

Cop execution of Jean Charles de Menezes

"We may be poor but we are not that stupid", said Giovanni de Menezes, the brother of Jean Charles de Menezes, who was gunned down on the Tube by police on 22 July. Rejecting officials' insulting blood money offer to the family of £15,000, he said, "We will not exchange money for my brother's life." The fury and disgust expressed by the family of the slain 27-year-old Brazilian immigrant has grown daily, as millions now know, due to leaks to the press, that the government's cover-up of the horrifying police killing was a complete pack of lies.

Blair's government and Scotland Yard officials now complain that the fury over de Menezes is distracting the public from the "war on terror", escalated after the 7 July terror bombing of London transport and the 21 July bomb

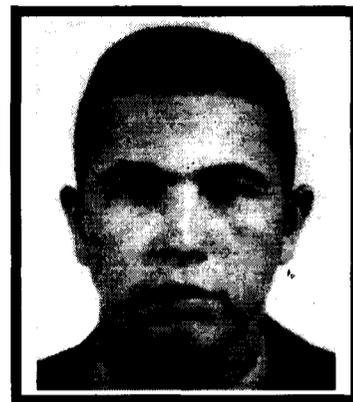
scare. But the cop execution of de Menezes is what Blair and Bush's "war on terror" is all about—expanding the state's deadly powers of repression against the population domestically.

Just about every single "fact" given out by police following the killing of de Menezes, whom they initially claimed was a terrorist suspect, has turned out to be a lie. He had no rucksack (where a bomb supposedly could have been hidden), he was not wearing a bulky padded jacket, he did not run from police, he did not jump over a ticket barrier. Actually, as the *Guardian* (17 August) reported, "According to documents obtained by ITV News from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), which is investigating the shooting, Mr de Menezes was filmed on CCTV cameras entering the station at a normal walking

pace and even picking up a free copy of the Metro newspaper. He was wearing a denim jacket."

The *Observer* (21 August) reported that police officials revealed to them that the surveillance team following de Menezes "felt that he was *not* about to detonate a bomb, was *not* armed and was *not* acting suspiciously [emphasis added]". However, a second, armed police unit then entered the carriage where de Menezes was seated. He stood up and they grabbed him. While he was held down, they opened fire. Seven shots to the head, another in the shoulder, while he was helpless: the death of Jean Charles de Menezes was a cop execution, pure and simple.

While the killing of an unarmed civilian in London has shocked the British public, "shoot-to-kill" has long



Reuters

Jean Charles de Menezes

been the *de facto* policy of British imperialism for "IRA suspects". For this reason, the lies about de Menezes

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US/British troops out of Iraq now!

Down with "war on terror" government repression!

"The rules of the game are changing", intoned Tony Blair on 5 August, as he seized on the criminal London terror bombings to justify strengthening the state's machinery of violence and repression. The July London bombings were horrific indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Whoever was responsible for them, and for other similar atrocities such as the 23 July bombing in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, shares the same mindset as the imperialist rulers, identifying the working class and the population as a whole with the policies of the capitalist rulers. The Blair government is shamelessly whipping up a climate of fear and hoping to meet with little opposition to repressive measures that in the past have been highly controversial.

The government and the police want the public in Britain to accept "shoot-to-kill", which has long been the form of British imperialist "justice" meted out to "IRA suspects" in Northern Ireland. The morning after the 21 July bombing scare, with public fear at its height, the Metropolitan Police brutally killed Brazilian immigrant Jean Charles de Menezes in cold blood. The Metropolitan Police's policy of "shoot-to-kill" has been endorsed by London mayor Ken Livingstone, in the face of growing public outrage at the police lies which are rapidly being exposed. The state's attempt to frame up the victim as a "terrorist suspect" floundered; however, in today's climate of Islamophobia, one can only imagine the



Mark Chilvers/Observer



Toby Madden/Independent

Armed cops in south London, 23 July, on the way to raid the block of flats in which Jean Charles de Menezes lived until he was killed the day before. Mosque in Mile End Road, east London (right) had nearly every window broken.

vilification that would have taken place had the dead man been a Muslim. Gruesomely justifying why cops pumped several bullets into the victim's head, former London police chief Lord Stevens, who sent police teams to Israel and other countries for training, explained that the only way to stop a "suicide bomber" is to "destroy his brain, instantly, utterly" (*Guardian*, 25 July).

Announcing the fourth "anti-terrorism" law in five years, Blair complained in his 5 August speech that in the past "each tightening of the law has met

fierce opposition" and that "regularly we have had defeat in parliament or the courts". The 2001 Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act allowed for foreign nationals to be detained indefinitely without trial but this was subsequently ruled to be contrary to the Human Rights Act. The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 was rushed through in March, amid huge controversy, replacing indefinite detention with "control orders"—ie house arrest—for *both* foreign and British nationals. But this expires in March 2006; the government's majority is much reduced since the May election,

and Blair wants to take advantage of public hysteria to make these measures permanent. As he said, "the mood now is different" (*Statewatch News Online*, 18 August).

The government is intent on deporting "terrorist suspects" to countries where they will be tortured, dismissing objections by Amnesty International, civil liberties organisations and the UN that this contravenes the European Convention on Human Rights. Blair plans to challenge the Convention and to amend the Human Rights Act that

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de Menezes...

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were instantly recognisable to Northern Ireland Catholics. As Mark Thompson, a spokesman for Northern Ireland-based Relatives for Justice, said:

"The accounts, as described by eyewitnesses, of the intent to kill had all the characteristic hallmarks of numerous shoot-to-kill incidents claiming hundreds of lives spanning three decades here including the all too familiar and characteristic headlines of the right wing press in seeking both to justify the unjustifiable and vilify the victim immediately afterwards."

—Daily Ireland website, 29 July

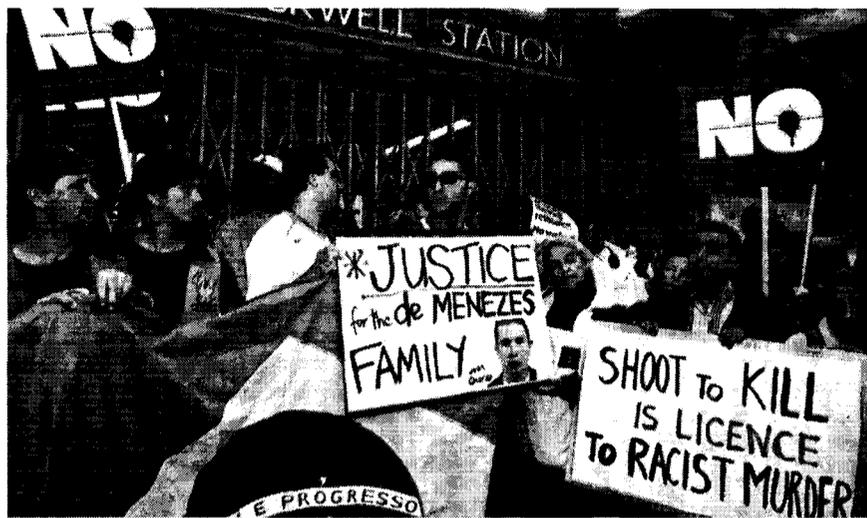
The Metropolitan Police didn't hesitate to "shoot-to-kill" long before there was any pretence that it was necessary to stop "suicide bombers". In 1999, they gunned down Harry Stanley in Hackney; the 46-year-old Scottish man supposedly "sounded Irish"; the sawn-off shotgun the police alleged he was carrying was a table leg. In 1996, police

blew away IRA supporter Diarmuid O'Neill in an early morning raid on his home in west London, then claimed he died in a "gun battle". He was unarmed, and was riddled with bullets after CS gas was thrown into his room. Likewise, when the SAS executed three unarmed IRA members in Gibraltar in 1988—firing 16 bullets into Sean Savage at point blank range while his hands were raised in surrender—they falsely claimed the victims were about to detonate a bomb. And it's not only "shoot-to-kill": a sickeningly long list of mainly black deaths in custody includes, most recently, the 6 August death of 32-year-old Paul Coker in Plumstead, southeast London.

Ominously, the operation that culminated in the death of de Menezes saw the first use of a new, secretive, "Special Reconnaissance Regiment" of the army, which "draws on members of the 14th Intelligence Company, and the Force Research Unit, which handled all military intelligence informers in Northern

Ireland" (*Sunday Times*, 24 July). The Force Research Unit is the sinister agency that colluded with Loyalists in the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

lies and to see that some form of justice is done. But we are under no illusion that a public inquiry will do either. Over 30 years after Bloody Sunday, when the British Army shot and killed



Evening Standard

London, 25 July: Hundreds protest at Stockwell station against the cop execution of Jean Charles de Menezes.

The family of Jean Charles de Menezes is calling for a public inquiry and for the police officers responsible to be charged with murder. The murderous and arrogant caretakers of the tattered British empire, from Tony Blair on down, are defending their police killers. As cries rise for the resignation of police chief Sir Ian Blair, Ken Livingstone said Blair "is the best news that London policing has got" (*Guardian*, 24 August). Once again, these Labour politicians are vehemently defending the interests of their capitalist masters against popular outrage—which means defending the cops' right to kill anyone, anywhere, especially if their skin is even slightly dark, without warning or reason. The day after the shooting, the cops arrogantly insisted that they'd do it again.

We support the family's every effort to find out the truth, expose the state's

14 Catholics in Derry in 1972, following a public inquiry that took over 400 days of evidence from more than 900 witnesses, the British state has yet to admit that the army did the killing, or even that the victims were unarmed civil rights protestors! Far from being prosecuted, General Sir Michael Jackson, who was a captain in the Parachute Regiment in Derry on the day, is today head of the British Army, overseeing the bloody occupation of Iraq. It is the imperialist rulers, from the toadying British hangers-on to the United States, who are the biggest terrorists in the world. The only way to get rid of state terror for good is through revolutionary struggle to sweep away the entire machinery of capitalist state repression and the capitalist system itself.

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 853, 2 September 2005.



TROTSKY

The Soviet Union in battle against Nazi Germany

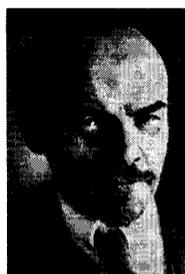
The 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe was on 8 May. The smashing of the Nazi regime was carried out by the Soviet Red Army. The Trotskyist position was for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union, and for revolutionary defeatism towards all sides in the inter-imperialist conflict between the Allied "democracies" and the Axis powers led by Nazi Germany. Polish Marxist

Isaac Deutscher noted that the heroic resistance of the Soviet workers showed that the revolutionary gains of October 1917 still persisted, despite being undermined by the Stalinist bureaucracy. This remained true until the USSR was destroyed by counterrevolution in 1991-92.

Eight months have passed since the fateful date of 22 June 1941 when Hitler began his march on Russia. From that day the two most powerful armies in the world have been locked in epic combat from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Although the German Panzer divisions have in this time conquered a territory no smaller than that of Germany itself, nothing foreshadows the breakdown of the superhuman heroism with which the Russian revolution fights for its life and for its banner. Bleeding profusely it finds its greatness anew. The destiny of the world now hangs in the balance across the vast spaces of the USSR....

One fundamental truth about the German-Soviet war has to be understood: the heroic resistance of the Russian workers and peasants is proof of the vitality of revolutionary society. Soviet workers and peasants are defending everything which, in spite of various deformations, has remained of the revolution: an economy without capitalists and landlords. They defend what they see as their socialist fatherland—and here the accent is on the adjective no less than on the noun. They defend it not because, but in spite of the privileges which the new bureaucracy has usurped for itself; not because, but in spite of the totalitarian regime with its GPU, concentration camps, cult of the leader, and the terrible purges. Whoever has had an opportunity to observe Soviet reality even for a short time knows that the totalitarian regime had not strengthened but weakened the Soviet state. The huge quantity of modern weapons which the Red Army wields in battle could have been produced on a far greater scale and in better quality without the whip that lashes the backs of the Soviet workers. The sword of the revolution would be sharper today if it had been honed by a true democracy among the working masses. Solidarity with Russia does not in any way demand that this truth be concealed.

—Isaac Deutscher, "22 June 1941" (February 1942)



LENIN

"War on terror"...

(Continued from page 1)

incorporates it into British law. Meanwhile, government ministers are seeking assurances from Algeria, Jordan and other countries that returned prisoners will not be tortured. Such "assurances" are widely condemned as worthless, but that's good enough for the British imperialists who are infamous for their sadistic torture of prisoners, not only in Iraq but also at home in prisons like Belmarsh.

Among ten foreign nationals previously serving control orders who have now been rounded up for expulsion are a group of Algerians who have been hounded and incarcerated as "terror suspects", despite the fact the state has failed to find a scrap of evidence against them. Ann Alexander, a friend of some of the men, wrote to the *Glasgow Herald* describing the cruelty and barbarism of their treatment:

"They have been the most monitored people in the country for four years and if they had been suspected of doing anything, least of all breaching their control orders, they would have been arrested and charged. Something that never happened, and they have never been charged with any terrorist offences.

"These are vulnerable people, asylum-seekers and refugees with wives and children who were born in this country. They are being sacrificed to show us how 'tough' the government is being. This action is being taken against the weakest and most damaged people. One man suffers from the effects of polio and walked into Belmarsh but left in a wheelchair due

to his immobility while detained. Another has no arms. Most have been victims of torture and their fathers before them in Algerian desert prison camps. They have never been alleged to have any connection to any acts of 'terrorism' against Britain let alone the London bombings last month in which all the suspects appear to be British. They are political prisoners."

—*Herald*, 15 August

Frustrated by judges who refuse to authorise deportations, the government now proposes to set up secret "anti-terror" courts, with special "security-cleared" judges who would conduct pre-trial hearings in secret, in which the accused would have no idea what the charges against them were. The new legislation would extend the maximum period of detention without charge from two weeks to three months or more. This attempt to enshrine in law the right to detain foreign nationals indefinitely without trial—amounting to Northern Ireland-style internment and no-jury Diplock courts—is an attempt to "disappear" people, the essence of a police state, which this government aspires to. "What we are seeing in Britain is the rise of the democratic police state", writes liberal journalist John Pilger, adding that: "Blair is silent on western state terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere; and for him to moralise about 'our values' insults the fact of his blood-crime in Iraq. His budding police state will, he hopes, have the totalitarian powers he has longed for since 2001 when he suspended habeas corpus and introduced unlimited house arrest without trial" (19 August, www.ukwatch.net).

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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!

The Spartacist League is the British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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Why I joined the Spartacus Youth Group For a revolutionary socialist programme to liberate humanity!

Letter

We print below an application letter from Dan L for membership of the Spartacus Youth Group, dated 7 June 2005. Some punctuation and spelling has been changed to conform to Workers Hammer style.

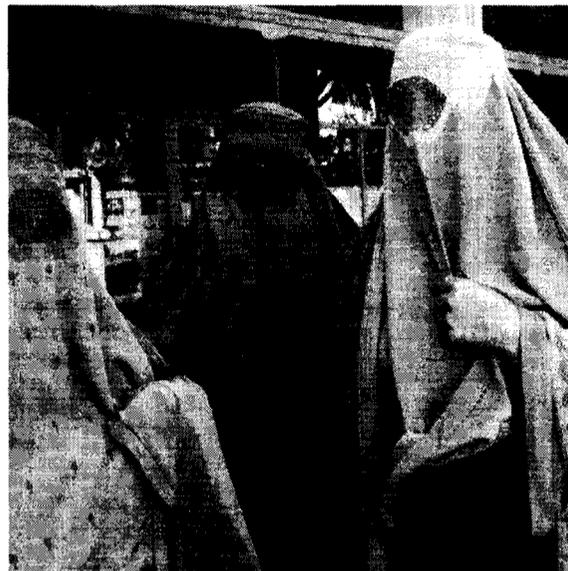
Comrades,

It is not hard to see how vile the present social order is. That is not what I wish to write about. The purpose of this letter is to explain how the Spartacist League has taught me that it is only through communism that humanity can rationally control its environment: by eradicating scarcity, and by placing social production under social control. Whilst many can identify the vast hypocrisies, oppressions, and injustices that the imperialist system creates, in which the parasitic classes of the few gorge themselves out of the blood and toil of billions, it is only through the politics of an effective and principled communist party that humanity can discard the embarrassment that is the decaying imperialist order. I understand that the forging of a party that provides leadership for the workers and oppressed of the world is our task.

I was in my late teens when I first began to realise that Marxism not only identifies the material basis of understanding class society, but provides, through dialectical materialism, the answer [to] how to transform society to provide for the needs of all. I understood that socialists need to look towards a revolution led by the proletariat—the world's producers who have both the incentive and social power to overthrow capitalism. However, a basis of understanding how capitalism works and a theory—however apt—in explaining how to overthrow a bourgeoisie that is armed to the teeth with disproportionate wealth, nuclear arsenals, and the oppressive powers of the state and ideological hegemony, is only the very start of becoming a revolutionary. The understanding of the need to build a party that is free from chauvinism, reformism, and opportunism, is another step entirely.

Until I was introduced to the Spartacist League through my brother, I was lost in search of a party that was worthy of inheriting the mantles of Lenin and Trotsky. I was never enthused by joining such groups as the SWP who at one point can speak rhetorically of tearing down the gates of Parliament whilst at the same time celebrate the careers of such avid parliamentarians as Tony Benn. I remember attending one of the SWP's sham "Marxism" events in which they invited the past member of one of Her Majesty's Governments, Tony Benn MP, to speak. Moreover, according to their programme, it was my proletarian responsibility to vote Labour in my 2001 constituency. Was this revolutionary? Obviously, I was confused. My

Left: Members of Afghan women's militia who fought alongside the Red Army against the CIA-funded Islamic fundamentalist mujahedin. The Spartacist League hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan whose withdrawal led to Islamic reaction with women being forced back into the oppressive burka as shown right.



uncertainty of what these charlatans called for meant that I never became enthusiastic. I never joined, felt disillusioned, but continued to read their red-top. I would later understand that their seemingly contradictory programme is consistent with the rotten core of their inability to question the class nature of the state.

I finally abandoned any illusions with reformism when I began to learn of the Spartacist League. I could leave the petitioning to local MPs to those that knew how to do it best: for I was now in touch with revolutionary Marxism. What first attracted me to the Spartacist League was its heroic history of at all times defending, and calling for the extension of, the gains of the Russian Revolution. The concrete historical example that proved to me that this was key to Trotskyism was the Spartacist defence of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This was an important factor of why I joined. I read and discussed about the issue at a time that was important to learn the history of such a degenerated society as, when I was first interested in the Spartacist League, the imperialists had just invaded Afghanistan—after their old allies had just destroyed the World Trade Center.

The Spartacist hailing of the Red Army was a truly heroic example of putting into practice the Trotskyist principle of defending the social gains of October, whilst calling for the proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy back in the Soviet Union. As Trotsky argued, "Those that cannot defend past positions, cannot conquer new ones." Unlike ostensible Trotskyists on the fake left, the Spartacist League did defend a past position. At the same time the charlatans were celebrating the cause of the Reagan and Thatcher-sponsored motley bunch of mullahs, landlords, tribal-chiefs and their bands of reactionary cut-throats, the Spartacists hailed the Soviets who, as a force of modernity, were building schools, hospitals, and basic infrastructure. Two images that really brought the truth home to me

over Afghanistan were two photographs printed in *Workers Vanguard*. One shows empowered women wearing modern clothes and bearing rifles, the other was that of subjugated women shrouded in burkas. It is not hard to see which society shown in the images any professed progressive should have supported, but still the fake left celebrated the *jihad* in which the *mujahedin* threw acid into the eyes of schoolteachers for simply teaching girls to read. This support is one of the many crimes of the leadership of the fake left who have not only been on the political barricades with Islamic fascists but have also bedded Solidarność—Thatcher's favourite union.

I became interested in the Spartacist League purely because its programme consistently espouses the correct class line. The Spartacists heroically fought against the reunification of Germany under German imperialism—even organising a mass demonstration with historical impact in Treptow Park in 1989. This was a mobilisation against fascist desecrations of a memorial to the Red Army soldiers who died in the liberation of Berlin from the Nazis. The Spartacists also called for proletarian political revolution in the USSR right up to its demise, and were there at the crucial moment. These were both times when such principled acts of heroism were going against the grain of the general cowardly opinion of the left in the imperialist centres.

The Spartacist League has taught me the lessons of history; of how the workers movement has continually been betrayed by its misleaders. It has taught me how vital it is never to pander to opportunism. The programme and consistency of the Spartacist League gives it the moral authority to alone call itself the heir to the work started by Lenin and Trotsky. For this reason I am writing to apply to join the Spartacist Youth Group. I agree to follow the disciplinary procedures, and fully agree to the programme. I believe that:

- The party must continue to function independent from the bourgeoisie and its state. No to the class-collaborationist politics of reformism and popular front-

ism! From Spain in the 1930s to Chile in 1973, class collaboration has meant bloodshed for the workers. The state is not neutral.

- The ICL must continue to maintain its international character. Socialism cannot be built in one country. The workers must be united against imperialism internationally. No to peaceful co-existence! For class war! For revolution in the imperialist centres in order to create abundance and eradicate scarcity!

- The deformed workers states of China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba must continue to be defended. The fall of the Soviet Union devastated conditions throughout the area, has let the imperialists run amok in the semi-colonial world, and has left the workers movement demoralised. Don't let the imperialists turn China into a giant sweatshop!

- Sexual and racial oppressions have a material basis: capitalism. For the eradication of the material basis of social oppressions! For a multiethnic workers party! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

- Socialism must be built by the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the collectivised economy will be administered by workers councils, democratically accountable to the class-conscious revolutionary workers.

Above all, the Spartacist League means the maintenance of a consistent programme. Despite all the difficulties of forging a revolutionary party from a small cadre in these difficult times, it is the strength of the programme that should give us optimism.

As Lenin said [in Russia in April 1917]: "We are not charlatans... We must base ourselves on the consciousness of the masses. Even if it is necessary to remain in a minority. We will carry on the work of criticism in order to free the masses from deceit... Our line will prove right... All the oppressed will come to us. They have no other way out" [Quoted in *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky, 1933].

I hope you accept my application,

Comrade Dan.

"War on terror" ...

(Continued from page 2)

Other police-state measures that are planned include drawing up a list of "extremist" centres, networks, websites and bookshops. A taste of things to come was seen on 15 July, when police smashed down the door of an Islamic book centre near Leeds and confiscated anti-war material. This included a DVD of Respect MP George Galloway addressing the US Senate and a *New Statesman* article by John Pilger, because it was illustrated by a famous photograph of a Palestinian man in Gaza trying to shield his son from the Israeli army, who then killed the boy. The Respect coalition—an alliance between the Socialist Workers Party and Islamic forces, led by maverick MP George Galloway—is a particular target for Islamophobic campaigns. We defend Respect and Galloway against any attempts at witch hunting and state repression.

Unions must oppose the "war on terror"

The Labour government's "terrorism" bogeyman, stigmatising Muslims as the "enemy within", fuels racism which only serves to further divide and weaken the working class. The largest groups of Muslims in Britain are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent, of whom some 69 per cent live in poverty according to a recent TUC study. But Muslims are not just victims; they are an integral component of the workforce. Only the multiethnic working class has the social power to defend minorities and immigrants against attacks, and to combat racist divisions. That social power was brought to bear with tremendous impact in the August strike that paralysed Heathrow Airport, when British Airways ground crews struck in protest against the sacking of Asian catering workers, mainly Sikh women. The racially-integrated workforce at British Airways recognised that their own interests and those of the Asian catering workers were the same, which demonstrates the power of class solidarity to transcend ethnic divisions. Moreover, the strike contradicts the prevalent lie that workers and minorities are powerless in the face of government attacks.

For too long, the government has felt emboldened by the fact that the union misleaders will not lift a finger to mobilise their multiethnic membership in defence of Muslims against the "war

on terror". Indeed some of the union tops have signed up in support of it, albeit with criticisms. A letter opposing Blair's latest proposals, published in the *Guardian* (26 August), argues that they will alienate people—meaning Muslim leaders—who ought to be co-opted to work with the police. Co-signed by union general secretaries David Prentis of Unison, Billy Hayes of the CWU, Paul Kenny of the GMB and Keith Norman of Aslef, as well as by Ken Livingstone and a selection of Muslim leaders and civil libertarians, the letter is a blatant call for co-operation with the police in the "war on terror", saying:

"We support the police and measures against those who plan, support or carry out such terrorist attacks. However a number of the security measures which the government has said it is considering risk criminalising or excluding people who condemn terrorist attacks and whose co-operation is indispensable to the work of the police in fighting terrorism."

It is downright treachery for the so-called leadership of the unions to support increased powers for the police and the state, the very same "special bodies of armed men" that will be used against the unions in class struggle. Contrary to the myth that the state is simply responding to exceptional circum-

stances presented by the threat of "suicide bombers", the British capitalist rulers have never hesitated to deploy the full force of the state—the police, army, courts and prisons—to crush dissent as well as class struggle. Innocent Irish people such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six were framed up and incarcerated for decades as part of

the 1970s witch hunt against "IRA terrorism", while an army of cops was sent to the coalfields to smash the 1984-85 miners strike. Many of the union bureaucrats back the "war on terror", but simultaneously like to brandish "anti-war" credentials and in the past have been welcomed on "Stop the War Coalition" platforms. But their supposed opposition to the Iraq war stemmed from social-patriotic motives—believing that following George Bush's foreign policy is not in the best interests of feeble British imperialism. Manifestly these bureaucrats did not mobilise the ranks of the unions in struggle against the war. Rather the firefighters strike was throttled by the FBU leadership who feared being branded as "unpatriotic" on the eve of the invasion of Iraq. At last year's Labour Party conference, Prentis and TUC bureaucrats, with the aid of pro-occupation Iraqi trade unionists, saved Blair's bacon by ensuring the defeat of a motion calling for early withdrawal of British troops from Iraq.

The purpose of the "war on terror" is to stifle class struggle and to regiment the working masses through domestic repression, the better to free the hands of British imperialism for its bloody



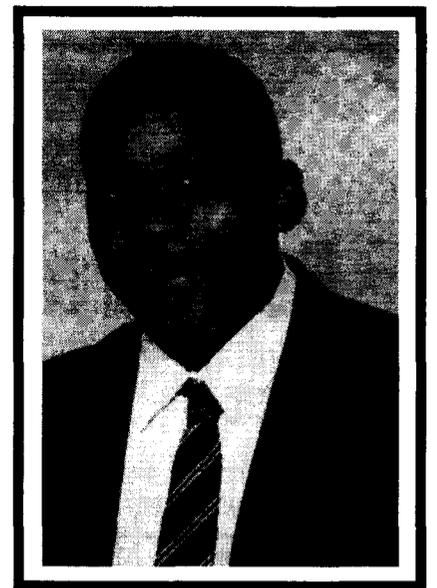
A British tank rolls through a village in Iraq. US/British occupation brings death and destruction to the Iraqi peoples.

depredations abroad. We seek to link opposition to the bloody imperialist occupation of Iraq with a perspective of mobilising the working class for revolutionary struggle against the capitalist rulers at home and abroad.

Government foments racist terror

Government foments racist terror

It is in the direct interest of the working class to mobilise against the racist violence against all minorities that has increased dramatically as a result of the state's vendetta against Muslims. On 29 July, a gang of race-terrorists carried out the heinous murder of black Liverpool teenager Anthony Walker, embedding an axe in his skull as he waited at a bus stop with his white girlfriend. This grisly murder has caused outrage in the city of Liverpool and beyond, echoing the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993. On 6 August Paul Coker, a 32-year-old black man, became the latest in a long list of black men to die in police custody. This government's policies have led to a rise of *over 500 per cent* in the level of racist abuse hurled at Muslims and Asians generally since the 7 July bombings. A mosque has been fire-bombed; a 12-year-old Muslim child in London had a gun pointed at his head by police; countless numbers of Asians have been detained for "stop and search" at airports, train stations, while driving or walking in the street.



Guardian

Murdered teenager Anthony Walker.

In an attempt to gag its opponents, the government proposes to create new offences of "acts preparatory to terrorism" and "indirect incitement to terrorism", which aims to criminalise *speech* and political *views*. Home secretary Charles Clarke published a "List of Unacceptable Behaviours" that applies to non-citizens both in the UK and abroad (!). It includes: "writing, producing, publishing or distributing material; public speaking including preaching; running a website" to express *views* which the government considers will "foment terrorism", "justify or glorify terrorism" or "foster hatred which may lead to intra community violence in the UK". This is rich, coming from the British imperialists who are daily fostering "intra-communal violence" in Iraq and who wrote the book on racist divide and rule from the Indian subcontinent to the Near East. This draconian measure could be used against any organisation on the left, or anyone who opposes the blood-soaked government's role in Iraq, or Israel's subjugation of the Palestinians.

The government proposes to award itself the power to close down places of worship, ie mosques; to deport and exclude foreign-born imams whose presence in Britain the Home Office decides is "not conducive to the public good", and to slap "control orders" on British imams if they don't toe the government's line. Muslim cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, who is currently in Lebanon but has been legally resident in Britain for years and whose family lives here, has been banned from returning to the country. This is an outrageous attack on the democratic rights of a British resident, which we oppose. Likewise we vehemently oppose Blair's proscription of the Islamic organisations Hizb ut-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun, just as we condemn the attacks on Muslim clerics and mosques. These are part of a blatantly racist vendetta against all Muslims and a cover for a major assault on the democratic rights of the whole population.

We Marxists are irreconcilably opposed to the ideology and social programme not only of Islam but of all organised religions, which are steeped in reactionary, anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry. Contrary to the rantings of the Islamophobic press, such prejudices are hardly unique to Islam, but are intrinsic to every organised religion, not least the Christian churches. It is difficult to imagine the *Daily Mail* howling with such vehemence against "preachers of hate" such as Pat Robertson, the American Protestant fundamentalist who recently called for the assassination of Venezuelan president Hugo

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Spartacus Youth Group Forum

British imperialism and the myth of the "democratic" war against fascism

Revolutionaries and World War II

Trotskyists fought for revolutionary defeatism towards all the imperialist powers, both the Allied democracies and the Axis powers led by Nazi Germany, and for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers state. It was the Soviet Red Army that smashed the Nazi war machine.

Saturday 22 October 2005, 2 pm

The Sols Arms,
65-68 Hampstead Road, London NW1
(corner of Drummond Street).

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For more information: 020 7281 5504



1989-90: Political revolution unfolds in East Germany

Fighting against capitalist reunification of Germany



East Berlin: 14 January 1990 Spartacist contingent at demonstration in commemoration of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (left). Banner reads "For a Red Germany in a Socialist Europe!" Spartacist speaker addresses 250,000-strong crowd at Treptow Park demonstration (right). Spartacist poster for March 1990 East German elections says "No to capitalist reunification!"

The Spartacist League/Britain held a dayschool in London on 21 May to celebrate the International Communist League's fight against capitalist counterrevolution in East Germany and the former Soviet Union during the period 1989-92. We publish below an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Kurt Weiss of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, German section of the International Communist League, based on his experiences as a cadre during the political revolution in East Germany. In our last issue (Workers Hammer no 191, Summer 2005) we published presentations by comrade Jane Clancy on the programmatic framework for the ICL's intervention and by comrade Jan Jędrzejewski on the origins of the Spartacist Group Poland, and on page 6 of this issue the presentation by comrade Mick Connor.

I don't know if anybody had a chance to see the television coverage of this year's celebrations of the end of World War II on 8 May in Moscow, but I considered it obscene. Soldiers from the Russian army marched with the original Soviet flag that was raised over the Reichstag in Berlin in 1945 by that heroic Red Army unit. The Russian army of today is a capitalist army that has nothing to do with the Red Army—the army of the Soviet workers state. Yet this Soviet flag was paraded in Moscow in front of a collection of imperialist leaders who are the major source of the massacres, wars and oppression on this planet. This was the first time ever that a German chancellor was allowed to participate in this celebration; Gerhard Schröder sat next to presidents Vladimir Putin, George Bush and Jacques Chirac.

May 8 should be a day of celebration for the working class and the oppressed. But it has been hypocritically seized upon

by the imperialists and in Germany it is now called "Democracy Day". In Berlin's Alexanderplatz, which used to be the centre of East Berlin, German Nazis demonstrated this year, protected by the police. We participated in a left-wing demonstration in Berlin with placards pointing out that Putin is conducting a dirty war in Chechnya, Bush is leading the brutal occupation of Iraq, Schröder has troops in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, and all of them are busy attacking their own working class. The German state is currently trying to deport 50,000 Sinti and Roma [Gypsies] back to Kosovo where they can expect a very dangerous fate in the conflict between Serbs and Albanians. When Germany's Social Democratic/Green government first mobilised troops to send to the Balkans, foreign minister Joschka Fischer and [then-defence minister] Rudolf Scharping ran a campaign to justify this, saying the purpose was to prevent another Auschwitz. This push by the German imperialists to be in the forefront of the redivision of the world is a threat to all the oppressed of this planet. And the reason it is taking place is the victory of counterrevolution 15 years ago.

DDR was founded through smashing Nazi rule

Our intervention into the DDR [East Germany] and the Soviet Union at that time was a key test for the International Communist League as a revolutionary organisation and it put to shame all these pseudo-Trotskyist organisations who supported counterrevolution and the destruction of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe. The Russian Question really is the question of revolution and we have to draw the lessons from it in order to go forward to fight for a revolutionary liberation of the working class. The creation of the DDR was directly linked to

tremendous sacrifices by the Soviet people. To overthrow the barbaric Nazi regime that was responsible for the holocaust—which killed six million Jews, as well as many Sinti and Roma, homosexuals and other people—the Soviet Union lost around 28 million citizens. The imperialist Allies only intervened on the Western front in order to race to Berlin and stop the Red Army from taking hold of Europe. That victory of the Red Army took place despite Stalin and, confronted with the Cold War, the Kremlin Stalinists abolished private property and established a deformed workers state in East Germany—the DDR—in their own bureaucratic way.

But it was a real social revolution and it brought about an extension of the Soviet Union into East Germany and thus it was very polarising. Basically, in 1945 all the Nazis fled to the West, including not only the industrialists, but also the reactionary Junker class that were the base for the *Freikorps* [fascistic paramilitary units used for counterrevolutionary violence in 1919, later incorporated into the army]. Meanwhile, immigrants, Jews and communists came back to the liberated part of the country. These included prominent Jewish figures like Markus Wolf, who became head of East Germany's foreign spy network; the leftist philosopher Walter Benjamin; the dramatist Bertolt Brecht; the writer Stefan Heym, and Ruth Werner, who was a member of the "Red Orchestra" [Soviet spy network], among others. Eric Honecker, who later became head of state, was in a Gestapo jail at the end of the war. In other words some elements of the bureaucracy, and even a large part of the population, made a political choice to live there, if they could.

Almost immediately, agriculture was collectivised. Huge collective farms

were supplied with tractors and other equipment for communal use. By contrast, in capitalist West Germany, big money was poured in by the American bourgeoisie. The CIA rebuilt the German Social Democracy [SPD], to contain the militancy and socialist aspirations of the West German working class. Other organisations had been banned by the Allied forces; unions were only permitted later, and only under CIA control. By the early 1950s, many of the Nazis—the people who financed and brought Hitler to power—were back in office, such as the steel barons Krupp and Thyssen, or former Nazi SS officer Hanns-Martin Schleyer (who later got his when the guerrillas that called themselves the "Red Army Faction" executed him in 1977). He was then chairman of the association of German industrialists (Bundesverband Deutsche Industrie) and head of Daimler-Benz. Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, who had direct responsibility for organising mass murder of Jews, was working as an electrician at their Argentina outlet.

The Nazis' secret service was completely taken over and former army generals were used to rebuild the West German army for the Cold War against the Soviet Union, because obviously they had experience in that area. This is what we mean when we speak of the continuity between today's German ruling class and the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz—it's concrete, it exists in the form of capital and private property—it's real. Just to give you another little glimpse: after counterrevolution in the DDR, the very unpopular head of the DDR secret service Erich Mielke was put on trial by the victorious German state for the killing of two cops in 1931 in the Weimar Republic. This

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From Berlin to Moscow: We fought to defend the Soviet Union

We publish below an edited version of the presentation given by comrade Mick Connor at the Spartacist League's 21 May dayschool. Comrade Connor spoke about the International Communist League's work directed towards Soviet soldiers in East Germany and later our intervention in the USSR itself.

When the Berlin Wall came down I was in Moscow, and when I came back to London, I got a call from our London organiser at that time, who said "How would you like to go to Germany, for what may be the only political revolution you're likely to see in your lifetime?" Of course there was no question, and within a week I was in Germany. All the comrades of our international responded magnificently to the opportunity that opened up in East Germany.

Our propaganda had already been written about defence of the USSR, and it was time for action. We knew that the obstacles we faced were gigantic. But we also knew that we had the Trotskyist programme and we knew that workers in East Germany had shown they wanted to fight. Television reporters asked workers crossing from East Berlin, "what do you want to see in East Germany?" and they kept saying "socialism". There were massive demonstrations in Berlin, with banners saying "For communist ideals", "For a new Communist Party". Workers had had enough, they wanted change, they wanted socialism.

I went to the USSR in the immediate aftermath of the August '91 coup/countercoup, which was a crucial point in the counterrevolution and overthrow of the remaining gains of the October Revolution. I also spent some time in the ICL's Polish section. I was at the Treptow Park demonstration and I was also involved in work towards the Soviet Army. There were 400,000 Soviet soldiers stationed in East Germany, and that was the *de facto* state power there. You could not have anything resembling a programme for political revolution in that country without confronting this basic question of the Soviet Army. In East Germany, it helped to have some appreciation of the fact that in Hungary in 1956 there was a political revolutionary uprising against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Kremlin sent in the Warsaw Pact forces with the lying claim that they were going to put down a fascist uprising. The soldiers found nothing of the sort. Instead they found workers councils, and workers who were ready to die to defend collectivised property, but who were rebelling against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The fraternisation between the Hungarian soviets and the Soviet soldiers meant that the Kremlin was



250,000-strong anti-fascist mass demonstration initiated by German Spartakists at East Berlin's Treptow Park in January 1990 was featured in Soviet Army newspaper *Red Star*, and *Pravda*.

forced to withdraw those troops and find others who were more willing to do the job and it was eventually put down.

When we intervened in East Germany, there was no political revolution unfolding in the Soviet Union, but clearly a successful political revolution in Germany would have spread there. We saw the Soviet troops as a bridge to the Soviet Union. Why were they the *de facto* state power in East Germany? Well, as comrades have already said, they crushed the Nazis in Germany. That was a heroic struggle which we hail, as did [American Trotskyist leader] James Cannon, who said the whole world hails this Red Army which smashed Hitler's armies, and all of humanity owes a debt to the Soviet Army for that. We were for the defeat of the Allies in the Second World War, as we were for the defeat of the Axis powers. Both sides were imperialist. But we defended the Soviet Union.

The imperialist world whip up a hoopla about the "great" D-Day, but D-Day was really a side-show. The Soviet Army prevailed despite Stalin's sabotage, including the beheading of the Red Army through purges of its leadership, which had real consequences in the Soviet Union later. For example, the kind of mass tank attack supported by aircraft that is known as *blitzkrieg* was not invented by the Germans, it was a Red Army Comintern strategy, intended to quickly support revolutions in other countries; it was developed by people like Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky, who was executed by Stalin before Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The Nazis learned from the Soviet Union under the Stalin-Hitler Pact and were able to turn such weapons on the USSR. That's just one example of the terrible weakening of the workers state that had taken place. Huge numbers of Soviet soldiers died in the liberation of

Eastern Europe, I believe 600,000 died to liberate Poland alone. Many died also in Germany and there are memorials to the Soviet war dead all over East Germany, but Treptow Park is the biggest.

The East German workers state covered one third of Germany. It's a pity that the Red Army advance through Europe stopped at the Elbe river. The Soviet Army's 400,000 soldiers were the front line against NATO during the Cold War. It was useful that Gorbachev seemed unwilling to use the Soviet Army to suppress the workers mobilisations in blood. We published greetings to the Soviet soldiers in Russian; very early on we also published a leaflet in Russian titled: "What do the Spartacists want" which was distributed *en masse* to the officers and soldiers at Soviet military bases. The first edition of "*Byulleten' Spartakovtsev*" [Spartacist Bulletin] contained the article "What is Trotskyism?" We published writings by Trotsky from the Bulletin of the Opposition and we distributed to Soviet soldiers articles by Trotsky and his book *The Revolution Betrayed*. Because we became known through our work, on the anniversary of the Red Army victory we were able to hold a meeting in a very large airbase just outside Berlin that was attended by around 300 Soviet soldiers and officers. In keeping with our fight for the revolutionary unity of German, Polish and Soviet workers, one of our speakers was from our German section and another was from the Spartacist Group of Poland. Following that meeting the Soviet army drove us by bus to one of the Soviet army cemeteries where we laid a wreath.

As you can imagine, when the withdrawal of the Soviet Army was announced by Gorbachev, there was huge demoralisation among East German workers, because it was not there, the forces of NATO and the West German state—the Bundesrepublik, the Bundeswehr, would move in. We had comrades in the East German army who refused the oath of allegiance to the new forces of the BRD. For months, we saw Soviet military hardware being moved out of East Germany. That was counter-revolution passing in front of our eyes. It truly represented a reversal of the decision of the Second World War, of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. I remember going to Sachsenhausen, one of the former Nazi death camps, which is now a museum. A huge poster said that during Soviet times, people came here and learned about the atrocities of the Nazis, but now you can learn that this camp was used by the Soviet forces to imprison German citizens after the Second World

War. Who were they talking about? The SS, who'd been imprisoned in Sachsenhausen!

Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was the first hole in the dam, after which things started to unravel. We said that it was better to fight the forces of counterrevolution in Afghanistan than in the Soviet Union itself, and we made a proposal to organise a brigade to fight in Afghanistan when the Soviet troops were withdrawn. That's a hallmark of a revolutionary organisation, as opposed to all kinds of charlatans—the cowards who flinch and the traitors who sneer. For revolutionaries, your words are in accord with your deeds. Then the fight shifted to East Germany. After defeat in East Germany the battle shifted to the homeland of the October Revolution itself.

Our meeting is not a memorial meeting. We know that the world proletariat has suffered a terrible defeat. The fact that these workers states fell without a shot being fired, not through a NATO invasion, for example, but through Stalinist collapse and sell-out makes that betrayal all the more demoralising for the proletariat, which has been thrown back in many different ways. It has impacted both on the material conditions and on the consciousness of the oppressed and exploited around the world, through the bourgeoisie's myth of the death of communism. But we know that capitalist imperialism by its workings always impels the masses into struggle against racism, against war, against the depredations of imperialism. Because of that, there will be opportunities for new October revolutions. But to be successful it is necessary to assimilate the lessons and pass them on to new generations. Trotsky said that if the worst case scenario were to happen—counterrevolution in the USSR—revolutionaries should be on the last barricades. We did that, and we take forward those lessons into our fight to defend China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. The ICL uniquely has the moral authority to do that. The heroic Polish-Jewish spy and leader of the Red Orchestra [Soviet spy network], Leopold Trepper, wrote a very famous commentary on who fought against Stalin, where he said, the Trotskyists are the ones who did that. They didn't howl along with the wolves, they refused to shut up. And we carried that through, we took up Trotsky's injunction.

We intervened in the Soviet Union itself beginning in the late 1980s. We sought to mobilise the proletariat against the imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution, as part of our struggle for new October revolutions. The Soviet Union by that time was seriously weakened. Gorbachev had introduced the whip of the market, so-called perestroika, which we warned would lead to the break-up of the USSR. It would exacerbate the differentials in regions and increase the antagonism between republics, thus loosening the USSR and seriously undermining the workers state.

There was enormous imperialist economic and military pressure on the Soviet Union. When the fledgling Soviet state was being invaded by over 20 different imperialist armies, Lenin was less concerned about the armies, which they could deal with. They rallied the masses of the USSR, the oppressed workers and rural toilers, forged this red fist under Trotsky called the Red Army, which won the Civil War against the White armies and against all these imperialists. Lenin was concerned about what they bring in the baggage cars, the cheap manufactured Western goods, etc. In other

words, the Soviet Union had a very powerful army, but the world capitalist market remained. This is why you can't have "socialism in a single country", because of the whip of the world market, the only one remedy for which is international proletarian revolution.

Yeltsin and Gorbachev introduced something called the "500-day plan",

Soviet working class. There was a coalminers congress in the Ukraine, which our comrades intervened in. This congress in Donetsk was crawling with everything conceivable: spies, fascists, social democrats, fake Trotskyists—everybody was there. One of the participants was something called the "Union of Democratic Mineworkers" (UDM) the



Our placard and banner at 7 November 1991 anti-Yeltsin Revolution Day demonstration in Moscow calls to "Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky".

which amounted to a forced march to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. There was going to be untrammelled private ownership. We put out a leaflet in the Soviet Union, which we distributed also among the Soviet troops in East Germany, calling for the workers to smash the 500-day plan. Gorbachev had seen the 1989 Soviet miners strikes and he was in China at the time of Tiananmen, and he was also aware of the January 1990 Treptow Park demonstration. This had a huge influence on later events because our Treptow Park demonstration was picked up in the Soviet Union and was on blaring front page headlines in two newspapers, including the newspaper

scab union formed during the great miners strike in Britain in 1984-85. The miners strike and defence of the USSR were intimately connected. Remember Margaret Thatcher was a big fan of Solidarność while she was attempting to smash the miners; the Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party deliberately set up miners leader Arthur Scargill for a massive witch hunt on the eve of the strike because he refused to support counter-revolutionary Solidarność.

At this Ukraine congress the UDM was attempting to spread poison about the National Union of Mineworkers to force the NUM to hand over money—donated by the Soviet trade unions to the striking British miners—to the



Boris Yeltsin on Moscow barricades of counterrevolution, August 1991.

of the Soviet Army, which carried it very enthusiastically. They took out our name, but showed the slogan for defence of the USSR, unsigned banners and so on. Gorbachev himself, interviewed on West German television, spoke about how Treptow was the turning point. He pinpoints it to early January. That's when they realised that the rule of Stalinism was shaken, that the potential was there for political revolution and that's when he decided to fast-track the West German takeover.

One example illustrates the kind of work we did and something about the

UDM. The Soviet workers did give enormous amounts of money to the British miners. There was a fracture in the Stalinist bureaucracy over support for the strike, which shows it was a contradictory phenomenon. While Gorbachev was getting into bed with Margaret Thatcher, money was being channelled to the striking British miners. In Donetsk, two comrades of the International Communist League spiked the anti-communist operation by the UDM. That tells you quite a lot about what a Trotskyist party could have done in the USSR at that time.

Now I come to August '91, the pivotal point for counterrevolution in the USSR, as it turns out. The bureaucracy was replacing the Union Treaty with a new treaty in which the various republics that make up the Soviet Union would be given more autonomy. Against this, a State Emergency Committee was formed. The State Emergency Committee attempted to carry out what we have called a "perestroika coup". The word "coup" is an enormous compliment because at no time did this "coup" attempt to move against Boris Yeltsin and the open counterrevolutionaries, who were in direct contact with George Bush Sr at the time. But the coup leaders, this State Emergency Committee, were no less committed than Boris Yeltsin to the restoration of capitalism. They wanted a slower pace and to remain within the framework of the USSR.

On the evening of 20 August they sent some tanks out into the street—which didn't seem to know what they wanted to do. Meanwhile, among the people who descended on the White House [Russian Parliament] to defend it were spivs, racketeers, the new little capitalist gangsters, Orthodox priests, an assortment of fascists, Workers Power and the Taaffeite organisation. The Workers Revolutionary Party turned up with a red flag and said people expressed surprise to see a red flag. Of course they would have been enormously surprised. These were the forces for counterrevolution. The State Emergency Committee that same morning had phoned George Bush and explained what they were going to do. They held a press conference in the evening and didn't mention "real existing socialism" or any of those things, but mentioned that they would continue Gorbachev's work and his foreign policy commitments. They didn't at any time attempt to arrest Yeltsin, although he challenged them to do so.

What happened to these guys? They basically gave it up. This was the gang that couldn't shoot straight, and didn't fire a single shot in anger, except when one of the coup plotters, Boris Pugo, shot himself in bed a couple of days later. This "coup" was the last pathetic gasp of the Stalinists in the USSR. And with its collapse, the armed forces were pulled out of the city and Yeltsin's forces were in the ascendancy. Yeltsin launched an offensive to dismantle the Soviet Union, to force through the restoration of capitalism. Now as Trotskyists we said, it ain't over, because the Soviet working class has not spoken yet, and that is actually quite a big factor, the working class that made the October Revolution. They did not come out on the streets in answer to Yeltsin's call for a general strike. And although some of the workers looked quite favourably on the coup, because they thought it was a move against Yeltsin and perestroika, the coup leaders told them to stay at home and imposed martial law.

The ICL was first to protest and to mobilise against Yeltsin. We put out a leaflet calling on the workers to smash the Yeltsin-Bush counterrevolution. We called for workers militias to smash the Yeltsinite demonstrations; for workers councils to fight the plunder and destruction of the collectivised planned economy; for soldiers' and officers' committees to prevent the army being used against the working class. We called for multinational workers defence guards to guard against racist attacks and anti-Communist attacks. We called for a return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky through the forging of a Trotskyist party and linked that to international class struggle. It wasn't over. We looked at what the Trotskyists did when Hitler came to power in 1933—

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East Germany...

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arose from what is known as bloody May Day in Berlin in 1929, when cops killed a number of workers in the working-class district of Wedding. It was alleged that Mielke was involved in retaliation against these cops. By putting Mielke on trial after counterrevolution the German bourgeoisie really wanted to make a point: "we have continuity here, and we're going to get you if you challenge our order". We defended Mielke, noting he was being tried by the wrong class for the wrong crimes.

We defended the DDR as a workers state, without any conditions, against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. While the DDR existed, the German nation was divided between two states, the distinction between them being their class character. The planned economy was in the service not of profits but of producing more goods for society. A very simple fact for example is that the DDR had a very large fleet of fishing trawlers on the Baltic coast that supplied the whole society with fish, but made no profit. After the counterrevolution the fishing industry collapsed overnight and the whole fleet was sold.

The question of defending the DDR was an extremely controversial one, and we had a high profile on it. This was a very important precondition for our later intervention into the political revolution in the DDR. Berlin was a frontier during the Cold War. The Maoists there were chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!" on the one hand, while on the other they were chanting "Down with the wall!". We defended the wall as a defensive measure by the DDR against the collapse of its economy, preventing all the skilled people from leaving the country. The Cliffites said "neither Washington nor Moscow"; in Berlin that meant that they tried to walk on the top of the wall. Not surprisingly, their branch in Berlin was not exactly huge!

The DDR had probably the most advanced social system in the world: 90 per cent of women had jobs; there was a broad system of kindergartens, a so-called "baby year" during which you could stay home to raise a baby and get your salary. There was food in the schools and kindergartens and a system of canteens and laundries at a nominal price. At the same time—and this was a typical contradiction—the Stalinist bureaucracy there insisted that the family was the "unit of socialism", which meant for women that after the shift at work there was another shift at home. The population of the DDR was 95 per cent atheistic, because the material basis for religion was undermined. Even today, leading bourgeois papers in Germany complain that the church is not making enough progress in the former DDR. Students at university had their expenses paid by the state; if you became pregnant while at university, there was childcare and you could continue with your studies. The question of having kids or not having kids, having one or two, was not mainly a question of economic means.

An independent income, a secure job and state-organised childcare proved to be a powerful engine of women's emancipation: female engineers, chemical workers or crane drivers in steel plants used to be a common thing. The same was true for jobs—there was no unemployment. I remember once being in a pub in Halle. You could not freely choose who to sit with and we were seated next to a group of people who spent the whole time discussing whether or not to take this or

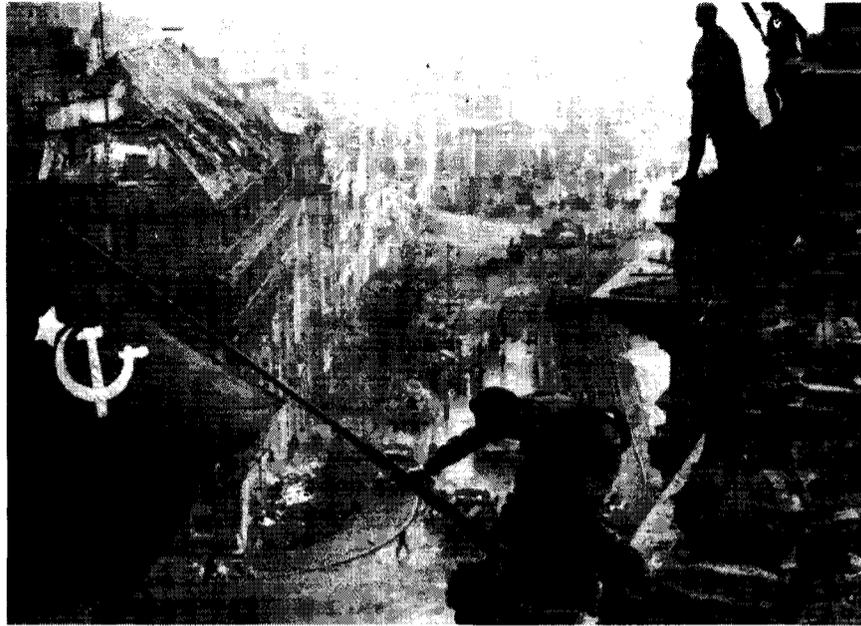
that job. I thought, my God, they really do have different troubles than we do! It gave a glimpse of the potential that would exist when the planned economy becomes a world system. Looked at from the western side of the Wall, there was a saying among Western trade unionists—that every time there were negotiations between unions and man-

chip made in the DDR. However, the product run on the assembly lines was always small and productivity was low. DDR scientists and engineers were forced to develop everything and produce every part for themselves—a "socialist economy in one country" that exhausted the resources. The political isolation of the DDR from the hi-tech

song, "I did it my way". Everybody had to do it "his way", which meant the various national bureaucracies struggling to maintain "their" national economy while becoming more and more dependent on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the Western banks.

Gorbachev introduced major changes in the political arena as well. In 1989 he moved Soviet troops out of Afghanistan, a betrayal that had a particular impact on the DDR. In the summer of 1989 Gorbachev had met with then-West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn. At the same time, in June 1989 one of Gorbachev's advisers on Germany, W I Daschitschew, gave a speech in Cologne in which he explained that any improvement in the relations between the Soviet Union and NATO would have grave consequences for the "sovereignty" of the DDR. So when Eric Honecker met Gorbachev at a Warsaw Pact summit later that summer, Honecker asked him "when are you firing Daschitschew?" Gorbachev claimed he didn't know who he was, and said he was sticking to the Warsaw Pact obligations. However, there was increasing worry among sections of the bureaucracy in the DDR—and in the Soviet Union—that the DDR would be used as a bargaining chip. Many people remembered that in 1952 Stalin had written to then-West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer offering German unification in exchange for West Germany not joining NATO.

The year 1989 was decisive for the Warsaw Pact. It also saw a complete breakdown of international planning, leading to disruptions of production in the DDR and other workers states. The national rivalries between the various Stalinist bureaucracies increased and there was nationalist unrest inside the Soviet Union. Situations akin to civil war existed in the Baltic States, and in Armenia over the question of Nagorny Karabakh. In China, there was an incipient political revolution, which was put down by the Chinese army. And in the DDR there was an overall sense among workers and students that there was no way forward for "socialism" in half a country. Honecker had said that by 1990 the



Yevgeni Khaldei

May 1945: Soldiers of the Red Army raise the red flag over the Reichstag of defeated Nazi Germany. Obscenely, this Soviet flag was claimed by Russia's capitalist rulers at this year's commemoration in Moscow.

agement in the West, there was an "invisible person" sitting at the negotiating table, meaning the DDR. The West German bourgeoisie had to make certain concessions because people could see what benefits existed in the East.

Contradictions of a deformed workers state

But the state was run by a Stalinist bureaucracy and there were real contradictions too. To give you an example of how the different generations of leaders were seen, there was a joke. The Trans-Siberian railroad comes to a stop because the railway tracks ended. How would the various "socialist" leaders deal with that? Stalin would have the engineer shot. Brezhnev would tear up

world market and the lack of a real division of labour in the bureaucratic Comecon [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] made it worse.

Under these circumstances, Gorbachev's perestroika reforms had a tremendous impact. Oil that had been supplied to the DDR at a very low price—through the so-called "pipeline of friendship" from the Soviet Union—would suddenly have to be bought at world market prices. To pay for that, the DDR had to export more to the West, which meant fewer goods were available in the DDR. This led to more discontent, and more government borrowing from the West German bankers. In the autumn of '89 these debts amounted to \$26.5 billion. At a meeting of Comecon in November 1986 in Sofia, Gorbachev made it clear



1989-90: ICL distributed internationalist greetings in Russian, Vietnamese, Polish and Spanish (centre). Workers Press Correspondence pamphlet (right). Trotskyism pamphlet (left).

the tracks behind the train and have them re-laid in front of the train. Honecker would call for comrades to get out and shake the train, so that everyone would imagine it was going forward! The DDR lacked natural resources. But they became massively involved in machine building and they developed their own computer industry. In 1988 Honecker proudly handed over to Gorbachev the first micro computer

that the Soviet Union would no longer subsidise countries like Hungary, Poland, the DDR, all of which would have to sell their goods at world market prices. In 1989 Gennady Gerasimov, spokesman of the Soviet ministry of foreign affairs, referred to this as the change from "the Brezhnev doctrine" [that the "socialist" countries had to unite against any capitalist threat] to "the Sinatra doctrine", according to the

housing question would be solved in the GDR. The plan was to build millions of new apartments and they used pre-fabricated, high-rise buildings, and they actually made it. However, maintenance on existing buildings was badly neglected. There's a joke about Honecker opening the three-million apartment in 1988 in Berlin. The officials arrive and open champagne but when the cork goes "pop", it causes an old building in the

background to crumble!

The developing political revolution led to the opening of the Berlin Wall. We intervened immediately and we put out our daily paper called *Arprekorr* [Arbeiterpressekorrespondenz—Workers Press Correspondence]. We were now able to go into the East and distribute our propaganda—not without having discussions with the border guards about this propaganda! One of our main headlines was: “No sell-out of the DDR! Workers and soldiers’ councils now!” We saw our paper as our collective organiser and the main tool to build Spartacist Groups. Our programme expressed the historical needs of the workers, and it had tremendous impact. To give an example, there was a demo in Rostock against any sell-out of the DDR. Many people there were members of the SED [ruling East German Communist Party] but they had absolutely no propaganda in their hands expressing their opposition to the sell-out. *Neues Deutschland*, the SED newspaper, was filled with news of negotiations with the German chancellor, and promises of money, credit from banks, etc. So when the Western TV teams turned up with cameras, everybody held up our leaflet, because it showed a way to fight against the sell-out. We called for workers councils and said that the people who worked in the plants should have a say in deciding what they produce. We tried to apply lessons from 1905 in Russia where Lenin turned the Bolshevik Party outwards to extend the political influence of the programme in a revolutionary situation.

Using our press as a collective organiser and a crystallising point for the vanguard party, we gave bundles of it to every worker or every student that agreed with the line and was willing to distribute it. Our second statement was titled: “What the Spartacists want”. People who agreed with that could join our groups. It reads:

“Defend the historic gains of the working class, which were achieved by the overthrow of capitalism—defend the Soviet Union against imperialism and internal counterrevolution! The enormous economic and political pressure of Western capitalism, with the help of the Social Democrats—the murderers of Liebknecht and Luxemburg—is aiming for a bloody counterrevolution in Eastern Europe. We Trotskyists oppose capitalist unification of Germany. No to a republic of the Deutsche Bank! Soviet Power in the DDR would be a great example and a lightning rod for workers in West Germany. For a Red Soviet Germany in the context of the United Socialist States of Europe!”

—*Arprekorr*, 7 December 1989

Our work consisted of travelling around, meeting groups, distributing bundles of our press and giving political guidelines. Discussions revolved around what was going on; why are plants being sold, why are capitalists showing up in the plants; how should workers organise? We were not willing to bloc with any bureaucratic forces inside the SED, but anyone who was willing to distribute our literature could do so, even while remaining a member of the SED—essentially, we allowed a kind of “dual membership”. We told people about the traditions of the Left Opposition to give them an idea of what we are and where we come from. Our pamphlet *Trotskyism: What it isn't and what it is* was extremely helpful. Sometimes people would queue up to get it, so you needed one comrade to hand it out and another to collect the money. It was really incredible—and a classic example of a revolutionary situation. Recently in Magdeburg someone came up to me and said he used to distribute our literature and that he had

participated in our meetings. Even when the revolutionary wave has gone, the memory remains.

Leninist tribune of the people

We ran candidates in the Volkskammer [East German parliament] elections in March 1990. There was one small newly founded organisation called the Communist Party of Germany that claimed to oppose capitalist unification of Germany. But at their conference in Frankfurt-on-Oder they voted a programme that welcomed SED leader Modrow’s proposal for a confederation with West Germany and argued for the introduction of market reforms *à la* perestroika. We had a big fight with them and there was a group of people listening, including an old guy who bought the paper. He was commander of a *Betriebskampfgruppe* [workers’ militia] at the big Leuna chemical plant between Leipzig and Halle that employed something like 25,000 workers.

grandson of a black soldier. When the local paper showed the various candidates of all the parties and what they stood for, we looked really different. We attracted different people, we had a different programme and it was clear that we were a “tribune of the people”.

In June 1990, after the election campaign, we held a meeting addressed by a black comrade from the SL/US, to which Mozambican workers came and we discussed Malcolm X and the civil rights struggles in America. There were many immigrant workers in the DDR; in addition to Mozambicans the biggest group was from Vietnam. There was a group from Cuba, and of course there were around 400,000 Red Army soldiers. So it was extremely important that, from the very beginning, we distributed material in their languages. We ran a campaign against a racist ban the Modrow government attempted to impose on Polish people in supermarkets in East Berlin. We defended immi-



German Spartacists at East Berlin march against reactionary West German abortion law, 20 June 1992. ICL propaganda defending the gains of East German women (left).

We went there with him and had a real discussion with him and his co-workers inside the plant. At the meeting we explained what a takeover by West German chemical giants like Bayer and Hoechst would mean for workers at this plant. We discussed the fact that this very plant used to be owned by IG Farben, the company that produced Zyklon-B, which was used by the Nazis for mass murder in the concentration camps. The company had been expropriated in 1945, but under reunification would be given back to its original owners. He broke with the KPD and supported our campaign in the Volkskammer elections and distributed our material, including inside the Leuna plant. The KPD in the Halle area also supported us because of our outspoken opposition to capitalist reunification of Germany.

To run in these elections you needed three people to support your candidate. In Halle we had one worker from the Leuna plant who was a leader of the SED and a leader of a *Betriebskampfgruppe*; a woman who worked on an assembly line in a chemical factory, but who was not accepted into membership of the SED because she criticised the bureaucrats and we had a machinist from a collective farm. Our candidate in the area was a black man with Rastafarian hair who was a leader of the local SED youth organisation. For a short period of time that part of Saxony had been occupied by US forces and he was the

grants and stood for full citizenship rights for all who made it there and wanted to stay there, as part of our recognition that it is vitally necessary for German workers to oppose German nationalism.

On 1 January 1990 the East German government introduced a number of changes, which had a real impact on the economy. The Deutschmark became accepted currency inside the DDR, which meant that land, property and goods could be bought with West German currency. This destroyed what was left of the state monopoly of foreign trade. In addition, West Germans acquired the right to live in the DDR. It was at approximately the same time that the fascists desecrated the Treptow Park memorial to Red Army soldiers. News of the fact that fascists had painted a swastika on it, with the slogan “Russians out”, electrified the society, because the DDR was founded by destroying the Nazi regime, and there were fears that if the Red Army left, it could lead to war and the rise of fascism again.

Mobilising for Treptow

We started mobilising immediately, dividing up the city into areas, covering the Narva electrical plant and all the big plants of Berlin. We wanted to mobilise a working-class base for this rally, which was pro-Soviet and directed against the German bourgeoisie. As we went through the plants, in general the

SED bureaucrats tried to stop us, accusing us of interrupting production and things like that. And we said “but if we don’t interrupt production now then there will be no *plant* left before very long, so what’s your point?” Often we manoeuvred around them, knocking at factory windows to get the leaflets in and in one case we got through the goods entrance and spoke to workers on the assembly lines, who were of course pretty happy to see us. Mainly they kept on working, but one worker took the bundle, put it on the assembly line and it went through the whole plant, so everybody could take a copy. Workers understood what was at stake and they came to the demonstration in masses.

At the rally we had two speakers who explained the Trotskyist perspective to a quarter-million people in a workers state—the first time Trotskyists did that since Trotsky’s Left Opposition was banished from the Soviet Union. The Treptow memorial is in the middle of a huge park and the demonstration was in the evening, when it was dark. I heard that there were some people provocatively yelling Nazi slogans from behind the trees and I shouted to the crowd that we need about 50 people to take care of that. A group of paratroopers came up to me and said “at your service!” The officer leading them wanted to speak at Treptow, because he was the head of a soldiers council. He said “come with me” and we went to the back and built a defence line which made sure there would be no disruptions. That tells you something about the character of the state, because these armed bodies of men had been trained to defend collectivised property, and he was at the demonstration because he wanted to do that. He also understood what the return of the Nazis would mean.

The Treptow mobilisation was the turning point in the political revolution. After it, Gorbachev gave the green light for capitalist unification and SED leader Modrow came out with the slogan that the SED was in favour of *Deutschland einig Vaterland*—Germany one fatherland. The active, advanced layers of the working class who participated in our campaigns fell back into passivity. In addition to that, the consciousness of the workers was undermined because the plants were closed down through lack of raw materials and before unification they were often sent home, sometimes on full pay. The PDS adopted the slogan “one to one—we are one people”, meaning one DDR mark should be treated as equal to one Deutschmark. That is the price they wanted for the workers state. Following the propaganda blitz of the bourgeois media on a working class that was demoralised and sold out by the Stalinists, the capitalist class of West Germany won the Volkskammer elections. This was the decisive step towards capitalist reunification of Germany.

What’s very important to understand is that the ICL had a chance to intervene in a revolutionary situation and we took it. The experience our organisation accumulated in that struggle will be of great use for us in the future, because these kinds of situations develop very fast and often they don’t last very long. Rosa Luxemburg used to say that revolutionary situations are situations where the programme itself becomes a *material force*. That was exactly our experience: whatever we needed—paper, cars, rooms, communications—we got it by convincing people politically that they should support us. And we will use this perspective to win next time. ■

Soviet Union...

(Continued from page 7)

they geared up for the struggle to reverse it. We wanted this very weak Yeltsin government to be overthrown before it could consolidate, which required the working class to move.

The British SWP came out with the infamous headline "communism has collapsed" and said: "It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing". Well, who's rejoicing now? A few years later they were popping champagne for the victory of Tony Blair, which is much more to their liking. We established a Lenin-Trotsky fund to collect money to fund and support our work in the Soviet Union. We put out also for the very first time in Russian Trotsky's book *The Third International After Lenin*.

I will go through some of the things that happened in the aftermath of the Yeltsin counter-coup. On Revolution Day—7 November—in 1991 the annual demonstration was banned by Yeltsin. But 100,000 Muscovites were going to march in Moscow anyway. At the very last moment the panicking Yeltsinites withdrew the ban and the demonstration went ahead. We distributed our literature massively and, halfway through, when we demanded to have the microphone, the Stalinists just ended the demonstration, because the last thing they wanted was the Trotskyists addressing the crowd. On Red Army Day, 23 February the following year, the OMON special forces bloodied the Soviet Army—they beat a Soviet general to death in the streets of Moscow. This was a period of consolidation and the Yeltsinite forces wanted to bloody any kind of resistance. Our

own comrade Martha Phillips was murdered around this time. We attempted to get a serious investigation into her death, but the authorities in Russia stonewalled. Comrade Martha Phillips paid the ultimate price for being at her post in defence of the Soviet Union. And as an organisation we paid a high price—we had comrades arrested, attacked, we were stalked by fascists, etc, and eventually we were banned—declared *persona non grata*—from the Ukraine.

With counterrevolution, all the old crap came back. Since then, we have published this pamphlet called *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, a collection of most of the main articles we wrote at that time. It also explains the main factor in the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, which was that the consciousness of the working class had been eroded by decades of Stalinism,

and by atomisation, to such an extent that they did not fight the counterrevolution. Nor would they have been very inspired by the sight of so-called "Reds", the Stalinist leftovers in a coalition with the kind of Pamyat fascist filth that was called the "Red-Brown" coalition. I saw these people myself in Moscow during demonstrations against the closure of the Lenin museum. I have been in a number of different sections and one of the things you are guaranteed to hear from anti-Communists is "why don't you go back to Moscow?" Well, I went back to Moscow and as I was selling the paper there, these left-over Stalinist hacks said to me, "go back to Israel". It was virulent, anti-Semitic filth. I remember that while we were fighting to hold these people back, a comrade said defiantly: "Stalin didn't shut us up 70 years ago and you ain't gonna do it now!" ■

"War on terror"...

(Continued from page 4)

Chavez. The British establishment and state is based on Christian (Protestant) bigotry. Rest assured, one preacher of hate who will not be facing either deportation or house arrest is the Reverend Ian Paisley, who has made a political career out of fomenting hatred against the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and backing murderous Loyalist terror gangs who work under the protection of the British imperialists.

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, Karl Marx noted that the 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". Today the oppression that was first visited on the Irish—"shoot-to-kill", internment without trial, no-jury courts—is being brought home to Britain with a vengeance, not only against minorities and immigrants but against everyone the government sees as an opponent. The key task is to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will be steeled in the struggle against racism, chauvinism and every manifestation of oppression, in the fight to overthrow capitalist rule.

We reprint below our 21 July statement, issued following the London attacks.

* * *

Following criminal London terror bombings:

Down with US/British imperialist occupation of Iraq!

Defend Muslims against Labour's racist witch hunt!

Within hours of the horrific London bombings that killed over 50 people and injured hundreds, Tony Blair seized on this atrocity as a pretext to escalate the "war on terror". Let's be clear: these bombings were a criminal act of indefensible terror. Like the attack on the World Trade Center and the bombing of commuter trains in Madrid last year, the perpetrators share the same mindset as the imperialist rulers, identifying the working class and the whole population with the policies of the capitalist exploiters and oppressors. The bombs were aimed not at Bush or Blair, who were in Scotland for the G8 summit, but at the multiethnic working people of London: areas such as Edgware Road, which is overwhelmingly Arab;



London, June 1981: Spartacist League contingent demands British troops out of Northern Ireland, protests Westminster butchers' H-Block murders. Muslims are now target of same repression visited upon Northern Ireland Catholics.

Aldgate, the heart of the Bangladeshi community; Kings Cross and Russell Square, through which hundreds of thousands of ordinary people of every race and ethnicity travel everyday.

Bush and Blair, whose savage occupation of Iraq has cost the lives of an estimated 100,000 people, self-righteously condemned the terrorists for taking innocent lives. Behind their crocodile tears for those killed and wounded in the London bombings they seek to deflect the justified outrage and sympathy of the population for the victims and their families in order to reinforce their rule at home and abroad. As *Guardian* journalist Seumas Milne noted, even to link the bombings to Britain's role in Iraq or Afghanistan, which is obvious to millions, can get

you denounced as a "traitor"; to question Blair's assertion that the bombings were an attack "on our way of life" is to be branded "an apologist for terror".

For millions around the globe, British imperialism's "way of life" has meant untold terror. Kurds in what is now Iraq, a country manufactured by British imperialism, were bombed from the air while Arabs were shelled by the British colonial overlords in 1919-20. The 1917 Balfour Declaration set the scene for carving the state of Israel out of the homeland of the Palestinians. The bloody partition of India under the Labour government of Clement Attlee ushered in communalist slaughter on an unprecedented scale. This laid the basis for murderous religious and ethnic conflicts that persist to this day, as well as

the poverty, destitution and desperation of countless people from the Indian subcontinent to the Near East to Africa.

Millions in this country took to the streets in protest against the impending imperialist slaughter of Iraq in 2003 and Britain's role in the brutal occupation of Iraq cost Blair in the last elections. In that context, London Mayor Ken Livingstone's prominence in the demonstrations protesting the war on Iraq made him an ideal candidate to lead a patriotic "unity" crusade against "terrorism". Addressing the crowd at a 14 July vigil for the victims, flanked by leaders of all the main religions, Livingstone intoned "you see the world gathered in one city, living in harmony, as an example to all". Livingstone's speech could have been written by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who was in the vanguard of this "unity" chorus. Their 7 July statement on the bombings proclaimed: "London is a centre of peace, the most multiracial city in Europe and a global centre of opposition to the war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan."

This is a shameless and grotesque denial of the reality of life for London's working class and poor, especially immigrants and minorities whose daily grind means long hours and pitiful pay while being routinely vilified by the racist press, the government and police. Since September 11, police dragnets have rounded up more than 600 foreign nationals under "anti-terrorism" legislation, the overwhelming majority of whom were later released. The handful detained, on no charges other than being "terrorist suspects", are confined

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in Britain's own Guantánamo—Belmarsh prison—or else electronically monitored under “house arrest”.

To be Muslim is to be suspect. No sooner had bombs ripped through the Underground than a further wave of racist attacks was unleashed. Muslim organisations received 30,000 hate-filled e-mails; mosques had windows smashed and one was firebombed. In Nottingham a Muslim man, Kamal Raza Butt, was murdered by a gang who shouted “Taliban” before beating him to death. In London, the putative “city of peace”, the fascist BNP put out a leaflet with a picture of the bombed bus, declaring that people should now “start listening to the BNP”. Muslims fear an even more severe racist backlash now that the police say the bombings were supposedly carried out by British Muslims.

The government is planning more round-ups, more deportations and more sweeping police-state measures. A range of new offences will be created for what are essentially “thought crimes”, such as “acts preparatory to terrorism”, which might mean visiting “terrorist” websites; “indirect incitement”, which includes “glorifying the acts of suicide bombers” as well as “attacking the values of the West”. While aimed most immediately at Muslims, the “war on terror” is designed to strengthen the capitalist state’s machinery of repression, to be imposed with a vengeance against anyone the government perceives as an opponent as most recently demonstrated by the mass arrests outside the G8 summit. But the ultimate target is the multiethnic working class.

Today, Blair and Livingstone have the audacity to salute the heroism of the Tube workers, firefighters, ambulance drivers and others who put their bodies on the line to help the victims of the bombings. But, for years the government has savaged the living, working and safety conditions for these and other workers. And when the unions have fought back, like the firefighters did on the eve of the Iraq war, they were branded the “enemy within” and threatened with the full force of capitalist state repression. Last summer, Livingstone—the boss of transport workers in the capital—called on London Underground workers to scab on their own strike. And greed for profit and the policies of the government pose the biggest threat to the lives of passengers. The 1987 Kings Cross fire, the 1999 Paddington rail crash and other rail disasters have claimed far more lives than any terrorists. Now, the government is trying to scrap the legislation—introduced after the inferno in Kings Cross took 31 lives—which mandated stricter fire regulations!

For class unity of the multiethnic working class!

It is a sign of the times that we have to point out today that London is a class-divided city, not to mention the seat of power of the blood-soaked

British ruling class. Despite Britain’s industrial decline, the City is still a hub for international capital. Share prices tumbled the day of the bombs, which in its own way shows that the workforce in the Underground and buses has tremendous social power—the City banks and stock exchange are dependent on the transport system. It is this social power that must be brought to bear in a class-struggle fight in defence of immigrants, minorities and the unions themselves against the racist “war on terror”. As revolutionary internationalists we took a side in the war, calling for defence of Iraq, without giving any political support to the Saddam Hussein regime. So too must the proletariat be mobilised in defence of the Iraqi peoples against the savage British and US occupation forces through class struggle against the British imperialist rulers at home! **All US/British troops out of Iraq now! Down with the racist “war on terror”! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! For trade union/minority mobilisations against fascist terror!**

We vehemently oppose the appeals for the “unity” of all classes, which only serves to strengthen the hand of the imperialist rulers by binding the working class and oppressed to their very exploiters and oppressors. Not so the Socialist Party which blatantly appeals to mobilise the proletariat behind the so-called “war on terror”, calling on the unions and the Stop the War Coalition to organise a mass protest on the slogan “no to terrorism, no to war”. This dovetails with the politics of “anti-war” Labour MPs like Alice Mahon who opposes Blair’s invasion of Iraq, from the standpoint that it is not in the best interests of British imperialism at present, while arguing that it’s a diversion from the “war on terror” at home.

As Marxists we oppose terrorism as a strategy, even when it derives from real, if misguided, anti-imperialist impulses and targets genuine institutions of state repression—which the London bombing clearly did not. Substituting individual acts against the symbols of imperialist exploitation and oppression is directly counterposed to the task of mobilising the working class for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. But the Socialist Party’s declared opposition to “terrorism” is nothing more than an appeal to mobilise the proletariat behind the government’s “war on terror”. Placing an equals sign between the imperialist powers and the Islamic terrorists, the Socialist Party is in fact capitulating to British and US imperialism, who constitute the mightiest and most dangerous terrorist forces on this planet. This is not particularly surprising coming from an organisation which prides itself on *not* calling for British troops out of Northern Ireland now—a call which is the most elementary act of opposition to British imperialism.

Class independence of the working class is the precondition for any genuine socialist opposition to imperialism

—both against imperialist war and attacks on the working class and minorities at home. But the whole premise of the SWP-built anti-war protests is based on peddling another version of “national unity”—between the working class and oppressed who oppose the occupation of Iraq, and a more “rational” wing of the ruling class that believes British imperialism’s interests are being damaged by acting simply as a “pillion passenger” behind the Bush White House. For the reformist SWP, the solution lies not in the overthrow of capitalism but in persuading the British government to break with Bush. An SWP statement (13 July) argues: “There has to be a dramatic reverse in policy, at home and abroad. Pulling the troops out of Iraq will begin to drain the swamp of bitterness that nurtures terrorism”, adding that “the majority of people in the US have turned against Bush’s war—we must intensify the pressure on the British government to break from him as well.”

It is ludicrous to suggest that Britain can somehow “opt out” of the world system of imperialism, short of workers revolution and the establishment of a workers state that expropriates the capitalist class. It is downright grotesque to blame the alliance with the US for British imperialism’s brutality. Although today reduced to a decrepit junior partner of the US, when they did have the economic and military clout the British imperialists wrote the book on racist divide-and-rule and ruthless exploitation of their colonial “subjects”. The “spirit of the Blitz” in World War II that has been invoked almost daily since the terrorist bombings in London is a persistent Labourite myth that all classes were united behind King and country in a common defence of British “democracy”. Far from a war for “democracy”, for the British imperialists this was a scramble to protect their imperialist “interests”—among which India was a prized possession. Thus they denied India its right to independence and even caused a famine in Bengal, while the Labour Party played a vital role in whipping up patriotic “unity” at home. And contrary to the main myth propagated about the “democratic” allies, it was the Soviet Red Army that smashed Hitler’s fascism, at a cost of well over 20 million Soviet citizens’ lives.

Moreover, the British imperialists hardly need any lessons from the Americans on police-state repression, having inflicted it for many years on the oppressed Catholics in Northern Ireland. Similar to today’s anti-Muslim hysteria, “anti-terrorism” campaigns of the 1970s led to outrageous frame-ups of innocent people such as the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Seven and the Guildford Four, who were wrongly convicted in a wave of anti-Irish hysteria following civilian bombing atrocities in British city centres.

Imperialist hypocrisy and Islamic fundamentalism

The British press is in a lather about the fact that this “democratic” country could produce “home grown” Islamic terrorists. Ken Livingstone stated the obvious when he said: “I suspect the real problem was that we funded these people as long as they were killing Russians. We gave no thought to the fact that when they stopped killing Russians they might start killing us” (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 July). For “we”, read the British imperialists who, together with the US and the Pakistan authorities, pulled off the largest covert operation in the CIA’s history throughout the 1980s to boost the most extreme

Islamic reactionaries, including Bin Laden, for a *jihad* in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. The SWP, the Socialist Party and most of the so-called socialist left were in the camp of the imperialists against the USSR. We hailed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, noting that this was a progressive act by the Stalinist bureaucracy that offered the possibility of extending the gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution to the Afghan peoples, particularly to the hideously oppressed women. Following counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, when imperialist funding to the Islamists dried up, the latter turned on their erstwhile backers, most dramatically in the criminal attack on the World Trade Center. Counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union gave an enormous boost to the forces of religious reaction around the globe, while also leading to a “one superpower world” in which US imperialism and its allies feel they have free rein to ravage the semi-colonial world.

The perpetrators of acts such as the London bombing, whoever they may be, demonstrate the mindset typical of religious zealots who believe they have a God-given right to exterminate all non-believers. Islam has no monopoly on this outlook: it parallels that of Christian fundamentalists who bomb abortion clinics in the US; the Protestant bigots who justify “ethnic cleansing” against Catholics in Northern Ireland, and the Zionists who seek to “cleanse” the Palestinians from what they deem to be the Jewish “holy land”. Terrorist attacks in the name of nationalist or religious forces tend to be aimed at the indiscriminate slaughter of as many of the ordinary, multiethnic working-class people as possible. It is unlikely you would find the remotest representative of the upper classes of this country on the London Underground or buses. Moreover, two of the bombings were in heavily Muslim areas. So whoever perpetrated these attacks, the message can only be that Muslims should go back to their “own” countries.

In Britain Islamic fundamentalism has grown, nurtured by international factors as well as the prevalence of Islamophobia and economic decline. In 2001, Asian youth in Oldham, Bradford and Leeds had to fight pitched battles to defend their homes from fascists who, backed by the police, laid siege to neighbourhoods. In these former textile towns, the factories once provided a degree of racial integration, but economic decline and factory closures has increased the polarisation between rich and poor and led to a level of racial segregation which has been compared to the American South before the civil rights movement.

For the imperialist rulers “Islamic terrorism” has become the surrogate for the war against “Godless communism”, the new enemy against which they seek to rally the population in support of imperialist terror abroad and increased state repression at home. Our purpose is to fight to infuse the working class with the consciousness that it has the class interests and the social power to eradicate the system of capitalist imperialism. The 1984-85 British miners strike, among whose most stalwart supporters were blacks and Asians, gave a palpable sense of how class struggle can unite all of the oppressed behind the power of the proletariat. We seek to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party which can take this power forward to victory through proletarian socialist revolution which alone can lay the material basis for ending racism, oppression, exploitation and war. ■

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Reinstate Gate Gourmet workers!

Wildcat strike protests mass sackings at Heathrow

September 10—When hundreds of British Airways (BA) staff at Heathrow Airport downed tools on 11 August in support of 670 South Asian, mainly women workers sacked by catering firm Gate Gourmet, the whole world took notice. From Detroit and Dallas to Frankfurt and Sydney, newspapers reported that for two days members of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) crippled BA and brought one of the world's busiest airports almost to a halt.

In the context of worldwide cut-backs, layoffs and union busting in the airline industry, this spectacular action gave a taste of the enormous social power that these strategically placed airline workers and their trade unions can bring to bear in defence of workers' rights. It also dealt a welcome blow to the myth that class struggle no longer exists in Tony Blair's Britain of poverty pay and "labour market flexibility". And it illustrated the treacherous legalism of the union misleaders, who brought the strike to an end while the workers remained sacked. The union and company are now negotiating over a "voluntary redundancy" package.

Airline workers have considerable clout. Heathrow is strategic to British capitalism, commercially as well as militarily. Demonstrating the power of collective action by these workers, the Heathrow strike cost the bosses more than £40 million, grounded much of the BA fleet internationally and snarled up BA operations for nearly a week. It was all the more impressive in that the strike was undertaken in defiance of anti-union laws forbidding solidarity strikes with workers in different companies and was launched in the teeth of the government's "war on terror" hysteria whipped up in the aftermath of the 7 July criminal terror bombings.

The government's "anti-terror" campaign singles out the country's darker-skinned minority population in order to divide the working class. But at Heathrow the workers gave a splendid demonstration of how class solidarity can transcend ethnic lines, with the integrated workforce, including ground crew workers, recognising that their own interests and those of the more vulnerable and mainly female and Asian catering workers were the same.

Targeting Muslims in the first instance, the government's "war on terror" is designed to regiment the working class, to discourage opposition to the imperialist occupation of Iraq and as a club against all perceived opponents of capitalist rule. Any Muslim, Sikh, Brazilian, African or anybody else deemed a "terror suspect" can be shot by trigger-happy, racist cops—as was seen in the brutal killing of Brazilian immigrant electrician Jean Charles de Menezes, who could have been just about any worker on his way to work. The TGWU and other unions must



T&G workers sacked by airline catering firm Gate Gourmet protesting in Southall, west London, 12 August 2005.

oppose the "war on terror", both as an elementary act of defence of the rights of their own multiethnic membership and to defend the unions as organs of collective struggle.

The working conditions of Gate Gourmet workers are familiar to millions of other workers in "dynamic", 21st-century capitalism. In 1997, BA contracted out their catering to Gate Gourmet, the world's second largest in-flight catering supplier. BA constantly demands "productivity increases" from Gate Gourmet, squeezing workers to do more work for less pay. Contracting out is designed to carve up the working class and prevent unified strikes across a single industry. Today, Gate Gourmet workers earn a paltry £12,000 per year, which is not a living wage. But even this is too much for this company. An exposé in the *Daily Mirror* (16 August) revealed that Gate Gourmet has been implementing a union-bashing scheme code-named Operation Milestones, for which a Gate Gourmet director set up a scabherding operation named Versa Logistics, specialising in recruiting Eastern European and other immigrant workers.

When management hired casual workers at Heathrow, workers saw the writing on the wall and staged a protest—the action for which they were sacked by the company. Gate Gourmet is trying to use immigrant workers from Eastern Europe and Somalia, who earn £6 per hour with no entitlement to state benefits, as a club against the Gate Gourmet workforce who, as British citizens or permanent residents, are entitled to sickness pay and benefits. And unlike most workers in low-paid, contracted-out work, they

are organised in trade unions and have family and union ties to other airport workers.

The mass sacking by Gate Gourmet is an attack on the very existence of trade unions at Heathrow Airport, which according to the *Financial Times* (19 August) is the "largest remaining bastion of unionised labour in the country". The TGWU is the largest union there, with over 20,000 members out of a workforce of 70,000. The fight to reinstate Gate Gourmet workers is an issue for the whole trade union movement. The response by BA ground staff was precisely what is needed: decisive class struggle, in defiance of the anti-union laws, that shut down the entire airport and hit the greedy airline bosses where it hurts—in their bottom line. Airport workers took this action knowing their own jobs could be next on the line—BA is determined to root out the airport unions as part of sweeping changes in preparation for moving to the new Terminal Five in 2008. There is a history of mass firings at Heathrow: 270 unionised catering workers were fired in one fell swoop by Lufthansa Skychefs catering in 1998, for having staged a one-day strike.

The solidarity strikes at Heathrow sent shockwaves through BA, not to mention the viciously anti-working-class Labour government. With Heathrow virtually at a standstill, and BA losing millions in profits, the union leadership repudiated the strikes as "unlawful" and workers went back to work. TGWU general secretary Tony Woodley justified this treachery, bemoaning the fact that solidarity strikes are "unlawful" in Britain, as opposed to elsewhere in Europe, and pleading that "it is time to bring solidar-

ity action within the framework of the law" (*Guardian*, 16 August).

But the powerful solidarity strike by Heathrow workers, which crippled operations at this major international air hub, exposed the lie of the bosses and their Labourite agents that the workers are helpless in the face of the government's anti-union laws. The workers demonstrated the potential of militant class struggle to render these laws inoperable. It was Woodley & Co who acted as the labour lieutenants of capital in enforcing these laws. With BA and the airport back in business, the TGWU leadership—aided by the Trades Union Congress and Labour government ministers—agreed to negotiate, from a position of weakness.

The TGWU leadership support the capitalist Labour government and the interests of the British ruling class—the very forces the unions have to mobilise against to defend workers. Grotesquely appealing to British patriotism against the American-based Gate Gourmet, Woodley asked, "Can a company walk into Britain and plan the cynical sacking of innocent men and women to cut

costs and be legally allowed to get away with it?" (*Guardian*, 23 August). He called on British-based BA to "step in and help the sacked Gate Gourmet workers get their jobs back at Heathrow" (BBC News, 22 August). Appealing to the capitalist bosses or their government, or viewing them as potential partners, is the kiss of death in class struggle, where it is critically important to know who one's enemies are.

The key question for airport workers facing union-busting attacks is to forge, in the course of class struggles, a new leadership in the unions that will not play by the bosses' rules or buy into the bourgeoisie's "national unity" hysteria, which was used to stop the striking firefighters on the eve of Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq. Against Gate Gourmet and other companies' attempts to pit immigrant workers against other workers in Britain, the unions must organise the unorganised! A class-struggle leadership would champion the fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants!** The fight for such a leadership is linked to building a new, revolutionary party of the working class. We of the Spartacist League/Britain are fighting to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party. This is not to be some warmed over version of the old Labour Party that for decades betrayed the interests of workers and minorities. What's needed is a party founded on the understanding that working people's fight for their own interests must culminate in a socialist revolution that overthrows capitalism and replaces it with an international, rationally planned economy that will consign unemployment, poverty pay and racism to the dustbin of history.

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