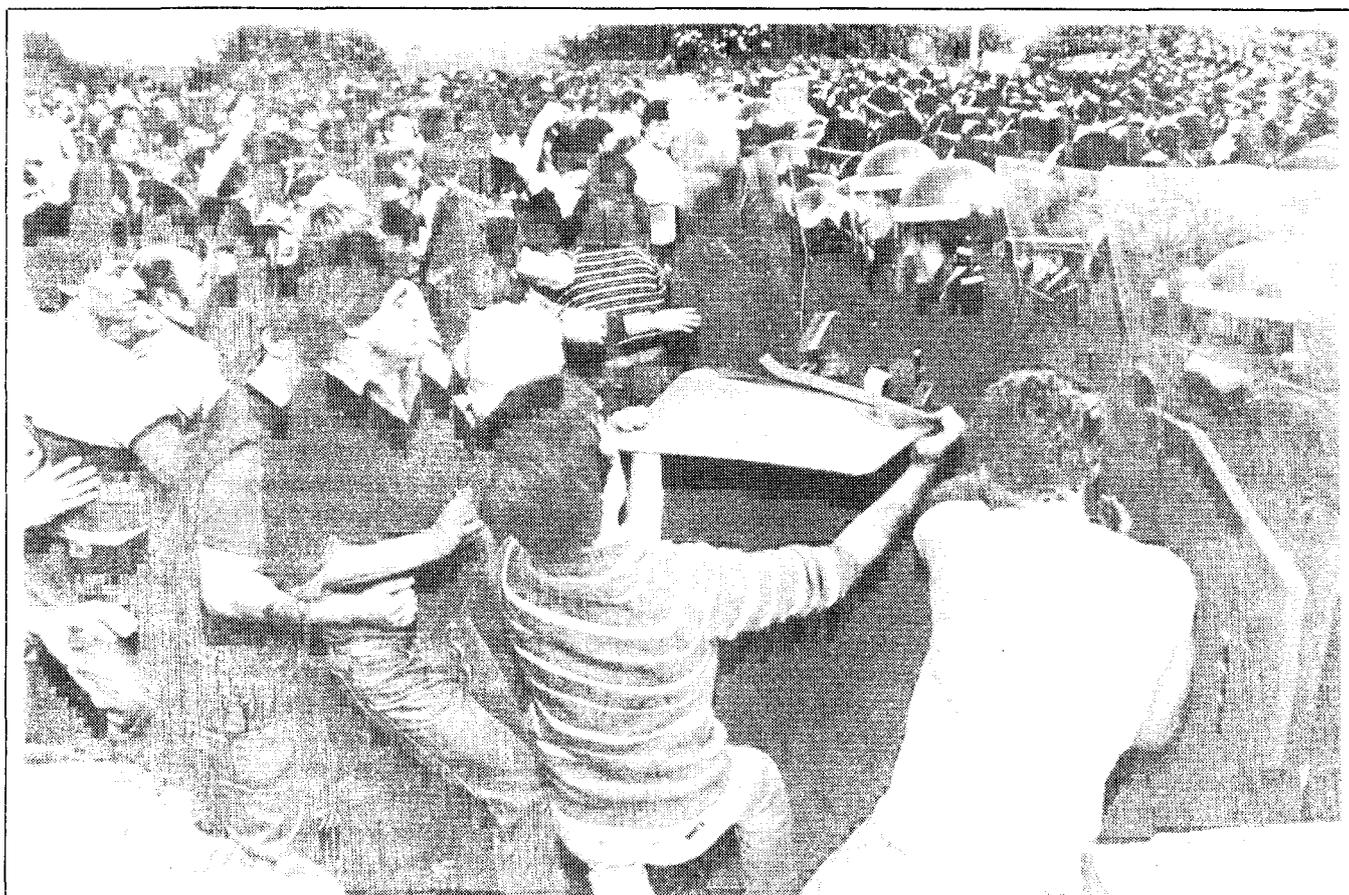


# Spartacist Pamphlet

## Militant Labour's touching faith in the capitalist state



Orgreave, 1984: heroic British miners battle strike-breaking cops.

John Sturrock, Network

**Includes Gauche révolutionnaire/Jeunesses communistes révolutionnaires pamphlet, *The International and the State*, with reply by the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).**

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Reply by the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

## Introductory note

The present pamphlet, published by the International Communist League (ICL), documents the counterposition between the principled programme of the ICL and the opportunist approach of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), led by the Militant Labour organisation in Britain. In particular, this pamphlet exposes the vast theoretical and programmatic gulf which separates Militant Labour from authentic Trotskyism on the crucial question of the capitalist state. The CWI views as unnecessary or utopian our call for independent mobilisations of proletarian power to oppose the fascists. And in their grotesque insistence that capitalism's racist cops are "workers in uniform", they sum up the difference between their reformist perspectives and our fight for socialist revolution.

This pamphlet consists of an exchange of views between the ICL and CWI. A supplement to *Workers Hammer* (our British section's newspaper) was mass-distributed at the 16 October 1993 anti-fascist protest in London. Two articles from that supplement are reprinted here along with a brief introduction published in our journal *Women and Revolution*. These articles—along with a polemical introduction directed at Militant Labour's French co-thinkers, the *Gauche révolutionnaire/Jeunesses communistes révolutionnaires* (GR/JCR)—were republished in *le Bolchévique*, the newspaper of our French section, the *Ligue trotskyste de France* (LTF). In response the GR/JCR produced a lengthy polemic in May entitled *The International and the State*. That polemic is also directed against *Pouvoir ouvrier*, the French group connected to the British Workers Power organisation. The full text of the GR/JCR polemic is included here, along with a detailed reply by the ICL.

Our pamphlet is being published simultaneously in English by the Spartacist League of Britain and in French by the LTF, which are sections of the democratic-centralist ICL. The French edition reproduces the CWI pamphlet in full, including its typographical errors; the English translation by the ICL similarly includes the complete text of the original.

Our pamphlet stands in the spirit of the ICL's unique pamphlet series, "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists", which is devoted to reprinting polemics against the ICL by our opponents on the left. We believe that our own members and others who are considering our views should want to seriously study the best efforts of our opponents to refute our politics and defend their own. In this vein we believe this pamphlet will be of great educational value to young people today who want to oppose the fascist menace and the official racist and anti-immigrant policies of the ruling class, and are examining the various tendencies which claim the heritage of Marxist socialism.

— International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)  
August 1994

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**16 October 1993, London: tens of thousands march against BNP**

## **For trade union/minority mobilisations to stop the fascists!**

From London to Berlin to Moscow, the New World Order swept in by counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has fostered the rise of rightist, racist and outright fascist violence against immigrant workers and all minorities. Deepening European recession, exacerbated by the economic disaster of German reunification, has impelled the imperialists to slam the gates of "Fortress Europe", exclude immigrants and refugees and cut back the extensive social services, instituted during the period of relative prosperity after World War II, which were used to pacify the working class. To displace the discontent of a population whose lives have been thrown into economic insecurity and chaos because of widespread unemployment and erosion of health care and social services, the bourgeoisies have sought to incite racism by blaming immigrants for the economic squeeze. But the wave of fascist terror has not gone unimpeded. Across Europe, youth in particular have marched, protested and in some cases battled against the racists and the police who protect them.

In London on 16 October, over 50,000 people protested the growing plague of murderous terror against the heavily black and Asian population of east London. This was the largest anti-fascist demonstration in Britain in two decades. As protesters attempted to follow the planned route which passed the fascist British National Party (BNP) headquarters in southeast London, hundreds of riot cops blocked their way, wading into the crowds with batons flailing and following up with charges on horseback. Dozens of marchers were taken to hospitals with blood streaming from their heads. But for two hours, outraged anti-fascist militants stood their ground against the racist thugs in blue, forcing the cops to pull back several times under a hail of sticks, rocks, bricks and paving stones. Police dragged off and arrested 31 of the anti-fascist protesters.

### **"Police protect the fascists!"**

The day before the 16 October march, the area had been placed under a virtual state of siege. Police invoked the Public Order Act to overrule the march route announced weeks earlier by the protest organisers. On Saturday, 7000 cops were deployed, lining the march route and barricading over 50 streets within half a mile of the BNP headquarters, where a couple of fascists sat cowering behind steel doors. Protesters who were charged by police

horses and clubbed by police batons learned a basic fact of life: the cops serve their capitalist masters and shelter their masters' reserve shock troops. Demonstrators chanted, "Police protect the fascists!"

That day, the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), organised a contingent which marched behind the banner, "Not Wretched Appeals to the Capitalist State! For Trade Union/Minority Mobilisations to Smash the Fascists!" We reprint below two articles from a special supplement prepared for the demonstration, where 9000 were distributed.

The huge outpouring on 16 October reflected widespread outrage throughout the country over the deadly rise of fascist terror, including the murder of black student Stephen Lawrence in April. The BNP scored a victory when avowed fascist Derek Beackon won a seat on the local Tower Hamlets council (on the Isle of Dogs) only days after the near-murder by racist thugs of 17-year-old Bangladeshi Quaddus Ali on 8 September. Asian youth took to the streets under the slogan, "Self-defence is no offence!" Two days later, cops waded into a crowd of anti-fascist protesters outside the London Hospital where young Ali lay perilously close to death. Twenty-three anti-fascist youth were arrested. The Spartacist League/Britain and the Partisan Defence Committee demand: Drop the charges against all the anti-fascist fighters!

### **For trade union centred mobilisations!**

In the weeks leading up to the march, SL/B supporters fought for a perspective centred on the power of the organised working class to stop the racist terrorists. A symbolic strike against the fascists by area unions, such as the Tower Hamlets public employees union, UNISON, took place immediately after the attacks and the election of the BNP candidate.

Yet while there was a sprinkling of public employee banners at the 16 October march, the trade unions did not mobilise for a display of integrated social power (black, white and Asian) which would have taught the BNP fascists a lesson and made the cops think twice before attacking the demonstrators. The reformist Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) and Anti Nazi League (ANL) organisers had neither a perspective nor a strategy for mobilising the heavy battalions of the working class, because they capitulate to the pro-capitalist bureaucrats

who hold back and strangle the labour movement.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress (TUC) tops, who work together as agents of the capitalist bosses within the working class, organised a deliberately diversionary “Anti-Racist Alliance” rally—which attracted barely 3000 people—miles from the BNP’s terror nest. While many militant anti-fascist youth mistakenly identify the organised workers movement with the sell-out Labourite tops and consequently despair of the possibility of organised workers action, the ICL wages a political battle to break the ranks of the working class from their present leaders, most importantly in the course of struggle.

### Reformists call for state bans

For months, the ANL has been pouring all its energies into vapid pleas to the Bexley council Conservatives (Tories)—who appeal to the same racist constituency as the fascists—to shut down the BNP headquarters. Under immense pressure from thousands of young people who want to clean out the fascists, the ANL and YRE leaders talked out of both sides of their mouths, calling for militant action against the BNP while pleading with or petitioning the capitalist state. On the one hand, the chief political force behind the YRE, the *Militant* (8 October 1993) of Peter Taaffe, declared: “Militant Labour [also known as Militant] does not depend on or want the state to ban the BNP”. Yet a week later, the *Militant* wrote, “we do campaign for local authorities to refuse to allow their premises for meetings and to use local planning regulations to close down the BNP bunkers”. In similar fashion, Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which dominates the ANL, stated: “We cannot rely on the state to stop the Nazis” (*Socialist Worker*, 9 October 1993). But in the same issue they declared, “If our pressure succeeds in getting Bexley Tory Council to close down their headquarters it will be an enormous victory”.

Denouncing the 16 October cop onslaught which left her bloodied, ANL chief steward Julie Waterson said: “Today has shown the police in their true colours protecting the BNP” (*London Sunday Times*, 17 October 1993). But only three weeks earlier, when the cops took 57 BNPer into custody on 26 September to prevent a repeat of the bashing they received a week before, ANL spokesman Claire Dissington crowed: “We welcomed the police action, but it should really have come sooner. We wanted them to stop the BNP selling their newspaper in the area long ago” (*London Independent*, 27 September 1993). *Both Militant and SWP argue that the cops should be part of the labour movement!*

After 16 October, as the bourgeois media sought to whip up a witch hunt against the anti-fascist demonstrators, ANL honcho Paul Holborow joined in the violence-baiting smears: “Those involved in skirmishes were not representative of the 98 per cent of the demonstrators that went along with the publically stated aim of a peaceful demon-

stration” (*London Guardian*, 18 October 1993). This is the real tradition of the ANL. Faced with a similar witch hunt following a militant anti-fascist demonstration in Lewisham in 1977, the Cliffites formed the ANL as a popular-frontist vehicle to curry favour with Anglican vicars and Labourite politicians. When the fascist National Front marched through the East End in 1978, the ANL organised an “anti-racist” Carnival *ten miles across town*, deliberately preventing thousands of anti-fascist militants from confronting and defeating the NF. Now, as a follow-up to the massive 16 October demonstration, the ANL is once again proposing ... a carnival to be held in six months!

The article titled, “The trade unions, minorities and the left must mobilise by the thousands: Drive the fascists off the streets!” (printed below) shows that both the SWP and Militant are *reformist* organisations, despite their occasional superficial militancy. Until recently, Militant had been buried deep inside the Labour Party for *decades*. Militant argues that a “left-wing” government of the dyed-in-the-wool pro-capitalist Labour Party, if armed with “emergency powers”, will bring socialism. For all their occasional anti-Labour rhetoric, Militant and the SWP *always* call for a vote to the Labour traitors—even when the Labour Party is up to its neck in strikebreaking.

The British Labour Party is an archetypal specimen of the Social Democracy (Second International). The treacherous history of the Social Democracy in the service of international capital had its most notorious expression in voting for war credits in the German parliament in 1914, an act which precipitated the split within the Second International, leading to the formation of the Leninist Third (Communist) International. Since then, the Social Democrats have slavishly served at every key historic juncture to tie the workers movement, with the assistance of the fake lefts (such as the Militant and SWP), to the political interests of capital. Calling on the state to disarm or ban the fascists is a classic demand of social democrats because they *fear* the mass mobilisation of the powerful working class. The Social Democracy, echoed by other so-called socialists, cheered the counterrevolution which has brought abject misery to Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union. And in Germany, the German Social Democratic Party was the main agent promoting capitalist *Anschluss* under the guise of being a socialist workers party. The ICL fought relentlessly within the limits of our small forces against capitalist reunification of Germany and counter-revolution in the Soviet Union.

The forces of fascism are still weak, while the proletariat has far greater numbers but is politically disarmed by misleadership. The lessons of history show that the capitalist class opts for fascism when a powerful working class threatens bourgeois stability, but is incapable of taking power due to a reformist leadership—then the fascist reserve troops are called in to destroy that proletarian power and restabilise the rule of capital. It is vitally necessary to give the fascists a lesson now, while they are still cowering in their nests. As Trotsky wrote to

his French comrades in March 1934:

"In this period it is very important to distinguish between the fascists and the state. The state is not yet ready to subordinate itself to the fascists; it wants to 'arbitrate.'... Our strategic task is to increase these hesitations and apprehensions on the part of the 'arbiter,' its army and its police. How? By showing that we are stronger than the fascists, that is, by giving them a good beating in full view of this arbiter without, as long as we are not absolutely forced to, directly taking on the state itself. That is the whole point."

When the capitalist class has its back against the wall, it turns to the fascists to act as their shock troops against the working class. The fascists are not just people with bad

ideas but an integral part of the state's reserve arsenal. Ultimately therefore, the fight against fascism is necessarily a *class battle*—not just military but political—in which the working class has the social power and the urgent interest to stop the fascists cold. This fight will be part and parcel of the revolutionary struggle of the working class against the very system of capitalism. Youth and workers who want to wage this fight against the ravages of capitalism will not find a vehicle among those parties whose strategy relies on *pressuring* the bourgeois state. The ICL intends to be that party armed with a revolutionary programme and the firm intention to fight for it. ■

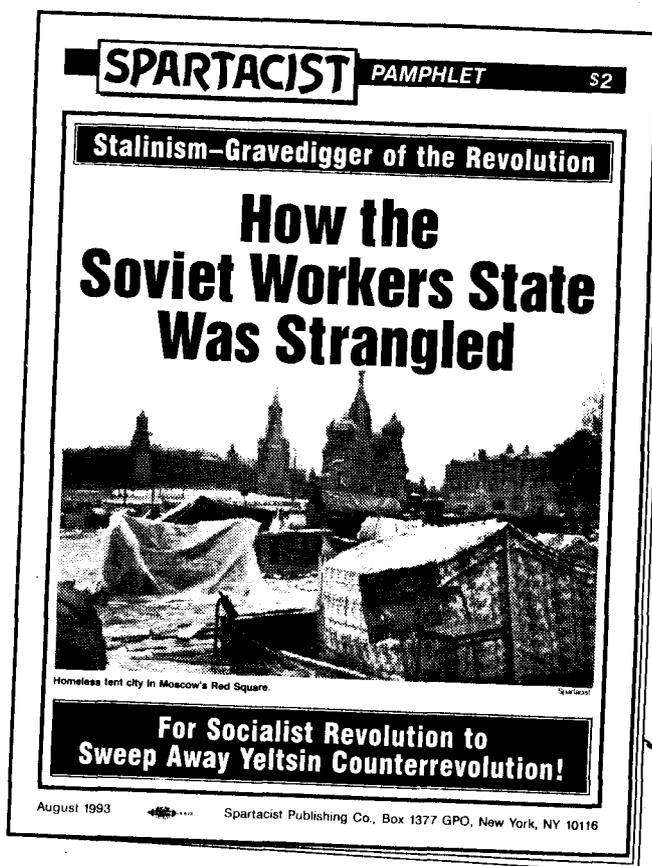
## Spartacist pamphlet

This pamphlet brings together articles from *Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League/US, and the Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin* covering the recent events in the ex-USSR. Beginning with the pathetic "Emergency Committee" putsch and Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in August 1991, the material contained in the pamphlet documents the unfolding counterrevolution and the Trotskyist programme to resist and reverse it. Included are several polemical articles which expose the role of numerous Western "leftists" in backing Yeltsinite counterrevolution and that of the Stalinist remnants in the former Soviet Union, whose bankruptcy is epitomised by their despicable "red-brown coalition" with virulent Russian nationalists, monarchists and outright fascists. Finally, we include an article from the current Russian-language *Bulletin* no 4 which details the Stalinist degeneration of the CPSU and the struggle of the Trotskyist Left Opposition for the authentic programme of Leninism.

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## The trade unions, minorities and the left must mobilise by the thousands:

# Drive the fascists off the streets!

### Remember Cable Street!

*This article was originally given out as a Spartacist League leaflet at an anti-fascist demonstration in East London on 26 September 1993.*

The anti-racist youth of this country have had enough! They have pointed a way forward. We salute the militant action of last Sunday [19 September 1993] in Brick Lane, largely organised by Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) and the Anti Nazi League (ANL). Some British National Party (BNP) scum, including their leaders, ended up on the pavement in a humiliated heap. After their murderous rampages in the East End, and their Isle of Dogs election victory, the BNP got the least they deserve, and every decent person cheered at the sight of it. The police who protect them are now forced to talk about not being able to “guarantee the safety of the BNP”. After fifteen years of provocations in Brick Lane, the fascists know they are in danger of getting their just deserts. Good! This victory must be built upon: let’s win the war, not just one battle.

Now is the time to drive the fascists off the streets, *out of the minority areas!* Avenge Quaddus Ali and every victim of racist terror! We want to see serious, lasting victories in the fight against fascism. Weld the militancy of the youth to the power of the *organised working class*, black, white and Asian, and deal a decisive blow against the BNP!

Now is the time to *shut down the BNP headquarters*: not by idiotic appeals to the Tory Bexley Council or the Home Office, but by a massive, co-ordinated action: for working-class unity to *smash the BNP!*

Every trade union, every minority community organisation, every socialist party and group should be on the streets of East London. One big fist to crush these rats, the killers of Stephen Lawrence.

Remember Cable Street! In 1936, hundreds of thousands of workers, many of them Jews targeted by the British Union of Fascists, responded to the call of local Communists and East End workers, and *stopped* the Mosley fascists in the East End. We need another Cable Street, not soft-headed, suicidal calls for government action.

We reject the crap that ANL and YRE “leaders” have pushed down everyone’s throats for so long. Reject their appeals to the capitalist courts and cops and councils!

Reject their lobbies to “reform” the racist Liberal Democrats who run Tower Hamlets! Don’t lobby the Home Office! Don’t appeal for justice to the sell-out Labour Party! The Labour reformist leaders are the enemies of serious action against the fascists. We need a class-struggle leadership, which will mobilise the strength of the working class and the oppressed, in action, on the road to workers power!

The Public Order Act, enacted after Cable Street, was supposed to be a law against the fascists—this law is used today to persecute the anti-fascists who resisted the police riot on 10 September outside the Royal London Hospital. It is being used to go after the militants who gave the BNP a bloody good hiding last Sunday. Drop the charges against all arrested anti-fascist fighters! No confidence in the capitalist state. No calls on the state machine! The state has always defended the fascists. It murdered Joy Gardner. It has always harassed and intimidated and attacked the black and Asian population. The cops who killed striking miners and the courts that sentenced them by the thousand are the *deadly enemies* of the working people.

*The sentiment is there*, in the working class, for a real showdown with the fascists. Already UNISON workers have struck for half a day in outrage at Beackon’s win. British Telecom workers have voted for pulling the plug on the BNP HQ. The Fire Brigades Union London Region has supported today’s demonstration. Tower Hamlets NALGO has called for anti-fascist unity in the workplaces. What’s missing is the determined, intransigent leadership that the combative youth and workers deserve.

We need an organised, militant demonstration, well-defended, with thousands of trade unionists at its core. *The BNP can be stopped in its tracks.* We are not talking about weak-kneed protests, and we are not talking about courageous street fights pitting a few tens or hundreds of leftists and youth against the fascist thugs. We are talking about determined *mass actions*. The labour movement in this country is still strong and well-organised, despite the defeats of the last years. It must get off its knees and start to struggle, *as a class!* Defend and steward anti-fascist meetings and marches with disciplined trade union defence guards: it is time the *fascists* went in fear!

TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris wants a “cross-party” demonstration against racism. We can’t fight this battle with the enemy’s generals in our headquarters! There can be no unity of genuine anti-fascists with the

bosses' parties, with the pious humbuggery of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such cross-class alliances—popular fronts—are fatal. The TUC made common cause with Tories like the vicious racist Winston Churchill in a campaign of words against the pit closures: today there is hardly a working coal mine left in Britain. Today, like last year, what is needed is determined class struggle, not collaboration with representatives of the ruling class.

The working class and the youth who burn with anger at the BNP murderers have nothing in common with Major, Ashdown and John Smith. These people preside over and love the capitalist system which feeds the fascists. The working class must fight in its own name, and for its own power. This country is rotted and rundown, a sea of misery for millions of unemployed and low-paid workers, a place of fear and violence for Asian and black people. Youth can only look forward to no jobs, nowhere to live, no money, no hope. This country does not need talk or prayer or moral witness: it needs a socialist revolution! Break the power of the capitalist state and expropriate the bourgeoisie! For the socialist reindustrialisation of Britain through a planned economy!

The trade union high-ups and the Labour Party misleaders would love to “calm down the situation”. They want to turn the militancy into the dead-end of parliamentary manoeuvres, petitions and electoral farces. Remember that the Labour Party councils ran the hated poll tax. The trade union leaders can't even bring themselves to call a strike of the five million public sector workers who are going to get a *pay freeze* this year. The same leaders refused to back the miners in 1984-85 with the joint strike action that was desperately needed.

The labour movement needs a revolutionary leadership which fights as hard and as long for working-class victory as Thatcher fought for her despicable, parasitic capitalist class. The workers, the women, the black, Asian, Jewish and gay targets of BNP terror need a *workers government*, so that all people can have a decent and secure life, in a society free of exploitation and racism. Such a government will be based on elected workers councils like the original soviets in Lenin's Russia. It will have nothing in common with the windbag chambers in Westminster, which are a front for bourgeois rule.

A socialist society won't come in one country on its own: this is an international struggle of the working class. The fascists feed off capitalist decay, in France, in Germany, in Britain. And it's not just a question of the recession, mass unemployment and anti-immigrant hysteria in the imperialist countries. The restoration of the capitalist system in the USSR and Eastern Europe was a huge defeat for the working class around the world. Fascism, monarchism and anti-Semitism have sprouted like weeds in the capitalist-induced wreckage of the planned economies. Look at East Germany: even under Stalinist rule the planned economy provided jobs, education and health care for all; today the former DDR is a wasteland of unemployment and despair. The fascists in Western Europe have been hugely

emboldened by the triumph of counterrevolution in the east.

The imperialists worked for years to destroy the workers states, with hypocritical chatter about “democracy” and “freedom”. Parties like the Labour Party backed the bosses' return. Their smaller cousins like Militant or the Socialist Workers Party did the same, sharing Labour's anti-communism. They supported Polish Solidarność, a company union for the CIA, the bankers and the pope. The German Social Democrats (SPD) were the Trojan Horse of counterrevolution in East Germany.

All the social democrats supported Yeltsin in August 1991 (just as Major and Bush did). Now the workers lose their jobs by the hundreds of thousands, abortion rights are removed or cut back, women are forced out of work and back into the kitchen, youth are faced with a life on the dole, and minorities like Roma (Gypsies) live in fear of their lives.

This wave of reaction is coming home to roost in Western Europe. The ruling class is pushing the lie that “communism is dead” and say that any resistance to this criminal system of exploitation and oppression is useless. We say no: Stalinism is dead, but communism lives—in the struggle of the working class around the world. In Britain, France, Germany and Italy, workers are having to resist as the rival capitalist powers try to tighten the screws of exploitation and dismantle the “welfare state” measures they had to offer the workers after World War II to hold off the “spectre of communism”. The imperialist powers united against the USSR; now they are more and more openly pitted against each other, in a competition which points towards a third world war.

The Stalinists that ruled countries like the USSR blocked every possibility of socialist revolution in the West, from Spain in 1936 to France in 1968 to Portugal in 1974-75. (There the Social Democrats played an openly counter-revolutionary role, supported by CIA funds channelled through the German SPD.) The “Communist” parties' betrayals isolated the Soviet Union and the other workers states, and led to their weakening and downfall. They showed that they were no better than organisations like the Labour Party. We are Trotskyists, the political party which stands for the tradition and programme of Lenin's Bolshevik Party. We fought for defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and internal counterrevolution and for workers political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucrats: to bring the USSR back onto the road mapped out by Lenin and Trotsky. Today we still defend Cuba, Vietnam and China against the threat of capitalism coming back.

We are not reformists. We want revolutions like the Bolsheviks led in Russia in October 1917. We do not believe reforms will change capitalism. We do not believe, like the *Militant* newspaper does, that a Labour government with “emergency powers” will bring socialism. We do not believe, like the *Militant* and *Socialist Worker* say, that the police should be in the unions! The SWP's Anti Nazi

League did not stop the National Front in the 1970s. That's a lie that every anti-fascist militant today should know the truth about. In 1978 the National Front had their headquarters round the corner from Brick Lane. They organised a demonstration in Whitechapel, and the ANL organised a carnival, same day, same time... in Brockwell Park in Brixton, ten miles away! We said then that the ANL Carnival was a *scab* carnival! It's exactly the same kind of politics when the ANL and the YRE leaders call for the capitalists to "ban the BNP" today.

That's why we say that groups like the Militant and the SWP are *reformist* organisations. At the end of the day they want popularity with left Labour MPs and celebrities: they don't want a consistent, hard fight for the interests of the working class. They don't believe that the workers can win state power. Their real maximum goal is to get Labour into government on a more left-wing sounding programme. This only means administering capitalism with a "human face".

Parties like the SWP and the Militant refused to defend Iraq against Britain, France and the US in 1991. The SWP didn't oppose British troops going into Ireland in 1969. We say: down with colonialism! Imperialist troops out of Somalia and out of the Balkans! Unlike Militant we say loud and clear: British troops out of Northern Ireland, now! The unions should block shipments of troops and military supplies to Northern Ireland. You can't fight racism and fascism at home unless you fight imperialism and its filthy wars.

The terrible poverty and the starvation that stalks the "Third World" comes from centuries of imperialist thieving and looting. The former colonial slaves of Britain, from the Indian sub-continent or the West Indies were brought to this country to do the most menial, worst-paid jobs. The same applied in France and Germany. The capitalists now make scapegoats out of these immigrants and their descendants. We are for full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!

The political backers and leaders of Youth Against Racism in Europe and the Anti Nazi League do not have a strategy which will *win*, either now against the BNP, or in the long run against the capitalist system. It is not a question of "uniting" the existing campaigns, as groups like Workers Power or *Socialist Organiser* put forward. It is definitely not a question of "returning a Labour government". It was Labour who sent the troops into Northern Ireland, and sent the army against striking workers the last time it was in office. It was the same Labour government that ordered grotesque "virginity tests" of Asian women entering the country, and planned the racist Nationality Act that Thatcher took over and passed into law.

When the SWP and the Militant print front page after front page with headlines which just call for getting rid of the Tories, they show that their horizons are limited to pressuring the Labour Party, even if they talk about "socialism" and "revolution". Pressure groups on the Labour Party can't take up a sharp fight against the union and party bureaucrats who dominate the labour movement.

Why is it that the SWP and Militant, who claim to have hundreds and thousands of trade union supporters, are not carrying out a determined campaign for the kind of union and minority mass demonstrations that are needed to smash the BNP?

At best these groups will bend to pressure from the militant youth in times like the last two weeks. They will be forced sometimes to go along with combative actions. Last Sunday was a victory, which could spark integrated working-class action to defend minorities and to drive the fascists off the streets. But the courageous action in Brick Lane is only a beginning. The BNP will be back, and in the future with much larger police protection, backed by prosecutions of the anti-fascist militants. The capitalist media will certainly beat the drums for an anti-red witch hunt.

In the face of such a witch hunt, parties like the Militant and SWP are fully capable of running for cover. In 1977, the SWP was ferociously attacked by the press for its role in organising a large anti-fascist march in Lewisham. They responded by forming the peaceful, legal, popular-front Anti Nazi League. Lords, vicars and the likes of Neil Kinnock were signed up as ANL sponsors. The confrontations with the fascists *stopped* and the scab carnivals of balloons and music began instead. And it's worth remembering that the Militant leadership of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation offered to turn over names of demonstrators who defended themselves against mounted police charges in the huge anti-poll tax march at Trafalgar Square, three years ago.

The Militant/YRE and the SWP/ANL are trying to put themselves at the head of the current wave of outrage, but with an eye to using their influence among radicalised youth for other ends. What these groups really want is to become a bigger factor in the calculations of the Labour bureaucrats. They are still pushing all the same old reformist crap about lobbying the councils and the government. This week's *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* push for the 16 October "Unity demonstration", whose main demand is for the council to close down the BNP headquarters. Strenuously opposing such calls, the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote: "To turn to the state, that is, to capital, with the demand to disarm the fascists means to sow the worst democratic illusions, to lull the vigilance of the proletariat, to demoralise its will." The only consistent anti-fascists are proletarian revolutionaries.

The Spartacist League is part of an international organisation, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Our comrades in the United States have several times organised the kind of union/minority demonstrations that are needed today in Britain. Similar actions have been initiated by our comrades in France and Canada, at different points. And on 3 January 1990 the largest anti-fascist demonstration in German history took place at Treptow Park in East Berlin. This demonstration of 250,000 people was initiated by our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) and then taken up by the ruling Stalinist party in response to the vile desecration of the Soviet war graves by fascist hooli-

gans. We are an organisation seeking to bring together the core of an international revolutionary party. This kind of working-class party fights for the interests of all the oppressed under capitalism, and for a lasting, socialist future for mankind, free of the fear of war and the scourges of unemployment, poverty and racism.

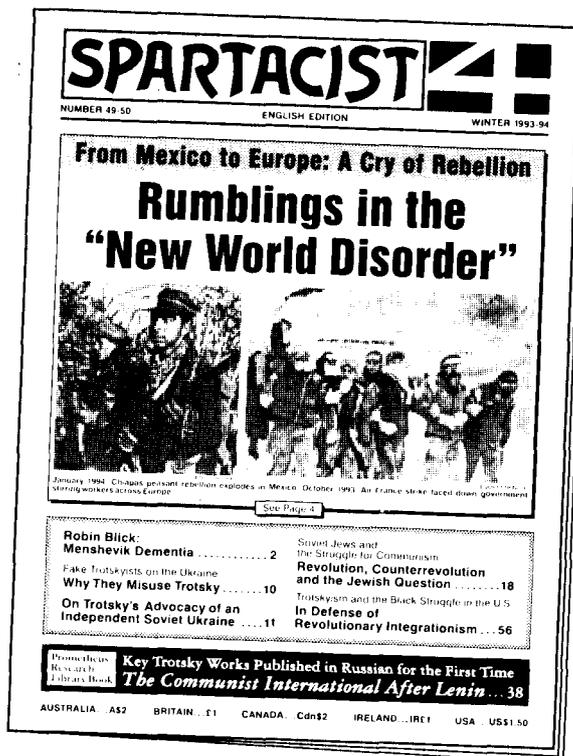
Stop the BNP! For mass, working-class and minority mobilisations against the fascists!  
Down with "Fortress Europe"—full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!  
For a federation of workers' republics in the British Isles!  
For a Socialist United States of Europe! ■

# Spartacist

An organ of revolutionary Marxism

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# Militant, SWP and the cops

For militants who want to oppose fascism, the question of our attitude towards the police is critical, because this is the question of the state.

On the morning of 28 July the cops brutally murdered Jamaican-born Joy Gardner. This underlined once again — in blood — the class nature of the police: the stop-at-nothing defenders of capitalist rule and racist oppression.

In a new pamphlet, *Against racism and fascism*, Militant Labour respond to this obscene racist killing by claiming: “Until there is democratic control of the police, including control of their day-to-day operations, outrages like this will continue to happen.”

This has nothing to do with revolutionary Marxism — and everything to do with Labour Party-style reformism. “Democratic control of the police” is a fatuous illusion, worthy of Sidney Webb or Tony Benn. The capitalist state, of which the police are an essential part, exists to protect the wealth and power of a tiny minority who exploit and live off the labour of the overwhelming majority. “The state is an organ of class *domination*, an organ of *oppression* of one class by another” (Lenin, *State and Revolution*). It cannot be reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of the working people and the oppressed. The bourgeois state must be *shattered* by workers revolution.

The police will obey only one master: the capitalist class. Any minority youth could testify to the daily brutality experienced by blacks and Asians at the hands of the thugs in blue. Remember Blair Peach, the anti-fascist militant and SWP supporter, who was murdered by the cops in Southall in 1979, the countless victims of police frame-ups — the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Tottenham Three — and the striking coal miners who were on the receiving ends of police batons and worse, like at Orgreave. We remember those like Davey Jones who were murdered on the picket lines defending their union.

But Militant Labour wants to “win over” the cops who carry out such vile attacks. They call for the racist, strike-breaking cops to be brought “into the orbit of the labour movement”, through the “right of the police to an independent, democratic trade union organisation to defend their interests as workers” (*The State... a warning to the labour movement*).

The notion that the front-line troops of capitalist violence and repression are “workers in uniform”, whose strikes should be supported, is also advocated by the SWP.

In July some 23,000 cop thugs assembled in Wembley Arena to protest the Sheehy report on police pay and conditions. They wore T-shirts emblazoned with the emblem of Polish Solidarność — the counterrevolutionary scab “union” supported by the CIA, the Vatican, Thatcher and the fake left. The SWP response was an article

concluding “when coppers strike, they stop behaving like police and rejoin their class”.

Police “militancy” and cop strikes over pay and “conditions” inevitably have a bonapartist thrust, reinforcing the cops in their view that they are a “law unto themselves”. Better “working conditions” for cops means fewer restrictions on their ability to brutalise minorities, attack picket lines and carry out provocations against leftists.

When a reader wrote in to *Socialist Worker* to protest that “police are not workers in uniform”, SWP honcho John Molyneux defended their pro-cop line, enthusing over the potential for organising cops into unions. He argued that the police “work for a wage” and that “most ordinary police are drawn from working class backgrounds” (*Socialist Worker*, 28 August 1993). The German Social Democrats (who along with the German Communist Party permitted Hitler to take power without firing a shot) used similar arguments. They claimed that the Prussian police would prevent Hitler’s Nazis from taking power. Leon Trotsky demolished this drivel, pointing out: “The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless.... The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker” (*What Next?*, January 1932).

The SWP gets worse. They favour recruiting prison guards! A letter to *Socialist Worker* (26 June 1993) from Blundeston prison (printed without comment) bragged that “About a year ago we had a number of prison officers who were in sympathy with our objectives and would read *Socialist Worker*”, and that the SWP had substantial influence among the screws. Prison officers, like cops, have no place in the workers movement, and the Prison Officers Association should be *expelled* from the TUC.

In *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky describes the enormous hatred towards the cops in particular that welled up among the proletarian masses in Russia in February 1917: “Toward the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers.... The police are fierce, implacable, hated and hating foes. To win them over is out of the question.”

Such bitter hostility towards the police is completely alien to Militant Labour. They believe it is possible for “local government police committees” to ensure that “any racist elements or fascist sympathisers within the police are weeded out of the force” (*The State...*). As any half-wit knows, this is tantamount to calling for the dissolution of the entire police force!

Embracing the cops is passed by a true chain of infec-

tion, from the Labour Party to both Militant and the SWP. All this disgusting tripe comes straight from the mainstream Labourites. The Police Federation—one of whose leading spokesmen is Tony Judge, a former GLC Labour councillor under Ken Livingstone—has become a cause célèbre in Labour Party circles. This political bacillus has a name: reformism. It is also at work in the calls for the capitalist state to close down the BNP headquarters: a position that the SWP and Militant share with their big brothers in the Labour Party (whose recent conference voted for banning the BNP). The fascists must be crushed by powerful organised mass mobilisations of trade unions and minorities.

It would be difficult to put a piece of paper edgeways between the SWP and the Militant on these questions. Nevertheless, the Militant tendency over the years has undoubtedly won the prize for its open enthusiasm for reforming the capitalist state.

For forty-plus years Militant's founding cadre burrowed away within the Labour Party. The effort to stay in the party at all costs led them to evolve a set of positions which would be palatable to the Labour left. It was only last year that Militant emerged as an independent organisation, recognising that, for the present, John Smith's Labour Party is an inimical place even for fake Marxists. However, nothing fundamental has changed in their politics. From their refusal to call openly for British troops out of Northern Ireland, to their position of "workers sanctions" against Argentina during the Falklands war, Militant abjectly capitulates to British imperialism. Like the old Russian "legal Marxists", they have covered their tracks with a veneer of formal Marxist learning.

The question of the state is at the reformist heart of Militant's politics. Along with yards of propaganda praising Lenin, they print articles alleging that: "A peaceful socialist transformation of society, would be entirely possible if... bold steps were to be taken by a Labour government" (Peter Taaffe, *The State... a warning to the labour movement*). This position would have had Lenin reaching for the same acid pen that demolished the renegade Kautsky. Attempting to maintain a Marxist cover, they acknowledge that capitalist reaction would seek to crush a workers government—and then reach, not into the arsenal of Marxism, but for a position pushed by Sir Stafford Cripps' Socialist League in the early 1930s: the "Enabling Act".

Cripps theorised that a genuine socialist Labour government (a contradiction in terms) would need to pass emergency powers legislation which would enable it to carry out "a rapid and complete conversion of the Capitalist into the Socialist system". He was at pains to reassure the Attorney-General of the National Government, no less, that while he believed in "a very rapid change of the present system by the method of Parliamentary Democracy", this might be termed revolutionary "in the same sense as one speaks of a 'revolutionary' change in fiscal policy", but certainly not "in the manner of the Russian revolution" (cited in *Parliamentary Socialism*, by Ralph Miliband).

Militant Labour leader Peter Taaffe admitted the lineage: "In the 1930s... [Socialist League leaders] John Strachey and Clement Attlee came out for enabling legislation to be used by a future Labour government. It would be entirely democratic for the labour movement to clearly outline its programme, and then give due warning that [it] would be implemented swiftly by means of enabling legislation" ("Marxism and the State", *Militant International Review*, June 1982).

It is not surprising that an organisation which so clearly has made its peace with left Labourism on the crucial question of reform or revolution, is saturated with softness on the police. And behind the idiotic dreams of "community control" lurks something much more sinister. It is a short step from seeing cops as workers to asking workers to act as police auxiliaries. In the United States (where, even more than in Britain, "the fight against crime" is a code phrase for straight racism) the *Labor Militant* (September-October 1993) offers what it calls the "Workers' Answer to Crime": "labor-community committees of public safety to deal with the problem of crime". This "socialist" version of vigilantism could only end up as a tool of the racist cops.

In Ireland the Militant didn't even bother with vigilantism—they turned straight to the capitalist state. Joe Higgins, Militant's Dublin West candidate for the Dáil in the elections last November, ran on a "law and order" ticket that would warm the heart of Michael Howard and Peter Lilley:

"Dublin Corporation and County should be forced to evict people who are known drug pushers or using their homes for criminal activities...."

"More police on the beat, and concentrated on well-known trouble spots, would prevent crime and anti-social behaviour."

Most grotesquely of all, Peter Taaffe's South African co-thinkers wrote in *Congress Militant* (April 1993):

"Hence Marxism is in favour of universal conscription for military training.... A soldier or a policeman who is a comrade must work hard, so that when he talks his fellow members will listen and he will get unity to paralyse the whole system."

This apparently has aroused discontent even in Militant's own ranks. In favour of *universal conscription* into the apartheid army? A policeman of the South African state who is a "comrade"? One who should "work hard"—ie, beat more viciously or shoot straighter? Better conditions and better pay for De Klerk's butchers? There is truly no limit to the opportunism of this tendency!

The Militant and the SWP are not forces for revolution—they are obstacles on the road to workers power. Any serious member of these groups should study carefully the politics of their own organisation, and those of Lenin and Trotsky. The international working class needs a Bolshevik party: not one led by those who would lick the boots of the capitalist state. ■

## The International and the State

Some people would be unhappy if they ever found themselves in the majority. They undoubtedly prefer to manoeuvre in the little circles of the so-called “educated” rather than concern themselves with the ordinary life of workers.

The launching of the *Gauche Révolutionnaire* [Revolutionary Left] has attracted the attention of two small sects of this type. *Pouvoir ouvrier* (PO), tiny branch office of a tiny network of British origin, and the *Ligue trotskyste* (LTF), another grouplet linked to an international asylum for unbridled far leftists, are of no importance in themselves. It is not for the pleasure of debating with these political fringe elements that we are responding to them but because it will certainly not be the last time that we hear these accusations, from various more or less important organisations, and it is better to be prepared.

These attacks show what the future holds in store for us since joining the dynamic, well-implanted forces of the *Committee for a Workers International* (CWI) in France. This is what makes them so strident and, where polemics are concerned, also dishonest. But it must also be said that the PO/LTF polemics are somewhat lacking in originality. Because what we’re dealing with are second-hand slanders which have circulated for some time now among our opponents.

The accusations that PO and the LTF have made against us can be summed up in three central themes: capitulation to the capitalist state, capitulation to imperialism and capitulation to reformism. This article will mainly deal with the latter, since it is only here that our critics come close to an argument that one can qualify as theoretical — what remains of their polemics being composed for the most part of lies, insinuations and distortions far too numerous to allow us to deal with them all here.

### The bourgeois state: practical experience

The French comrades, who have just made the acquaintance of the International, have the right to know if they’ve found themselves in the middle of an organisation “led by those who are ready to lick the boots of the capitalist state” (LTF) or who have adapted “to the most backward elements of Labourism” (PO).

For us Marxists, theory is the essential foundation. As far as this is concerned, our tendency has always known how to analyse the class character of the state in Marxist terms, as we’ll see. But we must also judge political tendencies by what they do, especially when the accusations are of cowardice or political softness. It is for this reason that we will here relate a bit of the CWI’s history.

The CWI has had to defend its militants imprisoned in

South Africa, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and in Great Britain. Our comrade Mahmoud Masarwa is still incarcerated by the Israeli state.

Our comrades in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka have been threatened and attacked by the state and by sectarian forces, on more than one occasion resulting in the assassination of a comrade.

We have built sections in clandestine conditions in several countries of Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

All this doesn’t suggest an exaggerated respect for bourgeois legality.

Further, we have suffered from political repression at the hands of the leaderships of workers parties in several countries — witch hunts, closing down of sections which were under our control and expulsions.

So, if we are really “Labourite reformists” (LTF) or “centrists” guilty of “systematic adaptations to other political forces” (PO), it would be nice of these wise souls to tell the capitalists and reformists around the world so they will recognise their error and leave us alone.

As for our super-revolutionary critics, let’s look at the records of their friends in Great Britain, where the struggle against the “Poll Tax” (hated local tax introduced by Thatcher) has just taken place. Hundreds of people were imprisoned there, including a large number of comrades of Militant Labour, either for refusing to pay or for having participated in activities tied to the campaign — notably picket lines against the bailiffs. We would be delighted to learn the name of a single member of these organisations, oh-so-committed to the struggle against the state, who took his place among these victims of British justice. We’re waiting...

Nevertheless, it is true that having suffered state persecution is not in itself proof of being a consistent Marxist. Let’s see then how our comrades behave in real struggles.

### Workers militias: those who talk and those who act

First let’s take the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) in South Africa. It is true as the LTF kindly informs us that these comrades found themselves in a minority inside the CWI by proposing universal conscription in the so-called “new South Africa”. A fraternal debate took place on these differences between comrades.

As our South African comrades saw it, conscription would be a way for the black majority to gain access to military instruction and arms. Furthermore, they hoped that the South African bourgeoisie would find they could rely less on such an army in the case of a clash with the

working class.

The International Secretariat (IS) responded to this proposal by explaining that the "Africanised" army that De Klerk and the ANC leadership propose would still be a bourgeois army, thus anti-worker, even if there were conscription. But the IS did not deny the importance of a strategy to cause a split inside it.

"It will become unreliable", said the IS, "and its ranks will go over to the side of the proletariat on the condition that the proletariat confronts it, politically and physically. During this process, the working class must show its determination to go all the way and propose an alternative, calling on the soldiers and showing them at the same time their strength and their will to confront reactionary officers and if necessary regiments.

"At bottom, every state apparatus draws its members from the ranks of the working class and/or the peasantry. The state, after all, has a tendency in any country to reflect society, which makes it possible to provoke a split in its ranks which could go over to the proletariat. The key to carrying this out is the strength, cohesion and programme of the working class. In itself, the composition of the state machinery is not enough to prevent its utilisation against the proletariat. It is out of the question that it change its class character."

This said, the LTF leaflet, which mentions this difference, very clearly illustrates this sect's bad faith. The so-called Spartacists devote two paragraphs to a falsified version of this discussion but they don't find space to note that the MWT has been fighting for a long time to build self-defence squads in the black ghettos and that its militants are at this moment participating in their construction.

It was while doing this that our comrade Philemon Mauku was arrested and sentenced to prison for possession of arms. He had to wait until February 1994 before being able to take advantage of the amnesty already granted in 1993 to most other ANC militants. It was also in the course of this struggle in 1988 that three other comrades, including local trade union leader Ivin Mlisa, were assassinated by Inkatha thugs.

There are those who never stop fulminating about workers militias—strictly in hypothetical terms, thus without risk—and those who concern themselves with building them when circumstances dictate it.

### **Liverpool: "Better to break the law than crush the poor"**

It is the CWI's British section which is particularly targeted by our detractors. But what emerges from an honest examination of its history is that Militant (now known as Militant Labour) has had to stand up to the state in the course of every important struggle that it led—and that our adversaries still recount false versions of these events.

Liverpool local council's fight against the Thatcher government from 1983 to 1987 marked a decisive stage in

the evolution of our tendency.

The Labour local council refused to accept the budget cuts that the central power wanted to impose. It was a question of refusing to implement legal obligations decided by the Conservative government in order to bring down Labour councils. The government's strategy was to force the councils themselves to dismantle "municipal socialism" which until then was the pride of British reformists, with lay-offs and closure of public sector services. This strategy was very successful in all other cases except Lambeth Council in London.

But it was in Liverpool that the struggle took on its most decisive character, becoming a cause célèbre in the workers movement, even internationally. Because at this time in Liverpool our comrades held key posts in the local council, in the Labour Party and in council workers trade unions.

Rapidly, the councillors were threatened with judicial action to force them to stop their programme to build council housing, protect local council jobs and various complementary reforms. Further, these legal actions meant they were threatened with huge fines, with losing their jobs and with being barred from running in elections for several years.

We should start by confessing to a "deviation" that the LTF and PO missed. These councillors, including our comrades, pleaded their case at every level of the judicial system right up to the House of Lords, a vestige of the feudal system adapted to the needs of the British bourgeoisie and which takes the place of a Supreme Court.

Betrayal of Marxist principles? In our opinion, no, and for the following reasons:

#### **\* We have to unmask bourgeois legality through experience**

Let's say we lead thousands of workers, whose standard of living will be decided by the course of the struggle. The vast majority of them undoubtedly have illusions in capitalist justice. How to rid them of these illusions? By a propagandistic explanation of the character of bourgeois legality? Of course, but that will reach a few hundred people at best. The others would understand a refusal to defend oneself in the courts as a desire for martyrdom and doctrinaire game playing with their own interests. On the contrary, experience will very effectively show them the partial nature of the courts. Boycott is out of the question.

#### **\* Partial victories are quite possible**

To imagine that the courts never make a judgment against the interests of the ruling class or that those interests are never contradictory is a mechanical conception. In Great Britain, the recent judgments in favour of the Birmingham Six and other Irish prisoners have strongly called into question the authority of British justice. The investigations into corruption in Italy in recent months have provoked a big crisis for the Italian bourgeoisie. To play its role as mediator in the context of bourgeois

society, the state needs a certain independence. Even if it remains very limited, this independence could result in some judgments that are useful for the working class, which is also possible as a result of differences in the ruling class and especially under the pressure of a mass movement.

**\* We can use the courts to address a wider public**

It was mainly for this reason that Marx brought a case against the provocateur Vogt, that Trotsky brought a case against the owner of the Hearst press and that Lenin advised Gorki to take the editor Piatnitski to court. "If you hear reproaches against you for this—" wrote Lenin, "spit in the mugs of those who make them. It is the hypocrites who will reproach you." (Works, Vol 35.)

These arguments are also sufficient to answer Pouvoir ouvrier's reproaches regarding the case that the *Militant* Editorial Board brought against the leadership of the Labour Party when the latter attempted to throw the Editorial Board out of the party. A small detail that Pouvoir ouvrier makes disappear: we won this case, which postponed the plans of the reformist leadership and slowed down hundreds of other projected expulsions.

This said, it is admissible to use bourgeois courts during an important struggle only on the condition that this remains secondary to the mobilisation of the masses using their own methods.

Is it true that we turned our backs on these methods in Liverpool?

At each stage, the local council, the Labour Party in the city and the council employees trade unions called on the workers to take to the streets. In March 1984 and September 1985, for example, 50,000 people showed their support this way.

Several times local employees struck to back the local council's budget, deemed illegal by the then ruling power.

Further, each important decision was submitted for approval to the Liverpool District Labour Party, a rather bureaucratic body in normal times but improved under the leadership of our comrades: on the one hand through delegates elected from the trade unions affiliated with the Labour Party, and on the other hand through representatives from shop-steward committees in the factories, to the point where hundreds of militants came to these meetings.

After a hard and long fight, Liverpool workers were isolated from other local council workers, their leaders threatened with court cases. It was in this context that council workers voted for an unlimited strike against the government's manoeuvres. But they were in a minority among council employees, because of sabotage by the local leadership of the office employees union and pressure from national leaders on their own trade unions.

After this decisive defeat, the national leadership of the Labour Party launched an intensified offensive against our comrades and the entire Liverpool workers movement.

Added to these exclusions and the closing down of the Federation, was a speech by Neil Kinnock at the Labour

Party Congress broadcast many times on the telly, which condemned both the miners strike and the Liverpool struggle.

Pouvoir ouvrier is not ashamed to swipe from this infamous speech the slander that Militant sacked council workers "while calling this a victory" (PO, p.41).

Lie! And a conscious lie, which is worse! Indeed, at a certain point, the local council sent redundancy notices to every employee—as a legal stratagem aimed at allowing the council, bled white financially by the government, to continue to pay salaries for three more months, the time necessary to re-mobilise Liverpool workers. It was clearly stated that the local council had no intention of carrying out these redundancies. Nevertheless, the national leadership of Militant called it not a victory, but a serious mistake which created confusion at a decisive moment.

But the record remains: not a single redundancy by the Liverpool local council between 1984 and 1987; creation of several hundred jobs at a time when other Labour councils had started firing people; 5400 homes built, more than by all the other councils in the country put together during that period; and finally, the councillors cruelly punished by the courts.

For Pouvoir ouvrier, Militant has "refused to lead a decisive fight against the policies of the Tory government..." (PO, p.41). You can judge for yourselves.

### The Poll Tax: victorious "opportunism"

It is definitely hard to get any credit at all from these polemical gentlemen.

Only after ten pages of polemics can PO stand to state that Militant led the struggle against the Poll Tax. But you can look in vain for the fact that this struggle ended with the withdrawal of this hated tax, followed by Thatcher's resignation.

How did we do that? Let's listen to PO:

"The motor force of the struggle—refusal to pay, organised by the Militant—received no official support from the Labour Party or the trade unions. The workers who took part in the campaign, who refused to pay, who fought against the bailiffs and who were imprisoned, did not necessarily have links with the traditional workers movement, but were influenced by Militant." (PO, p.47)

But in the next paragraph, PO asserts that since these workers did not join the Labour Party, "Militant's strategy ended in tatters"!

We could stand more such failures! Having said this, we have to admit that, against their will, our detractors in PO flatter us. Most of the people who took part in the campaign did have links with the traditional workers movement—were in a trade union, voted Labour, etc. Now, while Militant Labour runs independently, we have not forgotten that millions of workers support the Labour Party, even if sometimes unenthusiastically, as opposed to the 2.5 million who say they are "on the left of Labour", according to a recent poll.

But it is true that the struggle against the Poll Tax mobilised quite large layers of the working class, who had never participated in organised political life or who were disappointed by the Labour leadership.

It is precisely thanks to a strategy supple enough to allow us to orient ourselves to the traditional organisations while touching the world outside them that Militant was able to lead this struggle. In any case, it was due neither to an adaptation to the Labour leaders, nor to prostration to capitalist legality that we were able to do that.

By organising this refusal to pay, Militant prevented the isolation of the least favoured and pushed the number of persons who defaulted on their payment towards 14 million. No question either of leaving these people passively at home. Militant organised neighbourhood committees (Anti-Poll Tax Unions) across the country which were linked at city, regional and national levels.

No city escaped anti-Poll Tax demonstrations; the national demonstration in London in 1991 was the biggest since the Chartist movement a century ago.

City councils, including those run by the Labour Party, dragged people who refused to pay before the courts. In response, the committees mobilised hundreds of people to attend and thus made it impossible to hold the trials. When local councils chose to send the bailiffs against some, the committees organised pickets which chased off the forces of law and order.

Despite the efforts of our comrades, a certain number of people were imprisoned, including Tommy Sheridan, well-known Scottish leader. This "collaborator" (in the eyes of PO and the LTF) defied a court injunction by being present at a picket line against bailiffs. Having torn up the court order on live television, he was sent to prison and from his prison cell directed his campaign when he ran in the legislative elections in a Glasgow constituency. He won 6287 votes running on Scottish Militant Labour's platform.

In response to PO's insinuations, no one turned names over to the police, even after anarchists and provocateurs stoned the marshals at the 1991 demo. On the contrary, Militant participated in the support committee for those arrested that day.

A record difficult to reconcile with the thesis of a superstitious respect for bourgeois legality. That is why, using a method of falsification which would have been the envy of a Stalin, PO and the LTF give us false accounts on several occasions.

### **Fight racism and fascism: by any means necessary**

Everyone will have the opportunity to judge the CWI's position on the anti-racist/anti-fascist struggle according to its participation in the activities of the YRE.

One can already cite the first European anti-racist mobilisation in Brussels in 1992; the closing of the fascist NDP congress by the German YRE in 1993; the theses of the French YRE, including the slogans "for independent

inquiries, under the control of unions and neighbourhood associations, into racist crimes and police excesses" and "workers movement organisations must take part in the defence of communities against the fascists".

The LTF feels obliged regardless to denounce "the suicidal policies of Militant Labour in pressuring the racist bourgeois state to fight against racist/fascist bands".

How is one to understand such an accusation? It is almost impossible and, in all fairness, the Sparts don't go to a lot of trouble to justify it: barely a cryptic reference to *l'Egalité* which reported on a demonstration in London on 16 October 1993 which had as its target "to obtain the closure of the BNP [British fascists] office".

It is perhaps possible that some kind of upside-down Senator MacCarthy, making an enormous effort, could find here a call on the bourgeois state. But only by ignoring the context of the demo, organised by a joint committee of which the YRE and Anti-Nazi League (ANL) were the instigators.

It attracted thousands of people, was attacked by the police, and was defended by a marshal squad formed at the YRE's initiative, despite the opposition of the ANL, an association led by the Socialist Workers Party.

For Militant Labour, it was out of the question to demand that either the police or bourgeois justice close the "bunker", counterposing to such demands the mobilisation of the anti-racist movement and the working class to smash the fascists. We say that the ruling class would like to keep the fascists around as auxiliaries in its fight against the working class and that, if the justice system sometimes acts against the fascists for tactical reasons, at the same time it doesn't hesitate to gain experience and weapons thereby, which can then be used against the working class.

Perhaps it is the demand our comrades made on the Conservative local council ("Close the office or we will close it") which bothers these tough talkers. But we need make no excuses. Although part of the apparatus of the state, local councils play a contradictory role in it, as the experience of Liverpool, among others, has shown.

To close the BNP office, all that would be necessary would be to withdraw the authorisation given by this same local council. If there had been a Militant Labour member on the local council, this comrade would have proposed such a closure while calling on the workers to demonstrate against the fascists. It is obvious that the Conservatives would not give in voluntarily; their refusal would show their sympathies with the Nazis. On the other hand, it is not out of the question that they would close it under pressure of repeated demonstrations; would this reinforce illusions in the democratic good faith of the British bourgeoisie? Not at all, it would give a strong boost to the confidence of the masses in their own methods of struggle.

To end this business of the YRE's methods, let's quote the London *Guardian* of 16 October 1993 about an anti-racist demo in east London a month earlier:

"A planned sale of the BNP's newspaper was being picketed by anti-racists. The BNP sellers were soon joined by a group of around 20 skinheads dressed in the *de rigueur* bomber jackets and Doctor Martens boots. The group, chanting 'Rule Britannia' and giving the Nazi salute, was allowed by police to join their BNP comrades. Moments later, the newly arrived skinheads turned on the BNPer, attacking them and chasing them down Brick Lane and out of the area. Result: Anti-Nazis 1; Nazis 0.

"The victory was achieved by a Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) 'snatch squad'... Scoring a physical victory, they maintain, is just as important as scoring a political one."

It must be noted that our goal is the political mobilisation of the masses of the working class, but we don't turn our back on such confrontations if they are part of mobilising campaigns.

### Our friends the cops

The supposed trump card of our two adversaries is the question of the police. Militant Labour proposes that the police, as well as the military, have the right to be organised in unions (which is not the case for either one at the present time in Great Britain) and that the police be under the control of democratic committees.

If you can believe what the LTF and PO say, our British members pass their time at the entrance to police stations handing out leaflets to organise the cops. Unfortunately, our comrades haven't had such a pleasant experience at police stations!

Further, there are other demands regarding the police which are, as usual, shoved aside by our detractors as soon as they don't fit in with their arguments. They include:

- exclusion of racist or fascist elements
- abolition of specialised repressive units and intelligence services as well as the secret services
- abolition of political files

And these demands are only part of our programme regarding the state.

This said, it seems to us even more bizarre that the right of the police to belong to trade unions becomes the object of such sharp criticism in France where this right has existed for a long time and where it hasn't particularly done harm to the workers movement. To imagine that it transformed a capitalist state into a workers state would manifestly be absurd. But was the denunciation of the use of provocateurs by the left unions during the student movement in 1986 really of no value, or the opposition to their deployment against the workers in 1968, or the police strike during the Paris uprising against the Nazis in 1944?

For the revolutionary movement one must not let slip any opportunity to split the state. And it is in the composition of its base that we'll find the best means to accomplish this task. We say that the police, like the military, are, in the Marxist sense, workers in uniform. They sell their labour power and in the context of the state find themselves in a contradiction—being at the same time the manpower of repression and exploited.

The protests of these sects at this Marxist observation are completely subjective. There is no need to be a nice guy to be a worker. And we don't ask that people pass an ethics exam before trying to neutralise them, even to win them over, in the struggle between capitalism and the working class.

But let's be fair: we have to accept that our critics are right when they denounce the 1993 police excesses in France as the outrageous crimes they are. In return, they will certainly agree when we note that these crimes are multiplied thousands of times in a civil war situation—the bloody events in ex-Yugoslavia remind us of this every day. But they forget that the Bolsheviks, precisely in conditions of civil war, didn't hesitate to appeal to soldiers of the White armies, while at the same time fighting them with a determined spirit. Without this strategy the Russian Revolution wouldn't have survived. On the flip side, it was essentially due to the lack of a policy capable of destroying Franco's social base and in particular his army, which was of peasant/colonial origin, that the Spanish revolution ended in defeat.

That doesn't mean that one can never achieve a revolution without winning a majority in the ranks of the police, nor that we should stop fighting against repression and official and unofficial racism. But a Marxist strategy "tak[es] advantage of any, even the smallest opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional" (Lenin, "*Left-wing" communism, an infantile disorder*)

The question is not entirely theoretical. The history of our century has posed it in concrete fashion several times. For example:

**France 1989:** a spontaneous rank-and-file police movement erupts, which includes demands for a reduction of working hours, salary increases, improvements in barracks conditions and an end to abuse from officers; the movement, supported by firemen, customs agents and police unions from several cities began to win support in the navy and among air force non-commissioned officers.

**France 1980:** the CRS, unhappy with their lodgings during the Cannes Festival, carried out a work to rule strike, strictly applying security and preventative measures.

**France 1971:** at its Evian congress, the Independent Federation of Police Unions organised a march on the Thonon prefecture; it adopted a motion to occupy the offices of the Finance Ministry and to demonstrate at the Matignon.

**Great Britain 1977:** the Labour minister Roy Mason is heckled by delegates of the Police Federation (a "union" which is legally excluded from the British workers movement) which was planning to strike.

**Great Britain 1919:** a union of police and prison guards, created a year earlier to fight for "workers in uniform" calls for a strike; while widely supported, it ended in

defeat.

Let us then count those who were for and those against the right of the police to unionise and strike:

For:

- 1912-1994: French workers movement
- 1919: the postal workers union in Liverpool who sent this message to striking policemen: "Congratulations. Continue your sacred combat. For civil rights and fully recognised citizenship. At the side of other unions, we consider practical solidarity so necessary".
- 1919: a general assembly of trade unionists in Liverpool proclaims: "... We call on all trade unionists in the city and its environs to stop working immediately, following the government's attack on trade unionism... we demand that Liverpool men not act in such a way that their brothers in the police find themselves in a difficult position".
- 1964-1994: Militant and the Committee for a Workers International

Against:

- 1994: the LTF, PO and their international networks
- 1989: SP Defence Minister J-P Chevènement who threatened to punish "with the greatest firmness" those who "incite disobedience"; supported by UDF spokesman A. Lamassoure who thought that one should "avoid at all cost the politicisation of a military institution"; at least one gendarme was locked up.
- 1980: the Giscard/Barre government, which dismissed three of the Cannes CRS.
- 1977: the Labour government and police chiefs, who threatened the chairman of the Police Federation with imprisonment in the case of a police strike.
- 1971: the Pompidou/Chaban government which dismissed the chairman of the FASP.
- 1919: the Conservative minister Shortt, who called the strike an act of mutiny; and Liberal prime minister Lloyd George, who called its defeat "perhaps the decisive point" when the working class turned its back on "Bolshevik and direct action causes to return to the road of legitimate trade unionism".

A final example: Germany, January 1919, the right-wing Socialist government sends General von Lequis to Berlin to fire the city police chief Emile Eichhorn, a left socialist, and overturn his policies, which were supported by the Berlin workers council, "... that the police must be under the control of local administration". (Ledebour vor den Geschworen, 1919, p.27).

The occasion was an uprising which is among the most tragic and most heroic in the history of the European workers movement. Irony of fate: it would come to be known under the name of the Spartakist (!) insurrection.

## An unreal world

And now we must go to visit another world. It is a world

where hunting down drug dealers rhymes with hunting down illegal immigrants, where the anti-drug struggle rhymes with racist campaign. Here is a world where drug addiction doesn't haunt working-class neighbourhoods. It is the bizarre world of the LTF.

Your brother is breaking and entering to buy drugs? Your sister is on the verge of becoming a prostitute? Kids find syringes on the ground? You mustn't react! Those who do, according to the LTF, are nothing other than "auxiliary cops in the hunt against 'illegal immigrants'!"

This is the accusation made by the "Bolchévik" leaflet against the youth of the Biscotte neighbourhood in Lille and against our comrade Damien Elliott who cheered them in the pages of *l'Egalité*.

For our part, we think that if anyone has taken a step towards workers militias in France in recent years, it is those who mobilised spontaneously against drug dealers in working-class neighbourhoods. There are of course some dangers. Danger of being co-opted by the state, by gangsters or by Muslim fundamentalists. The latter's projects have won them a certain amount of respect among second generation youth and their parents. Why? Because they offer an alternative to drugs, alcoholism and crime while the representatives of the "official" workers movement control the city councils which allow the social disintegration which is at the origin of this plague.

Nothing to be done against drugs? We support those who, recognising the inertia, even complicity, of the state, take the initiative against this malaise which has struck an important section of our youth. And to prevent these movements from degenerating, we can perhaps propose that they be under democratic, popular control in the neighbourhoods and above all that the workers movement allies itself with them to give them a social base independent of the ruling class and from criminal or separatist elements.

Here is the whole difference. Revolutionaries concern themselves with the real problems of the working class. Sectarians quote "sacred" texts without understanding them.

## State and revolution

How can one take on the capitalist state, according to the CWI? We can turn to the brochure *The State ... a warning to the labour movement*, quoted numerous times by our adversaries:

"... measures to make the state more accountable to the labour movement must be stepped up. But the limits of such measures must also be understood by the labour movement. The capitalists will never permit their state to be 'gradually' taken away from them. Experience has shown that only a decisive change in society can eliminate the danger of reaction and allow the 'democratisation of the state machine' to be carried through to a conclusion with the establishment of a new state controlled and managed by working people."

The author of this article, Peter Taaffe, goes on to explain that we must take control of the economy, allow

workers the time to take over the leadership of the state by using the talents of technicians, cadres, etc. and by keeping or winning over the rank and file of functionaries and the military to the working class camp.

*“A peaceful socialist transformation of society, would be entirely possible if such bold steps were to be taken by a Labour government. However, it is equally certain that the road chosen by the leaders of the labour movement—of prevarication and half-measures—will mean enormous suffering for the British working class. Despite the ‘democratic’ mask which the British capitalists have been forced to don over the last twenty years, if their system is threatened they will not hesitate to resort to what Trotsky called that ‘cold cruelty’ which they displayed in the past, both in their dealings with colonial peoples and towards the British working class.”* [JCR’s emphasis]

In passing, we note that the LTF quotes this paragraph but drops everything which appears in italics above. After all, if the “pseudo-Marxists” don’t show themselves to be pseudo enough, you just need to make a few cuts!

### How to speak to a public of more than ten people

One can dispute this or that formulation in thousands of articles written during dozens of years, but we make no apologies for having presented ourselves in the working class as partisans of peaceful change, all the while predicting the resistance of the ruling class.

For a sect which addresses a tiny public, it is sufficient to explain that one must smash the state. You can prove yourself to be a good Leninist by quoting *State and Revolution*. But Lenin had more to say than just this simple slogan, which taken on its own sounds more anarchist than Marxist. The state will exist, said Lenin, during the transition from capitalism to communism but as a workers state, that is, “not a usual parliamentary bourgeois state but a state without a standing army, without police opposed to the people, without a civil service placed over the people” (Works, vol [6]).\*

Further, in writing *State and Revolution* he was addressing members of the Bolshevik Party and of the international socialist movement. Even before he had had the time to finish this little book he was obliged to stop. Why? To resolve the question of the state in a practical fashion—with the October 1917 revolution. To do that, he had to address the masses, notably with the pamphlet *The impending catastrophe and how to combat it*.

This transitional programme for the Russian Revolution is very interesting to read. Lenin proposes nationalising the banks and large industry, abolishing commercial secrets, regulation of consumption, proposing a just peace, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the march towards socialism....

Were you looking for the words “smash the state” or even workers militias, revolutionary violence, etc.? They are absent. Lenin presents the Bolshevik Party as the partisan of peace and an economic order that could feed people, which is completely in accord with the slogans which won the revolution: “Peace, bread and land”.

On 9-10 October 1917, Lenin wrote: “The proletariat will not hesitate to make every sacrifice to save the revolution, which is possible only by implementing the programme set forth above. On the other hand, the proletariat would support the Soviets in every way if they were to make use of their last chance to secure a peaceful development of the revolution” (Lenin, Works, Vol 26, page 68)

Filthy pseudo-Marxist, that Lenin!

A party which can win over the masses won’t do it by painting itself blood red. In any case, there will be no lack of candidates for this dirty business: as for lies, the ruling class has learned a lot in the past 80 years and, as for technical matters, with one touch of a keyboard a lie can go around the world.

Thus, we refuse to take responsibility for counter-revolutionary violence and look for any means to throw it back on the ruling class.

“But”, our critics will tell us, “Lenin and the Bolsheviks were obliged to push the slogan for peace to the forefront because of the carnage of the first world war.” And they are right. What are the objective conditions one must take into account in formulating our slogans today?

Since the Russian Revolution, Europe has lived through fascism, the Second World War, Stalinism, an unprecedented expansion of capitalism, the collapse of Stalinism. The post-war growth and accumulated wealth of capitalism allowed the democratic bourgeoisies to exist for a prolonged period in the imperialist countries. During the 80s, aside from the degeneration of the deformed workers states and their final collapse, in western Europe there was a certain temporary upsurge. It was a coincidence of circumstance which nourished the illusion among the masses in Stalinist countries that they could take advantage of the prosperity and democratic rights of the “free world”.

There is thus a new deal. Even if capitalism has now entered a deep crisis, it is not at all clear to the working class what the alternative is, largely because the leadership of the workers movement works to put over the point of view of the capitalists. A certain ideological confusion has appeared within the working class, which doesn’t prevent struggles but neither does it ease the task of drawing political conclusions. In the first instance the history of this century has fed democratic illusions and fear of dictatorship, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. And it is [not] only illusions. [Translator’s note: We have added “[not]” to this sentence where it obviously belongs, in order for the GR/JCR’s point to make any sense.] The working class feels, justifiably, responsible for democratic gains and doesn’t want to lose them. Stalinism proposed as an alternative to bourgeois democracy the dictatorship of a bloody bureaucracy. Can we ignore this history?

For us there is no question. We must appeal to what is progressive in the aspirations of workers and respond to their fears. In our epoch, it is urgent to show the masses

that we don't want to establish a military state, crush their democratic rights, start a civil war or any of the other nightmares associated with communism in the popular consciousness in several countries. On the contrary, we must denounce the bourgeoisie each time it threatens the democracy and stability it promised.

### An historic task

Does all this mean dropping the programme? Not at all. We put forward what is necessary and it doesn't matter if that puts us in the minority. But we are not *looking for* this status. We must find the most effective way to put forward demands in the language of the working class — and of the working class today. We endeavour to link these demands to current struggles, which takes into account prevailing conditions and, to a certain degree, the consciousness of the workers. The transitional programme's goal is to make a bridge between present consciousness and the historic task of socialist revolution.

In South Africa our comrades proposed workers militias under the rubric of community self-defence; in Northern Ireland our comrades proposed that the trade unions give life to a workers defence force. Have we adapted ourselves? We hope so, such an adaptation to national or historic differences being mandatory. We absolutely must try to have a dialogue with the working class in order to change our way of presenting things according to its consciousness and traditions. We must also change what we put forward depending on the conditions. We don't fight for workers militias immediately when there are no systematic attacks by the capitalists or their agents.

Further, we mustn't expect the class struggle to follow a pre-determined course. The masses improvise organisational forms according to their needs and according to the particular historic, national conditions, etc., like they did with soviets in Russia in 1905, which no party had foreseen. We can predict the general lines of workers democracy but we must adapt its precise form to events as they unfold.

We must add to these changes in the subjective condition of the working class, objective changes which are more in its favour. On a global level, the specific weight of the proletariat has increased enormously in our century.

It is especially the case in the United States, Japan and in Europe. In France, while it is true that the structure of the working class has changed over the past twenty years with the disappearance of a good number of enterprises encompassing thousands of employees on the same site, workers still comprise the same percentage — 39% — of the population. At the same time, a large number of civil service and other white collar workers today belong to the proletariat in their living and working conditions: peasants, fishermen, those whom in other times the ruling power maintained as a classic petty bourgeoisie, find themselves faced with liquidation as a class. The isolation experienced by a Paris Commune in a majority petty-bourgeois France is out of the question today. This is what 68 showed, the year that has become a reference point for all classes each time social discontent shows up.

We mustn't forget that this uncompleted revolution paralysed the ruling power. The present ruling power is clearly conscious that a social movement could once again polarise society in the same way. That could mean a change of regime with a minimum of violence. What makes it less probable is not the politics of revolutionaries but the aid which the reformist leadership of the working class gives to the ruling class to maintain a regime which is historically outmoded.

The bourgeoisie, in France as elsewhere, has lost the confidence which it had even three years ago. Without a solution to the gigantic problem of unemployment, pushed towards a confrontation over social gains and the standard of living of the workers, the fear of social explosions dominates the speeches of the most serious spokesmen for capitalism.

Such explosions are inevitable in the long term and remain completely possible even in the short term. They will drag in their wake sometimes rapid changes of consciousness. Revolutionaries must be ready to enter into these struggles, proposing a real transitional programme to the masses. The CWI is not afraid to tackle this task.

*\* In the time available to us we have not been able to verify the source of this quotation in Lenin's Collected Works either in French or English — translator's note.*

## Militant Labour's touching faith in the capitalist state

Militant Labour and its Committee for a Workers International (CWI), in which Gauche révolutionnaire/Jeunesses communistes révolutionnaires (GR/JCR) have recently enlisted, have a big problem. Through Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), these groups boast of being "in the front line in the fight against racism". In appealing to young fighters against fascism looking for an alternative to the decrepit and chauvinist social-democratic parties like Britain's Labour and Germany's SPD, Militant/CWI/GR occasionally even refer to themselves as Trotskyists, seeking to glean some authority from the unblemished revolutionary heritage of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Trotskyists' internationalist struggle against Stalinism.

But what kind of militant anti-fascist, much less a revolutionary Trotskyist, *thinks that the police can become a "mass ally" of the working class?* Any youth who has taken to the streets in the fight against fascism knows that the cops are there to beat *your* heads, that they are the hired thugs of the capitalist rulers, the sworn enemies of the working class, minorities, immigrants, women and gays. Yet the Militant devotes the central focus of its pamphlet, *The International and the State*, to a defence of the police as "workers in uniform" (just like nurses or road sweepers?). And with seemingly "learned" historical examples, they try to palm this off as Marxism, no less. A sick lie, and a dangerous one.

Militant Labour neither offers a militant working-class perspective, nor is it Trotskyist. Militant declares, "We say that the police, like the military, are, in the Marxist sense, workers in uniform." Trotsky wrote quite the opposite: "The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker" ("What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat", January 1932). We cited this quote from Trotsky in our article "Militant, SWP and the cops". But Militant says nothing about this.

In fact, Militant is a back door to Labourism, of which it was an integral component for more than four decades and to which it remains beholden. The Labour Party, like social-democratic reformists everywhere, seeks to incrust itself in the interstices of the bourgeois parliamentary regime. The GR/JCR polemic, written on behalf of Militant Labour/CWI, is a defensive response to the revolutionary criticism from the International Communist League (ICL), reprinted earlier in this pamphlet. In fact, their reply powerfully *confirms* what we said about Militant Labour's role in last autumn's anti-fascist campaigns in

Britain.

We will examine Militant's specific arguments and their concrete historical examples, and prove once again that they do in fact capitulate to the capitalist state, capitulate to imperialism and, though they have lately put on a more leftist face, they *are* reformist. Indeed, their disgusting apology for the police gets right to the root of the matter: reform or revolution. Marxists understand that the struggle against fascism cannot be divorced from the struggle against the capitalist system, which breeds fascism. We base our strategy on the mobilisation of the working class (along with its allies, particularly minorities and immigrants), which has the social power and weight to drive the fascist killers into the sewers. This is a necessary part of politically organising the proletariat to defend its own class interests and fight for its own state power, to sweep away the capitalist system and its repressive apparatus — of which the police are the core.

Instead, Militant wants to insinuate the cops into the workers movement and preaches the need to make the racist capitalist state "more accountable to the labour movement". This is consistent with having been nestled deep inside the racist, pro-imperialist, strike-breaking Labour Party for more than 40 years. Labourism is reflected in Militant's politics across the board, from its sympathetic portrayal of the British "bobby" and its appeals to the capitalist state to act against the fascists, to its gross refusal to oppose the murderous British imperialist troops sent into Northern Ireland by a Labour government. For Militant, street demonstrations against the fascists are not aimed at mobilising the proletariat for its own revolutionary interests, but are designed rather to win back to the Labour fold young people whose impulses initially went in the direction of a break to the left from reformism.

Echoing the big-time "socialist" politicians, Militant wants to dismiss with a wave of the hand our revolutionary criticism by bragging that they engage in "real struggle" while others talk. While making a bow to Marxist theory, they spit with contempt on the Marxist programme, which is nothing other than the concentrated lessons of the revolutionary struggles of the past. Their attitude to the police and the capitalist state is a frontal assault on everything that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky stood for. They present a caricature of the great proletarian revolutionary Lenin, turning him into some kind of left social-democratic pacifist, which is compatible with their own view that socialism can be introduced through legislation in the

bourgeoisie's parliament.

The polemic we are replying to was directed both at ourselves and at Pouvoir ouvrier (PO), connected to the British Workers Power (WP) organisation. Because of its overt reformism, Militant is an easy political target for centrists (like WP), who try to split the difference between a revolutionary programme and reformism. But on all decisive questions, WP ends up with the reformists, whether it be in endorsing "the right to strike" for cops or spreading illusions in social democracy.

### Once again on the cops

It's a basic point of Marxism that the racist, strike-breaking, fascist-infested bourgeois police are deadly enemies of the workers movement. The view, endemic on the left in Britain, that cops should be allowed inside the labour movement, reflects the outlook of complacent white labour bureaucrats. It is very different from how the cops are viewed by blacks and Asians, and by British miners, who in the year-long coal strike of 1984-85 had to confront these hired thugs on the picket lines day after bloody day.

Most cops still don't carry guns in Britain; the country has had an ossified parliamentary continuity since 1848, when the Chartists were smashed. The experience in Britain is very different from that of France, where there have been a whole series of popular and worker insurrections since 1789, as well as the armed Resistance during World War II. The Italian and German working classes went through the horrible experience of fascism. But you have to be a particularly parochial Labourite to continue to believe in the myth of the "friendly bobby" in the face of police rampages through the inner cities, murders and frame-ups of minority youth and Irish Republicans, provocations directed at leftists, attacks on anti-fascist protests and scabherding.

With its talk of cops as "workers in uniform", Militant wilfully obscures the vast gulf between *soldiers* in a conscript army, who are used as cannon fodder in the capitalist rulers' wars, and the *police*, who voluntarily hire themselves out to break workers' strikes and smash the heads of minority youth. Those who decide to become cops know that their job is to do the daily dirty work of the ruling class, defending the interests of the rich and powerful. As well as the fascists, with whom they heavily overlap, the police must necessarily be a sewer of concentrated racism, sexism and anti-socialist consciousness in capitalist society.

In the course of socialist revolution, the police must simply be swept away, *in toto*. It is a different matter with the army. Under conditions of great anti-war or revolutionary ferment, it becomes not only possible but a life-or-death question to *split the army*, to organise soldiers councils. The Militant pamphlet raises in passing the question of Franco's troops during the Spanish Civil War. Grotesquely, Militant implicitly poses that demands for better pay or better conditions are what would have deprived Franco of the loyalty of his North African troops.

But what was necessary to accomplish this was to demand immediate, unconditional independence for Spanish Morocco and all colonial possessions. And that meant a sharp political break with the Spanish Republican government of the Popular Front—a class-collaborationist alliance binding the workers parties to the representatives of the bourgeoisie.

### What the police want

As part of its defence of the police, Militant enthuses over the police protests against the last Labour government in 1977. As we noted at the time (*Workers Vanguard* no 154, 22 April 1977) the police grievances went far beyond wage claims. The cops wanted "protection from wrongful dismissal" and more "independence" from outside control for Police Federation activities. One observer noted that the federation echoed "American police union pressure on police chiefs and government about aims and methods of work, and endorsement of sympathetic political candidates, frequently on the extreme right" (Robert Reiner, "Police Unionism", in *The British Police* [1979], edited by Simon Holdaway). As the Labour government's wage control policy unravelled, the cops were increasingly used as strike-breakers. And when thousands of demonstrators turned out to confront the growing fascist presence, the cops used brute force to defend the National Front, killing Blair Peach as they had killed another anti-fascist, Kevin Gately, several years earlier.

The police demand for "union" rights—supported by Militant, Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and Ernest Mandel's British group—reflected a growing consciousness on the cops' part that they were indispensable to the government in repressing militant unionism and anti-fascism. The more effectively the police organise—even in "unions" run by social democrats as in France—the more effectively are they able to throw their weight around and to ride roughshod over all the oppressed. Police mobilisations and "strikes" necessarily have a bonapartist thrust, aimed at making these paid killers even more independent from society at large and enhancing their ambitions to carry out bloody repression without any interference.

The police protests last year in Britain over the Sheehy recommendations coincided with a "law and order" campaign launched by the Police Federation. The cops demanded and got new riot gear. Newly anointed Labour Party leader Tony Blair made a name for himself as the cops' champion. Now the Police Federation is asking for *more armed cops* (*Guardian*, 17 May). Ominously, the police law and order campaign has crystallised in the government's proposed Criminal Justice Bill, which provides for draconian measures against Travellers including Gypsies (Roma), squatters and homeless; abolishes the right to silence under police interrogation; and gives the cops increased powers to ban demonstrations and indiscriminately stop and search persons, powers which in the past have been used extensively against minorities. Notably,

the Labour Party refuses to call outright for a vote against this bill.

Among the left, Militant may be the most overtly rotten on the question of “organising” the police, but it is hardly unique. The SWP says much the same thing. As for Workers Power, at the December YRE conference in London, WP correctly denounced Militant’s reformist schemes for “community control” of the police. At the same time WP’s own YRE conference bulletin (4 December 1993) argued that “police constables should have the right to organise against the upper ranks and the government”, while *simultaneously* claiming that “Labour local authorities should block funding to the police”. How about that for centrist doubletalk! An earlier article in *Workers Power* (October 1993), while opposing admitting “representatives of these legalised thugs into the labour movement”, nonetheless concluded:

“Of course we support the *right* of the police to act against Sheehy, even strike against it. But we do so purely because if they took action it would help destabilise the force, make it weaker and serve the revolutionary socialist goal of breaking up and dissolving the police force.”

This is fatuous. Any successful cop mobilisation only serves to embolden them. Better “working conditions” for cops means fewer restrictions on their ability to brutalise minorities, attack picket lines and carry out provocations against leftists.

Typical reasons for bonapartist police mobilisations and “work actions” in the US have included situations when a few particularly egregious cops get their wrists slapped for shooting black youth in the back. Two years ago, when New York City considered a token measure to remove police representatives from its “Civilian Complaint Review Board”, 10,000 armed cops surrounded City Hall in a racist mobilisation against the city’s first black mayor, running amok and randomly assaulting blacks and other minorities who wandered by. Recently in Philadelphia, the cop “union”, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), mobilised its forces to prevent Mumia Abu Jamal, a former Black Panther, now on Death Row as a result of a police frame-up, from speaking on National Public Radio. This was part of an ongoing FOP campaign to speed up Jamal’s execution. And in France, shortly after the introduction of new laws against immigration, the French police “union” FASP demanded more money and personnel to carry out these anti-immigrant measures!

To justify its support to police “unions”, the GR/JCR pamphlet goes to great lengths to describe how cop strikes sometimes strike fear into the capitalist governments of the day. It ought not to be difficult for Marxists to recognise the existence of *reactionary* mobilisations by sections of the capitalist state apparatus. General Pinochet carried off a bloody coup against Allende’s left-talking capitalist Unidad Popular government in Chile in 1973. (On the matter of bourgeois repression, GR/JCR might take note that Allende was an *open reformist*, but this did not prevent his brutal murder by Pinochet’s forces.) Army officers belonging to the OAS (Secret Army Organisation) con-

spiracy were locked up for seeking to assassinate De Gaulle when he abandoned the line that “Algeria is forever French”. Were these fascistic officers also “workers in uniform” because the ruling class feared what they might do if not checked?

### “CRS = SS”

If this seems far-fetched, consider the fact that the GR/JCR do not even shrink from championing the hated CRS riot police! In October 1961, it was the Paris police and the CRS who massacred literally hundreds of Algerian workers demonstrating for the National Liberation Front (FLN) against French imperialism. The May 1968 general strike was triggered when workers struck *against the CRS* and other cops who were brutalising students. During fierce fighting with Peugeot workers in Sochaux, the cops killed at least two workers. “CRS equals SS” was the slogan of embattled workers and students. The general strike in turn ushered in a pre-revolutionary situation that posed the question of *power*: for a period of time the French bourgeoisie was paralysed. De Gaulle went to West Germany in search of reliable army units. De Gaulle knew who his friends were, at any rate. He quickly settled a police wage claim early on in 1968; he was later to free the imprisoned Algerian war criminals of the OAS. But the general strike was not smashed by the French state—it was betrayed centrally by the French Communist Party (PCF), which helped De Gaulle to reconstitute the shaken bourgeois order.

But Militant’s sympathy for the CRS killers pales in comparison to its other “historical” example, where it hails the 1944 strike of the Paris cops—*the scum who worked hand in hand with the Gestapo to deport Jews to the death camps of Auschwitz*. Freshly soaked with the blood of thousands of Jews sent to the death camps—as well as the blood of communists and other anti-fascist partisans, at the last minute the Paris police came out against the fleeing Nazi forces they had so efficiently served for four long years. These cops simply wanted to save their skins by coming out on the winning side. They wanted to be integrated into the new bourgeois order of De Gaulle, backed up by the Allied imperialists. Under the Vichy regime, as before and after, French cops served their French bourgeois masters.

Contrary to GR/JCR’s line of hailing the Paris cops, the French Trotskyists of the time—proletarian internationalists—called on striking workers to form militias to defend themselves against the Nazis *and* the French police, and called on the French workers to fraternise not with the French cops but with the German soldiers, who *were* workers in uniform. Here is what the Trotskyists said:

“Reinforce the FACTORY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKERS MILITIAS! They must occupy the key points in the factories and prevent management from warning the Gestapo and the police. They must establish a link between factories and neighbourhoods. They must organise food supplies. They must protect strikers against the police, SS brigands, the Gestapo and the Darnand Militia. “But the Workers Militias are poorly armed: the Resistance

refused to arm them because it is afraid of the working class. ARM YOURSELVES by disarming the cops, the fascists and the SS, by helping yourselves to arsenals and badly guarded stockpiles.

"Especially, do not forget that within the occupation armies the strikers also have allies. German soldiers are deserting en masse. They are workers like you. CALL ON THEM TO FRATERNISE, to give you their arms, TO JOIN YOU IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THEIR TORMENTORS AND OURS: THE SS AND THE GESTAPO."

—*La Vérité* (August 1944)

## The "Spartakist Uprising"

Symptomatic of how deeply ingrained is Militant's support for "Our friends the cops" (this is not as tongue-in-cheek as they intended) is their portrayal of the heroic 1919 Spartakist Uprising by the Berlin workers as essentially a "support action" for the police. What really happened is substantially different from Militant's rose-coloured account. The November Revolution of 1918 had forced the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm and inaugurated a brief period of proletarian revolutionary struggle. On 9 November thousands of armed workers and soldiers ringed police headquarters in Berlin and disarmed the cops. At that time Emil Eichhorn, a left-wing member of the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who later joined the German Communist Party founded by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, became head of the Berlin police. Eichhorn quickly recruited a new force consisting of about 3600 socialist workers and soldiers. The revolutionary sailors of the People's Naval Division later also placed themselves under his command.

On 4 January 1919, the Prussian government, headed by the SPD, sought to fire Eichhorn. A "revolutionary committee" was formed which included members of the CP. The "revolutionary committee", which called protests and general strikes, demanded the overthrow of the Ebert government, but did nothing to organise the insurrection. The bloody suppression of the January uprising in Berlin led to the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg by officers egged on by the SPD. But this was manifestly *not* a situation in which the bourgeois police were "radicalised" in a revolutionary situation. Eichhorn was not a bourgeois cop, and neither were the core of his forces. In a situation of revolutionary turmoil, Eichhorn and his militia sought to *replace* the existing bourgeois police force and regarded themselves as accountable to the workers councils and the left, not to the capitalist government. However, in a fatal mistake symptomatic of the confusion of the Berlin uprising, Eichhorn did not disband the old police force but merged his militia with them. Far from vindicating Militant's wretched line, the example of Berlin 1919 refutes it and vindicates Lenin's insistence on the need to *smash* the old state apparatus.

The sequel in Weimar Germany, in the period preceding Hitler's rise to power, is also important. The Prussian police were originally recruited from the SPD, and the real programme of the SPD boiled down to relying on the Prussian police to stop Hitler. Of course, the Prussian cops never fired a shot to prevent Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

They did, however, carry out a massacre of Communist workers at a Berlin May Day parade in 1929. As Trotsky noted in "What Next?": "Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain."

The police did remain, including the former SPD-derived force, which was integrated into the new Nazi order. The replacement of the tottering Weimar "democracy" by the Nazi regime reflected a *political* counterrevolution on the basis of the same bourgeois state and ruling class. Similarly today, the bourgeois-democratic Fourth Reich proclaims itself the legal continuator of Hitler's Third Reich. A striking example of this is the current German government's vindictive persecution of Erich Mielke, former head of the East German Stasi, who was recently given a six-year jail sentence for supposed involvement in the 1931 killing of two SPD cops (who were also notorious thugs) in front of Communist Party headquarters. These charges were first raised by a *Nazi court* in 1934, on the basis of "evidence" extracted under torture by the Gestapo! Our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, who fought down the line against capitalist reunification, steadfastly defended Mielke, Honnecker and others against the vindictive "justice" of the Fourth Reich.

## Reformism in action 1: Appealing to the bourgeois state

Militant's sympathy for the capitalist cops, and its calls to place them under "democratic control" is not an isolated aberration. It is part and parcel of a general view that the capitalist state can be made to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed, either through lobbying or legislation. This is what reformism is all about. GR/JCR deny that appealing to local government organs against the fascists means appealing for state bans against the BNP. They claim that local councils (particularly those run by Labour, but in the case of Bexley, even a Tory council) are "contradictory". This is baloney. The local councils are indeed part of the apparatus of the state, and that's what they act like. They help fund the cops, call out the bailiffs against Poll Tax protesters, lay off workers, etc. It wasn't John Major and Westminster that threw Militant Labour leader Tommy Sheridan in jail.

Moreover, Militant has for years sold a book authored by Ted Grant, *The Unbroken Thread*, containing a chapter on "The Menace of Fascism" which explicitly called on the Labour government to ban the fascists. "The Menace of Fascism" was originally published in 1948 by the Revolutionary Communist Party, which despite such softness toward the Labour Party, was a Trotskyist organisation. Far from representing the continuity of early British Trotskyism, Grant and Militant took its worst errors and turned them into a full-fledged reformist programme. They went into the Labour Party on a per-

spective of “deep entrism”, and didn’t come out for over 40 years!

Appeals to the government to act against the fascists are suicidal for the workers movement. Government “anti-extremist” bans enacted ostensibly against the right wing are inevitably used against the left. In Britain the Public Order Act was supposed to be an anti-fascist law; today it’s used to persecute anti-fascists. In the US the Smith Act sedition law was hailed by the reformist Communist Party as a blow against the Nazis. First used in 1941 to jail American Trotskyists and Minneapolis union leaders, during the McCarthy period the Smith Act was the government’s weapon of choice to witch hunt CPers.

Trotsky ridiculed those who called on the French government to disarm the fascists:

“And who will disarm the same police, who with the right hand will give back to the Fascists what they will have taken from them with the left? The comedy of disarmament by the police will only have caused the authority of the Fascists to increase as fighters against the capitalist state.”

— *Whither France*, November 1934

The Labourite left may occasionally pay lip service to the need to mobilise the organised working class against the fascists. But a proletarian revolutionary strategy is absolutely counterposed to relying on the capitalist state. Why should workers turn up on the streets to *stop* the BNP by militant action if they believe the police or the local council can be pressured to close down the fascists, or if they believe that putting the Labour Party in office is a real blow to the fascists? Of course, this is exactly the line that the workers are fed by the bureaucrats, as well as by groups like Militant.

Mobilising the working class in struggle against fascism is not only necessary but possible, as is clear from the examples given in our leaflet “The trade unions, minorities and the left must mobilise by the thousands: drive the fascists off the streets!” (reprinted at the beginning of this pamphlet). But it requires a revolutionary outlook. While our comrades propagandised for a proletarian-centred mobilisation last 16 October in London, Militant Labour did nothing to bring out union forces, despite its claims of hundreds of supporters in the trade unions. The absence of organised trade union contingents on 16 October made it that much easier for the cops to attack anti-fascists and make sure the protest never got anywhere near the BNP headquarters.

### Reformism in action 2: Tailing the Labour/TUC traitors

At bottom, Militant’s empty pretence of anti-fascist militancy is aimed at pulling youth back into the fold of Labour Party reformism—first the demonstration, then the door knock for Labour in the elections. After 16 October, Militant signed on eagerly as cheerleaders for the trade union tops’ “unite against racism” rally in March, whose purpose was to channel anti-fascist sentiment into Labour’s electoral bid. In Germany, the Militant/CWI group Voran calls for votes for the wretched social demo-

crats east and west, the PDS and SPD. In France the JCR—which two years ago was posturing as an opponent of popular frontism—backed the putrid, chauvinist Communist Party in the last round of legislative elections.

You won’t stop the fascists through installing a Labour government, or some version of a popular-front coalition government in France (or Italy, Brazil, South Africa). Such governments, enforcing capitalist austerity, can never undercut the demagogic appeals of the right even on the electoral terrain; they can only demoralise and disorganise the working class, rendering it passive before its deadly enemies. It’s no accident that the British fascists grew substantially under the last Labour government, while Mitterrand’s Cold War austerity regime was a breeding ground for Le Pen’s National Front fascists.

Capitalist rule is based on keeping the working masses divided, and is therefore racist. The reformist parties, whose goal is to administer this decaying capitalist system—whether it be Labour in Britain or the German SPD—are necessarily chauvinist. A case in point was the election this spring in Tower Hamlets in east London, where the fascist BNP has its stronghold. The Labour Party campaign manifesto deliberately catered to racist backwardness, refusing to even mention the grisly racist atrocities carried out by the fascists in the area. Tony Benn, a prominent Labour “left” MP, counselled that Labour should run a campaign to drive “a wedge between the ‘hard’ racism and fascism of the far right, and their ‘soft’ racist supporters” (*Guardian*, 9 April). The SWP, backing Labour, put out an election poster that refused even to mention that the BNP is racist. While Militant and Workers Power didn’t go that far, they both went around in Tower Hamlets to persuade racist and fascist voters to vote Labour.

Workers Power can write reams of criticisms of Militant’s “peaceful road to socialism” line, but WP is itself a brake on youth who are seeking a revolutionary path. Thus, at the 22-23 January JRE conference in Germany, a third of the delegates were in favour of calling on young people not to vote for the SPD. A report on this conference in *Workers Power* (February 1994) acknowledged that the “SPD has outraged anti-racists” by supporting the Christian Democrats’ racist assault on the right to asylum. But nonetheless, while conceding that the SPD has “terrible right-wing policies”, WP chided the rebellious delegates that “Getting the SPD into power would be the best way to show to workers in practice that their trust in the SPD is misplaced”. Workers Power exposes only its own social-democratic appetites by calling for a vote to this party, which voted to gut the right of asylum, which supports unleashing the Bundeswehr in imperialist adventures, which acted as the Trojan Horse for the German bourgeoisie in spearheading the *Anschluss* (annexation) of the former DDR (East Germany).

### Reformism in action 3: Debating the fascists

The end result of hitching your political cart to the tail of reformist parties like Labour or the SPD is that you be-

gin to take on their political colouration, including their chauvinism. The German Militant group apologised for the Nazis, claiming that “young fascists are victims of this society to the extent that they are reacting to unemployment and housing shortages” (*Voran* no 157, December 1993/January 1994). In its pamphlet *Against Racism and Fascism*, Militant Labour claims to be opposed to fascists “being allowed to hold public meetings”. But in January 1992, Scottish Militant leader Tommy Sheridan boasted that Militant itself had six weeks earlier provided the fascists with a public platform, engaging fascist thugs in a debate at a Militant meeting in Penilee, Glasgow.

In Germany, the current fascination among many anti-fascist leftists with having a “dialogue” with the fascists is based on the common ground of support to resurgent German nationalism. And the French Militant supporters have some knowledge of this themselves. GR/JCR leader Damien Elliott engaged in a French version of the “red-brown coalition” through his bloc with the fascist-infested *l'Idiot international* and its right-wing ideologue Marc Cohen. As has been demonstrated by the Stalinist has-beens in the Russian “red-brown coalition”, the upshot of such grotesque alliances is that the “reds” get ever browner in hue. Meanwhile, Workers Power anticipated the “red-brown coalition” with its tour of fascist-connected Russian miner Yuri Butchenko at labour movement meetings in Britain several years ago.

Debating fascists is suicidal, serving to “legitimise” them and provide them with a platform from which to spew their racist filth, while demonstrating to them the weakness and spinelessness of their leftist opponents. The fascists do not recruit by debating ideas. They grow through demonstrating in action their murderous intentions. It is necessary to break their will, and in so doing to demoralise and discourage their would-be recruits.

Marxists do indeed seek to cut the ground out from under the fascists by neutralising or winning away their potential base among the petty-bourgeoisie and lumpenised youth. We recognise that the fight against fascism is necessarily a class battle—not just military but political. What is necessary is not an “exchange of ideas” with the fascists, however, but a political programme aimed at winning to the side of the proletariat some of the petty-bourgeois elements being pauperised by capitalism. We raise transitional demands to fight the lumpenisation of ever larger sectors of the working class, especially the youth. But the vacillating middle classes will not be won over by downplaying the essential racism of the fascists’ appeals. Worst of all is to appear irresolute in the face of the fascist menace with an oh-so-reasonable appeal for more “dialogue”. Discontented middle strata will go with the proletariat only if it demonstrates its power and its intent to reorganise society on a revolutionary basis.

#### Reformism in action 4: Finking to the cops

Immediately after 16 October, the London cops launched a huge witch hunt against anti-fascists, which was joined in by a section of the press. With the papers

screaming about “rioters” and “violence”, Militant and the SWP, the principal organisers of the march, took a dive. They buried the issue of the anti-fascists who were arrested on 16 October and refused to organise any protest in their defence. With much smaller forces, the Partisan Defence Committee (the legal and social defence organisation affiliated with the Spartacist League/Britain) initiated a united-front defence demonstration which demanded, among other things, the dropping of charges against *all* anti-fascist protesters. Militant, SWP and Workers Power boycotted the protest, which was endorsed by about a dozen trade union, left and student organisations.

Nor is this the first time Militant has flinched in the face of a state witch hunt. The account in *The International and the State* about what happened after the cop riot at the Trafalgar Square anti-Poll Tax demonstration is a white-wash of Militant’s conduct. In an article printed in *Militant* (6 April 1990), Steve Nally, secretary of Militant’s All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, wrote: “Those who consciously and deliberately set out to seek confrontation with the police are the ones who must be excluded from the Federation’s future activities.” Tommy Sheridan went even further, explicitly offering to fink on “violent” protesters: Sheridan “said the federation would hold its own inquiry to identify individuals involved in violence, theft and criminal damage and their names would be passed to the police” (*Guardian*, 2 April 1990). This pattern of genuflection to the capitalist state should give pause to those who might be considering acting under Militant’s guidance in the future.

#### Reformism in action 5: Joining the bourgeoisie’s “war on crime”

A perfect example of adaptation to social backwardness is the JCR’s enlisting its support to the “crime” and “drugs” hysteria being whipped up by the bourgeoisie. The Ligue trotskyste de France, section of our International Communist League, nailed the JCR for its enthusing over a group of second generation North African youth in Les Biscottes, an immigrant district of Lille, who according to the bourgeois press were allegedly going after “drug crime”. The result of the campaign against “dealers”: 16 “clandestine” immigrants arrested. It was over this affair that Damien Elliott discovered that “the police can, from time to time, do useful things” (*l’Egalité* no 22, summer 1993).

The “law and order” campaign is the cutting edge of an anti-immigrant crusade by the bourgeoisie, which wants to slam shut the borders, repeal asylum laws, deport those already here, while cracking down on the standard of living of the whole working class. At the same time, “drugs” are used as an excuse to beef up the repressive powers of the police and state. In Britain last December the government outrageously detained and expelled Jamaicans who came to the country for holiday visits. Many of the Jamaicans were held at gunpoint, branded criminal drug-dealers, and herded in handcuffs.

When the JCR hails anti-drug vigilantism, this has a very concrete political meaning in France. "Drugs" was precisely one of the main excuses that the Communist Party used to go after immigrant workers in 1981, when the CP publicly denounced a Moroccan family at Montigny-les-Cormeilles for supposedly being involved in drug trafficking. The town's mayor, whose name is Hue, is now the general secretary of the PCF! At the same time, in the Paris suburb of Vitry, the Communist mayor led a mob that bulldozed the housing of immigrants from Mali, driving them out of the area. The PCF's despicable racist campaign against immigrant "ghettos", which dovetailed with the bourgeoisie's attempts to scapegoat "foreigners" for unemployment and "crime", was its entry ticket into the Mitterrand popular front.

The JCR not only enlists in the bourgeoisie's "anti-drug" campaign, but appeals to the workers movement to join in. First they seek to paint the cops as workers, now they call on the workers to become cops. The "independent" "crime-fighting" gangs proposed by the JCR as a regular feature of bourgeois society *can only be* auxiliaries to the bourgeois state—a "labour" version of the "Guardian Angel" vigilante squads. Whose courts and jails will they turn the "criminals" over to?

In a situation like a general strike, the workers can impose *proletarian* order, sweeping the streets clean of strike-breakers, fascists, and in the process lumpen criminals. Real workers militias will be built out of effective strike pickets and worker/immigrant mobilisations that *stop* fascist/cop terror. But the JCR shows no interest in this, instead encouraging second generation youth to forsake struggle against the racist bourgeois order for activities that will only leave hardline interior minister Pasqua smiling.

"Nothing to be done against drugs?" bleats the JCR. The poor and oppressed know all too well the reality of lumpen crime, much of it fuelled by the drug trade. But if the bourgeoisie were really concerned about drug-related "violence", the logical step would be to immediately repeal all laws criminalising drugs, which would take away the exorbitant profits in the drug trade.

We also note the admiration the JCR expresses for the Muslim fundamentalists, because "they offer an alternative to drugs, alcoholism and crime". And in a polemic against a group of Algerian militants, Elliott ridiculed our programmatic point that Algerian women should have the right to free abortion on demand (see our Spartacist League/US bulletin, *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League* no 7).

### Reformism in action 6: Militant's real record in Liverpool

What the Militant-led council did in Liverpool is a classic example of "municipal (sewer) socialism". In the middle of the Great Miners Strike of 1984-85, rather than countenance strike action by Liverpool workers, it struck a deal with the Tory government in which rates (taxes) were put up 17 per cent and bailiffs were called out against rates

debtors. A year later came the infamous "tactic" of distributing 31,000 redundancy notices to city workers. And when they were purged by Kinnock's Labour Party, Militant's only recourse was to appeal to the capitalist courts against the Labour Party. Marxists are not opposed in principle to defending ourselves in the courts, but to appeal to the bosses' state against opponents *within the labour movement* is a breach of class principle.

Militant's pretence to anti-racism was thoroughly demolished when they controlled the municipal government of this city in which non-whites make up eight per cent of the population and where in the heavily black Toxteth district unemployment ranges up to 80 per cent. Militant's "colour-blindness" on the race question was so notorious that it provoked a 1986 *Open Letter to the Militant Tendency* by the Labour Party Black Section National Committee, condemning the fact that Liverpool did not have a single black city councillor and that less than one per cent of city employees were black.

### Lenin and the state

Militant's administration of the Liverpool city council gets to the heart of what distinguishes Militant's politics from Marxism. It comes down to the central question of the bourgeois state and the divide between reform and revolution. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin laid out the fundamental Marxist understanding of the state. The state consists of "special bodies of armed men" and "is an organ of class rule, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another". Citing Marx and the experience of the Paris Commune, Lenin reiterates that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes", that the liberation of the working class cannot come about "*without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class...." The capitalist state—"the 'special repressive force' for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie"—must be replaced "by a 'special repressive force' for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat)". [all emphases by Lenin]

These teachings are diametrically opposed to the programme and practice of Militant. We have shown elsewhere how their conception of "peaceful socialist transformation" boils down to the promulgation of an "enabling act" by a parliamentary Labour government. They complain that we left out a key section of what Peter Taaffe said. In fact, we paraphrased this passage in "Militant, SWP and the cops". However, for the sake of clarity, we are glad to reproduce in all of its reformist glory the entire citation from Taaffe's *The State...a warning to the labour movement*:

"...measures to make the state more accountable to the labour movement must be stepped up. But the limits of such measures must also be understood by the labour movement. The capitalists will never permit their state to be 'gradually' taken away from them. Experience has shown that only a decisive change in society can eliminate the

danger of reaction and allow the 'democratisation of the state machine' to be carried through to a conclusion with the establishment of a new state controlled and managed by working people.

"If the next Labour government introduced an Enabling Bill into Parliament to nationalise the 200 monopolies, banks and insurance companies which control 80 to 85 per cent of the economy, a decisive blow would be struck against the 196 directors of these firms who are the real government of Britain. By the economic power they wield, they dictate the course to be followed by both Tory and Labour governments. They would be compensated for the nationalisation of their assets on the basis of 'proven need.' Such a step, backed up by the power of the labour movement outside parliament, would allow the introduction of a socialist and democratic plan of production to be worked out and implemented by committees of trade unions, the shop stewards, housewives and small businessmen."

And the second passage:

"A peaceful socialist transformation of society, would be entirely possible if such bold steps were to be taken by a Labour government, however, it is equally certain that the road chosen by the leaders of the labour movement of prevarication and half-measures—will mean enormous suffering for the British working class. Despite the 'democratic' mask which the British capitalists have been forced to don over the last twenty years, if their system is threatened they will not hesitate to resort to what Trotsky called that 'cold cruelty' which they displayed in the past, both in their dealings with colonial peoples and towards the British working class."

So Militant wants to implement "a peaceful socialist transformation of society" by making the capitalist state "more accountable to the labour movement", to be supplemented by the "decisive blow" of introducing an enabling bill into the bourgeois parliament to nationalise banks and industry—with compensation on the basis of "proven need"! (This is hardly to the left of the Labour Party's 1960 call for "enough" nationalisations to control the "commanding heights of the economy"—a compromise between Bevanites and Gaitskellites, watering down the LP's Clause Four plank for "common ownership of the means of production.") According to Taaffe, the enabling act must be backed up "by the power of the labour movement outside parliament", a vague phrase whose intention is to *avoid* calling for soviets (workers councils).

In contrast, let's see how Trotsky formulates the question of proletarian power in "The Problem of Revolutionary Force", *Where is Britain Going?* (1925):

"Those who prepare to seize power must necessarily prepare also for all the consequences that will result from the inevitable opposition of the possessing classes. We must firmly grasp the fact: if a real workers' government should come to power in England, even by the most extremely democratic means, civil war would be inevitable. The workers' government would be obliged to put down the opposition of the privileged classes. It would be impossible to do this by means of the old governing apparatus, the old police, the old courts, the old militia. A workers' government created by the parliamentary method would be obliged to create for itself new revolutionary organs, drawing their strength from the trade unions and the workers organizations in general. This would lead to an immense increase in the activity and independent action of

the working masses. On the basis of the immediate struggle with the exploiting classes, the trade unions would be actively welded together, not only in their upper ranks, but also in the masses, and would find it absolutely necessary to create local gatherings of delegates, i.e., soviets of workers' deputies. The true workers' government, i.e., the government which is entirely devoted to the interests of the proletariat, would thus be obliged to destroy the old government apparatus as an instrument of the possessing classes and would oppose it with workers' soviets for that purpose. This means that the democratic origin of the workers' government—if such a thing be at all possible—would lead to the necessity of opposing the strength of the revolutionary class to its reactionary opponent."

Isn't the difference clear? For Trotsky "civil war is inevitable", "a true workers' government would be obliged to destroy the old government apparatus as an instrument of the possessing classes and would oppose it with workers' soviets for that purpose". Civil war? Dictatorship of the proletariat? Militant's vaunted Labour MPs would have gagged if they had had to utter such words. Peter Taaffe and Militant exemplify the Kautskyan opportunism on the state which Lenin ridiculed for preaching that it is possible for the working class to "simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes".

There can be no such thing as making the capitalist state "accountable to the labour movement", inasmuch as this state is an instrument for oppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie. Militant says that the police should be "under the control of democratic committees", which in turn would exclude "racist or fascist elements", abolish "specialised repressive units", etc. In the same pamphlet, Taaffe argues that the bourgeois officer corps, as well as the cops, can be cleansed of its reactionary elements: "From a long term point of view, it is also necessary to take the present system of training officers—with the reactionary poison against the labour movement which is instilled into recruits—out of the hands of the specialised military academies and the generals, and put it under the democratic control of the labour movement and the working people as a whole."

Isn't it absurd how they preach that the cops and the officer corps can somehow be transformed into some kind of "anti-racist" and "progressive" organs? Writing of the officer corps of the liberal Spanish Republican government in the 1930s, Trotsky demolished such arguments:

"The officers' corps represents the guard of capital. Without this guard, the bourgeoisie could not maintain itself for a single day. The selection of the individuals, their education and training, make the officers as a distinctive group uncompromising enemies of socialism. Isolated exceptions change nothing.... To eliminate four or five hundred reactionary agitators from the army means to leave everything basically as it was before. The officers' corps, in which is concentrated the centuries-old tradition of enslaving the people, must be dissolved, broken, crushed in its entirety, root and branch. The troops in the barracks commanded by the officers' caste must be replaced by the *people's militia*, that is, the democratic organization of the armed workers and peasants. There is no other solution." ("The Lesson of Spain", 30 July 1936)

While Trotsky points to the importance of arming the

masses, Militant accepts the capitalist state's control over weapons with gun licensing. In fact, Militant does not even call for the right to bear arms, which at bottom is the right to make a revolution.

### Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution

Now let us see how Militant is forced to revise the history of the Russian Revolution in order to make it compatible with its Labourite vision of "parliamentary socialism". Talking of Lenin, GR/JCR assert: "Further, in writing *State and Revolution* he was addressing members of the Bolshevik Party and of the international socialist movement. Even before he had had the time to finish this little book he was obliged to stop. Why? To resolve the question of the state in a practical fashion—with the October 1917 revolution. To do that, he had to address the masses, notably with the pamphlet *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*."

Then they cite a brief excerpt, which they quote without explaining the context, from Lenin two weeks later, which refers to the fact that "the proletariat would support the Soviets in every way if they were to make use of their last chance to secure a peaceful development of the revolution". The implication here is that Lenin put away *The State and Revolution*, which at most could be of interest to a few *cognoscenti* in the party, and then got down to the "real business" of wooing the non-party masses to the "slogan of peace". Lenin is presented as a total caricature of himself.

GR/JCR's conviction that it was far more important for Lenin to address the "masses", as opposed to the party, says a lot about how little these reformists understand what a Leninist vanguard party is all about. But in this situation their distinction between "party" and "masses" is nonsense, for the obvious reason that the Bolsheviks, on the eve of the October Revolution, were a mass party! In the six weeks prior to the successful insurrection, Lenin spent the *overwhelming majority* of his time on the internal party struggle, as is evident from his writings of the time. And what was the fight in the party about? It was precisely on the question of the *need to organise an armed insurrection* in Russia immediately. Lenin and Trotsky defeated a group of vacillators in the central committee, led by Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had illusions in the possibility of a peaceful, parliamentary development of the revolution and at bottom supported the bourgeois Provisional Government.

At the exact same time as he was writing *The Impending Catastrophe* in September 1917, Lenin wrote a letter to the central committee entitled "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power", in which he declares: "The present task must be an *armed uprising* in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government. We must consider *how* to agitate for this without expressly saying as much in the press." This was immediately followed up by another letter to the central committee, entitled "Marxism and Insurrection".

A couple of days later Lenin published "The Russian

Revolution and Civil War". Here he refers to an "exceptional historic moment", in which a peaceful development of the revolution would be *possible* but only "if all power passes to the Soviets". Lenin offered a "compromise": he promised that the Bolsheviks would not use violence to overthrow a government headed by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, but only if the latter broke their coalition with the bourgeoisie. This proposal was made after the successful liquidation of the reactionary Kornilov coup. The masses were deeply aware of the fact that the openly bourgeois component of the coalition government had solidarised with Kornilov, and Lenin's tactic sought to expose the Mensheviks and SRs (the Conciliators) for their unwillingness to break with their bourgeois allies.

Militant would like to pretend that Lenin's reference to the possibility of a "peaceful development" vindicates their wretched parliamentarism. But Lenin was not speaking of a "peaceful development" within a bourgeois parliamentary framework. Rather he was talking of the Bolsheviks peacefully becoming the majority in the workers councils on the basis of "all power to the soviets". Russia was in a situation of dual power: the bourgeois state apparatus was in tatters, while the workers soviets challenged and competed with bourgeois institutions for control (which is why it would be absurd to expect Lenin to call for "smashing the state" in *The Impending Catastrophe*). This situation has nothing in common with Militant's line of a "socialist transformation" on the basis of an "enabling act" passed by a *bourgeois parliament*.

Lenin had few illusions that there could be a peaceful outcome. This is clear, since he had already initiated a hard fight within the party to organise an insurrection. Nor did he hide this from the masses. In the same article cited above, he asserts that "civil war is inevitable", if the Conciliators "do not wish to break with Kornilovism and the 'coalition' right now, once and for all".

Lenin insisted that the Bolsheviks would not be intimidated by the talk of the bourgeoisie to the effect that a civil war will mean "rivers of blood". In response, Lenin wrote: "But such rivers of blood would give the victory to the proletariat and the poorest peasantry, and there are ninety-nine chances out of a hundred that this victory would yield *peace* instead of the imperialist war.... No 'rivers of blood' in an internal civil war can even approximately equal those *seas* of blood which the Russian imperialists have shed...."

Lenin was perfectly honest with the working masses. He did not try to hide the fact that a proletarian revolution would involve great material sacrifices. He spoke openly of a civil war. This is a very different picture from the one painted by GR/JCR, which seeks to portray him as a one-dimensional advocate of "peace".

### Militant v Lenin on imperialist war

Under both the tsar and the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks were "revolutionary defeatists": Lenin called for turning the imperialist war into a civil war.

Without intransigent opposition to imperialism, the Bolsheviks could never have led the working masses to proletarian revolution.

But these politics are totally alien to Militant, which again and again has capitulated to British imperialism. It refuses to call for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the troops from Northern Ireland. During the dirty Falklands/Malvinas conflict in 1982, we fought for revolutionary defeatism on both sides and raised the call "Sink Thatcher!" Militant instead gave back-handed support to Thatcher—the butcher of the Belgrano—with its call for "workers sanctions" against Argentina. And during the imperialist slaughter in the Persian Gulf, it refused to take a position for the defeat of imperialism and defence of Iraq. Instead it campaigned for a general election to install a Labour government, at a time when Labour solidly supported the war.

### South Africa

The Militant/CWI look to fight for "socialism" by *subordinating* the proletariat to popular fronts—coalitions between workers parties and outright bourgeois parties. Look at their position on South Africa, where they politically support the ANC. The ANC is a nationalist popular front in the form of a party, including the South African CP and the COSATU unions. In calling for a vote to the ANC—petty-bourgeois nationalists who have evolved into bourgeois junior partners of the Randlords—Militant and its Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) supporters in South Africa called for a vote for the new black front men for neo-apartheid capitalism. After decades as the hegemonic nationalist organiser of resistance to the hated apartheid regime, the ANC was accepted in government by the white ruling class, who thought only Mandela & Co could rein in the masses and establish a stable business climate attractive to foreign investors. Already under the Mandela/De Klerk regime, South African strikers are being met by the same police dogs, rubber bullets and racist cops that were used to suppress anti-apartheid protests under the De Klerk regime.

We stress that the liberation of South Africa's black masses requires socialist revolution and call for ethnically integrated workers militias to defend strikes and anti-racist struggles and to suppress communalist fratricide. The Militant/CWI leadership lectures their South African comrades that it's wrong to support universal conscription into the bourgeois army. This advice is pretty rich coming from people who think the French riot cops and British police thugs are "workers in uniform". And both Peter Taaffe and the MWT want the South African black cop "union" POPCRU admitted to COSATU. The CWI claims that it wants to "split" the army, but on what basis? The bottom line is that they politically support the ANC, which is now administering the capitalist state, repressing strikers and township dwellers.

In this context, what could be the political function of the "community self-defence" forces the MWT claim to be organising? Self-defence against whom? How can you build

a "workers militia" when you support the enemies of the workers—the cops and nationalist politicians of the ANC? As is evident from Militant Labour's own line on the British cops, its chastisement of the South African MWT reflects no difference of principle on this fundamental question. Rather it is an example of how reformism is inherently anti-internationalist, with each national group adapting to different pressures deriving from its "own" national bourgeoisie. This is why the Militant's Committee for a Workers International can only be a federated lash-up. The same is true of Workers Power's League for a Revolutionary Communist International, whose English and Irish groups, for example, disagreed on whether to support an indiscriminate IRA bombing in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland in 1988 (see "Northern Ireland: for a proletarian solution", *Workers Hammer* no 109, September 1989). Only an authentically internationalist programme can provide the basis for a genuine, democratic-centralist International, like Lenin's Third International and Trotsky's Fourth International.

In the South African elections, we gave critical support to the Workers List Party (WLP). While sharply criticising its left-reformist programme, we noted that in advocating the building of a workers party and in standing against the nationalist ANC, the WLP's campaign drew a crude class line.

Workers Power argued that in South Africa, "The workers do not need the experience of voting for a popular front or an embryonic bourgeois party." But while also giving critical support to the WLP, WP made it clear that it did so reluctantly and yearned to give "critical support" to the popular front through the back door. "Had it been possible to vote separately for the workers' organisations and candidates within the ANC alliance then revolutionaries should have supported these candidates critically" (*Workers Power*, April 1994). So if South Africa had British-style constituency elections, WP would have called for votes to the SACP and COSATU candidates on the ANC ticket. And in the past, WP has indeed called for votes to non-working-class formations, like its support to SWAPO in Namibia in 1989 and its regular support to Sinn Féin in elections in Northern Ireland.

This ploy makes a mockery of class independence. The contradiction which otherwise exists in a reformist workers party between its pro-capitalist policies and its working-class base is *suppressed* once such a party enters a bourgeois coalition. As Trotsky insisted at the time of the Spanish Civil War, revolutionaries do not give any political support, however critical, to any of the parties of the popular front. The aim of the popular front is to bind the working class hand and foot to its bourgeois exploiters.

### Modern-day Kautskyans

We Trotskyists understood that it was the duty of revolutionaries to unconditionally defend the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution—not with the suicidal and self-

servicing methods of the bureaucracy and its preachments of “peaceful coexistence”, but with the methods of class struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisies, fighting for socialist revolution against capitalism and for proletarian political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states. Trotsky fought tooth and nail to defend the gains of the October Revolution—including, when necessary, in a bloc with the Stalinist bureaucracy—while fighting at every stage to oust the Stalinist usurpers, whose policies undermined the workers state. The fate which befell the Soviet Union vindicated Trotsky’s warning that either the Soviet workers would sweep away the bureaucracy, or the bureaucrats would devour the workers state. But the Bolshevik leader was adamant that real revolutionaries would fight on the last barricades to defend the gains of October.

In contrast, Militant echoed the anti-communism of their own bourgeoisie and its Labour Party, who claim to stand for “democracy” (bourgeois democracy) as against Stalinist “totalitarianism”. Today the GR/JCR writes: “In the first instance the history of this century has fed democratic illusions and fear of dictatorship, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. And it is not only illusions. The working class feels, justifiably, responsible for democratic gains and doesn’t want to lose them. Stalinism proposed as an alternative to bourgeois democracy the dictatorship of a bloody bureaucracy.” And then they say: “In our epoch, it is urgent to show the masses that we don’t want to establish a military state, crush their democratic rights, *start a civil war* or any of the other nightmares associated with communism in the popular consciousness in several countries.” [our emphasis]

There we have it, once again, the counterposition between “dictatorship” and “democracy”. These people are so shameless that they are not afraid to say openly that they *oppose civil wars*, which they associate with “crushing democratic rights”. The same arguments were made by Karl Kautsky, who opposed the October Revolution and the victorious smashing of counterrevolution by Trotsky’s Red Army. With its line on civil war, Militant should logically spit on the Nicaraguan Sandinista fighters who overthrew the bloody Somoza dictatorship in 1979, on the Salvadoran guerrillas, on the militant young Palestinians who waged the *Intifada* against the Zionist occupiers—or is civil war anathema to Militant only in “civil”, “democratic” Westminster Britain?

During the imperialist anti-Soviet war drive in the 1980s, Militant refused in practice to defend the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states. On the contrary, they supported every counterrevolutionary force favoured by the imperialists. Like Workers Power and the rest of the Labour-loyal left, Militant supported Polish Solidarność when it made its first bid for power in 1981. Far from being the “democratic trade union” painted by Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Militant, Solidarność was, as we wrote at the time, a company “union” for the CIA, the Vatican and the Western bankers. Today, as the imperialists and the Pope crow about how they

sponsored and financed Lech Walesa’s operation, there is no question about that. And with the Polish workers experiencing first-hand the ravages of Solidarność counterrevolution—the mass unemployment, the anti-Gypsy (Roma) pogroms, the denial of abortion rights—Militant and the other “left” supporters of Solidarność have conspicuously stopped trumpeting their earlier support to this capitalist-restorationist movement.

At the time of Yeltsin’s “heroic stand” against the farcical putsch by Gorbachev’s erstwhile lieutenants in August 1991, Militant’s supporters in the Rabochaya Demokratiya (Workers Democracy) group were to be found *on Yeltsin’s barricades*—as was Workers Power—alongside such other sterling “democrats” as Russian Orthodox priests, mafia-connected speculators, fascists and the CIA. Now Militant vehemently denies that they supported Yeltsin’s counterrevolution. Of course, because by now it is clear what the collapse of the Stalinist-ruled bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states has meant. The destruction of the nationalised, planned economy and the fracturing of the ex-USSR along national lines has ushered in not “democracy”, but unmitigated disaster for the working people.

Throughout Eastern Europe, capitalist restoration has meant impoverishment, degradation of women and youth, genocidal wars of nationalist fratricide and “ethnic cleansing”, a resurgence of fascist terror and pogroms. In the West, it has allowed the imperialist rulers to proclaim a “New World Order” of ever more brutal and frequent neocolonial adventures, of ever sharper attacks on education, social services, immigrant rights and the standards of living of the working class.

The social reforms of the “welfare state” were introduced at the end of World War II as part of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, to throw a sop to the working people of Western Europe out of fear of the prospect of social revolution in the West. Now, with the death of the USSR, the “social net” is being dismantled, as the capitalist rulers seek to drive up the rate of exploitation and position themselves for sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry and the drive to a new world war.

Today a new generation of young fighters is taking to the streets in response to the rulers’ attacks: education cutbacks, sub-minimum youth wages, anti-immigrant racism. But where many youth are starting to fight back against this decadent and racist system and its fascist dogs of war, Militant presents capitalism as some kind of rational system. In the recently published resolutions from their December 1993 World Congress, the CWI says:

“Indeed, the bourgeoisie has no need to, nor can it, call out its fascist dogs now against the labour movement. We have fully analysed in the past the reasons why the bourgeoisie will never again allow a petty bourgeois fascist upstart like Hitler or Mussolini to take power.”

In their resolution on “World relations” the CWI posits that the existence of nuclear weapons limits the antagonisms among the various imperialist rivals, and that “Only if the working class suffers a decisive defeat, and military

dictatorships in the main capitalist countries ensue, could the conditions be created for a nuclear war." What touching faith in the democratic imperialists, who A-bombed their already defeated enemy at the close of World War II!

In this as well, Peter Taaffe merely follows in the footsteps of Karl Kautsky, who likewise dismissed the inevitability of imperialist war with his theory of a rational "ultraimperialism". World Wars I and II proved Kautsky wrong. As Lenin insisted in his book against Kautsky, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, only world socialist revolution can put an end to the danger of new imperialist wars.

Ironically, Militant is given to such statements as: "Marxism can be said to be the science of perspectives, and in political questions, it repeatedly proves the invaluable advantage gained by foresight over astonishment" (*The Unbroken Thread*, Introduction, May 1989). Let's look at a couple of other Militant predictions. At the beginning of the incipient political revolution in East Germany in late 1989, Militant declared in its internal bulletin *Workers International News* no 5:

"At the present time there is no prospect of the reunification taking place on a capitalist basis. The West German capitalists do not want it. Even in the future, if the West German capitalists did toy with the idea of reunification, it is highly unlikely because of the opposition of the other world powers to the development of a united capitalist Germany. The bureaucracy in the East and the USSR is clearly opposed to it."

Now let's see what Militant had to say a few years later about the possibility of a deal between the ANC and De Klerk in South Africa:

"...it would be impossible for talks to succeed...even if the ANC leadership, on the one hand, and the SA regime on the other wished to achieve a negotiated settlement with each other...because the constituencies, the respective class bases on which the two sides rest, are irreconcilable, even temporarily...."

"There could never be a coalition government between the ANC and the bourgeoisie although many ANC leaders might earnestly desire it.... We cannot conceive of a condition which would permit of an ANC government on a bourgeois basis."

—quoted in *Trotskyist International* (April-September 1994)

Of course, Militant's spectacularly failed "predictions" were eminently self-serving. If there's no danger of a capitalist reunification of Germany, it's unnecessary to fight against the annexation of the DDR. If Mandela can't make a deal with De Klerk, it's easier to push political support for the ANC. If the bourgeoisie is inherently "anti-fascist", why not call on the capitalist state to ban the fascists? Likewise, the supposed impossibility of renewed imperialist war relieves you of the necessity of opposing imperialism down the line.

Militant invests the bourgeoisie with historical rationality. The implicit belief that capitalism is some kind of rational system is part of what leads reformists to believe that they can reform it by pressurising the rulers to make it more "humane", "efficient" and above all, "democratic". In fact, imperialist capitalism is a profoundly irrational system, which necessarily breeds racism, fascism and war. All attempts to "tinker" with it have failed, often in bloody massacres of the working class. What is necessary is to sweep it away, root and branch. And for that it is necessary to reforge a world party of socialist revolution, a Fourth International truly worthy of Trotsky's name and banner.

If you want to stop the fascists in their tracks, if you know the cops are no friends of the exploited and oppressed, if you want to make an international socialist revolution, the misnamed Militant tendency is no place for you. Reformism in the epoch of imperialist decay is a pipe-dream that goes nowhere. Young people should look to the forthright revolutionary programme of Trotskyism, which the International Communist League seeks to carry forward today. ■

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