

## US/British/UN/NATO troops out of Afghanistan and Central Asia now!



Shah Marai



Independent

Royal Marine commandos (above) will be sent to Afghanistan as part of imperialist "stabilisation" force, following devastation of Afghanistan through US/British bombing (left).

DECEMBER 22 — We reprint on page 6 a leaflet issued by the Spartacist League for distribution at the 100,000-strong anti-war demonstration in London on 18 November. Since then the military onslaught led by the US imperialists has led to the destruction of the Taliban regime throughout Afghanistan. Now the Blair government, which has been a front-runner in raining devastation on that country, has announced that 1500 British ground forces will form part of an international "stabilisation" force which Britain will lead initially.

At the end of November, before the Taliban's last stronghold of Kandahar was taken, the US and British imperialists gave full vent to their bloodlust when they massacred hundreds of Taliban Prisoners of War at a fortress near Mazar-i-Sharif, raining bombs on the prison and pouring burning oil into basements where prisoners were hiding. Reports show that many of the dead prisoners had their arms tied behind their backs. Video footage of the blood-bath show British SAS forces directing the bombardment alongside their US counterparts and firing at prisoners from the walls of the fortress. The Labour government is blocking an inquiry demanded by Amnesty International and other groups.

The question now being debated among imperialist powers is which country is to be bombed as "Phase Two" of this war of terror, especially in view of the fact that Osama bin Laden has eluded the world's mightiest power. Bush wants to target Iraq; the European imperialists are less keen, but the Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Sudan and North Korea are under threat.

At home, the Labour government continues to ratchet up the level of racist state repression. On 19 December, eight people, of mainly Arab origin were arrested under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act, which came into law a week earlier. Labour had declared a "state of public emergency" and rushed the law through Parliament at breakneck speed. It means that immigrants who are suspected of "terrorism" can be interned indefinitely without trial; those charged would be tried in secret courts, denied the right to see the "evidence" against them and denied virtually any means of appeal. In addition the new Act legalises police powers to track personal data such as bank account transactions, websites visited, phone calls and e-mail traffic. This law comes on top of anti-"terrorist" legislation enacted earlier this year that restricted the right of asylum and outlawed nearly two dozen mainly refugee and immigrant political groups — threatening anyone who financially supported these groups with imprisonment.

The new law is a fundamental attack

on civil liberties, meant to regiment and intimidate the entire population and to severely restrict the right and means to protest. It is so draconian that even the archaic House of Lords rejected the Bill several times before the government got it through. In the first instance it is aimed at immigrants and minorities, but ultimately at all opponents of British imperialism, the entire workers movement and the left.

In the same week that the Terrorism Act passed into law, home secretary David Blunkett attacked British Asians of Muslim origin for failing to adopt British cultural norms, saying "We have norms of acceptability and those who come into our home — for that is what it is — should accept those norms" and for not learning "a modest grasp of the English tongue so they can feel and become English". A report commissioned by the government on race relations even calls for immigrants to take an oath of allegiance, to declare their "clear primary loyalty to this nation". Blunkett's racist ranters were endorsed by the fascist scum

of the British National Party (BNP). On the BBC *World at One* programme, Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, said of Blunkett: "he's trying to shore up the white working-class vote. He is using the things that we've been saying for the last few years and he is now jumping on the bandwagon".

In case anyone missed the point, the norms that Asians can expect under Labour's racist reign are starkly revealed in the five-year jail sentence dished out to Shazad Ashraf, one of over 100 young Asians arrested for defending their communities from intense attack by fascists protected by the police. This was in stark contrast to the treatment of Leeds United soccer stars Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate who walked free from court following a farce of a trial for their part in a vicious racist attack on a young Asian student, Sarfraz Najeib, which left him severely injured. *Free Shazad Ashraf! Drop the charges against arrested Asian youth and anti-racist protesters! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants — down with the Terrorism Act!*



**Defend the  
Palestinian people!  
Israel out of the occupied territories!  
See page 3**

# Jamal death sentence reversed

## Urgent need for protest to free Mumia now!

We publish below a statement issued on 18 December by the Partisan Defense Committee.

Federal district court judge William Yohn today reversed the death sentence that has been hanging over the head of Mumia Abu-Jamal since his 1982 frame-up conviction for the killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Although Yohn rejected the mountains of evidence demonstrating Jamal's innocence — including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly testifying that he had been hired to kill Faulkner — this ruling represents the first crack in the state's 20-year legal vendetta against Jamal. And the forces that have worked overtime to ensure Jamal's execution are

literally screaming bloody murder. Maureen Faulkner, who has headed this campaign on behalf of the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.), condemned Yohn as a "sick and twisted person." Democratic Party District Attorney Lynne Abraham, who has done more than her share to see that more black people are sentenced to death in Philadelphia than any other city in the U.S., immediately convened a press conference to announce that the prosecution will be appealing Yohn's ruling.

The F.O.P. and the Philly D.A.'s office fear that the explosive new evidence of Jamal's innocence, which the capitalist state and the press have worked hard to bury, could finally be heard in a court of law. Prosecutor Hugh Burns made that clear when he declaimed today, "If there was a new sentencing hearing, it would probably entail the empaneling of a jury...and whatever evidence the defendant wanted to review again would be presented to the jury." Yohn has also worked assiduously to ensure that the overwhelming evidence of Jamal's innocence is buried. His decision affirms the original frame-up murder conviction, which was secured on the basis of "eyewitness" testimony coerced by the police through the promise of favors and outright terror, a manufactured "confession" and completely concocted ballistics "evidence." Yohn's ruling only allows for a new sentencing hearing within 180 days which would at best consign Jamal to life behind bars.

As Mumia himself said of life imprisonment in one of his writings from death row: "'Life' is thus but a grim metaphor for death, for only death releases one from its shackles. 'Life,' it might be said, is merely slow death." **Mumia Abu-Jamal is an innocent man!** An award-winning journalist, former Black Panther and MOVE supporter, Mumia's only "crime" is that he is an outspoken champion of the oppressed and exploited. And he has continued to speak out, unbowed and unbroken, from his death row cell. **Don't let them bury Mumia alive!** Workers, minorities and all opponents of racist capitalist repression must now redouble their efforts to mobilize mass protest centered on the social power of the labor movement to demand Jamal's immediate freedom.

From the time the Partisan Defense Committee took up Jamal's case 15 years ago, we have insisted that the fight to save this innocent man cannot rely on the capitalist courts but must be based on social struggle. What has kept him out of the clutches of the executioner is mass protest and publicity, in this country and internationally, especially by trade unions representing millions of workers. Now more than ever the PDC says: No confidence in the capitalist courts, all confidence in the power of the working people and oppressed!

Jamal's case throws into stark relief the whole nature of racist American capitalism. His prosecution and conviction were an extension of the CO-INTELPRO terror campaign by the FBI



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in which dozens of Black Panthers were assassinated and hundreds more sent to prison. Among them was Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), who was finally released in 1997 after 27 years in prison hell for a crime the state knew he did not commit. Jamal's case is a demonstration of the machinery of repression wielded by the capitalist rulers against any perceived threat to a system based on the exploitation of the many by the few, which in America is rooted in the forcible subjugation of the black population at the bottom of society.

As ever more death row and other prisoners are exonerated of false convictions through DNA evidence, popular support for the death penalty has waned and America's imperialist rulers have faced growing diplomatic embarrassment around the world. And Jamal's case shows what the racist, barbaric death penalty in the U.S. is all about. On December 2, the Paris city council voted to make Mumia an honorary citizen of the city, an indication of the breadth of support for his cause around the world. This new court ruling comes even as the right-wing Bush administration, invoking the need for "war measures" as it bombs the people of Afghanistan, is gearing up a new COINTELPRO-style campaign of terror and provocation. Targeting people of Near Eastern descent in the first instance, the government's "war on terror" is aimed at all immigrants, minorities, labor, leftists and all perceived opponents of the government.

What is needed is a massive struggle centered on the social power of the multiracial working class to fight for Jamal's freedom! Based on the only significant integration in racist America — the workplace and the factory floor — the trade unions have the social power and the potential to become battalions in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and racial oppression, to shake the foundations of this decaying capitalist system and ultimately topple it. If undertaken with a mobilization of the union movement at the forefront, the fight to free Mumia and to abolish the racist death penalty would be a first, giant step in that direction and would strike a significant blow against the draconian new repressive measures being implemented by the Bush administration with bipartisan support. To that end, labor must break the chains with which the trade-union misleaders have shackled the unions to the political parties — centrally the Democrats — and the state agencies of the enemy class. **No illusions in the capitalist courts! Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■**



TROTSKY

### Marxism v bourgeois pacifism

The reformist and pacifist organisers of protests against the bombing of Afghanistan push the illusion that the imperialist system can be pressured into being "peaceful". Writing as the storm clouds of World War I were gathering in 1911, Rosa Luxemburg, then a leader of the revolutionary-internationalist wing of the German Social Democracy, outlined the Marxist understanding that imperialist militarism and wars of depredation and



LENIN

plunder are an inherent feature of the capitalist profit system. The following translation appeared under the title "The Road to Peace" in Young Socialist (October 1958), organ of what became the youth group of the then-Trotskyist US Socialist Workers Party.

First and foremost, our task is to make clear to the masses of people the nature of militarism and to bring out, sharply and clearly, the difference in principle between the standpoint of social-democracy and that of the bourgeois peace enthusiasts.

In what does this difference consist? Certainly not merely in the fact that bourgeois apostles of peace rely on the influence of fine words, while we do not depend on words alone. Our very point of departure is diametrically opposed: the friends of peace in bourgeois circles believe that world peace and disarmament can be realized within the framework of the present social order, whereas we who base ourselves on the materialist conception of history and on scientific socialism, are convinced that militarism can be abolished only with the destruction of the capitalist state. From this follows the essential difference in our tactics in spreading the idea of peace....

The nations of today, if they are really serious and honest in their wish to call a halt to competitive armaments, would have to begin by disarming in the commercial and political field, by giving up predatory colonial campaigns, by abandoning the international politics of spheres of influence in all parts of the world — in a word, in their foreign as well as domestic politics, they would have to do the exact opposite of everything which the nature of the present politics of a capitalist state demands....

Only those who believe in the mitigation and blunting of class antagonism and in the reduction of the economic anarchy of capitalism can believe that these international conflicts will permit of slackening, mitigation and elimination.

For the international antagonisms of the capitalist state are but complements of class antagonisms and world-political anarchy, but the reverse side of the anarchic system of capitalist production. Both grow together and must be overcome together. "A little order and peace" is, therefore, just as impossible, just as much a petty-bourgeois utopia, with regard to world politics as it is with regard to the capitalist world market, with regard to the limitation of armaments as it is with regard to the restriction of crises.

— Rosa Luxemburg, "Peace Utopias" (May 1911)

## WORKERS HAMMER



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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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# Defend the Palestinian people!

**Israel out of the Occupied Territories!  
US/Britain/UN/NATO out of Afghanistan,  
Central Asia, Persian Gulf, Near East!**

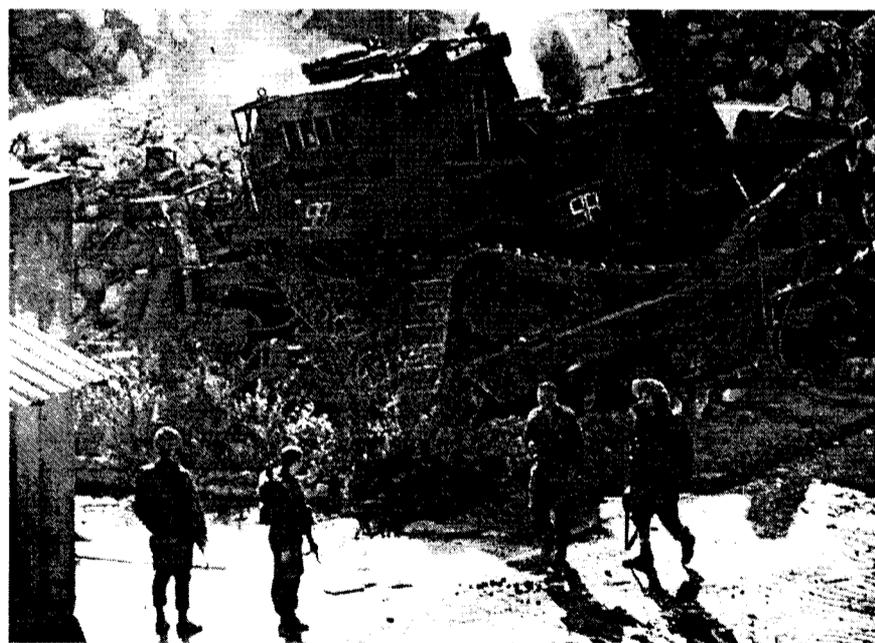
In the first two weeks of December, the government of Ariel Sharon devastated what remained of an "autonomous" Palestinian Authority (PA) established in the Occupied Territories by the US-sponsored 1993 Oslo accord. Israeli bombs and missiles have slammed into PA government buildings, police posts and radio transmitters. Israeli troops and tanks have stormed into one West Bank and Gaza town after another, ruthlessly mowing down any Palestinian perceived to be standing in their way. The Zionist butchers' trail of death and destruction includes hundreds of demolished homes and dozens of Palestinian corpses. And virtually every funeral results in yet another, as mourners are subjected to gunfire by Israeli occupation forces.

Having assured its patrons in Washington that it is not (for now) seeking the physical elimination of Palestinian Authority leader Yasir Arafat, the Sharon government is nonetheless — in a blood-drenched tradition dating back to the original Zionist colonisation and the 1948 expulsion of 700,000 Palestin-

ians — "creating facts" on the ground. As Arafat and his immediate coterie are confined to an office surrounded by Israeli tanks, little is left of the PA infrastructure or the trappings of Palestinian "sovereignty" proclaimed with much fanfare on the White House lawn eight years ago.

from the standpoint of the proletariat. A week later, Hamas attacked a busload of West Bank "settlers", even gunning down Israeli children as they fled. Such terrorist attacks only add grist to the mill of the Israeli rulers to wield their far more massive arsenal of terror against Arab men, women and children. Beyond the immediate pretext lies US imperialism's unexpectedly rapid and easy victory in Afghanistan. Intent on including many of the Arab regimes, and even Arafat's PA, in its "global coalition against terrorism", the Bush administration had sought to restrain Sharon. In early October, Bush even voiced support for a Palestinian state. But as the US-backed Northern Alliance forces began seizing Taliban positions in Afghanistan, a mood of imperialist triumphalism swept over the American ruling class and especially the Bush White House, with administration spokesmen again openly threatening a military assault on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, among other alleged "terrorist" states.

Washington also extended its "war on



Nasser Nasser/AP

**December 2001: Israeli army bulldozer completes destruction of Palestinian Authority's radio station in Ramallah.**

immigrant witch hunt. Significantly, despite the growth of anti-immigrant and anti-Arab chauvinism fuelled by the "war on terror", there is also considerable sympathy for the Palestinian cause among black people. *Defend the Palestinian people! Down with Zionist/PA repression of Palestinian opposition groups! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories! Hands*

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Nati Shohat

**Over 100,000 Palestinian residents of Hebron are subjected to military repression while fascistic Zionist settlers are given free rein to rampage.**

US policy shift that the liberal *New York Times* (14 December 2001) carried an editorial headlined "Looking Beyond Yasir Arafat".

*off Iraq — US/British imperialism out of Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Near East!*

Arafat's vow on 16 December to outlaw Hamas and other groups that continue the *Intifada* may have won him a bit of a lease on life. The US might yet try to restrain Israel if Sharon carries out a blood-bath of Palestinians that provokes upheaval among the neighbouring Arab masses and threatens to plunge the Near East into chaos. Even then, Israel's rulers have repeatedly demonstrated that they do not simply bow to Washington in pursuing their bloody ambitions for a "Greater Israel". The Israeli regime could well move to reimpose direct military occupation in Gaza and the West Bank or to formally annex broad swathes of territory including Zionist settlements and the network of "strategic highways" connecting them, leaving the Arab population to starve in ghettoised enclaves. Months before the current US-led "war on terror", we warned in "Zionist Butchers Escalate War on Palestinians" (*Workers Vanguard* no 760, 8 June 2001):

**From the Oslo "peace" accord to the new Intifada**

The backdrop to the ominous situation now confronting the Palestinians lies in the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Seeking to strengthen their own position vis-à-vis Western imperialism, the Kremlin Stalinists provided a certain amount of military, diplomatic and financial support to Arab bourgeois regimes and petty-bourgeois nationalist movements like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Bereft of such Soviet support, in 1993 Arafat accepted the US-brokered Oslo "peace" accord, which gave the PLO a few trappings of "sovereignty". But, as journalist David Hirst noted, "For the Israelis, security — theirs, not the Palestinians' — was the be-all and end-all of Oslo. His [Arafat's] job was to supply it on their behalf" (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13 December 2001). Palestinian police, trained and overseen by the CIA and Israeli security forces, would carry out the day-to-day policing of the subjugated Palestinian masses while all Israeli settlements remained in place pending an indefinite "final status" agreement. This ignominious deal served to fuel the growth of the forces of Islamic reaction, centrally Hamas, in the West Bank and Gaza, as the PLO (especially Arafat's Fatah) became increasingly discredited.

"After eight months of Palestinian defiance and an escalating war of terror by the Israeli military and its 'settler' auxiliaries, the ultra-chauvinist Zionist rulers could well be moving toward a bloodbath of catastrophic proportions."

Powerful international protest, centred on the proletariat not only of the Near East but of the imperialist centres, in defence of the Palestinian people is urgently necessary. In France, large numbers of workers of North African origin are integrated into key sectors of industry. There is a significant component of Arab workers as well in the US auto industry, many of whom are themselves threatened by the government's anti-

Various Western reformists, notably the US International Socialist Organization (ISO), enthuse over the growth of such Islamic "radicals". An article in the ISO's *Socialist Worker* (14 December 2001) conspicuously fails to condemn

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# Near East...

(Continued from page 3)

the recent indiscriminate terror attacks in Haifa and Jerusalem carried out by Hamas; more generally, in recent years the ISO and the British Socialist Workers Party have glorified Islamic fundamentalism as an expression of "anti-imperialism".

In fact, Hamas is a vile group of anti-Semitic and anti-woman religious fanatics which originated as an offshoot of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood following the outbreak of the first Palestinian *Intifada* in the late 1980s. As the *Times* (6 December 2001) pointed out: "At the time Israeli intelligence saw the movement as a potential rival to Mr Arafat's Fatah group, the dominant faction in the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which was fomenting the first intifada. The Israelis encouraged Hamas and its small group of religious zealots."

In seeking to create an Islamic regime in the West Bank and Gaza, Hamas mirrors the fascistic religious Jewish reactionaries who strive for a fully fledged Old Testament theocracy in Israel and who have themselves perpetrated repeated terrorist atrocities and pogroms against Palestinian Arabs. Indiscriminate terror against Israeli Jews, whether carried out by Islamic fundamentalists or secular Palestinian nationalists, mirrors on a small scale the genocidal logic of Zionism. In their own way, such outfits subscribe to the same basic position as Sharon: that all Jews, including schoolchildren or teenagers at a disco or shopping mall, are soldiers of the Zionist state.

Terror attacks against the Israeli population serve to strengthen the intense chauvinism which binds the Hebrew-speaking workers — including impoverished and oppressed Sephardic Jews — to their capitalist exploiters. Some Arab nationalists initially maintained that the attack on the World Trade Center was actually carried out by the Israelis in order to turn the outrage of the American people against the Arab/Islamic world. By the same logic, Hamas' attacks against Israeli civilians could just as well have been instigated by the Israeli Mossad

imprisoned 300 Hamas leaders and cadre and dismantled much of its military network. But five years ago Arafat still had considerable credibility among the Palestinian masses, who maintained illusions in his strategy of relying on the good graces of American imperialism to bring about an independent Palestinian state.

But these illusions were rapidly evaporating, as conditions of life went from bad to worse. Withdrawal of Israeli troops from small parts of the Occupied Territories was accompanied by the con-



Hamas supporter in Gaza. Indiscriminate terror by Hamas mirrors genocidal chauvinism of Zionist rulers.

struction of ever more checkpoints and fences, now augmented by trenches surrounding many villages. Along the border between Israel and the West Bank north of Tel Aviv, there is now a multiple barrier of razor wire, high-voltage fence and a ten-foot-high concrete wall that extends for more than a mile, blocking off the adjacent Palestinian town of Tulkarem. As Palestinian day labourers were increasingly denied entry to Israel, per capita income in the West Bank and Gaza plunged to half what it had been before 1993, and less than one-tenth that in Israel.

At the same time, the number of Zionist settlers doubled. East Jerusalem has been increasingly "cleansed" of Palestinians as Arab homes are razed while Jewish-only housing is vastly expanded, particularly in response to the demand

cistic religious zealots who act as auxiliaries to the military occupation forces and idolise the likes of Baruch Goldstein, the Brooklyn-born Zionist who slaughtered some 30 Palestinian worshippers in Hebron in 1994. The construction of new Jewish settlements is accompanied by the expulsion of the Palestinians who formerly lived on the land. Even more Palestinian land has been confiscated in order to build a network of fortified "bypass roads" which are open only to Jews and encircle those enclaves under nominal PA control. *We*



Getty Images

*demand the removal of all anti-Arab fortifications in the Occupied Territories — the settlements and the apartheid highway network!*

These conditions finally exploded into a new *Intifada* last autumn — sparked by Sharon's provocative "visit" with hundreds of cops to a Muslim holy site in Jerusalem in September 2000 — which was initially led primarily by elements of Fatah in defiance of Arafat. As Arafat, under pressure from Washington, tried to suppress the uprising, he has lost what remained of his base of support. The latest opinion poll indicates that support for Islamist groups has risen to 30 per cent while support for Fatah has fallen to 20 per cent. Though many Palestinians have turned to Hamas because of its seeming intransigence against the Zionist occupation forces, there has nonetheless been a sharp rise in the influence of religious fundamentalism among the Palestinian people.

This, in turn, is mirrored by growing support among the Hebrew-speaking population for ultra-chauvinist and Jewish fundamentalist parties. Half of all Israelis surveyed in a recent poll support the "transfer" — ie forcible expulsion — of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to Arab countries, a position once espoused by only a tiny handful on the fascistic right. The growing rightism of Israeli politics also targets the more than a million Palestinian Arabs who are nominally citizens of Israel. Prominent Arab Israeli parliamentarian Azmi Bishara now awaits trial on treason charges after being stripped of parliamentary immunity because he made a speech in Syria calling for Palestinian resistance.

Faced with Sharon's onslaught and Washington's hostility, Arafat has again looked to the United Nations or the European Union (EU) to broker some kind of deal. The EU has simultaneously echoed the American line demanding that Arafat crack down on Palestinian opposition groups while arguing against any "attempts to weaken or discredit" the PA leader (*Financial Times*, 15-16 December 2001). On 20 December, Jack Straw issued an ultimatum to Yasir Arafat to crack down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad and that the *Intifada* must end. With no mention of the Zionists' murderous at-

tacks, the Foreign Secretary said that Britain's position has changed because the Israeli government is under "unbelievable pressure" from Palestinian suicide bombings. Reflecting the more sympathetic posture of the EU imperialists towards the Palestinians, the French Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) issued a declaration denouncing "the bellicose logic in which the Sharon government has been engaged" and calling "for the setting up of an international force for peace and protection of the population" (*Rouge*, 13 December 2001).

These fake leftists are simply lining up behind the particular imperialist ambitions of Washington's European rivals, who are competing for influence among the oil-rich Arab regimes of the Near East. Even were Israel or the US to allow it to happen, any imperialist "peacekeeping" force, whether under the auspices of the EU or the UN, could only be oppressive to the Palestinian people. It was under a UN partition plan that the Zionist state was created in 1948, and it is through a UN-sponsored starvation blockade that over one and a half million Iraqis have died since 1991.

The only salvation for the Palestinian people lies through proletarian revolution and a socialist federation of the Near East. As revolutionary Marxists, we seek to smash the Zionist garrison state *from within*, through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution. Only through the overthrow of the Israeli bourgeoisie as well as the Arab ruling classes can the right of national self-determination of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples and the many other peoples of the region be equitably realised. We have no illusions that it will be easy to shatter the intense anti-Arab chauvinism of the Hebrew-speaking working class. But it is the task of revolutionaries to utilise every opportunity, every strike, every action that pits the working class against the Zionist capitalist rulers to emphasise the necessity for joint struggle by the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking workers. In the course of such struggles will be forged the internationalist Trotskyist party which champions the national rights of the Palestinians as part of the fight to place the proletariat in power.

## American imperialism and the demonisation of the Islamic world

Early this month, the *Jerusalem Post* wrote: "The US is not in a diplomatic mode with respect to Islamism; it recognizes that it is at war and Islamism must be defeated. Accordingly, the Taliban were given an ultimatum to either give up Osama bin Laden or give up power. The Palestinian Authority must be given a similar ultimatum with respect to Hamas and Islamic Jihad." It is not only the rabidly Zionist *Jerusalem Post* that



Reuters

Mourners at 12 December funeral in Gaza for Palestinian killed by Israeli occupation forces.

secret police, for they serve the aims of the Zionist state. In the early '50s, the Mossad engineered synagogue bombings and other provocations in Near Eastern countries (eg Egypt) with the aim of scaring the Jewish populations there to migrate to Israel.

In now demanding that Arafat crack down on Hamas, American ruling circles point out that he did so effectively in 1996, when his police rounded up and

that East Jerusalem become the capital of a future Palestinian state. While many who live in the settlements are either new immigrants forced to move there by the government or attracted by artificially low housing costs, large numbers of those who are not fanatical Zionists have concluded that cheap housing isn't much good if you're dead and have left the settlements. The political core of the settler movement consists of armed fas-

proclaims a war on Islamism. Bush administration spokesmen initially invoked the Christian Crusades to justify their "war on terrorism".

During the Cold War, American imperialism also utilised and mobilised the forces of Islamic reaction against the Communist parties and Soviet-backed nationalist movements and regimes in traditionally Muslim countries. The Saudi monarchy — the font of Islamic fundamentalism in the Near East — was and remains protected by the American military. Washington instigated the 1965 military coup by the Muslim generals in Indonesia in which half a million workers, leftists and others were massacred, effectively destroying the Indonesian Communist Party, then the largest in the world not holding state power. Bin Laden and his fellow "holy warriors" were originally the creatures of the CIA — using the Pakistani military and Saudi money — to fight the Soviet Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

However, the destruction of the Soviet Union through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92 posed a certain public relations problem for the US ruling class: how to motivate continued public support for the huge and even increasing Pentagon budget and imperialist military

religious obscurantism internationally, especially following the demise of the USSR. The Christian fundamentalist right in the US has become a staunch supporter of Israel as a representative of the "Judeo-Christian" tradition in the Near East.

Huntington arrogantly asserts that the peoples of the Islamic East are "convinced of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power". In reality, American imperialism has sought to demonstrate its global superiority by military attacks against the neocolonial peoples of the Islamic East precisely because they are powerless to resist effectively. Bush Sr proclaimed a "New World Order" for US imperialism — as the Soviet Union neared collapse — while US and British warplanes carpet-bombed Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War. And America's capitalist rulers have continued to vilify Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein as an enemy of the US and, indeed, the world.

Saddam Hussein is not, in fact, an Islamic fundamentalist. He is an Arab bourgeois nationalist of the kind hated and despised by pan-Islamic fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden. The Ba'athist movement was originally formed by Christian as well as Muslim



Workers Hammer

December 1998: Spartacist League demonstrate in London against US and British imperialist attack on Iraq.

the Iraqi army in the Gulf War. However, the factors arguing against an invasion of Iraq then are still operating today.

There is no armed oppositional group in Iraq (analogous to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan) that could overthrow Saddam Hussein given sufficient US air support. The US army would have to go into Iraq in force. And what then? If the Americans just pulled out, Iraq would almost certainly descend into chaos and ethnic/religious warfare, destabilising the entire oil-rich Persian Gulf region and perhaps toppling the increasingly fragile Saudi monarchy. Alternatively, to install and maintain a US puppet regime in Baghdad would require a large-scale, indefinite military occupation of Iraq. A *New York Times* (26 November 2001) editorial, "The Wrong Time to Fight Iraq", marshals the compelling military and political arguments against such a course. However, the American ruling class is not rational, and the anti-Iraq hawks could prevail. Indeed, such an editorial by the premier mouthpiece of the American bourgeoisie indicates that the imperialists are debating whether to invade Iraq today, and may do so tomorrow.

Taliban. More generally, the fanatically reactionary and repressive nature of the Taliban regime deprived it of broad support in the Arab/Islamic world even in the face of direct US imperialist attack.

But there is broad-based and deeply felt support for the oppressed Palestinian people among the masses of the Arab world and, indeed, among other oppressed peoples throughout the world. To translate the widespread sympathy for the Palestinians among the Arab masses into an effective struggle for their national liberation requires proletarian revolutions to overthrow the neocolonial capitalist regimes in the Near East — whether bourgeois-nationalist or Islamic traditionalist — which serve as the political agents of Wall Street, the City of London, Frankfurt, Paris and Tokyo. A workers revolution in one of the Arab countries, proclaiming the internationalist unity of all working people, would have an enormous impact on the political consciousness of the Hebrew-speaking workers in Israel.

The Near East is a region of deep, all-sided oppression — of women, of national, ethnic and religious minorities. At the same time, the last half century has seen the considerable growth of a proletariat in the urban centres and oil fields throughout the region. This industrial working class has the social power to lead the oppressed masses in struggle to overturn the capitalist order and open the road to socialism, which would necessarily entail extending the revolution to the imperialist centres of North America, Western Europe and Japan. The key is forging a revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, on the model of the Bolshevik Party of VI Lenin and Leon Trotsky that led the multinational proletariat of the tsarist empire to power in the October Revolution of 1917.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 771, 28 December 2001.



AFF

1998: Devastation in Baghdad from British/US terror bombing.

adventures in the absence of the Soviet "threat".

Harvard's Samuel P Huntington, a prominent Cold War academic, provided a new ideology for American imperialism in the post-Soviet world. That world, he argued, still contained enemies of the American state, and, indeed, of Western civilisation, but now they were based on deeply rooted national/religious cultures. Huntington's 1993 article "The Clash of Civilizations?", published in *Foreign Affairs*, became a kind of foreign policy manifesto for a significant section of the American bourgeois right, whose views are heavily represented in the Bush administration. The core of Huntington's position is:

"The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."

For Huntington, the battle lines of the future would pit the United States of America, as the exemplar and champion of Western civilisation, against Eastern Orthodox Russia, "Confucian" China and the Islamic states of the Near East.

Such views were espoused by a growing Christian right which had become increasingly influential in the Republican Party. The growth of a nativist, anti-woman Christian right in the US is itself an expression of the rise of all manner of

Arab nationalist intellectuals, and Iraq's foreign minister is likewise from a Christian Arab family. However, the ideologies of American imperialism have linked together Saddam Hussein and bin Laden, Hamas and the left-nationalist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in order to demonise the Islamic East as an enemy of the West represented by its American "superpower".

In putting together a "grand coalition" for the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Bush declared this was "not a war against Islam". The conservative *Economist* (6 October 2001) commented in this regard:

"America may have an even bigger problem in winning the propaganda war: those Americans, largely on the right, who think the country will indeed eventually have to wage war on Islam — or, at least, various chunks of the Muslim world. These voices say that you cannot defeat terror without confronting its backers in Iraq, Iran and to some extent Saudi Arabia and Syria."

For the moment Bush rejected those (including his deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz) who wanted to wage war then and there against half the states in the Near East. In effect, he said, first we'll destroy the Taliban and then we'll see. But then has become now.

As one Afghan city after another fell to the American-backed forces, members of the Bush gang began talking about getting rid of Saddam Hussein. In fact, significant elements of the American right have been harshly critical of Bush Sr for allowing Saddam Hussein to remain in power after the US forces routed

### For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Since 11 September, the Israeli rulers have pressed to extend Bush's "war on terrorism" to the destruction of the Palestinian national movement. However, that would have political repercussions in the Near East of a far greater magnitude than the destruction of the Taliban by the US and its Northern Alliance henchmen.

The Taliban (which was basically a creation of the Pakistani military) turned out to have many more enemies than friends in the Islamic world. Indeed, the Shi'ite Islamic theocratic regime in Iran has been among the chief backers of the Northern Alliance against the Sunni

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# Fake left crawl to war-crazed Blair

## For class struggle against British capitalism and its Labour government!

### Defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack!

Blair and Bush's bombing of Afghanistan, a hideously poor, famine-stricken country, has already claimed more than a thousand victims and seen hundreds of thousands of people flee; B52s and "daisy-cutter" bombers have relentlessly pounded the country. The bombing has cleared the way for the Northern Alliance to put the Taliban on the run, and the imperialists, who created both the Northern Alliance and Taliban as bloody anti-woman butchers in the 1980s, are now threatening to send troops to the region, cynically presented as "peace-keepers", possibly under UN auspices. The UN is the fig-leaf for the terror and destruction of US imperialism and its allies worldwide, from Iraq, to Somalia to the Balkans. All imperialist troops — UN, NATO, US, British — out of Afghanistan/Central Asia and out of the Balkans now!

Tony Blair has been circling the world drumming up support for the bloody US-led war against Afghanistan. This is the naked face of British imperialism, administered by "Her Majesty's Labour Party", stripped of its veneer of parliamentary "democracy". While playing the role of junior partners and cheerleaders for US imperialism, Labour ministers are also representing the interests of British imperialism — the City of London, the financial centre of Europe and centre for exploitation of the whole world. Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder is pushing for Germany's military inter-



Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Group contingent at 18 November 2001 anti-war demonstration in London.

**For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!**

lim world and in Europe. Imperialism is not a rational system, and the bombing poses any number of "what ifs" among capitalist powers. What if the war destabilises Pakistan, putting its nuclear capability up for grabs? What if it triggers a further war between India and Pakistan,

armed Zionist madmen threaten to "eliminate" Yasir Arafat and have re-occupied the West Bank and Gaza. *Defend the Palestinians against Zionist terror! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories!*

Immediately following the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center — an indefensible act of criminal terror that incinerated thousands of civilians — each section of the ICL issued statements introducing the SL/US Political Bureau statement of 12 September. We said the attack was being used by US and British imperialism — themselves a major force for international terrorism — for military action in revenge and for state repression at home. The Labour government has seized the opportunity to ram through drastic measures under cover of the so-called "war on terrorism". Jack Straw promised increased "security of a kind people in Northern Ireland have had to live with for decades". We said that, for workers and minorities, this would mean "the bloody police-state repression that oppressed Catholics suffer from the British Army and the RUC". Home Secretary David Blunkett is about to introduce internment for "terrorist suspects", which was used to round up and imprison Catholics in Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Labour has declared a "state of public emergency" to allow them to suspend part of the European convention on human rights and instigate indefinite detention without trial. This is a fundamental attack on civil liberties, particularly threatening immigrants and refugees, which also shows the true face of British "democracy" which Blair brags

so much about.

The SL/B statement of 15 September said:

"Labour's draconian Terrorism Act will undoubtedly be invoked. The Act bans a whole swathe of mainly immigrant and Islamic organisations but ultimately it is aimed at all opponents of British imperialism, the entire workers movement and the left. The government is setting up British Muslims as targets but all Asians and anyone of Near Eastern origin are under threat: already a number of Sikhs have been attacked....

"These police-state measures against immigrants and minorities are the domestic reflection of the impending murderous NATO retaliatory war measures....

"Ethnic and national minorities are not the only domestic targets in the sights of the capitalist state. It would be very convenient for the bosses and the Labour government if working-class anger over attacks on working conditions, health and education were to be displaced by a racist orgy of patriotic gore."

As well as detention without trial, new proposals include ID cards for asylum seekers, speeding up deportations, increased use of detention centres and compulsory English tests for immigrants. These measures add fuel to the anti-immigrant crusade that has been an abiding feature of Labour's racist reign. The ruling class always seek to divide workers along race lines to deflect the anger away from their own doorstep. Never more so than when the world is entering a global capitalist recession and hundreds of thousands of workers are being laid off. *Down with Labour's Terrorism Act! Down with the Asylum Act! For full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Workers and minorities must defend the Muslim population and all victims of Labour's racist witch hunt!*

The US, Britain and their imperialist rivals have declared that they will make a bloc with those who are "against terrorism". They are increasing attacks on the working class at home, which are designed to sharpen the competitiveness of their capitalist trusts on the world market, in the context of an increasingly dramatic economic recession. This competition between capitalist powers ultimately threatens world war.

In Europe, no less than in America, the working class has been subjected to a continuous attack on jobs, wages and benefits, in large measure from governments led by social-democratic parties. Throughout Europe there is widespread revulsion as children are massacred in the bombings and at the imperialists' cynicism in parachuting peanut butter between fragmentation bombs. At the end of October, the giant IG Metall union in Germany called for a halt to the bombing, only to be reprimanded by "their" Social Democratic chancellor, Schröder, who lectured: "Concern yourself with the living conditions of your members, but keep your fingers out of



Owen Humphries/PA

Bradford, July 2001: Police attacked Asian youth, defended the fascists. Free jailed anti-racist protesters!

vention because he says it is an opportunity to legitimise the commitment of German soldiers in combat for the first time since 1945.

There are signs of dissension in the ranks of Britain and America's bloc partners among those in the Arab/Mus-

plunging the region into chaos? What if access to oil is disrupted? What if these powers are inexorably drawn from their current status as cheerleaders into a shooting war in which they have no direct interest? In the Near East powder keg the stakes are very high. Nuclear-

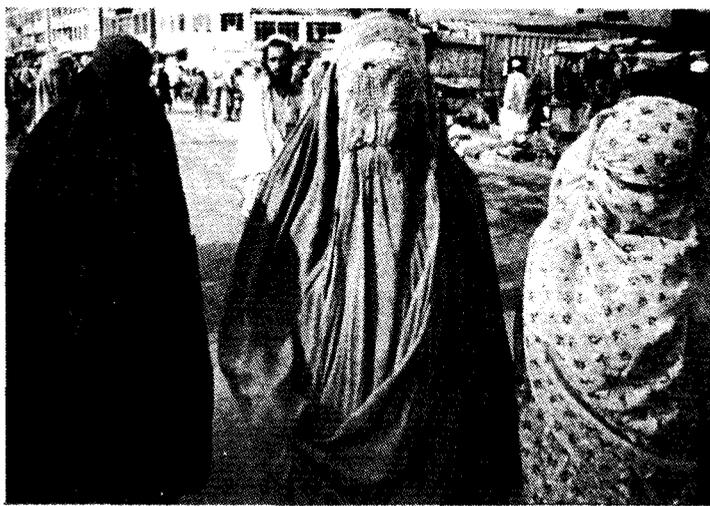
foreign policy, because you understand nothing about it" (*Spiegel Online*, 31 October). An IG Metall spokesman replied, "We're not about to let even Schröder shut us up." In Italy, the COBAS (rank and file committees) unions called a one-day general strike on 9 November against the war on Afghanistan and the Italian government's assault on social benefits.

There is huge opposition in Britain to the war. On 13 October, 50,000 marched in London against the war. The Fire Brigades Union and the rail union RMT backed the protest, and the Scottish TUC, the CWU and ASLEF have called for a halt to the bombing. Dissenting voices in the trade union bureaucracy reflect discontent at the base of the unions. Those union bureaucrats who oppose the war do so from the perspective that running point for America does not serve the best interests of British imperialism. Thus a letter from trade union general secretaries condemned the bombing but appealed to British workers to oppose war by lining up behind "their" government, ie their capitalist exploiters, pleading: "We therefore call upon the British government to pull back from the course of war." These Labour lieutenants of British capitalism seek to channel workers' anger into "little England" nationalism and anti-Americanism.

Strikes against the bosses would challenge the "national unity" used to cement workers behind the Labour government. This requires implacable opposition to Labour and its pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy. During the TUC conference they seized on the 11 September attacks to abandon their "battle" — which only amounted to a war of words — with the Labour government over privatisation of public services. But the fact that they were even raising their heads above the parapet at all is because of the growing anger and militancy amongst workers. When London Underground workers held one-day strikes earlier this year, the financial losses to the City of London were considerable. When Tube workers planned a one-day strike in October to defend their livelihoods, they were met by an onslaught from the bourgeois press and the CBI, accusing them of siding with terrorism, and the union bureaucrats called it off. Sustained strike action by all transport workers in the capital — train, bus and Tube — could bring the City grinding to a halt. *Break with the Labour misleaders! The working class needs a revolutionary party!*

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Group have intervened in demonstrations and meetings against the war centred on our demand: For class struggle against the British capitalist rulers! Defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack! At the 13 October demonstration our chants included: "Troops out of Ireland! Hands off Iraq!" and "Crawling to Labour won't stop war, workers revolution is what we're for!" Our signs said: "Trotskyists hailed Red Army against CIA-backed woman-hating Afghan reactionaries!" and "Defend China against imperialism, counterrevolution/ For workers political revolution!" as well as "Anti-terror' witch hunt: Danger to minorities, workers, left!" Intervening in meetings against the war, our comrades have stressed that the fight against war has to be linked to the fight against capitalism and "national unity" patriotism. This means destroying the illusions peddled by the fake left that imperialist war can be stopped by pressuring Labour.

The task of revolutionaries is to educate and mobilise the proletariat in the understanding that defence of workers here against increasing exploitation and



Chin/NY Times



Friends of Afghanistan Society

### Islamic reaction enslaves Afghan women (left); Soviet intervention opened the road to liberation.

oppression is integrally linked to the defence of Afghanistan against imperialist attack. And that requires breaking the allegiance of the workers to their Labourite, social-chauvinist leaders and mobilising class-struggle opposition to the war. Only the Leninist commitment to combat Labourism and to win workers to a revolutionary programme and party can prepare the way for the long overdue and increasingly urgent socialist overthrows necessary in Britain and elsewhere. Only workers revolution can end imperialist war and we fight to build the multi-ethnic revolutionary workers party necessary to succeed in this task.

### Labourites plead: "Stop the War"

We oppose the strategy of the Stop the War Coalition, an umbrella group formed by a host of fake socialists who helped



Workers Hammer

### London, 18 November 2001: Stop the War Coalition pleads to Labour.

elect this Labour government. Nestled comfortably with their Right Honourable friends from the Labour Party and the likes of Monsignor Bruce Kent and the Greens you will find Workers Power, along with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Socialist Party and the Alliance for Workers Liberty, forming this outfit whose main slogan — Stop the War — dovetails with bourgeois opposition to the war. Notably absent is any call to defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack. The Coalition's strategy is simple: pressure the war-crazed Labour government, which is raining bombs on the Afghan peoples. By spreading illusions that the evils and "excesses" of capitalism can be curbed by mass pressure on Labour, they aim to keep the anger and opposition building in this country, particularly amongst youth, firmly within the

bounds of bourgeois parliamentarism — ie preserving the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

At the centre of any socialist opposition to British imperialism has to be the demand for the British Army to get out of Northern Ireland now. But you will not hear a peep of this from the Stop the War Coalition. Catholic schoolgirls in Belfast's Ardoyne are running a gauntlet of Loyalist thugs on their way to school every day. The role of the British Army in Northern Ireland — shoring up the sectarian Orange statelet, backing the RUC and Loyalist death squads, gives the lie to the "democratic" credentials of British imperialism. Against the chauvinist and divisive poison of the capitalist rulers, we seek to mobilise the working class to take up this fight for troops out now and for workers revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea.

At a Stop the War Coalition conference on 27 October in London's School of Oriental and African Studies, a statement was adopted which called to "stop the war currently declared by the United States and its allies against 'terrorism'" — without even mentioning British imperialism, or the Labour government's role. Our comrades scandalised the organisers for inviting warmongers from NATO and the Foreign Office to "debate" the bombing of Afghanistan. In response to our interventions, leading SWP member Alex Callinicos confirmed that the Coalition's perspective is to pressure Labour, and sneered at our statement that "only socialist revolution can stop imperialist war". By denying this basic fact, the Stop the War Coalition is a barrier to mobilising the working class in a struggle for its own independent class interests, which means bringing an end to the system of capitalist exploitation.

### Bin Laden and the Taliban: bitter fruit of the Cold War against the Soviet Union

In December 1979 Red Army troops moved into Afghanistan to aid a pro-Moscow, left-nationalist regime besieged by a CIA-backed Islamic insurgency. In the biggest covert CIA operation in history, the US funnelled billions of dollars to the Islamic "holy warriors" in Afghanistan, with the aim of using the Afghan conflict as a launching pad for the destruction of the Soviet Union. Noting that what was posed was not only defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state but also the possibility of extending the social gains of the October Revolution to the hideously oppressed peoples of Afghanistan, particularly women, we forthrightly declared, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" It was only the Soviet intervention that opened the way to social progress for women and for Afghan peasants. That's why we raised the call,

"Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" Although administered by a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, the Soviet Union was a *workers state* based on proletarian property forms. We defended it unconditionally against imperialism and domestic counterrevolution, as we still do today for China as well as Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea.

Opposition to the Soviet Army in Afghanistan was a quintessential expression of social-patriotism, on what was a defining question of opposition to the imperialist rulers. At the time of the Soviet intervention, the Labour Party, which had just been thrown out of government, swiftly organised a delegation to the Soviet Embassy to demand the withdrawal of the Red Army. Heading up the delegation was one Tony Benn, so-called Labour left and darling of British fake socialists. The thoroughly Labourite SWP also screamed for "Troops out of Afghanistan!" Leading SWPer Paul Foot even used his weekly column in the *Daily Mirror* to denounce Margaret Thatcher from the right for allowing beef exports to the Soviet Army, asking "Are we putting beef into Russia's invasion?" Foot's "exposés" succeeded in provoking an anti-Communist clamour in Parliament for an all-out trade embargo on the Soviet Union.

The centrist Workers Power (WP) used the intervention of the Red Army into Afghanistan to announce its repudiation of the anti-Soviet "third camp" position inherited from the SWP, from which Workers Power had split five years earlier. Yet in practice they never drew the programmatic conclusions of Trotsky's analysis: unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the other deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. WP joined the imperialists and their Labour lieutenants in opposing the Soviet military intervention as "counterrevolutionary". They wrote at the time: "We have no hesitation in condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan... The Soviet invasion can only further strengthen the hold of reactionary forces over large sections of the oppressed masses" while they also claimed that it would be "tactically wrong... to demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops" (*Workers Power*, February 1980). This is exactly what Trotsky described as the "crystalised confusion" of centrism.

When Soviet forces were pulled out in 1988-89, paving the way for a bloody onslaught against the Afghan peoples, we denounced this enormous betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy. We pointed out that, "If the *mujahedin* succeed in butchering every leftist, teacher and unveiled woman in Afghanistan, their blood will be on the hands not only of the Bushes, Thatchers and Kohls, but also on their

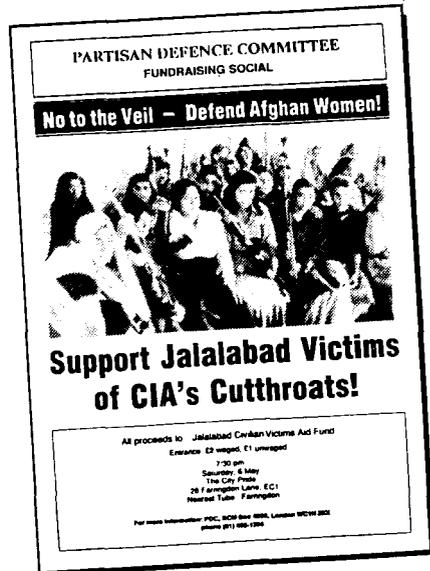
*continued on page 8*

# War...

(Continued from page 7)

'left' camp followers." We said clearly that: "At stake in the battle for Afghanistan is far more than the fate of this hideously backward land" (*Workers Hammer* no 105, March 1989). We warned that it was far better to fight and defeat the forces of counterrevolution in Afghanistan than be forced to take them on inside the Soviet Union itself. And in 1998 the ICL's "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" pointed to the bitter reality that: "The 1979 'Iranian Revolution' opened up a period of ascendant political Islam in the historically Muslim world, a development which contributed to and was powerfully reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union."

The pro-imperialist, anti-Communist Cliffites cheered: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the US in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern



ghanistan in the 1980s as part of its decades-long drive to smash the Soviet Union. In its crusade against "godless Communism", Washington readily accepted the re-enslavement of Afghan women as "collateral damage". A few years ago, Madeleine Albright also made



Smolan/Contact

**Kabul parade greets Soviet troops arriving to aid left-nationalist PDPA regime, 1980. We said "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!"**

Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker* [US], May 1988). Siding with the *mujahedin* as the SWP did, means that they bear a share of responsibility for the barbarous anti-woman butchery of the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. *Socialist Worker* (6 October) continues to alibi the heirs of the *mujahedin*. They go so far as to whitewash the Taliban's imposition of the veil, grotesquely implying they did it to protect women from rape: "The Taliban's treatment of women reflects both the under-development of the villages the Taliban had come from and the trauma of the war years.... Taliban leaders feared that their soldiers would behave as some previous Mujahadeen groups had on taking a city. The war years had seen repeated abuse and rape of women. They said that forcing women into seclusion was a means of protecting them."

While denouncing the Soviet betrayal, we did not give up in 1989; when the Afghan government declined our offer to organise an international brigade to go and fight to the death against the bin Ladens, Masouds and others, we made an international financial campaign which raised over £27,000 for the victims of the city of Jalalabad enslaved by the *mujahedin* of Bush Senior and Thatcher.

Bin Laden is a Frankenstein's monster that turned on his creator, American imperialism, which unleashed him and other Islamic reactionaries, like the Taliban, against the Red Army in Af-

ghanistan in the 1980s as part of its decades-long drive to smash the Soviet Union. In its crusade against "godless Communism", Washington readily accepted the re-enslavement of Afghan women as "collateral damage". A few years ago, Madeleine Albright also made

clear that the death by starvation and disease of over a million Iraqis in the defence of US imperial interests in the Near East was acceptable collateral damage. Using that brutal calculus, it is fair to ask if the thousands killed in the World Trade Center were also "acceptable collateral damage" for US imperialism's victory in the Cold War.

Afghanistan today is one of the most backward countries on earth, with no proletariat, which means social progress can only come from without. Socialist revolution, the liberation of the oppressed Afghan peoples, can come about only through socialist overturns in neighbouring countries such as Iran, Pakistan and India, where there are significant proletarian concentrations. Central to a revolutionary perspective in these countries is the fight against the age-old subjugation of women. Indeed, the Afghan conflict in the 1980s was the only war in modern history fought centrally over the status of women. Today we defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack, without giving any political support to the Taliban reactionaries. Class struggle in the imperialist centres against the war on Afghanistan will have reverberations across the world.

**Workers Power: "Defeat imperialism" in Kabul... LOBBY PARLIAMENT in London**

The Stop the War Coalition is so wretchedly Labourite that the anarchists of No War But The Class War (NWBCW)

have issued a refreshing critique which well and truly gored Workers Power's ox. Citing the following quote from NWBCW, WP dismiss as "ridiculous" the statement that the struggle against war should be linked to the struggle against capitalism:

"The response of the left to the war is to drag out the tired old discredited formula of anti-imperialism in which the USA is the imperial power to be opposed. This in turn means giving support (conditional or critical, it matters not) to the barbarous misogynist pro-capitalist regime of the Taliban. Not surprisingly this quickly develops into anti-Americanism, which writes off an important section of the working class as irredeemably reactionary."

Workers Power responds: "Anti-imperialism that falls into anti-Americanism couldn't be consistently anti-imperialist". But isn't that the point — and how does this refute the simple truth that the Coalition's politics are based on anti-Americanism, which has been the stock-in-trade of Labour "lefts" such as Tony Benn for decades? WP continues:

"But what is really startling is the sectarianism of NWBCW towards the Stop the War movement, and the ridiculous alternative they propose: that the struggle against the war and the struggle against capitalism are one. "In one sense it is true, if a bit abstract. But if this truth means refusing to unite with all those [who] are not (yet) anti-capitalist to defeat the government's war effort and, win hundreds of thousands of people to anti-capitalism in the process then it is just sectarianism."

— *Workers Power*, November 2001

The NWBCW statement illustrates why anarchism today appeals to those who genuinely seek to end the rule of the bourgeoisie and who have a healthy rejection of the parliamentary reformism of the social democrats and their hangers on such as Workers Power. Lenin wrote "*Left-Wing Commu-*



nism — an Infantile Disorder in 1920 largely to win left-wing anarchists and syndicalists to Bolshevism. He noted that: "Anarchism was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement." No War But The Class War is superficially more radical than pleading to Labour. However, anarchists don't stand for military defence of Afghanistan, using their opposition in principle to "all states" (as well as a healthy revulsion against Islamic fundamentalism) to justify a neutral posture between the biggest imperialist terrorists on the planet and devastated Afghanistan. Likewise, anarchists opposed the Red Army in Afghanistan during the Cold War because they refused to defend the USSR, which put them in the camp of imperialism alongside the Labourite fake socialists. Today, anarchism is attractive to youth who do not see the proletariat as an instrument for social revolution. But the working class alone has the social power to lead the oppressed and exploited to a revolutionary assault on the capitalist order. Anarchism rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat—the necessary first step towards the withering away of the state through the creation of a classless communist society.

On their home turf, Workers Power are happy as pigs in muck in the Stop the War Coalition, as they are in the Socialist Alliance. Voting Labour is just about the only "principle" Workers Power adheres to. In *Workers Power* (November 2001) they write:

"In Britain, the Socialist Alliance — which has been struggling to break out of a protracted phase of small-scale unity between left groups, union activists and a few Labour dissidents — now faces a much bigger prospect. It can become the socialist pole of attraction for the much wider mass movement — including left-wing Greens, Tribune Labour Party members and peace activists."

**Socialist Worker**  
12 January 1980

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**Troops out of Afghanistan!**

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**Socialist Worker**  
Paper of the International Socialist Organization 25c  
May 1988

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Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs.  
But this does not mean giving



Refugees in Makaki camp where thousands have fled devastation of US/British war on Afghanistan.

“Socialist pole”? The Socialist Alliance was the left’s chosen vehicle for getting out the vote for Labour. (As the SWP put it, “Vote Socialist where you can, vote Labour where you must.”) We said: “No vote to Labour: imperialist butchers! No vote to Socialist Alliance: lackeys of Labour!” and in 1997 we also said no vote to Labour. We gave critical support to Arthur Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party (SLP) who stood in opposition to Labour and to the Socialist Alliance. We pointed out that the SLP’s programme is reformist, which is confirmed by the SLP’s role today as part of the Stop the War Coalition.

Workers Power’s newspaper raises the slogan “Defend Afghanistan — Defeat imperialism”. But this is hot air for international consumption. In London, where they are, they can be found leafleting to: “LOBBY PARLIAMENT as it debates the war”. In Kabul, where they are not, they strongly urge the Afghan people that: “Workers, peasants, and socialists, must not only mobilise independently but they should advocate a united front against imperialism and could actually unite in action with Islamist forces if the latter allow for the independent democratic participation by workers organisations” (“How should we defend Afghanistan?” *Workers Power Global* [undated internet posting]). Who are these “Islamist forces” anyway? We thought they were the people who skinned communists alive. This is not just fanciful, it’s absurd, not to say grotesque. To paint the Islamists in such pretty colours is simply a gross adaptation to ultra reactionary social forces. Workers Power are boot-lickers for Blair’s Labour Party who write off the perspective of revolution at home and for whom “military support” is simply a formula for glorifying reactionary anti-proletarian forces.

They also call for “independent workers and peasants’ militias to defeat the imperialist attack and to defend the masses against Taliban repression” — the same Taliban they’re urging a common front with. Defeat the imperialist attack? Maybe Afghanistan’s air force is supposed to fight the US and British bombers to a standstill and establish supremacy in the air? However, even backward Afghanistan could become a quagmire for NATO or the US, but only if the imperialist forces invade in strength which they have no current plans to do. Instead they are pounding the country with bombs and using their Northern Alliance proxies to take the casualties.

Even though it’s only rhetoric, calling for defeat of imperialism in Afghanistan today is quite an about-face for the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI, centred on the British Workers Power

group) compared with their position during the 1999 NATO war against Serbia. Workers Power marched in demonstrations shot through with placards reading “NATO Good Luck” and sponsored speakers from the KLA, which was the pawn of imperialism during the bombing. Their left posturing over Afghanistan is a function both of the growing unpopularity of the bombing and the peripheral nature of Afghanistan from the standpoint of the European imperialists.

On 9 October the LRCI issued a joint statement with the Morenoite Fraccion Trotskista in Mexico and the Communist League-Workers Power (CL-WP) in Greece. In their British paper, Workers Power condemn the WTC attack, but in the joint statement they omit any condemnation of it. This illustrates how shamelessly the LRCI talks out of different sides of its mouth for different audiences.

Marxists draw a distinction between random terror against innocent civilians, as in the case of the World Trade Center, which we condemn, and attacks on institutions such as the Pentagon. As we wrote in “On the Pentagon Attack” (*Workers Vanguard* no 766, 12 October):

“The Pentagon is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military, and rather quintessentially represents the military might of U.S. imperialism, the main enemy of the working people and oppressed of the world. That recognition does not translate this attack into an ‘anti-imperialist’ act, nor do we think the planeload of innocent passengers which was used as the massive bomb ‘deserved to die’ (or the janitors and secretaries who were employed at the Pentagon).”

The use of terrorism as a strategy by individuals or small groups—even against a military target—is counterposed to mobilising the proletariat in class struggle against the imperialist rulers. In the case of the LRCI et al, anti-Americanism is intermingled with preposterous slogans and some very red rhetoric to appeal to any and all

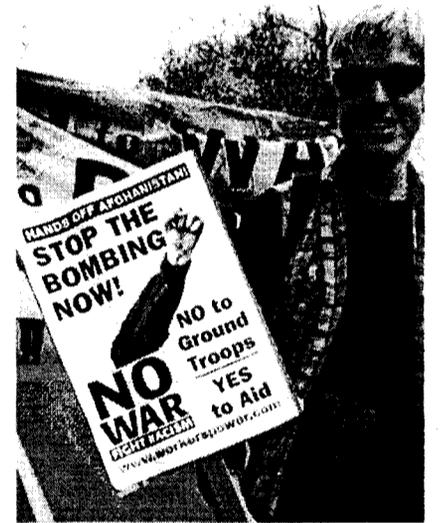
who might read it, from the psychologically disturbed to youth in search of an alternative to pacifism and reformism. The red rhetoric is bombast, as captured in the call on “soldiers to organise resistance in the armed forces...to rebel against the imperialists and their mass-murdering Generals” and on “workers in the munitions factories to boycott and sabotage imperialist war production”. For these opportunists, words are meant not for the class struggle but for Greek tavernas, English pubs and Latin American cantinas.

As to the preposterous, there is the call for “united action of all Afghan forces—including Islamist forces—to repel the imperialist assault”, a task of interest to those who believe in alchemy. The only time there was unity of all the reactionary forces in Afghanistan was when they united against the Red Army, which posed the “spectre of communism” by undercutting the mullahs’ stranglehold on Afghan society. The notion that there can be any but the most ephemeral unity among the various tribes within Afghanistan’s borders is belied by a history of constant internecine conflict. These peoples have no coherent national interest because Afghanistan is not a nation. The “Afghan forces” are today, as in the past, engaged in shooting at each other; the Taliban, based on the dominant Pashtun people, is arrayed against the largely Tajik and Uzbek Northern Alliance, which is currently acting as a puppet of US imperialism.

Declaring, “Afghanistan has suffered over 20 years of war”, the LRCI joint statement lumps together the CIA-backed *mujahedin* war against the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan with the later war among the rival *mujahedin* groups, the Taliban and the components of the Northern Alliance. In other words, the LRCI and its current bloc partners are united in hoping that no one will look too closely at where they stood on the imperi-

alists’ proxy war in Afghanistan at the time! We fervently desired that Soviet commandos would crush the Islamic fanatics who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women. Not so Workers Power, which *condemned* the Soviet presence while stopping short of echoing the imperialist cry for a Red Army withdrawal. As a left cover for its opposition to the Soviet military presence, Workers Power at the time concocted an Afghan proletariat as an independent “revolutionary force”. The current LRCI joint statement raises the demand for a “workers’ and peasants’ government” in Afghanistan, where there is no working class and not much of a peasantry.

Proletarian opposition to the imperialist depredations of the exploiters around the world needs to be based on the understanding that, in the words of Leon Trotsky: “To condemn war is easy; to overcome it is difficult. The struggle against war is a struggle against the classes which rule society and which hold in their hands both its productive forces and its destructive weapons. It is not possible to prevent war by moral indignation, by meetings, by resolutions, by newspaper articles, and by congresses. As long as the bourgeoisie has at its command the banks, the factories, the land, the press, and the state apparatus, it



Australasian Spartacist

Melbourne, 13 October 2001: Australian Workers Power pushes reformist pacifism on the ground; centrists’ “revolutionary” hot air is strictly for cyberspace.

will always be able to drive the people to war when its interests demand it” (“Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam”, 1932). Our perspective is based on the programme of the Bolshevik Party which led the workers to victory in the October Revolution of 1917, which triumphed amid the slaughter of World War I, creating the world’s first workers state, expropriating the bourgeoisie as a class and establishing a planned socialist economy. ■

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# N Ireland...

(Continued from page 12)

conflict in Northern Ireland short of proletarian rule in all of Ireland and in Britain.

## Labourite "socialists" push imperialist "peace"

The Labour-loyal fake left have shamelessly touted British imperialism, in the guise of Blair and the Labour government, as the agency to bring peace and equality to the North. In the last British election, the Socialist Alliance — which at the time consisted of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Socialist Party, Workers Power and others — supported the re-election of Labour and removed the call for troops out of Northern Ireland from their manifesto before launching it to the bourgeois press. We said "No vote to Labour, imperialist butchers" and "No vote to Socialist Alliance, lackeys of Labour".

The SWP is silent about the British Army, but gushing about the "tremendous hopes for peace in Northern Ireland following the IRA's announcement that it will destroy its weapons". They cravenly claim Labour's "peace" process provides "space" for united struggle of the working class. *Socialist Worker* (3 November 2001) says:

"That process is about reaching an accommodation between politicians representing Catholic and Protestant 'communities'. It can reproduce the sectarian division that is built into the Northern Ireland state. But it does provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests and against sectarianism."

This is almost exactly what the SWP said when they supported British troops being sent to Northern Ireland in 1969 (by a Labour government, of course), which they claimed would provide a "breathing space" for the Catholics. They wrote:

"The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists."

— *Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969

Less than three years later "their" British Army shot down 14 defenceless Catholics in cold blood in Derry on Bloody Sunday.

The sectarian Orange statelet was created by British imperialism's partition of Ireland as a police state based on subjugation of the Catholic minority. Its backbone is the RUC and, since 1969, the army; both work in tandem with the Loyalist paramilitary killers. Recent history is littered with scandals about collusion between Loyalist murderers

and the RUC/PSNI and British Army, and there's no "breathing space" for anyone who tries to expose this to the outside world. Thus on 28 September, Martin O'Hagan, a journalist with the Dublin-based *Sunday World*, who researched the collusion between the British Army, the RUC, leading Unionist politicians and Loyalist death squads, was murdered by the LVF. Rosemary Nelson, a prominent Catholic lawyer who reported to the UN that she received death threats from the RUC was also murdered in 1999; ten years earlier Pat Finucane, another well-known Catholic lawyer was also murdered by Loyalists in collusion with the state. The current Labour government is withholding documents on the 1974 bombings in Dublin and Monaghan which killed 33 people and British state involvement is widely suspected.

The Labourite left even advocate "peace" with Loyalist thugs such as Billy Hutchinson. Irish secretary of the transport union ATGWU, Mick O'Reilly



November 2001: Dublin protest against Blair government cover-up over 1974 bombings in the South.

recruited the UVF's Hutchinson and David Ervine into the ATGWU. The wretched Socialist Party has sponsored Hutchinson in public meetings and the SWP jumped on the bandwagon by taking part in a 1999 "debate" with him organised by the Scottish Socialist Party.

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

Following capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, petty-bourgeois nationalist movements like

Sinn Fein and the PLO have had much less room to manoeuvre and have increasingly sought to make deals with imperialism. Sinn Fein played up illusions that by involving US imperialism and the Dublin government they would secure a better deal from British imperialism for the Catholics. This overlooks the fact that US imperialism is the most powerful enemy of the workers and oppressed of the world, as can be seen in the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, or the dirty colonial wars against Korea and Vietnam; the bedrock of the system of exploitation of American workers rests on racist oppression of black people. The imperialist "peace" deal was brokered under Democratic President Clinton, who preferred to pass off imperialist marauding as "human rights" imperialism, something Bush and Co don't bother with. British imperialism is a junior partner of US imperialism — the City of London has close ties with Wall Street and British imperialism is also the foremost military ally of US imperialism in Europe. The Irish capitalist government is certainly no better. It supported the US and Britain's military adventures, including offering facilities for NATO warplanes at Shannon airport, and is viciously repressive of workers, women, Travellers and Republicans at home.

Petty-bourgeois nationalism is a political dead-end which cannot further the interests of the Catholic minority. It is premised on the world being divided into good and bad peoples. Whether through armed struggle ("the Armalite") or the parliamentary road ("the ballot box") the perspective of the Irish nationalists is to pressure imperialism.

Actions such as the Omagh bombing by the "Real IRA", which killed and maimed both Protestant and Catholic civilians in a shopping area, was a hideous crime from the standpoint of the working class and in no way a blow against imperialism. Marxists oppose the tactic of individual terror because it is antithetical to the necessary task of mobilising the working class against the imperialist and capitalist oppressors. Rather it expresses the aims of its practitioners to be the leaders of "their" people. When Irish nationalist groups strike a blow against the forces of British imperialism, the RUC or Loyalist fascistic killers, we defend the perpetrators of such acts against state retribution. But we have a fundamentally different attitude to indiscriminate terror directed against civilians. From a proletarian standpoint, bombings such as Omagh or the bombings of British shopping centres and pubs, are criminal acts which serve only to deepen hatred between Protestant and Catholic, English and Irish workers.

The attack on the World Trade Center, an atrocity designed to kill as many civilians as possible, has served to weld



Martin O'Hagan, journalist murdered by Loyalists in Lurgan, September 2001.

American workers to the ruling class just as Irish nationalist atrocities against Protestants push Protestant workers towards Loyalist reactionaries. Viewed from the interests of the working class, nationalist terror ranges from criminal — such as Omagh — to merely stupid. Even when the IRA hits a military target these acts are carried out as part of a programme, which writes off the Protestant — and Catholic — working class and also the British proletariat, which has an important Irish component.

In 1993, on the eve of the "peace" negotiations, the mainly Protestant workforce at Short Brothers in Belfast walked off the job in protest against the murder of a Catholic co-worker by Loyalist paramilitaries; very shortly afterwards the IRA placed a bomb in Belfast's Shankill Road, which killed nine working-class Protestant shoppers. This led to anti-Catholic demonstrations by Protestant workers in Belfast.

A revolutionary party would struggle for an integrated, programmatically-based workers militia to defend both Catholics and Protestants against sectarian attacks. As we said in our *Theses on Ireland* this must be based on the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army and our Marxist analysis of terrorism:

"Such militias will need a broad and strong programmatic basis if they are not to be derailed or coopted. They cannot develop just out of trade unionism but fundamentally require the existence of a strong and authoritative revolutionary cadre. Each militia unit would need at least one member of each community and the presence and strong influence of trained revolutionary cadre. Consequently, the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia is closely linked to the growth of a Leninist party based on a developed revolutionary program."

— *Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977

We also explained there that:



An Phoblacht



Alan Lewis/Photopress

Portadown: RUC forced a path for Loyalist marchers 1996 (left); Belfast: 15,000 UDA paramilitaries march in ominous display of anti-Catholic terror, August 2001.

"Leninism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed political viewpoints. Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the 'nationalism of the oppressed' is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists. In one of his major works on the national question Lenin stressed: 'Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the "most just," "purest," most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism....' 'Critical Remarks on the National Question,' *Collected Works*, Vol. 20".

### Workers revolution both sides of the border and both sides of the Irish Seal

Loyalist bigot Ian Paisley howls that the Good Friday Agreement is the slippery slope to being ruled by Dublin. Partition meant that Catholics in the North constituted an oppressed minority (although they are over 40 per cent of the population) but an overwhelming majority in the South. In the North, we oppose all discrimination against the Catholic minority. We also recognise that the Protestants are a distinct community, largely 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 by denying it to the other. Under capitalism this leads to inter-communal slaughter. We oppose the perspective of a capitalist "united Ireland" proffered by Sinn Fein nationalists, a prospect which is used to heighten genuine fears among Protestants of a reversal of the terms of oppression. Fear of being incorporated into the clericalist state serves to compact Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots, precluding a polarisation along *class* lines and instead laying the basis for a communal blood-bath and forced population transfers.

The fact that the bourgeois state in the South is a Catholic clericalist state is grist to the mill of the Loyalist bigots. The struggle for separation of church and state and for free abortion on demand is key not only for social progress in the South but as a way to undermine communalism in the North. Sinn Fein shares the clerical-nationalist outlook of Fianna Fail. Sinn Fein no longer flatly opposes abortion rights, but only concedes that it should be legally available in extreme circumstances, specifically: "where a woman's mental and physical well-being or life is at risk or in grave danger" (*Irish Times on the Web*, 6 December 2001). The struggle for abortion rights strikes at backward Protestant fundamentalists as well. Significantly, although SF's Bairbre de Brun is health minister in the Stormont Assembly, SF was conspicuously absent from a crucial debate there on legalising abortion in Northern Ireland which was opposed by Ian Paisley's DUP, David Trimble's UUP, the Alliance Party and the SDLP.

The DSG has actively intervened in support of struggles of the combative Irish working class, fighting for abortion rights and counterposing our programme to that of the Labourite bureaucrats. We said in a leaflet for the 1999 Irish nurses strike:

"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."

— reprinted in *Workers Hammer* no 171, Winter 1999/2000

With elections pending in the South, Sinn Fein is poised to gain support at the expense of Fianna Fail, and also trying to re-brand itself as a "left" alternative to Labour. Labour is rightly hated by workers for having dished out capitalist attacks as partners in coalition governments, most notoriously in 1994 by refusing to support striking TEAM Aer Lingus workers at Dublin airport. The Irish Labour Party, like its British namesake, is a bourgeois workers party — having a working-class base but a bourgeois programme. They are loyal servants of the Irish capitalist class.

Sinn Fein can be scathing in their press about Labour's rotten record. One of their articles on Labour concludes:



Tony Blair poses with Parachute Regiment, butchers of 14 Catholics in Derry on Bloody Sunday in 1972 (right).

"Sinn Féin is well on its way to overtaking the Labour Party, to cementing its position as the voice of the Irish left, but in doing so the party must be careful that it does not lose sight of one of Connolly's most fundamental truths. 'The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour'" (*An Phoblacht*, 30 August 2001). But the idea that Sinn Fein could become the "voice of the Irish left" is absurd — they are a petty-bourgeois capitalist party.

It is disingenuous in the extreme for Sinn Fein to claim the tradition of James Connolly. Connolly initiated and led the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, hoping it would ignite workers struggles against capitalist rule in Europe amid the car-

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



nage of World War I. This did come about, with the Russian October Revolution of 1917, but by that time Connolly had been executed. Nonetheless the Rising was the catalyst for the end of British colonial rule in Ireland. Connolly was a revolutionary socialist and an internationalist who, together with Jim Larkin, led significant class battles of the Irish working class in Dublin, and in Belfast they made huge strides to unite Catholic and Protestant workers. Con-

the Belfast strike led to massive purges of Catholics and trade union militants from the shipyards (including Protestant shop stewards), which paved the way for partition. Lord French, the British overlord in Ireland, released Sinn Fein leaders such as Arthur Griffith from prison in Dublin in recognition of Sinn Fein opposition to working-class struggle. He told the Cabinet:

"I did not however, consider that the time was ripe for an actual move in the direc-



Peress/Magnum

nolly's success in overcoming sectarian bigotry was achieved because as a socialist he fought against the state, the Orange Order and, to the best of his ability, against Catholic nationalism. Like most socialists of his time outside Russia, he was not acquainted with Leninism, which alone hammered out a Marxist perspective on the national question. Connolly fought trenchantly against the Labourite trade union bureaucracy in Britain and in Ireland; as a true labour lieutenant of British imperialism, Labour's Arthur Henderson led the applause in the House of Commons when the announcement was made that Connolly had been executed by a British firing squad.

The kind of consciousness Connolly had instilled among workers was once again in evidence among the Belfast workers in the 1919 engineering strike, the most significant class battle to take place during the independence struggle. Charles McKay, a socialist of Catholic background, led a strike of mainly Protestant workers that shut all heavy industry and most of the city. It was part of a wave of tumultuous strikes in engineering centres, including Glasgow. The army was deployed in Belfast (and later in Glasgow) but the strike lost because it was betrayed by the Labour bureaucrats in Britain and in Ireland. The defeat of

tion of an immediate release of prisoners until the strikes in the North occurred and a very dangerous crisis was at hand which might plunge the whole country in disaster."

— quoted in *Revolution in Ireland*, C Kostick (1996)

Today with the growing economic recession throughout Britain and Ireland, the capitalists will seek to increasingly pit one section of the working class against another. This could lead to increased communalism in Northern Ireland or, as happened during the struggles of unemployed workers in Belfast in the 1930s, it could lead to united struggles of Protestant and Catholic workers. When instances of integrated working-class struggle do arise, intervention by a communist vanguard will make a decisive difference to the outcome.

We seek to awaken the working class of England, Scotland and Wales to socialist consciousness and mobilise them around opposition to the monarchy, House of Lords and all other archaic institutions of British bourgeois rule including the "Mother of all Parliaments". We fight for an Irish workers republic, part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles. Our purpose is to forge revolutionary internationalist parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, in Britain and Ireland. ■

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**British troops out of Northern Ireland now!**

## Labour's imperialist "peace" fraud and Orange state terror against Catholics

The 11 September attack on the World Trade Center was a gift to Tony Blair in several ways, not least that the IRA announced on 23 October that they had begun to decommission their weapons. The British government claims to be waging a "war against terrorism" in the interests of "democracy" and the "civilised world" against religious fanatics. Terrorism anyone? How about the terrorism of the British state, such as the massive bombing of Afghanistan, and before this Serbia, in which this bloodthirsty Labour government took centre stage? What about British imperialism's domination of Ireland, which lasted for centuries and created a militarised garrison state in the North where the facade of democracy was never much in evidence and where no-one had any reason to believe in such myths as "unarmed Bobbies". As for religious zealots, there are very few Muslims in Northern Ireland but British rule there rests on collaboration with a gang of crazed fundamentalist Protestant bigots.

We said in 1993 that: "Any imperialist 'deal' will be bloody and brutal and will necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either" (*Workers Hammer* no 138, November/December 1993). This has been borne out: Loyalist violence against Catholics has continued, fire-

gunmen who mistook him for a Catholic. On 28 October Colin Foy was killed in Tyrone by a member of the British Army's Royal Irish Regiment.

The Catholics are an oppressed minority living under permanent siege. The plight of working-class Catholic families hit international headlines this summer as schoolgirls in Ardoyne, North Belfast trying to walk to Holy Cross school with their parents were shown daily on television confronting a Loyalist mob howling vile anti-Catholic and anti-woman slurs and throwing pipebombs, bags of excrement and balloons filled with urine. The British Army and RUC — now re-named the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) — lined the streets and tried to look as if they were making an honest effort to "keep the peace". On the day of their name change, the PSNI escorted leaders of the Orange Order down the Catholic Garvaghy Road. Catholics know they have as much to fear from the police and army as they do from the Loyalist death squads; indeed IRA decommissioning leaves sections of the Catholic population feeling defenceless against these forces.

The scenes at Holy Cross school are a microcosm of Northern Ireland which show the bitter reality of Labour's imperialist "peace" deal. The fact that Catholic parents refused to meekly accept their status as second-class citizens brought

But, with or without decommissioning, Sinn Fein manifestly can not offer a way forward to the beleaguered Catholics.

Sinn Fein has been organising protests against particular military installations and complaining that the imperialists

measures in Northern Ireland, which are often subsequently imposed on workers and minorities in Britain. After 11 September, Jack Straw pledged Britain would see "security of a kind people in Northern Ireland have had to live with



Paul McErlane

**September 2001: Blair's "peace" is a lie for Catholic families in Belfast who faced Loyalist blockade and RUC while taking children to school.**

have not lived up to the "programme for demilitarisation" that was promised in the Good Friday Agreement" *An Phoblacht* (1 November 2001). But while the British may agree to scale down the army presence to cut their

for decades". Sure enough, immigrants suspected of "terrorism" are being rounded up and interned without trial.

Withdrawal of the British Army does not in itself automatically ensure advance in a revolutionary direction, but it is the necessary starting point for a proletarian revolutionary perspective. We seek to break workers from illusions in Labour, which has loyally served racist, chauvinist British imperialism and the monarchy. The Spartacist League/Britain and Dublin Spartacist Group, sections of the International Communist League, fight to build revolutionary internationalist workers parties to put an end to capitalist rule and to establish a workers republic in Ireland as part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles. Our framework is internationalist and is based on the necessity to link the struggles of the working class of Ireland, North and South, with those of the workers in England, Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland divisions between Catholics and Protestants have deepened, which means the prospect of united struggle by Protestant and Catholic workers for their common class interests appears remote. Although Protestant workers are only marginally better off than their Catholic counterparts, the view is pervasive that improvements in the position of one community will necessarily be at the expense of the other. This indeed is true, unless such struggles challenge the framework of capitalist rule. A proletarian revolutionary perspective is the only way forward. There can be no just solution to the communal

*continued on page 10*



Dublin Spartacist Group

**Dublin Spartacist Group protests against Irish government's support to bombing of Afghanistan by US/Britain.**

bombings and pipebombings are commonplace. There were 220 Loyalist attacks recorded in 213 days to August this year, including 75 bombings and 20 gun attacks (*An Phoblacht*, 9 August 2001). In the last week of October alone there were twelve bomb attacks against Catholics in North Belfast. There have been a number of murders of Catholics, including that of 19-year-old Ciaran Cummings, killed in a drive-by shooting in Antrim in July and Gavin Brett, an 18-year-old Protestant killed by Loyalist

out blatant anti-Irish prejudice from British journalists who would often report with amazement that the situation is like the segregated American South in the 1950s prior to the civil rights struggles; in the next breath they would ask Catholic parents why they don't use a back entrance to the school! The Irish bourgeois press, which has the same contempt for working-class Catholics in the North as for those in the South, echoed Loyalist lies that the exercise was just a publicity stunt for Sinn Fein (SF).

costs, the Good Friday Agreement is premised on troops remaining in Northern Ireland.

We fight for the *immediate unconditional withdrawal* of British troops, not merely because no good can come of the British military presence there, but also because we agree with Karl Marx that the British working class cannot make a revolution against their "own" capitalist rulers if they accept imperialist oppression in Ireland. It is in the direct interests of the working class to oppose repressive