

Down with the racist "war on terror"!

For a class-struggle fight for all our rights!



Workers Hammer



Dan Chung/Kieran Doherty

Above: Four British detainees released from Guantanamo under armed guard on arrival in Britain. Martin Mubanga, one of the Guantanamo Four, addressing 2 March London protest in defence of Babar Ahmad (left).

Within days of the passage of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, heavily armed police were beating down doors, rounding up and imprisoning "terror suspects". Since September 11, more than 600 foreign nationals have been taken in by the cops and the overwhelming majority released. While not even the flimsiest evidence could be found to fabricate any charges against them, the brand of a threat to "the life of the nation" has virtually destroyed most of their lives. Seventeen men were locked up in Belmarsh and Woodhill high-security prisons. A *Guardian* article (11 September 2004) titled "Guantánamo in our back yard" gave a chilling description of the brutal and truly Orwellian conditions faced by these detainees:

"The detainees occupy small cells, 3m by 1.8m, for 22 hours a day, rarely see daylight and are strip-searched each time they are visited (a particular humiliation for devout Muslim men)... Not even their solicitors can establish why these men have been detained—the evidence, for reasons of national security, cannot be disclosed. The men are in a surreal legal no man's land specific to foreign nationals; they cannot be tried because there is not enough evidence against them; although labelled suspected terrorists, they are free to leave Britain; but they cannot be deported because they face persecution, torture or death in their countries of origin."

Last December, the Law Lords ruled that such conditions were "discriminatory" as only foreign nationals were considered a threat to "national security" and also irrational as the government's declared permanent "state of emergency" applied to no other country on the face of the planet (indeed one

Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

"terror suspect" was freed from jail and allowed to go to France where he is now at complete liberty). After initially considering deporting all the detainees, the New Labour government opted instead to expand the provisions of its anti-terror laws to include British citizens as well! To try to get around charges that they are violating the right to "liberty" by throwing people behind bars on no charges, the revised Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, passed in March, mandates that those detained instead be "gagged and tagged" under house arrest.

In addition to being electronically monitored and confined to their homes under specified curfew hours, if not around the clock, such "suspects" are barred from using mobile phones, the Internet, or being visited by anyone not authorised by the Home Office. The government has the right to enter and search their homes any time of the day or night. Family, friends and acquaintances are also considered to be fair game for searches of their home or person, and whatever other measures the government deems "necessary". Who will be subject to such "control orders" is entirely at the whim of the government—again no charges need to be laid, no jury convened or trial had. Presumption of innocence and burden

of proof beyond a "reasonable doubt" don't exist. The very right to counsel is entirely gutted as any legal representation that one is able to procure is barred from hearing such evidence as there is. In a throwback to the pre-Civil War Star Chamber, the putative evidence that you are a "terror suspect" can only be heard in secret hearings with neither accused nor lawyer present.

Although no charges need to be brought for detaining anyone, a violation of these "control orders" is a criminal offence with a sentence of up to five years in prison. It is a measure of the Kafkaesque provisions for "house arrest" that one might view facing such actual criminal charges as a relief—at least you get to hear the evidence and face your accuser in court before a judge and jury. As Gareth Peirce, a lawyer for many of those detained, accurately declared:

"What the government asks for here is the ultimate demand of any totalitarian regime: the executive is the accuser; the moment of accusation is also the moment of the imposition of the penalty.... The accuser, the executive, invokes a judge for one reason alone, to give its procedure a spurious cover, to safeguard it against any future judgement of the law lords or the European court of human rights" (*Guardian*, 8 March).

The shameless cynicism of the government's claims to be defending the

population against "terror attacks" was demonstrated when eight North Africans accused of the ludicrous 2003 "ricin terror plot" were acquitted. There was no ricin and no plot. One of ten other men who had been imprisoned as a threat to "national security", and then released to house arrest under the new legislation, walked into the office of the *Guardian* newspaper on his own. A Palestinian refugee who had been behind bars for three-and-a-half years, he told an interviewer: "I go everywhere now—on the underground, buses, the mosque. But I must be home by 7 pm. People think that I am dangerous, but I am not dangerous. The government is playing games. If I am a risk to security, why are they letting me out to be with people?" (*Guardian*, 24 March).

All of those previously detained were men from Arab countries. Several had successfully been granted asylum in this country on evidence of the persecution, torture and possible death they would face if returned to their countries of origin. Now "evidence" obtained under torture in other countries is entirely permissible as proof that someone is a "terrorist", provided no agent of "Her Majesty's" government was involved in the modern-day equivalent of turning the thumb screws. One need only look at the photos of Iraqi prisoners being beaten, sadistically tortured and humiliated to see the barbarism that British forces are capable of.

The government calculated that by initially targeting Muslims, an overwhelmingly poor and vulnerable layer of the population, they could get away with vastly augmenting their machinery

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'War on terror'...

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of state repression and violence without meeting much protest. Such calculation was served by the cowardly misleaders of the unions — the organised battalions of the proletariat which have the social power to put some teeth into a real fight against the racist "war on terror" and for the defence of all immigrants and minorities, which is vital to the defence of the working class as a whole. Overwhelmingly loyal to "their" Labour government, the trade union leaders have uttered barely a word of protest against the wholesale evisceration of rights won through hard-fought class battles going back to the English Civil War. Now the government has retooled and reloaded its state arsenal of repression, and is openly coming after anyone perceived as

an opponent of capitalist class rule. Everyone else is supposed to be intimidated, ideologically regimented automatons who will in Blair's words "play by the rules".

A leaflet by the organisation Stop Political Terror captured it: "You, yes YOU, could be locked up in your house without charge or trial simply on the impulses of the Home Secretary! You don't even need to be a Muslim as the law will apply to anybody the Home Secretary 'suspects of terror': Irish, Black, animal rights activists, civil liberties campaigners or anyone else the government dislikes!" But what the government fears and loathes above all is the multiethnic working class, for in its hands is the potential power for a real challenge to the class rule of the capitalist exploiters.

The legacy of the Thatcher years — decimation of the unions, wanton devastation of the "welfare state" and cruel

attacks on minorities and immigrants — has been carried through and enforced under the rule of Blair's "New" Labour Party. Having secured a fabulous increase in their wealth and profits over more than two decades by viciously grinding the working class, poor and oppressed, the rulers of this country are quite aware that they are sitting on top of seething discontent among the masses at the bottom of this society. In this context, the so-called "war on terror" is nothing other than a convenient pretext to try to extinguish any protest or political dissent through state terror and repression.

An *Amici Curiae* brief filed by the Spartacist League/US and the Partisan Defense Committee on behalf of US citizen Jose Padilla — who was declared an "enemy combatant", stripped of all constitutional rights and locked up in a military prison on no charges or evidence for close to three years now — exposed this fraud:

"The entirety of the Executive's legal justification for the denial of constitutional protections attendant to a criminal prosecution of Padilla are the emergency, preventative, national security needs of a putative ongoing 'war against terrorism' being waged throughout the globe and on U.S. territory. It is a 'war' without a defined enemy, a war without end. There is no war by any military definition. There is no shooting war and no battle between state powers. The 'war against terrorism' is a fiction, a political construct, not a military reality. It is a political crusade conducted in the name of ridding society of a perceived evil. It is no more a 'war' in a military sense than 'war against cancer,' 'war against obesity' or a 'war against immorality.' Like the 'war against communism' and the 'war against drugs,' this 'war' is a pretext to increase the state's police powers and repressive apparatus, constricting the democratic rights of the population. The Executive's declaration that its 'war against terrorism' forfeits constitutional protections for designated individuals echoes the regimes of shahs and colonels and presidents 'for life' from the Near East to Africa to Latin America, to justify the mass imprisonment and unmarked graves of political dissidents. Like them, the Executive is proclaiming the right to disappear citizens of its choosing."

But just as the state's anti-terror laws have ominous implications for everyone, so too would social protest mobilised behind the organised power of the working class have tremendous portent in the fight for the rights of all of the working people, poor and oppressed.

Could you be a "terror suspect"?

Under the government's laws, it is enough to engage in "conduct which gives support or assistance to individuals who are known or believed to be involved in terrorist-related activity" to find yourself branded as a "terror suspect". So look out if you gave any tsunami relief money — that could be enough for you to be considered as sup-

plying support to the Tamil Tigers, an organisation proscribed as terrorist by the British government, or with funding Islamic rebels in the Indonesian region of Aceh. Babar Ahmad, a British-born citizen, is currently facing extradition to the US as a "terror suspect" based on allegations that he raised funds for Islamic forces in Afghanistan and Chechnya.

Ahmad was first arrested in the early morning hours of 2 December 2003, amid sensational government warnings that Britain faced imminent terror attacks. As part of a series of police raids, cops broke down his door and dragged Ahmad from his bedroom, kicking and beating him while his wife screamed for mercy. Taken to a police station where he was further brutalised, sustaining 50 injuries, Ahmad was held for six days and then released, after which he filed a complaint against the police. Six months later, in August 2004, he was arrested again on an extradition warrant by the US government. Luridly describing Ahmad's arrest as an "al-Qaida raid", the *London Evening Standard* reported that he was accused of being in possession of battle plans to attack the US Navy. The absurdity was captured by a spokesman for Stop Police Terror who asked: "Are we to believe that the police massively cocked up in December and released al-Qaida's naval operations commander on to the streets of Tooting?"

Other allegations purport that he was laundering money for Islamic rebels in Chechnya and Afghanistan from 1998-2003. Why this would be reason for extradition to the US, no one can or will know. Under the conditions of the Extradition Act 2003 between the US and Britain, no *prima facie* evidence is required for Ahmad or any other "terror suspect" to be extradited, only that the US government provide documentation of the appearance of guilt.

When asked to define "terrorism" at a March extradition hearing for Ahmad, the prosecution replied "violence for political ends". Ahmad's defence lawyer aptly countered that "President Bush is continually engaging in violence for political ends". There is no question that the world's biggest terrorist is the American government which has at its fingertips the unchallenged military might for the elimination of any perceived enemies. Ahmad is accused of funding forces in Afghanistan which previously were on the receiving end of *billions of dollars* from the US and other imperialist powers to equip them for a *jihad* against Soviet Red Army troops and any measure of social progress, particularly for women. When the Kremlin treacherously withdrew its military — the opening act of the later capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the former Soviet degenerated workers state — these

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TROTSKY

Ireland and revolution in Britain

As Karl Marx explains in the passage below, the British bourgeoisie historically has inculcated anti-Irish chauvinism in the English working class as a central means to defend its class rule. As long as the English worker accepted the colonial subjugation of Ireland, and viewed the Irish worker as his inferior and competitor, he would be bound to the bigoted values of his bourgeois rulers, and the proletariat in England would remain divided along eth-

nic and religious lines. By fomenting racist hostility against immigrants and minorities, the British bourgeoisie aims to "divide and rule". Today, whipping up racist hysteria against British Muslims under the "war on terror" provides a pretext to constrict the democratic rights of the population in general. Just as opposition to anti-Irish chauvinism has always been a precondition for the emancipation of the English working class, so too must the working class use its social power to defend the victims of the racist "war on terror".

Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the Negroes in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland.

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this....

England...is at present the most important country for the workers' revolution, and moreover the only country in which the material conditions for this revolution have reached a certain degree of maturity. It is consequently the most important object of the International Working Men's Association to hasten the social revolution in England. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent. Hence it is the task of the International everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. It is the special task of the Central Council in London to make the English workers realise that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the first condition of their own social emancipation.

→ "Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt in New York", 9 April 1870



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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

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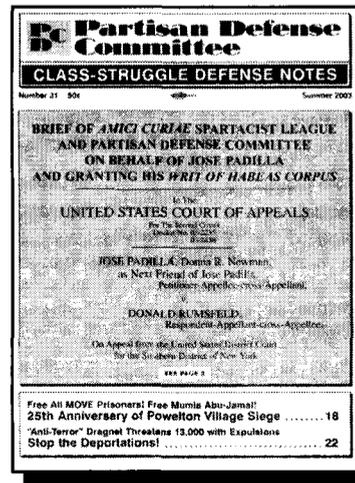
CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

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Brief on behalf of Jose Padilla.

Order from/make
cheques payable to:

Partisan Defence Committee,
BCM Box 4986, London,
WC1N 3XX



Victorian values at Berlin "Socialism Days"

No sex, no fun, no Spartacists!

We print below a translation of a leaflet published by our comrades of the Spartakist-Jugend, Germany that was distributed at the Berlin "Socialism Days" of 25-27 March. This event was hosted by the Sozialistischen Alternative Voran (SAV), the sister group of Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in Britain. The cowardly political exclusion of communists on the basis of our defence of consensual intergenerational sex exposes the kind of social backwardness that these "socialists" tail. Characterised by reformist politics and an orientation to the lowest common denominator of consciousness within the working class, the Taaffeite political tendency imbibes many of bourgeois society's chauvinist values. In the sphere of sexual relations this means accepting the capitalist state—that upholds the nuclear family and enforces sexual repression—as the authority on deciding when youth are ready to have sex, not the individuals themselves.

In this country the Taaffeites are very much at home with the "no sex please, we're British" culture. Whipped up by the Labour government's anti-"paedophile" witch hunt, reactionary vigilante mobs, infiltrated by the fascist BNP, rampaged through housing estates in 1998. The most recent example of this bigoted terror was the beating to death of Paul Cooper on 23 March, merely because his attackers suspected he was a paedophile.

The Socialist Party ignores the fact that the capitalist state makes no distinction between consensual intergenerational sex and rape when branding people as "paedophiles". It grotesquely endorsed the "paedophile register" of convicted "sex offenders"—and even suspected sex offenders—that was introduced by the Labour government in 1997. Reinforcing this support for capitalist persecution they bemoaned cutbacks in the repressive probation and prison services (Socialism Today, September 2000). As we pointed out in Workers Hammer no 186, Winter 2003-2004, the Labour government's pretence at "child protection" in justifying its draconian legislation 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 fascistic loyalist thugs terrorise little Catholic school girls 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 this does not worry the Socialist Party too much. They are notorious for their refusal to call for the immediate withdrawal of British imperialist troops from Northern Ireland, and in their present general election campaign say precious little in defence of immigrant

and minority victims of the government's racist "war on terror". Their prostration before the chauvinist values of the British bourgeoisie is proof of their fundamental inability to challenge the rule of capital.

The SAV leaders don't want revolutionary politics at their "Socialism Days" this year. They don't want any "impure"

the women's political event at Socialism Days last year, you have crossed a line, which we cannot tolerate.

"We therefore inform you that you are excluded from the forum on the theme 'new sexism', and that you are not allowed to have an information stand or to sell newspapers at the event."

The self-appointed "morality police" of the left lays it down: "Who's Bad?"



AP Photo/Spencer Weiner, pool

Michael Jackson exits the courthouse in Santa Maria, California, holding hands with his family including his sister Janet, his mother Katherine and brother Jermaine, right, Friday 16 January 2004, after his arraignment on child molestation charges.

thoughts to pollute the virgin minds of their membership. So the SAV's leader Sascha Stanicic wrote us the following e-mail on 23 March:

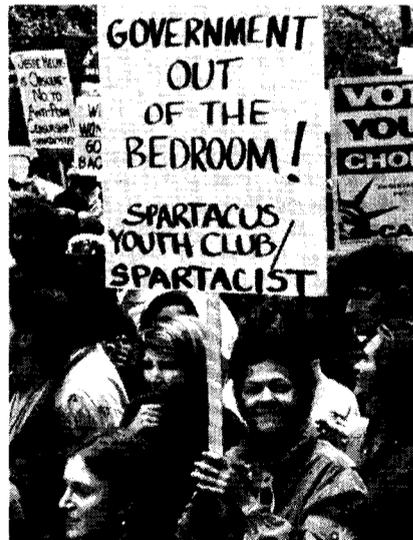
"As we've already told you, you will not have the possibility this year of setting up an information stand at the Socialism Days. Your position of relativising child abuse, which you defended last year at

Those who don't conform to the narrow, prudish and social-democratic worldview of the SAV leaders get banned. No to this political censorship!

The SAV leadership is hell-bent on defending the family values of their members and sympathisers against us communists. We reported in our article



Ms London



Workers Vanguard

Right: Spartacist League/US at abortion rights demonstration in San Francisco protests state intervention against consensual sexual activity. Left: Spartacist League/Britain demonstrates against reactionary anti-abortion forces.

Socialism Days, led to great indignation among many participants. Many declared that they don't ever want to hear such positions again.

"For years we have tolerated your untruths and distortion of the SAV's positions, because we assumed that those who attend our meetings could come to their own conclusions. The fact that no one who came to Socialism Days has ever joined your group, confirms this assessment. However, with your behaviour at

(under the seductive title, "Why the rejection, SAV?") on the moralist "outrage" which greeted our comrade's intervention in the forum on "Globalisation & the new sexism" at last year's "Socialism Days" (Spartakist no 155, Summer 2004). She attacked the SAV's prudish moralism and counterposed our Marxist position of opposition to state intervention in consensual sexual and other personal relations. That includes so-called pae-

dophiles who are victims of state persecution for having sex with minors on the basis of *effective consent*—meaning consensual sex as opposed to being forced to do something you don't want to do or don't understand. SAV cadre flipped out over this, and also over our defence of Michael Jackson—a black man being targeted yet again by the racist US courts! We wrote:

"While it is possible that Michael Jackson has been thoroughly asexual in his relationships with boys, as he steadfastly maintains, to us that is irrelevant. Jackson has been charged under part of the California penal code involving a 'lewd act upon a child'. It prohibits acts with the intention of arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust, passions or sexual desires of the person or the child. The state clearly and willfully does not distinguish between coerced and consensual acts."

—"Stop Vendetta Against Michael Jackson!", Workers Vanguard no 818, 23 January 2004

The SAV disgustingly slanders this position as "defence of rapists" or, as Stanicic now puts it, "relativising child abuse". With this slander of Jackson, the SAV leadership embraces the racist, reactionary values of the neo-conservative fundamentalist Bush government, whose henchmen are witch-hunting Jackson!

Stanicic accuses us of spreading "untruths and distortions" to cover up the fact that the SAV is too cowardly to defend its own politics. Why else ban a group from selling its paper at their event? In fact, the SAV's "outrage" against and censorship of our revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois state's persecution of sexual minorities is further proof of what we always said: they are social democrats (with a little militant rhetoric occasionally). The SAV's frenzy is not just cynical demagoguery. The whole affair reflects a deep-seated backwardness on questions of personal—particularly sexual—freedom. This backwardness has everything to do with anti-communist social democracy, which the SAV currently subordinates itself to in the form of the "electoral alternative" ASG [Arbeit & soziale Gerechtigkeit—Work and Social Justice]. For the bourgeoisie and their political police in the workers movement, the social democracy, it is of course of elementary importance that the workers (and the rest of the population) be regimented by hypocritical bourgeois morality—church, "ethics" courses in school, and family. The family—the central institution in class society for the oppression of women and children—serves to transmit this morality and regimentation to the next generation of workers. That is why every form of sex which questions the monogamous "norm"—homosexuality, paedophilia etc—is branded as "deviant" and "sinful".

And of course the highest principle of all social democrats is that the capitalist state, as protector of the "general welfare", plays the role of enforcing this hypocritical morality. The same state, guardian of private ownership of the means of production and the reactionary family, is

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“War on terror” ...

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Islamic reactionaries turned on their imperialist creators as the new “infidel”. And for the US imperialists, following September 11, their former “holy warriors” became the all-purpose enemy around which to reinforce their rule at home and abroad.

But rule through terror and violence is hardly peculiar to the US imperialists. The capitalist state—at its core the police, army, courts and prisons—is by definition an instrument for maintaining the property and profits of the bourgeoisie through the suppression of the working class and oppressed, as well as for waging war in the interests of the capitalist rulers. The British imperialists are hardly a more humane or “democratic” alternative to the nuclear cowboys in the Bush White House. They are simply more decrepit, and have long been so. While it has neither the military nor economic might of the US, British imperialism certainly doesn’t take a back seat to its senior partner in America when it comes to wielding its state power against perceived “enemies”. Indeed the British imperialists wrote the book on it.

Britain’s legacy of state terror and repression

Long before the criminal attacks on the World Trade Center which were seized on by the Bush administration for its “war on terror”, the British rulers had their own battery of “anti-terror” laws. Taking first aim, literally, against Irish Catholics, these laws were the basis for building up the arsenal of capitalist state repression. Internment without charges and juryless “Diplock” courts were instituted against the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland more than three decades ago, in the early 1970s. In 1974 the Prevention of Terrorism Act was brought down for Britain as a whole. Almost immediately following its pas-

sage three young men from Belfast and a young English woman were framed up, on “confessions” extracted through torture by the cops, for IRA bombings of two pubs in Guildford. Two years later, the Maguire Seven, most of them relatives of one of the Guildford Four, Gerry Conlon, were thrown behind bars

does it feel to be murdering an innocent man?” Virtually on the eve of bringing in the government’s renewed anti-terror laws this year, Blair issued a piously hypocritical apology saying: “I recognise the trauma that the conviction caused the Conlon and Maguire families and the stigma which wrong attach-

tolerate any dissent from the former subjects of the British Empire at home or abroad. South African president, Thabo Mbeki’s denunciation of the “terrible legacy” of the empire, and one of its favourite sons, Winston Churchill, drew an outraged response. On his cynical “fight poverty” tour of Africa in January, Gordon Brown declared that it was time to stop apologising for Britain’s bloody and brutal colonial heritage and rather to take pride in the empire as “open, outward looking and international!” A column by Seumas Milne in the *Guardian* (27 January) asked how Brown:

“squares such grotesque claims with the latest research on large-scale, systematic atrocities carried out by British forces during the Mau Mau rebellion in colonial Kenya during the 1950s; the 320,000 Kikuyu held in concentration camps, the 1,090 hangings, the terrorisation of villages, electric shocks, beatings and mass rape documented in Caroline Elkins’ new book, *Britain’s Gulag*—and a death toll now thought to be over 100,000. This was a time when British soldiers were paid five shillings for each African they killed, when they nailed the limbs of Kikuyu guerrillas to crossroads posts and had themselves photographed with the heads of Malayan ‘terrorists’ in a war that cost 10,000 lives.... Britain’s empire was built on vast ethnic cleansing, enslavement, enforced racial hierarchy, land theft and merciless exploitation”.

Brown was saluted for his “patriotism” by former Labour home secretary David Blunkett. A man devoted to eviscerating the very right to have any rights in this society for “terror suspects”, desperate asylum seekers and immigrants, Blunkett was drummed out of office amid revelations that he fast-tracked a residency application for the Filipina nanny of his well-heeled mistress. Obviously waiting in the wings for an arranged comeback, Blunkett contributed a lengthy piece to the *Guardian* (19 March) touting his contributions to promoting “British values”, pointing to the citizenship tests he instituted as home secretary aimed at enforcing the assimilation of “foreigners” around God, Queen and country.

It is a sign of the times that the opposition to the Labour government’s revised anti-terror laws, coming from liberals and others, not only plays the same chauvinist theme of “British values” but sanctions the government’s “right” to spy on the population and hold “terror suspects” without charges, as long as they eventually get their day in court. A full page ad opposing detention without trial was taken out in the 3 March *Independent* by the civil rights

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Workers Vanguard

Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League initiated labour-centered mobilisation in Oakland, California, February 2002, in defence of immigrant rights and against “war on terror”.

on charges of running “a bomb making factory”. These included a 13-year-old boy; a family friend who was arrested at the Maguires’ home when he dropped by to tell them that his pregnant wife had gone into labour; and the father of Gerry Conlon, Guiseppe, who was arrested after he travelled to England to speak to a solicitor on his son’s behalf.

At the time he was imprisoned, Guiseppe Conlon had one lung, emphysema and had just undergone chemotherapy. He died in prison where he was denied any treatment other than cough syrup. On his death-bed in jail Guiseppe asked the prison guards “how

es to them to this day” (*Guardian*, 10 February). But as Gerry Conlon noted, the witch-hunting atmosphere today is “just like 1974 and 1975 when we were wrongly sent to prison. The only difference is that the colour and the religion has changed” (*Observer*, 13 February).

It was during the Blair government’s first term in office that the “colour and the religion” of those targeted was vastly extended under the Terrorism Act 2000. The law banned 21 political organisations. The list of those proscribed is a virtual roll call of peoples who have ever been subjected to the tender mercies of British imperialism, from Irish Republican splinter groups to Sikh, Kashmiri, Kurdish, Palestinian and Tamil organisations, as well as Islamic groups. The continued augmentation of these laws over the past five years under Labour has even the former head of the “anti-terrorism” unit at Scotland Yard declaiming: “I have a horrible feeling that we are sinking into a police state, and that’s not good for anybody” (*Guardian*, 28 January).

Labour’s imperial “values”

The Blair government isn’t about to

took a decidedly different view from the SAV:

“Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle: it declares 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.... Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offences against public morality—Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called ‘natural’ intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters.”

—*The Sexual Revolution in Russia*, Grigori Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene [1923], quoted in J Lauristen and D Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement 1864-1935* [emphasis in original]

The decisive factor was Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party, which guided the revolution to success—a party which declared irreconcilable war on all aspects of capitalist oppression and every expression of state violence and arbitrariness against persecuted minorities. With their censorship and reactionary support for anti-sex prudery, the SAV shows once again that they have nothing to do with the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. We fight in this tradition, for the party of world socialist revolution to fully realise the hopes for human progress and freedom already awakened by the Russian Revolution. *Government out of the bedroom! Down with anti-communist exclusion at “Socialism Days”! No to the “morality police” of the left!* ■

No sex...

(Continued from page 3)

the source of all the reactionary persecution of gays, lesbians and minorities in general. The ASG wants to support and build up this state, which means proving their ability to govern. That is the reason for their witch hunt against the SAV and other leftists who use socialist rhetoric. By using similar methods of censorship and exclusion against us, the SAV expresses its own narrow prudery, and supports the state and its reactionary interference in people’s private lives. In this way, they present themselves as respectable to the ASG bureaucrats. Here is an organisation whose “Socialist Women’s Programme” calls for trade union mobilisations against pornography! Pornography is *not* rape or violence against women, as the feminists and SAV preach. It is a private matter, exciting or interesting according to taste. The capitalist state criminalises it in order more strictly to regiment people’s lives. The SAV programme for “trade union censorship” amounts to a social-democratic call to turn the workers organisations into auxiliaries for the state’s moral code. Such an outlook is opposed to the most basic socialist (and humanist) strivings for a society where *people can live in freedom*.

The first step to such a society—workers revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie—was made with the 1917 October Revolution. The new government of workers and soldiers soviets

Spartacist League Dayschool

The ICI’s fight against capitalist counterrevolution
and for the communism of Lenin and Trotsky

Including eye-witness accounts from the DDR to Moscow

“It is the duty of revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class even though it may be distorted by the pressure of hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones.” —Leon Trotsky

Saturday 21 May, 12 noon

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Down with US/Japan counterrevolutionary alliance!

Defend the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states!

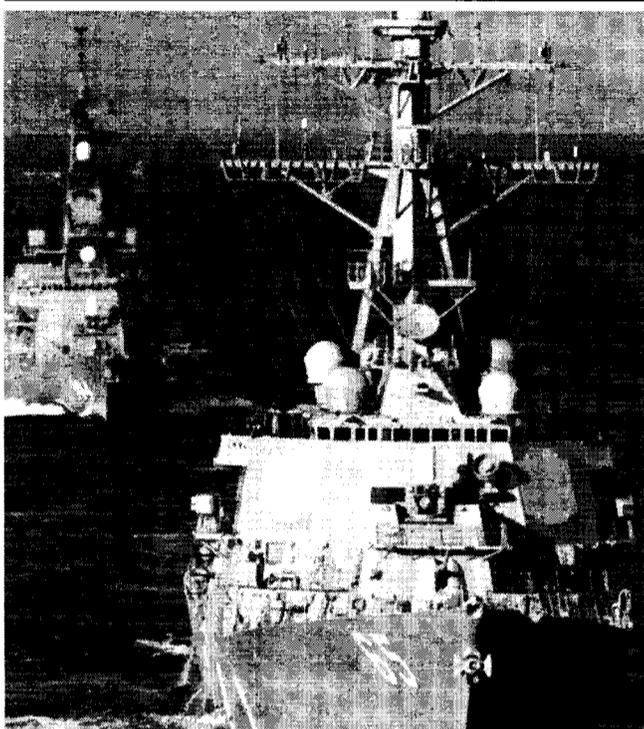
The following joint statement of the Spartacist Group Japan and Spartacist League/US is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 844 (18 March 2005). The statement was issued in response to the US and Japanese imperialists' new defence guidelines which represent a strengthening of their counterrevolutionary military alliance targeting the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states.

Japan and the United States issued a significant joint policy statement on 19 February avowing that Taiwan is "a mutual security concern". This is another ominous move by Tokyo and Washington to strengthen their security agreements and reposition their military forces, including placing antiballistic missile systems (ABM) in the region. These are dangerous provocations against the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states.

The Spartacist League/US and the Spartacist Group Japan, sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), stand for the unconditional military defence of China and North Korea—as we do for the other remaining deformed workers states, Vietnam and Cuba—against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. This includes the right of China and North Korea to possess and test their nuclear arsenals as part of maintaining a necessary deterrent against imperialist nuclear blackmail. China has been criminally trying to get North Korea back to the six-party talks that aim to disarm North Korea. The illusion of the Beijing Stalinists that there can be "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism only undermines China's own defence.

The US and Japan will not hesitate to crush any challenge in their drive to exploit the working masses of the region. Both Korea and Taiwan (Formosa) were colonised by Japan around the turn of the 20th century through the end of World War II. In 1937, Japanese imperialism was responsible for the Rape of Nanjing and during the war it enslaved the *ianfu* (comfort women). In 1945, the US became the only power ever to use atomic weaponry, causing the death of several hundred thousand civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These bombings served as a warning to the Soviet degenerated workers state. During the Korean War in the early 1950s, US imperialism was responsible for the death of some three million Koreans. China's heroic sacrifices defended the North Korean deformed workers state, stopping "United Nations" forces led by General Douglas MacArthur from grabbing the entire Korean peninsula and turning it into a neocolony of the US. During the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975, more than three million Vietnamese were murdered by US imperialism's losing attempt to smash the social revolution there. We fight to build revolutionary workers parties and a Leninist-Trotskyist international to lead the proletariat and oppressed in the overthrow of both rapacious

Joint statement of the Spartacist Group Japan and Spartacist League/US



Motor/US Navy

US and Japanese destroyers on joint manoeuvres in December 2004 in Western Pacific Ocean.

imperialist powers. Reforge the Fourth International!

Following a war of conquest against China in 1895, Japan colonised Taiwan and later used it as a staging area for assaults on southern China, the Philippines and Southeast Asia during World War II. After the defeat of Japan, the Chinese nationalists were given Taiwan. The counterrevolutionary Nationalist Army and the Chinese bourgeoisie fled there after the victory of the People's Liberation Army in the Chinese civil war. Since the 1949 Chinese Revolution, from which the Chinese deformed workers state emerged, Taiwan has been an outpost for US imperialism's counterrevolutionary schemes, military threats and interference in Chinese internal affairs through the puppet Chinese bourgeoisie. Taiwan has been since ancient times a part of China, and we Trotskyists will stand with China in the event of any military conflict with imperialism over Taiwan.

The overturn of capitalist property relations freed China from imperialist subjugation and resulted in the construction of a collectivised economy. Though deformed by the rule of a parasitic, nationalist Stalinist bureaucratic caste, this victory meant enormous social progress for workers, women and peasants, such as the right to a job, housing, education, childcare, social security and medical care. We do not minimise the danger posed to the Chinese deformed workers state by the capitalist economic penetration to which the Stalinist bureaucrats have opened the Chinese economy. However, the core of China's economy remains the collectivised state industries. We are opposed to the Stalinists' plan of reunification with Taiwan embodied in "one country, two systems". Instead, we advance a pro-

gramme for the revolutionary reunification of China, which requires a workers political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy on the mainland, a proletarian socialist revolution in Taiwan to overthrow and expropriate the bourgeoisie, and the expropriation of the Hong Kong capitalists.

The anti-Communist military alliance between Japan and the United States was, during the Cold War, directed primarily against the former Soviet Union. China's criminal alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet Union, begun under Mao Zedong in the early 1970s and continued under Deng Xiaoping, contributed to the eventual counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR in 1991-92. Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and across Eastern Europe created a "unipolar" world of unbridled military aggres-

sion by US imperialism abroad, as seen today in the bloody occupation of Iraq. This has been coupled with more savage attacks on workers, women, minorities and immigrants in the imperialist centres and greater plundering of all the colonial and semicolonial countries. As in the Soviet Union, the destruction of the Chinese deformed workers state would lead to widespread impoverishment of the population as the imperialists scramble for the spoils. The fate of China and the fate of workers the world over are inextricably linked, economically and politically.

Sixty years ago, Japan and the US fought a bitter interimperialist war. At this juncture, their imperialist rivalry is subordinate to their anti-China/North Korea alliance. Over the past decade, the Pentagon has strengthened its military deployment in the Pacific Rim region and, with its incursion into Afghanistan and Central Asia, has thus significantly strengthened its military vice around China. In signing on to the US-led "war on terror", Beijing has only encouraged US imperialism in its counterrevolutionary drive.

Japanese imperialism is determined to throw off the constraints of the "defeated nation" syndrome with which it emerged from World War II and to boost its military might. To accomplish this, the ruling class needs to impose a domestic policy of economic austerity, whip up nationalist poison and reinforce the oppressive apparatus needed for the maintenance of capitalist law and order. In the US, under the guise of the "war on terror", the rulers have further reinforced their arsenal of repression, union-busting and immiseration of the working class and oppressed. Revolutionary workers parties, leading the struggle against Japanese and US imperialism, must necessarily have an internationalist programme and perspective. Smash the counterrevolutionary US/Japan alliance through workers revolution on both sides of the Pacific!

18 March 2005

Available in Chinese

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Councils in a Socialist Asia!

Down With the UN Starvation Blockade!
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Statement of the International
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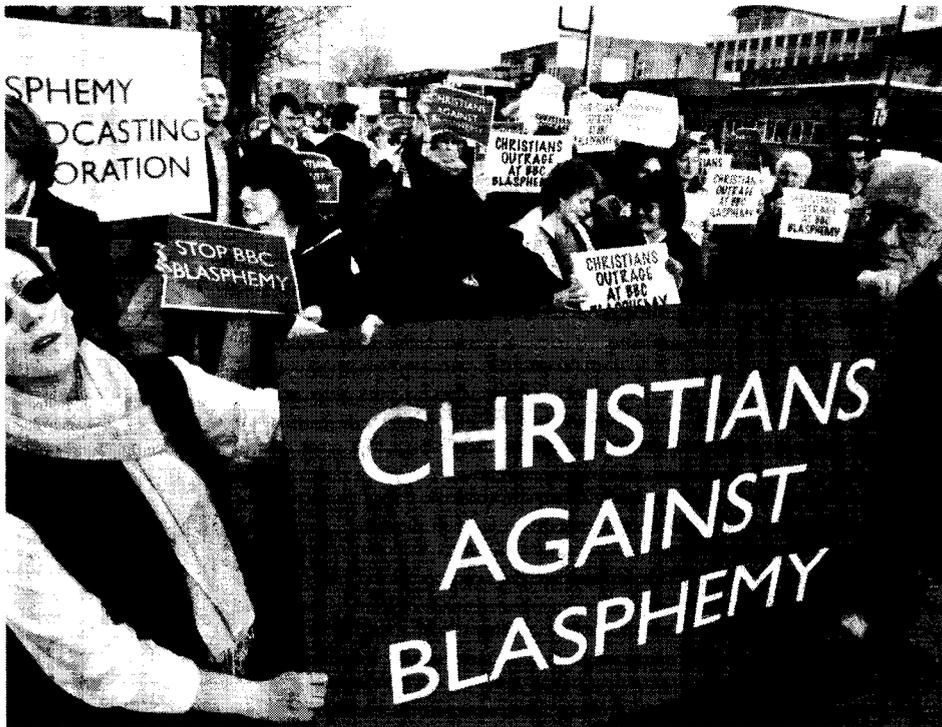
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Labour's Christian values and Islamophobia fuel religious reaction

For separation of religion and state!



Tony Blair promotes holier-than-thou Christian values; emboldens fundamentalist zealots who protested the comically irreverent Jerry Springer—the Opera (left).

The article below is based on a presentation given by Eibhlin McDonald of the Spartacist League at a public meeting in London on 26 February 2005.

Against the backdrop of the brutal occupation of Iraq, the overwhelming theme of the current election campaign is racism—from violent attacks on immigrants to the so-called “war on terror”. The changes to the immigration laws recently announced by Labour are among the most significant attacks on the rights of immigrants in decades. On top of this, more refugees and asylum seekers will be refused admission, more will be locked up and more will be deported. Charles Clarke’s draconian scheme for house arrest for “terror suspects” has been compared to the pass-law system in apartheid South Africa, and is a chilling threat to immigrants and to all ethnic minorities, including those who are British citizens. Citizenship rights boil down to the right to have rights; but those citizens and non-citizens alike who are swept up by the new “anti-terror” laws will effectively have no rights.

When Tory leader Michael Howard called for health checks and quotas on immigrants, British National Party (BNP) leader Nick Griffin said Howard was treading on BNP territory—but Labour insisted the Tories were merely keeping up with them. The Blair government needs no goading from Michael Howard to run a racist election campaign. In 2001, Labour whipped up a racist frenzy that emboldened the BNP who mobilised in large numbers and lay siege to the Asian area in Oldham. These racist thugs were shielded by the cops as Asians were forced to defend their communities in pitched battles. The pattern was soon repeated in Bradford and Burnley.

Not surprisingly, the Respect coalition, dominated by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), calls for votes to “anti-war” Labour candidates in areas where there are no Respect candidates standing, which means in all but a handful of seats. And in the main, the union bureaucrats are calling for votes to Labour. This means a vote for the bloody occupation of Iraq and the torture and death that it entails, and also for the racist “war on terror” at home.

For us, the defence of immigrant rights has a tremendous significance, especially in the face of such a racist onslaught. We call for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* What’s needed is a class-struggle fight to defend the rights of immigrants in the interest of the whole working class. This requires a very sharp fight not only against the Labour government but against the trade union bureaucrats, who share the politics of Labour. The union misleaders who are covering up for Blair over the occupation of Iraq also refuse to lift a finger to defend workers at home against attacks by the government, particularly in the run up to the election.

As Marxists, our programme to fight racism is distinct from that of liberal anti-racists, among whom I include anarchists and “anti-globalisation” ideologues. Racism cannot be understood simply as bad ideas in people’s heads, or ignorance about other cultures, which is plentiful but is not the root cause. Racism has a material basis in capitalist society and all capitalist governments have been known to foment racism. Today, New Labour is aping the far right and does not have much time for an anti-racist facade. But even when they did have a more liberal posture, “old” Labour carried out grotesquely racist anti-immigrant poli-

cies, including “virginity tests” on Asian women entering the country in the 1970s.

Historically, racism has served the British ruling class. Abroad, it provided a justification for slavery—based on the supposed inferiority of the black slaves—and as a cover for the subjugation of darker-skinned people in the colonies. At home, to this day the cutting edge of racism has targeted immigrants. From its inception, the Labour Party upheld the interests of the British ruling class at home and abroad, presiding over the bloody partition of India, for example. Such advances as were made by immigrants and minorities in this country were made in struggle—often as part of the trade union movement, sometimes against fascist thugs in the streets. And those gains were made in sharp opposition to Labourism.

Scarcity is the breeding ground for racism and the struggle to eradicate racism must be linked to the struggle to uproot capitalism and to liberate humanity from poverty and want. We fight for full *integration* (not forced assimilation) of immigrants and minorities into an egalitarian socialist society. Integration must be based on full equality for everybody, men and women, regardless of race. This means it must be integral to the programme for socialist revolution internationally and for planned economies dedicated to massively developing the productive forces.

For more than a decade, anti-immigrant racism has been a frontline issue in Europe. Britain takes fewer refugees than most advanced countries. Indeed the world’s poorest countries take the largest share of refugees and immigrants. For many decades, including during the largest waves of immigra-

tion, Britain remained a country of net *emigration*. However by 1997 (coincident with the election of Labour) this had changed and Britain had a small net inflow, reaching around 150,000 a year by 2003. This increase is part of a worldwide trend that began about 15 years ago. The United Nations says that during the 1990s the number of people living outside their country of birth rose by 55 million. This corresponds to the period since counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which unleashed many of the factors that give rise to migration—poverty, political persecution, instability and wars. Labour shortages in the imperialist countries have also increased demand for immigration.

In Britain and Europe generally, one of the largest waves of immigration took place shortly after World War II. A significant number (but not all) of those immigrants were Muslims. Turks and Kurds came to Germany; North Africans came to France; and many people came to Britain from what is today India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. British companies set up recruitment stations in the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean—London Transport recruited 5000 black workers in Barbados and many black women from the Caribbean were recruited to work in the health service.

The Labour government of the day preferred white, Christian immigrants. Ireland—which historically provided a pool of cheap labour for British capitalism—couldn’t provide enough. Eastern Europe was closed as a source of cheap labour for Western Europe in the late 1940s when most of the countries there became deformed workers states. This was reversed with counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and

Eastern Europe in 1991-92, which unleashed mass poverty, unemployment and emigration.

Christian bigotry, Islamophobia and "secularism"

In Britain today, Islamophobia—directed against immigrants from Muslim countries and their descendants



Workers Hammer

Muslims, main targets of Labour's "war on terror", seen here protesting extradition of Babar Ahmad on trumped up "terrorism" charges.

—is the predominant form of racism. Moreover, the term "religious fundamentalism" is seen as synonymous with Islamic fundamentalism. Britain's population is relatively secular, in terms of belief in God and church attendance. But the British Establishment and the state are far from secular and are in fact saturated with Christian (Anglican) bigotry. The Church of England is an established church; the House of Lords includes lords "spiritual" (senior bishops) and "temporal". Religious fundamentalism aptly describes Protestant zealots like Ian Paisley, who thinks that all Catholics will burn in hell. Tony Blair is in effect a practising Catholic within the Church of England. His recently appointed education minister Ruth Kelly is a member of Opus Dei, an ultra-reactionary secretive Catholic sect founded by a fascist Franco supporter in 1930s Spain. And this country has laws preventing "blasphemy" against the Christian churches. As for the Labour Party, Trotsky wrote scathing polemics about the holier-than-thou Christian values of Labour leaders. Tony Benn sees no contradiction in proclaiming himself to be a socialist and a republican while being a Methodist and a member of the Queen's Privy Council, whose members swear an oath "by Almighty God to be a true and faithful Servant unto The Queen's Majesty".

Secularism in Britain is increasingly defined against Islam, and when you scratch the surface this is often revealed as barely concealed racism. *Guardian* columnist Jeremy Seabrook captured this when he said: "Islamophobia is the only form of prejudice to which the middle class can readily admit; a religion which is perceived as advocating repression of women and hatred of gays renders acceptable forms of prejudice that would be unthinkable if directed against any other social group" and adds that "even secular liberals increasingly define 'Britishness' in opposition to 'medieval' Islamic values" (*Guardian*, 23 July 2004). However, even in the face of escalating attacks on Muslims, many liberals and some left groups deny that Islamophobia exists. Kenan Malik, previously associated with the now-

defunct Revolutionary Communist Party, did a TV show purporting to illustrate that Islamophobia is exaggerated or invented. Under the cover of "secularism" and supposed opposition to Islamic fundamentalism, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) wilfully refuses to call for British troops out of Iraq.

By contrast, the SWP's response to

Islamophobia has been to form an electoral alliance, the Respect coalition, with Islamic forces. A measure of how deeply these reformists have assimilated the notion that socialism is irrelevant is the fact that within Respect, leading SWPers have disavowed socialism, republicanism and secularism. In last year's elections, Respect leader George Galloway appealed for votes from Muslims on the basis that as a Catholic he opposes abortion. And at a subsequent Respect conference SWP members ensured that a proposal to adopt secularism in principle was voted down. Secularism is one of the most basic principles of humanism, as well as scientific socialism. The SWP's excuse was that "secularism" was the pretext used by the French state to ban Muslim girls from wearing the *hijab* in schools. The French state's claim to secularism is bogus and we oppose the racist ban on the *hijab*. We also oppose attempts by the mosques to impose the *hijab* on Muslim women.

The SWP has placed itself to the right of certain bourgeois liberals, such as Stewart Lee of the National Secular Society who directed and co-wrote a biting musical satire on Christianity titled: *Jerry Springer—the Opera*. Christian fundamentalists created uproar when the BBC televised the show in January. On stage, "Jerry Springer's" guests all feel Jesus owes them an apology. Among them are Adam and Eve, "the mother and father of humanity" as well as God and the Devil. One woman dolefully sings "dip me in chocolate and throw me to the lesbians". Things get heated, "Springer" is shot, and as he dies he fantasises about his contribution to history, imagining he has reconciled good and evil, God and the Devil, as the choir sings: "Let poets through the ages tell/ How Jerry Springer united Heaven and Hell!" Much controversy centres on a scene that depicts as rape the virgin Mary becoming pregnant by God (through an angel). Challenged about this on television, one of the writers turned a shibboleth of today's morality brigade back on itself, explaining that there's no way a 13-year-old girl

could have an equal relationship with God, so it had to be an exploitative relationship!

Hands off *Behzti/Dishonour* and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti!

In the ensuing backlash, tens of thousands of e-mails were sent to the BBC, whose executives were threatened. The campaign was orchestrated by Christian fundamentalists who cynically claimed they were following the example of Sikh mobilisations against the play *Behzti* in December. The Birmingham Rep theatre was forced to close in the face of intimidation by hundreds-strong demonstrations of conservative Sikhs (mainly men) against a play written by a Sikh woman, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, who was forced into hiding facing death threats.

The reactionary protests against both *Jerry Springer—the Opera* and *Behzti* heightened well-founded fears for the right of free speech, which will be even more restricted when Labour's new law against "incitement to religious hatred" takes effect. Supposedly designed to protect Muslims, this law could well be used to ban these plays, or indeed anything from Sean O'Casey's play *The Plough and the Stars* to Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*. And it could be used to prosecute imams for what they preach in the mosques. We oppose this law as an attack on free speech and warn against

home—to defend this play, or to oppose the reactionary agenda of the religious and conservative protesters.

Behzti is savagely critical of the oppression of Asian women by organised religion. It touches on homophobia as well as anti-black racism among Sikhs and by implication among all Asians. It harshly condemns the role of religious elders in arranged marriages. Set in a Sikh temple, the play's central character is a Sikh woman named Min who is secretly in love with a young black man—Min's mother's care worker. The mother opposes the relationship between her daughter and the black youth, because he's younger than Min, and he's black. The most controversial character is Mr Sadhu, an official of the Sikh temple, who is corrupt, has a homosexual past and a history of raping young women entrusted to him by their parents in the course of arranging marriages. By the end of the play, many of the women have broken from the shackles of tradition and Min's mother takes revenge on Mr Sadhu for having raped her daughter by killing him with the Sikh sword, intended as an act of liberation.

It is a breath of fresh air in today's political climate that the writer and the cast are so forthright about raising burning issues that minority women face in this racist capitalist society, and that they remain defiant in the face of threats from conservative Sikh forces. The



Reuters

Reactionary protest outside Birmingham Rep theatre by conservative Sikhs enraged by play *Behzti* which condemns oppression of minority women by organised religion.

any illusions that such laws will serve the interests of the oppressed; in fact they are often used *against* the oppressed. The first law against "incitement to racial hatred" implemented in 1966 was famously used for the first time against a black man from Trinidad, Michael X (or Michael DeFreitas), for a speech against racism that the police deemed to be inflammatory.

The cast of *Behzti*, and many liberals from the arts world such as Ken Loach, were outraged that the play had been closed down. Many complained bitterly that government spokesmen such as Fiona McTaggart and the police didn't defend the theatre and the play against the Sikh protesters. From our point of view, it's ludicrous to look to the capitalist state—that is carrying out brutality in Iraq and draconian measures at

actor who played Mr Sadhu, Madhar Sharma, condemned the protesters in a television interview, saying:

"In the name of multiculturalism, we are asked to be tolerant about intolerance. I find it unacceptable when I hear a Sikh leader saying it's wrong for a black man to kiss a Sikh woman. I think it's against the law. I find it unacceptable when a Sikh elder tells me you cannot be a homosexual and a Sikh. Not in this day and this age."

—"Holy Offensive", Channel Four

Such denunciations of "multiculturalism" are common among liberal anti-racists today, because it is seen as strengthening conservative, patriarchal, and religious forces within minority communities. Multiculturalism is an umbrella term used to describe liberal

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Religion...

(Continued from page 7)

policies adopted by governments and local authorities in an effort to alleviate the most overt aspects of racism, within the framework of capitalism. Because it was an attempt to combat racism, it was frequently ridiculed by the far right, and more recently by New Labour politicians. Thus "multiculturalism" became the bogeyman when official reports into the causes of the 2001 disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley revealed a level of segregation in schools and housing reminiscent of the

ference in education. A solution to the broader social questions requires a fight for jobs for all; good quality, free education for all; huge investment in decent public housing—all of which must be linked to the fight to end capitalism and replace it with the rule of the working class.

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

While there is growing influence of religious and separatist forces within minority communities today, there is also opposition to it, including among Muslims. *Independent* journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a liberal British

police more often than not work through the husbands, fathers, in-laws and community elders the women are trying to escape from. The whole purpose of the capitalist state—the cops, courts, army and prisons—is to defend, through force and violence, a system based on exploitation, racial and sexual oppression. Thus it is inherently racist and male chauvinist and cannot be transformed into an agency that will guarantee fairness for women, particularly minority women. Similarly, the bourgeois state cannot become an instrument for fighting homophobia, contrary to what gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell argues. Tatchell correctly points out that it is not racist to oppose homophobia among black people. But we oppose Tatchell's strategy of appealing to the immigration service and Scotland Yard to exclude and investigate black artists. This provides the racist British state with an added pretext for vicious repression of black youth.

Southall Black Sisters' critique of "multiculturalism" provides a useful summary of the limitations of "anti-racist" strategies that do not challenge the framework of capitalism. They say:

"At its best it is a laudable attempt to promote racial tolerance and respect for cultural diversity; at its worst it challenges neither the structural basis of racism nor inequality...it relies on self-appointed community leaders who historically have no interest in social justice or women's equality."

—From *Homebreakers to Jailbreakers* (2003)

The "structural basis" for racism and inequality is the capitalist system and private property. The institution of the family is the main source of women's oppression, as Engels pointed out in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. The monogamous patrilineal family is the vehicle for transmitting property to the next generation and the means of raising new generations of workers, inculcating them with traditional values, etc. Even under working-class rule, the family cannot simply be abolished—it must be replaced by socialised childcare and socialised housework.

Muslim personal law, like other forms of the oppression of women—bride price, dowry, the veil—originated as a means of enforcing *property rights* in pre-capitalist society. But while Christianity (and Judaism) had to adapt to rising industrial capitalism, Islam has not, largely because it remained rooted in parts of the world that were subject to imperialist domination, which retarded the economic and social development of these countries and reinforced social backwardness.

The English Revolution and the Enlightenment

Salman Rushdie, who faced murderous violence for *The Satanic Verses*, is a liberal opponent of Islamic fundamentalism but has a strong bias in favour of Western imperialism. Rushdie identifies secularism and humanism—values that originated with the Enlightenment—with Western imperialism. But he recently discovered that "we need to fight the battle for the Enlightenment all over again in Europe too", while adding that "the Enlightenment wasn't a battle against the state but against the church" (*Independent*, 22 January). This is far from true. The England of the Enlightenment was only possible because there had previously been an England of Cromwell and the English Revolution, which certainly was against the Catholic Church, the international centre of reaction at that time, but it was also against the state. It took a civil war, culminating in the execution of the king, to break the power of the church and the absolutist monarchy. Christopher Hill vividly describes how the New Model Army, which itself was based on Puritanism, mobilised the so-called "lower orders" in society against the official church, saying:

"Cromwell, [by] stabling in cathedrals the horses of the most disciplined and most democratic cavalry the world had yet seen, won a victory which for ever stopped men being flogged and branded for having unorthodox views about the Communion service."

—*The English Revolution of 1640*

The Enlightenment was the ideological reflection of material advances over feudal society and the link between the



John Sturrock (report)

Southall, April 1979: Martyred anti-fascist fighter Blair Peach and victim of racist murder Gurdid Singh Chaggar defiantly honoured by Asian workers.

American South before the civil rights movement.

The poverty in towns like Bradford results from the devastation of the textile industry, which employed primarily Asian labour. But with the de-industrialisation of Britain, the closure of the mills has led to devastation similar to that affecting former coal-mining areas such as South Wales, Scotland or Yorkshire, except that in the Lancashire towns it hits hardest at Asians. The official reports noted that Muslims were confined to ghettos, while many whites and the Asian middle class—which tends to include more Hindus and Sikhs—had moved out.

Although Britain's Muslims have a shared experience of Islamophobia, they are not a homogeneous group. The largest number are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin; other Muslims include Palestinians, Kurds and Turks, many Africans and others who have little in common with each other. But on every social indicator, Muslims, particularly those from Pakistan and Bangladesh, are among the poorest in the country. For example, according to the 1991 census, 47 per cent of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets were out of work.

The Labour government has encouraged religious schools, including Muslim schools. But government spokesman David Bell's recent denunciation of Muslim schools as a threat to "our coherence as a nation" is a reminder that the government prefers Christian schools, including even Catholic schools, which Labour has fostered in Scotland and in Northern Ireland for many years. One factor encouraging Asian parents to send their children to Muslim, Sikh and Hindu religious schools is the fact that they can expect to get better results there than in many poor-quality state schools. In addition, the mosques became increasingly opposed to the secularism of state schools. Obviously, as Marxists we are for the separation of church and state and we oppose all religious inter-

Muslim, complains that "multiculturalism" has exacerbated racial divisions, saying:

"It had led to wilful, woeful ignorance and volitional estrangements between the peoples of this nation, leaving black and Asian Britons playing marbles in the ghetto (in separate clans) and many white Britons feeling disengaged and indignant. Meanwhile, British institutions carry on blissfully, white and inward-looking. Our culture is officially Balkanised, a trend I abhor partly because of my experiences growing up in Uganda, my homeland."

—"The drama of my life", *Independent*, 18 February

The British imperialists stoked up racism between blacks and Asians in Uganda. As a teenager in Uganda under Idi Amin, Alibhai-Brown played Juliet on stage to a black African Romeo, for which she was attacked by relatives, and for which her father never spoke to her again. Pointing to the same prejudice in London in 1930, she notes that when Paul Robeson (a black American singer and Communist) played Othello with Peggy Ashcroft as Desdemona in the Savoy Theatre, critics walked out and the audience hissed when they touched.

Southall Black Sisters are also critical of multiculturalism because it strengthens patriarchal forces—family and religious elders—in minority communities and reinforces the oppression of women. Southall Black Sisters provide refuge and support for minority women in danger of violent assault, confronting real life versions of the kind of brutality that is dramatised in *Behzti*. They have publicly defended a woman who suffered a nearly fatal knife attack by her ex-boyfriend, who was a Hindu priest; a woman raped by a priest in a Sikh temple as well as many women fleeing from the horrors of domestic violence, forced marriage, dowry deaths and so-called "honour killings".

While it is understandable that women in such situations need to use every legal resource at their disposal to protect themselves, agencies such as the



No credit

We Trotskyists hailed Soviet Army's intervention into Afghanistan in 1979 which brought massive gains to women oppressed under Islamic fundamentalist mullahs.

All institutionalised religions reinforce women's oppression, but they are not its origin. Islam doesn't have a monopoly on religious backwardness and the oppression of women is hardly unique to it—Christianity and Judaism have equally stifling moral codes. The extent to which such codes are enforced depends on the history and level of development of a society. Women's oppression is reflected in the legal and social codes of every society. *Sharia* or

English and French Revolutions. However, advances in science and social development do not themselves bring an end to religion—the conditions of poverty that give rise to it must also be uprooted.

It's true that the values of the Enlightenment have increasingly been under attack in the advanced countries, a point made by Francis Wheen in his entertaining book *How Mumbo Jumbo Conquered the World*. Wheen views

1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran and Margaret Thatcher was elected in Britain, as a watershed. Today's retrograde political climate was prepared by the rightward shift, including among liberals and the reformist left during the Cold War. Many liberal ideologues who today bewail the rise of religion played their own part in some of the reactionary moral crusades that swept the US and Britain in the 1980s and 90s. In Britain, these anti-sex witch hunts and round-ups for "satanic" ritual sex were not carried out by religious fanatics but mainly by "liberal" social workers, and were virtually unopposed by the reformist left.

Counterrevolution in the Soviet Union gave the greatest boost to the wave of reaction that liberals now decry. For Western imperialists (and for those who backed them) it is sheer hypocrisy to fulminate against Islam today, having fanned the flames of Islamic fundamentalism during the Cold War, particularly in Afghanistan. The CIA launched the biggest covert operation in its history to back the *mujahedin* against the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Army went into Afghanistan in 1979 we said "Hail Red Army!" and called for extending the gains of the October Revolution to the peoples of Afghanistan, particularly to its brutally oppressed women. It was probably the first war in modern history in which the status of women was a central factor. Although the Soviet Union was ruled at the time by a Stalinist bureaucratic caste, it remained a workers state and had the material basis to bring Afghanistan into the modern world. The Soviet presence there posed the best possibility for the defeat of the reactionary Islamic forces. If the Soviets had pursued this battle to victory, it would have also been an enormous blow against the Western imperialists, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. But the Stalinists withdrew and this prepared the ground for counterrevolution in the Soviet Union itself.

For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!

The rise of political Islam internationally and the relentless attacks on Muslims in the imperialist countries have contributed to the rise of religion

among Britain's Muslims. The term "Asian" is in decline, in favour of Sikh, Hindu or Muslim. Among Sikhs, a separatist and religious movement for "Khalistan"—a religious homeland—grew, particularly in reaction to the 1984 massacre of Sikhs by Indra Gandhi's Indian troops at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. This also unleashed a wave of communalism across India. The Indian Congress Party was a nominally secular party, but its inability to solve any basic economic problems, coupled with increasing reliance on Hindu chauvinism, paved the way for the Hindu fundamentalist BJP.

De-industrialisation also undercuts the level of integration of British minorities. Many of the car plants which once had integrated—black, white, and Asian—workforces simply don't exist anymore. However, today's so-called flexible economy is just as dependent on immigrant labour, and on established minorities, as traditional industry was. And many of today's immigrant workers are not unionised. They work in horrendous conditions and their rights are constantly under attack by this Labour government.

A searing indictment of this "new economy" are the 23 Chinese immigrant workers who drowned last year while picking cockles in Morecambe Bay. Following this atrocity, the TUC commissioned a report about the conditions endured by immigrant labourers in Britain. The report details endless examples of forced labour—such as Greek immigrants contracted to pick flowers in Cornwall who lived in huts and were forced to eat dog food. Stories abound of debt-bondage, passports being removed and Dickensian conditions. *Guardian* journalist Felicity Lawrence wrote that: "The UK has Europe's most flexible labour force; it lives in fear and squalor, is paid a pittance and is bussed round the country to work in the shadows of the night shift." That's obvious to anyone travelling by Tube early in the morning in London. Lawrence adds:

"It is not just the sex industry that traffics and exploits migrants, but our key sectors—food and agriculture, contract cleaning, hotels and catering, construction and care homes. Moreover the state uses migrants' forced labour in many cases—when it outsources local authority care to the private sector, when it uses agencies to recruit

NHS nurses who end up living on £5 a week, when it uses contract cleaners provided by the cheapest bidder for its offices, or when subcontracted migrant labour is used on private finance initiative construction."

—*Guardian*, 3 February

Explaining why Labour ministers and union leaders tried to suppress this report until after the election, Lawrence

the union bureaucracy. Earlier, Sikhs famously fought to overturn a racist ban on wearing turbans at work, on the basis that, if they were good enough to drive British tanks in World War II wearing turbans, they should be allowed to drive Britain's buses wearing them. And in the 1984-85 miners strike, huge sums of money were raised for the miners, including in Sikh temples and from



Workers Hammer

TGWU workers demonstrate in support of 1984-85 miners strike. Strike enjoyed widespread support among black and Asian workers.

says they were fearful—not because the conditions of immigrants are shameful, but because they might lose votes—presumably the votes of racists who think Labour is "soft" on immigrants. Lawrence says: "unions and ministers alike are afraid to rock the boat on migration for fear of losing votes. So a deal has been done to wait."

The treachery of the "labour lieutenants" of the capitalist class is in itself a compelling reason to build a revolutionary leadership of the working class, steeled in the fight against chauvinism, to break the grip of Labourism on the British proletariat. The previous generation of immigrants played a prominent role in working-class struggles. The Grunwick strike of 1976 was a heroic battle by Asian women for the right to decent working conditions, and simultaneously required a struggle against

Asian and black communities in general. In fact, it's a sign of the times when you see Sikh protests against *Behzti*. Sikh immigrants were quite secular; many had been Communists in India and went on to found the Indian Workers Associations in London and Birmingham.

Just as black, Asian and other minority workers have stood in the front ranks of class battles in defence of the unions and against state repression, they will be among the best fighters in the struggle to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party in this country. Such a party will lead the proletariat in a genuinely socialist struggle against decaying British imperialism, whose depredations against immigrants and minorities and the colonial masses have been so amply carried out by Labour governments. ■

Free Mário Bango!

Down with anti-Roma racism!

Mário Bango is a Roma activist and leftist who has spent three years behind bars in Slovakia for defending himself and his brother against a violent racist attack. Last August the Supreme Court of Slovakia upheld his conviction, while reducing his sentence from 12 years to 10. Racism against Roma in Eastern Europe today is of a piece with anti-Traveller racism in this country, which is being stoked to white heat by Michael Howard and the gutter press in an attempt to outflank Labour's racism in the election campaign. Travellers are being hounded even for setting up caravans on their own land, and are being set up for violent racist attacks. Down with anti-Traveller racism!

We reprint below a 19 January letter demanding Mário Bango's immediate release sent to the Slovak

Ministry of Justice by the Partisan Defence Committee, a class-struggle legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League.

The Partisan Defence Committee joins others internationally in anti-racist protest demanding the immediate release of Roma youth and anti-capitalist activist Mário Bango. In March 2001, Mário defended himself and his brother from deadly attack by a skinhead on a tram in Bratislava, Slovakia. Outrageously, he was prosecuted and convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 12 years prison, later reduced to ten.

Mário Bango is a victim of the vicious official Slovak persecution of the Roma people. Shut out from decent housing, education and jobs, Roma are also at constant risk of racist attack. In a 2000 case publicised by the European Roma Rights Center, Anastazia Balazova was murdered by a gang of skinheads who broke into

her home in Zilina, beating her and her children with baseball bats while screaming racist abuse. In 1995, 18-year-old Mário Goral was burnt alive by a gang of skinheads in Ziar nad Hronom. There is no record of the number of racist murders of Roma because the Slovak state, packed with virulent racists like the prosecutor in Mário Bango's case, does not "recognise" racism as a motive in most attacks. Grotesquely, the Slovak parliament held a minute's silence in honour of Mário and his brother's attacker, a known fascist skinhead, when he later died in hospital.

The explosion of nationalism that accompanied the restoration of capitalism in the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe has brought a decade and a half of state attacks, police and fascist terror and degradation of Roma, already for centuries a persecuted minority. The European Union capitalists' club, which recently admitted Slovakia, the Czech Rep-

ublic, Hungary and the other new member countries, aims for broader, more brutally efficient exploitation of the working class. The reality behind all the EU "democracy" claptrap is shown in the common occurrence of Roma fleeing persecution being seized and deported or locked up in burgeoning immigrant detention camps by Western European EU "havens" such as Britain.

We demand: *Immediate freedom for Mário Bango!*

For further information visit the website: www.freemario.org.

Donate funds to his legal defence: Sort code: 07-00-93; Bank account number/reference: 0270/703 851 924. Free Mário Bango Campaign, Nationwide Brixton, 405 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DJ or send a cheque payable to Free Mário Bango to BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

'War on terror' —

(Continued from page 4)

organisation, Liberty. Calling for "respect for precious British values of freedom, justice and the presumption of innocence in any new anti-terror laws" the statement advises that: "Allowing intercepted telephone calls to be used in evidence will facilitate criminal trials of terror suspects. People can be detained for limited periods whilst charges are brought"! Among the hundreds of signatures to this promotion of a "democratic" war on terror is none other than prominent SWP leader and head of the Stop the War Coalition (StWC), Lindsey German.

While scandalous that a self-proclaimed "socialist" could sign such a statement, it wasn't a particularly big move for German from the politics that were promoted by the leadership of the StWC. Indeed, for them the whole purpose of mobilising millions of people on the streets was predicated on the lie that Parliament—the institution of capitalist rule in Britain—only needed to be pressured to serve the "will of the people". In this they found ready allies like the Labour Party's Alice Mahon who is among the most fervent supporters of the "war on terror". Walking the other side of the street, as a candidate for the SWP-dominated Respect coalition in the upcoming elections, German seeks to woo the votes of Muslims who have rightfully come to hate and fear Blair's New Labour Party. Here, under the cover of opposing racist Islamophobia, the SWP panders to Muslim leaders, denouncing even the proposal that Respect include "secularism" in its platform.

The Respect coalition is not even

nominal part of the workers movement but rather a cross-class populist formation centred on the SWP and Islamic religious forces. On principle we would not consider calling for a vote to this electoral alliance in these or any other elections. The very basis for extending critical support in elections is that in some way, however partial or deformed, this tactic advances the understanding of the need to fight for the independence of the proletariat from all the parties and agencies of capitalist class rule. That is the most elementary precondition for any mobilisation of the working class in its own interests and in defence of the interests of all the oppressed.

Claiming to provide a "socialist" alternative in the elections is the Socialist Green Unity Coalition—an alliance of the Socialist Party, Alliance for Green Socialism, the Alliance for Workers Liberty and some disgruntled left-overs from the SWP's last electoral vehicle, Socialist Alliance. Its declaration of "joint policy" promises "an alternative to the right-wing policies of privatisation, war and environmental destruction offered by both the major parties and the Liberal Democrats too." Remarkably, amid an electoral contest defined by an orgy of racist reaction against immigrants, asylum seekers, and Travellers, this goes unmentioned. In the sea of demands that follow, the word racism appears all of twice and the "war on terror" gets less attention than demands devoted to fighting pollution, calls to "favour local food" and taking action to stop "large scale extinction of species".

The dominant demands of this electoral programme are little more than appeals for the defence and meagre extension of the highly eroded "wel-

fare state" in Britain, combined with paeans to bourgeois democracy most grotesquely expressed in the demand for "local democratic accountability of the police". For the AWL such touching faith in the democratic credentials of the imperialist rulers extends to occupied Iraq. They refuse to call for the immediate withdrawal of the occupying armies of British and US imperialism, proclaiming that these provide a breathing space for the Iraqi working class to build its own organisations. This echoes the traitors of the Second International who refused to call for the liberation of the colonial masses from the imperialist overlords and who were rightly savaged as social chauvinists by Lenin. Since the Socialist Party calls for "troops out now", the question is obviously fudged in the election programme to simply say "troops out".

But the two organisations have much in common. Catering to the most backward level of consciousness among the working class, both the AWL and the Socialist Party consider raising the fight against racist reaction to be divisive to working-class "unity". They apply a similar consideration to Northern Ireland where they see the defence of the oppressed Catholic minority as an affront to the Protestant working class. The SP's idea of a voice of the working class in Northern Ireland was Loyalist murderer Billy Hutchinson, whom they hosted as a featured speaker. For its part, the AWL welcomed Ulster Loyalist MP Ken Maginnis to a "week-end of socialist debate" in 1995. In no way does the Socialist Green Unity Coalition merit even the most savagely critical support. On no question does it provide even a lever for breaking with the politics of Labourite parliamentary reformism and chauvinism that have for

so long blinded the working class to its true interests, chaining them instead to the very institutions of their exploitation.

The fight against racism and chauvinism is vital to the unity, integrity and fighting capacity of the working class as a whole. More than a century ago, Marx noted that colonial enslavement of Ireland by Britain and the chauvinism inculcated by the British rulers was "the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation". What was visited first on the Irish is being brought home with a vengeance today not only against Muslims, minorities and immigrants but against everyone the government perceives as an opponent.

Writing from his cell on death row in the US, former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, who knows all too well what it means to be lined up as an "outlaw" in the eyes of the state wrote: "As they scuttle the Constitution and create judges fit for a star chamber, they loosen the very ground on which they stand, quickening their demise.... It is a time not for confusion, but for opportunity, to transform what *is* into what must be." What must be is the revolutionary transformation of this society, the abolition of capitalism and the terror and barbarism that enforces its rule, the creation of a genuinely socialist society which will lay the material basis for the eradication of the exploitation of man by man by ripping the means of production out of the hands of the profit-driven capitalists. The key to unlocking the chains currently binding the working class is the forging of a multiethnic revolutionary workers party whose best fighters will be those steeled in the struggle against racism, chauvinism and every manifestation of state repression. ■

Sinn Féin...

(Continued from page 12)

of the IRA's Army Council. Irish Gardaí raided homes of Sinn Féin supporters in search of evidence of "money laundering". None was found, but McDowell later admitted that the raids had been prepared weeks earlier and there is much media speculation in Ireland that it was planned long before the bank robbery. Feeding grist to the mill of Paisley's anti-Catholic reaction in the North, the Irish government was also aiming to protect its own interests against the increasing inroads that Sinn Féin has been making, particularly among poor and working-class voters in the South.

Viciously anti-working-class, enforcers of clerical reaction against women and racist attacks on Travellers and immigrants, the representatives of the "Irish Free State" are also notoriously corrupt. Indeed former Fianna Fáil taoiseach Charles Haughey probably made away with more from shady business deals while he was in power than the £27 million robbed from the Belfast bank. Such corruption has in no small measure undermined Fianna Fáil's electoral support. But the bank robbery accusations against the IRA and Sinn Féin did them little damage among their traditional supporters in Catholic communities. Graffiti saying "Gerry, Gerry give us a loan" indicated that many thought the idea of the IRA walking off with a cool £27 million was too good to be true. By contrast, the murder of Robert McCartney initially provoked real and justified revulsion among Catholics in Northern Ireland. This reflects concern that, particularly

since the ceasefire, the IRA has operated less as a force for defence of the Catholic communities against Loyalist terror, the British Army and the cops, and act more as gangsters enforcing their own brand of "law and order" over these communities.

The bankruptcy of nationalism

On 6 April, Gerry Adams appealed to the IRA to maintain its previous commitment to "decommissioning", asking them to achieve their "aims by purely political and democratic activity". An article by Niall Stange in the *Guardian* (11 April) observed that "disbandment of the IRA is also the logical conclusion to the course Adams and his like-minded comrades began to chart almost a quarter of a century ago"—when Republican hunger striker Bobby Sands won a seat in Westminster. Today Sinn Féin represents the vast majority of the Catholic population of the North and its support in the South is growing. But it will never be acceptable as a parliamentary political party while it retains even the vestige of an armed wing. Behind the clamour coming from Blair, Ahern and Co for the IRA to disband, the message is that the capitalist state is not going to abide any challenge to its monopoly of armed force by the IRA. Parliamentary democracy is simply the velvet glove over the mailed fist of the state—the army, police, courts and prisons whose purpose is to maintain the rule of capital. It is not enough for the IRA to give up its arms; Republicans are being told that they must be subservient to all the state forces on these islands.

The murder of Robert McCartney is being wielded to force the Republicans to accept the authority of the Orange

state in the North, including the PSNI. This is a bitter pill, but one which Sinn Féin leaders have indicated they might be willing to swallow. Mitchel McLaughlin has said: "If the circumstances had worked out before Christmas, we would have convened a special ard-fheis [national conference] to debate the issues about policing. We want a PSNI that meets the criteria under Patten and the Good Friday Agreement once and for all" (*Daily Ireland*, 7 March). But with or without the window dressing of the Good Friday Agreement, the police force in Northern Ireland remains a fundamentally anti-Catholic force that works hand-in-glove with the Loyalist paramilitaries.

Assurances have also been offered of

Sinn Féin's respect for the police forces of the Irish state. One of the party's Dáil deputies, Aengus Ó Snodaigh declared that Sinn Féin "are now working constructively with the Gardaí to increase local accountability", adding that "we recognise that the Gardaí are a legitimate police force—albeit one in need of fundamental reform" (*Daily Ireland*, 7 March). Such appeals for police "reform" are simply designed to give a more "democratic" facade to the armed fist of the state.

Despite the fact that the IRA has not taken up arms against the Irish state for decades, the government can still whip up fear that the IRA is supposedly running "a state within a state". This is a historically-rooted pretext for repres-

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sion, harking back to the civil war in 1922-23, when the newly-independent Irish state brutally repressed Republican insurgents who objected to the terms of the Treaty signed with the British. Today's justice minister McDowell is the grandson of Eoin MacNeill who supported the execution of Republicans in December 1922; his great-uncle was in charge of the firing squad. But although they fought the state militarily over the terms of the Treaty, the anti-Treaty forces did not challenge the capitalist order. On the contrary, they supported it and were soon to be in charge of it politically. The Fianna Fáil party was founded by these forces and, led by Eamonn DeValera, ran the clericalist state for decades.

Sinn Féin is a petty-bourgeois nationalist party whose politics are fundamentally no different from those of Fianna Fáil. Its aim is the creation of a united, capitalist Ireland. But this would be far from a "democratic" solution to the national question. The Catholics in Northern Ireland are an oppressed minority, but they live within the same territory as the Protestants, who fear becoming an oppressed minority under the clericalist Irish state. The current hardening of Protestant opinion, seen in the huge vote for Paisley's DUP, is in part a reaction to Sinn Féin's claim that the Good Friday Agreement is a step towards Irish unity. This is compounded by the increasing impoverishment of both the Catholic and Protestant working class in Northern Ireland, with the Protestants falsely believing that the Catholics have been given preferential treatment under the Good Friday Agreement. Writing on the 2003 elections which were swept by Paisley on one side and Sinn Féin on the other, *Observer* columnist Henry McDonald explained that the DUP was able to "paint the peace process as a one-way pro-nationalist concession process". Noting that "the only growth industry north of the river Lagan in Belfast has been the construction of almost 20 so-called peace walls separating Protestants and Catholics on a permanent basis" McDonald added: "The landscape from Good Friday 1998 has been radically changed. The two communities are further apart than they were five years ago, politically and physically" (*Observer*, 30 November 2003).

We stand for the defence of the oppressed Catholic community in Northern Ireland and fight against all forms of discrimination in jobs, housing and education. At the same time, we oppose the forcible reunification of Ireland, even the suggestion of which serves to compact the Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots. This precludes a polarisation along class lines and instead lays the basis for communalist terror. In a situation of interpenetrated peoples and fratricidal nationalism, there can be no equitable solution short of the destruction of capitalism and the institution of workers rule. We fight for an Irish workers

republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles. An elementary precondition for any just solution is the withdrawal of British troops.

Deputy Higgins: servant of the bourgeoisie

Socialist Party (SP) Dáil deputy Joe Higgins leapt into the anti-Republican fray in support of the Irish state. A Socialist Party press release (23 February) details an exchange in the



Pat Finucane, murdered in 1989 by Loyalist UDA in collusion with British state.

Dáil in which Higgins asks: "Does the Taoiseach acknowledge that the great majority of residents of the Short Strand area in Belfast are horrified to have criminal butchers in their midst, hiding under the political banner of provisional republicanism". "Criminal butchers" is not a term the respectable Mr Higgins would readily use to describe the Loyalist UVF. Its representative Billy Hutchinson, who was convicted of the murder of two Catholics in Northern Ireland, was hosted by the SP at its meetings in 1995.

Deputy Higgins continued: "Mr. Adams said this morning he has a problem going to the police. Does he have a problem in going to the Short Strand unit of the provisional IRA — call it the local SS unit for short — and demanding that it present itself to justice?" Comparing the IRA to Hitler's SS rolls off Higgins' tongue as do declarations of faith in the "justice" of the notorious anti-Catholic forces of the Northern Ireland police and the shoot-to-kill British troops. The SP has long refused to call for the withdrawal of the troops from Northern Ireland. Last year, when Sinn Féin youth marched in a Belfast antiwar demonstration under a banner that said "Brits out of Ireland and Iraq" the SP denounced them, grotesquely declaring "the above slogan could only appeal to one side of the sectarian divide" (*Socialist Voice*, April 2004).

Higgins' role here is no different than that of British Labour leaders who sided with their "own" bourgeoisie in World War I. He is also keeping alive the leg-

acy of the Irish Labour Party, which refused to oppose the Irish bourgeoisie when it accepted the Treaty and partition in 1921 and gave back-handed support to the state against the Republicans during the civil war. Addressing a special conference of the Irish Labour Party and TUC in 1918, Irish Labour leader Thomas Johnson said: "Your executive believes, that the workers of Ireland join earnestly in this desire, that they would willingly sacrifice, for a brief period, their aspirations towards political power, if thereby the fortunes of the nation can be enhanced" (quoted in *Revolution in Ireland*, Conor Kostick, 1996).

At the height of the furore over the murder of Robert McCartney, Irish SWP leader Eamonn McCann outrageously compared the IRA to the British troops that gunned down 14 Catholics on "Bloody Sunday" in Derry. At a Belfast rally for McCartney, McCann declared to the capitalist media that "the McCartney murder had lowered Republicans to the level of the British paratroopers, and cast a 'dark shadow backwards' on the whole IRA struggle" (*Guardian*, 28 February). Talking out of the other side of his mouth in an article in *Irish Socialist Worker* (22 February - 8 March), McCann appealed to disgruntled Republicans to join the ranks of the SWP:

"Every ruling class voice is currently raised high urging Republicans to ditch paramilitarism, become totally respectable and join the conservative consensus. Forgiveness and glittering prizes are on offer to those who accept. This would represent abandonment of struggle. The SWP urges Republicans who think of themselves also as socialists to turn not to the Right but to the socialist ideas of self-liberation which alone offer a road forward."

And this too would be a ticket to "respectability", of the social-democratic variety.

Lessons of the civil rights struggles

McCann's reputation stems from his role as one of the prominent left-wing leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1960s which opposed the blatant discrimination against Catholics and shook the Orange state. The experience is rich in lessons for future struggles in Northern Ireland where the sectarian divide runs so deep that the possibility for advancing socialist consciousness, or even class consciousness, often seems remote. The Northern Ireland civil rights struggles took place in the context of an international political radicalisation, particularly inspired by the struggles for black civil rights in America. A famous march from Belfast to Derry in 1969 was modelled on Martin Luther King's 1966 march on Selma, Montgomery.

In Belfast, the civil rights movement had a base at Queen's University, where leftists in Peoples Democracy were active. In the early stages there was some support for the civil rights struggle among Protestant students. Following the brutal police repression of a 1968 march in Derry the civil rights movement acquired mass support almost overnight and leftists, including McCann and Bernadette Devlin (now McAliskey) were catapulted to prominence. However both of them had fatal illusions in British imperialism. Such illusions were reinforced by the British SWP which supported the intervention of British troops in 1969 and spoke of "the breathing space provided by the presence of British troops" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969). What was needed was a perspective based on fighting to mobilise the working class, north and south of the border—where there

was huge support for the embattled Catholics—as well as in Britain, against the deployment of the troops. In the absence of a class perspective, the Provisional IRA became the dominant force defending the Catholics in the face of brutal repression by the British. The IRA's forces grew dramatically after Bloody Sunday.

A former leader of Peoples Democracy, Michael Farrell, in a study of the Orange state, illustrates how previous attempts at mild reform by Westminster foundered on the rock of Unionist opposition. He notes that, for the first 40 years of its existence, the Orange state "remained a rigidly repressive police regime, confronting a hostile minority within and maintaining a permanent state of cold war with the South". Northern Ireland was once a centre of shipbuilding and engineering, but with the decline of British heavy industry, by the 1960s this economic link became less important for British imperialism. At the same time, Britain began to develop diplomatic and trade links with the South. The blatant oppression of Northern Catholics became an embarrassment and Westminster began nudging Stormont towards reforms. Farrell explains that:

"The effort met with little success. Once the Ulster industrialists had used the Orange ideology and Protestant supremacy to establish the Northern state; now the Ulster-based industries had all but disappeared, and with them most of the economic reasons for the six-county state. But Orangeism and Protestant supremacy had remained—and now they were themselves virtually the reason for the existence of the state: to dismantle Protestant supremacy would be to dismantle the state itself. The Unionists resisted stubbornly. The British had intervened to defend the state and reform it; but failing to reform it they were forced to concentrate more and more on defending it."

—*The Orange State* (1976)

The prevalence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not proof of some unbridgeable religious divide, but is fostered by the hellish conditions of capitalist exploitation. The attacks on workers in Britain accompanying massive deindustrialisation and the introduction of the so-called "flexible economy" of low-paid service jobs, have impacted even more heavily on both Catholic and Protestant workers in Northern Ireland. Loyalist demagoguery that Catholics have benefited from the "peace" fraud often falls on fertile ground among working-class Protestants because their own situation has worsened. The employment gap between Protestants and Catholics has narrowed mainly because unemployment among Protestants has grown. The inability of the capitalist system to provide a decent living and decent housing for the working people is a key reason for the increasing sectarianism in Northern Ireland; a sectarianism which is inflamed by the capitalists and their state in order to prevent workers from recognising capitalism as the root of the problem.

As communists we seek to intervene, attempting to alter the course of the conflict towards a class determination. We fight for workers revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea. Our proletarian perspective requires an internationalist struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, smashing the sectarian Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the vicious clericalist state in the South. The Spartacist League/Britain and our comrades of the Spartacist Group Ireland fight to build the revolutionary internationalist parties necessary to this task. ■

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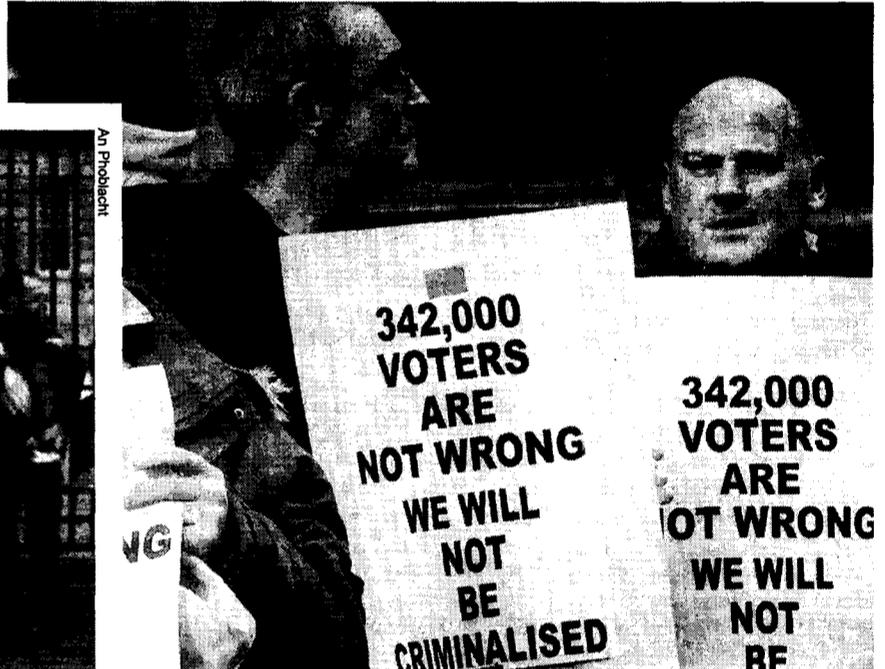
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WORKERS HAMMER

Irish state and imperialist butchers pontificate against IRA "criminality"

Blair and Paisley turn the screw on Sinn Féin

British troops out now!



Sinn Féin supporters protest against vilification of party by Blair, Ahern and Paisley. Outside Belfast offices of "Independent" Monitoring Commission in February (right) that declared IRA guilty of bank robbery, and on 1 March (left) anniversary of Bobby Sands' hunger strike.

The brutal murder of Robert McCartney, a young Catholic father from Belfast's Short Strand, by IRA members has been seized on by an unholy alliance extending from Ian Paisley to the rulers of the Irish state to the British and US imperialists. The killing of McCartney was a vicious crime, one worthy of the Loyalist gangs who regularly terrorise the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. But the "worth" of McCartney's life to the butchers of Iraq in Westminster and the White House, Paisley's Unionists and the clericalist regime in southern Ireland, is to reinforce the forces of Orange supremacy in Northern Ireland — from Loyalist terror to the "official" state forces for anti-Catholic repression, the British Army and the renamed Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Politicians in Washington, from Democrat Ted Kennedy to Republican president George Bush, embraced McCartney's sisters when they went to Washington. This certainly wasn't out of any new-found concern for the lives of working-class Catholics in Northern Ireland. Rather as a *Guardian* reporter put it, the motivation was that "these six women with 19 children between them could force the IRA to do what the British have failed to do for decades: put away their guns and disband" (*Guardian*, 11 March).

This has always been the real purpose of the imperialist "peace" fraud, whose very nature is underlined by the fact that Paisley, one of the most virulently anti-Catholic bigots on the face of the planet, is now calling the shots. Last December, amid declarations of

yet another supposed "historic breakthrough", Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) declared that it would accept a power-sharing deal with Sinn Féin in Stormont—the historic seat of Orange rule. This was about as likely as Paisley swearing allegiance to Rome. For its part, the IRA had declared that it would "completely and verifiably put all our arms beyond use". But Paisley demanded photographic evidence, pontificating that Republicans had to don "sack cloth and ashes". The IRA refused to submit to what they aptly described as an "act of humiliation". Although taking its "decommissioning" offer off the table for now, the IRA still accepts the framework of the "peace process". A 9 December 2004 IRA statement opined that "the search for a just and lasting peace is a challenging one. The IRA leadership has risen to that challenge. The British government and the leaders of unionism must do likewise."

Sinn Féin has steadfastly clung to the illusion that the British imperialists—with the assistance of the Irish government and US imperialism—would weigh in against the Unionists to ensure that a deal was implemented. Yet the 1998 "Good Friday Agreement" was premised on maintaining the British Army occupation of Northern Ireland, the guarantor for the repressive apparatus of the Orange statelet. The only force that was to disarm in Northern Ireland was the IRA, not the Loyalist death squads. As we warned from the beginning: "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).

Following the latest breakdown in "negotiations", all fire was turned against Sinn Féin as the responsible party, which was then subjected to a relentless barrage of hostility from the very forces it has promoted as its "allies" for peace in Northern Ireland. In January, Northern Ireland police chief Hugh Orde made the totally unsubstantiated accusation that the IRA was responsible for a spectacular bank robbery in Belfast. This was immediately seized on by the British and Irish governments to demand that Sinn Féin ensure that IRA "paramilitary and criminal activity" be "definitely removed from the equation". Blair cut off parliamentary allowances to Sinn Féin's four Westminster MPs amid calls to ban them from Westminster—despite the fact that they were actually elected to the "Mother of Parliaments" and don't even take their seats there, refusing to swear allegiance to the Queen.

There is still not one shred of evidence of the involvement of the IRA or Sinn Féin in the bank robbery (which in any case is no crime from the perspective of the working class and the poor, or as Bertolt Brecht put it, "it is easier to rob by setting up a bank than by holding up a bank clerk"). But while Blair was railing against IRA "criminality", he was busy trying to further cover up the very real crimes of British imperialism in collusion with the Loyalist death squads in Northern Ireland. In 1989, Pat Finucane, a Belfast Catholic lawyer who defended, among others, Bobby

Sands and other Irish hunger strikers, was gunned down in front of his family by the Loyalist UDA. He was targeted by Brian Nelson, an agent of the British Army and intelligence chief of the UDA. The whole truth about this case could be a devastating exposure of British imperialist "democracy", so Blair is now introducing a new public inquiries bill to curtail what can be made public in any "public" inquiry. As Michael Finucane wrote in a bitter indictment of Blair:

"In three days, on February 12 2005, exactly 16 years will have passed since my father was murdered by proxy agents of the British government. For those 16 years, my family and I have been campaigning for a public tribunal of inquiry into the murder because of our belief that his killing was ordered at the highest level. What is more, we are convinced the evidence to prove it is contained in files locked deep within the establishment.... Tony Blair signed an agreement with the Irish government in 2001 to deal with my father's case. He did so under pressure and in an attempt to delay an inquiry into the case, something his government has been doing for several years.... The murder of my father is a crucial event because of what it could potentially reveal. It is for this reason the [public inquiries] bill was created."

—*Guardian*, 9 February

Officials from the Irish government were as vehement against the IRA as Blair, if not more so. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern declared that Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness knew of the IRA's supposed plans for the bank robbery while they were sitting at the table negotiating for "power sharing". Justice Minister Michael McDowell weighed in to declare that Adams and McGuinness were members

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