



## Northern Ireland: Labour's "peace" is a lie

Eighteen months after the signing of the Good Friday agreement, the Northern Ireland Executive convened in December amid much fanfare by the Westminster Labour government. Under a headline "Ulster is a battleground no longer. It is a land of hope and progress", Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson writes that this is a "new era in politics in the British Isles" (*Independent*, 17 December 1999). Meanwhile across Northern Ireland Loyalist "ethnic cleansing", driving Catholics from their homes, is rife. In the town of Larne alone there were 14 pipe and petrol bombings in the first eight months of 1999.

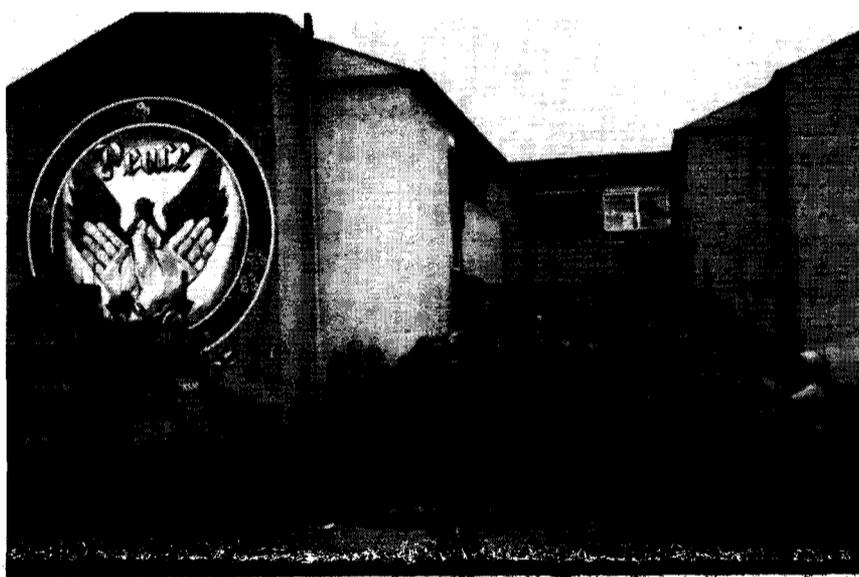
Labour is crowing about their "power-sharing" Northern Ireland Executive but it is far from certain that they will be able to hold it together long enough to entice the IRA to hand in their weapons. Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness took up his post as Education Minister and was pelted with eggs when he turned up at Protestant schools. To their evident dismay, Sinn Féin found a state-of-the-art electronic bug planted by British Intelligence in a car used by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in November. The British are keenly aware that the army failed to defeat the IRA militarily, thus they are willing to tolerate Sinn Féin in Stormont as a *quid pro quo* for the IRA handing in their weapons, which they have promised to do. Meanwhile David Trimble's Ulster Unionists threaten to boot Sinn Féin out of the Executive because "power-sharing" with them is splitting the Unionists' ranks.

The facade of "power-sharing" in Stormont is designed to give the appearance of "democracy" to the way Northern Ireland is governed. Labour also commissioned the Patten report on the RUC, which proposes to give them a makeover. The package is expected to lull the Catholics into believing the murdering RUC thugs and the state will become more "impartial", which ought to fool nobody. The Orange statelet is and has been a sectarian police state from its foundation. It has acquired powers of repression and coercion which were envied by rulers of apartheid South Africa. Its core is the heavily-armed RUC, who since 1969 have been augmented by a massive British Army presence. In addition there are Loyalist paramilitary killers, "unofficially" backed by the armed forces. Together these "special bodies of armed men" are the backbone of the Orange statelet and subjugation of the Catholic minority is inherent within it. Capitalist rule in Northern Ireland rests on setting Protestant against Catholic and maintaining a deep division in the working class.

We have consistently warned against illusions in this imperialist deal brokered by the governments in London, Dublin and Washington. Opposing the Good Friday agreement, a Spartacist League/Britain and Dublin Spartacist Group joint statement said:

"The 'historic' agreement signed in Belfast's Stormont Castle on 11 April cannot and will not bring peace to Northern Ire-

### British troops out now!



Derek Speirs/Report

Sinn Féin fosters illusions in Blair's "peace". Portadown, 1997: at Labour's behest, army lays siege to Catholic Garvaghy Road.

land. This reactionary imperialist deal will reinforce the subjugation of the oppressed Catholic minority. It will be enforced by the 18,000-strong British Army and the viciously sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), who work hand in glove with the fascistic Loyalist death squads in the murder of Catholics."

—"Northern Ireland: imperialist 'peace' fraud", *Workers Hammer* no 162, May/June 1998

Right from the start, the "deal" was premised on the British Army staying in place. Sinn Féin tries to deny this basic fact, to prettify the reality of the agreement they have signed. In December they stated: "As a prelude to its total withdrawal the British army should return to its barracks and end its patrolling on the streets and roads" (*Irish News*, 7 December 1999). The British government's rebuttal was sharp and swift: "Absolutely not" said Peter Mandelson, "There will be no major troop withdrawal or the like—it's been pure speculation" (*Irish Independent*, 7 December 1999). As the Executive was being convened, the army was in fact fortifying its positions in South Armagh. We fight for the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. No good can come of the British military presence there. This demand does not automatically ensure any advance in a revolutionary direction, but it is a necessary starting point and must be linked to a revolutionary, proletarian perspective.

We uphold the programme of Karl Marx who insisted that the struggle of the British workers against their "own" capitalist rulers can only go forward on the basis of firm opposition to imperialist oppression in Ireland. This requires intransigent opposition to Labour, the lie-

tenants of imperialism. We seek to break workers from all allegiance to Labour, which has always loyally served racist, chauvinist British imperialism and the monarchy. Labour MPs joined the Tories in cheering the execution of Irish socialist James Connolly for leading the heroic 1916 rising against British rule. Labour sent in the army in 1969 and New Labour today stands by the army's crimes. Last year Blair appointed Sir Michael Jackson as commander of NATO forces in Kosovo. Jackson was captain and adjutant to the paratroop regiment which carried out the Bloody Sunday massacre of 14 Catholics in Derry in 1972.

While talking "peace" in Northern Ireland, Labour is increasing the repressive powers of the state. In Britain a new Terrorism Bill has been published under which the right to a jury trial may be denied for "terrorist" offences and this category is being broadened to include "domestic terrorists" as well as "inciting terrorism abroad from within the UK" (*Financial Times*, 3 December 1999). This targets immigrants and minorities and is designed to criminalise political opponents of the racist capitalist state.

### Not Orange against Green, but class against class!

There can be no just solution to the communal conflict in Northern Ireland short of proletarian rule in all of Ireland and in Britain. The Sinn Féin/IRA nationalist strategy (of which the "armalite" and "ballot box" are two sides of the same coin) is a dead end, which inevitably looks to capitalist powers—US and British imperialism and the Irish state—to secure a better deal for Northern Catholics. Capitalist rulers are hardly in the business of

aiding the oppressed and exploited. Since partition, Catholics in the North have constituted an oppressed minority, whereas in the South they are an overwhelming majority. We oppose all discrimination against the Catholic minority. We also recognise that the Protestants are a distinct community defined in opposition to the Irish Catholic nation. As Leninists we uphold the right of self-determination for all nations, which means the right to set up an independent state, but where peoples are geographically interpenetrated "self-determination" for one can only be achieved at the expense of the other. Under capitalism this leads to intercommunal slaughter. We oppose any call for an "independent Ulster" which means supporting the Orange statelet. We also oppose the perspective of a capitalist "united Ireland" proffered by Sinn Féin nationalists, which means reversing the terms of oppression against Protestants. Nationalism is counterposed to the interests of the working class. The prospect of being forcibly incorporated into the Catholic state fuels legitimate fears among Protestants and serves to compact Protestant workers behind Loyalist bigots.

We fight for an Irish workers republic, part of a voluntary socialist federation of the British Isles. Our purpose is to forge revolutionary internationalist parties, sections of the International Communist League, in Britain and Ireland. As we said:

"The key to breaking the bloody cycle of imperialist repression and communalist terror is to unite the proletariat—Protestant and Catholic; English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish—across national and religious lines in common struggle against the capitalist class enemy. That requires intransigent proletarian opposition not only to blood-soaked British imperialism and Orange supremacy, to anti-Catholic terror and discrimination, but also to Green nationalism and the clericalist state in the South."  
—*Workers Hammer* no 162, May/June 1998

A look at the town of Portadown provides ample testimony that Labour's talk of "peace" in Northern Ireland is a cynical hoax. Portadown is the flashpoint for Loyalist violence every year when the Orange Order clamour for the "right" to march down the Catholic Garvaghy Road. It was here that in April 1997 a young Catholic, Robert Hamill, was kicked to death by a Loyalist mob while the RUC looked on. In July of that year, the newly-elected Labour government sent hundreds of troops and RUC into Garvaghy Road to clear the way for the Orange march. We issued a leaflet denouncing this atrocity headlined: "Labour government has blood on its hands!"

Although the Orangemen were banned from marching down Garvaghy Road the last two years, the Catholic residents have been subjected to an annual siege by the army, the RUC and thousands-strong Loyalist mobs. The 1998 siege ended only after the murder of three young children. The

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# Ireland: union tops axe nurses strike

We reprint below a leaflet issued by the Dublin Spartacist Group on the nine-day national nurses strike in Ireland in October. In the days after the leaflet was issued, numerous meetings of nurses throughout Ireland voiced strident opposition to the sell-out deal pushed by the trade union bureaucracy. Before a vote was taken, the bureaucrats called off the strike and rammed through the deal. This treachery by the bureaucracy underscores the need for revolutionary leadership of the trade unions.

The strike of 27,500 nurses, who are overwhelmingly women, shook Ireland. It is the first ever national nurses' strike and the largest strike in the history of the Irish state. Just as the strike was beginning to bite, the union bureaucracy criminally pulled down all the pickets before the ballot, against the wishes of most strikers. In reality the bureaucrats never wanted this strike and are afraid of the working class flexing its muscles.

For decades the trade-union bureaucracy and Labour Party have enforced class collaborationist schemes such as "Partnership 2000", an explicitly anti-working class alliance with the bourgeoisie to keep wages down and boost profits. This is

underpinned by the anti-union Industrial Relations Act which is designed to stop workers from striking. Strikes defying this act are deemed illegal and met with brutal state repression. The much-vaunted "Celtic Tiger" economy, based on the criminal class collaboration of the union tops, means massive profits for the bourgeoisie, and continuing immiseration for the mass of working people, especially women. This immensely popular strike is a crucial battle for all workers, women and the oppressed. Now, in the name of "social partnership", they are trying to force through a rotten sellout and stab the nurses in the back. This includes a measly lump sum increase which the nurses had already rejected and creation of additional senior staff posts but nothing for the majority of nurses. Reject the sellout!

The Dublin Spartacist Group (DSG) has brought our revolutionary politics to nurses on the picket lines. Smash "social partnership"! Partnership of labour and capital is a lie: their interests are irreconcilable. In Ireland, where the state is intertwined with the Catholic Church, the position of women is among the worst in Europe. Childcare is more expensive, divorce—only legalised in 1997—is very difficult to obtain (over 50% of applications have been rejected) and abortion still



Paddy Whelan

October 21 1999: 8000-10,000 nurses march in Dublin. Placard derides health minister Cowen.

remains illegal. It is this anti-woman Church which runs the hospitals. We call for: complete separation of church and state! We need free, quality healthcare for all. For free abortion and free contraception on demand! For free 24-hour childcare! To achieve these basic needs of women and the working class requires a revolutionary struggle against the entire capitalist system—and its labour lieutenants within the working class.

## Break with Labourism, for a Bolshevik party!

Nurses are divided into four different unions: the INO, SIPTU, IMPACT and the PNA, all four of whom came out on strike. The leaders of SIPTU and IMPACT specifically ordered their non-nursing members to cross picket lines and continue working during the strike and none of the unions would strike the private hospitals at all. Striking to win means building picket lines that nobody dares cross. Against craft unionism, which divides the workers within a common industry, it is necessary to struggle for one industrial union for all health service workers.

The union bureaucrats bent over backwards to provide high levels of "emergency" cover and to actively minimise the impact of the strike. It is necessary to first shut down the hospitals completely. After that has been accomplished, the unions can decide what emergency cover to provide. Any disruption in patient care is entirely the responsibility of the bourgeoisie, who have run the health service into the ground and refuse to pay the nurses a decent wage.

The Labour Party is what the Bolshevik revolutionary VI Lenin characterised as a bourgeois workers party: its working-class base is chained to capitalism by its pro-capitalist leadership. It is an obstacle to revolutionary struggle against capitalism. In the 1997 elections, the DSG uniquely called for no vote to Labour, because they explicitly ran on a programme of class collaboration and supported the imperialist "peace" fraud in Northern Ireland.

Irish clerical nationalism, a bourgeois ideology at the core of "social partnership", is one tool favoured by Labour and union bureaucrats in order to tie the working class to the capitalist system. Another side of clerical nationalism is the chauvinism which the bourgeoisie and their labour lieutenants push. Against the hideous

oppression of Travellers, we have a perspective of mobilising the workers movement in defence of all the oppressed and against racist terror and state persecution. For full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! The Dublin Spartacist Group fights for a vanguard party that instils revolutionary consciousness in the working class to fight in its own historical interests, against all forms of oppression.

Successful class struggle against the clericalist state in the South would also find great resonance among both Catholic and Protestant workers in the North. As proletarian internationalists, we, along with our comrades in the Spartacist League/Britain, demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Not Orange against Green, but class against class! A proletarian perspective is necessarily internationalist and requires the mobilisation of the working class, on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea, for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, smashing the Orange statelet in the North as well as the Catholic clericalist state in the South.

## Reform v revolution: "left" obstacles to revolutionary consciousness

The Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) claim to oppose the capitalist system. But these reformists give a left cover for Labour and the trade union bureaucracy. The SWP explicitly try to hold back militant nurses in a leaflet distributed at the 21 October nurses' rally in Dublin: "Many nurses feel like responding with an all-out strike. But before going down this route, nurses should appeal to other workers for solidarity." But *real* solidarity means *honouring* picket lines,

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TROTSKY

## For New October Revolutions throughout the world!

A defining event of the 20th century was the 1917 Russian workers revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party of VI Lenin and Leon Trotsky. John Reed, an American socialist and eyewitness to the revolution, described the working class taking power in his classic *Ten Days That Shook the World*. The revolution demonstrated in practice how the proletariat, led by a Leninist vanguard party, can seize state



LENIN

power and sweep away the capitalist system. Fatally undermined by nearly seven decades of Stalinist betrayal, the Soviet Union was ultimately destroyed through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. At the end of the 20th century, the International Communist League reaffirms our commitment to struggling for new October Revolutions throughout the world.

It was just 8.40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium, with Lenin—great Lenin—among them.... A strange popular leader—a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies—but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity.

Kameniev was reading the report of the actions of the Military Revolutionary Committee; abolition of capital punishment in the Army, restoration of the free right of propaganda, release of officers and soldiers arrested for political crimes, orders to arrest Kerensky and confiscation of food supplies in private storehouses.... Tremendous applause....

Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, 'We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!' Again that overwhelming human roar.

— *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919)

## WORKERS HAMMER



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

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# Why I joined the SYG

We print below a letter of application to the Spartacus Youth Group, slightly edited for publication.

Dear Comrades,

The following is my application for membership of the Spartacus Youth Group. It comes out of my conviction that the ICL is the only party today fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of a socialist society I am committed to.

I used to be the typical petty-bourgeois student with the exception that I didn't like the way things were. I believed in human rights, democracy, welfare, etc. I wanted an end to all wars. At the same time I was aware that there is no such thing as social peace today for the working classes and oppressed peoples of the world. I couldn't stomach mass starvation while the US drops grain in the sea or Europe stockpiles excess food and pays farmers not to produce so as to keep prices up. Or rampant racism and discrimination against women and homosexuals, or the fact that everyone who lives in a country does not have citizenship rights or even the right to work. Racist killings, police brutality, widespread unemployment, fatal train crashes, the list is endless. As such my worldview was very contradictory.

Nothing disposed me to think of the working class I had had little contact with as the only class which could lead the way forward. I systematically rejected all theories and explanations which tended to justify the present conditions and assert that "this is the best it gets"; I preferred not to support any political party which was satisfied with what we have today than do so and get something I didn't want. I instinctively said yes when a leftist salesman asked me if I was interested in Marxism, because I had some sense these people were outraged at some of the same things I was. I listened to them, but I had grown up thinking political activism was futile.

I was disillusioned with all the leftist parties I had encountered. Although they claimed to want to overthrow capitalism, I saw them in practice voting for the very governments they pledged to want to get rid of. For example, the SWP states in its "Where we stand" column that it is for "independent working class action" and "revolution not reform", yet its front page carries an appeal to campaign for Livingstone. Only the Spartacist League seems to be actually implementing in practice what they say they stand for.

In March, NATO began the bombing of

Serbia. Driven by the imperialists' need to control newly capitalist Eastern Europe, the conflict in Kosovo is the latest in a campaign of terror by the bourgeoisies of the main imperialist centres against the people of Serbia and the workers of the world. The situation in Yugoslavia is just one example of their attempt to foster ethnic strife, with different powers encouraging and financing different factions within a country which had lived at peace until the restoration of capitalism. Both Iraq and Serbia serve to warn more backward states of the consequences of refusing to toe the line set by the key imperialists in the post-Soviet "New World Order".

While this to me is unquestionably imperialism at work, it is surprising how few so-called Marxists actually characterize it—as Lenin did—as a stage, the highest stage, of capitalism. Today, many regard imperialism as the social democrat Kautsky did in Germany, as a set of policies which can be changed. One cannot pressure an imperialist government to simply cease being imperialist. Likewise, one cannot expect NATO, the UN or the OSCE to put on a human face (or "not to kill civilians"). Characterized by Lenin as "Dens of Thieves", world-imperialist organizations have terrorized the populations of Korea, ex-Yugoslavia, Palestine, Iraq, etc., and do so continuously by means of sanctions which, incidentally, have killed more than one million people in Iraq alone.

When the US was defeated in Vietnam, it was reluctant to go on further killing sprees around the world in the name of "containment of communism"—until counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Defeat shakes the foundations of an imperialist capitalist state and makes the bourgeoisie more cautious in its attacks on the working class and minorities at home. It is illusory to believe that the imperialists are in Kosovo to protect the "poor little Albanians" (after all the "peacekeepers" are watching on as revenge killings and burning of homes take place). NATO has never recognized Kosovo's right to self-determination; neither is there any talk of actual independence for East Timor. These are not options for the imperialists, who, beyond their murderous designs worldwide, also have their own national questions: Chechnya for Russia, the Basques and regional languages in France and Spain, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in Britain. The imperialists do not sanction the right of secession.

As the US and Britain are increasing their presence in Asia in an attempt to bring about and reap the benefits of coun-

terrevolution in China, North Korea and Vietnam, the left refuses to defend these states as deformed workers states. These same leftist parties that fail to understand imperialism are also those who fail to recognize the material base of Stalinism as stemming from civil war, the failure of revolution in Europe and capitalist encirclement. Instead of calling for political revolution by the working classes, they go as far as to "rejoice" at the counterrevolutionary destruction of communism in the East which has significantly lowered living standards there as well as shattered the lives of millions.

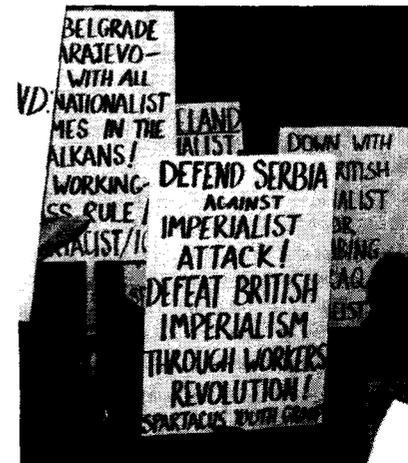
Since counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the bourgeoisies have intensified their efforts to beat the working classes into submission—by attacking their organizations, restricting their rights and attempting to divide them along racial, ethnic, sexual or other lines. In Britain, most of the left denies that this Labour government is administering a capitalist, imperialist state which enforces the rule of the bourgeois class. They refuse to condemn the so-called peace process in Northern Ireland by which British troops will remain and continue to terrorize the Catholic population hand in hand with the RUC. They resort to pressure, on the very same government that remains in Northern Ireland, has not repealed the anti-trade union laws, and continues to uphold racist immigration and asylum laws. The government has carried out attacks on students by introducing fees targeting working class and minority students, challenging their right to free education. It has attacked single mothers and is whipping up anti-gay and age of consent hysteria in a drive to impose the nuclear family model, source of the oppression of women worldwide. In short, under a Labour government, the left is unwilling to acknowledge that the main enemy is at home.

In doing this, the majority of the left is actively hindering the development of class consciousness among workers because it will not state that the interests of labour and capital are counterposed. Only the SL is fighting to forge a revolutionary proletarian party, independent of the capitalist state, the Labour government and the cops who defend its interests, which can lead the working class to power.

While the left here is lobbying Tony Blair or campaigning for Livingstone, the Partisan Defense Committee (fraternally allied with the SL/US) initiated a demonstration in New York against the KKK. The facts were laid bare on 23 October: on one side you have the fascists, protected by the cops and sheltered by the courts, along with the fake left advocating their right to free speech and agreeing to share their sound permit, on the other a mobilization of labour and blacks who experienced the power of organized labour and minorities when led by a revolutionary party to effectively stop the Klan. Consciousness is not static (as I used to think), quite the opposite, it is at moments like this that the party can instill revolutionary consciousness into the working class.

It was not until recently that I grasped what dialectical materialism means in practice. I was ten years old when counterrevolution began in Eastern Europe, I have never seen what some comrades refer to as the "red star in the East", neither have I ever experienced a struggle. I knew the difference between Lenin and Stalin,

but without a materialist analysis of the world, I was unable to see the progression from one to the other as anything but inevitable. My progression towards Marxism has been intellectual, not through struggle. Growing up, I had no sense the system we live in is not permanent, that social change, or even another inter-imperialist war might be a prospect. There seemed to be no other alternative than pushing one's government to the left within the framework of a timeless "democracy". I was not able to characterize the period we are in as a period of reaction stemming from particular material conditions, like counterrevolution in the East and consecutive successes for imperialism abroad. As in Europe after 1848 or Russia



Workers Hammer

SL/SYG protest imperialist bombing of Serbia, March 1999.

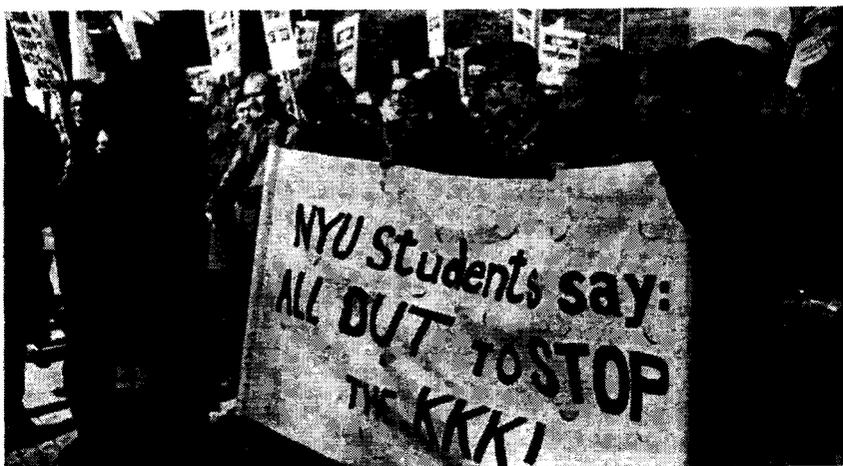
after 1905, the working classes today have suffered a series of defeats. After Thatcherism and the defeat of the miners strike, workers hold token one-day (or even, as I have heard recently, "ten minutes") strikes. Working class consciousness has been seriously eroded, and this together with counterrevolution in Eastern Europe, is what makes Blair capable of following up his attacks on workers and minorities with an unopposed statement in Bournemouth last September that the "class struggle is over". This is what makes it possible for the bourgeois institutions today to tell petty-bourgeois students like me there is no such thing as the working class, and that without a working class, communism is flawed in theory and dead in practice.

Proletarian revolution is not a historical inevitability, as some would have it, but a historical possibility created by the emergence of an industrial proletariat along with the bourgeoisie's rise to power. The working class is nothing special as such, but its strategic position in the relations of production make it the only class capable of actually overthrowing capitalism when led by a revolutionary party. I understand that the Russian Revolution of 1917 is the only time this has occurred, and that a revolutionary party today must draw on the experience of the Bolshevik Party.

I dream of a society where all property and all fruits of labour will be owned collectively by those who work to produce it, one in which scientific progress will increase dramatically, a society free of gender or racial distinctions, and of any discrimination on the basis of age, sexual orientation, religion. It is difficult to predict beyond that what such a society will look like, but I believe that the principles and programme of the SL provide a scientific, material basis on which to achieve this.

For international proletarian revolution to rid the world of this rotten capitalist system!

Comradely,  
J.



Workers Vanguard

New York: Contingents of students joined 23 October 1999 labour/black mobilisation to stop the KKK. Many got their first taste of mass action and social power of organised working class.



# Privatisation means capitalist murder

Following the 5 October Paddington rail crash, anger at the profit-bloated rail companies fuelled revulsion at the Labour government's privatisation of the London Underground. The crash occurred just as bids from prospective buyers of the Tube were coming in. Along with Tony Blair's paranoid machinations around the spectre of Old Labour evoked by Ken Livingstone, this threw a big spotlight on Livingstone's campaign for mayor.

Livingstone is a Labour-loyal pro-imperialist toad with a history of some maverick postures, but he is in no way a "leftist". As he says himself "I have supported the Government in 99 per cent of my votes cast in Parliament" (*Independent*, 11 August 1999). So thorough is his grovelling to Blair that in backing the government's imperialist slaughter in Serbia last spring he took the opportunity to retrospectively renounce his opposition to the 1991 Gulf War. Livingstone, like all the other Labour candidates, supports the British Army in Northern Ireland and the imperialist "peace" fraud, as well as the racist police and the Asylum Act. His scheme for selling bonds to finance the Tube, while dressed up as "opposition" to privatisation, is in fact merely an alternative method of privatisation.

Naturally none of this can take the shine off the Livingstone candidacy for the assorted fake-left outfits supporting him, as their mission in life is to keep the working class tied to the Labour Party. As workers' disgust with the racist Labour government of British imperialism grows, these "socialists" have seized on the Livingstone campaign as their latest project to pressure the Labour government. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) wrote an article devoted to the need to rescue the Labour Party from Blairism, aptly titled "The battle for Labour". For the SWP, Livingstone "represents the hopes and aspirations of tens of thousands of Old Labour supporters who feel betrayed and alienated from government policies" (*Socialist Review*, December 1999).

The Old Labour "socialists" of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP) are not campaigning for Livingstone openly. Indeed, as the SLP's *Socialist News* (December 1999/January 2000) reports:

"When pressed about the candidacy of Ken Livingstone for the job, Arthur Scargill said: 'I would not support Livingstone if he was standing for the Mayor of Toy Town, let alone London'. He reminded listeners that Ken Livingstone has said he is not opposed to the 'free market', belongs to a party which openly supports capitalism, and also supported NATO's unlawful bombing of Yugoslavia."

But in one of the Underground unions which are facing direct attack from privatisation, RMT Assistant General Secretary and SLP leader Bob Crow, chairing a 6 November rally, rolled over for Livingstone when he commended as "excellent" an SWPer's speech backing Livingstone.

We reprint below a Spartacist League leaflet issued on 4 November 1999.

The 5 October Paddington rail crash was not some unforeseeable tragic accident but capitalist murder in the pursuit of profit, just like the Southall crash in 1997. The Labour government and their rail boss cronies are guilty as hell! And yet the working class has not been mobilised to make a fight for rail safety. This illustrates

the fundamental question of capitalist Britain today — the need for a new, revolutionary leadership of the working class which fights to overthrow this rotten capitalist system.

In any rationally organised society, cheap safe mass passenger transport, like decent and affordable housing and free, quality health care and education, would be a necessary public service. But capitalism with its frenzied competition for profits is *not rational*. The Labourite "left"



Evening Standard

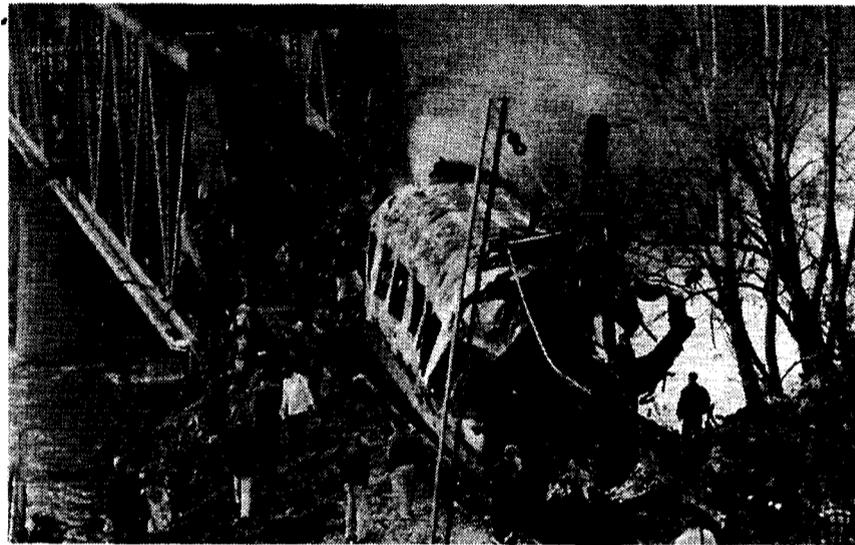
Livingstone cheered on Labour government's war on Serbia. Passenger train in Grdelica destroyed in April 1999 by imperialist bombing.

believes you can get a "fair deal" through reformist tinkering but disasters such as Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Piper Alpha, Clapham Junction prove compellingly that this system is way beyond reform.

Safety goes hand in hand with union power. Under capitalism, the power of the unions to shut down unsafe operations and enforce safety standards is the *only* real protection that exists. But to wield this power and defend working conditions means struggling against the rail companies, the capitalist state and the pro-capitalist Labourite trade union bureaucracy. There is a felt need for a strike by rail unions in the national network over the horrendous conditions for passengers and workers alike. A solid strike could link pay and working conditions to safety and it could launch an effective struggle to stop privatisation of the Underground. A strike over safety would rally support among all workers who have seen their jobs and working conditions under attack and are looking for a way to fight back. It would galvanise mass public support, even from yuppie commuters who don't want to be killed on their way to work.

There is a simple explanation for why the entire rail system wasn't shut down following the deaths of 30 people in a raging inferno at Paddington. The rail union bureaucrats, including prominent members of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP) such as Bob Crow in the RMT and Dave Rix in ASLEF, have worked overtime in order to *prevent* a strike, especially since that would mean confronting the Labour government. They are completely unwilling to defend even the most basic interests of the working class. Last year's token actions against privatisation of the Tube were axed by Crow and Rix. In October, the possibility of strikes in the national network over safety was posed concretely both in ASLEF and the RMT, but no strikes took place, one was scuttled in return for "assurances" from the rail companies, the other abandoned in the face of a High Court injunction which effectively

banned any strikes over safety. The unions have the potential power to turn the tide against the bosses and the Labour government through class struggle which could turn the anti-union laws into scraps of paper, but the Labourite bureaucracy squanders this power and paralyses the workforce by directing them to lobby the capitalist Labour government. A new, revolutionary leadership of the working class must be built through the intervention of a Leninist vanguard party to make the



AP

working class conscious of its historic interest in fighting to abolish this entire racist capitalist system.

The rail bosses and the government are well aware that the use of Automatic Train Protection (ATP) on all trains would automatically prevent trains running past red signals — which happened 643 times last year alone! Although ATP was recommended by the inquiry into the Clapham crash over a decade ago, the then-Tory government objected to the cost as a disincentive to bidders seeking to grow fat from privatisation.

But safety is not primarily a technological question. Safety, health, decent working conditions — all this is antithetical to the unrestrained profit drive and capitalist greed of the bosses. Only socialist revolution — and not impotent calls for Old Labour nationalisation — which expropriates the entire capitalist class and smashes their state through building a workers state based on workers councils (soviets) can rebuild the economy to serve the interests of working people.

Workers need a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead a proletarian revolution sweeping away the blood-soaked capitalist exploiters. The Spartacist League, section of the International Communist League, fights to forge such a party built through our unique and irreconcilable opposition to Labour, Old as well as New. The trade union bureaucrats, including "left" Labourites like Rix and Crow, share responsibility with the Labour Party in the maintenance of capitalism and thus serve as an obstacle to socialism. Their perspective sows demoralisation among the workforce and erodes class consciousness. The Labour Party is what Lenin aptly described as a "bourgeois workers party", having a working-class base and a pro-capitalist programme. Our strategic aim is to split Labour in the course of class battles to come, seeking to win its working-class base to our revolutionary party and programme.

We stand for unions built on an indus-

trial basis — one industry, one union — to maximise the *unity* of the working class in its struggle against the capitalist exploiters. This is linked to the fight for communist leadership of the unions on the basis of our programme, through a political struggle against the bureaucracy, who reflect and transmit the bourgeoisie's divide-and-rule policies of racism, chauvinism, and craftism. Craft divisions in the rail unions divide the workforce and embolden the Labour government to forge

ahead with privatisation. The bureaucracy uses these divisions to sanction scabbing by unions (and sections of unions) on each other's strikes. We fight for one industrial union across all of transport — rail, Underground and buses.

The general population overwhelmingly supports renationalisation. Renationalisation of the railways would be a rational measure, but contrary to Labourite mythology, bourgeois nationalisation is not a step to socialism. Blair's Labour Party opposes even that. Indeed Blair's claim to fame is to out-Thatcher Thatcher — after Paddington, Labour reassured the City markets that even the privatisation of London Underground and the National Air Traffic Control system will go ahead. Everybody knows that this will lead to even more carnage. Privatisations are accompanied by massive attacks on the unions, on working conditions, on jobs and safety. Writing in *Socialist News* (October/November 1999) Rix says that what's needed is "proper public ownership, with real accountability". There can be no "accountability" to the working masses under capitalist rule, nationalisation or not. Old Labour's classic rhetoric of nationalisation so loved by the SLP — the erstwhile Clause IV which promised "common ownership" in the by-and-by — was consciously designed to stave off the threat of Red Revolution following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. And the post-World War II nationalisations amounted to a giant *capitalist bailout*, generally limited to failing industries. British Rail, under nationalisation, systematically ignored every fundamental safety consideration. They "cut costs" by driving the workforce for long hours at low pay, they neglected necessary maintenance and structural improvements. A litany of gruesome "accidents", such as the grim butchery of the 1988 Clapham Junction crash which killed 35 people, gives the lie to illusions in nationalisation.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

continued on page 9

# Labour shores up oppressive Westminster rule

Since New Labour came into office draped in the Union Jack — the bloody "butcher's apron" of British imperialism — they have trumpeted their plans to "modernise" the archaic and unpopular institutions of British capitalism. A facelift for the monarchy and the House of Lords as well as devolution for Scotland and Wales were presented by the Blair government as momentous constitutional "reforms". In fact they offer nothing positive for the working people of these islands. They are designed to revamp Westminster rule, which is merely a "democratic" facade for the system of capitalist dictatorship through which the imperialist bourgeoisie, centred on the City of London financiers, bleeds workers in Britain and across the world.

The "United Kingdom" is based on English domination, national oppression of the Scots, Welsh and Irish as well as brutal racist oppression of blacks and Asians. The Labour Party has been integral to maintaining the reactionary pillars of British imperialism. It was Blair who ostentatiously rescued the monarchy from the depths of unpopularity at the time of Diana Spencer's demise in 1997. Steeped in obsequious servility, the Labour government showcased the "reform of the Lords" — the antics of the feudal aristocracy choosing which of their number should remain in the "new" House of Lords — ie, the *maintenance* of that relic of hereditary class privilege, as an act of modernisation!

In the devolution referendums of September 1997 Scotland and Wales voted "yes" to a devolved Scottish parliament and Welsh Assembly. These votes were then used by Labour to promote the Loyalist-dominated Stormont parliament in Northern Ireland, part of the imperialist "peace" fraud, under which the oppression of the Catholics is maintained by the British Army and the Orange statelet. We demand: British troops out of Northern Ireland now! We fight to bring down the archaic "United Kingdom" through workers revolution. Abolish the monarchy! Abolish the House of Lords and the established churches! For the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!

From early on, Blair made clear that English domination would remain unaltered by stating categorically that when devolved parliaments were set up, sovereignty will reside "with me as an English MP, and that's the way it will stay". This echoes Margaret Thatcher who twenty years ago told a Scottish Tory "I'm an English nationalist and never you forget it." Thatcher's brazen English chauvinism led to deep resentment among the people of Scotland and Wales against oppressive Westminster rule, symbolised by the hated Poll Tax, which was imposed in Scotland a year before England. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Scotland and Wales consistently voted Labour but Tory governments were returned in Westminster. This disenfranchisement, combined with Labour's treachery, led to a growth of nationalism in Scotland and Wales. It was Labour councils who carried out Thatcher's attacks on the working class and poor.

Labour offered devolution in 1997 because they feared a huge loss of support in Scotland and Wales. An *Economist* article (6 November 1999) entitled "Undoing Britain" points out that "Labour governments have almost always depended on Scotland for their majority" and that, prior to 1997, Labour has only ever won a majority of English seats in two previous elections — in 1945 and 1966. In elections to the devolved parliaments last May Labour failed to win a majority in Scotland or Wales.

The nationalist parties, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru in Wales, gained substantially. Both parties aspire to represent the bankers and bosses



V Deni and M Cherepnnykh

of independent Scotland and Wales respectively. The SNP calls for an independent Scotland, as a member state of the European Union, NATO — and the Commonwealth, under the English Queen. Infuriated by New Labour's outright disdain for the working class, some sections of the trade unions are considering affiliation to the SNP. This would be a retrograde step — the SNP and Plaid Cymru are bourgeois parties, open enemies of the working class.

Each issue of *Workers Hammer* carries the slogan "For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!" which expresses our general programme for workers revolution on these islands. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party which will bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class. A correct approach to the national question is essential to breaking workers from Labourism and is a key component of our programme for working-class rule. We uphold the right of self-determination for the oppressed nations of Scotland and Wales, which means the right to form independent states. At present, given the lack of decisive national differences either in language or religion, we do not call for independence for Scotland and Wales but advocate a course of common class struggle against the British state.

We oppose all forms of nationalism, first and foremost the dominant English chauvinism, as well as Scottish and Welsh

nationalism whipped up by the SNP and Plaid Cymru. It is the duty of the revolutionary party to fight for the working class in England, the oppressor nation, to champion the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales. It follows that the duty of the proletarian vanguard is to fight in Scotland and Wales for voluntary *integration* with the proletariat of England.

Our approach comes directly from the programme of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, which led the Russian Revolution in October 1917 and rallied the multinational working class throughout the tsarist "prisonhouse of peoples" to the overthrow of capitalism. Lenin insisted on the necessity to fight all forms of national and

taining 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."

The article correctly expressed our general approach to the national question in Britain. However it went on to advocate a "yes" vote in the referendums, saying: "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." This was a mistake,



Martin Speven/AP

Russian Revolution was a defining event of 20th century. 1920 Soviet poster reads: Comrade Lenin sweeps the rubbish from the world. Blair ushers in 21st century hand-in-hand with the Queen.

colonial oppression in order to advance the unity and integrity of the proletariat to weld them into a *conscious* force for socialist revolution. In "The revolutionary proletariat and the right of nations to self-determination" (1915) he insisted that for revolutionaries ("Social-Democrats") the definition of "the right of nations to self-determination" must be "consistently democratic, revolutionary, and *in accord* with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism". This means:

"the Social-Democrats of the oppressor nations must demand that the oppressed nations should have the right of secession, for otherwise recognition of equal rights for nations and of international working-class solidarity would in fact be merely empty phrase-mongering, sheer hypocrisy. On the other hand, the Social-Democrats of the oppressed nations must attach prime significance to the unity and the merging of the workers of the oppressed nations with those of the oppressor nations; otherwise the Social-Democrats will involuntarily become the allies of their own national *bourgeoisie*, which *always* betrays the interests of the people and of democracy, and is *always* ready, in its turn, to annex territory and oppress other nations."

Our article "On the referendums in Scotland and Wales" (*Workers Hammer* no 158, September/October 1997) accurately noted:

"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 main-

we should not have advocated a vote either way. From the standpoint of the working class the referendums offered nothing and it is a matter of indifference to Marxists how people voted. What was on offer was a form of regional autonomy. As Leninists, our approach to the national question under capitalism is essentially *negative*, based on opposition to all national oppression and privilege. The right of self-determination means the right of the Scottish and Welsh peoples to freely decide their fate. Autonomy, on the other hand, means that the terms and conditions for the Scottish and Welsh assemblies are determined by the Westminster parliament. Lenin pointed out that "autonomy" is a ploy often used by the bourgeoisie as a *denial* of the right of self-determination in the interest of capitalist rule. "The bourgeoisie are ready to promise all the 'national equality' and 'national autonomy' you please, so long as the proletariat remain within the framework of legality and 'peacefully' submit to them on the question of state *boundaries!*" ("The revolutionary proletariat and the right of nations to self-determination", 1915)

**"Socialist" in words, chauvinist in deeds**

Labour-loyal "socialists" such as Workers Power (WP) state categorically that "Scotland is not oppressed by England" (leaflet, November 1998). In 1992, when Labour was opposed to devolution,

WP headlined "No to Scottish Assembly". But come the Labour government's devolution schemes, naturally they favoured assemblies and of course voted Labour in the assembly elections. In Scotland they also called for a vote to "independent" Labour MP Denis Canavan, an anti-abortion Catholic bigot, as well as Tommy Sheridan of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).

Sheridan was elected to the Scottish parliament and assumed his rightful place as a reformist parliamentarian. The SSP split from the (English) Socialist Party to facilitate their adaptation to Scottish nationalism, however both parties remain wedded to Labourite reformism. In addition, the SSP have assumed the role of a PR agency for fascistic Ulster Loyalists. Billy Hutchinson, spokesman for the UVF, was an invited speaker at the SSP's "Socialism 2000" event in Glasgow last November, as was a "Detective Superintendent Barry Dougal". The SSP reformists embody what Lenin had in mind when he defined the term *social chauvinism*, which he summed up as: "Socialism in words, chauvinism in deeds" and "the utter betrayal of Socialism, complete desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie".

The "Communist Party of Great Britain" (CPGB) claim to be for the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales but they deny that very right by calling for *one* federal republic in Britain. In the referendums, they pretended to be organising an "active boycott" which was pie-in-the-sky rhetoric from a mini-grouplet. For Northern Ireland, they advocate self-determination for the Protestants which means denying it to the Catholics and supporting Orange supremacy. This is in keeping with their assertion that, coincidental with Labour's term in government, the British state has become anti-racist. *Weekly Worker* (22 October 1998) says: "Racism, like anti-semitism and anti-catholicism no longer serves the interests of the state". (See "CPGB: anti-communist pimps for the racist British state", *Workers Hammer* no 167, March/April 1999.)

Since capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there has been a growth of bloody nationalist fratricidal forces all across Europe, accompanied by an increase in racism. Together with the growth of nationalism, racist attacks have escalated throughout England, Scotland and Wales. In Britain, national antagonisms have been particularly exacerbated by a feature of imperialism in decline which Lenin noted in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916). This is the inherent tendency to underwrite financial inter-



Miners strike rally, Sheffield, April 1984. Year-long strike united miners from England, Scotland and Wales in class war against Thatcher government.

ests — the City, Bank of England and money markets — at the expense of manufacturing. Steel mills and coal mines were closed on a huge scale by the Tories. Thus the North-South divide between the South East of England where wealthy moneybags cluster, and the once-industrial proletarian centres in the North of England, Scotland and Wales, became synonymous with Thatcher. And it is still growing under Labour, one of the most vicious capitalist governments in British history, who revel in grinding the faces of the poor and working class.

It is in the context of class struggle that divisions in the proletariat, including national antagonisms, can be overcome. The 1984-85 miners strike was such a struggle. It united miners from England, Scotland and Wales in class war against the Thatcher government. But it also illustrated, in the negative, the need for a revolutionary leadership of the working class. The Spartacist League, the nucleus of that revolutionary leadership, fought to spread the strike to other sections of the working class which was necessary to prevail against the capitalist state.

The defeat of the miners strike facilitated the rise of nationalism and dealt a blow to the most class-conscious section of the proletariat. Scottish and Welsh workers have historically been among the most advanced in the British working class as a whole — the October 1917 Russian Revolution resonated from "Red Clydeside" in Glasgow to "Little Moscow" in Wales.

#### Sweep away all the old rubbish!

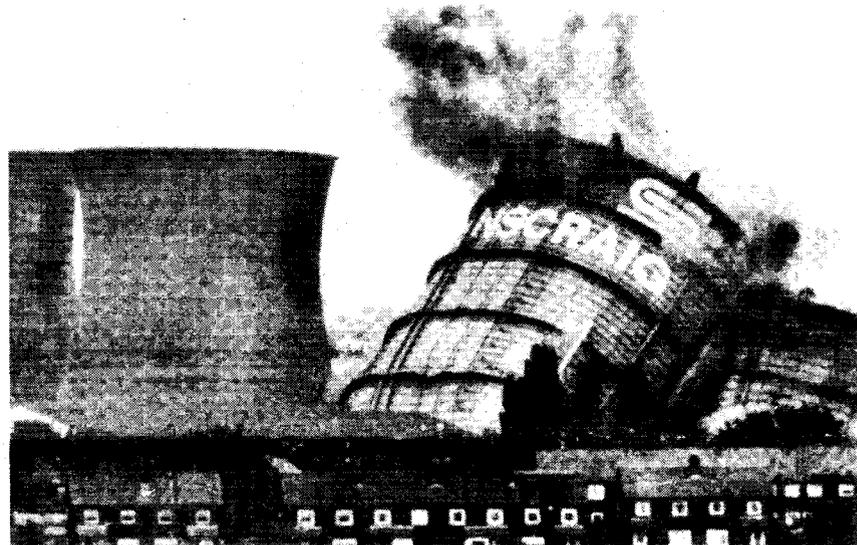
Seventy years ago, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky described the Labour govern-

ment of the time as "loyally devoted to the church, to the King, to the House of Lords, to the system of titles; that is to say, not simply to the sacrosanct principle of private property, but to all the old rubbish of the Middle Ages" ("British 'democratic

our programme. The Spartacist League, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is fighting to build the revolutionary proletarian internationalist party needed to overthrow capitalism sweeping away in its wake "all the old rubbish of the Middle Ages".

Writing after the Labour Party/TUC had betrayed the 1926 general strike, Trotsky described the Labourite officialdom as the "backbone" of British imperialism: "If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian masses as nothing but pitiful ridiculous playthings" ("The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism", November-December 1929).

The deep-seated grievances of the Welsh, Scottish and Irish workers would easily be addressed within the framework of the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism which will do away with the "United Kingdom" and all its chauvinist oppression and racism. A workers republic in England would return Berwick-upon-Tweed to Scotland, which would demonstrate in deeds that centuries of oppression by England under bourgeois rule have come to an end. The Spartacist



1996 destruction of Ravenscraig steelworks in Scotland symbolised gutting of British industry in bourgeoisie's war on jobs, trade unions.

traditions", *Trotsky's Writings on Britain*). The rule of the bourgeois class is based on forces outside the Westminster parliament — the armed bodies of men that constitute the state, the army and the police. The Labour Party is what Lenin described as a bourgeois-workers party, based on the trade unions but with a bourgeois programme. Our strategic task is to split Labour and win over its working-class base to

League/Britain and Dublin Spartacist Group seek to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties to lead the working class — black, Asian and white; English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh — to bring down British imperialism, Orange rule in Northern Ireland and Catholic clericalist rule in the South. For an Irish workers republic in a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■

## Spartacist

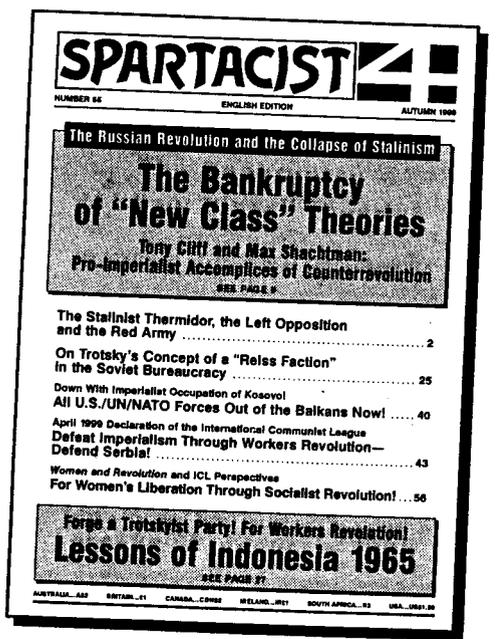
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## N Ireland...

(Continued from page 4)

society to the virulent racism directed against refugees and Travellers. Abortion is illegal in Northern Ireland as well as in the South. We call for the right to free abortion on demand! For the separation of church and state! For women's liberation through socialist revolution! The DSG raised these demands in a leaflet for last October's strike by 27,500 nurses, who are mainly women, the largest strike since the state was founded. We seek to transcend racial and ethnic divisions of the working class in the context of class struggle. The leaflet called for full citizenship rights for immigrants and also noted: "Successful class struggle against the clericalist state in the South would also find great resonance among both Catholic and Protestant workers in the North." While Catholic workers in Northern Ireland earn 15 per cent less than Protestant

workers and are more likely to be unemployed, conditions for Protestant workers are dire as well. The overall industrial decline of British imperialism has impacted heavily on Northern Ireland.

Over twenty years ago in "Theses on Ireland", we noted:

"We struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. While the establishment of a united workers state of the whole island may be preferable, the above demand is algebraic, leaving open the question of where the Protestants fall... Placing the demand in the context of a socialist federation has the additional advantage of highlighting the essential relationship of the proletarian revolution in the whole area and the virtual impossibility of the resolution of the Irish question on a working-class basis outside this framework."  
— *Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977

Down with the imperialist "peace" deal! British troops out now! For workers revolution both sides of the border and both sides of the Irish Sea! ■

# Building the New York anti-Klan mobilisation

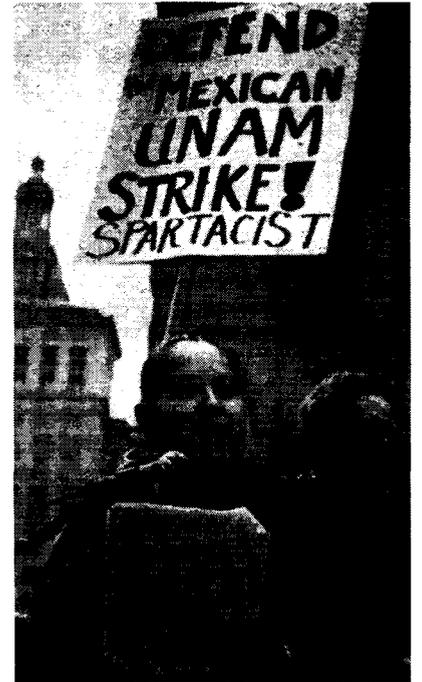
Following the immense success of the call by the Spartacist League/US and the Partisan Defense Committee to stop the KKK in New York City on 23 October 1999, the Spartacist League/Britain and the Spartacus Youth Group held forums at London's School of Oriental and African Studies and at Guildhall University on 27 and 29 November, featuring Spartacus Youth Club organiser Alma Gomez' eyewitness report of the mobilisation.

Alma pointed out that not only did this demonstration succeed in sending the KKK scurrying back to their sewers, it also offered a voice to the voiceless. Most important, we succeeded in genuinely mobilising the social power of the working class in its own interests, offering a taste of a revolutionary workers party in action. The anger and frustration that had

to break the working class from Labourism (Old and New). It runs counter to the stated aims of the fake left whose strategies never transcend pressurising the virulently racist Labour government to be more lenient on workers and minorities — a strategy mirrored by the American International Socialist Organization (ISO), satellite of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). They constantly cosy up to Clinton's Democratic Party. In direct opposition to our mass mobilisation to stop the Klan the ISO offered their services, as out-and-out running dogs of capitalism, by building for, and attending the so-called demonstration for "tolerance" called by black Democrat Al Sharpton. Sharpton's aim was to prevent the working class from coming out to stop the KKK, and furthermore, offered those who

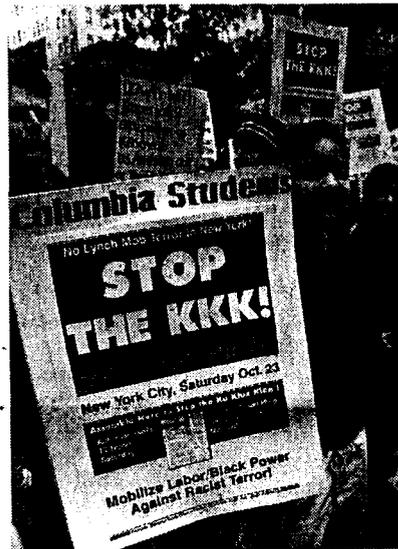
claiming that there were actually two demonstrations to stop the Klan that day ie that Al Sharpton's parade of cops, the New York Civil Liberties Union and fake leftists (openly preaching tolerance to these racist killers) was called to stop the Klan. An IBT speaker even went so far as to intervene for the purpose of lawyering for the ISO. She was angrily replied to by several SYG comrades who highlighted the IBT's dubious credentials on fighting racism. One pointed out that in the midst of the impact of the Stephen Lawrence case, they never wrote a single line on the case while they were seeking an alliance with the equally vile anti-Communist "Communist Party of Great Britain", which claims the British state (amongst others) to be anti-racist.

One comrade (himself a former mem-



Workers Vanguard

Alma Gomez of the Spartacus Youth Club speaking at 23 October anti-Klan mobilisation.



Workers Vanguard photos

Mobilising students at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Students from campuses around the area turned out on 23 October.

position being unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state against external imperialist attack or from internal attempts at capitalist restoration. To justify this stance and to hide their betrayal of the working class they created the 'theory' of 'state capitalism' which denies the class nature of the Soviet Union and fails to defend the gains of the October Revolution."

Another SYG member noted: "The SL/B is the only party dedicated to building the multi-ethnic workers party necessary for the overthrow of capitalism." It is our recognition of and faith in the capabilities of the working class, at the head of all the oppressed, that determines that dedication and differentiates us from the likes of the fake lefts in Britain in their tailing of the Labour Party. This level of optimism was expressed concretely by the success of October's mobilisation and enthusiastically conveyed to us in comrade Alma's presentation. ■

built up over the years was really allowed to spill out. Anger over the constant attacks by the representatives of both the Democrats and the Republicans. As Alma put it, the working class really proved itself to be "alive and kicking" on 23 October.

The experiences and observations described in the presentation offer a great deal to our efforts to win the working class to a revolutionary communist programme. As Alma specifically pointed out, ours was a labour/black mobilisation, ie a mobilisation of the working class itself, rather than by the likes of the Labour Party in Britain. This is a most valid point to make in terms of the SL/B's fight

attended his "counterdemonstration" a parade of Democrats making election speeches over a sound system shared with the KKK themselves. The ISO threw themselves heart and soul into this disgusting act and have deservedly discredited themselves in the eyes of a large proportion of black militants.

However, the ISO weren't the only members of the fake left to expose themselves as out-and-out traitors to the working class. At our 27 November forum, the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) put in an appearance, circulating a letter cynically "congratulating" the SL on the success of the anti-Klan demo whilst obscenely questioning its results and

member of the SWP) spoke of the ISO's treachery, declaring their actions to be of little surprise:

"The reason they acted as they did was because of their programme, which is one of reform. To achieve this aim they look to pressure parties like the Labour Party into changing the capitalist system. This reformism is clear from their origins when they broke from Trotskyism over the Russian question, the Trotskyist

## Nurses...

(Continued from page 2)

which requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist union tops — something the SWP avoids like the plague. The potential power of picket lines was illustrated during the 1998 Ryanair strike which shut down Dublin Airport for two days based on the principle "one out, all out".

The nurses' strike is a direct result of vicious cuts in the health services begun by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in the mid-1980s and then stepped up by Fianna Fail in 1987. A *Socialist Worker* (15-28 October) article on the strike blames the health service crisis entirely on Fianna Fail, and disappears the role of the Labour Party. Nor does the SWP see fit to mention that in the last government, Labour's Brendan Howlin as health minister carried out attacks on the health service, or that Labour opposes abortion rights.

Similarly, both the SWP and Socialist Party push illusions in the capitalist state, claiming that gardai are "public sector workers", along with bus drivers and nurses. In reality, as Lenin explained, cops are the armed forces of the capitalist state whose job is to defend the property forms and the rule of the bourgeoisie by repressing the working class and all of the oppressed. Their real role was shown on 4 October when twelve striking bricklayers were arrested outside Leinster House for defending their picket line.

The proletariat has the social power to change this society. In order for this power to be wielded, we need a revolutionary party, a party which will be forged in sharp struggle against the pro-capitalist Labour Party and its "left" tails. The Dublin Spartacist Group and our comrades in the Spartacist League/Britain struggle to build such parties to fight for a socialist federation of the British Isles as part of a Socialist United States of Europe.

28 October 1999

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# ISO cover for KKK, SWP debate UVF

The 23 October 1999 trade-union/black mobilisation that drove the Ku Klux Klan from New York City's streets illustrated the power of the multiracial working class when it is mobilised independently of the capitalist class enemy. It also laid bare the obstacles to such a class mobilisation, in the form not only of the open agents of the bourgeoisie, from the state to the Democratic Party, but also the self-styled socialists who do their bidding. The International Socialist Organization (ISO), sister organisation of Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, provided cover for the race terrorists in league with the cops and the capitalist politicians by working overtime to build a Democratic Party diversion rally which preached "tolerance" for the KKK nightriders.

The Cliffites, having made their accommodation with "democratic" capitalism long ago, oppose the perspective of workers revolution and restrict their programme to the fight for "democracy". In the US, this makes them a tail of the Democratic Party liberals such as Al Sharpton and Scott Stringer, for whom the main danger on 23 October was not the KKK but the mobilisation of the working class — led by open reds — against the race terrorists. Doing the Democrats' dirty work, the ISO social democrats went so far as to share a platform with the cops and to help provide a platform for KKK lynchings. This was not an aberration on the ISO's part, but the logical result of their anti-Communist programme, which above all is against mobilisation of the working class in its own class interests.

In Britain, the SWP tail the Labour Party, not least in regard to Northern Ireland. In 1969, the SWP supported sending imperialist troops there and today they support Blair's imperialist "peace" fraud.

As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* no 170 (Autumn 1999): "For Marxists, the basic precondition for any proletarian solution is the *immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops!* The SWP's support for the 'peace' agreement means they also support the armed bodies of men — the army and the RUC — who are there to enforce it." Not only that, but the SWP now embrace the Loyalist death squads.

Thus SWP leader Pat Stack boasts in *Socialist Review* (December 1999) that he took part in a "debate" with Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) representative Billy Hutchinson. The Scottish Socialist Party, a craven opportunist and social-chauvinist group, invited Hutchinson — and a cop — to their November 1999 conference in Glasgow. Hutchinson's UVF are fascist death squads who operate as an auxiliary of the British Army, carrying out the most heinous crimes against Catholics in Northern Ireland, such as the burning alive of the three Quinn children in their Ballymoney home in 1998 because their mother is a Catholic.

The UVF, founded in 1913 by Edward Carson, have perpetrated some of the most savage sectarian atrocities, from the "Shankill Butchers" in the mid-1970s to gunning people down in Catholic-frequented pubs and bookmakers' shops. They have well known links to British fascists including the Hitler-loving Combat 18. Hutchinson is himself a Loyalist killer, convicted for the sectarian murder of two Catholics, Michael Loughran and Edward Morgan. Only shameless lackeys who buy into "democratic" British imperialism's "peace" fraud would debate such scum whose programme is simply the murder of Catholics. The UVF must be smashed! We call for programmatically-based, anti-sectarian workers militias to

combat Orange and Green terror. Not Orange against Green but class against class!

From their origin as a tendency in 1950, when they sided with the Labour

government in the Korean War, the Cliffites shared the "democratic" imperialists' hatred for the Soviet Union. Thus they lined up with all forces opposed to Communism, from sadistic Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, Iran and Indonesia to Vatican-backed counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland.

Against the fake-left apologists for "democratic" imperialism, the International Communist League seek an end to capitalist barbarism in all its forms. Our perspective is workers revolution that smashes the capitalist state. For this, it is necessary to forge a revolutionary workers party on the model of Lenin's Bolsheviks, who led the Russian proletariat to victory in the October Revolution of 1917. ■



Workers Vanguard

Above: ISO speaker sharing a platform with cops at Democratic Party's tolerance-for-Klan diversion on 23 October 1999. Right: Loyalist mural of UVF paramilitary death-squads. Their spokesman Hutchinson was "debated" by SWP.



TNT

## Rail...

(Continued from page 5)

pretends this is a socialist demand and, as with all the SWP's demands, urges workers to pressure the Labour government to grant it. For the SWP this is *their* government — they voted for it, they constantly peddle illusions in it, even if this means defying any connection with reality, as when they appeared at a rally for rail safety on 16 October in Trafalgar Square bearing placards saying: "Prescott — Jail the fat cats!" Might as well say: Capitalist Labour government — Fight capitalism!

An SWP leaflet handed out at a 19 October SLP meeting where Crow and Rix were billed to speak argues to pressure the government, saying: "At the moment they're on the defensive and we could win renationalisation"! Labour wouldn't dream of renationalising the highly profitable rail companies, they are privatising the Underground and have even set in motion the privatisation of the entire public housing stock in Glasgow! Calling on workers to look to the government as an ally is treachery. It obscures who the class enemy really is — the bourgeoisie and their state.

Grotesquely, the 6 November rail safety rally has invited as a speaker Ken Livingstone, for whom the SWP is campaigning to be London mayor. During the imperial-

ist bombing of Serbia, a small dependent country, the Labour government was the most bellicose of the imperialists heading the attack. The Spartacist League called for the defeat of imperialism through workers revolution and for the defence of Serbia. Livingstone cheered on the bombing, falling over himself pledging his loyalty to Blair and British imperialism. Images of the burnt out train at Paddington recall the passenger train in Grdelica in Serbia cut in half by a video-guided missile in a deliberate act of terror.

The working class in rail and the Tube have suffered years of attacks. But this powerful, unionised, multiracial workforce has the power to fight not only for better working conditions, but against racist terror which is rampant on and off the job. The recent strikes at Ford Dagenham against racist attacks provided a taste of what is needed: the mobilisation of the social power of the multi-ethnic workforce of London, including transport workers, to sweep the fascists off the streets and out of the workplaces and to protest racist terror by the cops.

Ken Livingstone, like his SWP campaigners, supports the imperialist "peace" fraud for Northern Ireland which is premised on British troops staying in place. The working class must fight for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Down with Labour's racist Immigration

and Asylum Bill! For full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

The Spartacist League seeks to build a revolutionary party to struggle for new October Revolutions which will sweep away the capitalist order. For the revolu-

tionary 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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# KKK out...

(Continued from page 12)

the confines of electoral pressure politics.

Many of the thousands who mobilised behind the anti-Klan rally were looking for the answer not only to stopping Klan terror but to fighting back against the entire system of racist capitalist exploitation and oppression. Demonstrators listened raptly to all the speeches from the platform. Many shouted, "That's right, that's right" when PDC labour co-ordinator Gene Herson denounced both the Democratic and Republican parties as enemies of labour and the oppressed. Calls for the working people to build their own class party were met with applause.

What was seen on the streets of New

enemies and obstacles to organising struggles of the working class in its own interests and in the interests of all those at the bottom of this society. These included the capitalist cops, courts and Giuliani city administration; the American Civil Liberties Union, which continued its revolting decades-long defence of "constitutional rights" for the fascist terrorists; the Democratic Party, whose calls for a "demonstration for tolerance" were aimed at trying to demobilise the working people and others who wanted to stop the Klan; Al Sharpton and the black establishment *Amsterdam News*, who grotesquely filed a court brief on behalf of the Klan; the International Socialist Organization (ISO), who leapt into the camp of Giuliani, the Democrats, Sharpton, the ACLU and the Klan against the PDC-initiated labour/black

The KKK's rally site was secretly moved a block away to 60 Centre Street, information that was not made public for days. As it became clear that thousands of New Yorkers were rallying behind the PDC's call, as tens of thousands of leaflets were distributed over the weekend of 16-17 October, this cabal moved into high gear.

Stringer, joined by Sharpton and other Democratic Party figures, called a press conference on 19 October to announce that he had applied for a permit for a "demonstration for tolerance" at 60 Centre Street, where the Klan would stage its rally. That evening it came out, as a PDC press release reported, that Stringer & Co were "colluding with the Klan and the Giuliani administration to cut a deal to share a sound permit with the KKK at 60 Centre Street". The following day, Sharpton filed his *amicus* brief on behalf of the Klan. *We fought on behalf of the tens of thousands of New York's working people who wanted to stop the KKK, waging an incessant battle in the courts for their rights to free speech and assembly.*

On 21 October, a federal district court gave the Klansmen everything they had asked for and the working people were told they were to be muzzled. The court approved the deal cooked up by Siegel, Stringer and the Klan to share a sound permit and gave the KKK the right to stage their race-hate provocation in hoods with masks. The judges denied a sound permit for the labour/black mobilisation at 60 Centre Street. As PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein declared, "This deal is an attempt to guarantee that only the Klan will be heard and not their intended victims." She added, "The denial of a sound permit to the anti-Klan rally is a provocation against the mobilisation organisers' ability to hold a militant, orderly mass demonstration. A rally without centrally located sound and leadership is like a car without a steering wheel."

Even the right-wing *New York Post* (23 October) denounced the court's decision that the anti-Klan mobilisation could not use loudspeakers at the same time as the KKK on the grounds that that would "snuff out the free speech" of the Klan.

vincing people there was no reason to come out the next day since the KKK would not be there. A PDC press release that evening declared: "Whatever reports are circulating that the KKK currently has no permit to stage its race-hate provocation, the working people of this city have no reason to trust the word of these racist terrorists or the Giuliani administration. The only way to guarantee that the Klan does not rear its head in New York tomorrow is if the streets are filled with its opponents."

And, on 23 October, there were many thousands of determined opponents of the Klan filling the area around Centre Street. Here was the answer to Sharpton's defence of the Klan's right to "free speech". Many of those who came out had personal experience with the burning cross, the lynch rope, the shotguns through which the Klan "speaks". Despite being separated by helmeted riot cops and police barricades at different locations, they had come out not to show "tolerance" for the KKK as preached by Stringer and the Democrats but in response to the PDC call to stop the KKK.

## The ISO — traitors exposed

Except for some of the Democratic Party faithful, like Local 1199 president Dennis Rivera, and a token endorsement by the leadership of the Central Labor Council, Stringer, Sharpton et al's call for "tolerance" fell on deaf ears. The only organisation to leap into Stringer's camp with energy and purpose was the International Socialist Organization, which did its level best to give a cover to the Democratic Party — and the Klan — against the organised working class.

The ISO endorsed a meeting called by a variety of lawyers and liberals to organise behind Stringer's "demonstration for tolerance". When representatives of the PDC intervened to call for uniting all those who wanted to stop the Klan on 23 October, there were no takers. While Sharpton was outrageously defending the Klan's "rights" in court, at the meeting the ISO enthused over what a good speaker Sharpton was and how many people he would draw to the Democratic Party diversion! As it turned out, Sharpton never even showed up on 23 October, doubtless not anxious to face the jeers of the thousands who had come out to stop the KKK. But the ISO was there with bells on.

While shamelessly enlisting with the Democrats, the ISO tried to cover its despicable role by issuing a little-distributed leaflet under the heading "Stop the Klan!" Since their main purpose was opposed to stopping the KKK, this was pure cynicism. On site on 23 October, the ISO continued to try to deceive people who had mobilised in response to the PDC's call by steering them into the site of the Democrats' location, which was a police trap. When people discovered this deception, many who tried to leave found their way blocked by the cops.

Having been provided a temporary, if unwitting, audience by the ISO's treachery, Democrats like Senator Charles Schumer and others tried to turn the event into an election rally. They were repeatedly booed by the angry protesters who had not come out for election speeches or messages of "tolerance" but to stop Klan terror. While the anti-Klan demonstrators understood the role of the cops in protecting these nightriding terrorists, the ISO speaker stood in front of the banner of the Latino Officers Association. This is not unusual for the ISO, which has a long history of viewing the cops as "workers" and upholding their "right" to organise. Will these social democrats whose British paper once headlined "Are all coppers really bastards?" now ask, "Are all Klansmen really bastards?"

With the ISO acting as the donkeys for



Democrat Al Sharpton led pro-cop "anti-crime" march in Brooklyn in August; defence of KKK in October made headlines in black press here in Britain.



Workers Vanguard

York City on 23 October was a microcosm of a workers party in action, ie, the working class mobilised in its own interests, acting independently of the government and parties of the capitalist class. The PDC — a class-struggle legal and social defence organisation whose purpose is in accordance with the views of the Marxist Spartacist League — initiated the call which brought to bear the social power of labour and its strong, militant component of black workers in defence of all the oppressed. That same power, those same forces which stopped the Klan from riding can organise the unorganised and unemployed, can mobilise in defence of the masses in the ghettos and barrios, can crack the "open shop" South — itself a product of KKK anti-union terror.

The successful labour/black mobilisation brought to life the connection between labour's fight and the fight for black freedom. Black oppression is the cornerstone of racist American capitalism. There is no road to eliminating the special oppression of black people other than the working-class conquest of power, and there will be no proletarian revolution to end class exploitation unless the working class actively takes up the fight for black rights.

The working class has the numbers, the organisation and the power to win all those things that the ruling class appropriates for itself — health care, education, decent housing, abortion rights. What is lacking is the kind of leadership necessary to fight — a leadership of the unions that doesn't bow down to the bosses' laws, parties and state agencies, a workers party that doesn't respect the property "rights" of the bourgeoisie. We need a workers party that fights for a workers government to rip the means of production from the capitalist class and institute a planned socialist economy that operates not for the profit of a few greedy exploiters but for the working people who produce the wealth of society. That is the kind of workers party that we communists of the Spartacist League are fighting to build.

## The political battle to stop the Klan

Just as the mobilisation to stop the Klan in New York City on 23 October gave a real taste of the social forces and leadership required for socialist revolution in this country, it also starkly exposed the

mobilisation.

From the day that the Klan's rally was publicly announced in a 13 October article in the *New York Post*, there was a contention of two counterposed class forces — those representing the interests of the capitalist ruling class and those representing the interests of the working class and its allies. The moment the PDC heard of the KKK's plans, it applied for a permit to hold a demonstration at the same time and same place as the Klan's announced rally site, 100 Centre Street. The call for a labour/black mobilisation was issued immediately, and met with overwhelming support when it hit the streets. This mobilisation had an impact on city politics not seen in years. The issue captured the front pages of the tabloids, dominated talk



Workers Vanguard

October 23: It took revolutionary leadership to mobilise New York labour and minorities in powerful united-front action to drive out the KKK racist terrorists.

shows and call-ins on black radio stations, reportedly split union executive boards and drove the Democratic Party establishment to distraction.

The Giuliani administration and NYPD responded by setting to work in an attempt to block this mobilisation. Colluding with them was an unholy alliance ranging from the New York Civil Liberties Union's Norman Siegel, lawyer for the KKK, to Democratic State Assemblyman Scott Stringer and black Democrat Al Sharpton.

Indeed, the court ruling was a graphic illustration of the race and class bias of the capitalist "justice" system — a free ride for Klan terror and no rights for their intended victims! This was punctuated by the fact that the courthouse was literally used as a shelter for the KKK when it staged its race-hate rally.

When the Klan's permit to rally with masks was retracted in a federal appeals court on 22 October, a disinformation campaign was set in motion aimed at con-

the Democratic Party in trying to demobilise the mass labour-centred protest to stop the Klan, whatever pretences it had to the cause of "workers power" have been stripped bare. The ISO stands exposed as the servants of capital against the interests of the working class, black people and all the oppressed.

While the rest of the left did not play so forward a role as the ISO in serving the interests of the Democratic Party, most remained silent in the face of the deadly Klan threat until Stringer and Sharpton started to call for a liberal diversion. The Communist Party endorsed the Stringer rally. Workers World Party (WWP) tried to have it both ways. Feigning some mock independence from the Democrats, they called for people to assemble at Stringer's site, but somewhat later than the official starting time. Then, on 23 October, WWP also had people at the PDC rally site, where they handed out placards that called to "stop the Klan" and for a "new trial" for black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. When SYC comrades pointed out that this showed illusions in the very same courts that had sentenced Jamal to death and had upheld the "right" to Klan terror, many of the people who had unwittingly taken WWP's placards traded them in for PDC placards demanding freedom for Jamal.



Workers Vanguard

Trade unionists were the backbone of NYC mobilisation. Postal workers carried signs honouring their brother Joseph Iletto, gunned down by fascist killer in Los Angeles in July.

In a very unusual move, the Stalin-lovers of Progressive Labor Party (PL), who smear "Trotskyites" as fascists, called on people to assemble at the site of the PDC mobilisation, signing an endorsement form on the spot. Now a PL Internet statement crows how "thousands" were "led by PLP" and asserts, "It took the PLP to lead a breakaway march of hundreds who really wanted to confront the Klan." In fact, what PL did was "lead" itself straight into a line of riot cops a short distance away. PL's whole strategy of individual confrontations with the cops and the fascists is based on a rejection of the working class as a force for social struggle. Giuliani's cops did arrest several anti-Klan protesters on 23 October. We demand: Drop all the charges now!

The self-proclaimed redder-than-red communists of PL — who can't tell the difference between a trade union and right-wing religious bigots like the Promise Keepers — are guided by absolutely no class criteria. Thus, they expressed no solidarity with the powerful Teamsters union during its strike against the UPS bosses. Instead, they dismissed this struggle as a battle between two wings of the ruling class! With its utter contempt for the organised working class, PL's cries of "Kick the bosses in the ass" and "Death to

the Klan" are little more than the bleatings of grandstanding liberals.

### Linking the power of labour to the anger of the ghettos

The clear intent of the liberal Democrats and their allies was to block any independent expression of the power of labour and its allies to stop the Klan on 23 October. But they seriously miscalculated the outrage throughout this city against the Klan rally and failed miserably in their efforts. Throughout the building for this labour/black mobilisation, the Democrats and their labour lackeys evidently realised they couldn't even try the usual violence-baiting and red-baiting of the PDC which has been attempted against previous PDC-initiated anti-fascist mobilisations. That's not because they had any less fear of or hostility to labour being mobilised behind a class-struggle programme, but because they recognised they couldn't openly come out against the labour/black mobilisation to stop the Klan in a city where the overwhelming mass of the population is directly in the cross hairs of the racist terrorists.

Many unions told us that they couldn't endorse the PDC mobilisation because their leadership was split over the question. Nonetheless, a number that didn't endorse asked for stacks of the PDC's mobilising leaflet to put in their union halls. Dennis Rivera, who runs a well-oiled machine in Local 1199, made no overt attempt to mobilise his membership behind Stringer's "free speech" diversion. Likewise, the hidebound craft-union bureaucrats at the head of the Central Labor Council who endorsed Stringer's "demonstration for tolerance" did not put out the word that trade unionists should stay away from the labour/black mobilisation.

What was reflected here was the fear of the labour bureaucrats and black Democrats that by opposing the PDC's anti-Klan mobilisation they could potentially detonate the anger building at the base of the unions, the outrage in the ghettos and barrios. But that didn't stop them from trying to head it off.

In defending their legal efforts on behalf of the Klan, the editors of the *Amsterdam News* grotesquely echoed the racists who compared the Klan with Khalid Muhammad. Condemning this equation of the victims of Klan terror with its perpetrators, PDC labour co-ordinator Gene Herson responded: "The purpose of this is to conceal the real enemy and deny the true nature of the KKK. Khalid Muhammad is an anti-Semitic demagogue, but that's all he is. The Klan is a terrorist action group whose purpose is genocide." Speaking at a PDC press conference on 19 October, Jim Webb of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists added, "Khalid has never murdered, lynched, burned churches, synagogues and homes."

In its call initiating this mobilisation, the PDC noted that the Klan was making a big mistake by thinking it could ride in New York City, and 23 October proved that. The thousands who turned out that day sent a powerful message that the KKK had better not try it again. This mobilisation was also a powerful response to the demagoguery of Muhammad and his former mentor, Louis Farrakhan, who seek to channel the anger of the ghetto into bigotry against Jewish, Arab and Asian shopkeepers in order that they can be the sole exploiters of the ghetto masses. This response was palpable in minority neighbourhoods throughout the city.

A Korean shopkeeper in Harlem came out of his store to donate money and hand out leaflets to build for the anti-Klan mobilisation. In Chinatown, a merchant took a stack of leaflets and taught PDC soapboxers how to say "stop the Klan" in Chinese, immediately drawing sympa-



Workers Vanguard

PDC banner on 23 October calls for freedom for black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed up for the 1981 shooting of a Philadelphia cop. The racist capitalist state intends to kill Mumia because he is a powerful spokesman for the poor and oppressed. While Mumia has won a stay of execution pending a decision on his *habeas corpus* petition, no one must be lulled into thinking that Mumia is in any less danger. The fight to win Mumia's freedom requires

mobilising the same social forces that routed the KKK in New York. This perspective is counterposed to reliance on the Democrats and the capitalist courts. Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty! Funds are urgently needed for Mumia's legal defence! Make a contribution to the PDC and write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque. Send to: PDC, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 0171 485 1396.

thetic crowds. At the mobilisation itself, many black participants remarked on the multiracial character of the turnout and echoed denunciations of anti-Semitism from the speaker's platform.

In contrast to the preaching of liberal "diversity" — like Jesse Jackson's "rainbow coalition" or David Dinkins' "beautiful mosaic" — which means acceptance of the racist status quo and Democratic Party ethnic politics, this was a powerful demonstration of class unity and unity of the oppressed behind the social power of the multiracial working class. One chant in particular resonated at the PDC mobilisation: "Asian, Latin, black and white — Workers of the world, unite!" Everyone could see that proletarian power right before their eyes in this labour-centred anti-Klan mobilisation.

### The fight for a workers America

The Klan was born out of the bloody reaction in the South following the defeat of the slavocracy in the American Civil War. These were the hooded-and-robed agents of the former Confederacy, who carried out a campaign of terror, intimidation, mutilation and murder aimed at strangling the political rights that were won by the freed slaves during Reconstruction. The KKK spearheaded the restoration of white supremacy in the form of the system of Jim Crow segregation that held sway for nearly a century. It heralded a resurgence, reaching several million strong in the 1920s, with the lynching of Jewish businessman Leo Frank in Georgia in 1915.

Today the Klan is the lowlife, terrorist bunch held in reserve by the American capitalist ruling class. This ruling class, a tiny minority which expropriates all the real wealth of this society, believes that everyone else has no rights which this rich, white man's government is bound to respect. This capitalist ruling class needs the homegrown Nazis of the KKK, to be deployed to crush the organisations of the working class when the masses can no longer be lulled by the lie that their interests are represented by capitalist "democracy".

The political battle required to build the labour/black mobilisation which stopped the Klan from riding in NYC contains important lessons for all those who want to struggle against union-busting, racism, poverty, homelessness, war and all the other hideous expressions of a system rooted in exploitation and racial oppression. Central is that the

capitalist state is not neutral. It is the instrument for organised violence to ensure the rule of one class — the capitalists — over another class, the proletariat. As Marxists, we know that the bourgeois state at its core consists of special armed bodies of men — the cops, the military, the prison system and the whole "justice system" — whose job is to protect the profits and rule of the capitalists and to repress the workers. All historical experience has shown that the working class cannot reform the state and use it in its own interests but must create its own state, a workers state. The revolutionary fight for proletarian state power is the only road to black freedom and the emancipation of labour and all the oppressed.

We didn't invent the perspective on which our anti-Klan mobilisations are based. It is the concrete application of the experience of the Bolshevik Party which led the first, and only, successful working-class revolution in history — the October Revolution of 1917. Like the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy in this country which undermines the gains that were won through hard class struggle, the gains of the Russian Revolution were betrayed by the Stalinist bureaucracy which hijacked the exercise of political power by the workers. Paralleling the policies of the AFL-CIO tops, the Stalinists pursued class collaboration, not internationalist class struggle. Ultimately, this led to the destruction of the Soviet Union by the forces of imperialism and domestic counterrevolution in 1991-92.

Since then, the imperialist rulers have been celebrating the "death of communism". But communism isn't dead — it is the programme that expresses the class interests of the workers and oppressed, growing out of their aspirations and struggles for a society of genuine equality and social justice. What is needed to realise those aspirations is a workers party, which can bring the consciousness to the working class of its social power and historic interests in fighting the rule of capital and every manifestation of the barbarity of this system. What is needed is a workers revolution, which will break the power of the few and liberate the many — the working people and their allies — who will employ the wealth created by their labour for the benefit of the majority both in America and around the globe. On 23 October, thousands of New York's working people and minorities got a small taste of that workers power. ■

# WORKERS HAMMER

## Labour/black mobilisation rides KKK out of New York



Workers Vanguard

The power of labour was evident as SSEU Local 371 members led march towards Foley Square under labour/black mobilisation banner, 23 October.

*This article first appeared in Workers Vanguard, newspaper of the Spartacist League/US, on 29 October 1999.*

New Yorkers came out in their thousands on 23 October determined to make sure the KKK didn't ride in their city. They were mobilised by the call initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee, "All Out to Stop the KKK on October 23!" Hundreds of working people, students and others joined in distributing 175,000 of the PDC's mobilising leaflet in workplaces, campuses and neighbourhoods throughout the city.

Thousands came out in defiance of the efforts of the Giuliani administration, its cops and the courts to deny their right to mobilise to stop the Klan. They came out in opposition to appeals by the phoney "friends of labour" in the Democratic Party and self-appointed spokesmen for the black population who preached a "demonstration for tolerance" for the "rights" of the KKK. They knew this wasn't an issue of "free speech" but of stopping Klan terror and murder. They came out to drive the Klan lynchers off their streets. And that's exactly what they did.

Able to show their faces only under the protection of an army of cops, 17 Klansmen covered outside the New York State Supreme Court, surrounded on all sides by at least 8000 determined anti-Klan protesters. "Unmasked and Overwhelmed, the Klan Is Besieged at Rally", headlined the *New York Times* the next day. As these hooded-and-robed racists scurried back into the courthouse under police escort barely midway through their scheduled

rally, the trade unionists and others assembled under the PDC "Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK!" banner broke into nonstop chanting: "We stopped the Klan! We stopped the Klan!"

Headed up by union marshals with their arms linked, they marched up Lafayette Street displaying in victory the militancy, determination and defiance that was at the core of this mobilisation centred on the social power of organised labour. "We gave a message to the city: This is not Klan country!" said a member of the Social Service Employees Union (SSEU) Local 371. Local 371 came together with members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, postal, construction, civil service and many, many other trade unionists to form the backbone of the mobilisation to stop the Klan.

These unionists, who knew that coming to a mobilisation to stop the Klan was serious business, were above all what gave the mobilisation its disciplined and determined character. They acted as marshals to protect the mobilisation at 100 Centre Street. In the vanguard was SSEU Local 371, led by its president, Charles Ensley, whose members stationed themselves right in front of the speaker's platform and then led a large contingent from 100 Centre Street to Foley Square a block away, where thousands of others had drifted in the hope of getting closer to the Klan. A thousand edgy cops, with many more in reserve, were restrained by this show of labour power.

The thousands who turned out saw this labour/black mobilisation as their own, and many had indeed helped build it.

Workers at transit locations, hospitals and UPS depots, on buses and subways, at municipal office buildings took stacks of leaflets to distribute and poster. Many demonstrators brought their own hand-made signs or made them on the spot. People called out suggestions for additional chants to the speaker's platform.

Student governments from Borough of Manhattan Community College, Lehman, Bronx Community, Hostos, as well as students and student organisations from Columbia and New York University, Sarah Lawrence, Cornell and many others, endorsed and helped build the mobilisation to stop the Klan. Many students organised contingents from their campuses, which marched into the rally in groups. As the speaker for the Spartacus Youth Club — which helped build campus support — read off the names of the colleges and college groups, students cheered loudly.

For hundreds of students, this was not only their first taste of mass political action, but their first sense of the social power of labour organised in racially integrated unions. Speakers from the student contingents spoke with fire and passion, as exemplified by a young woman from City College who declared: "We are here to tell the KKK that you are cowards and if you would like to come to Washington Heights, if you would like to come to Harlem, and if you'd like to come to Brooklyn, we are waiting! Harlem is waiting, KKK!"

### A workers party in action

What was seen in the streets of New

York City on 23 October was exactly what the PDC had said was necessary to stop the Klan: a powerful mobilisation of the social power of the multiracial working class, standing at the head of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, immigrants, Jews, Catholics, gays, youth and all those the Klan has lined up in its sights. Our purpose was to give an organised and militant expression to the massive outrage against the Klan.

It was a united-front mobilisation, which allowed for the expression of many diverse political viewpoints by all those who shared a commitment to the urgent necessity to *stop the KKK*. But it tapped into far more than that, intersecting the accumulated anger among the city's working people, particularly blacks and Hispanics, who are fed up with being pushed around for years in the one-sided war against workers and the poor.

It galvanised the anger against the marauding, racist cops which exploded earlier this year over the killing of black African Amadou Diallo by the NYPD. It gave expression to the hundreds of thousands in this city — from unionised workers to immigrant cab drivers and hot dog vendors, CUNY students, artists, AIDS victims — who have had it with Giuliani's mini-police state. It demonstrated an alternative to the Democratic Party politicians, their black front men and labour flunkies, who worked as feverishly to try to demobilise any independent outpouring of the working people and all the enemies of Klan terror as they had done to contain the protests over the Diallo killing within

*continued on page 10*