

Workers power

British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

Number 169 July 1993

- ★ Interview: Branka Magas
- ★ The SWP and Leninism
- ★ Where does Tory money come from?

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

ROSYTH, TIMEX, SWAN HUNTER

Fight for the right to work!



THE TORIES' cheek is unbelievable. When the May unemployment figures showed the fourth monthly fall in a row of 26,100, they treated us to another display of self-satisfied back slapping.

Over a quarter of a million people have been thrown on the dole since the last election. The fiddled official unemployment figures of 2.9 million hide the real price they have forced us to pay for the bosses' problems. If we use the pre-1982 method of working out the figures the real number of jobless is about four million.

There is no doubt that the current slow recovery is leading to employers taking on new workers. But the great mass of the unemployed are unaffected. The major parties, Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrats, do not even bother to talk of full employment any more. They are well aware that their stagnating capitalist system cannot offer it.

It is not just a British problem. The latest OECD report predicts that Europe will see 23 million unemployed by the end of 1994. In two years the unemployment rate will have shot up from 7.7% to over 11%.

The latest "battle for jobs" in Britain, between the Rosyth and Devonport naval yards

exposes the dog eat dog world workers are forced to compete in. The "peace dividend" has a hollow ring to the thousands of workers being thrown on the dole because the military no longer want their skills in building and refitting ships.

The dutch auction conducted between the two yards for the work of refitting Trident nuclear submarines resulted in the contracts going to Devonport. While workers in Plymouth cheered the announcement, workers north of the border in Rosyth knew the announcement spelt doom for their yard.

The Tories were terrified of losing more seats to the Liberal Democrats in the south and this influenced their decision. But they have a cast iron case—in capitalist terms. There is simply "not enough work" to maintain both yards.

This is not a "Scotland" versus "England" question. In another "English" yard, Swan Hunter, the last shipyard on Tyneside, the same logic applies. In mid-May this military shipbuilder was put

into receivership having lost a key naval order to the VSEL shipyard at Barrow. At Swan Hunter over 2,200 jobs are at stake, 400 have already been given redundancy notices.

The "victorious" Barrow yard faces 1,500 redundancies even with the new contract. Devonport itself has suffered thousands of job losses recently. Swan Hunter employed 10,000 workers in the mid-1970s. Barrow, now down to 6,000, employed 14,000 only three years ago.

The way to fight these redundancies is not to set yard against yard, worker against worker but to unite in a struggle for jobs and against redundancies. The workers in Rosyth and Swan Hunter should immediately seize their yards through occupations. They should fight to win Barrow, Devonport and every other yard threatened with redundancies to join them in a fight for jobs. They should fight for the re-nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry and against the privatisation plans at Rosyth and Devonport.

Even a single occupation would inspire other workers to fight in a similar fashion. Workers such as the Timex strikers are threatened after six months on strike with factory closure.

Mass redundancies in every industry must be met with occupations. The government must be forced to maintain the workers on full pay. We need a plan, a workers' plan, to bring new work to the yards, for the construction oil rigs, civilian shipping etc., under the control of the workers in a nationalised industry.

Available work should be shared amongst the whole workforce through cutting the hours with no loss of pay. Workers with obsolete skills and those who want to leave the industry should be given genuine retraining on full pay. Not fake work for dole training schemes that both the Tories and the Labour leaders love so much.

Could the Tories be forced into this solution? Yes, if it becomes the only way they can save their skins. They found the money before when they were faced with a struggle and occupation at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in the early

1970s.

The Tories are a weak government. They could not even confront the question of closing down one of the yards head-on. They are having to employ the same tactics they used with the pit closures. They pretend to have come up with a solution giving work to "both" yards. Their promises of "only" 450 job losses at Rosyth were quickly exposed when management said it would be at least a thousand.

This is only the start. Plans are afoot for the owners of Devonport, DML, to buy out Rosyth when it is privatised, then close it down after a

decent interval, concentrating the work in one yard.

The fact that the Tories have to dither and disguise their real intentions and put off the closures at considerable cost to the government, shows their lack of confidence. They fear our response to the decision.

Whether they get away with their butchery depends on the workers' response. We must learn the lessons from the miners' defeat.

A militant response will send the government reeling. Passive acceptance and cross-class "popular campaigns" will hand them certain victory. ■

Occupy the plants and yards!

SHANE WARD, DRUMMOND STREET FOUR

Self defence is

no offence!

LAST MONTH saw two important legal victories for anti-racists. Shane Ward was acquitted of all charges and awarded costs at Birmingham Magistrates' Court and the Uddin brothers, Shabul (25) and Suhel (16) and Abdul Gofur of the Drummond Street Four, were found not guilty at Snaresbrook Crown Court, London.

Shane was charged under the Public Order Act during his opposition, in Birmingham City Centre, to a thirty-strong British National Party (BNP) paper sale in April of this year.

He told *Workers Power* that his acquittal should, "give a boost to the opposition to the fascists... if I had been convicted, people would have been unable to even speak out against them."

The Drummond Street case followed the courageous defence of Camden's Bengali community in April 1992. Five white youths armed with knuckle dusters and hammers turned up and attempted to terrorise local residents in the Drummond Street area. They chased two Bengali youths who only escaped by running into a local shop. The racists then threatened to kill the shopkeeper.

The swift response of the Uddin

brothers and other locals turned the tables. They smashed up the racists' car and chased them off. One of them, Robert Foulds, was caught and dealt with. He paid the price for his racist terrorism with a fractured skull and a broken shoulder blade.

The police and the courts acted true to form. Despite overwhelming evidence, the charges against the white gang were dropped before the case even went to Crown Court.

Not so for Shabul, Suhel and Abdul Gofur who were charged with them. They were forced to go through a twelve day trial before the jury found them not guilty.

Rokib Miha (15), the fourth Asian arrested and framed, had his

charges dropped on the second day of the trial. The two brothers did not deny their involvement but rightly claimed that they acted in defence of both themselves and their community.

In both the Drummond Street and the Shane Ward cases the blatant racism of the police is obvious. Police lyingly accused Shane of saying, "come on black brothers, let's get the white scum". His guilt or innocence before the court rested on the police evidence. At one point, the prosecution asked if he was saying that the police were not telling the truth. He answered with a straightforward "yes". In acquitting him the court also recognised that the police had lied.

The outcomes of the trials should

not lead us to be complacent about the nature of the judicial system. The odds are stacked against victories like the Shane Ward and Drummond Street cases.

The police and judiciary have always come down hard on black people who defend themselves against racist attacks and against anti-fascists. And these two victories will make them more determined to frame and imprison blacks, anti-racists and anti-fascists who defend themselves against fascists and racists.

Congratulations to Shane Ward and the Drummond Street Four. And remember we can rely on no one but ourselves to take on fascists and racists. The message must be clear—self defence is no offence!

BNP RUN OUT OF BIRMINGHAM

ON 12 June 300 marched in solidarity with Shane Ward, showing their anger at police attacks on black people and fascist activity in Birmingham.

The BNP chose the same day to mount a second "Day of Action" in the City Centre. They picked the wrong day.

Over 50 anti-fascists from Youth

Against Racism in Europe, the Anti-Nazi League and Anti-Fascist Action prevented the crew of 15 fascists from peddling their hate-sheet. The master race had to be led away under police protection.

The police, acting like a private security firm for the BNP, lived up to their usual impartial standards by saving the fascists from a hammer-

ing while arresting two anti-fascists.

Some of the money collected for the Shane Ward Defence Campaign will be used to support the comrades arrested.

More money from the campaign will go towards the defence of an Asian family in Birmingham who have faced a whole series of racist assaults over the last year.■

SERIAL KILLER

Press hypocrisy, police inertia

THE PRESS love it. Tabloids and "quality" papers alike have taken up the story of the serial killer preying on gay men in London with glee.

Stereotypes of a seedy underworld of sleazy bars, casual liaisons, "bizarre" sexual activities are combined with the press' morbid fixation with violent death to make one of the most lurid, and they hope best selling, stories for ages.

They have paid no regard to the relatives, friends and lovers of the five men who have been strangled. The fact that three of the victims were HIV-positive was revealed without any consultation with relatives. The respectable *Independent* did not even bother to check the name of the fifth victim in one of its articles and got his surname totally wrong.

Some journalists, making their first sorties into London's gay clubs and bars, have been surprised at what they found.

Even the liberal papers have felt the need to tell us that the pubs and clubs are ordinary places, frequented by ordinary people who live ordinary lives.

The press have dubbed the killer "the gay serial killer". There is no evidence that the killer is gay, but

the obsession with the victims', and possibly the killer's, sexuality comes from the fact that it makes it easier for the press to present it as understandable.

Gay men and lesbians are oppressed because their sexuality deviates from the morality that insists sex should be linked to reproduction and families. But it is not just homo-

Christopher Dunn, was even treated as an accidental death caused during sado-masochistic (SM) sex until a second post-mortem found that he had been strangled.

The lives of gay men are cheap to the police. The usual murder clear-up rate is 90%, but when gay men are the victims the rate is only 50%.

When they did finally wake up, the

"The fact that victims were gay men meant that it took four months and the pressure of GALOP, the gay London police monitoring group, to wake the Met up to the presence of a serial killer in London."

sexual sex that is oppressed through legal restrictions and moral objections in capitalist society, but lesbians and gay men themselves. Part of this oppression results in lesbians and gay men being branded "abnormal". The fact that they get murdered appears somehow "understandable".

The fact that victims were gay men meant that it took four months and the pressure of GALOP, the gay London police monitoring group, to wake the Met up to the presence of a serial killer in London.

The second murder, that of

police operation was inadequate. They panicked when they realised that they had done nothing while five men were murdered and called a hasty press conference to which none of the gay press were invited. The press went to work, claiming undercover officers would start operating in gay pubs and clubs.

In any other operation, the police would have gone up the wall if their tactics had been revealed.

Understandably, despite their desire to stop the murders, many gay men have been unwilling to contact the police directly. It is more usual

for the police to harass gay men than to try and protect them. Operation Spanner saw sixteen men jailed in 1990 for consensual SM sex.

A recent raid on a South Yorkshire private party led to 38 men being arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit acts of gross indecency for nothing more than being in possession of sex toys.

Gay men are rightly worried that the police could use evidence, given in relation to the murder hunt, to prosecute them!

At first the police refused to guarantee immunity from prosecution. Most of the information that has led to the release of a videotape of the suspect has come through GALOP rather than going directly to the police.

At this year's Pride the police produced a meagre 10,000 leaflets while twenty gay venues got together and produced 70,000 leaflets to distribute at the 120,000-strong event.

The police advice is to not get involved in casual relationships. If they said the same thing to heterosexuals, they would get laughed off the streets.

Outrage have a better suggestion—take a friend along, group sex is safest!▼

Poverty and violence in Cardiff

LES REED was battered to death by local youths in Ely Cardiff in the early hours of Saturday 12 June. The sorrow and anger in the community is revealed by the increasing spread of flowers placed at the spot where Les died, and by the lorry driven through the front wall and "parked" in the front garden of one of those accused of the murder.

Les Reed and his friend tried to stop a group of youngsters wrecking a bollard near his home. Eight youths between the ages of 16 and 20 were arrested. Four were charged with his murder and with the attack on his friend.

Acts of mindless violence like this, especially ones with such tragic consequences, cannot and must not be tolerated in working class communities. Unfortunately, such violence is all too familiar in impoverished, inner city parts of Britain.

Capitalism has created urban wastelands. No jobs, no facilities, no way out and no hope—these are the "prospects" for thousands upon thousands of British youth in John Major's "classless society". This miserable existence breeds tension and frustration. It leads to despair and a complete alienation from working class values of community solidarity. It leads to violence, often over petty matters. And it can lead to terrible tragedies like this murder.

To say this is not to condone the violence of the youths involved. It is to make the source of that violence comprehensible so that the working class can eliminate it. We can eliminate it but not by calling on the police, who harass youth for fun and who hate working class communities, to deal with it. We can eliminate it by fighting, collectively, for a better future and by organising community based defence organisations that can patrol our communities and ensure they are safe to live in for all workers.

The grim reality of life in Ely today contributed to the making of this tragedy. The few shops that face Charteris Green, Ely, are permanently shuttered. A local offshoot of the job centre squats in a small room off a church so that local people don't have to travel into the centre of Cardiff to be told that there are no jobs for them.

Like everywhere else Ely has "no" youth unemployment—because there should be a scheme for everyone. There aren't enough schemes even if all the youth wanted a place. And the reality of the situation is that in parts of Ely unemployment runs at 89% for 19-25 year olds!

Youth and community workers in the Ely area were inundated with calls from the press about why the local youth club had been closed that Friday night. The answer is simple—cuts in funding meant that part time youth workers had their hours cut, and a key youth worker received his redundancy notice along with a third of all full time community education workers in the county.

The way out of this spiral of decline is not to attack the family homes of the youths involved, or simply rail against evil. It is to fight back, collectively, against cuts, against unemployment, against all the deprivation that capitalism causes.■

EDITORIAL

The secret of Major's election victory . . . "Millions stand behind me"

LORD McALPINE, Tory Party Treasurer from 1975 to 1990 and close friend of Margaret Thatcher, recently decided that it had been a mistake to accept £440,000 for party funds from Asil Nadir.

It certainly was.

Nadir, facing £30 million fraud charges in relation to his liquidated Polly Peck company, was shocked to find that his generosity did not give him immunity from prosecution. Despite sending three Cabinet Ministers and several Tory MPs to see the Attorney General, the "buggers" in the law office kept coming after him!

Nadir decided this just was not value for money and ran off to a life of luxury in Northern Cyprus. Once there he threatened to expose all his dealings with the Tories. No wonder McAlpine decided it had all been a terrible mistake. It lifted just the corner of the curtain on the way in which the major political parties represent their most important constituents—the capitalist class.

Tory Party Chairman, Norman Fowler, railed at suggestions that the names of donors to his party should be made public. After all the Tories have gone to extraordinary lengths to conceal precisely where they get their money from.

By law public companies, like trade unions, have to include in their accounts any donations that they make. But the Tories have their "money launderers", the British United Industrialists and the Centre for Policy Studies, for those who do not want to be seen to donate directly to the party. Even better, industrialists were advised to make loans to the Tory Party in order to reduce the bank charges on its debts. If these were for less than a year no one had to know about them.

Then there are what McAlpine candidly described as the "tons of offshore accounts". Into these poured the millions of pounds from numerous international business friends of the Tory Party: £2 million from Greek shipping millionaire John Latsis; another two million at least from Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka Shing; at least £150,000 from Octav Botnar, now in Switzerland avoiding tax fraud charges; millions more, allegedly, from assorted Saudi, Brunei and Kuwaiti Royals and Princes.

It comes as a particular embarrassment that so much of their money comes from abroad, including the billionaire oil monarchs. The party of gung-ho British patriotism turns out to be heavily dependent on the "oil sheikhs".

Mark Thatcher's famous remark to the Sultan of Brunei, "now's the time to pay up for mumsie", obviously had its effect!

The Nadir affair gave us a glimpse of what was expected in return for these donations. But more important than "favours" for friends in trouble, or even the odd knighthood that follows, is the regular and direct influence on policy. A call to the party treasurer's office about a political proposal not in the interest of a particular capitalist can result in a quick meeting with the minister in charge and often a change in policy.

The capitalists, national and international, are willing to stump up millions for their preferred

party of government to ensure their wealth and power are protected. This year the Tories will receive something like £26 million, compared to £7 or £8 million for Labour. During the last election campaign the Tories spent between £11 and £13 million compared to Labour's £7 million.

The public exposure of the link between the Tories and big business has undermined one of the favourite weapons the Tories use against Labour, namely that the party is "in hock" to the trade unions. Yet the Labour leaders are still embarrassed at their union links, and are determined to weaken them. Not that the Labour Party is without its own shady backers within the ruling class.

The dead crook Maxwell was saved from expulsion from his local party by a leadership grateful for the loot he gave to them. The latest revelation that Labour took £400,000 from a Greek Cypriot millionaire embezzler—if true—shows one of the ways they are trying to break their reliance on the workers' contributions.

The Labour leadership is incapable of proudly arguing that, unlike the Tories who are in hock to a handful of big capitalist and tycoons, millions of workers contribute to the Labour Party and are able to participate in the party through these unions. Why? Because in the long term this is precisely what they want to get rid of.

John Smith has seized on the scandal to push for state funding of political parties. Every socialist, trade unionist and worker should be opposed to such an idea. At the moment Labour is dependent on millions of workers for its funding through the trade unions. State funding would free it from such dependence on its affiliated working class membership and free it from any control whatsoever by these workers.

Socialists should certainly demand an end to the undemocratic system that allows the Tories to spend as much as they like and to receive huge backhanders from their business cronies for services rendered.

Workers will not be able to stop the bosses bankrolling their own political parties, but by demanding more open accounting of donations we can at least publicise the rotten system and put a brake on the worst excesses. All national political parties should be obliged to publish every individual and corporate donation over £1000.

To reduce the abuse of wealth exercised by the Tories, party election expenses must be restricted to a fixed sum, at both constituency level and national level. All parties (except the fascists) should have equal access to the media, including press, poster sites etc., based on the number of candidates they are standing. The deposit system whereby each candidate has to put down £2000 should be abolished.

Such democratic demands will never redress the balance against a capitalist class which owns and manipulates the means of propaganda and communication throughout society. But they will help to expose these undemocratic practices and the way in which the current system works to the benefit of the bosses. ■



PHOTOMONTAGE AFTER JOHN HEARTFIELD

Published every month by the Workers Power Group: BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
ISSN 0263-1121 Printed by Newsfax International Ltd: Unit 16, Bow Industrial Park,
Carpenter's Rd, London E15

**£3000
FUND**

Last month we kicked off our second fund drive with the aim of raising £3,000 by September.

We know that in the summer people have to put aside some money for holidays. But at the same time, it's possible to use the summer months to organise outdoor events that can help raise money. Organise a barbecue and charge people to get in. Book a table at a car boot sale and get rid of stuff you hate—and get money for it.

This month we raised £108, taking our running total to £499. This leaves us with £2,501 to raise over the next three months. Thanks this month to readers in Manchester, Leicester, Bradford, Chesterfield and London for their donations.

JULY—PUBLIC FORUMS

BIRMINGHAM:

Somalia—UN Murderers!
Tuesday 13 July, 8.00pm
See sellers for venue.

LONDON:

Yugoslavia
Tuesday 6 July, 7.00pm
See page 8 for details

Workers Power is the British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

The LRCI includes:
ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Poder Obrero (Bolivia)
Poder Obrero (Peru)
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Workers Power (Britain)
Workers Power (New Zealand-
Aotearoa)

Contact the LRCI c/o Workers Power:
BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX,
Britain

FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER!

- I would like to know more about Workers Power & the LRCI
 I want to join Workers Power

I would like to subscribe to:

- Workers Power £7 for 12 issues
 Trotskyist International £8 for 3 issues
 Trotskyist Bulletin £8 for 3 issues

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Telephone: Trade union:

TIMEX**Workers Power**

interviewed Timex AEEU convenor **John Kydd, Jr** in the union's Dundee office, and strike committee member **Ann Crawford** on the picket line in the aftermath of the company's 15 June closure announcement

Workers Power: Did you think it would come to this from the outset?

John Kydd, Jr: Closure was always an option on the cards. One thing was for sure: if we weren't getting back into the factory then ultimately it would mean closure. The company's apparently decided to close the factory earlier than we may have imagined. At the end of the day the damage has been done to the company which may be why they chose to close. The other reason could be that they always intended to close the factory without making any redundancy payments.

WP: So the dispute was engineered as a pretext?

JK: Definitely. On the face of it they tried to keep the factory going: bussing in scab labour, not attacking the staff in the way they did the shopfloor workers. So they made an attempt but a futile one. We always knew they'd never be able to make it.

Gavin Laird [the AEEU's Deputy General Secretary] put to the company a number of weeks ago that the union would pay for a consultant to come in and look at the books, the state of the business and basically prove whether the plant could make a go of it. The company refused. We might ask the AEEU to step in again and do a feasibility study, demand the company leaves the plant and equipment behind, especially given the factory was mostly subsidised by government grants.

WP: You mean the £2 million they recently invested?

JK: Yes. There's one thing Mr. Hall

It's not over!

did say, to put it in black and white, that the plant made £400,000 profit last year and was expected to make £2 million this year on the basis of the orders for the last six months. If the company was going to be profitable, and on the basis of the old wages and conditions, there's no reason to close. It's only that Timex has got a bloody nose, its name has been tarnished. Then again, are they pulling out? Are they prepared to sell the plant and equipment to a new employer?

WP: Have you considered the occupation of the plant, or is it now just too daunting in terms of security?

JK: Never too daunting [laughter] . . .

WP: Is anything being done around IBM, Greenock, for instance? It seems an ideal time to go and leaflet the IBM plant with the message: boycott Dundee's output and join a union, especially given the clamp-down over pilfering and the increasingly draconian regime there.

JK: Campbell Christie [STUC General Secretary] put forward the option of a demonstration around the IBM plant. One of the problems at the moment is that of IBM dropping Timex products. A lot of Timex stuff for IBM is only at the development stage. So I don't know if that's feasible or not. You have to remember that a good few of them (IBM workers) are on £23,000 a year.

WP: In terms of the campaign there's obviously the consumer boycott.

JK: Yes, that's having an effect. The company doesn't like the fact that there all these leaflets going about. But in other ways it's got to be built for. We've got a delegation going to Denmark to the Bang & Olufsen plant [one of Timex Dundee's major contractors]. I was on the phone to the convenor there and she was supportive but saying that they'd lost 500 jobs in the last year and feel in a weak position but would do what they could to support us.

The USA will be the big delegation—it's really important to hit Timex in its homeland. They're not too popular there now, especially in those areas where they used to manufacture watches. They sacked 10,000 people and shipped production to the Philippines. It would give people over here a lift if we made a big dent over there.

WP: The consumer boycott is obviously a useful tactic but it's not something that is going to deliver a decisive victory, is it? One of the lessons of Wapping was that a boycott campaign was very easily ignored by Murdoch.

JK: Yes, but Timex is different from Murdoch. It's not the same kind of empire. Timex is still mainly about watches. If you hit the watches, you hit Timex. The sub-contractors are virtually panicking about their names being on the boycott list. But even so you're right in that we need something to bargain with. The company upped the ante with the announcement of closure and we've got to raise the stakes as well. The strike committee will have to discuss it and decide where to go from here.

WP: The key to victory, though, lies

here in Dundee itself, doesn't it?

JK: That's right. That's it.

WP: Ann, what about the strikers' morale?

Ann Crawford: It's just as good as ever. I'm a bit surprised that after 22 weeks we're still as solid as ever.

WP: What about escalating the fight, especially around the 1 July STUC day of action?

AC: We've brought up the question of a one day general stoppage before and we'll bring it up again at the strike committee. I think it will have to come to it if nothing else is going to help then maybe a one-day general strike will. It's a good thing that there's a boycott of Timex goods and going out around Scotland, Britain, Denmark, America is all good. That's all I can really tell you at the moment.

WP: Do you think you as a strike committee could actually pull the whole of Dundee out, which would put a lot of pressure on the leadership of the STUC?

AC: Well, I'm not too sure, but hopefully we could because there's lots of

works around Dundee whose bosses are just waiting to see what happens at Timex.

I think we'd get good support from the people of Dundee, but we should find out from the meetings on 1 July what the shop stewards really feel in the Dundee factories.

WP: What lessons have you learned since 29 January that you'd want to pass on to other trade unionists across Britain?

AC: It's changed my life completely. I'd never have thought for a minute that I'd be standing outside Timex and shouting at people that are going in and stealing our jobs. I spend more time here outside the factory gate than I ever would have done at my work inside—12 hours near enough every day. I never used to work at weekends and now I'm here at weekends or going on delegation work.

If it came to the crunch and we did get back in I would be more supportive to other people in similar positions to what we are. Before I thought a levy was my way of contributing but now I think you have to have moral and physical support as well. Other trade unionists should look at the Timex situation and get around their workforces, both here and outwith Dundee.

It's about time we all got together to stand firm and not let the bosses anywhere in this country do what the Timex bosses have done. We can't stand to let that happen to working class people. ■



OCCUPY THE PLANT!

"HALL MUST go" rang the battle cry for many weeks outside the gates of the Dundee Timex factory. On Monday, 14 June the company announced the resignation of Peter Hall as president of Timex UK. For a few hours many strikers believed that a famous victory was in their grasp. They thought that Hall's departure would pave the way for a major climbdown by the corporation's bosses.

Within a day those bosses abandoned talks with shop stewards and local AEEU officials. Timex vice-president, Mohammed Saleh, announced the company's decision to close the plant by the end of 1993.

To add insult to injury Saleh offered work to 150 of the strikers "to assist in the orderly rundown" of the plant on the same wages and conditions which a mass meeting had unanimously rejected on 3 June. On 17

June only two out of 250 were to vote in favour of returning to work with the scabs as cheap labour. Hall's departure from Dundee was an admission of defeat by Timex. Their hired hatchet man had failed in his strategy of running the factory with untrained scab labour. Though the pickets had never actually halted the strikebreaking buses for more than a few minutes after the mid-February lock out, their determined resistance effectively sank his union busting scheme.

In their long and bitter battle with Timex, and Fred Olsen's multinational empire, the women and men have been an inspiration to tens of thousands of other workers across Britain and beyond. Whatever the final outcome the Timex strikers have already given any other bosses bent on union busting cause to think long and hard. But such an achievement will seem cold comfort if the Timex strikers find

themselves on the scrapheap in an area where unemployment exceeds 11% even by the Tories' own fiddled figures.

With the dispute entering its sixth month morale remains high and picket line attendance strong. Despite a £50,000 donation from the NALGO conference and other large contributions such high spirits cannot last forever. A dramatic escalation of the battle is urgent.

The surest way of raising the stakes is to take Timex's property as ransom through an occupation of the factory. There are obvious practical problems to overcome, but an occupation is clearly feared by the company. Timex's anxiety explains not only the welding together of the factory gates in the face of the 19 June demonstration, but the beefing up of private security

around the plant and the appearance of CID officers inside the factory two days prior to the closure announcement. Christmas may or may not prove the corporation's intended time for closure, but Timex strikers do not have six months. Already the corporation has shipped lorries full of watches awaiting repair from Dundee to its French plant in Besancon.

The eventual success of any occupation would rely on rallying organised workers from Dundee and beyond to lend support and industrial muscle. Occupation of the factory might well become a new focal point for solidarity action in open defiance of the anti-union laws. Nothing else to date has forced the STUC's leadership to turn rhetoric into action.

Not only are workers sickened by job losses and the mounting threat of cuts in pay and conditions, they will not want to see Timex simply close a

factory that working class taxpayers have subsidised for many years.

Delegations of strikers throughout Britain, Europe and the United States are significant but such work must not serve as a diversion from the crucial task of intensifying the fight in Dundee itself. The focus for that fight must now be the plant and equipment. An occupation by itself is no guarantee of victory, as the bitter experience of Caterpillar shows, but it would greatly strengthen the strikers' hand.

Occupation could make a new rallying cry: "the plant must stay" into reality by forcing on to the agenda the question of taking the plant off Timex without a penny's compensation to the previous bosses. The nationalisation of the factory under the control of the original Timex workforce could then become a real solution.

For Timex strikers there are no easy options, but the likely alternative to a strategy based on occupation and seeking to mobilise wider strike action is another exhausting, "glorious defeat". We have seen too many of those in the past 15 years. The Timex strikers deserve much better and can still get it. ■

Nalgo's last conference

THE MOOD of the recent Nalgo conference was expressed in the most popular T-Shirt. The "Alan Jinkinson Repudiation Tour" referred to the General Secretary's official repudiation of a series of strikes in Newham, Lambeth and Islington using the anti-union laws as a pretext.

The conference itself repudiated a whole series of National Executive recommendations. On the 1.5% Government imposed pay limit, conference rejected a recommendation of "reluctant acceptance". Instead it carried a resolution calling for a ballot of members on whether to accept the deal. Motions which would have committed the union to rejection outright and gone straight to a ballot for action were, however, not accepted onto the agenda. This means that even if Nalgo rejects the 1.5% there has to be yet another ballot for action. All this gives the bureaucracy plenty of time to organise and fight against the conference wishes.

Despite the NEC's vehement opposition conference voted for a resolution that said:

"in order to protect its members' pay, working conditions and jobs, it may be necessary to come into direct conflict with the Tories' anti-trade union laws".

At the same time however a motion calling for the censure of Alan

BY A CONFERENCE DELEGATE

Jinkinson for repudiating Lambeth Nalgo's one day solidarity strike with the miners was defeated.

The "booze and snooze brigade", as one delegate characterised the NEC, were censured for deciding to spend £250,000 on goodbye to Nalgo festivities. The decision to fritter away the money on parties and celebrations was overturned and £50,000 of it was put to a useful purpose: it was donated to the Timex strikers.

Not all the decisions went the left's way however. Conference narrowly rejected a motion calling for strike action against the cuts in local authority spending and defeated a call for national action against Compulsory Competitive Tendering, the tendering-out of local authority services.

The top platform certainly suffered some knocks but at the end of it all, they were sitting pretty. The Unison merger guarantees them all fat pensions and, if not jobs for life, a safe seat until Unison's first elections in 1995! This is assuming the call, opposed by the NEC but passed by conference, for a Unison rules revision conference as soon as possible does not cause some radical changes if it actually goes ahead.

Workers Power's analysis of the Unison project—as a merger of the bureaucrats, for the bureaucrats and

by the bureaucrats—has been proved absolutely right. The rest of the left is already waking up with a hangover having been drunk on the idea of a huge new public sector union of 1.5 million members and uncritically hailing the moves to unity. They have now discovered that the bureaucrats have "stitched them up".

The Nalgo, Nupe and Cohse leaders have certainly won the first round. Starting now, we have to organise the fight for a democratic and fighting union built around strong and autonomous industrial sections. In the workplaces and in the branches we have to build effective rank and file organisation to oust the bureaucrats once and for all.

It will not be an easy job. Three years ago the SWP took over the Broad Left and turned it into little more than a party front. Since then it has shrivelled as a genuine rank and

Public Service

MID MAY 1993

For all NALGO members

These are the motions which will be going to the last NALGO Conference and group meetings of services in Brighton in June. Your branch, like all others in the union, will be considering this agenda in the near future. You can make your views on the motions known to your steward or branch officer. Conference is the policy-making body of your union. This is your chance to have a say.

Several motions on the conference and group meeting agendas instruct NALGO NEC, national service conditions committees or national self-organised groups to carry out various actions which can only be accomplished within UNISON. The Agenda Committee has not altered these motions but will advise Conference that they should be interpreted as conferring a responsibility on former NALGO members of the UNISON NEC, service groups or national self-organised groups to seek to implement the policies passed by the 1993 Conference and group meetings.

This index shows a selection of some of the issues covered by motions on the agenda and intended to be comprehensive but we hope you will find it helpful.

Group Meetings	2, 3, 4
Pay limit and anti-cuts strategy	4, 5
Anti-union laws	5, 6
Council tax	7
Pensions and pension reforms	8, 9
Victimisation of trade union activists	10
Asylum Bill and immigration	11
Pit closures	11
Europe and Maastricht	12
International motions 10, 11 (Cuba, South Korea, Tibet, Ireland)	11
Residential Care for NALGO members	

The FINAL AGENDA

for NALGO Conference 15 to 18 June 1993 and group meetings on 14 June

file force in the union and has been inactive. The rest of the left in Nalgo appears intent on trying to skirt round the SWP rather than politically confronting them. There was a lot of talk and meetings at conference about "re-organising the left". It is a laudable aim. But first we have to ask what politics, what demands and what programme for changing the union will it be "reorganised" around?

A programme that demands an end to all bureaucratic privileges, active

defiance of the anti-union laws, rank and file control of all disputes and effective fighting policies for the union is the only place to start.

"Re-organisation" on its own will not solve the political problems we face. If we do not learn the political lessons of past failures of the "broad lefts" we will set off on yet another merry-go-round of realignments that will inevitably fall apart in the face of a determined, well organised and highly political Unison bureaucracy. ■

COLLEGES

Prepare for real strike action

BY STUART KING

THE COLLEGES' dispute looks set to continue into next year as a result of the failed strategy pursued by the leadership of the lecturers' union, Natfhe.

A meeting of Natfhe's Further Education Sector Conference on 12 June narrowly rejected a call for an all out strike in September. Motions calling for further action this term were defeated, leaving the union committed to a vague call for "escalating action" next term.

The Colleges Employers' Forum (CEF) shows no such lack of determination. It called on its member colleges to deduct pay at 1/190th of a year's pay for each day's strike, effectively nearly two days' pay for each day on strike. It urged employers not to accept "partial performance" from lecturers.

Natfhe had followed up a successful one day strike on 20 May with sanctions to hit the marking of registers and the passing on of statistics. The CEF recommended that Principals refuse to pay lecturers not performing their full duties. In effect they were going to "lock out" the lecturers for refusing to mark registers, a tiny aspect of the job.

What was Natfhe leadership's response to this? To advise branches to individually call off the action and substitute strike action. This divided up the membership with branches being left to take isolated decisions as to whether to go on strike in the middle of exams or towards the end of the summer term.

Once again the union had missed the opportunity to mobilise national action against the employers. It could

not even organise co-ordinated local action. In London one college branch, Westminster, was locked out for two days when a group of South Thames Principals followed the CEF hard line.

Other colleges tried to link up individually but Southwark College lost a ballot for a two day strike, while Lambeth College Branches split on the issue, largely because they found they were the only college about to take action.

This chaos was predictable. It has stemmed from the leadership tactics pursued by our disastrophous start of the dispute. First, they refused to organise a national response to the threatened introduction of new contracts. As a result they left Birmingham and the West Midlands Colleges to fight alone in February and March, directing their energies instead at stopping other colleges organising solidarity strikes. Then they cancelled a planned national strike for 1 April at 24 hours notice leaving the only one day national strike until 20 May.

The left in the union around the Socialist Lecturers Alliance (SLA) warned of these dangers at the start of the dispute. We pointed out that the employers were divided, that a national strike in March would have split them down the middle and forced them into retreat. We said the Natfhe leadership would squander the anger of the members in a series of ineffective one day actions, dragging into the Summer term when the union is at its weakest. This is precisely what they have done.

The CEF is threatening to advise its members to introduce the new contracts from 30 June. Some headline college managements have already gone ahead, for example in Bath, Southend and Sutton. By the autumn term we will face a situation where hundreds of new and promoted staff are on new conditions much inferior to existing staff. Then these will be used as a wedge to drive existing staff onto new contracts within a year or two.

The employers' plans can still be stopped if the union changes its tactics next year. This means Natfhe launching a campaign to win the membership to support an all out strike to force the CEF to withdraw the new contracts and force college managements to return all staff to "Silver Book" (the existing national agreement) conditions. It will also mean ensuring all the appointees on new contracts are kept in or recruited to the union. Natfhe members must be warned that our union leadership is again in discussions with Roger Ward, leader of the CEF, despite the supposed breakdown in negotiations—no doubt over more "champagne lunches". This could produce new national guidelines allowing the erosion of the "Silver Book" through local negotiations. We must fight any attempt of the national union to wash its hands of the dispute by handing over negotiations to a branch or regional level. A clear call for all out action is necessary to re-unite the membership and offer a strategy that can win the dispute. This call must be taken up at the union's full national conference in July. ■

BURNSALLS

One year on strike



Burnsalls strikers still solid

THE ANNIVERSARY of the strike at Burnsalls, in the West Midlands, was marked by a raising of the temperature of the dispute. In this year long strike, the predominantly Asian and female strikers have maintained their determination on the picket line and drawn support from many sections of Birmingham workers as well as further afield.

Despite claims by the owner Jimmy O'Neill that they are able to keep up profits using their scab workforce there are signs they are getting more worried. Pickets and their supporters have been physically attacked by heavies.

On the day of the anniversary, Tuesday 15 June, a well supported

mass picket found themselves up against a substantial police presence—a far cry from the original "low profile" policing—and two arrests were made.

The demonstration on 26 July must be the signal for a renewed attempt to win boycott action and the cancellation of orders and supplies. The most successful action so far has been that by Jaguar workers who forced the withdrawal of their firm's order. This must be built on and spread to other workplaces. ■

Burnsalls national demonstration Assemble noon, 26 July, by Handsworth College, Soho Road, Birmingham

LABOUR AND THE UNIONS

JOHN MAJOR received one piece of good news last month. The Labour shadow cabinet met and decided to "maintain its attack on the government". That means Major will have no problems with Her Majesty's Opposition!

Labour currently resembles those tame opposition parties that dictatorships legalise to prove to the world that they are good democrats—it grumbles at the government but is totally ineffectual in mobilising any real opposition.

Instead Smith has made "one member one vote" (OMOV) for the selection of Labour parliamentary candidates and leadership elections his number one priority. Even the loyal *Tribune* newspaper found this too much to swallow. Its 11 June edition fumed:

"In the past week, Labour has gone from looking lacklustre and dull to appearing insular and introverted, utterly incapable of even the most elementary ordering of political priorities. One hates to imagine what it would be like if it actually had some power."

Personality

John Smith is as dull as the British summer, but the problem facing Labour goes way beyond his personality or style. Labour emerged from its fourth successive election defeat convinced that it lost because its policies, despite having been considerably watered down, were still perceived as being too radical. The principal leaders of the party thought that while Neil Kinnock had opened the door to the "modernisation" of the party he had not yet taken Labour across the threshold.

Basing themselves on these beliefs, Smith, Beckett, Brown, Blair and Blunkett agreed that they would push Labour's policies even more to the right and further undermine (though not completely break) the party's link with the trade unions. It is this strategy that lies behind Labour's current woeful state.

While the Tories are busily announcing the closure of hospitals, attacks on benefits, further restrictions on trade union rights and pay limits in the public sector, Labour have nothing to say.

On benefits they should be savaging the Tories. Instead they have set up a commission on social justice which is itself considering similar attacks to those proposed by the Tories.

On the NHS they have accepted the principle of the internal market and support the closure of major hospitals in London.

On public spending, while they condemn the mess the Tories have created, they refuse to call for taxing the rich and instead pledge themselves to reducing public spending.

And everybody knows that on pay Labour is the party of wage limits *par excellence*.

Cover

During the autumn crisis Labour supported Tory economic policy on the ERM and ended up providing cover, via Richard Caborn's select committee, for the pit closure programme.

This lamentable record of "opposition" is the price that Labour is paying for abandoning its "socialist" credentials. Its socialism was always of a reformist and deceitful brand, but it reflected Labour's link with the unions that marked it out from all of the open bosses' parties in Britain. It was a party based on the unions and, however limited and bureaucratized the link was, it subjected the party to pressure from the organised working class. This, say the "modernisers",

Battle of the block vote

Tory resignations, infighting and dodgy donations have dominated the headlines recently. But there is also a sharp internal battle going on inside the Labour Party. Mark Harrison looks at the issues at stake as the trade unions square up for a fight with the Labour leadership and at this year's party conference.

is a burden, a piece of traditionalist ballast that needs to be thrown overboard.

Smith, Blair and Brown cannot sever the link with the unions completely this side of a Labour government. The unions pay for the party. Without the political levy Labour could not survive. In government it could change this by introducing state funding for political parties. But that is a long way off. In the meantime, the modernisers want to weaken the link, while keeping the money, because they believe that by doing this Labour will be able to prove to sceptical middle class voters that the party is no longer the tool of the trade unions.

Paul Gallagher, of the scab electricians' section of the AEEU, echoed this when he told his conference:

"As long as the British public perceive the Labour Party to be no more than the servile tool of the trade unions, they will never vote to put them in office."

Votes

The changes involved in OMOV would exclude the trade unions, as affiliated organisations, from having a separate vote in elections for local parliamentary candidates and for the leader and deputy leader. Instead, only individual members, through a postal ballot, would have the right to vote. Members of affiliated trade unions would only get the right to vote if they paid a membership fee, in addition to their political levy, and registered as individual members.

All the variations of this scheme being floated boil down to the same thing—taking away the collective voting contribution of the unions.

The response of the trade union bureaucracy (with the single exception of the AEEU) has been outrage.

This whole row confirms what we have said since April 1992—Labour is in deep crisis, a crisis that threatens the party's future. Underlying it is a real split between the unions and sections of the Labour leadership on what sort of party Labour should be

Newspapers have talked of the most damaging split between the Parliamentary party and the unions since 1978/79 (the revolt against Labour's wage freeze). Outrage is not something we normally associate with John Edmonds (GMB), Bill Morris (TGWU), Tony Young (NCU) and the other top bureaucrats from Labour affiliated unions.

The "new realism" of these lead-

ers has done as much as Labour's rightward drift to leave the working class defenceless in the face of successive Tory attacks.

Yet Edmonds, despite having being key in Smith's election as leader, is now leading the charge for the bureaucracy. He told last month's GMB conference:

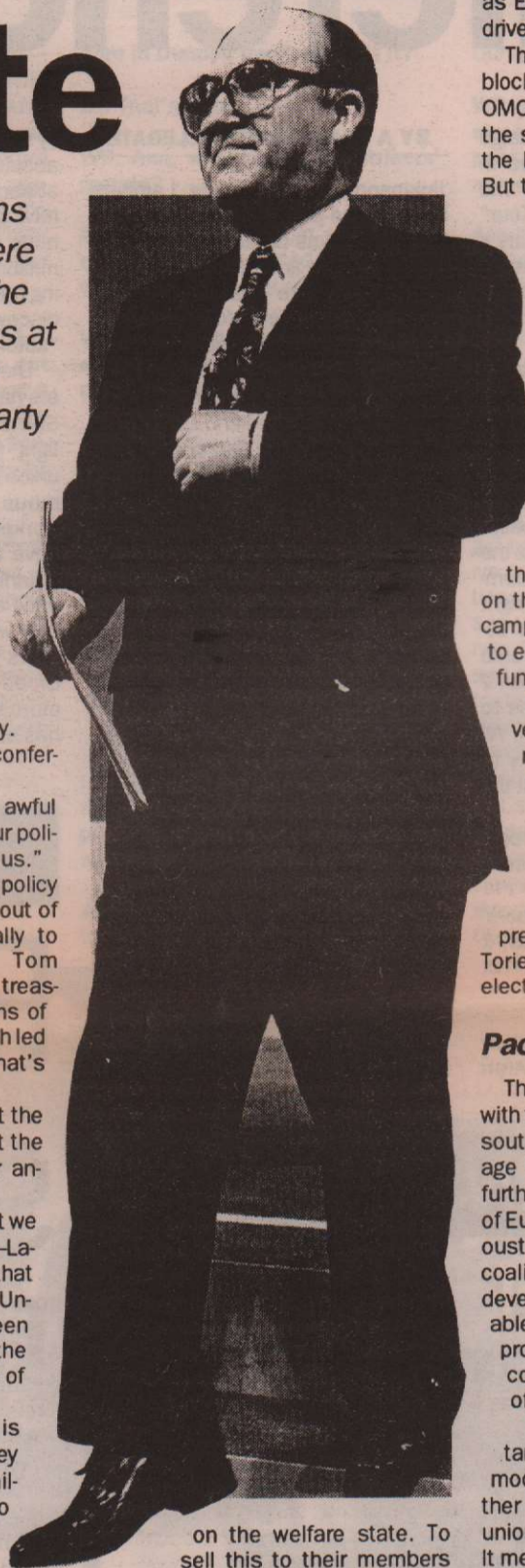
"Instead of attacking this awful government, a number of Labour politicians have decided to attack us."

And he promised to fight "any policy that squeezes trade unionists out of the party", referring specifically to OMOV. Edmonds' deputy, Tom Burlison (who is also Labour's treasurer) accused Labour politicians of "arrogance and inflexibility which led us to where we are today, and that's on the brink of crisis".

Every affiliated union, except the AEEU, has so far voted against the introduction of OMOV at their annual conferences.

This whole row confirms what we have said since April 1992—Labour is in deep crisis, a crisis that threatens the party's future. Underlying it is a real split between the unions and sections of the Labour leadership on what sort of party Labour should be.

The union leaders' rebellion is prompted by two things: first, they have closer ties to the four million workers who are affiliated to Labour through paying the political levy than the Labour leadership has. They can feel the frustration and anger that exists amongst these members at Labour's failure to offer a fighting alternative to the Tories. Second, they fear that the extent of change that the modernisers want to carry through is threatening their ability to influence



on the welfare state. To sell this to their members Labour has to look like a viable alternative. If it does not, the bureaucrats fear the growth of a revolutionary alternative that would threaten themselves as well as Labour. Retaining Labour as a viable alternative government is therefore a political lifeline for the union leaders.

These leaders believe, quite rightly, that they have already shouldered the blame for the 1979 defeat, and possibly also the 1983 defeat, and cut their role in the party in recompense. They accepted a reduction of the block vote at conference to 70% (down to 50% should Labour ever reach its target of one million members), the reform of its balloting procedures prior to leadership elections, and the reform of how the block vote is cast in the party (compilation of Labour supporters in a register).

Now, they are saying that they have done enough. Any further "reforms" they think will edge the party towards a severing of the link, and therefore an elimination of their main sphere of political influence. Not only does this threaten their own bureaucratic prestige, it threatens to undermine them, opening up the unions to political alternatives. They fear a growth in the influence of a left and, ultimately, a

revolutionary, alternative.

A region of the TGWU has already proposed withholding £1.75 million from Labour because it is ineffectual in fighting the Tories. Such ideas could gather momentum if Smith and his crew try to introduce OMOV against the will of the unions. Such ideas frighten the bureaucracy.

It is fear of the left and frustration with the right, their "political friends" as Edmonds called them, that have driven the bureaucrats to rebel.

Their rebellion is likely to either block Smith's attempt to introduce OMOV or result in a compromise. In the short term there is no danger of the Labour-union link being broken. But the continuing weakening of that

link remains on the agenda for the modernisers. In particular the aspiring future leadership team of Blair and Brown have a vision of a Labour Party organisationally free from the unions. They are determined to shed Labour's image as any sort of working class party. Their hopes are centred on turning the party into a European style mass social democratic party. Mass membership would remove the party's financial dependence on the unions, create an alternative campaigning base and open the door to electoral victory and, finally, state funding of political parties.

The problem is that this is not very realistic. Labour's successive recruitment drives over the last four years have taken the membership down to just over 250,000 (its lowest figure since 1929), with an estimated real (paid up) membership of only 90,000. Moreover on present form Labour, despite the Tories' mess, cannot guarantee an electoral victory.

Pacts

The development of electoral pacts with the Liberals on a local level in the south east of England might encourage these modernisers to go even further and, like the social democrats of Europe, decide that the only way to oust the Tories is through a national coalition with the Liberals. Such a development is no longer unthinkable, even if it is not an immediate prospect. And such a development could change the entire character of the Labour Party.

In the current dispute it is important to resist the moves of the modernisers and prevent them further undermining the link with the unions. This means opposing OMOV. It means opposing the alienating and passive "democracy" of both the postal ballot and the bureaucratically controlled block vote. It means fighting inside the constituency parties for active democracy, against bans and proscriptions on socialists, against the reduction of the national conference's authority, against the right of the leadership to disband local parties it doesn't agree with.

In the unions it means retaining the block vote, but fighting to take it out of the hands of the top bureaucrats by ensuring the democratic election of delegations to all Labour Party conferences, branches and committees. It means ensuring that the block vote is cast proportionately in accordance with votes cast at union conferences, and ensuring that all union representatives in the Labour Party are democratically elected and are accountable to the union members who pay the political levy.

These measures won't make the Labour Party a revolutionary party. They won't even guarantee that it becomes a better opposition to the Tory party. But they will stop Tony Blair and Gordon Brown from ensuring that the Labour Party is changed to the distinct advantage of the British bosses. ■

ALAN CLARK, not to be confused with his "podgy life-insurance-risk" namesake Kenneth, is an old-fashioned, church-going, Eton-educated military historian. He is also a Tory MP, and was a Minister in Thatcher's government from 1983. His knowledge of military matters was unable to avert her defeat in 1990, when he stuck by her:

"... (Tebbit said) ... we must fight all the way, to the death. This appeals to me. Leonidas at Thermopylae. But we don't win. It's the end of me. I came in with her. I go out with her."

Clark's diaries are not a political history of those years, nor a biography of Thatcher, which she refused his offer to write. During 1984 and 1985 he was at the Department of Employment. In his 49 diary entries for those years he fails to make one mention of the miners' strike. Instead he fills the pages with gossip about fellow Tories, complaints about the boring job he has, endless examples of his sexist, racist and chauvinist attitudes.

Toff

Unlike many of his contemporary Thatcherite MPs, Clark is not a member of the professional upper middle class or an industrialist. He is a stinking rich aristocrat who lives in a castle when he is not visiting his estate in Scotland, his house and chalet in Zermatt or one of his pads in London.

His diaries reveal, in their obsession with property, manners and status, that he knows and understands nothing of the lives of ordinary people. His is a life of ten different cars, of endless mistresses and a tolerant loyal wife, of dinner parties where the women leave the men to their port and cigars, and of more compassion for dogs than for the people he "represents".

After Harold Macmillan's funeral he wrote:

"I nostalgised (sic) for government by the upper class; which is what I thought it would be—the whole thing really run by the OE (Old Etonian) mafia. . . . But by the time that Ted got rid of Alec he was determined to keep all the others out if he could. And who is to blame him? Profumo exposed their essential rottenness. The few who remain—Gilmour, Whitelaw, Carrington—are impossibly defeatist. With the exception, I think the sole exception, of Robert Cranbourne the real toffs have opted out."

Contempt

His contempt for the new breed of Tory MP comes through in repeated bitchy comments. John Wakeham "was being unbelievable. The biggest leaker known to man"; John Selwyn Gummer, "sanctimonious little creep"; Peter Rost (MP for Erewash, 70-83) "poxy little runt, what's he ever done?"; Michael Heseltine "has always had this slightly scatty side. It is the only even half-endearing trait that he possesses" . . . and if he resigns (1985) . . . "good riddance."

Contempt is not reserved just for many of his fellow politicians and the electorate, the parliamentary system of government too comes in for scorn.

"This afternoon, as I strolled round, I thought the one thing I am really loathing is the prospect of being back in the bloody House of C, being yerr'd at the Box by a lot of spiteful drunks, on subjects that bore and muddle me. I'd gladly chuck the whole thing in and become a Count (retire) if it were not for the satisfaction this would give to others."

Clark is not a serious parliamentarian. He would prefer to have a dictatorship of the toffs, with enough time left over for him to spend running his various estates and writing the occasional history book. It is probably this attitude that allows him to write more openly about government than some of his fellow Tories.

CLARK DIARIES



Forsaking all others. . .

And it is this that gives the book its political interest, despite the profound lack of interest in political issues displayed by the author. Clark is carelessly open about matters which professional politicians seek to cover over. While at the Department of Employment in 1983 he comments:

"The subject matter is turgid: a mass of 'schemes' whose purpose, plainly, is not so much to bring relief to those out of work as to devise excuses for removing them from the Register."

He also writes openly about the internal workings of the party, the power struggles and the interest groups at work. In October 1990 he wrote:

"What finally brought David (Young) down was his picking a quarrel with the Brewers. I had no idea how many Tory MPs are on that payroll until I saw how widespread was the opposition within our own Party. . . . But if you were a sociologist you could say that David was brought down by two traditional strains in the Conservative Party: anti-Semitism, and the brewers' lobby."

His openness about the anti-Semitism in the party is remarkable: "He (Marcus Kimball, MP for Gainsborough) talked of dining with Willie (Whitelaw) the previous evening, and that there had been much talk of 'too many jewboys in the Cabinet'." (January 1986)

"As great and gifted as me"

Clare Heath reviews
Alan Clark's *Diaries*,
Weinfield and Nicholson,
£20.00

In December 1987 Francis Maude "said that Lawson couldn't be Foreign Sec as a Jew. . . . Ian (Gow) then switched to 'he's not a practising Jew anyway'".

Clark's own racism was recognised by, of all people, Thatcher. "She said someone (I wonder who) had said that I would be unacceptable to, e.g. the Nigerians because of . . . my remarks about Bongo-Bongo land."

Like all filthy rich people Clark be-

moans his financial situation. "I've got £700,000 in my Abbey National Crazy-High-Interest account. But what's the use? . . . I'm not rich enough to have servants. We have to do everything ourselves. . . . I'm bust virtually."

But that doesn't stop him bragging about his real wealth. In Budapest in October 1986, he sat next to the head of the National Bank, a man called Fekete. He described him as being very good company, a "bankers' banker".

"There is a certain vocabulary, a language that outside the profession (banking) only very rich people use . . . Ministers don't get any of that stuff in treasury briefs. But Fekete and I were comfortable with each other. . . . concluding that Zurich, the good old Swiss Franc, was the only place."

Upper class men like Clark are well known to hold sexist and arrogant views, and much of the press interest excited by these diaries and by a recent TV programme about him has centred on his infidelity to his wife, Jane. He has been presented as a man who loves the ladies, a sort of amiable and ageing Casanova. But what is apparent from almost every entry in his diaries is not his love for women, but his total disdain for them.

"I am madly in love with Frances Holland (his 22 year old Labour opponent in the 1983 election). I suspect she's not as thin and gawky as she seems. Her hair is always lovely and shiny. Perhaps I can distract her at the count on Thursday and kiss her in

one of those big janitors' cupboards off the Lower Guildhall."

Referring to Edith Cresson, at the time the Internal Market Minister in the French Government, he wrote,

"Yes I suppose she is 'attractive' (in quotes) a kind of up-market Irene Worth. But alas . . . I am not in the slightest degree aroused by 'the older woman'. They are fun to sit next to at dinner, but I don't want to get any closer. For me, girls have to be succulent, and that really means under twenty-five."

"Jenny [his personal private secretary at the Department of Employment] continues to bait me with her indifferent stare, and flat northern vowels. Why is our relationship so difficult? If only we were lovers".

"These Nordic tours are a complete fuckface, redeemed only by the girls, so blonde blonde, so clean and, at first sight, so correct. Already a clear skinned beauty has answered my call for room service."

As his wife told a Sunday paper, "I don't know about adoring women. There's a part of him that hates women".

Fascination

At the same time as despising women and wide sections of his own party, Clark's diaries show a sort of upper class fascination with the "lower classes". He refers almost affectionately to his supposed political opponents:

"Moss Evans was almost completely silent, a distinguished drawn face, immaculately dressed like a Mafia godfather, twice as formidable as any of the other TU heavies who were there. Terry Duffy was just a dear old thing; Frank Chapple a professional rough diamond."

And:

"I get on well with the Labour Party", and found 'Red' Ted Knight, "quite impressive".

He is anti-abortion, religious, and against hunting, yet clings onto vast wealth and property and flaunts his swearing and leering. Morals are things for others, the poor, to adhere to, and certainly not for the likes of him:

"Ian (Gow)'s trouble is that he is, *au fond*, a man of honour. Personally I don't give a blow. Lie if necessary."

Work is for others to do:

"I was in vile mood this morning, even on arrival. I had done a lot of washing up, drying, wiping etc, at Albany, and I always find this enervating. I do it so badly and so slowly. For someone as great and gifted as me it is the most uneconomic possible use of time."

Arrogance

And poverty is something to be noticed occasionally, to create a twinge of pity, and then be forgotten as you open the next bottle of claret.

"There was a demo by the unemployed. Uglyish mood, they created to rock the car (the one thing of which civil servants are absolutely terrified). Police useless, as always, like Hindus defending a trainload of Muslims . . . Wretched people, they were angry, but taken aback by me actually dismounting to listen. Some SWP yobs tried to get a chant going, but the others really wanted to air their grievances. One man, quite articulate, looked dreadfully thin and ill. He had a nice brindle greyhound on a leash, but it looked miserable too. . . . Uncomfortable, I thought what Soames (Nicholas) and I can spend between us on a single meal at Wiltons."

These diaries paint a picture of an arrogant, ignorant, wealthy enemy of the working class and everything progressive in modern society. Their only value is that they expose this picture. And it is a picture not of a harmless eccentric, but of a wing of the class who rule our lives. It is a picture of what we are up against. ■

OUT NOW

THE LATEST edition of *Revolutionary History* is devoted to an examination of the work of the first Trotskyists in South Africa. Historian and veteran of the struggle, Baruch Hirson, traces the origins of the Trotskyist groupings as adherents of the International Left Opposition.

Hirson shows how these militants had to struggle against the Stalinists as well as the state and how they attempted to grapple with programme and perspectives including the vexed question of the "Black Republic" slogan.

Further articles look at specific activity in the trade unions and of particular individuals. A number of key documents are reprinted. This

edition of *Revolutionary History* will be of interest to everyone concerned with the history of the international Trotskyist movement and students of the South African struggle. Buy it.

Revolutionary History
Volume 4, Number 4
Spring 1993
Colour and Class: the Origins
of South African Trotskyism
Price: £3.50
Available from:
Socialist Platform,
BCM Box 7646,
London WC1N 3XX

“ODD THINGS can happen when a country goes through a crisis of leadership,” an article in the *Economist* said recently. Very odd things indeed. The article was discussing Lady Thatcher’s possible return, musing whether or not her membership of the House of Lords barred her from becoming Prime Minister again!

The fact that such journals are casting around for a new leadership of the Tory Party reflects the deep crisis of the government. The resignation of Michael Mates as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is just the latest symptom of this crisis.

Mates was only doing what many other Ministers and Tory MPs have done—using parliamentary pressure to influence the Serious Fraud Office, urging them to go easy on a major contributor to Tory Party funds. At least two other Ministers, Michael Heseltine and Peter Brooke, and several other MPs, had taken up Asil Nadir’s case.

But Mates was particularly vulnerable. He had earned the enmity of the Thatcherites for his role as Michael Heseltine’s campaign manager in the 1990 leadership challenge. Their connections with important sections of the Tory press, such as the *Daily Mail*, finally ensured his downfall.

Affair

The Mates affair has brought into the open the internecine warfare going on at the heart of the Tory Party. Alan Clark’s memoirs have revealed how Thatcherites fed Labour MP Tam Dalyell information about Mates’ undeclared links with a firm which was trying to win Ministry of Defence contracts.

The government’s “miserable year”, as Douglas Hurd described the prolonged crisis, has its roots in irreconcilable differences over two fundamental issues—Europe and the economy.

The Maastricht debate split the Tory Party into opposed factions reflecting different answers to the dilemma facing British capitalism over Europe.

Thatcher’s strategy in Europe had always been based on obstructing moves to economic and political unity. Thatcher’s faction represented sections of the ruling class that feared the development of a regional power bloc in Europe which would increasingly come into conflict with the USA and Japan.

Britain’s historic dependence on US imperialism’s world role to protect its world interests, especially in the Middle East and Africa, would be undermined. Thatcher’s government had sold itself to Japanese and US capital as a base in Europe offering a cheap labour force with few of the “social regulations” existing elsewhere in the EC. Maastricht and the Social Chapter were seen as attacking the very heart of these policies.

In contrast there exists a very small “pro-European” faction around Ted Heath, who see British capitalism’s future as dependent on wholeheartedly embracing the Franco-German drive towards unity. But more influential, and fighting it out with the Thatcherites, are those sections of the Party who favour greater economic integration in Europe, and are therefore pro-Maastricht, yet want a larger, looser EC which rapidly integrates the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and parts of Eastern Europe. Pursuing this line, Major and Hurd tried to compromise, promising to fight against European political integration but from within the institutions created by the Maastricht Treaty.

For over a year the factions have slugged it out in the Commons.

Major has tried to hold the party together, but has not succeeded in uniting it. This has left him with a fragile majority and constantly obliges him to find ways of accommodating both sides.

But the Major-Hurd policy goes nowhere near decisively answering the strategic question facing the bosses—for or against an integrated imperialist bloc in Europe. The dynamic towards the fragmentation of the world economy into blocks is an objective and irreversible trend of late twentieth century imperialism. Within this process British capitalism will ultimately have to find a place in Europe—not as a “spoiler” for US and Japanese capitalism, but as a strong subordinate to Germany at the heart of the integration process if the marginalisation and ever more rapid decline of British imperialism is to be averted.

The problem of Europe can only be resolved if British capitalism is able to defeat its pro-USA, anti-European integration wing and find a party which can place Britain firmly within the European integration process. The dangers of a two-track Europe with Britain left on the outside, means that the European dilemma—for or against a federal Europe—will be increasingly posed.

Until such time as the ruling class finds a stable parliamentary majority for this strategy the objective tendencies towards the creation of a united Euro-imperialism will be a strategic source of political instability.

The economic debacle of the autumn, with the withdrawal from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and the devaluation of the pound, was greeted with unconcealed glee by the Thatcherites who saw it as ending the possibility of monetary union in Europe. Major’s party was deeply split. The Thatcherites declare “never again” the ERM, while the pro-Maastricht wing recognise that outside the ERM Britain will be removed from the core of the European powers and their moves to economic union.

As if this conflict over Europe was not enough the Tory party is now wracked with divisions over economic strategy.

The long recession and the autumn crisis led to massive dissatisfaction in the Tory Party. Business bankruptcies reached record levels, interest rates soared until the withdrawal from the ERM, and house prices plummeted. The Tory rank and file raged against Chancellor Lamont. The Tory press, the subservient lap dogs of Thatcher, began to reflect the divisions in the Tory Party. Murdoch’s propaganda machine could no longer be taken for granted. Even the *Sun* weighed in against the government.

Resignation

As Lamont revealed in his post-resignation speech, Major had opposed his resignation in the autumn because he saw the attacks on Lamont as “coded attacks” on himself. But the enormous gains by the Liberal Democrats in the May local elections in the South East, combined with the loss of the safe Tory seat at Newbury, produced panic in government circles. Major threw Lamont to the wolves hoping to save his own skin. Instead he has only whetted their appetites.

Major was devastated by Lamont’s speech because here was someone at the heart of the government blowing the whistle on the depths of his crisis. Lamont accused Major of “short termism”, of adapting to the pollsters and party managers, of being in “office but not in power”.

Lamont could accurately describe the symptoms but not the causes. The cause of the weakness of this government, is not John Major’s “lack of grip”, his failure to make

TORY PARTY

A CRISIS LEADERS

“inspirational speeches”, his lack of “leadership”. It is the other way round. His bumbling leadership, lacklustre speeches, failure to produce clear policies reflect the crisis of his party and his attempts to straddle the factions. The factions, in contrast, can sound clear and decisive because they represent coherent, if irreconcilable, political strategies.

Survive

Can Major survive the current crisis? It is doubtful. His only strength lies in the fact that as yet none of the factions in the Tory party has a secure majority. The Thatcherites organised in the “92 group” can count on a hundred MPs. They have captured 50% of the powerful backbench 1922 Committee’s Executive, a Committee which now appears to determine which Minister under attack will survive or go. But they remain a minority.

Their preferred candidates, Howard at the Home Office and

Portillo at the Treasury, failed to gain advancement within the Cabinet following Lamont’s resignation. Thatcher has even attempted a rapprochement with Lamont, letting it be known in her “circle”, how much she admired his speech.

Kenneth Clarke, now Chancellor and a potential replacement for Major, is pro-European and considered a neo-wet on economic policy. Lady Thatcher, having decided that Major is definitely “not one of us” is playing a longer game. As she told an ITN interviewer:

“There can be no question of a leadership challenge at this moment. Any such challenge would be ill judged.”

Major is in a cleft stick. His popularity is at an all time low—the latest National Opinion Poll put the Tories 15 percentage points behind Labour and a mere one point ahead of the Liberal Democrats. Asked who should lead the Tory Party, 18% of Tory voters plumped for Thatcher, 14% for Heseltine, 13% for Clarke and only 12% for Major!

Major is still prime minister, but his leadership of the Tory party gets lost in the articles John McKee analyses persistent Tory crises. Lesley... of the struggle against the pit... erous role of the trade union...

At the same time the massive public sector deficit, now running at £50 billion a year demands enormous attacks, not just on working class living standards but on those who consider themselves staunch middle class Tory supporters.

Hardly had Kenneth Clarke unpacked his bags at Number 11 than the different factions of the Tories were declaring where they stood on dealing with the deficit, through leaks and speeches. Heseltine declared that Tory Manifesto promises were up for grabs, code for potential tax increases. The “92 Group” met and while of course declaring

OCT '92

How our lead

LAST OCTOBER Michael Heseltine threatened to close 31 pits and sack 30,000 miners. Almost nine months on 16,000 of the 40,000 miners working last autumn are now out of the industry. Production has halted in nineteen of the thirty threatened pits. The rest are unlikely to last two years.

These closures could have been stopped. The government could have been defeated, its attacks on the working class repulsed. There was even the possibility of destroying the Major government altogether. What went wrong?

When the pit closure programme was announced millions were outraged. Sensing the government’s vulnerability following its September sterling crisis, a mood of revolt quickly spread across Britain. At the centre of this revolt stood those with most to lose from another spell of Tory government—the working class. But the the revolt spread to sections of the middle class as well, disenchanted with Tory broken promises.

On 21 October, a working day, one hundred thousand workers marched in central London. Many defied the anti-union laws and took strike action. In a matter of days, sometimes even hours, workers held meetings, voted

for action and organised transport to the demo.

The following Sunday a quarter of a million marched on the first TUC called demonstration for almost five years. Local marches were held in places as different as Chesterfield and Cheltenham.

This wave of protest caused the government to beat a tactical retreat and enabled the workers’ movement to recover a sense of confidence and purpose after the defeats of the 1980s. Right across industry a revival of militancy occurred, with strikes, or threatened strikes over pay and conditions.

The tragedy is that this revolt was demobilised. It was demobilised not because the Tories proved too clever in their delaying tactics, as some TUC leaders claim, nor because workers were unwilling to see the fight through to the finish. It was demobilised deliberately by the trade union and Labour leaders. Their strategy of limiting the revolt within the confines of legality and substituting endless passive protests for direct action, gave the Tories the time they needed to regroup and relaunch their attack.

To cover their own and Scargill’s complicity in the demobilisation of the revolt the *Morning Star*, now say the TUC and Labour leaders should have

called “mass extra-parliamentary action” in a “series of escalating days of action”.

But what the *Morning Star* conveniently ignores is that these “days of action”, proposed at the time by itself and notably by Arthur Scargill, were part of a strategy of “people power”—a strategy which proved fatal for the miners and the whole class. It was not fundamentally different from the populist campaigning strategy of the right and centre of the trade union leadership.

The first disaster was to link up with various bourgeois politicians, especially the Tory “rebels”. Their rebellion was short lived as the majority beat a rapid retreat once the review plans were announced. The idea that the rabid racist, Winston Churchill, was a friend of the miners, is a sick joke. But it was an idea peddled by the *Morning Star*.

Labour was equally guilty. Instead of pressing home its own advantage against the Tories in Parliament by refusing any compromise with them it went along with the Select Committee of Inquiry. It provided a “left” chair for that inquiry in the shape of Richard Caborn. And it provided approval for that inquiry’s findings that most of the 31 pits should close after all.

OF SHILL



but his grip on the leader-
loser every day. in these
es the real causes of the
Day reviews the lessons
closures and the treach-
and Labour leaders in it.

its "100% loyalty" to Major, threat-
ened a full scale rebellion against
any attempt to raise taxes. Major
was left pleading for Cabinet mem-
bers not to declare policy in speeches.
An appeal which was immediately
followed by Clarke declaring in an
interview that a "prudent Chancel-
lor" could not rule out tax increases.
Major's Government is threatened
with a repeat of the struggle over
the Maastricht Bill. The right wing
of the Tory Party has a clear pro-
gramme for dealing with the deficit.
It wants a massive attack on the
welfare state and it is willing to
fight for it.

Leaks coming out of the
Thatcherite Peter Lilley's depart-
ment of Social Security involve pro-
posals to attack disability benefits,
to "restructure" the welfare state by
ending universal benefits, so called
"targeting", encouraging "self-pro-
vision" in pensions, health care, i.e.
introducing a US-type health and
pension system, raising the pension-
able age for women to 65 years and
the tightening of "Restart Pro-
grammes" for those on the dole to
deprive more of the unemployed of
benefits. The *Economist* wants the
abolition of Mortgage Relief plus
the extension of VAT.

Such a programme would be mas-
sively unpopular with many Tory
voters which is why the Cabinet
wants to shy away from it. Major's
Government is in no position to
push such a policy through and it
knows it.

At the moment Clarke and Major
hope that the economic recovery will
be strong enough to take the sting
out of the unemployment figures
and start increasing tax revenue to

the point where they can avoid addi-
tional tax increases. They know
very well how unpopular the so-
called fuel tax, VAT on gas and elec-
tricity, is going to be.

Things could go badly wrong. Eu-
rope which now takes 57% of Brit-
ain's exports is going into recession
just as the British economy hoped to
take advantage of its devaluation
and improved productivity to in-
crease its trade with Europe and
boost its recovery.

Shrink

The German economy is expected
to shrink by 3% this year, the whole
of Europe by at least 1%. While this
will be offset to some extent by the
growth of the US economy, still a
major trading partner for Britain, if
Europe does not recover as expected
in 1994, the British recovery could
be in dire trouble.

Major, by all accounts, has been
put on a year's "probation" by Tory
MPs. He is becoming an increas-
ingly isolated figure as ambitious

MPs seeking government office be-
come doubtful about committing
themselves to supporting a Prime
Minister who might not survive the
year. But Major's downfall will pro-
duce no solution to the "crisis of
leadership" in the party. Rather it
will open up deeper and more last-
ing splits which may well not only
put an end to this lengthy period of
Tory rule but even put a question
mark over the survival of the Tory
party itself.

Norman Lamont ended his dam-
aging post-resignation speech with
winged words. "I look forward to the
great parliamentary events and bat-
tles ahead." So should the working
class. Rarely has there been a post-
war government so wracked by res-
ignations, divisions and corruption
scandals. We are facing a weak gov-
ernment riven by factional infight-
ing. If the Tories survive their cur-
rent term of office it will only be
because the leadership of the La-
bour and trade union movement fails
to seize the opportunity to finish the
Tories off once and for all. ■

the one day strike on 2 April was a
symbolic gesture. No further action
was planned. The miners went down
to a terrible defeat.

None of this was inevitable. Work-
ers Power argued at each stage for an
alternative strategy and tactics which
could have reversed the retreat.

We argued that to defeat the Tory
plans strike action by the miners them-
selves was the essential starting point.
The NUM executive had been given a
mandate for this by the delegate con-
ference, but chose to rely on the "peo-
ple power" campaign instead.

Secondly we called for a general
strike against the pit closures. In order
to build a general strike something
more was needed than the demand on
the TUC to call one, important as
raising that demand was.

Key sets of workers facing attacks
had to link together at all levels. The
bureaucrats, of course, made sure
that their alliances were designed to
prevent action. To challenge their lead-
ership, workers needed Action Coun-
cils, with rank and file delegates from
workplaces and unions. But the re-
fusal of others on the left to take up
this call and try to build these bodies
meant that no co-ordinated challenge
to the sell out could be mounted.

The various support groups that were
formed were no substitute for such
action councils. These groups, in many
cases nostalgic throwbacks to the
1984/85 strike, were cynically used
by Scargill to publicise the pit clo-
sures, not fight them. The actions of
groups like Women Against Pit Clo-
sures—their pit camps and short-term
occupations—were well intentioned
but never likely to budge the Tories
and British Coal one inch.

Another important element of our
argument was the need to build a rank
and file movement in the trade unions
against the stranglehold of the bu-
reaucracy. As chance after chance
has been frittered away, this task be-
comes ever more urgent. Many sec-
tions of workers have come into strug-
gle in the last nine months—on the
rail, in the private sector, in the council
offices. But they have found them-
selves isolated and hemmed in by the
refusal of their leaders to countenance
any action which defies the trade
union laws—no solidarity action, no black-
ing, no action without a ballot first.

On 21 October thousands of mili-
tants showed what they thought of
such restrictions. They defied them.
But the lack of an organised rank and
file movement, building on such ac-
tion, spreading and publicising it, en-
suring that those involved are not left
isolated, was missing.

The defeat of the miners is a defeat
for the whole working class. We say
this for two reasons. First, because
the miners and their union were the
best organised and most militant sec-
tion of the class.

A defeat for such a section can and
does have a bad effect on other sec-
tions. As in 1984/85, many workers
will say, "if the miners couldn't win
how can we."

Secondly, because out of the min-
ers' struggle last autumn the potential
for a class wide response, for a gen-
eral advance by the entire class against
every aspect of the Tory and capitalist
offensive, was on the cards. While the
spirit of resistance has not died the
immediate possibility for such a gen-
eralised fight back has been consid-
erably set back.

If we are to recover lost ground and
take full advantage of the Tories' con-
tinuing mess we need to learn the
lessons of this defeat, and learn them
quick. Apart from adopting a militant
alternative to the passive strategy of
the TUC and Scargill, necessary as
that is, we need to build a new leader-
ship altogether.

We need a leadership that puts
working class interests' before "pub-
lic opinion", that puts the need to save
jobs and livelihoods above the need to
respect Tory laws, that doesn't flinch
from action to defeat the class enemy.
In short we need a revolutionary
leadership. ■

Leaders saved Major

Another feature of the Scargill/TUC
strategy was reliance on the courts.
Against a background of continuing
public disquiet, and the prospect of
renewed action, the High Court ful-
filled one of its key functions for the
British ruling class: providing an ap-
parent check against injustice. It ruled
the closure announcements illegal.

The NUM announced a victory. This
gave completely misplaced hopes to
some miners and their supporters. Of
course once the heat was off and the
danger of strike action had passed,
the courts allowed Heseltine and Brit-
ish Coal to go ahead with their piece-
meal butchery of the industry.

The central component of the popu-
list strategy was the attempt to build
an alliance with sections of the bosses
in a campaign designed to mobilise
"public opinion". Scargill paved the
way for this with his argument that,
"people power can change this insane
energy policy". He called on the TUC to
organise "days of action" but refused
to campaign for a miners' strike, for
occupations of the threatened pits
and for the solidarity general strike
that was needed.

This allowed Norman Willis and
friends to organise an endless round
of protests that were days of anything
but action. The NUM was excluded

from the TUC's committee on the pit
closures. Willis called a "Day of Jobs
and Recovery" on 9 December when
workers and bosses were supposed to
sit down together to discuss how to
bring about economic growth!

The left leadership of the Scottish
NUM organised a march on Scot-
land to Westminster—but the TUC
clamped down on all attempts to or-
ganise a workers' welcome to the
capital. Instead there was a reception
and the daft "Switch-Off", in which
British households were supposed to
make the government tremble by col-
lectively dimming their lights for a few
minutes.

Against this background of ineffec-
tual opposition, it was hardly surpris-
ing that resistance at pit level began
to ebb away. Hundreds of miners suc-
cumbed to the pressures from British
Coal and took redundancy packages.

The signs that the leadership would
take this course were evident from
early on. On 21 October the original
plan for a march on parliament was
scuppered, with Scargill's collusion,
and the marchers had to stroll around
Hyde Park. On the following Sunday
the highlight of the demonstration was
not a militant call to arms but a render-
ing of "Jerusalem" by tone deaf bu-
reaucrats.

Scargill instructed his supporters in
the NUM to attack anybody who fought
for a strategy of strike action. Good
militants argued with Workers Power
supporters, that the time wasn't ripe
for action, that they couldn't win a
ballot, that a delay was necessary in
order to build up wider support.

Our answer was always that delay
risked losing the impetus of the Octo-
ber revolt. And the failure of the min-
ers to strike would give every other
union bureaucrat the excuse to avoid
calling their members out in support.
Today we have been proved right. The
hoped for ballot has never material-
ised.

Scargill's response was too little
and too late. The fatal flaw in his
politics—his refusal to break from the
trade union bureaucracy or in the last
analysis, from its reformist policies—
meant that he would not publicly de-
nounce the leadership nor join any
opposition to it.

In December he went his furthest
out on a limb—calling for a "National
Stay Away" on 18 January. The Stay
Away idea was dangerous, avoiding
the necessary call for a general strike
and putting the onus on individuals to
stay at home. Nevertheless this was
enough to get some militants organis-
ing for solidarity action or for action in

support of their own demands on that
day.

Shortly before the 18th, Scargill re-
treated. Norman Willis had leant on
Jimmy Knapp of the rail union (RMT)
who leant on Scargill. No call for action
came from the NUM executive. De-
spite this, council workers in Birming-
ham and the North East took action
against the council cuts facing them.

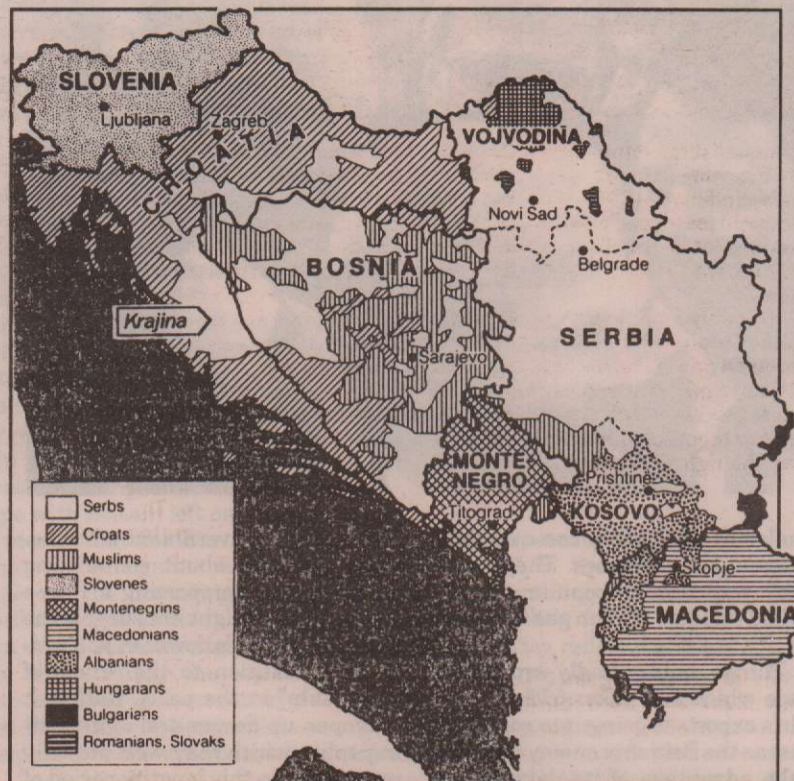
Further action was planned for 19
February in response to a militant call
from Scargill who had told a Cardiff
rally that the time for talking was over.
In the event, this turned into a "day on
which activities may occur" and only
Cardiff saw substantial action after a
Workers Power initiative led to a
number of unions calling a mass dem-
onstration against cuts and closures.
Once again, the NUM leaders left their
supporters high and dry.

This series of build ups only to be let
down had a sapping effect on the
morale of militants. Even so, the lev-
els of attacks and hatred of the gov-
ernment gave further opportunities for
resistance. The final death knell was
sounded by the failure of the rail and
miners' unions to deliver more than
one day's co-ordinated action.

After two one day strikes the RMT
engineered a sell out of their mem-
bers and of the miners. For the NUM

Branka Magas is a Croatian journalist and historian living in London. She is a member of the editorial board of *New Left Review*. She has written extensively on the developing breakup of Yugoslavia, writings collected in the recently published book *The Destruction of Yugoslavia, Tracking the Breakup 1980-1992* (Verso £12.95). *Workers Power* spoke to Branka Magas about both the book's analysis and the current situation in former Yugoslavia. Opposite, Paul Morris reviews *The Destruction of Yugoslavia* and counters some of the arguments and solutions contained within it.

"A war Serbia



WORKERS POWER: In the late 1980s, even as Milosevic came to power, your book gives the sense that there was still a possibility of working class action preventing the nationalist destruction of Yugoslavia. You give examples of growing workers' struggles in Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo. How were they so easily terminated or transformed into nationalism?

BRANKA MAGAS: The workers were initially taking action on purely economic issues—wages, conditions and unemployment. Unemployment grew amongst the young workers rather than through lay-offs. When the economic crisis struck the standard of living dropped, wages falling behind inflation. There was a growing strike movement in the 1980s. The working class however really identified with the YCL (League of Communists of Yugoslavia), because the modern Yugoslav working class is very much a post-war creation. But on the other hand this was not a party of the working class in political weight.

It was the party of the bureaucrats and the managers. The workers' actions never led to a lasting solution. So in the middle of the 1980s you see the beginnings of the attempt to create independent organisations (for example, strike committees staying in existence after the conclusion of strikes). You could have got support on an all Yugoslav level.

But this was overtaken by events

at the level of national state relations, and these concerns became dominant. It was Milosevic who first realised that if he was going to avoid social conflict at home he had to channel all the social energy into nationalism.

Compare Britain with Yugoslavia at this time. Here the left has its own papers, stands outside factory gates, builds solidarity. But for workers in Bosnia to speak to workers in Croatia, what are the instruments? They don't produce their own papers, the unions are bureaucratised, travel was difficult. They could send messages of support but even that means creating an unofficial structure.

The first really co-ordinated expressions of solidarity came with the Kosovo miners' strike of 1988. Then the trade unionists in Slovenia and Croatia collected money and sent trucks with food and medicine. But these never reached the miners. The Serbian state stopped them. It was genuinely difficult to build a workers' independent opposition materially and at the level of workers' self-perception, the failure of the workers to impose their own class solution is not surprising.

WP: Turning to the political situation in Serbia and Croatia today. *The Independent* carried an editorial asking "Is Serbia fascist?". In the current edition of *Capital and Class* the socialist economist Michael Barratt Brown claims Croatia is fascist. How do you characterise the political conjuncture? Is

there any progressive opposition in Serbia and Croatia?

BM: I think that Serbia is a kind of fascist state. It is engaged in an expansionist and racist war in that the conquest of territories—all of which are multi-national and in most cases minority Serb—is followed up by the murder or expulsion of non-Serbs. The idea is to create an ethnically pure Greater Serbian state. The leading idea of Milosevic's Serbia is that Serbs cannot live with others. Other national groups are seen as inimical, like Jews in Nazi Germany. Serbia itself is a multi-national state, yet it is seen as a purely Serbian country.

It is also fascist in that the state has created or condoned the formation of armed gangs which are used as instruments of "ethnic cleansing" and general terror in the occupied parts of Croatia and Bosnia, but also in Serbia itself. Serbia is now engaged—and I have this from Serbian opposition sources—in making the areas bordering with the other republics ethnically pure and militarised zones, by replacing the non-Serb population with militant Serbs coming from Croatia and parts of Bosnia.

We also see Seselj's party (the Radical Party) in Serbia which is openly fascist, which controls one third of the seats in the Serbian parliament and which works closely with Milosevic's ruling socialists. Milosevic has described Seselj as his favourite politician. The basis of this collaboration lies in the fact that both parties are a creation of the army and the police. Finally Serbia has created a very large police force, numerically larger than the army, which is under Milosevic's personal control. It is only a matter of time before the last flicker of opposition is extinguished in Serbia.

There is the myth from the second world war that all the Croats were fascists (of the Ustase type). This is demonstrably untrue. Most Croats fought in the Communist-led resistance, while the Ustase state was the creation of the Nazis. As for contemporary Croatia, after the elections of 1990 some supporters of Ustase and a number of hard line nationalists (who had fled Yugoslavia after 1945) returned and

are now playing a role in the political life of the country quite disproportionate to their actual popular support. It is these émigrés who funded HDZ electoral campaigns and who have given impetus to the policy of dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly as many of them come from western Herzegovina which had supplied the traditional Ustase.

Quite apart from this, there are elements of the Croatian state that have this tendency to national, racial politics towards the Serb minority. Serbs are under terrific pressure in Croatia today. They are being encouraged to leave, usually by not being able to work, get citizenship or passports. The difference here is that in Croatia you have the Serb rebellion, which has itself fuelled anti-Serb sentiments. In Serbia you do not have any equivalent: even the Albanians have so far opted for a Ghandi-style passive resistance.

WP: Throughout the book it's clear that you regard Kosovo as the key to the breakup of Yugoslavia and the key to the development of Serbian chauvinism. Everyone now fears that the imperialist peace settlement in Bosnia could be the prelude to a new blow up in Kosovo.

BM: Firstly it is not at all certain that Bosnia will be partitioned, and I doubt that it is possible. If this were to happen then Kosovo would become the next war zone. Seselj wants to pacify Kosovo by expelling all the Albanians (who make up 90% of the population) whereas people close to Milosevic would probably agree to a partition of Kosovo with Albania. What proportion would go to Albania, if any, depends, of course, on how successful Serbia is elsewhere. Kosovo Albanians reject partition. There are three alternatives on offer: union with Albania, a separate, independent Kosovo state, or if they have to stay in the rump Yugoslavia they will do it as a republic, not as part of Serbia as today.

To the vast bulk of the political establishment this is not acceptable, therefore war is imminent. Of course the Albanians are even more badly armed than the Bosnian Muslims—it is not an easy task to contemplate. The thought of Bosnia coming to Kosovo is terrible to contemplate, particularly as Kosovo is seen as part of Serbia by the international community.

So the Albanians are, to be blunt, hoping that the Bosnian war will continue for ever. But remember Seselj is an MP from Kosovo (representing the Serbian minority in the province) and his gangs are there and are provoking a conflict. The Kosovar Albanians are extremely disciplined and I think they will be able to stand it as long as there is some prospect of a resolution within a Balkan peace process. But if that ends there will be an explosion. And because of the huge Albanian population in Macedonia the two will go up together.

WP: On the partition of Bosnia, you said you don't think it can be achieved. This is now the policy of the EC, the Serbian and Croatian governments. Clearly it is going to be a source

of instability, but what makes you think the partition will not stick?

BM: Why now all the talk of partition? The situation on the ground has not changed essentially since the end of 1992, the central areas have held well despite the paucity of weapons. Even Sarajevo has held out! The government and the army remain multi-national, though largely Muslim. The army remains loyal to the president. What has changed is the attitude of the big powers.

Bosnia, however, cannot be divided because the national groups are intermingled and, in the case of the Serbs, not contingent with the "mother" republic. The cities are largely multi-national. So, before you divide Bosnia you must destroy it, destroy most of the towns and villages, which is what is happening. In other words, we are dealing not with a partition but a destruction of Bosnia.

What would partition bring? So many people have been killed and expelled, so many industrial centres destroyed, that Serbia and Croatia will inherit a desert. They are not rich and do not enjoy US support, like the state of Israel. All that will remain will be a barren land and repressive societies kept together by sheer violence. This is why the destruction of Bosnia is a crazy project. The war began as a quest for Serbian domination, but in the end Serbia will be the loser. It can't win this war without destroying itself in the process. The same goes for Croatia, of course, one third of which is already occupied and devastated.

The West has accepted partition of Bosnia which, it seems, its British and French components have always desired. But even for them it does not augur well. There is the question of precedent—of an internationally recognised state being destroyed by force—which, quite apart from the likelihood of it being copied in other parts of eastern Europe and the former USSR, will poison international relations for decades to come. This policy is also immoral. In any case, partition of Bosnia will be difficult to impose since the Bosnians will go on fighting.

WP: In the book you attempt to make a case against the right of secession of the Serbian "Krajina" in Croatia. With the rapprochement between Serbia and Croatia, the coming referendum on fusing Krajina into a Greater Serbia, do you think the Croat government would ever agree to cede the Krajina to Serbia?

BM: It is impossible for Croatia, under whatever government, to permit the secession of the so-called Krajina, because this entity cuts the country in half and makes it unviable. Secession of the Krajina does not solve the Serb question in Croatia either since the majority of Serbs do not live there and those who do were originally pressed into rebellion. This Krajina, moreover, cannot economically survive outside Croatia.

As for Bosnia, you should remember that Croatia has been pursuing a two-pronged policy. If Bosnia could be maintained either by self de-

YUGOSLAVIA

Can the workers stop the slaughter?

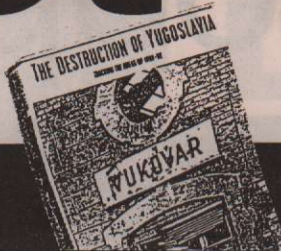
A Workers Power public forum with
Branka Magas,

Martin Suchanek (Workers Standpoint—Austria)
and **Paul Morris (Workers Power)**

Tuesday 6 July, 7.00pm, London School of Economics,
Houghton Street London WC2

(nearest Tube stations: Holborn and Temple)

cannot win . . . ”



WHAT WE THINK

fence or by western intervention, then well and good. Croatia, after all, has recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina and has taken a substantial number of its refugees. There is a Bosnian embassy in Zagreb and Zagreb has become a second Bosnian capital. On the other hand, if Serbia is allowed to get away with taking 70% of Bosnia, then Croatia would also take a slice of it, not least because of the presence there (before the war) of 700,000 Croats. Croatia has a problem, however, in that the partitioning of Bosnia along ethnic lines will serve to legitimise also the secession of Croatian Krajina.

This would, in the long run, allow Serbia to annex most of Dalmatia. For this reason whatever the Croatian president may think today, there can be no lasting agreement with Serbia. Why should Serbia, having won the war in Bosnia, give up this strategically important territory? My guess is that Croatia will be forced to take Krajina by force.

The military solution is the worst solution, however, for it will involve killing a lot of Serbs. It is my understanding that most of the Krajina Serbs want a return to normality, which means a return to Croatian administration.

At the same time they fear Croatian retribution—a fear enhanced by the persecution of Serbs in unoccupied parts of Croatia. Croatia will have to change its policy towards the Serb minority, make a gesture of conciliation with the Serb population of Krajina, though not with its leaders, most of whom are little more than war criminals.

WP: Is there any sign of any independent working class or even politically progressive opposition to the nationalism that is engulfing the republics of former Yugoslavia?

BM: One must distinguish between nationalism produced in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo etc, by Serbian aggression, and the nationalism that fuels that aggression. Despite the war, however, in Croatia the HDZ is losing its popularity, largely to the Social Liberals, led by Drazen Budiss. In Serbia right wing nationalism continues to grow as a result of the Serbian army's successes in Bosnia. As long as the west supports Milosevic, not only workers' opposition, but also liberal democratic opposition, has little future.

It is possible to imagine, however, that workers' unrest due to a collapsing economy in Serbia—such as the strike of 12,000 miners in Kolubara region—may contribute to the fall of Milosevic though, as things stand now, his fall would most likely result in an open military dictatorship. Ideally speaking, Milosevic and his supporters would be brought down by an anti-fascist alliance. It would be far better for Serbia and its neighbours that the regime there be brought down by internal forces than by outside intervention.

In general one can say that under present conditions workers throughout the region, and especially in Bosnia where they are direct victims of war, have little chance to impose interests and aspirations upon the rest of society. ■

The *Destruction of Yugoslavia* provides vital source material on two levels for understanding the causes of the conflict. First, it contains translations of key documents, petitions, leaflets and interviews which are invaluable aids to understanding the Yugoslav events. Secondly, as a collection of Magas' articles between 1980 and 1992, it charts the evolution of her own politics, an evolution symptomatic of a whole generation of post-1968 Yugoslav oppositionists.

During the early 1980s Magas clearly understood the problem in Yugoslavia as one of uneven economic development, the backwardness of the southern republics, combined with the defeat of a social-democratic, modernising wing of the bureaucracy in the 1970s. Seeing Yugoslavia as essentially "socialist" her solution at this time was some form of working class led reform movement.

While we do not agree that the Stalinist bureaucratic state created by Tito could be reformed, revolutionary socialists share the view that the causes of the breakup were primarily economic.

Once "market socialism" had decentralised Stalinist planning in Yugoslavia, and once Yugoslavia's development had been tied to crippling IMF debt, the stage was set for economic divergence between the developed republics (Slovenia and Croatia) and the rest.

This led to the emergence of distinct national bureaucracies and national workers' movements well before the breakup began in earnest. This guaranteed that the supra-national, centralising tendency within the bureaucracy (located in the army leadership) could not impose its will and quickly degenerated into a tool of the Serbian nationalist bureaucracy.

Expansionist

As the situation worsened during the 1980s we see a change of emphasis in Magas' writings. Serbian chauvinism, the expansionist aims of the Milosevic faction, which came to power in Serbia in 1988, are increasingly seen not as consequences but as the main driving force behind the breakup.

Because she sees Serb nationalism as seen as a prime cause of the breakup, rather than a consequence of the underlying material causes, Magas inevitably veers away from any scientific socialist analysis. Just why Serb chauvinism has proved to be so virulent comes to be explained in terms of national character, or in the self-defeating argument that "backward Serbia was not ready for democracy".

After decades of championing the rights of the oppressed Albanian population of Kosovo, and castigating the Serb intelligentsia's capitulation to nationalism, Magas herself begins to capitulate to Croat nationalism in response to the Serb-Croat war of 1991-92. This is logical once you see Serb nationalism as the main enemy in the Balkans.

Thus Magas attempts to make a case against the right of Serb minority populations of Croatia to secede. In the case of the Autonomous Republic of Krajina (ARK) she claims: "ARK does not contain the majority of Serbs in Croatia. It has no common border with Serbia. It is geographically, historically and economically an integral part of Croatia."

The problem is that the majority Serb population of the Krajina were driven into the arms of the reactionary Serb nationalist militias by the

nationalist government of Croatia. In the run-up to its declaration of independence in 1991 the Croat government festooned public places with nationalist symbolism reminiscent of the wartime fascist Ustase regime.

The only way that Croatia's right to self determination could be expressed progressively with regard to its Serb minority population was if, from the start, the Serbs had been guaranteed full equal rights, including the right to secede.

Mafiosi

It is not a question of Marxists supporting the "claim" of Serbia on the Krajina. It is a question of how best to neutralise the national question and turn the workers and peasants of Krajina against their real enemies, the Serb bureaucrats, bosses, Mafiosi and gang-leaders. The reasons Magas gives for Croatia's "right" to keep the Krajina have no socialist basis.

The geographical link is not decisive. With or without the Krajina, Dalmatia is only tenuously linked with the rest of Croatia. Added to this, the Serbs have now "solved" this problem by conquering a land corridor through Bosnia to the Krajina.

The historic and economic cases are equally tenuous. The "Greater Serbia" and the "Historic Croatia" being carved out of the ruins of Yugoslavia are not economically viable. Only a supra-national federation can restore civil society in the Balkans.

Here we come to the second strand of the evolution of Magas' position. Magas clearly sees Tito's Yugoslavia as a revolutionary gain for the workers—not a Balkan socialist federation but something roughly approaching that goal. Once Serb nationalism is let loose and the destruction of Yugoslavia becomes inevitable Magas is left only with the mechanisms of the "international community" to restore some form of multi-national order.

Thus her support for economic sanctions against Serbia, her support for a UN-backed war crimes tribunal, her support for EC "peace-keeping" and monitoring forces in the region etc. Within the region itself, if you see Milosevic as a Hitler-figure, and are armed only with the Stalinist popular front strategy of alliance with "democratic" bourgeois parties against the fascist threat, then it is logical to side with Croatia and with imperialism, even if you remain critical of nationalist ideology.

Cement

The immediate problem for Magas, and others who have adopted this position, is imperialism's complete capitulation to Milosevic, their reliance on Milosevic to cement a new imperialist order.

Marxists have to be scientific in order to cut through the prejudices generated by the Balkan conflict. Fascism, for us, is more than a ruthless expansionist, nationalist government. It is the mobilisation of the petit-bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat in the service of bourgeois nationalism, in armed bands dedicated to the smashing of working class resistance and the resistance of the oppressed. Certainly Seselj and Arkan's Serbian militias fall into this category, and the growing influence of these militias places on the agenda a future fascist coup in Serbia. But Serbia as a whole is not yet fascist.

In Croatia the real threat of fas-

cism does not come mainly from the expansionist pro-Ustase bourgeois émigrés. It comes precisely from those who have organised fascist bands—Paraga and the HOS militia. The fact that the HOS militia supported an integral Bosnia is no surprise: the integral Bosnia was to have been a subordinate buffer zone for Croatia.

The pro-Ustase revisionism of Tujman, the former émigrés and other "respectable" right wingers in Croatia, is just as much of a seed bed for fascism as the nationalism of the Milosevic régime. The fact that HOS has been integrated into the state machine should lull nobody into the idea that fascism in Croatia has little influence. At present it is marching through the institutions. A future war or economic crisis could see a new independent turn by Croat fascism on an immensely strengthened basis of support.

There is a threat of fascism in both Croatia and Serbia today. But neither Serbia nor Croatia has some historic propensity to fascism or anti-fascism. Fascism breeds on economic crisis and national chauvinism. And between them Stalinism and imperialism have left Yugoslavia a huge legacy of both.

The imperialist position in Bosnia today is proof that there can be no progressive imperialist solution. In the coming wars that Magas warns of this will be shown again and again.

The only progressive solution starts from two principles:

- the right of all nations and national minorities to self-determination, including secession
- the fight for a Socialist Federation of the Balkans

It is clear that Yugoslavia itself

cannot be reforged and that the present international boundaries cannot be maintained. Only the working class can implement a multi-national, federated structure in the Balkans.

The first step in forging socialist internationalism among the workers of the former Yugoslav republics is to stand resolutely against imperialist intervention, which will always utilise nationalism, even if it is one day Croat and the next Serb nationalism. The next step is to resolutely defend those under systematic oppression, which today is the Kosovo Albanians and the Bosnian Muslims. Independent working class action around basic economic demands is the starting point for revolutionary opposition to the war.

Explosion

Magas wrote in 1988:

"It is only a matter of time before a major explosion occurs and the only question is whether this will be on a national or a class basis."

For Yugoslavia that question has now been answered. But the unviability of the expanded Serbia and Croatia, the continued resistance of the Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovar Albanians means that the question now has to be posed for the Balkans as a whole.

There is still a chance for the workers of the region—including the Turkish, Greek, Albanian and Bulgarian working classes, to stop a Third Balkan War. To make the most of that chance they must reject reliance on imperialism, reject national chauvinism—even the national chauvinism of the oppressed—and fight for independent class organisations. ■

BOSNIA

No imperialist solutions!

Bosnia-Herzegovina has been effectively partitioned by Croatia and Serbia. Imperialism's Vance-Owen plan gave the green light for this process. In order to maintain the fiction of a unified Bosnian republic it divided the state into ten ethnically based provinces.

The Croat, Serb and Muslim militias then fought a bitter, ethnically genocidal war to impose their own divisions within the country. In the process the war became one to destroy the Bosnian Muslim community and annul its right to self determination.

All those who relied on imperialist intervention to protect the Muslims have been cruelly disappointed. Imperialism has effectively backed the reactionary settlement in the name of "containing" the conflict.

But the imperialist order imposed by Tujman and Milosevic's armies will not contain the situation. It guarantees a new war between Serbia and Croatia just as soon as one of them feels capable of winning it. It means that all eyes turn to Kosovo, where the fascist gangs of the Serb Radical Party, in alliance with the

Serbian state forces, are conducting a reign of terror against the Albanian population.

Faced with this descent into nationalist war neither pacifism nor reliance on the UN, or some other imperialist agency, can stop the slaughter. Only a revolutionary workers' party committed to defence of national rights, to the defence and extension of what is left of the workers' state property relations, and to a Socialist Federation of the Balkans, can begin to organise the movement necessary to stop the war.

Immediately workers throughout Europe must demand:

- No sanctions against any country in Yugoslavia
- End the arms embargo designed to prevent the Muslim community defending itself
- Open the borders to refugees of all nationalities from the Yugoslav cauldron
- All imperialist troops out.

They are there to cement a reactionary settlement and oversee ethnic cleansing. They are the effective jailers of the Muslims of eastern Bosnia. ■

GUATEMALA

Failure of a coup

ON 25 May, President Serrano of Guatemala decided he would emulate his Peruvian counterpart, Alberto Fujimori, and carry out a "self-coup". He dissolved the Congress, fired the supreme court and placed the country under a state of emergency.

Like Fujimori, he demagogically railed at the politicians and argued that he needed harsh powers to clear out corruption. Like Fujimori he had the tacit backing of the military.

Yet by 1 June ex-President Serrano was on a plane to El Salvador en route to exile in Panama, his plans in tatters. What went wrong?

Two factors lay behind Serrano's desperate actions. First, he and the army were alarmed by the rising tide of social protest during April and May. Second, he was about to face charges of corruption.

Protests

A huge round of protests had been triggered in late April by the decision of the power generation monopoly (Eegsa) to effectively double the price of electricity for many households. Around the same time the government introduced a new student ID card that was supposedly aimed at preventing abuse of student transport concessions, but which was seen by the students as a way of increasing state repression against them.

Students and trade unionists took to the streets in a growing anti-government movement. In many cities barricades were set up, buses torched, campus police raids repulsed. One student was killed. By mid-May three trade unions, in health, communication and the courts, announced that they were going to es-

BY KEITH HARVEY

calate their actions.

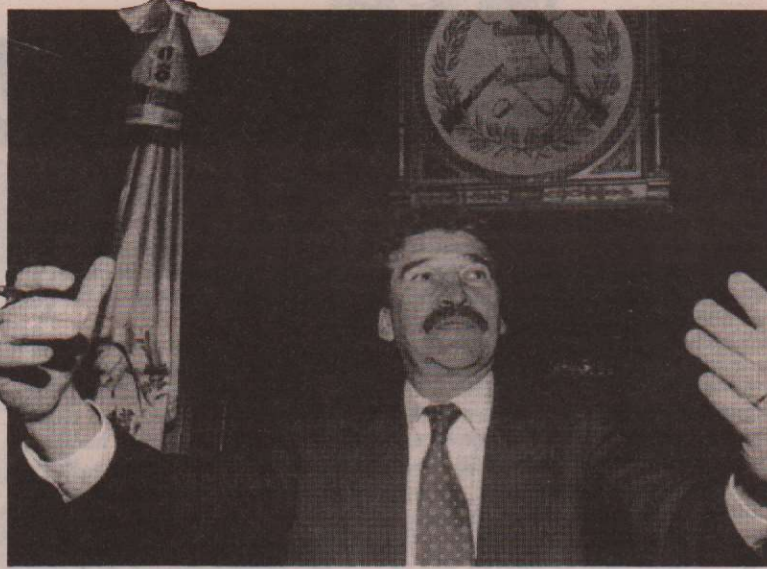
Congress deputies responded to the pressure and opposed the measures. Government concessions on the power charges failed to calm the situation. Serrano decided on more draconian action.

Impeachment

Serrano's timing was also influenced by the fact that a group of businessmen around *Acción Cívica* were about to present a petition to Congress which called for Serrano's impeachment on corruption charges. Serrano threatened to go the same way as Collor in Brazil, impeached by Congress last December, and Perez in Venezuela, suspended earlier this year and due to stand trial on charges of misuse of public funds. What better way to forestall this danger than by dissolving the accusing body?

However, Serrano failed in his plans to follow Fujimori and instead went the way of Collor and Perez. Unlike Fujimori, there was no popular support for Serrano's actions. In Peru the Congress was a largely discredited institution and the traditional parties had exhausted their credentials in the eyes of the masses. In addition, many demoralised and hard-pressed poor were prepared to give Fujimori a chance to use his unrestricted powers to defeat Sendero Luminoso (SL), in the false belief that they were the cause of Peru's and their own problems.

Moreover, in Peru the US responded to the "self-coup" with a mild and ineffective rebuke. Bush was keen to see a gloves-off approach to the increasingly threatening SL and hoped



New president de León

that the US intervention into the coca growing areas of Peru would be helped by the clampdown. But in Guatemala, the guerrilla movement (URNG) is not the threat it was. It is a much reduced force and has been suing for peace and disarmament with the Serrano government for some time.

If anything the greater threat was posed by the destabilising effect of army death squads continuing their assassinations of the indigenous Maya people, trade unionists and leftists. Consequently, the USA's response to Serrano's actions was a swift threat to isolate the government, cut aid and reverse the free access of Guatemalan goods into the US market.

Internally, Serrano and the military faced a growing popular frontist opposition to the state of emergency. At this point the military decided to dump Serrano. They sought to preserve their

own position by putting him on a plane and trying to get his discredited Vice-President—Gustavo Espina—sworn in as the new President. But he could only get a handful of Congress votes. The Supreme Court initiated actions against him for his part in the coup attempt and the unions took to the streets in collaboration with the bosses organisations to stop this manoeuvre.

A coalition of trade unions, business associations and political parties formed a new popular front—*Instancia Nacional de Consenso*—led by the businessmen of the industrialists' association, Caicf. They were able to block Espina's candidature and were instrumental in getting human rights lawyer Ramiro de León Carpio elected as the new President on 6 June.

The fall of Serrano is an undoubted victory. He was a thoroughly reaction-

ary evangelist neo-liberal who provided legal cover for the ongoing massacres of the Maya people and their just struggle for land rights. The installation as President of de León, one of Serrano's long term bourgeois critics over human rights; naturally instils a lot of hope in some sectors of the trade union and popular movement.

However, class conscious workers do not share these illusions. The first danger lies in the cross class enslavement of the unions behind the banner and initiative of the businessmen in *Instancia*. The interests of the Maya people and the Guatemalan masses in general lie in the opposite direction to those of the bosses, even those who opposed Serrano.

Legitimacy

The capitalists who tried to impeach Serrano are interested in clean and cheap government to lend legitimacy to economic and political life so that they can get on with the business of ruthlessly exploiting the opportunities offered them by the US market. They are no friends of the working class and poor peasants. The trade unions must break from *Instancia* and form their own united front of struggle.

The military remain a decisive force in the new regime. De León is not their candidate, and has sacked some key Serrano appointees to the General Staff, but in their place he has merely appointed the next most senior figures. He has appointed one of these, the most reactionary general in Guatemala, Roberto Perussina, Defence Minister. This does not suggest that de León's human rights convictions will make much headway in locating and suppressing the death squads.

Behind the new presidential and congressional façade the business and military still retain enormous initiative. The task of working class organisations is to break with the bosses and their Congressional parties and return to the mass actions of April and May which signalled the start of the crisis for the Guatemalan ruling class. ■

CAMBODIA

AS WE predicted in last month's *Workers Power*, Cambodia's recent UN-controlled elections have solved nothing.

Despite their supposed commitment to democratic elections, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) stood by as Prince Norodom Sihanouk executed a cold coup. Before the count was even finished he appointed himself prime minister.

His son, Norodom Ranariddh, and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) leader and former prime minister, Hun Sen, were to be his deputies. Ironically the most stubborn resistance came from his son who was not even consulted.

Tired by the whole affair, Sihanouk retired to bed on the advice of his astrologers saying he would defer plans to form a government until his birthday—in October!

In the first days of the count it became clear that the ruling Stalinist (and restorationist) CPP, established after the overthrow of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea in 1979, was likely to be defeated by Sihanouk's party, FUNCINPEC. The CPP called foul play, even threatening riots and an insurrection, conveniently forgetting that their tactics in the election campaign had included breaking up opposition rallies and machine-gunning the homes of opposition leaders.

UNTAC refused to consider a new round of elections. Sihanouk was their candidate and he was winning. The CPP, for all their bluster, appear to have resigned themselves to becoming junior partners in a coalition government with the self-appointed Sihanouk holding executive power.

UN crowns its prince



Election meeting in Cambodia

The Khmer Rouge, who had denounced the election process as a farce, went on to denounce the CPP for not accepting the result. The final seven seat FUNCINPEC majority over the CPP puts them in a strong bargaining position as the second military force in the country. To give a legitimate gloss to all of this a constituent assembly has been convened, but whether it will last is by no means certain.

BY CHRIS BRYANT

The outcome is a chronically weak government—an unwilling alliance of factions that have been at war with each other for fourteen years. In the short term this will allow the multinationals and Thai capitalists to take advantage and plunder Cambodia's natural resources.

From the late 1980s, the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary

Party (KPRP), as the CPP was then known, had increasingly abandoned its commitment to "socialism" in the face of imperialist blockade. As late as 1992, exports were practically zero. Rice production was still nowhere close to the 1970 levels. The per capita GDP is only \$150. The new government will not help alleviate any of these problems.

The utopian strategy of building socialism in one country has suc-

ceeded in building nothing more than greater and greater privileges for the bureaucracy. The chronic imbalances of an economic programme that dislocated the planning process from most of the rural economy, production from the market and the population from the plan meant the degenerate workers' state was permanently crisis ridden.

Sihanouk is upheld as a beacon of peace by the imperialists. They identify with his opulent lifestyle and his love of the free market. From 1941-53 he ruled on behalf of the French, after independence in 1953 he ruled as an absolute monarch. In this period he earned the imperialists' respect for brutally repressing any opposition. During the peasant rising of 1967-68 he boasted:

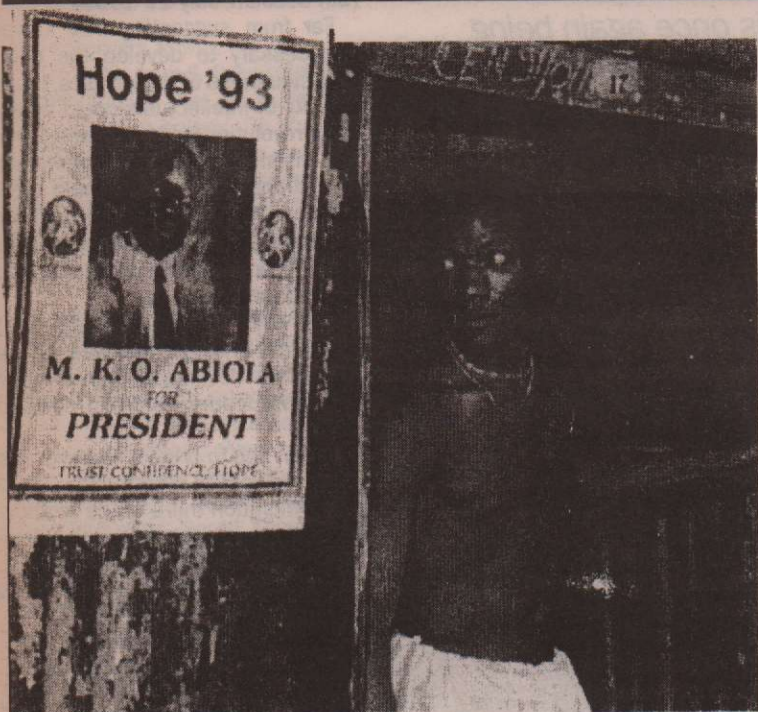
"When you roast a duck, you normally eat it. But when we had roasted these fellows [the rebels], we had to feed them to the vultures."

For the workers and peasants of Cambodia, he will soon show himself as no better than the Stalinists. Rather than simply facing the enemy at home, they will now face the terrible privations of the international monopoly capitalism that has been battering the country from outside for the last fourteen years.

Only workers' revolution offers an alternative to further tragedies for the long suffering masses of Cambodia. ■

NIGERIA

Democracy on hold



Abandon all hope?

THE FARCE of Nigeria's presidential elections typifies the difficulties of the "democratisation drive" in Africa. General Ibrahim Babangida, military dictator for the last decade, refused to accept the results of the June presidential elections. He announced new elections from which the previous candidates would be barred!

This was only the third presidential election since independence in 1960. Babangida justifies the military's frequent interventions into political life by pointing to the widespread corruption and the "chaos" of civilian governments.

The elections, postponed three times, took place under heavy dicta-

torial control. The two official parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) were both created without the participation of an active base. General Babangida himself dictated both their manifestos. To provide the facade of a serious contest, one was a little to the "left" and one was a little to the "right"!

After the second attempt at elections, the leading executives of the two political parties were disbanded. Presidential candidates were screened through Caretaker Committees and the National Electoral Commission (NEC), which are both firmly under

presidential control.

Last year Nigerians were given a whiff of democracy when they were allowed to vote in National Assembly elections. But legislative power remained with the Chairman of the National Defence and Security Council—Babangida. Political activities were repressed and non-approved parties banned. Trade union activists and socialists like Rotimi Ewebeyi and Biodun Olamosu, have found themselves in the dock for demanding free and fair elections.

Explosion

Nigeria's western backers are anxious to see a return to some sort of civilian rule. They know from experience that the current level of repression could cause an explosive reaction by Nigeria's powerful and growing working class. They would prefer to see a more "normal" form of bourgeois rule in which the major industrial and financial interests are able to involve the middle classes and a layer of the working class in safe

forms of political activity.

It was soon clear that early returns were favouring Moshood Abiola, the candidate of the Social Democratic Party. The Association for a Better Nigeria sought an injunction stalling the whole process. This pressure group, led by arms dealer Arthur Nzeribe, is a pro-Babangida alliance of businessmen who have benefited under the military.

Other interests opposed to the Abiola victory included supporters of rival Bashir Tofa of the NRC, a northern businessman. Some of the northern elite were disturbed at the success of Abiola, a wealthy southerner. Unofficial results suggest that Abiola's populist campaign had won support across the regions.

Abiola, is no friend of the workers. He owns an airline, a publishing house, farms and factories and has overseas investments worth tens of millions of pounds.

Despite Abiola's appearance as the candidate of a "left of centre" party, he, like his opponent Tofa, came from the old National Party of Nigeria which ran the last civilian government and was the main party of the Nigerian bourgeoisie.

Neither of the contenders in the June race had a serious programme for dealing with Nigeria's huge economic and social problems—but neither has the military or whatever stooge candidates it chooses to allow in the next round of elections. The national debt is running at £18 billion and serious inflation is affecting both

the cost of vital imports and everyday goods for workers and the rural poor.

Yet Nigeria is potentially rich. It is an important oil producer. It has a skilled working class, it should be able to produce adequate food. But it is suffering from decades of misrule and exploitation by its own ridiculously wealthy elite—1% of the population controls 75% of the wealth—together with their imperialist partners. Nigeria's economy has been skewed towards oil production and its agriculture suffers both from over concentration on production for export and from undercutting by US and European imports.

Opposition

It is time for the working class to come to the head of the opposition to military rule and to insist on uprooting the old corrupt practices. There should be a general strike against Babangida's dictatorship. Workers do not need the new rigged election Babangida called after annulling the last one.

They need the chance to fight for genuine democracy and a government that represents working class interests. They must fight for a constituent assembly free of interference from the army or the bosses—but to do this successfully workers will need to form their own councils and militia. This could pave the way to the overthrow of both the military and the corrupt ruling class once and for all. ■

MALAWI

Dictatorship still in power

MALAWI'S REFERENDUM on 14 June resulted in a two thirds majority for an end to Hastings Banda's one party state. The 63% of the electorate who turned out voted for a multi-party system.

The widespread jubilation at the result was hardly surprising. In thirty years, Banda and his Malawi Congress Party (MNC) have presided over one of the most vicious dictatorships in Africa.

Malawi has only 97 lawyers serving a population of almost 9 million. There is strict censorship, harassment of students and trade unionists, repressive laws against women (who are not allowed to wear trousers in public).

Torture is rife and detention without trial common. Banda has enforced his rule using an inequitable distribution of the staple crop, maize, together with the use of the paramilitary Young Pioneers.

Banda was forced into holding a referendum by a combination of domestic and international pressures. Malawi is one of the six poorest nations on earth. The population has a life expectancy of 46 years and a literacy rate of only 25%. The stranglehold of Banda's dictatorship has to be broken for any advance to occur.

Of course, the imperialist govern-



Dictator Banda

ments now demanding change cover over the fact that they have been friends of Banda in the past. Britain, the US and Israel, together with South Africa, have been the biggest suppliers of arms. But in the last year, the imperialists have enforced a donor aid freeze and foreign exchange reserves have dried up.

The western governments would like to see reforms which "free up" the economy. The problem with such moves is that they will cause even further misery for the workers and rural poor forcing up the prices of foodstuffs and discouraging public projects.

The opposition inside Malawi has coalesced around the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD). Both of these

have started to attract politicians previously associated with Banda's regime. The UDF is led by Bakili Muluzi, a former Banda loyalist. The record of the leader of AFORD, Chakufwa Chihana, at first sight seems more promising. As a former trade union leader, Chihana is a recently released detainee, but he is now emerging as a mainstream bourgeois politician.

These oppositionists are now busy demonstrating their "responsible" behaviour. Rather than demanding an immediate return to democracy, they have agreed to a managed transition which leaves Banda and his henchmen still in government. A National Consultative Council will be set up to advise Banda's National Executive Committee.

This deal lets the dictatorship off the hook and may have averted an uprising. But elections are not promised until May next year. Banda remains in control of the state apparatus. The uneasy truce between the government and opposition can hardly survive—particularly as Banda's supporters try to preserve the privileges they have held for so long.

There is a real danger that Malawi's referendum, far from heralding a new democratic phase in the country's future, could mark a new phase of repression, violence and misery for the mass of the population. ■

Hands off Iraq!

BILL CLINTON hailed his murderous raid on Iraq as a "success". He told the world, "I feel quite good about what transpired."

What transpired was that a US cruise missile attack killed at least six Iraqi civilians and left many more injured. Yet again the imperialists are trying to make the masses of the semi-colonial world pay for the new world order in blood.

The excuse for the attack was that Iraq plotted to kill George Bush in April. The target of the attack was supposed to be an Iraqi intelligence headquarters. Both the excuse and the claimed target are laughable.

The real reasons for the attack were to boost Clinton's sagging popularity at home by hitting the old enemy and to remind Iraq that Clinton's arrival at the White House marks no change in the US attitude. US imperialism under Clinton will carry on where Bush left off.

John Major raced to a microphone as soon as the raid was made public to declare his undying support for the US. But Clinton's action has worried many of the former allies who fought against Iraq in the Gulf war.

It shows that the grand coalition was built on sands as shifting as those on which it fought in 1991. It was not the beginning of a stable new world order. It was an attempt by the US to re-assert its role as the world's policeman. As its role comes under strain, the new world order crumbles, the policeman becomes more desperate and vicious.

The latest attack on Iraq proves what we said from the very beginning of the Gulf conflict. Imperialism acted not to save the world for democracy, but to save it for its own brutal rule.

No worker can support this latest atrocity by US imperialism. Every worker should condemn it, and condemn Major for supporting it. ■

NINETY YEARS ago this month, delegates assembled for the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). Out of this Congress emerged the revolutionary faction, known as the Bolsheviks. Though the disputed issues seemed to be obscure, in time it became clear that the division between the Bolsheviks (majority) and the Mensheviks (minority) was decisive.

The RSDLP was a very weak organisation. It had been founded in 1898 by a Congress of only nine delegates, and in Russia the circles that had been formed were subject to severe repression from the Tsar's police. Their efforts were insufficiently co-ordinated, with many of the groups operating on an individual basis and suffering from what Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik faction, was to describe as "amateurism".

Through the paper *Iskra*, Lenin and other revolutionaries, including at that time the future leader of the Mensheviks, Martov, waged a struggle against the backwardness of the Russian movement. They fought to establish not only circles, study groups, trade union bodies and mutual aid societies, but also an all-Russian political party with a central all-Russian newspaper.

Split

The Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903 aimed to complete the work of founding a really united party. With over 50 delegates it was far more representative than the first congress. But the Congress ended in a split that to many Russian socialists appeared to be not only damaging but incomprehensible.

The split was over paragraph one of the rules of the party. Lenin wanted party members to participate personally in one of the party's organisations. Martov wanted a broader formula, embracing as members all those who worked to accomplish the party's aims "under the control and direction of the organs of the party."

As an article in *Socialist Worker* by Ian Taylor rightly points out, Lenin wanted "a tight organisation with active members who worked in a co-ordinated way" (5 June 1993), whereas Martov's conception was of a broader party made up of anyone working under the party's direction, who would therefore be "free to accept or reject party discipline as they wished."

This was not simply an organisational wrangle, as Taylor and the SWP infer. Lenin's particular view of the relationship between the working class as a whole and the party, comprising its most class conscious representatives, was the crux of the argument: put another way, it was a dispute about the relationship between the spontaneous movement and conscious revolutionary ideas and action.

Spontaneity

In *What is to be Done?*, published in 1902, Lenin argued not simply, as Ian Taylor suggests, about "the means to build an organisation", but also that it was necessary to go beyond the spontaneous militancy that the workers had shown in the economic struggle through the trade unions. In the 1890s many social democratic groups had restricted themselves to promoting this economic struggle. Lenin argued that this tendency—known as *economism*—meant leaving the political struggle against Tsarism to be carried out by the liberals and the bourgeoisie.

In *What is to be Done?* Lenin insisted:

"There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, to its development along the lines of the Credo programme [the

SWP AND BOLSHEVISM

On the 90th anniversary of the split in the Russian socialist movement, the theme of what type of party the working class needs is once again being discussed in the socialist press. **Richard Brenner** examines the Socialist Workers Party's treatment of this historical event, and argues that despite their claims to stand in the tradition of Lenin and of Bolshevism, the SWP have rejected one of the principles that stood at the heart of Lenin's struggle.

What is Leninism?

programme of the economists]; for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei* [mere trade unionism], and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie."

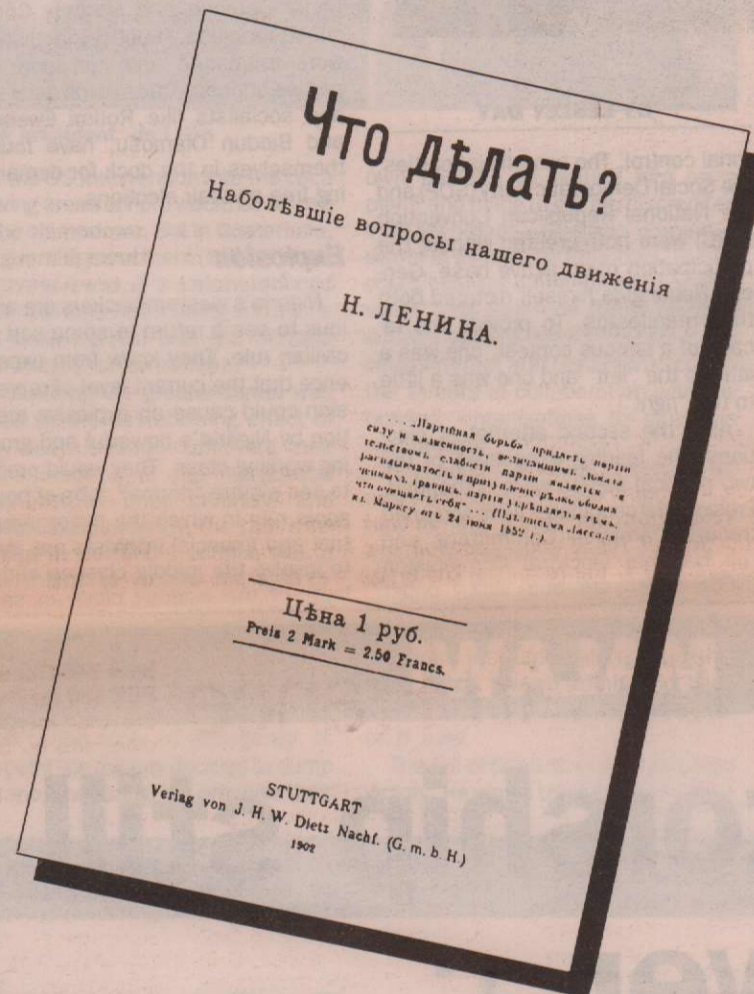
Whilst the economists saw the need only to promote the economic struggle, which they expressed in the slogan of "lending the economic struggle itself a political character", Lenin recognised that the spontaneous economic struggle already possessed a political character, and that it was spontaneously bourgeois. The task of revolutionaries was, "to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary social democracy."

Leadership

Lenin was not saying that trade unions were simply bourgeois organisations. He insisted on the need for socialists to organise within and build the unions. But on their own, trade unions and the spontaneous economic struggle lead only to the struggle against a particular employer to improve working conditions and pay within the framework of the capitalist system. For Lenin this meant that conscious revolutionaries would have to fight for and win leadership of the working class in order to direct the entire class struggle—economic and political—against Tsarism and the capitalist system itself.

What is to be Done? provoked great controversy. At the 1903 Congress it was attacked by representatives of the economist trend such as Martynov, who argued that there was a contradiction between Lenin's position and that of Marx and Engels. Martynov argued that the spontaneous development leads to the movement being subordinated "not to bourgeois ideology but to modern scientific socialism". The natural consequence of this would have meant that the socialists should organise a broad party to reflect the spontaneous development of the workers into conscious Marxists, and should tail behind the economic struggle as it was already developing.

This is why Lenin's views on spontaneity and consciousness were integrally linked to his views on the type of party that the Russian working class needed. Although at the Second Congress prominent figures such as Martov and Plekhanov defended Lenin's views against the economists, after the split they emerged as leaders of the Menshevik faction and both publicly repudiated Lenin's position in *What is to be Done?* as being at the root of the "mischief" caused by Bolshevism. They argued that by



Cover of *What is to be Done?* 1902

downplaying the spontaneous element, Lenin was essentially trying to substitute the working class as the main agency of social change with the tightly knit vanguard party itself.

This criticism of Lenin's ideas is echoed by the SWP today.

Despite laying claim to the heritage of Bolshevism, the SWP's official position on the nature of the revolutionary party owes more to Martynov than to Lenin. In the SWP's standard textbook, *Marxism and the Party*, John Molyneux echoes Martynov:

"If we accept Lenin's formulation that revolutionary consciousness has to be brought into the working class then precious little is left of Marx's fundamental dictum that 'the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself'. On the contrary, the role of the working class would be a strictly subordinate one."

This misrepresents Lenin's attitude, just as the Mensheviks were to do after 1903. Lenin was quite clear that the working class itself would have to overthrow the Tsar and capitalism by its own revolutionary action. But he correctly insisted that to do this the workers would have to develop full class political consciousness through the medium of a party guided by a revolutionary theory and programme. He argued that workers could and must participate in the process of developing that theory and

programme, but that this could not be achieved on the basis of the economic struggle alone. As he put it:

"Class political consciousness can only be brought to the workers from without, that is only from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers."



To the charge levelled against him at the 1903 Congress that this meant subordinating the workers to small groups of intellectuals, and that he saw no role for the workers in developing scientific Marxist ideas, Lenin replied:

"Really? Have I not said, time and again, that the shortage of fully conscious workers, worker-leaders and worker-revolutionaries, is precisely the

greatest shortcoming in our movement? Did I not say, there, that the training of such worker-revolutionaries must be our immediate task?" (9th session, July 22 1903)

Far from suggesting that it was unnecessary to develop the class consciousness of the workers, that a handful of intellectuals could do the job of revolution for the workers, Lenin was insisting that developing worker-revolutionaries was the main task, but one which could not be fulfilled automatically. It was the task of the party to subordinate spontaneity to consciousness.

The SWP argue—wrongly—that Lenin later changed this view as the Bolsheviks developed into a mass party. SWP leader, Tony Cliff, claimed that:

"Lenin had to protect his followers from allegiance to *What is to be Done?* His formulation there of the relationship between spontaneity and organisation still bedevils the movement. Yet in 1905 he clearly reversed his position:

"The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social-democratic."

"(International Socialism, May 1973) Cliff broke off the quotation at that point. If he had completed the quotation it would have been clear to his readers that Lenin's position in 1905 was the same as in 1902 when he wrote *What is to be Done?* The full quote reads:

"The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic, and more than ten years of work put in by social democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness."

This was of a piece with Lenin's argument in 1902 that the workers spontaneously gravitate towards socialist ideas because they reveal better than any other theory the cause of the conditions that the workers face, "provided however this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, provided it subordinates spontaneity to itself."

Evidence

Nobody has ever been able to provide evidence for the claim that Lenin later renounced his views on spontaneity and consciousness. On the contrary, in 1907, when *What is to be Done?* was republished, Lenin wrote a preface in which he refused to renounce his views.

The SWP's break with Lenin on the question of the relationship between spontaneity and consciousness means that the party is reduced to an organisational question. For us the party is also, indeed above all, a political question. It is not simply the organisation that "links all the struggles together", but one that gives direction and revolutionary purpose to those struggles.

The party does not simply reflect the mood of the class. It advances a strategy, a programme of action that can transform that mood into class political consciousness, a strategy that the workers in struggle do not automatically advance.

As against this the SWP reflected the militant mood of last autumn, for example, in the (correct) call for a general strike, but did not seek to transform that mood into a fight for the means of getting such a strike—action councils linking different sections of workers, organising them for the task of prosecuting a general strike, of challenging the bureaucracy and seizing the initiative from them. In failing to advance such a strategy the SWP ended up failing to offer the working class any means of preventing the terrible treachery that defused the autumn militancy.

Today the urgent task is the building of just the type of party that Lenin was fighting for in 1903. Ninety years on the full lessons of that struggle have to be drawn. The SWP cannot and will not do it. That task falls to Workers Power. ■

Democracy and South Africa

Dear Workers Power,

The letter from S. Roper last month implies that South Africa is a semi-colony. On the contrary, South Africa is perhaps the only country in the world that has managed to develop into an imperialist power since the First World War.

The South African economy is overwhelmingly dominated by white multinational companies. Out of the top 138 companies (excluding the ten state companies who themselves control 25% of the total) about 80% of the total assets were held by private South African conglomerates by 1986. It is not simply that there is a tendency towards monopoly, the economy is commanded by monopolies.

There is also a very high level of fusion between industrial and banking capital, not only within the multinational conglomerates but also between them. Anglo-American, SANLAM, Rembrandt and the other major conglomerates are interlinked in a complex web of joint directorships and joint shareholdings.

South Africa dominates most of southern Africa both economically and militarily. These three factors, monopoly capital, the fusion of banking and industrial capital and its international role clearly define South Africa as an imperialist country.

The white minority rule maintains some relics of colonial

ism. But that minority rule is by an indigenous bourgeoisie, not a comprador or colonialist bourgeoisie. The numerous clashes between South African and other imperialisms clearly illustrate this.

The struggle in South Africa is not an anti-imperialist or an anti-colonial struggle against foreign oppression. It is a direct struggle between workers and capital. Because of the particular form of class rule, apartheid, democratic demands take on a revolutionary dynamic just as they did in Eastern Europe during the collapse of Stalinism.



The task of revolutionaries is therefore to relate to the democratic aspirations of the masses that are centrally embodied in the demands for universal suffrage and majority rule. Making the revolution permanent in these conditions demands internationalisation of the revolution and the concretisation of the democratic aspirations in the dem-

of the rule of workers' councils, as I hope S. Roper would agree.

The job is not simply to place "more democratic demands than just universal suffrage" as the comrade suggests. It is also to put forward a programme for workers' power. The centrality of the demands around suffrage is that they immediately address the question of power. Other democratic demands, important as they may be, do not.

There was nothing in the article he criticised to suggest that democratic tasks cannot be achieved if the bosses see no other way out. Indeed we have always disagreed with those on the left who argued that apartheid could not be destroyed without the destruction of capitalism. We have pointed to the fact that many aspects of apartheid have already been abandoned. If we do see a South Africa with universal suffrage, however, it will be because it is the only way the South African imperialist bourgeoisie can save its profits: not because of the interests of other imperialist powers who are, in this context, a secondary factor in events. Revolutionaries fight against such a democratic counter-revolution by presenting themselves as the most consistent democrats, fighting to show the superiority of workers' council democracy over capitalism's fake democracy. The article was an explana-

tion of the current situation that identified the most important immediate tasks facing the black South African working class if it is to stop the sell out. Reading Comrade Roper's letter, I get the feeling we did not read the same article.

Communist Greetings,
Chris Bryant

Dear Workers Power,

In the May issue of your paper an article on South Africa called on the masses to fight for a "sovereign constituent assembly to implement full democracy and socialism for South Africa's working people".

It is correct to fight for a constituent assembly, but it would still be only the most democratic of bourgeois institutions. It cannot implement socialism and it cannot resolve all the unfulfilled democratic tasks. The only way that the South African masses can "implement full democracy and socialism" is through a workers' and peasants' revolutionary republic. In other publications of the LRCI this is made clear. I assume that this was an oversight by Workers Power, not a change of line.

With revolutionary greetings,
José Villa

WP replies: Yes, it was an oversight!

Red-Brown Bloc in France

Dear Comrades,

The collapse of Stalinism in the workers' states has led to sections of the bureaucracy allying themselves with reactionary and even fascist forces. There are signs that similar developments are now taking place around the French Communist Party (PCF).

At the end of June, the satirical newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* revealed a series of contacts between some PCF intellectuals and fascists who are seeking to win over the Stalinists on the basis of anti-Americanism and the call for a "third way" between communism and capitalism.

Last year the PCF held a public meeting in which a leading PCF journalist discussed with Alain de Benoist, a long-time "new right" fascist theorist. At the same time, Edward Limonov, journalist and PCF fellow traveller, was simultaneously publishing articles in the PCF's press and fascist journals.

More recently, the *Idiot Journal*, a supposedly satirical newspaper edited by PCF member Marc Cohen, has published a racist article by an ex-Maoist journalist calling for a new alliance between all nationalist forces, from the fascists to the PCF. This call was enthusiastically received by the PCF's "Communist Collective of Media Workers", led by... Marc Cohen.

The *Idiot Journal* is published by Jean-Edern HELLIER, who has produced special issues of his paper to support workers in struggle but who two years ago said that, "I have a great deal of personal

sympathy for Le Pen... he is sensitive and human."

This dangerous "national socialist" mixture has not only taken in the Stalinists. In the latest issue of their paper, the *JCR-Egalité*, a "Trotskyist" youth organisation praise HELLIER for his "provocation" and "impertinence" and call for the "absolutely necessary" defence of HELLIER, faced with a court case brought by ex-minister Bernard Tapie.

The truth is that all these characters on the fringes of

the PCF are playing with fire. History shows us the dangers. In the 1930s, the "left" wing of the Nazi Party around the Strasser brothers sought to win workers and left intellectuals on the basis of their "socialism". Even more strikingly, in 1934 the PCF leader, Jacques Doriot split to form his own party, on a basis similar to those advanced by Cohen and his cronies. In less than two years his organisation was openly fascist.

Although the contacts that

Dear Comrades,

Laugh? I nearly went myself! The bosses are giving us plenty of sitcom-style entertainment at the moment. The Tory scandals and the Royals' musical beds are great. But for real entertainment value you can't beat Lloyd's Names.

For anyone who has missed the recent episodes, these are the people who invest through syndicates in the Lloyd's insurance market. Of course the likes of us don't get in on the act as you have to have at least £250,000 knocking around. The fun bit is that the liabilities are unlimited. If your syndicate hits a run of bad luck you can lose everything.

A lot of very rich people became Names in the mid-1980s boom. The *Financial Times* now talks of "the tragedies [of] those gullible people sucked into a bubble". Gullible maybe, but also

Watch the names game

stinking rich. The 2,000 or so Names who face potential bankruptcy following the announcement of £2.91 billion losses at Lloyd's are now crying foul.

Disgruntled Names actually tried to liquidate Lloyd's at an extraordinary general meeting. Lloyd's shifted the goalposts by increasing the number of Names' signatures

needed for an EGM fifteen-fold!

It serves them right. Perhaps they might realise that their buddies, who were always so friendly when trying to pull them into the syndicates, are just like themselves—mercenary vultures who would steal the gold teeth from their dead grandmothers given the chance. Their system knows no personal loyalties.

For some all may not be lost. Lloyd's has a hardship fund. But many Names are reluctant to come forward because they don't want Lloyd's to know how much capital they really own. Successful applicants get a meagre £15,000 per year to live on and are allowed to keep a house worth £150,000, poor blighters. It makes me feel positively rich on my £44 a week dole.

Fraternally,

Emile Gallet

Paris

Yours in stitches,
The man with no Name

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, industrial 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 (LRCI). The last revolutionary international (the 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

INSIDE

Number 169 July 1993

- ★ Labour and the unions
- ★ Nigeria in turmoil
- ★ Major's mishaps

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

UN Somalia murderers

When they invaded Somalia in December, United States' forces promised to bring peace and food. This pledge was renewed by the United Nations when it took over the policing operation.

Months later the conditions of the Somali population are still terrible. The famine and the fragmentation of the country continues and the streets of Mogadishu are stained with the blood of hundreds of civilians, butchered or wounded by their supposed saviours.

The massacres of peaceful demonstrators and the air, infantry and artillery strikes on workers' districts in June have spurred opposition to the UN presence and sharpened the power struggle between rival tribal groups.

Massacres

The actions of the peace-keeping forces are reminiscent of massacres by the worst dictatorships and colonial troops. The blue beret has replaced the pith helmet as the symbol of imperialist brutality. The true role of the UN has been exposed.

It is not in Somalia to bring democracy or defend the Somali population. It is there to impose the US-led new world order in which dictatorship is only a dirty word if it is not a puppet dictatorship serving the economic and strategic interests of international capitalism.

When the Security Council agreed to take over from the US operation, it gave its forces a new tougher mandate which included the power to disarm combatants and to use weapons to maintain security.

The idea that the US and UN intervened to help humanitarian aid get through is a lie. The imperialists covered their eyes as Somalia went through the worst of the famine. Yet this was a famine largely caused by imperialist exploitation. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the US government pumped \$900 million of aid in to prop up Siad



Imperialist soldier gives Somali youth humanitarian aid.

Barre's vicious dictatorship but they did nothing to alleviate the country's \$1.7 billion foreign debt burden.

Somalia, like so many other semi-colonies, was forced into production for export rather than for the needs of the population. The international grain markets, rigged and price-fixed in favour of the US, helped force a 15% drop in food production between 1981 and 1991.

Famine

The famine, while not over, has worked itself through with the death of hundreds of thousands and the displacement of millions. By December, aid was getting through to most areas and the situation was beginning to improve. The pretence at being a peace-keeping force is another lie. Just a few years back, the US was

encouraging Barre's offensive that left 60,000 dead. In all, about one tenth of the population has died through famine and war and one quarter has been displaced.

While the majority of the western media continue to reproduce the lie that the UN presence is designed to help Somalis, the more honest *Economist* magazine confesses:

"Even the Pakistani's slaughter of civilians in the general's area could be turned to the UN's advantage, if it applies the unpleasant but powerful argument of the nastier kind of colonial administrator: that 'this is the only language these people understand'."

It was in part to hide this fact that the UN forces launched a military offensive against General Aideed's forces, arguing that this war-

lord lay behind all protests at its presence. The UN airstrikes took out several buildings totally unconnected with Aideed including one of Mogadishu's few factories.

Naturally the imperialists claimed a great victory, de-

spite the fact that they failed to capture or kill general Aideed and they were forced to recognise that, as *Newsweek* put it:

"Aideed's partisans are not patsies. During the fighting, they split up into small units

and resisted fiercely with machine guns and rocket launchers; four Moroccan soldiers were killed."

The killing of 23 Pakistani soldiers is being used as a pretext to smash the most powerful of the fifteen tribal military bands operating in the country. Aideed's forces controlled about three-quarters of Mogadishu, the centre of the country and the most important city in the south before the offensive. They posed a serious threat to the United States' ability to impose its will.

Intervention

The real reason for the UN intervention is to secure a firm US foothold in the horn of Africa. Strategically this puts them in a strong position to police the other conflicts in the region. Economically it gives the American oil giants like Amoco, Conoco and Chevron access to the potential oil reserves both within the country and in the shelves of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

For the people of Somalia, the only solution is one that cuts across tribal divisions, uniting the workers and peasants in a struggle against both imperialism and capitalism. For us, if we are not to see our fellow workers in Somalia subjected to further decades of imperialist barbarity and if we are not to see our own bosses strengthened even more, we need to demand the immediate withdrawal of all UN forces. ■

Who are the warlords?

Somalia's society is divided into six tribes, themselves divided into several clans. In 1991 a coalition of the three main tribes finally overthrew the Barre regime. But this coalition immediately broke up along clan lines.

The Isaacs tribe that dominates the previous British colony in the north, declared that they would split Somalia and create a new state of Somaliland. The Hawiyas who dominate the capital and the centre of the country split.

The new president Ali Mahdi was supported by the Hawiya's Abgal clan based in the north of the Mogadishu area. General Aideed and his Habar-Gidir clan (also Hawiyas) refused to recognise them. In re-

sponse Ali Mahdi formed a new coalition with the north-eastern Marejaan clan and the deposed Siad Barre's forces who control the extreme south of the country.

The military gang leaders have prospered in a situation of extreme want. All of them are based on the interests of tiny rich élites, none of them have anything to offer the peasants, workers and pastoralists of Somalia.

However the main enemy of the Somali people is imperialism. It is they who are responsible for the tragic state of the country. Without throwing off the shackles of the international monopolies and their blue beret shock troops, there will never be prosperity in the country. ■