



TORIES DOWN BUT NOT OUT

IF THE TORIES imagined that getting rid of Thatcher would solve their problems and unite the party for a fourth term of office, they have suffered a rude awakening. Their original plan – to remove Thatcher, dump the poll tax, patch up the economy and go for an early general election – has come badly unstuck. This was underlined by the Tories' disastrous showing in the local government elections of May 2, when they lost 890 seats and control of 42 councils.

The promotion of John Major as the new 'human' face of Toryism has failed to conceal the fact that his government, far from embracing some sort of 'one nation' Conservatism, remains committed to essen-

tially Thatcherite policies. The Tories are proceeding with the break-up of the National Health Service, as Health Secretary William Waldegrave's arrogant response to the crisis in 'self-governing trusts' like Guy's Hospital has confirmed. They intend to press ahead with yet more privatisations in order to finance tax handouts to the wealthy. Labour-controlled local authorities will continue to be starved of central government funds, with the aim of forcing through further cuts in services and jobs. And a new anti-union law is being considered, which would make it illegal to strike without first giving seven days notice, or 14 days in the case of public sector

By Bob Pitt and David Lewis

workers.

Even the abolition of the poll tax, which represented such a humiliating climbdown by the Tories, has left unchallenged the basic Thatcherite principle of penalising the working class in order to line the pockets of the rich. The new nine-band council tax, with its ceiling of £160,000, is blatantly designed to favour mansion-owning Tory supporters. So much for the talk of a 'classless society' which accompanied Major's elevation to the Tory party leadership.

Insofar as the government has shifted from Thatcher's more extreme policies, particularly with regard to Europe, it has only succeeded in opening up divisions within the Tory party itself. So hostile have some sections of the party become to Major, who they originally hailed as Thatcher's chosen successor, that they are prepared to see the Tories lose the next general election as a necessary step towards clearing out the compromisers and restoring true Thatcherism.

As the Tories struggle to pacify the middle classes by ditching the poll tax, and attempt to paper over the cracks in their own ranks, they have been assailed by a 'worsening economic crisis. April saw the biggest monthly increase in unemployment since records began, much of it in the Tory heartlands of the South-east. Company bankruptcies are predicted to rise from 15,000 last year to 20,000 this year. Government economic policy has come under fire from such unlikely quarters as the International Monetary Fund, the Institute of Directors, the Engineering Employers Federation, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and the Tory-dominated back-bench Treasury select committee. None of them hold out much hope for a recovery this year. The 'economic miracle' of the Eighties has been revealed as a fraud, and even the Tories' traditional allies are waking up to this.

Major is thus saddled with the political and economic legacy of Thatcher but is unable to effect any fundamental changes in policy without provoking a fight with the right wing of his own party. The result is a weak and vacillating government, hanging on to office in the hope that things will somehow improve before it is compelled to call a general election. The single-mindedness and self-confidence which won Thatcher support from the middle classes and backward workers have now evaporated.

The Tories' disarray should present Labour with a golden opportunity. But even the much-hyped launch of the policy document 'Labour's Better Way for the 1990s' failed to conceal the narrowness of the policy differences between Major's Tory party and Kinnock's right-wing social-democratic remould of the Labour Party. Speaking on LWT's Walden programme on April 28, Kinnock conceded that he shared with John Major the desire for 'a genuinely free society of opportunity, a clean country and a competitive country', noting only that he did not think the Tories could achieve these aims. It is not surprising that, judging by the May local election results, Labour would be hard-pressed to win an overall parliamentary majority at a general election.

Kinnock has succeeded in committing the Labour leadership to a programme indistinguishable from that advocated by the 'Gang of Four'

INSIDE

Socialism and the market

First English translation of a speech by Leon Trotsky on the NEP

Pages 4-5

when they split to form the SDP a decade ago. Not only has he dropped any verbal commitment to socialism as Labour's ultimate objective, but he is unwilling to consider even a radical capitalist alternative to the Thatcherite line of low taxation, low public expenditure and privatisation. The tiny increase in taxation proposed for the rich falls far short of what is necessary to reverse Tory cuts in local government and the NHS.

If Kinnock comes to office on this programme, he will head the most right-wing Labour government since that of Ramsay MacDonald in 1929-31. But it would be futile to suppose that the Labour leadership's rightward lurch will lead to a decisive desertion by the working class to independent 'revolutionary' organisations like the Socialist Workers Party. If betrayals by the Labour leadership were sufficient to destroy workers' illusions in the Labour Party, then Labour would have lost its mass base long ago. The building of a revolutionary leadership in the working class requires, in the first place, a campaign to force Labour into office, while fighting for the removal of the closet Tories at the top and for a commitment to a fighting anti-capitalist programme.

Rail workers to ballot for strike

LONDON Underground workers were scheduled to begin a series of 24-hour strikes in defence of jobs and contracts on May 9 if talks, conducted by the conciliation service ACAS, between their unions and management ended in deadlock.

At the same time, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), which represents the majority of LT workers, is planning a ballot of its British Rail membership for 24-hour strikes in defence of the national machinery of negotiation and for a pay rise 'considerably' better than the current BR offer of seven per cent.

On British Rail, the management, after a partial retreat in 1989 following a series of six one-day strikes, has developed a strategy of taking on rail workers grade-by-grade in pursuit of its target of smashing the national negotiating rights of the RMT. Through imposing separate 'restructuring' deals on the signalling and telecoms technicians (S&T) and the permanent-way trackworkers, managers are on the verge of realising their goal.

With a general election approaching, and the Tories committed to privatising the transport industry should they form the next government, the British Railways Board is preparing the ground for its future employers in the City of London to make a handsome profit.

On March 31 this year, the BRB imposed a new contract of employment on the S&T grades which, whilst it gives a 25 per cent increase on basic pay, is totally self-financing. Overtime is virtually abolished as weekend working becomes part of the normal rostered week. S&T workers were sent contracts individually and in

certain areas were intimidated into signing them by local managers. The permanent-way grades are next in line, followed by senior conductors, carriage cleaning and shunting staff, station staff and footplate staff. This grade-by-grade assault by the BRB on the national machinery of negotiation, could mean that by next April a nationwide pay strike by railway workers will be judged under the Tory anti-union laws as illegal secondary action.

But, at a time when the anti-union laws are increasingly tying the hands of the RMT – so much so that it has employed a team of solicitors to work out the wording on the forthcoming ballot papers – the Executive Committee has come out in favour of taking government money to cover the expense of ballots. There are no less than four resolutions in favour of this position on the agenda of this year's Annual General Meeting of the union. This is a marked shift to the right by the current leadership and will give little comfort to the London Underground workers who may be sacked if they go on strike. A leadership which has no intention of confronting the law is highly unlikely to call its members working on British Rail out on strike in support of sacked underground workers.

Whilst the leadership will be balloting the members over the question of pay, its real position is best summed up by the comments of one Executive Committee member at a recent District Council meeting of the union which inflamed the rank-and-file members present. Accusing the miners of having won the general election for the Tories by their 1984-85 strike, he went on to caution railway workers that there was a max-

imum of 18 months to the next election and that it would not be wise to upset Labour's middle class supporters by striking for more pay now. However, management's determination to break up the national machinery this year caused a very swift change of mind by the union bureaucracy regarding strikes in the run-up to general elections. The whole sequence suggests that the BRB can impose any kind of condi-

Turn to page 2



CIVIL WAR IN IRAQ – see story page 3

Teachers, schools and children under attack

By Terry McGinity and David Lewis

THE TESTING of schoolchildren at the age of seven is only the latest development in the all-round attack by the Tories on the education system which has been under way for the past ten years.

The Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs), which began in most schools in April, are supposed to measure the educational development of the children, and are intended by the Tories to bolster their argument that the standard of education in schools is unacceptably low. The aim is to provide a further basis for the attack on the education of working class children.

The tests, in English, mathematics and science, make no attempt to reflect the diversity of cultural and social backgrounds of schoolchildren. In this respect they resemble the discredited 11-plus, long abandoned by most education authorities. They thus discriminate directly against working class and non-white children. Ultimately they will be used to separate children into different streams on the old pre-comprehensive lines.

Over the past decade, the funding of schools has been steadily reduced. Music lessons, theatre visits and many other facilities now have to be paid for by parents, while

school buildings fall apart. In most schools, books, the basic tools of education, are in short supply. A major plank of the wholesale Tory attack on education is the provision allowing schools to opt out of local education authority control. With the drive of the Tories to re-establish a two-tier secondary schools system, one 'technical' and the other 'academic', the dismantling of the comprehensive system is on the agenda.

Accompanying the attack on the children and the schools has been an unprecedented attack on the teachers and their unions. In the past few years the Tories have systematically attempted to undermine the confidence, standing and collective strength of teachers. Forced redeployment, reduction of preparation time (during which teachers are not in contact with children) and attacks on teaching standards have been stepped up since the destruction of teachers' negotiating rights in 1987. Tory proposals to introduce compulsory appraisal of teacher performance were originally opposed by the main union, the National Union of Teachers. Such a scheme is now welcomed both by the NUT executive and Labour education spokesman Jack Straw.

The role of the NUT leaders in squashing opposition to the Tories' programme for education has been of central importance. Industrial action

such as the 'no cover for absence' campaign of 1987-88 was undermined by their refusal to support members who were disciplined. Their response to the smashing of the pay negotiating machinery in 1987 was to do nothing. In their latest manoeuvre to head off their members' militancy, they balloted on whether to boycott SATs. But, taking full advantage of Tory anti-union legislation, they demanded a two-thirds majority for action. The ballot was the final stage in the national executive's move to overturn the motion carried at the NUT's annual conference last Easter. After the conference vote, the national executive issued leaflets to delegates warning that anyone who did boycott the tests would not be supported by the union.

Alongside the treachery of the union leaders, the role of Labour councils in carrying out Tory policy must not be forgotten. The introduction of SATs, for example, is proceeding unimpeded in Labour-controlled schools, while cuts are being implemented with vigour. Thus, in the London Borough of Camden, £3.5 million is being slashed from the education budget this year. This will have a particularly sharp effect on special needs education and the teaching of English as a second language. On a national level, Labour provides no alternative to the Tories either. Aping, or rather competing with, the Tories, the Labour leaders place a



Teachers demonstrating one year after bargaining rights were abolished

similar emphasis on 'standards'. The way forward for children, parents and teachers clearly lies not with the Labour leadership, nor with the line of the union leadership, but in a fighting alliance to defend education. This will build on the practical opposition to the union leadership which has shown itself in the willingness of teachers to take unofficial action. This includes whole

schools voting to boycott tests regardless of the ballot. Education is a matter which affects the whole working class and which therefore must draw support from all workers. An action programme for the schools must include:

- A boycott of all tests;
- A boycott of the appraisal of teachers;
- Defence of all disciplined or victimised teachers;
- A struggle to replace

cowardly trade union leaderships with leaders who are willing to fight;

- Opposition to the replacement of comprehensive schools with a two-tier system;
- Opposition to opting out;
- The demand for full negotiating rights for teachers' pay;
- The demand for private education;
- The demand that a future Labour government reverses all education cuts.

Rail strike ballot

From page 1

tions it likes as long as the RMT's general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, is allowed to remain in a position to agree to it.

At a time when railway workers are under such a concerted attack from management, the RMT leaders are further undermining the morale of rank-and-file members of the union by forcing through a 'restructuring' exercise of their own. Declining membership has brought the union to the edge of financial collapse and, in an effort to save money, Knapp is attempting to close down or merge branches. His stated position is that he would like to see the number of branches reduced to 50 nationwide, including only two in Scotland. The whole deal has been cynically packaged as an attempt to bring the union closer to its membership.

By setting up sub-branches based on the workplace, the restructuring will in practice mean the end of the principle of all-grades branches and will add to the arsenal of those who argue for separate unions for the different grades.

RMT members on British Rail must, like their colleagues on London Underground, vote overwhelmingly in favour of strike action when the ballot is announced. The BRB must not be allowed to get away with the scrapping of national agreements as a prelude to privatisation. At the same time, the leadership of the RMT must be forced to call all its members out on strike in defence of any Underground workers who may be sacked. Transport workers must not allow the Tories, through anti-union legislation, to determine the policies of their union.

Release the poll tax prisoners!

'VICTORY! . . . We beat the poll tax . . . we got rid of Thatcher,' claimed *Militant* following the March 23 demonstration in London commemorating the first year of the tax in England and Wales, and the second year in Scotland.

Any serious member of the labour movement will, however, recognise that the decisions to remove Thatcher and modify the poll tax constitute a step back by the Tories, the better to prepare a leap forward: further attacks on the working class. The hollow boasts of *Militant* supporters will be of little comfort to poll tax resisters being hauled through the courts, harassed by bailiffs or sentenced to imprisonment for non-payment.

Throughout the campaign against the tax, *Militant's* tendency for self-aggrandisement has been accompanied by slanderous attacks on poll tax resisters arrested by the police and supporters of the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign (TSDC). The bulk of arrests took place on the March and October demonstrations last year called by the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, dominated by *Militant*. Yet the ABAPTF's leaders have signally failed to take responsibility for the defence of those arrested.

This task has largely been borne by the TSDC and a



TSDC picket of Wandsworth Prison in April

number of local groups throughout Britain. The TSDC was formed in May 1990 on the initiative of defendants and supporters. Since then it has co-ordinated the defence campaign, monitored court cases and published statements and reports to counter police and media attempts to discredit the poll tax movement. To date, not one defendant has been convicted of rioting, while a number have been released with all charges against them dismissed.

A support group has been established for convicted prisoners and defendants on remand. There are currently 25 prisoners, some of whom have received sentences of up to four years in connection with demonstrations last year. Among other activities, the TSDC has sent speakers to

Europe to raise support for defendants and prisoners. In February the TSDC organised a public conference in defence of the right to demonstrate. It campaigns for the abolition of the Public Order Act and the poll tax, and for an amnesty for the prisoners.

Workers, students and youth are strongly urged to support the TSDC by affiliating their organisations to it, publicising TSDC activities - which include pickets of prisons - and raising donations. The office used by the TSDC since its formation is soon to be closed down. It urgently requires a new base. If you or your organisation can offer a free space in London write to the TSDC c/o The Haldane Society, Room 205, 38 Panther House, Mount Pleasant, London WC1 or telephone 071-833 8958.

FUNDS

TORY losses in the local elections have ruled out a general election in June. Whether it comes in the autumn or next spring, millions of workers will vote Labour in the hope of a real change from the Tories and mass unemployment. But Kinnock offers nothing more than diluted Toryism, with the possibility that Labour will adopt PR and open the door to coalition with the Liberals. Over the coming weeks and months, agitation must be stepped up for a Labour government which really fights the ruling class, and against a capitalist Labour government. Workers News will stand in the forefront of this fight, and it needs your support both for the **£10,000 Building Fund**, currently at £2,251.68, and the **£300 Monthly Fund**. Send your donations to: Workers News, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE

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Kurdish refugees near the Turkish border

Kurdish leaders sell out struggle

THE PLIGHT of the Kurdish people has been front-page news for weeks. The imperialist powers, who only a few weeks ago subjected Iraq to an aerial bombardment which killed tens of thousands of civilians, are posing as the friends and defenders of the Kurds.

But it is the imperialists – particularly the British and the French – who have historically denied the Kurds the right to self-determination. They have worked hand-in-glove with the oppressors of the Kurds – including Saddam Hussein – to maintain the partition of Kurdistan, and their intervention today is merely to secure their own interests in the region. They remain utterly opposed to an independent Kurdish homeland, and are primarily interested in preventing the destabilisation of the region which they fear would result from an influx of Iraqi Kurds into Turkey and Iran.

The civil war in Iraq entered a new stage by the end of April. The open rebellions in the south led by Shi'ite fundamentalists and supported by Iraqi army conscripts had been suppressed. In the north, the Kurdish rebels had been driven out of the main towns and cities and forced to seek refuge in the mountainous regions bordering Turkey and Iran.

On April 11, Saddam Hussein's regime was informed by the UN Security Council of the formal ending of hostilities between the US-led coalition and Iraq. The ceasefire agreement was accompanied by a 120-day timetable for the Iraqi government to satisfy demands for substantial war reparations, as well as arrangements for the inspection and destruction of weapons of mass destruction.

American Defence Secretary Dick Cheney announced plans on April 14 for the withdrawal of allied ground forces from the 'demilitarised zone' along the southern border with Kuwait and their replacement by a UN force of observers.

By Ian Harrison

The flight of millions of refugees in the north was contained by US, British and French special forces who entered Iraqi-occupied Kurdistan to establish 'no go' areas for Iraqi troops. Plans were drawn up for UN observers to monitor the area around the town of Zakho, and for the special forces to be withdrawn as rapidly as possible in order to avoid any direct engagement with Iraqi troops.

On April 25, representatives of four Kurdish organisations, led by the PUK's Jalal Talabani, met in Baghdad with Saddam Hussein. Their meeting, ostensibly at the invitation of the Ba'athist dictator but undoubtedly brokered by the US and British governments, arrived at an agreement to allow Kurdish leaders a degree of autonomy in their own affairs. Talabani then appeared on Iraqi television embracing Saddam, and appealed to Kurdish refugees to return to their homes.

A week later, Talabani claimed that Iraq was on the verge of 'democracy' as a result of his intervention. 'The Iraqi delegation agreed to free elections for all parties and for multi-party life in Iraq. A new freely-elected parliament will function instead of all other bodies,' he said. He also announced that the concessions made by the Iraqi regime included Kurdish control over the oil centre of Kirkuk and a share of oil revenues, and an amnesty for Kurdish and Shi'ite prisoners captured during the uprisings after the end of the Gulf war.

Talabani's brief from the imperialists is to help defuse the situation in the north, particularly along the border with Turkey, by encouraging the Kurdish refugees to believe that it is safe for them to return to their homes.

In the background of these

developments, an intense round of diplomatic exchanges was taking place between Iranian, Turkish and Syrian government officials, aimed at sealing the borders of Iraq and strengthening links with the US and British governments. The fate of millions of Iraqi workers, Kurds, Turcomans and Assyrians was left to the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad.

The civil war has served the purposes of Bush and his supporters. Tens of thousands of Kurds and Shi'ites have been exterminated. The fundamentalist opposition to Rafsanjani's 'pragmatic' presidency in Iran has been further weakened. The Ba'ath Party of Iraq has emerged strong enough to hold the country together, get it back to work and pay the war reparations demanded by the US and Britain. The emergence of the Iraqi bourgeoisie as a factor which threatened imperialist supremacy in the Gulf region has been dealt a punishing blow, thereby serving as a warning to neighbouring governments.

The Iraqi workers and oppressed minorities, including the Kurds, must learn the lessons of defeat. Nationalism, fundamentalism and the Stalinists of the Iraqi Communist Party are incapable of freeing the region from imperialist domination. The organisations which declared their opposition to Saddam's regime from Damascus, and called for a popular uprising to overthrow him, were incapable of delivering the oppressed masses from his tyranny. Their appeals to the UN Security Council to intervene were the clearest expression of their political bankruptcy. In its relatively short history, the UN has systematically attacked the peoples of the semi-colonial world, including those of the Congo, Lebanon, Namibia and now Iraq. Only the proletariat of the Middle East holds the key to freeing the region from imperialist control.

The Kurdish masses must recognise that the answer to their aspirations for independent nationhood lies with the establishment of fighting alliances with the workers of Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. They in their turn must defend the oppressed Kurdish people and render every assistance to the establishment of a United Socialist Republic of Kurdistan, as a component part of a United Socialist Republic of the Middle East.

The weeks ahead will see Saddam Hussein using all the means at his disposal to stamp out opposition to the Ba'athist dictatorship. Iraqi workers, particularly in the oilfields, chemical plants and transportation services, must take the initiative. They must prepare and launch the struggle for independent trade unions, drawing behind them the oppressed and exploited masses, particularly women workers, whose economic and political demands they must champion. No trust can be placed in nationalists, fundamentalists or the Iraqi Communist Party. Appeals for assistance, particularly for support in opposing US-led demands for war reparations, must be directed to the international working class and oppressed masses throughout the region.

Above all, what is needed is a revolutionary workers' party to give clear voice to the demands of the masses, and to lead the struggle to overthrow the Iraqi bourgeoisie. Such a party must demand the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops; it must agitate for the setting up of a revolutionary constituent assembly and lead the fight to establish workers' councils.

It is the duty of revolutionaries in Britain and throughout the world to unconditionally support the Kurdish uprising. At the same time, it is necessary to remain completely opposed to the Iraqi Kurdish leaders who have allied themselves with imperialism.

EDITORIAL

Two years since Tiananmen

TWO YEARS on from the bloody crackdown on the Democracy Movement in Tiananmen Square and the Chinese leadership remains in a political stalemate – caught between the desire to speed up the introduction of market-style economic reforms and the fear of what that course of action could unleash.

The events of April and May 1989 – the Beijing Spring – taught the bureaucracy that the path it had opened up towards the restoration of capitalism in China was strewn with pitfalls. The political thaw which accompanied the new economic orientation had emboldened the oppressed masses. If the modest level of reforms already introduced could engender such a revolt – either from those opposed or those against – what did the future hold? On the one hand, the spectre of political revolution loomed, on the other, a capitalist China in which the bureaucracy had been displaced. The free market, after all, has a logic of its own. It is no respecter of individual capitalists, least of all the inexperienced would-be entrepreneurs of the Chinese bureaucracy.

The crushing of the Democracy Movement on June 4, 1989, therefore, and the subsequent round-up and purge of dissident students, intellectuals and workers throughout the country, did not signal a retreat from the pro-capitalist road, but the fact that the bureaucracy intends to remain in the driving seat at all costs. The immediate period following Tiananmen saw the removal from the leadership of 'reformer' Zhao Ziyang and the temporary ascendancy of 'hardliners' in the Chinese Communist Party.

However, the main division in the bureaucracy is not between those who favour market reforms and those who don't, but over how quickly and by what means such reforms should be introduced. The majority of those who defend what they describe as 'central planning' and 'state ownership' are not, in fact, defending any such thing. Their commitment is to bureaucratic centralised control over all economic and social life, which they see as the best means of effecting the transition to private ownership while avoiding widespread social unrest and retaining a stake for themselves. The differences in the bureaucracy are therefore only relative – all sections, even the minority completely opposed to using capitalist measures to resolve the economic chaos, are driven by self-preservation, not socialist principles.

But time is running short for the Chinese Stalinists. The 3,000 delegates at the annual two-week session of the National People's Congress in March were presented with the bleakest-ever economic forecast by Finance Minister Wang Bingqian. The 1990 budget deficit was 62 per cent higher than that of 1989 – the equivalent of £10 billion when calculated according to IMF practice. Wang concentrated his fire on state-owned enterprises and social policy, revealing that more money was spent in 1990 on subsidising prices and rescuing inefficient companies than the combined budget for defence, education, science, public health and culture. By contrast, he spoke in glowing terms of the semi-private rural and light-industrial enterprises.

The new Five-Year Plan formally adopted at the Congress announced a series of 'reforms' of prices, taxation, banking, workers' rights, wages and investment. These are the mechanisms by which the bureaucracy hopes to curb a budget deficit on the verge of careering out of control and prepare the economy for extensive privatisation measures. The delegates also welcomed a swingeing attack on the subsidised housing system. What this particular 'reform' will mean to workers can be gauged by the fact that in Shanghai it will mean the doubling of rents.

In his keynote address, Prime Minister Li Peng paid his respects to the 'vitality of socialism', but stressed that 'neither China nor any other country can do without reform and opening up'. In case it wasn't clear in which direction the bureaucracy was travelling, he added: 'China is now on the threshold of a new undertaking and a thousand things remain to be done.'

Another function of the wholly stage-managed Congress was to announce the official conclusion of the trials of those arrested at and after Tiananmen. The president of the Supreme People's Court, Ren Jianxin, reported that 715 people had been tried for various acts of 'beating, smashing, looting, burning and killing' and a further 72 for 'incitement'. The last group of about 30 were tried in the first four months of this year, the heaviest sentences being meted out to Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming, who got 13 years apiece in February, and Chen Yanbin, who got 15 years in April for 'publishing counter-revolutionary propaganda and forming an illegal organisation'.

But Ren's figures are a fraud. The government has already acknowledged that over 4,000 people were arrested in connection with the pro-democracy protests – the actual figure is certainly much higher. The statistics presented to the Congress only refer to those detained in Beijing, and leave out 900 who were held without charge for as long as 20 months. They ignore the thousands who were arrested in other parts of the country and those who were dispatched from Beijing to be dealt with in secret by small provincial courts. Finally, they make no specific mention of those who were beaten, tortured and summarily executed, although the Congress was informed in a separate report on the judicial system that the State Prosecutor's department had uncovered 472 cases of confessions extracted by torture in 1990.

In his closing speech, Li Peng said that the chaos in Eastern Europe vindicated China's 'resolute measures' to crush dissent, and that his government wouldn't hesitate to carry out another Tiananmen-style crackdown. The only force capable of proving him wrong, and preventing the restoration of capitalism in China, is the working class, allied with the students and the poorer peasants. The defence of the nationalised property relations can only be accomplished through the political revolution to overthrow the entire Stalinist bureaucracy.

SOCIALISM AND THE

THE FOLLOWING important document appears here for the first time in English. It is an extract from Leon Trotsky's report on production to the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on April 20, 1923. Not only is its publication timely, since it demonstrates the gulf separating the way in which Bolshevism approached the problem of the market from the 'market reforms' of Gorbachev today – which threaten the destruction of the Soviet Union – but it also occurred at a critical turning point in the development of Stalinism.

The week-long 12th Congress was the first to be held in Lenin's absence, and the last at which delegates would be able to speak freely, in spite of the efforts of the Stalin faction to pack it with its own delegates.

Trotsky's report, which introduced for the first time the concept of the 'scissors crisis', was presented as the collective position of the leadership, although its recommendations for increasing the tempo of industrialisation and strengthening planning were to be ignored by Stalin until the breakneck turn of 1928. Together with a set of 'Theses on Industry', its lucid presentation of the problems of Soviet economy and their solution was described by Isaac Deutscher as 'among the most crucial documents on Soviet economic history'. Nevertheless, there were dissenting voices such as L. Krasin, the Commissar of Foreign Trade, who attacked the incompetence of industrial managers and the growing practice of appointing them for political reasons rather than on grounds of ability.

Trotsky's concentration on economic questions and his failure to attack the 'triumvirate' bitterly disappointed oppositionists, who expected him to take a stand on workers' democracy and in defence of the Georgian and Ukrainian communists persecuted by Stalin. Indeed, Trotsky had entered into an agreement with Lenin to present a 'bomb' to the congress that Lenin had prepared for Stalin before his illness. Instead, Trotsky had been – mistakenly we believe – persuaded to accept a rotten compromise on March 6, which ensured a false unity at the congress. He absented himself from a number of its sessions but voted for all its resolutions. It would not be until the autumn that Trotsky launched an open attack on the triumvirate with the publication of *Lessons of October*. Pierre Broué describes his position at the 12th Congress as a 'suicidal attitude' in his recent monumental biography.

The present document was originally published under the title 'Production and Revolution' in *Pravda* (88) on April 22, 1923; in *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn* (88-90) for April 22-25, 1923; and in *Protokolui XII Sezd RKP (B)* (282-332). This text has been translated from the French as it appeared in *Bulletin Communiste*, May 10, 1923, and reprinted in *Les Cahiers de CERMTRI*, No. 58, September 1990, pp4-6. The editorial board is indebted to Richard Stephenson for the translation.

Leon Trot

THE FIRST, and the most elementary, of the tasks of the NEP decided upon by our party has been to provide a boost to the productive forces. The second is to steer the forces of production in the direction of recovery, or whilst recovering, towards socialism. These two questions must in no wise be confused.

The NEP has accomplished its first goal. Our statistics for 1913, 1921 and 1922, however inexact they may be, describe the movement of production quite well. In 1913 the total revenue of all branches of Russian industry and agriculture amounted to 11,000 million gold roubles. In 1921 it was less than 4,500 million, and in 1922 it was 5,300 million.

In 1913 agriculture furnished a yield of 6,700 million. In 1921 it provided 3,500 and in 1922, 4,000 million. In 1913 the whole of industry produced 4,400 million gold roubles and in 1921, 929 million. In 1922 production surpassed 1,300 million. But what concerns

us most is nationalised heavy industry on the one side, and small workshop production on the other. In 1913 heavy and medium industry produced 3,700 million; in 1921, 669 million and in 1922, 954 million. In other words, in 1922 it achieved an increase of 43 per cent over 1921. But what did the small workshops produce? It was 730 million a year before the war. In 1921 it was 260 million, and in 1922, 435 million.

The primitive nature of exchange with the countryside

Exchange between town and country has likewise increased. It mainly manifests itself in consumer goods. The link with the countryside has thus gone through a basic stage, and we are only now approaching a second, in which the countryside will provide raw materials to the town and receive machinery from it.

The primitive character of our ex-

By Richard Price

Miners conned by Yeltsin

WITH HIS political popularity at an all-time low, Mikhail Gorbachev has temporarily papered over the cracks in his presidency. Faced with the strike of 300,000 miners in March and April, the defiance of seven union republics and continuing attacks from both the 'radicals' and 'reformers' behind Russian president Boris Yeltsin and the headline 'conservatives' of Soyuz, Gorbachev had little alternative but to come to terms with both factions if he was to maintain his balancing act.

On April 24, after a secluded conference at Gorbachev's country residence, Yeltsin agreed to a peace treaty with Gorbachev under the terms of which Yeltsin's Russian Republic would sign the new union treaty and drop demands for Gorbachev's resignation in return for accepting a package of emergency proposals put before the Congress of People's Deputies two days earlier by Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov.

Pavlov proposed a ban on political strikes and rallies during working hours, support for the 'right' of strikebreakers to cross picket lines and an emergency system of grain and food distribution. In return, the union treaty has been altered to make it more acceptable to Yeltsin, referring to a 'union of sovereign states' rather than a 'union of Soviet socialist states', and some price increases have been modified. Although this went some way to appeasing the 'reformers', it fell short of hardliners' demands for a state of emergency and martial law throughout the Soviet Union, directed against both strikers and rebel republics.

This latest stage in the struggle between the various factions of bureaucrats seems a far cry from Yeltsin's accusations of a 'personal dictatorship' and his call to supporters to 'declare war' on Gorbachev in February and March. In fact, both the divisions and the temporary coalition are rooted not in clashes of personality, but in the situation the bureaucrats find themselves in.

The economic position of the Soviet Union is chaotic. Despite the notoriously unreliable nature of Soviet statistics, the all-round picture is one of steep decline. Output fell by two per cent last year – the first time in recent decades. In March a leaked Gosplan report predicted a fall of 11.6 per cent in Gross National Product (GNP) this year, with industrial production down by 15 per cent.

But even this looks optimistic in the light of an IMF report in April which estimated that GNP had shrunk by eight per cent in the first quarter of 1991, before the full effects of the miners' strike were registered. Meanwhile, the Soviet budget deficit for the same period had already overshot the planning projection for the whole year. Even last year's record grain harvest failed to improve matters since as much as 5 per cent of the grain rotted before it could be used.

Adding to the economic crisis is the

has been the political breakdown, with Armenia, Georgia, Moldavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the Russian Republic all declaring for varying degrees of independence.

Under the impact of the economic and political crisis, the coalition of support for glasnost and perestroika has collapsed, with most of the 'radicals' quitting the Communist Party, and a head of steam of popular support building up for Yeltsin, who concentrated on damning Gorbachev rather than revealing the full extent of his own programme for capitalist restoration. So long as the practical consequences of the programme of the pro-market 'radicals' and 'reformers' were unclear, they stayed popular. Having won control of the local government of Moscow and Leningrad, however, their support too has dwindled, as citizens saw shops remain empty, and food shortages grow more acute.

Gorbachev's response to the mounting crisis has been a series of indecisive policy zig-zags, combined with the assumption of dictatorial powers, which have succeeded only in alienating almost the entire working class. After sidelining the Shatalin plan for a 500-day transition to a market economy last autumn, Gorbachev rested increasingly on the 'conservatives', demanding 'discipline' in the factories and resisting the republics' demands for independence.

If Gorbachev withdrew from backing Shatalin, it stemmed not from any desire to defend 'socialism' or planned economy, but from a fear of what Shatalin's drastic capitalist surgery would provoke from Soviet workers. In spite of Gorbachev's bloc with the 'conservatives', and his heated exchanges with Yeltsin, both bureaucrats share the goal of the market economy – the gateway to capitalist restoration. Where they differ is on the tempo and the methods. Indeed, outside of the most diehard 'conservative' circles and some of the top echelons of the armed forces, most sections of the bureaucracy regard this as inevitable.

But at the same time, such a transition is for the bureaucracy rather like rolling over Niagara Falls in a barrel – a dangerous leap with no guarantee of survival at the bottom. In Poland, ex-Stalinist bureaucrats have busied themselves buying up and selling off nationalised property for enormous personal gain. Similar elements exist in large numbers in the Soviet Union. But only a fraction of the multi-millioned Soviet bureaucracy can hope to transform itself into a capitalist class. In the meantime, because it continues to draw its privileges from state property, the bureaucracy continues to have a vested interest in the status quo.

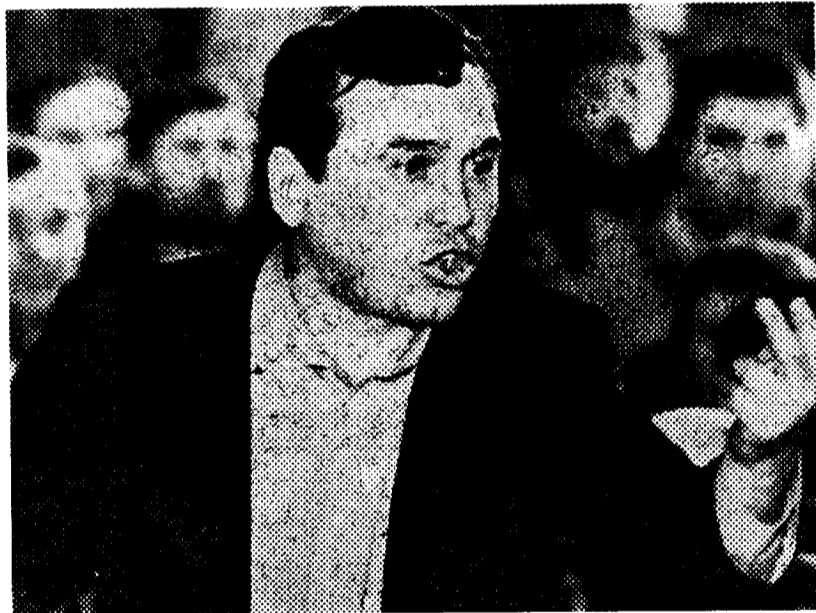
'conservatives' during the winter and the spring. Knowing full well that foreign capitalist investment and aid would not be forthcoming if 'order' was not restored in the republics and 'discipline' imposed in the factories, Gorbachev threw his support behind calls for curbs on strikes, refused to countenance the secession of the Baltic republics and tried to reimpose stricter censorship.

As Gorbachev withdrew behind the walls of the Kremlin, and tried to impose his will on the chaos outside by decrees which were steadily ignored, he vacillated on the economic front, waiting for better times, while the situation grew ever more acute.

The political fall-out has been immense, with one after another of Gorbachev's closest aides resigning in the face of the latest U-turn. These have included premier Ryzhkov, foreign secretary Shevardnadze and economic adviser Petrakov. Socialist oppositionist Boris Kagarlitsky has aptly commented: 'The real pillars supporting the president's power are the army and the right to print banknotes. This means that the president must turn to the armed forces each time he wants to put one of his decisions into effect.'

Gorbachev's economic policy has been as erratic as his political moves. Having utilised to the full the 'right to print banknotes', he embarked on a botched currency reform in February. Under its terms, 50 and 100 rouble notes were withdrawn overnight, leaving many workers holding useless high-value bills. But whatever effect this had on dampening down the money supply, and inflation, it was rapidly offset by wage increases and massive price rises in staple items like food and essential services announced in March and April. With the black market and currency speculation operating virtually without hindrance, inflation (once described by Trotsky as 'the syphilis of a planned economy') will continue to eat away at the economy, and the policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul will sooner rather than later decide Gorbachev's fate.

Boris Yeltsin's decision to cut loose from the Communist Party last year and launch a populist onslaught from outside its ranks was dictated by the gathering crisis and Gorbachev's failure to deliver the promise of the 'free market'. His popularity rests on the fact that his programme of rapid privatisation is attractive to broad layers of Soviet society – so long as it is not implemented. So discredited is bureaucratic planning that anything else seems preferable. Yeltsin's ambiguous support for the independent trade unions of miners, and the fact that he has called for a 'new



Angry miner at a mass meeting in Chelyabinsk

determination to break up the planned economy in short order. Whereas Gorbachev has the backing for the time being of the imperialists for maintaining the unity of the Soviet Union in order to proceed to the free market, Yeltsin is prepared to let it fragment in order to create pockets of territory ripe for primitive capitalist accumulation and foreign investment.

While Yeltsin's programme would mean massive unemployment and deprivation for Soviet workers on a scale surpassing that in east Germany, his demagogic attacks on the 'command economy' and Gorbachev's 'personal dictatorship' have enabled him to pose as the champion of the workers.

Ironically, it was Yeltsin that many of the leaders of the Soviet miners looked. While one of the central demands of the strikers was for Gorbachev's resignation, a leading figure in the Kuzbass strike committee called for 'a real market economy in which we can run our own affairs'. But it was also Yeltsin that Gorbachev and the 'conservatives' looked to end the crippling strike. The face-saving formula, whereby the Russian Republic will take over the administration of the Siberian coal mines is not worth the paper it is printed on. The miners' grievances – low pay undercut by inflation, poor food and inadequate pensions – will not go away in the Russian Republic, nor will they be overcome if Yeltsin wins the forthcoming presidential election.

Yeltsin has been called for as the champion of all miners, but his programme will only lead to the destruction of the Soviet state.

doubtedly have received a sympathetic response: on April 16, thousands were out in Kiev in solidarity with the Donbass miners; on April 26, there was an important solidarity strike in the Russian Republic; as well as nickel miners and oil workers, between 50 and 60 non-mining enterprises came out in Siberia, some over their own wage demands; and there was widespread action in Byelorussia.

The development of the new Soviet workers' movement, with its independent unions and strike committees, demonstrates that the working class has re-emerged as a class 'in itself'. But in as much as its leadership is highly confused, and in part reactionary, it is not as yet a class 'for itself'. The duty of Soviet revolutionaries must be to fight insistently against the illusions in Yeltsin and the market, and to agitate for a militant programme of action to defend nationalised property. This in turn must become the bridge to the political revolution to smash the bureaucracy before it destroys the Soviet state.

The Soviet workers' movement must also inscribe on its banner:

- Neither Yeltsin nor Gorbachev, but workers' democracy!
- For genuine soviets of workers, soldiers and farmers!
- For the right of all national minorities to secede from the Soviet Union – for independent soviet republics!
- Down with chauvinism – long live socialist internationalism!
- No to 'co-operatives' and 'self-management' – for workers' control of production and planning!

THE MARKET

Rykov on the NEP

change with the countryside is conditioned by two factors: it is based upon consumer goods, and small handicraft production plays an enormous part in it. Let us recall that this production has gone up to four or five million gold roubles, whereas that of heavy and medium industry is only 954 million. The question is here posed sharply: is the exchange between town and country proceeding towards socialism or towards capitalism? The NEP is a sphere legally recognised by us in which private capital is in competition with us.

Petty commodity production is the yeast of the culture in which capitalism has developed in Russia, otherwise introduced by foreign capital. Private capital has hardly penetrated our heavy and medium industry. The permitted enterprises only play a role of scant importance among us. But private ownership is predominant in trade. Petty commodity production and private trade form a hostile bloc of forces against us.

The recovery of production

Production has been revived. A little more has been produced, and a little better. The productivity of labour has increased, and wages along with it. Does this mean that the state is better off? In Germany the recovery of business meant the ruin of the country. But we do not pay reparations to anyone. We settled all our debts in October 1917, and our prerogative remains intact. If our nationalised industry works at a loss, who can therefore grow wealthy, seeing that it is not foreigners?

Because this year our production taken as a whole has worked out at a loss. Some branches hoped to make profits. Production went up by 43 per cent. There was a very slight improvement in fuel. That of paper has gone up by 86 million gold roubles to 191, and that of wool from 72 to 137. Textiles are in the lead, and privately owned light industry is in front of that. Nationalised heavy industry is still in deficit.

This deficit can be compared with the effort of running a machine which has almost ceased to function, and which has completely ceased to function in some respects. In this case there is nothing upsetting about it, it was inevitable. Only it must not go on. The start that has been made must not be ruined. The conclusion to draw from this experience is that we are still in the basic stages of recovery. This recovery helps us, that is obvious. It means a gain, and the rise in wages is another. But if we ask ourselves for whom it has provided its first profits, we would do well to reply that it was to our competitor, the small producer. And it is necessary for us to admit that we have spent part of our capital in order to put our equipment back in working order. Rykov has concluded this, and adds: 'It is necessary during the third year of the NEP for our industry and transport to make up their costs and produce.'

Improving the condition of the peasant and exporting grain

During the second stage of the NEP our aim is that of uniting with the countryside. The peasant is confronted with the small producer and nationalised industry. Our Commission of Internal Trade points out that the peasant today is paying in grain for his manufactured goods, his coal and his petrol, etc., 2.75 times more than in 1913. Last August the prices of manufactured goods on our markets were less than those of 1913. They have not stopped rising since. At the same time the prices of agricultural goods were higher than those of 1913, and they have not stopped dropping since. This is the whole problem of our economic

life and of our progress towards socialism.

It is urgently necessary to bring closer the prices of rural production and of industrial production, without which no control of the frontiers will save us from the competition of the foreign market.

The prime question here is that of our grain exports. It would be of first rank importance if we sold them at a profit. But we are in a period of fascism, and blockades are possible. The Americans have so much grain that they are using it to feed to their pigs and even burning it: during the war America took over nine-tenths of our grain markets. Can we regain them? Without the slightest optimism we can reply in the affirmative: Europe, even a fascist one, must eat our Soviet bread, and the profits from this export, profiting the peasants directly, will in the final analysis help revivify our industry again. But this is still not the solution. It is more a link between capitalist Europe and the Ukrainian countryside than between our proletariat and our peasantry.

Creating accountability

We are too awkwardly equipped in regard to our competitor, the small producer. His equipment is rudimentary. Out of our vast industrial enterprises we are utilising only 17 to 20 per cent, 25 per cent at the most, and we are carrying the entire weight of the rest. Our enterprises remember with all too much respect the former partisan armies, who had 500 bayonets, three aeroplanes and two telegraph apparatuses in order to convey the impression of an army. It is thus necessary, with the greatest circumspection, to reorganise them, the party and the trade unions devoting all their attention to it.

We must put a stop to all useless work. It is better to feed the unemployed than to make useless machinery function, to centralise our enterprises rigorously, to reduce the secondary costs of production, whether those labelled as training or support to the Red Army, and even more so those of advertising. In this connection one fact must be mentioned: a great part of our press is kept going on the completely useless advertising of our industrial establishments.

Moreover, we need strict accountability, the absence of which encourages theft and waste. Where are we in our calculations? The Workers' Inspectorate has learned that 80 per cent of our calculations are arbitrary – and we can assume that the others are worth absolutely nothing at all. The enterprises boasted of profits, and the Workers' Inspectorate proved to them that they were in deficit.

There is a whole lot of black and white magic with numbers and we must finish with it. We have now experienced the period of 'requisitions' that justified everything, and then that of 'speculations', and I fear that we may now be in that of 'calculations'. We have to create accountability, accurate calculations, which will no longer disguise the pillaging, but will really allow us to carry on our business. Accountability is not an office requirement, a technical detail, it is the way to socialism.

Regularising wages

The Party Commission on Wages, presided over by Rykov, has taken some important decisions: obviously wages must rise at the same time as production, but they must not reflect the boosts of the latter. The profits of the textile industry, for example, must not be entirely absorbed by wage rises, but must partly contribute to the recovery of the whole of the nationalised

industry.

Concentrating credit

Financing an enterprise is three-quarters of controlling it. In our state the financial mechanism is more and more called upon to reactivate industry, in its broad lines, naturally, and not in its details. The People's Commissariat of the Economy would be impotent if it did not have the use of a good financial mechanism.

Financial control of production obviously must not draw its inspiration from the immediate fluctuations of the commercial market, and must not lose sight of the long-term perspective, examined by the principle services of the state and by the party. The only way of avoiding all dilettantism in this sphere is to concentrate credit.

The monopoly of foreign trade must not be put in question. If we had to explain upon what our hopes for a socialist future for Russia rested, we would reply: 1) Upon the political power of the party, supported by the Red Army; 2) Upon the nationalisation of production; 3) Upon the monopoly of foreign trade. It would be sufficient to throw down one of these pillars for the building to fall.

Working in conformity with a rational plan

I will now go on to a question that I regard as fundamental, that of co-ordinated economic work on a unified plan. What is this plan? In the capitalist system it is the free play of supply and demand, crises, etc. that regulate production. There is only a plan for private industries; it is only when they are monopolies that their combined activity extends to the world market. Under War Communism we had to substitute the calculations of our administration for the interaction of all the economic forces. We therefore succeeded for good or ill in feeding the army and the proletariat. But we have to admit that we were not able to control our industry in this way. And we called the market to our aid. Only we could not incautiously put our industry at the disposal of the market. The army is always one systematic economy that does not depend upon the market; our transport is entirely nationalised; and our heavy industry and our fuel industry mainly work for the army and for transport. There can be no question of putting them at the disposal of a market, no matter how insignificant. We are thus obliged to reconcile the projected, planned activity of the economic organs of the state with the mobility and flexibility of the market, and that calls for the necessity of a plan. In 1921 we had a fuel crisis. In 1922 it was a sales crisis. We now have a crisis of raw materials. With reference to the fuel crisis Vladimir Ilyich told us in 1921: 'We are wrong in our forecasts.' The crisis developed from our lack of a system, and the absence of a well-constructed plan. The sales crisis later was the result of our lack of commercial foresight; we had saturated the feeble internal market. The raw materials crisis has the same cause; products were brought out at a price not warranted by the supply of raw materials. Our crisis was caused by the insufficiency of our plans. By planning our work better we could foresee and neutralise the movements of the market to the extent of five- to six-tenths.

Controlling economic life means foreseeing and planning it. But we must not confuse the general plan with the possibilities for manoeuvre and action allowed to isolated enterprises. These are different things and will



NEP economics – a contemporary cartoon

remain so.

Drawing up and applying a plan means doing what Morgan and his general staff do for their trust in America: co-ordinating leadership and administration. We must direct all our nationalised Russian production in the same way as they direct their trusts.

We thus move into agreement with the theses of the Central Committee on the necessity of having a great Economic Headquarters.

Overcoming the 'NEP'

We invoked the competition of the free market, and we must try our strength against it. We will persevere by a concerted effort, and our success will be indicated by the part in the reconstruction of the national wealth that will return to conscious control. The New Economic Policy is serious and long term, but in no way eternal. We have only created it so as to overcome it with the aid of the laws of the market, to utilise these laws for ourselves, introducing our powerful economic machine into it, whilst unceasingly extending into it the lever of work upon a unified plan.

The plan extended to the entire market will end by finishing it off. Is this victory possible? Obviously. Is it certain? No. Have we already begun it? In my opinion, no. We have only now been able to draw near to the positions upon which we can succeed. We have created the preliminary conditions for victory. What must we do to win?

Our advantages

1. As opposed to the capitalist countries, knowing our capabilities and our needs, we can consciously control our economic life;
2. In its general interest we can to a certain extent proceed in the relations between agriculture and industry to displace certain forces, and make them pass over from one to the other;
3. We can consciously direct the resources of our state, supplying certain branches of production better and suppressing those of which we have no need;
4. We can consciously allocate our resources between enterprises in industry, developing some and holding back others;
5. Infinitely better than in the capitalist system, we can co-ordinate the work of different enterprises;
6. Finally, the Russian working class

can allow the state some credit on wages. These are six of our main advantages. These I find enumerated in a pamphlet devoted to the Moscow mining region, whose author adds that if we are now in deficit, that is because we lack chiefs of industry, taking an interest in everything, dedicated to their work, who know it and dedicate their nights as well as their days to it. For the proletariat has only one means of realising socialism, accumulating profits. Here the most simple rule is the best: saving the Soviet kopek will make the Soviet rouble.

At the 9th Party Congress Vladimir Ilyich made the selection of men the main question. Comrade Kuibyshev's Commission examined 28 firms, and concluded that they were as 'maladroit, imprudent and unsystematic as those who directed them', to the consequent scattering of accountability. It also proposed that henceforth the administration of the all-Russian enterprises must be appointed by the Supreme Economic Council along with the Central Committee of the party. Similarly, in the provinces, the provincial party committees should collaborate as regards recommendations with the provincial economic committees.

Primitive socialist accumulation

We are getting ready to leap over the stages of primitive socialist accumulation. You should understand what primitive capitalist accumulation is according to Marx, and what pressure of forces it presupposes for the small employer. This small exploiter works miracles, attains to a sort of heroism, sleeps only four hours out of 24, lives on black bread, exploits his wife and children, and cuts down the pennies. This is a disgusting spectacle, because it is a matter of an individual penny of a rapacious petty bourgeois. But we need a strict economy ourselves, to which we must devote all our insight, all our energy, and all our will. We should throw out to the nation this slogan: Save the Soviet kopek. With the same devotion and attention that previously we used to put into clandestine revolutionary work, keeping the addresses of our comrades that must never be lost, and never be betrayed, we must henceforth defend steadfastly every little bit of the inheritance of our Socialist country.

Let us get to work, and we will bring this country out of misery and slavery. And we will not surrender in front of capital.

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

PART NINE

THE 1956 Hungarian revolution not only enabled Healy to replenish the depleted forces of the Group with recruits from the CP, it also had – for Healy – less welcome consequences at an international level. For the apparently ‘orthodox’ response to Hungary by the International Secretariat, who unequivocally demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops, encouraged the Socialist Workers Party leadership to look more favourably on the prospect of reunification with the Pabloites. The split between the IS and its American supporters, followed by the effective dissolution of the Cochran-Clarke group, had in any case removed ‘Pabloism’ as an organisational threat in the USA. If he could be given guarantees of non-interference by Pablo in the SWP, James P. Cannon could no longer see any major obstacle to unity with the IS.

Healy, however, was in a different position. After being deserted by the Lawrence group, in 1956 Pablo had collaborated with Ted Grant, Sam Bornstein and other former members of the RCP majority in launching the Revolutionary Socialist League. A merger between the International Committee and the IS would therefore have required Healy to unite with political opponents he had driven out of the movement back in 1950, who would undoubtedly have formed a faction against him. It seems evident that such narrowly national concerns, rather than any desire to uphold the ‘principles’ of the 1953 split, determined Healy’s resistance to international reunification.

Not that Healy argued his position openly and honestly. Instead, he declared his agreement with Cannon – ‘it is worth doing everything possible to get one world organisation’¹ – urging only that reunification should be preceded by political discussion, while at the same time manoeuvring to sabotage progress towards unity. In June 1957, in a move which Cannon condemned as ‘factional ultimatum’,² Healy informed Grant’s group that before negotiations could begin in Britain the RSL would have to abandon ‘open’ work and, furthermore, repudiate ‘The Decline and Fall of Stalinism’, Ernest Mandel’s draft resolution for the forthcoming Pabloite ‘Fifth World Congress’.³

A month earlier, Bill Hunter had written a polemic against Mandel’s document, entitled ‘Under a Stolen Flag’. This – the first political criti-

que of Pabloism produced by the Group since the beginning of Healy’s conflict with Pablo four years before! – sought to demonstrate that ‘the gulf between Pabloite revisionism and ourselves grows wider and wider’.⁴ Not only did Hunter fail to prove this assertion, but his legitimate criticisms of the IS document, with its emphasis on the role a ‘revolutionary’ wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy would play in the political revolution, were undermined by his misrepresentations of Mandel’s arguments.

Healy’s denunciations of the pro-Stalinist politics of the IS did not prevent him from turning a blind eye to his protegee Mike Banda’s blatant adaptation to Maoism. A *Labour Review* article by Banda depicting bureaucratisation as only a ‘potential’ threat under the Chinese Stalinist regime⁵ was criticised by Ellis Hillman,⁶ but neither Healy nor Hunter took a stand against Banda’s thoroughly ‘Pabloite’ position on China. This showed quite clearly, as Hillman points out, that Healy’s intransigence towards Pablo and Mandel was not based on any principled analysis of Stalinism, or of the problems of the political revolution, but was rather motivated by purely factional considerations.⁷

Healy’s real commitment to a discussion of the issues underlying the 1953 split is illustrated by the case of Harry Ratner, the Group’s industrial organiser, who resigned in 1957, unable to swallow Healy’s Stalinist-style demand that members should unquestioningly accept the leadership’s line on Pabloism. After six weeks, having reconsidered his position, Ratner applied to rejoin. Summoned before the Executive Committee, he was told that it was not enough to publicly defend the Group’s policies, but that he must also withdraw his reservations concerning the official line on Pablo. As Ratner recalls: ‘I replied that this was ridiculous. “You know damn well I’ve got reservations.” “You must drop them,” they insisted, “if you want to be readmitted.” At one stage Mike Banda said, “Soon, in the revolution, we shall be shooting Pabloites. So you better be clear.” All the committee – Healy, the Banda brothers, Bill Hunter – kept on repeating this ultimatum Eventually, Healy said, “You’d better make up your mind or you’re out!” Ratner was forced to state that he no longer had any reservations.’⁸

Healy’s opposition to the

Pabloite IS shaded over into hostility towards a centralised International as such. He was determined, he told Cannon, that there should be no return to the pre-1953 FI, with its ‘constant spate of meetings in Paris which meant sections raising funds to send representatives’.⁹ But the weakness of the International Committee obviously strengthened the hand of those advocating unity with Pablo and Mandel. From 1957, therefore, Healy tried to give the IC some semblance of political life by pushing for an international congress, which he attempted to dub the ‘Fourth World Congress’ of the FI until being dissuaded by the SWP.¹⁰ When the congress met in Leeds in June 1958, it not only failed to give any direction to the work of the sections, but even passed a resolution denying the IC the authority to intervene in its constituent national groups.¹¹

In Britain, Healy was faced with the task of integrating former CPers, both intellectuals and militant workers, into the Group. ‘With the new recruits Healy was like a young lover in the first flush of his infatuation,’ Ratner remembers. ‘Behan could do no wrong. Jack Daniels could do no wrong. Peter Fryer could do no wrong. When sometimes some of us would make some criticism of these people Gerry would say you had to be tolerant, they had a lot to unlearn from their period in the CP.’¹² But the more liberal regime that resulted did not represent a move towards genuinely democratic-centralist methods. Rather, Healy seems to have played a minic-Bonapartist role within the organisation, maintaining his dominance by balancing between the various groupings.

The intellectuals were encouraged to pursue their theoretical work through *Labour Review*, which stressed that it was ‘not a sectional Trotskyist journal’, and opened its pages to ‘all who wish to put a point of view on how Marxist science is to be evolved’.¹³ There was nothing wrong in principle with this approach, which had an obvious appeal to intellectuals breaking from the stultifying atmosphere of Stalinism. But what was more urgently needed was a thorough reassessment of the post-war crisis of the FI, which a number of recruits from the CP were theoretically equipped to carry out. At one point, indeed, Healy did propose to undertake an ‘objective study’ of the development of the world Trotskyist movement since 1945.¹⁴ But there were too many skeletons in the closet for Healy to risk such an enterprise. Not surprisingly, the ‘objective study’ failed to materialise.

The ‘old Healyites’ of pre-1956 vintage continued their established practice of ‘deep entry’ in the Labour Party. But the Labour left was in a demoralised state after Bevan’s renegacy at the 1957 annual conference. By contrast, there was an upsurge of activity in the trade unions. Healy therefore empirically shifted the Group’s efforts towards in-



The Healy group's intervention in industry prompted a witch-hunt in the capitalist press

tervention in industrial struggles, with the *Newsletter* producing a series of strike bulletins in which rank-and-file trade unionists were given space to put their case.

Healy was able to use the extensive network of contacts, particularly in the building industry, which Brian Behan had brought with him from the CP. Behan himself played a prominent role in the 1958 dispute at McAlpine's Shell-Mex site on London's South Bank, where pickets were subjected to police violence and numerous arrests were made, Behan receiving a six-week jail sentence.¹⁵ Characteristically, Healy went completely overboard on this. ‘We’ve got the bourgeoisie by the throat!’ he informed one London aggregate, ignoring the fact that the dispute, bitter though it was, was limited to a single building site. ‘But this was part of the apocalyptic concept Gerry had,’ Hillman observes. ‘There it was – the final showdown! And everything had to be poured into support for it.’¹⁶

Ken Weller, who was active in the Group’s AEU faction, argues that a real ‘window of opportunity’ had opened up for revolutionaries in the trade unions in this period, when a whole layer of militants, disillusioned with the CP, were looking for a new direction. But Healy blew his chance to build an effective industrial base. As Weller explains: ‘One of the consequences of this “crisis-ology” of Healy’s was that every five minutes everything had to be dropped . . . and we had to do something else. We were being rushed off our feet every night of the week . . . working in the print

shop, doing this, doing that, never being able to do any systematic work. And of course what happens is that people begin to drift away So that by the time I left, when I was expelled in 1960, that window of opportunity had closed.’¹⁷

The potential for building a revolutionary organisation in industry, and Healy’s failure to capitalise on this, were both demonstrated at the Rank and File Conference of November 1958. The gathering, organised by the Group, drew an audience of 5-600, ‘the bulk of them representing workers on the shop floor’.¹⁸ Yet, even though *Labour Review* had earlier advocated the formation of ‘a national network of rank-and-file bodies, with efficient liaison and a central organ’,¹⁹ Peter Fryer announced after the conference that there was ‘no plan for a permanent organisation’.²⁰ Fearing that a mass rank-and-file movement might escape his personal control, it seems, Healy preferred to use the conference to impress attending militants and recruit a few of them to a small sect where his domination was secure.²¹

Nor did the conference arm workers with a Marxist political strategy. The Charter of Workers’ Demands it adopted did correctly call on industrial militants to take up a political fight against the Labour Party’s Gaitskellite leadership. But this was presented in reformist terms familiar from the days of the Socialist Fellowship, workers being urged to ‘bring the party back to its original purpose and restore the socialist vision and energy of the pioneers of our move-

ment’. Adaptation to Labourite illusions was combined with the usual catastrophist predictions. Fryer declared that the capitalist class aimed to ‘smash us and break us and drive us back to the hungry Thirties’, while Behan warned of the danger of the unemployed being won over to fascism.²² Although Healy himself did not address the conference, the perspectives outlined here were distinctively his own.

Healy’s low profile was probably due to the witch-hunt launched by the capitalist press in the run-up to the conference. A front-page expose appeared in the *News Chronicle*, which sent a reporter to Healy’s home in Streatham to interview the evil genius behind the ‘Red Club’. (Healy refused to co-operate. ‘Print what you like. It’s a free press, isn’t it?’)²³ The campaign no doubt boosted Healy’s sense of his own importance, but it was based on a somewhat exaggerated view of the Group’s influence. A more sober assessment was made in a *Times* editorial, which pointed out that a conference which failed to set up a permanent organisation posed no serious threat to the established order. As for the ‘Red Club’ itself, *The Times* noted presciently that ‘the composition of the group is so diverse that it would be surprising if they were to cohere for long’.²⁴

To be continued

Notes

1. *How Healy and Pablo Blocked Reunification*, Education for Socialists, SWP, 1978, p.32.
2. *Ibid.*, p.62.
3. *Ibid.*, p.40. The RSL was an ‘open’ organisation in that, unlike Healy’s Group, it had a name, organised public meetings and published a Trotskyist journal, *Workers International Review*.
4. *Ibid.*, p.41.
5. *Labour Review*, July-August 1957.
6. *Ibid.*, September-October 1957.
7. Interview with Ellis Hillman, December 28, 1990.
8. H. Ratner, ‘Memoirs of a Trotskyist’, unpublished ms, pp.301-2. I am grateful to comrade Ratner for sending me a draft copy of his memoirs and allowing me to quote from them.
9. *How Healy and Pablo Blocked Reunification*, p.34.
10. *Deep Entryism and Pablo’s Anti-Unity Offensive*, Education for Socialists, SWP, 1978, p.7.
11. *Ibid.*, p.10.
12. Harry Ratner, interviewed by Sam Bornstein, February 4, 1987. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
13. Quoted by J. Callaghan, *British Trotskyism*, Blackwell, 1984, p.223.
14. *How Healy and Pablo Blocked Reunification*, p.33.
15. See Bob Pennington’s account in *Labour Review*, October-November 1959.
16. Interview with Ellis Hillman, January 4, 1991.
17. Interview with Ken Weller, April 17, 1991.
18. *The Times*, November 17, 1958.
19. Quoted by M. Hoskisson and D. Stocking, ‘The rise and fall of the SLL’, *Workers Power*, February 1986.
20. *The Times*, November 17, 1958.
21. Cf anon., ‘The disunity of theory and practice: the Trotskyist movement in Great Britain since 1945’, unpublished ms in Socialist Platform library, p.56. This makes the point that the organisation’s growth was always obstructed by the domination of the ‘Healy clique’, because ‘the bigger becomes the group, the greater the potential danger that control will slip out of the clique’s hands. Ex-members assert that this is the reason why no permanent continuing body emerged from the rank-and-file conference’.
22. *Newsletter*, November 22, 1958.
23. *News Chronicle*, November 13, 1958.
24. *The Times*, November 17, 1958.



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Homage to Oskar Hippe

THE PUBLICATION of the memoirs of Oskar Hippe (1900-1990) is an important event, since it brings to an English-speaking audience the life story of one of the outstanding figures of the German revolutionary movement.

This was by any standards an extraordinary life, from Hippe joining the Spartacus League of Luxemburg and Liebknecht as a teenager, through the struggle against the rise of fascism, ten years spent in Nazi and Stalinist jails, to the struggle for Marxism in the post-war Federal Republic.

All this is told in a vivid but modest and unpretentious style, reminiscent of Leopold Trepper's *The Great Game*, but on a higher political plane. Reviewing Margaret Dewar's autobiography 18 months ago (Workers News No.18), we drew attention to the scarcity of accounts of German Trotskyism in the 1930s, and regretted the fairly skimpy treatment of the subject in her book, despite the author's personal involvement. Trotsky's biog-

rapher Isaac Deutscher, deals with Trotsky's writings on fascism solely from the angle of the lone prophet marooned on Prinkipo, while Ernest Mandel in his 30-page introduction to *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* manages to ignore the German Trotskyists - the executors of the Left Opposition's programme - entirely.

Hippe sets the record straight in a very interesting account of this crucial period. He confirms that the fight for the United Front was by no means a hopeless cause and that it gained considerable sympathy from both social-democratic and communist workers. In spite of the sabotage of both SPD and KPD bureaucrats, the Left Oppositionists were able to initiate United Front committees in Oranienburg (Berlin), Bruchsal, Schmachtenhagen, Sachsenhausen, Birkenweder and Erkenschwick. Well over 10,000 copies of Trotsky's pamphlet *What Next?* were sold.

When Hitler came to power,

**... And Red is the Colour of Our Flag:
Memories of Sixty Years in the Workers'
Movement**

By Oskar Hippe
Index Books 1991; £8.95

Review by Richard Price

the SPD leaders tried to compromise, the reformist trade union leaders obligingly broke off all ties with the SPD, and the KPD disintegrated, entirely unprepared for the tank Trotsky had predicted would ride over the skulls of the German workers if fascism triumphed. It was under such conditions that the Trotskyists of the IKD continued the struggle underground.

Hippe was arrested and subsequently released in 1933. Rearrested in January 1934, as a result of the capitulation of another IKD member, he was tortured, along with his wife Gertrud, but both refused to reveal information. His warders included former members

of the SPD. At his trial in November 1934, Hippe courageously defended communist ideas and was sentenced to hard labour.

On his release in 1936, Hippe resumed political activity, maintaining a clandestine Trotskyist organisation which circulated the underground paper *Our Word*, put out leaflets until 1944, and survived the entire Nazi era.

This remarkable achievement enabled Hippe and his comrades to take up open work in the shambles of post-war Germany, newly partitioned into zones of occupation. This ended when he was arrested in September 1948 in the Soviet zone by the NKVD

for 'anti-Soviet activity' and for 'forming illegal groups', beginning eight years of imprisonment in Soviet and East German jails.

If the last two chapters which cover Hippe's fight inside the left wing of the SPD and his attempts to build a revolutionary party in the Sixties are less penetrating than the previous ones, this is more than compensated for by those covering the turbulent years from the 1918-19 revolution to the rise of fascism. In all, this book should be required reading for all serious socialists.

That being said, it is marred by a new and particularly stupid introduction (mainly about the WRP) by Trudi Jackson of the WRP/Workers Press. Among other things, it attempts to 'claim' Hippe for the WRP's 'Workers International' and tries by association to link him with the notion that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary *through and through* - that hardy annual first put forward by Joseph Hansen, 'developed' by Gerry Healy and resuscitated by Cliff

Slaughter. (Strange that the German Trotskyists carried out fraction work in the KPD if they subscribed to such a theory!) What the WRP thinks of Hippe's work in the SPD is, again, anybody's bet, since it normally regards any form of entrism as an act of class betrayal. On a par with the introduction are the notes, which contain a large number of elementary mistakes.

The introduction provoked a stormy reply in *International Worker* vehemently 'reclaiming' Hippe as an ally of David North's ICFI. These unsavoury squabbles are rendered even more ridiculous when you consider that the book was previously published under an imprint linked to the United Secretariat! In truth, Oskar Hippe's generous and non-sectarian spirit led him to lend support to any tendency he felt would assist the reunification of Trotskyists. And if his generosity was sometimes misplaced, that is something no honest person would hold against this inspiring fighter for international socialism.

Inside the ANC's camps

IT IS HARD to find more stark and sinister evidence of the counter-revolutionary and treacherous character of the ANC-SACP leadership than that contained in this pamphlet. It details the experiences of rank-and-file members in the guerrilla camps who dared to challenge the leadership by calling for democratic accountability within the ANC. Their calls were answered in a most horrific way: with detention, torture and even murder.

The evidence makes it quite clear that the whole leadership must shoulder the responsibility for these crimes. ANC tops Mandela, Tambo, Sisulu and Modise, and SACP gurus Slovo, Hani and Simons, are all guilty of a conspiracy of silence, cover-up, arrogant dismissal and slander. This publication bears testimony to the fact that the present blind alley of negotiations is nothing but the culmination of a long period of reformism and open political treachery by this leadership.

The pamphlet consists of a number of documents. The most important are:

- A first-hand account by ex-ANC detainees of the mutiny

**Mutiny in the ANC, 1984 - As Told by Five of
the Mutineers**
Justice for Southern Africa/Solidarity with Ex-SWAPO
Detainees; £1.50

Review by Vusi Makabane

by the majority of guerrillas in the camps in Tanzania in 1984, and the leadership's attempts from then on to take action against the mutineers and to suppress their demands. The most basic of these demands was simply for a fully representative democratic conference of the ANC.

□ A direct appeal - an open letter in 1990 - from the ex-detainees to Nelson Mandela.

□ A report of the assassination in 1990 of ex-mutineer Siphon Phungulwa, by all accounts killed by the ANC itself.

The gist of the developments around the 1984 mutiny is contained in the open letter to Mandela. The letter recalls that:

1. The mutiny was a spontaneous response to 'crimes and misdeeds' by elements in the leadership of the ANC who were responsible for,

amongst other acts, 'torture and murder', 'brutal suppression of democracy' and a failure to hold democratic elections 'for a period exceeding 13 years' (p.19).

2. The leadership, in particular ANC president Tambo, failed to intervene and instead acquiesced in identifying the 'ringleaders' and unleashing 'virulent brutalities against them' (ibid).

3. The mutineers spent close to five years in the ANC's most notorious prison, and still remained committed to the ANC.

4. Subsequently, two of the mutineers were democratically elected onto the ANC's Regional Political Committee in Tanzania, but the likes of Chris Hani, acting on behalf of the National Executive Committee, banned them from 'participating freely in ANC political life', and dissolved



ANC fighters training in Tanzania

'democratically elected structures' (ibid).

Horrible as these revelations are, the whole document has to be studied in order to appreciate fully the level of depravity of the ANC-SACP leadership. It foisted on the most self-sacrificing militants the guerrillaist approach, which effectively cut them off from the working class. Then it brutally repressed them when they did not unquestioningly toe the line. Little wonder that this leadership so readily cosies up to the state at the negotiating table. After all, it shares with the state a deep-seated fear of the working class and its methods of struggle.

The campaign to defend the ex-detainees must be taken into the ranks of the black working class whose interests are being directly betrayed by the ANC-SACP leadership. It must be linked with other campaigns against the bureaucratic-repressive practices of ANC and SACP members within the working class. These crimes have included splitting unions, as with the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa, and physical intimidation and expulsions, as in the case of the Food and Allied Workers' Union, to mention but two recent examples. And clearly the brutality of Winnie Mandela's 'football team' is another example.

However, the ultimate success of such a campaign must depend on the development in practice of a consistent work-

ing class political line in opposition to the petty-bourgeois politics of the ANC-SACP leadership. Only an alternative revolutionary leadership, a Trotskyist party, is able to provide such direction.

The campaign by the Justice for Southern Africa/Solidarity with Ex-SWAPO Detainees must be supported. The ANC-SACP leadership must be

brought to account. But there must be no illusions in the reformability of the ANC-SACP. The task must be to break the stranglehold which the ANC-SACP has on the South African working class. That is why this publication is so important. It must be read by the widest ranks of the working class and oppressed in South Africa and worldwide.

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How should socialists respond to the trial of Winnie Mandela? **Ben Jordan** argues that the reactionary politics of the ANC-SACP have given the South African state a stick to beat the masses with

SOUTH AFRICAN politics abounds in bitter ironies. No more so than at present, with the trial of Winnie Mandela. The 'first lady' of South Africa is on trial for kidnapping and assault. She could get a life sentence if found guilty.

Her husband, Nelson Mandela, was released from a life sentence just over a year ago. When sentence was passed on him and his fellow accused, the curtain dropped on open political activity in South Africa and a decade-long darkness descended upon the oppressed masses. Winnie Mandela's trial is taking place in what appears to be a very different time.

Firstly, all kinds of illusions have been generated amongst the masses that we are witnessing the dawn of freedom, that apartheid is about to end. Secondly, Nelson Mandela and the ANC's political fortunes appear to have turned: today he is a free man, the ANC has been unbanned and the prospect of an ANC government is in sight, with none other than Nelson Mandela as its leader.

Winnie's trial is thus a source of tremendous embarrassment for the ANC and its supporters in South Africa and abroad. But the ANC has been badly compromised in the eyes of millions because of its own politics. In an extraordinary way, in the person of Winnie Mandela, the past has caught up with the ANC.

Because she is married to the ANC's top leader, she has always been a very public figure. 'Greatness' has thus been thrust upon her. But the present situation is also the product of a set of particular political circumstances which occurred in 1988.

The terrible political recession, following the events of

1984-86, had reached its most extreme point. The trade unions were being battered into virtual submission by the bosses. Rather than becoming leading organs of mass defence, they became the site of bitter factional struggles, as the ANC-SACP leadership bureaucratically attempted to control them and stamp out socialism and the socialists.

In the townships, the mass organisations were reduced to shells, very often comprising cliques of the worst political elements. Thuggery and gangsterism became a substitute for politics. It is in this context that the events that gave rise to the killing of Stompie Moeketsi occurred.

It must also be remembered that Winnie Mandela, despite popular support, has never been a favourite of all young township militants. Indeed, her petty-bourgeois lifestyle, and the related alienation from the proletarian masses, produced tremendous anger on the part of the more far-sighted Young Lions of Soweto. At one point her newly constructed house was burnt down and the ANC leadership had to resort to all kinds of manoeuvres to limit the political damage.

Furthermore, when the Stompie Moeketsi affair broke in 1988, rather than rallying to Winnie Mandela's support, even leading UDF members publicly (but hypocritically – for it was their politics which 'produced' the Winnie phenomenon) distanced themselves from it. During 1990, rank-and-file discontent was again openly expressed when Winnie was placed in charge of Social Welfare by the ANC National Executive Committee.

The arrest and trial of Winnie Mandela, despite Nelson's

unflinching backing, has therefore done nothing to increase her popularity.

True to its class nature, the petty-bourgeois nationalist ANC has not been averse to repeatedly ditching principles in favour of pragmatic twists and turns. Hence the responses of Nelson Mandela and the ANC to the trial. Dizzied by the negotiations, the initial response was faith in the bourgeois courts. Compare this to the MK guerrillas who only a few years ago defiantly refused to recognise the authority of the apartheid-capitalist courts.

Drawn under the sway of the bourgeoisie, eager to believe that De Klerk was a 'man of integrity' who deserved to be given a chance, the ANC betrayed its own militants by now placing full trust in the regime's system of justice. The belated attempt at calling the trial into question, declaring it 'political' and a frame-up, has come across as a clumsy cover-up rather than a principled stand.

The trial itself has been an expression of the logic of the ANC's politics: far from conducting it in a revolutionary manner, it has become a platform for reactionary ideas.

As a sharp letter from the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) to a weekly newspaper in South Africa argued: Winnie's defence made homosexuality virtually synonymous with sexual abuse and ANC supporters marched around with anti-gay posters outside the court. These actions were in direct contradiction with the ANC's own guidelines for a new Bill of Rights which expressed the ANC's supposed opposition to all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sexuality.

With this scandalous kind of cynicism and betrayal of principle, yet again the ANC gives good reason to doubt its ability to deliver freedom to the oppressed masses of South Africa. Nor have we heard a whimper from the SACP leadership on what ought to be basic questions of principle for communists. For this 'communist' party, it is the silence of those who are most guilty; it is the silence and deceit of Stalinism.

Rather than being aimed at the education of the vanguard and an inspiration to the masses, Winnie Mandela's 'defence' has only produced further political disorientation and frustration. There is a sense that the De Klerk regime is calling all the shots, and that the eagerly sought 'climate of negotiations' – as was predicted by revolutionary socialists from the start – has produced nothing but a climate of concession, compromise and sell-out.

ANC politics in the dock



Winnie and Nelson Mandela arriving at court

The trial is merely an additional lever to secure De Klerk's aim of drawing an ANC freed of its militant mass base under the wing of the bourgeoisie. It is a means for ensuring that ANC support rests on passive, compliant lambs rather than angry Young Lions.

The trial of Winnie Mandela must be denounced. We know that apartheid courts are courts of injustice, in which the worst criminals sit in

judgement. At the same time, the air must be cleared of the poison of ANC-SACP politics. For this to happen, the masses, and especially the proletarian vanguard, must take hold of their own destiny by open militant action for all their democratic and economic class demands. And this will inevitably be against their present leadership's efforts to curb and demobilise them.

Only with the masses on the march can a real struggle be

conducted by revolutionary Marxists to stamp out political corruption and scandal; only then can serious steps be taken towards exorcising the townships of the thuggery and politically destructive violence.

For it is this perverted ANC-SACP inspired politics which has been at the heart of the Winnie Mandela trial and which has been so deftly exploited by the state and its agents.

WRP sits on the fence

ON MARCH 24, supporters of Workers News attended a conference called by Trade Unionists Against the War. Like Labour Against the War, TUAW is an organisation dominated by *Socialist Organiser* with *Socialist Outlook* playing the role of junior partner. Both were floated at the end of the Gulf conflict, after *Socialist Organiser* had unilaterally closed down the moribund Campaign Against War in the Gulf without even informing most of its affiliates.

In common with most events touched by the dead hand of *Socialist Organiser*, the TUAW conference was a pretty desultory affair, attracting only about 60 people.

In an effort to cut through the diplomatic generalities embodied in a statement presented to the conference, Workers News supporters proposed to a workshop of industrial trade unionists the addition of the following amendment: 'The trade union movement must fight for the victory of colonial and semi-colonial nations in any military conflict with imperialism by all means possible.'

Such a proposition does not allow socialists any room for equivocation: you are either for or against it. Longstanding WRP/Workers Press members present, however, managed, without any explanation, to abstain on the amendment. This act of fence-sitting sheds further light on the kind of 'independent intervention' the WRP/Workers Press pledged itself to make when it split from the Hands Off the Middle East Committee in November last year, apparently on the grounds that other affiliates did not share its hysterical Stalinophobia. In practice, this 'intervention' amounted to nothing more than pompous declarations in *Workers Press*, while the bulk of WRP members – in common with the other remnants of Healyism – hibernated during the Gulf crisis.

The WRP is fond of claiming – ludicrously – that it represents the 'continuity' of Trotskyism. Fudging basic principles of revolutionary defeatism in war is in direct contradiction to the founding documents of the Fourth International.

Strike derailed by Congress

By Daniel Evans

OVER 235,000 railway workers in the United States, represented by ten unions, walked out on strike on April 17. Within 24 hours, Congress and the Bush administration had rushed through emergency legislation to force them back to work.

The strike followed three years of negotiations over wages, during which there were also hundreds of local grievances over health and safety procedures, working conditions, the size of crews and the amount workers should contribute to health care costs. When the National Mediation Board, a three-man presidential emergency committee established in May 1990, recommended a three to four per cent pay rise – which was unacceptable to the railway owners – and changes in work practices – to which the unions would not agree – management attempted to impose their will and force a confrontation.

The solidly-supported strike

of the strike on an economy already in recession.

They needn't have worried. Rather than face the consequences of illegal action, the union leaders obediently led their members back to work. However, forcing railway workers to swallow the inevitable pro-management settlement will be a different matter.

● The chief executive of Germany's railway system has called on the Kohl government to remove 'civil-service red-tape' and allow him to run the industry, which he described as bankrupt, 'more like a business'. Heinz Durr said: 'I want to change the Bundesbahn into a business which makes profits.' The debts of the state-owned Bundesbahn, which now includes the old East German network, could rise to DM400 billion in the next eight years. Durr's comments follow a strike earlier this year by 100,000 East German railway workers in defence of their jobs.