

# Workers power

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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# STRIKE to save jobs and services

**LAST MONTH** John Major made an important speech, outlining the need for everyone in Britain to "tighten their belts". He made the speech at London's Banqueting House, in front of long tables groaning with luxury food and an audience dripping with jewellery.

Norman Lamont, the man in charge of Britain's economy drive, is allowed to run up debts on his Access card bigger than most people's monthly wages and has so many houses he can afford to let one to a "sex therapist". When Mr Lamont pops down to the local off licence he comes back with champagne. Meanwhile the rest of us are told to take a pay cut—with five million public sector workers' pay frozen at 1.5%. Three million have to survive on £42.45 a week.

The hypocrisy of Major and Lamont is stunning. They think they can get away with it because they see working class people as dumb wage slaves, cowering in fear of unemployment and their managers, incapable of fighting back. We can and must prove them wrong. If we don't they will continue to wreck the lives of working people:

- 86 companies a day are going bust, leading to thousands of redundancies every week.
- 5,000 jobs on the railways are to be scrapped, leading to dole misery and a more crowded, dangerous service.
- 20,000 health jobs are for the chop, with 2,500 hospital beds due to disappear in London alone.
- Thousands more job losses are being pushed through in the public sector, from the naval dockyards to the DVLA in Swansea.

- Councils face massive cuts in spending because of Tory attempts to stop the Council tax going through the roof: in Sheffield up to 6,000 jobs are on the line, and in Tory Harrow nursery education will be scrapped.
- Public sector workers face a real pay cut, with wage rises held down to 1.5%, well below the inflation rate.
- 30,000 miners' jobs are still in jeopardy, with another 100,000 jobs dependent on coal on the line.

The Tories are out to make working people pay for the crisis—a crisis caused by the crazy profit system.

Building workers are unemployed in their hundreds of thousands while the streets of major cities are filled with homeless people. Hospital beds are axed while the waiting lists get ever longer, and Britain stands near the bottom of the league in Europe for hospital bed provision. Jobs in the coal industry are cut because of "lack of demand" while thousands of old people will die of hypothermia this winter.

All this happens so that the top bankers and industrialists can get through the economic crisis without having to cut back on their champagne bills, their big cars and houses, their long foreign holidays and their private school and hospital fees.

No wonder millions of workers are burning

with anger at what the Tories are doing. No wonder millions who voted Tory feel conned and cheated by the results of Major's election win.

We have to turn the anger into action.

The Labour and trade union leaders denounce the Tories in Parliament and from the platforms of local demonstrations and rallies. But what are they doing to organise a fight? Nothing.

The strength of the working class was shown on the two enormous demonstrations against the pit closures in October, the biggest labour movement demonstrations for years.

But that strength has to be focused into strike action, into occupation of threatened workplaces, into a class struggle that can defeat the Tory plans.

The trade union leaders are frittering away the opportunity to turn anger into effective strike action. The decision of the rail union leaders to call off the strike on London Underground, in spite of overwhelming support from tubeworkers and without winning any concessions from management, is just one example of the spinelessness of those who call themselves leaders in the workers' movement.

Norman Willis, leader of the TUC, has said that there is "no way" he will call a general strike. But in October if he had given a lead, millions would have followed. A general strike

call from the TUC would paralyse industry and bring the country to a standstill. It could smash the Tory offensive against the working class to smithereens.

The miserable cowards who run our movement will only call action if they are forced to by pressure from below, if they can see workers organising to take action, independently of the officials if need be.

That is why we need to build the links now, across the workplaces, across sectional and union divisions, and across different industries. We have to unite all those who are prepared to fight in **ACTION COUNCILS**. Delegate based workers' committees can link up the struggles and co-ordinate genuine solidarity strike action, so that no one section needs to strike alone, and no union or workplace has to face isolation and defeat. And they can stop the union leaders from selling us short by controlling action from below.

The Tory government is weak, its parliamentary party is divided, its ministers lurch from one sleazy scandal to another. But unless we all fight back they will survive.

Tory policies, unemployment, repossession, low pay are set to make Christmas a dreary and anxious period for millions of families. A growing wave of workers action can spoil the Tories' Christmas and promise the millions in debt, on short-time, low pay or the dole a happier new year! ■



# CARDIFF THREE INNOCENT!

**O**N MONDAY 7 December the appeal of the Cardiff Three will finally be heard. There can only be one verdict: innocent.

It is over four years since Yusef Abdullahi, Tony Paris and Steven Miller were arrested for the murder of Lynette White, and over two years since they were given life imprisonment.

Lynette, a prostitute in the Butetown area of Cardiff, had been the victim of a frenzied knife attack.

The police originally issued a photofit of a lone white man seen covered in blood near Lynette's flat. However, after several fruitless months, they turned on Butetown's black community. Five black men were arrested: without a shred of forensic evidence, and solely on the confession of Steven Miller, the three were convicted.

Prostitutes in Cardiff themselves suffer continuous harassment and humiliation at the hands of the police. Normally crimes against them are considered unimportant by the capitalist justice system. But it is not hard to see why the police were in a hurry to "solve" the Lynette White murder case. The murder cast a shadow over the Cardiff Bay project—the second largest waterfront development in Europe. With its proposed opera house and yuppie marina, the new Cardiff Bay intends to exorcise the image of the old. The old, however—in the shape of the Butetown community—is not yet ready to lay down and die.

The original verdicts on the Cardiff Three resulted in a furious meeting of Butetown residents, incensed by the prosecution's portrayal of Britain's oldest multi-racial area as a deplorable den of vice. From this meeting the Cardiff Three Campaign was formed. Malik Abdullahi and Lloyd Paris, brothers of Yusef and Tony, have remained central to this campaign.

The conviction of the Cardiff Three, however, was only the beginning of the police operation to "clean up" Butetown's image, and send a message to potential investors that the area was "safe". The front doors of Butetown's council houses have been regularly crashing to the ground in drug busts, while activists have been subject to a predictable campaign of harassment, including the arrest of Malik Abdullahi on charges of affray and possession of an offensive weapon.

Malik had in fact been attempting to prevent the drug squad putting a friend's head through a car window, and was acquitted of all charges. John Actie, one of the original Cardiff Five, was less lucky. An entire squadron of police with dogs broke into his home at 6 am in order to charge him with possessing a stolen chequebook. On another occasion police sealed off both ends of Bute Street in order to inspect his driving licence.

The increased attacks on the Butetown community have only served to unite it. The minority who suspected the guilt of the Three have been won over by the mass of evidence assembled by the campaign, aided by three TV documentaries. Links have been made with other black community campaigns, including the Tottenham Three

Campaign, Newham Monitoring Project, Deane Family Campaign and the M25 Appeal.

At the same time, however, Cardiff Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) has been less than enthusiastic. Faced with a militant working class campaign, the hollowness of ARA's claim to be the voice of the black community has been exposed.

The start of the appeal hearing is to be marked by a mass picket of the Central Court of Justice on the Strand (9 am onwards). We must demand that justice is done. However, the release of the Cardiff Three, if and when it happens, will

be one small victory in a continuing battle. The case illustrates very clearly how the state promotes racism in the service of profit.

As long as capitalism remains, black communities will be under attack. It is essential that the momentum is not lost, but transformed into a continuing campaign to defend Butetown.

With the state on the defensive, we should go all out for a labour movement and community inquiry to establish how and why the Three were fitted up, why Lynette's real killers still walk free and to bring those responsible to justice. ■

## Smash Asylum Bill!

**T**HE TORIES are pressing ahead with the Asylum Bill. What it means was graphically demonstrated by the exclusion of 140 Bosnian refugees. No matter how much parliamentary language the Bill is dressed up in, its message to torture victims, to those fleeing war and repression is: "stay in hell".

The Bill will introduce a two tier appeal process for those who manage to overcome the numerous obstacles in the way of refugees who flee to Britain and get as far as applying for asylum.

Refugees—who often do not speak English, do not know their rights, arrive frightened, hungry and traumatised—will be given only 48 hours to organise an appeal. Those whose appeals are deemed to be "groundless" by racist Home Secretary Kenneth Clark will be passed to a "special adjudicator" and quickly deported.

In the meantime asylum seekers will be criminalised: compulsorily fingerprinted, denied council housing, arbitrarily detained in barbed-wire camps.

## Memorial Committee demands justice!

**I**NDPENDENT SOURCES estimate that 70,000 racist incidents occur each year in Britain. On average a racist attack occurs every 28 minutes. In the last thirty years there have been at least thirty racist killings.

In the long history of racist murders in Britain the violent background and the misery caused are rarely acknowledged. They are invariably covered up.

Last January Manchester witnessed the impact of the increase in racism throughout Britain.

The horrific racist murders of Saddick Dada and Mohammed Sarwar left the city's black communities in shock.

The Memorial Committee was set up in order to ensure that these murders don't go forgotten and unavenged.

Black community-based organisations worked along with other anti-fascist and anti-racist initia-

**"At last month's national Asylum Bill demonstration a mere 4,000 people turned out to protest against the Bill. This was just after Clark had excluded the Bosnian refugees! The average animal rights demo is bigger. The responsibility for this poor turn out lies primarily with the Labour and trade union leaders."**

And the government has tacked on a cynical clause denying any right of appeal for relatives of black people refused visas to attend funerals and weddings in Britain.

The Asylum Bill is part of a battery of racist immigration laws designed to pin the blame for racism on black people. The fewer black people there

are in Britain, reasons Kenneth Clark, the less racism there will be.

In fact it is capitalism that causes racism, the imperialist system of exploitation and the legacy of colonialism.

If you get angry at the blatant injustice and racism of the Asylum Bill something else should make you angry.

At last month's national Asylum Bill demonstration a mere 4,000 people turned out to protest against the Bill. This was just after Clark had excluded the Bosnian refugees! The average animal rights demo is bigger.

The responsibility for this poor turn out lies primarily with the Labour and trade union leaders. When they can parade alongside Tory and Liberal politicians, when they are busy building an "alliance for recovery" with the CBI, why should they spoil the party by fighting the racist Asylum Bill. Labour, in any case, offered to support the Tories' last attempt to push through an Asylum Bill "in order to take racism off the agenda of the election"! No doubt Labour's leaders—all of whom claim to oppose the Bill, none of whom supported the demonstration—are happy to have racism taken off the agenda of the class struggle as well.

The left too must bear some responsibility. The Socialist Workers' Party, which has built massive meetings about Malcolm X, mobilised less than a tenth of its membership in London, and had to cancel a coach from Sheffield (where it has over a hundred members) because of "lack of interest".

The rest of the so-called revolutionary left did even less to build for the demonstration.

The Refugee Ad-Hoc Campaign for Asylum Rights (RAHCAR), which organised the demo, has failed to build an active campaign in the localities. The refugee groups who rightly demanded a say in leading the campaign, fearful of the cynical and half-hearted left, fell for the line that it could expect massive TUC and Labour Party support. It has refused to build local committees and a national democratic campaign.

But that is exactly what we need. An anti-Asylum Bill campaign in every town, and a national democratic campaign committed to:

- Smashing the Asylum Bill
- Fighting all deportations and a labour movement orientation!

FREE THE CARDIFF THREE CAMPAIGN

in conjunction with innocence campaign

PO Box 273 Forest Gate, London E7 Tel 081 555 8151 Fax 081 552 7467

APPEAL HEARING

for Yusef Abdullahi, Tony Paris and Steven Miller

Justice Now!

MASS  
PICKET

Monday 7th December 1992  
Central Court of Justice  
The Strand, London W1  
Nearest Ⓧ : Temple  
From 9am onwards

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Smash  
the 1.5%  
pay norm!

**T**HE TORIES have chosen the most blatant method possible to make the working class pay for the recession. The decision to keep all public sector pay settlements between zero and 1.5% for the next 12 months is deliberately provocative. The struggle to smash this offensive is an essential part of the fight to halt the bosses' class-wide attack on our jobs, services and conditions.

The attack on pay has been well thought out. Last month, the firefighters settled for 4.9% and postal workers in the UCW for 3.5%. Both these deals narrowly beat the deadline for the new limit and have taken two of the most powerful and best organised sections of the public sector out of the firing line.

The UCW executive disgracefully recommended acceptance of a sub-inflationary deal rather than use their position to spearhead a revolt against pay restraint itself.

How different from the bluster of UCW leader Alan Tiffin about "no post this Christmas" from the platform of the miners' demo on 21 October!

The vast majority of the six million public sector workers remain in the firing line. The real possibility of a united front of all the public sector unions against the 1.5% limit still exists.

To win such action, activists in the public sector unions need to start campaigning now before the first section settles. All unions, including the FBU and the UCW, should be forced to tear up their pay agreements and bring their settlement dates forward to now. This will stop the unions being picked off one by one.

Public sector workers should demand a unified claim for an across-the-board flat rate increase that will eradicate low pay.

This will give low paid workers something worth fighting for rather than the usual phoney fight for the odd percentage point. All unions should then agree to strike indefinitely until all public sector workers have won the claim in full. ★



## EDITORIAL

# Organise the rank and file!

THE LAST two months have shown that millions of workers are prepared to act to stop the Tory offensive. The massive response to the pit closure programme, the enormous demonstrations in October, and the role played by the labour movement in leading that response, all showed the potential strength of the working class.

But if the Major government is to be stopped in its tracks the labour movement has to show a lot more than its potential. It has to show that it is willing to wage a fight to the finish. This brings us to the principal problem that faces every militant who wants to defeat the Tories—in the last two months of mounting anger, no major section of workers has translated that anger into sustained industrial action.

There have been a series of local all out strikes in the last period. Every one of them should be pointed to as an example of the determination of our class. But in themselves such local disputes, like Lyons Maid workers occupying in Liverpool or Nalco workers on strike for months in Newham, do not have the potential of rousing the working class as a whole into action against the generalised features of the bosses' offensive.

The entire NUM striking against pit closures, an alliance of the 5.8 million strong public sector unions striking against the pay freeze, a co-ordinated national strike by Aerospace, naval dockyard, British Rail, Ford and bank workers against job cuts, would have such potential.

If any of these sections launched a serious fight then the chances of building a general strike to stop the pay freeze, job cuts and attacks on services would be massively and rapidly increased.

Yet we are further from such a prospect now than we were in October. The reason for this is that throughout the period of mass anger the trade union bureaucracy has remained firmly in control. The action being taken is limited to the action the bureaucrats want to be taken.

Instead of strikes and occupations to stop the pit closures we have a campaign of demonstrations.

Instead of November being the month of a workers' strike offensive we saw more lobbies of parliament by workers in those thirty days than took place in the entire preceding year. The Tories' tactical retreat over the miners encouraged engineers, building workers, bank workers, dockyard workers (in a joint action with their managers) and the Women's TUC to queue up outside Westminster for some tea and sympathy from a local MP.

Where mass strike action did take place the bureaucracy managed to confine it to one or half day strikes. DVLA, London local authorities, Premium Bond workers in Lancashire, Scottish civil servants— all took limited strike action.

Where indefinite strikes were on the cards, the bureaucrats called off action at the last minute in return for promises that job and pay cuts would be "jointly negotiated". This happened on London Underground and Gatwick British Airways.

Where strike ballots have been called, the bureaucracy have either made plain that the ballot is merely a negotiating ploy to pressurise management, or have promised in advance that the action would be limited to one day protests. So while Ford workers are to be balloted, their leaders, Adams and Airlie, have announced publicly that an all out strike would be "madness". And the banking union, BIFU, is balloting its members on selective action only.

The most radical call for action has come from the rail drivers' union, ASLEF. Its leader, Derrick Fullick, has called for a series of one day general strikes. But behind Fullick's call is a cynical manoeuvre designed to save him and his fellow officials from having to organise strike action themselves against the rail job cuts.

He made this clear when he said:

"If one union sticks its head above the parapet on its own it will be shot, so this idea can only work if there is a concerted effort."

Fullick knows that the TUC would only respond if it was forced to do so by the pressure of action from below. After all, Norman Willis has already announced that any form of general strike is not on because the TUC doesn't want to "stick its head into a legal noose".

So, through a combination of cynical rhetoric and legalistic cowardice we are left with a situation where the only place the union bureaucracy *does* want to stick its head is in the sand.

If the lobbies and demonstrations, the one day strikes and the ballots were all being used by the union leaders to marshal the troops for a determined advance then there would be no problem with such limited actions. If every worker knew that going on a lobby or a march was the precursor to occupying their workplace against closure or an all out strike then such actions would be useful.

But the deliberate restriction of every workers' strug-



Public sector workers join forces with nurses over health cuts

gle to protest action is part of a TUC strategy to avoid a decisive confrontation.

Just who are these bureaucrats, and how do they get away with betraying us time and again?

They are a privileged caste within the workers' movement, whose everyday conditions are far removed from those of the people they represent. They have more of an interest in compromise than in winning, because their very role in the capitalist system depends on their being able to dupe the workers into accepting crumbs from the bosses' table.

Instead of leading a fightback, the trade union bureaucracy has been accepting the defeats inflicted under Thatcher as irreversible.

In the strategy of "new realism" it found a means of retaining union influence in the workplaces: through servicing management with single union deals and minimising the threat of strike action. Members were to be represented less through collective bargaining and more and more through protecting their individual rights at work.

But new realism did not restore to the bureaucrats the national political role they crave. Now the Tory crisis has opened a window of opportunity to the bureaucracy for the restoration of their national influence, but in a modified form. They are attempting to place themselves at the head of a "people's coalition" against the government.

At its most right wing, this strategy of populism means uniting with sections of the bosses to nudge the Tories towards a programme of greater economic growth. This explains why the TUC's campaign is called "Jobs and Recovery". The 9 December Day of National Recovery is envisaged as a day of dialogue with the bosses, and an opportunity for us to boost the profits of our own exploiters by buying some semi-worthless product of British industry that we can't afford.

But a left wing version of populism has also emerged, emanating from Arthur Scargill and even some rank and file activists within the NUM. Like Willis, though with more understandable reasons, Scargill is shy of placing strike action on the agenda. Scargill and many NUM militants fear they could lose a ballot, and fear they could lose a strike if they have to go it alone. That is why at present Scargill and Willis can agree on the immediate scope of the campaign—demonstrations and protests.

The furthest Scargill has gone is calling for a "day of action" in the new year, a call that Willis declined to take up at the 25 November General Council meeting. Significantly it was the NUM bureaucracy which fronted efforts to demobilise the lobby for a general strike called by the SWP outside the November General Council.

Scargill's left gloss on the populist campaign is in danger of convincing rank and file militants in the NUM and beyond that the round of demonstrations and rallies, lobbies and one day actions constitutes a form of "people's power". Scargill openly argues that this "people's power" will, short of strike action, be enough to defeat the Tories. At a recent rally he declared:

"Now we have got the support of the British people, we must not underestimate the power of the movement. People power can change this insane energy policy."

This blurs the distinctive interests of the

working class and opens the door to all sorts of dangerous alliances with the class enemy. It downplays the centrality of industrial action. And industrial action is central because it is the one form of action that can really inflict damage on the bosses, on the people responsible for cutting jobs, services and pay.

We are now in a situation where the real possibility of destroying a weak Tory government is slipping away. The longer we delay the confrontation, the more we have to lose. Already sections of workers are settling or being sold out. These workers are being taken out of the line of battle, and it is our side that is being weakened as a result. Postal workers, Rover workers, Tube workers and others have all recently fallen victim to settlements that involve real wage and job cuts.

If we want to seize the opportunity presented to us by the government's current weakness we need to act fast to reverse the situation. Central to achieving this is establishing rank and file unity. In every city rank and file workers must come together to co-ordinate their action.

Such bodies, **councils of action**, can begin to use the actions our leaders have called, as means of mobilising for a more far-reaching struggle. We must fight to turn days of protest into days of strike action, and on those days put the case to strike meetings for extending the action. We must co-ordinate the militants in each workplace, building caucuses committed to fighting for strike action and occupations against closures.

In doing this we will come up against the obstruction or treachery of the union officials. We need to co-ordinate the militants from different workplaces and different unions into rank and file movements capable of fighting these officials, challenging them for leadership in the unions. Above all we need to bend every effort to prevent the trade unions from merely becoming a cog in the wheel of a "people's coalition" and turn them into fighting, class struggle organisations. ■

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# Miners for the General Strike

## LITTLETON

**WP:** How many redundancies have there been at Littleton and what do you see as the life span of your pit?

**MC:** Since closures were announced between 185 and 285 men have been made redundant at Littleton. They say this is voluntary redundancy but I think we're going to come to a situation where British Coal are going to make people compulsory redundant. If they get away with closing the thirty pits, then Littleton would be one of the next to go.

The local community have been very supportive. Shopkeepers in Cannock have put posters in their windows. Some have said if we do go out on strike they will drop their prices accordingly. There has been a good response from ordinary working people. Even local Tory councillors have said it's disgusting what the government has done. If and when we go on strike we'll get 100% support from the community.

The committee are organising members of the NUM to discuss and speak at various meetings within the labour movement. We've had members go down to London to speak to underground workers and various other organisations and have had a terrific response. The situation here is that we are confident of reversing the government's pit closure programme

**WP:** Staffs miners have been prominent in the local labour movement, for example they spoke at a Birmingham RMT meeting. How do you see these links developing with rail and power workers?

**MC:** At the end of the day all these workers have got to play a prominent part in stopping the government's closure programme. By sticking together as three or four unions we are in a stronger position and by having meetings together and discussing the programme ahead. We have to act as one.

**WP:** There has been a fall in the political temperature since the beginning of November. Why do you think this has happened? Is it down to the leadership of the labour and trade union leadership and the way they've been campaigning?

**MC:** The ninety day review has made a difference. The issue has gone out of a lot of people's minds and the fall off in rallies and demonstrations is a sign that it has gone out of our leaders' minds. We need to get to our leaders to start the campaign again. We need to continue to press our union leaders for some sort of action. A general strike is my only answer.

**WP:** We agree that we should call for a general strike and we also argue that action councils be formed to build for one to stop any sabotage from TUC leaders, so that we aren't left waiting for the TUC to act.

**MC:** Yes, I think you're right. In particular with the miners' situation if we wait and wait we're going to come to a point in time where its gone, people are forgetting about what the fight is all about. We should be starting our own campaigns within various unions for action. If we wait for the TUC we'll be waiting a hell of a long time. We need to forge links with other un-

**Workers Power spoke to Mick Conroy, Littleton miner and Labour councillor, and to Billy Pye of Parkside NUM and a member of the NUM national executive.**

ions in preparation for a general strike and not wait for the TUC.

**WP:** How would you regard your own leadership in this dispute?

**MC:** Arthur Scargill to me and others is one of the best trade union leaders this country has ever seen and his role in this present situation has been excellent. He's called for strike action but only when the situation arises and that's the only disagreement I've got. I think we ought to be calling for a strike ballot to strike while the iron is hot if you like. But his leadership has been second to none.

But he has got a mandate for a strike ballot. What Arthur is saying is that he wants to see how the situation develops and then call for a strike ballot. I believe that within this ninety day period pits could be shut. We could lose men, men are taking their redundancy now, sadly only because of British Coal's blackmail. That's why we should have a strike ballot now. Other than that Arthur has led a good campaign and should continue to do so

**WP:** We too are in favour of a national campaign to win a strike vote. How would you ensure a yes vote?

**MC:** We can get it by campaigns, meetings, our NUM Midland Area delegates, and Arthur Scargill coming to pit level and discussing. I'm sure at this stage if Arthur were to come to pits to campaign for a yes vote he would get maximum support because the feeling is there within the pits, in particular Littleton, would get a yes vote, a good majority at that. So by meetings with Arthur, by national union officials getting involved in pit level discussions I'm sure we would get a yes vote.■

## PARKSIDE

**WP:** What do you think the mood in the pits is at the moment?

**BP:** I can't speak for all the pits but in Parkside the mood is still pretty good.

**WP:** What do you think of the TUC's response to the pit closures?

**BP:** Laughable. This "convention for recovery" is part of the ideology of new realism. The reason for the mass support for the miners is not just because of the pit closures. The pit closures were just the final spark. The TUC's idea of sitting down with the CBI ignores the idea of why we are getting mass support.

Two questions spring to mind. Are the CBI really worried about mass unemployment, or do they see the unemployed as a valuable asset to the business market? I would like someone to tell me which section of the CBI is about to deal with the problems of the young and the old, the disabled, racism and all the other

issues that come out of the realms of unemployment itself.

There is nothing wrong with calling on the TUC to organise a general strike, but it's unlikely they will. It is up to organisations like the miners' support groups and individual trade unions to organise and initiate any large scale industrial action.

**WP:** At the lobby of the TUC in Doncaster on 25 November, one miner called to Arthur Scargill, "Take your slippers off Arthur and put your boots on". What do you think of Arthur Scargill's strategy so far?

**BP:** Arthur Scargill has called for a day of action. This is good. But the question of organising that needs to be addressed. The TUC are organising a mass lobby after the ninety day moratorium period. The problem with that is that miners in the ten pits, like our men in Parkside, will be sacked by then. In my view we need something doing now.

**WP:** The question of a general strike has been raised. Do you agree with this, and how do you think we can

build for such action?

**BP:** Definitely. At the end of the day, that's the only thing that can bring this government down. What we need to do as trade unionists is put pressure on our own unions to call a national day of action. A day of action can build support and confidence for more generalised action.

There's no difference between a closure of a hospital, a pit or a public service that results in redundancies. All those attacks have the same root cause. What it's all about is making our class pay for the misery of their class and their system. We've got to stand together and demonstrate in real terms quite clearly to them that we've had enough.

**WP:** Do you think the miners should call a ballot for national strike action?

**BP:** The problem with that is that many miners after 1984-85 are reticent about going it alone. People in other unions have got to say that they are not going to stand behind the miners but side by side and take this government on together.

**WP:** For many trade unionists fighting against these attacks, their own union officials can be a block to action. How do you think we can overcome this?

**BP:** For the North West TUC Day of Action in November we argued for genuine support for the miners in trade union branches up and down the north west and got a good response. If the bureaucracy aren't prepared to give support then it's up to us to do it ourselves.

**WP:** What do you think about the need for action councils that can coordinate action across unions?

**BP:** That's fine. That's the next step on. At the moment the role of the miners' support groups is to bring in the broader issues that are affecting other workers. I see them as progressing to the sort of thing that can help to build for further action.

The TUC "Convention for Recovery" on 9 December should be used to show the real support that exists for the miners.■



## WHAT WE THINK

# The danger of delay

**BOTH MICK and Billy point to the need to keep up the momentum. The TUC's cowardly inaction is squandering the enormous opportunity for a class-wide movement after the massive demonstrations of October.**

December 9 must be turned into a day of strike action. Workers from the rail, the hospitals and local authorities are all facing massive redundancies. There is a common interest in presenting the broadest possible working class response to the Tories.

But at the moment there is a real threat that the mass anger against the Tories could go off the boil. There is an urgent need to regain the initiative and provide a focus for action. Billy points to the fact that many miners are wary of taking strike action. The defeat of the 1984-85 strike shows the danger of fighting alone. The determination of miners to avoid isolation and defeat is not only understandable, it is entirely justified.

But other sections of workers are feeling the same way. There is a real danger that while miners are waiting for solidarity action before committing themselves to strike, other sections of workers in the public and private sectors and in miners' support groups around the country, are waiting for a lead before solidarity action can be delivered.

That is why we have argued from the outset that delay is dangerous. There is no guarantee that it will automatically build confidence: with the do-nothing strategy of the TUC and union leaders the opposite could prove to be the case. The best way that miners can be shown the possibility of solidarity action from other sections of workers is by building action councils now, linking the struggles across sectional and union divisions through bringing together rank and file delegates to coordinate action. Miners should call for clear commitments from other unions for solidarity strikes as soon as they move into battle.

But that means that the NUM must launch the fight for a national strike without further delay. We think Mick Conroy is right in his constructive criticism of Arthur Scargill. We must not wait for the TUC, rely on public opinion, or place our hope in a spontaneous revolt in the new year.

Instead the campaign for strike action should move into top gear, fixing the date for the ballot, and building for the maximum possible yes vote through meetings and rallies. Where miners fear isolation, a campaign to build direct links through action councils is the best way to overcome it, and to raise the pressure on the TUC to call a general

strike.

Underlying many NUM militants' rejection of going for a strike ballot now is the fear that they will lose it and that this will kill the whole campaign stone dead. The risk is real. But the alternative of delaying action is not minimising the risk. Delay could well increase demoralisation.

The fact that one in ten miners have taken redundancy since the announcement of the closure programme is proof of this. Some of these miners will have been fooled, but many will have taken redundancy money because they are genuinely demoralised. And it means that if and when a strike is called there are several thousand fewer troops on our side already. This process could well continue. And with every voluntary redundancy British Coal are gaining a victory for their strategy of butchering the industry.

The perspective of a fight back now can win those miners away from the temptations of taking redundancy money. The resolve of all miners to resist job cuts will be boosted. At the same time a determined campaign in the NUM itself for a strike now will have an electrifying effect on other sections of workers. Every militant arguing in their workplace for action, either in support of the miners or around their

own demands, will have their hand strengthened if they can say "look, the miners are prepared to act. So should we".

But the longer the prospect for action is put on hold the weaker the belief in eventual victory will become. And if we end up in a situation where the government can get everything ready for another miners' strike—stockpiles, a police operation, scabs, the settlement of other potential disputes—then delay could mean that the miners are balloting for action in the spring (bad timing as every militant knows), with the chances of being isolated increased.

Time is of the essence. The phoney war benefits the government, not the miners. The threat of losing a ballot for action is real. But the threat of losing the battle over pit closures without fighting is just as real and is now the main danger facing the miners.

Where members and supporters of Workers Power have fought for action councils, we have met with a good response. Limiting the committees to "miners' support groups" unnecessarily narrows their scope at a time when workers up and down the country are facing a wide range of attacks. Those on the left who claim that this demand is "too advanced" should take a good look at Cardiff and Leicester where we have succeeded in winning workers to the need for such organisations within the local Labour movement and begun to build them.■



# BRITISH RAIL

## Stop jobs massacre

**T**HE BRITISH Railways Board (BRB) announcement that it is preparing to sack 5,500 railworkers over the next four months must be met with the most fervent opposition by every worker employed in BRB's "business sectors". If this attack is not defeated BRB have promised more job cuts to follow.

Britain's railways are in a crisis. Years of underinvestment by both Tory and Labour governments have left large amounts of rolling stock and signalling equipment in a chronic state of dilapidation. Even the outrageously overpaid BRB chairman, Robert Reid has complained that the Tories have not provided the funds necessary to drag the railway infrastructure out of the 1960s.

Privatisation is set to exacerbate this with dramatic impact on the rest of the transport infrastructure. In a document leaked to the *Independent* it was revealed that after privatisation the government will scrap all of BRB's freight operations. An extra 150 million tonnes of goods on the roads will inevitably bring chaos.

By 1995 the Tory transport vultures aim to cut the railway grant from the current £2 billion to less than £1 billion. And it is of course railworkers who are expected to foot the bill with their jobs and livelihoods. BRB already receives only a fifth of the subsidy that French, German, Italian and some other European rail networks get. This is the dubious foundation for the big sell-off. In turn this will lead to more cuts in "unprofitable" services, jobs and wages.

BRB are keen to disguise these cuts as necessary to safeguard scarce resources for safety improvements. This cynical manoeuvre to turn rail passengers against railworkers is economical with the truth to say the least! Sections of Network South East, particularly in London may have to close because essential repairs are "financially prohibitive". So the Tories go for their time-honoured crazy capitalist logic of announcing redun-

dancies. Workers whether as passengers or BRB employees, have every right to expect and fight for jobs and safe, decent services.

These attacks come on top of the 5,000 freight jobs that will go if the 31 pits shut. The need for the most determined resistance to this jobs slaughter has never been more urgent. Pressure for action has even resulted in the ASLEF's National Executive calling for a series of one-day strikes across the public sector.

All railworkers, whatever their union, should support this call. But more than that, we have to turn words into action. Otherwise, ASLEF's call on the TUC will simply act as left cover for doing nothing to stop the job cuts in the here and now—exactly what general

secretary Fullick and co. intend.

Activists from ASLEF, RMT and TSSA (the white collar rail union) must organise joint meetings and demand joint action now. Let's give Fullick a taste of his own medicine by organising cross union rail strikes from below. Such actions will also serve to put the occasionally left-talking Jimmy Knapp of the RMT on the spot. He has predicted a showdown on the railways in the spring of next year. For Knapp, it's always "next year". But for railworkers—we don't have that option.

Just look at the catalogue of disaster and treachery that passes for the RMT Executive's record. 8,000 workers in the Signal and Telecommunications grade restructuring debacle were sold out without even

a ballot, despite conference motions and promises. The sacked Manchester guards' representatives have likewise been stitched up and conveniently forgotten. And latest but not least (and probably not last) the tube workers have suffered at the hands of the treacherous RMT leadership.

Rank and file workers in RMT, ASLEF and TSSA must seize on every piece of militant sounding rhetoric from the rail unions' leaders and turn it into action. More than this, activists must link up across the unions and across the depots to fight for effective strike action against every cut in jobs or services.

Only this can force our misleaders to call the action we need—a national rail strike. But, just as importantly, only this sort of preparatory work can begin to organise and draw together rank and file militants from across the rail unions so that when the rail union bureaucrats call for action again, they won't find it so easy to call it off. ■

# COUNCILS

## Fight the cuts!

**U**P AND down the country councils are busily preparing budgets for 1993-94. A glance at some of the provisional figures makes disgusting reading:

- Sheffield, between £40 and £60 million cuts resulting in 4,000 job losses
- Birmingham, £31-35 million cuts
- Avon £40-50 million
- Greenwich up to £30 million cuts feared.

Last month the government announced the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for councils of £41.17 billion. This figure represents a mere 0.4% increase on last year's spending and is therefore a real cut. Tax-capping will be ruthlessly applied to ensure that even bigger cuts are made.

These cuts are the result of the new "fairer" council tax. The Tories claim that the tax will average at £439 per household, hardly fair for the low paid and unemployed. Meanwhile transitional relief will only ensure that no household pays more than £182 over their poll tax bill. In other words only those in more expensive houses will be eligible for rebates!

Jobs and services will be hammered. Take Sheffield as an example. Over 2,000 teaching jobs could be slashed as class sizes rocket by over 50%. Children's homes and day nurseries along with a residential disabled children's unit will close, as will seven hours for OAPs. Over half the city's libraries are earmarked for closures, along with several sports centres and museums.

In the fight against the cuts workers can expect no help from the Labour Party. Labour's NEC has ordered its councillors to make cuts hard and fast.

The starting point for defending jobs and services against this Tory offensive has to be the local authority trade unions. Union members must fight for strike action against each and every proposed cut and against the cuts that are on-going from the 1992-93 round (an estimated 45,000 jobs have been butchered by councils already this year!). The announcement of the SSA and the budgets that are currently being drawn up around the country can serve as a unifying factors for cross-department and even cross-authority strikes.

This fight is essential as the strikes of 1991 showed, where heroic struggles in Camden, Islington, Newham, Sheffield and elsewhere have been left isolated without a strategy for bringing the employers to their knees. Even worse, in many cases the unions have been involved in collaborating with the cuts.

Yet, where a strategy for strike action against the whole cuts packages has been put forward, it has won support. Last month Manchester NALGO's AGM voted to ballot for a three day strike followed by selective indefinite action. Actions like these can be used to build a campaign for a national council workers' strike until all cuts, privatisations and wage restraint policies are withdrawn. Such a campaign must be hammered out by militants in the various council unions. The NALGO Broad Left AGM should ensure that this work is begun now. ■

**NALGO Broad Left National Conference**  
Saturday 12 December 10am-4pm  
27 Britannia Street, London WC1  
For details: NALGO Broad Left  
210 Edmund Rd, Sheffield S2 4EH

# LONDON UNDERGROUND

## Betrayal!

**W**HAT A sell out! The decision of the RMT executive to call off the tube strike due to start on 24 November was sheer cowardice and treachery.

RMT members on the tube had voted three to one for an indefinite strike against the Company Plan, a revamped version of the 1989 "slaves' charter". The plan means 5,000 job losses, pay cuts for station staff and attacks on conditions in the run up to privatisation.

Trying to create a climate of fear, London Underground bosses took a leaf from British Coal's book and threatened summary sackings of strikers and loss of redundancy payments. But the strike vote showed that RMT members were ready to take them on.

One tubeworker told *Workers Power* that the mood at the depots, in the canteens and mess rooms was very angry and militant. Workers were ready to set up picket lines the minute the strike began. The RMT leadership's back down may have put a stop on the action, but the mood of anger is still there.

The RMT leadership called off the strike without having gained the slightest compromise from the bosses. All they achieved was an agreement that management would now be talking to the union. Not a single proposal in the Company Plan has been withdrawn. Knapp and the executive had the nerve to argue that the mood for action wasn't there. They dare to blame the workers for their own cowardice.

The ASLEF leadership was no better: if anything it was worse. Instead of balloting for action it held a referendum on the Company Plan and made no recommendation to vote against it. Only after big majorities against the plan did they then hold a ballot, with the result due on 29 November—that is after the RMT were due to strike.

The ballot included a question whether ASLEF members were prepared to take action short of a strike. ASLEF leader Derrick Fullick hypocritically called for public sector general strikes at the same time as sending out letters to his members telling them to cross RMT picket

lines if the strike went ahead!

This treachery shows the real aims of the trade union bureaucrats: they want to secure their positions and fat salaries as negotiators with management, but they couldn't give a damn about the jobs and conditions of the workers they are supposed to represent. Their ability to sabotage action depends entirely on rank and file tubeworkers remaining unorganised. As long as that is the case, ballots will be wasted, the fightback stalled on the starting blocks. If, as is likely, ASLEF and TSSA sit on their mandates for action, using the RMT's sell-out as their excuse, then that mood of anger can quickly turn into despair.

But the first whiff of real action will shatter the illusion of the bureaucracy's all-powerful hold on their members. As in 1989 independent rank and file organisation and action across the unions can seize the moment and turn the situation round 180 degrees. Even in the draconian conditions of the tubes this is a real possibility. It is also a burning necessity—there is no time to lose. ■

# LONDON HOSPITALS

## UCH workers strike and occupy

**O**N WEDNESDAY 18 November management of the University College Hospital (UCH), London, arrived at the hospital's Ward 2.1 and announced it was to close. There had been no warning, no negotiations.

Staff on the ward immediately demanded a meeting with the hospital's general manager. But the managers themselves had no answers as to why the ward was to close, where staff would be redeployed, what would happen to the patients. This was a measure of the financial crisis of the UCH/Middlesex Hospital Unit, which is reported to be losing £1.5 million per month under the NHS internal market. Managers implied that at least four more wards would have to close by Christmas. They plan to close UCH completely by July 1993.

Hospital workers held an emergency union meeting where immediate strike action and an occupation of the ward was planned. The speed of the workers' reaction is a lesson to all trade unionists. Decisiveness at the point of attack ensured the initial anger was built on. This is why the new anti-union legislation intends to demand a seven day "cooling off" period.

There was an overwhelming ballot vote for strike action amongst both NUPE and COHSE nurses and on 26 November the UCH nurses' strike began, along with an occupation of

Ward 2.1. The occupation was supported by ward patients and in the days since it began numerous delegations of workers from surrounding industry and services have visited the ward, donating £3,000 to the strike fund. As we go to press management were due to announce their response, while a lunchtime demo has been called to support the occupation.

The strike and occupation mark a potential turning point in the battle against hospital closures in London. Over the last six months health workers have taken numerous days of strike and protest action against the proposed cuts, but this is the first indefinite strike at the point of the Tory attack.

It poses all the questions health workers face when they need to take effective action:

- The RCN, the no-strike fake nurses

union remains an obstacle. At UCH 45% of nurses are in the RCN. Some have passively supported the occupation individually, but the RCN itself remains opposed to such moves. If its influence is not broken early on the RCN's role will change from abstinence to active saboteur. Nurses should leave the RCN and join a real trade union (NUPE or COHSE).

● Emergency cover levels are so high and ordinary staffing levels so low that nurses' strikes hardly affect the level of service. Nurses should provide emergency cover only under workers control and be prepared to withdraw that cover if management try to get tough or refuse it under the terms offered.

● Up to now militants in the NHS have concentrated on demanding the unions and TUC call "national action", many being uncertain about

trying to kick start the defence of the NHS with sectional fightbacks against individual attacks. Now the spark is there the action needs to be spread, and the workers' movement mobilised to defend the occupation should management try to evict the occupation.

The UCH strike and occupation should be the signal for an indefinite strike by all London health workers aimed at stopping the Tomlinson Report and protecting jobs and services. That is what health workers must demand now from their union leaders and the London Health Workers Co-ordinating Committee must set about organising it from below. ■

Donations and messages of support to:  
NUPE office  
UCH, Gower St, London WC1



**I**N THE late 1930s Stalinism was, in Trotsky's words, a "regime of crisis". It survived only through a massive terror against Soviet workers and peasants—and even against sections of the privileged bureaucratic caste itself.

At the same time Stalin was forced to make desperate deals with imperialism to try and ensure the "collective security" of the USSR. He recognised that war would threaten the existence of the bureaucratic ruling caste itself and he was desperate to avoid it.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed in August 1939 between the foreign ministers of Nazi Germany and so-called "socialist" Russia, was the signal for the start of World War Two. Under the pact Germany and the USSR partitioned Poland. Afterwards the USSR annexed the Baltic states.

This monumental act of betrayal by the Kremlin bureaucracy was greeted by a sullen acceptance amongst the Communist Parties of the west and dismay by class conscious workers everywhere.

Worker militants loyal to Stalinism tried to explain the treaty with a nod and a wink - "Stalin is playing for time before he crushes Hitler" was the unofficial line.

But even this lame excuse masked the truth. Throughout the period of the Stalin-Hitler Pact Stalinism went about its work of weakening and disarming the USSR with ruthless efficiency.

Under the pact Stalinism handed over a million tons of wheat and oil, half a million tons of iron ore, large quantities of platinum and manganese and hundreds of thousands of tons of other economic and war material. It received in return the dud blueprints of a German fighter plane.

### Committed

Stalin was totally committed to the pact. Intelligence reports to the Kremlin from its own agents, the US government and Britain's ambassador in Moscow, all pointed to a German invasion. Stalin was even informed of the actual date of the invasion; 22 June. He refused to believe these reports. On 14 June Soviet national newspapers declared:

"Rumours of the intention of Germany to break the pact are completely without foundation, while the recent movements of German troops which have completed their operations in the Balkans to the eastern and northern parts of Germany are connected, it must be supposed, with other motives which have nothing to do with Soviet/German relations."

One consequence of Stalin's bureaucratic terror was the decimation of the Red Army high command. Stalin feared the Red Army's leaders because many of them, including the commander-in-chief, Tukachevsky, had risen to prominence when Trotsky was Commissar for War.

During 1937 and 1938 Tukachevsky along with a staggering 86% of all senior officers and 50% of all lower ranking officers were shot. Tukachevsky's advocacy and implementation of modern military techniques based on tanks and aircraft was denounced. His reforms were transforming the Red Army into a force capable of mobilising massed concentrations of armour, paratroops and artillery. They were reversed by his Stalinist successors, Voroshilov, Kulik and Budyenny.

Kulik stopped the production of anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. Budyenny preferred cavalry to the creation of a motorised supply system. Voroshilov ordered the end of Tukachevsky's drive to develop armoured divisions with the words:

"It is almost axiomatic that such a powerful force as the tank corps is a very far fetched idea and we should therefore have nothing to do with it."

Trotsky, who had been assassinated one year before the outbreak of war between Germany and the USSR

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

# Stalingrad

*Fifty years ago the decisive battle of World War Two was fought at Stalingrad. The Red Army stopped Hitler's drive to conquer the USSR and began the march west which was to destroy Nazism. Despite the terrible suffering and cost in human lives, and despite the degeneration of the workers' state under Stalin's rule, the USSR's war with German imperialism was a just war. It was a war to defend the remaining gains of the Russian Revolution against fascism's determination to destroy them. But the Stalinist bureaucracy came within an inch of losing that war. Then, the military turning point signalled the start of a process that was to see the consolidation of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe. Paul Morris explains the class issues at stake in the defence of the USSR during World War Two.*

predicted that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not survive the war. If the workers did not take power from the Stalinist bureaucracy the nationalised property relations would be overthrown by imperialist invasion and the internal forces for capitalist restoration, he said.

Events ultimately refuted that analysis, but only because the Soviet working class proved willing to sacrifice itself on a scale unparalleled in any developed country during World War Two. The whole first eighteen months of the war came perilously close to proving Trotsky right.

Soviet defences were strung out along the frontier with no reserves behind them and with munition dumps sited within range of German artillery - one of the many examples of Stalin's "military genius". They collapsed and in the first few weeks of the German attack millions of square miles of the USSR's territory were conquered.

The contrast between the Soviet workers' response and that of the bureaucracy could not have been more marked.

On the day of the invasion, a Sunday, millions of workers rushed spontaneously to their factories to organise resistance. But Stalin was not seen or heard for several days. It became clear that there was no unified central command of the army!

Meanwhile the workers set about defending the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of workers mobilised themselves for military service in the first few days. Between July and August one million Leningraders - a third of the adult population - were employed in building defences for the city.

Before the war the Stalinist generals had dismissed the idea of workers' militias. But with masses of workers volunteering, and the military machine in chaos, local government and Communist Party bodies took responsibility for their organisation. By 8 July over 100,000 workers were organised in Leningrad's militia, and the centre was forced to issue an order making such mobilisations government policy.

A similar pattern occurred in Moscow in December. General Blumentritt recalled:

"A few parties of our [German] troops actually got into the suburbs of Moscow. But the Russian workers poured out of the factories and fought them with their hammers and other tools in defence of their city."

As the German lines advanced an-



Hand to hand fighting in Stalingrad

other element of self-organised resistance came into play with the emergence of an enormous network of partisan guerilla groups.

The impetus for the partisan war was neither a cunning Stalinist plan nor independent military action by troops surrounded during the German offensive. The impetus came from spontaneous revolts against the occupation policies of the Nazis: rape, pillage, forced labour and genocide.

In the beginning the partisan forces exerted a considerable degree of autonomy from Moscow, with numerous reports of commissars and officers sent out from Moscow to "take command" ending up with a bullet in the back. By the summer of 1942 the partisan movement was a mass force of ten of thousands, increasingly integrated into, and under the control of the Red Army, and operating on 150 kilometre "fronts" deep behind German lines.

The partisan struggle, unplanned by Stalinism, tied up 10% of German divisions in Russia at any one time, and in the words of a pro-Nazi Rus-

sian officer, "almost completely reorganised the efforts of the occupation authorities to exploit the economic wealth of the country".

Trotsky had predicted that, without the masses removing the bureaucracy's grip on planning, disaster would befall the USSR. In reality we have to recognise that the bureaucracy found a way out of that predicament short of military defeat. Despite its initial unpreparedness and all the bureaucratic blunders of a military and economic nature, the Soviet degenerated workers' state survived.

There were three pre-requisites for victory. The first was a workable economic system that could focus Russia's vast resources into its war effort. This was achieved through an emergency war economy aimed at converting civilian industries to the war economy and relocating the arms industry east of the Urals. This system worked because the bureaucracy in this period was undermined from two directions.

It was undermined "from above" by strictly centralised crisis management which cut through bureaucratic obstacles by the use of agents to override the local bureaucracy. By concentrating on war production and by drastically curtailing the inefficient and fragmented planning mechanisms of peacetime the bureaucracy was able to make the planned economy work.

In addition the emergency economic measures worked because the initiative of workers and lower level managers was unleashed. New methods

and initiatives were able to be adopted undermining bureaucratisation "from below". The recent economic collapse of Stalinist planning should not blind us to the fact that during the war post-capitalist property relations proved stronger than the mightiest onslaught imperialism was able to throw at the degenerated workers state.

The second pre-requisite for victory was the ability to focus the economic power generated by the planned economy onto the battlefield. The bureaucracy achieved this by reverting to the most advanced bourgeois methods: the massed tank concentrations and "deep battle" advocated by Tukachevsky. Stalingrad was the first occasion when these methods were successfully put into operation.

Just as in the economy however, Stalinism caught up with capitalism's most advanced military methods, to use Trotsky's words, "at three times the cost".

Finally the Soviet victory would not have been won without the subjective commitment to struggle of the working class. Overall wealth was transferred from the workers to the peasants during wartime. Labour was virtually militarised, with youth over 12 in some cases being conscripted for war work. Food consumption per person was at levels far below anything seen in Western Europe.

The commitment of the Soviet working class to the socialist ideals and anti-fascist war aims, behind which the bureaucracy hid its authoritarian power and parasitic existence, allowed the workers to accept and even impose on themselves extremes of work and malnutrition without the social order collapsing.

Stalingrad changed the military situation, ripping the heart out of the German army in Russia. It was the signal for revitalised bureaucratic planning and the bureaucratic war machine to begin to function efficiently. It was also the signal for the bureaucracy to begin to seize back all the elements of initiative it had to concede during the first eighteen months of the war.

### Nationalist

In 1942 political commissars in the Red Army were abolished, ranks and medals for officers were introduced. The *Internationale* was abandoned and the USSR's anthem was replaced by a nationalist parody. During 1943 Stalin increasingly conducted war propaganda on the basis of a nationalist common denominator. By 1944 the Red Army itself was retitled the "Soviet Armed Forces" to emphasise the discontinuity with the revolutionary years. The Orthodox Church was legalised, the Comintern disbanded, the law of value officially recognised as part of the Soviet economic system, and Motherhood Medals began to be awarded to women who produced the most babies!

In both Leningrad and Stalingrad the first act of the bureaucracy upon liberation was to flood the cities with the NKVD, arresting and purging many of the individuals who had been responsible for non-bureaucratic defence organisations.

Stalinism proved capable of stifling all the elements of semi-independent activity the first years of war unleashed, and put into place the post-war Soviet ideology of rampant nationalism and national oppression, atomising the workers' class consciousness. In the buffer states it oversaw the reimposition of capitalist order, before under the international pressure of imperialism in 1947-49 bureaucratically destroyed capitalism in Eastern Europe.

None of this should allow us to forget that the USSR's victories over Nazism, at Stalingrad and after, were victories for the working class, won largely by the ingenuity and self sacrifice of the working class itself, even though bureaucracy, not working class power, prospered as a result. ■

## What happened at Stalingrad?

**13 September 1942: German Sixth Army attacks Stalingrad. House and factory fighting begins. By middle of October Germans conquer most of central Stalingrad**

**19 November 1941: Red Army counter-offensive. Stalingrad's besiegers are surrounded. Hitler orders no surrender.**

**31 January 1943: German General von Paulus surrenders. German Sixth Army ceases to exist. 600,000 have died in the battle.**



# BOBBY SEALE

# Seize The Time

Mark Harrison reviews  
*Seize The Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P Newton* by Bobby Seale, Black Classic Press, Baltimore, 1991, Price: £10.50

**B**OBBOY SEALE was a founder and key leader of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. The party, which later became just the Black Panther Party, was founded by Seale and Huey Newton in October 1966.

This book, written by Bobby while he was a political prisoner, is a vivid account of the Panthers' formation and subsequent struggles. It is brilliant.

Huey and Bobby grew up in the black ghetto of Oakland, a working class city in the Bay Area of California. The book brings that ghetto to life, exposing the poverty and police brutality that black people faced. It reveals the spirit of resistance to oppression that shaped the Panthers' politics and led to their popularity amongst the masses.

## Enemy

Influenced by the teachings of Malcolm X, Huey and Bobby quickly broke with the "cultural nationalists". The nationalists looked back to Africa for their inspiration and saw all whites, irrespective of their class position, as the enemy. The Panthers saw through the nationalists' attempts to disguise the conflict of interests between black capitalists and the black poor behind the camouflage of African dress. Seale writes:

"Huey would explain many times that if a black businessman is charging you the same prices or higher, even higher prices than exploiting white businessmen, then he himself ain't nothing but an exploiter. So why should black people go for this kind of system?"

As the Panthers developed they collaborated with white-dominated organisations. They organised inside the unions, building Panther caucuses. Their lawyer, Charles R Garry, dubbed the "Lenin of the court room" by Seale, was white.

Not one of these actions compromised their struggle against racism and for black liberation. In contrast, as Seale explains, the separatists on a number of occasions seriously damaged the struggle by collaborating with black cops employed by the racist state.

While the separatists and posers talked Huey and Bobby decided to act. After failing to win over the separatists in Merritt College Soul Students Advisory Council to taking up arms and building in the community Huey denounced them: "We don't have time for you. You're jiving in these colleges. You're hiding behind the ivory-walled towers in the college, and you're shucking and you're jiving."

The Panthers' foundation was the direct consequence of this split with cultural nationalism and separatism.

## Patrols

The Panthers' first principle was armed black self-defence. By the brilliant exploitation of the US constitution and California state laws on the right to bear arms, the Black Panthers began to conduct armed patrols of the Oakland ghetto.

The technique was simple. So long as guns were on display and not pointing at anyone the Panthers could legally ride the streets armed to the teeth. And they did—tailing cop cars wherever they went. Of course the police tried to put a stop to this. They hadn't counted on Huey's knowledge of the gun laws.

Time and again the police were faced down by Panthers with pistols and shotguns. Every time the police tried to take the guns from them Huey Newton quoted the constitution at them, leaving them baffled. Every time the police threatened the Panthers, each one of them would click a bullet into the

firing chamber and quote the law on the right to self-defence if attacked.

The effect of these patrols on the black community was electric, and after a number of major confrontations the ranks of the party began to swell. Demonstrations and rallies against police harassment or in support of black rights were flanked by armed Panthers. The police stood by, helpless to do anything other than bitterly complain that "the niggers were twisting the Constitution round".

The Panthers put Malcolm X's message, "by any means necessary" into practice. But they combined their armed self-defence programme with a range of political activities that won them mass support beyond Oakland. With Eldridge Cleaver as their "Minister for Information" they produced

a regular paper and built a nationwide organisation.

They initiated united fronts against fascists and ran in elections. They developed a community programme based on satisfying the immediate needs of the poor of the ghetto—breakfasts for children, free health clinics, free education centres that taught black history. They conscientiously purged criminals and opportunists—"jacksonapes"—from their ranks.

While all of these activities demarcated the Panthers from the reformist wing of the black movement, led by Martin Luther King, and earned them the trust of black communities across the USA, the Black Panther Party failed as a political organisation. The heroism and determination of the Panthers could not substitute for a clear revo-

lutionary strategy.

Throughout their existence the Panthers remained unclear on their strategic goals. The programme, drafted by Newton and Seale, consisted of ten points, divided into "what we want" and "what we believe" sections. Its concept of "freedom" for black people to determine their own destiny went no further than a call for a "United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of the black people as to their national destiny."

This demand conceded to the separatists and nationalists the existence of a black nation. It hampered the ability of the Panthers to develop a fully fledged class strategy for black liberation in the USA, for it left as a possibility a purely national solution. And when the Panthers were pressed to give a concrete form to this potential national solution, they ended up by projecting the utopian idea of a nation based on the disparate urban black ghettos.

In turn, flowing from the idea of the US black population as a series of communities constituting a nation, the Panthers increasingly turned to concepts of community control—of the police, of education, of industry.

These nationalist and communitarian projects, premised on the idea of nationally separated communities, flatly contradicted the Panthers' occasional calls for socialism and workers' control.

Underpinning these confused programmatic goals was the influence of Stalinism. When the Panthers started out they got money for guns by selling Mao's "Red Book" at a profit to the "radical leftists" on the Berkeley university campus. But Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Castro and Guevara all began to exert considerable influence on the thinking of Huey and Bobby. They embraced the Stalinist "stages theory" of revo-

lution: first black liberation, then socialism.

In the fight against the "fascist" US state the primary task was to unify the lumpenproletariat of the ghetto. Only after that would the struggle for socialism become possible. The lumpenproletariat were seen as the decisive force for social change. And the method for change most suitable to this class was the armed struggle in the ghetto.

Various declarations from Huey Newton contradicted this strategy. But they remained declarations. He called for a general revolution in the "white mother-country", but developed a practice exclusively based on the struggle in the black ghettos.

Stalinism also influenced the organisation of the Black Panther Party. Franz Fanon's teachings on guerilla war were decisive in Huey and Bobby's thinking. The two of them set up the Panthers and became Minister of Defence and Chairman respectively. With more recruits they established other posts, but the organisation remained elitist and undemocratic. Huey became a cult figure whose own thoughts were rarely questioned by the rank and file.

None of this detracts from the place of honour that the Black Panthers have in the history of the black liberation struggle. It merely explains that they failed to develop a political strategy that could ultimately defeat the US imperialist state.

## Revenge

That state took vicious revenge on the young black militants who had used the gun laws to defy its racist police and their brutalisation of the black communities. A massive FBI operation, the Counter Intelligence Programme, was launched against the Panthers. Key militants were shot dead in deliberately provoked shoot-outs with the police.

Huey Newton was wounded in one such shoot-out and, in defiance of all the evidence, was incarcerated for murder.

Bobby Seale was framed and shipped to Chicago where, when he tried to defend himself in court, the judge ordered that he be chained to a chair and gagged throughout the trial.

Faced with this persecution the Panthers stood firm. To this day some of their members rot in US prisons. Bobby Seale's book is a tribute to these class war prisoners, to black liberation fighters who gave their lives for a noble struggle.

Today's generation of black militants can learn from the mistakes of the Panthers. Black self defence can be a starting point, and is a vital element of the struggle. But it has to be fought for as part of a programme to link the everyday struggles of black workers and youth to the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Black self organisation has to be class based and take place within the wider working class movement. Thus, while revolutionary Marxists support black caucuses in the workers' movement and in certain conditions even advocate a working class black movement, we do not advocate the setting up of a separate black political party. We fight for black workers and youth to take their place in the leadership of integrated revolutionary workers' organisations.

But as well as learning from the Panthers' mistakes today's youth must also learn the spirit of heroism and the will to act that permeated the Black Panther Party if they want to bring the ideas of socialism and black liberation to life. ■



Bobby Seale 1966

## PANTHER UK

### Repeating the Mistakes

**PANTHER UK**, an independent black organisation allied to Militant, is the main organisation distributing Bobby Seale's book in Britain. The problem is that Panther UK seems to have learned nothing from the mistakes of the original Panthers, and is set to repeat them.

The emergence of a black organisation allied to Militant may strike some working class activists as odd. Wasn't this the organisation which opposed Black Sections in the Labour Party on the grounds that it would split the working class? Looked at closely however, Militant's Panther venture fits in with its newly reconstructed brand of centrism—that is, politics which constantly waver between reform and revolution.

Militant's centrism used to focus on one unifying schema: the transformation of Labour into a "blunt instrument" for socialist change, the peaceful transformation of soci-

ety through a socialist Labour government backed up by the workers' organisations. This represented a strategic accommodation to reformism.

With that schema in ruins Militant is constructing another one, based on a strategic accommodation to various movements—feminism within CADV, Scottish nationalism with Scottish Militant Labour, and black separatism with Panther.

Panther UK has promoted Bobby Seale and the original Panthers uncritically, as a model for black youth in Britain to follow today. At the same time its programme is a classic "maximum-minimum" programme, with the socialist goal divorced from the demands of everyday struggle.

This was the method when all demands were addressed to the mythical "socialist Labour government". But applied to the programme for black liberation it not only leaves

the final goal divorced from the struggle: it leaves the programme for black liberation divorced from the programme for working class power as a whole.

Nowhere in Panther's programme is the question of united struggle with white workers addressed. Nowhere is the place of the black struggle within the struggle for socialism concretely explained. The place of Panther itself within the workers' movement is not explained either.

In the old days readers of Militant were meant to get the impression that the tendency was a left wing version of Labourism. Today readers of Panther can only come away with the impression that Panther is a left wing version of black nationalism.

Yet, as the whole history of the original Panthers shows, it was not the shortage of socialist rhetoric that was the problem. It was the lack of a complete break with black separatism and nationalism, lack of a concrete strategy to link black self-defence with the struggle of the whole working class against capitalism.

Today Panther UK is repeating the mistakes of Bobby Seale and Huey Newton. Militant members and supporters should demand a serious account of the trajectory of Panther UK, and reject the centrism embodied in its programme. ■



**"STATE UNITY** of the Balkan peninsula can be achieved from above, by expanding one Balkan state, which ever proves stronger, at the expense of the weaker ones—this is the road of wars of extermination and oppression of weak nations, a road that consolidates monarchism and militarism." (Trotsky, 1910)

These words, written only two years before the first Balkan war, are once again brought grimly to life as Yugoslav continues to disintegrate. The Stalinist or ex-Stalinist regimes of Tudjman, Milosevic and Izetbegovic have consciously stirred up nationalist hatred in an attempt to create independent capitalist states. They have succeeded to date in demobilising and confusing working class and popular opposition by rallying the "nations" behind chauvinism and militarism.

When the war between the two major republics of former Yugoslavia—Serbia and Croatia—swept across the borders into Bosnia-Herzegovina the bloody consequences were not difficult to predict. Since then about half of the republic's population (a total of two million so far) have been driven out of their homes. Thousands more have been killed and tens, if not hundreds of thousands, are threatened with starvation and death this winter.

In the early phase of the Bosnian war, and especially with the siege of Sarajevo, the imperialists (under German and Austrian pressure) took a half-hearted anti-Serbian stand. They imposed economic and diplomatic sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro and refused to recognise the "New Yugoslavia" formed by these republics. Until the summer of this year imperialist politicians considered outright military intervention.

Collectively, however, imperialism could not unite around such a perspective. Whilst the Austrian and German imperialists were pushing in this direction, the USA, Britain and France rejected such a strategy. In these countries it was left to the servants of the bourgeoisie—liberal journalists and social democratic handwringers—to give full public vent to the "moral outrage" against "Serbian aggression". But their plea for full-scale intervention to protect human rights was cynically ignored, leaving the liberals confused and angry, stunned by the contrasting imperialist neglect of the plight of the Bosnians as compared with Kurds in Iraq.

The more "cool-headed" imperialist spokesmen like British Foreign Minister Hurd or US Chief of Staff Powell represented the decisive factions of the bourgeoisie. They clearly did not see capitalist restoration as best served by a high risk military intervention without clear war aims. Such an intervention would have required a large armed force to occupy a difficult terrain against well equipped and trained opponents determined upon a protracted guerrilla war. German imperialism having achieved its main aims with the diplomatic recognition of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina by the UN, did not prove strong enough to force the other imperialist powers to go further and solicit military support for the newly recognised states.

The London Conference in August 1992 brought the warring factions to the Geneva negotiating table. The imperialists pointed to the power struggle between Milosevic and Panic/Cosic in Serbia as offering the best prospect of bringing the republic into line. Over night Panic became a respectable politician, although he had been denounced as a puppet of Milosevic before the start of the conference. Likewise Cosic, who drafted one of the first manifestos of Greater Serbian nationalism in the late 1980s, is now a "reasonable, cultured and understanding man".

This shift in imperialism's strategy did not dampen the conflict in Bosnia. Rather, the Serb and Croat nationalists consolidated their positions and the Croat-Muslim alliance became ever more fragile, eventually breaking down at the end of October. By conquering Jajce the Serbs took another important step in stabilising their territorial gains. The self-appointed parliaments of the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia now proclaim a union of these territories, formalising a common military alliance and introducing a common currency. This, in turn, will be but a step towards a Greater Serbian state.

**As Serbia and Croatia achieve their objectives, displacing millions of Bosnian workers and peasants, a new phase opens up in the Balkan War. Not only has the immediate character of the Bosnian war changed, but the danger of a conflagration in the whole region is greater. The International Secretariat of the LRCI outlines a revolutionary socialist response to the escalating conflict.**

After the London Conference the Croatian forces turned against their former Muslim allies in Bosnia. The army of Croats in Bosnia and Ustashe irregulars clashed with units of the Bosnian army around Novi Travnik and Vitez. In Poszar about 5,000 Muslims, a third of the town's population, was expelled by the Croat armed forces. In Mostar, capital of the self-proclaimed (Croat) statelet of Herzeg-Bosne, Croatian tank corps surrounded the Bosnian army. The Croatian headquarters openly refused to recognise the authority and legitimacy of the Sarajevo government or the Bosnian defence forces.

As the Croat nationalists moved against their former ally their Serb counterparts made progress in consolidating their military conquests. Both these forces have struck some kind of agreement to divide Bosnia. The Croat forces were reported as pulling back from the defence of Jajce deliberately and thereby decisively weakening the town's defence. On the other hand, the Serbs removed their forces from the garrisons near Dubrovnik, handing over these territories to the Croats. Diplomatic activity between Zagreb and Belgrade has grown considerably since the London conference in late summer. On 21 October Cosic and Tudjman agreed to exchange regular liaison officers between each other and to reopen the Belgrade-Zagreb highway.



The war in Bosnia began as a reactionary war on all sides in which it was impossible for any socialist to support any side. All three forces sought to enforce a reactionary nationalist settlement on minorities that had no wish to be incorporated. This applied equally to the Bosnian Muslims. Their leader's aim was to preserve the unity of the Bosnian state in an alliance with the Croat nationalists, backed by imperialism. The latter actively supported this by extending diplomatic recognition to the republic. Such a unitary state, embracing the Serb minority against their wishes, would have threatened them with national oppression. In the first months of the Bosnian war such a development was not excluded, but the shift of imperialism's strategy over the summer and its impact on the policy of the Croatian government turned it into an illusion. The illusions have been crushed. Now the people that looked to Izetbegovic are betrayed and the war has been transformed into a reactionary war of annihilation against the Muslim people of Bosnia.

The aims of Izetbegovic and his Muslim party of Democratic Action remain as reactionary and utopian as ever. Any success by them in creating a capitalist Bosnia statelet would threaten the Serbs with national oppression. Their strategy of seeking out imperialist political, economic and military aid to achieve this ultimately led to the start of the war itself. But the course of the war has led to the destruction and ethnic dispersal of the Muslim people at the combined hands of Croats and Serbs and so the character of the Muslim's struggle

changed into a war of justified resistance against ethnic annihilation. Therefore, revolutionaries critically support the defensive struggle of the Muslim Bosnians against the policy of ethnic cleansing from the Serb and Croat side. We call for the defeat of Croat and Serb forces at the hands of Bosnian Muslims and their allies. For revolutionary or working class forces on the ground this may well require agreements for joint action against Serb or Croat nationalist and fascist aggressors.

Our aim in the defence of the Bosnian Muslims remains the establishment of a multi-ethnic Bosnian state. Previously, this was best pursued by a tactic of generalised defeatism and a fight for joint multi-ethnic resistance against pogromists of all stripes. Now it requires the ability of the Muslims to remain an integral part of what is left of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Previously, we supported the defence of all ethnic groups against pogroms and forcible removal from their homes and villages. Now we fight for the establishment of military control of all and any areas within Bosnia-Herzegovina by Muslim forces—our aim remaining to establish multi-ethnic workers' and peasants' councils.

At present we do not recognise the "right of self-determination" of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, since they do not form an identifiable majority in a continuous compact area which is a necessary precondition for the ability to form their own state. Indeed, we seek to prevent this outcome at present since the reactionary goal of the Croat and Serb forces is precisely to herd the Muslim population into a restricted territory.

Undoubtedly, the progress of the war and the experience of oppression at the hands of Serb and Croat forces presents the possibility that the Muslim population will become an identifiable oppressed group in a compact area. In such circumstances we would recognise their right to self-determination.

This war has been characterised throughout by outright cynicism by imperialism towards the Muslims. Faced with the break up of the Croatian-Muslim alliance, the imperialists remained silent. No embargo against Croatia is being prepared. On the contrary, pointing at the Cosic-Tudjman agreement the UN and the EC claimed that "considerable progress has been made". The German imperialist "peace-mongers" make it clear that they will not take any action against their friends in Zagreb. All the hypocrisy of the imperialists is now revealed. Now all their anti-war, humanitarian rhetoric is exposed for what it is—a cover for their own economic, political and diplomatic interests.

Clearly, the imperialists will adopt resolutions which condemn the attack on Muslim towns and communities by the Croat army. They will send some more "monitors". The UN and the EC may be able to "negotiate" a divided buffer state for the Bosnian Muslims, but they will not prevent the ethnic carve up of Bosnia. The UN, spurred by France, may set up "safe havens" as a lesser evil to an even bigger refugee "problem" throughout Europe, rather than motivated by any greater concern for the Muslims. But they would only do this as a way of sealing the results of the Serbian war so as not to get involved in an ongoing clash with the Serbs.

Whatever aims their official leaders may or may not have, in the given circumstances it is excluded that the Muslims can militarily succeed in establishing a unitary Bosnian state. Their real prospect is either to retain control over small Muslim statelets or cantons politically and economically completely dependent on the neighbouring states, or to be completely forced into the position of an oppressed national minority inside a Greater Serbia.

Common military action with the Muslim forces must not extend to political support for the official Muslim leaders and their reactionary and pro-capitalist aims. We do not share nor support the territorial ambitions of many of their leaders to force the Serbian and Croat nationalities into a unified capitalist state of Bosnia-Herzegovina threatening them in turn with national oppression. We are clearly opposed to an alternative form of cantonalisation which is more favourable for the Muslims, not speak of any Muslim variety of "ethnic cleansing" which some far right and Islamic funda-

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in the



Bosnian Serbs near the Croatian border

mentalist-led units may try to carry out. Izetbegovic's more recent proposals to divide Bosnia into eight to ten non-ethnically defined cantons with a high degree of self-government will not help him out of the mess he has brought his people into even though such a divided mini-Muslim state could satisfy the "moderate" reactionary regimes of the Muslim world who now pose as the "defenders of the Bosnians". The hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees can also provide a fertile ground for the agitation and recruitment of fundamentalist forces and easily lead to a protracted small scale civil war.

But these reactionary potentialities must not blind the working class in former Yugoslavia that this Muslim people is now fighting for nothing less than its existence. That is what pre-dominates in their struggle at present. It must be supported by the working class movement internationally in order to stop atrocities, mass deportations or forced "assimilation" of the Muslims by Serbian and Croat forces in Bosnia. We favour unconditional military aid to the Bosnian Muslims to carry this out. We call on trade unions and socialist organisations to take direct action to prevent military supplies getting to Serb and Croat forces. We demand an end to the stepped-up imperialist blockade of Serbia.

The way forward for the Bosnian Muslim South Slavs does not lie in an ethnically Muslim-based state (or "safe haven"). It would be a dependant mini-state at best, or, in a bigger version, a state oppressing its Croat or Serb minority. Such a "solution"—which would require in the first instance massive imperialist military support—would only lead to further national tensions, not to building a bridge between the nationalities. We must challenge the influence of nationalist and pro-capitalist restorationist forces amongst this people

and prevent Islamic which are clearly a ring further influence would only worsen situation and further LRCI recognised at nationalist war in solution to the crisis means of separation remains true today. and necessity of the revolution. There outcome, no lasting solution for the into this intermixed nationalist restoration of a proletarian revolution, the creation of a public of Bosnia-Herzegovina towards a socialist

While the composition against the Serb and predominantly Muslim revolutionaries will fight the other peoples as the basis for a real against the war on all sides. As the microcosm of the Bosnia, the workers threatened with oppression by the national lines would mediate and long to the workers and Croat controlled former Yugoslavia native to the of Tudjman, Milosevic



# SOLUTION WAR Balkans



fundamentalist forces, minority now, from gain. Such a development is an already disastrous poison feelings. As the beginning of the Bosnia, a progressive is not possible by the on or secession. This proves the importance strategy of permanent can be no progressive g and non oppressive national tensions brought country by Stalinist and onist misleaders, short tionary one. This means ti-national workers' re- zegovina as a step to- eration of the Balkans.

on of defence militias and Croat attacks may be m at the moment, revo- to bring in as many of possible in order to lay multi-national defense gers and pogromists of e of Sarajevo shows, a intermixed character of of all ethnic groups are ith, starvation and op- inists. Separation along clearly weaken the im- m interests of all sides. n equally demonstrate easants in the Serb and ories as in the whole of at there exists an alter- ous chauvinist policies ic and their lackeys. It

would help the rank and file soldiers in the army of the Bosnian Serb nationalists and in the puppet state of Herzeg-Bosne see who the real enemy is and who his real ally is. It would help to break the control of the rank and file by the nationalist and chauvinist officers. Then these war-mongers and the criminal, semi-fascist and fascist leaders of the various irregulars will find justice for their deeds—justice exercised by workers' tribunals, ropes and trees. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all armed forces of the Croat or Serb state and the irregulars from these countries as well as the so-called peace-keeping forces of the UN. The UN blue helmets already assist the ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by providing security for Muslims driven from their villages. When the imperialists finally and officially agree to an ethnic cantonalisation of the republic then the UN troops will play an important role in securing this against any multi-ethnic resistance which might emerge.

The solution of the Bosnian crisis is inevitably connected to the development of the class struggle in the rest of Yugoslavia, in Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia. In its attempt to retain their grip on power the Serbian bureaucrats around Milosevic will clearly not allow the nationally oppressed Kosovo Albanians any form of autonomy, not to speak of secession from Serbia. Similarly, the other national minorities in Serbia—Hungarians, Croats, Romanies and Muslims are oppressed and disadvantaged by Greater Serb chauvinism and treated as second class citizens. There have been attempts at "ethnic cleansing" in the Serb heartlands already.

The years of national oppression and the seizure of power by the Milosevic clique have poisoned relations between the Albanians and the Serbs in particular. Kosovo is ruled by a Serb puppet administration and

is under the iron grip of the Serb police and military. The Stalinist regime has made absolutely clear that it will not let Kosovo go at any price. Even Panic, the most moderate politician both of the government or the "democratic" opposition on this question, repeatedly rules out recognising the right of self-determination, including secession of the Albanians—about 90% of the republics' population. Panic's proposal to divide Kosovo between a Serbian ruled part and another part which might go independent would equally lead to mass deportations and ethnic cleansing.

This has strengthened the bourgeois restorationist secessionist forces in Kosovo. The leading political force of the Kosovo Albanians, the Democratic Alliance (which claims 700,000 members, and is led by Rugova), stands for a neutral, demilitarised, independent and democratic republic of Kosovo with guaranteed rights for minorities. To its right many forces have emerged who pose the question of Kossovian self-determination more radically, that is, as unification with Albania and with Albanian majority districts in Macedonia.

Whilst revolutionaries do not favour the creation of small states and the break up of larger entities, they are clearly opposed to the Serbian Stalinists, Clericals and nationalists' brutal policy and ambitions to forcibly keep the Albanians within Serbia. We unconditionally support the struggle of the Kosovo Albanians against Serb national oppression. But we do not give any support for the political aims of the restorationist leaderships of the Albanians. We fight for self-determination to take the form of a workers' and peasants' council republic of Kosovo. In short, we combine the struggle for self-determination with the defence of the planned property relations and the creation of a healthy workers' state based on factory councils and a workers' militia.

To support the democratic rights of the Kosovo Albanians and all other national minorities is an elementary duty of every class conscious working class militant in Serbia. Only on the basis of boldly and unconditionally recognising and fighting for the democratic rights of these nationalities can the hatred between them be overcome. But unlike the Kosovo Albanians the other minorities do not live in clearly defined geographical areas or do not constitute a majority in them. A separate territorial solution to their fight against national oppression is therefore not possible. But we defend their democratic rights and oppose any form of discrimination at work, at school or in public life.

The question of Kosovo also demonstrates the reactionary nature of the Serb bourgeois nationalist opposition (Serbian Renewal, monarchists, church) and the open bourgeois restorationists in the Panic government. All of them have refused to champion national self-determination for Kosovo outright. Some, like the church and the monarchists, even criticised Milosevic for being too "soft" on the Albanians, allowing them to "degrade holy Serbian soil". The working class must make as much use as possible of the power struggle between Milosevic, Panic/Cosic and the "democratic" opposition. It must take advantage of the constant crisis and instability of the Serbian regime. But the working class must not give political support to either side. This struggle represents the fight between a wing of the bureaucracy which favours a state capitalist transition to capitalism (Milosevic) and another which favours a faster leap to capitalism. Both sides have clear Bonapartist ambitions and are totally anti-working class. Milosevic has proved this beyond any doubt through his actions, the war in Bosnia and his alliance with the Chetnik fascists.

His support, however, is waning. This is not because of his rejection of bourgeois democracy, but because the protracted war has considerably exhausted the Serb economy, leading to hyper-inflation, a dramatic decline in living standards and international isolation. This has complicated the process of capitalist restoration rather than helping it. Therefore, there are increasing signs in the Serb national institutions, the SPS and even the army that they want Milosevic to back down or be replaced by some form of coalition around Panic-Cosic. The war effort itself is unpopular amongst many Serbs. 200,000 young men

have already left the country to avoid conscription.

Nevertheless, Kosovo could be Milosevic's last desperate strike, in particular because this could undermine the "official" opposition who are all committed to an anti-Albanian course. For the Balkan people, however, this could unleash a war and a human tragedy many times more costly than the nationalist butchery in Bosnia. Civil war in Kosovo would eventually involve Albania and the Macedonian Albanians in the war, thereby drawing Macedonia itself into the battle. The spread of the war would probably not stop at that stage, dragging in Bulgaria and Greece, old Balkan states with longstanding territorial ambitions on Macedonia. Such a development could encourage Croatia in the north to take the military offensive against a Serb state occupied with war in its southern frontiers.

The Macedonian republic could face a similar fate to that of the Muslims in Bosnia and the Albanians in the Kosovo. Until today, the republic is not recognised internationally because of Greece's reactionary denial of the very existence of a Macedonian people and despite the fact that the Macedonian government has repeatedly made clear that it has no territorial claims on Greece whatsoever. Revolutionaries openly reject that nationalist and chauvinist policy. We demand the recognition of the Macedonian state while fighting against the re-introduction of capitalism in the country.



Macedonia has its own national tensions internally, principally between the Macedonians and the Albanian minority which totals about 400,000 (about 21% of the population). The antagonisms have grown considerably between 1990 and 1991 when Macedonia was ruled by Stalinist bureaucrats allied to Milosevic. These tensions have diminished over the last year when a government was formed incorporating representatives of the Albanian minority and a programme for education in the Albanian language was adopted. This, however, does not alter the fact that Albanians are still extremely under-represented in higher education and in the higher spheres of administration and management. Additionally, there are also influential nationalist forces amongst the Macedonians who are openly anti-Albanian and who can easily grow in influence in case of a civil war in Kosovo, looking for support on the Serbian or Bulgarian side. We are opposed to any denial of the Albanian minority's right to self-determination. Revolutionaries support their right to secede and unify with the Kosovo and/or Albania if they wish to do so and fight for it to take the form of a workers' state.

Whilst the exact military alliances in such a war, the degree to which imperialism will seek to limit it, are difficult to predict it clearly would be a reactionary nightmare, a war reflecting the ambitions of the nascent (or in the case of Greece and Turkey already existing) semi-colonial bourgeoisies. It would threaten the smaller nations and nationalities with pogroms, destruction of whole communities and decades of severe national oppression. Victories achieved in such wars would not bring peace to the Balkans, but only lay the foundation for future conflicts.

To prevent such a spread of the conflict and to put an end to the nationalist war, the policy of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, the oppression of other nationalities by the Serb and Croat regime, the pogromists in the self-proclaimed governments of Herzeg-Bosne and the Serb republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the working class of these countries must support the just struggle of the oppressed nationalities and combine this with the struggle to overthrow the reactionary regimes in Belgrade and Zagreb. In order to achieve this revolutionaries have to combine the struggle against capitalist restoration, for the most immediate economic demands of the workers and small peasants, the defence and maximum extension of the democratic gains made or conceded by the regimes with the struggle for working class power based on workers' and peasants' councils and a workers' militia.

Only such a state—the dictatorship of

the proletariat in alliance with the poor peasants—could hope to overcome the national hatreds of the Balkan peoples and thereby stimulate the political and social revolution in the other Balkan states. It would be a major blow to nationalism of any kind. It would open the road to a Socialist Federation of the Balkans.

To achieve such a goal it is necessary to break the workers and peasants of all nations from their current reformist, liberal or nationalist leaderships. The building of an international working class vanguard party as an integral part of a new revolutionary communist international is an indispensable tool for breaking the toiling masses away from their misleaders and leading them in the struggle for working class power. The working class in the imperialist countries throughout Europe must aid and promote this process. The workers, peasants and nationally oppressed must receive a clear message: it is the working class throughout Europe who support and help you, not the capitalists.

The European labour movements must fight the immigration controls imposed by "their own" bourgeoisies. Faced with the effects of the nationalist war and the restoration process—a process their policies promoted—they are now refusing to help the millions who are suffering. John Major, one of the most outstanding hypocrites, even poses as an example of charity for taking in some thousand refugees. The French government of self-styled super-Europeans closes its borders to refugees.

Austria has mobilised border troops in order to stop the "uncontrollable influx" of the starving and homeless. The right wing populist racist Haider and his FPÖ are using this for their "Austria first" campaign to stop immigration and start mass deportations of foreigners. The German government is making its contribution to the racist and chauvinist scandal by deporting Serb deserters who, they claim, are not threatened with political oppression.

In this situation the official labour, social democrat and Stalinist party and trade union leaders are promoting this policy in government or advertise themselves as a "constructive" opposition. The German SPD has recently agreed to restrict the asylum rights granted in the constitution, actively backing state racism to "undermine the far right". Some of these forces or minority currents within the labour movement have verbally opposed such moves. But we want to see deeds not just good-sounding phrases.

On national and EC-level, the workers' movement—with the official leaders if possible, without them when necessary—must start a European-wide campaign against all immigration controls. The European trade union headquarters must get off their knees to co-ordinate and lead such a fight for the right of entry, for state assistance, for decent housing provision. All must be allowed to stay as long as they want and be granted full citizen rights. The working class must defend the refugees against racist and fascist attacks by building a workers' united front against fascism.

The EC is spending billions every year subsidising the right of farmers to profit from the production of food that nobody buys, but it will not spend a penny for hundreds of thousands of refugees and homeless. Aid without strings must be given to the Bosnian Muslims and all refugees or homeless. We call on the workers' organisations to campaign for this and control such aid if given.

The workers' movement must also fight any attempts at outright imperialist intervention to "sort" out the Balkan crisis. Historically, this has always led to wars, a rise of national antagonisms to help imperialism's economic and political interests. There is no reason to believe that it will be different this time. That is why the LRCI demands:

- ★ No imperialist intervention!
- ★ No to UN/EC sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro!
- ★ No to UN or EC "peacekeeping" forces in Bosnia, Croatia and elsewhere!
- ★ Build links between independent proletarian organisations in former Yugoslavia and the European and international working class movement!



**H**UNDREDS OF revellers poured onto the streets of Little Rock, Arkansas, and danced into the small hours of 4 November. They were celebrating Bill Clinton's election as President of the United States.

Few were workers. Many were corporate lawyers, public relations consultants and other professionals hopeful of patronage appointments in the new administration.

While Labour commentators in Britain have hailed Clinton's election as if it marked the dawning of a new era, there is little evidence that the "man from Hope" has inspired any enthusiasm within the US working class.

Some bourgeois analysts of the election result have made great play of the unexpected increase in voter turn-out compared to recent presidential elections. Even so only 54% of registered voters bothered to visit the polls. The increase on previous turn-outs was largely due to Ross Perot's crackpot campaign, mobilising white petit bourgeois discontent with the USA's economic decline.

At 43% Clinton's share of the popular vote was the lowest of any presidential victor since Richard Nixon in 1968 and the third lowest this century. Given the massive unpopularity of George Bush amidst an unrelieved recession, what was remarkable was not Clinton's victory but his slender margin.

The Clinton/Gore ticket did, however, recapture a number of southern states by posing as "white southern boys in suits". They also won California and the industrial midwest on the basis of hatred of Bush.

Their campaign was clearly the best bankrolled Democratic drive for the White House since Kennedy's in 1960.

### Tune

This year the Democratic ticket matched the Republicans dollar for dollar to the tune of more than £40 million. Much of this funding came from big business contributions. But an important share of financial backing along with millions of votes came from women's and lesbian and gay organisations, genuinely fearful that a second Bush-Quayle term would mean an unleashing of social and moral reaction.

As a result of Clinton's election it is likely that a majority of the Supreme Court's nine judges will hold pro-choice views on abortion by 1995. But this is no guarantee that

## USA

In a follow up to last month's article on the US presidential elections G R McColl looks at Bill Clinton's victory and what his administration will mean for US workers.

# Slick Willie goes to Washington

legislative attacks on abortion rights will stop at state level. There is also little chance of a Clinton administration re-introducing federal funding for abortions. There are already signs of Clinton renegeing on a campaign pledge to scrap the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces. The US navy has already acted to tighten its homophobic regulations.

### Threat

One senior officer in an army base in the south warned that if Clinton went ahead with his plans he would be shot! The threat may be far-fetched, but Clinton is likely to bow to the military establishment's pressure anyway.

The chief of Clinton's transition team, lawyer Vernon Jordan, may be the epitome of black professional respectability but Clinton stands firmly committed to workfare, and an attack on "welfare mothers". In the coded language of US politics this is not just an attack on benefits but an appeal to racism. The implicit message is that Clinton will crack down on welfare claimants, many of whom are poor black people.

Clinton's promise to boost spending on the country's crumbling infrastructure will do little to repair the rotting core of the inner cities, whose residents are overwhelmingly black or Latino. The President-elect's answer to crime bred by deprivation and despair is to put another 100,000 cops on the ghettos' streets, not to provide jobs and services.

He is even more committed to the USA's role as global policeman. As an opponent of the Vietnam War

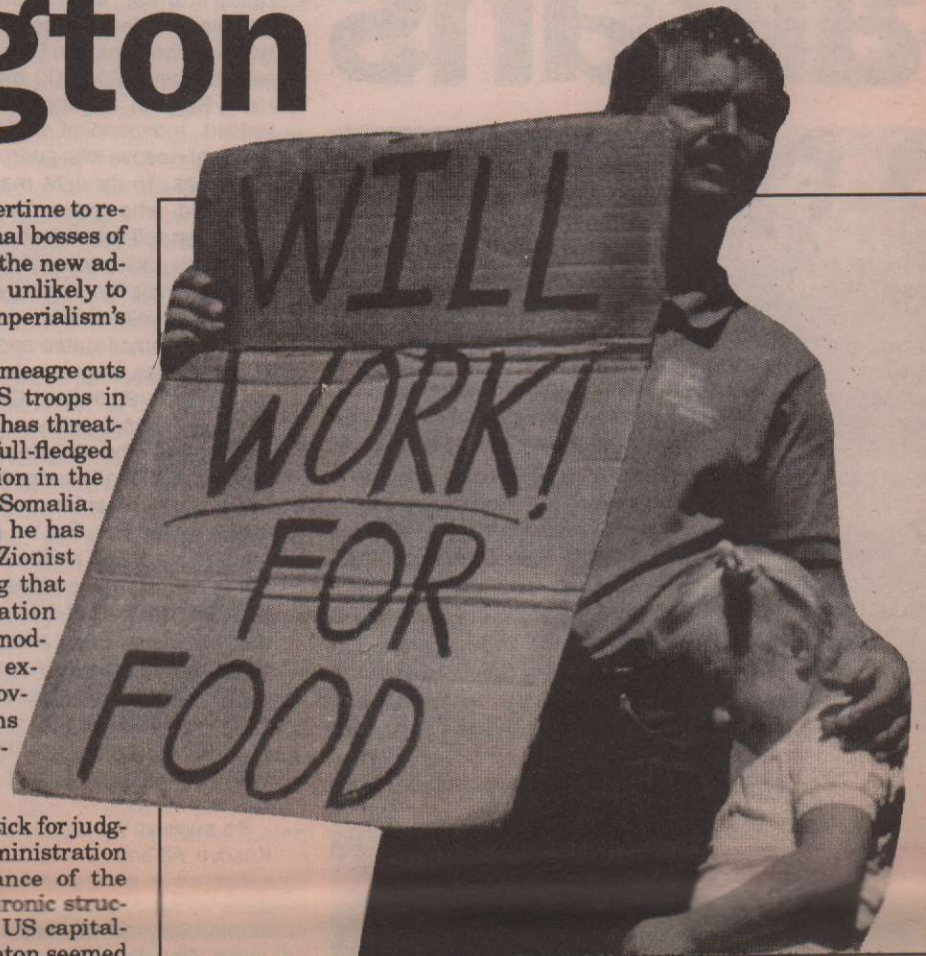
Clinton has worked overtime to reassure the multinational bosses of his patriotism. Under the new administration there are unlikely to be any changes in imperialism's foreign policy.

While he has pledged meagre cuts in the presence of US troops in Europe, "Slick Willie" has threatened the prospect of a full-fledged US military intervention in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. And since his election he has emphasised his pro-Zionist credentials, suggesting that a Clinton administration would eliminate the modest pressure that Bush exercised on the Israeli government over US loans for West Bank settlements.

For the US ruling class the crucial yardstick for judging the Democratic administration will be the performance of the economy. There are chronic structural problems facing US capitalism. On this score Clinton seemed a better bet for many of the big capitalists than another four years of Bush's ostrich-like approach.

### Research

The cornerstone of his economic policy is to restructure federal government spending on research and development away from the demands of the Pentagon and towards a Japanese-style form of partnership with private sector capital. On 14 and 15 December Clinton has scheduled an economic summit in Little Rock for top corporate bosses, bankers and economists. The AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy is conspicuous by its absence from



Clinton supports the attack on "welfare parents"

the guest list.

Despite its support for the Democratic ticket the glaring weakness of the US labour movement is apparent. With less than 16% of the country's workforce actually unionised and after a long series of defeats in key national and local disputes since Reagan's infamous smashing of the air traffic controllers' organisation in 1981, the union bureaucrats have made no demands whatsoever of the new administration.

Since the mid-1970s the majority of US workers have seen real wages fall by an average of 1% a

year. Pension and health care programmes negotiated by union bureaucrats during the boom have withered and the union success rate in representation elections has slumped badly.

### Scabs

Clinton has consistently defended Arkansas' "right to work" laws which have long banned the closed shop, protected scabs and aided employer attempts to intimidate would-be union members. The extensive battery of federal anti-union legislation, dating from the 1948 Taft-Hartley Act onwards, will remain on the statute books.

Unlike his supposed role model, Franklin Roosevelt, the incoming president feels no need to curry favour with the unions through the promise of labour law reforms. At the same time there is little danger that the new administration will have sown many illusions within the US working class.

US workers have lost neither the will nor ability to fight the bosses, even though the working class remains deeply divided by racism. Militants face the task of rebuilding fragmented union organisation and sweeping away the most corrupt and reactionary trade union bureaucracy in the world.

Their audience must include millions of alienated, often jobless youth who currently have little or no identification with collective struggle.

Above all the urgent need remains to establish the political independence of the US working class through the formation of its own party, committed to a programme of revolutionary struggle which challenges the priorities of the bosses at every turn and forges links with class brothers and sisters around the world. ■

**T**HE VILLAGE of Aravaca, just outside Madrid, witnessed a brutal racist murder on the night of 13 November. Lucrecia Perez, a poor black Dominican woman, was shot dead and left in an abandoned discotheque.

It is a safe bet that she was murdered by fascists or racists who had connections with the army or security forces. The four masked men who killed her used ammunition that is only issued to the army/security forces.

The killing is evidence that the rise of fascism and the increase in savage racist violence is not confined to northern Europe. Spain still hosts thousands of pro-Franco fascists and, in common with other EC countries, it has stringent immigration controls that are encouraging racists at the street level to step up their activity.

### Cynical

Lucrecia came to Spain in search of work. She died owing money to the cynical traffickers in "illegal" immigrants who operate between the Dominican Republic and Spain. Like many such immigrants she worked long hours in return for a pittance, exploited by ruthless bosses and hampered, because of

## SPAIN Outrage at racist killing

### FROM LRCI SUPPORTERS IN MADRID

her "illegal" status, from taking action against them.

On the Saturday following her death many immigrant organisations met to decide their response. Across Madrid slogans appeared on the walls condemning racism and the murder. Popular outrage against the cowards who killed her was expressed in a demonstration in Aravaca on the Sunday, when 5,000 people assembled in the main square.

A representative of the Spanish Socialist party (PSOE) turned up trying to utilise the demonstration for the purpose of boosting its elec-

toral campaign. Militants from the Latin American Committee began to shout slogans condemning the immigration laws that the PSOE government itself had passed in 1985 and that had made people like Lucrecia "illegals" and targets of the racist killers. The majority of the demonstrators felt the same way and took up the slogans until the PSOE leader was forced to leave the demo.

The demonstration at Aravaca was followed by two further protests against racism and the murder of Lucrecia. A number of radical and anarchist groups had already called a demo on 22 November. The major parties and trade unions agreed to boycott this because they

wanted to avoid a confrontation with fascists who were marching on the anniversary of Franco's death. Lucrecia's murder prompted the reformists to act. They called a demo for 21 November under the slogan "Against Racism and Xenophobia".

### Anger

Both demonstrations went ahead. The 21 November march, backed by the PSOE and the Stalinists of the PCE, attracted around 18,000. On this demo many of the marchers took up the call from the Latin American Committee to scrap the immigration laws and expressed their anger at the party leaders who said they opposed racism but who passed and implemented the racist law.

The 22 November march was smaller, around 5,000, but included many immigrant workers and organisations and was extremely militant and angry.

If workers in Spain are to stop the rise of racism and fascism, then it is crucial that the fight takes the form of a militant workers' united front dedicated to no platform for fascists. Racist terror must be met by organised black self-defence supported by the workers' movement. Spain's racist immigration controls must be smashed. ■



CIS

# Will old guard topple Yeltsin?

Russian economy.

There has been no lack of determination by Gaidar. But he has not forced the enterprises to follow his free market programme. This can best be seen in the extension of inter-enterprise credit over the year. Starting with about 100 billion roubles in January, it soared to 600 billion in April, and then to 3,000 billion in September! Gerashchenko, the chairman of the Russian central bank, has announced that it will reach about 4,000 billion by the end of the year. When one company puts off bankruptcy by running up debts with another, and the central bank goes on printing money, capitalism cannot be restored.

## Privatisation

Gaidar and Yeltsin's programme, their fast track privatisation and attempt to introduce a tough credit policy, met growing resistance from the industrial bureaucracy. Whilst the industrial bureaucrats are not opposed to capitalist restoration in principle, the successful implementation of the neo-liberal programme of the Gaidar government would have undermined their position and destroyed many of their privileges.

The growing influence of this layer of the bureaucracy could already be seen in April. At that time the "Russian Union of Industrialists and Entre-

BY MARTIN SUCHANEX

preneurs" and their allies in the Russian parliament were able to force Yeltsin to incorporate some of their supporters in the government. Repeated clashes between Gaidar and Gerashchenko over credit and banking policy revealed the struggle between the industrial bureaucracy and the neo-liberal restorationists backed by the IMF.

Gaidar's fortune has begun to fade. This is due to his failure to stabilise the Russian economy, and the inability and unwillingness of imperialism to invest in Russia on a large scale. Imperialist investment would provide a substitute for the lack of a strong, homogenous social base for the restoration process. But it cannot happen under present circumstances. Throughout the year the Russian industrial bureaucrats gained influence. At the end of May they formed their own political party, the "All-Russian Union of Renewal". Managers and representatives of 1,700 enterprises, producing about 60% of Russia's industrial output, have joined. One month later they founded the Civic Union, an alliance which also includes vice-president Alexander Rutskoi's People's Party of Free Russia, Nikolai Travikin's Democratic Party of Russia and the "New Generation" parliamentary faction.

The Civic Union brings together in-

dustrial bureaucrats with high ranking state and military officials. Their common programme emphasises a strong Russian state, the "salvation of national industry" and a slower process of price liberalisation and privatisation. They are the most influential faction in the Russian parliament. About two thirds of all the local and regional Soviet deputies are members or supporters of the Civic Union. Unlike the Democrats (Gaidar's supporters in parliament), they are a



Boris Yeltsin—likely to survive by compromise with Civic Union

nationally organised force which can make things happen—or stop them happening at all.

In addition Civic Forum has struck an alliance with the "Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unionists", the former state-run union. Faced with this growing opposition to his initial course, Yeltsin has tried to balance between Gaidar and Volsky (the Civic Forum leader), acknowledging shortcomings in the government's policy and "the need for change" whilst denouncing the Civic Union's appetite as "excessive and immoderate". However, he has also begun to say that while fast-track market reforms are correct in principle, "Russia might be different".

And so it will be. The negotiations between Volsky and Yeltsin led to an agreement before the start of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies. Yeltsin claimed that the government's course has not been changed, but that "tactical concessions" had been made. What are these "tactical concessions"? State support for enterprises and subsidies will temporarily increase, and price controls will be introduced. Voucher privatisation will go ahead, but "is expected to flounder". Additionally, the IMF has signalled that it could support such an agreement, leading to a coalition between the Civic Union and the government, providing that "it recognises inflation must be curbed and the budget deficit kept within reasonable bounds".

## Pragmatic

This pragmatic approach of the IMF is based on one consideration: better a less ambitious programme with considerable support than a utopia which nobody will implement anyway. But will the Civic Union, whether in some form of coalition with Gaidar or not, deliver what it promises: a smoother transition to (state) capitalism, the creation of a Russian capitalist class and what Volsky describes as a "system somewhere between socialism and capitalism"?

The answer to this is no. This is not because the component parts of the coalition would be opposed to capitalist restoration in principle, but that the immediate interests of many of these coalition partners collide with the requirements of restoration.

Once a new government has to divide the state industrial sector into parts which must close and others which will be maintained it will split the bloc of "industrialists and entrepreneurs". Whilst the formation of the Civic Union assists the creation of a political framework to push through capitalist restoration in a more statist way, it has yet to achieve the dominance of the more decisive and stronger elements of the managers and state bureaucrats, who are best positioned to become future capitalists or their leading political servants.

The strength of the Civic Union—the inclusion of virtually everyone who is opposed to the present economic course—is also its weakness. For example, when social provisions like food and energy supply, childcare, canteens, and the health service are axed, or millions of workers lose their jobs, what will be the reaction of the official and independent trade unions and factory councils? What will the mighty Russian working class, the biggest in the world, do then?

The proletariat's passivity over the last year has been a major advantage for the restorationists and reactionaries of all kinds. The crucial task for the working class in the struggles ahead is to overcome this, using all the contradictions and divisions that the bureaucrats will encounter on the road to capitalism. Seventy-five years after the October Revolution the Russian proletariat once again faces the stark alternative: capitalist exploitation and dictatorship or a workers' state based on workers' council democracy and democratic planning. ■

Revolutions announced in advance don't usually happen. The December session of the Russian parliament will be no different. The threatened overthrow of Boris Yeltsin by former Stalinist hardliners is unlikely to come off.

What we will see, however, is a further increase in influence of the Civic Union, a coalition of Russian industrialists and other factions of the "conservative" wing of the disintegrating Stalinist bureaucracy. This has caused a wave of speculation in the bourgeois press. Are we witnessing the "return of communism"? Or, on the contrary, is the Civic Union going to prove the decisive force for capitalist restoration which Yeltsin has so far been unable to deliver?

To answer these questions we have to look at the state of the capitalist restoration process in Russia. When Yeltsin and his prime minister Yegor Gaidar came to power after the failed coup in 1991 they rapidly adopted a fast-track programme to restoration. Following the Polish "big bang" approach, Yeltsin immediately announced an ambitious privatisation programme, the freeing of prices for the bulk of goods by January 1992 and aimed to balance the budget by cutting subsidies and raising taxes.

This programme was successful only in one respect: it led to a massive fall in output and the living standards of the masses. Production fell by 18% in the first half of 1992 alone. And there is no reversal of this tendency in sight. Investment has fallen another 46% in the first half of 1992. Inflation will be between 1,600 and 3,000% by the end of the year! The rouble stood at 403 to the dollar on 10 November—making Gaidar's initial aim for an exchange rate of 80 to the dollar by the end of the year look like a joke.

The price of consumer goods rose 1170% over the last year, whilst wages increased by only 590%. About 100 billion roubles' worth of wages have not been paid. The minimum wage, agreed by the government and the Federation of Russian Independent Trade Unions (the old state union), is now at 2,250 roubles per month.

## Programme

What the Yeltsin/Gaidar programme could not achieve was to smash the direct links between firms, and the old exchange structures between the banks, the enterprises and the ministries. The survival of remnants of bureaucratic planning, in the form of *ad hoc* agreements between economic units after the abolition of the planning ministries, means that the crucial task of capitalist restoration—making the law of value the dominant regulator of the economy—has not been achieved. Production for profit still does not dominate the

## Moscow school success

FROM RABOCHAYA VLAST

On 21/22 November the LRCI held a political school in central Moscow. LRCI speakers introduced discussions on the history of the Fourth International, the Marxist critique of anarchism in the Spanish Civil War, Tony Cliff's theory of state capitalism and the present economic and political situation in Russia.

A session on Wilhelm Reich and the sexual revolution was delivered by a member of the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchists (IREAN).

Discussion was often lively, with leading members of the Socialist

Workers Union (SWU), Workers' Democracy and IREAN participating. Participants travelled from various cities in Russia and the Ukraine.

Following the school LRCI supporters participated with SWU and IREAN members in a picket of the Ukrainian Embassy in Moscow in solidarity with Oleg Dubrovsky, a factory worker from Dnepropetrovsk, sacked for organising a strike. The LRCI calls on all trade union and political organisations to send protests to the Ukrainian government

via CIS embassies and to send donations of solidarity to comrade Dubrovsky who will receive no unemployment benefit and is effectively barred from working in state industry. Details and addresses will be available in the near future from Workers Power.

Issue 4 of *Rabochaya Vlast*, the LRCI's Russian paper, is available now, along with the first two issues of the Russian theoretical journal of the LRCI which contain translations of LRCI material on the theory of state capitalism and the history of Stalinism in Russia. ■

But these achievements for the pro-capitalist government are now in danger—ironically from the aggressive appetites of the most reactionary forces in the government coalition itself.

The coalition's proposal to criminalise abortion completely, thereby eradicating the abortion rights established while Poland was a degenerate workers' state, now threatens the coalition and its major party, the Democratic Union, with a split.

The Democratic Union's recent party conference in Poznan rejected the government proposal to ban abortion. It supported the demand of a referendum initially advocated by ex-Solidarity leaders like Bujak and the former Stalinists of the Democratic Left Alliance.

The conference decision was an open snub to right wing coalition partners like the Christian Democrats, who made the fight for "unborn holy Polish lives" their battle cry in the election. It also alienated the prime minister from her own party. Suchocka, herself is openly opposed to any abortion rights and stormed out of the conference.

The full implications of this for the government are still to be seen. For the left and the working class, however, it opens the possibility of a renewed fightback. It also demonstrates the government's continued vulnerability.

The struggle against the reactionary anti-abortion laws and for abortion on demand without any restrictions must be combined with a new fight-back on the industrial and political front.

To be successful in these struggles Polish workers must learn some important lessons. It must overcome its fragmentation into different industrial unions and its syndicalist limitations. The workers are still prepared to fight back. But sectional resistance will be increasingly inadequate to achieve even the most basic economic demands.

A new, revolutionary leadership in Poland is needed to smash the government onslaught on abortion and roll back its attempts to make the workers pay for capitalist restoration: one which can break the hold of nationalism, Stalinism and left reformism which have led to the present impasse. ■

## POLAND

# Abortion renews government crisis

BY STEVE JACOBS

Two important victories for the capitalist restorationists can be registered. Firstly the formation of the government led by Hanna Suchocka seemed to provide the basis for a relative stable government. Secondly, the government was able to make important gains in the industrial disputes at the end of the summer, in particular the FSM automobile workers' strike in Tychy. The defeat of the car workers opened the road for a "pact on state firms" between government and unions designed to speed up the privatisation process.

Over the last few months Poland looked set to complete the capitalist restoration process. Industrial output and GDP grew throughout most of 1992—something not seen in Eastern Europe for years. A question mark hangs over its ability to sustain economic growth, due to high levels of public and business debts and a relatively high public sector wage agreement. But economic growth could provide the basis for a decisive change in the state sector, definitively breaking up the remnants of the planned economy, which, up to now, have prevented completion of the restoration process.



## GATT

## Trade war looms?

**T**HE FUTURE of GATT—the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—still hangs in the balance. Faced last month with a US threat to impose a 200% import tax on European farm goods, the EC has cobbled together a deal that will further liberalise world trade.

But the deal will mean more deep cuts in agricultural production in Europe. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land will be taken out of production. More farmers will be paid to produce nothing. Other small farmers will be driven out of business by new production quotas.

This is all designed to keep European farm prices high, so that US farmers can exploit the markets of the third world without competing

BY COLIN LLOYD

with millions of tons of European produce.

But it may not happen. The main victims at the European end of the deal will be the small farmers of France. So heavily does the French political establishment depend on their votes that not one of the main bosses' parties dares to back the deal. Some manufacturing capitalists, for example the French equivalent of the CBI, have begged their government to push it through. But voices as influential as Alain Gomez, Chairman of French engineering giant Thomson, have been recently sounding forth on the theme "GATT must die!" (*Le Monde* 28 November)

So France may still be able to

stop the EC/US deal and put the trade war back on the agenda.

Faced with the threat of trade war between the emergent economic "super-blocs" (Europe, North America and Japan), the working class movement throughout the world will be called on to line up behind "its own" imperialist governments against "foreign competition". It is vital that workers reject this call.

We have nothing to gain by defending the economic interests of the European bosses against the US bosses. Nor do the workers of Europe have an interest in the maintenance of small and medium sized capitalist farming. The EC's budget and subsidy structure was designed from the outset to preserve this stratum of farmers as



French President Mitterrand

the social basis for the Liberal and Christian Democratic governments that have ruled Europe for the last three decades.

Whilst the workers' movement should offer its full protection and support to small farmers and agricultural workers who want to fight unemployment and indebtedness, they should not do so on the basis of maintaining a nationally privileged farm sector. That would tie the workers' movement to the defence of a system which sees billions spent on maintaining rural inefficiency and conservatism, and which destroys the domestic agriculture of the semi-colonial world.

But neither should European workers embrace the "free market" alternative of US imperialism and its allies in the British ruling class.

The working class, faced with the threat of trade war, has no interest in the victory of either bloc. It must campaign actively against the nationalist poison that rises to the surface during these economic conflicts. Just as with the question posed over the Maastricht referendum—a choice over two kinds of capitalist Europe—we have to reject both capitalist solutions and advance a third, socialist, solution.

The modern capitalist economy has produced a world market. But the idea that this is, or can be, a "free market" is a myth.

The market is free to capital, which can wander the world's stock markets in search of a fast buck.

But it is closed to the workers of the world, who cannot migrate to find a living wage without being treated as criminals or second class citizens by the racist imperialist states.

It is free to the imperialist producers of industrial as well as agricultural goods. But when third world nations attempt to even up the competition, by raising taxes on foreign firms or imports, the imperialists hit back with trade sanctions or even military intervention.

One US negotiator described GATT as "a US trade representative with a crowbar". That crowbar is used to prise open the markets of the third world, leaving millions of lives devastated. With or without a GATT agreement, the main imperialist economic blocs will continue their ruthless plunder.

Only if the world is freed from the fetters of capitalism can the world economy begin to function for the good of all the billions of human beings that inhabit the planet.

Neither nationalist protectionism nor US dominated "free trade" can advance the struggle to abolish capitalism. They can only lead, slowly but inexorably, to real, shooting wars—proxy wars at first, but with the real danger in the next century of renewed inter-imperialist conflict.

That is why we say: no to GATT, no to trade war, yes to an international workers' plan! ■

## THE WORLD ECONOMY AFTER STALINISM

## Back to the future?

**W**ILLIAM KEEGAN is a fervent believer in capitalism. As the economics editor of the *Observer* his job depends on it. But Keegan is also a critic of capitalism, or rather, a specific brand of Anglo-Saxon (USA and UK) capitalism. Keegan spent most of the last decade debunking the more exaggerated claims of the Thatcherites that they had worked an "economic miracle" in the UK economy.

The purpose of his new book is to extend his critique of "Anglo-Saxon" capitalism and the neo-liberal orthodoxy of the 1980s to the world scene. In a broad post-war survey Keegan charts the growth of post-war capitalism, examines the "golden years" of 1951-73 and charts the punctuated decline to today's world recession.

## Left

Keegan's essential argument is summed up in the following passage:

"Left to itself—possibly encouraged to be so by extreme free marketeers—capitalism embraces Darwinian power struggle within society. Left to itself capitalism brings out the anarchic tendencies of a certain side of human nature (witness the 'Wild West' style capitalism at present flourishing in the former USSR). Left to itself, capitalism appeals to narrow private interest which, allied with power, tries to secure a partial set of rules which suits interested parties only. Under competitive capitalism a similar struggle occurs between countries as within them. Hence the need for the management of capitalism, by means of a clear set of rules, within countries and from without... it is time once again to make the effort to manage capital-

ism more effectively." (p190)

*Clinton in the White House, the Japanese National Recovery plan, Boris Yeltsin's compromises with former Stalinist economic planners—all these are examples of a return to forms of capitalist economic management associated with "Keynesianism". Keynes was a British liberal economist of the 1930s and 40s. His theories of capitalist equilibrium based on state intervention to ensure full employment provided the capitalist explanation of the post-war boom. Under Thatcher and Reagan, Keynesian policies were denounced as "little short of East German socialism". But according to a new book by William Keegan they are back in the 1990s.*

ism more effectively." (p190)

This cannot be done. Keynesian economics were compatible with the business of making profits so long as wage increases and welfare provision could be paid for out of rising productivity. But the decline in the rate of profit in the late 1960s precipitated a crisis that could not be decisively cured through Keynesian measures.

Once growth went into reverse then Keynesianism came to be seen as a useless dogma by the capitalists. Profits and productivity could only be restored by reducing the "burden of the state" on profits. The costs of welfarism had to be reduced, taxes on capital lowered and, in many countries, real wages attacked.

But Keegan's book points to the growing attractiveness of a modified form of state management of the national economy in the 1990s. The weaker, dogmatic neo-liberal capitalist states such as the USA and the UK are having to face up to the fact that much of the success of Japan and Germany in the last twenty or thirty years has been based upon a very close co-operation between the state and industry.

This has not primarily been aimed at creating markets for in-

Keith Harvey reviews  
*Spectre of Capitalism;  
the future of the world economy  
after the fall of communism*  
by William Keegan  
Radius 1992, £16.99

dustry's goods (as in the classic Keynesian model) but rather planning a strategy for research and development, planning technological innovation, protecting nascent industries in their earlier stages from competition and then launching them on the world market and so on.

Keegan peddles the myth that all major industrial capitalisms can return to a form of institutionalised collectivism—"social capitalism"—where Japanese "team spirit" or German co-operation with the trade unions can be replicated everywhere for the good of all.

The book is deliberately blind to facets of capitalism in Japan which do not fit into Keegan's schema of "good" and "bad" capitalisms. For example, the rampant expansion of debt and credit as a result of deregulation in many ways went furthest in Japan. The result was a huge over-expansion of cheap credit to industry based on an over-valuation of stocks and property. This

has come to an end with a bump and the era of cheap loans from banks to industry—a hallmark of Japanese industry's high investment and growth—is over.

In addition Keegan skips over the fact that Japan's growth was based on smashing the working class after the war, depriving it of any meaningful trade union independence and atomising its class consciousness. It meant an absence of welfare provision and, for most of the post-war period, low real wages.

## Wrong

As for German imperialism Keegan has chosen the wrong time to hold it up as the model for capitalism's future. Germany's industrialists recognise that the post-war system of industrial co-operation has become a burden on future profitability and has to be attacked thoroughly if Germany is to compete effectively with the USA and Japan. Only the absence of a political leadership thoroughly committed to such an attack is postponing its launch.

Keegan never stops to ask the obvious question: how can all the major imperialist competitors copy each other's virtuous features and

still steal an edge on their rivals? The answer is: they can't. This is going to be a decade of sharpened class conflict rather than a return to paternalistic Keynesianism.

With the collapse of the Stalinist economies in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the idea that it is possible to organise social relations in a fundamentally different manner to capitalism took a blow. Yet Keegan's book gives evidence of a growing feeling that imperialism's victory over the degenerate workers' states may be hollow.

Neo-liberal economics, which the bosses used to defeat the workers' movement in the imperialist countries and devastate the third world, has reached a dead end. In the former Stalinist states it is proving disastrous. With neo-liberalism faltering it is up to the working class to fight for its own answer to the economic crisis.

Workers must reject the voices of those like Keegan who promise a bright capitalist future if only the bosses return to a form of Keynesian economics. Instead of managing capitalism we need to abolish capitalism as a whole.

Nationalisation of the monopolies without compensation, workers' control of production, a democratically planned economy and a state monopoly of foreign trade are the key planks of this programme. The internationalisation of the world economy since the 1970s does not mean they are impossible, only that the fight for a workers' solution will have to be internationalised sooner, and will clash with the political might of the world imperialist system sooner. These measures, at the heart of the socialist economic answer to the crisis, represent the only guarantee of a future free of hunger, crisis, poverty and economic rivalry. ■



## ROMANIA

# On the road to third world misery

Against all the predictions of the Western pundits, Ion Iliescu won the recent elections in Romania. Manfred Scharinger, of Gruppe ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt, Austrian section of the LRCI, analyses the situation.

SINCE THE mid-1980s Romania has been in permanent economic crisis. Ceausescu's regime reduced the foreign debt built up during the 1970s but at a heavy price. To pacify the Western banks the low living standards of the population were cut even further. Vital investment in industry was put on ice, along with anything else that would have used up foreign currency reserves.

By the time of the bloody downfall of the Ceausescu clan in December 1989 Romania was the only Stalinist state which was virtually free of debt. But the country had been bled dry. Living standards were lower than any other European state apart from Albania. The National Salvation Front (NSF—later to split into Petre Roman's NSF and Iliescu's DNSF) promised to take the road of democratic reforms and the transition to a market economy.

Over the last three years no such decisive transition has been effected. Expectations of rapid change have given way to disillusionment amongst workers and peasants. Generous terms were guaranteed for foreign investors, but despite this Romania has received less than other Eastern European states, with a meagre \$500 million of capital investment. For although wages are far lower than in Hungary or Czechoslovakia, productivity is also very low. The infrastructure is in crisis, with power cuts, factory closures and regular fuel shortages in winter.

Romania is no better off than three years ago. Only a small section of the population has been able to enrich itself through small businesses and semi-legal enterprises. The shops are a little fuller, but for many the price of basic necessities is now extortionate.

Industrial production is falling constantly. Figures for 1991 were 39.5% lower than in 1989. The first half of 1992 saw a further drop of 14.3%. Coal output is down 37%, and revenue from tourism has fallen by a quarter. All the time living standards are falling, in tandem with galloping inflation.

As productivity falls the "surplus" workforce grows to millions. There are sporadic bread and milk shortages. Infant mortality is approximately forty times that of the UK. Figures for still births are no longer compiled.

Everyone agrees that the low point is still a long way off. Bucharest's German language daily *Neuer Weg* declared:

"Even though our living standards are really low, just like before, this doesn't alter the plain truth that we are living beyond our means."

International capital is now in a position not only to dictate conditions to the states of Eastern Europe, but also to choose which are to receive investment. The Romanian people realise this: in reality the West has already written off Romania.

On 1 October 1992, the USA cancelled the trade concessions (most favoured nation status) that it had granted to Romania under Ceausescu, then imperialism's prized Stalinist critic of the Kremlin. But now the Cold War has been won, so the people can be left to rot.

In this situation the Romanian people have little to hope for from a rapid transition to the market. Without a powerful economic giant like West Germany behind it, able to pump billions into reconstruction, the capitalist restoration process means mass unemployment and misery.

Iliescu was able to whip up the emotions of the masses against the effects of the transition to the market



Miners in Bucharest

and win the majority of the workers, especially the poor peasants, who voted for him out of fear for the future. But the wily bureaucrat is hatching a treacherous scheme. He offers the transition to capitalism and privatisation, but at a slower pace. Iliescu and his government offer nothing but delaying tactics against "too many" factory closures and "too fast" a rise in unemployment. On 14 August 1991, the law on privatisation of state holdings in industry, agriculture, trade and tourism was passed. By the beginning of 1992, however, only one out of more than 6,000 enterprises had been privatised under this law!

"Help" from abroad has fallen far short of the expectations and promises of 1989. The whole country is gripped by a capital shortage. The economy is paralysed. As a result, experiments in privatisation are doomed to failure.

In a country like Romania capitalist

restoration cannot be introduced with kid gloves. Workers' resistance to restoration is spreading. Most of industry is bankrupt, and the majority of the peasants just do not want "their" land back!

Although the collective farms have been legally dissolved, they still exist. The overwhelming majority of the former collective farmers lack the essentials to work the land: machinery, capital to purchase seeds and fodder for livestock. The 1.5 hectares of land to which they are each entitled under the law provides no basis for building viable small-holdings.

The new government, however much it may want to, will be unable to achieve its main aims: the promised reconstruction of the economy and the simultaneous defence of existing living standards. In the coming period the ruling bureaucracy could therefore seek to play the nationalist card. Its main targets would be Bukovina

and Moldova, which have belonged to the Ukraine since the time of Stalin, and which the nationalist parties have demanded should be annexed in a latter day Romanian *Anschluss*.

Movements like the fascist *Vatra* are growing on the basis of militant greater Romanian chauvinism, which targets the two million Hungarians in Romania together with an equal number in the Romany and Sinti communities.

What about the workers' movement? Apart from small circles of intellectuals, the idea of the socialist transformation of society has been driven from the heads and hearts of the workers by the experience of "socialism in one country" and the record of Ceausescu. Those parties, such as the Socialist Labour Party, that appeal for support from workers have nothing else to offer but a new version of the Ceausescu dictatorship. Others like the Democratic National Salvation Front DNSF offer a purely bourgeois programme of cautious restoration.

## Vanguard

The workers' movement and its vanguard, the miners—who showed their combativity in Bucharest in 1990 and 1991—is also affected by the lack of an overall social perspective. When the bankruptcy of yesterday's ideas is revealed and no new ideas take their place, still older ideas will come to the fore. Not even the workers' movement is immune from this. In the absence of a proletarian political alternative, the workers' ranks are being infected with the poisons of the far right and monarchism.

It is precisely in situations like the present one in Romania that the limitations of defensive economic struggles can be clearly seen. Traditional strikes can break down when the enterprises send their workforces on enforced "holidays" due to shortages of raw materials and energy (as has happened every winter since 1989). In such a situation, the only way forward is through resistance to the entire process of restoration itself.

For this, the building of a revolutionary workers' party is the decisive prerequisite. The workers' movement is not yet defeated—as before the revolution, the trade unions constitute an army of over a million members. The two week strike of railworkers in February 1992 stands as proof that militant struggle can achieve limited success. But time is short for countries like Romania. They are on the way to capitalism but not the developed capitalism of the West. They are heading straight into Third World misery. ■

## 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, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

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, indus-

trial unions councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

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 fight for labour movement support for black

self-defence against racist and state attacks. 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.

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

## workers power

### £3000 FIGHTING FUND

THIS MONTH the Workers Power £3,000 Fighting Fund reached a total of £588.30, with the help of a fundraising bonfire organised by Manchester branch, a massive £230 raised from collections and raffles at our event in London to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and an individual donation of £125 from a supporter in South London. Many branches of Workers Power have fund raising activities planned for the Christmas period. We urge all our readers to look out

for these and contribute, by individual donations however small or by taking out standing orders (details available from Workers Power). Unlike Norman Lamont we don't have unlimited access to credit. But we do face increasing demands on our finances. We have produced tens of thousands of leaflets and bulletins during the current upsurge of class struggle and all of this is financed from the donations of members, supporters and sympathisers. Keep the money pouring in! ■

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Leicester**  
Turn back the Bosses' Offensive  
Wed 9 December 7.30 pm  
Castle Community Rooms, Tower St

**Leicester University**  
South Africa: Stop the Sell Out  
Mon 7 December, 1.30 pm, Room 3,  
Percy Gee Building

**Manchester Metropolitan University**  
War in the Balkans

Thurs 10 Dec 1 pm, Students Union

**Sheffield**  
The method of the Transitional Programme  
Tues 8 December 7.30 pm  
(see sellers for venue)

**Cardiff**  
Algeria's smouldering revolt  
Tues 8 December 8.30 pm  
(see sellers for venue)



The crisis of Stalinism and its consequences continue to wreak havoc on the centrist organisations. The latest victim is the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), where long running factional war has taken an unprecedented turn for the worse.

At the November meeting of the Central Committee the LCR leadership decided to break off all relations with one of its two youth groups, the 150-strong Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires-Egalité (JCR-Egalité). LCR members were ordered to leave the JCR-Egalité or face expulsion. JCR-Egalité's rooms at the LCR's Paris headquarters were emptied and all the locks were changed. More splits are likely in the future as the factional line-ups, which have been stable for over 20 years, begin to fracture and crumble under the impact of events.

This is the first time in decades that the LCR has taken such disciplinary measures. That its leaders felt the need for an open political split is an indication of the crisis of the LCR, and of the threat it felt from the leftward-moving youth around the JCR-Egalité.

The origins of the present crisis go back to November 1991, when the JCR split into two public tendencies with different papers: *L'Egalité* (Equality) and *Autre chose* (Something Else). This split mirrored differences in the "adult" organisation as to which forces on the French left should be the main targets of the LCR's political adaptation.

Fusion

The LCR leadership has been consistently arguing for fusion with various splits from the French Communist Party. They argue that the collapse of Stalinism has taken revolution off the agenda for the foreseeable future and that the labour movement needs to be rebuilt.

The factional grouping around Matti favoured an orientation towards the Socialist Party and SOS-Racisme. Their politics used a mixture of "orthodox" claims to be the party of the Fourth International with the idea that the workers' revolution was off the agenda and should be replaced by a "democratic" revolution. This position is common on the French left, its principal author being Pierre Lambert, leader of the 3,000-strong Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI)—another centrist Trotskyist group. Initially the JCR-Egalité reflected this orientation.

During 1991, however, part of the Matti grouping, disillusioned with their tendency's inability to provide a programmatic answer to the crisis of Stalinism, broke with the right centrism of Matti and began to evolve leftwards. Some of these militants were also leading members of the JCR-Egalité. The subsequent trajectory of the JCR-Egalité has consisted of a confused and only partially-successful attempt to break with the centrism of both Matti and the LCR majority.

For example:
• JCR-Egalité branches have initiated attempts to "no platform" the FN, a huge step forward from the passivity of the centrist left. On the other hand, they have also argued in their paper that now is not the time to physically confront the fascists.

• The JCR-Egalité claimed to be against Maastricht on the basis of the fight for the united socialist states of Europe, but devoted an important part of their argument to the alleged attacks on the separation of church and state represented by the treaty, directly imitating the arguments of Matti and of the Lambertists.

• Just over a year ago the JCR-Egalité adopted an "action programme" which said not one word about the revolutionary party, smashing the state or workers' democracy! It couldn't even bring itself to pronounce the anti-militarist slogan "not

FRANCE

USFI expels rebellious youth

a person, not a penny for this system".

Most striking has been the apparent non-aggression pact which existed between the LCR and the JCR-Egalité. The JCR-Egalité did meekly complain when the LCR denounced their determined action during an anti-fascist demonstration. But they refused, both publicly and internally, to make any political characterisation of the adult organisation.

Even today, following the LCR's organisational offensive, the JCR-Egalité has drawn no political conclusions. This political indecisiveness will cost the comrades of JCR-Egalité dearly.

From the summer onwards, it was clear that the LCR would launch an attack against the JCR-Egalité. Their left rhetoric, their discussions with other organisations claiming to be Trotskyist, and their relative success in attracting youth to their banner were an obstacle for the LCR in their campaign to build a "non-strategically delimited party" with various fragments of the Communist Party.

The correct response to this threat would have been to come out fighting and launch a pre-emptive strike. The membership—only 15% of whom are also in the LCR—should have been politically educated in the nature of the differences, a clear political balance sheet of the nature of the LCR should have been drawn up and a new programme adopted.

The JCR-Egalité leadership did none of this. They hoped that the situation would be drawn out and give them more time . . . to do nothing. They failed to take the political argument to the membership, they boycotted their own positions in the newspaper by refusing to make any substantial criticisms of the LCR.

Paralysis

One of the main reasons for this apparent paralysis lay in the fact that the leadership was far from homogeneous. Certain members still agreed with Matti, others had only recently split from him.

The leadership of the JCR-Egalité fell de facto to a handful of militants who in the middle of this year joined Franco Grisolia's International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO) within the USFI. Fearful of upsetting the fragile factional equilibrium within the JCR they never fought to win the rank and file to their positions.

Furthermore, despite their private criticisms of the USFI and LCR as centrist, they could not conceive of life outside the centrist "Fourth International". Like other leading members of the ITO, they were determined at all costs to avoid a decisive clash

BY HENRI NESSE

with the LCR. The ITO is founded on the belief that Trotskyist centrism is a "special type" of centrism, prevented from betraying the workers by its adherence to the Transitional Programme. It refuses to characterise the USFI as centrist, saying only that its leaders are responsible for "deepening revisionism" but they do not explain when this started, or why. The ITO also refuses to envisage an organisational break with the USFI, concentrating on the fruitless task of turning its next World Congress into an "open conference" for all Trotskyists. But as the JCR-Egalité expulsions show even a centrist organisation with such rampant factionalism as the USFI cannot tolerate a serious fight for revolutionary politics within its ranks. And the next World Congress could be years away or never, depending on how fast the USFI disintegrates.

Today, despite this blatant confirmation of the LCR's ingrained centrism and irremediability, the JCR-Egalité leaders seem to be persisting in their head-in-the-sand attitude. Rather than launch a political attack on the LCR and the USFI, the JCR-Egalité leadership is trying to "calm things down". There will not be a

meeting of their National Committee to discuss the split with the LCR until January. The next Congress is currently scheduled for Easter.

The opportunity to explain the split to the rank and file, to win them to the perspective of building an independent organisation, and to a clear recognition of what that means programmatic, is being wasted. There is even the possibility that the fear of breaking with the USFI will lead both the ITO members and others to launch a time-wasting campaign for re-admission, or even to setting up an "external faction" of the LCR.

This would be a disaster. The politics of appeasement are a dead-end. Without a clear lead and political explanation of the new situation, many of the non-LCR youth will probably leave. Some of the LCR majority loyalists will undoubtedly want to stay inside the LCR and will split, trying to take as many youth with them as possible. By failing to challenge the LCR leadership politically, in full view of the membership, the JCR-Egalité leadership will be making their task easier.

Any such weakening of the JCR-Egalité would be a tragedy. Despite its ambiguities and its confusion, the JCR-Egalité's leftward evolution represents the most important event on the French left in over a decade.

One indication of how far it has evolved is given by the latest issue of the LCR's "rival" youth paper, *Autre chose*, which features that well-known communist slogan "Workers of the world, wank!" and a pathetically pacifist anti-militarist position: "Be brave: run away!" (these are literal quotations). The JCR-Egalité is light-years ahead compared to the rubbish the LCR leadership wants to offer youth.

Scores of youth, new to politics, have been attracted to the JCR-Egalité, reaching out for what they consider to be revolutionary Marxism. On some questions they are right, on others

they are still misled by the centrist hangovers of the past. The essential feature is that they are still looking for answers.

But as yet neither the rank and file nor the leadership have found the necessary programmatic response to their current impasse. The confusion and eclecticism which has marked the JCR-Egalité's development is the product of the leadership's failure to fight consistently for political clarity. This must stop.

To find the political answers the youth need will mean a decisive break with the internal and external diplomacy of the past. What is the political nature of the LCR? Can the USFI be reformed? What programme and international affiliation should the JCR-Egalité adopt? These are the burning questions of the hour, and the answers to them will decide the future of the organisation.

The next few weeks will be decisive. The comrades of the LRCI's French section, Pouvoir Ouvrier, want to ensure that the JCR-Egalité's leftward split from centrism goes even further. We have been discussing and working with the JCR-Egalité wherever possible, trying to convince their members of the steps that remain to be taken, of the ambiguities which need to be ironed out, of the wrong positions which need to be corrected. We want to win the comrades to the project of building a larger and stronger section of the LRCI in France.

The expulsion of the JCR-Egalité is merely the beginning of the break-up of the LCR. Already David Assouline, leader of the 1986 student movement and Matti's right-hand man, has left the LCR to join the reformist "Mouvement" recently set up by SOS-Racisme leader Harlem Desir.

Matti, whilst proclaiming his loyalty to the USFI in general and the LCR in particular, has launched a public paper *Démocratie et Révolution* and has demanded that the LCR allow his faction to keep back 1/3 of their subs (around £1,000 a month) to pay for the paper! A split cannot be far away.

Struggle

In these circumstances, it is all the more important that the JCR-Egalité leadership and rank and file act clearly and decisively. Their struggle for a revolutionary programme must not only become a beacon for revolutionary youth, but also an example of how to fight against the centrism of the whole of the USFI. But to play such a role, programmatic clarity is vital.

JCR-Egalité members must abandon their dreams of reforming the USFI. Those who follow the ITO must break from the method which sees the basis for revolutionary regroupment as a bland restatement of the basics of Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme, combined with the "organisational regeneration" of the Fourth International.

They should join the LRCI in the fight for a new revolutionary International, and a new transitional programme loyal to the method of Trotsky's programme but with concrete answers to the problems posed by the major revolutionary crises of our period.

It remains to be seen whether the majority of the JCR-Egalité will take these decisive steps.

Glossary
USFI: United Secretariat of the Fourth International, led by Ernest Mandel, probably the biggest international organisation claiming to be Trotskyist. In Britain represented by supporters of Socialist Outlook and Socialist Action.
ITO: International Trotskyist Opposition, formed this year from various opposition groups, led by Franco Grisolia of the USFI's Italian section.
LCR: Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French Section of the USFI.
PCI: Parti Communiste Internationaliste, led by Pierre Lambert.
SOS-Racisme: pacifist cross-class alliance led by former Socialist Party youth activists dedicated to rock concerts rather than militant action against the fascists.
LRCI: League for a Revolutionary Communist International, founded in 1989. Workers Power is the British section of the LRCI, Pouvoir Ouvrier its French section.

For an in-depth analysis of the JCR-Egalité see Trotskyist Bulletin 2 available price £2 from Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX



## LABOUR

# No coalition!

**W**HILE THE Irish Labour Party celebrates its gains after the 25 November general election, working class voters are openly cynical about the likely consequences. Neither of the major capitalist parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have an overall majority. And Labour leader Dick Spring is widely expected to make a deal to form a coalition government with one of them before Christmas.

In twenty-four elections since the Civil War only seven have resulted in an overall single-party majority. Most often it has been the Labour Party which has bailed the capitalist parties out of their parliamentary crises by supporting one or other of them "in the national interest".

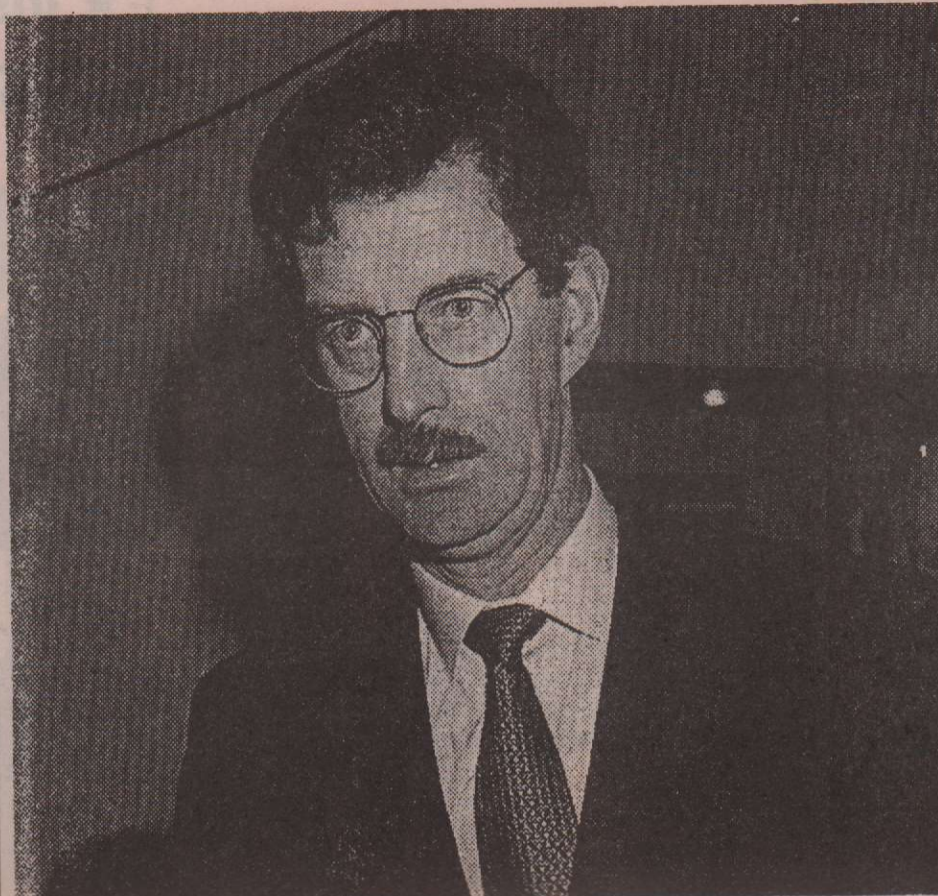
With sickening regularity workers, who have rallied around Labour to strike a blow against Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, have seen their support squandered by the self-seeking Labour and trade union leaders. The cycle usually continues with workers then abandoning Labour and forcing it into the purgatory of opposition.

Figures for the high and low points of Labour support over the decades tell a great deal about the inherent limits of Labour's relationship to the working class and the regularity of its treachery (see table).

This time out, Labour jumped from 16 to 33 seats in a 166-seat Dáil. Its 10% increase in votes since 1979 was a sharp blow against both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, but it also squeezed its left-reformist twin, Proinsias De Rossa's Democratic Left.

The Stalinist rump of the Workers Party, abandoned in April by De Rossa's majority faction, lost its single deputy, Tomás McGiolla, former leader of official Sinn Féin. The Workers Party in 1989 actually overtook the Labour vote in Dublin but now its inheritor, Democratic Left, has slumped from 11.4% to 5.4% in the capital, winning only five seats nationally (seven previously) with a national vote of only 2.8% (in half of the 41 constituencies). If Labour enters a coalition government these surviving left-reformists may gain by posing themselves once more as the parliamentary conscience of the working class, despite their recent rejection of all class struggle rhetoric.

What explains Labour's gains? Since recovering from the 1982-87 Coalition, Labour has enjoyed the enormous advantage



Dick Spring - leading Labour into coalition?

**Labour's vote since 1927**

Year	Vote	Seats
1927	12.6%	14%
1933	5.7%	5%
1943	15.7%	12%
1957	9.1%	8%
1965	15.4%	15%
1981	9.9%	9%
1987	6.4%	7%
1992	19.3%	20%

of a ruling class wracked by scandals, enhancing Dick Spring's image as an honest broker with clean hands.

While the ruling class boasted about its economic triumphs in wiping out inflation, raising exports to an all-time high, stabilising the national debt and strengthening the Irish currency, the working class faced

a dramatic growth in unemployment. Rhetoric about unemployment came centre-stage in the election, forcing Labour to pledge resistance to further privatisation, particularly in Aer Lingus where thousands of jobs could be at stake. This increased its popularity with working class voters.

Besides working-class support for Labour's stand on this issue, there was undoubtedly strong middle class support for a coalition of Labour, Fine Gael and Progressive Democrats, as an alternative to Fianna Fáil whose nauseating corruption was alienating their own supporters.

Hence the curiosity that both Labour and the neo-liberal Progressive Democrats gained seats. Labour support in working class areas of Dublin was 26% and in areas with a strong middle class it was almost the same: 26.2%. Labour got 24.9% in wholly urban areas as against 16.1% in rural areas with small towns.

Sinn Féin's vote was derisory in relation to the large number of candidates standing—1.6% throughout the 26 Counties. Its highest poll was on the Border where O'Caoláin got 7.6% locally. One-third of his voters gave second preferences to Fianna Fáil and one-fifth to Labour.

Militant Socialist stood their leader, Joe Higgins, in Dublin West where he polled 1,407. Higgins built up a base locally as a residents' association leader. Militant's propaganda focused heavily on law-and-order issues. But far from stressing the need for self-organisation and self-defence, let alone warning of the dangers of relying on the state to "keep the peace" in working class communities, they called for councils "to evict people who are known drug pushers or using their homes for criminal activities" and even promised:

"More police on the beat and concentrated on well-known trouble spots, would prevent crime and anti-social behaviour" (*Militant Socialist* no. 212, p4).

The Socialist Workers Movement issued the bland call to "vote left"—specifying Labour, DL, WP, Militant, SF etc. But from 1972 to 1987 they had argued that workers should not vote for Labour because Labour was not "part of the Left". Their new position of placing Labour among the "left" is a comic paradox for a group which correctly argues that Spring has taken the party further to the right than ever since 1987!

The Irish Workers Group called for a vote solely for Labour and Democratic Left—the only parties with a mass base in the working class—as a means of striking against the openly capitalist parties, and for workers' mobilisations to force these workers' parties to break completely from the bourgeoisie and defend every gain of the masses in struggle. In the conditions of Ireland, where revolutionaries have no working class base and where Fianna Fáil still gets the majority of workers' votes, calls for abstention in the election were nothing more than the self-indulgence of anarchism and sectarianism.

The fight for such united-front tactics in the election offered the best chance of winning a hearing for what must now be the central point of agitation by socialists in relation to Labour—to force them to vote against both proposals for Taoiseach by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, to make the openly bourgeois parties carry the can for the capitalist crisis and to divide the Dáil on class lines by refusing to enter coalition with any open bosses' party.

Workers must demand that Labour struggle against unemployment, for women's rights and against British imperialism in Ireland. A real fight to force Labour to openly assert the political independence of the Irish working class can help break the illusions that working class voters have in Spring and his party, and lay the basis for building a revolutionary alternative. ■

**O**N TWO of the three referendums on abortion, polled on the same day as the general election, massive majorities established two important gains for Irish women.

Sixty two percent voted to give pregnant women immunity from court injunctions against travelling abroad for abortion. Sixty per cent voted to allow information on abortion. In the same week student leaders were served with threats by Sheriffs to pay court costs to the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) for a High Court injunction which ordered them not to distribute abortion information.

On the third question, the 12th amendment, 65% rejected the Government proposal to cancel the right to abortion where there might be a risk of suicide, and to explicitly rule out dangers to "health" as distinct from "life" as grounds for abortion. Both supporters of choice and hardline anti-abortionists voted against.

The extreme-right Pro-Life Campaign could only claim a

third of the overall vote, however, as they had called for rejection of all three proposals. Pro-choice forces could easily claim at least as much support for more liberal abortion provisions on the evidence of the voting patterns and other recent information. In the country's biggest organisation of women, the Irish Countrywomen's Association, a survey answered by 7,000 members gave a 70% majority in favour of allowing abortion on the grounds of threats to women's health, as distinct from life. And two-thirds supported the right to abortion in cases of rape and incest.

Fianna Fáil, the Catholic bishops and the pro-lifers are stung by the result. Whoever forms the new government,

all contenders have promised to implement the results in legislation. But all defenders of women's rights should be on their guard. The major parties are all explicitly committed to the severe restrictions on access to information and counselling on abortion, and opposed to any right of doctors to make abortion referrals.

None of the four parties now haggling over the make-up of the new coalition—including Labour—even once raised in the referendum campaign the issue of the 5,000 women per year forced to travel for abortions for reasons which are still criminal in Irish law.

This was a central issue in the propaganda of only one campaign group in the past

month—the Dublin Abortion Information Campaign (DAIC). With the prominent support of the IWG, this campaign distributed 40,000 of its own leaflets in Dublin. It gave out an equal number of the leaflets of the national Alliance for Choice which merely argued a minimum position on how to vote on the three ballots.

The DAIC proved to be the only broad activist force in the campaign in Dublin, along with a number of campus groups nationally and local campaigns in Cork and Waterford. Sadly, the national effectiveness of the referendum campaign was undermined by the feminist leaders who refused to build broad activist groups. Two demonstrations in Dublin were

poorly supported, one organised exclusively by the feminists and supported by DAIC, the other organised inclusively by DAIC but boycotted by the feminists.

Sinn Féin revealed once more its wretched deference to Catholic nationalism. It had no difficulty in calling—in its paper—for a Yes vote on travel and information. But in calling for a rejection of the 12th amendment it argued no differently from the anti-abortion Fine Gael party:

"We are calling for a No vote on the abortion amendment wording as it will not improve the position of women, but will only add to the current constitutional confusion." (APRN, 12 November)

There were no pro-choice

arguments and the issue was tucked away in tiny articles; and there was no attempt by the party to campaign on the issue.

Surprising and inexcusable, given the importance of the abortion issue for Irish socialists, was the total absence of Militant and SWM from the referendum canvass.

The Irish Workers Group, by contrast, argues for DAIC to try to consolidate the activist groups into a national campaign for abortion rights which will be open to taking up any of the related issues of women's rights, including the question of divorce, which are posed in the coming period.

As against the all-class alliances of the feminists which have led to virtual silence on positive abortion rights, we fight for a central orientation to working class women as the only social force in Ireland who can open up the road of real struggle for women's liberation in Ireland—as part of the class struggle against capitalism and imperialism. ■



# Workers power

**INSIDE**

Issue 162 December 1992

- ★ War in the Balkans
- ★ Black Panthers: then and now
- ★ Irish Election shock

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

## NAZI TERROR IN GERMANY

# Build workers' defence!

**A WAVE of Nazi killings and violence is sweeping Germany. A**

**Turkish woman and two children were burnt to death in a firebomb attack on 23 November in Mölln near Hamburg. One girl was 14 years old, the other only 10.**

This has been only the latest and most outrageous in a series of attacks by the fascist organisations that are growing like wildfire across Germany. Immigrants from Turkey, Vietnam and Eastern Europe have borne the brunt of this racist terror. The Nazis are using the same methods against all who stand in their path: recently an anti-fascist was thrown from a train and killed in East Berlin.

The fascists are operating on fertile ground. The recession, and in particular the effects of the restoration of capitalism in the East, have led to widespread disenchantment and despair amongst sections of working class youth and the middle class.

The shipbuilding and engineering industries of the East have been massacred. According to the Bundesbank earlier this year, nearly one in five workers are on the dole. Gross domestic product has slumped by 45% in the last two years.

Young people can see that the new Germany they were promised after the wall came down is in reality a nation of bad housing, joblessness and hopelessness—a system without a future. Unorganised by the trade unions of the West, alienated by the so-called "socialist" terror and oppression of East German Stalinism, they have turned, in small but growing numbers, to the militant and disciplined organisations of neo-Nazism. The fascists offer an illusory way out through racist terror, national self-aggrandisement and the brutal anti-working-class traditions of the Third Reich.

The August riots in Rostock revealed an alarming level of sympathy and support for the fascist gangs from the local population. Across Germany the rise of racism creates conditions in which the fascist killers can be tolerated, even supported, by passive admirers.

The ruling Christian Democrats and the opposition Social Democrats argue that, in order to prevent the rise of



German neo-Nazis

fascism, stricter controls on immigration and the right to asylum must be imposed. Stoking the flames of prejudice, the capitalists use the Nazi terror to justify the racism of their "democratic" republic. But the official racism of the politicians only encourages the fascists.

The possibility exists to crush the Nazis completely, to uproot their movement, liquidate their gangs of fire-raisers, and drive them back into the sew-

ers they come from. The force that can accomplish this service to humanity is the German working class. Its trade union movement is the largest in Europe. The metalworkers' union, IG Metall, alone has 3.6 million members. If their leaders chose to act in unison, the DGB union federation, the Social Democrats, the East German Party of Democratic Socialism and the thousands of revolutionary and anarchist

youth could scatter the Nazis to the four winds.

The massive trade union support for the recent anti-racist demonstration shows that the possibility for such a fightback exists. But it is hopeless to remain within the confines of legality.

The German police stood by when the Nazis besieged the immigrant hostel in Rostock, but arrested Jewish anti-fascist protesters without a sec-

ond thought. The state may have banned the fascist Nationalist Front, but they will unleash the riot police, equipped with batons, shields and CS gas against anti-fascist demonstrators every time they attempt to teach the Nazis a lesson in working class justice.

That is why state bans against fascists are a dead end. Anti-fascists shed no tears when Nazis are repressed by

the bosses' state, but it is a self-defeating strategy for anti-fascists to call for state bans. In the end the repression will be directed at workers, black people and the left.

There is only one language that fascists understand: the language of physical force. IG Metall leader Steinkühler called for trade union defence of immigrant hostels. The German labour movement and youth must take him at his word and build anti-fascist defence squads to defend immigrants and the left, and move swiftly onto the offensive against the very existence of the Nazi organisations.

The German bosses do not yet need the fascist gangs to smash the workers' movement, as they did in the early 1930s. But that has not stopped the fascists from setting their own agenda. In this year alone sixteen people have died as a result of Nazi attacks.

The need for a workers' united front against fascism in Germany, committed to physically smashing the fascists without reliance on state bans, is urgent. ■

## Fascism: not just a German disease

**BEHIND THE British media coverage of resurgent German fascism is the smug message—there they go again. As in the 1930s and 1940s Germans are deemed to have a "national character" sympathetic to militarism and dictatorship. At the same time the bosses' propagandists draw the lesson: that's what happens when you let too many migrants in.**

This is rubbish designed to blind British workers to the fact that racist attacks and racist murders take place here with growing regularity, and to excuse the scandalous racist immigration and asylum laws in Britain.

And the British National Party may be

smaller than their German counterparts, but they are a homegrown bunch of fascists, not the products of a "foreign" disease.

In November these British fascists attacked an anti-racist march, a meeting of the Anti-Racist Alliance in Croydon and a demonstration in Glasgow.

Racism and fascism rise when capitalism is in crisis. And economic crisis is one thing the German and British bosses have in common.

Of course, in Germany there are thousands of former Nazis in positions of high political and industrial office and the ideological legacy of Hitlerism is never far from the surface of middle

class life in certain parts of Germany.

But this has nothing to do with "national character". It has far more to do with the fact that, to save capitalism after World War Two, British and US imperialism incorporated thousands of ex-Nazis into the administration of occupied Germany.

British workers and youth who want to help fight fascism in Germany should start by joining the fight for an anti-fascist united front in this country against the BNP and other such scum, build solidarity and support for the emerging anti-fascist organisations in Europe, and fight for a Europe-wide anti-fascist united front. ■