



No to terrorism!

No to war!

No to racism!

Withdraw the troops from Iraq!

Build a socialist alternative to capitalism and imperialism!

**Socialist Party statement on the London bombings.
18 July 2005**

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THE MAIN reaction of working people to the horror of the London bombings has been a mood of unity against terrorism. The strong sentiment shown by people to stand together must be the starting point for socialists.

Nonetheless the revelation that perpetrators of the London bombing were British, and probably suicide bombers, has deepened the sense of shock at the terrible events of 7/7. The fact that some of them may have been 'clean-skins' that had never appeared on the radar screen of the police and security services, combined the widespread speculation that they did not act alone, and that therefore other attacks are likely, has also increased the atmosphere of nervousness.

The Socialist Party utterly condemns these bombings, which resulted in the horrific killing of ordinary people from every ethnic group. Just over two years ago two million people marched through the streets of London to try and stop the invasion of Iraq. They had the support of the majority of the population.

Without doubt some of the victims of the bombings were amongst those marchers. This horrific act was not aimed at the policy makers, the powerful or the warmongers but at working-class Londoners on their way to work.

The newspapers have been full of glimpses of the bombers' lives. Millions of people have pored over these scraps trying to fathom what their motives were. To most people, including most Muslims, it seems unimaginable that these apparently ordinary young men should have taken such an extreme step.

However, we completely oppose the simplistic argument of Tony Blair and others that the bombers can be explained just by describing them as in the grip of an 'evil ideology'. Of course, anyone who could carry out such acts will be considered 'evil'. However, this is the first time suicide bombings have taken place in Europe, and as the police and government accept, it is possible it could happen again.

It is inadequate to use 'evil' as an explanation for this change. If we do not analyse the different factors that have led a tiny minority of young men to be prepared to carry out this horrific act we will inevitably face future indiscriminate bombings.

Tariq Modood, professor of sociology at Bristol University, attempted to back up Blair's argument in the Financial Times (16 July 2005) by saying that the bombers came from an integrated area and "from reasonably comfortable homes". He added: "You cannot explain this in terms of deprivation or other socio-economic factors. They were lower-middle class with fairly good futures in front of them. Like the 9/11 hijackers this is rooted in ideology."

Social deprivation

MUSLIMS AS a whole are one of the poorest sections of British society. One in seven of economically active Muslims are unemployed, compared with one in 20 for the wider population. Unemployment and social deprivation is particularly high amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims.

These economic factors cannot be separated from anger at racism, Blair's foreign policy and the oppression of Muslim's worldwide. When a group in society is oppressed as a whole this affects the outlook of its members who are middle class as well as those from a poorer background.

However, in fact three of the four bombers came from the

poorer sections of the working class. One was a low-paid classroom assistant and three were unemployed or only had part time work. Of the two that lived in Beeston, Leeds, one was unemployed and his father worked at a local factory. The other, while living in the same working-class area, was from a more middle class background; his father owned several shops. He alone of the four bombers could be reasonably described as middle class.

Nor is it accurate to say that the majority of the bombers came from an 'integrated' area. While the Beeston area of Leeds is undoubtedly more integrated than some other towns and areas in the North West, such as Oldham, TV reporters have interviewed numerous young men, black, white and Asian, who have explained graphically how for them the area was not integrated.

Their experience was of some streets being for blacks and whites and others for Asians, with abuse and the threat of violence if the borders were crossed.

These 'socio-economic' factors must have played their part. Crucially, however, these young men grew up in the post 9/11 era. The occupation of Iraq has had a profound effect on the consciousness of Muslims worldwide.

How can it not when we hear on the news of the 100,000 civilians killed in Iraq, and the 130 suicide bombings since the beginning of May, including twelve in the last week alone, which have killed three British soldiers and many Iraqis, including one bomb which resulted in the horrendous killing of almost a hundred people.

US imperialism, backed by British imperialism, used 9/11 as a justification to invade Afghanistan and especially Iraq. In reality, Bush's regime did so partly to increase its prestige in the wake of 9/11 by flexing its military might, but also to follow the dream of cheap oil for US imperialism. For millions of Muslims worldwide, however, Iraq, along with the plight of Palestinians and the devastation being wreaked in Chechnya, is understandably perceived as a war on their religion.

Imperialist oppression

BLAIR HAS brushed this argument aside, pointing out that 9/11 took place before Iraq or Afghanistan was invaded. This is a facile argument. Imperialist oppression of the Arab peoples did not begin with the invasion of Iraq or even the brutal subjugation of the Palestinian people over decades, but goes back at least as far as the imperialist carve up of the Middle East and its natural resources almost a century ago.

The oppression of the Palestinians over the last decades has undoubtedly angered the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, as did the first Iraq war and the sanctions against Iraq which resulted in the death of half a million children, described as 'a price worth paying' by Madeline Albright, then US Secretary of State.

That anger has been enormously fuelled by events since 9/11. And unlike the oppression of the Palestinians, the British government has been directly and unequivocally involved in the occupation of Iraq. This has inevitably had a particular effect on British Muslims.

British Muslims have also suffered an increase in prejudice, with racism increasingly being expressed in 'anti-Islam' terms. Politicians have tacitly encouraged this. David Blunkett, when he was home secretary, for example made repeated statements about how ethnic minorities had to make a greater effort to 'integrate' into British society,

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which were widely understood as being aimed at Muslims.

At the same time the number of Asian young men stopped and searched by the police has rocketed. In London, for example, from 2001 to 2002 there was a 41% increase in 'stop and search' against Asians by the Metropolitan police. The horror of the overwhelming majority of Muslims at 7/7 is especially sharp because, in addition to the fear of further attacks we all feel, they understand that the result will be an increase in racism and police harassment against them.

Al-Qa'ida, who certainly inspired, and probably directed, these attacks, is repellent to the most Muslims. This is not an organisation of national liberation which struggles for the interests of the oppressed peoples in Muslim countries. It is a deeply reactionary organisation that aims to turn the clock back to the seventh century.

It is backed by rich Saudi Arabians, and its roots lie in US imperialism's funding of right wing Islamic organisations as a bulwark against Stalinism, particularly during the Afghan war. It is no coincidence that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, two of the main countries in which Al Qa'ida has a base, were used by US imperialism for the building of a 50,000 strong mercenary army to force the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan.

Madrasas (the Islamic schools now being implicated by the press in the London bombings) were set up across Pakistan at this time as part of imperialism's drive to provide Islamic 'cannon fodder' for their proxy war in Afghanistan. Having defeated the collapsing Soviet Union, the jihadis turned their attention to driving out Western imperialism. It is as a result of these processes that Al Qa'ida developed.

Oppose terrorism

SOCIALISTS HAVE always opposed terrorism, because it attempts to substitute the acts of the individual for a mass movement. However, historically individual terrorism was at least aimed at representatives of the ruling class. The 'mass terrorism' of Al-Qa'ida, aimed at indiscriminate killing, has far more reactionary consequences.

Nonetheless, Al-Qa'ida has been able to tap into the alienation and anger of a small minority of Muslims. The Mirror carried an interview (July 14) with a young man who had been approached at a London mosque and asked to become a suicide bomber.

Chosen because he was both devout and vulnerable after a recent family bereavement, he was shown videos of Chechen fighters being executed by Russian soldiers. He described how "the men were shot in the head, with blood going everywhere". This violent reality, never shown on British TV screens, is undoubtedly circulating amongst young Muslims in Britain.

Blair is determined to try and remove any reference to Iraq, Chechnya or world events from the debate on the bombings. The majority of working-class people will not be duped by Blair's stance.

The latest report by the Economic and Social Research Council, written before 7/7, drives nails into the coffin of Blair's argument. It describes the British government as the US's "pillion" passenger during the invasion of Iraq. The pillion passenger is, of course, just as likely to be killed in a crash as the driver. The report goes on to say how the invasion has damaged the counter-terrorism campaign and

boosted support, training and fund-raising for al-Qa'ida.

Initially George Galloway MP was alone in parliament in courageously being prepared to tell the truth and make a link between the bombings and Iraq. Where were the Labour MPs who opposed the war when they were put to the test? It is only now that some of them, perhaps recognising that public opinion is not against them, have begun to put their heads over the parapet.

Some in the anti-war movement have argued that, in the current climate, we should limit ourselves to campaigning for unity against racism. However, this is mistaken. In attempting to evade any responsibility for the bombings the government is instead heaping blame onto the Muslim communities. Unchallenged this will lead to a further increase in racism.

While at the current time the predominant mood is for unity across ethnic groups, strengthened by the enormously varied background of those that were killed, there has already been an increase in racist attacks against mosques and individual Muslims, particularly but not exclusively outside of London.

Even within London, young Asian men have reported how, for the first time ever, they feel that people are looking at them oddly. Despite their pretty words about anti-racism, the government's actions are fuelling these tensions.

Muslim community leaders are coming under enormous pressure to "take on and defeat" this "evil ideology". Blair has emphasised how the problem can only be defeated from within the Muslim community. Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, has also talked about how the bombs were, "an opportunity for the Muslim community to connect more closely with the host community and work through ways they can combat extremism in their communities".

There is no doubt that the vast majority of Muslims want to prevent future bombings. However, it is not within their power to change the circumstances - economic discrimination, poverty, the occupation of Iraq, Palestine - that have pushed a small minority of Muslims down the profoundly mistaken road of terror attacks on ordinary working people.

Demonstrate

THE SOCIALIST Party is totally opposed to the scapegoating of Muslims as a result of the tragic events on 7/7. From whatever section of society mistaken and damaging methods of struggle arise, the only way to combat them is for all working people to unite in opposition, and to support a programme that counters the divisive and anti-working class policies of the main capitalist political parties.

It is to be welcomed that the TGWU union conference passed a resolution (seconded by Socialist Party member Teresa Mackay) that called for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

The Socialist Party is calling for the trade union movement go further and to call, together with the Stop the War Coalition, an emergency demonstration under the banner 'No to terror, no to war, no to racism'. Such a demonstration, mobilising workers of every religion and of none, would have an important effect in uniting working-class people, and showing to Muslim youth that it is the workers' movement that offers a way forward for them.

This is vital, because the actions of the government in introducing further repressive legislation in the wake of the

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bombings is likely to further alienate Muslim youth. As the campaign against the IRA proved in the 1970s, no amount of draconian laws can prevent terrorist attacks. Yet the government is bringing forward the introduction of ID cards, which existed in Madrid, but has been forced to admit that they would not have prevented 7/7.

Blair is also highlighting the government's intention to crackdown on those who 'foment support for terrorism'. But what does this mean? Anyone who is actively engaged in organising or assisting terrorist acts is already acting illegally.

Could this legislation be used against Jenny Tonge, the Liberal Democrat MP, who was removed from the front bench for saying she could understand what drove Palestinians to become suicide bombers, or more probably, against the tens of thousands of Muslims who express the same sentiment?

Many Muslims will fear that this could happen. The anti-terrorist legislation introduced in the wake of 9/11 has been used against peaceful anti-capitalist protesters outside an arms fair. It has also resulted in the imprisonment of Muslims without any real evidence against them. The latest legislation will not prevent future terrorist attacks, but will further alienate Muslims.

Since the bombings there also has been a further dra-

matic rise in the number of Asian men in London being stopped and searched by the police. In Leeds and Huddersfield, whole communities have been forced to move out of their homes for days or even weeks while searches of properties in their area take place.

These bombings show the need to struggle to build a socialist alternative of all working people to Blair and Bush and the system they defend. Capitalism is a system where the 400 billionaires own more than the poorest 50% of the planet.

Capitalism has created incredible wealth, science and technique, yet it cannot provide clean water for 1.2 billion people or food for the 841 million who are seriously malnourished. It is a system that rides roughshod over the national and religious rights of whole peoples, ultimately in order to defend the profits of the giant multinationals that dominate the world economy.

Only by ending capitalism will it be possible to begin to build a society, based on need not profit, which is capable of meeting the national aspirations of all humanity.

It is urgent to fight to build a mass socialist alternative of all working people that will oppose terrorism, imperialist wars and fight Blair, Bush and their capitalist system and struggle for a socialist world.

- **No to terrorism and imperialist wars**
- **Withdrawal of British US and all imperialist troops from Iraq and the Middle East**
- **For the unity in struggle of the Iraqi peoples and a workers' and peasants socialist government**
- **No to racism for unity of working people**
- **Defend democratic rights and civil liberties**
- **Down with the G8 and cancel the debt**
- **Build a socialist alternative to capitalism and imperialism**

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