



Cops protect BNP, attack anti-fascists

Trade unions, minorities must crush the fascists!

Over 50,000 people attended the massive 16 October anti-fascist mobilisation in Welling, southeast London. But when protesters attempted to march on the fascist British National Party (BNP) headquarters hundreds of riot cops blocked their way, wading into the crowds, batons flailing and following up with charges by police on horseback. Dozens of marchers were taken to hospital with blood streaming from their heads, and police dragged off 31 of the anti-fascist protesters. Almost immediately after, the bourgeois media stepped in, launching a vicious violence-baiting witch hunt of anti-fascist demonstrators. *Drop the charges against*

all the anti-fascist protesters!

In the days leading up to 16 October the government and their cops went into overdrive to prevent the march on the BNP HQ. Chief cop Paul Condon invoked the Public Order Act to ban demonstrators from marching on the HQ and brought thousands of cops to enforce a half-mile perimeter to protect it. For two hours demonstrators stood their ground against the racist thugs in blue. As ANL organisers "negotiated" over allowing a token delegation through the police blockade, angry protesters tore down a brick wall to arm themselves against the cop onslaught. Demonstrators chanted "Police

protect the fascists".

Thousands of young, anti-fascist militants who turned up to march on the BNP HQ left burning with fury at the brutal cop attacks. October 16 should have left no doubt in any serious militant's mind about the role of the bosses' cops as protectors of the fascist scum. But it was *only* the Spartacist League who consistently fought against the suicidal calls on the bourgeois state to ban the BNP peddled by the reformist SWP/ANL and Militant/YRE. Our banner on the 16 October march read "Not wretched appeals to the capitalist state! For trade union/minority mobilisations to smash the fascists!"

At a 28 September meeting called by the Tower Hamlets Trades Council and YRE we put forward the following proposal:

"The BNP is a deadly threat to workers and minorities. What is needed is trade union-centred, united-front action to *stop the BNP in its tracks*. To therefore organise for a *mass picket and militant, disciplined demonstration at the site of the BNP headquarters on 16 October*, uniting the trade union movement with the organisations of the minority communities and the left, and drawing on the support of all those threatened and outraged by the fascists. To reject all appeals for the capitalist state — the government, local councils,

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British troops out of Northern Ireland now!

Imperialist "peace" fraud—deadly trap for oppressed Catholics

The last period has seen a chilling increase in the level of communal tension and communalist killings, in which it has been the oppressed Catholics who have taken the most casualties, while the population of Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, live in terror. Enraged by the Hume/Adams talks, the fascist Loyalist thugs intensified their campaign of wanton murders of Catholics. This generated widespread revulsion, and not only among Catholics. The mainly Protestant workers at Shorts aerospace factory struck over the murder of a Catholic worker. On Saturday 23 October, the Irish Republican Army planted a bomb in a fish shop beneath the offices of the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (UDA) on a crowded street in the heart of the Protestant working-class district of Shankill, Belfast, killing nine Protestant shoppers and one of the IRA team planting the bomb. In the week that followed, Loyalist death squads implemented their grisly dictum "any Catholic will do". Two Catholic workers were killed and five others injured at a council sanitation depot in West Belfast. The next weekend six Catholics and one Protestant were gruesomely murdered in a machine-gun attack on a predominantly Catholic pub in Greysteel, County Derry.

Sections of the bourgeoisies in London and Dublin, together with their Labour and social-democratic lackeys, have seized upon the widespread fear, revulsion and despair over sectarian violence as an opportunity to foist an imperialist-imposed "peace" deal on Northern Ireland. Any imperialist "deal" will be



Denis Thorpe

British Army on Belfast street patrol targets Catholic community.

bloody and brutal and will *necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority*. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either.

The bourgeois press and Tory and Labour politicians have whipped up a chauvinist frenzy against "terrorism", which for them applies always to the actions of the IRA, but never to the blood-soaked British Army, which has 20,000 troops there, or the viciously sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)/

Royal Irish Regiment (RIR). In fact, in recent years there has been a build-up of military and police personnel. There is one army/RUC member for every 3.7 Catholic males between the ages of 16 and 44.

The words of one Belfast Catholic are apt: "We will not be lectured by the likes of John Major whose army has been responsible for the massacre of thousands of innocent people all around the world" (*Irish Times*, 25-26 October). Belfast

Catholics got a bloody reminder of the British Army's role when sixty shots were fired from an army landrover at mourners outside the home of Thomas Begley, the IRA member killed in the Shankill bombing, wounding a prominent Sinn Féin supporter. Elements of the British security services are interpenetrated with the fascist Loyalist paramilitaries. Brian Nelson, a British agent and the intelligence chief for a Loyalist gang, targeted Republicans for assassination and arranged substantial military shipments to the Loyalists from the South African apartheid regime. Beginning with the last Labour government, the SAS has been used to carry out assassinations of Republicans.

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

The Sinn Féin leaders are hell-bent on

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Not Orange against Green but class against class!

RIL: Really Into Labour

With the vicious police assault on the 16 October "Unity" demonstration against the fascist British National Party in Welling, the capitalist state has given its official response to all the petitions and lobbies of the SWP/ANL and Militant Labour/YRE.

The pathetic pleas and "demands" that the bosses' state act to shut down the BNP have served only to expose once again the reformist cynics of the SWP and Militant Labour as actual roadblocks in the struggle against the fascists. Many of the 50,000 and more youthful demonstrators on 16 October will have learnt valuable lessons—a police baton charge dispels more illusions in the state than a hundred lectures on the writings of V I Lenin. Anti-fascist youth will find in the revolutionary programme of the Trotskyist Spartacist League the key to putting the fascists out of business by mobilising the muscle of the organised working class. It is useful in this respect to comment on the positions of other organisations claiming to represent a class-struggle, Trotskyist perspective.

The Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL), which is actively involved in building the YRE and promotes the Kingsway (College) Anti-Fascist Group, offers some leftist-sounding criticisms of the SWP/ANL and Militant Labour/YRE leaderships. Its journal *Revolutionary Internationalist* (no 14, October/November) argues for "No reliance on the State" and "a political campaign for worker/community defence".

But what does RIL mean by "worker/community defence"? At a 28 September meeting of the Tower Hamlets Trade Council and YRE, the Spartacist League put forward a resolution calling for a "...trade union-centred, united-front action to stop the BNP in its tracks" on 16 October. The motion called for "uniting the trade union movement with the organisations of the minority communities and the left", and categorically rejected any appeal to the capitalist state to act against or ban the BNP. The RIL speaker at the meeting pointedly refused to speak in favour of the motion, and indeed ignored the 16 October

demo entirely.

In its written material, the RIL occasionally makes passing mention to the trade unions, but only as one of a dozen "constituencies". Yet they complain at length that a serious problem with the 16 October demonstration was the absence of effective stewarding. This they blame on the SWP/ANL. Yet it does not dawn on the petty-bourgeois radicals of the RIL that had there been several thousand organised trade unionists on the march, the cops would not have been able to attack it with such impunity.

Trotsky made the point in the *Transitional Programme* that picket lines are the embryo of workers defence guards. (It's not surprising that the RIL would miss this point since its American co-thinkers, the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), believe that crossing picket lines is a "tactical" question.) Drawing on such experiences as those gained in collectively defending a strike against scabs and police scabherders, the workers are far more able than atomised leftists and students to carry out a militant, mass disciplined mobilisation. It is the organised working class that has the social power to back down the cops and sweep the fascist scum off the streets. And it is exactly that component that was missing on 16 October. But recently the Air France strikers gave an object lesson in the power of the working class in its victory over the French government and its riot cops (see article this issue).

If not the trade unions, what does RIL have in mind when it talks about "worker/community defence"? In a leaflet issued a week after 16 October, entitled "The Next Steps to United Action", and incorrectly dated 24 November, RIL writes:

"There has to be a struggle in the labour movement to drive the racists [sic] out of Tower Hamlets Labour Party and commit all Labour candidates in next year's election to support for anti-racist/anti-fascist defence and a no cuts/no rent rise policy."

So here we have it—"worker/community defence" means cleaning up the local Labour Party! As if the Labour Party—the party that enthusiastically supported the imperialist war in the Gulf, sent the troops to Northern Ireland, supports racist immigration quotas—will change its chauvinist spots! Notably absent from the reformist programme proposed by RIL is any reference to "no reliance on the state". They appeal for an elected Labour council—the local arm of the capitalist state—to clean up the fascists. This is a totally *parliamentary cretinist* perspective. Rather than driving the fascists off the streets through trade union/minority mobilisations, RIL's programme for the "labour movement" means building the Labour Party from the bottom up into a viable electoral force that can implement its line—affirmed at this year's annual conference—of banning the BNP!

If, however, the RIL's struggle to break the Labour Party from its entire history of racist administration of the capitalist system should prove unsuccessful then there is a contingency plan:

"...the RIL proposes to the YRE, *Militant Labour*, and other anti-fascist groups in the borough a joint fight in the trade union movement and the local community for a united front of worker/community organisations to stand candidates in the elections on the basis, at least, of no platform for fascists, no cuts and no rent rises (with all groups being free to argue for their own programmes)."

In polemicising against the German

centrist Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (SAP), Trotsky attacked the SAP for proposing that the left parties run joint electoral slates (each of course being "free to argue for their own programmes"):

"We shall be told that the bloc between Rosenfeld-Brandler-Urbahns is only a *propaganda* bloc for a united front. But it is precisely in the sphere of propaganda that a bloc is out of the question. Propaganda must lean upon clear-cut principles and on a definite programme. March separately, strike together. A bloc is solely for practical mass actions. Deals arranged from above which lack a basis in principle will bring nothing except confusion.

"The idea of nominating a candidate for president on the part of the united workers' front is at its root a false one. A candidate can be nominated only on the grounds of a definite programme. The party has no right during elections to sacrifice the mobilization of its supporters and the census of its strength."

— "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat" (January 1932)

Claiming in words that independence from the capitalist state is critical, the RIL proposes a joint slate with reformists who kowtow to the bourgeois state. This demonstrates once again that for slimy centrists like RIL there is no such thing as *principle*.

Like almost the entire spectrum of the British "far left" the RIL "maintains a general position of calling for a vote to Labour in elections" in each and every situation. To be sure, it's sometimes in the interests of communists to advocate a critical vote for Labour, in order to break a section of the class from Labourite illusions, but what class-conscious worker has any illusions that Labour today would carry out anything other than overt anti-working class policies? At bottom the RIL identifies "working class" with the Labour Party and the Labourite bureaucracy of the trade unions, which is why RIL despairs of carrying out the political combat with the sellout Labourites necessary to mobilise the trade unions in struggle against the fascists.

Labour-loyalism goes hand-in-hand with anti-Sovietism too, so like all the other phoney Trotskyists the RIL gave its support to counterrevolutionaries like Polish Solidarność. The triumph of counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the former USSR has led to the growth of nationalism and fascism throughout the continent.

There is yet another more sinister connotation to "worker/community defence", as used by pseudo-leftists. Thus, Workers Power calls for "democratic and accountable defence organisations to police our communities" against "anti-social behaviour". This is a simple capitulation to the government's law-and-order campaign. Workers Power, it should be noted, supports "the right of the police to act against Sheehy, even strike against it" (*Workers Power*, October 1993). One example of where these deadly antics can lead is the US, where the RIL's sister organisation, the RWL, has sought to instigate a racist vigilante operation on the Berkeley, California campus. There, in the context of escalating cop attacks on blacks at Berkeley, the RWL stuck up posters with a description of a black man taken directly from a police blotter. Supposedly part of an "anti-rape" campaign, these posters were a deadly threat to black students, in a country where alleged rape has again and again been a pretext for lynch rope "justice", as with the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s (see "RWL Racist Vigilantism", *Workers Vanguard* no 586, 22 October).

To anyone taken in by the RIL's posturing as a Trotskyist alternative to Militant Labour or the SWP, we can only say you've got the wrong address. ■

Anniversary of the October Revolution



TROTSKY

Seventy-six years ago the workers of the old tsarist empire established the first workers state. Their victory, a triumph of proletarian internationalism, inspired workers and oppressed across the world, and brought down on the Soviet Union the unremitting hatred of the imperialists. Now the Soviet Union is no more, torn apart by capitalist counterrevolution, its strength sapped by years of Stalinist misrule and

treachery. Many fake-left organisations abetted the counterrevolution, supporting Solidarność in Poland, CIA-backed Islamic reaction against the Red Army in Afghanistan, and supporting Yeltsin in August 1991. There are hard lessons to be hammered home from this defeat. The inevitable new class struggles will only triumph when led by a revolutionary workers vanguard which upholds the decades-long fight by Trotsky and the Left Opposition to defend the Soviet Union while struggling for workers political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucratic gravediggers. As Cannon says, they will need the Russian Revolution in their hearts.

Those Petrograd workers put their lives in the scale. They had lived lives of misery and oppression, but they were possessed by a daring vision of the future when the lives of all men will be better and fairer. They were the heralds of a new day in the world when there will be no more masters and no more slaves, and they gave their lives to hasten on that day...

Those Petrograd workers struck the blow which shattered the capitalist regime in Russia and put the working class in power. But they did more than that, because the Russian Revolution did not stop in Russia. It found its way over the borders. It broke through the blockade and spread all over the earth. The Russian Revolution was the beginning of the international revolution.

Wherever there is a group of militant workers anywhere in the world, there is the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution is in the heart of every rebel worker the world over. The Russian Revolution is in this room....

For, after all, Soviet Russia is not a "country." Soviet Russia is a part of the world labor movement. Soviet Russia is a strike—the greatest strike in all history. When the working class of Europe and America join that strike it will be the end of capitalism.

—James P Cannon, *The Fifth Year of the Russian Revolution* (early 1923)



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER



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

Newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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As flames leapt from the Russian parliament on Monday, 4 October, the capitalist rulers from Washington to Bonn cheered on their man in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin. Hundreds were killed and some 1600 arrested as a state of siege was imposed on the Russian capital. Ten oppositional newspapers ranging from the so-called left to the nationalist right were banned, and all other media placed under strict censorship. All political organisations involved in demonstrations defending the parliament have been banned. Some Yeltsinite "democrats" are demanding a ban on all communist symbols such as the hammer and sickle. The smoke-charred "White House" and the blood in its corridors are the face of the capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Soviet Union, the homeland of the October Revolution of 1917.

Just over two years ago, Yeltsin stood outside the same building as he seized power from the disintegrating Stalinist bureaucracy which for decades ruled the Soviet degenerated workers state. This ushered in a period of counter-revolutionary chaos as the capitalist-restorationist regime, in the absence of working-class resistance, managed to cohere a bourgeois state apparatus, although weak and fragile. At the same time, the capitalist-restorationist forces split into bitterly hostile factions, headed by the Yeltsin presidency and the Russian parliament presided over by Aleksandr Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov. By destroying the parliament, Yeltsin has also taken aim at the layers of ex-Soviet bureaucrats in regional councils around the country. A bloody curtain has now been drawn on the initial, "democratic" phase of the counterrevolution.

The tank shells slamming into the "White House" on the morning of 4 October were the opening shots of a bonapartist regime aimed at brutally suppressing any kind of resistance to "free market" immiseration. For months, Western capitals and the world bankers cartel, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been pushing Yeltsin to clear out the obstacles to deepening the economic "shock treatment", whose next stage is mass layoffs of millions of workers and devastation of industry. Two days before Yeltsin decreed the dissolution of the parliament on 21 September, the IMF put a scheduled \$1.5 billion loan to Russia on hold until the government carried out promised economic "reforms". The US threw its full backing behind Yeltsin's coup. Hours before the military assault on the parliament, the view from Washington, according to an ABC-TV correspondent, was that they would "be quite happy" to see Yeltsin "break a few eggs to make this omelette".

Only hours after arresting Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, the Kremlin issued decrees vastly expanding the state of emergency. Security forces were authorised to conduct searches without court warrants and to set up checkpoints on main roads and at transportation facilities. Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov said the capital would be "cleansed" of "undesirables". Hundreds of supporters of parliament were detained in a sports stadium in Krasnaya Presnya district. The banned groups range from various "Communist" parties to the "left-right" National Salvation Front and the fascist Russian National Sobor. The outlawed papers range from the chauvinist *Sovietskaya Rossiya* and the virulently anti-Semitic *Den to Pravda*, formerly the premier organ in the Soviet Union and now connected to the Communist Party-Russian Federation, which was established in February of this year as a claimant to the legacy of the old CPSU.

A racist hysteria has been whipped up against darker-skinned people from Central Asia and the Caucasus, who are reviled by Russian racists as "blacks" and turned into scapegoats for the astronomi-

Would-be czar Boris' bloody Monday



Boris Yeltsin, goaded by Clinton and IMF paymasters, ordered storming of Russian parliament.

Yeltsin coup serves Washington

cal rise in street crime which has accompanied the restoration of capitalism. Moscow authorities seized on the state of siege to launch a pogromist dragnet, officially expelling over 7500 non-Slavic people and terrorising many thousands more into leaving in the space of two weeks. Police have indiscriminately broken into hotels and apartments and ransacked street markets which are predominantly run by Central Asians and Caucasians, beating people, stealing their possessions and dragging the victims off to be loaded onto trains and planes out of the city.

Rutskoi/Khasbulatov and the fascist-infested "red-brown" coalition that supported them are no less hostile to the working class than is Yeltsin. But, as we wrote last March, when the squabbling capitalist-restorationist factions were heading for a showdown: "*The working class must oppose moves from any corner to place its neck in the yoke of a bonapartist dictatorship*" ("*Dogfight in Moscow*", *Workers Vanguard* no 572, 26 March). Today the already widespread fear and distrust of would-be czar Boris has been enormously intensified. Even Western correspondents report overwhelming popular hostility to Yeltsin's "bloody Monday" massacre. The urgent and immediate task of the working class and its allies is to prevent Yeltsin, in the wake of this coup, from consolidating an effective police state. Class-conscious workers must demand an immediate end to the state of siege, to the censorship, to the ban on political parties, and call for the immediate release of all anti-Yeltsin prisoners.

A massive anti-communist witch hunt is now under way. In the longer term, the real purpose of Yeltsin's coup is to ward off the spectre of working-class resistance to the ravages of capitalist restoration. Watching the results of the 19 September Polish elections—where a population fed up with three years of capitalist "shock therapy" threw out the IMF-backed Solidarność parties and handed a resounding

victory to the former Stalinists—the imperialists were worried at the prospect of the "Polish scenario" spreading to Russia.

Today, Yeltsin is firmly in the saddle in Moscow. Whether or not elections for a new rubber-stamp "legislature" take place as scheduled in December, and even if they are combined with a presidential vote, today's masters of the Kremlin and their imperialist backers are intent on riding roughshod over any political opposition and imposing dictatorial rule. In our article, "*How the Soviet workers state was strangled*" (*Workers Hammer* no 133, January/February 1993), we warned: "For Yeltsin and other restorationists to nail down a solid capitalist regime, sooner rather than later a bloody reckoning is likely, signalling to the masses that there is a new order."

But as they carry out their draconian economic programme, and Russia's far-flung regions flagrantly disregard Moscow's writ, there will be continued turmoil. The Russian bourgeois state remains weak and fragmented, a stable capitalist class has yet to be congealed and the ever-deepening immiseration of the working people can well lead to explosions of class struggle in the coming period. The overriding necessity for the multinational Soviet proletariat lies in forging the nucleus of an internationalist vanguard party, which fights for socialist revolution to sweep away Yeltsin and all the would-be exploiters.

Split in the counterrevolutionary camp

The Western media describes the anti-Yeltsin forces centred on the Russian parliament as a "hard-line", "conservative" opposition to "free market reforms" who somehow want to restore the old Soviet system. In his speech announcing the storming of parliament Yeltsin railed that the forces opposing his *diktat* were "Communists seeking revenge", and that "Those waving red flags have once again covered

Russia with blood". In reality, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were once key Yeltsin supporters, standing shoulder to shoulder with him on the White House barricades in August 1991 as he seized power following the botched Kremlin coup.

Since then, however, the forces of capitalist counterrevolution have divided into two rival camps, though their differences are by no means irreconcilable. While personally a total opportunist, Yeltsin has taken on the role as the main agent of Western imperialism in transforming Russia into a subservient neocolony of Wall Street and Frankfurt. Rutskoi and Khasbulatov put themselves forward as spokesmen for more nationalistic forces, occasionally demagogically denouncing the IMF and Western capitals for seeking to degrade and impoverish Russia. They wanted to appeal to elements in the military, who chafed at seeing the one-time global superpower turning into a neocolonial vassal of the West; and to the corporatist faction of industrial managers, who didn't want to see their plants shut down on the altar of IMF monetarism.

So why didn't the parliamentary opposition succeed in rallying support from either the officer corps or the industrialists? And given the increasingly desperate economic straits of the masses, why was there no popular outpouring of opposition to Yeltsin's presidential coup? To answer these questions we must look at the various contending forces in post-Soviet Russia.

The nationalist-corporatist faction of the nascent Russian capitalist class, whose chief political representative is Civic Union leader Arkady Volsky, seeks to maintain the core of the existing industrial structure. Given the non-profitability in the world capitalist market of the giant enterprises built to function in a centrally planned Soviet-wide economy, the only way to presently keep them afloat is by massive subsidies from the central bank, leading to a hyperinflationary budget

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Remember Cable Street!

The trade unions, minorities and the left must mobilise by the thousands: drive the fascists off the streets!

The article reprinted below first appeared as a Spartacist League leaflet dated 26 September 1993.

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

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

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

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

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

We reject the crap that ANL and YRE "leaders" have pushed down everyone's throats for so long. Reject their appeals to the capitalist courts and cops and councils! Reject their lobbies to "reform" the racist Liberal Democrats who run



Workers Hammer

Spartacist League contingent at 16 October anti-fascist mobilisation. Trotskyists fight for a class-struggle strategy to stop BNP racist terrorists.

Tower Hamlets! Don't lobby the Home Office! Don't appeal for justice to the sell-out Labour Party! The Labour reformist leaders are the enemies of serious action against the fascists. We need a class-struggle leadership, which will mobilise the strength of the working class and the oppressed, in action, on the road to workers power!

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

The sentiment is there, in the working class, for a real showdown with the fascists. Already UNISON workers have struck for half a day in outrage at Beakon's win. British Telecom workers have voted for pulling the plug on the BNP HQ. The Fire Brigades Union London Region has supported today's demonstra-

tion. Tower Hamlets NALGO has called for anti-fascist unity in the workplaces. What's missing is the determined, intransigent leadership that the combative youth and workers deserve.

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

TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris wants a "cross-party" demonstration against racism. We can't fight this battle with the enemy's generals in our headquarters! There can be no unity of genuine anti-fascists with the bosses' parties, with the pious humbuggery of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such cross-class alliances—popular fronts—are fatal. The TUC made common cause with Tories like the vicious racist Winston Churchill in a campaign of words against the pit closures: today there is hardly a working coal mine left in Britain. Today, like last

year, what is needed is determined class struggle, not collaboration with representatives of the ruling class.

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

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

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

A socialist society won't come in one country on its own: this is an international struggle of the working class. The fascists feed off capitalist decay, in France, in Germany, in Britain. And it's not just a question of the recession, mass unemployment

16 October...

(Continued from page 1)

police or the courts—to act against or ban the BNP."

The 16 October march saw only a sprinkling of public employee banners. The trade unions were not mobilised for a display of the massive social power of the integrated working class (black, white and Asian), which would have taught the BNP fascists a lesson and made the cops think twice before attacking the demonstrators. It was precisely this strategy that Leon Trotsky outlined in a letter to his

French comrades in 1934:

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

The Labour Party and the TUC tops treacherously threw their efforts into a

deliberately diversionary Anti-Racist Alliance demonstration—which attracted barely 3000 people—miles from the BNP's terror nest. While many militant anti-fascist youth mistakenly identify the organised workers movement with the sellout Labourite tops and consequently despair of the possibility of organised workers action, Trotskyists point out that *what is needed is a sharp fight against the pro-capitalist bureaucrats who hold back and strangle the workers movement.*

In contrast, the SWP and Militant screech opposition to the Tories but remain wedded to the Labour Party and refuse to take up a sharp fight against the

Labourite bureaucrats. The ANL was formed by the SWP in 1977 as a popular-frontist vehicle to curry favour with Anglican vicars and Labourite politicians. Now in the face of the bourgeois witch hunt against anti-fascists, ANL spokesmen have announced plans for an anti-fascist carnival to be held on Easter Monday! The ANL's last major carnival, in 1978, was treacherously organised ten miles away from Brick Lane where the fascist National Front was marching.

On 16 October we distributed 9000 copies of a *Workers Hammer* supplement dated 13 October, articles from which are reprinted in this issue. ■



no credit

Cable Street, 1936: Quarter of a million workers, communists, Jews fought the cops, stopped the fascists in day-long battle.

and anti-immigrant hysteria in the imperialist countries. The restoration of the capitalist system in the USSR and Eastern Europe was a huge defeat for the working class around the world. Fascism, monarchism and anti-Semitism have sprouted like weeds in the capitalist-induced wreckage of the planned economies. Look at East Germany: even under Stalinist rule the planned economy provided jobs, education and health care for all; today the former DDR is a wasteland of unemployment and despair. The fascists in Western Europe have been hugely emboldened by the triumph of counterrevolution in the east.

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

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

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

The Stalinists that ruled countries like the USSR blocked every possibility of socialist revolution in the West, from Spain in 1936 to France in 1968 to Portugal in 1974-75. (There the Social Democrats played an openly counterrevolutionary role, supported by CIA funds channelled through the German SPD.) The "Communist" parties' betrayals isolated the Soviet Union

and the other workers states, and led to their weakening and downfall. They showed that they were no better than organisations like the Labour Party. We are Trotskyists, the political party which stands for the tradition and programme of Lenin's Bolshevik Party. We fought for defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and internal counterrevolution and for workers political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucrats: to bring the USSR back onto the road mapped out by Lenin and Trotsky. Today we still defend Cuba, Vietnam and China against the threat of capitalism coming back.

We are not reformists. We want revolutions like the Bolsheviks led in Russia in October 1917. We do not believe reforms will change capitalism. We do not believe, like the *Militant* newspaper does, that a Labour government with "emergency powers" will bring socialism. We do not believe, like the *Militant* and *Socialist Worker* say, that the police should be in the unions! The SWP's Anti Nazi League did not stop the National Front in the 1970s. That's a lie that every anti-fascist militant today should know the truth about. In 1978 the National Front had their headquarters round the corner from Brick Lane. They organised a demonstration in Whitechapel, and the ANL organised a carnival, same day, same time...in Brockwell Park in Brixton, ten miles away! We said then that the ANL Carnival was a *scab* carnival! It's exactly the same kind of politics when the ANL and the YRE leaders call for the capitalists to "ban the BNP" today.

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

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

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

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

When the SWP and the *Militant* print front page after front page with headlines which just call for getting rid of the Tories, they show that their horizons are limited to pressuring the Labour Party, even if they talk about "socialism" and "revolution". Pressure groups on the Labour Party can't take up a sharp fight against the union and party bureaucrats who dominate the labour movement. Why is it that the SWP and *Militant*, who claim to have hundreds and thousands of trade union supporters, are not carrying out a determined campaign for the kind of union and minority mass demonstrations that are needed to smash the BNP?

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

In the face of such a witch hunt, parties like the *Militant* and SWP are fully capable of running for cover. In 1977, the SWP was ferociously attacked by the press for its role in organising a large anti-fascist march in Lewisham. They responded by forming the peaceful,

legal, popular-front Anti Nazi League. Lords, vicars and the likes of Neil Kinnock were signed up as ANL sponsors. The confrontations with the fascists stopped and the scab carnivals of balloons and music began instead. And it's worth remembering that the *Militant* leadership of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation offered to turn over names of demonstrators who defended themselves against mounted police charges in the huge anti-poll tax march at Trafalgar Square, two years ago.

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

The Spartacist League is part of an international organisation, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Our comrades in the United States have several times organised the kind of union/minority demonstrations that are needed today in Britain. Similar actions have been initiated by our comrades in France and Canada, at different points. And on 3 January 1990 the largest anti-fascist demonstration in German history took place at Treptow Park in East Berlin. This demonstration of 250,000 people was initiated by our comrades of the Spartacist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) and then taken up by the ruling Stalinist party in response to the vile desecration of the Soviet war graves by fascist hooligans. We are an organisation seeking to bring together the core of an international revolutionary party. This kind of working-class party fights for the interests of all the oppressed under capitalism, and for a lasting, socialist future for mankind, free of the fear of war and the scourges of unemployment, poverty and racism.

Stop the BNP! For mass, working-class and minority mobilisations against the fascists!

Down with "Fortress Europe"—full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!

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

Spartacist  League

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Militant, SWP and the cops

This article first appeared in the Workers Hammer supplement dated 13 October 1993.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Cops attack protesters at vigil for Quaddus Ali, 10 September. SWP, Militant want bosses’ racist thugs as part of the workers movement.

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

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

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

Embracing the cops is passed by a true chain of infection, from the Labour Party to both Militant and the SWP. All this disgusting tripe comes straight from the

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

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

For forty-plus years Militant’s founding

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cripps theorised that a genuine social-

Rationales for a rotten line

This article first appeared in the Workers Hammer supplement dated 13 October 1993.

"A state is formed, a special power is created in the form of special bodies of armed men, and every revolution, by shattering the state apparatus, demonstrates to us how the ruling class aims at the restoration of the special bodies of armed men at its service, and how the oppressed class tries to create a new organisation of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters, but the exploited."

—VI Lenin, *State and Revolution*

Our comrades of the Spartacist League (SL) are running across a variety of weaselly arguments from SWP and Militant members, who are forced to defend their organisations' calls for the capitalist state to act against the BNP.

"We cannot rely on the state to stop the Nazis" (*Socialist Worker*, 9 October). "Militant Labour does not depend on or want the state to ban the BNP" (*Militant*, 8 October).

SL: The ANL and the YRE do rely on the state to stop the Nazis. Their conception is a big mobilisation of anti-fascists on the streets... to pressure the state into acting against the BNP. Of course, they may not always be able to control the anger of outraged militants, but that doesn't make a revolutionary leadership. They both endlessly petition Bexley Council to close down the BNP headquarters. *SW* says "if our pressure succeeds in getting Bexley Tory council to close down their headquarters it will be an enormous victory". On 25 June the YRE organised a picket of the Home Office to demand the government shut down the BNP HQ. The *Militant* (11 June) proudly announced "[German] JRE get neo-Nazi conference banned". They termed this measure by the Bavarian courts "a victory for us". But in September the neo-Nazi NPD held its conference anyway. Some victory!

Militant/SWP: But we don't "rely" on the state: we only make these calls to bring

new, raw anti-racists who aren't yet socialists into the fight against the BNP.

SL: Appeals to the state run 180 degrees against what is actually needed: mass, trade-union and minority actions to stop the BNP. When you tell people to pressure the state you divert their energies into petitioning and lobbying. You misguide them, miseducate them and reinforce illusions in bourgeois democracy. Petitions and lobbies don't stop fascists—but they do establish a precedent for the capitalist state to censor, ban and repress organisations of the left, and anti-fascist actions. The Public Order Act of 1936 (brought in after Cable Street) was supposed to be a measure against Mosley. Ever since it has been used to repress the left. Today it's being used against this very demo.

The job of revolutionary socialists is not to pander to liberal ideas but to make the hard arguments for Marx and Lenin's clear conception of the class nature of the bourgeois state and bourgeois democracy.

Militant/SWP: We don't believe the council or the government will actually close the

BNP down: this call is only to expose the fact the state won't act against the fascists.

SL: But they really do believe the government will shut down the fascists. When the police detained 57 BNPer on 26 September, an ANL spokesman said: "We welcomed the police action, but it should really have come sooner. We wanted them to stop the BNP selling their newspaper in the area long ago" (*Independent*, 27 September).

If the police or the courts act on one occasion or another against the fascists they will act a thousand times over against minorities, striking workers and anti-fascists. The bourgeois state will never completely eliminate or even sidetrack fascism because they keep the fascists in reserve to smash their real enemy—the revolutionary workers movement. In Germany in 1932, Hitler's stormtroopers were banned, yet a year later Hitler was handed power to save German capitalism.

The urgent necessity for mass mobilisations led by disciplined contingents of the working class springs from



no credit

Rise in fascist terror has galvanised thousands of black, Asian and white youth. Anti-fascist struggle needs to be welded to the power of the organised working class.



David Sillitoe

Defend the arrested anti-fascists! Drop the charges now!

Reprinted below is a Partisan Defence Committee statement issued on 24 October 1993.

The Partisan Defence Committee is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

As over 50,000 marched on 16 October through the streets of southeast London in the biggest anti-fascist demonstration here in two decades, the racist capitalist state demonstrated how far it will go to defend the murderous fascist BNP. Several thousand cops in full combat gear—many on horseback—repeatedly charged and assaulted anti-fascist protesters, beating up several scores of demonstrators. At least 31 anti-fascists face charges ranging from violations of the Public Order Act to serious assault; some could face lengthy prison terms. Now the cops are poring over video film from the demonstration to see how many others they can pick off for taking a stand against fascism. It is the elementary duty of the workers movement and all anti-fascists to join in intransigent defence of those victimised by the state and its police, raising the demand: Drop the charges

against all the anti-fascist protesters!

In order to isolate and intimidate anti-fascist fighters, the state attempts to shift the blame for the cops' attack onto their victims. The bourgeois press smears as "violent" those who seek to stop the fascist BNP, whose aim ultimately is race genocide. In particular, the *Sun* has published photos of unidentified protesters offering £1000 blood money for a name for each photo in an attempt to intensify the witch hunt atmosphere and extend it nationwide. One of the photos was of a postman whose job has been threatened by his employers. Outrageously, a postal union official told the *Sun* that the union would consider expelling this anti-fascist. The union must repudiate any collaboration with the company/government witch hunt and defend this courageous postal worker. The brutality meted out by the thugs in blue on 16 October in protecting the BNP scum is the kind of treatment regularly experienced by the minority communities and workers engaged in militant struggle, at the hands of the guardians of capitalist "law and order".

At this hour when the urgent need is for united-front defence, ANL spokesman Paul Holborow grotesquely capitulates to the state witch hunt when he says: "Those

involved in skirmishes were not representative of the 98 per cent of the demonstrators that went along with the publicly stated aim of a peaceful demonstration" (*Guardian*, 18 October).

Charges against anti-fascist demonstrators are being brought under the Public Order Act. The same act was invoked by the cops to ban the demonstrators from marching on the BNP headquarters. The Public Order Act, brought in after workers routed the fascists in Cable Street in 1936, was supposed to be a law against the fascists. In fact, ever since it has been used overwhelmingly against the left and the workers movement. *The capitalist state is not neutral*. The events of 16 October highlight the futility of appealing to the capitalist state to act against or ban the fascists, and are a sharp refutation to those who consider the police "workers in uniform".

The Tower Hamlets 9 go to court on 26 October. They defended themselves from a cop assault on a vigil for Quaddus Ali, who was beaten up by skinhead thugs and remains on a life support machine. While most of the Brick Lane 23 have been bound over to keep the peace for one year, at least seven are still up against more serious charges under the Public Order Act. And on the day of the hearing, two more anti-fascists were

the fact that they have the key social power to make the state back off while a decisive blow is struck against the fascists. And they have the power to get rid of the rotten capitalist system that breeds fascism. Only a workers state will suppress the fascists, as the Bolsheviks did to the Black Hundreds after the revolution of October 1917.

The SWP and Militant only want to get the Tories out—and get another capitalist Labour government in. They don't fight for the working class to seize power—that would require intransigent political opposition to the Labour and union misleaders, the only basis for forging a revolutionary leadership.

Militant/SWP: We're for "no platform to fascists": it's obvious we're for mobilising independently to stop the BNP.

SL: No, it's not obvious. The SWP and Militant Labour use this slogan to avoid taking a clear stand about who will stop the fascists. Our call for trade union/minority mobilisations to stop the BNP is completely unambiguous. That's because we have a Marxist, revolutionary perspective. The difference between reformists and revolutionaries is precisely the question of the state. The Militant and SWP's appeal to the state to act against the fascists is their reformist bottom line. ■

arrested at the courthouse for defending themselves against notorious BNPer Robert Jarvis. We say: not one anti-fascist fighter should pay one penny in fines or spend one minute in jail!

Those who have taken on the fascists and their police goon squad deserve the respect of all decent people. But the power of the organised working class must be marshalled in the fight to smash the fascists. Instead, the TUC tops threw their efforts behind the deliberately diversionary ARA rally miles away from the BNP terror nest. The cops would not have acted with such impunity on 16 October had they been faced by large, well-disciplined integrated battalions from the trade unions—Dagenham workers, London Transport workers, miners and Telecom workers. We call for disciplined, trade union centred workers defence guards to make the fascists afraid to show their faces!

Make a donation! It takes money to fight the racist courts. Send a contribution for the TH9 to: Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, London E7 AND Send a contribution for the Brick Lane 23 to: Brick Lane Defence Campaign, PO Box 858, London E9 5HU.

Yeltsin coup . . .

(Continued from page 3)

deficit. For the last couple of years, Volsky & Co have been engaged in a tug of war with the "shock treatment" economists represented by Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin's former prime minister. Using the parliament as a battering ram against the president, they put in one of their own, Viktor Gerashchenko, as head of the central bank, and achieved a momentary victory by forcing Yeltsin to dump Gaidar last December.

The present political showdown began when Yeltsin, under pressure from international financiers, named Gaidar first deputy prime minister a few days before decreeing the dissolution of parliament. A former chief economist of the World Bank, Stanley Fischer, observed: "The IMF's tough stance in recent weeks has had a positive effect because it has helped persuade Yeltsin that it was time to act, both in getting back Gaidar and confronting his opposition in parliament" (*Financial Times*, 23 September). Moreover, immediately upon dissolving the Russian parliament, Yeltsin's first military move was to surround the central bank with troops and take it over. One would think that Volsky & Co would have strongly supported the parliamentary opposition. Instead, the corporatists pushed for a compromise solution, to combine parliamentary and presidential elections, and ended up in Yeltsin's camp. Why?

As capitalist forces, in the first place the "industrialists party" requires social and political stability. Volsky and his fellow managers know that even a "slowed-down" introduction of the market will produce massive unemployment and potentially explosive social unrest. Thus they have always sought a solid "united front" of the nascent bourgeoisie, and have been pushing for a bonapartist regime, whether headed by Rutskoi or Yeltsin or someone else. But when parliament's defiance of Yeltsin was taken to the streets the weekend of 2-3 October, threatening to ignite a civil war, this pushed Volsky & Co from neutrality into Yeltsin's arms. Moreover, these well-versed businessmen are fully aware that they need massive infusions of Western cash even to maintain, much less modernise, Russian factories. The imperialists hold the dollars and D-marks, and Yeltsin is their man. But the imperialists are not irrevocably wedded to IMF-style monetarism, and might acquiesce to a more corporatist policy, particularly in light of the Polish elections.

Even more than looking to the industrialists, former air force general Rutskoi counted on support from the military. If anything, a significant section of the officer corps is undoubtedly more sympathetic to Rutskoi's brand of hard Russian nationalism than Yeltsin's subservient accommodation to the US. However, after Yeltsin's 21 September pronouncement the military high command declared "strict political neutrality", which under the circumstances clearly favoured Yeltsin.

But it was by no means given that the military would move to disperse the parliament. Senior generals had declared their reluctance to use the military, and many troops from Moscow had been sent out of the city to harvest potatoes and keep them away from the political showdown. The military high command feared the prospect of a civil war which would lead to a split in the army and a total disintegration of the Russian state. This fear sharpened after the Kremlin issued its ultimatum that the parliament be cleared out. On Sunday, 3 October, a protest of some 15,000 people organised by the "red-brown coalition" broke through police lines and armed Rutskoi supporters launched attacks on the Mos-

cow mayor's office and the Ostankino television complex.

At a meeting of the collegium (council) of generals late that evening, the top military leaders saw the spectre of division of the army. "Even so, the top council had lengthy deliberations before finally throwing its support wholeheartedly to Yeltsin", said military sources, according to the *Washington Post* (5 October). In the final analysis, the key was who controlled the payroll. A Reuters dispatch (4 October) by Carol Giacomo observed: "Senior US officials have said the military backed Yeltsin because their leaders understand Khasbulatov and Rutskoi do not have any better answers than Yeltsin about the economy and realise Yeltsin has the support of the international community and thus access to financial aid."

"Red-brown coalition" repels working class

The decisive factor conditioning the character and the outcome of the showdown between the Russian parliament and Yeltsin was the absence of the working class as an active force. Commenting on the prevailing mood on the streets of Moscow, the *Los Angeles Times* (23 September) remarked, "Suppose they had a coup and nobody cared?" The long-running feud between the Kremlin and the White House is generally (and rightly) regarded as a squabble between corrupt and cynical factions. Insofar as Rutskoi et al are identified with any political line, it is extreme Russian nationalism, which is linked to reactionary social policies. For example, last summer the parliament proposed to outlaw the right of abortion, which was legal and free under the old Soviet system.

Among the militant defenders of the Russian parliament were a host of ostensibly communist groupings, including the RKR of Viktor Anpilov and ex-general Albert Makashov, who were key leaders in the streets, and the RPK of Anatoly Kryuchkov, who appeared at Rutskoi's side on the White House balcony. From the outset, these remnants of the petty-bourgeois Stalinist bureaucracy have supported the restoration of capitalism. When the crowd gathered at the Lenin statue in October Square and headed off toward the parliament on 3 October, there were many red flags flying—along with the monarchist black, yellow and white banner. This time they forcefully smashed through the thin lines of riot police, who offered little resistance, and some of whom went over to the demonstrators. The *New York Times* (4 October) was venomous in bemoaning the "relative ease with which Mr. Yeltsin's enemies were able to move through the police lines Sunday afternoon."

For almost two weeks there had been a stand-off between the rival capitalist-restorationist factions. The parliament was an impediment to the consolidation of power in Yeltsin's hands; his move against it was taken in the service of imperialism. What was called for was a mobilisation of the working class against Yeltsin's bonapartist moves, beginning with his 21 September dissolution of parliament. With the fight taken to the streets, the fragility of the weak capitalist state was underlined, but the working class saw neither side as fighting for its interests. Absent was a revolutionary vanguard, rooted in the proletariat, which could have credibly fought to *independently* mobilise the working class and its allies. What was called for in the fighting on 3-4 October was a *military bloc* with the Rutskoi/Khasbulatov forces in opposition to Yeltsin's moves to complete his August 1991 power grab and seal his victory in blood. If a significant split had developed in the military and state apparatus, it would have provided an opportunity for rallying the thus-far passive masses

in opposition to the economic and social devastation being wrought by capitalist restoration. Such a military bloc would not entail an iota of political support, nor would it preclude the possibility of quickly sweeping away these momentary allies against Yeltsin on the road to establishing organs of proletarian political power (ie, soviets).

In the present confrontation, a massive outpouring of the working class would have shattered the existing political alignments. But the unrest did not reach that point, for both wings feared the spectre of civil war.

For all their red flags the Stalinist "patriots" are tightly bound to the monarchist/fascist scum and act as lackeys for the corporatist wing of the fledgling bourgeoisie. They are hostile to the independent mobilisation of the working class, opposing every strike, from the air controllers last year to the recent Ukrainian miners strike. Their crude mix of Russian chauvinism, virulent anti-Semitism and racism against minorities from the Caucasus and elsewhere has made them despised by all but the most backward, lumpenised elements of the working class.

The ex-Stalinist official "union" federation, the FNPR, is part and parcel of the corporatist faction and a constituent element of Volsky's Civic Union. The newspaper *Rabochaya Tribuna*, one of those banned by Yeltsin, was jointly published by the FNPR "unions" and the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. At the beginning of the two-week standoff, the FNPR made some noises about considering strikes to defend democratic institutions, but following Volsky's tack, on the morning of 4 October they issued a call for pro-Yeltsin "law and order". A spokesman for the paper protested its banning by pointing out: "This newspaper has done its best to keep workers off the streets" (*Financial Times*, 6 October).

Given the passivity of the working class, acquiescence to the West has fundamentally conditioned the outcome of power struggles among the Moscow ruling elite since the post-Brezhnev years, consistently tilting the balance in favour of those forces who are more pro-Western, and more acceptable to the West. Thus in 1987 Gorbachev came out on top of his "hardline" opponent Yegor Ligachev, who was initially a principal architect of perestroika. The same was true in August 1991 when Yeltsin faced off against the "gang of eight", elements of the Gorbachev regime who sought a gradual transition to capitalism, carried out through the bureaucratic apparatus, while maintaining a unitary USSR. At bottom, this was a by-product of Stalin's "socialism in one country", which denied the possibility of proletarian revolutions in the imperialist West and preached the pipe dream of "peaceful coexistence". Now, in the nascent capitalist state, the backing of US imperialism was more than ever a decisive factor securing the victory for Yeltsin over his more nationalist challengers on 3-4 October.

Post-Soviet Russia: immiseration, looting and chaos

When Yeltsin took over the Kremlin and then announced the dissolution of the Soviet Union in late 1991, Western governments and the media proclaimed a new era of "democracy" and "free market" capitalism. The reality has been economic collapse and social chaos. The breakdown of social order has reached a point that deadly diseases like cholera and diphtheria have reappeared, especially in regions of the former USSR ravaged by ethnic blood feuds and civil war such as the Caucasus and Central Asia. The *Washington Post* (20 August) summed up the condition of Russia after two years of capitalist counterrevolution:

"Unemployment looms as antiquated Soviet factories teeter on the edge of bankruptcy. Already, 4 out of 5 Russians are said to be living below the poverty level. Secessionist pressures are mounting inside Russia, while civil strife threatens its borders. A power struggle in Moscow has nearly paralyzed the government . . ."

Yeltsin now clearly has the whip hand in Moscow. But Moscow is not Russia. The economic chaos engendered by capitalist counterrevolution has unleashed disintegrative forces throughout society—political, social, economic and regional. Vast quantities of raw materials are being smuggled out of the country by black market "entrepreneurs"; the effective currency is the dollar, not the rouble; regional bureaucracies jealously husband their industrial and extractive resources for their own benefit with little regard to the central non-government.

This situation cannot continue indefinitely. Western imperialism demands counterrevolutionary order in Russia, not counterrevolutionary chaos. Putting the Russian capitalist house in order will mean first and foremost teaching the workers that capitalist exploitation functions on the twin threats of starvation and repression. As Yeltsin—or his successor—moves to crack the whip against the working class and national minorities, what is posed in the coming period is a series of defensive struggles against mass layoffs and against attacks on women's rights and further bonapartist measures. Out of these struggles will come a new layer of revolutionary fighters, proletarian internationalists, to provide the kernel for a Bolshevik party worthy of the name.

The task facing genuine communists in Russia is to wage an arduous propaganda struggle to overcome decades of Stalinist poison which atomised and paralysed the Soviet working class, as it rooted out its revolutionary traditions and sapped even the most elementary class consciousness. The Russian revolutionary workers movement—out of which the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky was crystallised—was steeled through years of patient Marxist education, illegal organisation and combative mass struggles, not only around the immediate economic interests of the working class but against all manifestations of tsarist autocracy and pogromism. Not for nothing did Lenin insist that the proletarian party must serve as a "tribune of the people". Only on the basis of the most deep-going proletarian internationalism could the workers of tsarist Russia and their Leninist vanguard strive to effect a socialist revolution in one of the most backward countries of Europe and bring together more than a hundred disparate nationalities in common class struggle.

The current generation of Soviet workers must now retrace the steps of their predecessors. As we wrote in "How the Soviet workers state was strangled":

"What is required above all is a revolutionary leadership capable of overcoming the divisions inspired by chauvinism and nationalism, clearing away the decades of false consciousness fostered by Stalinism, and linking the struggles in the ex-USSR to that of the world proletariat."

The International Communist League fights to build a Soviet section of a reborn Fourth International. We demand: End the ban on all newspapers and organisations! Free all anti-Yeltsin political prisoners! Stop the racist dragnet against non-Russian minorities! Down with would-be czar Boris, tool of the Western banks! For *socialist revolution* to sweep away all the new exploiters and the bloody starvation regime!

As revised by the International Secretariat of the International Communist League from *Workers Vanguard* no 585, 8 October 1993.

Women...

(Continued from page 12)

separation agreement made prior to its existence. By making separation a financially unviable prospect, the legislation will force couples to remain together whatever the circumstances. Government ministers are now moving to toughen divorce laws by limiting the grounds on which a divorce can be obtained. This is the government's version of bringing back "family values", like it or not! We demand: *Smash the Child Support Act! Free quality 24-hour childcare! Full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!*

The current reactionary anti-woman frenzy goes hand in hand with the wholesale attacks on social welfare spending, health and education. The National Health Service is being gutted. The introduction of "market forces" into the NHS has led to wholesale closure of hospitals and the expansion of waiting lists. And if some "health-fascist" medical consultant bureaucrats have their way, smokers, drinkers and other potential "non-healthy" types are likely to be denied treatment. "Smoking kills"—the government will make sure of it.

Health cutbacks, as usual, have a disproportionately greater effect on women, particularly as the family (ie, women) is supposed to substitute for health care, care of the aged, etc. Meanwhile cuts to NHS abortion facilities and the threat to take the contraception pill off the prescription list are aimed squarely at limiting women's right to abortion. Critical to fighting all these attacks is the demand for free, *quality* health care for all! Free abortion and contraception on demand!

Government ministers are threatening to force single mothers to live with their parents. Even the critical housing shortage is being blamed on single mothers. At the same time, it is stoking murderous racist hysteria against blacks and Asians. And council estates have witnessed a rise in racist attacks, targeting in particular black and Asian single mothers and interracial couples.

The rise and fall of the "welfare state"

The "welfare state" was set up as a direct response of the West European bourgeoisies in fear of social revolution after World War II. That fear was accentuated by the very existence of the Soviet Union, which had just acquired new prestige from the Red Army's victory over Hitler's Germany. To do this they enlisted the services of the social democrats and Stalinists in the project of social reform.

Post-war Britain was on the verge of bankruptcy, its empire disintegrating. Millions of workers had enormous illusions that Attlee's Labour government would usher in "socialism". But contrary to myths fostered by the Bennite left, the establishment of the welfare state, along with nationalisations of inefficient and failed industries, was carried out with the broad consensus of the ruling class. In part the establishment of the NHS, along with a comprehensive system of social provisions in housing, education and welfare, were financed by the American bourgeoisie through substantial amounts of aid. In exchange the Labour Party became a staunch ally of the US in the global "war against communism".

Throughout Cold War II the "welfare state" was glorified by Cold War social democrats as part of the imperialist propaganda campaign to subvert the Soviet Union. But with capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe the social-democratic welfare state is under attack by a bourgeoisie for which it has outlived

its historic usefulness. The massive unemployment and capitalist immiseration now afflicting workers of the former deformed workers states has shattered the myth that capitalist restoration would bring them a standard of living akin to that of better-paid workers of Scandinavia, West Germany and wealthier regions of the imperialist world.

The reactionary character of capitalist counterrevolution is most clearly revealed in its degradation of women. In deformed workers states like the former German Democratic Republic, despite the bureaucratic stranglehold of Stalinism, women were highly educated, highly skilled, with the best maternity and childcare benefits in the world, and over 90 per cent employed—from lorry drivers and crane operators to surgeons and judges. These gains were a testament to the power of the planned, socialised economy of the workers state. Today these gains have been ripped away and women forced out of the workforce throughout the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc by nationalist regimes who assert that a woman's rightful place is in the home, as childbearers. In Poland, for instance, both houses of the Sejm (parliament) approved a vicious anti-abortion law.

The International Communist League, of which the Spartacist League is the British section, fought unconditionally against capitalist restoration, while fighting for proletarian political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers states. We warned that counterrevolution would mean a big defeat for workers in the USSR, Eastern Europe and throughout the world.

Our intransigent Soviet defencism put us in hard class opposition to the Labourites and their fake-left hangers-on. Virtually the entire British fake-left, from the Third Campist ("Neither Washington nor Moscow") Socialist Workers Party to the right-wing centrist Workers Power group, lined up on the side of imperialism against the USSR. Their anti-Sovietism placed them on the side of the most reactionary anti-woman bigots and fanatics. They backed the clerical-nationalist Polish Solidarność to the hilt and supported Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary coup in the Soviet Union in 1991.

Trade union bureaucracy—capitalism's labour lieutenants

Today women constitute some 48 per cent of the workforce. But in the last decade women's wages have stagnated at around 75 to 80 per cent of those earned by men. For manual women workers, a category which includes a significant proportion of minority Asian and black women forced into underpaid, non-union sweat shops, the rate of pay is around 50 per cent below that of men. Women

workers also make up some 80 per cent of the part-time workforce, mostly in service industries. In the last decade this figure has risen dramatically as women are forced to eke out an existence in the face of cutbacks in social benefits.

There is an enormous reservoir of potential union power among women workers. And it is not inconsequential that women's membership in trade unions has continued to grow particularly over the last few years. This is despite the fact that overall union membership across Britain has now hit a post-war low. Yet the Labourite trade union tops remain *at best* indifferent to the plight of these women and minority workers.

In 1977 the strike of Asian women at Grunwick symbolised the aspirations of low-paid immigrant workers to take their part in building the trade union movement. But it was a Labour government which used the cops to break that strike. The heroic miners strike of 1984 and '85, sold out by the Labourite bureaucracy, inspired support from women, black and Asian communities across the country who saw that struggle as their own. As we wrote at the time about the impact of the miners strike on women:

"The role of women in the miners strike has awakened this country to working class women as a political powerhouse. Their militant marches and rallies, their courageous upfronting of scabs and cops on the picket lines... have played a critical role in this decisive class battle. They have put to shame the feminist myth that the woman struggle and the class struggle can be separate."

—Spartacist Britain, no 60, August 1984

Economic crisis has galvanised immense working class anger across this country and the rest of Europe. This anger was exemplified by combative Timex strikers in Dundee, most of them women. They fought a bitter battle against cops, scabs and a vicious union-busting management, only to be treacherously sold out by the trade union tops, who worked overtime against any and all joint strike action.

Various left Labourites today cry foul about the current attacks in social welfare and the demise of the welfare state. But it was Labour leader John Smith's Commission for Social Justice which pre-empted the Tories in targeting cuts to benefits. And the vicious capitalist "law and order" campaign with all its disgusting racist undertones, was kicked off at the Labour Party conference where shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair lambasted the Tories for failing to be "tough on crime".

The reformist trade union bureaucracy is incapable of fighting the drastic cuts and capitalist offensive that are savaging workers, women and all the oppressed. Their only "solution" is a Labour government. But such a government would be

at least as vicious as the Tories in implementing austerity measures necessary to prop up decaying British capitalism. The various fake-left organisations like the SWP and Militant who routinely prattle on about "driving out the Tories" are equally pledged to the election of a new capitalist Labour government. In sharp contradistinction, genuine Trotskyists fight to forge a revolutionary party. This means a sharp political struggle against the Labour and union bureaucracy around a class-struggle programme for working-class state power.

The reactionary moralist "family values" campaign pushes the basic message that women belong at home to raise the next generation of wage slaves. "Family values" bigotry not only targets women but all of the oppressed. In particular it goes hand in hand with anti-homosexual bigotry.

Homosexuals are a vulnerable minority under capitalism. While fascist skinheads carry out their bigotry with knives and gang attacks, more "respectable" bigots do so with reactionary scaremongering about AIDS and through homophobic legislation like Section 28 with its witch hunting provisions against "intentionally promoting homosexuality". Revolutionaries fight for full democratic rights for homosexuals. Smash Section 28!

Women's liberation through socialist revolution!

The struggle for women's emancipation is inseparable from the struggle for the emancipation of the working class from capitalist exploitation and oppression. Only the social ownership of the means of production can lay the basis for doing away with the institution of the family—"that archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to death" (LD Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*).

The 1917 October Revolution showed the way forward to the liberation of women. The Bolshevik government immediately gave women full political and legal equality with men and the right to abortion. And to the extent they were able in a backward and war-torn country, they sought to replace the social functions of the family with free, 24-hour childcare centres and communal laundries and canteens, thus laying the basis for the full integration of women into social and political life.

The urgent need is for a revolutionary Trotskyist party which can lead the working class and all the oppressed in the sweeping away of capitalist society and the establishment of workers' state power. And from among the massively oppressed working women will come some of the greatest fighters for proletarian revolution. *For women's liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

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Ireland...

(Continued from page 1)

pressuring the imperialists, and thus refuse to call for army withdrawal, waffling on about total "demilitarisation" of the situation—as if the armed forces of the capitalist state are about to disarm themselves. The only people slated to be demilitarised are the IRA, and in this process the Catholics are to be totally subjugated. Lenin stressed that the proletariat of the oppressor countries had a special duty to combat in words and deeds the chauvinism of its own rulers. Today British revolutionaries have particular responsibility to lead the English, Welsh and Scottish working class to struggle for the immediate withdrawal of the British troops and the blacking of all military goods and transport bound for Northern Ireland. In itself, withdrawal of troops does not constitute a solution but it is an essential prerequisite for any just resolution to the conflict.

Within Northern Ireland, the Catholics, part of the Irish nation, are an oppressed minority. But they live within the same territory as the Protestants, who are a distinct community which very much defines itself against the Irish Catholic nation, and who fear becoming a minority, which would in turn be oppressed and discriminated against within a capitalist united Ireland. And finally there is the presence of the British imperialist butchers, whose rule sprang out of 800 years of bloody English domination of all Ireland. In such situations of interpenetrated peoples there can be no just solution to national oppression, outside the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule.

Imperialist "peace" manoeuvres

In the mid-eighties an attempt to break the stalemate which had developed in Northern Ireland was made with the Anglo-Irish Accord. It was a Cold War, pro-NATO deal, which granted the southern clerical state a "say" in the running of the North and tried to cajole the Unionists into "power-sharing" in return for which, Ireland was to be made into a nuclear aircraft carrier for NATO, against the Soviet Union. There were promises of "financial aid", which included the "National Endowment for Democracy", a CIA conduit, pouring money into the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). This "peace deal" saw 100,000 outraged Loyalists marching through Belfast, a big crackdown on the IRA and more British troops in Northern Ireland. Underscoring the fact that the Unionists are not simply a creature of British imperialism, Loyalist mobs burned effigies of Thatcher.

The victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union undercut the Cold War imperatives of the Anglo-Irish Accord. At the same time, British imperialism was becoming increasingly concerned about its overheads for the situation in Northern Ireland. In a November

1990 speech the then Northern Ireland secretary, Peter Brooke, declared that they had "no selfish, strategic or economic interest" in remaining in Northern Ireland. Although Major was in a corridor coalition with the Ulster Unionists, while simultaneously manoeuvring with the Dublin government, he has now announced that there is a role at the negotiating table for Sinn Féin if they renounce violence for good.

In the "New World Order" Sinn Féin has junked most of its rhetoric about "socialism" and enthused over Bill Clinton, butcher of Somalia. (Major slapped an exclusion order on Adams from entering Britain, and Clinton followed suit by barring him from the US.) The Hume/Adams talks have been inspired by the PLO "deal" with the Zionists, and Mandela's negotiations with the apartheid butchers. In effect, the Palestinians have been granted "community control" over a couple of impoverished slums, hounded and terrorised by the Israeli army and heavily armed Zionist zealots. The PLO has been promised its own cops to help suppress the Palestinians, but that hasn't happened yet. The US imperialist-orchestrated "peace" in the Middle East and the ANC rapprochement with the racist South African regime is a product of the destruction of the Soviet Union through counterrevolution. As we noted:

"So long as the Soviet degenerated workers state existed as a counterweight to US imperialism, this allowed petty-bourgeois nationalists like the PLO and ANC and the bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial countries to jockey for position between the two 'superpowers'.... Now faced with a 'one superpower' world, the various nationalist movements see no option but to go begging hat in hand for any crumbs the US is willing to dispense."

—Workers Hammer no 137,
September/October 1993

Among the foremost enthusiasts for both the Anglo-Irish Accord and current "peace" negotiations is the Irish Labour Party leadership, part of the Dublin Fianna Fail/Labour coalition government, which is vehemently anti-Republican, anti-women and anti-working class. Irish president Mary Robinson actually resigned from the Labour Party in sympathy with the Protestant Loyalists, but the Labour Party still backed her for the presidency. Labour leader and foreign minister, Dick Spring, was vitriolic in his denunciation of "IRA terrorism", of Gerry Adams, and even of John Hume, who is a darling of the imperialists. Spring proposed a harsher version of "Pax Britannica".

Dublin has made conciliatory gestures towards Loyalists over the Irish Constitution's Articles 2 and 3, which outline the nationalist claim to Northern Ireland. As Leninists, we oppose forcible reunification of Ireland, and therefore do not uphold the Green nationalist claim that Dublin has an inalienable right to rule the whole island. However, Spring is anxious to stitch up a deal with Britain, including granting the Unionists a veto over Northern Ireland while demanding that the IRA lay down its arms before getting anywhere near the negotiating table. This fits well with Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader Jim Molyneux's call for a "period of quarantine" for the IRA. Spring's offer was welcomed by Major and by Patrick Mayhew, who is notorious for protecting RUC men guilty of shoot-to-kill actions from prosecution. Among Catholics in the North there is a strong feeling of betrayal by the Dublin politicians, and although Sinn Féin's electoral support in the South is currently low, there remain large residues of solidarity with the northern Catholics.

The spectre of the southern state—where workers struggles are attacked and the bourgeois parties, along with Labour and petty-bourgeois Republican politicians pander to reactionary and clerical

forces over questions of women's rights and education—helps to cement the hold of reactionary Loyalist politicians on the Protestant masses. The Protestants are neither a colonial administration (ie, mere agents of British imperialism), nor even a closed colour caste like the South African whites, but a distinct, million-strong community, differentiated by class as much as Irish Catholics. Arguments that the Protestants should be accorded no democratic rights because Northern Ireland is an artificial imperialist creation are based ultimately on reactionary notions of nationalist irredentism.

Any attempt by the Catholic bourgeoisie to forcibly incorporate this large and relatively well-armed community into a common state could only precipitate a bloody communal conflict. At the same time, the Protestants have not crystallised into a separate nation, and the establishment of an independent Ulster would necessarily be oppressive of the Catholic minority and likely accompanied by the expulsion and slaughter of the Catholics.

In the history of the Irish labour movement there have been examples of significant workers solidarity, which has temporarily cut across sectarian divisions. Invariably, as in the case of the 1919 Belfast engineers' strike and the mass unemployment marches in the 1930s, they have been countered with massive sectarian mobilisations intended to wipe out the fragile proletarian unity. The defeat of the 1919 strike and the subsequent expulsion of Catholic workers from the engineering industry, helped lay the basis for Partition. In 1934 Protestant workers marched from the Shankill to join a Wolfe Tone commemoration, carrying a banner "Break the connection with capitalism". This was an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist act by Protestant workers, who were rebuffed by the IRA.

In recent months there have been large demonstrations of both Protestant and Catholic workers against the proposal for the Royal Victoria Hospital to opt out of the NHS. Situated in the Falls Road, the RVH is the second largest employer in Northern Ireland, employing 5700 workers, 3000 of whom are drawn from the Falls and Shankill Roads. The industrial decay of British imperialism has particularly impacted on Northern Ireland. In some Protestant working-class slums, male unemployment can be as high as 50 per cent, and it is even higher among Catholics.

Most of the killings in Northern Ireland this year have been carried out by Protestant paramilitaries, mainly targeting Catholics not connected with any organisation. These acts are not only aimed at disrupting the "peace negotiations" but are also pre-emptive blows designed to undercut the possibility of joint class struggle. The fascist thugs explicitly motivate their attacks as "mass murder" intended to totally intimidate the Catholic population.

We Marxists consider the tactic of individual terror antithetical to the tasks of the liberating struggle of the proletariat as well as oppressed nationalities, because small groups of individuals cannot replace the masses. Thus, the Russian Marxists of Lenin's time ruthlessly criticised the Narodniks for their petty-bourgeois strategy of individual terrorism and assassination. However, out of solidarity with those who fought against the tsarist oppressor, albeit in a misguided way, the Marxists defended against state persecution those who carried out such terrorist acts. Similarly, the IRA policy of blowing away a Lord Mountbatten or an Airey Neave is not our policy. But when the IRA strikes a blow against the imperialist oppressor or the Loyalist fascist thugs, we defend the perpetrators against capitalist retribution. However, it is different with indiscriminate terror such as

the Enniskillen, Teebane, Warrington, and pub bombings, as well as the recent Shankill bombing. The rationale behind the latter mass bombings is ultimately genocidal nationalism, and they are simply crimes from the standpoint of the working class. Those ostensible Marxists who do not make this distinction render themselves apologists either for the nationalists or for the imperialists.

The context of the IRA's Shankill bombing was the murderous onslaught by the UDA and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) on Catholics in the preceding period. The IRA was under great pressure from the embattled Catholics to do something to stop the Loyalist killers. The UFF/UDA have close ties to hardcore British fascists like the Hitler-lovers of Combat 18, and are the equivalent of the race-terrorist Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) in South Africa or the fascist Zionist followers of the late unlamented Meir Kahane.

The IRA's plan was to leave the bomb in the fish shop on a Saturday morning when passing working-class shoppers were bound to be killed, even had the bomb not gone off prematurely. Their excuses about issuing a warning so that innocent passers-by could be cleared away are not plausible, even leaving aside the criminal reliance this places on the hated RUC/British Army. Nine working-class shoppers died while the UDA tops had left well before. At bottom, this bombing cannot be divorced from the IRA's nationalist politics. Dead British and Protestant workers are a matter of indifference to them.

Two weeks before the Shankill bomb over 1000 mainly Protestant workers walked out of Shorts in Belfast in protest at the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) murder of a Catholic worker in their factory. This was an opening which communists would seek to exploit in order to transcend the sectarian spiral. The IRA's Shankill bomb blasted that opening to hell, as the same Protestant workers went into the streets cursing the IRA and Catholics in general. There is a burning necessity for programmatically-based anti-sectarian, anti-imperialist workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage. Not Orange against Green but class against class!

Fake left capitulates to imperialism

The fake left either capitulates to British imperialism or Green nationalism, or in some cases both. *Socialist Organiser* (SO), social-democratic lackeys of the British bourgeoisie, can now applaud Sinn Féin too. Demanding that "Britain and Dublin accept the Hume-Adams proposals as the basis for negotiations", SO baldly states that "'imperialism' is no longer the central issue in Northern Ireland" (*Socialist Organiser*, 11 November).

It explicitly attacks the call for the immediate withdrawal of troops, arguing that this would necessarily precipitate a communal bloodbath. This argument assumes that the working people are incapable of transcending sectarianism, and that, in particular, the Protestants are wedded to Loyalism. In all likelihood, a definite resolution of the character of the Ulster Protestant community will be reached with the withdrawal of the British Army and will depend on the circumstances surrounding this. In the context of massive class mobilisations, directed as well against imperialism, opportunities would undoubtedly arise for a class determination of the question.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), whining that "Major slams door on peace", effectively endorses the idea of an imperialist-brokered solution, saying "The one thing Major could do is immediately meet representatives of all sides" (*Social-*

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Air France...

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ism and the establishment of workers rule.

Air France strikers ignite class struggle

The stage was set when the management of the national airline announced a "restructuring" plan entailing 4000 layoffs to gear up for privatisation and intensified competition when "European skies are liberated" on 1 January 1997. Starting with a "day of action" by workers in the public sector on 12 October, the mechanics and freight workers of Air France decided not to return to work the next morning, thus beginning a militant strike that crippled air traffic throughout France.

Air France was losing over \$10 million a day, while foreign carriers were threatening to sue the Paris airport authorities to recover the costs of postponing and diverting their own flights to France. But it was not just these monetary losses that caused the government to buckle. It was fear of the strike spreading, especially to other public sector workers facing layoffs and cutbacks. Just a few days before the

Air France walkout, 35,000 railway workers demonstrated in Paris. And during the strike, 10,000 teachers marched through the French capital in an anti-government protest.

Unemployment in France is now approaching twelve per cent, the highest level since World War II. Paris sociologist Olivier Duhamel, after conducting a survey showing 70 per cent of the population in favour of the strike, observed: "Everyone is afraid of unemployment and salary cuts so they have taken a kind of vicarious pleasure in the Air France protests".

Sensing it was sitting on a social volcano, the Mitterrand-Balladur government moved to end the Air France strike as quickly as possible. But the reformist union leaderships, instead of following up this victory, are squandering the advantage won from the government. Under pressure of the airport workers for a common struggle, the bureaucrats had to call for a "day of action" on 26 October, in which several thousand workers participated, including Air France flight personnel and employees of Air Inter (the other nationalised French company), as well as workers from the state-owned railways, the Chausson car and bus manufacturer and the SFP nationalised television production company.

ist Worker, 6 November). This is nothing new for these birds, who welcomed the British Army sent to Northern Ireland by the Labour government in 1969 on the grounds that it would provide a "breathing space" for Catholics.

For years Militant has refused to call for British troops out of the North—now, in response to the chauvinist hysteria whipped up by the imperialists, the SWP/Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) once again buries this demand. As with their appeals to the British government to act against the fascist BNP, the reformists of the SWP and Militant present the capitalist state as a neutral arbiter or even potential ally of the working class. Claiming to be for workers unity, they uncritically enthuse over the "peace" rallies organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) bureaucrats. While many workers attend these pacifist rallies out of a genuine disgust for sectarianism, the bureaucrats have openly appealed to the "business community", and have ingratiated themselves with the capitalists by denouncing "all violence", drawing no distinctions between the Republicans and the fascistic Loyalist gangs. SWM leader and Derry Trades Council chairman Eamonn McCann joined ICTU tops and assorted church leaders at a rally in Derry. McCann's only criticism of the ICTU is that they want to organise a 15-minute protest rather than a half-day stoppage against "violence" (*Derry Journal*, 12 November).

The Militant calls for factory and community-based "anti-sectarian committees... to provide defence against attack". However, in the absence of a call for immediate withdrawal of the British Army and with its effective equation of the IRA and the fascistic Loyalist thugs, such "workers militias" as envisioned by Militant would simply become an armed adjunct to the British state.

The Irish Workers Group (IWG), connected to Workers Power in Britain, attacks the SWM for capitulating to the ICTU's "peace chorus". But the IWG statement (12 November) is uncritical of the IRA's Green nationalism and refuses to even mention the Shankill bombing atrocity. The IWG's assertion that workers unity has and will be "fundamentally limited to episodes in the economic struggle as long as the sectarian state [is] not smashed" is profoundly despairing of any prospects of breaking Protestants from the Loyalist stranglehold and is effectively calling for a two-stage "revolu-

tion": first, forcible reunification of Ireland, and later socialism. On the other side, the IWG—like the SWM and Militant—supported Dick Spring's viciously anti-Republican Irish Labour Party in the last elections!

The struggles of the proletariat throughout the British Isles are necessarily intertwined. The strong possibility remains that the solution to the seemingly intractable communal divisions in Northern Ireland may very well come from the outside, for example, on the bayonets of a victorious Red Army of the proletariat of the British Isles—proletarians from Dublin, Glasgow, Liverpool and containing large numbers of Irish Catholics, Bengalis, Sikhs, Pakistanis, West Indian blacks and other national and ethnic minorities. But a revolutionary perspective requires a relentless struggle to purge from the British workers movement all traces of chauvinism. A century ago Karl Marx emphasised that the British proletariat would never be free as long as Ireland remained in thrall. What is necessary today is the forging of a revolutionary workers party by splitting the Labour Party. The British social democracy is the strategic obstacle to socialist revolution throughout the British Isles.

The southern Catholic proletariat, which in recent years has shown a greater measure of class consciousness, can be an important lever in breaking down the sectarian divide in the North. Key is intransigent struggle against the clerical state, which is deeply oppressive of women, as well as opposition to Irish Labourism, which bows to both imperialism and the capitalist bosses at home.

In the situation of interpenetrated peoples and fratricidal nationalism of the North, there can be no solution short of workers revolution. In the context of an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles, the Protestants may yet be incorporated in a common Irish nation, which they would at present vehemently reject; they may develop a more distinct national identity; or they may find a democratic accommodation with the Catholics outside the framework of strictly national solutions under the rule of the working class. The decisive factor in the overall outcome of the struggle will be the presence or absence of a revolutionary party, rooted in the proletariat of all the peoples of these isles. ■

October 26 could have been the springboard for other and even bigger class battles. But the cowardly reformist union "leaders" did everything they could to limit the mobilisation, taking workers for a ride around the airports. At mass assemblies at Roissy and Orly that day the strikers voted to stay out but the reformist union misleaders called for the workers to return to the job. Militant strikers are furious at the bureaucrats, because they have been forced to return to work without guarantees against job cuts or amnesty for arrested workers. Although the Air France strikers were able to force the government to abandon the Attali plan, they could not go over to the offensive. In the coming months Air France management will surely seek to pull the union tops into negotiations to continue the "restructuring" in a less directly confrontational way. Everyone knows the struggle is not over.

Spectre of May '68 haunts French bourgeoisie

Just as the US Rangers getting killed in Somalia evokes in the American ruling class unhappy memories of its humiliating defeat in Vietnam, so the Air France strike evokes the haunting spirit of May '68 in France. The minister of transport, Bosson, justifying the withdrawal of Attali's plan, explained that "It was a movement unheard of since May 68" (*Libération*, 27 October). *Le Monde* described the beginning of the 26 October action by baggage workers at Roissy: "...the playing of the *Internationale* by loudspeaker put the marchers into form. Like lightning, unionists or not, they stopped in their tracks and took up the chorus, their collars turned up and fists in the air. 'It's like 68!', a CFDT leader whispered under his breath."

Twenty-five years ago, that spontaneously spreading worker/student revolt brought France to the brink of revolution and led to the toppling of Charles de Gaulle's semi-bonapartist regime. Only the outright betrayal by the then powerful pro-Moscow Stalinist party saved bourgeois rule in France, preventing the working class from moving to take power from the bourgeoisie in an important country at the centre of NATO Europe. Even so, May '68 had powerful reverberations around the world, especially in West Europe. The following year came Italy's "Hot Autumn" as workers seized their factories and battled police and company goons.

Today conditions from the Baltic to the Mediterranean are ripe for new May '68s and "hot autumns". Everywhere, the capitalist ruling classes, involved in a genuine trade war to redistribute the markets in a context of deep economic crisis, wage the same attacks against their working classes, in the wake of the collapse of the deformed workers states in the East: dismantling of the "welfare state" concessions granted after World War II, imposing wage freezes and wage cuts, job cuts and layoffs, and widespread privatisations in the public sector.

In Bonn, Rome, London, European capitalists are following the French situation closely—in their countries too, the attacks on the workers have met active resistance: coal and metalworker strikes in the Ruhr, factory occupations in southern Italy. The victory of the Air France strikers has already created big shock waves among the working masses in Europe.

However, the proletariat remains saddled with a reformist leadership which keeps it bound and tied politically to the class enemy. In France the current round of attacks on workers by Balladur/Mitterrand was preceded by over a decade of

austerity enforced by a popular-front government which was politically supported by almost the entire French left. In 1981 the bourgeoisie agreed to hand over the reins of state to Mitterrand, candidate of a class-collaborationist alliance extending from a section of the Gaullist movement to the Communist Party and assorted fake Trotskyists. The bourgeoisie saw in Mitterrand a NATO "socialist" who would carry out a capitalist "shock treatment" at home. Unemployment in France has consistently hovered around ten per cent for some years now. Mass disenchantment with Mitterrand led to a substantial victory for the right wing at the polls in 1992.

Feeding off the economic deterioration, as well as the racist anti-immigrant campaigns implemented under Mitterrand's "socialist" administration of capitalism, the fascists of Le Pen's National Front have also grown markedly. The firebombing of hostels housing asylum-seekers goes hand in hand with government moves to expel "illegal" immigrants, for example French interior minister Pasqua's "zero immigration" plan. But while some backward sections of the working class have been attracted to the fascists, there are many more who would combat the racist scum.

The immigrant workers are a central reservoir of militancy within the French proletariat, and during the Air France battle it was an integrated working class that demonstrated its strength on the streets. Immigrant women, many of whom work as low-paid cleaners for subcontractors at the airports, have waged militant strikes in the recent period, and at Orly they were on strike at the same time as the Air France ground crews. And it's worth noting that many pilots have refused to carry out the government's orders to deport "illegal" immigrants, who are kept at notorious airport "holding camps" (set up by a "leftist" government) prior to being expelled.

Throughout Europe, a new generation of young radicals has come to the fore in militant protests against the fascists and against the "respectable", official racist policies. On 16 October more than 50,000 anti-fascist demonstrators—overwhelmingly young and leftist—turned out in London. They ran smack into the riot cops protecting the fascists. The demonstrators were beaten back. In France the infamous CRS riot cops were set upon the Air France strikers. But in this case the government had to retreat, facing the raw power of the working class. Had the cops in London been confronted with thousands of organised trade unionists, they would not have acted with such impunity. It is necessary to weld together the social strength of the proletariat and the militancy of the anti-fascist youth and minorities.

Above all, what is necessary is the construction of an international revolutionary workers party, part of a reformed Fourth International. Such a party would be a party of intransigent class struggle. It would ruthlessly expose the treachery of the reformists—the social democrats, Labourites and other sellout artists—who fritter away the fighting strength of the working class in class-collaborationist alliances with the bourgeoisie, in lying claims that the proletariat can win anything real through parliament or by seeking to pressure the capitalist state. It would unleash the courage and militancy of the working class—powerfully displayed by the Air France strikers—in the struggle for socialist revolution, which will finally put an end to the decaying capitalist system of unemployment, poverty, racism, fascism and imperialist war.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 587, 5 November 1993.

Smash the Child Support Act!

Capitalism's war on women, oppressed

Hardly a day has gone by these last couple of months without the bourgeois media or government issuing some vicious attack on single parents. In short order the capitalist rulers of this country have sought to blame single parents (93 per cent of whom are women) for everything from the budget shortfall and "rising crime rates" to the destruction of society's fabric, no less! Social Security secretary Peter Lilley has even announced that he has a list of women "who get pregnant just to jump the housing list" (*Guardian*, 9 November)! As with all Big Lie campaigns, any claims to actual reality are bare to non-existent. The rulers of this country want to scapegoat women, minorities and all the oppressed for capitalism's deepening economic crisis.

Under the "New World Disorder" the bosses' "answer" to all of the ills of their rotting system is a return to "Victorian family values". Under capitalism the patriarchal family is what provides the material basis for women's oppression — a conservatising bulwark of the capitalist order. And you don't have to look too far to see the link between this anti-woman campaign and racist anti-immigrant attacks which has fuelled the rise of murderous fascist terror in this country. In July of this year Jamaican-born Joy Gardner was murdered by cops. Even in death she was chastised for being a single mother. Capitalism offers no hope and no future. It needs to be smashed through socialist revolution.

Single parents constitute one of the

poorest brackets of society. Some 47 per cent of them are forced to live on starvation "benefits" of less than £100 a week. Those that do work have to balance between back-breaking jobs (often in non-union sweat shops) and expensive, inadequate childminding centres. Britain's childminding facilities are the most under-subsidised in Europe.

Now the government wants to slash £3.4 billion in payments to single parents. As usual this will greatly increase the burden on minority women — 51 per cent of all black Caribbean mothers are lone parents. The government suggests that grandparents be forced to contribute to the upkeep of their grandchildren. The draconian Child Support Act, enacted in April, aims to make up the shortfall by

forcing absent fathers to pay more subsidy. But of the estimated £530 million that the government intends to save with its cost-saving measures, only one in ten pounds will be directed to single mothers — the rest is headed for treasury coffers. While some bourgeois feminists like Sue Slipman welcomed these plans, the reality is that both parties will be drastically affected. While fathers are liable to be assessed on virtually all their income less housing costs, mothers will become poorer through losing out on benefits such as free school meals, council tax benefits, dental care, etc.

By 1996 the government plans to provide the Child Support Agency with the power to tear up any divorce or
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"The government is not afraid of the Air France strikers, what it fears is that everybody may take to the streets and say 'Enough!'"

—striking Air France worker

"This is not a strike but a revolt."

— French minister of transport
Bernard Bosson

For nearly two weeks, a strike of Air France ground crews against threatened layoffs and wage cuts threw Paris airports into chaos and ended up in a workers victory on the battlefield. The struggle electrified the French working class as the bourgeoisie reacted in fear of the working-class militancy. When on 25 October the new right-wing French government of Edouard Balladur backed down, spokesmen for the interests of capital throughout the world responded with dismay. The *New York Times* lectured that "Mr. Balladur has no stomach for conflict at a time when he judges France to be ripe for a social explosion of the sort that rocked the country a quarter-century ago".

Confronted by the government's obscene demands for redundancies and pay cuts of up to 20 per cent, the workers fought back. They marched to the airports, blockaded runways, and several times succeeded in stopping planes from taking off. The strikers exchanged blow for blow with the riot police, who fired tear gas and water cannon at them. The workers occupied the terminals. *Le Monde*, the leading French bourgeois daily, admitted: "The strikers are the total masters of the place". Inspired by their courage and militancy, other workers sought to join the strike. In a humiliating retreat, the government — which only four days earlier had described its demands as "irrevocable" — was forced to scrap its "restructuring" scheme and shove out the airline's top executive officer, the "socialist" Bernard Attali.

The *Financial Times* (1 November) summed up the impact of the victory: "Workers across Europe appear to have taken strength from the spectacular victory of Air France employees.... In Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and France, employers are facing increasing militancy as they demand job cuts and flexibility".

Almost all workers of the public sector



Informations Ouvrières

Air France strikers block runway in Paris. Workers took on government, bosses, cops and won!

and industry are under fire throughout Europe. Upon the announcement of the French government's retreat, the Italian bourgeoisie saw the Air France strikers' victory as a powerful boost to Italian workers who for months have been mobilising against savage austerity plans. And as the Air France strike was winding down, 2000 TAP-Air Portugal strikers, fighting against thousands of layoffs and a wage freeze, were occupying the runways of the Lisbon airport. Some of their signs read: "TAP/Air France, same fight!" Over 1200 crew members at Austrian Airlines struck against 500 job losses, while in Germany Lufthansa aircrews also went on strike and 120,000 building workers rallied against cutbacks. In Belgium some 70,000 trade unionists took to the streets.

After a decade of union-busting, mass layoffs, pay cuts — the product of what one American trade union faker called a

"one-sided class war" — finally our side has won *something*. What a breath of fresh air the Air France strike was to hundreds of thousands of class-conscious European workers! The workers showed that *strikes can win and class struggle pays off*.

This strike stood out in sharp contrast to the treacherous policies of the reformist misleaders who have been stifling the trade unions throughout Europe. Take the antics of the TUC bureaucrats, Scargill and Knapp, in the face of the government's plans to privatise the mines and railways, slashing tens of thousands of jobs. Instead of mobilising key sections of the working class in joint strike action — the miners, rail, transport and power workers — a popular front (cross-class coalition) was built ranging from Scargill to right-wing Tory racist Winston Churchill Jr. The anger of miners and other workers was

dissipated in futile attempts to lobby Parliament. Meanwhile, the government's pit closure programme has proceeded without a hitch.

What the Air France strikers won, they gained through hard class struggle, not by one-day "protest" actions, lobbying Parliament, or by electing a Labour or popular-front government. The workers need to generalise that politically. The union misleaderships, who at all times during the Air France battle sought to dampen the militancy of the strikers, are tied in with reformist political parties — the Communist Party, Socialist Party and their "far left" camp followers — that want to channel working-class discontent into a new version of a class-collaborationist popular front with the open class enemy. What is urgently needed is a revolutionary workers party that will fight all the way for the overthrow of capital

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Victory sparks class struggle in Europe

Air France strikers win