

# Workers power

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Number 184 December 1994

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British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1



## DIVIDED THEY FALL?

# KICK THE TORIES OUT!



**LAST MONTH** something unusual happened. A top Tory told the truth.

In a private memo, never intended to reach the eyes of ordinary people, Tory Deputy Chairman John Maples blew the gaffe. Major's Britain is the opposite of a classless society:

"The reality is that the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest, who are getting poorer."

The Tories are at each other's throats. They are deeply divided on Europe, and over VAT on fuel. As we go to press there are rumours of a leadership challenge to Major.

The Tories' defences are down. The working class movement in this country has a real chance to strike a blow for the poor, the sick, the victims of gas and VAT rises and NHS cuts. We have the opportunity to get this callous and corrupt Tory government off our backs for good.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

**NO VAT ON FUEL! • TAX THE RICH NOT THE POOR!**



# MARK HARRIS CAMPAIGN

## Police harassment fails to stop legal victory

**M**ARK HARRIS died in a Bristol police station in July. He did not commit suicide. That was the verdict of a coroner's inquest on 17 November. The Mark Harris Truth and Justice campaign now intends to prosecute the police for murder.

"Suicides" in police cells are tragically common—particularly for black men like Mark Harris. Normally the police persuade the family to release the body for burial straight after the police autopsy. The coroner hears only police evidence. The verdict of suicide is a formality.

### Manoeuvres

Not this time. The Harris family were wise to police manoeuvres. Though still in shock, they arranged an independent autopsy and an engineer's report on the cell in which Mark died. In August they set up a campaign, in which Workers Power has been heavily involved. Through pickets, public meetings and hard-

### BY CARDIFF WORKERS POWER SUPPORTERS

hitting propaganda, the campaign made sure Mark's death did not go unquestioned. Donations from trade unions, student unions and black community groups enabled the campaign to hire a barrister for the inquest. This was crucial. By the end of

meetings have been ripped down. Activists have been threatened with arrest and prevented from collecting money.

On the eve of the inquest, the police followed Paul to his mother's house, and then 15 riot police smashed their way inside. Paul's partner Debbie was dragged by the hair and handcuffed to the door. An armed

to deal with".

Campaign members were quick to act. The local media were alerted and a picket was mounted at the police station. Fearing publicity and aware of the illegality of their actions, the police dropped the malicious assault charge. When Paul appeared in court the next day, he was charged with minor offences which the police had been holding against him since May 1992. The magistrates conditionally discharged him, enabling him to go to the inquest. The police attempt to prejudice the jury at the inquest had failed.

Reporters from the press all repeated the police lie that Paul had appeared in court charged with malicious assault. None revealed the truth about the police raid. When HTV were challenged to correct their report, they simply dropped it from later bulletins. The liberal inclinations of some journalists were easily overruled by their employers, friends of the local police.

**"On the eve of the inquest, the police followed Paul to his mother's house, and then 15 riot police smashed their way inside"**

the hearing the police story had been torn to pieces. The jury took just five minutes to agree an open verdict.

The police have been harassing and spying on activists. Mark's brother, Paul and the campaign's solicitor have had their phones tapped. Paul's car has been followed on a daily basis. Posters for public

response unit was ready nearby!

But the police were unable to provoke Paul into a violent response. In desperation they claimed a graze suffered by one officer in breaking the door down was a malicious assault! Paul and Debbie were taken to the police station; their young baby was left in the car "for the social services

The harassment is surely not over yet. The campaign has been a lesson in what it means to take on the forces of the state. It has made a mockery of those like the Anti-Racist Alliance who have urged the campaign not to be "too anti-police", so as not to alienate Labour MPs and union leaders.

It is essential that workplaces, union branches and community organisations send not only donations but delegates to the campaign committee and provide practical help for leafleting and other activity.

### State

Links have been made with other campaigns, such as the Marlon Thomas Campaign in Bristol. But all such campaigns are currently limited to seeking redress through the legal system alone. Many activists are learning that we also need to be fighting *against* that system, which is racist to the core. The courts are part of the same unaccountable state apparatus as the police. If we are to win truth, justice and freedom for all victims of state racism, we will need a mass movement committed to destroying that machinery once and for all, and erecting in its place a state which is really under the control of the working class majority, black and white.■

**Donations, resolutions of support and offers of help to:**  
**Mark Harris Truth and Justice Campaign,**  
**45 Allerton St, Grangetown,**  
**Cardiff**  
**Tel: 0222-811178**

### Leeds fightback against C18

**O**VER TWO thousand anti-fascists marched through Leeds on 26 November in protest at a spate of violent attacks against black people, left activists and trade unionists by the Nazi terror group Combat 18 (C18).

In recent weeks C18 has been in the forefront of attacks on left wing book shops and paper sellers and an intensification of racist violence. In one incident two young Asian school students were attacked with a blow torch to their faces.

The march took place in defiance of a C18 threat to "take out" at least thirty activists. The demo, organised by the Leeds Alliance Against Racism and Fascism managed to overcome the organisational disunity on the left and unite the ANL with the AFA Northern Network, ARA and the YRE. The march attracted trade union banners from many local branches. Workers Power and *Revolution* supporters formed a large contingent on the march. A Workers Power leaflet, severely critical of the ANL's do-nothing pacifism in the face of the terror, calling loud and clear for organised self defence squads to be set up, was well received. On the day a team of at least 150 anti-fascist stewards was able to go in search of C18, who, with typical Aryan valour, skulked miles away out of sight. A few fascist "spotters" were spotted themselves and summarily dealt with. The police, who have managed to do nothing in response to the wave of firebomb attacks and beatings by C18, carried out a new style, high-intensity surveillance operation. Every demonstrator was individually photographed and videoed, while a heavy presence of plain clothes cops was detected.

Now anti-fascists in Leeds and the rest of West Yorkshire have to redouble their efforts to find and destroy the fascist menace terrorising the workers movement. They should adopt both mass campaigning and all necessary self-defence measures to crush C18 altogether.■

# New Nazi threat in East End

**R**ESIDENTS OF Tower Hamlets' Lansbury Ward, have become the latest unlucky pawns in the Nazi British National Party's (BNP) drive to consolidate a base in London's East End. In the coming ward by-election of 15 December, the BNP is fielding no less a candidate than Derek Beackon, who shot to fame a year ago after the BNP took, then lost, Millwall Ward.

In contrast to their recent low profile foray in nearby Shadwell, the BNP is already fielding up to 40 heavies at a time to "canvass" the mainly white ward, which faces many of the problems of unemployment,

bad housing and racism that the BNP utilised to gain an electoral foothold last year.

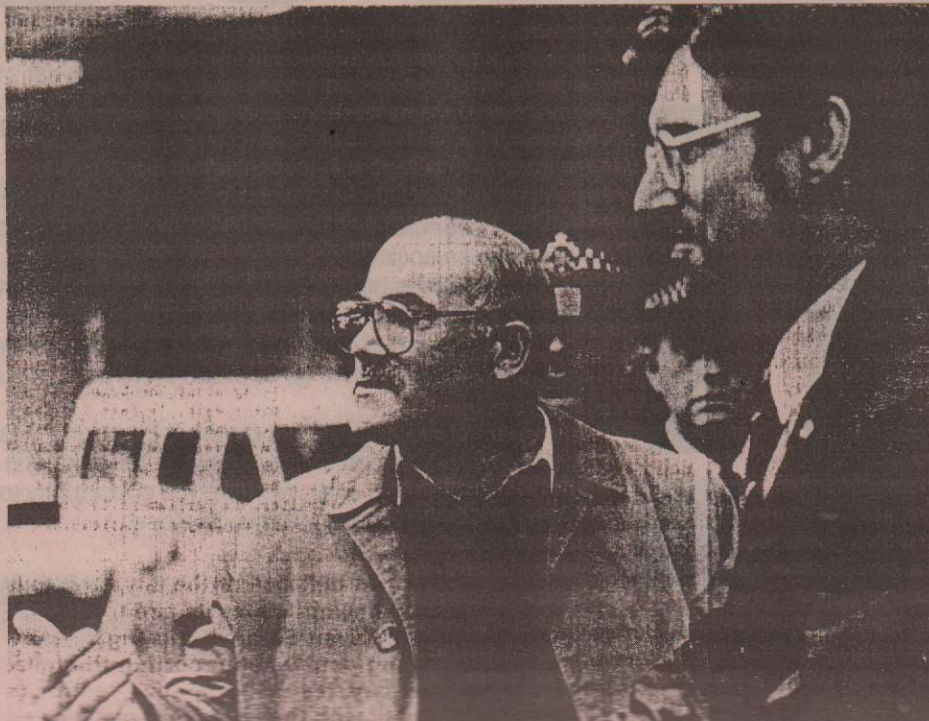
The BNP have chosen Lansbury Ward partly because it is soon to be amalgamated with parts of the Isle of Dogs and Newham—exactly the areas where the BNP is strong—into a new parliamentary constituency in 1995.

As the Nazi campaign got under way a Chinese health visitor was attacked by a gang of racists outside a health centre in Crisp Street Market. It was the seventh attack in a week. Meanwhile the Nazis have been trying to enlist the support of

local white youth gangs in a campaign to tear down anti-fascist posters and intimidate anti-fascist campaigners.

Workers Power is calling on all anti-fascists in London to join the ANL organised mass leafleting sessions in the ward every Monday evening and Sunday Morning. Together with supporters of the youth group, *Revolution*, we are holding a mass leafleting session in Crisp Street Market on Saturday 3 December. Any BNP attempt to hold an election meeting should be met with a mass demo. As soon as possible anti-fascists need to go onto the

**FLORENCE OKOLO CAMPAIGN**  
**DAY OF ACTION**  
**AGAINST**  
**DEPORTATIONS**  
**Public Meeting**  
**Dec 7, Manchester Town Hall,**  
**7.30pm.**



Nazi leaders Derek Beackon and John Morse

## Hunger strike

**TWO ALGERIAN** refugees are currently on hunger strike in Strangeways prison, Manchester. Another is taking similar action in Armley jail in Leeds.

All three are in prison hospital wings and have refused food since 5 November.

They are being detained because the Home Office have refused them asylum, and are threatening to move all three to the notorious Campsfield detention centre in Oxfordshire.

Britain should be open to all refugees, and to anyone seeking to live here, for whatever reason - political persecution, economic deprivation or to be with family and friends. The Tories' barbaric treatment of refugees must not go unchallenged.

**DON'T LET THEM DIE!**

**Picket Strangeways Prison, Manchester,**  
**Wed 30 November, 5.30 pm.**

Supported by Campaign Against Immigration Detentions, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, South Manchester Law Centre, Workers Power, Rahman Family Defence Campaign.

• Why unions should oppose all immigration controls p.7



## EDITORIAL

## FIVE YEARS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF STALINISM

## Triumph of the Market?

FIVE YEARS ago the world was changing with breathtaking rapidity. The last months of 1989 ushered in one of those periods in history when events close in on one another and the sheer speed of change takes everyone by surprise.

The Berlin Wall was first breached and then torn down. The whole population of Prague seemed to be in Wenceslas Square, bringing down the government. And by Christmas Day the lifeless body of the most hated dictator in Eastern Europe—Nicolai Ceausescu—lay slumped against a Romanian courtyard wall.

As history was being made, we were alive to its significance. One by one, the illegitimate regimes of Stalinist tyranny, imposed throughout Eastern Europe after the Second World War, fell or were pushed from power. Deprived of the backing of their sponsors in the Kremlin, the Stalinist rulers lost confidence in their decaying system of bureaucratic planning, and in their ability to sustain themselves. The ruling parties lost cohesion and fractured. Soon, they too were history.

By July 1990 Germany was reunited. In the same month NATO heads of state announced that the Cold War was over. That year elections throughout the region brought new parties to power committed to restoring capitalism to countries where it had been uprooted for forty or more years.

And after a brief respite, the same events engulfed the USSR. Far from creating a space for the revival of "reform Stalinism", as Gorbachev had hoped, the loosening of repression was soon to claim the very architect of *perestroika* himself. He fell to the coup and counter-coup in 1991. By late 1993 Yeltsin had dissolved the USSR, let loose the market on Russia and finally vanquished the political challenge of the conservative Stalinists.

In 1989 Eastern Europe was the epicentre of an earthquake whose tremors were to be felt throughout the world, tremors which continue today.

Guerrilla movements throughout the Americas that gained diplomatic leverage or military aid from the Stalinist States sued for peace without justice. The capitulation of the Stalinist-influenced ANC, through their compromises with South Africa's apartheid regime, accelerated in 1990 with Mandela's release.

Not even the political systems in the old imperialist countries were immune. Cold War regimes and patterns of political loyalties in Italy and Japan could not long survive Stalinism's collapse. The LDP and Christian Democrats' long grip on the monopoly of power was finally released in 1993.

The initial impact on the politics and ideologies of the mass labour movements throughout the world was great. The retreat of the intellectuals, many of whom worshipped at the altar of "really existing socialism" or at best kept silent about its crimes, suddenly became converts to the market and to the virtues of "democracy".

Even the vocabulary of "socialism" changed. It is now said to exclude common, public or state ownership of the means of production. The idea that there was an alternative to the market as a way of organising the economic activity of society is now widely rejected.

For some the Russian Revolution was simply an aberration. Others insisted, more stridently, that history was at an end, and the future reduced to an endless replaying of film of the present under the title—The Triumph of the Market!

And what of those who by their strength and courage set these changes in motion? The workers of Eastern Europe laboured under a gross illusion; that once they had helped to destroy the oppressor, they could take a back seat. They put their trust in the money men and women, the politicians with powerful and wealthy friends in the west, to reconstruct the country. Few believed that it was possible to throw off the dictatorship and yet rescue and reassemble a completely democratic form of socialist planning. Instead they absorbed the lies they were told about the democracy of the market, about the empowering experience of private property. And, when they got the chance they voted for bourgeois parties and policies.

But they have paid a heavy price. Eastern Europe has been through an economic slump deeper than the Great Depression of the 1930s. Millions of jobs and many social services are deemed incompatible with capitalist economic logic. Real wages have fallen. And whilst some goods are now readily available, they are totally out of reach for the majority. Russia is in its worst economic chaos precisely at the time when the reigns of power are more firmly in the hands of Yeltsin than ever.

We predicted that this would be so in 1989, that this would be the price for stopping the revolution half way. Now the apologists for capitalism, firmly in power, cynically admit that they "underestimated" the degree of trauma and pain that would be necessary, or how long would it would take before the fruits of the market could be eaten.

And democracy? The deceived workers in Hungary, Slovakia, ex-East Germany, Poland and Russia have made some use of their right to vote by swinging back towards parties of transformed

Stalinists in 1993 and 1994. They promise to protect the shell shocked masses from the worst effects of capitalism's incremental advance. But this democracy is completely hollow. They have no safeguard against the next round of treason and deception. Gone is the real democracy of 1989 and 1990 when the factory and street committees drew in the mass of the population into direct and accountable politics that was not divorced from the world of work.

Should we then say that those who fought for freedom in 1989 were wrong to even start the fight?

No, we must defend the political revolutions against Stalinism, however they turned out. It is not possible for the mass of workers who are suffering under a welter of lies and repression to wait for a genuine Trotskyist mass party to emerge at their head before they take to the streets and launch their rebellions. "Men make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing" is a law that applies to proletarian revolutionaries like anyone else.

We rejoice in the mass strikes and at times unavoidably violent action taken to destroy the secret services, smash the Stalinist Party apparatus, and establish the freedom to organise, to meet and to print whatever their rulers did not like to read. These things were gains of the 1989 events. And they were not given, but forcibly taken.

That the political revolution stopped halfway at mainly, if not exclusively, bourgeois democratic tasks, was tragic and due to the absence of a powerful proletarian revolutionary movement.

Five years on, the masses of Eastern Europe and Russia are carefully considering the results of their actions. Some look to demagogues for easy answers, directing their anger at visible if false targets. But a small vanguard, the organised unionists and isolated far left, are determined to resist the erosion of living standards and civil rights. They are searching for an alternative to the ravages of capitalism. It is to this layer, bound to grow in time, that we must look in order to build the basis of a revolutionary mass movement. Such a movement will make history—fighting for real democracy without capitalism, and for collective ownership of the economy without dictatorship. That is the communism that we are fighting for. ■

Published every month by Workers Power (Britain):

BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

ISSN 0263 - 1121

Printed by Newsfax International Ltd:

Unit 16, Bow Industrial Park, Carpenter's Rd, London E15

workers power

## MEETINGS

All meetings start 7.30pm unless specified

## LEEDS

How to stop Fascism and fight the system that breeds it

Thursday 1 December  
See seller for details

## SHEFFIELD

Bolshevik Women - How to Fight the CJB

Wed 7 December  
See seller for details

Revolution Supporters Meeting

Youth Under Attack  
Wed 7 December, SCCAU,  
West Street

## BIRMINGHAM

Is Fascism on the Rise in Europe?

Mon 12 December, Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Park

## ACTIVISTS DIARY

RMT London Midland District Council • Build for a national dispute over job losses, downgrading, depot closures and loss of conditions.  
Watford Labour Club  
Sat 17 December 1994

**READ REVOLUTION**

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**Kick out the Tories!**

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## FUND DRIVE

The Stalinists had a word for it: "storm the plan". They would issue production targets, then cajole and coerce the workers into meeting it early and producing even more than the plan demanded. This month, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Workers Power Fighting Fund has, literally, stormed the plan—relying not on coercion but on the internationalism of our readers.

We issued an emergency call for funds due to our Peruvian comrades losing all of their printing and technical equipment in a raid. The £700 we asked for came in within two weeks. Thanks go out to all those who contributed, however big or small the sum, from Workers Power and from our Peruvian comrades of Poder Obrero.

Added to this, donations have been flowing in to the main Workers Power Fighting Fund. We have launched a drive for £3,000 for new technical equipment for the production of Workers Power newspaper, Trotskyist International and the many leaflets, bulletins and pamphlets we produce. We want to improve the speed and quality of pro-

duction of these journals and plan a major revamp of both Workers Power and Trotskyist International, to meet the widening audience for our ideas.

Thanks to many small, and a few large, donations we are pleased to announce that we have already raised £733.25 towards this.

**BUT WE STILL NEED YOUR MONEY.** Christmas is a time when money is tight for most working class families. But you can always raise some

money from social events this time of year. Workers Power's range of Bolsheviek Woman, French "Smash Le Pen" and German "anti-Nazi" T-Shirts are available at £3, any size from the address below. Also remember that Workers Power Subscriptions make a good Christmas present for that relative or friend you want to radicalise.

We need the £3,000 by March. So start giving now!

## FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER!

- I would like to know more about Workers Power & the LRCI  
 I want to join Workers Power

I would like to subscribe to:

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 Trotskyist International £8 for 3 issues  
 Trotskyist Bulletin £8 for 3 issues

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:  
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

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Telephone: ..... Trade union: .....



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

# Tories in crisis

**I**N THE SAME week as John Maples told the truth about our "classless society", Cedric Brown, the Chairman of privatised British Gas, got a 75% pay rise, taking his income to £475,000 a year, a staggering £9,130 a week!

Who is paying for it? The rest of us. British Gas have just put bills up by nearly 3%—except for rich corporate customers and those with wages high enough to cover bank direct debit accounts. The poorest, the working class families who pay for gas in advance through meters, will get no discount. Meanwhile VAT of 17.5% on fuel will push bills up even further.

**How many old people will die of hypothermia this winter so that Cedric Brown can earn £9,000 a week?**

Maples admitted that living standards are "falling in 1994" and will "fall again in 1995".

It was no surprise to many workers. We are being hit with price rises, tax increases, pay freezes across the public sector and pay cuts for part-time temporary workers. No wonder Maples was worried that the Tories' talk of recovery is "completely at odds" with most people's experience. Except for the Tory leaders, that is, who breached their own pay guidelines and gave themselves a 4.7% rise, bringing Major's own pay to over £1,500 a week. The same leaders of our classless society spent over half a million last year on wine for "official hospitality".

Maples also admitted that health workers and doctors are almost "universally hostile" to the market madness in the NHS. His cynical advice to Major was "we can never win on this issue. The best result for the next 12 months would be zero media coverage of the National Health Service."

Major is not just the most unpopular Prime Minister since records began. His own party is tearing itself apart.

Major and Douglas Hurd want to keep Britain involved in the European Union, not in the name of international co-operation, but to be able slow down the transition to a single currency and a central bank from the inside. The so-called Euro-sceptics



## At each others' throats over Europe

want to take a much tougher anti-European stance. They tried to vote down Britain's financial contribution to the EU. They represent an extreme nationalist wing of the bosses, and the reactionary, middle class Tory activists who hate "foreigners" full stop.

That is why Major had to threaten backbench rebels with collective suicide if they refused to back his bill over increased payments to Brussels. He said he would call an election if they refused to vote it through. The Tories didn't need Maples' report to tell them what everyone knows already: if there were an election tomorrow, they would be hammered.

So the anti-Europeans put forward right-winger Nicholas Bonsor against Major's man for the backbench 1922

committee. The challenger only lost by 13 votes.

This was a trial run for a challenge to Major himself. If it had been a real leadership election, Major would have had to go.

That is why, as we go to press, Tory rebels are seriously considering launching a challenge to Major's leadership. They have reportedly already got the 34 names they need to do so. The right are trying to stitch up a deal with Heseltine to unseat Major, while the ruling clique are running around like headless chickens trying to save their skins. While Major is trying to act tough, Douglas Hurd has tried to appease the right by promising a referendum over Europe. All this only emphasises how deep their divisions are.

The Tories' weakness is our opportunity. But Blair and the "new-look" Labour Party seem determined to let the Tories off the hook. They have even abandoned the idea of renationalising the discredited privatised industries. Under Blair leeches like Cedric Brown will be allowed to carry on making a fortune at the expense of the poor.

Labour should be giving a voice to working people's anger about what the profit system and the free market are doing to their lives—destroying the NHS, robbing the poor to pay the rich, keeping millions on the dole. They should be calling for a ban on price rises and a massive tax on the rich to rebuild schools, hospitals and industry.

If Labour and the trade union lead-

ers really cared about the people they claim to represent, they would have used the Tory crisis to call a massive national revolt, a demonstration on a weekday, bringing hundreds of thousands to the streets to raise the loudest possible call for this rotten government to resign.

But there is more chance of winning the National Lottery than of Blair doing that. That is why we need to seize the opportunity to fight back from below. We need a revolutionary socialist alternative to Blair's "new Labour", and mass direct action against every Tory attack.

Unless working class people throughout Britain get organised to drive the Tories from office, once the furore dies down they could still be on our backs. ■

## UNIONS 94

# Partnership with the bosses

**J**AMMED INTO a hall at Congress House, headquarters of the TUC on a dank November Saturday, more than 600 took part in the Unions 94 conference.

The event was the brainchild of the *New Statesman* and, more importantly, *New Times*, paper of the Democratic Left, the largest and most fashionable fragment of the former Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The conference was chaired by Nina Temple, the last secretary of the CPGB. Having spent most of the last decade bidding farewell to the "white, male" working class, she presided merrily over an overwhelmingly white, male, 40-something Jurassic Park. The most notable, absent, "dinosaur", was a certain Arthur Scargill, the butt of more than one joke from the platform and the floor.

During the lunchbreak a now retired Glaswegian CPGB organiser remarked: "The last time I was in Congress House was for the conference which liquidated the Communist Party, quite rightly in my view. I never thought that I'd be back in less than three

*Unions 94 was the trade union bureaucracy's own day of discussion and debate. Our intrepid reporter G R McColl was there as an observer—through no fault of his own. This is what he saw.*

years to see our platform here with the General Secretary of the TUC and the leader of the Labour Party. Bloody marvellous!"

We agreed to differ. But the platform did indeed feature none other than John Monks and a reluctant Tony Blair, who came and went in 45 minutes, having delivered a tepid speech even by his standards. This might explain why the applause was less than rapturous. The otherwise ecstatic *Guardian* columnist, Will Hutton, was somewhat subdued after Blair failed to announce the final severing of the union link. Still, Hutton was convinced that he had heard Monks embrace "a different kind of British capitalism, a 'stakeholder' economy."

Repeating Monks' list of recent trade union "triumphs", with the obvious omission of the RMT dispute

(which did after all involve strike action), Blair left us in no doubt that his Labour government "will not press the rewind button" with regard to anti-union legislation.

There would be "fairness but no favours" towards the unions from the new Labour. But then again, as the *Daily Mirror's* industrial editor quipped, "There've been precious few favours from past Labour governments either."

The real substance of his speech was on "our agenda for the labour market", which is Blair's yuppie-speak for the workers. There was plenty of empty rhetoric about "springboards to success" as well as "cushions against failure". Instead of reducing unemployment, there was talk of boosting "the capacity of individuals to compete, survive and prosper" in the changed circumstances. For Blair,

it is all down to the individual to pull him or herself up by the skills-enhanced bootstraps.

There will be a national minimum wage, for reasons of efficiency of course, but Blair would not be "bogged down in this figure or that figure".

By contrast, John Monks was upbeat. He was busily trumpeting the TUC's "triumph" in persuading United Biscuits to agree to the creation of a European-style works council: a forum for co-management, i.e. class collaboration. His aim is for the TUC to blaze the "path of social partnership" in the context of an enlarged European Union—despite the fact that in Germany, Austria and Sweden this system of "social partnership" is currently breaking down. Somehow, no-one had the nerve to point this out.

On display was the new face of corporatism for the 1990s, with the

likes of the GMB's John Edmonds, Bill Morris of the T&G and the NCU's Tony Young all eager to join in. As so often at such events, it was the stalls displayed around the building that spoke volumes. In front of the main hall stood a display from the UK Industrial Support Group. A smartly dressed woman was advertising a campaign to persuade the RAF to buy the Hercules C-130J air transport carrier, brought to us by GEC-Marconi and other manufacturing giants, who are presently attacking their European workforces and reaping profits from the export of death and destruction to the "Third World".

Their presence made the show of solidarity with the South African COSATU union federation ring all the more hollow.

The only whiff of class struggle came from members of the NUJ and GPMU engaged in an ongoing battle with the union busting *Daily Mirror*, the paper which supplied not only its industrial correspondent but the background logo for the platform. Appropriately enough, some might say. ■



**SCHOOL  
LEAGUE TABLES****Tory  
con-trick**

**T**EACHERS HAD a bit of a shock last month. Tory Education Minister Gillian Shepherd was actually pleased with the exam results. She was delighted that 56% of secondary schools had increased the percentage of students who received the higher grades at GCSE.

But there is something special about this year's results. It is the first set of exams under new syllabuses brought in after the Tories scrapped 100% coursework tests. It would have been embarrassing if their chosen method of raising standards had led to a poor set of results.

Cynics might even be tempted to think the results were fixed. Many teachers expected that their students would not do as well. The exam boards were so worried that they asked teachers to give expected grades in many subjects—ironic considering they weren't trusted to give coursework marks under the old system.

The truth is the Tories aren't interested in standards or what the results actually reveal. They want to use the statistics to support their views on education.

Much has said been about the unfairness of these league tables. Many academics are arguing for a different approach. Children would be tested when they go into a school and when they leave. Then the actual progress that the child has made at that school can be measured. This approach is called the "value added" method. It would certainly make a vast difference to the league tables. Inner London's Tower Hamlets—almost at the bottom of the current league tables—would jump to the top four.

But for the Tories that would never do. Successful schools in the inner cities, where all those militant teachers are? Never! Instead the Tory tables show what an advantage it is to send your child to a private school. Only four state schools appear in the "top" fifty. The message, if you have the money, is clear.

The fact that these highly successful private schools are also highly selective is not a problem for the Tories. The education system they want is one which educates the few, trains a minority for the handful of jobs there are around and dumps the rest on the scrap heap. For the ruling class the idea is to spend money on educating a small layer and not "waste resources" on the rest.

The truth is that, however exam results are presented, they will always reflect inequalities and unfairness. A child who has their own centrally heated room, access to books and their own computer, is likely to do better than one sharing a damp bedroom with two others, who has to take responsibility for cooking and childcare and has no time or place to study.

No amount of changing formulae to reflect different socio-economic factors will change their lives and chances. Only changing the system which creates inequality can do that. By the way, one statistic which they couldn't fix: not one of the City Technology Colleges, set up by the Tories to be "beacons of excellence", got into the top 200! ■

**CIVIL SERVICE****Fight the witch hunts!  
Fight the job cuts!**

**T**HE CIVIL service is becoming the Tories' number one target. Up to 100,000 jobs are lined up for the axe as a result of cuts, privatisation and the Civil Service White Paper. A Fundamental Expenditure Review is putting many more jobs at risk.

The defeat of post office privatisation shifted the Cabinet's attention to their own departments. Days after his defeat at the hands of backbenchers, Heseltine told the bosses' CBI conference he expected to shed 2,500—a quarter of his staff—by 1997.

Many workers will be wondering what the unions are doing in response. Well, the leaders of the CPSA, NUCPS and IRSF are certainly fighting back—against their own members!

Since they gained control of the CPSA in 1988, the right wing "Moderate" group have launched a campaign to sabotage the best-organised branches of the union, whose militant struggles of the 1970s and 1980s made the CPSA the most effective white-collar union in the country.

Their first step was to close down the huge, Militant-controlled, Newcastle Central Office branch and impose their own direct control. This has led to a situation where today the local branch leadership, rather than fighting the cuts, is supporting the introduction of a stop-and-search policy for staff!

On 12 October another branch, the Benefits Agency Inner-London branch was shut down. Unsubstantiated allegations of ballot-rigging and other irregularities have all been rebutted by the branch leadership, but to no avail.

Inner London's real crime was to criticise the inaction of the CPSA bureaucracy and link up with their NUCPS sister branch in successful strike action against "market-testing" (privatisation). The NEC majority want to disperse Inner-London's membership

into neighbouring right wing branches.

The branch has called well-attended unofficial meetings since the ban and launched a campaign in their defence with the support of Jeremy Corbyn MP. But if it is not to meet the same fate as Newcastle, it must defy the ban and use the opportunity to escalate the fight against job cuts and for higher pay now, before it is too late.

Meanwhile NUCPS bureaucrats, who like to pose to the left of the CPSA, have been indulging in their own witch-hunting.

Along with the CPSA, the NUCPS branch at Companies House, has been to seeking allies from the "business community" and MPs (including that great class warrior Ted Heath). All industrial action is seen as a threat to this alliance.

A group of more far-sighted members in both unions have sought to keep the question of strike action in the forefront of the campaign and alert members to the fact that this campaign of public opinion is likely to fail. In response, five managers were co-opted onto the branch executive committee without an election. They then proceeded to call off a strike ballot, called for by a mass members'

meeting. The unions then sent a document to the minister claiming that if Companies House remained in the public sector new technology could be brought in which could cut 600 jobs or more!

Rank and file members issued an unofficial newsletter to warn the membership about this sell out. The union leaderships responded by denouncing one member, Jeremy Drinkall, as the ringleader.

Bureaucrat David Millar rushed down from London to put the boot in. He issued a circular to the members recommending that Jeremy be disciplined by the NEC for writing an article in a personal capacity for *Workers Power*. Millar has tried to isolate the militants. He issued a postal ballot which he argued would endorse the local leadership's actions. He would not allow a mass meeting to be held to discuss the issues.

Activists supporting the unofficial activities were warned by management that they would be disciplined if they issued any more leaflets. When the Head of Personnel was asked why he was acting now, he claimed that he was asked to intervene by the trade unions!

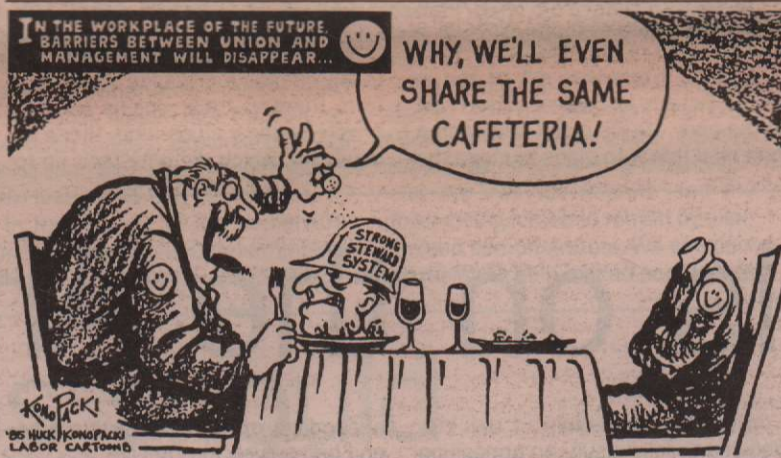
These two examples show that the bureaucrats of the CPSA and NUCPS will get militant members disciplined and sacked and destroy their organisations, rather than fight the jobs massacre. But civil servants are prepared to take action to defend themselves. On 8 December, members in the Royal Mint in Cardiff are due to go on strike against a miserly 1.8% pay offer, despite CPSA and NUCPS full-timers recommending acceptance.

Both CPSA and NUCPS Broad Left conferences last month were poorly attended, but a new layer of militants exists. They have little time for a strategy based only on winning seats on the NECs. They want an organisation which can show them how to defy the bureaucrats and how to win mass support for effective strike action.

Thanks to the initiative of *Workers Power* supporters, both the Socialist Caucus and the NUCPS Broad Left have agreed to put out the call for a civil service rank and file movement. Our call is to all civil servants who want to strike against the cuts, break the anti-union laws whenever necessary and are for the election and accountability of all union officials. Once founded, the rank and file movement must rise to the task of linking up the struggles and offering leadership in the fight against the bureaucrats and the Tories alike. ■

For more details and letters of support to CPSA Inner London, write to:  
**Debbie Daracott**  
Private and Confidential  
DSS, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1

Attend the mass lobby of the CPSA NEC:  
6 December 12 noon  
CPSA HQ  
160 Falcon Road, Clapham Common, London SW11  
For more information on the call for a rank and file movement write to:  
Socialist Caucus  
PO Box 3140, London E17 5LJ

**FE COLLEGES****Fight corruption  
and new  
contracts**

**T**HE CHICKENS are coming home to roost in the Further Education colleges. Taken out of local authority control last year, the colleges are now run like other Tory quangos, by a majority of "business governors".

There is no legal obligation to have any staff or students on governing bodies. Indeed where such representatives have blown the whistle on massive pay increases for top managers, like in Wolverhampton, they have been removed.

Now the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has had to recommend the removal of two sets of governors. At Derby College in Wilmorton, the FEFC referred to conditions in which "fraud and malpractice can flourish"—precisely the conditions the Tories have created.

While governors and principals swan around in leased cars attending one "business" lunch after another, they are demanding that staff accept "new flexible contracts", sweeping away existing conditions of service. There is growing anger amongst college lecturers. As their

workload increases daily, they are told they are not working hard enough.

Roger Ward, leader of the employers, expected a walkover when he launched the new contracts. He crowed about the weakness of the lecturers' union NATFHE. He was right about the leaders, but his walkover hit a brick wall because of the strength and determination of union members. Despite forcing some lecturers onto new contracts, the employers' offensive in many colleges has been fought to a standstill.

The national union has abandoned all co-ordinated national strike action. But one, two and three-day strike actions continue on a local basis. In

some colleges management have departed from Ward's new contract and agreed their own with the blessing of the local and national union. But most of these agreements involve a worsening of conditions.

Militants in the union—grouped around Fight the Contracts Now and the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance—have been fighting to link up local actions, head off deals being pushed by local union officials and restart national action over pay and contracts. With the lack of a real fight co-ordinated nationally, there is a danger that resistance will lose momentum. A recent meeting of "Fight the Contracts Now" supporters in Inner

and Outer London decided to push for national action in January. The meeting also heard of attempts to victimise union militants. In Barnsley College the Assistant Secretary has been accused of "financial misconduct" for sending a single private letter through the college franking system. In the College of North London, branch committee member Liz Knight is up on a "gross misconduct" charge for daring to support the right of the local student union to invite students from another college to a meeting about the NATFHE action.

In Lambeth College lecturers reported a victory in the Danny Gaskell case, where a lecturer had been charged with "gross misconduct" for criticising poor standards in the new vocational qualifications on a Channel 4 programme. A campaign forced the college into retreat and all charges were dropped. ■

Campaign information, petitions etc, on these cases and fighting the contracts can be obtained from: Mike Gallagher, c/o Tower Hamlets College, Poplar High St, London E14 0AF.



# How MI5 infiltrated the NUM

SEUMAS MILNE, the labour correspondent of the *Guardian*, has produced a revealing book about the government's war of subversion against the NUM and its leader Arthur Scargill. It demonstrates the resources the capitalist state has at its disposal when it feels its vital interests are threatened, from wide scale phone-tapping and bugging through to the use of paid agents in the labour movement.

The fact that large numbers of phones were tapped, including most lodge secretaries and chairs will come as no surprise to those involved in the 1984-85 strike. Militants knew this in the strike as police regularly appeared at pre-arranged picket assembly points using information that could only have been gained by phone tapping or informants.

Milne's book adds the concrete detail; the bugging of the Hotel room in Bloomsbury where Mick McGahey regularly stayed and of the North Sea Fish Restaurant near NUM headquarters where left-wing members of the executive used to meet, and the leasing of a building opposite the new NUM Yorkshire HQ to carry on their surveillance operations. He also reveals how, in the process, Stella Rimington climbed to the top of MI5.

Thatcher and the Tories recognised the power of the mineworkers' union and were determined to break it. This was not just revenge for the role the miners played in 1972 and 1974 in bringing down the Tory government. Thatcher also recognised the NUM's economic muscle and the vanguard role it played in the union movement.

In the 1970s and early 1980s MI5 operations against the trade union movement were stepped up. Hundreds of trade union members were recruited as informers. One former MI5 officer told Milne that up to three quarters of press labour correspondents were MI5 "sources". Stella Rimington was in charge of MI5's F2 section, in overall control of actions against the NUM throughout the strike.



Scargill and, behind left, Roger Windsor.

Her greatest "success" was in recruiting and placing an MI5 agent right at the heart of NUM HQ. This was Roger Windsor, the NUM finance officer and Chief Executive. When Windsor was sent to Libya to discuss stopping oil imports, he insisted on being shown on Libyan television hugging Colonel Gaddafi. This image was immediately flashed around the world and used to discredit the NUM at a crucial stage of the strike.

Windsor's role was not to end in 1985. Despite the defeat of the NUM in the early 1990s it still remained a potential threat to plans to close the

Clare Heath reviews  
*The Enemy Within - MI5, Maxwell and the Scargill affair*  
Seumas Milne  
Verso £16.95.

pits. In 1990, having left the NUM, Windsor was the centre of a series of charges of fraud against Scargill and Peter Heathfield.

Suggesting they used Libyan money to pay off their mortgages and money from Russian trade unions to fill a private political slush fund, these allegations, which did not stand up to

serious investigation, were nevertheless pushed by important sections of the media, themselves no strangers to doing MI5s dirty work. Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* and *The Cook Report* worked hand in hand to peddle this story. It came directly from the security services.

Stella Rimington got her reward in December 1991 by being made the first public Director-General of MI5. Since then she has sought to expand the role of MI5, winning control over intelligence operations against the IRA from Special Branch. She apparently wants to take the MI5 down the

road of the FBI, having both a judicial and intelligence role.

Of course it would be wrong to grace the MI5 actions as having a decisive impact on the outcome of the 1984-85 miners' strike. What lost the strike was the inability of the miners to spread strike action to all sections of the working class, to concentrate all the forces of the class in a general strike, just as the Tories were concentrating all the forces of the capitalist class to defeat the NUM. The leaders of the NUM, militant as they were, were unwilling to adopt such a strategy which would have meant breaking from their fellow bureaucrats and going straight to the rank and file of other unions, if necessary against their leaders.

Nevertheless the labour movement should be alert to the increasing activities of Rimington's crew. A major defence against such activities is full democracy in the labour movement. Nothing should be done behind the backs of the workers, to be later "exposed" and cause confusion. All officials should be elected annually, accounts must be open to the members and every elected official must account for their behaviour before an informed membership.

Above all workers should use these revelations to demand that one of the first things a future Labour government must do is to clear out Rimington and her 2,000 strong crew of strike-breakers by abolishing MI5 and all secret state services. ■

## Travels on the American left

John McKee reviews  
*The Prophet's Children: Travels on the American Left*  
by Tim Wohlforth.

FROM THE 1950s to the 1980s, Tim Wohlforth was active in the US Trotskyist movement. He has produced a book that is entertainingly written, contains many insights into the American left but at the same time is marked by his eventual journey's end—as an opponent of Leninism who believes that the very idea of a vanguard party has to be purged from a "post-Trotskyist socialist movement".

At the height of the Cold War and the McCarthy witch-hunts in 1953, Wohlforth joined the Young Socialist League (YSL), the youth organisation of the Independent Socialist League (ISL), a group led by Max Shachtman which had led a sizeable split from the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP-US) in 1940.

The ISL took a "Third Camp" position denouncing both American and "Soviet imperialism". Wohlforth—a talented propagandist and public speaker—quickly became a leading figure in the YSL.

But the ISL was moving rapidly rightwards and in 1956 declared its intention to fuse with the small and right wing Socialist Party. As Wohlforth puts it, "it had an extremely anti-communist programme that, except for the part that formally professed socialism, was indistinguishable from the Democratic Party's".

When the leadership of the YSL decided to follow suit, an opposition developed. Its leading figures were Wohlforth, Shane Mage and James Robertson.

The Hungarian Revolution raised doubts about Shachtman's theory that Stalinism represented a stable new class society that could develop as the next historical stage after capitalism. This led them back to Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism and of the Soviet Union as a transitional and fundamentally unstable regime, a "degenerated workers' state".

When the faction was expelled from Shachtman's group in 1957 they joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP-US).

### Suffering

Wohlforth was a member of the Political Committee of the SWP-US from 1957 to 1963. He describes a party suffering both from the onslaughts of Cold War America and from a political method which now had nothing in common with revolutionary Trotskyism. The party had over 1,500 members at the end of the war but had shrivelled to about 400 by 1957.

Wohlforth helped to launch a new youth movement, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA). Given impetus from its participation in the civil rights movement, the YSA grew and became the most dynamic part of the SWP. However the fact that many of its leaders came from the Shachtmanites and included some independents meant the YSA was far from an

appendage of the SWP at this time and had a lively internal life.

According to Wohlforth by 1959, "adaptation to Stalinism had become rampant throughout the party". It was this issue that threw Wohlforth and a significant section of the YSA into a second faction fight against the SWP-US leadership. The catalyst was the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

The SWP-US leadership embraced Castro as a genuine, if unconscious, proletarian revolutionary. Wohlforth, Robertson and Mage came out in opposition. Wohlforth argues that the key difference was the uncritical attitude of the party to the Castro leadership and the downplaying of the importance of workers' democracy.

When Castro moved against the small group aligned to Trotskyism in Cuba, suppressing their paper and smashing the plates set up to print Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*, the SWP was silent or even suggested it was done without Castro's knowledge! Later in the book Wohlforth reports an interview he had with two survivors of this current in Cuba. They explained how their initial illusions in Castro were punctured:

"Suddenly Fidel embraced Marxism-Leninism and began to nationalise everything. We supported all this. At the same time, though, Fidel supported the Soviet Union uncritically. Our old enemies, the Stalinists, found cushy jobs in the government. He began to clamp down on the unions. He took no steps to institute workers' democracy. We continued to support Fidel, to support the revolutionary

process, but we had our criticisms. . . I kept thinking, what would the Old Man [Trotsky] think of it all? Where are the soviets, the real workers' councils and control? . . . Suddenly they hit us . . . the government sent the police to the print shop and broke up the type for Trotsky's book. Our little office was seized. . ."

But the SWP-US leaders failed to recognise that a Stalinist regime was being introduced in Cuba. By 1961 the "minority tendency" was at the centre of a faction fight in the party.

### Disastrous

This tendency quickly gained international links with the Socialist Labour League (SLL) led by Gerry Healy in Britain. By the early 1960s Wohlforth was in regular correspondence with Healy and had formed a political relationship that was to prove disastrous for his political development.

Differences developed within the tendency as to the nature of the SWP itself. Gerry Healy's initial advice was to stay inside the SWP-US. But the majority went with Robertson and Mage and were quickly expelled by the SWP. They went on the form the Spartacist League, which was ironically later also to adapt to Stalinism in the most grotesque fashion.

Wohlforth hung on, but was carved out of all important areas of activity until he and his supporters were expelled in autumn 1964, after Healy changed his mind and declared war on the SWP leadership.

Healy's unprincipled zig-zags had

aborted any possibility of a genuinely revolutionary opposition emerging to the pro-Castroite SWP leaders.

The rest of the book is a rather sorry tale of Wohlforth's role as Healy's man in the USA and then as a rather broken and politically apathetic figure after his expulsion from the organisation he built—the Workers League.

It offers insights into the problems of building revolutionary organisations in the modern USA. But where Wohlforth's insight fails him is in any coherent explanation of the nature of Healyism—a tendency within which he spent most of his political life. Much of the second half of the book is devoted to detailed descriptions of his experiences at the hands of the "tyrant of Clapham High St".

Wohlforth's conclusion is that Healy's internal regime has its roots in "Leninism" and "vanguardism". This is far from the truth. Centrist organisations have to pervert and trample on genuine democratic centralism because their wrong political perspectives are constantly falsified by the living experience of their members in trying to implement them. A healthy democratic centralist party uses these experiences to change and correct its analysis, to test its line in the class struggle. A centrist leadership crushes such internal life precisely because it challenges its political analysis and threatens its position.

This is the real lesson of Healyism—one that Wohlforth sadly never learnt. ■



Arthur Merton reviews  
*Riot Police*  
Labyrinth Video £10.99

# Street war

THE POLICE Federation wants all major video shops to refuse to sell this "real life action from the war on the streets", as the blurb describes "Riot Police". A Labour MP, speaking for the Federation, denounced the video as sick and dangerous.

These are excellent recommendations for every socialist to buy the video. If it upsets the boys and girls in blue it must be good. But hang on, it's made by the people who brought us "Police Stop" and John Wayne's greatest westerns. Surely it can't be that subversive?

It isn't. It is really a pro-police video, concentrating on the menace that the "mob" poses to society and the front line efforts of the police to combat this threat. Two academics, Doctor Waddington and Professor Pearson, give the whole thing a spurious air of respectability. The film ends with cities and towns in flames after riots. The message is clear. Everything the police do is justified if these flames are not to spread.

The film also tries to conceal the reality of "riots" in Britain. The voice over tells us that riots are "thankfully a rare sight" on the British mainland. This means, of course, that Northern Ireland doesn't get mentioned at all. But it is also a downright lie.

In November the "Forbidden Britain" series on BBC 2 revealed that riots were "surprisingly commonplace" in Britain. The only reason we don't hear about them is that the British government censored coverage of them for years. Even in 1932, the government blocked all news-reel film of mass battle between the police and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in Hyde Park!

The reason for the video's lie is simple. They want to present "riots" as isolated examples of madness by people carried away with the crowd mentality. Any other explanation of political violence would destroy the myth that Britain is essentially free from trouble, governed by reason, not violence.



Police riot at Orgreave 1984

To bolster this argument—against a background of police battering demonstrators with truncheons, rocks and anything else they can lay their hands on—the video argues that the police, like the crowd, are normally peaceful. They are friendly bobbies on the beat who, when caught in the cross fire are prone to lose their heads like anyone else.

But the video is well worth getting, although at £10.99 for 50 minutes it's worth clubbing together to buy it to show at union meetings, unemployed centres, in youth groups and so on.

Despite its intention it proves two things: that workers and youth can and do fight back against police or fascist attacks; and the police are an instrument of control in the hands of the ruling class.

The film makes no distinction between riots and violent demonstrations. Everything is lumped together. But it has plenty of footage of events as diverse as a fascist rally being wrecked in the 1950s, the inner city uprisings of the early 1980s in Brixton, Toxteth and Handsworth, the Battle of Orgreave during the Miners' Strike of 1984/85, the Poll Tax riot in Trafalgar Square in 1990, South Korean students fighting for democracy in the early 1990s, the LA riot and the Battle of Waterloo in 1992, when Anti-Fascist Action (not the ANL as the video claims) wrecked the Nazi Blood and Honour's attempt to stage their first London gig in years.

In the footage of the demonstrations the heroism and determination of workers and youth faced with at-

tack is clear. In the film of the Orgreave picket we see a vast well armed and militarised police force being taken on by unarmed miners. The miners were fighting for their jobs and risked all against overpaid and legalised thugs.

In the footage of Waterloo the cameras were not quick enough to catch the main damage inflicted on the fascists (although a few bloodied fascists are pictured) but it does show them in disarray.

This wasn't a riot. It was a battle against the fascists and the best efforts of the police could not stop the fascists from getting a pasting.

In the Poll Tax riot, we see the police being forced to retreat by unorganised demonstrators. We see people racing to help injured people that

they do not know. We see selfless bravery in the face of police savagery.

Even the bland voice-over cannot disguise these images. Nor can it cover up the police's real role. The usual garbage is churned out about how foreign police are more vicious than British ones. And much is made of the fact that we do not have a real "riot squad". Yet the film documents the intensive training that "Level One" riot police in Britain undergo at "Riot City" in Britain. It explains the growth industry in specialised police weaponry and armoury in the British force. It explains the painstaking methods of "containment" followed by "dispersal" which are taken straight out of military manuals.

The police are not stuck in the middle—they are the front line troops of the class enemy. And the video reveals this, while trying to deny it.

You never see a single police officer protecting a striker against a scab, an anti-fascist against a fascist, or a peaceful demonstrator against another police officer who has got "red mist" (police slang for when they go into overdrive bashing reds!).

You do see them attacking strikers and anti-fascists. Even in the footage from the Solingen events in Germany, when Nazis attacked the Turkish community, the police are shown battering the Turks not the Nazis. They are racist to the core and hell bent on defending the bosses' order. Are they "workers in uniform"? Watch this video if you still think that!

One thing is really striking when you watch the video. Every battle shows moments in which the police are forced to retreat. But it also shows that they retreat in good order, regroup and then attack again. At best, as the film says, "the riot allows the crowd to wrest control for a day", but after that order is restored.

In other words they are organised and they know how to deploy their forces. They are now armed and equipped to do this better than ever before. The answer to this is not to cringe before their tactical superiority, bleat that nothing can be done, or echo the pleas of the reformists that workers should not "stoop to violence".

No, the answer is simple and obvious: organised self defence on every demo and a revolutionary struggle to wrest control of society from the bosses and the cops, not for a day but for ever.■

## Why trade unions should oppose immigration controls

THIS PAMPHLET takes . . . a position of total opposition to all immigration controls. The basis of this opposition is that immigration controls are inevitably racist. There cannot be non-discriminatory or non-racist controls."

From this uncompromising position Steve Cohen has written a clear, practical and informative pamphlet for trade unionists on immigration law. He rejects the commonly held position of many in the labour movement that there can be "non-racist" immigration controls, arguing that trade unionists have a responsibility to fight for the free movement of workers.

Cohen takes issue with many of the myths which surround immigration laws—such as the argument that the country is already overcrowded—and gives workers ammunition against the racists and the bosses. He reveals the history of immigration law in Britain, and the struggles that have been launched against them.

Crucially, Cohen looks at the role of the trade unions in supporting, imposing and, occasionally, resisting immigration controls.

"The door must be shut against

Kate Foster reviews  
*Workers' Control Not  
Immigration Controls –  
Why trade unionists should  
oppose immigration controls*  
by Steve Cohen,  
Greater Manchester  
Immigration Aid Unit £2.50

the enormous immigration of destitute aliens into this country . . . We must protect our own starving work people by refusing to be the asylum for the paupers of Europe."

No, not some Tory MP, but the President of the TUC in 1892, supporting anti-semitic immigration controls.

In 1965 the TUC called for immigration controls because there had been, "a growth of the proportion of Commonwealth immigrants lacking an adequate knowledge of English and of British customs".

These positions were not unopposed, but reflected the strength of the labour aristocrats in the movement. In 1894, Jewish workers demonstrated and passed a resolution

against the proposed Aliens Act:

"This mass meeting of Jewish trade unionists is of the opinion that the vast amount of poverty and misery which exists is in no way due to the influx of foreign workmen but is the result of the private ownership of the means of production; and this meeting calls upon the government to pass a universal compulsory eight hour day with a minimum wage as an instalment of future reform."

In recent decades the TUC has opposed some specific immigration measures, but rarely taken action against the laws in general or in support of those faced with deportation.

Cohen doesn't turn his back on the unions. Quite the opposite. He argues "the trade union movement has a particular responsibility to oppose controls. . . Only by opposing controls can a debt be paid to history and to black workers today."

The final section of the pamphlet deals with what trade unionists could and should be doing now to fight immigration controls. It pamphlet doesn't just tell us to pass a few resolutions or circulate petitions, useful as these activities sometimes can be. The pamphlet gives some advice

on how workers can oppose immigration laws by imposing some degree of workers' control. It points out how workers in immigration offices and airports could organise to refuse to operate the laws. It observes that many workers are asked to report on immigrant workers and calls for public sector unions to adopt a policy of non-co-operation.

The pamphlet could have included more on recent anti-deportation campaigns. This omission is surprising, given that the Immigration Aid Unit and Cohen himself have been very active in many of these campaigns. It would have been useful to look at the lessons of such campaigns as Mohammed Idrish, Viraj Mendis and more recently, the Rahman Family. Such campaigns show the practical importance of active trade union support.

This pamphlet is extremely useful for any trade unionist. Encourage your branch to order a number of copies and ensure every union office is equipped with one.■

Copies available from Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit,  
400 Cheetham Hill Road,  
Manchester M8 9LE.  
Phone 061 740 7722.



**W**hat are the prospects for the class struggle in Britain? How does the political situation in this country fit into the "new world order" set up at the end of the Cold War? On these pages we print edited extracts from the *Political and Economic Perspectives* adopted at the National Conference of Workers Power (Britain) on 5 November 1994.

The document outlines possible developments over the next 18 months. In 1996 or 1997 there must be an election. Also 1996 will see the crucial Inter-Governmental Conference which has the task of taking European integration forward. Experts also predict that the current economic recovery will peak around 1996.

This document is not an attempt at crude crystal ball gazing. Marxist perspectives attempt to discern likely trends and the likely terrain of class struggle, by combining our understanding of the laws of capitalist development with current data and experience. The world situation is more unstable than ever since the collapse of Stalinism in 1989 and the opening of a new world period full of revolutionary potential. This can always bring unexpected shocks and sharp turns to the British economy and politics. To understand this global background, we refer our readers to the *World Perspectives of the LRCI*, published in *Trotskyist International* 15.

### The Economy

In "British Capitalism—Results and Prospects", (published in *Permanent Revolution* 10, Spring 1994) we predicted a weak, inflationary recovery, with a prolonged increase in unemployment throughout. Appearances seem partially to invalidate that prediction. There is a recovery, which is admitted to be weak by all bourgeois commentators. Nevertheless it has been accompanied by continued falls in inflation and official unemployment, leading to Tory claims of a "dream" situation: rising growth, falling inflation, falling unemployment.

But this is a Tory myth. On closer examination our prediction has been borne out in all but one respect. The recovery, according to the *Economist* is "so mild that most Britons doubt its existence."

Overall the recovery itself has been sluggish and is set to be further slowed and weakened by two factors.

First, the effects of Clarke's tax increases, which were brought in to balance the massive government budget deficit, have not fully worked through. The end of 1994 and the start of 1995 will see them start to undermine growth.

Second, the capitalists really fear the inflationary potential locked within the recovery. Britain's reduced manufacturing base leads to imports being sucked in during a recovery, debasing the real value of Sterling and leading to inflation in the long term. This danger is confirmed by recent surveys showing that the economy may already be nearing its capacity to produce and that industrial investment has lagged behind the recovery.

By mid-summer 1994 the Bank of England was already pushing for an interest rate rise. It took place in early September. Long term investors are already acting as if further rises will take place. This will further slow the recovery.

The recovery has indeed been weak and, once output recovered, potentially inflationary. It is now going to be slowed down because of fear of inflation.

The one area of our prediction which has to be partially corrected is on employment. On the basis of official figures and forecasts we predicted that unemployment would continue to rise long after the recovery began. The picture in reality has been more complicated.

In official terms registered unemployment has fallen, on average by 17,000 for the last 18 months. Unemployment now stands at around 3.64 million. Even if we use the Unemployment Unit's "real figures" worked out on the old basis, we get a fall from a height of 4.06m in June 1993 to 3.56m in June 1994. Clearly there is a fall in the number of those who want a job but cannot get one.

But an important countervailing factor to the fall in measured unemployment is the actual fall in employment. According to *The Economist*:

"For 18 months unemployment has on average declined by 17,000 a month. Latest count is 2,661,400 or 9.4% of the workforce. Paradoxically the number of employees in Britain has also fallen to its lowest level for seven years. Employers are shedding jobs at a record rate, 92,000 in the past quarter alone. What's going on? The DoE hasn't a clue."

The supposition is a combination of people moving to retirement, sickness benefit, and being thrown off the dole into lumpenisation. Confirming this the most recent *Labour Force Survey* showed that 110,000 men between 35 and 60 gave up the search for work in 1993.

The fall in employment shows that, whilst Britain's economy is picking up, the recovery is not providing new jobs but allowing bosses to shed them, even where there is a growth of part time, temporary, low paid work, especially for women.

The explanation for this pattern after the most recent recession is an alteration in the balance of class forces. We did not take sufficient account of these when predicting a repeat of the post-recession rises of unemployment that occurred after 1973 and 1979.

The defeats inflicted on the working class in the 1980s and 90s have injected more "flexibility" into the labour market, forcing workers to work on the bosses' terms and wage levels and enabling bosses to take advantage of cheaper labour to hire faster during the recovery.

Overall we can expect an increased pace of recovery, leading to fairly rapid intervention by the Bank of England to raise interest rates and a growing balance of payments deficit as imports are sucked in. Any "feelgood factor" generated by the recovery will be felt mainly by the bosses and upper middle class. It will be counterbal-



anced by rising mortgages for homeowners and increased taxes for most workers. By 1996 the failure of the Tories, despite the "recovery", to show any long term improvement in Britain's economic performance, will pose the European question with renewed acuteness.

### The Tories

One recurrent element of the new period in world politics has been the breakup of old bourgeois political alliances and parties, especially where these were moulded by the acute needs of the bourgeoisie in the Cold War (Italy, Japan).

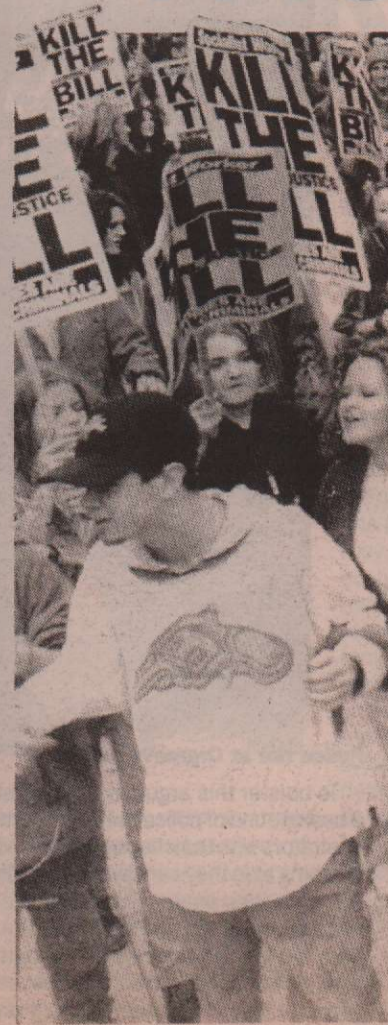
Despite the ruptures within Toryism which allowed Thatcher to rise to power, the most serious rupture in bourgeois politics lies ahead in Britain. Unlike in Italy, the British political order does not have an identity crisis as a result of the end of the Cold War. But it sits atop a political and economic fault line between Europe and America. A certain feature of the coming period is economic, and increasingly political-diplomatic, rivalry between the Franco-German dominated European Union and the USA.

This has left the Tory Party in a strategic dilemma. Its anti-European right wing expresses interests which are totally dysfunctional for the bourgeoisie as a whole. Its mildly pro-European centre is also unable to project a policy in line with the objective interests of British imperialism. It has virtually no enthusiastic pro-EU wing.

Since the Maastricht Treaty was narrowly endorsed on a vote of confidence in the government, Major has bought inner party peace at the cost of storing up trouble in the future. The deal involved appeasing the anti-European right, keeping its representatives in cabinet, and pandering to its mass base in the chauvinist middle class.

But in the run-up to the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) Major will face a renewed drive, led by Franco-German imperialism, to go beyond Maastricht towards a Central Bank and a single currency.

Major must sabotage this, as the only big imperialist country which opposes the project, or face the collapse of his inner-party deal before the next



election. The possibility of such a period of split and inner party strife may force Major to hold an election early to limit the damage. If not, we can predict a big, damaging inner party struggle over the terms on which Major is to approach the 1996 summit, and even a struggle to replace him with a clearer representative of one of the two wings of the party—Portillo or Clarke.

In the short term, at least, Major will emphasise his role of "peacemaker" in Ireland, partly concealing the virtual absence of any new domestic agenda since the "back to basics" disaster. But, as the current feverish infighting over the EU budget shows, the European question can blow up in the face of the Tory government at any moment.

Another factor determining the direction of Major's policy is the emergence of Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party. Blair has stolen the Tories' policies, and there is much talk of the need to put "clear blue water" between Major and Blair.

Major can only do this by playing to the right, to the prejudices of its mass base (anti-beggars, anti-yobs, anti-union). Here not only the caste interests of Tory MPs are at work, but also the interests of a whole section of the ruling class which staffs the Tory quangoes and knows it will lose its livelihood if Labour is elected.

That is why it is inevitable that Major's trajectory will continue rightwards, with further concessions to the neo-Thatcherites. However, Major's legislative agenda until the next election will rest content with the shoring up of anti-democratic laws and the piloting of the last big privatisations—rail and coal.

In our last British perspectives, written in the aftermath of the ERM debacle and the coal crisis of October 1992, we said that the whole period would be characterised by "weak government".

Notwithstanding the popularity of Blair and the Tories' unpopularity with their electoral base—from which it has never recovered after 1992—Major has temporarily strengthened his government through his pact with



the right.

However the cost is to build in greater dysfunctionality long term between Tory policy and the objective international interests of the bourgeoisie. A great many of the attacks which are necessary from the bosses' point of view, specifically the dismantling of the universal benefit system, are protected by current Tory manifesto commitments. This presages a pre-election struggle within the Tory party with the Portillo/Howard wing advocating a strategic attack on these benefits.

In Scotland, although they avoided meltdown in the 1992 election, the Tories remain in danger of slumping to fourth party status—despite Ian Lang's climbdown over water privatisation. Unlike Plaid Cymru, the SNP has enjoyed a dramatic resurgence in its electoral fortunes this year, taking votes from both Tory and Labour. The SNP leadership calculates that the prospect of an Irish "peace deal" will bring the constitutional question of Scotland's relationship to the UK back to the fore. This may prove a headache for Labour as well, a difficulty compounded by the relative strength of the Labour left in Scottish constituencies—which were less than unanimous in their support for Blair as leader and were crucial in his symbolic conference defeat over Clause IV.

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# S FOR BRITAIN s struggle in 1995



## The bosses' offensive

On the economic front the agenda of the bosses is clear. They are using the favourable balance of class forces and the union leaders' refusal to struggle to push home a drastic offensive.

This has been under way throughout the recovery period (since 1992) but has been gaining momentum, in the public sector in particular, as the effects of marketisation at a macro level and of new management techniques at a workplace level inflict defeat after defeat on the living standards, rights and working conditions of the working class.

Though there have been dogged attempts to resist this, for example college lecturers, sporadic disputes in the NHS and Civil Service and most notably in the Post Office, these have been hampered from the start by the unwillingness of the union bureaucracy to fight back effectively.

What are the main features of the employers' offensive?

### Jobs:

Many employers are using the current phase of the recovery to shake out jobs rather than create new ones. This is evident from the two types of reconstruction taking place. Banking represents one of the few areas of the economy where reconstruction has resulted from a revolutionising of the productive forces. The banking sector has introduced new technology to shed jobs.

In other areas production is increasing due to speed ups, changes in work practices etc. A steady flow of jobs are being lost in the NHS Trust hospitals. The same goes for Local Government. Nearly a third of a million public sector jobs were lost last year. BT has de-

are holding the line. Some sections or workers in the private sector have won rises in pay rates that are higher than the official rate of inflation (e.g. Rover, Jaguar, Signals). But such groups are few and far between, given the expansion of the economy that has already reached the point of significant skills shortages. Throughout the public sector and in many private sector firms, pay norms have been imposed at or below the official inflation rate. And in the most "flexible" sector of the economy—part time, temporary work with no employment rights—wages have actually fallen.

The anomaly is that overall take-home earnings are growing faster than inflation. But this is due to the preponderance of flexible work, leading to greater overtime and bonuses as the recovery has picked up.

Overall the next two years will see a continuation of the employers' offensive on workplace conditions, pay and jobs.

## Blair's "new Labour"

John Smith's death paved the way for an unplanned accession to the leadership of the Labour Party by the most extreme of the "modernisers", Tony Blair. Smith had been the choice of the union bureaucrats following Kinnock's resignation. They knew that he would stop short of a complete rupture with them, even though they were disgruntled at his attack on their rights at the 1993 conference (the introduction of one member, one vote).

His death caught them, like everybody else, unawares, and they had no plausible leadership candidate to back against Blair. Their suspicion of Blair was shared by many of their members and it is no accident that, while his victory was a landslide, he received less support in the unions than in either the constituencies or the PLP.

However, while he is prepared to go further than Smith in his casting of the Labour Party as a modern "national" party, as opposed to an old fashioned "union" party, Blair will stop short of severing the union link, at least before the next election.

The outcome of that election will determine how far the Labour Party chooses to go further along the road of either social-democratisation (transformation into a European-style Social Democratic Party) or liberalisation (transformation into a US Democrat-style party).

In advance of an election Blair himself cannot risk the loss of funding and resources that a break with the unions would entail. In essence, therefore, we have a continuation of the Smith compromise on organisation. The new twist, however, is that Blair is espousing a more openly right wing policy agenda than even Smith. On social policy, the minimum wage and the economy, he is diluting Labour's promises to the working class to almost nothing.

It is likely that Blair will get away with it. The left in the party remains terribly weak and the growing 'wait for Labour' moods coincides with the realistic expectation by millions of workers that the Tories can be beaten at the next election, and that Blair is the man who can beat them.

Nevertheless, the struggle over Clause Four that Blair has initiated could upset his plans. On balance, Blair is likely to win. The left are not making the campaign to defend Clause Four a fight against Blair's whole agenda. This could be their undoing, particularly as the party machine goes into overdrive wooing the union leaders over the next year and ensuring that they change their votes at the 1995 conference. However, he has gambled and a slim chance of upsetting his plans has been created. It is a chance that, if it is taken up by the left, could affect the class struggle up to and after the next election.

The focus of revolutionary propaganda needs to be warning workers what are the full implications of Blair's

agenda. While Labour remains a bourgeois workers' party based on the unions, we need to expose Blair's aspirations to change Labour, at best into a European-style social democratic style party with more "independence" and weaker links to the unions.

A question mark remains over Labour's Euro-policy. Labour is historically lukewarm over Europe, but Blair's instincts are pro-European. In order to pursue Blair's aim of attracting support from further sectors of big business, Labour, ought logically to carve out a wholeheartedly pro-European stance. Nevertheless the far reaching little-England chauvinism of sections of the labour bureaucracy, combined with the influence of Labour's own Euro-sceptics, makes this development questionable and a matter of struggle. The problem is that Blair will not want to open an inner party struggle over Europe at the same time as the Tories. The Blair leadership could gamble on continuing Smith's tactics: basically mirroring every Tory tactical move on Maastricht whilst embarrassing Major as the European Courts implement much of the Social Charter "from above".

## The Unions

The major trends within the trade union movement that we have analysed as resulting from the defeat of the 1984-5 miners' strike continue to be felt. In outline, these are as follows.

The numbers and percentage of employed workers who belong to a trade union continue to decline. There are now just over 7 million trade unionists in Britain, less than a third of the workforce. This is a result of a failure to recruit part-time (mainly women) workers and youth and to unionise the private service sector. Actual de-unionisation remains rare (e.g. Arrowsmith, some NHS trusts).

The number of strikes in 1993 reached an all-time low (211), though the number of strike days recovered slightly from its 1992 low point. More worryingly half the strike days were "lost" in the civil service (5 November 1993 accounting for the bulk) and a third were taken by members of NUCPS, the union for better paid Civil Servants and middle managers.

The public sector remains under the most severe attack whilst accounting for the majority (60%) of unionised workers.

Pay "rises" are very low, 1% in the public sector, suggesting that the pay freeze is holding. However, it remains a problem for the bosses as take-home pay in the public and private sectors has risen by over 7% in each case. Overtime, bonuses and performance pay are increasingly replacing the annual pay rise. This has had a knock on effect in job losses. Nearly a third of a million public sector jobs were lost last year.

Union finances have worsened. UCATT is bankrupt by any commercial standards, though it is clearly not the only union in crisis. Unity Trust is diversifying and commercialising itself as a result of its own financial crisis.

This in turn is continuing to fuel further mergers, though fewer of these are towards general unionism (e.g. UCATT and the T&G) and more towards industrial unionism (e.g. NUCPS and IRSF, NCU and UCW) which we can critically support. Pressure on the teaching unions to merge will mount.

The relaunched TUC has seen a dramatic shift towards the organisational and ideological goals of New Realism. The General Council, purportedly the organising centre of the movement, has been sidelined and replaced by Labour Party-style policy groups, making the Annual Congress even more meaningless. Moves towards a European-style triennial congress have now been raised.

John Monks is to Blair what Norman Willis was to Kinnock: the perfect counterpart. Since June, the tempo of Monks' reforms has increased with the invitation of David Hunt (when he

was Employment Secretary) to Congress House, the appointment of Liberal Democrat Des Wilson as an adviser on European Affairs, and the commissioning of a book on *The Future of British Trade Unions* by Robert Taylor, industrial relations editor of the *Financial Times*.

The conclusions of Taylor's book, and their welcome by not only Monks but the huge majority of the union leaders, marks an important ideological shift by the bureaucracy. Workers' participation schemes and the promotion of workers' rights (as opposed to unionised workers' rights) are the main planks of a programme for the Europeanisation of British industrial relations. They are also the TUC's main demands on Labour along with breaking the Tory Government's blocking role on the International Labour Organisation and within the EU. Although "business unionism" or "service unionism" has not been abandoned, it is no longer seen as a panacea. The GMB has even entered a consortium for a Channel Tunnel franchise!

However we can see the opening of a period of conflict between the Labour Party leadership and those unions representing the semi-skilled and unskilled and public sector workers. This conflict has not emerged immediately around organisational links but policy. The abandonment of the minimum wage pledge, and the squeezing out of UNISON from the negotiations over the issue, led to panic at the TUC Congress. Future and even more bitter disputes will erupt, particularly around pay, privatisation and unemployment, on which Blair is to the right of David Hunt. If Labour gets into power, these along with other social issues will lead to an intensification of the class struggle.

## A new mood of militancy?

Is there a new mood of militancy in the working class? The Socialist Workers' Party base their perspective on the idea that there is and that an industrial explosion is waiting to happen ("bubbling anger beneath the surface" is how they put it).

To some extent it is the wrong question. Militancy manifests itself in action. If there were a new generalised mood of militancy it would be translated into tangible, measurable action. This is clearly not the case. However, there is a new mood of anger and resentment in the working class. We have to understand why this is not yet translating itself into generalised militant action.

The answer is plain, but beyond the economists of the SWP. It is because this anger is, generally, being misdirected by a still entrenched bureaucracy into a growing, and for the first time in years relatively credible, "wait for Labour" campaign.

In other words, the anger is not being translated into generalised militant action because of the continuing crisis of political leadership within the working class. This crisis is compounded by the very important defeat that the working class suffered in 1992-93 around the pit closure crisis. Here the mood of anger had a clear opportunity to turn itself into a generalised offensive. That opportunity was criminally squandered by the labour movement leadership, including its left wing. This was a triumph for new realist style trade union leadership, eclipsing the old style of set piece confrontation that characterised the 1980s.

At the moment, therefore, it would be wrong to pin our hopes on a sudden explosion of generalised industrial militancy transforming the political landscape. But this is not to say that we are in a period of downturn. The situation is more complex.

There have been and there will continue to be a series of disputes over

continued on page 10



continued from page 10

pay, cuts, privatisation and job losses. Many of these disputes will take the form of industrial action (e.g. the recent rail dispute, the strikes in NATFHE, the post) and will offer important openings for revolutionaries to intervene and make propaganda about how to turn the anger into action.

In certain sections there will even be a bubbling anger which will express itself in a number of very bitter strikes (the Post Office is the clearest example of this at the moment). At the same time, however, the weakness of the government in the public sector, combined with the wait for Labour/new realist strategy of the union leaders will tend to produce old fashioned compromises—rather than clear cut victories or defeats. In the private sector this pattern will be fuelled by the recovery, and the consequent rise in workers' expectations, and the desire of the bosses to maintain industrial peace so as to take advantage of the recovery (e.g. pay settlements in the car industry).

The mood of anger, notwithstanding its limits, will produce local, often very bitter disputes and, in so doing, will prompt vicious management attacks, use of the anti-union laws and other forms of escalation.

Given the strategy of the union leaders, this will in turn create a layer of angry and discontented militants—the raw material for a rank and file movement. This is evidenced by developments in the UCW, the Sefton 2 in Unison, the CPSA in London. Ironically, the routine settlement of disputes—which will be a general feature of the period ahead—can also demonstrate that action can win results. It can reinforce the arguments of the militants and can begin to lay the basis for the rebuilding of the unions at the base.

The rail strikes showed this. The settlement of the signal workers' dispute was a partial victory for the RMT even though far more could have been won if their action had been extended. Not only did the signal workers gain substantial financial concessions, but their action has created real problems for the Tories in meeting their timescale for implementing rail privatisation. This all shows that militant economic struggle can bring victories even when the Tories and their puppet media intervene on the side of the bosses.

Because of the peculiarity of both the complex issues and the concentrated industrial strength of 4,000 signal workers, the victory will not necessarily serve as a model for other public sector workers wanting to smash the pay freeze. In fact the Tories retreated from the dispute in time for the settlement not to appear as a defeat for the government. Nevertheless, it will show to a wide layer of militants who identified with the strike that action can win concessions.

In the Post Office, although the government withdrew the privatisation plans under pressure from some of its own back-benchers, the level of industrial militancy amongst many sections of the UCW membership continues to give the Tories cause for concern. Though postal workers lack any recent history of anti-bureaucratic rank and file organisation there is a mounting tension between an often combative membership and one of the most right wing national bureaucracies of any major TUC-affiliated union.

Another round of anti-union legislation, especially with regard to additional ballots in prolonged disputes (a CBI proposal), cannot be ruled out this Parliament. Similarly, the Tories may give greater encouragement to private sector bosses to invoke the provisions of existing laws.

The most recent additions to the anti-trade union laws are designed to make any strike action, official or

unofficial, even more difficult. Ballots may easily be challenged by employers, giving the bureaucrats a convenient excuse for not calling action. This increases the pressure for unofficial action, but such action leaves individual militants open to prosecution under the new laws. We can expect to see some key test cases. Whilst the laws will make winning action more difficult, they can also lead to greater pressure for organisation at a rank and file level.

But the extent to which this situation creates the possibilities of building a national rank and file movement remain very limited.

First, a generalised politicisation, through struggle, of a whole layer of militants right across the trade unions, is a vital factor in the development in such a movement. This has not yet occurred.

Secondly, the main force that could bring such a movement into existence, the SWP, is currently opposing its formation. Their best placed militants pay heed to the idea, but they remain tied to a party perspective which counterposes their model of "party building" to constructing a united front in the unions that could lead a fight against the bureaucracy. Whilst this creates important opportunities for us to make propaganda for the idea of a rank and file movement in forums such as the Sefton 2 Conference, translating this into reality will remain difficult, except in particular circumstances such as the long running NATFHE dispute. However, because of the changed circumstances described above, we are in a more favourable situation to take both local and national union initiatives for rank and file organisations and for these initiatives to have a resonance both amongst a growing layer of militants and the SWP.

### Working class struggles outside the workplace

Several factors combine to make non-workplace struggles a very important focus for revolutionary propaganda and agitation in the coming period.

These include the weakness of the industrial struggle, the bosses' offensive against housing, education and healthcare, and the consequent politicisation of struggles of the working class as consumers to defend their services and living standards.

Workers' household bills have risen much higher than inflation, because both local councils and private monopolies are attempting to make working class consumers pay for the recession and public spending cuts. Council rents for example have risen on average 6% in the last year compared to 2.5% inflation. Water bills for some households have risen as much as 60% since privatisation. Bank charges, contributing to very high bank profits, are becoming a "political" issue. Barclays made £250 per head profit from every one of its account holders last year.

The very depth of these attacks, combined with direct economic attacks on wages, services and benefits, has widened the gap between rich and poor. Even within the working class a gap is widening. The experience of a minority of the class is that of increased lumpenisation: hard drug use, criminalisation, the dumping of mentally ill patients into the inner cities, increased poverty, the consignment of hundreds of thousands per year into the semi-legal economy.

This makes certain communities prey to despair and the demagoguery of the fascists. It certainly does not endear them to active participation in Labourite reformism. Nevertheless it also opens up the struggles of such communities to revolutionary intervention. Unlike the anarchists we do not regard the most lumpen as potentially the most revolutionary. But the

youth and the unemployed can and must be organised. Only avowed revolutionaries show any interest in or aptitude for that task.

### The fascists and state racism

So far fascism in Britain has made only a quantitative advance, not a qualitative one. The geographically limited spread of that advance should not blind us to its seriousness. In May 1994 the fascists came close to making an electoral breakthrough in their target area of East London. Not only did Beakon's vote increase, but the BNP made serious electoral advances in Newham and parts of Tower Hamlets. The ingredients for such an advance are as follows:

- a historically established working class community which has seen the traumatic destruction of the local economy
- the activation of racism around economic and social grievances in housing, jobs and education, occasionally exacerbated by "territorial" disputes between ethnically divided youth gangs
- an intensive, targeted, intervention by the fascists, usually based on prior "community" work by a local activist
- the readiness of existing bourgeois parties to pander to racism actively in housing and other policies, and to legitimise racist arguments
- a weak or declining local labour movement.

Of course there are many areas where one or more of these factors exist. But as the experience of Birmingham, South Wales and the East Midlands reveals, it is only where these features combine that the possibility of local fascist breakthroughs arises. This allows us to avoid impressionism with regard to the likely scale of the fascist threat. Many individual activists on the left have become depressed by the fact that "the conditions are there" for the advance of fascism in white working class estates. Without in any way being complacent about "the conditions", ie rampant racism, lack of self organisation, the politicisation of housing and education access—we should not predict on this basis an actual breakthrough for the fascists. The fascists experience problems in this period precisely because such breakthroughs look possible only in one or two areas. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the potential of the BNP to make political capital out of events in areas characterised by high levels of racist attacks. The Shadwell by-election, although in Tower Hamlets, partially illustrates this. The fascists captured 12.5% of the vote (1 in 3 white electors) in a ward where they had not stood before, and did little work, but where street level racial violence is routine.

The BNP made an attempt to turn towards electoral respectability during the Millwall elections. But their strategy in the current phase remains firmly in the mould of street politics. Hence, since the election, we have seen the apparent rapprochement between the BNP and C18, and the rising wave of individual attacks on the left (mainly the SWP) in Leeds and Coventry etc, and the recent attack on Football Supporters' Association activists in Chelsea. Every one of these bears the hallmarks of a tightly organised operation.

Another major problem faced by the fascists is the fact that the bourgeoisie clearly at the moment does not want them. Beakon's victory allowed the bourgeoisie to mobilise courts, police and media against the fascists in an unprecedented and coordinated way.

Within the next two years we can expect the BNP to maintain and possibly increase its support within its target areas in the East End. Elsewhere they are unlikely to make cor-

responding advances. However if and when the Tory right is forced into a corner over the Maastricht process, and in the case of any split, it is very likely that we will see a realignment of the far right, with the fascists seizing existing channels (e.g. Revolutionary Conservative Caucus, Western Goals etc) to make these links. The concomitant would be splits and realignments within the fascists as well, since their whole perspective of the last period has been at odds with the formation of a "front" with the Conservative right wing.

While the Tory cabinet's most virulent opponents of the EU (Lilley, Portillo and, to a lesser degree, Howard) are given to flights of xenophobic rhetoric, the Conservative mainstream will generally avoid the fuelling of overt racism. Nevertheless, the 1993 Asylum Act has substantially increased the number and swiftness of deportations. There has also been a further tightening of immigration regulations governing overseas students and visitors even as the government seeks a larger share of capitalists leaving Hong Kong. Howard's CJB includes a revival of the notoriously racist SUS law. None of this placates the Tory tabloid editors who continue to give prominence to stories about "illegals" on "our" shores who jump housing queues and claim state benefits.

### The youth radicalisation

There are several related phenomena occurring which on aggregate have produced an ideological "radicalisation" of young people. But this has yet to assume a specifically "class" form, and has yet to propel the youth into sustained struggle.

The basis of this radicalisation lies in the widespread rejection of neo-liberalism as the triumphant ideology. The TV screens bring nightly news of Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia and the degradation of the environment etc. What they do not bring are inspirational examples of revolutionary working class struggle.

Closer to home the youth are radicalised by British capitalism's failures: unemployment, urban decay, repressive policing, poverty, poor educational standards and opportunities. But at the same time the workers' movement does not inspire the youth with hope and confidence, still less a vision of an alternative future.

Thus the widespread ideology of youth resistance draws on capitalist culture. Much of youth TV—from the BBC to MTV—is resolutely anti-establishment and pro-sexual freedom, much to the fury of the far right. It is fashionable to be anti-racist and to solidarise with the struggles of black Americans. It is fashionable to be anti-fascist. A whole section of the music industry and related capitalists, dependent on the European youth market, has a material interest in opposing extremes of chauvinism and fascism, and thus lends its backing to bland liberal bourgeois anti-racism and anti-fascism.

At the same time however the "vision of the future" youth are offered is of a liberal capitalism: more Body Shop enterprises to protect the environment, more Richard Bransons to sponsor progressive youth culture whilst taking on "monopoly capital" like British Airways. Greenpeace to protect the environment, Live Aid to feed Africa, Amnesty International to protect the victims of injustice in the third world. For those who want direct action there is Animal Rights activism, anti-motorway campaigning, and the occasional foray into battles against the police and the fascists.

Despite its ideological immaturity, this radicalisation does carry the potential for a youth upsurge similar to 1968. Prior to 1968 it was precisely a combination of a cultural radicalisation based around music

and the arts, combined with illusions in various social charities and liberal causes which brought a generation of youth, many of whom had new access to higher education, into struggle. What detonated the struggle was the Vietnam War, the fight for a better education and a working class offensive. The international nature of capitalist culture allowed struggles in one country to provide direct inspiration to youth in other countries.

Today there are many parallels to the pre-1968 situation but there are also many dissimilarities. Youth in Britain have new-found access to further and higher education, to a greater degree than in the 1960s. But these are to vocational courses where "ideas" are not encouraged. Where there is a remaining tradition of intellectual radicalism in higher education it is profoundly anti-Marxist.

It would be wrong to argue that because today most the students are working class—not middle class or grammar school "labour aristocrats" as in the 1960s—the radicalisation will automatically turn to the working class. The second key dissimilarity—the absence of a growing and confident militant workers' movement—makes this less likely as a spontaneous occurrence.

A third dissimilarity is the utter weakness of Labourism and Stalinism amongst the youth. The occupation at the University of North London revealed this. The only really organised Labourite reformists scabbed. That does not mean that youth are not spontaneously reformist in their outlook. But it does mean that the fight for leadership amongst the youth will have to be against a different set of ideas and leaderships: black nationalism and separatism, feminism, new age lifestyle and mysticism, zero-growth ecology etc.

There is no need for this generation of youth to go through the experience of organised Labourism, and little possibility of them going through the experience of Stalinism. It is to centrism and anarchism that they will turn, as well as to revolutionary politics. But that moment lies ahead. At present the youth radicalisation allows us to conduct propaganda and agitation in a milieu receptive to anti-establishment and radical ideas. The core of our propaganda must be the renewed ideas of socialism and a constant battle against utopianism, bourgeois liberalism and individualism.

### Summary

Until 1996 the basic terrain of the class struggle will remain:

- a Tory party whose truce over Europe will be maintained only with difficulty and which will possibly fall apart in 1996
- a retreating trade union movement fighting defensive battles, losing some and winning compromises in others, as in the Signal workers dispute and the Post Office privatisation campaign
- a Labour Party moving to the right but looking increasingly capable of winning an election, and thus able to put pressure on the unions not to fight
- a growing militant minority in the unions which has yet to raise itself to the task of systematic organisation against the bureaucracy
- a radicalised youth milieu not yet organised for systematic mass action and not necessarily spontaneously socialist
- a fascist movement unable to make a qualitative breakthrough but continuing to grow and pose a threat in East London.

Things will begin to change around 1996. The approaching election, the pressure of the Inter-Governmental Conference, the petering out of the economic recovery, the possibility that rank and file pressure will force the unions to fight as the recovery takes hold—all these factors presage a change of period in or around 1996.■



## USA

# Racist right on the rampage

**W**HILE THE shock waves at the scale of the Republican victory in the November elections were still being felt, another political earthquake hit the United States—the Republican legislative programme.

The Republicans announced their "Contract with America" at the end of November. It is clear that the Republicans are putting out a contract on unmarried mothers, migrant workers and anyone who relies on welfare.

The Republicans intend to scrap virtually all welfare rights. Welfare budgets will be cash limited. State administrations will receive only a certain amount from the national budget, and if too many people claim—tough.

## Callous

Unmarried mothers have been specifically targeted. Mirroring the ideas behind the Tories' Child Support Act, welfare payments to children will be stopped if their mothers cannot identify the fathers. In an staggeringly callous response to concern at this measure, the Republicans suggest that the money saved might be spent on building orphanages. They are going to need them.

Illegal immigrants—and legal migrant workers—will be prevented from access to public health insurance (Medicare), immunisation programmes and rights to public housing.

The scale of the attack is the result of the confidence gained by the right at their election victory. For the first

G.R. McCOLL

time in forty years the Republican Party controls both houses of Congress. That is in large measure due to the pathetic record of Clinton, who promised so much and delivered nothing.

The Clinton administration has time and again accommodated to key elements of the conservative Republican agenda. Whether on the issue of "workfare" for single mothers, cutting the federal deficit or maintaining the Pentagon's budget, Clinton's "New Democrats" have found themselves cheek by jowl with Senator Bob Dole's wing of the Republicans.

In return for his concessions Clinton has been reduced to a lame duck president for the remainder of his term of office.

His domestic reform agenda lies in ruins. The final weeks of summer saw the death of Clinton's health care programme after a £60 million lobbying campaign by insurance industry bosses.

The November results revealed not only a swing to the right across the US but also a sharp rise in abstention.

In 1992 when Clinton captured the presidency with a mere 43% of the popular vote, more than half the registered electorate voted. November's turnout slumped to 38%. Only 7% of this year's actual voters were black, though African-Americans make up 12-13% of the population. Initial figures also suggest that unionised workers stayed at home in droves.

Inner city blacks and trade union-

ists have long had all too many good reasons for disgust with the Democrats—the supposed "friends" of labor and the ethnic minorities. Clinton's two years in office have done still more to alienate the "liberal" wing of the Democrats' two core constituencies.

The main legislative achievement of Clinton's term has been a Crime Bill which vastly increases the numbers of the police and their powers to harass the black community. He wants another 100,000 cops, to extend the scope of offences subject to the death penalty, and introduce mandatory life sentences for people with three serious convictions.

Clinton also reneged on his campaign pledge to grant asylum to refugees from the military regime in Haiti,

pandering to the racist xenophobia which has gripped much of the USA. At the same time he reneged on his promise to outlaw the creation of permanent scab workforces to break strikes.

Republican candidates struck a populist chord with attacks on the corruption of entrenched Democratic politicians. But the Republican election victory represents something more than an anti-Democrat protest vote. It was a measure of the reactionary backlash which has swept much of white suburbia. Even though the champion of the Christian right, Oliver North, lost his £15 million bid for the US Senate, a number of other far right Republicans won.

Their victories, and their clear commitment to destroying the welfare system, represent an increasing polarisation within the USA: between black and white, rich and poor.

## Target

Even given the low turnout, 91% of black voters voted Democrat. But two thirds of white male voters voted for the Republicans. Whilst welfare is the prime target for cuts, the \$49 billion set aside annually for tax relief on mortgages will be protected.

Having trailed in early opinion polls, Pete Wilson, the Republican governor of California, won by supporting the overtly racist Proposition 187. This proposition would bar "illegal" immi-

grants from California's hospitals, schools and welfare rolls. It gained a three to two majority at the polls. If the Republicans get their way it will be taken up nationally.

The unanswered question is whether Clinton will continue to aid and abet the rightward shift or instead take a cynical, rhetorical turn to the left in the hope of inspiring alienated Democratic voters back in time for the 1996 presidential election. The vacuum on the left of the Democratic Party might even spark another run by Jesse Jackson, this time as a third party candidate.

The organised working class has not yet recovered from the severe defeats of the past twenty years, but there has been an upsurge in militancy across a number of industries. There have been two large scale strikes by Teamsters in the road haulage industry as well as significant disputes in the rubber and auto sectors.

The largely, but not exclusively, Latino protests against California's Proposition 187 attracted up to 70,000 and reflected a violent anger within a growing layer of youth. In the context of disillusionment with the Democrats and the attacks of the Republicans, the fight to build a revolutionary workers' party, based on the struggles and interests of the exploited and oppressed, appears have more possibility of success. It is certainly even more urgent. ■



Building workers march against racist Proposition 187

## FRANCE

# Bosses divided – workers resist

**JEFFREY ARCHER could have written the scenario:**

- Three ministers resign due to corruption scandals; one lands in jail, along with bosses of some of the major companies.

- The government, with a 400 seat majority, has never looked weaker.

- The socialist President, ailing with cancer, could resign or die in office.

- Two right wingers, "friends for thirty years", are engaged in a war to the death over who should challenge for the presidency.

- And the man most likely to succeed has been "in exile" for ten years and has only won one election in his life...

Bizarre as it may seem, this is French politics six months before the presidential elections.

## Coalition

President François Mitterrand will step down in May 1995 at the end of his second term. A year ago, it seemed certain that the right wing would sweep to power. The right wing coalition had crushed the Socialist Party (PS) in the spring 1993 elections and looked set to do the same in the 1995 presidential campaign. The PS, perpetually ridden by factional struggle,

was plunged into a profound depression.

But then everything started to go wrong for the right wing. Firstly, youth and workers began to fight back against the government's austerity plans, beginning with students and Air France, and culminating in the violent struggles against the government's attack on youth wages (the "CIP") in spring this year.

Differences started to open up over who exactly should be the right's candidate. Jacques Chirac, Gaullist RPR leader and two-time loser in 1981 and 1988, had already reserved his place. Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, buoyed up by opinion polls, decided that he stood a better chance of winning, despite his massive tactical error over the CIP.

The power struggle between these two former allies has done much to weaken the right's cohesion. Yet the political differences between the two—if any exist—have yet to become clear.

Meanwhile the whole Balladur government has become increasingly tainted by the stench of corruption.

French political parties are generally short on members and on money. All of them (including the Communist Party) have therefore adopted an Ital-

EMILE GALLET

ian-style procedure: fake "consultants" bill companies for work that has not been done, the money is laundered by various Panamanian front companies, and eventually makes its way into the party's coffers.

In return, companies are awarded municipal and national contracts, in particular in building and water distribution.

## Corruption

Four years ago, the PS government—with the support of the right—amnestied all past illegal funding of political parties and claimed that everything would change. It didn't, and now investigating judges are beginning to tug on the thousand threads which connect all the parties to big business, corruption and shady dealing.

Already, three ministers have had to resign. The leader of the PS is due to appear in court soon, and rumours abound that Chirac will be investigated in the next few weeks.

Added to this Mitterrand has announced that he is dying of cancer. This has been followed by a series of

revelations about his past as a supporter of the fascist Vichy regime during the war, and the recent media spotlight on his illegitimate daughter.

The only person who seems to be coming out of this mess with any public credibility is Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission and the man the PS wants as its candidate. The latest opinion polls give him a clear lead.

There are substantial differences between the PS and Delors. For example, the new PS leader, Henri Emmanuelli, is in favour of the 35 hour week with no loss of pay. Delors, however, has explicitly disavowed any idea of reducing the working week. But the PS can be guaranteed not to rock the boat, since it faces electoral annihilation if Delors does not stand.

Why does Delors appear so attractive to the majority of the electorate?

First, he has the great advantage of having been in Brussels for the last ten years and can therefore appear to have no responsibility for the current state of the French economy. Secondly, his bank manager image—and policies—inspire confidence in the middle class.

Many workers will reluctantly vote for Delors in the absence of any alternative. But sections of the working

class have realised that the presidential elections are not the be-all and end-all of politics. They have recently launched a series of strikes for higher wages and more jobs.

The wave of industrial action began in the "21st century" Pechiney plant in Dunkirk. Here there are apparently no "workers", only "operators". If Pechiney is anything to go by, then the next century looks like being full of class struggle: the "operators" occupied the plant and won pay rises of £60 a month after two weeks of strike action. Then GEC-Alsthom workers in Belfort occupied their plants and went on strike for over a month before winning £40-50 a month pay increases. Inspired by these struggles, over 50,000 public sector workers demonstrated in Paris.

## Armoury

Whoever wins in May, it is clear that French workers will face the same problems: low wages and poor working conditions. The only way decisive gains can be won is by fighting with all the weapons in the workers' armoury: strikes, occupations and workers' democracy. That is the road that the whole of the French working class must follow. ■



# AS JUDGES CLOSE IN ON BERLUSCONI . . . Millions take to the streets

ON 12 NOVEMBER Rome played host to Italy's biggest post-war demonstration. Some 8,000 coaches, fifty trains and four ships brought 1.5 million workers onto the streets against the Berlusconi government's plan to cut workers' pensions and health benefits.

Berlusconi sees it as his personal mission to haul Italian capitalism into the Premier League of European capitalist states. For that he has to demolish the government's budget deficit—one of the biggest in the EU—to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria set out in 1992.

The recent budget aims to raise the minimum years of contributions required to receive a state pension from 35 to 40 years as well as put the age of retirement up from 60 to 65. In addition they want to abolish the already meagre 2% annual increment to the present pensions of around £400 a month.

Simmering below the surface of the current strike wave is concern about rising unemployment, something that flies in the face of Berlusconi's pre-election promise of one million new jobs and no sackings.

The breadth of opposition to the government was evident from the

*Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi is in trouble. His ruling coalition is falling apart. Magistrates are investigating his company for tax fraud. And millions of workers are set to launch a general strike. Only the leaders of the unions can save him—and they are trying hard.*

## FROM OUR ROME CORRESPONDENT

presence on the demo of tens of thousands of journalists and intellectuals who are angry at Berlusconi's plans for state TV (RAI). At present RAI is seen as providing roughly fair access to the views of all political parties. The government wants to parcel out RAI commission seats to the respective coalition partners and thereby make RAI output a tool of government—much like Berlusconi's own private TV channel.

The right to work, the right to a decent pension and the right to information were thus intertwined slogans on the 12 November march.

No one present on the streets of Rome that day could fail to be impressed by the massive display of working class solidarity. But many felt

that we had been here before. In 1992 there was a string of protests and strikes against the government's attack on index-linked wages. That energy and determination was dissipated by the trade union leaders who gave in and sanctified the *scala mo-*

*bile* indexation in July of that year.

Since then the main union trade union confederation (CGIL) has changed its leader, with Bruno Trentin being replaced earlier this year by Sergio Cofferati. Judging by the size of the November demonstration, he seems to be more committed than his predecessor to the mobilisations. But in a recent interview with the Milan liberal paper—*Corriere della Sera*—he expressed the usual bureaucrat's hostility to rank and file militancy during a spontaneous pilot's strike:

"Strikes like that are a mistaken and unacceptable form of protest, which alter the rules of the game. You just can't carry on like that . . . Do you know why we waited for two weeks

after the break with the government to call a general strike? Because we wanted to respect the norms which require 15 days notice for strikes in the public sector. And only by respecting the rules can you be credible. The pilots were wrong and I don't for one minute defend what they did."

It is this passion for playing the game of the class struggle according to set rules, as if it were a game of Trivial Pursuit, which earns Cofferati the respect shown to him by the bosses' representatives in the employers union (Confindustria). Its spokesperson, Aldo Fumagalli, hopes that Cofferati "continues to play his part with the intellectual honesty shown up until now."

It is indeed Cofferati's desire to get the game played by the rules that lies behind his plan of action.

The action on the 12 November was deliberately called for a Saturday to avoid further strikes. Cofferati's main demands, as opposed to those ringing around the streets of Rome, are for "reincorporation" and "discussion". Cofferati only wants parity with his predecessor Trentin; a round table of negotiations between the CGIL, Confindustria and the government, just as occurred in 1992 and 1993 when the CGIL was an equal partner in the "cost of labour agreement" which sold out years of hard won workers' gains.

Cofferati is even more determined than Trentin to separate the economic and political struggles, leaving the latter to the professional politicians.

Massimo D'Alema, the leader of the reformed Stalinists—the Democratic Left (PDS) has accepted the need for pension reform to bear the brunt of the cuts in the budget deficit. He merely hopes that the cuts are phased in and that cost-cutting in a number of government departments will bridge the gap.

In reality D'Alema hopes for a change of government, a popular front of "progressive forces" headed by a leader drawn from the bourgeois centre such as Buttiglione of the PPI, successor to the old, discredited, Christian Democratic Party.

By contrast *Rifondazione Comunista* (RC—the smaller left wing remnant of the PCI in which several centrist currents also work) has at least attempted to offer a solution that does not begin and end with the workers making all the sacrifices. Fausto Bertinotti, RC's leader, has centred his response to the budget crisis on chasing the tax evaders among the rich and taxing the interest on earnings made on state shares. After all, it is the government's generosity with these interest payments that accounts for the bulk of the present budget deficit.

Most Italians polled on this issue believe in taxing earnings above £40,000 made in this way. Meanwhile, the RC only seeks to tax those above £80,000, while the wretched PDS denounces the measure in general as an attack on "small savers"—potential allies in D'Alema's "progressive alliance".

The present wave of workers' protest is in the balance. Cofferati may get what he wants—the right to negotiate with Berlusconi. An eight hour General Strike called for 2 December is now in doubt as the government signals minor concessions.

The only way the CGIL officials can get away with this is if links between the many rank and file organisations remain weak. Local rank and file action committees must be set up and linked at the national level. They should draw in not only trade unionists but all those in the working class community immediately and directly affected by Berlusconi's budget: the old, the poor, the unemployed and progressive intelligentsia.

To build on and go further than the Rome demonstration requires a huge General Strike, prosecuted until Berlusconi and his right-wing allies crumble. ■

## Coalition in crisis

The weakness of Berlusconi's coalition government presents a huge advantage to the Italian workers.

This has two aspects. In the first place the ongoing war between the judiciary and the executive threatens to claim Berlusconi as its next victim. Magistrates have already warned the prime minister that he is to be investigated for tax fraud.

This rift within the capitalist state machine which opened up two years ago was a necessary, if painful, precondition for the "modernisation" of Italian bourgeois politics after the end of the Cold War. Four decades of uninterrupted Christian Democratic corrupt rule—blessed by the church, oiled by the mafia and protected by Nato—was the price the Italian bourgeoisie happily paid in order to ward off the challenge of the Communist Party.

### Change

When this was no longer necessary after 1991, many in big business wanted a change. They demanded "transparent" government, free of the onerous overhead costs of doing business with highly staid industry. A clean break with the past was the answer. Berlusconi, the "man from nowhere", unburdened by a political past and hence free from responsibility, was summoned. A party was invented overnight in his image and Forza Italia rallied the right to beat off the left in this year's elections.

The executive tried almost immediately after the election to call off the anti-corruption hunt. But it is not easy to call the dogs off once they have the scent. The judiciary have probed and pushed into Berlusconi's business dealings. Finally, on 22 November the Milan magistrates an-

nounced that they wanted to investigate the Prime Minister himself in connection with bribes paid to his accountants to come up with clean books for his Fininvest empire.

Berlusconi could have tried to shrug off this attack if it were not for the fact that his coalition government was already in crisis over the very 1995 government budget that has brought so many out onto the streets. Constitutionally, the government has to get this approved by the Senate by the end of 1994 or it falls. This will not be easy. The coalition comprises Forza Italia, together with the fascist MSI led by Gianfranco Fini and the Northern Leagues led by Umberto Bossi. From the outset this coalition of convenience was unstable, most obviously when Bossi's programme for the break up of Italy and autonomy for the North clashed with Fini's project for a more centralised Italian state.

Berlusconi needs Bossi's support to stay on office. But Bossi is less than forthcoming. He is caught between a rock and a hard place. Berlusconi's success with his neo-liberal economic programme draws Bossi's middle class support away from the Leagues towards Forza, while government failure and another election would almost certainly see a big fall off in the League's support.

### Consequence

As a consequence, Bossi at one moment supports the budget and in the next criticises it in the face of mass demonstrations for having been revised in the hands of Berlusconi and Fini. Bossi criticises the MSI as fascist one minute and extols their virtues the next in order to justify working in government alongside them. Bossi has echoed PDS criti-



Flood victims lead the 12 November demo

cisms of Berlusconi only to back down in the face of an inner party revolt led by his party colleague and Interior Minister Roberto Maroni.

The Bossi-Berlusconi conflict could easily devour them both, and Fini—if there were a resolute push from the working class to unseat the coalition.

Short of this Berlusconi's difficulties are only serving to boost the prospects of the MSI. He appears throughout the crisis as the man who is mature and aloof from the fray. Fini sells himself as the man who is needed to calm the other two and make them see reason. It is no accident therefore that recent local election results have seen the MSI make significant advances at the expense of the League and Forza.

Berlusconi has been offered support from the PPI which ardently supports the budget plans but only on condition that Berlusconi dumps

Finis. But this runs up against another series of contradictions. Fini is the bully boy of the coalition—the man who "stands up" to the unions in the present wave of protests. On the other hand Forza's success in the general election was in no small part due to the central marketing idea that Berlusconi was breaking resolutely with all that was bad in the past of Italian politics, chief of which was the PPI when it was called the Christian Democratic Party.

The coalition may or may not overcome its internal differences, and the assault of the judiciary, to pass the budget. If it does it will be mainly due to the legalism and reformist caution of the union leaders.

The workers have a great chance to get revenge for the defeats of 1992 and 1993 and once again inspire the whole of the European working class. ■



## PLO OPENS FIRE ON HAMAS

## Arafat-Israel's puppet

BY RICHARD BRENNER

In the last issue of *Workers Power* we pointed out how "the new Palestinian police force exists only to impose the settlement on reluctant Palestinians", and is "an instrument for maintaining rather than challenging Israeli domination of the region." On 18 November the PLO's police proved this beyond any doubt by massacring Palestinian opponents of the deal.

200 were wounded and 12 shot dead, after praying at the Palestine Mosque in Gaza City, by police under the control of the new "Palestine National Authority" (PNA). The worshippers were mainly supporters of Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement which opposes the deal.

The police moved in to stop a meeting called to protest against the deal. Yasser Arafat demonstrated his com-

**"What sort of leaders accept such an agreement on behalf of their people from a state and a mentality that has waged unremitting war against that people for at least half a century? Who is worse, the bloody-minded Israeli peacemaker or the complicit Palestinian?"**

*Palestinian writer Edward Said*

mitment to democracy by banning the meeting and opening fire on Palestinians. The crowd were in no doubt about the meaning of these events, chanting back "Collaborators" and "Arafat, remember Sadat" (the Egyptian leader assassinated after making peace with Israel).

The Israelis were delighted with Arafat's demonstration of loyalty to their rule. The deal leaves Israel in effective control of the whole of Palestine, with the PNA holding only the

most nominal authority over areas such as tourism and education.

Shamir and the Israeli government have made no bones about the role they have planned for the PLO's police. When Islamists kidnapped Israeli soldier Nachson Waxman in October, Shamir insisted that the PLO had to track down the killers, even though they were not holding Waxman on PNA-controlled territory.

But on 2 November, when leading Islamic activist and opponent of the

sell-out Hani Abed was killed in a car bomb attack in Gaza which was widely blamed on the Israeli secret services, the Zionist government made no such demands on their new Palestinian allies. The PNA did not even issue a statement denouncing Abed's killers.

Israel has done little to conceal its aim of provoking civil war between Hamas and the PLO. The murder of Hani Abed took place just as Arafat and the Islamists had reached a non-

aggression pact, based on a cessation of Hamas attacks on Israeli troops in the occupied territories. The provocation worked, forcing Hamas to retaliate in a suicide bombing of an Israeli Army checkpoint on 11 November. This set the scene for further Zionist calls on Arafat to crack down on Hamas.

This internecine carnage will continue for as long as the PLO attempts to police Israel's interests in the region. The Palestinian masses are opposing the deal in ever greater numbers. This rejection is not a sign that they are indifferent to the need for peace. As massacre follows massacre they feel that need acutely. But it must be a peace based on justice—not an insulting agreement which allows them neither democracy nor national self-determination, while leaving the Zionist occupation of their country, to all intents and purposes, intact. ■

## IRELAND

## Church grip on state exposed

BY HELEN WATSON

ONE DAY Albert Reynolds was looking forward to a Nobel peace prize for his role in the Irish peace process. The next day he was out of office, in disgrace, accused of lying to the Irish parliament and aiding the cover-up of a child abuse scandal.

It is not unusual for Ireland to be in a governmental crisis, with parties struggling to stitch together a coalition. But the circumstances of this crisis were enough to send commentators running for their keyboards to announce the start of a new era in Irish politics.

Reynolds was forced to resign not over policies, the economy or the peace treaty. He resigned because his Labour Party coalition partners refused to tolerate Reynolds' controversial nominee for the post of President of the High Court. This was no anonymous lawyer, but the attorney general, Harry Whelehan, the man who produced an injunction to stop a 14 year old rape victim travelling to England for an abortion in the "X" case in 1992.

## Scandal

More recently, Whelehan was involved in preventing a full investigation of Reynolds' role in the scandal around Larry Goodman. Millions of pounds of public money were siphoned off to this beef baron and his company, but Whelehan engineered a legal action to ensure that cabinet involvement in this could not be made public at a tribunal. Having denied the tribunal access to the evidence, Reynolds then went on to declare, using a doctored quote, that it had exonerated him.

The final touches to the picture of corruption linking Whelehan, the church and Reynolds were revealed over the case of Father Brendan Smyth. There were nine extradition warrants from London for this Catholic priest charged with child sex abuse.

## Complicity

Whelehan's office sat on the warrants for seven months. Reynolds' complicity was exposed when he lied to the Dáil about what he did and didn't know. And the church was shown to have known about Smyth's previous offences since the 1950s and done nothing about it.

In a letter to the family of one of Smyth's victims in Belfast, Cardinal Cathal Daly wrote:

"There have been complaints about this priest before, and once I had to speak to the Superior [of Smyth's Nobertine Order—WP] about him. It would seem that there has been no improvement. I shall speak to the Superior again."

We might have expected him to inform the police, or at least stop the man being posted all over Ireland, the USA and Britain, where he had thirty years of continuing opportunities to abuse children. But no, the self-appointed guardian of morality hushed it up.

This kind of privilege for the church is a result of its historic influence in parliament and the judiciary in Ireland. It is not new. What has changed is that sections of the ruling class and middle class in Ireland are no longer willing to tolerate it.

Ireland has archaic laws on divorce, abortion and contraception, more reactionary than most other European



Harry Whelehan

countries. This is often explained away as a result of the large proportion of the population who are practising Catholics. But that doesn't explain the difference between Ireland and countries like Italy or Spain.

## Church

The real problem is the continued role of the church in the Irish state. The priests have enormous influence through government, the legal system and in education. This influence on policy, linked to a network of propagandists in the pulpits, has been very useful for the Irish ruling class.

But it is at odds with the picture of a modern, urban society that many of Ireland's bosses want to present. Crucially, if there is to be any chance of succeeding in the long term goal of the "peace process" a capitalist Ireland, united economically and with non-religious governments North and South, the power of the church has to

be curtailed.

So there is a struggle going on within the ruling class, reflected in divisions within the two main bosses parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, and in Labour's willingness to make church corruption an issue.

The corruption has always existed, but clerical influence has swept it under the carpet more effectively in the past. Workers in Ireland can now see the corruption of officials in government more clearly. The same trend has led to more frequent exposure of the hypocrisy of the church. In a society where sex outside marriage is condemned, contraception is difficult to obtain, abortion and divorce are outlawed, scandals involving the church in particular can be powerful in undermining the confidence of masses of people in the previously accepted order.

## Funds

In 1992 Eamonn Casey, the Bishop of Galway, was caught with his trousers down and his hands in the till, having fathered an illegitimate child and paid for its upkeep using church funds.

Since then more and more "scandals" have come to light. A Galway priest was convicted of sexual assault on a young man, a Dublin clinic set up at the request of the Catholic church has been overwhelmed by more than sixty priests turning up with problems such as paedophilia.

In November Liam Cosgrave, a 68 year old priest, collapsed and died. Two other priests were on hand to administer the last rites. Why was this newsworthy? Because this happened in a gay sauna in Dublin that, it subsequently transpired, was regularly frequented by twenty priests.

We can all feel pity for the individuals who are forced to hide their sexuality.

But it is stinking hypocrisy for these people to be part of a powerful institution that perpetuates this situation for generation after generation of youth: telling them that sex is sinful,

divorce is wrong, homosexuality is bestial and abortion is murder.

The Irish ruling order is being shaken by these events. Pressure for reform is coming from many sides, but those in government are reluctant to give in. One senator said it was all about "love of power, marrying power and the refusal to leave power."

There is some truth in that. But it is not just about one set of rulers refusing to divorce themselves from power. It is also about the establishment of a new order, with less influence for the church but the same degree of central control over society, an order better suited to the needs of the bosses in Ireland and the imperialists in Europe, and the USA.

This instability creates opportunities for the workers and in the oppressed in Ireland. But there should be no reliance on the bosses, their parties and their press to create some haven of liberation.

Demands for free abortion on demand, free and safe contraception, free and simple divorce and an end to discrimination against lesbians and gay men must be raised and fought for with militant campaigns in the trade unions and working class communities.

Women, workers, and youth must demand that the church is kicked out of schools and all roles in the judiciary and government.

## Coalition

Labour, despite its willingness to pose as a "clean" non-clerical party has no intention of taking on the church over abortion.

In the name of the peace process in the North and stability in the South, it immediately rushed to make deals for a new coalition.

Labour must be forced to break with the bosses' parties, end all coalitions with Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats and fight in opposition against the attacks of whatever capitalist coalition emerges. ■



## SWP CONFERENCE 94

# “... endless repetition of the blindingly obvious”

The rapid growth of the Socialist Workers Party over the last two years has prompted it to set the creation of a mass revolutionary party as its short term perspective. In the words of the SWP's leader, Tony Cliff, at Marxism '94:

**“If you want to lead millions you need hundreds of thousands in the party... Marxism is about action and for action you need size. For action you need power. We need a mass party—of half a million.”**

This was the theme of last month's SWP conference. *Socialist Worker* stated that now is the “best chance in 20 years to build a real socialist party” and that this “was the message from the Socialist Workers Party conference” (12/11/94).

Unlike some critics of the SWP, it is not their commitment to the need for a revolutionary party that Workers Power objects to. It is the politics on which they are building their party. All the recruits in the world will not make the SWP a revolutionary alternative to Blair. Only recruits plus revolutionary politics can do that. The recent conference demonstrated how the SWP's centrist politics—revolutionary in words but not in deeds—prevent them from making the breakthrough they so keenly desire.

A revolutionary party has to have a revolutionary programme: not a set of paper truisms but a guide to action. The SWP rejects the very idea of a programme. The reason for this is simple—it means that the SWP can tailor its politics to the prevailing “mood” of the working class, without allowing revolutionary politics to get in the way.

Workers Power is well known for this criticism of the SWP. Our objections are often painted as a tiresome, academic debate. But the absence of a programme, and the necessary tactics which flow from it, are at the root of several debates that took place in the SWP run-up to their conference.

These centred on two issues in particular—the industrial struggle and the anti-fascist struggle.

The SWP rightly views the industrial struggle as important. A revolutionary party's conference would have to consider how to organise the small but growing militant minority—many of whom do not yet embrace revolutionary politics, but who are prepared to fight back against the bosses and defy the bureaucrats.

What do we get from the SWP? Their answer to every struggle is to build a “network of socialists”—by which they mean of SWP members or supporters. Of course we are also in favour of building a “network of socialists”—this is a crucial method for building up the nucleus of a revolutionary party. But a further responsibility of socialists is to link up with non-revolutionary workers in struggle, giving them a lead in the process.

Marxists call this tactic the united front. The form that tactic must take in the unions today is the building of a rank and file movement, organising union members to challenge the stran-



How to build on massive support for ANL?

glehold that unaccountable and overpaid bureaucrats have over our unions.

The SWP has opposed attempts to build such a movement to date. Their arguments have been numerous and incoherent. “The time is not right. We might not be able to control it. We might not be able to recruit from it. SWP members might get too sucked into it.”

But if the SWP saw its role as trying to lead the working class, and if it had a clear programme, there would be no risk of its members getting “sucked into” a rank and file movement. Even if they began as a minority within such a movement, they would be distinguished within it by their independent politics, and would rapidly expand their influence.

Instead the SWP will only raise the call for rank and file campaigns when they feel certain that they will be able to control them *organisationally* from the outset. As Trotsky often observed, sectarianism shows itself to be little more than “opportunism afraid of itself”.

The same political emptiness reveals itself in the anti-fascist struggle. The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) is an SWP front. For all that it mobilised 150,000 workers and youth at its Carnival. That is a good thing. The question should be, how to build on that?

The answer is political. The anti-fascist struggle needs to go onto the offensive on the strength of the ANL's successes. An offensive means taking the Nazis' turn towards street terror—as in Leeds (see page 2)—seriously. It means using the fight against fascist violence to advance the consciousness and organisation of the whole class by building organised self-defence squads. That in turn poses the question of how to organise the mass of non-revolutionary workers and youth, starting with the 150,000 who attended the Carnival.

Defence squads, linked and accountable to a mass united front, are a practical answer. They will also take the class forward, because the idea can be spread to picket lines and demonstrations under attack from

BY MARK HARRISON

the police. Workers and youth, instead of being battered into submission, would gain confidence from the victories that such squads could score against the fascists and the state.

This is so obvious that it is embarrassing to have to point it out. Yet at the SWP's conference it was rejected out of hand. It was denounced as “squaddism” by the Central Committee. Petitions and demos were pointlessly counterposed to defence squads. Yet they need not be counterposed in the slightest.

Trotsky, who the SWP are fond of quoting (selectively) on the question of fascism, derided those who refused to build defence squads. He argued:

“Nothing increases the insolence of the fascists so much as ‘flabby pacifism’ on the part of the workers’ organisations... To give over defence against fascism to unorganised and unprepared masses left to themselves would be to play a role incomparably lower than Pontius Pilate. To deny the role of the militia [defence squads] is to deny the role of the vanguard. Then why a party? Without the support of the masses the militia is nothing. But without organised combat detachments, the most heroic masses will be smashed bit by bit by the fascist gangs.” (*Whither France?*)

Trotsky words contain important lessons not just for the anti-fascist struggle but for the relationship of the party and the class, the relationship of programme to principled tactics.

The revolutionary party has to lead the working class by posing concrete answers—in this case the defence squad. It is an answer far in advance of the consciousness of many workers, yet it meets the immediate and objective needs of the working class. The organisation of the defence squad, and of an anti-fascist united front, allows the party to bridge the gap in practice between its members and its wider periphery.

Paradoxically the SWP's unwillingness to separate itself programmatically from reformist workers finds re-

flexion in its refusal to have anything to do with organising them in a common, genuine, mass anti-fascist united front.

Responding to recent calls within the party for a physical response to the C18 onslaught in Leeds the Central Committee rejects them outright and argues:

“Instead we have to respond to Nazi terrorism politically, by using the united front to isolate them.”

It then lists what this means: leaflets, petitions, demos, campaigns to get fascists out of the workplace, publicising attacks in the local media. Every one of these things is part of the fight against fascism. But you cannot beat off a fascist attack with a petition—even if it has a million names on it. You can with a determined defence squad.

And leaflets, petitions, even demos, are not in themselves united fronts. The united front consists of building unity in action with large masses of non-revolutionary workers, at every level. This means building joint anti-fascist committees and organisations which really involve people. In practice the SWP has shied away from allowing the ANL to develop in this way. It has next to no regularly meeting democratic structures that can really involve people.

Of course there were voices raised within the SWP against this. Some oppositionists have argued for the SWP to adopt a “minimum programme”. Others argued for activating the rank and file tactic. Others wanted to build a mass, active ANL. Voices were also raised for more democracy, with many different resolutions calling for the election of local district committees, and even one calling for “special meetings” for black comrades. It is a little known fact that, despite its penchant for Malcolm X posters, the SWP does not allow its own black members the right to caucus.

Does this signify a party vibrant with healthy debate? No. Many of those who raised criticisms or opposition documents have already been subject to vilification. If they continue to criticise Tony Cliff they will be treated to the process described by one re-

cent group of SWP oppositionists. After the expulsion of a key oppositionist,

“later [the others] will be frozen out. They will be humiliated and generally made demoralised. They will never be forgiven for their rebellion unless they apologise and admit that [the comrade who has been expelled] is a swine” (*Reinstate Andy Wilson Bulletin*, issued at Marxism 94).

Despite the proliferation of opposition documents, many of them making valid points but often politically flawed, the SWP conference seems to have been the usual leadership rally.

One SWP comrade lamented that:

“... the level of debate we are going to have at this year's Party Conference will not extend much beyond endless repetition of the blindingly obvious. I know Lenin emphasised the importance of repetition as a feature of revolutionary propaganda, but I don't think I can stomach another mention of street maps and Wednesday night Socialist Worker distribution.”

When you are building a party without a programme the A to Z becomes more important than the ABC of socialism.

The SWP leaders are showing all the signs of frenetic party building, devoid of politics—there are no education or training officers for example in the SWP's district organisations. Marxist cadres, who question the party's line and represent a living link with the wider working class, are a threat under such a regime. They are devalued and replaced by the unthinking hacks which all bureaucratic organisations foster.

And this is why the SWP, no matter if it scatters membership cards around like confetti, will not break through to Cliff's projected half a million. To do that a party needs more than exhortation, blind party loyalty and a National Party Notes described by one member as “written surely by a Butlins Redcoat on speed”.

It needs a clear programme and principled tactics. It needs to be prepared to organise the non-party masses that will follow its lead. The SWP cannot do this because its leaders fear the collapse of the party membership into any united front.

SWP members need to stand back from the numbers game currently being played by Cliff and the Central Committee and judge things politically. Look at the politics and practice of Workers Power.

On every one of the disparate issues: the rank and file movement, the anti-fascist united front and defence squads, the right of black comrades and the oppressed to organise within the party, real democratic centralism, the revolutionary programme—Workers Power has fought for a consistent revolutionary socialist alternative to Cliff:

The future on offer to critical-thinking SWP members is either a bureaucratic freeze-out or the zombie-like existence of those who have recanted their views and settled for an easy life.

For those who find either option difficult to stomach, we say join Workers Power. ■



## WHERE WE STAND

## WORKERS POWER

is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy.

We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary international (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The RLCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

Dear Comrades,

Regular readers of *Militant* will have seen the recent letter from one Phil Hearse calling on supporters of Socialist Outlook to follow him into Militant Labour as the only organisation on the far left worth building. Hearse was a central leader of the Socialist Outlook grouping and editor of their paper; this resignation will further demoralise the supporters that paper still has left. Over the last few years Socialist Outlook has lost the vast bulk of its supporters and now has just over 100 left. The supporters it does have are demoralised and divided; the central projects carried out by Socialist Outlook have been complete disasters which have only had the effect of losing its supporters to organisations such as the Socialist Movement and *Labour Briefing*. Ever since its formation in 1987 Outlook has been on the lookout for something to bury itself and its politics in. Its own programme and politics have been buried on the grounds of anti-sectarianism and building the "class struggle" left wing.

Reading *Socialist Outlook* for the last seven years it would be hard to guess that it was the paper of a revolutionary Marxist organisation fighting to build a revolutionary party. A good indication of this oppor-

# Why I've joined Workers Power

tunism is Socialist Outlook's youth paper *Liberation*, subtitled "For a Red, Green and Feminist youth movement". No mention of building a revolutionary youth movement but pretending to be a broad based campaign, and hiding its own politics.

Whilst Socialist Outlook supporters have been very good activists in the labour movement, as an organisation it stopped functioning some time ago. Some supporters have

now recognised this and are fighting within Socialist Outlook for a return to the Trotskyist programme and politics. These supporters should recognise the situation that faces them, either continue as supporters of Socialist Outlook, and attempt to win it to the transitional method, whilst what is left of it falls apart around them or join an organisation that it fighting for that programme in the workers' movement now. Workers Power is

small but it is a far more effective and coherent organisation than Socialist Outlook, it already has an understanding of the transitional method and applies it to the class struggle now. Comrades in Socialist Outlook who want to build a Trotskyist organisation should join Workers Power and help in the task of doing just that.

Yours, Graham  
Former supporter of  
Socialist Outlook  
Leeds

## Biting back

Dear comrades

The recent debate over animal liberation in WP has proved Engels right on one thing at least—that unlike the rest of animal kind the human brain is "nature conscious of itself". Your debate so far only participated in by humans proves that humans are a higher species than any other because it will be human beings who will decide the fate of the world and all other species on it. That is, of course, assuming that Rabbix (WP183) was once a baby and not a bunny.

Rabbix claims that isolated attacks carried out by animal liberation activists do not endanger life. Yet otters and fish have had their lives endangered when mink have been 'liberated' from fur farms into an alien habitat. Parcel bombs and incendiary devices clearly carry the risk of accidental or deliberate human death.

If Rabbix was committed to the cause this should be no problem. After all if a cause is worth fighting for, isn't it worth dying for and killing for?

But Rabbix is not only half hearted and inconsistent, but also a utopian who is bad at maths. Rabbix claims that through switching food production from meat to soya beans it would be possible to save \$20 billion and "feed, clothe and house the entire human population for one year". There are 6 billion people in the world—even eating soya beans alone it is difficult to see how \$3.33 could go so far.

No doubt more people could be fed if we all ate soya beans alone—but this misses the whole point. People do not starve because of meat production. There is enough food today to feed the whole world

even if meat is produced. It does not do so because people cannot afford to buy it. As Rabbix rightly points out production for profit means that food production, which has expanded massively, and has enormous untapped potential, means that luxury, extravagance and waste go alongside poverty, starvation and exploitation. And they will always do so as long as capitalism exists—even if we were all vegetarians and we only grew soya beans.

And finally as an animal who enjoys meat like my fellow species of lions, tigers and snakes I must ask the question—who wants to eat Sosmix all day anyway?

Yours in comradeship  
Bill Hesketh

Dear comrades

Paul Morris (WP183) asks "Is racism in our genes?" No, it isn't. But unfortunately for Rabbix (Letters WP183) we are genetically predisposed to be meat eaters.

The construction of our jaws and digestive system means that we are naturally omnivorous. Just as many non-human animals are carnivorous or omnivorous.

Incidentally, are animal libbers in favour of discouraging non-human animals from devouring each other?

Rabbix (WP183) raises the old red cabbage (respect to herrings) that it takes ten pounds of vegetables to produce one pound of meat. Without challenging the actual figures, the point missed here is that the nutritional values of foods derived from vegetable and animal sources are

completely different.

For example, protein is usually more highly concentrated in animal and fish sources than in vegetables, and is more easily assimilated by the human body.

Rabbix patronisingly refers to starvation in the "Third World" and believes that if there were no butchers this would benefit the "Third World". This is naive nonsense.

A tiny minority live very well in under-developed countries and many people in developed countries are malnourished. This is not due to the existence of butchers but of the bourgeoisie and their system.

No doubt the impoverished masses for whom meat represents a rare and welcome dietary addition will be delighted to know that the best on offer from the animal libbers is no

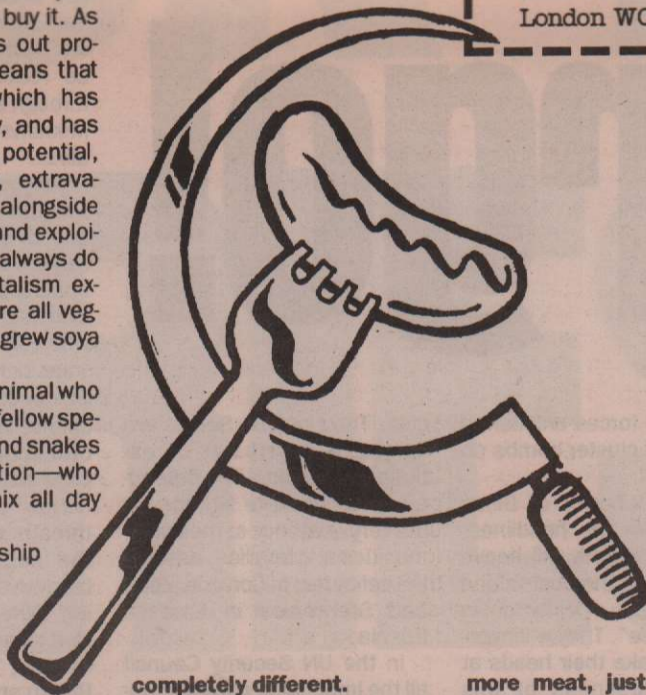
more meat, just more fruit and veg.

Since talking to animals is proving difficult, it is hard to know what they think of all this. Would a cow, for example, prefer to live in order to be eaten rather than never to have lived at all? We can't know. We have to rely on the subjective view of their self-appointed guardians. Luckily for the animal libbers they are not actually accountable to those whose interests they supposedly represent.

Rabbix says that animal libbers don't want to kill butchers, just encourage them to find a different trade. I don't want to kill animal libbers, just encourage them to find different politics. And Workers Power is a good place for them to begin that search.

Yours in comradeship  
John Taylor

✓ Agree  
✗ Disagree?  
! Got something to say?  
✉ Write in to:  
Workers Power  
BCM 7750  
London WC1N 3XX





# Workers power

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Number 184 December 1994

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## BOSNIA

# End the arms embargo!

**B**IHAC, a city with 70,000 residents, was designated by the United Nations as a "safe haven" in the Bosnian civil war. Today it stands ruined and occupied, its population scattered, its defenders killed or captured.

The United Nations abandoned not only the thousands of civilians it promised to protect. It abandoned 1200 of its own, Bangladeshi, soldiers. Deprived of food and ammunition by UN deals with the city's Serbian conquerors, the Bangladeshi troops were reduced to cowering in shelters as the Serbs advanced. "We have to protect and feed the Bangladeshis sent to protect us" com-

mented the mayor of Bihac.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) failed to protect the population of Bihac. Split between the USA, who demanded an air bombardment of Serb military positions, and Britain and France who wanted to do nothing, NATO carried out a series of air strikes. These were directed not against the besiegers of Bihac but against SAM missile sites which had fired at NATO airplanes. All the precision guided bombing equipment which the USA used to devastate the cities of Iraq was used, this time, to ensure that not a hair on the head of the ethnic cleansers was harmed, even

as the Serb forces unleashed napalm and cluster bombs on Bihac.

When the horror of Bihac recedes from the headlines, western diplomats will heave a sigh, putting the destruction and occupation of a city "down to experience". They will hypocritically shake their heads at the senselessness of this "tribal civil war".

Despite the verbal sympathy of the USA for the Bosnian Muslims, workers everywhere should take a stand in their defence. The Bosnian people, are a multi-ethnic and not merely a Muslim community. They have a right to defend the multi ethnic state from geno-

cide. The Bosnian Serbs' are fighting a naked war of national oppression. The defenders of Bihac were fighting for the very existence of their communities and families, as were the defenders of Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia.

In the UN Security Council all the imperialist powers combined with Yeltsin's pro-capitalist regime and the Stalinist butchers of Tiananmen Square to deny Bosnia the elementary right to defend its national existence. They straightjacketed the Bosnians with an arms embargo, whilst the numerically stronger and better armed Serbian forces ethnically

cleansed Bosnia, displacing hundreds of thousands.

At the last minute the USA had to appear to do something. They were terrified for their own prestige as "policemen of the New World Order". Hence the air strikes, the sending of marines to the Adriatic, the lifting of the arms embargo. So should workers call for the US to intervene militarily in Bosnia?

No! We should fight to get all imperialist and UN troops out of Bosnia. Whether they are wearing the UNPROFOR blue beret or the NATO silver star they can do nothing to protect the citizens of the safe areas. In fact they merely keep them disarmed and restrict their military actions the moment they achieve any success.

If the US or the UN were to intervene with ground troops on the Bosnian side - in reality the least likely outcome - they would subordinate the justified Bosnian struggle to their own interests and their "order" in the Balkans. This would be reactionary through and through and a catastrophe for Muslims, Croats and Serbs alike.

The new world order that was proudly declared at the end of the Gulf War has become a debacle in Bosnia. The imperialist powers of Europe and the USA disagree as to who can oversee Yugoslavia's transition to capitalism. They agree only that the process cannot be overseen by their own troops. Thus they can impose no unified order.

Now the same fault line threatens to fracture NATO, the most powerful military block in the world. Former British Defence Secretary John Nott expressed his panic when he said, "The rift between the British and the Americans is a catastrophe for the world". Having won the Cold War, scaled down its armoured divisions in favour of "rapid intervention" forces, the "new" NATO lacks the political unity of purpose to use them. Britain and France want a deal which leaves the Serb gains in the civil war largely intact.

America, in contrast is gearing up to lift the arms embargo. If it can overcome its allies' opposition it may even supply the Bosnians with \$8 billion of arms and training. It has already refused to share satellite intelligence with the European forces.

The tragedy at Bihac shows that imperialism can impose no lasting or no just order in Bosnia. It will either be an order based on Serb and Croat domination and the ethnic revision of Bosnia, or - in the unlikely event of a US intervention - a Croat-Muslim state based on oppression of the Serbs. Any such "solution" will leave national hatreds smouldering on, waiting to burst into flame at the next opportunity. The imperialists will have created another Middle East.

The only progressive solution will be *anti-imperialist*, based on the struggle for a Socialist Federation of all the Balkan peoples and an end to national oppression.

The imperialist troops can do nothing progressive. They should get out now. They should leave their weapons and supplies to the defenders of Bosnian Muslim and multi-ethnic communities. The arms embargo should be scrapped at once. Workers must campaign for arms and aid without strings to all those fighting to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia.

This crisis shows that there is no such thing as "international law", only international force. It shows that the great agencies of "international justice" from the UN to the Commission of Human Rights are impotent.

The Balkans may well face a future of murderous conflict. Starting with Sarajevo, possibly spreading to Kosovo, Macedonia and even Greece and Turkey, the old conflicts will erupt.

But if this tragedy happens it will reveal to millions that the capitalist system which rules their lives subjects entire cities and nationalities to destruction it cannot guarantee order and stability. It must itself be destroyed.

# UN AND NATO OUT OF THE BALKANS!