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No vote to Labour, party of racism and war!

Labour plans deeper cuts than Thatcher



London, 27 February: Whittington Hospital protest.

From the standpoint of the working people, it makes no difference whether Gordon Brown's Labour Party or David Cameron's Tories win the general election. Both parties are committed to the brutal imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and to the "war on terror" against Muslims at home, while each strives to outdo the other in racist hostility to immigrants. Above all, both are committed to fleecing the working people to pay for the enormous deficit in Britain's public finances.

The 2008 financial meltdown and the worldwide crisis that followed had a devastating impact on the British economy. The burden, which is being heaped onto the British working class, is proportionally higher than elsewhere largely because Britain's financial sector is so bloated relative to the rest of the economy. With public borrowing as a share of national income forecast to be the highest in the G20 group of the largest world economies, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and a budget deficit that is higher than that of Greece, the European Commission warned that Britain must take tougher measures to cut its deficit by 2015.

Both Labour and Tories know that to tell the truth about the state of the economy would be suicidal in electoral terms. But whoever forms the next government will implement massive public spending cuts and chancellor Alistair Darling has admitted that Labour will cut "deeper and tougher" than Margaret Thatcher did in the 1980s. Since the beginning of the present economic crisis, half a million people have lost their jobs and according to one estimate a British property is repossessed every eleven minutes. Economic analyst John Lanchester sums up the situation saying: "We had the longest period of sustained economic growth since records began, followed by the longest period of sustained economic contraction since records began, all of it under the leadership of a government that repeatedly and explicitly promised 'an end to boom and bust'" ("The Great British Economy Disaster", *London Review of*

Books, 11 March). Lanchester predicts cuts amounting to around eleven per cent across the board, rising to 16 per cent in certain areas, which he notes are of a magnitude never before achieved in this country, while "a two-

extracted through exploitation of workers around the world."

— *Workers Hammer* no 156, May/June 1997

The working class needs a party that fights for its own class interests. We fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers

Troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan!

Down with racist "war on terror"!

year freeze in NHS spending — which is what Labour have talked about — would be its sharpest contraction in 60 years". Meanwhile the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates spending cuts of up to 25 per cent.

We say: No vote to Labour, party of the City bankers and of imperialist murder and pillage in Iraq and Afghanistan, of vile racism against immigrants and minorities and contempt for the working class at home. When Labour won a landslide victory in 1997, in contrast to the euphoria amongst the reformist left, we vehemently opposed any support to Tony Blair's Labour Party. Our 21 April 1997 election statement titled "For a revolutionary workers party! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!" said:

"The Spartacist League/Britain says unequivocally: No Vote to New Labour in the general election! New Labour is pledged to maintaining the sickening reality of life under capitalism — keeping the unions in shackles, slashing welfare programmes, waging war on workers, racial minorities and immigrants, women and youth — everybody who is consigned to the bottom of the heap by rotting British capitalism. Blair's 'contract with Britain' is a pact with the bloated City of London, where vast wealth is generated from profits

party, part of a Leninist-Trotskyist international, dedicated to the task of fighting for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist order. Boom-and-bust cycles are endemic to the capitalist system itself which is also the root cause of all exploitation and oppression. Fundamental change in the interests of the working people can only come about through revolutionary internationalist class struggle which must shatter the framework of capitalism worldwide. Socialist revolution will lay the basis for rationally planned economies based on production for need, not for profit and for a qualitative development of the productive forces, opening the road to the elimination of poverty, scarcity and want and to the creation of an egalitarian socialist society.

Labour government racism bolsters BNP

The run-up to the election has been marked by an ominous increase in fascist activity. On the one hand the British National Party (BNP) has been running a high-profile election campaign, spreading racist filth against immigrants and Muslims, while on the streets the English Defence League (EDL) has been staging violent anti-Muslim prov-

ocations in various cities. A protest by Unite Against Fascism (UAF) against the EDL in Bolton on 20 March was viciously attacked by the police who arrested prominent leftists and anti-fascists. UAF leader and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member Weyman Bennett was held by police on outrageous charges of "conspiracy to commit violent disorder" (*Morning Star*, 22 March). We say: Drop the charges against Weyman Bennett and all anti-fascist protesters!

Fascists are paramilitary shock troops dedicated to racist terror who aim to smash the organisations of the working class. BNP and EDL provocations must be met with massive protests, centred on the trade unions mobilised in defence of Muslims, immigrants and all their intended victims. However, Marxists understand that the decaying capitalist system breeds the social conditions for the growth of the fascists, thus the struggle against fascism is inseparable from the fight for socialist revolution. Mobilising the social power of the multiethnic working class in a fight for jobs and for the rights of immigrants and minorities is anathema to the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, which aims to keep the unions tied to the capitalist order. The fascists have intervened heavily into the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers that began at Lindsey oil refinery in January 2009 under the slogan of "British jobs for British workers". This has long been a rallying cry of the fascists (see "Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!" *Workers Hammer* no 206, Spring 2009).

Disgracefully, these strikes were championed by the Socialist Party as well as by the Unite trade union bureaucracy and by Bob Crow, leader of the RMT. These unions — which consist of white, black and Asian workers — have enormous potential power that can hit the capitalists where it hurts. But Crow and the leadership of Unite have kept the lid on class struggle under Labour and the Unite bureaucrats have done their utmost to sell out their members who are on strike against British

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Qian Xuesen: an appreciation

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 952, 12 February 2010.

When Qian Xuesen (Tsien Hsueshen), the father of China's space programme, died in October at the age of 98, his story dominated the news on the Chinese mainland. In contrast, Qian's death received subdued notice in the US, which had expelled him in the anti-Communist campaigns of the mid 1950s. A household name in China, Qian was widely regarded as a hero for his contributions to military defence and technological development, including China's nuclear capacity. His funeral, held at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing, was attended by some 10,000 people, including all the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), such as President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and former

president Jiang Zemin. As Trotskyists — ie, revolutionary proletarian internationalists — we also salute Qian for his singular contributions to the defence of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, against the imperialist powers, centrally the US.

The story of Qian's life and accomplishments is recounted in Iris Chang's compelling 1995 biography, *Thread of the Silkworm*. Qian was born to a privileged family in Hangzhou in 1911, the year the decrepit Qing Dynasty fell. He became part of a generation of intellectuals who were determined to bring China into the modern world, liberated from imperialist domination. To that end, he began his studies in railway engineering at Jiaotong University in Shanghai. The campuses were in upheaval, with students protesting both Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria and

Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt, brutal Guomindang (Nationalist) regime, which was reviled for its subservience to Japanese imperialism. After witnessing the impact of Japan's aerial bombardment of Shanghai in 1932, Qian turned to aeronautical engineering.

To further its own imperialist interests, the US had established a scholarship programme — funded by indemnities extracted from China after the crushing of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 — aimed at cultivating a layer of Chinese intellectuals. Qian Xuesen was chosen to receive a Boxer indemnity scholarship, arriving in the US in 1935. Beginning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Qian transferred to Caltech in Pasadena the following year, where he began a long collaboration with his mentor, Theodore von Kármán, a giant in aeronautics.

Qian was himself a brilliant scientist, one of the founders of Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He made significant contributions to the US imperialist military, including as part of the Manhattan Project, which developed the first atomic bomb during the Second World War. At the end of the war, he was part of a team that went to Germany to interrogate rocket scientists. There he saw concentration camps where slave labourers had assembled V-2 rockets and he interviewed the Nazi scientist Wernher von Braun, who would be welcomed with open arms to the US where Qian would later be driven out. In 1949, Qian wrote a proposal for a winged space plane that, as *Aviation Week and Space Technology* wrote in 2007, inspired research that led to NASA's space shuttle.

Despite his prominence, Qian was subjected to racist abuse throughout his time in the US. In an incident he would recall with rage decades later, someone in a movie theatre who did not want to sit near an Asian demanded that Qian be ejected from his seat. A factor in his leaving MIT in 1936 was the requirement that students at his level work in industry to gain practical experience. This was nearly impossible for Qian to do since the US aircraft industry would not hire Asians. And even as Qian had security clearance at the Pentagon, he could not buy a house in Pasadena due to racist housing codes.

Qian became a target of the McCarthyite witch hunts that swept the US after American imperialism launched its post-WWII Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. The anti-Communist hysteria reached a fever pitch following the CCP's seizure of power in 1949, which marked the overthrow of capitalist rule in China, and the outbreak of the Korean War the following year. Qian's security clearance was abruptly lifted in June 1950. He came under special scrutiny by the FBI after he refused to testify against a friend alleged to be the leader of an American Communist Party (CP) cell in Pasadena. Qian was interrogated by the FBI and accused of having been a member of the CP, which he denied.

Hounded by the Feds, Qian decided to leave for China for an extended stay but was stopped at the airport by INS immigration cops. He was arrested in September 1950 and imprisoned for two weeks. During that time he lost 20 pounds and was kept in isolation, deprived of sleep and denied visits from all but his family. The INS issued a



Qian Xuesen in 1948

deportation order against Qian, but he was simultaneously prevented from leaving. He was not alone in that legal limbo. As Iris Chang noted in *The Chinese in America* (2003), following the 1949 Revolution, "some 120 Chinese intellectuals were detained and not permitted to leave for years" on the grounds that their "knowledge might jeopardize national security". Nearly 50 years later, Chinese American scientist Wen Ho Lee was the target of another racist, anti-Communist witch hunt due to which he lost his job at Los Alamos and was thrown in jail on trumped-up charges of spying for China (see "Chinese Spy" Hysteria Whips Up Anti-Asian Racism", *Workers Vanguard* no 719, 17 September 1999).

Qian faced constant FBI surveillance and harassment. Forbidden to leave Los Angeles, he was followed on the street, his mail opened, his home watched and his phone calls monitored. In 1955 he wrote a letter asking the Chinese government's help to get him back to China. His wife addressed the envelope to her sister, disguising her handwriting to resemble a child's. Qian and his wife managed to elude the FBI and drop the letter in a mailbox at a coffee shop, from which it eventually reached Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. Following negotiations later that year between Washington and Beijing, which involved a swap for prisoners from the Korean War, Qian was deported and returned to China.

Immediately upon his return, Qian threw himself into scientific work on behalf of the People's Republic. The establishment of a planned, collectivised economy enabled China — a country with a heritage of deep rural poverty and backwardness — to make historic social advances. This is despite the fact that the workers state that issued out of the peasant-based 1949 Revolution was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao Zedong's CCP. Qian played a significant role in China's technological development, due to his own research and especially his talent for organising scientific work on a large scale. He was instrumental in developing the Dongfeng series of rockets and missile guidance systems as well as the launching of China's first satellite in 1970. China has since become one of three countries to carry out a manned orbital space flight.

Qian was also involved in China's development and testing of nuclear weapons. The CCP regime understood that developing a nuclear arsenal was crucial for military defence. Less than a decade after destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic weapons, the US considered using them during the Korean War, in which China's military intervention turned the tide against the imperialist forces. The fact that the Soviet Union had by then begun to develop its own nuclear weapons helped stay the imperialists' hand.

Qian joined the Chinese Communist



TROTSKY

In defence of dialectical materialism

Materialism and Empirio-criticism was written by Bolshevik leader VI Lenin in 1908 during the period of victorious reaction following the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution. This work is a powerful repudiation of bourgeois philosophical idealism — embraced at the time even by some Bolshevik leaders — which in the end always amounts to a defence of reaction and the status quo. In the excerpt



LENIN

below, Lenin provides a concise exposition of the Marxist materialist outlook.

Yesterday we did not know that coal tar contains alizarin. Today we have learned that it does. The question is, did coal tar contain alizarin yesterday?

Of course it did. To doubt it would be to make a mockery of modern science.

And if that is so, three important epistemological conclusions follow:

1) Things exist independently of our consciousness, independently of our sensations, outside of us, for it is beyond doubt that alizarin existed in coal tar yesterday and it is equally beyond doubt that yesterday we knew nothing of the existence of this alizarin and received no sensations from it.

2) There is definitely no difference in principle between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself, and there cannot be any such difference. The only difference is between what is known and what is not yet known....

3) In the theory of knowledge, as in every other sphere of science, we must think dialectically, that is, we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how **knowledge** emerges from **ignorance**, how incomplete, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact.

Once we accept the point of view that human knowledge develops from ignorance, we shall find millions of examples of it just as simple as the discovery of alizarin in coal tar, millions of observations not only in the history of science and technology but in the everyday life of each and every one of us that illustrate the transformation of "things-in-themselves" into "things-for-us," the appearance of "phenomena" when our sense-organs experience an impact from external objects, the disappearance of "phenomena" when some obstacle prevents the action upon our sense-organs of an object which we know to exist. The sole and unavoidable deduction to be made from this — a deduction which all of us make in everyday practice and which materialism deliberately places at the foundation of its epistemology — is that outside us, and independently of us, there exist objects, things, bodies and that our perceptions are images of the external world.

— VI Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (published 1909)

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

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Defend the Palestinian people!

Free the anti-Zionist protesters! Drop the charges now!

We print below a 13 March letter sent to the Home Office by the Partisan Defence Committee, a class-struggle, legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League. The letter protests the conviction and jailing of youth, mainly Muslims, who took part in London protests against Israel's war on Gaza a little over a year ago. There will likely be more such sentences as more cases come before the courts.

Comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain and other International Communist League (ICL) sections internationally participated in protests while the Zionist mass murder machine pounded the Gaza ghetto in air assaults followed by a devastating ground invasion, terrorising and killing Palestinian men, women and children. The ICL called for the working class internationally to stand for military defence of Hamas without giving that reactionary Islamic fundamentalist outfit one iota of political support. We demanded: Defend the Palestinian people! All Zionist troops and settlers out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem!

Unlike the Zionists and indeed the anti-Semitic Islamic fundamentalists, we do not equate the Zionist state with the Hebrew-speaking people, who have the right to self-determination as well as the Palestinian people. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of interpenetrated peoples: two peoples laying claim to the same piece of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of national self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. As long as the national principle prevails, the oppression of the Palestinians, who are the weaker side, can only worsen. As Marxists we seek to bring the class question to the fore, insisting on the need for proletarian revolutionary parties to fight



London, 29 December 2008 protest against Zionist mass murder in Gaza.

for workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the mullahs, colonels, sheikhs and all the other capitalist rulers. Defence of those subjugated by the imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in Britain, the US and other imperialist centres, pointing towards a proletarian struggle for power.

For Arab/Hebrew workers revolution! For a socialist federation of the Near East!

We protest the outrageous convictions and sentences meted out to youth arrested during the December 2008-January 2009 London protests against Israel's slaughter in Gaza. Reportedly of 119 arrested, some 26 have so far been sentenced and 22 sent to jail for terms ranging from eight months to two-and-a-half years, for such trivial acts as

throwing placards. The arrests followed months of surveillance by the police, who descended on homes like storm-troopers in dawn raids during which family members were handcuffed in separate rooms.

These youth, almost all Muslims and many under 20 years old, were expressing justified rage at the bloodbath carried out by the Zionists in Gaza. Israel's war left 1400 Palestinians dead and thousands injured, and reduced most of Gaza—already essentially a concentration camp surrounded by an electrified fence, a sealed border with Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea—to ash and rubble. The jailings for protesting this atrocity underline British imperialism's solidarity with the Zionist butchers.

Judge John Denniss, in handing down the sentences at Isleworth Crown

Court in Middlesex, has stated his intent to send a message of "deterrence". The message, broadcast loud and clear in the convictions and sentences, is one of naked state racism otherwise known as the government's "war on terror", which is an anti-Muslim witch hunt. In fact the judge reportedly relied on the precedent of the draconian sentences handed out to young Asians jailed for defending their communities from rampaging fascists in Bradford in 2001. Then too such "lessons" were delivered in the form of six-year prison terms for throwing stones. The fruit of this poison relentlessly dished up by the Blair and Brown Labour governments is the growth of the fascist BNP and their spin-offs, the English Defence League, who parade their anti-Muslim filth.

We demand: **Free the jailed protesters now! Drop all the charges!** ■

Party in 1958, later becoming a member of its Central Committee. Over the years, he went along with every twist and turn of the bureaucratic regime, whose anti-Marxist policies were rooted in the false Stalinist dogma that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance—could be built in a single country. In the late 1950s, Mao carried out the disastrous Great Leap Forward—a utopian attempt to catapult China to the level of an advanced industrial society through the intense exertion of mainly peasant labour relying on primitive technology. Qian used his scientific credentials to assert in magazine articles that agricultural output could be increased by a factor of 20 using only water conservation, manure and labour. Thus he bears a share of responsibility for the immense famine that followed the collapse of the "Great Leap".

Qian made it through the intrabureaucratic Cultural Revolution virtually unscathed, as those working on highly sensitive military projects were largely shielded by their isolation and value to the regime. With his prominent position in the CCP hierarchy, he was very outspoken in support of the crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen upheaval, an incipient

proletarian political revolution against bureaucratic misrule.

The contradictions inherent in Stalinist rule were seen in Qian's own views. Though he was a brilliant scientist, his intense nationalism led him to promote some bizarre pseudoscience (as did Mao and others in the bureaucracy), urging the government to devote more resources to acupuncture, the *qigong* "art of healing" and the study of ESP. In the late 1990s, having originally promoted the Falun Gong cult, Beijing cracked down on this anti-Communist outfit, which pushes *qigong* to get popular support for its aim of fomenting capitalist counterrevolution and spews vile racism and anti-woman, anti-gay bigotry.

The most glaring contradiction was in the issue of China's military defence, which is undermined by the Stalinists' pursuit of "socialism in one country", whose corollary is the quest for accommodation with imperialism and opposition to the struggle for world socialist revolution. This was graphically displayed by the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, when the Moscow and Beijing bureaucracies fell out in pursuit of their own nationally defined interests. Where

the Kremlin criminally backed capitalist India in its border war with China in 1962, Mao's regime went on to forge an alliance with the US against the Soviet Union in the 1970s and '80s. Thus the CCP contributed to the final undoing of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, a historic defeat for the world's proletariat and oppressed masses that removed the only significant military counterweight to US imperialism.

The imperialist bourgeoisie, which has never reconciled itself to "losing" China, pursues a multifaceted strategy for capitalist restoration: economic penetration via Beijing's "socialist market economy", promotion of counter-revolutionary forces like the Dalai Lama, and direct military pressure, as seen, for example, in US arms sales to Taiwan. The struggle for a world socialist order crucially includes the unconditional military defence of the remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—against imperialist attack and domestic counterrevolution. Thus we support the development of the Chinese and North Korean nuclear arsenals. At the same time, we fight for proletarian

political revolutions to sweep away the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes of workers-democracy committed to proletarian internationalism.

As communists fighting in the belly of the US imperialist beast, we hold a place of honour for Qian Xuesen and the many other scientists and workers who, under extremely difficult conditions, made heroic efforts to build China's nuclear capacity. In the midst of the Sino-Soviet split, we underscored the historic importance of this development, writing in "Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking" (*Spartacist* no 3, January-February 1965):

"China's development of the A-bomb must be greeted by all revolutionary Marxists as a welcome strengthening of Chinese defenses at a time when the Chinese Revolution is not only being aggressively threatened by U.S. imperialism but when it is also being systematically betrayed by the Soviet bureaucracy in the search for 'peaceful coexistence.' However, the main point is that every increase in the ability of the Chinese to hold the U.S. at bay militarily is an increase in time to prepare the proletarian revolution—above all in *America*—the only final safeguard to all gains thus far made by the international working class." ■

All US/UN troops out of Haiti now!

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 955, 26 March 2010.

It is now more than two months since Haiti was struck by the earthquake that left over 200,000 of its nine million people dead. The quake has multiplied the desperate conditions of what was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Even before the devastation wreaked by it, nearly one out of every two Haitians had no regular access to drinking water and more than half the population survived on less than one dollar a day. Two centuries of looting by the US and France and repeated American invasions to install and prop up brutal tinpot dictatorships had left the populace utterly exposed to the ravages of this natural disaster and totally reliant on outside aid. The quisling state administration of President René Prével—a fig-leaf for a United Nations occupation regime—installed in 2006 at US imperialism’s behest, collapsed as rapidly as did the tin shacks housing much of the population.

As part of a “relief effort”, the Obama administration dispatched some 20,000 troops and a flotilla of naval vessels to Haiti, not least in order to prevent Haitians from fleeing to the US and to shore up the UN occupation force, which itself was damaged by the quake. Some 2000 additional UN troops have been sent to the country, as well as an additional 1500 UN police.

In response to the quake, a range of pseudo-socialist groups in the US rushed to beg the American imperialists to do right by the Haitian people and send “aid not troops”. In this, groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) served only to aid Democrat Obama, whose election they had hailed, in providing a “humanitarian” facelift for blood-drenched US imperialism. The notion that the imperialist powers that have laid waste to this small black country will serve the interests of the Haitian masses is a sick joke.

As we made clear in our article, “Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation” (*Workers Vanguard* no 951, 29 January), while we were not for the US military going into Haiti, neither were we going to demand, in the immediate aftermath of that horrific natural disaster, the immediate withdrawal of any forces that were supplying such aid as was reaching the Haitian masses. But the continued presence of any US or UN military forces can only be a dagger aimed at the social and national aspirations of the Haitian toiling people. **All US/UN troops and police out now!**

In a 1941 article titled “Shall We

Campaign for U.S. Government Aid to the USSR?” (*Militant*, 19 July 1941), the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) underlined: “There is a difference between not raising any objection, when a capitalist government sends aid, and *agitating* for such aid.

In Haiti today, the US imperialists have basically achieved their purpose, including a blunt reassertion to the rest of the world, most notably French imperialism, that the Caribbean remains an “American lake”. They are patting themselves on the back for a job well

hand in hand with fawning over Third World populist nationalists like Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Prével’s mentor, who was restored to the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince in 1994 by a US invasion force after being ousted by a (US-backed) military coup. Aristide was then subsequently whisked away by the US in 2004.

Taking up the left flank of the reformists is the centrist Internationalist Group (IG). In a 20 January article, the IG grotesquely and cynically claimed that the earthquake provided an opening for socialist revolution in Haiti, “particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police”. As we wrote in response in *Workers Vanguard* no 951, “not only is the state ‘largely reduced to rubble,’ but so is the society as a whole”, underlining that “there is a military power in Haiti that is far from ‘reduced to rubble,’ and it’s U.S. imperialism”. Indeed, the only force that seemed to share the IG’s delusions of an uprising in Haiti after the quake was the Pentagon.

Yet the IG denounced us as “supporting imperialism” because we didn’t call for the immediate withdrawal of US troops. As we stated, in a situation where there were no good alternatives, we were “not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on”. That the IG conjured up fantasies of a workers uprising was little more than an effort to give a phoney “revolutionary” veneer to Haitian populists and others who used the earthquake to reinforce the illusions of the Haitian masses in Aristide (see “Haiti: IG Conjures Up Revolution Amid the Rubble”, *Workers Vanguard* no 952, 12 February).

The desperate conditions of Haiti cannot be resolved within Haiti. To end the grinding poverty and degradation of the Haitian people, the imperialist system must be swept away through international socialist revolution. What there is of a working class in Haiti has neither the social weight nor industrial concentration to effect a revolutionary transformation of that society. But in the Dominican Republic, Canada and the US there are hundreds of thousands of Haitian workers who can play a vital role in the struggle for socialist revolution. As we stressed in *Workers Vanguard* no 951: “The key to the liberation of Haiti lies in proletarian revolution throughout the hemisphere, in which the mobilization of the sizable Haitian proletariat *in the diaspora* can play a key role.... It is only this revolutionary internationalist program that holds out any genuine perspective for the liberation of the Haitian masses.” ■



Port-au-Prince: US troops land on lawn of presidential palace, 19 January.

The key to the whole question consists in the understanding that we cannot rely on bourgeois governments to aid our cause.” The SWP was addressing the demand of the Stalinist Communist Party that the US provide aid to the Soviet Union following the June 1941 Nazi invasion amid the Second World War. The Trotskyists opposed all the belligerent imperialist powers in that inter-imperialist slaughter, while standing for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

But while the circumstances were different than those in Haiti today, the Marxist method outlined by our Trotskyist forebears remains fully valid. To call on the imperialists to provide aid means taking “responsibility for bourgeois governmental policy”. Drawing out the logic of the Stalinists’ position, the SWP article added: “Were we to agitate for aid to the Soviet Union by the Roosevelt government, would we then not be compelled to favor convoys to guarantee the arrival of the material shipped to the Soviet Union? Should we then not demand that the waters to Vladivostok be kept open by the U.S. government against Japan?” Indeed, the Stalinists’ call for imperialist aid was part and parcel of their support to the “democratic” imperialists in World War II.

done as they wind down their military deployment in Haiti to 8000 soldiers in order to direct troops back to where the Pentagon needs them—as part of the armies of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, some 9000 UN troops and 3600 UN cops are to occupy Haiti. The US and other imperialist military forces in the Caribbean are a particular threat to the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state. **Defend Cuba! US out of Guantánamo! All US troops and bases out of Puerto Rico!**

Meanwhile, the Obama administration’s vaunted offer of temporary legal status for undocumented Haitian immigrants in the US has been shown to be the sham that it is, as only a small percentage of these immigrants has been able to afford the \$500 application fees for the legal permits. Anybody who has made it to the US should have the right to stay and work here. **Down with the racist ban on Haitian refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

The notion purveyed by reformists like the ISO and WWP that US imperialism can be cajoled or pressured into serving the needs of the oppressed, rather than its own class interests, shows boundless illusions in the good offices of the rapacious American ruling class. Such illusion-mongering goes

Spartacist League Dayschool

Against quackery, monarchy and libel laws — defend scientific medicine!

British imperialism’s brutal crushing of the Mau Mau uprising in 1950s Kenya

Saturday 8 May, 12.30pm

Birkbeck, University of London, Room 416, Malet Street, London WC1E
Nearest tube: Goudge Street or Russell Square

For more information: Tel: 020 7281 5504 — Email: workershammer@btconnect.com

US Supreme Court of death rules against Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following statement was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee in the US on 24 January and is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 951, 29 January 2010.

On 19 January, the US Supreme Court took a clear step towards the legal lynching of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The Court vacated a 2001 decision by federal district court judge William Yohn overturning Mumia's death sentence. Yohn's decision had been previously upheld by the US Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The new ruling by the Supreme Court underscores our insistence that fighters for Mumia's freedom must place no faith in the courts, which, at every level, have colluded with the police and prosecutors to see through the execution of this innocent man.

Mumia was targeted by the police and FBI in his teenage years as a Black Panther leader and later as a journalist and MOVE supporter renowned for his searing exposés of cop brutality and racist oppression. In a blatantly racist and political frame-up, Mumia was railroaded to death row in 1982 on false charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Without a shred of actual evidence against him, he was convicted on the basis of phony ballistics and other manufactured "evidence", a "confession" concocted by cops and prosecutors, massive police intimidation of witnesses and racist jury rigging. His trial was overseen by "hanging judge" Albert Sabo, who was overheard saying he would help the prosecution "fry the n----r". To secure the death sentence, prosecutors pointed to political statements issued by Mumia as a 16-year-old Panther.

Since his trial, the courts have repeatedly tossed aside massive evidence of Mumia's innocence, not least the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. Yet Mumia remains unbowed, speaking out for the oppressed and the impoverished through his death row commentaries. The Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League/US—calls on trade unionists, death penalty abolitionists and all opponents of racist injustice to make their voices heard in demanding: Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!

The Supreme Court moved against Mumia with cold calculation. Last April, it turned down Mumia's petition to overturn his frame-up conviction. At the same time, the Court held in abeyance the arguments of Pennsylvania prosecutors to reinstate his death sentence, which had been overturned by Yohn on the grounds that Mumia's trial jury had been given faulty sentencing instructions. The Supreme Court waited to rule against Mumia until after it reinstated the death sentence for Ohio neo-Nazi Frank Spisak, which had been overturned on similar grounds of faulty jury instructions. In effect, the high court gave the Third Circuit their



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Mumia in prison. Right: Free Mumia protest in London, 19 April 2008, initiated by the Partisan Defence Committee.

Mumia is innocent—free him now!

marching orders to uphold Mumia's death sentence. Alternatively, the Third Circuit could send the case back to Yohn for a hearing to consider other still-pending claims by Mumia or, less likely, reaffirm its prior decision.

The Supreme Court cynically tied together the Spisak and Mumia cases, not despite but because of their glaring differences. Spisak is a sociopath who admitted to killing his victims and made no secret of his admiration for Adolph Hitler. Mumia has always maintained his innocence and won acclaim as the "voice of the voiceless" for his powerful commentaries. The Court is consciously manipulating abhorrence of the fascist Spisak's crimes to set a precedent for the legal murder of Mumia, a man whose "crime" was to stand up to the racist capitalist rulers. Noting how his case differed from Spisak's, Mumia aptly told Free Speech Radio News, "The law is the tool of those in power, so how they use it doesn't depend on the law; it depends on power." The Supreme Court ruling will touch off new rounds of perhaps lengthy legal proceedings. But even if Mumia wins his battle against execution, the "alternative" offered by the courts is a life sentence with no possibility of parole, which, as Mumia noted in one of his prison writings, "is merely slow death".

The Court's linking of the two cases highlights yet again how the fight for Mumia's freedom is inseparable from the struggle to abolish the death penalty. The PDC opposes the death penalty on principle and everywhere—for the guilty as well as for the innocent. We do not accord any state the right to determine who lives and who dies.

Capital punishment is a barbaric relic of ancient codes of justice and, in the US, of chattel slavery. Where in

medieval times those who ran afoul of Crown and Church were put to the rack or burned at the stake, today's representatives of bourgeois "civilisation" debate which combination of lethal drugs to administer to writhing prisoners strapped to death gurneys. In threatening such treatment for Mumia, the courts hark back to when black slaves could be tortured and put to death for hitting a white man in self-defence or for any other act deemed a challenge to the slaveholders. The hugely disproportionate number of black people on America's death rows is a testament to the racist subjugation of the black population, which is fundamental to the maintenance of American capitalism. And while judges in their oak-panelled chambers decree the legal murder of the poor, minorities and working people, the police carry out the same sentence on a far greater scale as they gun down ghetto and barrio youth in the streets.

The death penalty stands at the apex of the machinery of state repression used by the tiny class of capitalist exploiters against the masses they exploit and oppress. The "justice" system threatens Mumia with the ultimate state sanction that it used against earlier militants deemed to be threats to capitalist "order"—the Haymarket Martyrs (1877), IWW [International Workers of the World] militant Joe Hill (1915) and anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti (1927), to name a few. The state vendetta against Mumia began as part of the FBI's COINTELPRO campaign to wipe out the Black Panther Party, in which some 38 Panthers were killed and hundreds of others framed up and railroaded to prison. The government's intent was made clear in 1968 by FBI director J Edgar Hoover, who warned: "The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be

made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries."

Mumia's cause has been and must continue to be a focal point of the fight for abolition of the racist death penalty. Popular support for capital punishment has fallen steadily in recent years, due not least to the many cases where DNA evidence has exonerated death row prisoners. Even the conservative American Law Institute, whose death penalty guidelines were cited by the Supreme Court when it ended a brief moratorium on executions in 1976, has decided to get out of this gruesome business as ever more exposures of American injustice come to light. The Supreme Court, however, is not in the least deterred from its push to execute the innocent. Some six weeks before ruling against Mumia, the Court refused to consider the appeal of black California death row inmate Kevin Cooper despite evidence of his innocence and of a massive police frame-up. Free Kevin Cooper!

From the time we first took up Mumia's cause more than 20 years ago, the PDC has supported the use of every possible legal avenue available to Mumia while having no illusions in the courts or any other agency of the capitalist state. Our fight has centred on the struggle to mobilise the multiracial working class in the US and working people internationally, based on the fact that the proletariat is the one force in this society with the social power to effectively challenge the capitalist rulers. When Mumia faced a death warrant in the summer of 1995, worldwide protests that included trade unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers played a crucial role in staying the executioner's hand.

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Abolish the racist death penalty!

— Reformism in action —

When Militant ran Liverpool

The Fifth Conference of the International Communist League (ICL) in 2007 adopted the position of opposition in principle to Marxists running for executive office in the capitalist state. Such offices include president, mayor, provincial or state governor as well as cabinet member in Britain. As we noted:

“Communist deputies can, *as oppositionists*, serve in the U.S. Congress, parliaments and other legislative bodies as revolutionary tribunes of the working class. But assuming executive office or gaining control of a bourgeois legislature or municipal council, either independently or in coalition, requires taking responsibility for the administration of the machinery of the capitalist state. The ICL had previously held that communists could run for executive offices, provided that we declare in advance that we don’t intend to assume such offices. But in re-examining this question, we concluded that standing for election to executive positions carries the implication that one is ready to accept such responsibility, no matter what disclaimer one makes in advance. For self-proclaimed Marxists to engage in such activity only lends legitimacy to prevailing and reformist conceptions of the state.”

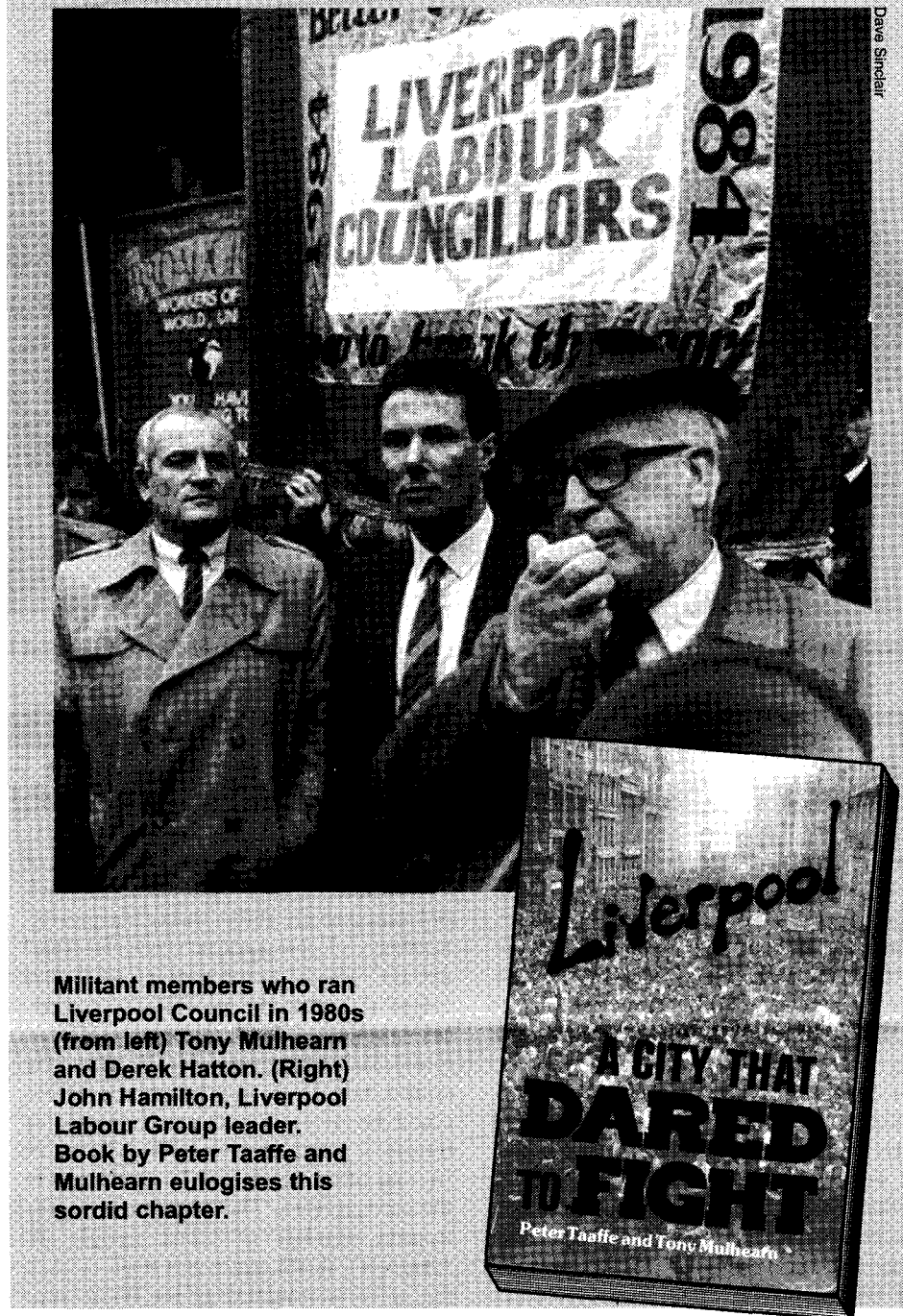
—“Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State! Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics”, *Spartacist* [English edition] no 61, Spring 2009

When Marxists run candidates and seek election to bourgeois parliaments it is in order to use them as a platform for furthering the goal of proletarian socialist revolution. In the face of the betrayal of the Social Democratic leaders in Germany at the outset of World War I, Karl Liebknecht used his position in parliament to urge the German proletariat to wage revolutionary class struggle against the German bourgeoisie. As Liebknecht put it in his famous rallying cry: “the main enemy is at home”. The Bolshevik party carried out revolutionary agitation and propaganda work, even in the reactionary tsarist Duma.

Assuming executive office however, means becoming responsible for administering the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation of the working class. The London mayor is the boss of the city’s Tube workers, for example, which means carrying out attacks on their wages and conditions. As an example of why communists don’t run for or take executive office, this article will look at the experience of Liverpool City Council from 1983-87, when the deeply Labourite Militant tendency, forerunner of today’s Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal, gained control of the council and administered the bourgeois state at the municipal level.

The Communist International and the struggle against reformism

Our opposition to executive offices flows from the Marxist understanding that the state is not neutral but an organ of class rule. At its core the state consists of armed bodies of men and instruments of coercion



Militant members who ran Liverpool Council in 1980s (from left) Tony Mulhearn and Derek Hatton. (Right) John Hamilton, Liverpool Labour Group leader. Book by Peter Taaffe and Mulhearn eulogises this sordid chapter.

—the police, the army, prison officers, the courts etc—committed to the defence of the prevailing property forms. In every struggle of the working class the attitude that one takes towards the state is critical. The fundamental counterposition is between the reformist strategy of taking hold of and administering the bourgeois state apparatus and the revolutionaries’ insistence on the need to smash the existing state and replace it with organs of proletarian rule.

Opposition to executive office is a corollary of Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written in 1917 and 1918 respectively. In effect, these are founding documents of Lenin’s struggle to forge a new, revolutionary international following the collapse of the Second (Socialist) International into social chauvinism at the outbreak of WWI in August 1914. With their support for their “own” bourgeoisies many of the official Socialist leaders passed over definitively to the defence of the capitalist order against the working class. In rescuing the revo-

lutionary heritage of Marxism from the reformist betrayers of the proletariat, Lenin had to reassert the fundamental lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which was, as Marx wrote in *The Civil War in France*, that: “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes”. The experience of the Commune enabled Marx and Engels to codify the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat vis-à-vis the bourgeois state.

The question of ministerialism—the participation of Socialists in bourgeois governments—had been the subject of a major dispute in the Marxist movement as early as 1899, over what became known as Millerandism. The French Socialist leader Alexandre Millerand joined the government of René Waldeck-Rousseau in order to help defuse the deep social crisis that had been raging over the Dreyfus affair. The anti-Semitic witch hunt of this Jewish military officer had polarised the country. Millerand’s entry into the government as minister of commerce was a betrayal which divided

French Socialists.

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-Jewish revolutionary who played a central role in the struggle against this reformist rot and against ministerialism, wrote: “The entry of a socialist into a bourgeois government is not, as it is thought, a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state” (“The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case”, 1899). But the Second International compromised on the key question of socialists entering bourgeois governments. A resolution cooked up by Karl Kautsky proclaimed:

“The entry of an individual socialist into a bourgeois ministry cannot be regarded as the normal beginning of the conquest of political power but can be only a temporary and exceptional makeshift in a predicament.

“Whether in a given case such a predicament exists is a question of tactics and not of principle. Here the Congress shouldn’t decide. But in any case this dangerous experiment can be advantageous only if it is approved by a united party organization and the socialist minister is and remains the mandate-bearer of his party.”

—Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Paris 1900 (International Socialist Congress in Paris 1900) (Berlin: Expedition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1900) (our translation)

The ICL stands on the resolutions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International (CI) which began the task of clearing out the Augean stables of Social Democratic betrayal and mainly did a good job of reaffirming Marxism on the question of the state. However, we think that the task was not fully completed and we are not uncritical of the CI during this period. In fact our position that communists should not run for executive office is an extension of our criticism of the entry of the German Communist Party (KPD) in October 1923 into the regional governments of Saxony and Thuringia, which were led by so-called “left” Social Democrats. This was a move which helped derail a revolutionary situation (see “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern”, *Spartacist* [English edition] no 56, Spring 2001).

At its Fourth Congress in 1922, the CI incorrectly applied the term “workers government” to the *bourgeois* governments of Saxony and Thuringia. We understand “workers government” as a popular designation for the dictatorship of the proletariat that follows the smashing of the bourgeois state. In Germany in 1923 the capitalist state was still intact and KPD participation in these governments reinforced prevailing parliamentary prejudices and acted as an obstacle to revolution.

Comintern ambiguity on municipalism

An example of unfinished business of the CI on the capitalist state was seen in the “Theses on the Communist

Down with executive offices of the capitalist state!

Parties and Parliamentarism” at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. The theses make clear that:

“The proletariat’s task is to break up the bourgeoisie’s state machine and to destroy it, and with it parliamentary institutions, whether republican or constitutional-monarchist.”

—*Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920* (Pathfinder, 1991)

Thesis 5 unambiguously states what the reformist left often denies, namely that municipal councils are a component of the bourgeois state apparatus which must be smashed by workers’ revolution:

“It is no different with the bourgeoisie’s institutions of local government. To counterpose them to the organs of the state is theoretically incorrect. They are in reality organizations similar to the mechanism of the bourgeois state, which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local soviets of workers’ deputies.”

However another thesis, number 13, which was added as an amendment, contradicts this understanding. It reads:

“Should Communists hold a majority in institutions of local government, they must (a) organize revolutionary opposition against the central bourgeois government; (b) do everything possible to serve the poorer sectors of the population (economic measures, creating or attempting to create an armed workers’ militia, and so forth); (c) at every opportunity point out how the bourgeois state blocks truly major changes; (d) on this basis develop vigorous revolutionary propaganda, never fearing conflict with the state; (e) under certain conditions, replace municipal governments with local workers’ councils. In other words, all of the Communists’ activity in local government must be a part of the general work of undermining the capitalist system.”

While trying to draw a line against municipalism, this point is ambiguous enough that it leaves the door open for opportunism. For us revolutionaries, it is important to acknowledge the weakness of the early revolutionary CI on municipalism. But unlike the CI, the Militant tendency which ran Liverpool Council had long been a hardened reformist organisation.

The myth of “municipal socialism”

A classic example of opportunist “municipal socialism” is the experience of Poplar Council in the years immediately following WWI. The term “Poplarism” is based on the “Councillors’ Revolt” against the central government, which is upheld to this day by reformists of every stripe as an exemplary “socialist” struggle. In the book *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn (Fortress Books, January 1988), Poplar is cited several times as an inspiration for Militant when it ran Liverpool.

In 1919 the Labour council of Poplar in East London, led by mayor George Lansbury, began a struggle with the central government, which at that time was a coalition of the Liberals and Tories. Seeking to force richer London boroughs and the central government to assist with poor relief, the Poplar councillors refused to collect rates other than those for the immediate benefit of the impoverished people of Poplar. As the post-WWI economy nosedived, unemployment levels were high, including among London’s dockers. George Lansbury was a left-Labourite—the Tony Benn of his day—in addition to being a Christian Socialist and a pacifist. Among the Labour councillors elected in Poplar were two Communists, Lansbury’s son Edgar and his wife Minnie.

The Poplar Labour councillors acted with considerable courage and were imprisoned for their stubborn campaign on behalf of the poor. However, funda-



Left: Bolshevik Duma faction exiled to Siberia for opposing World War I, 1915. Right: Karl Liebknecht was also imprisoned for opposing imperialist war.



mentally Poplarism revealed the futility of “municipal socialism” to provide any solution to the devastation wrought by the capitalist system of exploitation of the working class. That required workers’ revolution to rip the means of production out of the hands of the capitalists and a collectivised planned economy in at least a number of advanced capitalist countries. All the Poplar councillors could do was to try to pressure the central authorities to provide money. Noreen Branson recounts in her book *Poplarism, 1919-1925* that councillors hung out a placard when the King and Queen visited the borough stating: “Poplar Borough Council expects this day the King will

British labour and the wars of intervention 1918-21”, *Spartacist Britain* no 36, October 1981.)

Militant’s record in Liverpool

Militant held executive office in Liverpool in the context where Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government was waging a savage war against the working class and oppressed minorities. The coal miners were the main target but Thatcher took aim against the whole working class and had a particular disdain for former strongholds of the industrial proletariat such as Liverpool, Manchester and South Yorkshire, as well as Scotland and Wales. The Thatcher government cut the Rate

paper *Militant* shows what this organisation was about. In the 27 May 1983 issue they demand:

“Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 80-85 per cent of the economy. This should be done through an Enabling Bill, with compensation based only on proven need.”

This is parliamentary cretinism—the notion that socialism will come not through workers’ revolution but via the “mother of all parliaments”. Militant infamously upheld the line that cops and prison guards—the armed fist of the capitalist state—are “workers in uniform”. This reformist programme is upheld by the Socialist Party today. In August 2007, when thousands of prison officers staged a strike over pay, most of the reformist left gave gushing support to the strike. The Socialist Party went further, inviting Prison Officers’ Association (POA) leader Brian Caton to address its “Socialism 2007” event. Grotesquely, Caton is today a member of the Socialist Party.

Characteristically, the Taaffe/Mulhearn book extols the 1919 police strike and the “union” of police and prison officers, which it says “was founded in August 1918 to fight for the interests of ‘workers in uniform’”. Having described only pages before the savage police assaults against striking railway workers on St George’s Plateau in August 1911, Taaffe/Mulhearn declare:

“Many workers in Liverpool had indicated that they would come to the side of the police, which showed their sound proletarian instinct. This was despite many vivid memories of the beatings and shooting they had suffered at the hands of the police in 1911.”

In 1921 these cops carried out a brutal assault on unemployed workers occupying the Walker Art Gallery in which, as Taaffe/Mulhearn describe it, “workers’ blood ran down the steps of the gallery”. This confirms the nature of the police as described by Trotsky in an article about Weimar Germany:

“The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.”

—“What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat”, January 1932 (*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*)

Labourism and Cold War

Prior to 1983 Liverpool Council was run by the Liberals and Tories, often in coalition. The desperate economic situation however produced a shift and a political vacuum into which Labour, dominated by Militant, was able to

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Limits of municipalism: Left-Labourite Poplar borough councillors in London’s East End fought for minimal raise in welfare payments for poor and unemployed, 1921.

do his duty by calling upon His Majesty’s Government to find work or full maintenance for the unemployed of the nation.”

In contrast to the later example of the Militant in Liverpool, which did not oppose British troops in Northern Ireland and was mired in the imperialists’ campaign against the Soviet Union, Poplar Council did pass resolutions calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, as well as opposing British imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union. Poplar councillors were among those who, in 1920, stopped the ship the *Jolly George* from being loaded with munitions bound for Pilsudski’s nationalist forces in Poland for use against the Soviet Army. The action by London dockers against the *Jolly George* was part of the Hands off Russia campaign which had been established for working-class action in defence of the fledgling Soviet state against imperialist intervention. (See “Hands off Russia!”

Support Grant (central government funding) to cities like Liverpool, which was devastated by unemployment with the decline of shipbuilding and the docks. Militant had taken office on the basis of a programme of public spending. They refused to increase the rates (local taxes) and put pressure on the government to make up the budget deficit. This is the substance of Militant’s much vaunted struggle in Liverpool.

The Militant tendency, led by Ted Grant, was founded in 1964. While falsely purporting to be Trotskyist, they were in fact an organic part of the Labour Party. Contrary to their claim to be winning workers in the Labour Party to Marxism through their “deep entry”, it was Militant who took on the political line of the reformist Labour Party, a classic case of the mask becoming the face. Militant’s entire political perspective was to bring in “socialism” through gaining a majority in Westminster. The “What we stand for” box in their news-

Liverpool...

(Continued from page 7)

move. When Militant assumed office in Liverpool the anti-Soviet Cold War campaign of the imperialists was at its peak over the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and the rise of Polish Solidarność in the early 1980s. The Trotskyist Spartacist League stood forthrightly for the military defence of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, and the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe against imperialism and internal capitalist counterrevolution, while fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, whose policies of conciliating imperialism undermined that defence. Today, we uphold the same programme in respect of the remaining deformed workers states—China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam. Militant howled along with Thatcher and Reagan in their anti-Communist crusade against the Soviet Union. On 14 October 1982 Militant tendency goons attempted to exclude the Spartacist League from a demonstration in Liverpool against youth unemployment. Incensed by our opposition to counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland, after announcing that our banner “had no place on the march” they attempted to tear it down.

At the time the Militant tendency was being witch-hunted by the Labour leadership. Under the impact of Reagan and Thatcher's Cold War drive against the Soviet Union the Labour Party was rent by a bitter struggle between the pro-NATO, pro-CIA right wing, led by Denis Healey, and the Little England reformists around Tony Benn, whose opposition to the siting of American missiles in Britain threatened to make Labour unfit for government in the eyes of the British bourgeoisie. We defended the Militant tendency against Labour's inquisitors, while noting:

“Just as Healey is proving Labour's loyalty to the bourgeoisie by witchhunting Militant, so Militant tries by witchhunting the SL to prove its loyalty to anti-Soviet Labourism and its determination to get Labour into Parliament (with or without ‘socialist policies’) above all else.”

—“Witchhunted witchhunt”, *Spartacist Britain* no 45, November 1982

Like Benn, Militant truly believed that the Labour Party was a “broad church” which should function as a “party of the whole class”. We sought to exacerbate this split in the Labour Party by driving out the pro-CIA Healey wing, to place Benn in a position where his reformist politics could be exposed as a central obstacle to building a revolutionary party. Among our slogans that enraged Militant

Spartacist banners at 14 October 1982 demonstration in Liverpool against youth unemployment drove Militant bureaucrats into frenzy.



were “Kick out CIA/NATO-lover Healey!” and “Labour can betray without the CIA connection!”. More than a decade later, following the defeat of the miners and counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, Tony Blair began the project of seeking to transform the Labour Party from a “bourgeois workers party”—having a mass working-class base, but saddled with a pro-capitalist leadership and programme—into an outright bourgeois party, by severing all links to the trade union movement. This process is unfinished but Labour is now moribund as a reformist party of the working class.

Militant and the miners strike

Peter Taaffe, today's Socialist Party leader who was a leader of the Militant tendency with the late Ted Grant, equates Militant's stewardship of Liverpool Council with the heroic year-long miners strike of 1984-85. The first paragraph of the preface to Taaffe and Mulhearn's book says:

“Since 1979 the conditions and rights of working people appear to have been crushed by the Thatcher juggernaut. In reality, the working class has put up ferocious opposition to the Tory government. This reached its height in the titanic year-long miners' strike of 1984-5 and in the stand of the Liverpool City Council between 1983-7.”

Ludicrously placing the most significant class struggle in Britain since the 1926 General Strike on the same plane as Militant's pleading with Thatcher for more money for Liverpool shows Taaffe's miserable parliamentary cretinism. Although the book is 500 pages long there are only a few passing references to the miners strike. Thatcher deployed the full weight of the capitalist state—thousands of riot cops, MI5 spies, court sequestrators etc—against the NUM, which was dubbed the “enemy within”. As Taaffe/Mulhearn acknowledge: “the miners' strike had to

be ‘seen off’ and this was not to take place until March 1985”. Thus, in July 1984, four months into the miners strike, Thatcher's minister Patrick Jenkin made a deal with the Militant-led council whereby the Tory government in Westminster would give Liverpool Council £30 million in exchange for a rates rise of 17 per cent. In his book *Inside left: the story so far*, published in 1988, former Militant deputy council leader Derek Hatton recounts being told by Tory MP Teddy Taylor that “we had to tell Patrick to give you the money. At this stage we want Scargill. He's our priority. But we'll come for you later.”

We called for spreading the miners strike to other strategic industries, particularly the railways and the docks, which would have shut down the country. This would have immediately raised the question of state power, of which class shall rule. Taaffe/Mulhearn say that: “Like other councils, Liverpool City Council was heavily involved in support for the miners” and cite the facilities provided by the council “for collecting cash to buy food which was delivered to the mining areas by the lorry-load”. But Militant's perspective was above all to get a Labour government elected. The Labour Party at that time was led by Neil Kinnock, who was despised by militant miners, especially for his denunciations of the strikers as “violent” while they were under massive police assault. Kinnock infuriated the miners not least with his call for a ballot, which became the rallying cry of all those who sought to defeat the strike, including Thatcher and the TUC misleaders, and was echoed by much of the so-called “far left”. Not surprisingly, in their book, Taaffe and Mulhearn repeat this strike-breaking call, stating:

“Yet as Militant has consistently pointed out, one of the fundamental weaknesses of the miners' strike was the failure of the leadership to hold a ballot which would have resulted in an overwhelming major-

ity confirming the strike action which was in progress. The idea that the actions of a ‘determined minority’ can bulldoze other workers to come out on strike without discussion and a democratic vote is absolutely false.”

Militant/Socialist Party: Labourite social chauvinism

As a city, Liverpool was built on the slave trade. The City Hall from which Militant conducted their business is decorated with stone representations of slavery; city streets are named after those who got very rich in the trafficking of black human flesh, including numerous mayors of the city such as Foster Cunliffe, Joseph Bird and George Campbell.

In 1981, rampant police brutality against minority youth sparked riots in Toxteth. As we wrote in *Workers Hammer* no 109 (September 1989):

“Unemployment in the heavily black Toxteth area can reach up to 80 per cent. In some areas, according to another report in the *Independent* (15 October 1988) unemployment among black youth is as high as 90 per cent. ‘Nowhere else in Britain are blacks so exposed to threats, taunts, and abuse if they leave an area of the city’ (*Guardian*, 19 July).”

A Marxist revolutionary should strive to be, in Lenin's words, “not a trade union secretary but a tribune of the people”. In other words, we fight against all manifestations of oppression in capitalist society and seek to lead the multiethnic working class in a struggle against racism in all its forms, against women's oppression, against the oppression of homosexuals etc. The Militant tendency is a far cry from a “tribune of the people”.

A furious row developed when Sampson Bond, a Militant supporter from London, was appointed as Principal Race Relations Advisor to the Liverpool Council. Taaffe/Mulhearn claim:

“Two entirely different philosophies, reflecting diametrically opposed class forces, clashed on the issue of his appointment as Principal Race Relations Officer to the Liverpool City Council. On the one side stood the class conscious approach of the labour movement. On the other side stood the race relations industry, feeling threatened to the very marrow of their being by the appointment of just one Marxist to such a potentially important position.”

Militant's so-called “class conscious approach” was nothing other than Labourite chauvinist indifference to special oppression. In *Inside Left* Derek Hatton states that Militant's position “has always been that while accepting there is discrimination, the problems of the black community are part of the overall struggle. It is a class problem, and a Socialist problem, and must be solved within that wide framework.” He continues, “To do otherwise is to alienate many white working-class people from identifying with the struggle”.

Hatton's fear of “alienating white working-class people” is an expression

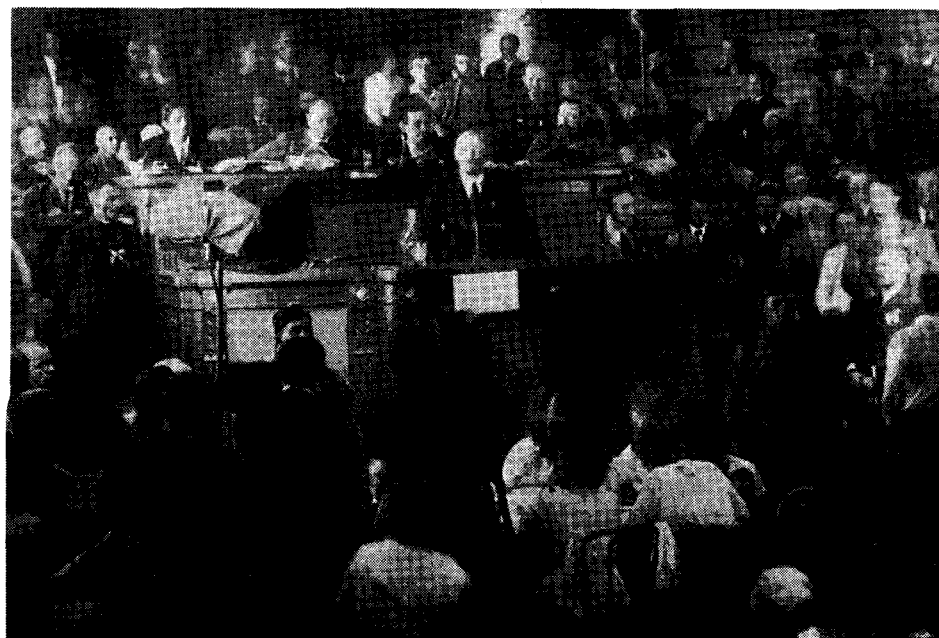


November 1984: Mass picket of miners and transport workers. TUC/Labour leadership spiked joint class struggle, leaving miners to fight alone against massive state repression.

of Militant's pandering to backward consciousness, including racism. Their indifference to racial oppression is of a piece with their refusal to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland and their refusal to defend the Catholic population against national oppression at the hands of the British imperialists and the Orange state. This crass Labourite social chauvinism is exemplified by an article in the 6 January 1984 *Militant* titled "Northern Ireland: Labour must combat sectarianism". *Militant* says, "the Labour Party in Britain can and must play a significant part in helping Northern Irish workers come together in common struggle for socialist change". This is the same pro-imperialist Labour Party which led the cheering in Parliament at the execution of James Connolly; which sent British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969 and which introduced the first draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974. Of course Militant's leaders are past masters at disguising their Labourite opportunism in the language of pseudo-Marxism, claiming that they're fighting for "working-class unity".

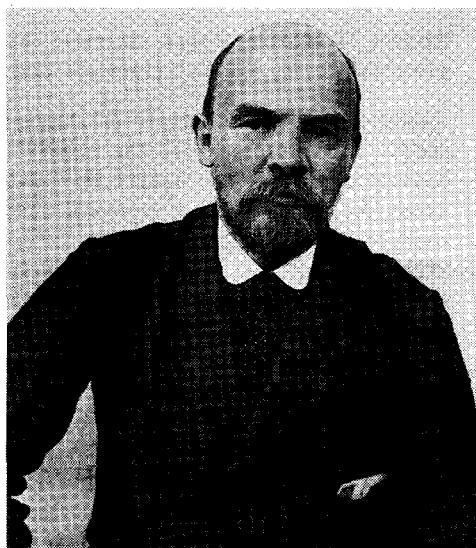
Once the Thatcher government had defeated the miners—who were betrayed by the misleaders of the working class—Thatcher turned her attention to Liverpool. The city councillors were made personally liable for the refusal to set a rate. A total of 47 councillors were surcharged, while the council tried to raise money from the Swiss banks. But in the meantime, with the money running out in a matter of weeks, Militant famously issued redundancy notices to the council workers. As described by Taaffe/Mulhearn:

"The Labour group decided on the 'tactic' of issuing 90-day redundancy notices to the 30,000 strong workforce to gain that period as a breathing space in order to build the campaign. It was absurd to suggest, as the press and to their shame the national trade-union leaders subsequently did, that 30,000 workers were to be sacked."

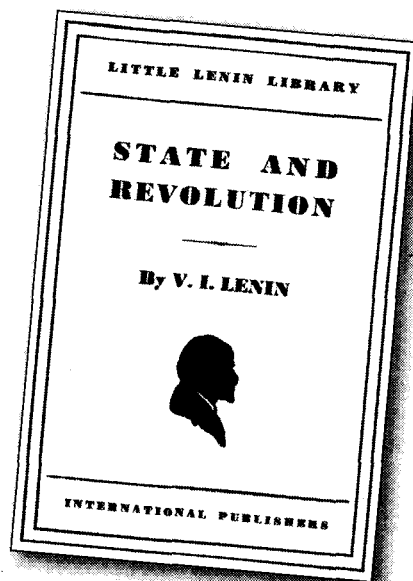


Viktor Bulla

Above: Opening of Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920. Below: Lenin's pamphlet *The State and Revolution* published in 1917.



BD Vigilev



They conclude, however, that "the issuing of 'redundancy notices' turned out to be a major tactical error". Derek Hatton, in *Inside Left*, unwittingly captures the miserable spectacle of self-proclaimed "Marxists" administering capitalism against the workers:

"We argued, that by issuing redundancy notices we could also hammer home the sharp reality of our arguments: that unless more money was available to Liverpool from the central funds then jobs really were on the line. There was never ever any intention to implement a single one of those 31,000 redundancy notices."

Not surprisingly, Militant's redundancy "tactic" was bitterly opposed by the unions. Hatton bleats: "Now we were their employers, and they fought us bitterly every inch of the way. We had told them that the redundancy notices were only a tactical ploy, but they sold the idea to their members as though it was for real. 'Should we let our employers sack us—or should we stand and fight them now?' was the line they took." That is the end result of running the local state in the first place, which means becoming the bosses.

The Labour councillors were surcharged and banned from office by the courts. Militant were rewarded for their decades of loyalty to the Labour Party by being expelled by the Neil Kinnock leadership. The response of Militant to the witch hunt is explained in an appendix to the Taaffe/Mulhearn book: "When faced with expulsion proceedings in 1982, *Militant's* Editorial Board decided to challenge the NEC's unconstitutional and undemocratic move in the courts." Use of the bourgeois courts against political opponents in the trade unions or the workers movement is a breach of the principle of proletarian independence and an attack on the labour movement's strength. Inviting the class enemy to intervene in the internal affairs of the labour movement is to promote illusions in bourgeois democracy by portraying the state as "neutral" between classes. That is the very essence of Militant's Labourite reformism.

What was the result of Militant's proud record in Liverpool? They boast that the Labour vote in 1987 was higher in Liverpool than the national average and much higher than it had been in 1983. In other words, if only that swing had been reflected nationally we would have had... a Kinnock-led Labour government! That's what you get with "socialists" holding executive office and administering the capitalist state. In its own way it's a powerful argument for why you need a workers revolution. ■

Mumia...

(Continued from page 5)

Counterposed to this class-struggle strategy is the policy of many organisations—Socialist Action, the Workers World Party, the Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and others—which long centred their protests on the demand for a new, fair trial for Mumia. With the judicial appeals in which they put their faith nearly exhausted, their plea that the capitalist state deliver justice now comes in the form of petitions to Attorney General Eric Holder to conduct a civil rights investigation into Mumia's frame-up trial and to President Barack Obama to "speak out against the death penalty for Mumia Abu-Jamal".

These hat-in-hand appeals to America's top cop and imperialist Commander-in-Chief are a savage

indictment of the liberal belief in the "democracy" of capitalist class rule. Holder's Justice Department recently threw leftist attorney Lynne Stewart in prison and threatened to extend her sentence by 28 more years for staunchly defending her client, who was accused of terrorist activities. Obama openly announced his support for the death penalty in his run for the White House, including in an interview with right-wing journalist Michael Smerconish, one of the voices calling loudest for Mumia's execution.

After eight years of the despised Bush regime, Obama took office to give a facelift to blood-soaked US imperialism. Reinforcing illusions that Obama represents "change", the reformist left tails after the trade-union bureaucracy, whose programme of seeking "friends" in the parties and state agencies of the capitalist class enemy has gravely dissipated labour's fighting capacity.

Meanwhile, the US military still rains death on Iraq and Afghanistan, inmates from America's vast prison complex to the military's Bagram and Guantánamo Bay dungeons continue to be brutalised and tortured, and bankers get billion-dollar bailouts while workers lose their jobs and homes.

The fight to free Mumia, as with all struggles against social oppression and deprivation, can go forward based only on a clear understanding of the class

forces involved. Make no mistake: In baying for Mumia's blood, the forces of bourgeois "law and order" are sending a message to all who would fight against exploitation, oppression and imperialist war that they, too, are in the sights of the state. Any real fight for Mumia's freedom must be based on a class-struggle opposition to the capitalist rulers, who have entombed this innocent man for more than half his life. **Free Mumia now!** ■

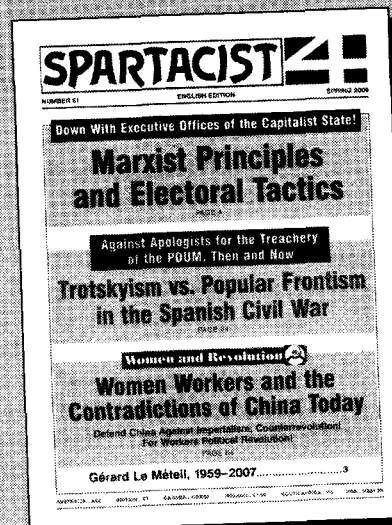
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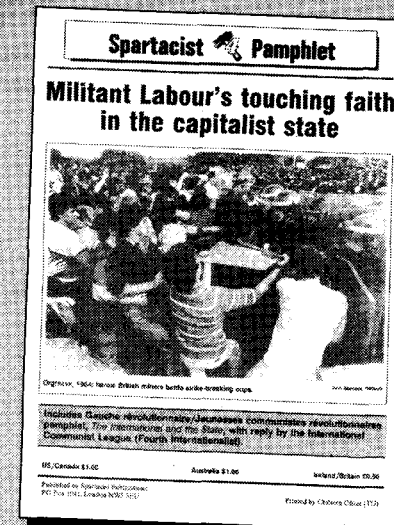
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Labour...

(Continued from page 1)

Airways (see "Shut down Heathrow Airport!" page 12).

Unions: defend immigrants!

Responsibility for the racist climate that has bolstered the fascists rests squarely with the Labour governments of the last 13 years. Under Labour, the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the "war on terror" at home elevated anti-Muslim racism to unprecedented levels. Liberal journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in her *Independent* column (8 March) bitterly complains that the British establishment "has surpassed its previous disgraceful record", treating Muslims as "contemptible creatures, devalued humans". The indifference of Gordon Brown (and Tony Blair) to the countless Iraqis killed and indiscriminately bombed, Alibhai-Brown says, only confirms that "native Iraqis are grains of sand to those who executed the imperial war". Even while the press is filled with revelations showing that "terror suspects" are routinely tortured abroad with the connivance of the British secret services, Muslim youth in Britain are being served with serious prison sentences for protesting against the murderous Israeli attack on Gaza last year (see article, page three).

Labour removed some of the most basic rights from asylum seekers, replacing meagre welfare benefits with food vouchers. Among other things, those incarcerated in detention centres are denied access to healthcare; other asylum seekers have been "dispersed" to sink estates such as Glasgow's Red Road flats where in early March a

mate of racist hostility. The sub-human conditions endured by workers in the meat processing industry—which is worth hundreds of millions of pounds and employs almost 90,000 people—was the subject of a report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A *Guardian* article titled "I'm not a slave, I just can't speak English"—life in the meat industry", summarised the condition of these workers, many of whom are immigrants, predominantly from Eastern Europe, saying:

"Pregnant women being forced to stand for long hours in factory production lines without breaks, or perform heavy lifting under threat of the sack; meat factory workers having frozen hamburgers 'like stones' thrown at them by line managers; women with heavy periods being refused toilet breaks so that they bled on their clothes on the production lines; workers with bladder problems refused breaks so that they urinated on themselves, workers exposed to verbal and physical abuse."

— *Guardian*, 13 March

The unions must organise immigrant workers and demand equal pay at the highest going rate for all work, **no matter who does it!** Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers! No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

Under the slogan of Karl Marx: "Workers of all countries unite!", immigrant workers from Eastern Europe must become a bridge to proletarian internationalist opposition to the European Union, a bosses' conglomerate designed to bludgeon the multiethnic working classes of all Europe.

No vote to Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition!

Following a long period when it seemed likely that Labour would lose



Penny Krantz

Bolton, 20 March: Police attacked Unite Against Fascism protest against racist provocation by English Defence League.

Labour—the unions remain the biggest source of funds for the party". Moreover, these consummate Labourites assert that: "To sit in a canteen, staff room or office and say there's no difference between the Tories and Labour cuts you off from some of the best people around you. You will look like you are some sect on the fringe." Heaven forbid. Better to vote for the party of imperialist occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the party which lavished benefits on the City bankers and which is running on its willingness to shove massive public spending cuts down the throats of working people.

The SWP is also supporting the Trade

the British National Party". Today Tusc's list of candidates includes Keith Gibson of the Socialist Party, who played a leading role in the strikes at Lindsey. Moreover the Socialist Party and Bob Crow appear to decide who is eligible to join Tusc according to whether or not they supported the Lindsey strikes and/or the No2EU coalition. An article by the Socialist Party informs us that the SWP's admission to Tusc was "not automatic" and explains:

"Bob Crow, reflecting the response of RMT militants as last year's Lindsey strike unfolded, immediately and rightly condemned those 'misrepresenting the strikers as xenophobic—a posh word for racist' (in a letter to *The Guardian*, 6 February 2009). The SWP, on the other hand, criticised the strikes as 'nationalist'.

"The SWP took a similar stance towards No2EU, the electoral body which was supported not just by the union tops but a big majority of RMT activists. These and other political mistakes by the SWP will not make winning support for Tusc easier inside the RMT, and other unions too."

— *Socialist*, 3 February

The SWP tried to have it both ways on the Lindsey strike, claiming to oppose the slogan of "British jobs for British workers" while petitioning in the unions for support to the demands of the strike committee, which included a version of local jobs for local workers.

The Tusc leadership allowed the SWP to join, because workers "would naturally want to see the widest possible unity", but both the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and Workers Power, who applied to stand candidates under the Tusc umbrella, were turned down. As a condition of admission both groups were asked to provide membership figures, details of any members they have on union national executive committees who would support Tusc and a statement of "what recommendation did your organisation give, if any, on how to vote in the 2009 European elections" (letter from Tusc to CPGB, 3 February, published in *Weekly Worker*, 11 February). The CPGB answered that they did not call for a vote to No2EU, because it wasn't for "working class unity on a European level"...so they voted Labour! The CPGB will of course vote for Tusc anyway, as well as for "Labour candidates who are prepared to call for an unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, and who pledge to oppose all cuts in public services and benefits" (*Weekly Worker*, 11 February).

In a recent split, the SWP lost three senior cadre—Chris Nineham, John



London, 21 May 2009: Bob Crow at launch of No2EU election campaign (left) which supported chauvinist strikes demanding "British jobs for British workers". Poisonous slogan on placard at construction workers demonstration at Westminster, 3 February (right).



Workers Hammer photos

Russian family—Serge Serykh, his wife Tatiana and her son—tragically threw themselves to their deaths from a tower block, having been refused leave to remain in Britain. This tragedy is not unusual, as *Guardian* columnist Deborah Orr points out, noting "the fact that the three had to chuck down a large wardrobe before they jumped, to break the anti-suicide netting that had been installed, is an indication that they were not the only people in the vicinity who were considered to be in danger of finding their lives intolerable" ("Who is really to blame for the Glasgow suicides?", *Guardian*, 11 March).

Britain's "flexible labour market" is heavily dependent on immigrant workers who work for pitiful wages in a cli-

big in the general election, in recent months the Tory lead has been narrowing. At the mere hint of a rise in Labour's fortunes, the reformist left—including Workers Power and the SWP—jumped to attention, calling for a vote to the rotten Labour Party, to "keep the Tories out". But calling for a vote to Labour in 2010 is hard to stomach for many. Notably it caused something of an uproar in the ranks of the SWP, an organisation that, since its inception over half a century ago, has voted Labour without fail. The SWP cites the age-old excuse that "over the last 50 years the majority of working class voters, between 50 and 60 percent, consistently vote Labour. Just over 4 million trade unionists are affiliated to

Unionist and Socialist Coalition (Tusc). One doesn't have to be a Marxist to be repulsed by Tusc, which upholds the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers and counts among its luminaries prison officers' leader, Brian Caton. Tusc is the successor to the No2EU coalition formed by the Socialist Party and RMT rail union leader Bob Crow for the European Parliament elections last year. We said "No Vote to No2EU", whose campaign consisted of chauvinist protectionism. As a 22 May 2009 article on *BBC News* online put it: "NO2EU was born out of the 'British jobs for British workers' protests at the Lindsey oil refinery and its aim is to provide working class voters and trade union members with a left wing alternative to

Rees and Lindsey German, who criticised the SWP's failure to build a mass electoral vehicle to replace old Labour. In her 13 February resignation statement, German, convenor of Stop the War, opined: "I believe the party leadership has systematically moved away from the perspective applied in the past decade, which has been so successful in building the anti capitalist and anti war movements." Upholding the Respect coalition, an attempt to "try to build a left electoral alternative involving working class people, including Muslims" as "a courageous thing to do", German laments "the abandonment of the methods of building pioneered by Tony Cliff", which he termed "bending the stick". In the recent period the SWP has certainly bent the stick in every conceivable direction. But the SWP failed to grow out of the Socialist Alliance, the Respect coalition or the Stop the War Coalition and overall its numbers have declined, while the Socialist Party's several years-long campaign for a "new mass workers party" has yet to get off the ground.

In the aftermath of counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union in 1991-92, these reformists have followed the rightward shifts of the mass reformist parties, notably the Labour Party, dropping any remaining lip service to socialism that might taint them by association with the Russian October Revolution. Yet despite their opportunistic efforts they failed to cash in. The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, and in the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe was a historic defeat for the working masses of the entire world in material terms. This counterrevolution, which ushered in the bourgeois ideological offensive that "communism is dead", was supported by both the SWP and the Socialist Party.

The SWP as a tendency originated out of the anti-communist Cold War hysteria that accompanied the Korean War of 1950-53. Its founder, the late Tony Cliff, reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union as well as the Chinese and North Korean

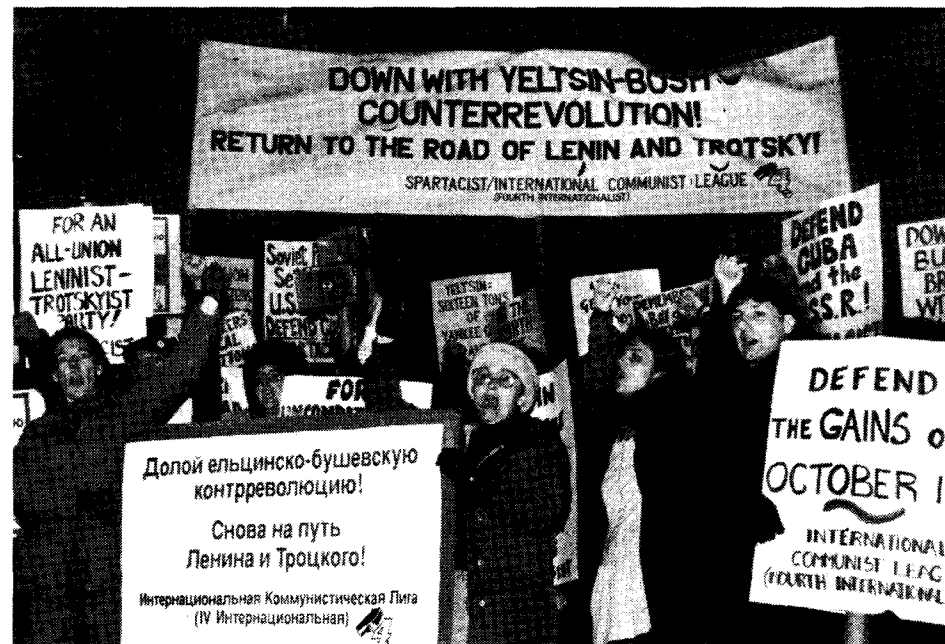
deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and to the Labour government that sent troops to Korea. See "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories" (*Spartacist* no 55 [English-language edition], Autumn 1999). The SWP actually played its small part in helping to create today's

defence of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, and for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. This is the programme we apply today to the remaining deformed workers states — China,

Labour had a sufficiently large working-class vote to get elected to parliament as a majority government. This is no longer the case. As a reflection of Britain's relative economic decline and also a product of the de-industrialisation policies pursued relentlessly both by Margaret Thatcher's Tory governments and by New Labour since 1997, the majority of the population is no longer proletarian. Under Tony Blair in the 1990s the Labour Party began to sever its historic links to the trade union movement (while trying to keep the unions' financial contributions to the party) and to cast around for the support of other social layers, particularly those who had swung to the Tories in the 1980s.

It was the political bankruptcy of old Labour that led to the rise of New Labour, which now stands discredited among workers after a prolonged period at the helm of a country in an economic mess. New Labour is a product of decades of attacks—including by Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s—on working people to break the power of the unions in an effort to improve the competitiveness of British capitalism. Labour was replaced by the Thatcher government in 1979 which prepared a showdown with the miners, culminating in the heroic year-long strike of 1984-85. Defeat in this battle was far from inevitable and was the result of the treachery of the Labourite union leaders, particularly the "left" leaders of the unions in rail and the docks who refused to organise solidarity strikes alongside the miners. The difficult conditions under which the British workers struggle today—including the anti-union laws—are the legacy of the defeat of that struggle and the fact that under the New Labour governments the leadership of the unions have refused to rock the boat with class struggle.

The British capitalist order is based on the dominance of the City of London and the middle-class English Home Counties over the former industrial heartlands of the north of England as well as the national oppression of Scotland and Wales. We oppose the reactionary United Kingdom, which is centred on the archaic institutions of the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established churches. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that fights to overthrow Westminster rule and replace it with a workers government. Abolish the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords! British troops out of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan! For an Irish workers republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles! ■



January 1992: Spartacists demonstrate in New York City, when Yeltsin came to Wall Street.

political climate of post-Soviet reaction. In August 1991 when Boris Yeltsin's imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution staged a counter-coup in Moscow, the SWP triumphantly proclaimed: "Communism has collapsed", describing this as a fact that "should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

We in the ICL fought with all our resources against capitalist restoration. During the unfolding political revolution in East Germany in 1989-90, we unconditionally opposed capitalist reunification with imperialist West Germany. We fought for political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West. Against Boris Yeltsin's forces of counterrevolution in Moscow in August 1991 we headlined: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" We upheld the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military

Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

Counterrevolution in the Soviet Union has led to a profound retrogression in proletarian consciousness. Although it is uneven throughout the world, today even the most politically conscious workers in the capitalist countries by and large do not identify their struggles with the goal of socialism. Our task is to swim against the stream of today's reactionary climate and to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary vanguard party. As Trotsky noted in his article "Stalinism and Bolshevism" (1937):

"Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions. On the one hand the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come. On the other hand the routinists, centrists, and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search of a 'New Word'."

The British SWP's "socialism" only ever amounted to pressuring the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy who are wedded to British imperialism and to parliament. The old Labour Party was born out of a unique situation in which Britain's industrial proletariat was a majority of the population. Thus

a crusade that saw foreign workers removed from a site in Wales and being denied jobs at many other building sites in a racist climate that has been a gift to the fascist BNP.

We told the truth: those strikes are poison to the interests of the multiethnic working class in Britain and workers throughout Europe. We say no vote to any of these traitors in the Unite election and no vote to Labour in the general election. The unions must oppose chauvinist "British workers first" protectionism as well as the "war on terror"—which targets Muslims—as well as all other racist divide-and-rule ploys. What's needed is to mobilise the multiethnic working class against Gordon Brown's Labour government in a fight for jobs for all, through a shorter work week with no loss in pay, and to undertake a union organising drive to draw into their ranks all of the working class, including its minority and immigrant components. In the heat of hard class struggle, workers must replace the Labourite cringers atop the unions with a class-struggle leadership as part and parcel of the fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that will fight for a socialist revolution to establish a workers government.

Victory to the BA strikers! ■

BA strike...

(Continued from page 12)

hand that bites them". But the union bureaucracy is tied hand and foot to the capitalist order and would gladly scupper the strike in the interests of re-electing this rotten Labour government. When the cabin crews originally announced a 12-day strike over Christmas, Unite co-leader Derek Simpson stabbed his membership in the back by publicly condemning their strike proposal as "over the top". The bitter enmity between Unite co-leaders Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley is palpable, but all wings of the bureaucracy are cringingly subservient to the Labour Party. Unite's "political director" is Charlie Whelan, a former spin doctor for Gordon Brown.

With an election for Unite general secretary in the offing, the supposed "left" candidate is Jerry Hicks, formerly union convenor at Rolls Royce, who outdid Unite bureaucrats Simpson and Woodley in his support for the protectionist strikes for "British jobs for British workers" last year. Hicks stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Socialist Party, which was part of the leadership of the anti-foreigner strikes at Lindsey oil refinery. The Lindsey strike launched

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Victory to the BA strike!

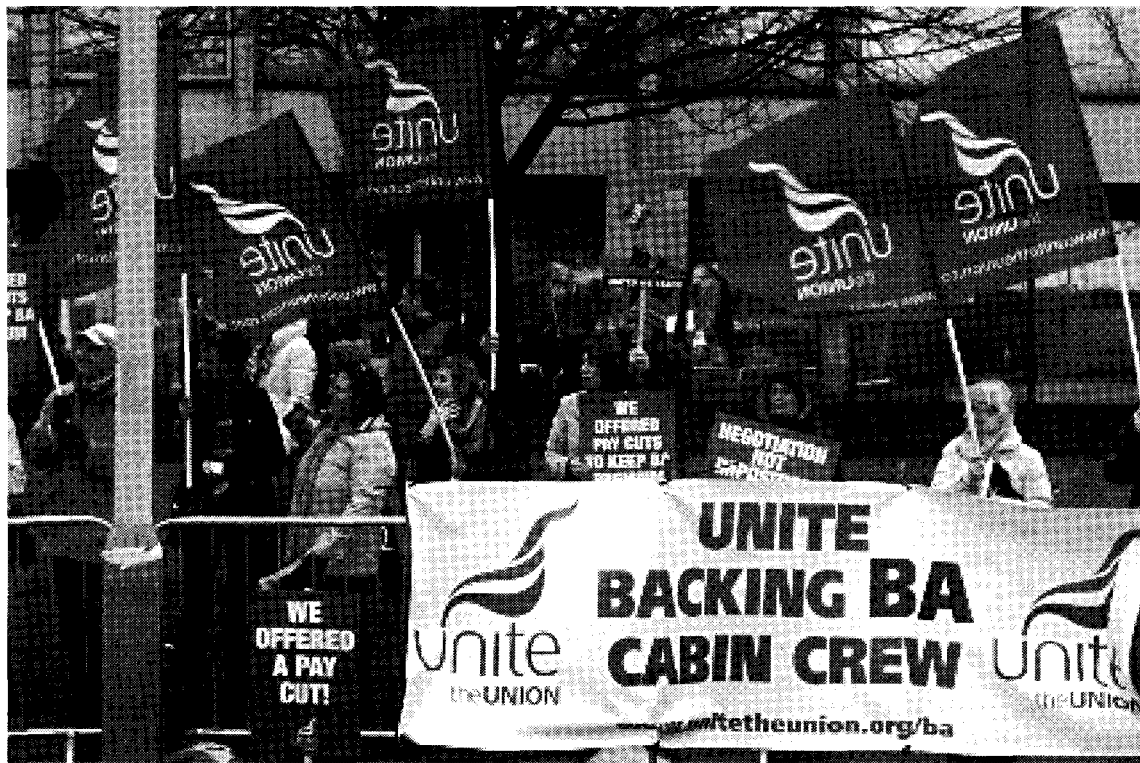
Shut down Heathrow Airport!

MARCH 31—As we go to press, the second in a series of strikes by cabin crews at British Airways (BA)—their first in 13 years—has concluded. A three-day strike beginning on 20 March, followed by a four-day stoppage a week later, have disrupted BA operations at London's Heathrow Airport, one of the busiest in the world. Further strikes are likely to be called for after 14 April.

The BA strikes are among a series of actions by workers in the European airline industry. In Germany, the Lufthansa pilots' union plans to strike for four days from 13 April while in France a strike by air traffic controllers in February disrupted flights from the two main Paris airports. Meanwhile as the worldwide economic recession bites, workers in Greece, who face savage assaults on their wages, benefits and working conditions, have mobilised for several massive strikes over the past month against government austerity plans. In Britain, the rail union RMT has announced a four-day strike from 6 April, which will be the first national rail stoppage since 1994.

The action by cabin crew members of the Unite union has certainly had an impact on BA, which is reported to have lost £7 million a day during the first strike. At the same time there has been scabbing. BA has been operating a flight schedule from London's Gatwick and City airports as well as a number of flights from Heathrow, through a combination of flying aircraft leased from other airlines and other strikebreaking operations. Strikers have faced intimidation and victimisation by BA chief executive Willie Walsh, who has stripped them of concessionary fares, which many use in order to travel to work. He has also vindictively docked the equivalent of twelve days' pay for those rostered for long-haul flights during the walkout. All BA flights must be grounded. Urgently needed is to shut down Heathrow Airport through class solidarity from other Unite members at Heathrow—baggage handlers, check-in staff and mechanics—as well as effective picket lines that no one crosses. As our 19 March leaflet, reprinted below, stressed: "To defeat BA's scabbing, solidarity strikes by other airport workers, in defiance of the anti-union laws, are necessary."

A successful strike by cabin crews at Heathrow Airport is necessary in order to defeat British Airways (BA) boss Willie Walsh's union-busting. Twelve thousand BA workers, members of the BASSA division of the Unite union, are set to take three days of strike action from 20 March and another four from the 27th. Walsh would like to gut BA of



Unite cabin crew picket line at Heathrow Airport, 20 March 2010.

unions altogether, which means all workers have an interest in supporting the BA strike. What's posed is the very existence of unions at Heathrow Airport, the largest remaining bastion of unionised workers in the country.

The airline industry is reeling from the impact of the current recession: figures for 2009 internationally show the largest decline in passenger traffic since World War II, net losses estimated at \$9.4 billion and some 32 airlines going under. With BA making huge losses, last November Walsh imposed major changes on the cabin crew—cutting more than 1100 jobs—which provoked the strike. In a classic union-busting move, BA plans to put newly recruited crew on lower pay and harsher conditions. Contrary to media lies about a pampered workforce, main cabin crew starting pay is currently £11,000 a year, rising after 12 years to £20,000. Make no mistake, if Walsh gets away with this attack on the cabin crews he will take it as a green light to go after all unionised workers at Heathrow, including ground staff, maintenance engineers and baggage handlers. This in turn will have a detrimental effect on airline safety.

Walsh has form when it comes to union-busting: before coming to BA in 2005, he ran Aer Lingus in Ireland where he earned the nickname "Slasher" by cutting 2500 jobs. Walsh would like to turn BA into a long-haul version of notoriously anti-union Ryanair whose chief, Michael O'Leary, egged on BA to "screw the union, lower the costs and lower the fares" (MailOnline, 24 February). Aer Lingus recently announced it will send its cabin crews notices of termination, re-hire them at lower pay and worse conditions and will impose 230 redundancies.

The BA cabin crews have shown impressive resolve in taking on the union-busters. After a December strike

ballot that showed 92 per cent in favour of striking was invalidated by a court injunction, a new ballot in February won an overwhelming 81 per cent support. On the other side, Walsh & Co are preparing for war. They have set aside £2 billion to break the strike and are aggressively building up a scab operation that BA claims will enable them to run 60 per cent of flights during the first strike.

To defeat BA's scabbing, solidarity strikes by other airport workers, in defiance of the anti-union laws, are necessary. BA employs 3000 baggage handlers at Heathrow, and thousands of engineers who service and maintain the aircraft. Without cargo and maintenance, nothing flies. Solid strike action, backed by unionised engineering and ground staff at Heathrow, could bring BA's worldwide operation to a screeching halt and provide a powerful demonstration of what trade unions actually exist for. **BA cabin crew must not be left to fight alone! Picket lines mean don't cross!**

Workers in the airline industry have tremendous potential power—the world economy cannot function without them. Airline workers internationally including the Teamsters union in the US as well as public sector union ver.di in Germany and the Australian Transport Workers Union have pledged to support the BA strikers. Concrete acts of class solidarity across national borders, such as refusing to work scab planes that arrive in other countries, would be of immeasurable help to British workers in their battle against BA. Such internationalism would also stand in powerful contrast to the chauvinist anti-foreigner strikes that have swept Britain's construction sites in the past year demanding "British jobs for British workers", a slogan long associated with the fascists. **Down with nationalist protectionism!**

For international working-class solidarity with BA strikers!

In August 2005, BA ground crews showed their immense power by striking against the mass sacking of over 600 Gate Gourmet catering workers. This "unofficial" strike defied the anti-union laws and brought Heathrow to a standstill, snarling up BA operations and costing them over £40 million. However the union leadership under Tony Woodley of the TGWU (now part of Unite) scandalously repudiated the strike as "unlawful" and left the sacked Gate Gourmet workers, who were mainly Asian women, out to dry. Today the Unite leadership is bending over backwards to capitulate to BA, volunteering their own package of cuts and begging Walsh to put his last offer back on the table. They have even agreed that workers will fork out an extra £37 million a year to cover a gaping hole in the BA pension fund!

Bleatings of David Cameron's Tories aside, the fact that Unite bankrolls the Labour Party doesn't prevent the Labour government from kicking the union in the teeth. Labour's transport secretary Lord Adonis has viciously condemned the strikes as "totally unjustified" while Gordon Brown said a strike at BA would be "deplorable". But only an inveterate Labourite reformist would whine, as *Socialist Worker* (20 March) did, that Brown "should be attacking BA chief executive Willie Walsh". Fat chance. While Old Labour governments routinely sided with the bosses against striking workers, New Labour prides itself on its loyalty to the bankers and bosses and its hostility to the unions. New Labour set out to sever the party's links to the trade unions, which would transform it from a reformist party (ie one with a working-class base but a pro-capitalist programme) into an outright bourgeois party like the US Democratic Party. This process remains incomplete because the party is dependent on union funds, but Labour is moribund as a reformist party.

Behind the condemnation of the strikers by Adonis and Brown stands the state, which has at its disposal a welter of anti-union laws and the courts and cops to enforce them. What the workers have is their numbers, their organisation and the power to halt the industry, hitting the bosses in the bottom line. But what is needed to unleash this power is a political battle against the sell-out Unite leadership.

For the members of the Unite union it must surely rankle that their dues have been funding the Labour Party to the tune of £11 million in the past four years, which amounts to "feeding the

continued on page 11