

Workers power

**Fighting for
lesbian
and gay
rights
in the 90s**

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INSIDE

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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For a workers' Europe

THE TORIES are ripping themselves apart over Europe. It is a sight for sore eyes to see these hard-bitten enemies of the working class in such disarray. But when Roy Hattersley complained that their arguments over Europe were "damaging the nation's interests" he was well wide of the mark.

Workers need their own policy on Europe. It must have nothing to do with either the anti-Europeanism of the Tory right and sections of the Labour left, or the pro-bosses' European strategy of Hattersley and Kincock.

The Tory right, backed up by papers like the *Sun*, stir up chauvinism with their ranting about the French and Germans trying to take "us" over. The elements in the Labour Party, like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, who talk about the European threats to "our" sovereignty achieve the same result. They both try to blind us to the fact that in Britain the working class has absolutely nothing in common with our bosses, except the accidents of birth that have put us all on the same island.

What sovereignty does an ordinary worker have over their lives as a result of the British state or the British Parliament? It is the British bosses who deny us any control over our work and deny us the right to a job if their economy cannot afford it. When we struggle against them they send in the police to smash up our picket lines and demonstrations. Free from any restraint by "our" parliament these bosses are allowed to shift vast sums of money all over the globe in the search for profits regardless of our burning economic needs.

British workers face all of these threats to their "sovereignty" regardless of the European Community (EC). So too do German, French, Italian workers. We face common problems inflicted on us by a common enemy—the capitalist class across Europe.

None of this means we should be fooled by Hattersley, Kincock or the pro-European Tories like Heath, into believing that the unity of Europe, within the framework of the EC and on a capitalist basis, is a solution we should support. A bosses' Europe will not change our lives for the better.

The vision of a Europe of long holidays and big new cars will remain

a mirage for the vast majority of workers. Greater co-ordination between Europe's bosses will be used to co-ordinate rationalisation plans across industries, the levelling of wages through internationally synchronised wage cuts and internationally agreed curbs on our trade union rights.

For the millions of immigrant and migrant workers in Europe 1992 will bring even greater racism and second class citizenship. Immigration controls, no political rights, the threat of expulsion will all be used to build a "fortress Europe" that will mean misery for millions of black people and for all migrants from the third world countries.

Against the moves towards a bosses' Europe we should seize every chance offered by the political and social structures of the new Europe to build a real internationalist European workers' movement, as part of the fight for international solidarity worldwide. Instead of the house-trained workers' councils offered in the Social Charter, instead of the impenetrable bureaucratic clubs of the international trade union federations we should build rank and file links, at every level, between the European workers' movements.

The lack of a real fighting interna-

tional organisation has enabled the bosses to send the workers of Europe off to kill each other twice this century with the unions and workers' parties acting as the recruiting sergeants. In the Gulf War the union federations across Europe adopted widely different responses—some opposed it, at least in words, others cheered on their rulers—but there was no united attempt to thwart the warmongers. We must not let the reformist leaders deliver us up to the profit makers of the united Europe, or condemn millions of black workers to a form of apartheid inside the borders of the EC.

Capitalism can unite Europe, but only through international rivalry, the subjection of the weak by the strong.

The great riches of the European bosses rest on the exploitation of millions in the third world. The bosses' EC seeks to intensify the life of poverty and exploitation suffered by these victims of imperialism. Great mountains of food are piled up to placate the base of the capitalist parties amongst the small farmers whilst millions starve in Africa and Asia.

Only the working class has the power and the material interest to unite Europe in a way that brings social justice and prosperity to the majority. The foot-dragging over the Social Charter, which despite being totally inadequate does include some important reforms on length of holidays, working hours and maternity

leave, shows that the bosses will not use their unity to improve our lives. Every gain we make will come from our own action, our own unity, our own internationalism.

The accomplished fact of an integrated European economy means that the "national road" to socialism once espoused by the Stalinists and Tony Benn is as reactionary, outdated and utopian as Thatcher's "Atlantic trading zone".

Against all such national solutions the approach of 1992 means, more than ever, that we have to fight under the banner of:

● A Workers' Europe in a Workers' World!

Now turn to page 3



... in a workers' world!

IN THE weeks following the 25 May "Rights for Whites" demonstration on the Thamesmead estate in south east London, the British National Party (BNP) have wasted no time in building their political profile in the area.

Letters were sent to the local press which argued for "a political party like the BNP giving a voice to the white people". South east London's news-sheet, *News Shopper*, carried five letters in one issue, with no right of reply extended to the Rolan Adams Family Campaign or any of the anti-fascist/anti-racist groups who have mobilised against the BNP.

The letters afford a valuable insight into the strategy the BNP employs in establishing itself within working class communities. Describing themselves as "the party of law and order", the fascists argue:

"We want a Britain that supports its people . . . the present government gives countless millions to foreign aid, while here in England old age pensioners are dying because they can't afford proper heating and food and the National Health Service is in a state of near collapse."

Fears

The BNP sets out to play on the fears of working class people. They tell them that the presence of Afro-Caribbean and Asian people in this country (whether immigrants or British born) is the cause of the unemployment and bad housing many working class families, especially in the poorest and most deprived areas, face today. It is an argument which served the National Front (NF) well in the mid-1970s, and one which can only be combatted by politics which draw a clear class line.

The BNP is a bosses' party. Of course it is not made up of bosses, and, at the moment the bosses do not want it in power. But, despite its populist rhetoric about the NHS and pensioners, it is a party of capitalism. Parties like the BNP and the NF have nothing to offer the white working class. They use racism to divide and weaken the working class and divert attention from the common enemy of black and white workers—the capitalist class.

All of us, black and white, lose out when hospitals and schools close and millions get thrown on the dole. In response to the BNP we should argue that our best chance of winning better housing, decent wages, jobs for all, is if we unite as a class and take the fight to those who really are to blame.

Reality

But none of this means that we can afford to ignore the reality of racism, and the increasing number of racist attacks, and raise "black and white unity" in the abstract. In areas like Thamesmead a precondition for fighting unity will be winning white workers, winning the labour movement, to active support for the black community's steps towards organised self-defence against racist attacks.

Part of the fight to build such support should have been a militant confrontation with the BNP march on 25 May. A successful confrontation would have made them far less confident about building their profile than they are at the moment. Yet this didn't happen. Instead, most political organisations operating on the estate has claimed the events on 25 May were a victory against fascism.

In the run-up to the "Rights for Whites" march, many groups and campaigns—from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to the Na-

THAMESMEAD

Beat back the racists

tional Black Caucus (NBC)—pledged themselves to physically confronting the BNP. Yet on the day they participated instead in a hastily arranged and diversionary counter-demonstration which marched away from the fascists.

For the SWP, a confrontation would have been unrealisable. They argued after the demonstration that it would only have been possible to confront the fascists had the numbers been sufficient to take on the state as well. In the present period, when the numbers prepared to challenge the fascists are small, such arguments are a permanent rationalisation for a refusal to challenge racist thugs like the BNP. If black and white anti-racists organised now to make Thamesmead

a no-go area for the fascists, the confidence and the numbers of militant anti-fascists would grow.

The self-selected leaders of the black community, principally the NBC, will brook no arguments critical of their track record to date. A document produced by Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) asked:

"How can a large number of anti-fascists marching away from a march celebrating white supremacy and rejoicing in racist murder and racist attacks be considered a success?"

At the meeting where this document was discussed it was denounced as racist. AFA and other "white left" organisations were told to "go back to your own communities", while the NBC attempts to

drag the large numbers of black youth who do want to confront the BNP down the blind alley of separatism.

All of this has given the fascists new confidence. It does nothing to build fighting unity.

In the run-up to the general election, much debate will centre around European unity and 1992. The right wing of the Conservative Party will attempt to play the racist card, conjuring up visions of

British culture being swamped by "greedy, smelly, noisy" immigrants. Already, Tory papers like the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Mail* have run scaremongering articles about Bangladeshi families "who don't speak any English" being given "rent-free Council flats". The BNP will go out of their way to benefit from such vile propaganda.

It is the duty of the labour movement to stand firm in the defence of the black communities under attack and begin to organise in the workplaces and on the estates to smash the fascists, and the system which nurtures them.

On Thamesmead the lines must be clearly drawn. The fascists on the estate must be identified, isolated and physically confronted. The Wildfowler pub must be opened to everyone or closed to all. A national campaign must be launched to close the BNP's Welling headquarters.

Any strategy which fails to mobilise the widest possible forces to confront the BNP will be doomed to do nothing more than allow the fascists' confidence to grow at our expense. ■

Manchester police protect fascists

FOR THE first time in eight years the fascists of the National Front (NF) announced plans for a public rally in Manchester's city centre on 15 June. This is yet another example of the growing confidence of the fascists in recent months.

Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), committed to a policy of no platform for fascists, called for a counter-demonstration to prevent the NF's rally taking place. Building united action to enforce no platform is crucial, and Workers Power, in the lead up to 15 June argued strongly for this in Manchester. The danger of sectarianism was revealed, however, by both *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Instead of supporting a joint action against the NF both of these groups called separate demonstrations at different times.

At least *Militant* called their's before the scheduled NF rally and in the the same area. The SWP, despite their supposed support for the

policy of no platform, called an "anti-fascist rally" for one and a half hours after the fascists were due to meet. Their hostility to a united front was revealed when they barred a supporter of Workers Power from an "open meeting" (which mysteriously became a "members only" one when our comrade turned up) despite his offer to pool information. They made it clear that they were not interested in direct action against the fascists, and even less interested in joining forces with AFA.

On the day of the rally approximately 500 anti-fascists turned up, including contingents of black, Jewish and white youth. The SWP sent along a few paper sellers, while *Militant* continued with their own event (though the march did eventually link up with the *Militant* supporters).

The fascist rally did not take place in the centre of Manchester—enough for the SWP to claim that the whole day was a victory. But it soon became clear that, under police protection, the NF were holding a rally at another Manchester venue. A group of fifty anti-fascist stewards went to intercept the NF at the station. An NF leader, Sudbury, was spotted at the station and was given police protection. Other fascists were given a police escort by car to their rally.

Ringling

The stewards did manage to put the case against fascism forcefully to one NF member on the station and as he was driven off in a police van his head was ringling with more than just the chants of "fascist scum". The involvement of working class youth from south Manchester in these actions demonstrated the potential for building a healthy anti-fascist movement in the area.

To build on this potential it is essential that AFA takes the argument for imposing no platform to the working class organisations and communities and to the big organisations on the left like the *Militant* and the SWP. Rank and file members of these groups can be won to taking direct action against the fascists. We must not let their leaders get away with obstructing effective unity in action.

We must take the challenge to them, arguing that they should abide by their formal commitments to the no platform policy. This way we can begin to build AFA as a significant force, capable of mobilising ever larger numbers of people in a workers' united front against fascism. ■



Black youth fight back against racist attacks

Solidarity with the Poll Tax prisoners

THERE ARE currently over thirty people in jail for protesting against, or not paying, the Poll Tax.

Many have been jailed as a result of frame-ups carried out during the police's "Operation Camaby" in the aftermath of the March 1990 Trafalgar Square demonstration. Others were arrested while trying to defend themselves against the police attack on the October 1990 Brixton Prison picket. All are class war prisoners that the labour movement must support.

In a letter written shortly before his release, Zac Osbourne, jailed for a year after the Trafalgar Square demo, described the effects of the Operation Camaby crackdown on his life:

"Nearly a year of my life was spent waiting to be sentenced, a year of not knowing what the fuck was going to happen, a year of total despair. Anything achieved, any roots put down, any relationship formed was destroyed by the memory of some CID bastard talking about 'two year stretches' and 'being up with the big boys'."

Over 120 police officers were involved in Operation Camaby. They were aided by journalists who were all too willing to hand over photo-

graphs, videos and film footage and by a press campaign to "name the rioters". The Operation was backed up by dawn raids on anti-Poll Tax activists across the country.

The Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign (TSDC) was set up by defendants and anti-Poll Tax unions as an emergency response to the attacks of the police and the courts. Run by volunteers who've learned as they've gone along, TSDC has provided a model example of how working class people can organise effectively to defend themselves against the machinations of the state.

As well as defending Poll Tax prisoners, TSDC has supported the Anti-Fascist Action prisoners, the Hackney Community Defence Campaign and provided legal observers for countless demonstrations. This year, through TSDC's work collecting witness statements and helping with legal defence work, there have

been over thirty acquittals in the prosecutions so far.

There are two years of the Poll Tax still to come and local authorities have, in the face of the demobilisation of the anti-Poll Tax unions, been quick to use the threat of imprisonment against non-payers.

Recently, Andy Walsh, a Trafford anti-Poll Tax activist and member of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) executive, was jailed for 14 days for non-payment. An emergency meeting was held at the BIFU conference and a decision taken to oppose the jailing of any BIFU member. Anti-Poll Tax activists should fight to commit their unions at both local and national level to action against the jailing of non-payers.

TSDC is campaigning for amnesty for all non-payers and prisoners. While fighting against the cuts in jobs and services which are the legacy of the Poll Tax, we should win all labour movement organisations to support for TSDC's call. As a TSDC statement put it:

"Every Poll Tax prisoner is held as a hostage to try to intimidate the population from joining the non-payment movement and our demonstrations. ■"

Affiliate to:
**TRAFALGAR SQUARE
DEFENDANTS' CAMPAIGN**
205 Panther House
38 Mount Pleasant
London WC1N 0AP

The Tory split on Europe

IF YOU'RE lucky enough to go abroad this year, the chances are it will be to Europe. You will find that the pound no longer zooms up and down daily on the exchange rate boards. What you find in the supermarkets is pretty much the same as in your local one. Your driving licence, cheques and even cash-till cards are good. Even your British passport is now European too.

All this is a result of the growing integration of the European economies. It reflects the massive change in Britain's economic position in the world.

In 1960 22% of Britain's imports came from the EC. Now it is over 52%. The figures are virtually the same for exports. While the USA remains top of the list of Britain's markets West Germany alone comes a close second, and the whole EC swallows up over half of Britain's exports.

Over the last five years "1992" has become the symbolic date for the completion of the "internal market" in Europe—the removal of trade and tax barriers which economists estimate will boost the European economy's performance by at least 4%. But as 1992 looms only months away the attention of Europe's rulers has turned from the economy to politics.

Europe has not one but twelve state powers. Twice this century those national imperialist powers plunged the world into war, killing tens of millions, over the question of which of them would be top dog. Today instead of shooting they are conducting their inter-imperialist rivalry by other, more peaceful means and in a different world context.

After World War Two the USA tried to construct a world market open to its goods and reflecting its unrivalled world dominance.

Today the world economy is beginning to fragment into three regional blocs with the USA, Germany and Japan at their centres. Every free trade measure in Europe is effectively a protectionist measure against

Japan and the USA. As European currencies huddle closer and closer around the Deutschmark they present a bigger challenge to the dollar as world currency.

But the rivalries lie not just between the regional blocs. A battle for supremacy within Europe is going on in the conference rooms of Brussels. It has generated a system of alliances every bit as complicated as the ones which dragged Europe into successive wars over the last 200 years.

These are the political and economic realities that are tearing the Tory Party apart, setting Thatcher and Heath at each other's throats like a pair of pit bulls, with Major looking on like a bewildered poodle.

The British ruling class is having to adapt to its new role in the world economy. The split is not between financiers and manufacturers. Both are urging the Tories to adopt a more positive stance on Europe, and have a lot to lose if they miss the boat. The economic basis of the split in Tory ranks is first of all the existence of giant multinationals like Hanson and ICI, whose main concerns lie in the USA and semi-colonial countries as well as the EC.

Secondly it is based on the fact that Britain is an imperialist power in long term decline. What pre-eminence it retained after World War Two was due to its role in the American world order. Now the patterns of trade erected in the "American Century" and the position of sterling that went alongside it have been eroded. But their ideological echoes live on in the shape of figures like Thatcher and Ridley.

Thatcher's call to replace the EC with an "Atlantic trading area stretching from the USA to the USSR" shows how little the Tory old guard's thinking grasps reality. Leave aside the inherent rivalry between Europe and the US trading bloc. The US economy itself has turned west. Its growing trade is across the Pacific and the booming sector of its economy is in California.

EDITORIAL

As one of the weakest of the old imperialisms the British ruling class has had to wage a struggle for the last two decades to defeat a strong and well organised labour movement. Now its EC partners propose for regional aid schemes, industrial subsidies and the Social Charter which, despite their totally capitalist nature, threaten to hand the battered and bruised British workers' movement some reforms.

This is the background to the new fears and arguments about Europe within the Tory party. They had hardly got used to their once proud sterling being strapped into the European Monetary System before they were asked to put their signatures to blueprints for a single currency, a federal Europe, the Social Charter and more powers for the European Parliament.

As a party the Tories are ill equipped to make the changes in outlook and direction they are being called on to make. Heseltine's full blown Europeanism cannot take charge with the Tories still in office. The present parliamentary party, and the inner power structures of the party itself, remain stacked with Thatcherites. That is why the Europe row will rumble on, with potential volcanic explosions before the election.

Labour dare not intervene in the Europe debate, despite some jeers at the Tories' difficulties. Kinnock's policy of waiting for the bosses' orders is useless when the bosses themselves cannot make up their minds. Kinnock has calculated that the best thing to do is say nothing on Europe until the bankers, businessmen and Tory journalists decide what they want. As Labour leaves workers leaderless and confused about Europe, revolutionary socialists have no hesitation in saying loud and clear:

No to every closure, every attack, every EC measure which aids the bosses in their ability to exploit us. Yes to every measure, including every capitalist reform, which helps us to struggle. Down with the Europe of class peace—it means poverty, racism and unemployment. No to a European super-state rivaling the USA as a world exploiter and world policeman. Forward to a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

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BOOTH THE stories and the statistics stretch credibility. In the last decade of the twentieth century, in an advanced industrial nation with the longest established parliamentary democracy, children can be kept in solitary confinement, out of reach of friends, family or courts.

They can be sent hundreds of miles to the other side of the country to residential schools, completely at the mercy of whoever is running these money-making concerns. Young prisoners in deep depression can be locked up and left unattended—only to be found hanged in their cells.

The entire care system fails children to such an extent that 80% of the population of Britain's jails were once children in care. This does not, however, prove that the care system causes criminality. The common factor is poverty—children from better off families infrequently end up in care and rarely in jail. It is children and young people from poor families that do so. The care system, however, fails to break the cycle of deprivation and criminalisation.

Intervene

Under the old system, about to be replaced by the provisions of the Children Act, local authorities have a duty and a right to intervene in cases where a young person is deemed "in need of care and protection" and take over the legal role of parent. This could occur in cases as diverse as parents dying, the child regularly getting into trouble with the law, or cases of cruelty. Children could also put themselves in care under certain circumstances.

Behind the pin-down scandal

BY LESLEY DAY

The problems of this system have been graphically illustrated in the scandals reported in the last few months—the Staffordshire "pin-down" scandal, the case of the Shropshire school where the head used his position of power to sexually exploit his charges, the removal of children from their families on the basis of inadequate evidence in the Orkneys.

These are the most extreme cases. Most children in care don't face that sort of treatment. Indeed, there are hundreds of dedicated, over-worked social workers and other care staff who struggle either to keep children with their families or provide something approaching a home for them in residential care. They are helped by an army of foster parents who are even more badly rewarded.

But the dedication of the staff cannot compensate for the deprivation suffered by the children and young people in their care, deprivation from two related sources: poverty and lack of rights. And the Children Act, while introducing some added legal protection for children, still leaves them at the mercy of a variety of adults and the courts.

The new Act includes the introduction of complicated court proce-

dures and the possibility that the increased emphasis on parental rights may not always act in the interests of the child. For instance, the existing provisions that allow children to "put themselves in care" will be restricted. And the weight given to children's opinion in court will depend on an assessment of their "maturity".

Oppression

Most importantly what the Act fails to do, and what capitalism cannot do, is address the question of the oppression of children and youth in general. It is this oppression that explains why children are deprived of basic rights and, all too often, left at the mercy of physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of adults.

Capitalism will not direct the resources towards a welfare system that could grant children real control over their own fate. Many social services departments are suffering cutbacks resulting from capping and long term underfunding. Without adequate resources for training social workers, providing new welfare service advice centres and so forth, the Children

Act will create a lot of new stress and strain and little improvement for children.

There will be little improvement either in residential homes unless more staff are trained. At present, there is no legal requirement that any children's home must employ even one qualified member of staff. Many are staffed by poorly paid assistant care workers. There is also a high proportion of agency staff, and many children in care can find themselves in money-making private homes, paid for by local authority fees.

No amount of changes in the courts or in legal procedures under the terms of the new Act will overcome the problems of poverty and lack of independence that children face. On these counts the Thatcher decade seriously worsened the position of children. Even Tory social security minister, Tony Newton, admits that in the last decade "there has been a widening of income differentials". In fact, they are now the widest since proper records began.

Top income earners have received £50 billion in tax cuts! But the poorest families face a desperate round of loans and scrabbling for benefit payments. In particular, families with young children have

been hard hit by the years of freezing child benefit and the cuts in levels of Income Support and Family Credit.

Children in the poorest families have the worst diets. Reading standards have fallen in poor areas. Crime figures have risen with unemployment and homelessness—and young men make up by far the biggest group convicted. Black youth in particular find themselves in prison or in youth custody and are more likely to be sent down than their white counterparts.

There are many battles to be fought now to increase children's and young people's rights—for grants, for equal pay, for democratic rights in school. It is an indictment of the trade union and labour movement that there is no young socialist organisation ready to take up these questions. Of course, Kinnock and his cohorts hate the thought of young people organising for demands which are bound to come into conflict with the Labour leadership's plans for managing the bosses' system.

Structure

The isolated family unit is the structure capitalism uses to reproduce its workforce. It chains children to that unit and opens the door to their systematic oppression and victimisation. These chains must be broken as part of the fight against capitalism itself. The cases of abuse, the scandals of mistreatment, the miserable plight of homeless inner city youth—all of these crimes against children and young people will continue so long as capitalism does. ■

FOR DECADES *Militant* justified its strategy of work within the Labour Party on the grounds that Labour can be transformed into a genuine socialist party. Workers Power has always warned that this is an illusion. Whilst supporters of our paper work in the Labour Party we have never peddled the illusion that it can be a vehicle to implement socialism. The whole history of Labour, and particularly the experience of the inner party struggles of the 1980s, has proved us right.

Now *Militant* has decided to support the tactic of standing independent candidates against the Labour Party. It supported the campaign of the Liverpool Broad Left councillors who, after being expelled from the party, successfully retained their seats in opposition to Kinnock's stooges. Following the death of Eric Heffer MP, supporter Lesley Mahmood was nominated to stand against Labour's official candidate, Peter Kilfoyle.

It is a tactic which is certain to lead to the expulsion of those supporting Mahmood. Already *Militant* supporters in Liverpool are signing people up to an organisation called "Walton Real Labour Party". *Militant* remains silent about the perspective it offers those who support Mahmood, but there can be no doubt that they are toying with the idea of a split from the Labour Party, or at least the creation of an independent organisation alongside their supporters' work in the Labour Party.

Bury

This trajectory invalidates most of the arguments *Militant* has used to brand revolutionary socialists who refused to bury themselves in the Labour Party as "sectarians". It demonstrates the complete falsification of *Militant's* previous perspectives and its leadership's utter lack of direction.

Militant's roots can be traced to the strand of Trotskyism which supported Michel Pablo in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Pablo's perspective was characterised by economic catastrophism. Capitalism was on the brink of destruction, yet there were no mass revolutionary parties to lead its revolutionary overthrow. In this situation workers would pour into their traditional organisations—the Communist and Socialist Parties—pushing them leftwards and transforming them into tools of revolutionary

change.

The task of Trotskyists was to remain within these parties until this influx happened.

Militant, under the leadership of Ted Grant, added to this perspective three unique features. First, they refused simply to dissolve themselves into the Labour left as, for example, Healy had done in the 1950s. They maintained a distinct and separate programme and publication within the Labour Party.

Secondly their programme involved an open adaptation to the reformist consciousness of Labourite workers. In Peter Taaffe's words:

"We have proclaimed hundreds, if not thousands of times that we believe that, armed with a clear programme and perspective the labour movement in Britain could effect a peaceful socialist transformation."

Finally, *Militant's* attachment to work within the Labour Party proved to be strategic when, during the mass radicalisations of the late 1960s and the breakaway of thousands of youth towards other "revolutionary" organisations, *Militant* virtually alone remained inside the party.

On the basis of these politics *Militant* evolved a perspective which was a complete departure from Marxism as a "science of perspectives". Every one of their predictions was categorical and one sided and could be summed up in *Militant's* famous assertion in 1983 that:

"The objective situation is moving in the direction of Marxism and the subjective situation as well." (British Perspectives)

Militant used to argue that the left in the Labour Party would go "from strength to strength". They predicted that their experience in winning the majority of the LPYS would be repeated in the adult party in the future.

The advance of the Labour left in the early 1980s seemed to confirm this. *Militant International Review* (MIR) argued in July 1981 that the likeliest scenario for the future was that the left would take over the Labour Party. While Workers Power pointed out the continuing hold of the right wing, and the left's propensity to make deals with the party leaders, *Militant* argued that "as events develop the right wing as an organised force will be shattered."

When the consolidation of the right received clear expression at

Militant Tendency faced with a

Militant's turn to standing candidates against Labour contradicts everything they said and did in the 1980s. It is the result of the collapse of their political perspectives, argues Richard Brenner.

the 1983 conference with the election of the Kinnock/Hattersley "dream ticket", *Militant* kept their heads buried deep in the sand. They wrote, "In reality Labour's old right wing is shattered". (MIR, November 1983)

This "analysis" was based not on a careful assessment of the situation, but on an established schema of the *Militant* leadership, namely that:

"The old Labour right is finished because, in a historical sense, their role is played out."

For *Militant*, right wing Labourite reformism only had an historical role in the period of the post-war boom, when social reforms could be won from the capitalists who were enjoying unheard of prosperity and expansion. *Militant* maintained that, with the end of the post-war boom, as the bosses turned to clawing back the gains won by the working class, the right wing would be left with no concrete role. As the 1981 MIR special put it:

"The effect of decades of reformism in a period when reforms could actually be gained on the basis of the upswing of capitalism are being swept away on the basis of the downswing of capitalism which is now developing. All the muck and encrustations on the trade unions and the Labour Party which have brought the neanderthal men to the fore will be dissolved and washed away as a result of the crisis of British and world capitalism."

This prediction was based on a misunderstanding of the very nature of reformism. The Labour Party does secure reforms, to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the period. But this is not its only or even its decisive characteristic. In Lenin's words, Labour is a bourgeois workers' party. It rests on working class support but is thoroughly pro-capitalist in its politics. It is led by a bureaucracy who have far more in common with the bosses than they do with working people.

The historic role of the Labour right wing (and its traditional left) does not depend on the availability of crumbs from the capitalists' table. It depends on the ability of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy to deliver up the working class to the capitalists, to betray workers' struggles and to use their remaining prestige to sell the bosses' policies to their worker base.

The end of the boom did not mean the withering away of the right wing. The "neanderthal men" were replaced by the slick thirtysomethings of the Kinnock clique. They have succeeded in bringing the party policy into line with the needs of the bosses in the 1990s, aban-

doning support for nationalisation, accepting the Tory anti-union laws and guaranteeing that many of Thatcher's gains over the working class will remain intact.

The notion of the automatic decline of the right wing went hand in hand with the notion of an inevitable flood of workers into the Labour Party, pushing the party to the left. The autumn 1985 edition of MIR stated boldly:

Walton REAL Labour
Vote LESLEY MAHMOOD



Walton REAL Labour
Support
LESLEY MAHMOOD
If you wish to see a socialist elected who will fight to defend jobs and oppose balliffs and services for non-payment of the poll tax... continue the tradition of... help us in the

Vote
LESLEY MAHMOOD
Walton

"The movement of workers into the Labour Party will be a reflection of the struggles in society as a whole. It is an inevitable process, that when the working class is thwarted politically, as in 1983, it turns onto the plane of industrial action, but equally when a period of struggle on an industrial level fails to lead to a fundamental transformation of the situation, workers will draw political conclusions again, first of all seeking a return of a Labour government but at a later stage in more actively participating in the party itself. From this point of view the right wing are already living on borrowed time."

Crude

This extraordinarily crude and wooden schema elaborated by *Militant* was already being falsified at the time it was published. The defeat of the industrial struggle, epitomised by the miners' strike of 1984-85, has not yet shown signs of pushing ever more workers into the Labour Party. Quite the opposite. It greatly encouraged and strengthened the right wing who have set out to prevent constituency activists playing any significant role in the party's internal life. Many wards are shrunken and moribund. The direct link between the trade unions and Labour Party conference via affiliated membership and the block vote is being consciously weakened by both sides.

Added to this the repeated betrayals of Labour, combined with the effects of defeat in atomising the advanced layers of workers,

have led to a situation where automatic working class identification with the Labour Party is shrinking, not growing.

The consequences of these errors for *Militant's* strategy and tactics are grave indeed. If the party will inevitably move to the left, if the right wing are living on borrowed time, if a mass influx of worker members is not far off, and above all if the party can be transformed into a socialist party then the conclusion is simple: stay in the party at all costs.

This completely false analysis informed *Militant's* tactics in all of

Banned!

"COME AND help Lesley win in Walton". That was the message from Mahmood's election agent, Mike Morris, in *Militant* (21 June).

But when *Workers Power* supporters turned up to take part in mass canvassing for Lesley Mahmood they were BANNED by the Broad Left organisers of the campaign.

Despite giving written assurances that *Workers Power* supporters would use the official leaflets of the campaign and abide by electoral law we were told that we were not wanted because we were... sectarians! This was after we had spent two days leafletting for Mahmood and building for her election rally.

As one *Workers Power* supporter told the election agent:

"I am a NALGO steward, a member of NALGO Broad Left, a Labour Party member under suspension for fighting the Poll Tax and my ward has just been closed down—and you turn down my help because I am a 'sectarian'?"

The real reason is not *Workers Power's* sectarianism but *Militant's*. Sectarianism means putting the

narrow needs of your own organisation before the real needs of the working class. *Militant* is putting its need to boost its own support through the campaign on the doorsteps above the need to have as many experienced canvassers as possible working for Mahmood on the streets. *Workers Power* supporters in the Labour Party travelled from Manchester, Cardiff, Sheffield and London as well as from Liverpool to support Mahmood, only to be given the brush off.

We take no pleasure in revealing this shoddy piece of manoeuvring at a time when all those involved in the campaign for Mahmood are under a vile onslaught of media lies. But to mount a real challenge to Labour the Walton Broad Left will have to learn to put aside such cynical manoeuvres.

It will not stop us campaigning on the doorsteps for Mahmood or from seeking to persuade the Broad Left to let us take part in the official campaign. But *Militant* supporters and workers in Walton should ask—is this a serious way for Marxists to run a campaign?

Militant could have led defiance of the witch-hunt before Kinnock had inflicted such powerful defeats on the Labour left. A challenge in the mid-1980s, when the witch-hunts and expulsions began, could have laid the basis for winning whole wards and constituencies to the fight for a new political party on a revolutionary socialist programme. But *Militant's* whole perspective prevented it from seeing this.

As *Militant* leaders Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn revealed in their book *Liverpool: The City that Dared to Fight*, Derek Hatton and some of his supporters raised the question of a split based around the Liverpool District Labour Party (DLP) in 1985. The *Militant* Editorial Board opposed this:

"An 'independent' DLP would undoubtedly meet with initial success, [the *Militant* Editorial Board] argued, in the short term, but would have undermined the long term struggle to transform the Labour Party in a leftward direction... They argued that for one worker who had supported the 'independent' DLP, there would be another five, ten and perhaps one hundred at a later stage who would move into the official Labour Party. These workers would be denied contact with the best fighters who would have constituted themselves into an 'independent' DLP."

Nothing demonstrates better how *Militant's* old perspective is now in tatters, and how it caused them to miss the best opportunity to regroup the forces for revolutionary socialism in struggle. For while there is certainly support for Mahmood within the Walton working class, and particularly from those council workers facing redundancy, the left in Liverpool is nothing like as strong as the 10,000 Taaffe and Mulhearn predicted could be won to a DLP-based split in 1985.

With that perspective falsified, *Militant's* leadership has begun flailing around for solutions in exactly the manner Trotsky attributed to centrist organisations.

They certainly fear being outflanked from the left by those able to work free of Labour Party legal-

capitalism into a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party.

Of course such a tendency could not co-exist for long with the Labour leaders. It would find itself the target of expulsions and witch hunts. But the fight to place demands on the Labour leaders, through whatever remains of the democratic structure of the Party, will remain an important tactic for revolutionaries for as long as masses of workers continue to hold illusions in Labour.

Lesley Mahmood is standing as the "Real Labour" candidate. Unfortunately many workers have learnt by bitter experience that the "real" Labour Party is the party of sell-outs, of spending cuts, of cringing before the bosses and international bankers, of sending working class youth off to do the killing for British imperialism.

Any attempt to regroup workers around a revolutionary banner will flounder if it peddles the myth that Labour is "really" or "essentially" a socialist party. It will rebound on those who split as workers ask:



Ted Grant

why abandon Labour if in essence it is a real socialist party, if the dominance of the Kinnockites is only a momentary blip?

Militant's tactic in Walton, therefore, is a compromise. It is playing with the possibility of a split whilst presenting that possibility as a localised and tactical question, caused by extraordinary events in Liverpool. It is facing the possibility of existence outside the Labour Party without giving a political rationalisation for the separate existence of a revolutionary party.

Call

The thousands of workers prepared to vote Mahmood, strike against a Labour council, read and discuss left wing papers, don't need to be told that Mahmood represents the "real" spirit of Labour. They need a clear call for a revolutionary organisation: a party of class fighters armed with a programme which spells out the inevitability of an armed uprising and soviets during the overthrow of capitalism.

The danger is that *Militant's* leadership will emerge from the Walton campaign with sore heads, saying "never again". Others may want to repeat the experience of Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League in the 1960s and provoke a split, setting up a carbon copy of Healy's sectarian organisation on the basis of the economic catastrophism which has always been a feature of *Militant's* perspectives.

Instead of these twin dead ends we say to all *Militant* supporters: join us in the fight for a new perspective, a new set of tactics for work both within and outside the Labour Party. Fight for a programme which refuses to hide what should be ABC for Marxists: we need a revolution to get socialism in Britain and a revolutionary party to organise it. ■

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



What is "critical support"?

AS REVOLUTIONARIES we do not believe that any Labour government, even one full of people like Tony Benn, will meet in full the burning needs of the working class, let alone open the road to socialism. The bosses' control of the economy and the state would either tame such a government or crush it.

But we cannot persuade the millions of workers who do support Labour that we are right simply through a battle of ideas. Workers learn from living experience, from struggle. They believe that electing Labour councils and a Labour government will help their struggle for a better life. They hate the Tories and recognise them for what they are—the open party of the bosses.

Workers voting against the Tories and for what they believe to be "their" party are taking a first step towards political class consciousness. We are ready and willing to take this step with them. We vote Labour with these workers in order to expose in practice that Labour too is a party of the bosses, but a disguised one, with roots in the labour movement, primarily the trade unions.

In short we want a united front with Labour supporters and we want workers to demand action, even from the likes of Kinnock, that meets their basic needs. Critical support for Labour at the ballot box is the shortest and surest road to putting the Labour traitors to the test.

Confused

We are often asked by sectarians or by confused revolutionaries from other countries: how many times will the working class have to put Labour in office before we stop using this tactic? The answer is simple: until the advanced workers begin to break, in a revolutionary direction, away from the Labour Party.

As Trotsky replied to similar questions in the 1930s:

"It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform... For us yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour." (Trotsky, *Writings* 1935-36, p199)

So why do we support Mahmood? Not because of her politics. Though sharply distinct from Kinnock's promise-nothing reformism Mahmood is standing on *Militant's* political platform which emphasises the peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Her programme is reformist too. And anyone who has been working in her election campaign will know that there is a good measure of Liverpool localism thrown in.

Mahmood's programme is tailored to reflect the left reformist aspirations of many workers in Liverpool and needs to be openly criticised as such. Neither when she is supporting a Labour victory, nor when she is standing against Kilfoyle does Mahmood speak openly about the need to fight for real working class power, rather than "office" in the Palace of Westminster.

Our support for Mahmood stems from the fact that the Broad Left has stood up to Kinnock's stooge candidate and has rejected the anti-working class cuts of the Labour group in Liverpool. Crucially it is clear that the most advanced, fighting sections of the Liverpool working class support Mahmood.

She has stood clearly on a platform of defending council jobs and

services. Both on the 18 June council workers' demonstration and in mass meetings of union branches like Liverpool's GMB 5 she has received massive and vocal support. Rank and file refuse workers and cemetery workers have been signing up to go out and work for Mahmood on the doorsteps.

The overwhelming majority of the workers who support Mahmood are not revolutionary socialists. But it is precisely because they are breaking from Kinnock's and Kilfoyle's practical reformism that Marxists need to go through this experience alongside them and help them draw revolutionary conclusions.

Blood

It is no surprise to see the self proclaimed Trotskyists of *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Action* refusing to support Mahmood. *Socialist Organiser* deny that Mahmood has any support and have called for a new selection meeting of Walton CLP. In the highly likely event of Kinnock refusing to call a new selection meeting *Socialist Organiser* has joined the *Sun*, the *Mail* and the *Liverpool Echo* in advising workers to vote Kilfoyle!

Absurdly they claim that "rivers of blood" separate Mahmood from the late Eric Heffer. Why? Because, "Heffer was a consistent anti-Stalinist. Mahmood on the other hand regards the now collapsing Stalinist states as 'workers' states' and even supported the bloody occupation of Afghanistan." (*Socialist Organiser*, 20.6.91)

This piece of "go back to Moscow" red baiting shows what a hard right outfit *Socialist Organiser* has become.

Ultimately, for revolutionaries, electoral tactics remain precisely that: tactics, means to the end of educating workers in the uselessness of reformism. That is why it would not be the "greater evil" even if Mahmood's candidacy leads to a split vote and the victory of the Liberals. Politically there is scarcely a hair's breadth of difference between Kilfoyle and the Liberals. In terms of Labour's social base, in Liverpool it has been split—not by an inner party squabble but by the fight of thousands to defend their jobs.

Likewise, if Mahmood wins, or gets a massive vote, it will be only a small blow against reformism (even if a massive blow to the egos of the leaders of *Socialist Organiser*, *Outlook*, *Action*, etc.).

It will not guarantee a single job is saved, nor will it represent an advance towards revolutionary politics by those who vote for her. They are being reassured daily that it is the real, genuine Labour tradition she represents. That is why our support for Mahmood remains critical.

But to those on the Labour left who refuse to support her, or are wavering we say: this is the acid test. Here is a candidate who represents a whole section of workers in struggle against your party. If your struggles against Kinnock are to mean anything they must mean taking sides: with the workers, with a section of councillors who have actually fought—albeit inadequately—against the council cuts and with a candidate whose challenge actually represents that struggle.

If not you may as well take your papers, magazines, "mailings", "briefings" and the rest of your self-deluding paraphernalia and dump them in the Mersey! ■

turn

cratic actions are undertaken by the right wing in the Labour Party and the trade unions could not separate Marxism [i.e. *Militant*] from the Labour Party". (MIR Special, 1981)

This masks the fact that undemocratic measures can succeed if they are not challenged through organised rank and file defiance. And it obscures a fundamental truth about the Labour Party that *Militant* has always sought to deny, namely that the right wing will take whatever bureaucratic steps they feel are necessary to stop the advance of the left in the party. It cannot be transformed. Rather revolutionaries must participate in its internal battles in order to break the vanguard away from labourism and to the fight for a new party.

Some *Militant* supporters have opposed the tactic of standing Lesley Mahmood. It is no secret that *Militant* Liverpool councillors were bounced into standing by other Broad Left councillors who were not supporters of the *Militant*. Now, with Mahmood's candidacy and the threat it would pose to all *Militant's* positions in the party, some are asking is this the tendency's "July Days" (referring to July 1917 when the Petrograd workers forced the Bolsheviks to take part in a pre-

Lesley Mahmood is standing as the "Real Labour" candidate. Unfortunately many workers have learnt by bitter experience that the "real" Labour Party is the party of sell-outs, of spending cuts, of cringing before the bosses and international bankers, of sending working class youth off to do the killing for British imperialism.

ture uprising and brought down a wave of reaction on the revolutionary party).

They are wrong, but it is understandable. After all, they draw their arguments from *Militant's* old position.

During each successive wave of witch-hunts, Workers Power demanded that wards and constituencies should uphold expelled members' rights, even in the face of threats to disaffiliate the constituency. When the leadership reduced the age limit of the LPYS and banned its conference we called for a national unofficial conference to organise defiance against Kinnock and to win the widest possible support from local parties and unions. Where democratically selected candidates for councillor or MP were overruled by Kinnock we argued that they should rally their local parties to stand against the stooge candidate. *Militant* was against all this because, they claimed, we were "playing into the hands of the right wing", we were "sectarian".

ity. The fact that after two years of mass work around the Poll Tax by *Militant*, it was the SWP which grew rapidly after March 1990, alerted them to the danger.

At the same time it has become clear that *Militant's* much vaunted MPs Nellist and Fields were themselves slipping further into the left reformist quagmire. This has been confirmed by neither Nellist nor Fields being prepared to risk withdrawal of the Labour whip in Parliament by openly backing Mahmood.

To stand Mahmood means to face the possibility of a substantial split. Those who support the campaign will inevitably be victimised, expelled, disaffiliated. What should revolutionaries do then? Do we simply say to them "give up and leave"? No. As long as the Labour Party remains a party with millions of affiliated members through union political levies then part of our work has to be a fight within it for revolutionary politics. We need to organise all those who see themselves as consistent fighters against

Class and sexuality

BACK IN 1985 it seemed that the long struggle by lesbian and gay rights' campaigners to get the labour movement to take up their cause was beginning to pay off. At Pride a record 15,000 marched, with delegations from the NUM and the miners' strike women's support groups returning the solidarity of "Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners".

Both the TUC congress and the Labour Party conference passed resolutions pledging support for lesbian and gay rights for the first time ever. The Labour controlled Greater London Council (GLC) funded the newly established London Lesbian and Gay Centre, as well as undertaking a range of other pro-lesbian and gay measures in local government and education.

These gains proved to be short-lived. In the run up to the 1987 general election Labour made plain its intention to ditch its commitments in the face of the press and Tory campaign against "loony left" councils. The TUC failed to act on its resolutions. Pride has become less and less a focus for mobilising labour movement active support for lesbian and gay rights.

Today, in the run up to another general election, Labour has diluted its promises yet again. Labour says it will outlaw discrimination. But it will not legislate the equalisation of the age of consent. It will merely allow a "free vote" in Parliament on the issue. At the recent Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) annual general meeting, the star turn was to have been Robin Cook, Labour's front bench health spokesman. He reneged on his promise and refused to attend.

The context of these retreats by the official labour movement is an increasingly homophobic atmosphere in Britain, sponsored by the Tories.

After stirring up a new wave of homophobia in the aftermath of the discovery of AIDS—which the tabloids disgracefully labelled the "gay plague"—the Tories went onto the offensive after their re-election in 1987. As part of a determined campaign to reassert the universal validity of the traditional, monogamous, heterosexual family the Tories launched a series of legal attacks on lesbians and gay men.

Prohibited

Section 28 of the Local Government Bill prohibited councils and educational authorities from "promoting homosexuality". Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill will introduce longer and more punitive sentences for homosexual "sexual offences" (namely various forms of sexual activity between consenting people—"crimes" in which there is no victim). Lesbians, and to a lesser extent gay men, are to have their right to be parents severely and legally restricted with Paragraph 16 of the Children's Act.

And against this background of legal attacks both the police and the "queerbashers" have stepped up their harassment of, and, in many cases, vicious physical attacks on lesbians and gay men. As a result of Operation Spanner fifteen gay men were prosecuted for consenting sado-masochistic sex and eight were sent down for a total of 25 years. The toll of gay men beaten to death on the streets is rising.

These attacks have been fought by thousands of lesbian and gay activists. Section 28 led to some of the biggest pro-lesbian and gay rights demos that Britain had ever seen. Trade Unionists Against Section 28 (TUAS) enjoyed some success, at the beginning of the campaign, in building on the advances that had been made in the labour

With Labour in retreat on lesbian and gay rights Mark Harrison spells out the limitations of OutRage and the politics of "direct action".



OutRage Kiss-In

movement. However, the Tories' victory in pushing through Section 28 took its toll on the activists.

The mobilisations against Clause 25 were smaller and, more importantly, it proved difficult to sustain local campaigns or build trade union support. The general mood of retreat within the labour movement made itself felt on the issue of lesbian and gay rights. In a situation where the new realist right wing leaders of both the unions and the Labour Party were falling over each other to prove to the bosses how "responsible" the labour movement had become, active support for lesbian and gay rights became harder to win.

Inevitably the combination of Tory attacks on lesbians and gay men and the retreat away from the active defence of lesbian and gay rights by the official labour movement led to debates amongst activists on how to combat the moral reaction. Many have turned their backs on any sort of class perspective and, modelling their activities on campaigns in the USA, developed separatist campaigns based on the "direct action" of a handful of activists.

Dramatic publicity stunts, "outing" famous personalities and "zapping" homophobic institutions or events have become the hallmark of campaigns like Act-Up (which centred its work around the issue of AIDS) and OutRage.

Problem

These loosely structured, direct action oriented campaigns were responding to a real problem. Insofar as we can talk about a lesbian and gay movement (fragments more accurately describes the situation) the right wing, in groups such as Stonewall, were pursuing a respectable lobbying strategy which involved shying away from a confrontation with manifestations of homophobia and bigotry.

Stonewall's answer to physical attacks was closer collaboration with the police instead of organised self-defence. Its response to legal attacks was to have a quiet word in the ear of "progressive Tories". But the left, in particular LCLGR, had

virtually ceased campaigning and was carrying out its own version of a lobbying strategy directed towards the right wing leaders of the Labour Party.

Frustration at these strategies spurred the activists who launched OutRage to adopt their high profile, action-oriented strategy. The problem is that these activists also spurn a working class orientation in favour of separatism and elevate their particular form of direct action—civil disobedience and non-violent direct action—into an all embracing strategy.

The separatist perspective of OutRage was expressed by one of its founders, Simon Watney, when he described the outcome of the political debates that shaped the organisation. The biggest struggle, he said, was "to keep the group strictly concerned with lesbian and gay issues and not to conform to anyone else's agenda". This raises immediate problems.

Lesbians and gays face a range of issues that also confront straights. Openings for unity in action around such issues—which can range from local council cuts through to media censorship—can strengthen the ability of a campaigning organisation to raise the

question of support for lesbian and gay rights amongst ever wider groups of workers. That was the positive lesson of "Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners".

To combat Clause 25 it is vital that we mobilise the organised working class. Within the framework of OutRage's exclusionist approach to other "agendas" that will prove impossible. As Jon Johnson and Peter Kent-Baguley correctly noted in the socialist lesbian and gay magazine *Rouge*:

"Thus it is that OutRage's adventurous ad hocery based on a predilection for cliché rather than analysis, leads them to publish stickers which exhort us to 'stop the straight war against queers', thus falsely elevating identity above ideology and antagonising working class heterosexuals, the very people we need in our struggle for equality."

To see the problem of homophobia in straight versus lesbian and gay terms means conceding defeat in advance. It means turning your back on large numbers of the only class in society, the working class, that has a material interest in destroying the basis of lesbian and gay oppression, capitalist class society, and the family structure integral to its continued functioning.

People are not homophobic due to natural causes. Their ideas and prejudices are shaped by the needs of the society they live in. And challenging those ideas means operating with an agenda that goes well beyond "strictly lesbian and gay issues". OutRage's failure to recognise this will lead to its failure to survive or achieve tangible gains for lesbians and gay men.

Identity

Worse, by making the question of sexual identity decisive OutRage necessarily limits its base of activists. It will hold no appeal for those who are prepared to fight tooth and nail for an end to sexual oppression, regardless of their "identity". It will alienate thousands of working class lesbians and gay men who, for countless reasons, are unable to openly assert their sexual identity. It will obstruct them from participating in action to end their own oppression. Separatism is a dangerous, elitist and self-defeating strategy.

What makes OutRage attractive at present, compared to the purely lobbying organisations, is that it is prepared to do something. This can be effective within limits. Because

class society tries to force invisibility on lesbians and gay men actions, like Kiss-Ins, like the demonstration against the Isle of Man's promotion stall at Expoship '91, can play a useful role in making the existence of lesbians and gays, and the struggle for equality and liberation, visible.

But those like Peter Tatchell who argue that such actions are the best way to fight for equality and liberation are wrong. Tatchell denounced the demonstrations of the left as "belligerent posturing" and argued for "peaceful, dignified, non-masculine protest" instead. He unwittingly summed up the uselessness of this type of action as a strategy when he wrote:

Headlines

"Nothing would better capture the headlines and provoke public debate about the rights of homosexuals than the repeated arrest and jailing of dozens of lesbian and gay rights' campaigners (all the more so if they included people like Tom Robinson, Miriam Margoyles and Jimmy Somerville)."

The idea that dozens of people, preferably celebrities, getting arrested will force the capitalist state into submission is ridiculous. We are talking about a state that can and does deploy the utmost force to preserve the laws it needs to run capitalism. It will easily be able to withstand the jailings of a few dozen activists, even if some of them happen to be singers or actors.

In other words, the direct action Tatchell is talking about is, at best, an auxiliary tactic, not a strategy to be counterposed to mass action. And if action has to be belligerent then so be it. We should remember that Pride commemorates the justifiably belligerent response of New York's gay community to police harassment. In response to the police attack on the Stonewall bar in 1969 the gay community fought the police on the streets. By being belligerent they created a milestone in the struggle for lesbian and gay rights.

Class

In the face of the Tories' attacks, and the labour movement's retreat, we should not be misled into abandoning our class analysis of lesbian and gay oppression or the centrality of a working class response to that oppression. We can begin to rebuild the fightback in two ways.

On the one hand we need to develop and extend the lesbian and gay caucuses that exist in the trade unions (NALGO, the London Underground, the CPSA etc). On the other we need to develop initiatives, such as the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition's call for a Clause 25 contingent on Pride, and for the establishment of a national campaign at a conference in July, into the focus for winning working class support for the struggle for equality and liberation.

This does not mean become lobbyists. Nor does it mean simply keeping socialist ideas alive in the pages of *Rouge*. It means setting as a key goal the mobilisation of the working class in the practical fight against all aspects of the current legal offensive. That way we can build a movement that can start to go beyond defensive struggles, towards an offensive against the mother and father of every manifestation of homophobia and bigotry—capitalism itself. ■

OUT NOW!

Lesbian and gay liberation

a Trotskyist strategy

Lesbian and Gay Liberation: a Trotskyist Strategy

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Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

ALAN BLEASDALE has an established reputation as a portraitist of working class life. Until the showing of his latest four part series, *GBH*, he has also had a thoroughly undeserved reputation as a writer sympathetic to working class struggles against the brutality of Tory Britain. The press dubbed him a "Marxist millionaire", which wounded him deeply. He has obviously set out to correct these errors with *GBH*.

Given the production costs of over £6 million, Bleasdale's cut must be in excess of the usual thirty pieces of silver. He has successfully proved that he is not and never was a Marxist, or even what passes for one in media circles. Five minutes of watching *GBH* would also convince anyone that Bleasdale never got within spitting distance of the anti-Tory struggles of the 1980s (let alone was he in danger of suffering bodily harm, grievous or otherwise).

His radical reputation rests on serialised TV plays like *The Boys from the Black Stuff* and *The Monocled Mutineer*. *Black Stuff* reflected the fate of workers marginalised, forced to work on the lump and fiddle the social security, as a result of mass unemployment in the early 1980s. But there was little radical about this series in reality. Yosser Hughes and his cronies were all deliberately painted as pathetic, incapable of resisting their misery, and, in anticipation of the characters in *GBH*, mad. It was a drama of despair.

The only references to collective struggle involved a romantic harking back to a long lost past of a heroic working class in Liverpool's docks and the exhortations of a typically caricatured "revolutionary". The only realistic survival techniques were individual "duck-

Bleasdale - from scally to scab

Mike Evans reviews Alan Bleasdale's *GBH*, Channel 4

ing and diving". The charming rogue, the "scally", was what Bleasdale really admired, as his early radio series about a local scally underlined.

The Monocled Mutineer was just such a lad. A born leader (i.e. "naturally superior") Percy Topliss, had no real commitment to the mutineers. Bleasdale showed the rank and file as easily led, easily incited and easily cowed.

In all of Bleasdale's works there lurks a strong dose of contempt for the ordinary working class person. He "knows" their habitual weaknesses and can portray them wittily at times. But he neither knows nor understands the potential strength of the working class, its collective solidarity, capacity for self-sacrifice, conscious and gladly accepted discipline.

Bleasdale shares a deep seated contempt for the working class with other Liverpool dramatists, like Willy Russell. Their stories frequently recount the odysseys of individual workers escaping from the class to higher things. But at least such stories previously involved some pointed satirical swipes at the system itself. In *GBH* there is none of this. The Tories' eight year long vendetta against

the Liverpool labour movement might as well not exist.

One of his two central characters, the villain (or is he an anti-hero?) Michael Murray, is simply a corrupt self-seeking bully at the head of a small gang of jobs. They get their way by sheer intimidation until they run into Jim Nelson, a sort of holy fool-cum-saint who loves kids, is a hypochondriac and has a phobia about bridges.

As for the background figures, the people who support Murray, they could have been taken straight from the pages of the *Sun* and the *Mirror*. They are the crudest possible witch-hunters' stereotypes. The "day of action" is voted in by a Trotskyite-manipulated Nuremberg Rally-style mass meeting.

The pickets are the rent-a-mob so dear to chief constables and Tory Home Secretaries. They jump up and down on the roof of a school for "disturbed children" as part of intimidating the courageous scab Nelson. They jog round army-style chanting, amongst other things, "fuck the rich and fuck the poor".

As for the sinister unnamed "Trotskyite" organisation, it has a quasi-fascist air. Not a whiff of realistic political motivation is allowed to intrude. The day of action

chondriac and phobic. Michael Murray has been psychologically castrated in childhood by a middle class school-girl *fatale* and beaten at school by a sadistic old Mr Chips who fancied his mother. As if this wasn't enough for one future "loony lefty" to bear his dad was a working class hero who died just before Michael was born, thus warping him even further. Phew! So that's what makes the Derek Hattons of this world tick.

This is what passes for plot, character, human interest—the lot. In fact if this series was not so useful to the Labour and Tory establishments alike and their servants in the media it would undoubtedly have received the paning it deserves. The sheer malice of the series is in itself a testimony to the fear that the workers of Merseyside still inspire in our rulers. Their struggles will still be making the bosses tremble long after the tapes of Bleasdale's film have been wiped. ■

Teamsters' rank & file

Adrian Saunders reviews
Rank and File Rebellion
by Dan La Botz, Verso, £11.95

"IT WAS like a scene from Ancient Rome in its days of decline and depravity, as Presser, an enormously fat man of some 3-400 pounds—looking like some decadent emperor, some Nero or Caligula—was carried into the hall on a sedan chair on the shoulders of four husky weightlifters dressed in the sandals and tunics of Roman centurions."

This is not a scene from a Jackie Collins novel or the climax of one of Ivana Trump's parties. It is a trade union conference.

Dan La Botz's description of union President Jackie Presser arriving at the 1986 convention shows the depths to which the once mighty International Brotherhood of Teamsters had sunk. Ever since the Second World War the union had increasingly fallen under the influence of corrupt officials and organised crime.

It was common for contracts to be settled through "sweetheart deals" and prearranged kickbacks. As long as this seemed to work to the immediate benefit of the membership (as was often the case under President Jimmy Hoffa) many Teamsters ignored the lack of democracy that went with it.

It was under Hoffa's presidency that links with the mob became increasingly prevalent. By the time he was killed by the Mafia their power and influence over the union had become virtually complete. But while his death showed the all embracing nature of gangster control, it finally sparked off a flight against it.

La Botz's book describes the 15 year long flight of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) to wrest control of the union from organised crime. At its inception TDU consisted of a tiny group of dedicated men and women who were sick of the mob, the lack of democracy, the sweetheart deals and the beating and bombing of union dissidents.

In the early years TDU activists had to display considerable courage in the face of the mob. They had only one delegate, Pete Camarata, out of 2,000 at the 1976 convention. He was the only one to dissent from electing President Fitzsimmons (in fact he

spoke for Hoffa in order to highlight his disappearance). For his pains he was beaten up at the convention hotel in full view of the delegates. La Botz chronicles the beatings, threats, red baiting and victimisation meted out to virtually all TDU activists.

At the same time TDU members pointed to the way that the internal regime caused the union to wither. Forced acceptance of deals worked out from above (it needed a two-thirds vote to reject a contract) led to the employers being able to virtually eliminate Teamster influence in wide sections of the industry. This development gathered pace with the onset of the recession and Reagan's union busting programme. This mirrors the role of the bureaucracy in Britain where class collaboration has seen membership plummet.

La Botz's book outlines in graphic detail how these union rank and filers have managed to turn the union round so that the membership can once again be proud to be Teamsters. But his concern to emphasise the patriotism, church membership and general respectability of TDU members gets a little tiresome, and indeed the book is at its weakest when analysing the politics of the reform movement inside the union.

Faced with such overwhelming hostility and violence it is not surprising that TDU looked to the legal process to help them in their struggle. But this willingness to turn to the bosses' state for assistance is a major political weakness.

In March 1989 TDU celebrated the outcome of a lawsuit which provided for the direct election of all delegates to the IBT Convention and of the international officers of the union. But at the same time the ruling allowed direct government interference into the affairs of the union. The Teamster rank and file will need to continue their long and heroic battle, but now also against all manifestations of state interference in the affairs of the labor movement.

This book is well researched and is an inspiration to read. It should also help to convince workers of the need for a militant rank and file movement in the British unions, and we recommend it to our readers. ■

Anti-Fascist Action

THE NEW pamphlet, *Anti-Fascist Action: An Introduction to London AFA*, is a timely contribution to the debate on how to combat the growing threat of fascist mobilisations around the country.

As well as explaining the background to the relaunch of London AFA in autumn 1989 (detailing both the strengths and weaknesses of the previous attempt which broke up in 1988), it clearly spells out its intention to confront fascism ideologically and physically.

This strategy, which Workers Power fully endorses, is exemplified by the wide range of activities in which AFA engage, which are well documented in the pamphlet.

AFA's successes in recent years in confronting all forms of fascist activity have attracted serious militants to the campaign. What is often overlooked, however, is the long hours of patient political work in the community which enables AFA's actions against the fascists to take place.

The preparation for the demonstration in Brick Lane in March of this year, which challenged the growth of fascist activity in the area, involved the mass leafletting of the estates, organising a public meeting in the East End, sending speakers to union meetings to raise support for the march and so on.

Similarly readers of the pamphlet will get a good idea of the efforts made by AFA to build links with working class youth: providing articles for football fanzines, organising gigs and discos to build support for the campaign's policy of denying the fascists a platform, wherever they raise their heads.

All of this activity serves to refute the dishonest allegations of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) that AFA is merely a group of "squadist" thugs whose activity consists solely of substituting their own physical challenge for any attempt to mobilise broad working class action to drive the fascists from the streets. These accusations are in reality designed to cover the SWP's own lack of commitment to consistent anti-fascist activity.

One thing that is missing from the pamphlet is a political explanation of what fascism itself is, what role the fascists play and therefore why they should be opposed physically. This is not just an academic question of concern to a handful of eggheads while the majority of the activists can be relied upon to "do the business".

If youth are not made to understand the mortal threat that fascism represents to the whole working class, then disillusionment with the Tories and Kinnock's Labour Party, coupled with the inadequacies of the main left wing

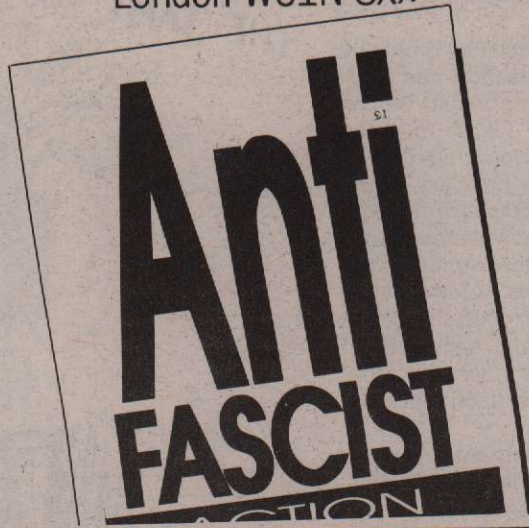
organisations, will drive unemployed youth into the arms of the Nazis.

The political project of fascism, in dividing the working class through racism, and mobilising the downtrodden, lumpen and middle class masses to smash the organisations of the labour movement, has to be explained carefully. Only in this way will the campaign's main slogans gain support from ever wider layers of youth.

The main priority for AFA must now be to win fresh layers of activists for the campaign to enable its activities to be expanded to meet the growth of fascist activity. We urge all our readers to buy and sell as many copies of this pamphlet as they can and to build AFA. ■

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The final collapse of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe arose from the developing crisis of the bureaucratically planned economies. By the mid-1970s the economies of Eastern Europe faced stagnation. In the 1980s they suffered outright decline.

The downward economic spiral undermined the regimes' political legitimacy in the eyes of the workers and the intelligentsia. Dissident movements originating in the intelligentsia, were isolated at first both by repression and the indifference or hostility of the masses. The breakthrough came in Poland where Solidarnosc—a mass workers' movement—drew into itself the whole spectrum of democratic, national and religious oppositionists. The failure of the regime to crush Solidarnosc in the years 1981-85 was of strategic importance for the whole region. It showed that if the bureaucracy were to lose control of the working class then the days of its undivided power were numbered.

Another essential factor in the events of 1989-90 was the Kremlin bureaucracy's attempt to carry out "market socialist" economic reform and to achieve a far reaching agreement with imperialism, designed to remedy the economic stagnation of the USSR. Gorbachev's barely disguised support for reform elements throughout the Eastern Bloc was intended to achieve both objectives. Gorbachev made it clear that the Kremlin had neither the will nor the means to crush the reform movements by force. The tanks would not roll to defend Husak, Zhivkov or Honecker. Moreover the democratisation process made big strides forward in the USSR itself in 1988 and the first half of 1989.

All this unleashed the revolutionary events of the events of October 1989 to January 1990. The isolated circles of dissidents found themselves at the head of millions. Gorbachev only intended to install duplicates of himself, i.e. "market socialist" reform Stalinists. He planned a carefully controlled democratisation of Eastern Europe that would leave the USSR's strategic interests safe and sound. Now he was obliged to go along with events. Quite simply a 1956 or 1968 style intervention would have wrecked Gorbachev's project in the USSR.

Thus 1988 and 1989 witnessed *pre-revolutionary situations* which exploded in the autumn and winter of 1989 into revolutionary upheavals in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania. These mass, popular and proletarian movements initially had no orientation to the goals of restoring capitalism. They were aimed, as their slogans show, at the destruction of the police dictatorship, the rule of the Stalinist parties and the punishing of those guilty of corruption.

A situation of dual power emerged in which the Stalinist regimes were unable to utilise repression. This "democratic phase" had the potential to become a proletarian political revolution.

Instead, after some months of disorientation, a social counter-revolution unfolded. This was the product of the crisis of working class leadership, not only in these countries themselves but worldwide. No powerful alternative leadership existed, armed with a programme of demands to create a workers' council democracy, to draw up a democratic workers' plan to solve the economic crisis.

As a result of the discredit that the crisis of bureaucratic planning and the repression cast on "actually existing socialism" the anti-Stalinist movements of the late 1980s were not "socialist" or "communist" like the movements of 1956 and 1968.

This crisis, and the victories of neo-liberal capitalism in the west, meant that the pro-market and "anti-communist" tendencies were predominant within oppositionist circles. The bureaucracy had lost all confidence in "planning" and sought legitimacy in marketising and nationalist ideologies. The most class conscious forces were limited to a syndicalist ideology ("workers' self-management") which accepted the triumph of the market and left the terrain of politics to bourgeois democratic pluralism. But only in Poland by the beginning of 1989 had a consciously counter-revolutionary leadership gained control over the broad masses of the working class. This triumph was not inevitable but to avoid it would have re-

Understanding proc



Lech Walesa

quired intervention by revolutionary communist forces—a Trotskyist international—if a serious conscious movement for political revolution was to develop.

In country after country during the spring of 1990 weak Stalinist regimes either gave way to coalitions with restorationist opposition forces or ceded power to them altogether. The exceptions to this were in Romania and Bulgaria where the Stalinists were able to keep the initiative for some time. However they too proclaimed themselves eager to restore capitalism.

What were the political tasks of the restorationist governments? They first had to break the resistance of the *nomenklatura* and whatever remained of its armed power. For the restoration of capitalism the power of the top layers of the bureaucracy had to be destroyed.

In the first place the Stalinist parties' decisive influence at all levels of the state and civil society had to be dissolved. In a degenerate workers' state the Communist Parties are the machinery that subordinates all political and economic life to the power of the central bureaucratic clique. The structure of this party apparatus down to its factory cells and party militia had to be destroyed. Regional secretaries, party secretaries in the enterprises, and all their attendant special party armed forces and informer networks; it is with these that the restorationists' purge of the state apparatus had to start.

The working class itself, during the revolutionary period, began much of the work of this purge. It demanded the expulsion of the party organisations from the enterprises, the disarming and the dissolution of the party militias.

However, important as the repressive apparatus was for the maintenance of bureaucratic rule, it did not constitute the nerve centre of that rule. This lay in the centralised apparatus itself, whereby the bureaucratic caste decided its objectives and reproduced itself through the *nomenklatura* system of appointment to all key decision-making posts.

This system and its personnel could not be trusted to dismantle itself. It had to be swept away by the restorationists before they could preside over a state machine reliable for the task of introducing capitalism. The Stalinists in the judiciary, army, secret police, top management of the economic ministries, and media also had to go. How far the bourgeois governments can dispense with the services of lower level (previously party-card carrying) civil servants, economic experts and technicians, without sabotaging its own need for efficient organisation, depends upon concrete circumstances in each country.

In the Balkans the revolutions and palace coups dislodged the Bonapartist familial cliques that held the *nomenklatura* itself in terror. By releasing the *nomenklatura* from the grip of a Ceausescu or a Zhivkov a process of fragmentation and ideological differentiation was started

within it. The old Stalinists are gradually being reduced to a mere rump, while the great majority strive to perform a metamorphosis into various types of social democracy with the aim of restoring a "social market" capitalism. Despite its oaths of loyalty to the market and its voluntary relinquishing of key positions in the old state apparatus the continued existence of the caste remains a hindrance to the restoration of capitalism.

The re-establishment of a capitalist state apparatus does not simply involve the taking over, in a purged form, of the old state apparatus of the degenerate workers' state. Qualitative changes in the structure of the state apparatus take place. The reintroduction of the division of labour between the executive, judicial and legislative parts of the state is vital in allowing the general interest of the capitalist class to be imposed over parts of the bourgeoisie.

To complete these tasks has required and still requires the resolution of a crisis of leadership within the bourgeois parties inherited from the revolutionary period. The multiplicity of parties was welcomed then as a triumph over dictatorship. In "normal" bourgeois democratic politics parties represent fundamental classes or serious fractions of them (and therefore serious ideological fissures within them). But the present array of parties represents the triumph of localism and regionalism or worse.

In addition the "democratic" intellectuals proposed extremely liberal electoral laws with proportional representation and low thresholds for gaining seats in parliament. Where this panoply of parties gains representation it can impede the ruthless and necessary decisions of the serious pro-capitalist parties. With continuing weak-

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difficult. Keith Harvey outlines a
process.

ness in the economies of Eastern Europe, capitalist transformation will be accompanied by ever greater strengthening of the state machine, the erosion of democratic liberties and increasingly Bonapartist forms of rule.

What are the economic tasks facing the restorationists? The economy of a degenerate workers' state is characterised by three features:

- state ownership of the decisive means of production;
- their co-ordination and functioning according to the objectives set by the ruling bureaucratic caste, which necessarily involves the suppression of the law of value within the state;
- their protection from the global operation of the law of value through a state monopoly of foreign trade.

The law of value is the fundamental objective law of the capitalist economy. Planning, state ownership and the monopoly of foreign trade are the vital measures a workers' state has to take to suppress this law and introduce production for need instead of profit.

In the restoration process it is the destruction of planning in the decisive sectors of the economy which involves the destruction of the proletarian character of the property relations. The point at which planning is destroyed is the point at which the state can no longer be called a workers' state of any kind.

ALL OF YOU AT
THE SAME TIME?



the restoration process

underway in Eastern Europe. From... and coalitions have declared their... and privatise the state run industries. ... phenomenon in history. As well as... and a programme of action for the... to analyse the process of restoration... features can we observe from the... national roads to capitalism being... leaps lie in the restoration process? ... talist and not, as yet, Poland or... rationists find easy and which more... Marxist analysis of the restoration



Vaclav Havel

of planning is not, as at first it might seem, the dissolution of the State Planning Commission or the failure to set a new annual plan. The critical moment is finally reached only when the centrally administered investment fund no longer determines the accumulation process of the industries, enterprises etc.

Under Stalinist rule the state bank did not advance credit for carrying on production on the basis of profitability. It charged no real interest rates and was unable to make a firm bankrupt. Even after the plan ceases to dictate production the state bank continues to extend free credit to keep production going. As yet no decision has been taken to allow profitability to be the deciding factor for banks, industry and commerce alike. Thus the proportions and commands of the planned economy continue to exist until the last central co-ordinating power is destroyed. When the structural reforms in the banking sector are functioning then we can say that a qualitative transformation has occurred. State monopoly capitalism exists and the rest of the process is one of deepening the new social relations (i.e. ensuring the full operation of labour power as a commodity and the end of the national wages fund).

It is at this moment that the concrete task for the restorationists boils down to the extension of the role of money into money as capital.

In a workers' state money is mainly used as money of account. Money has this function in pre- and post-capitalist societies as well as in capitalism. But money functions in capitalism above all else, and uniquely, as self-expanding money, that is, capital.

Money is converted into means of production, raw materials, labour power. In the production process surplus value is

created. If that surplus value can be realised by selling the product a profit emerges.

To arrive at this situation it is necessary to implement several inter-connected measures so that money can be freed to act as capital. Specifically the state must free prices (so that generally the market acts to create clearing prices). It must transform the nature and quantity of subsidies so that state protection against enterprise bankruptcy is removed. The state must introduce positive real interest rates and— together with the abolition of the state monopoly of foreign trade—implement currency convertibility.

In short, the new governments must transform the national economic framework to facilitate the operation of money as capital and encourage full commercialisation in the relations between the state enterprises.

The second essential ingredient in the restoration process, and one that comes chronologically after the transformation of money into money capital, is to free labour power so that it once again functions fully as a commodity. Then society becomes a society of generalised commodity production—capitalism. The ability of money to function as capital is essential but surplus value cannot arise in the circulation process. Only in production can it do that, and therefore the secret of its creation lies in the existence and nature of labour power as a commodity.

In a workers' state labour power is restricted in its movement. It is not disciplined by a reserve army of labour. The contractual relationship between the enterprise and the worker is often absent or the reverse of what one finds in a capitalist economy.

Even in states far along the road to restoration, such as Hungary, one residual element of central planning that obstructs the emergence of labour power as a commodity is the central allocation of the wages fund. This must give way to a system of plant-by-plant, or sector-by-sector pay bargaining. This must be carried out by the legally independent representatives of labour and capital so that a differentiated system of wage rates can emerge that reflect the market for labour.

Lastly the government must transform the relations of ownership of the means of production. In a degenerate workers' state property rights are vested in the state or even in organs of self-management in the enterprise. This represents the fact that the workers are the ruling class, although it may not appear that way to the working class! Property can be used but not disposed of or sold. To restore capitalism legislation must change all this and sanction the rights to possess and dispose of private property in the means of production (including the enjoyment of rent, profit, the right to hire and fire etc). It must put state force behind the enforcement of contracts between property owners. Without this legal framework no significant investment will take place.

Having sanctioned the rights of private property nearly all the restorationist forces recognise that the first form of private property will in fact be "public ownership" of the main means of production: in short, state monopoly capitalism. The bourgeois state will own the main means of production but it will prioritise the introduction of strict commercial relations between the state enterprises, while seeking at the same time to break up these monopolies as soon as possible.

The near absence of a native capitalist class, the need for the state to supervise the destruction of the inefficient means of production before imperialism will invest, and the need to sustain some kind of social stability through selective negations of the law of value, all ensure that such a phase is inevitable in the restoration process.

Moreover, in the present situation of global capital shortages and recession which are destroying more productive plants in the imperialist countries than are found in Eastern Europe the phase of restorationist state monopoly capitalism will be protracted.

The pressures for privatisation are strong because ownership changes are necessary to force changes by management at enterprise level and to encourage foreign investment. But the objective conditions are not favourable to this process.

Having destroyed the central regulatory planning mechanisms the government must go further and make the factories act in accordance with this new framework.

Often the workers "elected" the manager. The trade union/works council and the manager operated to keep employment high, prevent closures, reach targets and distribute the wages fund.

In some cases (e.g. in Czechoslovakia) these organisations are now consciously working towards privatisation. In other instances (e.g. Poland) the organisational remnants of factory life in the workers' state can serve to obstruct the plans of the managers and bourgeois forces.

This institutional resistance to the operation of the law of value has to be ended. The manager must cease to be beholden to the workers in any sense and his/her decisions have to reflect the orders of the new owners and their representatives.

This process of capitalist restoration will be a painful road for the working class of Eastern Europe. Indeed it already is. The working class is already paying bitterly for its loss of direction in the political revolutionary crisis of 1989-90.

Yet a powerful contradiction is lodged in the fact that it was the working class itself that raised the restorationists to political power. This contradiction is between interests of the class that seized the spoils of victory and interests of the class that helped it attain that victory. Now the contradiction is unfolding.

In Germany the struggle against the effects of capitalist restoration has already passed through several stages. In Poland, in the final critical stage before restoration, major sectional wages struggles have taken place. The working class is spontaneously (i.e. as yet unconsciously) resisting the transition to capitalism as its fundamental class interests dictate.

To date this resistance already displays many of the classic features of trade union resistance under capitalism; namely, sectional struggles against employers over wages and jobs. Although grievances are naturally directed at the new governments these grievances do not spill over into political demands as rapidly or spontaneously as they did in former proletarian upheavals in the Stalinist states.

Such working class resistance is inevitable. It will be a material factor in determining the pace of restoration. The development of workers' struggles to the level of a challenge to the process of restoration itself, through a conscious defence of the remaining gains of the workers' state, will remain difficult as long as the crisis of leadership of the working class remains unresolved.

Nevertheless it remains the objective of revolutionary intervention. ■



AT THE beginning of June, for the second time in less than three years, the Algerian President, Chadli, dismissed the government and declared a state of siege. The streets of Algiers were the scene of mass demonstrations against Chadli and of the bloody suppression of the demonstrators by the tanks and heavily armed troops he ordered in.

Instead of voting in the first multi-party parliamentary elections, the Algerian masses are now subject to a curfew and await the outcome of a series of negotiations between the new Prime Minister and the principal opposition party, the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), whose general strike call had led to the confrontation with the state.

This latest state of siege is the direct outcome of the events in October 1988, when Algerian youth took to the streets in a series of food riots. Bloody repression followed, leaving over 500 dead. The whole of the country was paralysed as the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) seemed about to lose its hold on power.

Threat

Faced with this threat President Chadli launched a policy of democratisation. He first assured himself of a new mandate—he was re-elected with 81% of the votes in December 1988—then legalised opposition parties in July 1989.

He also began to separate the FLN and the state, which had been effectively fused since independ-

Algeria won its independence from France in 1962. Today the tanks that are patrolling the streets of the capital, Algiers, are there on orders from the leaders of the National Liberation Front which led the struggle against the French. Algeria, as **Emile Gallet** explains, has become a classic example of imperialism's new policy of "militarised democracy" in the semi-colonies.

Algeria: state of siege

ence. In March 1989 the Popular National Army (NPA) withdrew from the Central Committee of the FLN. As the June state of siege shows, however, the army remains close to the ruling party—President Chadli himself is a Colonel in the NPA.

The undoubted victor of the whole process of democratisation is the FIS. Legalised in the September 1989, the FIS rapidly became the main opposition party. In the June 1990 municipal elections it took control in all the major towns, getting over 54% of the vote compared to only 28% for the FLN.

It was clear that the FIS would sweep the board in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 27 June 1991. Fearful of losing power, the

FLN tried to fix the election. On average, ten times as many votes were required to elect a deputy in the urban areas, which voted for the FIS in June 1990, as compared to the FLN rural strongholds!

Faced with this fix, the opposition parties called a series of protests, to no avail. The FLN was adamant. On 25 May the FIS launched a general strike, followed immediately by a 100,000 strong demonstration in Algiers under the slogans: No parliamentary elections, immediate Presidential elections, Islamic state ("Dawla islamiya") now.

Although the demonstration was a success, the strike was not. Neither the small shopkeepers, who constitute an important part of the

FIS mass base, nor the working class showed much sign of responding to the strike call.

Dissent

When it became obvious that the strike was a flop signs of dissent appeared within the FIS. A communiqué was issued from one wing of its ruling body, the Madjliss, calling for the end of the strike. The response of the leader of the FIS, Abassi, and his number two, Benhadj, was to try and provoke the government into a crackdown. They hoped to once again bring the youth onto the street in their tens of thousands. But there was no repetition of the October 1988 events. The FIS plan enjoyed only partial success.

Following the occupation of key parts of Algiers by sit-down protesters, a series of bloody confrontations broke out between police and demonstrators. On 4-5 June tear gas, molotov cocktails and automatic weapons were used. To cries of "Down with democracy", police

stations were attacked and barricades were built. Although non-fundamentalist youth were widely involved in the violence, the mass participation of October was absent. The FIS were unable to mobilise the masses behind them.

Chadli felt sufficiently threatened by these events to resort, once again, to the armed forces. An anti-democratic and repressive state of siege was installed on 5 June. The Prime Minister, Hamrouche, and his government were sacked. The tanks went onto the streets. Over twenty people were killed and the general election was cancelled "for the foreseeable future".

The FIS, sensing that it was better to quit whilst ahead, accepted the state of siege, called off the strike and before the week was out was negotiating with the new prime minister, Ghazali, over the holding of parliamentary elections.

The tanks were withdrawn from the streets of Algiers and the country settled into apparent calm, although the state of siege remained in force and the police continued to arrest FIS members, claiming that there was an armed conspiracy led by Bendhaj to launch a *coup d'état*.

The way now appears open for parliamentary elections in October, on the basis of "fair" constituency boundaries and with the FLN now no longer in control of the government. Although Ghazali is an FLN central committee member, none of the other ministers have held office in the FLN.

The FIS have strengthened themselves in this crisis and are poised for more successes when (or if) elections are called. Despite the failure of their general strike, they were able to provoke the government into a state of siege and to get the anti-democratic electoral law withdrawn. The repressive policy of the FLN has enabled the FIS to turn a fiasco of a strike into a political triumph. ■

The rise of fundamentalism

BASED ON mainstream Sunni Islam, the FIS represents a populist, reactionary response to the massive crisis affecting Algerian society. Over 60% of Algerians are under 25 years old. Unemployment is running at over 25% for the population as a whole, and is far higher amongst the youth. With no future and a hopeless present, and without any coherent radical alternative, youth have turned to the FIS as a way of demonstrating their rejection of nearly thirty years of FLN rule.

Programme

The FIS has no programme worth speaking of which could deal with the real problems of Algeria. Calls for a return to "Islamic law" will do nothing to alter the harsh economic reality of a state which, as even the resolutely pro-imperialist French newspaper *Le Monde* admitted, "is literally strangled by its external debt".

To pay back a scheduled \$6 billion in 1991, Algeria will have to borrow \$3 billion! The FLN's only solution has been to increase prices (inflation is over 30%), devalue the dinar by over 75% over the last five years and let unemployment rip.

The FIS mask the same anti-working class policies with a veneer of Islamic, populist rhetoric. So desperate is the plight of the masses, and so impoverished is political debate in Algeria, that for the moment this strategy is succeeding.

Were the FIS to come to power it

would be a disaster for all but the most privileged sections of Algerian society. Women would be among the first victims: the fundamentalists' hatred of even restricted western versions of women's liberation is renowned.

The veil would return, the sexes would be separated at school and women's democratic rights would be infringed. The non-Arab speaking minorities in Kabylie and elsewhere would be even more oppressed than under the FLN. Workers in the towns and countryside would be made to pay the price for the crisis in the name of Islam. Both the FLN and the FIS offer the Algerian masses the same solution: fake democracy backed up by the threat of army intervention, and a severe austerity programme to ensure that the imperialists' debts are repaid.

Forward

The only way forward for Algerian workers, peasants, women and youth lies in a radical break with the nationalist, religious and class collaborationist parties of both the FLN and the opposition. That means building a revolutionary party, resolutely opposed to imperialist exploitation and to indigenous capitalism. Such a party would not only fight to lead the masses against class exploitation, it would be a determined defender of workers' democratic rights, whether they come under attack from the FIS or from the FLN and its army. ■



Islam on the march

Left tail Islam

RATHER THAN opening the way to the liberation of the masses, Algerian petit bourgeois nationalism is at an impasse. The legacy of over a quarter century of "one party rule" and unbroken imperialist exploitation has created the conditions for the current wave of support for the FIS.

The prime responsibility for this situation lies with the FLN. It is their policy of Islam as a state religion which has nourished the fundamentalist monster. Their refusal to break with imperialism has led directly to the current economic disaster.

Their disdain for democracy and their appetite for military terror against the masses has led to repression and bloodshed. They are paying the electoral price. Unless a revolutionary solution is found, the final victims will be the Algerian masses themselves.

The FLN, however, are not the only factor in events. With their popular front strategy, the Stalinists have sought to tie the working class to the FLN through thick and thin—even when their own party has been banned. More recently, the self-proclaimed Trotskyists of the Parti So-

cialiste des Travailleurs (PST - affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) and the Parti des Travailleurs (PT - affiliated to the Fourth International - International Centre of Reconstruction of Pierre Lambert) have been legalised and have made a series of national interventions.

The PST have downplayed the importance of the FIS and, rather than calling for the immediate cancellation of Algeria's debt, have called for the "preparation of a world front to impose the cancellation of the debt". Although calling for "a workers' and popular front" of "anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces", the PST's programme in the economic sphere limits itself to opposing denationalisations and advancing the confused call of "progressing towards national economic integration".

Such errors, however, are as nothing compared to the opportunism of the PT. The PT's programme is strictly limited to that of "democracy" and the call for a constituent assembly. This did not stop them from actively supporting the general strike called by the FIS. In a

series of press and radio interventions, their nationally-known spokeswoman, Louisa Hanoun, repeatedly expressed the PT's support for the general strike. During the PT's second congress, held in Algiers at the end of May, Hanoun stated that the PT supported the demands of the FIS and that the strike should be supported by all the opposition parties.

Once again the "Lambertists", who like to present themselves as "orthodox" Trotskyists, have shown their real opportunism. There could be no question of revolutionaries arguing for workers to support the general strike called by the FIS explicitly for an Islamic state.

For Hanoun, who has a substantial constituency amongst Algerian women, to support the fundamentalists' strike call was a double betrayal. Any militants who believe the Lambertist's "left" rhetoric should closely examine the work of their Algerian section: from its bourgeois democratic programme to its adaptation to the FIS, this organisation has nothing to do with revolutionary politics. ■

ETHIOPIA:

Stalinism and the Derg

IN 1974 the Emperor Haile Selassie, or "King of Kings, Power of the Trinity, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Defender of the Faith, 225th descendant of the dynasty born of the biblical loves of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon" as he was known for short, presided over one of the last feudal empires in the world.

His regime, complete with a feudal court and nobility, ruled over a country where 90% of the people were peasants, 95% of the population was illiterate, where there was only one doctor for every 75,000 inhabitants and where the average calorific intake was lower than for the population of India.

The peasants were held in serf like subjection to their feudal lords, scratching a living on inadequate plots while almost half the cultivatable land remained unused, owned by the crown and the state. While millions of Haile Selassie's subjects starved in the 1973 famine he continued to feast in his palace and salt away millions in Swiss banks.

By 1974 due to sharply increasing prices and with a growing realisation of the extent of the famine across whole swathes of the country the working class and students in the capital, Addis Ababa, began to protest openly against the government.

Students marched through the capital singing the Ho Chi Minh march. The Ethiopian trade union confederation, CELU, increased its membership by 40% in two weeks to 120,000 and on 7 March 1974 it launched Ethiopia's first ever general strike.

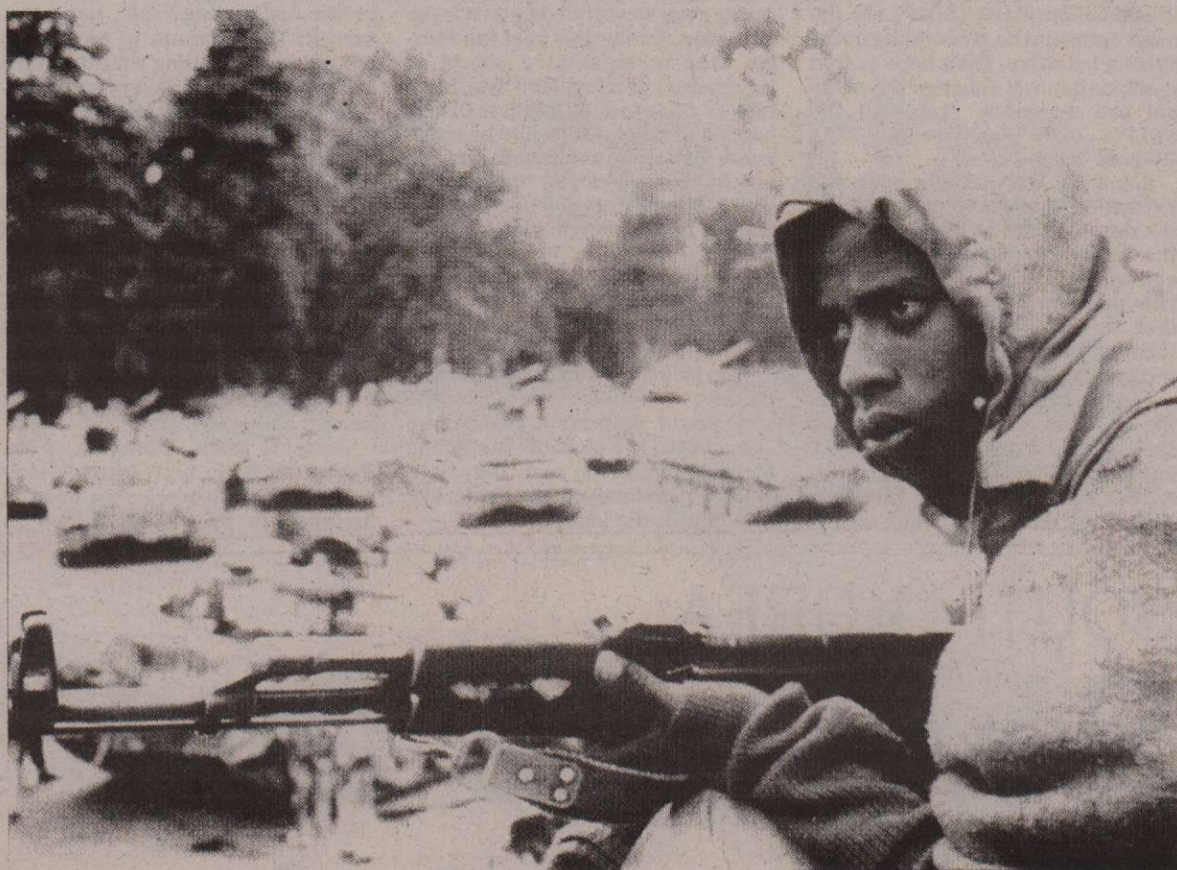
Paralysed

The regime was paralysed by a series of army revolts against the appalling conditions of the soldiers, led by NCOs and junior officers. Power fell into the hands of a politically heterogeneous group of junior army officers, the Derg (an Amharic word for committee of equals). In September 1974 the Derg finally moved against the Emperor bundling him away from the palace in an old Volkswagen.

The Derg came to power as a Provisional Military Government, promising a people's assembly to decide on a new constitution. They faced a radicalised and mobilised student and workers' movement in the towns specially in the capital, Addis Ababa. That they were able to defeat the masses in the years up to 1977 was largely due to the Stalinist misleadership of the masses.

One of the main forces on the left in Ethiopia at the time was the All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON). The Derg was forced at an early stage to make alliances with MEISON as the only way of cementing a new regime. The founders and leaders of MEISON had had their political training with the French Communist Party and, using the classic Stalinist stages theory, defined the Ethiopian revolution as a petit bourgeois and democratic one.

They argued that classes were not fully crystallised in Ethiopia and that the masses were not yet ready for a struggle for power. The Derg, they claimed, was the social force which represented the leading



EPRDF fighters move into Addis Ababa

arm of the revolution at that time. Giving critical support to the Derg, the Stalinist influenced MEISON began to turn its fire on all who opposed the military regime or demanded democratic rights, especially the left.

Certainly the depth of the popular revolution meant that the regime had to carry out some of the most radical measures ever seen in the African continent. All land was nationalised and a *Zemacha* campaign was launched in which thousands of students were dispatched into the countryside to organise the peasants into associations. The main sectors of industry and finance were nationalised. But perhaps the most far reaching move was the nationalisation of all urban land and the setting up of co-operatives to confiscate urban land from the landlords, set rents and build houses.

But at the same time that these progressive reforms were being carried out the inner military clique around Colonel Mengistu, aided by the MEISON, was consolidating its hold on power by progressively eliminating the opposition. It could only finally cement its rule by destroying the independent organisations of the workers and students.

Welcoming

The Ethiopian Trade Union Confederation, after initially welcoming the coup, found its leaders arrested for supporting moves to democracy. In September 1975 it launched a second general strike demanding an elected assembly and the immediate constitution of a democratic republic.

Workers' demonstrations were met with gunfire and CELU was dissolved by the government in December 1975. The thousands of students sent into the countryside were returned to the cities because they were stirring up too much trouble by agitating for equality and the end of landlordism.

From 1975 onwards the Derg came increasingly into conflict with the mass movement on whose crest

With the new Ethiopian government still trying to establish its authority over the whole of the country and discussing plans for a "return to democracy", Andy Simmons examines the lessons to be drawn from the revolutionary overthrow of the Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 and the dictatorship that followed it.

it had ridden to power. To remain in power it had to decisively break the civilian resistance.

In 1977 the students and workers—who were by then fiercely resisting military rule—were attacked by the Derg. Thousands were hunted down and murdered, especially members of the Maoist oriented Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party. A series of purges and killings within the army itself, especially of tendencies which looked to a compromise negotiated settlement with the Eritreans, further consolidated Mengistu's power. With no serious threat left to his rule Mengistu was able to turn on his former allies of the MEISON and liquidate them as well at the end of 1977.

From 1977 on Mengistu was the Kremlin's man in the Horn of Africa. He visited the USSR to get support against a Somali invasion and came back a "Marxist-Leninist". They supplied him with arms to suppress the population and the western Stalinist parties duly painted Mengistu as a benign and enlightened ruler who had come from the belly of his people to liberate the nation.

The chief political lesson the

Mengistu regime learned from the Soviet bureaucracy was how to use a bureaucratic party and state apparatus as a means of repressing and controlling the population. The land reforms were carried out in a bureaucratic Stalinist manner contributing to the alienation of the peasantry, while the Eritreans were joined by the Tigreans and Oromos, who also rose in revolt against what they saw as increasing Amhara domination from Addis Ababa.

Tragically for the masses of Ethiopia the revolution meant few positive changes and with the continuing secessionist wars disrupting agriculture even more, their lot has continually worsened over the years to the extent where once again millions face famine. It is not surprising therefore that the numerous rebel forces have been able to find support amongst the peasantry for their successful struggle against Mengistu.

The new government of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and its main component, the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, while professing to be Marxists, suffer from the same fatal political weaknesses as their predecessors.

Influence

Meles Zenawi, leader of the new government, is also secretary general of the Marxist Leninist League of Tigray. Under its influence the programme of the EPRDF in January contained the usual Stalinist mixture of references to the "broad masses", with explicit guarantees of a place for the "national bourgeoisie" in a provisional government. Workers' and peasants' councils, democratic planning and internationalism are all conspicuous by their absence. The only thing that is guaranteed from this government is that it will follow the trend of "perestroika Stalinism" in promoting the "free market" at the expense of the living standards of the workers and peasants.

Similarly the rebels of the Eri-

trea People's Liberation Front (EPLF) have, over the past two years, ditched much of their formal commitment to socialism. Their main strategy for achieving independence is to gain international acceptability for a UN supervised referendum. In order to get this backing they are explicitly down-playing all their old style "Marxism".

This strategy is paying off. Faced with the fact that the EPLF now controls most of Eritrea anyway the USA has just reversed over twenty years of foreign policy. It is now backing the Eritrean demand for self-determination. In return there is the promise from the main rebel groups of a free market and democratic reforms.

It is vital that the workers and peasants in Ethiopia organise independently of the EPRDF and the EPLF if they are to prevent a repetition of the events of 1974-77. They must reconstruct their union and student organisations on a genuine democratic basis. They must demand the immediate convocation of a constituent assembly which must deal with the demands of the workers, peasants and nationalities in a revolutionary, not a Stalinist, manner.

This means rejecting Amhara chauvinism and the system that spawned it. Despite the promises of the new government to respect the right of the Eritreans to decide whether they wish to remain within Ethiopia there are many within the EPRDF, especially those recruited from Mengistu's general staff, who are implacably opposed to this. Neither have any such promises been given to the Oromo people.

Demonstrate

The proletariat must demonstrate its internationalism through its opposition to any manifestation of Tigrean or Amharan chauvinism by supporting the right of all the nationalities—ruled over first by Selassie and then Mengistu—to self-determination, up to and including the right to secede.

A constituent assembly must not only grant democratic rights to the nationalities but also the workers: the right to strike, to demonstrate, to organise trade unions; the right to run and control the state industries through their own committees; the right to form their own militias to replace the EPRDF forces which will become, if it is allowed, the new repressive arm of the state to be used against the workers and peasants.

The assembly must immediately address the question of the land and the famine—land to those who work it. Peasant committees must be formed to redistribute the land and start to lay the basis for genuine co-operatives supplied with proper facilities and credit from central government.

Only through fighting for these demands and mobilising committees of workers and peasants to carry them out in practice, can the road to a genuine workers' and peasants' government in Ethiopia be opened. Only a government carrying through such a programme will represent a real break with the bankrupt history of Ethiopian Stalinism and petit bourgeois nationalism. ■

NORTHERN IRELAND

The stop-go talks

The unionists are playing brinkmanship with Peter Brooke. Nick Stone explains why.

THE UNIONIST people will feel betrayed. I will have no part in telling my people that we have to do as the Dublin government says." There are no prizes for guessing who said this.

This was Ian Paisley's latest threat to the Northern Ireland talks, after being told that a meeting between London and Dublin was to go ahead under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

It is not the first time that the talks have been on the verge of collapse. The Brooke initiative has so far stumbled over the date for talks to commence, the venue for talks and the chair for the talks.

The Brooke initiative is a serious attempt by the British bourgeoisie at a negotiated solution to the "troubles" with the "constitutional" parties.

In the North, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) are the most enthusiastic proponents of the Brooke initiative. Their hope is that participation will enhance the political and economic status of the SDLP's main constituency, the Catholic middle class.

Since the early 1960s, with the expansion of the welfare state and the development of free education, the Catholic middle class has grown considerably. Catholics now head two departments of the Northern Civil Service. The SDLP believe the talks will allow them a greater say in the running of the six county state.

For the Unionists, the talks offer the way out of the box canyon of their proclaimed policy of undermining the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In the past previous deals they didn't like, such as the

Sunningdale power-sharing agreement, were thwarted by mass loyalist action. Earlier this year Ian Paisley tried to organise a picket of Haughey's meeting with the Institute of Directors in Belfast. Only a handful of protesters could be mobilised. Paisley's continued rhetoric about the possibility of "betrayal" is widely interpreted as a cover for the degree of disunity in the Unionist camp.

In a recent interview Ken Kerr, ex-Ulster Defence Association (UDA) member and now leader of the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), said:

"I'm sick and tired of being led by the nose, of being used like the majority of protestant people are being used. The likes of Paisley and Molyneux and the rest, they have exploited ordinary protestants like myself over the years."

Kerr undoubtedly speaks for many protestant workers in denouncing the "official" voices of Unionism so forthrightly. The UDP have said:

"We believe in talking to people because no matter what happens, at the end of the day there will have to be talks."

UDA members still paint lurid "civil war" scenarios at the mention of British withdrawal but, for the moment, the pressure from below is pulling Paisley and Molyneux back to the negotiating table, not away from it. Their threats to boycott it are a way of ensuring that they can bargain from a position of strength.

In entering into a dialogue with the SDLP, Brooke hopes to undermine the political support for Sinn Féin, confining it to the hardened nationalist enclaves of West and North Belfast, South Armagh and Derry. Recent events have shown that the Tories' "agenda for peace" will be enforced at the point of a gun.

John O'Hara, a catholic from Short Strand was murdered by loyalist gunmen within days of the loyalists' announcement of the end of their murder campaign.

Recently three volunteers of the IRA—Tony Doris, Lawrence McNally and Pete Ryan—were shot dead in an ambush by British forces in

Omagh, South Tyrone. No pretence was maintained by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) that an arrest was ever contemplated. The Brooke initiative will be reinforced by the stepping up of the British State's shoot-to-kill policy.

Can the talks succeed? Can they even survive if Paisley once again retreats on his threat to boycott them? They may limp on, but the Orange state itself is designed to legitimise the oppression of the catholic working class.

Neither the Unionists nor the British, nor for that matter the Southern government, intend to do anything serious to change this. Maybe a form of power sharing can be put together. If so this will certainly help isolate the republican forces in the nationalist ghettos. But it will not end their struggle.

For as long as partition exists and is maintained by force of arms, for as long as the nationalist community is left to rot in poverty, their resistance will continue.

What is necessary is the forging of a revolutionary leadership which can build the unity in struggle of the nationalist community with its class brothers and sisters in the South as the only answer to the manoeuvrings of the Brooke initiative. ■

AT 4.00 am on the morning of 18 May, the funeral cortege of Kang Kyong-dae, a twenty year old student murdered by riot police, was blocked by 5,000 riot police on the motorway just north of Kwangju in South Korea.

It is fitting that Kang Kyong-dae, killed in an anti-government demonstration, should be buried there. Since the US-endorsed massacre in 1980 in which 2,000 workers were gunned down by the army after challenging the corrupt military dictatorship, Kwangju has become the symbolic centre of resistance in the country.

The cortege had travelled 200 miles from the capital, Seoul, despite a government ban. The previous day 10,000 braved tear gas and brutal police baton charges to march through Seoul with Kyong-dae's remains. By Friday evening another two had burnt themselves to death in protest against the regime and their comrade's murder.

As opposition leaders implored the students to go no further, the militant youth of Kwangju gathered in support of their brothers and sisters from Seoul. Thousands of well organised youth from Seoul attacked the police cordon and broke through onto the motorway, starting a pitched battle that went on for six hours. Finally the coffin was taken from under the noses of the enemy to a mass funeral at the Kwangju martyrs' cemetery.

History

The South Korean student movement has a proud history of struggle going back at least to the 1919 revolutionary nationalist resistance to Japanese imperialism. In 1960 they brought down the government. The anniversary of the Kwangju massacre has brought annual confrontations with the state forces, which the bosses cynically describe as the "riot season".

This term is used to reassure investors that resistance is marginal to South Korean society, rather than the inevitable consequence of the country's much vaunted "economic miracle". To realise the miracle post-war imperialism forced the masses to pay dearly.

Working hours in the late 1980s were the longest in the world and wages, by the government's own admission, met only 60% of workers' needs. In order to sustain the intense exploitation of the new generation of workers the country has been run by a series of military-backed dictatorships.

Democratic and trade union

SOUTH KOREA

Students and workers take on dictatorship



The new Prime Minister after meeting student protesters

rights are minimal and opposition is dealt with by a sophisticated intelligence network of 120,000 security police. When things do blow up on the streets or in the factories the government has no qualms about sending in the specially trained riot police.

But the development of the economy has also expanded the size and social power of the only class capable of destroying capitalism in South Korea: the working class. In the last forty years the peasantry has been uprooted.

Two-thirds of the population now live in the cities; only six million of the forty million population still work on the land. The centrality of the working class as a force for change and as the vanguard of all the oppressed masses of Korea was shown graphically in the events

four years ago.

The uprising of 1987 won some serious concessions from the military backed clique that runs the country on behalf of the imperialist and South Korean bosses. The student revolt acted as a catalyst that set the simmering discontent of the masses ablaze. The struggle spread like wildfire, igniting strikes in all key sections of industry. New illegal networks developed in place of the stooge company unions. The beacon of South Korean capitalism, the massive Hyundai Heavy Industries, was rocked by strikes.

The government was forced to announce relaxation of the annual anti-union laws—a promise that was never seriously carried out—and allow freedom of criticism in the press. Even the relatively conservative middle class joined

workers and students in battles with the riot police. By the government's own estimates, almost one million were involved in the fighting.

The main obstacle to the rising of 1987 maturing into full-blown social revolution is an obstacle that remains today. The leadership of the movement was a popular front, ranging from Stalinist influenced radicals to openly pro-imperialist politicians. Some of the latter were rewarded for their pleas for moderation by seats in the still viciously anti-democratic compromise government that came to power in 1988 headed by Roh Tae-woo.

The radical wing of the movement was tied to a strategy in which the struggle for the destruction of the dictatorship was limited to the goal of democratic capitalism. Conse-

quently many workers and radicals were bought off by the promises of reforms from Roh's predecessor, Chun Doo Hwen.

This year's riots have shaken the government more than any since 1987. A series of sordid political scandals have seen the sacking of two cabinet members and the dismissal of Prime Minister, Ro Jai-bong. This was despite the insistence of President Roh Tae-woo, an ex-general and former head of the notorious Defence Security Command, that he would not give in to student demands only days ago.

Within days of his appointment, the new Prime Minister, Chung Won-shik, had met the students of Seoul. They welcomed him with chants of "Down with Prime Minister Chung!" dragging him away from an appointment, beating him up and plastering him with eggs and flour in the process.

Battle

Roh's unexpectedly large victory in the local government elections suggests that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party may have won back support from conservative sections of the middle class. But though the students may have returned to the campuses for the moment, Roh's rule is far from trouble free.

Just as the government was returning to the mundane tasks of day-to-day dictatorship, 2,000 of Seoul's taxi drivers took to the streets demanding higher pay. As the riot police moved in against them, the sounds of battle and the smell of tear gas filled the air again.

Until the government is overthrown and replaced by the rule of workers' councils, until the imperialist enterprises are expropriated, until the last of the 43,000 strong US garrison is sent packing and until the country is reunified on a socialist basis, the vicious cycle of social conflict will continue. ■

IN APRIL, Gorbachev began a process of extricating himself from the embrace of the more conservative and hardline sectors of the central bureaucracy. Whilst denying a rift with the Prime Minister, Valentin Pavlov, Gorbachev has nevertheless publicly argued with him in the Soviet parliament.

He thwarted Pavlov's attempts to gain real legislative and executive power for the government. The conservatives now fear that the enhanced presidential powers they gave Gorbachev back in December will be used against them.

On the 23 April, Gorbachev reached an agreement with the nine union republic presidents in a meeting at his *dacha* near Moscow. He successfully isolated the Balkan republics, the Moldovans, the Georgians and the Armenians. Most significant amongst the nine was the agreement of the Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation. Prior to this meeting Gorbachev seemed at his most isolated.

His fall was predicted, and called for, by bureaucratic conservatives and restorationist "radicals" alike. The latter wanted him replaced by a national coalition to carry through radical reforms. The former wanted a military/KGB clampdown on the republics, the trade unions and the oppositional press and groupings. But despite the rhetoric, the marketising radicals' main target was not Gorbachev or the Bonapartist powers of the presidency. Rather, it was the cabinet ministers, the CPSU and the conservative bureaucrats at all levels.

The conservatives have a new Bonaparte in the wings, Anatoly Lukyanov, the head of the Supreme Soviet. When they called for Gorbachev to go, he was their favoured replacement. With Pavlov regarded as a "strong man", they would then impose a union-wide state of emergency. Gorbachev quickly realised that he would be the number one scapegoat for the conservatives and steered hard towards the "radicals", i.e. the more cautious nationalists.

Yeltsin had shown his indispensability and his power by encouraging, supporting and then ending the miners' strike. He had used this show of power to frighten the conservative majority in the Russian Supreme Soviet. Yet he too, if he was to be elected as Russian President, at least needed Gorbachev's neutrality. The majority

Gorbachev has done it again. He has re-aligned himself leaving the conservatives gasping and protesting. **Mike Evans** analyses the Soviet leader's latest move

Gorbachev goes to the market



of republican leaders—all those who have no realistic programme for secession—need to keep some sort of central authority to adjudicate disputes. The new Russia, under an "elected" Yeltsin would be a formidable power. For Kazakhstan and the Ukraine a counterweight was necessary.

The agreement of the nine republics plus the All-Union centre (the "Nine plus one agreement") means an entirely new constitution which will sweep away the semi-elected Supreme Soviet and all the structures that are the fortresses of the "right". It gives Gorbachev the opportunity to carry out another "legal", constitutional coup.

What did the republics, and Yeltsin in particular, extract in exchange for accepting the preservation of the union? Firstly that the centre would not impede the transfer of the great majority of all-union

enterprises to the republics. This will, if it is carried out, destroy the remaining authority of Gosplan and Gosbank over the industries of the USSR. In addition Gorbachev agreed to relinquish the centre's monopoly of foreign trade and hard currency exchange.

In addition the new constitution would legally limit the Soviet government's powers of intervention and break up all, or nearly all, of

the all-union bureaucratic structures opening all posts up to multi-party elections. Evidently a secret memorandum was signed by Gorbachev which allocated powers between the centre and republics which the latter will publish if Gorbachev reneges on the agreement.

This is the background to Gorbachev's turn once more to a yet another new plan for "market reform". This one has been drawn up by Grigori Yavlinski with the aid of a group of Harvard economists. This plan's major component is western aid. Throughout May and June Gorbachev has been demanding up to \$100 billion from the G7 states (the main imperialists) to fund a real leap for the market.

He has menaced them with the threat of his own downfall: either me or chaos. He has won himself an invitation to meet the G7 leaders.

However, Bush and Baker have made it clear that they won't be handing him a cheque for \$100 billion. Negotiations will centre on a drip feed of aid; so much for each step of the reform package plus hard undertakings from Gorbachev not to back down to conservative pressure.

The Harvard professors estimate that Gorbachev will need at least \$15 to \$30 billion dollars per annum for three years to carry out the plan. Has the USA, Germany or Japan got this kind of money and if they have will they gamble it on Gorbachev? This must be open to doubt to put it mildly. And if Gorbachev comes away from London more or less empty-handed, will he stick with the Yavlinski plan? Past records would suggest the answer is no.

Paradoxically, the USSR is back in the dilemma of last summer. There is a shaky deal between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, there is a radical plan (then it was Shatalin's 500 days). The difference is that the central government is virtually bankrupt, with a budget deficit of 250 billion roubles, as the republics refuse to forward taxation. There is a growing balance of payments deficit, inflation and unemployment are rising and production is slumping. The central planners exert little or no authority over vast areas of the economy.

Gorbachev, or his successor, can only restore order by one of two ways: by the "Nine plus one agreement" and market reforms, or by the desperate gamble of a State of Emergency. In the latter case, Gorbachev would virtually hand over power to Lukyanov and break his links with the west.

The Soviet Union is once more at the crossroads. Gorbachev has wriggled out of this dilemma twice this last twelve months. The economic situation and the political one are forcing the Soviet Bonaparte to a decision. Only one thing is certain about it. Whether it is Yavlinski's plan or Lukyanov's crackdown, it is the Soviet workers who will be the first victims.

Only the re-emergence of the proletariat from its enforced years of disorganisation and its awakening from the dream of market prosperity can resolve the crisis in a progressive direction: through a political revolution that will drive out the bureaucrats and keep out the capitalists. ■

Bolivian conference

WE ARE pleased to record that the LRCI's fraternal grouping in Bolivia has just successfully completed its second annual conference. This conference decided unanimously to request recognition as a full section of the LRCI. As well as adopting a series of important resolutions it decided to change its name from Poder Obrero (OCIR) to Poder Obrero (Bolivia). ■

● In *Workers Power 143* the article from our Peruvian comrades, "Cholera—another capitalist plague" was wrongly attributed to Julio Prieto. It was in fact written by Justo Cordova.

HUNGARY

In the slow lane to capitalism

WHEN THE October 1989 ruling Stalinist Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) conference voted to disband itself, much of the party's property was turned over to the state. Hungary was declared an independent, democratic republic in which "no one party can direct any organs of the state".

The reforming "market socialism" wing of Hungarian Stalinism, Pozsgay's Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), hoped to ride this whole process. They had a clear programme of capitalist restoration but one in which the modernising technocratic wing of the bureaucracy would direct the process from the vantage point of controlling the redundancy and being a powerful if not dominant force in a coalition government.

But the opposition, which had developed during the HSWP's unfolding and very visible crisis, prevented all attempts at an early election for the presidency. Pozsgay would have stood a good chance of winning as Hungary's

best known reformer.

In the spring the March/April elections swept the Stalinists from the last vestiges of office, and produced a solid majority for the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) and its supporters, the Independent Smallholders and the Christian Democrats. With 42.9% of the popular vote they gained 228 of the 386 deputies. The HSP were reduced to only 33 seats. The Hungarian Peoples Army declared its loyalty to the new government, accepted the retirement of half the generals and purged 1200 sergeants and NCOs.

The new government immediately set about dismantling the remnants of central planning and taking measures to promote "the market". But, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the course of capitalist restoration does not run smooth.

With much of its industry utterly uncompetitive by western standards, investment has been slow and patchy. After one year of the HDF government 90% of industry is still in state hands.

Worse, from the restorationists' standpoint, is that although subsidies and planned state orders have been abolished loans and credits have meant that the majority of enterprises have continued in the old way. Above all the banking system remains in chaos.

Although the state monobank, has been divided up into several commercial banks they have more debts than assets and would be the first victims of the bankruptcy laws if they were applied.

In short a capitalist banking system is not yet forcing the enterprises to rationalise, to lay off labour; to become profitable or perish. Consequently the levels of bankruptcies and unemployment have remained "disappointingly" low. Compared to Poland Hungary, once the showcase model of the restorationists, is now in the slow lane. It is drawing heavy criticism from its western backers.

A few showpiece factories have been bought out by western capital or privatised in a painful imitation of Thatcher-style "popular capital-

ism". The way has been opened for the workers (or managers) in an enterprise to initiate its privatisation without waiting for central government to single it out—so-called "spontaneous privatisation". Approximately 43,000 shops and restaurants are also up for grabs. But there have been few grabbers. In the main the Hungarian economy is still running, or rather running down, on the basis of the inertia of the now discarded planning mechanisms.

Two main obstacles remain to large scale investment to fuel the restoration process. The first is the lack of sizeable domestic capital, combined with the reluctance of imperialism to invest in an uncertain market. The second is the Hungarian working class itself.

Late October 1990 saw a potent reminder that the working class cannot be ignored. Petrol prices were raised by 66% overnight. A mass demonstration by taxi drivers turned into a strike by taxi and lorry drivers. Roadblocks were set up and all road transport brought to a

halt. Although rail and underground workers failed to join in, and the strike soon ended, the government was forced to back down and price rises were held to 20%.

The whole country was taken by surprise, and ridiculous comparisons with the events of October 1956 abounded. It is a bitter truth that the working class is not against the market *per se*. After years of Stalinist repression and economic stagnation they can see no alternative at the moment. But they have shown that they will not easily swallow a savage reduction in living standards and rising unemployment.

This contradiction cannot be wished away. Even in Poland, where Solidamosc has deep roots in the working class and years of practice in curbing class militancy, the restorationist government is meeting growing disillusion and resistance.

In Hungary the working class has no such experienced policeman. Spontaneous resistance can and will break out in the period ahead. ■

WHEN THE Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed right wing and left liberal intellectuals joined together to celebrate not just the fall of the dictators. Marxism itself was dead, they declared. The west had triumphed. Its liberal and market values had defeated socialism. For White House pundit, Frank Fukayama, the triumph of capitalism meant "the end of history".

Alex Callinicos' book is aimed at disproving their claims; to "deny that the death agony of Stalinism amounts to the bankruptcy of the revolutionary socialist tradition founded by Marx" (p1). Callinicos' book is a sustained attempt to grapple with the ideas of the new right, the muddled centre and the collapsing Stalinist left. It is not so much about the events in Eastern Europe but about the ideological confusion they have caused.

Callinicos tries to show how revolutionary Marxism could predict, explain and intervene progressively in the East European events. His big problem is that he tries to do so using Tony Cliff's theory of state capitalism as his guide. This reliance on the ideas of the Socialist Workers Party's leader results in a book that is a powerful critique of liberalism and "market socialist" ideas but fails in one important respect.

It is written for, and about, a period during which the attempt to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe is creating social turmoil. But Callinicos writes as if the questions being raised by the collapse of Stalinism are already resolved:

"In one respect the East European revolutions have simplified matters enormously. There can now be no doubt that we live in a single, unified world system. The illusion that there was a 'socialist third of the world', that a separate, post-capitalist socio-economic system was in the process of construction, has been destroyed, along with most of the regimes supposedly embodying that system." (p134)

Upheavels

The problem with such statements is, first, that they are premature—the social upheavals required to overthrow Stalinism in China and the USSR will shape the terrain of revolutionary struggle for the next decade. They lie ahead of us. Secondly, the disappearance of the Stalinist regimes does not "simplify matters" for the working class historically.

Cliff's theory of state capitalism accepts that "bureaucratic state capitalism" was the product of a degenerated workers' revolution. Isolated and backward Russia, Cliff and Callinicos argue, would inevitably succumb to capitalist restoration. In the 1920s this took the specific form of the Stalinist bureaucracy transforming itself into a class during the process of forced industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture.

Alex Callinicos in his new book, *The Revenge of History*, tries to answer those on the right who say socialism is finished. Paul Morris explains why his attempt suffers from being grounded in the SWP's theory of state capitalism.

State capitalist confusion



A crisis that the SWP cannot understand

Trotskyists on the other hand argue that the Stalinist counter-revolution did not involve the genesis of a bureaucratic capitalist class. The USSR remained a workers' state—its property relations remained those needed by the working class to carry out the transition to socialism. But under bureaucratic rule the transition was blocked by the bureaucracy's inability to plan effectively, and by the absence of what Trotsky called a "democracy of producers and consumers". Not only was the transition blocked; the gain made by abolishing the capitalist market was constantly threatened by the bureaucrats' inability to develop the economy, to enrich the lives of millions.

Despite his excellent critique of modern "neo-classical" pro-market economics, and of its echo in the market socialism of Alec Nove, Callinicos fails completely to get to grips with the actual problems of the transition from capitalism to socialism. This is no accident, because state capitalist theory is perpetually blind to the existence of, and the problems within, a transition period; a period after the working class takes power during which it begins to construct socialism (begins but cannot end within the borders of a single country).

Not only does Callinicos equate socialism with "the transition period from capitalism to communism" (p120) but he argues it is to be understood:

"... not so much in terms of any specific economic measures—for example the nationalisation of the means of production—but as the political framework, resting on soviet democracy, in which capitalist relations of production are progressively abolished."

Whilst this is true in the sense that the transition combines elements of socialist and capitalist economic phenomena it is not true that "specific economic measures" are optional to the transition to socialism. Industrialisation, state ownership and centralised planning are the essential components of that transition.

Immediate

These are not just theoretical differences. They have an immediate bearing on, for example, the question of which side we would take in a war between the USSR and the west (less likely now than during the cold war, but in no sense impossible). More importantly they lead to divergent positions on the question of the tasks of workers who find themselves in power in a backward and isolated country.

Finally, a wrong understanding of the concept of the transition leads the SWP to be indifferent to the economic mechanisms, established by the workers' states, as capitalism is being restored. Why cannot the economic mechanisms of nationalisation, planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade be wrenched from the bureaucracy, democratised and used by the workers in the transition period? What economic mechanisms should the working class use in the transition? Neither Callinicos nor the SWP can answer these questions except by lapsing into crude abstractions.

These problems of transition will not go away for Marxist theory just because of the collapse of Stalinism. They will reappear wherever the

working class is presented with the possibility of power.

For Callinicos the fact that Russia industrialised under the pressure of military competition and thus "subordinated consumption to production" meant that it inevitably became capitalist. "Production for production's sake was, of course, what Marx believed to be the defining feature of capitalism", he tells us (p40).

But the Trotskyist Opposition's whole struggle against bureaucratism and Stalinism was founded on a struggle for industrialisation—not the forced, autarkic (nationally isolated) industrialisation of Stalin but one which nevertheless would have subordinated the consumption of the masses to the construction of heavy industry and the modernisation of agriculture.

Callinicos, though he chronicles the unravelling of the bureaucratic plan under the twin pressures of market reform and integration into the world finance system, can only counterpose to it a pure, normative model of planning.

His chapter on "The necessity of planning" defends planning in principle. Alec Nove and his followers claim that modern society is too complex to be controlled by anything other than millions of individual decisions through the market. Against this Callinicos shows how the bureaucratic mechanism constructed by the Stalinists would always fail and contrasts it to the Marxist goal of democratic planning, involving the mass of producers and consumers.

Genuine

Likewise he is able to show how the Marxist goal of a genuine workers' council state is more democratic and more direct even than the most freely elected parliament. But the task of rescuing Marxism and defending it in the light of Stalinism's collapse cannot be completed simply by proving that our norms are not Stalinism's norms.

We have to explain what the

workers of the USSR, China and Eastern Europe could have and should have done, both against the rise of Stalinism and during its demise. Here it is no use contrasting soviets to parliament—the soviets in early 1920s Russia were only the shells of what had existed in the revolution. And it is no use contrasting democratic planning for human need against bureaucratic planning. We have to be able to explain how the working class could have coped with the tasks posed by the isolation and backwardness of the USSR.

Callinicos' book is at its weakest when analysing the course of the overthrow of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. Necessarily a provisional account (it was written in 1990) it nevertheless builds in some contemporary facts as "proofs" of the state capitalist argument only to see them contradicted by unfolding reality even before the ink has dried.

For example Callinicos asserts that the events in Eastern Europe were "political revolutions", where the "ruling class" (the bureaucracy) retained power but simply altered the form of its rule. As proof he cites the fact that the Stalinist *nomenklatura* has remained in control and in key positions of power despite the fall of the Stalinist parties:

"One noteworthy feature of the revolutions of 1989 was how little they affected the repressive state apparatus. Indeed the military in certain cases helped promote change. In Poland General Jaruzelski, the architect of the 1981 coup, and the Interior Minister and chief administrator of martial law, General Kiszczak, played a crucial role in negotiating the round-table agreement with Solidarnosc and the formation of the Mazowiecki coalition government (under which they continued to hold office)." (p57)

Survived

Awkwardly for Callinicos none of his examples survived the Polish presidential elections. Jaruzelski and Kiszczak have gone, along with the Mazowiecki regime which mistakenly thought it could restore capitalism whilst feathering the nests of the former bureaucrats. The army and Interior Ministry were purged, along with much of the state apparatus.

Of course it is not just a question of this or that individual. Trotskyists insist that the bureaucracy is not some variant of the capitalist class but a caste. That means we expect the process of the introduction of what Callinicos calls "multinational capitalism" to involve the destruction of the state machine and the whole system of the *nomenklatura*: the fusion of the state and the economy through the medium of the Stalinist party; the extraction of a surplus in the form of privileges rather than profit.

It is the Trotskyist, not the state capitalist, prediction which is being proved right, and if the process of restoration continues we will see the Polish experience repeated in the other East European states.

Callinicos' book forms part of the new literature of state capitalism that the SWP has generated in response to the crisis of Stalinism. As we show in *Permanent Revolution* 9 many of the original tenets of Cliff's theory have to be quietly forgotten in the process of making the theory fit new facts.

Nevertheless it is a book worth reading for its merits as well as its mistakes. It will undoubtedly enter the book lists of colleges as one of the best ideological defences of Marxism against triumphant neoliberalism. But as long as Callinicos fights under the banner of state capitalism there will remain gaping holes in that defence. ■

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Theoretical Journal of Workers Power (Britain) • Issue 9

Government



Workers Power splits ... its sides

THE TERRIBLE truth is out. In a major scoop the Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) have revealed that Workers Power is in a deep crisis.

Never ones to let accuracy, principled argument and truth stand in the way of a good story the RIL reproduce a letter of resignation from an ex-member of Workers Power, one Steve Masterson, written after he had joined their organisation, in the latest issue of their journal, *Revolutionary Internationalist*.

The main emphasis of the document is a detailed account of a series of disputes in which he was involved during his troubled and undisciplined time as a member of Workers Power. But it is necessary to address some of the issues raised by Masterson and the RIL. Otherwise lies that go unanswered may be accepted as truth by the unwary.

The RIL argue that during the Gulf War, Workers Power moved to the right and "adapted to the spontaneous consciousness of the working class". Masterson in his open letter writes of:

"The failure of Workers Power to stay firmly for the victory of the oppressed nation in imperialist war."

Intervention

We are justly proud of our intervention in the anti-war movement, not least because of the fact that throughout the conflict we maintained a clear line of calling for an Iraqi victory, something that we never sidelined for a single moment, let alone abandoned. On the day that the war broke out we issued a leaflet with the slogan "Victory to Iraq" prominently displayed on its front page.

On every demonstration throughout the war our members and supporters (including Masterson) carried placards bearing this and other slogans. We were the largest force on the anti-imperialist contingent on 2 February demonstration, and we took the lead both in carrying the "Victory to Iraq" banner and in leading the chants of the same slogan.

The clear and unequivocal statements for the revolutionary defence of Iraq in our propaganda did not escape the notice of our enemies. *Tribune*, the mouthpiece of the ex-left, pro-imperialists in the Labour Party, had no problem in identifying our unconditional support for Iraqi victory as the foremost example of the "explicit revolutionary defeatists". Similarly those pacifists who were so incensed by our slogans and arguments for an Iraqi victory that they offered physical violence to our members obviously knew where we stood.

The RIL quotes from an internal LRCI document to suggest that Workers Power deliberately chose not to fight for an Iraqi victory or to downplay our propaganda on this point. With characteristic slyness, they are highly selective in what they quote. The same document emphasises "the necessity for the groups of the LRCI to argue within the working class and the pacifist committees with consistent propaganda for our full position." Naturally this is not cited. It would not sit well with the distorted picture that the RIL seeks to paint.

What the RIL and Masterson really object to is that we opposed attempts to commit the pacifist committees dominated by CND, the SWP etc, to "Victory to Iraq" as a basis of the campaign. Instead we pushed for the basis to be "Troops out now, Stop the war against Iraq, Defend Arabs and Muslims against racist attack". We did not want to place a condition on those workers who would join with us in fighting the pro-imperialists within the

pacifist committees, and would fight with us for action to get the troops out, that they first had to support an Iraqi victory.

The method of the united front aimed to force a split within the peace movement over opposition to sanctions and support for withdrawal of the imperialist troops. A premature organisational split between the Iraqi defencists and the rest of the movement would merely have weakened attempts to get class action for the withdrawal of the troops, and therefore for real assistance to Iraq. Of course that in no way involved downplaying the argument for an Iraqi victory which we continued to raise in every forum throughout the war.

The RIL criticise this method as "keeping the united front together on the lowest common denominator at all times". Consistency is not their strong point. In an article entitled "Irish Solidarity: Where Next?", in the very same issue of *Revolutionary Internationalist*, they raise as the proposed anti-imperialist basis for a united front, "Troops Out Now, and Irish Self-Determination". They do not propose "Support for the IRA" as a basis for the campaign, and quite rightly so, as this would hinder the current task of building unity around anti-imperialist demands.

Should we then denounce the RIL for "dropping" or "sidelining" its support for the just struggle of the Irish resistance? Of course not. We leave such a childish method of argument to the them. Perhaps Masterson will now throw his energies into a campaign inside the RIL against its "failure to stay firmly for the victory of the oppressed nation".

Confusion

Masterson's generalised confusion, and the dishonesty of the organisation to which he now adheres, can be gleaned from numerous passages. His letter may serve to compound the fantasies of RIL members, but it departs so frequently from reality that we doubt whether it was ever intended to convince Workers Power members of anything.

Masterson fulminates against the "bureaucratic" and "undemocratic" regime in our organisation, but inadvertently reveals that we have a regular internal bulletin in which the views of all members may be freely developed. On the one hand he complains of the isolation that our "bureaucracy" imposed on him, and on the other claims (completely falsely) that he was able to convince large sections of the

membership of the justice of his arguments. Come on comrades—you can't have it both ways. Either we stifled debate or we encouraged it and he won support.

The fact that he reveals that our bulletin is open to members, even when they are suspended from the organisation for indiscipline, that material written by other tendencies may be included in the bulletin, that he was free to put resolutions critical of our majority positions at our internal meetings and conferences, that he was wholly entitled to campaign around his own views suggests that we are far from being the bureaucratic monolith that Masterson's letter suggests.

Careful readers of Masterson's tirade will note that the first sign of opportunism that he detected in our ranks was when one comrade expressed support for the slogan of the refounding of the Fourth International.

Yet Masterson's opposition to this and support for the slogan of a Fifth International is so fervent that he has joined the RIL who stand for... the regeneration of the Fourth International.

If anyone can trace a shred of logic, let alone principle, in any of this then they clearly owe a lot to the Gerry Healy school of dialectical thinking. ■

Not learning from history

Dear Comrades,

The Communist Party of Britain (CPB) recently published a pamphlet* marking the seventieth anniversary of the creation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1920.

Undoubtedly the formation of the Communist Party was an important step forward for the working class, bringing together the main revolutionary groups into a single democratic-centralist section of the Communist International.

It was an event which is certainly worthy of commemoration but what is also needed is an analysis of that party's history. Instead, the CPB's glossy pamphlet glosses over the Stalinist degeneration of the CPGB and its consequent policy twists, turns, somersaults and sell-outs.

Admittedly, it doesn't claim to be a history of the party but it does promise to describe "some of the struggles, problems and mistakes from which the party has learned". However, it's a very partial account and there's no indication that these Stalinists have learned anything at all!

There's no mention of Trotsky or Stalin and the ideological struggle they represented. According to the

pamphlet, the disastrous sectarianism of "third period" Stalinism which denounced the Labour Party and its members as "social fascists", simply "came from the Communist International". This neat formulation avoids any analysis of the policy's origins whilst implying that there is something intrinsically dodgy about an Internationalist.

In a pamphlet whose chapters are headed with significant dates the years 1956 and 1968, with their invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are completely disregarded. This is interesting considering that most of those who joined the CPB had earned themselves the nickname "tankies" due to their unqualified support for the use of the tanks on those occasions!

The pamphlet's selective coverage of international events understandably omits any reference to the Chilean "Popular Unity" experiment. The experience of this reformist "parliamentary road to socialism" with its catastrophic consequences for the Chilean working class, demonstrates the bankruptcy of the CPB's own programme, the *British Road to Socialism* (BRS). The CPB seems happy to disappear into the dustbin of history without ever

learning a single lesson from history!

Amazingly, the events in the USSR and the degenerate workers' states of Eastern, which have sent shock waves through the world Stalinist movement, are totally ignored. The CPB has failed to produce any coherent analysis of the collapse of "really existing socialism" and instead prefers to pretend that nothing significant is happening. The suggestion in the BRS that a socialist Britain would "draw inspiration from the experiences of socialism everywhere" was sick when it was adopted in 1988. It now looks positively ridiculous.

The CPB's desperate venture to avoid oblivion—the reunification of the rapidly dwindling forces of British Stalinism currently spread across three or four groups—receives barely a mention. And the pamphlet's assertion that "the CPB is now clearly the inheritor of the traditions of the seventy years of the struggle of the Communist Party in Britain" has already provoked an angry response from the New Communist Party, an enthusiastic partner in the "unity" project.

Neither the CPGB nor its Stalinist splinters have anything in common with the CPGB of 1920 or the Communist International of Lenin. Furthermore, it's obvious that they cannot be transformed into revolutionary organisations.

Amongst the members of these groups, and the thousands who have passed through them, are many who are subjective revolutionaries. But if they fail to find their way to revolutionary politics they must first make an honest appraisal of their own political tradition.

The CPB's pamphlet fails even to begin this process.

Yours in comradeship,
Bernard Harper
Leicester

**Seventy Years of Struggle: Britain's Communist Party 1920-1990*, published by the CPB, 3 Victoria Chambers, Luke Street, London EC2A 4EE. Price £1.50

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER (BRITAIN) is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class worldwide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power (Britain) is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!



Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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4 and 5

INSIDE



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LIVERPOOL

SUPPORT MAHMOOD

NEIL KINNOCK'S Labour Party is standing a candidate against the working class people of Liverpool. Kinnock's man, Peter Kilfoyle, is standing for Parliament on a programme of cutting council services, destroying council workers' jobs and hounding socialists out of the Labour Party.

Lesley Mahmood is one of 29 Liverpool Labour Councillors suspended for voting against the Poll Tax and against massive redundancies planned by the council's Labour leaders. She supports Liverpool Council workers fighting a planned 1,000 redundancies. She stands by the record of the 47 Liverpool councillors barred from office and surcharged for defying the Tory laws which say Labour councils have to attack local services. She has promised to draw the same wages as an ordinary worker if elected to Parliament.

Struggle

Lesley Mahmood is standing as a candidate of struggle—against the Tories and the Labour leaders who do the Tories' dirty work. That is why every voter in Walton and every working class person in the country should support her. Every Labour Party member and trade unionist should raise support for Lesley in their organisations and stand by to defend those who support her against a new Labour witch-hunt.

Now is the time for all those Labour MPs who talk left to act left. It is scandalous that self-proclaimed left MPs like Eddie Loyden and even so-called "Militants" Terry Fields and Dave Nellist refuse to come out and back Lesley Mahmood. Benn, Skinner, Jeremy Corbyn and all the others who like to make a big show of opposing Kinnock in Parliament and on television programmes should get out in the streets to build support for Lesley Mahmood's campaign.

Supporters

Many Labour supporters will be asking: is it worth challenging Kinnock's man? Shouldn't we be concentrating on the fight against the Tories? What happens if Mahmood splits the vote and lets the Liberals win?

In the next twelve months there will be a general election. Millions of people, sick of the Tory

attacks on the NHS, sick of rising unemployment, sick of decaying housing, transport and amenities will vote for Labour.

But if Kinnock is elected he will implement a political programme essentially no different to John Major's. He will leave the privatised industries in the hands of the profiteers, he will leave most of the anti-union laws on the statute books. Kinnock, and the trade union leaders who support him, are trying to sell this deal on the basis that there's no alternative.

Supporting Lesley Mahmood will show millions of voters there is an alternative: being prepared to fight back, to break the law where the law is designed to break us. It will send a clear message to Neil Kinnock: he can expect a rough ride from organised workers if he tries to carry on the Thatcher and Major legacy of attacking jobs, services and living standards.

Shouldn't we unite to fight the Tories? It is the Labour leadership which has refused to do that. When the miners fought the Tories Kinnock condemned them. When Liverpool Council fought the Tories Labour expelled those who led the fight. When over 100,000 marched to defy the Poll Tax, and up to eight million refused to pay it, Labour's leadership rushed to dissociate themselves from the movement.

Candidate

Of course, in the general election, where there is no class struggle candidate we should continue to support Labour. But in Liverpool, where Labour is in office and workers are fighting back already we say support the candidate who stands with the workers against the Tories and against the Labour traitors.

What if voting Mahmood lets the Liberal in? There is no guarantee that this will happen. Broad Left candidates won five out of six council seats in the May council elections in Liverpool. The best way of keeping the Liberals out is to go out on the doorsteps and convince thousands to vote for Mahmood.

But if the confusion sown by the Labour leaders, and the extremely short time they have allowed for the election campaign means that the Labour vote is split it is a lesser evil than refusing to challenge Labour's betrayals. ■



Mass meeting of Liverpool council workers

All out strike now!

LIVERPOOL CITY Council is pressing ahead with 1,000 redundancies and the privatisation of its refuse collecting service. Council leader Harry Rimmer is subjecting the city and its council workers to a dose of GBH on behalf of the Tories and the Labour leaders. It is vital that council workers launch an immediate all out strike to stop the job losses, privatisation and service cuts.

Already precious time has been lost. It has been clear for weeks that the battle in the Council chamber would be lost. The Kinnock-loyal Labour Councillors have pushed through their attacks with the support of the Liberal Democrats, leaving the 27 Broad Left Labour rebels powerless to resist.

But instead of the fight for immediate and co-ordinated action council workers have been called out on a series of one day strikes, sectional strikes and demonstrations.

Many council workers, especially those facing the dole queue in a city with one in six unemployed, are straining to fight back. But others have been demoralised by the selective action.

The calling off of the overtime ban by the binmen is likely to increase such demoralisation. But with the threat of redundancies and privatisation still there, it is vital that action is relaunched quickly.

Wary of the bitter battle that lies ahead, and the need to win support from the rest of the Liverpool working class, some union convenors and stewards have stressed the need to make the action official.

But Tory anti-union laws and union bureaucratic foot-dragging mean that it could be weeks before a ballot for all out action can be held.

There should be democratic mass meetings of every section of council workers to take their own vote for immediate action now. There must be no backing off from an immediate all out strike even if the union leaders declare such action unofficial.

Where sections of workers vote to carry on working, or are denied a vote by the bureaucrats, the time honoured practice of the picket line should ensure that no one works for Liverpool City Council until the job cuts and privatisation plans are withdrawn.

An all out fight will bring council workers into direct conflict with the law: with the anti union laws which can target individual stewards who organise unofficial action, with the police who will protect the scab private refuse firms and with government commissioners who are being lined up to take over Liverpool at the first sign of Rimmer and co giving in to the workers.

To win against the bosses' state will require not just a solid strike of every council worker but the active support of the whole Liverpool working class.

The Tories know what a powerful weapon that could be. That is why they are using every propaganda trick in the trade to set the people of Liverpool against the strikers. If the commissioners come in, if a single steward is fined or jailed under the anti-union laws, council workers should issue the call for a city wide general strike.

Already council workers have had a taste of police justice on the picket lines. In an all out strike picket line defence squads will be vital. To stop the bin yards and incinerators being taken over by the privateers they should be occupied and the vehicles disabled.

The *Liverpool Echo* billed the day of the Council vote on cuts and jobs as "The day war didn't break out". But the Tories and their Liberal and Labour allies on the Council are already waging a class war against Liverpool workers. Unless they fight back, and fight back now, there will be another thousand in Liverpool's job centres and the services of thousands more will carry on being wrecked.

- Occupy bin yards!
- Form picket defence squads!
- All out, indefinite strike now!

Now turn to pages 4 & 5