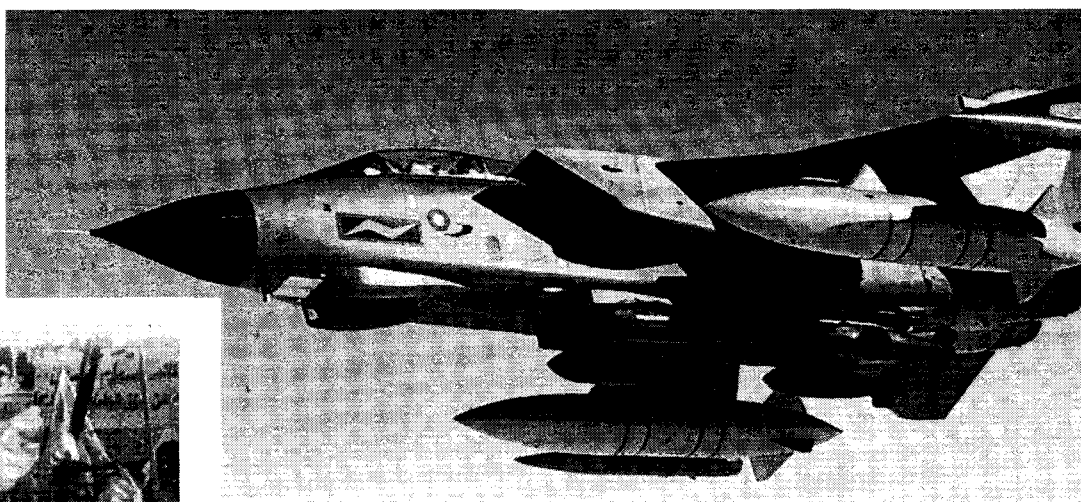


Down with Labour's racist witch hunt!

Defend Iraq against US/British attack!

For class struggle against British capitalist rulers!



Evening Standard

RAF Tornado fighter bombers attacked Iraq this month. Women (left) demonstrate in Baghdad, January 2001, on tenth anniversary of 1991 war by US and Britain.



SEPTEMBER 21—As the war drums thunder ever more loudly in Washington, tambourines rattle on eagerly in Downing Street in support of a renewed massacre of the Iraqi people. After months of “leaked” invasion scenarios and strident ultimatums for a “regime change” in Baghdad, US president Bush has made it clear that he and his cabal are charting a course for war against Iraq. And despite widespread expressions of unease or opposition from European imperialists and even sections of bourgeois opinion in Britain, Tony Blair has declared that British imperialism will join a US attack with or without United Nations approval.

Some 200,000 US and British troops are already in the region, including thousands just across the border from Iraq in Kuwait. The Pentagon is massively expanding and equipping its air base in the tiny emirate of Qatar. Washington is mollifying opposition to the use of critical military facilities in Turkey with a \$4 billion aid deal, down payment for future services rendered. In August, 5000 Turkish troops reportedly joined US Special Forces commandos already in place in the imperialist-controlled Kurdish area of northern Iraq to attack the Hurriyet airfield, located near Iraq's main oil fields.

Bush & Co are itching to “finish the job” they began under Bush Sr, with the

assistance of the British Tory government, in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when then-US defence secretary Cheney ghoulishly autographed a “bunker buster” bomb of the kind that incinerated hundreds of civilians crammed into a Baghdad air raid shelter. That war began with the bombing of a baby food factory and ended with the massacre of tens of thousands of Iraqi troops, literally shot in the back as they retreated along the infamous “highway of death”. The US and its allies deliberately targeted water sewage and treatment systems, devastating what had been one of the most developed societies in the Near East. In the years since, thousands of families have seen their loved ones buried or homes demolished under US and British bombs.

The war propaganda being churned out to justify another round of imperialist mass murder is breathtaking in its cynicism. US and British imperialism, the most powerful purveyors of terror in history, fulminate against tinpot ruler Saddam Hussein as a menace to the world, “another Hitler”. Blair preaches against Iraq's oppression of the Kurdish people while Kurdish refugees rot away in his “detention centre” dungeons. In June, Iraqi Kurds went on hunger strike in Plymouth to protest their dehumanising treatment. Britain, which gassed

insurgent Kurdish villages in Iraq in the 1920s, joins the US, which saturated the jungles of Vietnam with Agent Orange and CS gas, in denouncing Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the 1980-88 war with Iran.

Blair and Bush ludicrously claim that Iraq, whose only nuclear reactor was bombed by the Israelis in 1981, is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons. The truth is the US and Britain wouldn't so readily contemplate an attack if Iraq did have a nuclear arsenal, which remains about the only real guarantor of national sovereignty in today's world. They rant about purported “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq, while envisaging few casualties and an easy win in a war, because the Iraqi army has been devastated. At the same time, they arm Zionist Israel to kill Palestinian kids and wreak mass destruction in the Occupied Territories. And the war-crazed Zionists could well nuke Baghdad should a single Iraqi missile land on Israeli soil.

With the exception of Zionist Israel and Tony Blair's Labour government, not one of US imperialism's allies has endorsed an invasion of Iraq. And Blair & Co are facing considerable opposition to their war plans, not only from the working class, minorities and youth, but also from loyal servants of the British bourgeoisie: Labour MPs, the TUC leaders, bourgeois commentators, the Liberal Democrats, retired generals and even robed clerics like the newly-appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.

Across Europe, notably in Germany and France, bourgeois opposition to Bush and Blair's war plans reflects inter-imperialist rivalries, sharpened since counterrevolution in the former USSR. In the hotly-contested German

elections, Schröder—who presided over German imperialism's military interventions in the Balkans and Afghanistan—is gaining ground by opposing the bombing of Iraq. His stance reflects growing tensions within the NATO alliance, in the context of an economic downturn, exacerbated by the fact that the US is about to tighten its grip on the Near East oil spigot. More broadly, the US administration is seen as a gang of nuclear cowboys who tear up treaties and flout established rules of international diplomacy and commerce with abandon.

Denouncing such American “unilateralism”, bourgeois opposition to the war in Britain and the rest of Europe is demanding that no slaughter of Iraqis take place without “proper” consultation in the UN—where US and European imperialists could bargain over which vultures get the juiciest morsels from the plunder of Iraq. Along these lines, the TUC has advised war-monger Blair to set a “deadline for Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions”, raising that military action should take place “through, and only with, the explicit authority of the UN Security Council”. Similarly, “Labour against the war” (LAW), led by “left” Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and George Galloway, argues: “We should not abandon the long-standing protocol...that military force can only be used in accordance with the UN Charter when authorised by the UN Security Council” (LAW website). From its inception, the UN has been nothing but a fig-leaf for imperialist militarism and acts of war. A million and a half Iraqis have fallen victim to the UN starvation

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Down with Labour's racist vendetta against Asian youth!

Labour is waging a racist vendetta against the Asian youths who defended themselves against fascist attacks and cop terror in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in summer 2001. Already more than 100 youths have been jailed for between two and eight and a half years for "riot", while hundreds more have been charged. The charge of "riot" carries a maximum 10-year sentence. At the hand of Judge Gullick, a notorious racist, Asian youths in Bradford have been given long jail sentences for picking up a stone in self-defence. The draconian sentencing of the Bradford youths has caused outrage in Asian communities, which are well accustomed to racist British injustice. Parents of those arrested, many of whom even turned their sons in to the police on the advice of mosque elders, are now holding

weekly vigils to get the sentences reduced.

The racist witch hunt of Asian youth in northern England is the domestic reflection of the Labour government's "war on terror", which targets minorities, immigrants and the trade unions. David Blunkett stated that the sentences handed out to the Bradford youth were "a genuine reprisal but also a message to the community". Labour's "message" to anyone who has the temerity to fight back against state repression in this decaying, racist hellhole is that, at the very least, they will rot in jail. A Spartacist League leaflet issued at the time of the cop siege of Oldham stated: "Urgently needed is trade-union centred protest against the police occupation of the Asian community. This means

drawing in the power of the urban working class of the Manchester area so that besieged minority youth in this

the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and the oppressed and is necessarily racist. The SWP seeks to portray the



TROTSKY

Opportunism and social chauvinism

As the Labour government gears up to attack Iraq, it is also intensifying the war against workers and minorities at home. The Stop the War Coalition seeks to channel opposition to the war into class-collaboration and support for an alternative policy for British imperialism. In Socialism and War Lenin explains the connection between opportunism and social chauvinism.



LENIN

Not one Marxist has ever doubted that opportunism expresses bourgeois policies within the working-class movement, expresses the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and the alliance of a tiny section of bourgeoisified workers with their "own" bourgeoisie, against the interests of the proletarian masses, the oppressed masses.

The objective conditions at the close of the nineteenth century greatly intensified opportunism, converted the utilisation of bourgeois legality into subservience to the latter, created a thin crust of a working-class officialdom and aristocracy and attracted numerous petty-bourgeois "fellow travellers" to the Social-Democratic parties.

The war has speeded up this development and transformed opportunism into social-chauvinism, transformed the secret alliance between the opportunists and the bourgeoisie into an open one. Simultaneously, the military authorities have everywhere instituted martial law and have muzzled the mass of the workers, whose old leaders have nearly all gone over to the bourgeoisie.

Opportunism and social-chauvinism stand on a common economic basis—the interests of a thin crust of privileged workers and of the petty bourgeoisie, who are defending their privileged position, their "right" to some modicum of the profits that their "own" national bourgeoisie obtain from robbing other nations, from the advantages of their Great-Power status, etc.

Opportunism and social-chauvinism have the same political-ideological content—class collaboration instead of the class struggle, renunciation of revolutionary methods of struggle, helping one's "own" government in its embarrassed situation, instead of taking advantage of these embarrassments so as to advance the revolution.

— VI Lenin, *Socialism and War* (July-August 1915)



The Daily Telegraph

Bradford, summer 2001: riot cops lay siege to Asian youth defending themselves against fascist provocations.

enclave of Oldham, a run-down former mill town, are not left to go it alone against the organised violence of the state, its cops, courts and prisons." The Spartacus Youth Group (SYG) calls for the immediate release of all those imprisoned by Labour's racist vendetta and the dropping of all charges!

The scenes of blazing police vans in Oldham illuminated the reality of British capitalism under Labour and highlighted the despair of Asian youth. The massive de-industrialisation wrought by decaying capitalism perpetuates the conditions which provide a fertile breeding ground for the fascists, who made significant electoral gains in the former textile towns. Most minority youth have no hope of ever finding a decent job. They are viewed by the capitalist masters as expendable, a potential source of social unrest. We in the SYG fight for the unity of the working class against racism. The struggle in defence of immigrants and minorities today is a vital task for the working class as a whole. We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

The racist attacks against the Asian communities took place at the time of the 2001 general elections. At that time the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) called for a vote to Labour where Socialist Alliance (SA) candidates didn't stand. In the local elections earlier this year, the SWP/Anti Nazi League directed opposition to the BNP fascists into a call to vote for "anyone else", saying: "if you have a Nazi candidate in your ward then you must vote—for any other party—against the BNP!" (22 April ANL leaflet). But how is it possible to fight fascism by voting Labour, whose cops terrorised the Asian communities and whose courts are now sentencing the youth who fought back? Labour's cops, army, courts and prisons constitute the core of the capitalist state, which is an instrument of class rule of

localised electoral gains of the BNP as though a fascist takeover is imminent in order to corral support for Labour, and to conceal the fact that the Labour government, which they helped to elect, is the main source of racism in Britain today. Moreover, in situations where fascist gangs do pose an immediate threat, they cannot be stopped through parliamentarian means but only by mobilising the proletariat. In complete contrast to the SWP's Labourism, we called for trade union/minority mobilisations against the fascists. In the general election we said no vote to Labour and no vote to the SA, whose campaign was subordinated to voting in a Labour government.

In March the SYG led a united-front protest at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London against Labour's "anti-terrorism" legislation and anti-immigrant witch hunt. As the SYG speaker on the protest stated:

"The extent of the government's attacks depends on how much class struggle is present to fight them and that is what we look to. What is the obstacle to mobilising the working class in defence of all the oppressed in society? The main obstacle is that in this country for 100 years we've had a Labour Party, the other obstacle is the perspective that is put forward by left groups looking to 'Her Majesty's Parliament', pressing Labour MPs for a solution to attacks on all the oppressed in this country.... British imperialism is not a policy that can be changed; Blair cannot be pressured to be kinder to workers and minorities. For us imperialism is a system that must be replaced by a socialist society where all those who work, who produce the wealth of this country, must rule!"

The SYG fights to win youth and students to the side of the working class and the necessity of building a multiethnic revolutionary internationalist party that can break the working class from Labourism and lead it to power, laying the material basis for a society in which racism, oppression, exploitation and war do not exist. Join us! ■

WORKERS HAMMER

For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!
For a Socialist United States of Europe!

Published by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU
E-mail: WorkersHammer@compuserve.com
Subscriptions: £3 for 1 year, Europe outside Britain & Ireland £5, overseas airmail £7

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
The closing date for news in this issue is 21 September 2002.
Printed by trade union labour ISSN 0267-8721

Statement by the International Communist League

Capitalist Europe's war on immigrants is a war on all workers

The following statement was issued on 2 July.

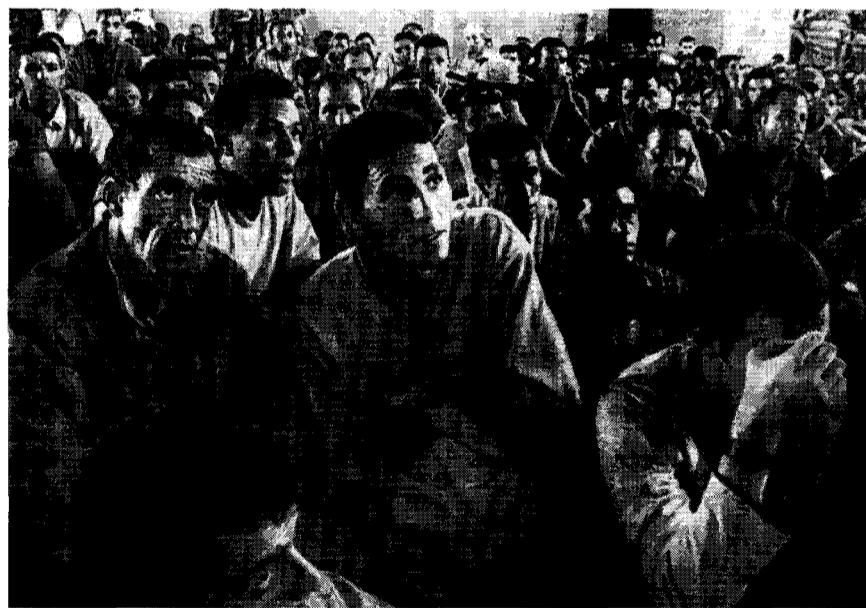
One day after a powerful general strike paralysed Spain on 20 June, Europe's capitalist rulers met in Seville to ratchet up the war against immigrants as the spearhead of an attack against the proletariat as a whole. The competition between the dominant nations of the European Union (EU) for economic advantage in the midst of a recession meant the summit fell short of its stated goal of establishing supranational police-state measures, such as joint border patrols on land and sea, but all that and more is promised by the guardians of Fortress Europe. In the meantime, each capitalist ruling class is trying to outdo the next in raising the bar to immigration and enhancing police-state measures against immigrants with the aim of regimenting the entire population, driving down wages and slashing social gains which were wrested through decades of class struggle.

The Seville EU summit seized on the recent electoral gains by fascists like Le Pen and the British National Party (BNP) to pander to their anti-immigrant demagoguery. Anti-immigrant racism is a timeworn method to divide the proletariat and deflect class struggle, but fundamentally the anti-immigrant campaign is driven not by "bad ideas" but by the workings of the capitalist economy and is enforced by bourgeois politicians from the left and the right. Large numbers of immigrants were brought into West Europe when their labour was needed, due in part to the low birthrate; now that Europe is in recession, the bourgeoisie does not need more immigrants as a supply of cheap labour or even as a "reserve army of labour." It would be an embellishment of bourgeois democracy to believe that it would require fascism to have mass deportations of immigrants. Such in fact happened during the 1930s Great Depression in France, when the number of foreign workers was reduced by half a million through mass expulsions. And these workers were mainly European and Roman Catholic, much easier to assimilate than the forcibly segregated North Africans and black Africans. In the same period, there were mass deportations of Mexican immigrants from the United States.

A decade ago the Soviet Union was destroyed through capitalist counterrevolution. This monumental defeat for the international proletariat and the ensuing



Above: March in Sunderland protesting racist murder of Iranian refugee Peiman Bahmani in August. Below: North African workers in Seville, Spain stage sit-in demanding work permits.



bourgeois triumphalism and lie that "communism is dead" has thrown back the consciousness of the proletariat and the youth who misidentify the Stalinist sellouts with communism. Capitalist rule in Europe is not challenged by a revolutionary-minded and insurrectionary proletariat today, and corre-

spondingly the working class and the dark-skinned minorities and immigrant populations in Europe are repressed mainly through the "normal" workings of the whole capitalist system, from the cops in the ghettos to the capitalist courts, and the prisons which are vastly disproportionately filled with minorities

and immigrants. In this context, parties that are by history, outlook and intent fascist, from Haider's Freedom Party (FPÖ) to Le Pen's National Front, have mainly advanced as electoral phenomena and pressure groups on more mainstream bourgeois parties.

The "normal" ebbs and flows of the world capitalist economy, which produce such vast human misery, cannot be eliminated short of the replacement of capitalism through proletarian socialist revolution. Those, like the social-democratic leaders and their "left" tails, who accept the capitalist framework necessarily become complicit in implementing and even spearheading anti-immigrant racism. The machinery of state repression has been augmented since September 11, but most of the anti-immigrant and anti-"terrorist" laws and policies were enacted years earlier by the "left" governments. The now-ousted French Socialist Party, which ruled France in a popular-front coalition with the Communist Party and the Greens, burns with anger that the new right-wing government claims credit for the racist "security" campaign which was in fact masterminded by the "left"! In order to rule on behalf of capital, the historic parties of the French working class, the Communists and the Socialists and their analogues in the trade-union bureaucracies, poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. Thus the popular-front government paved the way for Le Pen's big score in the recent French presidential elections and the election of a more right-wing government.

The so-called "far left" bears large responsibility too. Groups like the United Secretariat's Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) began the recent popular-front years with a vote for Jospin...and ended with a call to "bar the road to Le Pen"—i.e., vote Chirac! This is such a low, even for the LCR, which has long had the posture and backbone of a snake, that they feel compelled to publicly molt rather than defend their crime. The LCR were aggressive and energetic activists who channeled the massive youth demonstrations which shook France with justified outrage at the racism of Le Pen's National Front into reactionary "Republican unity" with Chirac. Similarly in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party directed opposition to

continued on page 4

Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Stop the deportations!

Immigrants

(Continued from page 3)

the BNP fascists into a call to vote for “anyone else”—i.e., even bourgeois parties, but especially Blair’s Labour Party. Each falsely proclaimed that there was an imminent danger of fascism, the better to corral support for Labour and even Chirac. Moreover, in situations where fascist gangs do pose an immediate threat, they cannot be stopped through parliamentarist means but only by mobilising the proletariat to crush them.

Defend immigrants, defend the working class!

In Italy, the new arsenal of repression includes roundups of immigrants for fingerprinting, as if being non-Euro-

only persecution at the hands of the capitalist state but also stepped-up racist violence on the streets. As our Irish comrades noted following the murder of a Chinese student, “Fundamental responsibility for Zhao’s brutal murder lies with the Irish capitalist state whose anti-immigrant policies give a green light to race terrorists.”

Everywhere, families are being ripped apart through restrictions on “family reunion.” Women suffer the brunt of this. If they manage to join their husbands in Europe, they are often legally deprived of the right to work and so are forced into dangerous and low-wage blackmarket jobs. In France, apace with anti-immigrant laws, a veritable “marriage market” has spread like cancer in immigrant communities where an arranged marriage with a young woman possessing citizenship is

political repression. Sangatte is filled with refugees from the bloody wars waged by U.S. imperialism and its NATO allies. Murderous nationalism, whipped up as the vehicle of capitalist counterrevolution to destroy the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe, uprooted minority populations including the Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) in an orgy of “ethnic cleansing” a decade ago. Another flood of refugees was triggered by the U.S./NATO ravaging of what was left of the former Yugoslavia in the 1999 Balkans War. Today the Sangatte camp is filled with Iraqis fleeing ten years of the starvation blockade imposed by the United Nations.

Thousands of Afghans fled the hell created by U.S. imperialism’s support to the women-hating *mujahedin*. When Soviet forces entered Afghanistan in 1979 after repeated requests by the left-nationalist PDPA government, we of the ICL straightforwardly said, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!” Gorbachev’s treacherous withdrawal in 1988-89 culminated in the victory of the Islamic fundamentalists and eventually the rule of the Taliban—truly a Frankenstein’s monster created by the U.S. imperialists with the help of their Pakistani allies. Now the terror bombing of Afghanistan by Bush, Blair and Co. in the name of the “war on terror” has created thousands of refugees.

Borrowing from Le Pen’s campaign promise to close the Sangatte camp and deport the refugees, Chirac has announced plans to close the camp and in the meantime plans to build an enormous fence around the rail yard and install high-tech scanners to detect heartbeats in the tunnel. Not to be outdone, Tony Blair is mobilising the navy to turn back (read: fire on and sink) ships of refugees, and plans to cage asylum-seekers in militarised detention camps, and to bleach England through airlift deportations of dark-skinned immigrants and blatant racial exclusion of people trying to get into the country from airports elsewhere in Europe.

Meanwhile, anyone who does make it into Britain will be compelled to carry a national identity card. These police-state measures are intended to regiment and accustom the entire population to restrictions on democratic rights, to accept police identity checks as “normal,” to chill free speech and impede politically organising against the government and the ruling class. To this end, the whole spectrum of capitalist politicians from left to right is whipping up hysteria over immigrants as an alleged “enemy within.” The model for police-state control of Arab, African, Turkish and Asian populations in West Europe is the French state’s “Vigi-

pirate.” The large population of North African descent, particularly the youth, are systematically brutalised by the French police, subjected to identity checks even in the hallways of their own apartment buildings, and treated as a “criminal” and “surplus” population. Changes in the French nationality code, whereby children born in France of immigrant parents no longer automatically gain French citizenship, prepare the ground for possible mass deportation. Peel back the “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*” facade and you’ll find a history of mass deportations whenever politically or economically advantageous to France’s capitalist rulers, from the Polish and Italian immigrants deported en masse between the two World Wars to the Jews stripped of French citizenship and deported to Nazi death camps under Vichy.

Capitalism needs a bogey man. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the “red menace” has been largely replaced with orchestrated hysteria against the “green menace” of Islamic fundamentalism. This has reached fever pitch since September 11 and a new word, “Islamophobia,” has entered the lexicon to “explain” racist assaults on women in veils, men in turbans, and anyone suspected of being of Arab origin. The restrictions on civil liberties and the patriotic fervor have also been used to criminalise political dissent and outlaw parties and national liberation movements, from the Kurdish PKK and the Palestinian PFLP to the Turkish Guevarist DHKC and the Basque Batasuna organisation in Spain. Meanwhile, the biggest state terrorists rain bombs on Iraq and threaten invasion, continue to pound Afghanistan, and arm the Zionist state of Israel in its war against the Palestinian people. Now the leader of the “free world” has the gall to tell the Palestinian people who they can and can’t elect to represent them in the Occupied Territories and “homeland” overrun by Zionist stormtroopers. Israel out of the Occupied Territories! Defend the Palestinian people!

Racial oppression is intrinsic to capitalism

The “maximum programme” of social-democratic reformism and the so-called “left” groups who function as its apologists is to restore the “welfare state” and paint a “human face” on capitalist austerity. Contrary to the myths of reformists such as Lutte Ouvrière, who campaign to “ban layoffs” and demand that the cops fight “real crime” instead of bashing immigrants, the truth is that under capitalism the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and racial oppression is *intrinsic* to the workings of the whole rotten domestic and world system. Whether the government is dominated by social democrats or ultrarightists, the



Car workers man picket line in Berlin last May. Ethnic Germans joined with workers of Kurdish and Turkish descent in strike by IG Metall union.

pean makes one “criminal.” With the Vatican railing against marriages between Christians and Muslims, the Italian police launched “Operation Just Married” to snoop into mixed marriages. Residency permits will be limited to the duration of a work contract, so that seasonal agricultural workers will become “illegal” the moment a crop has been harvested, and Italian employers will be compelled to pay the state in advance for the deportation of any immigrant who overstays the work contract! This is not even particularly rational from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, which needs a source of cheap agricultural labour. In a bald statement of the concerns of the ruling class, the Italian capitalist consortium negotiated exemptions from the government’s absurdly stringent immigration quotas for three professions: nurses, maids ...and soccer players!

now the last best hope of escaping poverty and political repression elsewhere. The slamming shut of doors to immigration and the segregation of oppressed communities tend to increase and help perpetuate arranged marriages, kidnappings, female genital mutilation, wife-beatings and “honour killings,” all of which are on the rise in Europe. These facts show that even a minimal democratic demand, like full citizenship rights for everyone who has managed to make it to a European country, is literally a question of life or death, especially for women.

The squalid war between Blair’s Britain and Chirac’s France to close the Sangatte Red Cross refugee camp exposes the hoax of the “free world” and the direct link between capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and across East Europe and the rise of economic misery, imperialist war and

The right of asylum is under intensified attack everywhere: Blair’s Britain promises immediate deportations without right of appeal for rejected asylum-seekers, while Denmark claims the right to revoke asylum for refugees when the new right-wing government decides that any given country an immigrant fled has become sufficiently “democratic.”

Instilling racial hatred at an early age to inculcate patriotism and loyalty to the crown, rotting Britain threatens to forcibly segregate the children of asylum-seekers from other schoolchildren. In Germany, our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party have been actively protesting against the computer-aided racist roundups of students. In this reactionary climate, immigrant workers and foreign students face not

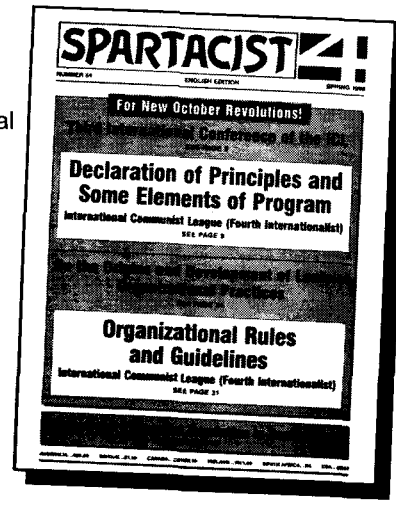
Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

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laws of capitalism work the same: the harder you work, the more wealth you produce for others, and the more precarious your existence becomes as you are at risk of being laid off. According to its economic needs, capitalism brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labour, principally immigrants from poorer countries who are deemed disposable in times of economic contraction. As Karl Marx wrote in *Capital* (Volume I): "The degree of intensity of the competition among themselves [the workers] depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus population; as soon as, by Trades' Unions, &c., they try to organise a regular co-operation between employed and unemployed in order to destroy or to weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalistic production on their class, so soon capital and its sycophant, political economy, cry out at the infringement of the 'eternal' and so to say 'sacred' law of supply and demand. Every combination of employed and unemployed disturbs the 'harmonious' action of this law."

That is why we in the ICL fight for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism. The struggle in defence of immigrant labour today is a vital task for the working class as a whole. We fight for: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! Free the detainees! Organise the unorganised! Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions! For labour/immigrant mobilisations against fascist attacks! Jobs for all—For a sliding scale of hours at no loss in pay! Expropriate the bourgeoisie—For a planned, socialist economy organised internationally!* In every country where we exist, the ICL has

Italy and Germany, there have been important breaks with the narrow economism and national chauvinism pushed by the trade-union bureaucrats in their role as "labour lieutenants of capital." Thus in Italy, the CGIL trade-union federation and COBAS have called general strikes by labour and immigrants against the Bossi/Fini anti-immigrant law and also against the Berlusconi government's attempt to make the labour market "flexible" for increased exploitation by shredding union gains won through several decades of hard-fought battles! In response to popular outrage, Rifondazione Comunista (RC) is now obliged to call protests calling for closing down the detention centres which RC itself had earlier voted for setting up. In Berlin's Potsdamer Platz on 20 June, a mass picket of German construction workers spiked an attempt to manipulate Portuguese immigrants as strike-breakers, by appealing to them to fight alongside the union in struggling for the rights of all labour, including foreign workers. As the Portuguese workers applauded and refused to cross the picket line, the strikers yelled, "Long live international solidarity!" This shows, as our comrades in Germany said in their leaflet to these strikers, "German, foreign and immigrant workers can only push forward their interests together, or they will be beaten back separately."

Advancement along this class-struggle road is obstructed by reformists and trade-union misleaders who deploy strikes not to combat capitalist rule but as pressure tactics on capitalist politicians to whom they are ultimately beholden. Thus the IG Metall strike, which united German, Turkish and Kurdish workers in struggle in May,

a 'left pole' that puts pressure on the reformist leaders and contributes to bringing them back to the helm of capitalism" (*Spartaco* No. 60, May 2002).

For a socialist fight for a workers Europe!

The rise of racist demagogy, government attacks on immigrants and the threat of fascist terror bands can only be eradicated through a victorious struggle against the capitalist system. This perspective is the fundamental point of departure separating the ICL from all of

how capitalism can be made rational or humane. Unlike groups such as Workers Power, which spout rhetoric against racism and slogans like "open the borders" but politically support the chauvinist social democrats, we seek urgently to mobilise the working class to take up the fight for full citizenship rights for all who manage to cross the borders and to drive home the understanding that the source of exploitation of all labour is the capitalist system of production, which is defended to the bitter end by *the capitalist state*. Until



Workers Hammer

London, 13 March: Spartacus Youth Group initiated protest at School of Oriental and African Studies against Labour's "anti-terrorist" laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt.

our competitors in the workers movement. The anarchist milieu, while often admirably audacious in militant protests against the powers that be, lacks a programme to effectively combat much less replace the rule of capital. At bottom, their worldview is that of street-fighting liberals: pressure politics expressing justified outrage outside meetings of the capitalist rulers, rather than loathsome suit-and-tie parliamentary reformism. It's not enough to protest, it's necessary to have a perspective to fight to transform society, to topple the rapacious imperialist system and create a workers state as the necessary first step on the road to a global classless society. The former Stalinist parties and the social democrats long ago made their peace with capitalist rule; indeed, across Europe they administered it and augmented the attacks on the working class and immigrants. Our pseudo-Trotskyist competitors peddle their wares in the shadow of the social democracy because their aim is not to forge an authentic Leninist party by splitting the proletarian base of the reformist parties from their pro-capitalist tops but to pressure these misleaders.

On the question of immigration, groups like Workers Power promote the call to "open the borders." It's a catchy slogan, but what it would mean for "Third World" countries is an open door for imperialist investors. More generally, it is a utopian and reactionary demand for an egalitarian world within the framework of capitalism. It is retrograde to promote the notion that some-

we achieve an internationally planned, socialist economy based on collectivised property, it will not be possible to abolish the state or national borders. The nation-state is the basis of the organisation of the capitalist economy, and to deny that is to capitulate to muddle-headed bourgeois "democrats." As Lenin said in his April 1917 speech on the national question, "What does 'Down with frontiers' mean? It is the beginning of anarchy.... Only when the socialist revolution has become a reality, and not a method, will the slogan 'Down with frontiers' be a correct slogan."

Against capitalist Fortress Europe, our perspective is the fight for *the socialist United States of Europe* as a vital step in the world socialist revolution. The necessary instruments to bring the working class to power are Leninist parties, politically guided with a programme that is proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist. We fight to reforge the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky. Despite the regression in political consciousness today and the huge gulf between our purpose and present means; it is evident that there is no shortage of combativity and desire on the part of the working people, oppressed minorities and youth to fight. For their struggles to be successful and not derailed into the trap of reformist pressure politics, it is urgent to construct a revolutionary leadership. This is what the sections of the ICL fight for, nothing other and nothing less. ■



Morris/Kent News

Asylum seekers from Sangatte refugee camp are rounded up by French cops after failed attempt to enter Britain through the Channel Tunnel.

fought to expose the lie of "national unity" between workers and bosses and to rally the proletariat in class solidarity with immigrants and minorities. As an example of this perspective, on 9 February in the San Francisco Bay Area our American comrades mobilised a labour-based united-front rally around the slogans: "Anti-Terrorist Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labour—No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!"

There are important developments in Europe that point the way to a class-struggle road to unite the proletariat in defence of its own interests against attacks by capital. From Turkish/Kurdish metal workers in Germany to black and Asian transport workers in London, immigrants and their children are a key component of strategic, unionised sectors of the proletariat. In

was called off by the SPD [Social Democratic Party] union tops as soon as SPD party leader Schröder warned that a long strike would cost the German capitalists money (isn't that the point of strikes, to hit the bosses in their pocket-books?) and so threaten the SPD's standing in upcoming parliamentary elections. Similarly, Italy's Rifondazione Comunista leader, Bertinotti, supports strike action against the Berlusconi government explicitly to put a centre-left coalition back in power to better manage capitalist rule. RC's left wing, the "Proposta" group, now admits that RC shares responsibility for anti-immigrant laws during its support to the Prodi government, but their role is to keep leftist militants within the fold of RC reformism. As our Italian comrades have noted of Proposta, "Their perspective is not to build a Leninist vanguard party to lead the workers to power, but

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From SWP reformism to revolutionary Trotskyism

Join the fight for a revolutionary party!

We reprint below an edited version of a talk given by comrade James Palmer at a public meeting of the Spartacist League held in London in July in conjunction with our internationalist intervention into the annual "Marxism" event of the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Comrade James was a leading member of the SWP's Oxford branch before being won to the revolutionary Trotskyism of the ICL.

I was previously a member of the Socialist Workers Party of Tony Cliff. My purpose here today is to explain how it is that I came to understand that the SWP was not the sort of party that I had believed it was, and how I was won over to the Leninist/Trotskyist programme of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League, by learning the principled political differences in programme that draw the real line between revolutionaries and reformists.

Something that concerns many young members in the SWP is the lack of internal democracy within the organisation. The reasons for this flow from the contradictions between their professions to be revolutionary and their actual programme of pressuring the Labour Party. This is reflected in the composition of the membership, where you have many young members who stay for a year or so until they become disillusioned, but you also have a layer of permanent, mainly older, "cadre" who are cynical Labourites in the leadership using the youth to do the leg work in the SWP's many reformist campaigns.

How I joined and why I left the SWP

At the end of 1999 I was amazed by news that the city of Seattle had been rocked by what were described as "anti-capitalist riots". I was fascinated by the idea that it was possible to build any organised resistance to capitalism. From the way it was reported, this seemed more like an insurrection than a political demonstration or the CND movement of the 1980s. So when I ran into some *Socialist Worker* sellers doing a petition of support, I signed it and bought the paper and also left my phone number. This was the first organised grouping on the left that I had met and it was not long before I was recruited by them. I had not read any communist literature at this point and was not able to tell the difference between reformist politics and revolutionary politics. I noticed that the SWP never said much about the former USSR or Cuba, merely classing them as "state capitalist". I didn't feel that this analysis did these states justice, but now that the Cold War was over and it didn't seem to be the main issue, I said nothing.

Being a campaigning member of the SWP, however, brought me into contact with other left groups (despite the SWP's apolitical argument that other parties were all "tiny sectarian groups"). One of these groups was the Spartacist League, with the newspaper *Workers Hammer*. Trotskyist ideas had been denied to me in the SWP, none of his books were ever on sale at the SWP book stalls, but in *Workers Hammer* Trotsky's position on defending the former USSR was explained and hit me as being a thousand times more convincing than Tony Cliff's negative, defeatist concept of "state capitalism". If all the revolutions so far had become state capitalist beyond repair, then the prospects for the working class were very bleak indeed; there hardly seemed any point in being a revolutionary!

In addition to this, the idea of voting for the Labour Party in the local elections where there weren't any Socialist Alliance candidates didn't seem like the way to develop the sort of revolutionary working-class movement needed to bring down the entire capitalist system, and I wanted to be able to discuss this with people who had politics that were not in some way tied to the Labour Party. This is what led me to more serious political discussions with the Spartacist League.

According to Lenin, in his pamphlet *What is to be done?*, the task of a revolutionary party is to build revolutionary consciousness in the working class from the outside as the basis for revolution. It doesn't come naturally, that's why Lenin talked of the need for a vanguard party. In Britain, the strategic goal is to split the working class politically from social democracy, historically, the Labour Party. Today, the Labour



Afghan women armed to fight mujahedin cut-throats. Soviet Army presence in 1980s opened the road to liberation of women. Socialist Workers Party sided with Islamic reaction.



January 1992: ICL protest in New York against visit of Boris Yeltsin. SWP cheered for counterrevolution in the USSR.

Party is so openly right-wing that it is hated by many working-class people and minorities. For a real Leninist revolutionary party, this presents an opportunity to win workers away from Labour and Labourite politics. The SWP acts as a barrier to this by offering the Socialist Alliance, a social-democratic grouping designed to play the same political role as the old Labour Party, that is to say, it is for reforming the capitalist state. One of the things that was said during the time I was onboard the campaign was: "There is a massive political vacuum where the Labour Party used to be!" ie the SWP intend the Socialist Alliance to fill that gap, rather than taking advantage of the huge divide to split the working class from Labourism. The final discrediting of the Labour Party during recent years in power represented a direct opportuni-

ty to intervene and utilise this split from parliamentary politics; instead the SWP chose to repair the credibility of social democracy by founding the Socialist Alliance to plug the gap. Once it had become clear to me that the SWP was another barrier to achieving a revolution, I resigned.

Being won to the Trotskyist programme

My point today is to explain the basic political differences and what they actually mean. Why did the SWP not defend the Soviet Union, what we Trotskyists understood to be a degenerated workers state and the deformed workers states of China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam? And why do Trotskyists defend them? In Trotsky's book *The Revolution Betrayed* he explained that the Soviet Union, as the first workers state, was different not just because its government had been founded by workers councils called soviets and led by the Bolshevik Party, but because of the new property forms that this society was based on, property forms resulting from the 1917 Russian Revolution. This was a society where there were no privately owned factories, no-one owned shares and bonds, there was no stock exchange, no capitalists could get rich off the workers' backs by playing the stock market or live off the interest and consequently there was no economic cycle of boom and bust to cause misery and impoverishment to workers. This was a system that could in no way be described as capitalist. It was based on a system of collectively owned means of production, a planned economy.

Stalin's bureaucracy first ascended to power in 1924 in the aftermath of the defeat of the 1923 German Revolution and Lenin's death. Some months later,

Stalin would preach the nationalist dogma of building "socialism in one country". Originally a recipe for utopian economic autarky, "socialism in one country" would become the justification for sacrificing socialist revolution internationally in the illusory belief that the imperialists would, in exchange, cease their drive to recapture for the capitalist market the one-sixth of the globe ripped from them by the October Revolution. Trotsky fought this betrayal of the Bolsheviks' internationalism down the line, and fought as the staunchest defender of the gains of the Bolshevik-led October Revolution. He understood that Stalin & Co eventually were able to consolidate a *political* counterrevolution, but not a *social* one. For this reason, Trotsky considered the planned economy and collectivisation to be a massively progressive feature of the new society and, although workers no longer had control of the political apparatus any more than they did in the west, he knew that those remaining gains for workers needed to be defended from a return to capitalism. The USSR, a formerly backward country, was able to modernise itself even during the epoch of imperialism. From being a backward, largely agricultural nation in 1917, the USSR's planned economy enabled it to industrialise, to mobilise the Red Army to smash Hitlerite fascism throughout Eastern Europe and, at the end of the Second World War, to emerge as one of two superpowers.

Against the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky called for *proletarian political revolution*, that is for workers to retake political control of the state, and return the Soviet Union as a beacon of international proletarian revolution against capitalism throughout the globe. Trotsky was a scientific socialist and his conclusions are based on Marxist science. Thus he was quite clear that the bureaucrats were not a capitalist class, but a new type of parasitic ruling *caste*, their social existence was dependent upon the collectivised property established by the Russian Revolution and therefore—and this is very important—they were based on a contradiction. That contradiction meant they were sometimes compelled to defend the Soviet Union against capitalism. Even though this ruling caste lived relatively privileged lives by comparison to the mass of the working people, even though they carried out often terrible repression—especially against the supporters of Trotsky's Left Opposition—to protect their existence, they had not destroyed the social basis of the Revolution.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* written in 1937, Trotsky explained:

"As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown."

You can draw a very simple analogy: imagine a trade union run by rotten leaders that was involved in a strike. No socialist in his right mind would call for the union to be smashed just because the union tops were corrupt, or because the struggle caused hardship, because this would be a huge defeat for the workers too. The very existence of the union is a gain to defend.

Trotsky went on to outline two possible outcomes to the class struggle with regard to the USSR. One was that the workers would struggle, the Revolution would spread to the citadels of imperialism internationally and in the USSR the workers would make a proletarian political revolution against the Stalinists, returning their state to the revolutionary internationalist perspective on which it was founded. The other was that counterrevolution would triumph, which was always a danger due to hostile imperialist encirclement of the world's first workers state, the bureaucratic and vacillating policies of the Stalinist bureaucrats both domestically and internationally, ie Stalin & Co's conciliation of imperialism at the expense of revolution internationally. Unfortunately, Trotsky was later proved correct in the negative. I should mention that we found workers in the former East Germany were amazed to read this book for the first time, and many could not believe that it had been written 50 years before.

"State capitalism" — a capitulation

So why was it that Cliff's Socialist Review Group (the SWP's forerunner) came into existence on the basis of abandoning Trotskyism and refusing to defend the Soviet Union, the North Korean and Chinese deformed workers states during the Korean War? The SWP's leaders won't tell it to you. Under the fig-leaf of the United Nations, Britain (then ruled by a Labour government) and the US were at war with North Korea, which was backed by China and the Soviet Union. Any support for the Communist forces meant coming head to head with the British ruling class and state at their most aggressive. This was unacceptable for the Cliff group, so they dropped it. They couldn't take the heat, so they got out of the kitchen, as they say. Rather than calling for unconditional military defence of China and North Korea, which meant calling for the military

defeat of their own bourgeoisie, they refused to defend the workers states. In order to cover their capitulation, the Cliffites resorted to equating both sides as waging war for their own "imperialist" interests.

This line was also flavoured with a hefty dose of patriotism: "Why must our young lads fight and die in far-off

drawal of British troops. Cliff, however, managed to find a rationale for supporting the British Army, encouraging faith in the supposedly democratic credentials of British imperialism. His argument was that it provided a "breathing space" needed for the Catholic population to avoid a pogrom. The pogrom did indeed occur: in Derry three years



Tony Blair with Parachute Regiment, Bloody Sunday butchers. SWP said British troops would give "breathing space" to oppressed Catholics.

Korea?" (*Socialist Review*, December 1952 - January 1953). By reneging on revolutionary defensism and placing themselves in the so-called "Third Camp"—which was supposedly for neither Washington nor Moscow—in the reality of the international class struggle they had crossed a clear class line and put themselves firmly in the camp of their own bourgeoisie, together with the Labour Party. They were rightly expelled from the Fourth International, founded by Trotsky in 1938.

In order to provide a theoretical justification for not defending the USSR, China and North Korea, Cliff & Co promoted the "theory" of state capitalism. Tony Cliff is generally credited with the invention of this theory but it was in fact first used by the infamous revisionist and apologist for the crimes of the Second International, Karl Kautsky, long before. "State capitalism" is not a serious Marxist theory, rather it is a way of rationalising defection from the essential task of defending the dictatorship of the proletariat. I can give you a quote from some years later in a paper called *The Leveller* in September 1979 where Cliff is caught in a moment of rare honesty. He says: "And I say no, no, we have nothing to do with bloody Russia, because it is not a source of strength." I think that makes it about as clear as it is going to be.

So this was how the SWP came to take the side of British imperialism, but I want to give you some other examples of enthusiastic support for the aims of its "own" ruling class. This wasn't some one-off failure based on a theoretical departure from Trotskyism; it was and is a fundamental part of the SWP's *programme* of class collaboration.

From Northern Ireland...

In 1969 the Labour government sent British troops to occupy Northern Ireland, and assist in the repression of the Catholic minority there. Revolutionaries in Britain have a particular responsibility to oppose British imperialism's oppression in Ireland which, for a start, means calling for the immediate and unconditional with-

drawal of British troops. Cliff, however, managed to find a rationale for supporting the British Army, encouraging faith in the supposedly democratic credentials of British imperialism. His argument was that it provided a "breathing space" needed for the Catholic population to avoid a pogrom. The pogrom did indeed occur: in Derry three years

...to Afghanistan and counter-revolution in the USSR

Let's look at the restoration of capitalism in Russia in 1991-1992. The SWP actively supported this. It is totally clear that this was a disaster for hundreds of millions of workers. The remaining gains of the October Revolution were finally undone. But Chris Harman of the SWP characterised the return to capitalism as a "step sideways" from one form of capitalism to another. Unemployment, virtually unknown in the former USSR, now exists on a huge scale; life expectancy has plummeted and industrial productivity is down to about 50 per cent of what it was before. Reactionary forces are on the rise—Great Russian chauvinism, Islamic fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, and appalling oppression for women. US imperialism and its partners, such as Blair's Labour government, feel unrestrained in their military adventures abroad. These are the concrete realities of Harman's "step sideways".

But the SWP grotesquely hailed Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary counter-coup as "The Russian Revolution of 1991" and the *Socialist Worker* of 31 August that year proclaimed: "Communism has collapsed... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing." For our part, the ICL actively fought to defend the gains of October, including within the Soviet Union, where our Moscow group distributed tens of thousands of leaflets headlined "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution".

One of the crucial events leading to the destruction of the USSR was the withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan. The SWP denounced the Soviet presence as Russian "imperialism". Against the CIA-backed *mujahedin* forces waging bloody civil war against even modest improvement in the condition of women in

continued on page 9

Spartacist no 55

Autumn 1999

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N Ireland...

(Continued from page 12)

January, when the bureaucracy did lead a workers rally, they got endorsements from the CBI and the British government's Northern Ireland secretary, John Reid. Class independence requires a struggle within the unions *against* the pro-capitalist bureaucracy.

The Socialist Party helped organise a separate rally of 400 workers in Belfast on 1 August, but their "anti-sectarian" posture is nothing but a cover for blindness to the oppression of Catholics. The need to combat the oppression of Catholics is a critical point that Protestant workers must understand in order to fight in their own *class* interests. The Socialist Party are known for defending the "right" of Orangemen to stage their anti-Catholic marches. They (and the SWP) have done their best to give "democratic" credentials within the workers movement to Billy Hutchinson, who is a spokesman for Loyalist death squads. (Here they are playing the same game as union bureaucrats like Mick O'Reilly who recruited Hutchinson into the [Irish transport union] ATGWU.) Not surprisingly, Hutchinson vehemently condemned workers' struggles against Loyalist death threats, saying: "I am fed up of the unions taking decisions on a whim and which are for one side of the community" (*Irish News*, 2 August).

The SWP also buried all reference to the oppression of Catholics at the Belfast demo. Although the British *Socialist Worker* (10 August) states the 2 August Belfast rally was in response to the "murder of a young Catholic man, Gerard Lawlor, by Loyalist paramilitaries", at the demonstration the Irish SWP distributed a leaflet entitled "Stand together against sectarianism" which completely failed to mention the oppression of Catholics in the North and didn't even use the word Loyalist. It is the hallmark of both the SP and

Belfast: Harland & Wolff shipyard, early 1900s. 1919 shipyard and engineering strike united Protestant and Catholic workers; in 1920 Catholics and socialists from both communities were driven out by Unionist-led violence, which prefigured partition.



But it does provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests and against sectarianism."

—*Socialist Worker*, 3 November 2001

This is no great surprise coming from the SWP, who in 1969 supported British troops being sent to Northern Ireland (by another Labour government) and claimed they would provide a "breathing space" for Catholics. Less than three years later the British Army murdered 14 Catholics in Derry on Bloody Sunday.

The London *Independent* (23 August) says: "Recent research suggests housing segregation has become more marked, and certainly the two sections of the working class in Belfast live almost entirely separately. Some, in fact, live behind peace lines to keep them apart." An illustration of life for Catholics behind so-called "peace lines" is the Short Strand area of East Belfast. Three thousand Catholics live in an enclave half a mile by half a mile entirely ringed by a 15-foot-high fence separating them from 60,000 Protestants. Almost every house inside the

your own risk". This situation is not unique—a 1998 book about Catholics in Portadown is aptly titled *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege*.

The Socialist Party ran an article on the violence in the Short Strand (*Socialist Voice*, May 2002) and managed not to mention *any* discrimination against Catholics! They simply say: "The underlying reason for the violence is the lack of jobs, the decline of services and the lack of affordable housing for people in the inner city working class communities." The lack of jobs and housing is a central issue in Northern Ireland, but communalism cannot be overcome simply by urging workers to "unite and fight" for purely economic demands. Class unity against sectarian terror must be linked to a fight against the discrimination and oppression of Catholics. A prevalent view in Northern Ireland is that this can only be achieved by making the situation worse for Protestants. Under capitalism this is true, which means there must be a fight for what the working class needs, not for what capitalism can afford. Revolutionaries would seek to unite workers around transitional demands—for a sliding scale of wages, work-sharing on full pay, jobs for all and good quality public housing—which transcend the framework of capitalism, as part of a programme for socialist revolution.

Southern Ireland is a clericalist Catholic state where the vast majority of the hospitals and national schools are controlled by the Catholic church. Divorce, only legalised in 1997, remains prohibitively expensive and requires that the spouses have lived apart for four of the preceding five years. Conditions for women are little better in the North. The British 1967 Abortion Act does not apply in Northern Ireland meaning that abortion is illegal in most cases. In fact, one of the few points on which the Pope and the Paisleyite fundamentalists agree is opposition to women's rights and abortion in particular. We fight for separation of church and state, and for free abortion on demand which are critical for advancing women's rights North and South.

Not Orange against Green but class against class!

Some workers at recent Belfast demonstrations agreed with our comrades that the British Army must get out, but coupled this with the nationalist view that Ireland must be reunited before there can be any hope of workers unity. Withdrawal of British troops does not in itself automatically ensure advance in a revolutionary direction, but it is the necessary starting point for

any just solution. As Leninists we uphold the right of self-determination for all nations, but we are implacably opposed to all nationalist ideology. In Northern Ireland both communities are geographically interpenetrated. Therefore "self-determination" for one can only be achieved by denying it to the other, which under capitalism leads to inter-communal slaughter.

We oppose the perspective of forcible imposition of a "united Ireland" upheld by Sinn Féin and other Irish nationalist forces. A united capitalist Ireland would reverse the terms of oppression against Protestants. Indeed Protestant fears of being forcibly incorporated into the southern state serve to compact Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots, making a polarisation along class lines all the more difficult. Thus the struggle against Catholic clericalism in the South is essential to breaking down communalism in the North. As we wrote in our 1977 "Theses on Ireland":

"We struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. While the establishment of a united workers state on the whole island may be preferable, the above demand is algebraic, leaving open the question of where the Protestants fall. This recognises that the nature of the Protestant community has not yet been determined in history. As such, it is counterposed to calls for a 'united workers republic' or for a 'united socialist Ireland' (where this demand is not simply an expression for left/nationalist or Stalinist two-stage theories). Placing the demand in the context of a socialist federation has the additional advantage of highlighting the essential relationship of the proletarian revolution in the whole area and the virtual impossibility of the resolution of the Irish question on a working-class basis outside this framework."

—*Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977

Many Catholics feel betrayed by Sinn Féin's active participation in the "peace" fraud, which put some Catholic faces in high places but did nothing to alleviate the situation of Catholics. Some now look to those nationalists who oppose the "peace" process, such as the "Real IRA". But, whether using the "Armalite" or the "ballot box", Irish nationalism is a political dead-end which cannot further the interests of the Catholic minority. Marxists reject the strategy of individual terror because it runs counter to the necessary task of mobilising the proletariat against the imperialist and capitalist oppressors. Viewed from the standpoint of the proletariat, nationalist terror ranges from merely stupid—such as the 1972 Official IRA bombing of the Parachute Regiment headquarters in Aldershot which killed six civilian workers, five of them women, and the Catholic chaplain but no soldiers—to downright criminal, such as the 1998 Omagh bombing by



July 1997: RUC on Garvaghy Road. Labour government forced through anti-Catholic Orange march.

SWP to patronisingly stoop to the lowest consciousness.

While the SWP now headlines "Peace process fuelling sectarianism", until recently they were gushing about the opportunities for "class politics" the imperialist "peace" deal would supposedly provide. Last year they heralded the "tremendous hopes for peace in Northern Ireland following the IRA's announcement that it will destroy its weapons". They claimed that the British Labour government's imperialist "peace" process provides "space" for united working-class struggle:

"It can reproduce the sectarian division that is built into the Northern Ireland state.

perimeter has had windows broken by pipe-bombings and stone throwing. According to the *Guardian* (11 June), there are no shops inside and no post office; residents are often afraid to venture outside to collect their benefits, or to get their drugs from the chemist. In one instance a community nurse volunteered to collect the medicines for everybody within, but the pharmacist refused to serve her, saying he had been threatened if he served Catholics. There are printed notices to be found in the area saying no Catholics are to be served. Nearby there's a huge, freshly-painted mural that says "No Short Strand T---[Catholics] on Our Road. At

the "Real IRA", which killed and injured Protestant and Catholic civilians in a shopping area. This was in no way a blow against imperialism. When Irish nationalists strike a blow against the forces of British imperialism, the RUC/PSNI or Loyalist death squads, we defend the perpetrators of such acts against state retribution. Even when they do hit a military target, their actions are still carried out as part of a perspective that writes off the proletariat in Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic, and also in Britain, which has a significant Irish component.

There is a felt need in Northern Ireland for some form of protection against sectarian attacks, and trade unionists have been acting instinctively in defence of their fellow workers whose lives are threatened. What's needed are anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Loyalist terror as well as attacks by Green nationalists. Political consciousness is critical to organising such workers militias. To be effective, they would require the leadership of cadre with real authority among work-

ers from both communities. That precludes their being led by nationalists, trade union bureaucrats, fake socialists who support the imperialist "peace" fraud, and in fact pretty much any leadership other than one based on the communist programme, including opposition to the imperialist presence. Each militia unit must incorporate both Catholic and Protestant workers and should be based in the trade unions, necessarily requiring a hard struggle against the existing union leadership. Organising marshals at trade union rallies to repel any sectarian provocation could be a starting point for such militias. Under the direction of Leninist cadre, these could become the nucleus of an integrated anti-sectarian militia, which could for instance have made a difference by organising an integrated, trade union-based defence of the Holy Cross schoolgirls in Ardoyne who were confronted by a Loyalist mob last year.

With growing economic recession and redundancies, for instance the hundreds projected at Shorts, the capitalists will increasingly resort to sectarianism

to divide the workers, which could lead to increased communalism. But it is important not to accept what exists at present as the inevitable outcome of history. A revolutionary party must be alert to opportunities that will arise in situations that are poisoned by communalism, especially since such opportunities may be transient. There is the potential for the current round of class struggle in Britain to extend to Northern Ireland, in particular a national strike by firefighters or other public sector workers chafing under Blair's vicious austerity and drive towards privatisation.

The most significant example of united struggle by Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland was the Belfast engineering strike of 1919. One of the most significant class battles in Irish history, it was part of a wave of tumultuous strikes in engineering centres, including Glasgow. The British Army was deployed in Belfast and the trade unions, the majority of whose members were Protestant, shut down the city in a strike that was led by a

socialist of Catholic background, Charles McKay. The strike was betrayed by Labour bureaucrats, in Britain and Ireland. A hideous wave of communalism followed in 1920 when 9000 Catholics and 3000 Protestants—mainly shop stewards and socialists—were driven out of their jobs. This communalism was the result of an enormous defeat in struggle and the subsequent "ethnic cleansing" laid the basis for partition.

As internationalists, we seek the solution to the sectarian divide not purely within Ireland, but as part of a revolutionary solution of all the national oppression on these Isles—including that of the Scots and the Welsh—through the overthrow of British and Irish capitalism and the establishment of working-class rule. The Spartacist League/Britain and the Spartacist Group Ireland are dedicated to building parties to fight for an Irish workers republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

Reprinted from *Spartacist Ireland* no 2, Autumn/Winter 2002.

SWP...

(Continued from page 7)

Afghanistan—the reduction of the bride price, the lifting of the veil and education of girls and women—we Spartacists recognised the progressive role played by the Red Army forces in Afghanistan. Our slogan was: "Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!" Workers in the west needed to be called on to stand against the sending of arms and money to the *mujahedin*, just as trade unions were mobilised to stop supplies of arms to the counterrevolutionary White forces during the Russian Civil War that followed the 1917 Revolution. We offered to recruit volunteers to fight for the Kabul government after the Kremlin had decided to withdraw. While our offer was refused, we took up the suggestion of the Afghan government to raise funds for the besieged fighters at Jalalabad and in fact were able to raise thousands of pounds internationally on their behalf.

As for the SWP, one of its leaders, Paul Foot, actually attacked Margaret Thatcher (who, along with the US rulers, was in the forefront of backing the reactionary Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan) from the right in his column in the *Daily Mirror*, 25 June 1980, complaining that exports of EU meat ("our beef") may have been used in rations for the Red Army. When the Red Army was finally withdrawn, *Socialist Worker* (4 February 1989) said: "The repercussions of this defeat will echo way beyond the borders of Afghanistan. All socialists should welcome it." I think this makes pretty clear the side which the SWP had taken in the wider struggle.

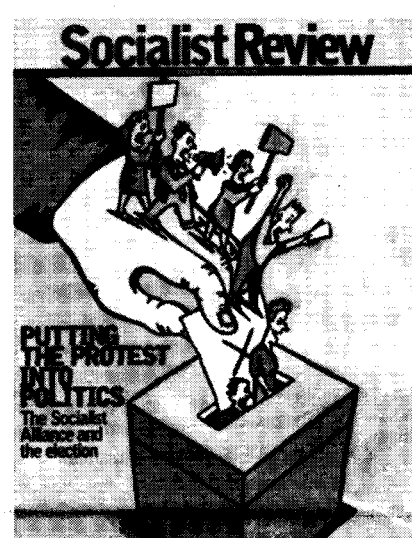
The SWP and Labourism

How can we explain these betrayals of the international working class by the SWP? They are based on a split from Trotskyism to join the camp of Labour, the party that serves to tie the working class to British imperialism. This is why they will not oppose them in elections. This has always been true, long before the SWP's turn towards electoralism via the Socialist Alliance. The politics of the Socialist Alliance, meanwhile, are even to the right of the politics of "Old Labour". Subordinated to the goal of getting New Labour re-elected, it is nothing more than a pressure group on

Blair & Co. This was made clear when the SWP announced in the last general election: "Our approach in the coming election should be vote Socialist where you can, vote Labour where you must" (*International Socialism* no 90, Spring 2001).

The historic role of the Labour Party in Britain can be seen in regard to the Russian Revolution. Labour vehemently opposed it. In the years immediately after the Russian Revolution, workers in the west knew that something historic had been achieved for their class, and they wanted it here too. What they didn't know was how to get it. To head off revolutionary explosions, Labour adopted measures like Clause IV in its constitution, which called for collective ownership of the means of production. At the time, the Labour Party had never been in power and Lenin advocated tactics, such as critical electoral support, in order to expose its real purpose—to rule for the bourgeoisie—and thus to effect a split by the working-class base from the pro-capitalist tops of what Lenin called a bourgeois workers party. I think it is quite clear that this is a tactic which does not apply today to Blair's "New Labour". In the last general elections we did apply the tactic of critical support for Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP). The SLP are based on Old Labour "Clause IV" socialism and there is no way they can lead workers to revolution. Our critical support was based on their refusal to support Labour in any way and the fact that, unlike the Socialist Alliance, they advanced basic demands in the interest of the working class, including the demand for British troops out of Northern Ireland.

The SWP's Labour-loyalism is the total antithesis to the whole concept of building revolutionary consciousness, serving to tie workers to illusions in the "mother of parliaments", as Labour leaders obsequiously worship institutions such as the monarchy, House of Lords and established churches. And this is what the SWP has always done: at each election the SWP says "vote Labour with no illusions", and then four years later "vote Labour with no illusions", ad nauseam. Today, there are a lot of youth and workers who are a million miles to the left of Tony Blair and would rather cut their own throats than vote for him. The huge gap between New Labour and workers and youth today is an opening we seek to utilise in



Socialist Alliance aims to corral youth and workers into "Old Labour" parliamentarism.

order to build a revolutionary Leninist/Trotskyist party. The SWP, through its various coalitions, alliances and electoral campaigns, seek on the contrary to rope radical youth and advanced workers back into the Labourite fold.

The "third camp" v revolutionary internationalism

The position taken by the SWP over the Russian Question is not some irrelevant piece of history. It is their political credentials. It mattered then and it matters now because capitalism has not yet been restored in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. There have

been major battles fought by millions of workers against the introduction of "market reforms" being introduced in China and elsewhere. How can you seriously fight against capitalism if you don't fight against its return to these states where capitalism has been overthrown by mass insurgencies? Should, for instance, the proponents of capitalist counterrevolution prevail in China, another billion workers to exploit in China will only strengthen huge corporations and weaken the position of workers everywhere. This is not an abstract argument for internationalists.

There is no, and can be no, third camp because the third camp is merely the camp of imperialism. The Labourism inherent in the politics of the SWP reflects the basic capitulation to its "own" bourgeoisie codified by its abandonment of the Trotskyist programme for unconditional military defence of all those states where capitalism had been overthrown, not least in the homeland of the October Revolution.

Comrades of the Spartacist League fight for the international, proletarian and revolutionary communism of Lenin and Trotsky, for new Octobers. The SWP denounce us as "sectarians" for this. We are proud to do the groundwork needed to build a revolutionary party here in Britain, carrying out the necessary fights against social democracy and its hangers-on, fighting to win serious revolutionaries to the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. Join us! ■

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Iraq...

(Continued from page 1)

blockade, among them an estimated 5000 children under the age of five who die every month from malnutrition and lack of medical care.

For class struggle against imperialist war!

War is the continuation of politics by other means. Imperialist war is the concentrated expression of the "normal" workings of the capitalist system, which daily condemns countless numbers of people around the world to death by malnutrition, lack of medical care and industrial "accidents". As always, imperialist terror abroad will mean further attempts at repression and regimentation at home.

From the moment they took office, Blair & Co have waged a relentless war on workers and the oppressed in Britain, zealously pushing union-busting privatisation, cuts in social services, racist deportations and attacks on racial minorities. The criminal terrorist attacks of September 11 provided but a pretext for the Labour government to intensify their assault, launching a so-called "war on terror" and attempting to impose a "national unity"—during which workers would renounce fighting for their interests.

Labour has given itself the power to detain without trial non-citizens suspected of "international terrorism" and stepped up deportations of asylum seekers. This has led to a vast increase in racist violence, targeting Muslims and particularly women in veils. Last month, racists stabbed 28-year-old Iranian refugee Peiman Bahmani to death in Sunderland and British Asians are bracing themselves for increased racist attacks when war starts.

Labour's attacks on immigrants and minorities intersect their union-busting privatisation plans: privatisation means the creation of a two-tier workforce, where subcontractors often employ mainly non-union immigrant workers in the "bottom" tier. Faced with this attempt to divide workers in Britain along ethnic and national lines, it is vital for the whole working class to organise the unorganised into the unions and take up the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, linking this to the struggle against privatisation.

The Labour Party is widely despised by working people, who see it as no different from the Tories. Despite Blair's attempts to impose "national unity" there has been a revival of class struggle in Britain, particularly by public sector and rail workers. For the first time in 25 years, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is planning a national strike over pay in October. RMT members in the Tube and other city underground systems are being balloted for strike action over safety in the event of an FBU strike. Workers in the Channel Tunnel have also indicated they will not work without fire cover. This poses the possibility of a major class confrontation between workers and the hated Labour government as it prepares for war. Joint strike action by these powerful unions would strike a massive blow against British imperialism's ability to pursue war against Iraq.

Aware of this possibility, the bosses and Labour are already geared up to treat any workers struggling for their own interests during the war as the "enemy within". The military is ominously training 12,000 soldiers for breaking the FBU strike, Downing Street advisers are reportedly working on plans to ban all public-sector strikes during war against Iraq (*Morning Star*, 14

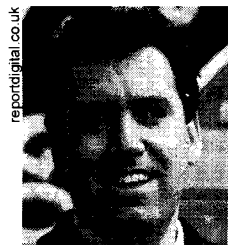
September), and the bourgeois press has begun to whip up a patriotic, anti-union frenzy, accusing the FBU of leaving the country without fire cover for possible "terrorist attacks" (BBC News, 11 September). Labour will not hesitate to use the army; they made this abundantly clear in autumn 2000 when they threatened to use the army to break the fuel protests. It is vital for the entire workers movement to ensure that the FBU is not left to go it alone against the government—all public-sector and rail unions, themselves targeted by Labour's privatisation, must rally in defence of the FBU against army strike-breaking. In the US, the West Coast dockers union has similarly been threatened by the Bush administration, who say they will use anti-union laws and even US Navy personnel to run the ports if dockers go on



David Sandison



Workers Hammer



Firefighters, led by Andy Gilchrist (top right) demonstrate in London in August. Bob Crow (right) says in the event of firefighters strike, Tube should be shut down. Vicious Labour government threatens army strike-breaking (left).

strike during the "war on terror".

Labour's vicious plans for the FBU strike highlight the connection between class struggle at home and opposition to British imperialism. It is in the interest of working people in Britain to fight for the defence of Iraq against imperialist attack, to support the struggles of those oppressed by British imperialism, and to fight for British troops out of Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, and the Balkans.

For class struggle at home against British capitalist rulers and their Labour government! Defend Iraq against imperialist attack! Down with the UN starvation blockade! US, British, UN and all imperialist forces out of Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Near East! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Defend the Muslim population and all victims of Labour's racist witch hunt!

Labour "lefts" pressure warmonger Blair

Faced with a growing hatred of

opposition to war on Iraq and hatred of the Labour government at the base of the unions led to a major clash at the TUC conference this month. In opposition to the TUC's pro-UN line, members of the so-called "awkward squad" of left union bureaucrats correctly opposed war even if sanctioned by the UN. An anti-war amendment they supported was only narrowly defeated. However, they argued not for class-struggle opposition to the war, nor for defence of Iraq, but appealed to the very Labour government that is attacking trade unions and minorities at home not to support the US. Thus Bob Crow wrote during the conference that "Tony Blair could do a massive service to humanity by urging the US president to call off his war plans against Iraq" (*Morning Star*, 10 September), and stated that instead of an attack "what we want to look at is further economic sanctions first of all, if need be" (BBC News Forum, 9 September). But sanctions themselves are an act of war and merely a prelude to bombing Iraq.

hatred of the government by leading a number of defiant strikes, their political perspective is entirely within the bounds of the existing capitalist order. This is clear in their attempts to revive the moribund parliamentary "left" wing of the Labour Party, in the form of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, whose mentor is Tony Benn. For decades, Benn peddled his "Little England" nationalist programme, manipulating genuine working-class opposition to US imperialism into amnestying the British bourgeoisie, while occasionally offering alternative policies for British imperialism. This was the case in the 1991 Gulf War, when Benn called for UN sanctions against Iraq instead of military attack.

Stop the War Coalition: unity with bishops, bosses

Giving a left cover to the perspective of the "left" trade union bureaucracy is the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who have set up the Stop the War (StW) Coalition. StW is an alliance with bishops,

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bourgeois parties (like the Greens), “left” Labour MPs, trade union bureaucrats, mosques and the like for the stated purpose of appealing to the Labour government to “stop the war”. Thus, in its call for the upcoming London anti-war demonstration StW writes that “An enormous demonstration on 28 September can make Tony Blair think again.”

The “unity” StW preaches is not that of the working class and its allies internationally, on the basis of class struggle against the capitalists at home, but unity with pro-imperialist politicians who are hostile to working-class struggle and certainly no friends of the Iraqi people. In order to secure this class-collaborationist alliance the SWP does not defend Iraq, nor do they raise a single demand for class-struggle opposition to the war. In fact, the SWP, together with Workers Power (WP), its youth group Revo, and a panoply of European fake-socialists organising the European Social Forum, signed an 8 September “appeal” calling “on all the European heads of state to take a public stand against this war...and to ask George Bush to abandon his war plans” (*Liberazione*, 13 September)!

Leon Trotsky savagely exposed these politics of “broad unity” to “pressure” imperialism. Writing in 1935 (in the run up to the World War II inter-imperialist slaughter) “To Young Communists and Socialists Who Wish to Think” regarding the centrist policies of the German Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Trotsky explained:

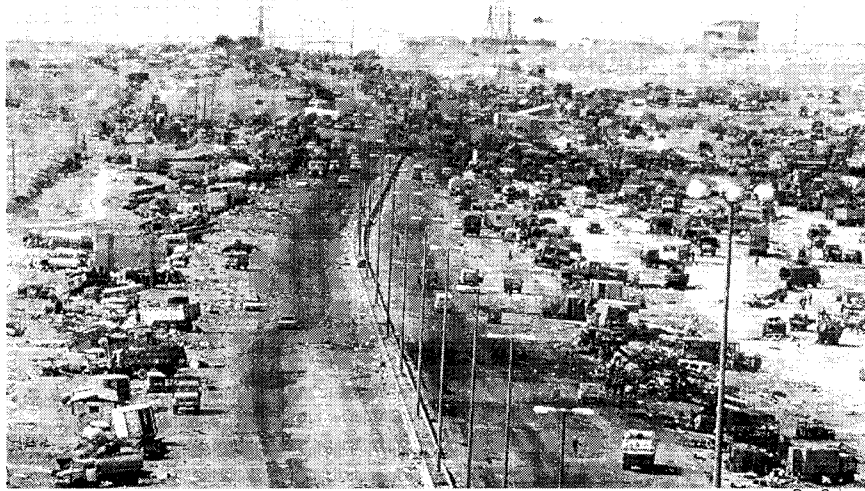
“No high-sounding phrases on the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat can wipe away the real, that is, pacifist, character of the SAP policy which proposes to gather ‘all forces’ for disarmament and peace, to form for this purpose an ‘all-inclusive committee.’ Whoever preaches that the imperialists can — under the ‘pressure’ of the masses — disarm peacefully, denies at the same time the necessity of proletarian revolution. For what sort of a revolution can there be against a *disarmed bourgeoisie*?”

Preaching unity with pro-imperialist politicians and the lie that British imperialism can be “pressured” into “more humane” policies, the SWP/StW hide the fact that exploitation, unemployment, racism and imperialist wars are intrinsic to the capitalist system and will only be eliminated once the working class overthrows the capitalist order through international socialist revolution. In so doing, they promote the lie that the capitalist state can act in the interests of the oppressed through mass pressure, disarming and diverting militant workers and leftist youth from the struggle against the capitalist system and war. Nowhere are the dangers posed by such illusions clearer right now than in the event of a fire-fighters strike, where the FBU would likely face the full might of the capitalist state in the form of army strike-breaking.

Seeking to cover its left flank in the eyes of its younger supporters, the SWP has sought on paper to differentiate itself from the pro-UN, pro-imperialist politics of its “anti-war” partners. Thus *Socialist Worker* (24 August) argues that “it is very dangerous to say that war on Iraq is wrong ‘unless endorsed by the UN’”. But loath to offend its “own” ruling class, the SWP disappears from the article any mention of atrocities committed by *British imperialism* under a UN flag, such as the 1950-53 Korean War where a US/British force slaughtered *three million people*. In fact, it was during that war that SWP founder Tony Cliff’s supporters were *expelled* from the Trotskyist Fourth International for refusing to defend the North Korean deformed workers state and Korean workers and peasants fighting for a

social revolution against the genocidal onslaught of the US, Britain and its South Korean capitalist/landlord props, using the anti-Marxist argument that North Korea, China and the USSR were “state capitalist” (see article on page 6).

In its search for “broad unity”, the SWP also panders to all manner of reactionary, anti-woman religious obscurantism, lionising the Archbishop of Canterbury for his anti-war stance, suggesting that “it would surely be a good way to start his office by leading his flock onto the anti-war demo on 28 September” (*Socialist Worker*, 3 August). In line with its appeal to this decrepit medievalist prop of the British capitalist establishment, the SWP—in true ecumenical style—politically accommodates to a number of Muslim religious organisations in StW. Thus they have printed a letter by leading Anti Nazi League member Aamer Anwar claiming that the presence of veiled women at anti-war demonstra-



“Mile of death” north of Kuwait City, February 1991, as US/British planes bombed fleeing Iraqis for 18 hellish hours.

tions “totally demolish[es] the Western myth of oppressed women” (*Socialist Worker*, 17 August)! Asian women, who are the main target of racist attacks, have in fact featured prominently in anti-war demonstrations. At the same time, they are oppressed by tradition, often segregated, and many wear the veil. Contrary to Anwar’s patronising drivel, the veil is both a symbol and an instrument of women’s oppression.

The craven political character of StW is also clear from the fact that a keynote speaker at the StW-initiated 28 September demo will be none other than Ken Livingstone. Livingstone, who is still struggling fiercely to be readmitted into Tony Blair’s Labour Party, supported the NATO imperialist bombing of Serbia in 1999—using that opportunity to recant his opposition to the 1991 Gulf War. As mayor of London he chairs Transport for London (TfL), which is taking over management of the Tube, including the implementation of Blair’s union-busting privatisation programme. Disgracefully, Bob Crow, whose union will be facing the deadly consequences of privatisation of the Tube, has joined Livingstone and union-buster Bob Kiley on the TfL management board. Such class collaboration is in flat contradiction to the necessary struggle by Tube unions against privatisation.

Striking a more leftist posture for peddling the same reformism is the centrist Workers Power. Last month WP announced that in the case of war against Iraq they would stand for the defeat of imperialism and defence of Iraq (*Workers Power Global Week*, 11 August). But in the true spirit of “little England” nationalism, the “socialists” of WP have managed not to say a single word about the crimes of British imperialism or the need for the working class in

Britain to oppose the British ruling class — not in any *Global Week* article, nor in a page-long article titled “Hands off Iraq!” in the September issue of *Workers Power*. Instead, after listing a number of crimes committed by US imperialism, the September article has a whole section on “Getting rid of Saddam”, where WP does talk about class struggle and even a “workers government”... in Iraq. But when it comes to Britain and indeed any country in Europe, as evident in the “appeal” to “European heads of state” they co-signed, their perspective is simply to plead to their “own” capitalist governments.

Defend Iraq! For Permanent Revolution!

While firmly nestled inside the pro-imperialist StW Coalition, the Stalinist-influenced Socialist Labour Party Youth —organised around the newspapers *Spark* and *Lalkar*—at the same time promote the “anti-imperialist” creden-

imperialist powers... Revolutionary support for China’s struggle does not, however, mean that revolutionists must furnish cover for the bankrupt Kuomintang regime and the Chinese bourgeoisie... China’s national liberation, and the emancipation of the Chinese masses from all exploitation, can be achieved only by the Chinese masses themselves, in alliance with the proletariat and oppressed peoples of all the world.”

Likewise today, the mobilisation of the Iraqi masses in struggle against an imperialist assault must be combined with the struggle to overthrow the bloody regime of Saddam Hussein. In the 1950s, Iraq had a powerful proletarian movement under the leadership of the Communist Party (ICP). The overthrow of the British-backed monarchy by a military coup in 1958 opened up a revolutionary situation in which the proletariat could have seized power had the Stalinist ICP leadership not subordinated the struggle to the nationalists. This betrayal paved the way for a blood-bath of workers, Kurds and Communists by the bourgeois-nationalist Ba’ath Party, in which Saddam Hussein was then a rising star, with the CIA providing lists of those to be murdered.

From the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 to the Iraqi Revolution of 1958, the Stalinist programme of “two-stage revolution”, subordinating the proletariat to a supposedly “anti-imperialist” national bourgeoisie, has meant bloody defeat for the workers. From Egypt to Iraq and Iran, bourgeois-nationalist regimes act as local enforcers of imperialist subjugation and backwardness. Despite formal independence, the semi-colonial bourgeoisies of the Near East remain dependent on the imperialists and fearful of any challenge to their class rule by the proletariat and the oppressed.

It is necessary to forge Trotskyist parties based on the perspective of permanent revolution: the chains of imperialist subjugation can only be broken through a workers revolution that shatters bourgeois rule as part of the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution, especially in the imperialist citadels. Only within a socialist federation of the Near East can the national rights of all the many peoples of the region be achieved, from the Palestinians to the Kurdish population, which is divided among Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

The reformists and centrists promote the liberal lie that imperialism is just a policy which can be changed through pressuring the capitalist state. But as Lenin stressed in polemicising against similar views advanced by German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, imperialism is the “highest stage of capitalism”, marked by the concentration and domination of finance capital, the pre-eminence of the export of capital and competition and wars among the advanced capitalist countries to control markets and spheres of exploitation.

We of the International Communist League adhere to Lenin’s injunction in *Socialism and War* that revolutionaries “not deceive the people with admitting the idea that a peace without annexations, without oppression of nations, without plunder, and without the embryo of new wars among the present governments and ruling classes, is possible in the absence of a revolutionary movement”. We fight for socialist revolution in Britain, the US and internationally as the only way to put an end to war and imperialist oppression. This requires building revolutionary working-class parties like Lenin’s Bolsheviks, in Britain and around the world, as part of reforging Trotsky’s Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

“The defeat of Japanese imperialism will not only open roads to the revolution in China and Japan but will encourage fresh waves of revolt in all the colonies of the

Northern Ireland: trade unions act against sectarian terror

Catholic minority under siege

This summer, violence in Northern Ireland reached the highest level since the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. An article about Belfast in the *Guardian* (11 June) noted “Almost incredibly for a city supposedly under ceasefire, the number of bombings and shootings in Belfast last year was the highest for 20 years.” In August the Catholic captain of the Northern Ireland team, Neil Lennon, was forced to retire from international soccer after Loyalists threatened to kill him.

British troops out now!

tive, any fight against Loyalist terror must politically confront the capitalist system that breeds it as well as the state forces that back the Loyalists—the British Army and the renamed RUC, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Key to making workers conscious of this fact and to breaking them

Belfast Telegraph (15 February) the “Waterside Young Loyalists” issued threats not only to Catholic postmen in Derry but also against Protestant workers who had defended Catholics. Workers at three Belfast hospitals also protested last month when the “Catholic Reaction Force” threatened to kill three

was led by Sinn Féin’s Alex Maskey, Lord Mayor of Belfast. The rally drew several thousand workers from many unions. But the spectacle on the speakers platform showed the utter political bankruptcy of the trade union bureaucracy—workers had to endure speeches from the CBI, the bosses’ organisation, the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Sinn Féin, and the leaders of four Christian churches, who led the demonstrators in prayer!

The Socialist Party (SP) and Socialist



Bill Smyth/Irish News

August 2 trade union rally in Belfast protests sectarian attacks (left). Leadership seeks to channel working-class anger into support for Labour’s imperialist “peace deal”, which brings intensified attacks against Catholic minority. Right: Terrorised Catholics live in boarded-up houses in East Belfast’s Short Strand.



Big Flynn

Particularly in working-class areas, the Catholic minority live under siege. In East Belfast’s Short Strand, Catholics are segregated within a ghetto and subjected to nightly terror by Loyalists, the army and police.

Tony Blair blithely asserted on 4 July that Northern Ireland is in the process of “transition from violence to democracy”, meaning his prized “peace” deal is working. The myth of British “democracy” was never much in evidence in Ireland, and the “peace process” is a fraud. We call for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British troops, and have consistently warned against illusions in any imperialist deal, which of necessity has been, is and will be at the expense of the oppressed Catholics, and does not serve the interests of the Protestant working class either.

Oppression of the Catholic minority is at the very foundation of the bourgeois order in Northern Ireland; it is reinforced by British imperialism and enshrined in the so-called “peace” deal which rests on the British Army presence. Sectarianism serves the interests of the capitalist exploiters by keeping the working class divided. To be effective,

from illusions in the imperialist “peace” fraud is the intervention of a revolutionary internationalist party.

In the last 18 months teachers, postal workers, hospital staff and ambulance workers have been threatened by Loyalist paramilitaries and their union brothers and sisters have responded. The murder of a Catholic teenager, Gerard Lawlor, in Belfast in July by Loyalist gunmen sparked renewed fears among workers. On 1 August, following yet another death threat against a Catholic worker by a Loyalist death squad, Catholic and Protestant health workers staged a one-day strike. In January postal workers throughout the North struck for five days protesting the Loyalist murder of a Catholic union brother, Daniel McColgan. At the time, the Irish Council of Trade Unions (ICTU) organised a 15,000-strong protest rally in Belfast and smaller rallies in other cities while public sector workers staged a half-day strike. Since then, postal workers in Derry have walked off the job a number of times in response to death threats from Loyalists.

Loyalist paramilitaries condemned the union protests—according to the

members of staff if they turned up to work. Although Loyalist violence far exceeds that of the nationalists, on 1 August dissident Republicans placed a bomb in a lunchbox at a Territorial Army base in Derry which has been closed since July 2001, killing Protestant construction worker David Caldwell. This was criminal and can only help push Protestant workers towards the Loyalist reactionaries.

The union mobilisations demonstrate the social power of a united proletariat and present an opportunity to win Protestant and Catholic workers to a proletarian revolutionary perspective, to transcend the sectarian divide by understanding the need to get rid of the capitalist system.

However, the trade union tops undermine the social power of the unions by seeking to re-direct working-class anger into support for the imperialist “peace” deal. Under mounting pressure from their members to act in response to the murder of Gerard Lawlor, the ICTU pleaded with Belfast City Council to lead an “anti-sectarian” rally, which they did on 2 August. This brought howls of anti-Catholic venom from Ian Paisley’s DUP, enraged that the rally

Workers Party (SWP) both claim to fight for “class unity against sectarianism” but this is bogus. Both organisations refuse to call in Britain for troops out of Northern Ireland and peddle illusions in British imperialism’s “peace deal”, which is premised on the presence of British troops. This makes them obstacles to the fight against Loyalist terror.

The Socialist Party correctly criticised the Belfast City Council-sponsored rally because of its leadership and called for “independent workers action”, by which they meant the ICTU bureaucracy should lead it. According to their British paper, “unfortunately NIC-ICTU rejected the proposal for independent mass action” (*The Socialist*, 9 August). Likewise the SWP says “it is up to the trade unions to take the lead. Leaving it to politicians to lead the call only blunts the message” (*Socialist Worker*, no 180 [undated]). The Socialist Party and SWP act as left tails of the trade union misleaders by calling for “independent” trade union action without stating that even when the trade unions call their own actions, the union tops push class collaboration. In

continued on page 8