

Operation Banner: 38 years of British Army terror in Northern Ireland

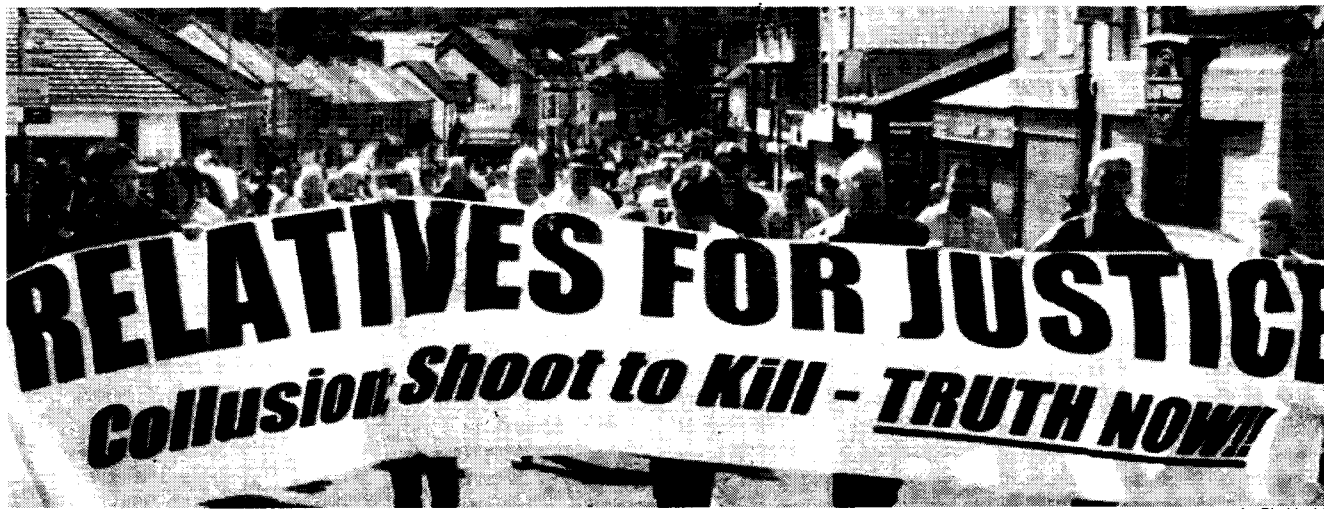
The myth of British imperialism as a force for peace

All British troops and bases out of Northern Ireland now!

On 1 August the British Army officially ended "Operation Banner", the codename given to its military operation in Northern Ireland that began in 1969. The formal ending of the army's role—which has been greatly reduced on the streets since the IRA cease-fire—is partly a recognition that the British military is overstretched in the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Nevertheless an internal report prepared by the army itself entitled "Operation Banner—An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland" brags that the army's campaign in Northern Ireland, was "one of the very few ever brought to a successful conclusion by the armed forces of a developed nation against an irregular force" and is being used as a model for other countries, saying: "Operations in the Balkans, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq have already demonstrated both the particular techniques and the levels of expertise learnt through hard experience, both on the streets and in the fields of Northern Ireland."

The foreword is written by none other than General Sir Michael Jackson, retired former head of the British Army during the Iraq invasion and former Chief of the General Staff. Jackson is an authentic spokesman for the top echelons of the British state's armed forces. He earned his stripes in Derry on Bloody Sunday in January 1972 as adjutant to the Parachute Regiment, the regiment that was centrally involved in the cold-blooded killing of 13 Catholic civilians (another man shot by the army died later). The army's report predictably glosses over the brutality of these imperialist butchers. Dealing with Bloody Sunday, its only criticism of the army is that one commander used vehicles, rather than foot soldiers, in the "arrest operation", which is described as "heavy handed". It chillingly states: "Almost immediately shots were fired and within minutes 12 civilians were dead". To date, despite a public inquiry, the army has not even admitted that its soldiers carried out this killing.

British "democracy" was never much in evidence in Ireland and this report by the military's top brass confirms that the brutality carried out under Operation Banner is not only regarded as legiti-



An Phoblacht

Belfast demonstration on 12 August demands truth about British imperialism's shoot-to-kill policy and collusion with murderous Loyalist paramilitaries. Below: a child wounded by rubber bullet is carried away on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, when 13 Catholic civilians were shot dead by British Army.



Peress/Magnum

mate, but will become the blueprint for the future. This applies not only to imperialist machinations abroad, but equally to the "war on terror" in Britain. The British imperialists pride themselves on their mastery of "counterinsurgency", based on the experience of subjugation in their former colonies. This point is not lost on the US imperialists: General David Petraeus, who currently commands US imperialism's troop "surge" in Iraq, recently published a "counterinsurgency" manual drawing on the example of Malaysia in the 1950s, where the British military crushed an anti-colonial revolt with unspeakable brutality. About half a million mainly ethnic Chinese, the base of the Communist-led insurgency, were forcibly concentrated in "new villages"—concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire and observation posts. Atrocities by the British imperialist butchers included wanton massacres of villagers as well as beheadings, as the gruesome photograph of a British officer displaying the severed heads of two of

their victims (page 4) shows. The British Army chiefs transferred the "lessons" of Malaysia to Northern Ireland.

The British capitalist rulers are particularly well-versed in the use of local militias to do their dirty work while denying responsibility for it, as they used the Loyalist death squads in Northern Ireland against Catholics. They have long used Northern Ireland as the testing ground for domestic repression in Britain, as is evident in the "war on terror". The treatment routinely dished out to Irish Catholics, who were once indiscriminately targeted as "terrorist suspects", is now being applied to Britain's Muslims and indeed to any perceived opponent of British imperialism. Internment without trial and the shoot-to-kill policy, practised for years on the streets of Northern Ireland, has been brought to the streets of London as seen in the brutal execution of Brazilian immigrant Jean Charles de Menezes who was labelled a "terror-

ism suspect" in July 2005.

The much-trumpeted end of Operation Banner in no way means the end of British troops in Northern Ireland. In fact the army is keeping in place a garrison of some 5000 troops, stationed at three bases, who can be called upon instantly to provide "assistance" to the 9000-strong heavily armed Police Service of Northern Ireland/Royal Ulster Constabulary (PSNI/RUC) police force. **We demand: All British troops and bases out now!**

We have consistently fought for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops as an essential starting point for any just solution. We pointed out that the 1998 "Good Friday Agreement" was premised on the presence of the British Army whose purpose was the maintenance of the Orange statelet. As Marxists we seek to bring a proletarian internationalist perspective to struggles in Northern Ireland. Regardless of the presence of Sinn Fein today in the Stormont Executive, Northern Ireland is a sectarian statelet based on the subjugation of the oppressed Catholic minority and divide and rule of the working class. The backbone of the state is the PSNI/RUC and, for the last 38 years, the blood-soaked British Army.

The imperialist "peace" deal and Blair's bloody legacy

For decades the British imperialist rulers have made no secret of the fact that they want rid of the cost and burden of their massive operation in Northern Ireland. But as we have always warned, this in no way implies that the British ruling class—which has perpetrated 800 years of subjugation of Ireland—has suddenly become neutral, as reformists, liberals and Sinn Fein nationalists would have us believe. Such illusions in the "democratic" credentials of British

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Class battle in the postal service

We reprint below a Spartacist League leaflet issued on 8 August and distributed to postal workers battling Royal Mail over pay and in defence of their pensions. In the wake of a number of wildcat strikes in Scotland and elsewhere by postal workers furious at management's provocative victimisation of strikers, on 9 August the CWU leadership of Billy Hayes and Dave Ward treacherously suspended all further official strikes in order to hold talks with the management. Calling off the strikes did not go down

well with the union's members. At London's Mount Pleasant sorting office, angry postal workers told Workers Hammer sellers that they feared a sell-out.

As we go to press the CWU has announced that the talks, extended to 9 September, have ended without agreement and that Royal Mail intends to push through its agenda of attacks on the wages and conditions of postal workers. In response the union has now said it is planning to call further strikes before the end of September.



TROTSKY

The partition of India

Sixty years ago British imperialism was driven out of India by a tumultuous upheaval that involved millions of workers, soldiers, students and women. The final phase of the struggle began with the 1942 Quit India movement and reached a climax in 1945-46. What was posed was not only the question of independence from 250 years of British subjugation but of social liberation of the subcontinent's

toiling masses from centuries of caste, gender, communal and class oppression. What was needed was a revolutionary vanguard party based on India's small but strategic proletariat, drawing behind it the peasants and other oppressed to oust the British and to expropriate the native capitalists and landlords by launching an offensive for socialist revolution.

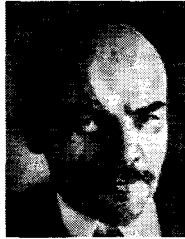
Yet by midnight of 14 August 1947 the spectacular upsurge had been derailed by a pro-imperialist alliance of the Indian Congress Party, a bourgeois nationalist party, and the Muslim League, which led the masses into British imperialism's waiting trap of partition. As the parting act of British imperialism's bloody "divide and rule", Clement Attlee's British Labour government engineered the 1947 partition, unleashing an orgy of communalist fratricide in which some two million people were killed and over eleven million driven from their homes—the largest forced population transfer in history.

We reprint below an excerpt from a 1948 resolution by the Trotskyist Fourth International.

Although India could be kept under the British yoke throughout the war and although the crushing of the August 1942 uprising had paved the way for an era of veritable military dictatorship, the forces of revolt continued to accumulate among the masses. They erupted again in November 1945, when British imperialism brought to trial former fighters of Chandra Bose's Indian National Army. A wave of demonstrations and strikes that shook the country was followed by the Royal Indian Navy mutiny of February 1946 supported by the Bombay workers. This sounded the alarm signal to imperialism.

Great Britain could find no solution in the strengthening of her military and repressive apparatus. This was ruled out by her definitely reduced economic position in which she emerged from the war. Britain sought a solution through granting a nominal independence—spectacularly marked by the withdrawal of British troops, but leaving the economic bases of British rule substantially intact. In India, this maneuver is most clearly revealed. By creating two states—as artificial as Pakistan and India, without geographic or economic unity—Great Britain kills two birds with one stone: On the one hand, she superficially satisfies the nationalist aspirations of the masses, diverts into communal strife their hostility to imperialism, weakens the country beyond repair, blocks any serious economic progress and prepares for herself a wide field for maneuvers by playing off one Indian state against the other. Great Britain will endeavour to impose her will on both and to ensure her possession of mines, plantations, industries and banks. India's independence thus means that imperialism no longer dominates the country directly, but rather through the agency of the indigenous bourgeoisie and feudal landlords; and that the partition of India guarantees to Great Britain the subjection of the Hindu and Moslem bourgeoisies to her wishes.

—“Struggles of the Colonial Peoples and the World Revolution”—Resolution adopted by the Second Congress of the Fourth International—Paris, April 1948, *Fourth International*, July 1948



LENIN

Victory to the CWU strikers! Postal workers battle Royal Mail and Labour government

The series of strikes begun by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) on 29 June, the first national postal strike since 1996, is the first test of the Gordon Brown-led Labour government and is of vital interest to all public sector workers. Under Tony Blair, Labour opened up the postal service to private competition while Gordon Brown as chancellor imposed a pay freeze on public sector workers and slashed tens of thousands of jobs in the civil service alone. To compete with private courier companies who are vying for the more lucrative parts of the postal service, Royal Mail management is hell-bent on driving down wages and slashing jobs of postal workers. This year postal workers, who are extremely low-paid, have been offered a below-inflation 2.5 per cent pay “rise”—effectively a pay cut—and are facing upwards of 40,000 job losses as well as attacks on their pension arrangements. To defend postal workers against this assault it is necessary to **mobilise the full strength of the union to shut down the postal service.**

Since the programme of strikes began, postal workers have staged several wildcat strikes which are a result of the ineffectiveness of the sector-by-sector, one-day stoppages that the CWU leadership has organised. The “official” actions often mean that union members in certain sectors are working while the union members on strike that day are picketing outside. Scandalously, the CWU leadership is putting some union members in a position where they are authorised to cross their own union's picket lines! This is a losing strategy. It is corrosive to class consciousness and indeed is a complete travesty of the most elementary principles of the class struggle: **Picket lines mean don't cross! An injury to one is an injury to all!**

Defiantly upholding these principles, including refusing to handle scab mail, postal workers have walked off the job on numerous occasions. On 30 July in Scotland, postal van drivers from Glasgow refused to cross CWU picket lines at Edinburgh airport. When management provocatively threatened these unionists with victimisation, workers in Glasgow walked off the job. When four workers in Edinburgh were then suspended for refusing to handle scab mail from Glasgow, an elementary act of class solidarity, the rest of the work-

force walked out demanding they be reinstated. Similar provocations by management have led to walkouts in Oxford, Liverpool and Tyneside.

The CWU leadership's piecemeal strikes are designed to **avoid** a serious confrontation with Royal Mail, behind which stands the Labour government and the anti-union laws. At a Liverpool strike rally on 21 July, CWU leader Billy Hayes boasted that the CWU “got the Labour Government to carry a commitment in its Manifesto not to privatise Royal Mail”. Viewing the capitalist government as any kind of ally is the kiss of death in class struggle, where it is critically important to know who one's enemies are! Regardless of whether Labour currently backs total or merely partial privatisation, management at Royal Mail is bound by the logic of the capitalist market and the quest for profits to turn the screw on postal workers and therefore on the CWU.

Taking on the vicious Royal Mail bosses is no easy matter, and this government would not hesitate to use the full force of the capitalist state—which consists of the police, the army, the courts and prison system—to try to smash this strike. However the working class cannot secure the most basic necessities of life by accepting the framework of the capitalist system. It is necessary to fight for what we need, not what the bosses say they can afford. The question before postal workers is one of forging, in the course of their battles, a new class-struggle leadership of the union. This is linked to building a revolutionary party based on a programme that will lead the working class in a fight to overthrow the rotten capitalist system through socialist revolution.

For a class-struggle leadership of the trade unions

Britain's “flexible” labour market that Blair and Brown boast about is based on grinding exploitation of the working class, which especially in low-paid jobs includes a large immigrant and minority component. *Socialist Worker* reports that in Watford an attempt by management to use Polish immigrant workers as scabs failed when the strikers appealed to the workers on a class basis; the majority of the Polish workers refused to cross their picket lines. It is in the vital interests of the CWU and the whole working class to oppose the government's anti-immigrant racism, including the work ban on workers from Eastern European EU countries, and to fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

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WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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

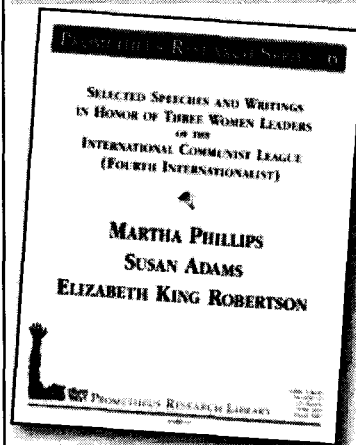
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Islamophobia, the SWP and the mosques

This letter was received by e-mail on 4 March.

Dear Editor,

In a two-faced article decrying the Islamophobia of the Blair government and its lackeys such as the Alliance for Workers Liberty, while at the same time echoing many of their smears against Respect and the Socialist Workers Party, the incoherence of the Spartacists faced with the 'war on terror' shines through.

According to Spart mythology, the SWP's 'state capitalist' analysis of the Soviet Union and refusal to 'defend' that state always meant that, like Max Shachtman in 1940, the followers of Tony Cliff had simply become political agents of their own ruling class—pro-imperialist reformists, in other words. This equation has been the central unifying point of all Spart polemics against the SWP since...the Sparts started writing polemics against the SWP.

The current 'war on terror', however, has exposed this equation as a lie. The real-life devotees of Max Shachtman, such as the AWL, line up with their own ruling class and its outrageous campaigns against Muslim peoples (though even they exhibit a few qualms now and then). The SWP, on the other hand, is on the opposite side of the barricades—and has to its great credit bent the stick in the defence of Muslims to the extent of having itself become the object of a hate-campaign by pro-imperialist reactionaries that begins to resemble old style anti-semitic rants against 'Jew-Bolshevism', albeit with 'Jew' replaced by 'Muslim'.

For all its protestations about how it opposes 'Islamophobia', the SL adds its own pennyworth to that demonisation. According to the SL: "The SWP's adaptation to Islam is based on the utterly false notion that political Islam is 'anti-imperialist'". Aside from the fact that no evidence is provided of any social pressure to "adapt" to political Islam in this racist, Islamophobic society and political climate—very much the reverse, actually—this actually begs another question. If the SWP are, as the SL says they are, pro-imperialist political agents of their own ruling class, then why should such "lackeys" politically adapt to an allegedly "anti-imperialist" force that its own ruling class currently regards as, in the words of *Workers Hammer*, "the replacement for the 'red menace' in order to justify domestic repression and imperialist military aggression". Why would "servants" of their own ruling class, as the SL has repeatedly slandered the SWP as, do that? The two accusations are mutually contradictory and simply do not make sense.

The SL continually, and in an increasingly lonely fashion, rants on about Afghanistan being the 'acid test for revolutionaries' around questions involving Islam and imperialism. Meanwhile the world passes it by. It is worth noting that both the SWP and the AWL supported the armed insurgency against the Soviet forces in the 1980s. Yet over the 'war on terror', they are on opposite sides of the barricades from each other. Which kind of suggests that Afghanistan in the 1980s was not an 'acid test' at all, but a problematic conflict whose significance could only be determined in the light of a longer historical perspective. The Shachtmanites of the AWL supported the anti-Soviet

insurgency for the same reason they tacitly support the 'war on terror' today...that is, because they support their own ruling class. The SWP, on the other hand, do not flinch from defending the rights of Afghans, even of the Taliban, to armed struggle against their 'own' ruling class's armed forces.

Maybe the real 'acid test' is something rather different to what the SL says it is (or was). Maybe the 'acid test' is unflinching defence of Muslim peoples from national oppression, whether such oppression comes from the Stalinist regime formerly in the Kremlin, or George Bush and Tony Blair today. In

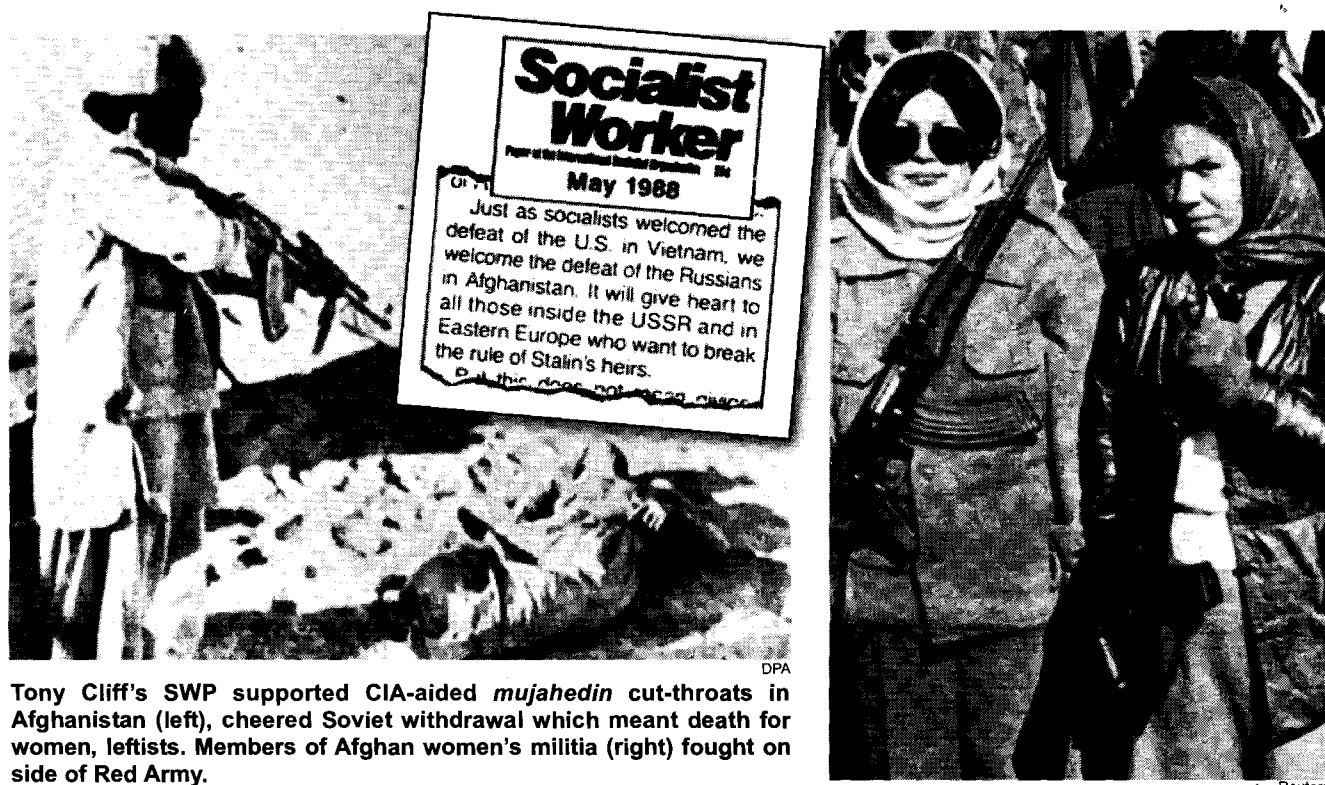
Once upon a time I believed your 'acid tests' offered something pretty unique to the working class. Ah well, it just goes to show how wrong you can be. In Sadness
Donald Irons

Workers Hammer replies:

Donald Irons was evidently stung by our article "Racism and the Islamic veil" which appeared in *Workers Hammer* no 197, Winter 2006-2007. Written in response to the racist furore whipped up by cabinet minister Jack Straw against the Islamic veil (niqab),

women from schools, universities and the workforce, which will reinforce their isolation and oppression. Bans will also fuel racism and play into the hands of the fascist BNP."

What gets Irons' goat though is our sharp criticism of the gross capitulation by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its Respect coalition to Islamic forces—an accommodation that is utterly antithetical to the liberating goals of proletarian socialism, especially the emancipation of women. The *Workers Hammer* article cites as an example a declaration by the "People's Assembly" organised by the SWP-



Tony Cliff's SWP supported CIA-aided mujahedin cut-throats in Afghanistan (left), cheered Soviet withdrawal which meant death for women, leftists. Members of Afghan women's militia (right) fought on side of Red Army.

this regard, it is worth noting that the least modified remnant of the old USSR, Uzbekistan, whose Stalinist regime is still intact (if camouflaged) is one of George Bush's most staunch and most barbaric allies in today's 'war on terror'.

Or maybe the 'acid test' is support for the struggle against the dispossession of the Palestinian people today, and for the destruction of the apartheid state of Israel that excludes many millions of mainly Muslim Arabs from the territory from which their families originated in living memory (as opposed to millennial biblical semi-myth)? Noting the SL's own Shachtmanite origins and acceptance of demonisation of the Arabs (who allegedly thirst to 'drive the Jews into the sea' according to the SL), maybe the real 'acid test' is all these things and more?

For the SWP, these are matters of the highest principle. For the AWL, these are things that can only be done with their own ruling class's approval. For the SL, completely divorced from reality in a dreamworld of Trotskyist 'orthodoxy' where the 'acid test' is the SL's supposedly 'uniquely correct' analysis of the 'Russian question', all these questions appear like from a different universe. As the Chinese 'workers state' openly aspires to one day eclipse America as the world's greatest capitalist economic superpower, the SL ruminates that the highest duty of communists is to defend China against capitalist restoration. Oh dear!

the article is a searing condemnation of the Labour government's anti-Muslim "war on terror" and the bigoted scapegoating of Muslim women. Putting forward a perspective of mobilising the multiethnic working class to combat the "war on terror" and to defend the besieged Muslim population, the article points to the need to struggle against the Labour government and the capitalist profit system which is the root cause of racist and sexual oppression. To that end it denounces those self-styled leftist groups like the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), whose craven loyalty to supposedly "democratic" British imperialism is such that they parrot the vile Islamophobia of the British ruling class and its Labour government. Our article also takes issue with the liberals—including liberals from Muslim backgrounds, such as the *Independent's* Yasmin Alibhai-Brown—who, in the name of "defending women's rights" end up on the side of the racists in Westminster by supporting a state ban on the niqab. In contrast, the Spartacist League demanded: "No to racist state bans on Muslim dress!" and explained:

"As Marxists—and therefore atheists and fighters for women's liberation—we oppose the veil as both a symbol and an instrument of women's oppression. Nonetheless we unambiguously oppose any state or government bans and restrictions on the veil, which are racist and discriminatory against Muslims. Contrary to liberal claims that banning the veil is designed to integrate Muslims into society, bans will lead to expulsions of Muslim

dominated Stop the War Coalition (StWC) on 18 November 2006. While condemning the government's attacks on Islamic religious practices and the occupation of Iraq, the statement uttered not a word on the rights of women and presented the veil as simply a "choice of dress and cultural expression". In response to this liberal nonsense our article insisted:

"Marxists reject such 'cultural relativism' which serves to prettify hideous oppression in the neo-colonial world as merely 'cultural differences'. Often those who speak of 'cultural relativism' do so in a laudable effort not to impose Western cultural standards on the rest of the world. However it can also be used to condone gruesome crimes like female genital mutilation or so-called honour killings. Contrary to such drivel, the head-to-toe veil is a walking prison that physically excludes women from society."

As the article made clear, "We solidarise with the countless thousands of women who have sought to escape the tyranny of the veil, whether in the Muslim world or in the imperialist centres."

It is notable that while almost the whole *Workers Hammer* article is an impassioned presentation of the need for "women's liberation through socialist revolution", and while the furore over the veil sparked a furious controversy in the country over race relations, religion and women's rights, not a bit of this is mentioned in Irons' letter. Taking up the cudgels for the SWP,

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Ireland...

(Continued from page 1)

imperialism are at the root of their support for the imperialist “peace process”. As revolutionary opponents of British imperialism we Marxists have opposed the imperialist “peace” deal from the beginning. In 1993, we stated: “Any imperialist ‘deal’ will be bloody and brutal and will *necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority*. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either.” We placed the imperialist “peace” proposals for Northern Ireland in the context of the British rulers’ bloody machinations, including when they were forced to pull out of their former colonies in the period following World War II. Our article stated:

“The essential assumption, explicit or implicit, in all the ‘peace’ proposals being touted about is that the British Army, with its shoot-to-kill policy, will remain to police capitalist order, backed up by the bloodthirsty Loyalist thugs. The British imperialists played divide and rule in colonies like India and Palestine, and then on their way out sought to wreck these places by whipping up communalism. Today they adopt a racist and arrogant pretence that they are just trying to stop the tit for tat barbarities of the ‘uncivilised Irish’ of all hues. All of [then-leader of the Catholic SDLP] John Hume’s initiatives, including the talks and proposals with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, are based on the premise that British imperialism is somehow ‘neutral’. All history and the graves of many Irish Catholics say otherwise.”

—Workers Hammer no 138, November/December 1993

The “peace process” with which Blair is credited finally saw the Northern Ireland Assembly reopened on 8 May this year, led by the unlikely combination of the anti-Catholic bigot Reverend Ian Paisley as first minister and Martin McGuinness of the petty-bourgeois

preconditions for being allowed to hold ministerial office in Stormont Castle, the historic seat of Orange rule.

The IRA agreed to abandon the armed struggle and to provide proof that it had given up its weapons. In so doing, the IRA conceded something that the British Army proved unable to do in 38 years of repression. Disarmament of the IRA, which has been the real purpose of the imperialist “peace” charade, paves the way for further subjugation of the oppressed Catholics. Paisley further insisted that Sinn Fein accept the legitimacy of the PSNI which is simply the sectarian, anti-Catholic RUC with a makeover. In mid-May, Sinn Fein duly agreed that its representatives would sit on the new Policing Board, absurdly claiming that they would “hold the PSNI to account” (*An Phoblacht*, 24 May).

By the time of Tony Blair’s exit from Downing Street in June, he was widely hated among the population in Britain and beyond because of the occupation of Iraq. But there was almost universal praise for his role in Northern Ireland, which according to the spin from Downing Street and Dublin is now being “normalised”. The fallacy that the Northern Ireland “peace process” is a major success rests entirely on the illusion that (despite the hideous mess it created in Iraq) British imperialism is a benevolent force that generally acts in the interests of peace. Martin McGuinness gave voice to this stating “Tony Blair and Iraq is almost like a total contradiction of Tony Blair and Ireland” (*Guardian*, 11 May).

Bourgeois liberal opinion in Britain shares this benign view of the capitalist rulers’ role in Northern Ireland. This was succinctly expressed in the London *Independent* (31 July) which summed up the army’s 38 bloody years in a headline: “Imperfect, but indispensable”. This article invoked the classic view of



Workers Hammer

Shoot-to-kill by police on streets of London. Jean Charles de Menezes shrine at Stockwell station in London where he was shot in July 2005.

anti-Catholic terror through the Loyalist death squads and other undercover forces. As Sinn Fein Assembly member Jennifer McCann pointed out at a recent 2000-strong Belfast “March for Truth” against collusion: “The British state and loyalist forces were responsible for 1,414 deaths in this country”, while the “British government armed loyalist death squad[s] and British intelligence directed and assisted them” (*Irish News*, 14 August). Nonetheless, Sinn Fein itself bears much responsibility for building deadly illusions in the imperialists as brokers of the “peace” deal. This stems from the bankruptcy of their nationalist politics which—whether pursued through the “armalite” or the ballot box—have always aimed at pressuring British imperialism to negotiate a deal. This aim has now been fulfilled.

As for the reformist left, in a recent article Chris Bambery of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) points out that “British troops were not sent into Northern Ireland in August 1969 to keep the peace”, adding that the “Labour government had to act to prop up a Unionist government which ran Northern Ireland as a sectarian, one party state” (*Socialist Worker*, 11 August). Well, for Bambery and his party, talk is very cheap, especially 38 years later. In 1969, these die-hard Labourites supported the decision by the Labour government to send in the troops. In a classic example of capitulating to their “own” bourgeoisie and shamelessly peddling illusions in British imperialism as a force for “peace”, they declared: “The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists” (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969). The Socialist Party also stands squarely on the side of British imperialism, refusing to call for British troops out, supporting the imperialist “peace process” and refusing to acknowledge the oppression of the Catholic minority.

We stand for the defence of the oppressed Catholic minority. At the same time, we oppose Sinn Fein’s nationalism, including its programme of a capitalist united Ireland. This perspective was reiterated by Martin McGuinness taking his pledge of office on 8 May when he declared, “I am proud to stand here today as an Irish republican who believes absolutely in a united Ireland” (*BBC News* online, 8



Daily Worker

British Army today brags of its expertise in “counterinsurgency”. Its barbarity is captured in photograph published by *Daily Worker* of 10 May 1952 showing a British marine holding severed heads of civilians in Malaysia.

nationalist Sinn Fein as his deputy. Paisley’s Loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein have become the two largest parties in Northern Ireland. The Assembly can be shut down on a whim by Westminster, as happened in 2002 on the pretext of bogus allegations that an IRA “spy ring” was operating in Stormont. The recent partnership between Paisley and McGuinness is hardly a match made in heaven: in the early 1990s when it became known that John Major’s government was in talks with Sinn Fein, Paisley fulminated that the then-prime minister had “sold Ulster to buy off the fiendish Republican scum”. As late as July 2005 Paisley famously demanded the IRA must not only disarm itself but don “sackcloth and ashes”. Since then Sinn Fein and the IRA have met all of Paisley’s stringent

the British imperialists undertaking a civilising mission to quell the native mobs, saying: “When the troops arrived, law and order was on the point of breaking down in parts of Belfast and Londonderry, with local police exhausted and mobs on the rampage.” It admits that, at certain points, “military actions brought about an escalation of the conflict, most notably the 1972 Bloody Sunday incident”. Yet notwithstanding this “incident”, the situation deteriorated to one where “republicans, loyalist extremists and the Army became locked in a violent three-way conflict”.

The prevalent myth of a “three-way conflict” is a whitewash that denies the army had a side: as guarantor of the repressive forces of the Orange state, particularly the RUC, while fomenting

May). Sinn Fein’s vision of a united Ireland dominated by Catholic clerical nationalism only serves to reinforce Protestant support for reactionary Loyalist demagogues such as Paisley and lays the basis for further communalist violence and segregation. It is antithetical to our perspective of polarising society along class lines, across the communal divide. We seek a solution through a proletarian revolutionary perspective for the British Isles: for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, of the Catholic clericalist state in the south—which is hideously oppressive of workers, women and Travellers—and of the Orange statelet.

“Normalisation” of the sectarian Orange state

Sinn Fein’s pledge to make the PSNI “accountable” and even to ensure that “political policing, collusion and ‘the force within a force’ is a thing of the past” (*An Phoblacht*, 17 May) is a whitewash of the true nature of the Orange statelet, of which the police are an integral part. In Northern Ireland as elsewhere, the capitalist state is an executive arm of the ruling class and cannot be made accountable to the working class and oppressed. It must be shattered in the course of workers revolution, led by a revolutionary workers party, and replaced with a new state power of the working class. Although it has been given a “democratic” face-lift and (for now) permits Sinn Fein to hold ministerial portfolios, the *fundamental* nature of the Orange state as it was created by the British at the time of partition, remains unchanged.

To underline this point, in June Northern Ireland’s Public Prosecution Service provocatively announced that not one police officer or soldier will face prosecution for the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane who was gunned down in his home in 1989 by Loyalists acting in collaboration with state forces. This announcement is a kick in the teeth to the Catholic population of Northern Ireland and to the Finucane family who have persistently campaigned for a public inquiry into his murder, which they believe was ordered at the highest level of the British establishment and is being hushed up. The Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998 brought no “peace” to those who try to expose to the outside world the British state’s murderous role. Rosemary Nelson, a prominent Catholic lawyer who reported to the UN that she received death threats from the RUC, was murdered by a Loyalist bomb in 1999; Martin O’Hagan, a journalist with the Dublin-based *Sunday World*, who researched the collusion between the state forces and the Loyalist death squads, was brutally killed by Loyalists in 2001.

This collusion between the state and the Loyalist death squads is not an aberration, but *par for the course* for “democratic” British imperialism. A mountain of evidence has come to light over the years, much of it uncovered by a two-decade long official enquiry by Lord Stevens who publicly stated that he had evidence of security force collusion in multiple murders, including that of Pat Finucane. The Stevens enquiry primarily centred on the murderous career of British undercover agent Brian Nelson and was always aimed at presenting collusion as a case of a few “bad apples”. Even so, this enquiry went too far for Tony Blair, who introduced a new public inquiries bill to curtail what can be made public in any “public” inquiry.

As Michael Finucane said in a
continued on page 11

It is with profound grief that we inform our readers of the death of our beloved comrade Gérard Le Méteil, a member of the Ligue trotskyste de France, who died in Dieppe on 3 September in unknown circumstances after having been taken into police custody, allegedly for public intoxication. We extend our deep sympathy especially to Gérard's eight-year-old son Nicolas and also to Nicolas' mother Valérie, the whole Le Méteil family and his many friends. A close comrade of Gérard's wrote in tribute: "The loss of Gérard is immensely painful for us all, for our party, and for each of us individually. It is a political loss but it is also a personal loss. Everyone valued Gérard on both levels: as a comrade and as a friend. The party was his reason for living and he always put the party's needs before his own personal options. He dedicated the best 25 years of his life to the party."

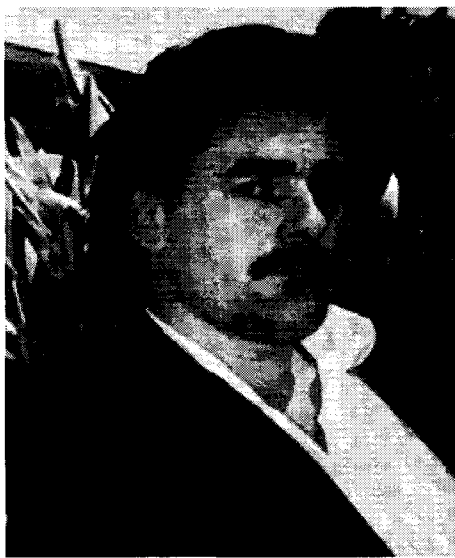
Gérard joined the LTF in April 1982 and was elected to the Central Committee at the LTF's Eleventh National Conference in December 1989. He was won to the Ligue trotskyste, French section of the international Spartacist tendency (now International Communist League [Fourth Internationalist]), in part through his involvement in a December 1981 united-front labour mobilisation against the fascists initiated by the LTF in Rouen, a port and industrial centre in north-west France. Four to five hundred protesters were mobilised, including some 200 trade unionists and a bloc of students from the Ecole Normale (teachers college) that Gérard, working with an LTF comrade, had organised. The mobilisation strengthened the roots of the LTF's local in Rouen, where Gérard worked for much of his life.

Key issues in the recruitment of Gérard, who had been involved in a Communist Party sports organisation, were the importance of the Leninist vanguard party and the Trotskyist position in defence of the Soviet Union. Before he joined, Gérard took part in an LTF meeting at the Tolbiac campus of the University of Paris on 2 March 1982. A move by the Polish Stalinist regime against the reactionary Solidarność "union" had taken place only months before in that deformed workers state. France, under social democrat François Mitterrand's popular front, was the cockpit of the anti-Soviet mobilisation in Europe, in which the pseudo-Trotskyists played an active role.

As elsewhere, the Tolbiac campus was polarised. LTF comrades in Rouen were literally spat on by leftists who had earlier marched with us against the fascists. Our comrades at Tolbiac had received phone threats, and Gérard came down from Rouen to join the successful defence of our meeting against a howling mob of over 30 fake Trotskyists and others. At the close of the meeting, a gauntlet of campus security guards (*vigiles*) and *autonome* youth combined to attack those leaving. A comrade recalled that in the raging street fight that ensued, "Gérard displayed considerable physical courage and connected with some well-placed punches." Shortly after that experience, Gérard applied for membership in the LTF.

During the next seven years, he became known as an extremely energetic and talented activist on

Gérard Le Méteil



Workers Vanguard



1959 — 2007

the Rouen campus. He would jump on a table in the campus cafeteria and, with a passionate speech, mobilise students to protest an atrocity perpetrated by the government or the campus administration. This work also meant daily political combat against our opponents on the left. Constantly seeking to win people over, trying to understand where they came from and finding the convincing arguments contributed to the political wisdom and depth for which he was known. Gérard later brought this experience to bear in his political education of our younger comrades, several of whom have become cadres in the LTF and other sections of the ICL.

Gérard was a teacher by profession and a long-time member of the SNUipp union. His death did not go unnoticed among leftists and unionists in the region and elsewhere. Postal workers organised a minute of silence in a general assembly during the night shift at the Créteil sorting centre in Paris on 5 September.

Since Gérard had been won hard to the understanding that we are above all the party of the Russian Revolution, it was completely in character that he took time off work to throw himself into the ICL's intervention into the nascent East German political revolution in 1989-90. Known as one who looked outside the French "hexagon", he followed the work of our entire international with the greatest attention. An excellent military leader, he was in

charge of our security squad at the July 2001 mass demonstration against the Group of Eight imperialists in Genoa, Italy, where the cop rampage left at least one young protester dead.

Gérard's detailed knowledge of French politics and of the history of the workers movement extended to the former and current French colonies. He researched and gave a forum on the French general strike of June 1936, when the Stalinists sabotaged the possibility of workers revolution. An article based on his talk was published in *Le Bolchévik* nos 179 and 180 this spring. He devoured new books, particularly about the crimes of French imperialism, and read extensively about the Algerian War, understanding well that these crimes still animate the French bourgeoisie in its racist oppression of North African immigrants, their children and grandchildren. It was often Gérard who proposed to the party to take up the cause of an immigrant family or Roma (Gypsy) encampment facing racist attack by the government or others.

One of his strengths was that he appreciated contradictions in society and on the left. His effectiveness flowed from his political understanding and his evident confidence in the power of our programme. A comrade wrote in tribute: "He was a 100 per cent person, in his love, his hatred, a 100 per cent communist, a guy that could inspire you. He was an activist, a leader, a great speaker with a deep voice, somebody from a Zola novel, full of passion and always, some sad, tragic glimmer in his eye."

In the mid 1990s, after capitalist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Gérard suffered a personal breakdown and left the party for a couple of years.

His return to active politics followed the big strike wave in France in late 1995. He had thought through a lot of the problems of the French section, and comrades recalled that he was a breath of fresh air, brimming with enthusiasm over the recent class struggles and, as always, full of insightful and stimulating observations about events in the country and the world. In September 1996, he was again elected to the Central Committee, on which he continued to serve until his death.

Comrades and friends are struggling to come to grips with the loss of comrade Gérard, only 48 years old and a talented athlete from his youth who had run numerous marathons. We are hoping to clarify the circumstances of his death. In Paris on 9 September, comrades, family and friends gathered to honour him at the Wall of the Communards in the Père Lachaise cemetery. A letter from the ICL's International Secretariat in New York saluted our comrade and friend:

"Gérard fought for the emancipation of the workers and all the oppressed people of the world, and for the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism by means of workers socialist revolution. To be successful, this liberating revolution requires the leadership of a revolutionary political party of the workers vanguard—the Fourth International, which we of the International Communist League are fighting to reforge. This memory of Gérard, as a comrade, is our greatest assurance that the spirit of humankind, striving for human solidarity, is unconquerable."



Le Bolchévik

Demonstration against invasion of Iraq in Paris, 15 February 2003. Gérard was often responsible for stewarding LTF contingents (left). With his son Nicolas (right).



Valérie

South Africa Permanent revolution versus “two-stage” Stalinist betrayal

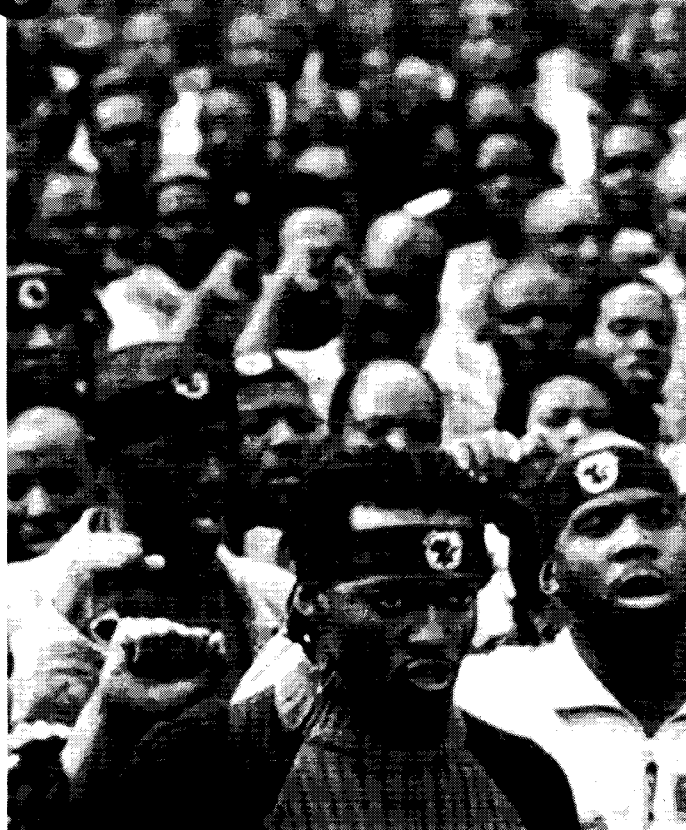
The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard no 875, 1 September 2006. It predates the public sector strike in June (see “Bitter End to Defiant Strike”, Workers Vanguard no 895, 6 July) and the sacking of deputy health minister Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge in August by president Thabo Mbeki ostensibly for having attended an AIDS conference in Spain without his permission.

In 1994, after more than a decade of massive struggles by the predominantly black working class and township poor, the white-supremacist police-state regime in South Africa was replaced by Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC). The black African, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian working people were promised that their everyday conditions of life would be greatly improved by redistributing the country’s wealth from the affluent white ruling elite. Instead, under the bourgeois-nationalist regimes of Mandela and his successor, Thabo Mbeki, conditions for the working class, rural toilers and township masses have in many important respects gotten worse.

Almost a million workers have been laid off through the privatisation of government-owned industry and other kinds of capitalist restructuring. Sixty per cent of the adult jobless black African population has never been employed. Two million people have been evicted from their homes because they could not pay the sky-high utility bills, and some ten million have had their electricity and water cut off. At the same time, a small black elite has arisen who drive Mercedes, vacation in Dubai and clink champagne glasses with the Randlords of the AngloGold Ashanti corporation. The income of white families has increased substantially while that of the overwhelming majority of blacks has plummeted.

A key factor in the ANC’s accession to power was the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which for decades had supported the ANC materially and diplomatically. During the Cold War, the ANC and other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “Third World” movements and regimes were able to play off Moscow and Washington, thereby achieving a certain latitude in which to manoeuvre. But as the Moscow Stalinist regime under Mikhail Gorbachev fell apart, the ANC leaders openly embraced “power sharing” with the white racist South African rulers, a section of whom accepted that ANC rule no longer posed a threat to the white economic oligarchy. Today, despite the change in the political and judicial superstructure, South Africa remains, as it was under the white-supremacist apartheid system, a country in which the black masses live in Third World poverty while most whites enjoy First World conditions. We have thus described South Africa under the ANC as a neo-apartheid capitalist state.

Nothing more clearly exposes the fact that the ANC-led regime is the enemy of the workers and the oppressed than its response to the AIDS pandemic that has ravaged South Africa. According to the United Nations, in 2005 an estimated 5.5



18 May 2006: Johannesburg rally during one-day COSATU general strike protesting unemployment, poverty.

million South Africans were HIV positive and some 320,000 died from AIDS. Women are among the hardest hit by the pandemic. Today, over 39 per cent of pregnant women in the province of KwaZulu-Natal test HIV-positive. An effective, scientific response to this crisis has been wilfully frustrated by the *criminal policies* of the ANC-led government. Mbeki himself outrageously refuses to acknowledge the scientific fact that the HIV virus causes AIDS! On 24 August, police using pepper spray attacked protesters in Cape Town who, as part of a national day of protest by the Treatment Action Campaign, were calling for the firing of the health minister and demanding that prisoners be treated with anti-retroviral drugs.

A key agency upholding the government is the heavily overlapping leadership of the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade

Unions (COSATU). As part of the governing “Tripartite Alliance”, the SACP/COSATU tops keep the country’s powerful and combative working class tied to the bourgeois nationalists of the ANC, who in turn are the black front men for the dominant white capitalist class. Leading SACP cadres are senior officials in the government, including those branches directly engaged in the brutal repression of labour struggles and township protests: the Security Ministry and the intelligence service.

In the last two years, major labour strikes and militant township protests have signalled growing hostility on the part of the black masses towards the ANC regime. The future of the Tripartite Alliance is now being intensely debated within the workers movement and among broader layers of society. Amid the anger and bitter disillusionment among their working-class supporters, the SACP tops

recently came out with a discussion document in which they openly criticised the central ANC leadership (*Bua Komanisi!* Special Edition, May 2006). The document raised the possibility of running candidates in future elections in the party’s own name, within the framework of the Alliance. Such candidacies would have a purely token character, in no way challenging, much less weakening, the ANC’s governmental power. The document categorically rejects “watering down the ANC’s overwhelming electoral majority”.

Along somewhat similar lines, the COSATU bureaucrats have issued a discussion document (“COSATU Political Discussion Document—Possibilities for Fundamental Social Change”) in preparation for a congress in September strongly condemning the “neoliberal” policies of the Mbeki regime. It points out that the share of national income going to the workers has decreased while the share raked off in corporate profits has markedly increased. Nonetheless, the COSATU misleaders cite favourably surveys through 2004 that “have confirmed that the overwhelming majority of COSATU members support COSATU’s approach of strategic engagement from within the Alliance”.

The sordid reality behind the ideological claptrap of the SACP document is the manoeuvring inside the ANC itself. The SACP/COSATU tops are backing Mbeki’s main factional opponent, Jacob Zuma. Mbeki’s former deputy president, Zuma combines a “man of the people” posture with appeals to Zulu tribalist nationalism.

The SACP leaders have always used the Menshevik/Stalinist schema of “two-stage revolution” as an ideological justification for their historic alliance and interpenetration with the ANC. According to this schema, conditions are not currently ready for socialism. Therefore, first must come a political bloc with “progressive” bourgeois nationalists, which in South Africa is called the “National Democratic Revolution” (NDR). Then, some far-off and unspecified time later, this will evolve into socialism. Thus the recent document asserted “the inextricable linkage between the NDR and the imperative of ‘building socialism now’”, while reaffirming “our commitment to the ANC-led Alliance”.

South Africa’s black workers and poor know damn well that the country is not moving towards socialism but in the opposite direction: towards increasingly brutal capitalist exploitation and immiseration. The SACP leadership is in some difficulty as it has failed to produce the gains it promised the masses. Hence, in order to repair the damaged credibility of the Alliance, the SACP/COSATU tops have adopted a more leftist stance towards the Mbeki regime while promising to fight for more worker-friendly policies. This is a cynical political con game. In order to go forward in its struggles, the working class must break with the ANC-led Alliance and with the reformist politics of class collaboration packaged as the National Democratic Revolution.



Cape Town, 18 August 2006: Treatment Action Campaign activists protest government’s criminal AIDS policies, call for resignation and arrest of health minister.

Break with the bourgeois ANC — no support to Mbeki, Zuma! Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party!

In opposing the “two-stage revolution” schema—a formula for class betrayal—Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, stands for the programme and perspective of permanent revolution developed by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky. This posits that in countries of combined and uneven development, the outstanding democratic tasks historically associated with the bourgeois revolutions can only be carried out through the assumption of power by the working class. In South Africa, genuine national liberation and the destruction of black oppression require proletarian revolution and its extension to the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries of North America, Western Europe and Japan. In fighting for that goal, we seek to build a Leninist revolutionary vanguard party of the working class that would champion the cause of the vast unemployed urban masses, the landless, immigrants, women, agricultural labourers and all of those oppressed under neo-apartheid capitalism.

Upsurge in labour struggles, township protests

All too little has changed in the “new” South Africa. Retaining an ironclad grip on the economic resources of the country (mines, banks, factories and land), the white bourgeoisie subcontracts out the task of administering the capitalist state to the ANC.

Last year saw the largest strike wave since the ANC assumed power, as workers protested starvation wages in the face of booming profits and fat bonuses to management. Militant actions by South African Airlines workers grounded both domestic and international flights, stunning the company by their determination and the level of public support. In the first national mine workers strike since the late 1980s, 100,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers shut down the gold sector, supported in an important (and unprecedented) action by two historically white craft unions.

In June 2005, COSATU called a one-day general strike against unemployment and poverty, supposedly meant to launch a series of rolling mass actions. A rally at Johannesburg Library Gardens was characterised by heightened anti-ANC sentiment. When the COSATU bureaucrats persisted in raising desperate cries of “Viva ANC! Viva!”, a large section of the crowd of up to 50,000 replied “Phansi!” (Down!).

For the past two years, a wave of protests—mainly over lack of water, electricity and decent housing—has swept South Africa. The most dramatic upheaval occurred in the Merafong township of Khutsong on the West Rand, where residents called for a boycott of the local elections in March 2006 and turned the area into a “no go zone” for the ruling party. When Defence Minister and ANC national chairman Mosiuoa “Terror” Lekota attempted to call a pro-government rally, he was greeted with chants of “voetsek” (f—k off).

In the township of Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, residents used rakes, spades and building tools to drive off security guards who had dismantled their shacks the night before. Police then arrived and fired on the crowd with rubber bullets and stun grenades. In Durban, a march by the Shack Dwellers Movement, which organised an electoral boycott, was attacked by the cops. Protesters were beaten while in police custody. These scenes of revolt and repression take place almost daily in the “new” South Africa.

Jacob Zuma: anti-working-class politician

The SACP and COSATU tops have sought to deflect the growing anger against the government among the work-

ing class and township poor into support for the Zuma “camp” of the ANC. When Mbeki dismissed Zuma as deputy president in June 2005, the COSATU leadership, the SACP and the ANC Youth and Women’s leagues came to his defence. Mbeki is widely viewed as a coldblooded, arrogant technocrat whose main priority is placating the white corporate elite and their imperialist senior partners, as well as their black junior partners. But as a bourgeois politician and Zulu traditionalist, Zuma is no less a class enemy of the proletariat than Mbeki. Criminally, the SACP/COSATU tops have told the working class to take sides in a power struggle between two bourgeois politicians whose reactionary politics are *indistinguishable*. Opposing Mbeki is not the same as opposing class collaboration with the bourgeois ANC. **Break with the ANC! Forge a revolutionary workers party!**

The obscenity of the SACP’s pro-Zuma position became utterly manifest during his recent trial for the rape of an HIV-positive woman, which resulted in



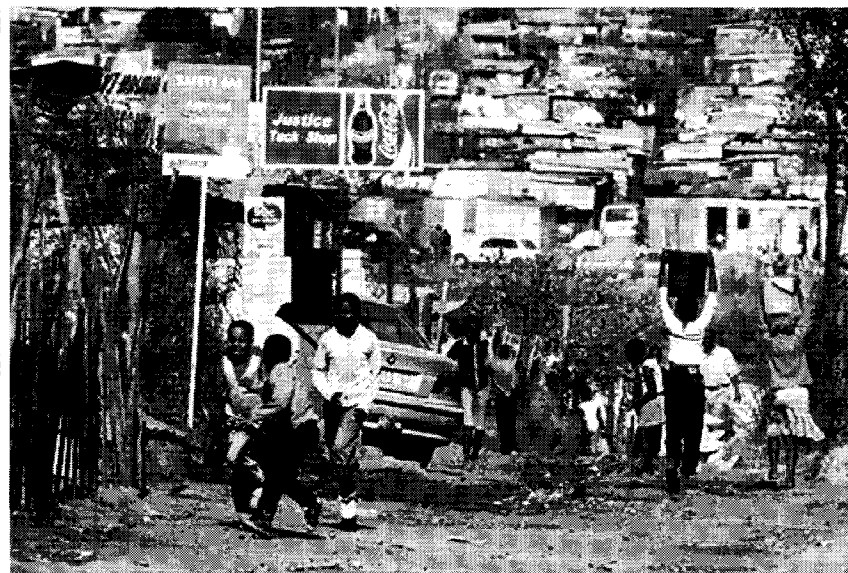
According to the document, the post-1994 period was a “democratic breakthrough” opening up progressive possibilities under the ANC regime. Focusing its criticism overwhelmingly on the GEAR policy—an anti-worker austerity plan implemented in 1996 under Mandela to attract foreign investment and boost profits—the document argues: **“Relative to the transformational potential of the 1994 conjuncture, this project [GEAR] represents a serious strategic setback for the working class (and the national democratic revolution)”** (emphasis in original). The document draws the conclusion that it is necessary to rebuild a mass-based ANC in order to fight for a “progressive developmental” (ie capitalist) state.

Even on its own terms, this account whitewashes the fact that the SACP initially endorsed GEAR and has played an active role in the ANC-led government for ten years. Underlying GEAR was not the sudden conversion of the central ANC leadership to neoliberal ideology but the imperatives of the world capitalist sys-

tem: the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*” (emphasis in original). The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. The capitalist state cannot be reformed. It must be smashed through socialist revolution.

Ironically, a counter-polemic against the SACP document published in an official journal of the ANC, *ANC Today* (13 June 2006), cites Marx to refute the notion that South Africa is not a capitalist society with a capitalist state: “In reality, the statement that South Africa ‘is not inherently capitalist’ is mere demagoguery, with no scientific, Marxist foundation.” Indeed it is!

Apartheid’s purpose was the procurement, reproduction and control of super-exploited African labour for white-owned capital, initially centred on the mining industries. The legal edifice may have changed, but the fundamental basis of South African capitalism, including the enormous disparities between racial groups, has not. During the anti-apartheid



Top left: South African president Thabo Mbeki. Left: former Mbeki deputy Jacob Zuma. Squatter camp in Soweto (above) epitomises impoverishment, oppression of black masses under ANC-led regime.

his acquittal. In his trial testimony, Zuma ignorantly proclaimed that he showered after sex to minimise the chance of catching AIDS! Meanwhile, his supporters paraded outside the courthouse carrying the slogans “Burn the Bitch” and “100% Zulu boy”. Disgustingly, the Young Communist League joined the pro-Zuma protests, rendering absolutely contemptible the SACP’s claims to stand against Mbeki’s HIV denialism and against women’s oppression.

One of the most sinister aspects of these events was their fostering of tribalist enmities. Many Zulus and others saw Zuma’s dismissal as an anti-Zulu plot by Mbeki and other Xhosa central leaders of the ANC. The historically Xhosa region of the Eastern Cape in fact contains some of the most destitute areas in the country. In reality, the ANC represents the interests of the (overwhelmingly white) capitalist class against workers of all racial and ethnic groups: Zulu, Xhosa and other black Africans, Indian, coloured and white. Since coming to power, the ANC has increasingly worked to pit different sectors of the oppressed against each other.

The Tripartite Alliance: a nationalist popular front

The Tripartite Alliance between the ANC, SACP and COSATU is a nationalist popular front in which the power of the African working class is held in check by its subordination to the supposedly “progressive” national bourgeoisie. The SACP’s class-collaborationist alliance with the bourgeois ANC goes back at least to the 1930s. The central purpose of the SACP discussion document is to provide a theoretical and historical rationale for maintaining the Alliance.

tem: driving down the cost of labour in order to increase the international competitiveness of South African business.

Those like the SACP who argue that some other set of economic policies—eg, the 1994 COSATU-authored Reconstruction and Development Program—could promote the welfare of labour and capital simultaneously are peddling a nationalist lie. And the purpose of that lie is to obscure the fundamental fact that modern society is divided into two main classes—the capitalist exploiters and the exploited proletariat—whose interests are irreconcilable.

By centring its criticisms on Mbeki’s particular policies, the SACP seeks to disguise the class nature of South African society and the neo-apartheid capitalist state. Thus the document asserts: “The post-1994 democratic state is not inherently capitalist, it is, in fact, a sharply class-contested reality.” Furthermore, in regard to the judiciary, the police and intelligence forces, the document declares that “demagogic attacks on these institutions are short-sighted and reckless”.

As Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, VI Lenin and Leon Trotsky argued repeatedly, there is no such thing as a class-neutral “democracy”; every state is an apparatus of repression—based on armed bodies of men, principally the army and police—that protects the social interests and property forms of the ruling class. Lenin wrote in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918): “Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the ‘democracy’ of the capitalists and

struggles, the SACP and COSATU leadership consciously manoeuvred to tie the working class to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC despite the masses’ far more radical aspirations, thereby laying the basis for neo-apartheid capitalism. Exploitation, immiseration and oppression can be eliminated only through a *proletarian socialist revolution* modelled on the October 1917 Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik party.

Menshevik/Stalinist “two-stage” betrayal

The 1917 October Revolution was the great event of the 20th century. Leading the vast, impoverished peasant masses, the small Russian working class, concentrated centrally in a few industrial centres, seized political power across one-sixth of the globe. The Russian Revolution smashed the old state apparatus inherited from the tsarist autocracy, replacing the class dictatorship of capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat based on democratically elected councils (soviets) of workers and peasants.

Despite the enormous poverty and backwardness that the Bolsheviks confronted (and the later degeneration of the Soviet workers state under Stalinist rule), the October Revolution laid the basis for a planned economy that would transform the country into an industrial powerhouse whose military might served as a counterweight to US imperialism. Full employment, housing and health care were won only through the overthrow of capitalism.

Against the Mensheviks, the original proponents of “two-stage revolution”, Lenin wrote a few months after the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy while

continued on page 10

(Continued from page 3)

Irons merely condemns the Marxist programme of the Spartacist League as “two-faced” and “incoherent”. For Irons, it appears, “bending the stick in the defence of Muslims” can only mean the SWP’s opportunist accommodation to the mosques.

Cold-war anti-Sovietism: the origins of the SWP

The central argument in Donald Irons’ letter is that the SWP’s stance on the “war on terror” and its purported defence of Muslims disproves our assertion that this organisation and its founder Tony Cliff decisively capitulated to the British imperialist ruling class over the “Russian question”. The fact is that Tony Cliff broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1950 when he accommodated to the anti-communist hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean War. When the Labour government of Clement Attlee sent British troops as part of a United Nations “police action” against North Korea, Cliff reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and the rotten Labour Party, for which the SWP’s forerunners were justly expelled from the Fourth International.

The Soviet Union was a workers state, issuing from the victorious Russian Revolution of October 1917 that overthrew the rule of the capitalists and the landlords and established the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under the conditions of hostile imperialist encirclement, the devastation and atomisation of the working class in the Civil War and the failure and defeat of the proletarian revolution internationally—particularly the 1923 German Revolution—the USSR underwent a political counterrevolution which began in 1923-24 when the bureaucratic apparatus headed by Stalin usurped political power. Despite this bureaucratic degeneration, the socialised property forms created by October were not destroyed and the USSR remained a workers state until counterrevolution in 1991-92. Trotskyists stood for unconditional military defence of the USSR while fighting for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy.

To justify their betrayal of the class interests of the proletariat and their reconciliation with British imperialism, Cliff and the SWP denied the working-class character of the USSR and the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba. In this respect, the Cliffites

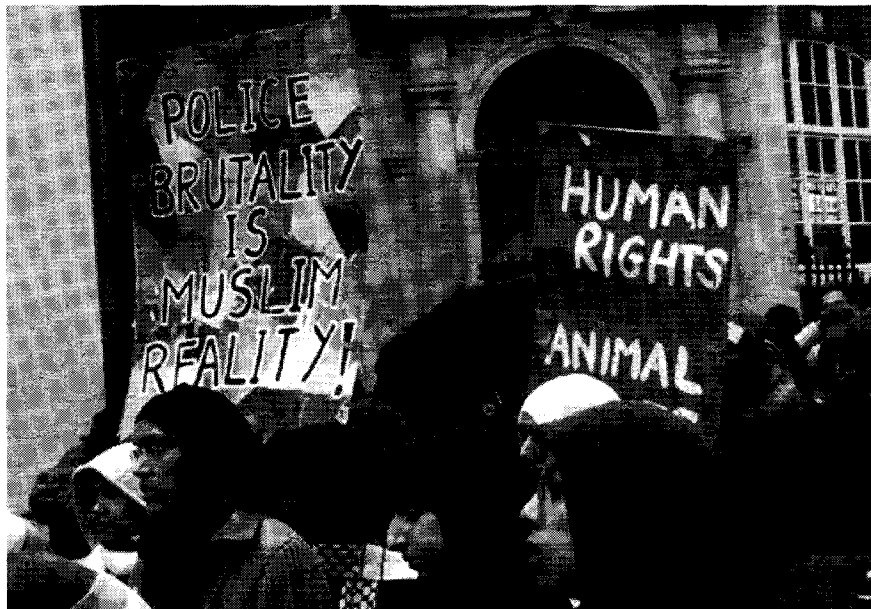
stand directly in the tradition of Max Shachtman, a leader of American Trotskyism who likewise capitulated to the wave of petty-bourgeois anti-communism on the eve of WWII and reneged on defence of the USSR. While Shachtman argued that the USSR was no longer a workers state but ruled by a new class of bureaucrats—a regime that he called “bureaucratic collectivism”—Cliff held that the Soviet Union was a form of “state capitalism”. In both cases, on their respective national terrains, this was simply a theoretical justification for a programme of anti-communist capitulation to their “own” ruling class—rallying to the defence of imperialist “democracy” against Stalinism. Shachtman claimed to be in a so-called “third camp”—neither with the imperialists nor with the USSR, but in

the Soviet Union, the world’s first workers state, was destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92, the Cliffites cheered: “‘Communism has collapsed’, our newspapers and TV declare. It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991). And when Tony Blair’s New Labour was elected in 1997, the SWP declared itself “over the moon”.

Afghanistan, imperialism and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism

Irons boasts that both the SWP and the AWL supported what he calls “the armed insurgency against the Soviet forces in the 1980s”. Let’s be clear. He is referring here to the largest operation ever mounted by the CIA, who organ-

class’s armed forces”. Insofar as the insurgents in Iraq aim their blows against the imperialist aggressors, we call for their *military defence* against US and British imperialism. We do not, however, imbue these forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials and we stand in intransigent opposition to the murderous communal violence that is often carried out by the very same forces fighting the occupying armies. However, the SWP’s occasional cheerleading for the Iraqi “resistance” doesn’t prevent them from capitulating to British imperialism and the Labour government. When 15 British army and naval personnel were seized by Iranian forces in March this year, the StWC flinched immediately and issued an (undated) web statement saying: “We urge the speedy release and return to this country of the detained



March 2005 protest (left) against planned extradition of Babar Ahmad, victim of “anti-terror” witch hunt. Spartacist placard (right) at November 2004 emergency protest against assault on Fallujah.

reality the “third camp” was the camp of the imperialist ruling class and indeed Shachtman ended up as an apologist for US imperialism’s “Bay of Pigs” invasion of Castro’s Cuba in 1961.

Under the rubric of “Neither Washington nor Moscow” the SWP consistently cheered the forces of anti-Soviet counterrevolution at home and abroad while swearing loyalty to the Labour Party. The SWP lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s at the hands of the CIA-backed *mujahedin* cut-throats and championed the “trade union” credentials of Polish Solidarność—a counter-revolutionary tool of the Vatican, the CIA and Western bankers. As further confirmation of the SWP’s belief in the “democratic” nature of British imperialism, when the Labour government sent British troops to Northern Ireland in 1969, the SWP welcomed it saying it would provide a “breathing space” for the oppressed Catholic masses. When

ised and armed the Afghan *mujahedin* in a “Holy War” against the Soviet army. This mobilisation of US imperialism was aimed at toppling the USSR itself and destroying every last vestige of the October Revolution. In December 1979 the Soviet army had intervened on the right side in the Afghan civil war—a conflict which pitted the left-nationalist PDPA government against the mediaevalist *mujahedin* who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and shot schoolteachers for teaching little girls how to read and write. In addition to defending the USSR itself against imperialist provocation, the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan opened up the possibility of extending the gains of October to the Afghan peoples. Trotskyists hailed the Red Army and condemned the treacherous betrayal by Gorbachev, who pulled the troops out in order to conciliate US imperialism, ultimately laying the basis for counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and finally in the USSR itself.

Donald Irons objects to our statement that the SWP’s adaptation to Islam “is based on the utterly false notion that political Islam is ‘anti-imperialist’”, but it is a fact that the rapid growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the past two decades was a direct outgrowth of US imperialism’s funding of the likes of Bin Laden and the Taliban as tools against the USSR. Likewise, Hamas was initially a creature of the Israeli Mossad, designed to be a counterweight to the secular nationalists in the PLO and the Palestinian left. Like Bin Laden, Hamas became a Frankenstein’s monster to its creator.

Irons claims that the SWP “do not flinch from defending the rights of Afghans, even of the Taliban, to armed struggle against their ‘own’ ruling

sailors and marines.” The SWP was not going to be seen as insufficiently supportive of “our boys” because that doesn’t play well with the Labour Party politicians and trade union bureaucrats they seek to influence.

While it is certainly true that the AWL is a shameless apologist for British imperialism—refusing even to call for British troops to get out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland—the SWP is no more an opponent of imperialism, regardless of its posture as a defender of Muslims. The Stop the War Coalition was built as a cross-class alliance of forces which upheld the capitalist status quo, but disagreed with Blair over the Iraq war. For Marxists, the fight against imperialist plunder and war is based on opposition to the system of capitalist imperialism which breeds war. The StWC does not call on British workers to *defend* Iraq against British imperialism, but seeks instead to unite the maximum forces on the basis of bourgeois pacifism, duping anti-war protesters with the absurd notion that mass pressure will convince the Labour government to break with Bush. In other words it does not oppose British imperialism as a system of class rule but merely advocates an alternative foreign policy—one more independent of the US.

The SWP’s main claim to represent Britain’s oppressed Muslim population is the role they play in the Respect coalition. Respect is a cross-class alliance which does not even pretend to be “socialist” or to oppose capitalism in the name of the working class. Far from putting the SWP on opposite sides of the barricades to British imperialism, the Respect coalition fully accepts the framework of racist British capitalist rule based on the monarchy, the House of Lords, the

continued on page 9

The Bankruptcy of “New Class” Theories

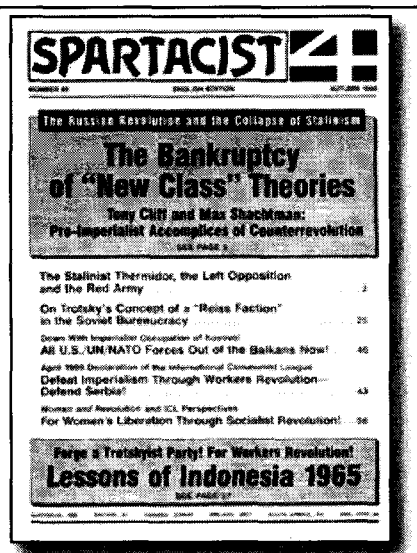
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CWU...

(Continued from page 2)

In opposition to management's attempts to hire immigrant workers to break the strike, a class-struggle leadership would organise immigrant workers—and "casuals"—into the unions and demand **equal pay for equal work and full union wages and conditions for all workers!** The CWU should also unionise workers in companies such as TNT: **Organise the unorganised!** Against the threat of redundancies, a class-struggle leadership would divide the available work among workers and demand 30 hours work for 40 hours pay and full cost-of-living adjustment. These demands transcend the framework of capitalism and thus require a political battle against the strategy of the CWU leadership.

Billy Hayes and deputy general secretary Dave Ward publicly repudiated an effective and hard-fought "unofficial" strike in late 2003 by over 35,000 postal workers that almost brought the postal service to a grinding halt. Management provocatively threatened to invoke the anti-union laws, but then changed tack and opted instead to collaborate with the CWU leadership. Sabotaging gains that had been won on the picket lines, Hayes and Ward agreed to a rotten deal that surrendered to management on two key points: collapsing two mail deliveries into one, in addition to thousands of job losses. As we wrote in "Hayes & Co sabotage wildcat victory", *Workers Hammer* no 186 (Winter 2003-2004),

"This sell-out should come as no surprise to postal workers. While they defended their union in defiance of the anti-union laws by holding fast to their pickets against spying and threats by managers taking 'notes' and filming workers, Hayes and Ward refused to back the strike because it was 'illegal'. Instead, Ward issued a statement on 'How to Resolve Unofficial Strikes', proposing that the disputes over pay and 'major change' be taken to the arbitration service ACAS. This is a strategy of surrender to the bosses."

ACAS is not some neutral agency, but a weapon of the capitalist state for the purpose of undermining the unions in struggle.

Break with Labourism: Build a revolutionary workers party!

The key to building a revolutionary workers party is breaking the working class from all illusions in Labour,



Postal workers demonstrating outside Royal Mail headquarters during this summer's strikes.

"old" as well as "New", which have tied them to the capitalist rulers for almost a century. The CWU leadership's loyalty to New Labour union-bashers has recently angered the membership, who at the June CWU conference dramatically overturned the leadership's decision to support Alan Johnson for deputy leader of the Labour Party. One conference delegate compared the decision to "having a fry up for the bailiffs before they repossess your cooker". Johnson, a former general secretary of the CWU, backed Tony Blair's privatisation schemes and was responsible for introducing top-up fees for students. New Labour has gone out of its way to demonstrate its hostility to trade unions. However, even before Blair, Labour in office always defended the interests of British imperialism at home and abroad: Labour used troops to break the firefighters strike in 1977, sent the troops to Northern Ireland in 1969 and introduced grotesquely racist immigration controls, including "virginity" tests for Asian women in Britain in the 1970s.

The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Socialist Party act as an obstacle to forging a revolutionary party by reinforcing illusions in Labourite reformism. The SWP is acting as a mouthpiece for the CWU bureaucracy, refusing even to mention the anti-union laws while giving a left cover to so-called "left" Mark Serwotka of the civil service union, the PCS, who

has been mouthing off about "solidarity" with the postal workers but doing nothing to organise strikes in his own union. Noting that the civil servants face over 104,000 redundancies, the SWP is circulating an appeal for a "common response" by the two unions, "to strengthen the bonds of fighting unity between our two unions" (*Socialist Worker*, 4 August).

A defiant postal strike could be a

launching point for a desperately needed fight back by the civil servants against the Labour government's attacks. But mobilising the strength of the PCS requires a political fight not only **against** Serwotka, but **against** his executive, on which the SWP's Sue Bond sits and which is dominated by members of the Socialist Party. This leadership agreed to a rotten sell-out deal on pensions in 2005 which means new entrants will have to work **five more years** (to age 65) to qualify for their pension. The SWP reports that the PCS "still [has] a live ballot for strikes" (*Socialist Worker*, 21 July) while honking on that: "United union action can force Gordon Brown to act", which is fundamentally no different than the perspective of the pro-capitalist trade union leadership.

As we wrote in "Hayes & Co sabotage wildcat victory", *Workers Hammer* no 186 (Winter 2003-2004),

"The working class has the power to put an end to British capitalism and to build a different type of society, governed not by the quest for profit but by human need. For that we need a party that rejects the bankrupt Old Labour tradition of relying on parliament and other institutions of the class enemy, and instead relies on the mobilisation of the social power of the working class, allied with all those oppressed by British capitalism, in the revolutionary struggle for a workers government that expropriates the capitalist exploiters. That is the kind of party we of the Spartacist League are fighting to build."■

SWP...

(Continued from page 8)

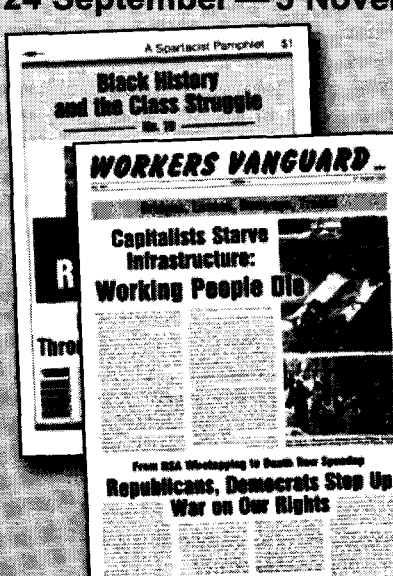

established churches and Parliament. At Respect's founding conference in January 2004, the SWP went so far as to ensure that a call for the abolition of the monarchy was *voted down*. Under the cover of fighting Islamophobia, Respect renounces secularism and any meaningful fight for rights for women and gays in pursuit of unity with the mosques.

Irons makes much of a supposed lack of "social pressure to 'adapt' to political Islam in this racist, Islamophobic society and political climate". Well, the SWP seeks political allies among Muslim community leaders and tailors its politics accordingly, for example on women's rights and gay rights. For the racist ruling class there is no contradiction between attacking Muslims as "terrorists" and nurturing

the most oppressive forces in the Muslim community—both reinforce the grip of capitalism by scapegoating and regimenting immigrants. That is also a central purpose of "multiculturalism"—the voluntary cultural and racial segregation of minorities that the SWP defends. As our article explains: "This denies that minority communities, like the rest of society, are class-divided and that the struggle of immigrants and other minority workers for jobs, unions and equal status means breaking the grip of religious and other conservative community leaders." The Spartacist League is unique in fighting today for new October Revolutions. To that end, we fight to forge a revolutionary workers party which will be built through breaking the ideological chains that tie the workers and oppressed to the class enemy—all variants of reformism and bourgeois ideology, including the false paradise of the priests, pastors, rabbis and imams.■

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South Africa...

(Continued from page 7)

Russia was in revolutionary turmoil:

"The leaders of the petty bourgeoisie—the intellectuals, the prosperous peasants, the present parties of the Narodniks [populists]...and the Mensheviks—are *not* at present in favor of a revolution against the capitalists....

"The conclusion is obvious: only the assumption of power by the proletariat, backed by the semi-proletarians, can give the country a really strong and really revolutionary government" (emphasis in original).

—"A Strong Revolutionary Government" (May 1917)

This statement shows that Lenin had in effect come to the understanding earlier put forward by Trotsky that the revolution in Russia could be consummated only through the proletarian seizure of power.

As later practiced by the Stalinists, the "two-stage revolution" policy led not to socialism but to bloody counter-revolution. The second stage, so to speak, occurred when the bourgeois nationalists turned on and massacred

workers were slaughtered. Following this catastrophic defeat, the battered CCP, under Moscow's instructions, shifted its support from Chiang to a rival "left" GMD bourgeois nationalist, Wang Jingwei, who controlled the major city of Wuhan. A few months later, Wang in turn massacred his Communist would-be allies and their working-class supporters.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution

It was in the aftermath of the crushing defeat of the Chinese Revolution (and part of his struggle against the treacherous and disastrous Stalinist leadership of the world Communist movement) that Trotsky generalised his theory of permanent revolution, which he had first developed in 1904-06 with regard to the course of the revolutionary struggle in tsarist Russia. Permanent revolution *rejects* the nationalist bloc between the proletariat and its capitalist class enemy.

By the late 19th century, the major imperialist powers had subjugated the rest of the world through either conquest or commercial/financial dependency, while the struggle among them for economic

revolutionary workers government.

Lenin, Trotsky and the other leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution never believed (contrary to Stalin's later falsifications) that socialism could be built in a single country, especially not in a relatively poor country besieged by world imperialism. As Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution*: "In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution."

As we wrote shortly after the ANC succeeded the apartheid regime:

"The consolidation or simply the survival of a socialist revolution in South Africa *requires* its international extension. This was the core of the Bolsheviks' program....

"For the moment South Africa is a weakened link in the chain of the world capitalist system binding the neocolonies of the Third World to the imperialist states of North America, West Europe and Japan. It is necessary to mobilize the forces of the proletariat to *break* that chain at its weak-

In a brief document titled, "The Vanguard and the Mass" (February 2005), Ngwane calls for "a party which groups the majority of workers together on politics which reflects their own interests" and denounces any conception of an independent vanguard party as amounting to "not really a vanguard—just a sect". Ngwane's "Socialist Group" in the APF issued a similar call three years ago. In response, we wrote in "South Africa: Union Militants Protest COSATU Alliance with ANC" (*Workers Vanguard* no 808, 29 August 2003): "This is essentially a call for a 'party of the whole class.' The model for this is the (old) British Labour Party.... We reject the notion that the South African working class must pass through the experience of a mass reformist party before a revolutionary party can develop out of it—a kind of two-stage theory of party-building."

In practice, the APF is a class-colaborationist outfit seeking to pressure the ANC-led regime from the left. This is clearly indicated by the APF's allegiance to the World Social Forum (WSF) movement, which is also supported by the COSATU leadership. The purpose of the Social Forums, which are bankrolled by various agencies of the imperialist rulers and their neocolonial underlings, was to draw left-radical youth protesting the evils of "globalisation" away from pitched battles with the forces of the capitalist state and to corral them behind the "democratic alternative" of parliamentary reformism, while pretending that these talk shops were "non-parliamentary" (see "Social Forum Con Game", *Workers Hammer* no 191, Summer 2005).

The list of sponsors of the biannual meetings of the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil, include the Brazilian federal government, the Banco do Brasil and the country's giant oil company, Petrobras. The 2003 European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris was funded by the right-wing Chirac government. And the 2004 ESF in London was bankrolled and hosted by New Labour mayor Ken Livingstone, supporter of the US/NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999.

The Social Forums have been dominated by the misnamed "Non-Governmental" Organisations (NGOs). These organisations, sanctioned by and receiving much of their funding from churches, corporations and capitalist states, are hardly independent of the governments to which they are answerable. Like other components of the Social Forum movement elsewhere, the APF in South Africa is funded by NGOs such as Oxfam Canada and War on Want. As the old saying goes, "He who pays the piper calls the tune."

For the perspective of permanent revolution in South Africa to become a reality requires the forging of a vanguard party modelled on Lenin's Bolshevik Party, a party which led the first and only successful proletarian revolution in history. This party united the most politically advanced workers with the best of the leftist intellectuals. The Bolshevik Party was built through political and polemical struggle against the reformist pseudo-Marxists (the Mensheviks), the populist Social Revolutionaries and the left nationalists of the various oppressed peoples of the tsarist empire. Similarly, our comrades of Spartacist South Africa seek to aggressively confront the different currents of the South African left in political and polemical struggle with the aim of forging an authentic Leninist-Trotskyist party on a clear programmatic basis. ■



Stalin's 1927 autographed photo (center) sent to Chiang Kai-shek: "To the Guomindang's victory and China's liberation." Left: in line with Stalinist policy, Shanghai workers welcomed Chiang Kai-shek's troops into city, April 1927. Right: execution of Communist Party member, one of thousands massacred following Chiang's coup.

their Communist would-be allies and the workers and peasants who supported them, such as in China in 1927 and Indonesia in 1965.

Consider the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27. By then the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state had placed at the head of the Communist International JV Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin, who applied the old Menshevik schema to colonial and semicolonial countries under the slogan of the "Anti-Imperialist United Front". Insisting that the coming revolution in semicolonial China would be limited to a "national-democratic revolution" placing the bourgeoisie in power, Stalin and Bukharin, despite objections by Trotsky, continued the policy of the liquidation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) into Chiang Kai-shek's bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (GMD), which soon engaged in a civil war against imperialist-backed Northern warlords in the name of unifying China.

In early 1927, the GMD army marched on Shanghai, then controlled by a local militarist backed by the British. Under CCP leadership, 500,000 workers staged a general strike that developed into a successful insurrection. Communist-led workers effectively took over this key metropolis. But the Shanghai proletariat laid down its arms on Stalin's orders. And shortly after Chiang's troops entered the city, where they were welcomed by the victorious workers, Chiang staged a bloody coup that beheaded the Chinese proletariat. Tens of thousands of Communists and revolutionary-minded

and military predominance intensified. In countries of belated capitalist development, the propertied classes emerged as too dependent on and tied to imperialism to complete the historic tasks of social and economic modernisation. "Progressive developmental" capitalism in a country like South Africa or those of Latin America is an illusion. However, in many cases foreign investment has created a force capable of breaking the hold of imperialist domination and opening the road to social progress: the industrial proletariat.

Thus, Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution* (1929): "With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially colonial and semicolonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution to their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation."

In South Africa, adequate housing for millions in the townships and shantytowns, electricity and clean water for the entire population, free quality education, the eradication of *lobola* (the bride price) and female genital mutilation, the mobilisation of all available scientific and medical resources in combatting the AIDS pandemic: these desperately needed measures require the socialist transformation of the economy and society. South Africa's industrial proletariat has the power and class interests to unite all of the oppressed in a determined battle for a

est links, and then fight like hell to take the battle to the imperialist centers, seeking allies against the vicious enemy of all the oppressed—international capital. Thus, the fight to build a South African Bolshevik Party is inseparable from the struggle we in the International Communist League are waging to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International."

—"South African Powder Keg: Part Four", *Workers Vanguard* no 606, 16 September 1994, reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* no 12

A socialist revolution in South Africa would reverberate among working people and the oppressed the world over, finding strategically powerful allies in the proletariat of the imperialist centres.

For a revolutionary vanguard party

Reflecting the growing popular discontent with the Mbeki government, several groups and individuals outside the Alliance have raised the call for a new mass workers party, for example, Trevor Ngwane of the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF). The Johannesburg-based APF functions as a kind of political sandbox for various pseudo-Trotskyist organisations in South Africa, including the Clifite Keep Left group and the Democratic Socialist Movement, which is affiliated with the Taaffeite Committee for a Workers International. Trevor Ngwane himself is a former ANC local councillor who was expelled from the party in 2000 for opposing the extensive privatisation of government-owned industries.

Ireland...

(Continued from page 4)

statement: "The decision by the director of public prosecutions not to prosecute any army or Royal Ulster Constabulary officers over the role in the murder of my dad, Pat Finucane, is disappointing but not surprising." He added, "why prosecute people for doing the job you asked them to do in the first place?", noting that "the word 'collusion' has become the adjective of choice for what was, in reality, British government policy in Northern Ireland since the 1970s" (*Guardian Unlimited*, 28 June). The Miami Showband massacre in 1975 is just one example of the depths of collusion between the British Army and Loyalist death squads. On their way home to Dublin, a bus carrying the five well-known musicians was stopped at an Ulster Defence Regiment (a local regiment of the British Army) checkpoint. After two soldiers, who were also members of the Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) terror group, killed themselves trying to plant a bomb on the bus, the band members were lined up and shot. Two of the five survived and later identified the "crisp English accent" of the officer in charge of the massacre as that of Robert Nairac, a captain in the SAS.

Nairac was implicated in many sectarian murders and was identified as the "liaison officer" for various state forces involved in the Dublin and Monaghan city centre bombings in 1974. Nairac was caught while undercover in Armagh in 1977 by the IRA who put an end to his career as an assassin once and for all. He was posthumously awarded the George Cross in 1979 by the British state, while being eulogised almost as a folk hero. At the time we wrote: "What the people of South Armagh really thought of this paid assassin was conveyed by a slogan on the walls of the Creggan River bridge just outside Crossmaglen: 'CAPTAIN NAIRAC'S SOUL ROTS IN HELL' — a sentiment with which we heartily concur, whatever disagreements we may have with its theological underpinnings" (*Spartacist Britain* no 8, February 1979).

Needless to say the current "normalisation" process in Northern Ireland leaves untouched the Loyalist UVF and Ulster Defence Association (UDA) who have not only held on to their weapons but are now being subsidised. The minutes of one Department of Education meeting record the need to: "Maintain/establish good working relationships with voluntary organi-

sations (Barnardo's, NSPCC, UDA, UVF)". In fact the murderous UDA receives an annual official stipend of £500,000 from the British state. Last March the Northern Ireland Office pledged £1.2 million to the Conflict Transformation Initiative (CTI), a slush fund for the ever-active Loyalist terrorists. Meanwhile, violent attacks on Catholics have by no means ceased. On 29 June, Niall Ferrin, a 15-year-old Catholic boy was savagely attacked by a Loyalist gang who cracked his skull open with a golf club before tying a wire noose around his neck and dragging him along the street. The intervention of a brave local Protestant woman saved him from this lynch mob but it is unclear whether he will ever fully recover his hearing and sight.

Northern Ireland — a case of interpenetrated peoples

We have uniquely warned that, within the framework of capitalism, there is no democratic solution to the oppression of the Catholic minority, in a situation where they are geographically interpenetrated with the Protestants, who are a distinct community. This is borne out by the degree of forced segregation that has taken place under the so-called "peace" process. Northern Ireland today is more divided along communal lines than it was when the army went there 38 years ago. While the Catholic middle class has grown in size and prospered — to the point where it can afford luxury homes, eat in the same fancy restaurants and shop in the same malls as its Protestant counterpart — for the working classes of both communities, life is grim and utterly segregated.

According to the London *Independent's* Irish correspondent David McKittrick, an official report puts a cost of £1.5 billion on the segregation of a society where the communities "live side-by-side but do not integrate or share easily". McKittrick says: "In one tiny but illuminating example, the report found that 165 extra school bus runs take place daily because it is not considered prudent to mix Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren." As regards health, he says "three-quarters of those interviewed in a survey said they refused to use their closest health centre if it was located in a place dominated by the 'other' community"; and when it comes to housing, "many homes lie empty — and some have to be demolished", and "some areas, often divided by 'peacelines', are overcrowded on one side of the wall but have spare space on the other"

(*Independent*, 23 August).

The prevalence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not proof of some unbridgeable religious divide, but has been fostered by the bourgeoisie in its efforts to maintain capitalist exploitation. The inability of the capitalist system to provide a decent living and decent housing for the working people is a key reason for the increasing sectarianism in Northern Ireland, a sectarianism which is inflamed by the capitalists and their state in order to prevent workers from recognising capitalism as the root of the problem. We oppose all the discrimination in jobs, housing and education. At the same time we advance a programme of transitional demands based on what workers need, not what capitalism can afford. These are particularly relevant in the context of the massive decline of heavy industry, where Protestant workers once enjoyed marginal privileges. We fight for jobs for all; work-sharing on full pay and a sliding scale of wages and hours. These demands point to the need to transcend the framework of capitalist rule, to break out of the cycle of scarcity which inevitably pits workers against each other in a scramble for the inadequate level of jobs, housing, education and healthcare that capitalism provides. A planned economy, organised under working-class rule, exercised through soviets (workers councils), would regenerate the former industrial areas throughout the British Isles that have been turned into an economic wasteland by capitalism. A workers republic in Ireland within a federation of socialist republics in the British Isles, led by a Leninist party, would resolve the centuries-long oppression of Ireland and would come to a voluntary arrangement with all, including the Protestant community.

Historically, the bourgeoisie in Northern Ireland has prided itself on its industrial base with some of the lowest-paid skilled workers in the British Isles, while looking down its nose at the poorer Catholic neighbours to the South. However, the shipyards are long gone and the Northern capitalists look in envy at the "Celtic Tiger" economy to the South, while seeking to emulate its success through low wages and high profits. Part of what lies behind the power-sharing arrangement is bourgeois pressure on Northern Ireland to present a picture of "normality" in order to attract foreign investment. Thus the *Financial Times* (9 May) urged the new coalition "to adopt policies to foster business and encourage entrepreneurs".

The announcement by Aer Lingus that it will set up a major hub in Belfast provided a good example of what the bourgeoisies North and South can agree on: attacking unions and the work conditions of their members. The Dublin bourgeoisie privatised the former state airline with an eye to large profits, following years of attacks on workers' conditions, in an effort to compete in the world market. Now, Aer Lingus chief executive Dermot Mannion is axing the Shannon-Heathrow route and setting up a new route from Belfast, under worse conditions for workers. When the airline's 500 pilots found out that pilots based in Belfast were to be excluded from the pension fund, they immediately voted for a 48-hour strike. Put under pressure by the Irish government, including with the accusation that it would threaten the "peace process", the pro-capitalist leadership of the Irish Airline Pilots' Association caved in and called off the strike.

As our comrades in the Spartacist Group Ireland wrote in an article on a wildcat strike by Belfast postal workers — uniting both Protestant and Catholic workers — that rocked the North in February 2006: "Displays of class unity by Protestant and Catholic workers are rare in Northern Ireland, but as revolutionaries we know that such opportunities will inevitably arise even in such a deeply segregated society." The article went on to say:

"The most powerful instance of joint class struggle was the 1919 Belfast engineering strike (part of a wave of class struggle that swept Britain and Ireland after the Russian Revolution) in which Charles McKay, a socialist of Catholic background, led mainly Protestant workers to shut down all heavy industry and most of the city. The strike was betrayed by Labourite bureaucrats and smashed by the capitalist rulers. The aftermath of this defeat included a hideous wave of anti-Catholic pogroms the following year in which 9,000 Catholics were driven out of their jobs, as were 3,000 Protestant socialists and trade-union activists. This communalism laid the basis for the partition of Ireland in 1921 by British imperialism. The lesson of these struggles is the necessity for a revolutionary vanguard to intervene to win Catholic and Protestant workers to a proletarian revolutionary perspective that can transcend the sectarian divide, and to the understanding of the need to uproot the capitalist system that gives rise to it."

— *Workers Vanguard* no 866, 17 March 2006

We are dedicated to building vanguard parties capable of waging a successful fight for socialist revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea. ■

Mumia...

(Continued from page 12)

show on the fight to free Mumia. The PDC's Kate Klein along with Glenroy Watson of Global Afrikan Congress and the RMT, and Jo Woodward, a supporter of the PDC and fellow trade unionist, were interviewed by Galaxy co-hosts Sista C and Omowale, who played one of Mumia's taped commentaries from death row. The hosts then asked the speakers to elaborate on Mumia's history as a fighter for the oppressed, and the state's murderous vendetta against him, and urged listeners to join the fight to free him. Lively exchanges took place with listeners who phoned and texted, expressing support for Mumia and opinions on a range of topics including the history of British imperialist oppression in Africa and Ireland and the racist "war on terror".

Sista C and Omowale laid particular stress on the evidence of Mumia's innocence, airing the recorded sworn affidavit of Arnold Beverly who in 1999 confessed that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. In marked contrast to many events held by liberal and so-called leftist organisations, neither the hosts nor the listeners who phoned in voiced illusions that Mumia can get "justice" from the capitalist courts. In response to the PDC's strategy for mobilising mass international trade union-centred protest demanding Mumia's freedom, one caller questioned whether white workers in America could be convinced to fight for Mumia. The speakers explained that multiracial and multiethnic trade unions in the US and internationally have taken up the campaign, including signing the PDC's statement calling for freedom for Mumia, and that they need to be mobilised *in action* in defence of Mumia. Glenroy Watson

spoke of his union's longtime support for Mumia and the need for other unions here in Britain to take up the campaign.

As Rachel Wolkenstein remarked at the May rally in London, "The fight to free Mumia is part of the fight for black liberation, and the broader fight for socialist revolution and therefore for the

liberation of us all."

Join the campaign! Send your details to the PDC to be contacted in the event of an emergency protest (see PDC email and phone details on page 12). Mobilise your union, your campus or other organisation to join protests demanding: **Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal!** ■

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WORKERS HAMMER 4

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Mumia is innocent!

Prepare for emergency protests!

Black American journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal sits on death row in Pennsylvania, awaiting the decision of the US Third Circuit Court of Appeals resulting from the appeal hearing which took place in Philadelphia on 17 May. A decision could come at any moment—the possible outcomes include new legal proceedings, life imprisonment, or a renewed death sentence. In the event that the court rules to uphold the death sentence or denies Mumia's appeals for a new trial or hearing, the PDC will call an emergency protest at the US Embassy in London demanding: **Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Mumia is innocent! Abolish the racist death penalty!**

Now on death row for 25 years, Mumia was framed up in 1982, falsely convicted of killing Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death. The state is as determined as ever to kill him because in Mumia—a Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth and later a MOVE supporter, an outspoken journalist who speaks of revolutionary change—the racist US rulers see the spectre of black revolt. They want to



Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1969 as Minister of Information for Philadelphia Black Panther Party. Website of National Union of Journalists in Britain/Ireland urges members to support fight for his freedom.

kill Mumia or bury him alive in prison, not only to silence his voice but to send a message to minority youth, to union militants, leftists and anyone who would dare defy their system of exploitation and racist oppression.

Regular readers and subscribers of *Workers Hammer* have received the Summer 2007 issue containing reports and speeches from the London rally held in May calling for Mumia's freedom. Organised by the Partisan Defence Committee (PDC), the legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League, the rally heard speeches from Glenroy Watson and Steve Hedley of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), and Paul Moffat of the Communication

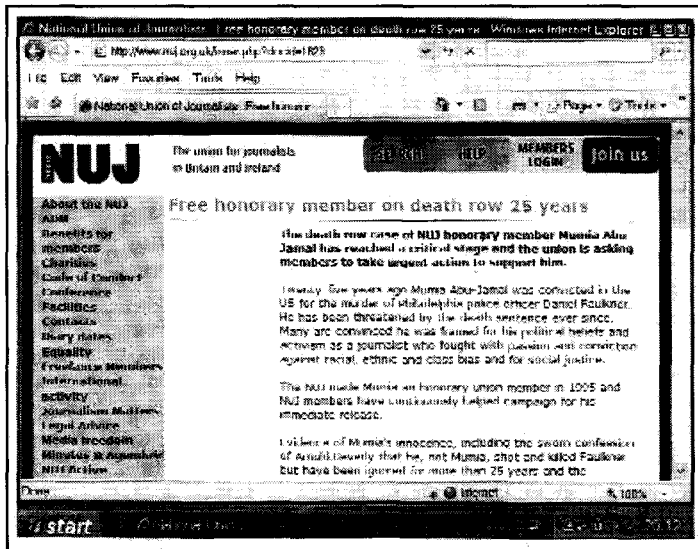
Workers Union (CWU), who have been actively campaigning in their unions for Mumia. Renowned civil liberties lawyer Gareth Peirce spoke of the British government's "war on terror" assault on democratic rights, and PDC (US) counsel Rachel Wolkenstein outlined the massive evidence of Mumia's innocence which she was central to uncovering while part of Mumia's legal team in the 1990s. While it is necessary to fight through court proceedings, the decades-long state vendetta against Mumia and outright refusal of any court to admit the stunning evidence of his innocence is ample proof that there is no justice for the likes of Mumia in the capitalist courts.

Union activists have taken bundles

of the supplement to distribute, including postal workers on picket lines during the one-day strikes and a strike rally that took place in July. In late August the National Union of Journalists (Britain and Ireland), which made Mumia an honorary member in 1995, posted an appeal on its website for union members to "take urgent action". Noting that Mumia's case is at a critical juncture the posting continued, "There is an urgent need to revitalise the mass protest to free Mumia on the basis that he is an innocent man" and that "The NUJ believes he should be freed."

On 29 July, London's black community Galaxy radio station (99.5FM and afiwestation.com) aired a three-hour

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Join the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defence!

Make a contribution today, payable to Partisan Defence Committee. Write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque and mail to the address below. Every penny of such contributions is transmitted to Mumia's legal defence team via Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal in New York.

Organise protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organisations demanding Mumia's freedom. Get your union or organisation to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicise Mumia's case in your union or organisation's newsletter.

Spread the word! Distribute the *Workers Hammer* supplement, "Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" (July 2007), containing reports and speeches from the May rally in London, £1 per bundle of 10. Order from/make payable to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY.

Order the PDC pamphlet *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia is Innocent!*, detailing the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive evidence of his innocence. It is available for 70p. Get the PDC badge: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" £1 each. Order the DVD made by the PDC, *From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, £2 each. Order from, make cheques payable to Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX.

Contact the Partisan Defence Committee
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Special Supplement!

