



Unions protest murder of Catholic postal worker

Imperialist “peace” fraud fuels Loyalist terror

We print below an article which first appeared in Workers Hammer no 179, Winter 2001-2002 along with an introduction adapted from Workers Vanguard no 773, 25 January.

The killing of 20-year-old Catholic postal worker Daniel McColgan by Protestant Loyalist paramilitaries in Belfast provoked a rare display of united protest action by Catholic and Protestant workers in Northern Ireland. McColgan's murder by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) as he arrived at work in the early morning of 12 January is the latest incident in a dramatic upsurge of Loyalist terror against Catholics in the context of the imperialist-imposed “peace process”. The Red Hand Defenders, a cover name often used by the UDA, subsequently threatened to kill Catholics working in Protestant areas including postal workers, teachers and transit workers.

When they heard about McColgan's murder, postal workers organised by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) walked off the job across Northern Ireland, refusing to return to work for five days in response to the threats against Catholic workers. Trade unions representing both Catholic and Protestant workers condemned the murder and threats. On 18 January, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) called a half-day public sector strike against sectarian attacks and organised mass rallies in Belfast, Derry and several other cities.

Upwards of 15,000 attended the rally in Belfast and thousands more demonstrated elsewhere. Trade-union contingents included the CWU, NASUWT and INTO teachers unions, National Union of Journalists, AMICUS (rail, aerospace and other workers), UNISON (hospital and school workers) and Northern Ireland Public Servants Association. The rally represented a broad swathe of Northern Irish society. Protestant and Catholic, old and young, men and women showed up to express their revulsion at the murder of McColgan and the upsurge in anti-Catholic terror.

The proletarian responses to the Loyalist murder campaign



Hugh Russell/Irish News

Postal workers union contingent at 18 January Belfast protest of Loyalist murder of Daniel McColgan.

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British troops out of Northern Ireland now!

Spartacist Ireland launched

We are proud to announce the publication of the first issue of *Spartacist Ireland*, newspaper of the Spartacist Group Ireland (SGI)—formerly the Dublin Spartacist Group—Irish section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). As stated in our international “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* no 54, Spring 1998), the ICL “is a proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist tendency which is committed to the task of building Leninist parties as national sections of a democratic-centralist international whose purpose is to lead the working class to victory through socialist revolutions throughout the world”.

The establishment of this journal is a modest but real step in the consolidation and construction of an Irish section of the ICL. As VI Lenin explained in *Where To Begin* (May 1901), the intervention of the revolutionary party is necessary to make the working class conscious of its historic task to overthrow capitalism. Lenin underscored the importance of a newspaper in building such a party:

“The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In the last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.”

—*Collected Works* vol 5

The banner of the ICL was first planted in Ireland in Autumn 1990 with the founding of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group (DSYG). Key to the founding of the DSYG was the intervention of the ICL into the nascent political revolution which unfolded in the East German deformed workers state in 1989-90. We fought

for unconditional military defence of the DDR and for a red Germany of workers councils, for revolutionary reunification through proletarian political revolution in the East and for socialist revolution in the West to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The restoration of capitalism led to massive immiseration of the working class, attacks on the rights of women and the rise of racist attacks and communalist wars throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Today we uphold the Trotskyist programme of unconditional military defence of the remaining deformed workers states: China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam. We stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies whose policies of conciliating imperialism threaten the gains of the social revolutions in these countries—the collectivised economy, central planning and monopoly of foreign trade.

In addition to the devastating consequences in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the counterrevolution emboldened the imperialists to undertake new imperialist interventions from Serbia to Afghanistan and beyond. Although Ireland is a very small, weak capitalist country, nevertheless its position at the western Atlantic approaches to Britain and continental Europe gives it strategic military significance. Despite the nationalist myth of Irish “neutrality”, pushed not least by the fake left, Ireland has never been neutral. The Irish bourgeoisie has deployed troops as part of UN imperialist “peacekeeping” missions from the Lebanon to the Balkans and East Timor and regularly makes Shannon airport available for refuelling by US military aircraft including in the recent war against Afghanistan. During that war we raised the demand for class struggle at home and called on the working class to defend Afghanistan. ***Irish/UN troops out of the Near East, Balkans and East Timor!***

Against Labourite chauvinism and Green nationalism, the SGI is committed to raising the banner of proletarian internationalism, not least in the context of Northern Ireland. As stated in the ICL’s 1977 “Theses on Ireland” (reprinted in *Ireland: workers to power!*, 1991) the key components of a revolutionary working-class perspective include: For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army! Full democratic rights for the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland! Not Orange against Green, but class against class! No forcible reunification! For an Irish workers republic in a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles! This leaves open the question of where the Protestants will fall and highlights the relationship of the proletarian revolutions throughout the British Isles and the virtual impossibility of a resolution of the Irish

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SPARTACIST IRELAND

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Editorial board: John Blake (editor), Keith Bruce, Gordon Lane

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Spartacist Group Ireland, PO Box 2944, Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 855 8409

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Printed by trade union labour.

Capitalist state's anti-immigrant crusade fuels racist murder of Chinese student

For a Bolshevik party—Tribune of the people!

We reprint below a 31 January DSG leaflet which was distributed at a Globalise Resistance protest on 2 February against the murder of Zhao Liu Tao.

On the night of 21 January a gang of racist scum viciously attacked Zhao Liu Tao and two of his friends in Beaumont. The 29-year-old Zhao, who had come from China to study English, was repeatedly pumelled with an iron bar sending him into a coma; he died three days later. Brutal assaults on Asians, Africans and East Europeans are commonplace. Irish Travellers have been targets of racist terror for centuries. Furthermore, the many Irish people who have emigrated to Britain and the United States have themselves been victims of anti-immigrant racism.

Fundamental responsibility for Zhao's brutal murder lies with the Irish capitalist state whose anti-immigrant policies give a green light to race terrorists. The government's attempts to prevent immigrants from even reaching these shores resulted in the deaths in December of eight Turkish and Kurdish immigrants who had hidden themselves in a cargo container en route to Rosslare. For those who do make it to Ireland, the government is stepping up deportations. Femi Adesoji, a Nigerian man, was recently arrested just before he was due to be married to an Irish woman, whom he had been with for three years and he may be deported.

The capitalists across Europe have been increasing attacks on the working class and especially immigrants in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US and the growing economic recession. The government and the opposition (including Labour) have supported im-

perialist terror in Afghanistan. At home the Irish bourgeoisie's "war on terrorism" ties the working class and oppressed to their capitalist exploiters. Racism is a key weapon in the hands of the bosses to divide workers and the oppressed to keep down labour costs and scapegoat the most vulnerable in this decrepit, decaying society. That's why we of the Dublin Spartacist Group fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants**, regardless of how they got here.

The protest action of 18 January by Catholic and Protestant workers in Northern Ireland against the murder of Catholic postal worker Daniel McColgan by Loyalist paramilitaries was a rare and welcome display of united **class** action across the sectarian divide. However, the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucrats worked to divert the justified outrage of the workers into support for the imperialist "peace" fraud, which has in fact resulted in an escalation of anti-Catholic violence. It is precisely united working-class action

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which is needed to be mobilised against racist attacks and in defence of immigrants and Travellers, but the union bureaucracy here are wedded to pushing the lie of "national unity" and social "partnership".

We of the International Communist League fight to break the workers from the reactionary "national unity" which has been the cornerstone of the "war on terrorism". In the US, for example, our comrades in the Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee have raised the call on the powerful multiracial unions of the Bay Area to mobilise 9 February against the US government's war on America's integrated working class, on black people and on immigrants.

The struggle against racism must be linked to the fight against capitalist exploitation and for socialist revolution. It must be conducted not only against this clericalist state and groups like the xenophobic Immigration Control Platform, both of which incite murder by racist gangs, but also as a political battle against the misleaders of the workers movement—the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy. The Labour Party was in the previous government which seized on a wave of racist hysteria to enact the 1997 "Aliens Order" and slammed the doors to immigrants. Their left tails, the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party absolve the trade union bureaucrats and the Labour Party, whom they supported in the previous elections.

Since the capitalist counterrevolution in the degenerated workers state of the USSR, the capitalists around the world have been on an offensive against the working class, immigrants, women and all the oppressed. Many of the groups protesting Zhao's racist murder (SP, SWP, WSM) cheered the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. And last September when Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji came to Ireland all these groups responded with an outpouring of anti-Communist vitriol protesting with

such openly counterrevolutionary groups as Falun Gong and the "Free Tibet" crowd.

By demanding that the capitalist Irish state condemn the Chinese deformed workers state, the SWP and Socialist Party cover up the crimes of their own capitalist class. They join with their own bourgeoisie in elevating bourgeois "democracy" above what is central for Marxists: the class character of the state. The ICL fights for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialism and internal capitalist counterrevolution! Also, we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy whose "market reforms", including joining the WTO, threaten the collectivised property and all of the gains of the Chinese Revolution. The proletariat in China needs a revolutionary internationalist party, part of a reforged Fourth International which fights for world socialist revolution. The anti-communist, anti-Chinese demonstration last September helped to fuel the climate of anti-Asian racism, which resulted in Zhao's murder.

In their call to "Rally at the GPO", Globalise Resistance says to "stand up for a multicultural Dublin". But racism is inherent to the capitalist system, which therefore requires the revolutionary overthrow of that system and the establishment of a workers government, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The reformist SWP and SP have helped to elect social-democratic governments to administer the capitalist state in Britain (Blair), in France (Jospin), and in Germany (Schröder) that have enforced the most vicious anti-immigrant terror. In contrast we seek to break the working class from these bourgeois-workers parties. We fight to build a Leninist party—a tribune of the people which stands in defence of all the oppressed—to lead the working class to power through socialist revolution. ***For an Irish workers republic, part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!*** ■

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Northern Ireland

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showed that it is the integrated working class that has both the interest in combating sectarian terror and the social power to do so. However, the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucrats worked to divert the justified outrage of the workers into support for the imperialist “peace” fraud, which has in fact resulted in an escalation of anti-Catholic violence. The bureaucrats also tied workers to their own capitalist exploiters. The ICTU sought and received the endorsement of the rallies from the bosses association, the CBI, and the British imperialist Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, John Reid.

Obscenely, the Belfast rally was addressed by Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). David Ervine of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), which is a front for the notorious anti-Catholic Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), was also present. While embracing the likes of Trimble, Ervine and the murderous British imperialist state, the ICTU organisers emphasised that “militant Republicans” were not welcome at the rallies, though Education Minister Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, which supports the “peace process”, was there. ICTU Assistant General Secretary Peter Bunting called “on all paramilitary groups to dissolve”, but predictably said not a word against the anti-Catholic killers of the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), now renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The ICTU bureaucrats even ensured that there were no pictures at the rally of McColgan or other recent victims of sectarian terror.

The class collaboration pushed by the trade union tops is a deadly danger to the working class and an obstacle to fighting against Loyalist terror. Oppression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland is the very foundation of the Orange (Protestant-dominated) statelet and is reinforced by British imperialism. Sectarianism serves the interests of the capitalist exploiters by keeping the working class divided. To be effective, any fight against Loyalist terror must confront the capitalist system that breeds it as well as the state forces which back the Loyalists—the British Army and PSNI. Key in making workers conscious of this fact and in breaking them from illusions in the imperialist “peace” fraud is the intervention of revolutionary proletarian internationalists.

Comrades from the Dublin Spartacist Group went to the rally in Belfast and distributed *Workers Vanguard* and the Spartacist League/Britain’s *Workers Hammer*. The workers that our comrades spoke to, including construction, rail and postal workers, generally saw the imperialist “peace” as better than—and the only alternative to—a return to the widespread communalist violence of the 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, there was universal acknowledgement that things have recently gotten worse. One rail worker noted that when the Good Friday Agreement was

signed there were a lot of hopes that things would get better, especially for the youth, but with the upsurge in sectarian attacks he was thinking that his teenage son should leave Northern Ireland.

Our comrades called for the withdrawal of the British Army; one construction worker replied, “They should all get out, what we need is a workers army!” We explained our perspective of programmatically-based workers militias to combat Loyalist thuggery and all sectarian terror. We also argued that a just solution to the situation in Northern Ireland will only come about through workers revolution throughout Ireland and Britain.

* * * *

The 11 September attack on the World Trade Center was a gift to Tony Blair in several ways, not least that the IRA announced on 23 October that they had begun to decommission their weapons. The British government claims to be waging a “war against terrorism” in the interests of “democracy” and the “civilised world” against religious fanatics. Terrorism anyone? How about the terrorism of the British state, such as the massive bombing of Afghanistan, and before this Serbia, in which this bloodthirsty Labour government took centre stage? What about British imperialism’s domination of Ireland, which lasted for centuries and created a militarised garrison state in the North where the facade of democracy was never much in evidence and where no-one had any reason to believe in such myths as “unarmed Bobbies”. As for religious zealots, there are very few Muslims in Northern Ireland but British rule there rests on collaboration with a gang of crazed fundamentalist Protestant bigots.

We said in 1993 that: “Any imperialist ‘deal’ will be bloody and brutal and will necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either” (*Workers Hammer* no 138, November/December 1993). This has been borne out: Loyalist violence against Catholics has continued, firebombings and pipebombings are commonplace. There were 220 Loyalist attacks recorded in 213 days to August last year, including 75 bombings and 20 gun attacks (*An Phoblacht*, 9 August 2001). In the last week of October alone there were twelve bomb attacks against Catholics in North Belfast. There have been a number of murders of Catholics, including that of 19-year-old Ciaran Cummings, killed in a drive-by shooting in Antrim in July and Gavin Brett, an 18-year-old Protestant killed by Loyalist gunmen who mistook him for a Catholic. On 28 October Colin Foy was killed in Tyrone by a member of the British Army’s Royal Irish Regiment.

The Catholics are an oppressed minority living under permanent siege. The plight of working-class Catholic families hit international headlines last summer as schoolgirls in Ardoyne, North Belfast trying to walk to Holy Cross school with their parents were shown daily on television confronting a Loyalist mob

howling vile anti-Catholic and anti-woman slurs and throwing pipebombs, bags of excrement and balloons filled with urine. The British Army and RUC—now renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)—lined the streets and tried to look as if they were making an honest effort to “keep the peace”. On the day of their name change, the PSNI escorted leaders of the Orange Order down the Catholic Garvaghy Road. Catholics know they have as much to fear from the police and army as they do from the Loyalist death squads; indeed IRA decommissioning leaves sections of the Catholic population feeling defenceless against these forces.

The scenes at Holy Cross school are a microcosm of Northern Ireland which show the bitter reality of Labour’s imperialist “peace” deal. The fact that Catholic parents refused to meekly accept their status as second-class citizens brought out blatant anti-Irish prejudice from British journalists who would often report with amazement that the situation is like the segregated American South in the 1950s prior to the civil rights struggles; in the next breath they would ask Catholic parents why they don’t use a back entrance to the school! The Irish bourgeois press, which has the same contempt for working-class Catholics in the North as for those in the South, echoed Loyalist lies that the exercise was just a publicity stunt for Sinn Féin (SF). But, with or without decommissioning, Sinn Féin manifestly can not offer a way forward to the beleaguered Catholics.

Sinn Féin has been organising protests against particular military installations and complaining that the imperialists have not lived up to the “‘programme for demilitarisation’ that was promised in the Good Friday Agreement” (*An Phoblacht*, 1 November 2001). But while the British may agree to scale down the army presence to cut their costs, the Good Friday Agreement is premised on troops remaining in Northern Ireland.

We fight for the **immediate unconditional withdrawal** of British troops, not merely because no good can come of the British military presence there, but also because we agree with Karl Marx that the British working class cannot make a revolution against their “own” capitalist rulers if they accept imperialist oppression in Ireland. It is in the direct interests of the working class to oppose repressive measures in Northern Ireland, which are often subsequently imposed on workers and minorities in Britain. After 11 September, Jack Straw pledged Britain would see “security of a kind people in Northern Ireland have had to live with for decades”. Sure enough, immigrants suspected of “terrorism” are being rounded up and interned without trial.

Withdrawal of the British Army does not in itself automatically ensure advance in a revolutionary direction, but it is the necessary starting point for a proletarian revolutionary perspective. We seek to break workers from illusions in Labour, which has loyally served racist, chauvinist British imperialism and the monarchy. The Spartacist League/Britain and Dublin

Spartacist Group, sections of the International Communist League, fight to build revolutionary internationalist workers parties to put an end to capitalist rule and to establish a workers republic in Ireland as part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles. Our framework is internationalist and is based on the necessity to link the struggles of the working class of Ireland, North and South, with those of the workers in England, Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland divisions between Catholics and Protestants have deepened, which means the prospect of united struggle by Protestant and Catholic workers for their common class interests appears remote. Although Protestant workers are only marginally better off than their Catholic counterparts, the view is pervasive that improvements in the position of one community will necessarily be at the expense of the other. This indeed is true, unless such struggles challenge the framework of capitalist rule. A proletarian revolutionary perspective is the only way forward. There can be no just solution to the communal conflict in Northern Ireland short of proletarian rule in all of Ireland and in Britain.

Labourite “socialists” push imperialist “peace”

The Labour-loyal fake left have shamelessly touted British imperialism, in the guise of Blair and the Labour government, as the agency to bring peace and equality to the North. In the last British election, the Socialist Alliance—which at the time consisted of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Socialist Party, Workers Power and others—supported the re-election of Labour and removed the call for troops out of Northern Ireland from their manifesto before launching it to the bourgeois press. We said “No vote to Labour, imperialist butchers” and “No vote to Socialist Alliance, lackeys of Labour”.

The SWP is silent about the British Army, but gushing about the “tremendous hopes for peace in Northern Ireland following the IRA’s announcement that it will destroy its weapons”. They cravenly claim Labour’s “peace” process provides “space” for united struggle of the working class. *Socialist Worker* (3 November 2001) says:

“That process is about reaching an accommodation between politicians representing Catholic and Protestant ‘communities’.

“It can reproduce the sectarian division that is built into the Northern Ireland state. But it does provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests and against sectarianism.”

This is almost exactly what the SWP said when they supported British troops being sent to Northern Ireland in 1969 (by a Labour government, of course), which they claimed would provide a “breathing space” for the Catholics. They wrote:

“The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate

withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists.”

—*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969

Less than three years later “their” British Army shot down 14 defenceless Catholics in cold blood in Derry on Bloody Sunday.

The sectarian Orange statelet was created by British imperialism’s partition of Ireland as a police state based on subjugation of the Catholic minority. Its backbone is the RUC and, since 1969, the army; both work in tandem with the Loyalist paramilitary killers. Recent history is littered with scandals about collusion between Loyalist murderers and the RUC/PSNI and British Army, and there’s no “breathing space” for anyone who tries to expose this to the outside world. Thus on 28 September, Martin O’Hagan, a journalist with the Dublin-based *Sunday World*, who researched the collusion between the British Army, the RUC, leading Unionist politicians and Loyalist death squads, was murdered by the LVF. Rosemary Nelson, a prominent Catholic lawyer who reported to the UN that she received death threats from the RUC was also murdered in 1999; ten years earlier Pat Finucane, another well-known Catholic lawyer was also murdered by Loyalists in collusion with the state. The current Labour government is withholding documents on the 1974 bombings in Dublin and Monaghan which killed 33 people and British state involvement is widely suspected.

The Labourite left even advocate “peace” with Loyalist thugs such as Billy Hutchinson. Irish secretary of the transport union ATGWU, Mick O’Reilly, recruited the UVF’s Hutchinson and David Ervine into the ATGWU. The wretched Socialist Party has sponsored Hutchinson in public meetings and the SWP jumped on the bandwagon by taking part in a 1999 “debate” with him organised by the Scottish Socialist Party.

Not Orange against Green, but class against class!

Following capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, petty-bourgeois nationalist movements like Sinn Féin and the PLO have had much less room to manoeuvre and have increasingly sought to make deals with imperialism. Sinn Féin played up illusions that by involving US imperialism and the Dublin government they would secure a better deal from British imperialism for the Catholics. This overlooks the fact that US imperialism is the most powerful enemy of the workers and oppressed of the world, as can be seen in the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, or the dirty colonial wars against Korea and Vietnam; the bedrock of the system of exploitation of American workers rests on racist oppression of black people. The imperialist “peace” deal was brokered under Democratic President Clinton, who preferred to pass off imperialist marauding as “human rights” imperialism, something Bush and Co don’t bother with. British imperialism is a junior partner of US imperial-

ism—the City of London has close ties with Wall Street and British imperialism is also the foremost military ally of US imperialism in Europe. The Irish capitalist government is certainly no better. It supported the US and Britain’s military adventures, including offering facilities for NATO warplanes at Shannon airport, and is viciously repressive of workers, women, Travellers and Republicans at home.

Petty-bourgeois nationalism is a political dead-end which cannot further the interests of the Catholic minority. It is premised on the world being divided into good and bad peoples. Whether through armed struggle (“the Armalite”) or the parliamentary road (“the ballot box”) the perspective of the Irish nationalists is to pressure imperialism.

Actions such as the Omagh bombing by the “Real IRA”, which killed and maimed both Protestant and Catholic civilians in a shopping area, was a hideous crime from the standpoint of the working class and in no way a blow against imperialism. Marxists oppose the tactic of individual terror because it is antithetical to the necessary task of mobilising the working class against the imperialist and capitalist oppressors. Rather it expresses the aims of its practitioners to be the leaders of “their” people. When Irish nationalist groups strike a blow against the forces of British imperialism, the RUC or Loyalist fascistic killers, we defend the perpetrators of such acts against state retribution. But we have a fundamentally different attitude to indiscriminate terror directed against civilians. From a proletarian standpoint, bombings such as Omagh or the bombings of British shopping centres and pubs, are criminal acts which serve only to deepen hatred between Protestant and Catholic, English and Irish workers.

The attack on the World Trade Center, an atrocity designed to kill as many civilians as possible, has served to weld American workers to the ruling class just as Irish nationalist atrocities against Protestants push Protestant workers towards Loyalist reactionaries. Viewed from the interests of the working class, nationalist terror ranges from criminal—such as Omagh—to merely stupid. Even when the IRA hits a military target these acts are carried out as part of a programme, which writes off the Protestant—and Catholic—working class and also the British proletariat, which has an important Irish component.

In 1993, on the eve of the “peace” negotiations, the mainly Protestant workforce at Short Brothers in Belfast walked off the job in protest against the murder of a Catholic co-worker by Loyalist paramilitaries; very shortly afterwards the IRA placed a bomb in Belfast’s Shankill Road, which killed nine working-class Protestant shoppers. This led to anti-Catholic demonstrations by Protestant workers in Belfast.

A revolutionary party would struggle for an integrated, programmatically-based workers militia to defend both Catholics and Protestants against sectarian attacks. As we said in our *Theses on Ireland* this

must be based on the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army and our Marxist analysis of terrorism:

“Such militias will need a broad and strong programmatic basis if they are not to be derailed or coopted. They cannot develop just out of trade unionism but fundamentally require the existence of a strong and authoritative revolutionary cadre. Each militia unit would need at least one member of each community and the presence and strong influence of trained revolutionary cadre. Consequently, the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia is closely linked to the growth of a Leninist party based on a developed revolutionary program.”

—*Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977

We also explained there that:

“Leninism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed political viewpoints. Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the ‘nationalism of the oppressed’ is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists. In one of his major works on the national question Lenin stressed: ‘Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the “most just,” “purest,” most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism....’ ‘Critical Remarks on the National Question,’ *Collected Works*, Vol. 20”.

Workers revolution both sides of the border and both sides of the Irish Sea!

Loyalist bigot Ian Paisley howls that the Good Friday Agreement is the slippery slope to being ruled by Dublin. Partition meant that Catholics in the North constituted an oppressed minority (although they are over 40 per cent of the population) but an overwhelming majority in the South. In the North, we oppose all discrimination against the Catholic minority. We also recognise that the Protestants are a distinct community, largely defined in opposition to the Irish Catholic nation. As Leninists we uphold the right of self-determination for all nations, which means the right to set up an independent state, but where peoples are geographically interpenetrated “self-determination” for one can only be achieved by denying it to the other. Under capitalism this leads to intercommunal slaughter. We oppose the perspective of a capitalist “united Ireland” proffered by Sinn Féin nationalists, a prospect which is used to heighten genuine fears among Protestants of a reversal of the terms of oppression. Fear of being incorporated into the clericalist state serves to compact Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots, precluding a polarisation along *class* lines and instead laying the basis for a communal blood-bath and forced population transfers.

The fact that the bourgeois state in the South is a Catholic clericalist state is grist to the mill of the Loyalist bigots. The struggle for separation of church and state and for free abortion on demand is key not only for social progress in the South but as a way to un-

dermine communalism in the North. Sinn Féin shares the clerical-nationalist outlook of Fianna Fáil. Sinn Féin no longer flatly opposes abortion rights, but only concedes that it should be legally available in extreme circumstances, specifically: “where a woman’s mental and physical well-being or life is at risk or in grave danger” (*Irish Times on the Web*, 6 December 2001). The struggle for abortion rights strikes at backward Protestant fundamentalists as well. Significantly, although SF’s Bairbre de Brún is health minister in the Stormont Assembly, SF was conspicuously absent from a crucial debate there on legalising abortion in Northern Ireland which was opposed by Ian Paisley’s DUP, David Trimble’s UUP, the Alliance Party and the SDLP.

The DSG has actively intervened in support of struggles of the combative Irish working class, fighting for abortion rights and counterposing our programme to that of the Labourite bureaucrats. We said in a leaflet for the 1999 Irish nurses strike:

“It is this anti-woman Church which runs the hospitals. We call for: complete separation of church and state! We need free, quality healthcare for all. For free abortion and free contraception on demand! For free 24-hour childcare! To achieve these basic needs of women and the working class requires a revolutionary struggle against the entire capitalist system—and its labour lieutenants within the working class.”

—reprinted in *Workers Hammer* no 171, Winter 1999/2000

With elections pending in the South, Sinn Féin is poised to gain support at the expense of Fianna Fáil, and also trying to re-brand itself as a “left” alternative to Labour. Labour is rightly hated by workers for having dished out capitalist attacks as partners in coalition governments, most notoriously in 1994 by refusing to support striking TEAM Aer Lingus workers at Dublin airport. The Irish Labour Party, like its British namesake, is a bourgeois workers party—having a working-class base but a bourgeois programme. They are loyal servants of the Irish capitalist class.

Sinn Féin can be scathing in their press about Labour’s rotten record. One of their articles on Labour concludes: “Sinn Féin is well on its way to overtaking the Labour Party, to cementing its position as the voice of the Irish left, but in doing so the party must be careful that it does not lose sight of one of Connolly’s most fundamental truths. ‘The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour’” (*An Phoblacht*, 30 August 2001). But the idea that Sinn Féin could become the “voice of the Irish left” is absurd—they are a petty-bourgeois capitalist party.

It is disingenuous in the extreme for Sinn Féin to claim the tradition of James Connolly. Connolly initiated and led the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, hoping it would ignite workers struggles against capitalist rule in Europe amid the carnage of World War I. This did come about, with the Russian October Revolution

of 1917, but by that time Connolly had been executed. Nonetheless the Rising was the catalyst for the end of British colonial rule in Ireland. Connolly was a revolutionary socialist and an internationalist who, together with Jim Larkin, led significant class battles of the Irish working class in Dublin, and in Belfast they made huge strides to unite Catholic and Protestant workers. Connolly's success in overcoming sectarian bigotry was achieved because as a socialist he fought against the state, the Orange Order and, to the best of his ability, against Catholic nationalism. Like most socialists of his time outside Russia, he was not acquainted with Leninism, which alone hammered out a Marxist perspective on the national question. Connolly fought trenchantly against the Labourite trade union bureaucracy in Britain and in Ireland; as a true labour lieutenant of British imperialism, Labour's Arthur Henderson led the applause in the House of Commons when the announcement was made that Connolly had been executed by a British firing squad.

The kind of consciousness Connolly had instilled among workers was once again in evidence among the Belfast workers in the 1919 engineering strike, the most significant class battle to take place during the independence struggle. Charles McKay, a socialist of Catholic background, led a strike of mainly Protestant workers that shut all heavy industry and most of the city. It was part of a wave of tumultuous strikes in engineering centres, including Glasgow. The army was deployed in Belfast (and later in Glasgow) but the strike lost because it was betrayed by the Labour bureaucrats in Britain and in Ireland. The defeat of the Belfast strike led to massive purges of Catholics and

trade union militants from the shipyards (including Protestant shop stewards), which paved the way for partition. Lord French, the British overlord in Ireland, released Sinn Féin leaders such as Arthur Griffith from prison in Dublin in recognition of Sinn Féin opposition to working-class struggle. He told the Cabinet:

"I did not however, consider that the time was ripe for an actual move in the direction of an immediate release of prisoners until the strikes in the North occurred and a very dangerous crisis was at hand which might plunge the whole country in disaster."

—quoted in *Revolution in Ireland*, C Kostick (1996)

Today with the growing economic recession throughout Britain and Ireland, the capitalists will seek to increasingly pit one section of the working class against another. This could lead to increased communalism in Northern Ireland or, as happened during the struggles of unemployed workers in Belfast in the 1930s, it could lead to united struggles of Protestant and Catholic workers. When instances of integrated working-class struggle do arise, intervention by a communist vanguard will make a decisive difference to the outcome.

We seek to awaken the working class of England, Scotland and Wales to socialist consciousness and mobilise them around opposition to the monarchy, House of Lords and all other archaic institutions of British bourgeois rule including the "Mother of all Parliaments". We fight for an Irish workers republic, part of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles. Our purpose is to forge revolutionary internationalist parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, in Britain and Ireland. ■

Spartacist Ireland forum

Bloody Sunday, Derry 1972: A Marxist perspective

**Saturday, 27 April 2002
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Defiance by army reservists shakes Zionist bunker

All Israeli troops, settlers out of the Occupied Territories!

4 MARCH—As European and United Nations emissaries embarked on yet another round of “shuttle diplomacy” in response to the latest “peace” proposal in the Near East, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon gave his reply in the language this mass murderer knows best. On 28 February, he ordered his troops to invade Balata, the largest refugee camp on the West Bank, and another camp near the town of Jenin. The Gestapo-style raid began in the dead of night when American-made Apache helicopters knocked out electricity in Balata. At least 30 Palestinian refugees were killed and dozens of homes reduced to rubble.

Since the start of the current *Intifada* 17 months ago, Israeli occupation forces and their ultra-Zionist settler auxiliaries have slaughtered over 800 Palestinians, many of those children. Palestinian villages and camps in the Occupied Territories have been turned into virtual concentration camps, surrounded by military blockades, “strategic highways” and a network of despised army checkpoints where Palestinians are routinely humiliated and terrorised. Malnutrition is rampant as many Palestinians have been denied any access to a livelihood other than pitiful UN handouts. Palestinian Authority leader Yasir Arafat, despite his every attempt to conciliate the Zionist butchers and their American patrons, remains imprisoned in his Ramallah headquarters. Describing the plight of the Palestinian people, Columbia University professor Edward Said wrote in an article in *Counterpunch* (14 January):

“The result today is that the Palestinians are locked up in 220 ghettos controlled by the army; American-supplied Apache helicopters, Merkava tanks, and F-16s mow down people, houses, olive groves and fields on a daily basis; schools and universities as well as businesses and civil institutions are totally disrupted; hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed and tens of thousands injured; Israel’s assassinations of Palestinian leaders continue; unemployment and poverty stand at about 50 per cent—and all this while [US “peace” envoy] General Anthony Zinni drones on about Palestinian ‘violence’ to the wretched Arafat, who can’t even leave his office in Ramallah because he is imprisoned there by Israeli tanks, while his several tattered security forces scamper about trying to survive the destruction of their offices and barracks.”



Reuters

Israeli soldier terrorises Palestinian at West Bank checkpoint. Zionist rulers have turned Occupied Territories into virtual concentration camp.

We demand the immediate removal of all anti-Arab fortifications in the Occupied Territories—the settlements and the apartheid highway network. All Israeli troops, settlers out now! Defend the Palestinian people!

Cracks in the Zionist bunker

The latest escalation in Zionist state terror came in response to a “peace” proposal by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, who has offered a “normalisation” in diplomatic relations between the Arab regimes and Israel in return for withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, which were seized by the Zionists in 1967. Abdullah’s plan intersects a deepening rift between the US and its imperialist rivals in Europe. While the European powers and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan embraced the plan, US Secretary of State Colin Powell initially dismissed it as a “minor development”. With Vice President Cheney preparing to visit Arab leaders in the region to try to strong-arm them into backing American plans for an invasion of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Powell upgraded the plan to an “important step”.

The new diplomatic flurry also intersects a growing polarisation within Israeli society. Until recently, the Zionist rulers’ murderous onslaught against the Palestinians had deepened a chauvinist consensus among the He-

Defend the Palestinian people! No to UN imperialist intervention!

brew-speaking population. The liberal Zionist “peace camp” had all but disappeared. The bourgeois Labor Party, with which Arafat hoped to cut a deal, is firmly ensconced in Sharon’s bloody “national unity” government; indeed Labor defence minister Eliezer is the architect of the assault on the West Bank refugee camps. But fissures in the Zionist fortress are now coming to the fore.

These fissures have been both reflected in and impelled by the defiant statement by more than 50 army reservists in January declaring their refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories: “We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements. We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.” While hundreds of other soldiers have quietly refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza over the past year and a half, this public statement of defiance by loyal, longtime officers and soldiers rocked the Zionist garrison.

Though the high command has suspended 48 reservists and imprisoned three, the number of signatories to the statement has surpassed 300 in the last five weeks. This comes on top of an earlier protest statement by more than 60 high school students declaring that they would refuse to take part in “confiscation of lands, arrests, executions without trial, destruction of houses, closure, torture and prevention of medical treatment”.

Remarkably, the “refuseniks” are supported by 26 per cent of the Israeli public. Arie Arnon, a spokesman for the liberal Zionist Peace Now movement, declared: “There has never been such popular support for a movement of refusing to serve in the army or what the right-wing would call treason” (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 21 February). On 16 February, 14,000 demonstrated in Tel Aviv to demand, “Get out of the territories, get back to negotiations!”

The growing polarisation extends right to the top of Israeli society. Exactly one year ago, a much-publicised conference of leading figures from the defence and political establishments called for mass expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Now the Council for Peace and Security—a group of 1000 reserve generals and senior officers and ex-officials from the Mossad and Shin Beth intelligence agencies—has announced a campaign for unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank, including the dismantling of most settlements.

What is animating such sentiment was captured by Nahum Barnea, a leading Israeli commentator and columnist for *Yediot Ahranot*: “After 17 months of intifada, we

must admit that the Palestinians have not been broken. Despair has only steeled them. Economic and human distress has only pushed them to acts of madness.” While the Zionist rampage in the Occupied Territories continues unabated, the Palestinians have inflicted significant blows against Israeli troops and settlers.

What really shook the Zionist rulers was the destruction in February of a Merkava 3 tank by a handmade land mine. As the *New York Times* (16 February) noted: “The stark evidence that even the Israeli flagship tank—the Merkava 3, one of the toughest tanks in the world—was vulnerable to Palestinian weapons fanned fears today that Israeli forces were facing the same kind of punishing war of attrition in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that they fought so long in Lebanon.” It was in response to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon—under the command of the butcher Sharon—that the military “refusenik” organisation Yesh Gvul (There Is a Limit) was first formed.

The recent cracks in Israeli society reflect a common perception that Sharon has delivered neither the peace nor the security he promised when he was elected last year. Since December, his approval rating has dropped from 70 per cent to 42 per cent. The *Jerusalem Post* (18 February), a right-wing government mouthpiece, wails that Israel’s “resolve” is cracking and a “chorus of defeatism can be heard in the land”. But Sharon’s latest provocations in the Occupied Territories, followed by a Cabinet decision to further intensify the war of terror against the Palestinians, underline that the Israeli government could well yet seek to implement a cataclysmic



Reuters

Tel Aviv, 16 February: 14,000-strong demonstration was first major protest by Israelis against Zionist rampage in Occupied Territories since start of Intifada.

“peace of the graveyard”. When Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told the Knesset (parliament) that “we can’t just expel 3.5 million people from their homes”, a right-wing parliamentarian shot back, “Yes we can, yes we can.” A leading member of the Israeli Cabinet, Tour-

ism Minister Benny Elom, is an open advocate of the forcible “transfer” of the Palestinian population out of the territories, a genocidal “final solution” supported by 35 per cent of the Israeli population, according to a 15 February poll by the Israeli paper *Ma’ariv*.

Following a sniper attack on one of the hated checkpoints yesterday that killed seven soldiers and three settlers, a spokesman for the Aksa Martyrs Brigade said, “This is our new slogan now: Break the siege and remove the checkpoints.” The attacks against army checkpoints and bases and against the heavily armed settler auxiliaries are directed at the military forces of the oppressive Zionist occupation. In contrast, the suicide bombings of Israeli civilians at shopping malls and discos, carried out by Islamic groups like Hamas and the secular nationalist Aksa, are reprehensible and criminal from a proletarian standpoint. Such indiscriminate terror, deeming all Jews to be enemies, mirrors the anti-Arab chauvinism of the far more murderous Zionist rulers and serves to drive Hebrew-speaking workers into the arms of their capitalist exploiters. But while the Palestinian attacks on the Israeli army have helped fuel sentiment for a withdrawal, the Palestinians cannot prevail in a military conflict with the Zionist juggernaut.

At bottom, the military struggle of the Palestinian nationalists is aimed at pressuring the imperialists and the Arab bourgeoisies. Looking to the Arab regimes to aid the Palestinian cause is a suicidal strategy. The result of this strategy was seen in the 1970 “Black September” massacre of thousands of Palestinian fighters by the Jordanian monarchy. That the reactionary Saudi monarchy is now embraced by Arafat and others as a guardian of Palestinian national rights is a travesty. After the 1991 US-led Gulf War, Saudi Arabia joined Kuwait in brutally expelling hundreds of thousands of Palestinian (and Yemeni) labourers, and Palestinians are still excluded from entering Saudi Arabia. Only through the overthrow of not only the Israeli bourgeoisie but of the Jordanian monarchy and the other Arab ruling classes can the right of national self-determination for both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples and the many other peoples of the region be equitably realised. ***For a socialist federation of the Near East!***

The fissures in the Zionist bunker pose opportunities for revolutionaries to drive a wedge between the Hebrew-speaking proletariat and its chauvinist exploiters. Adding to the growing war-weariness of the Hebrew-speaking population is the economic impact of the war against the Palestinians. As the conflict drags on without apparent end, the sharp losses in tourism and construction have begun to mean cuts in jobs and social services for Israeli workers, and there have been a number of strikes recently.

As revolutionary Marxists, we seek to **smash the** Zionist garrison state **from within**. As we wrote recently, “We have no illusions that it will be easy to **shatter the intense anti-Arab chauvinism of the Hebrew-speaking working**

class. But it is the task of revolutionaries to utilize every opportunity, every strike, every action that pits the working class against the Zionist capitalist rulers to emphasize the necessity for joint struggle by the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking workers. In the course of such struggles will be forged the internationalist Trotskyist party which champions the national rights of the Palestinians as part of the fight to place the proletariat in power” (*Workers Vanguard* no 771, 28 December 2001).

“Remember Sabra and Shatila—Don't trust the UN!”

The fight for proletarian state power throughout the Near East is the only road forward for the Palestinian people. The petty-bourgeois nationalists of Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) see no other road than to beg the imperialists to pressure the Zionist butchers for “peace”. This is also the plea of the reformist and centrist left organisations in the West which, rejecting the possibility of proletarian revolution, cynically peddle the lie that their own bourgeoisies can bring national justice to the Palestinians.

Given the overt hostility of the Bush administration towards the Palestinians, and the even more foam-flecked support for Sharon by Democrats like Hillary Clinton, the reformist *Workers World* (10 January) in the US limits itself to enthusing that support “has been growing dramatically” for “nationalist, left and Islamic Palestinian organizations”—which includes the anti-Semitic, anti-woman Islamic reactionaries of Hamas. It goes on to laud the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as “the largest Palestinian Marxist organization”. In fact, the PFLP is simply a petty-bourgeois nationalist group which has long relied on Syrian patronage and was notorious in the early 1970s for airline hijackings and other indiscriminate terror attacks. Like Arafat, PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat looks to the UN, as he said in an interview in *Al-Hadat* last year, to “force Israel to implement United Nations resolutions”.

In Europe, where the capitalist governments do strike a posture of opposing the Israeli onslaught against the Palestinians, the fake left explicitly appeals for imperialist intervention in the Near East. And nowhere is this more the case than in France, whose bourgeoisie is the most vocally critical of the US. A demonstration in Brussels on 27 February and a previous one in Paris on 19 December, both promoted by the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), were centred on the call, “For an international peace and protection force!” This has long been the position of the LCR. In November 2000, it called for “a political fight directed at the European Union and the French government so that they respond positively to the pressing demands of the Palestinian national movement” (*Rouge*, 7 December 2000).

Lutte Ouvrière (LO) strikes a different pose, writing in its journal *Lutte de Classe* (January/February 2002), “The only possible perspective is a real coexistence, a fraternal

cooperation between the peoples. But for this the only solution is to put an end to the imperialist presence in the region and to the oppression not only by Israel but by all the states and possessing classes in the region, who in various degrees are the agents of imperialism." LO's talk of "anti-imperialism" isn't worth the paper it's printed on. Last year, LO signed on to an appeal to France and the European Union (EU) to intervene in the Near East, and LO mobilised its forces for the pro-imperialist demonstration in December. Meanwhile, the anarchists of *Courant Alternatif* (February 2002), notwithstanding their profession of opposition to all state powers, join in the chorus of appeals for an "international protection force in the Occupied Territories". Such appeals parallel calls by Arafat and Arab bourgeois regimes for a United Nations "peacekeeping" force in the Occupied Territories.

Intervening into a protest organised by Palestinian and Maghrebin (North African) organisations in Paris on 2 March, a contingent of the Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, marched under a banner reading, "Defend the Palestinian people! French/UN/US troops hands off the Near East!" Our slogans were directly counterposed to calls from the podium for imperialist economic sanctions against Israel. Many Arab youth, in their desperation over the plight of the Palestinians, see no alternative to imperialist intervention. Nonetheless, particularly striking a chord among many of the protesters was an LTF sign reading, "Remember Sabra and Shatila—Don't trust the UN!"

In 1982, faced with constant Israeli bombing raids over Beirut, Arafat begged for imperialist intervention to protect Palestinian refugees and PLO fighters in Lebanon. US, French, Italian [*and Irish!*] "peacekeeping" troops moved into Lebanon to *disarm* the PLO militants, overseeing the transfer of many to Tunisia. With the PLO fighters gone, in September 1982 Israeli troops surrounded the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in West Beirut, and then Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon let loose the fascistic Lebanese Christian militias for a 36-hour orgy of killing, rape and torture. More than 2000 people—mainly women, children and the elderly—were slaughtered, shot at close range. Now Sharon complains that he was not able to kill Arafat as well at the time.

The hypocrisy of the French bourgeoisie's more sympathetic posture towards the Palestinian Arabs is exposed not only by France's history of brutal colonial subjugation and torture in Algeria but by the racist persecution of the large Arab minority in France today. The government of Socialist Party premier Lionel Jospin seized on the US-declared "war on terror" after 11 September to reinstate the dreaded Vigipirate campaign of police roundups of immigrants and youth of North African origin. Yet LO remains silent when it comes to anti-Maghrebin Vigipirate terror. Notably, with the exception of the LCR and the anarchist CNT, the bulk of the French left boycotted the 2 March demonstration organised by Maghrebin and immigrant groups.

As one of the LTF placards on 2 March declared, "The fight against French imperialism abroad means class struggle at home." Maghrebin workers form a key component of the multiethnic industrial proletariat in France. At an LTF public meeting in Paris the week before the demonstration, our speaker stressed: "A protest strike against Vigipirate and the repression against the Arab population in France would do more for the Palestinian cause than 10,000 people in Brussels."

Near East: cockpit for interimperialist rivalry

The LCR, among other left groups, calls for European delegations of civilian observers in the Occupied Territories. While some idealistic youth might see this as a way to deter Israeli army terror, in fact such "moral witness" tactics are aimed at securing imperialist "peacekeeping" intervention. In a similar vein, groups like the US International Socialist Organization and the British Workers Power push for a consumer boycott of Israeli exports or "divestment" of Israeli stocks. Such impotent appeals to Western consumers are at bottom a ruse for pressuring the imperialists to impose economic sanctions, which is the only way "divestment" can be realised. All such approaches are premised on portraying the Western imperialist powers as enforcers of democracy and justice, behind which lies a direct capitulation by the fake left to the imperialist appetites of their own bourgeoisies.

The attempt of the French and other EU governments to put themselves forward as "peacemakers" and wrest some influence from the US among the Arab states reflects a longstanding conflict of interest between American and European capitalism: the economics of world oil. The world oil market is dominated by American companies like Exxon-Mobil, which effectively control Saudi Arabia, while the core countries of the EU—Germany and France—are not major producers or distributors of oil.

The Europeans have significant trade with and investment in Iran, and the French have been negotiating for several years to invest in the Iraqi oil fields but cannot do so as long as the US maintains the embargo. The furor provoked in Europe by Bush's talk of an "axis of evil" including Iraq and Iran is an expression of these particular conflicts in the Near East. More broadly, the European imperialists are frustrated that Washington's overwhelming military superiority impedes them from pursuing their own ambitions.

In calling for the Jospin government to intervene in the Near East, groups like the LCR line up behind the French bourgeoisie in its growing competition with the US and other imperialist powers. French imperialism is intent on regaining its former sphere of influence in the region, where it had been the colonial overlord of Syria and Lebanon (not to mention much of North Africa). US opposition to the 1956 Anglo-French invasion of Egypt aimed at reconquering the Suez Canal—carried out in alliance with the Zionist state—signaled the decline of French and British influence and the ascendancy of

American imperialism in the Near East. The EU is already the largest trading partner for Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. But, as Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel put it, "The EU does not want to play an economic role only, but also a political one" (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 14 February).

The European and American imperialists, as well as the Arab bourgeois regimes, are utterly opposed to a genuine realisation of Palestinian national rights. The Saudi proposal currently embraced by the EU would offer, at best, the kind of bantustan-style mini-state envisioned by the US-sponsored 1993 Oslo accord between Israel and the PLO. While headlining its editorial on the accord "Towards a 'bantustan'", the LCR enthused over "a new dynamic" and called it the "first stage of a process that could radically change the situation" (*Inprecor*, October 1993). Its sister section in Israel went further, demanding that the Israeli government follow through with "the exact implementation of the agreements" (*The Other Front*, 5 September 1994). The "dynamic" hailed by the LCR has proven to be one of ever more suffocating imprisonment of the Palestinians in an Israeli-dominated ghetto.

As we warned at the time, far from offering even the most deformed expression of self-determination, Arafat's deal placed "the PLO's seal on the national oppression of the long-suffering Palestinian Arab masses" ("Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto", *Workers Vanguard* no 583, 10 September 1993). At best, the "two-state solution" being pushed by the im-

perialists, the "left" Zionists and Arab nationalists would mean an impoverished Palestinian statelet under the stranglehold of the Zionist state and with no viable economy. Moreover, it would permanently consign the millions of Palestinian refugees to the camps in Lebanon, Jordan and elsewhere where they now languish.

The answer to the plight of the Palestinian people lies not in petty-bourgeois nationalism but in an internationalist proletarian perspective. The Palestinians, spread throughout the Near East, suffer national oppression not just in the Occupied Territories but within Israel itself as well as in Jordan and Lebanon, which have large Palestinian concentrations. National and social liberation will only come through workers revolutions against all the capitalist regimes of the region and the creation of a socialist federation of the Near East. The Hebrew-speaking proletariat must be broken from the reactionary chauvinism of the Israeli rulers and won to the defence of the oppressed Palestinians, and the Palestinians and other Arab workers must be broken from petty-bourgeois nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. If the Zionist madmen are not to ultimately unleash their nuclear arsenal and engulf the whole region in a holocaust, the Hebrew-speaking proletariat must join with Arab workers in sweeping away the entire rotten edifice of capitalist class rule in the Near East.

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 776, 8 March

Spartacist Ireland

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question on a working-class basis outside this framework.

James Connolly, the internationalist socialist workers leader, aptly characterised women in Ireland as the "slaves of the slaves". We are including in our newspaper a regular section dealing with the fight against women's oppression under the *Women and Revolution (W&R)* masthead. This is continuing in the tradition of the Bolsheviks who published the paper *Rabotnitsa (The Woman Worker)* and our own journal *W&R* which was published by the Spartacist League/US from 1971-1998. The ICL continues to publish articles under *W&R* mastheads in our international theoretical journal *Spartacist* and in the press of various ICL sections.

The fight for women's liberation is strategic for socialist revolution in Ireland where social policy, education and healthcare basically remain in the grip of the Catholic church hierarchy. Conditions for women in Northern Ireland are little better: **Protestant** fundamentalists routinely join the **Catholic church** in op-

posing the extension of Britain's 1967 abortion law. The revolutionary party must champion struggles against every form of social oppression to become a "tribune of the people": combating not only the oppression of women but also that of gays, Travellers and immigrants.

We fight to forge a Bolshevik party to lead the working class in its historic mission to liberate all the oppressed and establish a planned economy based on socialised property forms. We, along with our comrades in the Spartacist League/Britain, fight for workers revolution on both sides of the border and both sides of the Irish Sea. For a reformed Fourth International that Trotsky would recognise as his own!■

Contact us!

Spartacist Group Ireland
PO Box 2944, Dublin 1, Tel: 01 855 8409
email: syc_dublin@hotmail.com

Spartacist League/Britain
PO Box 1041, London NW5 3EU
Tel: 020 7281 5504

Irish clericalist state's "war on terrorism" targets left, workers and all fighters against capitalist oppression

Drop all the charges against anti-privatisation and anti-war protesters!

We reprint below a leaflet issued by the DSG on 18 October 2001. The charges against the arrested protesters are still pending. A partial victory was scored when due to lack of evidence, the case of SWP member Rory Hearne was dismissed.

On Wednesday, 10 October, the Gardaí—clubs in hand—viciously attacked anti-privatisation protesters and also hunted down photographers that might have any evidence of the brutal assault. The Irish capitalist state's "justice" charged 14 bloodied protesters with "behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace"! Three days later, at an anti-war protest in front of the US embassy, two leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were arrested when the demonstration started to march to the British embassy. As proletarian internationalist revolutionaries despite political differences we defend any part of the workers movement from attacks by the capitalist state. We demand: **Drop all the charges! Hands off leftist protesters! An injury to one is an injury to all!**

The 11 September attack on the World Trade Center, carried out through the hijacking of civilian aircraft, was an indefensible act of criminal terror. But justified anger is being cynically manipulated by even bigger mass murderers with state power. On 7 October US and British imperialism began their terrorist "retaliation" bombing of Afghanistan. They got full support from the Irish capitalist government—which offered Shannon Airport facilities to US imperialism for refuelling—and from the UN where Ireland is currently presiding over the Security Council. At the same time all of the capitalist rulers have initiated a domestic "war on terrorism" which we warned here would be "directed primarily against immigrants, Republicans, leftists and eventually all workers. Their aim is to inti-

midate those who would resist the attacks of the bosses and their state" (15 September DSG statement). Already there have been a few thousand laid off, and there is more to come (eg, half of Aer Lingus' work force is threatened with redundancies). Add to this the proposed anti-abortion referendum, and deportation proceedings against "illegal" immigrants are ever accelerating; this clericalist capitalist state wants to send a clear message to intimidate all fighters against capitalist oppression and repression.

Yet the SWP continually demands that the Irish capitalist government be "neutral". And this is a group that "welcomed" the defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan at the hands of the CIA-backed mujahedin! In the current *Socialist Worker* (10-24 October 2001) they whine that the Irish capitalist government "has never spoken out nor lifted a finger to oppose the terrorist actions of the US themselves". This is the same Irish government which sent troops to the Balkans and East Timor as part of the imperialist "peacekeeping" troops, supports British troops in Northern Ireland, and is putting forth a referendum to copper-fasten the current ban on abortion in this clericalist state. The Irish capitalist state is not neutral and never has been! Pushing the nationalist lie of Irish "neutrality" only serves to politically disarm the working class. It is through nationalism and Labourism that the working class is tied to the capitalist system. **Break with Labour! For a revolutionary party!** We seek to mobilise the power of the working class in struggle against our "own" bourgeoisie and the imperialist war. Workers have the power to shut down Shannon; without airport workers planes can't land. **For class struggle against Irish capitalist rulers! Defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack!■**

Abortion

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abortion on demand as part of the struggle for workers rule. Also key to such a perspective is the fight for free, quality healthcare for all—a burning question in a country where health facilities have been allowed, decade after decade, to fall into a shambles. On 13 March, accident and emergency nurses walked out in a two-hour strike against overcrowding and miserable working conditions, vowing to work to rule for eight days following their strike. This industrial action by

the nurses, and their 1999 nation-wide strike which shook the country, demonstrate immensely more militant struggle against the clericalist state than the SWP & Co begging Labour to "legislate" a "liberal interpretation" of the extremely limited finding in the X case.

Down with clerical reaction!

In addition to its Labourism, the SWP's refusal to fight for free abortion on demand exemplifies how much it and the rest of the fake left are in the grip of the clericalist state and the backward, anti-woman prejudices it promotes. While the SWP wrote in *Socialist Worker* (1-14

March) it is not concerned “with theological arguments about potential human beings” one just has to pick up the SWP’s pamphlet *Abortion: Why Irish women must have the right to choose* to see that it is indeed quite concerned with theological arguments. In fact, the SWP argues as if it has hooked up to the Thomas Aquinas faction within the Catholic church. Thus, its pamphlet states:

“The Catholic Church did not always condemn abortion totally. St. Thomas Aquinas argued that the soul entered the body at 40 days of pregnancy in the case of a male foetus, 80 days in the case of a female. Until this moment of ‘ensoulment’, abortion was not a sin.”

Outrageous from a group claiming to be Marxist! Referring to bigoted clerical films like “Diary of the Unborn Child” the SWP argues: “But fetuses and embryos are incapable of conscious thought, still less of writing a diary. So why does the Church invest them with such attributes? There are two reasons: the soul and politics. The soul is important because according to current Catholic teaching, the soul enters the body at the moment of conception.”

Against this theological, metaphysical garbage genuine Marxists are *atheists* and *materialists*. We are proud to say so and to explain concretely that the Church’s opposition to abortion is based on its defence of the institution of the patriarchal family, the fundamental institution for the oppression of women and children. For the same reason, the Church demonises homosexuality as a threat to the sanctity of the family. Revolutionaries champion full democratic rights for homosexuals and stand opposed to all state intervention into people’s private sexual lives.

The 14 February leaflet printed below, hundreds of which were distributed at demonstrations, on campus and to workers in Dublin, forthrightly puts forward our perspective to mobilise the working class to fight for women’s liberation through socialist revolution.

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The government’s March 6 referendum to overturn the X Case and to further cement the constitutional ban on abortion is a deadly threat to women. Ireland already has among the strictest anti-abortion laws in Europe. If this referendum passes it will put the wind in the sails of the reactionaries and make the fight for women’s rights of any sort more difficult. The Dublin Spartacist Group says: ***Vote no in the government’s anti-woman referendum! For free abortion on demand in Ireland!***

Every year more than 8000 women from Ireland (including the North, where abortion is also virtually illegal) have to make the trip to Britain to obtain an abortion. For working-class women this often means having to borrow from moneylenders at extortionate rates. Because of the difficulties in **arranging** travel, Irish women have a much higher **rate of late-term** abortions than British women, with a **greater danger** of complications. Many other **women are forced to carry**

to term unwanted pregnancies because of the social stigma associated with having an abortion or because they are unable to afford the cost of the trip. ***There is an urgent need for abortion facilities in Ireland!*** When the Dutch “Women on Waves” abortion ship was in Dublin for a week last June over 300 women contacted it seeking its services.

Ireland is a vicious clericalist state under the sway of the Catholic hierarchy and a rotten hellhole for women (as well as for immigrants, Travellers, gays and workers). Divorce, only legalised in 1997, remains prohibitively expensive and requires that the spouses have lived apart for at least four of the preceding five years(!); childcare is often unaffordable for working-class women if places are even available. Women are daily victims of horrific levels of rapes and domestic violence.

In the context of a growing recession and the widespread recognition that the “Celtic Tiger” economic expansion is finished and that working people didn’t get anything out of it, this government is desperate to get re-elected by fulfilling its promise to copperfasten Ireland’s almost total ban on abortion. The government was shaken by their defeat last year in the Nice Treaty referendum. Now they want to win back the support of those who helped to defeat that referendum based on reactionary opposition to abortion (which the Treaty did not include). Furthermore, as Conor Ryan wrote in the London *Independent* (20 November 2001) in an article entitled “The Celtic Tiger is losing its teeth and seeking refuge in religion”: “Another divisive abortion debate will distract attention from concerns about the Irish health and transport services—and economic slowdown”.

Over the nearly 20 years since the first anti-abortion referendum in 1983, the attitudes of many people towards questions of sexuality and the Church have undergone dramatic changes. Particularly as many women have taken jobs outside the home, the Church’s “morality” is broadly resented and often ignored. Despite this change in attitudes the Catholic church maintains a stranglehold on society. The Church is closely tied to the capitalist state and controls key social institutions including most of the hospitals and **93 per cent** of national schools (with another six per cent being run by the Church of Ireland). In its budget for the year 2000, the government proposed revising the tax bands to encourage married women to enter the labour market because of perceived labour shortages. But it was forced to back off when the bishops condemned this “attack on the family”. ***For the separation of church and state! For free quality healthcare for all!***

The petty-bourgeois nationalists of Sinn Féin share basically the same position on abortion as the clericalist state: that it should be permitted only “where a woman’s mental and physical well-being or life is at risk or in grave danger” (*Irish Times*, 6 December 2001). In the North, the Unionist, Loyalist, and Nationalist parties are almost unanimous in their opposition to abortion rights. At a Stormont debate on ex-

tending Britain's 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland the DUP, UUP, Alliance Party and SDLP all opposed legalising abortion. Significantly, although Sinn Féin's Bairbre de Brún is health minister in the sham Executive, Sinn Féin absented themselves from the vote.

Labourite fake left, an obstacle to the fight for women's rights

The main leftist opposition to the government's referendum is the Alliance for a No Vote (ANV), led by Labour Party activists like Ivana Bacik and made up of fake leftists like the Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM). Taking their cue from the Labour Party the ANV consciously tailor their demands to what they think the clericalist state will grant: maintenance of the miserable status quo. Labour staunchly defends the Supreme Court ruling in the X Case on the grounds that "if another case such as the 'X' case emerges a suicidal pregnant rape victim would be entitled to an abortion in this country" (*Irish Times*, 8 February). This we are obscenely told is defending "abortion rights" in Ireland!

At the launch meeting of the ANV, it was only the Spartacist speaker from the floor who raised the call for *free abortion on demand in Ireland* and for the separation of church and state, which the assembled fake leftists sneered at. When it counts they are all silent about a "woman's right to choose", (which is meaningless if you don't have the money) let alone "free abortion".

The ANV and all of the parties involved in it are obstacles to the fight for women's rights now just as they were in 1992 when thousands demonstrated in the streets for abortion rights around the X Case. Coming out of those militant struggles there was an expectation that there would be some advancement of abortion rights. However, nearly ten years on women can still not get abortions in Ireland. At the time of the X Case the reformists' campaign was called "Repeal the 8th Amendment Campaign" which we described as the "Keep Abortion Illegal Campaign" since it did not touch the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act (a holdover from British colonial rule) which firmly prohibits abortion.

The reformist fake left push the "politics of the possible" rather than fighting for what is in the interests of women and the working class. Because these opportunists adapt to the national terrain in which they operate, they remain firmly lodged in the framework of Irish clericalism. Their line in this referendum is almost indistinguishable from that hotbed of radicalism the Irish Medical Council which last year voted that a termination of pregnancy is permissible where there is "a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother" (*Irish Times*, 13 September 2001). A motion to exclude the threat of suicide as a ground for abortion was defeated.

In an article headlined "No referendum! legislation now!" the SWP explicitly argues for maintaining the status quo: abortion rights in Ireland for women who are

suicidal and the "right" of all other women to take the boat to Holyhead!

"There is no need for another referendum. In 1992 the Supreme Court judgement in the X-case accepted that women who are suicidal do have a right to abortion. In a three part referendum that same year, there was an overwhelming vote in favour of the right of women to travel for abortions, in favour of abortion being available and against a move to reverse the Supreme Court judgement. *People voted to make abortion available here for women who are suicidal because of an intolerable pregnancy.*"

—*Socialist Worker*, 17-30 September 1999

The SWP are crawlers for Labour and their "fight" for abortion rights is subordinate to this. Thus they supported Labour's anti-abortion candidate Adi Roche in the last presidential election.

Both the Socialist Party (*Voice*, October 2001) and the WSM (*Workers Solidarity*, May-June 2001) condemn the "hypocrisy" of the Irish government, saying Ireland "exports its problems" rather than dealing with them at home. Only someone in the grip of Catholic "morality" would speak of abortion as one of Ireland's "problems". The Socialist Party goes so far as to call on bourgeois parties "to prove that they really are 'pro-life' by providing a properly funded and staffed health service. This would include full services for reproductive health, including abortion when necessary, and would put an end to the hypocrisy that allows us to pretend that the 8,000 women travelling to England every year don't exist" (*Voice*, October 1999). The Socialist Party disgustingly panders to the anti-woman, anti-abortion bigots by accepting their terminology and limiting themselves to calling for "abortion when necessary".

Winning any meaningful abortion rights (and a decent health system) will require social struggle against the anti-abortion bigots and the capitalist clericalist state and the church behind them. We seek to link this to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist bloodsuckers.

For the separation of church and state!

The government assures the "pro-life" bigots that they are getting what they have campaigned almost a decade for. The reactionaries are split however, with William Binchey's "Pro-Life Campaign" and the Catholic bishops supporting the referendum and the likes of the Youth Defence scum (obscenely styling themselves the "Mother and Child Campaign") opposing it based on their view that under the proposal human embryos "will not have legal protection from conception". Youth Defence is an action group of extreme anti-abortion bigots that harbours a violent, clerical-fascist core. It has links to anti-abortion groups in the US that have murdered doctors who provide abortions and Youth Defence has a history of attacking family planning clinics and leftists here. We fight to make the working class conscious of the necessity to fight for abortion rights, which requires a political battle against the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats who bring

bourgeois consciousness into the working class and who tie workers to church and state.

Over the past period the expanding Irish economy created an increased demand for cheap labour and many more women entered the workforce, albeit often in low paid, temporary or part-time jobs and for less pay than men. The growing recession means women will be hardest hit as can be seen with the closures and redundancies for example at Gateway Computers, Kylemore Bakeries and Aer Lingus. The working class must be made conscious of the necessity to defend all specially oppressed groups against attacks by the ruling class. This includes fighting against the underlying bourgeois ideology that women for instance should be confined to domestic drudgery, raising children and "women's work". It is this ideology, of which bans on abortion are a crucial part, which the capitalists use to justify paying women less and making them redundant before men, thereby dividing and weakening the working class as a whole.

The fundamental institution for the oppression of women is the patriarchal family which arose historically alongside the development of private property and the division of society into classes. As a means of the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a tiny minority, the patriarchal family enforced monogamy for women so that inheritance of property would be easier to determine. The family is also a great conservatising force. The ruling class uses it to regiment the population and make it more willing to accept capitalist exploitation and imperialist war. As Friedrich Engels explained in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, with the development of the family domestic work was also transformed from a social to a private function:

"The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a *private service*. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. Only modern large-scale industry again threw open to her—and only to the proletarian woman at that—the avenue to social production; but in such a way that, when she fulfils her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and cannot earn anything; and when she wishes to take part in public industry and earn her living independently, she is not in a position to fulfil her family duties. What applies to the woman in the factory applies to her in all the professions, right up to medicine and law. The modern individual family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules."

Organised religion is another prop of this decaying capitalist system, tying the oppressed to their present plight with the promise of a better life after death. Hand in hand with the capitalists, the churches of many persuasions (not just Catholicism but Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, etc) serve to enforce bourgeois morality—to maintain the subjugation of women.

Many young people who oppose the oppression of women and who see themselves as radicals or social-

ists consider abortion to be murder. In a poll last summer, 62 per cent of respondents favoured the availability of abortion in Ireland in certain circumstances. However, only 19 per cent said abortion should be available "when a woman believed that, for her, it was the right choice" (*Irish Times*, 1 June 2001). The absence of the sense that abortion is a democratic right and a purely private matter between a woman and her doctor is an example of the pervasive influence of the Catholic church in Irish society, which the fake "left" deny.

Abortion is a simple and safe medical procedure, not a moral issue. All of the talk about the "rights of the unborn" is double-talk to *deny* the rights of the woman and with little concern for the child *after birth*. Thus, in the early 1950s when Noël Browne as Minister of Health proposed the Mother and Child Scheme to provide free healthcare for mothers and children, Archbishop McQuaid led the crusade to run Browne out of government! The health of women and children meant nothing compared to the so-called "threat" to the sanctity of the family.

This clericalist state's supposed concern for the "unborn" was also shown to be rubbish in the High Court in January. The court ruled against a pregnant Nigerian woman who appealed an order for her deportation, arguing that because infant mortality is so much higher in Nigeria, the baby would have a better chance of living if she gave birth in Ireland. The High Court ruled that, in the absence of any adverse medical condition of the mother's, the right to life of the "unborn" was not an issue in the case. The racist state was set on preventing her child from being born here as an Irish citizen and didn't care that the baby may not survive birth in Nigeria! **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!**

For a revolutionary workers party to fight for a socialist revolution!

The liberation of women requires the overthrow of the capitalist system of private property in the means of production through workers revolution. The establishment of a planned economy based on collectivised property will provide the basis for allowing women to take an equal part in production. As Engels explained:

"With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not."

A revolutionary vanguard party is necessary to instil the working class with the political consciousness to understand its historic tasks, like Lenin's Bolshevik Party which led the working class to overthrow capitalism in Russia in 1917. We fight to build such a revolutionary party, tribune of the people, which is able to react to every manifestation of oppression and lead the proletariat to new October Revolutions. **For an Irish workers republic as part of a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!■**

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Women and Revolution



Government's anti-abortion referendum defeated For free abortion on demand!

On 6 March the government's reactionary referendum on abortion was defeated by a slim majority of 10,556. The result was a victory against an attempt to overturn the X Case, which theoretically allowed suicidal women to get abortions. At the same time, the rotten status quo of an almost total ban on abortion rights remains in Ireland.

Younger women from the largest cities were instrumental in the referendum's defeat at the polls. The *Sunday Business Post* (10 March) wrote: "Take the tens of thousands of women who have had abortions in Britain in the past ten years and think of how they felt about that [proposed 12 year] prison sentence.... Women, particularly younger women, voted against these proposals in very large numbers." The defeat of the referendum was due in smaller part, as well, to opposition from anti-abortion bigot Dana and the fascistic Youth Defence outfit who considered the referendum to be insufficiently draconian.

The Labour Party, which led the Alliance for a No Vote (ANV), made a sharp turn to the right following Bertie Ahern's denunciation of Labour in the Dáil. While the Labour Party's delegate conference had voted for the "right to choice", it took only Ahern's bait for Labour's national executive to dump its "choice" position.

This was too much even for the cravenly Labour-loyal Socialist Workers Party (SWP). For months the SWP uttered nary a word about the "right to choice" at ANV public meetings, as the leaflet printed below explains. After the Labour executive jettisoned the pro-



Spartacist Ireland
Spartacist contingent at 16 February Alliance for a No Vote demonstration against the government's anti-woman referendum.

choice position, the SWP announced it would "fight for the right to choose" (*Socialist Worker*, 1-14 March). This in turn led to the Labour Party despicably banning the SWP from the speakers platform at the national "Vote No" rally on 16 February. Meanwhile, the SWP continued to bury its supposed position of "free, legalised abortion" in order not to further alienate the wretched Labour tops. In fact, it raised not one placard calling for free abortion at the abortion rights demonstration two weeks before the referendum—in other words, when it counted.

Now *Socialist Worker* (15-28 March), while denouncing the "cowardice" of Labour, writes:

"We need to keep the pressure on parties such as Labour and Fine Gael to make sure that they make good on their commitment to bring in legislation—legislation that gives a liberal interpretation of the X case judgement and introduces real access to abortion rights for the women who need it."

It would be difficult to find a more pristine example of parliamentary cretinism! What's necessary is not crawling hat-in-hand to Labour (and the bourgeois Fine Gael no less!) but to fight to raise the consciousness of the proletariat to break from the clerical nationalism and religious backwardness that is brought into the class by the Labourite trade union misleaders. It is only through such a transformation of consciousness that the social power of the working class can be mobilised and that the immense anger of young and working women can be tapped to fight for free

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For women's liberation through socialist revolution!