

# workers power

For Internationalism, Socialism and Workers' Revolution

## INSIDE



France: Can the workers stop the right?

No 190 June 1995 ★ Price 50p

# Bosnia

# UN/NATO Troops Out Now!

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## As nurses and railworkers reject 3%

# Strike to end low

# pay!

**INFLATION STANDS at 3.3% and rising. Nurses have been offered just 1%. The local top-up deals to 3% depend on the nurses signing away their national pay bargaining rights, unsocial hours allowances and holiday pay. Nurses are so angry that even the "no-strike" union, the RCN, has voted to lift its ban on industrial action. Nurses in UNISON are due to ballot on strike action this month.**

Rail workers are angry too. As British Rail is broken into local companies, ready for privatisation, workers are being offered a paltry 3%. Their claim for 6% to compensate for massive job losses and productivity increases has been dismissed out of hand by the bosses. Meanwhile, managers are busy imposing new "image conscious" rules on railway workers — ranging from a ban on beards to an instruction not to roll up shirtsleeves! Both the RMT and ASLEF are due to ballot on strike action this month.

In local government, where union negotiators signed a two year deal based on 2% inflation, workers are fuming. Services are being cut, work conditions are worsening and, yet again, they are being asked to take a wage rise below inflation.

Wage rises below inflation are wage cuts. They are the way the bosses make the workers pay for the crisis of underfunding in the public sector.

All this anger will be wasted unless we can turn it into action. The Tories fear a "summer of discontent". They know that because workers' action in the NHS and British Rail could focus the anger of millions of service users against the health "reforms" and rail privatisation.

Unfortunately, the Labour leadership also fears a summer of strike action. Labour has

condemned the planned teachers' strike. It will condemn strike action in the hospitals and railways. It will place maximum pressure on the union leaders to limit action to passive protest. They, in turn, will try to limit any strike action to "one-day" protest strikes.

But passive protest and one day strikes have not managed to stop the Tories in 15 years of attacks on our pay, jobs and services.

We need all out strikes to win. In the hospitals nurses and other workers can and must take effective action—not just refusing to do paper work as the RCN proposes, but strike action, implementing emergency cover under the control of health workers themselves.

On the railways the bosses should be told: 6% with no strings or the network closes.

Local government workers should tell their leaders: rip up the 2-year deal and let's join the nurses and railway workers in a united public sector fight on pay.

Strikers will be vilified by the Tories, witch-hunted by the press, and condemned by the Labour leaders. But they will be applauded and supported by millions of fellow workers if they can strike a blow against low pay and the destruction of public services.

• **Public sector strikes can win!**—page 5





## Sheffield

## Somali youth resist racism

**S**HEFFIELD'S SOMALI youth protested outside of Bridge Street Police Station last month. The demonstration was called in response to the police arresting two young Somalis acting in self-defence following a racist attack (see last month's Workers Power).

The demonstration, timed to coincide with the police interviewing Abdi and Ahmed after four weeks police bail, attracted 40 young Somalis and about 20 other supporters.

After an hour Abdi and Ahmed emerged from the police station with their solicitor and interpreter and the demonstration was informed that it had been a success. Instead of re-bailing the two for a further two weeks whilst deciding whether to press charges, the police were forced to issue a caution and not bring any charges!

## Picket

Unfortunately, events following the picket have not been so positive. Abdi Ali, who was beaten during his detention in police cells, has decided not to press charges against the police, as a result of pressure from his family and other mem-

bers of the community.

Community leaders, who have done little to defend the community from attack, are opposing attempts by the youth to organise themselves. As the racist attack upon the ISRAAC Community Centre several days after the picket has shown, youth organising to defend themselves has never been more important.

The racism that the Somali people in Sheffield are experiencing is adding to the many problems they already face, problems faced by many refugee communities in Britain.

One million refugees fled Somalia when genocidal war broke out in 1988. Of these, about one half of one percent have been granted asylum in Britain. Many are not even recognised as refugees but have been granted "exceptional leave to remain". Of those that were accepted into Britain, most have seen close relatives and friends killed. Many of the women were raped, and most refugees have witnessed torture.

This, added to the racism they are experiencing in Britain, has resulted in a community that is in severe trauma. A recent survey conducted by members of the So-

mali community, supported by the Community Health Council, has shown the urgent need for counseling and treatment for Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## Response

The response from Sheffield's Labour controlled City Council, and from the Health Authority, has been appalling. After many months of discussion the authorities still refuse to seriously address the need for appropriate health care for the community.

Members of the community, together with Workers Power supporters, have launched a Refugee Health Campaign to demand that they receive the treatment they need.

This campaign is focused on the local and regional trade union and labour movement and seeks to mobilise working class support for the community through demonstrations, pickets and protests.

If you are involved in a local trade union or labour movement organisation you can invite a speaker from the campaign. Contacted it at 12, Hanover Court, Broomhall, Sheffield 3. ■



## Lesbians and Gays

## Don't join the army!



Fight for democratic rights in the military—but don't join the bosses war machine

**F**OUR SACKED members of the military took their claim for reinstatement to the High Court recently in a bid to end the policy of automatic dismissal for lesbians and gays in the armed forces.

Homosexuality in the military was decriminalised in last year's Criminal Justice Act, but lesbians and gays are still automatically discharged regardless of their service record.

Since 1991 about 260 lesbians and gays have been forced out. Before discharge they are subjected to humiliating investigations.

John Beckett, one of the four going to the high court, was offered electric shock therapy by a Royal Naval psychiatrist. Jeanette Smith was asked intimate personal questions on the nature of her sex life, including what she did in bed, who she had sex with and whether she interfered with her 16 year old foster daughter.

In defence of the ban, the military chiefs have cited an array of prejudiced and homophobic arguments. These range from the supposed detrimental effects on morale, and morality, of lesbian and gay personnel to the problems of living in close proximity—such as sharing showers!

Not that any of these were perceived as problems during the Second World War when the ban on lesbians and gays was quietly forgotten.

The military, a key component of the capitalist state, seeks to reinforce the family, a key pillar of capitalist society. That

is the real reason for the ban on lesbians and gays.

Capitalism needs the family as a stable unit to provide the next generation of socialised labour. It is the reason for our oppression in wider society, as well as in the military. As lesbians and gays we provide a fundamental challenge to the family with the notion that sex can be for pleasure, not just for reproduction.

As lesbians and gays we have no employment protection in any sphere. The military may have an outright banning policy, but in civilian courts the rights of employers to sack workers on the grounds of their sexuality have been consistently upheld.

## Harassment

At work we face harassment, with no legal right to protection. We also all face indirect discrimination in terms of pension rights: we cannot nominate our partners. We often cannot get compassionate leave if our partner is ill, even if we are out at work! We cannot take emergency medical decisions for our partners, nor are we able to make funeral arrangements. Our relationships are simply not recognised under capitalism.

Campaigning groups like Stonewall and Rank Outsiders are based on the idea that the discrimination we face is the result of outdated prejudice, and that under capitalism this can be overcome. This fails to recognise that the material basis for our oppression is capitalism and its need to prop up the bourgeois family. It

also fails to acknowledge the obvious fact that even if we win equal rights legislation under capitalism this does not mean equal rights—let alone liberation from oppression—as the struggles of women and black people for equality have shown. Despite legislation the bosses still operate racist and sexist policies.

But while we support calls for democratic rights for lesbians and gays in the military, we have to say to any working class person thinking of joining up: don't!

The British army is an army of repression. It is designed to put down the anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of the Third world and to enforce capitalist rule at home. There have been closet lesbians and gays in the British armed forces for years, at all levels, and that hasn't stopped the British state from torturing and murdering those fighting against the rule of imperialism.

We should stick to the old socialist principle—not a penny, not a man or woman, for the defence of this system. The same goes for the police forces that are actively trying to recruit lesbians and gays.

We need a working class lesbian and gay movement that will demand that our rights are upheld. We need this organisation to win over the labour movement to our take seriously the fight for lesbian and gay liberation, and demand that they take action to defend our rights as well as the rights. We need an organisation that will battle against the system which uses the family to oppress lesbians and gays. Now that is something worth fighting for! ■

## No to chequebook justice!

**W**E ARE all equal before the law—so we are told. But two Tory reforms announced last month blow a big hole in the reputation of British justice.

One new measure attaches a price tag to justice while the other rides roughshod over the rights of defendants.

The changes will restrict the amount of money available for Legal Aid.

The Tories are bringing in cash limits. Even if you are entitled to Legal Aid, if the Legal Aid fund has already been used up, you will be left high and dry. This is the same "principle" that has already been used to notorious effect on the Social Fund, making it incredibly difficult for the unemployed to get cash help for basic things the rich take for granted.

If you are lucky enough to get legal aid, you may find your lawyers are third rate. Legal Aid work will be restricted to certain law firms that take block contracts. Some of the most talented lawyers will avoid legal aid completely.

The change gives new meaning to the well-known phrase "One Law for the Rich". Rich employers and individuals will have the best advice and smooth-tongued lawyers in court; the rest could be left without legal assistance. Some equality!

The second government attack targets defendants. We learn that too many guilty people are being let off by the courts. Who says they are guilty? Not the juries, but Tory Home Secretary Michael Howard.

At the moment defendants in criminal cases have a right to see much of the prosecution's evidence under the so-called Advance Information rules. This allows defendants to prepare their case and to challenge the evidence of unreliable witnesses and the fairness of confessions forced out of them in police stations.

Howard wants to stop the defence getting their hands on the evidence against them. Worse still, the proposals will force the accused to reveal their arguments to the prosecution before the trial. With defence evidence revealed to the police, there is all the more danger that witnesses will be intimidated and nobbled.

These changes strengthen the rich and powerful and remove the rights of working class people. Labour and the unions must oppose them all the way.

- Abolish the CJA and all repressive laws.
- All judges must be elected.
- Down with chequebook justice! Free state funded legal advice for all.

## Marlon Thomas

## Maimed by racists

**I**N MARCH 1994 at a fair on Durdham Downs in Bristol, Marlon Thomas, an 18 year old engineering student was kicked, punched and beaten senseless with a baseball bat and a metal bar.

His crime? Going to the aid of another black youth being attacked by a gang of fairground workers. Marlon was left with a fractured skull and brain damage. More than a year after the attack, Marlon is still in Bristol Royal Infirmary, in a waking coma, unable to speak or move his limbs.

Last month Bristol Crown Court found four men guilty of the attack on various charges of grievous bodily harm and violent disorder. Steven Appleton was jailed for five years.

Two others were sent to a young offenders institution for three and a half years and four years respectively. A fourth man, Anthony Thompson, was given a two year jail sentence.

The Thomas family are furious at the

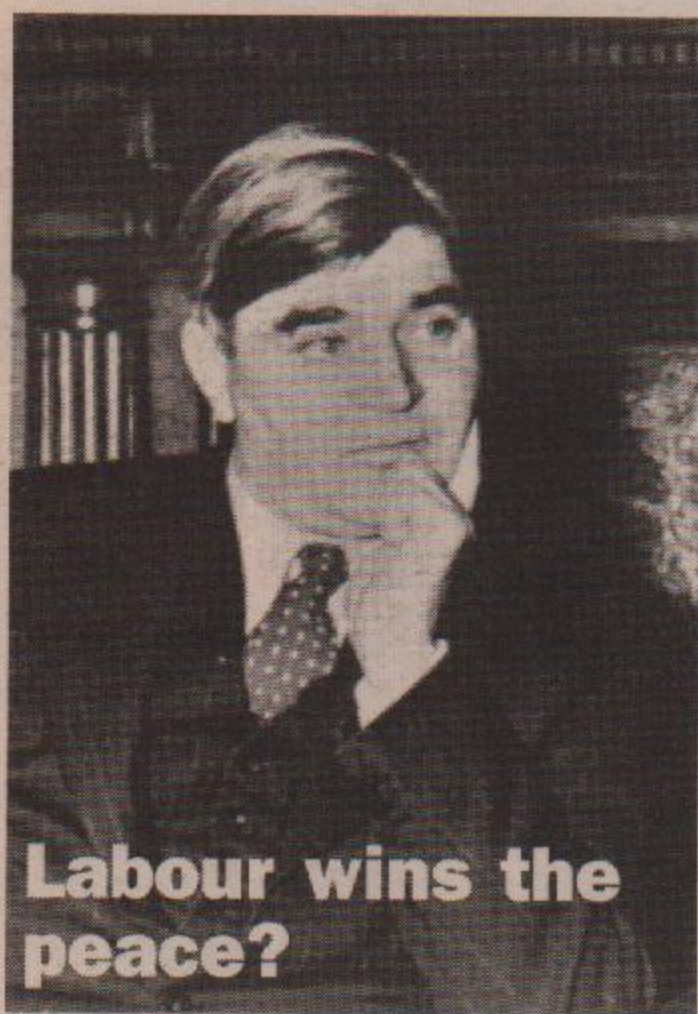
leniency of the sentences: Marlon himself faces a "life sentence" of serious disability. The family have lodged an appeal with the Attorney General and are mounting a campaign to have the terms increased to reflect the devastation they have suffered.

Marlon's family especially his brother, Leroy, have shown great courage and determination in campaigning tirelessly on his behalf, to raise awareness of the consequences of racist violence and to achieve justice for Marlon. Yet again the British criminal justice system has proved inadequate in delivering such justice.

The best sentence we can deliver for Marlon is one of a renewed commitment to eliminate racism, racist violence and its causes. And that means fighting to destroy the rotten legal system that deals out injustice, fighting racism, and fighting for the right of black people to organise defence of themselves and their communities when they come under racist attack. ■



## in this issue



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On the 50th anniversary of Labour's 1945 election landslide, Mark Harrison examines the myth and reality of the one Labour government that claimed to be "socialist and proud of it". Pages 8&9

### Black workers in the unions

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# Labouring under Tory Blair

**D**OES IT matter that Tony Blair is leader of the Labour Party? Isn't the Party more than its leader and capable of overcoming his particular defects and desires?

Does it matter that Blair is an ardent admirer of Thatcher, the most hated anti-working class prime minister this century? Does it matter that he sends his son to the London Oratory, a direct grant school that selects its pupils by social class?

Only if you think it doesn't matter to have a Tory as the leader of the Labour Party.

Marxists have always insisted that individuals gain their significance in history from the role they play for social classes.

Blair's rise to power is not the result of some sort of collective brainstorm by the Labour Party membership, MPs and the trade union barons. His election had been prepared by the whole evolution of the labour movement in the 1990s.

Blair personifies the needs of the British bosses to preserve all the gains of the Thatcher counter-revolution against the inevitable swing of the electoral pendulum. At the end of the twentieth century, a weak and decaying British capitalism cannot afford even a partial rollback of the Thatcherite legacy. Indeed, it has to take it forward.

But the Tories have exhausted their credibility, even with the middle classes and non-class conscious workers. Enter Tony Blair.

Blair has finally and unequivocally adopted the economic priorities of the Bank of England, the Treasury, the City and the CBI.

Inside the Labour Party, Blair has triumphed where Hugh Gaitskell failed and where Wilson, Callaghan and Kinnock feared to tread. The goal of winning "for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their industry on the basis of common ownership" has been replaced by a pledge to defend "the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition".

At the Aberdeen British Chambers of Commerce conference, Blair fleshed this

out: "Old Labour thought the role of government was to interfere with the market. What New Labour believes is that the task of the government is to make the market more dynamic and to provide people and business with the means of success in that market."

That same dynamism, no doubt, that condemns nearly three million people to the dole queue, millions more to short-term contracts and poverty pay levels.

At the same meeting he assured the assembled businessmen:

"There is no going back. The essential elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s will remain."

Blair wants to preserve at all costs the legislation against trade unions under which dozens of miners were jailed in the

Clearly, civil liberties, including the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, are something we associated with "Old Labour" that have to be junked along with the red flag and the block vote.

Blair's constant talk of "self-help", "self-improvement" and "self-support" is coded speech for the programme implicit in the report of Labour's "Commission on Social Justice". It is full of the right wing projects that the Tories did not dare to push: "targeting benefits", taxation on child benefit, the abolition of student grants.

It embodies a vision of the systematic dismantling of the welfare state as a universal service, free at the point of need.

To succeed Blair must seal the Labour Party off from working class pressure—before, during and after the election.

His distaste for the unions is plain

The only difficulty Blair has with the union leaders is money. In a non-election year the unions shell out over half the Labour Party's expenses (£4.7 million out of £8.8 million in 1993).

This figure is much higher in an election year when the unions give many millions extra to the party's "war chest". Income from "corporate donors" (the bourgeoisie) is minuscule. Overwhelmingly, Labour relies on the political levies of working class trade unionists.

This reliance on the unions funds underscores the fact that Labour is a workers' party at the level of its social base, though a bourgeois party at the level of its programme and leadership.

This remains a gigantic social contradiction. Workers, as party members and as voters, want social reforms, especially after sixteen years of Tory oppression. The upsurges of resistance over the past years, starting with the poll tax, going on to the massive popularity of campaigns to save the NHS and education, shows that workers want a serious and substantial reversal of what the Tories have done. But Blair has devised in the place of Labourism a new ideology or, rather, he has stolen it from the discredited Tories.

So far resistance to the Tories remains fragmented into trade union struggles and social campaigns. The next year or two is a clear pre-election period. Political questions, including what will go into Labour's manifesto will be brought to the fore, even if Blair tries to keep them as vague as possible.

Rank and file militants in the unions must bring forward the demands of working class people for fundamental change. These will embarrass and expose the real intentions of the Blairites. Around such demands an organised resistance to the crypto-Tories must be built that can develop into a fighting alternative. This will bring nearer the day when we can chase Blair and his cronies out of the labour movement and fight our class enemies with the full force of our organisations. ■

● Dromey vs Morris—page 4

**"I see a lot of socialism behind Labour's front bench, but not in Mr Blair. I think he has genuinely moved."**

Margaret Thatcher

Great Strike of 1984/5, under which the NUM was bankrupted and which allows shop stewards to be fined for organising unofficial action.

Blair is hard at work destroying the traditional Labour commitment to the public sector, and refusing to consider the renationalisation of the utilities like water, the railways, or the abolition of the hospital trusts.

He is busy refining Tory values in the sphere of social policy and civil rights. When teachers and parent governors, even in "middle England", revolt against sacking teachers and set illegal budgets instead, Blair condemns them.

Jack Straw, Labour's shadow Home Secretary, outflanks Tory Michael Howard on the right, claiming that "too many guilty people are being found innocent". According to Straw the police are too hamstrung by having to observe the rights of the "criminals".

enough. He will fight to reduce the percentage of trade union votes at Labour Party Conference—first to 50% and then possibly even lower. To push through these reforms he is planning a counter-revolution in the unions. His assault on Bill Morris and the TGWU is just the first shot in a campaign to replace left talking leaders with puppets who will just sit there in their Armani suits and smile while Blair kicks their members in the teeth.

The Labour and trade union leaders who oppose Blair are weak and indecisive because they know that the bosses will not tolerate, the "Old Labour" programme—inadequate as it was. That is why Bill Morris spoke against Blair "with a heavy heart".

They dare not expose Blair's real plans and they will not mobilise their memberships in an active campaign. He will press on with steps to cut their throats and they will flap like chickens that sense the knife.

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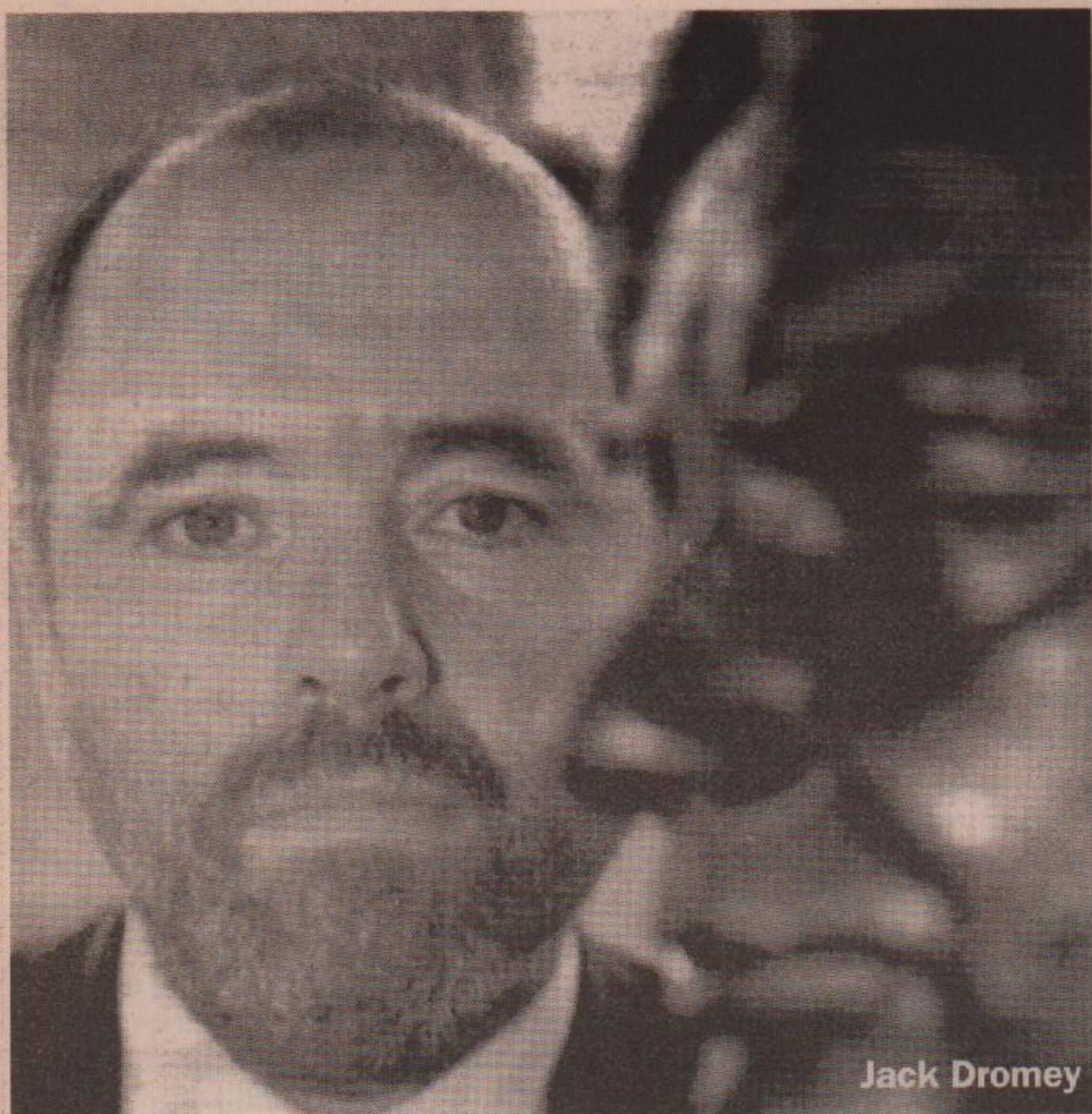
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Jack Dromey

## T&G Election

# Vote Bill Morris!



Bill Morris

It says something about the state of union democracy that a challenge to a general secretary can be so surprising as to make the front pages of the bosses' press. The election for the post of General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) has been greeted with lengthy articles in the broadsheets and featured on BBC 2's *Newsnight*.

The media's concern lies with the fortunes of Jack Dromey, who has made it plain that he seeks to recast the T&G in the mould of Tony Blair's "new Labour".

Dromey's personal and political identification with Blair's project has rightly set alarm bells ringing among militants throughout the unions. They recognise that the T&G contest is no mere squabble between bureaucrats over control of the union HQ.

The bulk of the T&G bureaucracy back Morris. Surprisingly the exceptions are the

supposedly left-leaning North West and Irish regions. Those regions' officers support for Dromey owes more to their personal vendetta against Morris and exposes them as cynical opportunists, not principled political opponents.

In other circumstances, revolutionaries might have given critical support to a challenge to Bill Morris' four-year reign at the T&G.

Bill Morris has presided over the loss of 200,000 members from the union's ranks. While he has publicly called for a future Labour government to repeal all the Tories' anti-union laws, he has insisted in the here and now that the union stay within the law - effectively condemning the sacked Badgerline bus workers to defeat. In the wake of Bill Clinton's 1992 election victory, Morris went so far as to organise seminars in Britain by advisors from the US Democrats.

By GR McColl

But these aspects of Morris' record have nothing to do with Dromey's candidacy. The real reasons behind his bid for control of the T&G are Morris' refusal to defy the union's executive and back the ditching of Clause IV at Labour's special conference, and his insistence on specifying a minimum wage of at least £4 an hour.

This figure - some £2 below the Council of Europe's decency threshold - is woefully inadequate, but for Dromey it is still too generous.

He is fully prepared to back his wife, shadow Employment Secretary, Harriet Harman, in her refusal to commit Labour to anything more than the principle of a minimum wage.

She is insisting that the figure could only be determined after the CBI (the bosses' organisation) has decided what it can afford.

Dromey poses as the champion of members' democracy, insisting that the T&G should have staged a ballot - or opinion poll - of its members over the Clause IV debate.

What Dromey clearly had in mind, however, was a stage-managed plebiscite, akin to the Labour leadership's poll of constituency party members, which was a sophisticated form of ballot-rigging.

In short, Dromey hopes to bypass the union's delegate conference and elected officers when their policies clash with Blair's unashamedly pro-market agenda.

Dromey and Harman send their children to the same grant-maintained, west London school that young Euan Blair will attend from September (a school which does not recognise any of the teaching unions). Dromey and Harman are part of Blair's

inner circle and Dromey clearly shares Blair's ideas for the future of trade unions.

Dromey's transformation of the T&G will be to make it little more than a loyal lapdog for Blair. In return, he will ask for, and get, *nothing* for T&G members from a future Blair-led government. T&G members should cast their ballots for Bill Morris.

Of course, Morris' re-election will do nothing, in itself, to improve the lot of T&G members in the bus garages, car plants and food processing factories, who are faced with job losses, shrinking real pay and the erosion of terms and conditions.

Despite the best efforts of a handful of militants in the union, the T&G lacks a national rank-and-file organisation capable of fighting for a root and branch transformation of the union. A Dromey win, however, would make the terrain of struggle a great deal harder. ■

## NUCPS Conference

# Don't wait for Labour

JUST SAY you'll give us something... anything!". With these words, General Secretary John Sheldon, captured the predicament of the leadership of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS). He was pleading with Kevin MacNamara, Labour's Civil Service spokesman, to promise the civil service unions some basic reforms should Labour win power.

The question of the next Labour government dominated much of the NUCPS conference in Bournemouth last month - demonstrating the bankruptcy of a leadership that has given up on workers' action to stop the Tory onslaught on members' pay, jobs and conditions.

Civil servants have not been immune to the Tories' pay freeze, their privatisation drive and cuts in jobs and services. A third of NUCPS's 100,000 members' jobs will be at risk when the viciously anti-working class Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) is introduced next year. Yet, the NEC could not even bring itself to demand of Labour that they repeal this act when they are in office.

In their main motion to conference, the NEC simply called for a moratorium on privatisation and contracting out, and for consultation with the unions in a "review" of already privatised civil service functions.

Rather than repeal the anti-democratic anti-union laws, Sheldon called for the re-introduction of the subscriptions check-off system.

Rank and file delegates felt they needed

more from any incoming Labour government. A petition calling for the reversal of the agency and privatisation policies, the return to national pay bargaining, sufficient jobs to provide a full service and the scrapping of the JSA and Incapacity Benefit rules was circulated. In just a couple of hours, the petition gained the support of nearly half the delegates.

At a lively fringe meeting, delegates asked MacNamara whether Labour would repeal all the anti-union laws, renationalise the utilities and implement a national minimum wage. MacNamara responded that these issues may have been relevant for the 1945 Labour government but now we have a "global economy" they were out of the question!

Despite Sheldon's pleading, it's clear that we can expect nothing from the sort of Labour government Blair and MacNamara are planning - only more of the same that we got from the Tories.

Civil service workers need to build a mass campaign for the repeal of all the anti-union legislation, bringing back in-house all the privatised and contracted work, without compensation and under workers' control, and the repeal of all those functions which civil servants have to carry out for the bosses against the working class - like the JSA and the Child Support Agency.

We need to fight for these demands not only under the next Labour government, but in the here and now. We can give Tony Blair and Kevin MacNamara a nasty shock. If they are elected to office in the

midst of strikes and demonstrations calling for these basic measures, then it will be all the harder for them to press through their Tory agenda.

The other major event at conference was the move to merge the NUCPS with the IRSF, the inland revenue union. If endorsed in a ballot of members in September this year, this will create a new union that will unite civil servants across all government departments. The new union, the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union (PTC), will be a step forward. But there is a danger that the merger will then be used as a stepping stone to a further merger with the clerical workers' union, the Civil and Public Sector Association (CPSA).

However tempting this may appear to activists - particularly in the CPSA where the right-wing leadership crush all attempts at official action and stamp on democratic procedures - such a merger would not be in the interests of members.

Why? Because the PTC, unlike the CPSA at present, will be a union that combines workers with their senior managers - the very people who are implementing the cuts and attacking jobs and services.

Time and again, this hinders workers' democracy and ability to fight back independently.

Militants in the new PTC will have to wage a battle to kick these managers out of the new union if the potential gains of this, and any future mergers, are to be realised. ■

## MSF Conference

# Counting the costs

THIS YEAR'S conference of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union (MSF) was dominated by discussions on the state of the union's finances. Branches were told in January that the operating loss for the year was £590,000. By the following month this figure had been "revised" to £1.4 million! The general incompetence of the current leadership, under Roger Lyons, was further highlighted when it was revealed that the union had total liabilities of over £18 million, the highest of any trade union in the country.

The response of the bureaucracy? Rather than see their own perks and fat salaries cut, they planned to save money by cutting down on democracy.

No less than 27 rule changes were proposed. These included the following:

- a 40% reduction in branch finances;
- a reduction in annual conference from 800 to 600 delegates and from three and a half days to two and a half;
- bi-monthly rather than monthly regional council meetings, with funding reduced by a third;
- a halving in size of MSF delegations to the TUC and Labour Party conferences;
- the national Health and Safety Officer position to remain unfilled.

Conference threw out most of these rule changes, apart from a reduction in regional council funding and the reduction in the TUC delegation. But several would have been passed if they hadn't required a two-thirds majority. This reflected a general drift to the right. Some left wing positions were agreed. Workers Power motions and amendments won the conference to support for the abolition of all anti-union laws, no platform for fascists and to kicking fascists out of the workplace.

We also won motions on total opposition to new management techniques, reversal of the marketisation of the NHS and opposition to Labour's Health 2000 proposals.

Conference agreed to send a letter of protest against the state of emergency to the Bolivian President and to support the Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee (see page 11).

But despite these successes, many motions were amended to avoid any commitment to actually organising action and to avoid any active defiance of the law. Instead the emphasis was put on education of members, and placing demands on a future Labour government.

The debate on the old Clause Four confirmed the control of the Lyons' leadership. In a debate on an NEC motion on full employment, an amendment was narrowly passed supporting Clause Four; the NEC then opposed the amended motion and it was defeated. Likewise, an emergency motion condemning the decision of the MSF delegation to the special Labour Party conference to vote against Clause Four (against existing union policy) was narrowly defeated.

The left within the MSF remains divided between Unity Left (the old TASS Broad Left) and Network 90 (the old ASTMS Broad Left).

Unity Left is the larger grouping and still retains some members on the NEC. It remains tied to electoralism, capturing positions rather than building support from the rank and file. Network 90, while more democratic and more committed to winning rank and file support, is still too incoherent in its aims to grow significantly. Discussion in Network 90 on an action programme for the union has, as yet, come to nothing. One opportunity to unite the left has emerged. At a packed Unity Left meeting Joe Bower was chosen to stand against Lyons in the 1997 election. Bower, a long time member of the Irish Communist Party, is supported by Unity Left and Network 90.

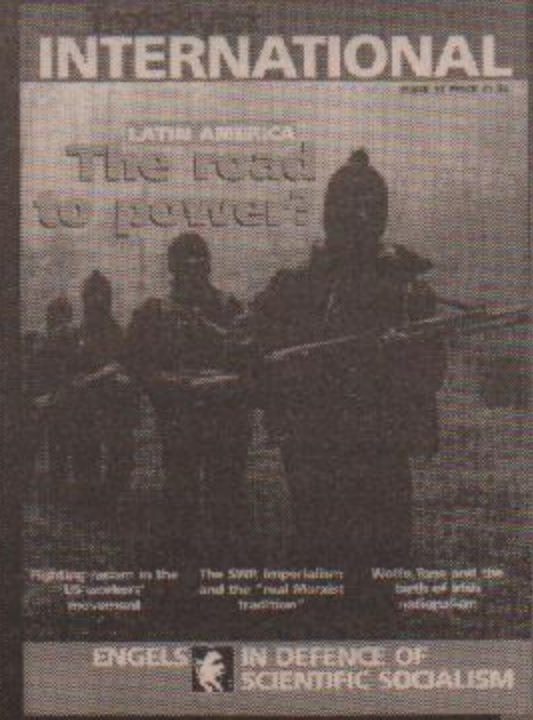
We need an open and democratic campaign around this election, involving all of the left in a debate around a united platform. Within this campaign Workers Power will argue for class struggle politics at all levels of the union.

We must use the campaign to start to build a rank and file movement across all sections of the union, based on transforming MSF into a democratic, fighting union. This is the only way to defeat Lyons and the right wing. ■

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## Nurses

# Time to join a real union

**WP:** The RCN has scabbed on every health strike ever called. Now it has voted overwhelmingly to drop its ban on industrial action, called for the legalisation of prostitution and is giving Tory ministers a rough ride. What's going on?

Jane: The RCN has always seen itself as a "professional" association—organising nurses who work on the wards but also representing nurse managers. It actively undermined trade union attempts to fight health cuts throughout the 1990s by breaking strike action. Obviously, the overwhelming nature of the Conference vote showed how angry nurses are at the results of the Tory health reforms. But I think nurses who stay in the RCN are still committed to the idea of nurses as "professionals"—like doctors; not nurses as workers—like other health workers who we deliver care alongside.

**Does the vote for action mean the RCN has changed as an organisation though?** Not fundamentally. It voted for "industrial action" not strike action. At present the form of action they are contemplating goes no further than refusing to collect patients' postcodes, so their "fund-holders" can't be billed for hospital services. They are still saying "We won't go on strike because that would harm the patients". I think every nurse in the RCN has to face up to what UNISON members have been saying for years: not striking harms the patients more than striking, because it allows the Tories to destroy the service.

**What is causing such levels of anger amongst nurses?**

Obviously, it is the effects of the Tory health reforms—not just the 1% pay offer and the local strings attached to 3% top-up offers. Our jobs are being systematically down-graded. Instead of a Sister being on a G Grade, she's now expected to take the same responsibility for less money on an F Grade. Because of the cuts nurses are having to do a lot more work. Managers are devolving responsibility right down the pay scale.

**How can health workers fightback?**

The biggest problem for organising the fightback remains the way many nurses see themselves as "different" from other health workers. There is a justified grievance

The Royal College of Nursing recently voted to end its ban on industrial action. Workers Power spoke to Jane, a UNISON steward and nurse at the University College London Hospitals, about opposition to the pay deal and how trade unionists in the NHS should respond to the RCN's change.

amongst our nurses: we are increasingly asked to do non-nursing duties. So the Sisters, many of them in the RCN, have drawn up a list of 77 jobs that we shouldn't do. But they have backed management's attempts to make the ancillaries do them by introducing "multi-skilling"! For them the porters and domestics are "low enough down the scale" to do these duties. Nurses have to break with this style of "management unionism", so we can fight management together with the ancillary staff. A group of mainly UNISON Sisters and other nurses have been trying to fight against this sectional attitude.

**What opportunities does the RCN vote open up for building UNISON amongst nurses?**

There are 240,000 nurses in UNISON. The vote allows us to step up the fight to recruit nurses to a real trade union. Unfortunately, the UNISON bureaucracy is likely to use the vote to try to limit us to the kind of action the RCN is proposing. And that would be fatal.

**How should UNISON members relate to the RCN at hospital level?**

We should set up joint meetings with them at hospital level. I have already had several discussions with RCN members as to how we can take effective action. There is clearly a "left" in the RCN on social issues—as on prostitution. You even get articles about Marxism and health in the *Nursing Times!*

To them we have to say: join a real union. You are workers, like the domestics and porters, and your strength lies in unity with them, not with the consultants and the BMA. If we take action, we can stop the destruction of the NHS.

The RCN vote makes it easier now for us to pose the issue of seeing nurses as workers and taking strike action. We've just recruited an RCN steward into UNISON and he's joined—despite the RCN vote—because he's seen the need for strike action. ■



Nurses need to unite with other health workers in the fight to defend the NHS.

## Conference ballot vote

**WITHIN MINUTES** of NATFHE Conference deciding by an overwhelming margin to ballot for a national pay strike in September, General Secretary John Akker arrogantly told Conference that the union would not implement the decision! Hiding behind Conference rules, the leadership tried to prevent this even being discussed. However, delegates finally forced Akker to retract and to commit himself and the union to use all resources to go ahead with the ballot.

The leadership was also defeated in its attempt to call off the national campaign against the imposition of new contracts following the breakdown of national talks. They wanted to restrict the union to a campaign for local agreements which threatened to fragment the entire union.

The campaign over pay is an opportunity to reunite the union in a fight against the new contracts and for a decent pay rise. The two campaigns cannot be separated. The government will again refuse any pay increase except to those who accept new contracts. The fight now is to organise in Regions and branches to make sure the ballot over pay goes ahead despite any sabotage or excuses from the defeatists in the leadership. The employers will go on the offensive to force through new contracts and branches must prepare for protest strike action in the next few weeks. ■

## College lecturers

# Sheffield strikes for jobs

**S**HEFFIELD COLLEGE is the largest further education establishment in Europe. But if the college bosses get their way, it won't be for much longer! They intend to "downsize" the teaching workforce by 120 over the next 18 months—a 15% reduction. These plans come as a result of their own financial incompetence and cuts in government funding. At the same time the college Directorate is aiming to introduce inferior contracts for the remaining staff and shutdown two out of the college's six centres.

NATFHE members in Sheffield are fighting back against these attacks. Last year after four days of strike action, college plans to introduce worse contracts were withdrawn. Last month, a three day strike thwarted their plans again. The vast majority of existing staff remain on 'Silver Book' (nationally agreed) conditions of service. No one, however, believes that the attacks are over—far from it. Pay increases, due since September 1994, have still not been paid and the Directorate shows no sign of breaking ranks with the policies of the bosses nationally in the College Employers' Forum.

Nevertheless, branch meetings continue to adopt militant positions. The three day

strike in May prevented a government inspection team from operating successfully. The next visit is due in September and branches are now debating proposals to strike again during that week. Also, if there are plans to make the 120 redundancies compulsory (currently they are seeking volunteers), there will be indefinite strike action.

The action in Sheffield has more than local significance; it contributes to the national fight against inferior contracts throughout the FE sector.

Much of the reason for the militancy of lecturers in Sheffield lies with the college's autocratic stance but some credit should also be attributed to the emergence of a new rank and file organisation in the college, attached to the national "Fight the Contracts" organisation. This group initiated by supporters of Workers Power and the Socialist Workers Party has produced four local bulletins and organised a successful local public meeting. It has done this despite attacks from management and criticism from the "soft left" leadership of the union. In the forthcoming branch election efforts will be made to win officer and committee posts to further develop a clear militant leadership for the battles ahead. ■



# Can public sector strikes win?

Jeremy Drinkall, Companies House NUCPS shop steward, writing in a personal capacity, looks at the chances of success.

**G**OING ON strike if you work in a factory has an immediate effect. You can see the bosses' production line coming to halt. You can see that they can't get their goods out and you know that you're affecting their profits.

I work in Companies House, an executive agency of the DTI. We don't work to produce a profit. By law, the only goods Companies House can sell are company searches and information. We have to sell these at cost price. There is no competition since Companies House is the only holder of this information, such as annual accounts and returns, collected as part of its role as regulator of companies.

Millions of other workers are in the same position. Health workers' strikes can't stop profit-making. Neither can benefit workers. If I got up at a mass meeting and argued that we go on strike and hit the bosses were it hurts—in their profits, I'd get a good laugh and not much more.

Yet strike action is essential if public sector workers are to fight back against low pay, worsening conditions, job cuts and privatisation. At present, we have just finished balloting for a one day strike and an indefinite overtime ban in protest at an attempt to contract us out to the private sector.

Like many others in the public sector, we have tried lobbying MPs, writing to the media, even leafleting customers. We got overwhelming and active support for keeping Companies House non-profit making and in the public sector. But it didn't work. Heseltine proposed to contract us out, bit by bit.

We decided to put a ban on overtime. But here we ran into problems. Who should vote on the overtime ban? Those who worked in sections that were offered overtime or everyone? What if only a handful of workers were asked, refused and were sacked? Of course, we voted to take further strike action in defence of anyone victimised—but then what about those whose contracts contain a clause to work habitual overtime?

The truth is that strikes effect everyone equally, whereas overtime bans, like selective strikes, call for some workers to make bigger sacrifices than others.

We are now planning a one day strike. But we know that a one-day strike causes management and the ministers few problems. We walk out for a day, have a noisy picket, get on the local radio—and then go back to work. We are due to strike on 2 June. By 30 June we will have caught up on the lost work but our pay packets will be down by £30.

I know waverers and potential scabs use any old excuse to justify breaking a strike. But when good union members say, "What's the point?" it can be hard to answer them.

We've taken nine one day strikes in defence of trade union rights at GCHO:

unions are still banned there despite rulings from the International Labour Organisation. One day strikes don't work.

But when the bosses aren't counting their lost profits, can all-out indefinite strike action win?

Although we don't produce a profit for our employers, our work is essential to the profit system. Without a complete and up-to-date set of company records, business transactions are conducted in the dark; mergers and takeovers are practically impossible. Companies House oils the wheels of capitalism. Why else would the government spend so much money keeping it going?

This is also true for other workers in the public sector. Of course, the effect of such strikes can take a long time to work through. Six weeks into a teachers strike its impact couldn't be measured in so many millions of pounds lost.

In the meantime, service users suffer. Buyers of coal can buy elsewhere, but benefit claimants can't get their money off anyone else during a strike.

But to shy away from all-out indefinite strike action in the belief that other workers will see you as the enemy, simply accepts the bosses' propaganda. Support can be won through mass public meetings, demonstrations and involving representatives of user groups in the running of the dispute—writing press releases, producing bulletins and collecting money for the strikers.

And we shouldn't forget that service users are also workers. Our own strikes might take a long time to hit the bosses but if carworkers, miners and others start taking solidarity action in defence of the services they depend on, the bosses quickly start to question their ability to "sit it out".

A successful strike across any group of public sector workers could inspire other workers to fight management attacks—a thought to send a shiver down the spine of any government minister with his clutch of private sector "consultancies".

It has taken a long time for trade unionists in the white-collar public sector to get where we are today. Only 20 years ago, the prospect of these workers taking indefinite action was unthinkable. In the last two decades, we have grown up, though we still have throwbacks to our previous existence. The most crucial of these is an unwillingness to challenge the bosses over who runs the service.

All-out indefinite action poses that challenge. By going on strike we can begin to assert our authority. By strikers deciding what constitutes emergency cover in a hospital, they can begin to realise that they—not some trumped-up manager—are best placed to sort out the priorities of the NHS.

Strikes, as Marx said, are a "school for socialism". Whether you are a public or private sector worker, now is the time to enrol! ■

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX



# Fighting racism in the unions

## Building black caucuses

This year's TUC Black Workers Conference was once again the scene of a fierce debate over forms of black self-organisation in the unions.

For three years running the conference has voted that it should be convened as a black only delegate conference—a decision repeatedly ignored by the TUC. This year, for the first time, Conference adopted the TUC position of allowing white delegates, leaving the question of who represents black workers at TUC level as a “matter for individual affiliates”. How can we ensure black representation and self-organisation in the unions at the same time as combating racism in the wider labour movement, and building black and white unity in action? **Laura Watkins reports.**

**I**N 1991 50% of all black workers joined their unions compared with 40% of white workers. While overall trade union membership has fallen significantly since 1989, black trade union membership has dropped less steeply. This is despite heavier job losses and higher rates of unemployment among black workers.

But despite this high level of participation, black workers are still poorly represented at all levels of the trade union leadership and officialdom. Two thirds of unions had no black full time officials in 1991.

A TUC survey in 1986 concluded that: “The under representation of black workers in senior union offices and decision making bodies is to many black trade unionists indicative of unions’ failure to adequately meet their particular needs and concerns.”

### Stewards

There has been little general improvement since in the levels of representation, although at shop-floor level more black workers are taking up positions as shop stewards. In the biggest union, UNISON, Sanjay Vedi, assistant research officer, has revealed that the proportion of black members in this union is now the largest of any trade union in Britain. But this is not reflected at the leadership level. Of 127 National Executive Committee (NEC) members only three are black. The situation is no better at regional or branch levels.

The general problems of black workers’ participation do not mean that black workers are passive members. The history of black workers’ struggles in Britain is long and heroic. Many such struggles have helped overcome some of the overt racism that used to be the accepted in the trade unions.

Across the trade union movement lip service is now paid to anti-racism but, in practice, constant concessions are made to the racism of the state, the Labour Party and of some white union members.

### Respond

This situation is a direct result of a record of indifference by the trade union leaders. They have been slow to respond to issues that mainly affect black workers. They have too often failed to challenge racism adequately in the workplace for fear of “alienating” white members. As a delegate explained to the TUC Black Workers Conference:

“In too many workplaces union officers still think they can get away with it by just saying ‘we only have one or two black members or we don’t have any at all’. Others, caught up in the institutionalised values which we all grow up with in this country, find it difficult to recognise the different, and often very sophisticated, forms in which racism manifests itself on the shop floor and in the office.”

Instead, bureaucrats hide behind the assertion that the union treats all its members equally, irrespective of colour. The problem is that capitalist society does not. And the failure to recognise this—to un-

derstand the roots and results of racism—is what causes the unions to fail their black members. It is also the implicit argument behind opposition—from bureaucrats and members alike—to black self-organisation.

Yet black self-organisation, in the form of black caucuses at every level and black representation on the leading committees, is a vital weapon in the struggle against racism in the unions. Caucuses can and should empower the oppressed minorities to fight to make their demands heard.

### Latest

Over the last five years many unions have begun activating long-held policies on positive action for black workers. The RMT is among the latest to support black members’ caucuses and conferences. In many unions race equality committees have been established to oversee aspects of equal opportunities. But the majority of unions remain “colour blind”.

As Bob Purkiss, TGWU National Secretary for Equalities and TUC General Council member, told the TUC Black Workers Conference:

“Amongst the 76 affiliates to the TUC, still only 16 have established structures at any level, which enables their Black members to have a voice in the union.”

But as UNISON delegates explained at

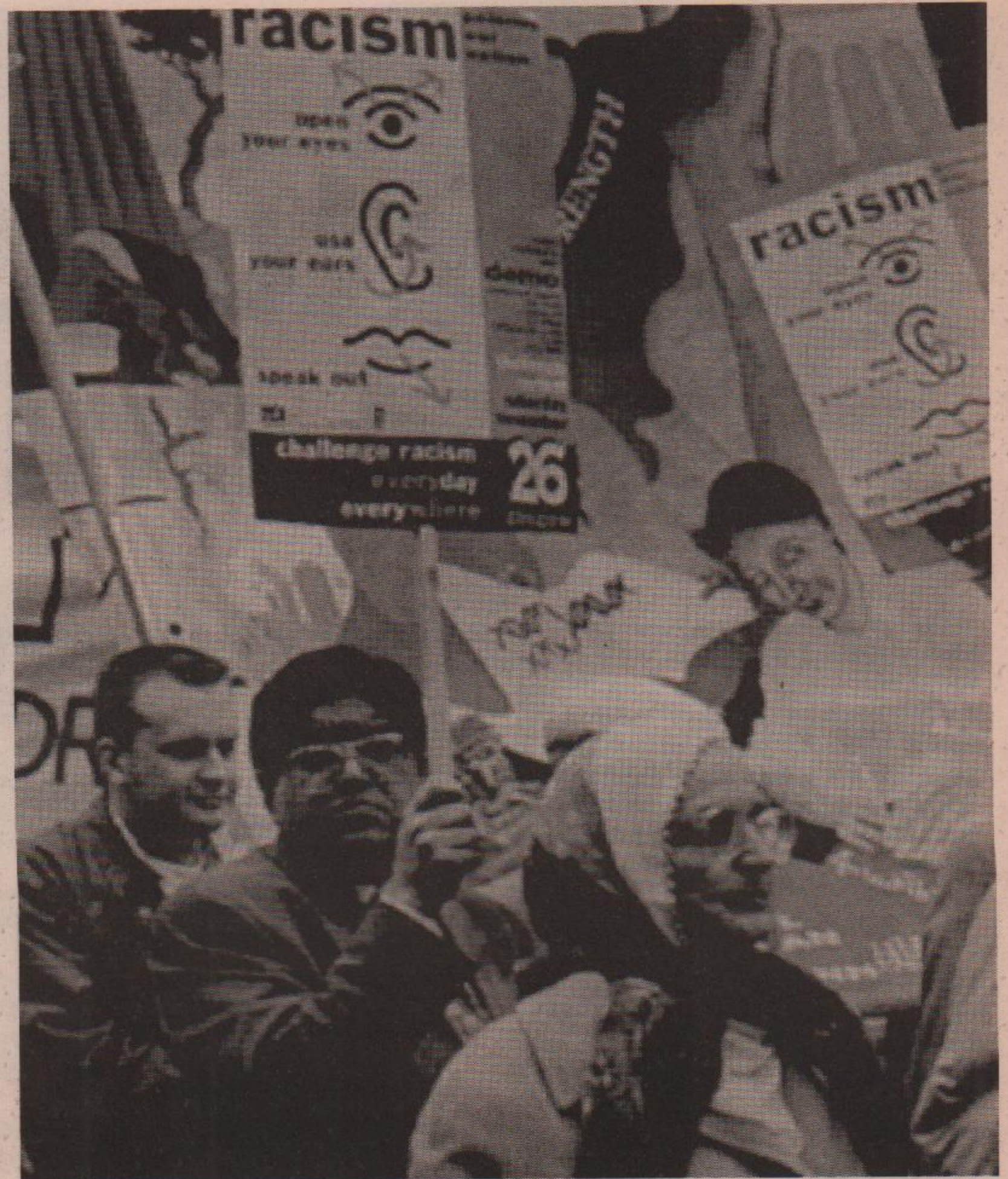
the same conference:

“All too often when black members meet together to establish strategies which can challenge the problem they share, there are angry mutterings about union unity.”

There is a common argument that black self-organisation is a form of “reverse apartheid”. Yet there is no evidence to support it. Where black workers have set up caucuses they have not drawn black workers away from the main body of unions or from the main concerns of the members. Neither have they limited black workers’ involvement to the areas of black workers’ issues only. They have not led to their isolation.

Instead, they have helped to build black workers’ confidence and involvement in many more aspects of the unions’ work. Far from being divisive, caucuses have actually served to strengthen unity. They have encouraged traditionally alienated groups of members to be drawn into the unions, adding their strength and confronting racism which is often used to divide the workforce.

Following a 1992 motion by NUCPS asking the TUC to examine its structure with a view to providing reserved seats on the General Council for black workers, the proposal became a reality at the 1993 Congress. This major step forward is a



Scottish TUC “Speak out against racism” demo. Unions’ anti-racist policies must be turned into action.

result of many years of relentless campaigning by black trade unionists.

At the 1994 TUC Congress three new seats were reserved for black members at the General Council.

There has been a slight improvement in the involvement of black delegates in Congress. A monitoring exercise of 76% of Congress delegations in 1994 showed an increase in black delegates from 3% in 1993 to 5.2% in 1994. However, approximately half the delegations had no black delegates at all.

The under-representation of black women is particularly acute. Since 1994, Congress has made special efforts to encourage affiliated unions to include black women on their delegations to the TUC Women’s Conference and has created four additional seats for black women on the TUC women’s committee to be elected by conference as a whole. Of the three reserved seats on the Council, one has been further reserved for a black woman.

### Point

Reserving seats on leading committees will facilitate better representation for black members. However, it does not guarantee success. And it poses the question of accountability point blank. Who is to elect and control those in the reserved

seats? Will the black members’ organisations coming into existence at union and TUC level be kept as talking shops or pressure valves for the bureaucracy, or can they transform the unions into active anti-racist organisations?

At the TUC Black Workers Conference a motion from the NUJ to give the Conference the right to elect the three General Council reserved seats was lost. The Conference’s former position of demanding black-only representation at the Conference itself was overturned.

What attitude should consistent anti-racists take to these debates?

First of all, there should be strong local and regional black caucuses—black members’ groups or other organisations where black workers can organise without the presence of their white brothers and sisters. To those affronted by the “divisiveness” of black-only caucuses we have to reply: why do you think there is a demand for such forms of organisation? It is because at certain times and over certain issues black workers feel they have to organise separately in order to make their voice heard in the union.

At a national level, black members’ conferences should also be black-only if they are to serve as effective national caucuses. We support the fight to make the TUC Black Workers Conference a black-only delegate conference. This does not absolve the TUC from organising black and white workers together in an anti-racist struggle, including national conferences, demonstrations and campaigns.

### Seats

At the same time we should reject the call for the three reserved seats on the general council to be elected by the Black Workers Conference. In individual unions the same applies to reserved seats on the NECs. The General Council of the TUC (like the NECs of individual unions) does not only decide on issues concerning black workers. It is, or should be, the “general staff” of the whole workers’ movement. It has to become accountable to the TUC Congress and, through it, to the whole movement.

Above all else we have to remember that the fight to change the structures of the unions is only a part of the fight to transform them. Those black leaders who are more concerned with advancing up the union career ladder rather than fighting for workers’ interests can sell us out just as easily as white ones. The layer of activists which dominates the UNISON black members’ group, for example, has repeatedly lent its support to the UNISON bureaucracy to support the cross-class alliance strategy of the ARA and oppose active anti-fascism or organised black self-defence.

That is why it is important to link the fight for better representation to rank and file control over all officials and leaders. Leaders must be forced to fight for their members’ interests or be replaced. And the unions as a whole have to be won to a programme of active anti-racism. ■

## Racism and the profit system

**M**any black workers lack confidence in the way their union represents them in disputes over racial discrimination. Support in such cases is often poor.

The Commission for Racial Equality, rather than trade unions, still represent the overwhelming majority of black workers in industrial tribunals.

This suits the trade union bureaucracy because it means that the union as a whole does not have to be seen to take a clear stand against managers

and, in some cases, union members who have collaborated in discrimination.

It means that black workers who are active in the struggle against racism often do not automatically see their union as the place to take up that struggle. It keeps anti-racist politics and trade unionism separate.

### Active

How can we make the unions take up the active struggle against racism, and ensure adequate representation of black

workers in the union and by the union?

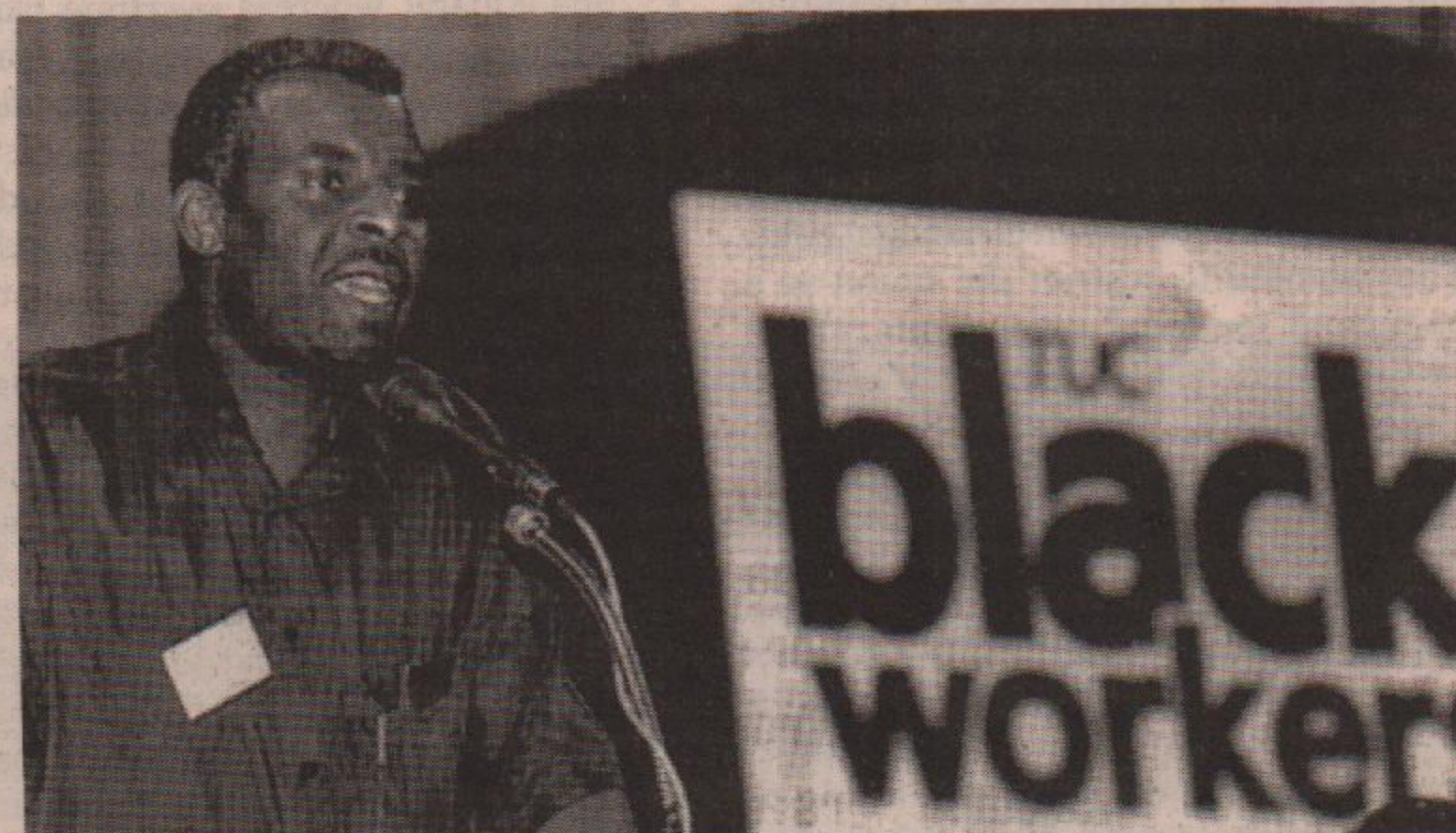
We have to start by understanding the real roots of racism. Racist ideology is perpetuated by the social system of capitalism.

Racist attacks, murder, police and state harassment, the low pay and poor conditions of black workers are the subject of countless motions discussed at labour movement conferences. They reflect something very deep seated—systematic oppression based on colour or supposed “race”.

To pull racism up at its roots we need an active fight by the entire working class. And those roots go as deep as the roots of the profit system itself. They are rooted in imperialism’s plunder of the third world, in the rampant nationalism stirred up and pandered to by Labour and the Tories in equal measure, and in the racist nationality laws through which the bosses ensure a global supply of cheap labour.

Any strategy to overcome racism has to start from the necessity of linking that struggle to the working class struggle to smash the profit system. This cannot be done without winning unity in action between black and white workers.

Black self-organisation within the unions is not an obstacle to such unity. It is part of the fight to make sure the unions as a whole fight against racism. ■



Neville Lawrence’s son Stephen was murdered by racist thugs in Eltham, London. All too often the unions abstain from the wider fight against racism. But, the TUC black workers conference gave the Lawrence family’s fight to bring the killers to justice huge support.



## Book

# Breaking the feminist spell

IN THIS "challenge to the old feminist order", Rene Denfeld paints a sharp and witty picture of the dire state of feminism in the USA—in all its goddess worshipping, men-hating, anti-sex, eco-friendly irrelevance.

Modern feminism, argues Denfeld, has come to mean all kinds of negative things that do not appeal to young women. This is neither because they are opposed to women's rights and equality, nor because they are satisfied with their lot. The reason is simply that the concerns of leading feminists are not theirs.

She rejects the argument that young women are all victims of the anti-feminist "backlash", but puts all the blame on the direction taken by the leading feminists in the 1980s and 1990s.

The book concentrates on the USA. Lack of any action on women's issues, means that US women tend to learn about feminism from college courses. It is from these courses, and their reading lists, that Denfeld draws much of her material. She cites hundreds of works, mainly by US feminists, and provides endless quotes to prove her point.

This is where the book is at its strongest and most entertaining. Denfeld presents an alarming picture of young women attending seminars and lectures where they are told that heterosexuality is oppressive *per se*, that only lesbian relationships are acceptable, that pornography is to blame for sexual violence, that women are morally superior to men (naturally peaceful, nurturing, nice to animals and the environment), and that we should all get in touch with our goddess to be at one with nature.

## Critical

On sex, she is rightly critical of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon who have led the ideological and legal campaign to ban pornography, in an alliance with the most reactionary right wing forces. It appears they are taught uncritically in many colleges in the US:

"Using a handful of extreme statistics from flawed surveys, today's feminists are pushing the idea that men are constantly out to rape women—and that women will constantly be raped. Sexual assault has been redefined to include whistling, touching, and sexual humour... Even consensual sex has come to be considered rape, as it was in the nineteenth century."

Denfeld correctly rejects this redefinition of rape and portrayal of women as the

inevitable victims of any heterosexual encounter. She doesn't belittle the crime of rape itself, but recognises the anti-sex and anti-men trend in the feminists' arguments. This "anti-phallic" campaign leads to the conclusion that women have to reject heterosexual relationships and, in the extreme, any contact with men.

The final area of modern feminist thinking that links anti-sex, anti-men and patriarchal theories together is, Denfeld argues, the ideology of goddess worship. Starting with an idea that women are intrinsically morally superior to men, identifying a time in history where women were not ruled by men and there were female deities, has led to a retreat into spirituality that, once again, is irrelevant to most women.

Denfeld quotes many amusing stories about this particular degenerate part of 1990s feminism, including the following account of Starhawk (a witch, perhaps?), who claims to be responsible for the with-

Helen Watson  
reviews  
*The New Victorians:  
A Young Woman's Challenge To  
The Old Feminist Order*  
by Rene Denfeld  
Simon and Schuster, £16.99

drawal of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. Starhawk describes protests against a nuclear power station in California:

"Dark falls, and as we feel our power and our anger rise, we break from the circle, line up on the ridge, shine our flashlights down on the plant, and scream. We yell out curses. We want them to know that we are here, shining our flashlights down, to draw their searchlights playing over the hills. We are banging on pots and pans, pointing our anger like a spear."

Denfeld comments:

"While all this hocus-pocus sounds like rantings of a lunatic fringe, it is often presented to young women as mainstream feminism... Students are taught—in all seriousness: 'The background into which feminist journeying spins is the wild realm of Hags and Crones. It is Hag-ocracy. The demons who attempt to block the gateways to the deep spaces of this realm often take ghostly/ghastly forms, comparable to noxious gasses not noticeable by ordinary sense perceptions.' Whew."

Denfeld does a relatively good job exposing some of the more absurd positions of the feminists, and relating these to positions adopted by some of the right wing feminists in Victorian times, but she is no theoretician and no political activist. She does not engage with the complex arguments that underlie many theories of patriarchy. In fact, she assumes they are all the same.

She puts forward no alternative explanation of why, for example, there were some societies dominated by goddess worship and women don't seem to have been oppressed in them. She restricts herself to rubbishing some of the more extreme quotes which suggest that early societies were nice places to live because they were run by women.

At the level of politics she is even worse, and it is a sad reflection of the weakness of Marxism and the left in the USA that she does not even attempt a critique of revolutionary politics or "socialist feminism".

She rejects separatism, idealist escapism and individualistic naval gazing. But despite condemning the passivity of the feminists, she rejects political activism:

"For many women of my generation civil disobedience and protest activism often do seem pointless: more of a feel-good nostalgic return to the sixties than an effective means to gain and exercise power. Women once had to stand outside in the rain yelling for their rights because they were forbidden a place inside government or the workplace. Now we have a foot in the door, going back outside seems like admitting defeat in a battle we are winning."

This reveals her true position. She has no theoretical basis for understanding women's continuing oppression in society. She rejects the feminist theories of patriarchy but concludes that because society is no longer run solely by men there is nothing "patriarchal" about it. She never mentions women's oppression. The problem is simply inequality.

## Challenger

As a "challenger" to the old feminists, Denfeld ultimately fails working class women. Her belief that single issue campaigns and working within existing institutions can bring about lasting equality is a dead end. For all her radical critique of feminism she is seeking a route which is already closed; full equality within capitalist society. As she might say to a goddess worshipper—sell that one to a single mother working in a US factory, let alone women working arid land in famine stricken Africa.

While Denfeld attempts to win feminism back to a reformist liberal perspective, someone in the US needs to start mounting a real challenge: organising young, and older women, and men, into a militant working class women's movement that will fight not just for equal rights, but for liberation and socialism. ■



Denfeld's book trashes current US feminists but ignores the potential of working class women, who fight oppression on the streets and in their workplaces.

## Journal

# The false start of Italian Trotskyism

BETWEEN THE time that Trotsky began his fight against Stalin in 1923, and the formation of an international left opposition in 1928-9, fascism triumphed and consolidated itself in Italy.

Fascist totalitarianism froze the political scene and prevented a clear demarcation of Trotskyism from the ultra-left opposition to Stalinism, led by Amadeo Bordiga.

When Mussolini was finally strung up and a revolutionary tide swept through Italy there was an unprincipled fusion between Trotskyists and Bordigists. A bitter faction fight led to the expulsion of the Italian "Trotskyists" (POC) by the second Congress of the Fourth International (FI) in June 1948.

The collection of articles in this volume (most by Paulo Casciola, of the Pietro Tresso Study Centre), tell this story. The difficulty is that this story has to be pieced together from biographical vignettes of prominent activists, official documents and partial accounts of specific periods. It is a difficult task for the reader but in the end a rewarding one.

The reader is best advised to start with Casciola's account of Tresso, by far the

most impressive figure of his generation, with Broué's account of the obstacles the Stalinists put in the path of working class power, and again Casciola's account of the POC's relations with the FI leadership in the post-war years.

Before 1930 there were no Trotskyists in the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Trotsky concentrated his efforts on winning over the ultra-left Bordigists (FSPCI), most of whom had been expelled from the PCI in 1928.

Then in March 1930 five Central Committee members of the PCI in exile in France (Leonetti, Ravazzoli, Tresso, Recchia and Bevasano) raised criticisms of the Third Period in the Central Committee. Four of the five were expelled from the PCI leadership.

In the summer they opened up direct correspondence with Trotsky. On 9 August 1930 they were all expelled from the PCI. The emergence of an Italian Trotskyist nucleus led to a rapid deterioration in relations between the ILO and the FSPCI, ending in their severing links at the ILO conference in Copenhagen in 1932.

The new group, called the New Italian

Keith Harvey  
reviews  
*Through Fascism, War and  
Revolution: Trotskyism and Left  
Communism in Italy*  
Revolutionary History  
Vol 5 No 4 Spring 1995 £3.95  
Socialist Platform, BCM 7646,  
London, WC1N 3XX

Opposition (NOI), became the ILO's Italian section in exile. Leonetti was elected to the International Secretariat.

After the emergence of a "Trotskyist" faction within the Bordigists led by Nicola de Bartolomeo (Fosco) it joined the NOI in 1931.

The turn towards a new (Fourth) International by Trotsky in 1933 and the hotly debated issue of tactical entry into the SFIO and other socialist parties divided the Italian comrades just as much as it did the French. Tresso and Leonetti agreed with Trotsky on the need for a new International, but Ravazzoli and Bevasano were against.

These two broke with Trotskyism in

March 1934. Leonetti too went off the rails with the advent of the Popular Front in 1935. At the July International Secretariat he proposed the slogan "Popular Front to Power" for France. In July 1936 he resigned and broke with Trotskyism.

As critics of Stalin's ultra-left Third Period they were disarmed when Stalin turned right again in 1934/5. They had not absorbed enough of Trotskyism's critique of Stalinism to understand the Popular Front as a leap from bureaucratic centrism into social patriotism.

Those that did, like Tresso, participated in the FI's founding conference and he was elected onto its leading body.

With Hitler's occupation of France in 1940 many Italian comrades there were interned or deported to Italy. Tragically Tresso was sprung from prison in 1943 by Stalinist partisans. When they realised who he was they murdered him.

With the collapse of fascism the Trotskyists were able to work again in Italy. On 30 October 1943 the first Trotskyist paper, called *Il Militante*, appeared published by De Bartolomeo.

At the same time, a group emerged led by the unreconstructed Bordigist

Mangano. In July 1944 Mangano and De Bartolomeo concluded a hasty and unprincipled fusion to found the Communist Workers Party (POC). They applied to the SWP (US) for recognition as the official Italian section of the FI, which they received.

The programmatic differences between the two halves of the POC proved unbridgeable. The organisation was soon riven by factionalism but De Bartolomeo died in January 1946 leaving the POC in the hands of Mangano's followers. Over the next two years battle raged with the International leadership until 1947 when the FI-loyal wing were defeated at a conference.

The final split was caused by the POC calling for an abstention in the April 1948 Italian elections and refusing critical support for the PCI. The June 1948 World Congress of the FI withdrew recognition from the POC and Italian Trotskyism had to start again, nearly from scratch.

Revolutionary History has given us a volume that is difficult to digest, but important lessons are there—the centrality of agreement on a Trotskyist programme and the futility of unprincipled fusions. ■



# 1945: As war ends Labour wins the p

**F**OR MOST of the war the Tory prime minister, Winston Churchill, and the Labour leader, Clement Attlee, collaborated in a government of national unity. After VE Day Churchill asked Attlee to continue the coalition until Japan surrendered.

Under pressure from his party Attlee declined and asked Churchill to call an election for the autumn of 1945. Churchill was furious and called an election for July.

Churchill was convinced he would win, provided he acted quickly to capitalise on his enormous personal popularity.

But when the final results of the election came in Churchill and Attlee were both dumbfounded. The Labour leader, who Churchill with typical arrogance once described as "a modest man with much to be modest about", had soundly trounced the mighty war leader. Labour, which had never before won an overall majority in a general election, got two million more votes than

the Tories (nearly 48% of the popular vote) and an absolute majority in parliament of 154. Two Communist Party MPs were also elected.

As Churchill's chauffeur-driven limousine pulled away from Buckingham Palace on that evening, a Standard 10 saloon car, driven by Mrs Attlee, pulled up. The King recorded that Clement Attlee seemed "very surprised that his party had won."

The sheer scale of Churchill's defeat was a surprise. But a Labour victory should not have been. The majority of the population, the working class including the armed forces, had long broken from the Liberal Party (the previous general election had been in 1935) and was ready for a Labour government.

Labour won 70% of the working class vote, with one poll revealing that 43% of the workers questioned gave class identification as the reason why they were voting

Labour.

More unusual, and a sign of the radicalisation wrought by the war, was the defection of a considerable part of the middle classes to Labour. According to surveys at the time 21% of professional and small business people went over to Labour.

Both the working class and a substantial section of the lower middle classes wanted radical change. They had lived through the hardship and fear of war. Before this they had suffered a decade of mass unemployment, with only the means-tested dole. The doctors' or the hospital bill was a nightmare, even for those in work.

Five years of full employment for those not in the armed forces, together with wartime government recognition of unions, had raised the level of organisation and self-confidence of the working class, enabling it to finally shake off the effects of the terrible defeat of 1926.

By and large the working class had tolerated Churchill for the duration of the war because they believed he was a good war leader. In their overwhelming majority they accepted that this was a war against fascism. It was not only that the British imperialist propaganda machine fed them this lie. So did their party and their unions and, after 1941, the Communist Party.

Only a few hundred Trotskyists tried to expose the falsehood that the cause of the British Empire was the cause of democracy and a socialist future.

It was hard to expose this lie given the workers' genuine and correct class hatred of Hitler and Nazism and British imperialism's alliance with the USSR. The British press carried almost daily reports "hailing the Red Army".

The war at one level was an enormous class compromise. But it produced a deep radicalisation at another. Expectations for

a better world had been fuelled by government propaganda to promote the war effort. There was a fervent desire that the great sacrifices ordinary people had made would be rewarded. There were sharp memories of the cruel deception after the First World War when Lloyd George had promised the returning troops a Britain fit for heroes but had given them the dole queue instead.

Workers remembered the Churchill of peacetime, the man who sent the troops into the coalfields to break the miner's strike, who set up machine gun posts at the pitheads. The depth of this feeling was potentially revolutionary, given the right leadership.

Leon Trotsky, the leader of the revolutionary Fourth International, had predicted that the Second World War would culminate in a revolutionary crisis across Europe. In particular countries, notably Italy and

## Labour's 1945 landslide

# "Socialist and pro

**L**ABOUR'S ELECTION manifesto, *Let Us Face the Future*, published in April 1945, reflected the radicalism of the masses rather than the conservatism of the leadership. Their original proposal contained no nationalisation measures, other than that of the Bank of England! It was considerably more timid than the reconstruction measures being pushed for by the TUC.

At the 1944 LP conference Aneurin Bevan led a rank and file revolt against this timidity, demanding widespread nationalisation and:

"Appropriate legislation to ensure that the national assets, services and industries shall be democratically controlled and operated in the national interest, with representation of the workers engaged therein and of consumers."

Bevan won and substantial nationalisation pledges were included in the manifesto. It declared the Labour Party was "Socialist and proud of it", and had, as its "ultimate purpose . . . the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain—free, democratic, efficient, progressive, public spirited, its material resources organised in the service of the British people."

Rhetoric maybe, but rhetoric the working class was prepared to believe and to have high hopes of seeing put into practice. The manifesto promised to implement the main proposals contained in the Beveridge Report of 1942.

Beveridge, a Liberal, had urged the creation of a modern welfare state, with a comprehensive health service, free at the point of delivery. The extortionate costs of health care before the war and the misery inflicted on millions thanks to the still intact Poor Laws made the Beveridge Report enormously popular in Britain. It had sold in vast numbers in a paperback version in the war. Even Churchill was obliged to put some of its proposals in his own manifesto.

After its stunning victory, Labour had no excuse for not carrying out its manifesto. With a 154 seat majority in parliament (393 Labour MPs in all) plus the support of the two Communist Party MPs, Labour lost the excuse that it had in 1924 and in 1929-31 when, as a minority government, it pleaded the need to tone down its reforms in order to maintain Liberal support.

Between late 1945 and 1948 the government actually honoured its major pledges. This, in itself, marks the 1945 Labour government off from all others.

It said it would nationalise, and it did. The Bank of England, the mines, the rail and transport system, civil aviation, telecommunications, the major public utilities (gas, electricity and water) and the iron and steel industry were all brought into public ownership.

By 1948 Bevan had set up the National Health Service. A universal system of welfare benefits was established. The major

points of the Beveridge Report became law and the modern welfare state was created. On education, by contrast, the government did very little beyond implementing the wartime coalition's Education Act (1944) which preserved grammar schools for the middle classes and set up what became secondary moderns for the working class. Far from abolishing the public schools Labour let them survive with generous funding.

Labour's great reforms were popular, none more so than the setting up of the NHS. The nationalisation of the mines was heralded as a first step to socialism, with miners marking nationalisation day in 1947 by running up red flags over the collieries and turning it into a holiday.

In addition to these economic and social reforms Labour gave the unions revenge for the defeat they had suffered after the 1926 general strike. After the defeat of that strike the Tories had passed legislation that had tied the unions down. These post-1926 laws were identical, in many respects, to the Tory anti-union laws of the 1980s.

Solidarity strikes and general strikes were outlawed, picketing and secondary action was illegal, civil servants were debarred from union membership, strikes were made more difficult to call and members were obliged to contract in, rather than out of, the political levy that unions collected to help finance the Labour Party.

With the 1946 Trades Disputes and Trades Union Act virtually all of these restrictions were abolished, leading to the affiliation of 350,000 civil servants to the TUC and the numbers of trade unionists paying the political levy rising in unions affiliated to Labour from 48.5% in 1945 to 90.6% in 1947.

So are Tony Benn and the reformist left correct? Did Labour between 1945 and 1951 set about introducing socialism, only to be thwarted when Britain's grossly undemocratic voting system gave them a majority of votes in the 1951 election but a minority of the seats?

In truth, it is pure mythology. In 1945 the Labour government introduced what a later leading Labour figure, Dick Crossman, called "welfare capitalism".

Of course, it carried through measures which deserved support, and it established gains for the working class that we should be ready to defend to the last. But were the reforms introduced by Labour a real challenge to capitalism, to the wealth, power and privilege of the minority who really rule Britain?

The astonishing thing about the 1945 government's reforms, with a few exceptions, is the extent to which they were the product of a consensus with the capitalist class. The bosses, the Tories and Labour were agreed that some measures of nationalisation were necessary and that a welfare state should be established.

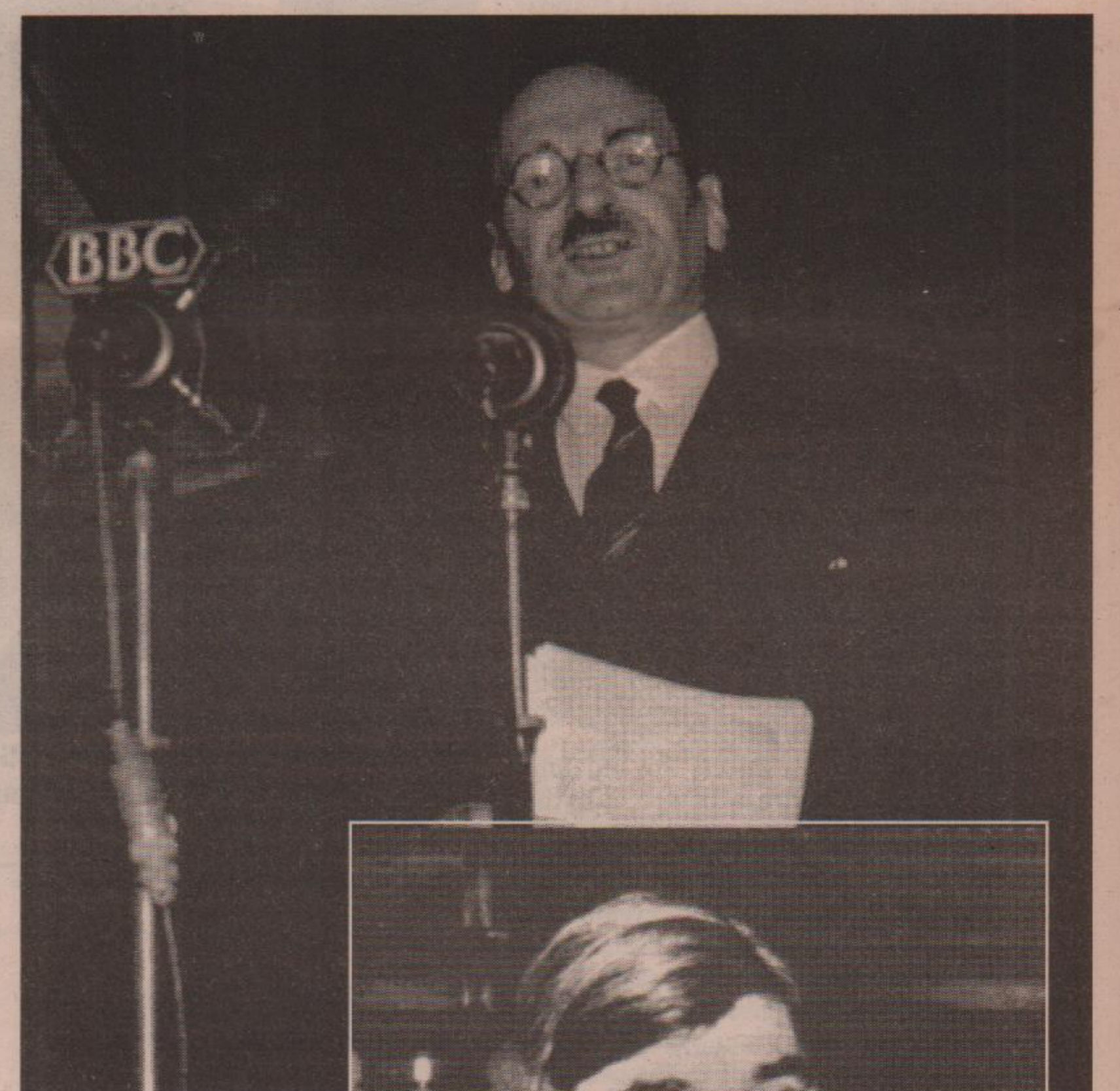
Only two months after the VE Day celebrations the working class had something else to celebrate. Labour was swept to power on a tide of working class votes for fundamental change. How would a Tony Blair New Labour government today compare with the one elected in 1945? **Mark Harrison** looks at the record of that landmark government.

For one thing they feared the consequences of not granting such reforms to a working class, including over one million under arms, demanding radical change. It was a case of reform being a by-product of the ruling class' fear of revolution. At the same time capitalism required state intervention in order to restructure itself and pay for things that it needed (an infrastructure, services and a healthy workforce that it could profitably exploit) but could not afford.

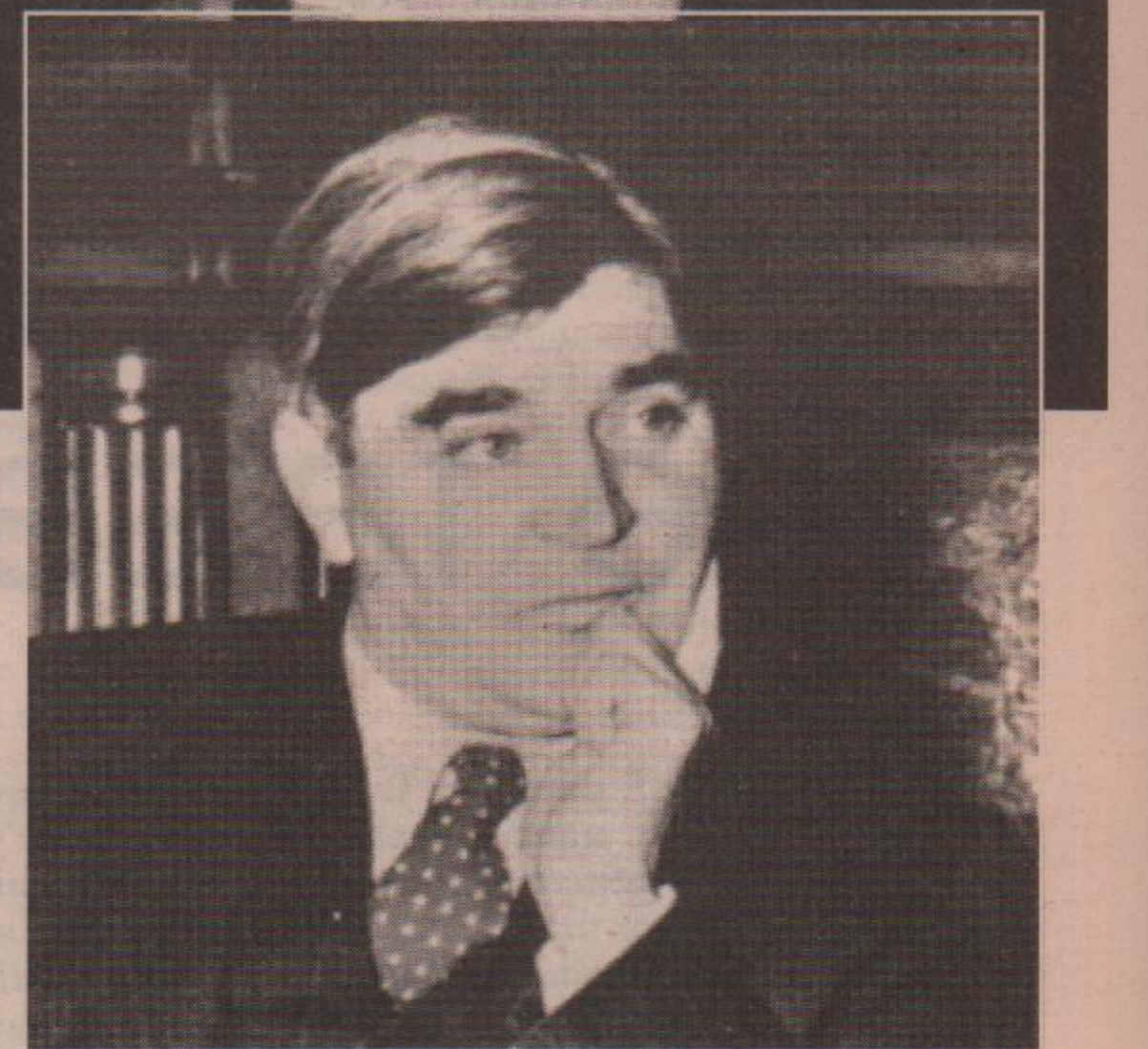
This was clearly the case with most of Labour's nationalisations. By awarding generous compensation, paid for by working class taxpayers, to the bankrupt former owners, Labour was "socialising their losses". This was overwhelmingly the case with the coal industry and the railways.

The coal owners could not or would not make the investment necessary to expand the coal production needed for post-war reconstruction. They co-operated fully with Labour's nationalisation and thus set themselves up for life with millions of pounds in compensation payments for handing over their over-valued, loss-making assets.

Just as privatisation became the road to profiteering in the 1980s, so nationalisation was the source of revenue for the owners of what Shinwell called, "dilapidated, out of date, down at heel" indus-



Clement Attlee (above) and Nye Bevan (right)



tries. Commercial liabilities, that were essential to the functioning of capitalism as a whole, were taken on by the government. And industry at large was given a hidden subsidy through the provision of cheap fuel and transport.

Compensation was not the only factor that negated the socialist content of Labour's nationalisation programme. The industries taken into public ownership were turned into state capitalist corporations. The model for running them was Morrison's London Passenger Transport Corporation. The workers and consumers had no control whatsoever. The dreams of workers' control or even participation were rudely shattered.

So it was with the nationalised industries. Boards were set up, staffed primarily by experts drawn from private industry. A few superannuated union bureaucrats were

added for good measure. When Walter Citrine of the TUC and Eddy Edwards of the miners' union, joined the National Coal Board both resigned their positions in the labour movement. Labour stipulated that the boards could not include representatives of "interested parties". So, the workers themselves could not have representatives on the board. Production targets, pay, methods of work—every aspect of the industry—were to be dictated by a board that was accountable only to the relevant minister.

Despite undoubted early reforms in working conditions, the longer term consequences of this state capitalist version of nationalisation were disastrous for both the workers involved and for the concept of nationalisation in general. Indeed right away Labour's "Battle for Output", in the context of post-war reconstruction and the



# Peace?

Greece such crises did develop.

But in the main allied countries the victory of the "democracies" over Hitler had the effect of deflecting revolutionary potential into the belief that democracy would be sufficient, in the hands of left wing governments, to transform capitalism into socialism by a series of major social reforms and the nationalisation of key sectors of industry.

It only seemed necessary to preserve and extend the role of the state in order to abolish unemployment and misery. Instead of revolution, Social Democratic and even Communist parties, entered the governments of Europe's major capitalist states.

In Britain this mood manifested itself in the first outright election victory for Labour. The mass of people demanded wholesale change. Capitalism, in order to save itself from revolution, recognised that governments committed to its reform were the

best means of containing this radicalisation of the masses.

Their job was to appease the demand for social transformation, limit it and eventually demoralise the masses. These governments could then be tossed aside. The Labour Government of 1945 represented both the pressure of the masses for social transformation and the determination of the union and parliamentary leaders to direct this pressure towards restoring a profitable British capitalism and a safeguarded British Empire.

The stunned Labour leadership (only the left wing leaders Aneurin Bevan and Emmanuel Shinwell had predicted victory) now found themselves masters of a country demanding change.

For the Labour left the Attlee government is always offered as the model to follow. It is viewed by Tony Benn as the most radical Labour government ever. He is right.

But its reforms, although they went further than anything done by Labour since, were still such as to demobilise and weaken the independent fighting capacity of the labour movement. They stopped far short of what workers had hoped for in 1945.

They themselves launched substantial attacks on the working class and this, in turn, led to disillusionment and the return of the Tories to power. Despite the scale of the social gains, the nationalised services and industries, the health service, and all the other aspects of the welfare state, the Attlee government put workers through the same cycle of aroused hopes and dashed expectations that subsequent Labour governments have done.

Attlee ensured that capitalism survived the post war years, not only intact but in a better position than it could have hoped for, to profit from the post war boom that eventually came in the 1950s. ■

# oud of it"

economic crisis that came (along with the worst winter on record) in 1947, forced the miners and others to work ever harder for less pay. Over the next decades the loss making character of the state capitalist corporations, the wave on wave of rationalisations and closures to offset these losses alienated millions of workers from the idea of nationalisation. It seemed to "prove" to millions in practice that nationalisation did not work.

Nor was the welfare state an unalloyed gain for the working class. The benefits system was paid for by a regressive taxation system that hit the workers and lower middle classes considerably harder than the rich.

National insurance ensured that universal benefits came from the universal dipping into working class wage packets not from a steeply progressive tax on profits and unearned income. House building programmes were cut back, especially during the economic crisis of 1947, while defence spending was allowed to rise and money was poured into research to build a British Atomic Bomb.

Even the greatest reform of them all, the establishment of the NHS, embodied a serious compromise with the greedy and destructive British Medical Association (the BMA). The BMA repeatedly voted overwhelmingly to oppose the NHS. Their lucrative practices were at stake.

Co-operation was finally achieved by Bevan guaranteeing the maintenance of the right of doctors to continue with private health care, building into the NHS a two tier system and allowing the doctors to parasitically use the NHS and its resources to increase their own income by taking on private patients.

By the time of the 1950-51 government (with Labour's overall majority reduced to just six) the government authorised the introduction of charges for aspects of health care (including spectacles, prescriptions etc) and cut the health budget to pay for increased defence costs incurred by British involvement in the Korean war and the suppression of anti-imperialist revolts in the colonies.

Labour's economic policies were dictated by capitalism's difficulties not workers' needs. Those difficulties became acute after the harsh winter of 1947. Labour responded with a series of austerity budgets.

Those budgets meant that houses were not built. They meant that food subsidies were cut, leading to bread rationing, to shortages of basic goods and to the introduction of a little known fish, snoek, as food for the masses!

Within the working class, particularly on the docks, this provoked resistance and strikes. The Attlee government met these strikes in Churchillian fashion, imposing states of emergency and using troops to break the strikes. As the cold war devel-

oped Ernest Bevin launched a ferocious witch hunt against the dockers' leaders, members of his own union, the TGWU, for their Communist sympathies. Suspected Communists within the party were summarily expelled.

All of these actions reveal the reality behind the myth of the 1945 Labour government. They put the reforms into context—reforms, to be sure, but not the expropriation of the capitalist class. Having saved capitalism Labour was trying, desperately, to manage it. This is the very nature of reformism, the party based upon the working class but which serves the bourgeoisie. It promises to legislate socialism piecemeal; it diverts the workers from seizing state power and, having got rid of the capitalist class, from building socialism themselves.

Once in power it drops all pretence. Indeed, so sober had the experience of office made Labour that by the time it went into the 1951 election the party that had promised the "Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain" dropped all reference to socialism, for the first time ever, in its manifesto.

The Labour Party of Attlee represented a vibrant reformism because it was brought to power by a radicalised and expectant working class. The New Labour Party of Tony Blair represents by contrast a senile reformism, pitifully aping Tory policies and trying in every way possible to avoid any serious promises of reform. It hopes to get the votes of a working class that has suffered a series of damaging defeats on ha-

tered of the Tories and a yearning to be free of them.

All Blair's concessions are to the middle classes. The abolition of Clause 4 is largely symbolic. But what it symbolises to Britain's bosses is that they need not fear even the sort of reforms carried through by Attlee.

Despite the difference in degree that exists between these two ages of Labour, there is a unity of purpose. That purpose is to prove to the bosses that Labour is, before anything else, an efficient manager of capitalism. The reforms offered by Attlee and the attacks promised by Blair are united by this common endeavour.

Herbert Morrison once cynically defined socialism as "what Labour does". We could equally well define Labourism as "doing what capitalism wants".

But there is another dimension that also unites these two stages of Labour's life. It is that the working class are not passive recipients of Labour policy, or rather, they need not be.

Attlee did not want to introduce serious reforms, let alone socialism, any more than Blair does. His hand was forced, to a certain measure by the working class. Blair's "New Labour" will not be immune from such working class pressure, whatever his long term goals, as the election approaches.

It is the duty of revolutionaries to aid and amplify this pressure, these demands, to upset Blair's plans to ride to power on the workers' votes and with the unions' money, only to then carry out Thatcher's policies. ■

## Labour guards the empire

**L**ABOUR'S ROLE in World War Two was as loyal and pugnacious defender of British imperialism. More pugnacious, indeed, than the appeasing wing of the Tory Party. That role continued once it got into government, although its ambitions had to be rapidly curtailed faced with proof of the overwhelming economic and military might of US imperialism.

The only clear cut pledge on international affairs that Attlee had was independence for India. While this was carried out, the other colonies remained under British rule. Troops were kept stationed everywhere. And those troops were authorised by the Labour government, to crush the risings of workers and peasants—in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Attlee revealed his own racism on the "colonial problem" when he privately denounced Bevan for being colour prejudiced, "pro-black and anti-white".

In Ernest Bevin, Attlee had a Foreign Secretary willing and able to ensure that

Britain joined the US in the developing Cold War.

The government sent troops to assist the US in its anti-communist crusade in Korea the minute it was asked. Behind the backs of the party and the cabinet millions of pounds were poured into developing nuclear weapons.

Most telling of all was the Government of Ireland Act of 1949—the act that to this very day gives the small minority of Unionists in Ireland (a shrinking majority in the six counties) the right of veto over the unification of the island.

In these policies Attlee and Bevin were at one with later Labour leaderships. They supported the USA in Vietnam, sent the troops into Northern Ireland to wage a 25 year long war, supported the Tories in the Malvinas and Gulf Wars. Beyond the shores of Britain Labour's flag was never red but red white and blue—the butchers apron of the oldest and most treacherous imperialism. ■

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## The A-Z of Marxism

### is for

# Bolshevism

WHOLE SECTIONS of the left—from Tony Benn to *Class War*—believe that Bolshevism led logically to Stalinism and bureaucratic tyranny. They are wrong.

Bolshevik means majority. It was the name adopted by the revolutionary majority in the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) after the party's Second Congress in 1903.

The losing faction became known as the Mensheviks (minority). The split took place because the old editorial board of the RSDLP newspaper *Iskra* refused to be bound by the democratic decisions of the congress.

The Bolsheviks argued for a regime of democratic centralism which combined two things: the maximum possible democratic debate inside the party, and total unity in action once a decision had been made. The Bolshevik leadership was elected and the programme and practice of the party was decided by democratic conferences, but once those decisions were made they were put into practice by all party members. Democracy ensured that errors could be corrected. Centralism ensured that the party would be a combat organisation in more than name alone, that it would strike as a clenched fist.

This form of organisation scandalises anarchists and Labour MPs alike. But their objection to "party discipline" in the name of democracy serves only to disguise the fundamental absence of democracy within their own organisations. The absence of democratic centralism in the Labour Party means that the MPs, ultimately, can do what they want. The anarchists and greens' devotion to "networks" and spontaneous, non-disciplined organisations, covers up the influence of unelected cliques and the ineffectiveness of their organisations.

But back in 1917, without both party democracy and centralism there would have been no October revolution. Following the February Revolution of that year, the Bolshevik Party won the support of the Russian workers through their struggle for "Peace, Bread and Land". In particular, they rallied the workers to the slogan "All Power to the Soviets", for the rule of democratic councils of workers' and soldiers' delegates.

But at first the party leaders Kamenev and Stalin opposed this and wanted to support the new capitalist Provisional Government. It was party democracy that enabled Lenin, after his return to Russia in April 1917, to campaign for and win a majority of the party and its leadership for a revolutionary approach. Centralism meant that across Russia the Bolshevik workers were now campaigning for the workers' councils to take power, eventually winning a majority in the Soviets for this course and for an armed uprising in October.

Soviet power was the highest form of democracy history has yet seen. The tiny handful of exploiters were excluded, but the mass of workers and poor peasants could recall their delegates to the soviets at any time to ensure they reflected their views. Far from promoting bureaucracy, the Bolsheviks sought to prevent it by rotating official posts and restricting the earnings of officials. Even when the Soviet Union was surrounded by imperialist armies in 1918, the Bolsheviks continued to debate the way forward.

But the legacy of seven years of war took its toll on the Russian workers.

Many of the finest working class fighters died in the civil war to defend the revolution. The soviets, which had been the centre of debate, collapsed as effective organisations. In these dire circumstances only the Bolshevik Party stood between the revolution and the right-wing "White" armies and their imperialist backers.

Inevitably, power became concentrated in the hands of the party, which acted as the guardian of the revolution. The Mensheviks openly called for the overthrow of the Bolsheviks and collaborated with the Whites. Socialist Revolutionaries tried to assassinate Lenin. To safeguard working class power the Bolsheviks banned these collaborators and terrorists from the Soviets.

Lenin and Trotsky realised that, with only one party in existence, the interests of the richer peasants, the middle class and even pro-capitalist elements could now find a voice in the Bolshevik Party itself. So they argued for a temporary ban on factions within the Party in 1921. This was the first voluntary limitation on internal party democracy the Bolsheviks ever undertook.

This proved to be a grave mistake. The ban on factions—like the banning of other workers' and peasant parties—was intended as a temporary measure. But it became the permanent foundation on which Stalinism was able to impose bureaucratic rule.

A bureaucracy developed within the party and remaining Soviet organisations. The initial job of the bureaucrats was to oversee the distribution of what resources were available. This bureaucracy had no interest in democracy, or world revolution. Quite the opposite. It was opposed to anything that could have threatened the status quo and its own relatively privileged position.

Lenin recognised the danger of the bureaucracy, and called Russia a "workers' state with severe bureaucratic deformations". He called for the party to launch a struggle against bureaucracy. Trotsky launched the Opposition in 1923 to fight for Soviet and party democracy. But Stalin used his organisational power at the centre of the party machine to help the bureaucratic caste take over the whole party and state.

It is in this sense only that Stalinism grew out of Bolshevism. It did so not as Bolshevism's continuation, but as its counter-revolutionary negation. Bolsheviks who opposed Stalinism were first isolated, then sacked, deported, framed and finally murdered.

Those who say Bolshevism led inevitably to Stalinism have to portray all the necessary measures of working class power—the building of the Red Army, the re-introduction of management into the ruined Russian factories, the banning of parties who had declared war on the revolution—as similar to Stalin's dictatorship against the working class. They judge the harsh methods of both Bolshevism and Stalinism from the same standpoint, without taking account of who they were fighting and why. As Trotsky said:

"... the Bolshevik revolution, with all its repressions, meant an upheaval of social relations in the interest of the masses, whereas the Stalinist Thermidorean upheaval accompanies the transformation of Soviet society in the interests of a privileged minority. It is clear that in the identification of Stalinism with Bolshevism there is not a trace of socialist criteria." ■



## Bolivia

# From mass strikes to a state of siege

In April the Bolivian government cracked down on a mass strike wave. The following article was written by Poder Obrero, the Bolivian section of the LRCI.

**I**N EARLY May the government of Sánchez de Lozada managed to put an end to three months of militant struggles by the workers, peasants and urban poor of Bolivia.

The struggle against Lozada's economic and social policies began on 10 January when a broad plenum of the COB (Bolivia's trade union federation) adopted a pay claim for 1995. The COB wanted to see the monthly minimum wage increased to 576 bolivianos (around £90) and a "family wage" of 1,871 bolivianos (about £300).

The government replied that "a pay rise is impossible", "Bolivia is finished if we meet the wage demand", and so on.

The government had originally agreed, with IMF approval, a wage increase of 6.5%. The government sent the Finance Bill to the Congress, where it has a majority, with a proposed wage rise of 7.5%. That means about 14 bolivianos a month and a change in the minimum wage to 200 bolivianos (approximately £30). At the same time the MPs decided to increase their own salary by 45%.

The first major demonstration called by the COB took place in La Paz on 4 February. Similar gatherings took place in all the provincial capitals, where masses of local people protested against the pay proposals and other government attacks: the handing over of natural resources through privatisation, the Education Reform and the so-called "Popular Participation".

These last two parts of the government's programme were announced soon after it took office in August 1993.

Popular Participation is the name given to the plans to decentralise many of central government's functions to regional and city level.

The basic laws were adopted a year ago. The government aims to transfer the 10% of central funds at present distributed to city administrations, together with another 10% that go to departmental development corporations, to 308 municipalities (most newly created).

Apart from the obvious fear that the decentralisation will disguise a cut in funding, the measure has also seen especially by the mass of the peasants as a way for the government to increase its ties of patronage to local, corrupt community leaders.

The Education Reform dates from June 1994 and aims to break with the system of free, universal education in Bolivia, introduced after the 1952 revolution. At present there is one teacher for every 13 pupils in Bolivia's schools. The government wants to reduce the number of teachers (at present around 70,000), cut back on secondary and higher education and concentrate resources in the primary sector. Instead of increasing the quality of teacher training the government wants to break the teachers' control over their profession and, with it, their union.

### Teachers under attack

The government wants to end job security for teachers and break their union's closed shop. In addition, by defeating the teachers the government hopes to weaken the COB. Since the destruction of the state mining industry in the 1980s, the teachers have been at the forefront of many labour movement struggles. Their union is a key source of finance for the COB, and the reform seeks to abolish the compulsory payment of union dues.

The government has been trying to introduce the Education Reform bit by bit. But a renewed struggle erupted in February against the imposition of College Principals nominated by, and loyal to, the government. This was the straw which broke the camel's back, and which transformed the struggle into one to revoke the whole Education Reform.

During March, faced with the growing mobilisation, the teachers and the COB



decided to call peaceful marches from the provinces to the regional capitals. The government responded with violence and repression.

On 21 March the government broke into the Federation of Urban Teachers of La Paz and arrested a number of leaders and rank-and-file teachers, among them Vilma Plata, Gonzalo Soruco, Estanislao Aliaga and José L. Alvarez.

From this moment onwards the government banned COB mass meetings in La Paz and the police took control of the city's streets. Meetings and demonstrations were heavily repressed.

On 27 March a demonstration of urban and rural teachers from all over the country set out from Oruro en route for La Paz. The masses accompanied the march to the city's outskirts. On the second day of the march heavily armed police encircled the protesters at Lequepampa, charged at them and forced them back to Oruro.

The COB national officials did not go with the marchers all the way, abandoning the march which had begun in the presence of Oscar Salas (COB General Secretary).

The high points of the mobilisations were in La Paz where organised groups of teachers set fire to a police station, replying to the gas canisters and batons of the police with slings and stones. The same happened in some other cities where there were also demonstrations and street fights.

Despite the fact that the COB's pay claim has demands which unite the peasants, the CSUTCB (peasants' trade union) and COB bureaucracy were never enthusiastic about incorporating the peasants into the struggle against the new laws.

Repeatedly, they threatened mass blockades without setting a date. By putting the brakes on the masses the COB and CSUTCB left the teachers, miners, universities and other sectors to fight alone.

In fact, many peasants are being drawn into the Popular Participation, with its public works such as electrification, drinking water and irrigation works.

It is the first time in the history of the communities that they have received economic resources directly from the municipalities. This is pacifying and diverting the peasants. Many sectors of the peasantry still support the MNR—the main party of government.

On the other hand, the peasant coca growers are resisting the pressure of the government which is trying to destroy the coca plantations.

The government minister has handed over to the coca producers US\$2,500 for every hectare of coca eradicated. This is a result of the pressure the government has been put under by the USA, which announced that it would not give any further economic aid to Bolivia if it did not destroy 1,700 hectares of coca by June 1995.

The coca producers showed their determination to continue the fight against forced eradication. They strengthened their armed self-defence pickets. Their leader, Evo Morales, was arrested on 18 April and was prosecuted as a criminal under the state of siege. Despite the fact that he has since been freed the coca growers do not appear to be inclined to destroy their plantations—and destroy their livelihood—for \$2,500.

The fight against the privatisation of state industries formed the third compo-

nent of the recent upsurge. The civic committees of La Paz and other provinces warned the government that if it didn't stop its privatisation plans for a number of enterprises, amongst them the telecom sector, the committees would paralyse the provinces.

The government quickly mollified the civic leaders. They incorporated the workers in ENDE (state electricity company) and the telephone co-operatives as shareholders in the enterprises' privatisation process. Thus privatisation continues on course, despite some setbacks through lack of confidence due to economic and social instability.

In Tarija a huge gathering decided to refuse to recognise the Prefect and initiated a "decentralised" political administration, in addition calling on the government that the main enterprises in the region be nationalised. This was a heavy blow to the government, which immediately ordered the detention of five leaders of the Civic Committee and the militarisation of the cities of Tarija and Camiri.

Other civic committees threatened strike action, but in practice nothing happened.

### The state of siege

A dialogue between the COB and the government opened in March through the mediation of the church.

Just when it looked likely to produce results the state of siege was declared on 19 April. The COB's leaders were arrested by the police who brutally attacked those at a meeting in La Paz.

More than 350 trade union and politi-

cal leaders were detained and confined in inhospitable, unhealthy and marginal parts of the country out of reach of communications.

The government had hoped that normality would return once the state of siege was imposed, with teachers returning to their classes. Instead opposition to the Education Reform remained solid.

The state of siege did, however, demobilise the rest of the movement.

The COB leaders who went underground (such as Alberto Vilar) neither sought to organise or unite any strikes or demonstrations against the state of siege. The only response was in Cochabamba, La Paz and the mining areas, where roadblocks, marches and assemblies were organised. These were quickly suppressed by the police.

Only the continued action of the teachers obliged the government to seek dialogue once more, and ease off a little on the repression.

One minister announced that he would respect the agreements struck before the state of siege. Other government supporters, such as Senator Durán, claimed that the state of siege was only meant to stop the violence taking place in the capital rather than achieve a return to work by teachers.

The government finally went looking for an "understanding" with four COB leaders, the militants of CONDEPA (a right wing populist party) and the ASD (Social Democratic Party) still at liberty. Together these leaders signed an "Act of Understanding". This was a deal designed to free those arrested in return for an end to the indefinite general strike and a return to work by the teachers.

### Results and prospects

The state of siege achieved some of its aims but not all of them. It aimed to push ahead with the eradication of the coca crops by force, and in this it was successful.

But the problems of the other exploited masses have not been resolved. The bourgeoisie remains strong and presses ahead with its legislation.

The COB's united claim has not been met, while the structural reforms and privatisations continue on course. Although the teachers' leaders have been released, pending trial, they still face serious charges.

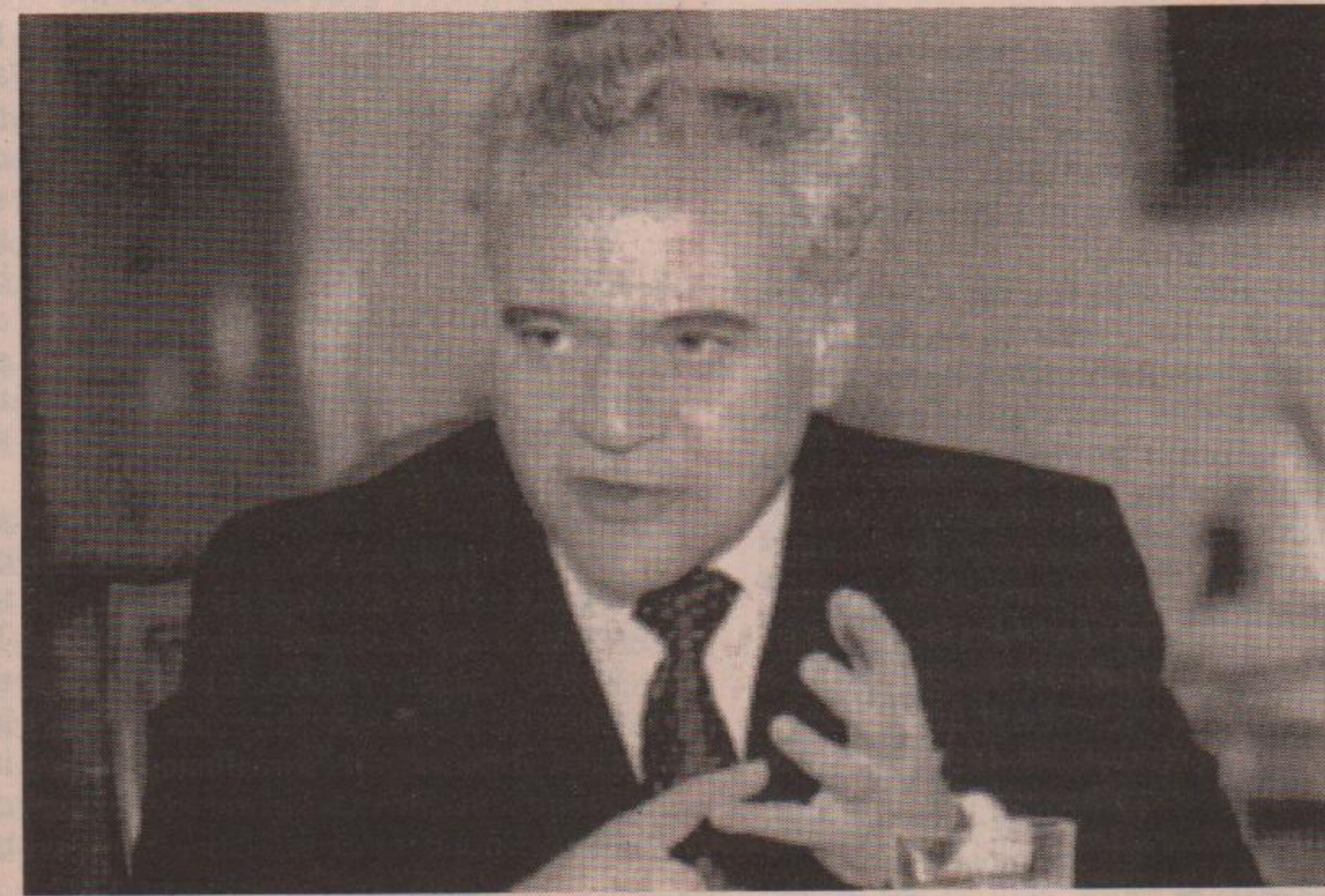
The state of siege has not managed to normalise the situation in the schools. Although the teachers' union has agreed to go ahead with the Education Reform many grievances remain and the government has had to reach an "understanding", in practice a compromise, in order for classes to resume.

In freeing most of the prisoners and giving guarantees that trade union and political leaders could work freely the government was forced to take several steps back in the middle of the state of siege. Meanwhile, wage negotiations continue and the universities have just begun a struggle over their budgets.

Now is the moment to continue the struggle and reorganise ourselves for future battles. We must discuss the COB/Government accords in rank-and-file assemblies and denounce the betrayals which they contain.

- Drop all charges against the teachers' leaders!
- Down with the state of siege!
- For freedom of association!
- Long live the COB's united pay claim!
- Wage rises to meet the needs of a family wage!
- Today and tomorrow: death to the Education Reform: long live free and funded education!

★Bolivia Solidarity—see report opposite.



President Sánchez de Lozada





## Bolivia solidarity

# Unions back campaign

José Villa explains how the Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee has mobilised support for the victims of repression.

OVER 140 people came to hear Tony Benn and other speakers at the London School of Economics on 18 May at a meeting called by the Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee (BUSC). Coming exactly a month after the Bolivian government imposed a state of siege on the trade unions and left organisations, the meeting was able to hear of successful protests, petitioning and lobbying of trade union conferences in Britain in support of imprisoned teachers' leaders.

Within hours of hearing news of the state of emergency, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) initiated the call for solidarity action. On 20 April BUSC was launched in London, an initiative supported by Workers Power, the British section of the LRCI.

BUSC organised a successful demon-

stration on 26 April of 150 trade unionists, Latin American refugees and British leftists outside the Bolivian Embassy. A petition with hundreds of signatures, gathered in a few days, was handed in protesting against the state of siege and demanding the release of the prisoners and the lifting of the repressive measures.

On various May Day demonstrations the BUSC spoke at rallies in London. Through the work of the BUSC important trade unions and labour leaders added their support, contacting the Bolivian embassy or sending messages of protest to the government in La Paz. UNISON, the Welsh TUC, CWU, NUM, GMB and NATFHE were among those who protested against the state of emergency. At the CPSA conference members of the Socialist Caucus succeeded in getting conference to support a motion in solidarity with the Bolivian un-

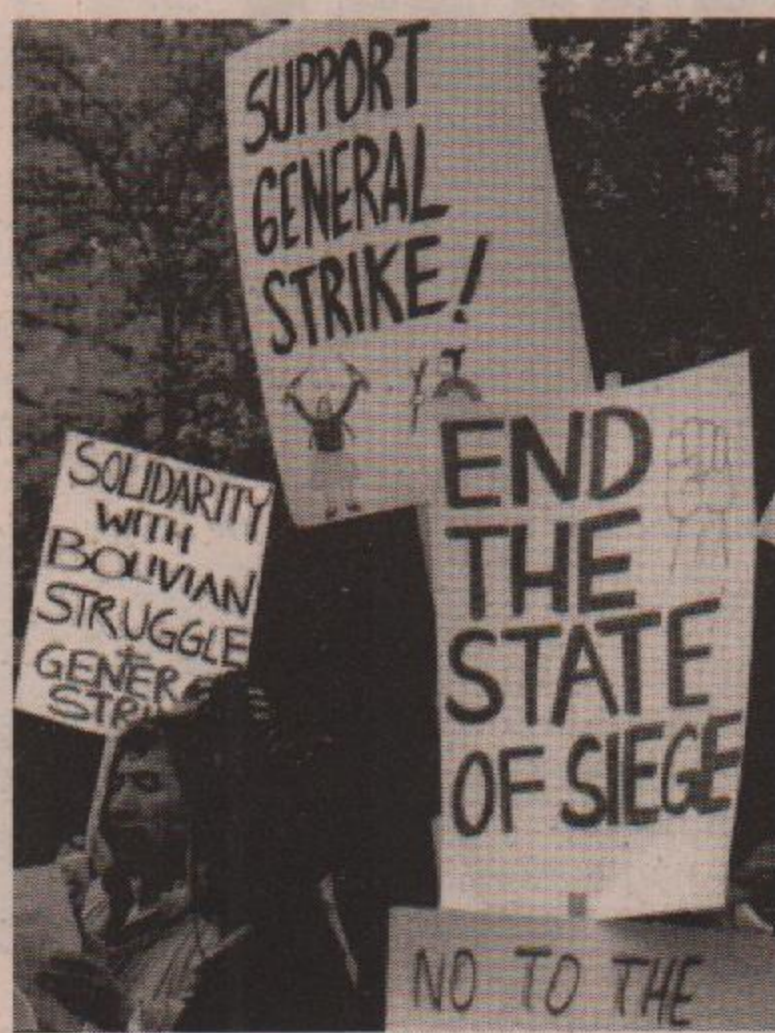
ions. At the Welsh TUC, BUSC supporters got the executive to back the campaign.

All COB and teachers' leaders have now been released (see article on page 10) but four teachers are only out on bail and await trial on conspiracy charges which carry 10 to 15 year jail sentences. The state of siege itself remains in force until mid-July, with its blanket suspension of constitutional rights.

BUSC remains committed to campaigning for the dropping of all criminal charges against the teachers' leaders and the end of the state of siege. We urge all our readers to add their voice to that protest.

• Send donations and affiliations to: Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee, BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX.

• Send letters of protest to: Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia. ■



## France

# Lutte Ouvrière gets big vote as right triumphs

ON 7 MAY, Jacques Chirac put an end to 14 years of Socialist Party presidential power in France. He easily beat his opponent, Lionel Jospin in the second round. Chirac will rule for the next seven years.

He enjoys an unprecedented power base, including a 380-strong majority in parliament for the right wing parties. Added to that, the right control most of the major towns and regional governments.

Chirac's first act was to appoint his loyal henchman Alan Juppé as Prime Minister. All the key posts in the new government have gone to Chirac supporters. The hated Interior Minister, Pasqua has gone—he backed the wrong right wing candidate in the election—but the police are as trigger-happy and racist as ever. The Economics Minister is Alain Madelin, one-time hardcore fascist and today a born-again Thatcherite. He symbolises many of the new government's political priorities.

The Juppé government claims it will prioritise the fight against unemployment. Like the Thatcherites in Britain this means forcing the unemployed to accept poorly paid jobs by attacking state support for those out of work. We can expect massive cuts in state spending, a wave of de-nationalisation, privatisation of pensions and health insurance and a systematic policy of state handouts for the bosses.

Despite being able to wield most of the levers of power, Chirac and his cronies will not have everything their own way. Throughout the election campaign, there was a wave of strike action as workers fought for higher wages and against sackings.

Since Chirac's election, public sector workers have participated in a series of days-of-action. It seems likely that over the summer break, pressure for action will build up amongst the workers. The autumn could see a new round of class struggle, fiercer than any seen since Mitterrand came to power in 1981.

As is often the case in France, the working class has the enormous strength of its spontaneous struggles and its ability to fight. But it is also weakened by the low level of unionisation and the lack of a

means to make its voice heard in politics.

The Socialist Party, momentarily strengthened by the fact that Jospin was not completely trashed by Chirac, seems set for a new round of apolitical internal struggle and blood-letting. The Communist Party, imitating its sister organisations throughout Europe, is fast evolving to the right. But has not been able to turn around its decline in membership and electoral support.

One of the main Trotskyist organisations in France, Lutte Ouvrière (LO), hopes to profit from this. LO's candidate in the elections, Arlette Laguiller, got over 5% of the vote (1,600,000 votes), an unprecedented result for a far left candidate. One of the reasons for this increased support was LO's radical change of approach.

Normally, LO concentrate on abstract denunciations of capitalism and demands for socialism, whilst pointing out that their candidate is "a woman of the people".

This time round, they presented "an emergency programme for the defence of the workers".

Having rarely advanced any kind of programme in their previous forty year existence, LO put forward a set of demands that owed a great deal to Trotsky's transitional programme—open the books, for a massive programme of public works, the take over of all companies sacking workers whilst making a profit, workers' control.

This was an undoubted step forward. Unfortunately, it was flawed by an exclusive focus on economic questions. Worse, LO's version of transitional demands was presented as a series of governmental demands, gutted of the central question of creating working class organisations in order to impose its control over the bosses in the factories and offices.

It thereby disconnected these demands from the struggle for power and in that sense robbed them of their transitional character. In addition to outlining "what we will do if you vote us into power" a revolutionary socialist election platform has also to explain how the masses can struggle for these goals outside parliament.

Most disappointing was LO's stance—



### Can the left build the workers' opposition to Chirac?

or lack of it—on the fight against racism.

In the seven issues of their weekly paper leading up to the election, there was only one article on racism (a petition launched by the PCF's anti-racist group) and only four mentions of Le Pen—in passing. In her 34 minutes of election broadcasts, Laguiller never once mentioned racism.

Following their success in the first round, LO decided that they should call for the creation of a mass workers' party, on the basis of their 1,600,000 voters.

Part of the problem, however, is that a sizeable proportion of those voters did not vote for any kind of socialist project, but rather voted for Laguiller in order to register a general protest against the established bourgeois parties. This was Laguiller's third Presidential campaign and she has a "notoriety", charisma and level of popular backing far in excess of LO itself. In the second round of the Presidential election, two exit polls reported that 20% of Laguiller's voters voted Chirac in the second round!

For all these reasons LO are finding it difficult to turn this level of electoral backing into solid support for their politics and organisation on the ground. LO is a few

thousand strong propaganda group and the election result has not changed this.

They have no real base in the workers' movement. That is why a vote for them in the election would have been a wasted vote since it could not have been the used to organise the workers who supported Laguiller into forcing LO to fight for the demands they espoused.

For the moment, it is difficult to tell what will happen to LO. In a series of articles in their paper, LO leaders seem utterly confused about their latest turn. Sometimes their new proposed party appears to be a left reformist party, sometimes a version of a mass workers' party (but without any mention of the unions), sometimes a revolutionary party.

The early post-election experience of organising meetings to test the water for a new party have been disappointing, reflecting the distance that separates LO's 1.6 million votes and their real support in the workers' movement. Only if LO were to abandon their traditional and ingrained hostility to non-economic struggles of the working class, improve further on their use of transitional demands and clarify the organisational and programmatic basis of any new party of the far left, could any lasting gain come from LO's first round vote. ■

### Mumia Abu-Jamal

IN LAST month's article on Mumia Abu-Jamal we asked people to send cheques to Jamal Legal Defence. Unfortunately, no account exists in that name and such cheques cannot be deposited.

Make cheques to **Partisan Defence Committee** and marked "Jamal Legal Defence" on the back of the cheque. These donations are sent in full to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Please send cheques to: Partisan Defence Committee, BCM BOX 4986, London WCIN 3XX

## A world to win

### ITALY

Savage cuts in Italian workers' pensions have been at the centre of the Dini government's plans this last half year. Many workers are being asked to work an extra five years before retiring. The bosses insist that it is a vital measure to cut the budget deficit.

Communist Refoundation (CR) is the only party mobilising strong opposition to the pension reform. It has demanded a wealth tax instead.

On 12 May a significant demonstration against the reform took place in Milan, organised by the factory councils. At it, Fausto Bertinotti, leader of the CR, called on rank and file workers to oppose the sell out by the union bureaucrats.

Bertinotti's stand is gaining support in the working class and CR's vote in the recent local elections went up to 11%. The question is will he and the CR turn this growing radicalisation into a mass movement against the attacks on the working class.

Dini's anti-worker budget could have been defeated in parliament had all the MPs of the CR voted against it as decided by the party's central committee. However, a number of them, led by Sergio Garavini, voted in favour, giving the excuse that "democracy" would be endangered by the fall of the Dini government.

There is still time to stop the reform before it becomes law. Bertinotti should use the tactic he has suggested—moving over 2,000 proposed amendments to the draft law—but use the time to mobilise for strike action to smash the reform. ★

### SWEDEN

THE MAY DAY rally in Malmö the third biggest city in Sweden, did not go according to plan this year. The leader of the local TUC denounced the Social Democratic government for betraying all their electoral promises since their September victory. The Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson demanded an apology. He didn't get it.

Elected in September, with an exceptionally high vote to replace the unpopular right wing government, the new rulers already face a massive rebellion in the ranks of their own party. The workers who voted for them were expecting a halt to the cuts, or at the very least a more "just" way of implementing them.

The Social Democrats failed to win an overall majority and had to negotiate with other parties to form a government. The government turned to the Centre Party which went against the expectations of many Social Democratic supporters, who were clearly moving to the left.

For the first time since the late 1940s demands resound for a government of the "left", i.e. a coalition between the Social Democrats and the Left Party, the former Stalinists. At various May Day marches union slogans could be seen in favour of a "Red Government".

Rank and file members of the Social Democrats were, however, heavily involved in the protests.

A revolutionary opposition inside the labour movement, particularly in the unions, is now an urgent necessity. Its main aim must be to focus and organise all the anger and frustration over the betrayal of the reformist leaders.

Arbetarmakt, the Swedish section of the LRCI has, despite its small resources, argued for a perspective to win in the struggle against the cuts. Through our fortnightly newsletter we have made this call to school students, protesting workers and angry marchers around May Day. We will continue to do so with all our strength in the struggles ahead. ★



## Clare Heath

# A market operation

**A**S A health worker I have almost got used to the invasion of the market into the NHS. I am no longer surprised by the appearance of Sock Shop in the hospital foyer, contract cleaners, caterers and porters with their company uniforms, and the burgeoning of managers responsible for "marketing" strategies, contracts and business plans.

The failure of health workers, patients and the labour movement in general to effectively resist these changes represents a significant defeat.

But last month the reforms hit me in a different way—as a patient. I had to go into hospital for an operation—nothing too major, but quite a specialised procedure.

I had looked into the question, talked to doctors and nurses at work, found out which of the London hospitals was going to be best for me.

Ten years ago I could probably have gone to my GP, got a letter and waited for an outpatient appointment.

Not so now. These days the first question asked, before deciding what would be best for the patient, is "who is going to pay?"

Stories from the USA of para-medics checking your credit card status before starting treatment sound alarming. But in Britain the same thing is going on—only it's not your personal bank balance they're concerned with, but your GP or District Health Authority's.

If your GP or Health Authority has no contract with a hospital, or if it has run out of money, then there is no treatment available.

In my case, the hospital was not the one closest to where I lived, but on the other side of London.

My GP is not a fund-holder, and he was quite happy to refer me to this place, agreeing that it was the best for this operation. He wrote a letter of referral and I got an appointment. The consultant saw me and recommended surgery, and I was booked to be admitted after a three month wait.

The night before I was due to go in I returned from a frantic day at work to find a message on my answer-phone:

"We have some rather bad news. We have had to cancel your operation because your health authority has refused to pay."

Remember the Tory propaganda at the time they introduced the NHS reforms? "The money must follow the patient", they demanded.

Good hospitals will attract patients through first class treatment, smart carpets and "marketing" strategies. Patients will get more choice, and hospitals will have to meet their needs to survive.

It is utter rubbish. The reforms were actually a way not only of cutting costs, but also of reducing choice.

Nowadays, patients have almost no choice in where they receive care.

If you need a hip replacement, there is no point scouting around to see which hospital has the best success rate, which offers the kind of care you want or even which is most convenient for your friends to visit.

No, you will go to the place your GP

or DHA has a contract with—usually, one hospital.

If your GP thinks you need to go somewhere else, you need an "extra-contractual referral" (ECR)—a special dispensation to pay a different hospital specifically for your care.

Who decides on these ECRs? Whole teams of managers have been created who decide on contracts, standards, costs and ECRs.

In my case, it probably meant several unqualified, non-medical suit-wearing managers discussing me (whatever happened to patient confidentiality) and deciding that I could not have this ECR.

It took them until the eve of the operation to decide. So much for increasing patient choice and the money following the patient!

I was lucky, in that the staff at the hospital I wanted to go to were so annoyed by the decision that they "disappeared" my case in among other contracts, and agreed to treat me anyway. But that is probably partly because I work in the NHS, and partly because they knew I would have made a fuss about it.

This kind of thing is going on day in, day out. There are resources available—staff, beds, theatre time—but because no one will promise to pay, treatment gets cancelled. Two other patients due to be admitted to the same ward as me that week were also cancelled due to "contract" problems.

But that is exactly what happens with a market—even if in this case it is not a free market.

It is irrational, unplanned and reduces choice.

The White Paper that led to the introduction of the reforms said that a useful by-

product would be the improvement of information within the NHS. We would now know exactly who was doing what and how much it cost because it would have to be paid for on an item-by-item basis.

If my experience is anything to go by quite the opposite is true—staff are encouraged to hide information and cook the books to try and avoid some of the worst effects of the market!

As a footnote to this diatribe against the new, McDonald's-style, NHS, I got another surprise once in hospital—the televisions.

I remember in a previous hospital stay there was a day room where people went to watch TV and chat. This time there was no day room.

But at the end of most beds there was a portable TV, complete with remote control and earphones. Great, I thought.

But then I was told that you have to pay! A man came round every day and collected rental, at the extortionate rate of £11.50 a week—you could buy the TV in question for about £100. This was on behalf of an independent contractor called Hospital Entertainment.

And like every other example of marketing the NHS there was no increase in choice involved here either. A notice on the door of the ward forbade patients to bring in their own TVs!■

**"We have some rather bad news. We have had to cancel your operation because your health authority has refused to pay."**

# Fascism and war

## German left's guilty conscience

**O**N THE 8 May VE demonstrations in Germany sections of the left could be heard shouting "No tears for Dresden," "Do it again, Bomber Harris" and "Germany never again". This "anti-national" or "anti-German" movement has grown over the last few years. Its ideas fill the pages of the biggest selling left wing monthly *Konkret* and even influence one daily paper.

The roots of these ideas are found in the nature of the post-war settlement in Germany. The ideology of "collective guilt" created at the end of the Second World War was one of the foundations of post war German capitalism. Its aim was to obscure the class character of fascism and its roots in the capitalist system.

According to the supporters of the collective guilt theory the reason that fascism triumphed was not because of the acute crisis in German capitalism between the two world wars and the failure of the German Socialist Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) to overthrow capitalism.

For *Konkret* Hitler's success was an expression of the lack of bourgeois democratic culture in the German people which made them opt for an authoritarian solution to their problems (unlike the "democratic nations"). According to this logic all the social classes of German society were guilty for the sins of the Third Reich.

Whilst many of the Social Democratic and Stalinist supporters of that ideology did not necessarily agree with this argument, they completely agreed with the political conclusions drawn from it. Both the SPD and KPD argued after the Second World War that the German people had not resisted Hitler and proved themselves not to be ripe for socialism.

### Stable

Thus, all attempts of the German workers to struggle for socialism had to be resisted! For the reformist leaders, the Germans had to learn to appreciate bourgeois democracy first.

The German workers' "lack of democratic credentials" could be cured by long experience of a stable bourgeois democratic system in which the different social interests could be mediated and a social partnership constructed.

The German left used to contest all this nonsense. That, like much else in Germany, has changed in the last years.

A so-called anti-national (or anti-German) left "movement" has emerged out of the ashes of the ex-Maoists, "autonomes" and Green-alternative groups. It first appeared in 1992, organising a demonstration in Dresden with the slogan "Nie wieder Deutschland" (Germany - Never Again!).

For the latter-day ideologues of "collective guilt" there is something intrinsically reactionary, nationalist and fascist in the German nation as a whole. For them no classes exist in Germany, only Germans, whose final aim it is to constitute themselves as the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Peoples' Community).

According to Jürgen Elsässer, one of the chief and most "radical" members of this current:

As VE Day celebrations dominated our TV screens many socialists found themselves having to fight against anti-German chauvinism, which blames all Germans for the crimes of fascism. In Germany some on the left have accepted the reactionary idea of collective guilt. Marcus Dahms of the LRCI's German section - Arbeitermacht - explains why.

"There were no contradictions worth mentioning between leaders and those led in Nazi-Germany."

He fails to explain why it was that some hundreds of thousands of communist and social-democratic German workers had to be rounded up and many killed in concentration camps. Why did the fascist regime need a regime of terror, an SS and a Gestapo, throughout these years if all Germans supported the Führer?

For the anti-national left, history has to be made to conform to their idealist and reactionary schema. Thus, even after the Second World War, the "inner structure of the *Volksgemeinschaft* remained intact" even though it was hindered by "the allied occupation".

Sadly, for the "anti-nationalists" this "last hindrance to collective hatred" fell along with the Berlin wall and German imperialism is free once more to resume its aggressive role.

For the anti-national left, the German working class has no progressive role to play whatsoever. It is an unsalvageable part of the "Peoples' Community". They believe that the left is doomed to remain a tiny minority. They "reject any positive reference to the people and their 'real' interests." Instead:

"We criticise those who ignore the fact that every policy which starts from the recognition of antagonistic interests comes up against incomprehension and even militant rejection by the vast majority of the people."

The rest of the German left is considered by the likes of *Konkret* to be part of the "left wing" of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Why? Because we want to win the workers and the oppressed for a struggle against the bosses.

We are blamed for having "illusions" in the existence of the class struggle and class interests. For the anti-German left, the idea of a German class struggle only serves to obscure the reactionary character of the German people as a whole and their total identification with the interests of German imperialism.

Naturally, if no saviour can be found within the German nation then the only force who can stop the blood-thirsty German "people's imperialism" from walking into other peoples' countries are the other, "civilised" imperialist powers. According to Elsässer

"Their [the Western allies'] measures against Nazi-Germany—catchword: 'Bomber Harris'—are to be defended without exception against the howls of the new and old *Volksgemeinschaft* of all Germans."

Unfortunately the anti-national left's pro-imperialist positions are not confined to the past. The same group of people sided with the US-led imperialist coalition in the Gulf war against Iraq.

Saddam Hussein was equated with Hitler, and Chancellor Kohl was criticised for not supporting the US firmly enough. How was such a view possible? Quite simply, the anti-nationalists viewed the whole Gulf war as a war of Islamic fundamentalism (which they equate with fascism) against Israel.

The fact that Baghdad was not bombed by German aircraft was taken as "proof" of the anti-semitism of the German people from Kohl, via the SPD, the Greens, the PDS, right down to the left who sided with Iraq against imperialism!

The ideology of anti-national leftists inevitably leads to reactionary conclusions, both at home and abroad. So why is it growing? The success of this current is simply a result of the crisis of the German left after 1989 when it failed to prevent capitalist reunification.

### Crisis

It did not foresee the crisis. It neither provided any political answer to the death agony of Stalinism, nor offered a revolutionary outcome to the problems faced by East German workers. It subsequently fell prey to demoralisation and confusion as capitalism triumphed.

Many of these leftists finally found someone to blame for their failure - the working class East and West. The fact that the majority of the East German workers voted for Kohl and for capitalist reunification made the anti-German left indict the working class and write it off for ever.

The whole of this anti-national ideology is the outlook of a desperate, worn out petit-bourgeois left, isolated from and cynical towards the daily struggles of the working class.

Of course, the German workers are full of reformist ideas and ideologies. They trust a leadership of social democratic bureaucrats in the unions and in the SPD. But they can and must be broken from this misleadership, won for revolutionary politics and leadership.

The recent strikes of Germany's unions and the fierce hostility of the employers testify to the fact that the "Peoples' Community" is riven with contradiction and conflict.

The defeat of the German workers at the end of the war produced a social partnership and quiescence which is now breaking up.

The anti-national left has given up the struggle to win over the working class part of the German nation. It thereby helps to leave the workers firmly in the grip of the reformists or even the open bourgeois parties.

Clearly, the anti-nationals won't find much of a hearing amongst trade unionists and long standing working class activists.

But there is a danger that they will get a hearing amongst the newly radicalised youth in Germany. This youth is rightly repelled by the passivity and cowardice of the reformists. They see a working class which is slow to move politically. They want to fight now. The anti-German left aims to poison the hearts and minds of the youths with their brand of "radical" hopelessness.

That is why revolutionary communists will continue to wage an implacable ideological struggle against their middle class claptrap. Not German "anti-nationalism", but workers internationalism!■



Nazis arrest Communists, 1933.



# Former Yugoslavia

# Solidarity with Bosnia!

The fourth anniversary of the Serbo-Croat war of 1991-2 and the third anniversary of the beginning of the Bosnian genocide have been marked by a renewal of heavy fighting in Bosnia.

Bosnian Serbs withdrew heavy weapons from UN supervised dumps and used them against Sarajevo. NATO staged an air raid in response, against a Serb ammunition dump near Pale, the capital of the Republika Srpska. The Serb reply was to bombard the multi-ethnic Bosnian capital once more and to shell Tuzla, killing 70 civilians in the northern industrial city, the main working class city of Bosnia. When NATO planes again hit Pale, the Serbs took up to 30 UNPROFOR military observers hostage and chained them to the doors of the ammunition bunkers.

As we go to press NATO is rattling its sabre, the UN is wringing its hands in despair and the military situation is on a knife edge.

In short, massive instability has displaced the relative lull in the fighting which lasted from summer 1994 to April 1995. The prospect of a full scale conflict between all the Serb states and statelets and the Bosnian-Croat alliance is now being widely discussed.

In January Croatian President Franjo Tudjman gave the UN an ultimatum to get out of the buffer zones surrounding the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK) in Croatia. He did this under political pressure from the 200,000 Croat refugees from the Krajina. The Serb majority in the Krajina drove out their Croat neighbours when they seized control of this territory at the start of the Yugoslav conflict. In addition, the territory of the RSK straddles the rail and motorway communication between Zagreb and the industrial area of Croatia, on the one hand, and the Dalmatian ports and tourist areas of the Adriatic on the other.

Croatia has experienced a 50% drop in industrial production since 1989 and has 18% unemployment. It now has 114,000 soldiers under arms with reserves of up to 200,000 men. It has 200 tanks, 25 combat aircraft and is close to beginning production of its own tank. Of course, this is still no match for Serbia proper with its 200,000 strong standing army, 800 tanks and 300 combat aircraft. But it is enough to deal with the RSK forces.

After the Croatian offensive in Western Slavonia the forces of the Serbian Republic of Krajina are naturally preparing for a further Croat offensive in their region. Should the Croats attack, doubtlessly Serb President Milosevic will at the very least allow volunteers from Serbia to go to the Krajina. No doubt the Bosnian Serb forces will join in too. This alone could be a very savage war.

The plans of the Contact group (the four main western powers plus Russia) for resolving this conflict has broken down on the intransigence of both Tudjman and the RSK leaders in Knin.

What should be the attitude of revolutionaries to such a war? Though the populations on both sides have justified grievances, a victory by either side would be equally reactionary. Why?

The Croatian government has never recognised the right of regions of the Krajina, where 400,000 Serbs form a majority, to either real autonomy or secession. It has mistreated and persecuted its Serb population, many of whom have fled as refugees to Serbia.

The RSK and its forces, however, drove over 200,000 Croats out of the Krajina in 1991, many from areas where Croats formed a clear majority. Their offensives on the Dalmatian coast were aimed at cutting Croatia in half and creating a Greater Serbia at the expense of both Croats and Bosnians.

There is only one progressive solution. The Serb majority areas (as they stood in 1991) have the unconditional right to secede. It would be sensible, in terms of their own economic well-being, for them to settle for federal autonomy—either within Croatia or, much better, within a restored but voluntary federation of the whole region.

A deal between Tudjman and Milosevic may still avert an all-out war. Tudjman, for all his Croatian chauvinism, has always believed that a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia could be mutually realis-



UNPROFOR tank near Tuzla: UN/NATO should get out of the Balkans

able goals—at the expense of a partitioned Bosnia.

But the Bosnian Croats, or rather the Croats of Herzegovina, were too few in numbers to defeat the Bosnian Army. They suffered outright defeat in 1993. In addition, despite much behind the scenes negotiation, Milosevic has never come up with such a deal.

The Serbian enclaves in Slavonia and the RSK have proved so far an insuperable obstacle to a Tudjman/Milosevic deal. Milosevic cannot agree to hand them back and Tudjman cannot get away with recognising their secession or even their federal autonomy within Croatia.

So, at the moment, war seems a more likely outcome than an imperialist brokered peace. Croatia feels it is getting stronger militarily, though not yet ready to take on Serbia itself. On the other hand, Milosevic cannot stand back whilst Croatia renews its offensive throughout the Krajina.

The Serbs are at the moment divided and weakened because Milosevic does favour some sort of deal with the Contact Group to preserve Serb gains, establish some sort of link between the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs and enable him to put his own puppets in power in Knin and Pale.

Karadjic and Mladic—the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs—clearly disagree and are doing everything they can to thwart this.

Milosevic needs to do something rapidly to avert the deterioration of the Serbian economy. The mass of the working class is being heavily hit by the economic blockade.

The average wage is 70 dinars, half that of an old age pension. More than two thirds of the population exist at or below the poverty level as designated by the World Bank. A Serbian Socialist Party MP recently told journalists over a meal of fried chicken, followed by venison and a fish course: "What does the opposition want? We never used to eat like this in Serbia?"

As the owner of an agricultural company and with two salary cheques—one as MP and the

As former Yugoslavia slides towards all out war Dave Stockton outlines the class issues at stake.



Bosnian government forces in action

other as a manager of the state TV company—this man speaks for the corrupt ex-Stalinist bureaucracy who park their Porsches, Mercedes, and BMWs outside the Cafe Rose, the Piano Bar and the Hotel Hyatt in Belgrade. For the 27,000 people in the city who eat in soup kitchens, the diet is plain rice and potatoes without meat.

The breakdown of the one year old partial ceasefire in Bosnia, sponsored by former US president Jimmy Carter, reflects the growing strength of the Bosnian government forces, the degree of confidence they feel as a result of the Serb divisions—reflected in the limited counter-offensives the Bosnian Army has been able to mount over the past months.

Bosnia has a regular army of 250,000 soldiers divided into seven army corps. Bihac, the Bosnian government pocket in the north, is hemmed in by Bosnian Serb and Krajina Serb forces (aided by the militias of the Bosnia Muslim gangster Fikret Abdic). Its survival is due more to the Bosnian Army 5th Corps than to its status as a UN "safe area". In the Tuzla region limited offensives have proved successful.

In the cities and towns of central Bosnia where hundreds of thousands of victims of post-1992 ethnic cleansing are crowded, and who form the backbone of the 7th and 17th Bosnian Army brigades, the impatience to liberate their homes is growing.

The citizens of the multi-ethnic Bosnian Republic want to liberate the huge areas of eastern Bosnia where Muslims and Croats (together with many ethnic Serbs opposed to the genocide) formed the great bulk of the population. This desire is thoroughly justified.

Though "Muslim" units have carried out atrocities and "ethnically cleansed" Serb villages, this is not, and has never been, the policy of either the Bosnian government or army. This is not because Muslim nationalists of the Itzetbegovic type are incapable of it. It is because the population on whom they are based is the main victim over a three year period of an horrific

attempt at genocide.

Thus the war of the Bosnian republic, whether militarily offensive or defensive is a justified war of survival as a people.

This is true whether or not they are "aided" by NATO air attacks. Up to now the NATO attacks have, in essence, been cosmetic jobs. They have been designed to cover up the fact that the UN, with its arms blockade, prevented the Bosnians from defending themselves against the vastly better armed Serb militias who were the spearhead of the pogroms. They have been aimed not at defeating Serbian forces, but at containing them and forcing them to a negotiating table where their conquests and the results of their ethnic cleansing will be ratified.

However, if the legitimate Bosnian war of liberation becomes totally subsumed into a Croat-Serb war, or if imperialism abandons its present divided and indecisive policy and intervenes in force, then the war would change its character.

This would be a national disaster for the Bosnians who would become bit part players in either a war for a Greater Croatia or extras in the imperialist conquest of former Yugoslavia. At present, however, the latter scenario is not on the cards—despite the heightened fighting between Serb forces and UN peacekeepers. The fact that the initial response of both Britain and France to the Serb attacks has been to threaten withdrawal tells us how uncommitted the European imperialists are, at present, to an attack on Serbia.

On the other hand, the very divisions within the imperialist camp, the desperate internal situation in Serbia itself, and the growing confidence of both Croat and Bosnian government military machines means that sharp and unexpected turns in the situation are not ruled out.

Negotiations are underway between the Contact Group and Slobodan Milosevic on a deal to recognise the international borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina in return for the lifting of UN sanctions and the opening of new negotiations with Zagreb and Sarajevo. The latest negotiations seem to have stalled over whether the lifting of sanctions should be temporary or permanent. Milosevic insists on the latter. This project is very much a French initiative. As the country with the largest contingent within the 38,651-strong UNPROFOR, and the one that suffered the heaviest losses, they want the situation sewn up as quickly as possible.

The solution apparently favoured by Britain, France and Russia is for the Bosnian-Croat federation to join Croatia and the Bosnian Republika Srpska to join Serbia.

The problems with this are the RSK and its status and the unlikelyhood of the Bosnian Muslims agreeing to partition plans. These plans would leave many hundreds of thousands of Bosnians homeless and recognise the fact of ethnic cleansing.

The trio are also unlikely to get their plan accepted by the Bosnians because the US—pressured by its "friends" in the Middle East like Turkey, Egypt and the Saudis—cannot be seen to allow an "Islamic" people to be the absolute victims of the whole process.

In short, another very bloody war is the most likely scenario.

That is why revolutionaries should maintain their demands:

- UN/NATO troops out now! Stop the bombings of Serb positions.
- End all imperialist sanctions and blockades: lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government, end the economic sanctions against Serbia.
- Victory to the Bosnian government forces. Against all ethnic cleansing and for multi-ethnic workers' militias.
- No support for either side in the war between Croatia and Serbia. For the right of minorities of either side to self defence against ethnic cleansing. Form soldiers' committees.
- For the right of self determination, up to and including separation, for all national and "ethnic" minorities in former Yugoslavia.
- No to all nationalist solutions. For working class internationalism on all sides. For a Socialist Federation of the Balkans.■

**NO SUPPORT FOR TUDJMAN OR MILOSEVIC!  
UN/NATO OUT OF THE BALKANS!**



# "The General" on war and insurrection

**I**N 1841, aged 20, Engels did his national service in the Berlin Guards' Artillery, where he spent most of his time learning about left wing politics. He gained his first experience of revolutionary warfare on the barricades in 1849.

Engels took part in the fighting in Baden, in South West Germany, against Prussia's attempt to crush the revolution which had broken out in 1848. Engels served as *aide-de-camp* to August von Willich, an army lieutenant who had been a leader in the Cologne workers' movement with Engels.

After the defeat of that rising, Engels, Willich and many other members of the Communist League joined Marx in exile in London. Here Engels engaged in fierce arguments with Willich and his followers, who argued for a left wing military coup, organised from abroad and led by Willich, to revive the revolutionary movement.

Engels argued instead that the military activity of the self-selected few under the control of the self-appointed "leaders" cannot replace the political action of the mass of the working class. The forms of military struggle appropriate to that class are subordinated to its mass democratic organisations.

Engels' difference with Willich demarcates Marxism from every brand of politics that substitutes militarism or physical force for mass action—whether it be in the anti-fascist struggle or in guerilla warfare.

Every revolution since 1848 has vindicated Engels' view. But in order to win the argument against Willich's "military gang" at the time, Engels decided to study military theory, with the help of a professional soldier and comrade in the 1848-49 revolution, Joseph Weydermeyer.

The relative quiescence of the class struggle in Europe—between 1851 and 1871—was punctuated by numerous national wars. Engels used his military knowledge to earn money for both himself and Marx by writing commentaries on these wars for the international press, at the same time laying down a socialist line on the different wars.

So knowledgeable were these articles that the press speculated about which famous general had really written them, causing Marx's family to give Engels the life-long nickname of "the General".

As the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) gave birth to the world's first, short-lived, workers' government—the Paris Commune—Engels turned once again to the questions of barricade fighting, the workers' militia and the tactics of revolutionary warfare.

Finally, in *Anti-Dühring*, Engels summarised the historical materialist view of warfare. Dühring, a fashionable academic theorist in the early German workers' movement, argued—against Marx and Engels—that physical force, not economic relations was the motor force of social history.

Engels' reply is a classic of historical materialism, reiterating many of the points made by himself and Marx in their writings on different wars, but presenting a systematic view of the history of warfare in class society.

Engels' starting point was Clausewitz's famous saying. But he also understood that the politics of each war determined what attitude the working class should take towards that war. Were the political ends just and progressive, or reactionary? What was the class character of a war?

In the mid 19th century, when the workers' movement was still weak, and in many countries the capitalist class had not yet overthrown the remnants of feudalism, Marx and Engels readily urged the working class to give critical support to the progressive side in the wars which raged.

They supported Prussia against both Austria (1866) and, initially, France (1870) on the grounds that Bismarck was completing the task of the 1848 revolution "from above" by building a unified capitalist Germany.

In the American Civil War (1861-65) Marx and Engels not only supported the Union side against the southern slave holders' rebellion—as did the whole of the organised workers' movement—they quickly saw the economic reasons for the half hearted and unsuccessful military cam-

## ENGELS



1820★1895

War is ugly and brutal. But it cannot be dismissed simply as a product of the violent and irrational side of human nature. It is—as the great 19th century military thinker, Clausewitz, observed—a continuation of politics by other means. As such it flows from, and is rooted in, the class struggle. In the latest in a series of articles to mark the centenary of Frederick Engels' death, Paul Morris reveals the enduring relevance of Engels' writings on war and insurrection.



Black soldiers in the American Civil War

paigns of the Union armies. The Union's failures were rooted in the desire amongst sections of the Northern capitalists (mainly supporters of the Democratic Party) for a compromise with the slave states. This found its reflection in the army in the shape of the early commander in chief, McClellan, who refused to countenance a war aimed at destroying the military power of the south.

Engels urged the North to adopt the tactics of total war against the Confederates, including the abolition of slavery and the recruitment of black soldiers.

Lincoln finally issued the proclamation ending slavery and black regiments were created. And one year after Engels wrote that "Georgia is the key to [the Confed-

eracy]" General Sherman marched his Union army through Georgia, conducting total economic war against the slave owners, and finally turning the tide.

Engels' military writings are an object lesson in the method of historical materialism. Marxism believes that the basic driving force of human history is not ideas or individuals, or even political parties, but ultimately the development of the social relations of production.

This position has often been reduced to or caricatured as the proposition that "the plough gives you feudalism, the steam engine gives you capitalism". Yet, in *Anti-Dühring* Engels examines the relationship between economic development, class struggles and military technique and shows

how, far from being a rigid "economic determinism", historical materialism understands the process of cause and effect as a complex interaction of the economic, the political and the military.

In the case of the introduction of firearms in the 14th century Engels wrote:

"The introduction of gunpowder and firearms, however, was not an act of force, but a step forward in industry, that is, an economic advance . . . And the introduction of firearms had a revolutionising effect not only on the waging of war itself, but also on the political relationships of domination and subjection. The provision of powder and firearms required industry and money, and both of these were in the hands of the burghers of the towns. From



**E**ngels' writings contain the best contemporary socialist account of the role of barricade fighting in the revolutionary insurrection.

Barricades emerged in the revolutionary struggles of the European workers in the forty years before 1848.

They were the final addition to military tactics by the masses of early industrial societies.

They came to a spectacular end when the French General Cavaignac worked out how to defeat them as he crushed the Parisian workers' revolution in June 1848.

Basically Cavaignac's method—still enshrined in the "Urban Storm" manuals of the US army today—was to avoid the streets and attack via gardens, alleys and buildings themselves. But behind Cavaignac's military solution, Engels explained, was a changing social situation.

Barricade fighting, Engels insisted against the prevailing romanticism of the 19th century left, hardly ever resulted in a decisive military victory:

"Even in the classic time of street fighting therefore the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect."

Its purpose was to disintegrate the army of the reactionaries and to force the local militia (such as the French National Guard) to face the choice of what to do with its arms.

Engels argued that developments in capitalist society—from the widening of the streets to the abolition of armed militias—had made the barricade outmoded: "The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of the unconscious masses, is past.

Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation,

the masses themselves must be also in it, they must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for with body and soul."

Later, the reformists of the Second International distorted Engels' argument to suggest that the "revolution" would be peaceful. But Engels was making the exact opposite point: that a violent revolution would have a mass character, that it would take the form of mass strikes, workers' militias.

It would be an offensive, mobile struggle as opposed to a passive defence of the workers' areas by using barricades:

"Does that mean that in the future the street fight will play no further role? Certainly not. It only means that . . . it will occur more seldom at the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces."★

the outset, therefore, firearms were the weapons of the towns, and of the rising monarchy, drawing its support from the towns, against the feudal nobility."

The feudal knight on horseback could now be shot out of his saddle and the castle walls blown to bits by the armies of the towns.

However, the development of musket armed infantry did not lead to one, static form of social organisation in war or in society as a whole.

The development of capitalism itself required social revolutions as well as revolutions in technique.

With the bourgeois revolutions of the late 18th century (1776 in America, 1789 in France) the human material of warfare changed: the masses, arms in hand, entered the fray. Before this most armies had been made up of brutalised criminal mercenaries or virtual slaves.

The American farmers who fought the British in 1776, and the masses of French artisans and peasants who defended their revolution against all comers after 1789, introduced two military tactics which devastated the military systems of the reactionaries—skirmishing (America) and the massed column (France).

Engels follows the line of development of infantry tactics right up to the form in which they existed until the introduction, decades later, of the tank.

The need of the 19th century capitalists to fight total economic warfare—using mass, conscript, proletarian armies—was creating a bourgeois militarism that would be "burst asunder from within". With the onset of revolutionary crises the "armies of princes become transformed into armies of the people; the machine refuses to work, and militarism collapses by the dialectic of its own evolution."

And that was exactly what happened as mutiny and revolution swept across Europe, from Russia to Germany, towards the end of World War One.

Much of Engels' military writings concern the strategy and tactics of revolutionary armed struggle.

Here Engels' constant theme, taken up with a vengeance by Trotsky at the head of the Red Army in the Russian Civil War, is that the workers' revolution has to master the most advanced techniques of bourgeois militarism before it can start dreaming up special "proletarian" military tactics.

Basically, the workers' militia does not beat the capitalist army with its revolutionary heroism. It has to have officers and NCOs who know what they are doing and who can maintain a discipline often at odds with the revolutionary fervour of a mass movement. Engels had learned this from bitter experience in Baden, and seen it repeated in the early defeats of the Union armies of the Paris Commune:

"Whoever has seen popular levies on the drill ground or under fire—be they Baden Freischaaren [irregulars], Bull-Run Yankees, French Mobiles or British Volunteers—will have perceived at once that the chief cause of the helplessness and unsteadiness of these troops lies in the fact of the officers not knowing their duty."

Drawing on Engels' writings Trotsky, then head of the Red Army, fought against the "left" generals of the Red Army who claimed that Marxism could evolve a special, infallible proletarian military tactics. What they were really doing was separating war in a rigid, and artificial way from social development. Trotsky wrote:

"The greatest incomparable merit of Engels consisted in the fact that while he had a profound grasp of the independent character of war—with its own inner technique, structure, its methods, traditions and prejudices—he was at the same time a great expert in politics, to which war is, in the last analysis, subordinated."

In revolutionary strategy—from the picket line to the seizure of power—the military is subordinate to the political.

But, as Engels constantly emphasised, it has its own laws which have to be mastered—learned from the bourgeoisie and not romanticised into special forms of "proletarian militarism". These are the lessons Engels, writing in the age of the musket, can still teach revolutionaries in the age of the guided missile.■



# LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 190 JUNE 1995

## Regrouping a divided left

Dear Comrades,

The last two issues of your paper have taken up the question of revolutionary regroupment, in the article "Uniting a divided left" in issue 187, and the letter from one of your Swedish comrades in WP188. Despite the space given to this subject, your position on regroupment appears rather confused.

Whilst you reject accusations that "Workers Power sees itself as the revolutionary party" or that your position means that "Revolutionary regroupment is reduced to the appeal to 'join us'." the rest of the article seems to argue just that position.

You correctly argue that revolutionaries should fight to build their organisation and win individuals and organisations towards it, and then go on to quote Trotsky on the need to have a correct and clear policy and to have self-confidence in the politics that we fight for. However, Mark Harrison appears to counter-pose party building and having self-confidence to any regroupment perspective:

"We are not suggesting that we are a fully fledged revolutionary international party. We are saying that the only justification for our existence is our belief that we have a clear and correct policy. That is not ultimatism. It is party building and there is nothing wrong with party building."

In other words Workers Power is the sole defender of a revolutionary policy, and that the revolutionary party will be built

by more and more forces agreeing with and joining Workers Power. If all that is needed for a world revolution is for enough people to agree with the existing positions of Workers Power then surely we can now ditch the need for democratic centralism and simply have centralism as a means through which forces can carry out the pre-ordained correct policy.

If Lenin had taken the position in April 1917 that having a clear and correct policy was the basis for the need for a new organisation, he would not have been able to lead the Bolshevik Party, which had a quite dramatically wrong policy, towards the October revolution, he would have split from them and gone off and forced his own group.

Your position on centrism also leaves some glaring questions. My understanding of centrism is that of a group which vacillates between reformism and revolution. These are two sharply counter-posed directions which would leave any organisations being pulled both ways extremely unstable, in particular during periods of heightened class struggle. The USFI, however, who you describe as centrist, "is not going to change" as "its centrism is ingrained."

The letter from Per-Olof Mattson further elaborates this theme of centrism, with what appears a very wooden understanding of it. He starts by an almost evangelical repentance and a pronouncement that he has, "along with a group of former members of the Swedish section, broken

from the centrist politics of the USFI and have not left politics in despair" So thankfully these Swedish comrades are back in the revolutionary fold of the LRCI.

Centrism, according to this understanding, is a matter of which organisation you belong to, rather than the politics you fight for. Not once did Mattson argue that it was not possible for revolutionaries to operate within the USFI.

I, along with thousands of other militants of the USFI, am committed to constructing a revolutionary party. We would agree with the comrades of the LTT when they say that there isn't one at present, and the construction of such a party is unlikely to be simply through a process of linear development. If you believe we are centrists, then using centrism as a term of abuse does little to engage in debate with us. It would be far better for you to educate us as to why you believe our politics are wrong (which incidentally, you would be in a far better position to do as members of the USFI).

More importantly, the letter relates how the Swedish comrades had waited around in the USFI for years for a revolutionary leadership to emerge and then left after it failed to materialise. If the Swedish comrades have really broken from centrism, surely they must now understand that a revolutionary leadership must be actively fought for, and that we cannot simply wait around for one to emerge.

In comradeship,  
Simon Deville, London

## Socialising housework

Dear Comrade,

Having read Helen Watson's article on Engels and women's oppression which appears to accept that bringing women out of the home into the workplace is a step forward, I wonder why Workers Power doesn't support Newt Gingrich. After all, that is what he intends.

Single mothers to work for their benefit while their children are socialised by warehousing. In the event of a woman on benefit refusing this "emancipation" her child to be taken into an orphanage because she is a "bad mother". Far from being emancipation this is, of course, direction of women into service industries to be used as cheap labour.

Helen Watson's analysis—in which she quotes Engels from the book without bringing to her reading any creative understanding of her own—concerns middle and upper-class women. Working-class women have always worked during the nineteenth century in the mines and the mills—and suffered a continual struggle to keep their family together. In pre-industrial times women worked in the

fields, as they do today in much of the Third World.

It is depressing to read an analysis which takes no note of changing technology which is bringing to an end labour intensive industry. Marx and Engels saw the factory as a socialising factory because hundreds were employed within it. What would they make of half a dozen persons running a fully automated factory? In the Third World where labour power is cheap and safety regulations poor, multi-nation-

als might invest in labour power instead of machinery, the "benefactors" of this employment being women.

If Helen Watson is looking forward to a socialism under which all women are out working and everyone eats in mass restaurants (which employ people to cook and wash up all day) and use Laundromats for mass washing instead of personal washing-machines, I wonder how she views socialism.

After all, modern technology, together with "from each according to his/her ability and to each according to her/his needs", should reduce hours of working in industry to a minimum and leave people with leisure to develop talents and interests.

If Helen Watson's article is a future plan for women under capitalism, she appears to lack understanding of contemporary capitalism. In conclusion, I would remark that "children are people too" and under socialism parents will develop their own methods of child care.

Yours sincerely,  
Sheila Lahr, London

✓ Agree  
✗ Disagree?  
! Got something to say?  
Write in to:  
Workers Power,  
BCM 7750  
London WC1N 3XX  
@ or e-mail:  
paulmorris@easynet.co.uk

## Pie in the Sky?

Dear Comrades

Recent months have seen the rare sight of Rugby League gaining national media attention, with the formation of Rupert Murdoch's Sky-sponsored £77 million "European Super League". While the attention of the sports media will focus on Rugby Union's "World Cup" for the next month, the issues raised by Murdoch's move will have significant impact on both games for the year to come.

The questions of professionalism and open payment for playing threaten to split world Rugby Union, with the Southern hemisphere countries largely in favour and those in the North opposed.

Meanwhile, Murdoch and Rugby League officialdom have been forced to withdraw most of their club merger plans following massive opposition from fans.

However, this summer will still see clubs like Keighley and Widnes legally challenging their expulsion from the Super League.

For Rugby League fans Murdoch's buy-out will mean more pay-as-you-watch TV coverage, with Sky TV deciding on fixture dates and times, as already happens with

Premier League football.

Despite being seen by many as a superior "product" to rugby union in terms of skill, pace and commitment, capitalism's much vaunted "market forces" haven't seen it triumph over Union.

Why? First, Rugby Union has operated an entirely illegal ban on the free movement of players between the codes. Secondly, League is stereo-typed as cloth-capped and Northern, not to be taken seriously by Rugby Union's friends in the media. Union, on the other hand, despite tiny crowds at most games, is portrayed as a truly "national" sport.

George Orwell's remark that a bomb under the West Stand at Twickenham would have halted British fascism for 50 years still says a lot about the type of people who run English rugby union—as Will Carling recently reminded us!

With partial exceptions, particularly in South Wales, the class divide between those who play and watch the two codes could hardly be starker. In contrast to most of Union, League is based in working class communities, with a proud history of solidarity. Many of the clubs are in former pit

villages.

Unlike in football, there is no racism or crowd trouble at games: we even applaud the opposition! The semi-professional status of League players reflects the working class origins of the game.

The League formed 100 years ago when the Northern Union split away over the issue of compensating players for pay lost due to time off work.

Clearly, Rugby League fans must continue their opposition to the Super League. However, we can't rely on the RL Parliamentary group to stop Murdoch. Instead we must take control of the running of the game ourselves.

Organisations like the Rugby League Supporters Association and the newly formed "Rugby League Fans United", together with the club fanzines, are a start towards doing that.

They must also link up with the Players Association, many of whose members are threatened with the sack if Super League goes ahead in its present form.

In comradeship,  
Pete, Cardiff  
A Warrington Rugby League Supporter

## Where We Stand



### 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.



### The Trade Unions

must be transformed by 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.



### October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin 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 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. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' 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.



### Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of 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.



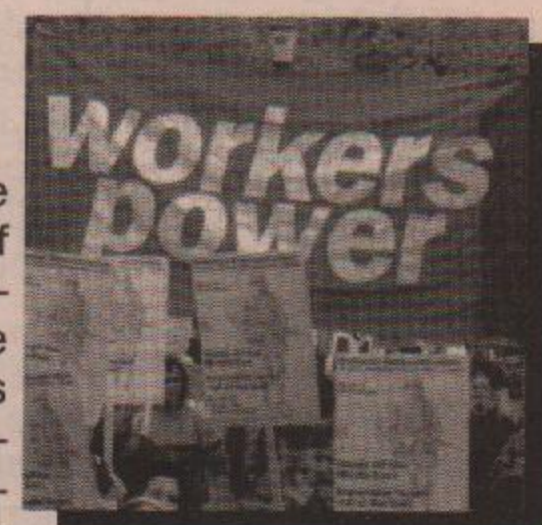
### Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. 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. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism 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 a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third and Fourth Internationals. 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 LRCI 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!★





# workers power

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

## BOSNIA

**Stop the NATO bombings!  
Get UN troops out now!**

## Brian Douglas

# No justice. No peace!

**BRIAN DOUGLAS was arrested for an alleged motoring offence on 3 May, in Clapham, South London. Five days later he died of injuries sustained during the arrest.**

He had been struck repeatedly on the back of the head with a US-style two-foot long police baton. His friend Stafford Solomon suffered a broken arm during the arrest and remains in custody.

On Sunday 14 May over 600 demonstrators, including a huge turnout from Brian's local community in Balham, staged an angry protest outside Kennington police station, where Brian had been held for 15 hours before being transferred to hospital. Later the crowd staged an impromptu march towards Brixton, which was only stopped after lines of police with dogs and riot vans threw a cordon across the road.

Brian is not the first black person to die at the hands of police. Police claim he was carrying marijuana, a knife and a CS gas canister when he was arrested. If that is true then he was doing no more than thousands of youth, black and white. Most do not get arrested, let alone murdered, because like Brian they are minding their own business.

Brian was arrested because of racist policing. Every day police flag down black drivers in the area where Brian was stopped—to search and harass them.

That is why hundreds of youth came out on the streets to protest at the death of Brian Douglas. And that is why thousands should turn out for the 10 June demonstration called by the Justice for Brian Douglas Campaign.

Brian's family have lodged an official complaint against the police. They want the immediate suspension of PCs Harrison and Tuffey, the officers who arrested Brian, and the suspension of the police doctor who ignored his facial paralysis for 15 hours. They are also demanding a "people's inquiry" into Brian's death. So far neither the

officers nor the doctor has been suspended.

The Metropolitan Police spends thousands of pounds a year on "anti-racist" advertising. Its Commissioner, Paul Condon, works overtime to promote himself as an "anti-racist". But on the streets the reality is that the Met are brutal, racist murderers.

The answer to police racism is not to plead for tolerance. It is to demonstrate our willingness and capacity to resist. When hundreds of black youth marched to protest at Brian's death the police drew their batons but never used them. As the youth rocked police vans and pointed their fingers in imitation of guns, the police cowered inside. As the youth broke through police lines, not a sin-

gle arrest was made. Why? Because the one thing the police fear most is organised self defence against racist harassment and attack.

"No Justice, No Peace" was the slogan heard as protestors surrounded Kennington police station. The 10 June demo should be just the start of a campaign of mass protest—not just to bring Brian's killers to justice, but to stop racist policing altogether. We need community self defence organisations in every area under attack, and maximum support from the unions, the Labour Party and the workers' movement.

Brian Douglas was the first victim of the US style baton. Demonstrate on 10 June and build the resistance to ensure the is the last. ■



## DEMONSTRATE

**12 Noon 10 June 1995  
Assemble: The Pond,  
Clapham Common  
March to Kennington Park,  
London SE11 for Rally at 3pm**

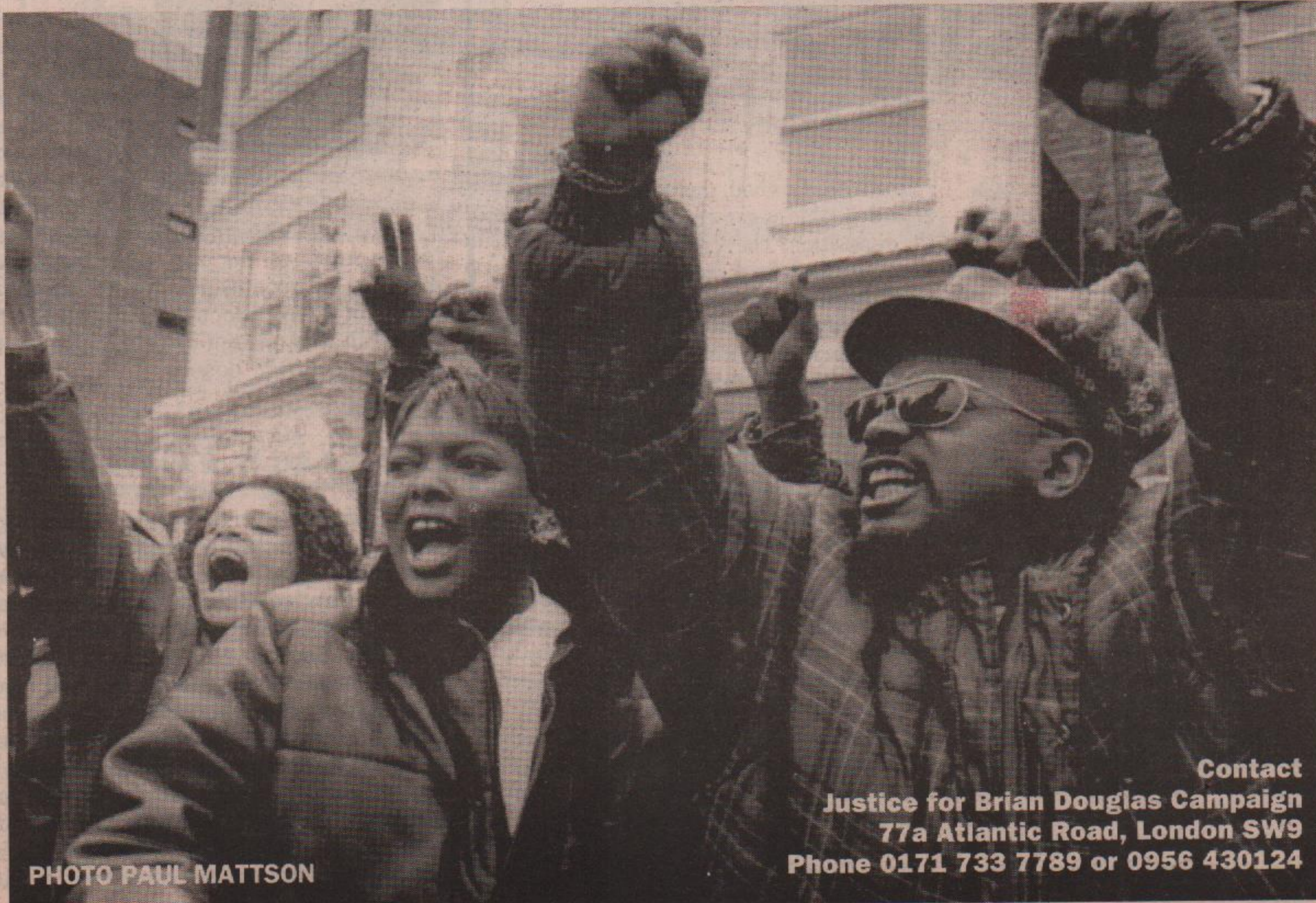


PHOTO PAUL MATTSON

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ON 25 May NATO planes bombed a Serb ammo dump in Pale. Within 24 hours the Serbs had given their answer. Bodies of 65 young civilians in Tuzla lay mangled in the streets and UN observers stood chained to the doors of Serbian ammunition bunkers to ward off the NATO planes.

On 28 May the Serbs captured 33 Welsh Fusiliers to add to the 300 or so other UN "peacekeepers" held for protection against further Nato strikes.

Major dispatched another 1,300 British troops and put 4,000 on standby. The French sent an aircraft carrier to the Adriatic. Nato special forces are being primed to release the captured UN troops.

Is this a prelude to all-out war against Serbia or bolstering the forces need to ensure a quick and secure final exit from Bosnia?

The UN and Nato have never been in Bosnia to protect the victims of ethnic cleansing—they have orders to protect only themselves. They are there to shore up a "peace" which gives the Serb and Croat ethnic cleansers the land and power they won at gunpoint.

Up to now their clashes with the Bosnian Serbs have been military pinpricks, designed to force them to accept the 49% of Bosnia allocated by the Contact Group plan.

Unlike in the war against Iraq the imperialists and their allies are deeply divided. The US wants a New World Order based on containing conflicts which cannot be resolved by normal, imperialist military means. It is prepared to lift the embargo and arm the Bosnian Muslims if it cannot coerce the Serbs into accepting the latest peace plan.

The European nuclear powers—Britain and France—want something different. Along with Russia they want an order in former Yugoslavia guaranteed by a strong, stable and if necessary expanded, Serbia.

It is imperialist diplomacy at its most naked and cynical. Neither the UN nor NATO can really protect the multi-ethnic communities of Bosnia. Even if they now decided to throw their military might behind the Bosnian government forces, it would only be a prelude to the enforcement of a reactionary settlement in the region.

The Serbs would have every right to defend themselves from imperialist military aggression—despite the reactionary nature of their own war aims.

The UN can do nothing progressive in former Yugoslavia, except to get out, stop meddling and lift the arms embargo so that the Bosnians can defend themselves.

The best thing the British soldiers can do is to pack up their belongings and go home—leaving their weapons to the defenders of multi-ethnic Bosnia.

No matter how much imperialism tries to save face in the coming days and weeks—either through Russian mediation or even an escalated military conflict with Mladic's Serb militias—this can only have reactionary consequences.

That is why we say: let multi-ethnic Bosnia defend itself. Stop the UN/NATO bombings. Lift the arms embargo. And get the UN troops out of Bosnia now! ■

★ The slide to war—page 13