

For class struggle against Labour to shatter “national unity”

Blair's war on workers and minorities

Blair's attempt to enforce “national unity” after September 11 in the pursuit of imperialism's “war on terrorism” has met with massive opposition, not only in thousands-strong anti-war protests which have had significant support in the trade union movement, but in general union opposition to Labour. The Labour government is reviled and mistrusted, with workers particularly furious that Blair is steamrolling ahead in his “reform” of Britain's decrepit public services—transport, education, the National Health Service—which means further privatisation and attacks on the unions. There is nothing new in a Labour government breaking strikes, attacking the living standards of the working people, encouraging vile racist attacks through anti-immigrant chauvinism which fuels the growth of fascism, or acting as bloodhounds for imperialist aggression. But Blair & Co are ideological zealots who have privatised where Thatcher didn't dare to go.

Internationally, Blair was a front-runner for Bush in the massive bombing of Afghanistan and in “phase two” of their “global war on terrorism”, Blair and Bush are gearing up for a major assault on Iraq. Labour is so gung-ho that Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon confirmed this government is prepared to use nuclear weapons against Iraq. Since the 1991 Gulf War, when British and American imperialist forces slaughtered tens of thousands of Iraqis, the Iraqi population has been pummelled with bombing sorties and missile assaults. Some 1.5 million people, mainly children and the elderly, have died as a result of the starvation blockade imposed under the aegis of the United Nations in 1990. Now Bush and Blair are preparing an invasion force, which has provoked unease even within the Labour cabinet. The international working class has a vital interest in the military defence of Iraq in the face of imperialist attack, while not giving an iota of political support to the anti-working-class regime of Saddam Hussein. A victory for imperialist militarism anywhere will mean further death and destruction around the world and further misery for working people and minorities in Britain. *Down with the starvation blockade! British/US hands off Iraq!*

As we noted following Blair's 1997 election: “Blair is searching for a regroupment of bourgeois forces as part of refashioning the Labour Party into an outright capitalist party, which means reverting back to the conditions of a century ago, before trade unions broke with the bourgeois Liberal Party and founded the Labour Party” (*Workers Hammer* no 158, September/October

For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!



Workers Hammer

London, 16 March: postal workers demonstrate against Blair's threatened privatisations and job cuts.

1997). Five years on, Labour's relationship with the trade union tops has become fraught. Thus, TUC general secretary John Monks denounced Blair's links with Italian prime minister Berlusconi as “bloody stupid”. Monks is New Labour through and through, touted by the bourgeois press as “always considered to be on the right of the Labour movement” (*Independent*, 27 March). Blair's bloc with Berlusconi in the interests of “flexible labour markets” in Europe was the last straw for Monks and he quit the job. What rankles with the union brass is that they have become marginalised within the Labour Party and are no longer consulted about how to betray the working class. They would like a return to the old days when they were treated to “beer and sandwiches” by Labour prime ministers at Number 10 and were instrumental in schemes to shackle the working class such as the “social contract”.

Anger against the government is severely straining the ties that bind the unions to the Labour Party, particularly the financial ones. There is growing sentiment in many unions not to continue handing over funds to buy the bullets

coming their way. The GMB is cutting £2 million from its donations to Labour over four years and the CWU plan to withhold £500,000. For the first time in 100 years, the GMB is not automatically calling for a vote to Labour in the May local elections and are looking for independent candidates to support. The RMT are insisting that MPs they sponsor must support re-nationalisation of rail. The moves by the unions to distance themselves from Labour are unprecedented and even the staunchly pro-Labour Communist Party says things could be heading for “uncharted territory”.

What's called for is not a return to “Old Labour” values, but the forging of a revolutionary party whose aim is the expropriation of the capitalists as a class, establishing a planned, collectivised economy under a workers government and launching a couple of five-year plans to reconstruct the devastated industrial infrastructure of the country. A revolutionary workers party pursues its aims through mass struggle centred on the working class, rather than begging for reforms by “Her Majesty's parliament”. In contrast to mass reformist parties, which are necessarily chauvinist, a Leninist party serves as a tribune of the people and seeks to infuse broad layers of the working class with the understanding that in order to defend its own class interests—opposing redundancies, defending working conditions and fighting for a living wage—it is necessary to oppose the British imperialist rulers on a broad range of issues. The decisive positions the Spartacist League fights for today are the necessary political foundations of a multiethnic revolutionary workers party. These include: opposition to chauvinism, including racist discrimination and violence dished out to asylum seekers, immigrants and minorities; opposition to the oppression of women. It also means resistance to all wars and military assaults by British imperialism such as in Afghanistan and Iraq; fighting for British troops to get out of Northern Ireland now and for unconditional military defence of the deformed workers states in China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam against capitalist restoration and imperialist attack.

For revolutionaries, the loosening of the unions' ties to Labour provides a welcome opening to intervene and to show the need for a political break from Labour, in all its incarnations, and for a Leninist vanguard party, modelled on the Bolshevik Party that led the Russian October Revolution in 1917, which smashed landlordism and capitalism and was seen by the Bolsheviks as the first stage in world

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**Iran 1979:
Proletarian
revolution or
Islamic reaction**

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Turkey: Free all leftist and Kurdish political prisoners!

The longest hunger strike in history has now gone on for more than 500 days, as leftist political prisoners and their supporters continue their desperate protest against the blood-drenched Turkish police state. While the *Guardian* (19 January) reported that 45 people had died in the death fast to date, the website of Halkin Sesi television reports that the death toll now stands at 88. Dozens more prisoners and supporters have been murdered by police rampages.

Initially involving over a thousand Turkish and Kurdish leftists, the hunger strike began in October 2000 to protest government plans under a new "anti-terror" law to move leftist prisoners from dormitory-style prisons where they had some solidarity and protection into new "F-type" prisons featuring "isolation cells", where they can be tortured and killed with impunity by prison guards. Two months later, the government unleashed a bloody attack on 28

prisons — cynically code-named "Operation Return to Life" — using troops and police with helicopters, tanks and bulldozers. Scores of prisoners were killed and many more injured, while survivors were dragged off to isolation prisons.

The government massacre was met with huge protests throughout Turkey. Coming amid the ongoing war of terror against the Kurdish population, and a year after the death sentence meted out to Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan, these demonstrations in solidarity with Turkish and Kurdish leftists represented a significant development. In cities around Europe, Turkish and Kurdish leftists likewise joined in protests against the Turkish regime's bloody state terror.

More than 140 inmates and supporters outside the prison walls are currently engaged in the death fast — consuming only water, sugar, salt and vitamin supplements — and new teams join the

protest every few months to replace those who have perished. While the regime callously rejects attempts to resolve the hunger strike, spurning a proposed compromise by the Turkish Bar Association that would have allowed prisoners to at least share a common area, it continues to terrorise all those who support the protest.

On 5 November, police launched a massive military-style invasion of Kucuk Armutlu, a working-class suburb of Istanbul which had become a centre of support for the hunger strikers. As helicopters flew overhead, armoured vehicles crashed through street barricades and police fired into buildings housing hunger strikers. Four protesters were killed as their house was set ablaze. Eighteen others were arrested and face sentences of up to 22 years on charges of belonging to or aiding an illegal organisation. Earlier, nine doctors who had spoken out against forced feeding of prisoners were threatened with ten years in prison. Another man faces a six-year prison sentence simply for writing a book about two daughters who died in the hunger strike. *Down with the isolation prisons! Down with the anti-terror law! Free Abdullah Öcalan! Free all leftist and Kurdish political prisoners! Down with the ban on the PKK and left-wing political groups!*

The leftist groups organising the death fasts in Turkey look to the example of the 1980-81 hunger strike by Bobby Sands and nine other Irish Republican prisoners in the notorious "H-Block" of Northern Ireland's Long Kesh prison. The H-Block hunger strikers were also protesting onerous conditions imposed on political prisoners, demanding basic rights such as being able to freely associate with each other and to organise education and recreation and that their political status be recognised. But Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher — supported by the Labour Party — coldly watched Sands and his nine comrades go to their deaths rather than give in to their demands.

Today, the European bourgeoisies weep crocodile tears at Turkey's violation of "human rights", using it as a pretext for refusing the country's application for membership in the European Union (EU). But the imperialists, especially Germany and the US, have long backed the Turkish regime to the hilt because of its loyal services as a strategic NATO bastion, and many of these capitalist gov-

ernments have themselves banned the PKK as well as immigrant organisations as part of the "war on terror". In fact, it was as a result of EU pressure that isolation prisons were introduced in Turkey in the first place. The "F-type" prisons are modelled after the infamous "Stamheim" isolation prison built by Germany under the Social Democrats (SPD) in the 1970s, which was meant mainly for the Red Army Faction (two of whose leaders allegedly "committed suicide" while in isolation).

As our comrades in Europe have stressed at solidarity protests from the start of the Turkish hunger strike, the power of the multiethnic proletariat, particularly in Germany, must be brought to bear against the Turkish police state and its imperialist sponsors if these desperate protests are not to result simply in removing from the battlefield hundreds more devoted fighters for social liberation. Unfortunately, the unquestioned heroism of the groups organising the hunger strikes — the Guevarist DHKP-C, the Maoist TKIP and TKP/ML, and the Kurdish nationalist PKK — is accompanied by the politics of petty-bourgeois reformism and nationalism that rejects the possibility of mobilising the proletariat in the fight for socialist revolution.

A mobilisation of labour's social power in defence of the leftist prisoners and in opposition to the Turkish terror regime is not only necessary but distinctly possible. In November, the leftist DISK union federation and other trade unions organised a protest of up to 10,000 people in Istanbul against unemployment and the attack on Afghanistan; demonstration speakers declared their solidarity with the imprisoned hunger strikers. In Germany, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turkish and Kurdish workers are a strategic component of the working class and can be a living bridge between class struggle in Turkey and in the industrial heartland of Europe. Labour protests and political strikes in Germany in support of the leftist prisoners could strike a powerful blow for their freedom and push forward united struggle by the working class against the anti-labour offensive of the capitalists and the ruling SPD.

It will take socialist revolutions to sweep away the Turkish police-state regime and the anti-immigrant, anti-working-class imperialists who back it. The International Communist League fights to build Leninist-Trotskyist parties, sections of a reborn Trotskyist Fourth International, which will be tribunes of all the oppressed.

It is urgent that trade unions, leftist organisations and all fighters for social justice join in an outcry of protest in solidarity with the leftist prisoners in Turkey's dungeons. The Partisan Defense Committee has sent a letter of protest to the Turkish government and we urge other organisations and individuals to do the same.

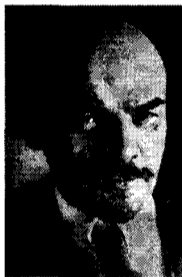
Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 776, 8 March 2002.

There is no partnership of capital and labour

Labour's "war on terrorism" is a war against the working class and minorities. Union-busting privatisation is fuelling widespread anger. Public sector and rail workers strikes have smashed through Blair's attempt to impose "national unity". What is needed for victory is the kind of class-struggle perspective laid out by Trotskyist leader James P Cannon at the time of a bitter maritime strike in the United States in 1936.



TROTSKY



LENIN

A good deal is said about strike "strategy" — and that has its uses within certain clearly defined limits — but when you get down to cases this strike, like every other strike, is simply a bullheaded struggle between two forces whose interests are in constant and irreconcilable conflict. The partnership of capital and labor is a lie. The immediate issue in every case is decided by the relative strength of the opposing forces at the moment....

The problem of the strikers consists in estimating what their strength is, and then mobilizing it in full force and pressing against the enemy until something cracks and a settlement is achieved in consonance with the relation of forces between the unions and the organizations of the bosses. That's all there is to strike strategy....

From our point of view the workers have a perfect right to the full control of industry and all the fruits thereof. The employers on the other hand — not merely the shipowners; all bosses are alike — would like a situation where the workers are deprived of all organization and all say about their work and are paid only enough to keep body and soul together and raise a new generation of slaves to take their places when they drop in their tracks.

Any settlement in between these two extremes is only a temporary truce and the nature of such a settlement is decided by power; "justice" has nothing to do with it. The workers will not have justice until they take over the world.

— James P Cannon, "The Maritime Strike" (November 1936)

WORKERS HAMMER

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

Published by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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Spartacist Publications, PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU
E-mail: WorkersHammer@compuserve.com
Subscriptions: £3 for 1 year, Europe outside Britain & Ireland £4, overseas airmail £7

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
The closing date for news in this issue is 3 April 2002.
Printed by trade union labour ISSN 0267-8721

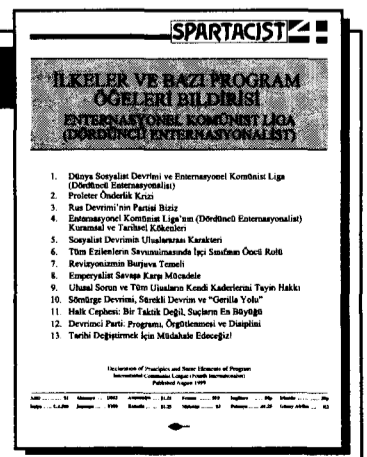
Available in Turkish

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United-front labour/black mobilisation defies "national unity"

Defend immigrants! Defend the unions!

OAKLAND—For the first time anywhere, on 9 February organised labour was mobilised here to flex its muscle in defence of its immigrant brothers and sisters targeted under the US rulers' "war on terrorism". Some 300 unionists, immigrants, blacks and youth rallied in downtown Oakland in opposition to the USA-Patriot Act, the Maritime Security Act and the anti-immigrant witch hunt. At the core of this demonstration were over 30 dock workers from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, including members of the drill team.

They joined transit workers from Bay Area Rapid Transit, water utility workers from the East Bay Municipal Utility District, printers, federal park workers from San Francisco's Presidio, day labourers, Asian and Near Eastern immigrants, college and high school students, and the revolutionary Marxists of the Spartacist League to declare that the US working class will fight to defend all the oppressed against their common capitalist class enemy.

In initiating and building this united-front protest, the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee sought above all to win workers to the need to tear through the straitjacket of "national unity" promoted by the US capitalist rulers and break down the poisonous racial and ethnic divisions among the oppressed that they promote. Marching through downtown Oakland, past the headquarters of the shipping employers' Pacific Maritime Association and the Federal Building housing the government enforcers of the capitalist attacks, the



Workers Vanguard

multiracial, working-class protesters chanted: "National unity is a lie—Bosses profit, workers die!" and "Immigrant rights, black rights: Same struggle, same fight—Workers of the world unite!" Banners of the SF Day Labor Program; AFSCME Local 444; National Parks and Public Employees, Laborers International Local 1141 and the Spartacist League joined those of the PDC and LBL on the march.

For many black longshoremen, acting in defence of immigrants—including the unorganised port truckers—represented a conscious break with widespread sentiment that immigrants and blacks are competitors, not allies—a lie cultivated by the capitalist rulers and their labour lieutenants in the trade union bureaucracy. At the rally, they joined forces with the Filipino Workers Association and with the largely Latino immigrant workers of the SF Day Labor Program, whose spokesman Eduardo Palomo declared: "We are here to resist the Patriot Act, the law that is going to harm all the workers of this nation.... We want all the workers in all parts of this nation to come out to protest this law." In mobilising for the rally, *Workers Vanguard* supporters sought to win workers to the understanding that in defending immigrants, they were defending the whole working class.

This was no abstraction but flesh and blood reality to longshoremen threatened with losing their hard-won union jobs under the background checks mandated by the Maritime Security Act, a law pending in Congress aimed at purging the waterfront of blacks, Latinos and other immigrants and at undermining union power. The political impact of this mobilisation spread far beyond those who came to the rally, raising the class consciousness also of the hundreds who took stacks of leaflets to distribute, and the thousands reached through discussion, leaflets and copies of *Workers Vanguard*.

The protest was built in distributions to key workforces: longshore dispatch, port

truckers, bus barns and BART yards, postal facilities, municipal utilities, industries with heavily immigrant workforces organised by ILWU Local 6 and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union, in Chinatown and other immigrant neighbourhoods, campuses and high schools. The campaign intersected struggles from Santa Clara—where the husband of Alia Atawneh, a Palestinian woman fired in an act of anti-immigrant persecution by Macy's, endorsed the rally—to Salt Lake City, where hundreds of immigrant airport workers were fired. Solidarity greetings from one of the lawyers representing these workers were read to the protest.

The seriousness of longshoremen at the rally, which Local 10 endorsed, was underscored by the fact that a number of lower-seniority B-men had foregone a trip to L.A. to pick up a weekend's work, a real sacrifice during a slow month at the Port of Oakland. At the end of the protest, several longshoremen made a point of taking home the mobilisation placards on which they had written the name of their union. Discussions afterwards at a celebration in a local bar and restaurant grappled with key questions: which way forward for workers, why we need a revolutionary workers party to get rid of capitalism and how to build it, why unions in themselves are not enough. One youth joined the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club at the party, and a number of workers expressed interest in joining the LBL.

Many longshoremen take a great deal of pride in their union, particularly in the gains that were won for black workers. At the same time, several longshoremen asked us why it took communists to fight to mobilise the social power of labour in defence of immigrant rights and in defence of the unions. To mobilise the multiracial proletariat in defence of immigrants, black people and all the oppressed requires a conscious struggle against the million and one ways the capitalist exploiters, aided and abetted by their labour lackeys, foster the racial and eth-

nic antagonisms that divide the proletariat and undermine its fighting strength. At bottom this is a question of programme and perspective. The worldview of the labour tops—even those of the most "progressive" stamp—is defined by what is possible or "practical" under capitalism, a system which is predicated on the exploitation of labour. We communists pursue another road, one based not only on improving present conditions but fighting to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery.

This rally was held during Black History Month to

underscore both the common interests of black and immigrant workers and the need for the labour movement to take up the fight against racial oppression. In a speech for the Labor Black League that was translated into Spanish, Adwoa Oni declared:

"The frenzied anti-Arab and anti-immigrant witch hunt is a deadly danger to all racial and ethnic minorities. This is especially true for the black population, whose forcible segregation at the bottom of this society is rooted in the history of chattel slavery and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. Black oppression is the very foundation of this racist capitalist system—but also its Achilles' heel. It's time to finish the Civil War! Forward to a workers state!"

Death row political prisoner, MOVE supporter and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal sent his endorsement, and a statement of support was read out at the rally. Speaking for the PDC, the legal and social defence organisation associated with the SL, Steve Bull called for "mass protests centred on the social power of the labour movement to demand Jamal's immediate release". Also endorsing was Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), the former Black Panther who spent 27 years in prison on a similar government frame-up before mass protest brought about his release. Speaking at the rally, former Panther Kiilu Nyasha brought attention to the plight of Haitian immigrants as well as that of Hugo Pinell and Ruchell Cinque Magee, political prisoners who have spent well over three decades in the prisons of the US capitalist system of racist injustice.

This united-front action intersected contradictions within the labour bureaucracy and exposed how this conservative layer resting atop the workers organisations acts as the key internal obstacle to mobilising workers power. From the time the new "anti-terror" legislation was introduced in September, ILWU International officials, instead of opposing the MSA, proposed that the capitalists make the ILWU a partner in

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Young Spartacus

SYC rallied support for 9 February mobilisation in Oakland's Chinatown.

Defend...

(Continued from page 3)

the "national security" war, including against other sections of dock workers who are heavily immigrant. The Teamsters and East Coast International Longshore Association tops likewise refused to oppose the MSA. It was the ILWU tops who pointed to the port truckers to be targeted by the bill. As the call for the demonstration pointed out: "It is not the job of the workers to enforce the laws, 'security' or otherwise, that will be used against them: cops and security guards have no place in the union movement!"

In Local 10, however, with its heavily black membership, there was a lot of pressure from the ranks to do something to oppose this attack. Secretary-Treasurer Clarence Thomas helped build and spoke at the rally. Also present were both business agents, Trent Willis and Jack Heyman, who put the motion at a Local 10 meeting that the union endorse the mobilisation. In his speech, Thomas noted, "There are people here today that don't necessarily share the same political views" but "we're all here to stand together against the issue of the USA-Patriot Act and the Port Maritime Security Act". All those at the rally were able



Oakland mobilisation struck a chord among immigrants (clockwise from left): Chinese-language Singtao Daily and World Journal, local Japanese community daily, Spanish-language fortnightly.

boycott was rather very much in line with US imperialism's battle with their Japanese capitalist competitors over which of these gangs of robbers would dominate the Pacific. The pre-World War II longshore action is an example of the same poison promoted today by the labour tops that pits workers of different countries against each other. This protectionism, premised on defending American capitalism, is part and parcel of the union bureaucracy's support

from the Spartakist-Jugend, youth group of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League.

This joint action by immigrant, black and white workers here in the US against the bloodthirsty US imperialist rulers struck a chord internationally. Reflecting the international character of the world market and common interests of the working class of all nations, greetings to the rally brought attention to the struggles of immigrant workers from Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and Basothans in South Africa to North Africans, Turks and Kurds in Europe, from Koreans in Japan to Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants in Australia. A solidarity statement to the rally by Pedro Wasiejko, secretary of international relations for the Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos union in Buenos Aires, declared that in the "profound political and economic crisis" of that country, "the social disciplinarians of today are basically two: unemployment on one side and judicial prosecution of social struggles on the other."

Other messages of support came from the National Federation of Undocumented Workers of France (Coordination Nationale des Sans-Papiers de France), Australia Asia Worker Links and the Brescia branch of the Italian FIOM (Federation of Metal Workers and Employees), which has been very actively involved in defence of Pakistani, North African and Senegalese immigrants in Italy. Statements were sent by sections of the ICL not only in Japan but Mexico, South Africa, France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Canada and Australia.

The Oakland demonstration repudiated in action the equation of the working class in the US with the racist, imperialist US state—an equation pushed both by the US ruling class and those who killed thousands of working people in the attack on the World Trade Center, as well as nationalists of all stripes, and widely believed by people throughout the world. The statement by the Grupo Espartaquista de México in particular had a strong impact when read out near the end of the demonstration. Noting that Mexican immigrant workers in the US create "a broad human bridge between the working class of the two countries", it went on:

"It is of great importance for workers and the oppressed in Mexico to see American workers, blacks, immigrants and youth fighting against the repressive and racist measures of the U.S. imperialist rulers. Down with the lie of national unity!"

"A fundamental part of our fight to forge a revolutionary and internationalist workers party in Mexico is to expose the lie of nationalism, an ideology that seeks to deceive the workers, tying them to their own exploiters.... The true allies of the Mexican workers are not their brutal

exploiters. Their true allies are you: the American workers fighting for their rights and those of all the oppressed. For joint class struggle against capitalist rulers in Mexico and the U.S.!"

While the demonstration helped workers to concretely see the need for and be part of joint struggle with immigrant workers, radical-minded students who came from as far away as Santa Cruz and Los Angeles were impressed to see the presence of workers who represent the only force that can defeat the imperialist rulers of the US and put an end to racism, exploitation and war. Students who drove up from the University of California at Santa Cruz were joined by a contingent of high school students from San Francisco's School of the Arts; among others were students from Berkeley High, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State and Oakland's Laney College.

In contrast to other recent protest demonstrations, this rally was a mobilisation of the working class and the oppressed *independent of the capitalists*, their parties and their state. It was built despite the boycott by most of the rest of the left, who claim to fight for an end to war and for solidarity with immigrants but who will not breach the bourgeoisie's "national unity" campaign, instead placing their hopes in allying with the liberal Democratic wing of the class enemy. The International Socialist Organization flatly refused to endorse the protest, falsely counterposing a rally at the San Francisco Marriott for largely immigrant hotel workers. The Bolshevik Tendency attended but would not endorse the demonstration; the Socialist Workers Organization and Freedom Socialist Party endorsed but did not attend.

This demonstration illustrated on a small scale what a revolutionary workers party would do. The task ahead of us is to forge such a party, in political struggle against the pro-capitalist misleaders of the working class, which will mobilise all the oppressed in a united struggle for workers power. Those who labour must rule. Join us!

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 775, 22 February 2002.

It took money to mobilise in defence of immigrant rights

Building the successful 9 February labour/black/immigrant mobilisation in Oakland cost a lot of money for posters, thousands of flyers and other demonstration expenses. Show your support for this crucial labour-centred protest! Make cheques payable/send to: Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX. Mark "Immigrant Defence Demo" on the back of the cheques.



Workers Vanguard

February 9: Bay Area longshoremen were at core of labour-centred mobilisation in defence of immigrant rights.

to compare openly Thomas' views with those of the Spartacist League speaker, Brian Manning, as they presented two different perspectives on which way forward for the working class—class collaboration v class independence from the capitalists and their state.

Thomas upheld as a model the "legacy of Harry Bridges", under which in the 1930s "longshoremen refused to load and unload cargo in the form of scrap iron that was destined for Japan". Far from an act of international working-class solidarity, this

for the capitalist Democratic Party.

In contrast was the powerful example of Japanese dock workers described in greetings read to the rally from the Spartacist Group of Japan: "To protest Japanese imperialism's cooperation in the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, dock workers near Nagasaki showed some of their potential power by refusing to load Japanese warships bound for the Indian Ocean." ILWU members also greatly appreciated meeting a young German worker who read greetings to the rally

WORKERS HAMMER

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Defend the Palestinian people! All Israeli troops, settlers out of the Occupied Territories!

Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

MARCH 30—The international working class must urgently rally to the defense of the Palestinian people against the Zionist military terror machine. Seizing on the killing of 22 innocent Israeli civilians at a Passover Seder in the working-class town of Netanya by a Hamas suicide bomber—a criminal attack worthy of the murderous nationalist mindset of the Zionist rulers—Israeli prime minister Sharon unleashed hundreds of troops, dozens of tanks, and helicopters in an assault on Palestinian Authority headquarters in Ramallah, where Yasir Arafat has been confined since December. After a fierce firefight, Israeli troops occupied Arafat's compound, forcing the PLO leader into almost complete solitary confinement in a windowless room. Meanwhile, Israeli troops have made other incursions into Palestinian towns throughout the West Bank.

The Zionists' genocidal impulses were captured in the headline for an op-ed piece by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the 29 March *Jerusalem Post*: "End Game." Sharon has called up more than 20,000 reservists for active duty in the Occupied Territories. Taking aim at the Palestinian Authority, which was created by the sham Oslo "peace" accords in order to police the Palestinian ghettos for the Zionist rulers, Sharon's bloody incursion into Ramallah could very well be a first step toward a complete Israeli re-occupation of the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip. The logic of reactionary Zionist nationalism has always been equivalent to Hitler's *lebensraum*



Reuters/Laszlo Balogh

Israeli soldiers storming the headquarters of Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat in the West Bank city of Ramallah, 29 March.

raum ("living space"), i.e., the clearing of areas occupied by Israel of all Palestinians. The fascist settlers, armed to the teeth, are the advance guard of this policy. *The Spartacist League stands in defense of the Palestinian people against the Zionist occupiers! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories now!*

The response of Palestinian spokesmen to this desperate situation has been to mount impotent appeals to everyone from the Arab bourgeois regimes to the United Nations, the European Union and the U.S. imperialists to rein in the Zionist butchers. In building for today's nationwide demonstrations in support of Palestinian rights, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee makes a direct appeal to the Bush administration

to "be actively engaged in the full implementation of International Law and UN Resolutions calling for an end of the Israeli Occupation and self-determination for the Palestinian people." It is a measure of the utter bankruptcy of any nationalist solution to the plight of the Palestinians who have bankrolled and armed Israel to the hilt and who, at home, are rounding up and detaining hundreds of Arab and Muslim immigrants as part of the "war on terror."

It is widely recognized that Bush's recent turn to a diplomatic solution is purely in the service of a massive U.S. attack on Iraq. The latest Israeli attacks come in the wake of the Arab League meeting which opposed any U.S. attack on Iraq.

The United Nations is hardly an "alternative." It was the UN that ratified the very foundation of the state of Israel; whose troops oversaw the disarming of Palestinian militants who were then slaughtered at the hands of fascist Lebanese militias mobilized by Sharon at Sabra and Shatila in 1982; and which has sanctioned the more than decade-long starvation blockade of Iraq that has killed over one million people. As for the European powers, their current objections to Israeli and U.S. policies are simply in the service of trying to reassert their own imperialist interests in the region they once controlled. *All U.S./UN/NATO forces out of the Near East now!*

While the Arab League meeting in Beirut passed empty resolutions supposedly in defense of the Palestinians, the policy of the Arab regimes has always been to suppress Palestinian refugees in their countries. In 1970, some 10,000 Palestinian militants were slaughtered by the Jordanian monarchy in the "Black September" massacre. In fact, such support that exists for the Palestinian "right of return" by these regimes is aimed at driving the Palestinians out of these coun-

tries. Immediately following the 1991 Gulf War, the Kuwaiti regime expelled nearly 200,000 Palestinian workers and their families.

The Zionist occupiers and their imperialist backers have destroyed any semblance of a livable life for the Palestinians entrapped in the ghettos. Many feel like they have nothing left to lose and are prepared to strap their bodies with explosives to get the perceived "enemy," which in the minds of anti-Semitic outfits like Hamas includes the entire Israeli Jewish population. Indeed, the Zionists look to these atrocities to advance their aims. In fact, until Sharon's provocative visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount, which set off the current *intifada*, the wave of suicide bombings had all but disappeared. Now, not just Islamic fanatics but secular Palestinians, including women, see no other option than to immolate themselves and random others in suicide bombings. But such attacks only serve to seal any fissures in Israeli society, such as the recent protests among Israeli army reservists and their supporters against the occupation, and drive the Hebrew-speaking population into the arms of the Zionist nationalist madmen.

Various putative leftists such as the International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party have called for a secular democratic state in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Positing a democratic solution within the framework of capitalism (with socialism removed to some far distant future) recalls the program of the Stalinist-led Communist parties in the region which posited a "two-stage" revolution—the first being to install the local ruling class in power supposedly to set the stage for socialist revolution. In reality, this played out in the Communist parties allying with the Arab nationalists, who subsequently massacred the Communists and their working-class followers. In contrast, Trotskyists have always fought for the political independence of the working class, which, as the tribune of all the oppressed, is the only force that can open the road to liberation from imperialist subjugation in the "Third World."

There can be no justice for the Palestinian people within the framework of capitalist rule. On the contrary, the system of private property and private ownership of the means of production necessarily contains within it the components of nationalism and religion, which make impossible the settlement of the conflicting national claims of the Palestinian Arab and the Hebrew-speaking populations. Only through the overthrow of both the Israeli bourgeoisie and all the Arab ruling classes can the right of national self-determination for these peoples and the many other peoples of the region be equitably realized. This necessarily calls for the leadership of internationalist Marxist workers parties, not least to defeat the intruding foreign imperialisms, particularly the American. *Defend the Palestinian people! For a socialist federation of the Near East!* ■

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A socialist revolution!

Iran 1979

Proletarian revolution or Islamic reaction

We print below a translation of an article from *Le Bolchéviek* (no 158, Winter 2001-2002), newspaper of our French section, the *Ligue trotskyste de France* (LTF), based on a presentation made in the LTF's Paris branch. The military operations in Afghanistan today underline the historic and current importance of the events in Iran 1979 and the veracity of the Trotskyist programme for permanent revolution.

In our international Declaration of Principles (*Spartacist*, English edition no 54, Spring 1998), we wrote the following:

"The 1979 'Iranian Revolution' opened up a period of ascendant political Islam in the historically Muslim world, a development which contributed to and was powerfully reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power in Iran was a defeat akin to Hitler's crushing of the German proletariat in 1933, albeit on a narrower, regional scale. The international Spartacist tendency's slogan 'Down with the Shah! No support to the mullahs!' and our focus on the woman question ('No to the veil!') stood in sharp opposition to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction."

I think this is important in two respects, and I would like you to take each sentence at its true value. First of all we compare the defeat of the proletariat in Iran, albeit on a more limited scale, to the defeat of the German proletariat. This is a very strong comparison, comrades, because the German proletariat was smashed by fascism, by Nazism. We also say that it not only reinforced Islam as a political force, but also contributed to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. It set in gear the "new world disorder"—what is happening today. Dialectically it was reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of

the Soviet Union. So it goes both ways. We were indeed literally the only ones, and we are proud of it, who fought against the mullahs and against the Shah, and for socialist revolution in Iran, with our slogans "Down with the Shah! No support to the mullahs!" and "No to the veil!", underlining the central importance of the woman question.

We translated a number of articles into Farsi, which were sold or distributed in the thousands—no exaggeration—by our sections. Through various channels they also went to Iran, were read in Iran, and we even got feedback from them. There are two specific points on which we had a lot of confrontations. Over the question of democratic rights for women, ie "No to the veil!", and also on gay rights. And I think it opened up a lot of "debate", because it led to a lot of horrible stuff from the Iranian left, who said that the veil is a "symbol of anti-imperialism", that homosexuality is a "problem" in France but that "there are no gays in Iran". We were physically harassed. A comrade was knifed in Germany by Turkish Maoists. We were thrown out of demonstrations as "CIA agents", and later, after we hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan, as "KGB agents", etc. We are proud that we told the truth to the proletariat, even if this truth is very hard to hear and to see.

The defeat in Iran and the Soviet entry into Afghanistan

I would like you to look carefully at this map. The title is "Iran and its perception of internal security". The "internal enemies" of the Persians, who are the dominant people, are the national minorities. You see: Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, Azeris, etc. But I would also like you to see how the country is strategi-

cally important in the region, as you had the Republics of Soviet Central Asia to the north of the country, with the same peoples on both sides of the borders, and right beside, you have Afghanistan.

In February 1979 the mullahs seized power in Iran. It took some time for them to consolidate their power. But a few months later, at Christmas 1979, the

I want to insist above all on the reading I recommended to comrades, "Iran and Permanent Revolution", which was published in *Spartacist* (English edition no 33, Spring 1982), which tells you how the proletariat in Iran could have seized power at least twice in its history, if it had not been led by traitors.

In several respects the Shah's Iran



Workers Hammer

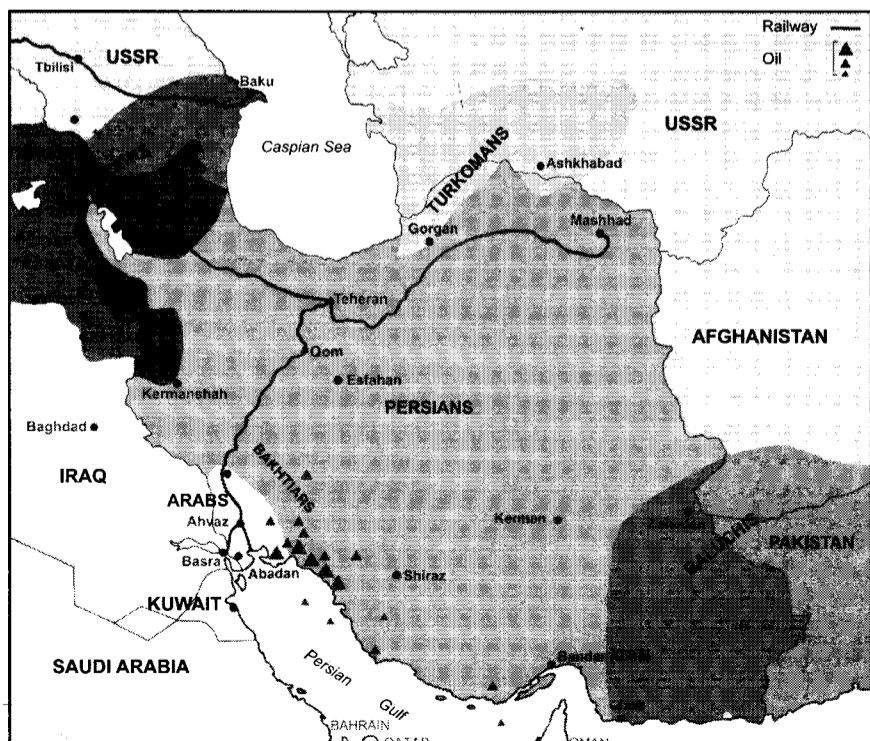
London, 14 January 1989: Iranian leftist groups joined with Spartacist League in united-front protest against executions in Iran.

Soviets intervened in Afghanistan in order to defend their southern border, because weapons from the imperialists were going through Iran to arm Afghan *mujahedin*, who had started to cut the throats of teachers who tried to teach young girls to read and write. This was nothing other than the beginning of the second Cold War, with near-daily provocations against the Soviet Union. In 1988, with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, it was the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union. As we said then: "Better to defend the Soviet Union in Kabul than in Moscow!" But the Stalinist bureaucracy's appeasement of the imperialists, and their refusal to fight in the interests of the proletariat, accelerated capitalist counterrevolution which swept away the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe and the October Revolution itself.

So this presentation has the limited scope of showing two things: firstly, the confirmation in the negative of our Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution and the necessity of the revolutionary party. Secondly, to show that this defeat was not at all inevitable. A proletarian revolution would have changed the situation, and it was possible. In that case we would not be speaking today of the horror of the war in Afghanistan, and maybe we would not be talking of the "new world disorder". So the presentation will necessarily be limited and it must be complemented by comrades' readings, and there is a lot of stuff to read.

resembled Russia before the 1917 revolution: a prison-house of peoples, as Lenin characterised tsarist Russia. In Iran the Persians dominated and still do, politically, various nationalities: Kurds, Azeris, Arabs, Baluchis, to mention only these nationalities. This domination is exerted through armed force and through a chauvinist policy. The other analogy with tsarist Russia is that there was a poor, numerous and very backward peasantry. So we face a country of uneven and combined development, as Trotsky explains in *Permanent Revolution*, where you have the latest word in technology based on the most backward social relations, in a country where there was no bourgeois revolution in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. (However, one crucial difference with tsarist Russia is that the Russian Orthodox religious hierarchy was a bastion of the tsar until the end, while the Iranian Shiite clergy opposed the Shah's regime in 1979.)

The country is also characterised by a very concentrated and powerful proletariat, socially speaking, in the oil workers. When I showed the map earlier to a comrade, she told me "I didn't know that the oil fields were there." I want you to have a closer look in the South. That was the case. After the war between Iran and Iraq the oil fields of those two cities, Abadan and Khorramshahr, were completely destroyed and it was dispersed. The refinery which was there, which I think was among the biggest in the world no less, was dispersed completely to the



"Iran and its perception of internal security": map based on "l'Atlas stratégique" (1988), showing the principal national minorities in Iran.

centre of the country. So it means that the proletariat was dispersed, of course. At that time it was a very important concentration of the working class, socially but also politically very important. The Iranian proletariat twice had the possibility of seizing power, which was given away by Tudeh (the pro-Moscow Stalinist party) to bourgeois nationalists and even to the Shah himself.

I would like to make a few points on the Russian Revolution of 1917, which is our international compass. As you have seen in *Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution* (Trotsky, August 1940), the 1905 revolution was a dress rehearsal for 1917. But there are in addition two very important points. The first one concerns the character of the Russian Revolution, because Russia was also one of those countries where there had been no bourgeois revolution. The bourgeoisie was weak. There was a concentrated, powerful working class but also a very numerous and extremely backward peasantry. And the second point was the question of the necessity of a party. This is the lesson that Lenin drew later from 1905.

I want mostly to talk about the *Three Concepts*. Because if you think about it, when these three conceptions existed the Russian Revolution had not taken place, so it was the first time that the revolution was going to happen, and in a backward country. So there were three perspectives: the Mensheviks', which of course was later adopted by Stalin regarding China at first; that you absolutely need a democratic stage where you put the bourgeoisie in power, and later you can talk about a socialist revolution, proletarian revolution. For the Mensheviks, the Russian bourgeois revolution could only be conceivable under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie, and it must give power to it. They were leading the proletariat down an entirely wrong path.

Lenin's position was clear that the belated bourgeoisie of Russia was incapable of achieving its own revolution. Lenin put forward a formulation for "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" in order to purge the country of mediaeval remnants, carry out agrarian reform and open the possibility of the fight for socialism. Lenin's conception represented a tremendous step forward inasmuch as it indicated the only realistic combination of social forces to carry out the revolution. But its weakness lay in the conception of a dictatorship of two classes. Lenin himself openly characterised this "dictatorship" as "bourgeois". By that he meant that, for the sake of maintaining unity with the peasantry, the proletariat would be obliged to forego posing socialist tasks directly during the impending revolution. Trotsky explains that "The insufficiency in the perspective of Bolshevism did not become apparent in 1905 only because the revolution itself did not undergo further development. But then at the beginning of 1917 Lenin was obliged to alter his perspective, in direct conflict with the old cadres of his party."

The Trotskyist position of permanent revolution is summed up in *Three Concepts*:

"the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism."

The left and the mullahs

The hated regime of the Shah was based on suppressing the left and the working class through the SAVAK, the very bloodthirsty political police, and you also had through this the oppression of national minorities and women. After the working class had the possibility of seizing power and the Tudeh party betrayed it, there was a massacre of the leaders of Tudeh. So the left was very small, and of course it was underground.

In 1977 protests started in the slums around the capital city and they were followed by student demonstrations which managed to get significant popular support. Of course the army answered by shooting at the demonstrators, and in response demonstrations spread to nearly the whole country. In this framework one Khomeini appears. Who was Khomeini? A mullah, a Muslim priest, necessarily reactionary of course, and part of the powerful, landholding clergy. I think it is important to note that he was a landlord. The clergy has a lot of land in Iran. The first political act of Khomeini was in the sixties, when he opposed in a very reactionary way the Shah's "white revolution". What was the "white revolution"? It was like a safety valve against a mass explosion which consisted in seeking to share some land among the peasantry and give voting rights to women. This was too much for Khomeini, and he mobilised the bourgeoisie from the bazaar, which by the way was his base, to foment a super-reactionary upheaval especially against these two points, ie voting rights for women and land distribution.

He was exiled to Iraq at that time, and as if by coincidence he got political asylum in France in 1978. He was somewhere in a Paris suburb, a little town called Neauphle-le-Château. And Khomeini started to lead the mass demonstrations from here. How was this possible? Think about it, after 18 years in exile, he comes here and from France he is leading...you wonder how. Of course there was a very important base of the traditional bourgeoisie of the bazaar which always supported the clergy; the traditional merchant class whose foundations were threatened by the modernisation of the country. This traditional social class is doomed by economic progress, and has a natural tendency to adhere to a reactionary ideology and its political expressions.

But above all there was the role of the left organisations and their influence, albeit limited, over the proletariat. These organisations tied the hands of the working class to its mortal class enemy, ie the

Shiite clergy representing the bourgeoisie. And some of these organisations supported Khomeini and the Shiite clergy to the death. That is, even when Khomeini started to massacre leftists they still supported the mullahs. They denounced their own comrades to this regime. While they had members in prison, the leaders of the Tudeh party went on TV to say that they were wrong if they had said anything bad about the regime of the ayatollahs. There was the guerrillaist group the Fedayeen, which faced with this support to Khomeini and the ayatollahs split. One part, called the majority, at bottom had the same position as Tudeh: that you must support the ayatollahs. The other part, called the minority, could not be as rotten as that, but never broke with the Stalinist policy of revolution by stages, that is of subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie as

was a youth. This is, in my view, a significant example of a layer of potential militants who were crushed—crushed, demoralised, finished off by a treacherous policy of revolution by stages.

We fought against arguments like this is the first stage of the revolution which has begun. We had Workers Power saying, "It's an anti-imperialist united front." There were organisations who were saying, "Khomeini will take power and people will know how bad he is. They will overthrow him and after that, there will be us", that it was a mass movement "even if Khomeini is here it's not so bad, we'll be right behind", etc, etc. You even had leaders of different organisations who claimed to be for Trotskyism and the working class, but who were going into the demonstrations and chanting "Allah Akbar" (god is great). Leftist women were putting the veil on their heads to go



Central Museum of the Revolution, Moscow

Women in Soviet Central Asia learning to read, 1924. Bolshevik Revolution led to enormous advances for women of traditionally Muslim East.

a first stage and the promise of socialist revolution as a second stage. But you never get to the second stage because, as history shows (China 1927, Indonesia 1965, Iran 1979), the political subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie always ends with a bloody massacre of workers and the left by the bourgeoisie.

You also had the Pabloties in Iran (the HKS, sister section of Krivine's Ligue communiste révolutionnaire) and in a way they were the most disgusting. The Pabloties supported this regime to the end. They split, with one part continuing to support the regime while the other part made some criticisms without ceasing their enthusiasm for the "mass movement". If there had been barricades, their two organisations would have been shooting at each other, while at the same time they were sitting at the same table in their international discussions. You see, this is the "United Secretariat". There were 14 Pablotie militants who were arrested in the beginning of the Islamic revolution. They wrote an open letter to Khomeini calling him "great leader of the revolution, ayatollah so-and-so, we haven't done anything, let us go, etc". The Pabloties did not wage any campaign to free their own comrades. We waged a campaign.

Some years later I saw one of these former Pabloties who had been in prison and who got out. We talked and I asked him, "But how could you have written a letter like that?" I said to him, "I have a programme which shows you that integrity exists." He said to me, "Integrity doesn't exist." I think that this is really sad. He

into the demonstrations in order to not break the unity with Khomeini.

As for Lutte ouvrière, at the time they were writing polemics against the abject tailism of the Pabloties vis-a-vis the mullahs. But there was no way they wanted to break the unity with Khomeini either. They wrote in *Lutte de classe* (8 January 1979), in connection with the arming of the proletariat: "Even while remaining within the framework and on the current political basis of the movement, this would be for them [the workers] a priority and an imperative task. Because it would not necessarily be a question of a head-on collision straight away with the current leadership at the level of slogans and immediate objectives." These people recognised the reactionary and anti-woman character of Khomeini, they talked of arming the proletariat, but in no way must the unity with these reactionaries ever be broken. Not surprising that a year later they denounced the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

A whole layer of militants were massacred, executed, raped, finished. There were a lot of splits, but the splits never went all the way, that is they never found the revolutionary programme. And when you look around the world where there are leftist Iranians from this generation, it's over: they are corrupt cynics, hopeless, or else they are dead. A lot of them put Marxism into question instead of examining their own rotten programme. Yet there were key moments when it was possible to change the course of history and to win the working class.

continued on page 8

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Iran...

(Continued from page 7)

The revolutionary intervention of the Spartacist tendency

Our reformist and centrist opponents pretend that our slogan “Down with the Shah! No to the veil!” signified political abstentionism. Of course, for the opportunists political activism is always synonymous with tailing a mass movement. On the contrary, we developed an active and interventionist political line at each step of the Iranian crisis. In opposing ourselves in a principled manner to participation in Khomeinist demonstrations, we did not opt for political silence. In accordance with its resources and the concrete military situation, a Trotskyist organisation would have used the opening created by the appearance of a mass Islamic opposition and the occasional hesitations of the repressive apparatus of the Shah in order to agitate around democratic-revolutionary demands and on the totality of its class-struggle programme. A vanguard Trotskyist organisation would also seek to break the base of the left groups, principally the Fedayeen, from Khomeini by proposing to these organisations a series of united-front actions against the Shah, actions independent of the movement of the mullahs and which would have been politically opposed to them. We tried to intervene as a factor with our ideas and our propaganda; we took a side in the struggle.

The first key moment for revolutionary intervention was (Khomeini was still in France at the time) when there were very important strikes of the working class in oil. These were in November 1978 and totally paralysed the economy

of the country. Khomeini sent a man named Bazargan, who later became his prime minister, to tell the working class: go on strike if you want, but for the exterior, not for the interior. The workers responded, “We didn’t go on strike for Khomeini and we are not going to stop for Khomeini now.” This was the moment to intersect the working class with the Bolshevik programme of political independence of the proletariat and to win the vanguard of workers to revolutionary consciousness. Khomeini sent Bazargan to Iran a second time and then those who were leading the working class broke the strike. They said that it was necessary to be united with Khomeini.

The second very important moment was when Khomeini arrived in Teheran in February 1979 and there were some leaders of SAVAK who were going to be executed. This was the moment to have peoples’ tribunals, revolutionary tribunals, to judge these torturers. So what happened? They executed two or three obviously hated, well-known bigwigs and afterwards they put the SAVAK back in place with the same structure under the name of SAVAMMA. It’s the same thing, just a little name change. And that’s where the mullahs consolidated their power.

And the third key moment was in March 1979, when there was a mass demonstration of women against the veil, with a security squad of Fedayeen. There were two days of demonstrations. The first day there was a physical attack by the mullahs against the demonstration. There was real resistance. The second day, the Fedayeen broke up the demonstration, because they wouldn’t break the unity with Khomeini. We fought to break this reactionary unity and to win the proletariat to a line of class independence.

So it was only with the support of the left that the mullahs could consolidate power. And immediately afterwards, the mass killings began. And when I say mass killings, I weigh my words. Literally thousands of leftist militants were executed. In the prisons thousands and thousands of national minorities, especially Kurds, were massacred. Thousands of homosexuals, of women, were tortured and assassinated.

Khomeini consolidated his power through something else: the war with Iraq. There too we have a number of articles that we wrote, then translated into Farsi, and we worked with a number of Iranian groups. On this subject, we said “both sides are reactionary”, we said to the workers, “Turn your guns against your own bourgeoisie”, “Down with the mullahs, down with the colonels”, “Transform the reactionary war into civil war.” The same groups which at least were asking questions about the left’s support to Khomeini nonetheless began to support their own bourgeoisie against Iraq. When you read *Socialism and War* (Lenin, 1915), he explains the link between opportunism and social chauvinism, above all in times of war. That’s how it was, with different arguments, in Iran. In spite of Iran’s failure to defeat Iraq, Khomeini completely consolidated his power in blood.

A second generation of potential militants was wiped out in this war. Imagine the force, the potential power of this smashed working class. When we now see that the defeat of the proletariat in Iran was a basis for reinforcing the possibility of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, and that this paved the way for the war in Afghanistan today and the hell for women there for 20 years under the *mujahedin* supported by impe-



UPI
Teheran 1979: women protesters against Ayatollah Khomeini’s imposition of the veil.

rialism, imagine the contrary. Imagine for a minute that if the revolution in Iran had been a proletarian revolution, what this would have meant for Afghanistan, what this would have meant for Soviet Central Asia, what this would have meant for the ex-Soviet Union as such. It is for you to see, I hope that it was clear, that defeats are not inevitable. When we fight it is possible to win. But it is necessary to have the capacity to swim against the stream and to be true to the programme which can bring the working class to power. ■

Blair...

(Continued from page 1)

socialist revolution. Our goal is for new October Revolutions.

Class struggle shakes Labour

The government is on a collision course with the public sector unions, who are facing unprecedented attacks and are fighting back. The last few months have seen the most significant strikes in the five years of Labour in power: since January there have been very effective strikes in rail as well as strikes by teachers, benefit workers and other public sector workers. The million-strong local council workforce is discussing a ballot for what would be their first national strike since the “Winter of Discontent” in 1979. Blair personally intervened to tell London Underground to pay the train drivers a 5.7 per cent pay rise when they threatened to strike in February. Such a strike would have brought the City to a halt, costing finance capital millions of pounds. This victory will encourage other workers eager to take on the bosses and the government. The latest targets of Blair’s privatisation obsession are 40,000 postal workers; Labour wants to throw them on the scrap heap in the service of stuffing more cash into the denizens of the City.

Union struggles against privatisations have driven Labour into a frenzy. Blair’s speech against “wreckers”, directed against public sector workers, enraged a new layer of union activists. Meanwhile, the bourgeois press has been filled with “mugshots” of rail union leaders such as Bob Crow, Greg Tucker and Mick Rix alongside lurid copy, all because the rail unions have

had strikes. During Bob Crow’s election campaign for RMT general secretary, in addition to being vilified as a “left-wing fundamentalist” who would “spell trouble for the government” he was badly beaten up in his own home. The *Independent* (13 January) reported that Crow accused the rail bosses of “hiring muscle” to have him “finished off”. The article added: “The government would love Mr Crow to lose the election, fearing chaos if he wins. A leaked TUC document outlines the fears of a hard left takeover of the RMT and promotes the candidacy of Phil Bialyk, Mr Crow’s main rival and the Government’s favoured choice”. But despite the TUC and Labour’s dirty tricks campaign, union members voted for Crow by an overwhelming majority and Bialyk was trounced. Blair was clearly rattled by this, railing that he would not be dictated to by “the guy who supports Arthur Scargill” (*Evening Standard*, 22 February).

Labour is haunted by the spectre of the heroic year-long miners strike of 1984-85, led by National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) head Arthur Scargill. They also remember the “Winter of Discontent” when the last Labour government was rocked in 1979 by a national public sector strike. But although we defend the likes of Crow and Tucker against these attacks, which are directed against the unions as a whole, this does not translate into supporting Bob Crow’s election in the RMT. While Crow places himself at the head of struggles in rail, which are driven by anger at the base, individuals running for union office only merit support if they break from the framework of Labourism in some fundamental programmatic respect. That is certainly not true of Crow. The day after his election

he called for: “a Labour Party that’s out there fighting as hard for workers as the Conservative Party is fighting for big business” (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 February). Crow supported Ken Livingstone for Mayor of London in 2000. Livingstone has appointed a notorious union-buster, Bob Kiley, to run the Underground; Livingstone was also an enthusiast for Labour’s bombing of Serbia in 1999 and supported police repression of the anti-capitalist youth who decorated Winston Churchill’s statue on MayDay 2000. Crow accepts the bourgeoisie’s framework of “national unity” against “terrorism”, which means he cannot effectively defend even the basic economic interests of union members. Thus he called off a Tube strike scheduled for October when Blair baited the union for siding with terrorism.

The union misleaders also abide by the anti-union laws, which are designed to make effective class struggle difficult, if not impossible. Defiance of these laws is not a guarantee of success, however it is only by engaging in serious mass struggle that workers can win anything substantial. In opposition to craft divisions, which undermine unity in struggle, revolutionaries fight for industrial unionism—one union per industry. In the event of a major class confrontation it is quite likely that the capitalist state would be used against the strikers. The miners strike demonstrates that one union, however militant, cannot take on the state by itself and win. What’s needed is joint struggle by key sections of the working class. But this poses the need for a class-struggle fight for leadership of the unions, ousting the Labourite bureaucracy. Communist work in the trade unions aims to develop the class con-

sciousness of rank-and-file workers and to win them over to the perspective of revolutionary struggle against capitalism under the leadership of the Leninist vanguard party.

Mobilise trade unions in defence of immigrants, minorities!

The need for a workers party to fight for the rights of all workers—including minority workers—takes on added significance in the face of growing racist terror. There is mass anger among minorities at Labour’s racist anti-immigrant legislation which has put the wind in the sails of the fascists and increased racist violence. The domestic side of Labour’s “war on terrorism” means renewed attacks on civil liberties, increased repression against refugees and asylum seekers, and a racist witch hunt against all Asians, especially Muslims, people of Near Eastern origin and other minorities who are branded as potential terrorists. This is an attack on all workers, and a blatant attempt at racist divide-and-rule. It calls for a powerful response from the multiethnic working class. The 9 February labour-centred demonstration in Oakland, on the US West Coast, (see page 3) in defence of immigrants had a particular impact on militant workers and fighters for minority rights in Europe, underlining the need for proletarian internationalism and refuting the lie that the working class in America is one seamless reactionary mass, wedded to its “own” imperialist rulers. In Britain in March the Spartacus Youth Group initiated a united-front demonstration at SOAS—a small but exemplary action against the Labour government’s “war on terrorism”, which targets workers and minorities (see page 12).

The possibility and necessity of link-

ing the social power of the organised working class to the defence of minorities and immigrants is posed point-blank. A Leninist vanguard party seeks to act as a “tribune of the people”, mobilising the trade unions in the forefront of a fight for: *jobs for all, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, for union/minority mobilisations to stop fascist provocations*. As we said in a Spartacist League statement, issued on 2 June 2001 in response to police occupation of Asian areas of Oldham: “Urgently needed is trade-union centred protest against the police occupation of the Asian community. This means drawing in the power of the urban working class of the Manchester area so that besieged minority youth in this enclave of Oldham, a run-down former mill town, are not left to go it alone against the organised violence of the state, its cops, courts and prisons”. Such a struggle will not be led by the existing union leadership but rather requires a new, revolutionary leadership.

In contrast to a Leninist party, Labourite groups maintain a strict separation between “workers” struggles and the fight against racism. This was evident at a February rally in London, “RMT and PCS on strike—Support the unions now!” Socialist Alliance was out in force and platform speakers included prominent Socialist Alliance members Paul Foot and Mark Serwotka, General Secretary elect of the PCS, and grand old man of the Labour “left” Tony Benn (whose maximal demand continues to be: “What Britain needs is a Labour government”). The most noteworthy thing about this rally was that, among all their lists of government attacks, not a single platform or floor speaker mentioned racism, minorities or asylum seekers, until our comrade intervened. She said:

“It’s crucial to support these strikes and to defend the trade unionists like Greg Tucker who are being witch hunted. The Labour government’s offensive, the sweeping privatisations that mean the threat of more job losses and attacks on pay and conditions must be beaten back through joint class struggle. The question to be thrashed out is, what kind of leadership does the working class need to win? To take on the bosses in the Post Office and rail and their government you need mass picket lines that no one crosses, you need an industrial union in transport, in rail, Underground and the buses, to take away the weapon of craft divisions from the bosses. But more than that you need a leadership that understands that the interests of the capitalists and the working class are irreconcilable and that Labour in power has always ruled for British capitalism; that the interests of workers and of minorities will either go forward together or fall back separately.

“The revolutionary leadership I’m talking about has to mobilise the multiethnic working class to fight for all the oppressed—asylum seekers, black and Asian people and Muslims. Labour’s ‘anti-terrorism’ laws target minorities in the first instance and ultimately the working class. This is the leadership that’s necessary for the working class to become conscious of its power to take over and run society, and strikes are the time when consciousness can be raised, because workers in struggle become clear about who their enemy is.

“The Socialist Alliance is not a revolutionary alternative. How can they be when they tell workers to ‘vote Labour where you must’. Their programme is to pressure Labour and offer its disgruntled members a home, it’s Old Labour warmed over.

“We need to break the working class from Labourism in all its forms, build a revolutionary party. For class struggle against the Labour government!”

It speaks volumes about the “colour blindness” of these Labourites that they could ignore the interests of a key section of the working class of this country.

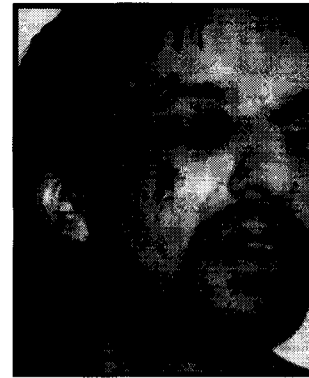
Free Satpal Ram!

The British capitalist state under Labour has been stepping up its racist vendetta against Satpal Ram. He was recently transferred from Blantyre House, an “open” prison for long-term prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentence, to Elmley, a closed prison. This is, outrageously, the 72nd time he has been moved from one prison hellhole to another in an attempt by the state to crush his defiant, outspoken opposition to their system of racist oppression. The Elmley prison governor has furthermore been refusing Satpal access to the money he has saved up and he is now being forced to open correspondence from his solicitors in the presence of prison warders. Satpal was unjustly jailed for murder in 1987 for defending himself against a brutal and potentially deadly attack in an Indian restaurant in Birmingham by a gang of racists, one of whom stabbed him in the face with a broken glass.

We demand: *Freedom now for Satpal Ram!*

In a 1998 article, “Criminal Justice Under the Microscope”, Satpal described how many prisoners “are living in overcrowded buildings which were originally designed and built in Victorian times.... Faced with inhumane conditions, lack of hygiene and day to day squalor, many endure a nightmarish existence which is clearly reminiscent of a bygone era.” He went on to underline the racist nature of the British “justice” system: “Racism within the Criminal Justice System has also been instrumental in criminalizing a disproportionate number of Black people who are in Prison today. Black people constitute 7 per cent of the population at large, as opposed to 18 per cent of the prison population. This reflects the level of bias that exists within the system.”

There can be no justice for blacks



no credit

and Asians and all working people under this capitalist system. The police, military, courts and prisons form the core of this state, an institution of organised violence used against the working class and oppressed to maintain the power and property rights of the ruling class.

Freedom now for Satpal Ram! Send messages of support to: Satpal Ram, HMP Elmley, Church Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4AY. E-mail messages will be forwarded to Satpal from: SatpalRam@satpalram.connectfree.uk.com

Blacks and Asians in Britain make up a significant part of the working class. Well before September 11, Blair’s “anti-terrorism” legislation banned a number of Islamic, Sikh, Kashmiri groups and others; taking their cue from the government, racists have escalated attacks against minorities on the street.

The fascist BNP made significant electoral gains in the last general election. When the fake left do address this question, it is along the lines of Socialist Alliance’s “Don’t vote Nazi” (ie vote Labour) campaign last year. Fascists such as the BNP scum are genocidal race-terrorists who cannot be stopped at the ballot box, but must be crushed by the integrated workers movement. Last summer, Asian communities in Bradford and Oldham were repeatedly attacked by fascists, then besieged by racist cops. Labour ministers sound so like the BNP that Shahid Malik, an Asian member of Labour’s NEC who was beaten by the cops last year in Bradford when he attempted to negotiate during the police siege of the Asian community there, asked: “Shouldn’t we be worried when the leader of Britain’s fascist party accuses the home secretary of plagiarising him?” (*Guardian*, 20 March).

Unemployment for Asian youth in the former mill towns of West Yorkshire and East Lancashire is sky high. The devastation of these areas mirrors that wrought by Thatcher in steel towns and mining communities. The north of England, Wales and Scotland are treated with particular contempt by a ruling class firmly rooted in South East of England finance capital, and there are upwards of 20,000 jobs lost every month in manufacturing alone. Women, including Asian women, are often hardest hit by the loss of jobs in textile mills and clothing factories.

Against the reformist illusions pushed by the Socialist Alliance (SA), Socialist Party (SP) and Socialist Labour Party (SLP), we demand: A sliding scale of wages and working hours! All the work should be divided among the employed and unemployed with no reduction in wages! Organise the unorganised in unions! For training organised by the unions for youth and minorities! For workers defence guards to defend minorities against racist attack! The fight for these demands means class struggle including factory

occupations and mass picket lines that nothing and no one crosses.

Break with Labourism in all its incarnations—Forge a Bolshevik party!

The formation of the Labour Party at the beginning of the last century was a deformed and organisational expression of the independence of the working class, separate from the capitalist Liberal Party. Described by Lenin as a “bourgeois workers party”, Labour’s role has always been to tie the working class to British capitalism and imperialism. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 marked a watershed for Labour and other social-democratic parties in Europe, which went over to the side of their “own” bourgeoisie in the war. The leaders adapted to the social chauvinism and patriotism of each country as a cover for collaboration with the capitalist class and rejection of the class struggle. From 1914 on it was clear that a political split in the workers movement was necessary and Lenin insisted on the need for a complete political break with the opportunists and social chauvinists.

Social democracy acts to mediate social conflict, the class struggle that inevitably occurs under capitalism. If

such struggle is not led by a revolutionary party to the conquest of state power, it must either be crushed by the ruling class or contained by a force that has sufficient authority in the working class to make sure it is diverted from the road of revolution and confined within the bounds of capitalist society. This role was particularly evident in the upsurge by the working class in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Labour’s adoption in 1918 of “Clause IV”, which promised “common ownership of the means of production”, was a response to the “threat of Bolshevism” that the British ruling class dreaded; the massive wave of struggles of the working class were diverted into the pursuit of reforms of capitalism through parliament. Labour covered itself in a “socialist” fig leaf, but the actual purpose of its leaders was to avoid socialist revolution like the plague. Although organically tied to the working class, the Labour Party has in fact been the voice of the trade union bureaucracy, a distinct petty-bourgeois layer that views the world through the same lens as the bourgeoisie.

The organisational structure of the Labour Party, based on bloc affiliation of

continued on page 10



GP Goldstein

May 1920: Bolshevik leader Lenin addressing soldiers in Moscow, with Trotsky standing by.

Blair...

(Continued from page 9)

the trade unions, means that by definition it is not a revolutionary workers party, it is based on unity with the social chauvinists and opportunists. The composition of the trade unions is necessarily different to the composition of a revolutionary party. Unions are defensive organisations of the working class and therefore seek to encompass as wide a section of workers as possible. A Leninist vanguard party organises only the most class-conscious workers committed to the programme of socialist revolution. The Labourite attachment to "bloc affiliation" of the trade unions means they are wedded to a party that submerges the most advanced layers of the class into the most backward ones. Mass reformist parties are modelled on what Karl Kautsky approvingly termed the party "of the whole class". Kautsky, a leader of the German social democrats, was a Marxist until 1914 when he became the "left" lawyer for outright social chauvinists. Labour-type parties are inevitably chauvinist, based on the dominant ethnic grouping and tied to the defence of the interests of their own ruling class. Thus, Labour has always put the interests of Queen (or King) and Country first—they supported the Empire while it existed, sided with Britain in the two imperialist world wars and supported US imperialism in the Korean and Vietnam wars. Labour governments have been responsible for the bloody partition of India, sending British troops to Northern Ireland in 1969, and vile racist measures including "virgin-

chauvinism, the SP refuse to call for the troops of British imperialism to get out of Northern Ireland, and engage in public "debates" with the Loyalist murderer Billy Hutchinson. Thus their "new mass workers party" would be, at best, a rehash of the old Labour Party.

Socialist Alliance haven't given up on New Labour (as was obvious in the call by its most prominent component, the Socialist Workers Party [SWP], to vote "socialist where you can, Labour where you must" in the last general election). SA now call for "democratising" the political fund. A Socialist Alliance conference in March devoted entirely to the question of the union link featured Matt Wrack as a main speaker, who stated: "We want to democratise the fund, to break Labour's monopoly over the fund, to give workers a choice and a voice" (*Socialist Worker*, 23 March). The call to "democratise" the political fund is deliberately ambiguous. For SA it is a half-way house between those who want to stick with New Labour and those who want to break the link. But the slogan includes a range of possibilities—on one hand it could mean supporting independent class-struggle candidates, defence campaigns, etc. On the other hand it opens the door to supporting outright capitalist parties. Although SA rejects supporting the Liberal Democrats, George Monbiot, a leading light in the "anti-globalisation" movement, says trade unions can choose to support any of "Britain's small progressive parties" in which he includes the Liberal Democrats, Greens, the

British capitalism.

The SWP have decided to revive "rank and file" in the unions, harking back to their work in the unions during the militancy of the 1970s. The implication of this perspective is that all leaders are sell-outs, but the ranks are inherently revolutionary and their job is to prevent the union leaders from selling out, mainly by urging them to be more militant. But this is just a left cover for the SWP's rejection of a political struggle in the unions against Labourism, particularly that of the "left" bureaucrats. An article in the SWP's *International Socialism* (Spring 2002) explains that there is "a positive element" to the link with Labour: "It means that, in however distorted a fashion, Labour still has some link to the organised working class." It goes on to say "socialists do not take a neutral position when it comes to the election of left and right union officials. Socialist[s] should always support and campaign in elections for left wing officials in union elections." For them, "left wing" means left social democrats like Bob Crow.

The right centrist Workers Power (WP) group, another Socialist Alliance constituent and habitual supporter of Labour in every election since WP's formation as a left split from the SWP, wrote of SA's campaign over "democratising the union link":

"But the campaign raises an urgent question for any rank and file movement; namely, what should replace Labour?..."

"Any rank and file movement today will be confronted with this question—and such a movement would have to thrash out an answer—one we believe lies in building a new party, a working class alternative to Labour. For us such an alternative must not be a re-run of Labour (100 years of trying to reform a system that puts profit before human need). It must be a total alternative to it, a revolutionary party that organises the working class to smash the capitalist system and the state that defends it."

—*Workers Power*, March 2002

At first blush, this sounds fairly left wing. However, WP's centrist chatter about a revolutionary alternative to Labour is belied by its unending electoral support to Labour—outright as well as via the Socialist Alliance in the last elections. Moreover, such verbiage is contradicted by WP's report on the conference, which is virtually uncritical of the likes of Matt Wrack, Mark Serwotka and Bob Crow ("Britain: Socialist Alliance trade union conference rallies against Labour", *Workers Power Global Week*, 16 March). As did their forebears in the SWP during the 1970s, WP makes much of a "rank and file movement" which in reality boils down to tailing, even if critically, those "left" bureaucrats who in turn are reacting to the anger at their base over the depredations of New Labour.

The SLP recently picked up significant support in the former Labour stronghold of Ogmere in the February by-election, receiving over six per cent of the vote while the Socialist Alliance scraped one per cent. In last year's general election, we gave critical support to the SLP which drew a crude class line in its refusal to call for a vote to Labour. But Scargill's model is also Old Labour. The SLP share the insular conception that the Russian Bolshevik Party is not an appropriate model for Britain.

The SLP, while raising supportable demands such as for troops out of Northern Ireland, has its own share of what Lenin termed "the baseness and vileness of social chauvinism". Thus the SLP supports import controls on foreign coal and oil—which is quintessential Labour reformism. Protectionist poison fuels national chauvinism and racism, pitting workers of dif-

ferent countries against each other when what's needed is international class struggle across national borders. Moreover, such policies of trade war pave the way for shooting wars.

Scargill led the most militant trade union struggle in Western Europe in decades. The bitter year-long miners strike galvanised support not only from a broad section of workers within Britain, but also from minority communities, gay activists, Irish Republicans, and workers throughout the world who saw in the miners struggle a powerful reflection of their own impulse to fight against the depredations of Thatcher and her cohorts. But Scargill would not go over the heads of the Labour Party and the sabotaging "left" bureaucrats in the powerful allied unions. The political chain of loyalty to Labourism made it impossible for the left reformist NUM leadership to open this breach. We fought for a "fighting Triple Alliance" of railworkers, dockers and miners, explaining that such united action would have effectively meant a general strike, which would go beyond simple trade union struggle and pose the question of which class shall rule.

Today, reacting to the simmering anger at the base of strategic unions such as the RMT, union leaders like Bob Crow look decidedly better to the members than the standard sell-out bureaucrats, albeit they don't hold a candle to Scargill's leadership of the miners strike. Industrial militancy is desperately needed to defend the unions against Labour's attacks, however, as the miners strike showed, on its own it is not enough. As Leon Trotsky, a leader of the Russian Revolution wrote shortly before the 1926 General Strike, which union "lefts" such as Purcell and Hicks were crucially responsible for betraying:

"A spontaneous radicalization of the trade unions expressing a deep shift in the masses is in itself totally inadequate to liberate the working class from the leadership of Thomas and MacDonald. National bourgeois ideology in Britain presents a formidable force—not only in public opinion but also in established institutions. 'Radical' trade unionism will break itself again and again against this force as long as it is led by centrists who cannot draw the necessary conclusions."

—*Writings on Britain*, vol 2

Using the Russian Revolution and its Bolshevik leadership as our model, the Spartacist League is fighting to build a multiethnic internationalist revolutionary workers party. It will be built not simply by an organisational break but by a *political break* from Labourism. In the course of the battles ahead, we seek to win workers to the understanding that they need such a party fighting to unite workers struggles across the world to put an end to capitalist exploitation and racism once and for all. The social power in the strategic, integrated unions such as London Underground, rail and Post Office can and must be unleashed against Labour; a class-struggle leadership of the working class would appeal to all those oppressed and downtrodden: the starving pensioners, the victims of NHS cuts, the masses of unemployed inner-city youth, the impoverished students, the Asian and other minorities subjected to police terror and fascist attack. Under the leadership of the revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed, the capitalist rulers and their Labour lackeys could be swept out of power and consigned to the dustbin of history as they so richly deserve. Forward to a British section of a reformed Fourth International, party of international socialist revolution! ■



August 1984: Women's Support Groups march through London in support of striking miners.

ity tests" for Asian women entering Britain—all before the days of Tony Blair.

The Socialist Party says that the process of transforming Labour into an outright capitalist party has been completed, thus the unions should break the link with Labour. They campaign for a "new mass workers party". What is this party for? According to the SP: to "put pressure on Labour and give working-class people a real choice, a new socialist alternative must be built, to challenge big-business power and begin a socialist redistribution of wealth towards working-class people" (*Socialist*, 29 September 2000). The SP's "free the funds campaign" was proclaimed in a demonstration of SP supporters...outside Labour's headquarters, where they "shouted loud enough for New Labour's leaders to hear" (*Socialist*, 22 February). The very essence of social

Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cymru (*Guardian*, 19 February).

SA's position is to end subsidies to Labour Party candidates who refuse to support union policies and, as reported by *Weekly Worker* (21 March): "In no small measure thanks to the efforts of Matt Wrack of the Fire Brigades Union, the SA has pulled back from making the premature and adventurist call for the unions to 'break the link' with the Labour Party—a position previously voiced by the SWP." In other words, SA and its constituent parts remain wedded to the parliamentary cretinist framework whereby the social muscle of the organised working class is not unleashed in independent social struggle, but rather used as a bargaining chip in order to "pressure" various MPs and Parliament to grant some rights and gains within the framework of decrepit

Protest...

(Continued from page 12)

repression against immigrants, workers and minorities at home. From the police occupation of Asian neighbourhoods in Oldham and Bradford last year, to the detention of asylum seekers in virtual concentration camps, to the government whipping up a racist climate, or the routine racism of British immigration, whereby every non-white entering Britain by train, bus, boat or airplane is at high risk of being grabbed and interrogated by the police for no reason other than their skin colour, Labour has proven its ability to rule for racist British capitalism. We say: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

With the new Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the state now has the power to detain non-UK citizens suspected of "international terrorism" without trial. Individuals can be held in jail, tortured and accused of any crime the government chooses, and if appealing against the detention, will not be allowed to know the evidence against them. The Act is being used to intimidate, terrorise and deport non-whites (mostly Muslims). Since its introduction, dozens if not hundreds of Muslims have been detained or arrested as part of the "war on terrorism" and held without any evidence against them, as the case of Lofli Raissi shows. An Algerian pilot, he was arrested allegedly for helping train those who carried out the attacks on the World Trade Center and held for five months in a maximum security prison without a shred of evidence being presented against him.

The upsurge in anti-immigrant racism has not been limited to Britain. For example, in Ireland—where the bourgeoisie fell over itself to support the US/British bombing of Afghanistan despite its professed "neutrality"—the increased racist climate of the "war on terror" resulted in the murder of a Chinese student, Zhao Liu Tao, by a racist gang.

Increased state repression is very much a domestic reflection of the British and US-led imperialist slaughter in Afghanistan post-September 11. British forces continue carrying out bombing raids alongside their US counterparts and the British-led "stabilisation" force has been shooting down civilians in the streets of Kabul. Britain and the US, in addition to routine bombing of Iraq over the past few years, are building up further forces in the Gulf area in what may lead to a full-scale bombing and possible invasion of Iraq. We say: *All British/US/UN/NATO troops out of Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Near East! Imperialist hands off Iraq!*

Fahim's arrest proves what the Spartacist League said previously, "The Terrorism Act targets immigrant organisations in the first instance but this is the thin end of the wedge. Ultimately it is

aimed at all opponents of British imperialism, the entire workers movement and the left" (*Workers Hammer* no 176, Spring 2001). Indeed, under the new legislation, it would be illegal to support politically or financially movements such as the international struggle to free South Africa's former most famous anti-apartheid prisoner and first black President, Nelson Mandela. Today, a whole string of Muslim, Turkish, Palestinian and Irish groups have been banned, and the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), for example, is currently fighting in court for their right to remain a legal organisation. Any group fighting against capitalist tyranny both at home and abroad could indeed be met with similar repression. Indeed anyone could, like Fahim, be detained simply because of their support to the struggle of the Palestinian people.

The official explanatory notes to the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, provided by the government, leave no doubt as to whom the legislation will ultimately target:

"For example, the provisions of the Bill would allow for someone working in the DTLR [Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions] to pass confidential information on an individual working as a train driver if that person is known to be wanted by the police."

Sure enough, with strikes over pay and conditions taking place in South West Trains, Arriva and ScotRail, it is possible that an effective strike picket that stops production, transport or public services could be outlawed and activists detained, or worse, under the new legislation. After all, Blair didn't hesitate to mobilise the army and secret services against the tanker drivers, who threatened to bring the country to a halt in September 2000 in support of lower fuel taxes.

Workers certainly aren't buying Blair's "national unity" campaign in the wake of September 11, as seething anger at Blair's attacks on jobs and conditions and attempts to privatise virtually every remaining public service, is mounting. As we speak, postal workers, threatened with 30,000 redundancies, have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action; London Underground workers threatening to strike have just won a pay claim and council workers have called for a ballot for what would be their first national strike since 1979. With this new legislation, the Labour government aims to increase its arsenal of repression to quell any discontent from within the working class and the oppressed.

But the extent to which Blair & Co succeed in this purpose depends on the class struggle: whether the multiethnic working class is mobilised to defend itself, immigrants and minorities in the cross-hairs of this new legislation. An example of the kind of struggle that is needed is the demonstration initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League for Social Defense in the Bay Area, USA, in opposition to

Bradford, July 2001: Police protected fascist thugs, attacked Asian youth.



the so-called anti-terror laws, which brought out hundreds of trade unionists, blacks, immigrants and youth on 9 February.

Here in Britain, a number of people, including Fahim Ahmed, members/supporters of the CWU (Communication Workers Union) and of the Communist Party of Britain, the Editor of *Student Re-Present* and several candidates in the SOAS Student Union elections have already endorsed the SYG-initiated protest at SOAS with the call "Down with the Labour government's 'anti-terrorist' laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt!" We urge everyone who agrees with this call to participate in this common action, and—in the spirit of the united front—look forward to the open clash of the different political programmes of all those participating in this protest. This is in stark contrast to the various political blocs, coalitions, committees and alliances of the "Left" in this country, such as Stop the War, where different groups "unite" around a common, Labourite programme.

A militant action by students at SOAS against the Labour government's anti-immigrant witch hunt and increased state repression could encourage workers, who themselves face daily attacks on their livelihoods by the same government, to take up the defence of immigrant youth and workers, leading to broader action in the working class. Through our protest we also seek to explain to youth and students that the working class, ethnically integrated at the point of production, is the only class in society with the social power and historical interest to fight against Labour's anti-terrorism laws and anti-immigrant hysteria, and to lead the struggle to smash capitalism and establish a socialist society.

This forthright revolutionary perspective is in direct opposition to that being offered by the Labourite "left". The Stop the War Coalition—which includes groups like CND, Workers Power (WP), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Socialist Party (SP), Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), SLP and an assortment of "left" Labour and other pro-capitalist politicians—is leading opposition to the war in this country. The leaflet publicising their 2 March demonstration, called to "Stop US torture of prisoners", while raising no opposition to the random arrest, police brutality and torture meted out to immigrants and minorities in this country.

Their main call, the minimalist slogan "Stop the War", aims to maintain unity with bourgeois liberals and Labour "lefts" who stand for different means of achieving the aims of British imperialism, in order jointly to pressure the Labour government into "better policies". At the 2 March demonstration, George Galoway MP captured the mood of the protest organisers, saying the "axis of evil begins with George Bush in the White House in Washington and ends with Ariel

Sharon in Jerusalem" and, addressing Tony Blair, he pleaded "if you join us instead, we can stop the war in Iraq!" This was echoed in a Stop the War Coalition leaflet advertising the demonstration imploring: "Blair must stop backing Bush". But for British workers, immigrants, youth and leftists, the main enemy is not Washington, but the British capitalist rulers and their Labour government in London. Stop the War's appeals to Blair "not to back Bush" conveniently alibi the crimes of the Labour government (which groups like the SWP and Workers Power helped put in power) in the pursuit of British imperialism's own interests.

Imperialism is not a set of policies, it is a decaying system of exploitation and oppression of which horrors like the bombing of Afghanistan and the targeting of asylum seekers, immigrants, minorities and anti-capitalist youth are an integral part. For us Marxists, imperialism cannot be reformed, but must be replaced by a socialist society. This is obviously not the perspective of the Stop the War Coalition. While British troops continue their imperialist aggression in Afghanistan, it has not raised any call for the withdrawal of British troops! Thus they attempt to keep the growing anger and opposition to the government firmly within the confines of "democratic" British capitalism, thereby representing an obstacle to mobilising the working class and all those opposed to British imperialism against the Labour government and the system it defends.

The SLP Youth, while *in words* opposing the perspective of pressuring Labour, stating in the latest issue of *Spark*, "We in the SLP will leave all the 'influencing' to the social democratic sell-outs, the reformist revisionists and the Trotskyite [sic] factions of the Socialist Alliance", have *in deeds* officially joined the very same "social-democratic sell-outs" in the Stop the War Coalition, including having a member on its Steering Committee, which organises the "influencing" of the Labour government. The SLP Youth's political unity with forces such as Stop the War, which stand in the way of the fight against capitalism as well as any anti-terror legislation, vitiates the claim that they "aim to abolish this system and replace it with socialism". That they attempt to equate Trotskyism with the anti-communist, Labourite politics of organisations such as the SWP, WP and the AWL, is nothing but a reflection of their inability to deal with the political criticisms we of the Trotskyist SYG level against them.

The SYG fights to win youth and students to the side of the working class and the necessity of building a multiethnic revolutionary internationalist party that can break the working class from Labourism and lead it to power, laying the material basis for a society in which racism, oppression, exploitation and war do not exist. Join us! ■

**"We endorse a united front protest with the following demands:
Anti-terrorist laws target immigrants, minorities, the working class and
the left! Down with the Labour government's anti-terrorist laws and
anti-immigrant witch hunt!"**

Initiated by the Spartacus Youth Group

Endorsers of the 13 March 2002 mobilisation:

Fahim Ahmed, SLP Youth NEC member*

Anadolu Halkkültür Merkezi, London

Betty Cottingham & Bob Cottingham, Greater London Pensioners Association*

Dr Graham Dyer, Economics Department, SOAS*

H Hoque, Editor of *Student Re-Present*

International Bolshevik Tendency

Joe Kelly, Young Communist League*

Sal Khadr, Candidate for Sports Officer, SOAS*

Abraham Ogunlana, CWU*

R Sinclair, UCATT*

Spartacist League/Britain

*Organisational affiliation for identification purposes only.

Spartacus Youth Group-initiated campus protest

“Anti-terrorist” laws target immigrants, minorities, workers, the left! Down with Labour’s “anti-terrorist” laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt!

We reprint below the Spartacus Youth Group (SYG) leaflet put out as part of mobilising for the SYG-initiated united-front protest on 13 March at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) around the demands: “Anti-terrorist laws target immigrants, minorities, the working class and the left!” and “Down with the Labour government’s

Young Spartacus

anti-terrorist laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt!” The SYG distributed hundreds of leaflets and raised the protest in various campus society meetings. Among the endorsers of the protest were: Fahim Ahmed, Socialist Labour Party (SLP) Youth NEC member, detained and tortured under the Labour government’s vicious Terrorism Act; the Turkish organisation Anadolu Halkkültür Merkezi; the editor of an Asian campus publication, *Student Re-Present*; Joe Kelly of the Young Communist League in a personal capacity and Ron Sinclair, a regional organiser for UCATT. Particularly given the multi-national composition of the student body at SOAS, the protest met with enthusiastic support from many students, some of whom took stacks of leaflets in order to get the word out. At its height, some 40 were on hand to listen to the speeches given at the protest.

The SYG-initiated protest polarised the campus politically, both during the building of the rally, as well as on the day itself. Our forthright opposition to the call for intervention by the blood-drenched troops of British imperialism to “defend” the Palestinians against Zionist terror—the suicidal programme of the Palestinian nationalists of the PLO—resulted in a boycott of the protest by the leadership of the campus Palestinian Society. Placards carried by the SYG at the protest pro-



March 13: Spartacus Youth Group initiated protest at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies.

Young Spartacus

claimed: Defend the Palestinian people! Remember Sabra and Shatila—No Reliance on the UN! We called for workers revolutions throughout the region, for a socialist federation of the Near East. We also carried placards reading: “Trotskyists hailed Red Army against CIA-backed, woman-hating Afghan reactionaries” and “Away with the veil! For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!” which sent elements of the anti-woman Islamist milieu on campus, including some connected with the Palestinian Society, into an anti-communist frenzy.

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) had initially said they would speak at the protest, but decided on the day and at the last minute that they would not, following an argument with an SYG member about the policies of Castro’s bureaucratic leadership of the Cuban deformed workers state and the programme of “socialism in one country”. This Stalinist perversion of communism has led Castro & Co to invite the Pope of counterrevolution to Cuba and poses a deadly danger to the defence and extension of the gains of the Cuban Revolution. In any event, on the basis of their professed agreement with our protest against the Labour government’s “anti-terrorist” laws and anti-immigrant witch hunt, the comrades of the RCG were more than welcome to put forward their political views in counterposition to our own. Unfortunately, they chose to avoid the open clash of political programmes, and unity in struggle against the common class enemy.

The majority of the self-styled “socialist” organisations beholden to Labourite politics refused outright to support the protest, including the Socialist Workers Party, Workers Power and its youth group, Revolution, as well as the Socialist Party. The hostility of these deeply opportunist groups was based on the fact that the protest was called by communists in opposition to the racist repression by the Labour government which they helped put in power and now seek to

“pressure”. As the SYG speaker at the protest made clear:

“The extent of the government’s attacks depends on how much class struggle is present to fight them and that is what we look to. What is the obstacle to mobilising the working class in defence of all the oppressed in society? The main obstacle is that in this country for 100 years we’ve had a Labour Party, the other obstacle is the perspective that is put forward by left groups looking to ‘Her Majesty’s Parliament’, pressuring Labour MPs for a solution to attacks on all the oppressed in this country.

“There are many socialists in this country, people who call themselves socialists, who despite all these attacks on the oppressed still have the perspective of pressuring the Labour government. In fact a number of groups have refused to participate in this demonstration today in direct proportion with how close they are to the Labour Party....

“British imperialism is not a policy that can be changed; Blair cannot be pressured to be kinder to workers and minorities. For us imperialism is a system that must be replaced by a socialist society where all those who work, who produce the wealth of this country, must rule!”

Although SLP Youth leader Fahim Ahmed’s detention had sparked the SYG’s call for a united-front protest and he endorsed as well as addressed the demonstration, explaining what had happened to him while “detained” by the authorities, the response of the SLP leadership was one of stonewalling and/or indifference. Nor was it the case that the SLP had itself mobilised any public protest against the escalating attacks of the Labour government, including against two of its own youth members! Despite the SLP’s significant support within sections of the trade union movement, not least reflecting its correct refusal to give electoral support to Blair’s New Labour in the last general elections, the fact was that, faced with a vile Labour government attack on its own members, the SLP preferred silence to joining revolutionary Trotskyist youth in a united-front protest action.

Last and least, the International Bol-

shevik Tendency turned up on the day, decided to endorse at the last minute and spoke. The BT spokesman failed to mention in his brief remarks that the BT had called for a vote to Labour by the back door during the General Election through their support to the Socialist Alliance, the chosen vehicle of the Labourite left in Britain for getting out the vote for Labour. A spokesman for the Spartacist League reminded the assembled of the record of these “United Kingdom socialists”.

The following leaflet was used to help build this exemplary action in defence of minorities and leftists, workers and immigrants against the onslaught of Labour government repression.

On 19 December 2001, Fahim Ahmed, a member of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) Youth, was viciously detained by Special Branch cops on his way back from the large trade-union and anti-capitalist demonstrations held in Brussels on 13 and 14 December, arrested, and held for 17 hours under the Terrorism Act 2000. He was searched, interrogated about his political work, and tortured during forcible attempts at taking his fingerprints. Fahim has now been told that there would be no charges against him. Another SLP Youth member was also detained and released in December without charge. We in the Spartacus Youth Group say: *Down with the Labour government’s anti-terrorist legislation and anti-immigrant witch hunt! Hands off leftist youth, immigrants and minorities! An injury to one is an injury to all! Come out and protest outside SOAS, on 13 March, 12 noon!*

Fahim’s treatment is typical of the brutal harassment to which immigrants and minorities are subjected daily in Britain. While the Labour government has seized on September 11 to augment massively its repressive powers, it didn’t need the attack on the World Trade Center to introduce anti-terror legislation, which has been used for decades against Irish republicans, or to dish out vicious

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Fahim Ahmed of Socialist Labour Party Youth addressing rally.