

# **Workers ACTION**

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No.6 – March / April 1999 – Price £1

## **Fight the Asylum Bill – No to state racism!**

- ★ **Stephen Lawrence inquiry**
- ★ **20th anniversary of the murder of Blair Peach**
- ★ **Still waiting for Labour's crisis**
- ★ **Welsh Assembly**
- ★ **Sweden after the elections**
- ★ ***Marxism Today* exhumed**
- ★ **Archive – The RCP versus the FI leadership, 1946**

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# Police reforms are no answer to racist attacks

The publication in late February of the report into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in Eltham, south-east London, in April 1993 was accompanied by a deluge of crocodile tears from the very institutions that have encouraged racism. In a revolting display of hypocrisy, newspapers and politicians vied with each other to demonstrate their commitment to anti-racism and a multi-cultural society.

The government, opposition parties and media all claimed that they fully accepted the contents of the report. Home Secretary Jack Straw hoped it would prove a 'watershed' for race relations in Britain. The *Daily Mail* fearlessly repeated its accusation that the five white men it had previously named on its front page were Stephen Lawrence's killers, and challenged them to sue. The *Mirror* accused the men of pleading poverty because they were frightened they would lose a libel action against the *Mail*, and offered to pay their costs. Even the *Sun* was obliged to tailor its editorials to suit the prevailing mood.

But the truth is that the British state is the worst offender when it comes to promoting racism. At the very time that it is talking about the need for a change of attitudes throughout society to 'make racial equality a reality' and promising reforms of the police, the government is introducing legislation whose basic premise is that anyone who is poor and not a citizen of an EU country is a criminal if he or she tries to settle in Britain. This is nothing new, of course. Labour governments, just as much as Tory governments, have been responsible for introducing ever more restrictive nationality and immigration laws since the 1960s.

This is the heart of the 'institutional racism' that infects British society, but it is something that even the most

liberal of commentators refuse to acknowledge – for the simple reason that they agree with strict immigration policies. Remember that only a few months ago the press stoked up a racist witch-hunt against Slovakian refugees arriving at Channel ports. Although the liberal papers did not sink to the level of the local south-coast paper that was threatened with prosecution under the Race Relations Act, neither did they defend the right of the refugees to stay in Britain, despite the fact that they were Romanies fleeing racist persecution in Slovakia.

Racism will not be eradicated by good intentions and a handful of reforms. The Lawrence report found that the police were guilty of 'pernicious and institutionalised racism', yet politicians and media all rallied to the support of Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon when it was suggested that he might resign. While the racism of the British state may be somewhat more subtle than that of fascist thugs on the streets of Eltham, it has the same purpose – to defend the privileges of one group at the expense of another. For the state and big business, this means preserving Britain as an imperialist power by exploiting the millions of workers and peasants of the developing world, excluding them from a share of the spoils, and bombing them if they threaten British economic interests; the fascists merely adapt this philosophy to local conditions.

The tenacious campaign by the Lawrence family and their supporters has succeeded in exposing the deep strain of racism in British society. This important work must continue, but it should be accompanied by the building of a united anti-racist movement to physically defend those at risk from attack.

**WA**

## Immigration and Asylum Bill

# Oppose all immigration laws!

by Charli Langford

It is a measure of the racism institutionalised into British society that there is no widespread opposition to the new Immigration and Asylum Bill currently before parliament. The demonstration against the bill in London on February 27, while larger than other recent mobilisations of the left, was pitifully small given that a major political ques-

tion over the previous month had been the level of racism within the police force exposed by the report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

The new bill is intended to close the loopholes in the Immigration and Asylum Act introduced by the Tories early in 1996. Jack Straw's proposals include:

- 'Fast-tracking' – speeding up the process of throwing asylum-seekers back into the arms of their oppressors. This is a dual-purpose procedure in that it

removes some rights of legal representation from asylum-seekers, but it also takes advantage of language problems and ignorance of the law to deprive them of what few rights they still have. It maximises the chance that they will make legal mistakes which allow immigration officials to deport them more rapidly. For those that manage to negotiate the legal maze successfully it also puts stricter limits on rights of appeal against decisions.

- 'Voluntary dispersal to reception centres' – it is necessary to decode the doublespeak here. Groups of asylum-seekers will be broken up, and individuals will be dispersed around the country to be housed in squalid accommodation. Benefit rights for all asylum-seekers will be withdrawn, but for as long as they remain in the reception centres they will receive the

vouchers and a roof over their heads. If they leave – which of course they are free to do – they give up these minimal rights to food and shelter.

- 'Increased use of detention centres' – these are essentially prisons, although their inhabitants have committed no crime. They are already being used for those judged most likely to abscond and attempt to remain illegally in Britain. The detention centres – Campsfield, Harmondsworth, Haslar – are not New Labour inventions but Tory relics that Labour wants to utilise more fully.
- 'New powers of arrest and surveillance for police and immigration officials' – which will mean that a greater proportion of asylum-seekers will be sent to detention centres, and that immigrant communities will come under closer scrutiny from the police.
- 'Immigration checks in the workplace' – combined with the removal of benefits, these are intended to ensure that asylum-seekers have no means of support. They will also lead to an increase in racism in the workplace with employers acting as immigration officials and workers encouraged to become snoops, and make it even more difficult for *anyone* with a dark skin or a foreign accent to get a job. When this measure was originally proposed by the Tory government it was condemned by Labour.
- 'Bonds' – any person arriving in Britain on a visa whom the immigration officials consider a potential illegal immigrant will have to lodge a bond of up to £2,000, repayable on departure from the country. This will discriminate disproportionately against poorer people intending to visit relatives in Britain, and will make entry to Britain subject to the prejudice of individual immigration officers.

These repugnant policies are merely the latest in a long line of steadily more repressive legislation governing entry into Britain. The ruling class has always had a totally opportunist attitude to immigration; when the post-war boom demanded a larger working class than Britain possessed, immigration was encouraged. Enoch Powell – later the darling of British racists and fascists – toured the West Indies to encourage immigration to provide workers for the most menial jobs in Britain. With the boom long gone and unemployment a permanent feature, the shutters have come down. As restrictions on entry to Britain have become greater, the numbers applying have dropped. However, those that are now applying are doing so on a more desperate basis. Many people are now trying

to come to Britain to escape impoverishment and famine, to escape persecution because of their race or beliefs, or to escape specific personal oppression.

The government has differentiated between these groups, labelling them as economic migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. This has allowed different tactics to be used against each group, and the tactics are dependent to an extent on how aware the bulk of British society is of their plight. For those whose situation has been publicised, the basic task is to persuade them to stay where they are, rather than come knocking on our door. For highly visible economic migrants, a few plane-loads of supplies is a cheap alternative to allowing entry. For refugees, various levels of pressure can be applied to their country of departure to be nicer to them, and in extreme cases military force can be used to create 'safe havens' – safe, that is, until the military withdraw leaving the refugees homeless, without food, and completely exposed to the oppressor government. Those who have not been the subject of extensive television coverage can be ignored entirely.

Asylum-seekers are a bit more difficult. Sending people back to the torturer, the hangman or the firing-squad is difficult to justify. Another tactic has to be employed. It cannot be the case that all these people are actually in danger of life and limb if they are returned to their country of origin, reasons the government. Most of them must be 'bogus' – economic migrants posing as political or religious dissenters, ne'er-do-wells in search of an easy life on benefit at the expense of the British taxpayer. Rigorous investigative procedures are needed to verify their stories, and, to discourage the fainthearted, what better way than to make life really uncomfortable for them. After all, if a few genuine cases are sent back along with the bogus ones, who really cares?

If anyone thinks that the above paragraphs are a little cynical, one further aspect of the Asylum Bill should convince. Carriers – transport operators – will be heavily fined if caught carrying 'clandestine entrants' to Britain. The point is that asylum-seekers are usually in no position to acquire valid passports or other travel documents in the country they are fleeing from. They must either travel on false documents or avoid transport and customs officials altogether. All asylum-seekers are clandestine by definition. This provision of the law makes it near-impossible for them to travel to Britain at all.

Perhaps the most effective technique that successive governments have

used is the suggestion that Britain is prepared to offer sanctuary to 'genuine' asylum seekers, but 'must not be taken advantage of by fakes'. This has caused various campaigns around individuals and families under threat to seek defence along the line of proving that they are genuine – and implicitly that others are bogus. This is very effective in destroying solidarity between different groups of desperate people trying to enter Britain. It is analogous to anti-deportation campaigns which claim that so-and-so has lived in Britain for ten years, s/he has never claimed a penny in benefit and has worked hard as a whatever . . . which rather undermines the campaign to defend the family next door who haven't had the good luck to find jobs, who might have some debilitating illness, who might have only managed to get in last year.

The basic point is that people come to Britain because it is a better place to live than the country they are leaving. It doesn't suffer from plagues, epidemics, famine or – despite the best efforts of the Yorkshire water company bosses – drought; torture by state forces is generally rare and does not receive government support; the working class is in general wealthy in relation to most of the rest of the world, and for all Tony Blair's faults he is not a military despot and his religious fundamentalist tendencies are held in check by liberal democracy. Britain has gained these advantages by rapacious exploitation of the very countries that most immigrants to Britain are fleeing from. This exploitation goes hand-in-hand with co-operation between Britain and the regimes in these countries; in many cases Britain is providing the arms that allow the regimes to turn their citizens into refugees and asylum-seekers. Britain is therefore responsible in a very direct sense for creating the conditions in other countries that give rise to emigration.

On moral grounds, therefore, there is a clear argument that massive immigration should be allowed as repayment for exploitation. In socialist terms the question is even more clear-cut – those who fight for a social system based upon equality and internationalism cannot deny that equality to anyone. To endorse any system of immigration controls is to say that the interests of the relatively privileged group inside the barrier have to be protected at the expense of condemning those outside to extreme poverty and oppression. This is totally inconsistent with any commitment to equality. Socialists in Britain must campaign not only against the new Asylum Bill, but against all existing immigration and nationality legislation. **WA**

# Roger Sylvester

by Andrew Berry,  
Islington Unison

**R**oger Sylvester, a worker at the Lambo day-centre and a member of Islington Unison, died on January 19 this year after his life support machine was switched off. He had been in a coma as a result of injuries sustained when he was 'restrained' by eight police officers outside his home on January 11.

Mindful of the problems of yet another 'police kill black person' story coming out at the same time as the Stephen Lawrence inquiry's report, the police have issued a series of smears against Roger. On January 14 their press release said that Roger had been banging aggressively on a neighbour's door; later they added that he had a history of mental health problems. On January 26 the police pathologist told journalists outside the coroner's court that Roger was a crack addict. Later a *Times* article said

that police believed Roger's death was due to his heart being damaged by crack cocaine use. In the same article it was claimed that pro-police witnesses had been intimidated and that police officers had received death threats.

The facts of the case are that Roger was knocking on the door of his own home, and there is no evidence that he was knocking aggressively. His mental health problems at the time were well controlled. The comments about drug use come from the fact that the Home Office pathologist was shown hospital records which should have remained confidential until the full inquest in order to avoid influencing the hearing, and Roger's family dispute the truth of these records. Having established that the police have consciously lied and distorted the facts, and have released information that 'perverts the course of justice', it seems reasonable to believe that they aren't above lying about witness intimidation and death threats if it is in their interests.

But the police are clearly trying to say that their victim was an aggressive mad drug addict with a weak heart who is closely connected with violent people. The alternative - that a gang of police casually murdered someone - would damage even further their already well-tarnished image.

The Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police has told Roger's family that they are reviewing their press bureau procedures. However, they have refused to repudiate or correct their original lying statement. This suggests that the review of procedures is aimed at creating better and more believable lies that won't collapse in the face of critical examination.

The Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign is appealing for support and funds to bring his killers to justice. **WA**

## Public meeting

7.30pm, 21 March 1999

Speakers include family members

West Indian Cultural Centre  
Clarendon Road, London N8

Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, PO Box 25908, London N18 1WU; Email: RSJC@hotmail.com  
Islington Unison, 257-258 Northway House, London N1 2UD; Tel: 0171 704 8320; Fax: 0171 477 2767

# Blair Peach: public inquiry now!

by Charli Langford

**B**lair Peach was a member of the National Union of Teachers and of the Socialist Workers Party. He was active primarily in anti-fascist work and in the local campaign against school closures in east London. On April 23, 1979, he went on the counter-demonstration to a fascist march in Southall, an area of west London with a large Asian population and a history of resistance to the fascists.

After the fascist march had been halted by the anti-fascist mobilisation, police mounted attacks on the anti-fascists. The 'People Unite' centre was attacked and Clarence White, of the reggae band 'Misty In Roots', was severely injured. Blair was with a small number of comrades walking along a back street when the group was attacked by six police from

the notoriously violent Special Patrol Group. The police leapt from a van and beat up the comrades with truncheons. All of the comrades got away but in the mêlée Blair received a truncheon blow that fractured his skull and from which he died. The subsequent police investigation identified the unit responsible for the killing, but was unable to discover which individual had dealt the lethal blow; as a consequence, it was declared that no prosecution was possible. Despite eyewitness reports that Blair had been hit over the head by a policeman, an inquest recorded a verdict of death by misadventure. Blair's killers have never paid any penalty.

The conclusions from this incident are glaringly obvious. If the group of killers had been anyone other than police all would have been charged with being at the very least accessories before, during and

after the murder. It is very likely that all could have been found guilty of murder under the legal device of 'common purpose' - which was used against those arrested for the killing of two soldiers who drove into a republican funeral in the north of Ireland when it was impossible for British forces to discover who fired the lethal shots.

It is also clear, because none of the comrades were arrested, that the attack was completely unjustified. No crime was being committed. The attack was clearly the work of police who were angry that their attempt to lead a fascist march through a black and Asian area had been defeated by a working class, anti-fascist mobilisation, and who vented their frustration on a group of anti-fascists.

Today, in the weeks following the publication of the report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the focus is yet again on police racism. The issues raised by the murder of Blair Peach remain as urgent as ever, and the police inquiry of 20 years ago is revealed as starkly partisan. The police cannot be trusted to conduct an unbiased investigation. We need a public inquiry into this killing, now. **WA**

## National demonstration

called by the Blair Peach 20th Anniversary Committee

1.00pm, 24 April 1999

Dominion Centre, The Green, Southall

More details 0181 980 3601

# Is Labour in Crisis?

Repeatedly during the last decade rumours have surfaced on the left claiming that a crisis of historic proportions is unfolding within the Labour Party – or at least labourism – and that as a result an opportunity exists for Labour's replacement by a new, mass socialist party. **Richard Price** and **Jonathan Joseph** argue that the death of labourism has been exaggerated, and the perspective of much of the left has been heavily distorted as a result

The evidence advanced for the existence of this non-stop 'crisis' has been very contradictory. In the late 1980s the heart of this crisis was held to lie in Labour's repeated failure to win elections and in its declining membership. Ten years on, with Labour in government with a massive majority and a greatly increased membership, very different criteria – such as Labour's neo-liberal economic and social policies – are being used to buttress the same thesis. To confuse matters further, belief in the existence of this crisis has been taken by many on the left to be some sort of benchmark of revolutionary 'optimism', while analyses which have stressed the residual strength of reformism have been correspondingly dismissed as 'pessimistic'.

But it is not enough merely to assert that a crisis exists; it is necessary to prove it, in order to proceed with the project which apparently flows from this conclusion. This article will attempt to ascertain whether there is a major crisis within British labourism, and if so, its nature and likely results. Only through a correct general assessment of the current state of the Labour Party is it possible to gauge the chances for a socialist alternative.

## Hobsbawm gets it wrong

But first, it is necessary to take a backward glance at the origins of such theories. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s Eric Hobsbawm's 'Forward march of Labour halted' thesis, championed by the Euro-Stalinist *Marxism Today*, gained widespread currency not only among a layer of former New Left intellectuals retreating from the revolutionary excesses of their 1968 past, but among media pundits, political columnists and academics. No less an authority than Professor Anthony King, the country's leading psephologist, accepted the argument that as a result of the decline of the old industrial working class and the rise of the new middle class, Labour

could never again construct an electoral bloc broad enough to win a majority of seats in parliament. Labour's only hope, according to this strange alliance, lay in an electoral bloc and probably a strategic alliance with the Liberals.

The general election of May 1997 proved such forces spectacularly wrong. Labour won an unprecedented landslide and the Tories were extinguished in the whole of Scotland and Wales. In the run up to the election it began to dawn upon various groups on the left that a Labour victory was quite possible. Switching their previous predictions of a mortal crisis of labourism, they nonetheless clung to the view that New Labour in government would enjoy only the briefest of honeymoons before major splits would emerge. Many leftists who went into the SLP didn't necessarily believe that this was *the* big split, but they thought that by founding the SLP a home would be created for the bigger splits which would follow on in short order after the election. The main task in the short term was to raise the standard of, if not socialism, then the next best left reformist-Stalinist alternative. The unfolding 'crisis of labourism', combined with the rip-roaring 'crisis of capitalism', would do the rest.

This perspective has been proved not only wrong, but badly wrong. Not a few of those who took it into the SLP, convinced that people like ourselves were 'capitulating to reformism', are now demoralised and out of politics. We take no pleasure in this, nor in the view that Labour's honeymoon has extended into its mid-term. Nor is the purpose of this article to say we told you so. But we can at least point to what we said and draw a balance sheet, and find most of it broadly in keeping with what has actually happened. Indeed, a completely unrealistic assessment of 'the crisis of labourism' lies at the heart of . . . the crisis of the revolutionary left!

In the fantasy world of the *Guardian*

politico-gossip columnists, New Labour is in crisis. The resignations of Mandelson, Robinson and Whelan and the reactions of Brown and Prescott represent a new turning point. According to the media's own spin doctors, Prescott and Brown will battle for a return of substance and appeal to traditional Labour values (in reality, nothing more radical than a 'responsible' Keynesianism).

Like New Labour, these stories are more spin than substance and reflect the trivialisation of politics. Without any ideological debate – exemplified by the laughable emptiness of the 'Third Way' – personal rivalries remain no more than personal rivalries.

## Factions within Labour

However, there is some substance behind the talk of different factions inside the party leadership. Prescott is popular because he is seen as a Labour person in a way which Mandelson is not. Brown, however right wing we may consider him to be, does have 'Labourite' roots in the Scottish workers' movement – in contrast to Blair who is from a Tory background. That these issues are starting to come out, however trivialised the form, indicates that the modernisers are starting to lose the propaganda battle and are being seen as outsiders with their own agenda.

There is no really radical opposition to the New Labour modernisers within the official structures of the party, but there is an undercurrent of widespread concern among the rank and file at the direction of government policy and the suppression of party democracy. This has been repeatedly reflected: in the last two NEC elections, in the vote for leader of the Welsh Assembly, and in the strength of support for Ken Livingstone's right to stand for Mayor of London. It shows that large sections of the membership, while not necessarily identifying with the left, are not paid-up Blairites who uncritically accept the project of modernisation. It was noticeable that the departure of Mandelson upset very few people. The immediate circle around Blair is rightly viewed with suspicion by the party membership. The real problem Blair faces is that, for all the alarming success of his project, he is still at the head of a Labourite party which continues to enjoy the solid support of the working class and trade union movement.

## Labour's current situation

Does this add up to a crisis of labourism? The answer depends partly upon what is meant by labourism. If it means the Blair government, it has to be said that it shows few signs of crisis so far. In its favour it

has a huge parliamentary majority, buttressed by the support of the Liberals; a Tory opposition more discredited than at any time in its modern history; a series of constitutional changes which have successfully outmanoeuvred left opponents within the party; an almost total absence of industrial struggle around which left opponents could build; a completely subservient trade union bureaucracy; unprecedented approval ratings for a party in mid-term; and an economy which has remained largely stable despite dire predictions of global catastrophe. If this is a crisis, it is one almost all of Blair's post-war predecessors would have swapped places with two years after a general election. If you think of Wilson after 1966 you think of the Seamen's Strike, balance of payments crises, Rhodesia, Vietnam, Northern Ireland and *In Place of Strife*. If you think of Wilson and then Callaghan in mid-term in the 1970s, you think of the run on the pound, IMF-imposed cuts, and the rising opposition to wage control which led to the Winter of Discontent. After nearly two years of Blair, the Lord Chancellor's wallpaper bill, Peter Mandelson's mortgage and Ron Davies' nocturnal adventures hardly add up to a government mortally wounded.

### 'Old' Labour's crisis

If by labourism, however, it means the historic bloc based on welfarism and the support of the trade union bureaucracy, and the outlook which went with it, then there is indeed a crisis. This bloc is undergoing a qualitative transformation as the post-war gains of the working class are eroded. Blair's successful counter-revolution within the party has demonstrated for all to see the weakness of traditional labourism. There can be little doubt that his ambition is to destroy *this* labourism for good, and replace it with a new ideological consensus based on neo-liberal 'social market' Christian Democracy.

Old-style labourism finds itself under attack from within, and from the right, at a time when Labour in government has never been more strongly placed. Few on the left foresaw such a possibility. Indeed, even those who didn't accept that Labour was terminally unelectable tended to believe that history would repeat itself: that Labour would be propelled into government by a mobilised working class, and that there would be an early challenge – from the left – to the modernisers' agenda. Instead, something very different took place and New Labour took office in a post-Stalinist desert for the class struggle, with the support of a sizeable slice of previously Thatcherite Middle England which had

belatedly decided that the Tories were incompetent.

The Old Labour consensus based on Keynesian economics and the welfare state is certainly in crisis, if not already dead. Keynesian economic policies were discredited, first by their own failure during the 1970s to contain the class struggle and rising inflation, then through the neo-liberal assault of Thatcherism. The hold of neo-liberalism was then further enhanced by the collapse of Stalinism from 1989-91. Left reformism has been in almost continuous decline since the early 1980s. Its dream of nationalising the 'commanding heights' behind a wall of import controls – a mixture of Keynesianism and Stalinism – has collapsed just as dramatically.

The policies of Blair's government are straightforward neo-liberal ones – a continuation of Thatcherism, but with a pro-Europe slant. In this sense the traditional Labourite ideology is in crisis not simply because it cannot back-up its reformist words with reformist deeds, but because it cannot even speak the words. Labourite ideology has been banished by the current Labour leadership despite the odd appeal to return to traditional values.

### Moving to the centre

Of course, Labour's first 20 months in office have not been entirely without 'reforms' – not least because Blair has traded heavily upon a combination of sound finance and modernised administration. But its 'reforming' measures have been concentrated in the constitutional arena – the creation of assemblies in Scotland and Wales; House of Lords reform; the creation of a new London local government; the Northern Irish 'peace process'; and the moves towards changing the voting system. Although many of these appear from the standpoint of the rank and file of the labour movement to be mere window dressing, they are – alongside the pro-EU stance – nonetheless an important pillar of Blair's wider project of redrawing the political map by a realignment of the centre ground. This strategy aims to outmanoeuvre both the Tories and opposition from the left.

### Can the link be broken?

However, for the modernisers to complete the destruction of the party as a party of labour, Blair and his supporters would have to smash up Labour's institutional relationship to the working class, above all by breaking the union link. Such a process would also involve creating a new and coherent ideological alternative to labourism. The pitiful attempt to develop the politics of the Third Way has been greeted even by Blair's supporters by

scepticism. While it is necessary, if Blair is to finish the job, to develop a new, more powerful ideology which could take the historic place which labourism has held in the minds of generations of workers, no such coherent set of beliefs has emerged.

At this stage it is not possible to determine the outcome of Blair's project. Blair's vision of modernisation implicitly includes breaking the Labour Party from its historic base in the working class and cutting the formal links with the trade unions. Blair is on record as regretting the rift with the Liberals which occurred when the trade unions transferred their allegiance to the Labour Party over 80 years ago. This gives a significant clue as to why Blair is different from past Labour leaders. He is not a 'Labourite', not even a right wing one.

### Can Blair break Labour up?

If Blair has his way, he *will* attempt, not just to shift Labour, but to smash it, while continuing with his anti-labour, neo-liberal policies. But Blair can only break up Labour if he is confident about being able to establish something new. He would have to be confident that a rapprochement with the Liberals would provide him with the opportunity of forming something concrete and sizeable. He is not going to split up the party he leads unless he can be sure that he has considerable backing.

All the indications from within Labour are that regroupment with the Liberals has very little support. In the Cabinet, Blair's only real ally on closer relations was Mandelson. The membership of the party is certainly not in favour. Blair will clearly not attempt a regroupment under these conditions.

Blair's support for the Jenkins proposals on electoral reform must be seen in this context. He is attempting to engineer a much closer working relationship with the Liberals and eventually form a political bloc. From the position of an electoral alliance he may be able to test the level of support for a new party. Due to their closeness to 'the project', we should oppose the Jenkins proposals and vote against them in the likely event of a referendum.

### ... and would that help the left?

If Blair does pursue his project to the point where a new party with the Liberals (and even perhaps pro-Europe Tories) became a real possibility, then the prospect of a significant left split from Labour would become much more likely. Even so, such a prospect would not be one the left should automatically look towards to

*Continued next page*

**Is Labour in crisis?***Continued from previous page*

resolve its problems. If we get to that stage, it will mean that Blair has succeeded in completely reversing the split he regrets at the turn of the century, and in doing so has managed to deprive the working class of even the vestige of independent political representation.

Such a situation would leave Blair in the ascendancy. It would be his supporters setting the agenda, not the left. While the old Labourites were regrouping themselves, Blair's forces would be moving forwards. This scenario is a long way from a *dynamic* left split. An Old Labour rearguard would clearly remain reformist and wouldn't amount to the new mass *socialist* party to which much of the left looks – although it would be a vital area of intervention for the left.

**The real prospects**

But this is all running well ahead of events. A decisive break up within Labour in the near future looks very unlikely and the various 'regroupment' and 'recomposition' projects which either see it as happening in the short term, or think that it can be hastened by unfurling an independent red flag are – unfortunately – based upon a high degree of fantasy. Such opportunities as do exist for recomposition at present concern the battered and much reduced forces of the far left, rather

than the larger bodies of the labour movement. And there are clear dangers even here of opportunistic lash-ups based mainly upon electoralism, however much it is dressed up as the need to 'decisively confront' New Labour. This disastrous path has already reduced the Socialist Party – ex-Militant – from a significant political force to a disintegrating sect on the fringes of the labour movement.

There is a danger that activists involved in the Socialist Alliances which have been established in a number of areas are looking for short cuts that don't exist. While such alliances can play an important campaigning role in local areas, at this stage they look more like an impatient response to the *failure* of the old Labour left and its ideas, and a frustrated response to the *success* of New Labour in keeping a firm hold over the consciousness of the working class. Behind the electoral projects currently doing the rounds of the left is a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between revolutionary organisations and the masses. They are an attempt to step around the organisations of the working class and appeal directly to the masses. Bitter past experience shows it is almost impossible for tiny currents to do such a thing.

We do not write off the comrades involved in the alliances, but we don't agree with the politics of their electoralist

project. There is little short-term prospect of left electoral alliances making a significant difference to this situation, except possibly in a few local areas. We believe that the comrades should abandon the idea of challenging Labour through the ballot box, except where a significant working class base makes such a turn viable, and instead concentrate on turning the alliances into campaigning bodies based on the organised working class. Instead of bypassing the structures of the labour movement we need to work through them. Anyone can join the likes of the SWP and learn how to use a megaphone. The difficult task is to take on Blair, Brown, the MPs and union bosses, and indeed the ideology of labourism itself, at the point where it really matters – the heart of the labour movement.

An orientation to the Labour Party – or at least to all the critical elements within it – will remain necessary for socialists for the time being because, unlike almost every other country, it enjoys a near monopoly of support both from the trade union movement and from the wider working class. This position has been unchallenged for the best part of a century. Although it is clear that Blair represents a new breed of Labour leader with an entirely new project, there is no reason to suppose that Labour's base in the working class is about to disappear. **WA**

**SPECIAL OFFER**

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**Labour Welsh Assembly election****Bad to the bone!**

At a demonstration against factory closures on February 12, ex-left Labour MP Peter Hain's non-appearance was noted and the demonstrators booed his message of support. **Nick Davies** reports on Labour's Welsh Assembly election and explains why New Labour is resented in Wales

**W**hen Ron Davies' little walk on the wild side prompted a scramble for his job as Labour's candidate for leader of the Welsh Assembly, Peter Hain suggested, without a trace of a smirk, that in the interests of 'party unity' Alun Michael, who at that time commanded a towering 4 per cent of support among Labour Party members, should be given a clear run as leadership candidate, with Rhodri Morgan (33 per cent and rising) as his deputy. Morgan's

public mockery of this proposal and its sinister logic that an election would be a bad thing because it would be 'divisive', together with the disquiet of many Labour Party members, meant that the leadership has had to grit its teeth and stage a re-run of the election.

Despite the fact that 65 per cent of the Labour Party rank and file preferred the free-thinking Morgan over Blair's dour churchwarden, and Morgan's convincing victories in Labour Party members' bal-



lots in Unison and USDAW, Michael managed to score a marginal 52–48 per cent victory in the outrageously undemocratic electoral college – which generated the comment ‘better than we thought; it was looking closer’ from a Blair aide. Michael’s support in this college came from the AEEU and the TGWU, who unlike Morgan’s supporters refused to ballot their members – clearly revealing the attractions of the old-fashioned block vote to Labour’s ‘modernisers’ – and from the third consisting of MPs and Assembly candidates, who dare not visit the toilet without Millbank’s permission.

Michael, who was recently noted defying Jack Cunningham’s food police and eating beef on the bone, mounted a well-financed charm offensive which basically consisted of him travelling all over Wales taking care to be seen with New Labour top brass while protesting that he was not a leadership candidate! But this did not impress rank and file Labour members who are wondering what is the point of devolution if they cannot elect a leader of whom the New Labour thought police disapprove.

Michael’s victory is partly a result of the weakness of the left. The Wales Campaign Group took no position basically because its leading light Llew Smith preferred Michael, who is closer to Smith’s anti-devolution position. (The Campaign Group was AWOL during the Assembly referendum campaign, also because of Smith’s opposition to the whole project.) Also, while Morgan stood up for party democracy he did not separate himself from Michael politically. The leadership regards him as ‘off message’ and he tells better jokes than Michael does, but that’s really about it. There was no attempt by Morgan to mobilise the left. Nevertheless, in a straight fight between him and the would-be imposed candidate Michael, Labour lefts had to give critical support to Morgan.

### No answer to Wales’ problems

But it wasn’t really about whether Morgan or Michael won the election. Neither has any answer to the particular problems facing the working class in Wales. The Assembly is an opportunity for greater democracy in Wales, and it is undoubtedly a great step forward from the years of Tory quangocracy, presided over by such friends of the working class as John Redwood and William Hague. However, the Welsh Assembly is a down-market version of the Scottish model. Its only real power is to spend the £7 billion budget allocated by central government. It will probably end up act-

ing as a shock absorber, deflecting away from Blair the anger and disappointment felt at New Labour’s betrayal. The last twenty years have been disastrous for the Welsh economy. Since 1979, two recessions have devastated the industrial sector and the Tories finished off the last of the mining industry, while privatisation has worsened public sector pay and conditions, and the provision of services. The abolition of planning controls means that economic development is concentrated along the main road links – in South Wales the M4 as far as Bridgend, and along the A55 on the North Wales coast. Regional assistance has declined from £2 billion in 1979 to £0.5 billion in 1990. The majority of workers are employed in services.

Unemployment and the level of dependence on benefit are high all over Wales, with the partial exception of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. In the valleys and in parts of South West Wales it is at appalling levels, with matching levels of poverty-related ill health. Water disconnections are among the highest in Britain, while the fatcats at Hyder (the owners of Welsh electricity (Swalec) and water) are making themselves into millionaires. Pay is lower than just about anywhere else in Britain. Desperate communities are browbeaten into accepting environmentally disastrous opencast mining, or face devastation through factory closures as in Mid-Wales with Laura Ashley, or Ystradgynlais with Lucas.

However, there are no fundamental differences between New Labour’s economic strategy (nor, despite its ‘radical’ tone, that of Plaid Cymru) and that of the Tories. As in England and Scotland, there will be no renationalisation, nor reimposition of planning controls. Labour’s strategy is based on ‘international competitiveness’ and ‘flexible working practices’: subsidising of the private sector through the Private Finance Initiative, Compulsory Competitive Tendering and Best Value, short-term contracts and casualisation. Potential investors are wooed by hefty subsidies, incentives, and boasts about Welsh low pay. Alun Michael has held up the Irish economy, the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ as an example for Wales, so presumably we can expect Corporation Tax rates of 10 per cent, and an even more lopsided economic development favouring the already wealthy areas.

### Euro-cash running out

The only significant difference between the Tories and New Labour is that New Labour makes more energetic use of European Regional Policy. Most of Wales

has secured Objective 1 Status, entitling it to money from European Structural Funds. But this means cutthroat competition with Greece, Ireland, Portugal and other parts of Britain, and for what? The £220 million going to South West Wales is just about enough to build a by-pass, and with the expansion of the EU the next injection of funds will be in Poland and the Czech Republic. Not only that; the Maastricht treaty forbids borrowing for large-scale capital projects if it takes the public spending deficit above 3 per cent of GDP.

### Break from Tory policies – Campaign Group must fight!

So, we in Wales are faced with a repeat of disastrous Tory policies. Getting a Welsh Assembly to implement them will not make them any better. This is no reason to give up on the Assembly – we must use the opportunities for greater democracy to demand that its powers be increased so that it can make a difference, and to demand that those Labour members who support these aims are as good as their word. We must demand a break from Tory policies: for full employment and for a programme of socially useful public works in health, education and public transport. Labour Assembly members who stand on the left of the party must use their position to advance and fight for these demands. This means opposing the Maastricht treaty. We must demand the repeal of all anti-union laws. As long as they are on the statute book it will be impossible to defend effectively any jobs or services under threat. At present the Labour Party Left is mainly organised in the Wales Campaign Group. The question members or supporters of the Campaign Group must ask themselves is this: do they want to remain supporters of a parliamentary clique or a semi-secret society content just to grumble about Blair, or do they want to mobilise Labour Party members and trade unionists to fight for these demands, to defend jobs and services under threat, and so really make a difference?

- \* For real democracy in Wales – for a Welsh parliament with tax-raising powers.
- \* For full employment, and a programme of socially useful public works.
- \* Repeal the anti-union laws!
- \* Renationalise Welsh Water, Swalec, British Gas and the Railways!
- \* No to Maastricht! For a workers’ Europe!

**Labour mayor selection**

# Let Livingstone stand!

by **Jonathan Joseph**

In March the Labour Party NEC is set to finalise the procedure for selecting its candidate for London mayor. This is despite the fact that last June the Greater London Labour Party voted by 400 votes to 2 for a one member one vote system to select Labour's candidate.

The reason is simple, the Labour leadership does not want any trouble-makers standing. It does not trust the London membership to chose the right candidate so it is establishing a hand-picked selection panel to vet candidates, a process similar to that used in Scotland to remove the left MP Dennis Canavan from the Scottish parliament list.

The Labour leadership's policy of manipulating the selection procedure has nothing to do with selecting the most 'electable' candidate. If it was down to popularity, opinion polls have shown that Ken Livingstone, the candidate Blair is hell-bent on barring, is the overwhelming popular favourite. Over 1000 people attended the February 15 rally organised by Livingstone's campaign and it is clear that he has a base of support way beyond the old Labour left.

Today's Livingstone is a far cry from the 'Red Ken' image the media like to portray. He has backed down on several important issues – such as accepting the partial privatisation of the London Underground – and has gone out of his way to reassure the leadership that he is a loyal supporter. In a letter to the *Guardian* of 29 January he even goes so far as to identify with the Blair project, claiming that 'Labour's policies are ones I have campaigned for over a quarter of a century'.

It would surely seem that from a Millbank viewpoint that 'Red Ken' is ripe for the picking and it is a sign of the levels of paranoia within the modernisers' camp that they would rather exclude him than bring him on board. Shocked by the left's NEC success and the Mandelson fiasco, the Blair clique fear that Livingstone would use his post to launch a campaign against the government and rally the expectations of both Labour members and the general public. No doubt memory of Livingstone's GLC days still sends a

shiver down Blair's spine.

However, if the Labour leadership is right about something it is that Livingstone cannot be trusted. Despite initially opposing the creation of a London mayor, he put his name forward once the chance to advance his career became apparent. The careerist desire to become mayor, rather than political principle, will have the biggest influence over Livingstone.

The drift of Livingstone's politics is alarming. He now advocates support for the project of European Monetary Union and puts himself forward as a 'left' advisor to Chancellor Gordon Brown.

However, Livingstone still maintains a great deal of credibility both on the left and, as the polls have suggested, with a wider electorate. He is remembered as the radical leader of the GLC who took on the hated Thatcher government as well as someone who introduced basic reforms like the 'fares fair' policy for public

transport which made life in London a bit easier.

Again, the actual record of Livingstone as GLC leader is more questionable, particularly his unwillingness to mobilise a full scale struggle to defend the GLC on ratecapping and its own abolition. But he is still the favourite of workers in London. The sectarians on the left like the AWL who rubbish Livingstone's record as an excuse not to support him, fail to see the dynamics of the contest and the political potential it offers.

The attempt to stop Livingstone standing is blatantly undemocratic. The attack on him is aimed at the already weakened democracy of the Labour Party, at Old Labour and at the left and, most importantly, at the London working class. We have to take sides in this struggle and give critical support to Livingstone as the best way to strike a blow against New Labour and begin the political fight-back. **WA**

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# Bloody Sunday: Public inquiry now!

About a year ago, as part of its attempt to win republicans to its peace initiative, the British government promised a further inquiry into the Bloody Sunday killings. One year on, the promise remains unfulfilled and instead we have from Blair an 'apology' which is worthless because it refuses to accept any responsibility for the murders.

Responsibility is the key. The British government cannot afford to acknowledge facts about Bloody Sunday that have become public knowledge through books, TV documentaries and the Irish government dossier. Such key facts as:

- No weapons were found on any of those killed. No guns were captured that day.
- At least one person was killed in a surrender posture; the bullet went in one armpit and exited through the other without touching either arm.
- Three people were killed by bullets fired from Derry city walls. The use

of snipers by the British army is clear evidence that the killings were planned rather than a self-defence response, as claimed.

The Widgery inquiry of 1972 – the 'official truth' – is revealed as a total sham. All the evidence available today was available then, but ignored by Widgery. Indeed, there is now clear evidence of the planned cover-up in the notes of Prime Minister Edward Heath's meeting with Widgery, where Heath said that there was a propaganda war being fought in Ireland, and in the concealment of witness statements from counsel for the relatives. Some of Widgery's findings are perverse beyond belief – Gerald Donaghy was reported to be carrying four nail bombs when he was killed. These nail bombs – each the size of half a brick – were found in the pockets of his skin-tight jeans on the sixth examination of his body after having been missed by the first five, but Widgery says that suggesting they were

planted there is 'mere speculation'.

The latest inquiry, led by Lord Saville, has spent a year doing nothing. Saville has complained that the relatives of the 14 murdered are 'too adversarial' in their approach. It is clear that Saville's inquiry, if not another whitewash, is at least a hush-up.

All the evidence shows that Bloody Sunday was an attempt to intimidate republicans by the random assassination of demonstrators. This is true terrorism, and the planning of such an action will have involved the highest levels of the military hierarchy and the British government – the Widgery whitewash is the proof of that.

We demand a genuine public inquiry into the Bloody Sunday murders, with no immunity from prosecution for the perpetrators and all who conspired in the act. This would open the way for justice and compensation for the relatives of the 14 who were murdered. It would also strengthen the campaign to end British occupation of the six counties. **WA**

These two articles are from the Workers Action leaflet for the Bloody Sunday march this year.

## The fight for self-determination

The Good Friday agreement marks the end of the phase of struggle that began in the late 1960s. Republicans, war-weary and with no alternative to the failed military policy, voted by a huge majority for the 'peace agreement'. The rule of the unionists from Stormont is being re-introduced and Irish self-determination is now as far away as it was in 1968. Republicans and socialists now have to discuss what has happened and learn the lessons.

While it is true that the Adams / McGuinness line is a betrayal, republicanism's problem is its political programme. Devoid of a class analysis, it always leans on the Irish capitalist axis of Fianna Fáil and the SDLP – the party of the emerging northern Catholic middle-class. The Hume / Adams talks of 1992 marked Hume's assessment that Sinn Féin had recognised that the military struggle could not succeed in its declared aim of liberating the North, and that the time was ripe for intervention. The content of the talks was the normalisation of the North for unfettered capitalist exploitation.

For its part, the British government realised that it was necessary to make some limited political concessions to the nationalists in order to marginalise the 'physical force' republicans. It calculated that of-

fering a range of reforms including a power-sharing executive, a curb on excessive Orange triumphalism and official cross-border bodies could end the 'armed struggle' where police-military methods had failed.

However, it is wrong to see the situation in the North as the removal of an obstacle to 'normal class politics', as many on the left are claiming. The factors dividing the working class still remain – the Orange card can still be played, the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish TUC still forbids discussion of the national question, and Catholic unemployment is still well above that of Protestants. The apparatus bolstering the sectarian divide still remains – the totally discredited Protestant police force, the unionist veto in the assembly, the sectarian parades.

Some republicans look to eventual Irish unity through the expansion of the all-Ireland bodies formalised in the agreement, or through demographic change – the Catholic birth-rate suggests a Catholic majority in the North by 2025. History suggests otherwise – these factors are far more likely to bring about a sectarian Orange response.

So the current agreement contains within itself the seeds of a loyalist backlash. It is likely that loyalists will continue to ex-

pect privileges over nationalists, and the ruling class will play the orange card if there appears to be any nationalist / loyalist unity. This suggests that any progressive struggles are likely to develop in the nationalist community and to be ghettoised there. Socialists still need to relate to nationalists, while fighting to win them to class politics and socialism.

Immediately, we have to relate to the 95 per cent of nationalists who voted 'Yes' on Good Friday. With Unionists and Tories demanding that the release of prisoners be halted until the IRA surrenders its arms, the government has delayed the full implementation of the assembly. The aim is to intensify the pressure on the IRA and break its control over nationalist areas. There is no basis for restarting an armed struggle at this point – but there must be no handover of weapons. Safety guarantees from the government and the RUC are worthless. The nationalist population must retain its ability to defend itself against loyalist attack.

- \* No decommissioning of republican arms!
- \* For community controlled defence committees in nationalist areas!
- \* Britain out of Ireland!
- \* Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole! **WA**

As Longbridge union leaders toe the bosses' line ...

## Sell-out leads to more attacks

In the run up to the recent ballot at Rover / BMW Longbridge, on redundancies and cuts in pay and conditions, workers found that the bosses, the media and their own union leaders were all urging acceptance of the management attack. Against the threat by management to close entirely the Longbridge plant, union leaders gave complete co-operation to management, even going so far as to organise joint union and management mass meetings of the workforce to put the case for acceptance. Lacking any fighting leadership, 75 per cent voted for the 2,500 redundancies, annually aggregated pay and other cuts. Currently it seems that there have been many more than 2,500

applications for voluntary redundancy.

Emboldened by the total collapse of the unions, management are now seeking a further 2,000 redundancies, this time mainly centred on the Cowley plant, if the increased productivity targets are not met. The lesson is clear – failing to fight against management's first attack merely encourages them to come back demanding more. And if the workers do meet the increased productivity targets, the management response will be that they have more workers than they need to reach the target. More efficiency simply opens the door to more redundancies.

The following article, by Pete Bloomer, a Workers Action supporter in

Birmingham, first appeared in *Unity*, the newsletter of the Birmingham Trades Council Workers Solidarity Committee (WSC). As a result of the article the Birmingham *Evening Mail* contacted the Trades Council who immediately disowned the article, and the Transport and General Workers Union threatened to disaffiliate from the Trades Council unless it took measures against the WSC. *Unity* is now edited by the Trades Council. An indication of the new direction of *Unity* can be taken from their editing of the latest issue, where a statement by the Hillingdon Hospital strikers has been edited to remove all criticism of their union, Unison. **WA**

### BMW hold workers to ransom — the threat to Longbridge

Many commentators like to hold workers responsible for every problem in industry. But the fact is that the Rover workers at Longbridge have for years been on the retreat, giving way time and time again to the worsening of conditions and pay, and increasing 'productivity,' all of this at the expense of the workers. BMW / Rover have already had 1,500 redundancies and now they want more.

At the last Birmingham TUC meeting Tony Woodley, the chief negotiator of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) for the Rover Group outlined the union's response to the latest demands of BMW/Rover management. He sought to assure the 100 strong audience that BMW are very serious about closures, that the Union had looked into the finances and they really do need serious cuts.

Without a hint of combativity the T&G strategy is to act as an agent of BMW, it was the T&G and not BMW that first went to the government for subsidy of the Longbridge plant. The T&G seek to persuade the Longbridge work force of the need to accept substantial redundancies.

It seems that the closeness of T&G leader Bill Morris to the wheels of financial power, on the board of the Bank of England, is not so unrepresentative.

The cause of Rover's problem is under-investment. The market is swamped through a cycle of overproduction in an environment of forthcoming recession. Instead of accepting this logic of the market, a workers' plan for Rover is required. Rather than allowing massive redundancies across the car and component industries the government must be forced to act. If BMW refuses the necessary investment then the government must step in and fund a re-established Rover under workers' control. If there is a glut of cars then government contracts for buses and trains and other diversification should be undertaken. The alternative is a renewed slump in production which will hit the West Midlands very hard. The workforce has an incredible wealth of experience and knowledge with which it can transform Rover, it is capital that lags behind.

Latest indications suggest that the T&G will push an agreement for 1,900 to 2,300 redundancies with further productivity (cuts in conditions) to include the aggregation of work hours for greater flexibility. Cowley Shop Stewards combine in a healthy display of solidarity has voted not to accept the deal. Whether the Longbridge workers feel able to reject the proposal is to be determined. If the workers choose to fight the whole labour movement must come to their aid. The WSC pledges its support! **WA**

### Meanwhile in Sweden ...

Ford and Volvo announced in February a Ford takeover of Volvo car industries. Ford will maintain the name Volvo on some of their models to cash in on the Swedish company's 'tough but safe' image as they did earlier with Jaguar's supposed status and exclusivity (translation – cars for stinking rich show-offs) image. Part of Ford's reason is the similar deal struck between General Motors and Saab last year which would give otherwise allow GM to play the nationalist "home marque" card in the rich Scandinavian markets.

Volvo will concentrate on its other interests – most importantly lorries. Last year Volvo sacked 6000 workers to release capital for a huge stock purchase in the Saab-Scania lorry and bus company.

Swedish social democracy has supported the deal, claiming it shows that foreign companies recognise their ability to solve their economic crisis. They are – of course – indulging in that specialist form of self-serving deceit that is known in Britain as 'spin-doctoring'. Ford's reason is nothing to do with supporting Göran Persson; it is that they gain better access to a rich market and they maintain equality with GM in the area.

The bourgeois parties have been against the deal on a nationalist basis. They claim that the government is responsible for the loss of a Swedish national asset because it has been too soft on the trade unions and has allowed wages to rise, making the company vulnerable to foreign takeover. Lars Leijonborg said in the Riksdag debate that he wanted Swedish companies to buy foreign companies and move the jobs to Sweden, not the reverse.

The union leadership at Volvo Gothenburg held a press conference where US flags were displayed, saying they were not opposed to the deal. but they opposed closure of their plant. **WA**

# The new right wing left government in Sweden

On 20 September 1998, Swedish voters gave the social democrats the right to rule for a further 4 years. Our Swedish correspondent **Gustav Mowitz** analyses the first months after the election

**T**his election was truly historic for several reasons, it had the lowest turnout ever in Sweden, the highest result ever for the Left Party (former Eurocommunists) and the lowest ever for the Social Democratic Party since the introduction of bourgeois democracy. The so-called 'middle' of the political scene was almost erased, the Liberals only just kept a few seats in the Riksdag and the agrarian Centre Party had its worst-ever result. The conservative Moderate Party led by Carl Bildt finished – despite dozens of spin-doctors and bribed media commentators (who all tried to translate his role as spokesman for world imperialism in Bosnia into political credibility) – on the same number of seats as before. The anti-abortion, anti-state childcare, anti-homosexual and basically anti-anything progressive Christian Democrats made the main gains.

Extreme right-wing parties made gains in the local elections too. The Swedendemocrats (who have connections with the Front Nationale (France) and the British National Party) won 8 seats on city councils in various towns. A lot of regional racist parties did even better, but the most successful right wing party – with 62 seats on various city councils – was the Party for the Interests of Retired People (SPI). The SPI has a far right agenda. When asked by an interviewer why she has engaged herself in politics at such an old age, one party leader replied 'Because I really hate niggers and wogs, my hate for them gives me the energy to campaign'.

## The reasons for the outcome

In the previous election, 1994, the electorate voted for the social democrats to sweep away the bourgeois government and rebuild the demolished public sector. Göran Persson, a well-known red-baiting 'moderniser' and strike-breaker unexpectedly became the state minister. Not only did Persson become

state minister against the will of the electorate; he also soon began to attack the public sector even more viciously than the previous bourgeois government had done. In the Riksdag he leaned for support on the Centre Party, a main architect of cuts in the previous government. His open contempt for the rank and file of his own party was ill-disguised; when long-standing party members pleaded with him to moderate his attacks he dismissed them as 'communist extremists'. He publicly stated his admiration for British Tory chancellor Kenneth Clarke and that his closest friend and ally in the international labour movement is Tony Blair.

Not very surprisingly, workers have been opposed to Persson and have wanted to protest against the government. The preference of the market under the present circumstances would without no doubt be a governmental coalition between social democrats, the Centre Party and the Liberals. While the Moderates and Christian Democrats are more representative of market interests, the less right-wing bourgeois parties like the Centre Party and Liberals would open the way for a more right wing government by assisting the social democrats to weaken the power of the trade unions and other working class forces in the Social Democratic Party. This, of course, coincides with the desires of the leadership of the SDP as well.

The problem is that during the 1998 election campaign, workers gave a clear message that they wanted a French / German solution, a social democratic, left, green government. The Left Party has some (undeserved) credentials as a more left wing reformist party, whilst the Greens have gained credibility as dedicated fighters against the EU and EMU. By voting for these parties instead of social democracy, many workers hoped that the SDP would be so small that they would have no option but to look to the left for support.

## The immediate aftermath

Only a few days after the election, attacks against the Left Party began. Their economic spokesperson, Johan Lönnroth, suffered a campaign of smears suggesting he was a new Lenin (which this guru of postmodernist, pro-corporatist intellectuals is absolutely not). Göran Persson showed exactly what influence the two supporting parties would have in his first speech in the new Riksdag, where he massively emphasised the role of the EU in Sweden's future. The Left and the Greens were very welcome to implement the right wing elements of their programmes but they could forget about influencing the social politics.

## The left-turners turn right

Many workers voted Green in order to weight the social democrats to the left. Unfortunately the Greens are not leftists in the social / economic sense and voted with the bourgeois opposition against the government – giving the opposition a majority – in order to destroy the employment security act. (This law forbids an employer to sack whom they want; it enforces a 'last in first out' system. The law protects trade unionists, but it has been so circumvented by other laws that it is now little more than symbolic. Nevertheless, it is an important symbol for the Swedish labour movement.)

Meanwhile the ex-communist Left Party, which also gained votes as a means of pulling the social democrats leftwards, is also showing a more rightist face than it did in opposition. The leadership is controlled by the right wing. Just before the elections Gudrun Schyman, the party leader, attacked the unions and demanded that they stop paying the SDP supportive money, calling the SDP Mafia-like and undemocratic. It has watered down its politics so much that it only appears leftist against the SDP 'modernisers'. Its secretary – Lars Ohly – promoted the Left Party's six-hour working day policy on the basis that it would create extra profits since the workers would have more energy.

The Left Party was able to pose as left as long only as long as it remained in opposition, but this is now impossible. However, within the Left Party, a falange based around the youth league has continued to call itself 'communist' and 'revolutionary'. Now the credibility of this group is also being tested. The main leader, Jenny Lindahl, has indeed 'defended' Lenin in the press, agreeing with Richard Pipes that he was a mass murderer but saying that the reactions of bourgeois media against Lenin are

*Continued next page*

... **left government in Sweden**  
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'hysterical'. Kalle Larsson, another leading Left leftist, put a motion in the Riksdag that the means of production should be socialised. Unsurprisingly this was not passed. The left falange, though small, plays an important role; the bourgeois media and social democratic politicians use it as an excuse for labelling the Left Party as extremist, which has led to differences within the party. Whenever Schyman or Ohly take a position which has an element of pro-working class politics in it, they come under attack. Their response is invariably to backtrack while attacking the left within their own party. The Lund region branch of the Left Party - one of the most important - has now refused to pay its party subscription saying that part of the money would pay the activities of 'fanatical revolutionary extremists'.

### The future

The present government is not what the workers wanted. While Persson has removed from the government some of his most well known and extremist 'modernisers' and has toned down the 'modernisation' rhetoric, he still attacks the Left and pushes the Greens to co-operate with the bourgeois parties, giving himself the room to pose as the defender of workers' interests. Within the government the 'modernisers' have been able to manoeuvre to put through right-wing legislation and to reinstate some of their number - like Mona Sahlin and Björn Rosengren, both whom had been kicked out for 'sleaze'.

But the real opposition has not yet even begun to form. Radical workers in Sweden must not accept Persson's proposition, nor can they trust the Lefts or the Greens. They must trust their own ability and organise as an opposition based upon class independence and around a programme for real socialism inside all spheres of the labour movement, including the SDP, against the bureaucracy.

And as for the 'revolutionary' opposition within the Left Party, it must either choose if it is going to succumb to Schyman's political 'decency' or if it is going to fight. If it chooses to fight, then it has to learn that the workers and their organisations must be defended as the only force which can make possible the changes these students and artists dream about. It must also reject the old 'Euro-communism with a radical tinge' that is its trademark. If they are really serious about being communist, they must go back to the basics; they must adopt the programme of Leninism, Trotskyism, and proletarian internationalism. ■

# Basques take to the streets

by Jim Padmore

**S**aturday January 9 saw one of the biggest demonstrations in Basque history. More than 100,000 braved the pouring rain to march through the streets of Bilbao.

Men and women of all ages marched together with friends, family and workmates, sometimes three generations could be seen together, it was a truly massive mobilisation of the working class.

The demonstration - called by the Basque nationalist parties (PNV, EA and Herri Batasuna) - demanded the immediate relocation of the Basque political prisoners to the Basque country. This elementary demand has been the focus of a series of militant demonstrations in the three months since the Basque elections.

Basque prisoners - including the entire former leadership of Herri Batasuna - are currently dispersed all over Spain. With distances of often 500 miles, it is next to impossible for family and friends to regularly visit those in prison.

The Basque government itself has pointed out that this is in clear violation of Spanish law which states that prisoners should serve their terms close to home. The Spanish government likes to give Basque prisoners 'special treatment'.

However, there is special treatment of a different sort for the former PSOE ministers jailed for their part in the notorious GAL operation. They have been released 'pending appeal' after only four months!

The last six months have seen an entirely new political situation. September's ETA cease-fire was followed by October's elections, with the nationalist parties winning a clear majority on a record turnout.

The new government is a PNV-EA coalition supported 'from outside' by Herri Batasuna/Euskal Herritarrok. there is a real danger of HB/EH actually entering the bourgeois government. At the moment HB lead-

ers say this is not on the agenda, but they do not rule it out for the future. Given that a number of HB leaders are known to be in favour of such a move, it is likely to be the focus of a major battle for the heart and soul of Herri Batasuna

The present situation provides enormous opportunities for socialists, but what has been the role of Izquierda Unida (United Left)? The IU could have taken a lead in the situation. They could have fought for the CC.OO and UGT to support these demonstrations, bringing their banners, marching in trade union contingents and raising demands against the PNV.

The Basque labour movement is at present tragically divided between nationalists (ELA and LAB) and non-nationalists (CC.OO and UGT). Only the bosses stand to gain when these organisations cannot even hold joint Mayday demonstrations.

Izquierda Unida should have gone all out for these demonstrations and taken the opportunity to go directly to the base of the nationalist parties. But while probably thousands of IU supporters turned out from all over the Basque country, they had no profile and no intervention. They made no attempt to inform demonstrators of the PNV's record or argue to for a socialist alternative. ■

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# Letters

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## The left in the Brazilian elections

Dear comrades,

You may be interested in some further information about last October's elections here in Brazil, particularly in relation to the performance of the Workers Party (PT) and the far left. In the elections in the PT-controlled Federal District (Brasilia), Cristovan Buarque was running for re-election as governor. He was opposed by candidates of the PMDB, a party without any clear political outline but which tends to be in the centre or centre-right, while sometimes putting forward a centre-left face, and of the PSDB, the party of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso which is now following a neo-liberal policy.

In the first round on October 4, the PT's Buarque was the winner and the PMDB's candidate, the right-wing populist landowner Joaquim Roriz, came second. The middle class voted for Buarque to avoid Roriz, whom they hate because when he was governor he attracted poor people from all over Brazil to the Federal District by his policy of land redistribution. Roriz's accent also counted against him. Unlike Buarque, who is a teacher at the university, Roriz speaks rather bad Portuguese!

You can guess what happened in the second round: Roriz tried to outflank Buarque from the left. He promised to keep all the good policies of the previous PT administration (like the very popular scholarship system which allows children from poor families to stay on at school) and to raise the salaries of the Federal District public-sector workers.

When asked where he would get the money to pay for the wage rises – the Federal District has no industries and is dependent on central government for funding – Roriz answered that it would be obtained by 'putting pressure on the Federal Government'. Buarque, on the other hand, refused to make a similar pledge: 'We don't have any money,' he said. 'I cannot promise to raise salaries.'

So, despite hating Roriz and supporting the previous government of

Buarque, the civil servants of the Federal District swung behind Roriz in the second round of the elections on October 25, and Buarque lost. Money talks!

For his part, Buarque supported right-wing candidates in other districts. In the neighbouring state of Goiás, for example, he allied himself with the candidate of Cardoso's PSDB. He even engaged in a common campaign with the PSDB in the area that straddles the border between the two districts, which is home to a large number of poor people who work in the Federal District.

It was bad enough that Buarque should forge an alliance with the PSDB, but in doing so he placed himself in the same camp as the extreme right-winger Ronaldo Caiado. Caiado is a landowner in Goiás and a member of Brazil's most reactionary party, the PFL. In his opposition to the Sem Terra movement of landless peasants, Caiado has become a symbol of the violence of the hated rural aristocracy. With little in the way of popular support for his own policies, this fascist threw his weight behind the PSDB candidate.

But Buarque's sharing a platform with Caiado was not an aberration – in the state of Piauí, Buarque gave his support directly to the PFL candidate, Hugo Napoleão, and in the Federal District, the PFL supported Buarque in the second round.

The Partido Socialista dos

Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU) was created by the LIT's Brazilian section, Convergência Socialista, when it was expelled from the PT. (Although the CS comrades were, indeed, expelled, it is also true that they wanted to leave in order to launch their own party.)

The PSTU stood in the municipal elections in 1996, when it did reasonably well. In the city of São Paulo, for instance, it gained 50,000 votes, along with 10,000 votes for its individual candidates. Another 10,000 votes would have been enough to elect a PSTU representative to the city administration. So in the federal and state elections of last October, it was anticipated that the PSTU might win a few seats.

In fact, the result was a disaster for the PSTU. Despite having policies against unemployment, the IMF and the Cardoso government which were popular with workers, particularly PT supporters, and a limited amount of free time on television to promote them, the PSTU gained only 0.2 per cent of the vote. In the state of São Paulo, which has four times the population of the city, the PSTU got 36,000 votes and its main candidate for parliament, Valério Arcary, got 10,000 votes, a long way short of the 250,000 needed to elect an MP.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, the PSTU's existing MP, the ex-Communist Party member Lindbergh Faria, received 70,000 votes. Although this was a respectable vote for an individual, the PSTU's total vote in the state was below the number required, so Faria wasn't re-elected.

The elections also proved to be a disappointment for the lefts who remain inside the PT, with no-one being elected at either the state or federal level. Although the differences between the right and left wings of the PT are becoming more distinct, the left is so small and ineffectual that the leadership is unlikely to waste its time trying to expel it.

Portilho Simões

Brasilia

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1946 – The RCP's challenge to the FI leadership's post-war perspectives

# Fighting against catastrophism

In Workers Action No.5 we argued in 'Waiting for the big one: Catastrophism and the *Transitional Programme*' that the 50-year crisis of Trotskyism was due, in large part, not only to the movement's inability to deal with the non-fulfilment of the post-war perspectives sketched out in the *Transitional Programme*, but also to the political method which lay behind those perspectives. We have to keep an open mind as to whether Trotsky, had he survived the Second World War, might have reappraised his methodology and adjusted his perspectives. As for his immediate successors, we cannot credit them with much capacity for independent thought.

Clinging to the letter of the perspectives in the *Transitional Programme*, the Fourth International, led (if that is not too generous a description) by the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (SWP), greeted the post-war era by denying that the war was even over. 'There is no peace', declared the August 1945 issue of *Fourth International*, the theoretical journal of the SWP. Presumably, since Trotsky's perspectives had foreseen a revolutionary situation after the war, then if there was no revolutionary situation, the war could not have finished! Further, the re-establishment of bourgeois democracies in Europe was firmly ruled out: '... the economic preconditions for an extended period of bourgeois democracy have disappeared... Roosevelt and Churchill understand that it is not on the cards to establish stable "democratic" capitalist governments in Europe today... The choice, from the Roosevelt-Churchill point of view, is a Franco-type government or the spectre of the Socialist Revolution.'<sup>1</sup> Third, despite the fact that the Soviet Union had not only survived the war but had expanded its sphere of influence into eastern and central Europe, the SWP maintained that 'under Stalin the Soviet Union has been debilitated and today is weaker than ever in relation to the capitalist world'.<sup>2</sup>

This bizarre world-view had percolated into the weak and inexperienced

European sections of the Fourth International, just emerging from illegality. Therefore, 'it was the revolutionary action of the masses' which had destroyed 'the last possibilities for the bourgeoisie to restore the economy which has been ruined and dilapidated by the war'.<sup>3</sup>

This failure to allow for even the possibility of a stabilisation of capitalism, and the insistence that it faced ever greater crisis, found its expression in 'The New Imperialist "Peace" and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International', the resolution put by the leadership to the International Pre-conference of the Fourth International in April 1946. This extraordinary document starts with a bald statement that 'there is no reason whatever to assume that we are facing a new epoch of capitalist stabilisation and development... what confronts us now is a world-wide crisis transcending anything known in the past, and a world-wide revolutionary upsurge'. 'Only the intervention of the proletariat,' it went on to warn, 'can save the Soviet Union from an early and fatal end.' As for the economic perspective, it had the following to say: 'The general situation of the world economy, the ruin of Europe, the exacerbation of all the inter-imperialist contradictions, the tense relationship between imperialism and the USSR – all these determine a lengthy period of grave economic difficulties, convulsions, and partial and general crises.' Last but not least, Trotskyist militants were told that it was 'undeniable' that the Second World War had 'destroyed capitalist equilibrium on a world scale, thus opening up a long revolutionary period'.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, there was some opposition in the SWP to this nonsense, in the shape of Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow. The latter observed that 'the Trotskyist movement would become a madhouse' if it followed the SWP leadership's line.<sup>5</sup> Goldman and Morrow pointed out that capitalist strategy was not limited to a Franco government as the only alternative to revolution: 'there is always a way out for the bourgeoisie

... The bourgeoisie will today, just as in 1918, use bourgeois democracy with equal facility with other methods... Roosevelt-Churchill are unfortunately more flexible than are the writers of the sub-committee resolution.'<sup>6</sup> They also recognised that Stalinism had in fact been strengthened by the outcome of the war.

Opposition also emerged from the majority of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), the British section, formed in 1944 by a fusion between the remains of the official section, the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), and the larger and more active Workers International League (WIL). A mutual suspicion had long existed between the SWP leaders and the WIL, notwithstanding the existence in the WIL and then the RCP of an energetic pro-SWP faction led by Gerry Healy. At first, the WIL and then the RCP shared the general perspectives of the FI leadership, but gradually a majority began to distance themselves from its conclusions. By 1945 Ted Grant felt able to predict that 'A bourgeois democratic phase in the next immediate stage of the evolution of European society is most likely in the Western states', defining this state of affairs as a 'bourgeois counter-revolution'.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, the RCP majority was sympathetic to some of Goldman and Morrow's positions.

This growing rift between the RCP and the FI leadership found expression in the amendments which the RCP tabled to the FI leadership's draft resolution to the 1946 Pre-conference. To the perspective of ever deepening crisis, it counterposed the idea that: 'All the factors on a European and world scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the next period is not one of "stagnation and slump" but one of revival and boom'.<sup>8</sup>

But the RCP's much more realistic and accurate analysis was voted down and the crisis-mongering of the leadership was endorsed – a decision for which the Fourth International would pay dearly. As Morrow said: 'The SWP was in a position to study and clarify the tasks of the movement... had the SWP done this work, it might have saved the European movement years of groping, errors, and painful reorientation'.<sup>9</sup> Indeed!

In fact, Morrow was eventually expelled from the SWP, and Goldman followed some of its more critically minded members into Max Shachtman's Workers Party. An account of the collapse of the RCP is beyond the scope of this introduction. Suffice it to say that shortly



afterwards the FI leadership authorised an unprincipled split between Healy's minority faction, which supported its perspectives and wanted to enter the Labour Party, and the majority led by Ted Grant and Jock Haston which quite correctly opposed the leadership's perspectives, but clung to an unrealistic open party building project. After two years, what was left of the RCP majority followed Healy into the Labour Party, demoralised and dispirited. Once Healy gained control of the section, he proceeded to expel anyone who stood up to him (and some who didn't). So began the long march of Gerry Healy and his supporters, through sectarianism, paranoia, violence, sexual abuse, and the eventual expulsion and disgrace of Healy himself. The failure to deal adequately with the criticisms of Goldman and Morrow, and then the break-up of the RCP could reasonably be said to mark when Trotskyism lost the plot. The failure to learn from this meant that the Trotskyist movement, in both its Healyite and Mandeliste forms, throughout a period of unprecedented economic boom preached a doctrine of imminent revolution which was at best unrealistic and at worst downright loopy. Those revolutionary Marxists who prefer to try to relate to the world as it is are faced with the difficult challenge of developing a coherent revolutionary theory and practice out of the wreckage of post-Trotsky Trotskyism.

We are publishing the RCP's amendments not just for historical interest, and not because we agree with every word of them. We reprint them to show

that the political crisis of the Fourth International need not have occurred in the way that it did, and that criticism of the FI leadership's positions in that period could be made without the luxury of hindsight. Moreover, the issues raised are relevant today. For the past 50 years disciples of Leon Trotsky have been predicting imminent economic meltdown. This is not only bad Marxism, it is bad empiricism. With the left in the state that it is in, to run around arguing that such a catastrophe, should it occur, would necessarily be a step forward for socialism, verges on the irresponsible. One phrase from the RCP's amendments

resonates down the decades: 'The theory of spontaneous collapse of capitalism is entirely alien to the conceptions of Bolshevism. Lenin and Trotsky emphasised again and again that capitalism will always find a way out if it is not destroyed by the conscious intervention of the revolutionary party which, at the head of the masses, takes advantages of the difficulties and crises of capitalism to overthrow it.'<sup>10</sup> Although the situation today is not the same as that of 1946, the mistakes of that time serve as a warning to those crisis-mongers of today, who appear to have caught the millennium bug.

Nick Davies

### Notes

1. 'Resolution of the 15th Anniversary Plenum on Perspectives and Tasks of the Coming European Revolution', November 2, 1943. Quoted in S. Bornstein and A. Richardson, *The War and the International*, Socialist Platform, 1986, p.173.
2. 'Draft Resolution of the National Committee on the European Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party', September 1944. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.174.
3. 'The Maturing Situation in Europe and the Tasks of the Fourth International', January 1945. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.177.
4. 'The New Imperialist "Peace" and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International', December 1945. *Fourth International*, June 1946.
5. F. Morrow, 'Letter to All Sections of the Fourth International', November 15, 1945. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.173.
6. F. Morrow, 'Report to Plenum', October 1943. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.174.
7. 'Resolution on the National Question in Europe Issued by the CC of the RCP for Discussion in the Party', *Workers International News*, July-August 1945. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.177.
8. See page 22 of this journal.
9. F. Morrow, 'Letter to All Sections of the Fourth International'. Quoted in Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.175.
10. See page 21 of this journal.

### Proposed amendments to the foregoing text

Adopted for Submission to the World Congress by the National Congress of the R.C.P. (British Section of the Fourth International) Sept. 1946.

### Proposed line of amendment to the International pre-conference resolution 'New Imperialist "Peace" and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International' on the relative strength of the USSR.

From the viewpoint of world development, in the absence of victorious proletarian revolution, the most outstanding factor in the resultant of the war is the emergence of the Soviet Union as the greatest military power in Europe and Asia – with the exception of the USA, the greatest power in the world. State ownership and planned economy have demonstrated their superiority in peace and in war.

This result has upset all the calculations of world imperialism. Nor was such a result foreseen even by ourselves. The allies made their agreements with the

Soviet Union with the confident expectation that she would either be defeated or would emerge from the war so weakened as to be completely dependent, economically and politically, upon Anglo-American imperialism. But despite the errors and excesses of the Stalinist bureaucracy, despite the total incapacity of the generals and officers who remained after the purge and who were largely responsible for the defeats in the first stages of the war, the Soviet Union survived the first terrible defeats as no other country could have done. Without the Ukraine and the Donetz Basin in which two thirds

The following are the three documents submitted by the RCP to the International Pre-Conference discussion in September 1946.

Spelling and punctuation have been slightly changed in line with modern usage. All emphasis is as in the original document and is that of the RCP except in one case which the RCP note as (Emphasis in original). The two original footnotes have been moved to their appropriate position in the text and delimited by square brackets. References to original graphs and page numbers have been changed to refer to the pagination in this document.

The reference to 'foregoing text' at the start of the RCP's amendments reflects the fact that the FI leadership document 'New Imperialist "Peace" and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International' appeared immediately prior to these amendments in *Workers' International News* Nov-Dec 1946.

of the most important industries – iron, steel, coal, aluminium – had been concentrated, the Soviet Union virtually unaided defeated a Germany armed with the resources of all Europe.

This was achieved by the transferring to and the building of new bases of heavy industry in the Urals and Siberia which, given the high morale of the masses together with the reorganisation of the army general staff and officer cadre, was sufficient to guarantee military victory over German imperialism. This despite the reactionary chauvinist policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy which was aimed at sabotaging and destroying the possibility of world revolution.

The economic system of the Soviet Union stood the test, despite all the disadvantages and the incubus of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Russia has emerged from the war strengthened and not weakened. Far from the calculations of the imperialists being realised – that Germany and Russia would knock each other out – Germany has collapsed, Russia has emerged victorious and now dominates half Europe and a great part of Asia. The Stalinist bureaucracy has achieved a position of domination in the Balkans and in Asia far surpassing the dreams of the Czars. They have secured points of vantage for a tremendous spurt forward.

Churchill's phrase 'the iron curtain' from Trieste to Stettin is a picturesque description of the domination of this region by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Britain has lost the balance of power which she maintained in Europe for 300 years. It is Russia that bestrides the continent and looms ahead as a serious threat to British imperialism in the Mediterranean, in the Middle East, in the Far East and in Europe. Only the giant strength of American imperialism stands as a challenge to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Both Britain and Japan have become bases for American imperialism for a future struggle to the death with Russia which looms ahead if capitalism survives the next epoch.

The changed relationship of forces arises out of the changed economic relationships. While European capitalism has been slowly decaying, an unprecedented development of the forces of production and the productivity of labour has taken place in the Soviet Union. Nearly two decades of Five Year Plans and planning has resulted in the creation of hundreds of thousands of technicians and specialists and tens of millions of skilled workers. It is on this solid base that the economic development of the Soviet Union has taken place and will proceed in the coming period.

Far from being economically dependent on Britain and America, Russia is in a position of bargaining with Anglo-American imperialism on equal terms. It is not accidental that Stalin has not only refused loans from America on the basis of economic concessions in Russia itself, but has even refused to accept loans which would weaken Russia's domination of Eastern Europe. Loans which Russia was prepared to accept from Britain even in the period prior to the war she is not prepared to accept today except on the bureaucracy's own terms. Russia was compelled at one of her weakest stages, in 1929-32, to give 9 per cent interest – even at the height of the world slump. In 1935 she gave 5.5 per cent on £10 million on five years' credit, yet today Russia has refused a loan of £30 million for five years at 2.5 per cent. The bureaucracy has demanded £100 million at 2.5 per cent for 15 years! The terms are not to her liking.

It is a fatal error to confuse the objective economic position of the Soviet Union with the counter-revolutionary policy of Stalinism. From the viewpoint of world socialism the Stalinist bureaucracy now plays completely a counter-revolutionary role. Had it not been for their policy the working class would have achieved a Socialist United States of Europe and in Asia, and the whole world situation would have been transformed. Nevertheless, despite the policy of Stalinism the objective situation of the Soviet Union varies from time to time in accordance with the world historical factors, both economic and political. It does not follow that because of the counter-revolutionary policy of Stalinism the Soviet Union is automatically weakened in its economic and political relation to the capitalist states at every stage of its development. The economic strengthening of the Soviet Union is a plus for the revolution on a world scale and for the regeneration of the USSR.

The objective revolutionary situation which has resulted from the war strengthens further the position of the Soviet Union. Far from world imperialism concerning itself with the liquidation of the Soviet State, its main preoccupation consists in attempting to stabilise the position of the shattered fabric of capitalism in Europe, Asia and even the Americas. It is this which gives the aggressive character to Stalinist diplomacy and diplomatic pressure to extend the sphere of influence of the bureaucracy (Persia).

Taking the revolutionary perspective into account, it is not possible for American imperialism immediately to

'launch a war against the Soviet Union. The American strike wave, the insistent demands of the troops to go home, the impossibility of the Labour government relying on the British workers and soldiers in a large-scale war on Russia, the famine, war-weariness of the masses of the world, the strength of Stalinism in Europe and Asia and the sympathy of the masses for the Soviet Union – all these preclude any possibility of immediate or 'next stage' military intervention against Russia.

Hysterical propaganda about immediate war on the Soviet Union ignores, and is in conflict with, the revolutionary perspective of our epoch and the objective development of events. If capitalism-imperialism maintains itself with the aid of reformists and Stalinists because of the weakness of the Fourth International, then savage reaction will inevitably succeed in taking control in Europe, Britain and America. The Labour government would be destroyed by reaction and the way would be clear for the inevitable onslaught on the Soviet Union which could prepare the destruction not only of Russia, but of world civilisation. From the viewpoint of world revolution – the extension of October – the present strengthening of the Soviet Union will solve nothing. Only the victory of the workers in the main capitalist nations can solve the problems of the Soviet Union and ensure that nationalised property will be preserved, and on the basis of the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the reintroduction of workers democracy, lead to world socialism.

From the Marxist norm, the development of the Soviet Union has a dual character. The differentiation between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, speeded up by the war, has prepared an absolute chasm between these two strata. But simultaneously with the development of the economy the proletariat is strengthened in numbers and in social weight in the country and thus the hour is preparing when the proletariat will settle accounts with the bureaucracy.

Russia is in an immensely stronger position than she was after World War I. In *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky wrote:

' . . . Industrial production in 1921, immediately after the end of the civil war, amounted to at most one fifth of the pre-war level. The production of steel fell from 4.2 million tons to 183 thousand tons – that is to 1/23rd of what it had been. The total harvest of grain decreased from 801 million hundredweights to 503 million in 1923. That was a year of terrible hunger. Foreign trade at the same time plunged

from 2.9 billion rubles to 30 million. The collapse of the productive forces surpassed anything of the kind that history had ever seen. The country, and the Government with it, were at the very edge of the abyss.'

Yet from this low technical level, with no plan, with strong capitalist sectors in the economy, with few industrial technicians – many of whom sabotaged the economy – with an inheritance of a low level of productivity, with agriculture on the name primitive level as under Czarism, within five years Russian production had been restored to pre-war levels: that is, had grown more than five times its size in 1921. Even after the restoration of economy, by 1926 the total proletariat numbered less than 2 million.

Today the situation is transformed. The proletariat now numbers 20 to 25 millions. Hundreds of thousands of new technicians and specialists have been trained. Freed from the hampering restrictions and fetters of private ownership, the amazing results shown in the war will undoubtedly be far exceeded in the future.

The argument of the International resolution on the Soviet Union is of a one-sided character, and thus gives a false picture. The conclusions are based upon figures given by the IS taken from 1941, though the document was written in 1945. These statistics, at the time when the Nazis were at the gates of Leningrad and Moscow, ignore the all-important changes in the intervening period. The figures of 17 million dead and 3 million disabled, or one sixth of the active population, are given without relation to the fact that in the territories added to the Soviet Union live 24 million people. Similarly with the industrial figures.

It should not be forgotten that owing to the tremendous resources of state ownership and planned production, the Soviet Union recovered after the terrible famine of 1932 in which millions died. The havoc wrought by Stalin's economic policy at home at that time was equal to a war. Yet the economy of the Soviet Union made enormous advances in spite of this.

On the basis of state ownership and the economic advances already made, the pace of reconstruction and development will be even faster. The new Five Year Plan sets itself moderate and attainable perspectives. By the end of 1947 it is calculated that pre-war production will be reached. By 1950 the aim of the Five Year Plan is 50 per cent overall increase over pre-war production.

The perspective of the pre-conference document in relation to the recovery and development of the Soviet Union is

entirely false and pessimistic in asserting:

'In its defence against both the external pressure of imperialism and of the internal reactionary elements, and in its efforts to rapidly revive the Soviet economy, the bureaucracy's *best chances of success* lie in the economic contribution of the countries now under Soviet control.'

This fails to take into account the actual technique which still remains in the possibilities latent in Russian economy, even without outside aid. The economy of the occupied countries will undoubtedly assist the Stalinist bureaucracy, which thus extends its sphere of domination over half Europe and Asia, but these conquests remain *auxiliary* to the economic exploitation of the resources of the Soviet Union itself.

The argument that the contradictions of world imperialism, upon which Russia was able to manoeuvre in the past, have now been eliminated and that the USA has encircled and united the capitalist world against the USSR has thus rendered the Soviet Union far weaker than before the war, is at variance with reality. It is true that America has enormously increased its preponderating economic lead on a world scale, and that Britain is now economically and politically a satellite of the USA. But the contradictions between the imperialists are by no means eliminated. Russia still has a field for manoeuvre, even if somewhat restricted. Meanwhile Germany, which was the only country economically, militarily, politically and geographically in a favourable position to launch a war against the USSR has been virtually destroyed for a generation, and within that period cannot be rebuilt for a new war against the USSR. Japan, the only country in the East capable of undertaking a large-scale military struggle against the USSR, has also been destroyed. Even with the assistance of American imperialism, Japan will not be capable of waging a war against Russia for many years.

The new bases acquired by American imperialism, even with the new methods of warfare, cannot compensate for the loss of Germany and Japan. Before the imperialists will be in a position to launch a new war against the Soviet Union the economic crises of capitalism will destroy whole sectors of the economy, while the economy of the USSR will advance.

The perspective in the original conference document is already being refuted by events. The document stated:

'Failing a mass movement capable of coming actively to its support, the USSR incurs the risk of being de-

stroyed in the near future *even without direct military intervention but simply through the combined economic, political and diplomatic pressure and the military threats of American and British Imperialism.*'

Though the passage has been deleted, because it cannot be maintained in the face of events, the basic conception which this passage expressed is retained in the document. For example

'In the test of strength which characterises the present relations between imperialism and the USSR, only the intervention of the proletarian revolution can save the Soviet Union from an *early* and fatal end.'

The false evaluation of the perspective of economic weakening, of imminent collapse, of diplomatic and economic pressure of the imperialists leading to an early collapse, of the danger of immediate war against the Soviet Union, is serving to disorient the cadres of the Fourth International and to discredit the International in the eyes of the world working class. Alarming symptoms of this have been:

1. The assertion of the American SWP that the war is still on.
2. The ambiguous position in the finally adopted International document on the question of the occupied territories and the refusal to accept the amendment of the British Party to demand the withdrawal of the Red Army as well as the imperialist armies from these territories. In the revised document the only reference to this question being:

'The Fourth International proclaims the right of self-determination for every people, fights for this right, and puts forward in every occupied country the slogan "*For the immediate departure of the occupation troops!*" In the oppressor countries (USA, Great Britain, France, insofar as Germany is concerned) the Fourth International actively defends the right of the occupied nations to independence and demands the recall of the occupied troops.'

[The IEC has since made an unambiguous statement on the withdrawal of the red armies from occupied territories. The conference considers that the International document should be amended along those lines.]

3. The failure to take a clear position, and the *actual opposition* on the part of the Minority of the British Party to the inclusion in the International

*Continued next page*

**RCP amendments***Continued from previous page*

- resolution the demand for the withdrawal of the Red Army from Germany and other occupied territories.
4. The assertion of the French Party that 'Never in the darkest hours of the war was the USSR so seriously menaced' which led then to the opportunist and capitulatory proposal of a united propaganda front with the Stalinists.
  5. The absurd answer in *Neuer Spartakus* to the question: 'Why does Stalin rob? Because he lost the war.' (Emphasis in original)

All this proceeds from a totally false evaluation of the development of the Soviet Union. The paralysis of the world revolution through its agencies, the Stalinist Parties, leads to a temporary strengthening of the position of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It remains, as yet, not an absolute fetter, but a relative fetter upon the development of the productive forces. Only on a world scale is the absolutely reactionary character of the bureaucracy revealed. In the absence of a revolutionary party with roots and connections among the advanced workers capable of mobilising the masses, without a revolution in Europe and Asia, the bureaucracy will most likely maintain its position in the Soviet Union, and even further entrench it in the next immediate period ahead. On the scales of history and the development of regimes, a few years is nothing. Only from a large-scale historical point of view can it be understood that the bureaucracy at a certain stage will come into *absolute* contradiction with the needs of economy and culture within the Soviet Union.

That is why it is more than ever important in fighting for the regeneration of the USSR, and in defence of the Soviet Union, to wage an implacable struggle against the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in the occupied territories and in Europe and Asia. The victory of the proletariat in any major country in Europe would sound the knell of doom for the bureaucracy because it would result in a new relationship between the bureaucracy and the Russian proletariat. The most important task of the European masses consists in the defence of the European revolution against Stalinism as well as imperialism. The struggle for a socialist Europe and Asia against imperialism and its Social Democratic and Stalinist henchmen becomes the most important means of establishing the power of the world working class, and thereby defending the Soviet Union. ■

**Economic perspectives**

**Proposed line of amendment to International conference Resolution 'New Imperialist "Peace" and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International.'**

The present epoch is the epoch of definite capitalist decline. The general crisis of capitalism is reflected in the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the private ownership of the means of production and the national state. Capitalism fulfilled its historic function, the development of the national state and the creation of the world market in the decades prior to the First World War. Capitalism can no longer serve for the development of the forces of production. Despite the immense increase in the productivity of labour and the continued development of technique, production on a world scale finds itself hampered and restricted by the fetters of private ownership of the means of production, transport and exchange, and the national state.

Already by 1850-1870 the basic historical role of capitalism had been fulfilled. It had, even at that stage, become a fetter on the development of the productive forces. That is the explanation for the error in perspective of Marx and Engels in believing that the victory of the proletarian revolution was imminent. However, through the development of the world market, which gave it new resources, capitalism revealed itself not yet as an *absolute*, but as a *relative*, fetter on the development of the forces of production at this stage. Marx pointed out that no society would give way to a new society until all the productive possibilities within it had been completely exhausted. Between 1870 and 1914 capitalism revealed itself as an ascending economy. Of course, had the proletariat come to power (the productive forces had already been sufficiently developed for this) the expansion of the productive forces would have been immeasurably greater. Nevertheless, capitalism could succeed in maintaining itself because it still remained a relatively progressive factor.

Between 1879 and 1914, the figures of production of the most important commodities in Germany, France, United States and Britain showed a general tendency to rapid increase.

The First World War marked a definitive change in the role of capitalism. The world had been divided into spheres of influence, markets, sources of raw materials and could only be redivided by bloody imperialist war. The epoch of capitalist decay and of capitalism's death agony was ushered in. This it was that presaged the period of wars, revolutions,

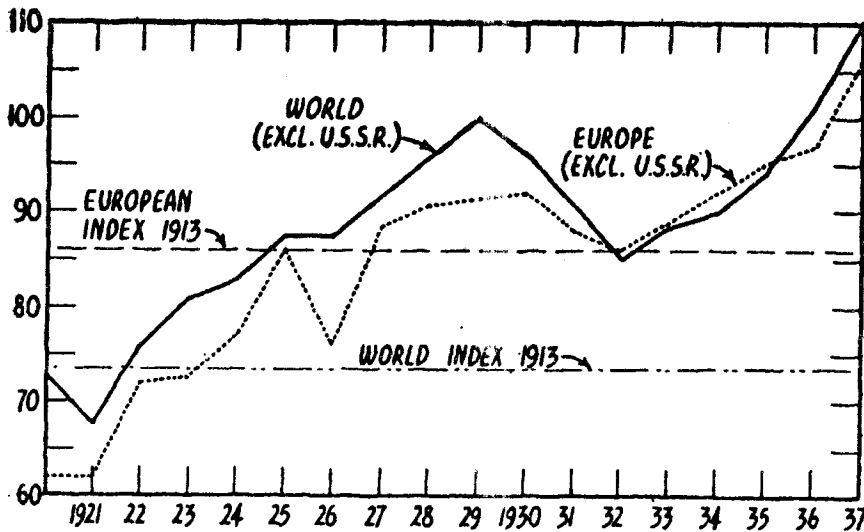
uprisings and convulsions which was clear evidence of the insoluble impasse into which the capitalist system had landed humanity.

The general crisis of capitalism was reflected in the fact that the productive forces had ceased to grow with the same rhythm as in the past.

The inevitable cycle of capitalist production now took a somewhat different curve. No longer short slumps and long booms, with each succeeding boom at a higher level than the last, but now an epoch in which short booms were followed by long slumps and depressions. The productive forces oscillated round the level of 1914, taking into account increases of population and resources. Nevertheless, the first post-war crisis of capitalism, in which the proletariat failed to take power, led inevitably to a new economic boom. The partial collapse immediately after 1921 did not last long or have major effects. In most countries of the world the figures of production in 1929 were higher than those of 1914, only to prepare for a complete collapse of the productive forces in a way never witnessed by capitalism in the past. The slump was one of unexampled severity, afflicting all the main capitalist countries simultaneously and causing frightful devastation and chronic decline in the utilisation of the productive potential. (Japan was an exception for reasons which it is not necessary to deal with here).

But again even this slump could not continue indefinitely. Where the proletariat was paralysed by its parties and failed to utilise the crisis to overthrow capitalism and take power into its own hands, a new economic upswing commenced. In many countries of Europe this crisis was not finally resolved until the preparations for the new slaughter of the peoples (itself a reflection of the impasse of capitalism) was in full swing. But on the basis of armaments preparations and the war measures generally, economic activity even exceeded the figures of 1929 in the main capitalist countries apart from France. (See graph 1 on page 21.)

Thus, in the downswing of capitalism it can be seen that production tends to oscillate around the level of 1919-37 [Owing to exceptional conditions produced by the war, German production virtually collapsed and American production soared to record heights.] without being enabled to gain the steady rhythm



Graph 1 – Indices of world and European production excluding meat and milk, 1930–37 (1929=100)

of increase in the decades prior to the First World War, when each crisis was succeeded by an enormous upswing on a higher level of the productive forces.

World War II, a further proof of the death agony of capitalism, has resulted in the frightful destruction of men, of the productive forces, in the disorganisation and disintegration of production in Europe and Asia, such as has never been exemplified in history. Imperialism and capitalism have thus shown the barbarism into which their continued existence will plunge mankind. In opposition to the reformists and Stalinists, who seek to lull the masses with a perspective of a new renaissance of capitalism and a great future for democracy, *the resolution of the International pre-conference is one hundred per cent correct in emphasising the epoch of decline and collapse of world capitalist economy.* But in a resolution that seeks to orientate our own cadres on *immediate economic perspectives – from which the next stage of the class struggle will largely flow and thus our immediate propaganda and tactics – the perspective is clearly false.*

The present crisis and low level of production, is *not* the economic crisis as understood by Marxists in the classic sense. It is a crisis of 'underproduction' arising from imperialist concentration of productive forces for war and from war destruction itself. It reflects itself in the lack of capital goods, lack of consumers' goods, and lack of agricultural goods. Just the opposite of an economic crisis of capitalist overproduction as understood by Marxists.

The frightful famines which have stricken the peoples of the entire world, the disorganisation and decay of Europe,

are indications of the disruption of the capitalist system. These could easily have led to the destruction of capitalism and the organisation of socialist production on an all-European and all-Asiatic scale, were it not for the weakness of the revolutionary party and the capitulation of the mass organisations of the working class. For the second time in a generation capitalism has been enabled to gain a new breathing space.

The theory of spontaneous collapse of capitalism is entirely alien to the conceptions of Bolshevism. Lenin and Trotsky emphasised again and again that capitalism will always find a way out if it is not destroyed by the conscious intervention of the revolutionary party which, at the head of the masses, takes advantage of the difficulties and crises of capitalism to overthrow it. The experience of World War II emphasises the profound correctness of these conceptions of Lenin and Trotsky.

Given the prostration of the proletariat through the betrayal of its mass organisations, the cyclical upswing of the productive forces, the wearing out of machinery, the slashing of wages leads to an absorption of the surplus stocks and the restoration or partial restoration of the rate of profit. Thus the way is prepared for a new cyclical upswing which in its turn lays the basis for an even greater slump. As Trotsky wrote of the world slump:

'The ruling classes of all countries expect miracles from the industrial upswing, the speculation in stocks which has already broken out is a proof of this. If capitalism were really to enter upon the phase of a new prosperity or even of a gradual but persistent rise, this would naturally involve the

stabilisation of capitalism and at the same time a strengthening of reformism. *But there is not the least ground for the hope or fear that the economic revival, which in and of itself is inevitable, will be able to overcome the general tendencies of decay in world economy and in European economy in particular.* If pre-war capitalism developed under the formula of expanded production of goods, present day capitalism, with all its cyclical fluctuations, represents an expanded production of misery and of catastrophe. The new economic cycle will execute the inevitable readjustment of forces within the individual countries as well as within the capitalist camp as a whole, predominantly towards America and away from Europe. But within a very short time it will place the capitalist world before insoluble contradictions and condemn it to new and still more frightful convulsions.'

No matter how devastating the slump, if the workers fail capitalism will always find a way out of its economic impasse at the cost of the toilers and the preparation of new contradictions. The world crisis of the capitalist system does not end the economic cycle but gives it a different character. The theory of the Stalinists put forward in the last world crisis that this was *the last crisis of capitalism* from which it would never recover, has been revealed to have been entirely unMarxian. There is a grave danger that this theory will be revived in our own ranks today

After World War I the capitalists were faced with large if inexperienced revolutionary parties striving to take advantage of the capitalist crisis in production in order to overthrow capitalism. This further aggravated the chaos, and rendered difficult the capitalist recovery. Despite this, however, production was largely restored. (See appendix.)

If the Stalinist parties had been genuine revolutionary parties, the capitalist class would now be faced with an entirely different perspective in economy as well as politically. The proletariat in France would have paralysed the attempt of the capitalists to restore production at the expense of further sacrifices and burdens on the part of the masses. But the two traitor organisations of the proletariat are straining every nerve to prevent, frustrate and sabotage any struggle, economic and political, on the part of the proletariat.

Meanwhile, with the weakness of the parties of the Fourth International, which remain small sects at this stage, the capitalists have been enabled to find a way out of the collapse and decline of

*Continued next page*

**RCP amendments***Continued from previous page*

economy. This has prepared the way in Western Europe for a steady and fairly rapid recovery.

If a conflict develops between Stalin and Western European capitalism and the Stalinist organisations are used to disrupt and force concessions by means of mass strikes, the situation can deteriorate for the capitalists overnight. Even the assistance of American finance would not and could not prevent the crisis that would follow.

The specific position taken by the International pre-conference and supported by the majority of the British Party, that the Western European countries – France, Holland, Belgium and others – will remain on a level approaching *stagnation and slump*, and cannot reach the level of production attained pre-war, is entirely false. The pre-conference resolution says:

*'This restoration of economic activity in the capitalist countries hit by the war, and in particular in the countries on the European continent, will be characterised by its particularly slow rhythm and these countries will thus remain on a level approaching stagnation and slump.'*

Eastern Europe in particular, under the control of the Stalinist bureaucracy, will undoubtedly recover and even increase its productive resources more rapidly than after 1914-18. It is impossible for Anglo-American imperialism and the bourgeoisie of Western Europe to allow complete stagnation and decline on one half of the continent, while economic activity will develop in the other half under the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

However, apart from these political considerations there are the laws of capitalism which themselves ensure the upswing of economy and make a new 'boom' inevitable. Particularly in view of the fact that this crisis is not a crisis of overproduction and that the capitalists are not being attacked in Western Europe by the mass organisations, but receive the direct assistance and support of Social Democracy and Stalinism, *a cyclical upswing is inevitable*. It is not excluded that particularly for Western Europe (with the exception of Germany and Austria) the productive figures can even reach and surpass the pre-war level in the next period. Even in Germany, depending upon the relationship between the imperialists and Russia, a greater or lesser revival will take place, though here because of the conflict between the powers and the division and occupation of Germany it is

impossible that pre-war figures will be reached in the next period.

*All the factors on a European and world scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the next period is not one of 'stagnation and slump' but one of revival and boom.*

The main feature of capitalist crisis ('stagnation and slump') as revealed for example by the classic crisis of 1929-33 which assumed unexampled scope and severity on a world scale, was overproduction of capital goods, consumers' goods and agricultural produce. The industrial crisis was thus supplemented with a simultaneous agrarian crisis. The economic revival which followed the last world slump as always was achieved by the destruction and deterioration of capital goods, the deterioration and destruction of consumers stocks, the cutting down of the areas sown with crops, etc. Though this involved immeasurable misery and suffering for the toilers, nevertheless, particularly with war preparations, by 1937-38 the production figures exceeded even the record years of 1928-29 in most countries of the world. The destruction wrought by the war has achieved similar results to those which the capitalists achieve when they consciously set out to destroy wealth in a period of crises of overproduction.

The classic conditions for boom are present in Europe today: shortage of capital goods, shortage of agricultural produce, shortage of consumers' goods. The shortages impose new miseries for the masses and new strains on the system. These conditions engendered by wilful destruction and the normal processes of decay of capitalist slump are here produced by the devastation and havoc of totalitarian war. This devastation did not lead to the overthrow of the system through the victory of the proletariat. In the same way as recovery follows a slump which does not lead to the overthrow of the system, so the restoration of the productive forces will follow the present chaos, even on a capitalist basis.

However, such a recovery, as already stated in the citation from Trotsky, cannot lead to a blossoming of the economy of capitalism. A new recovery can only prepare the way for an even greater slump and economic crisis than in the past.

The Stalinists and Social Democrats have largely persuaded the working class to accept the burden of reconstruction with the cries of 'Production! Production!' With this they have undoubtedly had a certain success among the broad masses. The Fourth International will only discredit itself if it refuses to recognise the inevita-

ble recovery and it will disorientate its own cadres as well as the broad masses by predicting a permanent slump and slow rhythm of recovery in Western Europe when events are taking a different shape. (See appendix.)

The argument of the comrades of the American SWP, which has been echoed by the Minority of the British Party, that only after the proletariat has been decisively defeated would American imperialism give loans to assist the recovery of Western European capitalism, has already been demonstrated to be a false one. The proletariat has not been defeated, *but loans have already been given*. Equally false is the argument that only if the proletariat is decisively defeated can economic recovery and revival take place. Such an argument lumps together political-economic problems visualising an immediate reflection of one upon the other. Undoubtedly, a decisive defeat of the proletariat gives the bourgeoisie *stability* and confidence, *But unless the economic preconditions for a boom are present, a boom would not necessarily follow even in that event*. It is not a law of the development of capitalism that only the defeat of the proletariat in a revolutionary situation can lead to a boom, any more than a slump automatically leads to a revolution. History teaches us that capitalism, even its death agony, recovers after a slump, despite the revolutionary possibilities, if the proletariat is paralysed or weakened by its organisations and rendered incapable of taking advantage of its opportunities.

After the revolutionary wave of World War I had been stemmed by Social Democracy, capitalism was enabled to revive at the expense of the intensified exploitation of the working class. The first post-war revolutionary wave of World War II has been stemmed and paralysed by Social Democracy and Stalinism. Economic revival is taking place before our eyes in most countries of Western Europe and Britain. Not only this. The bourgeois state machine in the Western countries, which had been disrupted and shattered after the fall of Hitler, has gradually been rebuilt on the basis of bourgeois democracy. A precarious 'stabilisation' of the bourgeois state and the restoration of the economy from the position of almost complete disruption and chaos has taken place. The rhythm of recovery is proceeding at a fairly rapid pace in all of Western Europe apart from Germany.

The paralysis of the proletariat, through its organisations, has allowed the bourgeois the opportunity to recover control of its economy. It does not follow from this that the proletariat is defeated.

In reality, ebbs and flows of the workers movement, together with ebbs and flows in the economy will take place, and not necessarily in direct dependence one upon the other.

Economic recovery is not necessarily dependent upon a definitive defeat of the proletariat: revolution is not necessarily dependent upon economic decline.

Economic revival is not necessarily a debit for the revolution. On the contrary, with the paralysis of the proletariat, the harnessing and knitting together of the masses in industry will strengthen their confidence and fighting capacity. It can prepare the way for big struggles (America 1936) which can pose again the political questions in a clear and sharp fashion. The economic revival, in any event, can last only a few years and the new slump again poses before the workers the treachery of the Stalinist and Social Democratic leaders who shouted 'Production!' . . . and produced unemployment and want because of 'overproduction.' While the proletariat can be lulled and reconciled by its organisations in a period of universal shortage, to accept the yoke of increased slavery and the burdens of increasing production, they will find it intolerable when they see the impasse into which these sacrifices have led them. *But only if the Fourth Internationalists have carefully explained the process in a theoretical fashion, can we reap the benefits from the advanced section of the working class.* Only on that basis will it be possible to talk of leadership of the masses. The new slump will reveal once again, as did the wars and the previous slumps, the degeneration and chronic crisis of world capitalism. Great class battles, revolution and civil war will be on the order of the day.

The definitive decline of Europe, already begun in 1914, has been aggravated in the succeeding decades, and World War II has put its seal on this decline. While cyclical upturns will take place and are taking place at the present time, there can be no real growth of the productive forces as in the past. The chronic crisis and death agony of capitalism will once again be revealed in its full scope when the catastrophe of the peace will be added to that of the war; the paradox of poverty and plenty, of idle factories and idle workers, of starving populations while food is rotting, of the burdens of the new rearmament programme, will pose insistently the need for the reorganisation of society in the consciousness of the proletariat. The programme of the Fourth International will become the banner of the European and the world proletariat.

Appendix to proposed amendment to economic perspectives

The First World War was followed by a boom, not by a slump, in accordance with the laws of capitalist economy.

Immediately following the war the overall production index for the whole of Europe excluding the USSR stood at 62 per cent of the 1913 figures. Production during 1919 and 1920 rose steadily to 79 per cent of the pre-war figure at the end of 1920, the average indices for 1919 and 1920 being 66 per cent and 74 per cent respectively of the 1919 figure.

The following figures of the basic commodities production in the main countries and graphs of French coal and steel production give an indication of the fairly rapid tempo of recovery in Western Europe, despite the existence of mass Communist Parties and the strivings of the young Soviet Republic under Lenin and Trotsky to extend the socialist revolution.

Coal and Lignite*				
	1913	1918	1919	1920
France	40,227	26,256	21,864	34,860
Germany	208,882	160,612	116,676	131,400
Belgium	22,642		18,640	22,392

Steel*				
	1913	1918	1919	1920
France	4,687	1,812	2,184	2,706
Germany	12,236	14,112	6,732	7,603
Belgium	2,467	12	336	1,253

\* in thousands of metric tons.

It is important to note that after the short slump of 1921, during which year the economic recovery was further hampered by the bitter class struggles, the economy of Europe and the world rose steadily apart from slight setbacks right up until 1929. (See graph 1 on page 21).

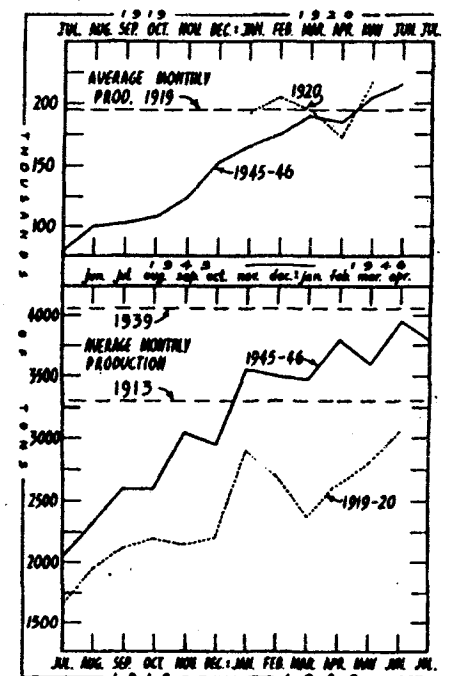
Theoretical understanding would postulate that given the tremendous destruction of capital goods in the course of the war and the dearth of consumer goods that resulted from six years of depreciation, the inevitable result would be a post-war boom. When we add to these economic factors the political relations which resulted in the paralysis of the

proletariat by Social Democracy and Stalinism, and the weakness of the Fourth International, it is clear that the economic recovery will parallel, if not exceed, that of the past post-war period.

This theoretical postulate has been conclusively proved in that the level of industrial production in France has risen from 33 per cent in August 1945 (*Economist* August 8 1945) to 60 per cent in March 1946 (*Economist* March 23 1946) to 80 per cent in June 1946 (*Economist* June 28 1946).

A comparison of the tempo of recovery of industrial activity of the two post-war periods is now partially possible. The following graphs (graphs 2 and 3 below), showing the average monthly output of coal and pig iron in the two post-war periods give an indication of the relative tempo of industrial recovery.

All statistics (unless otherwise mentioned) are official League of Nations figures.



Top: French pigiron production 1919-20  
Below: French coal production 1919-20  
Graphs 2 (top) and 3

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**Marxism Today emerges from the grave . . . and then crawls back in**

# New Labour gurus lose the faith

by Nick Davies

When, seven years after its winding up, *Marxism Today* reappeared for one issue only, to pass critical judgement on the first eighteen months of New Labour in power, the more cretinous representatives of the media saw it as the last gasp of the 'dinosaur' old style socialists. The more astute wondered at the irony of it all, as well they might. After all, it was *Marxism Today* which declared the forward march of labour halted, that politics could no longer be understood primarily in terms of class, and that the labour movement was just one of many special interest pressure groups. *Marxism Today* gave Neil Kinnock's project of moving the Labour Party to the right an appearance of political and intellectual credibility, partly by calling it, in an outrageous abuse of the English language, 'modernisation', thus bringing into being a whole political discourse based on a supposed dichotomy between 'modernising' right-wing policies and 'old-fashioned' left-wing policies. The media, TV, radio, tabloid and broadsheet

soon picked this up and ran with it, taking political debate to new depths of banality.

The concept of 'modernisation', in the context of the Labour Party and, just as importantly, in the trade unions, amounted to an acceptance of Thatcher's victories over the labour movement: 'new realism', the anti-union laws, and the primacy of the market. But we have *Marxism Today* to blame for the word. Thatcherism was, after all, a *New Times*. A glance at the introductory piece by Martin Jacques in the one-off issue shows that he has no regrets. He maintains that in the 1980s the left had 'lost touch with modernity' and that the secret of Thatcherism's success was its understanding of modernity and its ability to appropriate the latter for itself. What was modern about the political nightmare of the Thatcher era? Wasn't the aim of the Thatcher project to do away with the post-war gains in health, education and social security, to take social provision back to the 1930s, and the level of exploitation back to the 1830s? What was 'modern' about racism, chauvinist bigotry, primitive and

half-baked 'monetarism', and a massive redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich? Does *Marxism Today* possibly confuse style with content, seeing 'modernity' in business parks, breakfast TV, and Mexican lager with a slice of lime shoved in the neck of the bottle? Presumably, by the same token, 'old-fashioned' socialism is symbolised by 'Z Cars', light ale, and the Austin Allegro.

It is true that the ruling class had at its disposal the technology to move money around the globe in seconds, thus making the most of financial deregulation, and that privatisation, the form taken in large part by the ruling class offensive, was a new enemy for the labour movement. But this only makes Thatcherism 'modern' in the banal sense that, say, the Third Reich was more 'modern' than the Weimar Republic because it came later and was better armed. Jacques concedes that 'the meaning of modernity could be shaped and contested, providing it was not seen as some neutral, non-ideological phenomenon'. This is all very well, but it was Jacques and his co-thinkers who sold the initiative to the ruling class by calling the Thatcher project 'modern' as a way of rationalising and providing cover for their own crime: refusing (as opposed to failing) to provide any effective opposition.

Look at the effective scabbing role of the Communist Party of Great Britain, of which *Marxism Today* was the theoretical journal, in all the big industrial disputes in the 1980s. In the Miners' Strike the CPGB demobilised militant miners and gave Kinnock the political cover to betray them.

So, why the big fall-out with Tony? In so far as *Marxism Today* has a single, identifiable line of criticism, it is that Blair has swallowed the whole neo-liberal, globalisation project hook, line and sinker. We certainly don't hear anything about 'stakeholder capitalism' these days, just capitalism. David Held argues that New Labour's concept of globalisation, 'hyper-globalisation', is a continuation of the Thatcher-Reagan project, whatever Blair might say about market forces being balanced by regulatory mechanisms to provide fair

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and efficient outcomes (sic). Will Hutton sets out what he thinks a government with a genuine, social-democratic, redistributive project should do, and rails at Blair for not having done it. Eric Hobsbawm, the 'Marxist' historian whose name still worries *Daily Telegraph* readers, starts with a good idea: the unexpected interest shown in the 150th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* in the light of present economic turbulence, only then, lamely, to draw up a shopping list of measures to ensure that the free market operates more rationally(!). What is striking is his observation that '... no Labour Party which hoped to get elected could be expected simply to reverse everything Thatcher had done: some of it, most people now agree, needed doing'. What exactly was it that needed doing, Eric?

Stuart Hall, in 'The Great Moving Nowhere Show' has some fun at the expense of the political vacuity of the 'Third Way', mocking the supposed 'miracle of transcendence' which harmonises an ethical foreign policy and arms sales to Indonesia; media diversity and the love affair with Murdoch; an emphasis on the 'responsibility of individuals, and a slippery evasiveness regarding those of business'. Beneath the rhetoric of the 'Third Way' the only real question is: does it work for business? This has to be so, as the global economy is treated as a force of nature, 'the way of the world'.

Running away with the award for the most vacuous, pretentious drivel is the piece by Suzanne Moore. She liked the 1980s a lot. 'Culture replaced politics as to where it was at', she bumbles. '... to be able to say that sometimes popular culture could be as beautiful, profound and complex as sanctioned high culture... was to be suddenly in possession of what we already owned, what we already consumed and produced, a form of cultural stakeholding... that was implicitly democratic.' '... we didn't have to bother with boring stuff like constitutional reform and poverty, because we could watch films and decode their radical subtext'. Actually, if you were poor, or a trade unionist, or worked in or used the health, welfare or education services, or lived in one of the black communities, the 1980s were anything but democratic. Presumably, Suzanne Moore would have been prepared to advise striking miners, if she had known where to find them, that defending their jobs and communities was really a bit boring and they should be busy deconstructing the latest Peter

Czech Police collaborate with neo-nazis!

# Self-defence is no offence!

from the Solidarity Federation

Two anarchists were attacked in a club in Prague on Friday 27 November 1998. At least five neo-nazis knocked out one and injured the second, Michal Patera, a veteran of many anti-fascist confrontations. The ferocity of this second attack on him in six months convinced Michal that its aim was to kill him. He shot the leading nazi three times with his legally-held pistol, and escaped.

Shortly afterwards Michal was arrested by the police, and charged with 'attempted murder motivated by ideological conviction', which carries a sentence of 25 years hard labour. The police claim that this well-known 'leftist extremist' attacked an innocent group of 'ordinary young men'. None of the nazis has been charged with any offence. Michal faces up to a year's 'preliminary custody' before coming to trial.

According to the Czech Ministry of Interior Affairs' own statistics, more than one third of police officers are members or active sympathisers of neo-fascist, racist and extreme nationalist organisations. Direct co-operation between police and neo-nazis is well-known. On the day of Michal's arrest more than 300 attended a 'white music' gig near Pilsen. The police stood by as anti-semitic and fascist slogans were shouted and nazi salutes given, in spite of the latter being a serious offence under Czech law.

To fight the frame-up Michal Patera needs a good defence lawyer, and the likely cost of his defence is 130,000 CZK (£2,525) – equivalent to more than 20 months' wages for the average worker. Another anarchist, Vaclav Jez, was jailed after a similar incident in July 1997. That case exhausted the resources of the Czech anarchist movement, so money is urgently needed for the defence.

Donations should be made payable to 'NELSF' and sent via the Solidarity Federation for security and to minimise commission rates.

Contacts:

► SF-International Secretariat, PO Box 1681, London, N8 7LE

► Michal Patera (1976), PO Box 5, 14057 Praha 4, Czech Republic

► Defence Campaign: 420-(0)602-224747/82836; sam2ouj@axpsu.slu.cz

The Defence Campaign address is: FSA Praha, PO Box 5, 15006 Praha 56, Czech Republic. Please use the phone and email contacts if possible, as the police regularly check and confiscate FSA's mail. ■

Greenaway film instead.

It is difficult to have much sympathy for these people. They gave support and credibility to Kinnock and then to Blair. Now that Blair is following the logic of the project they embarked upon, they don't like it, but they've found that you can't put a fart back in the hole. The *New Times* are here alright: the destruction of trade union organisation built up over decades, privatisation, casualisation, 'flexible' working practices. They are here in part because of *Marxism Today's* refusal to defend hard-won gains when they were under attack.

The tragedy is, the current around *Marxism Today* is almost unchallenged as left critics of Blair. It has to be said that some of them write well, and with considerable insight – such as Tom Nairn on Scotland. They can also exploit their employment in or connections to the media. Compared to the infantilism of the SWP they can appear profound:

compared to the dogmatism of some Trotskyists, they appear imaginative. They engaged in debate on ecology, on gay and lesbian liberation, when some of the more troglodytic Trotskyist sects refused to take such questions seriously at all. Some of them were able to analyse the Thatcher project in terms of the break-up of the post-war historic bloc based on state intervention, planning and welfare, and the need for the ruling class to construct a new bloc in order to maintain its hegemony. On the whole, the Trotskyists could not or did not analyse the period in these terms and so they were disarmed – as were, for different reasons, the traditional reformist left. However, the fact that others didn't have answers either does not let *Marxism Today* off the hook. The flashes of insight of some of its luminaries are overshadowed by the greater betrayal. You can keep *Marxism Today*. What we need is revolutionary Marxism, today. **WA**

# Tintin out!

by Richard Price

An article by Tim Judah in the *Guardian Weekend* magazine of January 30, 'Tintin in the dock', reports on *l'affaire Tintin* – the furore which has erupted in Belgium over the pro-fascist leanings of Hergé, the creator of the famous children's cartoon character.

Although Hergé's ultra-right sympathies were not unknown in Belgium, the controversy has been fuelled by a recent favourable biography, and even a debate in the French National Assembly. Judah is anxious to paint an even handed portrait of Hergé. So much so, in fact, that he gives credence to the new air-brushed version – an Hergé whose main concern was his work and a harmless spot of moneymaking; someone who understood little of politics.

But while support for the view that Hergé was an undemonstrative 'anti-fascist' seems to rest upon *Blue Lotus*, an anti-Japanese story about China, the evidence of his pro-fascism – at least until the end of the Second World War – is consistent and damning. Hergé's first job at the age of 18 in 1925 was in the subscription department of a right-wing Catholic paper, *Le Vingtième Siècle*. It was edited by Father Norbert Wallez – a priest described by Mussolini as 'a friend of Italy and fascism', who would be jailed

for four years at the end of the war for collaboration with the Nazis. Tintin made his debut in 1929 in a children's supplement to the paper, *Le Petit Vingtième*, and it was in an explicitly anti-communist comic strip, *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*.

Tintin's second adventure in the Congo had stridently racist overtones. His creator was meanwhile also illustrating the cover of a pamphlet by Léon Degrelle – a man who was soon to found the Rexist fascist party and went on to command a Belgian SS division which fought on the Eastern Front, and to be decorated by Hitler. Hergé also drew the cover of another far right pamphlet, *For a New Order* by Raymond de Becker.

Having initially fled Brussels in the face of the German offensive in 1940, Hergé soon returned home to take up well paid work with two of the main collaborationist papers – the French language *Le Soir*, edited by de Becker, and the Flemish *Het Laaste Nieuws*. Despite paper shortages Hergé made a fortune during the occupation, his comic books selling at many times their pre-war rate, and benefiting from what Hergé termed 'the lack of French competition'. In keeping with the 'new order', Hergé contributed a number of vicious anti-semitic cartoons, one of which appeared alongside an editorial in *Le Soir* which

claimed that 'The German victory will make Europe.'

Hergé managed to avoid prosecution at the end of the war and continued to claim that he was non-political, that he knew nothing of the fate of the Jews, and that the attacks upon him were motivated by jealousy. Privately he helped out collaborationist friends who had fared less well at the end of the war. His pre-war albums were sanitised and retouched and he became a national institution, dying in 1983. Millions of people world-wide who continue to buy Hergé's comic strips know little or nothing of their author's unsavoury history. It is high time that the far from comic truth about their creator was widely debated.

*L'affaire Tintin* is yet another proof of how widespread were pro-fascist sentiments throughout the European bourgeoisie in the 1930s and 1940s. It has taken six decades for much of the truth of that period to become widely known. But now it is not so much a case of skeletons rattling in cupboards, as tumbling out of them one after another. The myth of the French nation united in resistance has taken knock after knock. The role of Swiss banks in aiding the Nazis and defrauding Jews and the exposure of the record of leading German companies in exploiting slave labour are fuelling an ever growing investigation into wartime history. Even the tiny Channel Islands have yielded their own story of widespread collaboration. But if simplistic and nationalistic explanations based upon 'German war guilt' are in retreat, only a historical analysis based on class politics can properly explain the era of fascism. **WA**

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