



Workers Press

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MAY DAY SPECIAL

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JOIN THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

LONG LIVE THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

BY THE EDITOR

MAY DAY 1988 sees rising struggles against oppression and exploitation in every part of the world.

From Soweto to Moscow, from Belfast to the Gaza Strip, from Crakow to Dover, working people with young workers at their head, battle heroically against imperialism and its agents.

The Workers Revolutionary Party / Workers Press salutes these struggles just as it salutes all those tens of thousands incarcerated in the jails of imperialism and Stalinism for the 'crime' of fighting for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed throughout the world.

What unites these struggles is not only the heroism and spirit of self-sacrifice but the essential character of the period of history in which we live.

70 years ago Lenin spoke of 'an epoch of wars and revolutions'.

Nearly 50 years ago Trotsky made this still more concrete. Amid massive defeats for the working class, he clearly saw the maturity of the 'objective prerequisites for a socialist revolution'.

'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat' he said.

That this rotten capitalist system continues to exist half a century after those words were written, is not because it has found some way to overcome its deepening contradictions.

Quite the contrary.

Since the 1930s, the capitalist system has brought about world war and the threat of complete nuclear destruction, the starvation of entire nations, mass unemployment, global pollution of the environment.

The international financial structure is teetering on the brink of the collapse anticipated by last October's stock market crash. The lives of millions are faced with ruination by this threatening catastrophe.

The survival of capitalism is not owing to the inability of the working class to fight. The struggles of the 1930s, the upsurge of the working class at the end of World War Two, the great battles for national independence in the former colonial countries, all testify to the potential power of the international working class.

As we celebrate May Day, this unbroken determination of the international working class to fight is everywhere in evidence.

Britain is no exception.

Thatcher's attacks on the rights and living standard of the working class have been answered time after time by miners, printers, health workers, local government workers, car workers, and many others.

Latest in line are the seamen who are now locked in battle against P&O and the capitalist state with its battery of anti-union laws fashioned by Thatcher and by previous Labour governments.

What has been lacking on each occasion that sections of workers have gone into battle has been a leadership willing and able to carry through that fight to a finish: the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

The working class movement has been controlled by leaders who are tied firmly to the class enemy.

That is the central problem to be faced in every part of the world. A new revolutionary leadership based on the principles of Marxism must be built world-wide.

To take up our responsibility for this task is the central aim of the Workers Revolutionary Party / Workers Press.

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DOWN WITH DOWN WITH STALINISM WORKING CLASS UN

Science and technology are developing at an unprecedented rate. But trapped within the capitalist system of production for profit, this development is turned against humanity.

Advances in agricultural science bring about famine. In Britain, new discoveries in medicine are accompanied by the collapse of the health service for ordinary people.

Cities decay faster than they grow. Each step forward in production increases the threat of destruction.

The efforts of nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America to find an independent road to development have led them into a new bondage of indebtedness to the bankers.

The advances in information technology are harnessed to powerful forms of state repression.

There is no way that the great advances of science can be used for the benefit of humanity except through the overthrow of capitalism which sucks the blood of the working people of the entire world.

Only by releasing the productive resources of the world from the stranglehold of capitalism can mankind plan their use on a rational scale for the benefit of all.

For this an international revolutionary leadership to replace the present treacherous leadership of the working class is essential.

The British ruling class has undergone considerable changes with the decline of its former imperial glory. It has become more parasitic than ever as industry has come under the increasing control of financial speculators.

The Thatcher wing of the Tory Party reflects this tendency most clearly, shutting down entire industries and moving others to areas of cheap labour in different parts of the world.

The privatisation of sections of the economy represents the same trend. Not only has the state handed over sectors such as oil and telecommunications to the City of London, it is now putting health, education and other parts of the social services into private hands.

Mining and the railways are next on Thatcher's list.

In the course of implementing these measures, the Tories have united industrial workers with sections of the middle class. The destructive and inhuman nature of imperialism has become glaringly obvious to millions of people even in a so-called prosperous country such as Britain.

The basis exists for a powerful unity of the working class and sections of the middle class who are increasingly hostile to Thatcher's policies.

But again a leadership able to unite these sections is the decisive question.

In pressing home these attacks — which will hit the very poorest in this country — the state in Britain has emerged ever more clearly as a repressive instrument for the preservation of capitalist rule, comprising of 'special bodies of armed men'. Nowhere has this been more clearly seen than in the north of Ireland with Thatcher's bloody 'shoot-to-kill'.

The Thatcher government has been able to remain in office for one reason alone: support from the leaders

of the trade union and labour movement. They prop up Thatcher by their unbroken efforts to diffuse and disrupt the struggle of the working class against the Tory government.

The 1984-1985 miners' strike exposed the role of such leaders, who conspired with the Thatcher government to isolate the miners in the expectation that they would be demoralised and crushed. These leaders repeated the same behaviour in the year long Wapping dispute.

They have stood aside and watched Thatcher attempt to dismantle the health service. They have desperately sought to divide the working class with isolated protest actions and ritual questions in parliament, thereby hoping to undermine the fighting capacity of the working class.

Their role in Thatcher's efforts to destroy the Republican movement in Ireland has been particularly despicable. They have applauded Thatcher's bloody 'shoot-to-kill' policy aimed at the legitimate struggle of the Irish people for their independence.

We condemn this cowardly action which also opens the way for similar brutal repression against the British working class.

FOR THE UNITY OF THE BRITISH AND IRISH WORKING CLASS!

FOR THE RIGHT OF IRISH NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE!

FORWARD TO A UNITED SOCIALIST IRELAND!

Such leaders fear the united strength of the working class in action against the class enemy far more than they fear the Tory government.

These same leaders have signed, or attempted to sign, deals with the employers — as at Fords in Dundee — which would strip the unions of their rights as bodies able to defend the standard of living and conditions of the working class.

Stalinists of all varieties are to the fore in such conspiracies against the working class. Leading Communist Party member Jimmie Airlie was among the architects of the proposed Dundee deal. Airlie also played a central role in the struggle earlier this year when the union leaders connived with the management to impose 'strings' on the workforce in return for paltry wage increases.

In the epoch known to Marxists as imperialism the unions face a historical crisis.

Either they become appendages of the state — a means of disciplining the working class in line with the direct needs of capitalism; or they become revolutionary organisations mobilising the strength, not only of their own members, but of the working class as a whole.

There is no middle road left for them.

A new leadership must be built that will fight to unite all sections of the class for the overthrow of capitalism. Such a leadership can be built only in implacable struggle against the traitors who presently head the movement.

IMPERIALISM! STALINISM AND REFORMISM! TRAITORIALTY FOR SOCIALISM!

In 1917, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, the Russian workers and peasants overthrew the capitalists and landlords.

A world-wide socialist revolution had begun.

After Lenin's death in 1924, the desperate conditions produced by the civil war, isolation of the Russian Revolution and the economic and cultural backwardness of the country, a privileged bureaucracy, headed by Stalin, usurped power from the working class in the Soviet state.

In the ten years following Lenin's death the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International were destroyed as revolutionary instruments of the world working class. The struggles of workers in China, Germany, France and Spain were led to defeat by Stalinism.

Today, Stalin's heirs, both Gorbachev and his opponents, face a crisis. The Soviet working class has become a powerful force. Including millions of Soviet youth, it refuses to be controlled by a parasitic bureaucracy. The Soviet working class, together with sections of the intelligentsia, demands a true account of the history of the revolution and its betrayals by Stalinism.

The Gorbachev leadership responds by turning towards agreement with American imperialism. Glasnost represents its efforts to limit the concessions it is forced to give to the working class.

We demand that the archives of the KGB be opened up! We demand that the entire works of Trotsky and his supporters be published and made available to the Soviet working class and youth!

In his foreign policy Gorbachev treads faithfully in Stalin's footsteps.

In South Africa, in the Middle East as well as Central America, the Soviet bureaucracy seeks to contain the rising struggles of the working class as part of their deal with Reagan and world imperialism.

The heroic struggle of the Palestinian people will be successful only if a leadership is built in opposition to the treachery of Stalinism.

We call for the overthrow of the Zionist state and for the creation of a Socialist United States of the Middle East in which peoples of the region would have their legitimate national rights.

In South Africa Stalinism strives might and main for an agreement with a section of the ruling class. Against them we fight for the mobilisation of the powerful black working class to lead the smashing of the apartheid-capitalist state.

FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST SOUTHERN AFRICA!

The political revolution to expel the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore Soviet democracy is inseparably linked with the world socialist revolution.

This is nowhere more clearly seen than in Gorbachev's sinister actions in Afghanistan. The working people of that country are victims of three forces: imperialism, their own ruling class and the cynical

manoeuvres of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Both when it sent troops into that country just as when it decides to pull them out, the Stalinists in Moscow are concerned with only one thing: their relations with American and world imperialism.

The needs of the Afghan people are of no concern to this gang of counter-revolutionaries.

The Workers Revolutionary Party is a Trotskyist Party, fighting to re-build the Fourth International.

The Fourth International was established by Trotsky and his co-thinkers in 1938. The new International was the result of the long fight against the degeneration of the Communist International at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

From the early 1920s onwards Trotsky had led the fight against a rising parasitic bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. He fought to bring the Communist International back to the internationalist principles of Lenin.

The betrayal of the Stalinist leadership in Germany in the period prior to 1933, which allowed Hitler's fascists to take power convinced Trotsky that the Communist International could not be reformed and that a new International based on the lessons of the Russian Revolution, had to be established.

Throughout its existence, the Fourth International has been involved in a life and death struggle against Stalinism which set out to destroy the Trotskyist movement politically, physically and ideologically.

The murder of Trotsky by Stalin's agent in 1940 was part of this effort to destroy our movement.

Despite overwhelming difficulties and many splits, the continuity of the movement has been preserved.

It was preserved in struggles against all those who, reflecting the pressure of Stalinism, tried to liquidate the movement. Chiefly amongst these was that trend known as Pabloism.

The Workers Revolutionary Party / Workers Press will be taking part later this year — the 50th anniversary of the International — in an international conference to prepare for the refounding of the Fourth International.

We do so under the most favourable conditions, with the working class on the offensive throughout the world and Stalinism and reformism in deep crisis.

We are convinced that large layers of the working class can be won to the banner of the Fourth International in this new stage of capitalist crisis.

We urge everybody who agrees with our aims to join the Workers Revolutionary Party / Workers Press and take their place in the fulfilling of these great tasks.

DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!

DOWN WITH STALINISM AND REFORMISM!

LONG LIVE THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS!

BUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND WORKERS PRESS

Report by Dot Gibson

THE fourth and final session of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) Ninth Congress was held on 24 April 1988.

Previous sessions had agreed to continue international work with the Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International, to begin the preparation of a programme for work in Britain to be discussed throughout the Party and at a further Congress to be held in three months' time, and had elected a Central Committee.

This Committee elected Cliff Slaughter as the Political Secretary of the Party, Geoff Pilling as Editor of Workers Press, and Simon Pirani as National Organiser; Cyril Smith is responsible for Party education and also Editor of the new theoretical journal to be produced by the Preparatory Committee, and a number of leading workers on the Central Committee are responsible for trade union work.

The final session of Congress discussed details of a weekly financial budget for the organisation of the Party, its committees and the weekly Workers Press. This marked a big step forward.

The expulsion of G. Healy from the WRP in 1985 on grounds of sexual and physical assault of Party members, revealed an enormous financial crisis and a system of organisation which meant that members were consistently faced with crippling demands for finance to overcome the constant cash flow problems and the cost of maintaining an apparatus

which was quite out of line with the size of the Party.

Healy was expelled on 19 October 1985. On 21 October, Vanessa Redgrave launched a series of legal actions to wind up the Party's companies. From then on the WRP was besieged from all sides. Healy's supporters, ex-full-time workers, resorted to industrial tribunals, Redgrave sent out copies of the winding-up petition to the creditors, Astmoor Litho, the printing company was liquidated.

But the most serious crisis the Party faced in 1985 (and it became clearer as the struggle unfolded) was that Healy's corruption, philistinism and method of so-called 'cadre training' was not something which could be overcome merely by his expulsion. Resort to organisational solutions to overcome the problems would have meant the eventual death of the Party. What was needed more than anything else was the struggle to overcome the past through the rebuilding of the Party on its Marxist foundations.

The nature of the crisis can be understood by a study of the political paths taken by Healy, who is an apologist for the Gorbachev wing of the Soviet bureaucracy, and Mike Banda (ex-general secretary), who has gone over completely to Stalinism.

In the course of the two-and-a-half years since October 1985 the WRP has been in constant battle against various tendencies and factions which have sought to weaken and smash the struggle for Marxism and the continuity of Bolshevism in the Fourth International. The most important theoretical work guiding the WRP has been achieved through the international struggle in collaboration with members of the Preparatory Committee. (Documents of this struggle will

be published in our forthcoming theoretical journal).

Making this the centre of our development meant that the Party needed time, free from undue pressure of financial and organisational problems, to clarify itself on the tasks ahead. Only when the political issues confronting the Party had been established was it possible to tackle these organisational and financial problems.

When Congress made a clear stand for the rebuilding of the Fourth International, and therefore the Party, on Marxist foundations, those who did not agree with this position walked out. The WRP had reached the position where it could take full control of its human and financial resources.

The 16-page Workers Press was closed down and the final session of Congress was able to discuss plans for resolving the problems. The 8-page Workers Press will be launched within four weeks on firm political, technical and financial foundations. WRP branches have already pledged to ensure the necessary finance for this work. (In the time during which we have had no Workers Press we have received £1,093 for the monthly fund).

In addition to sales of the paper, starting on 1 May, the Party will launch a fighting fund to raise £10,000 by 30 September 1988.

The May Day statement in this bulletin indicates the stand Workers Press will be making on all the issues facing the international working class. We invite you to take out a regular postal subscription to the paper, or arrange for it to be delivered to your home.

We hope you will help us to raise our fund.

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Venue: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.
£1 for each lecture, £2 for three.

*Peter Fryer is the author of 'Staying Power: the History of Black People in Britain' (Pluto Press, 1984) and 'Black People in the British Empire: An Introduction' (to be published by Pluto Press in June 1988).