist rulers because of his courageous defense of the oppressed. Now the Philadelphia district attorney's office has advised the Supreme Court that it is seeking the execution of Mumia. The D.A.'s petition opposes the federal Third Circuit Court's affirmation this past spring of a 2001 decision by Judge Yohn striking down Mumia's death sentence while upholding his frame-up conviction.

The remaining possibilities for Mumia within the court system are: 1) The Supreme Court could agree with the D.A.'s petition, in which case Mumia's death sentence would be reimposed, with no new trial. In this event, the case would be sent back to Judge Yohn, who in his 2001 decision deferred ruling on additional challenges to the death sentence raised by Mumia. 2) The Supreme Court could refuse to hear both the D.A.'s petition as well as Mumia's attorney Robert Bryan's upcoming appeal, which is centered on racism in the jury selection, of the Third Circuit Court's decision. This would let stand the current situation: a new sentencing hearing, with the only possibilities being either continued life

imprisonment for Mumia or a new death sentence. 3) The Supreme Court could agree with Bryan's appeal, thus putting Mumia back into the racist Philadelphia court system to be tried again. This could result in an acquittal; however, we have no faith in the capitalist courts, which over the decades have refused to hear the mountains of evidence of Mumia's innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he killed Police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

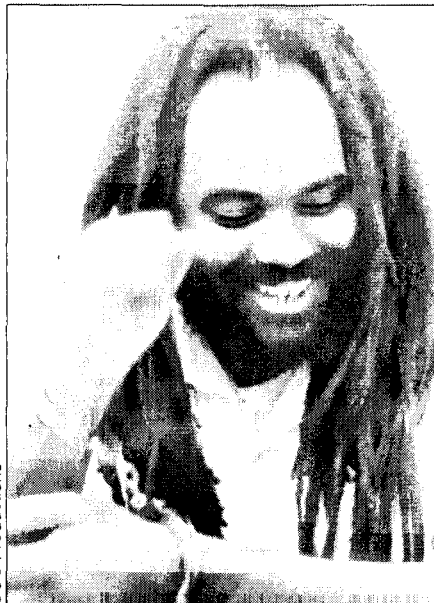
We have always advocated pursuing all possible legal proceedings. However, the Supreme Court has refused to hear four previous petitions by Mumia's attorneys. The Supreme Court is the highest court of America's capitalist rulers, the class enemy of workers, black people and all the oppressed. Our fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is based on a strategy of mass protest centered on the multiracial working class, which has the power to make the courts yield. As the Partisan Defense Committee has always stated, "We place all our faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the 'justice' of the courts."

To contribute to Mumia's legal defense, make checks payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" (earmarked "Mumia" on bottom left) and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159-2012, USA.

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 923, 24 October

### ANNUAL HOLIDAY APPEAL FOR CLASS-WAR PRISONERS

**Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man—Free Him Now!**  
**Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!**



#### **Come to a Fundraising Event!**

This is not charity—it's a duty and an act of solidarity with those in prison.  
 Their fight is our fight!

**\$5.00 for advance tickets, \$8.00 at the door**

**Friday, December 12, from 7 to 10 p.m.**  
**Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street, Toronto**  
 (1 block south of College at Ross Street, west of Queen's Park Station)

*All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal will go to the  
 Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund*

**Sponsored by the Partisan Defense Committee**

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## Obama...

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regimes in recent U.S. history, they now have in Obama a more rational face for their brutal, irrational system. Obama has also inspired illusions in the trappings of bourgeois democracy, the means by which the capitalists disguise their rule with the appearance of a popular mandate. Abroad, Obama provides an invaluable facelift for U.S. imperialism, the main enemy of the world's working people.

Obama calls to remove "combat troops" from Iraq (while maintaining a "residual force") in order to redeploy at least another 10,000 soldiers to Afghanistan in support of that murderous occupation. He is dedicated to further machinations against Pakistan, including military incursions into that country. In his July 24 speech in Berlin before a huge crowd, he invoked the anti-Soviet Cold War to motivate U.S. imperialism's interests, not least the restoration of capitalist rule in China. He is a staunch supporter of the "war on terror," including warrantless wiretapping and the renewal of the USA Patriot Act. His inner circle includes Carter- and Clinton-era war criminals like Zbigniew Brzezinski and Madeleine Albright as well as staunch supporters of Zionist Israel like Vice President-elect Joe Biden and Rahm Emanuel, projected to be the new chief of staff. Obama is considering one John O. Brennan, who was among those who created the current CIA detention and torture programs, for director of national intelligence or head of the CIA. Brennan vehemently defended the administration's use of "rendition" in a December 2005 interview on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, calling it an "absolutely vital tool."

We say, from Afghanistan to Iraq and Guantánamo: **Free all the detainees!** As revolutionary opponents of U.S. imperialism, we stood for the military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq in the lead-up to U.S. imperialism's invasions of those countries while politically opposing the reactionary Taliban and Saddam Hussein's brutal capitalist regime. We called for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home. We are for the **defeat** of U.S. forces; their every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed the world over. We demand the **immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia! U.S. hands off Pakistan and Iran!** As against the reformist left, which has lined up with its "own" bourgeoisie, we fight for the **unconditional military defense of those states where capitalism has been overthrown:** China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea.

Domestically, working people face grinding debt and mass layoffs. And the bourgeoisie has no solution for the current economic crisis and the inevitable boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism. With auto sales collapsing, General Motors and Ford recently announced that over the past three months they burned through cash at a rate of more than \$2 billion a month; GM said that by year's end it could run out of the cash necessary to fund its business. Even if bankruptcy is averted—or postponed—by government subsidies, as some Democrats are demanding, auto workers face massive layoffs, pay cuts and an all-out attack on pensions and health care.

Meanwhile, in the face of worldwide economic crisis, Obama and the Democrats embraced (with only minor modifications) the Bush administration's plan to transfer \$700 billion of taxpayers' money to banks and other financial institutions. So far, this gigantic bailout has done little to unfreeze credit markets. Last week the Treasury Department

announced that even though about \$290 billion of that sum had already been allocated, the banks were still not willing to lend to consumers. Obama seeks to socialize the bourgeoisie's losses on the backs of working people, while helping the exploiters appropriate the profits for themselves.

Our class opposition to all bourgeois candidates—and to bourgeois electoralism—is based on the Marxist understanding that capitalist society is divided between two fundamental classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, whose interests cannot be reconciled. Labor needs a fighting leadership that will unleash the power of the multiracial working class in struggle for workers' economic interests and also for black rights, in defense of immigrants and in opposition to U.S. imperialism. But the trade-union bureaucracy of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win union federations promoted Democratic Party "lesser evilism" and spent some **\$450 million** of union members' dues money on the 2008 elections, rather than building up a war chest for the struggle needed to defend the workers' interests. Instead of class struggle and international working-class solidarity, the union tops push chauvinist "America first" patriotism and protectionism, promoting the lie that working people abroad, as opposed to the U.S. capitalist rulers, are the enemies of the American proletariat.

### Class and Race in Capitalist America

The U.S. is a country historically defined by chattel slavery, an institution that was smashed only through the blood and iron of the Civil War. It is a country that required a massive civil rights movement, claiming many black and white martyrs, before Southern Jim Crow segregation was finally defeated. The pride among black people over Obama's election is, whatever his actual policies, a legacy of this history of oppression and enforced exclusion from the "process."

However, the condition today of the black masses, particularly those in the ghettos, is one of desperate poverty, police violence, massive incarceration. The "end of racism" myth of Obama's campaign is a cruel hoax, as is Obama's statement that the civil rights movement brought America "90 percent of the way" toward racial equality. As we pointed out in our first article on Obama's candidacy almost a year ago, "The Obama Campaign and the 'End of Racism' Myth" (*WV* No. 906, 18 January):

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

As the examples of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice also show, there is now a huge class gulf between the petty-bourgeois black professionals who were the main beneficiaries of the liberal-led civil rights movement and the masses of black workers and ghetto poor. But black president or not, America is America—racist, brutal, violent. As Obama's Grant Park election night celebration was going on, Chicago



cops harassed black residents cheering his victory. That same night in Staten Island, New York, a 17-year-old black youth was chased and beaten by racists who screamed "Obama!" at him. Four days after the election, Ecuadorian immigrant Marcello Lucero was fatally stabbed near the Patchogue, Long Island train station by a gang of racist teens who reportedly drove around searching for a Latino to attack.

Under the guise of being a post-"culture wars" unifier, Obama's positions on many issues are only a hair's breadth away from such stalwart reactionaries as Joe Lieberman (and we're not sure about the hair). Obama opposes gay marriage. He is a supporter of the racist death penalty, a legacy of chattel slavery in the U.S. This past July, Obama stated his opposition to mental health exceptions for "late-term" abortion bans with the paternalistic statement that a woman's rationale for an abortion cannot be "just a matter of feeling blue."

### Reformists' Obamamania

The "Anybody but Bush" reformist left is head-over-heels over Obama's election. In opposition to working-class political independence from the capitalist rulers, they promote collaboration with the bourgeois enemy as the way forward. *Workers World* (14 November) stated: "The election victory of Barack Obama will go down in history as a triumphant step forward in the struggle against racism and national oppression in the U.S." This was preceded by a 6 November piece in which *Workers' World* Party leader Larry Holmes babbled on about the "elation" and "feeling of liberation" unleashed by Obama's win, not bothering to even mention their endorsement of capitalist Green Party candidate Cynthia McKinney (whose campaign was, as we said, a stalking horse for the Democrats). According to Holmes, "The feeling on the streets of cities large and small across the U.S. on election night was that now, anything is possible, and it is." So, it is "yes we can"—under capitalism.

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) threw an election night party in Harlem to "celebrate the end of far too many years of republican rule" and to discuss "what can activists do to press their demands on the next administration?" The

ISO's *Socialist Worker* (7 November), aping liberal buzzwords, gushed that Obama's victory was "transformative." While acknowledging that many of Obama's positions point "to a big gap between the hopes and expectations of Obama voters and the cautious, moderate program he has put forward," the ISO intones: "None of this is to say that no change is possible. Tens of millions of people want a new direction. The question is whether they can be organized to fight for it."

For its part, the eccentric Stalinist-reformist Progressive Labor Party (PL) wrote in its newspaper *Challenge* (10 November) that Obama is a capitalist politician, noting that PL's "exposing and opposing Obama and the ruling class he serves may not be 'popular' at first." But actions speak louder than words. As we earlier reported, PL openly declared that it would "actively participate in Obama's campaign" (*Challenge*, 26 March). One "Red Registrar" even boasted in a letter to *Challenge* (4 October), printed without comment, "I helped out at a voter registration drive in my neighborhood that I found out about through BarackObama.com"! These reformists perpetuate deadly illusions that this government of the capitalists, by the capitalists and for the capitalists can be made to serve "the people."

All of our activity is directed toward forging, training and steeling the proletarian vanguard party necessary for the seizure of state power. In contrast, the politics of the reformists consist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of bourgeois society. This was sharply characterized by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in his 1924 work, *Lessons of October*, as "the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state."

We stand on what Trotsky wrote in *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (also known as the Transitional Program), the basic programmatic document adopted at the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. As Trotsky put it, the Fourth International "uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task—the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—the proletarian revolution." ■

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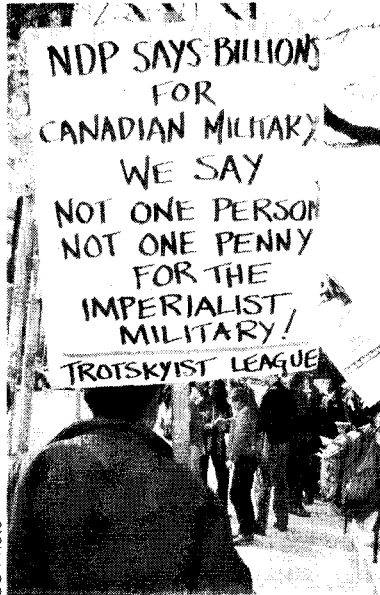
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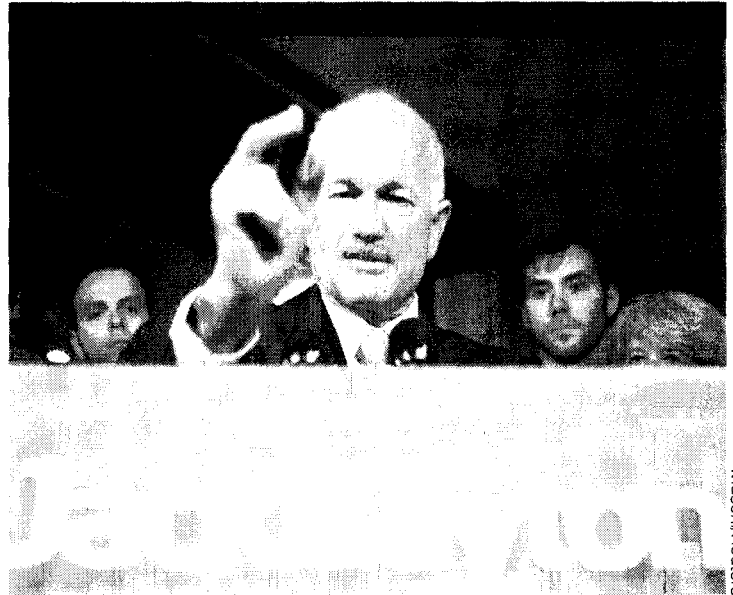


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Left: TL combats illusions in pro-imperialist NDP at Toronto demonstration. Right: NDP's Layton aspires to put his hands at the helm of capitalist state.



SC Photo



Muschi/Reuters

## Layton's Little Drummer Boys...

(continued from page 4)

private ownership of the means of production. Any party, irrespective of its social composition or formal program, that administers the existing state does so necessarily as a *bourgeois government*. Democracy under capitalism is democracy only for the bourgeoisie. It is a dictatorship of capital.

Following the defeat of the 1871 Paris Commune, the first genuine workers government, Karl Marx drew the lesson that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." He and Friedrich Engels reasserted this in their 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*. The working class must smash or break up the state machinery of the bourgeoisie and replace it with a state of its own, a dictatorship of the proletariat. The entire experience of the workers movement has confirmed this basic truth. The high point of this experience came in Russia in 1917 when the forces of genuine Marxism, the Bol-

shevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, successfully won the working class away from the reformist social democrats of their day and led the world's first socialist revolution.

### Layton's Camp Followers

In this election, as always, the Fightback group campaigned for the NDP under the watchwords, "NDP to Power on a Socialist Program." While calling on the New Democrats to adopt "socialist policies," Fightback's September 8 election statement had not one word to say about the need for socialist revolution, the overthrow of the capitalist state, or even the independent mobilization of the working class.

Administering the existing Canadian state is not and cannot be a "socialist program." It is a program to uphold capitalism with the possible assistance of piecemeal reforms to mollify the workers. Wherever the NDP has taken power, it has administered capitalism with a vengeance. In Ontario, the New Democrats jailed striking postal workers. In B.C., they called for the detention of all refugee claimants and oversaw a massive military operation against Native protesters at Gustafsen Lake.

In the mid 1980s, Fightback's British parent group got the chance to implement its "socialist program" when it controlled the city council in Liverpool. At one point, these "socialist" bosses threatened to lay off the entire 30,000-strong city workforce, claiming this was a "tactic" to deal with a budget crunch imposed by the central Tory government!

Fightback claims to be a "Marxist Voice of Labour and Youth." But who could believe this, given their track record, so flatly counterposed to the core Marxist understanding that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes"?

The I.S. writes in the "Where we stand" column of its paper *Socialist Worker*: "The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown." Yet *Socialist Worker* calls to vote NDP, "not because of its platform or its record in office, but because of the relationship between the NDP and the trade union movement" (6 October). By this logic, NDP strike-breakers and supporters of the imperialist military, the worst traitors to the working class, must anywhere and everywhere

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be supported because of their parasitic relationship to the unions. Thus, the support the I.S. gives the New Democrats is (and always has been) *unconditional*. This is a program to further *entrench* the agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement, who from their positions of power will do all they can to stymie the goal—so cynically claimed by the I.S.—of overthrowing the present system.

The bottom line for Fightback, the I.S. et al. is opportunist adaptation to one or another pro-capitalist current, whether social-democratic or even openly bourgeois. Both have called to vote for the capitalist Greens in the U.S. Fightback's co-thinkers in the International Marxist Tendency actually belong to bourgeois parties, from the state-sponsored United Socialist Party of Venezuela to the Pakistan Peoples Party and more. This is counterposed to the ABCs of Marxism, which is rooted in the class independence of the proletariat from its enemies.

### Anglo Chauvinism, Quebec and the Elections

Harper's scheme of courting Quebec nationalists (including by muzzling the anti-French yahoos in his own party) failed to translate into electoral advances there, consigning the Tories to another minority government. Even though active agitation for independence in Quebec is presently at a low ebb, the sovereignist Bloc won a majority of Quebec seats for the sixth straight election since the party was founded. This shows once again how the national question—the forcible retention of Quebec within a “united,” English-dominated Canada—remains the decisive issue of Canadian politics.

The NDP ties workers in English Canada to their own rulers by pushing “national unity” chauvinism against Quebec. Layton has reaffirmed the party's support to the Clarity Act, a law effectively outlawing Quebec's democratic right to self-determination, i.e., to independence. The NDP is rightly reviled by Québécois workers, who in their overwhelming majority support the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc and Parti Québécois. Recognizing that the working class is deeply divided on national lines and that this is a major barrier to proletarian class struggle, the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste advocates *independence for Quebec*. We do this both to fight the dominant Anglo chauvinism, and because it is the means to make clear to the workers of both nations that their enemies are their own respective capitalists, not each other.

Viewing the world through the same lens as its own bourgeoisie, the reformist left in English Canada overwhelmingly places itself in the camp of Anglo chauvinism. While calling for the record for Quebec's right to self-determination, Fightback denies this in practice by *opposing* independence and centering its fire against what it calls the “capitalist separatists.”

Even more flagrant is the Bolshevik Tendency (BT), which actually issued a statement (in English only) calling on Quebec workers to vote No in the 1995 sovereignty referendum. The BT was even officially invited to a mass “Canadian unity” rally organized by business groups in Montreal on the eve of the referendum, and when their only Québécois member quit he protested their “de facto bloc with the Canadian bourgeoisie.”

This is bred in the bone for this outfit. On October 8, BT honcho Tom Riley gave a public presentation, “On the U.S. & Canadian Elections,” which is available in text on their website. Riley managed to avoid mentioning Quebec even once! The

English Canadian bourgeoisie, which has been pulling its hair out over electoral strategy vis-à-vis Quebec, would only relish the BT's Anglo-chauvinist delusion of a Canadian election in which the Quebec national question did not matter at all.

While adapting to chauvinism in English Canada, in Quebec the reformist left for the most part tails bourgeois nationalism. The small Quebec wings of Fightback and the I.S. have liquidated into the populist, left-nationalist Québec Solidaire (QS), as have various other social-democratic outfits. While QS presents itself as a left alternative to the PQ, its declaration of principles does not even pay lip service to the class struggle, let alone to socialism.

Because QS has no federal affiliate, its members debated whether to vote for the Bloc or the NDP or abstain in the recent federal election. Intervening in this debate, Fightback says socialists in Quebec should not only support but join and build the NDP. This amounts to a call on Québécois workers to march behind the opponents of Quebec's national rights. As for the I.S., while their French-language paper *Résistance* has supported the call for Quebec sovereignty, they most assuredly do not raise this in the English-language *Socialist Worker*—an overt capitulation to their Anglo-chauvinist NDP big brothers.

We fight to break workers and the oppressed from the deadening grip of social democracy—and in Quebec from bourgeois nationalism—in order to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for workers rule throughout North America. The only way to smash the all-sided assault on social programs, to assure free quality medical care, childcare and jobs and decent living standards for all, to end the neocolonial pillage of the “Third World,” is by ripping the means of production from the hands of the capitalist class and putting them in the hands of those whose labour makes society run. A collectivized economy with centralized planning where production is for human need, not profit: that is the real solution for the working people. As we wrote shortly after the Harper Tories first came to power in 2006:

“‘Unity’ with the parties of the oppressors, or with their social-democratic political agents, is the road to defeat. In the course of the coming struggles the advanced elements of the working class must take up the fight for a Marxist workers party that can unite the many victims of this exploitative system—women, immigrants, Native people, the Québécois—behind the social power of the proletariat, in the fight for socialist revolution.”

—“For Class Struggle Against Capitalist Reaction!” SC No. 148, Spring 2006■

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## Holiday Appeal...

(continued from page 6)

short. Workers, immigrants, minorities and all opponents of racist oppression must mobilize to free Mumia now!

**Leonard Peltier** is an internationally revered class-war prisoner. Peltier's incarceration for his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize the U.S.' racist repression of its Native peoples, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. In 1976, the Trudeau Liberal government denied him asylum and extradited him back to the U.S. The RCMP and Canadian authorities were utterly complicit in the campaign of persecution against Peltier. Peltier's frame-up trial, for the deaths in 1975 of two marauding FBI agents in what had become a war zone at the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation, shows what capitalist "justice" is all about. Although the lead government attorney has admitted: "We can't prove who shot those agents," and the courts have acknowledged blatant prosecutorial misconduct, the 64-year-old Peltier is still locked away. Federal courts continue to keep under government seal thousands of FBI documents, covering up the racist frame-up that has already stolen more than 30 years of his life.

Eight MOVE members—**Chuck Africa, Michael Africa, Debbie Africa, Janet Africa, Janine Africa, Delbert Africa, Eddie Africa and Phil Africa**—are in their 31st year of prison. They were sentenced to 30-100 years after the 8 August 1978 siege of their Philadelphia home by over 600 heavily armed cops, falsely convicted of killing a police officer who died in the cops' own cross fire. In 1985, eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops. This year, after three decades of unjust incarceration, nearly all of these innocent prisoners had parole hearings, but none were released.

**Jaan Laaman and Thomas Manning** are the remaining anti-imperialist activists known as the Ohio 7 still in prison, convicted for their roles in a radical group that took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings against symbols of U.S. imperialism, such as military and corporate offices, in the late 1970s and '80s. Before their arrests in 1984 and 1985, the Ohio 7 were targets of massive manhunts. Their children were kidnapped at gunpoint by the Feds. The Ohio 7's politics were once shared by thousands of radicals during the Vietnam antiwar movement and by New Leftists who wrote off the possibility of winning the working class to a revolutionary program and saw themselves as an auxiliary of Third World liberation movements. But, like the Weathermen



RTskhIDNI

**James P. Cannon with Red Army soldiers, 1928. Cannon was secretary of the International Labor Defense and later founder of American Trotskyism.**

before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the "respectable" left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not a crime. They should not have served a day in prison.

**Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa** are former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. They were victims of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation under which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds more imprisoned on frame-up charges. Poindexter and Mondo were railroaded to prison and sentenced to life for a 1970 explosion that killed a cop, and they have now served more than 36 years in jail. Last year, a Nebraska court denied a new trial for Poindexter despite the fact that a crucial piece of evidence excluded from the original trial, a long-suppressed 911 audio tape, proved that testimony of the state's key witness was perjured.

**Hugo Pinell** is the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. He was a militant anti-racist leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson, his comrade and mentor, who was gunned down by prison guards in 1971. Despite hundreds of letters of support and no disciplinary write-ups for over 27 years, Pinell has repeatedly been denied parole. Now in his 60s, Pinell continues to serve a life sentence at the notorious Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in California.

**Jamal Hart**, Mumia's son, was sentenced in 1998 to 15½ years without parole on bogus firearms possession charges. Hart was targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father. Although Hart was initially charged under Pennsylvania laws, which would have meant a probationary sentence, Clinton's Justice Department intervened to have Hart thrown into prison under federal laws. Last year, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals turned down Hart's *habeas corpus* petition, which would have freed him after more than ten years in prison.

Contribute now! All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 314, Station B, Toronto ON M5T 2W1; (416) 593-4138. ■

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Canadian Communist leaders, mid-1920s, left to right: William Moriarty, Tim Buck and future Trotskyist leaders Jack MacDonald and Maurice Spector.

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## Canadian Trotskyists...

*(continued from page 5)*

monopoly—whatever there is left of it—but America cannot herself succeed to that monopoly. And unless one country has the monopoly of the markets of the world, at least in the decisive branches of trade, the conditions—relatively favorable—which existed here in England from 1848 to 1870 cannot anywhere be reproduced, and even in America the condition of the working class must gradually sink lower and lower. For if there are three countries (say England, America and Germany) competing on comparatively equal terms for the possession of the world market, there is no chance but chronic overproduction, one of the three being capable of supplying the whole quantity required.”

Failing the intervention of the proletariat, the crisis may be alleviated by the play of the market and yielding to a “revival” afford the capitalists a fresh breathing spell. But between the character of the precarious “stabilization” that capitalism has experienced since the war and the “organic” stability of capitalism when it was developing its productive forces there is a profound chasm. Considered abstractly, it may be that if the imperialists could destroy the Soviet Union, crush the colonial revolution and strangle the proletariat for long decades, capitalism would obtain a fresh lease of life. But this abstraction bears as little relation to realities as Bukharin’s abstraction of “socialist construction in one country” from the processes of world economy—or, say, Kautsky’s conception of an ultra-imperialist all inclusive world trust. The theoretical possibility of the latter Lenin never disputed, but its practical realization merely ran counter, he pointed out, to the dialectic of the class struggle. History with its titanic upheavals is apparently one long conspiracy to thwart the visions of the Fabian Society. It has mocked the apostles of “gradualism” at every turn, those same “evolutionists” who found no difficulty supporting the “gradualist” Boer War, the “gradualist” British rule of India, the “gradualist” war of 1914.

The *material foundations of communism*, the objective pre-requisites of the proletarian revolution, are available on a world-scale. The key to the

further development of society is now in the hands of the subjective factor, the proletariat, its party and its revolutionary leadership. “In the German revolution of 1918, in the Hungarian revolution of 1919, in the September movement of the Italian proletariat in 1920, in the English general strike of 1926, in the Vienna uprising of 1927, and in the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927—everywhere, one and the same political contradiction of the entire past decade, even if at different stages and in different forms, was manifested. In an objectively ripe revolutionary situation, ripe not only with regard to its social bases but not infrequently also with regard to the mood for struggle of the masses, the subjective factor, that is, a revolutionary mass party, was lacking or else this party lacked a far sighted and intrepid leadership” (L. Trotsky, “Strategy and Tactics of the World Revolution”).

### Barrier of Social Reformism

One of the principal barriers on the road of proletarian liberation continues to be social reformism, whether in the form

*(continued on page 14)*

This 1978 bulletin surveys the place of the orientation to social democracy in the development, degeneration and rebirth of Trotskyism in Canada. From the inception of the CCF in 1932 to its transformation into the NDP in 1961 to the present day, Canadian social democracy has been an obstacle to the development of a mass revolutionary workers party.

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# Celia Hart, 1963-2008

On September 7, Cuban leftist Celia Hart, along with her brother Abel, died in a car accident in the Cuban capital of Havana. Their parents, Armando Hart and Haydée Santamaría, were two historic leaders of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, which laid the basis for the overthrow of capitalist rule on the island and establishment of the Cuban deformed workers state.

Celia Hart regarded herself as a Trotskyist. But this stood in contradiction to her unwavering support for Fidel Castro's Cuban Stalinist regime and her support to the bourgeois-populist regime of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, with which Cuba is currently allied. The eclectic and self-contradictory "trotskoguevarist" politics she espoused were at a great distance from the revolutionary program embodied in Trotsky's permanent revolution. But Hart did not ooze with the odious

anti-Communism of the social-democratic left that liked to parade her around at their international conferences, like the recent Socialist Action-organized Toronto event, "A World in Revolt—Prospects for Socialism in the 21st Century" (see "ICL's Trotskyism vs. Socialist Action Reformism," *SC* No. 158, Fall 2008). Celia Hart was feisty and sharp, always willing to engage in open political debate. We always enjoyed our discussions with her. We are sorry that she's gone.

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 922, 10 October



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## Canadian Trotskyists...

(continued from page 13)

of the "Socialist" or the Labor Party. If any more were required, the crisis has been fresh confirmation of the utter bankruptcy of social reformism and its practices of class collaboration. After co-operating with the German bourgeoisie in the prosecution of the War for Kultur, saving the tottering structure of German capitalism in 1918, helping Entente and American Imperialism to operate the Dawes Plan, the Social Democracy has led the German workers into the greatest depths of social misery it has yet experienced. "Socialist" coalition with imperialism and capitalism has split the forces of the working class and paved the way for the Fascist recruitment of the despairing middle classes. In Great Britain there have been two "Labor" Governments. The "Labor Party," which attracted the masses by the radical phraseology of its successive manifestoes and programs, its promises of a new social order and its threats of a capital levy, has proved that it is a loyal and reliable Third Party of the bourgeoisie and its leaders are His Majesty's most excellent lackeys. The second Labor Government was kicked out as ignominiously by the capitalists as the first. Macdonald and Snowden, the theorists of "Constructive Socialism," entered the coalition leaving George Lansbury as an oppositional decoy for the masses. There is not even a single important legislative enactment in the workers interests to the credit of the Labor Party, let alone any basic measure of socialization. It has governed in the interests of British capitalism and the maintenance of "the Empire." In Australia, the record of social-democratic futility is farcically capped by a British official dismissing Lang's Labor Government for embarrassing British bondholders as nonchalantly as if he were dismissing a class of naughty boys.

Before "the crash" the United States was an almost limitless object of social-democratic adoration. If to-day "socialists" like the Webbs praise Soviet economic planning to shame their "own" capitalists to go and do likewise, in the period of prosperity, the "American standard of living" was held up by the Brailsfords and others of the I.L.P. [Independent Labour Party] as an example of enlightened and efficient capitalism. Henry Ford loomed up as the supreme Marx-destroyer of all times. The chapter of illusions American

Imperialism roused in the breasts of the "socialists" is now familiar to the proverbial schoolboy. Henry Ford's marvelous "Economy of High Wages" has been succeeded by Henry Ford's hired constabulary assassinating unarmed workless demonstrators. The touching Arabian Nights tale of how the "Labor Banks" were amassing the workers wealth to buy out Wall Street, has been succeeded by the expulsion of the Bonus Army from Washington by torch and bayonet. As for the bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor, which almost took entire credit for the "American standard of living," it has not as much as raised its little finger to organize resistance to successive wage-slashes.

## Canadian Social Democracy

The social reformists in the Dominion, the most prominent of whom is J.S. Woodsworth, M.P., are engaged in establishing their "Co-operative Commonwealth Federation," a neo-Farmer-Labor-Socialist Party. It already has received the endorsement of the United Farmers of Alberta and kindred organizations and as it rolls eastward, the workers organizations are asked for their affiliation too. Messrs Woodsworth, Heaps, Irvine and the others astutely speculate on the radicalization of the masses under the blows of the crisis and the natural desire of the rank-and-file for unity. Affiliation is to be on a federated basis, ostensibly the member organizations are to retain their organizational autonomy. The aim of the movement is to obtain the "Co-operative Commonwealth." Meanwhile the C.C.F. proposes economic planning, security of tenure for the farmer, social insurance, etc. Many workers who have not thought it through will no doubt favor affiliation.

The methods of Woodsworth are not at all novel. The social-reformists generally play "left wing" and "radical" when they are in a minority or in opposition. That is how they gain the support of the uncritical workers. To that extent the "Left" socialists are more dangerous than the Right, who discredit themselves in plain view. The masses must realize that Woodsworth is a little brother of the Mensheviks who opposed the conquest of political power by the Russian workers, of the German socialists whose history since 1914 has been a series of betrayals, of the leaders of the British Labor Government, who have administered the policies of British Imperialism. Woodsworth is not a young and inexperienced



worker just coming into the movement—he is an opportunist of many years standing who was prepared by the ministry and “social service.”

Following the precedent once set by Phillip Lord Snowden, Mr. Woodsworth introduced a resolution in Parliament last March “urging this House to take measures to get up a co-operative commonwealth.” Good propaganda, his followers may say. No, a policy that is false to the roots and can result only in the sowing of dangerous illusions. It is easy nowadays to pay lip service to planning and socialization. But never once characteristically enough did he raise the issue of class power. Instead, academic speeches, plentifully strewn with quotations from bourgeois publicists who say something critical about social conditions: “One of the best statements I have come across of the present situation is contained in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI.”... “I hold in my hand a book published thirteen years ago by Sidney and Beatrice Webb—a Constitution for the British Commonwealth of Great Britain.... If anyone wishes to see the steps whereby this could be brought about in Great Britain I recommend that he read this book by Lord Passfield....” This book by the bankrupt Fabian Webb retains the British monarchy in the scheme of the “socialist commonwealth.” And finally a confession from the statesman who is the candidate for Ramsay Macdonald’s position in Canada... “We do not know just what the next development will be” (Hansard, March 28, 1932).

The characterization of Woodsworth is necessary for the characterization of the new “Federation.” The one thing the “new” party ignores is the issue of power. How will they get their “social planning”? Will the capitalists plan for them? There is planned economy in the Soviet Union. But without the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leadership of the Communist Party, there would have been no “planning.” Woodsworth and his new Social Democratic-Farmers do not tell the workers that without the prior conquest of political power and the organization of the proletarian state on the ruins of “bourgeois democracy,” there will be no abolition of private property or socialization of the means of production.

The bourgeoisie will not peacefully abdicate even though their title deeds have become a fetter on the forces of production. There will be no automatic collapse and whoever preaches that is lulling the workers into passivity. Only the most heroic, the most revolutionary struggle of the working class supported by the exploited stratum of the farmers can propel capitalism to its doom. Before it will think of yielding, the bourgeoisie will mobilize every resource of cunning and force. Experience shows that once they feel their props slipping, the representatives of “civilization, culture and religion” will abrogate every civil liberty, if necessary, the entire paraphernalia and mumbo jumbo of parliamentarism, and will unleash the very middle classes finance capital has ruined in the Fascist terror against the working class. ■

## Financial Crisis...

(continued from page 1)

economists and media pundits insist that bailouts to Wall Street and Bay Street are the price everyone has to pay for restoring stability. But no one really believes they will do much for the economy. The stock market continues to plunge as credit tightens even further. Now the auto bosses, who have already axed tens of thousands of jobs and gutted pensions and other hard-won benefits, are demanding their own share of the bailout money. You don’t have to watch *The Sopranos* to know extortion when you see it.

The working class, poor and oppressed have plenty to fear as this crisis is being played out on their backs. Mortgage foreclosures are sweeping the U.S. at a rate not seen since the 1930s. The wholesale destruction of pension programs means that many are also seeing the retirement monies that they invested in stock market and other accounts go up in smoke. September saw the biggest monthly job losses in the U.S. in five years.

In Canada, nearly 400,000 manufacturing and forestry jobs have already been destroyed, and now workers in other sectors face mass layoffs. After throwing some 60,000 employees on the scrapheap, telecom giant Nortel is on the brink of collapse, its stock rated at zero by one prominent financial analyst. Since March of this year, almost \$100 billion has disappeared from the value of Canadian pension funds. For those who still have a job, it’s another day older and deeper in debt trying to make ends meet—paying the rent or mortgage, groceries, credit cards and other debts, gas and car payments.

Like all the inevitable economic crises that occur periodically under capitalism, the current crisis reflects a key contradiction of capitalism identified by Karl Marx and Friedrich

Engels. Under capitalism production is socialized, that is, concentrated and organized in vast corporations, but the means of production—and the appropriated, socially produced wealth—remain the private property of a few.

V.I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, in his 1916 study *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, described how imperialism, the system of modern, decaying capitalism, “leads directly to the most comprehensive socialization of production” under capitalism. Lenin emphasized that the monopolization of production and the dominant role of finance capital impel the imperialist powers to divide the world as they strive for markets and spheres of exploitation in the countries of belated economic development. He explained:

“The development of capitalism has arrived at a stage when, although commodity production still ‘reigns’ and continues to be regarded as the basis of economic life, it has in reality been undermined and the bulk of the profits go to the ‘geniuses’ of financial manipulation. At the basis of these manipulations and swindles lies socialised production; but the immense progress of mankind, which achieved this socialisation, goes to benefit... the speculators.”

The current financial crisis is a compelling argument for a thoroughgoing socialist revolution to seize the banks, the factories, mines, mills and other means of production from the hands of the capitalists who have appropriated and squandered the wealth produced by the working class. Socialized production must be extended to socialized *ownership* through the producers taking control of society. The way out of the endless cycle of capitalist economic crises and imperialist wars was shown by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, when the Russian workers took power in their own hands, expropriating the bourgeoisie and establishing a workers state. Today

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Margaret Bourke-White



Sam Javanrouh

**Left: Depression-era bread line in Louisville, Kentucky, 1937. Right: Homeless man in Toronto, 2005. Economic crash endangers livelihoods of millions of working people internationally.**

## Financial Crisis...

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we fight for international socialist revolution, for the collectivization of the means of production and for economic planning on an international scale.

### The Shackles of Class Collaboration

Since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, America's rulers, with their Canadian junior partners in tow, have reveled in the supposed "death of communism" as they increasingly savaged the unions, drove up the rate of exploitation of the working class and made life unlivable for the poor. Now working people everywhere are enraged at seeing their tax dollars going to line the pockets of those responsible for their ruin.

With its hands on the means of production, the working class uniquely has the social power and interest in sweeping away this deeply inhumane system. However, there is a huge disproportion between this necessary perspective and the present consciousness of the working class. It is commonplace for workers in Canada, as in the U.S., to identify themselves as "middle class." Such false consciousness is transmitted to the workers by the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy and the NDP social democrats, who push the idea that the workers have a common "national interest" with their exploiters.

In a November 18 statement, NDP leader Jack Layton called on the Harper Tory government to "signal a new willingness to work together in the interests of all Canadians.... Working together is the only way we will overcome the economic challenges." On October 6, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) president Ken Georgetti called on the government to institute "an emergency national action plan with input from labour" including "measures to audit, re-regulate and shore up our battered financial system." Two weeks later, another CLC statement added: "Working people know there will be sacrifices. They should not be expected to make them all, or any for that matter without consultation."

"Working together," a "national action plan," agreement to

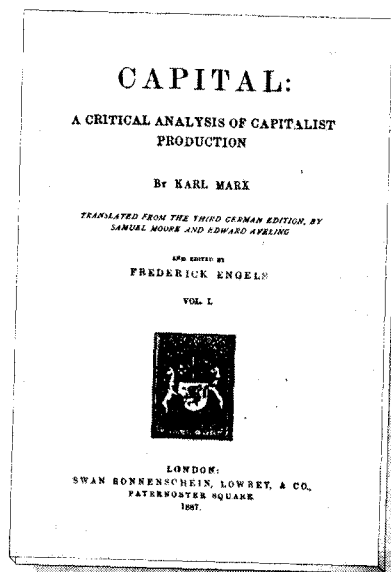
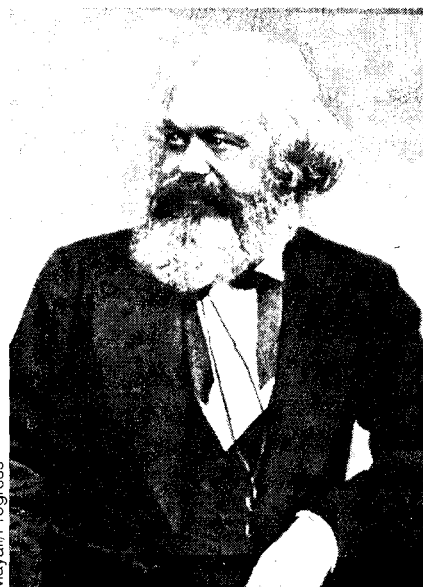
share the "sacrifices" as long as labour is "consulted": such is the bankrupt political perspective pushed by the New Democrats and labour tops. Their program of a "partnership" between labour and capital has long served to sap the fighting power of the working class by shackling it to the capitalist class enemy. Its cost has been savage attacks on living standards, the wholesale destruction of unionized jobs, the slashing of health care and the looting of EI and other social programs, while the capitalists "divide and rule" over the workers by whipping up anti-Quebec chauvinism and racism against immigrants. Now the Harper government, citing the financial crisis, is moving to ban strikes in the federal public sector until 2011.

**Enough!** The situation desperately cries out for class struggle against the capitalist rulers' onslaughts. Labour needs a fighting leadership that will unleash the power of the multiracial working class in struggle for its own interests and in defense of all the poor and oppressed. First and foremost that means breaking the chains forged by the present labour misleaders, which have shackled the working class to its exploiters. A revolutionary workers party would give conscious leadership to the struggles of the working class not only to improve its present conditions but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. For a class-struggle leadership of the unions! Those who labour must rule!

### Capitalist North America: Crumbling Infrastructure, Deindustrialization

Shunning investment to expand and modernize industrial capacity and to repair crumbling infrastructure, such as bridges, roads and power grids, the capitalist rulers have expended the economic surplus they appropriate through the exploitation of labour on a succession of speculative binges. First came the stock market boom driven by the supposed "revolution" in information technology (the IT/dot-com hoopla) in the mid-late 1990s. This was followed by the housing bubble in the early-mid 2000s. Now we are witnessing a classic financial crisis such as described by Marx in *Capital* (Volume III):

"This confusion and stagnation paralyses the function of money as a medium of payment, whose development is geared to the



Karl Marx, London 1872. Marx's *Capital* laid the foundation for scientific socialist understanding of capitalist system.

development of capital and is based on those presupposed price relations. The chain of payment obligations due at specific dates is broken in a hundred places. The confusion is augmented by the attendant collapse of the credit system, which develops simultaneously with capital, and leads to violent and acute crises, to sudden and forcible depreciations, to the actual stagnation and disruption of the process of reproduction, and thus to a real falling off in reproduction."

The current crisis was conditioned by a broad transformation of the U.S. financial industry since the late 1980s that was exemplified by the repeal, under the Democratic Party Clinton administration, of the Glass-Steagall Act, a Depression-era law that sought to limit speculation by commercial banks. A component of that transformation was the explosive development of derivatives and other forms of "financial engineering."

A major attraction of entering into derivatives contracts for the purpose of speculation is that often very little money needs to be spent up front. In such highly "leveraged" investments, both the risks and the possible payout can be astronomical. "Financial engineering" also allows large banks to offload risk onto others. For example, when a bank issues bonds using mortgages as collateral, the buyers of those bonds take on the risk that the mortgages will default. The enormous expansion in the volume of mortgage-backed securities is what Marx called *fictitious capital*. This is an increase in *paper wealth* that is *not* based on an increase in productive capacity (e.g., in factories, electric-power plants, transport systems, communications networks) or in this case even by an increase in the quantity and quality of consumer goods.

The deterioration in the condition of the working class is directly related to the *deindustrialization* of North America. Since 1979 the share of the labour force employed in the goods-producing sector in the U.S. has fallen steadily from almost 28 percent to under 15 percent. In Canada, former industrial centers in Southern Ontario, Quebec and the B.C. Interior have been devastated by plant closures.

The U.S. trade deficit, which is equal to more than 5 percent of the gross domestic product, is now far higher, in absolute terms and in proportion to GDP, than in any other major capitalist country. The result is an historical anomaly

in which the world's most powerful capitalist power is also the world's leading debtor. Consequently, Asian countries and the Persian Gulf states are accumulating an ever larger stock of U.S. Treasury bonds and bills as a major component of their foreign-exchange reserves. This state of affairs is a potential source of enormous instability for the world economy. Should central banks change their minds about parking their capital in U.S. government debt and begin to diversify quickly out of dollars, it could trigger a quantum leap in interest rates and precipitate an even more profound world economic downturn.

### The Myth of "Regulation"

It has now become conventional wisdom to blame the meltdown on Wall Street on inadequate government regulation and then to blame inadequate regulation on the U.S. Republicans' supposed belief in "free market fundamentalism." An editorial in the *New York Times* (20 September) asserted:

"This crisis is the result of a willful and systematic failure by the government to regulate and monitor the activities of bankers, lenders, hedge funds, insurers and other market players. All were playing high-stakes poker with the financial system, but without adequate transparency, oversight or supervision."

In reality, speculative binges that inevitably crash are endemic to capitalism. An example is the 1720 South Sea Bubble in England, where rampant speculation in the stocks of the South Sea Company led to a financial collapse whose impact was felt internationally. (David Liss's 2000 novel, *A Conspiracy of Paper*, is a good read on the subject.) One need only look back to the last major financial crisis, the collapse of the dot-com stock market boom in 2000-2001. In that case, the preceding speculative bubble took place under the Democratic Clinton administration, not a Republican White House. The wild inflation of financial assets was centered on corporate shares rather than newfangled, exotic securities like CDOs (collateralized debt obligations) and CDSs (credit default swaps).

Stock market transactions were and are highly regulated in the U.S. by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Nonetheless, at the height of the bubble in 2000, the shares of companies listed on the S&P 500 Index were trading at *36 times* their average earnings over the previous five years. The so-called price-earnings ratio was at the highest level in over a century. When the crash came, it wiped out *more than a third* of the stock market's paper wealth. And then came a recession as corporate spending on new plants and equipment plunged and employment fell for three straight years.

In all modern capitalist countries, the overall supply of money and availability of credit is regulated through the operations of the central bank. No sustained speculative bubble, whether centering on corporate shares or mortgage-backed securities, can occur behind the back of the central bank. And the Federal Reserve, the U.S. central bank, helped fuel first the stock market boom and then the housing-price bubble through its "easy money" policy. When the former went bust, the Fed flooded financial markets with money. It cut the interest charged on short-term loans to member banks

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## Financial Crisis...

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from 6.5 to 1 percent by 2003, the lowest rate in half a century. During most of this period, the so-called federal funds rate was *less than the going rate of inflation*. In effect, the government was giving away money for free—and as much as they wanted—to Wall Street financiers. No wonder the latter then spent with reckless abandon.

In late 2004, the London *Economist* warned that America's "easy money policy has spilled beyond its borders" and "has flowed into share prices and houses around the world, inflating a series of asset-price bubbles." Almost all European countries were infected with speculative bubbles regardless of the political and ideological character of their governments or the particular laws and practices regulating their financial markets. Countries like Spain, which have been governed by social-democratic parties, experienced an even more extreme inflation of housing prices than did the U.S.

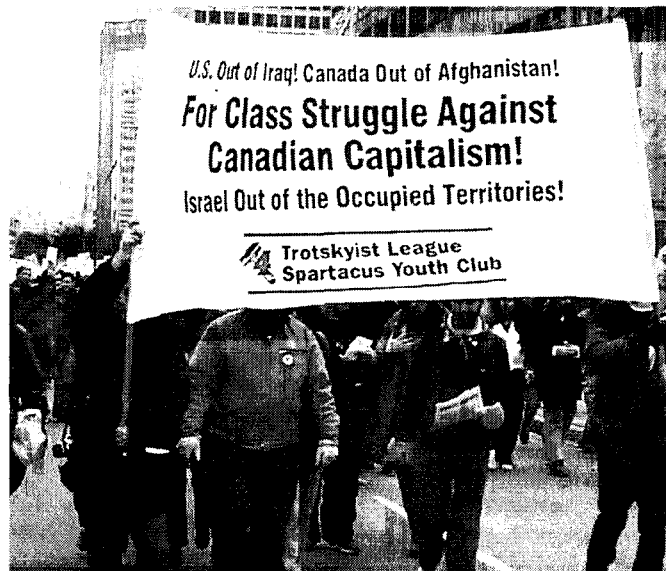
Now these and other European countries are also facing the day of reckoning. A large British bank, Northern Rock, which specialized in mortgage loans, went bust and had to be taken over by the government. The French, Belgian and Dutch governments have been involved in "rescue" operations for two major banks, Dexia and Fortis. The Union Bank of Switzerland—one of the largest in the world—has been hit by heavy losses, and there is now talk of a bailout for this global titan. The German government announced that it will guarantee all private savings, to the tune of more than \$700 billion, after a group of banks pulled out of a deal to provide more than \$48 billion to rescue the large German mortgage lender, Hypo Real Estate. Thomas Mayer, chief economist for Germany's Deutsche Bank, bemoaned: "In this day and age, a bank run spreads around the world, not around the block." To maintain that the current international financial crisis could have been prevented by more regulation and better oversight by Washington is like arguing that the destruction caused by a 100-foot-high tidal wave could have been prevented by adding a few feet to a six-foot-high jetty.

At the political level, the West European imperialist ruling classes are conflicted between worrying about the fallout from the Wall Street crash and gloating over the sudden weakening of their American imperialist rival. A recent study by the German economics ministry points to a "noticeably worsened external economic environment." On the gloating side (which didn't last too long) is a lengthy piece in the leading German bourgeois journal *Der Spiegel* online (30 September) titled, "The End of Arrogance: America Loses Its Dominant Economic Role":

"With its rule of three of cheap money, free markets and double-digit profit margins, American turbo-capitalism has set economic standards worldwide for the past quarter century. Now it is proving to be nothing but a giant snowball system, upsetting the US's global political status as it comes crashing down."

### End of the "Globalization" Myth

The current economic meltdown demolishes the notion peddled by various liberal and radical ideologues of a new era of "globalization," positing that capitalist rule had transcended the nation state and that agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund had become some kind of world capitalist government. Currently the national bourgeoisies of various countries, including those in the European Union con-



SC Photo

Trotskyist League contingent at March 2005 antiwar demonstration in Toronto.

sorium, are scrambling to shore up their own economic interests. The move by Ireland to guarantee the debts and deposits of its six largest banks provoked the ire of the British New Labour government, which feared a loss of depositors in its banks as people headed for greener pastures.

Noting that the "lack of a unified regulatory structure and a co-ordinated European response has led some governments to act unilaterally to protect their banks, even at the risk of infuriating their neighbours," an article on the website of the *Financial Times* (3 October) quoted Willem Buiter, a professor at the London School of Economics, writing in his *Financial Times* blog: "The Irish guarantee is the most 'in-your-face' beggar-thy-neighbour provocation since medieval armies catapulted bubonic-plague-ridden corpses into the cities they were besieging." Meanwhile, the Dutch government ripped up its part of the deal with Belgium to bail out Fortis, declaring that it would now spend this money to take full control of the bank's operations in the Netherlands alone.

The "globalization" myth was premised on the liberal-pacifist notion that the capitalists don't need state power—i.e., armed bodies of men—to defend their interests both against the exploited at home and against rival capitalists in other countries. As the world today is once again riven by an economic crisis, rivalries among competing imperialist powers that have led to two world conflagrations are once again heating up.

The union bureaucrats' calls to "defend Canadian (or American or German...) jobs" against foreign competition amount to a chauvinist defense of the interests of their "own" imperialist rulers against the working class, both at home and abroad. The leadership of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), long one of the most vociferous advocates of such protectionism, has now joined with the auto bosses in pleading for government bailouts. "The Canadian government has provided \$100 billion in support for banks, but it also needs to support the real economy," said CAW president Ken Lewenza in a November 20 statement. Lewenza went on to complain that "offshore imports will take 30 per cent of the North American market this year" while bragging that the giveback contracts the CAW signed with the auto companies earlier this year will save the latter \$300 million a year!

In both Canada and the U.S., the nationalism pushed by the union tops has been a disaster for auto workers. Tens of thousands of jobs are gone for good, pension funds have been liquidated and multi-tier wage systems imposed. While surrendering gains won in the past through hard labour struggle, the CAW and United Auto Workers tops have miserably failed to organize the non-union, often Japanese-owned, auto plants that have mushroomed in the U.S. South and elsewhere, including in Southern Ontario. As for the parts sector, before his retirement former CAW head Buzz Hargrove signed a yellow-dog deal with Magna's Frank Stronach that bans strikes and even day-to-day union protection on the shop floor in exchange for largely meaningless union "recognition."

### Reform vs. Revolution

The defense of the class interests of the proletariat must be imbued with the program of international solidarity and struggle that Marx and Engels inscribed on the banner of the communist movement more than 160 years ago: "Workers of the world, unite."

In sharp contrast, the various reformist left groups who tail after the NDP and union bureaucracy have reacted to the crisis with abject pleas to patch up capitalism. The International Socialists (I.S.) urge a "massive fight-back among workers to demand that the government—no matter who is in power—nationalizes the banks and guarantees our jobs and pensions" (*Socialist Worker*, 6 October). More recently, the I.S. reacted to the auto crisis with the call, "GM should be retooled under public control" (21 November). The same issue of *Socialist Worker* says "a financial transfer tax to discourage short-term speculation in stock markets" must "be implemented in every Canadian stock exchange immediately."

The Fightback group adds its own twist in a November 20 website posting that calls to nationalize the banks and that they be "combined with the Bank of Canada." This new "socialist central bank," says Fightback, should get a management "elected one third from the bank employees, one third from the Trade Union movement to represent the working-class as a whole and one third from the government." From fiddling with the stock exchange to retooling the Bank of Canada, the reformists' fealty to the capitalist state and its institutions is overt and unashamed.

Calls to nationalize the banks have also been raised in the U.S. by the International Socialist Organization (ISO, formerly affiliated with the Canadian I.S.) in an editorial titled "Why not a bailout for the rest of us?" (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 1 October). Just in case anyone might mistake their call as any challenge to bourgeois rule, the ISO is quick to add: "Nationalized banks are nothing new. For much of the second half of the 20th century, they were the norm in Western Europe—and they remained capitalist institutions to boot." No kidding! In the mouths of mass reformist parties in Europe, like the old Labour Party in Britain, calls for nationalization were typically nothing other than a prescription for bailing out bankrupt enterprises and financial institutions. By these lights, even the ISO allows, "It's hard to describe the federal government's recent adventures in the banking industry as something other than nationalization."

To avoid confusion between what they are calling for and what the U.S. government has already done with its \$700 billion bailout package, the ISO argues, "An economic bailout on pro-worker terms would include much more than nationalizing the banks." What follows is a wish list of beneficial programs such as a moratorium on home foreclosures, job

creation, public works to rebuild schools and housing in the inner cities and so on. According to this pipedream, all of these demands can and will somehow be legislated by the capitalist state. As Lenin explained nearly a century ago, bourgeois parliaments are "*instruments for the oppression of the workers by the bourgeoisie.*" "Important questions under bourgeois democracy," he emphasized, "are decided by the stock exchange and the banks."

For the working class and the poor to get their hands on the money that will provide jobs, education and health care requires *breaking the power* of the bourgeoisie. Capitalism cannot be defeated short of the proletarian seizure of state power, which will abolish the private ownership of the means of production and institute a planned socialist economy. Only then will the wealth and productive capacity of society be used to serve the needs of the majority, not the profits of the few.

### The Necessity of Revolutionary Leadership

The discrediting of neo-liberalism in the wake of the financial crisis by no means indicates the fall of bourgeois ideology. We can now expect a return to the "left" wing of the bourgeois political spectrum, including at least lip service to the program of deficit spending associated with the British liberal bourgeois economist John Maynard Keynes. But Keynesian fiscal policies never did, and never could, stop the cyclical crises of overproduction which are inherent in the capitalist system.

It is a liberal myth that Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" with its Keynesian fiscal policies pulled the U.S. out of the 1930s Depression. In fact, the American economy did not recover its pre-1929 level until the imperialist slaughter of World War II set the war industries running in high gear. The New Deal was, however, successful in heading off a proletarian socialist movement. During the 1930s, American workers waged hard-fought class battles to organize for the first time in mass industrial unions. However, thanks in large part to the Stalinists and social democrats at the head of these unions, the incipient radicalization of labour was diverted into FDR's Democratic Party.

Today's financial crisis has exposed the bankruptcy of the capitalist mode of production for all who would wish to see. But the capitalist system cannot be defeated and overthrown without proletarian revolutionary consciousness and leadership. Speaking in July 1920 at the Second Congress of the Communist International, which took place during revolutionary upheavals in capitalist Europe as well as a global economic crisis, Lenin stressed that "There is no such thing as an absolutely hopeless situation" for the capitalists:

"The bourgeoisie are behaving like barefaced plunderers who have lost their heads; they are committing folly after folly, thus aggravating the situation and hastening their doom. All that is true. But nobody can 'prove' that it is absolutely impossible for them to pacify a minority of the exploited with some petty concessions, and suppress some movement or uprising of some section of the oppressed and exploited. To try to 'prove' in advance that there is 'absolutely' no way out of the situation would be sheer pandantry, or playing with concepts and catchwords."

—"Report on the International Situation and the Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International"

The destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 has led to a profound, though uneven, regression in political consciousness internationally, with most advanced workers no longer identifying their struggles with socialism. Unlike when Lenin spoke

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in 1920, there is today a vast disproportion between the rottenness of the imperialist system and the atomization, disorganization and false consciousness of the proletariat, which is at a level not seen since the formation of the mass workers parties in Europe in the 1880s, many of them nominally socialist and in some cases Marxist. Thus working people today are at a particularly difficult pass.

In the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, written on the eve of World War II, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky put forward a series of demands aimed at bridging the struggles of the working class to the understanding of the need to overthrow the decaying and anarchic capitalist profit system. To unmask the exploitation and fraud of the capitalist owners and the swindles of the banks, he argued that the workers should demand that the capitalists open their books "to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profit."

Pointing out that "imperialism means the domination of *finance capital*," he raised the call for the expropriation of the banks while arguing that this would produce "favorable results only if the state power itself passes completely from

the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers." In the face of mass unemployment, he called for working-class struggle for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work, for a massive program of public works and for wages to rise with prices to guard against the ravages of inflation.

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

"Property owners and their lawyers will prove the 'unrealizability' of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a 'normal' collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 921 and 922, 26 September and 10 October

## Nandigram Massacre...

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Pratirodh (Land Eviction Resistance) Committee (BUPC) was attacked as CPI(M) cadre shot bullets and hurled bombs into the village, killing at least five. Foreshadowing what was to come, CPI(M) State Secretariat member Benoy Konar railed, "But if they want to make things difficult for us, we are prepared to make life hell for them" (*Nandigram: What Really Happened?* [2007]).

In the early morning of March 14, some 5-6,000 unarmed residents of Nandigram assembled in an attempt to prevent government forces from entering the area. On the other side a 2,000-strong police force and several hundred armed CPI(M) cadre, some in police uniform, launched an assault, blinding people with tear gas and then opening fire. The official count put the dead at 14, with over 200 injured. Others put the number of dead at more than 100. The true toll may never be known: a reporter for the civil-rights journal *Combat Law* (May-June 2007) was told by villagers that cops and CPI(M) goons hauled off bodies in trucks or buried them nearby under a newly repaired road.

What is known is that this attack was planned months in advance. Women and children, who were in the forefront of the protest in the mistaken belief that this would stay the hand of the police and CPI(M) goons, bore the brunt of the onslaught. Wrenching evidence was later given at hearings in Kolkata to a "People's Tribunal on Nandigram" organized by the All India Citizens' Initiative. Some women were raped and there were at least five cases of "sadistic sexual assault"; several women accused policemen of "forcing rod/lathi/gun-barrel into sex organs" (Executive Summary of the Report: People's Tribunal on Nandigram, 26-28 May 2007). Others were told of children being "torn apart, hurled into ponds and killed" (*Combat Law*, May-June 2007). Of 38 missing, 11 were children. This is the horrific reality that *People's Voice*



Kunal Chattopadhyay

**14 November 2007 protest in Kolkata against Nandigram massacre. Left Front's state repression has shattered illusions of many in CPI(M).**

hopes to hide in its lying hosannas to the West Bengal CPI(M) government.

While covering up this massacre, *People's Voice* portrays the CPI(M) as a party under siege from "elements of the reactionary right and the sectarian left" which are "using murder and mayhem" (September 1-15). In reality, Nandigram has been the site of a virtual small-scale civil war as the inhabitants have faced down repeated attacks from police and CPI(M) thugs acting on behalf of the bourgeois state.

The chemical hub in Nandigram—now on hold—was to have been built by the Indonesian Salim Group, whose





PTI Photo

**Kolkata, July 2006: Left Front Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya with representative of Indonesian Salim Group, infamous for its close ties with brutal Suharto regime.**

founder was infamous for his close ties with the Suharto regime which killed some one million Communists and their supporters in 1965-66 following a military coup. Happy to front for such butchers, the CPI(M) says it is promoting development that will better the lives of the masses and indeed be a “weapon of class struggle.” But no amount of such Marxoid mumbo jumbo can hide that this is a *capitalist* government in a *capitalist* country. No less a mouthpiece for imperialist finance capital than the London *Economist* pointed out in an article titled “The Capitalist Communist” that CPI(M) chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya “has embraced business with an apostate zeal...travelling the world and wooing foreign companies” (24 November 2007).

### **Only Workers Revolution Will Liberate the Indian Masses!**

The idea that capitalist development in a country like India (or anywhere else for that matter) could be other than brutal and exploitative is a lie pushed by the bourgeoisie and their reformist frontmen. India is a country of enormous social contradictions where modern industry is grafted onto a backward society marked by profound women’s oppression as well as national, religious and caste oppression—the heritage of the pre-industrial past, reinforced and deepened by more than two centuries of British colonial rule.

Imperialist subjugation foreclosed any possibility of the Indian bourgeoisie playing the historical role of the bourgeoisies of Western Europe in liberating and developing the productive forces from feudal backwardness. The perspective for resolving the questions posed by what Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky termed “combined and uneven development” is provided by the theory and program of permanent revolution, developed by Trotsky and vindicated by the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution (see “The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution,” ICL Pamphlet [2008]).

In a country like India where development is belated and strangled by imperialist subjugation, the weak national bourgeoisie is dependent on its imperialist masters—yesterday the British, today the U.S.—and above all fears its “own” working class. The only road to liberation for the subjugated masses lies in the successful struggle of the proletariat for

state power, at the head of all the oppressed, especially the vast peasantry, under the leadership of a revolutionary workers party. An Indian workers revolution would spark a revolutionary upsurge throughout the subcontinent, from Pakistan to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its survival and advancement would hinge on the achievement of social revolutions in the imperialist centers: Japan, North America and West Europe.

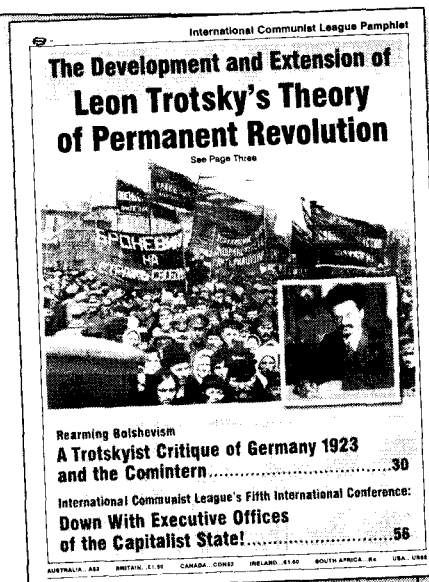
This is emphatically not the perspective of the Indian variants of Stalinism, including Maoism. Stalinism as an ideology arose in the Soviet workers state following the defeat of the post-1917 revolutionary wave in Europe. Beginning in 1923-24 a conservative bureaucratic caste which came to be led by Stalin usurped political power from the proletariat. Among its greatest crimes against the world working class was the resurrection of a variant of the class-collaborationist Menshevik program which had been defeated and discredited in the victorious 1917 Revolution. The Stalinist dogma of “two-stage revolution,” in which the masses are tied to a mythical “progressive” bourgeoisie in a first, supposedly “democratic” stage of struggle, has brought bloody defeat to struggling workers and peasants around the world.

Over the decades, both before and after independence, the Stalinized Communist Party of India (CPI) has often given support to the bourgeois Congress Party and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The CPI(M), which issued from the CPI in 1964, continues this pattern of class collaboration. At the head of the Left Front, it has ruled West Bengal continuously since 1977, wielding the repressive powers of the bourgeois state in defense of private property and profit over a deeply impoverished population. At the all-India level, both CPs have continued to back Congress and its allies, including until recently the Congress-dominated United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in New Delhi. This is the political logic of the bankrupt program of “revolution by stages.” Whether labelled the “National Democratic Revolution” or the “Peoples Democratic Revolution,” the masses remain brutally oppressed by capitalism and the supposed second, socialist stage never comes.

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## Nandigram Massacre...

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Many of those who have harboured illusions in the capacity of the CPI(M) to bring progress and a better life to the masses of West Bengal have been shaken by the atrocities in Nandigram. The months after the massacre saw a wave of resignations from the party, and heavy electoral losses in its former rural strongholds followed this year. Most of these losses were to the virulent anti-Communists of the Trinamool Congress, which has also been the main force in the BUPC-organized protests in Nandigram. In a rotten class-collaborationist alliance, this "resistance committee" is also supported by the Socialist Unity Centre of India, one of the country's many Maoist groups.

Another group, the CPI (Maoist), also claims to provide an alternative to the Left Front's SEZ policy. But their program of "New Democratic Revolution" and "People's War" is no less bankrupt than that of the CPI(M) and CPI. Basing themselves on the peasantry, not the proletariat, the Maoists call for a "bloc of four classes" including with so-called "progressive" capitalists. In *The State and Revolution* and many other works, Lenin savaged the idea that the class interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat were anything other than irreconcilable.

It is necessary to break with this deeply ingrained class collaborationism which has long branded India's various Communist Parties and their offshoots. The history of the international working-class struggle against capitalist wage slavery abounds with betrayals by Stalinism, whose anti-Marxist dogma of "socialism in one country" has meant pursuit of the pipedream of "peaceful coexistence" with world imperialism and opposition to the struggle for international socialist revolution. As well as "two-stage" betrayal, it has also meant forming and supporting popular-front governments—political blocs with capitalist parties in which the politics of the working class are necessarily subordinated to those of the bourgeoisie. Too often workers have paid with their lives for the treacherous policies of their leaders.

In Indonesia this program brought the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965-66. The Chinese Maoists instructed the PKI—the largest Communist party in the capitalist world, with three million members and many times that number of supporters—to maintain at all costs a political bloc with the "anti-imperialist" regime of Sukarno, an ally of Beijing. The PKI adopted a policy of "national unity" with the Indonesian bourgeoisie and its military, even to the point of forcing workers to return to the capitalists the factories they had seized. With the workers politically lulled by the misleadership of Beijing and the PKI, the Indonesian military staged a coup led by General Suharto, ushering in the horrific bloodbath of Communists and their sympathizers. (See "Lessons of Indonesia 1965," *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999.)

A contemporary lesson in popular-front betrayal is found in South Africa. The South African Communist Party (SACP) has long backed the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) and participates in the capitalist ANC-led Tripartite Alliance—a nationalist popular front that came to power in 1994, signaling the end of apartheid rule. The SACP's role in South Africa in containing proletarian struggle parallels that of the CPI(M)—both are central to the



Vast slum in Mumbai next to modern airport facility.

Ferguson/Time

administration of the capitalist government.

Through its participation in the Tripartite Alliance, the SACP has been instrumental in suppressing the struggles of the black toilers and other oppressed, while providing ministers and provincial premiers to staff the ANC-led government and its repressive state apparatus. Our comrades in Spartacist South Africa are unique in calling to break with the Tripartite Alliance and to build a Bolshevik workers party that fights for a black-centered workers government. In contrast, the activity of the reformist left is firmly within the boundaries of the Alliance, reinforcing the political chains binding the masses to neo-apartheid capitalism.

### Down With U.S.-India Pact Against China!

India is the imperialists' favourite "emerging giant" in Asia, one whose economic growth over the past decade or so is sometimes compared with that of China. In fact, China and India are fundamentally different kinds of states and societies.

India is a capitalist regional power dominated by imperialism. Its per capita gross domestic product is barely half that of China. China's poverty rate is less than half that of India's and the rate of child malnutrition three-quarters less. Female adult literacy in China is 87 percent; in India it is just 48 percent. India has more hungry people than any other country in the world. All the hype by the imperialists and the Indian rulers about India's supposed rapid-fire development is just that: hype. Even before the current global economic crisis, which is already sending India's economy into a tailspin, the country's per capita GDP was a minuscule six percent of that of the U.S.

China is a bureaucratically deformed workers state, and has been since the 1949 Chinese Revolution overthrew capitalist/landlord rule and ripped the world's most populous country from the clutches of the imperialist powers. For good reason, China became a beacon for millions of oppressed toilers in Asia. Despite the bureaucratic parasitism and mismanagement of the ruling Stalinist Chinese Communist Party, the collectivization of the economy has brought enormous social gains for workers, peasants and women, not least an end to centuries of chronic starvation



March 2007 strike at Hindmotors, Kolkata. Only proletarian revolution will liberate Indian masses.

in the countryside.

U.S. imperialism today sees capitalist India as a strategic ally in its drive to overturn the gains of the Chinese Revolution. This fall, Washington approved a pact for the sale of nuclear technology to India. As the *Financial Times* (28 September) noted, this opens “a new chapter in relations” between the U.S. and India that “could help counter the rise of China.” The International Communist League stands for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist threats and internal counter-revolution. At the same time, we call for a proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist, Stalinist ruling caste in Beijing and create a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

### Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali et al. Rescue CPI(M)

While the Nandigram massacre wracked the left in India, the CPI(M) found voices of solidarity outside the country. Less than two weeks after yet another assault on Nandigram led by a CPI(M) militia, a statement by Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Susan George, Walden Bello, Howard Zinn and various other fake-left luminaries appeared in *The Hindu* (22 November 2007) and elsewhere. Silent on the Left Front’s brutal state repression, the authors deplored “what appear to be unbridgeable gaps between people who share similar values” and expressed “trust that the people of Bengal will not allow their differences on some issues to tear apart the important experiments undertaken in the State (land reforms, local self-government).”

Many Indian leftists were stunned by this plea for unity between the state architects of a bloody massacre and its victims. As well, several intellectuals, including renowned writer Arundhati Roy and Bengali novelist Mahashweta Devi, issued an angry rebuttal. For our part, we were unsurprised. This is par for the course for petty-bourgeois dilettantes like Chomsky et al., many of whom have been leading publicists for the popular-frontist World Social Forums. International confabs backed by numerous capitalist governments and corporate endowments, the purpose of the Social Forums has been to ensure that those who oppose some of the depreda-

tions of capitalism do not challenge the capitalist system itself. As noted in a well-researched article in *Aspects of India’s Economy* (September 2003) shortly before the 2004 Social Forum in Mumbai, these gatherings are funded by the likes of the “Ford Foundation, which has closely collaborated with the US Central Intelligence Agency internationally, and in India has helped to shape the government’s policies in favour of American interests.”

An article in the online version of the British Socialist Workers Party’s (SWP) *International Socialism* (2 July 2007) attacked the Nandigram massacre—only to mourn the lost “unity” of the Social Forums, including in India, where the left shared a “common platform.” “After Nandigram,” they continue, “it is difficult to see where this shared space is.” According to *International Socialism*, the alternative to the CPI(M) is “a real democratic left, stripped of old dogmas” that breaks “from the dead past and stifling present.”

Here the SWP is dishing out the same old anti-communist garbage in new pails.

In sharp contrast, the ICL fights for the communism of Lenin and Trotsky whose highest embodiment was the 1917 Russian workers revolution. In India today, alongside the massive peasantry is a small but very powerful and vibrant working class. It is this proletariat that holds the key to the future. In January 2007, and again in March, West Bengal workers carried out state-wide strikes against the bloodshed at Nandigram. More recently, in August this year, a country-wide general strike against price rises, rising unemployment and falling real wages aimed at the UPA government brought West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura almost to a standstill. The burning need is to give this immense proletarian social power the necessary leadership and program through the forging of a genuinely revolutionary party, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

Against the class collaborationism and popular frontism endemic to the Indian left, such a party will counterpose a revolutionary program for the all-sided emancipation of the Indian masses under working-class rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our Trotskyist forebears in the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India stood firmly in this tradition. In 1942 they declared:

“The ultimate fate of the revolution in India, as in Russia, will be determined in the arena of the international revolution. Nor will India by its own forces be able to accomplish the task of making the transition to socialism. Not only the backwardness of the country, but also the international division of labor and the interdependence—produced by capitalism itself—of the different parts of world economy, demand that this task of the establishment of socialism can be accomplished only on a world scale. The victorious revolution in India, however, dealing a mortal blow to the oldest and most widespread imperialism in the world will on the one hand produce the most profound crisis in the entire capitalist world and shake world capitalism to its foundations. On the other hand it will inspire and galvanize into action millions of proletarians and colonial slaves the world over and inaugurate a new era of world revolution.”

—“The Classes of India and Their Political Roles:  
A Thesis of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India,”  
*Fourth International*, March 1942 ■

# India: The Nandigram Massacre



AP Photos

Above: Protester wounded in bloody rampage by cops and CPI(M) thugs in Nandigram, 14 March 2007. Right: Police attack July 2007 Kolkata protest following rape and murder of young woman activist Tapasi Malik by CPI(M) members.



## “Left Front” Government’s State Repression in West Bengal

The Communist Party of Canada (CPC), long skilled in justifying working-class betrayals, has now taken up the cudgels for the capitalist government of West Bengal headed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). Last spring the correspondent in India for the CPC’s *People’s Voice*, B. Prasant, claimed that the state budget of the Left Front government “prioritises the empowerment of the poor.” The government, he reported, was buying land and “handing it over to small peasants at no cost” (1-15 April). The October 16-31 issue had Prasant hailing the government’s “pro-employment and pro-poor industrial policy” in Singur, a rural area not far from Kolkata (Calcutta).

“Paper will put up with anything that is written on it,” as J.V. Stalin once wrote. Schooled for decades in the program of Stalinist class collaboration and the lies it entails, the CPC should know. The truth is that for the last two years, far from giving land to peasants and “empowering” the poor, the CPI(M) has made Singur and nearby Nandigram synonymous with bloody state repression—murders, rapes, beatings, mass arrests and land seizures, all to serve the greater glory of capitalist profit.

In 2005, India loosened the regulations governing the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), sparking a frenzied real estate boom as central and state governments invoked

the 1894 Land Acquisition Act, a relic of the British imperialists enacted to smooth the forcible acquisition of land and minimize the cost. More than 500 SEZs have been approved around the country. Highly capital intensive, the SEZs employ a tiny fraction of the vast numbers they have displaced and ruined. To ensure untrammelled profits, strikes and protests are banned inside SEZs and taxation is minimal.

Quick to cash in on the SEZ craze, in December 2006 the Left Front government in West Bengal moved to create an SEZ in Singur, forcibly acquiring land there on behalf of Tata Motors, one of India’s largest capitalist conglomerates. Those who resisted were severely beaten and some 50 arrested. Reportedly led by CPI(M) spotters, houses were ransacked and haystacks burned. Later that month the charred body of a young woman activist, Tapasi Malik, 18, was found. She had been brutally raped and murdered. A full year passed before two CPI(M) workers were charged with this savage crime (Indo-Asian News Service, 7 December 2007).

Singur proved to be merely the opening act. In Nandigram, in late December 2006, villagers learned that 25,000 acres of arable land were to be taken to create an SEZ for a massive chemical industrial complex. There was an immediate outcry. On 7 January 2007, a protest organized by the Bhumi Uchhed

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