MONAERS MONAERS

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

* Can Northern Irish workers unite?

pages 8 & 9

★ The British left and the peace deal page 10



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IRELAND

No peace

under

Brill Sh

NO MORE BLOODY SUNDAYS! TROOPS OUT NOW!

DEMONSTRATE:

29 JANUARY 1994 • 12 NOON, HYDE PARK, LONDON JOIN THE TROOPS OUT NOW CONTINGENT!

N JANUARY 1972 British paratroops shot dead thirteen unarmed demonstrators on the streets of Derry, Northern Ireland.

Not a single soldier was disciplined or charged for the "Bloody Sunday" massacre. The British justice system white-washed this act of cold-blooded murder and laid the blame on the Civil Rights protesters themselves.

Last month two British soldiers walked free from a Belfast court after being acquitted of murdering an unarmed Sinn Féin member at an army checkpoint. One of Ireland's no-jury courts had decided that the soldiers' cooked-up stories were enough to ensure "reasonable doubt" about their intentions when they pumped twenty bullets into Fergal Caraher as he drove away from the checkpoint.

Nothing changes in Northern Ireland, and nothing will change until the murderous, sectarian six-county state, and the British troops who uphold it, are swept away for good.

The Major-Reynolds' declaration has been hailed as a great step forward towards peace. But Major and Reynolds are not at war with each other. It is the British state which is at war with the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland. And the peace deal that is being crafted behind the backs of the anti-unionist masses is designed to guarantee surrender, on British imperialism's terms.

The Major-Reynolds' declaration is a two faced, cynical exercise. It grants nothing concrete to the anti-unionist working class, but promises the loyalist population the continued right to veto a united Ireland.

Its main purpose is to provide the Republican leadership with a form of words under which they can cease the armed struggle and take their place, like so many other middle class nationalist leaders, from Palestine to South Africa, at the negotiating table with imperialism.

So the Downing Street agreement nods in the direction of "self-determination for the whole of Ireland". What use is that when the loyalists are guaranteed the right to veto self-determination.

The document claims Britain has "no economic or strategic interest" in Northern Ireland. That may be true given the decline of Britain's navy and the need to introduce "market forces" into the heavily subsidised, Protestant dominated industries.

But Britain has a strategic and economic interest in preserving the imperialist social order in Ireland, north and south. That is why its 18,000 troops are on standby to launch a new offensive against not only the IRA, but the entire anti-unionist population, if their peace con-trick fails.

Every year Irish Republicans and and anti-imperialists in the British workers' movement march to commemorate Bloody Sunday. This is not because of sentiment, or because we are obsessed with the past. It is because as long as British troops remain in Ireland, innocent people will be killed and our bosses will be able to develop an arsenal of repression which they can use against the working class in Britain.

The Republican movement's strategy—the bullet and the ballot—could never bring victory. It was based on a refusal to mobilise the working class, north and south, in a combined struggle against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. But the way out of the stalemate does not lie through an illusory peace deal with the British state.

It lies through a mass political struggle to force British troops out of Ireland, a struggle which workers in Britain and Ireland should do their utmost to develop and maintain. This year's Bloody Sunday march must be a massive show of defiance, against both the Major-Reynolds' con-trick and the threats of increased repression which lie behind it.

N 10 SEPTEMBER 1993, hundreds of people held a vigil outside the London Hospital in Whitechapel in the East End. Nine of those people, all young men, are currently facing charges of riot which could lead to long terms of imprisonment.

The vigil was for Quddus Ali who had been rushed to the hospital after a vicious racist attack. Quddus was in a coma after being beaten and almost killed by a gang of racist thugs.

The vigil was held to show support for the family of Quddus and to draw attention to the increasing number of such racist attacks in the area. The police were doing nothing about the racist attacks, but this was no surprise to the local black youth who have suffered police harassment and racism for years.

TOWER HAMLETS

Drop the charges!

The police response was to break up the vigil. As the demonstrators, mainly local Bengali youth, attempted to defend themselves, nine were arrested and many others were injured.

But the police were determined to go further and punish the local community for daring to protest against racism. The area was swamped by police wearing riot gear who then allowed over 50 fascist thugs from the British National Party to attack shops and terrorise local people in Brick Lane, close to the hospital.

Of course, it is not the police or the BNP who are facing charges of riot. It is the nine young men who were arrested on the vigil. We must demand that these charges are dropped immediately.

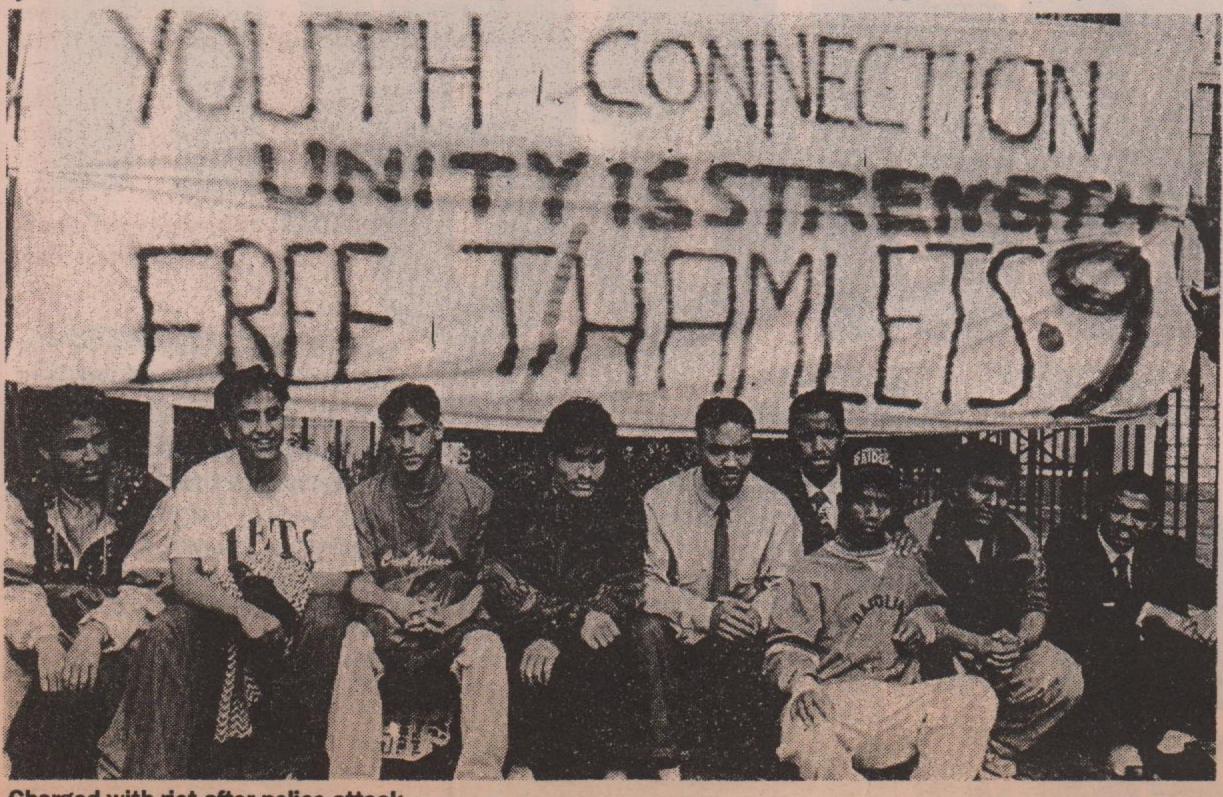
A campaign has been set up for the defence of the Tower Hamlets Nine. They urgently need support. What you can do:

- · Organise meetings in your trade union or student union and get a speaker from the campaign
- Organise a collection and send a donation to the campaign Affiliate to the campaign
- · Support pickets of the court

For further details and to send donations, write to:

TOWER HAMLETS NINE DEFENCE CAMPAIGN PO Box 273 London E7

> **Tower Hamlets Nine are** Innocent! **Drop the Charges Now!**



Charged with riot after police attack

JAMAICAN DEPORTEES

Racist visas on the way

HE BRITISH state did more than just dream of a "White Christmas". They enforced one when they detained 190 Jamaican nationals on a charter flight at Gatwick airport.

Their only crime was being black. No white visitors on this or any other flight to Britain were detained over the holiday period. As Labour's immigration spokesman, Graham Allen, pointedly asked, "Can we expect Concorde flights from New York to get the same treatment?" The answer is no.

Fifty-seven Jamaicans were held for up to five days at the recently completed Campsfield Detention Centre in Oxfordshire. The conditions at the centre, which is run by Group 4, are prison-like.

The detainees were denied con-

tact with the outside world and lawyers, deprived of food, sleep and medical attention for long periods and forced to bed down on concrete floors. The 500 friends and relatives who had come to greet their visitors were treated to a wall of silence and lies by immigration officials and police. After 16 hours of waiting with no news they were moved on at gunpoint.

At 9.35pm on Christmas Day, 27 detainees were deported. TV cameras were stopped from filming the plane's take-off for fear of outrage. Under the new asylum laws, they were denied all legal rights and cannot appeal against the decision itself. If they lose their appeal that illegal procedures were employed they will be barred from Britain for life.

This was just one incident amongst many. One in four Bangladeshis who arrive in Britain are deported. Like the Jamaicans, the vast majority have no criminal record. They are deported because they are black.

New European Union laws announced this month will impose visa regulations on 31 black Commonwealth countries. Predominantly white countries like Canada and New Zealand will remain exempt.

Racist bigots were heartened by this sickening outrage. Tory MP Terry Dicks said the government should be "applauded". The response of the labour and trade union movement has been patchy.

Some like the racist Gerald Kaufman have used the opportunity to condemn Jamaica's human rights record!

Others like Bill Morris of the TGWU and Keith Vaz MP have called for public enquiries and reforms to the immigration laws.

But these laws cannot be reformed. They are racist through and through. We need a labour movement campaign to smash all the immigration controls.

GAY AGE OF CONSENT

Abolish it!

EXT MONTH MPs will get a "free vote" on the question of the age of consent for gay men. At present gay sex is illegal for men under the age of twenty-one. Yet there are thousands of sexually active gay men under the age of 21. The current law is being flouted on a mass scale. Last year 169 men were convicted of the "crime" of sleeping with a man under the age of 21. Stupid and unjust as every one of these convictions were. this relatively low figure shows why even the moralistic Tories are prepared to sanction some reform of the gay age of consent.

But what should the new law say? MPs will be given the chance to vote for a variety of options, including the status quo, or reduction of the age of consent to 18 or to 16. Since only 12% of voters support the equalisation of the age of consent at 16, and with a wave of moralism sweeping the Tory party, it is touch and go whether there will be any change at all.

Labour MPs should be forced. through an official party whip, to vote for equalisation.

But that must be only the start of a fight to remove all age of consent legislation, for heterosexuals as well as gay men.

Function

The age of consent laws were brought in at the end of the nineteenth century, supposedly to outlaw child prostitution. But their main function has been to give the state the right to legitimise the oppression of youth. The argument behind all age of consent laws is that there is a certain age before which young people aren't qualified to make decisions about their sexuality. Anybody who has sex with a young person below this age is supposed to be guilty of rape.

But there are other laws to deal with rape and child abuse. The denial of young people's sexuality is one of the bedrocks of youth oppression in capitalist society, and the age of consent one of the cornerstones of that oppression. It is used to criminalise both gay and heterosexual teenagers' sexu-

ality. The only reason lesbian sex is not outlawed is because the Victorian moralists who dreamed up the age of consent couldn't bear to think of its existence!

Many young people, gay, lesbian and straight, have sex before the age of sixteen without doing any more harm to each other than people twice their age. The average age at which gay men first have sex is sixteen! Since many gay men don't discover their sexuality until well after this age, this means that there are a lot of young men having sex before they are sixteen.

One argument that often comes from people who don't consider themselves moral bigots is, "shouldn't young men be given time to work out their sexuality?" But how does an age of consent law, at 16, 18 or 21, do that? It leaves gay youths in fear of prosecution for "working out" their sexuality.

Moralists

As for stopping child prostitution—does anyone who watched Prime Suspect III think the current age of consent has stopped it? Gay youth prostitution is a thinly hidden big business in London and other large cities, under the very noses of the Tory moralists.

Those who are so concerned about the plight of rent boys should start addressing the poverty and violence that has driven them onto the streets, not criminalising them and their clients with the age of consent.

There should be laws and punishment for anyone who forces anyone else into sex against their will. Such laws, linked to a massively improved programme of sex education in schools and the further extension of children's legal rights (it is only in the last few years that children's evidence was accepted in court in abuse cases!) can protect children and youth from oppression and abuse.

The arbitrary age of consent legislation is irrelevant to this. It is, and always has been, an excuse for the bosses' state to veto the sex lives of ordinary people, especially youth.

SPECIAL OFFER

The Trotskyist Manifesto

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EDITORIAL Happy New Year?

1993 WAS A frustrating year for the Tories. They were riven by internal conflict. Their attacks on the working class were vicious. Workers were angry. There was widespread hostility to the government and plenty of opportunities to turn the anger into action. Yet each time the opportunities were wasted. The Tories survived.

The number of strike days reached an all time low in the year to September 1993. The public sector pay limit of 1.5% was not breached, nor even seriously challenged.

In the private sector, pay deals in the final quarter of 1993 averaged just 2.2%. Despite government figures showing a reduction in unemployment, job losses continued throughout the year. Fifty thousand jobs were lost in local government alone.

But it was not a year devoid of industrial militancy. Miners and railworkers showed a willingness to fight-RMT members with devastating effectiveness. Workers at Timex, Burnsalls, Hillier, Arrowsmith and Middlebrook Mushrooms showed tremendous courage and determination in their long strikes.

The problem was not a lack of willingness to fight. The problem was the cowardly policies of the union leaderships. In the mighty revolt against pit closures, the leaders obstructed strike action in favour of ineffective protests and alliances with rebel Tories. In the hard fought strikes that did take place, the leaders kept the strikers isolated, refused to build solidarity and orchestrated outright sell outs where they could.

There is an important lesson for every militant to draw from 1993 if the new round of Tory attacks is to be beaten. The anger and the will to fight exists. But the leadership of the labour movement determined to stifle the anger and strangle the resistance. Fighting the Tories means at the same time fighting for a new leadership in the labour movement. Rank and file militants must organise themselves into a movement capable of carrying through such a fight.

This year the full effects of the Tories' budget cuts and tax hike will hit home. In the two budgets of 1993, the Tories increased taxes for workers by the equivalent of seven pence in the pound. In addition, workers' contributions to National Insurance will increase by 1%.

At the same time local authority services will be savaged and public sector jobs and conditions will be attacked. The Tories have already announced an £860 million cut in this year's central government funding for local authorities. They promise to double this cut in 1995, resulting in a 5% fall in support for local services. Higher council tax bills and crumbling services will follow.

The Tories are also determined to speed up the privatisation of services. Under new regulations the Tories have given 'carte blanche' to the private sector to bid for the work of all the civil service agencies when they are reviewed.

The final straw for many workers will be the three year pay freeze in the public sector. According to Alan Jinkinson, General Secretary of Unison, this will amount to a 10% wage cut for public sector workers. For those in London and the South East, it will be even more dramatic as the traditional cost of living allowance-London weighting-is being scrapped, starting with teachers and civil servants.

Each of these attacks can be defeated. But only if we break from the do-nothing trade unionism of the new realist leaders.

Recent strikes, particularly in the post and colleges, have shown the way. Several sections of workers have indicated that they are prepared to take national strike action. BT operators in the UCW have voted by 85% in favour of strike action against the withdrawal of unsocial hours payments. Their fellow members in the post have also won concessions with strikes and threatening action in Oxford and Somerset.

The mounting pressure on the union leaders to launch a serious campaign of strike action can be seen by Unison's proposal to December's meeting of the TUC public sector sub-committee for a one-day public sector general strike on 11 April. The proposal has already won tentative support from the TGWU and the NUCPS (civil service) although, typically, John Edmonds of the GMB has denounced it as "falling into a government trap".

The trap this man is so worried about is the Tories' anti-union legislation, the latest being the Trade Union Reform and Employment Act. Abiding by this legislation means waiting a minimum of 6 weeks between deciding to ballot and walking out the door. Obeying these laws is the real trap. It gives the bosses all the time in the world to defeat a strike before it has even started.

The opportunities will arise in the coming months to turn industrial relations in Britain on their head. We only need to look at the situation on the continent, where the successful strike at Air France and the Belgian general strike have undermined governments far more secure than John Major's crisis-ridden Tory Party.

The European bosses have decided not to give a 'theme' to 1994. This is because they are unsure of how to take European capitalism forward. A series of militant all-out strikes would not only threaten the bosses' fragile recovery, it would threaten the Tory government's very existence and give a theme of our own to the coming year. Forward to the European Year of the Workers!

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MEETINGS

Workers Power branches run a regular series of meetings to discuss vital issues facing the working class movement today, both in Britain and overseas. So don't just read the ideas in the paper, come along and discuss our theories and our practice in a lively and informal atmosphere.

BIRMINGHAM Workers Power Readers' meeting The family in crisis

Monday 24 January 7.30pm See sellers for venue

CARDIFF Companies House Workplace Readers' Group Ireland-what is the real

solution? Monday 24 January 8pm

Debate Ireland— which way forward? Speakers invited from the Troops Out Movement Wednesday 2 February 7.30pm

LEICESTER Workers Power Readers' meetings Marxism and the national

See sellers for venue

question Monday 17 January 8pm

What is Permanent Revolution? Tuesday 1 February 8pm

The Tories and "family values" Tuesday 15 February

8pm See sellers for venues

Public meeting Ireland-debate with Socialist Organiser Thursday 27 January 8pm

Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street/Welford Road (near the prison)

LONDON **Public meeting** Ireland: What is the real solution? Wednesday 26 January 7.30pm

Small Hall, Conway Hall Red Lion Square, Holborn

MANCHESTER Workers Power Readers' meeting Palestine-PLO sell out? Thursday 20 January 8pm

Women's discussion group Women's Liberation and the crisis of the family Thursday 3 February 8pm See sellers for venues

SHEFFIELD **Public meeting** Ireland—why we say "Troops Out Now" Monday 24 January 7.30pm SCCAU, West Street

OUT NOW TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

No 4 November 1993

Yeltsin: from coup to elections Down with the PLO-Israel peace settlement

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For most organisations on the British left, internationalism comes cheap.

While mouthing phrases about the importance of organising the working class across all national boundaries, most left-wing groups devote no attention to the practical task at hand. They save themselves a lot of hard work in the process . . . and a lot of hard cash.

This summer Workers Power will be helping to organise and participating in the Third Congress of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI). It will be an expensive affair-in terms of time and money. Because we are serious about building an international tendency on a democratic and centralised

basis, we need to hold regular representative Congresses in which the principles, programme and tactics of our sections can be discussed, voted upon, amended and adopted.

Our record after two Congresses of the LRCI is second to none in avoiding the fake-internationalism of the rest of the left-federalism, which leaves political differences unresolved; bureaucratism, which leaves the real decisions to be taken by the largest national section; and indifference to intemational organisation altogether. Each of these errors leaves tendencies open to national degeneration. We do not intend to follow that road.

That is why we are asking

all our readers and supporters for money. The Congress will cost a small fortune in terms of travel-we have to bring delegates to Europe from as far away as New Zealand and the Andesplus preparing the Congress documents and providing adequate facilities for the delegates.

workers power

Workers Power needs to raise its proportion of the costs of the Congress by the end of April this year. It comes to £6,000. So far we have reached £2,154.34. Special thanks to comrades in Derby, Manchester, Sheffield, Spain and Birmingham for donations over the last weeks. And keep it up. We will need more-much more-in the weeks to come.

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--- FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER! -

NYONE LISTENING to the outpourings of Education Secretary, John Patten, over the last few weeks might have been reminded of the words of Shakespeare (who is ironically compulsory reading in the National Curriculum): "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

But beneath the meaningless blather, Patten's words do signify something, which is not good news for students, teachers and parents. Since the days of Thatcher, the Tories have had a clear goal for their education reforms. The 1960s and 1970s are seen as the decades when the left won the ideological battle over education. Thatcher came to power determined to change all that. Education had to meet the needs of capitalism more closely, both ideologically and practically.

During the long economic boom, British bosses needed workers able to master the skills needed by new technologies. But now, Britain has a low-skill, low-wage economy. The most academically able students need to be identified and taught in selective schools to be technicians or bosses. Meanwhile most working class youth are to be "trained" in the skills required in the factories and taught the values of subservience and timidity which are needed for long periods on the dole.

To do this the Tories needed greater centralisation, taking control of schools away from local government and strengthening the powers of the Secretary of State for Education. They could then attempt to control what is taught in schools through the imposition of a National Curriculum.

Tests

To achieve a two-tier education system they encouraged schools to opt out and select their pupil intake. Finally in order to make the bosses' task of recruiting workers a little more straightforward, they would set tests and use the result to label every child with a number from one to ten.

This remains the overall plan for education. But the Tories have run

EDUCATION

Towards the two-tier system

BY SHEILA PHILLPS

into a number of problems implementing it. These problems lie in the limited success of opting out, the content of the National Curriculum, and resistance from teachers.

Bribes

The system of schools opting out of local authority control has come to something of a standstill. Despite generous bribes in the form of additional government funding, relatively few state schools have opted out. A new approach was needed to kick start the process.

On 29 December the Department for Education published draft guide-lines dealing with the establishment of new schools. They suggest that parents, businesses and religious groups should be able to establish their own grant-maintained schools. They would receive 85% of the building costs from the government. There are in fact "too many places" in current schools and a number of state schools (nine in Sheffield alone) are faced with closure. But the government is encouraging new schools to break up state education further.

These new private schools would be able to select their own students. Obviously such schools would operate like old grammar schools, creaming off the academically able and leaving state schools to deal with the "rejects".

This month saw the publication of the Dearing Report. Sir Ron Dearing was appointed by John Patten to look at the content of the National Curriculum in the aftermath of last summer's teachers' rebellion. It was clearly impossible for schools to teach everything in the curriculum. There was no consultation with teachers and schools quickly found that there were simply not enough hours in the day to get through everything. The final straw came when tests were added to the burden.

The Dearing recommendations significantly lower the compulsory elements of the National Curriculum to around 80% of school time for 5 to 14 year olds and 60% of school time for 14 to 16 year olds.

Basics

It will now concentrate on the "basics" of English, science and maths. For 14 to 16 year olds there will be a greater emphasis on "vocational" education. By this the Tories mean training for the workplace. Most other subjects, including technology and languages, have been significantly cut. Needless to say, religious education, that extremely important subject which the Tory hypocrites insist is

needed to teach us "moral values", remains compulsory for all students. The use of the ten level scale to grade students in all subjects is retained by Dearing.

Dearing had another job to dosow the seeds of division between the teaching unions over the tests. Last year's boycott of the tests was very solid. Only 5% of secondary state schools conducted the test. This was the result of a firm alliance between all teaching unions (even the headteachers) and parents. The boycott was a defeat for the Tories and a major personal defeat for John Patten who spent the rest of the summer ill in bed. For union members it was an important taste of victory after years of attacks on pay and conditions. It was vital for the Tories to find a way of stopping the action.

Initial reactions to the Dearing proposals for slimmed down tests show they may be successful.

As a smokescreen for their climbdown over the National Curriculum the Tories have launched a new offensive over discipline in schools. The poor teachers are being harassed by teenage terrors, Patten claims. Patten himself was beaten at school and regrets that this is now barred by European law. Since bashing the little terrors is out, what else should teachers do? Patten recommends more detentions, more school uniforms and more truancy officers. It is as easy as that!

But most teachers know that dealing with disruptive pupils is anything but simple. It requires time to resolve behaviour problems. Schools need trained counsellors, the possibility of offering alternative lessons or institutions, as well as effective but nondegrading sanctions. Being in a large class where the teacher is constantly having to deal with one disruptive student can be an incredibly frustrating experience, for the teacher and the other students. It is important to have additional teachers either in the classroom or supplying outside support. Smaller classes benefit all students, not just the disruptive ones.

Behaviour

Even so, you don't have to be a sociology professor to work out that most of the behaviour problems that lead students to be violent and disruptive originate outside the school gates. Family breakup, sexual abuse, poverty, drug and solvent abuse and the increasingly prevalent part-time work by school students are common factors. These are often exacerbated by petty, ideologically motivated school rules, like having to "tuck your shirt in". These have nothing to do with educational standards and everything to do with imposing capitalist work discipline on youth.

So long as capitalism carries on making the lives of working class youth a misery, teachers will be forced to combine educating children with the task of alleviating some of the worst side-effects of society's oppression of youth. The Tory offensive over discipline doesn't solve the problem of disruptive pupils. But it does form part of the ideological offensive



Patten

on the "liberal" teaching establishment, with the implication that teachers are "too soft".

Although they will never abolish the root causes of anti-social behaviour amongst a minority of youth, smaller classes, special units and more support teachers can have a big effect. So can nursery education. At the same time, teachers have the right to demand the exclusion from school of pupils who are consistently violent or sexually menacing.

Cuts

But Patten's government is the one which has introduced drastic cuts in funding for all these special educational measures. The Tories have done nothing to further nursery provision, and their local government spending cuts have led to the abolition of the few nurseries provided for public sector workers' children. At the same time, Patten is insisting on a maximum quota of eighteen "exclusion days" for disruptive pupils in any term.

The real purpose of Patten's "discipline" offensive became clear when he spent £2 million on a leaflet to parents. Teachers and parents, not Tory policies and youth oppression, are to blame for bad behaviour—this is the message behind Patten's leaflet. He lectures parents on the need to give their children a healthy breakfast, ensure they do their homework and turn up at school properly dressed.

Try buying a "healthy breakfast" on the dole. Try finding the time to cook it if you're working a split shift for a clock-watching employer. Try finding the money for new school uniforms when your wages are being frozen and massive tax increases are loaded onto everything you buy.

It is not difficult to poke fun at such a useless politician as Patten. But we must not forget that behind this fool is a clear class strategy for education. It is not concerned with the education of youth but the needs of capitalism. It is a strategy that we must resist.

We have to demand a secular, comprehensive, state education for all. We have to fight for a National Curriculum that is not dictated by the bosses and their political representatives but is agreed upon by parents, students and teachers. We need adequately funded schools and free universal nursery education for the under-fives. And right now teachers have to maintain the test-boycott until all compulsory testing is abolished.



After Dearing ... still too many tests

HE UNION of Communications Workers' (UCW) General Secretary, Alan Johnson, and £214,000 a year Post Office chief executive, Bill Cockburn, are working hand in glove.

Earlier this month the Post Office's company rag, The Courier, carried articles by Cockburn and Johnson side by side, both urging the Government to allow the Post Office to conduct commercial business like any private company. This, claims Johnson, will boost profits and save jobs. Unfortunately, you get no marks for getting things half right.

Cockburn is a hard-nosed boss by any standards. Over the past four years he has cut jobs by 5% while the amount of mail handled has increased by 16%. Thirty thousand more jobs are threatened over the next five years.

Working conditions have been savaged while profits have continued to rocket to a record £283 million this year. Any co-operation with the plans of Cockburn and his cronies will cost postal workers more jobs and work speed-ups. It is totally out of order for a union leader even to suggest it.

But for Johnson, this is par for the course. His mates on the NEC have sabotaged almost every postal dispute in the last 12 months. Most recently, the fight against the miserable 1.5% pay offer has been jettisoned. Despite a clear majority of members voting in the branches to reject the offer, the NEC sent out a leaflet with the ballot papers recommending acceptance saying, "industrial action will do more harm than good. . . you will lose money and in the longer term work and jobs will be lost." Maybe Cockburn wrote the leaflet in return for Johnson's article in The Courier!

The argument that strikes always lose is a tired old piece of bosses' propaganda. It is patently untrue. Members in Oxford and Bridgwater in Somerset recently threatened to walk out. "Longer term work" in the shape of second deliveries was protected in one instance and a sacked member's job was saved in the other.

The 11,000 who voted for action represent a large number of UCW members in the post who are angry and want to fight. The problem is that this militant minority is not organised to fight against the misleadership of the NEC majority.

From Newcastle to Somerset, UCW members have time and again dis-



Cardiff postal workers strike

POST

Union leaders sabotage action

played their willingness to fight back. Last month, UCW members in BT voted by a massive 85% for strike action to stop the erosion of unsocial hours payments. Even though BT backed down, Johnson has now said he is willing to negotiate over the issue!

The problem is not that UCW members are unwilling to fight, nor that BT and the Post Office management are invincible.

The problem is the spineless leadership, who will negotiate away members' pay, jobs and conditions, in

return for a congratulatory pat on the back for the latest article in The Cou-

The most immediate danger, if the UCW leadership are not challenged, is that the campaign for a shorter working week will result in trade-offs for even greater flexibility and even more draconian conditions, as happened in many engineering plants in 1989. In the longer term the idea of increased "commercial freedoms", which Alan Johnson is toying with, will lead to semi-privatisation or worse. Rank and file UCW activists need to

launch a campaign now to force the NEC to oppose any such move and to back a national all-out strike for an immediate 35 hour week with no strings.

The Bournemouth conference at the end of January offers activists an opportunity to start this fight. A clear lead from a communications workers' rank and file organisation is needed if the campaign for a shorter working week is not to be sold short. If the lead is given, the UCW can win dramatic victories. But there is no time to lose.

Bosses

COLLEGES

tear up contracts

BY STUART KING

MPLOYERS IN Further Education Colleges engineered a breakdown in national negotiations at the end of December. Their national organisation, the College Employers' Forum, (CEF) is now intent on pushing ahead with the introduction of new "flexible" contracts for all teaching staff.

The employers are working hand in hand with the Tory government whose aim is to expand further education while at the same time slashing costs. The Department for Education has announced a 2% hold back in college budgets, to be released only on the introduction of "flexible working practices".

Leaders of the lecturers' union NATFHE had called off industrial action last year in order to enter negotiations with the CEF. They immediately offered major concessions to the employers including an extra 2 hours teaching each week and an extra five to eight days work each year!

CEF leader Roger Ward scented blood and turned this "offer" down. Ward is demanding contracts without any written limits on teaching time and an even longer working year. The new contracts, originally proposed for new and promoted staff, are now aimed at everyone. Existing staff would be offered an "incentive" of £500 to abandon their old conditions, backed up with threats of dismissal if they do not accept.

Ward can still be stopped. Strike action in the spring of last year revealed divisions and weakness on the employers' side. They were forced to postpone the introduction of new contracts until 1994. Strike action in individual colleges, or the threat of it, forced some college managements to retreat last term.

The danger is that the NATFHE leadership will hand the employers a victory. It has refused to lead an effective fight right from the start of the struggle and has now shown itself prepared to abandon existing "Silver Book" conditions.

In the face of the employers' intransigence the NATFHE leadership has been forced to call another ballot for action. Again they are proposing a disastrous strategy. They want selective strike action, with just a handful of colleges involved. This will play straight into the employers' hands, encouraging isolation and demoralisation and paving the way for college by college deals, which are exactly what Roger Ward wants.

The worst deals will be CEF style contracts, the "best" ones close to the NATFHE negotiators' concessions. Every college will then be under threat of being undercut by those with worse conditions, paving the way for further redundancies and mergers.

NATFHE members must fight for: No retreat from the Silver Book

National all out strike action until

all new contracts are withdrawn Immediate all out strike action in any college introducing new contracts.

 Action committees at regional and district level to co-ordinate support for colleges in dispute.

 Joint Union Committees in the colleges to build united action with students fighting grant cuts and administration staff fighting new working practices.

SOCIALIST TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

Seedy manoeuvres

HE BIGGEST group of organised left wing teachers in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is on the verge of a split. The leadership of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), around National Executive member Bernard Regan, is seeking ways to part company with teachers from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

This is surprising since SWP members have been loyal and uncritical footsoldiers for the Regan leadership for some years. The row has come to a head over the SWP's insistence that one of their members should have stood on an STA slate in a recent election. Regan objected on the grounds that the SWP teacher did not have enough "experience" in the NUT to stand, but he lost out.

As a result Regan has made overtures to the other main left grouping in the NUT, the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU). He proposed discussions on uniting the STA and CDFU, attempting to isolate the SWP.

Meanwhile inside the STA, Regan was organising behind the back of

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the SWP. He made plans for a meeting which would be open to everyone except the SWP, who were not to be told that this was taking place! Clearly no socialist teacher interested in open and democratic debate could have any truck with such a manoeuvre. It is therefore to their discredit that teachers belonging to Militant Labour planned to attend this clandestine meeting.

What is crystal clear is that none of this organisational dishonesty and political manoeuvring has anything to do with the vital issues facing teachers in the union.

Workers Power teachers want an end to the organisational divisions on the left of the NUT. We have argued for a long time that we need a united, fighting rank and file organisation in the NUT.

There are no real political differences between the CDFU and the STA, yet they continue to divide the left vote by standing separate candidates and allowing the right to win important conference decisions.

But we are not for unity at any price. All forces on the left should engage in a full debate about the sort of organisation and politics we need to fight the right wing and the bureaucracy in the union.

Both the STA and the CDFU have developed as typical "broad lefts". They both concentrate on putting pressure on the Executive to support particular actions, seeking to capture posts in the apparatus of the union for "left" candidates and intervening at the national conference of the union.

What they will not do is organise, initiate and lead action from below when the bureaucracy refuses to act, especially where this means unofficial action, and fight to place all union officials under the democratic control of the rank and file.

Because of this the current STA and CDFU leaderships remain a road block to the building of a genuine rank and file organisation. If they united on the basis of their current methods, which is unlikely given the personal antagonism that exists between them, this would be no step forward. For many years the SWP teachers have gone along with the

policies of the Regan leadership. Their old "downturn" theory led them to rubbish the idea of rank and file organisation. As a result they provided the STA leadership with left cover.

When Workers Power teachers called for unofficial school-based boycotts of the Tory tests in the face of NUT inaction, leading SWP teachers sided with the leadership of the STA in rejecting such action. Suddenly they found themselves being outflanked on the left by the "moderate" NAS/UWT which voted for a boycott. The NUT leadership had to rapidly follow suit when it became clear that rank and file NUT members were simply refusing to do the tests.

Possibly the SWP's change of line, its analysis of a "new mood" of militancy in the workers' movement, has finally shaken its teachers out of their pessimism. If so, well and good, but this means not abandoning the hundreds of teachers organised in the STA and CDFU but fighting to win them away from "broad leftism" and to the perspective of building a real rank and file organisation amongst teachers.

Student grants under CHECK TA



Manchester Metro Students' Union officers say don't demonstrate—write to your MP

TUDENTS ARE already on the breadline. Unless you come from a rich background, getting through college is a nightmare.

According to a survey by Barclays Bank, students leave their courses with debts averaging £2,200. Many students have to

BY DAVE BEECH

work in lousy jobs to make up for the shortfall. A lot of these jobs only pay about £3 per hour. This means that to make up their grant students are working four, five and even six days a week on top of their studies.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Kenneth Clarke announced in the budget that a massive 10% will be lopped off the grant immediately! To justify this he said "Why should the bus driver or the pensioner pay to finance the living costs of tomorrow's lawyer?"

For years the Tories have

and less on education. first of all they introduced loans, then they increased the proportion that a loan takes up of a student's income by freezing the grant. Now they have cut the grant.

education.

Loans

In the future they want students to pay their education fees as well. They are considering loans for the payment of fees or a tax which graduates would have to pay on top of income tax to pay back course fees.

while the rest of us sink into debt

or just give up the whole idea of

lege. We must fight for a living

grant that is available to every-

one and for the funds needed for

We don't want the pensioner or

the bus driver to pay for this. Let

Clarke's rich friends fork out for

planned how they can spend less

Education is a right not a privi-

getting an education.

No wonder the Tories want to stop students fighting back. They are putting a bill to Parliament banning student unions from campaigning.

How to stop the grant cut!

"HERE WAS an immediate response at many colleges to the news of the 10% grant reduction. Students at a number of colleges, including the London School of Economics and the University of East Anglia, went into occupation. There were student demonstrations up and down the country.

To defeat Clarke's proposal we will need more than sporadic outbursts, we need a co-ordinated national campaign of action.

The leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) refuses

to organise this sort of action. For years they have stuck to a policy that mirrors the leadership

OUTH AGAINST Racism in Eu-

With 240 young people, representing

branches from cities and towns all

over Britain, it opened the real possi-

bility of a socialist youth organisation

that can take the fight against racism

and fascism forward. The tasks of

the conference were outlined by the

come involved in battles, not just

against racism, but against educa-

tion cuts, for decent housing, on all

the issues that affect working class

politicians and fascists like Derek

Beackon spew out, we need to put

forward genuine socialist answers to

the causes of unemployment, crime,

That is why Workers Power sup-

porters at the conference put for-

ward a clear and honest explanation

of what the fight for socialism means.

bad housing or police harassment.

To combat the racist lies that Tory

"We have to be prepared to be-

national officers' statement:

people, black and white."

rope (YRE) held its first British

conference on 4-5 December.

of the Labour Party. They have based their strategy on winning public opinion and writing letters to MPs. They hope that some Tory MPs will break ranks with their government when they see the sense of the NUS leadership's arguments. They have done everything in their power to stop students taking direct action. They claim that militant action only puts people off.

Their strategy has failed time and again. It didn't stop the withdrawal of benefits. It didn't stop the introduction of loans.

We need action that will scare the Tories witless. Every college should immediately form action

committees to organise demonstrations and occupations-with the local NUS officers if possible but against them if necessary. Different colleges should co-ordinate their actions. Students need to unite their struggles with those of the college workers. Lecturers, cleaners, technical and administrative staff have been on the receiving end of privatisation and job losses. This year they also face a pay freeze. Students should attempt to build their action committees with the college workers and build effective united action. With militant action students can inspire others to take on the Tory government.

Hypocrite

What a hypocrite! This man is from the same government that has spent years attacking the conditions of busworkers and now wants to freeze their pay. And he is from the same government that has kept pensions at a miserly rate and brought in VAT on fuel.

No one should doubt for a minute why he really wants to cut grants. Public spending eats into the profits of the Tories' big business friends, so they want to make us pay for education. That's no problem for the rich-mean-

> right to 24 hour childcare as well as free contraception and abortion on demand for all women. By taking up the battle for lesbian, gay and women's rights, the YRE will draw into its ranks ever wider forces, including some of the best and most resolute fighters for socialism.

> In the session on "Building the YRE", branches put forward some excellent initiatives. Waltham Forest YRE pointed to the need to target football matches and counter fascist propaganda which is all too prevalent on some terraces. The YRE confirmed its commitment to carry on the fight against fascism by passing a resolution by Workers Power which argued for a policy of "No platform for fascists", the building of anti-fascist defence squads and for unity in action with the ANL, the labour movement and black organisations. Plans for a Europe-wide summer camp to be held on 8-14 August in Germany are now underway.

> Despite its small size, the conference gave many working class youth the chance to debate and discuss a range of important issues.

Those delegates who either disagreed with or were confused by the policies put forward by Militant on those issues of contention—the state, revolution and the struggles of oppressed people in Ireland and South Africa—should take these issues up in their branches and continue the fight Workers Power began at conference. That is the fight to build a revolutionary wing of the YRE!

Youth against racism

BY KIRSTIE PARKES

Tower Hamlets YRE

overthrow their state power, replacing it with working class power based on democratic workers' councils and a workers' militia."

Militant Labour, whose members made up the majority of delegates, voted this down because, as one delegate put it, "... it is too narrow to say that there is no parliamentary road to socialism."

And how did they explain how socialism would come about? They didn't. Apart from some nice sounding phrases about the fight for a democratic and socialist Europe they refused to say that only revolution can achieve such a goal.

This idea that socialism can be introduced peacefully is the hallmark of Militant Labour's programme. It was heard in the debates on the police where Militant delegates argued for a form of democratic accountability. This strengthens illusions that the present police force as it exists can be made accountable to workers and youth. Workers Power are in favour of any measures that weaken the ability of the police to suppress working class protest, but the major task for socialists is to fight for methods of struggle that strengthen our ability to fight back effectively.

As one delegate pointed out, making the police "accountable" at Broadwater Farm would not have protected the black community from police violence. Well organised, disciplined community defence would have been a far more effective way of stopping the police.

Necessity

But unless workers and youth are clear that the police need to be smashed rather than reformed then they will not see the necessity in building their own defence organisations. While the the majority of the conference voted in favour of the Militant resolution, Workers Power's resolution on the police had some support amongst a minority of Militant Labour delegates.

Unfortunately, the agenda prevented full conference discussion and

voting on all resolutions. Instead resolutions were voted on in commissions which then gave majority and minority report backs to full conference. This meant that not all resolutions could be discussed by conference as a whole. However Workers Power held a successful fringe meeting on Ireland which was attended 25-30 people where there was a lively debate with supporters of Militant.

The YRE conference wasn't all stormy debates and heated controversy. Conference passed some excellent resolutions on the issues of housing, unemployment and education. It adopted Workers Power's policies against all immigration controls, to fight for a 35 hour week without loss of pay and a programme of state spending under workers' control to combat unemployment.

Equally important, the conference took up the fight against all forms of bigotry and discrimination. A resolution by Swindon YRE put the fight against lesbian and gay oppression to the forefront of the YRE's future activity. A Workers Power resolution committed the YRE to campaigning for women to get equal pay, for the

We submitted this resolution: "Racism and fascism will never finally be defeated unless the capitalist profit system is overthrown and replaced with a socialist system that can overcome all national divisions, end the exploitation of the 'third world' and remove the power of the tiny class of capitalists who use racism and fascism to divide working people and stop us fighting back.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism: breaking the hold of the capitalists will take a revolution to

any people will be familiar with Sebastião Salgado's photography through one image: the apocalyptic vision of thousands of miners swarming through the mud of the Serra Pedala gold mine in Brazil. Salgado's WORKERS exhibition is full of equally stunning images of labour gathered from all over the world.

From the Indian women digging a 500 mile canal in Rajastan, to the shipyard welders on a French nuclear warship, Salgado distills the essential features of working class experience which endure wherever men, women and children carry out manual work.

Co-operation and mutual dependence between the workers are shown in settings as varied as an Indian coal mine, a Polish shipyard and a Rwandan tea plantation. Poverty is there, of course. In almost every photo we get a sense of the sheer hard physical work which deforms and degrades the bodies of the vast majority of humanity.

If there is a single unifying quality in Salgado's photography it is the reflection of the individual resilience of working class people in the face of strenuous work in terrible conditions.

For these reasons alone the WORK-ERS exhibition has a lot to teach any worker or socialist.

But the photographs themselves have also stirred up widespread criticism on the left.

Salgado's vision of the working class is unashamedly romantic. These are not the grainy naturalistic images of workers which have become commonplace in much of British left-wing "documentary" photography. Neither are they the idealised "hero-of-labour" type photos beloved of Stalinism.

Salgado's picture of a woman digging the Indira Gandhi canal in Rajastan exemplifies his individualist approach. The woman is caught in a classic 1930s Stalinist pose, wielding a shovel against an empty sky. But it is not the shovel which weighs her arms down: it is the huge and ornate dowry bangles she wears, and clearly takes pride in wearing.

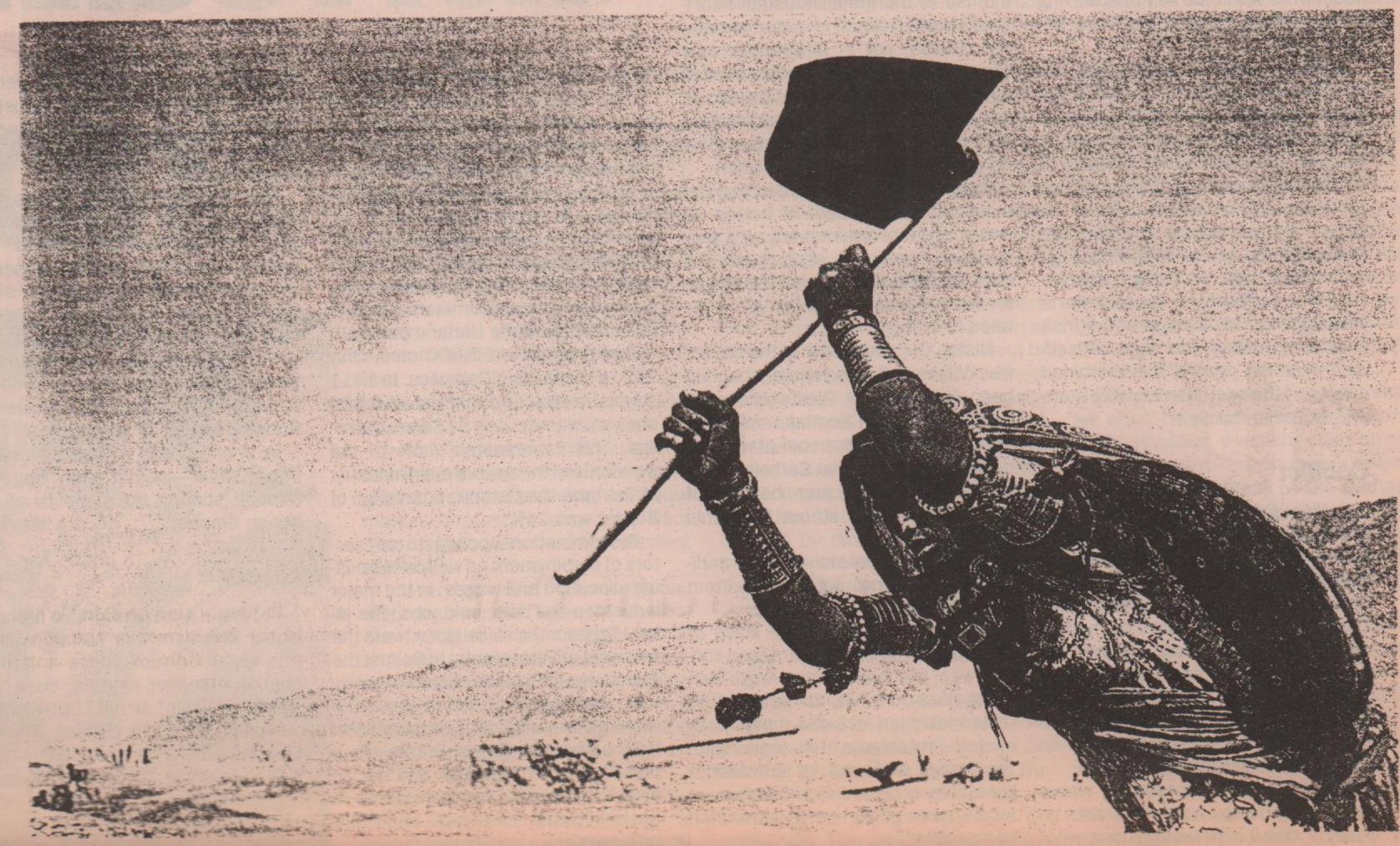
Salgado sees the rough manual labour of third world factory and farm workers as a kind of "living museum" of capitalism. The sub-title of the exhibition—"an archaeology of the industrial age"—reflects this view: the workers of the Third World show us a past which the developed world is supposedly outgrowing.

Though Salgado takes this "post-Fordist" outlook as his starting point, he clearly doesn't share the disdain for the working class which many "post-Fordist" theorists express. Every photograph presents a positive image of the working class. But what is positive in working class life, seen through Salgado's lens, is usually individual hope and resilience.

He sees exploitation as an "endless cycle" with barriers that "only dreams can surmount". These dreams shine out through the cheeky

SALGADO'S WORKERS

From survival to class struggle



faces of Rwandan child tea-pickers queuing for their pittance of a wage, through the meticulously ornate jewellery of the canal workers, and through the defiant stare of a Pakistani factory worker amid clouds of dust and dirt.

But Salgado's view of manual labour as an outmoded, dying, Third World experience is false to the core. Manual labour in semi-colonial countries is very much part of the *present* of capitalism. Even in what Salgado calls "developing countries" there exists uneven and combined development: the latest techniques alongside abject poverty and backwardness.

The very products the workers are tearing out from nature with their bare hands—tobacco, sugar, fish, oil, coal and lead—form the basis of individual consumption the world over.

Though it is referred to in the accompanying text, the photography hardly begins to explore the experiPaul Morris
reviews
Sebastião Salgado's photographic
exhibition
WORKERS - an archaeology of the

ence of the modernisation of industry and agriculture in the third world, or the millions of starving, unemployed and homeless workers this has created. Salgado chooses his images to emphasise the echoes of early capitalism in 19th century Europe which can be found in many semi-colonial countries today.

industrial age

That being said, there is one striking difference between Salgado's pictures of rural workers and workers in heavy industry. In almost every image of rural labour the human beings predominate. Even in vast projects like the Serra Pelada mine the landscape is dominated by the human

form. But in the pictures of heavy industry huge abstract shapes predominate: giant pipelines, oil rigs and ship interiors dwarf the human beings which created them. In capitalist industry it is not machines which serve humanity but human beings who become the servants of the machines.

Most disappointingly, the exhibition does not show workers' collectivity in struggle. There is collectivity at work, whether it is in the struggle to haul huge nets of thrashing tuna fish, or to lever an entire ship into the waters of the Gdansk shipyard—but collectivity in struggle is largely missing.

There are glimpses of it, as in the images of the Serra Pedala miners grappling with their security guards. And the picture of women dam-constructors holding a big semi-circular "discussion meeting" prompts the unanswered question: what were they discussing?

But overall, despite his attempt to show every worker as a thinking individual, capable of dreaming and surviving, Salgado never shows the only genuine source of hope in working class communities: the collective struggle for a better future.

A world where the vast majority don't have to destroy their bodies and waste their childhoods in hard physical labour can only come through the collective struggle for socialism. Once all society's productive capacity is harnessed to providing food, shelter, power, education and health to all humanity we can progressively reduce the time spent at work—mental and physical—to a negligible minimum, leaving human beings to develop all the qualities and aspirations which a life of drudgery suppresses.

It could be argued that Salgado's pictures merely reflect the true state of the working class internationally, which has suffered a decade of defeat and atomisation, particularly in the semi-colonial world where product prices, and therefore wages, have fallen dramatically since the late 1970s.

One way to counter such an argument would be to reel off a list of strike figures and trade union growth showing how Third World workers are fighting back. But there is no need to. You only have to look closely at the faces of the children, men and women in Salgado's photographs.

There are few looks of resignation and hopelessness, many of determination, hope and anger. It is out of hope and anger that revolutionary socialists can and must fashion an international movement which will fight to destroy the rotten system Salgado depicts.

WORKERS is at the Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London SE1 (Waterloo Tube and BR) until 13 February, Free. For information and teachers' packs call 071-921 0951.

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IRE

N THE aftermath of the Shankill bombing, thousands of workers from Belfast's main employer, Harland and Wolff, marched to protest at the killings.

This was an example of workers' action, but not of workers' unity: Harland and Wolff is a Protestant sectarian employer whose workforce is overwhelmingly Protestant. Catholic SDLP MP Joe Hendron was hounded off the march by a baying mob, despite declaring his total opposition to the Republican movement and despite the SDLP's repeated collaboration with the British'security forces.

That small incident spoke volumes about what lies in the way of achieving working class unity in Northern Ireland.

Workers' unity is a complete abstraction unless the fundamental political obstacles to it are removed. Those obstacles are not the religious ideas in the minds of two sections of the working class. They are the British occupation of the six counties and the British state's refusal to allow the whole Irish people to determine their own future free of foreign interference. The conflict in the six counties is a struggle by one section of the Irish people to realise this right of selfdetermination against the combined efforts of the sectarian Loyalist state and its British backers.

Conflict

Religious strife is a mere reflection of this conflict, an ideological echo. It is not an echo which reverberates equally on both sides of the divide. Despite Sinn Féin's capitulation to the Catholic church on abortion and a number of other social issues, its rhetoric is that of a secular, anti-imperialist movement. Loyalism—from its parades and legal parties through to the rhetoric of its paramilitaries—is overt in its religious sectarianism.

The division in the working class between Catholics and Protestants is really a division between those who believe that all 32 counties in Ireland have a right to be part of a single united country, and those, largely Protestants, who wish to maintain "Ulster" as a province of the United Kingdom.

This is what Marxists call an unresolved national question. The right to full national independence has been denied to Ireland. Instead Britain partitioned Ireland, retaining six of Ulster's original nine counties as a fiefdom, governed for most of its existence by Orange dominated capital and, when that broke down in the face of the anti-unionist revolt of the late 1960s and early 1970s, by Westminster.

Unless Marxists confront, and seek to resolve, the national question in a revolutionary way, then workers' unity will remain the stuff of bar room bluster forever.

National unity and independence are not socialist demands. Marxists recognise these demands as "bourgeois democratic" goals, which formed



Carson calls the unionists to arms

part of the political programme of the rising capitalist class in the 19th century in Ireland and elsewhere. But recognising the national question as a bourgeois question doesn't mean we refuse to fight for a revolutionary outcome, or that the unresolved national question is a "distraction" from the class struggle. In fact the national question in Ireland is a key component of the class struggle.

The whole history of attempts to unite the working class by ignoring or bypassing Orange sectarianism proves the futility of such an approach.

The division in the working class of the six counties, a division at its most intense in the great industrial heartland around Belfast, is rooted in material causes, not in differences over church ceremony. As British capitalism developed, Ireland was treated as one big farm. Its agricultural produce fed the great cities of Britain that grew up during the industrial revolution.

Britain deliberately obstructed the industrial development of Ireland so that it could be maintained as a subservient colony. Its agricultural produce benefited Britain and the British aristocrats who owned the great estates in Ireland.

Ulster, the north east of the island, was different. It was the area that had been "planted" by Presbyterian settlers, mainly from Scotland. As a distinct region it was born out of war and conflict with the native Catholic population. Much of the paraphernalia of the Orange Order stems from this period.

Even so, Protestantism in its earliest form was not entirely free from nationalist sentiment.

The existence of a large class of Presbyterian tenant farmers bred conflict with the aristocratic Anglo-Irish ruling class. In 1798, the rising of the United Irishmen included many north eastern Protestants in its leadership. The Orange sash was not sufficient to guarantee a decent livelihood, even for a section of the rising native Irish bourgeoisie.

Division

After crushing the rebellion of 1798 the British state responded in a way that became its hallmark in every colony it seized. It fostered division in order to secure its unchallenged rule.

While the industry of Ireland as a whole stagnated, the north east was nurtured as a centre of manufacturing. Textiles, shipbuilding and engineering were all developed. Markets were secured courtesy of the British empire. Belfast in particular developed in line with nineteenth century Britain. The Protestant middle class which had felt aggrieved by the link with Britain in 1798 was thoroughly integrated into its industry and empire by the middle of the nineteenth century.

One economic historian noted:

"Instead of being the solitary Irish industrial city, Belfast, looked at this way, becomes an outpost of industrial Britain . . . This in turn involved a withdrawal of industrial Belfast from the rest of Ireland and made its leaders singularly deaf to all appeals of economic nationalism."

Belfast and its north eastern hinterland shared in the profits of the empire. There was no market in backward Ireland for its textiles or its warships. But the union with Britain guaranteed the realisation of profits for these Protestant owned industries.

At the beginning of this period of industrial expansion, Catholics numbered a mere 6% of Belfast's population. But industrial development swelled the ranks of the Catholic community as Catholics headed north to find work.

In response the seeds of real sectarianism—the defence of the privileges and priorities of the Protestants against the Catholics-were sown. Egged on by the violently anti-Catholic Orange Order, Protestant workers repeatedly rioted against the invasion of



MO A

"their" city by Catholics.

The Protestant workers also suffered terrible privations. But the extent of these privations turned them into jealous defenders of their community against their fellow Catholic workers. As the century wore on the conflicts intensified. Protestant workers were granted considerable advantages. In the major industries there was systematic discrimination in their favour. In 1866 the Harland and Wolff shipyard employed 3,000 men. Only 225 of these were Catholics. In 1911 a census recorded that out of 6,809 shipyard workers only 518 were Catholics. This represented 7.6% of the workforce in the town's main industry. At the time the Catholic population of Belfast was 24%.

Discrimination applied to all sectors of employment as well as to housing allocation and wages. In the major industries the best paid jobs, the labour aristocratic skilled jobs, were the preserve of Protestants. In Belfast the gap between skilled workers' earnings and those of the rest of the working class were, on average, greater than anywhere else in Britain. As a preserve of Protestants and as an object of ambition for Protestants in unskilled work, these were important privileges.

In the context of such advantages, the hostility of the Protestant working class to nationalism had a clear material base. An independent united Ireland would cut them off from the empire they depended on. Thus, their hostility to the arrival of Catholics began from an economic motive. In the context of the movement for Home Rule, first threatened in 1886, it received an added political motive. The Catholics favoured Home Rule, a limited form of national independence. Protestants favoured the maintenance of the Union with Britain.

Unionism

Politically, the Protestants—workers and bosses-were forged into an anti-Home Rule Unionist bloc, reaching a high point with the massive Unionist Convention in 1892. Its goal was preservation of the union with Britain at all costs. It gave birth to the concept of the "Ulsterman", the loyal subject of the crown and the sworn enemy of Irish national freedom.

Home rule—"Rome Rule" as the Protestants dubbed it—meant an end to a share in imperialist profits for the bosses of the North and an end to the privileges enjoyed by Protestant workers. The Orange worker and boss found a common political cause. Both donned the bowler hat and the Orange sash and marched arm in arm against Catholicism and nationalism. The Orange monolith was created—a cross-class reactionary alliance dedicated to preserving the privileges of one section of the working class and the position of the whole Northern Irish ruling class.

A crucial factor in the maintenance and development of the Orange bloc was the political leadership of the Belfast labour movement. Founded upon the solid rock of the skilled workers' unions, this labour movement was infected from the very beginning with Orange sectarianism. In so far as there was any class consciousness in

this movement, it was one shaped by the need to defend Belfast's industrial supremacy as a means of defending Protestant workers' privileges in the labour market.

The unions were British unions, and proud of it. They were in conflict with what they regarded as "debased" Unionism—the Unionism of the conservative Ulster landlords. In place of such Unionism they fostered a "progressive" Unionism, shared by sections of the urban ruling class, which stressed social improvement for the working class in line with the gains secured by British workers.

In short it was a brand of social imperialism—social gain secured through sharing the benefits of the British empire.

Labour

The main exponent of this brand of labour Unionism was William Walker, who regarded himself as a "labour man on economic matters" but a "Unionist in politics". In his 1905 election campaign in North Belfast, Ramsay MacDonald was his agent. His outlook was compatible with the reformism of the developing British Labour Party which for many years refused to take a position on the Home Rule question for fear of alienating Protestant support in the north east of Ireland.

Typically, this labour movement Unionism disguised its reactionary, proimperialist content with spurious internationalism. The movement's mouthpiece in the early twentieth century, the Belfast Labour Chronicle, argued:

"Nationalism is dead or dying and Imperialism is the transition stage to international union of the proletariat all the world over. The total separation of Ireland would be but a disintegrating influence on the people and can proceed from narrow views alone . . . there is no victory in changing lay for clerical tyranny in any country."

This labour Unionism found common cause with the urban based Independent Orange Order, led by Lindsay Crawford. Both shared reformist goals (municipal reform, progressive labour legislation) and reactionary ones (total opposition to separation from Britain). While this brand of Unionism caused occasional strains in the Orange monolith, it was incapable of breaking that monolith since it was founded on the common overriding aim of maintaining the link with Britain.

Partition

Since the 1890s the Orange bloc has undergone periods of intense strain but it has never been broken. To this day, despite the deprivations suffered by Protestant workers, the fear that they would lose their marginal privileges within a united Ireland has kept them tied to the Orange bosses and the British state. The creation of the Orange sectarian state in 1921, and the maintenance of this state up until now, provided a material foundation for sustaining the Orange bloc.

The current Downing Street peace declaration makes much of the need to resolve the conflict through the democratic process. But is there anything remotely democratic about the



Defenders of the Orange state

"Why can't the workers of all, both loyalist and anti-u attacks. What is more, b wants to live for years I marched together on rec arguments amongst man to make sense: since Ma be transformed into a re shouldn't we argue agair But these arguments don really divides the working systematic national oppr

existence of the six county state?

In 1918 an all-Ireland election produced an outright majority for the party of independence, Sinn Féin.

We hear much about modern Sinn Féin's "hostility to the democratic process" from British politicians and propagandists. But no mention is ever made of the way in which the Sinn Féin of 1918 was victim of one of the greatest affronts to democracy in the history of British imperialism.

The election returned 73 Sinn Féin MPs, seven Irish Nationalists (compromisers) and 26 Unionists. Two thirds of the population voted for a Republic. If any party in Westminster received such a majority it would consider its mandate inviolable. Yet when Sinn Féin made good its promise and declared a Republic, the British state banned all nationalist parties, declared the Sinn Féin parliament an "illegal assembly", and unleashed its troops to terrorise and murder Irishmen and women.

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Northern Ireland get together and end the conflict? After nionist workers, Catholics and Protestants, face similar oth sides have an interest in securing peace: nobody a war zone. Haven't both sides of the community ent peace demonstrations?" These are commonplace and British workers and socialists. At first sight they seem exism teaches that the workers' economic struggle can volutionary struggle against the whole profit system, at anything that "diverts" workers from that struggle? It make sense, writes Mark Harrison. They ignore what class of Northern Ireland—British occupation and the ession of the anti-unionist population.

Democracy was flouted in 1918 and the years that followed. Democracy was replaced by the reign of the Black and Tans, a brutal special force who systematically tortured and murdered nationalists.

In response the Irish Republican Army (IRA) fought back. Faced with war the British government of Lloyd George edged towards partition as a solution. In the "Better Government of Ireland Bill" plans for two parliaments were laid, one for 26 counties, one for six of Ulster's nine counties. Again, the proposal was in defiance of elementary democracy, even of the most hypocritical kind. The democratic will of the majority was ignored and the electoral boundaries were redrawn purely on the basis of ensuring that a small minority of the country, the Protestants, would be saved from Home Rule.

Only by butchering Ulster itself could this swindle be guaranteed success, for in municipal elections in 1920, Sinn Fein had won a majority of the nine counties of Ulster. The Unionists were only a majority in four counties.

From 1920 to 1922 the Catholic community of Belfast was systematically pogromed. In those two years 428 Catholics were killed, 1,766 were wounded, 8,750 were driven out of theirjobs by Orange mobs and 23,000 were rendered homeless either by arson attacks or straightforward violent intimidation.

The British state allowed the pogroms to rage. When nationalists so much as blinked the Black and Tans would smash a rifle butt in their face. When Orange mobs threw Catholic shipyard workers into the river, the troops cheered them on.

Order had been preparing for these events. Bigots like Carson had long preached violent resistance to Home Rule and had armed and organised volunteers. When partition came the Orange Order unleashed its mobs,

with the full support of the British army.

The new state machine, based in the rigged northern parliament, systematised discrimination. Housing allocation benefited Protestants, with all councils gerrymandered to ensure Unionist majorities.

In Derry, for example, by 1966 there were 20,102 Catholics to 10,274 Protestants in the adult population. The Orange state resolved this potential electoral problem by giving the Protestant wards 12 seats, the Catholic wards eight. The Unionist majority was secured.

In employment the story was, and remains, the same. Protestants were given preferential access to the labour market—Protestant employers were encouraged to take on only Protestant workers.

In every sphere of life the sectarian state discriminated against Catholics. The fact is that any struggle for the immediate economic interests of workers in Northern Ireland sooner or later brings them to the question of challenging Protestant privilege and the system of imperialist exploitation on which it is based.

The anti-unionist revolt of the late 1960s was not a purely national or even purely political movement. Though it focused on slogans like "one man one vote" and equal electoral boundaries, the anti-unionist workers wanted these reforms precisely as a means to securing an end to discrimination in housing, jobs and education—concrete economic questions. Pursuit of their basic economic interests brought the Catholic working class right up against first the Loyalist police and then the British army.

Unity

The six county state is founded on the sanctity of Protestant privilege. Unless and until that state is smashed and Ireland as a whole is united, this injustice, this terrible crime against democracy, will continue.

So where does this leave workers' unity? Are the Protestant workers wedded forever to the Orange state?

From the Labour leadership right through to Militant Labour and the SWP, the usual answer is to quote examples from the past to illustrate the potential for working class unity despite the national question.

The spontaneous riots by unemployed workers in 1932, in which both Protestants and Catholics fought against an outdoor relief system that plunged thousands into pauperism, is one such example. There is a famous story that when Protestant and Catholic workers joined together to fight back they resorted to singing "Yes We Have No Bananas" as the only song they all knew which was not Loyalist or Republican. Inspiring as this example is, the riots were spontaneous. They tended to take place in the communities coincidentally, but separately. And they were quickly followed (in 1935) by some of the worst anti-Catholic rioting the north has ever seen.

More significant is the 1907 dockers, carters and coalmen's strike. This was a stirring example of workers' unity.

Dockers walked out in May, refusing

to work with non-union men. The newly arrived leader of the National Union of Dock Labourers, James Larkin, persuaded the men to return to work. On doing so they found themselves locked out, their jobs taken by scabs shipped over from England. Larkin called a strike, which lasted until November. It was supported by carters, coalmen . . . and the police, who mutinied!

Larkin, at the time a syndicalist, a marvellous leader of the "new unions" of the unskilled and a Catholic, went to work with a vengeance. He brought to Belfast the militant fighting spirit of new unionism. He organised brilliant picketing, sympathy strikes, solidarity action and a series of massive rallies in which he denounced the capitalists.

Attempts by Orange capital to foster sectarianism came to nothing. Larkin offered to stand down as leader, but he stayed on at the insistence of the Protestant union leader, Alexander Boyd. In the end the strike resulted in compromises for the carters and coalmen and defeat for the dockers and police. No matter, it proved the possibility of workers' unity. Or did it?

The unity that existed was short-lived. It lasted only for the duration of the strike. And it was brought about by very specific circumstances. The sheer bloody-mindedness of the bosses pushed workers together. The bosses, in industries dominated by unskilled labour, were concerned to halt the advance specifically of new unionism, which had been given a tremendous impetus by developments in Britain (the great unskilled strikes and the Taff Vale judgment legalising effective action).

Split

Equally important was that the Orange bloc had undergone a split. The more liberal Independent Orange Order led by Crawford supported the strike as a means of bringing pressure on the conservative wing of the Orange Order. This meant that a section of the Protestant establishment was prepared to temporarily support workers' unity as a means of securing its own reforming goals.

Last, but far from least, the strike (which, we would do well to remember, occurred prior to partition) took place during a lull in the national struggle. Home Rule was off the immediate agenda. A British union was engaged in a purely trades dispute. Moreover, when rioting occurred and the British army was deployed (in the Catholic Falls Road area—despite the fact that the rioting was not taking place there!), Larkin deliberately appealed to Belfast particularism as a means of avoiding the national question. He issued a hand bill which read:

"Not as Catholics or Protestants, as Nationalists or Unionists, but as Belfast men and workers, stand together and don't be misled by the employers' game of dividing Catholic and Protestant."

Economic

Unity was possible, but only outside the context of the national question. Yet the national question in the north east, especially since partition, is the central political question. Protestant workers may stand with their Catholic counterparts in a purely economic dispute. But as soon as the economic question is resolved they will be confronted again with the national question.

When James Connolly went to Belfast in 1911 he was confronted with this problem far more acutely. Larkin's spectacular success was not repeated. Connolly organised a strike by Protestant aluminium workers, only for them to turn on him within days, on the say so of the Orange clerics. Connolly commented:

"[Larkin] is forever snarling at me and drawing comparisons between what he accomplished in Belfast in 1907 and what I have done, conveniently ignoring the fact that he was then the secretary of an English organisation and that as soon as he started an Irish one his union fell to pieces... the feeling of the city is so violently Orange and anti-Home Rule at present that our task has been a hard one all along."

For revolutionaries today this problem must be the starting point in elaborating a working class strategy for Ireland. Nothing will come from abstract declarations of the need for workers' unity if the national question is not confronted. Sentimental stories about the 1907 strike and 1932 may warm the hearts of the British left, but they are no solution for anti-unionist workers trapped in the Orange state.

Strategy

Workers' unity cannot be bought at the expense of denying the right of Ireland to determine its own future. The right to a united Ireland is a fundamental democratic right. Inevitably, this will mean conflict with the most obdurate defenders of the Orange state and British rule, including sections of workers. In this sense the conflict will be analogous to a strike in which the strikers are obliged to fight with recalcitrant scabs.

If we were to leave the matter there we would be no different from nationalists. However, a working class strategy for a united Ireland is very different. We seek to break up the Orange bloc and win the majority of Protestant workers to our side. This can be achieved by directly linking the struggle for national liberation with a struggle for a socialist Ireland.

The workers must lead the national struggle, posing their own needs and interests. In the context of Northern Ireland this will mean seeking to mobilise Protestant workers to fight for their own economic interests within the context of mobilising the workers of all Ireland, north and south, for socialist goals. Workers' unity in the south against the Green Tories who rule them would set a powerful example to Protestant workers. It can and must dispel their age old fears about "Rome Rule". It will embolden the anti-unionist workers of the north, demonstrating to them the value of a socialist solution over a purely nationalist one.

Socialism

Far from pandering to Protestant privilege, a resolute fight by the workers, north and south, against British imperialism, will at one and the same time remove the prop that holds up the Orange alliance and demonstrate that without that prop the increasingly marginal privileges of the Protestant workers are but nothing compared with the possibilities of socialism. Decent housing for all, fought for by a tenacious working class movement will convince Protestants in practice that there is no need to maintain discriminatory housing policies. The same applies in the fight against unemployment.

It is precisely because modern Republicanism refused to adopt this perspective that it has proved incapable of breaking sections of Protestant workers from British imperialism. Modern Republicanism in all its forms—from the Stalinism of the old "Official" IRA, to the "socialist republicanism" of the Adams wing of Sinn Féin—has always relegated the social and economic questions to second place: questions to be solved only after the achievement of a united Ireland.

Our goal is to engender a struggle by the working class of all of Ireland for socialism and national liberation. That requires a revolutionary party. Such a party will be both resolutely anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist. The creation of such a party is the precondition of a socialist struggle for national liberation. And such a struggle is the precondition for achieving real workers' unity, unity that lasts.

ALL THEY ARE SAYING IS ...

HE PEACE being prepared in the talks between Major and Albert Reynolds, as well as those between John Hume and Gerry Adams, is a reactionary settlement. It is the latest in a long line of capitulations by armed middle class nationalist movements, where a place at the bosses' negotiating table is exchanged for a ceasefire in an armed struggle that seems to be going nowhere.

The one "concession" British imperialism has made to the Republican movement—the denial of any "economic or strategic interest in Northern Ireland"-does not mean that Britain has any intention of quitting Ireland. It merely shovels the whole responsibility for legitimising Britain's presence onto the will of the Protestant population to maintain the union.

It is the duty of revolutionary socialists, both in Britain and Ireland, to warn those with any illusions in the proposed peace deal, especially the war-weary working class of Northern Ireland, that no good can come of it. It will maintain imperialist domination of Northern Ireland. It will cement the privileges of the Protestants, with the added bonus of the Republican leadership playing the role of a Mandela or an Arafat in selling the surrender to the masses.

Britain's two main left organisations, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Militant Labour, have failed in this duty.

On 6 November Socialist Worker castigated John Major for not responding positively to the Hume-Adams' peace initiative. Attacking Major because he had "snubbed the one real chance of peace", it suggested:

"The one thing Major could do is immediately meet representatives of all sides."

Proposals

The Hume-Adams proposals, still not published, are clearly a formula worked out between the Republican leadership and the pro-imperialist SDLP for a face-saving ceasefire. Instead of focusing their fire on this, the SWP criticise Major for failing to take up Sinn Féin's offer of surrender!

When Major responded with his own formula, the Downing Street declaration, the SWP's tune changed slightly. The January issue of Socialist Review states:

"Socialists welcome the possibility of peace. But we remain sceptical about the [Downing Street] deal and critical of the Republican politics which have carried Gerry Adams down this road."

Why welcome the "possibility of peace" if that peace is going to mean outright defeat for a just struggle? In reality the SWP's scepticism about the deal is because of its inability to bring a ceasefire, not because it is a betrayal of the struggle for national self-determination:

"Of course [Major and Reynolds] would like the war in Ireland finished. It is an enormous drain on the resources of both governments. But neither will be distraught if Sinn Féin and the IRA reject the declaration. They hope such a rejection will cost Sinn Féin support. Then they will blame Gerry Adams for the war . . . This is clearly no recipe for peace. But it could help raise the standing of Major and Reynolds themselves."

Certainly the Republican leadership-which has placed all its hopes on "bombing Britain to the negotiating table"-faces the threat of renewed repression and loss of mass support. But the proposed talks are not just a cynical attempt by Major to expose the Sinn Féin leadership. They are a genuine attempt to stitch up a reactionary deal.

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BY CHRIS BRYANT

If socialists are to be consistent in their criticism of the politics which have brought Gerry Adams so close to this sell out, then they must draw the logical conclusion and demand the rejection of the deal offered by Major.

Neither the SWP, nor its sister organisation in Ireland—the Socialist Workers Movement (SWM)—can bring themselves to do this.

On the contrary, they regard any "peace" as the best possible condition for taking the fight for socialism forward. Even a peace deal dictated by British imperialism is preferable for the SWP/SWM.

In order to pose itself as the best fighter for "peace", the SWM lumped the justified and progressive anti-unionist struggle in with the reactionary activities of the loyalist paramilitaries under the general heading of "sectarianism".

Its leaflet to the 3 November peace demo in Derry proclaimed:

"Today must be the start, though not the end, of a strike movement throughout the country against sec-

Workers' unity is a worthy goal, but socialists have the responsibility to ask on what basis this unity can be achieved if it is going to take the struggle of the working class forward rather than to lead it into another dead end.

Unity of workers, Protestant and Catholic, north and south, is vital to the success of the Irish revolution. But workers need to be united against not only economic oppression and attacks on the welfare state, but against the very existence of the sectarian northern state.

Border

It is the border and the British presence that maintains the relative privileges of the unionists of the North. It is Britain and the border that tie Protestant workers to the Orange bosses. The imperialist presence is what divides the working class, and the road to unity must come through a struggle against the sectarian state led by the working class.

The SWP's economism blinds them to this fact. Economism is a deviation from Marxism which suggests that

"The type of unity built by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has depended on ignoring the reality of discrimination . . . it has never targeted the British army and the RUC as the source of the violence. As a result, this 'unity of the working class' amounts to nothing when sectarian tensions rise."

But now Socialist Review tells us:

"A working class fightback against low pay, unemployment and hospital closures could be a major start in breaking down sectarianism."

What will happen when "sectarian tensions rise"? The SWP has to pin all its hopes on the imperialist peace deal in the vain hope that "peace" will mean an end to sectarian tensions.

Far from seeing the Irish national question as a key component of the class struggle, the SWP sees it as a diversion from that struggle. Because of their economism they have no strategy for resolving it. They wish that this decisive political question would quietly disappear, letting workers get on with the task of fighting Major and Reynolds on wages and Jobs.

This is why we find Socialist Worker

Process

ain."

By the ruling class, yes, but why should socialists welcome the "complicated process" of selling out the national struggle?

strategy and methods of struggle. It

is not simply a question of supporting

the IRA's right to defend the anti-

unionist population from sectarian

killings. Revolutionary socialists in

Britain-from Karl Marx onwards-

have always supported, uncondition-

ally but critically, the armed struggle

of Irish Republicans against the Brit-

from supporting this fight openly.

Despite its anti-imperialist "principles"

it has discovered that you cannot just

throw membership cards at workers

and students if your paper stands

against the stream and takes the

side of Britain's enemy in the Irish

Militant Labour commits all the er-

rors of the SWP but openly and una-

shamedly. It has never supported the

armed struggle against the British

state, even critically; it has consist-

ently equated republican and loyalist

violence; it has peddled the abstract

formula of "workers' unity" around

economic issues as a fig leaf for its

refusal to take the anti-imperialist

Little wonder that faced with the

prospect of a reactionary peace deal

Militant has even fewer qualms than

the SWP about accepting it with open

arms, in order to get on with the

economic struggle alone. As Militant's

editorial (17 December 1993) states:

it will only represent the first stage of

a complicated process fraught with

tremendous obstacles. Peace how-

ever would be seen as a great step

forward throughout Ireland and Brit-

"Should an agreement be reached

side in the Irish war.

The SWP has consistently flinched

ish state.

war.

"An agreement is still possible and with it a reduction in the intensity of the violence. This would give the chance to the trade unions to unite Catholic and Protestant workers in common struggle."

Militant Labour-in a classically economistic manner—has always argued that if only the "sectarian" national struggle would go away then workers could "unite" on the bread and butter issues. It is only logicalalbeit a total betrayal of the antiimperialist struggle-for Militant to welcome British imperialism's attempts to "get rid" of the national struggle for them. Militant Labour's economism is distinguished from the SWP's merely by its more blatant proimperialism.

The SWP and Militant Labour, faced with British imperialism's latest manoeuvre against the anti-unionist revolt in Northern Ireland, have jumped aboard the peace bandwagon. Whether they realise it or not, they are sharing seats on this wagon with imperialism itself. They are betraying the anti-unionist revolt. And this marks them down as centrists-revolutionary in their rhetoric and reformist in their deeds-not revolutionary socialists.

Harsh words. But the 25 year old revolt against the Orange state and British occupation has been too bitter too allow*for any diplomacy. The British state has hurled everything it could against the anti-unionist population—its troops, its assassination squads, its non-jury courts, its bouts of internment with out trial, its daily raids on the nationalist community. Still that revolt continues.

It is unworthy of any socialist, let alone a socialist in Britain, to reward that spirit of resistance, to repay the sacrifices made in that revolt-prison, torture and death-with calls for peace on Britain's terms. The struggle against Britain's occupation of Northern Ireland deserves much more than the counsels for surrender being offered by the centrists of the SWP and Militant Labour.



Far from seeing the Irish national question as a key component of the class struggle, the SWP sees it as a diversion from that struggle . . . They wish that this decisive political question would quietly disappear

tarianism, for peace . . . The loyalist campaign of sectarian murder and the IRA massacre on the Shankill Road have united most working class people in terror and grief."

This is rubbish. Far from uniting working class people, the upsurge in violence and the "concession" to the Republicans contained in the Downing Street statement have, if anything, hardened support for the loyalist paramilitaries amongst the Protestant working and urban middle classes.

Sceptical

If the SWP is "sceptical" about the Major-Reynolds' declaration, how does it see "peace" being achieved? SW tells us:

"Permanent peace can only come from a fight against [the Irish and British Tory governments] that unites Protestant and Catholic workers north and south of the border."

the day to day economic struggle of the working class has the power on its own to generate revolutionary consciousness and to overcome all forms of oppression: racial, sexual and national. Socialist Review says:

"It is up to socialists to argue that Irish workers, whether Protestant or Catholic, whether living in the north or south, can expect nothing from Reynolds and Major. Together they can fight to create a new Ireland free from poverty, repression and discrimination."

True, but unless socialists also argue that the new Ireland will have to be united, will have to be created by throwing out British troops and smashing the Orange state, and by eliminating all the anti-Catholic discrimination in employment, housing etc, the much vaunted "workers' unity" will disintegrate every time the national question is posed.

In 1990 SWM leader Kieran Allen wrote:

"welcoming" not only the prospect of peace but the reactionary peace process itself.

Amid this vague, confused and, at root, opportunist reaction to the peace talks, what has happened to the SWP's much vaunted anti-imperialist position on the Irish war?

Every week in Socialist Worker's "Where we Stand" column they tell us that they "support all genuine national liberation struggles".

Now all trace of support for the Republican struggle against the British state has disappeared from the SWP's publications. Even the call for Troops Out of Ireland Now, the formal position of the SWP, appears less frequently, and it certainly is not part of the SWP's strategy for achieving "peace".

If socialists support all "genuine national liberation struggles" then we should support the, IRA's struggle against the British occupation forces, even though we criticise its wrong

HE RUSSIAN elections brought an unexpected success for the extreme right and a hollow victory for Boris Yeltsin. His new constitution was only narrowly agreed. Nine of the Russian Federation's republics did not vote for the constitution.

The closeness of the vote-only 28% of the eligible voters actually voted for the constitution—has inevitably led to accusations of vote-rigging. The pro-reform parties who support Yeltsin were only able to win a third of the vote, but this is just enough to allow them to stop the new parliament blocking Yeltsin's every move.

Russia's economic collapse, more severe than the one Germany suffered in the years before Hitler's rise to power, has led to the emergence of a proto-fascist force, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The LDP won one the highest proportions of the poll, around one quarter of votes cast. Some of the pro-Yeltsin "reformers" were so surprised by Zhirinovsky's success that they suggested he had used the talents of the faith healer Kashpirovsky to induce mass hypnosis of the electorate.

The reasons for Zhirinovsky's success, however, are the direct result of the effects of the capitalist restoration process, not of a television faith healer.

During the election campaign the Russian media gave Zhirinovsky much more coverage than, say, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Why? first he supported Yeltsin's October coup, though he has since criticised the bloodiness of the repression.

Then he repeatedly advocated a "yes" vote for Yeltsin's "authoritarian" constitution. He is fond of saying that Russia needs a strong man and not a parliament. He has said repeatedly that he would ban or crush the Communists.

Yeltsin and his advisers may have thought that Zhirinovsky would split the protest vote against the economic "reforms", keep the Communist Party of the Russian Federation's vote under control, and act as a bogeyman to the West, making it ease up its pressure on him to go faster with the shock therapy.

All of this may be true but it is not a sufficient explanation for Zhirinovsky getting 22.79% of the votes.

Racist

Zhirinovsky's main stock in trade is ferocious Great Russian chauvinism with strong racist overtones. He is for a ban on refugees coming into Russia. He is for the expulsion of millions of non-Russians living in the cities and towns of Russia. He declares his "understanding" of the violence against them. He is for a ban on any non-Russian having the right to trade in Russia. His call for the dissolution of the current republics in the Federation is a means of ensuring Great Russian dominance over other ethnic groups.

The main butt of his attacks are the Caucasian and central Asian small traders in the major cities and the "cosmopolitan intellectuals" who, according to him, dominate the media and fill it with praise for the West and un-Russian lifestyles.

Despite the strong possibility that Zhirinovsky's father was Jewish, and the reported fact that he was active in 1989/90 in a Jewish organisation (probably as a KGB agent), he has added Jews to the list of his targets.

Of course he has also denied he is an anti-Semite. Yet on his visits to the west he has hob-nobbed with the Austrian industrialist Edwin Neuwirth, Waffen-SS veteran and holocaust revisionist. He has met with Dr Gerhard Frey's German Peoples Union (DVU) whose publications also proclaim the Nazi regime's innocence.

Zhirinovsky's economic programme

Russia's rising fascist threat

BY KATE FOSTER

includes an end to any aid to the former soviet republics, stopping the closures of arms manufacturing factories and no conversion of these factories to civilian uses. He also promises the liquidation of the organised gangs which run the virulent and extremely violent black market.

This is an extremely populist programme but it is not an anti-capitalist

His fulminations against the "informal economy", which obviously strike a chord with people suffering rampant inflation, are directed more against the non-Russians, who in his view dominate it, than against the "market" as such.

Orders

Zhirinovsky's economic plans include a commitment to preserving a strong state sector, the reintroduction of state orders and stronger inter-enterprise links. The state should "organise the labour market" to avoid unemployment and strikes, he says.

However this does not represent any kind of defence of post-capitalist property relations. Fascists are also frequently defenders of a large sector of the economy controlled by the state: not in order to abolish private capitalists, rather to protect them in times of economic crisis.

In Zhirinovky's case it is the road to creating Russian capitalism. Zhirinovsky's corporatism is part of a state-capitalist programme of restoration which will ensure the creation of a Russian imperialism, not under the domination of foreign multinationals.

He has threatened not only all the states of the former USSR with reabsorbtion but also Finland and Alaska. The backdrop to his election broadcast showed a map which included all these areas as Russia plus a large slice of eastern Europe thrown in for good measure.

He also proposes the seizure of the Middle East and the break up of the Muslim world. His book The Last Dash to the South advises the United States and Canada to colonise Central and South America, Europe to recolonise Africa, and Japan and China to take over South East Asia.

Crazy ravings? Yes, but Hitler's plans for world conquest in weak, crisis ridden Weimar Germany must have seemed the same!

How then has Zhirinovsky suc-



Zhirinovsky

ceeded in gaining the support of a quarter of the Russian electorate? A large section of the electorate has had its illusions in capitalist democracy shattered by economic reality and yet remembers the stagnation and political repression of Stalinism. Zhirinovsky said there was a "third way", and there was no significant revolutionary socialist opposition to expose his ravings and offer a genuine alternative to capitalism and Stalinism.

Industrial output continues to decline, inflation is rife and massive unemployment is expected. Whilst some wages have been increased as price controls have been lifted, those on pensions and in low paid work have been affected severely. In January 1992, when price controls were lifted on 90% of goods, there was a 250% price increase, virtually overnight.

Chaos at the level of the economy is mirrored by social breakdown. Black marketeering and profiteering have become rife. The levels of corruption, if anything, appear to have increased since the days of the Stalinists. In an opinion poll published in December, 42% described the current state of Russia as one of

"increasing anarchy".

Zhirinovsky himself is clearly a fascist and he has has obviously found strong electoral support. But it is not the case that fascism is close to triumph in Russia.

first, the programme of the party put before the electorate was a chauvinist one, but it was not overtly fas-

As with fascist leaders like Le Pen in France, Zhirinovsky has to hide his full intentions behind a smokescreen of outbursts, denials and retractions. Consequently many in his party, including some of its leaders, are not yet fascists.

Centralised

Zhirinovsky has to combine notoriety with respectability. The hard core fascists of Russia, like other restorationist forces, have yet to develop a strong, centralised party organisation. Their forces are divided into the old organisations, such as Pamyat, which existed alongside Stalinism, and the newly-emerging chauvinist-populist forces which Zhirinovsky represents.

There are currently six openly fascist groupings in Russia. There are

also a number of extreme nationalist groupings which have links with fascism. The essential difference between fascism and other far right dictatorial movements is that fascism attempts to mobilise a massmovement with the open programme of crushing working class opposition.

The LDP as a whole is thus not yet a fully fledged fascist party. It has a relatively small membership of around 20,000, though it is likely to recruit rapidly in the wake of the election. But it is funded by big business and, according to opinion polls, it appeals differentially to young male voters on average or above average wages who are more concerned about the humiliation of Russia and its army and law and order than economic hardship. All these facts show the LDP's potential to become a fascist force.

Strikes

The Russian working class is just beginning to fight back against the effects of restoration. In November, gas and construction workers were on strike for over a week in Nadym in Siberia. The miners of the Kuzbass and Vorkuta came out on strike in December. Both strikes began with demands for payment of wages which were overdue. In both cases the demands rapidly moved from the economic to the political, with strikers demanding a say in who should be in the cabinet. These sectors of the working class are the most used to taking action Until recently they also had the biggest illusions in Yeltsin, but now things are changing.

With the obvious potential of a mass base, of money from sections of the military industrial complex, and with increasing numbers of desperate young unemployed and dismissed soldiers there is no reason why the Russian fascists should not resolve their differences and coalesce into a fully fascist party with organised street gangs.

Zhirinovsky's high level of support in the army and the easy availability of weapons all indicate that if resistance to the restoration process steps up, then what is at present a semi-or a proto-fascist party can become a fully fledged mass fascist movement.

Workers in Russia must reject both Zhirinovsky and Yeltsin. They must reject Gaidar's call for a popular front against fascism. It is Gaidar's "reforms" that gave Zhirinovsky so much support.

Direct action, strike action, giving a lead to all who feel helpless faced with the collapse of the economy and the welfare system, are the best answers to the LDP.

If the working class rouses itself from its passivity and atomisation, the fascist scum like Zhirinovsky will be flushed back down the sewers from which they have emerged. Workers will need to organise their own militia, drawing in the unemployed and the ex-soldiers, to do this.

A united front of the working class including those from the oppressed and threatened nationalities can smash both Yeltsin and Zhirinovsky.

But most of all the Russian workers urgently need a new revolutionary party to lead the way in these combined struggles, to provide a real alternative to Stalinism, fascism and the unfettered market.

The Thoughts of Chairman Vlad

On the October Revolution of 1917:

. the Satanic dirt which came to us at the beginning of the century, let loose on us by the west to poison this country and destroy us from within, via communism, via nationalism, via cosmopolitanism, via the influence of alien religions, alien ideas and an alien way of life. We will get rid of it all. We will emerge as the most hardened and tempered nation of all."

On the media:

"Ninety per cent of all our news on our television channels will be only about Russia, in good Russian language. You will be addressed by Russian presenters with good kind blue eyes, with fair hair".

On anti-semitism:

"Sometimes Russia has been overwhelmed by anti-

semitism. This phenomenon was provoked only by the Jews themselves. Russia is a kindly nation"

On Russia under the LDP:

"Millions of Southerners will go home, and you will breathe freely. Because it is not so much commercial kiosks that irritate you, but those who trade inside them. When healthy Russian lads, from your regions, are standing there with honest Russian faces, they will be too ashamed to deceive you. For you know it is mainly aliens and fly-by-night southern mafia, who are the devil's advocates, swindlers, burglars, rapists and killers.

On war:

"What an army needs are armed conflicts, both inside and outside the country. Only wars will revive the Russian army".

In advanced capitalist countries like Britain, where the ruling class are sworn enemies of revolution, the very idea of a bourgeois (capitalist) revolution seems a contradiction in terms. But in the period of the rise of capitalism, the bourgeoisie led revolutions in the Netherlands, England, and France to sweep away the power of the former ruling class—the feudal aristocracy.

These revolutions were carried out in the name of democracy, aiming to establish national unity, independence and elected parliaments. They involved smashing the old monarchical and aristocratic regimes. To achieve this the bourgeoisie had to mobilise and arm the masses, to initiate open civil war. Only in this way was the bourgeoisie able to establish a state which allowed for the expansion and development of capitalism.

But what the early bourgeois revolutionary leaders did not have to contend with was a modern working class, with distinct interests that stood in fundamental contradiction to the needs of capitalism.

The modern working class which developed throughout the nineteenth century had no stake in the existing society, and the social power to overthrow it.

So when revolutions broke out in Germany in 1848 and spread to Vienna, the bourgeoisie played a very different role in the struggle against the aristocratic regimes.

Class

In Germany the capitalist class distinguished itself by its halfheartedness, prevarication and cowardice. Terrified of the masses, and particularly of the industrial workers, the bourgeoisie did not destroy the absolutist monarchy but came to an accommodation with the landowners and the crown, who crushed the revolutionary movement. Meanwhile in France the bourgeoisie, which had mobilised the workers against the monarchy, turned round and brutally crushed a rising by the Parisian workers.

In the Communist Manifesto of 1848 Marx and Engels had already asserted the need to instil into the working class the "recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat" even while supporting the bourgeoisie in its struggle to overthrow the military-aristocratic

regimes. In the light of the events of 1848 Marx emphasised the importance of the proletariat organising independently of the bourgeoisie. They needed their own armed organisations and their own political party.

As Marx put it in 1850, the German workers:

... must do the utmost for their final victory by clarifying their minds as to what their class interests are, by taking up their position as an independent party as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves to be seduced for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeois into refraining from the independent organisation of the party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: the Revolution in Permanence."

Revolution

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Marx's conclusions were decisive for the development of the theory of Permanent Revolution. He recognised that the bourgeoisie in a developing capitalist society may be too weak or too afraid of the working class to carry through its revolution against the political remnants of the old feudal society to the end.

The working class must therefore fight, independently of the bourgeoisie, to carry through the democratic

WHAT WE MEAN BY

bourgeois revolution to the finish. But it must also prepare to fight for socialism under the best possible conditions—a democratic republic, national unity, the abolition of all feudal obstacles to progress, and the most highly developed, experienced, and battle hardened working class organisation possible.

Trotsky developed his theory of Permanent Revolution in Russian society in the first decade of the twentieth century. He took Marx's 1850 position as his starting point, but developed it further.

Capitalism was growing fast in Russia, and was already the dominant economic system. But in the sphere of politics and the state, key tasks of the bourgeois revolution had not been achieved. There was no political democracy. Russia was ruled by the absolutist monarchy of the Tsar. Feudal relations on the land, together with the existence of a vast mass of landless peasants, obstructed the needs of capitalist development.

The Russian Marxists, organised in the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP), all recognised that the coming revolution would be bourgeois. It would occur as a direct result of the contradiction between the development of the capitalist economy and the pre-capitalist political superstructure. Its main aim would be the overthrow of the Tsar, the solution of the land question and the establishment of political democracy.

The working class would have to win the support of the peasantry by proving itself the most determined fighter for land and for political democracy.

This much was a matter of agreement among the Marxists. The question that divided them was which forces in society, which classes, would lead the Russian bourgeois democratic revolution.

The Menshevik faction of the RSDLP drew the conclusion that it would be led by the parties of the liberal bourgeoisie. The working class would need an alliance with the liberal and democratic bourgeois forces, and would have to avoid scaring them off with too radical or revolutionary actions. Once the bourgeoisie had overthrown the Tsar, the way would be clear for the peaceful expansion of Russian capitalism, and with it the organisation of the workers' fight for socialism.

The Bolsheviks held a radically different view. Lenin summed up the difference:

"Our revolution is a bourgeois revo-

Charter to the contract of

lution, therefore the workers must support the bourgeoisie—this is what the worthless politicians from the ranks of the liquidators [right wing Mensheviks] say. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, is what we Marxists say. Therefore the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deceit of the bourgeois politicians, teach them not to believe them, to rely on their own forces, on their own solidarity, on their own arms."

Permanent Revolution.

Destroy

The Bolsheviks held to the view that the bourgeoisie was utterly untrustworthy and would be incapable of carrying through the bourgeois revolution to the end. The working class would need to strengthen its own independent organisations, and build an alliance with the multi-millioned masses on the land—the peasantry to destroy Tsarism and establish a democratic republic. Instead of relying on the liberal capitalists, Lenin held out as the future form of a revolutionary government the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

In 1906, when he developed the theory of Permanent Revolution, Trotsky belonged to neither faction of the RSDLP. But he agreed with the Bolsheviks that the bourgeois democratic revolution would have to be led by the workers and peasants. He based his views on an integral component of Permanent Revolution, the theory of combined and uneven development.

The imperialist epoch brings with it a highly uneven economic development of world capitalism. In backward countries, and Russia was backward, imperialist capital was able to create great centres of modern industry, a modern and highly developed working class, alongside the most appalling backwardness.

Russia embodied this uneven development in the early twentieth century. The great centres of modern capitalist life-Petrograd and Moscow-existed alongside abject primitiveness in the countryside. This uneven combination of economic and political development had a practical consequence for Trotsky. It meant that the task of dragging Russia out of its feudal darkness belonged to that class, in those urban centres, equipped with the social power and progressive outlook of modern capitalism—the working class.

The working class itself had devel-



Trotsky

oped in an uneven and combined way. It was small, relative to the proletariats of western Europe and to the peasant majority in Russia. But in one generation it had developed a level of organisation and political consciousness that evolved over decades in western Europe.

The theory of Permanent Revolution is widely known to be one of the most

important and original of Leon Trotsky's contributions to Marxism.

Misunderstandings of what it means are almost as widespread. Today the

theory is relevant to every country where the masses are denied democratic

rights, from Palestine to South Africa, from Ireland to Sudan. In this article

Richard Brenner explains the fundamentals of the theory and programme of

Peasantry

The working class of one of the most backward countries in Europe was also one of the most advanced. It developed and pioneered such class struggle weapons as the mass strike, the soviet, the workers' militia and, above all, the Bolshevik Party-the first modern revolutionary working class party. All of these weapons were put on display, tested and refined in the defeated revolution of 1905. This rehearsal proved invaluable for the later revolutions of 1917.

The preponderance of foreign capital in the Russian economy had left the native Russian bourgeoisie extremely weak, with only slender roots in the population at large. This factor, together with the developing militancy of the working class, the vast size of the peasantry and the seething cauldron of oppressed nationalities that made up the Russian empire, meant that the bourgeoisie was too weak and too terrified of the pressure of the masses to strike out on a revolutionary road. The experience of 1905 had exposed the Russian bourgeoisie as even more cowardly than their

German counterparts of 1848.

It is a common misconceptionone spread by the Stalinists for decades-that Trotsky wanted to ignore the bourgeois character of the revolution, and to ignore the role of the peasantry within it, and simply proceed straight to a socialist revolution. Trotsky was clear that the working class would have to win the support of the peasantry by proving itself the most determined fighter for its demands for land and for political democracy—both demands being bourgeois, part of the programme for the bourgeois revolution.

But Trotsky recognised that there was no prospect of the peasantry playing an independent role in the revolution. The peasantry were not a historic class in the sense that the bourgeoisie and proletariat are: they had no single common interest, no role central to the functioning of capitalism, and no fundamental aims separate from those of the two major classes. As a hangover of one of the old feudal estates, they could be rallied to support either the liberal bourgeoisie or the working class.

Trotsky insisted that, if the proletariat were to overthrow the Tsar in alliance with the peasantry, the only government a workers' party could participate in would be one in which it played the leading and dominant role. This way the working class could ensure it would not be used as a cover for the actions of a capitalist government against the workers. As he put

it in his work, The Year 1905:

"It is self-evident that the proletariat, as in its time the bourgeoisie, fulfils its mission supported by the peasantry and the urban petit-bourgeoisie. The proletariat leads the countryside, draws it into the movement, gives it an interest in the success of its plans. The proletariat, however, unavoidably remains the leader. This is not 'the dictatorship of the peasantry and the proletariat' but the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry."

Socialist

Trotsky went on to argue that if the working class were the leading force in a revolutionary regime then it could not restrict itself to the democratic (bourgeois) task of clearing away all impediments to the fullest development of capitalism in Russia. It would be obliged to undertake socialist tasks. From being the leading force in the bourgeois democratic revolution, the working class in power would have to start the process of transforming society along collectivist lines, in the direction of socialism.

In Results and Prospects, the pamphlet in which the theory of Permanent Revolution was first set out in detail, Trotsky used the example of the eight hour day. This was not a socialist demand in and of itself but part of the democratic programme. But, asked Trotsky, what would happen if the workers went on strike against an employer who refused to implement the eight hour day?

If the employers locked out the workers then the "democratic dictatorship" would have to provide maintenance for the strikers. If the employers remained intransigent the only correct course would be "the expropriation of the closed factories and organising production on a socialised basis".

For Trotsky this was a further important element of Permanent Revolution. The working class in power could never give a guarantee not to make inroads into capitalist property. Any such guarantee would debar the workers' party from implementing democratic demands, like the eight hour day, let alone socialist ones, if the capitalists put up resistance to them.

Permanent

He wrote, "the democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a permanent revolution". The only way that the working class could stick rigidly to a bourgeois-democratic programme would be by refusing to act on behalf of the workers against capitalism and private property. If the workers' party was at the same time the leading force in the government then these bourgeois-democratic limits would "compromise Social Democracy from the very start."

Lenin did not agree with Trotsky's theory at this time. He described it as "absurdly left". Lenin was wrong.

The value of Lenin's original formula was that it did not prejudge the precise nature of the coming revolutionary government. The notion of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" held out the possibility that in the course of the revolution a strong, revolutionary peasant party could emerge playing a relatively independent role vis-a-vis the workers' party but sharing government with it and carrying through the democratic revolution.

But the formula did not settle in advance of concrete events what the precise relations would be between these parties. As Trotsky later put it in his book *The Permanent Revolution*:

"The formula deliberately retained a certain algebraic quality, which had to make way for more precise arithmetical quantities in the process of historical experience."

That experience, when it came in the revolutions of 1917, showed that the peasants were unable to play such an independent role. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party (SRs), which had its mass base among the peasantry, fell in behind the bourgeois democrats and betrayed the revolution. Only the Left-SRs rallied (temporarily) to the Soviet power established by the October Revolution. And they did so as allies, under the leadership of the proletariat.

After the overthrow of the Tsar in the revolution of February 1917, the democratic bourgeoisie, supported by the Mensheviks and the SRs, did everything possible to reach an accommodation with the landowners. They refused to recognise the right of the peasants to the land, refused to grant the right of self-determination to nations within the old Russian Empire and even refused to convene a democratic Constituent Assembly.

Lenin drew the conclusion that the bourgeoisie had already gone as far as it was prepared to, and that the only way to complete the democratic revolution was for power to pass into the hands of the working class, leading the mass of the peasantry behind it. The councils of delegates established across Russia by the workers and soldiers would have to take power directly from the coalition government headed by Kerensky.

Fight

To those within the Bolshevik party, such as Stalin and Kamenev, who wanted the Bolsheviks to fight simply for a new democratic coalition government, Lenin declared:

"Whoever talks now only about the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' has lost touch with life, has, in virtue of this circumstance, gone over, in practice, to the petit bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; and he ought to be relegated to the museum of 'Bolshevik' pre-revolutionary antiquities."

The essence of the theory of Permanent Revolution had been proved in practice.

The peasantry could be rallied either to the capitalists or the workers but played no independent role. The only way to take the revolution forward was through a proletarian dictatorship—the rule of the democratic workers' councils—supported by the mass of the peasants. It was not the democratic bourgeois governments of the Mensheviks and SRs but the rule of the Soviets that attempted to solve the tasks of the bourgeois revolution, and go beyond those tasks towards the transition to socialism.

Trotsky's analysis had been proved right.

Nevertheless, Russia was a backward country, unsuited to the task of establishing socialism, which can only take place on the basis of exceeding the technical and economic level of capitalist society. For Trotsky, as for Lenin, the fact that the bourgeois revolution in Russia now had to address socialist tasks in no way meant that Russia was "ready for socialism." But whereas the Mensheviks had drawn from this the conclusion that the workers should avoid taking power at all costs, Lenin and Trotsky drew an entirely different conclusion: that the Russian revolution could survive only as the first link in the chain of a world revolution.

The defeat of the revolutionary upsurge in Europe after the end of the First World War left the Russian workers' state isolated. The theory that the emerging bureaucratic Soviet leadership under Stalin and Bukharin were to develop against the ideas of the Permanent Revolution was "Socialism in One Country". Stalin and Bukharin maintained that it was possible for Russia—despite its backwardness and its dependence on the world market—to proceed to socialism without the victory of the revolu-



Armed workers in the Russian Revolution

tion elsewhere.

Basing their theory on the peculiarities of Russia's development, Stalin and Bukharin ignored the principal lessons of the Russian Revolution—that in backward countries the tasks of the bourgeois revolution could only be solved under the rule of the working class. Resurrecting Lenin's obsolete slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry", they advanced a strategy for the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 that was identical to the one that the Mensheviks had applied to Russia.

The Chinese Revolution was a bourgeois democratic revolution therefore the working class and its Communist Party would have to make the revolution in alliance with the democratic national bourgeoisie. Under no circumstances should the Communists disrupt this alliance or advance socialist goals for this revolution, the Stalinists argued. The result of this policy was disaster for the Chinese Revolution.

The Chinese Revolution began as a struggle against foreign imperialist domination. Stalin and Bukharin held that in order to complete this struggle a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry should be formed. Their means to this goal was the building of a so-called block of four classes—the working class in



Bukharin

permanent alliance with the "national" bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie and peasantry.

Far from the working class and the Communists fighting against the influence of the national bourgeoisie over the peasantry and aiming to bring the workers to the head of the struggle, the Stalinist-led Communist International used all its authority to keep the workers subordinated to their "allies" in the dominant bourgeois nationalist party, the Kuomintang.

In sharp contrast to the theory of Permanent Revolution, verified by the Russian experience, Stalin and Bukharin held that revolutions had to advance by rigidly separated "stages". The first stage could only be bourgeois-democratic. As a Communist International resolution put it, any attempt to skip over this stage

cause such a formulation of the question eliminates the most important national peculiarity of the Chinese revolution, which is a semi-colonial revolution."

This formulation was more than harmful. It was fatal, both for the Chinese revolution and for every semicolonial revolution that the Stalinists were able to mislead in the decades that followed. It transformed a slogan that Lenin correctly abandoned into a timeless schema. It transformed the concept of "stages" in a revolution into a noose for the working class.

Lead

Describing a revolution as either "democratic" or "semi-colonial" merely tells us what the spark and motive force for it is. It does not tell us which class can lead such a revolution to a progressive victory. The lesson of the Russian revolution, which began as a democratic revolution, was that only the working class can secure victory. Ignoring this lesson, Stalin and Bukharin argued that the immediate motive force of a revolution must circumscribe the goals of that revolution.

Inevitably, this meant accepting that the working class should not lead the revolution, but should defer, for the period of the "bourgeois-democratic" stage, to the leadership of the bourgeoisie. In China the practical consequences of this "stage-ist" strategy became clear.

Moscow curtailed the struggles of the workers, instructing the Communists to agree to the Kuomintang's introduction of compulsory binding arbitration in all industrial disputes rather than allow the class struggle of the workers to "disrupt" the democratic alliance. While the struggle was at its height and spreading across China, the Communist International forbade the creation of workers' councils, because these were organs of working class power rather than of democratic capitalist rule.

The Communists issued a statement insisting that their differences with the Kuomintang were only of an incidental nature. They refrained from carrying any criticism of the bourgeois nationalists, even while the trade unions and Communist cells remained illegal in many areas under nationalist control.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition within the Communist International fought against this betrayal. They pointed out that while the revolution had immediate bourgeois goals—independence from foreign imperialism—the national bourgeoisie were more frightened of the masses than the imperialists, and would do a deal with imperialism over the corpses of the revolutionary workers if they could.

As to the peasantry, the Trotskyists applied the theory of Permanent Revolution to demonstrate how the big capitalists were bound up with the landowners and ultimately foreign capital. The peasants' struggle against the big landowners could be solved only under the leadership of the working class, which alone had an interest in breaking the power of

the landowning classes.

Stalin stuck to his Menshevik strategy and launched tremendous persecutions of the Opposition throughout the International. But despite admitting the Kuomintang into the Communist International as a sympathising party, despite all Stalin's services to the Chinese bourgeoisie in restraining the class struggle of the workers, despite designating the nationalists as the legitimate leadership of the revolution, in 1927 Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek sent troops into Shanghai and drowned the Communists and workers' movement in blood. The campaign within the international communist movement against the theory of Permanent Revolution had resulted in a bloody defeat for the Chinese working class.

From this experience Trotsky developed his theory of Permanent Revolution into its mature form. Before this he had been prepared to accept that it was a "Russian" question. China proved that this was not the case. It applied with equal force to every country in which the principal tasks of the democratic revolution remained to be fulfilled.

Not only that. The events of China demonstrated that the dispute was not about isolated slogans, such as the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" or the "workers' government". Nor was it merely a theoretical dispute about the peculiarities that arise from combined and uneven development. It was a dispute about the entire strategy for the victory of revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies.

Validity

Permanent Revolution had to be fought for as a strategy. It would not simply happen as a result of "national peculiarities". Its essential elements—the leadership of the proletariat in the democratic revolution, the maintenance of the class independence of the proletariat, the refusal to sacrifice the interests of the proletariat to other classes involved in the revolution, the fight for soviet power, and the internationalisation of the revolution—constituted a combined programme.

The validity of this programme has been proved time and again since the Chinese revolution. Sadly, it has been proved negatively. In every struggle and revolution against imperialism, from China in 1925 to Nicaragua in 1979, in Palestine, Ireland and South Africa today, the failure of the working class to win and utilise power in its own name has resulted in disaster after disaster.

Imperialism, with its multinational corporations and its treacherous national bourgeois allies, has survived. It has done so not thanks to any inner strength, but thanks to leaderships—Stalinist and petit bourgeois nationalist—who have favoured the strategy of "stageism" and "democratic revolutions" to the strategy of Permanent Revolution.

ZAPATISTA REBELLION

Mexican peasants take up arms

EGIONAL PEASANT risings in Latin America do not normally make front pages of our newspapers day after day.

But the seizure of the southern Mexican town of San Christobal de las Casas by several hundred armed guerillas on New Year's Day was different. It happened on the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, linking Mexico, Canada and the United States in a free trade area.

The rebels in the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ELZN) have named themselves after Emiliano Zapata, a peasant leader in the Mexican Revolution, who was instrumental in seizing Mexico City and overthrowing the hated government in 1913. The parallels were sufficiently uncomfortable to send a shudder of fear through the North American bourgeoisie.

The ELZN is made up of indigenous peasants, many of them women. They have declared war on the Mexican government. Armed only with old guns and homemade grenades, they took to the streets of San Christobal and other towns in the Chiapas area of Mexico. They made clear their opposition to NAFTA. One of the leaders said:

"NAFTA is the death certificate for the indigenous people of Mexico."



Zapatista peasants prepare to march on Mexico City

Their demands are for basic rights, such as food and housing. One rebel even declared that "our thinking is that we have to build socialism".

For President Carlos Salinas de Gortari the explanation of the rebellion was simple. Foreign subversives were at work, from Guatemala and El Salvador, manipulating the local peasants and trying to destroy Mexico and its "advances"!

BY JOHN MCKEE

The real reasons were not hard to find even for the world's press. The state of Chiapas is one of the most poverty stricken areas of Mexico. Thirty per cent of all adults are illiterate. According to national statistics, its education, income per capita, access to electricity and running water is among the lowest of all the states

in Mexico.

The population, the majority being indigenous people, descendants of the Maya, are cruelly oppressed. Thousands die each year as a result of hunger, disease and in clashes with the big landowners who are backed by the military.

As in Zapata's day, land hunger is the fundamental cause of this rebellion. The peasants have been driven

into small holdings that can no longer sustain their families. Large scale agribusiness offers little employment and the landlords dominate the corrupt state government. When the rebels seized San Christobal the first thing they did was to free over 170 prisoners, many of them peasants imprisoned after clashes over land rights.

The Mexican state has responded by pouring 14,000 troops into the area and used the airforce to indiscriminately bomb and strafe peasant villages. Numbering under 2,000, the poorly armed Zapatistas have been forced back into the jungle. Despite closing whole areas to the press, journalists have already reported seeing numerous bodies, hands tied behind their backs, killed with a single shot to the head. The Salinas government clearly intends to put down the rebellion ruthlessly, fearful of it spreading to other parts of Mexico.

The fear is well founded. The situation in the cities is explosive. The wages of the industrial workforce in Mexico declined by 40% in real terms during the 1980s. The minimum wage set by the state has declined by 58%. Constant demonstrations by both workers and peasants take place in the capital. Developing this discontent, deepening the mobilisations of the working class and the poor peasants into a mass struggle against the regime is the key to ending misery and poverty in Mexico.

Whilst the Zapatistas have declared their intention of marching on Mexico City, alone they have little chance of posing a real threat to the Salinas government.

On their own they will be smashed. To prevent even more of the peasant insurgents being massacred, Mexico's workers, with support from workers in other countries, must campaign for an immediate end to the repression now.

GATT DEAL

Dividing the spoils

he world trade agreement struck on 15 December in Geneva was met with relief, if not exactly jubilation, in the capitals of the major imperialist powers.

The latest "Uruguay Round" of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) had, after all, been in preparation for three years and under negotiation for seven!

GATT was introduced after World War Two as part of the "new world order" dominated by the economic and military might of US imperialism. The USA as the new economic superpower demanded "free trade" from all of its allies. As Britain had done in the nineteenth century, the USA demanded free access to all the world's markets for its goods. It wanted an end to all forms of protectionism, import quotas, subsidies and tariff ing the period of recession and interimperialist rivalry between the wars.

It didn't get everything it wanted. Its proposed International Trading Organisation never got off the ground—largely because many countries, like India and Australia, insisted on being able to protect fledgling industries and strategic sectors of their economies from international competition. Instead the USA was deft with GATT, a much more limited agreement based on attempting to reduce import taxes among the participating nations through a series of negotiations.

These "rounds"—there were seven between 1948 and 1979-were indeed relatively successful, often reducing tariffs by 30% or more. But this changed with the new period of world economic crisis and recession that emerged in the mid-1970s. Economic stagnation and recession led the major imperialist powers to adopt a whole range of protectionist meas-

ures against their rivals—measures which GATT had no power to undo.

Where their own interests were at stake the imperialist powers had no hesitation in using protectionism. Textiles were always excluded from GATT decisions. A separate "Multi-Fibre Arrangement" laid down strict quotas on the amount of textiles which could be exported to the advanced industrial countries from the developing ones, purely to protect their own textile industries.

Europe

Agriculture was also exempt from barriers, which had proliferated dur- the agreement. GATT, which was meant to prevent discrimination in tariffs between one nation and another, specifically exempted regional trading organisations which lowered tariffs within these blocks.

The European Community (EC) used these exemptions to develop its agriculture behind huge tariff barriers, barriers which made it impossible for developing countries not connected to the community to compete in the EC's market. The US government ran a similar system for its farmers, offering guaranteed prices to keep its food exports competitive.

These measures of protectionism were quite acceptable to the imperialists for use against the semi-colonial countries. But problems arose when the imperialists used these methods against each other.

By employing such measures the European Union (EU) has now established itself as a major competitor against the USA in the export of agricultural products. The USA con-

trols 11.8% of world trade while the EU controls 11%. This has led the USA to cry "foul!" and to demand that the EU dismantle its subsidy system.

Both the USA and the EU have adopted import quota systems, "voluntary" of course, directed at Japanese cars. Japan in turn has massively protected its agriculture against US imports of rice. All the imperialist countries have adopted "anti-dumping" laws through which imports can be restricted if they decide that products are being dumped at "artificially low" prices.

The last two GATT rounds, especially the Uruguay one, have been marked by clashes between the imperialist powers. Indeed such was the struggle between the EU and the USA during the current round that issues affecting other countries, especially the developing ones, hardly got a look in.

During the Uruguay round, which started in the early 1980s, Washington insisted that GATT should be transformed, bringing in whole new areas of trade which had been exempt in the past. In particular agriculture, service industries and so-called "intellectual property", which covered patents and copyrights, were all targetted. The failure to reach agreement for so long, with periodic adjournments to avoid complete breakdown, reflected the growing economic rivalry between the three major imperialist trading blocs.

In some areas, as negotiations dragged on, the USA found itself pushing at an open door. In the EU the "Common Agricultural Policy" was up for the chop because Europe in re-

cession could no longer afford massive subsidies to farmers. France, responsible for 34% of the EU's cereal production, fought a prolonged rearguard action, both against the USA and the deals struck by its EU partners. One estimate suggests that 300,000 out of a million French farms will disappear as a result of the reforms. In the service sector, areas like telecommunications were already being privatised and sold off to the highest bidder, especially in the lucrative Latin American market. For both the EU and the USA this was a vital area to end protectionism, opening up whole areas of the globe to telecommunications giants such as BT, Alcatel and AT & T.

Blocks

The agreement on "intellectual property rights" represents another blow inflicted on the semi-colonial world by the imperialist nations. It not only restricts the development of products like "IBM clones" in the computer industries of these countries but affects everything from medicine to new strains of seeds. The price of certain life saving drugs, for example, will rise five or six times in countries like India as they are forced to conform to world "market prices"the inflated monopoly prices demanded by the multinational drug companies.

In exchange the semi-colonial world is offered greater access for their textiles—over a ten year period! The USA immediately followed this agreement by cutting China's quota of textile imports by 35%, clearly demonstrating its intentions.

But the latest GATT agreement has not solved everything.

No agreement was reached on how to restrict anti-dumping laws which can be used to get round commitments made at GATT. Individual countries are still allowed to introduce retaliatory legislation against countries supposedly discriminating against the home country's exports. The USA has a battery of such legislation and regularly threatens to use it, as it did with steel imports from the EU. France is demanding that the EU adopts similar legislation.

Both the EU and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), comprising USA, Canada and Mexico, are pushing ahead to reduce all restrictions on trade internally while maintaining external barriers. Any failures or circumventions of GATT will certainly strengthen the role of these trading areas and the tendency for the world to be divided into antagonistic and increasingly protectionist regional blocks.

In this sense the "successful" conclusion of the Uruguay round is conditional. GATT remains a set of voluntary agreements. Its success up to the 1970s largely rested on the enormous clout wielded in the world trading arena by the USA. Washington could ensure that the nations in GATT stuck by their agreements or suffered the consequences.

Today, while the USA reigns supreme in the military and political sphere, its economic supremacy has waned as Japan and Europe's economies have risen. The agreement struck in Geneva on 15 December remains as fragile as Washington's "new world order". The economic and political crises which will rock the world in the 1990s will test GATT to its limits.

Dear Comrades,

Two articles in the last issue of Workers Power (WP 173), Family Crisis and Censorship is not the answer, deal with, or touch upon, the death of James Bulger. In the first it is stated:

"politicians and the press place the blame for all of society's evils, including the tragic killing of James Bulger on this 'crisis'".

In the latter we find:

"... why did they do it? The answer lies deep in the psyche of the killers themselves. . . we do not believe that James Bulger's murder can be written off simply as a result of this decay [of capitalism]. Nor do we believe that it is the result of inadequate parenting. It has specific causes lodged in the disturbed psyche of its two perpetrators."

So much for historical materialism!

To paraphrase and supplement Marx's famous statement: being determines consciousness, and the unconscious mind.

There is not a trace of materialist insight into the historical origins and causes of such "disturbed psyches" in the two articles. In fact these are general symptoms of a crisis in the family and a "result of inadequate parenting", not in the sense of individual parental fault, though that is real enough, but rather the social system of parenting bound up with the family's "complex" relation to decaying capitalism. This applies equally to the family in its dual and single parent forms. Neither is historically progressive in relation to the other.

The reader isn't given the tiniest hint that the family is the central site of the abuse, physical, sexual and emotional, of children. This is reminiscent of much, if not all, feminist analysis which sees in the family only the "woman question", thereby glossing over the part played by women in the oppression of children of both genders.

I don't have the figures to hand, but certainly in Britain the number of children killed by their parents, step-parents or familial carers could be counted by the week. This toll is all too "normal" and goes largely unreported. It in turn is the tip of the iceberg of the oppression and abuse of children by adults. This is the real issue lurking behind James Bulger's death. Here the two boys didn't wait to become adults before murdering a child.

Abandoning Marxism over Bulger case?

This is the "aberration".

You hardly require a latterday younger Freud to work out that at least one of the two murderers had probably been secretly abused by an adult or adults, and that this formed the real historical and material basis of his "disturbed psyche" as well as the terrible actions that followed. It is not fantasy reflected artistically in horror videos which lie behind such hate-saturated deeds, normally perpetrated by adults, but real traumatic events, unbearable acts of adult oppression and abuse originally experienced in their turn as a powerless child.

True, censorship cannot in any way solve this problem, rather it furthers its social repression. True, the socialisation of domestic labour is central to the undermining of the family as a site of oppression and exploitation; but not just for women against male power, but also for children against adult domination.

I would suggest to the author of the censorship article a solid theoretical point of departure: Freud's article of 1896, The Aetiology of Hysteria, written when he believed that real traumatic events, particularly sexual abuse, in childhood were a central source of psycho-pathology.

He was later to turn this discovery completely on its head in the theory of the Oedipus complex where real abuse was replaced by repressed aggressive childhood sexual fantasy, whose object is the parent, as the purported basis of neurosis.

Freud had moved from a biographical, i.e. historical and materialist, starting point to one which sought the source of illness "deep in the psyche". This basic move transformed him from the patriarchal family's potentially most incisive theoretical critic into its most successful defender. Arguably no greater betrayal has been perpetrated in the history of thought, a history replete with betrayals.

This forms the critical turning point in the history of psy-

the bourgeois economists with the labour theory of value Freud had abandoned a theory not because it revealed too little, as both they and he claimed, but because it exposed too much.

In the process he rendered his depth psychology, his investigation of the dynamics of psychic reality, exaggeratedly autonomous of real external material events, of individual and social history.

In an attempt to maintain a materialist and scientific method he turned to natural history as the primary causative element, to a specious neo-Lamarckian biology [the belief that acquired behaviour could be inherited-eds], which became the foundation of his concept of fateful human destiny, a legitimating ideology of the familial, sexual and social status quo.

Nonetheless Freud re-

mained opposed to religious obscurantism, which is more that you can say with certainty about the author of the article on censorship.

For to locate the causes of James Bulger's murder purely within the depths of the individual psyche, with no material point of reference at all, is little more than a secularised version of the religious right's explanation of the event. In the one case we have a nameless and causeless disturbance of the psyche, in the other we have the presence of immanent evil. Both are qualities that supra-historically inhere in the individual . . . original sin.

In other words we have a view more akin to lapsed Catholicism than Marxism. The fact that the author is unconscious of this logic is hardly a recommendation. On the contrary it is just what stamps it as ideology.

Marxist theory is sadly lacking in this field as is, in my opinion, programmatic development around the issue of the emancipation of children. The younger Freud provided us with a brilliant theoretical starting point. Its development is

long, long overdue. Quentin Rudland Sheffield

Dear Comrades,

Your article on the James Bulger murder in the December issue was a complete abandonment of Marxism. To locate the problem "deep in the psyche of the killers themselves" leaves a begging the question of what disturbed these psyches? You can "recognise the increasing violence in modern society as a product of capitalism's decay" (well done!) but this is not enough, you say, to explain this act of violence nor is "inadequate parenting or growing truancy".

Having ruled out all material reasons for the affair we are left with a reactionary sociologists view, the pseudoacademic equivalent of the "evil bastards" theory trumpeted by the gutter press. Their whole purpose was to avoid the obvious conclusions that many intelligent observers were making; that the cause was the disturbed and decaying social relations of the capitalist society as a whole. It is the Tories and their system who are the real 'evil bastards'.

The effect of the economic crisis of capitalism is massive cho-analytic theory. Just like alienation among the oppressed resulting in growing racism and fascism, domestic violence, child abuse, rape etc, but this is the effect and not the cause of the problems. So-called mental illness (as distinct from physical brain-damage) must be tackled as best we can, seeking the origins of disturbed psyches in the distorted human relationships of capitalism and specifically that reactionary institution, the nuclear fam-

Freud empirically pioneered the latter course in a materialist manner, as Trotsky recognised; revolutionaries must tackle the problem as a whole as the only real and lasting solution to its' specific manifestations.

Progressive psychiatric treatments can often only temporarily and partially solve individual problems, even though they reject the reactionary individualist lobotomy, electric shock and tranquilliser methods. Until we can alter the material circumstances of people's lives and ultimately overthrow capitalism and its anti-human social values, more Jamie Bulger and Suzanne Capper cases will occur.

As revolutionaries, such appalling incidents must sharpen our anger against the system that does this to two boys so young. Without this approach we will not be able to appeal to the enormous frustrated anger that this super-exploitation produces, as seen, for example, in the Los Angeles riots.

Toxteth, the scene of the worst inner city riots of the early eighties in Britain, was close to the Liverpool homes of the two boys.

We must not divert that anger by ridiculous "Marxist" theories of "aberrations" that "defles pat explanations"; This can never set alienated youth on the road to revolution but will only encourage reaction.

Comradely **Gerry Downing** London

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 imperial-ISM.

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

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (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 classfighting for revolutionary leadership.

En-gerland?

Dear Comrades,

I support the England football team. Like millions of others I have done since childhood. But unlike Arthur Merton I don't go around boasting about it or trying to justify it (WP 173, December 1993). Of course you don't have to be a racist or a fascist to support the England team. You could just have a deep-seated national prejudice, like me . . . and Arthur Merton, apparently.

In solidarity **Dave Cohen**

Hackney racism

Dear Workers Power,

May I, through your pages, draw the attention of your antiracist readers to an unpleasant-and almost unbelievable-development affecting workers at the London Borough of Hackney?

Although Hackney is a Labour Council, and makes noises about Equal Opportunities policies against racism, sexism and so on, Hackney managers have now taken disciplinary action against two African workers—for speaking to each other in their own language!

We would be interested to know of any other cases like this, and especially of any successful fights against such policies. Meanwhile, we shall treat it as a totally unacceptable act of discrimination, and one which we hope will be widely condemned.

Yours sincerely Tony Whelan Branch Publicity Officer, UNISON Hackney No 1 Branch

Send messages of support, information etc. to: Hackney No 1 Branch at **Education Finance** Room 52 **Edith Cavell Building**

Enfield Road London N1 5AZ or phone 071-214 8644

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Number 174 January 1994

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- → Tories attack education
- Russia's rising fascist threat

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TORY "BACK TO BASICS" CALL

Hynocrites!

Christmas panto, where the villain is unmasked at the end as a rotten hypocrite. The Tories were kind enough to give us one this year—the Tim Yeo show.

On Boxing Day the News of the World revealed that Yeo, a Tory environment minister, had fathered an illegitimate child. No big deal—except that Yeo and his party have been blaming all the ills of society on . . . one-parent families!

"It is in everyone's interest to reduce broken families and the number of single parents", Mr Yeo moralised last autumn. "I have seen from my own constituency the consequences of marital breakdown." Only now is it clear that he was speaking from personal experience.

But rather than own up to his double standards, he tried to justify them by saying he only meant those "single mothers whose financial support derives entirely from the public purse, and this is not the case in this situation." How hypocritical can you get?

In John Major's classless society a single parent family is condemned to survive on a weekly benefit of £63.95. Mass unemployment and the lowest level of state-funded nursery provision in Western Europe combine to turn the lives of millions

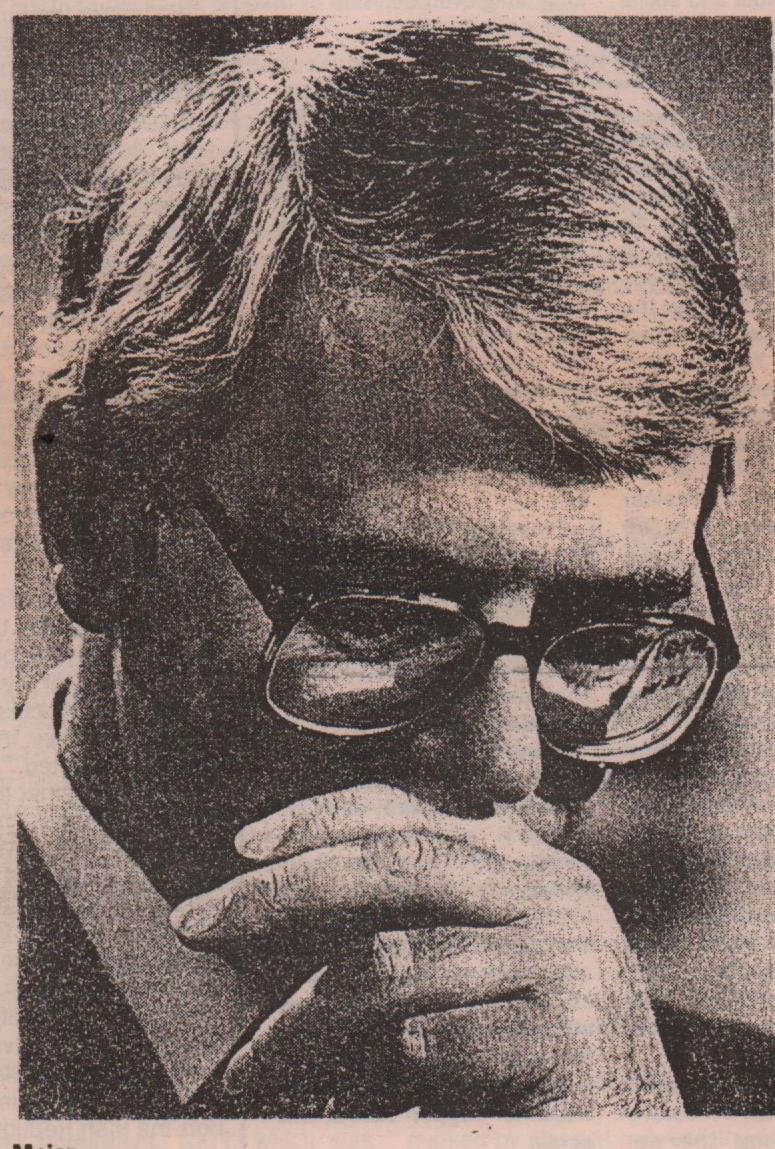
Heaping degradation upon degradation these single parents are blamed for everything from rising crime and bad education to poor health standards.

But if the mother is a Tory councillor with a middle class job and a £150,000 house, then that's a "personal matter."

It is these double standards that have angered so many workers and single parents—not prudishness or Victorian morality. Most working class people don't care who Tories sleep with . . . as long as it's not with them.

John Major says his "Back to Basics" campaign will continue to form the bedrock of government social policy. On the day Yeo finally resigned he said, "None of my ministers have interpreted it [Back to Basics] as an attack on single mothers." This is strange. Major seems to be ignorant of who is in his cabi-

Constitution of the Consti



Major

net and what they have been saying over the last six months.

Health Minister Virginia

Bottomley said recently:
"Women do not have a right to have
a child; a child has a right to a
suitable home."

Treasury minister and arch bigot
 Michael Portillo boasted:

"We prize the individual who demonstrates a sense of duty towards family and the community."

 Education Secretary John Patten told last year's Tory conference:

"To me there is no greater betrayal than having a child and then walking away."

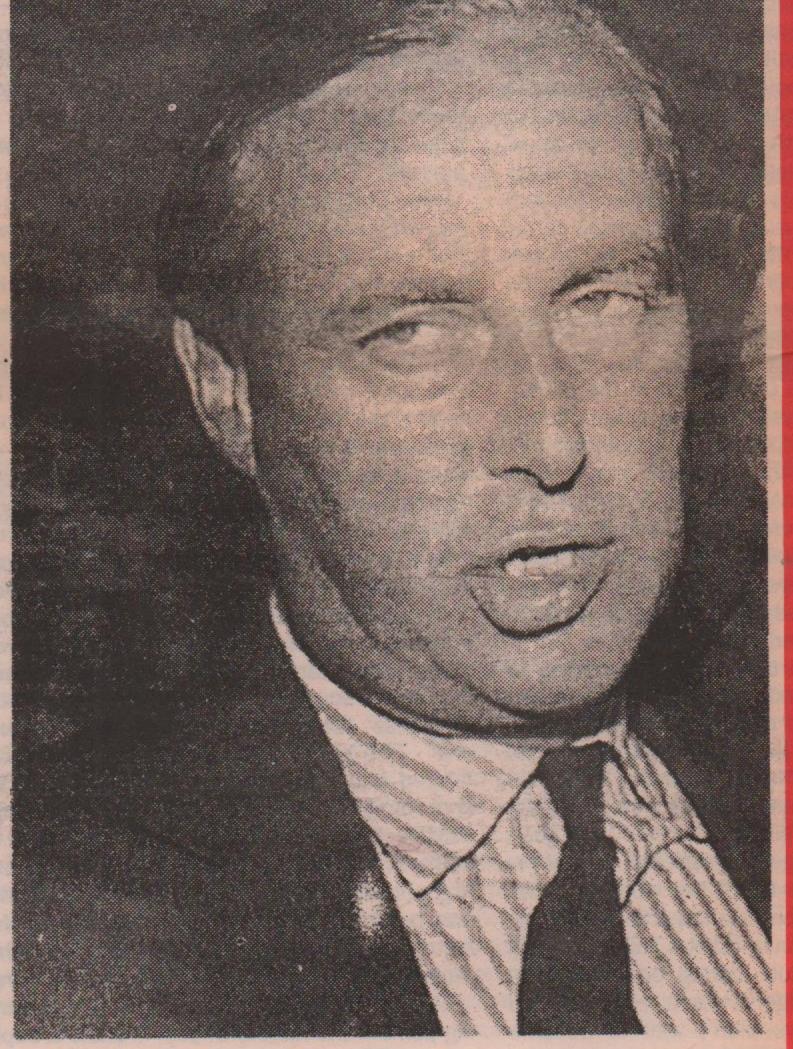
Tim Yeo, John Major—who already knew about Yeo's "love child"—and Steven Norris, who is alleged to have five "mistresses", all applauded vigorously.

Rather than drop their moral cru-

sade Tory MPs will be spending the next few weeks hectically "tidying up" their personal affairs: bribing and threatening various actresses, rent boys and corrupt hangers-on into silence in an attempt to prevent the gutter press having a field day with their private lives.

The Tories are reluctant to abandon their "Back to Basics" crusade because they have no alternative. After 15 years of Tory rule, they can no longer blame the last Labour government, so they are blaming individual members of the public who don't conform to Noddy in Toytown norms of behaviour.

"Back to Basics" is an empty slogan to hide the bankruptcy of a government whose main business is launching a massive attack on the rights and living standards of working class people.



Yeo

John Patten, for example, has spent £2.1 million sending out leaflets to all parents explaining the "Backto Basics Guide to Education".

In the leaflet he urges parents to dress their kids properly, give them a hearty breakfast and not forget to pack them off to school "ready to learn".

This condescending junk mail is designed to disguise the fact that schools are now so underfunded that Newham Council in East London, for example, is abolishing all school meals.

No wonder that Margaret Morrissey, moderate spokesperson of the National Association of Parent Teacher Associations summed up the effect of Patten's leaflet campaign: "I think somebody is going to kill him".

For the Tories and the bosses,

"Back to Basics" means just this: back to the basic task of cutting social spending, increasing repression and whipping up ignorant outrage amongst its middle class supporters.

But millions of workers know the weakest and most vulnerable in society are not the cause of capitalism's ills, they are its victims. Hypocrites like Yeo deserve to be chucked out of office, not because of their sexual activities, but because of their unrelenting assault on working class people.

The working class should start its own back to basics campaign. Back to the class struggle to abolish poverty and deprivation, back to strike action, occupations and effective picketing. Back to the basic struggle to kick out the hypocrites and bigots for good!