



SWP says: pressurise capitalist government

Labour turns the screw on the working class

Labour's commitment to serving decaying British capitalism, which was plain as a pikestaff before, is rapidly being proven in office. Blair has already deployed the armed fist of the capitalist state against the oppressed, seen in the massive army and RUC invasion of a Catholic enclave in Portadown, Northern Ireland this July, and the use of riot cops in August against asylum seekers in Campsfield detention centre. Another round of Thatcherite attacks against the working class is in the works, targeting the public sector unions, and the threat of union-busting privatisation hangs over London Underground and the postal service. Blair is committed to doing what Labour governments invariably do—strikebreaking, attacking the working class and oppressed—in the service of the capitalist rulers.

In addition, those who today lead the Labour Party, a bourgeois workers party, are on a course which will result in them leading a bourgeois *liberal* party—something that they yearn for. Blair has appointed a host of millionaire business magnates to government posts and set up a joint cabinet committee with the Liberal Party as a precondition for more systematic class collaboration. This harks back to the strike-breaking Lib-Lab pact during the Callaghan Labour government in the 1970s, and indeed to Ramsay MacDonald's National Government of 1931, which from the standpoint of the working class was a historic betrayal. Blair is searching for a regroupment of bourgeois forces as part of refashioning the Labour Party into an outright capitalist party, which means reverting back to the conditions of a century ago, before trade unions broke with the bourgeois Liberal Party and founded the Labour Party.

Since the Soviet Union was destroyed by counterrevolution in 1991-92, the ruling class perceives an opportunity to return to a situation they would prefer—to rule without the mediating influence of reformist parties. The "Blair project", which involves severing the union links to the Labour Party, is very much tied to this aim.

Blair is very keen to sever the union link but less keen to reject union members' money. In protest at the way the union bureaucrats are being sidelined within the party, right-wing AEEU General Secretary Ken Jackson announced that his union had cancelled a cheque for £250,000 to Labour. This hit Labour where it hurts, in the bank accounts, which are substantially in the red following the up-market election campaign. Until Labour secures alternative sources of funding it is still dependent on substantial donations (estimated at £11m per annum) from the unions. But while the bureaucracy may protest, and from time to

The working class needs a revolutionary party!

time withhold the unions' political funds in an effort to strike a bargain with Blair, the union ties to the Labour Party are likely to be formally severed whether the union bureaucrats like it or not. The situation is entirely of the union bureaucracy's own making, since they share the same political outlook as New Labour, as Jackson confirmed when he said, "we made New Labour possible".

The problems the working class face today, including the massive web of

through tacit or overt collaboration on "national" issues while standing for elections to parliament. But Labour in government is a capitalist government. Capitalism is a social system of class rule, not merely a set of government policies, and fundamental change in the interest of the working class cannot be achieved through the "Mother of Parliaments" while leaving the capitalist state machinery intact. The working class cannot simply take over the existing apparatus of the capitalist state;

the oppressed will not be met through a Labour government, or through a reconstitution of the old relationship between Labour and the unions, which has served to strangle workers' struggles, as is graphically seen in the case of the Liverpool dockers. The dockers have battled for *two years* in defence of a basic principle: *never cross a picket line*. Their struggle has repeatedly inspired solidarity action by workers from the US to Australia and Japan. Yet from the very start TGWU leader Bill Morris and Co have done all in their power to knife their struggle. At the biennial TGWU conference in July, Morris tried to get the union to disown the dockers completely. But this proposal was angrily voted down by TGWU delegates who included representatives from British Airways cabin crews fighting a union-busting attack by Tony Blair's friend, Bob



Labour has always served "queen and country". The "Blair project" means turning Labour into outright capitalist party.

Thatcherite anti-union laws which the Labour government will enforce, is a product of class-collaboration and betrayal of struggles, in which the 1984-85 miners strike was pivotal. Now there is a palpable sense that Labour and the unions can no longer go on in the same old way. The union leaders are so tied to the capitalist order that they reject class struggle, the very means by which the unions were built.

The question posed quite starkly in Britain today is: what kind of party does the working class need, to actually represent their interests, independently of the capitalists? While the Labour Party was born out of the basic class division in society, even in the days when it formally claimed to be "socialist" it has always been based on the illusion that the way to advance the cause of the workers is

that state must be shattered and replaced by one based on organs of working-class rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A genuine workers party must be based on the understanding that only through the mass mobilisation of workers in struggle can the workers fight for their interests and in defence of all the oppressed. The best example in history was the Bolshevik Party led by VI Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which led the workers of Russia to power in the October Revolution of 1917 and created the first workers state in history. The Spartacist League is fighting to build such a party, forged in sharp political struggle against the Labour misleaders.

Labourite treachery and the Liverpool dockers fight

More than ever before, it is obvious that the felt needs of working people and

Ayling. UNISON bureaucrats similarly disowned Asian women members sacked from Hillingdon hospital; union officials called the cops to prevent them speaking at a commemoration of the Tolpuddle martyrs.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) who claim to champion "rank and file" opposition to the bureaucrats, are making an all-out effort to channel anger against Morris and the TGWU tops into the dead end of lobbying the vehemently anti-working class Labour government. The Socialist Labour Party (SLP) is wedded to the same conception. At a Liverpool conference of dockers support groups in July, members of the Spartacist League argued strongly against a motion presented by Jimmy Nolan (chairman of the shop stewards committee and a member of the SLP),

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On the referendums in Scotland and Wales

During this year's election campaign, Blair pompously declared that even if Scotland achieves a devolved parliament "sovereignty rests with me as an English MP, and that's the way it will stay". In September, referendums will take place in Scotland and Wales. The referendum in Scotland offers a new parliament (and the option of limited tax varying powers) with administrative control over such areas as education, transport and local government. Westminster will retain control over economic management, foreign and defence policy. For Wales the offering is more meagre: an assembly with little more powers than the Welsh Office already has. To promote the "devolution" proposal among Scottish voters, Labour has launched a popular front "Scotland Forward" alliance

of Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party, together with the STUC, churches and business groups.

The referendum proposals do not offer the choice of separation for either nation. "Devolution" aims not to undermine the 1707 Act of Union, but to *update* it, while maintaining the very substance of the reactionary English-dominated "kingdom" based on the City of London financiers, bloated with profits, and filled with chauvinist enmity towards Irish, Scots and Welsh. When the government moved to rekindle the US-backed Northern Ireland imperialist "peace" fraud, Blair pledged that the "Union" with Northern Ireland is not negotiable.

Our position on the national question is based on that of Bolshevik leader Lenin:



TROTSKY

India and permanent revolution

August 15 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence from British imperialist rule. Yet today, the subcontinent remains one of the most impoverished, oppressed and exploited places in the world—a prisonhouse of nations and nationalities, of women, of religious and caste minorities. Over two hundred years of British "divide and rule", marked by repeated massacres of thousands upon thousands—from Kanpur, 1857 to Jal-



LENIN

lianwallah Bagh, 1919 and beyond—bore their final, grisly fruit when the country was partitioned into an 80 per cent Hindu-majority India and an Islamic-confessional Pakistan. It was the Labour government of Clement Attlee and Aneurin Bevan that oversaw this final act of butchery. Between one and two million Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus—overwhelmingly poor—died, and over eleven million were uprooted. In this project, imperialism was zealously aided by Stalin and his acolytes in the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of India. From its inception in the early 1940s, the small and newly formed but heroic forces of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party, Indian section of Trotsky's Fourth International, fought tooth and nail against this deadly class-collaborationism, fighting for the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution.

The party actively supports all concrete struggles of the peasantry against exploitation and oppression, including struggles for the reduction of land revenue and rent, reduction of debt and the abolition of feudal dues, forced labour, serfdom etc.... Above all, it seeks to expose the reactionary role of the Congress and to wean away the peasantry from the influence of the bourgeoisie, pointing out that not one of the fundamental demands of the peasantry will ever be conceded by the bourgeoisie and that it is only with the leadership and assistance of the proletariat standing in opposition to vested interests of all the exploiters, that these demands can be fulfilled. The party seeks to link up each concrete struggle of the peasants with the general political struggle against imperialism—a task rendered easier by the direct role of repression and extortion played by the imperialist bureaucracy....

The soldiers... being mainly peasants in uniform, are naturally sensitive to peasant demands and cannot fail to be affected by an agrarian upsurge in the country. Since the attitude of the soldiers is of decisive importance in every revolution, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party must face the urgent task of widespread revolutionary propaganda (against imperialism and the imperialist war and on the land question) in the Indian Army.

—Draft programme of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, 1942

"Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers."

In each case the question for Marxists is: how best, under the given historical situation, to break the hold of nationalism and chauvinism on the working class (in effect to get the question "off the agenda") and open the road to revolutionary struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

Our attitude to the national question in these isles is grounded in intransigent opposition to all forms of nationalism, particularly the dominant English-chauvinism. We stand for the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination (which means the right to choose to form a separate state). The prospects for an independent Scotland however would be bleak, and for Wales even more so. We recognise that the attitude of the English bourgeoisie could well drive the Scots and Welsh to separation. But given the lack of decisive national differences either in language or religion, at the present time we advocate a course of common class struggle against the British state. Triumphant, unified class struggle which overthrows capitalism would make for amiable and easy resolutions of the national questions on these islands.

The "devolution" referendums offer only a restricted form of regional parliamentary administration. Nevertheless, as an elementary (if limited) extension of bourgeois democratic form, we advocate a yes-yes vote to a Scottish parliament including with tax-varying powers, and a yes vote to a Welsh assembly.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) visualises an "independent Scotland" within the context of NATO and the EU holding out North Sea "oil wealth" as a basis for economic viability along with its hope of mimicking the Republic of Ireland's "success" as a low-wage haven for capitalist exploitation. Nationalist sentiment in Scotland grew particularly in the last decade as a reaction to the pervasive English chauvinism and the devastation of major industrial proletarian centres in Scotland, Wales and the North of England under Thatcher. The proletariat there used to embody some of the most class-conscious traditions of the British working class. But "Red Clydeside" and "Little Moscow" in the Rhondda Valley are no more. The working class has suffered repeated and systematic defeats at the hands of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy. The sell-out of the heroic miners strike of 1984-85 was a watershed in this course of events. None of this can be redressed through "devolution" but requires the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

The British "socialist" left are characterised by their adaptation to pervasive English chauvinism. It was only after Blair

announced his "devolution" proposal earlier this year that the right centrist Workers Power (WP) decided to change its 1992 position of "No to a Scottish Assembly". However, WP remain opposed to a Welsh assembly and in the event of a referendum on Scottish independence they enlist themselves *in advance* to a "campaign for the biggest possible 'no' vote" (*Trotskyist International* no 22, July-December 1997). Needless to say WP's article on the question fails to deal with dominant English chauvinism.

The Northite Socialist Equality Party (SEP)'s stand for a "no" vote in the referendum lines it up with the most reactionary "UK" loyalists like the "Think Twice" (anti-devolution) campaign supported by the remnants of Scotland's dilapidated Tories. The SEP is notorious for denying the democratic right of self-determination for Scotland. This is of a piece with their position against the right of self-determination for Kashmir, the Punjab and other nations locked into the "prison house of peoples" that is the Indian bourgeois state. Similarly, they come out against the national rights of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Québécois in Canada.

The Socialist Party (SP) has been an enthusiastic promoter of bourgeois Scottish nationalism, particularly through the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) which they dominate. They have even enlisted their services in the government-sponsored "Scotland Forward" class-collaborationist alliance. For years, the Empire-loyal SP has refused to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland and more recently has taken to politically embracing Loyalist death squad representatives like Billy Hutchinson. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB—*Weekly Worker*) who are also part of the SSA in Scotland, have embarked single-handedly on a campaign for an active boycott of the referendum and for another ballot containing the "multi-option" of a sovereign parliament. In reality, the CPGB oppose the exercise of self-determination and call for a *single* "federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales".

As revolutionaries we seek to hasten the demise of the archaic "United Kingdom". Key to this task is the building of a revolutionary Trotskyist party, forged in relentless battle against the treacherous Labourite and trade union bureaucracy to lead the working class to smash Westminster rule and establish a workers government. What's needed is a planned collectivised economy based on need and not profit. *Abolish the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established churches! For workers revolution to overthrow British imperialism, the Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the clericalist state in Southern Ireland! For a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles, as part of a Socialist United States of Europe.* ■

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Young Spartacus

Down with Labour's attacks on university education!

As part of its reactionary programme, the Labour government has embarked on the biggest shake-up in university education for 30 years. The Dearing Commission, set up jointly by Labour and Tories, was asked to consider how to revamp higher education "to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years". Dearing proposed to "solve" the funding crisis in universities by making students pay tuition fees of £1000 per head per year. Labour rushed to embrace this (a measure Thatcher balked at in the 1980s), and declared their intention to abolish student grants as well.

Blair's attacks on public welfare provision, on the working class and all the oppressed are the British version of an international offensive by the capitalist class, which is a direct result of counter-revolution in the former Soviet Union — a massive defeat for the working class and oppressed peoples of the world. The capitalist masters saw this as an opportunity to increase exploitation, as each ruling class is forced to compete more aggressively with other world powers over the redivision of markets. Despite years of relentless Tory attacks on the working class, British capitalism demands another savage round of cuts even to attempt to compete with its rivals. This next round is Labour's agenda, and in education, this means university is virtually out of the question for people from working class backgrounds, and for all the oppressed in society. Blacks and Asians, who are an integral part of the workforce, and working-class women, who seek a way out of grinding poverty through education, will be hit especially hard.

Students must fight to defeat the Labour government's onslaught, the question is how. This must be done in alliance with the working class, in a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system which Labour serves. The Spartacus Youth Group (SYG) fights for free, quality education for all! We oppose the discriminatory system of massively higher fees for overseas students, and fight for universal access to education, and a decent allowance to make that access a reality. Contrary to the views of Blairites, class struggle is not dead, and the working class has not ceased to exist. It is the only force which has the social power to defeat and overthrow the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. The essential prerequisite for this is a revolutionary leadership, which must be forged in opposition to the defeatist, sell-out policies of the pro-Labour trade union bureaucracy, and in opposition to all varieties of Labourism. We seek to win students and youth not simply to a pro-working-class perspective but to the understanding of the need for a party based on the programme of Lenin and Trotsky.

The SWP and Workers Power, who campaigned vigorously for a Labour gov-

ernment, got what they wanted on 1 May, and then claimed that Labour in government is a great gain for the working class. The SWP's "answer" to the attack on education, and indeed to every other attack inflicted by this government, is to pressurise Labour. Their latest scam is a lobby of the Labour Party conference on 28 September. The SWP's endless petitioning and pressurising of the pro-capitalist

students come from working-class families, the debt will be prohibitive. Many graduates will only get lousy, low-paid jobs, some will get no jobs at all. Unless your degree is from Oxford or Cambridge, the future is bleak.

While the Blair government with its massive majority is riding high, arrogantly confident that the working class will "take it" from Labour, the SWP and Workers



Brian Harris

Students protest Tory loans system in 1992. Now Labour government attacks aim to exclude working class youth and oppressed from university education.

Labour Party was always a shameless promotion of illusions in Labour; a lobby of this Labour government, which prides itself in attacking the working class, is absurd. Far be it from these good "socialists" to agitate in the trade unions for strikes to defeat Blair's attacks; they merely advise union branches to "send a letter of protest to education secretary David Blunkett" (*Socialist Worker*, 2 August).

Last year during the 19 November college and university strike we joined the picket lines and called for students to join the striking workers, for mass picket lines and to shut down the colleges. *Picket lines mean don't cross!* But we also pointed out that the one-day strike was called by the Labourite union bureaucrats to protest, not to win, and that workers' anger would be channelled into getting Blair into office. In sharp distinction to the SWP, NUS and others who were touting Labour as the "solution", we said: "To hell with Tony Blair's Labour Party! Students and youth: fight for a socialist future!"

As it is, many working-class (and even middle-class) university students have to work in part-time jobs at pitiful wages to supplement the meagre grant, and many are forced to continue living in the parental home, unable to afford their own accommodation. Now, under Blair's proposals students will face thousands of pounds of debt at the end of a three-year degree; in Scotland where four-year degrees are the norm, and where a very high proportion of

Power constantly whine that Labour ought to "tax the rich". Who in their right mind could envisage Blair taxing his millionaire friends like Bob Ayling or Rupert Murdoch? The political premise that the rich capitalists will always be willing to pay for the education of the poor workers belongs to bourgeois liberalism, not to Marxism. Under capitalism, the ruling class is only prepared to spend on educating the exploited what they will get back as profit. The education system was expanded to include more working-class students in the 1940s (and again in the 1970s) when there were shortages of skilled workers. The ruling class has devastated manufacturing — coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding — inflicting defeats on the unions in the process. And today the ruling class has precious little need for skilled workers, or for significant numbers of working-class graduates. The trade union bureaucracy which sold out each struggle of the workforce, and allowed jobs to disappear down the drain, paved the way for Blair's onslaught today.

Measures such as public education and public health, which were vastly increased at the end of World War II, were a gain for the working class which Marxists defend. Karl Marx's 1848 *Communist Manifesto* demanded: "Free education for all children in public schools." But class inequality and oppression is fundamental to the capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production, and therefore cannot be eradicated by reforms.

The British education system — from its "public" schools to the appalling, overcrowded comprehensives of the inner cities, where poor, black, Asian and immigrant children are crammed — has always embodied the virulent snobbery, prejudice, and arrogance of the ruling class.

The "welfare state" expanded the provision of health care and education for the mass of the population, but did nothing to alter the fundamental class inequality in society. The 1944 Education Act accepted the notion that the working class was "genetically" inferior in "intelligence". The "public" school system for the rich was augmented, while the hated 11-plus selection system in schools resulted in the systematic exclusion of 80 per cent of working-class students from university. Despite "comprehensivisation" in the 1970s, today less than 20 per cent of manual workers' children and under 10 per cent of unskilled workers' children get to university.

But the world has changed dramatically since the days when the ruling class introduced public welfare, to forestall what they saw as the "threat of communism". This spectre haunted them in the form of the Soviet Union, and in the growing strength of the trade unions at home. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was the signal event of the 20th century, the first and only victorious proletarian revolution. But the pressure of imperialist encirclement on an economically backward country, the devastation of the Russian working class in civil war, and the defeat of revolutions abroad set the stage for a political counter-revolution in 1923-24. This Soviet Thermidor led to decades of misrule by a nationalist, parasitic caste headed by Stalin and his heirs. The ultimate result of the Stalinist betrayals was the capitalist counter-revolution which destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92. As Trotskyists, we consistently defended the gains of October against imperialism and counterrevolution, and fought for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist usurpers. Today we fight for new October revolutions as the only answer to increasing capitalist reaction.

It is a symptom of the state of decay of British capitalism that the ruling class is about to pull the plug on funding of university (and school) education for all but the rich. Vast numbers of the working class and poor are regarded by capitalism as expendable, and not even worthy of a basic education. Knowledge is an essential weapon in the fight for social equality, and therefore, education as a means to eliminate the distinction between mental and manual labour was a key goal of the Bolsheviks. They abolished child labour, instituted compulsory education for all children and made literacy mandatory for everyone up to the age of 50. Today, the fight for free, good quality education for all is inseparable from the fight to overthrow the system of capitalist exploitation, oppression, inequality and racism. ■

Labour...

(Continued from page 1)

which called upon "the government to intervene in the long-running Liverpool Docks dispute in order to return the sacked dockworkers to their rightful place of work in the port of Liverpool". Our comrades pointed out that any "intervention" by the government would likely be the kiss of death. Since the dockers were sacked, the SWP and Workers Power, who supported Bill Morris for leader of the TGWU, have offered nothing but mealy-mouthed "criticisms" of Morris' back-stabbing of the dockers. What the dockers need is the mobilisation of the power of the trade union movement in joint strike action to smash the anti-union laws. Of necessity this means coming up sharply against the anti-working class Labour government. *For a revolutionary leadership in the unions!*

For his part, Jimmy Nolan dismisses the possibility of class struggle alongside the dockers in Britain today, which reveals the SLP's defeatist perspective when it comes to the anti-union laws. This also shows up in the RMT union in London Underground, where the SLP has a base of support. But it has no perspective to mobilise this racially integrated and strategically placed workforce, either to fight against the threat of privatisation, or against racist attacks which are a daily fact of life in the city. A Leninist party actively seeks such opportunities to mobilise the social power of the working class to combine the fight against racist terror with resistance to anti-union attacks. We fight for: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For trade union/minority mobilisations to crush the fascists!*

Break with Labourism, Old and New!

In the general election we said "no vote to New Labour", which was standing on a blatantly anti-working class, pro-imperial-



Liverpool, Mayday 1997. Australian maritime union supports dockers.

Marty Size

dates. At the same time we intervened into SLP meetings and widely distributed our election statement, "For a revolutionary workers party! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!" Workers' interests cannot be met through Old Labour reformism. History shows that the tradition of Keir Hardie and Nye Bevan (Labour Party leaders at the time of its birth and post-World War II respectively), upheld today by Arthur Scargill, is an anti-revolutionary, anti-internationalist tradition, which has at times frustrated the bourgeoisie, but has never raised a finger to overthrow the system of capitalist rule.

The SWP, Workers Power, Socialist Outlook, all joined in hailing Blair's landslide as a victory for the working class. The bottom line for the SWP was to elect a Labour government, but during the election campaign they also occasionally used the slogan "Vote Labour or Socialist" to give themselves something of a left face, and to keep the door open to tailing Scargill's Old Labourism. Nonetheless their position was to the right of the SLP, which stood in opposition to Labour and refused to campaign for a Labour victory.

Even in the face of Labour's flagrant hostility to the working class, the SWP works overtime to foster the illusion that this vehemently anti-working class gov-

ernment can be pressured to act on behalf of the working class. This is the main purpose of the SWP-organised 28 September lobby of the Labour conference in Brighton, demanding: "for workers' rights — keep the union link". This boils down to a call to keep the unions shackled to Labour. In a similar vein Workers Power demands that: "In every affiliated union a campaign must be launched now. Resolutions, petitions, district and regional conferences must all be used to demand no breaking of the union link..." (*Workers Power*, October 1996). This is pure parliamentarist pressure politics. The situa-

tion the unions face in regard to Labour reflects the relationship of class forces, which will not be fundamentally altered through resolutions in the trade unions or in the Labour Party but through class struggle, which the Labourite bureaucracy are hostile to.

To polish up their image as a "socialist alternative" to Labour, the SWP recently wrote: "Winning fundamental improvements for working people means breaking with the Labourist, parliamentary tradition altogether and taking on the priorities of the bosses and their system" (*Socialist Worker*, 9 August). All well and good, but the SWP has never put forward a programme for breaking with Labourism. The SWP has supported the pro-imperialist Labour Party in every election. They uphold the Labourite view that cops and prison guards, who are part of the capitalist state, are part of the working-class movement, or potentially so. This is a rejection of the Leninist understanding of the capitalist state as "special bodies of armed men". Moreover, since their inception in the 1950s at the time of the Korean War, when the Labour government of the day presided over British imperialist military intervention on the side of US imperialism against North Korea, China and the USSR, the SWP has taken the side of their own bourgeoisie on every crucial question of the international class struggle. Their refusal to defend the USSR and the North Korean and Chinese deformed workers states was of a piece with welcoming British troops to Northern Ireland in 1969, sent in by a Labour government. During the imperialist anti-Soviet hysteria of the 1980s, they supported every counterrevolutionary scum, from the barbaric Afghan *mujahedin* to Polish Solidarność, Thatcher's favourite "union". They welcomed Yeltsin's accession to power, which resulted in counterrevolution. They stood with the pro-imperialist Labour Party on these decisive international questions for the working class.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was the signal event of the twentieth century, the first and only victorious proletarian revolution. But the pressure of imperialist encirclement on an economically backward country, the devastation of the Russian working class through the Civil War, and the failure and defeats of proletarian revolutions abroad — due in large part to the betrayals of West European social democracies — set the scene for a political counterrevolution in 1923-24. This led to decades of misrule by a nationalist, parasitic caste headed by Stalin and his heirs. The ultimate result of the Stalinist betrayals carried out under the lie of building "socialism in one country", whereby workers revolution was subordinated to an accommodation to imperialism, was the capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92.

As Trotskyists, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) consistently defended the gains of October against imperialism and counterrevolution and fought for political revolution to

sweep away the Stalinist usurpers. In 1979 we headlined "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" against the CIA-backed *mujahedin* Islamic reactionaries. We said extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. In 1981 we said "Stop Solidarność counterrevolution". Only the Trotskyist programme of political revolution could have prevented the disaster of capitalist counterrevolution in the former USSR and Eastern Europe.

The Bolshevik tradition versus Labourite treachery

The Labourite left regard the existence of a mass reformist party in Britain as something of a historic birthright — something that must always exist. The organisational structure of the Labour Party, based on bloc affiliation of the trade unions, is antithetical to building a proletarian vanguard party, that is, a party of the most class-conscious elements of the working class which can translate the historic interests of the proletariat into a fight for socialist revolution. The SLP's adherence to the Labour Party structure reflects their insular conception that the Russian Bolshevik Party is not an appropriate model for Britain, a prejudice which stems from rejection of the programme of Leninism.

An independent working-class party would necessarily have to have all the elements that were found in the party which issued out of the majority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, in the course of many different struggles, learning from their mistakes along the way, in the period from 1903, through the outbreak of World War I. This experience included a wave of mass strikes unparalleled in the world, leading to the 1905 insurrection which was crushed, and the birth of soviets (workers councils) as organs of working class power. The Bolsheviks acquired a wealth of experience combining parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle, as well as legal and illegal work. Lenin noted that one of the principal reasons the Bolshevik Party was able to lead the working class to victory in October 1917, based on the support of the broad masses of the proletariat, was that especially since the outbreak of World War I in 1914, they had been ruthlessly exposing "the baseness and vileness of social chauvinism" to which the views of the leaders of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians corresponded. Through this experience the working masses in Russia became more and more convinced of the correctness of the Bolshevik views. Led by the Bolshevik Party, the Russian working class was able to win the support of the peasantry and, amidst the carnage of the war, were able to acquire a crucial base of support among the soldiers. The October Revolution of 1917 liberated oppressed nationalities and peoples from the yoke of Tsarist rule. Like the Bolsheviks we seek to build a revolutionary workers party that serves as a tribune of the people.

A Leninist vanguard party is counterposed to Karl Kautsky's conception of the "party of the whole class", of which the Labour Party and its organisational setup is a particular example. A party "of the whole class" necessarily submerges the most advanced layers of the class into the most backward ones; hence such parties are inevitably chauvinist, based on the dominant ethnic grouping and tied to the defence of the imperialist interests of its own ruling class.

Labourism is and has been the main obstacle to revolutionary struggle of the working class in Britain. A strategic perspective for revolutionaries is to split the working-class base from the pro-capitalist leadership. The formation of the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers party at the beginning of this century was a de-



Petrograd, 1917: workers and soldiers formed core of Bolshevik Party.

no credit

ist programme, using the chauvinist symbol of the British bulldog. We extended critical support to the Socialist Labour Party, which stood against New Labour, albeit on a programme of Old Labour parliamentary reformism. Scargill's split from New Labour, in opposition to the latter's outright hostility to the working class, represents a fracture in the Labour monolith. It offers an opportunity to break the stranglehold of Labourism over the workers movement and an opening for Marxists to intervene to demonstrate the need for an authentic workers party. We campaigned for the election of SLP candi-

dates. At the same time we intervened into SLP meetings and widely distributed our election statement, "For a revolutionary workers party! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!" Workers' interests cannot be met through Old Labour reformism. History shows that the tradition of Keir Hardie and Nye Bevan (Labour Party leaders at the time of its birth and post-World War II respectively), upheld today by Arthur Scargill, is an anti-revolutionary, anti-internationalist tradition, which has at times frustrated the bourgeoisie, but has never raised a finger to overthrow the system of capitalist rule.

Shut down Campsfield! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!

Labour's racist, anti-immigrant rule

AUGUST 25—For asylum seekers fleeing Nigeria, India, Colombia and countless other repressive nightmares, the Labour government continues the Tory government's vicious treatment: Fortress Europe, racist prison hell-hole Britain. Some 100 asylum seekers have been shipped from Campsfield detention centre, Oxfordshire, to prisons/detention centres around the country in the wake of a protest that was crushed by 100 cops, complete with riot gear, helicopter, horses, and police dogs. The protest by about 50 Campsfield prisoners erupted in the early hours of 20 August over the "removal" of two Nigerian refugees to prison elsewhere. It was the latest in a series of such actions at Campsfield, where refugees, who are charged with no crime, are confined for months on end, deprived of legal and other support and "supervised" by the hired thugs of Group 4 Security.

The same week as the Campsfield crackdown, "International Development" Secretary Clare Short poured arrogant racist contempt on the devastated inhabitants of Montserrat, victims of the Ca-

ribbean island's volcanic eruptions. In true colonial overlord style, Short spits on the "sort of people" (ie black, poor) on the island who are demonstrating against the British government's paltry aid and relocation programme, denouncing the protests as "little shows in the streets". According to *The Voice* (25 August), "Despite being classed as British nationals, the islanders have never been allowed free movement into this country." It continues, "they are often treated like asylum seekers from independent countries".

Vicious attacks against immigrants and racial minorities are the real face of Blair's Labour Party in government, behind the hypocrisy of ordering a public inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, or ministerial vows to review asylum procedures. Thus the Onibiyo family, whose cause Jack Straw cynically championed while in opposition, are now threatened with the deportation of Joyce and the two children who remain here. Abdul Onibiyo was deported to face torture in a Nigerian jail in October

1995, and his son Ade was deported in May 1996. Immigration minister Mike O'Brien justifies slamming the door in the face of thousands of Colombians fleeing government-backed death squads, saying an "alarming" number are making "unfounded" claims for asylum. Within a month of the election, the government introduced a new visa requirement for all Colombians. Since the change in the law, monthly asylum applications from Colombia have fallen from nearly 250 to just 15.

Furious imperialist competition for markets and resources, intensified by capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, has meant a rise of anti-immigrant racism—and fascist attacks—across Europe. Last March the popular-front government of Italy, before launching its imperialist invasion of Albania, drowned 89 Albanian refugees by ramming their boat, and imprisoned the survivors, a measure intended to stem the flow of desperate Albanian refugees to Italy. Our comrades of the Lega trotskista d'Italia, in a 5

April leaflet denouncing this massacre wrote: "The working class must respond to all of this with: *Worker/immigrant mobilisations to smash racist terror! Organise all immigrants into the trade unions! Workers actions and strikes against the deportations, the naval blockade and the imperialist intervention in Albania!*"

This Labour government is intent on making good its promises to the bourgeoisie of a "flexible" workforce: keep the unions in shackles, keep the "illegals" in sweatshops or jails. The fight for full citizenship rights for immigrants is part of mobilising the working class to fight in the interest of all its components—foreign- and native-born, black, white and Asian, women and men. Our struggle is to build a Trotskyist party, a Leninist tribune of the people, which will fight to lead the workers to power through socialist revolution.

We say: *Shut down Campsfield and release all detained asylum seekers! Asylum for refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

formed and organisational expression of the political independence of the working class, separate from the capitalist Liberal Party. Yet the role of the Labour Party has always been to tie the working class to British capitalism and imperialism. This was particularly evident in periods of upsurge by the working class, such as in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Labour's adoption in 1918 of "Clause IV", which promised "common ownership", served to stave off the "threat of Bolshevism" which the British ruling class dreaded; the massive wave of struggles of the working class were diverted into the pursuit of reforms of capitalism through parliament.

Labour's "Clause IV socialism" was the corollary to betrayal of actual struggles of the working class, such as in 1919, when the prime minister Lloyd George summoned the leaders of the "Triple Alliance", a powerful combination of the rail, coal and transport unions who were preparing a joint strike. Lloyd George noted that the army was disaffected and could not be relied upon, and that these trade union leaders were in a position to challenge the capitalist state power. He asked the union leaders: "have you weighed the consequences", noting that this meant being prepared to "take on the functions of the State". Robert Smillie, the miners leader, commented that from that moment on "we were beaten and we knew we were" (from *In Place of Fear*, autobiography of Aneurin Bevan).

In "Left-Wing" Communism—an Infantile Disorder Lenin made it clear that mass reformist parties cannot be simply written off as "irrelevant" but must be engaged through intelligent tactics to win their working-class base to the communist party and programme. This has nothing in common with the "socialist" left's idea of "tactics", which amounts to always voting Labour to "keep the Tories out". The Labour Party was not, Lenin insisted, the political organisation of the trade union movement. It represented the political interests of a narrow, bureaucratic, upper stratum of the working class, who benefited from the superprofits of imperialism and were thoroughly imbued with the chauvinism of "their" ruling class. At the

Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Lenin described the Labour Party in the following terms:

"Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie."

The lessons of the miners strike

As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels stressed in the *Communist Manifesto*, every serious class battle is a political struggle, and the Communists are distinguished from other working-class parties because "they everywhere represent the interest of the movement as a whole". As Leon Trotsky wrote in "Communism and Syndicalism" (1929), "The question of the relationship between the party, which represents the proletariat as it should be, and the trade unions, which represent the proletariat as it is, is the most fundamental question of revolutionary Marxism." As defensive organisations the unions must be built on the broadest possible basis to maximise the unity of the working class against the capitalist exploiters. This is directly linked to the fight for communist leadership within the unions, on the basis of our programme, against pro-capitalist and centrist elements who reflect and transmit the bourgeoisie's divide-and-rule policies. At the same time, the task of the communist vanguard party is to sharpen the differences between competing political tendencies in order to bring the workers to communist consciousness and to assemble the cadre, through splits and regroupments, in a Leninist party whose purpose is to lead the workers to state power.

Arthur Scargill, who led the miners strike to just about the limits of trade union militancy, at the time made it clear that his idea of "power" did not transcend a parliamentary Labour government, telling a miners rally in Mansfield in 1984 that "Above all, we will pave the way for a general election to elect a Labour government." In order to prevail against the bosses and their state it was necessary to spread the strike to other key sections of

the working class. We fought for a *fighting Triple Alliance* of railworkers, dockers and miners. Such united strike action with the miners would have effectively meant a general strike, which goes beyond simple trade union struggle and poses the question of which class shall rule. Scargill refused to struggle for power. This would have meant a political break with the Labour bureaucracy. But it was the TUC/Labour "leadership", "left" and right, who did everything in their power to help Thatcher strangle the heroic miners. And the SWP played their own nefarious role—their steelworker members waltzed across miners' picket lines.

Today New Labour pushes the lies of bourgeois triumphalism, that the collapse of the USSR means the "death of communism", and the defeat of the miners and gutting of industry means the end of class struggle in Britain. The TUC under John Monks concurs, peddling "New Unionism" as a signal that "the unions are ready to take an active part in making the UK economy more competitive". It is precisely with the intention of making British Airways "more competitive" that Bob Ayling seeks to bust the TGWU, and why the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company wishes to return to non-union labour in the

docks.

Especially since capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the drive for competition between imperialist powers has become more intense. The need to increase the rate of exploitation means further grinding the working class and poor and fuelling anti-immigrant hysteria. Across Europe, social democratic parties in government, like Jospin's Socialist Party and the Party of Democratic Socialism in Italy are, like Blair's Labour, the enforcers of vicious capitalist austerity and the racist anti-immigrant policies of "Fortress Europe".

To save the working class and oppressed from further devastation requires working-class rule and the establishment of a rationally planned economy on an international scale. The task of a revolutionary party in Britain is to fight for a new October revolution, which will sweep away the capitalist order. We say: for a start abolish the monarchy, House of Lords and established churches. For the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class—black, Asian and white; English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish—in a struggle for a federation of workers republics in the British Isles, part of a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

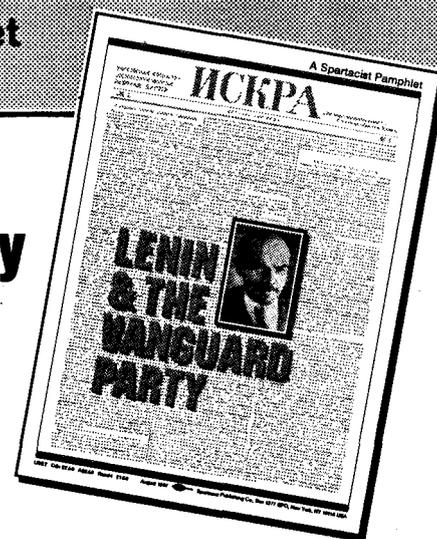
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South Africa and permanent revolution



William Matlela



Kendridge Mathabathe

ANC-led nationalist popular-front government upholds neo-apartheid capitalism. Left: Trade unionists protest government economic policies benefiting white capitalist exploiters. Right: Squatters in impoverished black shantytown.

We publish below an edited transcript of a presentation by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Don Alexander at an SL regional educational held in Oakland on 10 May which first appeared in Workers Vanguard no 671, 11 July 1997.

A few of us from the International Communist League recently visited our comrades in South Africa for two weeks. We also talked to various revolutionary-minded workers and students in Johannesburg and Cape Town. This was my second trip there, and it's even easier now to see why imperialism, particularly US imperialism, is quite satisfied with what's going on there. The bourgeois-nationalist regime of President Nelson Mandela has created what he's called "an investor-friendly environment".

The capitalist government in South Africa is a nationalist popular front. It is based upon a tripartite, a three-cornered, alliance between the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP), whose cadre occupy key positions within the COSATU union federation and also have a significant base of support among politically advanced black workers. There have been profound changes in the political superstructure.

Rigid apartheid has been eliminated and a black capitalist class is being formed. Radio and TV broadcasting are filled with all the crap about the "rainbow nation", about "we are one people". Even beer commercials are couched in terms of building a "rainbow nation". But what exists is neo-apartheid capitalism, a system of brutal superexploitation of black labour, which of course is an expression of the fact that the real power lies in the hands of the white capitalist class — the mining magnates and the Johannesburg stockbrokers — backed up by their courts and police and army.

Black life is even cheaper in South Africa than it is here. We saw white bosses pushing black workers around, and in some cases, literally trying to run them over with their vehicles. White flight and black misery are pervasive. Previously, blacks could only be in Johannesburg from 6am to 6pm. Now the city has been

abandoned by the mainly English-derived whites, who have either fled the country altogether or to the north of the city, to create new all-white bastions. The stores in Johannesburg have moved to northern suburban strip malls. All taxis from Johannesburg to black Soweto, which is about a 30-minute drive to the south, stop at 7pm, so all political events end early. Everyone takes taxis or minivans, which are packed with black workers. There's a lot of desperate poverty. Even if you could afford to own a car, cars are commonly stolen if left on the street. Also, the only people walking along the roads are blacks. We very rarely saw a uniformed policeman, but there are private security guards everywhere.

Soweto sprawls across rolling hills as far as the eye can see. It is divided into townships, some better than others. There are no stores for miles. Mostly we saw endless stretches of small brick houses with outdoor plumbing, dirt roads, no street signs or street numbers. Interspersed is the so-called informal housing for squatters, corrugated metal and board shacks with no facilities whatsoever. Even the squatters are expected to pay for utilities. There are also workers' barracks.

This regime is a very brutal capitalist regime. While we were there, Mandela's cops were using rubber bullets on students who were protesting against cuts in education subsidies. In the rural areas, blacks, and particularly black women, are steadily being thrown off white-owned land and

farms. On one news broadcast, a wealthy white farmer was complaining about these "black spots" that have to be eliminated.

And just before we arrived, there was a revolt in the coloured (mixed-race) El Dorado Park township near Soweto against the attempts of the government to enforce back payment of rent and utilities. It was crushed by the police. Two people were killed and a number of people injured. Their generally supportable demands, however, were combined with a virulently anti-black thrust. The protest was led by a coloured supporter of Inkatha, Buthelezi's Zulu-based tribalist organisation. This points very clearly to the fact that in the absence of a fight for proletarian revolution, things can descend into all-sided ethnic and communal warfare, a legacy of the divide-and-rule schemes of British colonialism.

Our description of the current regime as "neo-apartheid" rubs a lot of South African leftists the wrong way, because, after all, they say, "This is a democracy." But neo-apartheid is no abstraction. The brutal misery of blacks, the mass homelessness, the squalid townships, the continued enormous disparities in incomes and education and health care between whites and blacks is a pervasive reality.

ANC fronts for racist capitalist rule

When we were riding around town in Johannesburg, I kept seeing signs for a

"New Africa Investments". And what is this? It turns out that Cyril Ramaphosa, who used to be the head of the National Union of Mineworkers and of the ANC parliamentary delegation in Cape Town, is a big shot in this New Africa Investments. There has been a steady growth in a layer of black millionaires who are now on what is called the "grave train". And he typifies that layer of former anti-apartheid activists who are now fully fledged black capitalists. While a lot of black workers see this bourgeoisification going on, they are still wedded to nationalism. They must be broken from the belief that there are common interests between workers and the oppressed and the new class of black exploiters.

The South African bourgeoisie also has regional imperialist ambitions. At the moment, Mandela is working with Clinton for an imperialist-orchestrated "peace" in Zaire. When I got back here, I saw in the papers that Hillary Clinton had been a few steps behind us when we visited Cape Town. One of the places she stopped was the University of Cape Town, whose current vice chancellor was Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko's comrade and companion. Now she rails on and on about the "culture of entitlement" that has to be uprooted in South Africa — you know what that means. So she was praised by Hillary Clinton as being a role model for youth around the world. Bishop Desmond Tutu also welcomed Hillary Clinton while she was there. He



Nurses during September 1995 strike in Soweto chanted slogans denouncing "grave train" for aspiring black capitalists of Mandela's ANC.

Spartacist

took time out from his busy schedule in the so-called Truth and Reconciliation Commission, orchestrating the exoneration of the former apartheid regime's racist cut-throats.

The South African government is the enemy of the oppressed and the exploited at home and abroad. Two years ago, they fired thousands of nurses who went out on strike. Their attacks on the working class are assisted by the bureaucrats of COSATU and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), a second union federation associated with the radical nationalist Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). The existence of two rival union federations weakens the labour movement. We say that there should be a single industrial union federation in South Africa.

The whole question of how to fight against neo-apartheid capitalism in South Africa is the question of how to build a revolutionary workers party, which would not simply defend the particular interests of the working class but fight to eradicate all forms of national and social oppression. Our perspective for proletarian leadership in the struggle for national and social liberation is encapsulated in the call for a black-centred workers government. Under a black-centred workers government there would be an important role and full democratic rights for coloureds, Indians and those anti-racist whites who accept a government based on the rule of the predominantly black working people.

The party needed to lead this struggle must be based on the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution. Trotsky explained that in countries of belated capitalist development, the democratic demands associated with the bourgeois revolutions of the past — agrarian revolution, political democracy, national independence, etc — can only be achieved when the working class smashes capitalism and takes power. In this era of history we live in — this epoch of imperialist decay, of wars and revolutions — there is no such thing as a progressive bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisies in backward capitalist countries are weak, dependent upon and tied to world imperialism.

The programme of international socialist revolution is key to the fight for working-class power. Particularly with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, US imperialism especially will seek to crush a revolutionary South Africa. Also, proletarian power in South Africa will have to contend with the pressures of the imperialist world market, which can only be conquered through the victory of socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries and the institution of worldwide socialist economic planning. A socialist revolution in South Africa cannot remain isolated if it is to succeed and smash imperialist domination. At the same time, a revolution in South Africa would immediately have strategic allies in the imperialist countries, particularly among black workers in the US and the oppressed worldwide. We are fighting to build a world party of socialist revolution and a South African Bolshevik party which is a section of that.

One of the things we had continued debate on in South Africa is the significance of the capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Soviet Union. A number of South African leftists said, "Well, that doesn't have anything to do with us." In fact, it has a lot to do with what's going on in South Africa today. It was an enormous defeat for the working class internationally. It showed how the self-serving nationalist lie of "socialism in one country" and decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule had succeeded in politically atomising the Soviet proletariat and destroying its socialist consciousness



Police fire at squatters being evicted from their homes in Alexandra township outside Johannesburg, May 1996.

to the point where there was no working-class resistance to Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary coup in 1991. And with the collapse of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state, the ANC could no longer manoeuvre by playing Moscow off against Washington and so on. Instead, the apartheid capitalist rulers and their imperialist backers saw the possibility of using the ANC to defend capitalist rule in South Africa, which was increasingly threatened as a result of the growing power of the black workers movement and mass anti-apartheid struggles.

Today, South Africa is one of the few countries where many working people, many leftists still identify in some way with the struggle for socialism or communism. But reformist prejudices are prevalent, and the point for us is to combat them. One of the clearest examples is that the reformists and centrists are deluded by and push the belief that South Africa is a stable bourgeois democracy and that gradual reforms will eliminate the tremendous class and racial inequalities. This is not so. This is a deadly illusion. The nationalist popular front, backed by the fake left, has disoriented and demobilised the working class in South Africa. That's why there was not a single street protest in response to the acquittal last October of former defence minister Magnus Malan, who organised the 1987 slaughter of 13 black people, mainly women and children. Meanwhile, every day we were there we heard about how white fascist terrorists are raiding arms depots all over the country, getting ready for a showdown.

Bolshevism on the national question

The strategic tasks in South Africa are to break the working class from nationalism and to split the reformist South African Communist Party, in order to win over the subjectively revolutionary elements to the programme of genuine communism. Time and again, we had to cut through this "rainbow nation" crap and the idea of "socialist nation-building". I want to concentrate on some basic points we made to militant workers and leftist youth about this.

We emphasised that the programme of proletarian internationalism, of world socialist revolution, was key for the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the workers revolution in 1917. It was key to smashing the capitalist system and state, and in defeating the imperialist and counterrevolutionary armies during the Russian Civil War of 1918 to 1921. We made the point that revolutionary Marxism is fundamentally counterposed to nationalism, despite the pious pronouncements of the SACP and centrists such as the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action

(WOSA). Such organisations are obstacles to building a Leninist vanguard party in that country. And we also stressed that the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution, which was vindicated by the Russian Revolution, is key to the struggle for socialist revolution in South Africa.

The Bolshevik Party was proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist to the core. This was reflected in its programme and in the composition of its leadership. It was embodied in its steadfast opposition to all forms of national inequality or privilege and in its support to the right of all nations within the tsarist prison house of peoples, as it was called, to national self-determination — that is, the right to set up independent states. This in no way represented support to bourgeois nationalism. When Lenin argued for support to the Irish Easter Uprising against the British imperialists in 1916, for example, he stood for military support, not political support to Irish nationalism.

Lenin sharply distinguished between the nationalism of oppressor nations and that of oppressed nations, but at no juncture did he argue that nationalism is progressive. Basing itself upon the sanctity of the nation-state, nationalism is a form of capitalist ideology. Lenin fought against splitting the working class into separate parties based on nationality. Following Marx and Engels, who wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that "the workingmen have no country", Lenin argued that "bourgeois nationalism and proletarian

internationalism, these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world and express the two policies, nay the two world outlooks in the national question". Under Lenin, the Bolsheviks emphasised the irreconcilability of nationalism and internationalism. Of course, this was to change in 1924 with the political counterrevolution led by Stalin, who proclaimed the nationalist dogma of building "socialism in one country".

Upholding the democratic right of national self-determination — which required implacable opposition to the chauvinism of one's own bourgeoisie — was the only road to taking the national question off the agenda, to winning the confidence of the oppressed nationalities, to transcending national divisions and bringing about real class unity. Now this was a huge task. The tsarist empire consisted of a vast European and Asian land mass inhabited by a population of extraordinary linguistic and ethnic diversity. This included about 200 more or less distinct peoples and languages; the dominant Great Russian nation made up approximately 43 per cent of the population. This agglomeration of diverse peoples was held together by a ruling military and bureaucratic caste, at the head of which stood the "Tsar of all the Russias".

The Bolsheviks' revolutionary internationalism was concretely expressed in the first acts of the revolutionary workers government. A week after the seizure of power, on 15 November 1917 the Bolsheviks issued the Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia. This was followed a few weeks later by a special appeal "To All Muslim Toilers of Russia and the East". The Bolsheviks repudiated the annexationist and Great Russian chauvinist policies pursued by both tsarism and the short-lived bourgeois Provisional Government of Kerensky. They opposed the chauvinist cry for "nation-building" couched in terms of "Russia, one and indivisible". The Bolshevik leadership did not maintain that the various nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire had to be reorganised within the framework of a single federated Soviet workers state. Lenin declared:

"They tell us that Russia will be partitioned, will fall apart into separate republics, but we have no reason to fear this. However many independent republics there may be, we shall not be afraid. What is important for us is not where the state frontier passes, but that the union of

continued on page 8

Letters and articles presenting the Marxist position on key questions of debate on the South African left: for revolutionary proletarian opposition to the "neo-apartheid" government of the new bourgeois-nationalist ANC; the debate over a "mass workers party"; the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution versus the doctrine of "nation-building" in colonial and neocolonial countries.

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South Africa...

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workers of all nations shall be preserved for the struggle with the bourgeoisie of whatever nation."

This was a critical factor in achieving victory in the bitter Civil War and extending workers rule beyond the area where it initially held sway, which was mainly limited to the great cities of northern and central Russia.

Lenin opposed every manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism within the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state. This was the subject of his last struggle over the national question in the Caucasus. He broke with Stalin over Stalin's arrogant treatment of the Georgian Communists and his attempt to impose a single Transcaucasian republic against their will. Against Stalin, Lenin insisted that the right of self-determination for the constituent workers republics be written into the Soviet constitution. The Bolsheviks recognised the national rights of autonomous republics and regional autonomy for the diverse peoples which were not fully formed nations.

At the same time, the Bolsheviks understood that national self-determination was a democratic demand subordinate to class considerations. They fought against the counterrevolutionary intrigues of various bourgeois nationalists who, hiding



February 1997: Cops and troops brutally suppress "coloured" township revolts against government. Leaders of protests pushed anti-black racism. A revolutionary proletarian party would seek to transcend racial and ethnic tensions through class struggle against neo-apartheid capitalist rulers.

visions in South Africa. Time and again, we were told that to recognise the continuing reality of these divisions put us in the camp of the National Party. It's just the opposite: those who talk about nation-building and "national unity" and "non-racial democracy" are in bed with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and its white capitalist masters.

Capitalism did not create a single South African nation; nor do the diverse

group which deliberately mobilises anti-African sentiment.

The various organisations I mentioned accept the permanence of the "sacred" territorial boundaries established by the imperialist powers. We don't know what the boundaries of a future workers state in South Africa will be. But we do know that the creation of a "single nation" cannot be established by administrative decree. Under workers rule, regional autonomy will be extended to groups like the Zulus if they demand it, although to advocate such a thing right now would mean unleashing tribalist communal bloodshed by Inkatha, which would be aided and abetted by the white racist enemies of the proletariat. All of this again underlines why South African revolutionaries must study the history of the Russian Revolution. In a country like South Africa, with various pre-national peoples such as the Zulus, and various tribal and language groups, the Bolshevik programme for Central Asia has great relevance.

Forge a Bolshevik party!

The stark racial and class inequalities in South Africa make it particularly clear that there's no middle ground. The alternative to communalist bloodletting and all-sided oppression is a fight for proletarian power and its international extension. With a revolutionary South Africa as its powerhouse, a socialist federation of southern Africa would begin the task of eliminating the extreme poverty and backwardness promoted by imperialist subjugation of this region. What is needed is to forge the internationalist revolutionary party that can lead the working class to power.

To do this it is necessary, as Lenin and Trotsky pointed out, to politically defeat

and expel the opportunist betrayers from the labour movement. There's a lot of talk among South African leftists about "unity". Now there's unity, and there's unity. In 1914, Lenin wrote, "Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers cause needs is the unity of Marxists, not unity between Marxists and opponents and distorters of Marxism." Only by sharply drawing a line of ideological demarcation between revolutionaries on the one hand and reformists and centrists on the other can politically advanced workers be broken from the open and camouflaged opponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That's at the root of our perspective of revolutionary regroupment. In South Africa, you've got a real chummy left, where everybody rubs shoulders and the lines are blurred. A group like ours, which insists upon fighting for the political independence of the working class from its class enemies, jars some nerves and gets some people pissed off. But that's how to go forward.

The reformist Communist Party claims to be fighting for socialism, but really they want to cultivate a "refined" nationalism. Recently, in the pages of the *African Communist*—some people now call it the *African Capitalist*—Phillip Dexter, the SACP Western Cape Provincial Secretary and a Member of Parliament for the ANC, revealed that nationalism has a "trans-historical, sacred" character and warned that "the nation is a strategic resource that the working class ignores at its peril". Now, what revolutionary workers in South Africa ignore at their peril is that Mr Dexter and the reformist SACP and its tripartite alliance are bitter enemies of class struggle and proletarian revolution. I mentioned the nurses strike, thousands of them fired. The SACP is also the party that smashed a strike by Mercedes-Benz workers a few years ago.

But the SACP's role in implementing the dictates of the capitalist rulers has led to a lot of turmoil at the base of the party. We hear a lot of talk about a rumoured left-wing faction, the "Chris Hani faction", named after the young SACP leader who was murdered by a right-winger a few years ago. But what really haunts this party which claims to be the continuator of Leninism is the whole question of Trotskyism, of permanent revolution and proletarian internationalism. We're certainly running across members of their youth group who are interested in this programme.

Neville Alexander, a WOSA spokesman who's a very prominent leftist in South Africa, recently argued at a conference in the Western Cape that "we are building a nation". And he remarked that "if the nation does not become the primary identity of the people of South Africa, they will imbibe willy-nilly all manner of eth-



South African bourgeoisie has regional imperialist ambitions. Mandela (centre) was instrumental in "negotiating" deal between former Zaire (Congo) ruler Mobutu and US-sponsored successor Kabila.

behind the slogan of self-determination, made common cause with domestic and imperialist enemies of Soviet power. This was the case in the Ukraine and Georgia during the Civil War.

Nationalism and the South African left

We have a new pamphlet on South Africa called *The Fight for a Revolutionary Vanguard Party: Polemics on the South African Left*. In there is a letter we wrote to the New Unity Movement (NUM), which is fairly moribund at this point, where we took up the question of nation-building. Now, it's true that, in part, the support of the NUM and other South African groups to "building a nation" is a reaction to the former white-supremacist apartheid regime and its racist "separate development" schemes, which under the guise of "self-determination" for the various races pushed blacks onto bantustans. This kind of forced retribalisation was a key prop to the brutal system of superexploitation of black labour.

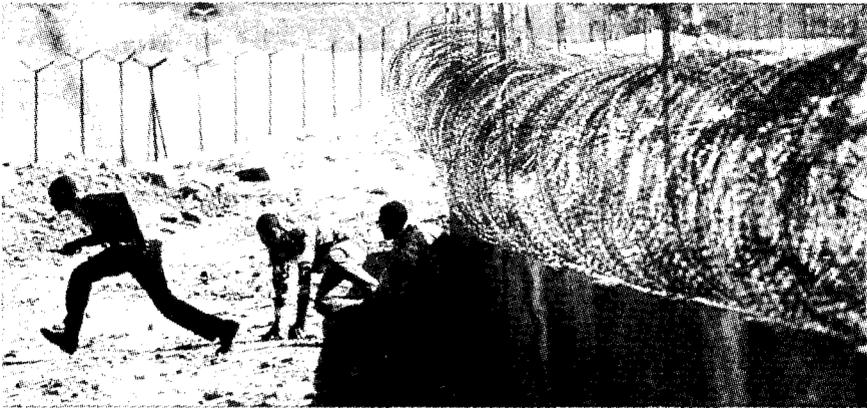
But it is impossible to smash imperialist domination with a programme that ignores the real ethnic, racial and tribal di-

peoples currently constitute nations, since they're all integrated into a single capitalist economy. It is not the slogan of "building a nation" that can raise to their feet the (black) African, coloured and Indian toilers to overthrow the Randlords and the black frontmen presiding over the neo-apartheid capitalist regime. Rather it is the programme of a black-centred workers government, which expresses the fact that a proletarian revolution in South Africa will also be, in this colonially derived state, a supreme act of national liberation.

In our discussions in Cape Town with organisations like WOSA and the Workers International Vanguard League (WIVL), we were told that our call for a black-centred workers government—that our emphasis on the centrality of black African labour—is divisive, or backhandedly pro-nationalist. On the contrary, it is groups like the WIVL which tail behind coloured nationalism, which is very prevalent in the coloured community in the Western Cape. Look at the work of this group. In the Cape region, they orient toward a vigilante organisation called People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), which executes drug dealers. This is a largely Muslim fundamentalist



Teachers union at May 1995 protest in Johannesburg. ANC government has slashed funding for social services and housing.



T. Dollaert

Mozambican refugees scramble to get across South African border. Nationalist ANC continues former apartheid regime's deportations of desperate immigrants.

nic and racial allegiances or sub-identities as their ideological lifeblood". A few years ago WOSA organised a Workers List Party to run against the ANC in the elections. We gave them critical support; despite a lot of reformist demands, which we pointed out at the time, they at least posed as some kind of expression of independent working-class politics and drew a crude class line against the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. But now WOSA, tailing behind the nationalist popular front, condemns the struggle for socialist revolution as "unrealistic". They have increasingly expressed opposition to proletarian internationalism and oriented toward petty-bourgeois nationalists.

There is a great danger of heightened racial and ethnic strife born of brutal poverty and capitalist superexploitation. But what the Bolshevik Revolution showed is that the programme of internationalism can link together diverse peoples for the goal of eradicating national, sexual and class oppression. The fight against all forms of social oppression is one of the defining features of a Leninist vanguard party. The working class must stand at the head of the struggles of all of the downtrodden, fighting for jobs, housing and free quality education for all, for maternity benefits and childcare. You have a lot of nice-sounding resolutions being passed by the ANC. But the government's so-called Reconstruction and Development Programme is a fraud. There's no housing being built — in fact, funding for health care and housing have been halved over the last year.

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

We fight for a Bolshevik party in South Africa, composed of the most advanced workers, which will act as a tribune of the people in struggle for all of the oppressed. Such a party will fight for the expropriation of urban land to provide desperately needed housing for urban squatters. It will fight for the expropriation of white agribusiness to provide land for agricultural workers. It will fight for union-based workers defence guards to suppress right-wing terror and intercommunalist slaughter. It will fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, who are being scapegoated like crazy right now in South Africa; you've probably heard how the ANC women's league has been running a centre for the deportation of immigrants. We seek to build a party that will fight against the special oppression of women and for gay rights, for an end to the bride price (*lobola*) and to the tribalist, patriarchal polygamy system, which the ANC doesn't want to touch with a ten-foot pole.

The fight against the age-old oppression of women is really a critical question in South Africa. We hear a lot about how the African family is a communal-oriented family and so forth and so on. But under capitalism, the family is the main institution in the oppression of women, who are

confined to the home or forced to do double shifts — first as workers and then shouldering heavy burdens as domestic slaves. And black women in South Africa really are domestic slaves. Moreover, women workers are relegated to the lowest-paid jobs in the textile, food and service industries and are disproportionately concentrated in what Karl Marx called the industrial reserve army of labour, the unemployed.

During the height of the anti-apartheid revolts a decade and more ago, black working women were in the forefront of the anti-pass campaigns, the stayaways, the strikes, the struggles against evictions of squatters and for the freedom of anti-apartheid political prisoners like Nelson Mandela. Today Nelson Mandela could care less about them. The essence of capitalism, the system of private ownership of the means of production, is the extraction of surplus value from the proletariat, and its "democracy" is a democracy for the rich. The new South African constitution is one of the most liberal ones around. The death penalty has been eliminated, laws have been passed for the protection of gay



Scott Braley/Impact Visuals

Waiting room at day hospital in Duncan Village, East London. Miserable social conditions among oppressed masses can only be overcome through socialist revolution. Those who labour must rule!

rights and now for the right to abortion.

Before I get into what the right to abortion means in reality, it's necessary to point out that the previous law, the Abortion and Sterilisation Act passed by the white-supremacist regime in 1975, could in actuality be called a population control act. Women factory workers, for instance, were threatened with losing their jobs unless they submitted to contraceptive injections. Soweto schoolgirls were denied the right to sit for matriculation examinations unless they had contraceptive injections. There were many accounts of women being sterilised or fitted with IUDs without their knowledge. The barriers to a legal abortion were formidable; of

course, many white women could go to other countries to get one. During a debate on abortion in 1982, the minister of health at the time was constrained to admit that while 20 legal abortions had been allowed during the preceding year — 20, right! — a quarter of a million South African women had been forced to resort to illegal or back-street abortions.

While abortions are now legal, the health clinics are underfunded and understaffed, and doctors and nurses can refuse to provide abortions. After the law passed in February, I read in the papers there that Johannesburg's general hospital was performing only four a day. There's an acute shortage of nurses, a low-paid job in which women are concentrated. There's also pervasive backwardness, fostered by the reformists and nationalists, who at best pay only lip service to the fight against women's oppression — it was reported that 78 per cent of ANC supporters don't support abortion. This patriarchal backwardness consigns women to an inferior, subordinate position. *Lobola*, the bride price, makes African women slaves of their husbands and fathers and subject to a lot of violence. There's a searing indictment of this in the book *African Women*. Black women are considered to be minors no matter how old they are and black rural women have even fewer rights. We intend to build a party which will fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution.

The extreme poverty and oppression shows up in the high cervical cancer rates for black women. Tuberculosis is rampant, as is AIDS. Thousands of children are born to mothers who are HIV-positive. To the extent that occupational health needs are addressed, it's centred on men, who are more likely to be in unions. The vast majority of black women proletarians are domestic or agricultural workers; with no legal protections. But apartheid capital-



Der Spiegel

1987 strike at Mercedes-Benz was sold out by "Communist" misleaders.

crying need for maternity benefits, among other demands.

Fight for new October Revolutions!

This is not surprising. As the labour component of the nationalist popular front, the COSATU bureaucracy's role is to discipline and police the working class. Now they're literally trying to enlist their members in the racist "law and order" hysteria, mobilising trade unionists to sign up for "community policing" programmes to work with the cops, who in fact commit a lot of the crime. There are massive illusions among South African leftists in the "neutrality" of the capitalist state. For example, POPCRU, a police "union", is regarded as part of the labour movement. This is a denial of the fact that the capitalist state and its cops are bloody instruments to maintain the rule of the racist capitalist oppressors.

At bottom, the difference between the International Communist League and the rest of the left in South Africa and elsewhere boils down to the fact that we fight for new October Revolutions. We point out that what is of enduring significance about the Russian Revolution is that it proved that the working-class seizure of state power requires building a Leninist vanguard party fighting against all forms of social oppression. We point out that revolutionary internationalism cannot be combined with even the most "refined" nationalism. If you are a nationalist, you're going to want to keep the chains on somebody, because you accept the poisonous divisions within bourgeois society. And to conclude, and to repeat, Trotsky's programme of permanent revolution recognises that though the socialist revolution may occur in backward capitalist countries, it cannot be completed except through the road of international proletarian revolution, because an isolated socialist revolution more than ever confronts inevitable imperialist intervention and strangulation.

It's our task to build Trotskyist vanguard parties in South Africa, the United States and everywhere else as part of the fight to reforge a democratic-centralist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. And that requires ruthless political combat to expose the reformists and the centrists and to win over and regroup the revolutionary elements who want to fight for authentic communism. That's the kind of programmatic intransigence that the Bolsheviks had and that we have to have, because that's what is needed in order to eliminate the exploitation of the working class by capitalism. ■

N Ireland...

(Continued from page 12)

solution requires that the working class come to the head of the national struggle. But that does not prevent us from solidarising with those who are fighting for independence under the banner of petit-bourgeois nationalism — i.e. a capitalist united Ireland" (*Workers Power*, April 1996). WP's support to the forcible reunification of Ireland is a recipe for communalism, directly counterposed to the Leninist programme which seeks to cut across the communal divide and fight for working class power.

Although Sinn Féin in the past have espoused some pretensions to socialism, they were always petty-bourgeois nationalists whose strategy is counterposed to the necessary mobilisation of the working class. Since the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, such petty-bourgeois nationalist groups can no longer manoeuvre between the Soviet Union and imperialist powers and they have no alternative but to appeal for imperialist aid and assistance. Sinn Féin views the US as a potential ally of Catholics in Northern Ireland, calling for intervention of US imperialism in the "peace process". Leaders of imperialist powers are not in the business of acting in the interests of the oppressed and exploited. Whether through "armed struggle" or "negotiation", nationalists inevitably seek a solution within the framework of capitalism and imperialism, which today includes the palpable possibility of a "Bosnia-type" scenario, ie communalist war.

JULY 6 — At about 3.30am hundreds of British soldiers and RUC men in full riot gear, Saracens, and over a hundred armoured Land Rovers stormed into the Garvaghy Road. Residents were thus "informed" of Secretary of State Dr Mowlam's "decision" to clear the way for a thousand Orangemen to flaunt the bloody Union Jack in the face of the oppressed Catholics of Northern Ireland with the biggest mobilisation of the British Army for years. Catholic residents who resisted this outrage were met with plastic bullets fired at the head; casualties lay on the ground, blood streaming. This is the bitter fruit of the imperialist "peace process".

Mo Mowlam is the authentic face of Her Majesty's Labour Party. The swinish pro-imperialist British Labour Party defended the British Empire in two world

wars, and infamously cheered the British execution of James Connolly. Lenin, whose Bolsheviks led the Russian workers to power in 1917, denounced the Labour Party and the rest of the social democracy as "social chauvinists" — occasionally "socialist" in word, but chauvinist in deeds. It was a Labour government, which included Tony Benn, which despatched the British Army to Northern Ireland in 1969: and after 27 years, the blood-soaked Army remains to defend the oppressive Orange statelet of Northern Ireland. The bitter reality of the imperialist "peace" fraud, we have repeatedly warned, leaves the Catholic minority at the mercy of the Army/RUC and emboldened Loyalist death-squads and has done no good for Protestant workers either.

The Spartacist League says: British Army/RUC out of Garvaghy Road and all Catholic areas — for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland! The British working class has a particular obligation to oppose its "own" bourgeoisie: a century ago Karl Marx emphasised that the British proletariat would never be free as long as Ireland remained in thrall. Those who fail to oppose in words and deeds British imperialism's armed rampage in Northern Ireland today are no Marxists but miserable class traitors.

In the recent general election the Spartacist League told the truth and refused to give a gram of support to Blair and Co who, wrapped in the Union Jack, pledged to serve Queen and City. The SWP said "vote Labour or socialist", which in practice meant going all out for a Blair victory. Tony Cliff declared that the SWP were "over the moon at the Labour victory". *Socialist Review* (June 1997) added: "The Labour victory has lifted a burden from the shoulders of socialists everywhere." The fake Trotskyist Workers Power crowed: "Blair's victory is our victory" (*Workers Power*, May 1997). Now Blair will use his overwhelming majority as a mandate for massive attacks on anyone who resists oppression, whether Irish Republicans, or militant trade unionists at home.

The SWP supported its own bourgeoisie when the British Army was sent to Northern Ireland in 1969 with the "argument" that they would "save lives". The SWP continued to whitewash their bloody role and denounced those who called for troops out: "The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immedi-

ate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969). This support for the army who carried out a cold-blooded massacre on Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972 is grotesque. It is

"breathing space" for them. In step with the Labour lieutenants of imperialism, the SWP, Workers Power et al supported capitalist counterrevolutionaries from Polish Solidarność to Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. The Spartacist League upheld Trotsky's position, for unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers



Daily Telegraph

British troops and RUC defend Loyalist mobs while unleashing bloody terror against Catholic residents in Garvaghy Road.

quintessential reformism, expressing confidence in the armed forces of the capitalist state. Today the SWP supports the imperialist "peace" fraud by calling on Mr "I believe in the United Kingdom" Blair to talk to Sinn Féin to "send a message of hope to Protestants and Catholics alike". Tell it to the people on Garvaghy Road! With crass hypocrisy the SWP refuses to call for troops out in the British *Socialist Worker*; they only mention it in their *Irish* paper, in the small print.

Supporting the British Army in Northern Ireland is a graphic example of the capitulation of these so-called "international socialists" to their own bourgeoisie, which began with Cliff's refusal to defend the USSR and the North Korean and Chinese deformed workers states against US and British imperialism in the Korean War during an earlier Cold War Labour government. In the second imperialist Cold War, the virulently anti-Soviet SWP went so far as to cheer the CIA-backed Afghan *mujahedin* scum who fought against the Red Army to murder unveiled women and school teachers for the "crime" of teaching girls to read. No

state, and proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy. This is the only programme that could have prevented the disaster of capitalist counterrevolution in the former USSR and Eastern Europe.

Northern Ireland today stands on the brink of another wave of anti-Catholic pogroms and communal strife. As communists, we seek to intervene to alter the course of the conflict towards a class determination. What's necessary are integrated, programmatically based workers militias to smash Loyalist and all sectarian terror and stop imperialist rampage. Nationalism is a dead end: Sinn Féin supported the imperialist "peace process", which is premised on maintaining the British imperialist armed fist in Northern Ireland. As proletarian internationalists we oppose the nationalist irredentist view that the Protestants should be forced into a unified Ireland. We fight for an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles. This requires the construction of Leninist vanguard parties to fight for workers revolution on both sides of the border and both sides of the Irish Sea. ■

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Down with racist anti-Traveller attacks!

For trade union centred defence of Traveller halting sites!



Nan Joyce



Spartakist

Travellers protest in Dublin, 1984. Placard reads: "Travellers are here to stay and won't vanish into thin air" (left). Spartakists protest in Berlin against exclusion of Soviet Jewish immigrants in 1990. Sign reads: "Stop the manhunt against Roma and Sinti! Full citizenship rights!"

We reprint below a statement issued by the Dublin Spartacist Group on 18 August 1997.

After weeks of defiance in the teeth of incessant cop harassment, vindictive court orders and reactionary "local resident" mobilisations, members of the Irish Travelling community were violently driven from their temporary halting site in Cabinteely, South Dublin by a carefully orchestrated cop raid on the morning of Tuesday 12 August which even the racist anti-Traveller bourgeois press were kept from witnessing. *We in the Dublin Spartacist Group call for urgent mobilisations by the workers movement in defence of Traveller halting sites and to put a stop to racist cop and vigilante attacks on Travellers! Hands off the Travellers!*

Throughout the summer Travellers in South County Dublin have faced a barrage of court orders and injunctions designed to give legal cover for driving them from their halting sites. Amidst this racist state vendetta High Court orders for the arrest of Travellers who have refused to "move along" were issued on 29 July. As one Traveller aptly summed it up, "We can't be running all the time. We are being shoved all over the place" (*Irish Times*, 31 July). So, on Tuesday 29 July over 30 Traveller families converged on Cabinteely Park in the notoriously anti-Traveller Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council area to take a courageous stand in demanding their elementary right to halting site provision. The Travellers braved cop and vigilante harassment for days while their caravans were vandalised, their water was cut off and their halting site was laid siege to by a combination of cops, council workers and "local community" vigilantes who turned up with earth-moving equipment and a lorry load of slurry.

The Travelling community faces brutal oppression from the Irish clericalist state. The myth of Mary Robinson's "tolerant" and "racism-free" Ireland is exposed for the lie that it is by the wave of savage attacks against Travellers in the recent period. Travelling people face constant

eviction, driven from their sites and forced onto waste land in dangerous locations (often near public tips) without even elementary sanitation. Infant mortality rates are high, life expectancy low and Traveller children are often denied even basic education. In November 1994, there was a horrific attack on Travellers' homes and a pub which served Travellers in Glenamaddy, Co Galway. A month later in Bantry, vigilantes used forklift trucks and iron bars to wreck caravans, leaving two families homeless. And in Dublin local residents have mobilised to block development of new halting sites.

The government's "law and order" "anti-drugs" campaign — kicked off in the first place by the "Rainbow Coalition" with the full support of the Labour Party and Democratic Left — means the strengthening of the repressive powers of the capitalist state which will be used against workers, women's rights activists, Republicans and Travellers. Youth Defence Blueshirts feel the wind in their sails and have targeted the Mary Stopes women's clinic. There has been a rise of community-based vigilante groups which necessarily act as auxiliaries of the racist bourgeois state, particularly the cops. Ireland's growing number of refugees and immigrants — including from Eastern

Europe — will be targets of the state and vigilante terror now meted out to Travellers. In the wake of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, immigrants and minorities are under increasing attack. Fleeing from racist reaction, poor immigrants including large numbers of Gypsies are attempting to move to Western Europe. They face vicious racism and deportation when they arrive. Our comrades of the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski, Polish section of the International Communist League, in a protest statement issued in response to a vile racist roundup and deportation of Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) refugees by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) government stated "the deportation of the Roma is part of a plan which includes the opening of new 'deportation centers' financed through an agreement with the German Fourth Reich to keep 'undesirable immigration' out of 'Fortress Europe'" (*Workers Vanguard* no 648, 5 July 1996). *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees! Smash anti-*

Traveller vigilantism!

The fake left bear their share of political responsibility for the recent attacks on Travellers. The Socialist Party of Joe Higgins TD are up to their eyeballs in the ruling class's reactionary "law and order" crusade. In his April 1996 local election campaign in Blanchardstown — with its large Traveller population — Higgins pandered directly to anti-Traveller vigilantism when his election leaflet announced that "The local community has the right to publicly identify regular offenders and apply community pressure to stop them." In the context of Ireland, such appeals are thinly disguised code language for inciting lynch-mob hysteria against Travellers such as was witnessed in Cabinteely.

The Workers Solidarity Movement essentially views with favour the "self-activity" of the community and supports the "anti-drugs" campaign which helps fuel anti-Traveller vigilantism, though they may wring their hands at "problems with some of their tactics, especially when they degenerate into self-appointed gangs running personal vendettas" (*Workers Solidarity*, Spring 1997). As for trade union action, the WSM calls for defence of local authority trade unionists who refuse to be involved in evictions, but say not a word about the need to mobilise the trade union movement in defence of Travellers' halting sites! As for the Socialist Workers Party, they did not even mention the Traveller question or the woman question (burning questions in this country) in their recent election campaign.

As we Spartacists said seven years ago at the founding of our group "...the defence of the horribly oppressed Travellers' community is an 'acid test of Irish revolutionaries'" (*Ireland: workers to power*). Urgently necessary is the fight for a revolutionary workers party to combat all forms of capitalist oppression on the road to smashing the rotten capitalist system and establishing workers power throughout these islands. *For an Irish workers republic, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles.* ■

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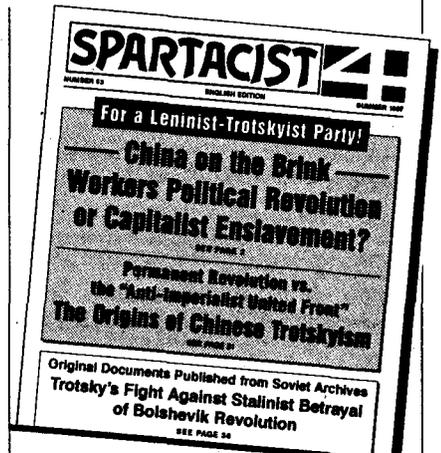
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Northern Ireland: Labour government has blood on its hands!

We reprint below a leaflet issued by the Spartacist League/Britain on 6 July, hours after the Labour government sent in hundreds of British soldiers and RUC in full riot gear to ensure that the Orange Order would march down Garvaghy Road, a Catholic enclave in Portadown.

In forcing Orange marches through Catholic areas, Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam are acting exactly as we warned they would: "Labour and Tories are committed to maintaining the massive presence of the British Army in Northern Ireland, reinforcing the RUC and the Loyalist gangs who are already on the rampage and are gearing up for a summer of anti-Catholic pogroms" (Spartacist League statement, 21 April). The leaflet which was first distributed at Marxism '97 noted that the SWP called for a vote for New Labour and now they have got what they wanted — Labour in government.

Since the start of the "peace process", Drumcree and Garvaghy Road annual marches have been the focal point for Loyalist triumphalism and supremacy. On each occasion, the role of the British Army, in collaboration with the RUC, has been crystal clear — to force a path for the Orangemen to maraud through Catholic areas. This fans the flames of Loyalist terror all over the North. The brutal killing of the young Catholic woman Bernadette Martin on the morning of 15 July in her Protestant boyfriend's home, the recent murder of the young Catholic James Morgan in Co Down and the Apprentice Boys' mass mobilisation through Derry on the weekend of 9 August are only the most recent examples of the brutal reality of the "peace process".

From the very start we warned that any deal imposed by the bloody imperialists on Northern Ireland will necessarily be unjust and brutal, maintaining the oppression of the Catholic minority and offering nothing for the Protestant working class either. It is ABC for Marxists that the main enemy is your "own" bourgeoisie. In Britain this means raising the elementary call for the *immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland!* The imperialist role in Northern Ireland reinforces the communal divide. Loyalist demagogues use the fact that the Protestant community would become an oppressed minority in a Catholic-dominated united capitalist Ireland to whip up anti-Catholic frenzy. Anti-Catholic violence by the army, RUC and Loyalist paramilitaries leads the Catholic population to look to Sinn Féin/IRA to protect them. The situation of the two communities in Northern Ireland is such that they constitute interpenetrated peoples in which the Catholics are an oppressed minority. Under capitalism the exercise of self-determination of one

For immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops!

people can be carried out only at the expense of the other. Capitalist solutions necessarily fan the flames of communalism — only workers revolution can bring about a just solution to national oppression. *We fight for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles.* This will only come about by the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, the Orange statelet and the clericalist state in the South.

The SWP in Britain refuse to oppose

which lends credibility to the idea that British imperialism can advance the cause of peace or progress in Northern Ireland. This is a lie! The imperialist "peace process" rests on British troops *staying* in Northern Ireland. The SWP may "criticise" their "own" bourgeoisie, but there is a world of difference between their reformism and the Marxist programme of fighting for working class revolution to overthrow capitalism.

While supporting Labour in Britain,

racist Labour government.

The Socialist Party (SP), who have for decades also rejected the call for troops out, have become outright apologists for Loyalist death squads and their frontmen, such as Billy Hutchinson. Even after Drumcree this year, they still maintain that: "the parades issues is a clash between two rights, the right to march and the right to object to parades which residents find offensive. But we also argue there is a third right, the right of the working class as a whole not to be dragged into full scale sectarian conflict. We stand for local negotiation and agreement" (*Voice*, August 1997). The SP obscenely equate the supremacist marauding of the Orangemen with the question of defence of the *oppressed* Catholic minority under siege. By referring to these Orange marches as a



Bitter fruit of the imperialist "peace" process: Mo Mowlam (inset) ordered British army and RUC occupation of Catholic Garvaghy Road, to force a path for display of Loyalist supremacy.

the troops in Northern Ireland; they even welcomed them in 1969. In the week after the Army and cop occupation of the Garvaghy Road, the SWP bleated: "The only government policy which can begin to work in Ireland is to immediately begin real talks with all parties, including Sinn Féin, to remove the Unionists' veto over any settlement and to get the British troops out" (*Socialist Worker*, 12 July). For an organisation that rarely mentions the presence of the troops, this is a cynical attempt to pretend that the SWP calls for troops out. They proffered advice to Blair, even as his government had blood on its hands, about how to conduct the "talks",

the SWP strikes a posture of offering a "class against class" perspective for Northern Ireland. In a nationalist demonstration in Derry in 1996, they marched with a banner saying "class not creed". But what kind of a class perspective is it that accepts the presence of the British Army in the city of Bloody Sunday and refuses to call for defence of Catholic areas against rampaging Loyalists? When it comes to Britain, a revolutionary perspective means irreconcilable *opposition* to the pro-imperialist Labour Party and the capitalist state. The SWP's answer is vote, lobby, petition and pressurise Blair's anti-union, anti-working class, anti-Irish

matter of "rights", Militant is adopting the language of demagogues like David Trimble who, together with Loyalist paramilitaries, secured the "right" of Orangemen to assert "Protestant supremacy" in Garvaghy Road, backed by the Army and the RUC.

Workers Power (WP) calls for the British Army to get out, but then simultaneously supports Labour in Britain and the nationalist, capitalist strategy. Crowing over Blair's victory they peddle illusions that Blair's New Labour can be forced to "meet our needs" (*Workers Power*, May 1997). At the same time they say: "We recognise that a progressive

continued on page 10