



UNITE AND FIGHT ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THE TORIES are gearing up for another onslaught on Britain's five and a half million public-sector workers. As many as 100,000 healthworkers and 90,000 local government workers are set to lose their jobs, along with thousands more in the Post Office, British Rail and the civil service. In all, half a million jobs are under threat in the next 12 months.

Those who remain in work will also suffer. Demands for more flexible working practices and increased productivity are to be reinforced by a battery of measures, including the break-up of collective bargaining, market testing, compulsory tendering, individual contracts and performance review. Together with the introduction of fixed-term and part-time contracts, which are designed to undermine trade union organisation and even the right of individual employees to industrial tribunals, this amounts to the most concerted assault waged by a government on the public-sector workforce in recent history.

Not content with this, cabinet and Treasury officials are now discussing the extension of the 1.5 per cent ceiling on wage increases for the public sector into 1994 and 1995.

At the same time, one of the most graphic examples of union-busting is taking place at the Timex electronics factory in Dundee, where 340 workers are mounting a courageous fight-back after being sacked for taking strike action in January against 170 redundancies and a wage freeze. On March 22, there were scenes resembling those at Grunwick's in the late Seventies as a 400-strong mass picket attempted to stop busloads of scabs from entering the plant.

The Tories are pulling out all the stops in an attempt to rescue British capitalism from the grip of world-wide recession. Faced with such a situation, the only form of defence is to fight back.

To begin with, it is necessary to rebuild effective trade unionism, without which the level of wages and working conditions now under threat could not have been established in the first place, and won't be defended in the future. To establish a fighting unity of all public-sector workers under attack means taking up the struggle against the

cowardly trade union and Labour Party leaders.

The greatest opportunity for mass action existed last October, when 250,000 people marched through the streets of London behind the miners. But NUM president Arthur Scargill failed to call for generalised strike action and instead told miners and their supporters to put their confidence in the TUC's hearts and minds campaign. The outcome is that not one of the pits on Heseltine's closure list is guaranteed a long-term future.

In December, the RMT leadership set aside the decision of Tube workers to take strike action. This year, busworkers' leaders have undermined their own members' struggle against 20 per cent wage cuts, longer hours and job losses in the run-up to the privatisation of London Buses; and in Sheffield, the Labour council, with the collaboration of the local NALGO branch leadership, has imposed a 3.25 per cent wage cut. More recently, the NALGO leadership's pathetically organised day of action in local government resulted in only three branches in the entire country coming out on strike.

The greatest obstacle that workers have to overcome is this leadership. Though the Tories have experienced one crisis after another under the impact of the recession, they have been allowed to buy time to overcome the divisions in their ranks. They survive in government courtesy of the TUC and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The years of defeat since the 1984-85 miners' strike have left their mark. According to the EC's statistics office, days lost due to strike action in Britain fell from 1,278 per 1,000 employees in 1984 to just 34 per 1,000 in 1991. The number of workplace shop stewards has fallen substantially in recent years. This



Miners: united action is the way forward

means that the fight to rejuvenate the trade unions starts from a low point.

The Tories are attempting to establish a deregulated, low-wage, predominantly low-tech economy. One of the factors undermining trade unionism has been the push to establish ever-growing areas of part-time employment. Hardest hit by this trend are women workers, 44.3 per cent of whom are in part-time jobs, as against 8.6 per cent of male workers. Part-time workers now comprise 25.6 per cent of the total workforce, compared with 18.2 per cent 20 years ago. The trade union leaders have failed to organise most of these workers, concentrating instead on credit cards and other gimmicks. This must be reversed by a vigorous recruitment drive.

Given the depth of the recession and the kind of 'leadership' that has been on offer, it is not surprising that groups of workers who previously stood at the forefront of industrial militancy have been reluctant to take strike action. But since the end of last year, in sheer desperation at the scale of the Tory attacks, public-sector workers have

shown a renewed willingness to take up a fight. Many actions have either been stifled or channelled into limited protests.

The large turn-out and the resounding 'yes' vote in the RMT ballot opens the way for joint action by railworkers and miners on April 2. This is the first significant co-ordinated stand taken by industrial workers since 1989. At the same time, pressure for industrial action is building up in the Fire Brigades Union. But it is only a beginning. Left at the level of a single day, or even a series of one-day strikes, it is of course totally inadequate.

The situation facing miners, transport workers, local government and health workers, firefighters, postal workers, teachers and civil servants poses the need for united strike action across the public sector. The first initiative in this direction was the founding conference of the Public Sector Alliance in Stoke-on-Trent on March 6. While we welcome the creation of the PSA, the conference was little more than a Militant rally and offered few concrete steps forward. If the PSA is to be

anything more than a series of occasional meetings, then it must be built at local, regional and national level, and be composed of delegates who are fully accountable to the rank and file. In this way, workers can co-ordinate their activities and gain the confidence to mount sustained industrial action, while exerting greater pressure on the trade union leaders to carry out a serious campaign.

The PSA must set itself two immediate tasks – defending jobs and breaking the 1.5 per cent pay limit. This in turn means building rank-and-file opposition groups in each union to mobilise the members in a struggle to replace the existing bureaucrats with new leaders who will fight. Allied to a campaign for strike action throughout the public sector, the slogan of a 24-hour general strike is an important way of proposing united action to all workers, in both the public and private sectors. But the 24-hour general strike is not a cure-all or an end in itself as Militant suggests. It is a step along the road to wider action aimed at bringing down the Tories.



London busworkers march through central London on January 27 against the new contracts

BUSWORKERS held two one-day strikes on March 10 and 17 against the imposition of new working conditions designed to prepare the ten subsidiaries of London Buses for privatisation next year. The package comes into force on April 1, the day that the current system of block grants is withdrawn and new route contracts determined by 'market forces' start. It includes wage cuts of up to 20 per cent, longer hours and reduced pension rights.

Though the companies were clearly intransigent, the T&GWU leaders encouraged busworkers to put their faith in negotiations, parliamentary com-

mittees and legal procedures, and spread confusion by recommending the signing of the 'first option' at the start of February.

When, despite all this, busworkers voted 2:1 in favour of strike action, the T&G refused to call off the two subsidiaries which voted against on the grounds that they were separate companies. The strikes led to about 80 per cent of London's buses being off the road, and one garage in west London staged a half-day walk-out on March 18 in support of a victimised worker – against the advice of union officials.

Militant nationalism

READERS of Workers News will recall that in December of last year we detected a shift in Militant's traditional opposition to import controls. It seems that we have touched a raw nerve down at Hepscoot Road. At the Public Sector Alliance conference on March 6, a motion defending the basic socialist position on import controls was voted down by Militant supporters and singled out for attack in a Militant leaflet circulated among the delegates.

Militant justified its reactionary stance by arguing that, between the lines, the motion was referring to campaigns involving its supporters in Bristol and Bootle. Although it normally opposed import controls, environmental hazards and child labour made it possible to support such community campaigns, and link them to the defence of miners' jobs in Britain.

This position doesn't hold water. Fighting against the health hazards created by coal dust is one thing; making an economic nationalist case for defending 'British coal' and 'British industry' is quite another. The explanation is clear: Militant doesn't want to challenge the line of the NUM leadership. And the issue

of child labour is a not-very-red herring. Logically, this should mean Militant calling for a ban on imports from most of the 'third world', not to mention European countries like Portugal. In any case, our information is that child labour is not used in Colombian coal mining.

Underlining the fact that this latest turn is not an aberration, Militant supporters opposed a similar motion within the Broad Left in Liverpool on March 9, moving an amendment calling for a ban on coal imports to Bootle, both on (justified) environmental grounds and because Parkside pit faces closure. According to one leading Militant supporter, the problems of British industry stemmed from a failure by British bosses to invest. Presumably socialists should campaign for higher investment to keep British capitalism competitive and for selective import controls to be applied where jobs are at stake – in other words, for the Labour left's Alternative Economic Strategy of the 1970s, which Militant once vehemently opposed.

Anyone who believes that the launch of Militant as a public organisation in England and Wales means a left turn has some hard thinking to do.

Europe-wide blitz on jobs

ONE OF the first effects of the single market has been a spate of factory closures and cut-backs as multinationals rationalise their European operations. Now that the remaining tariff barriers are down, some companies are finding that it makes more sense to concentrate production in one country, while others are shifting particular product lines to different plants. Behind this lies the relentless search for higher productivity and cheaper labour costs.

Although British manufacturing in general is 20-30 per cent less productive per labour hour than that of Germany and France, there are a number of reasons why companies are still prepared to invest here. Under British employment law, the bosses have fewer obligations than in many other EC countries and workers' rights are severely restricted. The 'social costs' of production –

those in addition to wages, such as employer national insurance contributions – are considerably less. Within the EC, only Portugal, Greece, Spain and Ireland have lower overall labour costs than Britain, where an outlay of £100 is equivalent to £180 in Germany.

In addition, the experience of foreign-owned companies setting up in Britain, especially where they are able to build on green field sites, is that productivity comparable to Germany and France can be achieved. While this is in part due to the introduction of more modern technology, the role of the trade union leaders in abandoning the hard-won rights of generations of workers is a crucial factor.

The decision by the US-owned Hoover in January to close its factory in Dijon, France, with the loss of 600 jobs and transfer production of vacuum cleaners to Cambuslang,

By Andrew Mills

Glasgow, was only made after the British unions agreed a deal which undercuts French wages and welfare costs by 37 per cent.

Hoover conducted separate talks with British and French unions to find out which would offer the greatest concessions. The AEEU and MSF negotiators caved in after it was revealed that the company had been offered the equivalent of £8 million in subsidies to develop the Dijon plant. In return for the creation of 400 jobs at Cambuslang, they agreed to wage cuts, a ban on strikes, a reduction in union influence and sub-contracting. Most of the 975 workers already employed at Cambuslang will have their wages frozen for a year, though the introduction of flexible working will mean that

some will lose £10 and those on the night shift up to £50 a week. New recruits will be paid £30 less than the normal rate and only hired on two-year contracts.

Officially, the TUC leaders oppose this kind of 'social dumping' and the playing off of workers in one EC country against those in another. In practice, of course, they let the AEEU get on with it. Only after the deal had been signed did Scottish TUC general secretary Campbell Christie offer a weak protest at a joint press conference in Brussels with Louis Viannet, general secretary of the French CGT. During the negotiations, both British and French union bureaucrats fell over themselves to accommodate the company.

AEEU national officer Jimmy Airlie was enthusiastic about the deal. 'If we hadn't agreed, the jobs would have gone to Dijon,' he said in a radio interview. Describing it as a 'realistic agreement' which the AEEU was not ashamed of, he offered it as a model for solving the problems of British capitalism. 'It brings us into line with the most up-to-date working practices on the continent,' he said.

The verbal opposition of the TUC leaders is not based on any internationalist principles; it's because they know that jobs are just as likely to be lost in Britain as anywhere else. The low level of government regulation means that multi-nationals wishing to cut production find it easier and cheaper to close their British factories. There is less red tape involved and the redundancy payments are smaller. So while inward investment is taking place at Cambuslang and Preston (where Rockwell Graphics will build up its operation after halving the workforce in Nantes, France), in another part of Glasgow 550 jobs are threatened by the closure of the outdated Nestlé factory and the transfer of confectionery production to more modern facilities in Newcastle and ... Dijon.

Jobs and conditions cannot be guaranteed by opting in to the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, as the Labour Party and trade union leaders would have us believe. The governments which signed this protocol didn't do so in order to protect workers, but to ensure that roughly the same labour costs prevail

throughout the EC and that no one country acts as a magnet for investment. Wage rates, the right to strike and the right to organise are excluded from the chapter, and it specifically allows for national and local agreements which undermine the social chapter's objectives.

In any case, the continuing recession is pushing the EC states in quite the opposite direction – towards becoming low-wage, deregulated economies. The social costs borne by employers in Europe are substantially higher than those of their competitors in the United States and Japan. If anything, European capitalists are looking for ways to drastically reduce them. German employers, impressed by the low cost of production in Britain, are already having exploratory talks with local union representatives in an attempt to by-pass national agreements.

To fight successfully against the actions of the multi-nationals, workers must wage a campaign across national boundaries. The terms of the Hoover deal met with widespread anger among the Cambuslang workforce, while in Dijon there was a two-week strike and a number of militant demonstrations against the closure. The basis for a co-ordinated challenge to the company's plan existed, but it was strangled by the chauvinist AEEU bureaucrats. The main lesson to draw from the experience is the urgent need to establish combine-wide committees at the rank-and-file level. Capitalists are organising on a pan-European basis; workers must do likewise or live to regret it.

Editorial, page 6

CPSA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Vote Mark Serwotka!

THE CIVIL and Public Services Association (CPSA) has seen some of the most bitterly contested left/right struggles in the trade union movement. In recent years, the right-wing 'Moderate' faction has increasingly controlled the union, leading retreat after retreat. Faced with a range of government attacks – privatisation in the shape of market testing, the public-sector wage freeze and serious staffing shortages throughout the civil service – the CPSA is at a crossroads. Under new general secretary Barry Reamsbottom, the right wing has responded to the situation by stepping up the campaign of red baiting.

For its part, the main opposition in the union – the Broad Left led by Militant – has looked with increasing desperation to an electoral bloc with the 'centre' Broad Left '84 as the only way to defeat the right wing. Although BL '84, led by reformists and Stalinists, has a track record of blocking with the 'Moderates' on most important issues, there is nothing in principle against

such an approach, provided it is based upon a fighting programme aimed at building rank-and-file opposition.

Militant, however, has seen the question in purely electoral – and opportunist – terms. After highly secretive negotiations with BL '84, Militant presented the Broad Left with a fait accompli for this year's elections. In the name of 'Left Unity', it agreed a crude carve-up with BL '84. Each faction would run only one candidate for the two vice-president posts, while both groups agreed to back a little-known 'independent', Albert Astbury, for president.

Although subsequently endorsed by a Broad Left conference, this has proved to be a serious mistake, alienating many Broad Left activists. Not only is Astbury a Grade 7 senior manager – hardly likely to endear him to the union's overwhelmingly low-paid rank and file – but he has no principled record in the union. His platform is a series of generalities rather than concrete

proposals for action. Nor has his candidacy delivered left unity since a section of BL '84 has reneged on the deal and decided to run its own presidential candidate. What is more, separate BL and BL '84 slates will contest the NEC elections and other positions in the union.

Under these conditions, we have no hesitation in supporting the candidacy of Mark Serwotka for president. Serwotka, a Broad Left member and *Socialist Organiser* supporter who is backed by the Socialist Caucus grouping in the CPSA, calls in his platform for a national campaign of strike action to stop market testing and for strike action across the public sector to defeat the 1.5 per cent pay limit. This must be linked to building a serious alternative among the rank and file – a task Militant has abandoned in favour of its growing electoral appetite.

● For details, contact Mick Loates, c/o CPSA, Section 1, PRFD, Somerset House, London WC2, or phone 071-791 2946 (evenings).

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Britain's crumbling cities HOME OF THE UNDERCLASS?

GANGS OF bored and alienated kids hang around on street corners. Smack addicts shoot up in back alleys or on tenement stairs. Up the road, young women, prematurely aged, sell their bodies. Meanwhile, not far away, boys race stolen cars in games that lead to death.

This happens to be a description of where I live. It could also be any number of inner-city areas across Britain today. To all these people the future appears to be hopeless. Without prospect of work, only crime and prostitution can provide money to buy the things the media tells us are essential, or the drugs necessary to temporarily escape this nightmare.

These are the conditions that are once again leading to a rise in fascist and racist attacks, as working class communities turn in on themselves on an apparent path to self-destruction. Drug

wars, leading to unpredictable shootings like that of 14-year-old Benji Stanley in Manchester, are increasing in a situation where only the dealers are seen to have any money, and often it is only the street gang that provides any sense of belonging to these youth.

At the same time, the constant tension that is the result of deep alienation from society has led to countless small riots on estates across the county. At any time, riots might return to the big cities in a repeat of the major confrontations with the police that occurred in the early 1980s.

The Labour Party has betrayed and abandoned these people – it calls for more policing to try and keep the lid on areas of dire poverty – while the trade union leaders have refused to organise the unemployed in a fight for jobs and decent housing. It is not surprising, there-

By Jim Dye

fore, that the Labour Party has lost support among working class youth, who see the respectable 'men in suits' as no different from the Tories. Over the last few years there has been a massive decline in registered voters in the inner cities, a situation especially marked in those under 30.

Some on the left, following the ideas of sociologists and media commentators, have seen this as the development of a permanent 'underclass', where the restructuring of capitalism has produced a large layer of people condemned to part-time, low-paid jobs or continual unemployment. This analysis was popular with American politicians in explaining the Los Angeles riot last year. It is often linked to the mistaken idea that

the working class is disappearing, and being transformed and divided into a prosperous 'new middle class' and a permanent underclass.

It is not only the ex-Marxism Today advisers to the Labour leaders who hold this view; the WRP/Workers Press has come out with similar arguments to justify a move into community campaigns with little class perspective. (See the article by Nick Lee in *Workers Press* of August 8, 1992, where the future of northern Europe is seen as cities in which 'a small core of high-tech and financial sectors, employing a middle class and small working class, is surrounded by massive shanty towns of people living in abject poverty. Shanty-dwellers [who are] entirely outside the labour market and working class organisation...')

There is no evidence to suggest that there exists a large and permanent 'underclass'. This is not to say that areas of extreme poverty in most cities do not contain large numbers of unemployed workers, some of whom have effectively been placed outside the labour market permanently, but for the majority of the unemployed this is still the exception. And whilst there has indeed been a relative decline in manual workers, they still number some ten million. Even more significant has been the steady proletarianisation of white-collar workers in poorly-paid jobs. Far from the rise of a new middle class, what has happened is a massive growth of the working class, and as for those forced into insecure part-time working, they are no less members of the working class than the drifting groups of casual labourers in the docks and big cities in the last century.

The basic perspective of Marxists, that the power of workers is in the workplace where they can act collectively and hold economic power, is as valid as ever. Strikes will always be more of a threat to the ruling class than riots, which can normally be contained within poor districts, creating little disruption elsewhere. ('Containment' of things like drugs has also been a deliberate policy of the police in certain areas such as Moss Side in Manchester, where drug dealing has been allowed to continue if it hasn't spread to surrounding areas.)

The potential power of work-

ers is often hidden in times of low levels of class struggle, but when large numbers of workers confront the power of the state they can draw in the unemployed and dispossessed behind them. This doesn't mean that we should neglect work among the alienated youth on the estates – if Marxists don't attempt to relate to them, then we will allow the fascists to grow. Nor does it mean that we should ignore issues such as crime and drug abuse; Marxists should lead campaigns for free recreational facilities and decent jobs and training, as well as trying to organise the community to deal with the drug dealers rather than leaving it to the police, who are part of the problem.

In fighting the terrible conditions created by capitalism's drive for profits, we demand the following measures:

- Employment and decent living conditions for all;

- Unions must mount an immediate fight against unemployment, together with a campaign for 100 per cent union membership. Existing union branches must be thrown open to the unemployed;

- The TUC must support the formation of a national movement of unemployed workers;

- An emergency mass house building programme;

- Nationalisation, under workers' control, of all businesses facing closure;

- The introduction of quality, voluntary, training schemes and apprenticeships, with pay not less than the average industrial wage;

- A massive increase in state benefits, pensions and student grants. Restoration of benefits to 16-18 year olds, and the abolition of student loans;

- Free access to education for all, at any age;

- Workers to organise themselves against drug dealers; and the creation of properly funded rehabilitation programmes, together with the decriminalisation of addicts;

- A Labour government that must be forced to commit itself to the above programme.

Build a rank-and-file teachers' movement!

SINCE 1988, the Tories have introduced successive rounds of legislation designed to smash up comprehensive education and promote the growth of a two-tier system. Contrary to all their propaganda – which talks of 'local control' and 'parental choice' – part of the aim is to strengthen the grip of central government over education in order to gear it to the narrow requirements of commerce and industry. A new Education Act will soon be in force to put even more pressure on schools to opt out of local authority control. But despite widespread anger at the measures, the leaders of the teaching unions and the Labour Party are refusing to launch a concerted fightback.

The government is using the National Curriculum, and the standard tests (SATs) associated with it, to exercise control over what takes place in the classroom. The publishing of 'league tables' based on the results of the tests is intended to bring pressure to bear on those schools which don't put sufficient emphasis on preparing pupils for SATs, and develop an 'upper tier' of high-performing institutions. The next step is to limit entrance to the latter, and Education Secretary John Patten is already demanding that schools wishing to opt out must introduce selection by 11 plus-style entrance examinations.

The majority of teachers are opposed to SATs, some because they recognise them as an assault on progressive teaching methods, others because they see them as an unreasonable administrative burden or as impracticable without additional resources. The NUT held a consultative ballot on boycotting only Key Stage 3 of the English SATs, a course which was overwhelmingly approved by the members. The NAS/UWT ballot in early March was 88 per cent in favour of boycotting all SATs.

In 1992-93, over 1,400 teaching jobs have been lost nationally, and government capping of the new council tax is predicted to create a

By Terry McGinity and Vusi Makabane

further 5,700 redundancies in the coming year. Hargro is threatening to cut all nursery education and Hounslow to switch nursery funding to secondary schools to prevent them opting out.

To add insult to injury, teachers won't even get the full 1.5 per cent increase in April in line with the public-sector pay limit. Most will receive only 0.55 per cent from April 1, followed by a £90 one-off lump sum on May 1. The government claims that the rest will be incorporated into the new pay scale which comes into operation on September 1. Nor has any money been allocated for the extra teachers needed because of rising pupil numbers. Schools will therefore have to spread their budgets more thinly, leading to job losses among teachers of 'peripheral' subjects, an increase in class sizes and longer working hours.

The new pay scale will usher in performance-related pay. In future, school governing bodies will have the power to set individual salaries according to what they consider to be a teacher's relevant experience, general ability, level of responsibilities, etc. They will be able to pay a 'recruitment and retention' supplement to attract staff from other schools.

To assist the governors in this task, the government is introducing what it calls 'teacher appraisal'. This will consist of keeping continuously updated records of every teacher's performance that can be used to determine such matters as pay, promotion, discipline or dismissal. Presented as a means of raising teaching standards, in reality it is intended to suppress militancy and force teachers to toe the government line.

Unless all these attacks are met with a vigorous, organised resist-

ance, the Tories will succeed in pitting teacher against teacher and school against school. But the motions the NUT leaders are placing before the union's annual conference this Easter are notable only for their cowardice. The executive calls on members to prepare for industrial action 'when and if appropriate to secure a satisfactory salary settlement in 1994'. In other words, this year's pay cut is accepted and the seeds for a retreat next year are already planted in the resolution. And the executive has welcomed teacher appraisal in so far as it will assist 'the professional development of teachers'.

The demand that the NUT and the NAS/UWT institute a total boycott of SATs and teacher appraisal must be supported, but this must be clearly identified as part of a campaign for strike action against the government's education 'reforms'. The defence of teaching standards is inseparable from the defence of jobs and conditions, and neither will be achieved short of determined strike action. The task facing militant teachers is the building of an inter-union rank-and-file teachers' movement. In this way, the widespread anger of teachers can be channelled into a campaign for co-ordinated national action, and the pressure on union leaders stepped up. If the leaders refuse to mount such a fight, they must be replaced by those who will.

At the same time, action at a local level – unofficial if necessary – must be encouraged wherever possible, as a step towards mobilising the wider membership of the teaching unions in an all-out, indefinite strike against the pay limit and job losses. Links must be forged with other groups of workers in the public sector – miners, rail and bus workers, firefighters, postal workers, health service and local government workers, and civil servants. Brent teachers have taken a lead by mounting a series of one-day strikes in defence of 100 jobs – others must follow their example.

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Yeltsin launches his second counter-coup

BORIS YELTSIN's declaration of presidential rule by decree and his stripping of the Congress of People's Deputies of its constitutional powers on March 20 has brought to a head a political crisis which has been brewing for over six months. The response of the stalinoid-nationalist majority of the Congress has been to declare Yeltsin's actions unconstitutional, begin impeachment proceedings and refer his 'coup' to the constitutional court. Yeltsin has effectively staked his presidency on the outcome of a referendum on April 25 to determine whether he or the Congress rules.

Yeltsin's oft-threatened assumption of special powers provoked immediate denunciations from Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, chairman of the constitutional court Valery Zorkin, secretary of the security council Yuri Skokov, prosecutor-general Valentin Stepanikov, and the leader of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov.

All this is a far cry from the heady days following the collapse of the August coup in 1991, when in the space of four months the Yeltsinite counter-revolution swept away the Communist Party and dissolved the Soviet Union without significant opposition. It is ironic that the centre of Yeltsin's support at that time – the Congressional White House – is now his most serious rival. At the heart of the present conflict is Yeltsin's failure to resolve any of the enormous and growing problems facing the Russian economy. The restorationists have broken the back of what remained of the planned economy, but have proved completely incapable of delivering a functioning market economy in its place.

The basic questions of who controls and owns industry, the banks and agriculture remain unresolved. The brave new world of 'fast-track' market reform is looking more and more like a nightmare. Inflation is currently running at between 20 and 30 per cent a month (1,000-2,000 per cent a year); living standards fell by an estimated 40 per cent last year, leaving one-third of the population below a basic subsistence level; production fell by about 20 per cent; unemployment, while still the lowest in the world at 1.5 per cent, has doubled in the same time.

For bourgeois commentators, it's a price worth paying for the return of capitalist 'freedom'. This is fine

for them to say, of course, as they are not doing the paying, but there is no evidence of any economic stability on the horizon. The future looks even worse.

Congress belatedly linked pensions and minimum wages to inflation in January in opposition to Yeltsin. The central bank, also under the control of 'conservatives', has propped up state enterprises by issuing more and more credit, and the printing presses keep churning out money. All these factors are fuelling inflation and accelerating the collapse of the rouble. At the same time, Russia has inherited a huge foreign debt of \$80 billion from the Soviet Union, \$47 billion of which is due to be repaid in the next two years. The prospect of significant aid from the Group of Seven leading industrial nations remains as distant as ever.

So far, Yeltsin has baulked at administering the only medicine capitalism knows in such situations – drastic deflation – for fear of the social and political explosion it could unleash. But as part of his special powers Yeltsin has

By Jon Bearman
and Richard Price

announced that he has taken control of the central bank – signalling a probable tightening of credit to state enterprises. A withdrawal or drastic reduction of credits would result in wholesale bankruptcies and redundancies. *The Economist* argues that this would be no bad thing, one, because unemployment provides a ready pool of cheap labour for new capitalist enterprises to thrive on, and two, because the state enterprises were, they say, 'value subtractors'.

But this begs the question of how a new capitalist class is to be created. The considerable private savings which existed under the old regime (due to the lack of consumer goods) have been heavily eroded by inflation. Such a bourgeoisie as does exist has been largely created from the ranks of criminal gangs and former bureaucrats. Yeltsin's plans to denationalise 30 per cent of large-scale enterprises have hit innumerable

delays, and the issuing of privatisation vouchers has done nothing to allay workers' distrust of market reforms. The vouchers are seen as little more than a gimmick and are exchanged as rapidly as possible before their value depreciates. The stock exchange functions not as a centre for buying and selling stocks but as a bizarre futures market in privatisation vouchers.

The issuing of vouchers is in itself an admission that the vast enterprises which Russia has inherited from the ex-Soviet Union are unable to compete on a world market and will be virtually impossible to sell to foreign investors. Bureaucratic central planning produced a situation in the Soviet Union where production was dominated by monopoly enterprises, many of them based in a particular region or republic. Enterprises employ on average 800 workers – ten times greater than in the West. But while Stalinism led to an exaggerated emphasis on heavy industry, there was no corresponding development of the infrastructure of transport and distribution. Quality was con-



Boris Yeltsin

sistently sacrificed to achieve ever greater production quotas.

The most advanced sector of the economy – military production – faces drastic contraction and a difficult road to conversion to civilian production. Oil production was one of the few success stories of the 1970s and 1980s, and was the Soviet Union's major foreign currency earner. Even so, production fell by 15 per cent in 1992, and 25,000 oil wells stand idle. Simply to restore existing plant to full capacity would require \$4 billion; so far only \$100 million of foreign investment has been forthcoming.

Faced with economic crisis, the disintegration of 'law and order' and the reduction of its status and influence, the army is deeply disaffected. Conscription is highly unpopular, with only 20 per cent of those called up reporting for duty. A huge black market in military hardware exists. The middle-ranking officer corps, seeing their chances of advancement recede as the role of the army contracts, seethe with frustration at the failure of politicians who have sold out to the West, and place their faith in Russian nationalism.

The conditions for civil war in Russia are rapidly maturing – a collapsing economy, political crisis and a vast repressive apparatus which is increasingly restive. A weak bourgeois state sits on top of an economy which remains overwhelmingly nationalised, without a significant capitalist class on which it can depend. The opposing sides in such a conflict would be the supporters of 'radical reform' who look to Western imperialism and the growing Stalinist-nationalist-fascist axis which fears the semi-colonial status opening up for Russia. The likelihood in such a conflict is that the army would split. Yeltsin's defence minister has pledged the army will remain neutral in the struggle between the president and Congress. It remains to be seen if such a promise can be delivered if the situation escalates. Neither side presents any socialist perspective to get out of the current impasse.

By no means the least dangerous aspect of the present situation is the absence of any significant revolutionary party to fight both wings of the bureaucracy. The struggle for everyday existence has left many workers disgusted and apathetic as to what happens in the political arena. Nevertheless the next few months could see decisive changes in the situation.



Pupils occupy a school in Athens

School youth revolt in Greece

From K. Nicolaou in Athens

SINCE the end of last year, hundreds of secondary schools in Greece have been occupied by pupils opposed to the attack on state education. They accuse the right-wing New Democracy government of wanting to starve secondary education of funds and encourage the growth of the fee-paying sector, while introducing an increasingly authoritarian regime into the remaining state schools. They complain of schools that are cold, crowded, dilapidated and dirty, with few technical, sports or cultural facilities.

The movement today is a by-product of the great mobilisations of 1990-91, when tens of thousands of pupils fought pitched battles with the forces of law and order. The bloody climax came when youth members of New Democracy murdered N. Temponeras, a left-wing teacher who supported the occupations in Patras. This was followed by a mass demonstration in which four bystanders were burnt to death through police negligence. The outbreak of the war against Iraq, together with a government compromise (the resignation of the Minister of Education), led to the pupils ending their occupations. But New Democracy has since renewed its attack.

More than 760 secondary schools have been occupied

during the current phase of the struggle, and there are signs of a growing politicisation among the youth involved. Occupation committees, which include parents and teachers wherever possible, are better organised. A statement by pupils occupying a school in Dafne, central Athens, links the run-down of state education to the wider attack on the working class and calls for solidarity from the local workers' organisations. The leaflet, which also attacks plans to extend national service, led to a TV campaign against the pupils.

On March 9, the man accused of murdering N. Temponeras during the last wave of school occupations – New Democracy party member Kalambokas – was sentenced to life imprisonment. The fact that the case came to court at all marked a climbdown by the government. Thousands of students demonstrated outside the court in Volos and elsewhere during the trial, shouting 'If Kalambokas is freed, the whole of Greece will burn!'.

As in 1990-91, the parliamentary parties of the working class – PASOK, Sinasismos and the KKE – have condemned the students. How long the revolt lasts depends entirely on whether the occupations get support from the workers' movement. But whatever the outcome, it is becoming clear that a generation of youth is refusing to submit to the norms of capitalist education, to militarism, nationalism and unemployment.

FUNDS

There can be few more disgusting spectacles than Labour's response to the worst recession in 60 years. While thousands of workers are thrown on to the dole every week – many of them sacked by Labour local authorities – Labour's leaders try to outbid the Tories as the party of law and order and further weaken the links with the trade unions.

At the same time, the possibility exists to unite workers across the public sector to defend jobs, halt cuts in living standards and hasten the end of the Tories. But without a fight for the programme put forward by Workers News, the union leaders will sell out the struggle and prepare new defeats. So we are asking every reader to give a little extra and support both our **£10,000 Building Fund**, which stand at £3,489.12, and our regular **£300 Monthly Fund**. Send your donations to: Workers News, 1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE.

Declaration of fusion

1. (a) After more than a year of discussion, collaboration and common political work, the CWG (South Africa), a South African group based in Britain and the LTT announce their decision to fuse and, from now on, to act as a single international tendency organised on democratic centralist lines.

(b) The political basis of this fusion is constituted by the central documents produced by the CWG and the LTT, including the LTT-WIL fusion document, documents on Stalinism, the Fourth International, the tasks of international Trotskyist regroupment, and the perspectives and programme of the South African revolution. In addition, extensive agreement has been reached on tactics towards social democracy, and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

(c) In its essentials, the LTT-WIL fusion document, conceived as a summary of basic positions rather than as an extensive programmatic or perspectives document, remains valid. A number of its projections have been borne out by subsequent events – the absence of any stable 'new world order' after the collapse

equates Stalinist bureaucracy with a workers' state. Precisely the weakness of capitalist development in the former workers' states makes a 'normative' restoration of the law of value unlikely in the short to medium term. As Trotsky anticipated, the restorationists will be obliged to retain a significant sector of nationalised property. This inheritance from the past will continue to distort the 'normal' operation of the law of value.

A connected argument for the continued existence of workers' states bases itself on the fact that since the bourgeois restorationist governments have been unable to create a thriving capitalism, this demonstrates that the working class has not yet suffered important defeats. This 'optimistic' scenario underestimates the significance of the destruction of planned economy and the monopoly of foreign trade, the elimination or drastic reduction of subsidies, hyperinflation, the growth of unemployment, etc.

The apparently opposite argument that Stalinists in government, or at least in control of the repressive apparatus, equals a workers' state leads to similarly erroneous conclusions. It confuses gov-

South African Trotskyists fuse with LTT

IN JANUARY, the founding congress of Comrades for a Workers Government (CWG) took place in South Africa. At its congress, the CWG took the decision to fuse with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT), the British section of which is the Workers International League.

The CWG is the product of a patient, protracted struggle to regroup the best forces from a predecessor organisation which entered into a crisis after De Klerk's unbanning of the ANC and other nationalist and socialist organisations in February 1990.

In the early Eighties, the original group had begun the task of re-establishing South African Trotskyism almost from scratch. The virtual collapse of Trotskyism in the late Forties, the failure of the main international tendencies to make any serious contact with militants inside the country, and the effects of four decades of severe repression all contributed to breaking any revolutionary continuity in South Africa.

Despite many positive features, including a serious attitude to theory and important inroads into the trade unions and the youth, the isolation (partly self-imposed) from international discussion and collaboration made this group vulnerable to the effects of the rapid change in the political situation after February 1990. A crisis was precipitated by the leadership embarking on an opportunist adaptation towards the ANC.

A fight against this course was taken up independently by small groups of comrades in South Africa and in Britain, the latter in collaboration with the LTT. These two groups of oppositionists established con-

tact with each other and rapidly converged. The British-based group agreed to join the CWG, which had begun to publish *Qina Msebenzi* in November 1991. At the same time, close relations and joint work were established between the CWG and the LTT.

Since then, *Qina Msebenzi* has won a reputation among vanguard militants as a consistent and principled opponent of the negotiated settlement with the white ruling class proposed by the ANC. It has achieved a wide readership among factory workers and established important connections with township youth looking for an alternative to the traditional leadership of the ANC-SACP.

From a handful, the CWG has steadily grown, drawing in both more experienced forces and newer militant workers and youth in spite of the difficult conditions under which it operates. For the LTT, this is a very important development in a country which has experienced explosive class struggles and which is of strategic significance to the international socialist revolution. It also means the doubling of the LTT's forces internationally.

The LTT has the highest hopes for the further development of the CWG. We are confident of its ability to withstand the acute pressures that have unleashed a crisis across the South African left and build the nucleus of a revolutionary party throughout the country.

In addition to an extensive discussion of documents on South African questions, the founding congress of the CWG adopted the following two short statements.



Walking to school in Pietermaritzburg

of eastern Europe and the Gulf war; the impending collapse of and the possibility of a military coup in the Soviet Union; the resulting pressure on petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist movements in Africa and elsewhere to move further to the right and to deepen their accommodation to imperialism.

The class nature of eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union

2. (a) However, although the two main lines of development were correctly anticipated, important developments since March 1991 require further elaboration.

The states of eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union can no longer be categorised as deformed or degenerated workers' states. At root, a workers' state is one in which the bourgeoisie is politically suppressed, leading to its economic expropriation as a class. This is what such apparently disparate events as the October Revolution of 1917 and the bureaucratic overturns in eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba after 1945 have in common. The class nature of a given state is determined by the property relations it defends and/or strives to develop. We reject both purely 'economic' and purely 'political' definitions of a workers' state. The former stresses the continued existence of nationalised property and the continued suppression of the law of value, irrespective of the political regime, while the latter

ernmental personnel with the function of the state apparatus. The continued existence of large state bureaucracies staffed for the most part by Stalinists and ex-Stalinists in itself demonstrates nothing. If a partial analogy with a previous situation can be drawn, it is with the period 1944-48, when Stalinism used its power to defend a weak bourgeoisie.

(b) The existence throughout east-

Founding of the CWG

The emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself and the struggle of the working class is the struggle for the abolition of all class rule.

The economic exploitation of workers by the capitalists, who control the sources of life, lies at the root of all social misery, mental degradation and political oppression.

Committed to the full emancipation of the working class and the oppressed masses as a whole, we hereby announce the founding of the Comrades for a Workers Government (CWG) on 6 January 1993, the South African section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT).

ern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union of restorationist regimes which are committed to developing capitalism (no matter what the difficulties); which have dismantled the planned economy; which openly promote capitalist elements in society; which tolerate or even defend fascist, chauvinist and racist movements; and which conclude strategic alliances with imperialism, leads unavoidably to the conclusion that these are no longer workers' states. The reference in the *Transitional Programme* to unconditional defence of the workers' state is no longer applicable to those states. We regard the states which have emerged from the ex-USSR and eastern Europe as bourgeois.

(c) We reject therefore the notion put forward by many brands of centrist 'Trotskyism' (some sections of the USec, Lambertism, SWP (Britain), etc) that the collapse of Stalinism has been an unconditional gain for the working class. Although the possibilities for Trotskyists to intervene openly are greater now than in previous periods, it is in a situation in which workers have already suffered serious defeats. We do not characterise (as do Stalinophiles) these defeats as either catastrophic or irreversible, and the continued instability and fluidity of the situation will constantly create new opportunities for revolutionary intervention, as well as the possibility of further reverses, military coups, Bonapartist regimes, etc.

In the coming period, the axis for the construction of revolutionary Trotskyist parties must be the defence of nationalised property and all the remaining gains of the working class in struggle against all forces of reaction and restoration. In so far as the revolution will now be faced with overthrowing bourgeois states, it will be a social revolution, even if for some time to come it will con-

tinue to have many of the features of political revolution.

(d) To a large extent, Trotskyist parties in eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union will be tested by their attitude to the national question. We reaffirm the Leninist-Trotskyist attitude to national self-determination as expressed in our articles and documents.

For revolutionary regroupment!

3. The LTT and the CWG reaffirm their commitment to the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International as a genuinely revolutionary Trotskyist international. This process must of necessity pass through a number of stages of regroupment. At each point, the task must not be mere repetitions of 'orthodoxy' inherited from the past, but to develop and deepen our programme and perspectives, strategy and tactics, in relation to the international class struggle.

Our prognosis that the combination of the collapse of Stalinism and the generally low level of the class

struggle would accelerate the political crisis of the main currents claiming to be Trotskyist has been confirmed by the major splits in the LIT, in Militant and its international tendency, by the deepening problems of the USec, and by the purges within the Lambertist movement. Most of the forces issuing out of the ICFI explosion of 1985-86 are in steep decline.

Despite the demoralisation of many 'Trotskyist' forces, this crisis also contains possibilities for revolutionary regroupment. If the leaderships of the main centrist currents have proved incapable of giving a revolutionary lead in the face of the titanic events of the last three years, then the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International must be undertaken with redoubled energy. With this aim in mind, and without for a moment concealing that we are in combat with the main centrist leaderships of what passes for 'Trotskyism', we extend a hand to revolutionary-minded militants (Trotskyist and non-Trotskyist) everywhere, and remain open at all times to serious and comradely discussions.

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South African Leninist-Trotskyist magazine

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EDITORIAL

Down with Maastricht!

ON MARCH 8, parliament voted to support a Labour amendment to the Maastricht bill, bringing about John Major's first Commons defeat since he replaced Thatcher as prime minister in 1990. Appeals for party unity and attempts to encourage pressure by constituency parties on dissident backbenchers failed, and over 40 Tory MPs defied the party whip. These splits in the Tory ranks and the consequent deepening of the government's crisis over Maastricht contain the potential to inflict a really serious defeat on the Tories and even drive them from office. Yet the success of the Labour amendment has not derailed the Maastricht bill, but only served to delay its passage through parliament.

Tory loyalists take the line that most 'non-political people' are indifferent to the whole issue of Maastricht, and are merely irritated by the endless parliamentary skirmishing over the treaty. This argument is par for the course among Tory career politicians, who believe that politics is a business best left to professionals like themselves. However, it can be conceded that the level of popular concern over Maastricht has been low – much less than in the early 1970s over Heath's entry into the Common Market. In January, when a rally in Trafalgar Square was organised by the Campaign for a British Referendum, it attracted an audience of only 800.

If workers find it difficult to get steamed up over the prospect of European capitalist integration, they are making a great mistake. The Maastricht Treaty embodies a number of major attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of the working class throughout Europe. As part of the drive towards monetary union, article 104c imposes severe restrictions on government budget deficits, with fines for those national governments which overstep the limit. The main levers of economic policy will be in the hands of a European Central Bank, control over which by either national governments or the European parliament is specifically excluded by the treaty. This amounts to a blueprint for imposing a monetarist regime across Europe, and will have a devastating effect on what remains of the welfare state. Furthermore, as part of the 'fortress Europe' policy, article 100c imposes a central immigration policy which would considerably worsen the position of black and Asian people from Commonwealth countries.

Even in bourgeois democratic terms, the Maastricht Treaty is clearly a step backwards. It takes powers from elected national governments and hands them over to a non-elected bureaucracy. There is to be no significant increase in the powers of the European parliament, which will remain a toothless body. In Britain, this anti-democratic aspect is compounded by the Tory government's refusal to allow a referendum on the issue, and by its insistence that even a Commons defeat over the social chapter will not stop it ratifying the treaty.

If many people have still not woken up to the full implications of Maastricht, it is not least because of the appalling performance of the Labour leadership. The turn to 'new realism' under Kinnock involved the junking of any vestige of opposition to the capitalist unification of Europe. Instead, the party's right wing convinced itself that electoral success depended on outbidding the Tories in enthusiasm for the project. The Parliamentary Labour Party has therefore proved incapable of using the Tories' crisis over Maastricht to mount a serious attack on the Major government. The issue on which the government received a setback on March 8 – the method of selection for the EC's Committee of the Regions – was scarcely a central question. On the really important issues, Labour's parliamentary spokespersons refuse to carry out any fight at all. Shadow home secretary Tony Blair, for example, has declared that article 100c is 'entirely acceptable', and two days after the March 8 victory, the PLP voted down a proposal that the front bench should back an amendment opposing the cap on budget deficits.

While the Labour leaders make much of their support for the social chapter (which itself is little more than window dressing), this doesn't extend to a commitment to vote against the Maastricht bill on its final reading. Instead, the PLP will probably be instructed to abstain – thus allowing the bill to go through. In a conflict between workers' rights and the requirements of capitalism, Smith, Beckett, Blair and Co have no hesitation in opting for the latter. As for a referendum on Maastricht, the Labour leadership will have none of it. After all, if one were held, the electorate might vote *against* the treaty. For the great 'democrats' of the Labour front bench, the right to a vote on Maastricht would be acceptable only if the vote could be relied on to go the 'right' way.

Anti-Maastricht sections of the PLP don't come out of it too well either. Dennis Skinner's backward chauvinism towards Europe is a disgrace, but it only reveals in a particularly crude form the nationalism which lies behind the socialist rhetoric of many left reformists. No less contemptible is the readiness of some anti-Maastricht Labour MPs to join forces with the Tory right in their campaign against the treaty. The sight of Bryan Gould beaming across the table at Thatcher at an anti-Maastricht phone-in was positively sickening. As for Tony Benn, at the Trafalgar Square rally in January he happily appeared alongside the likes of Teddy Taylor and Teresa Gorman in front of a collection of union jack-waving reactionaries, among whom were open fascists. No wonder workers find it difficult to identify with this kind of campaign. It eradicates the class issues at the heart of the Maastricht Treaty, and pretends that the interests of the working class can be advanced in an alliance with some of our most vicious enemies.

What we need is a *labour movement* campaign against Maastricht. Voting with Tory dissidents in parliament is entirely permissible – indeed, we should demand that the Labour leadership abandons its present fence-sitting and utilises every such opportunity to damage the government. But it is quite another matter to engage in a joint political campaign with right-wing opponents of Maastricht. Any such 'mixing of flags' should be emphatically rejected.

A referendum must be seen as a means of mobilising workers against the Maastricht Treaty on an anti-capitalist basis, not merely as the exercising of a democratic right. Above all, any hint of nationalism, whether of the right or the left, must be firmly rejected. The working class must forge its own unity across national borders with the aim of establishing a socialist united states of Europe.

THE CRISIS OF THE



Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy (left) with François Mitterrand

As France prepares elections on March 17, the major parties face major re-evaluations of the crisis which is gripping the workers' movement.

THE WORKERS' movement in France is characterised above all by a deep crisis which it is experiencing in the context of setbacks for workers internationally. The two traditional parties of the working class, the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party (PS), are in sharp electoral decline and are consumed by internal crises. Together, the four trade union confederations, CGT, Force Ouvrière (FO), CFDT and FEN, hardly account for more than 15 per cent of all employees, while the number of strike days for 1992 is predicted to be the lowest for decades. Young people remain almost completely unorganised at both the trade union and political level. Millions of unemployed workers are in practice excluded from the organised workers' movement and constitute a rich recruitment ground for the semi-fascist National Front (FN). Immigrant workers and youth from North Africa are isolated and their rights increasingly attacked. The class struggle is in a trough.

The crisis of Socialist rule

Such a situation can only be seen as

Rocard calls for new movement

IN A SPEECH on February 17, carefully timed to take advantage of the Socialist Party's impending electoral debacle, Michel Rocard called for the creation of a new movement which would embrace reform-Stalinists, ecologists, 'human rights' activists and representatives of the political 'centre'. A congress of the as yet unnamed party is planned for June.

Such an intervention in the midst of an election campaign would usually invite furious accusations of sabotage. The parlous state of the Socialist Party's fortunes, however, has meant that even figures like Jacques Delors and PS First Secretary Laurent Fabius have declared themselves politely 'interested'. More serious indications of support have come from other PS leaders such as Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy and former prime minister Pierre Mauroy, PCF leaders Charles Fiterman and Philippe Herzog, Génération Ecologie leader Brice Lalonde and three ministers in the current administration – Ségolène Royal (environment), Dominique Strauss-Kahn (industry) and Bernard Kouchner (over-seas aid).

Early indications suggest a wide degree of support among PS voters for Rocard's 'big bang'. He has had the political horse-sense not to tie his project too closely to the discredited, scandal-ridden PS, whilst seeking to take what he can of it with him. In this, there is a close parallel to Mitterrand's founding of the Socialist Party itself in 1971 on the ruins of the old SFIO with the aid of bourgeois politicians. Rocard

Since the above article was written, Michel Rocard, prime minister in the Socialist Party government between 1988-91, has set the cat among the pigeons by calling for a 'big bang' realignment of French politics.

Richard Price reports



Michel Rocard

is also attempting to take advantage of the terminal crisis of the PCF and head off the electoral rise of environmentalism, all with an eye to the 1995 presidential election.

If it does take off, Rocard's movement will not amount to a realignment of the 'left' at all – even if it is an almost perfect parody of the strategy pursued by the 'Trots-

kyist' LCR. It will either produce an organisation which has effectively severed its link with the workers' movement, or simply 'reinvent' the Socialist Party. Given that right-wing politicians have shown little interest in the project – hardly surprising when the UDF/RPR slate looks set to win a landslide victory – the latter outcome seems the most likely. Led by Rocard, the apostle of orthodox bourgeois economics and critic of the apparently 'radical' reforms of the first Mitterrand presidency, such a revamped Socialist Party will have taken yet another step to the right.

Rocard may have been at loggerheads with Mitterrand in recent years, but in many ways he is the true inheritor of his legacy. In 1988, it was Rocard whom Mitterrand appointed to make overtures to the centre in an attempt to shore up the shrinking base of Socialist rule.

Meanwhile, Mitterrand has maintained an Olympian detachment as to the fate of his own party, reportedly even encouraging UDF leader François Léotard's bid to become the next prime minister.

FRENCH WORKERS' MOVEMENT

es to go to the polls in the parliamentary
h 21 and 28, the Socialist and Communist
verses. L. Leroy outlines the background to
ripping the traditional organisations of the
ovement as well as those of the far left

the result of the open betrayal by the PCF and the PS of the most basic interests of their working class supporters. The PCF and the PS, in a coalition between 1981 and 1984 with radicals and 'left' Gaullists, rapidly set themselves against all independent workers' activity so as to implement their policy of 'loyally managing' capitalism. The trade union leaders became the best upholders of this policy by accepting a wage freeze, hundreds of thousands of redundancies in the steel and car industries, and attacks on the public health system, social security and national education. In 1983, the sending in of the CRS riot police and the use of racial insults to break the strike by the largely immigrant workforce at Talbot-Poissey, which was deserted by the trade union leaders, crowned the entire 'left' policy of the PCF-PS-Radical coalition. This government also opened the way for the right wing to return to power in 1986, and since 1983-84, for the emergence of the FN as a significant political force.

Since 1988, successive Socialist Party governments have only continued the policies of the 1986-88 Chirac government, with the direct support of the leaders of the teachers' federation FEN and the CFDT. The PCF, the CGT and the FO opted for a policy of 'pressure' - which in fact put them as much for the government as against it - in the name of 'returning the government to the left', or more recently of 'returning the PS to the left'. The PS, the PCF and the trade union leaders are all to blame for the present state of extreme weakness of the organised workers' movement in France, as well as for the continued growth of extreme reaction represented by the National Front. The crisis of the workers' movement is, in a sense, the price of its leaders' betrayal. The PS is crumbling with every electoral defeat and with each new scandal, the latest of which, the contamination of blood banks by the HIV virus, threatens to cost the party dear in the March parliamentary elections. The PCF began its terminal crisis with the collapse of Stalinism in 1989, having been in continuous decline for 20 years. The trade unions are floundering in a crisis which has been endemic since 1983-84, and which is intensified by the traditional trade union divisions.

'Recomposing' the workers' movement

It is within such a context that attempts at a 'recomposition of the left' are coming from various wings of the PCF and PS apparatuses. The nature of this 'recomposition' is clear given the past and present views of its promoters on all sides. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, ex-Minister of Defence in the Rocard government, has spent the last few months making a posthumous apology for General de Gaulle, and openly extending his hand to the reactionary Philippe Séguin (of the Gaullist RPR) in the 'No to Maastricht' campaign. Ralite, Le Pors and Fiterman, ex-PCF ministers in the Mauroy government, have spoken more or less openly for the dissolution of the PCF (of which they are still members) in the name of supposed 'new social realities' and in favour of a 'renegotiated Maastricht'. Philippe Herzog, currently still a member of the PCF leadership, talks with 'progressive' managers within

the 'Confrontations' group. Julien Dray, a former member of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR - French section of the United Secretariat) who became a PS deputy, belongs to the same 'tendency' in the PS as the minister Marie-Noëlle Lienemann. What unites these people is very simple: they are all avowed enemies of the workers' movement.

It is indicative of the advanced state of degeneration of French 'Trotskyism' that for some time a large number of its leading figures have been calling for the 'loyal building of a common party' with Dray, Chevènement, Le Pors and Co. This is the position notably of the 'majority' of the LCR led by Alain Krivine, while the main leader of the 'opposition' within the LCR, G. Filoche (known as Matti), recently wrote a book on Europe jointly with Dray. Pierre Broué and A. Langevin, until recently Lambertists, are putting themselves directly at the service of the advocates of 'recomposition' via their respective journals *Le Marxisme Aujourd'hui* and *Démocratie*, journals which have both received the patronage of Dray. Anice: Le Pors and Filoche-Matti. The supporters of 'recomposition' certainly seem to represent every part of the bankrupt and demoralised 'far left'.

The position in the trade unions

'Recomposition' in the trade unions is proceeding along the same lines of class collaboration, under the banner of 'democracy'. The kick-off has been taken by the Socialist leadership of FEN, which several months ago expelled more than a third of its own members grouped behind the 'Unity and Action' tendency led by the PCF. The aim of these expulsions was to allow the setting up of a 'Teaching Union' (SE) completely integrated into government policy and the state apparatus. This proposal has run into hostility not only from opposition tendencies in the federation, but also from a large number of supporters of its 'majority' at its last congress held in October. If the leadership has its way, the result will be a massive deunionisation in primary education and the break-up of the remains of the federation, with SNES (secondary education) and SNETAA (technical education) becoming effectively 'independent'.

'Recomposition' is also at work within the CGT via a part of the leadership linked to Philippe Herzog. However, it has been opposed by the rank and file of the CGT, which supports the majority of the current PCF leadership, and which is against liquidating the CGT into a 'trade unionism of member services and fringe benefits', the most obvious example of which is the CFDT. The only thing that is certain is that the struggle, which has already broken out among CGT officials, will be very sharp.

The resistance which 'recomposition' encounters from militant workers in the PCF and the CGT, and to a lesser extent FEN and the FO, demonstrates that even if the working class is disorientated and partly demoralised, it is not beaten. Even more than in the past, the solution to the crisis of the workers' movement boils down to the question of revolutionary leadership, as the general strike in Italy showed so clearly last



Peugeot carworkers at Stendal
year.

Problems of the far left

The absence of a revolutionary workers' party, based on a clear and coherent programme with answers to the questions raised by the crisis in the traditional organisations, is making itself felt more than ever. France does not lack pretenders to the title 'revolutionary leadership', and the far left still has the allegiance of several thousand militants. But the politics both past and present of the main groups on the left has disqualified them from playing such a role.

Today, the LCR is completely in favour of political 'recomposition'. But this is only the outcome of a long process since 1976 when, with the backing of Ernest Mandel, it volunteered to abandon its Trotskyist title 'within 24 hours' with a view to a possible amalgamation with the social democratic Parti Socialiste Unifié (*Politique-Hebdo*, June 10-16, 1976). That the LCR, like the rest of the petty-bourgeois 'left', has swung consistently to the right since the end of the 1970s was to be expected, as was the fact that this course resulted in its embracing the reformist ex-PCF spokesman Pierre Juquin in 1987-88 (who with good reason can lay claim to the title 'father of recomposition'). The positions upheld by the LCR itself in recent years differ less and less from those of Dray-Le Pors-Chevènement. During the imperialist military build-up in the Persian Gulf two years ago, the LCR joined under a common banner with the Greens and the Young Christian Workers, demanding 'negotiations' and a 'peaceful solution'. More recently, the LCR reproached Mitterrand for his 'inaction' in the Croatian crisis in Yugoslavia (see *Rouge* No.1471, November 21, 1991) and Alain Krivine officially signed a petition calling for 'EC intervention' in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see *Le Monde*, August 26, 1992.) It's hardly surprising that members should leave an organisation which has signally failed to live up to the title of 'Revolutionary Communist League'. This trajectory of the LCR leadership has been underlined

by its decision to sever links in November 1992 with its own youth organisation, the JCR-Egalité.



The Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI), the leading section of Pierre Lambert's 'Fourth International - International Centre of Reconstruction' (FI-ICR) has recently changed its name to 'Courant Communiste Internationaliste' (CCI). But this 'current' is in turn a faction within - and, indeed, the main component of - the Lambertists' own front organisation, the Parti des Travailleurs (PT - Workers' Party). The PT, with its 6,000 members (not much more than the PCI alone claimed in 1984), combines a classically social democratic political line, centred on the struggle for 'democracy', with organisational practices which can only be described as 'Stalinist', practices moreover which date back to the beginning of the 1970s. The key to all CCI/PT policy is its long-standing adaptation to the anti-communist union apparatus of the FO. Several senior positions in the PT are occupied by top bureaucrats, such as the mysterious 'Angelo Geddo' who has his own page every week in the PT's paper, *Informations Ouvrières*. The real PT programme is perfectly illustrated by its attitude during the Gulf war. In January 1991, its militants were saying 'No new Vietnam in the Middle East!'. As soon as the first shots were fired, the PT disappeared from demonstrations, just like the PCF.

Lutte Ouvrière (LO) is altogether a more healthy organisation, more 'leftist' and more rooted in the industrial working class than either the LCR or the CCI/PT. But LO rarely gets beyond purely 'economic' questions such as wage demands (including those for the police and prison warders!). It is characterised by a mania for organisational secrecy, abstention towards existing trade union structures and a marked insensitivity towards the specially oppressed, particularly immigrant workers, gays and lesbians. However, for a number of years, LO has supported positions which in general have been more correct than those of the rest of the far left - even if this is largely due to the fact that the other organisations have been evolving rapidly to the right. During the imperialist intervention in the Gulf, LO belatedly reached a position for the 'defence of the Iraqi people', though this remained semi-internal and the concrete implications were not drawn out. More recently, however, LO's stance on the Maastricht Treaty has revealed the scale of the bankruptcy of this group, behind whose 'hard' organisational methods and 'harsh' words lies a deep-rooted opportunism.

The situation of the three main 'Trotskyist' organisations is such that they are unable to exercise a positive influence on the more left-wing oppositional currents within the PCF. Indeed, the current crisis in the workers' movement extends right to the heart of the centrist organisations, the CCI/PT, LO and the LCR, which have each produced their own mini-bureaucratic apparatuses and which, although to a lesser extent than the PS and the PCF, constitute obstacles to the building of a revolutionary workers' party. This is confirmed by the recent wave of expulsions from the CCI/PT, and by the disaffiliation of the JCR-Egalité by the LCR. A genuine revolutionary workers' party must be built in France, just as the Fourth International must be rebuilt on an international scale, based on the method of the Transitional Programme. These urgent tasks are dictated by the needs of the class struggle and the workers' movement.

The crisis in the federation of Yugoslavia

THE CRISIS which Yugoslavia is now experiencing is part and parcel of the crisis of the world Stalinist bureaucracy. The reforms of 1965, based on 'self-management' of the means of production, the free market economy and the profit motive, lead straight back into the anarchy of world capitalism.

Although Yugoslavia's national income has increased by 200 per cent since 1948, because its chief industries – chemicals, shipbuilding and fibres – are in direct competition with the capitalist West, these policies are now producing contradictory results.

The world economic crisis has its reflection in every economy. The experience of the other bureaucratic states should have demonstrated to the Yugoslavs that the entry of a planned economy into the anarchy of a free market brings about wide fluctuations in that economy.

In 1967 and 1968, there was an 18-month period of decline. Many co-operatives and trading organisations collapsed. Others experienced severe difficulties. In 1970, at least 3,500 enterprises were still producing below capacity. The bureaucracy continued to appropriate a disproportionate amount of wealth, while the great mass of workers lived in poverty. In 1969, the number of unemployed rose to 500,000. The dinar was devalued. This economic crisis led to a rapid increase in the cost of living – a direct attack on the working class.

The trade war waged by the capitalist states on the workers' states induced the opportunist bureaucracy to think up a temporary solution to the problem. The resultant reforms, based on self-management and the profit motive, were a capitulation to capitalism and strengthened the bourgeois tendencies within Yugoslavia. The whole bureaucracy moved to the right. The prosperity of the bureaucracy is indicated by the 20,000 villas on the Adriatic coast, the big limousines, the ever-increasing number of luxury goods on the market.

But this does not represent a restoration of capitalism, as the state capitalists claim. There has been no qualitative retrograde change to the extent of the bourgeoisie regaining power. But the more counter-revolutionary the bureaucracy becomes, the more the bankruptcy of their 'Yugoslav road to socialism' is exposed, the greater are the dangers of restoration. But let us not forget that the working class is openly at war with the privileged layer, and that first on the agenda are the political revolution and genuine workers' power.

The centrifugal tendencies of the nations of the federation

Yugoslavia's internal crisis prevents it from playing a leading role in the diplomatic skulduggery in the Balkans. The historical rift with China precludes any initiative to form a bloc with Peking under Chinese leadership, and Yugoslavia has had to contend with strong centrifugal tendencies among its own nations, some of which are now demanding secession. The industrialised areas of Croatia and Slovenia are now at odds with the more prosperous Serbia. The differences are expressed behind a facade of ideological and political jargon, but are nevertheless leading to a split.

In 1967, after the formal fusion of Serbian and Croat into one language, with a preponderance of Serbian, a group of Croat intellectuals

THE BALKANS INGREDIENTS OF AN EXPLOSION

*From a 1971 article by
Workers Vanguard of Greece*

IN LINE with our policy of making available rare documents and archive material – particularly those which have a bearing on major issues today – we are reprinting the bulk of a long article written in October 1971 by the Greek organisation Workers Vanguard.

The explosion which this document foresaw has come to pass with a vengeance since the collapse of east European Stalinism in 1989-90, and especially since the outbreak of civil war in the former Yugoslav Federation in 1991, although not in the political revolution that the author envisaged.

Unlike much of the left, the author did not credit the Titoite bureaucracy with having 'solved' the national question in Yugoslavia. The 'ingredients' of an explosion in the Balkans which he identifies: competition between different national Stalinist regimes; economic unevenness; national oppression of minorities; the pressure of imperialism and the development of restorationist and even pro-fascist tendencies in the bureaucracies – all have been amply confirmed in the current conflagration.

The response which is proposed – the struggle for a Balkan socialist federation and the recognition of the rights of all minorities to self-determination – is more timely than ever.

The origins of Workers Vanguard lie in a split in the Greek section of the International Secretariat ('Pabloites') in 1958. In 1964, it joined the International Committee, and in 1967 it split on the eve of the coming to power of the colonels' regime. In 1972, the IC recognised the EDE led by L. Sklavos as its official section. Since then Workers Vanguard has led an independent existence.

The principal figure in the group, Loukas Karliafitis (b. 1905), has been a revolutionary since 1921. A leader of the Archeiomarxists in the 1920s and 30s, he was imprisoned on several occasions by the Metaxas dictatorship. During the Second World War, he was for the defence of the USSR, but opposed to any support for the Resistance on the grounds that it was an adjunct of the Allied war machine. In 1946, when the three Trotskyist groups fused to form a single section of the Fourth International, he became the secretary.

began agitating for Croat independence. The publication in Zagreb of the biography of the fascist Pavelic shows that some sections of the bureaucracy have little difficulty in identifying with the fascist Ustashi, the Croat separatist organisation which allied itself with Hitler against Tito.

The victory of Kardelj over Rankovic for the vice-presidency was seen as a victory for the Croats and the Slovenes over the Serbs. The Croats refused to forget that while they produce 33 per cent of the Gross National Product, their actual share of the wealth amounts to only 17 per cent, as against 60 per cent for Serbia.

The Croat people comprise 23 per cent of the total population of Yugoslavia, but are represented by only eight per cent of the administration. Equivalent figures for Serbia are 42 per cent and 73 per cent. Is this the 'equality of socialist nations' that Tito demanded from the Russians?

To combat these growing separatist tendencies, the bureaucracy has reorganised the constitution and attempted to decentralise authority. However, it is the bureaucratic leadership itself and its opportunist policies which are chiefly responsible for the strengthening of separatism. Only soviet democracy can be the basis for the consolidation of all the nations of Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

The dispute over Slavo-Macedonia

Slavo-Macedonia has been the subject of dispute for many years. In 1967-68, when relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were at a low point, the Slavo-Macedonia question was brought to the fore, as it is again today. It has been a source of continual friction with Greece.

The nation of Macedonia is situated in that part of the Balkans where Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria meet, and is divided between these three states. Yugoslavia's officials state that Bulgaria should recognise the republic of Macedonia, which is part of the federation of Yugoslavia, as a separate nation, and should stop the oppression of the Macedon minority of Pirin (Bulgarian Macedonia).

The Bulgarians reply that the Macedons are not a separate nation; they are pure Bulgarians, and all those 'Bulgars' in Greece and

pendence.

The nationalist Serbian and Bulgarian 'communists', having annexed the Macedonian people, line up with the Greek capitalists in denying them their right to self-determination.

The Slavo-Macedon nation, comprising more than three million people, is a distinct cultural and geographical entity, with its own language and historical social relations. They have been oppressed for many centuries. But their long-standing subjection, the attempts of their more powerful neighbours to



Yugoslavia should be an integral part of their nation.

Macedons in Greece number some 300,000 – a very small minority – but the Greek capitalists have concluded that they all have a 'Greek mentality' and, being Greek, they have no need of inde-

pendence. The nationalist Serbian and Bulgarian 'communists', having annexed the Macedonian people, line up with the Greek capitalists in denying them their right to self-determination.

The greatest struggle was the rebellion at Illenden in 1903. Although there have been many bloody struggles, success always

eluded the national liberation fighters. The economy of the region is essentially agrarian, and the Macedon bourgeoisie was weak and irresolute, while the young working class lacked experience as a revolutionary force. The leaders of the workers and peasants were assassinated by the Greek bourgeoisie under General Melas. The struggle for independence was further interrupted by the eruption of the Balkan wars.

Because of the Macedon element in Yugoslavia, Tito has had to pay lip-service to their independence struggle, recalling the memory of Illenden. The nationalist Bulgarian Stalinists characterised this struggle as a movement of Bulgars in other countries struggling against oppression and for integration with Bulgaria.

Between 1946 and 1948, Macedonia was recognised by Georgi Dimitrov, who made an arrangement with Tito for its independence, but this proposal was torpedoed by Stalin.

During the period of the 'thermidor' and the degeneration of the Comintern after 1925, the Stalinists turned away from the workers to flirt with the 'Peasants' International' of Radic (Croat peasant leader, assassinated in the late 1920s) and La Follette (American labour leader). The separatist leaders Panica and General Ptotogerov (Bulgarian Macedonian separatist, killed in July 1928) put forward the demands 'for a united and independent Thrace'. At this time, these demands were bureaucratically imposed on the Greek CP by the Comintern.

The first demand, in fact, was not based on self-determination for the Slavo-Macedons and did not change their position. It applied only to that part of the nation incorporated into Greece, and was intended purely for home consumption.

The second demand was a non sequitur. There is no particular nation of Thrace, and therefore no Thracian problem. The minority of Pomaks (Balkan Muslims) and Turks had never fought for independence.

The communists had never built national movements, but when these movements exploded, the Trotskyists were in the vanguard. Their object was to transform the national liberation struggle into the permanent socialist revolution. This policy was derided and rejected by the Greek CP, though later the general secretary, Pouliopoulos, became a Trotskyist and defended these demands in the bourgeois courts in an attempt to save the honour of the CP.

The unity of Romania with the Balkans

The rapid development of the Romanian economy in the last ten years has made it the strongest state in the Balkans. It has set a world record with its regular annual expansion of 13 per cent in industry and 9.4 per cent in agriculture. From the founding of the present state until 1965, exports rose by 53 per cent. In 1969-70 alone, they rose 11 per cent. Roma-

nia's foreign trade now embraces 110 capitalist countries.

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of factories – 1,500 new industrial estates have sprung up in the last five years. The export of machinery rose from 16.6 per cent of production in 1965 to 22 per cent in 1969. Surplus is now being invested in capitalist countries.

Despite this, the Romanian bureaucracy has been unable to acquire sufficient strength to shake off the grip of the Kremlin. However, they dispute vigorously the authority of Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, pleading their own special 'independent road to socialism'.

The Romanians are under great pressure from the need to open up markets wherever possible. It is impossible for them to ignore the Balkan market. Their resistance to the Kremlin must combine the defence of their own privileged position with their drive to take the leadership of the Balkan region. So the bureaucrats have resurrected the demand for Balkan unity.

The Soviet-Romanian treaty, revised in 1970, contained an implicit approval of the need for Balkan co-operation. However, the Balkans are bedevilled by such a variety of problems – antagonistic governments, the latently explosive nationality question, the conflicting interests of the big powers – that this kind of unity is not just difficult, but Utopian.

The creation of a Balkan Federation is not within the scope of either capitalist nationalism or bureaucratic nationalism; it presupposes the victory of the proletarian revolution under the internationalist banner of Trotskyism.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 induced Romania to turn towards Yugoslavia, Albania and in particular China. This was the meaning of Ceausescu's visit to the Far East and Chou En-lai's visit to the Balkans.

This situation is itself an impediment to the achievement of unity. Conditions today are not favourable for another invasion on the lines of 1968, but Moscow is unrelenting in its attacks on the Balkan 'rebels'. The Warsaw Pact has carried out military exercises in Hungary and Bulgaria, while Hungary has shown signs of reviving its traditional claim to Transylvania, now part of Romania. The visit of Chou En-lai increased the war of nerves.

Following in the footsteps of Tito, Ceausescu is proceeding in a super-opportunistic fashion, manoeuvring between Moscow, Peking and Washington, while the parasitic bureaucratic caste which he represents continues its arrogant oppression of the Romanian masses. However, these masses are already on the march towards the political revolution.

Albania swings to the right

The Albanian bureaucracy, which has always been close to the Chinese, is isolated from the other Balkan states. Despite the welter of left-sounding rhetoric, Albania has always been in the grip of counter-revolutionary Stalinism. The building of socialism in this single state has proceeded at a snail's pace.

The invective directed at Tito was not only a product of inter-bureaucratic conflict; it was accentuated by the threat of the Yugoslav 'communists' who had laid claim to the Kosovo-Methohija, a sizeable Albanian minority.

The Albanian Stalinists cannot forget that in 1948 they were in danger of being swallowed up by their 'brother' Yugoslavs. This scheme emanated from Stalin himself: that Yugoslavia should annex Albania in exchange for submission to Stalin's policies.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the omnipresent threat of the 'Brezhnev doctrine', together

with Mao's new conciliatory attitude towards Nixon, have created the conditions for the change of direction of Albania. In spite of their previous disdainful isolation, the Albanian Stalinists now lick where they once spat. They made their first moves towards making amends with Yugoslavia in 1967. In 1969, they established diplomatic relations.

With Bulgaria, their relations are less friendly as a result of the crisis of July 1968 when the Albanian Embassy was evicted from Sofia. It was re-established in October 1970. The rift with Greece has been continuous since 1939 – a reminder that they are still officially 'at war' with the Greek capitalists over Epirus, the territory which divides the two countries. Recently this problem has been played down by both sides, and relations were established at consular and trade levels in May 1971.

At the last (6th) Congress of the Albanian CP, Enver Hoxha stated that 'our relations with our Greek neighbours are a great historical fact; the beginning of the end of the unfortunate situation in the Balkans; leading to peace and security'.

In fact, this class-collaboration will have precisely the opposite effect. The Greek 'neighbours' are a right-wing military dictatorship – notorious murderers and torturers of communists and militants, brutal oppressors of the working people, staunch supporters of NATO. For years the Maoists fulminated hypocritically against the 'peaceful co-existence' of the Kremlin, but because they are committed to the same Utopian conception of 'socialism in one country', they have succumbed to the same method.

The prostration of the bureaucracy before the pressures of imperialism is a crime which will be paid for by the blood of workers. Such is the treacherous role of world Stalinism.

Bulgaria – the Kremlin's policeman in the Balkans

Bulgaria still remains faithful to the Soviet bureaucracy. It played a leading part in the Warsaw Pact suppression of the Czechoslovak people, and has constantly condemned its 'rebellious' neighbours. In the current struggle between Moscow and Peking for the leadership of the Balkans, Bulgaria acts according to the wishes of its Kremlin masters.

Nevertheless, the last Congress of the Bulgarian CP showed that the bureaucracy does have its independent interests. The basic demand of the party was the improvement of relations with the Balkans, but the 'Brezhnev doctrine' of 'limited sovereignty' denies Bulgaria the opportunity to raise relations above the platonic level – 'friendship', 'peace', 'co-operation', etc.

The proposal of the CP leadership for a trans-Balkan conference was squashed by the Kremlin. This was the action of a great power nation, not a socialist state. The Kremlin does everything it can to obstruct the prospect of unity of the bureaucratic Balkan states.

Bulgaria is always critical of the friendship of the 'rebels' with China, but is still able to applaud their stronger ties with Greece. By its participation in the Warsaw Pact manoeuvres carried out on its borders, Bulgaria revealed its role as the Kremlin's policeman in the Balkans.

The degeneration of the slogan 'For a Socialist Balkan Federation'

A long time has passed since the idyllic days of 1947-48 when Tito and Dimitrov agreed on the need for a Socialist Balkan Federation.

The Comintern slogan for such a federation was abandoned. It proved irreconcilable with the nationalist 'communists' of the Stalinism of the USSR and the Balkans alike.

In this period of crisis for the bureaucracy, the new proposals for a Balkan Pact are placed in a different context – devoid of any class, socialist meaning. Today it is a case of manoeuvring between capitalism and bureaucracy, in order to serve the interests of both. Such manoeuvres, of course, take place behind the backs of the masses, and against them.

The counter-revolutionary content of the 'friendship pacts' now being cooked up has been exposed by the well-publicised toings and froings of Heath, Brandt, Nixon, etc, which give the leaders of the bureaucracy so much pleasure. The antagonism between the great powers – the Soviet Union, the USA, China and the EEC – attempting to solve their crises nullifies the chances of a real Balkan accord.

As for the deals between the deformed workers' states in the Balkans, these are no more than temporary affairs, overshadowed by interference from Moscow and the rivalry between the USSR and China. They have no relevance to the serving of the interests of the masses and their aspirations for a socialist pact and peace.

The Romanian proposals for a Balkan Pact, accepted by Yugoslavia, are nothing more than an agreement between second-rate bureaucracies for the defence of their privileges against the piratical interventions of Moscow and Peking, disguised under the slogan 'bureaucrats of all lands, unite'.

Tito's declaration that his country will remain 'uncommitted' is tantamount on the one hand to a confirmation of his rejection of the idea of the unity of socialist states, and on the other to an independent policy of treacherous co-existence with imperialism. The correct concept of a 'Socialist Balkan Federation' has degenerated into a 'pact' of deformed workers' states, to fit the reactionary theory of 'socialism in one country'.



Tito (right) with Cominform leader Georgi Dimitrov at Bled, Slovenia in the Summer of 1947

The Romanian proposals for 'neutralisation' or a 'nuclear-free zone in the Balkans' are deceptive, in the well-worn vein of 'disarmament' with which the masses are demagogically deceived. How can there be understanding between capitalist and socialist states? How can there be solidarity between the eastern states when one section of the bureaucracy sits on the fence between East and West? This is nothing less than conscious opportunism and betrayal.

The Ceausescu-Tito plan for a Balkan accord and disarmament, to include in the first stage Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, and in the second stage Greece and Turkey requires them to build political bridges to these states.

Their great dilemma in this cloud-cuckoo land, of course, is who is going to disarm whom! Until, that is, the tanks of US imperialism or the Soviet bureaucracy roll in to crush the working people of these countries. It is more likely that this counter-revolutionary co-existence will be totally overthrown by the

approaching anti-bureaucratic political revolution and the anti-capitalist socialist revolution.

The political revolution raises its head in the deformed workers' states in the Balkans

The anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the Balkans has begun its first stages in Yugoslavia. The world events of 1967 to 1969, resulting from the world economic crisis, brought about a revolutionary situation in Yugoslavia. The political regime of Tito was shaken to its foundations. Even with Tito's reforms, the federation was in danger of disintegration and decay. Thousands of strikes swept the country. This was an indication of the deep displeasure of the workers and students at their inequality and oppression, and the undermining of wages by inflation.

The crisis smashed the weaker enterprises and increased unemployment. Emigration reached an unprecedented level. One million workers, who had not yet realised any means of removing the reactionary bureaucracy, left for the capitalist states of the EEC. The rest joined in the struggle.

There had been a precedent for this strike-wave – the strikes in the mines of Slovenia in 1958, the shipyard of Rijeka, and the mines of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The bureaucracy banned what it termed 'wild and uncontrolled' strikes, but was forced to permit 'legal' ones. However, it did not stop trying to throttle the strikes with violence.

The masses took part in several riots, but without leadership the workers were weak and the Stalinists were able to isolate the strikes. The official press tried to present the strike-wave as being of an anti-progressive, 'Luddite' nature; in reality, it was anti-bureaucratic.

The same applies to the struggles of the students who, reflecting the misery of the working class, fought until they had gained control of their

and workers' control, can solve the present crisis and prepare the way for economic developments. It is a prerequisite for the democratisation of the workers' states and the raising of the cultural level and the economic conditions of the masses.

The unity of the Balkan workers' states is a necessity which can only be realised by these means. There must be complete equality between all states and national minorities.

The Yugoslav federation, even with the constitutional reforms and the self-government of its nations, is a fraudulent 'cover' for equality – to conceal the exploitation and oppression of the masses. Tito's dramatic call in Brioni for a centralised Yugoslav federation merely exposes the bureaucracy's inability to solve its own problems.

The demands of the workers, peasants and students for a real democratic soviet equality has demonstrated the bankruptcy of the 'Yugoslav road to socialism'. Tito's conception of federal unity really belongs to the last century when the bourgeoisie was engaged in a struggle against feudalism.

In the epoch of Lenin and Trotsky, 'self-determination' must become a reality, not a vague, insincere abstraction. The theses of Lenin cannot be reconciled with a federation in which self-determination is incomplete, or in which one strong nation dominates the others, as does Serbia in Yugoslavia.

The Croat problem can only be understood in the context of this demand for self-determination. In their struggle against the Yugoslav bureaucracy, the workers must raise the same demands that Trotsky once put forward for the Ukraine.

National oppression and discrimination as practised in the bureaucratic states are a bourgeois tendency. It is essential that all these nations should have the freedom to determine their own destiny, as part of a United Socialist States of the Balkans, in order to rid themselves of the relics of the bourgeois era.

Only a United Socialist States can carry through the struggle against the capitalist class in the Balkan countries where they still hold power. Only this demand can guarantee the unity required to overthrow the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy through the political revolution with the demand for equal rights, greater parity of wages, the freedom to strike, freedom for the trade unions, workers' control, freedom for the soviet parties, planning based on the interests of the masses, the sovietisation of the Stalinist regimes, an international foreign policy, etc.

The greatest and most important task of all is the construction of revolutionary parties. This must be based on the historical struggle for Marxist principles, and its further development. Only by taking Marxist theory, dialectical materialism, into the working class can the party assert and win the leadership of the class. This is the way forward to the triumph of the proletarian revolution, the objective of the Fourth International.

* Editor's Note: In fact, the Peasants' International, or Krestintern, was set up by the Comintern in October 1923 in response to the peasant unrest of the post-war years. Its attempt to organise peasants over the heads of the working class led to an accommodation to hostile class forces. S. Radic, the reactionary leader of the Croatian Peasants' Party, attended its 1924 congress and was hailed by the Comintern as a 'real leader of the people'.

Robert La Follette was the Progressive Republican senator for Wisconsin who ran a third-party campaign for the US presidency in 1924. John Pepper, the Comintern representative in the US, proposed that the CP-dominated Federated Farmer-Labor Party endorse La Follette's candidacy as a means of securing influence over the farmers. This was opposed inside the CP and the decision was referred to the Comintern. Although it had support from leading figures in the Comintern, under pressure from Trotsky the policy was declared opportunist and the American CP backed off and stood its own candidates in the election.

If La Follette did not try to register in the Peasants' International, that was only because the American Communist Party was so extremely weak. He did not have to. Pepper, uninvited and unsolicited, embraced La Follette without that. But Radic, the banker-leader of the Croatian rich peasants, found it necessary to leave his visiting card with the Peasants' International on his way to the cabinet. (Trotsky: *The Third International After Lenin*, New Park, 1974, p. 173.)

The United Socialist States of the Balkans

The slogan for the United Socialist States of the Balkans springs from the historical necessity of our epoch. It can be understood from the wider demand for a United Socialist States of Europe, which today assumes an even greater importance.

Only a nationalised and planned economy, under the soviet system

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by
Bob Pitt

PART TWENTY

THE 'TRANSFORMATION' of the SLL into the Workers Revolutionary Party was immediately followed by the final upsurge of struggle against the Heath government which was to culminate in the historic defeat of the Tories by the National Union of Mineworkers. In November 1973, when the NUM began an overtime ban in pursuit of a pay claim which breached the Tory pay laws, Heath declared a state of emergency, followed in January 1974 by a three-day week in industry to conserve energy supplies. In the face of the government's continued refusal to concede their claim, in February the miners declared a national strike, and Heath responded by calling a snap general election, hoping to win the middle class vote with a union-bashing campaign. In the event, he suffered a humiliating rejection. Labour emerged from the election as the party with the largest number of seats and was able to form a minority government under Harold Wilson.

In this situation of intense industrial and political conflict, a genuine revolutionary organisation, even one of the WRP's relatively small size, could have played an important role in clarifying political issues for advanced workers and outlining the tasks ahead. But the WRP leadership was in a state of complete political disorientation. During the election campaign Healy proclaimed that Heath was intent on installing a police-military dictatorship, and *Workers Press* carried a series of bloodcurdling headlines to this effect. However, when the maverick Tory Enoch Powell made his intervention just prior to the election, urging his supporters to vote Labour, Heath was deposed from his position as aspirant British führer and replaced by Powell. Healy assured a WRP eve-of-poll meeting that 'the two-party system is breaking up' and that the coming conflict would be 'between the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Powellite movement!'

The WRP stood nine of its own candidates in the general election. They received votes ranging from a derisory 52 for *Workers Press* journalist Stephen Johns in Dunbartonshire, to a relatively respectable 1,108 for WRP miner Dave Temple in Wallsend (compared with 41,811 for the successful Labour candidate).² These results indicated that at best only a very narrow layer of the working class was responsive to pseudo-revolutionary appeals to break from Labour, and that the overwhelming majority of class-conscious workers retained their political allegiance to social democracy. Yet Healy failed to take this question at all seriously. The WRP leadership deluded itself that a Labour government would be quickly discredited among militant workers, who would then rally to the alternative 'revolutionary leadership' of the WRP.³

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy

It all turned out rather differently. The Wilson government proceeded to settle the miners' pay claim, end the state of emergency and the three-day week, and abolish the Industrial Relations Act. Far from breaking from reformism, the advanced sections of the working class remained loyal to Labour, and at a second general election in October, Wilson was returned to office with a narrow overall majority.

But Healy was oblivious to the real political situation. Having surrounded himself with middle-class sycophants from the journalistic and acting professions, and cut himself off from all but the most intermittent contact with the working class, Healy was able to allow his political fantasies free rein. Thus he could argue, in all seriousness, that a situation of dual power had been ushered in by the fall of the Heath government. In the October election, the WRP again stood its own candidates, scarcely bothering to argue for a Labour vote. Healy set a target of 3,000 new recruits for the election campaign, and 'members' were signed up to what was supposedly a Bolshevik party on the most minimal political basis. The

deep entry in the Labour Party, they were very effective at exposing the anti-Marxist absurdities of his current political line. In particular, the group emphasised the need for transitional demands instead of Healy's ultimatum calls for the immediate nationalisation of major industries and the banks.

Healy's reaction was to ban WRP members from reading the *Bulletin*, and to change the party's constitution, removing the right of expelled members to appeal to conference.⁴ Even loyal party members balked at this. Alan Thornett, the leading figure in the WRP's factory branch at British Leyland Cowley, voted against Healy's constitutional changes on the central committee. A furious Healy demanded, and got, from Thornett a written retraction of this vote. When the issue was put to the party's special conference in July 1974, another Cowley WRP'er, Tony Richardson, made the mistake of asking a question of clarification. He was hauled off to Healy's office and forced to admit, on pain of expulsion, that he was wrong even to have asked the question.

Hamstrung in their industrial

cally assaulted by Healy. A control commission set up to inquire into the violence against Richardson was then rigged by Healy to provide trumped-up charges against Thornett and his supporters in order to justify their expulsion. Some 200 members were thrown out of the WRP, and its main base in industry liquidated.

The effects of Healy's wrong perspectives, sectarian politics and bureaucratic centralism were not restricted to Britain, but were felt throughout the WRP's 'International Committee'. In the United States, Workers League leader Tim Wohlforth was encouraged by Healy to implement a new orientation towards youth in imitation of the SLL's YS work, trying to attract young blacks and Puerto Ricans to politics by means of dances, socials, etc.⁵ On Healy's instructions, Wohlforth waged a bitter struggle against the 'conservative' forces in the League who resisted this new turn. The results were devastating. By Wohlforth's own calculations, around 100 members, including some of its oldest and most experienced cadres, were hounded out of the WL.⁷ Healy, for his part, regarded all this as a great success. At the Fifth Congress of the IC, in April 1974, he argued that the loss of the old 'propagandists' was a necessary part of the WL's 'turn to the working class', and recommended the League's work to the other sections of the IC as an example to be emulated.

After contact with a group of former WL members, however, Healy apparently woke up to the disastrous consequences of the new turn. That he himself was directly to blame for this situation was not, of course, something that Healy could accept. Instead, Wohlforth recounts, Healy 'immediately concluded that the loss of leading members over the past year was the work of the CIA! . . . After all, as he saw it, the League was breaking up. The CIA would like to see the League break up. Therefore the CIA must be at work'. The chief agent was identified by Healy as Wohlforth's partner, Nancy Fields, on the sole basis that her uncle, with whom she had broken all relations years before, was a former CIA employee.

Healy attended the WL's summer camp in August 1974 in order to deal personally with the matter, having first sent Cliff Slaughter on ahead to check that the great leader's life would not be under threat! The purging of Wohlforth, who was essentially set up as a scapegoat for the results of Healy's own policies, was carried out at a WL central committee meeting in the middle of the night. 'Healy started the discussion charging that Nancy was an agent of the CIA,' Wohlforth writes. 'I was held responsible for not reporting Nancy's "CIA connection" . . . The comrades, who had been up since six am or earlier, were clearly bleary eyed, dazed and caught up in the isolated world of the camp with its tensions, guards and continuous discussion of the outside world in terms ever more stark and unreal. Within a few minutes an atmosphere of complete hysteria dominated the meeting. . . . Healy, with his face getting ever redder and in an extreme emotional state, dominated the proceedings. Finally it was just too much for me. I stammered that I disagreed with the entire proceedings. We were all sitting in a circle and Healy

was centre stage. He rushed up to me and shook his fists within an inch of my face shouting "I will destroy you!"

At Healy's instigation, Wohlforth was removed as WL secretary, while Fields was suspended from the League. Healy then returned to London to call a meeting of the IC which retrospectively endorsed his actions, for which he had in fact no constitutional authority whatsoever. An internal inquiry into Fields subsequently found that there was no truth at all in Healy's paranoid accusations. By this time, however, both Wohlforth and Fields had left the WL in disgust.

Another victim of Healy's arbitrary methods was L. Sklavos (Dimitri Toubanis), the secretary of the IC's Greek section, the Workers Internationalist League.⁸ In April 1975, Sklavos put forward a short draft resolution to the WIL central committee, arguing that the League's call for the immediate overthrow of the government did not correspond to the actual state of the class struggle or the existing level of political consciousness of the working class. And, to make matters worse, in an international school later that year, Sklavos had the nerve to question Healy and Slaughter's exposition of dialectics. At the WIL congress that summer, Sklavos and his supporters found themselves in a minority, and Mike Banda, who attended on behalf of the WRP, organised the removal of Sklavos as editor of the League's paper.

After being repeatedly postponed, an international discussion on philosophy was held in Athens in January 1976. Healy, who seems to have been worried that his intervention in the Workers League had too blatantly revealed his corrupt organisational practices, did not address the conference, but remained in his Athens hotel room directing operations against the opposition. Sklavos, who was refused the right to relate the disputed philosophical issues to differences over practical political questions, resigned as secretary in order to fight for his positions among the membership – and was promptly expelled for doing so! As had happened in the Thornett case, this was followed by a wholesale purge of oppositionists.

It would be a mistake to see the events of the mid-70s in the WRP and IC as representing the degeneration of what had once been a healthy revolutionary tendency. If this study of Healy's career has demonstrated anything, it is that the organisation he led was never more than a degenerate fragment of Trotsky's Fourth International. But the bureaucratic thuggery and sheer political craziness which became synonymous with Healyism certainly intensified from this time onwards. In retrospect, the only surprising thing about the collapse of Healy's organisation, which occurred a decade later, was that it did not happen long before.

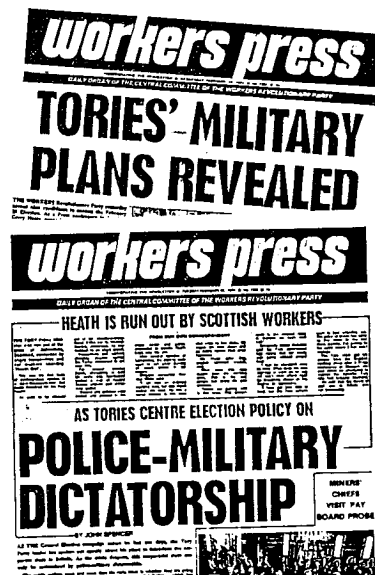
To be continued

NOTES

1. *Workers Press*, March 1, 1974.
2. *Ibid.*, March 2, 1974.
3. Thus Cliff Slaughter argued (*Workers Press*, January 8, 1974) that, if the Heath government were brought down by industrial action, 'in a general election that followed, the reformist Labour leaders would be exposed by the demand that they carry out socialist policies and by the refusal of workers to call off their action simply because Labour was elected'.
4. This account is based on the Workers Socialist League's *The Battle for Trotskyism*, Folroze, 1976.
5. When the details of this collaboration were revealed some years later by Robin Blick, Healy predictably accused the Thornett group of having conspired with the WRP's political enemies behind the backs of the party. But such conspiratorial methods were entirely justifiable, given the regime that existed in the WRP. The only criticism of the Thornett group is that, after their expulsion from the WRP, they continued to deny that they had collaborated with the Bulletin group during their factional struggle against Healy.
6. This account is based on an unpublished draft of Tim Wohlforth's 'Memoirs', and on a document by Wohlforth serialised in *Intercontinental Press*, February-March 1975.
7. *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol. 7, Labor Publications, Detroit, 1984, p. 172.
8. This account is based on a document by the Sklavos group (the Communist Internationalist League), serialised in *Socialist Press*, October-December 1976.



'Workers Press' headlines during the campaign for the first election in 1974—Healy forecast a dire outcome



WRP candidates did no better than in February, and the party's numbers continued to decline.

All the conditions for a major crisis in Healy's organisation were present, and it was not long in breaking. The catalyst was provided by a group of former SLL members linked with the French OCI – Robin Blick, Mark Jenkins and John and Mary Archer – who in January 1973 began publishing a regular *Bulletin* aimed at WRP members. Although the *Bulletin* group held an unduly positive opinion of Healy's earlier

work by Healy's sectarian ultra-leftism, and faced with a party regime which prevented any serious reassessment of the WRP's policies, Thornett and his supporters opened up discussions with the *Bulletin* group, and began with the latter's assistance to organise a faction against Healy. In September, Thornett presented a document in his own name urging a return to the Transitional Programme, which was in fact written in large part by Robin Blick. It demonstrated irrefutably that the WRP's politics had nothing in common with Trotskyism.⁵

Healy responded to this challenge with his usual anti-Bolshevik methods. Thornett's views were dishonestly misrepresented to the membership and denounced as a form of Menshevism, while *Workers Press* editorials suddenly began including the very transitional demands – sliding scales of wages and hours, etc – which Thornett had accused the WRP leadership of rejecting. As it became clear that he was incapable of answering Thornett politically, Healy abandoned any pretence of democratic procedure. In October, Tony Richardson was summoned to the party's Clapham headquarters and physi-



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Lee tones down the message

Malcolm X
Directed by Spike Lee

Review by Graham Campbell

AFTER MONTHS of hype, Spike Lee's film of the life of black revolutionary Malcolm X was released in Britain on March 5. The merchandising and publicity have been detrimental to Malcolm's legacy, with the clear intention of containing the upsurge of interest in black liberation and anti-racism. But for those who haven't read Malcolm's speeches and writings, the film – based on the 'autobiography' ghost-written by Alex Haley in 1965 – provides a basic education on the life of the man who became a symbol of liberation.

Malcolm X is an epic in the tradition of the 1940s and 1950s biopics, with Lee acknowledging his debt to directors such as William Wyler, and the Bogart and Cagney gangster films. Malcolm's politics are sometimes overshadowed by the colourful fashion statements – Lee himself is first on the screen with his usual self-parody-

ing 'cheeky chappie' character. Lee's egotism doesn't detract from the story – it merely adds to its length.

Denzel Washington is a powerhouse in the lead role, successfully portraying both sides of this incredible man despite the limitations of the screenplay. The hoodlum and drug-dealer 'Detroit Red' and later 'the angriest black man in America' are played with equal passion and sincerity.

The scenes in prison when the young hustler becomes a follower of Elijah Muhammad are unmatched anywhere else in the film for their spirit of awakening black pride. By portraying the path to black consciousness so sensitively, Lee enables the audience to begin to understand why Malcolm was attracted to the Nation of Islam.

The part of Elijah is brilliantly played by Al Freeman Jr. Elijah's misogyny and his influence over Malcolm are given full weight, as is the test of Malcolm's faith on discovering his leader's hypocrisy. However, the motive for his murder – his rejection of the NOI's passivity before the US government and its truce with the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazis – is not dealt with. At the time that the

'autobiography' was being written, Malcolm was being very diplomatic towards the Nation. On the whole, the NOI's corruption is not fully explored, possibly in deference to the present leader, Louis Farrakhan, or because of Lee's admiration for the NOI's anti-drug programme and black communal business/family strategy.

The weak portrait of Malcolm's wife, Betty Shabazz (Angela Bassett plays the part as far as it allows), and other women who had an important influence on him is Lee's major departure from the book. His own brand of bourgeois family moralising is revealed in his treatment of the female characters – the good (black) woman Laura and the bad (white) woman Sophie. In his desire to defend black 'manhood', Lee reverts to extreme male chauvinism in his general depiction of women.

For black activists and socialists, the film will be unsatisfying because of what's been left out. Words like 'socialism', 'capitalism' and 'revolution' are neither seen nor heard, and some of Malcolm's most famous speeches from 1964-65 are missing. There's some value in Lee's argument that in a three hour twenty minute film some-



Denzel Washington as Malcolm X

thing has to go, but the only parts of Malcolm's life that are dealt with fully are his early days as a hoodlum and his conversion to Islam. The most passionately delivered political message is in the speeches about racial segregation and separation.

Malcolm's break with the Nation and his evolution towards pan-Africanism and socialism are not sufficiently developed in the 25 minutes accorded to them by the film. His class analysis of 'Field and House negroes' is only half explained. Lee seeks only to provoke an emotional response – for blacks, the film's message is one of self-pride, self-respect and self-organisation; for whites, it's little apart from guilt.

The reason that Hollywood allowed this film to be made is because it doesn't tell the whole story. While it does implicate the Nation of Islam and the FBI in Malcolm's murder, it avoids looking at the politics of his last year. The scene prior to his assassination shows his Organisation of Afro-American Unity as weak and disorganised, but most black liberation and black power movements, including the Black Panthers, were directly inspired by the OAAU. Spike Lee offers no solutions, but the message that ought to be taken from his film is that the upsurge in awareness in the black community, especially among the youth, must be given organised expression in the struggle against racial oppression.

The significance of the Panthers

BOBBY SEALE, founder member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, wrote this book in 1969-70 whilst he was a political prisoner. Full of anger at the rotten capitalist system that produces the racist brutality the Panthers attempted to fight, it has lost none of its relevance or impact. That said, the new edition would have greatly benefited from a preface to set the historical scene, an index and a glossary of names.

The Black Panthers were formed in Oakland, California, in 1966, a year after Malcolm X had been murdered and two years after the Watts uprising in Los Angeles. After a slow start (a year later there were only 75 members in two chapters – LA and Oakland), the Panthers' growth was noteworthy: by 1971, 5,000 members were claimed in 45 chapters. However, only a short time later the Panthers had disintegrated under the violent attacks of the FBI and the police, who murdered Panther members and imprisoned others on false charges.

Another factor weighed against the Panthers: the existence of internal splits caused by arguments over direction and programme. These could not be mended by the courage of the young blacks who took on the armed might of the United States in a defensive war against racist oppression and poverty.

Huey P. Newton, the young leader or 'Minister of Defense' of the Panthers, articulated a ten-point programme in October 1966 that marked the beginning of the organisation. Its demands revolved around black self-determination and self-organisation. However, the Panthers made it clear that they would not tolerate any 'black racists', correctly seeing the right to self-determination as the first step to black and white unity on the basis of equal partnership. As Seale writes:

'We, the Black Panther Party, see ourselves as a nation within a nation, but not for any racist reasons. We see it as a necessity

Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton
By Bobby Seale; Black Classic Press; £9.95

Review by Jim Dye

for us to progress as human beings and live on the face of this earth along with other people. We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. And we do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism.'

This excellent approach, an advance on the previous outlooks of the civil rights groups and of the Black Power movement was, however, hampered by the fact that to the Panther leaders socialism was mistakenly seen as the Stalinist variants of Mao and Castro.

Armed self-defence was central to the Panthers' activities from the start. Making clever use of the contemporary gun laws, the Panthers openly, and legally, carried guns and set about 'patrolling the pigs'. Legally the police could do nothing, and at first had to back down from confrontations with armed groups of Panthers.

Not surprisingly, this apparent success at curtailing the racist police inspired a whole layer of black youth, who were drawn to the Panthers – dressed as they were in a stylish uniform of black leather jackets and berets, and who carried pump-action shotguns and M-1 carbines. But it soon became clear that this concentration on the dispossessed youth of the ghettos led to severe problems, for despite Newton's insistence that the gun was merely a tool for backing up the political programme and other community activities, such as providing free breakfasts for poor children, many of the youth were attracted to the power and macho image of the gun alone. Some even carried out

armed robberies in the name of the Panthers. This situation led to the leadership refusing to take more members and making over a thousand expulsions.

These were not the only problems. From the beginning, Newton had opposed the politics of the cultural nationalists, whom he saw as black racists. Among them was Stokely Carmichael, a leader of the SNCC civil rights group with which the Panthers attempted to merge in 1967. Such was the animosity that Newton was later to allege that Carmichael was a CIA agent. Hostility also existed between the Panthers and black capitalists like Ron Karenga, who owned a number of businesses and who ran the LA-based 'US' organisation. Just as black Muslim reactionaries had murdered Malcolm X, members of Karenga's nationalist outfit murdered two Panther organisers from LA.

This offers proof enough that black workers will have to deal with these black agents of the state if they are to achieve liberation; those who preach black unity across class lines ignore the fact that it was a black mayor who sent in troops to riot-torn LA last year, just as it was a black mayor in Philadelphia who fire-bombed the building of the radical black group MOVE in 1985. In fact, the real beneficiaries of the black radicalism of the late 1960s have been middle class black officials and capitalists, whose numbers have grown significantly with the introduction of anti-racist legislation. At the same time, conditions for the mass of black workers have grown worse, with the youth often seeing crime as the only possible escape from the hopelessness of the ghetto.

The Panthers split apart in 1971.



Bobby Seale (left) and Huey P. Newton

Shaken by the wave of arrests and state murders of activists, the contradictions within the group came to the surface. One section, led by Eldridge Cleaver, identified with a Maoist guerrilla strategy and sought alliances with the middle class students who had formed a small terrorist group called the Weathermen. Seale himself became close to Jerry Rubin and the Yippies, and also to the California Peace and Freedom Party (an anti-Vietnam war electoral group), and for a time the Panthers made a joint electoral pact with these middle class radicals. Despite leading Panthers advocating socialism, this process eventually led to the appalling situation of holding a national conference in which 'anti-fascists' in the Republican and Democrat parties were invited to attend.

In 1989, Huey P. Newton, who had become involved with drugs, was shot dead by a fellow dealer, a victim of the society he failed to change. Bobby Seale, who now sees himself as a 'revolutionary humanist', has become a reformist, backing the Democrats in the recent US election. Black workers and youth will draw inspiration from the struggles of the Panthers, but it is also necessary to learn from their mistakes. Only in the fight for a socialist transformation of society, a fight rooted in the working class, can racism be destroyed permanently. In this fight, Marxists must give full support to the right of black self-organisation, whilst at the same time arguing for a united struggle against the bosses. Today, it is even more necessary for us to 'seize the time'.

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Tories step up attack on unemployed

Workfare has hit the headlines again. Daniel Evans examines the reasons behind renewed Tory interest in the scheme and questions the extent of the Labour leaders' opposition to it

WITH THE official rate of unemployment at over three million, and according to most forecasts set to remain at or above that level for the rest of the decade, the Tories have revived the debate on workfare, the scheme pioneered in the United States that forces the jobless to work for their dole money.

Their reasons for doing so are obvious: not only is the recession lasting much longer than they had expected, but its impact has been to reduce Britain's manufacturing base and cut a swathe out of that great white hope for future profits – the service sector. Unwilling to invest in real jobs and training, the Tories are trying to increase productivity by cutting the workforce still further and deregulating the economy. Having decided that unemployment is here to stay, they are looking for ways to tighten social control over the unemployed and reduce state expenditure on benefits.

On February 3, John Major delivered a speech from the plush surroundings of the Carlton Club in which he gave notice that the government was reconsidering the workfare option. 'I increasingly wonder whether paying unemployment benefit, without offering or requiring any activity in return, serves unemployed people or society well,' he told the Tory audience. Explaining that the principle had already been introduced in a limited form for the long-term unemployed via the Restart scheme, he called for studies to be carried out into how to extend it.

The element of compulsion Major was referring to has been operating since July 1986. Under this ruling, anyone who refuses to attend the six-monthly Restart interviews obligatory for those out of work for more than six months can have their benefit suspended. Those unemployed for over two years have to attend a week-long course and if they refuse, their benefit for that week can be cut by 40 per cent.

From April 1, people who have been out of work for more than one year, of which there are now over a million, will find themselves eligible for the same kind of treatment. In the initial phase, 300,000 will be required to attend not one-week, but three-week courses known as Jobplan workshops, where they will be subjected to a 'skills strengths assessment'. Like the present

scheme, failure to attend will result in a 40 per cent cut in benefit for that period.

The cabinet committee chaired by Lord Wakeham, set up to consider ways of tackling unemployment, has given special consideration to the one million plus 18 to 24-year-olds on the register, 209,000 of whom have been out of work for over a year. This is the group most likely to be targeted for compulsory work or training, not out of concern for their futures,

'I increasingly wonder whether paying unemployment benefit, without offering or requiring any activity in return, serves unemployed people or society well'

John Major

but because the Tories fear the social consequences of having thousands of youth with time on their hands and no money in their pockets.

However, the Budget speech on March 16 made no mention of a broad-based work-for-benefit scheme. The £125 million training package outlined by the Chancellor includes the setting up of a new Community Action programme which will provide 60,000 part-time community places for people unemployed for over a year, but as yet there is no indication of it being compulsory.

The Tories will think very carefully before taking such a step. The US experience of workfare has proved that it is a very expensive method of 'putting the unemployed to work' – which defeats the object of the exercise as far as the government is concerned. The cost of setting up schemes, subsidising employers and topping up benefits would be far too high if extended to include a substantial portion of the unemployed.

So while Tory ministers are agreed that increasing compulsion is the goal, they are divided over how to achieve it and whether or not the result would be good for the economy. In theory, nothing would delight them more than seeing the unemployed breaking stones to

build new motorways in return for their benefit; but their aim is to cut the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, not increase it. The problem the Tories are wrestling with is how to transform the unemployed from a 'liability' into an 'asset' without bankrupting themselves in the process.

Traditionally, capitalism has relied on the 'reserve army of the unemployed' to drive down wage levels. Today, despite the fact that wages are rising more slowly than at any time in the last 25 years, this law is not functioning as effectively as the Tories would like. In order to act as a downward pressure on wages, the unemployed have to possess the skills currently in demand. But employers are reluctant to hire workers who have been away from regular work for a long time, or who may never have had a job. In some industries, and in some regions, there remains a shortage of specific kinds of labour. The long-term unemployed have ceased to be a significant factor in forcing wages down, which goes some way to explaining the growing concern of the Tories for 'training'.

Although the official position of the Labour leadership is opposition to workfare, a group within the party which includes shadow health secretary David Blunkett favours its introduction if it is tied to guaranteed training. Blunkett thinks that all unemployed 16 to 21-year-olds should do nine months' community service and calls for an end to 'paternalistic and well-meaning indulgence of the sub-culture of thuggery, noise, nuisance and anti-social behaviour'.

Part of the current concern among right-wingers, and a subject for study by the policy review commission, is that Labour is identified as the party of 'welfarism'. This is a definite drawback if you are seeking the support of Tory-voting sections of the middle class, and there are signs of a sea-change in Parliamentary Labour Party opinion on benefit entitlement in general. In a recent letter to *The Independent*, Labour MP Peter Mandelson publicly revised his view on compulsory schemes, condemning the party's 'knee-jerk' opposition to workfare and calling for 'new thinking' to replace the old slogans.

There is no doubt that the Tories will progressively introduce a more authoritarian benefits regime, but

its main aim will not be to place the unemployed on costly schemes. It will be to drive them off the register altogether and into low-paid jobs. Faced with a huge public-sector deficit, the government is putting all welfare provision under scrutiny. The PSBR is forecast to rise to £50 billion in 1993-94 and is seen by the Tories as the greatest single factor blocking the way to economic recovery. Social security, health, education and the Home Office are already under review – the privatisation of some services and swinging cuts in the rest will probably be announced later in the year. The unemployed will be one of the main targets.

- No work-for-benefit schemes!
- Benefits to be set at the level of the average wage!
- Restore benefits to 16 to 18-year-olds!
- For voluntary training and apprenticeships paid at the level of the average wage!
- Free full or part-time education to be available to all the unemployed!
- For an emergency programme of public works providing jobs at normal rates of pay!
- The trade unions must organise the unemployed!
- Demand the TUC support the building of a National Unemployed Workers' Movement!

Workfare in the '30s

LABOUR CAMPS – the words conjure up images of Nazi Germany or Stalin's Russia. It is a little known fact, however, that they existed in Britain before the Second World War.

Between 1929 and 1939, 120,000 unemployed men were processed through 27 labour camps. The scheme was the brainchild of Baldwin's Tory government in 1928. It was implemented by Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government in 1929, and had the approval of the TUC.

The camps were built in remote rural areas and were staffed by ex-army officers. The regime was strict, the conditions squalid and the training non-existent. Those selected for three months of 'hardening' were threatened with the loss of their already meagre dole if they refused to attend.

The work ranged from the mind-numbing – felling trees for eight hours at a stretch – to the mindless – digging holes and filling them in again. Fines were imposed at some camps for minor infractions of discipline, while the food was a constant source of discontent.

For the three-month duration of the 'courses', contact with the outside world – families, women, pubs, even the nearest village – was discouraged.

But despite all the efforts to break the men's will and self-respect, there was widespread resistance. Nearly a quarter of all those enrolled in the camps left early; there were strikes, sit-ins, protests and 'riots', linked sometimes to the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. NUWM activists got themselves sent to camps and organised opposition to the regime.

Even if today's advocates of workfare dress up the package differently, the thinking behind it is the same: to punish those who are unemployed as a result of capitalism's economic crisis by making them work. In a memo from the Ministry of Labour to the Treasury in 1928, camps were proposed for 'the class of men to whom our existing training schemes do not apply. I refer to those, especially among the younger men, who, through prolonged unemployment, have become so "soft" and temporarily demoralised that it would not be practicable to introduce more than a very small number of them into our ordinary training centres without danger to the morale of the centre on which the effect of the training depends'.

For more information, see Dave Colledge's *Labour Camps: The British Experience*, Sheffield Popular Publishing, 1989.