

Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League (Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency/Britain) No. 34 October-November 1991 30p

By Richard Price

ON THE face of things, Neil Kinnock and the right wing's control over the labour movement seems near complete. With the sole exception of the proposed boycott of Employment Action, Kinnock's line won the day at the TUC annual conference in September. Three weeks later, any semblance of political debate at the Labour Party conference was abandoned in favour of a six-day election rally-cum-press launch, culminating in a display of Union Jack waving and a rendition of Queen's 'We Are the Champions'.

Conference supported the position of the right-wing NEC on all but one motion – a feeble proposal to cut defence spending to the average level of EC countries. The leadership then let it be known that it would ignore even this commitment when it came to drawing up Labour's election manifesto. The suspension of MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist was also endorsed – in their absence – by 4,630,000 votes to 523,000. A motion calling for a programme of fundamental reform to be achieved through a planned economy and a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power to working people' was defeated by 4,715,000 to 641,000, while calls for the withdrawal

KINNOCKISM – OR SOCIALISM

of British troops from Ireland and the repeal of all anti-union laws lost by similar margins.

Kinnock has been fortunate enough to benefit both from the prolonged instability within the Tory leadership and the collapse of Stalinism, which has been assiduously used to witch-hunt the left of the party. Labour's Brighton jamboree projected a party positively revelling in 'post-socialism'. Having slayed the albatrosses of nationalisation, unilateral nuclear disarmament and 'loony left' councils, here was a party ready for government – more pro-European, more concerned about law and order, and more committed to the defence of our manufacturing industries than the Tories!

The soft left and the ex-left have played a decisive role in driving Labour to the right. At *Tribune's* fringe rally, Tony Banks and Ken Living-

stone praised Kinnock's keynote speech to the conference; and Clare Short explained that although the wave of expulsions and suspensions of left-wingers had been 'an enormously painful journey for some of us to deal with', they were justified by the fact that *Militant* stood against Labour in the Walton by-election. *Tribune* itself was more brusque in its post-conference editorial. Fields and Nellist 'should be investigated and, if found guilty, expelled,' it advised the leadership.

In electoral terms, however, it is far from clear that this is delivering the goods. Labour has not convinced a decisive majority of middle class voters, let alone won back those skilled workers who deserted to the Tories in 1979 and in subsequent elections. Indeed, this is hardly surprising when Labour's programme scarcely differs from that of the Liberal

Democrats. The wavering centre of the British electorate voted for the Tories because it lost faith in Labour and saw Thatcher as firm and decisive. Kinnock's cynical U-turns on almost every policy hardly impress such people. Labour's relative popularity can be put down more to the Tories' disarray and the depth of the slump than its own strengths. A victory for the Labour Party at next year's general election is, therefore, far from assured.

At the level of its leadership, Labour's transformation into a Euro-style social democratic party, along the lines of the German SPD and the Spanish PSOE, is almost complete. John Smith continues his one-way romance with the CBI, and favours the 'fast lane' approach to a single European currency. Roy Hattersley calls for solidarity with the police against 'rioters' and for 'more police

officers visible on our streets'. Tony Blair condemns the TUC boycott of Employment Action. Gerald Kaufman argues that the retention of nuclear weapons is 'the only basis on which you can effectively negotiate'. Socialism, even in words, has been successfully exorcised.

But the triumphalism of the Labour leadership is premature. If a Labour government is elected, it will inherit a deep slump and a massive dole queue. The likely outflow of capital from Britain will confound John Smith's dreams of more investment. Unable and unwilling to push through a reform programme, Labour in government will once more disillusion its own supporters. Even if the slump bottoms out and the economy revives, inflation and falling unemployment will stimulate wage demands. All the old contradictions between Labour in government and the ranks of the Labour Party and the unions will re-emerge.

If, on the other hand, the Tories succeed in winning a fourth term, it is the right wing which will have to carry the can. After all, it can hardly get away with blaming the bogey of the left this time. Kinnock, the self-proclaimed 'captain of a winning team', will rapidly find himself on a free transfer.

The Euro-transformation of Labour faces other obstacles. It took the German SPD leadership years of internal struggle before it defeated the opposition – and it had the advantage of a booming economy and of having been re-established after the war minus its former organic ties to the unions. Spanish social democracy's version of Thatcherism has led it into repeated confrontations with the UGT union confederation.

It is one thing to distance Labour from the unions,

another to complete the divorce. Even if the TUC leaders are in Kinnock's pocket, and even if they overcome rank-and-file resistance and consent to a separation, they are less likely to want to fund a party they have no influence over. And Labour, with its bank overdraft up to its £1.9 million limit, cannot afford the break.

Whatever the outcome of the general election, the Labour right wing must be defeated. Those within *Militant* who are trying to stave off their own political crisis with the thought of founding an independent 'party' to directly outbid Labour are suffering delusions of grandeur. If the Walton by-election was a success, then it would be hard to imagine what a failure would look like! Property developer Kinnock is only too pleased to hear that the troublesome tenants are thinking of moving out.

The Labour right wing can be cursed, and the Labour Party by-passed by proclaiming independent 'parties'. The history of the left in past decades in Britain is littered with attempts to pronounce the Labour Party prematurely dead, from the WRP and the SWP to the RCP. In recent months a few hundred left-wingers have resigned from the Labour Party, not a few of them thoroughly demoralised.

But for the millions of workers who will vote Labour at the next election – particularly the younger generation which can hardly remember the last Labour government – illusions in parliamentary reformism have grown. Revolutionaries must recognise this contradiction and, in our opinion, conclude that reformism will not go away by being ignored or called rude names. Revolutionaries must not substitute pseudo-revolutionary frustration for political analysis. They must clearly advocate a Labour election victory, whilst taking no political responsibility for a Kinnock government, or in any way tying themselves to Labour's official programme. They must mobilise workers to fight for their most vital interests and connect this to the struggle for socialism. To do this requires consistent work both inside and outside the Labour Party and the unions.

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RELEASE THE TOTTENHAM THREE!



The march through north London on October 5 calling for the release of Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite, jailed for the murder of PC Jakes during the Broadwater Farm uprising in 1985

Workers News PUBLIC FORUM

Defending the Russian Revolution

Thursday 14 November, 7.30pm
Conway Hall (Small Hall)
Red Lion Square, London WC1
Admission £1

Don't trust Labour to defend the NHS

ON OCTOBER 16, Tory Health Secretary William Waldegrave announced details of the latest round of government attacks on the National Health Service.

Following the establishment of 57 self-governing 'NHS trusts' last April, approval has now been given for a further 99 hospitals and other health units to break away from NHS control in April next year. This will mean that services accounting for £5 billion of health authority spending, almost one-third of the total expenditure on the NHS, will have been primed for privatisation. Some 250,000 employees and 100,000 beds will have been removed from the nationally planned service.

Approval has also been given for 153 units to submit plans for achieving trust status in April 1993. Since only a handful of those seeking trust status in the first two waves were turned down, it is likely that after April 1993 units accounting for more than 50 per cent of health spending will be outside the NHS.

Not content with this scale of devastation, the Health Secretary also announced approval in principle for four of London's leading teaching hospitals to opt out with the third wave in

1993. This gives the lie to claims made at the Conservative Party annual conference that health service provision in London would be reviewed by an independent enquiry. The fate of St Mary's, St Bartholomew's, King's College and St Thomas's has now been settled in advance of the enquiry's first meeting.

The Tories' confidence to press home their assault on the NHS has been strengthened by the failure of Labour Party and TUC leaders to mount a serious campaign of opposition. Kinnock and Willis have treated the attacks on the NHS as little more than photo opportunities. At the same time, they have worked hard to suppress every initiative of rank-and-file members of the Labour Party and trade unions to resist the Tory attacks.

The burden of the cuts is, of course, falling on the poor, the sick and the elderly in the working class inner-city areas. By 1993, 70 per cent of NHS services on Merseyside will be operating as trusts. In the last year, following the introduction of higher charges, five million people have left NHS dentists' lists. In London it is increasingly difficult for women to obtain an abortion on the NHS, and even when they do, they must wait

Ian Harrison assesses how far the Tories have got with the break-up of the NHS and casts a sceptical eye over Labour leaders' claims to be able to reverse the damage

longer for it. Many patients previously cared for in mental hospitals and long-stay hospital wards now live on the streets of major cities and seaside towns. They compete for handouts alongside thousands of homeless and unemployed people for whom no healthcare arrangements exist.

The deteriorating services are forcing doctors to transfer chronically ill patients from hospital wards to their homes. As a result, a growing number of people, particularly women, are being forced to give up their jobs and take on the role of full-time carers; while others are obliged to undertake extra part-time work in order to pay for private treatment.

The cowardly retreat of the trade union leaders in the face of this onslaught is demonstrated by their response to an initiative from NALGO's health service members. This year's NALGO conference instructed national officers to organise a working conference

to draw up a balance sheet of government attacks on the NHS, and to launch a campaign of action to defeat them. The leaders of all NHS-based trade unions were invited to participate, together with rank-and-file delegates, and all have so far refused.

The impact of the first round of NHS opt-outs leaves no room for complacency if workers' interests are to be defended.

Trade union branches and Labour Party wards must pass resolutions demanding that their organisations take up a serious and sustained fight. The Labour Party leaders cannot be trusted to reverse Tory attacks on the basis that their health policy, promoted through parliament and the media, is an 'election winner'. In fact, unless there is a widespread mobilisation of the working class, the outcome of the election will be determined by the general state of the economy – the more buoyant the economy, the more likely the Tories are to win. Major's government knows this, which is why it is pressing ahead with NHS reforms it

knows are deeply unpopular.

Rank-and-file workers must, therefore, be organised throughout the NHS as a prelude to mobilising the whole working class in a campaign to defeat the Tories. But it must not stop there. The Tories' anti-union laws, which criminalise workers who are prepared to take industrial action to defend jobs and services, and which a Labour government would retain substantially intact, must be abolished as well. Such a campaign requires, above all, the building of a principled revolutionary leadership in the trade unions, and the removal of all those leaders who refuse to fight.

What future for trades councils?

By Graham Campbell

IN RECENT years, trades councils have undergone a steady decline, both in the participation of trade union activists in them and in their numerical strength.

Ten years ago there were nearly 400; now there are around half that number. Long gone are the days when trades councils were the central focus of activity in uniting trade union struggles. They have now assumed a supporting role which is most effective when major disputes occur. In their other main goals – to recruit workers to trade unions, to overcome sectarian divisions affecting different groups of workers and to defend jobs – trades councils have clearly had little impact. Not only have they failed to halt the decline in the fortunes of organised workers, but they have themselves become part of that decline.

The last decade has seen several major industrial disputes where trades councils have successfully organised fund-raising and support for workers in struggle, but have failed to get solidarity strike actions off the ground. They were not in a position, politically or organisationally, to prevent the TUC and Labour Party leaders from isolating those workers and assisting in their defeat at the hands of the employers.

However, even this limited supportive role of the trades councils was too much for the TUC General Council to stomach. With its right-wing policies gaining ground in the low ebb of the class struggle, the TUC made its move to isolate trades councils in October 1990, when it decided to abolish County Associations of Trades Councils, the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee – the national organising body – and the annual conference.

At the 1991 annual conference of trades councils in Manchester last June, a firm stand was made against the TUC General Council's attack – the conference decided not to be abolished! Previous TUC-recognised annual conferences had been restricted because of pressure from above instructing delegates not to discuss certain issues, or policies which conflicted with the official TUC line. Many of

the delegates agreed with the chair when he said that this had been the most effective conference in the 20 years he had been involved in trades councils. It was felt that it was the first time they had been able to discuss freely and decide democratically. The conference demanded a 'going back to the previous state of affairs', although it was agreed to accept a return to the 'status quo' – TUC recognition – if offered.

The official justification for the TUC's bureaucratic actions was to save money – the TUC is deeply in the red. In what was supposed to be 'Trade Union Recruitment Year', it cut the paltry sum of £18,000 – equivalent to about half of Norman Willis's salary – which is shared annually among the nearly 200 organisations best placed to carry out this much needed campaign.

The real reason was clearly political. Trades councils, despite their limitations, have been among the main organisers of rank-and-file solidarity with workers engaged in struggle against the Tory government such as the miners, the printers at Wapping, the Dover seafarers, the dockers and the ambulance workers. The TUC's attack on the trades councils – which were responsible for founding the TUC in 1868 – is part of a wider attempt to control all rank-and-file militancy. The aim is to convince the employers and the middle class that the union leaders are in control of their members, and make the election of a Labour government more likely.

The battle for the defence of trades councils is not merely for the reversal of a bureaucratic decision. It is part of the struggle for a trade union movement that defends the rights and gains of the working class, against a reactionary, parasitical bureaucracy (which includes the right wing within the trades councils themselves) acting as policemen for the capitalist state.

It is probable that the TUC annual conference in Glasgow in September would have seen an important defeat for the

General Council's decision, since 12 unions submitted motions in support of trades councils. The TUC leadership, fearing such a challenge at Congress, decided to re-recognise the trades council bodies it had 'abolished' the year before and set up a one-year consultative review to look into their future role.

Delegates to trades councils and all trade unionists should have been aware of the fact that: 1) trades councils are not properly funded in order to do their work; 2) they be given more democratic rights in the TUC structures, especially at Congress; 3) union branches be freed to affiliate and pay their trades council fees directly, without the interference of the regional bureaucratic structures of trade unions; 4) shop stewards' committees and direct labour committees be directly affiliated to trades councils; 5) a national union of unemployed workers be formed as an urgent task; 6) trade unions form direct links with working class community and voluntary groups, and tenants' associations, by allowing their direct affiliation. This will strengthen trades councils and help to strengthen the unity of the working class in its coming struggles.

● Islington Trades Union Council is holding a public meeting on October 30 in Islington Town Hall to discuss how to fight the cuts in services in the borough.



The national demonstration through London on October 19 organised by the Prisoners Support Group and the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign. It called for all poll tax debts to be written off, and for the release of all those jailed for non-payment and for defending last year's demonstrations against police attacks

FREE VIC WILLIAMS!

VIC WILLIAMS, the 28-year-old soldier who went AWOL to protest against the Gulf War, was sentenced to 14 months imprisonment and dismissed from the army 'in disgrace' by a court martial on September 11. He was found guilty by a panel of five officers on one charge of 'desertion' and two of 'conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline'.

Williams spoke at an anti-war demonstration in Hyde Park organised by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf in February, after going absent from his unit in December 1990. He also gave interviews to the television programme *Heart of the Matter* and the press. At the Hyde Park rally he said: 'We are no better than Saddam Hussein with what we

By Lizzy Ali

are doing in the Middle East.' After 72 days, Williams gave himself up.

The stiff sentence handed out to Vic Williams was largely due to his public opposition to the war. Had he remained silent, he could have received as little as 28 days. Instead, he had outlined his reasons in a letter to his commanding officer after going absent. He stated that he knew of no army procedure by which he could register his conscientious objection to the Gulf War. He described the allied campaign as 'a blatant attempt to reduce the country and the people of Iraq to

ruins under the guises of the UN'. It was 'naked aggression, which in my opinion is no different to the way Kuwait has been treated by Iraq', he wrote.

While socialists do not hold illusions that the imperialist war against Iraq could have been halted by individual desertion, Vic Williams's courageous defiance of the military top brass must have the support of the labour movement, which must campaign for his immediate release. The Vic Williams Defence Campaign can be contacted at 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE.

● In another case, a teenage soldier from the Royal Engineers, whose battle experiences during the Gulf War led him to go absent in order to seek medical help, has been fined £800.

FUNDS

The millionaire media continues to pour out the good news that Marxism is dead, communism is finished and the future lies with the free market. But, as millions join the dole queues east and west and Nazi thugs rampage in democratic Germany, capitalist freedom increasingly shows itself to be no freedom at all. Workers News isn't immune from the recession. We need our readers' support more than ever. The Workers News £10,000 Building Fund now stands at £2,473.24. Don't forget we need to maintain our regular £300 Building Fund. Send your donation to:

Workers News
1/17 Meredith Street
London EC1R 0AE

What can we do to stop the bosses' attacks?

Workers are under attack

Workers in South Africa are in a very dangerous situation. From all sides, the enemy attacks us. Every day more than 1,000 workers are thrown out into the streets and turned into beggars. Workers are losing jobs at a terrific rate as the economy of the bosses slides downward, dragging us with it. Prices are going up sharply and the government wants to impose even more burdens on the masses with its VAT tax.

The De Klerk regime has used our money to fund Inkatha and Uwusa [Inkatha's 'trade union'] and has directly helped in the murdering of our people. The full extent of secret projects and funding operated by the government may never be known to the public. There is evidence that big business too was involved with Uwusa. Only fools can still believe that capitalists and their governments are to be trusted.

What are our key demands?

Many issues are affecting workers now. But we cannot take up each issue as if it was separate from other issues. Three immediate demands stand out for workers.

attacks?

What follows is the text of a leaflet which has been circulated to trade unionists and other militants in South Africa by the *Qina Umsebenzi* group. We reprint it to give readers an indication of how class-conscious activists are organising workers to fight back against the attacks of the South African regime

1. Stop all retrenchments now

When a worker loses his/her job, many people suffer. The workers' family and especially their children suffer. Such a worker may never find a job again. Every worker who gets thrown out by bosses makes the employed workers weaker because these unemployed become more desperate and then they become scabs. Retrenchment weakens the fighting power of the working class. It drives the unemployed to rob and assault their fellow workers. Unemployment breaks up our communities. We must stop any further retrenchments now or we will become too weak to defend ourselves in the future!

2. Stop VAT and PAYE deductions

VAT is going to be im-

plemented at the end of September 1991. Cosatu says that VAT will push up our expenses by five per cent. Under GST [General Sales Tax] basic foods were not taxed, but VAT will apply to all things that workers buy. The big profits of bosses will not be subject to VAT. Bosses will in fact save R6 billion per year but the ordinary person will pay more. VAT is going to drive us further into poverty at a time when bosses are retrenching workers. This creates an impossible situation for the worker who is now being sucked dry. Cosatu has called for people to stop paying PAYE tax to a government which funds the killing of its own population. We can only pay our hard-earned money to a government that we control and to a government that is

honest, open and accountable to the masses. Let us close the tap of funds that the government has by not paying any taxes to them.

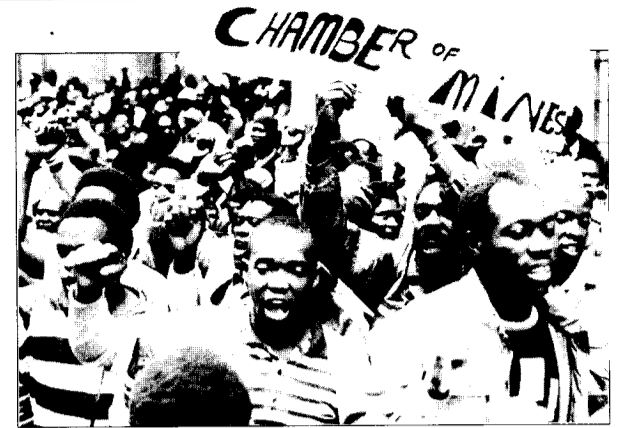
3. Stop the violence - the government must get out

We must stop the violence among ourselves. Many followers of Inkatha only yesterday were our fellow-workers and even our friends. We must find ways of winning back the confidence of fellow-workers who support Inkatha. We must explain why they should support our demands for a stop to retrenchments and VAT. At the same time we must prepare our structures for effective defence of our lives.

We cannot trust the government, so how can we negotiate with them? The only way is to force the government to resign. A temporary government accountable to the workers must take power in order to organise a free and fair election for a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution for SA.

How can we take our demands forward?

In early September, Cosatu will be meeting with Saccola (the national organisation of the bosses) to negotiate the demands of the workers with



Militant slogan of resistance: but will the unions be powerful enough to shape the terms of a social contract in a new South Africa?

the bosses. But this meeting with Saccola will not give us anything if we do not fight seriously at plant level. The bosses may not agree to any of our demands. In such a case, Cosatu has said it will call a national strike. The form of the national strike could be a siyalala ['sleep-in' factory occupation], we could take over factories or we could have a long stayaway. Whatever we decide, workers will have to be strong and prepared for action.

We suggest the following steps to build our campaign:

1. At every factory we must write a letter to the factory bosses stating our immediate demands. This letter must as far as possible have the same demands. (Cosatu has suggested a standard letter.) Workers must march to the manager's office and hand over the letter of immediate demands.

2. In every street of every industrial area, we must form street committees with a few representatives per factory. The street committee must meet regularly to hear if any

boss is planning to retrench or what his response is to our demands. If there is any boss who tries to retrench, then every worker in that street and in other streets must come out in solidarity action to stop the retrenchment.

3. All industrial street committees must be linked into an Industrial Area Committee with at least three reps per factory attending the Industrial Area Committee (IAC).

4. The IAC must go into the townships and rally all the unemployed. Civics and youth must help. The unemployed and retrenched must all assemble at the factories where they used to work at on the day the Cosatu and Saccola are meeting. From each factory, workers and the unemployed will march to the nearest Industrialists Association office to deliver our demands.

5. Workers must carefully evaluate the government and Saccola's response to the demands. If the demands are not met then all street, Industrial Area Committees and locals should plan further action such as a general siyalala strike.

HELP LAUNCH A TROTSKYIST JOURNAL FOR SOUTH AFRICA

We are a group of South African Trotskyists in political solidarity with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT), sharing the internationalist perspectives contained in its fusion platform.

Our political perspectives for South Africa are contained in our 'Draft Theses on the Present Situation', entitled *South Africa at the Crossroads*. We are for the smashing of apartheid and capitalism on the basis of the theory and perspective of the permanent revolution.

At present our central political emphasis is the rejection of the framework of negotiations in favour of the struggle for a revolutionary democratic constituent assembly convened by the oppressed masses themselves. For us, a struggle on this basis is now the shortest route to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in South Africa.

What is required is a clear and consistent opposition to negotiations. Through patiently explaining in every meeting and forum where workers and youth are gathered why we think negotiations are a trap, why the masses have to trust only in their own initiatives and rely only on their own power, we will attract the attention of the best militants.

Through providing a clear programme of action on which to fight, through subjecting every burning question (both international and national) to a careful Marxist analysis, we are confident we will strike a chord with those who are desperately seeking a way out of the current demoralising impasse.

A bold revolutionary initiative on the part of the Trotskyist vanguard is necessary. Central to this is the production of a regular journal.

To whom will the journal be addressed?

Our efforts must be directed at a particular layer within the mass organisations:

- Those who feel frustrated, confused or angered by the developments in South Africa over the past 20 months and who have begun the painful process of drawing the political lessons of this period.
- Those who are looking for a programme of action that can counter the deep constitutional illusions of the masses and the sell-out being prepared by the ANC-SACP leadership.
- Those who feel betrayed, after years of sacrifice, by the abandonment of the perspective of an armed seizure of power.
- Those who want to fight for socialism now and are instinctively suspicious of the mixed economy idea pedalled by the ANC and SACP leaderships.
- Those who were once ready to accept wholeheartedly the politics of Stalinism, but who now want to make sense of its collapse and disintegration.

The best elements will of course be chiefly found among the worker and youth militants of the ANC, the SACP and in the unions (chiefly COSATU but also NACTU and the independents).

But given the programmatic bankruptcy of other prominent liberation organisations such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), and the inept and confused response of these and other centrist organisations such as the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) to the course charted by the ANC-SACP leadership, many of their militants are no doubt also waiting for a clear revolutionary lead.

An appeal to all workers, youth, students and intellectuals who are for socialism and against a sell-out to capitalism in South Africa and worldwide

Why such a publication is especially timely

Only Trotskyism - the revolutionary Marxism of today - can provide the vanguard of the world proletariat with answers to the range of questions that have been raised by the new world situation; and South Africa provides especially fertile soil for Trotskyism.

The space provided by De Klerk's 'glasnost' must be fully exploited by the Trotskyist vanguard. For this task, a revolutionary journal is required.

The counter-revolutionary significance of the class-collaborationist negotiations policy and aims of the ANC-SACP leadership has been amply demonstrated over the last 20 months. The strengthening of this leadership's ties with the ruling class; the series of political concessions to the De Klerk regime; the abandonment of its own policies of 'armed struggle' and nationalisation; the refusal to organise a serious defence of the masses against Inkatha violence; the demobilising of the masses on every terrain; the rampant reformism and cowardly retreat of the bureaucratic Stalinist leadership in the unions in the face of a relentless economic offensive by the ruling class - all of these developments have thrown many loyal, tried and tested militants of the ANC-SACP into a state of political and ideological confusion. Only Marxism can make sense of the situation. For this task, a revolutionary journal is required.

The collapse of Stalinism has aroused the theoretical curiosity of militants who had previously been under its insidious influence. Workers and youth who have rallied behind the South African Communist Party now want answers that its leadership cannot provide. The recent failed coup in the Soviet Union exposed the rottenness of this leadership and the chaos and confusion inside the party.

While the majority of Stalinists attempt to hide what remains of their filthy and tattered banner and the rest try desperately to hang on to it, we Trotskyists must attract the attention of advanced workers by raising our banner more openly and boldly than ever before. For this task, a revolutionary journal is required.

The aims of the journal

We believe that with the production of a Trotskyist journal, the preparatory propaganda and interventionist work that has already been done will rapidly bear fruit. A propaganda organ will serve as a beacon and a pole of attraction for the militants in the unions, in the township organisations and on the campuses.

Its aims will include:

- The development of the internationalist perspectives of the revolutionary vanguard in South Africa.
- The elaboration of a programme of action for the South African working class.
- The consistent exposure of the bankruptcy of Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

■ A thoroughgoing critique of all centrist currents within the mass movement.

■ An analysis of the unfolding world situation, with a specific focus on South and Southern Africa.

■ To assist the further development of the revolutionary Trotskyist vanguard in South Africa.

Strengthened by our association with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, we believe we have the requisite political clarity to proceed with such a project. What we lack are material resources, especially money. We therefore call on you to support this venture. If you agree with our basic political line, give generously to what we believe in the present world situation is a strategically important cause.

WE AIM TO LAUNCH A QUARTERLY JOURNAL EARLY IN 1992

OUR TARGET IS £500 PER ISSUE

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Workers International League

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EDITORIAL

The SWP: sectarianism and opportunism

FOR OVER two months, the Socialist Workers Party has been campaigning for Labour Party members to tear up their membership cards and sign an 'Open Letter' that commits them to building 'an independent socialist alternative to Labour ... outside the Labour Party'.

There are no prizes for guessing where the SWP thinks such an alternative might be found, although it is remarkably coy about coming out openly and saying it. The reason for this silence, we suspect, is that the SWP leadership privately recognises the absurdity of a propaganda group of a few thousand masquerading as a credible political alternative to the Labour Party, with its affiliated trade unions and millions of working class votes. In this, at least, Tony Cliff and Co show some political judgement.

The SWP has been the main beneficiary of the understandable disgust with which many long-time Labour Party activists have responded to the rightward political trajectory of the Labour leadership. Many honest militants have already quit the Labour Party and joined the SWP. However, they will soon find that they have escaped one opportunist leadership only to fall into the hands of another. For, in truth, the SWP has the same fundamental political approach as Neil Kinnock. They both agree that the way you get on in politics is by deciding what the punters want to hear – and then telling it to them.

Thus Kinnock's new model Labour Party has tailored its programme to what it sees as the popular aspects of Toryism and, in the absence of any distinctive policies, tries to sell itself to the electorate on the purely negative basis that it is not the Conservative Party. The SWP, for its part, attempts to win socialists to its ranks on the basis that it is not the Labour Party! Its leaders long ago renounced the struggle to win the working class to a revolutionary programme. Not for them the mundane tasks of patiently, persistently and systematically explaining political issues to workers, and of fighting to train a Bolshevik cadre. Instead, they appeal to the lowest common denominator. By this means, they imagine, it is possible to find a short cut to a mass membership.

A recent and important example of this approach was the SWP's response to the Soviet coup and its aftermath. Here, in the face of a capitalist propaganda barrage depicting Boris Yeltsin as a hero of democracy and the defeat of the coup as the death of communism, the SWP swam with the stream and adapted its line to prevailing public opinion. In the week of the coup, *Socialist Worker* hailed Yeltsin's 'courageous' call for a general strike. A week later, after the coup's debacle, the paper echoed the enemies of the working class by rejoicing that 'Communism has collapsed'. It makes little difference that the SWP then attempts to explain that it is the collapse of Stalinism it celebrates, because the key step has been taken – to appeal to the backwardness and anti-communist sentiment which the Stalinist crisis has brought to the surface.

Of course, all this was dressed up in a suitably 'left' garb. According to the SWP the failure of the coup, which enormously accelerated the drive towards capitalist restoration, was really a step towards socialism! The fact is the week's events bring the workers of the USSR closer to the spirit of the socialist revolution of 1917, *Socialist Worker* babbled mindlessly. The destruction of statues of Bolshevik leaders was heartily applauded by Alex Callinicos. After all, he reasoned, hadn't the masses overthrown Tsarist statues in 1917? 'The logic of revolution,' Callinicos concluded happily, 'is driving those radicalised by the August Days to behave, despite their professed hatred of Bolshevism, in a remarkably Bolshevik way!'

It is this political amorphousness, this readiness to drift with the tide – and not some supposed revolutionary 'hardness' – which explains the SWP's sectarianism towards the Labour Party. The leadership fears that if its politically miseducated members were required to do fraction work in a social democratic party they would quickly succumb to the pressures of reformism. We can only agree with this assessment.

With the general election, of course, *Socialist Worker* will resurrect its meaningless slogan 'Vote Labour With No Illusions'. This will provoke the usual spate of letters demanding to know why, if it is a point of political honour that socialists should reject work in the Labour Party, they should not also reject calls to vote for it. The answer is that millions of workers do have illusions in the Labour Party, and even in Kinnock and the other class traitors who lead it. The call for a Labour vote is a necessary part of the strategy revolutionaries must develop if they are to break the working class from these illusions.

The SWP leaders might reflect that their 'party' was launched in the mid-1970s in order to compete electorally with Labour, on the assumption that the betrayals of the Wilson/Callaghan governments would cause the working class to break from the Labour Party to the left. The votes the SWP's candidates received were in fact so derisory that it has never stood in an election since. Meanwhile, the Labour bureaucracy proceeded with its attacks on the working class, spreading confusion and demoralisation and paving the way for the return of the Tories in 1979. By abstaining from the struggle within the Labour Party to remove this rotten leadership, the SWP made its own small contribution to Thatcher's victory.

Just as the SWP let the Labour Party leadership off the hook in the 1970s, so it does today. For, while the Labour left may be at a low point at present, a resurgence of the class struggle can be expected to have its reflection in the Labour Party, bringing the left wing back to life. Indeed, this is precisely what worries the SWP leaders who remember the drastic decline in their organisation's numbers which followed the rise of the Bennite movement. Hence the 'Open Letter' stunt. Its purpose is to make sure that those disaffected Labour activists who have come over to the SWP, and who might in future recognise the need for a renewed struggle against the right wing inside the Labour Party, have well and truly burnt their bridges behind them. The SWP leadership's own narrow interests are thus cynically elevated above the political needs of the class. Could there be a more graphic illustration of political bankruptcy?

FROM THE Baltic republics to the Balkans, from the Caucasus to the central Asian republics, nationalist movements have emerged on an unprecedented scale in the last three years. One after another, national minorities have defied the crisis-ridden Stalinist bureaucracies, determined to put an end to compulsory 'federations', unitary states and national oppression.

On October 18, 1991, only eight republics of the former USSR were prepared to sign the new Union Treaty drawn up by presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin. The Ukraine, the second richest republic, was among those that refused to sign. In Yugoslavia, Serbian domination is being imposed on Croatia by force of arms. Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have all declared their intention to withdraw from the Yugoslav federation.

But this does not exhaust the complexity of the national question. In Georgia, the majority Georgians who have experienced a long history of repression under both Stalinism and Tsarism, have turned on the minority Ossetians. In central Asia, in just six weeks of inter-ethnic clashes in June and July last year along the borders of Kirghizia and Uzbekistan, over 200 people were killed. What is the driving force behind these and other similar events, and what should the attitude of socialists be towards them?

In 1988 a wave of strikes and demonstrations in Armenia heralded the emergence of the mass nationalist movements, threatening Gorbachev's attempts to renovate Stalinism. The events which have unfolded since then have established beyond dispute that the Stalinist bureaucracies have not only failed to resolve the national question, but have created conditions which could throw its solution back for decades.

THE circumstances which found me 'in confrontation' with a nephew and a great nephew of Lazar Kaganovich would make a story in themselves, but I do not intend to elaborate on them here for reasons of space. Suffice to say that a meeting was arranged through the auspices of a newspaper. Michael Kaganovich (Lazar's nephew) and his son, Dr Yuri Kaganovich, were in no doubt about my political background from the outset. In fact they had been told in advance!

Michael Kaganovich could only speak Russian and the conversation took place through his son, whose English was good enough to enable a three-way conversation to proceed without too much difficulty.

I asked Michael Kaganovich how he viewed the Stalinist regime. He appeared to be a little disillusioned, mainly on account of the outbreaks of anti-Semitism which his family had experienced in the Ukraine – they lived in Kiev. But he was defensive about the role of his uncle, Lazar Kaganovich, more in terms of defending the 'honour of the family' than the regime of Stalin. He told me that Lazar Kaganovich had claimed that Stalin's successors during the Khrushchev era – especially at the 20th Congress – as well as Mikhail Gorbachev in more recent times, were 'digging up the bones' and 'resurrecting the bodies' who had been

Socialism and national question

The collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is being mirrored by a rapid growth of nationalist movements. Ian Harrison outlines the socialist position on national self-determination

The open manifestation of deeply-held national grievances under Gorbachev was not accidental. The stagnation of the Soviet economy registered strongest in the non-Russian republics. Opposition to Great Russian chauvinism, the economic plunder of non-Russian republics and cultural despotism – paralleled in the Czech domination of Slovakia, the Serbian domination of Yugoslavia and the Han Chinese oppression of the Tibetan, Uigher, Mongolian and other peoples – could only find expression, under circumstances where the class struggle was retarded, in a revival of national strivings for equality and an end to humiliation. The emergence of a national bourgeois outlook among layers of party bureaucrats, small traders, sections of the intelligentsia and religious elements, and the growth of chauvinist prejudices, has been given its decisive impulse by the disintegrating economies and the collapse of bureaucratic state apparatuses.

Decades of Stalinism resulted in the masses not only lacking revolutionary leadership, but even elementary

trade union rights. Small wonder that the ex-Stalinist nationalists and national-Stalinists were able to build substantial support. The discrediting of Stalinist 'already existing socialism' has driven large sections of the working class and the rural population into the arms of emergent nationalism.

The leading nationalist elements, driven by instincts of self-preservation, champion national 'independence' in order to develop a home market as the base for their operations. Ancient prejudices have been drawn out of the arsenal of reaction and pumped into the masses. They find their most virulent expression in anti-Semitism. They serve, like customs posts along national borders, to create barriers between peoples and to undermine the unity of the working class, further consolidating a national base on which to restore capitalism.

The young Soviet state under Lenin inherited the legacy of Tsarist national oppression. Despite mistakes – some of them serious in Georgia and the Ukraine – the Russian Revolution made an

heroic attempt to overcome these problems on the basis of national equality. Stalin systematically destroyed Leninist internationalism, giving 'all the old crap' Great Russian chauvinism, terminating entire national groups and deporting others like the Crimean Tartars, Meshketian Turks and Volga Germans, to the 'Hazy' Steppes of central Asia. The resources of non-Russian republics – and in China, homelands of Tajik, Mongolian, Tibetan and other peoples – were plundered and environment polluted with toxic and nuclear waste.

Once the lid was blown off the pressure cooker of Stalinist dictatorship, nothing could be held back. Increasingly, masses saw the retention of the USSR as an insurmountable barrier to their own economic and cultural development. Soviet bureaucracy had completely exhausted the credit of the Russian Revolution, which had enabled it to rule for decades. Not only had it discredited itself on the national plane: internationally, humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan was followed by a series of 'regional settlements'

Kaganovich – Stalin's

purged' not out of any concern for the victims of Stalin's purges, but rather to evade being called to account for their own mismanagement of the economy. It was not entirely clear whether the views he was expressing were solely his uncle's or his own as well.

It would seem that the branch of the family which left the Ukraine for Israel had become progressively disillusioned with the post-Stalin period, and had found that the family name and its 'association' with the terrible repressions carried out by Lazar Kaganovich in the Ukraine in the Thirties and immediately after the Second World War made life impossible for them. This was accompanied by the resurgence of a deeply rooted anti-Semitism which made them rethink their situation. They decided to emigrate to Israel, taking leave of their uncle shortly before he died. He was very unhappy about their desertion of the 'Soviet cause'.

I asked Michael Kaganovich about the Moscow trials and the Stalinist repressions. He said that he had cross-examined his uncle about the purges but that Lazar had remained silent, switching the conversation to the 'happy times' he and his nephew had shared in his early days. He had, however, agreed to his nephew's co-operation in writing his memoirs, which are now being prepared for publication.

The last member of Joseph Stalin's 'inner circle', Lazar Kaganovich, died at the age of 97. He personified the breed of ruthless leadership of the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s to the mid-1950s. His death to Stalin earned him a long life and the chance to die in peace. His death should extend to millions of workers, peasants and political prisoners.

A few months before Kaganovich died, his nephew, Michael Kaganovich, with his family, emigrated from the Soviet Union. Michael Kaganovich spoke about his late uncle to **Ellis Hillier**.

LAZAR Moiseyevich Kaganovich (1893-1991) was the youngest of five brothers – Israel, Mikhail, Aaron (the father of the Kaganovich I interviewed), Yuli and Lazar. All of them played a substantial part in the development and consolidation of the Stalinist regime, but Lazar Moiseyevich was the most prominent. Pathfinder Press dismisses him in a footnote as 'a crony of Stalin and an unconvincing Stalinist in various Soviet party and governmental posts' (*Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35*, New York, 1974, p.340).

In his unfinished biography of Stalin, Trotsky mentions Kaganovich only once – in Supplement I, the section dealing with 'The Thermidorian Reaction': 'There is no doubt that Stalin, like many others, was moulded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship – Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov, Kaganovich – and a whole

layer of workers and peasants [raised to the status of] mandarins and administrators' (*Stalin*, London, 1968, p.340). Text in square brackets is Charles Malamuth's editorial interpolation.)



Lazar Kaganovich

Born in Kiev, Lazar Kaganovich joined the Bolshevik Party in 1911 and took an active part in the October Revolution. He became one of Stalin's trusted cadres in the early Twenties and a member of the Central Committee

and the question

with imperialism. The low level of the class struggle in the West also contributed to an overwhelming disillusionment with the 'socialist fatherland'.

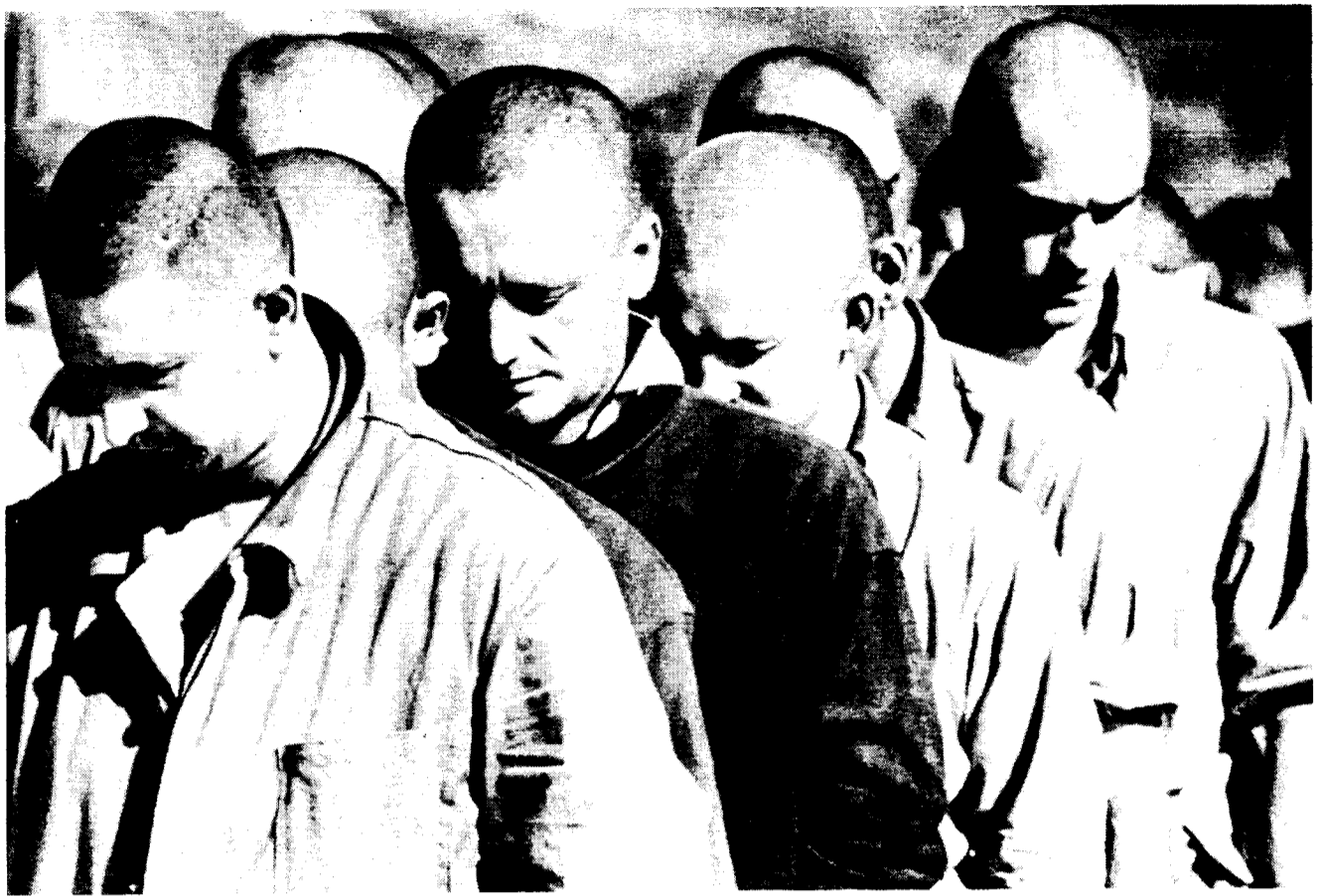
The fate of the degenerated and deformed workers' states hangs in the balance. Without a revival of working class struggle and the development of revolutionary leadership, prospects are not of proletarian victory through political revolution but of capitalist restoration. Along this latter route, existing states will disintegrate on national lines.

Trotskyists are not partisans of union where the masses feel the state to be a prison house. Nor are they, in principle, for an ever-growing number of national states. However, in order to distinguish themselves clearly from the false friends of the working class, socialists must unconditionally defend the right of nations to self-determination, up to and including secession if the masses so desire. In the epoch of imperialism, socialists must prove themselves as vigorous defenders of democratic rights and as opponents of every manifestation of national chauvinism. Where a majority of the working class, small farmers and peasantry has expressed its desire to secede – be it in the Baltic republics, the Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Slovenia or elsewhere – then it is the duty of socialists to defend its right to do so. Only on this basis can the unity of the working class be re-established. The demo-

cratic rights of minorities within seceding nations must also be defended – for example, Russian nationals in non-Russian republics and the Ossetians in Georgia – as must the right of Serbian enclaves in Croatia and Armenian enclaves in Azerbaijan to unite with Serbia and Armenia respectively.

Following Khrushchev's speech in 1956 to the 20th Congress of the CPSU, a number of nations deported by Stalin were given permission to return to their homelands. In practice, the Stalinists continued to prevent the Crimean Tartars and Meshketian Turks, among others, from returning home. This reactionary policy led to demands by the Meshketians to be allowed to leave the Soviet Union for Turkey. The Meshketians could have been in no doubt that the Turkish bourgeoisie was engaged in the brutal suppression of national minorities and democratic rights. But, for them, there appeared to be more hope of an end to national oppression in an undemocratic capitalist state, where the limitations of their rights would at least have the virtue of being spelt out to them in their own language.

Our support for the right of self-determination is unconditional in the sense that we do not insist that national minorities have a socialist leadership. To make such a condition would not only be impracticable, since in republic after republic the masses have



Croatian prisoners of war held by the Yugoslav Federal Army

already voted with their feet; it would also totally discredit socialism for the foreseeable future.

At the same time, however, we are not partisans of nationalism or national culture. We are internationalists, fighting for a 'truly human' international culture. We oppose all the reactionary manifestations of nationalism – from national self-centredness to chauvinism and xenophobia. Socialists approach the question of secession from the standpoint of developing the international unity of the working class. Where opposition to the oppression of one nation by another expresses itself through the desire on the part of the masses to secede, then socialists must stand shoulder

to shoulder with the oppressed. In doing so, they must put forward the slogan of independent workers' republics – that is the bridge by which they reach out to the masses and win them to the task of overthrowing their own pro-capitalist leaders or remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracies. On such a basis, genuine internationalist relations will be established between workers of different nationalities.

To the nationalist leaders' plans for capitalist restoration we counterpose action programmes to defend the remaining gains of the working class – nationalised property and the vestiges of planned economy – through the formation of workers' councils (soviets), factory committees and a workers' militia. Their tasks must include the elaboration of a new plan, democratically drawn up by producers and

consumers. Only through political revolution can genuine independence be achieved. We oppose any reliance on the imperialists to achieve self-determination. Their support for secession is linked directly to the goal of restoring capitalism. The struggle for a genuine socialist policy on the national question calls for the building of Trotskyist parties in every country as a decisive task of a rebuilt Fourth International.

Restorationists tighten their grip on power

By Daniel Evans

IN THE aftermath of the failed coup in the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin – the defender of the 'White House' – has been putting together a regime which completely bypasses any authority the Russian parliament might have had. The brief honeymoon with the various liberals and democrats, who believed that a thriving bourgeois democracy would follow the collapse of Stalinism, has been terminated.

Yeltsin has appointed a 16-man State Council comprising nine ministers and seven state councillors, including a state secretary through which he will exercise his increasingly authoritarian rule. Vice-president Alexander Rutskoi explained to the Russian parliament why executive decree would be necessary: 'We are building mountains of laws, but no one is carrying them out; there is no effective mechanism of state control.'

While the collapse of the coup gave enormous impetus to the establishment of openly pro-capitalist regimes in most of the republics, Mikhail Gorbachev is retaining his tenuous grip on power by acting as the link with imperialism. Through his good offices, thousands of Western business and financial advisers are now permanently on call in the Soviet Union to help plan the restoration of capitalism, and there has been a further substantial reduction in nuclear warheads.

Gorbachev and the West would prefer the Union to survive largely intact, thus avoiding the additional economic and social disruption which would accompany the forming of new sovereign states. Yeltsin, on the other hand, attempts to balance

between forces with widely differing agendas. Within Russia, there are those who want the Union to survive so that they can continue to dominate it, and others who think it can become an EC-style free association of capitalist economies; there are also those extreme right-wingers who see the Union as an unwanted 'social' responsibility, standing between Russia and its ability to become the biggest imperial power in the region.

In his relations with the other republics, Yeltsin, having now decided that immediate dissolution of the Union would probably not be in Russia's best interests, has to tread delicately to avoid appearing as yet another representative of Russian domination. This explains his caution both before and during the signing of the new Union Treaty on October 18. He was slow to announce publicly whether he was for or against the 'economic community' brokered by Gorbachev, and after signing it, warned that there were still up to 20 special agreements to be reached before the treaty could be finally ratified. However, he attempted to draw in the republics which refused to sign, particularly the Ukraine, which he said could have full, associate or observer status in the community.

What is becoming clear is that the 'heroes' who defeated the coup are attempting to rebuild a strong centre, but with a thoroughly pro-capitalist orientation. In St Petersburg, mayor Anatoly Sobchak is breaking away

from his liberal allies and has appointed ex-KGB officers to take charge of three districts of the city. Certainly, the personal wealth of many bureaucrats and the positions of power they now occupy will ensure that they make up the majority of any new capitalist class.

But the working class has yet to say its last word on the subject. In Eastern Europe, the social havoc caused as the new governments re-introduce production for profit shows the advantages to the working class in defending nationalised property relations. The majority of workers remained passive during the coup, not because of any love of Stalinism but because they are sceptical about the benefits of capitalism. Since glasnost, millions have joined independent trade unions. Though many of these organisations are led by Yeltsinites and other reactionaries, the programme of restoration will inevitably bring them into conflict with the new regime.

Trotskyism, which was wiped off the political map in the Soviet Union by Stalin's police apparatus, must once again become the guiding theory for the most militant elements of the working class. Stalinism discredited economic planning by carrying it out in a bureaucratic manner and in the interests of a minority ruling caste. Though the Stalinist 'plan' is collapsing and the monopoly of foreign trade has been breached, the task remains – at this stage – political revolution. However, the more the 'planned' economy crumbles, the more the revolution will have to take on 'social' tasks – the expropriation of speculators, hoarders, profiteers and the new rich in general.

right-hand man

Kaganovich, died on July 25 at Papatrichki who made up the 1950s. His unswerving loyalty had, a right he was not prepared to oppose.

Michael Kaganovich, together with Israel. In August, Michael

a pension, but despite repeated attempts to get him to speak about the Stalin repressions, he refused to comment.

MICHAEL Kaganovich confirmed that his uncle died an unrepentant Stalinist. He told me that Lazar believed that the terrible repressions were necessary to 'build socialism' and was convinced that a new, young Stalin would eventually emerge and sweep away the 'debilitating' period associated with glasnost and perestroika. Lazar was particularly scathing about Roy Medvedev and Dmitri Volkogonov, who he said were not 'objective historians'. I asked Michael Kaganovich if he had read Trotsky or Deutscher, but he had not. I said that if he was trying to write an authoritative biography of his uncle, it would be impossible to ignore reading such books. He replied that he had never had access to them.

He was anxious to deny reports that Lazar Kaganovich's sister, Rosa, had married Stalin. It simply was not true. Nor was it true that Lazar was just a leather worker and trade union organiser as he had been portrayed. He was a man of encyclopaedic knowledge, embracing architecture, engineering, the arts, literature and philosophy. He had a fine library, Michael Kaganovich claimed, and Stalin often consulted him on these 'matters'.

He seemed to be building

his uncle up as co-builder with Stalin of 'socialism in one country', a sort of parallel to Trotsky's co-leadership with Lenin of the October Revolution. He was, unsurprisingly, strongly anti-Trotsky, but knew nothing about Trotskyism or the Fourth International. He claimed that Medvedev's account of Lazar Kaganovich's silence when his brother Mikhail was accused of setting up a Zionist state was a lie. He said the charges were manufactured by Beria against Mikhail (who had been Minister of Defence and was later responsible for the aviation industry) as part of a plot by the secret police to implicate Lazar Kaganovich himself. Stalin used these trumped-up charges to test Lazar's loyalty. According to his nephew, Kaganovich did protest, but was ignored. 'I am powerless,' he had told the family. His brother committed suicide.

I asked him about the 'doctors' plot' of 1952. He claimed that his uncle had demanded an audience with Stalin about the affair, but that Stalin became cooler and cooler towards him as he persisted. Stalin died shortly afterwards.

My overall impression was that I was speaking to a displaced family 'fragment' of the old Stalinist bureaucracy which could not adjust to the 'reforms' from above, feared revolution from below, and had taken the only way open to it – emigration.

1924. From 1925 to 1928 he was first secretary of the party in the Ukraine, faithfully securing the Stalin apparatus in the consolidation of its power base against the Left Opposition, the United Left Opposition and later the Bukharin-Rykov Right Opposition. He joined the Politburo in 1930, and in 1934 was appointed chairman of the party's Control Commission. He was responsible for the construction of the Moscow Subway which was named after him in 1935 – to be erased later after his downfall. He actively supported the repressions – the forced collectivisations, the Moscow Trials and all of Stalin's deportations. He was made a member of the State Defence Committee, holding key positions right up to the time of Stalin's death and for a short time after. He opposed Khrushchev's 'reforms' and with Molotov, Malenkov and Shepilov was expelled from the Central Committee and all party posts as a member of the 'Anti-Party Group' in 1957. He was given

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

PART TWELVE

BY MID-1960, all the potential for reorganising the Trotskyist movement in Britain, which had arisen from the 1956-7 crisis in Stalinism, had been squandered by Healy. Many important recruits from the Communist Party - John Daniels, Peter Fryer and Brian Behan among them - had been driven out of the SLL. Even veteran Trotskyists like Ellis Hillman, Harry Ratner and Bob Pennington had been expelled or had resigned after questioning Healy's methods and perspectives.¹ In the course of these developments, any vestige of democracy in the SLL had been destroyed and Healy's complete domination over the organisation established. It was to be another 14 years before he again faced a significant challenge to his authority.

Harry Ratner warns against laying all the blame for this on one man. 'Healy could not have acted as he did,' he points out, 'without the support of a whole group of other people around him in the leadership.'² Healy himself was well aware of this, and made a specific point of involving other leading SLLers in his attacks on political opponents. In September 1959, for example, when two dissidents were 'visited' in the middle of the night and entry forced into their house, he had insisted on taking Cliff Slaughter along. Because, Healy explained afterwards, 'it was important to commit people like Slaughter'.³ Tom Kemp was brought in by Healy to rubbish Behan's economic analysis - an analysis which was, in reality, indistinguishable from the catastrophist views traditionally expounded by Healy himself. And Kemp happily gave his advance endorsement to Behan's expulsion, without even attending the National Committee meeting where the decision was taken.⁴

Indeed, throughout the 1959-60 purges, Healy succeeded in committing each of his victims to the suppression of earlier critics. When he expelled Ellis Hillman for opposing the unconstitutional and undemocratic proclamation of the SLL, this was done with the agreement of all those who would later denounce the bureaucratic character of the Healy regime. Before his own expulsion, Brian Behan was an enthusiastic proponent of disciplinary action against the so-called 'Stamford faction',⁵ while Bob Pennington played a prominent role in crushing opponents of the leadership, only to fall beneath the Healyite guillotine himself soon after. Healy was thus able to implement a version of the salami tactic, isolating and destroying a series of opposition groupings one by one.

Healy apparently regarded his record in expelling political

opponents as cause for boasting. At an Executive Committee meeting in September 1959, according to Peter Cadogan, he 'reeled off a list of them from Jock Haston to Ellis Hillman. He then snarled across the room at me: "I am determined to put you out now."⁶ But such internecine warfare, taking place as it did against the background of a downturn in the class struggle, inevitably had its destructive effect on the SLL. By June 1960, when the League's second conference was held, membership had plummeted to less than 300 - under half the figure claimed at the foundation conference the previous year - and the circulation of *The Newsletter* had slumped from 5,000 per week to below 3,000.⁷ As his organisation's size and influence continued to decline, Healy reportedly found a handy explanation: 'Police spies! GPU men!'⁸

In a *Newsletter* article entitled 'Cause for Revolutionary Optimism', Healy tried to boost the morale of his depleted troops, assuring League members that a developing crisis in the Labour Party would have 'decisive repercussions on the evolution of the struggle against imperialism'.⁹ When Gaitskell declared that he would 'fight, fight and fight again' against the 1960 Labour Party conference vote in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament, Healy asserted that the Labour leader's purpose was 'clear and unmistakable': having 'decided to emulate [Ramsay] MacDonald's betrayal', Gaitskell was 'systematically preparing to split the Labour Party'.¹⁰ In Healy's mind, the perspective on which he had begun entry work in 1947 - that of a militant Labour left breaking from the right wing, with the Trotskyists standing by to take over the leadership - was about to reach fruition.

But Healy completely misjudged the situation. Just as the dispute over nationalisation had ended with the right wing still in command (Clause 4 being retained in principle but abandoned in practice), so too did the battle over nuclear disarmament. For although the conflict in the party culminated in the withdrawal of the Labour whip from Michael Foot and a handful of other MPs early in 1961, the Tribune parliamentarians' defiance soon crumbled, as did that of the left trade union leaders who had swung the block vote behind the unilateralist resolution at the party conference. 'The task of the Left,' Healy explained to his members in May 1961, 'is to lead the fight for unilateralism along the lines of the class struggle. Lacking any understanding of this kind of struggle, the centrists [sic] are unable to fight.'¹¹ It became clear even

to Healy that 'the so-called "leaders" of the Left wing have no intention of widening the breach with Gaitskell'.¹² Healy's mistake was in supposing that they ever did have any such intention.

At the League's 1961 conference a new slogan, 'Build the Marxist Left in the Labour Party', was adopted. This was to be accomplished, Healy argued, not primarily through work in the adult party - 'since many of the older Labour Party members are tired and demoralised' - but through intervention in the Young Socialists. 'Marxists must combine with these new youth to organise the Left wing,' Healy urged, '... and lead the fight to conduct the next election campaign on a unilateralist policy.'¹³ Indeed, since the launch of the YS in 1960 the Healyites, organised around the paper *Keep Left*, had made major gains in this area, prompting the Labour Party NEC to demand that YS branches cease sponsoring the paper. By recruiting large numbers of working class youth through dances and other social events, the *Keep Left* tendency rapidly emerged as the dominant force on the left of the YS. While there was nothing necessarily wrong with such methods of recruitment, so long as they were backed up by serious political education, for Healy there was an obvious appeal in an increased reliance on politically raw youth who would present less of a threat to his domination of the SLL than the more experienced converts from the CP had done.

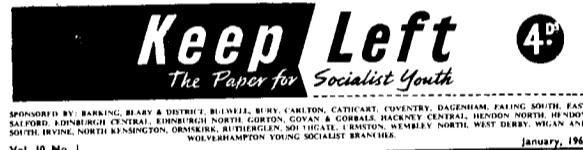
Political work in the YS required a clear and principled policy towards the semi-pacifist Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which had attracted tens of thousands of youth since the success of the first Aldermaston march in 1958. In particular, it was necessary to take a firm stand in defence of the Soviet Union's right to retain the H-Bomb while it remained under threat of attack from the imperialist powers. Healy, to his credit, did take up this issue in the correspondence columns of *Tribune*. However, as had been the case a decade earlier during the Korean War, his political line tended towards an adaptation to Stalinism. Thus he referred to the 'socialist economic basis' of the Soviet Union,¹⁴ a classically 'Pabloite' formulation.¹⁵ And he counterposed to Khrushchev's call for peaceful co-existence, not the revolutionary programme of the Fourth International - but the foreign policy of the Chinese Maoist regime!¹⁶

Moreover, while Healy used the position of Soviet defence to polemicise against both left reformists and the state capitalists of Tony Cliff's Socialist Review group, *Keep Left* took a much less open stand on this issue. Yet it was among the youth that the SLL wielded its greatest influence at this time. In a letter to *Tribune* in January 1961, the question was posed point blank to *Keep Left*: 'Does the unilateralist editorial board agree with Mr Gerry Healy's public support for the Soviet hydrogen bomb?'¹⁷ But this received no definite answer. It seems that Healy was more

concerned with winning numbers than with training a cadre among the youth, and he was prepared to compromise on political principles in order to achieve this.¹⁸

The 1961 Labour Party conference vote to renounce unilateralism appears to have convinced Healy that there was no longer any point in fighting the bureaucracy from within the Labour Party proper. The power of the right wing, the SLL now decided, rested 'on the carcass of a party, not on a living movement'.¹⁹ The usual apocalyptic pronouncements were employed in order to justify the shift away from opportunism towards sectarianism. Healy claimed that by early 1962 Britain was gripped by an economic crisis so deep that the working class faced 'the most serious threat to its wages and conditions since the defeat of the 1926 general strike', and even the imminent prospect of 'dictatorship and fascism'. In these circumstances, there was 'absolutely no room for a compromise with

the IS. 'The Fourth International as far as the rank-and-file membership of the SLL is concerned is virtually non-existent,' the Behan faction had complained in 1960. 'Information of a serious character on the world movement... is conspicuous by its absence.'²² Bob Pennington, too, had condemned the SLL's failure to criticise the growth of 'Pabloism' in the SWP.²³ Nor did Healy make any serious attempt to grapple with the theoretical and programmatic challenge posed by the Cuban Revolution. Instead, the SLL ignored the wholesale expropriation of the bourgeoisie which had been carried out in 1960, and insisted that Cuba remained a capitalist state - a position which had the advantage of raising another obstacle to unity with the IS. There was, of course, the small problem that the SLL's analysis bore not the slightest resemblance to the facts. This problem was overcome by the simple expedient of denying that facts had anything to do with Marxism.



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Merseyside Labour Says: WITHDRAW THE BAN IMMEDIATELY

THE Liverpool Trades and Labour Council, one of the largest of its kind in the country, decided unanimously at its January 19 meeting to support the right of Labour youth to publish *Keep Left*.

Over 250 delegates, including Mr John Braddock and Mrs Brian Braddock M.P. accepted the following resolution:

The Trades Council and Labour Party condemn the attempt to ban the Young Socialist newspaper. It is considered that the ban is an attempt to suppress the views of the young socialist workers and to prevent the development of the socialist movement in the country.

Wigan Young Socialists Recruit 300 (See p.3)

From 1960, the SLL increasingly intervened in the Young Socialists

capitalism'.²⁰ With reformism apparently finished, the SLL now saw its central task as constructing a revolutionary organisation outside the Labour Party. 'The need to build independent Marxist parties in order to provide alternative leadership,' it was declared, 'is the most urgent task of the day.'²¹

This change in line was a response not only to domestic but to international pressures. For, from mid-1960, the US Socialist Workers Party had been drawing closer to the International Secretariat of Pablo and Mandel, the rapprochement being cemented by a common opportunist response to developments in Castro's Cuba. This was held to have evolved into a healthy, 'uncontaminated workers' state, and the role of Trotskyists was not to build a revolutionary opposition to the Castro regime, but to enter as a loyal tendency into the party that the Fidelistas formed with the Cuban Stalinists. Healy's sudden conversion to the principle of the independent party is to be explained in part, therefore, as a factional manoeuvre to block unity with the Pabloites.

Not that Healy had made any effort to prepare his organisation for the conflict that now erupted within the International Committee over the SWP's moves towards reuni-

For this purpose, Healy's fraudulent philosophical polemic of 1945-6 against the 'empiricism' of the Revolutionary Communist Party leadership was resurrected, and acclaimed as part of the priceless theoretical heritage of Trotskyism! 'If there was one thing Haston and Co taught us,' Healy pontificated, 'it was around the vital necessity of the Marxist method. Before we became the leadership of the British movement, we went through many long years as a minority battling it out against the empiricists and impressionists... We have been working with that political capital ever since.'²⁴

In the immediate post-war period, Healy's ignorance on matters of theory had been ridiculed by RCP intellectuals like Denzil Harber.²⁵ By the early 1960s, however, he was able to rely on some rather more compliant members of the intelligentsia. Cliff Slaughter was called in to attack the view that Marxism shared with empiricism a respect for the facts as a philosophical heresy, which inevitably resulted in capitulation to petty-bourgeois political leaderships.²⁶ The SLL's political 'analysis' was thereby freed from the constraints of empirical evidence - and 'The world was what G. Healy declared it to be!'²⁷

To be continued

NOTES

1. Harry Ratner resigned from the SLL early in 1960, having found Healy's predictions of growing working class radicalisation completely at variance with his own experience in the labour movement. H. Ratner, 'Memoirs of a Trotskyist', unpublished ms., pp.344-5. (It is to be hoped that this excellent account of 25 years in the Trotskyist movement will soon find a publisher.)
2. *Ibid.*, p.327.
3. G. Downing, *WRP Explosion*, Revolutionary Internationalist League, 1991, p.8.
4. SLL Internal Bulletin No.3, June 1960.
5. Named after the town where it met in September 1959, the Stamford faction was not really a faction at all but a loose association of oppositionists which included John Daniels, Peter Fryer and Peter Cadogan.
6. *Socialist Leader*, September 16, 1961.
7. *By Their Words Ye Shall Know Them*, Solidarity Pamphlet No.4, 1960, pp.2, 9.
8. So Walter Kendall claimed in *Socialist Leader*, September 9, 1961. Healy's obsession with agents, which was to achieve its full flowering in the paranoid fantasies of the 'Security and the Fourth International' campaign in the 1970s, was evidently well established in this earlier period. Celia Behan had already noted Healy's readiness 'to create a spy mania which has nothing to do with the necessary vigilance in protection of a communist movement. I was in the print shop once when Comrade Healy grilled a young comrade for almost an hour because he had in his possession a list of comrades' addresses. This comrade was accused of being an agent and was subjected to a tirade of threats' (SLL Internal Bulletin No.5, June 1960).
9. *The Newsletter*, June 25, 1960.
10. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1960.
11. *Ibid.*, November 19, 1960.
12. *Ibid.*, September 30, 1961.
13. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1961.
14. E. Heffer, *Never a Yes Man*, Verso, 1991, p.91.
15. Cf. the dispute between Morris Stein and George Clarke in 1953: *International Secretariat Documents*, Education for Socialists, SWP, 1974, pp.114-6.
16. *Tribune*, November 25, 1960; January 27, 1961.
17. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1961.
18. Not that this was anything new. *Socialist Review* supporter Peter Sedgewick pointed out that under Fryer's editorship *The Newsletter* had argued that the Soviet Union should abandon the bomb unilaterally 'without (as far as I am aware) any objection from Comrades Healy, Pearce or Slaughter' (*ibid.*, February 10, 1961).
19. *Labour Review*, Winter 1961.
20. *The Newsletter*, February 27, 1962.
21. *Labour Review*, Winter 1961.
22. SLL Internal Bulletin No.5, June 1960.
23. *By Their Words Ye Shall Know Them*, p.13. There was a certain irony in this, for Pennington later became a leader of the 'Pabloite' International Marxist Group.
24. C. Slaughter, ed., *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol.3, 1974, p.149.
25. See part 3 of this series, *Workers News*, May 1990.
26. *Labour Review*, Summer 1962.
27. Chris Bailey, 'Theoretical Foundations of Healyism', WRP Internationalist Faction document, 1988.

In his 'Personal Column' (*Workers Press*, September 14, 1991), Peter Fryer disputes my statement in part 11 of this series that he was 'expelled from the CP for criticising the party in a bourgeois newspaper'. He asserts that he was in fact expelled for publishing his book *Hungarian Tragedy*.

I can only refer Fryer to his own appeal against expulsion (*Labour Review*, May-June 1957), where he states explicitly: 'Officially I was expelled for using the *Daily Express* as a platform'. Far from denying that this was the case, or denouncing the Communist Party leadership for misrepresenting the cause of his expulsion, Fryer vigorously (and entirely correctly) defends his action in using the capitalist press to reveal the truth about the Hungarian Revolution. *Hungarian Tragedy* doesn't even rate a mention.

Yet Fryer now sees fit to read me an arrogant and abusive lecture on my supposed disregard for historical accuracy. It is, of course, Fryer's democratic right to make a pompous idiot of himself. But he should perhaps consider exercising it a little less frequently.

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Wesley Snipes

When worlds collide

SPIKE LEE's fifth film finds him back in the form he displayed in 'Do the Right Thing', and dealing with the same subject - race relations in New York City. In 'Jungle Fever', he takes the problem of racially mixed relationships as the starting point for a deeper exploration of racism.

Set against the divide between the black community of Harlem and the Italian community of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, 'Jungle Fever' has none of the pat solutions offered by 'West Side Story', its most obvious forerunner. Part of the motivation for making it was the racist murder of Yusuf Hawkins by two white youths in 1989. His death prompted widespread anger in the African-American community and led to militant marches on Bensonhurst organised by the Reverend Al Sharpton. An inscription before the opening credits roll describes the film as being 'In Memory of Yusuf Hawkins'.

'Jungle Fever' starts out with one of Hollywood's most traditional themes - happily-married professional man gets the seven-year itch - and then undermines it. Successful architect and contented family man Flipper Purify (Wesley Snipes) falls for his secretary, Angie Tucci (Annabella Sciorra). Their relationship deepens, accompanied by a soundtrack of extravagantly lush strings and Sinatra love songs which serves, unusually, to warn us *not* to expect a happy ending. The problem is that this time the successful man is an African-American from Harlem, while his secretary is an Italian from Bensonhurst.

As Angie and Flipper start rolling back the frontiers of their experience, they both make the painful mistake of telling their closest friends their 'secret'. This triggers a storm of condemnation on both sides of the divide - from the ugly racism of Angie's father who beats her up and throws her out of the family home, to the politically considered position of Flipper's best friend Cyrus (Spike Lee) who advocates separatism. Normally, the drama to be wrung out of such stories derives from a close examination of the feelings of the main characters. Here, however, Lee

concentrates with good reason on the impact the relationship has on others. His aim seems to be to set up a parallel to the conditions of ignorance in which racism thrives. We learn little about the psychology of Angie and Flipper, but plenty about the attitudes of the respective communities they come from and of society in general.

The chain reaction of events gets totally out of control, and occasionally out of reality. There are so many sub-plots and underlying themes that some subjects are dealt with more effectively and with more authority than others. The film's greatest strength, however, flows from its willingness to air diverse, and often contradictory, opinions. When Flipper quits his job in a firm of architects because his white bosses refuse to promote him, Cyrus's response is: 'Good! We need our own firms.' But, elsewhere, the call for the enlargement of the black middle class as a counterweight to racism is undercut by scathing criticism of the same social group. Flipper's father, a fire-breathing preacher, refuses to give any help, either practical or spiritual, to his crack-addicted older son Gator (Samuel L. Jackson).

In a powerful scene based on the circumstances of Marvin Gaye's death, the Reverend Purify shoots Gator after catching him trying to cadge money out of his mother. Lee's camera pointedly follows the smoking gun as the reverend puts it down on top of his Bible.

'Jungle Fever' is an ironic title. It refers to the so-called 'unnatural desire' for sexual relations between black and white people, a concept which originated during slavery. Lee's intention is to show that it isn't the desire that's unnatural, but racist society.

One possible motto for this film is 'Love does *not* conquer all' - at least, not in the United States in the 1990s. But although Lee doesn't allow his central relationship to succeed - to do so would be unrealistic - he leaves the door open on another mixed race relationship between two minor characters. Italian-American Paulie (John Turturro) braves the abuse of the 'friends' who hang out in the cafe he runs, and turns up for a date with an African-American customer, despite being badly beaten up on the way. Spike Lee seems to have got the balance about right.



Annabella Sciorra

Jungle Fever (USA, 1991)
Written and directed by Spike Lee

Review by Graham Campbell

Trotskyism on trial

The Workers International League recently published *Class Struggle in the Second World War*, a series of articles by Jack Gale dealing with the police raid on the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1944 and the subsequent prosecution of four members of the organisation under the Trade Disputes Act.

One of the Trotskyists sentenced to terms of imprisonment for intervening in a strike of engineering apprentices was Ann Keen. During the trial, the prosecution continually played down her political role on the grounds that she had been 'led' by the three men - Heaton Lee, Roy Tearse and Jock Haston.

The RCP correctly saw this both as a denigration of women and as an attempt to divide the working class in its future struggles. Ann Keen prepared a speech rebutting the attack but was prevented from delivering it in court. Workers News is pleased to be able to reprint it below, along with correspondence from Comrade Keen.

CONSISTENTLY throughout the trial the prosecutor has attempted to separate me from my comrades because I am a woman. He has pictured me as a dupe and tool of Lee and others.

I do not ask for any special consideration. The part that I have played in assisting the movement of the apprentices was a conscious and voluntary one.

The work that I did to assist the apprentices was merely a continuation and extension of my activities with my party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, to further the struggle of the working class for their emancipation towards socialism.

That a woman has been charged under this Act side by side with her men comrades is symptomatic of the movement that is developing in the ranks of the working class movement. It is a sign of the part that the working class women will play in the revolutionary period that lies ahead.

The development of society in the past few years has torn women away to a large extent from their slavish existence of the past. No longer are the mass of the working class women entirely dependent upon the male breadwinner. During the course of the war hundreds of thousands have been drafted into the factories, where they stand shoulder to shoulder with their brothers, fathers and husbands and be-



come economically independent of their husbands and fathers. They now stand shoulder to shoulder in a relation far stronger - far more lasting - than the blood relationships that bound them in the past. Today they are workers first and last. They are members of the same unions in which they share equal rights and in which the voice of women is becoming daily stronger. In the struggles that lie ahead women trade unionists will play their part.

Not only the women in the factories but the mothers of working class youth have a new outlook. It has been said that the strike of the apprentices could not have lasted more than a day, had the 20,000 lads involved not had the wholehearted and sympathetic support of their mothers, who fed, clothed and housed them and gave them moral support during the two weeks they were away from their employment. That they received the entire support from their parents became all the more apparent when the barrage of lies and calumny

was put out by the capitalist press, radio, the trade union leaders, the Communist Party and the Economic League, and that in spite of all this the lads remained solid in their fight against the Pit Ballot Scheme and against any breaking down or worsening of their existing conditions of employment.

These 20,000 mothers know that their sons are not misguided youths. These mothers know that these same lads are being called upon daily to get into uniform, handle a rifle and die in the imperialist bloodbath that is at present taking place. These lads are not looked upon as dupes then, and they are only called this when they conduct a struggle in their own interests.

We revolutionary communist women and men alike claim that if these boys are to be forced to fight and die for their country, they should be allowed to take part in the shaping of their future.

I do not regard as a crime my actions. Rather do I regard them in the light of an honourable duty - honourably executed. By punishing me for the part that I have played in support for the striking apprentices, the government attempts to brand as criminals the thousands of women who have given moral and material assistance to their sons.

In the eyes of the capitalist class we are all criminals, but I am confident that working class women do not regard me and my comrades as criminals but rather do they regard us as fighters in the interests of and with the working class.

I consider it an honour to have been chosen from thousands of other women who supported the strike to represent them before this court.

Letter from Ann Keen

THANK YOU for the pamphlet about the trial of four comrades in 1944 under the Trade Disputes Act of 1927.

I found it very interesting and for the most part factually correct. There is one correction, which is that Jock Haston's sentence was one and a half years (not six months) because he had a previous conviction. Another is in Al Richardson's introduction where he describes me as a 'newcomer'. I was a foundation member of both the WIL and RCP and I was well known on Clydeside outside all the major shipyards selling the paper *Socialist Appeal*, which I continued to do in Newcastle.

You may be interested to know that during the miners' strike I gave a talk to my local branch of the Labour Party, heard by miners who were here collecting money, about what led up to the arrests and trial. One of the Labour Party members works for the Imperial War Museum and the whole story was put on tape and is now at the museum.

The material in the Imperial War Museum not only includes my talk, but many photocopies of newspapers and letters written to me by comrades while I was on remand in Durham jail. There are also two tapes of interviews with me which took place over several weeks. This material is filed under the name Ann Finkel/Keen.

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FOR A WORKERS' UNITED FRONT AGAINST FASCISM

THE GROWTH of fascist and ultra-right movements in both Western and Eastern Europe is a challenge socialists in Britain ignore at their peril. The recent pogroms organised by neo-Nazis in Germany and the strength of support for Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in France show the extent to which racism has struck deep roots in Europe's largest and most 'cultured' nations. Indeed, it has gained fresh respectability from 'democratic' politicians across the EC, who warn of Europe being swamped by immigration in the Nineties.

Classic fascist movements of the inter-war years based themselves on the ruined petty-bourgeois masses, who in turn drew the most backward section of the working class behind them. Having despaired of the Communist Parties leading socialist revolutions, they turned to the fascists to provide a radical solution to the social crisis, revenging themselves on the working class in the process, and abolishing its organisations, as well as murdering millions of Jews, gypsies, gays and other minorities.

Capitalist Europe is once more a fertile breeding ground for fascist, racist and nationalist demagogues. The collapse of Stalinism, the renunciation by social democracy of even limited reforms, the return of mass unemployment, and the failure of capitalist democracy to solve the poverty, bad housing conditions and squalor of the cities have opened up new room on the extreme right.

The Stalinists and social democrats have facilitated this process. They too are partisans of the nation state in both war and peace. They too join the chorus against immigration, and divert responsibility for the social crisis away from capitalism and onto the heads of black, Arab and Jewish people and other minorities. The pay-off for the crisis of leadership is seen graphically in the Paris 'Red Belt' where sections of the Communist Party's electoral support has transferred directly to the National Front.

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS

Sunday 10 November
Assemble 1.00pm
Aldgate East Tube
London E1

Comment

While hard-core organised fascists in Britain number only a few hundred, the growing level of violent racist attacks shows that they are swimming in a much wider pond. The traditional problem fascist movements have had since the Second World War is breaking into the bedrock of right-wing middle class Tory support. Whereas even Mosley's Black-shirts in the Thirties could count on a slice of the aristocracy, Rothermere's *Daily Mail* and a sprinkling of industrialists and army officers, post-war fascists were left with the lumpens and the barrow boys.

The highest point of their fortunes came in 1978, when the National Front polled over 100,000 votes in London. But the advent of a right-wing Tory government in 1979 stole the NF's thunder and it consumed itself in a series of bitter internal feuds. With Thatcher banging the nationalist drum and dealing out defeats to the unions, fascism had little chance to grow.

More recently, fascist groups, among them the British National Party, have taken to the streets once more, bolstered by the successes of co-thinkers internationally, and spurred on by the cracks appearing in the Tory government.

The anti-fascist response has been weak, divided and frequently confused. Recent counter-demonstrations against the BNP in Thamesmead and Bermondsey have been small and ill-organised. The split between the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism has been accompanied by allegations from numerous black activists that *Searchlight* emphasises anti-Semitism, while downgrading racist attacks on black and Asian people. A sharp debate has opened up within Anti-Fascist Action on the way forward. The largest organisations on the left – the SWP and *Militant* – have boycotted most anti-fascist mobilisations for years, on the grounds that fascists do not represent a significant threat.

In one form or another, these developments resurrect the debates of the late 1970s. Without correct lessons being drawn from the experience of the Anti-Nazi League, these divisions will not be overcome. The belief that it was the ANL which 'stopped' the National Front and that therefore it can serve as a model for today must be challenged. The ANL was a popular front which increasingly used its sizable support not as a force to smash the fascists, but, in order not

to frighten off its reformist and bourgeois sponsors, as a stage army mobilised around rock concerts and other 'fun' events. When it ceased to serve the SWP's purposes as a recruiting ground, it was cynically wound up, leaving many young black and Asian activists bitterly alienated by their experience with the 'white left'.

The WRP launched sterile denunciations of the ANL as a popular front, while criminally absenting itself from anti-fascist mobilisations. It counterposed the demand for workers' defence squads, but it didn't even fight for this position in the unions. Revolutionaries should have intervened in the ANL along the lines advocated by Trotsky during the Popular Front in France – clearing out the capitalist elements and turning it into a workers' united front.

Others arrive at opposite conclusions from the ANL experience – that the sole task is to physically confront fascists. This unwittingly draws its inspiration from the slogan of the German Communist Party (KPD) in the 'Third Period': everyone get a fascist.

The idea that Hitler came to



Desecrated Jewish graves in Edmonton, north London

PHOTO: DAVID HOFFMAN

power as a result of the absence of physical confrontation is entirely false. The KPD was a party of several hundred thousand, with a paramilitary wing, which fought the Nazis with great courage. But its 'Red United Front' could not win the social democratic workers, who were simultaneously called upon to take part in a joint struggle against the Nazis and denounced as 'social fascists' if they didn't break with their leaders.

If small groups of anti-fascists see their *only* role as a physical one, they will repeat all the mistakes of the KPD, but without even the forces it could command. At best this will lead to a praetorian guard

operating without working class support; at worst it will degenerate into political gang warfare. If fascist movements grow, such tactics, without a political axis of struggle, will prove counter-productive.

History has provided only one answer to racist and fascist movements – the workers' united front, fighting to draw the mass organisations of the working class into an alliance with those minority communities under attack. There must be no reliance on the police, the courts or the government! Without such a turn to the labour movement, anti-fascism condemns itself to a peripheral existence – the preserve of a few self-appointed groups an-

xious to dominate in their own chosen sphere.

This also highlights the necessity to establish a single national anti-fascist movement on a principled basis, uniting existing local and regional groups, with a democratic and accountable internal structure. The minimum basis for such a movement can only be a determination and a willingness in action to fight fascism and defend working class and minority organisations and communities. But, since fascism is the product of rotting capitalism, revolutionaries within such a united front must advance an anti-capitalist programme as the only way ultimately to defeat fascism.

Yugoslavia shatters

By Graham Fenwick

THE COLLAPSE of Stalinism has brought to the fore the question of national self-determination in the Balkans. Once again, the imperialist nations of Europe are faced with the nightmare scenario similar to that which preceded the First World War. But how should socialists respond to declarations of independence by the Yugoslavian republics?

In Slovenia and Croatia, nationalist, pro-capitalist governments have been put into office by masses anxious to improve their living standards and fearful of Serbian expansionism. Clearly the majority of non-Serb workers and peasants in most of the republics want to be free of the domination of Serbia.

The ambitions of the Belgrade Stalinists are transparent – under cover of preserving Yugoslavia as an integral state, they are seizing as much territory as they can in order to create the strongest possible basis for restoring capitalism in a 'Greater Serbia'.

The presence in their republics of the Federal Army – 80 per cent of whose officers are Serb – is correctly perceived by the people of Slovenia and Croatia as a threat by an oppressor nation to their sovereignty. Their right to resist militarily is beyond question.

The fundamental task of

socialists is to fight for the unity of the working class internationally. However, this in no way rules out supporting the right of self-determination for oppressed nations. Abstract calls for internationalism cut little ice when Serbian workers are supporting their Stalinist and nationalist leaders in a bloody war of attrition against the Croats. Socialists must form a military bloc against Serbia with the minority republics, without giving an inch politically to their pro-capitalist governments or militia leaders.

Faced with the fragmentation of Yugoslavia into warring ethnic groups, the fight for proletarian internationalism is precisely the fight to convince Serbian workers to respect the wishes of Croat workers for independence – and vice versa. Inside Croatia, the rights of the minority Serb population must also be protected – where they form a majority in any region, they must be given the options of self-government or of joining Serbia. Socialists must demand that Serbia recognises the right of Kosovo to unite with Albania, and of Macedonians in Yugoslavia to unite with those in Bulgaria and Greece.

In the minority republics,

the duty of socialists is to expose the reactionary leaderships as enemies of the workers and peasants. The 'independence' that Croatia's Franjo Trudjman and Slovenia's Milan Kucan are fighting for is the choice of which imperialist gangster to pay protection money to. Genuine independence can only be won by the working class in struggle against capitalist restoration. Socialists must fight for the establishment of workers' councils, based on factory and workplace committees and committees of rank-and-file soldiers. The pro-capitalist leaderships must be thrown out and independent workers' republics formed.

To workers and peasants in the republics under attack from Serbia who call for military intervention by an EC- or UN-sponsored task force, socialists must answer with an unequivocal 'No!'. A military bloc with the minority republics does not mean extending an open invitation to the imperialists to smash the army of a deformed workers' state.

The concern for 'peace-keeping' shown in Brussels, Washington and elsewhere is aimed at effecting an orderly transfer of Yugoslavia's repub-

lics back to capitalism, not at protecting their right to self-determination. Several former British soldiers are already fighting alongside Croatian militiamen for, in their words, 'the overthrow of communism'.

The destruction of Stalinism and the tasks of the political revolution in Serbia can only be carried out by the Serbian working class, fighting for their own independent workers' republic. A full-scale military intervention by the West will speed up the process of capitalist restoration immeasurably. Socialists should demand the immediate withdrawal of all EC monitoring groups and other so-called 'peace-keepers'.

The Belgrade Stalinists and nationalists are using the Serbian workers and peasants as cannon fodder in their war for domination over the region and in their attempt to transform themselves into a new capitalist class. Socialists must campaign vigorously against the poison of 'Greater Serbian' chauvinism. Serbian workers, poor peasants, soldiers and youth must oppose the war with Croatia as thoroughly reactionary. Only in this way can the basis be laid for uniting workers throughout the region in a Socialist Federation of the Balkans.

The national question, centre pages