



IMPERIALIST war in all its barbarity has been unleashed upon the Iraqi people with the full support of the United Nations. Iraqi cities have been steadily reduced to rubble with a terrible toll on civilians, while capitalist politicians and their Labour and 'Socialist' lackeys have thrilled to the wonders of 'precision' bombing and 'surgical' strikes.

Do not believe the lies of the capitalist media! The self-styled freest press and television in the world have put themselves at the disposal of the Ministry of Defence without so much as a murmur. Imperialism is letting loose the full range of horrors against Iraqis - famine, disease and the destruction of the basic necessities of life - and all this in the name of democracy and international law.

And yet, despite everything, Iraq fights. Iraqi workers remain unconvinced by the lesson in democracy given to them by the aerial bombardment, and are prepared to dig in for a protracted war. Iraq's stand against the US-British-led coalition has inspired the sympathy and support of millions among the Arab, Asian and Turkish peoples. If the justification for intervention against Iraq was to preserve regional 'stability', then the imperialist onslaught has already failed.

Permanent Instability

In Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Jordan, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh, demonstrations and strikes have shaken pro-imperialist or 'neutral' governments. This identification with the Iraqi struggle extends beyond deeply felt ties of religion and culture, and reflects a common experience of, and desire to end, imperialist exploitation. The experience of the rule of the Ayatollahs in Iran however, has demonstrated conclusively that Islamic fundamentalism, for all its rhetoric, cannot wage any consistent struggle against imperialism. The Iranian leadership, which for over a decade has poured out denunciations of 'Great Satan' now sits on the sidelines, waiting to become the power broker in the region, should the 'Allies' succeed in smashing Iraq.

When the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe collapsed in 1989-90, and the Soviet bureaucracy accepted capitalist restoration, it was triumphantly proclaimed that a 'new world order' of peaceful democratic development was under way. Some saw the end of the 'Cold War', others the 'end of history' no less.

Not twelve months later, these lofty dreams of a peaceful imperialism lie in tatters. Recession stalks the world economy, eastern Europe and the Soviet Union continue to undergo violent convulsions, and the largest armed force

NO PEACE WITH IMPERIALISM

since the Second World War has been mobilised, with the backing of the Kremlin and the blessing of the United Nations, to subdue a single nation.

A war of plunder

The 'Allied' contingents were assembled on the pretext of defending Saudi Arabia and restoring sovereignty to the fictitious 'nation' of Kuwait. The war aims of the imperialists have steadily expanded to include the destruction of Iraq's armed forces, the deposing of the Ba'athist government, the trial of Saddam Hussein for war crimes and the occupation of Iraq.

The assassination of Abu Iyad and two other PLO leaders on January 14, the continued suppression of the Palestinian intifada in the Occupied Territories and the continuous state of war in South Lebanon give the lie to any notion that the defeat of Iraq would be followed by a general settlement of the Palestinian question.

For the Kurdish people, to whom the 'Allies' do not even pretend to make pledges, the prospect of an Iraqi defeat holds similarly bleak prospects. Not only has the war already meant increased military repression of Kurds in the east of Turkey, but it had led to the bombing of Kurdish areas in the north of Iraq. Turkey meanwhile, looks forward hungrily to extending its borders southwards to annex Iraqi Kurdistan and its oilfields.

The Arab component of the anti-Iraq coalition has been recruited with the fattest chequebook in history. Egypt has had a \$7 billion military debt to the United States cancelled. Syria has been allowed to continue the Balkanisation of the Lebanon, and received trade and other inducements. Secret diplomatic agreements have undoubtedly been made with Morocco, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The funding of the war resembles the activities of a shady casino. Japan (\$9 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$13.5 billion) and the exiled government of Kuwait (\$13.5 billion) are staking huge amounts on the destruction of Iraq. Japan is prepared to take a cut in its economic growth to ensure the flow of cheap oil - a cornerstone of its expansionist drive into Asia, North America and Europe.

Germany, the world's third capitalist power, is dominated by the tasks of reconstructing the east German economy and pursuing its ambitions in Eastern Europe, and is consequently unwilling to underwrite the United States and Britain in policing their traditional sphere of influence.

Such is the 'war for democracy' that this gang of thieves is engaged in.

Peace Utopias

Pacifism cannot mount any consistent or effective opposition to imperialist war. It has no programme to counterpose to imperialist exploitation. Instead, it appeals to the capitalist governments to declare a ceasefire. It does not locate the source of wars in the imperialist system itself. It throws up its arms in horror at war, but has no solution for the oppressed masses who are on the receiving end. It tries to separate the warring sides, rather than take sides against the oppressor. It tries to restore the pre-war status quo. It cannot develop a class-based opposition to its 'own' imperialism.

Revolutionary Marxists, however, will not fail to distinguish between the sincere desire for peace among many sections of workers, and the professional peace-mongers who head the anti-war movement.

The central figure of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf (CSWG), Tony Benn, has used his influence to build every possible illusion in the United Nations, just as he did during the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982. Yesterday he called for support for the UN to avoid war. While the UN sponsors war against Iraq today, he calls for it to sponsor a peace conference tomorrow to settle all the disputed questions of the Middle-East. Benn presents the UN as a neutral arbitrator, when in reality it is an instrument of imperialist policy.

Opponents of the war must carefully examine the credentials of the other main participants in CSWG:

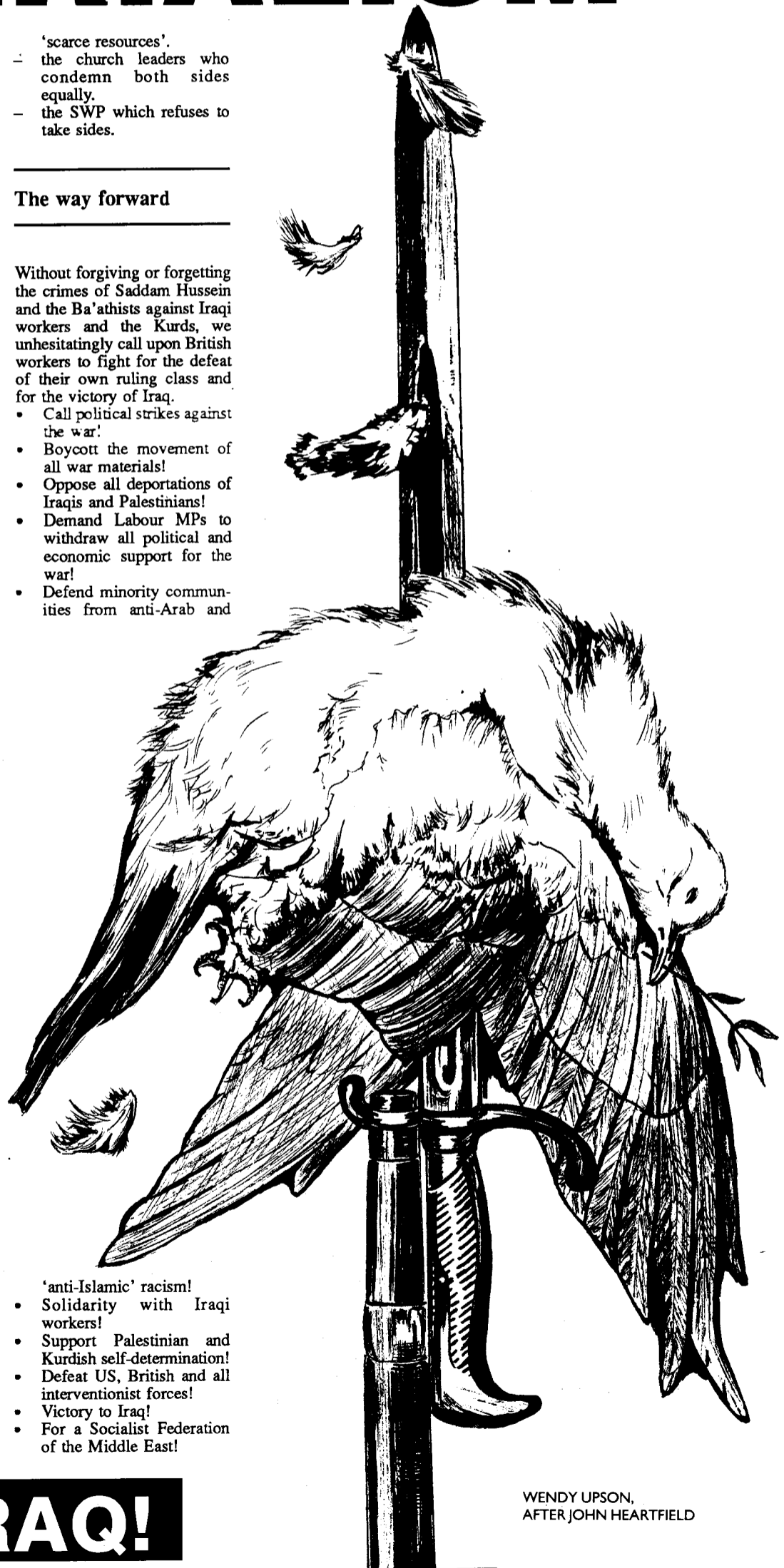
- the leaders of CND who silence the voice of anti-imperialism.
- the left Labour MPs who supported UN sanctions.
- the Green Party which views the war as a North/South conflict over

- 'scarce resources'.
- the church leaders who condemn both sides equally.
- the SWP which refuses to take sides.

The way forward

Without forgiving or forgetting the crimes of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athists against Iraqi workers and the Kurds, we unhesitatingly call upon British workers to fight for the defeat of their own ruling class and for the victory of Iraq.

- Call political strikes against the war!
- Boycott the movement of all war materials!
- Oppose all deportations of Iraqis and Palestinians!
- Demand Labour MPs to withdraw all political and economic support for the war!
- Defend minority communities from anti-Arab and



- 'anti-Islamic' racism!
- Solidarity with Iraqi workers!
- Support Palestinian and Kurdish self-determination!
- Defeat US, British and all interventionist forces!
- Victory to Iraq!
- For a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

VICTORY TO IRAQ!

WENDY UPSON,
AFTER JOHN HEARTFIELD

SWP: Don't upset Benn and the pacifists!

FOR MARXISTS the outbreak of war against a semi-colonial country such as Iraq imposes the elementary obligation of supporting the military victory of the oppressed country against imperialism.

The struggle against such a war must be a struggle against imperialism, against our own ruling class, if it is not to descend into the grandiose and empty phrase-mongering of those such as Tony Benn and the leaders of CND.

Like Kautsky, they have no difficulty in supporting their own ruling class while hypocritically calling for peace. Instead of inspiring the working class to overthrow imperialism, they call on the imperialists to police themselves through the forum of the United Nations. These political quacks disarm the working class.

It is to the bankrupt forces of left reformism that the Socialist Workers Party consistently turns when the chips are down. The SWP showed this on the subject of Ireland. Nominally their policy is for the immediate withdrawal of troops, but year in, year out, SWP members in the unions refuse to fight for this or even to campaign for support for Troops Out demonstrations. It only took a few left Labour MPs to sponsor the Time To Go campaign, which simply calls on the British state to consider withdrawing from Ireland in its own interests, for the SWP to rush to volunteer its members as footsoldiers.

The same political instincts have operated in the run-up to war. *Socialist Worker's* front pages have been littered with exhortations to 'Stop Bush now', 'Don't let them start a war', 'Stop this barbaric war', etc - everything but a clear call for the defeat of imperialism

By Colin Harrison

and an Iraqi military victory. In an attempt not to frighten away the supporters of Benn and the CND, with whom they now sit in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf alongside Plaid Cymru and the Greens, the SWP refused to make a principled issue within CSWG of opposing UN sanctions against Iraq and for the immediate withdrawal of troops. Worse still, they have never pointed out the unpleasant truth that their partners in this popular front are pro-imperialists.

In case anyone thinks we are being unfair to the SWP, they have been quite explicit about the reasons for their political cowardice. In *Socialist Worker* of August 25, John Molyneux's 'Teach Yourself Marxism' column took a clear stand 'for the defeat of America and the victory of Iraq'. However, three weeks later Molyneux was junking the slogan of 'Victory to Iraq' in favour of 'US-UK out of the Gulf'. His justifications for this accommodation to imperialism were characteristic of the SWP. He claimed that the working class would be unable to understand the distinction between military and political support to Saddam Hussein. Having burdened the working class with the backwardness of his own party, Molyneux then went on to draw out the main reasons:

'It would be a sectarian error erecting a barrier between ourselves and many of those who are genuinely opposed to the war drive ... but have not yet thought matters through to the end.' Molyneux is referring to the reformist and pacifist followers of Benn and CND, who can

clearly expect no help in 'thinking things through to the end' from the SWP.

Not only have the SWP turned their paper into a house magazine for CND, they have also tried to restrict local anti-war committees to a bourgeois-pacifist position. Just as they have excluded anti-imperialism from the pages of *Socialist Worker*, so they have striven might and main to exclude it from the local anti-war groups.

In Kent, following the outbreak of war, the WIL attempted to commit the local anti-war group to a position of 'Hands off Iraq'. This was not acceptable to either *Militant* or the SWP, who even voted against the half-hearted slogan put forward by *Militant*: 'No to US interference in the Gulf'.

Pacifism, with its middle class illusions in 'peaceful imperialism' and the power of protest, represents the most pernicious illusion. War is rooted in the development of class society and, in particular, in the development of imperialism this century. It is necessary to fight alongside workers who raise the demand for peace, and even to form limited agreements for joint action with their pacifist or reformist leaders. But we must explain that peace can only come from a proletarian, internationalist, revolutionary struggle against imperialism, i.e., capitalism. The SWP's repetition of pacifist formulae, their calls for protest action alone, their failure to call for revolutionary action, brands them, in Lenin's words, as 'hypocritical phrase-mongers'.

The SWP have claimed in the past that if Trotsky were alive today he would be a member of the SWP. The Old Bolshevik must be turning in his grave!



The SWP contingent on a demonstration against the build-up to war in the Gulf last year

'Militant' running scared on the Gulf

OVER 53 years ago, Leon Trotsky made his position clear on the question of wars waged by imperialist powers against colonial and semi-colonial countries: he was for the victory of the oppressed nation over the oppressor. He also poured scorn on such slogans as 'No to War'.

'That is why we can only feel pity or hatred for those who in the face of the Sino-Japanese war declare that they are opposed to all wars, to wars altogether. The war is already a fact. The working class movement cannot remain neutral in a struggle between those who wish to enslave and those who are enslaved. The working class movement in China, Japan, and in the entire world must oppose with all its strength the Japanese imperialist bandits and support the people of China and their army' ('Pacifism and China', September 25, 1937).

On January 18, the paper of the right-wing centrist group *Militant Tendency*, which claims to be Trotskyist, had as its main headline the 'in' slogan 'Stop the War'. This slogan - or something like it - is held by many other centrist groups, from the SWP to the ultra-sectarian egotistical piques of the ICP (whose particular variant is 'End the War'). It has nothing to do with Trotskyism and would be more at home in CND or at Greenham Common.

Since the imperialist intervention in the Gulf, there has been no hint in the pages of *Militant* as to whether it supports an Iraqi victory or not. We can safely assume that it does not. It tries to evade the question by stating that the Arab people should decide their own fate, and by calling for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East - but how will this be done without the defeat of imperialism?

Militant attempts to justify its position by saying that Saddam Hussein is a dictator and a butcher of workers. He is, but that will not defeat Trotsky's argument. The only way to

Trotsky refers to semi-colonial China led by Chiang Kai-Shek, the brutal nationalist leader who executed thousands of communists, trade unionists and peasants. This did not deter Trotsky from supporting China against Japan, while at the same time vigorously denouncing Chiang Kai-Shek. A victory for China would weaken imperialism and raise the confidence of the Chinese toilers, who would then be in a better position to deal with their own dictator. It would also give the Japanese workers a better chance to overthrow their own weakened capitalists. On the other hand, the defeat of China would undoubtedly strengthen imperialism. Translate this to today's situation and it's easy to see where your support should lie.

In 1982, *Militant* characterised the war between Britain and semi-colonial Argentina as an 'inter-imperialist war' which workers should have nothing to do with. It argued that a 'socialist task force' should be sent both to 'liberate' the Malvinas from the Argentinians and the Argentinian workers from the military Junta, and called for a trade union boycott of Argentina. By dressing up its national chauvinism in 'socialist' garb, *Militant* could argue to the uninformed that its Marxist credentials were intact, but the intention was to appease the Labour leaders, in order that it could remain as a loyal opposition in the reformist party.

Nine years later, the *Militant Tendency* are playing the same game in relation to the US-led imperialist attack on Iraq. Too busy with the bureaucratic suppression of the anti-poll tax movement, which they see as their baby, they have boycotted anti-imperialist, and even 'anti-war', campaigns and demonstrations.

With the approach of the UN deadline for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, they at last woke up to the fact that some kind of campaign was called for. *Militant* on January 18 declared that 'Militant sup-

porters must involve themselves as fully as possible in the Stop the War protests ... Where no committees exist they should set them up. Maybe they should go back to sleep and save workers looking for a real anti-imperialist programme from wasting their time.

On January 15 at a CND demonstration in Trafalgar Square, *Militant* supporters were busy hawking 'peace whistles'. When challenged as to whether Marxists advocated 'peace', a seller could not reply, except to say that 'at least it sells the whistles'. Well of course, everyone knows it takes a good war to turn a healthy profit on peace whistles!

The January 25 edition of *Militant* devoted ten out of its 16 pages to war coverage and comment, but you searched in vain for a principled defence of semi-colonial Iraq against imperialism. The front page was given over to *Militant*-minded Labour MP Dave Nellist's speech in parliament on January 21, in which he made a bid for the 'Tommies' best friend' franchise. 'We are not against British troops,' he said. 'We are against the government's policy of sending our [!] troops to the Gulf and committing them to a war in which many hundreds, if not thousands of them, will lay down their lives.'

Elsewhere you could find calls for 'troops out', 'bring back the troops' and 'defeat the troops' ... there was not a sign. True, 'the imperialists must be forced to retreat' appeared on page two, but since it was part of an editorial which deplored 'the sight of captured airmen speaking apparently under duress on Iraqi TV', even this mealy-mouthed formulation must be suspect.

In time of war, socialists are put to the most severe test. Once again, *Militant* has shown that its strategic orientation to the Labour Party keeps it firmly bogged down in the mire of 'social' patriotism.

Labour goes to war

IF truth is the first casualty of war then the anti-war posturing of reformists runs it a close second.

Right up until the attack on Iraq, the Labour leaders wanted to 'give sanctions a chance'. When war started, this was shelved. Now, the Labour leaders play a vital role in supporting the Tory war on Iraq, while left wing MPs act as a loyal opposition to Kinnock.

TUC support is no less real for being tacit, Norman Willis and the General Council having gone to ground since war started.

On the first day of war, the shadow foreign secretary, Gerald Kaufman, nailed his colours to the Tory mast to 'support our forces so that casualties can be at the very minimum'.

The next day, Kinnock chimed in: 'what is necessary is that we have the maximum possible unity and we seek the shortest possible conflict, with the minimum number of casualties'.

Mention of a pause in the attack after the first wave of bombing soon got rid of the 'humanitarian' line on casualties. Kaufman's said that unless Iraq withdraws then 'there is no point in having

By David Lewis

On January 28, Kinnock any kind of pause'.

On January 21, Kinnock rejected calls for a ceasefire and said 'Our forces are being used for the precise purpose of using international law... They are doing their duty bravely; it is our duty to see that we give them our backing firmly'. The same day, Labour's defence spokesman, Martin O'Neill, told television viewers that 'the way the war is being prosecuted at the moment is correct', while Kaufman looked ahead to post-war imperialist interests and called for limits and controls on arms in the Middle East when war ends.

On January 22, Tony Banks resigned as front bench social security spokesman after voting against the government. He was the fourth one to go in this way but hardly out of deep principles. He said his thoughts were with the troops but it was now time for a ceasefire.

On January 23, Kinnock criticised the European Community for lack of support of the attack on Iraq. He went on to claim Britain's right of influence over the region on the grounds that there are thousands of British troops there

gagged John Prescott, Labour's transport spokesman, for having the temerity to suggest that Labour should not support war aims going beyond Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

On January 30, the Labour Party NEC voted down a left wing ceasefire motion but overwhelmingly supported a call for all Iraqi nuclear, biological and chemical installations to be removed.

The extent of opposition to the Labour leadership is minimal. Of the MPs who say they oppose the war, only one, Bernie Grant, spoke out against United Nation sanctions before the war started. The rest now perpetuate illusions in the UN by demanding a UN conference to end the war. The UN made its position clear first by initiating economic war (sanctions) and then by supporting military war.

Workers must force Labour MPs to cease their support for the war and to vote against all war expenditure. Trade unionists must demand that the TUC breaks from supporting the war; they must fight for political strike action against the war, particularly in the armaments industries, and for a trade union boycott of all war materials bound for the Gulf.

Drive the racists off the streets

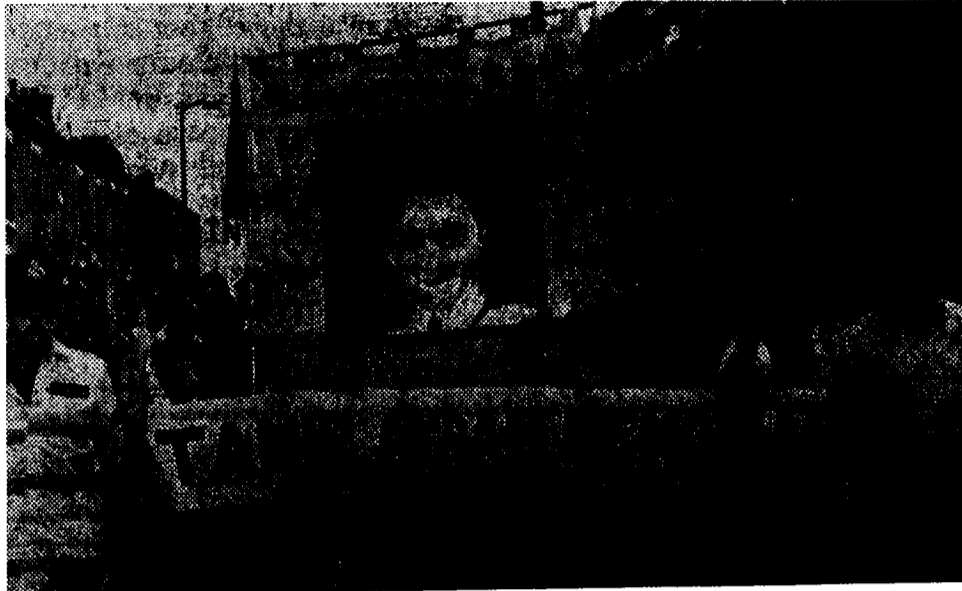
By Ian Harrison
and Lizzy Ali

THE GROWTH of extreme right-wing groups and the rise in the number of racist attacks in Britain, throughout Europe and in the United States is directly linked both to the deepening economic crisis of capitalism and the political failings of Stalinism and social democracy.

In Britain, the current confidence with which racists operate can be traced to the period of working class defeats starting with the 1984-5 miners' strike. The election of a right-wing Tory government under Thatcher in 1979 eclipsed a National Front already riven with internal disputes. It was to be the sustained attack on the organised working class and the cowardly retreat of the Labour Party and trade union leaders which, together with Tory economic policies, created the conditions for a resurgence of racist attacks.

Thatcher's policies were aimed at rapidly restoring the fortunes of the capitalists at the expense of the middle and working classes. The source of racism, however, is not to be found in the heads of those who perpetrate it - it is a by-product of decaying capitalism. For the ruling class, racism provides a convenient method of diverting attention away from its policies and undermining opposition from workers. It also serves the purpose of reinforcing nationalism and patriotism, both in the workplace to encourage sacrifices 'in the national economic interest', and more generally to prepare workers to go to war.

Since 1979, the Tories have imposed massive cuts on public-sector spending. Local



A march in memory of Tahir Akram who was murdered in July 1989

councils have been forced to abandon house building programmes and cut money spent on maintaining existing housing stock. Hundreds of hospitals and schools have closed with the destruction of thousands of jobs, drastically reducing the level of education and health care.

The Tories' incapacity to resolve Britain's economic problems has burdened sections of the middle class with massive interest payments on mortgages and given a new impetus to the number of businesses going bankrupt. Racism feeds off the growth of social tensions produced by the rise of unemployment, rotten housing conditions, homelessness and a sharp decline in living standards, and also by the failed expectations of an otherwise relatively comfortable middle class. The development of the economic recession will tend to reinforce the message of every street-

corner racist thug, and attacks on ethnic minority groups will rise still further.

While sections of the organised working class and minority communities have demonstrated their preparedness to fight Tory policies, they have not found a leadership worthy of them. The Labour Party and TUC leaders have pulled back in the face of the Tory onslaught. They have helped fuel anti-Irish feeling by wholeheartedly supporting the brutal occupation of the north of Ireland, joined in the flag-waving jingoism during Thatcher's dirty war in the Malvinas/Falklands and given anti-Arab racism a boost by supporting the imperialist war against Iraq. Labour-controlled local councils and education authorities have dutifully imposed every reactionary piece of Tory legislation, thus creating the very conditions under which racism thrives.

Labour councils must be forced to evict racists and provide special facilities to minority groups to organise their own defence. For decades the labour and trade union leaders have drawn support and subscriptions from black workers and their families. They must be forced to organise national campaigns with the aim of abolishing all reactionary Tory immigration legislation and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

A Labour government must restore all cuts in health, education and other social services and launch a crash programme to build new houses, hospitals and schools.

Local trade unions must jointly organise self-defence with minority groups. They must mobilise their forces to defend neighbourhoods, housing estates and meeting places from racist attackers, and organise to drive the racists and fascists off the streets.

Attacks on the increase

ISLINGTON Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action was set up in 1986 by teachers who were based at Highbury Quadrant school, a school which gained notoriety because of the attacks on Bengali children and because a Blood and Honour house had been set up opposite the Arsenal football ground.

One of our most successful activities has been the work to get the Blood and Honour fascists out of two local pubs in the King's Cross area.

Our group is mainly involved in Islington, but we have also been involved in Stamford Hill in Hackney. There have been increasing attacks both on the Jewish community and on Asians. There's nothing new about attacks on the Hassidic [orthodox Jewish] community. What has become more evident over the past year is the way it seems to have become more politicised and systematic, with swastikas being put up outside synagogues and schools.

We believe that National Front people are behind that. The Jewish community is beginning to look at self-defence. With the Asian community, there have been a number of shootings of shop owners.

In Stamford Hill one of the complications, in terms of attacks on both the Asian and Jewish communities, is that there seems to be some kind of Afro-Caribbean involvement.

David Landau of Islington Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action talks to Workers News about the rise in racist attacks in two neighbouring inner-London boroughs and about the work of his organisation to combat them

Part of that seems to happen because a punkish and Afro-Caribbean gang hang around together. Whether there's any political element there trying to deliberately turn communities against each other, I don't know - it wouldn't surprise me as it's a tactic some of the more sophisticated fascists have been looking at, especially over the last two or three years, and particularly because the Farakhan movement has an interest in Hackney. The fascists have always tried to exploit the situation.

In Islington there has been a definite escalation of racist attacks. A watershed was reached around March, when a Bengali family was going to move into a house near the Liverpool Road. Before they could move in, the whole house was wrecked - 'Pakkies Out' on the wall, everything smashed up, petrol poured everywhere. Obviously similar things had happened before, but this incident signalled that things were getting worse.

There are three main areas where there is a lot of trouble - Finsbury area, Barnsbury and around Caledonian Road, and the Packington Estate. In all

these areas attacks have got more serious.

Some of the most severe are the murder of Robert Carr and two attempted murders - a Chinese man was stabbed in the head and a black man was stabbed in the lungs, both in the Barnsbury area. We have been working with witnesses on some of these cases.

So far as we can see there are no organised groups involved in these attacks. As far as the Barnsbury Estate is concerned, if there is any fascist involvement, it's very low key. What you have is gangs of white youth with no political involvement with a big P.

That goes for attacks generally in Islington. It's not really clear that there has been an input from the British National Party or the NF. Although in the Finsbury area, I wouldn't be at all surprised if there was a connection.

I think, however, there is an indirect relationship, particularly with the open activity of the BNP in Tower Hamlets. The other racist political force locally is the Islington tenants and residents' movement. Council workers have said that their propaganda was fuelling racist sentiments during the

local elections.

The police have insisted that the murder of Robert Carr was not a racist murder. They are keen on saying how much they are doing but when it comes down to it, we find great difficulty with them. King's Cross police station has refused to have dealings with us.

When we have made very minimal demands like an extra police presence for young children leaving school in areas of known attacks, they have refused this, but it's interesting that when the Right made demands to flood an estate like Broadwater Farm the response was different.

There is no uniform way in which the council deals with the issue of racist attacks. In certain areas, where you have reactionary neighbourhood officers and in certain cases reactionary councillors, basically nothing gets done. But on the other hand where you have good offices we have been able to establish very good relations. There is a centralised racial harassment unit which for years has done nothing. It's actually been an obstacle to getting people rehoused.

What needs to be done is to build a mass movement in the community, including white people. We are trying to get involved in Labour Party ward meetings. Even though we know what the Labour Party is like, we can make demands on councillors.

A calendar of racism, 1990

January: The National Association of Probation Officers reports that 25 per cent of female and 19 per cent of male prisoners are black. Yet black people only constitute 4.4 per cent of the general population.

Tower Hamlets Homeless Families reports that the council is housing 68 per cent of homeless families in D grade hotels. The families concerned are all Bangladeshis. Other councils are decreasing their use of D grade hotels.

Home Office statistics for 1988 show that Britain deported 3,000 people that year, a rise of 50 per cent over 1987.

The Asian community and many white neighbours in Pollokshields, Glasgow, organise a campaign to counter a rise in local racist activity.

The High Court awards the sum of £130,000 to the family of Winston Rose. He died at the age of 27, after being violently restrained by Metropolitan Police officers in 1981. The police make no apology to the family.

February: Sheffield City Council considers means of compensating black businesses targeted by racist attacks. In one such incident five armed men smashed up a cafe belonging to a Yemeni, shouting racial abuse at the customers.

London's Southwark Council adopts a policy to evict council tenants convicted of racial attacks or harassment following a reported 56 per cent rise in racial incidents since 1987. The council will provide legal and financial assistance to victims of racist attacks.

A white youth is convicted in Dudley Crown Court for demanding money with threatening behaviour from Asian pupils at a Wolverhampton school.

Blackley anti-racist group draws attention to a campaign of race attacks including arson on Asian shops in the north Manchester area.

Council officials in West Lothian, Scotland, record a substantial increase in racist incidents in the area.

Three years after his death during a struggle with police officers, the family of Clinton McCurbin appeal for a judicial review.

March: Olympic sprinter Linford Christie wins substantial damages for unlawful arrest and libel by the police, who falsely accused him of possession of a stolen car.

April: Viresh Patel, aged 20, is stabbed by six white youths on a bus in London's Bethnal Green.

A 16-year-old Asian youth is assaulted and left unconscious by a gang of white youths in Roman Road near Bethnal Green.

Three black Labour Party candidates in Greenwich, who had given evidence at the trial of British National Party members subsequently convicted, are targeted for racist revenge attacks, including arson and assault with firearms.

The Home Office sacks a lay prison visitor in Hackney following her report that seven out of 20 prisoners she visited alleged ill treatment and assault by police officers while in custody.

Germain Alexander dies after sustaining a fractured spine while in custody in a strip cell in Brixton prison.

A report by the Overseas Students Trust voices concern on behalf of foreign students who are forced to live in poor housing conditions and fear of racial attacks.

Black comedian Lenny Henry tells an audience that he had been subject to racist attacks. His home had been daubed with National Front slogans in human excrement.

May: A Chinese man is stabbed 58 times in Barnsbury, Islington, north London.

Reports are released of a campaign of anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish synagogues and cemeteries daubed with fascist insignia and slogans. Attacks had occurred in Leeds, Manchester, Dundee, Middlesex and Stamford Hill and Edmonton, north London.

June: A white youth is imprisoned for the murder of Tahir Akram in 1989.

Gangs of white youth assault black children with bottles in Britannia Row and St Mary's Passage, Islington.

July: Steven Coker, aged 22, is imprisoned for the murder of an Asian taxi driver whom he stabbed 50 times. Southall Monitoring Group reveals evidence of Coker's involvement in previous racist assaults.

A 47-year-old woman and her son narrowly escape death during an arson attack on their council flat in Bristol.

A report from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants cites a dramatic increase in the number of Caribbean visitors being denied entry into Britain.

August: Robert Carr is stabbed to death in Islington.

October: An Asian family is fire-bombed in Sparkhill, Birmingham.

Southwark Council responds to a wave of racist assaults on council estates in the Rotherhithe area by establishing round-the-clock security guards.

Manchester City Council dissolves its race unit without consultation with the 22 representatives on the unit.

The Anti-Slavery Society highlights the failure of existing legislation to offer any protection to slave domestic labour employed by wealthy families. The slaves, typically young Filipino women and children from Sierra Leone, are employed in areas such as London's St John's Wood. Home Office officials acknowledge the problem but refuse to take measures to deal with it.

The European parliament indicts Britain for exporting skinhead violence. In a report it estimates that 70,000 racial attacks take place in Britain annually.

November: Four black students from St Phillip's College in Birmingham are assaulted.

Fifty-eight headstones in a Jewish cemetery in north London are daubed by fascists.

December: In preparation for war with Iraq the British government deport 160 Iraqis and interns a number of Iraqis and Palestinians, while the media whips up fear of a Muslim terror campaign. Among those deported to Iraq are opponents of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Arson attacks on several mosques are reported in Woking, Surrey, Bromley, Chorley in Lancashire and Batley in Yorkshire. In Sheffield a mini-bus taking children from the Yemeni Community Association to school is stoned.

DIVISIONS DEEPEN AS PERESTROIKA FAILS

By Daniel Evans

THE FATE of the Soviet Union is in the balance. Perestroika, the Stalinists' response to economic stagnation, has succeeded only in intensifying the contradictions of an isolated workers' state ruled by a caste of parasitic bureaucrats. That bureaucracy is now split between so-called 'hardliners', yearning for the return of the 'old methods', and 'reformers' who favour capitalist restoration.

As soldiers were ordered to patrol the streets of all major cities against the threat of public unrest, Colonel Viktor Alksnis, an enthusiastic supporter of the military operation to assert Moscow rule on the independence-seeking Baltic states, claimed that the operation would 'inevitably grow into a civil war on a Union-wide scale'.

As a possible showdown approaches, the speed of events is quickening. In early January, the foreign secretary Eduard Shevardnadze, a prominent 'reformer' and supporter of President Mikhail Gorbachev, resigned, citing the threat of dictatorship as his reason. Boris Yeltsin, another 'reformer', who quit the Communist Party last year before becoming president of the Russian Republic, has called for a general strike against a clampdown and the formation of an independent Russian army. Several large demonstrations have taken place in Moscow calling for the government to resign.

Fear of the break-up of the Union has galvanised support for the 'hardliners' in the Communist Party. The new government of Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, which they dominate, hit back with two decrees. The first was the overnight abolition of 50 and 100 rouble notes 'in the interests of the majority of the population, to combat speculation, corruption, smuggling, forgery and un-earned income and to normalise the monetary situation and the consumer market'. This decree will actually hurt 'the majority of the population' the most. With very few consumer goods to buy, workers have been forced to save their money. Most criminal speculators are holding either gold, foreign currency or commodities and many made a killing by buying 100 rouble notes for as little as 10 roubles and re-selling them to their backdoor contacts in the state banks. Decree number two gave the KGB sweeping new powers to 'enter premises without hindrance if state security officials think it necessary to investigate economic sabotage', particularly where joint ventures with the West are involved.

Several of Gorbachev's closest 'reform'-minded collaborators and authors of perestroika, including the economist Stanislav Shatalin, have resigned in disgust as the 'hardliners' have re-captured the government. Only a few months ago, Gorbachev and Yeltsin were locked into discussions on how to implement a compromise version of Shatalin's '500-day' plan to restore capitalism.

But the 'hardliners' are not as dominant as they appear or think themselves to be. Part of the reason for their re-capturing

the Communist Party, the Supreme Soviet and the government has been the outflow of thousands of party members disillusioned with the pace of reform over the past two years. They have not been idle either. Reformists and nationalists have taken control of the administration of nearly all of the republics, including the biggest and most important, Russia. In addition, reformists dominate the councils of nearly every major city including Moscow and Leningrad. An ideological battle is taking place between the two camps for the support of the so far politically undecided working class. Neither side, of course, genuinely has the interests of the workers at heart.

The 'middle ground' upon which Gorbachev relied for his authority, playing one faction off against the other, is evaporating as the utopian dream of the 'social market' becomes the reality of an even worse economic crisis. The bureaucracy is dividing into those who want to return to the 'command' economy and those who are coming to the conclusion that only full-blown capitalist restoration can save their skins.

Between 1964 and 1982 under Leonid Brezhnev, alcohol consumption quadrupled and 12 per cent of the state budget came from tax on that alcohol. Life expectancy declined in males from 67 to 62 years, and infant mortality rose sharply. Bureaucratic planning introduced enormous distortions into the economy. For example, thousands of spectacle lenses but no frames and an increasing number of highly trained specialists but none of the technicians they required. The percentage of Gross National Product being re-invested by the mid-1980s was a massive 35 per cent, and rising, just to keep economic decline at bay. Agriculture was stagnant and valuable foreign currency was swallowed up on grain purchases from the West. Declining productivity meant that most state enterprises, instead of producing wealth, were actually consuming it. The personal interest of the workforce in the success of the economy was at rock bottom, summed up by widespread alcoholism, cynicism and a joke: 'They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work.'

Corruption flourished and theft from state industries was endemic. Illegal factories were established and underground millionaires appeared. Meanwhile, the state budget, which finances the army, the KGB, the welfare state and the vast bureaucracy, chalked up a deficit which makes that of the United States look positively healthy.

The pressures of imperialist encirclement of the Soviet economy were keenly felt by the army. Their budget was out of control, but no amount of roubles could counter the technological advances of the West. Their equipment was obsolete on arrival, despite being at the quality end of Soviet production. Ronald Reagan's multi-billion dollar Strategic Defence Initiative was, as intended, the last straw.

But perhaps the most decisive factor determining the



Part of the estimated 100,000-strong demonstration in Moscow on January 20 against the crack-down in the Baltic states

bureaucracy's decision that something had to be done was the wave of strikes which spread across the Soviet Union in 1980 and 1981, and which briefly gave rise to an illegal union. The working class could not live in the old way and the bureaucracy could not rule in the old way. As Gorbachev himself said: 'Problems snowballed faster than they were resolved. On the whole, society was becoming

la, Central America and, of course, Eastern Europe.

Perestroika, or reconstruction, was intended to make state enterprises more efficient by concentrating on income rather than output. Central planning would be relaxed and inefficient enterprises would be allowed to go bankrupt. Price controls would be relaxed and sections of the illegal black market would be legalised in the form of

line could be neutralised. Only in this way could the bureaucracy be prepared politically for the rigours of perestroika. The 'rule of law', decreed Gorbachev, would replace the arbitrary rule of the bureaucracy.

In practice, perestroika has been a disaster, merely speeding up the processes under way during the Brezhnev years. To avoid bankruptcy state enter-

mists', some 400 new political parties have emerged. Communist officials have been booted out of state enterprises and there are around two dozen independent trade union groups. Eastern Europe has left the Soviet 'sphere of influence' and some of the republics look set to follow.

Doubtless Gorbachev believes he can weather a crack-down and re-emerge after order has been restored with a revamped version of perestroika. But the new doyen of the 'hardliners' in their struggle to achieve that crackdown is the chief of the Russian Communist Party, Ivan Polozkov. With perestroika floundering, Polozkov joined battle with the reformers over the question of the new co-operatives in 1989. Despite officially accounting for less than six per cent of the Soviet economy, the co-operatives have demonstrated the feebleness of the state sector, but have earned the hatred of workers because of their extortionate prices. 'Co-operatives are a social evil,' said Polozkov, 'a malignant tumour - let us combat this evil in a united front. We can't simply do nothing when people are protesting against this vandalism and shamelessness. We must hold public meetings and rallies a thousand strong to resolve this question We must base our actions on reality, not on the law.'

Polozkov's number two, Nikolai Kharchenko, added: 'At this stage, we won't survive without command methods. Sometimes I tell myself, all right, I will no longer use pressures, but when I see that things go amiss, I am ready to push aside any co-operative, relying in this on people's support.'

Unlike in Eastern Europe, perestroika has given a preview of how the market works and there has been a great deal of hostility to it. The Soviet working class must take advantage of the split in the bureaucracy to push for its own interests. What is required is a political revolution, retaining the nationalised property relations established by the October 1917 revolution, but sweeping out the Stalinist bureaucrats and creating a workers' democracy.



Soviet troops keep watch from a rooftop in the Latvian capital, Riga

increasingly unmanageable. We only thought that we were in the saddle The need for change was brewing.'

Gorbachev's policies were not ready to hand, but were formed pragmatically until three clear strands became apparent: perestroika, glasnost and 'new thinking'.

New thinking summed up the retreat of Stalinism from the world arena. Military equality was not necessary; all you needed was the ability to inflict enough casualties on the enemy to make an attack restrictive. The Soviet Union needed Western technology and expertise: it needed to become 'part of the international division of labour'. This meant bowing to the strategic interests of imperialism in Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Middle East, Ango-

private co-operatives. Peasants would be allowed to lease land and legally sell their produce to a buyer other than the state. Workers would have a bigger say in the running of factories and would be given a share in the profits as an incentive to work harder. With the same intention, greater wage differentials were encouraged and the notorious piece-work system brought back.

Glasnost, openness, was aimed at recruiting the support of the fastest-growing section of Soviet society, the new urban middle classes. Poets, artists, actors, scientists, dissidents and intellectuals were wooed back into the party with the promise of greater freedom of expression. The aim was to create the climate in which the more entrenched opponents of the new

prises lent each other a total of 15.6 billion roubles in 1988 alone, leaving the central bank to pick up the tab. They have raised prices again and again on goods no longer held in check by government decree. Productivity has continued to fall while wages have risen. The economy is in the grip of speculators and middlemen. Out of a basket of 1,000 basic commodities, 996 are not regularly obtainable. With nothing to spend their money on, personal savings have reached a staggering 500 billion roubles. This is hyperinflation waiting to happen.

Glasnost has failed the bureaucracy too. Opponents of the Soviet system have been able to organise independently of the Communist Party. Apart from the seizure of republic and city administrations by 'reform-

Cracks in the ANC?

ON DECEMBER 15-17, 1990, the African National Congress held its first Consultative Conference inside South Africa for over three decades. The event has sent political shockwaves throughout South Africa and beyond.

If the ANC leadership was expecting a representative meeting typical of this sort, with the customary praise-singing and back-slapping and a ritual show of unity, they experienced a rude shock. For the most striking feature was the sharp tension and division between the ANC rank and file and its leadership.

The latter had been severely tested over the last year and found seriously wanting. There was none of the starry-eyed reverence that Mandela experienced on his release or the exile leadership on their return.

The ANC leadership was subjected to trenchant criticism on a full range of questions:

- The delegates questioned the decision to suspend the armed struggle, many insisting that if it had been put to the

vote the Pretoria Minute would undoubtedly have been rejected.

- They condemned the abject failure of the leadership to respond decisively to the violence unleashed by Inkatha in the townships of the Transvaal.

- They criticised the leadership for failing to mobilise the masses in the urban areas, let alone the rural areas. They said that this was because the leadership was proceeding in an undemocratic, bureaucratic manner and, over many months, had repeatedly failed to draw in or consult their potential mass constituency. Many pointed to the ANC's small membership (estimated at 200,000) after ten months of legality.

- They roundly rejected the leadership's idea of softening the demand on sanctions.

Despite attempts at smoothing over the differences, the leadership was clearly shaken by the anger and militancy expressed by delegate after delegate.

The programme of action adopted by the conference,

The ANC's Consultative Conference in December 1990 revealed growing discontent with the leadership's policies among the rank and file. Ben Jordan examines the differences and proposes a course of action for Trotskyists

despite attempts by the leadership to moderate original demands, clearly reflected the main concerns of the rank and file. Chief among these was the question of the place of mass action. Seemingly rejecting the leadership's emphasis in 1990 on discipline and restraining mass mobilisation, the call was made for 1991 to be 'a year of mass action for the transfer of power to the people'.

Despite generally attempting to appease the discontented delegates, on significant questions Mandela defended the approach of the leadership. In direct breach of a resolution just passed, in his closing speech he said the leadership 'totally rejects' the idea of talks proceeding 'without

any secrecy or confidentiality'.

However, the perspective of the militant opposition to the leadership remains confused. There is still a basic commitment to the negotiations strategy and loyalty to the ANC. The perspective is not one of revolution but of radical reform through negotiations, even though by means of exercising mass pressure. The two-stage perspective was still fully accepted and no connection was made between apartheid and capitalism.

Despite the weight given to the question of the violence in Natal and the Transvaal, Inkatha and Buthelezi were not singled out as enemies who had to be crushed.

Furthermore, the resolutions reflected no criticism of

the mixed economy policy of the ANC nor of its abandonment of the nationalisation clause in the Freedom Charter.

Apart from calling for the building of 'local alliance structures', there was no specific reference to the working class or the trade unions in the resolutions. In particular, one wonders what the new emphasis on mass struggle means for workers who have been told by their Stalinist leaders (ably assisted by their new syndicalist allies) not to 'damage' the economy any further by strike action and, as in the most glaring case of the Mercedes-Benz September strike settlement, have been instructed to pursue a policy of 'industrial peace'.

A major source of the terrible confusion is of course the SACP, which has continued to play the role of providing 'theoretical' credibility and political rationalisation for the sell-out course taken by the ANC. Even before the conference, the SACP leadership was gearing itself for criticism from below. Joe Slovo put forward the view that the main aim of the conference was to emerge with a 'balance' between negotiations and mass struggle (no doubt much like his 'new realist' idea of the mixed economy as a 'balance between the market and planning'). He even admitted that in the course of negotiations, thus far 'the people' had 'in part' been ignored.

There was no shortage of admissions of mistakes and concessions to the militancy of the rank and file. But the fact remains that all the resolutions were adopted unanimously. By the end of the conference the cracks in the ANC were relatively successfully papered over.

But the contradictions are deep-seated. There can be no doubt that actions on the part of the ANC leadership will produce new sources of discontent, adding to accumulated grievances.

No more than a couple of weeks after the conference, fresh anger was prompted as the significance of Mandela's defence of 'confidential talks' was revealed. His announcement on behalf of the ANC Executive accepting the De Klerk regime's idea of an All-Party Congress came like a bolt from the blue. The conference had certainly not given the NEC a mandate to adopt this new tactical turn.

The All-Party Congress will include no less than the likes of Inkatha and the Conservative Party. Its acceptance is another in a series of major political concessions to the

South African bourgeoisie. It indicates that the petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership is prepared to cynically weather more anger from the militant rank and file and determined to press on with a rotten sell-out completely over their heads. In so doing, they clearly want to play their part in securing a 'new world order' for imperialism.

The few months between now and the decision-making ANC congress scheduled for June will be decisive.

The programme of action adopted at the Consultative Conference, despite its reformist framework, insofar as it is centred on mass action (including the building of defence units aided by Mkhonto we Sizwe) and expresses the militancy of the rank and file, can facilitate a new set of dynamics which could throw the negotiations process into chaos and force a real political rupture within the ANC.

The challenge for Trotskyists is to solidify their contact with the discontented militants within the ANC. The main task is to give programmatic shape to the discontent and deepen the rift with the class-collaborationist leadership.

The primary means must be a revolutionary programme of action centred on the demand for a democratic Constituent Assembly, as a sovereign body to take the necessary steps to destroy every vestige of apartheid.

The opportunity given by the ANC's programme of action for taking the movement forward must be seized by the Trotskyists. They must fight for an action programme based on the method of our 1938 Transitional Programme within the proletarian 'local alliance structures' called for at the Consultative Conference.

The oppressed and exploited masses - in the townships, workplaces, farms and bantustans - must be drawn into active struggle around the full range of their political and economic demands. Militant committees of action and defence squads must be built. In the course of such a struggle, and under a revolutionary banner and firm revolutionary leadership, illusions in negotiations will be shed and the workers and proletarian youth will rightly, as they have done before, take things into their own hands.

The time will come when the question of class power will be sharply posed. With the necessary revolutionary leadership at the helm, the black working class will know what to do next.

Home front threat to Ozal

By David Lewis

ON JANUARY 3, the first general strike in the history of Turkey gave notice to President Turgut Ozal that the days of his vile regime are numbered.

More than 90 per cent of the country's two million trade unionists joined in. Spearheaded by the 48,000 coalminers who had been on strike since November 30, car, textile and steel workers were joined by civil servants and other white collar workers. Their demands were both economic - up to 600 per cent pay rises - and political - the legalisation of strikes and political involvement by trade unions.

Attacked by the government for undermining its preparations to join the war on Iraq, the strikers added a new demand - No to War! In taking this stand against the war, they have since been joined by thousands of others in demonstrations throughout Turkey.

Following the general strike, the miners and their supporters, 100,000 in all, began to march from the mining town of Zonguldak on the Black Sea to the capital, Ankara, 150 miles away. After three days on the road, their way was blocked by soldiers and riot police with bulldozers, water cannon and an armoured car. The march stayed put for two days, and was then called off on the promise of talks with the government. A week later, the textile workers settled for a 372 per cent increase in pay, the largest ever won by Turkish trade unions.

The upsurge of opposition by the working class comes on top of a developing crisis within the ranks of the government. December's resignation of the armed forces chief of staff, General Necip Toruntay, in protest at Ozal's anti-Iraq stance, came at the end of a year which had also seen the departure of two foreign ministers and a defence minister.

Faced with these mounting problems, Ozal seeks a solution in the imperialist war on Iraq. Turkey now has 200,000 troops massed on its border



Turkish miners march on Ankara in January

with Iraq. Two days after the bombing started, US planes from the Incirlik air base near Adana in southern Turkey began to raid the north of Iraq. A few days after that, Patriot missiles were reported to have been installed in the NATO air base at Diyarbakir, in south-eastern Turkey or, more correctly, northern Kurdistan.

Ozal's war aims include gaining control of the Mosul province of Iraq, which has long been claimed by Turkey. This oil-rich area is part of Iraqi Kurdistan. In the carve-up of the Ottoman Empire by British and French imperialism in the wake of the First World War, Kurdistan was partitioned between Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. One thing that all these countries have in common, regardless of their differences in other matters, is hostility to the Kurds, whom they all oppress to this day.

In May 1983, under the cover of NATO manoeuvres led by the US, Turkey, in collusion with Iraq, attacked Kurdish resistance forces in northern Iraq. In October 1984, they repeated this, again with

the agreement of the Iraqi leadership. At the same time, the Iranians attacked Kurds within Iran. In 1988, Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranian Kurds, killing thousands.

One of Ozal's objectives in the present situation is to ensure that Iraqi Kurdistan does not achieve autonomy as a result of the wars since one result of that would be to make Turkish Kurdistan ungovernable. Ozal is not just relying on diplomatic manoeuvres to do this. He is also using the military build-up on the Iraqi border to crack down on the Kurdish population. Schools have been closed, many people have been arrested, youth have been conscripted, large areas around military bases have been declared forbidden zones, and hospitals and buses have been requisitioned for military use. The recent government pledge to lift the ban on the Kurdish language and music will do little to appease Kurdish youth, many of whom are joining guerrilla units to fight the Turks.

The opposition to war by the working class and the re-

sistance of the Kurds to Turkish oppression can together help to frustrate the plans of the imperialists and their stooge Ozal.

Self-determination for the Kurdish people!

Victory to the Turkish working class against Ozal!

Build a Turkish Trotskyist party!

● In London on January 3, Turkish and Kurdish workers who struck in solidarity with the general strike in Turkey were brutally attacked by the police. Workers in factories walked out in defiance of threats of dismissal by the owners, who complained to the police that they had been 'threatened'. Using long batons, police attacked workers who had gathered outside the Halkevi Turkish Community Centre in Hackney. The police then entered the centre and attacked those inside. When members of the Turkish and Kurdish community gathered outside Stoke Newington police station to protest, they were also attacked by the police and 60 were arrested.



Workers International League

For the rebuilding of the Fourth International!

I would like to join/have more information about the WIL.

Name:

Address:

Trade Union:

Send to: Workers International League
1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

EDITORIAL

For and against

THE FOLLOWING imaginary conversation takes place between a Labour Party supporter and a principled opponent of the Gulf war.

'I'm normally against war, but this time I just think that somebody has to stand up to dictatorship.'

'Exactly the same argument that was used to justify the Falklands war, and that's given the Tories another nine years of government. I can see you haven't learnt much. Calling on the imperialists to act against dictatorship is like asking Satan to take a stand against sin. Who supported Pinochet in Chile, the Junta in Argentina, Somoza in Nicaragua and the El Salvador regime? Who is still propping up the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia?'

'The United States, I'll grant you. I'm not a supporter of American foreign policy, but this time, surely it's a war between democracy and dictatorship?'

'Leaving aside for the moment that your imperialist "democracies" are based on the exploitation of two-thirds of the world that lives in poverty and semi-starvation, where is this war being fought from? From countries like Saudi Arabia where women can be stoned to death for "adultery", thieves have their right hands cut off and political opponents are beheaded. And Turkey, where socialists and communists are tortured or murdered and Kurds forbidden to speak their own language.'

'But Saddam Hussein is a new Hitler. Someone has to stop him.'

'I notice you say a "new" Hitler. He's been in power for nearly twelve years, but he only seems to have been compared to Hitler for about six months. I don't remember Kinnock making a big noise about Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war. I don't recall him calling for a trade union boycott of Iraq. He was dancing to Thatcher's tune then, and Reagan was calling Saddam "a force for moderation". I don't remember a big Labour Party campaign to defend the Kurdish people when Saddam gassed Halabjah. You say someone has to stop him. What is it you want stopped and who do you think should do it?'

'I still think Iraqi aggression has to be stopped. Kuwait has to be liberated by the West. I hope it's over quickly, and then all the other problems in the Middle East can be solved by a peace conference.'

'So, you want British workers to help the imperialists to restore the super-rich of Kuwait to their position by flattening Iraq. The only way the war will end quickly is if they succeed in killing enough Iraqis. And to cap it all, you think after all that, the same people are going to solve the Palestinian and Kurdish questions.' 'As far as I can see, you are supporting Saddam Hussein. Are you also saying that you support indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the inhuman treatment of prisoners-of-war? What about chemical weapons?'

'The issue is not whether I support this or that action of the Iraqi high command, but that I defend Iraq - in spite of the Saddam Hussein regime - against the imperialists because it is an oppressed country. And because of that, the best outcome from the standpoint of the world working class, not just the Iraqi workers, is a major defeat for the imperialists - America, Britain, France and the rest. If the working class were in power in Iraq, then, no doubt, it would fight the war in an entirely different way. It would nationalise imperialist assets under workers' control and it would appeal to the class instincts, not to the religious instincts, of the Arab, Asian and Jewish workers.'

'But coming back to what you say about civilian bombings, prisoners-of-war and chemical weapons. You seem to have a very short memory. The USA dropped more bombs on North Vietnamese cities than were dropped in the whole of the Second World War, and they sprayed so much Agent Orange that Vietnamese women are still giving birth to deformed babies. Don't you know that Vietnamese prisoners were regularly shot out of hand? Don't you know that a million Algerians died in the struggle to liberate their country from French imperialism? Don't you know that it was the British who introduced the aerial bombing of civilians to the Middle East when they attacked Kurdish villages in the 1920s? And doesn't British imperialism bear the main responsibility for the ordeal of the Palestinians since 1948? Now you could argue that parading captured aircrew was a farcical shot in the foot by Iraq, but alongside these crimes it pales into insignificance.'

'That might all be true, but I don't see what it has to do with today.'

'That, if I may say, is because you are very short-sighted. You think that Western "democracy" has some sort of civilising mission in the Middle East. You don't see that imperialism has built every problem of the region into its foundations; and you ignore the fact that it was the Western powers who drew the borders which divided nations and peoples, set one against the other and put all the emirs, sultans, sheikhs and kings in power. Saddam was fine so long as he was destroying the workers' movement and repressing the Kurds in Iraq. It was only when he got off the leash and began attacking Western oil interests that it was decided he should be put down.'

'You say you're in favour of the Allies being defeated by Iraq. I can't see how that helps workers here?'

'I can't give you any guarantee that it will "help" British workers in a direct and immediate sense. How the struggle of the British working class develops will depend on a number of factors and above all on whether there's a revolutionary alternative to Kinnock, Hattersley and Smith. But what is obvious is that it will weaken all the imperialists including our own ruling class - and those are the best conditions for British workers to fight.'

'A law unto them'

Police and policin

A barrelful of bad apples

1990 WAS a bumper year for allegations of police corruption. Star billing goes to the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, disbanded in August 1989 due to allegations of systematic fabrication of evidence against suspects. This one, as they say, will run and run. For reasons of space, individual acts of corruption - blackmail, drug dealing, living off immoral earnings, etc - with which officers were charged have been omitted from this month by month summary.

January: The Metropolitan Police are ordered to pay £25,000 damages to window cleaner Milton Morris, who accused officers of planting forensic evidence in order to implicate him in an armed robbery. Morris spent nine months in custody before being acquitted in September 1984.

Fraud charges against John Stalker's friend Kevin Taylor are suddenly dropped amid allegations of dishonesty against Greater Manchester police. Stalker describes the charges against Taylor as 'a contrivance - a means of getting at me through him'.

February: Hassan Khan, serving 11 years after being convicted in December 1988 of armed robbery, has his conviction overturned by the court of appeal. He claimed that the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad had fabricated a confession.

It is announced that there is insufficient evidence to bring criminal charges against two members of the squad. Following an allegation that they had forged a confession, the notes of the relevant police interviews went missing from the court archives. The two DCs had visited the archives the previous day.

March: The court of appeal quashes the conviction of PC Thomas 'Ged' Corley for conspiracy to rob and a firearms offence. It was alleged that police in Greater Manchester offered criminals bribes of cash and reduced sentences to provide evidence against Corley.

April: A National Opinion Poll conducted for *The Independent* newspaper finds that four out of ten people believe that there is 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' of corruption in the police force and that recent revelations concerning police giving false evidence are only the tip of the iceberg.

May: The Police Complaints Authority annual report states that serious complaints against the police have risen by 14 per cent in the past year. The PCA attributes this to increased public confidence in the investigation system.

June: Addressing the Association of Chief Police Officers, ACPD president and deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police John Dellow accuses *The Independent* of carrying 'offensive and largely untrue and misleading reports about allegations of police corruption'. He expresses concern over the effects such reports have on public opinion.

July: Allan Green QC, the Director of Public Prosecutions, addressing the British Justice in Crisis conference, declines to discuss allegations of police frame-ups and argues that the most serious miscarriage of justice is that many guilty men are allowed to go free. 'Acquittals of this kind,' he states, 'might multiply if there is a marked decline in confidence in our system of judicial justice.'

August: The inquiry into the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad enters its second year. It is revealed that the squad's headquarters was 'not secured' when it was disbanded, leading to the disappearance of six case files, several documents, and at least seven detectives' pocket books. There are 85 complaints against the squad under investigation, 37 of them from people in prison.

September: A Home Office study reports a 'steady erosion' of public confidence in the police during the 1980s.

October: A *World in Action* television documentary interviews two former officers who claim that Scotland Yard failed to fully investigate evidence of criminals in a car-theft ring being given tip-offs by the police, and that a tape recording of a criminal talking of his relationship with a policeman went missing during the inquiry.

November: John Edwards, serving a 14-year sentence for armed robbery, appeals against his conviction, claiming that officers from the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad 'tailored' his statements and suppressed evidence. Referring to allegations of 'rotten apples' in the squad, Edwards' council stated: 'The barrel itself was rotten, never mind the apples inside it.'

Detective sergeant Michael Hornby, a former member of the squad who is facing a number of allegations of malpractice, takes early retirement on grounds of ill health, thereby avoiding disciplinary action being taken against him.

December: Peter Jackson, a former Greater Manchester police officer whose allegations against colleagues led to the acquittal of 'Ged' Corley in March, is arrested by detectives responsible for the ensuing inquiry, on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, perjury and neglect of duty. He refuses to answer questions and is released after ten hours. Jackson states that he has lost confidence in the inquiry.

January 1991: It is announced that four former members of the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad face trial on charges of perjury and attempting to pervert the course of justice. The charges arise from an investigation into allegations of fabricated evidence in the case of Keith Parchment, who was released after the court of appeal ruled his conviction unsafe.

The court of appeal also quashes the conviction of John Edwards, who becomes the third man to be released after conviction on evidence provided by the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad.

THE CAMPAIGN to free the Birmingham Six gained momentum throughout 1990 in the wake of the release of the Guildford Four and the quashing of the convictions against the Maguire Seven. However, despite overwhelming evidence substantiating the convicted men's claim that their 'confessions' had been fabricated, they are still in jail.

The third appeal, launched in December 1990, was adjourned because an on-going inquiry by the Devon and Cornwall police force 'needed to be digested'.

However, Lord Justice Lloyd revealed that he had another kind of digestion in mind when he told the court: 'I don't think we are going to let this spoil our Christmases.'

Home Secretary David Waddington was under pressure to review the case back in January 1990, following the disbanding of the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad which included some of the detectives alleged to have beaten the Six. He responded by setting an exclusion order on Daniel McBreaty, who after some months in custody

The usual sus

TAKING court actions or making complaints against the police for such crimes as assault and wrongful arrest is notoriously difficult, under conditions where witnesses are often hard to locate and courts uphold the evidence of individual officers. During 1990, a few victims were fortunate enough to win.

□ Glendon Spencer, a Rastafarian who was beaten up by police outside a Bradford club in 1985, was awarded £5,935 damages for wrongful imprisonment, malicious prosecution and unlawful violence on February 8.

□ Ian Cutler, a photographer whose house in Holloway, north London, was smashed up during a police raid in 1985 in an attempt to obtain information about former robber John McVicar, accepted £15,000 damages at the High Court on March 26. Police had caused £7,000 worth of damage.

□ Kevin Thorpe, a postgraduate student when he was arrested at a demonstration against the then Home Secretary Leon Brittan at Manchester University in 1985, was awarded £50,000 compensation on July 30. The judgement represented £1,000 for assault, £4,000 for false imprisonment, £15,000 for malicious prosecution and £30,000 exemplary damages - the latter no doubt reflecting the judge's ruling that two officers had lied to magistrates about notes they claimed to have compiled after the demonstration.

□ Mark Haylock, a motorcyclist who crashed after being pursued by police, won £13,500 damages on March 19. Police had broken the Highway Code by driving too closely behind him.

□ Jeffrey Coombes, a miner arrested while picketing the Port Talbot steelworks during the 1984-5 strike, won £7,000 damages against the South Wales police, who were found to have used excessive force.

□ On December 7, seven constables were sacked by a disciplinary tribunal for severely beating Gary Stretch at a pub in Hackney. Stretch, who was drinking in the pub, claims he was subjected to an unprovoked assault of savage proportions. The off-duty officers attacked him after being involved in a fight with another man. He was hit over the head with a glass, dragged outside, kicked several times, knocked unconscious and temporarily blinded before being taken off in a police van. The Crown Prosecution Service decided not to charge the officers in January 1989. Stretch is currently pursuing a claim for civil damages.

Police in Hackney, north-east London, have acquired a notorious reputation. Edgar and Marie Burke, a West Indian couple aged 76 and 71, were dragged from their home by Hackney police in January 1989 after Mrs Burke had reported that a friend had been involved in an accident in their car. When Mr Burke, a diabetic in poor health, refused to be breathalysed, he alleges that he was put in a police van in his underwear, held down by at least six uniformed officers, and taken to a police station. His wife was meanwhile strip-searched, fingerprinted and charged with assaulting the police.

For Raphael Joseph, an attempt to drive up a one-way street on his motorcycle ended

Police defend s

IN JUNE 1980, Gail Kinchin, a pregnant 16-year-old, was fatally wounded by a police marksman in a shoot-out with her former boyfriend, David Pagett, who had held her hostage during a siege of his council flat in Birmingham. She died in hospital one month later, shortly after her seventeenth birthday.

Pagett was subsequently charged with Gail's murder, and served nine years for manslaughter. After ten years, a case of negligence brought against the West Midlands police by Gail's

mother ended with the awarding of a miserly £8,155 damages in December 1990.

In the course of the case it was revealed that an internal police document drawn up soon after the killing, which was critical of police tactics, had been left out of the official report. The judge drew the conclusion that the document had been 'deliberately suppressed by someone of high rank in the Birmingham force'.

Gerald Roberts, the detective constable who shot the pregnant teenager, and who has subse-

nselves'

g in 1990

irmingham Six!

had been found innocent of explosives charges brought against him in a separate case.

In the same month, a prosecution witness in the trial of the Birmingham Six broke 15 years silence and stated that the police had influenced his evidence by telling him one of the accused was a serving IRA lieutenant. This, of course, was a lie.

In March, Granada TV's *Who Bombed Birmingham?* claimed that the Special Branch had known the real identity of the bombers since 1975. Grana-

da followed this up in July with a *World in Action* programme about an ex-IRA member who admitted planting the bomb himself.

Meanwhile, Sir John May's inquiry entirely exonerated the Maguire Seven, convicted for the possession of explosives in 1976. The forensic tests that had convicted them were similar to those that were used on the Birmingham Six.

In August, scientist Dr Janet Drayton declared that the 1988 court of appeal had 'defied common sense' in ruling out her evidence that a forensic test on one of the accused had condemned all six. She added that she had recorded only 'possible nitro-glycerine present, very small increase'.

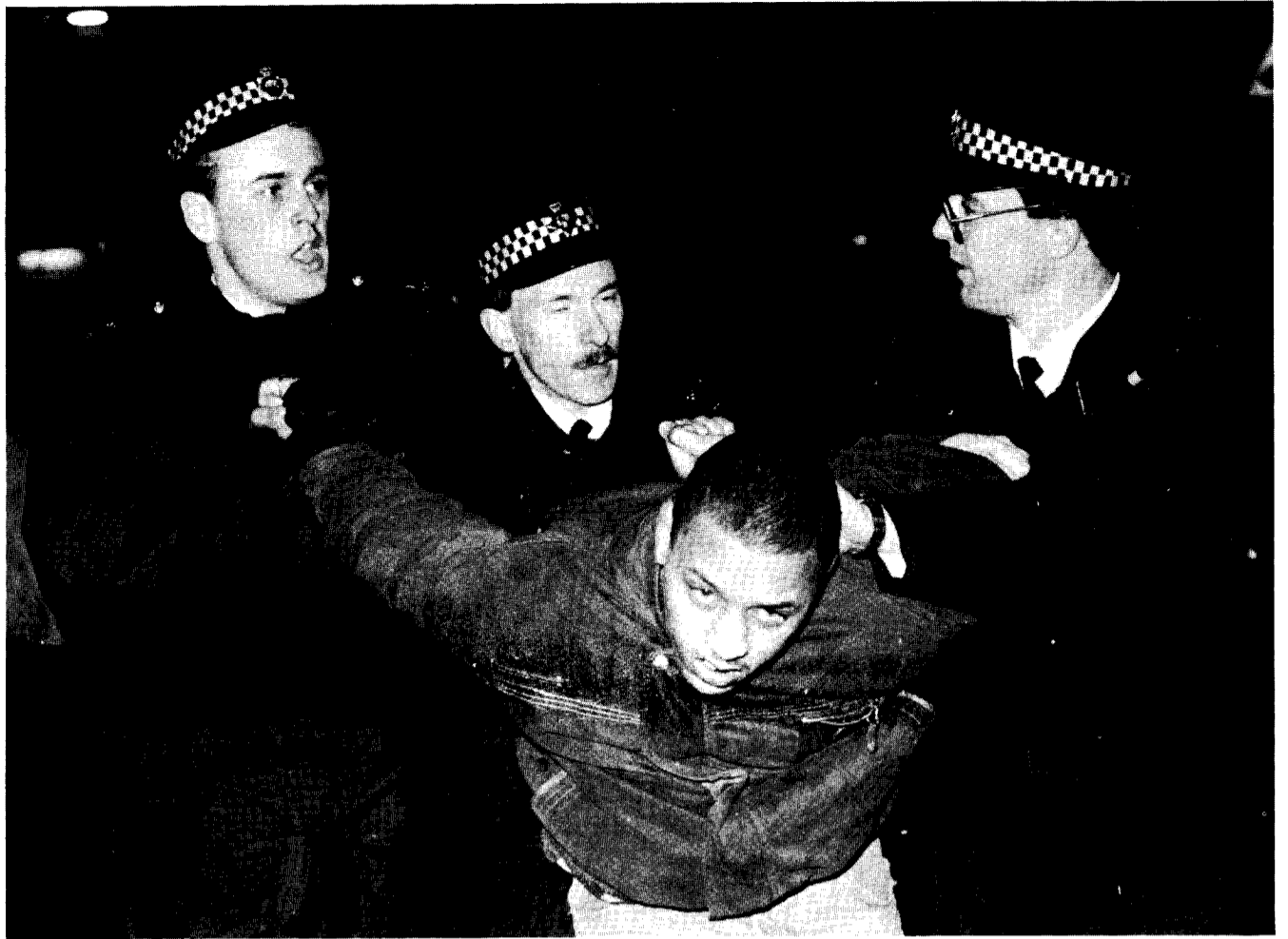
At the same time, after a 20-month investigation, the Avon and Somerset police inquiry came up with 12 names of Surrey officers involved in concocting evidence in the case of the Guildford Four. Top officers, such as Peter Imbert, now head of the Metropolitan Police, were cleared.

Also in August came the notorious Lord Denning interview in *The Spectator* in which he said that if the Guildford Four had been hanged in 1975, the state would have 'hanged the right men'. He went on to say: 'We shouldn't have all these campaigns to get the Birmingham Six released They'd have been forgotten and the whole community would have been satisfied.' What he really meant was that the judiciary, and of course the police, would have been satisfied.

In September, there was confirmation that all four confessions signed by the Birmingham Six were police fabrications. Andrew Morton, a syntax expert, concluded that Billy Power's confession was the work of at least four people. The confessions of Hugh Callaghan, Johnny Walker and Richard McKenny had been the work of one person, but not of any of the convicted men. A second language expert, Malcolm Coulthard, backed up Morton's findings later the same month.

The December court of appeal was told that evidence pointing to the invalidity of the forensic tests had been hidden from the defence for 16 years. The tests, which supposedly indicated the presence of nitro-glycerine, also give a positive result if playing cards or cigarette packets are handled. Dr Frank Skues, the police forensic scientist responsible for carrying out these tests on the Birmingham Six, was sacked in 1985 on the grounds of his 'limited efficiency'.

The appeal is due to continue in February and the chances are that the Six will be eventually released. But this in no way undermines the necessity for a workers' inquiry into the frame-up of Irish men and women on 'terrorist' charges. These are not 'mistakes', or the result of the actions of a handful of rogue policemen, but the logical and deliberate outcome of the imperialist occupation of the north of Ireland by the British ruling class.



Young protester arrested outside Hackney Town Hall in March 1990

IN FEBRUARY and March 1990, protests and lobbies of town halls against the poll tax gathered momentum. Police repeatedly denied that these were legitimate expressions of anger by local people, and claimed that they were the work of sinister forces, outside agitators, anarchists and Trotskyists bussed in specially on each occasion. March 31 saw one of the biggest demonstrations for years, ending in the 'Battle of Trafalgar' in London's West End. Channel Four's documentary of the same name, shown in September, confirmed that responsibility for the violence lay with the police, who arrested over 500 marchers on the day and dozens more in the months that followed.

In spite of the huge media campaign, which set out to criminalise

opposition to the poll tax and cover up police violence, the public response to the official version of events was deeply sceptical.

On October 20, 30,000 people marched peacefully through south London. After the demonstration terminated in Brockwell Park, Lambeth, a mass picket of Brixton prison, where poll tax prisoners from March 31 were being held, was attacked by police keen to have a 'return leg' in revenge for the Trafalgar Square battle.

● Detailed reports of police actions on March 31 and October 20 can be obtained from the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign, c/o Haldane Society of Lawyers, 205 Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP.

Racism – alive and well

POLICE racism against black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities is overt and widespread. All statistical surveys show that black and Asian workers and young people are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be charged and more likely to be sent to prison than their white counterparts. Meanwhile, racist attacks proceed almost unimpeded.

After years of strident publicity about 'mugging' (a tiny fraction of crime statistics which is projected as a 'black' offence) and the portrayal of Brixton, Tottenham, Handsworth, Toxteth, St Pauls and other black neighbourhoods as criminal populations, the police have finally caught on to the collapse of confidence in them.

What worries them is that they have all but burned their bridges to the 'respectable' sections of the minority communities – hence the well-publicised and expensive campaigns to recruit police from the black and Asian communities, and the mock-earnest claims to be elimi-

nating racism within the force.

Last August, the Police Federation's magazine, *Police*, asked in an editorial: 'How many times have we all winced to hear a colleague (never ourselves, of course) speak to a black or Asian citizen in a condescending fashion that would just not be used towards a white citizen?' How many indeed?

A Home Office study, the 1988 British Crime Survey, published in September 1990, admitted that: 'Afro-Caribbeans were the most frequently and repeatedly stopped, they were more often searched and they were the most dissatisfied with how politely they were treated.'

Nobody should swallow these pious declarations. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate this is to illustrate the routine racism practised against ethnic minority recruits to the force.

Black Constable William Halliday from Orpington, Kent, took his case to an industrial tribunal in February 1990. He alleged that Inspector Ian Thir-

kell, a former bodyguard to Anne Windsor, the well-known princess, had subjected him to five months of systematic abuse, greeting him with words such as 'Hello coon' or 'Hello nigger'.

In March, Sergeant Reg Inman, an instructor at Northamptonshire police's training centre at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, was found guilty of misconduct and forced to resign after allegations of racism by an Asian officer. Four others faced disciplinary action.

Nearby Nottinghamshire police were found guilty of racial discrimination against PC Surinder Singh by an industrial tribunal in October. In the course of the hearing, one DC Colin Martin was asked if the word 'coon' expressed prejudice. He replied: 'No. In my view it's a word that's been widely accepted in society to depict a person who is black or non-white.' Asked why he did not consider the term 'wog' offensive, he said: 'Because it's a term used broadly by the whole of society.'

A Wapping load of lies

REMEMBER those policemen who were due to get their comeuppance after the brutal scenes outside Rupert Murdoch's Wapping plant on January 24, 1987? Well, they didn't come to trial in 1987, 1988, 1989 and – you've guessed it – they didn't in 1990.

Sections of a 300-page report compiled by Chief Superintendent David Wyrko of Northamptonshire police were leaked to the BBC in January 1990. Wyrko concluded that junior officers had acted in a 'violent, undisciplined and uncontrolled manner' and that the deploy-

ment of Territorial Support Group and City of London officers to clear a park of demonstrators was 'both violent and undisciplined in nature', 'provocative and dangerous' and 'seriously aggravated large sections of the crowd'.

Cases against six officers were thrown out by the Bow Street magistrate in May 1989 on grounds of delay. A charge of unlawful wounding against a seventh was subsequently quashed. In March 1990 the Crown Prosecution Service dropped charges against 14 more officers. And then there were four By October four

had become three, as it was announced that charges of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice would be pursued. By January this year, three had been whittled down to two as the CPS offered no evidence against a third officer.

Assistant Commissioner Wyn Jones – the man in charge on the night – hasn't done too badly all things considered. He was promoted to his present rank in the course of the Northamptonshire inquiry and is now on £57,000 per annum. Jones described the Wyrko report as 'nonsense'. Now that's what we call law enforcement!

Policing the homeless

FACED with a general rise in homelessness, what does the government of caring capitalism do? Build houses? Of course not! It enforces the 1824 Vagrancy Act, introduced after the Napoleonic Wars to deal with discharged soldiers and the unemployed by a government frightened by movements such as the march of the Blanketeers.

The Act states that 'every person wandering abroad [and] every person endeavouring to gather alms [is] deemed a rogue and a vagabond' liable to up to three months' imprisonment for being 'an idle and disorderly person'. This Act was only a refined and modernised version of the 1531 Vagrancy Act which sentenced vagrants and the unemployed 'to be tied to the end of a cart naked and be beaten with whips throughout the same market town or other place till his body be bloody by reason of such whipping' before being sent back to his place of birth or last place of residence.

Unlike other antiquated pieces of legislation, the 1824 Act has not been allowed to fall into disuse. Indeed, during the 1980s, prosecutions revived to the point where, in 1989, there were 1,386 cases heard at four central London courts alone – the majority for begging. Last year, the Tories vetoed its repeal, and the police continue to use it energetically.

The waiting list for most inner-London council homeless units stands at two years. In the meantime, being homeless and poor remains a crime in capitalist society.

pects

with his being put on a drip-feed in a hospital bed. After being hit from behind by a police car, he claims that he was seriously beaten up by several officers. Both cases, along with a number of others against Hackney police, are awaiting civil actions for damages.

Four Metropolitan Police officers were suspended after allegations of an off-duty assault on mini-cab driver Emmanuel Ziregbe in Hammersmith, west London, on July 24. After he refused to pick up five passengers instead of the permitted four, he claims that he was head-butted, was called 'a black bastard' and suffered a black eye and cracked ribs.

Five days later, Leyton police made the mistake of accelerating towards 20-year-old Derek Newson as he stood directly in front of their patrol car – a mistake because there were several witnesses including a solicitor. After Newson, who was drunk, was thrown onto the bonnet of the car, police sat on his shoulders as he lay face down. Witnesses who protested at the police actions were threatened with arrest.

● Much the same sort of thing was going on in 1959, according to Cabinet papers released under the 30-year rule in January 1990. The Cabinet discussed several cases of police assault on the public and was forced to set up an inquiry into the 'Thurso Kid', a 16-year-old beaten up by police in Thurso, Scotland. Tory Home Secretary 'Rab' Butler announced that 'it was recognised that there had in recent years been a change in the relations between the police and the public'. Now where have we heard that before?

shooting

quently been promoted, defended his actions during the siege. 'Even if I had been aware she was being used as a shield I would not have acted differently,' he told the court. A firearms expert called the police operation 'a disaster'.

● A survey conducted by the magazine *Police Review* in late 1990 found that over half of the officers it questioned supported routine arming of the police force.

Debate

The following contribution by John Archer is a response to Al Richardson's article 'Fourth International? What Fourth International?', published in Workers News No.27, October-November 1990. Comrade Archer joined the Marxist Group in the ILP in 1934, and was in the leadership of the RSL and RCP until 1946. From 1950-63 he was a member of the political tendency led by Gerry Healy, and in 1974 he was a founder member of the Bulletin Group. Comrade Archer is currently a supporter of *Socialist Outlook*.

FOR TROTSKY'S INTERNATIONAL!

TO RICHARDSON'S question (in Workers News, Oct-Nov 1990) 'What Fourth International?', there is one, brief answer: we want Trotsky's Fourth International. The lugubrious catalogue of futile mistakes and follies which he presents as the history of our last five decades' struggle for internationalism will have surprised no one who knows him, but what use is it?

It offers no programme, nothing to help the thousands of militants who today seek a road forward, whom it does not help to be told that 'already by 1943' we had 'abandoned the essence of Trotskyist politics'.

Though it was not intended, the effect of his tirade is simply to feed reactionary anti-Trotskyism, when he jeers at our past failures, our present isolation and our divisions. Energy might be better spent in seeking the real, material reasons for our difficulties as well as a way out of them. Our problem is neither to embellish nor to denigrate our comrades, but to explain them.

Since 1940 we have all had to work in conditions which we could influence only to a very small extent. These conditions were not merely unpredictable but resulted from an exceptional balance of the counter-revolutionary forces in the world. No one expected in 1939 that imperialism and Stalinism, that parasitic growth on Soviet society, could divide the world between them, on a basis of counter-revolutionary co-operation (to which gigantic arms spending on both sides was necessary) called 'peaceful co-existence', or that, consequently, the reformist and Stalinist parties could over 40 years exclude Trotskyists from that space on the Left which the latter was fighting to win.

Trotsky's pre-war view of the whole period had not been falsified. Crises, wars and revolutions continued (as they still do) to be on the order of the day. Since 1945 humanity has progressed only in the field of technology. In every other field of human activity and relations the future of mankind has been placed in greater danger than ever, as the result of the private interests involved in the application of technology. Any partial gains have proved to be precarious.

In 1940 already Trotsky had written, in 'The Alarm Signal': 'The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death-agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings. A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective. History will provide it with enough opportunities and possibilities to test itself, to accumulate experience and to mature. The sooner the ranks of the vanguard are fused, the more the epoch of bloody convulsions will be shortened, the less destruction will our planet suffer. But the great historical problem will not be solved in any case until

a revolutionary party stands at the head of the working class.'

Even allowing for our own immaturity, few of us in the conditions of the second half of the 1940s could win or hold an influential place as Trotskyists in the workers' movement, however hard we tried.

To be sure, Trotsky, like Marx, Engels and Lenin, had the right to revolutionary optimism. All of us who claimed in 1946 to be Trotskyists accepted that we were in the period of wars and revolutions, of the death-agony of capitalism. We weren't so wrong, either!

The reformists and the Stalinists, each in their own way, were implacably hostile to us, and worked together to exclude us, because we exposed their efforts to paralyse the independent movements of workers and of the oppressed, and to divert these movements towards narrow, illusory sectional or national aims, even when they fought their way out of the clutches of imperialism.

would have been invaluable, about the internal political life and experience of Bolshevism and of the Comintern in its early years. Stalinism succeeded for many years in burying the record of Bolshevism and in poisoning the sources on which we had to draw.

Not until 1970 could we learn that the fundamental concepts of 'Transitional' programmes and of the United Front had been fought for by Lenin and Trotsky at the 3rd and 4th Congresses of the Comintern, or that their disputes with opportunists and ultra-lefts on these questions were a central part of the experience of constructing the mass Communist Party in Germany, the KPD, in 1921-22.

Even to this day very few comrades in Britain know that the 4th Congress actually instructed the constituent sections each to prepare, for the next Congress, its Transitional Programme to meet the workers' needs in its 'own' country,

with sectarianism, in the false hope of avoiding the isolation which sectarianism inevitably exacts.

In the face of incessant frustration and of the political contradictions which resulted about what to do next and why, profound internal controversies have wracked the organisations, despite the subjective intentions of leaderships. These internal differences could not be resolved by either experience or debate. In some organisations, therefore, we have seen develop highly centralised regimes, some with quite bizarre personal characteristics. In others, excessively loose, decentralised internal regimes have arisen, apparently in reaction against 'little bosses' and in the illusory hope that free debate and goodwill between them can automatically lead to correct policies. Others have tried the device of turning away from the mass organisations of the working class in the direction of 'new vanguards' or 'the left of the

bourgeois nationalism. Trotsky had pointed out in 1928, in that basic document of the Left Opposition, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch' that, on the one hand: '... the possibility of betrayal is always contained in reformism. But that does not mean that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Not quite. Temporary agreements may be made with reformists whenever they take a step forward.'

But at the same time, and on the next page, he warned:

'Manoeuvres bear only a subordinate, auxiliary and expedient character in relation to the basic methods of revolutionary struggle. Once and for all it must be grasped that a manoeuvre can never decide anything in great matters ... A manoeuvre can consist either of a concession to the enemy or an agreement with a temporary always dubious ally, or a well-timed retreat calculated to keep the enemy from our

them their chance, tend to be educated in the illusion that these leaders know more than they really do, and that their particular group is the 'one and only' representative of the 'continuity' of Trotskyism. Thus a 'cordon sanitaire' grows up between members of different groups. Discussion between them becomes a dialogue of the deaf. Objective study of what is going on and of each other's proposals is silenced. In mutual denigration, mutual slander and mutual obstruction, over a long period leaderships become ossified. As we have seen often, the crises which hit them (such as the miners' strike, to take just one example) find leaders and members alike unprepared to discuss reality, liable to fly apart and unable to trace to its roots the source of the crisis.

No one has avoided error. No one's experiences deserve to be written off. It is not 'original sin', but the hard experience of real life, within the framework of the real relations between Stalinism and imperialism through the last 40 years and more, which helps to explain our ill-success.

Richardson's document reveals, at any rate, that his method, that of piling up arbitrarily catalogued 'facts' and his disagreements with one and all does not lead to any practical result. Our period is rich enough in lessons, but they have to be evaluated, and the incidental separated from the relevant, not all dissolved in a general flood of either hagiography or denunciation. In my submission, the method which we need will take account of the dominant, persistent material conditions and then of the underlying political problems which we could not resolve. Only along this route can we get away from finger-wagging and name-calling. Only this way can we hope to restore their lost political meaning to such important political terms as 'sectarianism', 'ultra-leftism', 'opportunism' and 'centrism', which have been so ill-used as terms of abuse that their proper meanings have been lost. I am sure that there are many who would gladly study the sources and take part in a discussion of them on this basis, with far more pleasure than is afforded by chewing the chopped bristles of Richardson's current text.

Now that he has got off his chest his not-unreasonable (though subjective) disgust with the various outfits which he feels to have mucked him about, and whom he could not convince of the error of their ways (not an experience unique to him, he may be sure!), can he now bring himself to consider more scientifically the groups claiming to be for the Fourth International, from the angle of how they got to be the way they have been and of the principal characteristics of their development?

Anyway, let us have done with whitewash and with denunciation. What we seek are



Leon Trotsky and Natalia Sedova in Mexico

Who was there to educate those who hoped to be the educators of the workers and the oppressed? We were cut off from the possibility of testing our ideas in the practical experience of struggle. Is it surprising that we should more than once blow our chances even when we had painfully won a place on some battlefield of the class? In consequence, imperialism and Stalinism have had a wholly unmerited reprieve. But it would have been far more disastrous for workers and the oppressed if we had not tried, if we had let the bourgeoisie, the reformists and the Stalinists have all their own way.

In 1940 our links with the Russian Opposition were already broken. The murder of Trotsky then robbed us of our last living authoritative link with the generation that made the Russian October Revolution and founded the Communist International. Moreover, we were seriously deprived, until much later years, of the information, which

warning that these drafts, which were to be discussed by the 5th Congress, should consist 'neither of ultimate aims nor of immediate reforms'. But this instruction was lost forever in the process of Zinoviev's 'Bolshevisation' in 1924 and in the Stalinisation of the International thereafter on the basis of 'Socialism in a Single Country'.

By the later 1940s, the most opportunist tendencies in the Fourth International were tending to take off in search of greener pastures elsewhere. The sheer physical burden of holding revolutionary groups together over a long period of time, let alone of responding to rapid changes in the world situation and of building the organisations was beginning to tell. Since then successive leaderships have worn out and degenerated. During that process, in the absence of experience, the lure of short cuts to the building of the organisation could hardly be resisted. The result has been complex interweavings of opportunism

left'. Others again adopt eclectic combinations of these devices. But all of them have helped to increase the difficulties of the comrades, have spread confusion and prepared for splits. (How necessary it is to explain splits rather than to deplore them?)

Throughout the long years of internal struggles about what to do next and why, some comrades may have come closer than others to grasping the method of the Transitional Programme, which Richardson quotes with approval. Perhaps if these comrades had been better informed, or more experienced, they might have been harder to shout down. It is a risk which could be lessened today if the work, for example, of Pierre Broue on Germany in 1917-23 were more widely available, and more acceptable.

The problem of alliances is not a new one. In the hands of more than one leadership it has assumed a specific form of adaptation to tendencies in reformism, Stalinism or

throat, or, finally, the raising of partial demands and slogans in such succession as to split the enemy camp ... A concession must be called a concession and a retreat a retreat. It is infinitely less dangerous to exaggerate one's own concessions and retreats than to under-estimate them.'

This is a context within which we may better understand Healy's involvement with certain Arab bourgeois Bonapartist regimes. Less startling in their immediate results, though politically no less serious, are the illusions of some elements of the USec majority (though not confined to them) in those former Stalinist bureaucrats in Germany and elsewhere who hope to go on being bureaucrats by publicly repenting of their Stalinism.

But how do the Healys and the rest get away with it? In every group the active members, who feel the pressure of bourgeois society and who very properly want to be loyal to their leaders and to give

explanations. Maybe by that road we shall manage to identify what our principal mistakes have been and the underlying sources of them, irrespective of and despite our subjective intentions or desires, which have marked our history. Indeed, let us hope that Richardson will apply his undoubted talent and join in attacking such questions as:

1. Must our perspective today be one of reform, or does it make sense to work now for international proletarian revolution? If we accept that here and now the workers need a revolutionary international vanguard party, then on what programme should we be trying to construct it?

2. If, therefore, we should undertake today (as I believe we should) to re-draft the Transitional Programme of 1938 and to up-date it without revising its fundamentals, what specific elements in the 1938 document should we drop and what new elements should we include?

3. The study of the errors of the past and of the wrong ideas which persist from them makes sense only so long as we seek the positive lessons to draw from the decades since 1940: how, specifically, shall we embody these lessons in a new Transitional Programme adapted to the needs of the working class in Britain in the light of the coming General Election?

Comrade Trotsky advised us, in his preface to Volume II of *The History of the Russian Revolution*: "Spinoza's principle, 'not to weep or laugh, but to understand', gives warning against inappropriate laughter and untimely tears. It does not deprive anyone, even though it be a historian, of the right to a share of tears and laughter when justified by a correct understanding of the material itself. That purely individual irony, which spreads like a smoke of indifference over the whole effort and intention of mankind is the worst form of snobism. It rings false alike in artistic creations and works of history. But there is an irony deep laid in the very relations of life. It is the duty of the historian, as of the artist, to bring it to the surface."

We may rest assured that, even if Richardson may not be able to improve on the method which his piece reveals - others will!

November 9, 1990

Healyism and 'philosophy'

THE DECEMBER 20, 1990, issue of *Workers Press* carries an article by Geoff Pilling, entitled 'Mean and malignant', which continues the WRP's long-running vendetta against the Workers International League. After lumping the WIL together with defenders of capitalist exploitation, apologists for Stalinism and (of course) Gerry Healy, Pilling proceeds - without any apparent sense of irony - to accuse the WIL of an amalgam!

Our crime consists in having published a joint review of Cyril Smith's *Communist Society and Marxist Theory* and Healy's *Materialist Dialectics and the Political Revolution* (see *Workers News*, October-November, 1990). According to Pilling, this is a 'classic amalgam' because the only common ground between

COMMENT

Smith and Healy is that they have both recently published books on philosophy. If Pilling can get his followers to swallow that - and his article is clearly intended primarily to wall the faithful off from a consideration of the WIL's politics - it is only because the WRP membership has been kept in such ignorance of the real history of 'Healyism'.

As far back as 1945-6, Healy was denouncing his opponents in the Trotskyist movement as 'empiricists' hostile to 'the Marxist method' because they rejected his assertion that Britain was plunging into economic slump and revolutionary crisis. At that time, intellectuals in the movement treated

Healy's arguments with derision. But by the early 1960s Healy had recruited some rather more compliant members of the intelligentsia. His bogus 'philosophy' was now consciously resurrected in order to bolster the ludicrous claim that Castro's Cuba remained a bourgeois state. Those who pointed out that it was a strange sort of bourgeois state that had expropriated the entire Cuban capitalist class were, yet again, condemned for succumbing to empiricism and attacking Marxist methodology.

Throughout the following years, this fraudulent distortion of philosophy was indeed transformed into an 'obsession' by Healy and his academic sycophants, although its purpose was far from 'curious'. It served as a smokescreen for Healy's revisions and betrayals of the Trotskyist programme. Thus in 1974-5 Alan Thornett was accused of philosophical deviations ranging from Kantian agnosticism to Husserlian phenomenology, but his arguments concerning the WRP's abandonment of transitional demands went unanswered. Nor was the abuse of 'the Marxist method' in order to evade challenges on concrete political questions renounced after the split with Healy in 1985. Cyril Smith himself slapped down South African members of the Preparatory Committee, who had raised tactical differences with the WRP, with the comment that he wasn't interested in tactics, he was only interested in Marxism.

At the risk of appearing 'mean and malignant', we cannot resist pointing to another link between Healy and his former intellectual toadies - an inclination to 'borrow' passages without acknowledgement from Soviet textbooks on philosophy. Readers of *Workers News* might be interested in comparing page 94 of Pilling's *Marx's Capital: Philosophy and Political Economy* with page 176 of *Philosophy in the USSR: Problems of Dialectical Materialism* (Moscow 1977). They will find that Pilling has lifted a whole para-



Castro

graph with only minor changes in the wording. Of course, Pilling will no doubt retort that, in revealing the fact that



Healy

both he and Healy are common plagiarists, we are nothing but empiricists intent on producing an amalgam!

stage of capitalism in his fight against Kautskyism. To illustrate this point we can take Lenin's definition of imperialism and compare it with that given by Kautsky.

Lenin's definition:

Imperialism is Capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe amongst the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.

Kautsky's definition:

Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex all large areas of agrarian territory, irrespective of what nations inhabit it.

The version according to Pilling...

To illustrate this thesis let us compare Lenin's well-known definition of imperialism with the definition of imperialism given by Karl Kautsky.

Lenin's definition: "Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed." ****

Kautsky's definition: "Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex all large areas of agrarian [Kautsky's italics] territory, irrespective of what nations inhabit it." **

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 390.
 ** *Ibid.*, p. 392.
 *** *Ibid.*, p. 393.
 **** *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, pp. 266-67.
 * *Ibid.*, p. 268.

... and the Soviet textbook

Lessons of the Blue Union struggle

Dear Comrades,

I was very interested once more to read part seven of Bob Pitt's essay on 'The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy' (*Workers News*, December 1990-January 1991) with its description of the part played by Healy in the clash of the blue and the white unions, which has been the subject of an extensive mythology for some time. Perhaps a few observations can be added to his level-headed account.

The first is that as a result of this inter-union war and the breakaway encouraged by Healy, non-unionism appeared on the docks at Liverpool and Hull for the first time for a generation, greatly weakening the trade union movement as a whole. The second is that it was just not worth it anyway - Healy ended up not with a huge union and a big bureaucracy but with a small union with a smaller bureaucracy, largely run by a Roman Catholic who had escaped his tutelage. The third, and probably the most serious, was the strategic failure involved in cutting off the vanguard from the rank and file, though this was never a thing to worry Healy very much.

For the reactionary rule of Deakin and his ilk in the

T&GWU was in fact almost at an end, and under the influence of Jack Jones and others it swung to the left, throwing its weight behind resolutions for nuclear disarmament at Labour Conferences, proposed from the constituency side by, among others, Trotskyist Vivienne Mendelson. Thus a golden opportunity was missed even before it was presented to make the link between politics and trade unionism - to close the dangerous gap that has always existed between the trade union and political arms of the movement, a perennial weakness for the left. Moreover, it left the rank and file of the T&GWU at local level substantially under Stalinist domination with Trotskyist influence almost negligible, and it had to be rebuilt painfully from the bottom up in the years to come.

Does all this not strongly remind us of Trotsky's criticism of the POUM in the Spanish Civil War: 'To avoid sharp conflicts, they did not carry on revolutionary work They built instead "their own" trade unions By isolating the revolutionary vanguard from the class, the POUM rendered the vanguard impotent and left the class without leadership?'

Fraternally
 Al Richardson

The Phil Penn affair WE REST OUR CASE

REGULAR readers of *Workers News* will know that it has campaigned over the past six months for a workers' commission of inquiry into scurrilous allegations made by the WRP/*Workers Press* that members of the WIL beat up and framed WRP member Phil Penn in 1986. Penn served a brief term of imprisonment for grievous bodily harm in 1987 for seriously wounding WRP/*News Line* supporter Eric Rogers.

Workers News replied to these slanders in its first edition in April 1987 and for three years three months *Workers Press* went silent. Then, in June 1990, it relaunched its slander campaign against the WIL. Once again, *Workers News* replied to the allegations. The WIL also wrote to the WRP/*Workers Press* Central Committee on July 26, 1990, refuting its evidence in great detail and challenging it to participate in a workers' commission of inquiry and in a public debate. This letter has gone unanswered for six months and the only article in *Workers Press* purporting to answer our charges was a grossly inaccurate piece by non-

WRP member Peter Fryer in his 'Personal Column'. In the meantime, letters supporting a commission of inquiry have been suppressed from *Workers Press*'s letters column.

After repeated assurances, both publicly and to its members, that it would reply to the WIL, the WRP has failed to get its act together, despite dark rumours that it has a 'new' witness up its sleeve. If the WRP is thinking at this late stage of fabricating evidence, then we would warn them that we have received information that one of their ex-members states that Penn was itching for a fight on the night that he attacked Eric Rogers. Furthermore, the WIL has another direct witness to the events, who has never testified up until now.

Whilst WIL members remain ready at any time to testify before a workers' commission of inquiry, we see no purpose in prolonging a campaign against an opponent who refuses to answer. Nor do we see any point in setting up our own commission when the WRP refuses in advance to take part,

although veteran Trotskyists have come forward to offer to participate.

The workers' movement should draw its own inference from the WRP's silence, and from the fact that no less than five organisations who were formerly members or observers of the WRP's 'Preparatory Committee' have supported the call for an inquiry. We therefore consider this matter closed and rest our case.

The following list of organisations and individuals supported the call for a workers' inquiry: **International:** Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (Belgium/Germany); Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (Argentina); Ben, Vusi, Jimmy, Mtshana and Theresa (South African Trotskyists); Voce Operaia (Italy); Revolutionär Kommunistische Liga (Austria); Maulwurf (Germany); Revolutionary Workers Party (Sri Lanka); Workers Socialist League (USA).

Britain: Workers Power; Revolutionary Internationalist League.

Journals: *Searchlight South Africa*; *Revolutionary History* Editorial Board: (in a personal

capacity) Al Richardson, Barry Buitekant, Paul Flewers.

Labour Party: (in a personal capacity) Ellis Hillman (councillor, Barnet); Clive Boutle (former councillor, Haringey); Steve King (former leader, Haringey Council); Edna Griffiths (councillor, Islington).

Trade Unionists: Peter Farrell (treasurer, Kentish Town and Hampstead UCATT/ex-WRP CC member); John Rees (ex-chair Tower Hamlets Printworkers' Support Group/Workers Power supporter); Hal MacDermot, Alton Williams, Bob Russell (branch secretary) (all RMT Willesden No.1 Branch); Andy Fletcher (secretary, Tower Hamlets Health Branch, NALGO); Jim Mansfield (secretary, Hampstead Health Branch, NALGO); John Pestle (secretary, City and Hackney Health Branch, NALGO); Paul Duployen (chair, Bloomsbury Health Branch, NALGO).

Others: Gary Hollingsbee (ex-YS National Committee); Mick Byrne (ex-WRP CC/ex-ICP CC); Linda Byrne (ex-WRP Western Region Committee/ex-ICP); Arthur Shute (a Trotskyist since 1937).

WIL PUBLICATIONS

FOR THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN CHINA!

Articles and documents 1989-90
 Price £1.00 plus 50p postage and packing

ROUMANIA AND BESSARABIA
 by Christian Rakovsky
 Price £1.00 plus 50p postage and packing

THE WRP AND THE 'REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION' (1978)

by Jack Gale
 Price 50p plus 30p postage and packing

WHAT NEXT?
 AND OTHER WRITINGS FROM 1917
 by Leon Trotsky
 Price £2 plus 50p postage and packing

Please send me:

..... Enclosed £.....

Name

Address

.....

Send to: WIL, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by Bob Pitt

PART EIGHT

BY THE end of 1955, Gerry Healy's political fortunes were at a low ebb. The split with John Lawrence two years earlier had cost Healy half his membership, including leading trade unionists and most of the youth. His submission to the Labour right wing's ban on *Socialist Outlook* had left him without a public organ, while the Group's press had been bankrupted by a libel action, forcing it into liquidation. The Bevanite movement, on which Healy had pinned his political strategy, was in decline after Labour's defeat in the May 1955 general election. And his attempt to win an industrial base by organising the 'Blue Union' breakaway on the docks had ended in failure.

Healy's only success that year was the recruitment of the 'Marxist Group' from the Labour Party League of Youth. One of its members, Ellis Hillman, recalls finding Healy 'very, very demoralised' at this time. 'There were points at which one began to wonder whether Gerry was thinking of chucking the whole thing in. I clearly remember him looking through the window at Sternhold Avenue and desperately asking his Executive Committee: "What the hell are we doing here? None of you are prepared to take any initiative whatsoever. I have to do everything!" It was a genuine cry of despair...'¹

Healy was saved by the crisis which broke out in the Stalinist movement in 1956. The CPSU 20th Congress in February and the subsequent leaking of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin's crimes, was followed in November by the bloody suppression of the Hungarian revolution, an action fully supported by the British CP leaders. As a result, the Communist Party of Great Britain lost about a third of its 30,000 members. While most of these ex-CPers renounced Marxism or abandoned politics altogether, Healy was able to win a number of important recruits (perhaps as many as 200) to the Group. Two of them - Cliff Slaughter and Tom Kemp - were to remain with Healy until his expulsion from the WRP almost 30 years later.

It is necessary, however, to demolish the myth that Healy's successful intervention in the CPGB was made possible 'on the basis of the 1953 split' in the Fourth International, or by 'the clarification which had been achieved through the struggle against Pabloite revisionism'.² In fact, Healy's initial response to the 20th Congress was the purist 'Pabloism'. Basing himself on Mikoyan's speech to the Congress attacking the 'cult of the personality', Healy announced to a stunned London area aggregate of the Group that the political revolution had now begun in the Soviet Union and that Anastas Mikoyan represented the Reiss (ie the revolutionary) tendency in the bureaucracy.³ Healy quickly retreated from this position. But his only published reaction to the 1956 Congress, while emphasising that the restoration of democratic rights in the Soviet Union required 'a successful struggle against the bureaucracy', stopped short of spelling out the need for a political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist regime.⁴

The Group's impact on the CPGB crisis was the product not of any political clarity on Stalinism, but of Healy's considerable organisational skills.

His ability to spot a political opportunity and go for it with everything he had, which in other situations led to grossly opportunist results, in this case enabled real political gains to be made. With characteristic energy and pugnacity, Healy now directed all the group's resources towards the CP. Labour Party work was temporarily put on the back burner and Group members who had spent the best part of a decade pretending to be left social democrats found themselves agitating openly as Trotskyists at CP meetings. 'I don't think there can be any doubt about this,' Hillman states. 'It was Healy's attack that broke the morale of the CP after the 1956 Congress.'⁵

An early recruit to the Group was Nottingham CPer John Daniels who wrote in to *Tribune* explaining that he had begun a 'fundamental criticism' of Stalinism and offering like-minded comrades a suggested reading list which ranged from Arthur Koestler to Leon Trotsky.⁶ John Archer immediately replied on behalf of the Group, steering Daniels away from anti-Communist writers and towards the revolutionary critique of Stalinism contained in *The Revolution Betrayed*.⁷ This exchange led to Daniels visiting Archer in Leeds for a discussion, and soon after he became a member of the Group.⁸ Healy himself was to make a particularly effective use of literature in his political assault on the Stalinist movement. In the following period he would visit hundreds of CP dissidents, providing them with a basic reading course in Trotskyist writings.⁹

In the course of 1956 Healy managed to raise the finance for a new printing press.¹⁰ These facilities, modest though they were, played a crucial role in cementing political relations with Peter Fryer, the *Daily Worker* correspondent in Hungary during the revolution. Having returned to Britain to find that his sympathetic reports on the workers' uprising had been spiked, Fryer turned to the capitalist press to publicise his story and for this he was expelled from the CP. Healy arranged a meeting with Fryer and offered to print his appeal against expulsion, an offer which Fryer gratefully accepted. Healy also organised a series of meetings for Fryer to explain his case to the labour movement.¹¹ With the new press, in January 1957 Healy was able to relaunch the journal *Labour Review* in a new, larger, format explicitly aimed at the Communist Party milieu with John Daniels and veteran Healyite Bob Shaw as co-editors. The journal was instrumental in attracting further CP rebels to the Group, notably the historian Brian Pearce,¹² who was able to contribute a number of pioneering articles on the Stalinist degeneration of the CPGB.

In his pamphlet *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Hungary*, Healy urged dissident CPers to 'immediately demand a special Congress to repudiate the leadership's line on Hungary. STAY IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND FIGHT IT OUT'.¹³ This, indeed, was the approach adopted by the CP oppositionists and in April 1957 a special party congress, the first in the CPGB's history, was held in Hammersmith. Healy organised a major intervention Fryer's appeal, published in pamphlet form as *Hungary*

and the Communist Party: An Appeal Vs Exulsion, was distributed at the door, while inside the congress Brian Bevan, a militant building worker who had joined the Group, acted as one of the main spokesmen for the anti-Stalinist opposition. Fryer, meanwhile, laboured through the night to produce a daily bulletin reporting and commenting on the congress proceedings.¹⁴

The congress was packed so efficiently by the CP leadership that on all the disputed issues - Hungary, inner-party democracy and Fryer's expulsion - the opposition was overwhelmingly defeated.¹⁵ But the political ferment in the CP did not abate. A week after the Hammersmith congress, the Socialist Forum movement - launched by CP dissidents to provide an organisational framework for political discussion - held a national conference at Wortley Hall in Yorkshire. Here Healy, who attended with a small delegation from the Group, demonstrated an admirable degree of tactical subtlety. Instead of crowing over the Stalinists' crisis and claiming that Trotskyism had been vindicated, as many there no doubt expected him to do, Healy advised the conference: 'This is the season for reading books, not burning them... Read and study. Examine every point of view.'¹⁶ He left it to Brian Pearce to put forward a Trotskyist historical analysis of the 'Lessons of the Stalin era'.¹⁷ Given Pearce's reputation as a CP historian, this obviously made a much greater impact on the conference than a lecture from a known Trotskyist would have done.

Impressed by Fryer's work on the Hammersmith bulletin, Healy took him on as a full-time professional to produce a weekly paper for the Group. This appeared in May 1957 as the *Newsletter*. The paper claimed editorially that it had 'no sectional axe to grind',¹⁸ but its real purpose, as Healy explained to Fryer, was to provide a pole of attraction for CP dissidents 'so that we can catch them for our movement'.¹⁹ Healy allowed a fairly free hand to Fryer whose journalistic talents guaranteed a high standard of partisan working class reporting. As usual with Healy, there was undoubtedly a strong opportunist element in all this. Nevertheless, along with the theoretical work in the bi-monthly *Labour Review*, the *Newsletter* enabled the Group to become the focal point for both intellectuals and militant workers breaking with Stalinism. By contrast, the small ex-RCP groups led by Ted Grant and Tony Cliff were able to make virtually no gains from the CP crisis, having been completely outmanoeuvred by Healy.

However, although Healy employed the literary heritage of Trotskyism to good effect in recruiting from the CP, there was an evident gulf between the revolutionary content of Trotsky's classic writings and the actual practice of the Group, buried as it was deep in the Labour Party. One former CPer, in a contribution to the internal bulletin, while putting forward an ultra-left argument against Labour Par-



Soviet tanks roll into Budapest, Hungary, in 1956

ty work, nonetheless made some telling points against the Healyites' promotion of *Tribune*. This he characterised, not inaccurately, as 'feeding mass illusions to the workers by the mass sale of reformist literature'. He dismissed the prospect of an imminent split in the Labour Party, which Healy in 1956 had apparently predicted within six months, and rejected Bevan's credentials as a leader of the left.²⁰

In reply, Healy accepted that Bevan was a parliamentary reformist incapable of providing the working class with revolutionary leadership. 'Tribune, however,' Healy assured his critic, 'is different! Indeed, according to Healy, pressure from the Tribunites had forced Bevan 'further and further to the left'.²¹ This judgement was to be falsified within a matter of months. At the 1957 Labour Party conference when Group member Vivienne Mendelson moved a resolution from Norwood CLP in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament, it was the 'leftward moving' Bevan himself who put his rhetorical powers at the service of the right wing in order to secure the defeat of what he condemned as 'an emotional spasm'.²²

If Healy's approach to social democracy was at odds with the principles Trotsky had fought for, his attitude to internationalism was no less so. The withdrawal into 'national Trotskyism', inherent in the federal structure of the IC, is confirmed by Hillman's experiences on joining Healy's organisation in 1955. 'I do recall continuous denunciations of Pabloism,' he states. 'But I cannot recall a single

report from any of the so-called sections of the International Committee. It appeared to be a totally insular group.'²³ The numerical and political strengthening of Healy's Group during 1956-7, due to the influx of former CPers, only reinforced this nationalist outlook.

It never seemed to have occurred to Healy that the expanded resources of the Group might be used to build up the IC, whose effectiveness as an international leadership may be gauged by the fact that it had failed even to issue a statement on the CPSU's 20th Congress.²⁴ Healy's main concern was that his organisation in Britain should no longer be regarded as the poor relation of the SWP, but recognised as an equal partner. As he explained to Cannon, whereas in the past the British section had been politically dependent on the US Trotskyists, it was now 'reaching a position where we can help our American comrades'.²⁵ Peng Shu-tse commented irately that Healy's offers of assistance would be better directed towards the weak IC sections in France and Italy, where Stalinist parties of much greater size and political significance than the CPGB were also in crisis. Yet, despite repeated requests from Peng, Healy failed even to stump up the finance for the Italian group to send a delegate to IC meetings.²⁶ And this was the man, it will be recalled, who in the 1940s had broken up the British section in the course of a vicious factional struggle waged under the banner of 'internationalism'!

To be continued

Notes

1. Interview with Ellis Hillman, December 28, 1990. Executive and National Committee meetings were held at Healy's house in Sternhold Avenue, Streatham.
2. G. Pilling et al., in *Tasks of the Fourth International*, May 1990; D. North, in *International Worker*, February 24, 1990. These writers merely echo Healy's own fraudulent claim cf. *How Pablo and Healy Blocked Reunification*, SWP, 1978, p.34.
3. Hillman interview. 'The reaction of the comrades was a mixture of amazement and bafflement...' Hillman recounts. 'Even Mike Banda looked a bit astonished!'
4. *Tribune*, March 9, 1956. With unconscious irony, Healy noted that the congress decisions were 'unanimous and unopposed - a method sharply in contrast with the tradition of Lenin'.
5. Ellis Hillman, interviewed by Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein, June 19, 1978. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
6. *Tribune*, June 22, 1956.
7. *Ibid.*, June 29, 1956.
8. Information from John Archer.
9. D. Widery, *The Left in Britain, 1956-68*, Peregrine, 1976, pp.60-1; Peter Fryer, interviewed in *Workers Press*, September 13, 1986.
10. Anon., 'The disunity of theory and practice: the Trotskyist movement in Great Britain since 1945', typescript in Socialist Platform library. According to this account, Mike and Tony Banda were the main source of finance for the new press.
11. Fryer interview.
12. Brian Pearce interviewed in *Workers Press*, December 6, 1986.
13. G. Healy, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Hungary*, New Park, 1957, p.14.
14. Fryer interview.
15. *Daily Worker*, April 22-23, 1957.
16. *Newsletter*, May 10, 1957.
17. Pearce interview. The speech is summarised in the *Newsletter* report, but Pearce is not named, presumably because he was still a CP member.
18. *Newsletter*, May 10, 1957.
19. Fryer interview.
20. *Forum*, February 1957.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Labour Party Conference Report, 1957, pp.165-6, 181.
23. Hillman interview, December 1990.
24. *How Healy and Pablo Blocked Reunification*, p.77.
25. *Ibid.*, p.34.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.77, 79.

When the 'Communists' allied with Hitler

AS THE British Communist Party grows smaller it drifts further to the right, on the principle that the better part of valour is discretion. It has come to realise that acceptance into the respectable political culture of the day cannot simply be achieved by repeated attacks upon class politics and low intrigues to force Labour into power-sharing by means of proportional representation, or even by syndicated columns in *The Times*. Like any other parvenu, it finds it necessary to show that its family connections go back a long way.

And whilst the marriage of the CPGB into 'British democracy' does indeed go back a long way – to the period of the Popular Front (1935-39) and the latter part of the Second World War (1941-45) – there is the little matter of the period in between. In the last dozen years we have therefore been subjected to book after book explaining that when the CPGB changed its line in 1939 into what the Labour Party then called 'exonerating Hitler', it had not liked it, and tried not to carry it out (K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*), and that the change of line was forced upon it under protest anyway (J. Attfield and S. Williams, 1939: *The Communist Party and the War*). The book under review here is meant to provide some of the evidence to back up the second supposition.

When we recall that the CPGB was the most servile party in the Comintern, to the extent of boasting that it had no factions within it (Motion of the enlarged plenum of the ECCI, February 1925) and was for that reason chosen to propose the expulsion of Trotsky from the ECCI (*Against the Stream*, p.21), it comes as a surprise to learn that 'the British Communist Party displayed a greater degree of initial independence', so the preface asserts, 'than any other Communist Party towards the line' in 1939 (p.14). This is a bit of a fib to start off with, when we remember that nearly a third of the MPs of the French Communist Party resigned rather than carry it out and the Ceylonese group did not carry it out at all, as the Trotskyists moved to expel the Stalinists from their ranks. Another piece of economy with the truth is the remark about the CPGB's 'long-standing principled position that aggressive German Fascism had to be opposed by all possible means' (p.13), since it had rejected the proposal for a Communist-Socialist United Front against Fascism as 'disruptive and counter-revolutionary' long before (*Daily Worker*, May 26, 1932), and was about to return to a line favourable to Nazi Germany in 1939-41 (described by the Labour Party as 'how the Communists played Hitler's game', and 'a record of hypocrisy and treachery to the workers of Europe'), apart from the fact that its masters in the USSR had been secretly negotiating with Hitler all the time, as Robert Tucker and Louis Fischer have demonstrated. A third lie refers to the 'heroic efforts by small groups of Communists' in Germany during the 'first months of the war' (p.32), by which it presumably means Ulbricht's instruction in *Die Welt* (February 2, 1940) for Communists, Social Democrats and Nazis to 'expose' to the authorities opponents of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, perhaps to that same Gestapo to whom the NKVD was delivering anti-Nazis who had taken refuge in the Soviet Union (Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators*; Weissberg-Cybulski, *Hexensabbat*).

Thus the raison d'être of this book is to save the honour of the British Communist Party by making the most of the initial hesitation of Campbell, Gallacher and Pollitt to carrying out the 1939 turn, a heroic verbal

struggle of all of 25 days (it was all over by November 19). Campbell, the arch-liar of the Moscow Trials, is commended for a 'realistic, down to earth assessment' (p.40), and Gallacher (notorious for his attacks upon his Labour opponent in the post-war elections as a pacifist during the war) for his 'honesty' and 'critical mindedness' (p.38). But the main lion of the show is meant to be Harry Pollitt, whose opposition is put down to his 'deep and sincere convictions' (p.37). Is this really the same Harry Pollitt who got his job in the first place in 1929 when Albert Inkpin had been removed for supporting 'the right danger', who was sent by Stalin to remove Jay Lovestone from his leadership of the American Communist Party in 1929 (rather like Springhall's intervention in 1939), and who kept silent when one of his intimates, Rose Cohen, perished at the hands of the NKVD in 1938?

About Turn: The Communist Party and the Outbreak of the Second World War
The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings, 1939
Edited by Francis King and George Matthews
Lawrence & Wishart, £34.95

Reviewed by Al Richardson

yourself out from the leadership of the Party' (p.211), and 'when I speak of deserters I was wanting to present to these comrades what it would mean for them to go out of the leadership in such a situation ...' (p.285). It is for this reason that Pollitt capitulated, rather than the more sinister threats from Bert Ramelson's wife (p.262) and the 'coalfield radical' Idris Cox¹ that they should consider 'arranging for him to have a talk in Moscow' (p.248). For Dutt was thrusting

himself out from the leadership of the Party' (p.211), and 'when I speak of deserters I was wanting to present to these comrades what it would mean for them to go out of the leadership in such a situation ...' (p.285). It is for this reason that Pollitt capitulated, rather than the more sinister threats from Bert Ramelson's wife (p.262) and the 'coalfield radical' Idris Cox¹ that they should consider 'arranging for him to have a talk in Moscow' (p.248). For Dutt was thrusting

were too readily prepared to fit in that new development with the previous policy which we had associated with the Soviet Union, and failed to really go deeply enough into it at that time. I should have pressed in the discussion for a fuller consideration of it. I mention this because I believe that we must do the same thing again at every important turn' (pp.237-8). The party's philosopher, Maurice Cornforth, was evidently still at an early stage in his researches into distinguishing between faith and reason, when he admits that 'perhaps it sounds rather silly in some ways to have oneself in the position where when the Soviet Union does something one is willing constantly at first, while thinking it over, to follow what the Soviet Union is doing, but I must say that I personally have got that sort of faith in the Soviet Union, to be willing to do that, because I believe that if one loses anything of that faith in the

war by the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council at the end of September 1939 as being 'the greatest victory the party has ever gained in the sense that they were fighting on three fronts, fighting the pacifists, the ILPers and Trotskyists, and the right wing of the Labour movement in what was the filthiest debate that has ever taken place in the City Council' (p.192), whereas the truth of the matter was that the Trotskyist speakers were arguing in support of the resolution that was passed! (cf *War and the International*, p.9).

Whether the publication of these minutes will gain the Communist Party any new friends in respectable politics remains to be seen. Well-placed notices in *The Guardian* (December 10) and *The Independent* (December 9 and 11) suggest that it might, though the more difficult part of this historical cleaning-up operation lies not in the precise events of the change of line in 1939, but in trying to disguise the pro-German thrust of the politics of the following period. This is already hinted at in these discussions, where James Shields tries to argue that 'defeat of British imperialism does not mean that we have suddenly become pro-Hitler', but that if the new line is put 'incorrectly or unclearly we can give the impression that we are putting a line which means that we are pro-Hitler' (p.265), and Peter Kerrigan already reports that 'I have been at work-gates and dockers' meetings in Glasgow, and have had interruptions, even in a factory where I worked as an apprentice, where they talked to me, and where I met very considerable hostility amongst the workers' (p.253). The Communist Party's fellow travellers in the Labour history industry have already set to work² on the more difficult task of trying to pretend that their politics during this period did not have this aspect at all, but are only able to carry it forward by selecting carefully from the party's own statements between 1939-41, and by ignoring what the whole of the rest of the Labour and trade union movements were saying about them at the time, as well as such uncomfortable facts already admitted that Communist school teachers were subjected to mocking Hitler salutes from their pupils (Attfield and Williams, pp.123-4). For their pacifism and defeatism were anything but revolutionary at the time.

But as Pollitt is clearly meant to be the hero of this book, perhaps it is wisest to let him have the final say:

'I don't envy the comrades who can so lightly in the space of a week, and sometimes in the space of a day, go from one political conviction to another. I don't believe that augurs well for a leadership that can command the confidence of the party, the working class and the majority of the people' (p.200).

1. Workers News, October-November 1989.
2. K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*, Manchester U.P., 1990.



The CPGB Executive Committee during the 1940s

In order to understand what is really going on in these minutes it is necessary to grasp the mechanism at work in the CPGB whenever it had a sudden change of line imposed from Moscow. The British party was far too small to make a habit of the large-scale purges and expulsions that were the rule on such occasions in other Communist parties. What generally happened was that a section of the leadership was singled out for public criticism, blamed for the supposed 'failure' of the old line, and demoted from their positions which a new group moved up to fill. This scenario was generally orchestrated by Palme Dutt, who came to the fore at such times, and the outgoing leaders had a 'self-criticism' dictated to them by which they alone accepted the blame for the now discarded policy. Then, if they kept their heads down and behaved themselves for long enough, they might hope at some time in the future (the next change of line, perhaps) to regain their bureaucratic posts.

It is against this background that we must understand Dutt's repeated personal threats to Pollitt – that 'he knows very well that if we have used very sharp terms it is because we are fighting to save his political life and he knows that this is our last measure. We have tried every measure so that you don't put



Palme Dutt

at a very weak spot in Pollitt's armour. In spite of his remark that he was 'never an office boy' (p.209) he ingenuously describes in his autobiography how his mother advised him early in life to get his feet under a desk and keep them there. A footnote to these minutes (p.48, n.61) also shows how well Herbert Morrison was informed by the Intelli-

Few surprises emerge in the rest of the minutes, unless we are still prepared to be surprised by the general low level of the debate. Ted Bramley sets the tone for the peculiar mixture of naivety and cynicism: 'I have been surprised with other comrades, at each new event made by Soviet policy, because I did not understand them I felt we

Soviet Union one is done for as a Communist and Socialist' (pp.130-1).

As regards references to Trotskyists, colossal ignorance and monumental lying combine in equal degree. They are described as being on the same side as the ILP, the pacifists, the Fifth Column, and the Fascists (pp.113, 133, 138, etc) and as holding the view that 'Fascism makes no difference' to the war (p.26). George Allison describes the resolution condemning the

SUBSCRIBE TO Workers News

	6 issues	12 issues
INLAND	£3.50	£7.00
Europe, Ireland & overseas (surface)	£4.40	£8.80
Europe, Ireland (letter rate)	£5.10	£10.20
North Africa, Middle East, Asia, Americas, Africa, Caribbean (air)	£6.10	£12.20
Australia, Far East (air)	£6.60	£13.20

Name Encl.£.....

Address

Send to Workers News, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE



Tories begin the break-up of the NHS

ON APRIL 1, an important stage in the Tory government's strategy for dismembering the National Health Service comes into effect.

Since 1979, government attacks on the NHS have been concentrated on reducing state expenditure and weakening trade union organisation among NHS employees. Sophisticated campaigns overseen by Tory Central Office have been used to create the impression that the health service is top heavy with administrators. Clerical and ancillary staff have been vilified and accused of putting job demarcation before patients. Strikes organised by unionised sections of low-paid, mainly women workers against reductions in their living standards and management demands for flexible working practices have been portrayed by the Tories as an obstacle to improving health care.

In reality, the Tory onslaught on the NHS has seen the closure of 400 hospitals, a reduction of 25 per cent in the number of beds available, down from 362,000 in 1979 to 270,000 in 1990, while waiting lists have mushroomed to include nearly 1 million patients.

Today, NHS employees, including nursing, ambulance, clerical and ancillary staff, work in a hostile atmosphere of increasingly severe discipline and in buildings which for the most part are decaying due to the hundreds of millions of pounds of maintenance money withheld by the government. In many areas, trade unions now represent less than a quarter of the workforce. Drastic cuts in staffing levels have been sustained among the low-paid ancillary, clerical, technical and secretarial staff.

On April 1, the NHS will be divided up into purchasing and providing sectors. Existing health authorities, reinforced by all shades of government sympathisers, will be responsible for assessing the level of health care to be provided to the local population. Contracts designed to meet this level of service are being drawn up throughout the NHS with the assistance of those general practitioners who support the scheme - and who have accepted the role of purchasers of health care.

The task of providing the care falls to hospitals, clinics, health centres and ambulance services, who will be forced to compete for contracts together with the new NHS trusts.

According to a government spokesperson, the first 66 trusts, whose services will be

The first of a two-part article in which Ian Harrison looks at the implications of the NHS 'internal market'

'mostly free at the point of use', will come into being on April 1 and are to be the 'model for health care in the future'. The NHS trusts range in size from small hospitals, ambulance services and community health centres up to entire existing health districts, such as the London Hospital group in Tower Hamlets. The trusts will be operationally independent of the NHS. They will have the right to acquire and sell assets, including property and equipment, employ their own staff and set the terms and conditions of service, as well as advertise their services. The trusts will receive no funds directly from the Department of Health. Their sole source of income will be revenue earned by competing for contracts from health authorities, insurance companies and the private sector. The trusts will, however, be able to borrow funds from the Secretary of State and commercial sources. Under the terms of their establishment, they must show a six per cent return on their capital assets and break even from year to year.

The setting up of trusts drives a wedge into the existing nationally planned health service and will, if not successfully opposed by work-

ers' action, lead to the disintegration of the NHS. Following the successful application by the first 56 trusts, a second wave of 200 hospitals and service groups has declared an interest in opting out of the NHS by April 1, 1992.

In spite of propaganda that it is not seeking to destroy the NHS, there can be no doubt that this is the government's intention. Vital services established since 1948, on which workers and their families depend, are to be abolished. This is proven beyond dispute by the refusal of the new Minister of Health, William Waldegrave, to listen to the advice of his own financial experts and independent consultants to the Department of Health who have warned that over 50 of the applicants for trust status are not financially viable.

The refusal of the Labour Party and TUC leaders to support the struggle of health workers in the previous decade, and mount a serious sustained campaign against the Tory onslaught on the NHS, has opened the door to a further round of attacks. In part two of this article their role will be examined, together with the tasks facing the working class in defending services vital to their interests.

No major policy changes

FORTUNATELY for John Major, he is having a good war. For if ever there was an opportune time for the Tories to have the spotlight taken off domestic issues, it is now.

On top of the party crisis which prompted the change of leadership, the British economy is now in its worst recession for a decade. The latest CBI quarterly survey, published at the end of January, is the gloomiest since 1981. Output and investment have slumped and are expected to get even worse. Export orders are down. Last autumn's estimate that the economy overall will shrink by one per cent this year will have to be revised.

When he took over as prime minister in late November 1990, Major knew he had to address concerns over Tory policy which had led to Margaret Thatcher's removal. In his first few days of

office, broad hints were dropped to the media that a series of U-turns was imminent.

In reality, there has been a handful of judicious minor concessions which has cost the Exchequer very little:

□ On December 11, it was announced that haemophiliacs infected with HIV through blood transfusions would be awarded an additional £42 million compensation. Not only was the amount derisory - £23,500 for each infected individual - but there was no pledge to increase funding for research into the virus, nor to provide proper care for AIDS patients infected via sexual contact or shared needles.

□ Under the pretence of concern for the homeless, but really intended to sweep the embarrassing 'cardboard cities' off the streets of the capital, the government announced on December 18 that £81 million would be



TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

On January 26, about 1,000 people took part in the annual demonstration through London to commemorate Bloody Sunday in 1972, when British paratroopers murdered 14 unarmed civil rights protesters in Derry. Speakers at the pre-march rally called for solidarity with Iraq.

On a more humorous note, members of the Socialist Workers Party, which has boycotted the demonstration for years, turned up to hand out placards in their usual opportunist fashion. So few marchers accepted this generous offer that three SWP members were forced to scuttle away from the demonstration bearing armfuls of the offending items.

By Philip Marchant

spent on providing more hostel accommodation in London. Since 1979, homelessness has increased dramatically as a direct result of Tory housing policy. In the 1970s, about 200,000 council houses were built each year. The annual figure is now less than a quarter of that. The only way to tackle homelessness is to provide low-rent housing.

□ Also on December 18, £81 million was earmarked for health authorities to help balance their books prior to the introduction of the NHS 'internal market' on April 1. Up to now, health managers have resorted to cutting services - 40,000 NHS beds were closed last year alone. The government's purpose, however, is not to defend the NHS, but to

ensure that its break-up can go ahead on schedule.

□ The following day, Home Secretary Kenneth Baker criticised the Home Office response to an inquiry into cell deaths, and promised a long-term programme of upgrading prison facilities. 'Conditions in many of our prisons and remand centres are quite unsatisfactory,' he said with a degree of understatement considering that the annual number of suicides has more than doubled since 1986. And the solution? That was to become clearer by the end of January, when Baker gave his support to a Tory backbench amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill calling for the privatisation of all new prisons.

The government is intent on deepening the attacks on the working class initiated under Thatcher. Major has made it clear that the Tory principle that everyone has to pay something

towards local services will remain. When asked on TV-am's *Frost on Sunday* on January 6 what he would do if Michael Heseltine proposed the abolition of the poll tax, Major replied: 'I am sure he won't suggest that, the situation won't arise.' On January 24, he told the 1922 Committee that he didn't think it viable to continue with a tax which allowed half of the charge payers to be relieved of the payments. Far from pointing to abolition, Major's statements indicate either enforced collection under the present system, or a new two-tier system - a reduced poll tax alongside a reformed rates.

Finally, it should be noted that Major has welcomed with open arms the fastest-rising unemployment rate since 1981. It was proof, he told parliament on December 13, that the government's anti-inflation policy was working.