Amidst Tory and Labour “law and order” flag-waving

Imperialist bloodsuckers bolt door on asylum seekers

The government’s proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill aims to stop people seeking asylum in Britain through the creation of a “white list” of countries that are supposedly safe. Anyone claiming asylum from these countries will be classed as “bogus”. The right of oral appeal will be abolished and a “fast track” will render decisions within days. The new bill aims to close the doors of refuge, deporting to Nigeria and quickly “disappeared”. The trade union movement must fight for the right of asylum!

Almost simultaneously with the news of the “white list”, Nigeria executed writer and human rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa, along with eight other activists who had campaigned for the right of asylum. The government intends this new bill to bolt it shut! Down with the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill!

The brutal legacy of British imperialist rule reality: the government has operated its “white list” at least since May this year. For “white list” Nigeria, where persecution under General Abacha’s regime has caused thousands to flee, only one out of 2032 applicants for asylum in the past year has been given “refugee” status and just three granted “exceptional leave” to stay. Recently Abduki Osibiyi was denied asylum, deported to Nigeria and quickly “disappeared”. The trade union movement must fight for the right of asylum!

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

Today bloodsucking companies like Shell lord it over former colonies and gouge profits from the superexploitation of working people. Only when the sheer corruption and incompetence of the neo-colonial regime threatens the profits of the imperialists, as is happening in Nigeria, do they get exercised about “human rights”.

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

The victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the bureaucratically-ruled workers states in the former Soviet bloc has been followed by a capitalist offensive against the bureaucratically-led workers movements of Western Europe and elsewhere. The social democratic and Stalinist labour bureaucracies played their role as indispensable agents in the victory of the imperialists. But in the face of an intensified capitalist offensive and sharpened imperialist rivals present utility to the ruling class. But it is the case of the New Order, most strikingly in the United States and Britain but also in Germany and France.

Blair and his cohorts’ conference floor victories came after a month of strident declarations aimed at further turning the Labour Party away from its role, since inception, as the political voice of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, and into a party explicitly modelled on Clinton’s openly capitalist “New Democrats”. To the Liberal Democrats assembled in Glasgow the week before Labour’s conference, Blair announced that he envisaged collaboration in government with the Liberals, whether or not the Lib Dems hold the balance of power in the next Parliament.

Blair’s manoeuvre recalls the infamous Lib-Lab pact of the late 1970s, which enforced grading wage controls and racist policies in the face of growing working-class opposition—and evokes the remote memory of Ramsey MacDonald’s “National Government” in 1932. An influx of ex-Social Democrat party activists into Blair’s entourage underlines the fact that the Labour leadership is shopping away at the organic links with the trade unions, in favour of a “New World Order” party. The eventual outcome is not clear, but Blair is certainly driving to reverse the historical development which organisationally (if not politically), broke Labour away from the openly capitalist Liberal Party at the turn of the century. His oft-repeated statement, that the “trade unions can expect no special favours from a Labour government”, indicates that the bourgeoisie, after years of successful assaults on the trade union movement, is contemplating taking the risk of ruling via a renovated Labour Party which no longer will possess the automatic levers of suppression and...
Labour
(Continued from page 1)
control over the working class that "Old Labour" so successfully wielded under Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan.
Financial Times journalist Robert Preston caught the "mood" of Labour's moment when he explained that:
"Under Mr Blair the Labour party is no longer as broad a church as it once was. Those uncomfortable with Mr Blair's mission can worship elsewhere." (3 October)
Blair promises the captains of industry that with Labour capitalism will not only be safe, but that they will acquire an aggressive arsenal for continuing the assaults mounted by the heavily discredited anti-union laws that have been used to maintain the oppression of the working class to permanent unemployment, or Burger King wages.
Scargill floats his new Old Labour Party
NUM leader Arthur Scargill no doubt touched a chord with many trade unionists and militant youths when he described the Labour Party as "almost indistinguishable" from the Liberal Democrats. The Labour Tribune (17 November) noted that a national Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT) delegate conference, held a week earlier, which voted by three to one to reject a call for the union to "campaign positively" for a Labour government. Scargill went on to signal the "possibility of founding a trade union-based Socialist Labour Party on May Day 1996, to stand candidates in every constituency in the country", while ruling out opposition to any "socialist MPs" (Guardian, 10 November).
Scargill's vision of a Socialist Labour Party consciously harks back to the early part of the century. According to Scargill, this was the time that the Labour Party was fashioned as a "broad church" accommodating the left, non-socialists and trade unions, while maintaining a commitment to common ownership. His "blueprint" for a new party contains an implicit appeal to young people alienated by Labour's right-wing trajectory, who have become disenchanted with the politics of the Labourite establishment in the mid-1990s (Guardian, 27 October). Scargill's project of a new party, based on the trade unions, would mean coming up against, and splitting from the trade union bureaucracy which has made its peace with Blair.
* Scargill's new party project marks a divergence from his Labour left ally, Tony Benn, who has taken to appealing to "left wingers to stick with Labour" and advising them that it has always been the right who have left the party (Guardian, 5 October).
* The shift behind the Benn-Scargill debate is the Labour left's marginalisation, particularly since the 1984-85 miners strike and, the growing sense that the old structures and power balance of post-1945 Labour are disappearing. Gone are the days when Labour leaders, even of the right, would make noises about "a fundamental shift in the balance of power and wealth"—the better to capture the allegiance of workers for another five years of Labour.
In the early 1980s, in reaction to the years of Social Contract wage cuts and a wave of sackings of nuclear war protesters, Arthur Scargill and his deputy National Union of Mineworkers leader Joe Turner began their anti-Soviet crusade, the Labour lefts were able to become a substantial force. But a decisive test of their fundamental loyalty to capitalism came in the miners strike of 1984-85. The future of the union movement was at stake, but the "lefts" in the TUC and the parliamentary party abjectly refused to break with the Kinnock leadership, despite its strike-break­ ing attacks on the embattled NUM. Prefer­ ring unity with the right above all consider­ ations of working-class interests, the likes of rail union leader Jimmy Knapp opposed strike action alongside the miners. Striking dockers were hung out to dry twice, whereas a fighting Triple Alliance of rail, coal and dock workers could have shut down the country. Scargill himself, operating at the extreme limits of trade union sup­ port, nevertheless continually oriented to winning the support of the TUC General Council (which opposed the strike from the beginning), and pushed the political perspective of "paving the way for a general elec­ tion to elect a Labour government". Scargill today is posing a split from the Labour Party, a rejection of Clause IV—but a split from Labour at that time, in the context of bitter class struggle, would have appealed to the very broad layers of workers and the organised poor who desperately wished the victory of the miners. This would have posed a direct challenge to the capitalist ruling class and its labour leaders, posing the question of what kind of party and programme is needed for the working class to take power.
On the eve of the 1926 British General Strike, Leon Trotsky pointed out that when decisive class issues were posed, the Labour "lefts" would bend their knee to the right-wing Ramsey MacDonald leadership:
"It should be thoroughly understood that leftist of this kind remains left only so long as it has no practical obligations. But as soon as the question of action arises, the left wingers respectfully cede the leadership to the rights..."
"Problems of the British Labour Move­ ment", 12 January 1926
Scargill and Benn's difference over a "Socialist Labour Party" today has found its echo within the British fake-Trotskyist milieu, who have been forced to state their respective positions of allegiance. Militant Labour welcomed Scargill's news. They saw it as a vindication of their leader Peter Taaffe's line that Britain's "93 confirmedLabour's transformation into a wholly 'lib­ eral' capitalist party" (Socialism Today, November 1995). This helpful to judge the eventual outcome of Blair's strategy simply expresses the Militant group's heart-felt desire to get back the "good old days" of old Labour, so that they can return to the trade they know best: setting up a permanent ginger group in the Labour Party, which is what they were for some 40 years prior to their recent efforts as a separate organisation. Through Harold Wilson's support to the US continued on page 10
Journalist on death row testifies in Pittsburgh
Mumia Abu-Jamal fights prison harassment

"What the hearing brought out", said Rachel Wolkenstein, Partisan Defense Committee staff counsel and one of Jamal's attorneys, "is that less pressure was put on the governor's office by the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police and politicians like State Represen­tative Kim Yingling and McCreehan. They are the governor's legal office—the very same office from which Mumia's death warrant was issued—and they knew the prison authorities would not punish Mumia and their interception of his correspondence and cutting him off from the broader public hearing that is a vital part of his defence."

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

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

Another "mail watch", including read­ and copying Jamal's legal mail, was conducted in the period immediately fol­lowing the 1 June issuance of the death warrant, including, the governor Tom Ridge and the filing of Mumia's petition for a new trial. Just days later, on 9 June, Mumia was accused of "misconduct" for being a 'journalist' and for the publication of Jamal and Abu-Jamal correspondence. "As the daily press could not and could not not cover Jamal, it was a way of silencing me in a way the daily press could not and would not."

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

In fact, prison officials, including then­superintendent Love at Huntington, were well aware of Jamal's writing, including his 1990 Tale Law Journal article and columns for the local Huntingdon college paper The Juniataan, which was mailed to the prison. A "surprise" witness, criminal­ist and professor Ted Allenman, testified that while he was a teacher in the prison, he had openly assisted a Huntingdon prison­ner publish a 1985 book, Caesar's Gladiators Pvt. Not only was no punishment­

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

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

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

Join the campaign!
Contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX, Tel: 0171-485 1396. Make a contribution today: send/make payable to Parti­san Defence Committee and write "Jamel legal defence" on the back of the cheque. All such funds go entirely to the Commit­tee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal in New York, without deduction for administra­tive costs. Send protests to: Governor Tom Ridge, Main Capitol Bldg., Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA. Write to Jamal to express your solidarity: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15570-8090, USA.

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Workers Power’s “international” falls apart: Chickens come home to roost over Balkans betrayal

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

Workers Power’s refusal to take a stand on the side of the Bosnian Serbs against the most bigoted imperialist onslaught since the 1991 Gulf War has finally blown apart its phoney “League for a Revolutionary Communist International” (LRCI). The bulk of its New Zealand section and all of its Latin American supporters have split away in the past six weeks, following several years of proto-fascist struggle. The LRCI has now been reduced to its English group, a small band in Western Europe, and a handful of dazed supporters in New Zealand and Australia. As a contrast grouping on the British left position to take a stand, the PF’s phoney international is little more than the larger, reformist SWP and Militant, the existence of Workers Power has long been an obstacle to the building of a genuine revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

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

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

This open prostration before the imperialist terror bombers appears to have been the last straw for the “Proletarian Fraction” (PF, now the Communist Workers Group [CWG]) in the LRCI’s New Zealand organisation and for a tendency composed of the Poder Obreo (PO) groups in Bolivia and elsewhere, while taking the LRCI to task for siding with the Bosnian Muslims, the PF’s fascist declaration does not breathe a word about the need to defend the Bosnian Serbs against NATO imperialism (including the numerous earlier air assaults). Nor does the PF call for lifting the economic embargo with which the imperialists have been strangling Serbia.

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

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

The Poder Obreo groups are also confused over Bosnia. While clearly taking the side of the Bosnian Serbs against direct imperialist attack, their declaration on the Bosnian question talks about “defence on both sides in this war when all play a reactionary role and use ethnic cleansing to produce semi-colonial, ethnic-centred bourgeois micro-states”. Up until the decisive imperialist intervention against the Bosnian Serbs under the heel of an imperialist “ Pax Americana”. For this reason we pointed out that “Islamic declarations cannot be neutral between the Bosnian Serb army and the Croat-Muslim alliance forces when NATO bombs are raining down on one side, and that our revolutionary-defencist position mandated taking the side of the Bosnian Serbs during the past two months of imperialist attack.

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

included the embrace of the Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1979 “Islamic revolution” in Iran. Under the rubric of the “anti-imperialist front”—a label that has become a codeword for a popular front with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist forces in the “Third World”—Workers Power also lined up on the side of the Galtieri dictatorship in Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas war and has proffered political support to the Gorbachevists of the Polish Fén.

Despite their many, often at least semi-valid, criticisms of particular rightist positions of the LRCI, both the New Zealand and Latin American splits support the anti-Trotskyist line of the “anti-imperialist united front” and neither has any quarrel with WP’s anti-Soviet, third-camp, defencism approach prior to 1990. Indeed, even after WP openly sided with the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in the 1990s, they have not abandoned a common “international” for four solid years. This reflects a centrist denigration of principle that would-be revolutionaries have to break from.

The fate of the LRCI is symptomatic of the general rightward lurch of the centrist left under the impact of the counterrevolutionary wave which has inundated the Trotskyist movement for the last two decades.

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

“The question of the Russian revolution is also the question of the Soviet Union which in its creation—has drawn a sharp dividing line between those who have lived out the historical period to their credit and those countries for 22 years. The attitude toward the Soviet Union throughout all these decades has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades of degrees and shades of deviators and separatists who, from the pressure of the bourgeois world—the Mensheviks, Social Democrats, Anarchists and Syndicalists, Centrist, Socialists.”

—James P. Cannon, The Struggle for a Propertarian Party

This applies no less to Workers Power and the United Secretariat than to those like the so-called International Bolshevik Team which sought to carve out a niche to the left of the International Communist League, which today claim to offer a “left” alternative to the disintegrating LRCI.

Afghanistan—the Russian Question point blank

The Poder Obrero groups say Workers Power made “a big revolutionary step forward” in 1980 in the debate with “state capitalism” centrist and re-elaborated Trotsky’s theses for the unconditional defence of the Degenerated Workers State. A secondary aspect after the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, an article in Workers Power (February 1980) announced laconically, “we found it impossible to advance a principled revolutionary programme from any other standpoint than that of characterising the USSR as a degenerated workers’ state” (Workers Power no 12, February 1980). While this represented a leftward step from WP’s previous state-capitalist position, carried over from its origins in Trotsky’s influence, the debate was far from a “principled revolutionary programme”.

With the 1980 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan the question of Soviet defence was, as we said at the time, posed point blank. The Red Army intervened on the side of the radical-nationalist PDPA regime in Kabul, which was threatened by an Islamic fundamentalist insurgency. The mujahedin took up arms in reaction to a series of bourgeois-democratic reforms, notably measures taken against the enslavement of women such as the “bride price”. Heavily backed with CIA money and US and British munitions, the mujahedin war was also immediately supported by the defence of the Soviet Union, on its crucial southern flank, against imperialism.

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

Workers Power tried to carve out a position half-way between the Spartacists and the Labour Party leaders, who to a man (including famous “left” Tony Benn) vowed to condemn the Soviet intervention. WP’s line was “Whose side are you on?... We opened our doors to workers and students.” We addressed the counterrevolutionary move, “We oppose the invasion of Af­ghanistan.” At the same time, they opined that it would be “tactically wrong for revolutionaries... to demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan”.

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

Today, the “Resolution from all the Latin American members of the LRCI” seeks to pin WP’s burgeoning Stalinopho­bia solely on “a minority that postu­lated a hybrid between the theories of Cliff and Trotsky”, claiming that “since the 1990s the old minority was becoming the effective leadership of the LRCI. This explains very much the LRCI’s right wing evolution” (Resolution). The minority they refer to was led by Keish Hassell, an anti-communist lout who is WP’s current supremo. In 1980, Hassell called for immediate withdrawal of the Red Army, arguing that, “It simply is not true that a pro-imperialist Kabul government would necessarily be a worse political option for the Afghan masses than Stalinist occupa­tion!” (The Afghanistan Discussion: The Danger Signs, Workers Power Internal Bulletin no 36, February 1980). Tell that to the Afghan masses today!

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

In a classic demonstration of the absurdity that “programme generates theory”, it was only two years after its formal line change that WP published its “re-elaborated” analysis of Stalinism, in the 1982 pamphlet The Degenerated Revolution. This “innovative” gobbledygook was the “theoretical” justifica­tion for WP’s line on Afghanistan and subsequent support to capitalist counter­revolution from Poland to Germany to Moscow. The document denied Trotsky’s characterisa­tion of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a brittle caste whose conditionality reflected its position of simultaneously being depen­dent on the existence of the collective property forms of a workers state while seeking to conciliate world imperialism in the name of building “socialism in one coun­try”. Instead Workers Power proclaimed that the Stalinist bureaucracy was “invariably a counterrevolutionary force”, which is analogous to saying the bureaucracy is counterrevolu­tionary through and through. WP derided the anti-capitalist social trans­formations carried out from above by Soviet forces in Eastern Europe after World War II, as well as the overthrow of capitalism by peasant-based guerrilla movements in Yugo­slavia, China and Cuba as “counterrevolu­tionary overtures”.

Workers Power’s “critical” support to Solidarność counterrevolution

In August 1980 a mass strike move­ment catapulted Lech Wałęsa into the leadership of the disintegrating Polish working class. At that point we noted that insofar as the strike and its outcome enhanced the Polish workers’ capacity to struggle, to exercise their own programmatic despair over the prospect of pro­letarian revolution.

At Solidarność’s first national congress in September 1980, the leadership was forced of clerical reaction and capitalist restoration de­cidedly triumphed. In sharp contrast to the Hungarian workers councils of 1956, which exercised a planned, nationalised economy, the Solidarność congress resolutions made no mention of socialism. Instead they espoused “self-managed” and “worker-managed” capitalism and took up the CIA-inspired Cold War calls for “free elections” and “free trade unions”. We recognised that Solidarność and the so-called “workers’ and clerical” unions for the Vatican, the CIA and the Western banks: a giant scab “union” (like the Thatcherite “Union of Democratic Min­ers”) which was making an open bid for power based on a programme of capitalist restoration. Raising the call “Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!” we argued:

“What do revolutionaries do when the Marcos (and most recently the Baudissin) are drowned in the overwhelming bulk of the working class in the Philippines? Do we of course urgently seek to avoid? There can be no doubt, The task of communists must be to de­fend the workers and the trade unions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today Trotskyists find themselves in such a position over Poland, and it is necessary to swim against a powerful current of counterrevolution.

“Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!” (Spartacist Britain no 36, October 1981)

We stood militarily with the Polish gov­ernment on page 6
government of General Jaruzelski which it splashed Solidarność December 1981 power bid. At the same time we recognised that that down would only delay the day of reckoning, for Solidarność would have to be defeated politically, that was the bottom line. Thus our call to stop Solidarność countercoup was integrally linked to the need to forge a Trotskyist party that could lead a proletarian revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Infatuated with this “mass movement” and reflecting the pressures of the Cold War, much of which was under the call for “Solidarity with Solidarność” was the rallying cry of pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, Workers Power saw in the stream of counterrevolution. While many fake leftists sought to dress Solidarność up as a “progressive” movement, Workers Power admitted that it was countercoupary and supported it anyway! Even while acknowledging that all the “dominant tendencies in Solidarność sought the recreation of capitalism” they went on to conclude that this did “not mean that we do not SOLIDARITY with Solidarność!”

The recent Podor Otero statement confirmed this through and through line; writing approvingly that Workers Power called for fighting with the Polish work­ers and Solidarność against the hard line Stalinist coupists but with no militant stands with the church and the bourgeois parties and opposing to fight for the freedom of the KPN and other capitalist par­ties “(Resolution)”. But the church and the ultrarightist KPN were at the political core of Solidarność. It was hardly a long step from “solidarity with Solidarność” to standing on the Yeltsin barricades in 1991.

What about the Fourth Reich’s “anschluss”? The Latin American groups correctly note that the LRCI’s call for “a constituent assembly for the two Germanies in 1989” meant that the East German deformed workers state would be subordinated to the “bourgeois forces of another capitalist country and that the East German Degenerate Social Democracy” would be finally destroyed by German imperialism. But neither PO nor the CWG breathe a word about the LRCI’s 1989 call for the with­drawal of the West German army and the former DDR, a demand which directly echoed NATO imperialism. The withdrawal of Soviet forces could, and did, only facilitate the revanchist drive for capitalist reunification. When Gorbatchev acceded to the NATO powers and agreed to a with­drawal, this was a decisive factor in the eventual countercoupary anarchy.

The ICL mobilised the whole weight of our international resources to intervene massively in the critical days of winter 1990, but the German coupists had succeeded in the climax of the descent of the Soviet war militant in Treptow Park, East Berlin on 3 January 1990, which drew 250,000 people. The result of this dramatic event was to allow two Trotskyist speakers to address the rally from the platform. Our comrades attacked the incompetence and betrayals of the Treptow Park Maid Marian, calling for a workers militia and a Red Germany of workers and soldiers’ congresses.

Alarmè by this mobilisation, in which they correctly saw evidence of the forces that could prevail against capitalist an­schluss, the West German bourgeois and the Social Democracy were already ripe for sowing the Treptow protest as a “Stasi trick”. This lie was echoed by Workers Power, which wrote at the time: “Shortly after the GDR’s declaration of independence, government attempted to re-establish the security state (Stasi) but were prevented by mass mobilisations... For revolutionaries this is the very stuff of revolution.”

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

A close point in response: “This is the stuff that capitalist counterrevolution is made of. But in its mindless en­thusiastic over anti-Stalinist actions’ Workers Power could not see the difference between revolution and counterrevolution” (“Workers Power: right on East Ger­many”, Workers Hammer no 113, March/April 1990). In the March 1990 elections (effectively a plebiscite on “anschluss”), the Socialist Party was at the only party to clearly and unambiguously stand against capitalist reunification. WP’s response? To call for “abstaining on the vote”! Instead, Workers Power joined the West German bourgeois and Social Democracy in scrape­ing for a witch-hunting purge of SED members—which duly came in the wake of capitalist annexation of the DDR and continued to be pursued with a vengeance by the Fourth Reich.

Unconditionally anti-Soviet: Sajudis and Butchenko

In 1990 Workers Power called for “unconditional” support to the drive for Lithuanian independence spearheaded by the thoroughly pro-capitalist Sajudis, which was caving out with outright fascists. In this, WP stood to the right of Margaret Thatcher, demanding that the anti-commu­nist “Lady” recognised Lithuania’s “independence” and send whatever aid the Sajudis requested. Today, the document of the New Zealand Workers Partisan Action that takes the LRCI to task for its scandalous appeal for British imperialist aid to the Lithuanian national­ists. But it does so while accepting the basic anti-communist positions from which this grotesque demand sprang, arguing that the LRCI “correctly called for the unconditional right to self-determina­tion of the Baltic states from the USSR, i.e. in the case of Lithuania calling for independent workers state”.

Unconditional support means just that—indefeasible of the class nature of the resulting state. It does not mean “an independent workers state”. The call for independence of the Baltic republics was a cover for capitalist restoration and the LRCI’s line was nothing other than a capitulation to the imperialists’ “capitive nations” crusade, a long time battering ram against the Soviet state, a political surrealism. In contrast, the ICE defended the right to secession for all nations with an anti-counterrevolutionary leadership. As for the GDR, WP, despite its position of bottom line comes down to “Workers Aid to Sajudis”, expressed in its call for “the mobilisation of arms and volunteers from outside Lithuania” (“Declaration of

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

Yeltsin’s White House and “critical” centrisms

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

“The ‘gang of eight’ was incapable of sweeping away Yeltsin in its pathetic excuse for a pitchfork because, as we wrote, it was a ‘perestroiska coup’. But both imperialism and the forces of internal counterrevolution were aligned on Yel­tsin’s side. The coup plotters were not only irresolute but didn’t want to unleash the forces that could have defeated the most extreme counterrevolutionaries, for that could have led to a civil war if the Yeltsinists really fought back. And in an armed struggle pitting outright restorationist against recalcitrant elements of the bureaucracy, the defense of the colonies remained the only anchor placed on the agenda whatever the Stalinist’s intentions. Trotskyists would have been able to block a repeat of the Therdemian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution, as Trotsky postulated in the 1938 Transitional Program.”

—Workers Hammer no 535, 27 September 1991

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

“If Yeltsin was serious in opposing the coup we could offer a military bloc with him, but only if he ‘broke with the bourgeois’ Revolutionary. Educational would have demanded that Yeltsin not only called for and supported a general strike, but called on the army to defeat and arm the workers.”

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

A similar line was held at the time by the French Trotskyist League, who split with the LRCI following Yeltsin’s counterrevolution. Trying to keep a foot in both camps, the KTL argued that “no united front with Yeltsin was possible” while in the next breath saying, “That does not mean that a common struggle against the coup could not have been waged alongside the work­ers, soldiers and others who had illusions in Yeltsin.” This was also the position of the Trotskyist League in Britain, which called on Soviet workers to observe Yeltsin’s strike call. These Stalinohistc categories, like the LRCI split groups, couldn’t take a straightforward position against Yeltsin’s
drive for capitalist restoration because to them any possibility of a military bloc with elements of the bureaucracy was anathema. We denounced groups such as the LRCI as "Traitors not Trotskyists" for their support to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the homeland of the October Revolution. And, while the FF and Poder Obrero groups now complain about WP's craven backing of Yeltsin, they did not find this sufficient cause to split from the LRCI at the time.

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

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

The "anti-imperialist united front"

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

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

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

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

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

The international Socialist tendency warned that the victory of Khomenei would mean white terror against the left, medieval oppression for women, the murder of homosexuals in a "Paradise of Victorian" assault against oppressed national minorities. Our slogan was "Down with the Shah, Down with the Multilhah: For workers revolution in Iran!" Where Trotskyists fought against the subordination of the militant oil workers, whose strikes showed the potential for bringing down the Shah through proletarian revolution, Workers Power argued "workers must be willing to "strike together with the militias, bazaaris, students, peasants etc, ie to form a de facto anti-imperialist military united front" (Workers Power, February 1979).

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

Having supported Khomenei on the road to power, Workers Power went on to side with Iran when it began its ghastly war with Iraq in 1980, a chauvinist border feud which resulted in the slaughter of over a million working people. Once again the excuse was that the imperialists backed Iraq—although in fact they profit­ably armed both sides to the teeth. But while the shah was "anti-imperialist", WP attacked our line as "sectarian" and asserted: "The Socialist position would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran". But while the shah was at the time favoured by Washington and other Western capitals, he was not simply a "puppet of imperialism" as the Stalinists dubbed him in order to justify their explicit stagist strategy. Whether under the shah or the multilhahs, Iran is a sub-imperialist regional power in its own right. What was posed by the multilhah-led mass demonstrations in Iran was nothing other than a struggle to replace the shah's autocracy with an Islamic theocracy.

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

The RIL also extended outright political support to Green nationalism through its call for "critical support" to the petty-bourgeois Sinn Fein in elections.

But, for the Revolutionary Internationalist League the problem with WP is that it doesn't go far enough in capitulating to petty-bourgeois nationalism. In its publication "Split in Workers Power" the RIL chides WP for its "initial refusal... to call for a vote on Sinn Fein." The RIL also condemns the LRCI for "sectarianism" for continued on page 8
not calling for a vote to the ANC in last year’s elections in South Africa. While WP were to the left of the RIL they have notplaceto voting for populist fronts. Calling for a vote for this nationalist popular front meant endorsing the shackling of the combative black proletariat of South Africa to its “own” exploiters. The bourgeois-nationalist ANC was brought in to rule as the junior partners of the white capitalist class in order to preserve neo-colonial rule. What is posed here is nothing less than the elementary Marxist principle of the class independence of the proletariat. But WP has time and again demonstrated its own willingness to cross the class line on this fundamental question by offering electoral support to the reformist workers party component of popular-front coalitions.

Reform the Fourth International!
The LRCI leadership, the CWG and the Latin American groups all reject the perspective of reforming Trotsky’s Fourth International and sneer at the fight of the International Committee in 1953 against its destruction by Pabloite liquidationism. The PF writes off its destruction by the rest of the Trotskyist movement” (International Socialist no 76, March 1975). But the Cliff group fought against Trotskyism, not Pabloism, arguing as early as 1948 that the USSR and the deformed workers states were “state capitalist.” Cliff was expelled from the Fourth International in 1950 for publicly repudiating the FI’s unconditional military defence of the North Korean deformed workers state against imperialism.

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

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

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

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

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

Far from being a “re-creation” of the Transitional Programme, the LRCI’s founding document is an explicit repudiation of this central point. Thus, The Trotskyist Manifesto claims:

“Trotsky’s ‘Transitional Programme’… pronounced that the crisis of humanity was reduced to the crisis of leadership. However, today it would be wrong simply to repeat that all contemporary crises are reduced to a crisis of leadership.”

“The proletariat worldwide does not yet face the stark alternative of either taking power or seeing the destruction of all its past gains.”

This was written on the eve of the social countercoups in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

The destruction of the Soviet deemed-governed workers state has released a wave of 

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

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WORKERS HAMMER
Sri Lanka: bloody “People’s Alliance” onslaught against Tamils

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

Despite the heavy bombardment, govern­ment spokesmen have issued claims that civilian casualties have been limited to a mere handful. In September, one day after the government imposed censorship on reports of the war, planes bombed a civilian做到daylight, killing more than thirty children. Half a million or more refugees have fled their homes before the advancing army. The government’s initially meagre relief supplies to Jaffna residents, who have been forced to endure an economic blockade, has now resulted in starvation and disease. The army may have succeeded in planting their Sinhala Lion flag over Jaffna, but the only way it will hold is through indiscriminate communalist slaughter.

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

The People’s Alliance came to power in August 1994 amid a wave of popular anger against 17 years of bloody, corrupt UNP rule. It promised a negotiated peace in its election campaign. But the nonhonest executive presidency, ending unemployment and lowering prices for essential foodstuffs, has been the principal thrust of efforts, strongly opposed by both Sinhala­se chauvinists and Tamil extremists, were blown out of the water this April — and indeed the government, too, after the government turned around and negotiated a $500 million purchase of aircraft, boats, armoured vehicles and infantry weapons. Kumaratunga’s fragile eight-party coalition now faces a spiralling defence budget along with IMF/World Bank demands for further attacks on liv­ing standards.

The Lanka Guardian (15 October) re­vealed that the PA’s “economic” programme, if not tutored, by a small well-knit group of NATO diplomats. Despite its populist rhetoric, the PA government is beholden to its imperialist overlords. Kumaratunga desperately hopes that victory over the LTTE and her government’s anti­Tamil bloodbath will appease the reaction­ists, who may lining up against Sinhalese hopes to drown mounting popular unrest against the regime’s austerity measures. President Kumaratunga is truly an heir of the Bandaranaike dynasty. Her father SWRD Bandaranaike rode to power on the basis of “Sinhala Only” chauvinism in the 1950s. This targeted Tamils and English­speaking Burghers (people of mixed Euro­pean and Sinhala or Tamil stock). Moreover, it was an “anti-imperialist” measure which bifurcated rights of citizenship and immi­gration and nationality laws and controls, joining the Bandaranaike family) from learning English. But it did cut off whole generations of Tamils and other minorities from access to edu­cation, and fuelled the frustrated and statis­ticism communalism of Sinhala youth, whose revolt in the late eighties was drowned in blood. Her (the present day, the current Tamil Tiger leader) led the anti-Tamil Popular front which butchered the 1971 youth uprising of the then Jaffna and now extreme Sinhalese–Chauvinist JVP.

Asylum... (Continued from rights). The artificiality of such states that issued from the post-colonial era, and the national and communal differences within them, are the results of the policies of divide-and-rule with which the British and other imperialists played off one ethnic group against another. They could be sure Britain will assist this communal hatred with arms supplies and the trained killers of their own people.

We oppose the liberal pro-imperialist calls on the West for economic sanctions on the Sri Lankan government. This will only be answered by a series of anti-Islamist and anti-imperialist movements. The response to the Sri Lankan government’s anti-immigrant legislation comes alongside an all-sided assault on social benefits. European capital no longer needs cheap, imported labour on the previous scale. To save the costs of unemployment benefits, socialised health care and other social programmes, the bosses now find it more profitable to invest in Europe and the US, where the blood of their workers will back to their Third World neocolonies. The proposals to have employers clock immigrants’ status will be added to the government’s welfare cuts. The proposed bill will soon be tabled, and the government’s unused time to enlist workers from local councils, schools and hospitals as immigration police. The bill also allows for “new entries to take up the government’s racist plans! While more asylum seekers are com­peted to run for their lives, even fewer than the current four per cent of asylum seekers will be granted refugee status. At the moment 6000 are detained in Camp­field, a virtual concentration camp, and other such centres awaiting, sometimes for years, decisions that often mean life or death. Free all the interned! Shut down the concentration camp! Full citizenship for refugees and asylum seekers. Full rights for all foreign­born workers and their families!

As we go to press, news has reached us that student supporters of the Revolution­ ary International League (RIL) face suspension by campus administrators. This witch hunt comes after Tory party candidate Barry O’Brien’s “New World Disorder” — puts the blame for oppression squarely on the shoulders of the oppressed, not the bosses who have created the hellish conditions of racism. Moreover, black women were told to stay at home — according to Louis Farrakhan (the man who wanted to see Malcolm X dead) that is their place. In Britain and throughout Western Eu­rope, foreign-born workers and their children occupy positions in strategic industries. The struggle against anti-immigrant racism is intertwined with the mobilisation of the working class in order to sweep away this devastating capitalist system and for all.

To achieve this we need a Bolshevik Party, a champion of all the oppressed.

Rescind the suspensions on RIL supporters!

To Those who listen to fascist talk about reparation but only as part of burning the drum for a new war.

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

Fighters for What? Certainly not against racism. The NOI with its anti-Asian, anti­ Semitic, anti-white, anti-black, anti­phobic, separatist, pro-capitalist programme has nothing to do with the struggle for black liberation. The Million Man March—organized by Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam—puts the blame for oppression squarely on the shoulders of the oppressed, not the bosses who have created the hellish conditions of racism. Moreover, black women were told to stay at home — according to Louis Farrakhan (the man who wanted to see Malcolm X dead) that is their place.

In Britain and throughout Western Eu­rope, foreign-born workers and their children occupy positions in strategic industries. The struggle against anti-immigrant racism is intertwined with the mobilisation of the working class in order to sweep away this devastating capitalist system once and for all.

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Rescind the suspensions on RIL supporters!
Labour...
(Continued from page 2)

Morris line. Those, like the workers over its austerity Social Contract, extended critical support to Tony deeds against the Social Contract, would it Trotskyist propaganda group should have bour stand out order to alist CIA-connected right wing and place and combatted. to enhance these contradictions within the Labour Party.

strict programmatic against the policies and actions of the pro- and objective interests of the working class always lies through sharp political contradictions within the bourgeoisie, revolutionaries can employ various tactical options to enhance these contradictions within the Labour Party.

When the 70s Callaghan Labour government began to face increased hostility from workers over its austerity Social Contract, we set out the case for a CONTRADICTORY opposition to candidates in the 1976 parliamentary by-elections. We said that only—you a Labour candidate—actually stood out unambiguously, in words and deeds against the Social Contract, would it be possible to consider giving a vote to you. The 1981 deputies leadership contest between Cold Warrior Denis Healey and Labour left Tony Benn, marked a showdown on key issues within the Labour Party: for or against the CIA connection, support for imperialist Cold War, for or against the architects of capitalism and austerity. This situation dictated that a Trotskyist propaganda group should have extended critical support to Tony Benn on the split, to drive out the blatantly pro-imperialist CIA-connected right wing and place them in the opposition. Anti-imperialist politics could be more effectively expressed and combatted as we said at the time. Labour can betray without the CIA connection.

Smash the anti-trade union laws!
Blair’s “victory” was assured by the big trade union vote delivered to him by the likes of Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) and John Edmonds of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers union (GMB), in return for the “promise” to maintain the 50 per cent pay raise. As a Matthew dock workers Labour administration is underpinned by a plant trade union bureaucracy which has written the anti-union laws into its anti- Labour Party’s agenda. Blair’s campaign was the mildest trade union resistance. Its shackle of working-class struggles has led to the present infamous state where trade union membership has fallen from 13 million (56 per cent) of the workforce in 1979 to 6.5 million, under a third of the workforce.

Any real working-class fight against the years of wage slashing attacks must be prepared to turn the clock back to the 1984-85 miners strike. and to this day. Labour is still connected with the trade union bureaucracy which has terror bombing of the Bosnian Serbs. We opposed NATO and the Socialists for Professionals who urged support for Morris against Tony Blair’s crony, Jack Dromey. They had taken Morris’ very British two-faced opposition to anti-trade union laws as good coin. We said that there was no basis to support either candidate. Morris’ critical betrayal of dockers confirms what we said at the time, that the leadership battle “was an intra-bureaucratic conflict that did not go beyond an exchange of rhetoric among loyal Labourites. Old­ style trade unionism was pitted against New la­bour betrayal” (Workers Hammer no 146, July/August 1995).

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

For proletarian internationalism!
Political subordination to the Labour leadership has its own reactionary logic. This was shown by Scargill’s role in derailing the opportunity for strike action against the pit closures in late 1992-early 1993. Despite clear indications that trade unionists were ready to take action, the NUM leaders organised a class-collabora­ tionist rally in their own back­ yard, stretching from the TUC and Labour leadership through the Liberal Democrats to the Archbishop of Canterbury to the out and- out fascist MP Winston Churchill. The basis of this national alliance was the appeal to preserve “British industry” through calls for import controls. Imperial­ ists trade blocs, nationalism and the working class way for shooting wars. The imperialist bourgeoisie will invest anywhere they can make a higher profit. Their only answer to the grinding effects of the world capitalist market, which attacks the working class across the globe, is to build international proletarian unity, with the perspective of creating an international planned economy through socialist revolution. This is not a new fight. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels founded the International Working Men’s Association to promote this aim.

A decisive question for any would-be leadership of the working class is their attitude to their own imperialist state. During the figaro socialist party’s attack on Clause IV the Benn/Scargill opposition raised the call for unilateralism and demanded a reduc­ tion in the “promise” to maintain the 50 per cent pay raise. Blair’s committee for Peace in the Balkans. Benn’s call for an end to direct military intervention, while simultaneously supporting the UN presence, provides an alternative route for imperialist domination.

In February of this year, at a “Defend Clause IV” rally held in London, Arthur Scargill was trying to achieve what Margaret That­ cher failed to do: “wipe socialism off the agenda”. He described the 1945 Attlee Labour government as having the most massive radical programme ever seen. But as an SL supporter responded:

“Is Clause IV, as comrade Scargill would put it, the socialist principle of the Labour Party? I am confused. Is it for or against the Labour Party?” Because if you look at the history of the Labour Party in power—if you look at 1945 or any of the Labour governments—the Labour Party has always had a hand on the head of capitalism.”

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

“Expropriate the capitalist class without compensation. Those who labour must rule. Westminster parliament is a talking shop instrument of bourgeoisie rule. The Labour Party leaders are the servants of the ruling class. Forward to a class-strug­ gle Marxist workers party. For a workers government based on workers coun­ cils... We fight to build a party like the Bolshevik party led by Lenin and Trot­ sky, which organised the workers in October 1917 Russian Revolution. We fight to reforge the Fourth International: its battle against capitalist domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—proletarian revolution! (T. Trotsky, The Transitional Programme 1938).”

WORKERS HAMMER
Lanka...
(Continued from page 9)
the massacres of unarmed villagers, women and children included, are indefen­
sible atrocities, mirroring the worst ex­
erience of the Sri Lankan armed forces and police in their persecution of oppor­
tutees against Tamils.

The Tamil population of the Sri Lan­
capital of Colombo, swollen with refu­
ges, is held hostage to the warmong­
police bodies, found in lakes near Colombo and in the headquarters of the notorious police working class is battered and terrorised.

Divorce...
(Continued from page 12)
property but of the entire ruling class.

For free abortion on demand!
The question of the oppression of women and most especially the right to abortion is the ultimate test of the clericalist state. Fighting for free abortion on demand means having to confront the Labour Party and the Democratic Left middle class backwash of the church. Far from confronting them, So­cialist Worker and Militant Labour both tail them. The Socialist Worker Party’s campaign exhorting people to “Stand up to the Bishops” and “Vote for Change” is simply the stuff of Labourite reformism.

At the time of the X case, when thousands of young women demonstrated on the streets to win the right of a young girl to travel abroad for an abortion, the SWP was not at the head of a struggle “up to the Bishops” when they came out with their notorious leaflet asking for “abortion rights for rape victims”, and forget the rest of the campaign. We have the right to free abortion on demand.

Militant Labour, as consummate re­formists, declare that the fight for divorce is part of a struggle for “a democratic and secular society” where people make the laws, and where all religious views are respected, but none is given the right to dictate morality (AJS, 1995). So much for even socialist speculating, not to mention the necessity of workers rule and the materialist struggle against reli­gious obscurantism. The problems for Irish women who seek abortion are caused by the fact that contraceptive advice and assistance is not readily available without charge and they cannot obtain abortion free and on demand.

The disgust and anger felt over the child sex abuse accusations against priests is not only being used to constrain the church but also to bolster the bourgeois morality underpinning the institution of the Catholic Church. The “clergy” are being used to underpin women’s oppression under capitalism. We insist that sex involving young people is not a “private” or “just sex”. Abortion is part of the right of all adults. If the church is to be left alone, they must respect the law which is the product of all our ages. The guid­ing principle of sexual relations ought to be a matter between adults, not between the public and the law. Outlawing abortion is tantamount to the right of all adults. The guiding principle of sexual relations ought to be a matter between adults, not between the public and the law. Outlawing abortion is tantamount to the right of all adults.

And of course, through the divorce campaign Sinn Féin (SF) and Sinn Féin (RSF) keep their heads down. SF, while agreeing with the right to di­vorce, know that to make women’s rights a genuine and concrete fact confronting women, deeply and church and splitting their own movement, just as they were split over the X case when their supporters marched on demonstra­tions both for and against the right of women to travel to have abortions. And for RSF, “The national question is para­mount and when faced and solved all other issues will fall into place and be cleared” (Scarr, Augustus, 1995). For RSF, as it always has been for nationalists, the ques­tion of the national question is paramount. The nationalists must wait until the national question has been resolved. Clerical reaction cannot be appeased. Irish history is replete with examples of the failure of the church to the homophobia outcry against Sir Roger Casement to the church hierarchy’s resolution with the Treaty, the War, where the church and its “moral” teachings have come down on the side of imperialism and reaction. The nationalist reactionaries and the current complicity with the police sucess, as a living and dangerous example, is to pressure imperialism for a place in the imperialist world order. Just as the military men and women and children included, are indefen­sible atrocities, mirroring the worst ex­nerience of the Sri Lankan armed forces and police in their persecution of oppor­tutees against Tamils.

The war on the Tamils and the plight of workers, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, is a product of betrayals perpetrated by the established leaders of the working class. Just as they joined the anti-Tamil Sinhala-chau­vins popular front of government from Mrs. Bandaranaike to the anti-Tamil Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party serve in today’s PA government. The use of armed state forces and the official section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat in Sri Lanka, has a storied history of class collabor­ators. The Tamil mitra movement has called on the Sinhala-communist JMP to support “Tamil-speaking regiments” in the army. In fact this demand is raised by certain Tamil quashing groups who actively work with the army in hunting down and killing LTTE supporters.

The Socialist Communist League, Lankan section of David North’s “Inter­national Committee of the Fourth Interna­tional”, while on this occasion raising the possibility of outside forces supporting Sri Lankan troops from the north and east of the island, deny that the Leninist recognition of the right of national self-determination is valid today for the Tamils or any oppressed nation, thus giving back-hand supported to “unity” Sri Lanka. Despite the longstand­ing links between various left and ostensibly Trotskyist groups in Britain and Lanka, when more than 120 Tamils, many of them children, died in a sudden and illegal attack by British forces on 18 November in a militant pro­test against the onslaught on Jaffna, the only British presence on the ground was the Spartak­ist League.

During WWII, the Ceylonese Trotskyists took the lead in establishing the Bolshevik Leninist Movement, a conscious national, caste, sexual oppressions and indescribable exploitation of workers and agrarian toilers. The task throughout the subcontinent must be to build revolution­ary working-class parties to lead the working class and its allies in socialist revolu­tion. For the right of Tamil Eelam! For federated workers republics of Eelam and Lanka, part of a socialist federation of South Asia!

 Corrections
In Workers Hamer no 147, Sep­tember/October 1995, in the article “Pan-Slavism and the political photo caption incorrectly stated that a PDC-initiated protest at New Scotland Yard was defen­se of Walter-fas­cists occurred on 5 March 1993. It should have read 5 March 1994. In the article “On the imperialist warpath” in the same issue, we refer incorrectly to a 5 August 1995 demonstration co­organised by the Workers Defence and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This demonstra­tion actually occurred on 6 August 1995. Also in this issue, in the article “Peace and Freedom for Ireland”, the Irish coalition government is incor­rectly described as Fin reaff Fáil, Labour and Democratic Left. It should have read Fine Gael, Labour and Demo­cratic Left.
Dublin government offers referendum on timid reform

For the free, unconditional right to divorce!

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

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

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

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

man Eamonn McCann has touted the British state's Orkney child abuse tribunal. But state intervention into personal life is to bolster the conservative morality of the institution as a hallmark of capitalist exploitation, not to act in the interests of the oppressed. The divorce amendment is being promoted energetically by those slick-suiting "smoked salmon socialists" of the Labour Party. Dick Spring and Minister for Equality and Law Reform Mervyn Taylor. From the very beginning these traitors to the working people have made clear their determination to grant as little as possible in their desire to appease clericalist reaction. Spring only recently echoed arch-reactionary Eamonn de Valera by signing to give a face lift to the Irish clericalist state to head off social unrest. The referendums of 1983 and 1986, and the heavy church intervention, were deeply divisive. More recently the X case provoked an explosion of angry protest. Dick Spring and the Labour Party master-minded Mary Robinson's presidential candidacy in 1990 to continue to tie the oppressed working class and women to the clericalist order through generating reformist illusions in Robinson's "Rainbow coalition". Both Robinson and Spring's Labour Party advocate appealing the Loyalist reactionaries and British imperialism. All the minimal social reforms, from abortion information to limited divorce, have been proposed with an authority has been deeply undermined by seemingly unending revelations of sexual and financial scandal, lies and hypocrisy, cover-ups and innumerable accusations of child sexual abuse. It is no accident that the steady drip-drip of scandal about the Catholic priesthood comes in the months before the divorce referendum. The revelations have been fuelled by the current onslaught against abortion, the expropriation not just of the church's power of the church as an institution in Ireland.

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

The political power of the church in Ireland will not be defeated by parliamen-tary manoeuvres. The secularisation of education and provi-sion of free, quality health care requires the expropriation not just of the church's

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!