



## Labour councils cut and sack: Foretaste of a Kinnock government

You don't have to be a Marxist to know there isn't an ounce of difference between the policies of Major's Tories and Kinnock's Labour Party. Labour enthusiastically backed Bush/Major's Murder Inc operation in the Persian Gulf, demanded enforcement of Thatcher's hated poll tax and supports key sections of Tory anti-union legislation. When Major came up with a "Citizens' Charter" scheme which would tie the pay of public sector workers to "performance"—which in plain language means speed-up and job losses—the Kinnockites whined that they thought of the idea first! And while the Labour Party leaders are shedding crocodile tears over the continuing rundown of essential health and educational services, take a look at what the Labourites have done where they run the show.

Lambeth Council, an inner-city borough in London containing the heavily black Brixton area, is a case in point. Some would have you believe that Lambeth Council is a stomping ground for the "loony left", and indeed Kinnock and his running dog, Vauxhall MP Kate Hoey, are intent on purging the Lambeth Labour group. But any resemblance between militant communism and the local "left" Labourites such as council leader Joan Twelves is entirely fictional. We have no reason to disbelieve the fervent

denials of *Labour Briefing* that any of its supporters chanted "victory to Iraq"; indeed, we don't think it credible that these spineless junior Bennites would fight for anything smacking of the defeat of their own bourgeoisie during an imperialist war. And while Kinnock complains that the Lambeth Council leaders encourage disrespect for the law, the truth is that this council has enforced the poll tax—now set at the *highest* level in the country—and has massively slashed jobs and services to boot.

On May Day about a thousand Lambeth public employees staged a one-day protest strike over a £25 million spending cut rammed through by Joan Twelves & Co, with at least 600 workers facing redundancies. In addition, there have been scattered occupations of advice centres and other facilities slated to be closed. A meeting called on 30 April was attended by a sizable contingent of NALGO members. As Twelves scurried out of the room, the NALGO spokeswoman stressed the union's opposition to Kinnock's

witch hunt while denouncing Twelves for slashing jobs. Angry NALGO workers produced a funeral wreath for Twelves regarding one of the targeted facilities which read: "Consumer Advice Centre RIP".

Council workers should be linking up in militant, joint strike action with teachers, health workers and strategic sections of the proletariat such as transport workers to fight against the redundancies, pay cuts and attacks on working conditions. But a NALGO leaflet addressed to "Dear Joan" and other council leaders concluded by pleading, "You are called upon at this meeting, to pledge your support for the unions in Lambeth, and to support your workforce to the extent that you—tonight, withdraw the threat of compulsory redundancies". Hard class struggle has been buried six feet under and actions have been restricted to one-day protests, in a futile attempt to "pressure" the council (reflecting the false notion, widespread on the left, that somehow *Labour-run* councils

have ceased to be part of the bourgeois state apparatus). The union leaders plead that the elected Labour council ought "to do right by the workers". But there's the rub: political loyalty to Labourism means selling out the interests of the working class.

On a broader scale, the TUC/Labour leadership has sabotaged class struggle in order to prove to the bourgeoisie that Kinnock & Co will make reliable administrators of capitalist austerity. The number of official strikes last year was the *lowest since 1935*, and the unions have lost one in four members in ten years (*Guardian Weekly*, 12 May). In the run-up to the next general election, the clamps have been put on even token and minimal strike actions—for instance the recent back-down by the RMT bureaucracy of Knapp & Co over a threatened one-day strike against massive job losses in London underground. Forging a class-struggle leadership of the unions is organically linked to the task of constructing a genuine Bolshevik party—a party that counterposes itself politically to all wings of Labourism, the "lefts" as well as the rights. The situation in Lambeth is a graphic demonstration that the Labour "lefts", no less than the Kinnockites, are conscious class traitors prepared to do

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## German Spartakists at 8 May 1945 anniversary

### Red Army smashed Nazi rule

On 5 May our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) and the Spartacist Group of Poland (SGP) held a forum on the subject: "The Red Army Smashed the Nazi Regime! For Workers Mobilisation Against Fascism, Chauvinism and Anti-Semitism!" The event, in celebration of the Red Army's victory in Germany on 8 May 1945, was held at the barracks club of a Soviet Army base south of Berlin. The Trotskyists of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) spoke there to 300 Soviet officers and NCOs. After the presentations of Renate Dahlhaus of the SpAD and a comrade of the SGP, there was a discussion period.

Also attending the event were some Kurdish friends and a Vietnamese who fought as a soldier in Saigon against US imperialism and who together with fellow

Vietnamese workers recently beat back a skinhead attack on their Berlin dormitory. On 20 April (Hitler's birthday), the SpAD joined with the Vietnamese and co-workers in standing guard at the dormitory in case of another fascist assault. There have also been a series of Nazi attacks on Poles travelling to Germany. On May Day in Berlin, the Spartakists distributed a letter calling upon the German trade unions and mass organisations of the working class, together with other anti-fascists, to mobilise in united-front actions to stop the Nazi scum.

At the conclusion of the event, several Soviet officers joined with Polish, German, American, Kurdish and Vietnamese comrades in laying a wreath in honour of the Red Army men and women who gave their lives in crushing the scourge of

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Yevgeni Khaldei

# Charges dropped against Alastair Green

The British state was forced to back down over its attempt to prosecute Spartacist League supporter Alastair Green for taking a side against the British/US-led war of devastation against Iraq. In a letter dated 3 April 1991 the Crown Prosecution Service announced that it was dropping the charges of "obstructing a police officer" and "threatening behaviour" (a Public Order Act offence) stemming from Green's refusal to stop chanting the slogan "Victory to Iraq" as part of the Spartacist League contingent at a 2 February demonstration called by the CND.

This admission of defeat by the government in its wartime campaign to *de facto* outlaw advocacy of the defeat of imperialism and defence of Iraq is a victory and a testament to the power of a united-front defence effort. The Partisan Defence Committee launched a defence

campaign mobilising impressive support from left organisations, trade unionists, black, Turkish and Kurdish groups and students. The campaign, based on the slogans "Drop the charges! No to government censorship and repression of the left!", received widespread endorsement from the left, prominent academics and authors, civil liberties organisations, the trade union movement and internationally.

A PDC meeting held on 16 April in London's Conway Hall celebrated this victory while stressing the need for continued defence efforts on behalf of all those still facing the injustice of the capitalist system, including those who still face Public Order Act charges stemming from a protest by Black People Against War in the Gulf against the government's vicious round-up, detention and deportation of Arab people during the war. Irish abor-

tion rights activist Ivana Bacik; the Political Editor of *Asian Times* and *Caribbean Times*, Keith Bennett, speaking in a personal capacity; the coordinator of Greenwich Action Campaign Against Racist Attacks; a representative of Hands Off the Middle East Committee; a representative from the *Socialist Organiser* editorial board spoke at the rally along with representatives of the Partisan Defence Committee and Alastair Green for the Spartacist League. A spokesperson for the Justice for Dessie Ellis Campaign also addressed the meeting about the plight of the extradited Republican activist.

The PDC event brought together groups with quite diverse political viewpoints to speak out against state repression of the workers movement, left and minorities. After detailing the rise of racist attacks during the course of the Gulf War Keith Bennett put it: "If we learn nothing else from this present situation I think we need to learn that it's high time that the workers movement put an old slogan on its lead banners: the slogan that an injury to one is an injury to all. Since the days of the campaign to raise aid for the civilian victims of CIA/mujahedin terror in Jalalabad Afghanistan I have always been pleased and honoured to lend whatever support I can to the work of the Partisan Defence Committee. And one can only hope that their united front example will be one that's followed by more of the British left in the future."

And in the Leninist tradition of the united front, the event was also a forum for the open struggle between competing political views. While the Workers Power member speaking on behalf of HOME

preferred to keep his remarks to the level of a press release for that committee, the main political debate took place between Socialist Organiser and the SL. Despite very deep political differences, Socialist Organiser energetically joined the defence effort on behalf of Alastair Green.

Speaking for the *SO* editorial board, Mark Osborne attacked our defence of Iraq in the Gulf War, polemicising against the slogan "Victory to Iraq" *from the right*. As we have noted, the slogan "Victory to Iraq" carried overtones of political support to Saddam Hussein and Arab nationalism. However, at the 2 February CND demonstration where Green was arrested and attacked by the cops, where the HOME committee was forced to take down their banner, this was not "because the police or the Labour Party or the CND were making subtle distinctions about the question of how precisely you formulate the defence of Iraq, they understood that the question was what side were you on in that conflict", as Green pointed out.

Osborne argued that socialists should have demanded—along with the imperialists and their Labour lackeys—the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. And in order not to "isolate" themselves from the working class with "anti-Labour stuff" leftists should also have said: "All right, let's support the troops, let's bring them home where they can't get killed." This overt social chauvinism is what would make for *SO* a "tolerant and rational left". The Gulf War, of course, starkly illuminated the politics of the Labour Party, right and "left" with no wing opposing the war aims of the imperialists. Currently themselves

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TROTSKY

## Trotsky on the Red Army and defence of the Soviet Union

*For the international working class 8 May is an anniversary worth remembering. On that day in 1945, after tremendous sacrifices, the Red Army finally crushed the fascist beast of German imperialism in Berlin. Today, as the Fourth Reich tramples on the working people of eastern Germany, sundry "leftists" join in the anti-communist hue and cry against the Red Army. Before*

*Hitler's Operation Barbarossa, and against the petty-bourgeois critics, Trotsky laid out the tasks of the Fourth International.*



LENIN

But let us suppose that Hitler turns his weapons against the east and invades territories occupied by the Red Army. Under these conditions, partisans of the Fourth International, without changing in any way their attitude toward the Kremlin oligarchy, will advance to the forefront, as the most urgent task of the hour, the military resistance against Hitler. The workers will say: "We cannot cede to Hitler the overthrowing of Stalin; that is *our own task*." During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradesly relations with the rank-and-file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

This kind of "defense of the USSR" will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defense which is now being conducted under the slogan: "For the Fatherland! For Stalin!" *Our* defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: "For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!" In order that these two varieties of "defense of the USSR" do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation. But above all it is necessary to establish clearly just *what* we are defending, just *how* we are defending it, against *whom* we are defending it. Our slogans will create confusion among the masses only if we ourselves do not have a clear conception of our tasks....

We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.

—Trotsky, "The USSR in War", 25 September 1939, in *In Defense of Marxism*

## Defend the Moabit anti-fascists!

Anti-fascists who defended a meeting in the Moabit district of Berlin against an armed attack by the Republikaner fascists on 14 January 1989 are facing trial on 24 May on criminal charges. The attack occurred during the racist "election campaign" of the Republikaner, which was marked by attempts at intimidation, provocations and unconcealed violence. The capitalist unification of Germany has given enormous impetus to the sinister growth of Hitler worshippers and bands of Nazi/skinhead thugs. When the Republikaner rant "Germany must remain German" it translates into 30 brownshirts, armed with iron bars and wooden stakes, laying waste to a residence for asylum seekers in Saxony, brutally beating the residents.

Originally judicial investigations were initiated against eight victims of the Republikaner attack. The Committee to Defend the Anti-Fascists of Moabit has to date gathered over 200 signatures for an immediate halt to all proceedings against the anti-fascists and has obtained support and financial donations from trade-union, anti-fascist and immigrant organisations and leaders. Investigative proceedings against six of the anti-fascists have been dropped.

However charges are being pressed against Michael Philippson for "bodily harm" and against Renate Dahlhaus because she defended herself against a Nazi attack and "forcibly compelled" the fascists "to desist". The charges are based on the testimony of the notorious Republikaner leader Carsten Pagel who led the fascist assault in Moabit. It is no accident

that Renate Dahlhaus, candidate of the Spartakist Workers Party (SpAD) in the Bundestag elections last December and spokesman at the mass anti-fascist demonstration in Treptow in January 1990 is being made the target of Nazi attacks and state repression. The SpAD has stood in the front ranks against racist attacks and the anti-Communist witch hunting unleashed in reunified capitalist Germany. Renate Dahlhaus was also a SpAD spokesman at a protest demonstration against the gag order imposed on Arabs and other immigrants from the Middle East in Berlin on 7 March. For having defended himself against the fascists Michael Philippson is also threatened with a civil suit and extortionate demands for monetary compensation. And in Renate's case the real meaning of the charges lies in an attempt to criminalise a well-known anti-fascist and communist candidate in the elections.

The Partisan Defence Committee along with its sister organisation in Germany, the Komitee für soziale Verteidigung, urges you to support the campaign to defend the anti-fascists—drop all the charges! Write to Judge G Schultz, Turmstrasse 91, 1000 Berlin 21. Urgently needed donations should be sent to the account: Werner Brand, Anti-Rep. Verteidigung, Commerzbank Hamburg, BLZ 200 400 000, Account 13 48 267. Contact: Committee to Defend the Anti-Fascists of Moabit, c/o Werner Brand, Postfach 11 22 86, 2000 Hamburg 11.

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## WORKERS HAMMER



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# German Workers Power group: Fourth Reich centrists

Unlike the US imperialists and their British partners, reunited German imperialism saw the "allied" war of mass slaughter in the Persian Gulf as a diversion from its main preoccupation—a new *Drang nach Osten* swallowing up the DDR, plundering Eastern Europe and dismembering the USSR. It was not lost on the bourgeoisie of Bonn that the US imperialists waged the bloody Gulf War in large part to bolster their bankrupt empire against more economically viable rivals in Germany and Japan. This was reflected in the anti-war demonstrations in Germany—much larger and more nationalist than elsewhere in Europe. Through the medium of the eco-capitalist Greens and the Social Democrats, the German "peace" movement was to a very large degree an extension of government policy.

This included the PDS ex-Stalinists turned social democrats who obscenely compared the mobilisation of the imperialist powers for mass slaughter in the Gulf to Gorbachev's limited crackdown against the right-wing secessionist government in Lithuania. The PDS even called for and participated in a "human chain" in Berlin extending from the American to the Russian consulates in which the SPD, Greens and CDU itself participated; the next day's protest in front of the Soviet consulate was joined by the fascist Republikaner.

Bonn could not stay out of the Gulf War entirely if it was to be in on the postwar division of spoils (the German rulers have their own considerable interests in the region). It picked up a large part of the bill for the Anglo-American led war and dispatched some Alpha jets and Bundeswehr troops to help its Turkish ally Özal in suppressing the rebellious Kurdish population. Furthermore, an orchestrated campaign of embarrassment over German arms sales to Iraq was exploited by the German ruling class to compete in patronising US imperialism's ally, Israel. An all-party Bundestag parliamentary delegation was dispatched to Israel together with a billion marks in military aid to defend Israel from a made-in-Germany chemical weapons attack which never took place. Excluded from this, the PDS sent their own delegation to Israel, keeping their mouths well and truly shut about the Zionist state's massacres of Palestinian people in the course of the intifada.

On the other end of the spectrum, fascist shock troops for the new Reich cheered Scud missile attacks on Tel Aviv and called for "Victory to Hussein" because he was using German-made weapons to kill Jews. Now the Fourth Reich has sought to make Germany "Judenrein" and assist the Shamirs and Sharons in the "final solution" of the Palestinian question by its exclusion of Soviet Jews and deportation of those in Germany to Israel.

It is in this context that we deal with Workers Power's German co-thinkers in Arbeitermacht. Workers Power tailed, from the "left", the forces of counter-revolution and capitalist reunification in the former DDR. Their call to "Smash Capitalist Restoration" was in flat contradiction to their siding with capitalist counterrevolution at every stage. After howling for the blood of the Stalinist

SED-PDS up until its complete capitulation before the *anschluss*, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht entered the "renewed" PDS of social-democratic "opposition" within reunified Germany. There Arbeitermacht may be found today, raising its sub-cretinist calls for "workers control" of the Treuhänd—the instrument of capitalist destruction of East German industry—and crying along with the worst of the social democrats about the "oppression" of the German nation at the hands of the victorious Red Army in World War II.

During the Gulf War, Arbeitermacht differed with its PDS cohorts on at least one question. The PDS, while capitulating to the capitalist reunification embraced the nationalist concept of "collective guilt" which asserts that *all* Germans were responsible for the Holocaust. The PDS had already offered reparations to the Israelis; such were the depths of its social-democratisation that it equated the Nazi war criminals, their capitalist backers and the self-proclaimed successor state of the Third Reich in the West with the East German deformed workers state comprised of the victims and would-be victims of Nazi extermination liberated by the Soviet Red Army.

For its part, Arbeitermacht came out sharply not only against the Zionist butchers but against the right of the Hebrew-speaking nation in Israel/Palestine to exist ("Should the German Left Defend Israel?" *Arbeitermacht* no 16, March 1991). In this issue *Arbeitermacht* wrote that Saddam Hussein "doesn't just make speeches, but strikes back against the Zionist state with force of arms". "If a thousand Scud missiles landed on Tel Aviv, they could not make up for what Israel has done to the Palestinians in the last forty years." Embattled Palestinian youth in the Occupied Territories understandably cheered Hussein's Scud rockets against the Zionist oppressors. But *Arbeitermacht's* call for a "thousand" Scud rockets—in any military sense, an absurd scenario—is the language and the mindset of "collective revenge" against a people for the crimes of their rulers.

Admitting that "for the Iraqi regime the Palestinians are pawns in the bloody game for power and supremacy" and warning of "the trap of bourgeois Arab nationalism and fundamentalism which wants in turn to drive out and annihilate the Israeli Jews", *Arbeitermacht* proceeds to call for just that. In reality *Arbeitermacht* denies any national right for the Hebrew-speaking people in the Middle East. And when our comrades in the Spartakist Arbeiter Partei Deutschlands (SpAD) protested in Berlin on 19 September demanding "Down with the Fourth Reich's Ban on Jewish Immigration" Gruppe Arbeitermacht had nothing to do with this unique internationalist protest against anti-Semitism in Germany.

*Arbeitermacht* writes: "We are for smashing the Zionist state by force! In the event of war we stand on the side of the backward and semi-colonial Arab states against Israel and its imperialist allies." So, irrespective of the imperialist allies of the Arab states, which are not inconceivable, and irrespective of the aims of such a war, *Arbeitermacht* has declared its side. Its paper denunciations aside, Arbeitermacht has capitulated both to Arab na-

tionalism and the German nationalists closer to home who sport shaved scalps and tattooed swastikas.

No doubt in 1948, Arbeitermacht would have marched with the British-trained, equipped and officered Arab Legion of the Transjordan's King Abdullah to seize the West Bank (as had been previously worked out with the Zionists). That war and those of 1967 and 1973 between Israel and bourgeois Arab countries had nothing to do with "anti-imperialism" and still less with the "liberation of Palestine". The responsibility of revolutionaries in each of those wars was to be *defeatist* on both sides. On the other hand, in 1956 Israel was allied with British and French imperialisms' attack on Egypt over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, and it was the duty of revolutionaries to defend Egypt. And in the uprising in Jordan in 1970 in which King Hussein massacred ten thousand Palestinians and against the Israeli blitzkrieg in Lebanon in 1982 and again against the massacre of thousands by the Syrian army at Tel Zaatar, we were *defencist* on the Palestinian side. And we do not forget that it was the Arab bourgeoisie and their vicarious cheerleaders who disarmed and derailed the struggle for the Palestinians' national liberation.

It was the Nazi Holocaust combined with the slamming shut of their borders to Jewish immigration by the imperialist "democracies" that transformed Zionism from a sect unpopular with the overwhelmingly socialist Jewish working class into a mass movement that could compact a new, Hebrew-speaking nation in the Middle East. Chamberlain, Churchill and Attlee not only blocked Jewish immigration to the British Isles, but set up their own concentration camps. Despite emphatic appeals spirited out of Eastern Europe from the victims of the Nazis, the British and Americans consistently refused to bomb the transport links to and extermination facilities at Auschwitz. Indeed the Soviet Union was the only country to open its doors to Jewish refugees *en masse*. Today, it is a horrible irony of history that the largest concentration of Jewish survivors of Hitler's "Final Solution" in Europe are to become the pawns for a Zionist "Final Solution" against the Palestinian people.

But for *Arbeitermacht* there is no Hebrew-speaking nation (simply referred to as "Jews" in their article). *Arbeitermacht* poses the whole question in terms of smashing the Zionist state by the *existing Arab bourgeois regimes*. The existence of the Hebrew-speaking nation has been a fact since 1948: does it have a right to exist? Certainly! Did it have a right to exercise this at the expense of the Palestinian Arab nation through the creation of the Zionist state of Israel? Certainly not! Like Cyprus and Northern Ireland, Palestine's legacy was that of the British imperialists' "divide and rule" schemes, creating situations of *interpenetrated peoples* who, under capitalism, can only realise national "liberation" through the national subjugation of another people. A just solution requires a *working-class* revolution, the destruction of the racist fortress state of Israel and the artificial Hashemite kingdom of Jordan from *within* as part of the struggle for a socialist federation of the Middle East.

Socialist revolution is the only road to genuine democracy and national emancipation: everything else is a lie.

## National question and Russian question in Germany

Workers Power's New Left methodology on the national question—viewing the world as divided between the "good" peoples who have a right to exist and the "bad" peoples who do not—is standard fare for many centrists and reformists; their position on Israel is certainly not unique on the left. (In much the same way Workers Power combines slavish loyalty to the chauvinist British Labour Party with enthusing over anti-working-class indiscriminate acts of terror against Protestant civilians and British workers by the petty-bourgeois Green nationalists of the IRA.)

This "logic"—completely divorced from Marxist class analysis—plays into the hands of the most reactionary nationalist demagogues who exploit the fears of a genocidal reversal of the terms of oppression. The card that Shamir and his ilk play is precisely that it is only they who will defend the right of the Hebrew-speaking people to exist; the same can be said for the likes of Paisley in Northern Ireland. And this brand of vicarious nationalism has also time and again given way to anti-Communism. Many former "radicals" who had opposed the dirty colonial war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants joined up ideologically with US imperialism against the Soviet Red Army over the plight of "poor little Afghanistan" in 1979. (Workers Power itself denounced the Soviet intervention as "counterrevolutionary" but recoiled from adding its voice to the pro-imperialist chorus of much of the fake left, and after major internal convulsions, "suspended" the call for the withdrawal of the Soviet forces.)

In translating its version of this methodology on the national question to the terrain of reunited capitalist Germany, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht ends up tailing... *German* nationalism. By the lights of the revanchist German bourgeoisie and its social-democratic running dogs, Germany has been a "good people" oppressed by the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union ever since the victory over Hitler fascism by the Red Army in World War II. Arbeitermacht has issued a brochure under the masthead *Arbeitermacht Materialien* (undated) in which they let it all hang out:

"The main enemy (on the military plane) in East Germany is now no longer the Soviet, but the Bundeswehr, respectively NATO troops. This we express, by the way, through the slogan: 'No Foreign Troops Any Longer in Germany—For the Immediate Withdrawal of All NATO Troops and All Rocket Bases in Germany.' But an essential point remains the same: the function of the Soviet troops is pro-capitalist...."

Two paragraphs later, Arbeitermacht grotesquely makes an outright comparison of the Soviet Red Army with the fascist Japanese occupying forces in China and Hitler's Wehrmacht:

"To also go into a possible objection that was always raised against us from

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# Soviet workers: fight "free market" misery!

## USSR lurching towards catastrophe



Outrage over drastic price rises (left). Pro-Western "democrats" stage rally in Moscow.

AP

APRIL 8—"I am very worried now simply how I am going to feed my children," exclaimed a Moscow mother of two. On 2 April, the price of bread, meat, flour and rice was tripled. The cost of milk, eggs and tea doubled. A child's school uniform which had been 12 roubles now costs 62. The long-expected and long-feared shock of "price reform"—the cutting edge of Gorbachev's declared "transition to a market economy"—hit Soviet working people with a vengeance.

Two days later the expected mass strikes and protests had begun. In Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia, tens of thousands of workers streamed out of automobile, tractor, engine and other factories and marched on the central square. Standing atop the pedestal of a statue of Lenin, speakers demanded wage increases to fully offset the price rises and called for the resignation of Gorbachev.

A month ago the Soviet president personally assured angry workers at the huge Minsk tractor factory that they would not suffer as a result of the "price reform". Now Minsk workers are defending their living standards by turning their power against the decomposing Kremlin oligarchy. An elected strike committee declares it will call a citywide general strike if its demands are not met by 10 April.

A commonly voiced sentiment among Soviet working people is that they're willing to pay higher prices if only there was something to buy in the state stores. But the shops are empty. "I don't have a family to feed, so I've just said to hell with meat," said a schoolteacher in the capital. A coal miner's wife in the Donbass of the eastern Ukraine described a scene at the Children's World department store: "People were literally fighting over some two-ruble tights that came in."

The Gorbachev regime has promised compensatory increases in wages, pen-

### Bread price triples



Zhigalov/TASS

In February Gorbachev promised Minsk tractor factory workers they wouldn't suffer from price increases. They have now held strikes against slashing of their living standards.

sions, student grants and child benefits such that there will be no overall fall in living standards. But with the Soviet economy visibly collapsing, such promises are unbelievable and unbelieved. The state planning agency, Gosplan, predicts a twelve per cent fall in national output this year coming after a three per cent drop in 1990. A Gosplan forecaster, Yakov Urinson, prophesies darkly: "I see an abyss ahead—economic, political and social—a return to the horrible times that we lived through in our country in the past" (*Independent*, 11 March).

Soviet working people can avoid falling into this abyss only by sweeping away all wings of the disintegrating Stalinist bureaucracy—the hardline apparatchiks and

military men, the Gorbachevite "centrists" and the openly pro-capitalist "democrats" around Boris Yeltsin—and taking political power into their own hands. The price increases reveal more sharply than anything else that all of these contending forces are enemies of the working class.

The "patriotic" apparatchiks and colonels, who denounce the "democrats" as agents of Western imperialism (which they are), will support Gorbachev against the workers in the name of "law and order" and of preserving a strong Russian-centred state. While condemning Gorbachev for ruining the economy, the "free marketeers" criticise the price hikes only for not going far enough. They want an end to all government price controls

without any compensation. Yeltsin is now reintroducing into the Russian republic's parliament the "500 days" to capitalism plan, which calls for the privatisation of housing, agricultural land and 70 per cent of industrial enterprises.

As we wrote in Part One of our three-part article "Where Is the Soviet Union Going?" (*Workers Hammer* no 121, March 1991):

"Working-class struggles in defence of social equality and the emergence of an authentic Leninist pole of attraction would shatter the present alignments within the bureaucracy and intelligentsia.... The Soviet working people must cut through the false polarisation between the 'democrats' and the 'patriots,' each in their own way heirs of the parasitic and reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy."

Now this possibility is posed directly. The organisation of workers resistance to the price increases can become the basis for *soviets* uniting the workers with collective farmers, Red Army soldiers and officers, old-age pensioners, oppressed minorities and others who embrace the cause of the working class. The fight for genuine soviet power requires the forging of a new Bolshevik party which can lead the working class against the forces of capitalist counterrevolution and bloody nationalist strife.

#### Gorbachev and Yeltsin: end products of Stalinist degeneration

The descent of the USSR into economic chaos parallels the disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucratic elite. The Soviet Union is today politically paralysed at the top as the two main factions arising out of the decomposing Kremlin oligarchy for the moment counterbalance each other. Yeltsin's propagandists and many Western commentators portray the

conflict as one between the advocates of capitalist democracy and the defenders of a refurbished "Communism" (ie Stalinism).

There is no question that the "democrats" are agents of Wall Street, the City of London and the Frankfurt banks. Recently, a top Yeltsin aide, Gennady Filshin, was forced to resign as deputy prime minister of the Russian republic after a financial scandal that starkly reveals this gang's real programme and masters. Filshin reportedly arranged a deal with a shady British outfit, Dove Trading International, to import consumer goods for the fantastic sum of 140 billion roubles. These roubles would then be used by Western investors to buy up state-owned factories, mines and other enterprises. The deal was scotched by the central Soviet government.

However, the Gorbachevites, too, aim to transform the Soviet Union into a capitalist market economy although at a slower pace and for the benefit of different elements of the bureaucratic elite. A leading Gorbachev supporter, Yuri Prokofiev, Moscow Communist Party chief and a member of the CPSU Politburo, declared, "We must go the way of Japan and South Korea" (*Financial Times*, 5 February). Prokofiev even included Pinochet's Chile among the model countries where "developed market infrastructures were created in a short period of time"! In other words, the Gorbachevites are looking to introduce a corporatist system, if necessary through massive police-state repression.

Yeltsin's main appeal is that he promises a radical alternative to the present intolerable situation. Yet the mass of Soviet working people reject, indeed dread, the effects of "free market" capitalism. A poll, reported in the *Wall Street Journal* (2 January), indicates that only five per cent of the Soviet population supports allowing the market to determine prices. Leningrad workers have reportedly refused to vacate the premises of stores, restaurants and service centres recently privatised by the Yeltsinite city council.

Yet Yeltsin remains an extremely dangerous demagogue because he can exploit the increasing economic desperation and growing hostility to Gorbachev among the Soviet masses. Witness the month-long coal miners strike. When half a million miners struck in the summer of 1989, the government offered sweeping concessions. At the same time, Gorbachev claimed sympathy with the miners' plight and used the strike, with some success, as an argument for perestroika, his half-baked programme of market-oriented "reforms". But as perestroika produced only greater misery and government promises were inevitably broken, the miners turned sharply against Gorbachev.

The current strike leaders are staunchly in the Yeltsin camp. In addition to economic demands, they are calling for Gorbachev's resignation and the transfer of effective political and economic power to the various pro-capitalist republic governments. Viktor Filimonov, a strike leader in the Kuzbass, states: "We fight for Yeltsin, but we don't believe he can change anything quickly. It took centuries to build capitalism, and he's talking of 500 days. But we have to get rid of the Communists" (*New York Times*, 28 March).

From a distance, it is not clear whether a significant section of the miners actually buy Yeltsin's pro-capitalist demagogy. Many mines are *not* on strike and there are reports of heated debates over the action. It may be that the miners are being manipulated by a small group of anti-Communist activists, with well-established ties to American imperialist circles, who formed a "free" union last autumn (see "Soviet Miners Strike Amid Perestroika Turmoil", *Workers Vanguard* no 522, 15 March).

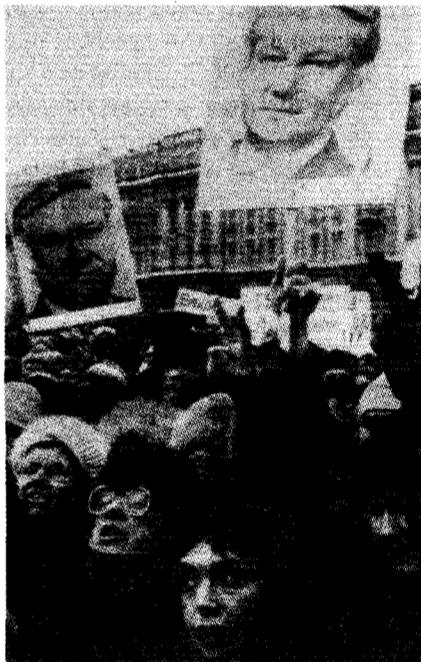
In any event, Soviet miners must understand that the Yeltsin forces are deadly enemies of the working class. It is not Communism that has produced the present economic chaos but the Stalinist perversion of Communism during decades of bureaucratic mismanagement and parasitism. A return to capitalism would mean even greater misery for Soviet working people.

Look at East Germany! A year ago many East German workers believed that unification with the wealthiest state in capitalist Europe would quickly bring them the good things of life. Instead it has brought them mass unemployment, massive rent rises, the closing of day-care centres and generalised immiseration. Suicides are up, the birth rate is down. Today, many East German workers are saying "it was better before" under a collectivised economy.

Soviet workers do not have to experience for themselves the ravages of capitalist restoration. Resistance to the price increases can be the beginning of a proletarian counteroffensive against the forces of "free market" misery.

#### For socialist planning under workers democracy

The last time the Kremlin bureaucracy raised the price of food and other con-



**Demagogue Boris Yeltsin spearheads drive for capitalist counterrevolution in 500 days or less.**

sumer goods was in 1962 under Khrushchev. This provoked large-scale strikes and protests, which in at least one case (Novocherkassk in the Ukrainian Donbass) was suppressed with appalling bloodshed by the KGB political police and army units. When Brezhnev ousted Khrushchev a few years later, he sought to secure social peace by freezing consumer prices at 1962 levels.

However, as the Soviet economy stagnated after the mid-1970s, money wages, salaries and procurement prices for state and collective farms continued to be increased. The ever-growing gap between official prices and costs of production was covered by ever-greater subsidies from an ever-growing money supply. In the last Brezhnev years, rife with corruption, an increasing fraction of foodstuffs and other necessities were diverted into the black and grey markets. But under Gorbachev's perestroika goods have simply disappeared from state shops and are available only in private markets at 10 or 20 times the official price.

To begin with, the black marketeers were legalised under the misnomer "co-operativists", and their activities greatly expanded. Administrators looted their factories, warehouses and shops, turning over state-produced goods to their part-

ners in the private markets. Real economic power is passing to what Russians call "the mafia"—a mélange of corrupt apparatchiks, private operators and outright gangsters. Early this year the deputy chairman of the state pricing commission reported that the cost of producing and distributing consumer goods was 25 per cent greater than the state's receipts for selling them. The Soviet government is in effect subsidising the mafia's price extortion!

Perestroika has also led to the fragmentation of the Soviet economy along national and regional lines. Republics, regions and even cities are waging economic warfare against one another: erecting trade barriers, tariffs, separate currencies, preventing sales to non-residents. Meanwhile, large numbers of Soviet Jews, who constitute a significant section of the technical and scientific cadre, are emigrating out of fear of anti-Semitic pogroms. The prominent "free market" economist Nikolai Shmelyev complains that the situation is "reminiscent of medieval times". However, economic nationalism along with communalist bloodletting (like the current Georgian pogrom against the Ossetian minority) is inseparable from the drive for capitalist restoration of which Shmelyev is a leading ideologue.

Spokesmen for the Gorbachev regime as well as its "free market" opponents argue that a pricing system which encourages farmers to use bread as cattle fodder is crazy. And it is crazy. Prices bear no relation to either relative or absolute costs of production. But the answer is not the introduction of a "market economy"—code word for capitalism. If the workers take political power, a genuinely socialist government would enormously increase the efficiency of the democratically planned economy, rationalising prices and also soaking up the present hoards of unspendable roubles (for example, exchanging them for long-term bonds).

Market calculations have an important role in aiding the plan in areas such as the output of consumer goods and services. As long as everyone is guaranteed an income adequate to cover basic necessities, the price of specific consumer goods should in general be proportional to the cost of production. If someone wants to buy a leather jacket that costs twice as much to produce as a cloth jacket, he should pay twice as much for it. But to find out what people want to buy doesn't require unleashing anarchic market forces—all you need is product



**Soviet coal miners in the Urals debate strike as pro-Yeltsin activists openly push for capitalist restoration.**

codes and a computer network linked to inventories!

As Trotsky called for in the 1938 Transitional Programme, democratically elected consumer committees should oversee the quality and pricing of goods. And Soviet bodies can democratically decide on which social programmes should be provided free (such as medical care, day-care centres and education) and subsidies for certain items (for example, children's books to encourage reading).

Such a rationalisation of the Soviet Union's pricing and financial system is possible only in the framework of the socialist revitalisation of the economy as a whole. This means the elimination of all forms of bureaucratic waste and parasitism. It means radically increasing productivity through scientific planning and, no less important, through the renewed discipline and dedication of working people who know they are building a better future for themselves and their children. But that requires defence of the system of collectivised property.

To go from the present conditions of chaos and misery to a genuinely socialist system requires a proletarian political revolution to oust the degenerate remnants of the Kremlin bureaucracy and to crush all of the forces driving pell-mell towards bloody counterrevolution—the pro-Wall Street "democrats" around Yeltsin, the reactionary nationalists in the Baltics, Caucasus and Ukraine, and the Great Russian chauvinists now masquerading as Soviet "patriots".

The bureaucratized anarchy of Gorbachev's perestroika has fuelled the growth of all these anti-working-class forces. But now worker resistance to the price increases offers a crucial opportunity to turn the entire political situation around. The Soviet Union can be polarised along lines for or against the interests of working people; whether the cost of living will be hostage to the mafia and Western financiers or determined by the democratic mandate of society.

Under revolutionary leadership—a reformed Bolshevik party built on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky—the Soviet working class can reclaim their genuine communist heritage. Just as the October Revolution shook the capitalist world, so the re-establishment of Soviet power in the USSR will inspire the revolutionary struggles of the working class in the heartlands of imperialism, opening the road to a global communist order.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 524, 12 April 1991.

This is the first part of an edited version of the 14 March talk in Dublin by comrade Tom Crean of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group.

Connolly is best known as the Dublin commander of the Easter 1916 Rising, subsequently executed by the British imperialists for his leading role in that rebellion. But it must be remembered that this man who is the greatest figure in the history of the Irish socialist movement—and alongside Larkin one of the two greatest figures in the history of the Irish labour movement—does not belong simply to Irish history or the history of the Irish proletariat. The first seven years of his political career were actually spent in Scotland. And from 1903 to 1910 he was in the United States where he went through some of his most important political experiences and played an important role in the Socialist Labor Party, the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party led by Eugene Debs.

Unlike the school of thought whose members for various reasons want to paint Connolly in Green nationalist colours, a task admittedly facilitated by the way he subordinated his socialist politics in the run-up to Easter week, we see Connolly's career as first and foremost one of dedicated service to the international working class. We also view Connolly in the context of the Second International in which he was part of the left wing. Many of the weaknesses of pre-World War I left social democracy and syndicalism were weaknesses he shared. The real tragedy is that he did not live to see the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and to confront the politics of the Communist or Third International, particularly on the national question and the

# Connolly's legacy struggle for a re

nolly was stationed in Ireland though it is possible he may have spent some time in India. This was his first time in Ireland and it was in Dublin that he met Lillie Reynolds who was from a good Protestant family. He deserted in February 1889 which is why we knew so little about his life until Desmond Greaves' biography. He wasn't particularly keen on letting the authorities know where he had come from.

He and Lillie were married in April 1889 in Perth. Back in Edinburgh, Connolly was almost immediately recruited to the Scottish Socialist Federation, following in the footsteps of his older brother John who had already become a socialist. The newly formed SSF combined Scottish supporters of the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation of Henry Hyndman. Hyndman had started out as a Tory radical and carried his virulent chauvinism and pro-imperialism into the SDF. The Socialist League, led by William Morris, had been a split from the SDF which advocated a very sterile form of socialist purism. But at least it represented some form of left opposition



The Dublin General Post Office, a gutted shell after the defeat of the Rising.

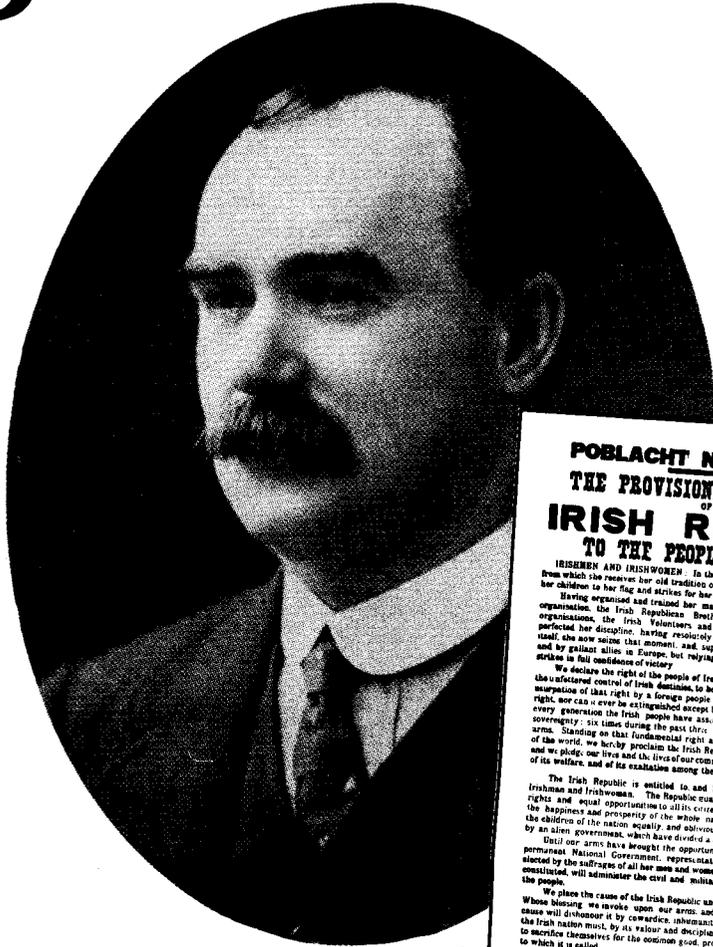
necessity for a party of professional revolutionaries to carry that through. But more of this anon.

Connolly was born in 1868 in Edinburgh in Scotland into a very poor Irish Catholic working-class family. James' father was a dung-carter (which literally meant taking out human refuse) as was James in his youth. Despite some periods when he was slightly better off, Connolly remained quite poor throughout his entire life. Samuel Levinson tells a story in his biography that Connolly always had a love for the Shakespearean theatre but he was never able to actually afford the money to go and see a play. In 1882 Connolly joined the First Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment. This was not at all uncommon for Irish unemployed men to do at that time, and was not in many respects so unlike the economic draft that one sees in the United States today of black and Hispanic youth. During much of the next seven years Con-

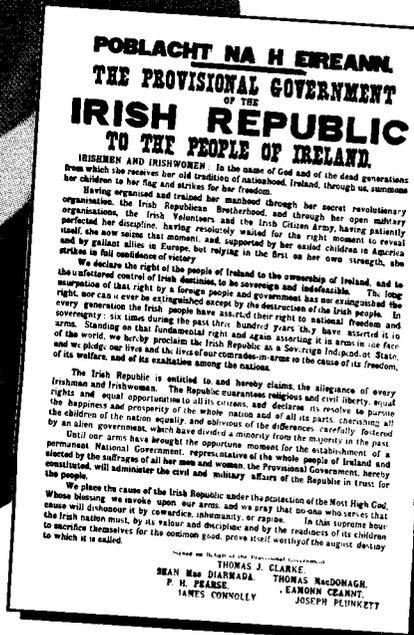
to Hyndman.

Connolly rapidly proved to be an extremely capable speaker and organiser and by 1892 he was secretary of the Scottish Socialist Federation. In 1894 and again in 1895 he ran on the socialist ticket for local office.

In assessing this first period in Connolly's political career, it is important to remember just how distorted the version of Marxism expounded by the British left at that time actually was. I've already mentioned Hyndman who was the worst expression of this. But it must also be remembered that British Marxists had very few texts of basic Marx translated into English and available to them. They had the Communist Manifesto and they had the first volume of Capital and the main text they actually used was Engel's work *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. It is also worth noting that British leftists like Belfort Bax came to see the Marxist analysis as applicable only to economic



no credit



questions and that other matters including religion, democratic rights and so forth were outside the scope of scientific socialism.

One of Connolly's mentors in these years was the Reverend John Glassey, an explicit "Christian socialist". Given all these things it is perhaps not so surprising that Connolly came to believe that the Second International's position that religion was a "private" matter meant that socialists could offer no opinion on matters beyond this life. Socialism and religion exist in mutually exclusive spheres and leave each other alone. Unfortunately for Connolly, in the real world—especially in Ireland—the church would not leave the socialists alone.

By the mid-1890s, in spite of or more accurately because of his success as a socialist agitator, Connolly had fallen on very hard times economically. He was unable to find work because of his views. When an offer came in 1896 to be the paid organiser of the Dublin Socialist Club, he jumped at the offer. This was the start of Connolly's second stint in Ireland, this time in the army of the proletariat. And he was to remain in Ireland until 1903.

Within a year of his arrival in Dublin, he was able to found the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The party had an irregular paper, the *Workers Republic* and never numbered more than a hundred members in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. It was nonetheless a very visible group, leading militant demonstrations on Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and other occasions. A sense of its politics can be gained from looking at the programme

James Connolly (1868-1916); proclamation of a Provisional Government by the Easter insurgents.

that it adopted. Among the demands that are raised in this programme are the nationalisation of the railways and canals, abolition of private banks, legislative restriction of hours of labour to 48 per week, establishment of a minimum wage, public control and management of national schools by boards elected by popular ballot for that purpose alone—a demand that obviously would come into conflict with the Catholic Church, whose central priority in the late 19th century was getting its hands on and keeping control of education in this country.

When he printed this programme he added another statement saying that the struggle for Irish freedom has two aspects: "it is national and it is social. The national ideal can never be realised until Ireland stands before the world as a nation, free and independent. It is social and economic because no matter what the form of government may be, as long as one class owns as private property the land and instruments of labour, from which mankind derive their substance, that class will always have it in their power to plunder and enslave the remainder of their fellow creatures."

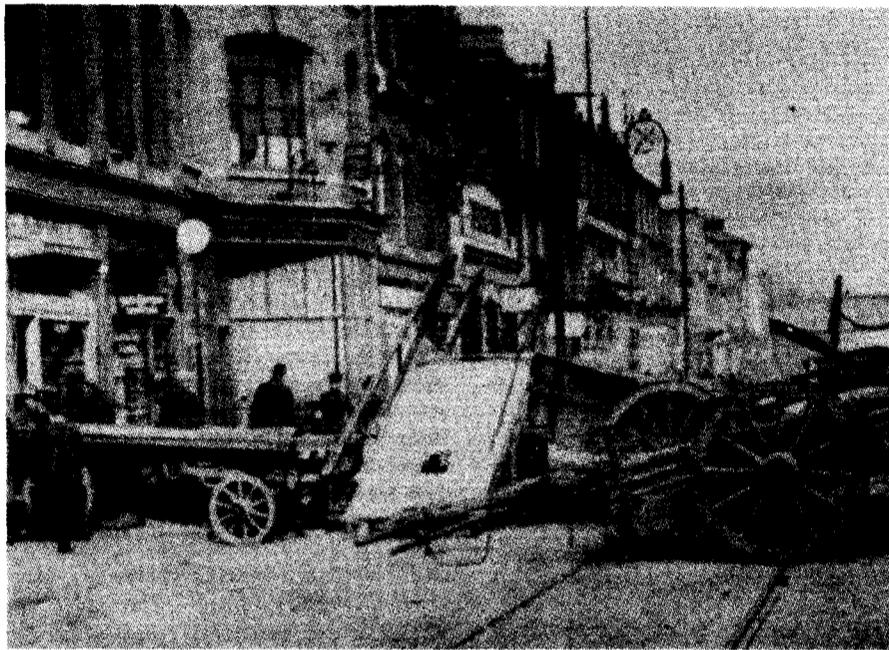
So from the beginning, this is 1896, Connolly's general approach to the fight for socialism in Ireland was: the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. Nationalism and socialism in this perspective are

# cy and the evolutionary party

not contradictory, because the Irish bourgeoisie is beholden to England. You can see how this approach was actually carried through in his political work at that time. In 1898 you had a Commemoration Movement for the hundredth anniversary of Wolfe Tone's Rebellion. Connolly's group intervened into this, and put forward the view that Wolfe Tone as an internationalist and a consistent democrat was arguing ultimately a socialist position, that when he said that if the worst came to the worst, they would have to rely on "the men of no property", this was actually an early call for some sort of proletarian upheaval. Now, that's a very problematic point of view because in fact Wolfe Tone was very clearly linked with the French Revolution and with basically bourgeois nationalism, which was certainly progressive at that point in time in Ireland and represented the best hope for a united Ireland, which would have been, if it had succeeded, a much better thing than the subsequent development. Nevertheless, the way Connolly was posing it was basically to say again that nationalism in its most consistent form equals socialism.

The strength of his approach at the time could be seen in his intervention against the Irish Parliamentary Party led by John Redmond which became quickly involved in the Commemoration Movement and took it over. So on the one hand, while there was this kind of confusion present in his politics at the same time there was absolutely no sense in which he was giving an inch to Redmond's bourgeois nationalism.

Another case perhaps even more egregious showing where this approach could lead was in relation to Arthur Griffith who is probably well known to you as the founder of Sinn Féin. Arthur Griffith spent a good deal of time in South Africa. He came to Ireland and Connolly and he were on the same side of the Boer War. That is when they first came into contact as far as I know. This was around 1900 and they were both for the defeat of



Barricades in Dublin, Easter 1916. Lenin defended the Rising against those who labelled it a "putsch".

the British. Fair enough. The problem with Arthur Griffith was that he was an absolute racist, a raving anti-Semite. In 1904 when there was a pogrom in Limerick, he hailed it or alibied it anyway. Now Connolly was in no sense a racist and there is no evidence for any such statement in anything that he said or did. At the same time faced with Griffith's utterly reactionary politics he dropped a lot of the disagreements in favour of trying to emphasise whatever points of agreement he could find. And this again came from the perspective of trying to cajole nationalists, push them step by step to the left in the belief that consistent nationalism was going to be socialist.

Another aspect which I have already alluded to and a consequence of this approach, to some degree, was soft-peddalling criticism of religion, fighting shy of religion as someone put it. This is from Kieran Allen's [a leader of the Irish

Cliffite SWM] book. A couple of interesting examples of how this actually was practised:

"In so far as the clergy involved themselves in politics they should be attacked as politicians. Otherwise the question of religion should be avoided entirely. This is why Connolly stated that the ISRP 'prohibits the discussion of theological or anti-theological questions at meetings, public or private'....

"The result was that the ISRP was always on the defensive. Its idealistic attempt to exclude religion from the realm of socialist debate collapsed time after time. It was dragged into making more concessions to Catholicism. During the local election campaign of 1900 Connolly proposed a resolution at the ISRP branch meeting instructing all members to attend Mass!"

— *The Politics of James Connolly*, Kieran Allen, p28

These pressures that exist in our society eventually really took their toll on the ISRP. They became expressed in one particularly notorious sub-political fight which was over the putting in of a cash bar in the office which was done while Connolly was out of town because I don't think he would have tolerated it if he wasn't out of town. So he came back, found the cash bar there. He was a life-long teetotaler. The thing that really got him was that the cash bar lost money. And that was intolerable. This led to big eruptions but I think that if you could isolate that it doesn't really mean so much. It was the pressures that they were under.

Connolly at this stage was a supporter of the American Marxist Daniel De Leon and in 1902 he did a speaking tour of the US on behalf of the Socialist Labor Party, De Leon's party. Later that year in Britain he was chairman of the founding conference of the British Socialist Labour Party which was a left split from the aforementioned Social Democratic Federation of Hyndman. And this was a good split. This Socialist Labour Party was founded on a number of things which

weren't so bad—certainly within the context of the British left at that time—including a very clear opposition to what was called Millerandism. Millerand had been a leading French socialist who actually entered a bourgeois cabinet in France which created all kinds of debate in the Second International. The left wing clearly opposed this. It was really the first case of what we have come to characterise in the later 20th century as the popular front. That is the alliance of working-class parties with bourgeois parties which inevitably means the subordination of working-class politics.

So in 1903 with relationships with his Irish comrades deteriorating and his support for De Leon's SLP, Connolly packed his bags and left for the United States, for good or so he thought. Now he came of course to participate in the SLP. De Leon, on the one hand was America's only original Marxist theoretician, having in some respects foreshadowed the idea of soviets and in fact was given some credit for that by Lenin. He was nevertheless in 1903 at the head of an organisation in the process of degeneration and was soon to be eclipsed by Debs' Socialist Party. What basically happened was that in the American trade union movement you had the domination of the AFL (the American Federation of Labor), which was a very craft union organisation led by Samuel Gompers who had a lot of the same views as Arthur Griffith did, except that he was a trade union leader. In order to combat craft unionism, the Socialist Labor Party built up a parallel union structure, which they called the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. While this did all right at the start—I think they had well over ten thousand members and 70 trade unions represented in the New York Council of Unions—it quickly began to collapse. What really took the wind out of it was the formation in 1905 of the Industrial Workers of the World, known as the Wobblies, who put forward the idea of one big union for all the workers and advocated the general strike to shut down the system.

So Connolly came to the US. He went first to Troy, New York. Then he was in New York City and he finally settled down in Newark for a period of time where he worked in a Singer factory where he intersected a number of Italian workers. And far from being a pure and simple nationalist only interested in staying with his own kind, he set about trying to learn Italian in order to intersect these workers and win them over to the Socialist Labor Party. At another factory he set about learning German to intersect German workers.

Of course he was a member of the SLP but he began to have a number of differences with De Leon which eventually led to an irreparable split between the two. Several theoretical issues were at stake. One was De Leon's adherence to the theory of the so-called iron law of wages which states that it is useless for workers to fight for higher wages because any such increase will be immediately off-

continued on page 8



Queens Square, Belfast, 1907: meeting during strike led by Jim Larkin.

# Connolly...

(Continued from page 7)

set by an increase in prices. Any improvement at all in the workers' standard of living would have to wait for the overthrow of capitalism. De Leon claimed that this was an orthodox Marxist position but Connolly correctly pointed out that it was in fact the position of Ferdinand Lassalle and Marx had polemicised against it.

Another dispute arose when Connolly declared his belief in monogamy. As he put it in the 9 April 1904 issue of the *Weekly People*, which was an SLP paper: "When touring this country in 1902, I met in Indianapolis an esteemed comrade who almost lost his temper with me because I expressed my belief in monogamic marriage, and because I said, as I still hold, that the tendency of civilisation is towards its perfection and completion, instead of its destruction... The abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the Woman Question but it will solve that alone... men and women would still be unfaithful to their vows and questions of the intellectual equality of the sexes would still be as much in dispute as they are today." De Leon was on much firmer ground in pointing to for example Bebel's book *Women and Socialism* which in the immediate context provoked Connolly's statement. There are certain things you can say of Connolly that are due to the Second International and to the deforming kind of political environments and some of the tendencies in which he first came to political consciousness. But there are other things that he should have known better about and this was simply his social conservatism as a Catholic coming through. He was opposed to divorce and unfortunately I don't think he would have been with the DSYG in calling for free abortion on demand. Which is not to say that within the context of the Irish society at the time his position, which was certainly for women's right to vote and for organising them into trade unions, was not enormously progressive. But still within the Marxist movement at the time there were better positions that he knew of and he consciously rejected them so that's something that we very clearly disagree with him on.

In spite of these disagreements, Connolly might well have remained with the SLP had it not been for his utter distaste for De Leon's method of running the party and the change in the political situation in the US. By the end of 1907 Connolly and his supporters had resigned from the SLP. De Leon's party was not a Bolshevik party. They weren't seeking as Lenin did to create a party of professional revolutionaries, a cadre organisation. Nevertheless they were a disciplined party and Connolly's conclusion coming out of this was that this type of party building was better left aside and was much less of an emphasis in his later work. He came out of this much more syndicalist in his political activity, emphasising building revolutionary trade unions—the one big union—as the essential answer politically. At the same time he was interested in the organisation of the Socialist Party in the US which was broad and included all sorts of tendencies from reformist to revolutionary and he saw the development of the British Labour Party as very positive and sought to emulate that within Ireland. He was able to get at least a motion passed at the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1912 to that effect.

In 1910 after having been one of the six organisers of the Socialist Party for a year Connolly decided to come back to Ireland. He had been trying to get back for a long time but he had been waiting for the right kind of offer, and it finally

came in the form of being the organiser for the newly formed Socialist Party of Ireland.

He came back with a manuscript in hand which was published shortly thereafter and which is actually his key statement of his political standpoint and that was *Labour in Irish History* which he had been working on for a number of years. It was his attempt at writing the history of Ireland from a socialist perspective. His main theme in this work was that first the Irish aristocracy and later the Irish bourgeoisie have always betrayed the cause of Irish national independence:

"The result of the long drawnout struggle of Ireland has been, so far, that the old chieftainry has disappeared or, through its degenerate descendants, has made terms with iniquity and become part and parcel of the supporters of the established order; the middle class, growing up in the midst of the national struggle, and at one time, as in 1798, through the stress of the economic rivalry of England almost forced into the position of revolutionary leaders against the political despotism of their industrial competitors, have now also bowed the knee to Baal and have a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism as against every sentimental or historical attachment drawing them towards Irish patriotism; only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

—*Labour in Irish History*, pp8-9

Taking this idea to its extreme Connolly argues that the bourgeoisie are not really part of the nation because they are completely beholden to England. The true people of Ireland are therefore the workers and the agrarian toilers. What programme was in their interest? Socialism. Therefore Connolly concludes that what was posed was a "social and national revolution each resting upon the other" (*Labour in Irish History*, p132). Connolly spends a great many pages detailing various revolts in modern Irish history and the betrayal of these revolts by aristocratic and bourgeois leaderships. But while explicitly rejecting bourgeois nationalism he also attempted to trace a different strain of Irish nationalist thinking which emphasises the social question. He sees this type of nationalism logically culminating in the socialist proletarian movement. I have already mentioned how Connolly and the ISRP tried to fuse the tradition of Wolfe Tone with that of socialism. In *Labour in Irish History* Connolly also praises James Fintan Lalor, the 19th century advocate of Irish national independence and land nationalisation, as an "Irish apostle of revolutionary socialism". And this fails again for the same reasons as the analysis of Wolfe Tone does, because while he may have made statements that are somewhat socialistic really his politics were focused on the peasantry not the overthrow of capitalism. They were a form of populism.

So after his return, he tried to make a go of it as being Socialist Party of Ireland organiser but ran into an old problem that had beset him before which was that the money that he was promised was not forthcoming for this position. He was finally able to obtain a job as an organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union led by Jim Larkin in Belfast. The Transport Union came out of a process which began in 1907 when Larkin came over as an organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers to Belfast and led a strike which was an extremely dramatic event uniting the Catholic and Protestant workers in shutting down the port for several months and which eventually necessitated the intervention of British troops. The British ruling class had come to the conclusion that the strike was of that seriousness. Now it was eventually defeated, sectarian appeals being made by Orange and Catholic reactionaries resulting in riots. Never-

theless it stood out as really the best example of what a class-struggle perspective could achieve. The problem was that there was no revolutionary party in Belfast at the time which could go beyond simply raising the common economic interests of the class and pointing to the necessity for resolving the terrible conditions which existed in Belfast at that time through socialism.

In 1911 Connolly and his family moved north. As I said he had taken a job with the ITGWU. An opportunity soon presented itself for Connolly to reorganise the docks where things remained in a very bad condition as a result of the defeat of the 1907 strike. In the middle of 1911 there was a strike by the Seamen's and Firemen's Union which began to paralyse the Irish ports. Dockers on the Belfast cross-channel docks, still mostly Protestants, then came out on strike in sympathy with the seamen in late June. Connolly saw this as a prime opportunity to unite the workers by bringing out the mostly Catholic deep-sea dockers. Connolly's methods were reminiscent of Larkin's in 1907: "He went down to the lower docks, and introduced himself during the lunchtime break. A docker called Clarke found him a conveniently placed barrel from which he addressed the men. The Head Line [shipping bosses] was then holding out against the seamen's settlement. On July 19 he brought out three hundred dockers in sympathy and marched with them to meetings at Garmoye Street and the Custom Hall steps. There, arrangements were made for picketing the cross-channel boats" (*The Life and Times of James Connolly*, C Desmond Greaves, p265).

The newly organised ITGWU men then made their own set of demands. Conditions on the docks were virtually as bad as they had been in 1907, the dockers earning no more than 15 shillings a week, at work that was so gruelling that no dock worker could stand it for more than three days at a stretch. The employers were of course very quick to rise to the challenge thrown at them by Connolly and the ITGWU. They threatened the men with complete lock-out if those on strike did not return to work immediately, but the response by the dockers was one of complete solidarity. Connolly formed the "Non-Sectarian Labour Band", an idea he took from his Wobbly experience, which led union processions through working-class neighbourhoods to raise money. There was tremendous support from these areas and in the docks meanwhile scab-carts were being attacked and overturned by union pickets. But Connolly did not feel prepared to deal with another 1907 type situation and readily accepted the compromise offer by the capitalists for an average increase of three shillings a week which was in fact fairly substantial. The strike had lasted only a few weeks but it achieved a measure of working-class solidarity across sectarian lines which, albeit modest, was still impressive by the standards of the previous few years.

Connolly's organising successes did not end there: "on October 4, 1911... a number of mill girls striking spontaneously against speed-up introduced by the masters to evade an agreement to restrict output, approached Connolly for advice"

(Greaves, p271). There was already a textile operatives' society in existence led by Mary Galway but it was composed mostly of women in the better paid and heavily Protestant making-up section. The overwhelming majority of textile workers were unorganised. Connolly decided to organise them. At the end of November 1911, a textile workers section of the ITGWU was established. Galway immediately accused Connolly of poaching and appealed to the Belfast Trades Council, but he could justly answer that Galway's union had shown no interest in organising the bulk of the women. In the end the Trades Council accepted the validity of Connolly's union and he and Galway even managed to cooperate later on. In his manifesto entitled "To the Linen Slaves of Belfast" Connolly called on all the women workers to stand together:

"Especially do we appeal to the spinners, piecers, layers and doffers. The slavery of the Spinning-room is the worst and least excusable of all. Spinning is a skilled trade requiring a long apprenticeship, alert brains and nimble fingers. Yet for all this skill, for all those weary years of learning, for all this toil in a super-heated atmosphere, with clothes drenched with water, and hands torn and lacerated as a consequence of the speeding up of the machinery, a qualified spinner in Belfast receives a wage less than some of our pious mill-owners would spend weekly upon a dog."  
—*Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table*,  
Cork Workers Club, 1975

Now, these were modest successes. Unfortunately, this was not a good time to be in Belfast for socialists. In 1912 with Home Rule looking more and more imminent you had the rise of Carsonism, huge demonstrations and then in 1912 as well Loyalist attacks in the shipyard with the approval of the owners, driving out hundreds of Catholic workers and leftists. Then 1914 with Home Rule looking imminent but also with the formation of the Ulster Volunteers, a conflict of enormous proportions was brewing—it was the greatest constitutional crisis that the British bourgeoisie has ever faced. Basically the Asquith Liberal government backed down and accepted the compromise and we know what that compromise was. This was in the face of the Curragh Mutiny in the same year where the officer corps let it be known it was not prepared to go north to enforce Home Rule. Connolly made it very clear that he was opposed to partition. He predicted quite correctly that it would be a "carnival of reaction" and I will also read what he had to say at that point; this is in 1914.

"The effect of such exclusion [that is of Ulster] upon Labour in Ireland will be at least equally, and probably more, disastrous. All hopes of uniting the workers, irrespective of religion or old political battle cries will be shattered, and through North and South the issue of Home Rule will be still used to cover the iniquities of the capitalist and landlord class. I am not speaking without due knowledge of the sentiments of the organised Labour movement in Ireland when I say that we would much rather see the Home Rule Bill defeated than see it carried with Ulster or any part of Ulster left out."

— "The Exclusion of Ulster", *Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table*, p60

[END OF PART I]

Spartacist League  public meeting

## Labour councils cut and sack Foretaste of a Kinnock government

Time: 7.30pm  
Date: Thursday 13 June

Venue: Old White Horse  
261 Brixton Road, SW9  
corner Loughborough Rd  
Nearest tube: Brixton

For more information phone 071-485 1396

# In honour of the 1916 Easter Rising

Seventy-five years ago, on 24 April 1916, a group of less than one thousand insurgents took to the streets of Dublin, in the teeth of a British Empire at war, with the aim of creating an independent Irish republic. The main contingent was that of the Irish Volunteers, a petty-bourgeois nationalist force which had come under the influence of the old Fenian conspirators of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The other component of what came to be known as the "Easter Rising" were the 150 or so members of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) whose commander was the revolutionary socialist, James Connolly. The ICA had originally been formed in 1913 as a workers defence guard against scabs during the Dublin Lockout by the city's employers. At that time, Connolly stood alongside Jim Larkin at the head of the heroic Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

Within five days the rebellion had been crushed and, during the next two weeks, captured leaders were executed by the British military authorities. When fourteen had been killed, it was widely thought that would be the end, but the *Independent* newspaper, mouthpiece of William Martin Murphy, leader of the bosses in 1913, howled for Connolly's blood and on 12 May he was shot in Kilmainham Gaol.

Lenin's reaction to the Easter Rising which he declared "must be the touchstone of our theoretical views" on the national question was to defend it as a legitimate anti-imperialist rebellion. He firmly rejected Karl Radek's description of it as a "putsch":

"We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are 'opposed' to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a 'putsch', we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites."

— Lenin, "The discussion on self-determination summed up"

For Lenin then, the events in Dublin were part of the revolutionary process unleashed by the imperialist war. Any socialist worth his salt had to defend the Rising and this obviously drew a hard line against all the various social-democratic apologists for imperialism.

Though the enormous outpouring of anti-imperialist sentiment in Ireland after 1916 is often attributed to outrage over the executions, it is clear that the threat to extend conscription to Ireland in 1918, as well as the continually deferred promise of Home Rule and mooted partition, would have caused a profound political shift even had there been no Rising. Nor were the leaders of the Rising simply crazed nationalists intent on a "blood sacrifice" as they have been portrayed by latter-day detractors. They had a serious plan for a national uprising which, through various shortcomings, blunders and betrayals, went seriously awry. Centrally, they were counting on a shipment of German guns which was captured by the British off the coast of County Kerry. Of course, the chances of the rebellion succeeding even if all had gone according to plan are another matter. They were not helped by the utterly conspiratorial methods of the IRB which precluded any mass agitation and facilitated the inactiv-



no credit

Parade by Irish Citizen Army in Dublin. ICA was initiated as a strike defence force.

ity of other parts of its organisation. The Easter Rising can well be compared to John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 as a giant historic landmark of the struggles about to break loose. The soldiers who destroyed slavery in the course of the second American revolution—the Civil War—marched to the tune "John Brown's body", and the Easter Rising provided the inspiration of anti-imperialist insurrection. And it is the same forces of bourgeois reaction and their reformist lackeys that seek to disappear the examples of John Brown and Easter 1916.

The Easter Rising and Connolly's role in it have been the subject of considerable comment in the bourgeois and left press in Ireland during the past couple of months. A whole slew of "revisionist" historians have come forth to tell the world that Pearse, Connolly et al were deluded romantic nationalists who willingly and even "criminally" undertook a hopeless venture. By implication they are made centrally responsible for the hundreds of civilian casualties and the damage done by the British artillery. One of the prime exponents of this point of view is Kevin Myers, who writes an "Irishman's Diary" on the editorial page of the *Irish Times*. Myers is famous (infamous) for his obsession with showing in column after column how the leaders of the Rising were filled with bloodlust and retailing all the crimes of the IRA during the War of Independence while writing about the virtuous nature of this or that British officer.

And who are the "revisionists" of today? As much as anything they are the ideological voice of the neo-Redmondite wing of the Irish bourgeoisie. John Redmond was the leader of the constitutional nationalist and pro-imperialist Irish Parliamentary Party which had brokered Home Rule in alliance with Asquith's Liberals. Redmond and his ilk worked overtime as recruiting sergeants for British imperialism in the world war. Connolly correctly and vociferously opposed this pro-imperialist treachery.

The neo-Redmondites would like us to believe that if it wasn't for those crazy bastards in 1916, everything could have

gone peacefully and step by step "independence" would have been achieved except without the "tradition of violence" to which they attribute all the trouble in Northern Ireland. The neo-Redmondites include everyone from Fine Gael and Conor Cruise O'Brien on the right to Mary Robinson and the Workers Party on the "left". These are the people hankering to give the bourgeois clericalist state in southern Ireland a "European" facelift. They want a "new relationship" with the Unionist bourgeoisie in the North based on bashing Republicans even harder and exploiting the workers more intensively.

Other elements of the Irish bourgeois establishment, centred in Fianna Fáil, fretted that unless some gesture of commemoration was made, the Rising as the "foundation of the state" would "by default" become a tradition monopolised by the "men of violence" in Sinn Féin. Nonetheless Charlie Haughey gave a very "European" speech at this year's Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis, filling many neo-Redmondites with glee. He and President Robinson then held a perfunctory 15-minute ceremony at the GPO on Easter Sunday.

Meanwhile, Republicans sought to "Reclaim the Spirit of 1916", culminating in a 10,000 strong march through Dublin on 6 April. The keynote speech was given by artist Robert Ballagh who commented: "It has been a revealing experience to witness the serried ranks of the southern establishment squirm in the face of their own history" (*An Phoblacht*, 11 April). Ballagh asked: "Is the Fourth of July irrelevant to the people of the United States? Is Bastille Day irrelevant to the French?" But the question is better put: what does the "Spirit of 1916" mean today? For Republicans it means the nationalist perspective of a "united Ireland".

Connolly predicted that partition would mean a "carnival of reaction", and the tragic truth of that no one knows better than the oppressed Catholic minority in the North. However, the forcible reunification of Ireland, implicit in the slogan of a "united Ireland" is a recipe for the re-

versal of the terms of oppression and to ensure that the carnival of reaction continues.

What is the left's reaction to all this? *Militant*, *Socialist Worker* and *Class Struggle* have all recently produced long historical pieces on the Easter Rising. The latter, organ of the Irish Workers Group, co-thinkers of the British Workers Power, draws the following balance sheet:

"Firstly, we say that Connolly was wrong to lower the red flag to the green, to subordinate the working class programme to that of the revolutionary democratic petty bourgeoisie.... Secondly, we hold that, even had Connolly openly made propaganda for independent action by the working class, he still would have been wrong to organise an insurrection against British rule in the conditions of 1916 where by no stretch of the imagination were any significant working class forces prepared 'for revolutionary struggle.'"

— *Class Struggle*, no 24, April 1991

The IWG is undoubtedly correct to criticise Connolly for dipping "the red flag to the green" during the Rising. The Declaration of the Irish Republic, which Connolly signed, is simply a bourgeois nationalist document. Connolly issued no manifesto to the working class because he did not expect much response. Having observed the prostration of the Second International and the trail of Irishmen going off to die in the trenches, he was desperate to act. His early avowals of internationalist solidarity with Liebknecht were followed by later statements which viewed the victory of German imperialism as a lesser evil.

The implications of his writings giving the Irish national struggle an inherent socialist character became more pronounced in the direction of lapsing into nationalism. If we had been there, with the benefit of hindsight and above all of the experience of the Russian Revolution, we would have wanted to argue strenuously with him to wait for more propitious circumstances, which did in fact arise within two years. By then the October Revolution would have happened and the Irish working class was on the move. Lenin too had seen the collapse of the Second International, and initiated an uncompromising struggle to build a new Third International and to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war. The key political task was to bring proletarian leadership to the struggle for national liberation and Connolly's enormous political abilities could have been brought to bear in the work of forging a Bolshevik-type party that alone can provide such leadership.

But though the IWG and the Cliffites of the Socialist Workers Movement can produce interesting and often correct comment about the events of 75 years ago, their politics today are, protestations notwithstanding, a constant exercise in dipping the red flag before the green, not to mention the yellow of social democracy. What is really indicative in the IWG's four page supplement on "James Connolly and the Easter Rising", is that they do not once mention Connolly's efforts to unite the working class, Protestant and Catholic. Ditto for their book on Connolly—no discussion of the 1907 Belfast dockers strike or the engineering workers strike of 1919.

Elsewhere the IWG have argued explicitly that a united bourgeois state in Ireland is "all but impossible" (*Trotskyist International* no 3, p54). The SWM also mock Sinn Féin's goal of a united bourgeois Ireland because the Catholic bourgeoisie has supposedly lost all interest in

continued on page 11

# Red Army...

(Continued from page 1)

Nazism. We print below a translation of the speech by the SpAD.

Dear comrades and friends,

We greet you comrades who for years and years stood at your posts against NATO imperialism. May 8, 1945 was a decisive day for humanity. The Red Army smashed the Nazi regime and thus ended hell on earth for millions of people. This was a truly proletarian internationalist act. Without the struggles of your fathers, mothers and grandparents we would not be here today. When the Red Army withdrew from the Soviet memorial at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, an experienced comrade from our American section thought perhaps we should say to you: "Red Army, *Aufwiedersehen* (until we meet again), we may need you back soon."

Our party is proud of having initiated the Treptow demonstration of 3 January 1990. It was the largest anti-fascist demonstration against the desecration of the Soviet memorial, at which over 250,000 people honoured the Red Army. It must not be that 20 million Soviet citizens died in vain fighting Nazi barbarism. But comrades, for nearly two years now that is precisely what is being called into question.

We saluted the Red Army in Afghanistan and after the Red Army withdrew, we said it would have been better to have fought imperialism in Afghanistan than to be fighting it today in the Soviet Union. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan at the beginning of 1989 tremendously encouraged Western imperialism and prepared the subsequent collapse of Soviet power in Eastern Europe, which led to the founding of a powerful Fourth Reich which dominates Europe.

Ultimately, "peaceful coexistence" means support for the imperialist war in the Gulf. Yet it was Soviet pilots who on 8 February said "nyet" and thus prevented German Roland missiles from being sent to south-eastern Turkey. Their courageous action was a concrete step in defence of the Soviet Union as well as Iraq against imperialism and thus an inspiration for the international working class. The imperialist victory over Iraq means genocide of the Kurds and strengthening the imperialist bourgeoisies, who are attempting to undermine the Soviet Union economically. The fight against a new imperialist world order, whether it be in the guise of American, German or Japanese imperialism, is on the agenda today. So we have tremendous tasks facing us and perhaps not very much time.

We Trotskyists call ourselves the party of the Russian Revolution, because we want to defend and extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution. The fate of the German working class has always been linked to the Soviet Union. From the very beginning of the October Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky fought to spread the revolution and to get aid from the German Revolution.

Stalinism is a product of the unresolved tasks of the international workers revolution, beginning with the German

Revolution in 1923. This enabled the Stalinists to conquer the Soviet Union by destroying workers democracy and instituting the nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country". Ten years later, this led to capitulation by the Stalin/Thälmann led KPD to the German fascists. This was followed by Stalin's popular front policy, in which the proletarian struggle for power was abandoned in favour of diplomatic alliances with the imperialists.

For us, drawing the lessons of the capitalist reunification of Germany means not allowing capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union. You can see daily, just as we do, what the so-called "gains" of the market economy are. Recently fascist attacks on Soviet citizens have become more frequent, an officer in Rathenow and a young soldier in Wittstock were brutally murdered. Soviet citizens have told us about Nazi graffiti on your houses and the destruction of your cars.

Today in Germany five million are unemployed, abortions are outlawed, children's nurseries and hospital clinics are being closed. The nationalist frenzy over "Germany, One Fatherland" turns into racist terror against workers from Poland, Mozambique and Vietnam. Roma and Sinti [gypsies] are driven away and Soviet Jews are supposed to be shunted off to Israel.

We of the Spartakist Workers Party fought for political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy in the DDR and against the capitalist unification of Germany. This battle was lost, but the decisive battle will be in the Soviet Union. Today we are trying to mobilise workers in eastern and western Germany to fight against the catastrophic consequences of capitalist restoration. And there have in fact been workers demonstrations in Leipzig and now strikes in the west. We hope that an echo of these struggles will be heard in the USSR. Today friends tell us that Soviet workers are more interested in bread than in talk of political revolution. But the only way to ensure enough bread and to achieve prosperity for the masses is workers political revolution. The capitalist "market economy" brings with it soup kitchens in Poland and unemployment queues in Germany.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, with Gorbachev and Yeltsin in the lead, prepared the path for capitalist restoration in Germany, as they are doing today in the Soviet Union. This is also true of the so-called "patriots", although they differ over the question of timing.

If today we call for workers mobilisation against fascism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism, it is because that was the model of the 1917 October Revolution which put an end to tsarist pogroms against the Jews, expropriated the capitalists and installed a government of workers, soldiers and peasants soviets.

We support the vision of Trotsky's Red Army. Marshals Tukhachevsky, Blücher and their comrades fought for a strong Soviet state as a bastion of international proletarian revolution. Their goal was not to make Soviet Russia into yet another world power that would for decades push for peaceful coexistence with the imperialist powers. Stalin tried to exterminate the internationalist traditions of the Red Army by murdering Tukhachevsky, Blücher, Gamarnik (the brilliant Jewish political high commissar) and the other



(Above) Leipzig, 8 April: SpAD banner on East German workers protest against unemployment. (Left) Spartakist comrades lay wreath at Soviet war memorial, Treptow Park, Berlin, 8 May 1990.



Spartakist photos

Red Commanders from the Civil War, just as he murdered the surviving leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution. With these blood sacrifices to "peace" with imperialism, Stalin criminally sabotaged the defence of the Soviet Union and greatly facilitated Hitler's invasion. And then there are the Stalinist lies about 8 May and the victory of the "Anti-Hitler Coalition", although everybody here knows that it was the Red Army and not the imperialist powers, from the USA to Britain.

In the same breath in which he formally dissolved the Communist International, Stalin took away the proud name "Red Army", because this name stood for international communism. Today the Soviet army is not the army of Lenin and Trotsky, and there are appeals to Great Russian chauvinism which lead to undermining the multinational character of the Soviet army. There are ethnic blood feuds among the soldiers and between soldiers and officers, and this plays a large role in

the growth of pogromist "national" militias.

Nationalism is the weapon of the enemy. The USSR must become internationalist, otherwise it may cease to exist. The existence of the Soviet Union is at stake. Soldiers and officers of the military who want to defend the Soviet Union on a socialist basis must take as a model the communist internationalists of Trotsky's Red Army, not the Stalinist criminals who seized all power for themselves and murdered the earlier revolutionary generation.

Comrades, as proletarian internationalists we know that the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz must be stopped, as must the imperialists from Washington to Tokyo. To do that we need a communist International like the one led by Lenin and Trotsky up to 1924. The SpAD, as the German section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) fights here to mobilise workers against the Fourth Reich, against its racism and anti-Semitism.

For a red Germany of workers councils which has unconditionally committed itself to the defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and internal counterrevolution! For the revolutionary unity of the German, Polish and Soviet working classes! For workers mobilisations against chauvinism, Pamyat and anti-Semitism! For a government like that of Lenin-Sverdlov based on workers democracy! What we need in the Soviet Union is a party in the spirit of Lenin and Trotsky which fights for a truly socialist Union of Soviet Republics! Forward to the Fourth International! ■

## Alastair Green...

(Continued from page 2)

victims of vicious red-baiting and witch hunting within the Labour Party, SO is as Labourite as they come, not least in its virulent Stalinophobia.

As Bob Cole, chairing the meeting on behalf of the PDC, noted: "I'm sure the comrades of the Spartacist League greet the criticism from Socialist Organiser much the way comrade Lenin would have greeted the criticisms of Kautsky or Scheidemann." Speaking for the Spartacist League, Alastair Green noted that "only those groups on the not-so-far left can actually tell what this difference is between Kinnock's Labour Party and Major's Tory Party.... They're all very keen to 'Finish Off the Tories'" (the front page headline of *Workers Power* in April).

Against the overt social democracy peddled by anti-Soviet Socialist

Organiser, Green countered:

"In class society progress sometimes comes through real conflict, real fights, it sometimes comes through civil war. There was a civil war in this country and Oliver Cromwell cut off the head of the king of England. That was a very intolerant act, it was also a very progressive act. There was a civil war at the birth of the Soviet workers state, a very bitterly fought civil war which was necessary to actually defend the Soviet Union in its inception, a civil war which was accompanied, yes, by the imprisonment of opponents who wanted to destroy that first workers revolution."

Outlining many of the cases taken up by the Partisan Defence Committee in Britain and internationally on behalf of class-struggle prisoners Christine Sawyer explained: "ultimately we fight for the day when such an organisation will not be necessary, when justice will truly be done and we know that this can only come about by the working class internationally sweeping away this capitalist system which has so long outlived its time". ■

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## Germany...

(Continued from page 3)

the side of the SpAD: isn't the demand for withdrawal in contradiction with our tactic of fraternisation with the ordinary Soviet soldiers? Not in the least: Trotskyists *always* fight for a fraternisation with the conscripted sons of the workers and peasants of an occupation army. That was the case in occupied France during the 2nd World War (it is well-known the Trotskyists organised illegal cells among German soldiers) just as in China in relation to the Japanese. The fraternisation tactic had never hindered revolutionaries from fighting for the withdrawal of an occupation power."

Imagine the "fraternising" by the Gruppe Arbeitermacht with Soviet troops—the Russians would be forgiven for thinking they'd walked into a band of rabid German nationalist youth. To be consistent, Workers Power would have to support capitalist *anschluss* as the first step in German "national liberation". Sure enough, while tailing the forces of counterrevolution in East Germany, *Trotskyist International* (no 4, Spring 1990) came out with the line that "the division of Germany was a reactionary denial of

the right of self-determination". In stark contrast to Workers Power's capitulation to revanchist German nationalism, we print (see p1) the presentation of the SpAD at our celebration of the Red Army victory over Hitler given on 5 May 1991.

Workers Power has in fact extended its call for the withdrawal of the Soviet Red Army from Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union itself. *Trotskyist International* (no 6, April 1991) writes: "Defend the right of the republics to secede from the USSR. Resist the imposition of the new Union Treaty. Soviet troops out of all republics that have clearly and democratically decided to withdraw from the USSR." Workers Power has a very selective mechanism for whose national rights it will uphold. It militarily sided with the virulently anti-Russian, anti-Jewish, anti-Polish, anti-Ukrainian Lithuanian Sajudis nationalists who have used the fig leaf of "national self-determination" in order to mobilise for capitalist restoration; Workers Power went so far as to invite the British bourgeois government to provide material aid to the Sajudis. Trotskyists, as opposed to WP, uphold the right of self-determination of various nations of the USSR—including their right to secede and

form a separate state—except where it serves as a cover for counterrevolution. And while decrying the existence of the former DDR as an example of the national oppression of the German people (and, of course, a "counterrevolutionary" overthrow of capitalism), Workers Power recognises no national rights for the Hebrew-speaking people of the Middle East.

We will add to the above that many of Arbeitermacht's present members came from its sister organisation in Austria—Arbeiter Standpunkt—which in turn should be notorious for the line it took on Austrian state president Kurt Waldheim. Two years after Waldheim was exposed as a senior intelligence officer in the Wehrmacht and Nazi war criminal responsible for the deportation and murder of tens of thousands of Jews and anti-fascist partisans in Nazi-controlled Croatia, Arbeiter Standpunkt issued a statement dated 7 February 1988 "Force Waldheim to resign". In fact, Arbeiter Standpunkt was willing to settle for far less than his resignation: "we are in favour of a constitutional amendment—one that would strip him of all the special powers of 1929, one which would unconditionally subordinate all his decisions to Parliament, which

makes him subject to recall at any time—and gave him the average wage of a skilled worker!"

This revolting apology for Nazi war criminal Waldheim, duly translated and reprinted in *Trotskyist International* (Summer 1988) was a harbinger of scandals to come for Workers Power. Today with the disintegration of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union all the old crap of reactionary, murderous nationalism, fascism and anti-Semitism is reviving. Workers Power/Arbeitermacht evidently have one criterion: if it's anti-Soviet and big enough, tail it. They may prefer the social-democratic swamps of the British Labour Party "left" and PDS "Platforms". But Workers Power's methodology has also brought it into the rather more unsavoury company of the Yuri Butchenkos and worse.

The imperialists' goal of an economic Operation Barbarossa throughout Eastern Europe can meet the same fate as Hitler's. Key is the struggle for a genuine communist leadership and the revolutionary unity of Polish, German and Russian workers in the urgent fight against the ravages of capitalist counterrevolution. This is the task of the International Communist League. ■

## Kinnock...

(Continued from page 1)

the bosses' dirty work of enforcing the poll tax, laying off workers and slashing social services.

In other areas besides Lambeth there is anger over the vile policy of the Labour traitors. In Liverpool a bloc of Liberal Democrats and the majority of Labour councillors approved massive budget cuts entailing hundreds of redundancies. In the local elections, the "Broad Left"—linked to the Militant Tendency—won five out of six seats where they challenged the candidates bureaucratically imposed by the Kinnockites. While this was indicative of disgruntlement with the Labour Party officialdom, this was a Labourite campaign, which in no way merited any kind of electoral support. Indeed, the Militant campaign was prem-

ised on billing themselves as the "real" Labour candidates.

The history of Militant's work in Liverpool reads like a text book of sewer socialism. Thus, when Derek Hatton & Co ran Liverpool Council it struck a deal with the Tory government in which rates were put up by 17 per cent in the city in the middle of the Great Miners Strike of 1984-85 rather than countenance strike action against this increase by Liverpool workers in conjunction with the miners and their allies. In 1985, the common-organised left Labourites of Militant distributed 31,000 redundancy notices to city workers. When Hatton & Co faced opposition from trade unionists over this "tactic", Hatton was moved to write (*Inside Left*, 1988): "The betrayal by the trade union leaders had brought me face to face with the stark reality of one political theory: the greatest obstacle to true Socialism is the leadership of the trade union movement". Even "the Church turned against us"! In Hatton's own words: "What Militant says now is little different from the things said by Keir Hardie when he founded the Labour Party." Too true—one of Hardie's statements proclaimed: "The propaganda of the class hatred is not one which can ever take root in this country" (quoted in Cliff & Gluckstein, *The General Strike of 1926*).

If anything, Militant's actions then were even more despicable than what Joan Twelves is doing today! But fake-left groups such as the SWP and Workers Power hailed the Broad Left/Militant campaign, developing a case of convenient amnesia over Militant's betrayals. "Liverpool left candidates beat Labour", heralded *Socialist Worker* (11 May). "The decision to stand against Kinnock's gang of imposters is to be welcomed" declared *Workers Power* (May 1991). In order not to embarrass themselves, neither pointed to the Militant's tawdry history in Liverpool, nor to the Militant's other notorious exploits, such as its scabby, cowardly threat to shop anti-poll tax demonstrators after the Trafalgar Square demonstration a year ago.

Workers Power threw out any *pro-grammatic* considerations, and took its position on the standpoint of "democracy". "A willingness to stand against undemocratically imposed candidates can be the starting point for such a break with reformism." The message is that the problem with the Labour Party is not that it supports austerity, chauvinism and imperialist war, but that Neil Kinnock isn't a democrat! Furthermore, lest any-

one figure they're going overboard in a left-wing direction, *Workers Power* asserted that "Unlike the Socialist Workers Party, Workers Power has never called on socialists to turn their backs on the fight against the right wing within the Labour Party and to abandon the party to Kinnock, Gould and their ilk..." While occasionally criticising the Bennites, Workers Power's strategic perspective of "fight the right" simply boils down to breeding illusions that social democracy can be pressured to the left. In contradiction, Leninist tactics towards the Labour Party are employed precisely in order to *split* the mass of workers away from the pro-capitalist tops—the Kinnocks and the Benns—in order to regroup them around a Bolshevik banner.

So mired in Labourism are the centrists of Workers Power that they criticise the SWP from the *right* and in the process give too much credit to the SWP. The SWP's anti-Labour Party posture is essentially phoney. For the SWP electoral support to the Labour Party is as much a way of life as it is for Militant and Workers Power. While organised externally to the Labour Party, the Cliffites are programmatically indistinguishable from left social democracy. In some sense they are an anti-Soviet version of the old CPGB, which for years functioned as a third-rate tail of the Labour Party. Writing in *New Statesman & Society* (3 May), leading SWPer Paul Foot boasts:

"The CP in Britain has effectively been replaced by the Socialist Workers

Party—the only organisation on the left to have survived the 1980s with any confidence.... One exhilarating effect of this is that we have rid ourselves of the sectarian whine with which we were inclined to denounce other socialists. To help build a powerful and effective anti-war movement during the few weeks of the Gulf war, for instance, we had to make friends, link arms and speak on platforms with all sorts of people we would once have denounced as reformist trash."

Indeed they did! Claiming on paper to be for the defeat of imperialism, the Cliffites quickly dropped this like a hot potato in order to embrace pro-sanctions, pro-UN, pro-imperialist Tony Benn! And you can bet they didn't denounce this "reformist trash" from the platforms of the Benn/CND committee to which they prostrated themselves, either. With the disintegration of the CP, the SWP sees itself in a position to get a piece of the action as the water boys for the left Labourites.

The key question, as the Russian Revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky put it, is the "historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat". The Labour Party is a dead end for the workers and oppressed; the bankruptcy of the "lefts", as well as the Kinnockites, has been made even more clear in the course of the Gulf War of one-sided imperialist slaughter. Unlike our opponents on the left, we of the Spartacist League don't seek to pump new life into this rotting corpse. Rather we fight to forge a genuinely revolutionary party that can lead the victorious struggle for workers rule. ■

## Easter...

(Continued from page 9)

such a project. The point of all this is to invest the slogan "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole" with a necessarily progressive, even "socialist" character, to deny the reactionary possibilities of unification, and justify capitulation to Republican nationalism.

The prospect of a peaceful bourgeois reunification may indeed be a chimera. But this ignores the reality of what bourgeois, nationalist reunification *would* mean: the reversal of the terms of oppression in the context of escalating communal slaughter and forced population transfers. Moreover, a possible alternative reactionary outcome, so long as the issue is posed along communal/national lines, is the repartition of Ireland with Protestant reaction intensifying, consolidating and even seeking to expand its domain.

The Irish left after Connolly has either repeated his mistakes or fallen into the wake of neo-Redmondites. We, on the other hand, see Connolly as comparable to John Maclean in Scotland and Eugene Debs in the United States, ie, fighters who despite all their flaws were thoroughly committed to the proletariat's struggle for emancipation. We stand on their shoulders but we seek to use the Bolshevik method of Lenin and Trotsky to finally achieve the socialist society to which they devoted their lives. ■

## WORKERS HAMMER

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For trade union/minority mobilisations to crush race terror!

## Don't crawl to the racist cops

On 27 April, some 1200 people, mostly black, participated in a protest march in South East London called over the racist murder in February of a black teenager, Rolan Adams, knifed to death by a gang of white youths. Vicious racist attacks have been escalating in the area and it is no coincidence that the fascist British National Party set up a headquarters and "bookshop" in nearby Welling some two years ago. The demonstrators carried slogans such as "Rolan Adams: his only 'crime' was being black!" "Police attack: we fight back!" Organised by the Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA), the march was an opportunity for blacks to demonstrate their deep sense of outrage about their lot in this racist capitalist society.

However the organisers and their left apologists such as the Socialist Workers Party used the occasion to preach reliance on the cops and the Labour Party to deal with the fascists. Calls on "our police officers" to protect black and Asian people from the fascist scum is a suicidal and treacherous strategy. On 11 May another black man, Orville Bertam Blair was stabbed to death by a white assailant in Thamesmead. True to form, the cops immediately denied any racial aspect, and focused on criminal allegations against the victim. Now the BNP has announced another race-hate provocation on 25 May: this must be stopped!

As we wrote last month in the article titled "Avenge Rolan Adams, Arif Roberts, Simon Yadev! Smash BNP race-terrorists!" (WH no 122, April 1991):

"The key is the massive and militant mobilisation of the organised working class and all the oppressed to crush the racist terror and drive the fascists off the streets! Mobilise the muscle of the trade unions—no faith in the racist capitalist state, its cops and courts—for integrated workers defence guards!"

The Labour Party (the "left" as well as the right) is an obstacle to such a strategy, an instrument of the capitalist system to keep down the working class and the oppressed minorities. In power Her Majesty's Labour Party has instituted and administered some of the most revolting policies against racial minorities. In the late '70s a Labour government subjected Asian women seeking to join their husbands in Britain to virginity tests. It was a Labour government which rammed the Prevention of Terrorism Act through parliament, and presided over the frame-up, beating and jailing of scores of Irish people living in Britain, notably the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four. And it was the Labour Party in government which unleashed the thugs of the Special Patrol Group against anti-fascist protesters in Southall in April 1979.

A key speaker at the protest was the New York black activist preacher Rev Al Sharpton—charlatan, demagogue and admitted FBI fink. In concert with the cops, Sharpton has terrorised black neighbourhoods ostensibly in the fight against drug dealers. Sharpton is of the same ilk as



Workers Hammer

### London: hundreds protest racist murder of Rolan Adams

the sinister anti-Semite Farrakhan (the man who wanted Malcolm X dead) and Sonny Carson, who leads vigilante squads against Korean merchants in New York. These hustlers trading on the just outrage of black people in racist, capitalist America have been able to surface in the vacuum of leadership created by the bankruptcy of the Democratic Party black elected officials and the nationalists. Our comrades in the Spartacist League/US have exposed these con artists, and in particular covered the Sharpton case in *Workers Vanguard* no 460, 9 September 1988. In his speech during the march, Al Sharpton called on the government to "ban" the fascists, a dead-end which will not stop the fascist bands but opens the door to state repression of the left.

A *Workers Hammer* salesman after the demonstration paraphrased the sentiments of many black youth as: "No I don't like the Labour Party and I agree they won't do us any good in power; no I don't think you should rely on the cops, they murder us too; well if Sharpton preaches separatism I don't agree with that, I believe in integration." But a number of SWPers at the demonstration who claim to know better sought to persuade black youth of the necessity for a petition to pressure the police to act against the fascists.

In contrast, we point to the success of mass trade union/minority mobilisations over the past ten years in many cities in the United States which have stopped Ku

Klux Klan/Nazi/skinhead provocations. The highly integrated unions in London have the social power to bring the city to a halt and some integrated workers defence guards would make the Greenwich area safe for young black kids. Knife-wielding fascist thugs would very quickly learn that their chosen life-style is dangerous to their health.

At the 27 April demonstration a number of dead-end black nationalist solutions were put forward, from the Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP) who seek to mobilise separate "black workers" struggles to the demagogue Al Sharpton peddling his version of "black separatism". In Britain, with blacks and Asians constituting a small minority of the population, mostly concentrated in the inner cities, it is precisely the struggle for integrated mobilisations in defence of the rights of minorities which is starkly posed. As the economy worsens and unemployment skyrockets, the fascist filth have escalated and will escalate their race terror as the shock troops of capitalism in decay.

The BUFP claims to be fighting for socialism. Yet they narrowly focus on reformist community pressure politics. Despite the BUFP's claim to working-class politics, at the protest demonstrations none of their slogans was directed at the organised working class—not surprising as they base their own organisation on white exclusionism. And any serious black worker militant who has

stood on picket lines with fellow workers of all races would rightly find a call for a separatist black workers mobilisation not only ridiculous but downright reactionary.

In fact, BUFP's rhetoric about a separate black revolutionary vanguard is merely a cover for reformist politics. Thus its first "short term demand" is "an immediate end to, Public Enquiry into, the Brutal Racist activities of the police against Black people", ie, make the police accountable to the people! They choose to forget that the "job" of the police is the protection of the racist, capitalist status quo against the struggles of the working class and oppressed. It was the racists in uniform who took the life of Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton, who gunned down Cherry Groce in Brixton. And do the BUFP want to take bets on how many cops have pals in the BNP and National Front?

The whole capitalist system must be overthrown, along with its police and the courts. For this the workers movement needs an integrated revolutionary vanguard party, in the tradition of the Bolsheviks who united all the oppressed nations of Russia behind the proletariat to smash capitalist property relations and establish the first workers state in history in October 1917. Such a party is internationalist and fights on behalf of all the oppressed. This is the kind of party the Spartacist League is fighting to build. Join us! ■