

Down with racist capitalist rule!

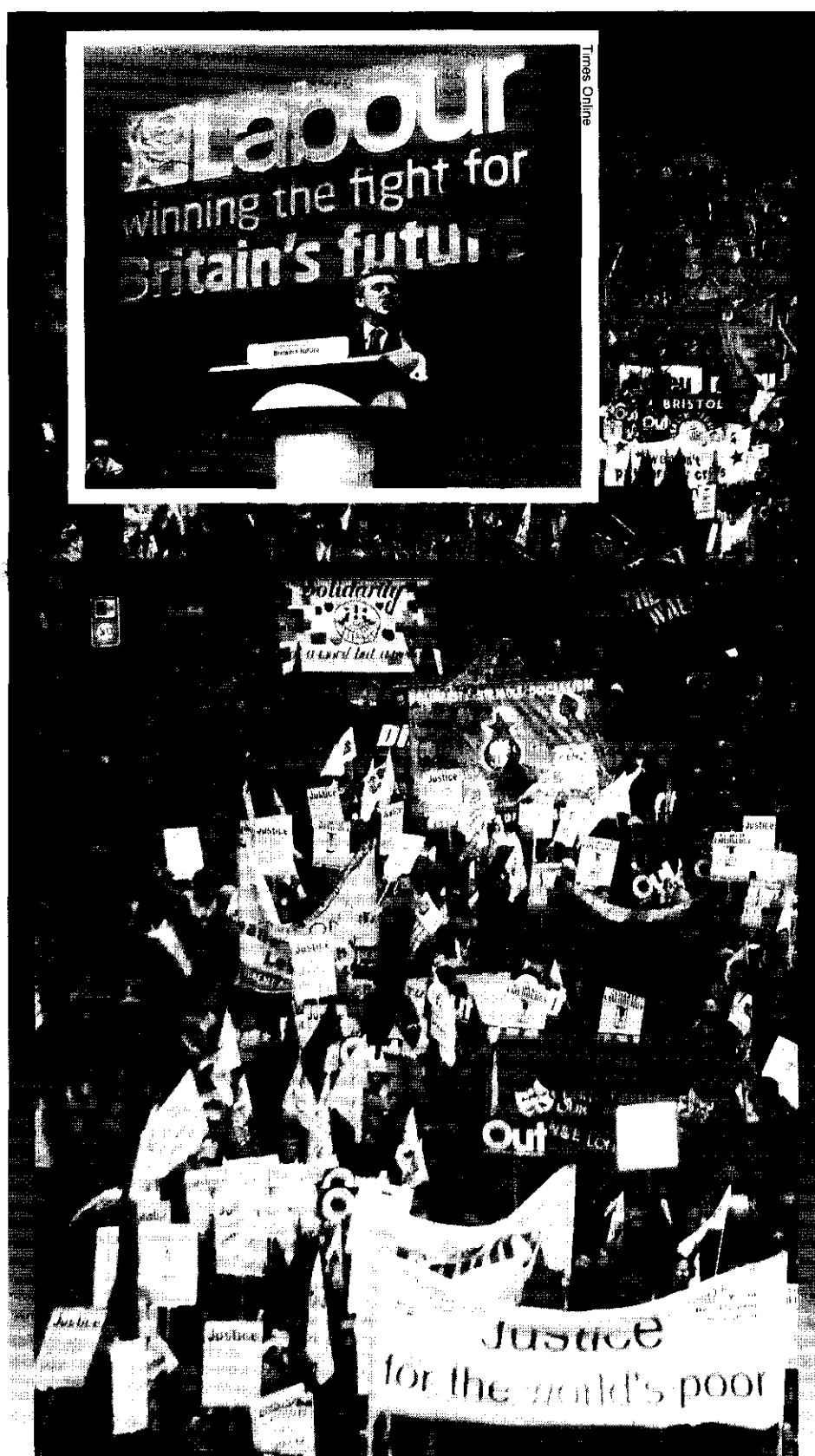
The bankruptcy of Labour —The case for socialist revolution—

If the elections to the European Parliament held in June are anything to go by, the Labour Party is in the throes of a political crisis at the end of twelve years in government. Labour was trounced at the polls, coming in third behind David Cameron's Tories and even beaten by the xenophobic United Kingdom Independence Party, while the fascist British National Party (BNP) won two seats in the European Parliament. Labour's dire election results, coming at a time of widespread fears over job losses and in the context of a huge scandal over MPs' expenses, signal almost certain defeat at the general election.

To say that New Labour in office has alienated its traditional base of support is an understatement. The majority of the population opposes the brutal occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. ~~Britain's minorities have deserted~~ Labour in droves, especially those of Muslim background, who have been relentlessly targeted by the racist "war on terror". Meanwhile immigrant workers are scapegoated for everything from job losses to lack of housing and more.

Responsibility for whipping up the racist climate that played into the hands of the BNP lies squarely with the Labour government. As an article by John Nicholson, a leader of the Convention of the Left, says: "Now there are British fascists in the European Parliament and there is no question that it is Labour's fault. Blair and Brown and a succession of home secretaries have gone out of their way to legitimise the BNP, seeking the approval of the Daily Mail for increasingly racist measures before the far-right had even thought of them" (*Morning Star*, 7 August).

In government, Labour held true to Peter Mandelson's declaration that the party was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich". Mandelson, who was fired for corruption on more than one occasion, was brought back into the Cabinet last year by Gordon Brown in an effort to revive the government's image. New Labour continued Margaret Thatcher's devastation of manufacturing industry that has resulted in a vast reduction in the size and weight of the proletariat that historically formed the party's core membership. This went hand in hand with slavish support to the City of London: the financial sector now accounts for over seven per cent of gross domestic product, larger than in most developed countries, while manufacturing has shrunk in the last decade from around 20 per cent to 13 per cent (*guardian.co.uk*, 30 August). Thus the international banking crisis had a tremendous impact on the British economy, for which the working people are



London, 28 March: Thousands of trade unionists march in opposition to job losses caused by economic crisis. Above: Gordon Brown addresses Labour Party conference, September 2008.

being made to pay a heavy price, especially in terms of job losses.

Last year's government bailout of the banks has pushed public borrowing to £13.3bn in June, and total borrowing now stands at a whopping 56.6 per cent of gross domestic product. This recalls the level of debt Britain incurred

to pay for World War II and fears abound that Britain may default on its debt. Prior to the financial crash, the booming house prices enriched some, but created an excruciating housing crisis for the majority of working people. An article on the *Guardian* website (30 August) says: "When Labour came to

power in 1997, the average price for a house in England and Wales was £63,313. By January 2008, when the market peaked, you would need to fork out £184,362 to purchase one—a near 200% rise." Now there are "270,400 mortgage loans in arrears of three months or more" while "hundreds of thousands of construction workers have been laid off and built units are at historic lows". Moreover "in 12 years under Labour, the number of households on council waiting lists has risen 70% to 1.7 million".

Tony Blair set out to transform the Labour Party from its original character as a "bourgeois workers party"—ie having a mass working-class base yet saddled with a capitalist programme—into an outright bourgeois party. This means severing Labour's historic link to the trade unions, a process that remains unfinished. The character of Labour's relationship to the unions needs to be tested and could well be resolved in the event of a crushing defeat at the next election. But New Labour today is moribund as a reformist party.

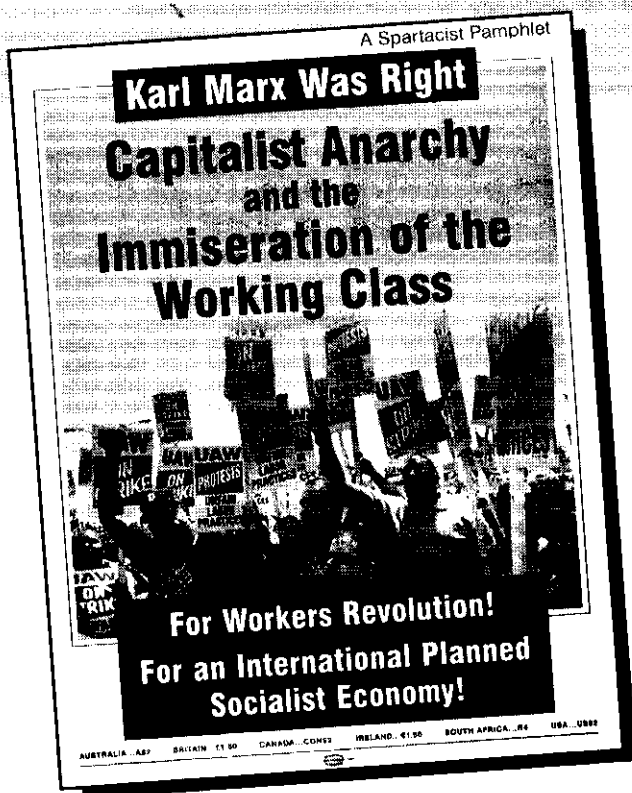
The fact that New Labour's relationship to the unions has not undergone a decisive test in the form of a sharp class confrontation is not because Tony Blair or Gordon Brown lacks the bottle to attempt to smash a union. Rather the venal trade union bureaucrats, in particular the "lefts", have refused to engage in serious class struggle under Labour and have betrayed the strikes that did occur. To avoid being seen as unpatriotic the Fire Brigades Union leadership called off a powerful strike as Tony Blair was preparing the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Postal workers who repeatedly staged wildcat strikes in recent years and British Airways staff who almost shut down Heathrow airport in 2005 were disowned by the union leaders of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and the Transport and General Workers Union (now part of Unite), because these wildcat strikes defied the anti-union laws.

The utter bankruptcy of old Labour "lefts" is also evident in their support to protectionist poison. After decades of campaigns to "save" British coal, British steel, British Leyland, ad nauseam, today there is precious little industry that could be described as "British". But still "left" union leaders such as Bob Crow of the rail union RMT grotesquely support the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers that have been raging in the construction industry under the slogan "British jobs for British workers". An *Economist* article (5 February) about one such strike quoted David Lindley, a former director

continued on page 4

Economic crisis: Karl Marx was right.

Spartacist pamphlet



We reprint below the introduction to the latest Spartacist pamphlet, *Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class*. It first appeared in *Workers Vanguard* no 937, 22 May 2009.

The anarchy and brutality of the capitalist system has been revealed again in a global economic crisis, which threatens to reach the proportions of the Great Depression. As millions are thrown out of work, as massive numbers of foreclosures throw people out of their homes, as hunger stalks the poor, black people and other minorities, the sick and vulnerable, the US has seen a bitter winter of deprivation. The impact of this crisis extends far beyond the US, threatening the lives and livelihoods of the working class and oppressed internationally. It is left to revolutionary Marxists both to explain the roots of the current crisis and to provide the programme necessary to put an end to this barbaric, irrational system through the emancipation of the proletariat and establishment of its class rule, thus laying the basis for the construction of a socialist planned economy as a transition to a classless, egalitarian and harmonious society on a global scale. That is the purpose of this pamphlet, composed of articles previously published in *Workers Vanguard*.

Leon Trotsky's *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (also known as the Transitional Programme), adopted as the basic programmatic document of the founding conference of the Fourth International in September 1938, is particularly relevant and urgent today. The political situation of the late 1930s and that of the post-Soviet world in which we live today are quite different, to be sure. But Trotsky's declaration that "under the conditions of disintegrating capitalism, the masses continue to live the impoverished life of the oppressed, threatened now more than at any other time with the danger of being cast into the pit of pauperism" could have been written about conditions in Detroit and elsewhere today. The same is the case with the call in the Transitional Programme that: "The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the politics of the capitalists, which to a considerable degree, like the politics of their agents, the reformists, aims to place the whole burden of militarism, the crises, the disorganization of the monetary system, and all other scourges stemming from capitalism's death agony upon the backs of the toilers. The Fourth International demands *employment and decent living conditions* for all" (emphasis in original). Such transitional demands, as Trotsky wrote, stemmed "from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class" and unalterably led "to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat".

Against the tried and failed stratagems pushed by liberals and fake socialists — from the Keynesian project of "benevolent" intervention by the capitalist state to the British Labour

Party's bourgeois nationalisations in the post-World War II period—we Marxists understand that no amount of tinkering with the existing system can wrench it into serving the needs of the proletariat and the oppressed. The 1997-98 *Workers Vanguard* series "Wall Street and the War Against Labor", reprinted here, takes this up in the US context. It also deals with the labour movement in the US and the roots of its historic economic militancy and political backwardness—a backwardness due not least to the continuing oppression of black people as a race-colour caste, integrated into the industrial proletariat but at the same time forcibly segregated at the bottom of society.

The more recent articles reprinted in this pamphlet put forward our revolutionary programme against those who purvey illusions in the Democratic Party and its current Obama administration as well as for class-struggle oppo-



TROTSKY

Troops out of Northern Ireland!

August 2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the despatch of British troops to Northern Ireland. The Labour government led by Harold Wilson sent the army to suppress a popular revolt against the oppression of the Catholic minority. At the time the International Socialists, forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, cravenly claimed the imperialist troops would provide a "breathing space" for Catholics. The fallacy of this was shown on Bloody Sunday in January 1972 when

the army shot and killed 13 Catholics on a civil rights march in Derry. Our tendency has a proud record of consistently calling for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops, as part of a proletarian revolutionary perspective.

An essential element of our program is the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army. British imperialism has brought centuries of exploitation, oppression and bloodshed to the island. No good can come of the British presence; the existing tie between Northern Ireland and the British state can only be oppressive to the Irish Catholic population, an obstacle to a proletarian class mobilisation and solution. We place no preconditions on this demand for the immediate withdrawal of all British military forces or lessen its categorical quality by suggesting "steps" toward its fulfillment (such as simply demanding that the army should withdraw to its barracks or from working-class districts).

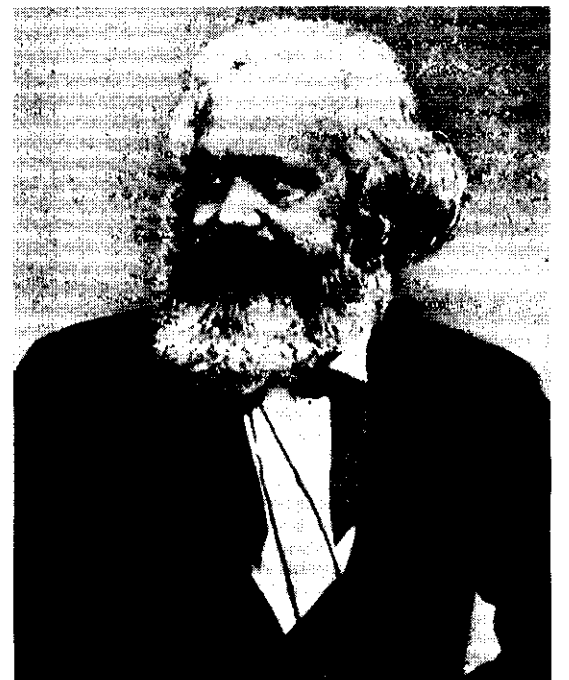
At the same time we do not regard the demand as synonymous with or as a concrete application of either the call for Irish self-determination (that is, a unitary state of the whole island) or for an independent Ulster—two solutions which within the framework of capitalism would be anti-democratic, in the first case toward the Protestants and in the second toward the Irish Catholics. Nor is the demand for the withdrawal of British troops sufficient in itself, as though it has some automatic, inherent revolutionary content or outcome....

As historically demonstrated by examples such as India, Libya, Cyprus and Palestine, the withdrawal of British imperialism, while a necessary objective of the communist vanguard, in itself does not automatically ensure an advance in a revolutionary direction. Thus, the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland must be linked to and constitute a part of a whole revolutionary program.

—"Theses on Ireland", *Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977



LENIN



Karl Marx

John Mayall

sition to the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy. Part and parcel of such a struggle is a fight against nationalist, chauvinist protectionism, anti-immigrant racism and the anti-Communist poison spread by the union tops against those states where capitalism has been overthrown, centrally China but also the other deformed workers states of North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam. Our programme is that of *unconditional military defence* of those states against imperialist attack and internal counter-revolution and for *proletarian political revolution* to replace the nationalist bureaucratic regimes that undermine their defence. Our model remains that of the victorious October Revolution of 1917 led by Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik party. For class against class! For new October Revolutions! ■

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For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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Down with age of consent laws! Government out of the bedroom!

Drop the charges against Helen Goddard!

We print below a letter to the Southwark Crown Court by the Partisan Defence Committee, a class-struggle legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League.

The Partisan Defence Committee demands the immediate dropping of all charges against 26-year-old music teacher Helen Goddard, a victim of the government's anti-sex witch hunt. Goddard, nicknamed the "Jazz Lady" by her students, is due to be sentenced on 21 September in Southwark Crown Court under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for the "crime" of having had sex with a 15-year-old female pupil. According to the *Telegraph* online, having admitted six counts of sex with the girl who is under the age of consent, Goddard now faces a possible sentence of **up to 14 years in prison** and has been ordered to sign the Sex Offenders Register.

Goddard and the pupil at City of London School for Girls were involved in a close and sexual relationship, a perfectly natural thing that should be no business of either the school or the state. There is **no** suggestion from anyone, including the girl's parents, that the sex was anything but consensual. Now Goddard's promising career as a musician and teacher is in tatters, she has been thrown to the media wolves, both her and her partner's personal lives violated.

The puritanical witch hunt against

"sex offenders" waged by the Blair and Brown Labour governments is a modern-day version of Christian fundamentalist crusades against "sin". Adults engaged in inter-generational sex, especially between teachers and pupils, are treated as though they are de facto child rapists and murderers. The Sex Offenders Register is a witch hunter's charter, containing thousands of names of totally innocent people—eg some merely cautioned for possessing "dirty" pictures—now blacklisted, stigmatised and worse for the rest of their lives.

State interference aims at regimenting society to conform to the mythical sexual "norm" of one man on one woman for life, denying the complexity and variety innate in human sexuality. State repression will not alter the fact that children and teenagers develop sexual attractions towards other children and adults, including their teachers. "Age of consent" laws giving the capitalist state the right to determine at what age youth can engage in sex are an invasion of privacy. The guiding principle in these matters should be that



Helen Goddard

Images International Ltd

of mutual effective consent.

We protest the gross abuse perpetrated by the state on Helen Goddard and demand: **Drop the charges now!**

Free Leonard Peltier!

On 21 August, the US Parole Commission again turned down the parole request of Leonard Peltier, a prominent member of the American Indian Movement who was framed up on charges of killing two FBI agents during the federal assault on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. The commission cold-bloodedly declared Peltier would not be considered for parole for another 15 years! For the 64-year-old Peltier, who suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, partial blindness and a heart condition, this is a declaration by the racist rulers that this courageous man will die in prison.

Grotesquely, US Attorney Drew Wrigley gloated, "Leonard Peltier is exactly where he belongs—federal prison, serving two life sentences." Wrigley added the claim that Peltier "has neither accepted responsibility for the murders nor shown any remorse", a standard ruse for denying parole to those imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. As the PDC pointed out in a 29

June letter to the Parole Commission demanding freedom for Peltier (see *Workers Vanguard* no 940, 31 July):

"One court proceeding after another has laid bare the evidence of his innocence and of massive prosecutorial misconduct. In a 1985 appeals hearing, the government's lead attorney admitted, 'We can't prove who shot those agents.'

"In 1986, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the trial jury could have acquitted Mr. Peltier if records improperly withheld from the defense had been made available.

"In November 2003, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals stated, 'Much of the government's behavior at the Pine Ridge Reservation and in its prosecution of Mr. Peltier is to be condemned. The government withheld evidence. It intimidated witnesses. These facts are not disputed.'

"In 2001, in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act and lawsuits, the U.S. government admitted it had withheld a staggering 142,579 pages of evidence of its secret COINTELPRO efforts to persecute

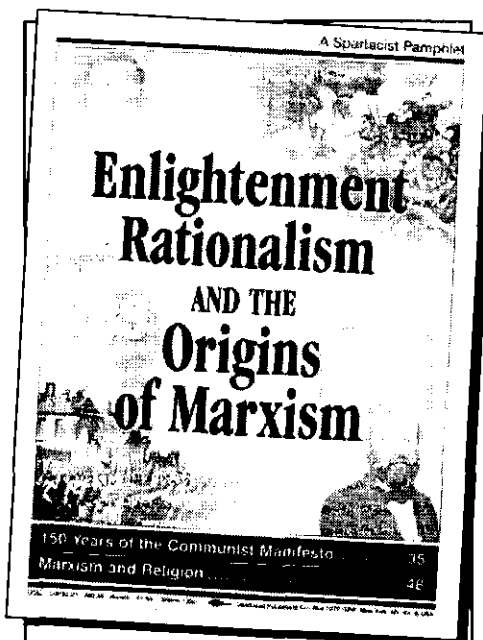
and convict Mr. Peltier."

Yet again, the depraved capitalist rulers have demonstrated there is no justice for fighters for the oppressed like Peltier. We join with millions worldwide in demanding: **Free Leonard Peltier now!**

—Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 941, 28 August 2009



Ben Corbett



This pamphlet reprints presentations given by SL Central Committee member Joseph Seymour on the origins of Marxism in the French Enlightenment and in left Hegelianism. Also included are "150 Years of the Communist Manifesto" and "Marxism and Religion". In the retrograde climate of post-Soviet reaction, the struggle to reassert the validity of the programme and purpose of revolutionary Marxism is crucial for our fight for new October Revolutions.

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Labour...

(Continued from page 1)

of the construction firm Taylor Woodrow, saying: "Britain's hollowed-out manufacturing sector lacks the capacity to produce much of the specialist machinery that such projects require". The vile "British jobs" campaign echoes the protests by London dockers who marched in support of Enoch Powell's landmark racist speech in 1968 intoning that immigration would lead to "rivers of blood".

From the point of view of the working people it matters little whether Labour or Tories win the next election. Further attacks on living standards and welfare spending are planned and both parties will tighten the screw on working people to restore profitability to British capitalism. Contrary to the bourgeois myth that Marxism is a "failed experiment", the situation cries out for an authentic Marxist party dedicated to the struggle for socialist revolution to rid society of the decaying capitalist order. Our task is the construction of such a party—a multiethnic revolutionary workers party—based on a programme that is proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist.

Europe's mass reformist parties in crisis

The Labour government's present crisis takes place in the broader context of widespread disillusion among workers in other European countries with their historic parties. In recent years these parties have held office and have been among the best enforcers of "neoliberal" policies, fleeing working people in the service of "flexible" labour markets, attacking welfare provision and leading to enormous wealth for the capitalist masters. Workers in Germany are turning their backs on the social-democratic party, the SPD, the French Communist Party has collapsed and the once-mighty Italian Communist Party is no more. The latter split in the 1990s into a majority wing, which now appears to have become an openly cap-

aim of the pseudo-Trotskyists of yesterday who are wedded to social democracy is to build new electoral formations to retain and strengthen illusions in parliamentary reformism. Such "new" parties amount to roadblocks to the construction of revolutionary parties.

A case in point is the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain. An article by Alex Callinicos in *Socialist Review* (July 2009) bemoans the fact that "centre-left governments brought to office by popular revulsion against neoliberalism continued with free market policies", noting that "in Germany the Red-Green coalition under Gerhard Schröder between 1998 and 2005 forced through Agenda 2010, which was designed to make labour markets more 'flexible'". Nowhere does he mention that the SWP supported the election of these anti-working-class governments all across Europe—not least in Britain where then SWP leader Tony Cliff shamelessly proclaimed that the SWP was "over the moon" for Tony Blair's landslide win in May 1997. By the time of that election New Labour was certainly a known quantity. We wrote, "the sheer size of Labour's victory is ominous; it will be taken as a mandate to carry out New Labour's vicious anti-working class programme" (*Workers Hammer* no 156, May/June 1997).

The reformists have marched in lockstep with the rightward shifts of the social-democratic parties, dropping any remaining verbiage that might taint them by association with revolution. In France the former Ligue communiste révolutionnaire formally junked the terms "revolutionary" and "communist" to form a "New Anti-capitalist Party" that seeks to occupy the space left by the Communist Party. In Germany the pseudo-Trotskyists are liquidating into the Left Party—Die Linke—which upholds the programme of the earlier SPD. This is a party of countless betrayals of the working class. Above all, Die Linke embraces the PDS, the remnant of the leading Stalinist party in the former East

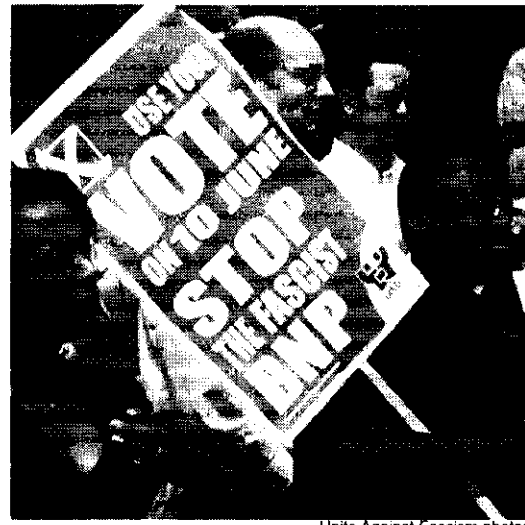
has collapsed", a fact they said which "should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

In the aftermath of counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union, reformists have become the perennial "moving right show". The SWP formed a coalition with Muslim organisations in Respect, which disavowed even a nominal commitment to "socialism" (ie social democracy) but this was a disaster and blew apart in 2007.

In the wake of the European elec-

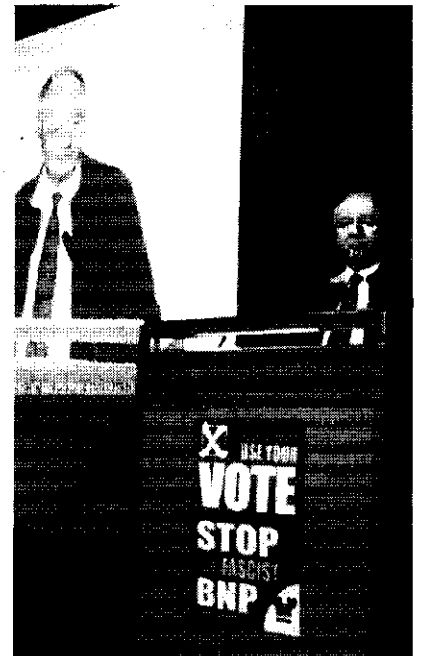
journalist Inayat Bunglawala has noted that the BNP's campaign against Muslims has translated into a series of violent attacks on mosques, in Luton and elsewhere. Ominously, an outfit called the English Defence League has carried out physical provocations against the left in Birmingham.

Against such fascist provocations, we call for trade union/minority mobilisations to stop these race terrorists in their tracks. But the social conditions endemic to decaying capitalism provide



Unite Against Fascism photos

SWP's parliamentary-cretinist campaign against BNP (2004). Former London mayor Ken Livingstone (right) addressing 2009 Unite Against Fascism conference.



tions the SWP issued an open letter to the British left declaring that: "The SWP firmly believes that the first priority is to build even greater unity and resistance to the fascists over the coming months and years", coyly stating that "those who campaigned against the BNP in the elections know that when they said to people, 'Don't vote Nazi' they were often then asked who people should vote for. The fact that there is no single, united left alternative to Labour means there was no clear answer available."

Over the years, the SWP has routinely resurrected "anti-fascist" work at election time as a way of getting out the vote for Labour. However Labour is so despised today that even these consummate opportunists are leery about openly saying vote Labour (although they will surely campaign for Labour when the time comes). Moreover the SWP doesn't see much point in setting out the "vote Labour" stall just now. As the open letter says, it would "take a miracle for Gordon Brown to be elected back into Downing Street" and "the danger is that by simply clinging on we would be pulled down with the wreckage of New Labour" ("Left must unite to create an alternative", *Socialist Worker*, 13 June).

The SWP's current "anti-fascist" face, Unite Against Fascism—like the Anti Nazi League of old, complete with music gigs and pressure tactics—aims primarily to bring people out to vote. The idea of "stopping" the BNP by voting is in itself parliamentary cretinism. The BNP is a fascist organisation, consisting of paramilitary shock troops whose real programme is murderous racist terror against immigrants and minorities. Fascists are generally kept on a leash by the capitalist class for use in times of crisis, especially when bourgeois rule is threatened by socialist revolution. Manifestly this is not the case today in Britain or elsewhere. Nevertheless the election of BNPers Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons to the European Parliament gives respectability to the fascist stormtroopers and will lead to increased attacks on the streets, posing *real and present danger* to minorities, gays and leftists. *Guardian*

fertile ground for these scum to thrive, particularly during the present historically low level of class struggle. Therefore for Marxists the struggle against fascism is inseparable from the fight for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist economic system that breeds it.

The BNP cashed in on the chauvinist strikes on construction sites at Britain's oil refineries and power stations which popularised the fascist slogan "British jobs for British workers" (see article on page 12). The SWP's appeal for unity of the left "against the BNP" is directed at organisations such as Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party which has been in the forefront of leading these strikes. For the European elections the Socialist Party joined with "left" union bureaucrat Bob Crow of the rail union RMT and the remains of the British Communist Party to form the "No2EU" electoral alliance. As we said last issue: "No2EU boasts that its electoral list comprises candidates who played a leading role in those reactionary protests on construction sites and participation in the alliance is conditional on having supported them. This in itself is enough for Marxists to reject any support whatever to this outfit. We say: No vote to No2EU in the European elections!" (*Workers Hammer* no 207, Summer 2009).

For Bob Crow, as for the Socialist Party's supporters in the trade union bureaucracy of the PCS, protectionism goes hand in hand with their refusal to wage any meaningful, effective class struggle to defend their own union members against the bosses. Recently the government has further tightened restrictions on immigration, while brutal round-ups of immigrants—such as the one staged in June at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, in which cleaners were lured to a bogus meeting where they were trapped and seized by immigration police—are on the rise. We insist that the trade unions must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Mobilising the unions in defence of immigrants requires a political struggle against the existing trade union bureaucracy—against Bob

continued on page 10



Labour's "war on terror" fuels racism, particularly against Muslims. East London mosque had windows smashed in racist attack, July 2005.

italist party while its "left" wing, Rifondazione Comunista, is in severe crisis.

Be that as it may, the social-democratic parties in Europe are not about to go out of business—they continue to provide an invaluable service to the ruling classes by tying the working classes to the capitalist order. The strategic task of ICL sections in these countries is to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties by splitting the mass reformist parties and winning their working-class base to our programme. In contrast, the

German deformed workers state. The founders of the PDS joined with the Kremlin bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev in handing over the DDR to capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990. This was a precursor to counterrevolution in the USSR in 1991-92, a historic defeat for the working classes of the entire world. This enormous betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracies was supported by reformist pseudo-Trotskyists internationally. Foremost among them was the British SWP whose paper crowed that "Communism

The man in the mirror

Michael Jackson and racist society



The following article is slightly adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 940, 31 July 2009.

On 25 June, black megastar and musical icon Michael Jackson died at his home in Los Angeles. The “King of Pop”, as he has been known for decades, was one of the most successful recording artists of all time and has remained hugely popular throughout the world. Following his death, there were spontaneous gatherings of fans

the African continent performed the Jackson 5’s “Blame It on the Boogie”.

The tragedy of Jackson’s death is that an extremely influential music career was driven to the brink of destruction by a savagely racist and puritanical witch hunt spanning more than a decade. The mass hysteria whipped up against Jackson over charges of “child molestation” was an indictment of this anti-sex, bigoted capitalist society, where being an eccentric black celebrity is enough

tabloids that had baited him mercilessly, dubbing him ‘Wacko Jacko’ for his erratic behavior, increasingly strange looks and accusations of child molestation, were suddenly effusive in their praise of a man ‘who provided the soundtrack to a billion lives’.

Victim of racist vendetta

During his highly publicised career — which soared when he was only eleven years old as the lead singer of the Jackson 5 under Motown Records, through his solo career as a songwriter, musician and performer up until age 50 — Michael Jackson was famous not only for his talent and versatility, but also for challenging both racial and sexual identities. In the spirit of other “crossover” artists like Chuck Berry — who was one of the first artists to perform to multiracial audiences — Jackson was known for breaking down racial barriers and was the first black artist to get heavy airplay on MTV.

But the “inexcusable” racial barrier that he attempted to break down was his appearance. Whether due to vitiligo or to skin bleaching, the fact is that his gradual “whitening” and plastic surgeries did nothing to make him less black in the eyes of racist America — a twisted confirmation of the colour-caste nature of black oppression. No money in the world, no changes to your “racial” appearance, could ever change the fact that, if you are born black, capitalist America will make sure to try to put you in your place. In a country where the white supremacist ideology of racial “purity” resulted in the “one drop of black blood” rule, Jackson’s physical transformation became a transgression that the bourgeois media and “public opinion” would not let him get away with.

There is a real connection among blacks to someone who, no matter what he did, always had to respond to this society’s expectations of what a black

person should look like, act like and sleep with. Even in death, the mud continues to be slung against this enormously talented and idiosyncratic man, with most black people defiantly coming to his defence. In the last few weeks, it was not rare for TV and radio commentators to ask why black people seem to identify with Michael Jackson since he “looked white”. Rabidly vile Fox News commentator Bill O’Reilly ranted on his show *The O’Reilly Factor* against blacks seeing Jackson as their own when he looked white and “chose to have white children”. In pure O’Reilly fashion, this was a bitter and unfiltered expression of the American bourgeois psyche.

Race and sex in America

As we stated in our article “Stop Vendetta Against Michael Jackson!” (*Workers Vanguard* no 818, 23 January 2004): “The Jackson case represents an intersection of blatant anti-gay bigotry, the reactionary state-enforced stigma against intergenerational sex, and racial prejudice.” The intense vilification of Michael Jackson served the bourgeoisie’s aim to whip up hysteria over race and sex, which is all too common in a country where blacks (famous or not) are frequently indicted on false charges involving sex. In 1913, black boxer Jack Johnson was arrested because his relationships with white women were deemed to violate the Mann Act against transporting women across state lines for “immoral purposes”. In 1960, black rock ‘n’ roll artist Chuck Berry was also convicted under the Mann Act for transporting an underage girl across state lines. More recently, R&B singer R Kelly was dragged through the courts on sex-related charges. Frenzy about black male sexuality is a common thread in American

continued on page 11



Fans sing and dance to the music of Michael Jackson during tribute at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York, 30 June.

dancing to his music in Harlem and doing the “moonwalk” or holding tributes as far away as Mexico City, Hong Kong and Paris. Rio de Janeiro’s mayor announced the construction of a statue of Michael Jackson in the slums where he filmed one of his videos to “They Don’t Care About Us”. In Algiers, hundreds of singers and dancers from across

for the state to try to frame you up with something. The stunning hypocrisy of the bourgeois media — which hounded and scapegoated Jackson as a “pedophile” when he was alive, even after he was acquitted of all charges, but then teemed with adulation and tributes after he died — was captured by an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (27 June): “The

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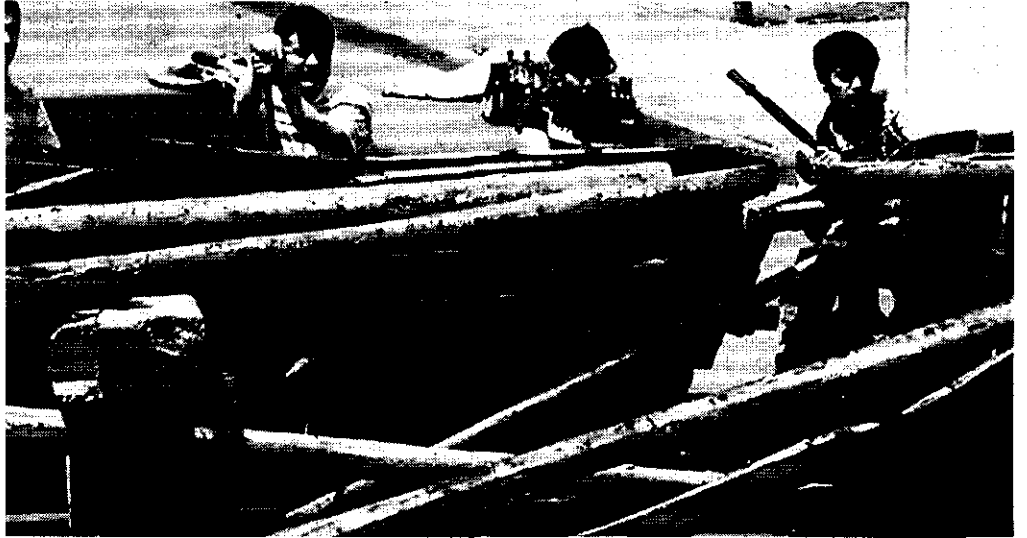
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Defend Chinese deformed workers state! For workers political revolution!

Communal violence in Xinjiang



Ethnic conflict in Xinjiang, July: Injured Han Chinese women in hospital (left); Uighurs behind roadblock in their neighbourhood (above).

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 941, 28 August 2009, adapted to Workers Hammer style.

Early in July a violent national conflict erupted in Urumqi, the provincial capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in western China. It began on 5 July when hundreds of Uighurs — a Turkic-speaking, traditionally Islamic people — went on a murderous rampage against their Han Chinese neighbours. Han mobs then retaliated in kind. The Chinese government now sets the number killed at 197, most of them Han Chinese, while some 1600 were injured. To halt the inter-ethnic bloodletting the government authorities utilised massive police force with 20,000 troops patrolling both Han and Uighur neighbourhoods.

From the outset the Beijing regime has claimed, without convincing evidence, that the riots in Urumqi were masterminded by the anti-Chinese nationalists of the World Uighur Congress (WUC), an imperialist-sponsored group based mainly in the US and Germany. Needless to say, the WUC presents a completely different picture from that of the Chinese government of the events leading to the riots. It contends that on 5 July, a peaceful protest by Uighurs, mainly university students, was set upon by the police who opened fire on the demonstrators without any provocation. For its part, the Chinese government says that the repressive measures it took were a response to, not the cause of, the violence. We are quite distant from the situation, and each source — whether it's the Chinese government, the WUC or the imperialist media — has its own motive in presenting what happened. What is clear is that however the events on 5 July may have begun, they soon degenerated into communal violence. Even the London *Economist* (11 July), a house organ for Anglo-American financiers, stated: "The violence in Xinjiang was crude, racist stuff on both sides, with the Han Chinese suffering the brunt of it."

The trigger for the riots in Urumqi was an event that occurred thousands of miles away in the southeastern Chinese coastal province of Guangdong. In late June, Uighur migrant workers living in a dormitory at a toy factory owned by

Hong Kong capitalists were attacked by Han workers. At least two Uighur workers were killed and scores injured. The attack, which lasted for hours, was apparently provoked by a false rumour circulated by a disgruntled former worker that six Uighur men had raped two Han women. After news of what happened reached Xinjiang, Uighurs were enraged over inaction by Chinese authorities and demanded a full government investigation. These complaints against the Chinese government, which seem to be justified, in no way excuse the murderous rampage by Uighurs in Xinjiang against their Han neighbours.

Xinjiang, with its wealth of natural resources, especially large deposits of oil and natural gas, is of great strategic economic importance to China. The country's president, Hu Jintao, judged the communalist violence in Urumqi to

peasant-based armies over Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang, destroyed capitalist-landlord rule and liberated the country from imperialist subjugation. The revolution brought enormous social gains to China's workers, peasants and deeply oppressed women. However, the People's Republic of China, ruled by the Communist Party (CCP), emerged as — and continues to be — a bureaucratically deformed workers state patterned on the former Soviet Union under JV Stalin. A parasitic, nationalist bureaucratic caste rests atop a collectivised economy.

Like their Soviet Stalinist forebears, Mao and his successors, including the current regime, have preached the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that socialism could be built in a single country. Marxists define socialism as a classless, egalitarian society based on material

capitalist counterrevolution. In answer to the aspirations of the Chinese workers and rural toilers, and also national minorities like the Uighurs, for democratic rights and a government that represents their needs and interests, we stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and establish a government based on elected workers and peasants councils that is committed to revolutionary proletarian internationalism.

For the past several decades, the Beijing Stalinist regime has utilised extensive market mechanisms in the economy while encouraging large-scale investment by Western and Japanese corporations and the offshore Chinese bourgeoisie in Taiwan and Hong Kong. A sizable class of capitalist entrepreneurs — many of them former government functionaries and the children of current functionaries — has also developed on the mainland. As a consequence, there is now a widely held belief, across the entire political spectrum, that once-"Communist" China has become capitalist or is rapidly and irreversibly doing so. That belief is false. The core of the Chinese economy continues to be based on collectivised property. In fact, the *non*-capitalist character of China has been clearly demonstrated during the current severe global economic downturn.

To see this, one can compare the effects of the economic stimulus programmes in the US and China. Despite the \$800 billion stimulus package enacted by the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, output and employment have continued to fall. The gross domestic product is nearly four per cent below what it was a year ago, while industrial production has been cut by 13.6 per cent over the same period. Official optimism that the economy is bottoming out, propagated by the Obama White House, points to the fact that in July employers eliminated "only" a quarter of a million jobs, somewhat less than the average job loss over the previous several months.

By contrast, China's stimulus programme, centred on investment in infrastructure by state-owned enterprises and government bodies and expanding loans by state-controlled banks, has effectively offset the massive decline in



Chinese troops on a main street in downtown Urumqi.

be of such political importance and urgency that he cut short his participation in the G8 summit in Italy and returned to Beijing. What is the broad political significance of the national conflict between Uighurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang? To answer that question it is necessary to understand the class nature of the Chinese state and its relationship to world imperialism.

The class character of the Chinese state

The 1949 Chinese Revolution, marked by the military victory of Mao Zedong's

abundance, which could be built only on the basis of international planning, crucially requiring the overthrow of capitalist rule in the advanced capitalist centres of North America, Western Europe and Japan. In practice, the Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country" has meant accommodation to world imperialism and opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism and

export earnings. The annual rate of growth of gross domestic product increased to eight per cent in the second quarter up from six per cent in the previous quarter. Richard McGregor, a China watcher for the *Financial Times* (9 August), commented: "Beijing has managed to pull the Chinese economy out of a ditch with a massive fiscal and monetary stimulus."

Nonetheless, the global economic downturn has sharply worsened conditions for those migrant workers from the countryside who have toiled in factories owned by foreign and offshore Chinese capitalists producing light manufactures for export. Many have had to return to their villages, at least temporarily, including Uighurs from Xinjiang. Impoverished Uighur and also Han youth in the villages and cities of Xinjiang cannot now improve their conditions by securing employment in the capitalist-owned factories producing for export. In this sense, the basic contradictions of the world capitalist system and the accommodation to that system by the Beijing Stalinist regime have aggravated the national conflict between Uighurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang.

In their own way, the imperialist bourgeoisies recognise that China continues to embody the social and national gains of the 1949 Revolution. The country is not theirs as it was in the past. The ultimate goal of the US, European and Japanese imperialist powers is to restore capitalism in China

cial incentives. However, for the past decade or so, Xinjiang had experienced an economic boom, even by China's standards, centrally based on the exploitation and development of its oil and natural gas fields. According to official figures, the region's gross domestic product doubled between 2004 and 2008 from \$28 billion to \$60 billion. This boom has attracted Han Chinese of all classes, from capitalist entrepreneurs to unskilled labourers, pursuing their own economic interests. That is, the changing demographics are not solely determined by the policies and intent of the CCP regime, though Uighurs complain that they continue to be excluded even from unskilled work.

At the same time, the pervasive use of market relations in the economy and the large private sector have increased the gap between the growing number of Han Chinese and the indigenous peoples in the country's western borderlands. Especially in private enterprises, but also in the state sector, hiring often is based on nepotism, other personal connections or outright discrimination in favour of Han Chinese. But even if competition in the labour market were decided solely by individual capacity, Han Chinese would still have an advantage over Uighurs; they are far more skilled and literate, in particular fluent in Mandarin, China's *lingua franca*.

Thus, the past decade's economic boom in Xinjiang appears to have aggravated rather than lessened Uighur resentment against Han Chinese as a



Sabrie/NY Times

In the wake of communal violence, Uighurs and Han Chinese in mixed neighbourhood sign up for joint self-defence group.

However, today's young Uighur men and women are much less likely to compare their conditions of life to those of their parents and grandparents than to those of the Han newcomers. And by those standards they are clearly disadvantaged. To be sure, the Stalinist regime has made an effort to recruit more Uighurs and other national minorities into the higher reaches of the social order. Thus Uighur students are given additional points on the standardised examinations that are a screening mechanism for admission to university. But such measures have a tokenistic character given the reality that the mass of Uighurs are on the bottom of a newly reconfigured society in their own homelands.

The Chinese Stalinist leaders, who strive above all to maintain social "order", recognised the danger to themselves in the growing hostility of the poorer Uighurs towards the better-off Han. But instead of moving to raise the Uighur populace to the level of the Han *within* Xinjiang, the CCP regime had recourse to the safety valve of internal migration to the factories and construction sites of coastal China.

Beginning in 2002, the government instituted a labour export programme for Uighur youth from low-income families. That programme offered substantial advantages for those participating in it: incomes two or three times what they could earn at home, training in modern industrial equipment, Mandarin-language classes and free medical care. But state coercion in the form of stiff fines also was used against those Uighurs who, despite such material incentives, refused to leave their homes to work in strange cities thousands of miles away.

An estimated 1.5 million people from Xinjiang, mainly Uighurs, work elsewhere in China. But that safety valve is now being shut off by the effects of the global capitalist downturn. Reports indicate that both Uighur and Han perpetrators and victims of July's riots in Urumqi were mostly unemployed or seasonal migrant workers.

What then is to be done? A workers and peasants government in China, issuing out of a proletarian political revolution, would establish a rationally planned and centrally managed economy based on state-owned enterprises. (This would not preclude the use of market mechanisms for certain purposes nor a limited role for the private, including foreign-owned, sector.) Only such a system would be able to narrow the present and widening socioeconomic gap between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang. What is required is expending and directing sufficient resources to educate and train Uighurs in the use of modern industrial technology on the same footing as Han Chinese. In the final analysis, however, to achieve a

level of material abundance for the benefit of all of China's peoples requires aid from a socialist Japan or a socialist America, underlining again the need for international proletarian revolution.

Key to achieving genuine national equality in Xinjiang is reversing the Stalinist policy of forced Sinification, in particular the effort to marginalise the Uighur language in favour of Mandarin. The CCP boss of Xinjiang, Wang Lequan, declared that minority languages like Uighur are "out of step with the 21st century" (*New York Times*, 10 July). Wang is here speaking the language of the Mandarinate of old imperial China translated into the Stalinist nationalism and Han chauvinism of today. Since 2002, Mandarin has been the only language used in courses at Xinjiang University for at least the first two years of course work. At the same time, children from lower-class Uighur families have had little opportunity to achieve fluency in Mandarin. Under a workers and peasants government, there would be genuine bilingualism at all levels of education from preschool to university. Uighurs would be able to use their own language as well as Mandarin in all economic and political institutions, whether dealing with factory managers or government officials.

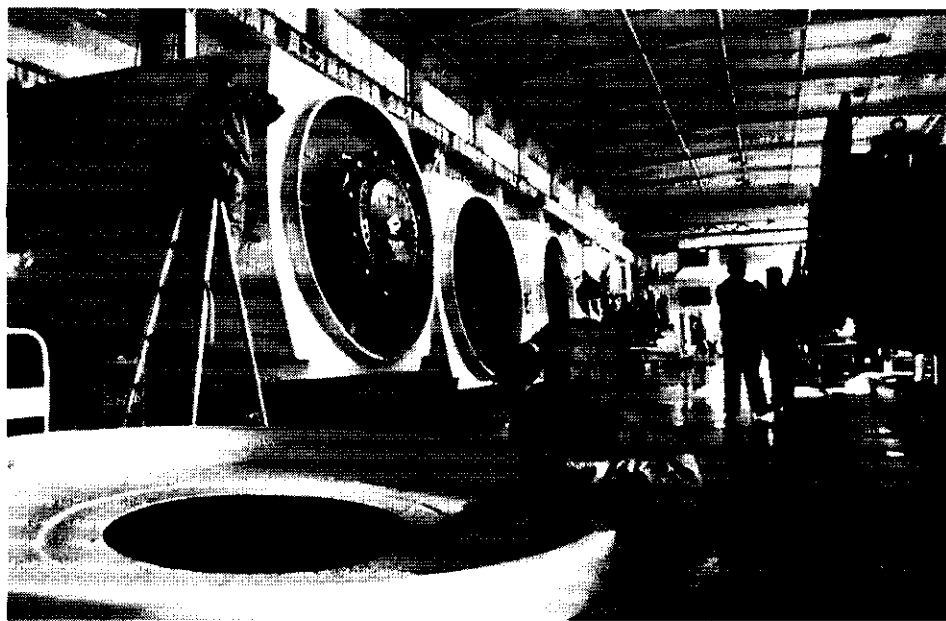
Such a language policy is mandated by the principles of proletarian internationalism—ie, equality of all peoples in all spheres of life. The example to which we look is that of the Bolshevik regime led by Lenin and Trotsky that issued out of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Tsarist Russia was aptly described by Lenin as a "prison house of peoples". Upon coming to power, the Bolsheviks implemented the policies for which they always fought: the equality of all peoples, ethnicities and languages, including the right of self-determination for the myriad nations oppressed under the tsarist empire.

In China, the Han majority comprises some 90 per cent of the population. Only a Leninist-Trotskyist party committed to proletarian internationalism can effectively combat Han chauvinism, including by mobilising the Han proletariat in the struggle for the equality of all of China's peoples. And only such a party can combat the efforts of reactionary Uighur nationalists and Islamicists, supported by the imperialists, to exploit the just grievances of the Uighur masses against Chinese Stalinist misrule for counterrevolutionary purposes.

World Uighur Congress: an agency of imperialism

There is historical irony and deep political significance in the fact that both Uighur Islamicists and the leading figure in the World Uighur Congress were originally sponsored and promoted

continued on page 8



Corbis

Workers in state-owned wind turbine factory in Urumqi. The core sectors of the Chinese economy remain collectivised.

and once again reduce the country to semicolonial subjugation. In pursuing that goal, the imperialists have encouraged and supported reactionary nationalist forces linked to religion among the non-Han peoples—Tibetans, Uighurs—in the western borderlands of China. Thus the national conflict between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang must be viewed within the broad framework of imperialist hostility to the Chinese deformed workers state.

Stalinist misrule and the national conflict in Xinjiang

The specific character of the national question in Xinjiang has significantly changed as a consequence of developments since the 1949 Revolution. At that time, 75 per cent of the region's population were Uighurs, less than seven per cent were Han Chinese. Today, of the 21 million people in Xinjiang, 45 per cent are Uighurs and 40 per cent are Han. Moreover, the Han population is concentrated in the cities and even in 1949 made up a majority in Urumqi, the provincial capital.

Initially, the migration of Han into the relatively impoverished backwater province of Xinjiang resulted from deliberate government policy and spe-

cially privileged and politically dominant nationality. Two China correspondents for the *Financial Times* (7 July) report:

"The redevelopment of old towns and the influx of richer Han Chinese radically changed local economic structures, costing many Uighurs their traditional jobs....

"This has happened while Xinjiang's economy has been growing at more than 11 per cent a year for the past six years, above the national average. The wealth created by this rapid growth has been concentrated in the pockets of new immigrants, increasing the gap between rich and poor, Han and Uighur, some locals complain."

Enmity between Uighurs and Han Chinese has centuries-old, historical roots. But that enmity has been intensified by the effects of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, particularly in the last two decades. At the same time, it is important to recognise that Uighurs, like other workers and rural toilers throughout China, have benefited enormously from the progressive social and economic development of the post-1949 People's Republic. Since the Revolution, infant mortality in Xinjiang has continually declined while life expectancy, less than 30 years in 1949, rose to 67 years by 2000.

Xinjiang...

(Continued from page 7)

by the Chinese Stalinist leadership. In the 1970s and '80s, China was engaged in a strategic alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet Union, a policy initiated by Mao Zedong. In the context of that reactionary alliance, the Beijing regime trained and dispatched religious-minded, young Uighur men (who were Sunni Muslims) to join the CIA-backed *mujahedin* cut-throats fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Thus, the Chinese bureaucracy criminally bolstered American imperialism in weakening and undermining the Soviet Union, thereby furthering imperialism's counterrevolutionary drive against the USSR. We Trotskyists hailed the Red Army's intervention into Afghanistan, not only as an elementary expression of our unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state but also as the only means for social progress to be realised in benighted Afghanistan, not least for its horribly oppressed women.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the main body of militant Islamicists, represented by Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, turned against their former US masters. Similarly, Uighur jihadists who had fought in Afghanistan redirected their fire at the Chinese Communist government. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, *Jane's Security News*, which is linked to British intelligence, commented in this regard: "Chinese strategy on this front [Afghanistan], however, had a negative fallout for Beijing as the returning Uighur jihadis fuelled the already-simmering insurgency for an independent Muslim Eastern Turkestan in Xinjiang."

Most of the Uighur jihadists did not, in fact, return to China. However, the exiled Islamicists may well have ties to small, shadowy Uighur terrorist groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement operating in Xinjiang. Indeed, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR has led to a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism throughout Central Asia. For its part, the Chinese Stalinist government has signed on to the global "war on terror", again emboldening the imperialists in Washington, who are now seizing on the communal riots in Xinjiang to promote their counterrevolutionary aims against China.

Far more important than the Uighur Islamicist terrorist groups is the World Uighur Congress because of the support it receives from US and also German imperialism. The WUC receives funding from the National Endowment for

Democracy in Washington, a notorious CIA conduit. The organisation's leading light is one Rebiya Kadeer, who dubs herself "the Mother of the Uighur nation". Kadeer began her career in China as a successful and wealthy capitalist, becoming a member of the National People's Congress, the rubber-stamp parliamentary body of the CCP regime. However, in 1997 this poster girl for China's new capitalist class fell from political grace after her husband, who had fled to the US, made offensive

In Tibet, the effect of the CCP regime's policies has been to reconstitute a numerically large and relatively wealthy Buddhist priest caste. The lamas are in the forefront of both internal reaction and imperialist provocations, such as last year's riots. By contrast, Beijing's policy in Xinjiang has been to suppress the emergence of a socially and politically influential Islamic clerical caste. Mosques must be registered with the state and imams require government approval. There



World Uighur Congress head Rebiya Kadeer (left) at press conference in Washington DC, with Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (centre) and Democrat William Delahunt, 10 July.

broadcasts over the official government Voice of America radio station. Two years later, she was arrested and charged with "providing secret information to foreigners" as she prepared to meet a delegation of US Congressional staff. She was imprisoned until 2005. After her release, she moved to Washington DC, operating in the bastion of world imperialism. On more than one occasion, Kadeer was granted an audience by George W Bush, who duly called her an "apostle of freedom".

The communal riots in Urumqi occurred a little over a year after Tibetan mobs, led by Buddhist lamas, engaged in murderous attacks on Han Chinese residents in the capital, Lhasa (see "Counterrevolutionary riots in Tibet", *Workers Hammer* no 202, Spring 2008). Much of the Western bourgeois media has drawn a parallel between the two events, while hypocritically condemning the Chinese Communists for their brutality towards the country's national minorities.

There are similarities but also important differences between the anti-Han riots in Tibet last year and last month's communal violence in Xinjiang. The similarity lies in the reactionary, imperialist-backed nature of the exiled forces that claim to represent the Tibetan and Uighur peoples. The difference lies in the actual influence these forces exercise on the ground in the borderlands of western China.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after the suppression of a lama/aristocrat uprising organised and armed by the CIA. Since then he has been elevated, so to speak, by his imperialist masters as the supreme incarnation of opposition to the Chinese Communist government. The Dalai Lama is a political personage of some importance on the international scene. The WUC's Rebiya Kadeer has made every effort to identify herself and her cause with Tibet's "living god", who contributed a brief introduction to her autobiography. Nonetheless, prior to July's communal violence in Xinjiang, few people paid attention to Kadeer and her cohorts except for their CIA handlers.

does not now exist an organised network of Islamic clerics that could act as an effective link between the imperialist enemies of the People's Republic of China and the disaffected Uighur masses. On the available evidence, what happened in Urumqi in July was mainly a spontaneous eruption of ethnic hatred, fuelled by relative economic deprivation, on the part of Uighurs involved.

Reformists and the Xinjiang riots

Joining the imperialist drive for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese deformed workers state are reformist "socialists" such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the US and its former parent, the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Both groups claim that China has never been a workers state but has been "state capitalist" since 1949. This "theory", which they also applied to the former Soviet Union, is a fig-leaf for decades of anti-Communist practice on behalf of imperialism. Both groups howled alongside the imperialists against the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan. When Soviet forces pulled out of Afghanistan in 1988-89, in a futile attempt by the Kremlin bureaucracy to appease the imperialists, the ISO gloated: "We welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker* [US], May 1988). Three years later, the SWP exulted: "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

More recently, in an article titled "The Changing Shape of Struggle in China" (*Socialist Worker* [US] online, 9 July), the ISO painted the horrific communal bloodletting in Xinjiang as "class-infused protests", grotesquely enthusing that "the Urumqi revolt confirms that grassroots struggle continues to erupt on an expanding scale".

On the other side of the reformist spectrum is the Party for Socialism and

Liberation (PSL). A 24 July article on its website, "Behind the Urumqi Riots in China", while rightly denouncing the imperialists and their media for seizing on the riots in Urumqi, is essentially an apologia for the Chinese bureaucracy. Ever so gingerly, the PSL declares that "relations between the Han Chinese and Uighur people are not perfectly harmonious". While noting that the CCP's "market reforms" have led to "nationalistic rivalries", the PSL disappears any hint of Han chauvinism on the part of the Chinese bureaucracy. Indeed, it is to the Stalinist bureaucracy that the PSL looks as the key barrier to counterrevolution, writing in an earlier article (10 February): "The CCP government, in spite all of its contradictions, remains the most important obstacle to the return of China to its previous state of semi-colonial slavery."

In reality, the continued rule of the CCP undermines defence of proletarian state power in China. Contrary to the PSL's claims, the bureaucracy continues to preserve state property not out of a subjective identification with socialism but, as Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) in regard to the Soviet Union, "only to the extent that it fears the proletariat"—ie, to protect its privileged position as a parasitic caste atop the workers state.

For international proletarian revolution!

The CCP regime denounces the World Uighur Congress as "separatist". Actually, Kadeer & Co do not now openly call to detach Xinjiang from China and establish an independent state, though that is manifestly what they're aiming for. The Uighur jihadists do call for an independent "Islamic East Turkestan". As proletarian internationalists, we do not consider the present state boundaries of China to be sacrosanct. But all of the forces advocating or supporting an independent Xinjiang today are in the camp of capitalist counterrevolution. Moreover, the demand for an independent Xinjiang, even if couched in the most "democratic" language, would be viewed by everyone in the region as a programme to drive out the Han people.

One cannot envision a progressive solution to the national conflict in Xinjiang except in the context of a proletarian political revolution throughout China. This would open up historical possibilities that do not now exist: regional autonomy in some form, even an independent state allied to China.

The Chinese Stalinist regime of Hu Jintao declares a "harmonious society" to be the goal of its policies and practices. It is a fundamental premise of Marxism that a harmonious society can be achieved only through overcoming economic scarcity leading to material abundance. Despite China's rapid economic growth since the 1949 Revolution, it is still a relatively poor country by international standards. Per capita gross domestic product is one tenth that of the United States and one seventh that of Japan.

Ultimately, the survival and advancement of China's revolutionary gains hinge on the fight for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries of Japan, North America and Western Europe, the only road towards the all-round modernisation of China as part of an international planned economy. A proletarian political revolution producing a China of workers and peasants councils would be a beacon for the oppressed working masses of Asia and the entire world. That is the perspective of the International Communist League. ■

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Construction...

(Continued from page 12)

owned by ExxonMobil and Total". While admitting that "Hertel faxed the media that the Polish workers [had] been removed from the site", the Socialist Party dismissed this by saying merely that "this was never a demand of the union". The Socialist Party proclaimed the outcome as another "victory" and blatantly admitted that the British workers "were not opposed to laggards from Poland getting work on the site as long as local laggards were given the opportunity of the work first as under the union agreement" (*Socialist*, 28 May-3 June).

Having embraced the reactionary campaign against foreign workers, the Unite and GMB union bureaucrats are now conducting a strike ballot that would bring future strikes within the provisions of the anti-union laws. The Unite statement motivating strike action repeats the claim that British workers are being discriminated against: "UK workers want fair access to UK construction projects" and alleges that "at a time when the engi-

protectionism is poisonous to class consciousness and plays into the hands of the fascists. In the recent elections to the European parliament, the fascist BNP secured two seats, while the right-wing populist UK Independence Party beat the hapless Labour Party, which fell into third place. We said no vote to the No2EU campaign that was led by RMT rail union leader Bob Crow in alliance with the Socialist Party and others. No2EU was supposed to provide a "left" alternative to the BNP but was centrally based on support to the anti-foreigner Lindsey strikes—the "British jobs" crusade that the BNP was riding high on. A protest rally on 6 May at the 2012 Olympics building site in Stratford, London, addressed by Bob Crow and Keith Gibson, was an orgy of nationalist protectionism. Many protesters had been brought in from Lindsey and some sported signs saying "British Jobs for British Workers" and "Fairness for British Workers". This is particularly provocative at the Olympics site where some 200 Romanian workers have been removed in a clampdown on immigrants in recent months.



Paul Mattson

Socialist Party's Keith Gibson was a member of strike committee that led reactionary strike at Lindsey oil refinery in January.

ded. Old Labour's erstwhile claim to "socialism" amounted to nothing more than a commitment to nationalised industry under capitalism, which is inherently protectionist. The extensive nationalisations of industry carried out under Clement Attlee's Labour government in the post-World War II period had nothing to do with socialism but were a "rescue package" for British capitalism, which was in profound decline against its rivals.

Compared to the Socialist Party, the SWP has taken a more critical stance on the anti-foreign-worker crusade. A recent headline says: "'British jobs' slogan pushed back but its argument remains a danger" (*Socialist Worker*, 27 June) and the article notes, "Socialist Worker has always firmly insisted that this is a divisive slogan that feeds racism and pits workers against each other." This is a cover-up of the SWP's actual support to the reactionary strikes, which is expressed in a petition being circulated by the SWP. On the one hand it says:

"The slogan 'British jobs for British workers' that has come to prominence around the dispute can only lead to deep divisions inside working class communities. The slogan, coined by Gordon Brown in his 2007 speech to Labour's conference, is being taken up by the right wing press and the Nazi BNP. These are forces that have always been bitterly hostile to the trade union movement."

But the petition also says clearly: "We support the demands of the Lindsey Oil Refinery strike committee" ("Unite to Fight for Jobs Petition" at petitiononline.com). Those demands include: "Union controlled registering of unemployed and locally skilled union members, with nominating rights as work becomes available", which is

merely another version of "British jobs for British workers".

For the trade union bureaucracy, the Socialist Party and the SWP, support for these "British first" strikes stems from their reformist programme, which accepts the framework of nationalism as opposed to proletarian internationalism. They have no answer to the worldwide capitalist crisis other than to rally in defence of British capitalism. In virtually all major capitalist countries, the union tops have responded to mass job losses and unemployment with chauvinism and calls for increasing protectionism. As we wrote in "Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!": "For the bourgeoisie, 'free trade' and protectionism are options they can debate, but for the proletariat, protectionism is poison. It is a classic means of channelling discontent over job losses into hostility towards foreign workers and immigrants while building illusions in the benevolence of our 'own' capitalists.... There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialised economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity and want."

We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, forged in opposition to Labourism, to overthrow the bloodsoaked British capitalist order and replace it with working-class rule. Down with the reactionary "United Kingdom"! For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles! For a Socialist United States of Europe! ■



Workers Hammer

London, 21 May: Bob Crow at press conference held by No2EU campaign for European elections.

neering construction sector has the ability to be offering quality jobs to working people, UK workers are being excluded from these job opportunities" (unitetheunion.com). As we said regarding the January strikes, no British workers were fired at either Lindsey or Staythorpe. We also insist that until the workers take state power, the proletariat will not be in a position to worry about the ebbs and flows of labour migration, which is subject to the world economy more generally.

The prospect of continuing strikes has enraged the construction bosses, who are incensed that projects such as the de-sulphurisation plant at Lindsey are behind schedule, which means extra costs. Strikes could also disrupt major infrastructure projects such as new power stations and London's Crossrail scheme. The *Financial Times* described the issues behind the construction strikes: "Unemployment is a big factor behind the disputes. This is a cyclical industry and 25-30 per cent of the 30,000 workers are jobless after projects dried up in recent months. There are more than 1,500 foreign workers on UK sites, which has fuelled the stoppages" (ft.com, 19 June).

Unions must defend immigrant workers!

Our articles have warned that any mobilisation of workers on the basis of

As Marxists we oppose the European Union, an imperialist trade bloc and a vehicle for European capitalist classes to co-operate against the working class and oppressed minorities of each country. Our opposition is based on proletarian internationalism, which is counterposed to the "little England" nationalist opposition to the EU that is associated with old Labour reformism, to which the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party are wed-

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Labour...

(Continued from page 4)

Crow, whose RMT union organises immigrant cleaners in the London Tube network and against the Socialist Party-influenced leadership of the PCS union. Scandalously, the PCS organises immigration cops and the wretched Socialist Party regard these guard dogs of the racist capitalist state as part of the workers movement. **Down with immigration raids! No deportations! Immigration cops out of the unions!**

Down with protectionist poison!

Internationally, fascist and xenophobic outfits have benefited from the vile nationalist protectionism being whipped up by social-democratic parties and trade union leaders as a substitute for the class struggle that is needed to fight job losses. Protectionism sets workers of each country against each other and lines them up behind their "own" bourgeoisie. As the car giants in the US slashed jobs, union leaders of the United Auto Workers proffered "America first" protectionism, railing against "outsourcing" of jobs to foreign countries, while handing over historic gains won by the auto workers in decades of struggle in order to bail out the Big Three car producers. Part of the government's bailout package includes the "Employ American Workers Act". In Australia, the construction and mining union has recently appealed to "its" government to provide stimulus monies only to employers "that give preference to local content" and "local labour" (*Australian*, 26 May).

British construction workers, many of whom work in other European Union countries, should note that protectionism is a two-way street. In March 2007 when Airbus workers faced mass layoffs and plant closures, a trade union representative in Hamburg, Rüdiger Lütjen, complained that German workers were losing out to British workers, saying: "My impression is that England and Spain are getting extra work, and we Germans have to foot the bill" (quoted in *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 3 February 2007). Meanwhile a representative of the French union Force Ouvrière complained that German workers were getting the lion's share, saying "Hamburg alone would profit from an increase in production of up to 45 planes from the A320 family. That's unacceptable." We counterposed a class-struggle perspective to the bureaucracy's vile protectionism in a joint ICL statement issued by the British, French and German sections (published in *Workers Vanguard* no 889, 30 March 2007) under the headline: "For United

Class Struggle Against Airbus Bosses! Against National Protectionism, Chauvinist Poison for the Working Class! For the Socialist United States of Europe!" Britain's construction bosses are currently renegotiating the national agreement with the unions and also demanding a wage freeze in January. The unions must fight tooth and nail against attacks on the national agreement just as they went on strike in June against job losses. We supported these strikes, despite the union leadership's recent crusade against immigrants, in the spirit that Trotsky outlined in 1939 when he said:

"A trade union led by reactionary fakers organizes a strike against the admission of Negro workers into a certain branch of industry. Shall we support such a shameful strike? Of course not. But let us imagine that the bosses, utilizing the given strike, make an attempt to crush the trade union and to make impossible in general the organized self-defence of the workers. In this case we will defend the trade union as a matter of course in spite of its reactionary leadership."

In Defence of Marxism

With the construction bosses gearing up for further attacks, it is all the more urgent that the reactionary strikes must stop! Immigrant labour is endemic to the building trade (as is subcontracting) and the bosses will always seek to foster national and ethnic divisions to "level down" wages for all. At the same time the bottom line for the trade union movement should not be *who* the employers hire, but what rate of pay they get and under what conditions they work. The construction unions must appeal on an internationalist basis to workers from other European countries, especially from Poland and the other Eastern European countries, to become allies of British workers in a struggle for jobs for all.

Our perspective requires a political battle against the trade union bureaucracy, which is wedded to British capitalism. The unions must demand: **Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does it!** Under the slogan of Karl Marx: "Workers of all countries unite!", migrant workers of Europe must become a bridge to proletarian internationalist opposition to the European Union, a bosses' conglomerate designed to bludgeon the workers of Europe, the better to compete with the EU's rivals such as US and Japanese imperialism.

For revolutionary internationalism!

The decimation of the proletariat and de-industrialisation of Britain is not part of some inevitable process but the result of defeats and betrayals of the working class in struggle, of which the



Women workers based at Heathrow airport sacked by catering firm Gate Gourmet, August 2005. Solidarity wildcat strike by British Airways workers was sold out by T&G bureaucracy. Glasgow, November 2002: Striking firefighters were sold out by FBU tops when strike was accused of obstructing military preparation for Iraq invasion.



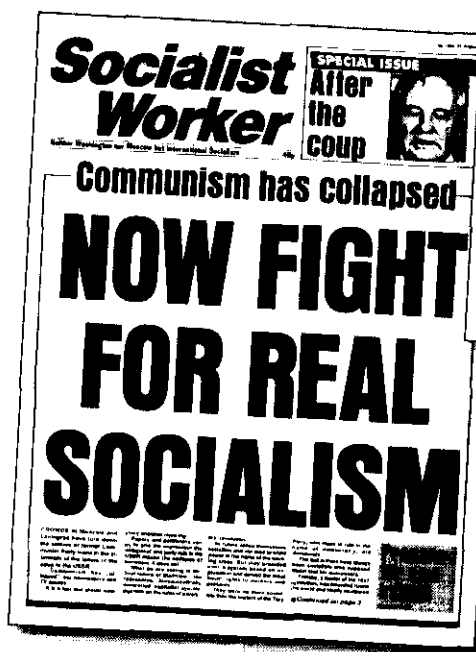
defeat of the miners strike of 1984-85 was pivotal. However, contrary to wishful thinking by the arrogant capitalist rulers and the venal trade union bureaucracy, the class struggle cannot be consigned to history. What is urgently posed is the need for a class-struggle fight to save jobs and to save the working class from decay, demoralisation and ruin. To combat mass job losses it is necessary to fight for a shorter working week with no loss in pay and for spreading the available work, as part of a fight for jobs for all. Wages and benefits must rise with the rate of inflation, benefits for the unemployed must be extended until they get jobs. All pensions must be guaranteed by the government and a huge rise is needed: Britain has the worst pension provision in Europe, its pensioners being paid on average a mere 17 per cent of their average earnings, in contrast to the European average of 57 per cent (*guardian.co.uk*, 3 July).

To redress the housing crisis there must be a massive building programme of good quality, affordable public housing. Also needed is a building programme to upgrade the crumbling infrastructure — railways, roads, power stations and other energy facilities, etc — employing all workers (including immigrants) at the highest union rates of pay. To reveal the extent of capitalist corruption, robbery and exploitation, not least in the government's "private finance initiatives" (PFI) and other scams, workers should demand that the capitalists open their books to show the gross misuse of human labour in the

pursuit of profits.

A vast improvement in health care is necessary. The class divide in health is a yawning gulf: former Labour health minister Alan Johnson admitted that: "A man living in Kensington and Chelsea will on average live 10 years longer than a man living in Manchester. For every stop on the Jubilee line from Westminster to Canning Town, life expectancy goes down by one year" (*Guardian*, 9 June 2008). Even before the parasitical "private finance initiatives" that proliferated under Labour permitting capitalist enterprises to make millions out of building hospitals, schools and other facilities, the pharmaceutical giants made untold wealth out of the NHS. Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies! Abolish charges for medicines, dental and other health care! Full access to free, good quality medical care for all!

The class divide permeates the education system which is designed to favour the wealthy few. "Scores of state schools have become 'no-go' areas for pupils taking traditional A-level subjects such as maths, science, history, geography or languages" according to recent research, while "children from the higher social classes were more likely to opt for subjects such as biology, further maths, English literature and languages" (*independent.co.uk*, 19 August). Only seven per cent of all pupils are educated in the elite "public" school system, yet this produces 75 per cent of judges, 70 per cent of finance directors and 55 per cent of solicitors (*independent.co.uk*, 22 July).



Anti-Soviet, pro-Labour Socialist Worker rejoices that "communism has collapsed" (31 August 1991); backs Labour which was committed to Thatcherism (7 May 1997).

The British ruling class sees little need to educate and train working-class people beyond what is needed for the City, which in the words of *Guardian* columnist Stewart Lansley "has sucked in the pick of Britain's brightest graduates with some of the best young PhD mathematicians and physicists behind the fiendishly complex mathematical formula used to run arcane financial instruments" (*guardian.co.uk*, 27 August). As against the capitalist rulers' wilful neglect, we demand free, good quality education and training for all, with open admission to universities and colleges and a living grant for all students.

These demands are based on the 1938 *Transitional Programme*, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, which asserted:

"Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the crumbs of a disintegrating society. *The right to employment* is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, 'structural' as well as 'conjunctural,' the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of *a sliding scale of working hours.*"

— *The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International, 1938*

An effective fight against the catastrophe of mass unemployment must be led by those committed to socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government. Particularly in Britain, transitional demands are commonly misused by reformists to cover the fact that at bottom they uphold the old Labour programme centred on

nationalisation of industry under capitalism, to be achieved through legislation in parliament while leaving the capitalist state intact. Our programme of transitional demands will not be granted by the profit-gouging capitalist rulers. We understand that the capitalist state exists to defend the profit system and the rule of the bourgeoisie and cannot be transformed into an instrument that will serve the interests of the working people.

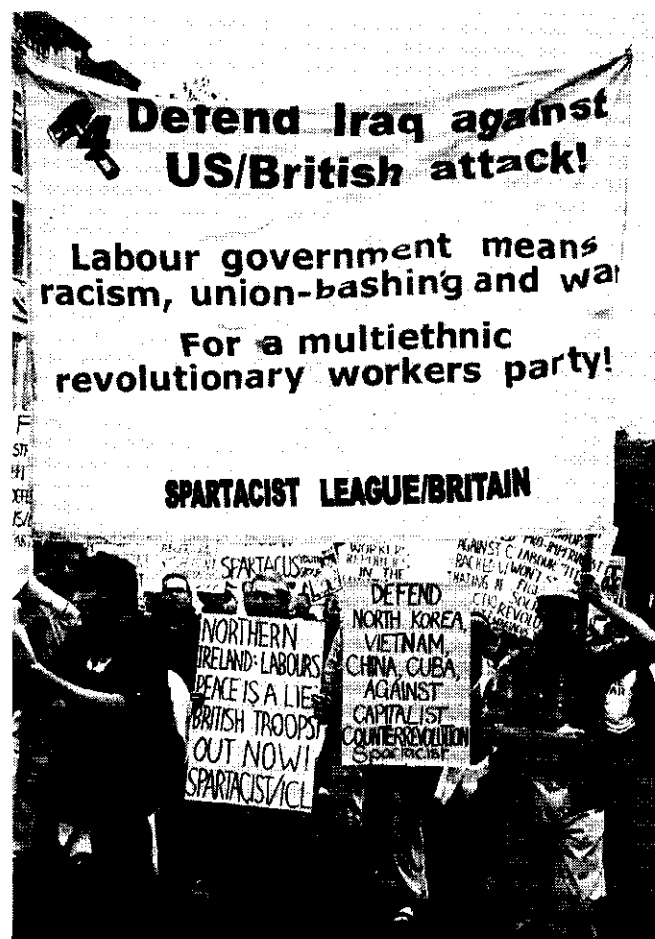
It was the political bankruptcy of old

Labour that led to the rise of New Labour, which now stands discredited at the helm of a country in crisis. The crisis of New Labour is a reflection of the abject decline of Britain's industrial proletariat, itself the product of efforts by successive governments—including Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s—to enforce wage reductions on the working people and break the power of the unions in an effort to improve the competitiveness of British capitalism. Labour was replaced by the Thatcher

government in 1979 which prepared a showdown against the miners, culminating in the heroic year-long strike of 1984-85. Defeat in this battle was far from inevitable and was not mainly the result of the massive state repression, but of the treachery of the Labourite union leaders.

Particular responsibility lies with the "left" leaders of the unions in rail and the docks who failed to strike alongside the miners, and with Labour "left" MPs such as Tony Benn who mouthed off in many speeches about solidarity with the miners, but whose perspective—like that of militant miners leader Arthur Scargill—did not go beyond the election of a Labour government.

The regeneration of Britain's infrastructure and the re-industrialisation of its manufacturing centres, putting the proletariat back into productive work, requires a thoroughgoing socialist revolution that will introduce a rationally planned economy. This is part of an internationalist programme for socialist revolutions in other countries, particularly in the rest of Europe. Workers revolution will overthrow the British capitalist order, and with it the dominance of the City of London and the yuppie English Home Counties over the former industrial heartlands of the north of England as well as Scotland and Wales. Down with the reactionary United Kingdom and its archaic institutions of the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established churches! The multiethnic revolutionary workers party that we seek to build will be dedicated to the overthrow of Westminster rule by the revolutionary proletariat and the establishment of a workers government. ■



SL/B contingent at September 2002 London demonstration to protest British and US war moves against Iraq.

Jackson...

(Continued from page 5)

culture, long used as a justification for lynch rope terror.

Many black establishment figures who wouldn't normally go near a contentious "sex" issue have felt obliged to come out in Jackson's defence. The day after Jackson's death, black Representatives Jesse Jackson Jr and Diane Watson asked for a moment of silence in the House of Representatives in Michael Jackson's memory, with at least one Congressman storming out in protest. When Democratic Representative Sheila Jackson Lee put forward a resolution proclaiming Jackson "an American legend, musical icon and

world humanitarian", it was promptly killed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, to the pleasure of Republican Representative Peter King. King infamously called the media coverage of Jackson's death an "orgy" and ranted on a YouTube posting about Jackson being a "paedophile" and a "pervert".

Michael Jackson was the victim of a depraved social order with a degenerate and cruel sense of "morality". And all of these politicians—black or white, Democrat or Republican—are staunch defenders of that very social order, ie, American capitalism.

America's puritanical values

As Michael Jackson was twice dragged through the courts over accusations of child sexual abuse, we defended him through his legal trials and tribulations. The cases relied on hearsay, contradictory testimony and zero physical evidence. As we stated in "Michael Jackson Defeats Racist, Anti-Sex Vendetta" (*Workers Vanguard* no 851, 8 July 2005):

"Jackson steadfastly maintains that he has been asexual in his relations with boys, which is certainly possible—but for us, that is irrelevant. The state's vendetta against Jackson rested upon anti-sex laws that we oppose on principle....

"Sex is a natural activity for humans—even children. We believe that in any kind of sexual relations, the guiding principle should be effective consent, regardless of age, gender or race. That is, if those involved have effective knowledge and desire to do whatever it is they will, that should be the end of it. We oppose arbitrary and reactionary state interference in such intimate matters."

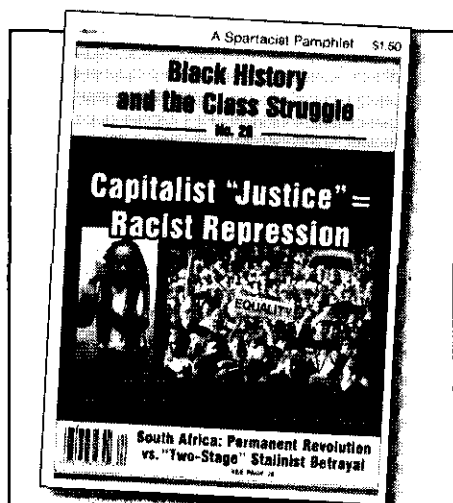
Our steadfast defence of privacy and sexual freedom, more generally across the board and more specifically in the Michael Jackson case, has earned us the contempt of the liberals and the

reformist left, who groove on being the "morality police" when sexual matters are involved. The most extreme demonstration of this was when our comrades in Germany were excluded from a conference called "Socialism Days" hosted by Sozialistische Alternative Voran (SAV), the sister group of the Socialist Party in Britain, both of which are associated with Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International (see "No sex, no fun, no Spartacists!", *Workers Hammer* no 190, Spring 2005). For the Taaffeites, anything that doesn't conform to bourgeois society's chauvinist and repressive values deserves political censorship. Outrageously, the Taaffeites slandered our position in the Michael Jackson case as "defence of rapists" and "relativising child abuse"! Whether explicitly or implicitly, much of the left was happy to jump on the "strange means guilty" bandwagon around the Jackson case, thus demonstrating their embrace of prudish bourgeois morality and their fundamental loyalty to the current social order.

Michael Jackson's sex life was nobody's business but his own. But not

unlike the countless people branded "sex offenders" in this country who have committed no crime and hurt no one and yet whose lives are made a living hell under bourgeois laws and media hysteria, Jackson had to withstand the bourgeoisie's attempts to railroad him for falling outside the norms of this society. Today, after his death, the media is replete with discussions over his finances, custody of his children and the raid on his doctor's office for suspected manslaughter.

Black Democrat Al Sharpton is a political hustler who specialises in coralling black anger at racist injustice into support for the capitalist Democratic Party. But at Jackson's elaborate, lavish and emotional memorial, he had a moment of honesty, stating: "I want his three children to know, wasn't nothing strange about your daddy. It was strange what your daddy had to deal with." The fact that the very gifted Michael Jackson was one of the entertainment world's biggest sources of scandals and attacks was not an indication of what he did, but of the sick society in which he lived. ■



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WORKERS HAMMER 4

Down with chauvinist campaign against foreign workers!

The following article was first published in Workers Vanguard no 939, 3 July 2009. On 4 August the GMB union announced a strike ballot of selected engineering construction sites, in part because the Total oil company reneged on the agreement reached as a result of the June strike at Lindsey oil refinery referred to in the article below.

LONDON, 28 June—Powerful solidarity strikes of construction workers at many of Britain's power stations, oil and gas facilities over the past week have defeated a union-busting effort by the bosses and secured the reinstatement of some 647 construction workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire, run by oil giant Total. These workers were fired on 18 June for having walked out on strike in protest when one subcontractor laid off 51 workers who, according to *Socialist Worker* (20 June), were "stewards, activists or union members". At the same time, a different subcontractor hired a different set of roughly 60 workers who had almost identical skills as those who had been laid off. The sackings were rightly seen as an attack on the union and sparked sympathy strikes which spread to plants across England, Wales and Scotland in a show of solidarity that appears to have forced a complete climbdown by the bosses.

These sympathy strikes were necessary in order to defend the existence of the unions, and the outcome was certainly in the interests of the working class as a whole. But at the same time, the unions in these construction sites are spearheading a chauvinist campaign against foreign workers that can only fuel racist attacks on immigrants and is *poison* to class consciousness and working-class solidarity. Pitting British workers against their class brothers from other countries, this crusade undermines the fighting capacity of the unions and is detrimental to the interests of the multiethnic working class as a whole. The bosses will always seek to exploit every division among workers to go after all workers; this chauvinist campaign against foreign workers gives the bosses yet another means to attack the unions.

Beginning in January, construction workers at the Lindsey refinery staged a wave of reactionary strikes against Italian and Portuguese workers under the slogan "British jobs for British workers", a cry long associated with the

to Italian workers were allocated to British workers.

From the outset we have insisted that the struggle against protectionist poison is vital to the interests of all working people. In contrast to the majority of the

multiethnic working class *against* Gordon Brown's Labour government in a fight for jobs for *all*, through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, and to undertake a union organising drive to draw into their ranks all workers, including those in dangerous and low-paying jobs.

The chauvinist anti-immigrant campaign takes place in the broader climate of a worldwide economic recession in which virulent racism against immigrants is on the rise. A chilling example is the recent provocative attack by the state on immigrant cleaners at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Outrageously, when the cleaners turned up to a 6.30 am meeting on 12 June, ostensibly called to discuss working conditions, 40 immigration police in riot gear who had been concealed in the building descended on these low-paid, vulnerable workers. Many have since been deported or await deportation, mainly to Latin America. The real "crime" of these workers was that they had been organised into the Unison union.

Immigrants from Eastern Europe in particular are being viciously scapegoated for the economic crisis that stems from the capitalist system itself. Thus in Belfast, over 100 Romanian immigrants, mainly Roma (Gypsies), were driven from their homes this month by violent racist mobs, who also attacked a rally in support of immigrants. These atrocities show that there is a vital need for the unions to *defend immigrant workers!* To bring the unions' strength to bear in defence of immigrants means fighting for an end to the reactionary strikes against foreign-born workers on construction sites. We say: Down with racist attacks on immigrant workers! No deportations! Down with work restrictions on workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

Mobilising the working class in defence of immigrants requires a class-struggle leadership in the unions, forged as part of the struggle for a Leninist party that would act as a "tribune of the people". This party must be built in opposition to the existing trade union bureaucracy and pseudo-socialists like the Socialist Party, which tries to claim that the original strikes were not aimed at foreign workers. But the truth is there for all to see. At a protest in Newark, Nottinghamshire, on 24 February against jobs being awarded to Spanish and Polish workers at the Staythorpe power station, a section of the demonstrators chanted "foreigners out". Last month in Milford Haven in South Wales, another anti-immigrant strike resulted in some 40 Polish workers losing their jobs. According to the *Guardian* website (21 May), the strike was settled when "the Dutch-based employer, Hertel, agreed to withdraw 40 Poles and replace them with UK staff at the terminal

continued on page 9

Defend unions in the construction industry!



June 19: Striking workers picket outside Lindsey oil refinery to protest mass retaliatory firings for earlier walkout against layoff of 51 workers.

fascists. Among the leaders of these strikes was Keith Gibson of the Socialist Party, who is a prominent member of the GMB union. The Socialist Party has tried to airbrush that slogan out of the picture. In the January strikes, the demand for "British jobs for British workers" became "local" jobs for "local" workers, but the content remained the same. The reactionary strikes and protests received enthusiastic backing from rabidly anti-union, anti-immigrant newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and from the fascist British National Party (BNP). The outcome of the January strike at Lindsey says it all: over 100 jobs that were expected to go

left, we opposed the January strikes at Lindsey, noting in "Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!" (*Workers Hammer* no 206, Spring 2009): "The strikes were not intended to secure more jobs or indeed any gains for the working class as a whole, nor to defend existing jobs. They were about redividing the existing pool of jobs according to the nationality of the workers. These reactionary strikes, pitting British workers against foreign workers and immigrants, are detrimental to the interests of the multiethnic working class in Britain and those of the workers of Europe as a whole." The reactionary politics of this crusade are shared by the Labourite leadership of the Unite and GMB trade unions, who embraced this patriotic crusade as naturally as they embraced Labour's racist "war on terror" that is directed against Muslims.

The bottom line for the trade union movement must not be *who* the contractors hire, but at *what rate of pay* and under what conditions. The way to undercut attempts by the bosses to "level down" the wages and working conditions, including safety standards, of all workers by playing off one nationality against the other is for the unions to demand: Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work! What's needed is to mobilise the



Protectionist rally against foreign workers at Lindsey oil refinery in January.