

Workers power

SUPPLEMENT
Militant
in crisis
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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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RECESSION

Over for some

TWO MONTHS ago the Bank of England said Britain's economy was "bumping along the bottom of a recession". Less than one month later the Bank's Governor, Robin Leigh Pemberton, announced: the recession is over. Why the sudden change?

Improving the Tories showing in the polls has more to do with it than any meaningful improvement in the economy. This summer output hit a new low, down 3.5% on the summer of 1990. Profitability in all companies averaged a mere 6%, a drop of 4% on 1988. This poor situation explains in turn why investment for this year will be more than fifth down on last year.

That figure alone should tell us that the recovery is being talked up for political reasons. The real picture was described by Ian Mackenzie, chief forecaster for the building materials industry, who admitted recently, that "Prospects for this year and next are dreadful". The only meaningful change in the last month or so has been a slight pick up in high street sales as interest rates have continued to fall.

That no doubt was why Major decided to call off the election until next year.

The Tories shabby election propaganda is a gross insult if you are one of the millions of people condemned to poverty, unemployment and homelessness by the bosses' system.

In the midst of this "recovery":

- Two and a half million are on the dole. Add the hundreds of thousands not counted due to Tory fiddling with the figures and an estimated 3.6 million are out of work. Even if there is a recovery it will be bought at the cost of rising unemployment well into next year.

- 55,300 families are officially homeless. House repossessions soared to 36,000 in the first six months of this year, another record.

Some bosses may be feeling confident that they can start making money again. But what is the mood on working class estates and in the dole office queues? There are not many champagne corks popping there.

The eruption of one estate after another into a round of late summer riots revealed the depth of poverty and hopelessness; pockets of 50%



and 70% unemployment where the only relief from endless boredom is racing stolen cars. Places where poverty is so ingrained that small shopkeepers look like rich class enemies. That is what capitalism means—not just for a few but for millions of people.

Of course that is not the whole picture.

The Tories have survived for more than a decade by convincing a section of workers with jobs to look out for nobody but themselves. They let them coin in what looked like "loadsamoney" in return for selling jobs and union rights, and accepting new harsh conditions at work.

The recession undermined all that. The thousands of small businessmen and self employed plucked out of the ranks of the working class by the "Thatcher revolution" found themselves back at square one.

Even the skilled blue collar workers courted by Thatcher, have found themselves on the dole queue—

part of another 250,000 clear out in engineering industry before this recession is over. For millions of other working class families in the 1980s the recovery never came first time around.

Now, with the first signs of a faltering economic recovery the bosses are trying to fool us once again.

They hope that a few months of fine sounding "results" in the statistics section of the TV news will produce another Tory election triumph.

If they win, what can we expect? Cuts in health and education; the backdoor privatisation of schools and health care through "opting out". Official unemployment will reach three million: that means four mil-



Why won't Labour fight?

Another five years of Tory rule means no end to the misery. But what is the Labour leadership promising?

Faced with a sustained media attack they can only grovel.

Private schools? They're safe with us whines Labour's education spokesperson, Jack Straw.

Poll Tax? We'll collect the debts and jail the debtors, says Kinnock.

Riots? Prison breakouts? We'll crack down, blubbers Hattersley.

While Labour's John Smith does the rounds of the employers' lunches, smooth talking the bosses, Labour's witch-hunters do the rounds of the party wards throwing out anybody prepared to defend the working class in action.

But there is an alternative. We are faced with six more months of Tory attacks. We don't have to wait for Labour and an election. We must organise to fight now:

- against sackings and closures
- against cuts in public services
- against the poll tax bailiffs and the jailing of non-payers
- against the bosses attempts to hold down wages

We need a campaign of strikes, occupations and direct action against every attempt to make the working class pay.

Their "business confidence" will soar as long as they think they can rob us blind. We've got to make them think again.■

lion in reality.

Local services, already collapsing, will be given the final shove by the Tories' proposed council tax.

At work our unions will be further shackled while the employers treat us like dirt. And, as Leigh-Pemberton warned the CBI:

"Price stability is an absolute precondition for sustainable growth in output and jobs".

That means lower wages. It means the Tories will be forced to take on the sections of the working class who have avoided wage cutting policies in the past.■

● Fight the witch-hunt: page 4

CARDIFF SAW £370,000 go up in smoke in September—in a massive council funded firework display. Meanwhile community workers for the Bute town have an annual budget of around £350,000 for the whole year!

This callous disregard for the unemployed workers and youth of Cardiff is exactly what fuelled the riots on the Ely estate in August. Capitalism glorifies commodities as the goal in life and then systematically denies millions the opportunity to get them. Riots are a spontaneous way of getting hold of what poverty and discrimination put out of reach.

Now that the dust has settled over Cardiff's run-down Ely estate and "normality" has returned to Newcastle and Oxford, John Major has the nerve to say that poverty is "no excuse". Riots are the work of "criminal elements" and the result of "a breakdown in parental authority". Of course he wouldn't admit that Tory policies had any part to play!

The background to the events in Ely was a long running feud between two shop-keepers, one of them Asian, over the right to sell bread. Abdul Waheed's shop and home above it were attacked, ostensibly because he prosecuted shop-lifters and insisted on his legal right to be the sole seller of bread and milk in the street.

Although Cardiff has one of the oldest black communities in Britain, most black people still live around the docks. Ely has a black population of about 5%. During the riots Asian, black and white youth were on the streets together. While there was no evidence of open fascist activity it is obvious that the racists did play a part in the attack on Abdul Waheed's shop.

The initial demands were for him to leave the estate and not return, and this did happen. The fascists intend to capitalise on this. Already the British National Party have announced their intention of standing in Cardiff in the next election and their poster campaign is underway in some areas of the city.

Racism

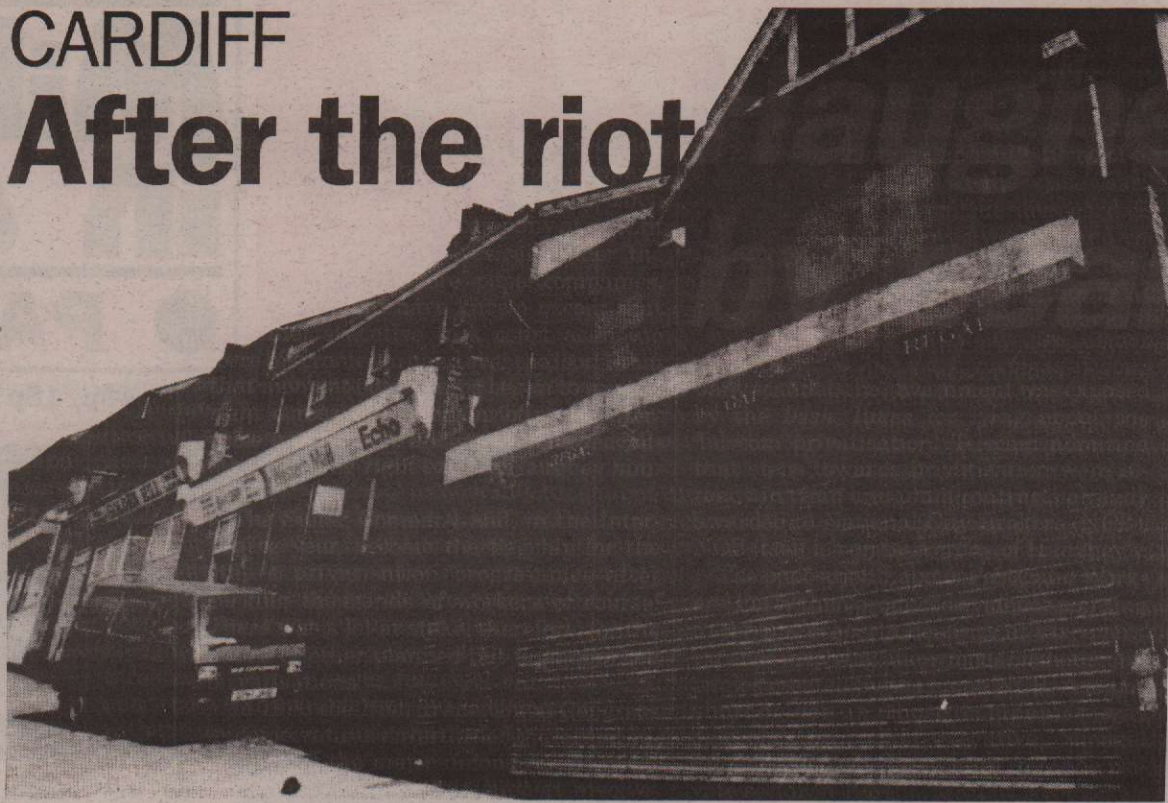
Racism clearly played a role in the Newcastle riots as well. Unlike the inner-city uprisings of the 1980s which were largely a revolt against racism, today's riots revolved around pre-existing gangs of mainly white youth on the forgotten and run-down estates circling the cities. With the exception of Telford there was no conscious anti-racist element. In fact for many youth on the estates black shopkeepers are seen as exploiters who profit from isolated estates.

Organised workers and youth have to actively combat all manifestations of racism, explaining why it is a tool of the bosses, who are the real cause of unemployment and poverty. They have to be prepared to defend black communities and individuals against racist attack, whether they are small shopkeepers and businessmen or not. This must be done while encouraging a fight against the many justified grievances that caused the riots.

And it is capitalism itself which causes these.

In Ely the situation rapidly exploded into a riot against the police which lasted four nights. Local youth were more than ready to vent their anger against the police and get their own back for years of harassment and brutality. By the second night it was clearly aimed at the police, and local youth were joined by 500 others from across Cardiff. The same is true elsewhere. A youth from Blackbird Leys said "We're going to give the police a good hiding". Many of the youth on the streets of Ely were in their

CARDIFF After the riot



Abdul Waheed's shop—the wrong target

early teens yet they already knew what role the police play.

The anger of whole communities at the decaying condition of their homes was realised in the fire bombing of the City Council's District Housing Office.

This was no mindless attack. Ely is the biggest council estate in Wales. It was built nearly seventy years ago. The state of the housing is deplorable and improvements that were started in one part of the estate have been halted because of spending cuts.

In Ely unemployment for men

between the ages of 20-29 officially runs at 50%. Overall it is 30%, more than three times the average for Wales. Facilities are appalling. There are only about a dozen small shops, generally with high prices. One small shopping centre known locally as "Little Beirut" is totally derelict. Only the betting shop is still open.

The labour movement must now take up a fight alongside the youth of the estates for a programme of public works directed at improving conditions of communities like Ely and soaking up the unemployed to

work under trade union wages and conditions.

The working class communities which erupted in August have been made to pay the price for a decade of retreat and defeat by the labour movement. The only way to give hope to the youth who see no future but the dole is to start the fightback, ditching the old methods of "municipal socialism" and sell-out trade unionism.

Otherwise fascism and far right racism—"socialism for idiots"—will be waiting in the wings to start its own "fightback".

INAH3 Born this way?

AT THE end of August a scientist in the USA, Simon LeVay, reported that he had found differences in the brain structure of gay and heterosexual men. LeVay warned that his findings were provisional and based on only 41 samples.

But the media pounced on this as yet more evidence for the reactionary theory that gay sexuality is a "freak of nature".

The same media supported Clause 28 on the grounds that gay sexuality is "a learned behaviour" that could be wiped out if only local authorities stopped promoting it. The homophobes can't seem to decide what causes homosexuality! They will seize on any piece of scientific research if they think it offers them a chance of "curing" it.

But does that mean the research itself was reactionary? Many in the lesbian and gay movement have condemned it. Robert Bray of the US National Gay and Lesbian Coalition said:

"Homophobes could exploit the result by pointing to a 'brain defect' in homosexuals. They might even envisage screening for homosexuality in utero [in the womb]"

Lisa Power, secretary of the International Lesbian and Gay Association likened it to experiments in Nazi Germany.

Of the 41 people in the study nineteen were gay men who had all died of AIDS; sixteen were heterosexual men (six of whom had died of AIDS); the remaining six were women who were presumed to be heterosexual. LeVay, examined the hypothalamus, a structure in the centre of the brain which is thought to be involved in

regulating sleep and sexual behaviour.

He found that one group of cells—called INAH3—was over twice as large in heterosexual men as in women. In itself this is not surprising: it confirmed a previous result from two years ago. What made headline news around the world was that the same difference appeared comparing gay men with heterosexual men. In other words, as far as this one small structure was concerned, homosexual men and heterosexual women appeared to be similar.

As LeVay himself points out, this study is only a beginning and interpretation of the results will necessarily be "speculative". In particular, very few individuals were studied. Added to this the technique

LeVay used is controversial. You don't have to be a scientific genius to see that the differences could have been produced by AIDS itself. Or to ask questions like: how big is INAH3 in lesbians, in bisexuals etc, etc?

Even if the result is confirmed, does the study do anything to confirm the myth that biology determines sexual behaviour?

No. Even if there is a correlation between sexuality and INAH3 who is to say what is the cause and what is the effect? Who is to say that the small size of INAH3 is not the result of certain sexual behaviour rather than the cause of it? Nothing in the research so far proves that the difference in size of INAH3 is present at birth.

Men and women are biologically different. There is nothing reactionary or dangerous in admitting this. It is scientific fact. But that does not mean that every difference between

the sexes is caused by these genetic and biological differences, or that the cause of different sexual behaviour by members of the same sex has to be sought in the genes.

Sex roles have changed across the ages and in different societies. There is no evidence—psychological, anthropological or archaeological—that the different roles held by men and women in society, their intellectual abilities or their personalities, are determined and strictly limited by biological differences. These differences are refracted, altered, suppressed or amplified by the way class society organises itself.

Over the course of evolution, heterosexuality has been a biological necessity for the preservation of the species. And yet homosexuality has existed in every human society since the dawn of time. It is the development of class society which produces sexual oppression. Capitalism rests on the systematic subjugation of women. As capitalism developed it imposed the bourgeois family as the norm tried to suppress homosexual behaviour, in the process creating a specific gay sexuality.

Looking for genetic origins to human behaviour is not dangerous in itself. Reactionary politicians will seize on every scientific explanation, genetic or environmental, which they can use to explain "racial" differences, to justify women's role as subservient child-minders and the view of gay men as biological freaks.

Our task is to fight the misuse of such discoveries, not to deny the results out of hand, or to condemn the research as no better than the work of Doctor Mengele. Workers and the oppressed should have no fear of scientific truth: we have to confront and change the world as it is, not as we wish it to be.

Free Dessie Ellis!

WHEN THE Birmingham Six and the Guildford four were released politicians across the parliamentary spectrum rushed to reassure us that this was in fact proof of the fundamentally fair nature of the British judicial system.

The case of Dessie Ellis, whose trial was due to begin on Wednesday 2 October, disproves this lie.

In November 1990 Dessie became the first citizen of the Irish Republic to be extradited to Britain under the 1987 extradition treaty. He was brought to Britain on the 37th day of hunger strike.

As a known republican his chances of a "fair" trial in Britain are nil. Since arriving he has faced a continuous media campaign which has described him as an "IRA bomber" (*Daily Mirror*, 14.11.90) and "One of the most dangerous men behind bars in Britain" (*Daily Express* 9.7.91).

Following the breakout of two Irish prisoners from Brixton in July he was moved to Parkhurst top security prison on the Isle of Wight. So much for the principle: "innocent until proven guilty".

At his committal hearing in February the Crown accepted that there was no evidence that Dessie had ever been in the UK. Yet the Explosive Substances Act (1883), under which he is charged, imposes a statutory ban on prosecuting nationals of another country unless they had conspired within the UK. Instead of releasing Dessie the magistrates simply decided to impose new charges.

This was in clear breach of the extradition agreement. It caused considerable embarrassment to the Irish government, who then insisted the original charges be reinstated.

The farce which followed should surprise no one who has observed how the British legal system deals with political prisoners. On 20 June 1991 at the Old Bailey Judge Swinton Thomas (the Winchester Three judge) decided to "re-interpret" the law in order that reference to "within the UK" could refer to the location of the offence and not the person.

Such changes were clearly motivated by political consideration and have nothing to do with the "rule of law" or "justice".

The heightened publicity given to the issue of framed political prisoners must be used to help build the campaign in support of Dessie Ellis. This campaign, however, cannot afford to remain at the level of a fight to prevent another innocent Irish republican being wrongly convicted. It must be built into a fight that exposes such cases as being in no way "miscarriages of justice" but part of a systematic campaign planned by the establishment to intimidate the Irish community and all those in Britain willing to stand up and fight Britain's occupation of Ireland.

Support the Old Bailey picket
Wednesday 2 October, 9.30-11.00
and every Monday during the trial

Messages of support to
Dessie Ellis, MV 3051,
HMP Bellmarsh, Western Way,
Thamesmead, London SE28.

For information of activities contact
Free Dessie Ellis Campaign
c/o Haringey IBRG, Hornsey Library,
Haringey Park, Crouch End,
London N8
Tel: 081 348 3351 X1432

For more on Ireland turn to
Class Struggle - page 15

Whose democracy?

DEMOCRACY IS the buzz word of the 1990s. In its name imperialism wreaked bloody carnage on the fleeing armies of Iraq. In its name capitalism is demanding mass unemployment and the savaging of living standards in Eastern Europe

Meanwhile, at home, in the land of the "mother of parliaments" we have again been subjected to the four-yearly ritual, in which a sitting Prime Minister alone decides the date of the election. This farce, and the possibility of a hung parliament emerging from the election, has led to a resurgence of debate about electoral reform.

The Independent has managed to assemble a motley crew of MPs, writers and lawyers for a "Constitutional Convention" in November, at which Britain's lack of a written constitution will be bemoaned at length.

But it is not only the liberal bosses who are mulling this problem over. In the first issue of *Socialist*, the paper of the Socialist Movement, there appeared a debate on the desirability or otherwise of proportional representation (PR). Opposing PR is common on the Labour left.

The usual underlying reason is that only the first past the post system makes a Labour majority possible. PR would, in their view, make a coalition inevitable. So the Labour Party's famous principled opposition to coalitions only hangs on the rotten thread of an electoral system that fails to reflect the real voting strength of the parties within the electorate.

Still more outrageous is the opposition to PR from the "revolutionaries" of the Socialist Workers Party and the "Marxists" of *Militant*. They also oppose PR on the grounds that anything that weakens Labour's electoral chances and benefits the Liberals must be a bad thing. Of course, they don't expect Kinnock to introduce socialism, but a Labour government is both a lesser evil and a necessary step in their schemas for winning the working class to real so-

cialism. To this schema they sacrifice the defence of the democratic rights of the working class as a whole and the right of its revolutionary vanguard, at present in a minority, to use elections as a platform to address the working class as a whole.

If elected, revolutionary communist MPs would use their position in the public eye not only to conduct uncompromising propaganda for revolution but to defend the immediate interests of the workers and summon them to class struggle against every attack of the ruling class. This opportunity has been denied to genuine Marxists by the British electoral system since the 1880s. Only in the early 1920s did it prove possible briefly to circumvent this arch-undemocratic system.

To put a Labour government at any price above the need to eliminate an undemocratic obstacle to the advance of revolutionary socialism is the rankest opportunism. Workers Power seeks the widest possible extension of democratic rights under capitalism, the better to utilise these rights to win millions to the need for the destruction of capitalism itself and its replacement by workers' democracy and socialism.

We do not think this will perfect the system of bourgeois democracy. Rather we hope it will introduce instability into bourgeois politics together with a variety of conflicting political positions which is the norm in society at large. We do not believe, like Arthur Scargill, that PR would provide "an electoral system within which the working class and its allies can for the first time win real power". Firstly, even a left reformist and confused challenge, such as was contained in the Labour manifesto of 1983, will always be met with a massive smear campaign from the millionaire-owned media.

And even if these myriad obstacles were to be overcome—even if Parliament could be stuffed full of Arthur Scargills—real power, in a capitalist democracy, does not rest in Parliament. It rests with

the unelected civil servants, judges, police and army officers who control the repressive apparatuses in support of the real ruling class—the oligarchy of super-rich financiers and industrialists.

The great majority of the people, the working class, does not rule. It is duped by the masquerade of choosing between two or three bosses' parties every five years. And that won't be changed just by altering voting rules and bringing in fixed term parliaments. Unlike the anarchists, however, we cannot ignore or just denounce the parliamentary system. We have to use the rights and the arenas it presents to us. This would include utilising any serious movement for constitutional reform that went beyond the windbagging of *The Independent's* elite of journalists and MPs. We would do so not to build illusions in a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism, but to clear the obstacles to the penetration of revolutionaries into the institutions of capitalist democracy.

Our purpose once there is to fight for the smashing of the capitalists' state, and its replacement with a system of democratic councils of elected and recallable workers' delegates. This system alone can involve the workers in the direct running of the state and the economy. It is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it will have to suppress the furious resistance of the exploiting minority to the loss of their power, wealth and privileges.

That's what we mean by workers' power. It can only be the result of the revolutionary overthrow of all the institutions of the capitalist state. For this reason *The Independent* will not be calling a convention about it and it will never receive the royal assent. ■

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where we stand

WORKERS POWER 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 and the LPYS, 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 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.

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THE SUSPENSION of Dave Nellist and Terry Fields from Labour Party office, and their consequent barring from Conference, is a massive injustice. Not just to the two MPs themselves, but to the thousands of Labour Party members and voters who have supported them in their constituencies and elsewhere across the country. It is also an insult to the intelligence of any thinking Party member.

Dave Nellist, for instance, was accused of "a sustained course of conduct detrimental to the Labour Party". But Nellist has consistently increased the Labour majority in his Coventry constituency! On 23 September over 500 people turned out in Coventry to show their support for him. With enemies like these, who needs friends?

The real crime of both Nellist and Fields in the eyes of the Labour bureaucrats is association with *Militant*. Whilst both Nellist and Fields deny they are *Militant* supporters both agree with the policies advocated by *Militant*. As far as Kinnock's thought-police Joyce Gould and Larry Whitty are concerned, that is enough.

Between 200 and 400 alleged *Militant* supporters and other left activists are currently suspended or have been expelled from the Labour Party. And why? For many, because in Liverpool they supported independent candidates against official candidates in the council elections and the Walton by-election, or because they supported and participated in the mass campaign against the poll tax. For others, supporters of *Socialist Organiser*, even slavish support for Kilfoyle in Walton could not save them from the charge of being part of "a separate party".

We say, whether Nellist, Fields and the other victims of Kinnock's witch-hunt can be proved to support *Militant*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Tribune*, *Socialist* any other paper or grouping or none at all, every Labour Party member and trade unionist should support their right to be in the Labour

LABOUR WITCH-HUNT Nellist/Fields must stand!

BY RICHARD BRENNER

Party.

We don't need to pretend that class fighters and revolutionary Marxists are part of a big happy family from Keir Hardie to Neil Kinnock to claim our place in the Labour Party. Marxists have nothing in common with Labour's political tradition of sell-out, betrayal and surrender. We claim our right, and the right of all socialists, to membership because Labour is the mass party of the working class, formed and funded by the trade unions with the aim of "representing the workers in parliament". All socialists must have the right to membership of the party and to fight against its right wing leadership which has acted consistently against the workers' interests.

The Broad Left were forced to stand councillors against the official candidates in Liverpool because they, like Fields and Nellist, were suspended from office. They voted against Harry Rimmer's job-axing, service-cutting Labour administration. Kinnock had them deselected and replaced by official candidates. But the Broad Left wiped the floor with Kinnock's stooges: five out of six took office after beating Labour's official candidates.

Lesley Mahmood stood as the Broad Left candidate in the Walton by-election, against Labour's Peter Kilfoyle. She was right to stand and

we supported her. The selection procedure which produced Kilfoyle was a farce, with hundreds of left wing members expelled or suspended. More importantly, Mahmood stood at the head of a developing struggle against the Rimmer administration—a section of organised workers were being forced in practice to make a break with the official Labour Party in Liverpool.

The irony is that, whilst *Militant* supported Mahmood, Nellist and Fields refused to publicly support her. If they thought they were going to save themselves from Kinnock's purge they have been proved mistaken. *Militant*-bashing wins Kinnock popularity points with Gallup and NOP. Nothing will stop him short of all out defiance of the witch-hunt, organising as many Labour wards and GCs and as many union branches as possible. Kinnock has declared war on the left, and is winning hands down. Unless we are prepared to adopt our own war-like tactics, we will continue to lose.

If Labour Party Conference fails to overturn the NEC decision, Nellist and Fields should prepare to stand as independent candidates themselves. They should declare themselves now and seek the backing of their local GCs, wards and trade union organisations. Kinnock's allies will inevitably move to shut down or disaffiliate any organisation which supports the two MPs. This is the



Dave Nellist

vision of the future for every Labour Party member who thinks the party can be made to fight for the working class. Real fighters for working people are expelled and witch-hunted.

In response they should call an immediate conference of workers' movement organisations—inside and outside the Labour Party—to organise the election campaign. This call cannot be restricted to just local, or even just party, organisations. If Labour MPs stand as independents this has implications far beyond Coventry and Liverpool Broadgreen. It is a declaration of war on Kinnock's witch-hunt and his second hand Tory policies. It will draw a line in every constituency and in the PLP between those prepared to fight and those prepared to sacrifice every political

principle to put Kinnock into office.

Many Labour supporters will sympathise with Nellist and Fields but will be wary of supporting them. "Shouldn't we be uniting to fight the Tories?", they will ask. But it is Kinnock who has chosen to start the fight, Kinnock who is closing down Party branches and suspending members all over the country. As Dave Nellist commented:

"There were over 500 of my constituents at a meeting last week. They wished they were there to launch a general election campaign. Instead they had to be there to defend me!"

The danger is that Nellist and Fields will accept their suspension "under protest". That has been the disastrous strategy of the *Militant* throughout the 1980s. There is a danger, too, that once again *Militant* will drag the bosses' courts into the workers' movement by seeking legal injunctions against the suspensions. They should forget court action and start organising the enormous reservoir of support that exists, both in their own constituencies and in the whole Labour movement, for a real fightback against the witch-hunt.

And nobody should have any illusions about what the current round of suspensions, independent candidacies and individual resignations from the Labour Party means:

- it means the working class needs a new party, a revolutionary party committed to action in defence of workers' interests and to fighting for working class power
- it means there is no parliamentary road to socialism and no possibility of transforming Labour into a genuine socialist party

If those mobilised around the fight to put the two MPs back in Parliament can learn the lessons of the past—including the mistakes made by *Militant* in the Walton campaign—this need not be a fighting retreat.

It can be a small step forward in the fight for a real, revolutionary workers' party. ■

EGA

Jobs and services attacked

BY JANE POTTER

THE Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Soho Women's Hospital (EGA) is set to make nurses and ancillary staff redundant. Gone are the days when a closure of beds or a hospital meant redeployment for the staff. The new internal market dictates even tougher management tactics. Now staff in threatened units face the sack.

Guy's Hospital set the precedent, one week after becoming a Trust, by announcing 300 redundancies. Many hospitals have followed suit.

The cash crisis throughout the NHS is having an especially severe impact on many inner-city areas. Bloomsbury and Islington Health Authority, which EGA is a part of, is £7.5 million in the red. It is planning to save £800,000 by April 1992. Managers saw their chance to save £60,000 of this by slashing the Aldridge Blake Ward from twenty beds operating seven days a week to an eight bed, five day ward. Eleven staff were to lose their jobs.

But management met valiant resistance from EGA staff. They must have expected some sort of protest. But they didn't expect a unanimous vote for a one-day strike taken at a packed meeting.

Workers rejected a 30% reduction in the service and job losses. They feared that this was one more step towards shutting EGA altogether. From the meeting plans were made for the strike and morale was high.

Workers at EGA thought they

would have some problems with management over negotiating emergency cover etc. What they didn't bank on was the resistance they met from the union bureaucrats. In the face of one tame letter from the bosses, pointing out it was illegal under the Tories anti-trade union laws because a ballot hadn't been held, the local union bureaucrats called the whole thing off without any consultation with the NUPE and COHSE members. The officials decided to ballot for a strike... one day before the ward was to close!

That gave them lots of time to try to persuade the staff against strike action and for a campaign of protest. Crucially, it ensured a one-day strike would remain a protest without any prospect of it becoming a launching-pad for effective all-out action. EGA was seen by the union bureaucrats as a good election issue—"Tories' market plans hit world famous women's hospital". The last thing they wanted was a strike.

They were able to sow panic and confusion amongst the staff who thought they could look to their officials for advice and help. This behaviour was designed to derail the campaign and take it out of the hands of the local stewards. It very nearly succeeded. However, at a further angry meeting without these "great leaders" it was agreed to hold a ballot but to bring forward

the date of proposed strike action. The action and campaign was back in the hands of the rank and file. The ballot returned an overwhelming vote for a strike. The strike was a success, winning good support from other trade unionists and local women. It forced a partial retreat by management which has been accepted by the staff, though unfortunately there will be job losses.

What happened at EGA is a lesson for all workers. The union lead-

ers are desperate to stop any action taking place before a general election. Tom Sawyer at the TUC conference warned all public sector workers against a wave of politically damaging strikes in the run-up to the election. Delegates were told that they must find alternatives to the strike weapon and to alienating the public in their campaigns.

This "advice" is worse than useless. It is sabotage. Faced with the current Tory onslaught on the pub-

TANKS & DRUMS Solidarity needed

BY GR MCCOLL

"AFTER TAKING so much abuse we said to management: you're not treating us like that any more". That's how Geoff, a striking TGWU member from Liverpool, described the start of the bitter dispute at Tanks & Drums, now entering its seventh month.

The official strike began after management at the Speke plant claimed they could not afford to meet production workers' claim for a meagre 5.5% rise on basic hourly pay of £2.79. But the Bradford-based firm, which manufactures metal and plastic containers for the chemicals industry, did manage to find the money to seek a court injunction against the union. As Geoff explained, "Management wanted the union out of the plant", the only organised fac-

tory in the Tanks & Drums combine. After losing in the courts the company's bosses simply sacked the 115 strikers.

For several months the dispute had been desperately isolated, but only eight of the original strikers have scabbed. Another 96 remain on strike, unable to claim dole.

The action has drastically cut output from the Speke plant, though Tanks & Drums has transferred some production to Bradford. In order to win reinstatement and union recognition the Speke strikers urgently need solidarity action. Shop stewards at ICI, the multinational chemicals giant which accounts for 75% of total demand for Tanks & Drums'

lic sector, and the prospect of a Labour government committed to putting profits before services, it is suicide for workers to give up their best weapon. The fact that the EGA staff were able to force some concessions from management through their determination to take strike action shows how effective strikes can be. An indefinite strike could have forced a complete U-turn.

Workers have seen the effects of the anti-trade union laws on union organisation and action. They are an effective weapon in the hands of the bosses.

And they are an equally effective weapon for the union bureaucrats. No wonder the bureaucrats voted in favour of keeping these laws, even if a Labour government gets in next time. ■

products, have cited the Tories' 1990 Employment Act as an excuse for refusing to boycott the scab output.

The Speke strikers have begun to receive substantial financial support from trade unionists at other plants in the North West. They have recently begun a tour of workplaces in London, organised by the T&G Solidarity Group. This needs to be extended to other regions if the strikers are going to be able to sustain their action. But to win their dispute the Tanks & Drums strikers need to combine the raising of hardship funds with a campaign to overturn the ICI stewards' decision, where possible by speaking to ICI workers directly. After six months this task is vital.

To arrange for a speaker at your union branch contact:

Mark: 071 241 3799 (Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays daytime)
John: 081 509 0365 (evenings and weekends)

Jim: 081 802 4738 (evenings and weekends)

Donations to: Tanks & Drums dispute, T&GWU, c/o Vinny Tuzio, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool L3

UNIONS TUC bows to Tory laws

BY JEREMY DEWAR

IN THE midst of a recession, the Department of Employment figures for 1990 reveal fewer strike days (1.9 million) than for any year since 1963. Whilst union leaders generally like to see the back of strikes, the ACAS report for 1990 reveals that their preferred method—class collaboration—produced the fewest negotiated settlements since records began over fifty years ago. No wonder there were few happy faces at the TUC Congress in Glasgow last month.

The fact is that the union union chiefs are feeling the cold. As their role at the bargaining table has diminished, so has their courage to rally their members into a confrontation, with all the dangers that rank and file involvement brings for the bureaucrats. As a result, membership rolls have continued to dwindle, now down to under 8.2 million. The plain truth is that workers don't join trade unions for shopping discounts! The TUC's project for the late 1980s—service unionism—has failed.

The TUC Congress this year met to flesh out a new project. No, not a plan of action to take on the Tories. Congress was bewitched by the prospect of a Labour government and the prospects of new realism in office. What role do the union leaders want in a future Kinnock administration? The central "debates" were on pay bargaining policy, the anti-union laws and the EC's Social Charter. On all three the Kinnockites, led by John Edmonds of the GMB, won decisively.

On pay bargaining, the TUC unanimously endorsed Labour's policy. All the leaders agree in private that this is pay restraint by any other name. Co-ordinated pay "bargaining" between unions, the government and the bosses will work out what the bosses can afford and then divide up the crumbs. Here is where the divisions occur

in the TUC—not over the principle, but over the crumbs.

Alan Tuffin of the postal workers' union wanted to see open pay restraint so he could sell the minimum wage. Gavin Laird of the engineers' union wanted to protect differential wage norms at the expense of the low paid! The compromise rested on a minimum wage proposal of £3.40 an hour, so low that Kinnock can gleefully gloat that it'll hardly affect anyone!

The debate on the anti-union laws did at least split the vote. It also produced the most pathetic response of any bureaucrat throughout the week, which is some feat. Ron Todd overturned the TGWU's conference position of calling on Labour to repeal "all the anti-union laws" on the grounds that... some of these laws are pro-union! Of course, Todd is entitled to his opinion. After all, they saved him from having to dole out strike pay during the dockers' dispute.

The 2.2 million votes for the NUM/FTAT motion calling for total repeal of the Tory laws showed that a sizeable minority of the TUC

feel under sufficient pressure from their crisis to put up a left face. However, the means for achieving their aims were revealed when Arthur Scargill said:

"We are entitled, in line with International Labour Organisation and United Nations conventions, to be free of state interference."

Not the rank and file but a club of capitalist governments is being called on to save the TUC!

On the motion on the EC, John Edmonds told us about "a revolution which will sweep away almost every feature of the British industrial relations system" and about "round-table discussions in works' councils and enterprise committees". Workers must be left in no doubt that when the TUC announce their slogan as "social partnership at work" they mean "class collaboration at work".

Norman Willis (TUC General Secretary) told a press conference before Congress, "I hope it is not too interesting for you". For the vast majority of workers it wasn't. Even the victories for the "left", like the motion to boycott the workfare Employment Action scheme, were won on the basis that the token "boycott" of Employment Training was a victory—even some bosses are boycotting Employment Action!

Quietly, the TUC is preparing itself to attack workers alongside a future Labour government. It is preparing to translate the legacy of a decade of defeat, as a result of its new realist strategy, into a new onslaught on workers' wages and conditions. ■



"OK. We give in"

Tories twist the knife

THIS SUMMER the Tories unleashed plans for their seventh major legal attack on the trade unions. On 24 July Employment Secretary Michael Howard published the Green Paper, *Industrial Relations in the 1990s*, revealing 26 proposed changes in legislation. The package was carefully presented as a consultative paper not for implementation until after the general election.

Clearly, the Tories are again using taxpayers' money to present their own party manifesto. Against Labour and TUC promises that the unions have been tamed, and will remain chained under a Labour administration, Howard has laid down a challenge. The Tories are prepared to continue the anti-union offensive as the best guarantee of the untrammelled rule of the bosses. Can Labour offer the City and the CBI that prospect?

Attacks

The Green Paper contains a series of important attacks on our trade unions, which if enacted will put serious obstacles in the way of workers fighting for their jobs and conditions, especially in the public sector. When the Tories introduced a Green Paper as part of their 1987 election strategy, it eventually became law in 1988. For socialists and rank and file trade unionists the lesson is clear. When the bosses debate the need for further attacks on us, we must force the unions to debate our response in kind.

The most serious attack contained in the Green Paper is the set of proposals aimed at undermining the right to strike. If workers want to take strike action and remain inside the law they must follow this procedure.

First, the union must give the employer notice of the intention to hold a postal ballot, including a copy of the ballot paper, a list of who is to vote and details of the voting procedure. Then, an independent scrutineer would have to monitor the ballot and produce a report for the union and the employer. Finally, the union then has to give written notice to the employer at least seven days in advance telling him/her who is taking action and when.

Given the union bureaucracy's love of "selective action" as a means of forcing limited compromises at the negotiating table, the Green Paper makes it clear that this rigmarole will have to be followed for each selective day of action! Workers must work on as normal for at least a month whilst their boss organises a lock-out and scab labour before they

walk off the job in protest, say, at unsafe working conditions. That's Major's classless society for you.

For public sector workers the Tories have something else in store. Here they are aiming to unite their party and their class behind the central thrust of Thatcher's political legacy, the erosion of the welfare state and the shackling of the unions. The Green Paper would give any customer, or potential customer, the right to sue any union taking unlawful industrial action that disrupts the provision of a public service or a privatised utility (water, gas, etc.).

In the past the Tories' anti-union laws have often taken time to bite as few employers have been willing to become the guinea pig for testing them out. Now any "disinterested individual" (in reality any old arch-reactionary like Norris McWhirter or any quasi-fascist pressure group) can play that role.

Teachers, healthworkers, local and central government workers and railworkers, whether their work has been privatised or not, are all targets for future attacks. The government are preparing their ground for battle. We must prepare ours. All legal restraints that damage our prospects for victory must be shoved aside. Any attempt to drag strikers through the courts must be met with widespread solidarity action and a call on the TUC to organise a general strike to smash the anti-union laws.

Calibre

Not surprisingly, the union chiefs' response has been of a different calibre. Initially, they simply released the results of a TUC-commissioned opinion poll that showed only one in five Tory voters were in favour of further constraints on the unions.

Once our "leaders" had had time to reflect on the implications of the proposals they found something far more important to worry about than the right to strike. The Green Paper also attacks the bureaucracy directly, often in ways designed to play on the alienation and distrust most members feel towards the official unions.

The check-off system for collecting dues is to be subject to annual written consent, thus threatening a haemorrhage of members. The Bridlington rules governing inter-union rivalry are to be outlawed, thus increasing the scope for scab unions and would-be Eric Hammonds as well as "beauty contests" between unions.

Workers must be actively convinced that their union is worth defending—that it is theirs and not some distant machine.

This can only be done as part of a conscious fight to wrest control of our unions from the hands of the bureaucrats, who only bleat when their financial base is threatened. Such a fight will, at the first test, come up against a battery of laws backed up by the judges and the police aimed at preventing effective industrial action.

The full-timer will invariably come down and argue compliance. We must rally the rank and file and shout "Defiance!"

- Hands off the unions!
- Break the anti-union laws and strike with those who are attacked for doing so!
- Force Labour to repeal all the anti-union laws!

Twisting the Knife

Labour Research
Department guide to
the Green Paper

£1.40 including postage
From: Labour Research
Department,
78 Blackfriars Road,
London SE1 8HF

No to AEU/EETPU merger!

BY COLEEN MACMULLEN

ERIC HAMMOND and Bill Jordan, the leaders of the EETPU and the AEU, Britain's two largest craft unions, are forcing the issue of merger again only two years after the proposal was thrown out by the AEU national committee. They appear confident they can win it this time by holding a direct postal ballot of the membership of both unions. If they win the first ballot on the principle of a merger only then will there be a second ballot on the question of affiliation to the TUC. In true "democratic" style it will be four years before they hold a ballot on the new rule book.

The rank and file members of both unions have been aware for a long time that something was in the air but no information filtered to the branches. All negotiations took place behind closed doors. Jordan and Laird have now sent a letter to all AEU branches which was printed on the front of 'Contact', the monthly paper of the EETPU, arguing that now is the time to get together. They argue that they can build a union that will be a major force in industry and society.

The TUC this year reaffirmed its

decision not to accept the EETPU back into membership unless it agrees to abide by the rules and procedures of the TUC. The leaders of the AEU are well aware that this also applies to any union seeking amalgamation with the EETPU. Throughout the TUC conference, whether on the question of the anti-union laws or boycotting cheap labour schemes, they put themselves firmly on the right wing.

When the merger was last on the agenda in 1989, Hammond was clearly seeking to use a new union as the basis for building a right-wing alternative to the TUC that could work hand in glove with the bosses and was not linked to the Labour Party. Today Hammond's project is slightly different, but just as reactionary. As the UCATT affair showed, when the electricians recruited a layer of UCATT officials and their members, the EETPU is still hellbent on breaking up other unions or their struggles whenever it suits them. BBC2's recent exposure of EETPU's practice of swamping Labour Parties with pho-

ney delegates also shows that, if their interests are served by being scabs inside the official labour movement, they will do so.

With the Tories set to outlaw the Bridlington rules on poaching Hammond and Paul Gallagher, the general secretary elect of the EETPU, see backdoor re-entry into the TUC as a possibly useful tactic in their long term project of spreading scab unionism. In any case, according to Hammond, "the TUC is now irrelevant to ordinary workers' needs".

Loss

Mergers have become the issue of the day for many a bureaucrat. Clearly the AEU and EETPU merger has to be opposed. Like many bureaucratic mergers the leaders are partly seeking a solution to dwindling membership. The AEU lost 39,419 members in 1990. EETPU is also concerned about its loss of members. A shrinking union threatens the bureaucrats' salaries and privileges. It affects their influence with governments.

AEU members must argue against the merger. They should oppose the

ballot and stand by the 1989 National Committee decision. If the ballot goes ahead rank and file members should campaign for a No vote. The 'Engineering Gazette' should launch a campaign, organising meetings in workplaces and at branches. They must be committed to a fight against the national leadership who are trying to lead the union into a stitch up with a scab outfit that deserves its place outside the TUC.

The rank and file of the AEU stand to lose a great deal. Their present rule book looks positively democratic compared with the EETPU's. Any campaign must mobilise the rank and file. To do that it must reveal the real differences between trade unionism and scab unionism in practice. The recession has badly hit engineers. A campaign of strikes and occupations against all job cuts, wage freezes and plant closures is needed. If the 'Gazette' refuses to take this campaign on then it will be up to active shop stewards and militants to co-ordinate the fight. And throughout the trade union movement as a whole workers must stand firm against re-admitting EETPU to the TUC, even through the backdoor of a merger with the AEU. Our strategy should be to break up EETPU and win as many as possible away from scab unionism. ■

TO OFTEN, militant anti-fascists have built alliances with all and sundry, including vicars and community policemen, only to tie their hands when the fascists show" says the editorial in the first issue of AFA's new magazine, *Fighting Talk*. We are rightly told that the precondition for defeating the fascists must be "a break with the strategies of the past". Foremost among these is the disastrous strategy of alliances with the "democratic" bosses: the policy of the popular front, originally introduced by the Stalinists in the 1930s, which has been hampering struggles throughout the world ever since.

But the excellent intentions of the editorial are not matched by an article in the same issue entitled "Turning the tide". Supposedly drawing the lessons of the defeat of the British Union of Fascists at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, the article whitewashes the role of the Communist Party (CP) and obscures the dangers of the popular front policy in the process.

In October 1936 Oswald Mosley's fascist Blackshirts announced that they would be marching through the East End of London, an area widely populated by poor Jewish immigrants who were the target for a vicious fascist hate campaign. They were met by a massive mobilisation of the working class, the Jewish community and left wingers—including Labour, ILP and anarchist activists and a large number of CP members and branches. The police protected the Blackshirts, and the battle became one between the anti-fascists and the police for control of the streets. The police were beaten and British fascism suffered a propaganda and physical defeat from which it took decades to recover.

Stalinist historians like to claim Cable Street as one of the CP's finest hours, and, as the article points out, "a victorious example of their policy of the popular front in action". To be fair, the article does also refer to the fact that the CP initially opposed the call for a mass mobilisation. But it obscures the true reasons for this.

As the article reveals, the CP leaders were reluctant to allow the fascist march to disrupt their planned rally in central London in support of the Spanish republican government. For them the Spanish rally was "a nationally and internationally important event". Local party members who disagreed with this "argued their case strongly enough for the party to change its plans and put resources into building a massive counter to the British Union of Fascists" according to the author.

The picture here is of an understandable error corrected through a process of internal party democracy. But it is a false picture.

CP officials told Joe Jacobs, an East End CP member and anti-fascist militant who was critical of the party line over Cable Street, that the Spanish rally took precedence. In his book, *Out of the ghetto*, Jacobs records his reply:

"The best way to help the Spanish people was to stop Mosley marching through East London. It was in fact the same fight... A victory for Mosley would be a victory for Franco. In any case, the people of East London had their own ideas about all this and would oppose Mosley with their bodies, no matter what the CP said."

A profound political error lay at the root of the CP's initial refusal to support the march. Despite the rise of Hitler and the Spanish Civil War, they still did not see the crushing of Mosley's march as a priority. They changed their position not because of the arguments of militants like Joe Jacobs but because as he himself explains:



Lessons of Cable Street

"The pressure from the people of Stepney to go ahead with their own efforts to oppose Mosley left no doubt in our minds that the CP would be finished in Stepney if this was allowed to go through as planned by our London leaders."

Was the CP's attitude just a mis-estimation of the situation, the sort of mistake that even the most healthy political organisation could make? An extract from a written instruction to Joe Jacobs from the CP's East London organiser, Frank Lefitte, says it all:

"Keep order: no excuse for government to say we, like the BUF, are hooligans. If Mosley decides to march let him. Don't attempt disorder (Time too short to get a "They shall not pass" policy across. It would only be a harmful stunt). Best see there is a good, strong meeting at each end of march. Our biggest trouble tonight will be to keep order and discipline."

The popular front policy meant subordinating the anti-fascist

struggle to the need for an alliance with the liberal bosses.

The article in *Fighting Talk* states that the CP "had no pacifist illusions about defeating fascism without physical confrontation". In fact, the CP were desperate not to allow the anti-fascist struggle to assume a form that might frighten off their hoped-for liberal and capitalist allies.

Independent working class action was not their policy. At Cable Street they were caught on the hop. In the face of the heroism and determination of the East London working class they were unable to demobilise the swift and militant response of the masses or tie it to a legalistic bourgeois leadership.

But that was what the popular front policy was really about. The workers of Spain discovered to their cost just what the Stalinists were prepared to do to keep a place for the bosses in the "anti-fascist alliance". They drowned the anarchist and socialist workers of Barcelona

in blood.

Understanding the true meaning of the popular front policy is vital for those involved in the fight against fascism today. The experience of the Anti-Nazi League shows that popular frontism is not the exclusive property of the Stalinists. Led by the SWP, the ANL tried to preserve its support from respectable public figures by continuing with its carnival in Brockwell Park in 1978 while the National Front marched through East London.

Our aim is to build a mass workers' united front against fascism, to mobilise workers organisations in common action to crush the fascists, and resolutely refusing to subordinate that struggle to liberal fair-weather friends. ■

FIGHTING TALK

Journal of Anti-Fascist Action.

Four issues for £5 from
AFA, BM 1734
London WC1N 3XX

GERMANY

Police protect fascists

We print below an article from the October 1991 issue of the journal *Arbeitermacht*, produced by the Revolutionary Communist Faction of the PDS, which supports the views of the LRCI.

SINCE 1988 the Bavarian town of Wunsiedel has become a shrine for fascist pilgrims from Germany and elsewhere.

In the absence of a genuine "führer's grave", a memorial gathering of old and young Nazis takes place there every year on the 17 August at the grave of the mass murderer Rudolf Hess. In 1990 a thousand fascists marched there once again. Rightly, counter-demonstrations were organised against this annual provocation, which clearly outnumbered the fascists, by three or four to one. The police—as always—protected the Nazis.

This year all demos and meetings in Wunsiedel were banned and the Nazis moved their march to nearby Bayreuth. Significantly, the demonstration was allowed, whilst the authorities did not allow the counter-demonstration—convincing proof of the "democratic character" of this state. The police bent over backwards to prevent an anti-fascist counter-demonstration and allow the fascists to pass through the streets unhindered.

The event also highlighted some disturbing political realities. The balance of forces has shifted in favour of the Nazis. 1,500-2,000 fascists faced around 3,000 anti-fascists.

Aside from the general upturn of right wing extremism since the capitalist reunification, the main reason for the relative failure of the counter-demonstration was that the autonomists [the radical liberation life-stylist movement] were left to build it in isolation. The rest of the left were, to their shame, hardly even there, let alone prominent in building it.

The notorious loudmouths of the "Spartacist Workers Party"—the shrillest voices in back-room debates—displayed their heroism by making themselves scarce when the demonstration went on to Wunsiedel! Barking dogs don't bite, as they say. And the Communist Platform of the PDS, which at its June conference decided to support the common action at Wunsiedel, proved yet again what its decisions mean in practice—nothing! Not one of them was to be seen or heard. As a result the demonstration was held around petit bourgeois liberal slogans. Virtu-

ally no effort was made to build amongst workers and their organisation.

In future confrontations this is a guarantee of defeat. In view of the growth of the fascists, and the rapid proliferation of attacks on immigrants, leftists, lesbians and gays by skinheads and other extreme right thugs, we need broad class-based resistance and the building of a workers' united front against the Nazi vermin. ■



Carnival success

HACKNEY DOWNS pulsed with energy on 8 September as 10,000 people gathered at the Unity Carnival organised by London Anti-Fascist Action. Unlike many a dreary "labour movement" event this one drew in the crowds as the black community of Hackney turned out in thousands alongside anarchist youth and anti-racist activists.

And unlike the anti-racist carnivals of the 1970s this was a focus for militant action as well as a celebration of black and white music and youth culture. As the sun beat down the crowd heard greetings from a veteran of the battle of Cable Street and then listened in silence as an AFA speaker read out the list of those killed by racists and fascists in the last ten years. AFA spelled out its commitment to fighting fascism ideologically and physically through mass workers' action, and many individuals and organisations flocked to sign up.

The carnival was organised due to the tireless efforts of the three main political groups in AFA: Workers Power, Red Action and the Direct Action Movement. It shows that the left can organise events that attract workers and youth, black and white, without abandoning politics to do it. Workers Power has successfully argued within the campaign for an orientation towards the labour movement and the working class, recognising that it is only through mass mobilisations of our class that a successful challenge to the fascists can be made.

We have shown that this is possible through hard and determined work, and can point to the fact that the carnival was sponsored by several trades councils and local and regional trade unions. But one group conspicuous by its near absence was the SWP. According to the SWP racism and fascism are not growing, and those who want to maintain the great East London tradition of driving fascists off the streets are described as "squad-ists". They did not lift a finger to build the carnival, and, like *Militant*, they have not affiliated to AFA nationally.

Unlike certain individuals within AFA (including some of the stewards at the carnival), who sought to prevent the SWP from selling papers and "swamping" the event, Workers Power positively calls for the involvement of all working class parties and organisations in the campaign, including the 6,000-strong SWP. We call on their leadership to follow the lead of labour movement organisations which are beginning to get involved in AFA, by joining as a national organisation and actively supporting its policies.

The fascists, who had been able to swagger round Bermondsey harassing the anti-racist demo two weeks before, were nowhere to be seen. Now we must use the success to build further.

Last but by no means least, as the carnival was free it lost money. The organisers desperately need cash donations. Send all money to AFA (Carnival) at the address below. ■

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 12 October

The lessons of Cable Street

Davenant Centre
179 Whitechapel Road
London E1

WORKSHOPS

2.00-4.30 pm

Battle of Cable St 1936 • Women and fascism • What is fascism and how to fight it • Fascism and football • Music against fascism

RALLY

5.00-6.00 pm

SOCIAL

7.30pm Tickets £3/£2 (conc)

DEMONSTRATE!

Sunday 20 October

Reclaim the Lane!

Oppose the fascist paper sale
Assemble 11.00 am, corner of
Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Rd

NATIONAL

DEMONSTRATION

Sunday 10 November

Stop the racist attacks!

Assemble 1.00 pm
Aldgate East Tube, London

Affiliate to AFA:

BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

Workers Power

Militant in crisis

SUPPLEMENT ON THE POLITICS BEHIND THE MILITANT FACTION FIGHT

The bosses' press and many on the Labour left are gleefully watching as *Militant's* leadership tears itself apart. *Workers Power* publishes the following as a serious contribution to the debate which is taking place amongst *Militant* supporters. Since the debate became public, with a leak to the *Guardian* of Grant's factional platform, *Militant* itself has contained no reference to the issues at stake. In response to this contribution no

doubt the *Militant* leaders will be resurrecting all the traditional scare stories about *Workers Power's* politics and practice which they used in the LPYS and the poll tax struggle to seal off supporters and sympathisers from genuine Marxism. All we ask is that *Militant* comrades consider our arguments and follow Karl Marx's favourite advice: doubt everything—especially unsubstantiated assertions from a leadership in crisis.

AFTER WALTON

More excuses

In the aftermath of the Walton by-election a factional struggle has broken out within the ranks of *Militant*. Ted Grant, its founder and theoretician, now commands only a small section of its supporters and is seemingly bound for a split. The debate over standing independent candidates reveals deep flaws in the politics of both the Grant minority and Peter Taaffe's majority faction, and calls into question the whole of *Militant's* method. On the following pages we examine the roots of the argument. Here **Paul Morris** explains the tactical muddle *Militant* has created out of the Walton events.

THROUGHOUT THE 1980s the left in the Labour Party was faced with the summary de-recognition of candidates who were considered too left wing by the Walworth Road bureaucracy. In each situation *Workers Power* advocated that candidates deposed from above should stand, seek recognition from their party organisations and confront the witch-hunt from a position of strength.

The tactic of defiance that we proposed flows from a strategy and perspective which is the very opposite of *Militant's* and which is being proved correct by every current event.

Workers Power supporters in the Labour Party aim to commit as many party members as possible to revolutionary ideas. We aim to prove in practical struggle the impossibility of transforming the party into an instrument of socialist change, and to show the need for a revolutionary combat party.

For *Militant*, however, the "inevitable" influx of workers into the party at some unspecified future date, makes any thought of organisational separation from the party before this impermissible. Any conflict which leads to a "premature" break from the Labour Party is deemed ultra-left.

This was the rationale for *Militant's* response to the expulsion of the entire editorial board of their paper in 1983 and later to the expulsion of Hatton, Mulhearn and the Liverpool DLP leaders.

The same attitude guided *Militant's* response to the closing down of the LPYS. When the Labour bureaucracy moved to strangle the LPYS in 1987 *Workers Power* alone argued for a tactic of defiance.

So *Militant* was disorientated when a section of its close allies amongst the left reformists in Liverpool decided to defy the witch-hunt and stand. For the Broad Left, *Militant's* schema came a poor second to defending the positions and reforms gained in the council chamber. *Workers Power* had no hesitation in welcoming this development and giving the Broad Left councillors critical support in the election.

When *Militant* went along with this tactic they could only describe it as a special case, forced on them by the ferocity of the witch-hunt. In the pages of *Militant* there was no attempt to explain how this fitted in with decades of refusal to break under any circumstances with Labour.

The tactic of critical support for Labour in elections flows from the fact that Labour is, as Lenin said, a bourgeois workers' party, led by pro-capitalist bureaucrats but organically related to the working class and its movement. As long as revolutionaries do not have the strength to pose as an electoral alternative to the main reformist parties of the working class we will operate the critical support tactic at the polls.

The only exception we make to this tactic is where an advanced section of workers in struggle is in the process of breaking with Labour in practice, or where struggles within a mass workers' party lead a militant minority to mount an electoral challenge to a right wing candidate.

Nothing in *Militant's* "science of perspectives" prepared them for the Walton events. But we wrote as long ago as 1980:

"Whilst the tactic of critical electoral support is most generally applicable to mass based bourgeois workers' parties it can, in certain circumstances, be applied to smaller reformist or centrist formations. Again the deciding factor is that of the relationship of such currents to the working class, or sections of the working class. Where small reformist or centrist groups represent a genuine break to the left by workers or oppressed groups it is possible that illusions in their incomplete or false programmes can best be dispelled via the use of critical support. However such a tactic has to be very carefully

weighed in its context. Communists must oppose any tendency in such formations to turn their backs on the working class who still support the major reformist party." ("Theses on Reformism", *Permanent Revolution* 1)

In the context of the class struggles taking place in Liverpool at the time, and the support she received from organised workers, Mahmood's candidacy represented such a break in practice. It is the task of a Marxist leadership to lead such a political break whilst soberly assessing the extent of remaining working class illusions in the mass reformist party. *Militant* proved incapable of doing either.

The victory in the 3 May council elections unleashed a bout of wild optimism about the position of *Militant* within the Liverpool workers' movement. Dave Cotterill declared:

"The results have shown the real balance of forces... The right wing have no support among the party activists. Trying to frighten voters with the spectre of *Militant* doesn't work for the Labour right or the Liberals, it only further radicalises the population and builds support for the Broad Left... Liverpool is now heading towards having a mass radical socialist movement, free of the right wing impostors and careerists." (*Militant*, 10.9.91)

In contrast to this, another section of *Militant's* leadership rejected the decision to stand Mahmood altogether. Ted Grant, Rob Sewell and Alan Woods formed a faction in opposition to standing independent candidates, characterising the tactic as a challenge to *Militant's* whole method, perspective and strategy.

Ironically we can at least agree with Grant on this. In attempting to explain away the Mahmood campaign as a limited tactical reorientation within the general framework of *Militant's* method, Taaffe and co are trying to square the circle.

We have outlined in *Workers Power* 145 our major criticisms of the Mahmood campaign. But the end of the campaign did not mean an end to *Militant's* mistakes.

Having portrayed the whole process, from Broad Left victory in May to Mahmood's defeat in July as a forward march, the leaders who had supported the standing of candidates had to do some quick re-thinking when she polled a lower than expected vote. Clive Heemskerk's article in *Militant International Review* (MIR) 46 contains the fruits of this attempt to reorientate the leadership. It admits that all the rhetoric about official Labour's demise on Liverpool was well wide of the mark:

"MIR concedes that the Liverpool candidacies—in the council elections and in Walton—were indeed not part of a generalised 'advancing working class movement.'" (MIR 46, p6)

Acknowledging the debate in 1985, when Derek Hatton advocated the declaration of an independent DLP but the *Militant* EB vetoed it, Heemskerk explains the difference between then and now:

"Developments on the council and in the Liverpool Labour Party have taken a qualitative turn since these lines were written." (MIR 46, p5)

Just how feeble Heemskerk's excuse really is can be judged by comparing today's tactic with what would have been possible if, in 1985, Liverpool DLP had defied the Labour bureaucrats, or if the LPYS had defied the threat of closure. The Labour leadership had not yet achieved a fundamental change in the balance of forces. It had not yet reduced the left to its current state of disorganised impotence. In these conditions such actions could have had the chance of winning far more support.

Militant could have led a break before the left in the party had been defeated, whilst their influence over the city council was far greater, and when the bitter trade union battles of the mid-80s were still raging. The most favourable tactical opportunity for the building of an independent party was missed.

But in fact *Militant's* case against an independent DLP in 1985 never rested on the level of the witch-hunt or on the balance of forces. It rested on Grant's schema that *Militant* had to be inside the party at all costs awaiting the "inevitable" flood of workers to Labour. Heemskerk tries to dodge this point, because to acknowledge it would be to highlight *Militant's* fundamental error of political method.

Instead Heemskerk calls on a military analogy to justify the tactic in retrospect: "But does a retreating army preclude the possibility of mounting limited offensives? Napoleon wrote that 'retreats always cost more men and materials than the most bloody engagements'. Could not a stand be made at a point of strength, the better to conduct a rearguard action and prevent a rout?" (MIR 46, p8)

If *Militant* supporters paused to think about this lame analogy, which stands as the only real rationalisation for the tactic in all the pages of Heemskerk's explanation, they would realise what an admission of political

bankruptcy is being made.

Of course it can be part of a military strategy, even a Bolshevik military strategy, to sacrifice troops in a rearguard action to allow for organised retreat. But even at a military level Bolshevik tactics differ from bourgeois tactics. Basically, Bolshevik generals tell the truth to their troops. They do not lead them into such actions claiming that they are offensives, still less that the enemy is finished!

Even when judged against its stated intention of providing for orderly retreat, the tactic must be considered a failure. Has it slowed down the witch-hunt? No. Despite Nellist and Fields' decision to sit out the rearguard action in their bunkers they have taken a direct hit and are now suspended. Hundreds of those who canvassed for Mahmood are threatened with expulsion. The campaign did not serve as a rallying point for the force which could really have altered the situation—the best organised council workers. Only as a means of preserving the left councillors' grip on office can it be deemed a temporary success.

But even as far as the council Broad Left is concerned the retreat has been far from orderly. In the aftermath of the Mahmood defeat and the intensified witch-hunt a section of the Broad Left has set up its own Liverpool Independent Labour Party (LILP). *Militant* has condemned the setting up of LILP.

Finally, it helps if any rearguard action—political or military—contributes to stability in the leadership and amongst the cadres. But only weeks after the end of the Mahmood campaign the bourgeois press was filled with stories of a public row between *Militant's* "Napoleon" and his Chief Marshal!

This reveals what a mess can be made out of a correct tactic when it has to co-exist with an unscientific strategy and perspective.

Ted Grant's intransigence on the need to stay in the Labour Party come what may is revealed as a recipe for accepting "under protest" any attack on the left, no matter what its consequences for the working class.

Peter Taaffe's rationale for standing Mahmood was muddled from beginning to end. It was a tactic essentially forced on Taaffe by *Militant's* Broad Left reformist partners. It found an echo amongst sections of the membership for whom the lifeless schema of transforming the Labour Party bore no relation to their everyday practice. First, it was rationalised as an advance towards a new party, although only in certain areas. Then it was explained away as a kind of suicide mission within an overall retreat.

The whole process calls to mind Trotsky's description of the Mensheviks during and after the 1905 Revolution, being swept along by the stream of events only to emerge "like hung-over revellers" declaring "never again". Wild zig-zags, political inconsistency, intrigue, and manoeuvre—Trotsky had a word for this: centrism. ■



"We regard this committee as the germ of the mighty workers' international which will, within the next decade, become the decisive force on the planet."

(Committee for a Workers' International, Founding Conference, 1974)

IT WOULD be possible to fill page after page with categorical predictions by the leadership of the Militant Tendency about the imminent triumph of its politics, all of which have been disproved by subsequent events. Lying behind each of them is a false method of drawing up perspectives. It is a method which, applied to the prospects for the Labour Party in Britain, is currently disorientating the Militant leadership.

Scientific perspectives are a key component of modern revolutionary Marxism. But Grant and Taaffe's perspectives are invariably a parody of Marxism since they embody a false, one-sided view of the prospects for revolution. For Militant the historical process not only creates the objective conditions for revolution (the class struggle) but also solves the subjective condition: the attainment of a revolutionary consciousness within the working class. Militant once summed this up in the phrase: "The objective situation is moving in the direction of Marxism and the subjective situation as well."

Militant further elaborated this in 1981:

"Marxists can only have an effect in relation to the inevitable processes that take place in the minds of the working class. It is not agitators who create such situations, but the situation itself. All that the Marxists do is make conscious a process that is unconsciously taking place in the minds of the workers." (*British Perspectives*, 1981)

But there is nothing inevitable about the "process" in workers' minds. Still less is it an unconscious process. If we argue that workers are advancing unconsciously towards a revolutionary consciousness, it is a short step to arguing that the "making conscious" only needs to take place by stages, as events unfold.

This perspectival method has an important practical conclusion for Militant. If objective events are moving in the right direction, if the "hammer blows of class struggle" inevitably produce centrist and then revolutionary consciousness within the minds of millions then there is no need for the decisive subjective factor—the guiding intervention of a revolutionary party.

Throughout the last decade Militant has refused to contemplate any meaningful obstacle to its progress in the Labour Party. In the 1983 election it wrote:

"If the Tories win, as the right wing never tires of repeating, Marxism will gain. If Labour wins that will be even better. Marxism will gain even more."

Faced with the witch-hunts, which in 1983 saw its Editorial Board expelled from the Labour Party, Militant was full of lofty optimism:

"Whatever action is taken, the right wing will fail. If they witch-hunt us we will gain influence. If they do not witch-hunt us we will gain more influence."

Heads I win, tails you lose.

So how could Militant have possibly arrived at its present situation? That is the question that now faces Militant comrades. The Tories have won three elections, and the witch-hunt in the Labour Party has intensified dramatically since 1983. The influence of Militant within the Labour Party has been massively eroded, calling into question its whole project of transforming the Labour Party into a vehicle for legislating socialism.

Militant's schema for Labour

Militant's schema for the progress of the "Marxist wing" of the Labour Party has always been false to the core, always destined to lead to opportunism and disorientation. At root Militant argues that long term entry work into the Labour Party is dictated both by the relative isolation of revolutionaries from the masses, and by the inevitability of those masses joining their traditional organisations in times of crisis:

"All history demonstrates that at the first stages of revolutionary upsurge the masses turn to the mass organisations to try and find a solution for their problems, especially the young generation, entering politics for the

first time." (*Problems of Entrism*, March 1959)

Because of the inevitability of the masses entering the Labour Party Militant argues it will be possible to transform the Labour Party into a vehicle for socialism. This will be made easier, Militant insists, because Marxism has always had a place within the Labour tradition, and that it is the right wing politics of the leaders which are alien to the Labour Party. For Militant Labour is basically a workers' party which has been hijacked by the bosses' agents.

The victory of the left within the Labour Party is in the long run assured since the crisis of capitalism, according to Militant, spells the end of right wing reformism. Because there are no reforms to deliver the right wing will be reduced to a rump, whilst the left grows, first in a centrist then in a revolutionary direction.

This self-comforting scenario neatly absolves Militant from using Trotsky's *Transitional Programme* in a revolutionary way. Their whole series of demands is raised as the programme for a "socialist Labour government". Since the masses are going to find their way to revolutionary consciousness under the impetus of the objective situation there is no need to reveal the revolutionary end point of the linked chain of demands; namely, soviets, the workers' militia and the insurrection. Militant's "perspectives" and "historical laws" about the Labour Party dictate that the transitional programme is abandoned in favour of a series of minimum demands.

Let us examine each step in Militant's schema.

The masses turn to Labour?

Clive Heemskerk, writing in the aftermath of the Walton by-election, argued that:

"The historical law formulated by Marxism, that workers will move to reclaim their traditional organisations, is a process in which a complex interplay of different factors are involved" (*Militant International Review—MIR* 46)

He cites such complex factors as the economy and the development of workers' consciousness lagging behind events. None of this can hide the fact that the "historical law" formulated by Militant is far from accurate.

It would be true in general to say that "the masses can never give up their old organisations until these have been tested in the fire of experience" (*Programme of the International* 1970). But the history of the working class struggle does not simply follow a cyclical pattern.

Workers' organisations, having been tested in struggle, may disintegrate and fragment. Workers' illusions in them may be deflected onto other false leaderships, their internal structures may be altered to distance the parties from the possibility of mass influx.

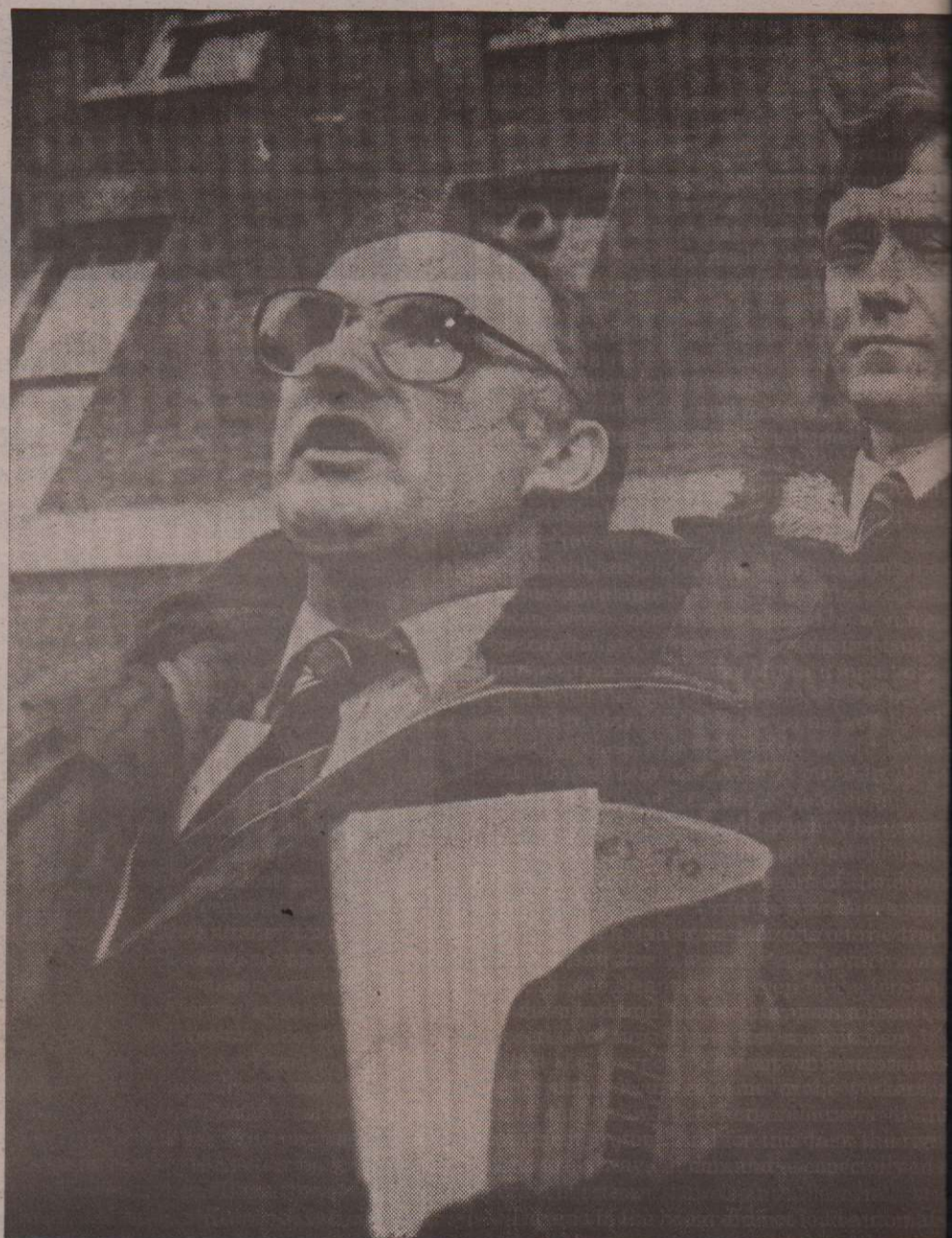
All workers' organisations which are reformist or Stalinist led contain a fundamental contradiction between politics and social base which, according to the laws of dialectical materialism, cannot exist forever. The resolution of these contradictions can take place in a reactionary as well as a progressive direction.

What this means concretely can be seen through numerous historical examples. In addition to millions of workers turning to Social Democracy in the revolution of 1919 hundreds of thousands flocked to the centrist USPD and to the revolutionary KPD. Faced with the bankruptcy of the Communist Party in the early 1930s French workers flocked to Social Democracy, attempting to turn it left.

Today, the world-wide collapse of Stalinism is leading to a falsification of the "historical law" across many continents. The masses have

MILITANT A

Marxism is the science of perspectives, Ted Grant never way he expected. Events have disproved Militant's development. The confusion in Militant's leadership is



Peter Taaffe (left)—breaking with Grant's tactics, not his method. Ted Grant

not flocked to the ANC in South Africa, nor has it moved left under the impetus of mass struggle. In Latin America a decade of savage attacks has not (apart from in Brazil) seen a growth in the parties of the left, but a decline, fragmentation and the growth of bourgeois and populist parties instead.

In Britain, when the workers' movement hit the obstacle of the Thatcher government there were certainly periods when attention focused on Labour rather than on the trade union struggle. But at no stage during the 1980s did workers turn *en masse* to individual membership of the Labour Party. Nor did they have to in order to effect a turn to politics. It is through the bureaucratic machine of the unions that the organised workers' movement exerts its influence on the Labour Party. Today individual membership of the Labour Party is at a post-war low and activism extremely depressed.

As Workers Power argued from the very beginning of the Thatcher years, the scope and the limits of the left turn within the Labour Party after 1978-79 was dictated by

the temporary rupture between the union bureaucracy and the Parliamentary Labour Party. By the 1982 Bishop Stortford Conference this had been healed and the left was in retreat. It was this perspective which event confirmed. Compare it to Militant's, written in 1981:

"An inexorable process of turning and moving towards the left will take place in the labour movement as a whole, and will turn the Labour Party into a left reformist party or even moving it in a centrist direction." (*British Perspectives* 1981, p17)

Conceding the possibility that the Tories would win a second term in office Militant wrote:

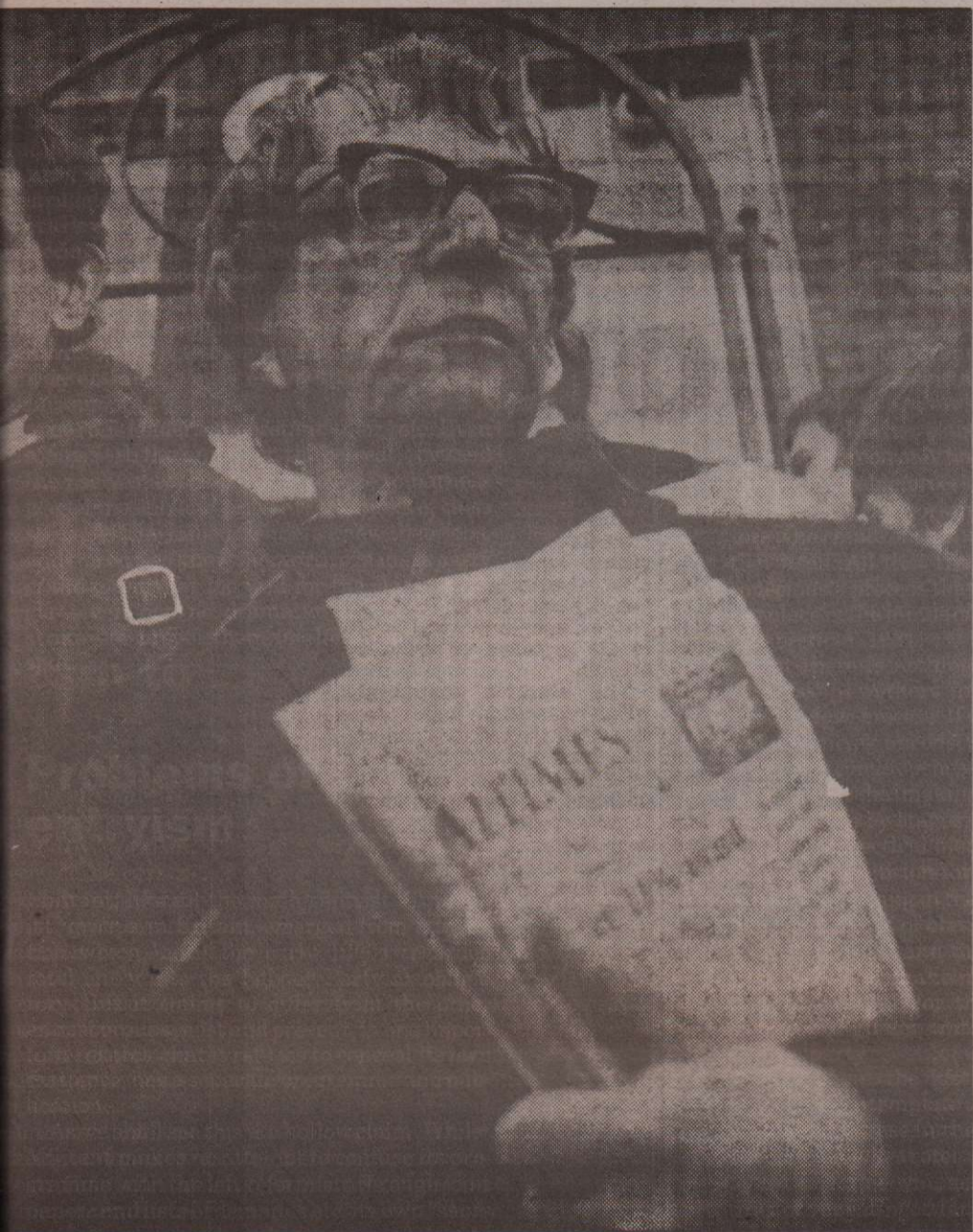
"Such an eventuality would push the masses inexorably on to the road of industrial struggles and a further transformation of the Labour Party and the unions. The Labour Party and the unions would be pushed even more to the left than they have been as a result of the defeat of the Labour government in 1979" (*ibid* p18)

Whilst the second Thatcher government dic

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r tires of repeating. He is being proved right, but not in the
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the result of a flawed method, as Colin Lloyd explains.



position (right) is a recipe for accepting every right wing attack "under protest".

provoke unprecedented industrial struggles in the 1984-86 period these were defeated, and as a result the right wing consolidated the hold it had already taken in both the Party and the unions. Militant's perspective of continuous radicalisation and leftward movement was falsified again and again.

Of course, none of this rules out a future attempt by masses of workers to flood the Labour Party, turn it leftwards and so on. But this is not a historical law, not an accurate generalisation from experience. So any strategy based on its inevitability, let alone on its imminence, will be false. Nor does such radicalism necessarily have to affect Labour first or most. We only need look at the experience of Scotland to see confirmation.

The anti-poll tax struggle in Scotland after 1989 was part of a deep going radicalisation and mass activity of Scottish workers and youth. But it did not lead to an influx into the Labour Party, nor to a left or centrist move inside Labour. It certainly led to support for Militant because of their early direct work on the housing estates. But at the same time it

has led to masses of radicalised youth deserting Labour, and damaging Militant's prospect of transforming the Labour Party. Instead workers and youth looked to "left" Scottish Nationalism for political answers. Jim Sillars scored a spectacular by-election victory over Labour in Govan. Today half of under-24 year olds now support the SNP.

Labour's right wing finished?

But even if Labour were to be the main beneficiary of the radicalisation this would not inevitably lead to Labour's transformation. The main reason for this is the role that Labour plays for the bosses and hence the centrality of the right wing within the party.

Militant believed that, in conditions of economic crisis, the material basis for right wing reformism would disappear. This is the linch-

pin which holds together the many other, internally contradictory parts of Militant's analysis. That it is central to Militant's perspective can be proved beyond doubt.

In 1981 Militant argued that "as events develop, the right wing as an organised force will be shattered". (*MIR*, July 1981)

Even when the right wing consolidated their grip in 1983, with the election of the Kinnock-Hattersley dream ticket Militant declared, "In reality Labour's old right wing is shattered" (*MIR*, November 1983). In autumn 1985 Militant argued:

"The movement of workers into the Labour Party will be a reflection of the struggles of society as a whole. It is an inevitable process, that when thwarted politically as in 1983 the working class moves 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 participating more actively in the party itself. From this point of view the right wing are already living on borrowed time."

This prediction too has been rubbished by reality.

The whole false schema was based once again on a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the Labour right, summed up in the assertion:

"The old Labour right is finished because in a historical sense their role is played out" (*MIR* November 1983)

For Militant right wing 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 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 *MIR* put it in 1981:

"The effects 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."

But the "purpose" of right wing reformism is not just to secure reforms for the workers, it is to tie the workers' organisations to the capitalist system. And for this task the right wing are always in demand—especially in a period of crisis.

The end of the boom did not lead automatically to the withering away of the right wing. The "Neanderthal men" were replaced by the slick Kinnock clique (of course aided and abetted by Neanderthals like Jordan and Hammond in the trade unions). It was the possibility and the necessity of presenting pro-capitalist Labourism as some form of socialism which declined. This was the legacy of defeat on the industrial plane and of the cyclical revival of the capitalist economy after 1982.

Modern imperialism has no need of the planning boards and wages policies of former Labour governments. The economic nationalist programme of state-funded production behind trade barriers is an anachronism for British imperialism faced with 1992. It never had anything to do with socialism and has been unceremoniously junked by the Labour right. Without as yet severing the trade union links which make Labour a bourgeois workers' party, the right wing have managed to systematically reforge Labour's politics and survive in charge of the mass workers' party, despite the ending of the post-war boom.

Because Militant completely misunderstood the role of the right wing in the Labour Party they believed that it was always looking to split the party. This was important for them

since it allowed them to believe that the Party would be abandoned by the right and the Marxists could repossess it as a result.

All of this leaves out of account the role Labour plays in the running of capitalist society. Whilst it is certain that a section of the big bourgeoisie had a direct hand in the creation of the SDP (Sainsbury, etc) it is not the case that the bosses' media, or the Tories consistently fostered a MacDonald type split in the Labour leadership.

In fact by 1982, with the Bishop Stortford retreat by the union tops and the Bennites, the split of the SDP had done most of its work for the bosses. It cowed the left and strengthened the centre and right. It put them in a position whereby they could begin to wrest control of the party from the left and over an eight year period complete a counter-reformation in the party.

Militant predicted further splits of the right wing after 1981 under the impact of the class struggle. But it did not happen and, as Workers Power predicted, was never likely to. Why? Because without the unions an SDP style new party could not play the vital role of incorporating the working class organisations into the system of exploitation. Since the war there have been only two governments under which workers' real wages fell: both of them were Labour.

Labour leaders understand their role. Even today, with the unions on the retreat, they sell themselves as the party best able to harness wage inflation and prevent outbreaks of class struggle. The Labour leaders knew their jobs, and the bosses knew the worth of a mass party of the unions far too well for the class struggle—even one as dramatic as the miners' strike—to propel them in the direction of a split.

Problems of entryism

Militant, like all the main centrist "Trotskyist" groups in Britain, emerged from a tradition which, until the early 1960s regarded total entry into the Labour Party as obligatory. But it claims to differ from the other entryist groups, past and present, in one important respect: that it refuses to conceal its own existence, has a separate programme and publication.

As we shall see this is a hollow claim. Whilst Militant makes no attempt to confuse its programme with the left reformists through joint papers and lists of demands etc, its own "separate" programme is one big accommodation to reformism. This is inevitable, once entryism becomes a strategy instead of a tactic.

Writing about the 1930s, Militant's leaders admit that entryism was conceived as a short term tactic by the Trotskyists, to be used in specific situations:

"The tactic of entry was also considered as a short term expedient, forced on the revolutionaries by their isolation from the masses." (*Programme of the International*, p6)

Writing about the Fourth International (FI) leadership immediately after the war, the document continues disparagingly:

"In Britain they raised the question of entry in the immediate post-war period because they saw at the time the conditions of slump and the existence of a strong and developing left wing within the Labour Party!" (ibid)

Ted Grant was one of the few leaders of the British section of the FI who could see this perspective was false at the time. But writing about the degenerate Trotskyism of Pablo and Healy in the mid-1950s Militant says:

"Entrism was imposed by the objective situation and the weakness of the revolutionary forces, but they operated it in a purely opportunist fashion." (ibid)

What had changed? Why had Trotsky's short term tactic, which Grant rejected in the immediate post-war period, become a long term "tactic" imposed by the objective situation? The answer lies once again in Grant's perspectival disorientation. The man who had been able to see through the perspectival errors of Pablo/Mandel and Healy succumbed to the same methodological poison.

Behind Grant's insights into the possibility of a post war recovery lay a refusal to recognise the possibility of a boom. As early as 1946 he argued that the recovery:

"... cannot lead to a blossoming of the economy of capitalism. A new recovery can only prepare the way for an ever greater slump

yes in ruins

... there can be no real growth in the productive forces." (*The Unbroken Thread*, pp381-83)

By 1952 Grant argued that the world recovery was drawing to a close. In 1960 he claimed that "the world economy is beginning to move towards a slump" (*ibid*, p392).

It is precisely those conditions which Grant derided in 1945—imminent slump, imminent left turn in the Labour Party, which have become timeless features of Militant's perspective and which, along with continued isolation from the masses, dictate the total entry tactic as a long term necessity.

Trotsky's entry tactic was short term for one sound political reason. If the tactic has to involve the open fight for the revolutionary programme it must inevitably bring the Marxists up against the bureaucracy of the mass workers' parties. It may even bring sections of the left reformists up against the same obstacle, provoking mass expulsions and a ban on factions.

In this situation the choice is either to lower the revolutionary banner, refuse to fight, or gather all the forces possible around that banner for the inevitable split. If there are overriding perspectival reasons for staying inside the mass parties then the logical consequence is some form of *détente* with the bureaucrats and some form of programmatic accommodation to them.

For Militant this has taken several forms. After 1983 it has resulted in repeated capitulation to the witch-hunts, as in 1985 when they advised Hatton to accept expulsion "under protest". Still worse it takes the form of a consistent attempt to depict the revolutionary Marxist programme as something intrinsic to the Labour tradition.

Defending Labour's "socialist" traditions

The most recent example of this can be seen in Richard Venton's attempt to defend Terry Fields and Dave Nellist against the wrath of the Labour NEC. He writes

"Terry Fields and Dave Nellist are amongst the very few Labour MPs who can truly claim the mantle of Keir Hardie." (*Militant*, 20.9.91)

Whilst admitting that Hardie was not a Marxist, Venton claims that he fought for policies "with an uncanny resemblance to the policies which Kinnock denounces Terry Fields for today". He follows this with a quote from Hardie calling for common ownership and a socialist commonwealth. Venton goes on to cite Clause IV of the party constitution with its commitment to common ownership, quotes Atlee who "spoke of an enabling act", cites the FBU rule book, which gives a commitment to building a "socialist system" and finally reveals that Neil Kinnock himself once called for the overthrow of capitalism.

Let's be clear about what is going on in articles like this. Militant is attempting to defend its MPs against expulsion from the party at the cost of systematically distorting the relationship of Marxism to Labourism.

In the first place no verbal commitment to socialism ever made Keir Hardie, Atlee, Bevan, Benn or any trade union leader anything other than a reformist socialist. Has Militant forgotten that the Mensheviks, long after they took up arms against the October Revolution, retained in their party programme the *dictatorship of the proletariat*?

Clause IV was written, by the admission of its author Sydney Webb, in order to mean anything, at any time, to any Labour leader. It can mean state capitalist nationalisation or it can be interpreted to mean wider share ownership. No one except the poor deluded reformist workers led to one defeat after



ABOVE The miners' strike in 1984: upsurge in industrial struggle did not lead to mass influx or left turn in Labour Party.
LEFT Keir Hardie: an "uncanny resemblance" to Nellist and Fields?



another by the Atlees, Bevans and Benns ever thought it meant the expropriation of the bosses.

This is what a real Marxist, Friedrich Engels, once wrote about Keir Hardie:

"The ILP is extremely vague in its tactics, and its leader Keir Hardie is a super cunning Scot, whose demagogic tricks cannot be trusted for a minute... He appears in Parliament only on demagogic occasions, in order to cut a figure with phrases about the unemployed—without getting anything done—or to address imbecilities to the Queen on the occasion of the birth of a prince." (*Selected Correspondence*, Marx and Engels, p449)

The same could be said about all left re-

formists, from Hardie to Heffer.

Marxism is *politically alien* to Labourism, even the Labourism of 1945, the Labourism of Clause IV and of Keir Hardie. It should claim its right to membership of the Labour Party not on grounds of political affinity, but because Labour is the mass party of the trade unions. Every Marxist pays their political levy in the affiliated unions. Every Marxist should fight for non-affiliated unions to affiliate as long as there is no alternative mass workers' party to Labour. It is on this basis that we, like the early Communist Party, should demand full membership status within the Labour Party. Anything else leads, as with Militant, to an opportunist distortion of Marxism.

Grant versus Taaffe: a question of tactics?

Militant's leadership has not been impervious to the gradual but insistent falsification of its perspectives. During the latter part of the 1980s it has been pushed pragmatically to adopt a more "left" face on a number of important questions, and to develop a periphery and activity outside the Labour Party.

In contrast to the days when Militant prevented discussion of lesbian and gay rights at LPYS conference by moving a resolution about football (!) we now see Militant supporters with a high profile on the Gay Pride demos. In contrast to the first two hundred and fifty issues of *Militant* which contained

only four articles specifically on the woman question we now see women's struggles and concerns covered in depth. Not just economic questions but the problems of reproductive rights and sexual harassment. And whereas Militant opposed the setting up of Labour's Black Section on grounds of the need for class unity it has now set up its own black front organisation in the shape of *Panther*.

During the anti-poll tax struggle Militant developed real roots in working class communities. But these workers were at best indifferent to or, in the case of Scotland outrightly hostile to, the Labour Party. In response Militant has adopted various forms of independent work, effectively party work not entry work. In Scotland it has redrawn its programme to accommodate the schema of a Scottish assembly being the focus for a "workers' government".

However, Militant took this tactical turn very late in the day: too late to stop it alienating tens of thousands of youth when it condemned the poll tax Trafalgar Square riots in March 1990 as the work of "anarchists" and "outsiders", and offered to "name names" to the police. Too late as well to pose itself as a real alternative for the radicalised youth in anti-war campaigns after Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

It is no surprise that the vast majority of youthful and active comrades within Militant now supports the section of the leadership which masterminded this tactical turn to the left. But the Taaffe leadership majority has not broken in principle from Grant's strategic entry scheme. This is clear from Taaffe's letter to the *Guardian*:

"Militant sees Labour as the traditional party of working people, who in years to come will force it back to the left. We have no intention of abandoning it... We will not be urging people to tear up their party cards. We will be building a force inside and outside the party that will in the end transform Labour." (*Guardian*, 4.9.91)

The message is plain. Militant may be forced to make a tactical retreat within the labour movement but it is sticking to its schema of transforming Labour. One day Grant's predictions will come true, the Labour right will give up the ghost, the masses will pour in. In the meantime, the difference between Grant and Taaffe remains a tactical one: whether to lie inert in the stagnating wards or whether to carry on independent "party" activity.

But despite the intentions of the leaders there are real objective difficulties facing the Taaffe project. If Militant are forced into supporting Fields and Nellist they will face yet another round of witch-hunts. And such campaigns cannot be carried out under the slogan of "retreat".

As the Liverpool experience shows, such open party work has a tendency to induce wild optimism in Militant's supporters and organisers about Labour being "finished".

And this is not just the result of individual excess. It is impossible to rouse halls filled with hundreds of workers and youth to the fight for an independent candidate without calling into question their loyalty to Labour, without effectively getting them to "tear up their party cards". In the age of the Polaroid camera and fax machine canvassing for a Militant backed MP is as good as tearing up your card, as Walton showed.

There will be those in Militant who want to go much further than Taaffe in a break from Grant. In the coming months this may manifest itself in the struggle over particular tactical questions, or in the outright call for an independent party. It may even manifest itself in the shape of outright revisionism and anti-Trotskyism, or a collapse towards the SWP by some elements unable to contemplate life as a smaller group.

Trotskyism has not failed: Militant has. Those who want a progressive solution to the factional struggle must make a clean break with the method of Militant, elaborated over forty years of centrist disorientation and opportunist practice, and look to the genuine Trotskyism of the LRCI. ■

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Between 24 and 28 September Bucharest was the scene of mass demonstrations and street battles between miners from the Jiu Valley and the paramilitary riot police of the Romanian government. The miners stormed government buildings but proved unable to bring down Petre Roman's government as they had hoped, or force the resignation of President Iliescu.

DURING THE demonstrations some Bucharest workers and many anti-NSF students joined the miners' demonstrations. But after meetings between the leader of the League of Miners of Jiu, Miron Cosina, and President Iliescu, Cosina called on the miners to return saying that he had received promises that their grievances would be dealt with. For two more days at least 1,000 miners refused to heed the call until they were dispersed by the actions of the paramilitary.

The miners' action was to press a list of ten demands that included a rise in wages and a price freeze. Only one year previously the 52,000 miners of the Jiu Valley had been amongst the NSF's strongest supporters, sending thousands of their number to Bucharest to suppress the movement of the students and the opposition parties which was trying to oust the NSF government—elected scarcely a month previously.

Now the miners feel betrayed. They voted for the NSF because it promised to protect them against the mass unemployment and un-

ROMANIA



Miners strike back

bridled price rises which the openly bourgeois opposition parties were touting as the short road to the market and prosperity.

But Petre Roman, protected by the miners from the opposition, then adopted a liberalising programme similar to the latter's. This has led to 167% inflation in the last eleven months, to a slump in retail sales of 30%, a fall in the GNP this year alone of 5% and to tens of

thousands of unemployed. The government responded to this crisis with the insulting proposal to index wages to 40% of price increases.

The opposition in parliament—the Liberal Monarchist Party, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party recently joined by the Party of Civic Alliance—have had little success in mounting mass opposition to the NSF in recent months. Despite win-

ning the support of a new regroupment of trade unions, the national Confederative Trade Union (NCU), the protest rallies and an abortive "general strike" called for 18-19 June this year failed to rally more than 2-6,000 in Budapest.

Opposition leaders and their union allies bitterly attacked the capital's factory workers and the miners for their lack of solidarity with the opposition. They also attacked

the Fratia (Brotherhood) trade union federation, which is generally closer to the government, as "a far cry from the Solidarity-type of trade union in which we had placed our hopes".

Confusion

The opposition could hardly believe their luck when the NSF's working class supporters began to turn against it in September. Clearly the miners' revolt against declining real wages indicates that the working class will not indefinitely pay the cost of the restorationist government's attempts to carry out their programme at the expense of the working class. But at the same time it shows the confusion in the workers' organisations as to what programme is needed and what sort of government could carry it out.

So discredited is Stalinism and the parasitic *nomenklatura* that the workers call simultaneously for an end to the attacks on wages, jobs and a halt on price rises alongside the demand for the speeding up of the privatisation programme. The latter lays them open to being used as the battering ram to smash the old conservative bureaucracy, only to open the way to power for an opposition which will redouble its attacks on the working class. In Romania this will probably mean a military-Bonapartist regime and even the return of the king.

Struggle

If the working class is not to be politically exploited in this way it must find a political programme and leadership worthy of its combativity. A revolutionary party must be built that takes up the struggle to carry through a political revolution to oust all factions of the NSF government and smash the counter-revolutionary pro-monarchist opposition.

The only government that the workers can give any support to in opposition to the NSF is a workers' government, rooted in recallable delegates from the mines and factories and committed to halting the dictatorship and austerity of the market. ■

POLAND

Stop Walesa!

AT THE end of October Poland will elect a new parliament. For the first time all seats to the lower house (Sejm) will be freely contested. Back in 1989 some 65% of the seats were guaranteed to the Polish ruling Stalinists. The outcome of these elections will likely see a majority for open restorationists, demagogic populists and reactionary clerical nationalists.

For most of this year the election date has been a political football kicked around between the Sejm itself and President Walesa. Walesa has sought to bully the Sejm into accepting earlier elections in order to get through drastic restorationist policies before the election allows the workers to pass judgement on the results. The Sejm resisted, but only at the cost of endorsing the reactionary pro-capitalist measures that have been served up in legislation by Prime Minister Bielecki, Walesa's chosen man.

The Polish people will be voting in a period of unprecedented economic crisis. From early 1990, with the installation of the Mazowiecki government, Poland has been subject to "shock therapy", a series of plans aiming at the transformation of the economy from "market socialism" to free market capitalism within two to three years.

The result of these measures was predictable. Subsidies to state industries, to staple foods and housing have been slashed. While it brought the hyper-inflation under control by balancing the state budget it did it by

producing a massive slump in the economy. Unemployment rose rapidly. Today it is 1.5 million (9%) and rising. At the same time wages collapsed by as much as 50% in real terms in the first three months of 1990.

But this was only the first phase of the "big bang". Much of the large state concerns remained intact, surviving by cutting wages and relying on their traditional trading links with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The introduction of the "hard" rouble in Polish-Soviet trade was a further blow to the Polish economy. By the middle of this year many of the major state concerns like Ursus, the giant tractor producer, faced bankruptcy.

Only continued loans, on easy terms, from the state banking system has kept many industries afloat. One of the last acts of the old Sejm, however, has been to pass new laws injecting a more ruthless, capitalist credit policy into the relations between the banks and the enterprises. Crunch time is coming.

Only a rapid awakening from illusions in the market by the Polish workers can deliver an electoral blow to Walesa. Already significant strikes and occupations have broken out this year. In February there was a wave of strikes against a government wage capping law imposed on state industries. The OPZZ organised a march of 25,000 workers in Warsaw in protest. In May even Solidarity was forced to organise a day of protest against government policies. Recently 5,000 workers occupied their truck plant



demanding the government take action to prevent bankruptcy and save jobs. By July President Lech Walesa was declaring that Poland was at a "turning point" as "anarchy was threatening to allow the old system to reassert itself".

in the last few months we have seen what to expect. Walesa has been threatening to rule by decree if the Sejm proves obstructive. Despite huffing and puffing the Sejm has not resisted the programme of cuts in subsidies and welfare measures.

Walesa and his advisors are well aware of the problems that face them. Unlike the East German case Walesa does not have the massive financial strength of an imperialist bourgeoisie to cushion the impact of possibly another million or two thrown onto the scrap heap

Walesa and his advisors are well aware of the problems that face them. Unlike the East German case Walesa does not have the massive financial strength of an imperialist bourgeoisie to cushion the impact of possibly another million or two thrown onto the scrap heap. He knows that these measures will cause massive unrest which will have to be put down. Already

Having faced down the opposition in the Sejm, Bielecki's government decided to do the same to the workers' movement.

In early September police forcibly evicted striking bus workers who had been occupying their depot in Bialystok. A threatened farmers' demonstration which had planned to march on Warsaw and occupy govern-

ment buildings in protest at the governments agricultural policies was called off by its leaders after warnings from Walesa and Bielecki.

Polish workers and farmers face a decisive turning point. Walesa and his supporters want a pliable parliament and "special powers" to push through the last act in the restoration of capitalism in Poland with all the suffering and hardship that this will entail.

Workers must give their votes only to those parties who give a clear commitment to oppose these measures that attack the workers and small farmers; to those who oppose privatisations, wage freezes and cuts in social provision in education, health and social security; to those that openly defend the existing rights to abortion and contraception under threat from the Catholic church.

The SdRP (the old ruling Stalinist party) has made occasional statements indicating a stand against the effects of restoration while not resisting the restoration itself. In five seats in Lower Silesia the Inter-factory Coordinating Committees (MKK) are putting up candidates. The workers themselves must link up their struggles, form strike committees and defense organisations to protect their factory occupations.

The unemployed and the youth must be organised and linked to the trade unions in struggle. Above all the workers of Poland need to form a genuine revolutionary, Trotskyist party which can launch a struggle for workers' democracy and socialism. ■

AFTER THE COUP

Two roads to nowhere

The failure of the hard-line coup in the USSR has had two main results. It has brought Boris Yeltsin to power, determined to restore capitalism. And it has unleashed a wave of independence declarations by the non-Russian republics. But the fragmentation of the USSR and the capitalist plans for restoration are mutually opposed. The only thing uniting them is the need to attack the working class, writes **Mike Evans**.

IN THE aftermath of the coup Boris Yeltsin was able to mount a swift counter coup, replacing Gorbachev as the single most powerful politician in the old USSR. The Russian Republic and its government established control over all the central levers of political and economic power. They are no strangers to this role. Yeltsin and Rutskoy lead an "alternative *nomenklatura*" of bureaucrats who have abandoned all hope of defending the planned property relations of a degenerate workers' state, and instead seek to head the restoration of capitalism. They hope to end up as industrialists, bankers, generals and politicians in a new capitalist, and if possible imperialist, Russia.

Up to Yeltsin's seizure of power immediately after the coup, the openly restorationist section of the bureaucracy was in close alliance with the nascent capitalist class that has emerged over the last few years. This class is represented by Konstantin Borovoi, the chairman of the Russian Stock Exchange. He personally led hundreds of his fellow brokers onto the streets during the coup. But now a split has emerged between Borovoi and the Yeltsinite bureaucrats.

"I'll tell you what happened during the coup. Communists defeated communists. They may call themselves democrats but they are still communists. Their methods are the same. We are again building communism. It's the same old centralised methods and the same old people, it's terrible", Borovoi told reporters.

His exaggerated anger points to a deep unease amongst the fledgling capitalists at having helped—to the tune of 15 million roubles—another faction of the bureaucracy to take power. They want an immediate "big bang" privatisation and the dismantling of all the central state controls over the economy, price controls, etc.

Dismayed

Likewise the "democratic intelligentsia", the third force in the anti-coup alliance, has begun to distance itself from Yeltsin. The intellectuals are increasingly dismayed as Yeltsin rules by decree and avoids being held to account before the Russian parliament. Figures like Gavril Popov, the mayor of Moscow, have followed Yeltsin's lead. Voted emergency powers by the city soviet, he has now used them to bypass it and to rule by decree; seizing party property worth billions of roubles. These former critics of Gorbachev, and of centralisation, are now converts to building a new

economic and political federation with minimum democracy and the rule of a few self-selected leaders.

But they are being severely hampered by the second major result of the August *putsch*: the reaction to the rise of Russia. One after the other the republics have declared their independence, starting with the Ukraine on 24 August, followed the next day by Belorussia, and the day after that by Moldova.

The tensions between the new Russified centre and the non-Russian republics deeply affect the plans to dismantle the centrally planned economy and bring about the restoration of capitalism.

The bureaucratic conservative faction was delaying this process—not in order to preserve the planned economy but to preserve its own privileges. The scale of this plunder can only be guessed at. The transfer abroad of billions of roubles worth of hard currency by the CPSU and Gosbank gives some idea: \$5.5 billion in December 1990, \$2 billion in May, \$4.5 billion in August (*Soviet Weekly*, 19.9.91). It also reveals the lack of any real hope amongst the conservative bureaucracy that they had any future other than as exiles polishing their many medals.

Removed

Once the obstruction of the hard line coup-mongers was removed many thought that the road would be wide open to the restorationist programme.

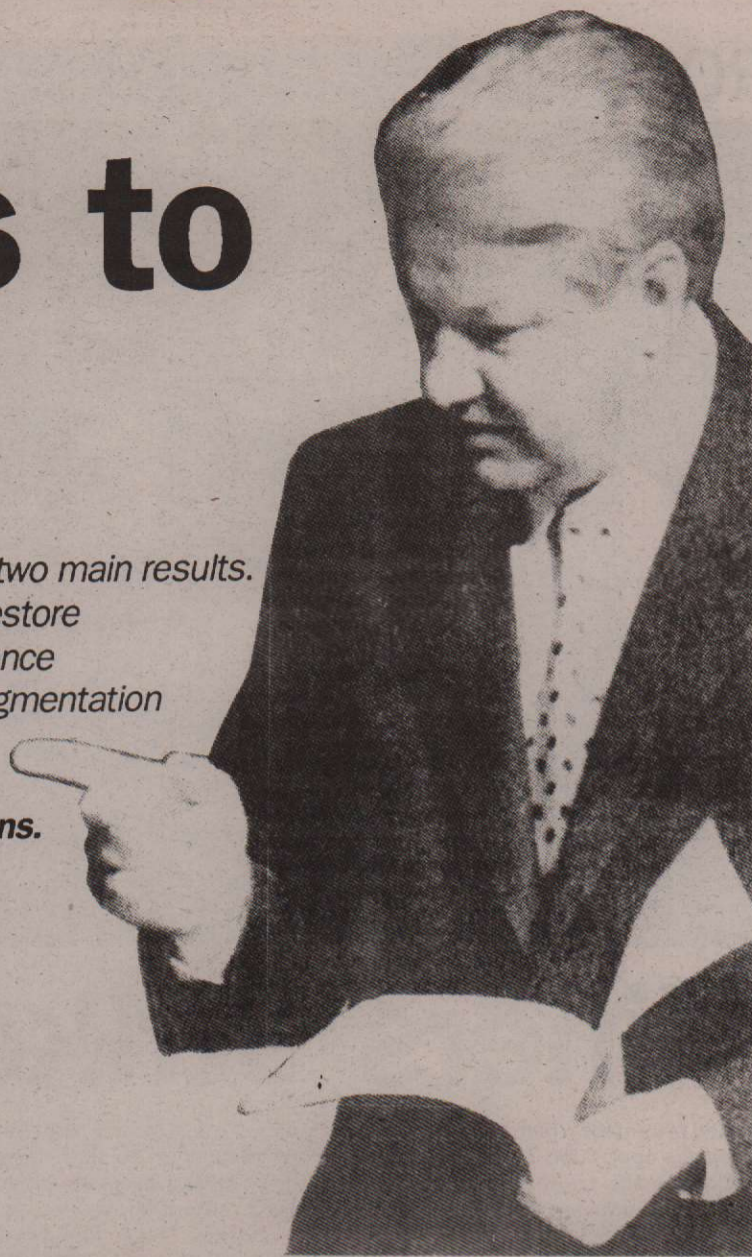
Certainly Yeltsin and his advisors struck quick and hard at the old centres of bureaucratic command planning—the main obstacles to the operation of the law of value within the soviet economy.

In the first days after the failure of the August coup the activities of the USSR Ministry of the Economy and Forecasting (the renamed Gosplan) and the State Supply Agency, which between them directed the centrally planned economy, were banned throughout the territory of the union.

The head of the Gosbank was removed. The new Russian-dominated government made it clear that this was to be a decisive break with the centrally planned economy. The Chairman of the Russian Federation Bank, Georgy Matyukhin, told the *Financial Times* on 17 September that Gosbank would be scrapped, perhaps as soon as the end of October.

In fact these legal measures are only speeding up a process that has been underway since all the republics declared independence or sovereignty in the last two years.

Increasingly, the republics only



Will the republics dance to Yeltsin's tune?

carried out orders from the central planning agencies which were in accord with their immediate national interests. As a result, by the first half of this year, only 40% of orders were fulfilled by the enterprises. The planned economy was disintegrating into local or republican spheres, within which barter between enterprises was coming to predominate.

The results of this for the economy of the USSR were devastating. Estimates for the decline of the economy in the first six months of the year vary. The State Committee for Statistics (Goskomstat) reports that industrial production fell by 6.2% and agriculture by 11%. The IMF official forecast for the whole of 1991 is a 15% drop.

Since the republican banks began to print money, and the republican governments started to withhold payments to the centre, the money supply has risen by 40%. This has fuelled a half-yearly inflation rate of 57.9% according to official figures. Both central and republican governments are running up massive budget deficits. If the "laws of the market" were applied to these banks they would be declared bankrupt!

Putsch

With their seizure of power in the wake of the failed *putsch* Yeltsin and the Moscow and Leningrad mayors have joined up with Gorbachev in the struggle to preserve a union-wide economic framework, supposedly modelled on the European Community. Their aim is to prevent the USSR breaking up into a patchwork quilt of borders and customs posts.

Grigory Yavlinsky, co-author with Leonid Shatalin of the famous "500 days" plan of summer 1990 had the thankless task of trying to cajole the republican leaders into accepting a common economic agreement. As deputy chairman of the Committee for the Management of the National Economy he has been engaged in protracted talks with representatives of the fifteen former

Soviet republics.

The "Yavlinsky Plan" published in draft form on 13 September, is the latest in a long series the USSR has witnessed over the last few years. It involves agreement to set up a politically independent Federal Bank on the model of the US Federal Reserve or the German Bundesbank, charged to issue a common currency or to maintain a fixed exchange rate between republican currencies and the rouble. The republics must agree to take joint responsibility for the old USSR's state debt, to maintain a common policy on taxes, customs and prices and to end internal customs barriers.

A bitter three-cornered struggle has broken out, over control of these areas, between the Russian Federation Bank, Gosbank (the old central bank of the USSR) and the banks of the republics.

However, the plan itself is already meeting considerable opposition from the republics as being too centralist. Whilst not officially breaking with it, leaders of the republics convened a conference in Tallinn, the Estonian capital, and drafted a radically different agreement—the "Tallinn Process". The leading advocate of decentralisation was the Ukraine's Minister for Privatisation, Volodymyr Lanovy, who rejected the Yavlinsky Plan as "another effort to force upon us a single financial and monetary system".

The Tallinn Process envisages the abandonment of the rouble as a common internal trading currency. Instead of a central Federal Bank the republics proposed an interstate clearing bank to establish exchange rates between the republican currencies.

The official line of the principal imperialist protagonists in the restoration process—the USA, Germany, Britain, France and Japan—is to back the attempt to preserve a degree of economic union.

Just as they prefer to deal with a central authority over the USSR's

nuclear arsenal so they have no trust in the fractious republics to be sensible bargaining partners for economic aid. They want a centralised authority responsible for the USSR's debt. This was estimated at the end of July to be some \$62 billion. Reserves have run down to only \$5 billion. Additionally the imperialists harbour a powerful fear that the USSR will disintegrate into warring states, like Yugoslavia, unleashing an avalanche of refugees westwards.

The degree to which the go-it-alone policies of the republics will undermine the "All-Union" plans of Gorbachev, Yavlinsky and Yeltsin is clear from the actions of the Ukraine, the biggest non-Russian republic. It accounts for one quarter of Soviet industrial production and one third of agricultural output. Ukrainian parliamentary leaders have called in a team of western advisors, including that economic whizz-kid Sir Geoffrey Howe, to draft a "reform programme" for an independent Ukraine. Its fundamentals, already announced, are an independent currency, a balanced state budget with tough constraints on enterprises and a massive privatisation campaign.

Given this situation will it be possible for Gorbachev and Yeltsin to force the signature of an Economic Union treaty in October? Perhaps. But who or what will force the republics to honour it? Each republican leadership is trying to take the first steps of the restorationist programme—letting prices soar, keeping wages and pensions low, cutting real incomes by 30-40% on the Polish model, to produce "realistic" prices and soak up the huge unusable hoards of roubles.

This will undoubtedly provoke even more resistance than has been seen in Eastern Europe. They have no tamed "Solidarity"; no Catholic church to help control the masses. Nor will they have the dollars and deutschmarks that Poland has received. If they are tied to an Economic Union these nationalist demagogues will try once more to blame Moscow.

Process

However, on their own these internal contradictions amongst the restorationist forces will not stop the restoration process. They will only prolong it, increase its destructiveness and lead to the growth of reactionary nationalist, even fascist tendencies. Only one force in the Soviet Union can change all this: the working class.

Its wages, jobs and social welfare, miserable as all of these were, are in the first line of attack. Fed with illusions and lies about the wonders of the "market economy" and the flood of high quality goods it brings, the Soviet workers are about to experience a rude awakening.

Freed from bureaucratic police tyranny, but still burdened by illusions in the market, they must struggle to create independent fighting class organizations. These have to be independent not only of the old bureaucrats but also of the new agents of the AFL-CIO who have clambered to the top. Fortunately these reactionaries do not have the credibility of a Lech Walesa to exploit.

In the workers' anger—which will erupt in the next months and years—lies the objective basis to halt the restoration process and to create a new anti-capitalist labour movement. Central to this task is the solution of the crisis of leadership—the creation of a new socialist party based on the revolutionary legacy of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

LRCI SUPPORTER Joanne Gray interviewed Boris Kagarlitsky, a leader of the Russian Socialist Party and Moscow Soviet deputy. Kagarlitsky has been prominent in moves to form a new "Party of Labour". This project has received a fresh impetus following the coup and the resulting disorientation of the non-Stalinist left. One component of the Marxist Platform of the CPSU (which split after the coup), led by former Central Committee member Alexander Buzgalin, has announced its intention to be involved in this process.

If successful the new "Party of Labour" will be a thoroughly reformist one seeking its place alongside the Second International. That is clear from the interview with Kagarlitsky. It is clear too from the draft "Appeal for a Party of Labour", issued in Moscow on 28 August, and signed by the President of the Moscow Soviet, members of the Socialist Party and some trade union leaders from Moscow.

The appeal specifically rejects the idea of a revolutionary vanguard party and comes out in favour of a "decentralised social sector", co-existing with the private sector "within a mixed economy".

Just when the much praised Swedish model of Social Democracy is losing support because it attacked workers to preserve the profitability of the "mixed economy", its imitators of the "Party of Labour" want to divert the workers of Russia and the other republics into the same reformist dead end. And this in a period of mass struggles and revolutionary upheavals throughout the old USSR, when the urgent need is to build a revolutionary alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism!

The interview starts by trying to clarify Kagarlitsky's position on the coup. Like many others on the left in Russia, Kagarlitsky started off by adopting a "plague on both your houses" position with regard to the coup-mongers and the forces resisting it, led by Boris Yeltsin. Kagarlitsky attempted to justify this position with convoluted theories of Yeltsin being a participant in, if not the originator of, the coup (see statement published in *Socialist Organiser* 497)

Other members of the Socialist Party obviously did not follow this position and correctly stood shoulder to shoulder with the forces outside the Russian Parliament, while giving no political support to Yeltsin.

Is it true that you were opposed to the barricading of the White House during the coup?

Socialists were told to go to the Moscow Soviet, which we said was the representative legal government, and to protect their Moscow Soviet. They were told they were free if they wanted to go to the White House and the barricades but mostly to concentrate on defending the Red House, the Moscow Soviet, which we considered to be the better place for us to be.

On the night of 19-20 August when there was the danger of attack on the White House. Most of the socialists concentrated there. One of the members of the Executive went there and announced that they went there to "defend our enemies" and they spent most of the night there. Personally I was not in Moscow, I was in Sweden. I came back on 23 August.

Socialists were very active during the whole period. In Leningrad the leader of the Socialist Party (SP) there was the very first leader of any party to sign the appeal to resist the coup. The Socialist group in Leningrad immediately started to arm themselves and to arm people. Then suddenly they faced a big problem from a very unexpected source. It was the Leningrad Soviet government which tried im-

BORIS KAGARLITSKY ON THE SOVIET COUP

Under a Menshevik flag?



Soviet tank opposite the Russian parliament building, 19 August

mediately to disarm them.

The Leningrad government was very uneasy about any kind of popular resistance or mobilisations. In Moscow, people like Yuri Kramov and Alexander Popov were key figures in organising the resistance of the Moscow Soviet. Then suddenly Gavril Popov arrived at the Moscow Soviet and to disarm their guard and tried to persuade the deputies to leave the house. The deputies refused. Then Popov left and the guards were immediately rearmed. They had to resist, not so much the plotters but the so-called Russian democratic bodies, who were very hostile to any genuine attempt to mobilise resistance among people.

Can you tell me about the Socialist Party, of which you are a leader.

The SP is a party that tries to represent the interests of skilled labourers, old and new types... Politically, in western terms, it is a very radical left party. It is definitely not a social democratic party because it is oriented towards self-management, public property, municipal property, public investment funds and so on. It is very hostile to privatisation though there are some privatisation scenarios discussed by the SP as well, mostly about how to

use privatisation as an additional accumulation source for the public sector.

That is how we see privatisation which is very different from how the liberals see it. We think that the point of privatisation is to get rid of certain enterprises that need not be in the public sector, which are a kind of burden for the public sector. Selling them would keep the money in the public sector, in public investment funds to be re-invested in the expansion of the public sector.

If you have an efficient public sector you have to buy something and sell something. For the liberals the main purpose of privatisation is not to bring more efficiency into the economy, which now even the most radical liberals are not able to pretend, but just to change the proprietor. They see the creation of a new bourgeoisie as essential.

What forces do you represent, where are you located and what do you stand for?

We are mostly active in three cities, Moscow, Leningrad and Irkutsk. Generally we cannot pretend to be a real national force in Russia. In Moscow, where the group of Socialist Parties called the Moscow Left is very respected, it is still a very



Boris Kagarlitsky

small minority group. On the other hand it has a reputation for being a kind of elite group. It's a party of Labour... It is not a cadre party of the Bolshevik type. It consists of very skilled and well educated people. That creates a bit of a problem.

On the one hand it gives you a lot of authority when you speak to different people. On the other hand it also creates individualism, demobilising people, especially when the party's mentality is very anti-hierarchical. When you try to mobilise and organise in any hierarchical way, you face enormous resistance from within. You have to organise from below. Yet the people in the Socialist Party are hardly the kind that could organise from below. In that sense they are very elitist.

The Moscow group has a good reputation, with about eleven deputies, regularly getting about seventy votes in the Soviet, with quite a lot of people supporting our proposals. But it's very hard to make it a strong mass party.

That's where the whole idea of the Party of Labour is coming from. It's the idea that we have to overcome this contradiction. We aim to build a party of the left sharing the main ideas we advocate and at the same time, a party which does not have our weaknesses. There are three categories of people most active in joining the Party of Labour: the majority of the anarcho-syndicalist federation (KAS), ex-communist intellectuals and activists who belong to different left wing opposition groups and trade union activists from both old and new unions.

Today the union leaders realise they are going to be wiped out by a reactionary government unless they fight back politically. They want someone to protect them and they know that the only force that could successfully do this is a radical left wing party with a clear cut socialist orientation. We are very supportive of the idea of representative government, of self-management—not just industrial self-management but also local territorial self-organisation. This notion is getting a lot of sympathy among local deputies.

Now is the period of recomposition of forces. Ironically we are getting people who were earlier on different sides of the barricades—

including some who were elected on the Democratic Russia list. They have suddenly realised what is happening with the new Russian government. It is bringing the only capitalism possible in the Soviet Union, which is fascist capitalism. They don't want to live in a fascist country. So they join the left. There is a process of radicalisation among at least certain sections of the intellectual communists.

What is the mostly likely scenario for the future?

The CPSU is finished. The Yeltsinites are forming a special government, forming some kind of united political movement connected to the state, bringing all the parties together and bringing them under control... Mostly it will be controlled by the old communist bureaucracy which is now called the democratic leadership. They are very busy in building a new-style repressive apparatus. Georgia is two or three steps ahead of the rest. I think we will have a Georgia here in Moscow quite soon.

This means a repressive government which first enjoys some real public support but then public support vanishes fast. The more public support disappears the more openly repressive the government becomes, and then you come to the open clash between the population and the government with the government really ready to use force and repression against its opponents.

On the other hand there has been a very dramatic resurgence of a tendency that could be called the democratic left, after the collapse of communism. It is a very interesting phenomenon which is not typical of the rest of Eastern Europe. There the Communist Party in one form or another managed to survive but its tradition was very much undermined.

This was not absolutely the case in Russia. Here the tradition of the CP though very badly wounded is still quite alive. It creates the resurgence of the left or at least the conditions for a resurgence of the left and the only real opposition to the new autocratic regime.

It is going to happen in the rest of Eastern Europe as well, but probably not so fast, probably after Russia. Ironically Russia is very far ahead of the other countries of Eastern Europe. We started our *perestroika* four years earlier than them.

Take Georgia for example. I you watch Soviet TV, you will see that some people are waving red flags once again, not Bolshevik red flags but Menshevik ones, the red flags of the revolutionary Georgia of 1920, when Georgia was governed by a left wing social democratic party and it had the red flag as its national flag. They are opposing the red flag of the first social democratic Georgian republic to the national flag. So, people really identify themselves with the Menshevik tradition, with the Menshevik flag, which we think is a very promising scenario.

London bus job massacre

Dear comrades,

Conductors, drivers and white-collar staff face the sack. Bosses at London Buses have shut down their London Forest subsidiary and threatened to axe the giant Ash Grove garage in Hackney.

The closure of London Forest comes amid allegations of corrupt accounting practices. There are rumours that London Buses itself may soon disband, as a prelude to unbridled competition for profitable transport routes in the capital.

The Forest closure follows the transfer of tendered routes at Walthamstow garage to private operators Ensign. Because of this, and the likelihood that other tenders will be lost, management say the whole unit has become unviable. Walthamstow itself has been due for the chop since early August with the loss of forty clerical and administrative jobs and redundancy for dozens of drivers, many of them recently hired women.

London Buses have guaranteed only a handful of jobs for workers from Ash Grove with 200 others doomed to the dole queue from 23 November. The proposed shut down of the £5.5 million facility has left workers stunned, especially after the supposedly successful outcome of a strike this summer. As one conductor put it, "This makes a joke of everything we fought for a couple of months ago".

In July nearly 1,300 TGWU members at London Forest's four garages walked off the job for 17 days to resist the bosses' attempts to slash wages and dramatically increase the working week [see WP

145]. Union officials claimed victory when London Buses stripped its own subsidiary of the Walthamstow routes and handed them to Ensign, even though Ensign's terms and conditions were worse than at London Buses! The back-to-work deal, moreover, was shot full of holes.

Many on the left, most notably the SWP, echoed the T&G official line, ignoring the absence of any job guarantees for the Walthamstow drivers and the promotion of a handful of scabs at that garage. Real victories, however minor, should be congratulated. But self-delusion disarms workers and lets the T&G officials off the hook.

In reality the strike's official leadership hid behind the Tories' anti-union laws and refused to spread the action to other units in the fleet, even where drivers took solidarity action. The T&G officers threw away a unique opportunity to beat back the Tories' drive for complete deregulation and eventual privatisation.

Worse still, their misleadership of the Forest dispute means bus workers in other units will now feel the pressure to buckle at the first management threat rather than risk losing their jobs altogether.

Unless workers are swiftly rallied to renewed action including all out strikes, occupations of the threatened garages and the immediate spreading of all action to other units many of them will pay the price for the summer's totally unnecessary defeat.

Yours in solidarity
Zoe Jollie

Dear comrades,

While on holiday in Leningrad last month I was informed over breakfast on Monday 19 August, by my host, that we were in the beginning of "extraordinary times". After receiving a confused look from his guest he looked in the Russian-English dictionary and changed extraordinary to extreme. He attempted to explain:

"For six months there will be no strikes, no foreign travel and a ban on the sale of alcohol."

But why?

The reply was that President Gorbachev was ill.

Throughout the day I began to pick up bits and pieces and a clearer picture of the nature of the events. My friends did not know where Gorbachev was and believed Yeltsin would be killed. The Russian Parliament in Moscow had been surrounded by tanks and Yeltsin had appealed to the people to come and defend it.

I now realised things were much more serious than some bureaucrats stepping in to keep order until Gorbachev recovered! But my friends seemed resigned to the situation. "We have a crazy political system" they would say.

Later that evening we came out of the metro station and saw two men with placards addressing a large

Leningrad eyewitness

crowd. One placard said KMCC which means CP=SS, equating the Stalinists with Hitler's SS. The other spoke about bringing the *junta* to justice. They were announcing a public meeting the next morning.

So the following day, in a tense and nervous group we set off for the meeting. My friends warned me that it would probably be a small meeting and there may be trouble. As we walked down the Nevsky Prospekt it very soon became clear that this would not be a small group of people waving a few placards. People were streaming out of the metro station, stepping off buses and trams, waving flags, chanting slogans and holding placards, all heading for Palace Square.

People were absorbing any information they could get. Anyone with a radio soon found a crowd of eager listeners around them. Similarly leaflets stuck to buildings were immediately surrounded. Illegal news-

papers thrown in the air in handfuls were scrambled over by the eager crowd. The tension was subsiding as we realised the scale of the protest.

The crowd, over 50,000 strong, was defiant and confident. There was a broad cross-section of Leningrad citizens on the demo: men, women and children, students, workers and the retired. The most vociferous were the youth.

There were a number of Russian Federation flags being waved and nationalist speeches from the platform. But to suggest that these were fascists, as some people would have us believe, is ridiculous. Many of those in the crowd lived through the Nazi blockade. One of the main slogans was KMCC, as on the night before. Fascists are not popular in Leningrad.

Despite the carnival atmosphere the *junta* was still in power. That night the barricades went up outside the Leningrad Soviet and Sobchak, the Mayor, called on people to defend it.

The barricades were never needed in Leningrad, however, and soon life returned to normal. In Palace Square a hastily arranged concert called "Rock against the Tanks" took place. People seemed to sense that they had achieved a great victory over something which at first they felt powerless to change.

The overall impression I got was that the coup had driven the final nail in the coffin of what the masses saw as communism. Our task now has to be the rehabilitation of Lenin and Trotsky, and to show that the coup was the final death throes of Stalinism, not communism. More than ever a Trotskyist leadership is needed to win the workers from their illusions in the market and bourgeois democracy, and to a truly revolutionary course of action.

Communist greetings
John Deer

Dave Hughes remembered

Dear comrades,

I was very sorry to hear of the death of comrade Dave Hughes. Dave, as well as being an outstanding Marxist intellectual, was also a brilliant organiser who always powerfully defended the interests of the working class.

I remember Dave at an anti-fascist public meeting on a council estate in Leicester in the 1970s bravely facing the fascists. I remember him discussing with miners on class struggle tactics and on developments in the Soviet Union. I also remember Dave standing up to the intimidation and undemocratic practices of Tony Cliff when we were in the International

Socialists.

What a tragedy that Dave will not be present to help the rebuilding of the Soviet workers' movement at this time of the world historic collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Our greatest homage to Dave must be to continue the struggle for the development of creative Marxism, a task to which he dedicated his whole life.

Paul Winstone,
On behalf of Leicester Socialist Movement

This is one of many letters and tributes which Workers Power received following the death of Dave Hughes (see obituary WP146)

The Trotskyist Manifesto

As part of the Russian work of the LRCI a number of comrades from different sections of the LRCI were in the Soviet Union both during and after the coup.

Within days of the coup the first LRCI statement on the events was translated into Russian. A second LRCI statement on the aftermath of the coup and the tasks facing the working class (see WP146) was translated and circulated in Moscow in September.

Students at a meeting at Moscow State University on the implications of the coup eagerly snapped up the statement and other LRCI literature in Russian.

The programme of the LRCI, the **Trotskyist Manifesto**, has now also been translated into Russian and will be printed this month in book format. All this work is being financed by donations to the Dave Hughes Memorial Fund (see opposite).

For LRCI material in Russian and other languages write to
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX



The Trotskyist Manifesto is now available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian

Dave Hughes Memorial Fund

Dave Hughes (1948-91) devoted his life to the fight for revolutionary Marxism. He worked tirelessly to rebuild Trotskyism in the USSR. Please give generously so that we can carry on that fight.

The death of our comrade Dave Hughes has left a big gap in the workers' movement. It leaves Workers Power and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International without their most experienced comrade in the field of work in the Soviet Union.

Dave made a major contribution to developing the Trotskyist analysis of today's crisis in the USSR. His knowledge of Russian and his frequent visits to the Soviet Union allowed him to develop contact with the emerging worker' movement and the left wing oppositions to Stalinism.

We are committed to carrying on that work, a task made more urgent than ever by the collapse of Stalinist rule.

To do this we need money, not just to finance the LRCI's work within the USSR but to pay for the translation of even more of our material into the languages of the USSR. We need money also to train more comrades to speak Russian.

We appeal to all those who, through Dave's work, have gained insight into the developing crisis of Stalinism and the other major questions facing socialists today, to give generously to the Dave Hughes Memorial Fund.

Make cheques/postal orders to Workers Power. Mark the back Memorial Fund and send to:

**Workers Power,
BCM 7750,
London WC1N 3XX**

For Trotskyist work in the Soviet Union

CHARLES HAUGHEY'S government, already facing a severe financial crisis and confrontation with the unions, suddenly found itself in a minefield of scandals in September. Directors of the state-owned Sugar Company "borrowed" from company funds to buy into another company. Then they sold it to the state company at a profit of millions to themselves, all under the anonymity of "off-shore" paper companies.

No-one would have known except that the chief executive took court action to force his cronies to hand over the loot! From that moment on, the pips began to squeak right across the spectrum of state enterprise as one new allegation followed another, leading right back to Haughey himself.

The Sugar Company had, in the intervening year, become the flagship for the state's privatisation programme—after sacking thousands of workers of course! There was a lot at stake, therefore, for the image of other planned but unannounced privatisations.

In 1990 the Irish Trade Union Congress undemocratically overturned the formal opposition of the major unions to privatisation—saying they would support involvement of private capital where it might boost employment! Nevertheless, the Haughey government explicitly promised that Irish Telecom would not be privatised. Union leaders brokered this "guarantee" to workers as one more reason to vote for the three-year wage restraint package narrowly adopted in a national ITUC ballot in February.

Suddenly, in the wake of the Sugar Com-

Haughey rocked by scandal

pany scandal, the government was exposed by the *Irish Times* for lying about the Telecom privatisation! Telecom admitted that steps towards privatisation were already in train and plum contracts already awarded to National City Brokers (NCB). NCB itself is run by a crony of Haughey's.

The opposition Labour Party and Workers' Party then produced evidence pointing to corrupt property dealings at taxpayers' expense involving anonymous offshore companies created by the same NCB. A major shareholder in those companies was Telecom's own chief executive, Michael Smurfit, who was brought in from the private sector in 1984.

Smurfit, who "resides" in the tax haven of Andorra, is Ireland's biggest capitalist. The biggest, that is, since the collapse of the meat empire of his rival Larry Goodman whose illegal dealings are the subject of the biggest ever judicial inquiry by the state. This inquiry was instigated after an Irish TV exposure of Goodman in May. It goes into public session in October, plunging the meat industry bosses into further crisis as

their £1 billion export trade plummets further.

The pressure of the opposition parties and the media forced Haughey to call on Smurfit and a leading NCB executive (in a radio broadcast!) to "stand aside" from their respective public offices as chief executives pending investigations. In response they resigned amid bitter recriminations, but not before more evidence began to leak out of allegations of ripping off the state for the benefit of their own companies.

While the bosses' media, the parliamentary left and the union leaders fulminate about "corruption in Irish business" and the need for a "code of ethics", they are incapable of unearthing its roots. These are not just isolated misdemeanours by a few individuals. On the contrary corruption is endemic to capitalism itself, in which all economic activity is driven by unbounded competition for private profit. But as long as it is left at the level of "scandal" vital issues for rallying the working class are being obscured.

The issue of privatisation is central.

Smurfit called for Telecom to be sold off for £1 billion "to ease the national debt". Telecom was developed entirely from public funds, absorbing £1.5 billion alone in the 1980s, and now seems set to pay back up to £100 million a year to the state in the next period. Smurfit as head of the expanding multinational Jefferson Smurfit Corporation, is determined to get as big a stake as possible in those future profits. The Haughey administration, for its part, is threatened with a major financial crisis and is convening a conference on 7 October with the unions to tell them that up to £340 million of promised public sector wage increase may have to be cancelled, as well as cutting more public spending.

In these circumstances militant action is vital to make the union leaders hold firm against both privatisation and the threat to wages and services. Significant sections of the union leaders are making loud noises of resistance to any further retreat on wages. The ITUC will almost certainly be forced into token national stoppages to strengthen their hand in bargaining for a compromise.

There is a real chance, however, of rank and file resistance leaving no room for the kind of compromise on wages that can bale out Haughey. So unless the unions are simultaneously forced to mobilise against major privatisations and cuts, the working class will be made to pay dearly in jobs, conditions, prices, heavier taxes and public spending cuts. Such is the weight of state companies in the economy that all the major unified and organised layers of wage workers are in the state sector. The destruction of the state companies would thus also strike a major blow at the trade unions themselves.

The parliamentary "left" who are so vigorous in their rhetoric about corruption merely offer themselves as the conscience of the Irish bourgeoisie. Cleaning up the appearances of Irish state capitalism is the limit of their perspective at this crucial moment. These are the very parties which in the past year have derided "nationalism", and even socialism itself, as outworn shibboleths. Yet they remain the only political expression of any kind of independent working class interest on the national stage. It is all the more important that workers target them, in every mass action in the forthcoming wage battle, with the clear demand for workers' mobilisations against all privatisations.

Exposing the sham claims of Spring and De Rossa's parties to represent workers' interests is only one side of our task. Equally important is to win workers to recognise that the defence of state property against privatisation is not only of practical economic importance in the short term but is a necessary task of the programme for socialism. It can become an active element in the fight for workers' power when workers struggle to impose their own veto over conditions within the state industries, especially abolishing the business secrecy which masks systematic parasitism by private capital on state property, by opening their books to workers' inspection!

That fight against business secrecy has a stinging relevance at this moment when William Attley, leading figure in the Trade Union Congress, drawing a salary of £60,000 from SIPTU, continues to respect the business secrecy of the privatised Sugar Company (Greencore). He retained his directorship of Greencore as trade union representative right through the process of privatisation and the present corruption scandal!

So-called "worker directors" must be forced to defy business secrecy and to be fully accountable to the rank and file, or else be forced out of the workers' movement! ■

Republican armed struggle in a cul-de-sac

TWENTY-ONE YEARS of the republican armed campaign against the Six County state has been marked by the introduction of new repressive legislation, local pogroms against Catholics, and a frightening increase in sectarian reprisal murders by organised loyalist paramilitaries with police collusion.

Although the Anglo-Irish strategy of talks about power-sharing within the province may well be stalled until after the next British general election, the repressive apparatus continues to steadily grind down nationalist resistance.

The IRA is nevertheless boasting of success in "isolating" British forces in the Six Counties after the Haldane/Sheils company announced it would cease supplying the army when the IRA shot its managing director. This is but the latest instance of the IRA tactic of "economic boycott" of the army through military action against "collaborating" capitalists. It is a self-deluding tactic. Workers as well as bosses have been similarly targeted for such collaboration. In Haldane's case the company hit back by boasting its record of defending its Catholic employees from sectarian harassment.

In every way this IRA tactic flies in the face of any hope of building action by the anti-unionist masses, and especially working class action against repression and for troops out. All the more so when it is linked to actions such as the recent bombing of the Shorts factory and the forcing of so-called economic collaborators to drive "proxy bomb" lorries into army posts.

Given the enormous discrimination in jobs which makes mass unemployment a constant factor for the nationalist community, and given the huge weight the security sector has in the Six County

economy, it is not surprising many nationalist workers take jobs that are "collaborative". Military "justice" cannot solve this problem. A campaign aimed at winning workers to political boycotts and strikes can.

The past two years have seen a new growth of protest movements against the IRA from petit bourgeois sections, encouraged by the anti-republican Workers' Party, but also by the trade union bureaucracy. The IRA's tactics have played increasingly into the hands of their opportunist opponents, by alienating many among the nationalist population.

The repeated bombing of the Dublin-Belfast railway led to Peace Train demonstrations with trade union support. The killing of a farmer for collaborating with the Gardaí brought out 5,000 in a demonstration in the Armagh-Lough area, fuelling the STOP campaign. Rough justice by the IRA against petty criminals gave major propaganda opportunities to the FAIT campaign. Since these campaigns preach open collaboration and peace with British imperialism the counter-productive nature of the IRA campaign is clear to see.

The exacerbation of sectarian tensions, and a savage backlash by loyalist murder gangs, has vastly outweighed any supposed success in "isolating" the army in the consciousness of the most oppressed nationalist communities who are totally sidelined by the elitist nature of the IRA guerrilla campaign.

The will to continue the Republican struggle, however, is sustained by the living nightmare of nationalist oppression. Daily and nightly harassment of communities by security forces goes unreported except in local and republican organs. Beatings, liftings, bru-

tal interrogation, long remands and cynical convictions on the say-so of the police are the lot of hundreds of young men and women. Several instances have lately been reported of the daubing of Catholic schools with British National Party slogans by British soldiers. Every other week brings another murder of a Sinn Féin figure or elected representative and their councillors are barracked and intimidated in the chambers of major local councils such as Belfast.

The thousands who turned out in Belfast to mark the twentieth anniversary of internment in August testify to Britain's achievement in making indelible the consciousness of national oppression among the half million Catholics in the Six Counties. But such large numbers have not been rallied in action since the H-Block struggle of ten years ago. The responsibility for that failure falls principally on the leadership and programme of the republican movement.

State capitalism defended with physical force

TEN PEOPLE walked out in protest from a public meeting of the Clifftide Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) in Dublin on 6 September when a member of the IWG was roughly thrown out of the meeting. He was trying to voice protest at the censorship of debate.

Members of the anarchist Workers Solidarity Movement co-signed an open letter of protest at the physical action which was carried out by Kieran Allen, national secretary of the SWM, and one of his cronies. All to prevent the meeting from hearing the protest of the IWG member, who was objecting to our deliberate exclusion from the open discussion. SWM speakers obsessively tried to rubbish Trotsky's understanding of the USSR as a post-capitalist society but they were not prepared to allow anyone to defend the Trotskyist position in the "open" discussion.

The "state-capitalist" SWM has brought ridicule on itself among wide circles of the Irish left for introducing Stalinist methods at a meeting convened to pronounce "Good riddance to Stalinism"! ■

Workers power

INSIDE

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- AEU merger
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YUGOSLAVIA

THE EUROPEAN Community (EC) is discussing armed "peace-keeping" in Yugoslavia. As the struggle for national rights degenerated into chauvinist bloodletting the EC sent observers to oversee successive fragile ceasefires. But French and German imperialism wanted more than that. They urged the EC to send in troops to restore order in the disintegrating Stalinist state. So far, Britain's refusal to go along has prevented EC troop deployments but it remains a real possibility. If it happens what should workers do?

No one can fail to be horrified at the bloody civil war which has broken out. As successive peace deals break down it is tempting to think that if only a strong outside force cracked down it would give the warring nations time to see sense.

But the only peace imperialist troops ever keep is the peace that benefits imperialist domination.

The problem for imperialism at present is that the EC has no unified strategy for the kind of "peace" they want in Yugoslavia. The short term benefits of ripping off developed Slovenia and Croatia may bring new potentially profitable areas into their orbit of exploitation, but at the cost of Stalinist retrenchment in Serbia and continued civil war, and of possibly destabilising the region and drawing Greece, Hungary and others into the conflict.

Despite the pro-capitalist nature of the national governments and the decades of market reform Yugoslavia remains, for the moment, a degenerate workers' state. Capitalism has been abolished, and the workers' revolution needed to build real socialism will have to overthrow Stalinist bureaucrats as well as the growing class of new capitalists.

Force

At present those trying to construct working class unity in the face of the descent into murderous chauvinism have to start by recognising the legitimate right of Croatia and Slovenia to self-determination and secession. That means their right to resist the Serbian backed attempt to keep them in the federation by force. At the same time they have to condemn Croatia's refusal to let go of the large Serbian enclaves, and defend the Serbs' right in these areas to fight for their own secession from independent Croatia.

A mess? Yes, but one we cannot simply wish away. It is the Croatian and Ser-

bian nationalist governments who have fostered the hatred and created the divisions amongst communities who lived in peace for decades.

Support

If, however, the imperialist troops go in it will be necessary for every worker in this country and throughout Europe to fight for their withdrawal and support those in Yugoslavia who resist them. Any imperialist intervention, under whatever guise, will be aimed at guaranteeing a capitalist Croatia and delivering a final death blow to what they see as "communism" in Yugoslavia.

In such circumstances revolutionaries will defend a workers' state, albeit a degenerate one, against imperialist intervention, even if it means siding temporarily with the very troops who have been bombing Croatian civilians. ■

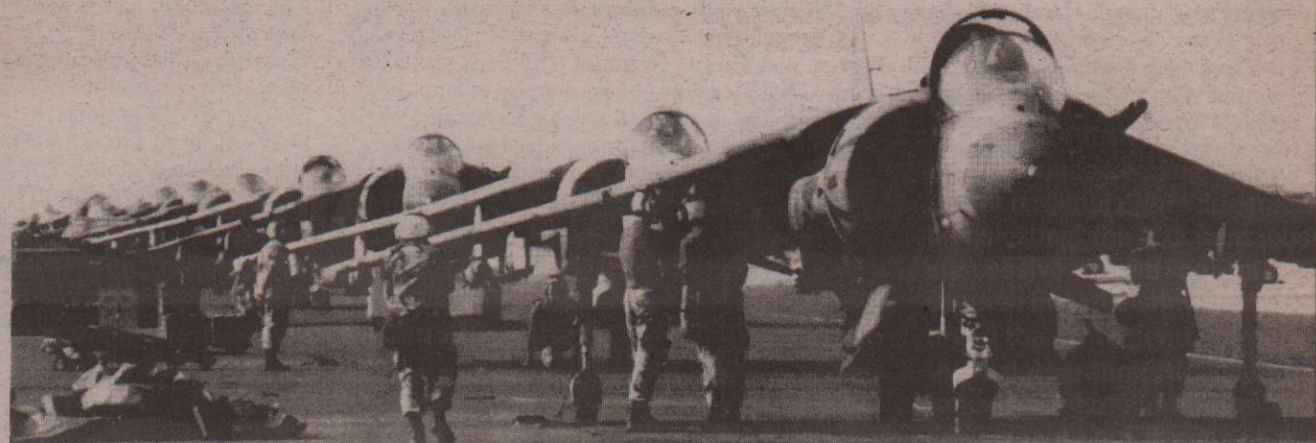
IRAQ

PRESIDENT BUSH has dusted off his Patriot missiles and sent another US aircraft carrier steaming into the Persian Gulf. Unless Iraq gives "full cooperation" to the United Nations nuclear observer mission, British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd warned, there would be "serious consequences".

It is no wonder that Bush and his allies use sterile diplomatic language to threaten Iraq. They are in fact declaring their willingness to unleash mass death on conscripts and civilians once again and to starve the Iraqi population of food and medical supplies. Why? Because Iraq will not reveal or give up its plans to build nuclear weapons.

Once again it is necessary for workers throughout the world to prepare to defend Iraq against imperialist aggression and to demand "Troops out of the Gulf now!"

Nuclear weapons are certainly terrible weapons of mass destruction. But what about the conventional weapons Bush and Major used to kill over 100,000 Iraqis in the Gulf War?



Imperialist troops keep out!

Only recently have stories emerged of the inhuman tactics British and US troops used:

- they buried Iraqi soldiers alive with special tanks designed to fill up trenches
- they massacred surrendering Iraqi troops
- they only stopped pouring down fuel-air bombs—themselves nicknamed "DIY H-bombs"—when their own pilots became sickened by the prospect of more slaughter.

Any US or British politician claiming a moral case for depriving Iraq of its nuclear capability should be branded a hypocrite on this score alone.

But there is more than this. Britain, the USA and the UN all turn a blind eye to a dozen third world states who have developed nuclear weapons

programmes. Most importantly, Israel—the war-mongering Zionist settler state—is armed to the teeth with secret nuclear weapons. When Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli nuclear technician, tried to reveal this to the so-called guardians of world peace they ignored him.

Solitary

Their security services stood back or even collaborated as Israeli agents kidnapped him and returned him to Israel. There, in the "Middle East's only democracy" he is serving a 25 year prison sentence in solitary confinement for revealing the truth about Israel's nuclear capability.

Israel, which carried out an unprovoked air raid on Iraq's

nuclear research installations eight years ago, is imperialism's guard dog in the Middle East. So the UN does nothing.

Saddam's Iraq is a military dictatorship which dared to threaten one of imperialism's richest semi-colonies. So the UN sanctioned the military destruction of its economy and is now engaged in the administrative dismantling of its nuclear capability.

Behind the diplomatic language of the US/UN threat to Iraq is naked aggression. Obey us or we will obliterate you. They preach peace, democracy and "the rule of law"; they practice mass murder, militarism and legalised plunder.

It is the task of the working class and the poor peasants in the Middle East to impose their own order and their own peace. They will have to do that by defeating imperialism and settling accounts with their own spineless and autocratic bosses—from Saddam

to the Saudi princes. They won't be able to do that by using rifles against 21st century military technology. They will have to do it by obtaining whatever weapons imperialism has.

Alliance

As long as there are Arab bourgeois rulers like Saddam who come into open, if temporary, conflict with imperialism, the working class has to be prepared to make a temporary alliance with them against imperialism.

That is why we don't join the chorus, from right wing imperialists to hand wringing "anti-nuclear" pacifists, in calling for Iraq to give up its nuclear weapons, while the imperialists and their agents remain armed to the teeth with just such weapons.

Instead we say:

- End the UN blockade, revoke all peace conditions!
- Get imperialist troops out of the Gulf!