

Amidst Tory and Labour “law and order” flag-waving Imperialist bloodsuckers bolt door on asylum seekers

The government's proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill aims to stop people seeking asylum in Britain through the creation of a “white list” of countries that are supposedly safe. Anyone claiming asylum from these countries will be classed as “bogus”. The right of oral appeal will be abolished and a “fast track” will render decisions within days. The new bill aims to close “loopholes” in the already draconian racist 1993 Asylum Act. On top of this the government intends to cut off social security benefits from January next year to some 13,000 asylum seekers currently awaiting decisions on their cases.

While Home Secretary Michael Howard rails against “bogus asylum seekers” and “benefit scroungers”, Tony Blair has offered Labour's collaboration to make the bill a “genuine consensual exercise”. If the 1993 Act slammed the door on political refugees, the government intends this new bill to bolt it shut! *Down with the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill!*

The brutal legacy of British imperialist rule

In reality the government has operated its “white list” at least since May this year. For “white list” Nigeria, where persecution under General Abacha's regime has caused thousands to flee, only *one* out of 2032 applicants for asylum in the past

Down with the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill!

year has been given “refugee” status and just three granted “exceptional leave” to stay. Recently Abdul Onibiyo was denied asylum, deported to Nigeria and quickly “disappeared”. *The trade union movement must fight for the right of asylum!*

Almost simultaneously with the news of the proposed “white list”, Nigeria executed writer and human rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa, along with eight other activists who had campaigned for the rights of the Ogoni people against the ravages of Shell (see article on Lanka—another “white listed” country—in this issue).

Assorted liberals lament the abandonment of a British “tradition” of asylum. But today's policies are the direct continuation of the racist colonial rule of the British Empire. They are the latter-day version of the racist and vile “No Dogs and Chinese” signs that once graced Hong Kong parks. Whereas counterrevolutionaries fleeing the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution got a warm welcome, the British government did its best to keep out Jews



Justin Williams

Sister and daughter of Oluwashiji Lapite at London protest in December 1994. Nigerian-born Lapite was beaten to death by racist police.

fleeing the Nazi Holocaust.

Today bloodsucking companies like Shell lord it over former colonies and gouge profits from the superexploitation of working people. Only when the sheer

corruption and incompetence of the neo-colonial regime threatens the profits of the imperialists, as is happening in Nigeria, do they get exercised about “human
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Scargill's dead-end nostalgia for “Old Labour”

Blair to bosses: I'm your man

Labour's 1995 Brighton conference was the latest step in Tony Blair's mission to fashion “New Labour” as a tool for the administration of British capitalism today. The right wing swept the floor at the conference, winning endorsement for the ditching of Clause IV, the NEC decision to overturn Campaign Group “leftist” Liz Davies' candidacy in Leeds and the dropping of opposition to the Trident missile. They even managed to avoid any commitment to a £4.15 minimum wage.

The victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the bureaucratically-ruled workers states in the former Soviet bloc has been followed by a capitalist offensive against the bureaucratically-led workers movements of West-

ern Europe and elsewhere. The social democratic and Stalinist labour bureaucrats played their role as indispensable agents in the victory of the imperialists. But in the face of an intensified capitalist offensive and sharpened interimperialist rivalries their present utility to the ruling class has been diminished and they are being forced to refashion themselves in the New World Order, most strikingly in the United States and Britain but also in Germany and France.

Blair and his cohorts' conference floor victories came after a month of strident declarations aimed at further turning the Labour Party away from its role, since its inception, as the political voice of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, and into

a party explicitly modelled on Clinton's openly capitalist “New Democrats”. To the Liberal Democrats assembled in Glasgow the week before Labour's conference, Blair announced that he envisaged collaboration in government with the Liberals, whether or not the Liberals hold the balance of power in the next Parliament.

Blair's manoeuvre recalls the infamous Lib-Lab pact of the late 1970s, which enforced grinding wage controls and racist policies in the face of growing working-class opposition—and evokes the remote memory of Ramsay MacDonald's “National Government” in 1932. An influx of ex-Social Democratic Party operatives into Blair's entourage underlines the fact that the Labour

leadership is chopping away at the organic links with the trade unions, in favour of a “New World Order” party. The eventual outcome is not clear, but Blair is certainly driving to reverse the historical development which organisationally (if not politically), broke Labour away from the openly capitalist Liberal Party at the turn of the century. His oft-repeated statement, that the “trade unions can expect no special favours from a Labour government”, indicates that the bourgeoisie, after years of successful assaults on the trade union movement, is contemplating taking the risk of ruling via a renovated Labour Party which no longer will possess the automatic levers of suppression and
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Andre Camera



Daily Post

Labour leader Tony Blair (left) and deputy John Prescott: bidding to administer British capitalism. Merseyside dockers picket (right) fighting company job-slashing and union-busting attacks.

Labour...

(Continued from page 1)

control over the working class that "Old Labour" so successfully wielded under Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan.

Financial Times journalist Robert Preston caught the "mood" of Labour's moment when he explained that:

"Under Mr Blair the Labour party is no longer as broad a church as it once was. Those uncomfortable with Mr Blair's mission can worship elsewhere" (3 October).

Blair promises the captains of industry that with Labour capitalism will not only be safe, but that they will acquire an aggressive agent for continuing the assaults mounted by the heavily discredited Tory Party—which is divided and weakened by non-stop factional warfare over Europe and Northern Ireland. Trade unions will remain bound by the web of anti-union laws that have been used to prevent the defence of jobs and conditions. British troops will remain in Northern Ireland to maintain the oppression of the Cath-

olic population. Racist immigration laws will stay. Under Labour the ruling class will gouge out vast profits while working people are burdened with job-slashing austerity. Nor will Labour touch a hair on the head of the reactionary institutions of the monarchy, House of Lords and the established churches.

Jack Straw's infamous attack on "beggars and squeegee merchants", modelled directly on the utterly racist "grind the poor" policies of New York Republican right-wing mayor Giuliani, was a vile token of the yuppie mentality of Blair's team, who are determined to ride roughshod over the sizable portion of the population who are already condemned by the ravages of capitalism to permanent unemployment, or Burger King wages.

Scargill floats his new Old Labour Party

NUM leader Arthur Scargill no doubt touched a chord with many trade unionists and militant youth when he described the Labour Party as "almost indistinguishable"

from the Liberal Democrats. The Labourite *Tribune* (17 November) reported on a national Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT) delegate conference, held a week earlier, which voted by three to one to reject a call for the union to "campaign positively" for a Labour government. Scargill went on to signal the "possibility of founding a trade union-based Socialist Labour Party on May Day 1996, to stand candidates in every constituency in the country", while ruling out opposition to any "socialist MPs" (*Guardian*, 10 November).

Scargill's vision of a Socialist Labour Party consciously harks back to the early part of the century. According to Scargill, this was the time that the Labour Party was fashioned as a "broad church" accommodating the left, non-socialists and trade unions, while maintaining a commitment to common ownership. His "blueprint" for a new party contains an explicit appeal to young people alienated by Labour's right-wing trajectory, who have become preoccupied with petty bourgeois politics within ecology protests, sectoralist social issues and even anarchism:

"Today, radical opposition in Britain is symbolised not by the Labour and trade union movement but by the groupings such as those which defeated the poll tax, the anti-motorway and animal rights bodies, Greenpeace and other anti-nuclear campaigners, and those fighting against open-cast mining."

—*Herald*, 9 November

While opening the doors to every sort of campaigning group, Scargill makes no mention of striking workers, specifically the Liverpool dockers who are being sacrificed on the altar of "New Labour" by the "left" trade union bureaucrats. Indeed, were Scargill to pursue his project of a new party based on the trade unions, it would mean coming up against, and splitting from the trade union bureaucracy which has made its peace with Blair.

Scargill's new party project marks a divergence from his Labour left ally, Tony Benn, who has taken to appealing to "left wingers to stick with Labour" and advising them that it has always been the right who have left the party (*Guardian*, 5 October). What lies behind the Benn/Scargill debate is the Labour left's marginalisation, particularly since the 1984-85 miners strike defeat, and the growing sense that the old structures and power balance of post-1945 Labour are disappearing. Gone are the days when Labour leaders, even of the right, would make noises about "a fundamental shift in the balance of wealth and power"—the better to capture the allegiance of workers for another five years of hard Labour.

In the early 1980s, in reaction to the years of Social Contract wage cuts and a wave of pacifist fear of nuclear war as Reagan and Thatcher geared up their anti-Soviet crusade, the Labour lefts were able to become a

substantial force. But a decisive test of their fundamental loyalty to capitalism came in the miners strike of 1984-85. The future of the union movement was at stake, but the "lefts" in the TUC and the parliamentary party abjectly refused to *break* with the Kinnock leadership, despite its strike-breaking attacks on the embattled NUM. Preferring unity with the right above all considerations of working-class interests, the likes of rail union leader Jimmy Knapp opposed strike action alongside the miners. Striking dockers were sent back to work twice, whereas a fighting Triple Alliance of rail, coal and dock workers could have shut down the country. Scargill himself, operating at the extreme limits of trade union militancy, nevertheless continually oriented to winning the support of the TUC General Council (which opposed the strike from the beginning), and pushed the political perspective of "pav[ing] the way for a general election to elect a Labour government". Scargill today is posing a split over the abandonment of Clause IV—but a split from Labour *at that time*, in the context of bitter class struggle, would have appealed to the very broad layers of workers and the oppressed who desperately wished the victory of the miners. This would have posed a direct challenge to the capitalist ruling class and its labour lieutenants, posing the question of what kind of party and programme is needed for the working class to take power.

On the eve of the 1926 British General Strike, Leon Trotsky pointed out that when decisive class issues were posed, the Labour "lefts" would bend their knee to the right-wing Ramsay MacDonald leadership:

"It should be thoroughly understood that leftism of this kind remains left only so long as it has no practical obligations. But as soon as the question of action arises, the left wingers respectfully cede the leadership to the rights."

— "Problems of the British Labor Movement", 12 January 1926

Scargill and Benn's difference over a "Socialist Labour Party" today has found its echo within the British fake-Trotskyist milieu, who have been forced to state their respective positions of allegiance. Militant Labour welcomed Scargill's news. They saw it as a vindication of their leader Peter Taaffe's line that Brighton '95 confirmed Labour's transformation "into a wholly 'liberal' capitalist party" (*Socialism Today*, November 1995). This leaping to judge the eventual outcome of Blair's schemes simply expresses the Militant group's heart-felt desire to get back the "good old days" of old Labour, so that they can return to the trade they know best: setting up a permanent ginger group in the Labour Party, which is what they were for some 40 years prior to their recent efforts as a separate organisation. Through Harold Wilson's support to the US

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TROTSKY

Trotsky on the trade unions

In 1940, in a world plunged into imperialist war, Trotsky wrote of the role of trade unions:

Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It demands of the reformist bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy, who pick up the crumbs from its banquet table, that they become transformed



LENIN

into its political police before the eyes of the working class.... Impossible are the independent or semi-independent reformist trade unions. Wholly possible are revolutionary trade unions which not only are not stockholders of imperialist policy but which set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism. In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution.

—Leon Trotsky, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (August 1940)

WORKERS HAMMER



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Journalist on death row testifies in Pittsburgh

Mumia Abu-Jamal fights prison harassment



Mumia Abu-Jamal, death row political prisoner.

Death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal testified in his civil rights case against the Pennsylvania prison system in Pittsburgh in October, speaking in court on his own behalf for the first time since his frame-up conviction in 1982. Surrounded by seven to eight prison guards, his legs shackled at all times, Jamal's strong, calm demeanour and powerful testimony defeated all attempts by his prison captors to dehumanise him.

A black journalist and radio commentator, Jamal was sentenced to death for allegedly killing a police officer in Philadelphia in 1981. This summer, he won an indefinite stay of execution as thousands demonstrated internationally and his lawyers sought to win a new trial to prove his innocence. "Hanging judge" Albert Sabo turned down Mumia's appeal in September, and Jamal's attorneys have now filed a "notice of appeal" to the Pennsylvania state supreme court.

Jamal's lawsuit contends that the prison system has waged a furious campaign to punish and isolate him because he is fighting his death sentence, and because his powerful prison writings, centrally his book *Live from Death Row*, expose their racist system of repression. On behalf of Jamal, Pittsburgh attorneys Jere Krakoff and Tim O'Brien challenged as unconstitutional the prison administration's obstruction of Jamal's access to the courts and the media, basing the case on the First, Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution.

"What the hearing brought out", said Rachel Wolkenstein, Partisan Defense Committee staff counsel and one of Jamal's attorneys, "is that heavy political pressure was put on the governor's office by the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police and politicians like State Representative Michael McGeehan. Then the governor's legal office—the very same office from which Mumia's death warrant was issued—oversaw the prison authorities' punishment of Mumia and their interception of his correspondence and cutting him off from the broader public hearing that is a vital part of his defence."

A key operative in this campaign against Jamal, David Horwitz, Assistant Counsel for the Department of Corrections, supervised by the governor's General Counsel, admitted that he had authorised opening and copying Mumia's mail, including from his attorneys Leonard Weinglass and Rachel Wolkenstein, in August 1994. "At least two of these letters were forwarded to the governor's legal office, and who knows what other state officials up to and including the DA received copies," Wolkenstein said. "What they wanted to do was to lock up Mumia's ideas and kill the writer. Where Mumia is concerned, COINTELPRO never ended."

In February 1995, as news of Mumia's book came out, confidential attorney correspondence from Wolkenstein, including notes of a key legal strategy meeting among attorneys, was confiscated. Prison officials also denied Len Weinglass' paralegals access to Mumia, and banned the media from interviewing him, under the thin guise of lack of prison personnel and that Mumia was "the subject of an internal investigation".

Another "mail watch", including reading and copying Jamal's legal mail, was conducted in the period immediately following the 1 June issuance of the death warrant by Governor Tom Ridge and the filing of Mumia's petition for a new trial. Just days later, on 9 June, Mumia was convicted of "misconduct" for being a journalist and for *Live from Death Row*, because, they said, it violated a prison policy forbidding "engaging in a profession". The punishment was 30 days of disciplinary confinement, eliminating all phone calls to his family and allowing only one family visit—at a time when Mumia had only two months to live!

On 13 October, Jamal took the stand in US Magistrate Kenneth Benson's Pittsburgh courtroom. Regarding his "misconduct" for *Live from Death Row*, Jamal testified in his strong, resonant voice, "I pled not guilty, not based on the fact that I wrote it, because it's hard to deny that. The basis of the plea was, the thrust of the misconduct [claim] was a violation of the First Amendment of the US Constitution. To try to infract me from exercising what is said to be a constitutional right, was itself unconstitutional."

Regarding this "write-up for writing", Jamal noted he has written many works in prison. "To be perfectly honest", Mumia testified, "I began writing in the County of Philadelphia jail, while awaiting trial. Some of those essays were put together as a book, sold and distributed under the title *Survival is Not a Crime*." Around 1987, he began writing for radical and commu-

nity publications: "As someone who had never been to prison, I found a new world. It was a form of self-expression, but also a revelation of what it really is, as opposed to how it's reported in the daily press.... What I saw, what I heard, what I smelled, what I perceived around me. They were stories of despair, the hopelessness of some people on death row, stories of suicide, of people losing their way, getting entangled and not getting out."

Jamal said he sought "to talk about and expose conditions on death row, and hopefully to affect and change that reality. I wrote not just for myself, but for everyone on death row, thousands now. As you can see, it's gotten me disciplinary action, write-ups." Although he knew there might be retaliation, Jamal said, he taped a series of commentaries for National Public Radio in 1994—a series NPR cancelled under pressure from the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police.

Those tapes meant all "the difference between life and death", Mumia told the court; they were "a window into my soul as a living man". He did them, "Essentially to save my life. As someone on death row, I know we are not perceived as persons, but as nameless, faceless beings, unknown except as a headline in yesterday's newspaper. By airing on NPR, millions of people would have been in an intimate communication with me—it's a two-way communication, and it humanises me in a way the daily press could not and would not."

Another reason Jamal published *Live from Death Row*, he said, was "To make money. And to use the money to pay, hire and employ lawyers for my appeal, investigators and other support staff." This forthright explanation put to shame the pathetic efforts of the state's eager-beaver "investigator" David Horwitz, who bragged how he chased computer printouts to sniff out supposed subterfuge in Jamal's "stamp money accounts" and to challenge Mumia Abu-Jamal's support groups, such as Equal Justice and the Partisan Defense Committee.

In fact, prison officials, including then-superintendent Love at Huntingdon, were well aware of Jamal's writing, including his 1990 *Yale Law Journal* article and

columns for the local Huntingdon college paper *The Juniata*, which was mailed to the prison. A "surprise" witness, criminologist and professor Ted Alleman, testified that while he was a teacher in the prison, he had openly assisted a Huntingdon prisoner publish a 1985 book, *Caesar's Gladiator Pit*. Not only was no punishment ever inflicted on the author, who proudly kept a copy by his prison bed for years—but the prison even assisted in publicising the book!

Regarding the deadly chilling effect of having his vital legal mail seized, Mumia said he has zero confidence in his ability to exchange confidential legal mail with his attorneys: "The security or confidentiality of my legal mail is, in a word, non-existent.... I have no faith, no trust, no sense of security—all of my mail, slit open outgoing, slit open incoming. I believe that mail I sent to you [counsel Jere Krakoff] was interfered with because I sent you a letter and you didn't get it."

Testimony has now concluded, and the hearing magistrate will make his recommendation to a US District Court judge on whether to order an injunction against the prison system to cease its vindictive and unconstitutional actions against Jamal.

Meanwhile the battle continues outside the courts. Justice for Mumia will begin only when he walks out of prison a free man! Join the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Join the campaign!

Contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX, Tel: 0171-485 1396. Make a contribution today: send/make payable to Partisan Defence Committee and write "Jamal legal defence" on the back of the cheque. All such funds go entirely to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal in New York, without deduction for administrative costs. Send protests to: Governor Tom Ridge, Main Capitol Bldg., Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA. Write to Jamal to express your solidarity: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA.

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Workers Power's "international" falls apart:

Chickens come home to roost over Balkans betrayal

This article dated 12 November 1995 first appeared in the Spartacist pamphlet "Workers Power's phoney international splinters over Balkans betrayal".

Workers Power's refusal to take a stand on the side of the Bosnian Serbs against the heaviest imperialist onslaught since the 1991 Gulf War has finally blown apart its phoney "League for a Revolutionary Communist International" (LRCI). The bulk of its New Zealand section and all of its Latin American supporters have split away in the last six weeks, following several years of proto-factional struggle. The LRCI has now been reduced to its English group, a scattering in Ireland and Western Europe, and a handful of dazed supporters in New Zealand and Australia. As a centrist grouping on the British left posing as a Trotskyist alternative to the larger, reformist SWP and Militant, the existence of Workers Power has long been an obstacle to the building of a genuine revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

As NATO forces were bombing the Bosnian Serbs, a 5 September statement by Workers Power argued that two weeks of a concerted bombing campaign by war jets and cruise missiles did not constitute a decisive imperialist intervention! In fact, this was a decisive shift in the character of the war, subordinating the Croat and Bosnian Muslim forces to the imperialist attack on the Bosnian Serbs, mandating a revolutionary-defencist stance towards the Bosnian Serbs. Yet WP baldly declared that "in the war between NATO and Republica Srpska, revolutionaries continue to take a revolutionary defeatist position on both sides". This is an open repudiation of the elementary Leninist principle of unconditional military defence of a small nation or semicolonial people against imperialist aggression.

This betrayal did not fall from the skies. On the contrary, WP has long been egging on imperialist intervention. Echoing Thatcher and the US Republican Party, it has called for lifting the phoney "arms embargo" against the Bosnian Muslim regime in Sarajevo. At the same time, it has boosted the "defend Bosnia" campaign, a stalking horse for UN/NATO military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs. As we of the Spartacist League/Britain noted in a leaflet calling for an emergency protest demonstration against the NATO bombardment, WP and the rest of the "Workers Aid" crowd have consistently acted as "the allies, dupes and agents of their big brothers in the pro-imperialist Labour leadership".

This open prostration before the imperialist terror bombers appears to have been the last straw for the "Proletarian Faction" (PF, now the Communist Workers Group [CWG]) in the LRCI's New Zealand organisation and for a tendency composed of the Poder Obrero (PO) groups in Bolivia and Peru. Nonetheless, while taking the LRCI to task for siding with the Bosnian Muslims, the PF's fac-

tional declaration does not breathe a word about the need to defend the Bosnian Serbs against NATO imperialism (including the numerous earlier air assaults). Nor does the PF call for lifting the economic embargo with which the imperialists have been strangling Serbia.

While claiming to be against communalism on all sides in former Yugoslavia, the PF writes: "The LRCI had a correct position at the beginning of the war. We were in favour of defending Sarajevo, Tuzla and any multi-ethnic community against the Serbs but without supporting the Bosnian government. We were in favour of defending every community against Muslim, Croat or Serb militia attack." What does this mean, in the context of all-sided communal war? All of the competing nationalist forces in Bosnia claim to be defending "their" community against "ethnic cleansing" by other nationalities. And why single out the role of the Serbs in Tuzla and Sarajevo? In the course of the civil war, the Serbian population of Tuzla has been reduced from 20,000 to 8000, while former Serb villages in the surrounding areas have been razed to the ground.

The claim that the Bosnian Muslim regime uniquely stood for "democratic" and "multi-ethnic" policies was one of the lies pushed by fake leftists—echoing the imperialists—to justify support to the Izetbegovic government. If the Bosnian Muslim forces have carried out ethnic cleansing on a lesser scale than the Serb and Croat forces, it's largely because at least hitherto their military strength has been less. In Izetbegovic's 1990 "Islamic Declaration" he called for "the islamisation of Muslims". Today, his army incorporates elements who fought with the Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* in Afghanistan.

The Poder Obrero groups are also confused over Bosnia. While clearly taking the side of the Bosnian Serbs against direct imperialist attack, their declaration on the Bosnian question talks about "defeatism on both sides in this war when all

play a reactionary role and use ethnic cleansing to produce semi-colonial, ethnic-centred bourgeois micro-states". Up until the decisive imperialist intervention of the NATO bombardment this would have been a correct position. But the Bosnian and Croatian militaries have clearly been *subordinated* to the imperialists, fighting a land war under NATO air cover designed to put the Bosnian Serbs under the heel of an imperialist "Pax Americana". For this reason we pointed out that revolutionaries cannot be neutral between the Bosnian Serb army and the Croat-Muslim alliance forces when NATO bombs are hailing down on one side, and that our revolutionary defencist position mandated taking the side of the Bosnian Serbs during the past two months of imperialist attack.

While both splits from the LRCI chide Workers Power for a general strategy of elevating bourgeois democracy above the class interests of the proletariat, the PF is also trapped in the framework of bourgeois democracy. Its assertion of the right of self-determination to all nationalities in Bosnia is simply a recipe for all-sided communal war. Bosnia is not a nation, and there is no Bosnian "people". Until the forced population transfers, which were an integral part of the recent communalist slaughter, the nations and peoples of former Yugoslavia were particularly heavily intermingled in Bosnia, making any attempt to place the province under the rule of any one of these peoples necessarily oppressive of the others. In such a situation, under capitalism, there is no democratic solution to the national question. Self-determination of one people can necessarily take place only through "ethnic cleansing", ie driving out the other peoples.

From Khomeini and Walesa to Yeltsin and Izetbegovic

Both split groups, whose positions overlap, trace the origins of WP's Balkans betrayal back to its support to Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary counter-coup in the

USSR in August 1991, while claiming that WP's programme had until then been Trotskyist. Thus, the Latin American statement maintains that the LRCI was Trotskyist at its foundation in 1989, but that "since the beginnings of this decade the stalinophobic positions of adaptation to bourgeois democracy have pushed the LRCI towards centrism" ("Resolution of all the Latin American members of the LRCI", end of September 1995). In fact the LRCI's founding document, *The Trotskyist Manifesto*, perfectly captures the centrist cocktail of Cliff-derived Stalinophobia, Mandel-style tailism and "new world reality" obfuscation that Workers Power elaborated in the early 1980s. WP's support to Yeltsin counterrevolution was no aberration. The road was well paved.

The politics of Workers Power are a quintessential example of what Trotsky characterised as the "crystallised confusion" of centrism. While formally adopting a position of Soviet defencism in 1980 over Afghanistan, WP condemned the Soviet intervention against imperialist-backed feudal reaction as "counterrevolutionary" (later also denouncing the Soviet withdrawal as "counterrevolutionary"). In 1981, they "critically" championed Solidarność even while admitting that Solidarność in power would mean capitalist restoration. In 1989, while claiming to be against the capitalist annexation of the former DDR by the Fourth Reich of German imperialism, Workers Power sided with counterrevolution at every crucial stage. The following year, they supported the anti-Soviet, fascist-infested nationalist movement in Lithuania and were caught out collaborating with Russian fascists in sponsoring a "trade union" speaking tour by one Yuri Butchenko. In 1991, they stood, literally, on the Yeltsin barricades.

To counter the splitters' criticisms of its scandalous position on Bosnia, Workers Power points to its history of so-called "anti-imperialism". At best WP's history on this score is one of capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism, at its worst it



Workers Hammer

Workers Power in the Third Camp: shoulder-to-shoulder with *Socialist Organiser* in anti-communist "picket" calling for "Hands off Baltic States" at Soviet consulate, London 16 May 1990.

included the embrace of the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 "Islamic revolution" in Iran. Under the rubric of the "anti-imperialist united front"—a slogan that has become a codeword for a popular front with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist forces in the "Third World"—Workers Power also lined up on the side of the Galtieri dictatorship in Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas war and has proffered political support to the Green nationalists of the IRA/Sinn Féin.

Despite their many, often at least semi-valid, criticisms of particular rightist positions of the LRCI, both the New Zealand and Latin American splits support the anti-Trotskyist line of the "anti-imperialist united front" and neither has any quarrel with WP's anti-Soviet, third-campist positions prior to 1991. Indeed, even after WP openly sided with the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union, they cohabited a common "international" for four solid years. This reflects a centrist denigration of principle that would-be revolutionaries have to break from.

The fate of the LRCI is symptomatic of the general rightward lurch of the centrist left under the impact of the counterrevolutionary wave which has inundated the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe—hailed by the imperialists as the supposed "death of communism"—expressing their own programmatic despair over the prospect of proletarian revolution.

The LRCI's evolution is not accidental. As James P Cannon said in 1940 after the fight against the Burnham/Shachtman "third camp" opposition in the American Socialist Workers Party:

"The question of the Russian revolution—and the Soviet state which is its creation—has drawn a sharp dividing line through the labor movement of all countries for 22 years. The attitude taken toward the Soviet Union throughout all these years has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades and degrees of waverers, backsliders and capitulators to the pressure of the bourgeois world—the Mensheviks, Social Democrats, Anarchists and Syndicalists, Centrists, Stalinists."

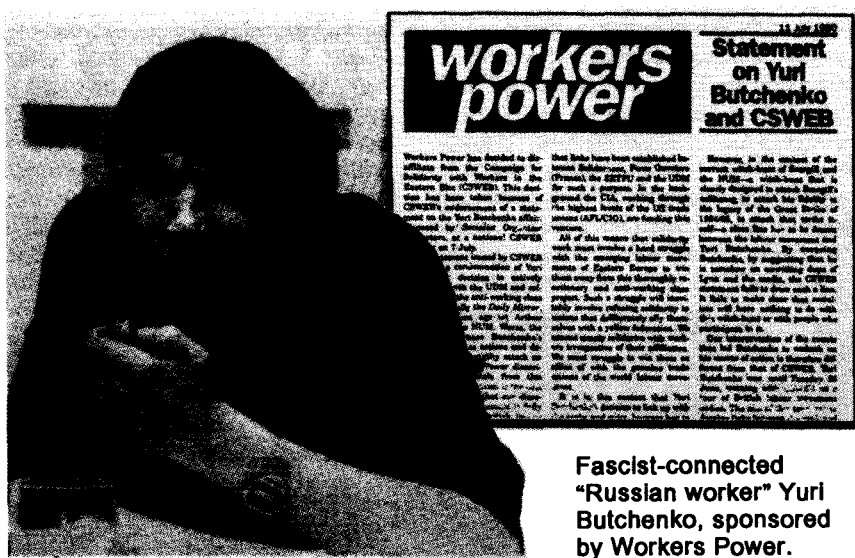
—James P Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*

This applies no less to Workers Power and the United Secretariat than to those like the so-called International Bolshevik Tendency and the Revolutionary Internationalist League, who today claim to offer a "left" alternative to the disintegrating LRCI.

Afghanistan—the Russian Question point blank

The Poder Obrero groups say Workers Power made "a big revolutionary step forward [in 1980] when it broke with 'state capitalism' centrism and re-elaborated Trotsky's theses for the unconditional defence of the Degenerated Workers States". A month after the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, an article in *Workers Power* (February 1980) announced laconically, "we found it impossible to advance a principled revolutionary programme from any other standpoint than that of characterising the USSR as a degenerated workers' state" (*Workers Power* no 12, February 1980). This represented a leftward step from WP's previous state-capitalist position, carried over from its origins in Tony Cliff's organisation, their stance was far from a "principled revolutionary programme".

With the 1980 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan the question of Soviet defencism was, as we said at the time, posed point blank. The Red Army intervened on the side of the radical-nationalist PDPA



Socialist Organizer

Fascist-connected "Russian worker" Yuri Butchenko, sponsored by Workers Power.

regime in Kabul, which was threatened by an Islamic fundamentalist insurgency. The *mujahedin* took up arms in reactionary opposition to a series of bourgeois-democratic reforms, notably measures taken against the enslavement of women such as the "bride price". Heavily backed with CIA money and US and British munitions, the *mujahedin* war also immediately posed the defence of the Soviet Union, on its crucial southern flank, against imperialism.

Recognising this and understanding that—whatever the intentions of the venal Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin—the Red Army intervention opened the possibility of extending the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples, the international Spartacist tendency (precursor of the International Communist League) said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" Many Soviet soldiers saw themselves as fulfilling their internationalist duty in fighting to defeat the imperialist-financed forces of Islamic reaction. But as we pointed out, for such internationalism to have been fulfilled required a political revolution to oust the Kremlin Stalinists and return to the proletarian internationalist programme of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks.

Workers Power tried to carve out a position half-way between the Spartacists and the Labour Party leaders, who to a man (including famous "left" Tony Benn) voted to condemn the Soviet intervention. WP's article "Whose side in the war?" began: "We oppose the invasion of Afghanistan". At the same time, they opined that it would be "tactically wrong for revolutionaries... to demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan".

To square this centrist circle, they hid behind the search for a mythical "third force" (to be based on what they described as "the tiny Afghan proletariat"). Refusing to call for military victory to the Soviet forces, the most left-wing expression of their line was the statement: "In the present conflict between the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) and the pro-imperialist rebels, we are not neutral. We are for the defeat of the pro-imperialist forces" (*Workers Power* no 12, February 1980).

Today, the "Resolution from all the Latin American members of the LRCI" seeks to pin WP's burgeoning Stalinophobia solely on "a minority that postulated a hybrid between the theories of Cliff and Trotsky", claiming that "since the 1990s the old minority was becoming the effective leadership of the LRCI. This explains very much the LRCI's right wing evolution" ("Resolution"). The minority they refer to was led by Keith Hassell, an anti-communist lout who is WP's current supremo. In 1980, Hassell called for immediate withdrawal of the Red Army, arguing that, "It simply is not true that a pro-imperialist Kabul government would

necessarily be a worse political option for the Afghan masses than Stalinist occupation" ("The Afghanistan Discussion: The Danger Signs", *Workers Power Internal Bulletin* no 36, February 1980). Tell that to the Afghan masses today!

Hassell's line was programmatically identical to Tony Cliff's. It was the WP majority, led by the late Dave Hughes, which formulated a "hybrid between Cliff and Trotsky", at bottom a continuation of anti-Sovietism. As Trotsky noted, Soviet defencism and third-campism are like fire and water. Right from those early days in Workers Power, ie in the specific case of Afghanistan, the water extinguished the fire. While remaining mired in the Labourite swamp of British social democracy, WP tried to carve out a niche to the left of the Cliffites and Mandelites. This however brought them head-on against the revolutionary programme of the Spartacist tendency. Flinching at what they perceived as the dreaded spectre of Spartacist "sectarianism" ie principled Trotskyist politics, WP balked at following through its break with Cliffism to a decisive conclusion.

In a classic demonstration of the axiom that "programme generates theory", it was only two years after its formal line change that WP published its "re-elaborated" analysis of Stalinism, in the 1982 pamphlet *The Degenerated Revolution*. This "innovative" gobbledygook was the "theoretical" justification for WP's line on Afghanistan and subsequent support to capitalist counterrevolution from Poland to Germany to Moscow. The document denied Trotsky's characterisation of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a brittle caste whose contradictory character reflected its position of simultaneously being dependent on the existence of the collectivised property forms of a workers state while seeking to conciliate world imperialism in the name of building "socialism in one country". Instead Workers Power proclaimed that the Stalinist bureaucracy was "invariably a counterrevolutionary force", which is analo-

gous to saying the bureaucracy is counterrevolutionary through and through. WP described the anti-capitalist social transformations carried out from above by Soviet forces in Eastern Europe after World War II, as well as the overthrow of capitalism by peasant-based guerrilla movements in Yugoslavia, China and Cuba as "counterrevolutionary overturns".

Workers Power's "critical" support to Solidarność counterrevolution

In August 1980 a mass strike movement catapulted Lech Walesa into the leadership of a sizable portion of the Polish working class. At that point we noted that insofar as the strike and its outcome enhanced the Polish workers' capacity to struggle for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy—which had mortgaged the economy to IMF bankers and conciliated the Catholic church and small-holding peasantry while lording it over the working class—revolutionaries could support it. At the same time we warned that "only a blind man could fail to see the gross influence of the Catholic church and pro-Western sentiments among the striking workers" ("Fight clerical reaction! For proletarian political revolution! Polish workers move", *Spartacist Britain* no 25, September 1980).

At Solidarność' first national congress in September 1981, the forces of clerical reaction and capitalist restoration decisively triumphed. In sharp contrast to the Hungarian workers councils of 1956, which explicitly defended the planned, nationalised economy, the Solidarność congress resolutions made no mention of socialism. Instead they espoused "self-management" and production for profit and took up the CIA-inspired Cold War calls for "free elections" and "free trade unions". We Spartacists recognised that Solidarność had become a company union for the Vatican, the CIA and the Western banks: a giant scab "union" (like the Thatcherite "Union of Democratic Miners") which was making an open bid for power based on a programme of capitalist restoration. Raising the call "Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!" we argued:

"What do revolutionaries do when the Marxist programme stands counterposed to the overwhelming bulk of the working class, a situation we of course urgently seek to avoid? There can be no doubt. The task of communists must be to defend at all costs the programme and gains of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today Trotskyists find themselves in such a position over Poland, and it is necessary to swim against a powerful current of counterrevolution."

—"Stop Solidarity's counterrevolution!" (*Spartacist Britain* no 36, October 1981)

We stood militarily with the Polish government on page 6

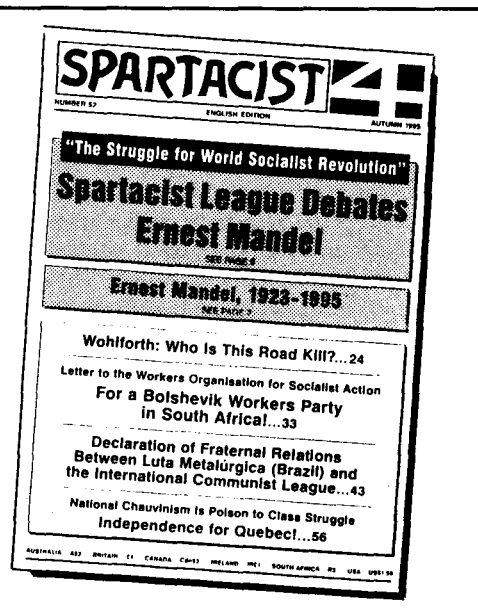
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(Continued from page 5)

ernment of General Jaruzelski when it spiked *Solidarność*' December 1981 power bid. At the same time we recognised that the Stalinist crackdown would only delay the day of reckoning, for *Solidarność* would have to be defeated *politically* within the working class. Thus our call to stop *Solidarność* counterrevolution was integrally linked to the need to forge a Trotskyist party that could lead a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Infatuated with this "mass movement" and reflecting the pressures of the Cold War Labourites for whom the call for "Solidarity with *Solidarność*" was the rallying cry of pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, Workers Power swam in the stream of counterrevolution. While many fake leftists sought to dress *Solidarność* up as a "progressive" movement, Workers Power admitted that it was counterrevolutionary and supported it anyway! Even while acknowledging that all the "dominant tendencies" in *Solidarność* sought the restoration of capitalism, they went on to conclude that this did "not mean that we do not solidarise with *Solidarność*"!

The recent Poder Obrero statement continues to uphold this wretched line, writing approvingly that Workers Power "called for fighting with the Polish workers and *Solidarność* against the hard line Stalinist coup d'état but without making blocks with the church and the bourgeois parties and opposing to fight for the freedom of the KPN and other capitalist parties" ("Resolution"). But the church and the ultrarightist KPN were *at the political core* of *Solidarność*. It was hardly a long step from "solidarity with *Solidarność*" to standing on the Yeltsin barricades in 1991.

What about the Fourth Reich's *anschluss*?

The Latin American groups correctly note that the LRCI's call for "a constituent assembly for the two Germanys in 1989" meant that the East German deformed workers state would be subordinated to "the bourgeois forces of another capitalist country and that the East German Degenerated Workers State could be more easily destroyed by German imperialism". But neither PO nor the CWG breathe a word about the LRCI's 1989 call for the withdrawal of the Red Army from the former DDR, a demand which directly echoed NATO imperialism. The withdrawal of Soviet forces could, and did, only facilitate the revanchist drive for capitalist reunification. When Gorbachev acceded to the NATO powers and agreed to a withdrawal, this was a decisive factor in the eventual counterrevolutionary *anschluss*.

The ICL mobilised the whole weight of our international resources to intervene massively in the critical days of winter 1989, when East Germany stood poised between the possibility of workers political revolution and a stampede towards capitalist reunification. We initiated the anti-fascist demonstration to protest the desecration of the Soviet war memorial in Treptow Park, East Berlin on 3 January 1990, which drew 250,000 people. The ruling Stalinist SED was forced to allow two Trotskyist speakers to address the rally from the platform. Our comrades attacked the incompetence and betrayals of the bureaucrats in Berlin and Moscow, calling for a workers militia and a Red Germany of workers and soldiers' councils.

Alarmed by this mobilisation, in which they correctly saw evidence of the forces

that could prevail against capitalist *anschluss*, the West German bourgeoisie and the Social Democrats went into overdrive, smearing the Treptow protest as a "Stasi trick". This lie was echoed by Workers Power, which wrote at the time: "Shortly after the SED [Treptow] rally... the SED government attempted to re-establish the security police (Stasi) but were prevented by mass mobilisations.... For revolutionaries this is the very stuff of revolution."



capitulation to the imperialists' "captive nations" crusade, a longtime battering ram against the Soviet degenerated workers state. In contrast, the ICL defended the right to secession for all nations with an *anti-counterrevolutionary* leadership. As for the PF/CWG, despite its criticisms, at bottom its line comes down to "Workers Aid to Sajudis", expressed in its call for "the mobilisation of arms and volunteers from outside Lithuania" ("Declaration of

Lech Walesa (waving money) and *Solidarność*: CIA-funded and church-backed. In 1981, WP went all the way with Lech.



The "mass mobilisation" hailed by WP, attacking Stasi headquarters in East Berlin, was a rightist mob shot through with Nazi skinheads and carrying West German flags inscribed with the call, "Germany, One Fatherland"!

As we pointed out in response: "This is the 'stuff' that capitalist counterrevolution is made of. But in its mindless enthusing over 'anti-Stalinist actions' Workers Power couldn't tell the difference between revolution and counterrevolution" ("Workers Power: right turn on East Germany", *Workers Hammer* no 113, March/April 1990). In the March 1990 elections (effectively a plebiscite on *anschluss*), the Spartakist Workers Party was the *only* party to clearly and unambiguously stand against capitalist reunification. WP's response? To call for "abstaining on the vote"! Instead, Workers Power joined the West German bourgeoisie and Social Democracy in screaming for a witch-hunting purge of SED members—which duly came in the wake of capitalist annexation of the DDR and continues to be pursued with a vengeance by the Fourth Reich.

Unconditionally anti-Soviet: Sajudis and Butchenko

In 1990 Workers Power called for "unconditional" support to the drive for Lithuanian independence spearheaded by the thoroughly pro-capitalist Sajudis, which was crawling with outright fascists. In this, WP stood to the *right* of Margaret Thatcher, demanding that the anti-communist "Iron Lady" recognise Lithuania's "independence" and send whatever aid the Sajudis requested.

Today, the document of the New Zealand Proletarian Faction takes the LRCI to task for its scandalous appeal for British imperialist aid to the Lithuanian nationalists. But it does so while accepting the basic anti-communist positions from which this grotesque demand sprang, arguing that the LRCI "correctly called for the unconditional right to self-determination of the Baltic states from the USSR i.e. in the case of Lithuania calling for independent workers state".

Unconditional support means just that—irrespective of the class nature of the resulting state. It does not mean "an independent workers state". The call for independence of the Baltic republics was a cover for capitalist restoration and the LRCI's line was nothing other than a

Proletarian Faction") to bloc with the anti-Soviet Baltic nationalists.

Neither the PF/CWG nor the PO groups mention the infamous Butchenko affair, in which WP (along with *Socialist Organiser*) organised a British speaking tour for a Russian fascist "trade unionist", Yuri Butchenko. Only when Butchenko appeared at a press conference alongside Roy Lynk of the scab "Union of Democratic Mineworkers", as part of the witch hunt against Arthur Scargill and the miners union, did WP cease their sponsorship of his tour. Caught out, WP admitted that they had known all along that Butchenko was in favour of capitalist restoration in the USSR *and* that his visit was brokered by outright fascists. WP had actually met with Butchenko's "control" George Miller, the London representative of the NTS, a grouping which fought alongside the Nazis in World War II and was a creature of British and American intelligence during the Cold War. Nor was this the first time that WP's Stalinophobic appeals to "democracy" led it to betray the militant miners union. In the 1984-85 miners strike, WP echoed the Thatcher government and the scab-herding Labour Party of Neil Kinnock, in demanding a "strike ballot" be taken *after* the miners had already struck!

Yeltsin's White House and "critical" centrism

In the critical events of August 1991 in the USSR, a member of WP literally stood on the counterrevolutionary barricades and even provided a candid eyewitness account of the social dregs in front of the Yeltsin White House. The International Communist League argued that what was necessary was a call on Moscow workers to clean out the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's barricades. Such an independent mobilisation of the workers could have opened the road to political revolution through a showdown with the imperialist-backed forces of capitalist restoration. For its part, *Workers Power* (September 1991) adamantly insisted: "No matter what the socially counterrevolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme, no matter how many spivs and racketeers joined the barricades to defend the Russian parliament, it would be revolutionary suicide to back the coup-mongers and support the crushing of democratic rights"! We said at the time:

"The 'gang of eight' was incapable of sweeping away Yeltsin in its pathetic excuse for a putsch because, as we wrote, it was a 'perestroika coup.' But both imperialism and the forces of internal counterrevolution were aligned on Yeltsin's side. The coup plotters were not only irresolute but didn't want to unleash the forces that could have defeated the more extreme counterrevolutionaries, for that could have led to a civil war if the Yeltsinites really fought back. And in an armed struggle pitting outright restora-

tionists against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, defense of the collectivized economy would have been placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinists' intentions. Trotskyists would have entered a military bloc with 'the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution,' as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Program."

—*Workers Vanguard* no 535, 27 September 1991

Now, the New Zealand PF document excoriates the LRCI's call "for a 'united front' with Yeltsin without conditions" as a position tantamount to a "united front" with imperialism. Nonetheless, the PF can't see any difference between the isolated and pathetic "Gang of Eight" coup plotters—whose programme for a more gradual and controlled introduction of capitalism came down to "perestroika without glasnost"—and Yeltsin, the spearhead for capitalist restoration who was supported by every imperialist power. On the contrary, they write:

"If Yeltsin was serious in opposing the coup we could offer a military bloc with him, but only if he 'broke with the bourgeoisie'. Revolutionaries would have demanded that Yeltsin not only called for and supported a general strike, but called on the army to defect and arm the workers."

While claiming to be for a "workers united front" against what they called Yeltsin's "popular front", the PF calls on Yeltsin to lead a general strike and arm the workers! In other words, their "opposition" to the LRCI's line of unconditional support to Yeltsin's counterrevolution turns out to be a call for a "united front" with Yeltsin... under certain conditions.

A similar line was held at the time by the tiny American-based Revolutionary Trotskyist League, who split with the LRCI following Yeltsin's counterrevolution. Trying to keep a foot in both camps, the RTL simultaneously argued that "no united front with Yeltsin and the restorationists was permissible" while in the next breath saying, "That does not mean that a common struggle against the coup could not have been waged alongside the workers, soldiers and others who had illusions in Yeltsin." This was also the position of the centrist Revolutionary Internationalist League in Britain, which called on Soviet workers to observe Yeltsin's strike call. These Stalinophobic centrists, like the LRCI split groups, couldn't take a straightforward position against Yeltsin's

drive for capitalist restoration because to them any possibility of a military bloc with elements of the bureaucracy was anathema. We denounced groups such as the LRCI as "Traitors not Trotskyists" for their support to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the homeland of the October Revolution. And, while the PF and Poder Obrero groups now complain about WP's craven backing of Yeltsin, they did not find this sufficient cause to split from the LRCI at the time!

Seemingly on the other end of this spectrum is the so-called "International Bolshevik Tendency", which proclaimed its "military" support to the coup plotters, whose only "action" was to hold a press conference! The BT's grandiose gesture was simply a cover for them to finally rid themselves of the albatross of even the most formal nominal Soviet defencism. They rushed to declare the Soviet degenerated workers state dead and buried as soon as the "Gang of Eight" collapsed, writing off in advance any possibility that decisive working-class resistance could have swept away the Yeltsin regime through a proletarian political revolution. Originating as a bunch of individual quitters from our organisation in the early 1980s, flinching from our forthright Soviet defencism, the BT spent the intervening years trying to peddle a counterfeit version of our politics which would be acceptable in social-democratic circles.

Workers Power now tries to cover for its support to capitalist counterrevolution by inanely insisting that Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union remain "moribund workers states". Effectively revising Engels and Lenin on the state—defined as armed bodies of men who constitute an organ for the oppression of one class by another—WP's line boils down to saying that the nature of the state is determined solely by the extent to which property is nationalised. This neatly dovetails with the left Labourite view that "socialism" will be achieved by successive nationalisations through parliamentary enactment.

The "anti-imperialist united front"

In a statement announcing the suspension of the Bolivian group and the expulsion of Jose Villa (one of the leading members of the Latin American tendency), the LRCI's International Secretariat charged that they had capitulated to Latin American nationalism. What hypocrisy! Capitulation to petty-bourgeois Third World nationalism is inscribed in the very programme of the LRCI, the 1989 *Trotskyist Manifesto*. This "re-elaboration" of the Transitional Programme argues that "so long as bourgeois or petit bourgeois forces have a real mass influence in the anti-imperialist struggle it is necessary for the working class to use the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front [AIUF]." WP seizes on a formulation from the Fourth Congress of the Communist International and perverts it in the same way Stalin did in justifying political support for the Chinese bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang.

Of course, there can be specific united-front actions of an anti-imperialist character between proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist forces, for example, a joint protest demonstration against British troops in Northern Ireland. Similarly, revolutionaries extend military support to nationalist forces fighting imperialism, as in the case of the Algerian FLN's struggle against the French army and *colon* terrorists. We would also support and if necessary defend measures taken by bourgeois-nationalist regimes against foreign capital, like

Workers Power described Yeltsin's barricade as manned by "spivs and racketeers" but stood shoulder-to-shoulder with them anyway.



Cárdenas' nationalisation of Mexico's oil fields in 1937 or Nasser's 1956 nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

But for the LRCI, the "united front against imperialism" in fact becomes a formula covering up political capitulation to a supposedly "anti-imperialist" wing of the bourgeoisie. This is a flat denial of Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution, which is based on the understanding that the bourgeoisie in backward countries is dependent on imperialism and that correspondingly even the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can only be accomplished through a proletarian seizure of power.

One of the more egregious examples of Workers Power's application of its "anti-imperialist" strategy was its support for the Khomeini movement in Iran in 1978-79 (about which both the CWG and PO are silent). Here in the name of the "anti-imperialist united front" they embraced a movement whose goal was the imposition of feudal Islamic reaction. To do so they simply denied reality, ie they backed the mass demonstrations in the streets of Tehran in late 1978, early 1979 which placed Khomeini in power.

The international Spartacist tendency warned that the victory of Khomeini would mean white terror against the left, medieval oppression for women, the murder of homosexuals and a Persian-chauvinist assault against oppressed national minorities. Our slogan was "Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs: For workers revolution in Iran!" Where Trotskyists fought against the subordination of the militant oil workers, whose strikes showed the potential for bringing down the hated regime of the shah through proletarian revolution, Workers Power argued "workers must be willing to 'strike

together' with the mullahs, bazaaris, students, peasants etc, ie to form a de facto anti-imperialist military united front" (*Workers Power*, February 1979).

Accusing us of "gross distortions worthy of the capitalist yellow press", Workers Power assured its readers that "it is plainly untrue that [Khomeini's] movement is explicitly for the return of women to the seclusion of the home and their submission to barbaric punishments". Claiming that the Khomeini movement was "anti-imperialist", WP attacked our line as "sectarian" and asserted: "The Spartacist position would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran". But while the shah was at the time favoured by Washington and other Western capitals, he was not simply a "puppet of imperialism" as the Stalinists dubbed him in order to justify their explicitly stagist strategy. Whether under the shah or the mullahs, Iran is a sub-imperialist regional power in its own right. What was posed by the mullah-led mass demonstrations in Iran was *nothing other* than a struggle to replace the shah's autocracy with an Islamic theocracy.

Having supported Khomeini on the road to power, Workers Power went on to side with Iran when it began its ghastly war with Iraq in 1980, a chauvinist border feud which resulted in the slaughter of over a million working people. Once again the excuse was that the imperialists backed Iraq—although in fact they profitably armed both sides to the teeth.

The "anti-imperialist united front" (much beloved of Guillermo Lora, the leader of the group from which Poder Obrero [Bolivia] emerged) was a point of mutual attraction between WP and the LRCI's former Latin American sections when they intersected each other in the

latter part of the 1980s. The Poder Obrero groups today remark approvingly that in 1981 Workers Power "had the courage to agitate for the victory of Argentina in the war that was fought by its 'own' British imperialism" ("Resolution").

Our line in the Malvinas/Falklands war was "Sink Thatcher! Sink the Junta!"—ie *revolutionary defeatism* on both sides—declaring that the best possible outcome would be if the war ground up the military machines of both governments. Argentina was not a semi-colony nor was this a war against imperialist aggrandisement. Britain went to war with the Argentine bourgeoisie over a desolate piece of land hundreds of miles from the Argentine mainland, which had had no Argentine population for 150 years. As for the oil fields around the Malvinas, the Argentine and British governments are cheerfully divvying up the potential proceeds in friendly New York confabs.

Workers Power's line of military support for General Galtieri's Argentina may not have had fatal consequences in Britain, but in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America it was a criminal betrayal which bolstered national chauvinism against proletarian class struggle. For Trotskyists in each country, *the main enemy was at home!* We pointed out that the war was strictly an attempt by two hated right-wing regimes to divert popular hostility into the channel of chauvinist hysteria. While refusing to draw any political conclusions, Poder Obrero now admits as much, writing: "When Argentina attacked the Malvinas the *gorilla* dictatorship wanted to distract the Argentine workers from holding them responsible for their massacres and for the economic crisis which it was creating, and thus to avoid being overthrown" ("Declaración de Poder Obrero [Bolivia] y Poder Obrero [Peru]").

In Northern Ireland, WP's "anti-imperialism" is simply conciliation of petty-bourgeois Green nationalism. Workers Power's slogan of "critical but unconditional support to the IRA" leads them to justify (or worse) every time the IRA pulls a Harrods, Enniskillen or Shankill Road bombing, and British or Protestant civilians die for the accident of their birth. (Meanwhile, closer to home, the LRCI's Irish group condemned the Enniskillen bombing—reflecting the rotten-bloc character of their "democratic-centralist" international.) Most overtly, the LRCI has extended outright *political* support to Green nationalism through its call for "critical support" to the petty-bourgeois Sinn Féin in elections.

But, for the Revolutionary Internationalist League the problem with WP is that it doesn't go far enough in capitulating to petty-bourgeois nationalism. In its publication "Split in Workers Power", the RIL chastises WP for its "initial refusal... to call for a vote to *Sinn Féin*". The RIL also condemns the LRCI for "sectarianism" for

continued on page 8



Workers Power supported the Khomeini movement in Iran 1978-79 claiming it was anti-imperialist. Khomeini's bloody regime executed thousands of leftists.

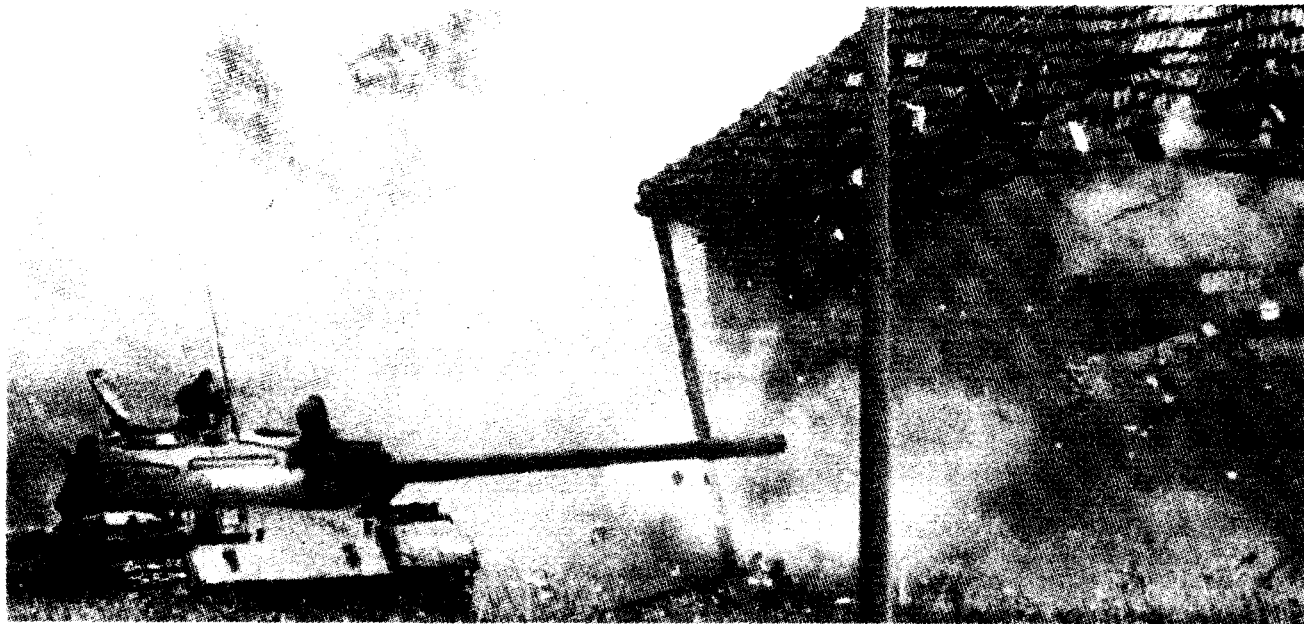
(Continued from page 7)

not calling for a vote to the ANC in last year's elections in South Africa. While WP were to the left of the RIL they have no principled objection to voting for popular fronts. Calling for a vote for this nationalist popular front meant endorsing the shackling of the combative black proletariat of South Africa to its "own" exploiters. The bourgeois-nationalist ANC was brought in to rule as the junior partners of the white capitalist class in order to preserve neo-apartheid rule. What is posed here is nothing less than the elementary Marxist principle of the class independence of the proletariat. But WP has time and again demonstrated its own willingness to cross the class line on this fundamental question by offering electoral support to the reformist workers party component of popular-front coalitions.

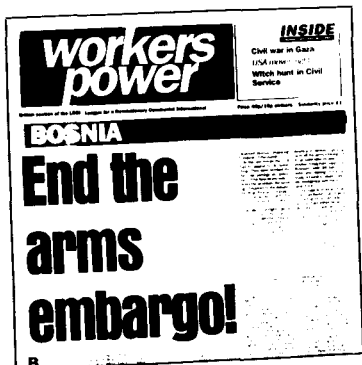
Reforge the Fourth International

The LRCI leadership, the CWG and the Latin American groups all reject the perspective of reforging Trotsky's Fourth International and sneer at the fight of the International Committee in 1953 against its destruction by Pabloite liquidationism. The PF writes off the Fourth International as dead in 1946. Workers Power locates the "degeneration" of the FI over Yugoslavia, an "analysis" borrowed straight from the Cliffites, who occasionally trace their origins to a fight against "the shamelessly opportunist support for Tito's Yugoslavia by the rest of the Trotskyist movement" (*International Socialism* no 76, March 1975). But the Cliff group fought against Trotskyism, not Pabloism, arguing as early as 1948 that the USSR and the deformed workers states were "state capitalist". Cliff was expelled from the Fourth International in 1950 for publicly repudiating the FI's unconditional military defence of the North Korean deformed workers state against imperialism.

Trotsky wrote that those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones. That applied not only to the defence of the now-destroyed gains of the October Revolution, but also to the subjective instrumentality necessary for proletarian revolution, the vanguard party. From this vantage point, the PF and Workers Power naturally disdain Trotskyists like James P Cannon who fought the liquidationism of Michel Pablo, albeit belatedly, partially and



Independent



"Defenceless" Bosnian forces pound Serbs. Workers Power egg on imperialism to "send heavy artillery, tanks and planes" to Bosnia.

the Fourth International.

The essence of Trotskyism is the fight for a revolutionary leadership to lead the proletariat to power internationally. As Trotsky wrote in the founding document of the Fourth International:

"All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet 'ripened' for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only 'ripened'; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. It is now the turn of the proletariat, i.e., chiefly of its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."

Far from being a "re-elaboration" of the Transitional Programme, the LRCI's founding document is an explicit *repudiation* of this central point. Thus, *The Trotskyist Manifesto* claims:

"Trotsky's *Transitional Programme*... pronounced that the crisis of humanity was reduced to the crisis of leadership. However, today it would be wrong simply to repeat that all contemporary crises are 'reduced to a crisis of leadership'. "The proletariat worldwide does not yet face the stark alternative of either taking power or seeing the destruction of all its past gains."

This was written on the eve of the social counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe and the USSR!

The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state has released a wave of

pent-up imperialist frenzy against the poor, the dark-skinned, the oppressed and the working people of every continent. The "neo-liberalism" that Poder Obrero describes so savagely in Latin America, the unending absolute *decline* of the African continent under IMF tyranny, the rapine of capitalist encroachment into China and Vietnam (where conditions in the "special economic zones" resemble those Engels described in the Manchester mills of the 1840s), the catastrophic collapse of the ex-Soviet economy, accompanied by epidemics of the diseases of poverty and the burning fires of nationalist despair, the steady, if unfinished, assault on the "welfare state" in Western Europe—all this only drives home with renewed impact what Trotsky wrote in 1938.

A necessary task in resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership is the fight for revolutionary regroupment through a process of splits and fusions, seeking to break subjectively revolutionary elements from reformist class collaboration and centrist wavering. The unglueing of the LRCI is convincing evidence that an "international" based on lash-ups where all parties hold their differences in reserve, and with enough programmatic "flexibility" to span British Labourism and Latin American nationalism, cannot avoid the fate of fracturing along national lines or dying silently in the shadow of defeats, just like the centrist components of the London Bureau. As Trotsky said:

"By its very nature opportunism is nationalistic, since it rests on the local and temporary needs of the proletariat and not on its historical tasks. Opportunists find international control intolerable and they reduce their international ties as much as possible to harmless formalities... on the proviso that each group does not hinder the others from conducting an opportunist policy to its own national taste."
—"The Defence of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition" (September 1929)

The LRCI's prostration before the altar of bourgeois "democracy" reflects how deeply it has imbibed the "death of communism" cant of the imperialist rulers. But they are hardly drinking from a new well. Throughout Cold War II, Workers Power consistently found itself in the camp of its "own" bourgeoisie behind the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As it went along, the centrist trimmings on its Labourite anti-Sovietism were shed, leading to its bald-faced capitulation to imperialism over Bosnia today. Those repulsed by the LRCI's present politics would do well to recall that those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. ■

primarily on their own national terrain.

As we wrote in our Prometheus Research Bulletin, *Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism*: "This petty-bourgeois idealism and disdain for the centrality of the party question—that is, the crisis of revolutionary leadership—is typical for the British pseudo-Trotskyist left. Steeped in years of chummy hobnobbing in the Labour Party milieu—whether 'deep entrist' like Grant's Militant Tendency and a host of USec supporters over the years, or perpetual 'critical support' to Labour in elections à la Workers Power—for them Trotskyism consists of erudite analyses rather than *the fight to build an independent revolutionary vanguard*."

Our tendency arose from factional combat against the rightward degeneration of the once-Trotskyist American Socialist Workers Party in the 1960s. We also fought tooth and nail against the degeneration and worse of Healy's Socialist Labour League, but these fights in turn stemmed from the early International Committee's resistance to Pablo/Mandel, whose centrist adaptationism destroyed

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Sri Lanka: bloody "People's Alliance" onslaught against Tamils

For twelve years, since the horrific government-instigated anti-Tamil pogroms of 1983, the island of Sri Lanka has been one of the bloodiest places in the world. Now, after a major offensive, including aerial and artillery bombardment, the army is reoccupying the town of Jaffna, which for the last five years has been the bastion of the de facto Tamil mini-state run by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The People's Alliance (PA) government, headed by President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's populist capitalist Sinhala-chauvinist Sri Lanka Freedom Party, is demonstrating that it is every bit as committed to drowning the struggle of the oppressed Tamil minority in blood as the previous United National Party (UNP) governments were. We say: army out of Jaffna! For the right of Tamil Eelam!

Despite the heavy bombardment, government spokesmen have issued claims that civilian casualties have been limited to a mere handful. In September, one day after the government imposed censorship on reports of the war, planes bombed a crowded school yard in broad daylight, killing more than thirty children. Half a million or more refugees have fled their homes before the advancing army. The government continues to block relief supplies to Jaffna residents, who have been forced to endure an economic blockade and now face the prospect of starvation and disease. The army may have

succeeded in planting their Sinhala Lion flag over Jaffna, but the only way it will hold the territory is through indiscriminate communalist slaughter.

The capture of their Jaffna bastion is a major strategic blow to the Tigers. But these ruthless and effective guerrilla rebels will remain a contending military force. Since April the "Sea Tigers", with a large component of women fighters, have destroyed more than a third of Sri Lanka's small navy, threatening fragile supply lines to the north. While the army has concentrated its troops in the Jaffna peninsula, the Tigers operate freely through wide areas of the Eastern province and government leaders continue to live in fear of suicide bombers like those who assassinated Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and UNP president Premadasa.

The People's Alliance came to power in August 1994 amid a wave of popular anger against 17 years of bloody, corrupt UNP rule. It promised a negotiated peace in the north, abolition of the bonapartist executive presidency, ending unemployment and lowering prices for essential foodstuffs. When Kumaratunga's peace efforts, strongly opposed by both Sinhalese chauvinists and Tamil extremists, were blown out of the water this April—along with a good deal of her navy—the government turned around and negotiated a \$500 million purchase of aircraft, boats, armoured vehicles and infantry weapons. Kumaratunga's fragile eight-

party coalition now faces a spiralling defence budget along with IMF/World Bank demands for further attacks on living standards.

The *Lanka Guardian* (15 October) reveals that the PA's "brains trust"...was assisted, if not tutored, by a small well-knit group of NATO diplomats. Despite its populist rhetoric, the PA government is beholden to its imperialist overlords. Kumaratunga desperately hopes that victory over the LTTE and her government's anti-Tamil bloodbath will appease the reactionary forces lining up against her. She also hopes to drown mounting popular unrest against the regime's austerity measures.

President Kumaratunga is truly an heir of the Bandaranaike dynasty. Her father SWRD Bandaranaike rode to power on the basis of "Sinhala Only" chauvinism in the 1950s. This targeted Tamils and English-speaking Burghers (people of mixed European and Sinhala or Tamil stock). Moreover, it was an "anti-imperialist" measure which never prevented the elite's children (including the Bandaranaike family) from learning English. But it did cut off whole generations from the market and international communication, and fuelled the frustrated and atavistic communalism of Sinhala youth, whose revolt in the late eighties was drowned in blood. Her mother (the present prime minister) led the anti-Tamil popular front which butchered the 1971 youth uprising of the then-leftist and now extreme Sinhala-chauvinist JVP.

Contrary to the Sinhala-nationalist myth, Sri Lanka only truly became a "unitary state" under British colonial rule. The national and communal divisions are a direct product of British divide-and-rule policy. Since independence the drive of Sinhalese nationalism has been remorseless and bloody. A cycle of anti-Tamil communalist outbreaks culminated in the 1983 pogroms, a watershed which signalled the effective partition of the island.

The Tamils of the north and east have the right to establish an independent state of Tamil Eelam. At the same time the east has an interpenetrated population, consisting not only of Sinhalese but also of Tamil-speaking Muslims, who have asserted an identity of their own in the face of both Sinhalese Buddhist and Tamil Hindu-centred nationalism. The only equitable resolution will come through socialist revolution. Within the framework of capitalism, the contending nationalist forces will determine what constitutes the territory of Eelam through communalist bloodletting, as happened with the 1947 partition of India. This "battle for the land" is already being carried out with Tiger massacres of Sinhalese and Muslim villagers. In some places, as in the Welioya settlements in the north-east, the hapless and poverty-stricken Sinhalese villagers are settlers who are used to break up contiguous Tamil areas, drive Tamils from their land and shield army bases. But

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Asylum...

(Continued from page 1)

rights". The artificiality of such states that issued from the post-colonial era, and the national and communal differences within them, are the results of the policies of divide-and-rule with which the British and other imperialists played off one ethnic group against another. And you can be sure Britain will assist their neocolonial hatchet men with arms supplies and the training of the officer corps for the suppression of their own people.

We oppose the liberal pro-imperialist calls on the West for economic sanctions on Nigeria. Economic sanctions feed into inter-imperialist rivalries and always impact heaviest on working people. The real challenge to South African apartheid capitalism throughout the late 70s and 80s came from the organised struggles of the powerful working class. In the end run, as in South Africa, sanctions and boycotts are designed to enforce the will of the dominant imperialist powers. Labour's Robin Cook has urged the government to seek UN oil sanctions and freeze the military regime's bank accounts. Echoing the reactionary hue and cry about "economic refugees" he calls for "increasing aid to help ordinary people—thus curbing the flow of economic migrants which had prompted the Government's Asylum Bill" (*Guardian*, 17 November).

Nothing short of socialist revolution under the programme of permanent revolution, linking up to revolution in the advanced capitalist countries and creating federations of socialist republics in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent can provide genuine equality of the peoples living in these areas. This will put an end to the domination of imperialism and the concomitant brutal nationalist, ethnic and religious warfare that has sub-

jected hundreds of millions to oppression, starvation and death.

The current Immigration Bill is part of a racist Fortress Europe "consensus" agreed upon by the main European imperialists. France wants to keep out Algerians, while Germany particularly wants to exclude tens of thousands of Roma (Gypsy) peoples fleeing the rabid nationalism that has accompanied the demise of the Eastern European deformed workers states. The escalation in the numbers seeking asylum is a direct reflection of the capitalist "New World Disorder" that has followed the collapse of the Soviet degenerated workers state, with its accompanying severe economic dislocation, and nationalist, fratricidal wars across the world.

Racist Fortress Europe anti-immigrant legislation comes alongside an all-sided assault on social benefits. European capital no longer needs cheap, imported labour on the previous scale. To save the costs of unemployment benefits, socialised health care and other social programmes, the bosses want to ship "surplus" workers back to their Third World neocolonies. The proposals to have employers check immigration status will be used to target blacks and Asians. The government wants to enlist workers from local councils, schools and hospitals as immigration police. *Trade union action is needed to spike the government's racist plans!*

While more asylum seekers are compelled to run for their lives, even fewer than the current four per cent of asylum seekers will be granted refugee status. At the moment 6000 are detained in Campsfield, a virtual concentration camp, and other such centres awaiting, sometimes for years, decisions that often mean life or death. *Free all the interned! Shut down Campsfield concentration camp now! Full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers and their families!*

And if all this were not enough—to be

an immigrant or a member of any oppressed minority in Britain is to fear for life and limb from both the emboldened fascists like the British National Party, and from the forces of the state itself: its cops and immigration police. The state murders of Joy Gardner, Oluwashiji Lapite and Brian Douglas go unpunished. And as the family of Richard O'Brien (beaten to death by eight cops) can tell you, just having an Irish accent is all it takes to become a target. *For mass trade union/minority mobilisations to stop racist attacks!*

Today the eternally Labour-loyal *Workers Power* (November 1995) pleads with the Labour Party to "put its money where its mouth is" on the question of immigration. But the Labour Party in and out of power has always promoted racist immigration and nationality controls. It was a Labour government who first introduced "patriality"—aimed mainly at excluding Asians whose parents or grandparents were likely not born here. Thatcher's notoriously racist 1981 British Nationality Act rested on the provisions prepared by the previous Callaghan Labour government. And in 1992 the Labour leadership made a deal that allowed the passage of the draconian Asylum Bill. That's Labour's "money". As for its "mouth", Jack Straw recently called for a "robust system of immigration laws and controls", joining in the racist hysteria about the influx of "economic" migrants. Still, you can be sure that *Workers Power* will say vote Labour in the next election.

The despair generated by living conditions in racist, capitalist Britain has enhanced the growth of nationalist separatism along with the growth of reactionary outfits like the US-based Nation of Islam (NOI) led by Louis Farrakhan. Labour MP Bernie Grant calls for the government to give money to repatriate black and Asian people back to their countries of origin, giving

succour to fascists who also talk about repatriation but only as part of beating the drum for their real aim: genocide.

Grant's views on repatriation scored him a welcome on the platform of the London NOI meeting held on 16 October, the same day as the US "Million Man March". To thundering applause Grant stated that: "I'm with the fiercest fighters in Britain today" (*Independent on Sunday*, 12 November).

Fighters for what? Certainly not against racism. The NOI with its anti-Asian, anti-Semitic, anti-abortion, anti-woman, homophobic, separatist, pro-capitalist programme has nothing to do with the struggle for black liberation. The Million Man March—organised under the rubric of "atonement"—puts the blame for oppression squarely on the shoulders of the oppressed; not the blood-sucking capitalist class which has created the hellish conditions of racism. Moreover, black women were told to stay at home—according to Louis Farrakhan (the man who wanted to see Malcolm X dead) that is their place.

In Britain and throughout Western Europe, foreign-born workers and their children occupy positions in strategic industries. The struggle against anti-immigrant racism is intertwined with the mobilisation of the working class in order to sweep away this decaying capitalist system once and for all. To achieve this we need a Bolshevik Party, a champion of all the oppressed.

Rescind the suspensions on RIL supporters!

As we go to press, news has reached us that student supporters of the Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) face suspension by campus administrations. This witch hunt comes after Tory party chairman Mawhinney was hit by paint bombs. *We demand that the suspensions be rescinded immediately!* ■

Labour...

(Continued from page 2)

in Vietnam, the sending of the troops into Northern Ireland, the Lib-Lab pact, the stabbing of the miners strike, and to this day, Militant has continued to maintain that a "socialist transformation" can be achieved by an "enabling act" passed through the "Mother of Parliaments"!

On the other side of the reformist spectrum stands the Socialist Workers Party, which announced in a conference report by leading SWPer, Lindsey German that: "The SWP calls for a Labour vote in general and local elections, despite what Blair has done. Labour is still connected with the trade union movement. A vote for Labour is a class vote" (*Socialist Worker*, 11 November 1995). Not far behind them is the right-wing centrist Workers Power, who believe that the best way to deepen the mistrust in Blair, is to build active support "for a series of demands that will force a Labour government to act in the interests of the millions of workers it claims to represent" (*Workers Power* no 194, November 1995)! Such a statement is totally anti-Marxist. Whether under Blair or Tony Benn, a Labour government in the bourgeois parliament would be a capitalist government, which *cannot* act in the interests of the workers. Indeed, the problem with all the various permutations of "critical" advice to Labour, whether it be SWP-style Labour-loyalism or Militant's born-again "independence" is that they remain tied to the same old parliamentarist framework, ie to the maintenance of the capitalist order.

Marxists recognise that the road to building a revolutionary vanguard party rooted in the proletariat, lies through sharp political battles against the existing pro-capitalist Labour leadership. The Labour Party is a *bourgeois workers party*: a party that has always been saddled with a pro-bourgeois leadership with a maximum programme of parliamentary reform. We aim to exacerbate the contradictions between the aspirations and objective interests of the working class base, centrally organised in the trade unions against the policies and actions of the pro-capitalist leadership. While maintaining strict programmatic independence from all wings of the Labour bureaucracy, revolutionaries can employ various tactical options to enhance these contradictions within the Labour Party.

When the 70s Callaghan Labour government began to face increased hostility from workers over its austerity Social Contract, we advocated the use of the tactic of conditional opposition to candidates in the 1976 parliamentary by-elections. We said that: only if you—a Labour candidate—actually stand out unambiguously, in words and deeds against the Social Contract, would it be possible to consider giving a vote to you.

The 1981 deputy leadership contest between Cold Warrior Denis Healey and Labour left Tony Benn, marked a showdown on key issues within the Labour Party: for or against the CIA-loyal exponents of Cold War; for or against the architects of coalition and austerity. This situation dictated that a Trotskyist propaganda group should have extended critical support to Tony Benn—in order to intensify and follow through the split, to drive out the blatantly pro-imperialist CIA-connected right wing and place Benn in a position where his left-reformist politics could be more effectively exposed and combatted. As we said at the time, Labour can betray without the CIA connection.

Smash the anti-trade union laws!

Blair's conference "victory" was assured by the big trade union vote delivered to him



Marlin Argles



John Harris (IFL)

Labour left allies, Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill: diverging views on the Labour Party. But during the 1984-85 miners strike Labour lefts refused to break with the treacherous Kinnock leadership.

by the likes of Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) and John Edmonds of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers union (GMB), in return for the "promise" to maintain the 50 per cent union block vote. Blair's "vision" of a new Labour administration is underpinned by a pliant trade union bureaucracy which has written the anti-union laws into its anti-working-class strategy, forbidding even the mildest trade union resistance. Its shackling of working-class struggles has led to the present ruinous state where trade union membership has fallen from 13 million (56 per cent) of the workforce in 1979 to 6.5 million, under a third of the workforce.

Any real working-class fight against the years of wrenching austerity and union-busting attacks must of necessity challenge the draconian anti-union laws. Not through empty phrases about working-class rights mouthed once a year at conference, but through *hard class-struggle action*. It could start with a fight in support of dockers and rail workers who confront bosses' attacks aimed at conditions and destroying trade union organisation through the imposition of casualisation. Reports of "wildcat" strikes by angry sections of the working class occur more and more frequently. On 16 November T&G members at Dagenham walked out in protest at the Ford bosses' miserly pay offer. In Scotland, postal workers have staged a national strike and have set up flying picket lines. Scandalously, but all too predictably, these strikes are almost always deemed "unofficial" by sellout trade union leaders who don't want to be anywhere near real class struggle.

While the Labour conference was jiving to Blair, Liverpool T&G dockers were involved in a desperate struggle to defend their jobs and union against the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), which had dismissed 500 dockers for refusing to cross a picket line of sacked workers fighting against company casualisation moves. As a Merseyside dockers leaflet distributed to a TUC-called anti-racism rally on 28 October explained, the MDHC is "determined to turn the clock back to the time when you had to line up in a pen and if your face fits you get work for the day."

The dockers' fight has attracted widespread support. A rally in Liverpool on 7 October brought together over 2000 trade unionists and supporters from across the city, including members of the Fire Brigades Union, who have carried out a series of strikes against the job-slashing attacks of the Labour-controlled Liverpool local authority, and UNISON care workers who struck against wage-slashing attacks. But what was needed was joint strike action to link up with the dockers, and militant mass picket lines to shut the port down tight and spread the strike to other ports across Britain. Criminally, the T&G leadership under Bill Morris refused to grant "official" backing to the strike, let alone organise the

full force of the powerful T&G workforce, including lorry drivers to shut down the port. Instead Morris & Co have sheltered behind the government's anti-union laws to cover their treachery, leaving the sacked dockers locked out while the Birkenhead docks are operated by newly-hired scab labour.

Earlier this year in the T&G elections, Morris was the favoured candidate of much of the fake left, including Workers Power and the Socialist Workers Party who urged support for Morris against Tony Blair crony, Jack Dromey. They had taken Morris' very occasional verbal opposition to anti-trade union laws as good coin. We said that there was no basis to support either candidate. Morris' criminal betrayal of dockers confirms what we said at the time, that the leadership battle "was an intra-bureaucratic conflict that did not go beyond an exchange of rhetoric among loyal Labourites. Old-style treachery was pitted against New Labour betrayal" (*Workers Hammer* no 146, July/August 1995).

It wasn't just Liverpool dockers whose struggle has been knifed in the service of "industrial peace". London Underground workers fighting the deterioration of working conditions and management attempts to impose casual labour were itching to engage in strike action after months of ballots and court hearings. But on the eve of their 48-hour strike, scheduled for 7 November, they learnt that they had been sold out and their strike suspended by RMT bureaucrats overriding the opposition of shop stewards.

For proletarian internationalism!

Political subordination to the Labour leadership has its own reactionary logic. This was shown by Scargill's role in derailing the opportunity for strike action against the pit closures in late 1992-early 1993. Despite clear indications that trade unionists were ready to take action, the NUM leaders organised a class-collaborationist alliance (popular front), stretching from the TUC and Labour leadership through the Liberal Democrats to the Archbishop of Canterbury to the out-and-out racist Tory MP Winston Churchill Jr. The basis of this nationalist alliance was the appeal to preserve "British industry" through calls for import controls. Imperialist trade blocs, nationalist protectionism and trade wars pave the way for shooting wars. The imperialist bourgeoisies will invest anywhere they can make a higher return on their capital. The only answer to the grinding effects of the world capitalist market, which attacks the working class across the globe, is to build *international proletarian unity*, with the perspective of creating an international planned economy through socialist revolution. This is not a new fight: Karl Marx among others founded the International Working Men's Association to promote this aim.

A decisive question for any would-be

leadership of the working class is their attitude to their own imperialist state. During the fight against Blair's attack on Clause IV the Benn/Scargill opposition raised the call for unilateralism and demanded a reduction in arms expenditure. As proletarian internationalists we counterpose the slogan: *not a penny, not a man to the imperialist war machine!* We opposed NATO and the Common Market, which were creations of US imperialism for the purpose of fashioning an anti-Soviet alliance in Europe. We were the only ones to initiate a protest on 2 September against the massive imperialist terror bombing of the Bosnian Serbs. We called for Britain, US, UN, NATO out of the Balkans, and for defence of the Bosnian Serbs against imperialist attack. Much of the fake left fell in behind the Labour Party, echoing Blair's pro-imperialist, pro-Bosnia line. Those, like the SWP and the Militant, who hung back from the pro-Bosnia line, refused to call for the defence of the Bosnian Serbs, handily keeping the lines open to Tony Benn's Committee for Peace in the Balkans. Benn's call for an end to direct military intervention, while simultaneously supporting the UN presence, provides an alternative route for imperialist domination.

In February of this year, at a "Defend Clause IV" rally held in London, Arthur Scargill announced that today Tony Blair is trying to achieve what Margaret Thatcher failed to do: "wipe socialism off the agenda". He described the 1945 Attlee Labour government as having the most massive radical programme ever seen. But as an SL supporter responded:

"Is Clause IV, as comrade Scargill would put it, the socialist principle of the Labour Party, or does Clause IV represent a figleaf for the Labour Party? Because if you look at the history of the Labour Party in power—if you look at 1945 or any of the Labour governments—the Labour Party has never touched a hair on the head of capitalism."

Whatever the talk, socialism has never been on the Labour Party's agenda. Blair says it straight—but earlier Labour leaders just lied. In *Workers Hammer* no 144 (January/February 1995), at the time of the debate over Clause IV, we printed "What revolutionary Marxists stand for", stating:

"Expropriate the capitalist class without compensation. Those who labour must rule! Westminster parliament is a talking shop instrument of bourgeois rule. The Labour Party leaders are the servants of the ruling class. Forward to a class-struggle Marxist workers party. For a workers government based on workers councils.... We fight to build a party like the Bolshevik party led by Lenin and Trotsky, which organised the workers in the October 1917 Russian Revolution. We fight to reforge the Fourth International: 'Its task—the abolition of capitalism's domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—the proletarian revolution' (L Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme* 1938)." ■

Lanka...

(Continued from page 9)

the massacres of unarmed villagers, women and children included, are indefensible atrocities, mirroring the worst excesses of the Sri Lankan armed forces and pogromists against Tamils.

The Tamil population of the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo, swollen with refugees, is held hostage to the warmongering and communalist hysteria. Frequent police sweeps and round-ups lead to the "disappearance" of Tamil youth. Recently, police admitted that over 20 decomposing bodies, found in lakes near Colombo and other towns, were Tamils tortured to death in the headquarters of the notorious police Special Task Force.

On this island there were once fertile possibilities of joint class struggle across ethnic and religious divisions. Today the working class is battered and terrorised along communal lines. No group epitomises this tragedy more than the overwhelmingly lower-caste, mainly women workers of the upcountry tea plantations. Superexploited by state corporatism, private estate and imperi-

alist tea marketing houses, they are a prime target of the Sinhalese pogromists. The petty-bourgeois nationalists of the LTTE have no answer to their plight, except population transfers to "Tamil Eelam". Moreover, they are lumbered with the communalist leadership of the Ceylon Workers Congress, led by Thondaman, an ancient nepotistic landowner and profiteer who has served in both UNP and PA governments. In the recent period, plantation workers have carried out a series of strikes in opposition to the government's privatisation plans threatening jobs and homes. They have had to confront strike-breaking police and government-sponsored vigilante mobs. Meanwhile there have been a succession of strikes and occupations, including by women textile and Free Trade Zone workers. In September, railway workers shut down the entire railway network for a day.

The government has announced a wage freeze, compelled workers to give up a day's pay for the war effort and established special police units to suppress workers struggles. The war on the Tamils and the plight of workers, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, is a product of betrayals perpetrated by the

established leaders of the working class. Just as they joined the anti-Tamil Sinhala-chauvinist popular-front government of Mrs Bandaranaike in the 1960s, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party serve in today's PA government. The Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), a split from the LSSP and the official section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat in Sri Lanka, has a sordid history of class collaboration. Recently NSSP leader Karunaratne called on the Sinhala-communist JVP to support "Tamil-speaking regiments" in the army! In fact this demand is raised by certain Tamil quisling groups who actively work with the army in hunting down and killing LTTE supporters.

The Revolutionary Communist League, Lankan section of David North's "International Committee of the Fourth International", while on this occasion raising the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the Sri Lankan troops from the north and east of the island, deny that the Leninist recognition of the right of national self-determination is valid today for the Tamils or any oppressed nation, thus giving back-handed support to "unitary" Sri Lanka. Despite the longstand-

ing links between various left and ostensibly Trotskyist groups in Britain and Lanka, when more than 12,000 Tamils, many of them refugees, marched through the centre of London on 18 November in a militant protest against the onslaught on Jaffna, the only British group in attendance was the Spartacist League.

During WWII, the Ceylonese Trotskyists took the lead in establishing the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India. Then, with Tamil working people of the island and south India serving as a vital bridge, the struggles of the Tamil and Sinhalese working class could have been the catalyst for revolutionary mobilisations throughout India. Today the island is a microcosm of the Indian subcontinent, a prison house of national, caste, sexual oppressions and indescribable exploitation of workers and agrarian toilers. The task throughout the subcontinent must be to build revolutionary working-class parties to lead the working class and its allies in socialist revolution. For the right of Tamil Eelam! For federated workers republics of Eelam and Lanka, part of a socialist federation of South Asia! ■

Divorce...

(Continued from page 12)

property but of the entire ruling class. Such a programme can only be realised through the struggle for socialist revolution, that is the working class must rule.

For free abortion on demand!

The question of the oppression of women and most especially the right to abortion cuts to the heart of the Irish clericalist state. Fighting for free abortion on demand means having to confront the Labour Party and the Democratic Left misleaders who capitulate to the Catholic church. Far from confronting them, Socialist Worker and Militant Labour both tail them. The Socialist Workers Party's campaign exhorting people to "Stand up to the Bishops" and "Vote for Change" is simply the stuff of Labourite reformism. At the time of the X case, when thousands of young women demonstrated on the street to win the right of a young girl to travel abroad for an abortion, the SWP wasn't doing much "standing up to the Bishops" when they came out with their notorious leaflet asking for "abortion rights for rape victims", and forget the rest of women. We say: all women have the right to free abortion on demand.

Militant Labour, as consummate reformists, declare that the fight for divorce is part of a struggle for a "democratic and secular Ireland where people make the laws, and where all religious views are respected, but none is given the right to dictate" (*Militant*, October 1995). So much for even socialist speechifying, not to mention the necessity of workers rule and the materialist struggle against religious obscurantism. And on abortion, they say "no exporting our problems abroad. For the provision of abortion in Ireland through the health service." Aside from deliberately leaving out the question of the cost and provision of abortion, they pander to the reactionary notion, spread by Catholic reaction, that abortion is a shameful "problem". The problems for Irish women who seek abortion are caused by the fact that contraceptive advice and assistance is not readily available without charge and they cannot obtain abortion free and on demand.

The disgust and anger felt over the child sex abuse accusations against priests

is not only being used to constrain the church but also to bolster the bourgeois morality underpinning the institution of the family, the chief instrument of women's oppression under capitalism. We insist that sex involving young people is not *a priori* a crime, but are for replacing the whole network of "age of consent" laws by the principle of effective consent, applicable to people of all ages. The guiding principle of sexual relations ought to be nothing more than mutual agreement and understanding. In contrast, the Workers Solidarity Movement's spring issue of their paper ran the headline calling to "Keep the paedophiles out of our schools". This put them on the side of right-wing reaction and its campaign to drive any teacher with "suspect" sexuality out of the schools, while in the same article they launched a defence of priests and nuns teaching in schools. This goes hand in hand with the WSM doing the donkey work, leafletting and fly posting for the Labour Party *et al* in campaigning for *only* abortion information and no more than a yes vote in the divorce referendum.

And of course, through the divorce campaign, Sinn Féin (SF) and Republican Sinn Féin (RSF) keep their heads down. SF, while agreeing with the right to divorce, know that to make women's rights an issue means confronting the Catholic church and splitting their own movement, just as they were split over the X case when their supporters marched on demonstrations both for and against the right of women to travel to have abortions. And for RSF, "The national question is paramount and when faced and solved all other issues will fall into place and be cleared" (*Saoirse*, August 1995). For RSF, as it always has been for nationalists, the question of the workers, women and oppressed must wait until the national question has been resolved. Clerical reaction cannot be appeased. Irish history is replete with examples, from Parnell and Mrs O'Shea to the homophobic outcry against Sir Roger Casement to the church hierarchy's role in backing the Treatyites in the Civil War, where the church and its "moral" teachings have come down on the side of imperialism and reaction. The nationalist perspective and the current "peace" process fraud, as a living and dangerous example, is to pressure imperialism for a place in the imperialist world order. Just as the oppression of women, deeply and inextricably woven into the fabric of Irish

class society, can only be solved through the overthrow of capitalism, so also a progressive solution to the national question and the conflict between the interpenetrated Protestant and Catholic populations in Northern Ireland can only be achieved through workers rule. *For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland! No forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles!*

Stop Youth Defence/SPUC reaction!

While the church is somewhat constrained by the recent scandals from launching a wholesale onslaught for a no vote in the referendum, neither it nor its allies are down and out. An orchestrated campaign about the "dangers to children" and the prospect of increased taxes preaches that there is no alternative to the "god-given" inequities and vindictiveness of capitalist society. The No Divorce Campaign is led by Rory O'Hanlon, a reactionary anti-abortion former High Court judge who believes law-making power derives from god, Dr Gerard Casey of the Christian Solidarity Party and one Peter Scully, a founder of Youth Defence. Linked to the NDC are also the Solidarity movement and Human Life International with its connections to the anti-abortion terrorists of Operation Rescue in the United States. Another small organisation in this lash-up is Muintir na hÉireann, which has attacked Ministers Mervyn Taylor and Alan Shatter with the anti-semitic slur that being Jewish they cannot understand Irish society. And as on the question of abortion rights, the sinister Youth Defence organisation, with its fascist core harkening back to O'Duffy's Blueshirts, are the shock troops of Catholic reaction, who have physically targeted pro-abortion forces and leftists. The capitalist rulers turn to the fascists when the popular front fails to stifle the class struggle. The strategy of ignoring Youth Defence as is practised by Militant Labour and the SWP is dangerous and suicidal. Far better to stop them when they are small, but both groups play down the danger of fascist growth. With criminal complacency, SWP denies that Youth Defence have a fascistic core and rather, with its call to keep Ireland Nazi free, portrays the threat of fascism as something that could only come from outside. The

powerful trade union movement with its heavy component of women workers must be mobilised to stop these reactionaries wherever they try to organise or to disseminate their reactionary anti-women literature. *For mass trade union mobilisations to stop Youth Defence/SPUC reaction!*

Women's liberation through socialist revolution

Only working class revolution and the establishment of a planned economy can provide the material conditions for women's liberation, freeing them from the domestic slavery of the home to play a full part in social life. This will require at the very least the resources of nationalised, planned economies throughout these islands, within the framework of a voluntary federation as part of a socialist united states of Europe. For women and all the oppressed, including youth, gays and travellers, to be free the working people must rule. In that struggle, above all what is needed is a revolutionary Marxist party, vanguard of the working class and tribune of the oppressed like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the workers in the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia. *For women's liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

Corrections

In *Workers Hammer* no 147, September/October 1995, in the article "Defend the Welling protesters!" a photo caption incorrectly stated that a PDC-initiated protest at New Scotland Yard in defence of Welling anti-fascists occurred on 5 March 1993. It should have read 5 March 1994. In the article "On the imperialist warpath" in the same issue, we refer incorrectly to a 5 August 1995 demonstration co-organised by the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina. This demonstration actually occurred on 6 August 1995. Also in this issue, in the article "'Peace' fraud strains at the seams", the Irish coalition government is incorrectly described as Fianna Fáil, Labour and Democratic Left. It should have read Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left.

WORKERS HAMMER

Dublin government offers referendum on timid reform

For the free, unconditional right to divorce!

We reprint below a leaflet produced by the Dublin Spartacist Group on 14 November 1995.

After years of procrastination and timidity an Irish government has finally decided to hold a referendum on 24 November proposing the removal of the state's constitutional ban on divorce. Under capitalism reforms which are won in the interests of the exploited and oppressed are always reversible, as the current onslaught against abortion rights in the United States shows. Nonetheless despite the severe restrictions imposed by the amendment on the future availability of divorce, the Dublin Spartacist Group is calling for a "yes" vote in the referendum.

Divorce in Ireland has been outlawed since 1925 when the treatyite Free State government abolished even the highly limited divorce provision that had been available under British imperialist rule. This prohibition was later codified in de Valera's clericalist constitution of 1937 which was drafted under the watchful eye of the Catholic hierarchy. The proposed amendment is far from making available free, unconditional divorce at the request of either partner that simple human decency demands. Those seeking a divorce will have to convince the courts that they have been living "apart" for at least 4 of the previous 5 years and that there is "no reasonable prospect of a reconciliation" between them. They must then convince the courts that "proper" provision has been made for any children that may be involved.

Those seeking freedom from an unwanted marriage will face the daunting prospect of having to throw themselves—and their children—on the tender mercies of an Irish judiciary riddled from top to bottom with the reactionary Knights of Columbanus and Opus Dei! There can never be justice from the capitalist courts on any question. The judiciary, like the police, cannot be reformed into something more "sensitive", "understanding" and less anti-woman as wished for by the tame reformists of Militant Labour. Our demand "Government out of the bedroom", goes with opposition to government meddling in and regulation of the difficult and highly personal area of family relationships. Divorce should be easier than marriage: marriage needs the consent of two people, divorce should require the decision of only one. Leading SWP spokes-

man Eamonn McCann has touted the British state's Orkney child abuse tribunal. But state intervention into personal life is to bolster the conservative morality of the institution of the family as a bulwark of capitalist exploitation, not to act in the interests of the oppressed.

The divorce amendment is being promoted energetically by those silk-suited "smoked salmon socialists" of the Labour Party: Dick Spring and Minister for Equality and Law Reform Mervyn Taylor. From the very beginning these traitors to the working people have made clear their determination to grant as little as possible in their desire to appease clericalist reaction. Spring only recently echoed arch-reactionary Eamonn de Valera by

signed to give a face lift to the Irish clericalist state to head off social unrest. The referendums of 1983 and 1986, and the heavy church intervention, were deeply divisive. More recently the X case provoked an explosion of angry protest. Dick Spring and the Labour Party master-minded Mary Robinson's presidential candidacy in 1990 to continue to tie the oppressed working class and women to the clericalist order through generating reformist illusions in Robinson's "Rainbow coalition". Both Robinson and Spring's Labour Party advocate appeasing the Loyalist reactionaries and British imperialism. All the minimal social reforms, from abortion information to limited divorce, have been proposed with an

authority has been deeply undermined by seemingly unending revelations of sexual and financial scandal, lies and hypocrisy, cover-ups and innumerable accusations of child sex abuse. It is no accident that the steady drip-drip of scandal about the Catholic priesthood comes in the months before the divorce referendum. The revelations are being used by the liberal bourgeoisie to tarnish the church's reputation in order to exercise some control over the Catholic church, not to bring social justice. They only want to adjust the still pervasive influence and power of the Catholic church in favour of themselves, when elementary democratic principle demands the complete separation of church and state and the destruction of the power of the church as an institution in society.

Numerous priests stand accused and some convicted of horrific crimes of rape and child abuse and we certainly do not oppose the prosecution of the perpetrators. What has also fuelled public anger is the cover-up and hypocrisy of the church, including payment of hush money. The exposure of the brutality of the church which has for centuries, through pontificating from the pulpit sought to control and oppress the working class, women, youth and gays in this country, has undermined its authority. There was a time not so long ago when Ireland was seen as an alternative papal headquarters if Italy went communist. Today the Irish church hierarchy is stymied in making even cosmetic accommodation to the changes in Irish society as diehard reactionaries are appointed to its leadership by the pope, godfather of Solidarność capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. Weeding out the "bad apples" will not change the fact that as a key institution maintaining bourgeois class rule, the church has fought, in the name of anti-communism, the unions, the working class and any progressive social measure. From opposing free health care for mothers and children to abortion, the church has condemned workers, oppressed women and their children to suffering, poverty and even death.

The political power of the church in Ireland will not be defeated by parliamentary reform or constitutional referenda. The secularisation of education and provision of free, quality health care requires the expropriation not just of the church's

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1992: angry young women protest reactionary clericalist anti-abortion outrage.

declaring, no doubt after looking thoughtfully into his own heart, that severe restrictions on divorce are necessary in Ireland because of some innately conservative "Irish psyche". Taylor poured forth reassurance that there will be no "quickie divorces" and no "divorce culture" here. And through all this quietly sits Proinsias De Rossa whose reputed objections to a 4 year "cooling off period" evidently are not strong enough to shift him out of his coalition cabinet seat.

The divorce referendum is only the latest in a series of "liberal" reforms de-

signed to give a face lift to the Irish clericalist state to head off social unrest. The referendums of 1983 and 1986, and the heavy church intervention, were deeply divisive. More recently the X case provoked an explosion of angry protest. Dick Spring and the Labour Party master-minded Mary Robinson's presidential candidacy in 1990 to continue to tie the oppressed working class and women to the clericalist order through generating reformist illusions in Robinson's "Rainbow coalition". Both Robinson and Spring's Labour Party advocate appeasing the Loyalist reactionaries and British imperialism. All the minimal social reforms, from abortion information to limited divorce, have been proposed with an

eye to the Unionist politicians of Northern Ireland to provide "pluralist" window dressing aimed at giving the appearance of distance from the Catholic church. Now the same class-collaborationist popular front occupies the government offices and as Taoiseach John Bruton recently made perfectly clear, it is introducing limited divorce in order to preserve "social stability" (*Irish Times*, 12 October 1995).

The Robinsonites are attempting a balancing act in their effort to give the clericalist state a face lift without provoking a clerical backlash. Today the church's

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!