



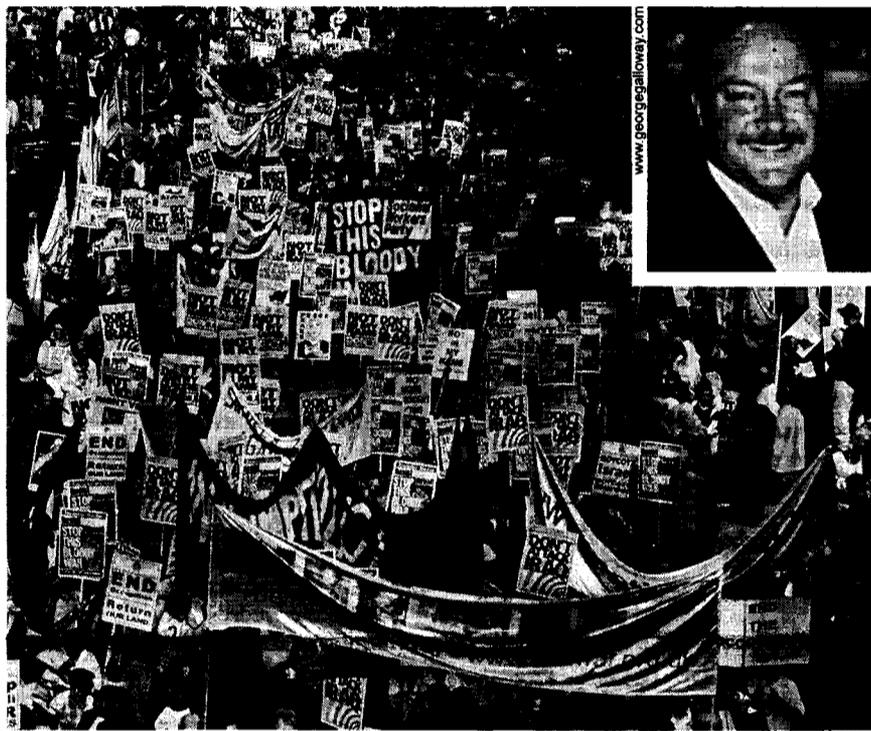
Labourite left abandon their cherished "Clause IV"

## "Respect" coalition: bowing and scraping to Queen and Parliament

The Labourite "socialist" left thought that with millions of people out on the streets to protest the Iraq War, and the increasing disaffection with Blair's Labour Party, the fortunes of a "socialist" alternative to Labour were on the rise. But they didn't get their dividends, not even the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which ran the Stop the War Coalition. And why should they? The Stop the War Coalition was built on the premise that it was possible to stop imperialist war without opposing the system of capitalist imperialism that breeds war. The message was, all you need are mass demonstrations to pressure the Blair government to serve the interests of "the people". So who needs a "socialist" alternative?

Indeed that seems to be the very question that the SWP is asking itself. Workers, minorities and youth who hate Labour did not exactly flock to the polls to vote for the SWP-led Socialist Alliance last year. So the SWP have now joined forces with expelled Labour MP George Galloway, sundry liberals and some Muslim leaders to launch a new electoral coalition known as "Respect". Its founding declaration, published by the SWP, doesn't even mention the words "capitalism" or "working class". What's more, that old chestnut once revered by Labourites — the demand for nationalising the "commanding heights of the economy" — has been dumped.

The kind of cross-class coalition that the SWP is now proposing would have been unimaginable during the great miners strike of 20 years ago when the country was polarised by class war as the miners, led by Arthur Scargill, heroically battled the capitalist state for a whole year. For all his great militancy and audacity, Arthur Scargill never transcended Old Labour reformism politically. But he knew where the class line was — unlike the SWP whose leader Tony Cliff publicly bragged in August 1984 that their members in steel plants were crossing miners' picket lines; or Workers Power who wailed along with the scabherders that the strike violated "democracy" because the union hadn't balloted the members. Even today, compared to these putative "socialists", Scargill looks like a fire-breathing Bolshevik in television footage of the strike, demanding a fight for "socialism", the abolition of the monarchy and promising that he could find the Queen a decent-paying job. In contrast, at the Respect founding conference on 25 January, SWP cadre led their members in *voting down* a call for the abolition of the monarchy and for a republic (not even a workers republic) and rejected a demand that an MP should be paid no more than a worker's wage! Prior to this, at a Socialist Alliance executive meeting earlier in January, SWPers and their allies voted down a motion to urge the new coalition



SWP's "Respect" coalition embraces George Galloway and channels anti-war protests into support for "Her Majesty's" parliament.

to "adopt a working class and socialist platform", ie some variant of Old Labour.

Why on earth, one might ask, in the year 2004, are the cadre of a self-professed "revolutionary socialist" organisation trying to saddle the British working class with a programme so retrograde that it would preclude supporting the English Revolution of the seventeenth century? Three and a half centuries ago, when King Charles I was sentenced to death as part of the English Revolution, Oliver Cromwell declared: "I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown on it." Why are today's leftists complicit in dragging class consciousness down to a level that was surpassed by the Chartists, the independent workers movement formed in the early nineteenth century, who certainly did not bow their heads to the monarch and were not filled with awed respect for the

state and its institutions. They organised mass processions with pikes and muskets in hand asserting, among other things, the right of the citizens to bear arms.

With New Labour seeking to rid itself of its working-class base (but not the union donations) there has been much debate on the left about what should replace Labour. The SWP itself does not seek to become the replacement for Labour, but sees itself as a pressure group on a larger party of "the masses". However the formation they propose to build today would have failed to meet the entry criteria for the Second (Socialist) International that the nascent Labour Party managed to join almost a century ago. As Lenin wrote, Labour barely met the entry requirements, which were: "first, socialist parties which recognise the class struggle,

and secondly, working-class organizations whose standpoint is that of the class struggle (i.e. trade unions)" ("Meeting of the International Socialist Bureau", 1908). At that time Labour was not even nominally socialist; it only adopted a socialist facade in 1918 in the aftermath of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution by introducing "Clause IV", a notional commitment to "common ownership of the means of production". This was a conscious ploy to deflect the working class from the path of revolution and to bolster illusions in parliament by proffering "socialism" through nationalisations enacted by parliament while leaving capitalism and its repressive state machinery intact. Tony Blair, who says that the split from the Liberals to form the Labour Party was a historic mistake, abolished Clause IV in 1995 in the aftermath of counterrevolution in the USSR as his opening shot in the attempt to turn Labour into a capitalist party. Now the SWP are following in Blair's footsteps.

The SWP today are capitulating to the reactionary political climate of the post-Soviet world, which they helped bring about. Just as the Russian Revolution thundered its verdict across the globe inspiring struggles by the working class and oppressed, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 inspired an offensive by the imperialist rulers and their social-democratic handmaidens against the exploited masses around the globe. The one-sided slaughter and imperialist occupation of Iraq is a product of the collapse of the Soviet degenerated workers state, which meant the US emerged as the world's unrivalled military superpower.

The Respect founding declaration opens with a fanfare to the anti-war protests as the "greatest mass movement of our age". In fact the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was the greatest anti-war movement of our age. It ripped tsarist Russia out of World War I by expropriating the capitalists and landlords and placing power in the hands of Soviets, or workers' councils. Unlike the rest of the left, who have long forsaken the fight for socialist revolution, we fight for new October Revolutions. At the same time we recognise that there is a huge gulf between our purpose and the present consciousness of youth, workers and particularly left organisations. In a climate conditioned by imperialist triumphalism that "communism has failed", it is generally believed that workers revolution is impossible and that the best you can do is try to ameliorate the hideous conditions of life perpetrated upon millions by the imperialist rulers.

The crimes of the Stalinists and the social democrats, who made a mockery of the ideals of Marxism, contributed in

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## Hayes & Co sabotage wildcat victory

Over 35,000 postal workers checked a concerted offensive by Royal Mail bosses this Autumn aimed squarely at destroying their union, the CWU. Blair's handpicked management headed by Allan Leighton—hell bent on privatising the Post Office and destroying 30,000 jobs—calculated that the earlier narrow defeat of a national strike ballot among postal workers meant an open season on the CWU. Local managers systematically bullied, harassed and attempted to dismiss local union activists while provocatively ripping up existing local agreements and trying to impose gruelling conditions. In response, postal workers walked out in an “unofficial” walkout in several London depots that quickly spread

nationally as others throughout the country refused to handle scab mail, effectively bringing “Her Majesty’s” postal service to a grinding halt. This resolute action gave postal and other workers a concrete demonstration of the social power of the unions that can and must be mobilised to defend their interests and defeat the Labour government’s anti-working-class attacks.

Forced by postal workers to back down from its open union-busting plans, Leighton & Co changed tack. They are now collaborating with the CWU bureaucracy of Billy Hayes and Dave Ward...the better to attack postal workers. Together they have cooked up a rotten deal on “major change” (read: privatisation), which Hayes and Ward

have served up to postal workers. This deal surrenders over the two key points in management’s backbreaking speed-up plans to squeeze profits from the hides of postal workers before handing the Post to privateers: single deliveries and thousands of job losses. As part of the latter, they are trying to force postal workers to take early retirement on starvation-level pensions.

This sell-out should come as no surprise to postal workers. While they defended their union in defiance of the anti-union laws by holding fast to their pickets against spying and threats by managers taking “notes” and filming workers, Hayes and Ward refused to back the strike because it was “illegal”. Instead, Ward issued a statement on “How to Resolve Unofficial Strikes”, proposing that the disputes over pay and “major change” be taken to the arbitration service ACAS. This is a strategy of surrender to the bosses. Just ask the firefighters. FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist demobilised their strike a year ago taking the dispute to ACAS, where firefighters got a paltry wage increase (which management later postponed) linked to massive job losses. ACAS is not some “neutral” agency but a crucial weapon of the capitalist state whose whole purpose is to stop strikes and weaken the unions. Deceiving the workers with the complicity of the trade union bureaucracy, arbitration is simply the velvet glove behind which stands the police, army, courts and prisons that if needed—as in the heroic 1984-85 miners strike—will be deployed to violently suppress workers’ struggle.

Despite their sometimes radical rhetoric, the “awkward squad” bureaucrats like Hayes, Ward and Gilchrist have no stomach for the difficult but necessary class-struggle fight needed to defeat privatisation and the anti-union laws. It’s not simply cowardice, it’s political. To wage such a struggle would mean a direct confrontation with Blair’s Labour government. But while they decry “new” Labour’s attacks on the unions, the policies of the “awkward squad” are premised on the lie that the workers’ interests can be served by parliament, the very institution of capitalist class rule in this country. Their calls to “reclaim” Labour amount to nothing more than appeals for a return to the days when the union tops got a seat at the table of Old Labour in negotiating what the workers would sacrifice to maintain “the party” in power as the administrators of decaying British capitalism.

In an article, “Wildcats are back” (*Socialist Review*, December 2003) the Socialist Workers Party’s Martin Smith, editor of the *Postal Worker*, enthuses that the “CWU bureaucracy was forced to take its lead from the activists, not Royal Mail or the Labour Party” and that “the key factor in the post victory was rank and file organization”. Actually the key factor was that the postal workers waged a class-struggle fight in defiance of the CWU bureaucrats that the SWP only yesterday had argued that the workers should support and whose current sell-out deal takes its lead directly from Royal Mail and the

Labour government.

The question posed is not one of rank and file organisation but rather of postal workers, in the course of their struggles, fighting to build a new class-struggle leadership of the union. Key in this fight is the mobilisation of the ethnically-integrated CWU against racist attacks and Labour’s anti-immigrant crusade, which is a classic “divide and rule” ploy by this government to weaken the unions the better to try to smash them. Postal workers in Wolverhampton showed the way when they walked off the job in protest against racist filth posted on a notice board, winning an apology and full pay for the time of their action after four days out. This is a vital example for places like London depots and sorting offices, where management has hired many immigrant workers, often on a casual basis, hoping the desperation of many of these workers for any job will make them a bulwark against the CWU. Postal workers—immigrant, black, Asian and white—will either advance together against privatisation and the racist Labour government or be defeated separately. *For full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

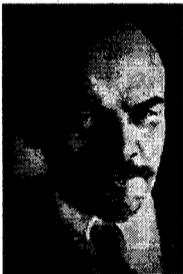
Forging this kind of leadership in the CWU is linked to the fight for a revolutionary party of the working class. Sclerotic British capitalism is well past its sell-by date. It offers workers and the oppressed nothing but privatisation and cutbacks of public services, 2500 manufacturing job losses *per week*, racist and anti-immigrant attacks, and ongoing bloody wars of plunder. The working class has the power to put an end to British capitalism and to build a different type of society, governed not by the quest for profit but by human need. For that we need a party that rejects the bankrupt Old Labour tradition of relying on parliament and other institutions of the class enemy, and instead relies on the mobilisation of the social power of the working class, allied with all those oppressed by British capitalism, in the revolutionary struggle for a workers government that expropriates the capitalist exploiters. That is the kind of party we of the Spartacist League are fighting to build. ■

### The English Revolution

On 30 January 1649 King Charles I was executed. The regicide marked the decisive defeat of the feudal order—the monarchy, landed aristocracy and the Anglican Church—in the English Revolution led by Oliver Cromwell and his New Model Army. The monarchy was restored in 1660 but bourgeois rule had been firmly established by the revolution. For centuries, the bourgeoisie and their Labour lackeys have surrounded this revolution in



TROTSKY



LENIN

myths: that all change in Britain is gradual, and that parliament ought to represent the will of “the people”. Today the capitalist order is outmoded and must be eradicated through socialist revolution. Trotsky’s articles urging the British working class to learn from Cromwell are a breath of fresh air compared to today’s Labourite “socialists” who incessantly moan about the “crisis of representation” in parliament.

At the end of 1653 Cromwell once again purged the House of Commons with the aid of soldiers. If the rump of the Long Parliament dispersed in April had been guilty of deviating to the right, towards deals with the Presbyterians—then Barebone’s Parliament was on a number of questions inclined to follow too closely along the straight road of Puritan virtue and thus made it difficult for Cromwell to establish a new social equilibrium. The revolutionary realist, Cromwell, was building a new society. Parliament does not form an end in itself, law does not form an end in itself and although Cromwell himself and his ‘holy’ men regarded the fulfilment of divine behests to be ends in themselves these latter were merely the ideological material for the building of a bourgeois society. In dispersing parliament after parliament Cromwell displayed as little reverence towards the fetish of ‘national’ representation as in the execution of Charles I he had displayed insufficient respect for a monarchy by the grace of God. Nonetheless it was this same Cromwell who paved the way for the parliamentarism and democracy of the two subsequent centuries. In revenge for Cromwell’s execution of Charles I, Charles II swung Cromwell’s corpse up on the gallows. But pre-Cromwellian society could not be re-established by any restoration. The works of Cromwell could not be liquidated by the thievish legislation of the Restoration because what has been written with the sword cannot be wiped out by the pen. This, the converse of the proverb, is far truer, at least so far as the sword of revolution is concerned.

—Leon Trotsky, *Where is Britain Going?* (1925)

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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## Corrections

In “Fight British imperialism through class struggle at home!” (*Workers Hammer* no 183, Winter 2002-2003) we incorrectly said that the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) are up in arms because the Stop the War Coalition jointly sponsors events with the Muslim Association of Britain. The CPGB’s position is that this is a tactical question, not “impermissible in principle” (*Weekly Worker*, 16 January 2003).

In “Chickens come home to roost in Kiev” (*Workers Hammer* no 185, Autumn 2003) we incorrectly spelled out the ITO as the “International Trotskyist Organization”. The name of the group is the International Trotskyist Opposition.

# HONG KONG

# Expropriate the bourgeoisie!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 814, 21 November 2003.

This summer, Hong Kong was the site of a series of mass, anti-Communist mobilisations openly, indeed flagrantly, backed by American and British imperialism. The pretext for the protests was new “security” legislation introduced (and since withdrawn) by the Beijing-appointed and directed executive of this capitalist enclave within the People’s Republic of China (PRC). These events clearly illuminate certain basic truths that have been obscured by the widespread notion that China has become or is fast becoming capitalist under the government of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Despite more than two decades of market-oriented “reforms” by the Beijing Stalinist regime, the core elements of China’s economy remain collectivised. The 1949 Revolution, although bureaucratically deformed from the outset, liberated mainland China from the capitalists and landlords and their American imperialist masters. And they want to get China back. The conciliatory policies of the CCP regime, from Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, have allowed Hong Kong to become a bridgehead for the forces of capitalist counterrevolution within the PRC. A proletarian political revolution in China ousting the Stalinist bureaucracy would necessarily expropriate the Chinese capitalist class in Hong Kong, the imperialist-backed enemy within of China’s workers and rural toilers.

When Mao’s peasant-based Red Army marched into Beijing in 1949, a large body of China’s capitalists fled to the offshore island of Taiwan where they have been protected ever since by American military power. A lesser though still significant number of China’s capitalists decamped to the British island colony of Hong Kong. The Mao regime, for all its strident Chinese nationalist rhetoric and pretensions to revolutionary socialism, never challenged British sovereignty over Hong Kong.

After years-long negotiations, Hong Kong was transferred to the sovereignty of the People’s Republic in 1997. Under the formula “one country, two systems”, the Jiang Zemin regime ensured there would be no infringement of the property rights of Hong Kong’s wealthy financiers and other businessmen. We wrote at the time:

“The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) joined in cheering as the rotted British Empire finally lost its last major colonial holding with the lowering of the bloody Union Jack and the raising of the five-starred red flag of the People’s Republic. But we warn that in the hands of the venal Stalinist bureaucracy, which has pledged to maintain Hong Kong’s capitalist system, the takeover of the territory is a dagger aimed at the remaining gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution.”

—Workers Vanguard no 671, 11 July 1997

Throughout their occupation of Hong Kong, the British imperialists lorded it over the island as the racist and repressive overseers. It was only in the years leading up to reunification that the British imperialists started to install some trappings of “democracy” in Hong Kong. The last British colonial governor, Christopher Patten, actively promoted the formation of

a militantly anti-Communist, pro-Western party, the Democratic Party. Supported by a section of the Hong Kong bourgeoisie, the Democratic Party acquired a mass constituency among the city’s large petty-bourgeois population—eg, the managerial and technical personnel of its banks, trading houses, industrial corporations, etc.

The political liberalisation of the early 1990s also allowed the formation of a left-wing, pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Association for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB). Its founding leader was a



Hong Kong, 1 July: anti-Communist protest by 500,000 against proposed “security” law. Right: demonstrators burn communist flag.

Beijing appointed a “strong” executive in Hong Kong headed by a former shipping magnate, Tung Chee-hwa. The city’s legislative body was given quite limited powers, and elections to it were structured in such a way that the Democratic Party could not gain control even if it garnered a majority of the votes.

Since 1997, Hong Kong has experienced a certain shift in its social composition which also affects the local political balance of forces. Hong Kong’s capitalists have increasingly concentrated industrial investment on the main-



Reuters photos

self-described Marxist. Many of its leading figures were former Maoist “Red Guards” who had made much trouble for the British colonial authorities in the late 1960s. More importantly, from its inception the DAB has been largely based on a section of the working class through its close ties to the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), which with a combined membership of almost 300,000 in 2000 is the city’s largest. Many DAB leaders are former union officials.

As the transfer of sovereignty to the PRC approached, the main body of the Hong Kong bourgeoisie decided it was tactically smarter to collaborate with the Beijing regime than to adopt a confrontational stance à la the Democratic Party. These “patriotic” financiers and industrialists did not join the leftist DAB but instead formed their own parties, most prominently the Liberal Party, with an explicitly “free market” capitalist ideology and programme. Following the 1 July anti-Communist mobilisation, which drew some 500,000, it was Liberal Party leader James Tien who reportedly convinced Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa—and behind him the powers that be in Beijing—to drop the new “security” legislation.

The preservation of Hong Kong as a capitalist enclave within the PRC is in keeping with the more than two-decade-long policy of the Beijing regime of encouraging investment in the mainland by the offshore Chinese bourgeoisie. But the British, strongly backed by the Americans, also demanded that there should be no curbs on the activities of the political parties of the Hong Kong propertied classes, including especially the Democratic Party. This was not at all to the liking of Jiang Zemin and his cohorts.

As it was, a compromise was reached.

land where labour is much cheaper. One consequence has been an increase in the relative social weight of the petty bourgeoisie, which benefits the Democratic and Liberal parties as against the mainly working-class-based DAB.

## The crisis over Article 23

The crisis last summer was set off when the Tung executive, certainly acting under the directions of Beijing, proposed new “security” legislation in the form of implementing Article 23 of Hong Kong’s separate constitution (the Basic Law). This would have broadened the powers of the Hong Kong executive to suppress “seditious” groups and individuals. Had the new “security” law been enacted, it would more likely have been used against militant workers and leftists, including dissident elements of the DAB/FTU, rather than against anti-Communist rightists. As revolutionary Trotskyists, we opposed this legislation, and we place no confidence in the bureaucracy to carry out genuine defense of the Chinese deformed workers state. Concretely, the Beijing bureaucracy has no intention of cleaning out the bourgeois counterrevolutionaries in Hong Kong because it is intent on maintaining Hong Kong as a capitalist enclave.

The 1 July protest had nothing to do with maintaining the legal status quo in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Democratic Party has made no secret that its goal is to take political power in Hong Kong and transform it into an anti-Communist bastion from which to launch a “pro-democracy” movement on the mainland. On the eve of the protest, British foreign office minister Bill Rammell issued a statement denouncing the proposed “security” legislation as a violation of Hong Kong’s “independent” legal system. Afterwards,

writing in no less an authoritative organ of American capital than the *Wall Street Journal* (10 July 2003), James A Kelly, Bush’s assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, lauded the Hong Kong protesters for sending a “powerful message that freedom matters deeply to them”. Needless to say, the only “freedom” that matters to the men represented by the *Wall Street Journal* is freedom to exploit the workers and rural toilers of China as well as those in the rest of the world.

Initially, the DAB/FTU leadership supported the proposed legislation out of loyalty to Beijing. In fact, the DAB and FTU staged counterdemonstrations, reportedly drawing 40,000, against the anti-Communists in July under the slogans “National security is the responsibility of everyone” and “Without the state, we don’t have a home”. In late August, however, the DAB leaders did an about-face and proposed that any new “security” legislation be postponed for at least a year. In contrast to the DAB/FTU leaders, a Trotskyist organisation in Hong Kong would have opposed Article 23, seeking rather to expand the available democratic rights in order to mobilise the working class, especially supporters of the DAB/FTU, against the city’s capitalist class in both its openly anti-Communist and “patriotic” wings.

The two organisations in Hong Kong misidentified with Trotskyism—the *October Review* and Pioneer groups—are in substance anti-Communist social democrats. The former actively mobilised for the July protest, calling for a “return of government to the people” (*October Review*, 31 May 2003). The Pioneer group actually joined with the right-wing bourgeois nationalists of the Guomindang to protest against restoring Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China in 1997. This summer Pioneer was part of the “Civil Human Rights Front” that organised the 1 July anti-Communist demonstration, which Pioneer hailed as an “initial victory of people’s power”.

Although not now possible, the American imperialists would like to use Hong Kong as a staging point to replay in mainland China the same political strategy they used in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the 1980s and early ’90s: promoting a capitalist counterrevolutionary movement in the name of Western-style “democracy”. Behind the facade of parliamentary democracy in the West and elsewhere is the reality of the political as well as economic dominance of the capitalist class—ie, racial oppression, persecution of immigrants, brutal exploitation, etc.

As part of our struggle to defend and extend the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, we call for the expropriation of the Hong Kong bourgeoisie, including their holdings on the Chinese mainland. But to carry out this task poses the need to sweep away the Beijing bureaucracy, which by its policies is undermining the defence of the Chinese workers state, through workers political revolution. We fight for a government of workers and peasants councils (soviets) such as was created by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky. Such a government in China would seize the wealth of Hong Kong’s financiers and other capitalists and use these resources in the interests of China’s workers and rural toilers. ■

# Government outlaws “under-age” kissing

## Down with Labour's anti-sex witch hunt!

Last November, Blair, Blunkett and their cohorts in the Labour Party, in league with the anti-sex bigots across the parliamentary benches, passed the Sexual Offences Act (2003) which outlaws even kissing involving under-16s. In its subsection on “child sex offences”, the Act makes anything that can be deemed as “sexual touching” illegal where one or both participants are under 16. The penalty is up to five years in prison! So you might be too young to kiss but old enough to be thrown in the slammer!

A much worse fate faces those of 18 years or over caught kissing or sexually touching a lover under the age of 16. The courts have the power to incarcerate such an “offender” for up to 14 years! For the “crime” of sexual intercourse or oral sex with an under-16, again *regardless* of consent, a person over 18 can expect to face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment! The Act also criminalises those who allow under-16s to be in the presence of or to watch a sexual act. So parents you’d better lock your doors and while you’re at it, you’d better not allow your kid to have sex at home since those who “facilitate” underage sex are also branded as criminal “offenders”.

With monumental hypocrisy this legislation was passed in the name of “child protection”, which is truly twisted coming from a Labour government that has administered the murder of hundreds of thousands of children through its filthy imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Serbia. This is the same government that continues the oppression of Catholics in Northern Ireland today under the facade of the “peace” deal, where fascist loyalist thugs terrorise little Catholic schoolgirls such as those of Holy Cross school. This is the government that in the name of the “war on terror” steps up the persecution of immigrants, threatening to take away and incarcerate children if their parents do not agree to deportation. But never mind this murder and terror. What the Labour government makes out to be the big evil threat facing children and youth is ... sex! The party that created the “New Deal” with its pitiful pay and conditions for youth, that slashed benefits and introduced fees for higher education, that governs over one of the wealthiest countries in the world where a third of the child population lives in poverty, warns about the “danger” of youth receiving *any* form of sexual pleasure that may provide some comfort from the pain of this rotten society.

This draconian legislation with its creation of new crimes and extension of punishments regarding “child sex offences” is part of Labour’s wholesale attack on democratic rights and augmentation of the powers of the state, its cops, courts and prisons. There have been twelve new “Criminal Justice” bills since Labour came to power in 1997, with 700 new offences being added for which one can be imprisoned. Under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 the state has the legal

power to detain individuals indefinitely without public trial, while the new Civil Contingencies Bill gives the government the authority to do practically anything it wants in a situation it deems to be an “emergency”. As we wrote in “Anti-terror laws target immigrants, workers—Down with Labour’s racist witch hunt!” (*Workers Hammer* no 185, Autumn 2003): “The intent of these augmented police powers is to regiment the population, to accustom people to the restriction of democratic rights, to accept ID checks and surveillance as

cue about the danger of a computer game used by “paedophiles”. Follet sanctimoniously intoned: “In this shot, Pantou the dog has told the boy to press his face on to the screen. Online paedophiles use special gloves to feel and palpate the child’s face”. For such satire the programme received 1500 complaints, making it one of the most controversial programmes ever broadcast on British TV, this in itself a demonstration of the extent of the frenzy.

As we wrote at the height of this frenzy (in “Labour’s witch hunt against

respect for authority and inculcating “obedience” to the moral codes of bourgeois patriarchal society—which, for one, is important for taming the inherently anarchic nature of youth.

The family is the instrument not just for the subjugation of youth but also for women’s oppression and is the origin of anti-gay bigotry. For the bourgeoisie the patriarchal subjugation of women in the family is meant to ensure the “rightful” inheritance of property. In working-class families the role of women is to raise the next generation of wage slaves for capitalist exploitation. Like child sexuality, homosexuality represents sexual relations outside the confines of the family structure of one man on top of one woman for life. By the same token attacks on gays, laws banning sex for youth and the witch hunt of “paedophiles” are all aimed at strengthening the family, a horrible straitjacket of violence, misery, guilt and enforced moralism.

The racist, anti-working class, anti-woman and anti-youth capitalist state has no business legislating people’s consensual sexual activity. We recall that the origins of “age of consent” laws are in the days of the “bride-price”, guaranteeing a woman’s virginity in arranged marriages. We oppose leaving it up to the capitalist state that upholds the oppressive nuclear family and enforces sexual repression, to decide *on behalf* of youth when they are able to engage in sexual activity and with whom.

### A revolutionary workers party — tribune of the people

As a Marxist-Leninist youth group we fight to train and educate the future cadre to build a proletarian revolutionary vanguard party that acts as a tribune of the people. VI Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, described the tasks of the revolutionary vanguard in his book, *What is to be done?* (1902) as follows:

“[The] Social-Democrat’s [Communist’s] ideal should [be] *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

We in the International Communist League have proudly taken up the defence of victims of the capitalist state’s anti-sex witch hunt. In the US, our comrades have fought against the vicious persecution of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which the state has attempted to frame up, bankrupt and crush for its courage in opposing “laws that punish consensual relationships” of



San Francisco: Spartacist League/US at abortion rights protests state intervention against consensual sexual activity.

‘normal’, to create a climate of fear aimed at quashing in advance any social and political struggle.”

### “New” Labour — deranged puritans on the loose

Blair’s “New” Labour government threw itself into an anti-sex witch hunt upon coming to power with legislation passed in its first term that extended police monitoring of former and even suspected “sex offenders”, requiring them to be part of a “police register” for life. During the summer of 2000 reactionary “anti-paedophile” mobs rampaged throughout Britain, following the notorious *News of the World*’s “name and shame” campaign, terrorising those on the paper’s hit list of “suspected paedophiles”, and even ludicrously targeting a woman paediatrician. In October 2003 judges were told by the Attorney General and the Court of Appeal to toughen up their sentencing of child “sex offenders” in particular.

The big scare story of recent years has been the use of the Internet by “paedophiles”. Amidst lurid stories of paedophiles using chatrooms to lure children for “grooming”, police are hunting down people who merely download pornography featuring children. According to the police they are tracking some 7300 such “suspects”! Such hysteria was cleverly captured by Channel 4’s satire *Brass Eye* in a mock special on paedophilia in July 2001. In one sequence Labour MP Barbara Follett, seriously thinking the show to be sincere, read a warning off an auto-

‘sex offenders’ unleashes vigilante terror” *Workers Hammer* no 174, Autumn 2000): “‘Paedophilia’ simply means sexual desire towards children. To equate this with child murder and rape is grotesque and partakes of the same reactionary bourgeois bigotry which declares all sex other than heterosexual monogamy to be ‘deviant’”. This capitalist society must deny that children can experience a legitimate sexuality, even though they obviously do. There is no other rationale for age of consent laws. As for child pornography, like any other kind of pornography, whether portraying naked women, young boys or donkeys, it is merely images and words designed for entertainment. One person’s turn-on is another person’s turn-off—who is going to decide what is “obscene”?

For us the guiding principle for sexual relations should be that of *effective consent*, nothing more and nothing less than mutual agreement and understanding, as opposed to coercion. *We vehemently oppose state intervention into people’s sexual activities, entertainment and private lives. Down with the “age of consent” laws! State out of the bedroom!*

Central to explaining the deranged frenzy over youth having sex with anyone, including even people their own age, much less older is an understanding of the centrality of the family to the maintenance of capitalist class rule. The family is the key institution for the regimentation of the population, instilling

whatever sexuality and age. In Britain we defended the British Paedophile Information Exchange, whose leaders were jailed in 1984 for advocating the right of youth under the "age of consent" to have sex with adults. *Down with Labour's reactionary "anti-paedophile" campaign!*

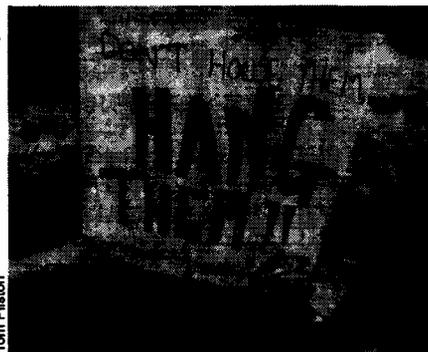
Outrageously, other groups who call themselves "socialist" have responded at best with ambivalent passivity and even with outright support to puritanical bigotry and state intervention. The Socialist Party actually endorsed the state's "paedophile register" installed in 1997 and bemoaned cutbacks in the repressive probation and prison services (*Socialism Today*, September 2000). Taking his lead from the "anti-paedophile" scaremongering, the Socialist Workers Party's Paul Foot supported a police operation against child care workers amidst wild accusations that children's homes had been infiltrated by "organised groups of paedophiles" in an article carried by the *London Review of Books* (4 July 1996). More recently, SYG members have been baited by *Socialist Worker* salespeople trying to inflame their own witch hunt against us by screaming that our staunch defence of consensual sexual relations against state persecution is a defence of "child abuse". It is a real statement of their

own small-minded backwardness that these organisations end up on the side of bigoted bourgeois morality.

To their credit Revco, the youth affiliate of Workers Power (WP), oppose the "age of consent" laws. But this is pretty cheap when they cannot bring themselves to say a word in opposition to the persecution of adults involved in consensual sex with under-16s. Meanwhile their Workers



Home Secretary David Blunkett, pious sexual puritanism, anti-immigrant racism. Below: Children used by reactionary mobs in 1998 anti-paedophile witch hunt.



## Ireland...

(Continued from page 8)

can only be secured by the violent suppression of the other through communalist terror, forced population transfers and ultimately genocide. The only just and equitable solution to the communal conflict in Northern Ireland is within the framework of proletarian class rule through workers revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea. We fight to build the revolutionary internationalist parties that can lead the struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

### "Socialists" who can't call for British troops out

The Socialist Party (SP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) ran candidates in the recent assembly elections (the latter as part of the Socialist Environmental Alliance [SEA]) both claiming to offer a "socialist alternative". Far from being any such alternative, neither organisation provided even the remotest semblance of an independent working-class perspective much less a challenge to the vicious sectarianism rooted in the Orange statelet and enforced by British imperialism. The SP, which supported the Good Friday Agreement claiming that it would provide a framework to end communalist violence, ran candidates in mainly Protestant South and East Belfast. A prelude to this electoral performance was provided in the early 1990s, when the SP had Loyalist Billy Hutchinson address its meetings in Belfast and Dublin. Hutchinson, who had been convicted of murdering two Catholics, and his Progressive Unionist Party are nothing but a front for the murderous UVF. When the Scottish Socialist Party hosted him at a meeting in Glasgow in 2000, the SWP gave this their seal of approval.

In the recent elections, the SP openly advocated "a vote for any candidates who are standing on behalf of genuine community campaigns or for other radical and non sectarian candidates who are standing independently of the existing parties" in constituencies where it

wasn't running ("Defend public services vote Socialist", www.worldsocialist-cwi.org, 11 November 2003). The SWP followed suit with Eamonn McCann declaring, "We are asking people to give us their number ones [first preference votes]. After that, of course, voters can go on to indicate their choice between other parties and candidates" ("Speech at launch of SEA manifesto", SEA press release, 13 November 2003). So much for the "socialist", or even "anti-sectarian" credentials of these

land], 13-26 November 2003). Claiming to be "unashamedly anti-imperialist", McCann noted that the SWP "are actively against the occupation of Iraq". But no such opposition to the forces of British imperialism closer to home where McCann had not a word against the British Army in Northern Ireland. This is no surprise given that the SWP supported the sending in of the army in 1969, claiming that the imperialist butchers would provide a "breathing space" for the besieged Catholic communities.



January 2002: Postal workers union contingent at Belfast protest against Loyalist murder of Daniel McColligan.

outfits! They can't even uphold the elementary principle of working-class independence from bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties like the Greens or Sinn Fein, much less the parties of Loyalist terror!

SP candidate Tommy Black declared: "It was working class people who created the peace process by coming onto the streets demanding a halt to paramilitary activity. The sectarian parties have made a mess of this opportunity" ("Northern Ireland Assembly elections", www.worldsocialist-cwi.org, 12 November 2003). Yet while cheering actions against "paramilitary" activity, the SP opposes the basic demand for the withdrawal of the British Army! For his part, McCann opined that the election of candidates from his party "won't end sectarianism but it will at least help reduce it a bit" (*Socialist Worker* [Ire-

The election campaigns of the SP and SWP occasionally called for joint class struggle, but on an economist basis: against privatisations, water charges and for higher wages. But even though poverty and the lack of housing and jobs bring misery to the lives of both Catholic and Protestant working-class people, the sectarian divide cannot be overcome by exhortation to "unite and fight". Class unity can combat sectarianism only if it is linked to a fight against the discrimination against Catholics. This means confronting the widespread view in the society that the only way to improve the situation for Catholics is by making the living standards worse for Protestants. Under capitalism, this is true. For us this means the struggle must be waged for what the working class needs, not what capitalism can afford. A revolutionary party would

they cannot give informed consent to sexual activity with an adult." WP goes on to argue that "penetrative sex between adults and pre-pubescent children [is] physically harmful to children" and call for bourgeois state intervention in the form of "protective legislation for children". Obviously things become murkier when you have very young children with adults and the question of effective consent must be looked at on a case by case basis. But even at that, contrary to WP, state legislation has nothing to do with "protecting" children but with strengthening its own consummately violent and oppressive rule.

In contrast, our model is the young Soviet workers state that issued out of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, whose law on sexual affairs was based on "the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters so long as nobody is injured and no one's interests are encroached upon". The purpose of the SYG, youth auxiliary of the Spartacist League/Britain, is to build a party like the Bolsheviks that can lead the working class in a victorious socialist revolution that will destroy the inherently oppressive capitalist state. Such a revolution will open the road to providing the material basis to replace the repressive nuclear family, opening the way to true sexual equality and freedom. ■

seek to unite workers around transitional demands—for sharing the available work through a shorter working week with no loss in pay, decent quality housing for all—which go beyond the framework of capitalism and point to the need for socialist revolution.

### For a Leninist vanguard party!

Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie's constant drive for profits grinds workers into ever greater poverty. The de-industrialisation of Northern Ireland is of a piece with the decimation of heavy industry in Britain over decades. Attacks on the working class in Northern Ireland and Britain today are paralleled by high unemployment and cuts in social services across Europe. In this context the British capitalist rulers continually fuel racism and chauvinism and foment divisions within the working class. Labour's so-called "war on terror" means extending many of the repressive powers used in Northern Ireland to Britain, targeting primarily Muslims and people of Near Eastern and South Asian origin. It was revealed in mid-December that the Humber Police Special Branch, under the guise of fighting terrorism, maintained secret files on everyone "of Irish origin, descent or background" with whom the police dealt, regardless of whether they were even accused of a crime.

Labour's racist "war on terror" has led to a huge escalation of racist attacks in Britain, while their policy of dispersing immigrants to predominantly white, economically desolate areas has contributed to the situation where Northern Ireland, which is over 99 per cent white, has a higher rate of racist attacks than anywhere in Britain. Loyalist paramilitaries have been brutally attacking blacks, Chinese and Filipinos with over 200 incidents reported to the police in the past nine months and many more going unreported. Just days before Christmas, two Chinese and one African family were driven out of their homes in South Belfast. Two doors down from a UFF mural of the "grim reaper", several members of a Chinese family, including two pregnant women, were viciously assaulted. A South Belfast estate agent, whose office was damaged by a petrol

continued on page 7

# Coalition...

(Continued from page 1)

no small measure to conditioning the regression in political consciousness that opened the way to counterrevolution. This in turn reinforced the dramatic retrogression of consciousness that we encounter in the post-Soviet world. In the Soviet Union, Stalinist nationalism so destroyed any identification among the mass of the workers with the Bolshevik Revolution that the proletariat was disarmed in the face of counterrevolution. The social democrats, foremost among them the British Labour Party whose government ministers helped found NATO in 1949, were an anti-Communist bulwark for imperialism against the Soviet Union. This was a cause for which the SWP and the rest of the reformist left played their role, cheering the forces of anti-Soviet counterrevolution abroad while swearing a loyalty oath to the Labour Party at home.

## From Vietnam War to Cold War

Throughout the demonstrations against the Iraq War, the left invoked the spectre of the Vietnam anti-war movement as their model. It wasn't the demonstrations that stopped that war but rather the battlefield victory of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in a social revolution that drove out the imperialist exploiters and their local lackeys. Internationally, the left grew qualitatively because there was a general radicalisation at that time. Many thousands of young radicals sided with the unfolding social revolution in Vietnam and joined organisations claiming adherence to Marxism, which back then was widely accepted as *the* road to liberation for the oppressed people of the world. In 1968 the SWP dragged itself out of the Labour Party and changed the name of its paper from *Labour Worker* to *Socialist Worker*. But the prevailing consciousness of youth at that time was to the *left* of the SWP's formal programme.

The SWP's loyalty to "democratic" British imperialism dates back to their origins in 1950 when Tony Cliff broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International by accommodating to the anti-Communist hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean War. Cliff reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and its rotten Labour Party—it was a Labour government that sent troops to Korea. But by the time of the Vietnam War, the SWP's line on North Korea meant they had to go through contortions in order to get a hearing among activists, whose consciousness was summed up in the chant: "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win!" At first the SWP avoided taking a side with the Vietnamese workers and

peasants, because they were led by Stalinists. Later the Cliffites supported the Vietnamese struggle but justified it on the anti-Communist grounds that the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and China *did not* intervene directly against US imperialism in the Vietnam War.

The SWP's radical posturing was short-lived. Within four years after the end of the Vietnam War the SWP and virtually the entire spectrum of the Labourite left were cheering for the victory of the reactionary ayatollahs in the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. A year later, when the opening shots of anti-Soviet Cold War II were fired by the imperialists over the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan against a CIA-backed insurgency of mullahs, warlords and tribal chieftains, these leftists were on the side of their "own" imperialist rulers against the Soviet Red Army. We proclaimed "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was a prelude to counterrevolution in the USSR itself. We actively fought this, calling in 1991 on Soviet workers to defeat Yeltsin's counterrevolution that was backed by US imperialism. We stood on the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military defence

leader John Rees put it recently:

"The broad anti-capitalist movement encompassing the whole left save for the social democratic defenders of neo-liberalism would have been inconceivable in the Cold War. In that era the first question asked of any 'anti-capitalist' would have been, 'So does that mean you are pro-Russian?' The movement would have divided in response to that challenge. Now it no longer does."

—*International Socialism*, Autumn 2003

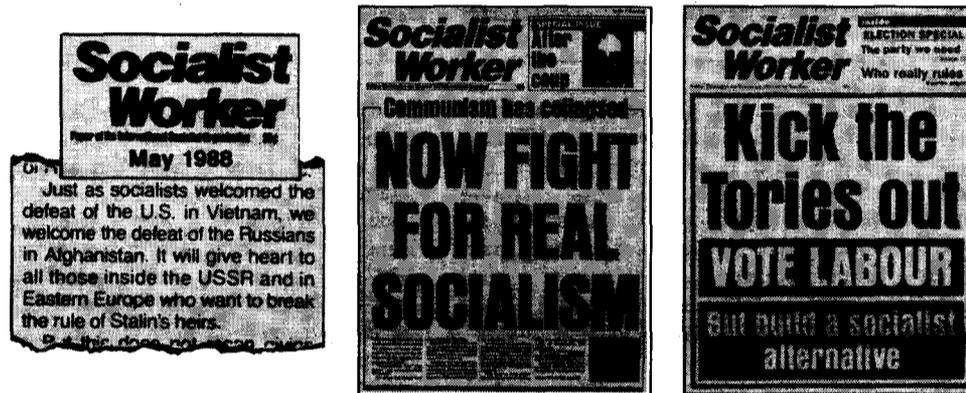
Now that they confront a generation of young activists who consider themselves "anti-capitalist" and who can see for themselves that the end of the USSR was a catastrophe, the SWP are rather modest about their history of support to counterrevolution. Our task as revolutionaries is to fight against the ideological nonsense that youth are taught by liberal gurus of the anti-capitalist movement—that Marxism is some quaint relic of the past, the capitalist system is here to stay and the working class is no longer a force with the power to challenge that system, much less replace it. For the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution, the working class in its struggles no longer identifies with the ideas of "socialism", which means that Marxism must be motivated again. If the SWP leadership now bewail the fact

a perspective for the new party, which they describe as follows:

"A new workers' party could play the role of uniting together, around a fighting anti-capitalist programme, all those who want to struggle against the system and its affects [sic]. It could be a vehicle for defending the interests of working class people through collective action in the workplaces, communities and society generally and could become a pole of attraction to the most class conscious workers and youth, as well as radicalised middle class people".

—Socialist Party pamphlet, "Resisting capitalism—The case for a new workers party" (undated, published in 2001)

The pamphlet states that said new workers party "would represent an enormous step forward for working class people, just as the formation of the Labour Party did at the beginning of the last century". The Socialist Party invokes the fact that Engels welcomed the formation of the Independent Labour Party even though it was not nominally socialist and "advised Marxists to do everything they could to promote an independent workers' party". While noting that the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) took a sectarian attitude to the formation of the Labour Party, they neglect to mention that the SDF's founder, one HM Hyndman, was notoriously anti-



**Socialist Worker supported defeat of Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan, welcomed capitalist counterrevolution in USSR and has never denied a vote to Labour.**

of the Soviet Union and for workers political revolution against the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy that sold out the USSR to capitalism. This historic defeat for the working class and oppressed of the world led to a huge resurgence of reactionary forces, including all kinds of religious obscurantism in the imperialist countries and in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

## From hailing counterrevolution to posing as "anti-capitalists"

For their part the Socialist Party, Workers Power and the SWP were physically present alongside Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary forces in Moscow in 1991. The SWP crowed that "Communism has collapsed", a fact they said that "should have every socialist rejoicing". With the Soviet Union out of the way, the Cliffites thought that people would flock to their brand of "socialism". As SWP

they are not getting the "breakthrough" they expected, they are hoist with their own petard in a situation *they helped create*.

## Respect's tame critics

In response to the SWP's Respect coalition, Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party says it ought to have an "explicitly socialist programme"...but presumably in name only because the Socialist Party "do not preclude" that the new coalition may decide to make "a compromise on the socialist content of its programme" (*The Socialist*, 17 December 2003). The Socialist Party's answer to the question of what should replace Labour is a "new mass workers party", which they would enter as a faction. Their origins are in the Militant tendency which for decades nestled inside Old Labour, trying to pressurise Labour to "nationalise the commanding heights" of the economy. But they have junked this as

Semitic and pro-British imperialist. This omission is not surprising considering the Socialist Party's own chauvinist positions, amply demonstrated particularly in Northern Ireland, where they have made overtures to Ulster Loyalist bigots while refusing to oppose the British Army presence.

Many of the SWP's critics on the left argue they should follow the example of Tommy Sheridan's Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and form one single party of the left. The SSP claims to be the replacement for Labour. Recently several branches of the rail union RMT voted to affiliate to the SSP leading Blair to throw the union out of the Labour Party.

The SSP offers nothing remotely socialist in elections. And although Sheridan's group also has its origins in Militant, they too have discarded the commitment to nationalising the top monopolies—they run for elections on bourgeois-democratic demands and have even promised not to nationalise call centres and electronics plants belonging to multinational corporations. Interviewed by the *Glasgow Herald* (30 April 2003) Sheridan made the SSP's commitment to capitalism absolutely clear, declaring: "What we're saying is that in a future independent socialist Scotland we want to work on training, on skills. We want to offer a very highly skilled economy, a motivated work force for big business."

The SSP are stridently nationalist, even to the point of chasing after a "regroupment" from the Scottish National Party—the party that aspires to represent the interests of the Scottish bourgeoisie. It is a travesty that the SSP

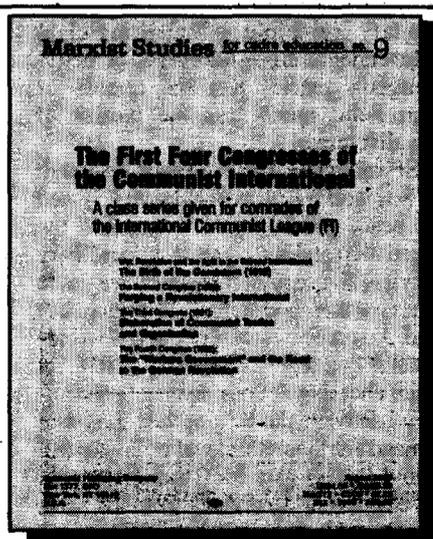
# Marxist Studies no 9

This volume of Marxist Studies, a series of bulletins for the education of Marxist cadres, contains the transcripts of four classes given in 1998-99 throughout the International Communist League dealing with the first four (1919-1922) Congresses of the Communist International. Also included are the list of related readings and a general chronology (1912-1924) of relevant events.

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now purports to represent the Scottish proletariat, who historically openly identified with Communism. During the 1980s Cold War we appealed to such sentiments by raising evocative slogans such as "Turn Holy Loch into a Soviet U-Boat pen!" and "For a Scottish workers republic as part of the USSR!" to distinguish ourselves from the anti-Communist, "Sassenach" Labourite left and to express our opposition to English domination.

Workers Power regard the existence of a mass social-democratic party as something of a historic birthright and are very critical of the SWP for committing themselves to the Respect coalition, declaring: "We think Respect's leaders have turned their backs on socialism". Never mind that until recently Workers Power happily joined the SWP in building Socialist Alliance—which never even managed to say no vote to Labour, or to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland. They also joined the SWP in building the Stop the War Coalition that had no "socialist" credentials at all. But now Workers Power balk at the Respect coalition and have found a niche for themselves as the lone standard-bearers of Old Labour's "socialist soul". They drew up an alternative programme for the Respect coalition that is classically left social-democratic, complete with touching faith in the capitalist state in its call to "purge racists from the police". This is crowned by Workers Power's very own equivalent of Clause IV—"nationalise transport, banks, utilities and major corporations—no compensation". Portraying 100 years of Labour betrayal as "political independence" they motivate their "alternative" saying: "Anything else will be a betrayal of the cause of the trade union movement's historic break with liberalism over 100 years ago

—the cause of the working class and political independence" (*Workers Power*, January 2004).

The birth of the Labour Party was an organisational expression of class independence, which in itself was a step forward, but politically it was tied to Liberalism and to the "labour lieutenants of capital", the union bureaucracy. From its origins Labour was a "bourgeois-workers party"—working-class in composition but with a bourgeois programme and leadership and it became the historic vehicle for tying the working class to British imperialism. We fight to build a genuine socialist alternative: a Leninist vanguard party. Our strategic goal has been to split the working-class base from its pro-capitalist leadership. However the present split is not the one we envisaged. It is being propelled not by the search for a more radical alternative by the working class, but by the rightward shift of Labour and relentless attacks under Blair & Co.

The entire history of Workers Power, the Socialist Party, the SWP et al—of pressuring Labour, ostensibly to "make the lefts fight"—has taken place in a situation where Labour was the hegemonic party of the British working class. But those days are gone forever and now they are finding that recreating a mass social-democratic party in the current climate is not all that easy. The working class is disillusioned by the demise of the USSR and by decades of Labourite betrayal. Doubtless the SWP would like to rope the "awkward squad" into their new electoral lash-up, but by and large these union bureaucrats are reluctant to part company with New Labour. Moreover, these Old Labour bureaucrats have time and again

sold out their members, as seen in the firefighters strike and the recent postal wildcat strikes. Meanwhile youth are uninterested in voting, or in political parties and thus the SWP's Respect coalition is banking on getting the Muslim vote that has deserted Labour.

Asians and other minorities have been utterly betrayed by Labour and are on the receiving end of Labour's racist "war on terror". The SWP and Galloway are desperately trying to hustle for votes among Muslims, yet the Respect founding declaration can't even make a simple statement of opposition to the "war on terror", or to Labour's racist anti-immigrant laws. Instead it sticks to vague legalese like "opposition to all forms of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs (or lack of them), sexual orientation, disabilities..." Nor does it explicitly defend women's rights, or homosexual rights, for fear of upsetting the imams. Instead it offers the vapid and unintelligible call for "the right of self-determination of every individual in relation to their religious (or non-religious) beliefs, as well as sexual choices". Placing religious and so-called "non-religious" beliefs on the same plane is a sleight of hand that covers up a sort of *quid pro quo*: Muslim leader Selma Yaqoob, one of the leading lights of the coalition, seems willing to accept that the coalition will not fight Islamophobia in any meaningful way, while the SWP tolerate reactionary treatment of women. In *International Socialism* (Autumn 2003) Yaqoob enthuses over a Birmingham anti-war meeting that featured SWPer John Rees as well as an imam, and had a *segregated area for women*. But with or without the alliance with the imams, the SWP's reformism makes them incapable of offering a programme that will champion

the rights of immigrants and minorities, fight against racist attacks or fight for the emancipation of women from the oppression of the family, society and religious obscurantism.

The multiethnic working class needs a genuinely revolutionary party, to defend its interests against the ravages of the capitalist economy, against racist attack and to roll back New Labour's offensive. This must be part of a fight to end British capitalism. Today's Asian youth of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent are the children and grandchildren of immigrants who worked throughout this country, from the "dark Satanic Mills" of Bradford and Oldham, to car plants in London and Birmingham, battling racism and fighting in the forefront of union struggles. The decline of manufacturing has left the vast majority of this population living in poverty. A similar fate has befallen a large swathe of the industrial proletariat—from the former coal mining areas of Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire, to former shipbuilding cities that have been devastated under the Tories and Labour alike. The British working class has been weakened by defeats in struggle, particularly the devastating defeat of the miners strike, which was betrayed by Labourite union bureaucrats, including the "lefts" of the day. Nevertheless the working class is vital to the system of capitalism and has the power to bring it down; what it presently lacks is socialist consciousness and a genuinely revolutionary party. From among the mass anti-war mobilisations many will be won to authentic Marxism. Our task is to educate and train Marxist cadre for the future, drawing the lessons of past struggles and in the course of new ones, to build the nucleus of a vanguard party. For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party! For a reformed Fourth International! ■

## Ireland...

(Continued from page 5)

bomb last June, was warned by Loyalist paramilitaries not to let properties to immigrants. One businesswoman from Zimbabwe, who has been subject to a seven-month campaign of racist abuse, told the *Guardian* (10 January): "Initially we wanted to move. We called the police. Then we realised it's happening everywhere in Belfast. There is nowhere to run to".

Many Belfast City Hospital nurses are Filipinos and are targeted by racists, yet

trade union bureaucrats like UNISON's Pamela Dooley, obscenely called on the RUC/PSNI to work with the union to "protect" immigrants. These racist sectarian thugs are the enemy of the workers and all the oppressed! Just as the trade unions came out in protest against the murder of Daniel McCollgan and the death threats against Catholic workers in 2002, the social power of the unions should be mobilised against racist terror and in a fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! The fight against the vicious oppression of women is also critical not only in the North where religion is a core component of both Orange and Green



Belfast: Harland & Wolff shipyard, early 1900s. 1919 shipyard and engineering strike united Protestant and Catholic workers; in 1920 Catholics and socialists from both communities were driven out by Unionist-led violence following the defeat of the strike.

nationalism but also in the southern clericalist state. Organised religion of all sorts is one of the main forces for women's oppression. The Protestant and Catholic religious bigots are united in opposing women's right to abortion. Thus, the British Abortion Act does not apply in Northern Ireland meaning that, as in southern Ireland, it is impossible to get an abortion. *For free abortion on demand!*

We are under no illusion that the struggle to unite Catholic and Protestant workers around their common class interests will be an easy one. Opportunities that arise for such a struggle are often transient. However, through the intervention of a revolutionary internationalist vanguard, even transitory instances of working-class solidarity can provide the basis for altering the course of the conflict towards a class determination and workers revolu-

tion. As we wrote in our statement opposing the Good Friday Agreement:

"The key to breaking the bloody cycle of imperialist repression and communalist terror is to unite the proletariat—Protestant and Catholic; English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish—across national and religious lines in common struggle against the capitalist class enemy. That requires intransigent proletarian opposition not only to blood-soaked British imperialism and Orange supremacy, to anti-Catholic terror and discrimination, but also to Green nationalism and the clericalist state in the South. The ICL fights to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties to lead the workers in the revolutionary overthrow of all their oppressors and exploiters and in the establishment of proletarian state power throughout the British Isles. *Not Orange against Green but class against class! For an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles!*" ■

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Paisley gains in elections, Loyalists rampage on streets

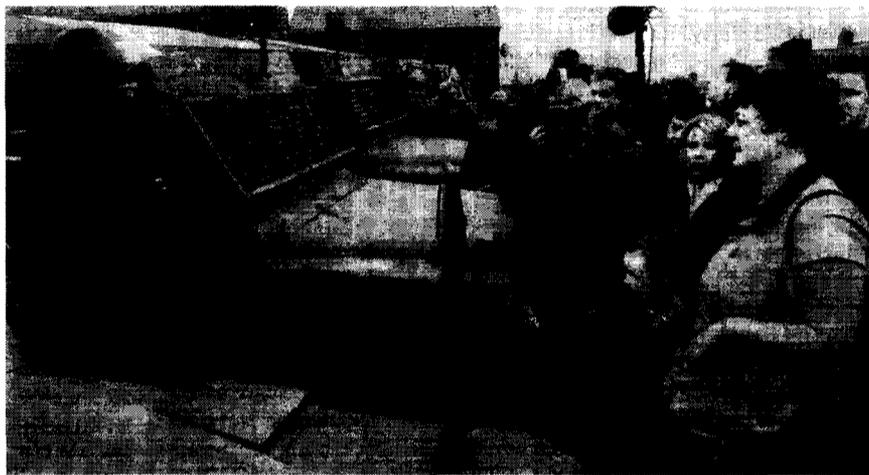
## Bitter fruits of Labour's imperialist "peace" fraud

Ten years of the "peace" fraud in Northern Ireland—brokered by British imperialism with the help of the southern Irish capitalists and US imperialists—have resulted in a society ever more polarised along communal lines. In a real taste of imperialist "democracy", the Blair government unilaterally abolished the Stormont assembly in Belfast last spring. The November assembly elections, which had been postponed for six months, yielded the expected results: of the two anti-Catholic Unionist parties, David Trimble's Ulster Unionists were surpassed by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), who are so bigoted they refuse to form an executive with Sinn Fein.

Meanwhile, in the lead-up to the elections the Loyalist campaign of terror against Catholics continued: on 16 November, hours after a number of Catholic homes in the Longlands area of North Belfast were attacked, Paul Denvir was beaten so severely by a gang of the Loyalist Action Force armed with machetes and hammers that virtually every bone in his face was broken, and he also lost an eye. A week before the elections, 21-year-old Catholic James McMahon was beaten to death by a UDA gang in Lisburn.

The Spartacist League/Britain and Spartacist Group Ireland have long emphasised our proletarian internationalist opposition to the imperialist "peace" fraud. In 1993 we wrote: "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). When the Good Friday Agreement was signed, we issued a joint statement saying: "The 'historic' agreement signed in Belfast's Stormont Castle on 11 April cannot and will not bring peace to Northern Ireland. This reactionary imperialist deal will reinforce the subjugation of the oppressed Catholic minority. It will be enforced by the 18,000-strong British Army and the viciously sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), who work hand in glove with the fascist Loyalist death squads in the murder of Catholics" (reprinted in *Workers Hammer* no 162, May/June 1998).

The British and Irish governments and the Unionists constantly demand IRA "decommissioning", while placing no such demands on Loyalist paramilitaries. The fact that the Loyalist death squads work in collusion with the British military and the RUC Special Branch was finally acknowledged in a report by the Stevens Commission in April 2003, but the Labour government refuses to publish the report. Likewise the government is sup-



September 2001: Labour's "peace" is a lie for Catholic families in Belfast's Ardoyne who face blockade by Loyalist mobs while taking children to school. Paul McErlane

### British troops out now!

pressing Canadian judge Peter Cory's findings of state involvement in sectarian murders, including of Catholic solicitors Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, and of Robert Hamill who was kicked to death by a Loyalist mob in full view of the RUC. *For the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland!*

#### Oppressed Catholics under siege

Housing remains a key indicator of the continuing oppression of Catholics. The 2001 census recorded nearly twice as many Catholics as Protestants living in officially overcrowded housing. In North Belfast, the population density in the Protestant Glenbryn is 17 people per hectare, whereas in the Catholic Ardoyne it is 220. Glenbryn, with a population of 900 was awarded £8 million for development, while the Catholic New Lodge, where nearly 7000 people live in eleven acres, received only £1 million. Glenbryn is the estate where violent Protestant mobs were mobilised in 2001 to prevent Catholic children from walking up "their" street to attend Holy Cross Catholic school. Whereas in 1991, half the population lived in segregated wards that were either 90 per cent Catholic or 90 per cent Protestant, now 70 per cent of housing estates are religiously segregated and new housing is dramatically imbalanced towards Protestants.

Catholics seeking to escape overcrowded estates are met with Loyalist terror if they try to move into a "Protestant" area, and Loyalists have been waging a campaign to drive Catholics out of mixed estates. In the

first week of September 2003, three Catholic families were driven out of the mixed Deerpark estate adjacent to Glenbryn. Sara Barkley recounted to the Dublin *Sunday Tribune* (7 September 2003) how she "chose to buy my house in Deerpark because it was a mixed area and I don't want my kids to grow up bigoted and narrow minded". After an eight-month ordeal of attacks and intimidation—including having her windows broken, her car smashed up and the family cat mutilated and killed (all ignored by the police)—she was forced to move out. An 83-year-old Protestant woman who offered sympathy was threatened by the UDA.

While discrimination in employment has become less blatant, Loyalist terror means that many Catholics cannot work in Protestant areas. In January 2002, Loyalists murdered Catholic postal worker Daniel McColgan and threatened to kill Catholics working in Protestant areas. In response, postal workers, Catholic and Protestant, in the Communication Workers Union walked off the job and refused to return to work for five days. This strike, and a half-day public sector strike against sectarian attacks organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), was a welcome response by the trade union movement. That is where the power lies to combat sectarian terror. However, the union bureaucrats worked to divert this outrage into support to the imperialist "peace" fraud, gaining the endorsement of the Confederation of British Industry and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for the rally protesting McColgan's killing. ICTU Assistant General Secretary Peter Bunting called

"on all paramilitary groups to dissolve" but said not a word against the British Army and PSNI/RUC.

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

Despite the fact that the oppressed Catholic minority has suffered most under the "peace" fraud, opposition to the Good Friday Agreement has been strongest among Protestants. Average conditions for working-class Protestants are worse than for workers in either Britain or southern Ireland. Several large companies with largely Protestant workforces, like the Harland and Wolff shipyard and Shorts aircraft maker, now owned by the Canadian firm Bombardier, have recently closed altogether or made large numbers redundant. As historically has been the case, Loyalist demagogues seek to channel the anger of Protestant workers against their own miserable, exploited conditions into anti-Catholic bigotry.

Sinn Fein's programme is a united capitalist Ireland, which they previously pursued through the "armed struggle". Nowadays they hope British imperialism will accede to this in a piecemeal fashion through the "peace process". Through their executive posts in the Stormont assembly they helped administer the sectarian Orange statelet, although they were barely tolerated by Trimble's Ulster Unionists. Many Catholic youth have become disillusioned in Sinn Fein for having made too many concessions and now look to nationalists like the "Real IRA" who oppose the "peace" fraud. But even when using the "Armalite", the Irish nationalist perspective is a political dead-end.

The current situation in Northern Ireland is the result of centuries of brutal British imperialist domination and the partition of Ireland in 1921. The Catholics in the North, part of the Irish Catholic nation, are an oppressed minority. But they live within the same territory as the Protestants, a distinct community which largely defines itself against the Irish Catholic nation and fears becoming a minority, which would in turn be oppressed and discriminated against within a capitalist united Ireland. Such legitimate fears serve to reinforce the hold of Loyalism over the Protestant workers, making a polarisation along class lines more difficult.

As Leninists we oppose the national oppression of and discrimination against the Catholics. However we also recognise that in situations where two peoples share a common territory, there can be no stable solution under capitalism without the rights of one people

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