



SLP split: fracture in Labour monolith

Blair kicks unions in the teeth

At the Blackpool TUC conference this year Tony Blair's New Labour launched a union-bashing offensive designed to convince City bankers and big business that Labour in power can be just as anti-union as the Tories. Blair's attack on tube strikers earlier this year was widely described as unprecedented for a Labour leader in opposition. Meanwhile, his employment spokesman David Blunkett told postal workers to end their strikes and conduct yet another ballot of their membership. This followed New Labour's pledge to retain the Tories' hated anti-union legislation and effectively to ban strikes in the public sector by imposing binding arbitration. To top it all off, Blair's shadow junior employment minister, Stephen Byers, took the opportunity to pronounce what everyone knows is key to the "Blair project": the breaking of Labour's historic link to the unions.

In the midst of this orgy of union bashing, Arthur Scargill stood out as a focal point of opposition to New Labour at the TUC conference. Earlier this year Scargill split from Labour and launched the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) "in response to New Labour's betrayal of the commitment to common ownership, abandonment of socialism and open support for the 'free market' and capitalism" (*Socialist News*, September 1996).

Despite the very clear intentions of Tony Blair, the Labour Party remains a bourgeois workers party, ie based on the trade unions but saddled with a pro-capitalist leadership. For communists, breaking the stranglehold of the Labour Party over the working class is a key strategic task. Although the programme of Scargill's SLP is at bottom simply that of "old" Labour as against the New Labour Party of Tony Blair, this split from the Labour Party offers the possibility for a fundamental realignment of the political configuration in this country out of which a revolutionary Marxist and internationalist workers party can be constituted.

At Blackpool, Blair reminded the TUC leadership that "in the end we govern for Britain". Under New Labour, he proclaimed, British imperialism can "regain influence abroad" and "compete in the new global market". With the Tories deeply divided over Europe, Blair is presenting New Labour as the party of "the business world" and of Maastricht austerity. In "Fortress Europe" Maastricht dic-



Independent



Guardian

Striking postal workers: accumulation of social anger from years of vicious Tory austerity. Blair's New Labour promises union-bashing, untrammelled capitalist exploitation.

tates union busting, privatisation, massive attacks on welfare and increased social oppression, racist terror and attacks on women.

Blair is indicating his willingness to deliver what the imperialists think they can get in today's world—a more naked form of class rule. This is what is behind Blair's project to turn the Labour Party into a bourgeois party—a version of the US Democratic Party. We stated the international context for this in the International Communist League's (ICL) January 1996 "Perspectives and Tasks" memorandum:

"Today much of the world's bourgeoisies, drunk with glee over the collapse of the Soviet Union, has been seized with a deep ideological passion to return to the imagined halcyon days of unfettered capitalist freebooting. Irrationally, from their own class standpoint, they are thus dismantling or privatizing everything from government bureaus of scientific standards to transportation and communications infrastructures. Imagining the 'red menace' behind them they are also dumping the intermediaries and brokers (parliamentarist and trade union) they previously maintained and cultivated, the better to contain and control the working class. To the extent this project is realized we can expect a pattern of protracted passivity punctuated by

violent upheavals and outbursts of class struggle."

Tory/New Labour union bashing

A great deal of social tinder has accumulated during the long years of Tory rule, which have brought devastating attacks on the NHS and welfare services. Despite the Tories' boast of "no-strike" Britain, this summer there was a series of one-day strikes in London Transport, the Post Office and the fire brigades. The public sector unions are made up of some of the most oppressed sections of the workforce—blacks, Asians, women—many of whom have worked for decades for extremely low pay. These strikes have been defensive battles against the ravages of privatisation, which attempts to destroy the unions, to atomise the working class and to impose scandalously low wages and working conditions reminiscent of the nineteenth century. But even such limited and episodic strikes were too much for New Labour, who are vying with the Tories for the reputation of being "tough on the unions".

New Labour's declared commitment to union busting rankled with even the most slavishly pro-Labour union bureaucrats. TUC General Secretary John Monks com-

plained that delegates in Blackpool "were shaken by the wild talk of Labour severing all links with us". They may be shaken by Blair's deliberate kick in the teeth, but the TUC bureaucracy's "New Unionism" accepts New Labour's basic political premise: the trade unions must not pose a challenge to the "free market" of capitalist greed. These leaders cannot mount a fight against Blairism. Indeed by the time of the Labour Party conference all the TUC heavyweights had knuckled under. TGWU leader Bill Morris spoke for all of them when he said "unions would now concentrate on helping Labour to win the general election". The message to striking workers is to go to hell—comply with the anti-union laws, and elect a union-bashing Labour government.

This is what lies behind Morris' treacherous efforts to knife the 13-month-old battle of the sacked Liverpool dockers. Determined to keep the strikers isolated, he refuses to give the strike official backing and is dead against what is desperately needed to win. The Liverpool docks must be shut down through militant mass picket lines that nobody dares cross and the strike extended to *all* the other ports in Britain as part of the drive to reunite

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Towards a revolutionary workers party!

Nation of Islam: bodyguards for Hitler apologist David Irving

We reprint below a letter which first appeared in *Workers Vanguard* no 653, 11 October 1996.

Oakland, CA
1 October 1996

To the Editor:

Workers Vanguard has repeatedly warned that Louis Farrakhan is bad news for black people [see, for example, "Louis Farrakhan: Apologist for Slavery in Sudan," *Workers Vanguard* no 651, 13 September]. Just how bad was demonstrated recently here in Oakland, California, where about 43 percent of the population is black and another 28 percent is Latino and Asian. Many black people settled in Oakland during and after World War II, moving here from the Deep South to work in the Richmond shipyards and other industries. Many black families had firsthand experience with the night-riding Ku Klux Klan race-terrorists. So if the hooded Klansmen ever tried to have a rally in downtown Oakland, you can bet they wouldn't last five minutes.

But no less of a racist provocation

occurred here on the night of September 10, when one of the world's most notorious Hitler-loving Nazi organizers and propagandists, named David Irving, slipped into downtown Oakland to give an organizing speech titled, "Freedom of Speech and Adolf Hitler's Final Solution Finally Solved"! His presence here was an insult and a threat not only to the majority black, Latino and Asian population, but to every person who hates racism and fascism. How could this have happened without a massive mobilization by all the people—many of them trade-union members—who would be the intended victims of this dangerous racist? The answer is that *Irving's meeting took place in cooperation with and under the protection of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI) on the basis of their shared program of Jew-baiting anti-Semitism!*

The time and location of the meeting was kept secret until the day it occurred, when an ad appeared in the *Daily Californian* at the University of California-Berkeley. On site at 24th Street and Tele-

graph Avenue, six of the NOI's Fruit of Islam (FOI) stood guard at the front door of the hall where Irving spewed his anti-Semitic filth. Other members of FOI security stood on nearby street corners with

clashing with black nationalist security squads protecting the meeting of a white-supremacist in heavily black Oakland.

This is not the first time the Nation of Islam has joined with fascists. In 1961, Elijah Muhammad invited a delegation from the American Nazi Party to an NOI convention. In 1985, Farrakhan invited California Klan leader Tom Metzger to an NOI rally in L.A. and accepted a \$100 donation from this racist terrorist! Farrakhan also recalls with nostalgia the Jim Crow era: "When civil rights broke down the segregation laws we began to lose black businesses and spend our money with white businesses. So throughout the



Young Spartacus

When David Irving tried to speak in Berkeley in October 1994, militant protest initiated by Spartacus Youth Club broke up his fascist rally.

communications devices and more were seen going into the meeting. Oakland police also mobilized to guarantee Irving a platform. A racist white-supremacist like Irving should have been run out of Oakland. The fact that instead he had the protection of the Nation of Islam is a condemnation of Farrakhan's program of black separatism, which puts the NOI in a bloc with racist segregationists and violent terrorists like the KKK and Nazis, since they all believe in the "separation of the races."

This British fascist Irving seeks to use "academic" credentials to deny that six million Jews, and hundreds of thousands of Gypsies, homosexuals, Catholics, communists and others designated as *Untermenschen* ("sub-humans") were gassed in Hitler's concentration camps. He is the star attraction at meetings of European fascist terror gangs which have carried out murderous campaigns against dark-skinned immigrants and Jews: the British National Party, the Hitlerite "Nationale Offensive" in Germany, the white-supremacist Heritage Front in Canada.

Irving has twice been denied a platform by militant demonstrations here in the Bay Area for his fascist recruitment meetings. In October 1994, an integrated protest of 300 students, leftists and workers initiated by the Spartacus Youth Club broke up a fascist rally outside UC Berkeley. Irving was reportedly flattened on the floor, sprawled amongst his Nazi paraphernalia. In February 1995, the grotesquely misnamed "UC Berkeley Free Speech Coalition," a front group of anti-Semitic, gay-baiting, racist Islamic fundamentalists, organized a second provocation on campus with UC administration support. This time Irving's intended meeting site was surrounded by a spirited 400-strong demonstration that stopped the Hitlerites from daring to enter the building.

Humiliated, Irving and his cohorts have been probing for a way to get a foothold in the Bay Area. It is an outrage that Irving was given this opportunity under the auspices of Farrakhan and the Fruit of Islam, thus setting up a potential scenario of integrated anti-racist demonstrators

South the economic advancement that we gained under Jim Crow is literally dead" (*Emerge*, August 1990). The Farrakhanites use anti-Jewish, anti-Arab or anti-Korean bigotry to create scapegoats and divert black people away from the struggle for equality. For the Farrakhanites, their program for black capitalism *requires* the continued existence of segregated black ghettos to guarantee a market for blacks exploiting blacks.

In this period of open racist reaction, a racial demagogue like Farrakhan gets a certain hearing among black workers and youth because he appears to be anti-racist. But as the NOI's defense of the notorious racist David Irving shows, this "leadership" is based on smoke and mirrors, designed to conceal its reactionary accommodation to the racist capitalist exploiters.

The acceptance of separatism has historically meant accommodation to oppression and *renunciation of struggle*. The separatist doctrine is the cover for the black nationalist misleaders' program of peace with the racist ruling class. In fact, the fundamental truth of the race question is that the interests of the working class and those of blacks—an oppressed race-color caste—are not antagonistic but go hand in hand.

As an oppressed racial minority, blacks find a driving force in their struggle for emancipation in the demand for full equality, the right to complete integration and assimilation into American life. The Spartacist League and the Labor Black Leagues fight to mobilize the working class on the program of revolutionary integrationism—complete social, political and economic equality in an egalitarian, socialist society. Achieving that goal requires the building of a multiracial, revolutionary vanguard party which can lead the multiracial working class to the seizure of state power. The road to black freedom lies here—in proletarian emancipation, the building of a society in which those who labor rule!

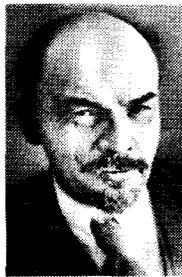
Comradely,
Deborah Maguire

Trotsky on the trade unions



TROTSKY

Leon Trotsky addressed the following outline of the Marxist attitude to the trade unions in the "old" capitalist, imperialist countries such as Britain, to would-be revolutionary socialists then in the Independent Labour Party, which in 1932 had split from the slavishly pro-capitalist Labour Party. Trotsky warned against those who would turn their backs to the unions using the corrupt character of the trade union bureaucracy as a pretext. Now as



LENIN

before, the revolutionary party must be built which fights to raise the unions from off their knees, reaches out to the unorganised worker, fights for industrial unionism against the old craft divisions, and above all fights to transform the unions into instruments for proletarian revolution.

The trade-union question remains the most important question of proletarian policy in Great Britain, as well as in the majority of old capitalist countries....

The trade unions were formed during the period of the growth and rise of capitalism. They had as their task the raising of the material and cultural level of the proletariat and the extension of its political rights. This work, which in England lasted over a century, gave the trade unions tremendous authority among the workers. The decay of British capitalism, under the conditions of decline of the world capitalist system, undermined the basis for the reformist work of the trade unions. Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organizations or become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade-union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path. It turned all the accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction.

From that point on, the most important task of the revolutionary party became the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade-union bureaucracy.

—Trotsky, "The ILP and the New International", 4 September 1933

WORKERS HAMMER

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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Key witness for Mumia Abu-Jamal arrested on the stand



Veronica Jones, jailed for telling the truth.

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 653, 11 October 1996.

For the many thousands around the world who rallied to stop the execution of black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal last year, his continuing persecution by the cops and courts has been an object lesson in the racist American "justice" system. The capitalist state's intent to silence Mumia and his supporters and to kill this fighter against racism and oppression was demonstrated again last week in the Philadelphia court of "hanging judge" Albert Sabo, who presided over Jamal's 1982 frame-up "trial" and death sentence.

In a supplemental evidentiary hearing on 1 October ordered by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Veronica Jones, an eyewitness in the 1981 shooting of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner for which Jamal was falsely convicted, gave powerful testimony pointing to Jamal's innocence. In retaliation, in front of scores of Jamal's supporters who had filled the courtroom, Jones was dragged from the witness stand and taken to jail. Jones, a black mother of three, had taken the stand to testify that in 1982 she was coerced by police to retract her eyewitness account of having seen two men run from the scene of Faulkner's shooting while Jamal lay wounded on the ground. After two hours of browbeating Jones, Assistant District Attorney Arlene Fisk declared, "I'm promising to lock you up." Moments later, Jones, while under oath, was placed under arrest for an outstanding bench warrant issued more than two years ago in New Jersey on alleged bad-check charges.

Although Jones had already testified that she was completely unaware of the 1994 New Jersey bench warrant, the D.A. rose to "ask that the sheriffs take her into custody...as a fugitive from justice", announcing that two New Jersey police officers were waiting outside the courtroom. Despite pleas by the defence attorneys that Jones be allowed to continue to testify and that an arrangement be made for her to appear in New Jersey to settle the outstanding warrant, Sabo hypocritically argued he had no jurisdiction, and Jones was dragged from the court. Later

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now!

that afternoon, a New Jersey cop testified that they had known Jones' Camden address from the time the bench warrant was issued, but no action was taken to arrest her until Assistant D.A. Fisk phoned the New Jersey police last week. Following her arrest, Jones was not finally released until 5 am on \$10,000 bail.

Asked why she had come forward now, Jones said that she did not want her grandchildren to "think their grandmom was living a lie". Testifying in Mumia's case for the first time since the 1982 trial, Jones described how just days before the trial began she was visited in jail, where she was facing serious felony charges, by Philadelphia police detectives and threatened into retracting her eyewitness account. Jones was later put on probation on charges which carried a sentence of up to 15 years in prison. Jones told the hearing, "I was to name Mr Jamal as the shooter." She refused to make such a statement but did retract her original true account to avoid imprisonment. In an anguished voice she said, "It was a big decision to make, but this was five or ten years away from my kids." When threatened with arrest by Assistant D.A. Fisk, Jones responded, "You think that's going to make me change my story. It's not."

"This courtroom is not for justice"

Jamal's lead counsel, Leonard Weinglass, told a midday press conference outside City Hall on 1 October that Veronica Jones "came forward to bravely and courageously tell the truth after 14 years and was set up in a courtroom". What happened to Jones, Weinglass said, illustrated the continuing "intimidation and coercion of witnesses who have come forward on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal. It's happened in the police station. Today you saw it happen in open court."

From the moment Jones took the stand on 1 October, she was subjected to a stream of threats and accusations by Sabo

and Fisk. Continuing the pattern of misconduct by the police and District Attorney's office in this case, prosecutors again used the threat of arrest in a blatant attempt to coerce Jones to recant her testimony, just as they had in 1982. Even before Jones started her testimony, Sabo threatened Jones with back-to-back perjury convictions ranging up to seven years' imprisonment each. The prosecutor then dredged up an eight-year-old allegation that Jones had worked for several months while collecting welfare for her three children, snidely accusing Jones of "steal[ing] from the State of New Jersey". After patiently withstanding this gross abuse for more than an hour, Jones responded to her persecutors: "I'm the one on trial now. This courtroom is not for justice."

Overruling all defence objections to the Assistant D.A.'s outrageous persecution of Jones, Sabo threatened Jamal's attorneys with removal from the court. The antics of Sabo and Fisk were a replay of Jamal's post-conviction relief (PCRA) hearing in the summer of 1995, when Sabo repeatedly ruled against every defence motion and objection and had Jamal co-counsel Rachel Wolkenstein briefly arrested.

As Veronica Jones was hauled off to jail, Mumia's supporters immediately began collecting funds for her bail. After her release, on 3 October Jones returned to the hearing, demonstratively sitting with Jamal's supporters. The evidentiary procedure ended that day, following a morning session in which Sabo responded to defence appeals for the release of prison logs from the time Jones was imprisoned in 1982 by screaming at Wolkenstein to "shut up" and threatening to remove her from the court. From beginning to end, the latest hearing was marked by the same kangaroo-court behaviour that has been rampant throughout the 15-year attempt to "legally" lynch Mumia Abu-Jamal: continuing cover-up of evidence showing

Jamal's innocence, intimidation of defence witnesses, massive cop and prosecutorial misconduct.

State apparatus of racist repression

In reporting the events last week, even the *Philadelphia Daily News* (2 October) felt compelled to express its exasperation at Sabo for "exhibiting his usual prejudice against the defense.... Such heavy-handed tactics can only confirm suspicions that the court is incapable of giving Abu-Jamal a fair hearing." It's not as if the pro-cop *Daily News* has now come out for Jamal. Ever since the beginning of last year's PCRA hearing, the bourgeois media and other ruling-class elements—including Republican "law and order" types like Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter—have feared that Sabo's flagrantly biased conduct was threatening to undo the state's trumped-up "case" against Jamal. In blatantly teaming up with prosecutors and cops in the face of widespread public attention, Sabo's actions were serving to tear off the veil of "impartiality" which is central to the myth of "blind" bourgeois justice.

Many liberals and reformists who joined the campaign to save Mumia's life buy into the illusion that the capitalist court system can dispense "justice" for Jamal. Thus, many of them have focused on the call for a "fair trial", which they argue would necessarily result in either a reversal of the 1982 verdict or the voiding of the death sentence. A more "radical" take on this position is offered by Refuse & Resist activists, who showed up in the Philadelphia court last week with buttons reading "Sabo Must Go." But then what?

Jamal's defence team has rightly called for Sabo's recusal from the case. But as Rachel Wolkenstein, who is also counsel for the Partisan Defense Committee, pointed out at the 1 October press conference: "Every day, Sabo and the prosecution have made it clear that it is impossible for Jamal to get a fair trial in the city of Philadelphia. Our legal papers call not only for a new trial but call for his freedom based on the history of prosecutorial misconduct."

continued on page 8



Jennifer Beach

London demonstration, 22 July 1995 initiated by Partisan Defence Committee, fights for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Blair...

(Continued from page 1)

the docks. As we noted in our 12 January 1996 leaflet ("Time for a working-class counterattack!"): "mass rallies in support of the dockers have brought out thousands of supporters from across the country.... Strike action alongside the dockers at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port and Ford Halewood would make Merseyside a launching pad for the working-class fight-back we so sorely need."

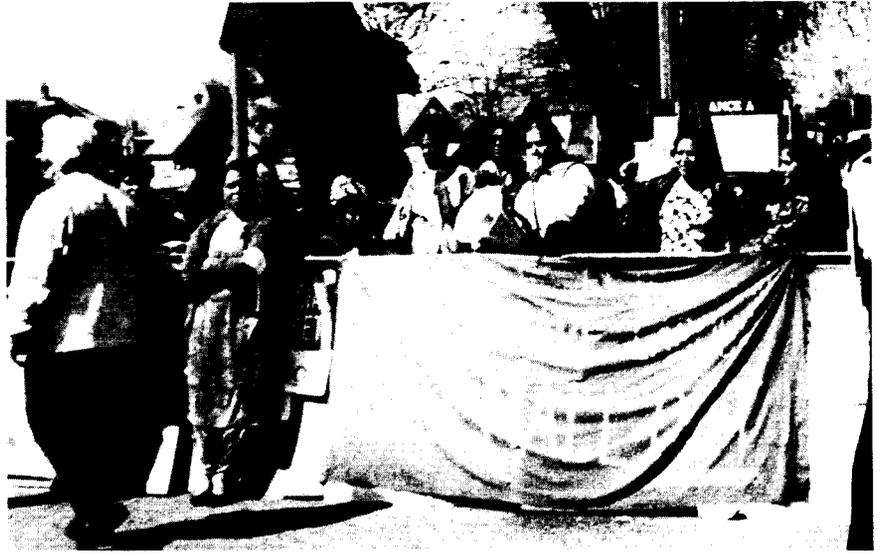
Morris even denounces those who do want to show their solidarity. On 30 September the cops viciously attacked a demonstration at the Liverpool docks supported by the "Reclaim the Streets" protest group, arresting 41 people. Morris lambasted the "violence and unlawful action" of the cops' victims and demanded that the dockers must "disassociate themselves" from the demonstrators. We say: drop all the charges!

The postal workers too have been forced to pay the price of the Labourite bureaucrats' enforcement of anti-union laws. Postal workers have repeatedly balloted to strike, and a number of sorting offices have staged walkouts against the bosses' attacks on working conditions. But the bureaucrats have restricted the "official" strikes to one-day actions, using only token picket lines. This is a recipe for defeat. The treacherous politics of the union bureaucracy are also clear in the case of sacked Asian women cleaners at Hillingdon hospital over a year ago. With the blessing of union officialdom, Unison

conference, Scargill's SLP announced the recruitment of bakers union leader Jo Marino and Liverpool dockers leader Jimmy Nolan, as well as many other trade unionists. The split within Labour's ranks is widening.

From the beginning we have actively sought to intervene with our revolutionary Marxist programme into these developments. We gave critical support to and actively campaigned for the SLP's Brenda Nixon, who stood against New Labour in the Hemsworth by-election last February. We said that the issues she stood for — including repeal of the anti-union laws, renationalisation of the main privatised industries, rebuilding public services and an end to unemployment — spoke to the felt needs of the working class. At the same time we pointed out that these issues "cannot be addressed in the absence of hard-fought struggle which, pursued to the end, must shatter the framework of capitalism" (*Workers Hammer* no 149, February/March 1996).

The limitations of the SLP's programme are illustrated in relation to the tube strikes and the Liverpool dockers. Over half the RMT national executive, including Assistant General Secretary Bob Crow, have joined the SLP. The strikes in London Underground, one of the few public services which have not been privatised, could have provided an opportunity to launch a counteroffensive against the impact of privatisation in rail, and against the anti-union laws. Yet the tube strikes were conducted within a framework which accepted the hated anti-union laws. RMT leaders in the Underground instructed



Workers Hammer

Hillingdon hospital: militant Asian women workers in year-long struggle. With blessing of treacherous union misleaders, Unison members are crossing their picket lines.

cher government, its cops and courts, with active assistance from Neil Kinnock's Labour Party and the TUC bureaucrats, including the "lefts" who preached solidarity with the miners but left them to fight alone. As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* (no 67, March 1985):

"The NUM leadership under Arthur Scargill took this strike about as far it could go within a perspective of militant trade union reformism, and still it lost. Why? Because militancy alone is not enough. From day one it was clear that the NUM was up against the full power of the capitalist state. What was needed was a party of revolutionary activists rooted in the trade unions which fought tooth and nail to mobilise other unions in strike action alongside the NUM. But all Arthur Scargill had was the Labour Party, and it would rather see the NUM dead than organise to take on the bosses' state in struggle."

Today, to Scargill's credit, the SLP stands for the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, but his version of "socialism" harks back to the early post-World War II period, when much of British industry was nationalised and free health care and other welfare benefits were introduced by a Labour government. The welfare reforms of the 1940s were introduced to forestall the "spread of Communism" and went hand-in-hand with the crushing of potential social revolutions in Western Europe.

The world has changed dramatically since then with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, sold out by Stalinism. The problem with Scargill and the SLP is that they look not towards a revolutionary future, but to a social-democratic past. For revolutionary Marxists, the struggle for socialism, to put the working class in power, necessitates going forward to new October revolutions, to place the working class in power, in Britain and throughout the world. This requires building an internationalist, vanguard party of the working class, like the party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the 1917 October Revolution.

Scargill rejects this internationalist

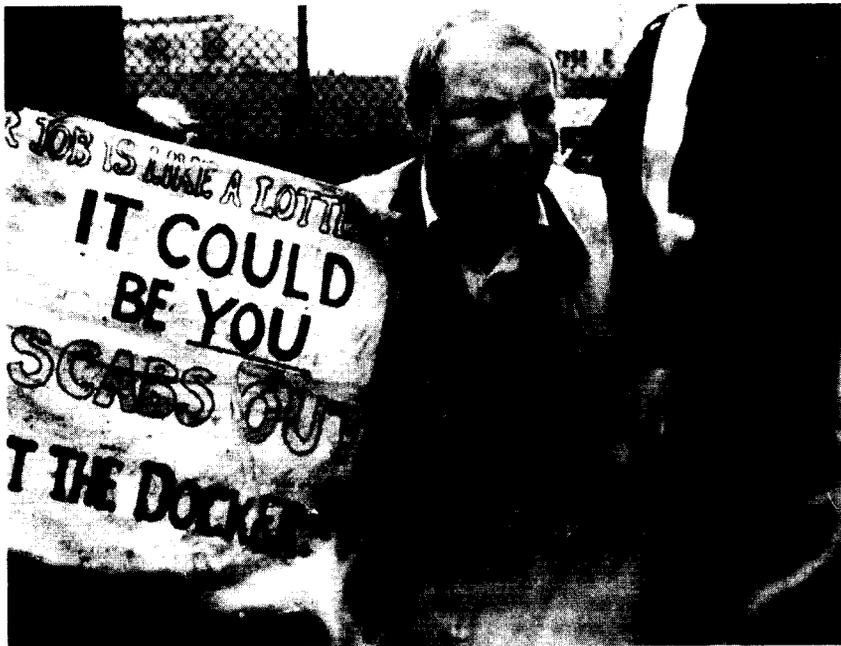
programme. While the SLP opposes the European Union (EU) as a bosses' club, and makes statements against "narrow nationalism", they in fact push little-England protectionism. Where this leads was illustrated in 1992 when Scargill ended up alongside arch racists like Winston Churchill junior in a class collaborationist campaign to "save British coal".

Such nationalism is counterposed to the fight against the government's racist anti-immigrant onslaught. It is reflected in the SLP's constitution which restricts membership to people who have "resided in Wales, Scotland, England or Ireland for more than one year". This is corrosive and weakens the possibility of fighting against the bosses' attacks like at Hillingdon where the Pall Mall company demanded that the Asian women strikers produce their passports, a blatant attempt to intimidate these workers as a prelude to sacking them.

At its founding conference the SLP did pass a motion against the racist Asylum Bill. But what's needed is to mobilise the workers movement on behalf of immigrants and minorities who constitute a key component of the integrated working class — for example car workers in the Midlands and postal, hospital and Underground workers in London. The fight for union rights and the rights of immigrants and minorities will either march forward together or fall back separately. Against the capitalists' attempts to divide and rule, we need to forge a revolutionary Leninist party that is a tribune of the people. Such a party will fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for union/minority mobilisations to stop fascist attacks.

The SLP and the "left"

The hallmark of the ostensible socialist left in Britain has historically been abject loyalty to Labour. A prime example is Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party, who persist with the tedious singsong: "Vote Labour to get the Tories out." Since their inception as a split from the Cliffites, Workers Power has preached *strategic*



Independent

Liverpool dockers knifed by TGWU bureaucrats. Shut down the Mersey docks! Smash the anti-union laws!

members have been crossing their picket lines every day. The bitter fruits of the bureaucracy's acceptance of the anti-union laws has left the way open for the government to prepare even greater attacks on the unions. A Tory Green Paper now proposes that calling a strike with "disproportionate or excessive" effects would be unlawful and any employer or other business could seek an injunction against a union. Even the most basic struggles of the working class and the oppressed highlight the need for a multi-racial revolutionary party built through uncompromising political struggle to oust the treacherous sellout Labourite misleaders!

Break with Labourism, "old" and New

At the TUC conference, in the debate on the minimum wage, Arthur Scargill received rapturous applause when he asserted "I'm fed up to the back teeth with people telling us not to rock the boat before a general election...." After the

station staff (who had themselves voted to strike) to go to work, while RMT drivers were on strike. Pitting one section of the union against another weakens the power of the union and is poisonous to workers' consciousness.

At the TUC conference Arthur Scargill argued for a one-day strike each week in support of the Liverpool dockers. When a Spartacist spokesman asked in a 16 October SLP London meeting if this was to be fought for by the SLP's supporters in the RMT, Scargill adamantly replied that this demand applied only to the TGWU, the dockers' union. The perspective which leaves each union to fight its "own" battles was the recipe which led to the defeat of the miners strike. It was used by so-called left TGWU leader Ron Todd to betray dockers' strikes which occurred twice during the 1984-85 miners strike. Todd sent the dockers back to work on both occasions, leaving the miners isolated, and paving the way for union busting in the docks in 1989.

The miners were defeated by the That-

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Tory/New Labour "law and order" frenzy

No to gun control!

On 13 March a demented gunman, Thomas Hamilton, entered a school gymnasium in Dunblane, Scotland and shot dead 16 small children, aged no more than six years old, and their teacher, before killing himself. This horrific slaughter unleashed a broad campaign for greater firearms control, especially the banning of all handguns. The Snowdrop petition initiated by bereaved parents and calling for a complete handgun ban gained more than 700,000 signatories. At the Labour Party conference in October Ann Pearston of the Dunblane Snowdrop group delivered an emotive appeal, while Tony Blair called for a complete ban on private ownership and possession of handguns. The government has announced legislation to outlaw, with limited exceptions like veterinary surgeons, all handguns above .22 calibre, with those of lesser calibre permitted only in secure gun clubs.

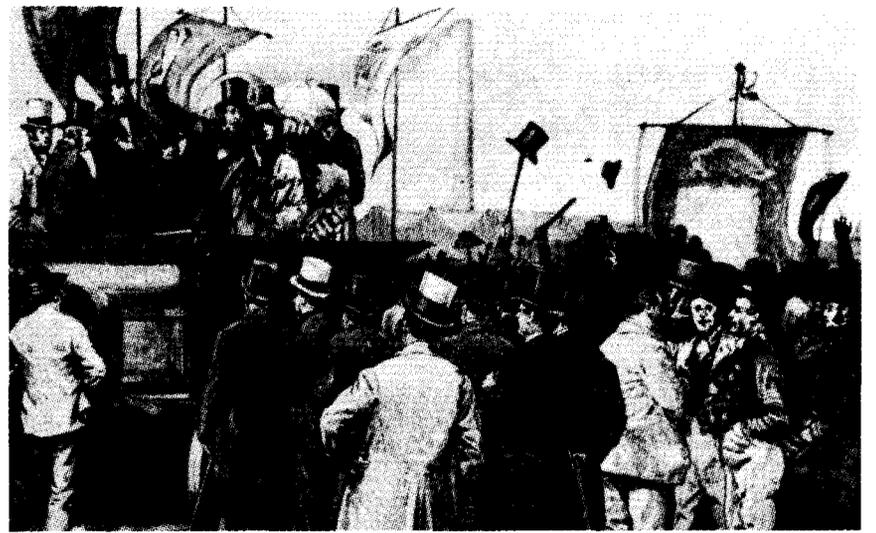
The crackdown on guns is part of an escalating frenzy in which the anguish and horror of the Dunblane tragedy have been cynically manipulated by the Conservatives and New Labour as they seek to outbid each other for the "law and order" mantle. While Labour hopes to portray the government as "soft on crime", the Tories' new proposals constitute a sweeping attack on democratic rights: longer, mandatory jail terms, less parole; a "national paedophile register"; a national police unit that can break into your home or bug your

phone; a crackdown on "benefits fraud"; and a witch hunting criminal records vetting system. Tory, Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians have also fallen over themselves to endorse the "morality crusade" of Frances Lawrence, the widow of the headmaster knifed to death by a youth outside his school.

As usual the ruling class has seized upon a distressing criminal incident to fuel hysteria and strengthen its monopoly over weaponry. Gun laws were tightened in 1988 after 16 people were murdered by a gunman in Hungerford a year before. The ruling class hypocritically bemoans society's "fractures" and violence, but these are of their making. The capitalists' aim is to contain growing social discontent with unemployment, poverty and capitalist austerity through a sharply increased arsenal of state repression.

As Marxists who champion the cause of all exploited and oppressed we oppose gun control from the standpoint of the struggle for workers revolution. In an article entitled "Revolution and the Right to Bear Arms: The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution", we wrote:

"But the ruling class does not believe in pacifism and has carefully armed its state to the teeth. The whole issue of gun control revolves around the question: do you trust *this state* to have a monopoly of arms? And the answer is refracted through the deepening class and racial



Kennington Common mass meeting, 10 April 1848. Insurrectionary Chartists upheld citizens right to bear arms.

polarization of this society. The core of the state, after all, is 'special bodies of armed men,' as Lenin explained in his 1917 pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, commenting on the writings of Marx and Engels."
— *Spartacist* no 43-44, Summer 1989

The whole history of gun control is of the ruling class trying to disarm the population, especially in periods of social discontent and struggle. British imperialism demands that the IRA's arms be "de-commissioned", ie, that the IRA be dis-

armed while the British Army remains in place with ever-enhanced lethal capacities, reinforcing RUC terror in Northern Ireland. Gun control is a pre-emptive strike, a bid for unimpeded counterrevolutionary suppression.

Reformist complacency and acceptance of the established ruling class order suffuses much of the British left. Militant Labour have their own "socialist" version of the Tory/New Labour law and order drive. They're for a ban on handguns more
continued on page 9

unity with the Labour Party, and view with horror any split in Labour's ranks.

As the SLP widens the split within Labour, WP's attitude to Scargill's party gets more tortured. WP's attitude to the SLP is coloured by their abiding hatred for "the Stalinist" Arthur Scargill. What bothers WP is not Scargill's reformist, "old" Labour framework, but the fact that he is splitting the Labour camp by standing candidates against New Labour. WP called for a vote for Blair's man John Trickett against the SLP in Hemsworth. However WP are forced to acknowledge that "some militants are voting with their feet and joining Scargill's new party" (*Workers Power*, October 1996). Despite many contortions in their press over what "tactical" attitude to take towards the SLP, their bottom line remains constant: elect a Labour government. At a 30 October London public meeting WP leader Paul Morris proclaimed that this "will be a great act of class revenge and class offensive against the Tories... a great victory!"

This is not the first time WP has opposed Scargill from the right. In the 1980s Scargill incurred the wrath of Thatcherites and Labour alike for his forthright denunciation of Polish Solidarność as anti-socialist, on the eve of the miners strike. WP supported counterrevolutionary Solidarność, and lined up against Scargill again during the strike, joining the union-bashing chorus demanding a ballot *after* the miners had gone into battle. This was a "loyalty oath" to Kinnock's Labour Party and the scabherding TUC bureaucrats in practice.

WP address their call for a "revolutionary platform" in the SLP to people like supporters of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) who are now in the SLP. This outfit has a record which often coin-

cides with WP's—the CPGB (then the *Leninist*), also denounced the "lack of a ballot" in the miners strike. The CPGB's credentials as a "left" opponent of Scargill are bogus today too. Like WP they refuse to oppose the anti-working-class Maastricht Treaty, and are part of the Militant-led Socialist Alliance, which is committed to electing a Blair government.

Inside the SLP the CPGB have run across supporters of the International



Heroic 1984-85 miners strike. Spartacist League fought for fighting Triple Alliance of rail, coal, dockers.

"Bolshevik" Tendency, whom they ended up describing in a one-word headline as "Wretched" (*Weekly Worker* no 162, 10 October). The IBT, having decided that "participation in the SLP was more important than maintaining a propaganda circle" (1917 no 18, 1996), then berates the ICL as "abstentionist" — because we haven't liquidated our party! Their own organisa-

tional dissolution into the SLP reflects their political adaptation to it. The 1917 article, for example, praises the SLP's call for British troops out of Northern Ireland but fails to point out that the SLP supports the imperialist "peace" process which is premised on the British Army remaining in place. Where we have pointed out that the SLP's "residency clause" would prohibit immigrants and asylum seekers from joining, 1917 replies

towards mainstream Labourism for trifling advantage, most likely when the SLP comes under heavy fire from the right. Arthur Scargill upholds the principle of not crossing a picket line. Not so the IBT. Last winter they frothed at the mouth when we nailed them for crossing picket lines in the New York City building workers strike. Inside the SLP former IBTers joined Stalinophobic anti-communists — supporters of Solidarność counterrevolution, and advocates of imperialist intervention for "poor little Bosnia" — in a common election slate at the founding conference.

Forge a revolutionary workers party!

We Spartacists have always had a sharp, aggressive programmatic counterposition to Labourism. As we wrote in "Revolutionaries and the Labour Party" in 1981:

"We seek to exacerbate the contradictions between the aspirations and objective interests of the working class base, centrally organised in the trade unions, and the policies and actions of the social-patriotic leadership. We wish to win the base to our programme and to the building of a Marxist party in *counterposition* to the Labour Party, in the course of mobilising for class struggle and through the exposure of Labour treachery by the communist vanguard."
— *Spartacist* no 33, Spring 1982

The purpose of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League, is to pursue this perspective, in order to bring about the overthrow of bloody British imperialism, its monarch, House of Lords and parliament, and to replace it with a federation of workers republics. For workers governments based on workers councils (soviets), part of a Socialist United States of Europe! ■

Imperialist "peace" process means "shoot-to-kill" murder

We reprint below a 23 September 1996 leaflet issued by the Spartacist League/Britain protesting the murder of unarmed IRA man Diarmuid O'Neill by cops in London. Barely two weeks after his murder two huge IRA bombs went off inside the British Army headquarters in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. The car bombs injured

into a frenzy, gloating over the "foiling of the IRA", linking reports of a massive haul of IRA arms and explosives found in North London with the dawn raids, proclaiming that O'Neill was shot in a "gun battle". Within days it emerged that there was no gun battle, the murdered man did not even have a weapon, he was riddled

Prevention of Terrorism Act is used to criminalise blacks, Asians and Irish people. The IRA bombing of British cities such as Manchester, which are criminal acts of indiscriminate terror, also fuel poisonous national hatred against the Irish, and serves to divide the working class. Trade unions must be mobilised to fight against anti-Irish chauvinism and racist attacks.

There have been predictable calls for an "inquiry" into the death of O'Neill, including from the Dublin government (even as Irish cops conducted their own dawn raids on suspected "terrorists"). The Stalker inquiry into shoot-to-kill activities of the security forces in Northern Ireland, which was abruptly halted, and the recent acquittal of the police killers of Wayne Douglas, Brian Douglas, and Shiji Lapite show that such inquiries usually result in a whitewash of acts of terror by the forces of the capitalist state. For workers, racial minorities and anyone designated an "enemy" of the state, there is no justice under capitalism.

John Major said he was "absolutely delighted" with the police operation against the IRA. Together with his Israeli counterpart Netanyahu, these "statesmen" are seriously committed to smashing up a "peace process". In Northern Ireland a wave of anti-Catholic terror has been unleashed. The sham Stormont "elections" in May, were set up to exclude Sinn Féin from the "talks" despite their large share of the Catholic vote, while permitting participation by every Loyalist paramili-

clear: Orange supremacy rules, and the oppressed Catholics better accept this.

Blair bans Adams, embraces Trimble

Three days after the murder of Diarmuid O'Neill, Blair effectively banned Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams from setting foot in the hallowed halls of Westminster Palace, where he was due to have a private meeting with Labour MPs Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn. Blair's office threatened to remove the whip from Corbyn and Benn, which would have meant expulsion from the Parliamentary Labour Party. Adams saved the blushes of the hapless Labour MPs by deciding to venture no closer than the grounds of the House of Commons, and wryly referred to a McCarthy-style witch hunt within the Labour Party. Blair's Ulster Unionist proclivities mean that Sinn Féin's pleading for a negotiated settlement will make no more advances under a Labour government than under Major.

The entire affair illustrates plainly the imperialist arrogance which saturates "Her Majesty's Labour Party". Labour MP Kate Hoey went ballistic against "IRA terrorism", yet Labour fully endorsed the US terror bombing of Iraq this month, adding a call for US ground troops in the Middle East. New Labour has made repeated overtures to the far-right wing of Ulster Loyalism. As Loyalist mobs massed in Drumcree this summer, Labour spokeswoman Mo Mowlam showed up to



An Phoblacht

Portadown: RUC forced a path for Loyalist provocation against Catholics in Garvaghy Road.

31 people, including 21 soldiers, one of whom, Warrant Officer James Bradwell subsequently died.

John Major was enraged over the spectacular IRA bomb and Bradwell's demise, ranting that "he was murdered in cold blood in the United Kingdom". This is predictable from the man who was "absolutely delighted" with the cop operation in which Diarmuid O'Neill was gunned down in cold blood. The Dublin government, who managed only a mealy-mouthed protest about O'Neill's murder, were vitriolic against the Sinn Féin and the IRA after the Lisburn bomb. Taoiseach John Bruton went so far as to compare the IRA to "Nazis and fascists". This is rich coming from Bruton who, together with Dick Spring's Labour Party, extol the virtues of outfits like the Progressive Unionist Party—a front for fascistic Loyalist death squads.

While the IRA's terrorist strategy is not our strategy, we defend the perpetrators of acts such as the Lisburn bomb against capitalist state retribution. We take a different attitude to IRA acts of indiscriminate terror, such as the 1993 Shankill bombing or this year's London and Manchester bombs, which are criminal acts from the standpoint of the working class. And we call for defence of the Catholic communities who constantly face the armed terror of the RUC and the British Army, and the Loyalist militias.

In the early morning of 23 September heavily armed cops brutally murdered Diarmuid O'Neill at his home in Hammer-smith, West London during a round-up of "IRA suspects". The bourgeois press went

with bullets after CS gas was fired into his room. His parents bitterly commented: "Our eldest son, Diarmuid, was never arrested; he can never be tried, nor can he be acquitted or convicted other than by the press who have not waited to have a full and proper picture before judging him. Instead, those who accused him took the law into their own hands and killed him."

The murder of Diarmuid O'Neill is only the latest in a series of provocations against Sinn Féin and the IRA by the British government, conducted in the name of the imperialist "peace" fraud. This is linked to a campaign to target so-called "IRA sleepers", ie anybody with an Irish background. Blair's despicable Labour Party backs the government's policy to the hilt while systematically playing their own version of the "Orange card". While screaming about "IRA terrorism" they back the brutality of the armed fist of the capitalist state—the cops and the British Army—while making overtures to representatives of the Loyalist militias. We say: British troops out of Northern Ireland now! We fight for workers revolution, on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea.

"Shoot-to-kill" has long been the de facto policy of British imperialism for those deemed to be "IRA suspects" in Northern Ireland; it was also the form of British "justice" meted out to three unarmed IRA supporters who were shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar in 1988. Press reports at the time of a supposed "bomb" in their car were subsequently shown to be completely false. The British cops are also notorious for racist killings of blacks and Asians; since 1990 *eighteen* have been killed in police custody. The draconian



Martin McCullough

Gerry Adams with Taoiseach John Bruton (centre) and Labour leader Dick Spring (left). Sinn Féin looks to anti-working class, anti-Republican Dublin government as part of imperialist "peace" fraud.

tary group. The "peace" talks have become a forum for Loyalist terror, resulting in massive pogromist mobilisations centred in Drumcree in July, which saw the British Army and RUC forcing a path for Loyalists to parade down the Catholic Garvaghy Road, brutalising Catholic residents in the process. During the months of July and August, as the North stood on the edge of a precipice, the message from the British imperialists was

visit (and sing the praises of) Progressive Unionist Party leaders such as Billy Hutchinson, who are frontmen for the Loyalist death squads. This year's Labour Party conference has invited David Trimble as a guest. Trimble rose to leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party by leading howling Loyalist mobs in Drumcree last year, which he repeated again this year. And while Labour leaders rail at the prospect of Gerry Adams entering Westmin-

Workers Power's "One night in Derry"

The following is an edited extract from a 19 September forum in London, given by Spartacist League Central Committee member David Strachan, entitled "Northern Ireland: Imperialist 'peace' fraud fuels Loyalist terror. For immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops!"

I want to talk about Workers Power, which in its last issue has two and a half pages on Ireland. There's an article by Richard Brenner entitled "One night in Derry" which is sort of "Gidget goes to Derry". It has this quality of a small boy following the fire engine. So he's there and he's really grooving on being there, on the [nationalist] march. And he says: "From time to time a marcher would hear my English accent, uncomfortable with the accent of the occupying army." This is the closest they get to saying anything about the British Army in all these two and a half pages. "Eventually one marcher handed me an anti-unionist sticker, 'so nobody gets the wrong idea about you', he explained. I fastened it to my lapel gratefully. 'No, no' he said, smiling broadly. 'Stick it on your feckin' mouth!'"

Now, if you know this individual, that might sound like a very good idea because it's quite certain that he wasn't opening his mouth to present revolutionary politics. But, broadly speaking I think it's rather sadder than that. People who have not been driven too far and are not too locked into a communal framework would welcome accents from the oppressor nation acting in solidarity. Anyway, Richard Brenner returned to Britain "with a thousand questions buzzing in [his] mind".

Brenner thinks to make a mild criticism of Martin McGuinness' speech. He says, "but I was struck by his silence about the role of the British". So I looked through all these two and a half pages of articles and there is no mention of the elementary demand for the withdrawal of the British

Army. That says something. They claim to be opposed to this peace process, and that no good will come of it. At the same time they urge a vote to the British Labour Party, whose Irish spokesman recently, for instance, was busy praising Billy Hutchinson's PUP. And they urge a vote in the South for the Labour Party, which has been in a series of coalition governments. They call for a break from the Irish bourgeoisie and yet they urge a vote for a popular front, a coalition with the bourgeoisie. It's no accident that they omit the demand for the withdrawal of British troops, who are the central underpinning of the so-called peace process.

One of the articles is a polemic against the SWP. The SWP has been talking about class unity, "class not creed" and other slogans like that. Now, it's pretty funny for a group to call for class unity and "class not creed" but not call for the British Army out. It's impossible in terms of any consistent politics. If you want to build a class perspective, that's an elementary thing. That's bad about the SWP, but Workers Power doesn't see that as central to denouncing the SWP either.

The present international situation is shaped by the defeat we suffered with the victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These defeats are not properly acknowledged by groups like Workers Power, because they were supporting the movements that overthrew the deformed workers states, supporting Solidarność for example. As a result there's been a lot of despair which is reflected in the way such groups have moved to the right. But there's a basic point which applies to Northern Ireland, and Ireland as a whole, and anywhere. It is that capitalism is a system which generates class struggle, which must inevitably create great explosions. And our job as revolutionaries is to

be ready for those explosions so that when they happen they are not dissipated or later drowned in reaction.

I want to give you another example. Sri Lanka is one of the most horrific and bloody places in the world presently. Last May in the middle of a lot of communalist

The point here is that even in the worst situations class struggle will erupt. What it requires is something more than what Workers Power provides. What Workers Power says when there have been episodes of cross-communal class struggle in Ireland is, well, yes it's true that in 1932 there were unemployed struggles, but straight afterwards there were massive communal pogroms against the Catholics. Well, if you are not victorious in class struggle, then of course you are going to



Irish Times

Northern Ireland: Labour leader Tony Blair visits Parachute Regiment butchers of 14 Catholics on Bloody Sunday. WP supports Irish nationalism and also says vote for Blair!

triumphalism, after what appeared to be a big victory for the army against the Tamils who are fighting for national liberation in the north and east of the island, a strike of power workers took place and for three days they closed down the island. This strike involved both Tamil and Sinhalese workers. The government had to back off and abandon some privatisation plans. In the aftermath the government—it is a popular front government, which includes the Communist Party and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, which was once known as Trotskyist—started a virulent slander campaign against the strikers. All over Colombo posters went up saying the strikers were saboteurs working for the Tigers and working for the other bourgeois party.

get reaction on the offensive. So their argument is simply a rationalisation for tailing nationalism, for not providing an independent class perspective. It fits together with their recent statements that they solidarise with the struggle for a capitalist Ireland and are fighting for national unity. There are the various caveats—they want the working class involved, they put the word socialist in—but the real question is national unity. In short to sustain their opportunist tailing of nationalist and social-democratic forces, Workers Power dismisses and denigrates the episodic but nonetheless real examples of cross-communal class struggle which are the crucial opportunities for a revolutionary vanguard. ■

ster Palace, they did not raise even a peep of protest in July when John Major officially received a group of Loyalist paramilitary representatives at Downing Street, including double-murderer John White who is known to have hacked to death SDLP Senator Paddy Wilson and his girlfriend Irene Wilson in 1973.

Imperialist-brokered "peace" deals are a feature of the "New World Order" proclaimed by the imperialists in the wake of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The much-vaunted Middle East "peace" process which established a supposed Palestinian autonomy was the model to which Sinn Féin looked when they decided to call a ceasefire and enter the "peace process". We Marxists have consistently warned against such illusions in imperialist "deals" which we

noted would necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed. The bitter reality of this warning is now being borne out in the bloody killings of Palestinians by Zionist forces. We say: Israeli troops and settlers out of the occupied territories!

The current wave of Zionist terror against the Palestinians and the escalation of communalist divisions in Northern Ireland starkly reveal that the strategy of nationalism is a bankrupt one, whether it is pursued through "armed struggle" or "negotiation". The petty-bourgeois nationalist politics of groups such as Sinn Féin/the IRA and the PLO inevitably seek a solution within the framework of capitalism. In both cases they have recently looked to US imperialism to act on their behalf against British imperialism and Zionist Israel respectively. But there can

be no progressive solution to the oppression of the Catholics in Northern Ireland, or of the Palestinians, short of workers revolution throughout the regions. Imperialist "solutions" in situations of interpenetrated peoples invariably include the prospect of intensified communalism, which means "ethnic cleansing", and fratricidal civil war.

Taking their cue from Labour, Militant Labour and the Alliance for Workers Liberty, who oppose the call for immediate withdrawal of British troops, have become "socialist" apologists for Loyalism, including sponsoring Loyalist murderer Billy Hutchinson in their meetings. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who endorsed the deployment of the troops in 1969 by the Labour government, now call for working-class unity between Protestants and Catholics, but refuse to call for troops out. The July events in Garvaghy Road illustrate graphically that the role of the army, together with the RUC, is to reinforce Protestant supremacy, which intensifies the sectarian division within the working class. The International "Bolshevik" Tendency peddled illusions in the imperialist "peace" deal, claiming that it would not necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholics.

Workers Power proclaim opposition to the "peace" deal but try to reconcile support for the IRA's nationalist, communalist programme for a capitalist "united" Ireland with calling for a vote to the pro-Unionist Labour Party. Their September issue carries a polemic against the SWP which neither calls for troops out nor mentions the SWP's refusal to do so.

The Socialist Labour Party, which

represents a break with Blair's New Labour, calls for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army. But this is contradicted by their support to the imperialist "peace process", which is premised on the army remaining in Northern Ireland. This points to the British nationalist perspective underlying the SLP's "old" Labour programme.

We of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) have a long record of fighting for a proletarian, internationalist perspective. The Catholics in Northern Ireland are currently an oppressed minority; we oppose the forcible unification of Ireland which would reverse the terms of oppression against the Protestant community—a scenario which is today being used by Loyalist demagogues to fan the flames of communalism. We fight for a workers republic in Ireland, as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. This requires an internationalist struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, also smashing the sectarian Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the vicious clericalist state in the south. "Social imperialism" has been a hallmark of Labourism throughout this century. In sharp contrast we stand in the tradition of the Chartists, who did not bow their heads before the monarch and were not filled with awed respect for the capitalist class, its state and institutions. Instead Chartism was republican, internationalist and revolutionary-minded. We fight to build revolutionary vanguard parties which are internationally united and imbued with this tradition. To find out more about the ICL, subscribe now to our publications. ■

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Imperialists kill Arabs and Kurds as election stunt

US, British imperialist butchers hands off Iraq!

Reprinted below is a Spartacist League/Britain leaflet of 5 September 1996.

In the early hours of Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, the United States launched a terrorist cruise missile attack on Iraq ordered by the Clinton White House. The US rulers were assisted by British imperialism, who allowed the bombers to refuel on the British-owned island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. We say: US/British imperialism — hands off Iraq! US and all imperialist forces out of the Persian Gulf! This latest attack on Iraq is a cynical attempt by the Clinton White House to boost the Democrats' electoral fortunes in November, and it is also meant to send a message to the racist US rulers' imperialist rivals, particularly Germany, that American imperialism is the military top dog in the world. Clinton and Dole kill Iraqis and Kurds as an election stunt! The British Tory government, and the Labour Party "opposition", give full backing to Clinton's bombing raids. Capitalism means racism and war!

In 1991, the US imperialist-led "allies" devastated Iraq, killing tens of thousands of people in the one-sided slaughter called "Operation Desert Storm". The Labour Party leadership gave its wholehearted support to this murderous war; the so-called left of the Labour Party like Tony Benn and the pacifists of CND supported a policy of starving Iraq through UN sanctions. In the aftermath of this slaughter, a brutal economic embargo remained in place which has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died of malnutrition and disease. Now Clinton is planning on tightening the screws, ripping up the lousy UN-brokered deal where Iraq could exchange oil for food. We say: Down with the imperialist embargo of Iraq! United Nations — den of thieves! Overthrow the bourgeoisie!

In the US, the same racist rulers, the Democrats and Republicans, who have condemned millions of welfare mothers and their children to death by "abolishing

welfare as we know it", bomb Iraq and have starved hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. The British Army enforces mass terror against oppressed Catholics on the streets of Northern Ireland. The racist state forces in Britain are responsible for scores of deaths of black people in police custody, and brutal incarceration and deportation of refugees and asylum seekers. The Labour Party in power has always done the bidding of British imperialism. We say: For class struggle at home against racist imperialism! Break with Labourism — for a revolutionary workers party!

Clinton and Major say the bombing of Iraq was in retaliation for the incursion of Saddam Hussein's army into the Kurdish "no fly" zone. Yet while the White House now weeps crocodile tears for the embattled and oppressed Kurdish people, US imperialism has been one of the main backers of Turkey, which has waged a war of annihilation against the Kurdish people. In 1994, the British government arrested and detained Kani Yilmaz, a representative of the Kurdistan Workers Party, on his way to a meeting with MPs in Westminster. We call for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan! Down with US and British imperialism! Hands off Iraq! Saddam Hussein should be dealt with by his own working people for his crimes against them. Down with the oil sheiks, emirs, Zionists, mullahs and military strongmen! Workers to power! For a socialist federation of the Middle East!

In the aftermath of the destruction of the former Soviet Union — a degenerated workers state — the imperialist bourgeoisies around the world see nothing standing in the way of their system of unbridled exploitation, poverty and war. As rivalries between the competing imperialist powers increase internationally, the racist rulers wage war against the working class, the poor, young people, immigrants and minorities at home and rain cruise missiles down on Iraq abroad.

On 3 September, the day of the first bombing raid, the Spartacist League/

Spartacus Youth Group participated in an emergency protest at the US embassy in London. Our contingent chanted: "Defend Iraq against imperialist attack!", "UN sanctions starve Iraq, Down with US/British attack!", "British troops out of Northern Ireland, out of the Balkans and

tion of Iraqi people", "US/Britain out of Diego Garcia!" and "1991: Jingo Labour Party supported Gulf War carnage".

The Spartacist League fights to build a revolutionary internationalist workers party to overthrow the imperialist rulers and build an egalitarian socialist society.



Workers Hammer

London, 3 September: ICL protests imperialist bombing of Iraq.

out of the Middle East" and "US-Britain: special relationship of butchers!" We carried signs including: "US/British imperialist butchers — no friends of Kurdish people", "For a socialist republic of united Kurdistan", "UN sanctions=mass starva-

The Spartacus Youth Group fights to win youth and students over to the side of the international working class and to become active partisans in its struggles against the imperialist bombers who starve minorities and the poor at home and Iraqis abroad. ■

Jamal...

(Continued from page 3)

The openly pro-prosecution Sabo simply exhibits in a blatant fashion the real workings of the frame-up system that is bourgeois "justice". The cops and their Fraternal Order of Police have waged a frenzied campaign to kill Jamal. The courts on every level have turned a truly blind eye to the overwhelming evidence of Jamal's innocence. The prisons lock up fighters for black freedom like Jamal and Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt). All of these are the essential components of the capitalist state, which is not some "neutral" body but exists to administer the exploitation of the working class by the handful of rulers who own the wealth of society. From the very origins of the US, when black enslavement was enshrined in the US Constitution, racial oppression has been built into the foundations of American economic and social life, enforced by deadly cop terror. At the summit of this apparatus of racist repression is the institutionalised barbarism of the death penalty.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was targeted by the state for death from the time he was a young leader of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party. This continued when Jamal was a widely known journalist who exposed the racist reality of daily life in Philly and later became a supporter of the MOVE organisation. As Wolkenstein said at the 1 October press conference: "We have an innocent man who's on death row, an innocent man who's been framed up by the police and prosecution. Mumia was subject to daily surveillance from the time he was 15 years old by the FBI, part of the COINTELPRO program", which sought to "neutralise" the Black Panthers and other black and leftist activists.

What saved Jamal from execution last year was the powerful wave of protest that broke out on his behalf around the world.

As we wrote last year in the PDC pamphlet *The Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal*:

"In Clinton/Gingrich's America, what possibility is there for a valiant fighter against oppression like Mumia Abu-Jamal to find justice in the criminal court system?..."

"Jamal should not have spent a day in jail in the first place, and he should not be in prison now. He should be allowed to join his family and to join all those who seek and struggle for a society in which there will be no racist frame-ups and legal lynchings. While Jamal's lawyers pull every possible legal lever to win his freedom, what's urgently needed is to mobilize millions of workers and the oppressed worldwide to demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty!"

For more information about the campaign to free Mumia, contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX, Tel: 0171-485 1396. Contribute to Mumia's legal defence: send/make payable to PDC and write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque. Letters of solidarity to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg PA 15370-8090, USA. ■

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The Norden "Group": Polymorphous Opportunism

Racist state killing machine

Recently in London, two black men of Nigerian origin became the latest to die in the custody of racist cops. On 4 October, Fred Akiyemi died several days after falling from his fifth floor flat. As the *Caribbean Times* (10 October) reports: "His 'fall' coincided with a visit from the police, 'part of an ongoing enquiry'". Three days later George Davis was followed by cops, who alleged he was driving "erratically". More cops were called, and Davis was arrested and taken to Marylebone police station. His condition was "okayed" by the cops at 5am. When a doctor examined him less than an hour later, he was so concerned he called an ambulance. Davis died soon after.

An Egyptian PhD student, 33-year-old Ahmed El Gammal also died recently in police custody. Like Davis he was declared "fit" by the cops; five hours later he was dead. These deaths in police custody, scarcely noticed by the bourgeoisie's press, highlight an escalating toll. In September the Home Office reported a 170 per cent increase in two years, and a staggering 50 deaths alone this year to April. In racist Britain the targets of cop terror are disproportionately blacks, Asians, Irish and other minorities, the young, the poor — society's most vulnerable. The struggle against racist cop terror

is a vital issue for the entire workers movement whose own struggles on picket lines run up against the scabberding cops and courts time and again.

It's standard operating procedure that the courts stand by their thugs in blue. A 7 August inquest jury decided on death by "misadventure" in the case of Brian Douglas, a black man killed in London last year when cops beat him over the head with a heavy truncheon. In October a similar whitewash occurred over the death of Irishman Richard O'Brien. A vile attack by the cops left this father of seven with 31 separate injuries. An inquest jury found he'd been unlawfully killed, but the Crown Prosecution Service laid no charges. There is no justice for working people and minorities under capitalism!

Behind the deaths in cop custody lies the government's sinister "law and order" campaign. In the past year alone several new laws and Home Office regulations, many passed with the active support of Blair's Labour Party, have been added to the arsenal of racist laws targeting minorities, immigrant communities and political refugees. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has been strengthened and workplace raids and stop-and-search are on the increase. Draconian anti-asylum laws paralleled by changes in social security regulations



Brian Douglas killed by cops in Kennington, London, May 1995.

mean that political refugees are left with the choice of starving or being forced back to places where they face torture or death. We say: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants and their families!

In late October the government announced another handful of vicious "law and order" bills. All this repressive, racist legislation only emboldens fascists like those of the British National Party to carry

out their murderous attacks on blacks, Asians, Irish, gays and others in which they are invariably protected by the state. Black teenager Stephen Lawrence was murdered by fascist thugs, and the courts and cops worked overtime to shield the killers. The cops are an essential part of the capitalist state which is the instrument for maintaining the class rule of the bourgeoisie, the special bodies of armed men whose role is to protect capitalist private property through their monopoly of armed violence. Groups like Militant Labour who believe that "local government police committees" will weed out "any racist elements or fascist sympathisers" in the cops, and who think, along with the Socialist Workers Party, that the cops are "workers in uniform", feed the lie that the capitalist state is reformable, and politically disarm the working class.

For the ruling class, in this post-Soviet "New World Order", sharpened imperialist rivalries dictate intensified exploitation and racist oppression. We fight to build a revolutionary vanguard party which, like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, understands that the capitalist apparatus of repression and terror cannot be reformed, but must be swept away through workers revolution. ■

Gun control...

(Continued from page 5)

sweeping than the Tories' plan, and fret that even this will not be enough. Their call for "greater public control" over gun clubs and licences through "democratically elected committees" (*Militant*, 25 October) is an appeal, dressed up in "democratic garb", to the same bourgeois state whose racist cops brutally murdered Diarmuid O'Neill, Brian Douglas and so many others.

Workers Power at least manages a mealy-mouthed defence of the right to own a gun. But writing under the headline "Gun Control is not the answer" WP calls for "people's justice" and "people's courts", merely another version of Militant's position (*Workers Power* November). Their declaration that this is "a remote goal" for the future can't obscure that their line is a bridge to Militant's "law and order" reformism. The Communist Party of Great Britain declares "Arm

the class, Disarm the state" (*Weekly Worker*, 24 October) and polemicalises against Militant while planning a joint election campaign with them in the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

The right to bear arms is no peculiar American "exception" or preoccupation: their "Bill of Rights" — the first Ten Amendments to the US Constitution — was drawn heavily from earlier British experience with our kings. The 1689 Bill of Rights stipulated "That the Subjects which are Protestants, may have Arms for their Defence suitable to their Condition, and as are allowed by Law" and the 1689 Scottish Claim of Right had a similar point. The revolutionary Chartists upheld the citizens' right to bear arms. The basis of Britain's current quite sweeping gun controls is the 1920 Firearms Act, introduced not to combat "armed crime" as the government claimed but in response to the Bolshevik workers revolution and armed national uprising in Ireland. Writing in *The Guardian Weekend* (1 June) journalist Paul Mungo notes:

"Governments tend to disarm those they distrust. The English Bill of Rights, while conferring the right to bear arms on Protestants, also sought to disarm Catholics. Until the last century, Catholics and Dissenters possessed the right only sporadically. In this century, the various gun-control measures have exhibited a class bias: it was never the intention to proscribe the rights of landowners and farmers to hold arms for hunting or vermin control; instead, the measures were targeted almost exclusively at disarming the volatile urban proletariat, whose members might be expected to react violently to perceived government injustice. Or, if you prefer, engage in criminal acts such as drug-trafficking."

Indeed today the "war on drugs" is a codeword for increased police repression against black and other impoverished inner-city communities. And the current particular focus on handguns reeks of class prejudice. There was a time at least into World War I when officers in the British Army were "gentlemen" who purchased their own sidearms, an expense beyond most of the population. But in the

last twenty years there has been a huge growth in gun clubs catering for more plebeian shooters, notably users of handguns. These folk are not generally the type to wear tweed and Barbour, or shoot grouse. Not for them a weekend at some country mansion where the ruling class officer corps, City directors and politicians cement their common ties.

It would be suicidal for the proletariat to concede a monopoly on firearms to the imperialist ruling class which carried out the 1919 Amritsar bloodbath, the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, and which with US imperialism today enforces an economic boycott of Iraq which has led to the deaths of more than 600,000 children. To maintain their class rule the capitalists will carry out the most merciless slaughter. Just as the bourgeois revolutionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries understood that an armed citizenry could stay the hand of reaction and despotism, so today the working class and its vanguard must stand in this tradition and uphold the right to bear arms. ■

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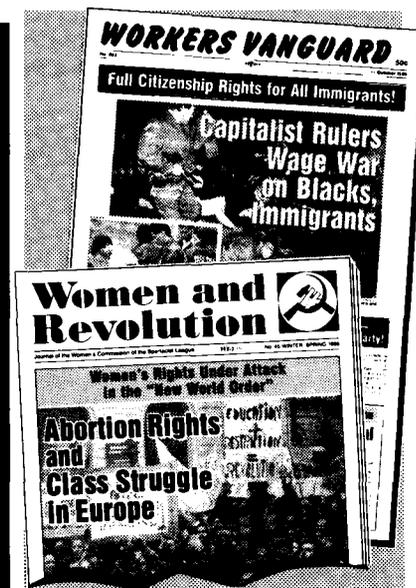
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The Cliffite opportunists pose as "revolutionary" opponents of the capitalist rulers, but they take their cue from the reformist labour misleaders, who are themselves (in Lenin's words) "social-imperialist" lackeys of the bourgeoisie. But over Afghanistan, the Cliffites even surpassed their reformist Labourite big brothers in abject treachery. The British Cliffites were actually able to make a real contribution to the imperialists' anti-Soviet drive by making common cause with... right-wing Tories. In 1980, SWP leader Paul Foot, writing in his column in the bourgeois *Daily Mirror*, attacked the virulently anti-Communist Conservative government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher *from the right* by denouncing the possibility that British meat exports to the Soviet Union might be going to Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. The incendiary "revelations" in Foot's column provoked an anti-Soviet frenzy on the floor of Parliament, helping to justify an escalation of imperialist support to the Afghan *mujahedin*.

Though particularly flagrant in their embrace of imperialist anti-Sovietism over Afghanistan, the Cliffites were far from unique on the left. After some initial zig-zagging, the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat of the late Ernest Mandel issued a statement in 1981 toeing Reagan/Thatcher's line, with the call "For an End to the Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan!" The political bandits of David North's Workers League and its "International Committee" screamed along with the US imperialist rulers that the Soviet intervention was an attack on "the national rights and feelings of the Afghan people" (*Bulletin*, 8 July 1986).

Somewhat more contradictory was the centrist Workers Power group in Britain, which arose as a split from Cliff's organisation. In response to the imperialist uproar over the Soviet intervention, Workers Power took a step to the left, breaking from Cliff's absurdly anti-Marxist theory that the Soviet Union was "state capitalist" (without either a capitalist class or a capitalist economy) and announcing its formal adherence to Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

But while not calling for an immediate Soviet withdrawal at the time, Workers Power joined the rest of the anti-Soviet Stalinophobic left in "condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan" as "counterrevolutionary" (*Workers Power*, February 1980). When the Kremlin later pulled out of Afghanistan, Workers Power turned around and denounced the withdrawal. And all the while, they vituperated against our call, "Hail Red Army!" Behind Workers Power's insistence that the eminently progressive Soviet intervention was counterrevolutionary lay a deeply ingrained anti-Soviet prejudice inherited from their Cliffite origins. In their Stalinophobic quest to distance themselves from the Red Army, WP called on a fictional Afghan proletariat and even "feudal elements" to "organise their own state power" (*Workers Power*, February 1980), when the point was precisely that social revolution could only come from without.

Slimy centrists, Workers Power time and again sided with imperialism: "critically" championing Reagan/Thatcher's favourite "trade union", Polish Solidarność, while acknowledging Solidarność in power would mean capitalist restoration; supporting the anti-Soviet, fascist-infested nationalist movement in Lithuania in 1990; and standing literally on Yeltsin's barricades in August 1991 as he consolidated the headlong drive for capitalist counterrevolution.

But the Cliffites themselves showed no centrist qualms, consistently supporting the imperialist line. As Gorbachev was preparing the Soviet withdrawal, the ISO gloated: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan" (*Socialist*

Worker [US], May 1988). This comparison is truly grotesque! The Cliffites see no essential difference between mediaeval fundamentalist killers coming to power in Kabul and the victorious *social revolution* — which they refused to support — that drove US imperialism out of Indochina! In Britain the SWP enthused: "The Russian army clearly isn't invincible. The Mojahedin victory will encourage the opponents of Russian rule everywhere in the USSR and Eastern Europe" (*Socialist Worker*, 4 February 1989). That it certainly did.

With the fate they welcomed having come to pass and its horrendous consequences daily described in the bourgeois press, Cliff's SWP can only wring its hands and hypocritically moan about the "long series of tragedies to beset the Afghan people" (*Socialist Worker*, 5 October). Even now, with the Soviet Union gone, the Cliffites continue to whitewash the role of the Islamic fundamentalist anti-woman terrorists and their Pakistani and US backers, writing that "Taliban's success comes from popular disenchantment with the leaders who oppose it" and complaining that "the Taliban has no answer to the terrible crisis of the country". These fundamentalist reactionaries *do* have an "answer" — a programme of all-sided reaction and extirpation of even the most modest social advances for women!

Again borrowing from Western imperialist propaganda, the sole fig leaf that the Cliffites and the rest of the anti-Soviet camp offered for their line was that the Soviet intervention violated Afghan "national self-determination". For Marxists, the question of self-determination is subordinated to overriding class considerations — in the case of Afghanistan, defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and the struggle against feudal reaction and women's oppression. Moreover, Afghanistan is not a unitary nation, as the Cliffites assert, but a cauldron of distinct, feuding nationalities (as well as tribal and other ethnic groupings) divided by artificial borders: the Pashtuns extend into Pakistan and the Uzbeks into the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, while the Tajik people overlap the border with both Tajikistan and Iran. The hue and cry about the "national rights" of "poor little Afghanistan" had about as much validity as the cries of "states' rights" raised by the Confederacy during the American Civil War and again 100 years later by diehard Dixie segregationists. Precisely because the Soviet Union was not capitalist/imperialist, the Red Army intervention into Afghanistan, rather than deepening oppression and reinforcing the forces of reaction as imperialism does in its semi-colonies, posed the possibility of bringing progress to that backward land of fragmented peoples.

In a different sense, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) also obsessed about the borders of Afghanistan. For the CPGB with its left-nationalist outlook, fundamentally derived from the Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country", the issue was a supposed "proletarian dictatorship" in Afghanistan. While correctly noting that the SWP and others were "inexorably drawn into the arms of imperialist-directed counterrevolution", they even granted that the Spartacists "stood up to the tidal wave of anti-Sovietism" (*Weekly Worker*, 17 October). The fact of the matter is, the CPGB didn't. They excoriate us for our "Hail Red Army!" slogan, claiming it "downplay[ed] the criminal nature of the Red Army's intervention — ie, the cynical murder of Hafizullah Amin and 97 other PDPA government members, the leaders of the Afghan revolution". Opposed to the "export of revolution", the CPGB thought the only role of the USSR should have been as auxiliary to this "revolution". Like Workers Power but for its own reasons, CPGB denied what was posed was defence of the Soviet Union.

The CPGB claims we were unable to grasp the "paradoxical nature of the Soviet intervention in 1979 — which was to extinguish the flame of the revolution while defending the *husk* that remained". They view the question strictly within the confines of Afghanistan, whereas the decisive question was in the Soviet Union — proletarian political revolution or capitalist counterrevolution. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was the last time the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy undertook a progressive act. The withdrawal of the Red Army was the direct precursor to the bureaucracy's sell-out of East Germany and subsequently the Soviet Union itself.

Armed with our programme of proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist

cracy still operates on the basis of the nationalized property established by the revolution. That is the decisive criterion for our evaluation of the question."

— Reprinted in "We Are the Party of the Russian Revolution!" *WV* no 181 (11 November 1977)

Stalinist treachery and imperialist terror have left Afghanistan devastated, with a total breakdown of transportation, trade and economic life. The country has been turned into a patchwork of regional fiefdoms ruled by ethnically-based warlords, with the Taliban, based on the predominant Pashtun grouping, controlling the gutted capital and two-thirds of the country in the south, while the Uzbek region in the north is ruled by Abdul Rashid Dosh-



Students at Kabul University in the 1980s. Soviet military presence opened possibility of liberation for Afghan women.

bureaucracy, we Trotskyists fought against counterrevolution. The CPGB, operating within the framework of nationalist Stalinism, accepted counterrevolution as a *fait accompli*. Thus they denounced us for our campaign in defence of Jalalabad, and for our fight for a red Germany of workers councils in a socialist Europe against capitalist *Anschluss*.

We are the party of the Russian Revolution!

As Afghanistan demonstrated, the Cliffites' ludicrous "state capitalist" analysis and their posture as leftist opponents of Stalinism were simply a cover for their profound programmatic hostility to the homeland of the October Revolution. From the time of the 1950-53 Korean War, when Cliff broke from Trotskyism in refusing to defend North Korea against US and British imperialism, the Cliffites' supposed "third camp" ("Neither Washington nor Moscow") was nothing but an empty shell, as they continually lined up with imperialism (first in a veiled way, then openly) against the Soviet Union.

Opposition to Stalinism from a revolutionary, Trotskyist standpoint meant defence of the social foundations of the Soviet Union — centrally the existence of a planned collectivised economy, a necessary precondition for the creation of an international classless, communist society. The Trotskyist call for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist usurpers was premised on our defence of the gains of October, including our unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack. In his 1939 speech, cited above, James P Cannon explained:

"The Soviet Union emerged from the October revolution as a workers' state. As a result of the backwardness and poverty of the country and the delay of the world revolution, a conservative bureaucracy emerged and triumphed, destroyed the party and bureaucratized the economy. However, this same bureau-

tum and Ahmed Shah Massoud's militia lords over the Tajiks. While Dostum and Massoud's forces are today painted as supposed "moderates" relative to the Taliban, Massoud remains allied with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, one of the most savage fundamentalist leaders during the PDPA regime.

The martyrdom of Afghanistan is a direct product of the counterrevolutionary cataclysm which resulted in the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This has emboldened reactionary forces not only in backward areas like Afghanistan but in West Europe and the US as well. While various bourgeois commentators are now wagging their fingers over the horrors being carried out by *Islamic* fundamentalists in *Afghanistan*, "family values" Christian fundamentalists in the US also aim to drive women back into the home. This is revealed not only in attacks by "right to life" terrorists on women seeking abortions but in the growing barbarism of the racist capitalist "justice" system.

The horrors being played out in Afghanistan today are the starkest expression of the choice which has been posed, with increasing sharpness and urgency, throughout this century: socialism or barbarism. Young fighters against social oppression must study and learn the lessons of past struggles and defeats, including the world-historic defeat represented by the destruction of the remaining gains of the October Revolution, if they are to go forward to win new victories. We of the International Communist League fight for a new October, both in this country and around the world. We fight to forge Bolshevik parties internationally to lead the workers — standing at the head of all the oppressed — to power and to a society in which capitalist oppression and enslavement of women are relics of a barbaric past.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 654, 25 October 1996.

Bitter fruit of the imperialists' anti-Soviet dirty war

Afghanistan: hell for women

On 27 September, Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic militia. Four years of horrific rule under a shifting "coalition" of warring factions of reactionary Islamic *mujahedin* ("holy warriors") had already brought Kabul to the point of famine and devastation. Now the Taliban killers have begun to wreak bloody vengeance against any vestige of social progress overlooked by the vultures who preceded them. One of their first targets was Najibullah, the pro-Soviet Afghan president ousted by the *mujahedin* in 1992, who was dragged from his sanctuary in the city's United Nations compound and beaten, shot and hanged, his body left strung up on the street for several days. Justifying this atrocious act of savagery, a member of Kabul's Taliban council railed that Najibullah "was against Islam. He was a criminal, and he was a Communist."

Without question the chief victims in the consolidation of Islamic fundamentalist reaction in the aftermath of the Soviet military withdrawal in 1989 have been Afghanistan's miserably oppressed women. While the civil war has now resumed, with ethnically based militias which supported the former *mujahedin* regime launching an offensive against Taliban positions outside Kabul, all the contending forces are deeply reactionary.

Among the first acts of the Taliban after seizing Kabul were to bar women from all work, to close down all girls' schools and to order women to remain locked in their homes in *purdah* (social isolation) unless accompanied by a man. As a result, almost all educational facilities have been shut down, since 75 per cent of teachers are women, overwhelmingly trained during the Soviet presence in the 1980s. This has also created chaos in hospitals and orphanages that were primarily staffed by women. Given fundamentalist taboos against women being treated by male doctors, the elimination of female medical personnel means a death sentence for countless women and girls.

The *Los Angeles Times* (2 October) reports that "women who have ventured onto Kabul's dusty streets without cloaking themselves from head to toe in opaque, suffocating gowns have been lashed with whips or fan belts". The situation there is today so dire that better-off Afghans are seeking refuge for their daughters in neighbouring Iran, which is under the rule of Islamic fundamentalist ayatollahs. The Taliban's orgy of woman-hating terror adds the finishing touches to the programme of social reaction implemented by the *mujahedin* cut-throats who took power four years ago and revived the stoning of women for adultery and "immodesty", while subjecting the entire population to a reign of terror and plunder.

While hypocritically distancing itself from some of the "excesses" in the nightmare of dark reaction which has befallen the women of Kabul, Washington has been the chief force in the Taliban's rise to power. Through its client regime in Is-

lamic Pakistan, US imperialism has for years funnelled vast sums of money and high-tech military equipment to various *mujahedin* factions, from the notorious Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who rose to promi-

1980s was the chief bulwark against Islamic fundamentalist reaction. For over a decade, Washington armed the *mujahedin* murderers to the hilt, building them up to wage a proxy war against the So-

extent their limited means allowed, to bringing about the horror which is today being inflicted upon Afghan women.

The "Russian question" point-blank

In the 19th century, utopian socialist Charles Fourier observed that social progress can be gauged by the status of women in society. This is unambiguously clear in the case of Afghanistan. For Marxists, as indeed for all opponents of women's oppression, taking the side of those fighting the US-backed Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan was as clear and obvious a position as was the support of Karl Marx's First International for the Union forces led by Abraham Lincoln in the American Civil War against slavery.

How, then, could self-avowed socialists like Cliff's SWP/ISO line up with those fighting for the enslavement of women in Afghanistan? The answer lies in their virulent hostility to the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state. From the moment the Bolshevik Revolution toppled capitalism in Russia in 1917 until the capitalist counterrevolution led by Boris Yeltsin several years ago, the imperialists' central aim was focused on restoring capitalist exploitation in the Soviet Union and overturning the social gains which remained despite decades of Stalinist degeneration. That is why the entire apparatus of political indoctrination in the United States and Western Europe was geared to producing hatred for and fear of the Soviet Union. Because groups like the SWP bought into the anti-Soviet programme propagated by the bourgeoisie, they lined up with any and all forces opposed to the Stalinists in power — from sadistic Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan and Iran to the Vatican-backed anti-Communist, anti-Semitic and anti-woman *Solidarność* movement in Poland.

Historic American Trotskyist leader James P Cannon, in waging a factional struggle within the then-revolutionary US Socialist Workers Party against the Shachtman/Burnham minority which argued to abandon the Marxist position of military defence of the Soviet Union, said in 1939:

"The question of the Russian revolution and the Soviet state which is its creation has drawn a sharp dividing line through the labor movement of all countries for 22 years. The attitude taken toward the Soviet Union throughout all these years has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades and degrees of waverers, backsliders and capitulators to the pressure of the bourgeois world."

In the case of Afghanistan, this dividing line not only separated revolutionaries from reformists, but proponents of social progress from those who backed, openly or otherwise, mediavalist barbarism.

Uniquely in modern history, the rights

continued on page 10



Independent

Seizure of Kabul by Taliban militias (above) has led to intensified Islamic fundamentalist reign of terror against Afghan women, imprisoned at home or forced to wear head-to-toe "veil".



China/NY Times

nence by throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women students at Kabul University in the 1970s, to, most recently, the Taliban cut-throats. Even as women were being beaten and brutalised in the streets of Kabul, Clinton administration spokesmen rushed to meet with Taliban representatives, hailing the efforts of these mediavalist killers and torturers to "liberate Afghanistan".

The unspeakable hell which has descended on women, teachers, doctors, working people, ethnic and religious minorities and all secular elements in Afghanistan is the bitter fruit of imperialism's unrelenting drive to undermine and destroy the former Soviet Union, whose military presence in Afghanistan in the

viet Army and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). *But the blood of every unveiled woman butchered by the Afghan fundamentalists is also on the hands of those leftist organisations internationally which lined up behind imperialism's anti-Soviet dirty war in Afghanistan!*

For years, groups like Tony Cliff's social-democratic Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and their US co-thinkers of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), marched in lockstep behind Washington's drive for the defeat of Soviet troops by the mullah-led forces who were openly fighting for the enslavement of women in Afghanistan. Now they have got what they wanted. *These self-styled "socialists" contributed, to the*