



## Down with occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq! Imperialist troops out of Pakistan, Central Asia!

# Obama, Brown escalate war in Afghanistan



ISAF photo



Reuters

The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard no 931, 27 February 2009, newspaper of the Spartacist League/US.

True to his campaign promise to step up the US/British/NATO war in Afghanistan, President Barack Obama announced on 17 February that he was reinforcing the US occupation force with an additional 17,000 troops, bringing the total number of NATO troops to 85,000. Of these reinforcements 10,000 are destined for the Helmand province, joining the over 8000 British Army soldiers currently ravaging the area.

British imperialism has also been increasing the number of its troops on the ground in Afghanistan. By reducing the British troop numbers in southern Iraq—leaving a smaller contingent to train and watch over the new Iraqi army, and, of course, letting the Iraqis take the brunt of the casualties—Gordon Brown can send over 1500 regular troops and scores of the infamous killers from the SAS into Afghanistan.

While moving troops from the quagmire of Iraq to Afghanistan the British-imperialists go so far as to proclaim Iraq a “success”! When he was still deputy commanding general of the British Army in Iraq, Lieutenant-General John Cooper bragged that “Basra is back on its feet” and that the British will “leave southern Iraq in a better position” (*Guardian*, 2 March). After ravaging Iraq for 18 years, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths of its citizens either by bombs, communal violence or starvation, and destroying



AP/Peter Macdiarmid

most of the country’s infrastructure, the imperialists boast of bringing “democracy” and peace.

Long before the inception of the current occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, Westminster has continually peddled the myth that British imperialism has been a force for peace around the world, particularly in Northern Ireland. Lieutenant-General Cooper attributed the “success” of Iraq to the recent troop “surge” by the British and US armies, stating: “Surges work. We saw that in Northern Ireland in 1972 and with the way the Awakening [Sahwa, a Sunni militia] removed support for al-Qaida.” On Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972, British paratroopers killed 13 Catholic civilians in cold blood—that is the true nature of British imperialism.

Indeed, few corners of the planet have not suffered under the British bour-

geoisie’s “vision of peace”. From the bloody subjugation of India and the horrors of partition, to the centuries-long occupation of Ireland, British imperialism’s history is a catalogue of immense human suffering for the many and untold wealth and luxury for the few. Having undergone a long decline, and been reduced to a decrepit and indeed bankrupt third-rate imperialist power, British imperialism’s world role today is reduced to slavish allegiance to US imperialism, on whom Britain depends to protect its vast wealth and interests abroad. In particular the British Army’s most valued contribution is its “expertise” in counterinsurgency obtained during almost four decades of subjugation of the oppressed Catholics in Northern Ireland. The Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR), which is currently operating in Northern Ireland and has been active in Iraq and Afghanistan,

**British troops in Helmand, Afghanistan, December 2008 (top left). 15 February funeral for victims of US missile attack in Pakistan’s North Waziristan region, near Afghan border (top right). Brown and Obama in Downing Street, July 2008 (left).**

was part of the operation which led to the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by the police in London in July 2005. We demand: All British troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland!

### Imperialists extend war into Pakistan

Meanwhile, since taking over as Commander-in-Chief of US imperialism, Obama has ordered at least four separate bombing attacks on Pakistani villages by remotely piloted drones, killing over 50 people.

US air attacks in Pakistan—often with the approval of the Pakistani military-backed regime—have inflamed anger among the Pakistani population and exposed that country’s rulers as impotent lackeys of the US imperialist overlords. That anger boiled over when Democrat Dianne Feinstein let slip in a public Senate hearing that US drone attacks were launched from a secret base inside Pakistan. According to the *New York Times* (23 February), “more than 70 United States military advisers and technical specialists are secretly working in Pakistan to help its armed forces battle Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the country’s lawless tribal areas”.

Since August, the Pakistani military, under intense pressure from Washington to curb the growing power of the Taliban and its allies, has been waging a brutal terror campaign in the rugged tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. Entire villages have been razed in “search and clearance operations”, creating more than a quarter of a million refugees. The terror has only driven

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## On "crimes without victims"

Dear SLB,

Good article on Labour's crackdown on prostitution ["Down with Labour's crackdown on prostitution!" (*Workers Hammer* no 205, Winter 2008-2009)]. Very interesting. But... "we Marxists regard [prostitution] as a 'crime without a victim', like drug use, gambling, pornography, homosexual sex and 'statutory rape'?"

Somewhat describing those activities as any sort of "crime" doesn't seem right. What about pleasure? They don't feel like crimes while you're doing them.

Comradely,  
Ann W  
Washington, DC

### WH replies:

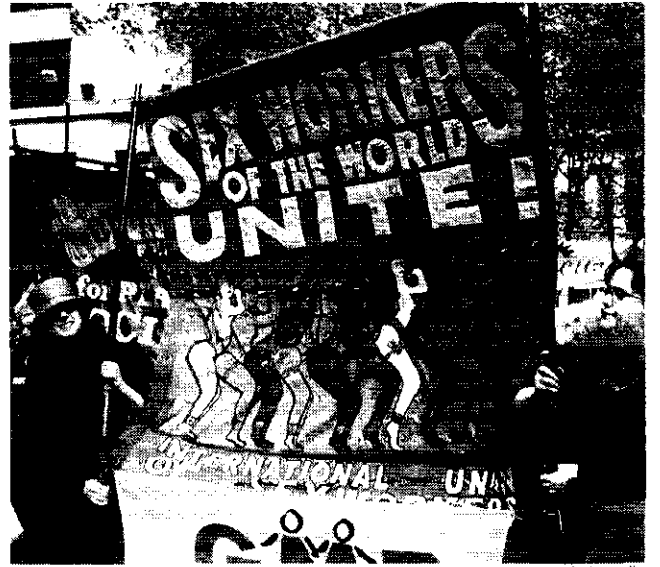
We welcome Ann's thoughtful letter. The sentence she quotes from our article reads in full: "We are for

the decriminalisation of prostitution which we Marxists regard as a 'crime without a victim', like drug use, gambling, pornography, homosexual sex and 'statutory rape'—activities that are generally illegal or heavily regulated under capitalist law." The term "crimes without victims" is commonly used by those, including ourselves, who oppose criminalisation of activities which injure no one but are deemed crimes by the capitalist state and punished accordingly. Legal penalties and vicious prejudice towards homosexuality, for one example, in many countries of the world can mean not only prosecution and imprisonment but also violent attacks and murder.

Our use of quotation marks enclosing the term "crimes without victims" is meant to indicate that, as Ann says, these are not crimes at all in the eyes of Marxists (or indeed anyone not in the grip of religion

and bourgeois morality). We oppose state intervention in people's private lives, as well as moral crusades and witch hunts such as the Labour government's crackdown on prostitution, which are aimed at reinforcing bourgeois morality and bolstering the state's repressive powers.

And "what about pleasure" indeed? Ultimately, to remove the material basis for the moral straightjacket will take socialist revolution establishing proletarian rule internationally. Then, as to private pursuits, as long as there's effective mutual consent between participants, one can say in the words of Billie



Sex workers organised in GMB union demonstrate for rights for prostitutes at London Mayday 2003.

Holiday: "I never hurt nobody but myself and that's nobody's business but my own."



TROTSKY

### The heroic 1984-85 miners strike

On the 25th anniversary of the year-long miners strike which began in March 1984, we reprint an excerpt from the article we published at the conclusion of that great battle. The Spartacist League intervened actively and fought to spread the strike to other unions, particularly the dockers and rail workers. The defeat of the miners strike, as a result of the betrayals of old Labour, emboldened Thatcher. Her policy of decimating the proletariat

through massive job losses in manufacturing industry was continued by New Labour.

She had her courts, her cops, her press, her billions of pounds, but it still took Maggie Thatcher a solid year to beat back the miners. And when she finally forced them back, after twelve long and bitter months, they *marched* to the pit gates, heads high, banners unfurled. The strike has been defeated, but the NUM has not been broken....

In the final analysis, it was not the cops and courts that defeated the NUM; it was the fifth column in labour's ranks. Norm Willis and Neil Kinnock opposed this strike from the first day to the last; now they'll try to tell us class struggle doesn't pay. And from the TUC 'lefts' who could have shut down the country and achieved a historic victory for the working class, there came plenty of hot air speeches and even more backroom sabotage....

The NUM leadership under Arthur Scargill took this strike about as far as it could go within a perspective of militant trade union reformism, and still it lost. Why? Because militancy alone is not enough. From day one it was clear that the NUM was up against the full power of the capitalist state. What was needed was a party of revolutionary activists rooted in the trade unions which fought tooth and nail to mobilise other unions in strike action alongside the NUM. But all Arthur Scargill had was the Labour Party, and it would rather see the NUM dead than organise to take on the bosses' state in struggle.

The problem with Scargill, put simply, is that he is not a revolutionary. *The key lesson of this strike is the burning need to forge a revolutionary workers party so that the next battle can end in victory.*

—"Miners defiant in defeat", *Workers Hammer* no 67, March 1985



LENIN

## Corrections on Tibet

The article "Counterrevolutionary riots in Tibet" in *Workers Hammer* no 202 (Spring 2008) stated, "The recent opening of the Lhasa-Qinghai railway, *connecting Tibet to China*, has led to economic development and an improvement of living standards" (emphasis added). This implies that **Tibet is not a part of China**; we should have said, "connecting Tibet to the rest of China". In the same article we also wrote:

"During the misnamed 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' that began in the mid 1960s, in which Mao mobilised millions of student youth to buttress his position in an intra-bureaucratic factional feud, Mao subjected the Tibetans to fierce Great Han chauvinism. Tibetan language and native dress were proscribed. Much of what had been at the core of Tibetan culture was simply smashed up and destroyed, although with the beneficial side effect of driving monks into actual labour."

This passage feeds into a widespread distortion promoted by the Dalai Lama camp and the imperialists that during the Cultural Revolution Mao mobilised Han student youth to "smash up and destroy" much of what had been at the core of Tibetan culture. But it was mostly Tibetan youth who destroyed many Buddhist relics and palaces. Wang Lixiong, in his very thoughtful article, "Reflections

on Tibet" (*New Left Review*, March-April 2002), points out:

"The truth is that, because of poor transportation and the huge distances involved, only a limited number of Han Red Guards actually reached Tibet. Even if some of them did participate in pulling down the temples, their action could only have been symbolic. Hundreds of shrines were scattered in villages, pastures and on rugged mountainsides: no one would have been capable of destroying them without the participation of the local people. Furthermore, most of the Red Guards who did reach the TAR [Tibet Autonomous Region] were Tibetan students, returning from universities elsewhere....

"Surely these actions are evidence that, once they realized they could control their own fate, the Tibetan peasantry, in an unequivocally liberating gesture, cast off the spectre of the afterlife that had hung over them for so long and forcefully asserted that they would rather be men in this life than souls in the next."

The Cultural Revolution inflicted tremendous human and economic damage on Tibet, as it did everywhere in the People's Republic of China. It was, in fact, anti-culture, including that of Han Chinese as well as Western art and music. At the same time, there was indeed Han chauvinism. The Tibetan language and native dress—as was the case with all minority nationalities—were attacked during the Cultural Revolution.

# WORKERS HAMMER 4

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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EDITOR: Eibhlín McDonald  
PRODUCTION MANAGER: James Palmer  
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Mick Connor

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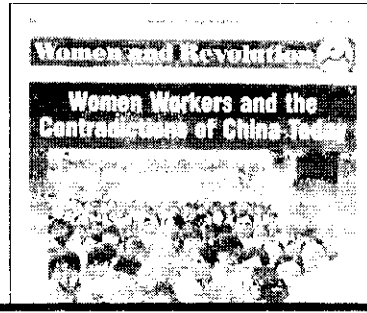
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# British troops out of Northern Ireland now!

# Defend Irish Republicans

# against state repression!

The Orange state in Northern Ireland has unleashed a wave of repression against Republicans in the aftermath of the Real IRA's killing in March of two British soldiers in Massereene British Army base in Antrim and the killing of a police officer in Craigavon by the Continuity IRA. These attacks by IRA dissidents on state forces came in the midst of a public row in which police chief Sir Hugh Orde was forced to admit that the British Army's "Special Reconnaissance Regiment" (SRR) had been deployed to crack down on IRA dissidents.

Even prior to these killings there had been a massive increase in state repression against Republicans, which targets the whole Catholic population: the last quarter of 2008 saw a **245 per cent** increase in the number of people stopped and searched by police. Now the police are conducting sweeping raids and roundups in Catholic areas, which have led to riots in Craigavon and Belfast. A Catholic bar in North Belfast was attacked with a pipe bomb and a Catholic primary school in the same area was daubed with Loyalist graffiti. According to the *Derry Journal*, Irish nationalist dissidents fear for their lives. One said: "It is only a matter of time before one of us is taken out by the Brits or some branch of their so-called security agencies. It is always a possibility but it seems more likely now" (*Derry Journal*, 16 March). Among those arrested are prominent Republicans Declan and Dominic McGlinchey (Junior) as well as Colin Duffy who has now joined others on hunger strike. **Release the detainees! Down with Orange state repression!**

The killings of two British soldiers and a cop were met with obscenely hypocritical declarations against "terrorism", not least from the British Labour government which is part of the world's biggest force for terrorism as seen in the brutal occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. British imperialism's murderous record in Northern Ireland includes the killing of 13 Catholic demonstrators on Bloody Sunday in 1972 and countless deaths in collusion with the Loyalist death squads.

Obscenely Sinn Fein, which for many years was subject to repression by British armed forces and those of the Orange state, joined the denunciations of the IRA dissidents. Gerry Adams condemned the shootings as an attack on the "peace process". In fact the aftermath of the shootings shows that the **only** significant change brought about by the "peace process" is the disarmament of the IRA — something decades of state repression by the British military failed to do—in exchange for "power sharing" between Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionists (DUP) in Stormont, the historic seat of Orange-supremacist government in the province. This imperialist-brokered "peace" deal is premised on the continued op-

pression of the Catholic minority under the heel of the sectarian Orange state. The **fundamental** nature of that state as created by the British at the time of partition remains unchanged. It is today

have not disarmed. In May 2007, Sinn Fein agreed that its representatives would sit on the new Policing Board, absurdly claiming that they would ensure "the PSNI are publicly held to

revolutionary workers party, and replaced with a new state power of the working class. Coming from the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Sinn Fein, the pledge to hold the PSNI "to account" is a whitewash of the anti-Catholic nature of the Orange statelet. To underline the fact that little has changed, when Orde called in the SRR as part of a major crackdown on Irish nationalists, he didn't bother to inform the Policing Board.

From the point of view of the working class, the killings of these British military personnel and a Northern Ireland cop are not criminal acts. However, in most such terrorist acts, innocent civilians are among those killed or maimed. Among those injured in the shooting were two workers delivering pizza to the army barracks, one of whom was a Polish immigrant. The obscene claim by the Real IRA that both workers were "collaborators" with the British shows the reactionary (and racist) logic of nationalism, which purports to represent its "own" people and writes off all "other" people as the enemy. This outlook frequently leads to acts of indiscriminate violence against the working people.

We stand for the military defence of the Irish nationalist organisations in their conflicts with the British Army, the Northern Ireland state forces and Loyalist paramilitary groups. At the same time, we oppose and condemn communalist attacks by the Irish nationalist forces on the Protestant population as well as indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in Britain and in Northern Ireland, such as the Omagh bombing in 1998. These indiscriminate actions are indeed crimes against the working class of these islands. Politically our programme is counterposed to the terrorism that is carried out in the service of the nationalist programme which **cuts across** the class unity of the workers in the struggle against their common enemy: the capitalist class.

Our perspective requires the internationalist unity of the working class throughout the British Isles in a struggle against British imperialism, the Irish clericalist state and the Orange state. We fight to eliminate all forms of national oppression, from a proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist perspective. Thus we call for British troops out of Northern Ireland as an integral part of our programme for an Irish workers republic within a federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

## The dead end of nationalism

Today, disillusionment among Irish nationalists with the disbandment of the IRA in favour of power-sharing in Stormont is running high. The *Sunday Times* quotes Richard O'Rawe, a former IRA member imprisoned with Bobby Sands (who died on hunger strike in 1981) saying he would "not have joined

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Martin McGuinness (top right) backed Northern Ireland police chief Sir Hugh Orde (top left) as police carry out raids on Catholic homes in Bellaghy.

what it always has been: **a heavily militarised, anti-Catholic, police state.**

Although the British Army no longer patrols the streets, having reduced their presence in August 2007, some 5000 British troops remain there as back-up for the heavily-armed Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI, the renamed RUC), while the Loyalist paramilitaries

account" (*An Phoblacht*, 17 May 2007). Police accountability is a myth also frequently peddled by reformists. In Northern Ireland as elsewhere, the capitalist state is the executive arm of the ruling class and cannot be made accountable to the working class and oppressed. It must be shattered in the course of workers revolution, led by a



Dublin, January 2007: protest at Sinn Fein conference which voted to support the PSNI.



# Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 1)

increasing numbers of people into the arms of the fundamentalists and the Pakistani government has repeatedly been forced to accept "truce" agreements, resulting in the creation of what are essentially fundamentalist mini-states that are now the focus of US drone bombing attacks.

According to the *New York Times* (21 February), the bombing raids ordered by Obama inside Pakistan have "expanded" the policy introduced last year by George Bush. The attacks ordered by Bush targeted what Washington claimed were "safe havens" in Pakistan for Taliban and Al Qaeda forces fighting US troops in Afghanistan. The attacks ordered by Obama on 14 and 16 February for the first time targeted camps run by Baitullah Mehsud. He is a fundamentalist leader accused of attacks against Pakistani security forces and political leaders but who "has played less of a direct role in attacks on American troops". In other words, the US imperialists are now beginning to intervene militarily in Pakistan to support their client regime against fundamentalists seeking its removal. The client itself, meanwhile, alternates between terror and capitulation in dealing with the forces to whose destruction the American government is so committed. The bulk of the Pakistani army remains in the eastern part of the country, arrayed against Pakistan's perennial main enemy (and fellow nuclear-armed state) India, locked together in intractable conflict over Kashmir.

In taking their Afghan war further afield, the imperialists may be making the worst of a bad situation. A recent article in *Newsweek* (9 February) observes that for the imperialist forces "the situation in Afghanistan is bad and getting worse" and asks: "So why not just get out?" The answer given is that, in the resulting power struggle, "the winning side would likely be the one backed by Pakistan, which may end up being the Taliban — just as it was in the last civil war".

During the presidential election, candidate Obama distinguished himself from Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain by insisting that he would not shy away from intervening in Pakistan to chase down Taliban leaders. In office, Obama has not rescinded an order signed last July by Bush authorising ground raids into Pakistan without prior approval by that country's government. The *Washington Post* (4 February) reported that Obama officials have decided that "Afghanistan and Pakistan are to be treated as a single theater of war" (they are calling it "Af-Pak"). If Obama and Brown are moving towards full-scale military intervention in Pakistan, with its large area, mountainous terrain and large, ethnically diverse and fractious population, the US and British rulers will find themselves with a far greater mess on their hands than the military quagmires inherited from Bush and Blair.

The arrogant US and British imperialists seem undeterred in their ambitions by the unwillingness of the other NATO countries thus far to commit any additional troops to the Afghanistan occupation. And underlining their evident conviction that any number of perceived enemies can be targeted simultaneously, Washington and London have not ceased to threaten Iran over its nuclear programme. It could not be clearer that, in the context of such

threats, Iran needs nuclear weapons to deter an imperialist attack.

The escalation of the US/British-led war in Afghanistan comes as the military situation in that country is rapidly spiralling out of the imperialists' control. A December report by the International Council on Security and Development, a London-based think tank, reported that the Taliban "now holds a permanent presence in 72 percent of Afghanistan" and "are closing a noose around" Kabul. On 11 February, Taliban gunmen and suicide bombers attacked the Justice Ministry and two other government buildings in the capital, killing at least 20 people. A conservative US military analyst at the Center for Strategic

gunmen in Lahore.

Fundamentalist forces in Pakistan pose an increasing threat to the vital supply line that carries more than three-quarters of the provisions for US/NATO forces in landlocked Afghanistan. That route runs more than 700 miles from the port of Karachi, north to Peshawar and then through the Khyber Pass, a critical gateway since the time of Alexander the Great. Attacks on truck convoys and the bombing of a key bridge have turned the stretch of road from Peshawar to the Khyber Pass into a deathtrap. Meanwhile, the Obama administration is scrambling to come up with an alternative to the crucial US air base in Kyrgyzstan, after that coun-



Above: School in Pakistan's Swat Valley reduced to rubble by Islamic militants in January. More than 140 girls' schools have been destroyed in recent months. Below: 12 February protest against Taliban in Lahore, Pakistan.



and International Studies wrote (*Nation* online, 10 October 2008): "We currently are losing", adding "We face a crisis in the field — right now."

Meanwhile in Pakistan, fundamentalists opposed to the US-backed regime have in the past several months dramatically extended their reach to more developed regions beyond the western tribal areas. Over 140 girls' schools have been blown up or burned down in the North West Frontier Province. In September 2008 a suicide bomb attack demolished the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, killing more than 50 people. Less than 100 miles from Islamabad, in the Swat valley, a relatively developed area of the North West Frontier Province that was once a leading tourist attraction and site of a ski resort, months of clashes between security forces and fundamentalists resulted in yet another "truce" recently in which the government accepted the imposition of Islamic law in the region. Early this month eight people were killed and others injured in an attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team by masked

gunmen in Lahore. Within hours of being granted a hefty aid package by Russia, the US ordered the base to be closed within six months.

Obama took office pledging to draw down US troop levels in Iraq in order to pursue what a significant portion of the US and indeed British bourgeoisie sees as more strategic aims, including the occupation of Afghanistan. A major consideration behind this policy is the encirclement of China. Ultimately, the imperialists aim to restore capitalist rule in the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, and for this they have a two-pronged strategy: military pressure combined with capitalist economic penetration. It is vital for the international proletariat to stand for the unconditional military defence of China and those other countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown: Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

## Only socialist revolution can end imperialist war

In the lead-up to the 2001 and 2003 invasions, the Spartacist League/Britain,

section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), stood for the military defence of Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist attack without giving any political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the bloody capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. We underlined that every victory for the imperialists in their military adventures encourages more predatory wars; every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed the world over. Today, we call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British, US and NATO troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia!

The bombings in Afghanistan and the devastation of Iraq have gone hand in hand with the capitalist rulers' onslaught against the working class and a huge increase in racist attacks in Britain, especially against Muslims. The increase in troop numbers in Afghanistan and the escalation into Pakistan by the new US administration and Gordon Brown's Labour government takes place as the economies holding up the imperialists' military powers are undergoing a meltdown. We have stressed from the beginning that the chief means of defending neocolonial Afghanistan and Iraq against the overwhelming military might of American and British forces is international working-class struggle, especially in the imperialist centres.

During the recent US election campaign, the reformist left on both sides of the Atlantic embraced a perspective of "anybody but Bush", which meant barely pretending to care that candidate Obama promised continued imperialist depredations overseas, and, upon his election, they rejoiced. "The Stop the War Coalition is delighted that Barack Obama has won the US Presidential elections", proclaimed its website (5 November 2008), while the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) declared the event "a momentous achievement in a country with a long history of entrenched and vicious racism" (*Socialist Worker*, 8 November 2008). The American affiliate of the Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative, said that Obama's election "could be a spark that helps ignite a new movement to fight for better conditions among African-Americans" (socialistparty.org.uk, 12 November 2008). Throughout the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, the above organisations have begged the Labour government to "break with Bush", reflecting bourgeois concern about the damage to British imperialism's image abroad. Their support for Obama's election victory is consistent with the fact that his presidency offers a much-needed facelift for US imperialism.

Now with Obama carrying out his election promise for a military "surge" into Afghanistan, the Stop the War Coalition (StWC) declares this to be "a terrible disappointment" and the SWP's Lindsey German, convener of the StWC, urges the British government "not to follow Washington's lead but to set an example and bring the troops out now" (stopwar.org.uk, 18 February). Peddling such craven illusions in bloody British imperialism underscores the very purpose of the "anti-war movement", which has never been to struggle on behalf of the victims of British or US imperialism at home and abroad, but to forge a political alliance with supposedly "anti-war" sections of the bourgeoisie, ie to seek a solution to imperialist depravity within the confines of the capitalist

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# "War on terror" targets immigrants, workers

## Binyam Mohamed, British imperialism and torture

Since the time of his arrest in Pakistan in April 2002, Binyam Mohamed has been chained, beaten, slashed with scalpels, sleep deprived, held for weeks on end in darkness and hauled from one prison to the next, from Pakistan to Morocco to Afghanistan. Caged at Guantánamo Bay for the past four years, he was finally released and arrived back in Britain on 23 February. There has never been a shred of evidence against him of any crime. Mohamed's US military-appointed lawyer, Lieutenant Colonel Yvonne Bradley, told a press conference that his treatment "would make waterboarding seem like child's play" (*Guardian Unlimited*, 11 February).

As Mohamed courageously exposes his torture at the hands of the CIA and their stooges and pursues legal actions in British and US courts, the complicity of the British state in his "rendition" and torture is being dragged into the light of day. "We unreservedly condemn any practice of 'extraordinary rendition' to torture. We have always condemned torture", proclaimed the Foreign Office (*Independent*, 10 March), while the whole world can observe the bloody fingerprints of MI5 all over the story of Binyam Mohamed. A special UN report issued on 9 March named Britain as among countries that have aided the US "through providing intelligence or seizing suspects" (*BBC News* online, 10 March). The report says, "UK intelligence personnel, for instance, conducted or witnessed just over 2,000 interviews in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and Iraq" (*independent.co.uk*, 10 March).

Having fled Ethiopia in 1992 as a teenager, Mohamed sought asylum in Britain and was eventually granted legal right to remain. He was swept up by the US "anti-terror" frenzy while travelling in Pakistan a few months after 9/11 and interrogated by MI5 there before being "rendered" by the CIA to a prison in Morocco. During 18 months there he was tortured by his US-instructed interrogators who repeatedly slashed his chest and genitals with a scalpel. The Americans were bent on extracting Mohamed's confession to a web of "terror" crimes including a nuclear "dirty bomb" plot. They claimed he conspired in the bomb plot with Jose Padilla, a US citizen who was kidnapped in 2002 by the US government, framed and tortured as a "terror suspect". "They had fed me enough through their questions for me to make up what they wanted to hear", Mohamed told the *Mail on Sunday* (8 March). "I confessed to it all." In January 2004 he was again moved, to the CIA prison in Kabul, Afghanistan, where his tortures included being



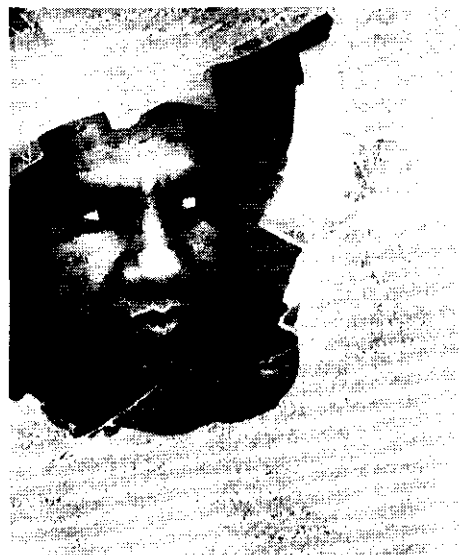
Lewis Whyld/AP

**23 February: Binyam Mohamed arriving in London from Guantánamo Bay after seven years of confinement and torture.**

chained, able to neither stand fully nor sit, for eight days continuously.

"The very worst moment came when I realised in Morocco that the people who were torturing me were receiving questions and materials from British intelligence", said Mohamed (*Guardian Unlimited*, 23 February). According to his attorneys from the civil rights law group Reprieve, in one memo disclosed in US

release of 42 secret documents necessary to Mohamed's *habeas corpus* case (challenging his detention) in the courts. According to the *Guardian* website (16 February), Miliband's office "solicited a letter from the US state department to back up his claim that if the evidence was disclosed, Washington might stop sharing intelligence with Britain. The claim persuaded the high



Toby Madden/Independent

**March 2005 protest (right) against planned extradition of Babar Ahmad, victim of "anti-terror" witch hunt.**

**Labour's "war on terror" fuels attacks on Muslims: East London mosque had windows broken following attack by racists, July 2005.**

court hearings, MI5 told the CIA: "We believe that our knowledge of the UK scene may provide contextual background useful during any continuing interview process" (*Guardian*, 9 March). It continues, "This will place the detainee under more direct pressure and would seem to be the most effective way of obtaining intelligence on Mohamed's activities/plans concerning the UK." The government's attempt to cover up British support to torture failed when it was exposed that foreign secretary David Miliband blocked the

court judges to suppress what they called 'powerful evidence' relating to Mohamed's ill-treatment."

Revelations of British participation in torture predictably elicit "shocked" calls for investigations from all quarters. Behind such calls lies panic that British "democracy" is besmirched by the torture revelations. Just as the Obama regime is charged by the US bourgeoisie with the task of restoring the myth of mass-murdering American imperialism as upholder of "human rights", elements of the British bour-

geoisie need the moral credibility of British imperialism whitewashed, and fast. A spokesman for Human Rights Watch, speaking after British defence secretary John Hutton publicly admitted that Britain has handed over "terror suspects" in Iraq to the US, said: "The drip, drip of allegations and admissions does huge damage to the international reputation of the UK and the ability of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan to say they are fighting on the side of justice and truth" (*Guardian*, 27 February).

But from the Indian subcontinent to its African colonies, from the occupation of Palestine after World War I to Iraq today, British imperialism, under both Tory and Labour governments, has always used torture, an indispensable tool for the subjugation of a people. In Northern Ireland, Republican prisoners interned without trial were routinely tortured by the RUC: hooded, beaten, forced to run obstacle courses over broken glass. Thousands died from starvation and torture in British concentration camps during the suppression of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s. As Seumas Milne wrote in the *Guardian* (27 January 2005), British soldiers "nailed the limbs of Kikuyu guerrillas [in Kenya] to crossroads posts and had themselves photographed with the heads of Malayan 'terrorists' in a war that cost



Workers Hammer

10,000 lives... Britain's empire was built on vast ethnic cleansing, enslavement, enforced racial hierarchy, land theft and merciless exploitation".

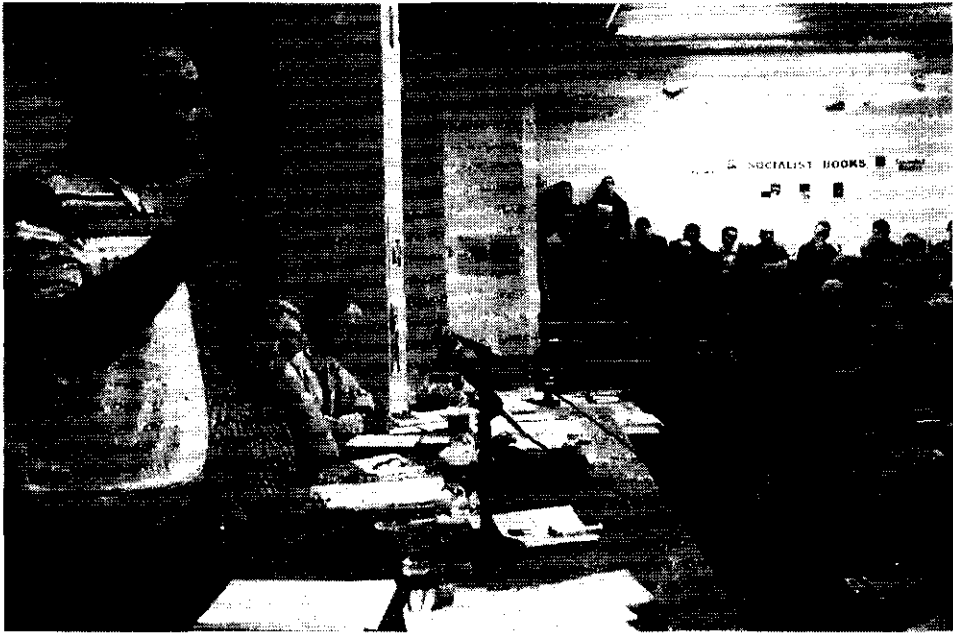
In Germany between 1945 and 1947, Britain ran a secret torture camp at Bad Nenndorf where suspected communists as well as Nazi and SS prisoners were beaten, starved and frozen—evidence of which was buried in government files until 2005 when the *Guardian* secured a report on the torture centre under the Freedom of Information Act.

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### For a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!

Down with protectionist poison!

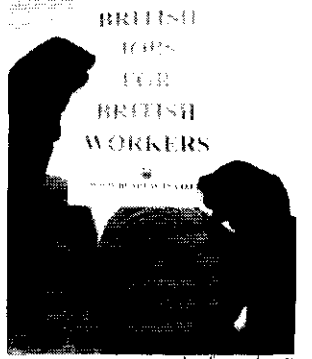
# Labourites whitewash chauvinist strikes



Paul Mattsson



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Socialist Party's Keith Gibson (left), member of strike committee, was instrumental in building reactionary strikes. Above: Protest at Staythorpe, February, awash with Union Jacks and slogans against immigrant workers. Right: Reactionary "British jobs for British workers" slogan.

With the workers of the world confronting the most severe world economic crisis since the Great Depression, a wave of virulently chauvinist strikes against foreign workers has swept building sites at Britain's oil refineries and power stations. Demanding "British jobs for British workers", a slogan long associated with the fascists, these protests are playing the bosses' game — lining workers up with Gordon Brown and the British capitalist rulers against immigrant workers.

The reactionary character of the protests is blindingly obvious from the settlement reached at Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire in February. Brokered by the arbitration service ACAS, the deal included a pledge by management that 102 jobs that were previously expected to go to Italian workers will now be offered to British workers. This shameful deal is hailed by Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party as a victory and held up as a model for the Staythorpe power station in Nottinghamshire, where protests against Spanish and Polish workers are ongoing. Meanwhile protests against Polish workers have taken place at the Isle of Grain in Kent. The outcome of the Lindsey strikes confirms our statement that: "The strikes were not intended to secure more jobs or indeed any gains for the working class as a whole, nor to defend existing jobs. They were about redividing the existing pool of jobs according to the nationality of the workers" (see article in *Workers Vanguard* no 930, 13 February, reprinted on page 12).

This "British jobs" crusade is so alien to the interests of the multiethnic working class that it has been supported by the xenophobic, anti-working-class gutter press. Thus the 16 February London *Evening Standard* whipped up a storm against foreign-born workers who are registered as "local" and working on building sites for the 2012 Olympics, fulminating that: "The *Evening Standard* found people from various eastern European backgrounds employed [at] the Stratford site, as well as workers of Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese origin". During the Lindsey

strike, Italian workers living in fear of their lives were told to go back to their own country by racist strikers. Meanwhile the government plans to augment their racist immigration laws, imposing even more restrictions on the rights of immigrants.

This month marks the 25th anniversary of the start of the miners strike of 1984-85, and the contrast between today's construction strikes and the miners heroic battle couldn't be clearer. The striking miners came up against the full force of the capitalist state and are still being vilified by the capitalist press to this day. At the same time the embattled miners became a tribune of the oppressed layers in society: women of the coalfields, Britain's oppressed black and Asian minorities as well as gay and lesbian organisations backed the strike against the hated Thatcher government. In contrast to the vile nationalism prevalent at Lindsey and Staythorpe, the miners strike inspired magnificent displays of proletarian internationalism from workers across national lines: French trade unions as well as workers in Ireland, elsewhere in Europe, South

Africa and the Soviet Union sent material aid to the miners and their families.

In the face of today's worldwide assault on jobs, the urgent need is to mobilise the strength of the trade unions in a class-struggle fight *against* the capitalist bosses, Brown's Labour government and *in opposition to* the trade union bureaucracy. A genuine struggle to defend the interests of the multiethnic working class would demand a shorter working week with no loss in pay and a sliding scale of wages and hours. This would be counterposed to the current campaign pitting British workers against foreign workers and fuelling anti-immigrant racism. Scandalously Derek Simpson, co-leader of the Unite union, has backed this campaign, spewing poisonous rhetoric while posing beside the Union Jack, the racist emblem of the Empire in colonial times, symbol of the subjugation of Catholics in Northern Ireland today and of the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. As we said in our last issue:

"It is vitally necessary for the unions to fight against racism. Labour's vaunted 'flexible economy' is heavily dependent on

immigrant workers, who work for pitiful wages and face a climate of racist hostility. The government's 'war on terror' has led to increased racism against Muslims, who are concentrated among the poorest section of the working class. Particularly in the context of recession, attacks on immigrant workers are increasing. The union Unite recently protested at the decision of subcontractors working at Staythorpe power station near Newark to employ only overseas workers on the job while refusing to hire any local workers. A demonstration outside the power station evoked Gordon Brown's call at the GMB union conference in 2007 for 'British workers for British jobs' — a slogan associated with the fascists. We vehemently oppose such divide-and-rule ploys, pitting workers of different countries against each other. We say the trade unions must fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*"

— *Workers Hammer* no 205, Winter 2008-2009

Far from organising a defence of jobs, about the *only* thing the trade union bureaucracy is offering the working class is an endless stream of chauvinist rhetoric about British jobs, but *no* class-struggle fight against the capitalist order that plunged the world into this dire economic state. With the world's largest carmakers announcing tens of thousands of redundancies around the world, the Unite bureaucracy in Britain called on the government "to support UK manufacturing and the UK car sector" ([tgwu.org.uk](http://tgwu.org.uk)). When German car manufacturer BMW summarily fired 850 workers in Cowley in February, Unite co-leader Tony Woodley declared his loyalty to British capitalism saying: "I not only speak for my members but I think for Britain, when I ask for a meeting with your company" ([unitetheunion.com](http://unitetheunion.com)).

Until such time as workers revolution rips it from their hands, British industry belongs to the bloodsucking capitalists. The working class has no country! Nationalist protectionism doesn't save a single job, as former Rover workers sold down the river by



Socialism Today

Taaffeite journal *Socialism Today* denying presence of anti-immigrant racism...with photo showing placard from behind!



Woodley can tell you. When BMW announced in 2000 it was pulling out of Rover in Birmingham, Woodley led a chauvinist anti-German demonstration with signs such as: "We won two world wars — let's win the third".

### Socialist Party wallows in social chauvinism

It is not surprising that Taaffe's Socialist Party—which is notorious for adapting to backward consciousness—has assumed the pre-eminent role as spokesman for the reactionary protests, peddling the lying claim that these strikes are *not* anti-immigrant. Socialist Party member Keith Gibson, who was part of the strike committee of the Lindsey strikes, claimed at a 13 February London public meeting that: "We turned this dispute from where the media wanted to go—looking at a racist agenda—to what we put forward, through discussions with other Socialist Party members, a clear class agenda" (*Socialist*, 19-25 February). Taaffe claims that the slogan "British jobs for British workers" was "a minor feature of the strike" (*Socialism Today*, March 2009) while a report on the Lindsey strike in the *Socialist* (5-11 February) says the BNP "have been bounced off from this strike". This is hardly the point. *Why did the BNP support the strike?* The Socialist Party bears its share of responsibility for leading a chauvinist campaign that has the enthusiastic support of the fascist BNP!

The Socialist Party's unique contribution to the Lindsey strike was to *replace* the demand "British jobs for British workers" with the demand for: "Union controlled registering of unemployed and locally skilled union members, with nominating rights as work becomes available". "Local union members" in this instance means "British workers". As our article on the strike noted, other Labourite left groups such as Workers Power and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) managed to take a correct position of opposition to the reactionary strikes. But for the SWP this was short-lived. Having correctly stated at the beginning that "these strikes are based around the wrong slogans and target the wrong people" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 January) the SWP has been circulating a petition which is as disingenuous as it is opportunist. On the one hand it declares:

"The slogan 'British jobs for British workers' that has come to prominence around the dispute can only lead to deep divisions inside working class communi-

ties. The slogan, coined by Gordon Brown in his 2007 speech to Labour's conference, is being taken up by the right wing press and the Nazi BNP. These are forces that have always been bitterly hostile to the trade union movement."

However it goes on to say: "We support the demands of the Lindsey Oil Refinery strike committee" ("Unite to fight for jobs petition" at petitiononline.com).

This petition is a grovelling capitulation to the Socialist Party and to the trade union bureaucracy. The real, anti-foreigner meaning of the demands of the Lindsey strikers for preferential hiring of "local" union members is unmistakable in the Unite newsletter's coverage of the strikes. The Spring 2009 issue approvingly quotes Steven Bright, an unemployed erector from Newark, who "believes foreign workers will send money home rather than spending it in the local community" and demands that the government must "stop foreign labour coming in to do work that we are qualified and available to do". The same article quotes Simpson saying "it will be a disgrace if UK workers are shut out from building their own power stations".

We insist that the concern of the trade union movement must not be *whom* the building contractors hire, but *at what rate of pay and under what conditions they work*. A genuine strike would undercut attempts by the bosses to "level down" the wages and working conditions of all workers by playing off one nationality against the other by demanding: **Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work!**

A strike for jobs for all in construction—ie including immigrant labour—would of necessity be *counterposed* to the current campaign, whose true face was shown at a Staythorpe protest in Newark, Nottinghamshire on 24 February in which at least one demonstrator was wearing a Union Jack and a section of the demonstrators chanted "foreigners out!". When a video of the demonstration appeared on YouTube the wretched Socialist Party was forced to admit the presence of racist elements, saying: "Disturbingly, a small minority of workers at the front of the march had chanted 'Foreigners out!'" ([socialist-party.org.uk](http://socialist-party.org.uk), 4 March). The Socialist Party does not claim that their members who were present uttered a peep of protest, much less tried to kick these thugs off the demonstration. It is notable that the petition being promoted by the SWP has been signed by prominent Labour "lefts" and trade union bureaucrats such as John McDonnell, Tony Woodley and Mark Serwotka, but *not* by Keith Gibson or any other prominent figure in the Socialist Party. This is presumably because of the petition's (mealy-mouthed) opposition to "British jobs for British workers".



Top: Ford Dagenham TGWU banner carried by black and Asian workers marching in support of 1984-85 miners strike. Mobilising social power of multiethnic working class is counterposed to protectionism. Below: Founding conference of Red International of Labour Unions, 1921. Multilingual banner reads "Workers of all countries, unite!".



Consistent opposition to these reactionary strikes requires a revolutionary internationalist programme and a perspective of mobilising the multiethnic working class in Britain in a struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the racist capitalist system. This is counterposed to the programme of the Socialist Party (and the SWP) whose "socialism" is merely old Labour's social-democratic programme based on a commitment to nationalised industry under capitalism while leaving the capitalist state intact. Labourite reformism is inherently protectionist, as can be seen starkly in today's cries for nationalisations to bail out "British" jobs and to minimise British capitalism's losses.

The working people in this country need a party that fights for their class interests, a workers party committed to sweeping away the bankrupt capitalist system through socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist order worldwide. We fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, part of a Leninist-Trotskyist international. Socialist revolution will establish a workers state, ruled not through parliament but by soviets (or workers councils) and will lay the basis for rationally planned economies based on production for need, not for profit. This in turn will allow for development of the productive forces so that poverty, scarcity and want will be eliminated, thus laying the basis for the creation of an egalitarian socialist society.

### For a Socialist United States of Europe!

The worldwide economic crisis has opened up deep divisions within the European Union (EU). This was evident

at the 1 March emergency summit at which Czech prime minister Mirek Topolánek, who currently holds the rotating EU presidency, was said to be fuming over French president Nicolas Sarkozy's proposal that in return for a government bailout, French car makers should shut down plants in Eastern Europe and produce in France. An article in the *Times* the day after the EU summit headlined: "New 'Iron Curtain' will split EU's rich and poor" claimed that "Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western leaders were told yesterday that five million jobs could be lost in the 'new' European Union countries of the East unless radical action were taken to bail them out" (*Times*, 2 March).

As proletarian internationalists we oppose the EU, an imperialist consortium designed to improve the competitiveness of the European imperialists against their American and Japanese rivals, while grinding the working classes in Europe, including by intensifying racism against its minority component. We also opposed the eastward expansion of the EU into the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe, which provided the European bourgeoisies with a vast supply of very cheap labour. At the same time we oppose work restrictions by Western European governments on workers from "new" EU member states.

The eastward expansion of the EU resulted from the capitalist counter-revolutions that swept Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992 creating massive unemployment and social immiseration within these countries and across the world as a

*continued on page 11*



Russian Militant tendency's newspaper *Rabochaya Demokratiya* boasts support for counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite rabble, "On the Barricades in Moscow...", "...And in Leningrad".

# Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 4)

system that gives rise to it.

The capitalist system cannot be pressured or reformed to work in the interest of human needs. The relentless drive for profits and spheres of influence by the rulers of the major capitalist powers necessarily results in neocolonial pillage and wars. Imperialist aggression and war are not "policies" that can be ended within the framework of capitalism—the entire system must be overturned! Only by wresting the means of production from the hands of the capitalist imperialist rulers and creating an international planned economy can the needs of the billions of toilers now consigned to hideous poverty begin to be met and the threat of war ended once and for all.

## Islamic reactionaries, the CIA and the Red Army in Afghanistan

Largely the creation of the Pakistani military and Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) as well as the American CIA, the Taliban and Al Qaeda are Frankenstein's monsters turned on their former masters. The US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, among others, armed, funded and trained reactionary *mujahedin* (holy warriors) to kill Soviet soldiers following the entry of the Red Army into Afghanistan in 1979 at the request of the modernising nationalist PDPA regime.

That war, in which imperialist-backed forces threatened the southern flank of the Soviet Union, posed an acid test for revolutionaries. The Soviet military intervention was one of the few genuinely progressive acts carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Red Army intervened on behalf of a regime

the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap." Today, Brzezinski is a key foreign policy adviser in the Obama administration.

The Soviet intervention was unambiguously progressive, underlining the Trotskyist understanding that despite its degeneration under a Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Soviet Union remained a workers state embodying historic gains of the October Revolution of 1917, centrally the planned economy and collectivised property. These were enormous gains, not least for women and the historically Muslim peoples of Soviet Central Asia, where conditions before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution had been as backward and benighted as in Afghanistan. For Afghanistan, which is not a nation but a patchwork of tribes and peoples, with its minuscule proletariat, progress would have to be brought in from the outside. The international Spartacist tendency, now the International Communist League, said: "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and called to extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples.

In stark contrast, the Socialist Party's forerunner the Militant tendency opposed the Soviet Red Army intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed Islamic reaction. Going even further, the SWP championed the *mujahedin* as "freedom fighters", criminally standing four-square with the imperialists. The 12 January 1980 issue of the SWP's *Socialist Worker* blared, "Troops Out of Afghanistan!"

When then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in a vain attempt to appease the imperialists, withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, we denounced this as a crime against the Afghan and Soviet peoples. That betrayal by the Kremlin bureaucracy opened the road to *mujahedin*



Friends of Afghanistan Society



**Afghan women militia volunteers mobilised against CIA-backed *mujahedin* cut-throats. Spartacists hailed Soviet intervention, called to extend gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples.**

January), Obama officials intend to "put more emphasis on waging war than on development" and "work with provincial leaders as an alternative to the central government". One provincial warlord who caught Obama's eye is Gul Agha Shirzai, the governor of Nangarhar Province. Shirzai ran Kandahar in the early 1990s during the bloody rule of the *mujahedin*, when that province first emerged as Afghanistan's opium capital. When then-candidate Obama visited Afghanistan last July, he snubbed Karzai (saying the president had not "gotten out of the bunker"), meeting first with Shirzai, who was later invited to the inauguration festivities.

## Pakistan and Afghanistan: reactionary legacy of colonialism

Imperialists and their ideological spokesmen are increasingly voicing fear that the turmoil in Pakistan's western regions could lead to the disintegration of Washington's client state. The *Guardian* (23 October 2008) expressed alarm at the "cycle of violence" that

"threatens the very fabric of Pakistan, an unstable nuclear-armed state that at times appears on the very brink of unravelling. Were that to happen the consequences both for the country and the region would be unthinkable".

The imperialists are indeed playing with a bomb that could easily blow up in their faces.

Pakistan, like India, is a prison house of peoples, a legacy of three centuries of British colonial "divide-and-rule" in the region. That policy culminated in the partition of the Indian subcontinent by the British imperialists under a Labour government in 1947, unleashing the forced migration of millions of poor Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs accompanied by communalist slaughter of indescribable savagery. During the partition, Punjab and Pakistan's North West Province were rent by murderous pogroms.

Pakistan's claim to constitute "one nation" of all Muslims masks the domination of the Punjabi ruling class over Baluchis, Pashtuns and other oppressed nationalities. The myth of "national unity" has been imposed through brutal repression carried out by the Pakistani military. For most of the years since Pakistan was created, it has been subjected to direct military rule. In addition, the borders arbitrarily drawn by the British imperialists and inherited by Pakistan deliberately cut across the ter-

ritory of virtually all the nationalities. The purpose was to undercut their power to revolt while creating a legacy of conflict that could be manipulated at will by the imperialists.

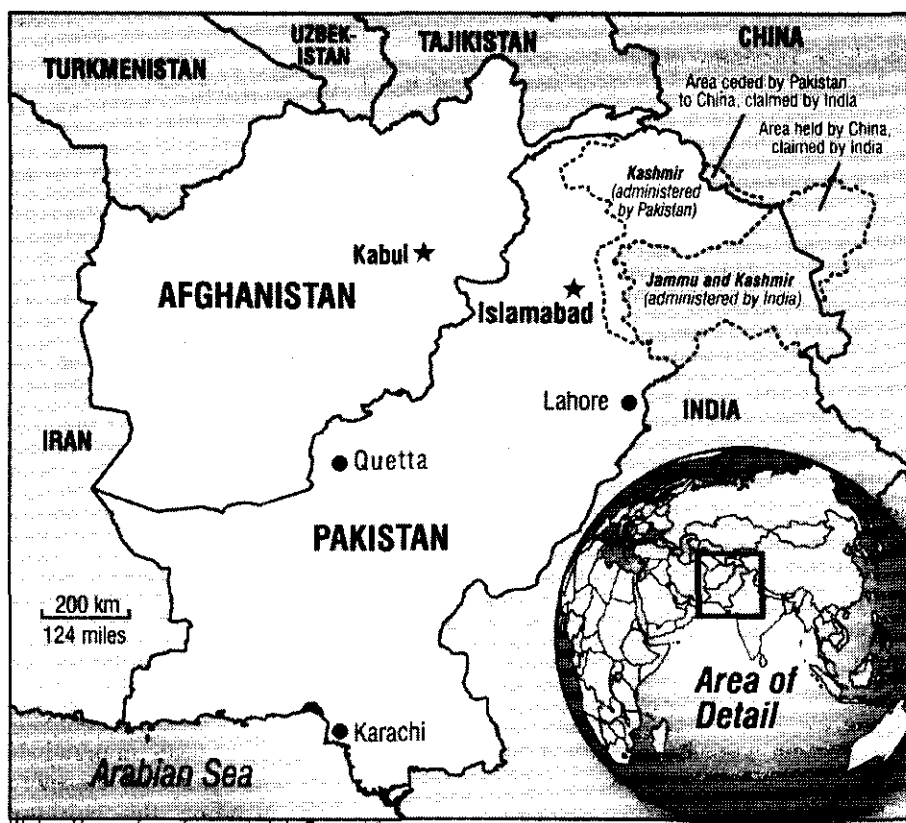
A prime example is the Pashtuns, who inhabit territory that today covers much of southern Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan. The border that divides them dates from 1893 when the British, smarting from the defeat of their second attempt to militarily subjugate Afghanistan, drew an arbitrary frontier through the mountains to demarcate Afghanistan as a buffer state between British India and tsarist Russia. The resulting Durand Line has been disputed by successive Afghan governments.

In turn, Islamabad has sought to use influence among Pashtun tribes to extend its influence in Afghanistan. According to Pakistani military doctrine this would provide "strategic depth" against the country's perennial foe, India. Today, amid the powers vying for influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, Pakistan and India are playing their own version of the "Great Game", the 19th-century jockeying for advantage in Afghanistan between agents of Britain and Russia. Last month India completed a \$1 billion highway in southwest Afghanistan linked to a highway in Iran, thus creating a route from the Indian Ocean to Kabul—and beyond it, to energy-rich Central Asia—that does not go through Pakistan. Islamabad worriedly views that project as "encirclement".

The high point of Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan came in 1996 when the Pashtun-based Taliban, with backing from the Pakistani ISI, drove the *mujahedin* regime out of Kabul. Five years later, when the Taliban was driven from power by US, British and other NATO forces following the September 11 bombings, Islamabad was forced into a contradictory posture of backing its imperialist patrons in Washington and their "war on terror", while seeking to maintain relations with fundamentalist forces ensconced in its western tribal regions. Just as the US imperialists' backing of bin Laden against Soviet forces in Afghanistan ultimately came back to haunt them, so Islamabad today finds itself trying to tame a monster it helped create.

Pakistan is an example of uneven and combined development, reflecting the impact of imperialist oppression and

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Workers Vanguard map (sources include Economist)

that sought to introduce minimal social reforms and faced a *jihad* (holy war) led by reactionary landlords, tribal chiefs and mullahs.

The US imperialists seized on the Red Army intervention as the pretext for their revived anti-Soviet crusade ("Cold War II"). As the CIA undertook its biggest covert operation ever, Afghanistan became the front line of the imperialists' relentless drive to destroy the Soviet Union. In 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to the Democratic Carter administration, boasted: "That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had

*hedin* rule in Afghanistan and prepared the ground for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state itself in 1991-92, a historic defeat for the proletariat and the oppressed around the world. In 1992, the CIA-backed *mujahedin* marched into Kabul, opening up four years of horrific rule under a shifting "coalition" of warring fundamentalist factions that brought the city to the point of famine and devastation. Many of the reactionary warlords who today control the provinces as flunkies of Washington are veterans of that brutal regime.

According to the *New York Times* (28



# Northern Ireland...

(Continued from page 3)

the IRA in the first place" if he had been told that power-sharing with the Unionists would be the outcome. "Who in their right minds would do a minute in jail for this?" Rawe pointedly asks (*Sunday Times*, 15 March). Such disillusionment has led some hardline nationalists to seek a solution by trying to re-ignite the military campaign that the IRA abandoned. Prior to the recent shootings, a 300lb bomb produced by IRA dissidents supposedly intended for another British Army base was found in Castlewella, Co Down in January.

Irish nationalist movements have always combined, in the words of the IRA, "the armalite and the ballot box", wielding armed struggle along with diplomatic manoeuvres and appeals to the "democratic" pretensions of the imperialists as pressure tactics. In the changed political landscape resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had acted as a counterweight to the imperialist powers, petty-bourgeois nationalist formations no longer have the diplomatic, military and financial means they once had and have been compelled to accept "negotiated solutions": the Oslo Accords in the case of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Good Friday Agreement in the case of the IRA.

When Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness, former IRA leader who is now deputy first minister in Stormont, stood shoulder to shoulder with Orde and condemned dissident Republicans as "traitors to the island of Ireland", it was aptly described as McGuinness's "Michael Collins moment". Collins led the mili-



Pat Finucane, murdered in 1989 by Loyalists colluding with state forces.

tary struggle against the British and signed the Treaty with Britain that led to the partition of Ireland. Upon taking over the administration of an independent capitalist Ireland in 1922, Collins ruthlessly suppressed the IRA dissidents of the time, executing many of those who continued the struggle against the Treaty and the new Irish "Free State". From Collins to McGuinness to the IRA dissidents of today, Irish nationalism has inevitably proven to be a dead end for the oppressed whose interests it claims to represent.

The partition of Ireland by British imperialism created the Northern Irish statelet as a reactionary move against the consolidation of an Irish bourgeois national state encompassing the entire island. Since then, the Protestant majority dominates over the Irish Catholic minority. However, the Irish nationalist

programme—upheld today by Sinn Féin and the dissidents, and previously by the "anti-Treaty" forces that went on to form the Fianna Fáil party—calls for reunifying, necessarily by force in the case of the Protestants, the six counties of Northern Ireland with the southern Catholic clericalist Irish bourgeois state. If achieved, this would simply be a reversal of the terms of oppression, leading to communalist slaughter and forced population transfers.

All nationalism has a genocidal logic, which is particularly acute when two different peoples interpenetrate on the same territory as is the case in Northern Ireland. In such situations, there is no democratic solution under capitalism to the contending democratic rights of national self-determination. While opposing all aspects of national oppression of the Catholic minority, we recognise that the conflicting claims can only be equitably resolved within the political framework of proletarian class rule, in which the capitalist drive for divide-and-rule of the working class in the service of profit has been eliminated.

We have consistently called for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British troops and we opposed the imperialist "peace" deal. In 1993 we stated: "Any imperialist 'deal' will be bloody and brutal and will necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either." Our article stated:

"The essential assumption, explicit or implicit, in all the 'peace' proposals being touted about is that the British Army, with its shoot-to-kill policy, will remain to police capitalist order, backed up by the bloodthirsty Loyalist thugs. The British imperialists played divide and rule in colonies like India and Palestine, and then on their way out sought to wreck these places by whipping up communalism. Today they adopt a racist and arrogant pretence that they are just trying to stop the fit for tat barbarities of the 'uncivilised Irish' of all hues. All of [then-leader of the Catholic SDLP] John Hume's initiatives, including the talks and proposals with Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, are based on the premise that British imperialism is somehow 'neutral'. All history and the graves of many Irish Catholics say otherwise."

-- *Workers Hammer* no 138, November/December 1993

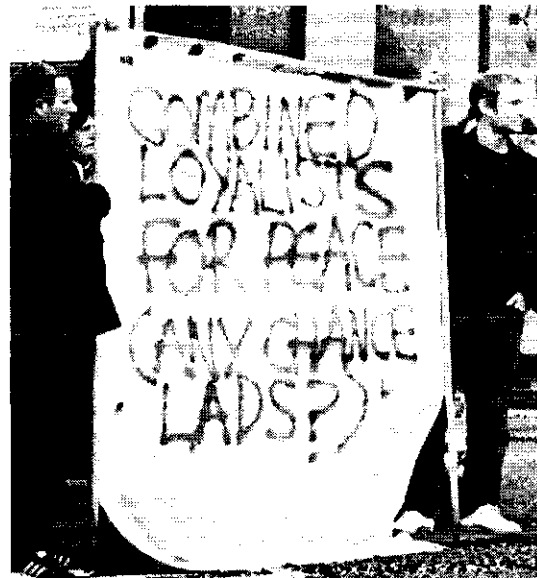
## Socialist Party: Union Jack "socialists"

While the Taaffeite Socialist Party in England was up to its neck in a reactionary crusade for "British jobs for British workers", its sister group the Socialist Party in Northern Ireland played an equally reactionary role, lining up behind British imperialism and the Orange state in whipping up a chauvinist frenzy against the "terrorism" of the Irish nationalists. On 11 March the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions called a pro-imperialist, anti-"terrorism" rally in which Loyalists, clergy and trade union bureaucrats united in condemning the Republican attacks on the army and PSNI. The Socialist Party was highly visible and distributed a leaflet titled "No More Killings!" (dated 11 March), which said: "The killings by the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA of two soldiers and a policeman should be roundly condemned by every section of the working class movement", adding that: "The killings in Antrim and Lurgan are a reactionary attempt to divert the attention of workers away from the class issues that bring people together by stirring up sectarian division."

This chauvinist organisation's idea of "bringing people together" is unity under the Union Jack—whether leading chauvinist anti-immigrant strikes in



Peter Muhly/AFP/Getty Images



Peter Muhly/AFP/Getty Images

**Belfast, 11 March: Socialist Party placards and leaflets were prominent at reactionary anti-Republican rally supported by Loyalists, clergy and trade union bureaucrats. No placards or banners opposing British imperialism or PSNI.**

England or pandering to Loyalists in Northern Ireland, such as former paramilitary killer Billy Hutchinson whom they hosted in their meetings in the 1990s. The leaflet said not one word against the British Army, either for its butchery in Iraq and Afghanistan or in Northern Ireland, which is hardly surprising given that the Socialist Party refuses to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Rather they view British imperialism as a force for "democracy".

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) also supported the pro-imperialist, anti-Republican rallies on 11 March. Addressing the Derry rally, the SWP's Eamonn McCann said:

"It's worth recalling that it was protests by ordinary people that gave the spur for the peace process that ended 30 years of armed conflict between the mainly Catholic Republicans, who want a united Ireland, and Protestant Unionists backed by the British state. Time and time again people took to the streets to push the process forward when establishment politicians were blocking it."

— *Socialist Worker*, 21 March

Indeed the likes of McCann and the trade union bureaucracy did mobilise the unions in Northern Ireland and peddled massive illusions in the imperialist "peace deal" because, like the Taaffeites, promoting British imperialism as a force for "democracy" is what their programme boils down to. Thus the SWP welcomed the British troops being sent to Ireland by a Labour government in 1969, obscenely declaring that: "The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969).

Britain's vaunted parliamentary "democracy" is the velvet glove to disguise

the mailed fist of the capitalist state—the army, police, courts and prisons whose purpose is to maintain the rule of capital. The capitalist rulers have long used Northern Ireland as the testing ground for domestic repression in Britain: Irish Catholics were indiscriminately targeted as "terrorist suspects" and subjected to the same treatment as Britain's Muslims today. Shoot-to-kill has been brought to the streets of London as seen in the brutal police execution of Brazilian immigrant Jean Charles de Menezes in July 2005.

The Orange state in Northern Ireland has always been a police state, obsessed with repression against Irish nationalists. From the horse's mouth, this is described by Sean Rayment, a former commander of the Close Observation Platoon (COP) of the Parachute Regiment—the regiment responsible for the slaying of innocent Catholics on Bloody Sunday—who says that in the 1990s:

"Around 13,000 soldiers, and an equivalent number of RUC officers, patrolled Ulster's cities, towns and villages, while a bewildering array of covert agencies secretly monitored the IRA. These covert agencies were collectively known as 'The Group' and consisted of the SAS; 14 Intelligence Company, a covert organisation which conducted close surveillance of senior IRA members; and the Force Research Unit, which ran a network of IRA informers. The military agencies also worked closely with the Special Branch's SAS-trained E4A teams. The Special Branch also ran their network of informers, as did MI5 which had a sizeable presence in the Province."

-- *Telegraph.co.uk*, 14 March

Little has changed today. The covert forces described above have been replaced by the SRR, a sinister outfit that was involved in the operation that led to the execution of de Menezes and has been active in covert operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today Britain's MI5 devotes a whopping 15 per cent of

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## Strikes...

(Continued from page 12)

What's needed is to mobilise the multi-ethnic working class **against** the Brown-led Labour government for jobs for **all**. This requires a political fight to replace the current union misleaders — the labour lieutenants of capital — with a class-struggle leadership. **Trade unions must oppose anti-immigrant racism! Down with protectionist poison!**

Much of the Labourite reformist left managed to take an elementary position of opposition to the reactionary strikes. In a 31 January statement, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) correctly noted that these strikes “are based around the wrong slogans and target the wrong people”, adding that “those who urge on these strikes are playing with fire”. Workers Power “unreservedly oppose” the strikes saying, “the strikers’ target is not their employers but 100 Italian and Portuguese workers” (*Workers Power*, February 2009). A leaflet (undated) issued by Gerry Downing, a member of the Socialist Fight organisation, says, “Socialist Fight (SF) unequivocally opposes the ‘wildcat’ strikes and their outcome because they were called on the reactionary basis of ‘British jobs for British workers’” and “it was on this xenophobic basis they were spread, with the assistance of the right wing media and on this basis they were tacitly endorsed by the entire Unite and GMB leaderships. And it was on this basis they were settled.”

But the Socialist Party, whose supporters were a key part of the strike leadership and which proposed the demands adopted by the strike committee, was up to its neck in this shameful campaign. The strike demands, while paying lip service for “All immigrant labour to be unionised”, do not defend job rights for foreign workers. They include the demand for “Union controlled registering of unemployed and locally skilled union members, with nominating rights as work becomes available”. In other words, jobs would be filled from “local” (ie, **British**) applicants. This is a version of “British jobs for British workers”. In contrast to a Leninist vanguard party that fights

against all manner of chauvinism, the Socialist Party is mired in it.

As part of the fight for a class-struggle leadership, the trade unions must oppose the “war on terror” and racism against immigrants and minorities. We oppose all the bourgeoisie’s anti-immigrant laws and regulations, including work restrictions on workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe. We demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! A class-struggle leadership in the unions would demand jobs for all, through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, and undertake a union organising drive to draw into their ranks all workers, including those in dangerous and low-paid jobs.

### Workers of the world unite!

In the face of world capitalist recession, protectionism is increasing. Thus Barack Obama included a “buy American” clause in his “rescue” package for American industry. For the bourgeoisie, “free trade” and protectionism are options they can debate, but for the proletariat, protectionism is poison. It is a classic means of channelling discontent over job losses into hostility towards foreign workers and immigrants while building illusions in the benevolence of our “own” capitalists. The global economic crisis has exacerbated tensions between capitalist governments within the EU who are jostling to “save” their own economy. The EU directive that allows contractors operating in other countries not to hire local workers has fuelled opposition to the EU among construction workers. Contrary to the trade union bureaucracy’s pledge that EU laws can be amended to serve the interests of workers, levelling down of wages and conditions for workers is part of the purpose of the EU. As revolutionary, proletarian internationalists, we oppose the EU, an imperialist consortium designed to improve their competitiveness against their American and Japanese rivals, at the expense of the working class in Europe, including its minority component. Our programme is for workers revolutions leading to a Socialist United States of Europe.

Our programme is completely counterposed to “little England” nationalist

opposition to the EU that is associated with old Labour reformism, to which the SWP, Workers Power and the Taaffeites are all wedded. Old Labour’s erstwhile claim to “socialism”, as upheld by former miners leader Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn — a commitment to nationalised industry under capitalism — is inherently protectionist. The extensive nationalisations of industry carried out under Clement Attlee’s Labour government in the postwar period had nothing to do with socialism; rather they were a “rescue package” for British industry which was in profound decline against its rivals.

The further expansion of the EU imperialist trade bloc into the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe provided the European bourgeoisie with a vast supply of very cheap skilled labour. This expansion was made possible by the series of capitalist counterrevolutions that swept across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992 creating massive unemployment and social immiseration. This historic defeat for the workers and oppressed was supported by the Socialist Party, SWP, Workers Power and sundry other reformists. In contrast, we Trotskyists of the International Communist League fought to mobilise the working class in defence of the gains that those states embodied.

Protectionism is doubly pernicious when directed at the People’s Republic of China, where Britain, the US, and other imperialist powers have had as a central goal the restoration of capitalist rule. The fact that capitalism was overthrown in China by the 1949 Revolution, leading to the building of a collectivised economy, represents a historic gain for the working class internationally. We continue to fight for the unconditional military defence of China against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution, and for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy and replace it with the rule of workers and peasants councils.

The workers movement has seen many examples of trade union solidarity against the capitalists’ attempts to use low-wage immigrant workers as a club against the unions. In Dublin in 2005,

workers throughout Ireland demonstrated against Irish Ferries — and in solidarity with immigrant workers — when the bosses tried to hire Eastern European workers at a fraction of Irish workers’ wages. Our comrades issued a leaflet calling for the power of the working class to be harnessed behind defence of immigrants, declaring: “Unions must organise immigrant workers! Full wages and benefits for immigrants!” Another example was the Heathrow strike in 2005 when, in response to the sacking of low-paid catering workers and replacing them with immigrants at even lower wages (which did **not** happen in the construction sites at power stations), the workforce at British Airways staged an immensely powerful wildcat strike that crippled BA’s international operation. But the trade union leadership under Tony Woodley snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by ending the strike without having obtained the reinstatement of the sacked workers.

As far back as 1866, under Karl Marx, the International Working Men’s Association prevented an attempt by London master tailors, who were big capitalists, to replace journeymen tailors in London by recruiting journeymen in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Marx wrote that the secretaries of the International “published in Belgian, French and Swiss newspapers a warning which was a complete success. The London masters’ manoeuvre was foiled; they had to surrender and meet their workers’ just demands” (“A Warning”, 4 May 1866).

There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialised economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity and want. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, forged in opposition to Labourism, to overthrow the blood-soaked British capitalist order and replace it with working-class rule. Down with the reactionary “United Kingdom”! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■

## Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 8)

capitalist exploitation superimposed on an underdeveloped and backward society. In Pakistan, women are subjected to *pardah* (seclusion) and jailed or stoned to death for adultery and similar “crimes” under Islamic law or murdered in “honour killings” by their own families.

At the same time, Pakistan has a significant working class that has shown a determination to struggle. In the past years, there have been major strikes in several industries. In 2008, tens of

thousands of workers at the Pakistan Telecommunication Company struck for several weeks, gaining a 35 per cent pay raise and regularising contract workers. There have also been strikes by textile, sugar mill and transport workers. Reportedly, thousands of health care workers struck throughout Pakistani-occupied Kashmir in mid-February.

The task of liberating all the exploited and oppressed of the Indian subcontinent demands the forging of Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties dedicated to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisies in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the estab-

lishment of a socialist federation of South Asia. Crucial to such a proletarian-internationalist perspective is the fight for workers political revolution in the Chinese deformed workers state, a fight that must be premised on the unconditional military defence of China against imperialism and domes-

tic counterrevolution. Only an internationalist perspective, uniting social struggle on the subcontinent with the fight for workers revolution in Britain, the US, and other advanced capitalist countries, can open the door to real social liberation for the impoverished masses. ■

### Contact Addresses

**Spartacist League/Britain**  
PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY  
Tel: 020 7281 5504  
workershammer@compuserve.com

**Spartacist Group Ireland**  
PO Box 2944, Dublin 6, Ireland  
**International Communist League**  
Box 7429 GPO, New York,  
New York 10116, USA

Visit the ICL website: [www.spartacist.org](http://www.spartacist.org)

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## Northern Ireland...

(Continued from page 9)

its resources to Northern Ireland, against Republicans. The notorious collusion between state forces and the Loyalist killers remains untouched: no police officer will be prosecuted for the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane who was gunned down in his home in 1989 by Loyalists, working with state forces. Such collusion is not some aberration, but *par for the course* for “democratic” imperialism. One year after the Good Friday Agreement was signed

Rosemary Nelson, a prominent Catholic lawyer who reported to the UN that she received death threats from the RUC, was murdered by a Loyalist bomb in 1999.

More than a decade after the ballyhoo about the “peace deal” Northern Ireland society is more segregated than it was before the army was sent there four decades ago and is riven by over 40 “peace” walls. Catholics remain oppressed, and the SWP reports that: “Some 60 percent of applicants for social housing in Northern Ireland are Catholic and 40 percent Protestant. Yet 60 percent of allocations go to Protestants and only 40 percent to Catholics” (*Socialist Worker*, 21 March).

The task of revolutionaries is to seek opportunities for a proletarian perspective in Ireland and to transcend the religious divide that has been fostered by the bourgeoisie in its efforts to increase capitalist exploitation. This means mobilising the whole working class—Protestant and Catholic—to fight for an end to discrimination against the oppressed Catholics, in jobs, housing and education. We advance a programme of transitional demands based on what workers need, not what capitalism can afford. We fight for jobs for all; work-sharing on full pay and a sliding scale of wages and hours. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, these demands point to the need to transcend

the framework of capitalist rule, to break out of the problem of scarcity which inevitably pits workers against each other. A planned economy, organised under working-class rule, exercised through soviets (workers councils), would regenerate the former industrial areas throughout the British Isles that have been turned into an economic wasteland by capitalism. To resolve the centuries-long oppression of Ireland and come to a voluntary arrangement with all, including the Protestant community, our goal is a workers republic in Ireland within a voluntary federation of socialist republics in the British Isles, led by a Leninist party. ■

## Torture...

(Continued from page 5)

Some of the subsequently released photos showed suspected communists whom the British tortured in their efforts to obtain information about Soviet military plans.

Another form of torture continues today within Britain against 15 Muslim men among those rounded up and interned as suspected “terrorists” after 9/11. They cannot legally be deported and in 2004 were ordered released from Belmarsh prison on “control orders”. Introducing her article “Besieged in Britain” (*Race & Class*, January 2009), Victoria Brittain describes their shattered lives:

“Held for years without charge, under restricted regimes of twelve to twenty-four hour curfews, with virtually no access to the wider world and kept in ignorance of the alleged evidence against them, the impact on them and their families has been devastating. Many had come to Britain as

refugees seeking a safe haven; some have been driven into madness, some have attempted suicide, some have left their families and returned voluntarily to regimes where they may face imprisonment and torture. The mental and physical health impacts on the men and their families, of an inhumanity that beggars belief, masked under the bureaucracy of ‘control orders’, ‘SIAC deportation bail’ and torturous legal processes, is here unveiled.”

### Trade unions must oppose the “war on terror”

The capitalist state—the core of which is cops, courts, prisons and armed forces—exists to maintain the property and profits of the bourgeoisie through the suppression of the working class and oppressed. Stigmatising Muslims and immigrants as the “enemy within”, the Labour government has fuelled racism which divides and weakens the working class. In its “war on terror” the government has calculated it can get

away with massively augmenting the state’s machinery for repression, and in this it has so far been correct thanks to the cowardly chauvinist leaders of the trade unions. As the organised battalions of the proletariat, the trade unions have the social power to put some teeth into the fight against the racist “war on terror”. But their ability to fight is hampered by the Labourite trade union leaders whose loyalty to “democratic” British imperialism means they have signed on to the government’s witch hunt and uttered hardly a word, much less led any class struggle, against the gutting of hard won rights going back to the English Civil War.

Defence of minorities against grinding racist oppression must go forward with and as part of the struggles of the organised working class, or both struggles lose ground. And Muslims and other minorities are not just helpless victims, they are an integral part of the

working class. The power of the multiethnic proletariat was clear in the August 2005 strike which paralysed Heathrow Airport when British Airways ground crews struck in defence of sacked catering workers, mainly Sikh women. But the TGWU leadership rode to the rescue of the bosses and called off the wildcat strike in deference to the anti-union laws, and the catering workers remained sacked.

The key to unchaining the power of the working class is the forging of a multiethnic revolutionary workers party built through hard political combat against Labourism—a party whose purpose is to take the class forward to power through socialist revolution. Revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order worldwide alone can lay the material basis for ending torture, racist oppression, exploitation and war. **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Down with the racist “war on terror”!** ■

## Whitewash...

(Continued from page 7)

whole. We Trotskyists of the International Communist League fought to mobilise the working class in defence of the gains that those states embodied. This historic defeat for the workers and oppressed was supported by the SWP and the Socialist Party. The Taaffeites were on Yeltsin’s barricades: the front-page headlines of their newspaper *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991) trumpeted: “Where We Were”, “On the Barricades in Moscow” “And in Leningrad” (see *Workers Vanguard* no 828, 11 June 2004).

The Taaffeites’ sordid role in the “British jobs” campaign has prompted Workers Power to quit the Taaffeite “Campaign for a New Workers Party” (CNWP). This is truly a “day late and a dollar short”. Workers Power walked out on 1 March when the majority voted for a Socialist Party motion hailing the Lindsey strike as a “victory for the working class”. Only then did it dawn on the hapless Workers Power that the CNWP “has become little more than a front for the SP and a conduit for its politics” (*Workers Power* online bulletin, 10 March).

The current “British jobs” campaign gives an accurate picture of what kind of “new workers party” the Taaffeites seek to build. But this is hardly news. The Taaffeites’ politics including support for counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and loyalty to “democratic” British imperialism and its police and prison guards, as well as social chauvinism, are integral to Labour reformism. This is a programme which Workers Power shares. Like the Taaffeites, Workers Power was present

on Yeltsin’s barricades of counterrevolution in Moscow in 1991. Prior to the 2006 split with most of its founding cadre who formed Permanent Revolution (which today shamelessly supports the “British jobs” strikes) Workers Power perennially supported Labour in elections, a tradition upheld by both wings after the split. Old Labour in government sent British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969 to reinforce the viciously anti-Catholic RUC and in the 1970s Labour introduced vile anti-immigrant measures in Britain. Upholding this tradition, the Socialist Party has for decades refused to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland.

In Britain, a revolutionary party can only be built through opposition to Labourite reformism, which has served to tie the working class to the capitalist exploiters for over a century. Tony Blair began the process of remoulding the Labour Party from what Lenin termed a “bourgeois workers party”. Labour today has gone some way towards becoming an openly bourgeois party and is moribund as a reformist party. Describing Blair’s transformation of Labour, Peter Taaffe claims that “leaders like Tony Blair in Britain and their social-democratic cousins in Europe and elsewhere” went over “lock, stock and barrel to the side of the bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism” (*Socialism Today*, March 2009).

Contrary to Taaffe, the *leaders* of the social-democratic parties went over “lock, stock and barrel” to the bourgeoisie at the outbreak of WWI in August 1914. The leaders of the social-democratic parties became what Lenin termed social chauvinist for lining up the working class behind their own

bourgeoisie. This is a fitting description of the Taaffeites today. Lenin fought intransigently to win the working-class base of these parties through a political *split* from the social-chauvinist camp in the workers movement, the camp of Labourism. He wrote: “**Opportunism and social-chauvinism have the same political content**, namely, class collaboration, repudiation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, repudiation of revolutionary action, unconditional acceptance of bourgeois legality, confidence in the bourgeoisie and lack of confidence in the proletariat. **Social-chauvinism is the direct continuation and consummation of British liberal-labour politics**” (*Opportunism and the*

Collapse of the Second International, 1916).

The ICL is dedicated to the task of reforging Trotsky’s Fourth International, the necessary instrument to fight for new October Revolutions, through intransigent struggle against social democracy. As the world today is again riven by an economic crisis, rivalries among competing imperialist powers are heating up. We insist that the proletariat must be imbued with the programme of international solidarity and struggle that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels inscribed on the banner of the communist movement more than 160 years ago: “Workers of the world, unite!” ■

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# WORKERS HAMMER 4

**Unions must defend immigrant workers!**

## Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!

The following article was first published in Workers Vanguard no 930, 13 February.

For over a week, thousands of construction workers at oil refineries and power plants across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland staged a series of strikes demanding “British jobs for British workers”. The strikes were not intended to secure more jobs or indeed any gains for the working class as a whole, nor to defend existing jobs. They were about redividing the existing pool of jobs according to the nationality of the workers. These reactionary strikes, pitting British workers against foreign workers and immigrants, are detrimental to the interests of the multiethnic working class in Britain and those of the workers of Europe as a whole. The main strike slogan, “British jobs for British workers”, long associated with the fascists, was recently affirmed by Labour prime minister Gordon Brown at the 2007 Labour Party conference. The strikes received gushing sympathy from the likes of the virulently anti-immigrant, anti-working-class *Daily Mail* and were actively supported by the fascist BNP who churned out racist garbage, including the claim that British workers were losing out to foreigners.

The strike wave centred on Lindsey refinery in Lincolnshire, owned by French oil giant Total. Part of a construction project was subcontracted to IREM, an Italian contractor, which brought in Italian and Portuguese workers, and did not hire any British workers. A similar situation exists at Staythorpe power station in Nottinghamshire where Spanish subcontractors brought in their own crews. According to reports of the settlement, over 100 “new” construction jobs have been created at Lindsey, earmarked for British workers. The real outcome however will reverberate against foreign and immigrant workers, not least on building sites such as the 2012 Olympic projects where over a third of the workers are immigrants and where in recent months some 200 Romanian workers were removed during a clampdown on “illegal” foreign labour. More broadly, the protectionist poison emanating from the strikes sends a chilling message to all immigrants and minorities, fuelling racism and reinforcing national divisions between workers in Britain and their class brothers in other European countries.

The responsibility for this social-chauvinist crusade lies with the Labourite leadership of the Unite and GMB trade unions, who embraced this patriotic crusade as naturally as they embraced Labour’s racist “war on ter-



Protectionist rally against foreign workers at Lindsey oil refinery, 30 January.

ror” that is directed against Muslims. Particular blame lies with Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party, which had a member on the strike committee and authored its key demands, while whitewashing its chauvinist character. Throughout what

85, to the sell-out of the Heathrow airport strike in 2005 in solidarity with over 600 Asian women who were sacked.

The bureaucracy’s claim that British workers are being “discriminated”

### Full union pay for all work!

the Socialist Party calls “one of the most significant strike waves in recent times”, Italian migrant workers have been holed up in a rusting barge in Grimsby, fearing for their lives, not without reason: according to the *Times* (31 January), 40 striking construction workers from Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire—visited the Italian workers to tell them to “go back to your own country”. Generalised insecurity and fear about job losses caused by the worldwide economic recession provide fertile ground for the kind of chauvinism that this strike wave has unleashed.

Trade union leaders have been cynically banging on about British workers being discriminated against. Derek Simpson, co-leader of the union Unite, addressed “the growing problem of UK workers being excluded from important engineering and construction projects” and demanded that “companies involved in engineering and construction projects give UK workers equal opportunities to build Britain’s infrastructure” (Unite statement, 30 January). The Labourite bureaucracy’s touching concern for “equal opportunities” for British workers stands in sharp contrast to their abject betrayal of class struggles by Britain’s multiethnic working class, from the Grunwick strike by Asian women in 1976 to the Labourites’ knifing of the great miners strike of 1984-

against by foreign contractors rests on a “posted” workers directive in European Union (EU) law, under which subcontractors can supply their “own” workers to work on short-term projects in other EU countries. No British workers were fired at either Lindsey or Staythorpe. Until the workers take power, we will not be in a position to worry about the ebbs and flows of labour migration or the world economy more generally. The bottom line for the trade union movement must not be *whom* the contractors hire, but at *what rate of pay and under what conditions they work*. The way to undercut attempts by the bosses to “level down” the wages and working conditions, including safety standards, of all workers, by playing off one nationality against the other, is for the unions to demand: **Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work!** This poses the need for international collaboration between construction workers across European countries.

The chauvinist nature of the “British jobs” campaign is starkly obvious when viewed through the lens of workers across the channel. Indeed, protectionism cuts both ways: Italian workers (including IREM workers!), who are currently working alongside British construction workers in northeast Italy, could easily retaliate with strikes and

mobilisations demanding “Italian jobs for Italian workers”, which would undoubtedly get the support of the Italian fascists. According to figures from the European Commission, 47,000 British workers were temporarily “posted” to other EU countries in 2006, which is three times more than the 15,000 foreign workers “posted” to Britain at the time (*Financial Times*, 3 February). Regarding the British strike, a spokesman for the General Confederation of Italian Workers (CGIL), Guglielmo Epifani, said, “we have to be careful, because if unemployment is used against workers from other countries” it would mean “Italians could only work in Italy, English in England and the French in France” (Reuters, 5 February).

The capitalist system is based on the brutal exploitation of all labour, and the ruling class inflames racial and ethnic hostilities to keep the working class divided and thus ensure greater profits. When construction is booming it relies on immigrants, who in Britain were historically Irish but today are drawn heavily from East Europe. With the advent of a severe global recession, the scramble for a diminishing number of jobs is becoming more intense. This scramble is particularly acute in construction where temporary contract work and job insecurity are endemic and where the system of subcontracting drives wages down lower and increases the bosses’ opportunities for divide-and-rule.

#### Labourite reformism and protectionism

Rather than wage a fight for jobs for *all* construction workers, which requires an internationalist perspective, and championing the rights of immigrants, the reformist trade union bureaucracy pandered to the reactionary demand “British jobs for British workers”, even as they have condemned BNP incursions into the strike. On behalf of Unite, Derek Simpson issued a statement saying: “Trade unionists stand against everything the BNP stand for. We have warned union members on construction sites to remain vigilant when it comes to ultra right wing leeches”, while asserting that the industrial action was “not about race or immigration, it’s about class”. But any mobilisation of workers on the basis of protectionism is poisonous to class consciousness and plays into the hands of the fascists. It serves to reinforce anti-immigrant racism and weakens the capacity of the working class to defend its own interests. The bureaucracy uses protectionism as a cover for rejecting class struggle in favour of class collaboration.

*continued on page 10*