



EDITORIAL BOARD STATEMENT

THE UNDERLYING principle of the poll tax has now gained wider and wider acceptance. So thinks Environment Secretary, Chris Patten, which goes some way to explaining why the Tories are now trailing Labour by 20 points in the opinion polls.

Patten, it will be remembered, was the man promoted by Thatcher to bring youth, presentation skills and style to the introduction of the poll tax. One month into its operation in England and Wales, Tory ministers are being guarded by public relations minders and Tory councillors up and down the country have resigned the party whip. Aspiring leader Michael Heseltine is rumoured to be on the point of calling for the withdrawal of the poll tax, while another ex-cabinet minister, John Biffen, has come out in favour of a graduated tax. Thatcher herself is heading a cabinet committee whose task is to bring forward revisions to the poll tax legislation.

Labour's sweeping by-election victory in the safe Tory seat of Mid-Staffordshire, together with Labour gains in the local elections, have fuelled the Tories' problems. Owners of small businesses have been alienated by the new Uniform Business Rate. Together with the rapid erosion of their support in the home-owning middle class and among sections of better-off skilled workers hit by high interest rates, this adds up to a political crisis of major proportions.

The support on which Thatcher has rested for the last ten years has begun to break up. Deep divisions have opened up in the ruling class not only on the poll tax, but on almost every aspect of policy, while substantial numbers of middle class voters have defected to Labour. Meanwhile, mass working class opposition to the tax has continuously grown culminating in the 250,000-strong demonstration on March 31 - one of the largest ever seen in London.

Almost every aspect of the poll tax has back-fired on its authors. The cost of collection has proved to be far in excess of estimates, as councils desperately recruit more staff. Pressure of work has led to a number of disputes in hugely over-stretched council departments.

Chancellor John Major's much-vaunted budget concession, extending the upper limit for rebates to couples with savings of between £8,000 and £16,000, has been revealed as a hollow stunt. Only 22,000 people will benefit! At the same time, eight out of ten income support claimants lose under the poll tax compared with the old rates system.

Thatcher's own justification for the poll tax - that it would make councils more accountable to local electors - has been sunk by the poll-capping

of 21 authorities, none of them Tory. Further proposals are being floated whereby poll tax levels in every area would be fixed by central government.

Frightened by the extent of working class opposition and alarmed by electoral collapse, considerable sections of the Tory party are prepared to ditch both the poll tax and

The poll tax has provoked such a deep reaction in the working class precisely because it is the most blatant expression of capitalist class rule. The Tories claim that the poll tax is 'fair'. Every generation of capitalists has justified lining its own pockets at the expense of the working class in this way. The great French

writer Anatole France summed up the real state of affairs a century ago: 'The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread.' Behind the poll tax stands the capitalist system, its courts, police, bailiffs and sheriffs' officers.

The anti-poll tax movement must be squarely based on the working class and fight for its interests. The fight against the poll tax must be consciously linked to the struggle for socialism and for the overthrow of capitalism. All attempts to limit the movement to an 'anti-Thatcher' crusade must be opposed.

The extent of official Labour 'support' for the anti-poll tax movement was underlined in the aftermath of the fighting which broke out at the end of the March 31 demonstration. Kinnock, Hattersley and Gould went out of their way to show their solidarity... with the Tories. Instead of placing responsibility for the

violence firmly on the shoulders of the police, who repeatedly charged the crowd on horseback and drove vans at high speed through streets crowded with demonstrators, Kinnock blamed 'criminals and anarchists'. 'Like every other democrat,' Kinnock stated, 'I regard them and treat them as enemies of freedom,' adding that 'rioters should be severely punished' because they had 'viciously abused the right to protest'. Hattersley, speaking in the House of Commons, condemned the demonstrators 'without reservation or qualification'. Gould implicitly criminalised the entire demonstration, assuring Thatcher that it was nothing to do with the Labour Party. Unimpressed by this cringing, Home Secretary David Waddington tried (laughably) to make the Parliamentary Labour Party morally responsible for rioting.

In addition to the overblown and lurid publicity given to the anarchist group Class War, *Militant*, which leads the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, became the target of a witch-hunt which was stepped up at the National Union of Teachers' annual conference by general secretary Doug McAvoy. The day after McAvoy's speech, the *Evening Standard* claimed to have found evidence of *Militant* supporters wrecking the tranquility of a south London college.

Militant supporters are convenient whipping boys for the ruling class who have observed their reaction to witch-hunts time and again. True to form, *Militant* responded to the attack by fingering 'rioters' to the state in the most disgraceful manner. Tommy Sheridan, chair of the All Britain Federation promised to have 'rioters' expelled, and said that 'if any of those who climbed the scaffolding in Trafalgar Square and threw blocks of concrete, metal and fire extinguishers into the crowd are identified, we will have no qualms about informing the police'. After the demonstration, the All Britain Federation's telephone ran a recorded message urging callers to give information on 'rioters'.

The traditional description for such people is not 'militant' but 'police nark'. Anti-poll tax groups up and down the country should pass resolutions condemning the activities of Sheridan and other Federation leaders, who have no mandate to grass up members to the state.

Militant's shameful capitula-

tion is not an accident: it flows from its belief that the capitalist state can be peacefully reformed step by step.

Despite our unbridgeable political differences with anarchism, we oppose any attempt to expel anarchists from Anti-Poll Tax Unions on account of their political views. Despite *Militant's* record, we oppose every witch-hunt directed in it, whether in the Labour Party, against the anti-poll tax movement or in the trade unions (see page 3).

Workers have every justification to defend themselves physically against the police, the fascists or other elements who violently attack demonstrations. The task of stewards at future demonstrations must be to defend them against such attacks - not to act as neutral referees between the state and marchers.

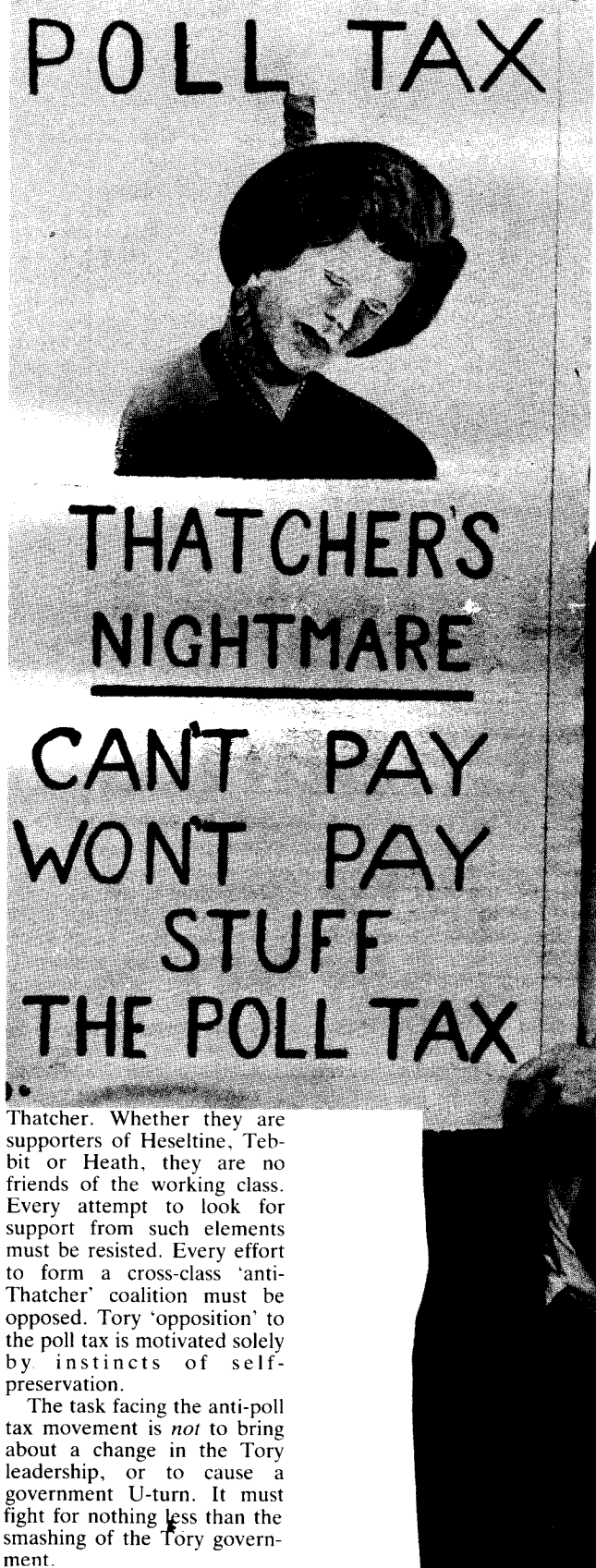
In addition to learning the lessons of the March 31 demonstration, the anti-poll tax movement must urgently take up the struggle for trade union boycott action. The *Militant*-led Broad Left grouping in the CPSA has distanced itself from boycott action. In its leaflets for the CPSA's national elections, the most the Broad Left could manage was a mealy-mouthed promise to defend any member disciplined for taking any action against the poll tax. In other words, action will only be taken at the initiative of individuals in local offices. The other main union with members involved in poll tax work is NALGO. Despite a large number of 'left'-led branches, the agenda for the union's annual conference in June does not have a single motion from a single local government branch proposing serious action.

Student nurses, who are enraged by the poll tax bills they face, must reject the argument put forward by the leadership of the Royal College of Nursing that they are a 'special case'. This can only serve to drive a wedge between them and other equally low-paid health workers.

To all those opposed to the poll tax we say:

- Build the mass non-payment campaign!
- Fight for a trade union boycott of poll tax work!
- Demand that Labour councils refuse to collect the tax and refuse to prosecute non-payers!
- Organise mass strike action!
- Bring down the Tories!
- Demand Labour takes office on a fighting, anti-capitalist programme, including the immediate repeal of the poll tax!

Poll tax: Tory crisis deepens



EDITORIAL

Tories in trouble

THERE IS little of cheer for the Tories in the present economic situation. Inflation is expected to reach double figures by the middle of the year, the March trade deficit was the second highest on record, interest rates are likely to remain at their current high levels until 1991, and unemployment looks set to rise.

Since 1979, Tory policies have been a concerted attempt to overcome the long-term decline of British capitalism. The breakdown during the 1970s of the relatively stable post-war world capitalist order highlighted the problems of low productivity and the inability to compete successfully with overseas rivals. The Tories were more than ever convinced that the best route to a higher return on investment lay in restricting the powers of the trade unions and reducing state expenditure on social provisions.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the governments of first Wilson, then Heath, had attempted to bring in anti-union legislation. The succession of Margaret Thatcher to the leadership of the Conservative Party marked the triumph of that strand of Tory thinking most suited to survive the harsher economic climate. Thatcher, it was thought, would succeed where Heath had failed.

For ten years, Thatcher's brand of right-wing populist rhetoric has paid dividends. It was pitched at the professional and commercial middle class and at skilled, better-off workers, and promised them a place in the new democracy of share-owners and home-owners. If the initial stage of this transformation to what the Tories called 'people's capitalism' was achieved, it was only due to temporarily favourable conditions in the world economy, and to the wholesale sell-off of nationalised industries, council houses and other state assets.

But this is not the 19th century, when free competition held sway. This is the period of monopoly capitalism – the rule of the banks and the big corporations – and monopoly capitalism is no respecter of the petty-bourgeois. Today, those same people who fell for the Tories' slickly-packaged promises find themselves mortgaged to the hilt, and having to pay a poll tax which claws back all they received in tax cuts and more. Repossessions of the houses of mortgage defaulters by banks and building societies, and bankruptcies of small businesses, are at record levels.

For the Tories, however, the enrichment of the middle class was never an end in itself. Their purpose was to buy a solid constituency of support to act as a base for the real task: the rolling back of the gains made by the working class, particularly since the war, and the rationalisation of industry.

The Tory party is the party of big business and finance capital, not of the petty-bourgeoisie; its commitment is to British-based industrial and financial monopolies. For this reason, the Tories prefer to tackle the problem of the flood of imports and keeping the value of the pound stable by using the mechanism of sustained high interest rates, which hits small businesses and the middle class first and hardest.

There is, of course, an irony in all this. The bribe which Thatcher offered in return for votes was a bonanza for small business operations – the privatisation of council services, the deregulation of bus routes, the contracting out of hospital and school ancillary services, etc. To ensure that the sale of the century went according to plan, interest rates had to be relatively low. But cheap money led to an explosion in spending, which in turn fuelled demand for imports. Now, the return to high interest rates is squeezing out many of the small firms, and leading to control of some of the newly-privatised sectors passing to a handful of large companies.

The current political crisis gripping the Tories, therefore, doesn't necessarily herald Thatcher's imminent departure, nor does it preclude them winning the next election. Although the poll tax has aroused anger amongst Tory supporters, it has done so primarily as a surrogate for their real concern – high interest rates. Given a resolution of this problem, their opposition to the tax, the principle of which they largely agree with, would undoubtedly become less vocal.

Statistical evidence in *The Economist* of April 7 reveals a close inverse link between support for the Thatcher government and interest rates over the last decade. Mortgage rates were higher than at present in 1980-81, and nearly as high in 1985. These were also the periods when support for the Tories was at its lowest ebb, lower than it is today. The mortgage rates fell and the support grew at general elections.

The root of the problem for the Tories is that, despite all their efforts, they have been unable to check the decline of the British economy. In the last quarter of 1989, invisible trade, traditionally a strong area which has helped offset the fall in manufacturing exports, showed a deficit for the first time since the early 19th century. Central to this failure to resuscitate moribund British capitalism, and consequently to the Tories' lack of success on the world capitalist stage, has been the resistance of the working class to the assault on its jobs, wages, conditions and basic democratic rights. Despite the handicap of Labour Party and trade union leaders who are jettisoning the baggage of 'industrial struggle' at every turn, in an attempt to woo Tory voters, workers have disputed every inroad into their historic gains.

The opportunity to strike at the Tories when they are in disarray must not be lost. Despite the fact that it was opposed by the Labour and TUC leaders, the anti-poll tax demonstration in London on March 31 attracted up to a quarter of a million people, who marched behind slogans which called for 'illegal' action. Further millions of workers all over the country know that they can't afford to follow Kinnock's and Willis's advice to 'wait for a Labour government'. With confidence in the reformist leaders shaken, the potential for building a revolutionary leadership in the working class has increased.

BUILD FOR MASS STRIKE ACTION AGAINST THE POLL TAX!

Labour's poll tax confidence trick

By David Lewis

THE LABOUR Party leaders have no intention of rushing to repeal the poll tax legislation in the event of winning the next general election.

They have repeatedly stated that it would take two years for a Labour government to introduce a 'fairer', property-based tax. During the local government election campaign, Bryan Gould, the Shadow Environment Secretary, was quoted as saying that it might take 'even a little bit longer'. Since they are doing everything they can to enforce payment of the poll tax, oppose the growing campaign to kick the Tories out, and limit political action to the 'ballot box', it's clear that the Labour leaders intend workers to pay the tax for at least four years.

Those who propose 'breaking the law' by refusing to pay the poll tax are given short shrift. The party 'whip' was never so much in evidence as in the present campaign to bring the rank and file into line! Liverpool councillors face disciplinary action for disobeying an instruction from the National Executive Committee to set the poll tax rate; Kinnock has personally condemned Labour councillors who oppose prosecuting people for non-payment; and in constituency parties up and down the country, individuals who persist in supporting non-payment and non-collection are being disciplined and, in some cases, expelled.



The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation's London demonstration on March 31 was the largest political protest for years

While the Labour leaders lose no opportunity to make political capital out of the disarray of the Tories, their aim is *not* to move swiftly to alleviate the hardship which the poll tax is causing the working class, but to attract the votes of disenchanted Tory supporters. If Labour does win the next election, there will be no question of poll tax refunds, and no indemnity against prosecution for non-payers. Kinnock and the rest of the right wing know that even a hint in this direction would destroy the growing perception of them by the capitalist class as leaders of a party 'fit to govern'. Kinnock has said that the poll tax is 'short of friends'. But with 'enemies' like him, who needs friends?

The efforts of the leaders of the Labour Party to undermine the mass movement against the poll tax are complemented by those of the trade union bureaucracy. Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC, was so upset by the disturbances following the anti-poll tax demonstration on March 31 that he almost cancelled a TUC rally and lobby planned for the following Wednesday. Only individuals with TUC-issued credentials were allowed into the rally at Central Hall, Westminster, and even they were liable to be searched by one of Willis's hand-picked stewards.

Representative of the line being taken by most union leaderships is that of the National Union of Teachers,

which ruled out of order a motion calling for support for a mass non-payment campaign tabled at the NUT's annual conference over Easter. Arguing that the motion was an incitement to illegality, the NUT president, Barbara Lloyd, also threatened to throw left-wing delegates out of the meeting.

In the turmoil arising out of the poll tax, the trade union and Labour Party leaders are proving to be the best friends the Tories ever had.

The Benn doctrine

WITH THE campaign against the poll tax building strongly, threatening the very basis of Tory rule, and with the Labour Party and TUC right-wingers increasingly discredited because of their refusal to support non-payment, the time was obviously ripe for a leading 'left' to come forward and try to head the mass movement down a political cul-de-sac. No prizes for guessing the identity of that 'left' – Tony Benn.

However much the Tories or the Labour and trade union right wing appear to be at odds with him, Benn serves a useful purpose for them. His role is all the more insidious because he *seems* to support the non-payment campaign. He speaks at meetings of Anti-Poll Tax Unions, and invariably summons up the memory of the Chartists, the early trade union movement and the Suffragettes to testify to an 'honourable British tradition' of law-breaking.

But wait a minute, what's this he says about 'no-one should be instructed to break the law or criticised if they do pay', and that those not paying 'must expect to be punished, believing that their sacrifice may help others'? There's the rub! In place of an organised, collective struggle by the working class, Benn proposes a polite middle class campaign of civil disobedience. Instead of mass, militant action, he preaches the virtues of supplication and self-sacrifice. For *class consciousness*, he would substitute *individual conscience*. A truly Christian standpoint, but of absolutely no use in fighting either the tax or the Tories!

Gould exploits the peasants

SPEAKING IN Basildon in early March, Bryan Gould joined the list of Labour politicians who have laid claim to the inheritance of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It must be said that Gould, one of the chief architects of Labour's policy review, is playing with fire by invoking this great popular rebellion against feudalism and trying to link it to Labour's official 'opposition' to the poll tax.

Unlike Gould, the peasants of 1381 never learnt to respect the laws laid down by the rich for the exploitation of the poor. Strangely enough, neither did they reconcile themselves to turning the other cheek to the violence of the ruling class of their day.

If there is a parallel to be drawn with 1381, then it is the speed with which opposition to the poll tax has spread throughout the country, making it the focal point of opposition to a hated government. Labour's front bench, however, corresponds to the middleheads who urged the enraged peasants to disperse and place their confidence in the King, who repaid their misplaced loyalty with a sav-

age wave of repression.

One of the peasants' leaders, the travelling preacher John Ball was evidently closer to the outlook of scientific socialism than the Labour leadership is 600 years later. The contemporary chronicler Frossard reports Ball saying: 'Good people, things cannot go right in England and never will, until goods are held in common and there are no more villeins and gentlefolk, but we are all one and the same. In what way are those whom we call lords greater masters than ourselves? How have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in bondage? If we all spring from a single father and mother, Adam and Eve, how can they claim or prove that they are lords more than us, except by making us produce and grow the wealth which they spend?' The more things change, the more they stay the same!

And the peasants, who had not had the opportunity to study Labour's policy review, did not try to unite all classes in the interests of the 'nation'. According to Frossard, they passed through Kent 'like a tornado, levelling and gutting

the houses of the kings and judges of the King's and Archbishop's courts, and showing them no mercy'. Once in London, they burnt down the property of aristocrats, bankers and merchants, and beheaded the Chancellor of England (who doubled as Archbishop of Canterbury).

All this is a bit at odds with Shadow Chancellor John Smith's recent attempts to hawk Labour's economic programme round the City of London and Washington, where he has been presenting Labour as 'also' the party of business, which the billionaires need not fear.

The tragedy of the peasants of 1381 lay in their inability to replace the feudal state. No modern working class existed, and they were persuaded that the King had been misled by 'evil counsellors'. The treachery of the Labour leaders lies not least in their determination not to alienate today's robber barons. Were they miraculously transported back to the 14th century, Kinnock, Gould and Smith would undoubtedly be posing as the party of *both* the peasants and the feudal land-owners.

Motor industry gears up for fight over markets

THE WAR between international motor manufacturers has led to significant developments in Britain over the last month which have left union leaders empty-handed.

The pay-off for the scabbing operation in early March against craftsmen and electricians at Ford's Halewood factory, organised by T&GWU officials, came on April 9. Ford management, far from

offering any concessions to the bureaucracy, announced that they were cancelling a £225 million engine plant development at Bridgend in South Wales, which would have created 3,000 jobs, and transferring the project to Cologne. The decision has been taken with one eye on the prospect of a developing market for cars in Eastern Europe, and the other on the spate of new

plants being opened in Britain and Europe by Japanese competitors.

On April 17, Honda clinched a deal with the last British-owned volume car manufacturer, Rover. Honda paid £520 million for a 20 per cent stake in the company's car-making operations only, which are valued at £1.1 billion. The Tory government sold the entire Rover group,

including property assets and subsidiary companies, to British Aerospace in 1988 for a mere £150 million.

Rover will also get a 20 per cent stake in Honda's new £370 million factory near Swindon, Wiltshire, which will be the first non-union car plant in Europe. Union leaders have refused to mount any campaign against the plan for fear of damaging their relations

with Rover management, showing that their cowardice is matched by their stupidity. In three years time British Aerospace's obligation to keep Rover in one piece expires, and Honda is top of the list of prospective buyers.

In a further development at Rover, T&GWU and AEU negotiators have recommended that workers at the Longbridge plant accept round-the-clock working, seven days a week – the first such deal in a motor plant in Britain. In return, all Rover's 30,000 manual workers are being offered a 37-hour week.

To start with, only engines and gearboxes for Rover's popular 200 and 400 ranges will be on continuous working lines, but the precedent will undoubtedly be followed elsewhere in the group and by other car manufacturers.

Union leaders have hailed the deal as a great accomplishment. Bill Jordan, the AEU

president, claimed that Longbridge workers on non-stop production would have 'the most advantageous working hours agreement for any industry in the United Kingdom'. The chairman of the union negotiating team, the T&GWU's Jack Adams, went even further. It was, he said, 'the best hours package in the industry anywhere in the world'. It was left to the AEU's chief motor industry organiser to let slip that there was more to the deal than a reduction in hours. The productivity agreements which went with it were 'onerous', he said. They would mean the speeding up of production lines.

■ Back in 1960, US giants General Motors, Ford and Chrysler produced more than half the world's cars. Today, they make less than a third, and their share of the US market is only 67 per cent – and falling.

Defend the Newcastle 8!

By a CPSA member

IN A blatantly political attack, eight members of the largest branch of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) – at DHSS Newcastle Central Office – have been expelled from the union.

The eight are all former branch officials and supporters of the *Militant*-led Broad Left group in the union. Their expulsion by the right-wing dominated National Executive Committee in March follows allegations by a former treasurer of the branch that its office had been used as a 'Prontaprint shop' for the Broad Left, and that branch funds had been used to mail Broad Left literature. The Newcastle Central Office branch was suspended in June 1988 and one of the largest accountancy firms in the country, Grant Thornton, brought in to investigate.

What amounted to a kangaroo court, composed of three former general treasurers of the CPSA and the retired assistant general secretary of the NUR, right-winger Charles Turnock, then set about convicting the eight on the flimsiest of evidence. Defence witnesses requested by those charged were rejected by the tribunal. At the NEC meeting on March 8, supporters of the Stalinist-led Broad Left '84 grouping sided with extreme right-wingers, including a leading member of the Conservative Trade Union Group, to support the expulsions.

The result of the disciplinary hearing was announced – conveniently for the right wing – in the immediate run-up to the union's annual elections for the NEC, in a circular to all members from general secretary John Ellis dated March 13. The CPSA's journal, *Red Tape*, devoted the front page of its April edition – brought forward to mid-March – to a witch-hunting article on the expulsions placed next to the announcement of NEC elections. Among other things, the article gratuitously informed readers that the solicitor con-

sulted by the Newcastle members had also represented *Militant*-supporter and former deputy leader of Liverpool Council Derek Hatton. This only serves to emphasise that the eight have been attacked for their political views, not for breaching union rules.

A further circular from Ellis, dated April 12, threatens rank-and-file CPSA members, warning that 'any activity such as that of those involved in the "Campaign to Defend the Newcastle Eight" could be extremely prejudicial to the outcome of the appeal and could be construed to have negated the whole process, especially if the appellants themselves become involved'. No prizes for guessing who would 'construe' that the campaign to defend the eight had 'negated' their appeal, should it be successful at CPSA conference!

The response of the Broad Left to the witch-hunt has been low key and legalistic, in keeping with *Militant*'s response to similar attacks from the Labour Party right wing. Instead of making the case of the Newcastle Eight a central feature of the NEC election campaign, none of the victimised members has been nominated to the Broad Left slate of candidates.

The fight for union democracy in the CPSA requires, above all, a political counter-offensive to oust the right wing. Delegates to the CPSA Annual Conference must reject the findings of the inquiry, along with the NEC's expulsion order and its threats against the membership, and vote for the reinstatement of the eight members. *Militant*'s capitulation to the state over the poll tax demonstration (see front page), and its refusal to call for industrial action in the civil service against the poll tax, underline its inability to lead such a struggle. The Socialist Caucus grouping within the CPSA, despite certain differences with the Broad Left, puts forward a very similar programme. A new, revolutionary leadership must be built.



Lobbyists at Westminster on April 24, the day the House of Commons debated amendments to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill designed to reduce the existing 28-week time limit on carrying out abortions. Although attempts by the so-called 'Pro-Lifers' to set the limit as low as 18 weeks were defeated, MPs across party lines voted for a 24-week upper limit, in the first major change since legal abortion was introduced in 1967.

The Labour Party's spokesperson on women's issues, Jo Richardson, spoke against any reduction, reminding her colleagues that it was official party policy to defend the 1967 Abortion Act. But the Labour leaders threw their weight behind the attack on a woman's right to choose by making it clear that they favoured 24 weeks, and agreeing to a free vote 'according to individual conscience'.

Miners under attack

THE WITCH-HUNT launched by the *Daily Mirror* and Central Television against Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield must be seen for what it is: an attempt to weaken the National Union of Mineworkers at a time when further attacks on miners' jobs and conditions are being made by British Coal.

The allegations, based on interviews with former NUM chief executive Roger Windsor, are that Scargill and Heathfield misused donations raised to prosecute the 1984-85 miners' strike, and that large sums of this money were obtained from the Soviet Union and Libya. Scargill had previously called in the fraud squad to investigate alleged links between Windsor, now resident in France, and a company which supplied equipment for the NUM headquarters in Sheffield.

Two prerogatives of trade unions are under attack here. The first is the right to raise funds and seek support from anyone they please in order to combat the employers and the capitalist state. The second is the right of the members to regulate the activities of their officials without interference from the state or the mouthpieces of the capitalist class.

Whether it was funds from Libya or the savings of Soviet trade unionists which helped the miners fight Thatcher is irrelevant. Equally irrelevant are the subterfuges which were used by the NUM to keep its funds out of the hands of the sequestrators. Anyone who would deny the NUM this right is really saying that the miners should have been starved back to work even sooner than they were.

Though Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* poses as a 'friend of the workers', attacks on

strikers and trade union militants are its stock in trade. Maxwell himself was a long-time associate of Ceausescu of Romania and other deposed Stalinist dictators. His collaborative publishing ventures in Eastern Europe have earned him and his organisation many millions, and helped keep the working class in those countries under the heel of Stalinism. The Kinnock-friendly *Mirror* thinks nothing of doing Thatcher's dirty work.

On March 16, 11 days after the beginning of the witch-hunt, British Coal announced an increase in the size of voluntary redundancy payments with a view to cutting the workforce by up to 30,000. The impact of a privatised electricity industry, which will use a larger tonnage of cheap imported coal, and preparations for the coal industry's own sell-off lie behind this

proposed rationalisation.

The media smear campaign is consciously designed to assist the NUM right wing and Stalinists to oust those leaders with a track record of fighting pit closures and redundancies. Despite considerable weaknesses in the way Scargill conducted the 1984-85 strike, the ruling class has never been able to forgive or forget his willingness to stay out and lead the miners in battle with the state, and his adamant refusal to condemn any actions they took in defence of their jobs and communities.

Though Workers News has substantial differences with Scargill and Heathfield, the state and its agents must be given no jurisdiction over the unions. Only the miners themselves have the right to investigate their officials. The witch-hunt must be firmly rejected by miners and all other trade unionists.

Iranian regime hit by protests

By Ian Harrison

THE ISLAMIC regime headed by President Rafsanjani is becoming increasingly isolated inside Iran because of its failure to revive the war-devastated economy, and its barbaric treatment of political opponents, women and minority peoples.

There are indications of a widening gulf between disaffected groupings in the capitalist class and the government. Such a development could either pave the way for the end of the fundamentalist regime and the return of the big bourgeoisie, or herald a fresh period of mass struggles led by the working class.

Both the 'pragmatists' led by Rafsanjani, who advocate closer economic links with the West and who dominate the government, and the fundamentalist 'radicals' led by Ali Akbar Mohteshami depend on the support of Tehran's wealthy bazaar merchants and the poorest elements organised by the Hizbollah. Since the ceasefire in the war with Iraq, the hopes of Iran's masses for an improvement in their living standards have been confounded by rocketing inflation, chronic food shortages and increasing unemployment. From time to time, therefore, in an attempt to retain the support of the poor masses, the regime has been obliged to punish the bazaar for speculation and profiteering. Fundamentalists organised in local groups have publicly flogged bazaar merchants, and imposed heavy fines and prison sentences on them. In November, the bazaar retaliated by organising a crowd to stone and beat up fundamentalists when they tried to arrest and flog a wealthy merchant, and by threatening to hold a general strike if the floggings did not stop. The strike was only averted by the personal intervention of President Rafsanjani.

In a radio broadcast, Rafsanjani also apologised to students of Tehran Polytechnic for arrests and injuries during fighting which followed an attack on the students by fundamentalists. On November 20, Revolutionary Guards hanged a tribal chieftain in Izeh, Khuzestan province, provoking an uprising among the local population which lasted for several days.

Not long after these incidents, a dozen of Iran's most senior religious figures visited Grand Ayatollah Montazeri. Even though Montazeri was publicly disgraced by Khomeini before the latter died in June last year, and has been placed under house arrest by the 'radicals', the clerics appealed to him to end his self-imposed silence. In a direct challenge to the decision of the 'council of experts' - which included Rafsanjani and Khomeini's son, Ahmad - they called on him to assume the role of spiritual successor to Khomeini in place of the more junior cleric Khamenei.

There can be no doubt that the visit to Montazeri, and the appeals made to him, received



Women accused of defying Islamic laws being rounded up in Tehran

the support of important groupings in the Iranian capitalist class. Montazeri is opposed to direct religious interference in government, the economy and affairs of daily life. If Montazeri breaks his silence, and challenges Khamenei for the position of spiritual leader, it would signal a move on the part of the big bourgeoisie to bring down the fundamentalists and reassert full capitalist control over the Iranian economy.

Sensing this, the fundamentalists organised anti-Montazeri demonstrations in the 'holy city' of Qom on Friday, January 5. The demonstrators chanted 'Death to the Liberals' - a reference to Montazeri's links with Mehdi Bazargan, Iran's first prime minister after the downfall of the Shah. The attack on Montazeri and his supporters was stepped up when Hojatolislam Reyshahri, the regime's chief prosecutor, issued warnings against the 'resurgence' of the Mahdi Hashemi gang. Hashemi was Montazeri's son-in-law and head of the World Organisation for Islamic Liberation Movements. He was arrested in 1987, and tried and executed by Reyshahri for alleged conspiracy against Khomeini and the Islamic state. Montazeri's closest supporters are reported to have taken him to his native village, Najafabad, near Isfahan, and formed a 'human wall' around his house to prevent his possible arrest and detention.

In January, the regime responded coolly to developments along the Soviet side of the border with the USSR, when Azeris pulled down guard towers and fences. The Azeris in the Soviet Union want to restore family, cultural and religious ties with Azeris in Iran. However, Iranian officials discouraged them from crossing the border. The Islamic regime, which might be expected to welcome its growing influence in the Soviet Union, particularly over Shia Muslims, has, in fact, good reason to fear the Azeris. In common with other minority peoples in Iran, the Azeris have been brutally oppressed. They played an active role in bringing down the Shah, called for a constituent assembly and opposed Khomeini's doctrine of rule by the clerics. Grand Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, the

most outspoken of the Azeri religious leaders, was publicly disgraced by Khomeini. Stripped of office, he was forced to appear on television and 'confess' to the trumped-up charge of being a CIA agent. Meanwhile, the events which have swept through Eastern Europe, toppling one government after another, have been censored by the officially-controlled media in Iran.

As the government unveiled its five-year economic plan, Rafsanjani warned that the state of 'armed peace' with Iraq could break down and war begin again. The defence budget has been increased by a reported \$1.5 billion. Rafsanjani has appealed for foreign investors to take part in Iran's reconstruction programme, while military discipline is being increasingly used to prevent strikes.

On February 16, Tehran was rocked by mass demonstrations led by young people chanting 'Death to Khamenei' and 'Death to Rafsanjani', which the Revolutionary Guards only succeeded in breaking up by firing into the crowds, killing at least five people.

Following the demonstrations, the government, clearly anticipating further resistance to its policies, set about strengthening its repressive apparatus throughout the country by issuing a set of National Security Council directives (see this page). They reveal how the United Nations, through its Human Rights Representative, comes to the aid of such regimes by covering up the full extent of class-war crimes. According to the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran's UK Branch, during the last year alone the regime has executed 68 women oppositionists, stoned to death 24 women for adultery and prostitution, and whipped and imprisoned thousands more for failing to dress in public in accordance with Islamic dictates.

In early April, following the killing of a Baluchi chieftain by Revolutionary Guards, heavy fighting erupted in the eastern provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan. Government sources put the casualties at 30 killed and scores wounded. By mid-April, further mass demonstrations were shaking Tehran with hundreds arrested

and a number believed killed after Revolutionary Guards opened fire. Meanwhile, fighting was also taking place in shanty towns as local fundamentalists raided homes. On April 20, the governor of Iran's largest political prison, together with two of his bodyguards, was killed by unidentified guerrillas.

Eleven years after the overthrow of the Shah, there are signs that growing discontent with the regime of the mullahs could lead to a resurgence of mass struggles.

Security forces put on alert

Below is the text of the secret directives sent to all provincial and district administrators by the National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, following the demonstrations and other acts of resistance against the regime in Tehran and other major centres in February. They came into the hands of the UK Branch of the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rahe Kargar), who released them to the press on March 11.

1. All military and security units must be on full alert and be ready to deal with any unforeseen move or action against security.
2. They must prevent these moves without any hesitation and wavering. Use must be made of religious and doctrinaire (*Maktabi*) personnel whose loyalty has been tested.
3. Intelligence units must be ordered to control the movements of the people in streets, and vital city intersections, and keep any suspicious activity under observation.
4. All persons suspected of being in contact with groups and parties which are counter-revolutionary and against the Islamic Republic regime must be placed under secret surveillance.
5. Units responsible for controlling towns must be armed with weapons and other equipment necessary to confront demonstrations.
6. Immediate steps must be taken to reduce discontent, particularly those most palpable and prominent. If this is impossible, it must be made out that the Islamic regime is itself unhappy about the shortages and is making efforts to overcome them. Also, if people are sensitive to one or more officials, these officials must either be removed or moved elsewhere. People must be promised that their complaints will be answered.
7. Propaganda programmes which look at the needs of people must be strengthened on television, and in particular, on radio. Among these must be talks and interviews with top-ranking officials of government.
8. Efforts must be made to create diversion for youths and students. The Ministry of Guidance and the Ministry of Education must act more effectively and quickly to this end. In all actions, Islam and the Islamic government must be borne in mind.
9. All top government officials must bear in mind the Islamic views and commandments of the regime when dealing with those persons who are disturbing public order, and deal with them with complete decisiveness and conviction.
10. In the Friday Prayer [meetings] people must be invited to observe Islamic patience and forbearance. For this purpose, in addition to the Friday Prayer Imams, use must be made of well-known personalities and intellectuals.
11. The plots of America and its internal lackeys in attacking the Islamic regime must be exposed, and the collusion of the demonstrators, or any grumbling protesters, with America must be made clear. Meanwhile, those positive aspects of [UN Human Rights Representative] Galindo Pohl's report [on human rights in Iran] must be taken up and used for propaganda in meetings and the media.
12. Until normal conditions return, the National Security Councils in towns must meet every week, or if no problems arise, fortnightly.

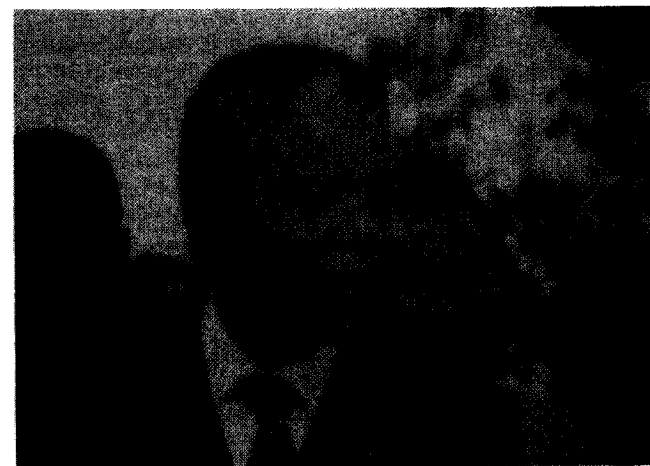
Mandela plays down state terror campaign

SINCE HIS release from prison on February 11 this year, Nelson Mandela has emerged as a well-groomed elder statesman. He has continuously stressed the need to negotiate with the government, but has scarcely a single harsh word to say about his 27 years behind bars.

In the weeks that followed the unbanning of the ANC and the UDF, a wave of revolt surged through black townships and the tribal homelands. It was met head-on by the security forces who left over eight dead and 300 wounded in Sebokeng alone on March 26. At the height of the white backlash, a group of right-wing extremists declared war on the ANC. Led by Piet Rudolph, they declared they were arming themselves in April and 'going for the ANC's throat'.

From his base in Natal province, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi continued a reign of terror over ANC, UDF and COSATU supporters. In three years, 2,000 black people have been killed by Buthelezi's state-sponsored Inkatha organisation. Yet Mandela and the ANC were scheduled to hold a joint rally with Buthelezi on April 2 during Mandela's two-day visit to the province. Only when faced with pressure from local activists did Mandela agree to postpone the rally.

Mandela has praised Inkatha for 'making it difficult for the regime to implement successive schemes to perpetu-



Nelson Mandela

ate minority rule'. During his visit, not one word of criticism was directed at Buthelezi for his attacks on the ANC, UDF and COSATU supporters.

After F.W. de Klerk's decision to tighten security measures in the black townships, Mandela welcomed the move as evidence that the government was trying to end violence. While the ANC had been obliged, again only under mass pressure, to postpone talks with the government scheduled for April 11, Mandela nonetheless announced his intention to meet de Klerk informally on April 5. At the meeting, Mandela announced that he would propose further measures to end 'township violence'. But he did not spell out what the measures were, or who they were to be directed against.

Mandela emerged from the

meeting, according to press reports, looking more relaxed than de Klerk. He welcomed the President's decision to order a judicial inquiry into the Sebokeng massacre, but had himself proposed that 'credible' black leaders should participate.

In contrast to Mandela's open capitulation to the state, Inkatha and tribal chiefs, the South African Youth Congress's first national delegate meeting in April resolved to build an armed militia in the townships, organise in the tribal homelands and develop campaigns of mass defiance to meet state terror. From Mandela, in spite of the one billion television audience for his Wembley Stadium appearance, not one word on the programme necessary to arm the black masses to accomplish the tasks ahead.

SOVIET UNION/EASTERN EUROPE

Workers must fight the rise of anti-Semitism!

By Daniel Evans

THE RESURGENCE of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe testifies as much to the complete ideological bankruptcy of Stalinism as to the scale of the economic problems facing those countries.

The effect of Gorbachev's *glasnost* has been to strengthen capitalist trends within the Soviet Union, providing a legal framework for their continued growth, and to accelerate enormously the break-up of the other deformed workers' states. Far from being engaged in a process of 'self-reform' in the face of the hostility of the masses to decades of bureaucratic dictatorship and economic privation, the Stalinists have become the main agents for capitalist restoration.

The success of this plan relies, above all, on obstructing the growth of an organised, independent movement of the

working class. The Stalinists' conversion to the cause of 'political pluralism', therefore, owes nothing to a desire to see genuine workers' democracy. On the contrary, it is designed to let the most rabidly anti-working class forces in society off the leash, in an attempt to resolve the economic crisis whilst simultaneously defending bureaucratic privilege. For the Stalinists, any and every means of smashing the unity of the working class is legitimate: in the Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe, one of the closest tools to hand for this purpose is anti-Semitism. Jews are to be allowed to become the scapegoats, once again, for economic crisis and political misleadership.

The leaders of Pamyat, the extreme right-wing nationalist organisation in the Soviet Union, have called for a pogrom against Jews for May 15, the anniversary of Karl Marx's death. One of the conditions for membership is the handing over of the names and addresses of at least three Jewish families.

Pamyat had been allowed a free rein by the authorities

until February when, following mass demonstrations in Moscow demanding its activities be curbed, the Stalinists announced that two of its members were to be prosecuted for inciting racial hatred. However, the announcement was followed by an Interior Ministry statement claiming that fears of pogroms against Jews had no grounds whatsoever. Soviet officials continue to assert that the problem is not with Pamyat but with the Israeli secret service, Mossad, which is supposedly responsible for fomenting unrest in order to encourage emigration. This, it can be seen, is only a thin disguise for anti-Semitism in the bureaucracy itself, and has the effect of identifying all Jews with Zionism.

The chairman of Fatherland (The Russian Patriotic Society of Leningrad) is a retired colonel called Shchekatikhin who retains his membership of the communist party. Along with the party secretaries in several of the city's largest factories, he would like to see the birth of what he describes as a 'Russian communist party'

(as opposed to Soviet), which would be called the Party for the Revival of Russia.

In Eastern Europe, fascists are again emerging with the legal right to compete for power. In Romania, where a number of synagogues have recently been ransacked, the Iron Guard (which provided the pre-war Nazi sympathising government with its death squads) has re-emerged 50 years after it was outlawed with this simple perspective: 'Until we have liquidated all the communists, socialists and dirty leftists, we will not give up... our trust is in force... our time has come. Heil Hitler.' They are thought to have been responsible for the recent murder of prominent National Peasant Party member Vasilae Valescu, and a former Iron Guard leader now living in Spain asks why a Jew, Petro Roman, is Prime Minister.

In Czechoslovakia, the 'Republicans' claim a 'growing membership of 2,000'. Their demands are simple too - outlaw the Communist Party, expel all foreign workers. They warn: 'If the gypsies

behave badly, we will push for... the elimination of their activities.'

Anti-Semitism has a higher profile in Hungary where Jews occupied prominent positions in the discredited Stalinist government and throughout society. The arch-conservatives of the Democratic Forum, which swept to power in the second round of voting in the recent elections, found it an indispensable weapon against their main opponents, the 'free-market liberals' of the Alliance of Free Democrats. Both the Alliance, which enjoys widespread support from the 80-100,000 Jews estimated to live in Hungary, and the Forum are mainly composed of former Stalinists. In addition, synagogues have been attacked and the Freedom Party has breathed new life into the infamous 'Magyar Doctrine' which seeks racial classification of all citizens.

In East Germany, the message of the fascist Republikaner Party of West Germany, headed by a former SS sergeant, has not fallen on deaf ears. Skinhead gangs can be seen roaming the streets, particularly in Leipzig, giving Nazi salutes and beating up foreigners.

In Poland, anti-Semitism is widespread and not solely the preserve of the numerous small right-wing parties. Cardinal Glomp, leader of the influential Polish Roman Catholic Church, played a role in whipping up anti-Jewish feeling when he defended the provocative opening of a Catholic convent at Auschwitz. Under the Solidarity-led government, unemployment is poised to explode from its official level of 9,600 last December to between one and two million this year. Representatives of the Jewish community have expressed fears that this will cause a sharp increase in anti-Semitism.

Since the rise of Stalin, the bureaucracy has periodically resorted to anti-Semitism to maintain its grip on power. It was used in the infamous Moscow show-trials of the 1930s. Leon Trotsky, chief defendant *in absentia*, pointed out that 'the Soviet bureaucrat feels himself morally in a beleaguered camp. He attempts with all his strength to break through from his isolation'. 'Catering to the national feelings and prejudices of the backward layers of the population' helped him in this, Trotsky added. 'The... bureaucrat... will, at the critical moment, inevitably try

to emphasise that he is a brother of the muzhik and the peasant - not some sort of foreigner and under no circumstances a Jew.'

Thus, for instance, following the rebellions in Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, and during the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War in 1967, the Polish Communist Party purged all Jews from its ranks and from their jobs in an orgy of anti-Semitism. Under the present circumstances, how much more will the bureaucrats, particularly those who cannot find a place in the new 'free market', be emphasising the 'purity' of their blood?

Over 100,000 Soviet Jews are expected to emigrate to Israel this year alone. When they get there, however, they are being met with increasing resentment from poorer Israelis because of the sharp rises in rents, house prices and unemployment, and with strike threats from Palestinians in the Occupied Territories whose land and jobs are disappearing. At the same time, the Israeli government is reluctant to speak out against growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union - also claiming that the danger of violence is exaggerated - in order not to upset Gorbachev and to keep the new emigration channels working smoothly. Meanwhile, the United States, after years of condemning the Soviet Union for restricting Jewish emigration, has imposed strict quotas on the numbers it will accept.

Today, Jews should place no faith in 'liberal' bourgeois democracy in Eastern Europe. It cannot survive on such a backward economic base. The return of capitalism promises to bring with it the rise of nationalism, racism and dictatorship. Trotsky warned in the 1930s that the 'Jewish Question' could not be solved within the framework of capitalism. His advice to Jewish workers and intellectuals was to acquaint themselves with the problems of the working class in the country in which they found themselves. The fate of the Jewish people is bound together with the struggle of the international working class for socialism.

Workers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe must take a firm stand against anti-Semitism. Fight for the maximum unity of an independent working class movement against the Stalinists and capitalists. Drive out the racists and fascists! Down with anti-Semitism!

Western leaders favour Gorbachev

By Bob Pitt

WHEN THE Lithuanian parliament declared independence from the Soviet Union on March 11, it probably did so in the belief that this would provoke no significant retaliation from Moscow.

After all, Gorbachev had swallowed the loss of Eastern Europe and the capitalist reunification of Germany - so the leaders of the Lithuanian nationalist movement Sajudis must have reasoned - why should he balk at the secession of a tiny country like Lithuania? Moreover, these right-wing restorationists no doubt anticipated that their pro-capitalist politics would guarantee support from US and European imperialism, which had in the past taken a bellicose attitude towards Soviet rule over the Baltic states. They were to be disappointed on both counts.

First of all, Gorbachev did not turn out to be the expected pushover. With his political authority already undermined by the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and by his abject failure to revive the stagnant Soviet economy, and with a crucial Communist Party congress due in July, Gorbachev was under pressure to demonstrate to his conservative critics that he was at least capable of resisting the political break-up of the USSR. Lithuania's declaration of independence was immediately rejected as illegal and, although repression stopped short of a Baku-style bloodbath, Soviet troops engaged in blatant acts of intimidation against the Lithuanian



Lithuanian nationalists protest in Vilnius

nian people. Eventually, in mid-April, Lithuania was subjected to an economic blockade in order to force the would-be secessionists to sue for terms.

The Sajudis leaders' reliance on imperialist backing for secession turned out to be no less of a miscalculation. President Bush and his advisers took the view that US imperialism's main interest lay in preventing a backlash against Gorbachev by the 'hard line' opposition in the bureaucracy. Although he came under fire in the US Congress, where he was accused of selling out Lithuania to the Russians, and demands were raised for economic and political sanctions against the

Soviet Union, Bush showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for punitive action. This view was shared by the Western European bourgeoisie, who turned a deaf ear to requests by the Lithuanian government for assistance in breaking the Kremlin's economic blockade. Indeed, the French and West German governments openly urged the Lithuanian nationalist leaders to rescind their declaration of independence and reach a settlement with Moscow. The leaders of world imperialism, it was clear, were intent primarily on maintaining their friend Mikhail Gorbachev in power, and the denial of Lithuanian independence was a price they were happy to pay.

Lithuania's democratic rights, along with those of other national minorities, have long been trampled on by the Great Russian chauvinists in the Kremlin. In 1918 the Lithuanian people succeeded in breaking free from their imprisonment within the former Tsarist empire, only to suffer the re-imposition of Moscow rule in 1940 as a consequence of the Nazi-Soviet pact. The Lithuanians' fight against national oppression is entirely legitimate, and those 'socialists' who refuse to support this struggle, because of the political complexion of the existing nationalist leadership, must be condemned. It is the elementary duty of Trotskyists to defend unconditionally Lithuania's right of secession from the Soviet Union, and to oppose without equivocation the Stalinist bureaucracy's bullying attempts to bring the national movement to heel.

That being said, neither should our hatred of Stalinism lead us to uncritically endorse the politics of a movement presently headed by the aspiring bourgeois politicians of Sajudis in alliance with nationalist elements from among the local Stalinists themselves. Within the 'independent Lithuania' advocated by this leadership, workers would exchange oppression by Russian bureaucrats for exploitation by imperialism, albeit mediated by fellow Lithuanians. It is necessary to raise the demand for a genuine workers' government, which would oppose capitalist restoration with a programme for democratically reorganising the bureaucratically planned economy in the interests of the producers and consumers, and would defend the rights of Lithuania's Russian and Polish minorities against right-wing nationalists. No to a bourgeois state! For an independent workers' republic of Lithuania, based on soviets!

FUNDS

Labour may be streets ahead in the opinion polls, and Thatcher on the rocks, but Kinnock, Hattersley and the rest of the Labour leadership are doing everything possible to dampen down the growing militancy of the working class. Calling for exemplary sentences for poll tax protesters; saying that rubber bullets should have been used at Strangeways - are there any limits to which these servants of the ruling class won't go?

You can help the fight to build an alternative, revolutionary leadership by supporting the Workers News £10,000 Building Fund, which now stands at £1,887.00, and by regularly contributing to the £300 Monthly Fund. Post your donations to:

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Revolutionary Perspectives

The following document is by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (Belgium and West Germany) and has the political solidarity of the Workers International League. It was written prior to the sweeping victory of the right wing in the East German elections, but fully retains its significance in the present situation

I. Back to capitalism or forward to a republic of workers' councils?

With the collapse of Stalinist rule in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the burning question has become: 'In what direction should the country develop?'. Taking their lead from the ideologues of capitalism in the West, the new political groupings in the GDR proclaim, almost unanimously, that socialism is dead and that only capitalism can offer a perspective for the future. The free market economy - whose blind functioning has led to two world wars, whose supposedly 'self-regulating powers' keep the major part of humanity in misery, and which has transformed creative productive forces into means of destruction - is said to be superior to socialism. The demoralised SED bureaucrats (who have turned into supporters of 'democratic socialism' and have rebaptised the SED as the PDS - the Party of Democratic Socialism), together with the newly-formed restorationist parties and their mentors in Bonn, continue to equate Stalinism with socialism. In opposition to this, we confidently declare that *the crisis and collapse of Stalinism does not represent the end of socialism*.

Socialism means that the working class and its allies take control of their own destiny; it requires the united action of the working class in the most developed capitalist countries; it means production based on the 'free and equal association of the producers' (Engels); it means a classless society and the withering away of the state. In the GDR, only the very first steps have been made in the direction of socialism: nationalisation of the means of production, the establishment of a planned economy and basic levels of healthcare and social security, along with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the Junkers (the big landowners).

From the start, the Stalinists blocked any further advance towards socialism, preventing the working class from developing the process of socialisation of production. The imposition of bureaucratic planning meant the creation of a monstrous, supercentralised 'command economy'. All talk of a democratic system of planning aimed at satisfying the needs of the masses, which also takes into account the need to protect the environment, was suppressed. The Stalinist perversion of central planning, the battery of repressive measures used against the working class and the material privileges which the bureaucratic hierarchy enjoyed have all served to discredit the name of socialism. The few socialist elements which existed within East German society were systematically undermined.

As the Stalinist state ran into deeper and deeper economic crisis, the bureaucracy concluded that in order to maintain its position it had to lead the retreat back towards capitalism. In doing so, it has placed its own future principally in the hands of West German capital. What the Stalinists hope to gain from this course of action is the integration of the largest possible part of the old bureaucracy into the new capitalist structures. Since this is their overriding consideration, the fact that the SED/PDS is widely distrusted by the masses because of its political past is of little concern to them. Only the most discredited elements in the bureaucratic apparatus will be denied

an opportunity to profit from the restoration of capitalism.

The return of the GDR to the capitalist fold, initiated by the SED/PDS, is also the goal of most of the newly-founded parties, including the SPD. The Round Table* parties tolerated the existence of Modrow's caretaker regime, and even formed a joint government with the SED/PDS. On fundamental policy, there is no disagreement between the majority of the new parties and the SED/PDS and its bloc partners: they all want the return of capitalism. Between them stands only the past of the SED/PDS.

Contrary to the expectations of some of its participating organisations, the Round Table was never a committee to control the Stalinist bureaucracy. Its function was to bring together all those in favour of capitalist restoration and, from the start, it acted as the most important instrument to prevent the building of workers' councils.

The capitalist future which the Round Table parties are jointly working towards will not only mean the return of the old proprietors from the West, and the resumption of land speculation and rack-renting. Because of the low productivity of the GDR's economy, the advent of a market economy will lead to mass unemployment, widespread poverty, social polarisation, the destruction of working class solidarity and, for the farmers, a threat hanging over their very existence. The GDR would be transformed into a 'semi-colonial' territory of West German capitalism, ruining large parts of the economy and encouraging mass emigration and the growth of fascist tendencies.

There is only one alternative to this scenario: the building of a republic of workers' councils as the genuine expression of working class power and democracy.

2. Rule by workers' councils instead of Stalinism!

As well as reflecting the strategic requirements of the post-war settlement between imperialism and Stalinism, the existence of the GDR as an independent state is also the result of the strivings of the working class to establish an anti-fascist, socialist society in Germany.

As in the other countries of central and eastern Europe which were occupied by the Red Army, Stalinism tried in the period immediately following the Second World War to rebuild capitalist regimes which were friendly to the USSR. The attempt failed because of the resistance of those remnants of the capitalist class who had remained, and because of the aggressive cold war policies of imperialism. The global military and strategic balance of power could only be secured by abolishing the capitalist state. The need to secure Stalinist rule in the USSR required the building of a similar regime in East Germany. For that reason, the bureaucratic structure of the GDR was, from the outset, in contradiction to the needs of the working class and of the goal of socialism.

A Stalinist bureaucracy, draped in German colours, was established and developed under the protection of the Red Army. It possessed its own repressive apparatus and its own bureaucratic

*The grouping of political parties and other organisations opposed to the Stalinists, which held the first of its regular meetings on December 7, 1989.

traditions, and was formed under the impact of specific Cold War conditions. It was a regime whose condition of existence was the exclusion of the working class from political power. Only in this way, by subjecting the whole of society to its bureaucratic rule, could it secure its political monopoly and social position. Outside the borders of the workers' states, it supported the 'right' of imperialism to rule.

Stalinism has nothing in common with genuine, revolutionary communism which fights to raise the working class to the position of a real ruling class. For socialism to be achieved requires the united action of at least the workers of the most highly industrialised countries. For this reason, a radical break with the regime of the bureaucracy is the first precondition for the advance towards a real communist society in the GDR. The dismissal of 200 top bureaucrats is wholly insufficient.

Revolutionary communists therefore fight for the following aims:

- The disbanding of the People's Chamber (parliament) and of all other branches of central and local government (city councils etc).

- The immediate sacking of all Stasi (State Security) employees. The opening of all security files by workers' councils. The publication of the names of all spies, informers and collaborators with the Stasi. The right of individuals to have access to Stasi files held on them. Trials by workers' courts of all Stasi members, and the judiciary, for actions against the interests of the working class.

- The disarming and demilitarisation of the Volkspolizei (police). Election of all army officers by rank-and-file soldiers.

- The formation of workers', neighbourhood and soldiers' councils. Permanent accountability and recall of all delegates.

- For a national congress of councils.
- The formation of a government responsible to a national congress of workers' councils.

- The immediate abolition of all categories of political crime in the penal code and of all discriminatory laws.

- The abolition of all censorship and the provision of adequate printing facilities for all organisations recognised by workers', neighbourhood and soldiers' councils. Equal access to the media for all such organisations.

- The investigation of all Stalinist crimes in the GDR and compensation to the victims.

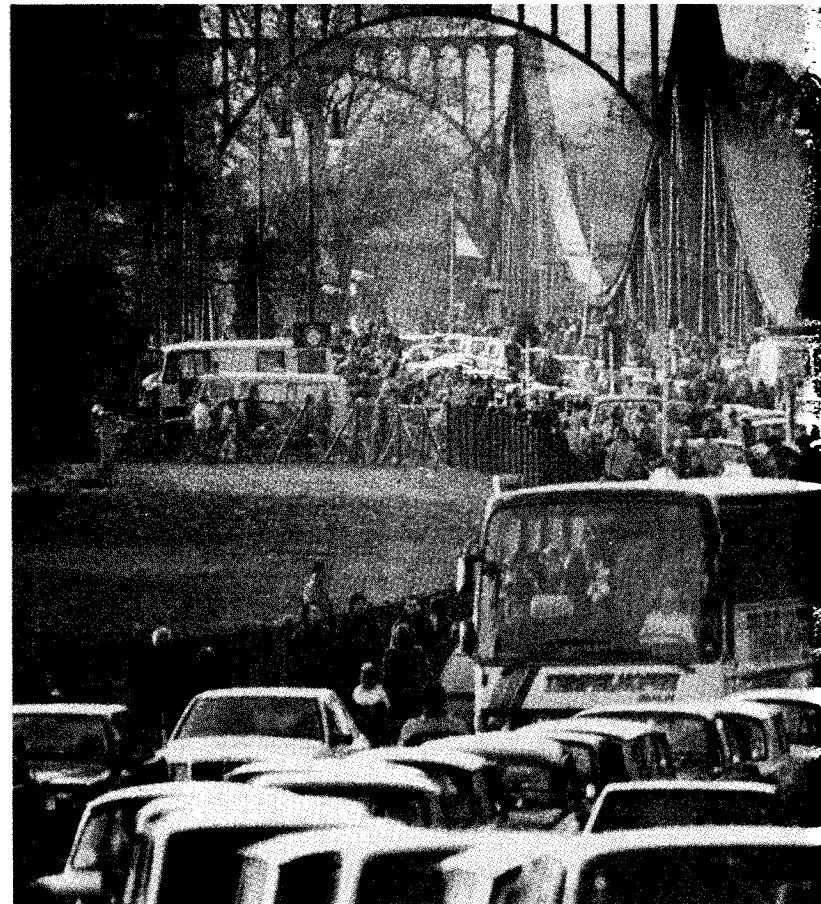
3. Stop the sell-out!

Neither capitalism nor Stalinism, but a democratically planned socialist economy

The GDR's 'command economy' is in such deep crisis that the Stalinists have lost all hope of being able to resolve it by their own means. They are counting on the transformation of the so-called 'People's Economy' into a capitalist economy, and on its integration into the European Community. The borders have been thrown open to foreign capital investment, and the accumulation of private capital is being encouraged internally. Factory managements are to be given greater powers, including the right to become 'independent' of the state, in preparation for the privatisation of the nationalised industries.

Economic integration with West Germany will mean a single currency,

Draft Program



Thousands of East Germans crossing the Gliencke Bridge into West Berlin in January

a 'reform' of wages and prices (the end of subsidies on basic goods and the introduction of capitalist criteria for evaluating wage rates) and widespread factory closures. At the same time, the welfare system will be undermined and probably collapse, leading to the impoverishment of a considerable part of the population.

In anticipation of mass resistance to such measures, there are plans to give the working class a stake in the restoration of capitalism by co-opting individuals onto factory managements after the West German model. The preservation of the official FDGB trade unions as an instrument of social control is being sought and, in the last resort, the assistance of the Federal Republic is being counted on. Thus, the fate of the 'reform' of the GDR is made dependent on the unstable situation in the world imperialist economy and on the hope that the Bonn government will extract sacrifices from the West German working class in the name of 'national unity'.

The replacement of the Stalinist 'command' system with independent enterprises managed by technocrats, subject to the whims of the 'market', offers no security for the East German working class. The perspective must be the construction of a genuine socialist economy, based on the principle of satisfying need rather than creating profit. But this requires more than just nationalisation - control over socialised production must be exercised by the producers themselves. Democratically-elected committees at factory, regional and national level must plan and direct production according to the decisions of the working class and small farmers. Only through such a democratic framework can rational production be achieved under conditions which safeguard the environment.

Workers' control of production

The first step towards genuine socialisation - that is, socialisation which is not in the interests of either capitalism or the bureaucracy - is workers' control of production. The following steps must urgently be taken in order to introduce workers' control throughout the economy.

- The immediate convening of factory assemblies and the election of factory

committees.

- New elections for shop stewards.

- The election of control commissions which, together with the shop stewards, must conduct a thorough inventory of every enterprise. The present managers, who share responsibility for the crisis, are incapable of such a task.

- The immediate punishment of all those found guilty of corruption and abuse of power.

- Details of the total incomes and private property of all individual bureaucrats to be published.

- The drawing up of new health and safety legislation which protects workers and the environment.

- The election of managers by the workforce. Managers to be fully accountable to the workers and subject to recall.

- Democratic control by the entire workforce of all social and welfare provisions previously controlled by the official FDGB trade unions, especially the organisation of holidays.

- No workplace restrictions on trade union activity, or political activity by parties recognised by the workers' councils.

- House and flat maintenance to be taken over by neighbourhood committees, and quality control of goods to be overseen jointly by consumers' commissions and factory committees. An export ban to be placed on all essential goods in short supply.

- The building of local and regional assemblies of factory committees and neighbourhood committees.

- The convening of a full-time congress of factory committees.

- The replacement of the state administration with one elected by and subordinate to the congress of workers' councils.

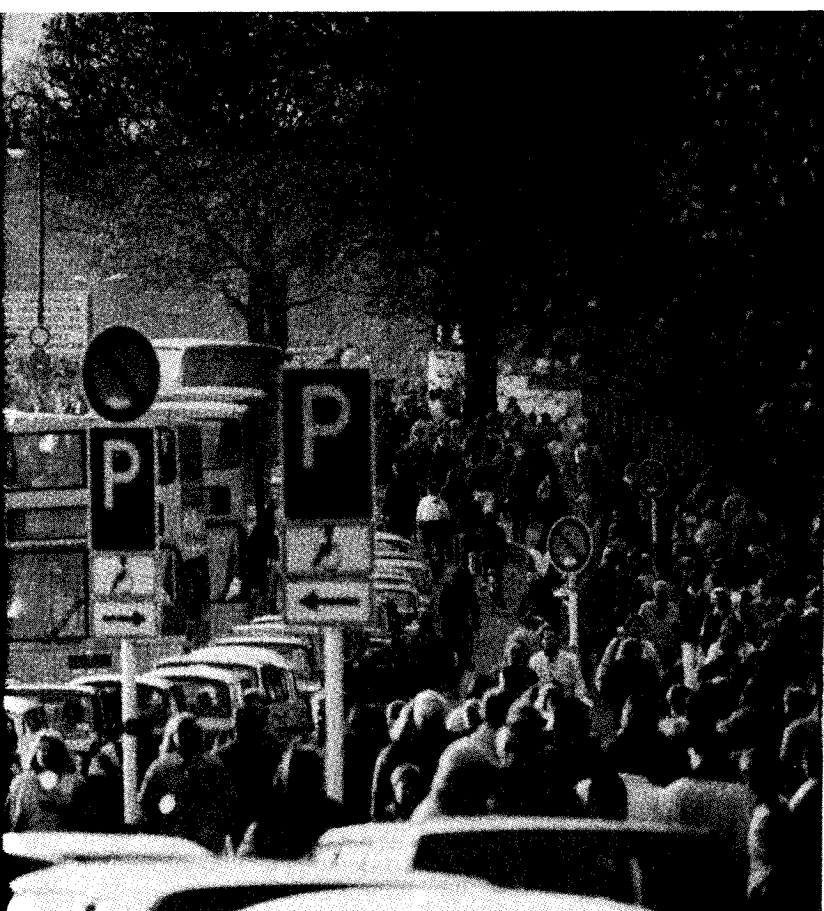
- Retention of the monopoly on foreign trade.

Keep the capitalist tendencies under control!

The restoration of capitalism offers no solution to the economic crisis gripping the GDR. Where joint ventures with capitalist concerns are absolutely necessary - to gain access to advanced technology, for instance - a majority stake in the enterprise must be held by the state and workers' control must be established. The interests of society must be the priority, not the profits of the capitalists, in

atives for East Germany

Programme of Action



cases where the exploitation of workers by capital has to be tolerated for a transitional period.

Alongside the state sector, small private enterprises and co-operatives – shops, services, handicrafts, etc – must be permitted. Their nationalisation, the bulk of which took place in 1972, was an example of the bureaucracy consolidating its own political power rather than the application of a correct economic and social policy. The socialisation of small-scale production is only possible over a period of time, parallel to a development of the entire economy which convinces the small producers that it is in their own interests. State regulation of the private sector must ensure that workers' rights are protected, and a careful tax policy must ensure that, whilst individual initiative is encouraged, it won't lead to capital accumulation on a large scale.

To oppose capitalist restoration not only demands a fight against the privatisation of the means of production and the rejection of all claims for compensation by the former owners. It means opposing the transformation of any state property into capital. It means a defence of the LPGs (agricultural production co-operatives) against the property claims of the Junkers and against the disastrous agricultural policy of the European Community. The current agricultural policy must be reformed in the interests of both farmer and consumer. Ecologically safe methods of farming must be introduced, according to a plan democratically arrived at by those working in the LPGs.

Preserve and extend the gains in social services!

The all-pervading bureaucratism has also led to the alienation of the masses from social conquests in the field of healthcare, job security, education, etc. The Stalinists' need for absolute control has led to the employment of idlers, swindlers and other anti-social elements, and has undermined support for the welfare system. Nevertheless, the step-by-step restoration of capitalism threatens all such gains, however bureaucratically deformed, and will give a strong impulse to the struggle to defend and democratise them.

Revolutionary communists demand:

■ A sliding-scale of wages, and of

pensions and other benefits, to provide for the automatic adjustment of income to rising prices.

■ Full protection against unemployment. For a reduction in work hours to absorb any surplus labour. Increased productivity must not be at workers' expense. Any redistribution of the labour force resulting from factory closures must be carried out with the agreement of workers' councils.

■ An emergency plan to counter the effects of the emigration of skilled workers. In the health service, medical specialists to be immediately relieved of administrative tasks. Generally, in all sectors covering health, welfare and education, a premium to be paid – for a transitional period – on the wages of essential skilled personnel. The training and employment of foreign workers to be continued, but with full civil rights granted to immigrants and their dependants.

■ The right to work and the right to higher education for mothers and for disabled people, whom capitalism systematically excludes from the social production process. For the retention of a full network of free kindergartens! Reject any move to reverse the gains made in the fight for social equality for women!

■ The right to good quality, affordable housing for workers. This requires a complete break with Stalinist housing policy, and a fight against the return of private landlords and the privatisation of state-owned housing stock. The neighbourhood councils must work out housing needs locally, in conjunction with small housing associations and building co-operatives. The central planks of this policy must be the complete refurbishment of all old housing and a programme of new house building designed to meet the particular needs of the communities. Alongside housing, there must be adequate provision of social amenities, especially community centres for youth, the elderly and women.

4. For an independent workers' republic as part of a federation of socialist states in Europe!

From the outset, the Stalinist-deformed GDR was a product of the military-strategic interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. It was this outlook, rather than the international interests of the working class, which predominated and, as a result, Stalinism discredited socialism in both East and West. This laid the basis for the development of anti-communist ideology, and made it easier for imperialism to justify its own arms policy, the goal of which is the restoration of capitalism. For decades, Stalinism helped imperialism push the international socialist movement onto the ideological defensive.

In the final analysis, only the working class and its allies can defend the progressive features of the workers' state. Real socialism means not only the victory of workers' councils within the GDR, but also the struggle for an international federation of workers' council republics and, as the initial goal, the United Socialist States of Europe. An important precondition for this perspective is the fight against anti-communist ideology. Without the struggle against all the relics of bankrupt Stalinism, that ideological battle cannot be won. Revolutionary communism must, however, take the lead in defending all the existing gains of the working class against imperialism and the process of capitalist restoration. This is first and foremost a practical task of giving political leadership, rather than a military question. Those who cannot defend the gains of the past will never conquer new ones!

On an international level, revolutionary communists in the GDR must pursue the following objectives:

■ Dissolution of all military pacts. Withdrawal of all Soviet troops from the GDR.

■ The ending of Soviet supreme command over the National People's Army.

■ Publication of all international treaties agreed by the GDR.

■ Workers' control and planning of all international relations, such as the monopoly of foreign trade.

■ Reorganisation of relations with all Comecon countries.

■ Support for all struggles aimed at creating similar workers' council republics. Support for all anti-imperialist and anti-Stalinist liberation struggles of oppressed nations.

■ Freely chosen co-ordination and integration of the economic plans of future workers' council republics.

■ Opposition to all attempts to integrate the GDR into the capitalist world market, and particularly to a 'single market' with West Germany and the European Community.

5. For a socialist policy for Germany!

The GDR originated as 'the other German state'. It gained its right to exist as a result of the abolition of capitalism in the Soviet occupation zone, and the regeneration of capitalism in the western part of the former German Reich.



East German refugees at a camp site in West Germany

The discrediting of socialism by Stalinism; the reactionary and utopian attempts to 'build socialism' within the boundaries of each of the East European states after 1945; the submission of the Warsaw Pact states to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy – all these factors created fertile soil in the GDR for the development of nationalism.

Faced with the West German 'economic miracle', and as a result of the depoliticisation enforced by Stalinism in the GDR, it is not surprising that, in the present period of flux in central and eastern Europe, large sections of the masses place their hopes in the reunification of Germany.

This reactionary tendency is reinforced by the politics of the SED/PDS and the Round Table parties. Their only perspective for overcoming the old bureaucratic policy of 'supercapitalism' is to join the headlong rush to integrate the GDR into the European capitalist market. In this, the GDR is following the course laid down by Gorbachev for the entire Soviet sphere of influence. Although the SED/PDS would like to maintain an independent existence for the GDR and uphold the post-war frontiers of Europe until a new European order has been achieved, and although it, like the restorationist parties, talks about maintaining the social gains of the GDR, it uses all its energies to push forward capitalist restoration. In such a relatively backward country, capitalism cannot be restored without dismantling the gains workers have made.

The prospect of mass unemployment, growing misery and insecurity will give an impulse to the growth of fascist movements. The inevitable social problems resulting from the restoration of capitalism will be used by fascism to accelerate the process of restoration, and to violently suppress resistance to it. The more that hopelessness and despair develop, the more rapidly fascist gangs will menace the working class and its allies.

No amount of appeals to the forces of the state, led by restorationist politicians, will help against fascism and its terror gangs. Those who want to fight fascism effectively must oppose the reintroduction of capitalism. Those who want to defend themselves against fascist terror must take up the building of self-defence groups in factories, schools, universities and working class neighbourhoods. This will be another task of workers' councils.

In spite of the vital struggle against nationalism and fascism, revolutionary communists do not deny the existence of a single German nation, linked by numerous cultural and personal ties across the border separating the two German states. But a common nationality is not a principled starting point for the socialist internationalism fought for by revolutionary communists. A socialist society cannot be built within the borders of the GDR, nor even within a united workers' state of Germany. For that reason, international socialism remains our perspective. That means opposing every policy which accepts the status quo in the GDR and in West

Germany. It is the primary duty of revolutionary communists in West Germany to fight for the overthrow of capitalism. Only when this struggle is successful is the question of German unity posed. For these reasons, a socialist policy for Germany means:

■ Defence and extension of all gains made by the working class.

■ Neither *Anschluss* nor privatisation. Maintenance of two states, so long as West Germany remains capitalist.

■ Fight for the recognition of the GDR by West Germany.

■ Fight nationalism, chauvinism and fascism!

■ For the free development of cultural relations between the two German states, including by treaty. Opposition to all attempts to form a capitalist German confederation.

6. Revolutionary communists must organise!

The developments in the GDR show that society cannot develop automatically in the direction of socialism. Stalinism systematically destroyed the basis that existed after the war for building a genuinely democratic workers' state. The collapse of Stalinism initially pushed forward the forces adhering to socialism, but they were unable to match up to the demands of the new situation either politically or organisationally. This allowed the restorationists of the SED/PDS and the new parties sponsored by Bonn to go onto the offensive. Revolutionary communism will only be able to reverse this trend when it builds an organisation capable of meeting the new challenge. The working class can only take the road of socialist construction when it gains political power. It will only be able to do this if it is led by a workers' party armed with a revolutionary programme – a programme it fights for in an organised and disciplined fashion, which can win the working class to this perspective.

Revolutionary communists seek discussion and joint action with all those forces who continue to hold to a socialist perspective, or fight to defend the social conquests. They will constantly stress that such a struggle can only be completed successfully within the framework of workers' democracy, based upon workers' councils. They will make clear to the remaining honest members of the SED/PDS that this struggle demands a radical break with Stalinism, and with the new orientation of the SED/PDS.

Revolutionary communism starts this fight with a programme which has assimilated the experiences of the international revolutionary workers' movement during the last century, especially of the Communist Left Opposition in the USSR which was physically destroyed by Stalinism. In this lies its strength. But it also has to overcome the handicap of the slanders heaped by Stalinism upon its victims. Stalinism has discredited not only the perspective of socialism in general, but in particular the concept of a democratically organised party which is disciplined in action.

Nevertheless, no other organisational framework exists for international socialism, either in the GDR or on an international level. Revolutionary communists therefore strive to build a world communist party. Internationally, this must mean active participation in the fight to rebuild the Fourth International. Only the Fourth International, founded by Leon Trotsky, maintained the essential lessons of the international revolutionary workers' movement against Stalinism. We say 'rebuild' because the impact of decades of Stalinism and the post-war imperialist world economic boom opened up a crisis for revolutionary communism. No other alternative exists for socialist internationalism.

■ For the building of a revolutionary party in the GDR!

■ For the rebuilding of the Fourth International!

LTT (Belgium/W. Germany)
March 1, 1990

Klara Zetkin defends the Russian revolution

IN A RECENT article entitled 'Democracy or Dictatorship', Comrade Kautsky opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as it has been established in Russia by the Bolshevik overthrow of the state authority. He expressed his dissent from the views of those socialists who have contended that in existing circumstances this dictatorship is historically justified. Substantially, Kautsky's opinions are identical with those recently published by Martov, a Menshevik comrade, in his writing 'Marx and the Problem of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. My answer to Kautsky's criticism of the Bolsheviks runs as follows:

Bolshevism and the strong hand

The use of the strong hand is the essential characteristic of Bolshevik activity. This is not ideal, but unavoidable. It may be contrary to the prescriptions of democracy, and yet it subserves the interests of democracy. If, for all who live in Russia, democracy is to become a socialistic reality, the Bolsheviks cannot escape the necessity of sacrificing, as a transient measure, the rights of certain individuals and of certain social groups. That this should happen is an inevitable feature of historic evolution. Democracy is of a twofold nature, being simultaneously means and end of historic evolution. As end or goal of historic evolution it may come into conflict with itself as means of historic evolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry in Russia bears the insignia of this contradiction. Plaintive voices from Russia, the criticisms uttered by the adversaries of 'Bolshevism' in other lands, assure us that since the Bolsheviks attained to power they have everywhere infringed and sacrificed democratic principles. Democracy, we are told, has repeatedly been given the go-by: in the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly; in the deprivations of civil rights announced in the soviet constitution; and in the declaration of the mass terror. Doubtless! But without such infringements could the revolution have been saved, could it have been carried a stage further, could the revolutionists have continued to work for social-

THE COLLAPSE of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe is being jubilantly greeted by political leaders and media pundits in the West as 'the end of socialism'. In doing so, they deliberately seek to identify socialism with the corrupt and brutal rule of the Stalinist bureaucracies. The dictatorship of the proletariat, they tell workers, inevitably means the dictatorship of Stalinism.

For their part, the 'Communist' parties, having declared for the last four decades that socialism had already been achieved, have become enthusiastic brokers for the restoration of capitalism. Having leached a privileged existence in the deformed workers' states, they are intent on securing a place in the sun for themselves under capitalism.

Parliamentary (bourgeois) democracy and working class power are irreconcilable opposites. It is no accident, therefore, that these born-again converts to 'market' economics and capitalist democracy have been forced to carry their onslaught on socialism right back to the Russian revolution. In the Soviet Union, leading academics openly attack Lenin and the Bolsheviks for dispersing the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 and for using force to suppress the counter-revolution, while turning a blind eye to fascist and anti-Semitic organisations such as Pamyat.

Both Gorbachevites and 'radicals' such as Boris Yeltsin are driven to attack the very foundations of the Soviet state, and to rehash the arguments first put forward by Karl Kautsky, the 'pope' of Marxism during the Second International, and the Bolsheviks' most determined 'socialist' opponent.

This article by Klara Zetkin (1857-1933) represents one of the first responses to Kautsky's earliest polemic against the Bolsheviks, 'Democracy or Dictatorship', published in 1918. Although no great theoretician, Zetkin shows herself to be a vigorous and militant defender of the Russian revolution.

For 40 years, Klara Zetkin stood on the revolutionary left of German socialism. She led the women's socialist movement in Germany and helped organise the International Conference of Socialist Women in Berne in 1915 – the first conference of internationalists against the imperialist war. A leader with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacus League during the war, she joined the German Communist Party and became a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1921. After a brief period of sympathy with the Left Opposition in 1923, following Zinoviev and Stalin's betrayal of the German revolution, she capitulated to Stalin and ended her days, as Trotsky observed, as a 'purely decorative figure' in the Communist International.

However, when she wrote this article (first published in English by the Socialist Labour Party in 1919 under the title 'Through Dictatorship to Democracy') she stood shoulder to shoulder with Lenin and Trotsky.

ism, which alone guarantees democracy for all? This is the crucial question, and for me the answer is self-evident, considering the circumstances attendant upon the Russian revolution.

Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly

I hold that the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, far from involving a sacrifice of democracy, made democracy more effective. No doubt that assembly had been elected upon the basis of a democratic suffrage, but the elections had taken place before the bourgeois watchwords and the bourgeois-socialist programme of compromise had lost their allurements for the broad masses of the workers. They had taken place before the decisive historic moment in which the November revolution and the acceptance of the soviet government by the organised workers, peasants and soldiers had effectively condemned as 'partial and inadequate' the programmes of the two opening phases of the revolution and of the parties that had put these programmes forward. It should be added that, during

the opening periods, the economic and social power of the possessing classes was still sufficient to exercise considerable influence upon the electoral results. The Constituent Assembly could not possibly be regarded as an unfalsified expression of the opinions and the will of the workers. In so far as in Russia we can speak of a popular will, that will was indubitably incorporated in the decisions of the soviets. Was the provisional soviet government to abdicate its real power in favour of the will-o'-the-wisp democracy of the Constituent Assembly? Was the soviet government to entrust the work of revolution to bourgeois hands, to hands that were itching to fetter, nay to strangle, this unruly intruder? Or was power to be handed over to the Social Revolutionaries, who had proved too weak to protect the revolution? To take such a step would have been no less foolish than criminal.

Revolutionary wine and parliamentary bottles

There is another point to consider. The revolution had not arrested its progress at the goal of a bourgeois revolution. Transcending any such aim, it had revealed the titanic figure of a proletarian revolution, of one aiming at socialistic reorganisation. Had they accepted parliamentarism, the Bolsheviks would have accepted an institution which, however important, is of very limited value; an institution which even in times of peaceful evolution has proved obviously inadequate to the needs of the proletarian struggle for emancipation; an institution which, adapted to the requirements of the capitalist order, must necessarily fail to meet the necessities of those whose purpose it is to subvert that order. It is undeniable that the proletariat must derive all the advantage that can be derived from parliamentary institutions. But parliament is one of those state institutions which a victorious proletariat cannot

simply take over and use for its own purposes. The new revolutionary wine must not be poured into old bottles. From this outlook, 'Bolshevism' was assuredly justified in replacing the Constituent Assembly by the soviets, in replacing the activity of a determinative and legislative assembly by the activity of organisations upon the broadest possible democratic basis, and simultaneously legislative, administrative and executive.

single mighty blow to abolish private ownership of the means of production. In Russia, the knell of private property has not yet sounded, the hour for the expropriation of all expropriators has not yet struck. Minorities still possess economic power and social power, can still use and misuse these powers against the overwhelming majority of the workers. Is political power to be added as well, to enable them to pursue their egoistic



Klara Zetkin

Proletarian dictatorship provisional

It is undeniable that the democracy created by the soviet constitution is incomplete; it is incontestable that thereby large groups of persons are excluded from the suffrage. But the critics seem to forget that these disqualifications are merely provisional, that they will be enforced solely for the period during which the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry persists and must persist. The constitution leaves no doubt upon this matter. The dissolution of Old Russia, the coming of New Russia, are not yet so far advanced as to enable the soviet government with one stroke of the pen or with a

aims in defiance of the interests of the community at large? Let us clear our minds of phrases; let us cut loose from formalities; let us cease to reiterate the shibboleth that 'the masses have the right and the power' to counteract the anti-social machinations of the possessing minorities. Is it not obvious that, in reality, things will be very different until economic freedom and economic equality shall have endowed the entire nation with spiritual freedom and maturity? Who would not laugh at a military commander so unwise as to send artillery and shells as a gift to the hostile army? Yet the Bolsheviks are supposed to have committed a deadly sin in that they refused to arm and equip the reactionary minorities for the struggle against

the revolution. This too at the very moment when revolution and counter-revolution were at life-and-death grips; when the counter-revolution was not merely supported by all the reactionary energies of Russia, but was being furnished by the Allied governments with troops, money and moral support.

Measures of military necessity

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the use of forcible measures against opponents, the declaration of the mass terror – these are bitter fruits of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. They must be regarded as measures of military necessity. 'A la guerre comme à la guerre.' (When you are making war, make war.) The Bolshevik leaders of revolutionary Russia are engaged in a war of unparalleled significance. Here the moral and political standards of everyday life fail us. On this colossal stage, individual measures and individual phenomena are dwarfed into insignificance. The drama is one of overwhelming historic import, and it must be accepted or rejected as a whole. Who wills the end must not shrink from the means. A proletarian revolution aiming at socialism cannot be effected without dictatorship. Above all is this true under existing conditions in Russia.

The appeal to Marx

The ungracious critics of our Russian friends do not, indeed, absolutely reject dictatorship on principle. What they take amiss is the character of the dictatorship in Russia. Karl Kautsky endeavours to prove that dictatorship and democracy must go hand in hand. The dictatorship must not sacrifice democratic principles but must realise them. The dictatorship must be an effluence of democracy. It must subserve the will of the majority and the interests of the majority. According to the critics, neither of these requirements is fulfilled in Russia. The small Bolshevik minority, we are told, employing brutal and forcible measures, constrains the overwhelming majority of Russians to accept Bolshevik policy. This policy, far from safeguarding the revolution, endangers the revolution; far from advancing socialism, compromises socialism. This is the kernel of the critical onslaughts, which are directed at a mark beyond 'Bolshevism', which aim at clarifying, at revising, the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are given chains of logical inferences, attempts at a new outline of the concept of dictatorship, as contrasted with the old theory which is rejected as 'Blanquist' or 'Jacobin'. The arguments are, of course, peppered with appeals to Marx and Engels, and with quotations from these authors. I have carefully read the expositions, but my general outlook upon the question, upon the application of the doctrine to the special case of the Russian revolution, and upon the part played by the Bolsheviks in



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Trotsky at a military parade in Moscow, 1919

that revolution, remains unchanged. As concerns the contentious questions of our own day, what does it matter whether the historic phenomena which Marx witnessed during his lifetime led him to modify his conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat; what does it matter if, having at first been inclined to a 'Jacobin' outlook, he subsequently came rather to adopt an 'evolutionist and parliamentarist' view. With all due deference to Comrade Martov's wide knowledge of Marxist theory, and to the indisputable acumen with which he applies that theory, we may nonetheless feel inclined to challenge his deductions, and the way in which he contrasts his interpretation of Marx with the dictatorship exercised by the Bolsheviks. But even if we believe Martov to be right concerning Marx's opinions and concerning the applicability of those opinions to the Russian situation, there is one simple fact still to be remembered, and it is that historical evolution was not arrested when the pen fell from Marx's hand.

The new capitalism

Since that day, the capitalist economy has not merely grown, but has exhibited entirely new phenomena, phenomena of notable importance. To enumerate a few of these, we have: formation of rings, trusts and syndicates; the assumption of the premier place in industry by iron and steel products in place of textiles; the revolutionary transformation effected by improvements in electrical technology; the interlacings of industrial capital, commercial capital and banking capital to constitute financial capital, and the world-wide dominion of the latter, etc. In the home policy and the foreign policy of all the more highly evolved states can be traced the influence of a further developed and maturer capitalism. Although on the surface the amenities of life may seem to have improved, the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has in reality been intensified. Among the struggling classes we see a medley and a confusion of impulses towards far-reaching settlements and dread of such settlements, of great schemes and little deeds. The dominant classes are increasingly inclined to cling to the fugitive political past. We note the decay of bourgeois

parliamentarism, and its more and more obvious incapacity to assist the proletarian struggle for freedom towards decisive issues. Above all we are impressed by the mighty expansion of imperialism, with its insatiable thirst for world domination, with its overgrown armaments, its colonial undertakings and its wars, its extremist policy of exploitation and oppression alike at home and abroad.



'He who does not work, neither shall he eat': former Russian capitalists at compulsory labour in 1918

Marxism a progressive doctrine

Who dares maintain that in face of the developments of the last decades, Marx, an out-and-out revolutionary thinker, would not have modified his conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat in accordance with the teaching of towering facts? If we assume Comrade Martov to be right as to the theory Marx held more than 40 years ago, can we not rest assured that Marx would have revised that theory had he been alive today? To Marx, theory was something greater than a means of elucidating the world; it was a means for transforming the world. But, for this very reason, he never regarded his theories as eternal and immutable truths to which reality must conform; for him, reality always remained the object of research, the thing to be conscientiously investigated, the thing from

from the expositions of the adversaries of Bolshevism. Marx's revolutionary intelligence was as keen as a sword; his heart glowed with revolutionary fire; his revolutionary will was hard as steel. Marx was ever a revolutionary fighter, a man of action, and I cannot believe that he would be found today among the critics of Bolshevism.

On paper 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' and 'the ideal of complete democracy' may be simply linked. In the world of reality, it is otherwise. The historic essence of dictatorship is power - stark, coercive power. Without infringing the rights and interests of minorities, it is as impossible as squaring the circle. The historic justification of the dictatorship of the proletariat lies in this, that the dictatorship is exercised in the interests of the enormous majority of the population, and that it is no more than a means of transition, for it aims at suspending

itself, at rendering itself impossible, at realising the ideal of democracy - a free people, in a free land, living by free labour.

Durability of Bolshevism

Our anti-Bolsheviks deny that the existing dictatorship in Russia possesses these justifications. They declare that the Bolshevik dictatorship is the



Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.

Art in the service of the proletarian revolution: 'Comrade Lenin sweeps the world of its rubbish'

world that in spite of defeat they have power and are in the right.

Who will deny that many of the workers, numbers of the peasants, and above all most of the intelligentsia, neither share the views nor endorse the policy of the Bolsheviks? Nonetheless, a very large proportion, if not the majority, of those proletarians and peasants who take an active interest in political matters support the Bolsheviks, and the same is true of the Social Revolutionaries of the left. This opinion is confirmed by the fact that those who are, it is alleged, in an infinitesimal minority, though reproached with errors, deeds of violence, breaches of principle and so on, have retained power for a considerably longer period than that for which the provisional governments of the two opening phases of the revolution held sway. Moreover, this has taken place under conditions of almost unprecedented difficulty, throughout the terrible ordeal of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, and in face of the ever-present menace of famine. The anti-Bolsheviks may say what they please, but the mere use of force cannot account for the durability of the soviet government - which has lasted far longer than is usual in time of revolution. No minority whose power rested only upon force could continue in such circumstances and for so long a time to sit on bayonets.

Through dictatorship to democracy

The persistence of soviet rule which, the confident prophets assured us, could not possibly last more than a few

Who would not laugh at a military commander so unwise as to send artillery and shells as a gift to the hostile army? Yet the Bolsheviks are supposed to have committed a deadly sin in that they refused to arm and equip the reactionary minorities for the struggle against the revolution

weeks, enables us to infer with certainty that this government is supported by the broad masses of the Russian people. The Bolsheviks, and the Left Social Revolutionaries who cooperate with them, constitute the stalwart framework of the Russian revolutionary army.

Through their readiness for action, through their capacity, they inspire confidence in the masses and rally the masses to their support. The need for dictatorship shows us, indeed, that the number and importance of the opponents of the soviet government must by no means be underestimated. Power must be used to repress power. Our hope is that the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry will maintain itself long enough to abolish itself when it has fulfilled its function and reached its goal. For whereas during the two opening periods of the revolution the path of the governments led from the fine ideal of democracy to the harsh and cruel reality of dictatorship, the path of soviet rule will lead from the harsh and cruel reality of the dictatorship to the beautiful and realised dream of democracy.

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THE FUSION of the Workers International League and the Revolutionary Socialist League in March 1944, which established the Revolutionary Communist Party as the British section of the Fourth International, marked an important advance for the Trotskyist movement in Britain.

It also considerably strengthened the meagre factional forces which Gerry Healy had been able to muster against Jock Haston, Ted Grant and the other former WIL leaders who headed the new party. To Healy's own handful of followers was now added the more substantial numbers of the 'Trotskyist Opposition' from the RSL, providing him with a 'minority' of some 50 members.¹ What Healy initially lacked, however, was a single distinct policy around which to conduct a struggle against the Haston-Grant leadership.

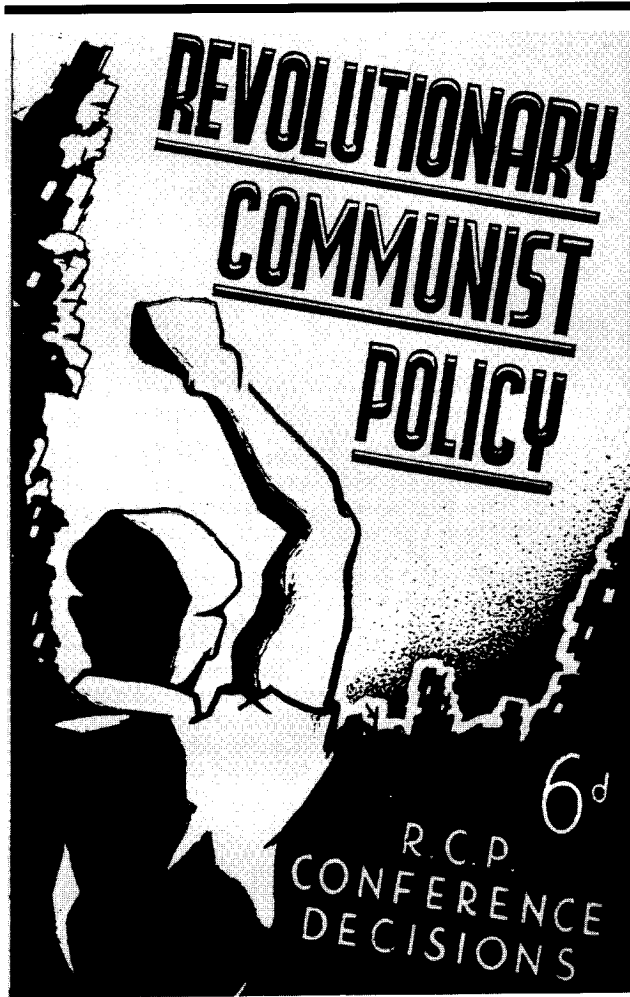
This leadership was not without its political weaknesses. The decision to launch as a 'party' an organisation with less than 500 members, in the belief that it was powerful enough to make an independent bid for the political allegiance of the mass of the working class, indicated that their wartime successes had encouraged illusions among the Trotskyists concerning the real extent of their influence in the labour movement. The wave of radicalisation which swept the working class during 1944-45 in fact poured into the traditional political channel of the Labour Party, leading to the massive Labour victory in the 1945 general election. Although the RCP campaigned vigorously during the election under the slogan 'Labour to power on a socialist programme', the failure to build a revolutionary tendency within the Labour Party in this crucial period - it has been persuasively argued - let slip an opportunity for Trotskyism to win a genuine mass base.²

Gerry Healy, it must be emphasised, had raised no objections at all to the tactics of the party leadership on this question. At the RCP's founding conference, he and his supporters had endorsed the independent party perspective and were reportedly 'vociferous' in rejecting the view that, in order to facilitate entry work, the fused organisation should adopt the more modest title of 'league'.³ When the Healy minority did issue a policy document in opposition to the RCP leadership, in August 1944, this advocated a turn not to the Labour Party but to the ILP, which was said to offer 'the best opportunities for fraction work at the present time'.⁴ Only on the very eve of the 1945 general election did Healy discover that the logic of the 'Labour to power' agitation required entry into the Labour Party itself⁵ - by which point the British Trotskyists had effectively missed the boat.

The force of Healy's argument was in any case weakened by his dishonesty in trying to pin responsibility for

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy

The third part of an extended obituary in which Bob Pitt assesses the life of the former WRP leader



A 1945 RCP pamphlet

the RCP's political course on the party leadership, studiously ignoring his own earlier support for open work. 'It is the fatal failing of Comrade Healy,' the Political Bureau observed wearily, 'that he never likes to admit that he has been wrong; that he has changed his position.'⁶ Healy's case was further undermined by his refusal to abandon the call for work in the ILP, which allowed his tactical line to be dismissed as an attempt to 'ride two horses at one time'.⁷ But the major defect in Healy's proposal for Labour Party entry was undoubtedly its reliance on the erroneous political and economic perspectives of the international leadership - in particular of the Socialist Workers Party (USA), on whose behalf the Healy group acted as an undeclared faction against the RCP leaders.⁸

The perspectives Healy was given by the SWP consisted essentially of a dogmatic adherence to Trotsky's pre-war prognoses, which had anticipated neither the long-term viability of bourgeois democracy nor capitalism's ability to achieve a sustained economic recovery after the war. Whereas the RCP leadership, following the example of the Goldman-Morrow opposition in the SWP, grappled with the problem of re-evaluating the Fourth International's perspectives in the light of actual developments, Healy merely parroted the 'orthodox' formulae of SWP leader James P. Cannon⁹ - and, later, of the Paris-based International Secretariat of the Fourth International, headed by Michel Pablo. Marxism, Healy informed the 1945 RCP conference, was a 'precision instrument' that enabled 'exact prognoses' to be made,¹⁰ from which standpoint no re-evaluation was of course necessary.

Thus Healy argued for entry on the grounds that in 1945 the historical conditions for reformism no longer existed, and that this would provoke major conflicts within the Labour Party. The loss of Britain's industrial and financial hegemony, he wrote, made it impossible to grant 'the slightest concessions to the working class', and had thereby 'stripped the economic base from the bourgeois democratic regime'. Healy claimed that millions of workers, 'whose elementary problems are insoluble under capitalism', were moving towards political action. In response, the ruling class was already preparing 'extra-parliamentary mea-

asures' and would be compelled to turn towards fascism.¹¹ A year later, Healy was predicting economic catastrophe, insisting that British capitalism was 'on the edge of an abyss'.¹² Despite his future somersaults on the Labour Party question, the main threads of this analysis - impending economic collapse, the erosion of parliamentary democracy, a drive towards right-wing dictatorship, and imminent revolutionary struggles - were to remain constant themes in Healy's political pronouncements throughout his subsequent career.¹³

The RCP leadership made a much more sober assessment of the situation. Beginning with an understanding of the fact that capitalism was establishing itself in post-war Western Europe on the basis of bourgeois democracy rather than open dictatorship, Haston and Grant went on to reject the SWP/International

Secretariat's economic perspective of 'stagnation and slump', recognising instead the reality of a developing 'revival and boom'. This economic upturn, the RCP pointed out in 1947, had combined with the reforms implemented by the Labour government to generate substantial working class support for social democracy. No organised left wing was discernible in the Labour Party, still less a centrist current moving towards revolutionary politics; therefore Healy's entry policy - so the RCP leaders argued - was inapplicable.¹⁴ They accused Healy of producing his tactical line with no regard for empirical evidence concerning the state of the workers' movement or the relationship of political forces. Yet it was precisely in the field of tactics that 'empirical adaptation' was necessary. 'When Comrade Healy learns this,' the Political Bureau advised, 'he will raise his stature as a Marxist.'¹⁵

Healy 'tried to evade this challenge on the concrete details of his political analysis by retreating into a specious debate on philosophy (a trick which he would resort to on many subsequent occasions). Turning the factional struggle against Haston and Grant into a caricature of Trotsky's 1939 polemic against Shachtman and Burnham, Healy seized on the phrase 'empirical adaptation' to accuse the RCP leaders of renouncing Marxism in favour of empiricism.¹⁶ Bill Hunter, too, was found guilty of an epistemological deviation when he drew on his many years' experience in the ILP to refute the minority's claim that

this represented a fruitful area of work - only to find himself condemned by Healy for trying to impress us with his knowledge of "the facts" . . .!¹⁷ The dispute over Labour Party entry, Healy announced in January 1946, had become 'transformed into a discussion on the Marxist method'. Consequently the differences between the majority and minority have considerably deepened . . .¹⁸

In contrast to the later situation in Healy's 'own' organisation, however, the RCP's intellectuals did not see their role as providing a veneer of 'Marxist' sophistication for Healy's errors. On the contrary, former RSL leader Denzil Harber in particular took a distinct delight in demolishing Healy's theoretical pretensions. At the 1945 RCP conference, when Healy made his ludicrous assertion that Marxism offered a guarantee of precise predictions, Harber burst into derisive laughter, justifying this by citing Plekhanov's dictum that, in the face of absurdity, laughter was the only serious response! And after Harber had demonstrated that there was an important empirical component to Marxism, backing up his argument with a lengthy quotation from 'The German Ideology' in which this point was underlined by Marx and Engels themselves, nothing more was heard from Healy on the subject of the RCP leaders' alleged empiricism.¹⁹

Healy's contribution to philosophy in 1945-46 did have the merit, in comparison with his later excursions in this field, of at least being comprehensible, but it was no less bogus. What determined Healy's political line was not Marxist methodology, but blind obedience to instructions from the international leadership. This involved Healy in some farcical political manoeuvring, notably over the issue of the Red Army and Eastern Europe. At a Central Committee meeting in February 1946, Healy voted for an RCP resolution demanding the Red Army's withdrawal. Two months later, pursuing what he took to be the line of the IS, he reversed this position and began a fierce campaign against the 'revisionist' policy of the RCP leaders. Unfortunately for Healy, in June the International Executive Committee of the FI came out in favour of withdrawal. Confronted by the Political Bureau with a letter from the IEC announcing the new line, according to Ted Grant's account, Healy looked momentarily stunned - then 'he threw out his arms, and he looked at us, and said, "Well, so we got agreement"'.²⁰

Healy's mindless factionalising blighted political debate within the RCP, preventing a serious examination of the party's political problems and spreading demoralisation among the membership. It also produced widespread disgust at Healy's dishonest methods, with the result that he failed to gain the support of more than a quarter of the RCP's members (reduced to little over 300 by 1947). The Healy group - now a formally declared fac-

tion - therefore decided to request that the IEC divide the RCP and allow the minority to enter the Labour Party.²¹ They attempted to justify this by hysterical - and almost entirely baseless - denunciations of the regime in the RCP, charging Haston and Grant with creating 'an atmosphere of crisis and ideological terror in the ranks' and hounding 'worker critics with expulsions and threats'.²² Despite the RCP's protest against 'a disgraceful manoeuvre to get rid of the democratically elected leadership of a section of the Fourth International', in September 1947 the IEC acceded to the minority's request, and the next month a special conference of the RCP ratified the International's decision to split the party.²³

In 1943, it will be recalled, Gerry Healy had formed an opposition tendency in the WIL under the banner of uniting the forces of British Trotskyism within the Fourth International.²⁴ Now, four years later, after waging a bitter factional struggle against the national leadership, this proponent of Trotskyist unity had succeeded in breaking up the Fourth International's British section. To Healy, and to his latter-day apologists, this 'achievement' counted as a victory for internationalism. In reality, it served only to demonstrate the destructive consequences of his unprincipled politics.

To be continued

NOTES

- Former TO member Bert Atkinson, interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, November 4, 1977. Transcript courtesy of Socialist Platform.
- S. Bornstein and A. Richardson: 'War and the International', Socialist Platform, 1986, esp. pp.142-3.
- RCP Political Bureau statement, July 20, 1945.
- RCP internal bulletin, August 9, 1944. The document appeared over the names of Dave Finch and Bob Shaw.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., pp.187-8.
- RCP Political Bureau statement, July 20, 1945.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.188.
- Ibid., p.197.
- Cannon took this as proof that Healy had broken with 'sectarian nationalism' and become 'a real internationalist': 'The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century"', Pathfinder, 1977, p.182.
- J. Callaghan: 'British Trotskyism', Blackwell, 1984, p.82.
- RCP internal bulletin, June 30, 1945.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.189.
- The origin of Healy's politics in the immediate post-war programme of the Fourth International no doubt explains why Ernest Mandel and his followers prefer to explain 'Healyism' as the result of an early training in 'Third Period' Stalinism. Cf. Alan Thornett's obituary of Healy, *Socialist Outlook*, No. 21, February 1990.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., pp.174-7, 189-91.
- RCP Political Bureau statement, July 20, 1945.
- Callaghan, op. cit., p.35.
- RCP internal bulletin, November 27, 1945.
- RCP internal bulletin, March 1946.
- Ibid.
- M. Upham, PhD thesis, Hull University, 1980, pp.391, 404; Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., pp.197-8.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.195.
- Callaghan, op. cit., p.36, where the quotation is wrongly attributed to the IS. The minority's only legitimate complaints were that they had no members on the Political Bureau and that their representation on the Central Committee was not proportionate to their share of the party membership. Yet the RCP leaders were denounced for imposing 'a regime which systematically violates the elementary principles of democracy in the service of a sectarian political line which departs more and more from the traditional line of orthodox Trotskyism': RCP internal bulletin, July 1947. In the light of Healy's later organisational practices, this description appears laughable.
- Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., pp.195-6.
- See Workers News, No.23, March-April 1990.

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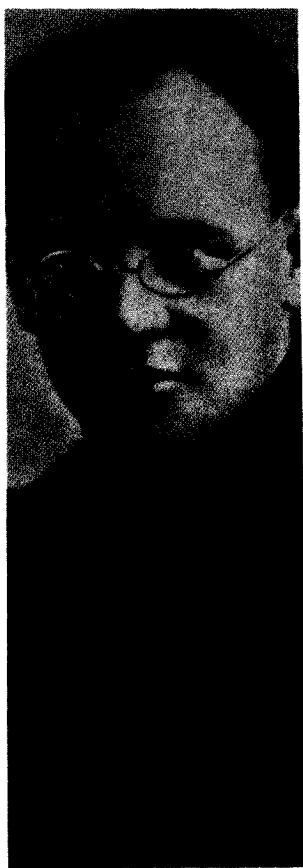
The turmoil of revolution in Petrograd

CHRISTOPHER HAMP-TON's adaptation of Isaac Babel's second and last play avoids using it as a vehicle to make clever points about the present (although the programme tries to). Instead, this excellently staged production by Roger Michell remains faithful to the spirit of the original.

Written in 1933, *Marya*, like much of Babel's work, deals with the collision of the old with the new in revolutionary Russia. By then, however, the creative upsurge of Soviet literature and art had already been strangled, and Babel had been largely forced into silence. He wrote to his family: 'As, of course, it does not fit in with the "general Party line", it can expect rough going.' He wasn't wrong, and after going into rehearsal, the play's performance was banned.

The difficulties facing writers in this period account in part for the play's weaknesses. Unable to deal with contemporary developments, Babel was forced to revert to the immediate post-revolutionary period to find his subject matter, and to employ a final scene whose forced 'optimism' is at odds with the rest of the play. But Babel's unrivalled talent as a writer of sharply etched, economical short stories does not lend itself easily to the dramatic form.

Set in Petrograd in 1920, amid the turmoil of war communism, *Marya* depicts a series of characters or 'types' who adapt to, take advantage of, or are broken by the new conditions. The pivot of the play is the formerly well-to-do residence of retired general



Isaac Babel

Mukovnin. Oblivious to his surroundings, the general buries himself in writing military history, and sees the Bolsheviks as finishing the work of Ivan I in uniting Russia. Ludmila, his daughter, keeps hunger at bay by noctur-

Marya by Isaac Babel
Old Vic Theatre, London SE1

nal liaisons with men like Dymshitz, a Jewish black marketeer, until she disappears into the hands of the Cheka. The ascetic Golitsyn mournfully plays the cello and prays before an icon.

Intersecting their lives are groups of dissolute ex-officers, disabled peasant soldiers and other flotsam and jetsam. The 'central character', Mukovnin's other daughter, *Marya*, never appears on stage. She is serving at the front with the Red Army, and living with Akim, a divisional commander and an ex-blacksmith. Representing the future, the off-stage *Marya* is a constant counterpoint to the relics of the old society she has left behind.

Except for the last scene, in which a worker's family takes over the Mukovnin apartment, *Marya* avoids sentimentality and romanticism. It was this which caused it to fall foul of Stalin's censors.

In a play which has little room for character acting, all the cast give creditable performances, especially Julie Legrand as Ludmila. Stealing the show, however, are the highly imaginative scene-shifting interludes. Jets of steam, hammering, a summary execution, looting and the movement backwards and forwards of homeless people, possessions piled high on prams, creates a brilliant atmosphere of upheaval and change.



Soviet miners on strike, summer 1989

Banning strikes, Soviet-style

The Law Will Become the Arbitrator
by Leonid Sobolev
Novosti Press 30p

Review by Alastair Wrightson

PART OF the recent flood of Russian publications, Sobolev's pamphlet is an attempt to justify the law banning strikes which was passed by the Supreme Soviet in October 1989.

The author makes no attempt to hide the aim of the anti-strike legislation - to smooth the way for the transition to a 'market economy'. The bureaucracy is attempting to bind and gag the independent movement of the working class, to make investment more attractive to foreign capitalists, to protect the growing private sector and to maintain its own privileged position.

Sobolev admits that in the past, strikers' grievances were not groundless, but like a good Gorbachevite, he argues that political and economic reform have created entirely new conditions. He puts strikes on a par with 'nationalist and patriotic movements', and condemns 'rallies and other public gatherings, when millions of people, who have no connection with the new approach to property [!], or who completely disregard new economic interests [!], go out into the street'. These are all 'negative developments' which promote 'group interests' and infringe the rights of society and of the individual. Now, where have we heard that one before? Sobolev's remedy is to call for 'the consolidation of the au-

thoritarian aspect of state power'.

Like many other Soviet hacks, Sobolev attempts to justify the extension of private ownership today by referring to the New Economic Policy of the 1920s. He ignores the conditions of economic breakdown and famine caused by civil war which forced the Bolsheviks to adopt NEP as a temporary retreat. The current economic crisis in the USSR has nothing to do with such conditions - it is entirely the result of bureaucratic mismanagement.

Sobolev's account of the debate on and amendments put to the draft law does not reveal his own position, but it seems to be not too far from those of deputy Svetlana Savitskaya, who called for police and troops to be used against strikers. Indeed, he defines a strike as 'a manifestation of violence whose negative effect must be reduced to

the minimum by strict judicial regulations'.

Among the most important parts of the law on strikes are:

- Clause 8, which demands the disbanding of strike committees;
- Clause 9, which gives the Supreme Soviet the right to impose a two-month 'cooling-off' period on disputes;
- Clause 11, banning strikes in a wide range of industries, public bodies, transport and state installations;
- Clause 12, a catch-all which outlaws strikes 'motivated by demands to overthrow or change the state and social systems of the Soviet Union', and sets out provisions for strikers to be forced to resume work;
- Clause 13, allowing wages to be paid to strikebreakers.

The only virtue of this pamphlet is that it shows how frightened the bureaucracy is of the emerging workers' movement in the USSR.

More on Healy's early years

Dear Comrades,

ALLOW ME to congratulate you on the very close historical analysis of the formative period in the political life of Healy made in your journal by Bob Pitt. There are, however, a few points that could bear a little elaboration.

The story (one among many) Healy put out about being a Comintern courier to Nazi Germany (repeated in the account of Mr David North in the *Bulletin*, January 19) has obviously been purloined from Haston (cf. 'Against the Stream', p.130), if it does not go back to Valtin. This is not, incidentally, the only assault upon historical truth to be found in Mr North's recital. To lend credence to his present ludicrous posture as leader of a Fourth International he is also obliged to pretend that it was Trotsky, not Cannon, who wrote the resolution condemning the WIL at the founding conference of the World Party. Even more foolish is his description of Bert Atkinson as an 'old Hastonite'. From quite early on Bert opposed Haston,

but from an entirely different direction from Healy, as anyone who knew either him or the internal literature of the RCP can well affirm. A nodding acquaintance with the internal literature of the WIL and the RSL would also greet with hysterical laughter North's remark that 'the internal life of the WIL was no less factional than that of the official section'. Has North ever tried to make piles of the two sets of internal factional bulletins?

The point that Comrade Pitt correctly makes that the WIL opposed the 1938 unification of the British Trotskyist groups as 'a violation of democratic centralism' needs some expansion in view of its misrepresentation by North (and others). In this scenario the WIL is generally represented as defending the claims of national democratic centralism against the organisational and political authority of the Fourth International.

But ever since entry into centrist and reformist organisations had been first posed in Britain (in 1933) Trotsky

and the International Secretariat had always supported revolutionary unity on the basis of total entry - no half in, half out groups that would allow the bureaucracies of these parties to identify the entrists as 'agents' of the open groups. This stand had been reaffirmed in the famous 'Geneva' resolution of 1936, and in all the correspondence of the International Secretariat with the British groups afterwards, where it invariably defended the Harber group's refusal to enter into any sort of organisational unity with the Marxist Group and the (original) RSL, which were open organisations. (The policy of revolutionary unity on the basis of Labour Party membership was, incidentally, also Lenin's attitude at the formation of the CPGB.) This policy had never been rescinded by the IS.

In patching together precisely this sort of half open, half entry set-up, it was Cannon and Shachtman, not the WIL, who were violating international democratic centralism, a mistake Sherry Mangan was later to repeat with the

formation of the RCP in 1944, with equally destructive results. International leaders are just as capable of violating democratic centralism as national ones, as the case of Mr North himself shows all too clearly.

I also feel that Comrade Pitt puts too much weight upon Healy's support for entry as evidence for his lack of Third Period politics. Hysterical catastrophism and a belief in capitalism's imminent collapse by no means preclude support for entryist activity, as Healy was himself to demonstrate from 1945 onwards. Nor is this contradicted by Healy's equivocation over the military policy; the German Communist Party during Hitler's rise to power managed to combine Third Period politics with concessions to nationalism, in the shape of the 'National Bolshevik' propaganda. As Trotsky never ceased to remind us, opportunism and sectarianism are not dialectical opposites, but simply two sides of the same coin. Fraternally,
Al Richardson

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Down with Stalinism! Trotskyism lives!

THE COLLAPSE of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe over the last seven months heralds further explosive upheavals in the Soviet Union and China.

The Stalinist bureaucrats – who thought they could cheat history, conceal their bloody crimes against generations of workers and maintain their bloated existence – have come crashing down. Not a shred of popular support came to the assistance of Honecker, Ceausescu, Zhivkov, Jaruzelski and their henchmen. The Yugoslavian federation stands on the brink of disintegration as rival Stalinist factions whip up nationalism and inter-ethnic confrontations. The Chinese bureaucracy awaits the first anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in the certain knowledge that it is ultimately doomed and that a new upsurge of mass discontent is inevitable.

At the root of this unprecedented collapse is the economic stagnation gripping all the bureaucratic workers' states. Far from having built 'socialism', the so-called 'Communist' parties have presided over low levels of productivity, generalised shortages, chaotic distribution, the destruction of the environment and endemic corruption. Every attempt by workers to assert their own interests independent of the bureaucracy has been met by savage repression: East Berlin in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1971 and 1981.

The events of 1989 have redrawn the political map not only of Europe but of the entire world. Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* are not revolutionary but counter-revolutionary, and have prepared the ground for the restoration of capitalism. They are not the negation of Stalinism – they are its outcome. Gorbachev represents that element in the bureaucracy which drew the conclusion from the gathering economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s that it was necessary, in order to stabilise its position, to make much wider-ranging concessions to imperialism.

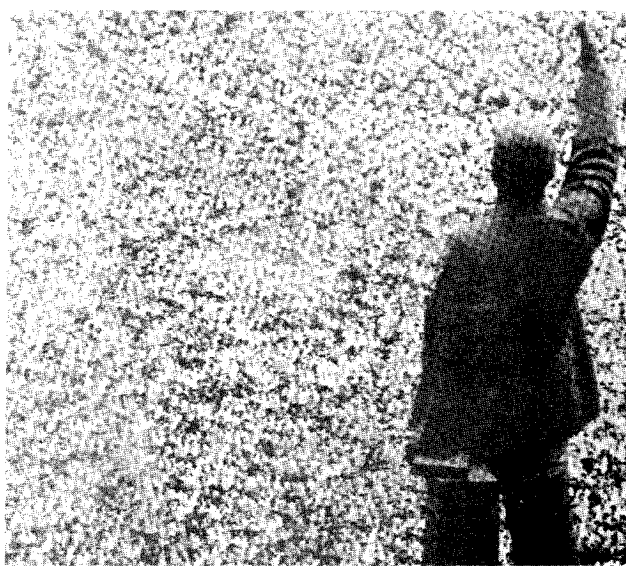
In an attempt to stimulate the domestic market, Gorbachev began by offering the imperialists substantial weapons reductions and easing the restrictions on private ownership in the USSR in

Joint May Day statement by the Workers International League (Britain) and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (Belgium and West Germany)

return for foreign investment and improved trading relations with the capitalist world. Far from regenerating workers' democracy in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev has engaged in a balancing act, the aim of which is to prevent the emergence of a workers' movement which fights for the destruction of the bureaucracy. Intellectuals are offered the concession of *glasnost* ('openness') – relaxation of censorship, cultural exchanges with the West, greater freedom in the arts and press, etc; private traders have been encouraged and the 'black market' legalised; private farming has been boosted by the decision to allow families to lease land and transfer it to future generations.

The eruption of mass demonstrations in East Germany in October 1989, which rapidly spread to Czechoslovakia and the rest of Eastern Europe, faced the Soviet bureaucracy with two stark alternatives to prevent working class political revolution: either military intervention or channelling the popular movement in the direction of capitalist restoration. For the Soviet bureaucracy, the fall of the Stalinist governments of Eastern Europe was preferable to a military crackdown which would have impeded its relations with the West. In return, the imperialist governments all spoke of the necessity of an orderly and peaceful transition to 'democracy' and have emphasised their support for Gorbachev's 'reform' programme in the USSR.

With the defeat of the Trotskyist Left Opposition from the 1920s onwards, Stalinism consolidated the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy in the USSR as a parasitic growth on the nationalised property relations. At the end of the Second World War, the developing revolutionary



September 1989: 100,000 demonstrators rally in Baku, Azerbaijan

movement in Europe and in the colonial countries was suppressed in a division of labour between imperialism and Stalinism. In return for its betrayal of the revolutionary opportunities in France, Italy and Greece, imperialism conceded Eastern Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence. Together with the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, these events gave Stalinism a new lease of life. But while Stalinism extended the geographical base of its rule, built up its military forces and successfully suppressed workers' uprisings, the productivity of labour in the 'Communist' states fell ever further behind that of capitalist countries.

The Stalinist boast of having built socialism within the boundaries of each of these separate countries is exposed as a lie. Marxism has always understood socialism as standing, from the outset, at a higher level of economic development than the most advanced capitalism. When Soviet miners strike to demand, among other things, soap, cocoa, condensed milk and a flat of their own in ten years time, it is the clearest indication that socialism has not been achieved!

Having drawn its material privileges for so long from nationalised property, Stalinism is rapidly moving to complete the counter-revolution and restore capitalism. Gorbachev has overseen the creation throughout Eastern Europe of caretaker governments which are putting the gains of the working class up for auction.

But while Eastern Europe is sold off to bankers and businessmen, Gorbachev continues to apply the old methods of great Russian chauvinism against the

movements. Only the overthrow of Stalinism by the working class can accomplish this.

The only force standing in the way of Gorbachev's dream of an orderly transition to a market economy is the working class. The Supreme Soviet gave its answer in October 1989 to the emerging workers' movement when, in response to widespread miners' strikes during the summer, it imposed legal restrictions on industrial action, including compulsory arbitration. In Tiananmen Square, the government of Li Peng smashed the democracy movement at the point when Chinese workers were coming forward with their own class demands.

For millions of working women, the return of capitalism threatens all the partial gains they have made – childcare, contraception, abortion, the right to work and higher education. Stalinism has manifestly failed to complete the emancipation of women; capitalism would drag it back decades.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is poised to split three ways into factions headed by Gorbachev, Ligachev and Yeltsin. None of them represent the interests of the Soviet working class. To the workers of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, we say:

- Oppose capitalist restoration!
- Build workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets)!
- Overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracies!
- Long live workers' democracy!

Only Trotskyism is capable of arming the masses with the necessary programme to accomplish these tasks through the building of revolutionary workers' parties. This in turn poses the rebuilding of a world party of socialist revolution – the Fourth International. 'Workers of the world unite!' must not remain a holiday phrase which is ignored for the rest of the year.

Foreign policy is always a continuation of domestic policy. Gorbachev's pursuit of so-called 'regional settlements' in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Central America and southern Africa, and the ever-greater co-operation with US imperialism at successive summit meetings, has been at the expense of the struggles of oppressed peoples. In Cambodia, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops has given a fresh impetus to the guerrilla coalition led by the bloody Khmer Rouge, which is

backed by both imperialism and China. In Afghanistan, Gorbachev has abandoned his erstwhile ally Najibullah to the zealots and fundamentalists of the Mujahedin. The fall of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was connived at by Moscow, which withdrew oil and weapons supplies at critical points, and by the Nicaraguan Communist Party, which joined the right-wing UNO coalition led by Violeta Chamorro. Three decades of struggle by the workers and peasants of Namibia has been betrayed by a neo-colonial solution which leaves the country's industry, mineral resources and chief port in the hands of South African finance capital. In South Africa itself, Gorbachev, through the medium of the South African Communist Party and the ANC, has done everything to encourage a negotiated settlement which would ensure that the economic base of apartheid remains, covered by a thin coating of democracy. The frantic pace of this treachery should not fool anyone into thinking that these regional settlements represent a fundamental departure from previous Soviet policy. They are the consequence of the entire policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism.

For those Communist Parties in Europe which have until now retained a mass base – particularly in Italy, France, Spain and Greece – the present crisis in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union can only serve to accelerate their process of disintegration. Desperate to avoid extinction, they are all banging the nationalist drum in an attempt to outbid the growth of the extreme right. Not only has the bankruptcy of Stalinism breathed new life into the social-democratic parties – all busily engaged in dumping even minimum reform programmes – it has assisted the development of fascist and ultra-nationalist parties. Millions of rank-and-file Communist and social-democratic workers face the new situation in Europe without any leadership capable of defending their rights, still less of fighting for the overthrow of capitalism.

A new, revolutionary internationalist leadership must be constructed. Trotsky's Fourth International must be rebuilt, purged of opportunism. It is to this task that we rededicate ourselves.

**WIL (Britain)
LTT (Belgium/West Germany)**

May 1, 1990

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