



Spartacist Ireland

Dublin, 9 December 2005: Irish building workers union placards demand unionisation of immigrant workers.

Irish unions show their strength

Wretched deal at Irish Ferries

DUBLIN, 15 DECEMBER—Friday 9 December saw the largest display of trade union strength in Ireland for decades, with 150,000 marching in total across the country, 100,000 in Dublin alone. The union members turned out in force in support of Irish Ferries workers who had occupied two vessels in Pembroke Dock and Holyhead for three weeks, having foiled an attempt by the company to forcibly remove the mainly Irish crew and replace them with immigrant workers who would be paid half the Irish minimum wage. Providing a glimpse of the enormous potential

power that the unions have to bring the capitalist system to a grinding halt, workers left their jobs en masse to march in solidarity with the ferry crews in what turned into *de facto* **solidarity strike action**. Dublin Bus services were shut down; LUAS and DART [Dublin light rail and commuter train] services were severely curtailed, as were CIE train and Bus Eireann services, while workers at a Tesco distribution centre in Tallaght walked off the job. Among the many union contingents were workers from building sites (Irish and Polish); Dublin airport workers,

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Imperialist 'democracy' means barbarity in Iraq

For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!

As the occupying forces get further bogged down in their brutal occupation of Iraq, there is growing concern among imperialist representatives both in the US and Britain about the absence of an "exit strategy". This worry is fuelled by revelations about atrocities by the Blair and Bush regimes inside and outside of Iraq in the name of the "war on terror", which threaten to blow apart some of the myths about "democratic" imperialism. It has now been revealed that in Falluja last year the military used white phosphorous as an incendiary agent, as well as thermobaric (or "fuel-air") explosives which not only char human tissue but also cause air embolisms in blood vessels, multiple internal haemorrhaging in the liver and spleen, collapsed lungs, ruptured ear drums and can displace eyes from their sockets (*Guardian*, 22 November 2005). The world may never know exactly how many people died in Falluja, but before the attack thousands of men "of fighting age" were prevented from leaving the city by US and British troops, and one estimate says that between 30,000 and 50,000 civilians remained in the city during the attack.

To prevent the real story about dirty operations in Iraq from seeing the light of day, Britain's attorney general Lord Goldsmith has used the Official Secrets Act to prosecute two men accused of leaking a government memo and has taken the unprecedented step of threatening to use this Act to gag newspapers. The memo allegedly refers to a



Sean Smith/Guardian

November 2005: Iraqi prisoners captured by US marines on Iraq's border with Syria, blindfolded and tied together.

discussion that took place in April 2004 between George Bush and Tony Blair in which Bush threatened to take "military action" against the Arabic TV station al-Jazeera, to which Blair supposedly objected. Al-Jazeera's Kabul office was hit by a US bomb in 2001, while during the 2003 invasion of Iraq its Baghdad office was hit by a missile. Now David Keogh, a former Cabinet Office official, has been charged with leaking the memo while Leo O'Connor, researcher to former Labour MP Tony Clarke, also faces charges. Downing Street went to extreme lengths to suppress this memo for fear of damaging the so-called "special relationship" with the

Bush White House which Blair values above all else.

British imperialism arrived early on the historic scene, but is now too weak to behave as an "independent" power in any meaningful sense. The capitalist rulers have by and large given up on industry in Britain, and increasingly live off the profits derived from superexploitation of workers the world over through investments brokered in the City of London. Unable to afford a military that could police the world and guarantee its own investments, the British ruling class relies on US carrier fleets, which means supporting US military moves to ensure its geopolitical

supremacy.

But the British establishment is far from unanimous in backing Blair's unconditional loyalty to the Bush regime, especially over Iraq. At the time the Blair-Bush dispute is said to have taken place, the *Guardian* reports that the British military top brass was furious with the US military:

"The meeting between Mr Bush and Mr Blair took place at a time when Whitehall officials, intelligence officers, and British military commanders were expressing outrage at the scale of the US assault on the Iraqi city of Falluja, in which up to 1,000 civilians are feared to have died. Pictures of the attack shown on al-Jazeera had infuriated

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Young Spartacus

Revolutionaries and World War II

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Iraq...

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US generals. The government was also arguing with Washington about the number of extra British troops to be sent to Iraq at a time when it was feared they would be endangered by what a separately leaked Foreign Office memo called 'heavy-handed' US military tactics. There were UK anxieties that US bombing in civilian areas in Falluja would unite Sunnis and Shias against British forces."

— Guardian, 24 November 2005

The outrage expressed by the British military over US tactics is not motivated by concern over the number of Iraqi deaths, but over the imperialist occupiers' casualty rate. The dispute shows that, drawing on their experience of subjugating Catholics in Northern Ireland, British troops in Iraq have the mentality not of a soldier—whose job is to kill and be killed—but of a policeman, whose job is to kill and not be killed. In Northern Ireland, the British Army use the Loyalist death squads to do much of their killing. Transposed to Iraq, the British commanders would



September 2005, British Army "softly, softly" tactics in Basra: when two undercover British soldiers were imprisoned by Iraqi forces, British Army stormed the jail leading to a riot in which tanks were set ablaze.

prefer to use undercover operations, such as last September's botched mission in Basra, and to foment communalist violence between Shias and Sunnis while maintaining a lower casualty rate

among imperialist troops.

Hypocrisy of "No torture please, we're British"

Numerous press reports about the fact that the CIA has been secretly kidnapping "terror suspects" for so-called "extraordinary rendition", which means being flown to secret US prisons around the world for torture and "interrogation" outside the constraints of US law, have set off a diplomatic spat between the European Union and the US. This practice was authorised by Democrat Bill Clinton when he was US president and is probably well-known to many European governments. The EU Commission's warning to Eastern European member states that any "extraordinary renditions" and "human rights violations" taking place in their territories would run counter to EU rules was a masterpiece in hypocrisy. All EU governments use repression and carry out their own version of the "war on terror". Moreover the European Commission stood shoulder to shoulder with the French state while it used truly "extraordinary" powers that date from the time of its dirty, losing colonial war in Algeria to repress immigrants who rose up against racist cop terror in November 2005 (see article, page 4).

Opposition to some of the more extreme aspects of Blair's "war on terror" reverberates even in Parliament, where the government suffered a stunning defeat in a vote over "anti-terrorism" measures that Blair tried to ram through following the London bombings in July 2005. A controversial amendment to extend the period that a suspect can be detained before being charged to 90 days was voted down by a combination of Labour, Tory and Liberal Democrat MPs. Clearly, most of these "honourable gentlemen" do not oppose the "war on terror" on principle and are not known for their defence of democratic rights. The amendment that passed allows for detention without charge for up to 28 days, which is hardly a liberal measure. Just like the bourgeois opposition to the occupation of Iraq, the vote reflects concern that Blair

& Co are damaging British imperialism's credibility as defender of "democracy".

For similar reasons, the House of Lords has also ruled that evidence obtained under torture is not admissible in British courts. The ruling came in an appeal by a group of immigrants, mainly Algerians, who were rounded up under anti-terrorism legislation rushed through in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US. Their detentions were ruled unlawful by the law lords a year ago. Most were released but were placed under "control orders"; they were detained in prison again following the London bombings and are now facing deportation. This ruling is a significant legal victory for these prisoners and a setback for the government's deportation plans. Nonetheless their lawyers' claim that the ruling puts "beyond doubt that the ban on torture was absolute in civilised countries" (Guardian, 9 December 2005) is far-fetched. Secret "dirty tricks", illegal detention and torture of prisoners are standard operating procedure for Britain's ruling class—and indeed for any imperialist power. Torture was routine in Britain's hell-hole prison camps in Northern Ireland and some of the most famous frame-up trials of Irish people, such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six, used "confessions" obtained through torture.

Free Babar Ahmad—stop the extradition!

The description of Britain as a "civilised country" would not be recognisable to those who have been on the receiving end of racist state repression. A recent statement by Babar Ahmad, a British Muslim incarcerated in Woodhill prison facing extradition to the US on "terrorism" charges, based on no evidence whatsoever, gives a more accurate picture. He says:

"I never supported a terrorist attack on Britain, publicly or privately, even though Britain terrorises Muslims around the world. I thought I had a fair idea of what it means to be a 'British Muslim.' But I was wrong. On 02 December 2003, two years ago today, I found out what it really means to be British. To me, being British means being beaten up at 6 a.m. by a gang of racist 'British' police officers, in front of my wife, in my own bedroom. To me, being British means being dragged around by handcuffs on my wrists like a dog on a leash.... It means being strangled by police officers en-route to the police station until you think you are going to die. It means being punched, kicked and sworn at by the same police officers who remove their shoes out of 'respect' when entering mosques to recruit spies amongst the Muslim community."

—Stop Political Terror, 6 December 2005

Ultimately, the solution to the suffering of the victims of British imperialism—both at home and under the occupation in Iraq—depends on the struggle of the British proletariat to overthrow the capitalist order through socialist revolution. From the start of the anti-war demonstrations we have emphasised the need for class struggle

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TROTSKY

The origins of the materialist conception of history

In contrast to the anti-scientific and anti-materialist notions prevalent today, such as the idea that it is possible to "change the world without taking power", Marxism is the scientific world outlook of the proletariat which emerged in the period 1845-47. The materialist conception of history was first stated in the Theses on Feuerbach and elaborated in The German Ideology, both written by Karl

Marx in 1845-46. The theory of historical materialism uncovered the genuine laws of social development and revolutionised the science of society, while the Communist Manifesto of 1848 elaborated the programme to change the world through working-class power.

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature....

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life....

This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. Hence what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production.

—Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1846), printed in *Collected Works, Volume 5*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Lawrence & Wishart, 1976)



LENIN

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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

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Correction

Berlin
14 November 2005

Dear Comrades,

In my speech to your dayschool on "Fighting against capitalist reunification of Germany" published in the Autumn 2005 issue of *Workers Hammer*, I said Walter Benjamin went to the DDR. He did flee the Nazi regime but he committed suicide in 1940 and thus

did not live to see the DDR (where his sister-in-law Hilde Benjamin became Minister of Justice). Also, my English let me down when I said that our candidate in Halle in the Volkskammer elections was a leader of the SED youth organisation; I should have said he had been.

Comradely,
Kurt Weiss

The following article is adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 857, 28 October 2005.

Our comrade Elizabeth King Robertson died at home on 12 October after a six-year battle with cancer. Over the course of more than 30 years as a professional revolutionist, Lizzy excelled as an organiser, propagandist and editor. A patient mentor and inspiration for younger comrades, Lizzy provided a vital link in the fight to preserve our revolutionary heritage going back to Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. At the time of her death, she was a full member of the Spartacist League/US Central Committee and of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League. Her loss is incalculable both to our party internationally and to her family—Jim Robertson, Martha and Martha's children Rachel, Sarah and Kenneth—as well as her father Henry and mother Mary King and the rest of the King family.

Lizzy grew up in a large family in New York City. Following the death of her mother, Barbara, her father Henry King, a successful corporate lawyer, remarried. Mary King raised Lizzy as her own daughter, and for Lizzy she became "mom". Lizzy attended Brearley private school for girls in New York. She always valued the education she received there and many of the friendships made at Brearley endured until the end of her life. As a teenager she was sent to Miss Porter's, an exclusive finishing school for "old money" society girls. Her first-hand experience of anti-Semitism and class snobbery there played a role in her becoming a passionate fighter against racism and inequality.

Lizzy first encountered the Spartacist League in the early 1970s while a student at Boston University. Under the impact of the Vietnam War, Boston campuses were a hotbed of New Left radicalism. Lizzy was active in the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee, a group trying to defend working-class families from being pushed out of their homes as the universities expanded. She was recruited to Trotskyism, joining the Revolutionary Communist Youth, the SL's youth group in 1973. For many students, the brush with radical activism was just an episode of youthful rebellion on the road to an eventual comfortable career. But Lizzy's recruitment to the fight for international socialist revolution was for keeps.

Lizzy was accepted into party membership in July 1974. She had by then transferred to Detroit, where the SL was seeking to intervene among the largely black proletariat of the auto factories. She impressed comrades as the youth organiser as well as by her participation in the lively debates that took place as the party began to get more experience in trade-union work. Here she also began the difficult training to become a legal stenographic reporter, a profession in which she was active until her debilitation by cancer.

Around 1976 she transferred to New York in order to be part of the national leadership of the youth organisation (renamed the Spartacus Youth League). Lizzy was elected to the SYL National Bureau in July 1976 and was a member of the editorial board of the monthly *Young Spartacus* from October 1976 through September 1978. She served for a year as the SYL National Organizational Secretary. Her experience as youth organiser and leader was crucial to Lizzy's understanding of the importance of a youth organisation in the training of party cadre.

In August 1978, she resigned her leading positions in the youth organisation in order to take on the job of secretary of the Political Bureau. Not only did Lizzy fulfil the demanding assignment of getting out regular and accurate minutes throughout her years in New York, but she turned the job of PB secretary into a nexus for organising political discussions. Her close personal association with SL national chairman James Robertson began at this time, and she remained his loving companion and closest party collaborator until her death. After serving on the party Central Committee as a representative of the SYL, Lizzy was co-opted in her own right in 1979 and elected a full CC member at the August 1983 national conference. She also took charge of the subject indexing for the bound volumes of our press, which are the documentary record of our political line and our work. Lizzy transferred to the San

Elizabeth King Robertson



Robertson family



1951-2005

Francisco Bay Area at the beginning of the 1990s. She tirelessly guided the local leadership, was secretary of the West Coast CC group and also took continuous responsibility for our local in Los Angeles.

Lizzy's strength was in tackling the intersection of political principle with concrete social reality, coming up with tactics and slogans to express our programme. She closely followed the work of Spartacist supporters in the trade unions and her counsel was highly valued by those involved in such work. She was a longtime member of the Bay Area local executive committee and fought to remain on this body despite her many other responsibilities because she understood so well that making political decisions real means daily choices of "what to betray" in order to focus on the most important things; it means finding the right comrades for the concrete tasks and preparing them politically to carry out those tasks.

Lizzy was unsurpassed as a Leninist political organiser. After a party gathering, she was inevitably involved in figuring out how to shift personnel or assignments to make the political priorities just established actually happen. She had a profound understanding of how our organisational functioning corresponds to our revolutionary purpose. For decades, Lizzy was one of a handful of comrades who took initiative in formulating, refining and codifying our internal norms and practices as the party came across new situations or as problems were seen with the existing rules.

At the ICL's Third International Conference in 1998, she gave a presentation, "On the Origins and Development of Leninist Organizational Practices". Published in *Spartacist* no 54 (Spring 1998) along with our revised "Organizational Rules and Guidelines", Lizzy's presentation educated both young comrades and experienced cadres by providing the historical background, beginning with the first Marxist organisations founded by Karl Marx himself, to enable the conference delegates to consider the Rules. In this presentation, she explained: "Living organizational rules are one of perhaps a half-dozen elements that characterize an organization; in that sense, they are political. But they are not determinate. A sound set of organizational rules is not a guard against political departures, although departures from our organizational norms are generally a signal of political problems. In the absence of Bolshevik practices, an organization is necessarily amorphous, that is, Menshevik."

Though she rarely raised her voice, Lizzy was a powerful speaker at party gatherings. Her astute judgment and forthrightness made her a uniquely authoritative voice in the deliberations through

which the party selects a leadership. Numerous times she was chosen to chair the nominating commission charged with recommending a slate of candidates to the party conference that elects the leading body (the CC in the SL or the IEC in the ICL). Lizzy was clear-eyed in seeing the weaknesses as well as the strengths of comrades, including her closest friends, and she was renowned for her fairness. This ability is crucial in a Leninist party, which aims to build its leadership as a collective that is stronger than the sum of its individual parts.

Lizzy was also her own harshest critic. Although in great pain, she authored a document on 7 October addressing her role in a political fight in the Los Angeles local that had been marred by extreme characterisations of comrades and bureaucratic practices. Her purpose was not a *mea culpa* but a statement of conscientious regard for clarity, drawing the political lessons necessary to strengthen the party.

Beginning in early 1979, Lizzy was a mainstay of the editorial board of *Women and Revolution*, the journal of the SL CC Commission for Work Among Women. Lizzy authored or co-authored some of *W&R's* articles on the most sensitive subjects, defending human sexuality and exposing the barbarous cruelty of the bourgeois state as it destroys the lives of people whose only "crime" is that their sexual proclivities and needs vary from the repressive, religion-based strictures of hypocritical bourgeois moralism. She wrote articles on the AIDS crisis, the crime of female genital mutilation, the fabricated "child abuse" day-care scandals, incest and the furor over so-called

"date rape". When publication of *W&R* was suspended after the Spring 1996 issue, Lizzy continued to contribute to the articles published under the *W&R* masthead in the press of the national sections of the ICL, including *Workers Vanguard*, and in *Spartacist*. During the last weeks of her life, Lizzy was heavily involved in the editing of an article for the next issue of *Spartacist* examining the debates and discussions in the Bolshevik Party over women's emancipation after the Russian Revolution.

The final undoing of the October Revolution in 1991-92 was a historic defeat for the workers of the world, ushering in a difficult period for revolutionists. Our difficulties in coming to grips with the new period have been expressed in political disorientation and corresponding internal difficulties (see "Spartacist League 12th National Conference—A Hard Look at Recent Party Work and Current Tasks", *Workers Vanguard* no 841, 4 February). Nobody has been immune to these problems, but comrade Lizzy played a forward role in trying to get the party out of this morass. Several times during the past five or six years, our internal bulletins have featured a document by Lizzy, submitted early in the discussion, often less than one page in length, which became a touchstone for subsequent contributions. Often her document would begin from a concrete, seemingly tactical question of a particular projected intervention somewhere, and would proceed logically to illuminate programmatic and principled issues.

After Lizzy's cancer was diagnosed, she undertook surgery, chemotherapy and, finally, radiation. Her father ensured that she obtained high-quality care, which was ultimately unavailing. She continued to do her bi-weekly sales and other public political activity. In April 2003, she was wounded by a "non-lethal projectile" fired from a cop shotgun during the vicious police attack on anti-war protesters, longshoremen and port truckers at the Port of Oakland.

Her comrades, family and friends will miss Lizzy's presence in our lives for as long as we have consciousness. We will miss her fine mind, her humour, her warmth and compassion. We will always remember her beauty and courage. Even in the midst of our grief, we celebrate her life and find comfort in knowing that she lived as she chose to and never wavered in her belief that fighting for the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed was the right way for her to live. For us, she has been a very strong link in the chain of continuity that goes all the way back to Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, and Cannon. We resolve to honour our beloved comrade Lizzy by carrying on her struggle.

Down with racist state of emergency!

Ghetto youth upheavals in France

The following article is based on a leaflet issued on 5 November by our comrades of the Ligue trotskyste de France.

On 27 October, two youth of African origin, Ziad Benna and Bouna Traoré, were electrocuted in a power substation where they had sought refuge from a police dragnet in Clichy-sous-Bois, near Paris. For over a week, immigrant and minority ghettos and neighbourhoods have been in flames. Thousands of cars as well as some warehouses and stores have burned. The unprecedented unrest in the suburban ghettos has also flared up in the centre of Paris and spread to suburbs all over France and beyond.

Cars were set ablaze outside the main train station in Brussels and in a working-class neighbourhood of Berlin.

The French government continues to fuel the outrage. A state of emergency invoking sweeping police measures has now been imposed against the seething ghettos. Some 10,000 police have been deployed while more than 1200 youth have been arrested and some have already been sentenced to months in jail. We demand the **immediate release of all the jailed youth and the dropping of all charges! Down with racist police terror against youth in the immigrant ghettos!** We also oppose Vigipirate, a plan consisting of racist joint police and army patrols in train and metro stations and airports, which has been on "code red" for five months now.

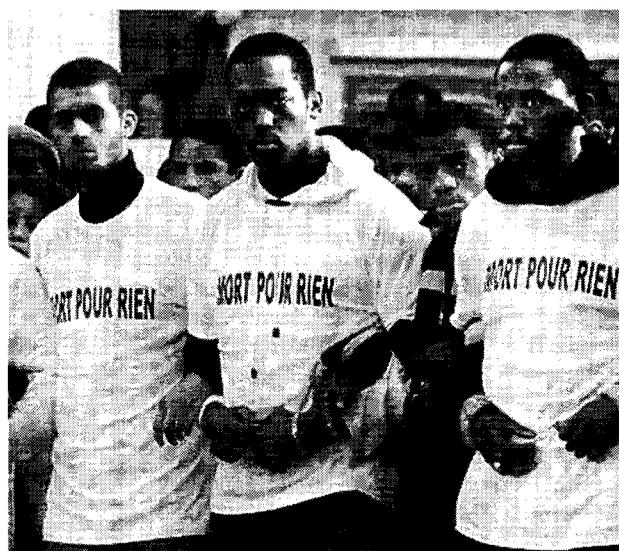
The explosion started in Clichy-sous-Bois, a rundown ghetto with a population consisting heavily of immigrants and French youth of immigrant descent. The official unemployment rate there is 25 per cent; in reality, probably more than 50 per cent of youth there are unemployed. No wonder Clichy exploded. The bourgeoisie does not have much to offer these youth except police patrols, jail and death—in some prisons about 80 per cent of the inmates are of Muslim background, whereas Muslims make up less than ten per cent of the population of France.

A recent sociological study documents "apartheid at school", with racist segregation now even more intense in high schools than in housing. As a result, these youth have little to no perspective of finishing school or getting a job. And the situation has gone from bad to worse over the last 20 years, under "left-" and right-wing governments alike. Racism is inherent to capitalism, and in France it is rooted also in its colonial past: the French bourgeoisie still seethes over its defeat in the Algerian liberation struggle over 40 years ago. A consistent fight against racist oppression requires a fight to overthrow the whole capitalist system.

Riots such as these are an expression of despair by unemployed youth so marginalised that they are deprived of any means to be a factor for effective social change. The unrest has also included incidents of indiscriminate attacks on individuals who happened to find themselves in the wrong place, and



Left: Paris suburb Clichy-sous-Bois invaded by cops. Right: Clichy-sous-Bois residents march on 29 October. T-shirts reading "Dead for Nothing" honour two young men who died after being chased by police.



has devastated the neighbourhoods these youth have to live in. Yet despite the vast energies expended and the devastation suffered, these outbreaks usually change nothing. This makes it even more important for workers to fight for better conditions for residents of these neighbourhoods. The working class is the social force that has the objective interest and power to overturn this whole system of capitalist exploitation, racism and misery, and build a workers state based on a planned economy.

Aulnay-sous-Bois is another city in the 93rd district, a heavily working-class and immigrant region outside Paris that was prominent in the recent riots. In Aulnay there is also a large Citroën auto plant where young workers, mostly of North and West African immigrant origin, carried out a winning strike this past March. Thousands of youth from the area have jobs at the nearby Charles de Gaulle Airport, one of the largest in Europe. The power of the multiethnic workforce of the area, French and immigrant, can be unleashed to fight against the terrible conditions in the ghettos and in defence of the oppressed youth. But for this to happen, what is necessary is a relentless fight against the chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy, which restrains and betrays working-class struggles because at bottom it shares the bourgeoisie's concern that French capitalism be made more "competitive" against its international rivals.

The government's vicious attack against a whole generation of youth is intended to fuel racist divisions within the multiethnic working class of this country in a context of savage attacks against the whole proletariat and growing working-class resistance. After the seamen of the Corsica-Mediterranean ferry line lost their strike, stabbed in the back by the CGT union leadership (see "Corsica and Class Struggle in France", *Workers Vanguard* no 857, 28 October), the government, wielding an anti-strike court injunction, is now trying to break a month-long strike by Marseille transport workers. A strike has been called for 21 November by all the major unions of the SNCF railway. This makes it all the more urgent for the organised workers movement to oppose the government's racist onslaught. For the working class, it is a life-and-death question to stand united and fight off the attacks on its standard of living and on social

services. As the LTF wrote in *Le Bolchévique* (September 2005):

"An attack against one is an attack against all. The whole workers movement... must mobilise in defence of its most vulnerable class brothers, the workers coming from North and West Africa in particular, who form a strategic component of the proletariat of this country, whether in construction, auto or among the sanitation workers of Paris. What's needed is a campaign to unionise the temp workers, time-limited jobs and 'new hire contracts' [a new type of contract below union standards]. **Down with Vigipirate! Down with racist expulsions and deportation charter flights! Full citizenship rights for all those who are here! French troops out of Africa!**"

Neighbourhood police and riot police: guard dogs of the bourgeois order

The trade-union bureaucrats and the reformist parties should be condemned for their refusal to protest the government's racist onslaught in Clichy-sous-Bois and other neighbourhoods. They mainly complain that Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy is a crazed maniac, only pursuing his career to become president. Thus they give backhanded support to his rival, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin (a close ally of President Jacques Chirac), who has even increased the level of police repression since he took over the situation after the first days of rioting. The reformists condemn Sarkozy for sending riot police on hit-and-run operations against the minority ghettos. Instead of Sarkozy's raids, they promote the so-called good old days of the "neighbourhood police" put in place by the late popular-front government of Lionel Jospin of the Socialist Party (PS) and Marie-George Buffet, the current head of the Communist Party (PCF). The PCF and the pseudo-Trotskyist Lutte ouvrière (LO) have even attacked Sarkozy for reducing the number of police working daily in the ghettos. LO wrote in *Lutte Ouvrière* (8 July):

"In complete contradiction to his promises, the minister Sarkozy has conducted the same policy on his turf as his colleagues: playing tricks with the numbers to hide the decrease, closing police precincts, budgets without funds."

The "neighbourhood police" was a favourite concept of Jean-Pierre Chevènement, minister of police in the Jospin government, who is still widely

hated by undocumented immigrants and by ghetto youth, whom he liked to refer to as *sauvageons* (little savages). He introduced new laws enabling charges to be brought against anyone found helping undocumented workers. The harking back of the PS and PCF to Jospin and Chevènement's "neighbourhood police" days is a deadly omen for immigrants and youth. It was Jospin's cops who killed Habib Ould Mohamed in Toulouse in 1998, provoking a riot for three full days in the Le Mirail neighbourhood, which was quelled by a massive mobilisation of the riot police, exactly as Sarkozy/de Villepin are doing now. Again, in April 2000, a neighbourhood patrol killed Ryad Hamlaoui near Lille, provoking another wave of unrest.

The PCF issued a special statement (*L'Humanité*, 4 November) on Clichy demanding: "Place the police at the service of the whole nation, which means democratisation, training, neighbourhood residency and adequate funds." LO's editorial on Clichy mentions immigration or racism only once, in order to warn that Sarkozy's antics will "encourage more repressive attitudes among the police and racism among many of its elements". As if putting a different top cop in charge and throwing a few "bad apples" off the force would create "good" French cops. All these reformists are trying to rehabilitate the police in the eyes of oppressed youth, thus promoting deadly illusions in the bourgeois Republic. The police cannot be reformed to serve the population. Promoting the lie that they can be reformed is what distinguishes reformists from revolutionaries. Like the other armed bodies of men that constitute the core of the state (prison guards, the army), their function is to protect private ownership of the means of production by the capitalists. The capitalist state has a legal monopoly on weapons in order to maintain the capitalist system: the police are the guard dogs of the bourgeoisie, not "workers in uniform". **Police and prison guards, out of the unions!**

PCF, LCR: architects of a new "popular front"

In its statement, the PCF speaks accusingly of Sarkozy: "The government has shown that it is incapable of guaranteeing public order." The PS and PCF are using the current riots in order to refurbish their much-tarnished credentials

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British, US imperialist troops out of Iraq now!

“International Peace Conference”

building illusions in a kinder, gentler imperialism

We publish below a Spartacist League leaflet that was distributed at the 10 December London “International Peace Conference”.

Amid mounting reports of imperialist savagery in Iraq, including atrocities such as the deliberate incineration of civilians in Falluja, the hideous torture of prisoners and the brutal injustice of the racist “war on terror”, the question facing anti-war activists is how to effectively oppose such imperialist slaughter. Even though the military is bogged down in Iraq and domestic support in the US is declining, Bush has just launched a “National Strategy for Victory”. Meanwhile his administration continues to threaten Iran, Syria and North Korea, and the US has formed a strategic military alliance with Japan against China. The Stop the War Coalition (StWC) led by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) boasts of having led demonstrations of millions of people who oppose the occupation of Iraq, which indeed they did. But what exactly has this “broad unity” movement achieved?

One thing it certainly did *not* achieve: the millions of demonstrators who listened to speeches from its platforms never heard a hint of the most elementary truth about imperialism that has been known to Marxists for a century—that opposition to imperialist war cannot be separated from the struggle for socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism, because war is intrinsic to the capitalist system.

The Spartacist League has intervened in demonstrations and other events under our own political banners, raising our revolutionary programme. As our 21 March 2003 statement condemning the assault on Iraq made clear, Marxists are not pacifists, but take a side. It said:

“We stand for the military defence of Iraq against US and British attack. Every setback for these imperialist forces abroad is a blow in defence of the interests of the working class and oppressed masses around the world. It is the job of the working people of Iraq, and throughout the Near East, to get rid of the bloody regime of Saddam Hussein and all the colonels, sheiks and dictators, including the Zionist butchers who are using the cover of this war to ratchet up their daily killing of Palestinians with the aim of forcible expulsion. It is our job here to build the revolutionary leadership that can mobilise the only force with the social power and class interest to challenge the rule of capitalist imperialism: the multiethnic working class.”

—reprinted in *Workers Hammer* no 184, Spring 2003

We call for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of imperialist troops from Iraq. We are not sending “delegates” to this “peace conference”, which would imply we are affiliated, for the same reason we are not affiliated to the StWC: our aims and goals of mobilising the working class for revolutionary

struggle against their “own” imperialist ruling class are *counterposed* to building a movement based on the supposed *unity* of all classes against the occupation. Unlike Workers Power, for example, we consider it absurd to affiliate to this class-collaborationist body to pressurise it to adopt a more radical programme. The StWC is built on



Brutality of colonial occupation: an Iraqi prisoner who was among a score detained in a raid on the town of Rawa, handcuffed, blindfolded and left out in the open overnight before being flown to the US base at Qaim.

unity-above-all between MPs, capitalist parties such as the Greens; union bureaucrats, bishops, mullahs and pacifists—around a perceived common aim. That aim is to seek to convince the Blair government to adjust its foreign policy, which is seen as being too slavish to the Bush White House and therefore damaging to British imperialism’s interests abroad. And as former Labour MP Tony Benn never fails to point out, Blair’s involvement in Iraq is discrediting Britain’s “democratic” credentials at home.

A classic example of this kind of appeal to British imperialism to “see sense” can be found in a breathtaking “Dear Tony” letter on the StWC website. Addressed to “Dear Mr Blair”, it humbly beseeches the prime minister to promise that “British troops will be brought home by the end of this year”, and even fantasises that: “You can save the lives of our soldiers. You can make Britain’s streets safer. You can defend civil liberties rather than erode them.” Marxists vehemently oppose such obscene appeals, addressed to the chief representative of British imperialism whose imperialist bloodthirstiness and appetite for savaging civil liberties is second to no-one in the Bush administration. Try telling the family of Jean Charles de Menezes to appeal to Tony Blair to “make Britain’s streets safer”! (from whom?) This is back-handed support to the racist “war on terror” that brands all Muslims as potential terrorists.

This letter illustrates clearly what reformism comes down to: appealing for a kinder, gentler version of imperialist rule. Imperialism is not simply a foreign

policy; it is fundamentally an economic system, based on conquest of territory for raw materials (such as oil), markets, cheap labour and spheres of influence. Particularly within the imperialist countries, parliamentary “democracy” plays a very important role in disguising the basic fact that, at home and abroad, imperialism is nothing other than the dictator-

the British Army because of lack of jobs, and the army does have a class contradiction, between the officer class and the soldier—who is regarded as expendable “cannon fodder” in a military conflict. But the purpose of the army is to protect and serve the interests of British imperialism. The army’s function abroad today is no different than that of the private armies who colonised India and Java while in the employ of the British and Dutch East India companies respectively. Together with the police, the courts and the prison system, the army is the backbone of the capitalist state. An imperialist army’s function is to prevail over its imperialist rivals in inter-imperialist wars; to subjugate neocolonial countries such as Iraq; to suppress domestic disorder—troops were placed on standby to break the 2002 firefighters strike; and to forcibly maintain “order”, such as in Northern Ireland where the army maintains the sectarian state through subjugation of the oppressed Catholics.

We seek to demolish the predominant myth of the post-Soviet world, that the perspective of mobilising the working class for socialist

revolution—or indeed for major class struggle—is hopelessly outdated. The StWC (and for that matter the Respect coalition) is living proof that the SWP no longer offers the British working class even a hypocritical nod in the direction of socialism. Contrary to post-modernist and Blairite wishful thinking, the contradictions of capitalism are such that class struggle is *inevitable* and the working class is the only force with the potential to bring the capitalist system to a halt. But that requires a struggle against the existing union misleadership that is tied to British capitalism and has sold out their members’ interests rather than mount a real struggle against the bosses and the Blair government.

The government permitted the mammoth anti-war demonstrations to take over the streets, but took a very different attitude to the firefighters strike of November 2002, threatening to use the army to break the picket lines. This is because the firefighters strike had far greater potential to throw a spanner into the war preparations than the demonstrations did. The brief wildcat strike at Heathrow airport this summer in solidarity with sacked Gate Gourmet workers also showed the tremendous potential of the working class—in less than two days it paralysed the entire British Airways operation and cost the company millions. The FBU leadership called off the firefighters strike and handed the government a victory over the unions; in Heathrow the TGWU ended the wildcat strike and betrayed over 600 sacked Gate Gourmet workers. The much vaunted “unity” within the StWC means unity with anti-war

revolution—

ship of the bourgeoisie. Rather than fostering illusions in the “democratic” credentials of British imperialism, which reformists like the SWP and the Socialist Party have done throughout their existence, Marxists seek to tear off the veil of “democracy” and expose the truth: that depredation, militarism, conquest and savage brutality do not exist somehow apart from the “democratic” charade in the Mother of Parliaments, but are all part and parcel of the “normal” workings of imperialism.

British parliamentary democracy has been used for decades to delude the working class at home while the ruling class carried out its blood-drenched rule. Today British imperialism is reduced to being the senile partner of US imperialism, but it is hardly less rapacious. In the last century British imperialism carved up the Middle East, artificially creating what is today Iraq, where in 1919-20 the Kurds were bombed from the air and Arabs were shelled; the British 1917 Balfour Declaration set the scene for carving the state of Israel out of the Palestinian nation; while the bloody partition of India (under a Labour government) ushered in a communalist slaughter on an unprecedented scale.

Every major imperialist power is equipped with massive military force. Thus it is downright shameful for self-described “socialists” to refer to British imperialist troops as “our soldiers”. In Iraq they are the iron fist of imperialist occupation; not to mention British troops in Northern Ireland—try telling the relatives of the victims of Bloody Sunday that their killers were “our soldiers”! Many working-class youth join

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British imperialism and the myth of the “democratic” war against fascism

Revolutionaries and World War II

We publish below an edited version of the presentation given by Comrade Olly Laing at a Spartacus Youth Group forum in London on 22 October.

This year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the second world war. I'm sure anyone here who observed George Bush and Tony Blair's platitudes about the fight for freedom and democracy around the VE day commemorations was sickened by the hypocrisy of these imperialist butchers of Iraq. The notion that World War II was, for the British and American imperialists, a crusade of democracy against fascism is still used by them today to portray their imperialist wars abroad and war on civil liberties at home as progressive struggles against tyranny. After the 7 July London bombings, “the spirit of the Blitz” was invoked by politicians and the bourgeois media to declare the unity of all Londoners against “terrorism”—supposedly today's tyrannical threat to democracy. The purpose was to rally the population around the flag of national unity, so that they would accept the racist and ever-increasing draconian “anti-terror” legislation. But national unity is a lie. Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeois ruling class, which fosters the poison of racism and other bigotry, to divide the working class in order to maintain capitalist rule. Pushed by all manner of liberal and reformist ideologues, the idea that the second world war was a “people's war” on the part of the “democratic” capitalist powers, with all classes standing together against fascism, is also a grotesque lie.

The Nazi regime was unparalleled in its barbarity. It systematically exterminated six million Jews, millions of Slavs and other peoples and strangled all working-class organisations, turning Europe into a living hell. But this did not make the Allied imperialist “democracies” anti-fascist fighters for freedom. To understand World War II, or the history of the twentieth century for that matter, it is essential to understand the significance of the Russian Revolution.



Yevgeni Khaldei

In the period following the first world war, the political consciousness of all classes in Europe was dominated by the victory of the world's first workers revolution in Russia in 1917. For those who gained any material advantage from the status quo, those with any ideological or religious connection to the bourgeois order, fear of communism dictated pro-fascist sympathies. In this period of economic and social crisis in Europe, where the facade of parliamentary democracy could no longer deceive and contain the militant organised working class, the bourgeoisie looked desperately to fascist reaction to smash the workers organisations and the threat of socialist revolutions. That imperialist pig Winston Churchill, today still celebrated as an “anti-fascist”, enthused over Mussolini's fascists in 1927 with the declaration: “Hereafter no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism” (quoted in Robert Black, *Stalinism in Britain* [1970]).

It was in Germany that the Nazis placed themselves at the head of European reaction. The Russian Revolution had failed to spread to the rest of Europe and

humanity was made to pay for this with Nazi terror and the Holocaust. The German proletariat had suffered the defeat of a series of insurrectionary and semi-insurrectionary movements in the period 1919-23 due to the immaturity of the Communist leadership there. The German bourgeoisie resolved to crush the organised working class once and for all. To do this it turned to the Nazi party which, in its crusade against communism, also fed off the traditional anti-Semitism of the German ruling class and targeted the whole Jewish people as racially decadent “Jew-Bolsheviks”.

It was only when German imperialism, militarised under Hitler, re-emerged as an imperialist competitor to be reckoned with that the “democracies” began to be hostile to the Nazis. For all the capitalist countries involved, the second world war was no different in character from the first world war. It was an interimperialist struggle for redividing the booty of capitalist profits. The imperialist states of both the Nazi-allied Axis powers and the Allied “democracies” all fought to defend their “right” to oppress and exploit the masses of the world. As Leon Trotsky pointed out, the “imperialist democracies are in reality the greatest aristocracies in history. England, France, Holland, Belgium rest on the enslavement of colonial peoples” (“Manifesto of the Fourth International on the imperialist war”, May 1940).

For Britain, as the oldest imperialist power, the second world war was all about defending an empire whose dominance had already been encroached upon and eroded by other imperialist powers. The bloody British Empire's prize possession was its severely oppressed Indian colony. As Trotsky remarked upon the hypocritical pretensions of the British ruling class about defending democracy:

“If the British government were really concerned about the flowering of democracy then a very simple opportunity to demonstrate this exists. Let the govern-



Red Army soldiers trample Nazi flag in Austria, 1945. Soviet Red Army defeated Nazi war machine. Heroic Trotskyists in Brest, France, built cell in German army, distributed *Arbeiter und Soldat*, seeking to polarise Hitler's army along class lines.

ment give complete freedom to India. The right of national independence is one of the elementary democratic rights. But actually, the London government is ready to hand over all the democracies in the world in return for one tenth of its colonies.”

— “India faced with imperialist war”,
25 July 1939

As for the United States, the society was founded on black chattel slavery whose racist legacy of black oppression was, and still is, an essential feature of American capitalism. Its interests in the war had nothing to do with the defence of “democracy” but everything to do with the defence and advancement of its imperialist sphere of influence in the world, particularly in the Pacific. From the Allied firebombings aimed specifically at the civilian populations of Dresden and Tokyo and the atomic mass murder in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to British imperialism's deliberate starvation policies in its colonial domains like Bengal, the Anglo-American war was an imperialist crime against humanity.

For defeat of imperialism and defence of the USSR

Trotskyists upheld the Leninist programme of revolutionary defeatism for all the capitalist states involved in the second interimperialist world war. Revolutionary defeatism is the position taken by Leninists in a war between rival imperialist blocs, where the working class has no side. It means hostility to all sides in a military conflict, with communists working for a revolutionary uprising of the proletariat on all sides. In a war between a colonial or semi-colonial country and an imperialist power, revolutionaries do have a side. This policy is known as revolutionary defensism, the position we of the International Communist League took in the 2003 war on semi-colonial Iraq, without giving any political support to Saddam Hussein. There was a just side to take, in defence of Iraq



Deutsche Fotothek Dresden

Firebombing of Dresden by British and US imperialists deliberately targeted civilians, slaughtering over 100,000.

against US and British imperialist attack. We fought for class struggle in the belly of the imperialist beasts, and for the blacking of military shipments in order to defend Iraq against the imperialist slaughter.

In an inter-imperialist war the defeat of an imperialist power—with the ruling class weakened, demoralised and totally discredited—opens up revolutionary possibilities. It is this situation that the programme of revolutionary defeatism strives to achieve. Revolutionary defeatism is best encapsulated by a slogan of the German revolutionary Marxist, Karl Liebknecht in World War I: “The main enemy is at home!” The aim being for the workers to focus their opposition against their “own” capitalist ruling class in order to turn the imperialist war between nations into a civil war for socialist revolution. The position was developed by Lenin in the first world war, against the treachery of the reformist leadership of the so-called “socialist” parties of the Second International, who supported their “own” national bourgeoisies in the conflict. These agents of the capitalist class in the workers movement led the workers into the inter-imperialist slaughter, against their own class brothers, for the profits of their exploiters. The term Leninists use to describe the support of members of the workers movement for their own imperialist ruling class is “social-chauvinism”. As Lenin wrote in the midst of the first world war: “A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war” (*Socialism and War*, 1915).

It was the betrayal of fundamental socialist principles by the social-chauvinist reformist leaders which necessitated the crucial split in the workers movement between the reformists, who had proven their loyalty to their national bourgeoisie, and the revolutionary internationalists who still represented the interests of the working class, socialism and therefore humanity. Lenin’s Bolsheviks broke with the Second International on the basis of the programme of revolutionary defeatism towards all the warring capitalist powers. It was this split that enabled the Bolshevik Party to uniquely lead the working class, supported by the peasantry, in a socialist revolution in 1917 against the Russian aristocracy, landlords and capitalists. The revolution pulled Russia out of the inter-imperialist conflict.

It was the existence and participation of the state that resulted from this revolution—the Soviet Union—that made one important difference in the strategy of revolutionaries in World War II. While being for the defeat of all capitalist states, Marxists were for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union. This was because the USSR was a workers state that had overthrown capitalist and landlord exploitation, as well as tsarist tyranny. It was based on a collectivised, planned economy where production was not determined by the capitalist profit motive. The revolutionary economic and social gains that produced full employment, free universal healthcare, education and affordable housing remained despite Stalinist degeneration. The revolutionary leadership under Lenin and Trotsky fought for world socialist revolution, but the conservative bureaucracy led by Stalin abandoned this programme when it usurped political power from the working class in 1924.

The rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy came about in the context of the abortive of the German revolution in 1923,

which produced a wave of disillusionment amongst the people of the Soviet Union and a conservative cynicism about the prospects for the international extension of the revolution. The majority of the revolutionary Bolshevik workers who had led the Russian Revolution had either been killed in the civil war or co-opted into the bureaucracy. Lenin had been incapacitated by a stroke during Stalin’s rise to power, and



Bolshevik agitator (left) addresses Russian troops at the front during World War I. Bolsheviks in the army published “Pravda of the Trenches”. German revolutionary leader Karl Liebknecht (above) during WWI. German bourgeoisie jailed Liebknecht in attempt to silence his revolutionary anti-militarist agitation.

died in January 1924. Motivated by maintaining their privileged position against the working people, the Stalinist bureaucracy had given up on world revolution in favour of peaceful coexistence with world imperialism under the utopian-reactionary dogma of “socialism in one country”. To consolidate this political counterrevolution, the Stalinist bureaucracy exiled, executed or imprisoned the best remaining proletarian revolutionary elements led by Leon Trotsky’s Left Opposition.

USSR liberated Europe from Nazism despite Stalin

The Stalinist misleadership seriously endangered the Soviet Union during World War II. Soviet Russia was Hitler’s main target and the Nazis almost succeeded in destroying it due to the sabotage of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Stalin’s regime had been consolidated by bloody purges in the 1930s in which many of the Red Army’s best officers were murdered, including Marshal Tukhachevsky, one of the most brilliant generals in the civil war of 1918-21. Stalin trusted the paper promises of his 1939 pact with Hitler. He ignored all warnings from Soviet spies of the coming Nazi invasion and even when it was clearly imminent he ordered the Soviet armed forces not to actively prepare for defence. But it was the Soviet Union, *despite* Stalin, that took on the vast majority of the Nazi war machine, smashed it and liberated Europe from fascist enslavement.

Up until the last year of the war in Europe, nearly 95 per cent of all German troops were engaged against the Soviet forces. By the time the Allied imperialists launched D-Day the guts of the German army had already been destroyed, especially in the decisive battles of Stalingrad and Kursk in 1943. A truly remarkable example of the Soviet peoples’ endurance and heroism was the 900-day siege of Leningrad, where the city’s population was

mobilised in a fight to the death to defend the city from the Nazis. Over 800,000 citizens died. For example, when a giant armaments factory was attacked by German artillery the workers formed a battalion and went to the front.

In fact the D-Day “second front” was not motivated by finishing Hitler off, but by saving European capitalism from the Soviet Union. The policy of the imperi-

supported the war effort. Siding with their “own” ruling class in the war meant class-collaboration for the Communist parties of the Allied countries. The American Communist Party supported the racist internment of American citizens of Japanese origin and expelled those from its own ranks. The British Communist Party opposed independence for India for the duration of the war.

The size of the Trotskyist forces was small but their intervention was significant and heroic. British and American Trotskyists were persecuted and jailed for their anti-imperialist propaganda and support for working-class struggles during wartime. In Britain greedy bosses used the war as an excuse to drive down wages, particularly in the coal mines. The miners reacted with strikes which the British Trotskyists threw their forces behind, calling for the organisation of strike committees and all-out support for the miners, demanding nationalisation of the mines without compensation to the coalowners and under workers control. This was in stark contrast to the British Stalinists, who acted as strikebreakers. They insisted that the miners should go back to work as they were criminally damaging the British war effort and joined the capitalist government’s witch hunt against the Trotskyists, becoming the most enthusiastic in slandering the Trotskyists as Nazi agents.

While fighting for class struggle against the imperialist war, British and American Trotskyists were actively fighting for the defence of the Soviet Union. Members of the American then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—which is in no way a relation of the British Socialist Workers Party—volunteered as merchant seamen for the deadly Murmansk supply run to Russia, risking their lives in U-boat-infested waters doing their internationalist proletarian duty to aid the USSR. On these supply runs Trotskyists also carried revolutionary internationalist propaganda to inspire the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy that was undermining the defence of the Soviet workers state. As for the hundreds of thousands of revolutionaries in Stalin’s prison camps—among whom numbered many individual Trotskyists who survived the executions of 1937-38—they requested to be sent to the front to fight to the death against fascism. When Stalin refused to allow them to do so, they did what they could for the Soviet war effort by agreeing to the extension of the working day to twelve hours. In 1941 Stalin ordered a further wave of executions of political prisoners. Among 157 murdered on 11 September were Olga Kameneva, Trotsky’s sister, and Christian Rakovsky, formerly a leading member of Trotsky’s Left Opposition.

Fraternisation with the soldiers of the occupying armies is an essential wartime activity for revolutionaries in order to undercut national chauvinism. In Nazi-occupied Europe, French Trotskyists fraternised with working-class conscripts of the German army in a bid to get them to turn their guns the other way against the Nazi rulers. Courageously, they distributed an underground revolutionary newspaper in German, *Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier) and built a cell within the German armed forces at Brest. For example, 65 heroic French and German Trotskyists were shot by the Nazis in 1943 when they were discovered. Rather than trying to evade forced labour in Germany, some French and Dutch Trotskyists

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reported by the American SWP's newspaper, the *Militant*. It printed two letters in 1942 from a socialist worker drafted into the German army. He had spent three weeks in Warsaw at the end of 1941 where he had made contact with Jewish Bundists and Polish socialists, for whom he raised 500 marks from his underground resistance group upon returning to Berlin.

Many may think that the Trotskyist position of turning the imperialists' second world war into a series of socialist revolutions against all the capitalist powers, even if courageous and principled, never had any chance of happening. But there *were* pre-revolutionary situations around the world during and because of World War II. Proving the policy of revolutionary defeatism correct, the military defeat of the fascist Italian bourgeoisie in 1943 led to the Italian working class rising up and taking their revenge against Mussolini and his ilk. They seized arms and formed workers councils, creating a pre-revolutionary situation against the capitalist order. Similar revolutionary opportunities occurred with the defeat of the Nazi-collaborator regime in occupied France. But it was the betrayals of Stalinism which strangled these revolutionary opportunities. Desperate not to see the overthrow of capitalism by workers revolution in the West, the Stalinist bureaucracy ordered the re-emerging Communist parties in Italy and France to instruct the workers to disarm and join the governments of the supposedly progressive "democratic" bourgeoisie.

Had the workers made their revolution, under the kind of leadership the Trotskyists were fighting to build, there

home, could have split the base of the armies from the officers, winning it over to the cause of socialist revolution. Stalin also allowed the British imperialists to crush the Greek Communist Party-led uprising at the end of the war. After the defeat of the Japanese imperialists, the Vietnamese Trotskyists—with a mass following amongst the workers—led the 1945 Saigon insur-

alism. There is a flyer from the time for a meeting of the Workers International League. It says workers control of production is the answer to the chaos of the war effort. It doesn't mention any opposition to the imperialist war. At a 1943 Workers International League conference, one of its leading members, Ted Grant, went so far as to voice his support for an army of British imperialism.



Peasant rally under red flag in Punjab. During WWII, Communist parties of Britain and India subordinated the struggle for Indian independence to support for British imperialism, as did British Labour Party.

rection against the reinventing French colonialists who were supported by British forces. The uprising was put down and the Trotskyist forces massacred, not only by the French and British imperialists but above all by the Vietnamese Stalinists.

Even though the PMP was adopted in theory in America by the SWP, in practice—because it was utopian and because the American Trotskyists *did* focus on opposing the American imperialist war effort—it never came to anything.

There were two Trotskyist groups in Britain at the start of the war: the Revolutionary Socialist League and the Workers International League. The Revolutionary Socialist League opposed the PMP, correctly arguing that it was a concession to social-patriotism. The Workers International League, however, embraced it—though there was opposition to it within the party. The Workers International League remained revolutionary defeatist towards British imperialism in its activities. It highlighted British atrocities in its colonies during the war and called for their immediate unconditional independence. It actively supported strikes and made clear in a headline from its newspaper *Socialist Appeal*: "Capitalist Second Front will crush European Revolution". But its support for the PMP did blunt its revolutionary propaganda and provided for a current that was conciliatory to social-chauvinist defensism of British imperi-

He declared: "We have a victorious army in North Africa and Italy, and I say, yes. Long Live the Eighth Army, because that is our army" (quoted in Sam Bornstein/Al Richardson, *War and the International* [1986]). Grant was talking at a time when there was working-class dissent in the Eighth Army. But it was still very much an army of British imperialism. Grant's statement is an example of the seeds of social-chauvinist and reformist perspectives that were to grow and contribute to producing the many Labourite outfits sometimes referring to themselves as Trotskyists in the decades since the war.

The Socialist Party: parodying the PMP

Ted Grant went on to lead a reformist outfit called *Militant*, which was characterised by being deeply buried inside the Labour Party until it was thrown out in the early 1990s. The Socialist Party of today has its origins in the *Militant* group and still holds to *Militant*'s reformist social-chauvinist tradition. In a Socialist Party meeting a week after the 7 July terrorist bombings, Socialist Party speakers, including its leader Peter Taaffe, participated in an orgy of social-patriotic ravings about the need for the working class to unite against

terrorism and war. They said what was needed was for the trade unions to help in organising a campaign for this unity. This sentiment was repeated in its newspaper for the next four weeks in a row, with the front page spelling out such slogans as: "No to terrorism, no to war" and "Workers' unity against war and terrorism". We Marxists of the International Communist League of course condemn all terrorist attacks against innocent civilians. But this condemnation does not mean echoing the British ruling class's own campaign for mobilising national unity "against terrorism", which is aimed at maintaining class peace and arming the state to the teeth with reactionary racist "anti-terror" legislation. The Socialist Party's demands for demonstrations to be built by trade unions and working-class organisations under the slogans "United against terror" and "United against war" conceal the fact that the biggest threat to the working class and oppressed at this moment in time is not terrorism but the "anti-terror" laws.

In providing a thin proletarian veneer for the ruling class's own aims of national unity in the "war against terrorism", it is as though the Socialist Party are acting out their own bizarre parody of the PMP. Instead of trade-union control of the war "against fascism" today they are practically calling for trade-union control of the "war on terror". The difference being, of course, that the PMP was a result of tremendous pressures on Trotskyists resulting from the Nazi victories and a desire of the working class to fight fascism. The Socialist Party's unity campaign against "terrorism and war" is the result of its standard reformist practice of shamelessly adapting to the most backward moods and fears within the working class which are conditioned by bourgeois scaremongering.

In contrast we communists of the Spartacus Youth Group and International Communist League base ourselves on the principles laid out by Trotsky at the founding conference of the Fourth International:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

This is our tradition and this is why we honour those Trotskyists in World War II who swam against the stream in the fight against imperialism—fascist and "democratic"—and the struggle for socialist revolution, the only road for the liberation of humanity. A struggle which today we fight to carry forward. ■

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Workers International League leaflet, February 1942.

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(Continued from page 2)

against the capitalist rulers at home. But this requires a struggle against the pro-capitalist misleaders of the trade unions, whose betrayals of struggles such as the firefighters strike emboldened the Blairites for further attacks on the public sector unions.

Socialist Party to civil servants: work till you drop!

The issue of pensions has become the latest battleground between the unions and the government. British Gas workers are staging one-day strikes in defence of their existing pension rights. In the civil service, the government threatened to increase the pension age by five years, from 60 to 65, against which PCS union members voted to strike. But before the battle was engaged, the TUC and PCS union leader Mark Serwotka brokered a rotten deal with the government. In exchange for government promises (which are

about as reliable as the "dodgy dossier") that the current workforce would continue to have the existing pension rights, Serwotka agreed that new entrants to the civil service will work **five more years** to earn their entitlement to a pension. Scandalously, this rotten two-tier deal was initially supported by two Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members, Sue Bond and Martin John, who sit on the national executive of the PCS union. Such an open betrayal enraged union members and was a bit much for the SWP, which opposed the deal and publicly disavowed the actions of these two members. Bond subsequently recanted, while John quit the SWP in favour of the PCS bureaucracy. The SWP of course made clear that the party will go on giving Serwotka a left cover in spite of his betrayal, pledging to "continue to work with left wing general secretary Mark Serwotka in the fight to build the union and improve the lives of members across Britain" (*Socialist Worker*, 19 November 2005). Even worse than the SWP is the Socialist Party, whose members **dominate** the

PCS leadership and who voted for this wretched two-tier structure. The Socialist Party-dominated Left Unity caucus swept the PCS elections last May, placing several Socialist Party members on the union's national executive—Chris Baugh is Assistant General Secretary while PCS Assistant Janice Godrich is a member of the Socialist Party's group inside the Scottish Socialist Party. Small wonder the Socialist Party is today trying to pass off their abject capitulation over pensions as a "victory".

In a **defeat**, both the SWP and the Socialist Party have succumbed to the myth that in the post-Soviet world, class struggle is no longer the motor force of history. The SWP's Respect coalition is not even nominally based on the working class or the trade unions, while the Stop the War Coalition is a class-collaborationist coalition with a bourgeois pacifist programme (see article page 5). The Socialist Party nominally claims to be in favour of building a "workers party" but its support for the two-tier pensions

deal shows that this would be simply a party of Old Labour betrayals. Meanwhile, their slogan "no to terror, no to war" means they give backhanded support to the "war on terror", which targets Muslims in particular and ultimately the entire working class.

We fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that would champion the interests of the entire working class of this country. A recent study of low-paid workers in London showed that 90 per cent of those surveyed were migrants, over half from sub-Saharan Africa, establishing decent wages and living conditions for such workers will take significant class battles, mobilising the kind of power that paralysed Heathrow Airport this summer when British Airways workers struck in solidarity with the mainly Asian women fired by catering giant Gate Gourmet. A revolutionary workers party must be built through the intervention of Marxists into the struggles of the working class, which must be directed towards overthrowing British imperialism through socialist revolution. ■

Ireland...

(Continued from page 12)

immigrant brothers and sisters.

The importance of this was demonstrated by the case of the mainly Turkish GAMA construction workers. Employed by a Turkish company working on state contracts, the workers were paid an absolute pittance (around 2 euros per hour), with the company siphoning off around 40 million euros into secret Dutch bank accounts. Just like at Irish Ferries, this was a case of the bourgeoisie trying to use immigrant workers to force down wages. Outrageously, the union leadership did not organise a class-struggle defence of these workers. Nevertheless, the campaign publicising the case of the workers had some success, not least due to its prominence at the 2005 May Day protests when around

500 GAMA workers marched behind a SIPTU banner. If the working class does not take up the defence of immigrant workers and the bosses are successful in their current campaign, this could lead to the growth of truly sinister forces including fascists.

We need a revolutionary workers party!

Revolutionaries fight for the unions to combat racism, to organise immigrants and take up the fight for full citizenship rights. In contrast, while the Socialist Party exposed the horrific conditions of the GAMA workers, the political strategy of their campaign was based on wretched appeals to the bourgeois state. For example, Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins asked, "Will the Taoiseach stand up to Gama from today and ensure this scandal ends forthwith?", and argued that, "The Government must live up to the

expectation that justice be done to all working people" (Socialist Party Press Release, 27 April 2005). Unsurprisingly, the Socialist Party welcomed the GAMA case being taken to the Labour Court, that is, to an institutionalised mechanism of class collaboration.

The Socialist Workers Party represents just another version of these same Labourite politics of pressuring the capitalist government. A typical SWP article on Irish Ferries, written by Kieran Allen, argued that "Statements will not come from 'complex' legal discussions led by barristers—but from the mobilisation and actions of tens of thousands of workers". But for Allen the purpose of such mobilisations should be for workers to impose their will on "their own" government: only through the use of "people power" will any Irish governments be forced to turn on the very corporations who pull their strings" (*Socialist Worker*,

26 October-10 November 2005). But it is not possible for workers to use the capitalist government against the capitalist class.

We stand squarely in a different tradition. What is necessary is a revolutionary party that upholds the political independence of the working class—that **does not crawl before and beg the bosses and their state, but relies on the power and independent organisation of working people**. Such a party would act as a **tribune of the people** by fighting against all forms of capitalist oppression: it would fight for women's liberation, for immigrants' rights, for the defence of travellers, for equal rights for gays. Such a party would seek to emulate the Bolshevik Party that led the working class to power in the 1917 October Revolution, sweeping away the rotten edifice of bourgeois rule and establishing a workers state. Join us in the struggle to build that party! ■

Dublin demo...

(Continued from page 1)

teachers, postal workers—whose union leadership had just agreed to a lousy deal based on "changes in work practices"—and even a group of uniformed pilots from the notoriously anti-union airline Ryanair. The march was extremely popular—union banners were applauded by people lining the route.

Our call for the union movement to organise immigrants and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants was well received: workers snapped up 500 copies of the Spartacist Group Ireland's leaflet (reprinted on page 12) and comrades sold well over 100 papers. In a clear statement of proletarian internationalism, trade unions from Britain, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania were represented on the demonstration. Nonetheless, papers like the Irish *Sunday Tribune* (11 December 2005) tried to imply that Irish workers are mainly motivated by anti-immigrant racism, asserting that, "Immigrants have a 'negative impact on the economy, reduce average wages and take away jobs from native employees'." But union signs and banners on the demonstration told another story. The Building and Allied Trades Union carried placards reading: "Irish workers, migrant workers, one union, one

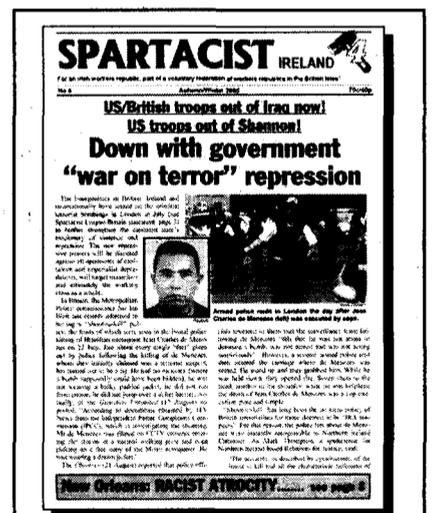
struggle" and postal workers carried placards stating clearly: "Say no to racism". Poisonous nationalism was expressed on the demo—in the placards of the Irish Labour Party, which said: "Irish Flag for Irish Ferries". The Irish flag is the flag of the Irish bourgeoisie, the class enemy! Unions must wage a class-struggle fight for full wages and union conditions for all, including immigrants! The fight against Labourite nationalism is central to our fight to build a revolutionary workers party.

Within a week of this enormous display of potential union power, the SIPTU union leadership had agreed a sellout deal, which did not secure full union wages for immigrants. Irish Ferries agreed to pay immigrants the legal Irish minimum wage of 7.65 euros an hour (as opposed to the 3.60 originally offered) but they will continue to "outsource" crews, meaning they will be able to replace unionised crews with non-union labour. For their part, the union bureaucracy outrageously agreed to binding arbitration for three years, which effectively means a no-strike clause. SIPTU official Brendan Hayes holds aloft the fact that the agreement means "vulnerable migrant maritime workers have the protection of Irish law" and that "a framework agreement which will legally protect all employees, irrespective of the flag under which the company registers its vessels—has

been agreed" (SIPTU statement, 14 December 2005). The Socialist Workers Party welcomed the wretched deal, and parroted the bureaucracy's line that the law will guarantee a fair deal for the workers, guaranteeing "the conditions of all workers for Irish ferries" (*British Socialist Worker*, 17 December 2005).

The notion that the laws of the Irish capitalist state will protect workers—immigrant or Irish—is a deadly illusion, cut from the same cloth as the myth that there can be "partnership" between workers, bosses and the government. The 9 December demonstration shows that workers in Ireland are sick to death of having their wages kept down by "partnership" deals, which have been instrumental in maintaining class peace while the capitalists make handsome profits. The bureaucracy uses the threat of union power to bargain for whatever concessions the capitalist class will grant, within the framework that guarantees their profits. What's needed is not to negotiate a better "partnership" deal but to break out of this institutional framework of reformism. The kind of leadership the working class needs is one based on the understanding that the only way to defend and advance the rights of the working people is through waging the class struggle, **independently** of the bosses and the capitalist state. We fight for a revolutionary party that will be built

in the course of such struggles, which must culminate in socialist revolution. ■



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France...

(Continued from page 4)

and present themselves as those who are more capable of maintaining order in the largely minority neighbourhoods, and thus can be relied upon by the bourgeoisie to run the bourgeois state more smoothly.

At bottom, the issue for the PCF is to push forward a new coalition, including with bourgeois parties like the Greens, Chevènementistes and

the privatisation of the EDF electricity monopoly. Thus, the LCR and LO promote illusions that you can fight the capitalist onslaught by uniting with capitalist parties!

Down with the racist campaign "against terrorism"!

In early October at Charles de Gaulle Airport, baggage handlers went on strike for permanent hiring of casual workers and for higher wages (following the privatisation of Air France under the previous government of Jospin/Bufferet). The

oppose Vigipirate and this goes hand in hand with its leading role in pushing the racist campaign to expel young women wearing the headscarf from school. In France, Islam is a religion of the oppressed and of the ghettos. The headscarf represents a reactionary social programme that confines women to the home in a position of servitude. The expulsion of Muslim girls from school can only reinforce their isolation and oppression and fuel racism against all immigrants. We oppose these racist campaigns and defend the girls who

from Chirac's UMP party!

LO does mobilise on behalf of undocumented immigrants, just as many bourgeois liberals do who believe the French Republic should be able to integrate those immigrants who often have been in France for years and have raised families in this country. However, racism against ghetto youth runs deep and goes to the core of French capitalism, serving to profoundly divide the working class. LO consciously evades the issue, talking only of "poor neighbourhoods", avoiding the key question of racial oppression. What is needed is to forge the revolutionary unity of the working class, starting with workers mobilisations against racist police terror. We fight to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, committed to leading the proletariat of this country in socialist revolution. ■



Left: High school students expelled from school for wearing headscarves in 2003. Right: Paris cops evict impoverished African immigrants from living quarters in rundown building in September. French proletariat must fight anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim reaction.

Left Radicals, to win the 2007 elections. And the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) as well as LO (albeit more indirectly) are helping them out. The "left", including the PCF and the pseudo-Trotskyists from the LCR and LO, are sharing a platform on 8 November in Paris with two little Chevènementiste bourgeois parties, MARS and MRC, supposedly against

strike was broken by the government, using Vigipirate and a supposed terrorist threat posed by luggage not being sorted. This shows very concretely what we have been saying for years: Vigipirate targets all immigrants and minorities, as well as the working class as a whole. It may be wielded again in coming weeks if a major strike gets underway at the French railway.

LO has from Day One refused to

wear headscarves against the bourgeois state. Instead of that, LO welcomed Chirac's law banning the headscarf, a racist law that is part and parcel of the daily harassment against Muslims, and LO spokesman Arlette Laguiller even linked arms at a 6 March 2004 march of women from immigrant neighbourhoods with Nicole Guedj (then-Secretary of State for prison construction

Peace...

(Continued from page 5)

union bureaucrats based on a shared programme of class collaboration. Revolutionaries seek opportunities for class struggle at home and fight for political independence of the working class from its capitalist rulers, which is an elementary condition for a class-struggle perspective.

Few of the "socialist" groups at the peace conference will bat an eyelid

over StWC's "Dear Tony" letter, or the fact that the StWC refuses to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland (which would destroy its precious "unity" in an instant). But much hooha has been generated over the SWP's political capitulation to the Iraqi resistance. We have repeatedly said that any blows struck against the occupying armies are in the interests of working people of the world. But we give no political support to the forces currently fighting against the occupation and we vehemently condemn all acts of inter-

communalist violence, attacks on women, imposition of the veil and other Islamic strictures that are integral to the social programme of many of the various forces fighting against the occupation. Many on the left (such as the Alliance for Workers Liberty), who today condemn Islamic fundamentalists and echo the government's Islamophobia, supported these very forces during the 1980s, as did the SWP, when the US and British imperialists bankrolled and trained extreme Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan (including Bin Laden) for a *jihad* against the Soviet Union. We Spartacists uniquely hailed the Soviet Red Army intervention which offered the possibility of extending the social gains of the 1917 Russian October Revolution to the peoples of Afghanistan, particularly its women. In the wake of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, when imperialist funding dried up, the Islamic reactionaries turned on their erstwhile paymasters, most dramatically by the criminal attack on the World Trade Center.

The October 1917 Russian Revolution was the signal event of the twentieth century. Nurtured amid the carnage of World War I, led by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin and Trotsky, that revolution ripped state power out of the hands of the landlords and capitalists and placed it in the hands of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. Although it later degenerated under bureaucratic Stalinist rule, the Soviet Union continued to demonstrate the power of a planned collectivised economy, providing free education,

health care, affordable housing and jobs for all. We took a side and fought for unconditional military defence of the USSR against imperialism and against the restoration of capitalism, while simultaneously fighting for a working-class political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats.

In contrast to pacifists and reformists, we also take a side today for unconditional military defence of China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea, societies where capitalism was overthrown (and, contrary to the views of reformists, it has not been restored). We take this position despite the fact these states are ruled by bureaucratic Stalinist castes. We uphold the right of these states to develop nuclear weapons and say: Down with the counterrevolutionary US military pact with Japanese imperialism against the Chinese workers state!

The Marxist view that coalitions such as StWC are in fact an obstacle to the necessary fight against imperialism was eloquently stated in a 1936 pamphlet by James Burnham who was then a leading Trotskyist in the US. He said:

"To suppose, therefore, that revolutionists can work out a common 'program against war' with non-revolutionists is a fatal illusion. Any organization based upon such a program is not merely powerless to prevent war; in practice it acts to promote war, both because it serves in its own way to uphold the system that breeds war, and because it diverts the attention of its members from the real fight against war. There is only one program against war: the program for revolution—the program of the revolutionary party of the workers."

— "War and the Workers" ■

LE BOLCHEVIK

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WORKERS HAMMER

Unions must organise immigrant workers! Full wages and benefits for immigrants!

For solidarity strikes to defend crew members occupying Irish Ferries!

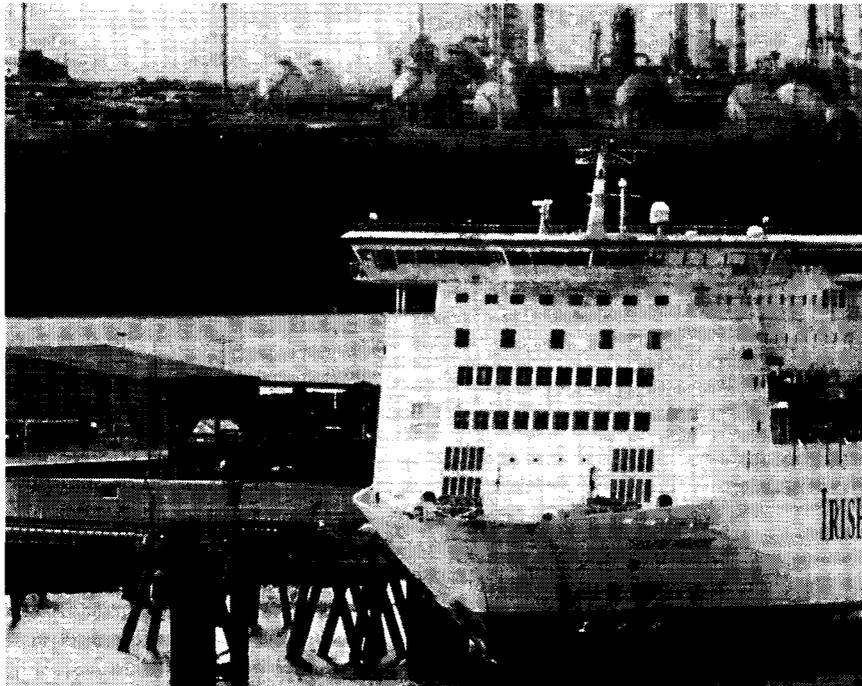
Down with “partnership” and all class collaboration!

The following leaflet was published by the Spartacist Group Ireland, Irish section of the International Communist League, on 7 December 2005.

Irish Ferries declared war on its workforce and the whole workers movement when it sent “security personnel” on board its vessels in Holyhead and Pembroke, for the purpose of forcibly replacing the crews with immigrant workers from Eastern Europe who will be paid pitiful wages. The company’s “security” squads, hired thugs reported to include former members of the army, sneaked on board in civilian clothing and were caught on CCTV monitors changing into military-style clothes, causing workers to fear a “terrorist attack”. This outrageous assault met with a courageous response from the ships’ officers and SIPTU crew members, some of whom barricaded themselves into the ships’ control rooms. The company’s boats are currently out of action. Port workers in Rosslare have refused to handle its ships, and SIPTU clerical staff at Irish Ferries have also voted in favour of strike action to support their embattled co-workers. **SIPTU and SUI members: now is the time to strike Irish Ferries! Defend the occupying crew members!** There have been important statements of support from unions elsewhere in Europe, such as the British RMT. There is an urgent need for solidarity **action**: dockers should move no Irish Ferries goods; Stena [ferry] workers should fight alongside their besieged union brothers.

The courage of these workers in occupying the vessels is in stark contrast to the cowardice of the trade union bureaucrats of SIPTU and ICTU, who have resorted to begging the government and Irish Ferries’ board of directors to intervene on behalf of the workers. This craven attitude is a product of the political perspective of the trade union tops, which is based not on a perspective of class struggle, but of class collaboration (or “partnership”) between labour and capital. What is needed is a class-struggle fight against the bosses that is geared towards building the unity of the working class in struggle. There is an urgent need to **organise immigrant workers into the unions, and to fight for full wages and benefits for all immigrants**. It is absurd to rely on the capitalist state to intervene to “protect” workers; the state consists mainly of the police, army and prison system and is the repressive instrument of capitalist class rule. **For the political independence of the working class! For a class-struggle leadership of the unions! Equal pay for equal work! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

If successful, Irish Ferries’ campaign to replace its 543 workers with immigrant



Jeff Morgan



Sovietpop

Top: Irish Ferries vessel *Isle of Inishmore* occupied by workers in protest against sacking of crew members. Bottom: 3 November Dublin protest in solidarity with Irish Ferries workers.

labourers from Eastern Europe earning **3.60 euros per hour** will set a precedent for busting unions and firing workers *en masse* by replacing them with cheaper labour. Despite its claims to the contrary, the company is highly profitable: Irish Continental Group, of which Irish Ferries is part, raked in 26 million euros in profits last year. The peculiar viciousness of Irish Ferries’ campaign has been criticised by IBEC [Irish Business and Employers Confederation] and Bertie Ahern, who called its actions “ham-fisted” (*Irish Independent*, 28 November). But the Irish bourgeoisie is eagerly awaiting the outcome of the conflict, as a victory for Irish Ferries would give the impetus for a wholesale assault on the workers movement.

The increase in the arrogance of the bourgeoisie is the consequence of the recent extension of the EU, with the large pool of cheap labour this provides, and 18 years of “social partnership” that has seen declining union membership and unanswered attacks on workers’ pay and conditions. But, as demonstrated by the rapid shutting down of Irish Ferries’ operation, the proletariat still has tremendous social power. This power must be

brought to bear. Already, the Irish Exporters’ Association has begun bleating about the potential damage the ferries dispute could cause to Ireland’s export trade, which is worth 48 billion euros per year: Irish Ferries contributes about 25 per cent of this freight capacity.

Other disputes, such as the recent attacks on the CWU [postal workers] by An Post, highlight that this is a critical time for the working class to fight back against the bosses. The 3 November Dublin protest organised in solidarity with the Irish Ferries workers, when 10,000 workers took to the streets, demonstrated the support existing more broadly for the plight of the seafarers. Workers in other sectors of the economy — construction, services, manufacturing — understand that if the company wins, they will soon be facing the same treatment.

The union bureaucracy remains wedded to the concept of “Social Partnership”. This is in the tradition of Labour Party reformism, which holds that the working class must work alongside the capitalists and limit their struggles to what is “in the national interest”. SIPTU president Jack O’Connor still sings the

praises of the “partnership” process, claiming that it heralded “the most significant enhancement of the living standards of working people in the history of the state” (*An Phoblacht*, 24 November). Mick O’Reilly of the ATGWU is more critical of “partnership”, but still argues, “The debate is not really whether we should have Social Partnership but who we should have Social Partnership with” (*An Phoblacht*, 24 November). O’Reilly is critical of the Labour Party’s alliance with bourgeois Fine Gael, but looks to the formation of a bloc with more “left-wing” petty-bourgeois forces, potentially including Sinn Fein and the Greens. Neither of these parties are part of the workers movement. Such a formation would still be a **popular front**, ie, an alliance between a reformist workers party and openly bourgeois parties where the interests of the working class are sacrificed on the altar of private property.

While many workers are opposed to a renewal of “partnership”, there are widespread illusions in the ability of the Labour Court to act on behalf of the working class. The Labour Court, as part of the capitalist state, is used by the bourgeoisie to present the **pretence** of “neutrality” and thereby to veil the reality of this vicious **bourgeois class dictatorship**. **No illusions in the Labour Court!**

EU expansion and the destruction of the USSR

The key component for understanding the current situation is the series of capitalist counterrevolutions that swept across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992. In Poland, for example, the destruction of the deformed workers state in 1989-90 by Solidarność-led counterrevolution ripped the society apart and has contributed to massive unemployment and social immiseration. Among other things, the further expansion of the EU imperialist trade bloc into the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe has provided the European bourgeoisies with a vast supply of very cheap skilled labour. This is a situation where bloodsuckers like those at Irish Ferries are eager to take advantage. Unlike those self-styled “socialists” such as the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party who supported the destruction of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states, we Trotskyists of the International Communist League fought to the end to mobilise the working class in defence of the gains that those states embodied.

The events at Irish Ferries show that it is necessary for the unions to defend and organise the most vulnerable, immigrant section of the proletariat, which is linked to the struggle to maintain their own existence as an effective force. Just as Karl Marx emphasised that British workers must fight for equal rights for Irish immigrant workers in Britain, so too must Irish workers fight for equal rights for their

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