

**Trade unions/minorities must
stop racist provocations!**

Fascists feed on Labour government racism

The British National Party (BNP) was awarded a badge of bourgeois respectability when the BBC defied a storm of protest to host its leader Nick Griffin on *Question Time* in October 2009. Having won two seats in the European Parliament and obtained over 900,000 votes in local elections in June, the BNP thugs intend to increase their vote in the 2010 elections. The televised “debate” took place largely on the BNP’s terrain of virulent anti-immigrant racism, with representatives of all parties arguing over who is to “blame” for immigration. Labour was represented by none other than justice minister Jack Straw, who in 2006 fanned the flames of anti-Muslim racism with a provocative public declaration that he “prefers” Muslim women not to wear the niqab (veil) when coming to his constituency office (see “Racism and the Islamic veil”, *Workers Hammer* no 197, Winter 2006-2007).

Responsibility for the current rise of the BNP lies squarely with the Labour governments of the last twelve years, which have relentlessly pursued the racist “war on terror” against Muslims and vied with the BNP for being “tough” on immigrants. The BNP is also thriving on attacks on immigrants, who are being scapegoated for the loss of jobs brought on by the capitalist economic crisis. Among those rounded up for deportation in a racist dragnet by the state were cleaners at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies and construction workers at the London Olympics site. The BNP are also reaping gains out of the reactionary crusade against foreign workers that began at Lindsey oil refinery in January 2009 under the slogan of “British jobs for British workers”. Responsibility for this lies with the Socialist Party and the trade union bureaucracy, who led this campaign. We say: Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers! No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For trade union/minority mobilisations to stop fascist provocations!

No-one should be fooled by the BNP’s posture as a parliamentarist outfit: the BNP is and has been a fascist organisation since its inception. Fascists are paramilitary shock troops for all-sided reaction, particularly racist terror against immigrants and minorities, and smashing the organisations of the working class. As Trotsky explained in *Whither France?* (October 1934):

“Finance capital is obliged to create special armed bands trained to fight the workers.... The historic function of fascism is



PABBC



BBC

October 22, 2009: Protest against BNP leader Griffin (bottom) appearing on BBC’s *Question Time* programme. Relentless racism of Labour governments, represented by Jack Straw (top), has fuelled rise of BNP.

to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.”

Griffin was convicted in 1998 of inciting racial hatred for articles that denied the Nazi Holocaust. The Nazi regime was unparalleled in its barbarity. The Holocaust was the systematic extermination of six million Jews, as well as homosexuals, Gypsies and millions of Slavs. Hitler’s Nazis placed themselves at the head of European reaction. From 1918 to 1923, Germany came to the brink of revolution a number of times, but the proletariat was defeated. For the failure of the Russian Revolution to spread to the rest of Europe, humanity was made to pay with Nazi terror and the Holocaust.

In the inter-war period of economic and social crisis in Europe, where the facade of parliamentary democracy could no longer deceive and contain the militant working class, the bourgeoisie looked to fascist reaction to smash the workers organisations. But this did not make the Allied imperialist “democracies” anti-fascist fighters. Contrary to the myth of the “democratic war against fascism”, we uphold the Trotskyist position on WWII of revolutionary defeatism for *all* the imperialists—Allied and Axis powers—and for unconditional military defence of

the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. It was the Soviet Union that smashed the Nazi war machine, at a cost of over 20 million Soviet lives.

**Trade unions/minorities must
stop EDL provocations!**

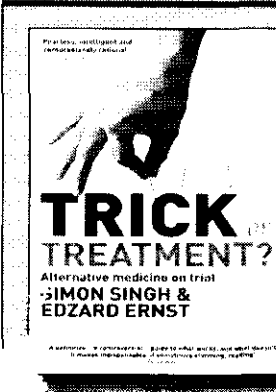
We warned last issue that “the election of BNPers Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons to the European Parliament gives respectability to the fascist stormtroopers and will lead to increased attacks on the streets, posing *real and present danger* to minorities, gays and leftists” (“The bankruptcy of Labour”, *Workers Hammer* no 208, Autumn 2009). This warning has been borne out: since the summer an outfit

calling itself the English Defence League (EDL) has staged numerous, high-profile demonstrations in several cities, including Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and London. EDL marches are racist provocations, targeting Muslims in particular using outrageous slogans such as “Muslim bombers off our streets”. These provocations must be met with massive protest centred on the trade unions mobilised for defence of Muslims, immigrants and all the intended victims of the EDL scum.

All evidence points to the fact that the EDL is a fascist organisation. The EDL was set up by BNP members (or recent ex-members) and organised

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Defend Simon Singh!

**Defend scientific
medicine!**

Student union bureaucrats ban Spartacist society

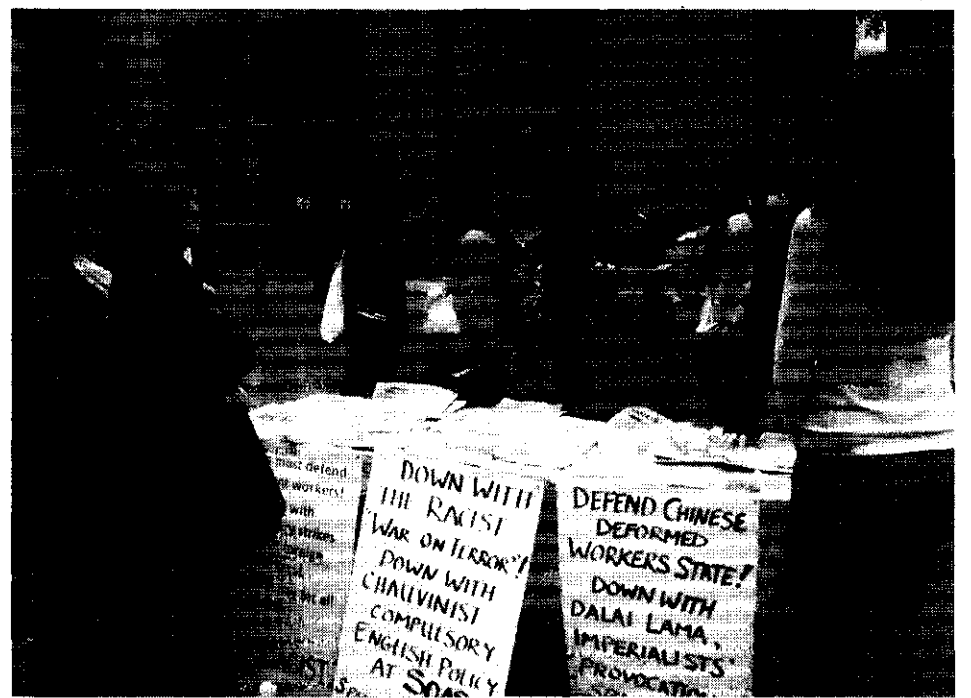
Down with chauvinist compulsory English policy at SOAS!

The British state's "war on terror" is the domestic face of the bloody imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. At universities, this is reflected in government guidelines for "tackling violent extremism", which place students and immigrant workers squarely in the crosshairs of police repression. Exactly what this means was seen on 8 April 2009 when police arrested eleven Asian men, mainly students, on bogus "terrorist" charges. When the cops finally admitted they had no evidence and released the men two weeks later without charges, ten of them—all Pakistani nationals—were incarcerated by the UK Border Agency. Eight were forced to leave the country while

two remain in jail fighting deportation.

A 4 December 2009 *Guardian* article titled "Terror arrest students fight to clear their names" describes how "men in combat uniforms grabbed Rizwan Sharif outside a Liverpool university last April, pointing a gun at his head". Another of those arrested, 25-year-old business student Janas Khan, told the *Guardian* his life had been ruined by the experience, commenting: "The whole thing is rubbish. There was no bomb factory, no link to al-Qaida and they know it."

It is in the vital interests of students, lecturers and campus workers to oppose the "war on terror" and anti-immigrant witch hunts on campuses. Under Labour's draconian new immigration rules, universi-



Workers Hammer

Spartacist table at 3 October 2009 SOAS freshers fair in defiance of diktats of student union bureaucrats, with placard opposing racist "war on terror" and chauvinist language policy.



TROTSKY

Marxism, science and technology

Under capitalism the power of science is used largely to strengthen the imperialist military and advances in medicine are subject to the pursuit of profit. Anti-scientific quackery and all forms of religious and superstitious backwardness, including on sexuality and abortion, are on the rise in this period marked by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. In a 1926 radio broadcast in the Soviet Union, Leon Trotsky, co-leader with VI Lenin of the

1917 October Revolution, noted how under proletarian rule the development of science and technology will open the door to the most far-ranging improvement of the conditions of humanity.

Just as inside the hull of a steamship impenetrable partitions are placed so that in the event of an accident the ship will not sink all at once, so also in man's consciousness there are numberless impenetrable partitions: in one sector, or even in a dozen sectors, you can find the most revolutionary scientific thinking; but beyond the partition lies philistinism of the highest degree. This is the great significance of Marxism, as thought that generalizes all human experience: that it helps to break down these internal partitions of consciousness through the integrity of its world outlook....

Technology and science develop not in a vacuum but in human society, which consists of classes. The ruling class, the possessing class, controls technology and through it controls nature. Technology in itself cannot be called either militaristic or pacifistic. In a society in which the ruling class is militaristic, technology is in the service of militarism.

It is considered unquestionable that technology and science undermine superstition. But the class character of society sets substantial limits here too. Take America. There, church sermons are broadcast by radio, which means that the radio is serving as a means of spreading prejudices. Such things don't happen here, I think—the Society of Friends of Radio watches over this, I hope? Under the socialist system science and technology as a whole will undoubtedly be directed against religious prejudices, against superstition, which reflect the weakness of man before man or before nature. What, indeed, does a "voice from heaven" amount to when there is being broadcast all over the country a voice from the Polytechnical Museum?

—Leon Trotsky, "Radio, Science, Technology, and Society" (March 1926), printed in *Problems of Everyday Life* (Monad Press [1973])



LENIN

ties and teachers are compelled to act as auxiliaries of the immigration police by monitoring foreign students and reporting anything "suspicious" to the state. This has rightly outraged many lecturers. But while the lecturers union UCU states that it is "absolutely opposed to this legislation", it urges its members to co-operate, stating that: "these duties are part of a legal obligation on universities" and "the union's protection of members cannot extend to endorsing a breach of the law relating to PBS [points-based system] or defending members who do so" ("Points-based Immigration", UCU briefing paper, February 2009).

Meanwhile, on 12 June 2009, immigrant cleaners at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) employed by the contractor ISS were called to an "emergency meeting" and set upon by 40 immigration cops who were hiding in the room with the complicity of SOAS management. Nine cleaners were detained, most of whom were subsequently deported. This was a blatant attack on this workforce which had just won union recognition and the London Living Wage after going on strike. The Spartacist League protested this vicious raid and called for full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

It is scandalous that the student union bureaucracy, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), has long been colluding with the university administration to enforce a chauvinist compulsory English policy on student societies' literature that fits squarely in the framework of the government's 2006 "extremism" guidelines, targeting in particular Islamic societies. At the September 2006 freshers fair, student union bureaucrats led by then-prominent SWP spokesman Clare Solomon, imposed a rule that "all publicity must be in English", ludicrously passing this off as part of its "equal opportunities policy". This was subsequently amended to state that all literature must have a direct English translation. Ever since, we have campaigned against this attempt at

censorship at interventions into campus events and at regular sales of our literature (including in Arabic, Chinese, Turkish, Tagalog and other languages).

Escalating this chauvinist campaign, a 25 August 2009 email from Ben Sellers, current SOAS vice president for sports and societies, indicated the Spartacus Youth Group (SYG) would not be allowed a stall at the 2009 freshers fair unless we agreed to censor our foreign-language literature. This is somewhat ironic at SOAS which boasts of being a "guardian of specialised knowledge in languages", offering "an unparalleled range of non-European languages" (soas.ac.uk)! As the SYG's email reply to the student union made clear:

"We oppose this policy as a matter of political principle because it discriminates against foreign students and is a tool for enforcing the capitalist state's racist 'War on Terror' on campus. This primarily targets Muslim students but is ultimately aimed at immigrants, workers and leftists such as ourselves. Therefore, we cannot and will not censor our foreign language literature.

"We believe that all students and students societies should be free to distribute literature in any language they wish and to express any political opinions that they choose to, including our opposition as revolutionary internationalist socialists to this chauvinist rule."

When the SYG set up a table outside the freshers fair making clear our opposition to racism and chauvinism, including the foreign-language gag at SOAS, it proved too much for the student union bureaucrats. A 20 October 2009 email from Ben Sellers preached: "This is not acceptable behaviour for the officers of a society, and as such I will not be accepting society paperwork from the Spartacus Youth Group for the coming academic year." This ban on our communist society is outrageous and students and workers on the campus have an interest in opposing this censorship. As for us, we will continue to oppose the "war on terror" witch hunt and demand: **Down with the chauvinist compulsory English policy for student societies at SOAS!** ■

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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

The Spartacist League is the British section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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

Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY
Email: workershammer@btconnect.com
Subscriptions: £3 for 1 year, Europe outside Britain & Ireland £5, overseas airmail £7

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
The closing date for news in this issue is 19 December 2009.
Printed by Newstax International Ltd (trade union) ISSN 0267-8721

Postal union in vital struggle for jobs

DECEMBER 19, 2009—The Royal Mail bosses, with the Labour government behind them, are hell-bent on “reform” in the postal service and they are out to crush the union to get it. The workforce has shown its will to fight to defend jobs and conditions with months of regional strikes and finally, in October, a series of national strikes. But on 5 November Dave Ward, deputy general secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), signed an interim agreement with Royal Mail, suspending the national strikes just when they had begun to bite. The union leadership’s pledge of class peace in the run up to Christmas—the heaviest mail period of the year—without extracting any major concessions in the long-running defensive battle against Royal Mail, was tantamount to surrender. At the core of the interim agreement is the lie that the interests of the workers and bosses can be “aligned”.

When the national strikes began in October they were resolutely undertaken by postal workers fed up to the back teeth with relentless attacks. In an article entitled “Faced with such an attack, it would be folly not to strike” (guardian.co.uk, 21 October 2009), Seumas Milne wrote: “In recent months, Royal Mail’s meat-headed management has accelerated attempts to impose job cuts and office closures, longer shifts and increases in the working week, heavier workloads, longer and faster delivery rounds, more casual and part-time working and effective cuts in pay—while reports of rampant bullying, harassment and sackings on paper-thin pretences multiply.”

Milne reports that 63,000 jobs have been cut in the past five years. With more of the same in store, what was necessary and overdue was the *mobilisation of the full strength of the union to shut down the postal service*. Instead the CWU leadership, before caving in and suspending the strike, repeated the piecemeal, half-hearted strategy it carried out in the last national strikes, in 2007. Sector-by-sector one-day stoppages with one section working while others picketed, placed CWU members in the position where they were meant to cross their own union’s picket lines. This is a losing strategy, corrosive to class consciousness and a travesty of the most elementary principles of the class struggle: *picket lines mean don’t cross! An injury to one is an injury to all!*

A week after the 8 October ballot results showed the CWU membership more than ready to do battle, a Royal Mail document called *Dispute: Strategic Overview* was leaked to the BBC. A declaration of war on the union, the document lays out the company’s strategy of “actively down-dialling [the] role of [the] union”, reducing its rights to the “legal minimum” and ramming through its decreed changes to working conditions “with or without union engagement”. Both Royal Mail and Peter Mandelson, the Labour government business secretary, coyly denied knowledge or authorship of the document but as CWU general secretary



Striking postal workers demonstrate outside Parliament on 18 July 2009.

Billy Hayes commented, it represented “a cynical attempt to derecognise the union” (cwu.org, 16 October 2009). Meanwhile Royal Mail proceeded with plans to hire **30,000 scab workers** and was setting up and operating scab mail centres to do the work of the unionised workforce.

Royal Mail was playing hardball. At the same time the strikes were solid, and a backlog of tens of millions of letters and parcels strengthened the union’s hand. The agreement suspending the strike provides no stop to the job-cutting plans of Royal Mail, nor to the changes to working conditions—so called “executive action”—which have been imposed. Back at work, slammed against the wall by the same regimen of bullying, threats, work overload and harassment, workers’ frustration at their leaders’ capitulation mushroomed. Bowing to pressure from the base, London regional CWU officials in late November called on the national union executive to restore the strike, and it is not precluded that growing pressure could force the national executive to do so.

From the outset of the economic crisis, the Labour government has been clear that its medicine for dire recession is to slash jobs and wages, and that the public sector unions must be brought to heel. This comes on top of decades of

decimation of industrial jobs. An article on the *Financial Times* website titled “Lofty ideals give way to thwarted hopes” notes: “The rate of decline in the manufacturing share of the economy under Labour has been 2.7 times faster than under Mrs Thatcher’s government” (FT.com, 2 December 2009). Many other public sector workers have closely watched the unfolding battle of the postal workers, understanding that the outcome would affect their own struggles. The fact that unionised public sector workers on scandalously low pay have not struck in their hundreds of thousands alongside the postal workers is down to the refusal of the union leaders to engage in concerted class struggle against the Labour government.

No to Labourite class collaboration!

Underlying the recent strikes is the unfinished business from the 2007 battle in the post office, when the CWU leaders called off national strikes against the wage and job-slashing of Royal Mail and agreed to the company’s demands for “flexibility”, cuts to pensions and a paltry wage rise. Labour’s plan to privatise the postal service has been shelved for now, but Royal Mail is nevertheless bound by the logic of the

capitalist market. Its drive to modernise the postal service is in response to fundamental changes the industry has been undergoing internationally. According to the *Economist* (15 October 2009) replacement of billing, advertising and personal written communications by email and other electronic means, together with competition from private companies such as TNT, means the Post Office’s traffic is shrinking by an estimated ten per cent yearly. Management blames falling revenue, predating the economic recession, for a deficit estimated at up to £10 billion in its pension scheme. Automation measures in Britain lag behind other European postal systems, and the postal service plans to bring in “walk sequencing” equipment in the New Year which will greatly cut the time and manpower now employed in sorting mail.

Defence of the working class against economic attacks and union busting demands a class-struggle fight against the bosses and their government with its panoply of anti-union laws. This cannot be won within the framework of the capitalist profit system which demands job losses and a “flexible” low-paid workforce. It is necessary to *fight for what the workers need*, not what the bosses say they can afford. What’s needed to fight against job losses is a shorter working week with no loss in pay, and 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. Marxists do not oppose technological advances in industry, but fight for job re-training at company expense when the results mean that fewer workers are required. These transitional demands are designed to demonstrate that the struggle against unemployment and attacks on the living standards of the working class must be linked to the overthrow of the capitalist order. But such a strategy requires relentless political struggle against the politics of the trade union leaders.

Bureaucrats such as Hayes and Ward are experienced hands at selling out the battles of their besieged membership, sowing demoralisation within the union. As in the wildcat strikes in 2003, Hayes & Co now look to the ACAS conciliation service (specified in the interim agreement along with the TUC) to broker talks with the bosses. ACAS is not some impartial arbiter, it’s a weapon of the capitalist state to undermine class struggle. And it is a crystal clear snapshot of the class-collaborationist politics of the TUC that they brokered the interim agreement between Royal Mail and the CWU in November, working to “align” the class interests of the workers and bosses, which are counterposed.

What we wrote of the supposedly “left-wing” trade union leaders of the Hayes/Ward ilk when they sold out the wildcat strikes six years ago is equally true today: “It’s not simply cowardice, it’s political. To wage such a struggle would mean a direct confrontation with

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BNP...

(Continued from page 1)

through networks of football "casuals" who have long been linked with the fascists. In Luton, the EDL targeted Muslim organisations who protested against a parade in March 2009 by the Royal Anglian Regiment on their return from Iraq. The EDL were particularly incensed at placards describing British soldiers as "butchers of Basra". This is a rather benign description of British Army brutality in a city where in 2003

fascist provocations. At the same time, as Marxists we make clear that the decaying capitalist system breeds the social conditions in which the fascists thrive and therefore the struggle against fascism is inseparable from the fight for socialist revolution.

The BNP führer used the BBC debate to engage in open gay bashing, declaring that he finds the idea of two men kissing "creepy". Recent months have seen a dramatic rise in murderous homophobic attacks. On 13 October 2009 Ian Baynham died of severe injuries received in a homophobic attack in



Workers Hammer

Spartacist contingent at 16 October 1993 anti-fascist demo in Welling, London.

Baha Mousa was horrifically put to death in the custody of the Queens Lancashire Regiment, having suffered 93 separate injuries.

The EDL is linked to a number of fascistic organisations such as "Stop the Islamisation of Europe" and its mobilisations have targeted mosques, such as in Harrow, London. Britain's fascists have historically had links to the anti-Catholic Ulster Loyalist paramilitaries. At a November 2009 demonstration in Glasgow by the Scottish Defence League the Loyalist slogan "No surrender to the IRA!" was chanted. Today, according to the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*, the BNP has its call centre in Northern Ireland. The EDL makes a point of thrusting a couple of mixed-race faces to the fore when facing the press but its claim that it is not racist is hogwash.

It is in the interests of the multiethnic working class as a whole to combat these racist terrorists. We call for trade union/minority mobilisations to stop

London's Trafalgar Square; on 25 October James Parkes, a 22-year-old gay man (who is a trainee cop) suffered multiple skull fractures when he was attacked by up to 20 people as he left a gay night club in Liverpool, while two transsexual women were also murdered—Andrea Waddell in Brighton in October and Destiny Lauren in London in November. In response to the rise in homophobic attacks and in memory of the victims of the fascist firebombing of a gay bar in London's Soho ten years ago, thousands held vigils in London, Liverpool and other cities at the end of October.

Our call for trade union/minority mobilisations is counterposed to wretched appeals to the capitalist state to halt fascist provocations. Mobilising the social power of the trade unions to defend immigrants and minorities requires a political struggle against the reformist trade union bureaucracy and is counterposed to the "anti-fascist" strategy of Unite Against Fascism

(UAF), built by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Demonstrations organised by UAF are not intended to stop fascist provocations: the UAF slogan "stop the BNP" in reality often means that the state should ban the BNP. We oppose calls on the capitalist state to ban the fascists, which will invariably be used against the left. The role of the capitalist state—in particular its police, prisons and courts—is to maintain order within the framework of private property relations and therefore it embodies the chauvinism that is inherent in capitalist society.

Anti-fascist myths glorify bourgeois "democracy"

The standard reformist answer to fascism is to unite all "democratic" forces into a cross-class coalition. This is today embodied in UAF, whose strategy consists of using bourgeois "democracy" as a bulwark against the fascists. But the counterposition between bourgeois "democracy" and fascism is false. Parliamentary democracy, imperialism's preferred method of rule, is merely the best disguise for the dictatorship of the capitalists. Fascism in power is another form of the dictatorship of finance capital, one which the bourgeoisie only resorts to under extreme circumstances such as when its rule is threatened by the proletariat mobilised for revolution.

In the post-Soviet climate, the fact that the capitalist ruling classes currently face no threat from the insurgent proletariat means that fascist organisations across Europe have increasingly focused on parliamentary activity. Thus in France in 2002 when Le Pen's National Front fascists scored big gains in the presidential elections they did so primarily as an *electoral party* and in Italy Gianfranco Fini's formerly neo-fascist party mutated into an electoral party that merged with Berlusconi's Freedom People movement in March 2009.

Our demand that fascist provocations must be *stopped* rests on the understanding that there is *nothing to debate* with fascists. What's to debate with supporters of the Holocaust, for example? The fascists' methods of "debate" are the firebomb, the lynch rope and other murderous weapons. However today reformists and liberals are rush-

ing headlong to debate the fascists. Leading the pack is *Searchlight* editor Nick Lowles who proclaimed a "new reality" in July 2009, a month after the BNP won two seats in the European Parliament. Lowles argues that:

"Searchlight comes from a proud tradition of No Platform, a belief that fascism should not be allowed to air its politics of hate publicly. We have always opposed legitimising fascism through public debate and where fascists try to incite hatred within communities through provocative marches and actions, we have backed mobilisations against them.

"While I still adhere to this in principle I also believe that we have to accept a new reality. Firstly the BNP has MEPs and whether we like it or not Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons will appear more regularly on television. No platform agreements between political parties were already breaking down before the election, with only Labour holding to them, and this process is likely to quicken now."

—"The Way Forward", *Searchlight*, July 2009

Related to this, Lowles argues in the same article: "To fight the BNP effectively we must move away from city and town centre events to focusing on the very communities where the BNP is drawing its support"—in other words more electioneering among the racist BNP voters. The SWP's strategy of "use your vote" means voting Labour (or some alternative), absolving the Labour government of its role in putting the wind in the sails of the fascists.

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in *Weekly Worker* (15 October 2009) mocks any demonstrations against the fascists as "mindless 'fash-bashing'" and an article by Eddie Ford denies that the EDL is fascist, insisting they are but "a motley and ugly" alliance of "nationalist, far-right and lumpen elements, such as intoxicated football hooligans and semi-criminal riff-raff", a description which sounds like any gang of fascist scum. The CPGB equates any opposition to the fascists with the SWP's reformism, but its criticism of the SWP for grovelling appeals to the state to ban the fascists is a cover for the CPGB's line, which amounts to *doing nothing* to combat the BNP or the EDL. Rather than protesting against Griffin outside the BBC, the CPGB suggested that "the establishment make room for the

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Defend Simon Singh! Defend scientific medicine!

The statement below was issued on 14 December 2009 and distributed that evening at a lecture by Simon Singh entitled "Science and the Battle for Free Speech" held at Imperial College London. It was also published in Workers Vanguard no 949, 1 January 2010.

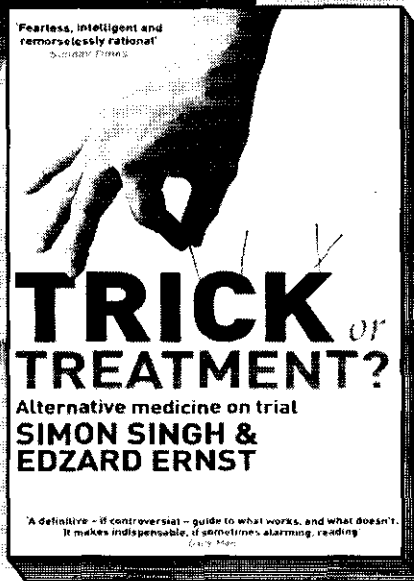
We Marxists defend Simon Singh, the renowned science writer, against the outrageous libel action by the British Chiropractic Association (BCA). At issue is an April 2008 article by Singh, titled "Beware the spinal trap" published in the *Guardian* which challenged a statement by the BCA that chiropractic could help treat a number of childhood ailments including colic, ear infections and asthma. Singh said "there is not a jot of evidence" for this claim and asserted that the BCA "promotes bogus treatments". Libel suits against scientists and science journalists are becoming increasingly common. In 2007-08, the *Guardian* and journalist Ben Goldacre, author of the book *Bad Science*, fought a libel case against vitamin pill magnate Matthias Rath who published advertisements in South Africa denouncing AIDS drugs as ineffective while promoting his own supplements. Although Rath was forced to drop the case, the *Guardian* only recovered part of the whopping £500,000 legal fees it incurred.

In the reactionary political climate of today's post-Soviet world, we Marxists find ourselves defending the basic principles of materialism, secularism and the rational humanism of the 18th century Enlightenment. Against this ideological background, snake-oil treatments, commonly referred to as alternative "medicine", are growing in popularity and many are even being funded by the state. The British government spent £20 million of taxpayers' money on the refurbishment of the Royal London Homeopathic "Hospital", while accident and emergency units are being closed down.

Science-based medicine and quack therapies are irreconcilable. While some popular treatments may be relatively harmless and may sometimes have a placebo effect, more often they are dangerous both in themselves and because they divert patients from needed medical treatment. This is borne out in the book Singh co-authored with Edzard Ernst titled *Trick or Treatment? Alternative medicine on trial* (Corgi books, 2008) an authoritative study of acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic therapy and herbal medicine. The authors concluded that "In fact, not only are such treatments unproven, but over and over again we have seen that alternative medicine is also potentially dangerous." Regarding chiropractic therapy, they said it "might offer some marginal benefit, but only for back pain—all its other claims are unsubstantiated".



Simon Singh: fighting vicious libel suit by British Chiropractic Association.



The libel writ from the BCA quickly followed the publication of *Trick or Treatment?* The *Guardian* had offered the BCA space for a response to Singh's article. But the BCA declined, preferring instead to hide behind the English libel laws. The BCA writ has sparked a public campaign and over 20,000 people have signed a petition calling for reform of the libel laws because they "discourage argument and debate" and have no place in scientific disputes.

English libel laws, which are enforceable in other countries, are so favourable to the claimant that London has been dubbed "a town named sue". The English libel system has no relationship to the question of truth. Indeed it is nothing more than a protection from the truth for the rich and well-born. Unlike in the US for example, where the accuser must prove that the statement in question is false, in England the burden of proof is on the defendant. With the costs of litigation 100 times higher than in most other European countries, more often than not cases are never taken to court but succeed in their dirty work simply by intimidating journalists, newspapers and other publishers. As Simon Singh says: "Any publisher has to make a calculation on whether to defend a writ not on whether they have a strong case but on whether they can afford the extraordinary costs of running a

case to court" (*Scotsman*, 11 December 2009).

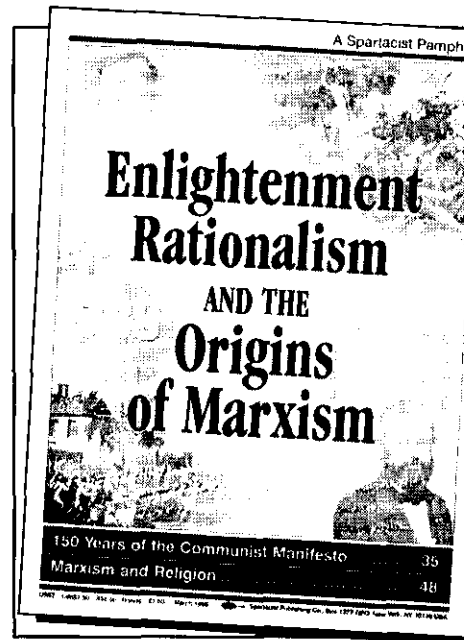
The British capitalist system is to blame for the inadequate education system that results in widespread ignorance of the principles of science among the population, and for failing to provide decent healthcare for the mass of the working people. In these circumstances many people turn to remedies that promise miracles.

It is scandalous that in the 21st century Prince Charles, heir to the throne of the mediaeval institution of the monarchy, received £900,000 from the Department of Health to promote

"alternative therapies", which are international multibillion-dollar businesses, while Simon Singh has had to fork out £100,000 (thus far) fighting the BCA libel suit. The libel laws are used to defend the interests of big business. We also defend Dr Peter Wilmshurst, a consultant cardiologist at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, who criticised the research data used to promote a new heart implant and was sued by the manufacturer. He faces financial ruin as a result of a libel suit by US company, NMT Medical.

Marxism has as its foundation the gains of the Enlightenment and bourgeois revolutions which freed scientific and social development from the shackles of feudalism. The triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 has ushered in a period of theoretical, political, social and not least sexual reaction. There has been a growing assault on science, including from Christian fundamentalists seeking to undermine the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. Particularly in this context it has become necessary to reassert the basic premises of historical materialism and the corresponding programmatic principles of Marxism.

The libel laws in this country are part of a system, including the institution of Parliament, that exists to keep the working class "in its place". We look forward to the day when the libel laws and the system of lies they uphold—including feudal relics such as the monarchy, the House of Lords and established churches—will be swept away by socialist revolution. A future international planned socialist economy will provide free, good quality healthcare for all and sweep away the material basis for the persistence of dangerous anti-scientific quackery. In a world communist society—where social classes and all forms of oppression are part of a distant, barbaric past—mankind will finally be able to put into place the power of science in the service of all humanity. ■



This pamphlet reprints presentations given by Spartacist League/US 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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October 1917

The Bolshevik Revolution

The article below is an edited version of a class given by comrade James Palmer in London on 14 November 2009.

The 1917 Russian October Revolution was the greatest victory for the working people of the world, a defining event of modern history. For the first time ever the proletariat seized state power and created a workers state based on soviets, or workers councils, under the Bolshevik party's leadership. As the founder of American Trotskyism, James P Cannon, put it in 1939:

"The Russian Bolsheviks on November 7, 1917, once and for all, took the question of the workers' revolution out of the realm of abstraction and gave it flesh and blood reality."

—*Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, 1943

The Soviet government decreed land to the peasants and pulled Russia out of World War I, an inter-imperialist war. It demanded an immediate peace without annexations, including freedom for the colonies subjugated by the imperialists. It also recognised the right to self-determination of all the non-Russian peoples oppressed under tsarist/capitalist rule.

The Bolshevik Revolution was not made solely for Russia, but for the working masses of the whole world, occurring at a time when the Indian subcontinent, China and Africa were either colonies or semicolonies of the imperialist powers. The Bolshevik Revolution became a beacon to the oppressed masses of all countries, not least in the colonial world. Revulsion against the imperialist rulers as a result of the slaughter in World War I led to a wave of revolutionary and pre-revolutionary struggles in many countries. This wave ended with the defeat of the German Revolution of 1923.

Only in Russia in October 1917 did this upsurge result in the working class taking state power, because uniquely among the socialist organisations of their time, the Bolsheviks had a programme for working-class power. At the outbreak of WWI on 4 August 1914, the German Social Democracy (as well as the Labour Party and most other parties in the Second International) passed definitively into the camp of social chauvinism by supporting their "own" bourgeoisie in war. WWI was a watershed, provoking a profound realignment in the revolutionary workers movement internationally. Prepared by years of struggle and a decisive split with the Russian opportunists—the Mensheviks—Lenin and the Bolsheviks emerged as the leadership of an international movement to recapture the banner of revolutionary Marxism.

From 1914 onwards Lenin hammered away at two related themes: the need to *split* from the social traitors of the Second International and to fight for a new, Third International; and the call to turn the imperialist war into a civil war against the capitalist system. Lenin's programme for the working classes of all the warring countries was *revolutionary defeatism*—ie, the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie is the lesser



Spartacist League class



For a Leninist-Trotskyist party!



Top: Revolutionary soldiers march through Moscow, 7 November 1918. Above: Lenin and Trotsky in Red Square on the second anniversary of October Revolution.

civil; turn the guns around—the main enemy is at home! Following the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1919 the Third (Communist) International was founded and, under Lenin and Trotsky's leadership, it sought to forge vanguard parties to fight for proletarian revolutions worldwide.

Social chauvinism is integral to the programme of parties like the Labour Party. Old Labour governments have loyally served the aims of British imperialism, from the bloody partition of India in 1947, leading to communalist slaughter on a mass scale, to sending troops into Northern Ireland in 1969, to introducing vile racist virginity tests for Asian women in Britain in the 1970s. Social chauvinism is alive and well today, as seen in the reactionary strikes against foreign workers, under the slogan "British jobs for British workers",

led by the Socialist Party and trade union bureaucrats and tacitly supported by most of the Labourite left. In building a party modelled on Lenin's Bolsheviks, our strategic task is to expose such reformist organisations as an obstacle to building a revolutionary party.

Despite the grim poverty of Russia at the time of the October Revolution, the young workers state granted far-reaching measures of equality. It eliminated laws discriminating against women and gave women in Russia a level of equality and freedom that has not yet been attained by the most economically advanced "democratic" capitalist countries today. Just over a month after the revolution, two decrees established civil marriage and allowed for divorce at the request of either partner; all laws against homosexual acts and other consensual sexual activity were also abol-

ished. The Bolshevik position was based on the following principle, as explained in a pamphlet by Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia* (1923):

"It declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon."

This is light years ahead of the consciousness of liberals and fake leftists today, who go ballistic over our defence of Helen Goddard and of Roman Polanski. Both are behind bars because of "age of consent" laws, under which the bourgeois state accords to itself the right to regulate the sexual activity of youth.

Today's reactionary political climate is shaped largely by counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union in 1991-92. The USSR remained a workers state (although degenerated), despite the rise to power of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste that began in 1923-24, rejecting the revolutionary internationalist programme of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky. We upheld the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe and called for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and we have a proud record of fighting against the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1989-90 and against counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union.

The message behind today's rejoicing by the capitalist politicians and liberals over counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is: "never again" should the working class hold state power. While organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) are dumping any remaining claim to base themselves on the Bolshevik Revolution, we in the ICL uniquely uphold the programme of the Bolshevik party in that revolution. To quote James Cannon again,

"We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood."

—*Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, 1943

There are many lessons from the revolution but the central one that I want to highlight—an issue that set the Bolsheviks apart from their competitors at the time—the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (SRs)—was the need to combat illusions in bourgeois democracy. Breaking such illusions was central to the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Ever since October 1917, social democrats and reformists, beginning with the Mensheviks, have denounced the October Revolution, arguing that the Bolsheviks should not have led the proletariat to seize power. Instead, they argue that the Russian proletariat should have supported the liberal bourgeoisie—in the name of "democracy". The main accusation levelled against the Bolsheviks is that they violated bourgeois democracy. What they actually violated was the rule of the landlords and capitalists,

based on private property—exactly what bourgeois democracy exists to protect. Bourgeois democracy is a facade to conceal the reality of capitalist rule which is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

The state is not neutral

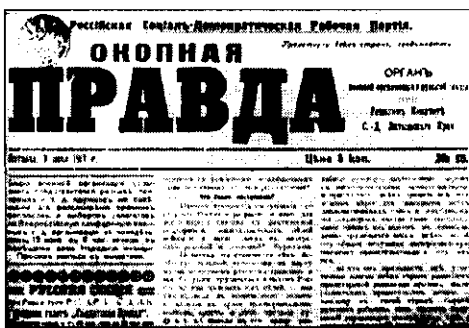
Lenin's pamphlet, *The State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the October Revolution, codifies a central lesson of the revolution: that the proletariat *cannot* use the bourgeois state to achieve a peaceful transition to socialism. Rather, the proletariat must smash the old state machinery, create a new state and impose its own class rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat—to suppress and expropriate the capitalist exploiters.

The role of the reformists today, as it was in 1917, is to reinforce illusions in “democratic” imperialism. For groups like the SWP and Socialist Party, the solution to everything from how to combat the fascist British National Party to ending the British and US imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan is to appeal to the capitalist state. This is worse than grotesque: these bloody imperialist occupations are not aberrations, but part of the normal workings of “democratic” imperialism. The imperialist rulers have carried out mass murder and torture on an immense scale in their drive to secure world markets; much of the wealth that laid the foundations of British capitalism was acquired from the trade in African slaves. From the Indian subcontinent to Africa and beyond, British colonial rule killed tens of millions, subjugating entire populations. As Karl Marx put it in *Capital*, capitalism was born “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt”.

The paradox of the February Revolution

The February Revolution of 1917 that overthrew the tsarist monarchy was carried out overwhelmingly by the working class with the peasants, organised in the army, also playing a key role. The spark was a demonstration by women workers on 23 February (on the old calendar, which in the new calendar is 8 March, International Women's Day). On 25 February there was a general strike in Petrograd followed by a mutiny in some regiments and the creation of the Soviet of Workers Deputies. By 28 February the tsar's ministers were arrested. The paradox of the February Revolution was that while workers had toppled the monarchy, power was handed over to the bourgeoisie in the form of the Provisional Government. This bourgeois government existed side by side with the soviets in what was known as “dual power”. The central question in Russia following the February Revolution was this: whether to cede power to the bourgeoisie or whether the proletariat should take the power.

Tsarist Russia was the weakest link in the imperialist chain as the Russian bourgeoisie were entirely dependent on the European powers. The particular conditions in Russia were described by Trotsky as “combined and uneven development”. A vast mass of hundreds of millions of peasants—who had no mechanised agriculture, were only a generation away from serfdom and were hungry for land—co-existed with urban centres containing a small but concentrated proletariat. Particularly in Petrograd the proletariat was based in large-scale modern factories. This meant that the proletarian revolution could not hope to succeed and survive in backward Russia without the support of the mass



Above: *Pravda of the Trenches* published in Latvia by Bolsheviks in the army during World War I. Right: Dead Russian soldiers on the southwestern front in 1916. Russian deaths totalled 2.5 million, 40 per cent of total killed fighting for the Entente.



Novosti

of poor peasants.

The soviets, which had previously arisen in the 1905 Revolution, were revived in the February Revolution, but they now included soldiers, who were mainly peasants and who would otherwise have been difficult to organise. Soldiers soviets became the organised form of the armed military units that were now at the disposal of the

Soviet permits it” (quoted in *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky, 1932-33). Dual power could only be resolved either by revolution or counter-revolution.

With the overthrow of the autocratic rule of the tsar, democratic illusions became widespread. Upon his return from exile in the spring of 1917 Lenin described Russia as the “freest of all the

maintained that the February Revolution had achieved the main task of overthrowing the monarchy and now the task was to defend “democratic” Russia against German imperialism. In other words the war aims of the Russian bourgeoisie would continue. During Lenin's exile the Bolshevik leaders in Russia began to bend in the direction of the Mensheviks' defensism. Trotsky was scathing in his *History of the Russian Revolution* about a *Pravda* article in early March which said: “Our slogan is pressure upon the Provisional Government with the aim of compelling it... to make an attempt to induce all the warring countries to open immediate negotiations... and until then every man remains at his fighting post!” Lenin vehemently opposed this line in *Pravda*, saying in a March letter: “I shall prefer even an immediate split with anyone in our party, whoever it may be, to making concessions to the social-patriotism of Kerensky and Co.”

Lenin fights to rearm the party

On his return to Russia in April, Lenin led a sharp fight to reorient the Bolshevik party. Few events had such significance for the fate of the revolution as the Bolshevik party conference held in April, where the issue at stake was the question of the working class taking power. As Trotsky noted in *Lessons of October*: “The fundamental controversial question, around which everything else centred, was this: whether or not we should struggle for power; whether or not we should assume power.”

Lenin's “April Theses” make clear that not the slightest concession to “revolutionary defensism” is permissible. He abandoned his slogan of the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” in favour of a direct struggle for proletarian power. Lenin's theses included a recognition that the seizure of power by the proletariat would place on the order of the day not only the democratic tasks in Russia, but also the socialist tasks. Also included was a sweeping programme for nationalising land and banks under a soviet government and the creation of a new revolutionary international.

Even before April Lenin was irreconcilably opposed to class collaboration and to the Russian bourgeoisie. His old slogan had nothing in common with the Mensheviks, whose programme was that the Russian Revolution needed to be led by the bourgeoisie and supported by the proletariat, for a period of years or decades. In contrast Lenin saw the vital necessity for the peasants, who needed to rise up and overthrow the landlords, to ally with the proletariat in the coming revolution. He also saw the revolution in Russia as the opening shot

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Demonstration in Petrograd in June 1917 raises Bolshevik slogans “Down with counterrevolution! Down with the ten capitalist ministers! All power to the Soviet of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies!”

working class.

Between February and October there was continual conflict between the Provisional Government and the soviets. Describing the instability of dual power, the first minister of war in the Provisional Government, Alexander Guchkov, complained: “The government, alas, has no real power; the troops, the railroads, the post and telegraph are in the hands of the Soviet. The simple fact is that the Provisional Government exists only so long as the

belligerent countries in the world”, and there was freedom of expression and intense public debate, especially in the soviets about the way forward for the revolution. But the fundamental nature of Russia as an imperialist power had not changed and for Lenin, the question was to maintain the Bolsheviks' revolutionary defeatist position on WWI—the task remained that of “turning the imperialist war into a civil war”.

The soviets in February were dominated by the SRs and Mensheviks, who



Novosti

Troops fire on protesters during the July Days.

BNP...

(Continued from page 4)

Marxist left on its platforms" (*Weekly Worker*, 1 October 2009).

SWP honcho John Molyneux argued in a letter to *Socialist Worker* (13 June 2009) that the SWP shouldn't make a "fetish" out of not debating the fascists. Meanwhile, according to the SWP's Pre-conference Bulletin no 1 (October 2009):

"A discussion has been taking place in the party about our stance on No Platform for the BNP. While our commitment to denying the fascists a platform is not in doubt, there have been calls from comrades centrally involved in Unite Against Fascism to scrap our opposition to debating with the BNP leadership in the media."

The SWP leadership has decided not to debate Griffin, at least for now.

When the EDL began mobilising in major city centres in the summer of 2009, UAF was lukewarm about mobilising any kind of counter-demonstration. A petition on UAF's website (25 September 2009) called on the home secretary, local council and police to ban the 10 October EDL demo in Manchester. According to Permanent Revolution's website (permanentrevolution.net, 11 October 2009), when this was denied UAF sought permission to rally on the other side of the city. However, the cops placed the UAF demo near the EDL mob of 500-700 thugs and "kettled" the anti-fascist demonstrators. UAF deliberately called its demonstration for noon, two hours after the EDL provocation began. *Socialist Worker* (17 October 2009) reports that the North West TUC urged people to stay "away from the UAF protest".

Workers Power defends the position "no platform for fascists", saying: "Communists see fascist organisations as instruments of civil war against the working class. Their aim is to smash the workers movement". They conclude: "we believe they [the fascists] have to be stopped from organising their forces. This is the policy of 'no platform'. Wherever fascists seek to grow and develop their influence and support, communists seek to organise united

action of workers, youth and anti-racists to stop them" (workerspower.com, 29 September 2009). What Workers Power doesn't say is that upholding the slogan "no platform for fascists" in no way precludes—indeed is often synonymous with—calling on the state to ban the fascists. Workers Power attacks UAF



RMT contingents at 28 March 2009 mass trade union protest for jobs in London. Banner shows worker crushing fascism, capitalism. Mobilising social power of working class requires political battle against reformist leadership.

for its failure to physically stop the fascists in the streets, saying: "Though UAF sees the need to protest against the BNP, it suffers from having to limit its arguments and tactics to what the capitalist politicians and figures on the right wing of the labour movement will accept". The problem with UAF is not that it lacks militant tactics, but its reformist programme, which Workers Power shares.

Reformists seek unity behind chauvinist "British jobs" crusade!

Nowhere is the political bankruptcy of the Labourite left more evident than in their pleas for unity with the leadership of the reactionary strikes for

"British jobs for British workers". Both the SWP and Workers Power look to the Socialist Party and RMT leader Bob Crow, who led the No2EU coalition at the time of the European Parliament elections, to form a new electoral vehicle for the 2010 general election. No2EU was founded on support to the

Socialist Party proclaimed the outcome as yet 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 2009).

No2EU's election strategy consisted of feeding at the same trough as the BNP, aiming to compete for the racist vote. In November the Socialist Party and Bob Crow formed a new coalition for the 2010 election. Its leadership also includes Brian Caton—leader of the Prison Officers Association, part of the armed fist of the capitalist state—who is now a proud member of the Socialist Party. Given its history as No2EU and its leadership, this "new" coalition could be nothing other than a vehicle for chauvinism, class collaboration and betrayal. But Workers Power criticises this cabal because they will not *form a party*, and therefore "will not stop the Tories but, on the contrary, demoralise working class activists and deliver the more backward and disorganised parts of our class over to the British National Party, which can pose as 'anti-establishment' unopposed by a genuine, radical party of the left".

The notion that a mass workers party should accommodate would-be BNP voters expresses Workers Power's commitment to a social-democratic "party of the whole class". This view, which is common to all Labourite organisations including the Socialist Party and SWP, sees the workers party as an analogue of the trade unions, embracing the most advanced as well as the most backward layers of the working class, in which the backward layers usually dominate. In contrast, the Leninist vanguard party that we seek to build necessarily excludes from its ranks all chauvinists and bases itself on the most advanced layers, fighting every manifestation of backwardness, chauvinism and prejudice, leading the entire working class and acting as a "tribune of the people".

The protectionist poison expressed in the "British jobs" strikes is inherent to the programme of social democracy. To workers facing ruin by the capitalist economic crisis, it substitutes class

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Postal union...

(Continued from page 3)

Blair's Labour government. But while they decry 'new' Labour's attacks on the unions, the policies of the 'awkward squad' are premised on the lie that the workers' interests can be served by parliament, the very institution of capitalist class rule in this country" (*Workers Hammer* no 186, Winter 2003-2004). In the course of battling against these attacks it is necessary to forge a new, class-struggle leadership in the trade unions, linked to the building of a revolutionary party to lead the working class in a fight to overthrow the decrepit capitalist system through socialist revolution.

Crucial to that struggle is defeating the poisonous chauvinism of the official trade union leaders such as the Unite and GMB bureaucrats who led the reactionary strikes against foreign workers in construction in early 2009. As we wrote 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 reac-

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

A class-struggle leadership in the CWU would counter the bosses' attempts to use immigrants as strikebreakers by fighting to organise immigrant workers into the union, demanding equal pay for equal work and full union wages and conditions for all workers. **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

What's needed is a political battle in the union against the bureaucracy. The last place such a battle will come from is the ostensible "leftists" within the unions, such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party. Militant noises aside, these Labourites have always acted as apologists for

the trade union bureaucracy, whose reformist programme they share. Today their members hold positions of influence in the bureaucracy as "labour lieutenants of capital" in their own right. Less than a week after *Socialist Worker* limply headlined in their postal strike coverage "How do we fight when union leaders waver?" (31 October 2009), Jane Loftus, the CWU president and a prominent SWP member, *voted for* the interim agreement calling off the strikes! Caught with their pants down, the SWP publicly admitted this scandal one month later in the 28 November 2009 issue of *Socialist Worker*, which tersely noted that Loftus had resigned from the SWP, having "caused problems for our members in the union and much wider". We can imagine. In January 2009, they condemned the reactionary Lindsey oil refinery strike slogan "British jobs for British workers" while at the same time circulating a petition in support of the strike demands, which included the call for "local" jobs for "local" workers. This poisonous "Britain first" protectionism too is endemic to Labourite reformism.

For their part Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party grotesquely welcomed the interim agreement calling off the post strikes remarking that it "does allow the CWU to regain some element of trade

union control in the workplace and therefore does push back the attacks of the bosses" (*Socialist*, 12-18 November 2009). Social-chauvinists to the core, this is the group which lent leadership to, and whitewashed, the reactionary strikes against foreign workers at Lindsey oil refinery. And since 2005 they have bragged about the deal negotiated by the executive of the PCS, in which their members are prominent, requiring new entrants to the civil service to work **five more years** to qualify for a pension! Part and parcel of class-collaborationism is the notion that police and prison guards—whose job it is to beat and jail striking workers, blacks, Asians and immigrants—belong in the trade union movement. This virulently anti-working-class stance paid off recently when their long courtship of the Prison Officers Association won them a new recruit—POA general secretary Brian Caton! We say **prison guards out of the trade union movement!**

Workers need a party that rejects the bankrupt politics of old Labourism purveyed by the trade union misleaders and fake leftists, and instead fights to mobilise the social power of the multiethnic working class in a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of a workers government. ■

1917...

(Continued from page 7)

in the European and international revolution. But Lenin's formula for a joint dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was flawed, not least because the peasantry is not an independent class but an atomised petty-bourgeois layer.

Faced with the reality of dual power Lenin came over to Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution". From 1905 Trotsky understood that the realisation of the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in backward Russia was conceivable only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. Moreover, the seizure of power by the working class in Russia would place on the order of the day not only democratic, but also socialist tasks. This would give a powerful impetus to international socialist revolution, which was necessary for the development of socialism in Russia. Trotsky in turn came over to Lenin on the party question, making clear on his return to Russia in May 1917 that he no longer favoured unity between the Bolsheviks

had decided instead to go "not to the German front, against the German proletariat, but against their own capitalist ministers".

By June the Bolsheviks had a near majority in the Petrograd factories and in some garrisons but it was far from clear that this support existed in the countryside or at the front. On more than one occasion in July the Bolsheviks had to restrain the workers in Petrograd from taking power because, without support in the countryside, they risked losing power again. After initially opposing the July demonstrations, the Bolshevik leadership decided that it was better to go with them. And when this wave broke, a period of severe counterrevolutionary repression followed. Many Bolsheviks were killed; Trotsky was arrested and Lenin went into hiding. The repression however was useful in helping the workers to understand the true nature of the supposedly "democratic" government of Kerensky, the Mensheviks and the SRs, which was in fact the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The Mensheviks and SRs emerged discredited from the July Days, whereas the Bolshevik party



International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) banner raised in Moscow 1991 demonstration on anniversary of October Revolution.

were "two variants of one and the same danger...the one chronic and the other acute" and one must: "Ward off the acute danger first, in order afterwards to settle with the chronic one".

Lenin continued to fight against the conciliators in his own party who wanted to use the military bloc with the Provisional Government as an excuse to slide over into a political bloc with the Mensheviks and SRs, leading to a defencist policy on the war. The pressure on the Bolsheviks to adapt to defencism was greatly increased by the German capture of Riga on 20 August. A conspiracy was entered into by the Kerensky government and the Anglo-French imperialists to surrender Petrograd to the Germans and in this way to suppress the revolution. Rodzianko, the former head of the State Duma, said: "Petrograd appears threatened" adding "I say, to hell with Petrograd".

Occupation by the German army would have meant an end to the soviets and to dual power. Baltic sailors had been fighting to protect the approaches to Petrograd, the centre of the revolution, which was necessary. But Lenin was clear that the Bolsheviks must not become defencists, writing: "We shall become defencists *only after* the transfer of power to the proletariat.... Neither the capture of Riga *nor the capture of Petrograd* will make us defencists." From prison, Trotsky said: "The

Russian bourgeois government and even in this tricky situation maintained their internationalism.

Lenin's fight for the seizure of state power

In September the Bolsheviks obtained a majority in the Petrograd Soviet and, unlike in July, Bolshevik support among the masses outside the cities was growing rapidly. With land wars raging in the countryside in which the peasants were seizing land, Lenin recognised that the time had come for the overthrow of the Kerensky government and the seizure of power by the proletariat. From mid-September on Lenin fought relentlessly to put the insurrection on the order of the day. The task he said was "*armed uprising* in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and the overthrow of the government. We must consider *how* to agitate for this without expressly saying as much in the press." The Democratic Conference that took place at this time was a parliamentary diversion from the seizure of power, as was the pre-parliament.

The crucial upcoming event was the Second Congress of Soviets, which was very popular with the masses because it was sure to have a Bolshevik majority and which the Mensheviks and SRs kept trying to put off. Trotsky and Sverdlov thought that the seizure of



General Kornilov's troops being disarmed following attempted coup.

and Mensheviks.

In contrast to both Lenin and Trotsky, the right wing in the Bolshevik party at the time—exemplified by Kamenev—still had in mind a consolidation of the new bourgeois democracy. Kamenev and Zinoviev would oppose the seizure of power in October.

Fake socialists join the Kerensky government

When the SRs and Mensheviks openly joined the Provisional Government in May, this was a political betrayal of the working masses in the soviets, but entirely in keeping with the SR and Menshevik programme. The Kerensky government was a bourgeois government; the presence of the Mensheviks and SRs was designed to fool the workers that their concerns could be met through the bourgeois state. These defencist "socialists" still dominated the soviets and when the All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened in June it voted to approve Kerensky's new offensive at the front.

But the mood in Petrograd was changing in favour of the Bolsheviks. When a demonstration in early June was banned by the government, the Bolsheviks stood down. The Mensheviks then called a demonstration on 18 June, but the workers came out *en masse* under Bolshevik slogans, including: "Down with the ten capitalist ministers!" "Down with the offensive!" and "All power to the soviets!" By the start of July Petrograd was in semi-insurrection—a delegation from a machine gun unit met workers from the Putilov factory to tell them they had received an order on 4 July to go to the front, but

emerged with increased support. The credibility of the Bolsheviks would also be enhanced by their role in the Kornilov episode that was to follow.

Military defence against Kornilov; no political support to Kerensky

Kornilov, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, was a monarchist general of the "Black Hundred" type (Great Russian chauvinists who carried out pogroms against Jews). When he attempted a coup in August, the Bolsheviks quickly mobilised workers from the Petrograd factories to repulse him, in contrast to Kerensky who would have sat back while Petrograd was invaded. A victory for Kornilov would have meant not only a slaughter of the Bolsheviks and the workers and soldiers in the soviets but would also have been fatal for many of the compromisers as well. The failed coup by Kornilov showed that bourgeois democracy, as represented by the Provisional Government, was not viable in the historic sense in Russia in 1917. The real choices were represented by the Bolsheviks on one hand, and Kornilov and the forces of reaction on the other.

The Bolsheviks formed a *military* bloc with Kerensky against Kornilov, but gave him no *political* support. In fact they used the military bloc as a way of undermining Kerensky's remaining political support. When Kronstadt sailors asked Trotsky if they shouldn't arrest the government, he replied: "No, not yet.... Use Kerensky as a gun-rest to shoot Kornilov. Afterwards, we will settle with Kerensky." Putting it another way he said Kerensky and Kornilov



Armed guard outside Petrograd Smolny Institute during the October Days. Inset: 25 October proclamation by Military Revolutionary Committee announces establishment of Soviet power.

fall of Riga is a cruel blow. The fall of Petersburg would be a misfortune. But the fall of the international policy of the Russian proletariat would be ruinous." The Kornilov coup fizzled by the end of August. The Bolsheviks never abandoned their defecatist posture towards

power could coincide with the congress of the soviets; Lenin feared this was a smokescreen for not organising an insurrection, which was understandable given the opposition in the Central Committee to the seizure of power. On

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Polanski...

(Continued from page 12)

the girl's 1977 grand jury testimony, which has been splashed all over the internet, "proves" that this was a case of "brutal rape". Hardly. In fact, the prosecution's case against Polanski was never believable. Grand juries, which determine if there is enough evidence for a trial, are a weapon of the prosecution where a witness cannot even be cross-examined by the defence. Moreover, the grand jury testimony in Polanski's case "proves" nothing other than that the prosecution's case rested on very shaky ground. In the midst of providing much obviously coached detail (like the year of the champagne she and Polanski were drinking), the young woman at one point admits: "I can barely remember anything that happened." Moreover, Polanski, even if he is a rich, famous, white male, has as much right to be listened to as his accuser.

The renewed persecution of Polanski takes place at a time when "sexual tolerance has shrivelled", as noted by Alexander Cockburn in *CounterPunch* (2-4 October 2009). The puritanical witch hunt against "sex offenders" waged by the Blair and Brown Labour governments under the guise of "protecting vulnerable children" is a modern-day version of Christian fundamentalist crusades against "sin". In today's reactionary climate, liberals and reformists buy into the hysteria that treats adults engaged in inter-generational sex as though they are *de facto* child rapists and murderers. The "anti-paedophilia" hysteria has even seen parents banned from accompanying their own children to public parks in Watford Borough because they have not been vetted by police! (bbc.co.uk, 29 October 2009).

The government has recently seized on the spurious crusade against "sex trafficking" to introduce draconian new legislation criminalising men who "pay for sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force", a move which marks a significant shift towards outlawing prostitution altogether by penalising customers. We Marxists oppose not only reactionary "age of consent" and "statutory rape" laws, but also other laws against "crimes without victims", such as gambling, prostitution, drug abuse and pornography. Our defence of Polanski, like our longstanding defence of NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association, which advocates the decriminalisation of consensual sex between men and boys), is based on our Marxist programme for women's liberation through socialist revolution. **Government out of the bedroom! Hands off Roman Polanski! Drop the charges!**

We reprint below our article, "Stop the puritan witch hunt against Roman Polanski!" which first appeared in the newspaper of the Spartacist League/US, *Workers Vanguard* no 192, 10 February 1978. The political points in that piece are as relevant today as they were then, over three decades ago.

Internationally acclaimed film director Roman Polanski has been driven out of the US by a vicious and vindictive official witch hunt. His legal tribulations began last 11 March when he was arrested in the lobby of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel by Los Angeles police, responding to a woman's charge that he had screwed her 13-year-old daughter. Ever since, Polanski's nightmarish persecution—which included 42 days in the Chino, California state prison for degrading "psychiatric observation"—has escalated.

Polanski was recently released from Chino upon completion of the "psychi-

atric diagnosis", which was reportedly "favorable". However, Superior Court judge Rittenband immediately called the report a "whitewash" and informed the director's lawyer that he intended to sentence Polanski to an additional 48 days in prison, to be followed by "voluntary deportation". "He doesn't belong in this country", proclaimed this state-empowered guardian of the nation's morals. Polanski, who holds French citizenship, fled to Paris on 1 February, where he remains while the prosecution plans ways to extradite him.

Rittenband, known locally as a "hanging judge", obviously intends to make Polanski into an example. Douglas Dalton, the defendant's attorney, has pointed out that of the 44 people convicted in Los Angeles County on similar charges in 1976, *none* ever spent any time in jail. Former state attorney general Younger also sought to make political hay out of the case as part of his general "law-and-order" campaign.

The national press has covered the case with a mixture of pious outrage and amused contempt as another typical "Hollywood scandal". *Time* (28 March 1977) sneeringly referred to the director's "tawdry troubles", while the *New*

against him, including rape, child molestation, oral copulation, sodomy and providing drugs to a minor. However, statements at the trial make it clear that what happened was hardly a case of rape!

The 13-year-old whom Polanski was accused of raping was described in the *Los Angeles Times* (20 August 1977) as "an aspiring actress", whose mother had known Polanski for over a year and given permission to photograph her daughter for the French edition of *Vogue* magazine. One of those photography sessions with the celebrated director turned into an evening of sipping champagne, nude bathing in a Jacuzzi whirlpool bath and consumption by the girl of part of a Quaalude (a fashionable sedative). Following this there was sexual intercourse (translated in the press as "drugging and raping").

It came out in court, however, that the girl had been "experimenting" with Quaaludes since the age of 10 or 11, and had a 17-year-old boyfriend with whom she had had prior sexual intercourse. A police detective on the case described her as looking to be "between 16 and 18", while the girl's mother at one point described her daughter rather lamely as "preocious in the midst of growing

upholds today reek with hypocrisy in a society where scientific research into human sexuality is only now beginning to be published on a mass basis; where scientific breakthroughs in contraception have removed the legitimate fear of pregnancy, which for ages stood as a barrier to sexual pleasure; and where rigid taboos based on ignorance have lost much of their force.

All those laws which define "sex crimes" in America today are fundamentally aimed at glorifying and propping up the obscene and repressive prison of the family, for centuries the main institution for the oppression of women and children. The reactionary sentiment whipped up by the persecution of "sex deviants" is fuelled also by recognition that the family is the individual's shelter in a hostile world. Only a broader social vision of the eventual **replacement** of the family as part of the transition to a classless society can defuse these fears that lumpenisation and social collapse are the only alternative to bourgeois morality.

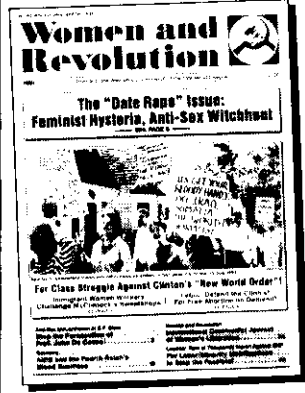
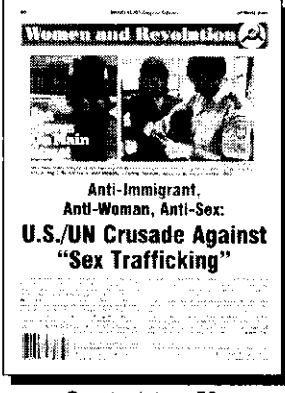

The media's exploitation of the Polanski case is more than mere sensationalism. His prosecution, like the furore over "kiddie porn", feeds into the sanctimonious "Save Our Children" crusade epitomised by Anita Bryant's anti-homosexual witch hunt—a reactionary offensive which hides behind the "innocence" of children to enforce bourgeois morality through the vindictive persecution of "deviants".

The victimisation of those held to threaten the prevailing norms of family life often takes the most extreme forms. In November a 23-year-old princess and her commoner husband were executed in Saudi Arabia as "sex criminals". By the traditions of her tribe, which is simultaneously the Saudi ruling class, shooting her and hacking off her husband's head by sword in the public market of Jidda were socially quite "moral". Judge Rittenband was not able to have Polanski beheaded in order to protect the "American Way of Life", but the principle that the state has the right to enforce a "norm" on private sexual activity is equally held by the US bourgeoisie and the Bedouin sheikhs. Their methods simply vary a bit.

There are indeed very real and pervasive sex crimes committed in America today, but they are not only nor necessarily the ones splashed across the pages of the tabloid press. Fear, guilt and repression are loaded on the very young for even having sexual thoughts. Adolescent youth are inhumanly and artificially segregated from one another in schools and colleges. The religious strictures of the Catholic church and other religious sects, including orthodox Judaism, keep thousands of women trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, pregnancy and ever more mouths to feed. The aged are locked into grim and tiny rooms to die as their wardens debate "Should sex be allowed in old age homes?"

In ignorance and shame thousands of poor young women are forced into dangerous abortions without Medicaid, while the wealthy manage as they always have. The more unfortunate must either bear their unwanted children or else be sterilised permanently in government hospitals while great debate rages as to whether the young should be "exposed" to contraceptives and birth control information. There is also the hideous frustration and sexual tension built up within the family itself, with attendant beatings and brutalisation of children, including their sexual mistreatment. Rape and these other very real crimes, along with the prostitution which is the eternal companion of enforced monogamy, are the sordid reality behind "public morality".

Women and Revolution (2)

 <p>W&R no 43, Winter 1993-Spring 1994 £0.75</p>	 <p>Spartacist no 58, Spring 2004 £1</p>	 <p>W&R no 28, Spring 1984 £0.75</p>
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York Post (2 February) devoted a full-page spread to the "new Hollywood" and Polanski's "rat pack" of sexually swinging friends, making him out to be some kind of exotic, neurotic freak. This is not the first time that the state, gleefully cheered on by the sensation-mongering press, has driven prominent figures out of Hollywood. Errol Flynn, by all accounts an amiable man who never hurt anyone, was endlessly being dragged through the courts on account of his well-known preference for young women.

Ingrid Bergman was even denounced in Congress at the height of the McCarthyite witch hunt for her nerve in defiling her saintly "Joan of Arc" screen image by bearing a child out of wedlock to the Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini. Charlie Chaplin too was driven out of the "land of opportunity"—largely for political reasons, of course, but with a good dose of nasty sexual innuendo thrown in. The news-starved press runs periodic "exposés" of glamorous Hollywood in order to simultaneously titillate the public—for the most part trapped in deadly dull, poor and restricted lives—and channel their resentment against the rich and famous into satisfying but empty moral outrage.

What is genuinely "tawdry" and sordid about the Polanski case is not the actual incident itself, but the vile official persecution and the hideous hypocrisy of it all. The national press has carefully "omitted" the real facts of the case. The director had pleaded guilty on 8 August to unlawful intercourse with a minor in return for dismissal of other sex and drug charges

up". Even Judge Rittenband in his probation report was forced to admit the blatantly obvious sexual maturity of the girl: "the prosecutrix was a well-developed young girl, who looked older than her years, and regrettably not unschooled in sexual matters".

The incident occurred in the home of movie star Jack Nicholson, and it was partially on the testimony of Nicholson's current roommate Angelica Huston, who had returned home later that evening, that Polanski was charged. Of course, her eager co-operation with the police could have had something to do with the fact that detectives searching the place for "evidence" found a vial of cocaine in her room.

Sexual and social life in southern California, with its thriving drug culture and troupes of precocious and sexually active groupies hanging about the fringes of the entertainment industry, produces thousands of "aspiring actresses" (and young male would-be "rock stars") like the one Polanski had the misfortune to run into. Regardless of what one thinks of the scene as a whole, its all-too-obvious reality makes absurd Rittenband's attempts to force rigid morality of the Victorian era into LA freeways and bedrooms.

Official repression and enforced standards of sexual activity have brought oppression and pain throughout history, from the cruel feudal "right of the first night" through the Catholic church's intensely detailed rules on various sexual sins to the Victorians' complete denial of the sexuality of women and children and their artificial prolongation of childhood. The sexual "norms" which the American state

(Continued from page 9)

10 October a crucial meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee, which Lenin managed to attend although he was still in hiding, voted for insurrection by a majority of ten to two. Zinoviev and Kamenev who were against went so far as to publish a letter in Maxim Gorky's newspaper on 18 October, a gross breach of discipline that alerted the class enemy to the planned insurrection. Lenin called for their expulsion from the party but they were saved by the revolution itself.

Despite Lenin's worries, an insurrection was in fact being organised through the means of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC). The MRC arose from a joint motion by the Mensheviks and SRs to disguise the fact that they were planning to move the Petrograd garrison to the front. To their surprise the Bolsheviks voted for the MRC, knowing they would have a majority in it, and when it was set up the Mensheviks boycotted it. A body that was legally identified with the soviets was an ideal vehicle for the Bolsheviks to prepare the seizure of power under the slogan of defending the upcoming congress of the soviets.

A decisive event towards the seizure of power was when the Petrograd Soviet, at the behest of the Bolsheviks, invalidated an order by Kerensky to transfer two-thirds of the Petrograd garrison to the front. Trotsky noted: "The moment when the regiments, upon the instructions of the Military Revolutionary Committee, refused to depart from the city, we had a victorious insurrection in the capital, only slightly screened at the top by the remnants of the bourgeois-democratic state forms. The insurrection of October 25 was only

supplementary in character" (*Lessons of October*, 1924).

The Bolshevik-led soviet had taken control of the armed bodies of men out of the hands of the Provisional Government and when the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet voted to transfer authority from army headquarters to the MRC, the soviet had power in all but name.

The first proletarian socialist revolution

On 24 October Kerensky foolishly tried to shut down the Bolshevik newspaper. The MRC immediately sent a detachment to re-open it and also to start taking over the telephone exchange and other key centres. Even at this point Lenin was frustrated with the lack of progress of the insurrection and went in disguise to Smolny, the Bolshevik headquarters, to oversee preparations personally. The battleship *Aurora* was still firing on the Winter Palace when the second congress of soviets opened.

The October Revolution was no *coup d'état*. The seizure of power was based on the support of the majority of the proletariat. The actual military plans were not made public, but the masses of workers and soldiers were fully aware that the Bolsheviks intended to take power. Days before the revolution, the Bolsheviks organised rallies throughout Petrograd attended by *hundreds of thousands* who knew that the upcoming congress of soviets would decide the question of power. Workers raised their hands and dedicated themselves to defence of the proletarian power based on the soviets.

At the opening session of the congress of soviets, the Mensheviks and the right-wing SRs were enraged that the Bolsheviks had taken power and walked out, some declaring that they were going to the Winter Palace to die with the Provisional Government. Trotsky

vehemently denounced these deserters, saying: "All these so-called Socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Bund—let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept away into the garbage-heap of history!" (quoted in *Ten Days That Shook the World*, John Reed, 1926).

The Bolsheviks were not against coalition with these parties; they *only* insisted that the reality of soviet power be recognised, and that the Bolshevik party would form a majority in the government. What this meant was that they would not cede power to the conciliators who would hand it back to the bourgeoisie. The Mensheviks and SRs immediately started organising a counterrevolutionary uprising against the Bolsheviks. Based in the Petrograd city Duma, the "All-Russian committee for salvation of the country and the revolution" tried to organise an insurrection using the Cossacks but it was quickly repulsed.

Consistent with their opposition to the seizure of power, the conciliators in the Bolshevik party leadership around Kamenev argued for a coalition government but they backed down when it became clear that there was nobody to form a coalition with. This layer would re-emerge after Lenin's death and the defeat of the German Revolution of 1923, when a bureaucratic caste began to coalesce around JV Stalin in 1923-24.

One particular question that the Mensheviks and SRs seized on was the Bolsheviks' dispersal of the Constituent Assembly after the October Revolution. During the spring and summer of 1917 the Bolsheviks had called for a Constituent Assembly, at a time when the Provisional Government refused to convoke one out of fear of sparking a peasant uprising. After the seizure of power this stage had passed but the Bolsheviks didn't simply call off the

elections to it because a Bolshevik majority could have strengthened the authority of the soviets among the backward masses, especially in the countryside. But the election list system did not reflect the dramatic shift towards the Bolsheviks that had taken place in recent months and this, combined with the nature of parliamentary elections, gave the petty bourgeoisie a disproportional weight of the vote. Faced with a Constituent Assembly dominated by the bourgeois Kadets as well as the SRs and Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks rightly demanded that it recognise the soviet power; the assembly refused and it was soon dissolved. I should note that, for the good reformists of the SWP, the Russian Revolution was all about democracy and so their account is that the Bolsheviks won the masses by promising bread, peace and land. The small detail they leave out is that in order to grant this, all that was needed was the smashing of the bourgeois state and overthrow of the Provisional Government, followed by the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

I want to conclude with Lenin's opening remarks at the second session of the congress of soviets. He was met with tumultuous applause. When he spoke, his now famous words were: "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!" There was a three point agenda: an end to the war, land to the peasants, and establish a socialist dictatorship. One of the tasks that the Bolsheviks proceeded with after the revolution was re-grouping revolutionaries across the world under a new international, as a necessary instrument to spread the revolution to the advanced countries of Europe, and to bring about world socialism. Our fight for Leninist-Trotskyist parties worldwide is a continuation of this task. ■

Polanski has been made the latest public target in the state's vindictive attempts to uphold the puritan myth and hide this reality. Even his brilliant and often powerful films, like "Cul de Sac", "Knife in the Water", "Repulsion", and more recently "Rosemary's Baby" and "Chinatown", have been used against him. As one Columbia Pictures executive moaned, "Roman's got such a bad reputation for being a pervert film maker, he's going to be judged guilty by his work" (*Time*, 28 March 1977).

What emerges from the director's life, however, is a pattern of successful creative achievement in the face of a pattern of violence and tragedy. As a young boy Polanski saw his parents ripped away (to disappear permanently in the concentration camps) by Nazi stormtroopers. At 15 he was beaten almost to death with an iron bar by a maniac. After achieving a reputation as a talented filmmaker in Stalinist Poland, he emigrated to the West—where his pregnant wife, the actress Sharon Tate, was hideously slaughtered at home along with the couple's friends by the crazed Manson family. And now Polanski has had the humiliation and torture of spending over a month in prison for "psychiatric observation". (If this had occurred in the Soviet Union, where dissidents are barbarously locked up in mental hospitals, the director would already be high on the list of Jimmy Carter's "human rights" campaign.)

Yet to the state of California Polanski is a "sex criminal" and it threatens more prison. It is no wonder why the victim chose to leave America. As he rightly observed, "They spent 42 days trying to drive me bizarre, but thank god I'm smart and rich..." (*New York Post*, 7 February). He went on:

"In America, California, I lose my wife, my baby, my friends, perhaps my sanity and almost my freedom. No, I say, no! The Nazis couldn't take it away from me, nor could the grief of my losses. And this little whore and the California laws won't either. I have given much and they have taken too much from me."

Good for him. We are cheered to see that this ordeal of puritanical witch hunting has not broken Roman Polanski's spirit.

The Polanski case has stirred up the poisonous fears and vicious repression which underlies bourgeois morality. As communists we oppose attempts to fit human sexuality into legislated or decreed "norms". The guiding principle for sexual relations between people should be that of effective consent—that is, nothing more than mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion. We hold that any and all consensual relations between individuals are purely their own concern, and the state has no business interfering in human sexual activity.

Drop the charges against Roman Polanski! No extradition! Stop the puritanical witch hunt! ■

BNP...

(Continued from page 8)

collaboration for class struggle, lining workers up behind their own capitalist rulers. Protectionism is common among "left" union leaders, including former NUM leader Arthur Scargill, militant leader of the heroic 1984-85 miners strike, who expressed his support for the "British jobs" crusade in a 4 November interview with Indymedia Ireland. Asked about the Lindsey oil refinery strike Scargill said: "You can't have a situation [where] you can just move migrant labour, migrant capital into a society without it having devastating effects on the whole society", while emphasising that: "I'm not talking about immigration [and] I'm not talking about asylum seekers! I'm talking about migrant labour being moved by capitalism."

Our proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist programme is flatly counterposed to nationalist protectionism. We insist that until the working class takes state power, we will not be

in a position to worry about the ebbs and flows of labour migration or the world economy more generally. We have noted that in cases such as the Lindsey strike, the bottom line for the trade union movement must not be *whom* the contractors hire, but at *what rate of pay*. The way to undercut attempts by the bosses to "level down" the wages and working conditions, including safety standards, of all workers, by playing off one nationality against the other, is for the unions to demand: **Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work!** This poses the need for international collaboration among construction workers across European countries.

Twelve years of Labour rule has meant an even more rapid de-industrialisation than under Margaret Thatcher. The chronic job losses have been devastating for the working class. Entire areas of the country, from the former coal-mining and steel-producing areas of England, Scotland and Wales to the desolate former textile towns such as Bradford and Oldham offer little hope of a decent job. The situation cries out for a socialist revolution and a planned economy to regenerate social and economic life. There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycle of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and establishes a planned, socialised economy. The greatest obstacle to this is the social-chauvinist Labourite leadership of the working class who are loyal to British capitalism. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, forged in opposition to Labourism, to overthrow the racist capitalist order and replace it with working-class rule. ■

Contact Addresses

Spartacist League/Britain

PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY
Tel: 020 7281 5504
workershammer@btconnect.com

Spartacist Group Ireland
PO Box 2944, Dublin 6, Ireland

International Communist League
Box 7429 GPO, New York,
New York 10116, USA

Visit the ICL website: www.spartacist.org

WORKERS HAMMER

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

Hands off Roman Polanski!

Suddenly reviving their 32-year-old vendetta against world-renowned film director Roman Polanski, the US authorities orchestrated his arrest in Zurich on 26 September 2009, seeking his extradition to be sentenced for having had *consensual* sex with a precocious 13-year-old one day back in 1977. After two months in a Swiss jail, Polanski is now under house arrest in Switzerland having been granted bail for an outrageous \$4.5 million.

Roman Polanski committed no crime. Facing a Hollywood show trial with multiple felony charges hanging over him, he pleaded guilty to “unlawful sexual intercourse” with a minor. Threatened with more prison time, having already served six weeks in state prison for “diagnostic testing”, Polanski, a French citizen, fled to Paris in 1978 to escape the puritan witch hunt. Despite the standing threat of extradition, Polanski has persevered in the face of the American judicial *fatwa* and managed to pursue his film career in Europe with artistic success, until now.

We oppose this outrageous witch hunt, as we have from the outset. In the US, the morality police are howling for Polanski’s blood. In France, after officials in the French government objected to Polanski’s arrest, they were met by howls of indignation from other politicians demanding that Polanski face “justice” in the US. Meanwhile, Polanski has long avoided travelling to Britain for fear the British state would arrest him and hand him over to the American authorities.

Many are asking the obvious question about Polanski’s sudden arrest: *why now?* The events occurred over three decades ago, Polanski is in his 70s and there is no “victim” to avenge. The woman involved, Samantha Geimer (then Gailey), now in her 40s and married with three children, has long opposed the continued prosecution of Polanski and has come forward several times requesting the charges be dropped. And, until recently, the US has not really turned the screws trying to extradite him.

But, as noted by author Robert Harris in a 30 September 2009 article in the *New York Times*, that changed after the release of the 2008 documentary, *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired*. The documentary includes an interview with David Wells, who brags how he, as a then-deputy district attorney, coached Judge Laurence Rittenband (now deceased) on the case, in particular to ensure prison time for Polanski. Based on the film and other evidence, Polanski’s attorneys filed a motion to dismiss the case, which was denied in February by Los Angeles Superior Court judge Peter Espinoza. With perverse logic, Espinoza acknowledged that there was “substantial misconduct”, but refused to consider dismissal unless Polanski personally showed up in his

No extradition!



Roman Polanski at AIDS research benefit at Cannes film festival, May 2005.

court to face certain arrest.

With the frame-up story out—including in court—the prosecutors had nothing to lose in gunning for Polanski. Wells now ludicrously claims that he lied on camera and assumed the film would not be shown in the US. In response, Marina Zenovich, who made the documentary, noted that Wells had in fact “corroborated the account of events that he gave in my film” to the *New York Times* in an article printed on 17 July 2008.

At the time of Polanski’s original persecution we were virtually alone on the left in defending him. This remains the case today, as most of the left maintains a studious silence over his renewed persecution. We also recently defended Helen Goddard, a young teacher who was jailed for 15 months for having a *consensual* sexual relationship with a 15-year-old female pupil (see *Workers Hammer* no 208, Autumn 2009). When *Weekly Worker* (3 September 2009) published a letter defending Goddard by the Partisan Defence Committee, the class-struggle legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League, this drew a flurry of outrage from its readership. These guardians of “morality” were enraged by the PDC’s simple assertion that Helen Goddard committed no crime and that this relationship should be *no business of either the school or the state*.

An article by Eddie Ford published in *Weekly Worker* (10 September 2009) professes to agree with our call for abolishing reactionary “age of consent” laws, rightly saying that these “give the state powers to interfere in, and poten-

tially criminalise, what should be purely personal and private matters”. But Ford’s conclusion belies this, saying “communists propose that there be alternative legislation to cover sexual misconduct and abuse, based on both effective consent and the empowerment of youth”. As we noted in a 14 November letter to *Weekly Worker*, “In other words, there are some bedrooms in which the government does belong, if it deems that ‘sexual misconduct’ has taken place. This exposes the CPGB’s touching faith in the benign nature of the capitalist state, which you entrust to establish the principle of ‘effective consent’ and to regulate the sexual activity of youth and children.”

In his 26 November response, Eddie Ford reiterates the call for “alternative legislation” and adds that the Communist Party of Great Britain’s call for the abolition of “age of consent” laws forms “part of a whole raft of demands that we fight for in the *here and now*”, ie under capitalism. The idea that the capitalist state will ever introduce legislation based on “effective consent and the empowerment of youth” is downright laughable. The capitalist state—including its cops, courts and prisons—is not a neutral arbiter and cannot be pressured into acting in the interests of youth or the oppressed. It is the instrument for the suppression of the exploited by the exploiters. As such it plays a key role in enforcing the oppression of women (and youth) alongside organised religion and the patriarchal family, which remains the central instrument for the subjugation of women under capitalism. The family is critical for the ruling class

to pass on its property to “legitimate” heirs and to instil obedience to bourgeois codes of morality.

Among the most rabid moralists on the Polanski case is the small *Socialist Fight* group, which writes that “We can only hope that he does not escape again and is returned to serve a lengthy sentence.” Regarding the circumstances of the case, they add that “Whether [the girl] had had sex or taken drugs before or not is totally irrelevant; we reject the reactionary ‘precocious Lolita’ defence, only pleaded by those imbued with patriarchal antifeminist prejudices” (*Socialist Fight*, Autumn 2009). However, rape uniquely involves an act the circumstances of which determine whether it is a crime or voluntary sexual intercourse. In this case, the information about the young woman’s sexual activity with her boyfriend and her drug use is actually important in assessing what happened and determining that she knew what she was doing.

As for the “precocious Lolita” defence, we reject *Socialist Fight*’s statement that “there cannot be effective consent between a child and an adult in sexual relations. Before the age of sexual maturity this is a criminal matter.” Human sexuality is inherently complex and varied. Youth do, in fact, have sexual desires, and they act on them—desires that sometimes involve older people. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. For us the guiding principle for sexual relations is that of effective consent, which means that as long as the parties involved agreed to take part at the time, no one, *least of all the state*, has the right to tell them they can’t do it. To lump together sex with a minor, morning after regrets or the awkward and sometimes unpleasant experiences that are part of growing up, with rape, is to trivialise the savage brutality of the crime of rape. It is especially ridiculous to present the sexually experienced, post-pubescent teenager in the Polanski case as an unwitting child. Gore Vidal, who was working in the film industry at the time, recently responded to an interviewer (theatlantic.com, 28 October 2009) who asked him about Polanski: “Look, am I going to sit and weep every time a young hooker feels as though she’s been taken advantage of?... The idea that this girl was in her communion dress, a little angel all in white, being raped by this awful Jew, *Polako*—that’s what people were calling him—well, the story is totally different now from what it was then.... Anti-Semitism got poor Polanski.”

While the age and supposed “immaturity” of the teenager are often cited as evidence she couldn’t possibly have consented, this doesn’t stop guardians of “morality” such as *Socialist Fight* from arguing that everything she said must be unconditionally believed as the absolute truth. We are led to believe that

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