

# Workers power

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**against**  
**RACISM**

national demonstration  
saturday march 19 '94

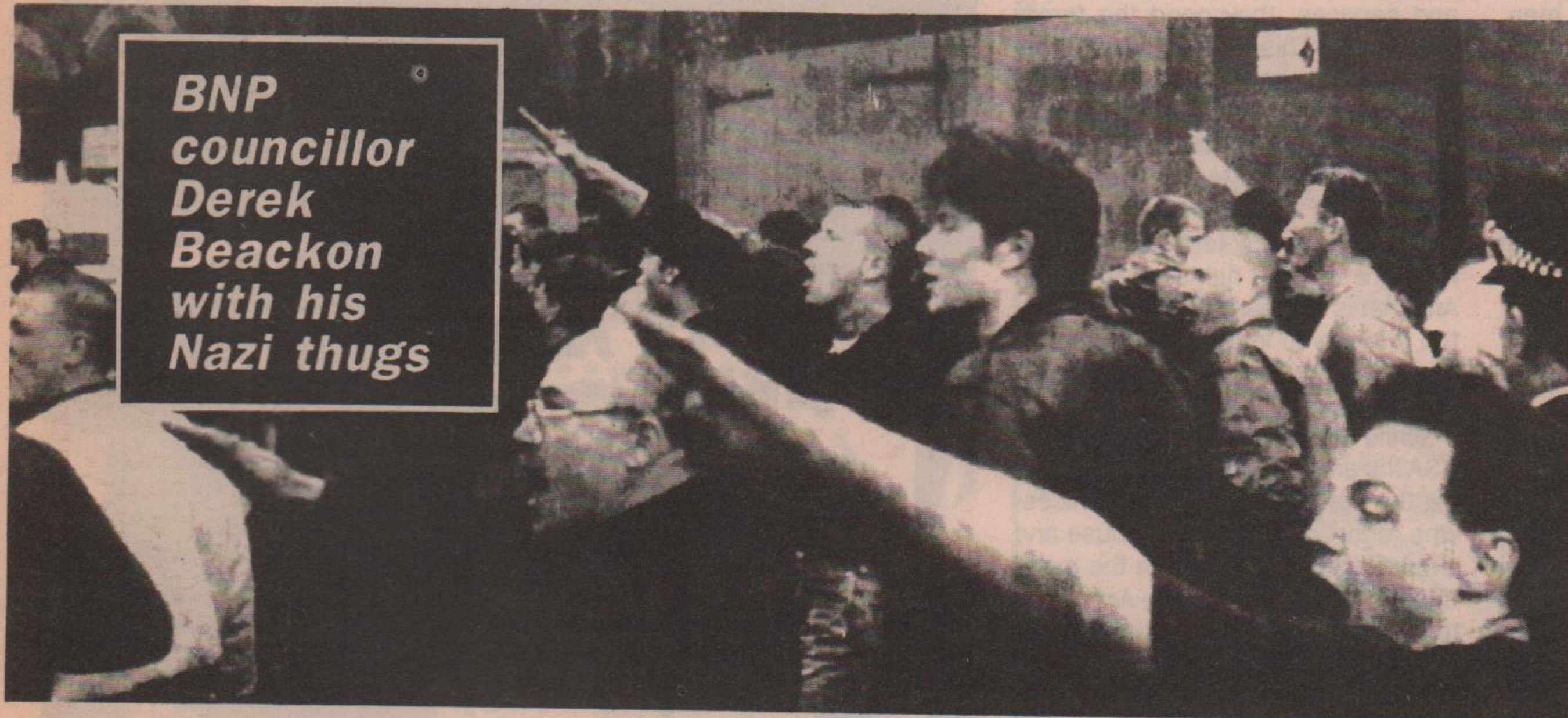
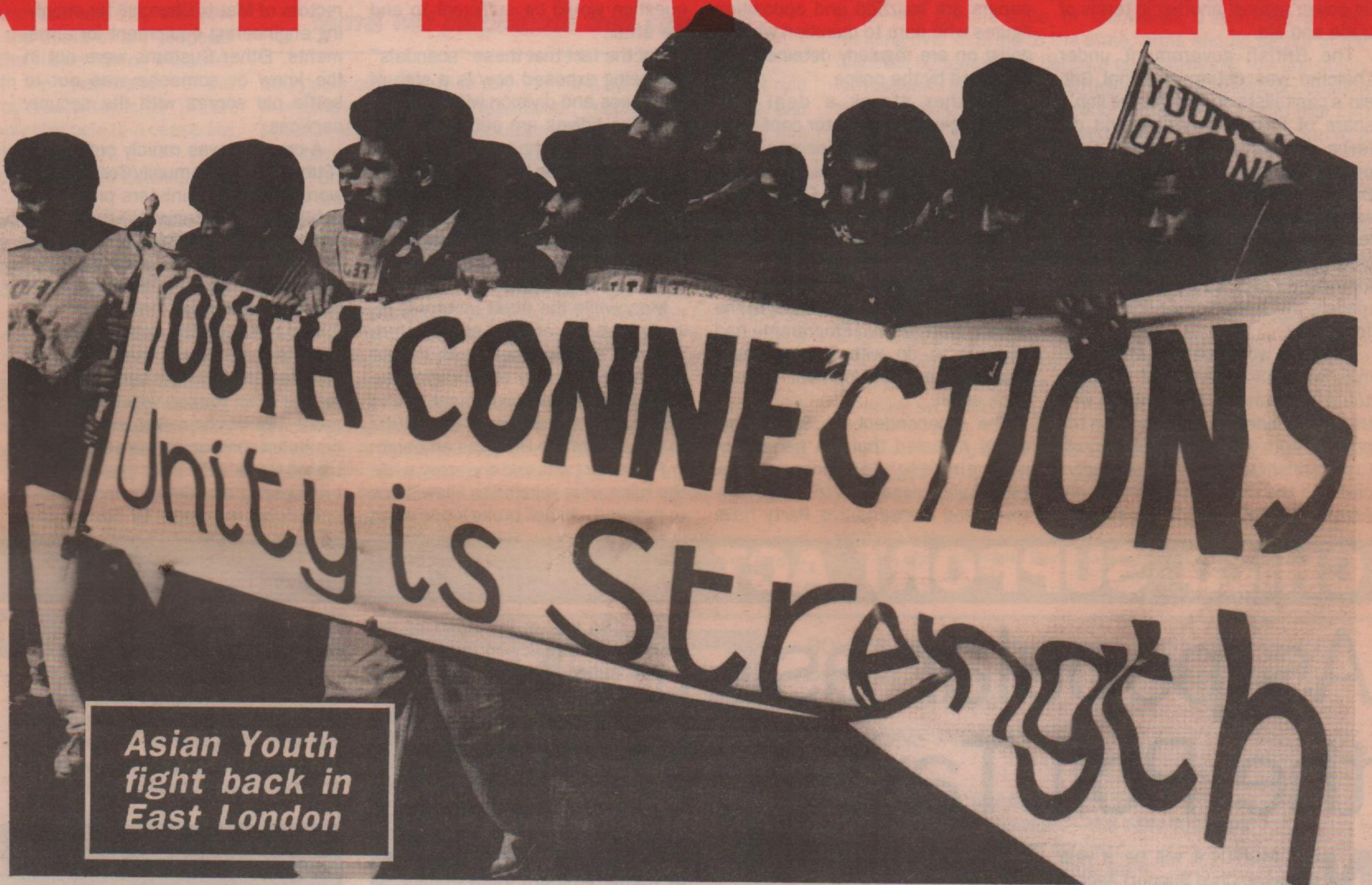
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# FIGHT RACISM

- Scrap all immigration controls!
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- No platform for fascists!



- Labour and the unions must declare war on racism and fascism!
- For a workers' answer to unemployment, poverty and poor housing!

# SMASH FASCISM!

HOW TO BEAT THE RACISTS: PAGES 8 & 9

## PERGAU, SCOTT ENQUIRY

# More dam scandals

THE MALAYSIAN Pergau Dam affair and the Arms to Iraq scandal allow a glimpse into the normally secret world of the capitalist state.

The corrupt interlocking web of government, big industrial monopolies, army and security services, and overseas aid have all been exposed to the unaccustomed glare of publicity.

The story of the Pergau Dam in northern Malaysia is fairly straightforward. The Malaysian government, a coalition headed by Mahathir Mohamad which has been in power for almost 25 years, has been flexing its muscles, playing off one imperialist power against another in terms of trade and aid.

The British government under Thatcher was determined that Britain's capitalists should get the lion's share of lucrative building and defence contracts. The Pergau Dam project was one of these. The major British contractor was Balfour Beatty whose parent company, BICC, regularly makes large scale financial contributions to organisations like Aims for Industry and British United Industrialists which have close links to the Tory Party.

The dam would only go ahead if a massive £234 million aid package could be arranged. The problem was that every independent report on the project, from the World Bank through to the British Government's own agencies like the Overseas Development Administration, thought the scheme

was wasteful and uneconomic.

These reports had no effect on the Malaysian government's determination to go ahead. As everyone knew, including the British government, the most important factor was how many payoffs and kickbacks had been arranged for various ministers and officials in Malaysia in relation to the dam.

The Malaysian Government is renowned for its high levels of corruption. Every big building project, and foreign aid packages connected with them, line the pockets of Malaysian government officials, capitalists and members of the royal family. The newspapers are muzzled and opposition figures who dare to question what is going on are regularly detained and harassed by the police.

Thatcher struck a deal with Mahathir, which was later confirmed by John Major when he became Prime Minister. He would get the dam aid. In return Britain would get £1.3 million worth of defence contracts. For good measure a base for British secret Special Forces was thrown in.

Of course Pergau is only the tip of the iceberg. Anyone who thought the British Overseas Aid Programme had anything to do with helping "poor countries" or "development" should think again.

The Independent on Sunday recently revealed that: "A handful of leading building and engineering companies with close links to the government and Conservative Party have

been the main beneficiaries of Britain's industrial overseas aid programme."

Five major concerns, Balfour Beatty, GEC, Biwater, Amec and Davy, picked up over 40% of the £1.4bn aid tied to contracts distributed since 1978. All five of these companies are represented on the government policy groups who advise which projects to give overseas aid to!

At other times these deals, in which taxpayers' money for aid is used to oil the wheels for British capitalists to make huge profits overseas, would go unrevealed and unmentioned on. A vague answer to a parliamentary question would be sufficient to end the affair.

But the fact that these "scandals" are being exposed now is a sign of weakness and division within the Tories. The knives are out in the Tory Party. Thatcher had put too much down in writing on her 1988 deal with Malaysia and was now out of power. Other factions are gunning for Major who is implicated in the deal. Thus the constant revelations to the press from "inside sources".

Meanwhile the Scott Inquiry is revealing more of the same. Here Thatcher's government was caught red-handed, merrily encouraging the sales of arms and equipment to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s in defiance of the UN arms embargo.

Parliament was told one story, while the rules were relaxed to allow sales to proceed. All hell broke loose when



Holding back a flood of revelations

one wing of the state machine, Customs, arrested and charged the directors of Matrix Churchill for supplying engineering equipment for armaments. Either Customs were not in the know or someone was out to settle old scores with the security services.

A cover up was rapidly organised. "Public Interest Immunity Certificates" were issued by ministers preventing publication of documents showing the Government's involvement. But as the scandal grew the judge would not play along. The case against Matrix Churchill collapsed and Major was forced to set up the Scott inquiry.

In its "merciless" questioning of ministers the inquiry is carefully avoiding the main reason why the government was involved. The same major capitalist companies were at the centre of trade with Iraq: the building, engineering and defence industries.

They were joined by banks like

Midland which provided loans to Saddam's regime to "buy British", all protected by Government Export Credit Guarantees.

Profits were enormous. The longer the war went on, the bloodier it became, the more money poured into the British companies. It only became a "scandal" when suddenly Saddam's army faced the British and Americans in the Gulf War!

No doubt the Scott inquiry will demand the Government cleans up its act. In a bourgeois democracy the amount of lying to Parliament, cover ups and corruption in high places has to be kept within limits or the very institutions of its rule could be irreparably damaged. But the fundamental relationship between the capitalist class and government will not change. The role of the government remains what it was in Marx's day: "A committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

## CHILD SUPPORT ACT

# As popular as the Poll Tax!

NEXT MONTH it will be a year since the Child Support Agency (CSA) was set up. Few will be celebrating its anniversary.

The CSA was established under the Child Support Act. The Act is rapidly becoming the nineties equivalent of the poll tax—in terms of popularity at least!

Under the Act the CSA has massive powers to investigate "absent" parents and force them to pay child maintenance. The Tories have tried to sell the Act on the basis that it is only fair that men who desert their wives and families should pay maintenance.

But no one should be fooled that the Tories have suddenly become protectors of single parents. The last thing that the Child Support Act is designed to meet is the needs of working class women and children.

The Act states that both parents have a duty to pay maintenance. But the only case where the CSA has to be involved by law is where the "parent with care" of the child is on benefit. Anyone who claims Income Support or Family Credit has a duty to apply. And, if you refuse to disclose information about the "absent" parent, then you could face a "benefit penalty"—a cut.

The Child Support Act is about restricting benefits, not about the welfare of children. Those on benefits can only lose under the provisions of the Act. Any money the CSA does recover is not paid to the family on

benefit. It goes straight into the Treasury's pocket.

There are other detrimental effects. Many women do not want to rely on financial contributions from men. Many fear a violent response from former partners who find the CSA are after them. Others fear possible abuse of their child if contact with the father is renewed.

The only legal reason for not disclosing information about an absent father is that such a disclosure would cause undue harm or distress. But it is not the women who decide this. It is decided by the Child Support Officers (CSOs).

In their questioning to establish if harm or distress is likely they can ask the most intrusive questions. You can be asked where, when and with whom you have had sex. If a woman cites rape as a reason for not naming the father, the CSOs are advised to persist in their questioning until the woman becomes visibly upset or breaks down.

The Act is harming children. Many of the men targeted have changed partners and established a second family. They now face a doubling or sometimes trebling of maintenance payments. Some parents can no longer afford to travel to see children living with an estranged partner.

Obviously this does not effect the likes of Tim Yeo, the most famous "absent" parent in recent months. But for many workers it has put their new families into real hardship.

The CSA lies at the heart of the government's policy on the family.

The Tories need the family. The family provides the cheapest means of bringing up and providing for the next generation of workers. In a society that provides little in the way of proper community childcare, cheap restaurants, laundries and so on, all these vital tasks are supposed to be carried out within the family, usually by women who are often working as well.

As the Tories cut existing benefits and services, they need the family even more. This is why they stigmatise anyone who does not match up with the "norm" of the model family: two parents and children. This is why they attack single mothers and threaten to remove their housing rights. This is why lesbians and gay men are refused rights of adoption. And that is why parents who have had the temerity to leave their partner or end their marriages are now being hounded by the state.

While there is justified anger at the CSA the answer does not lie in attacking the staff who work in the offices, who report daily personal abuse and even death threats. Rather the mass anger at the results of the Act needs to be organised to defeat this piece of reactionary legislation.

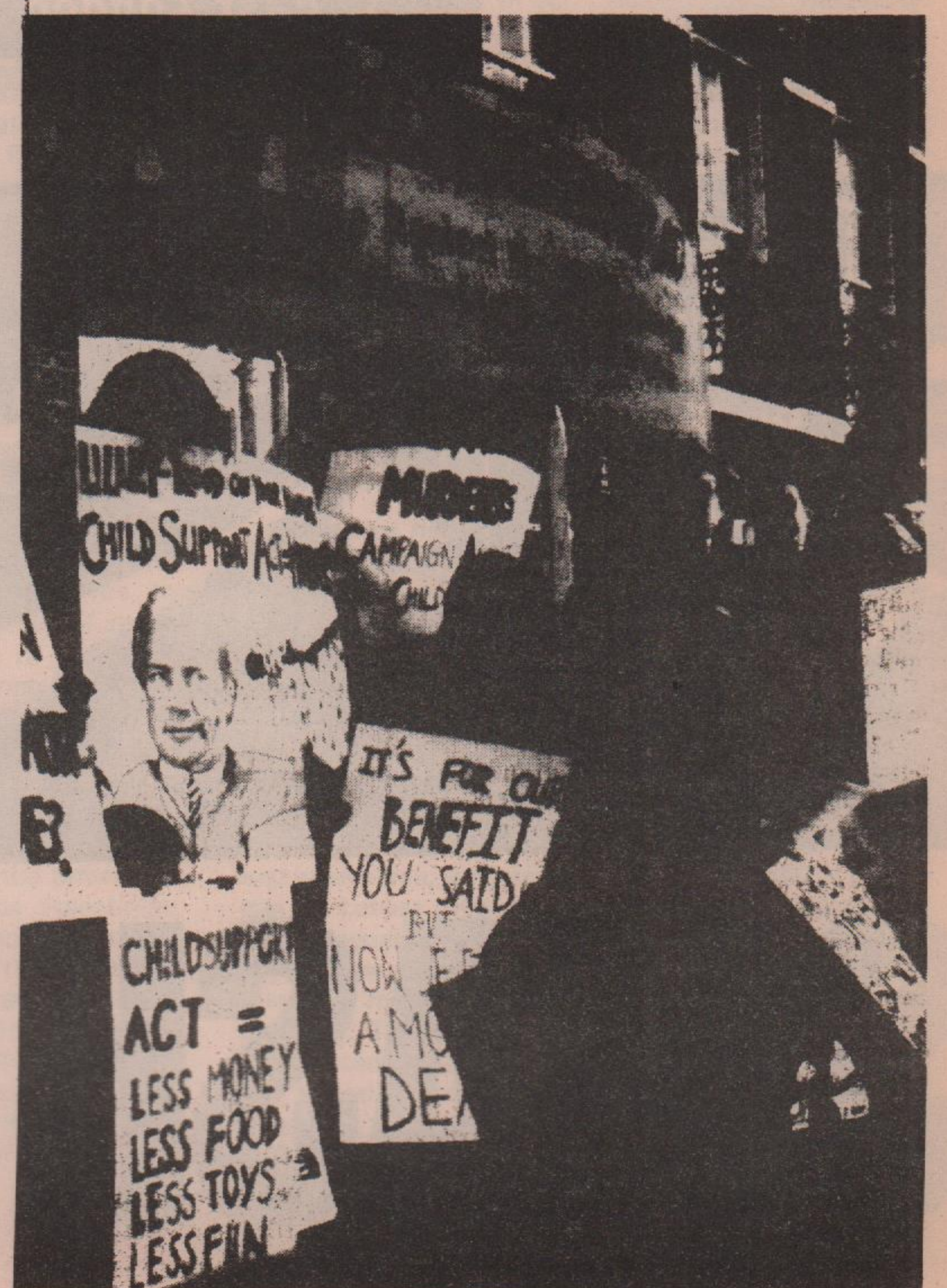
This means building on the success of the Campaign against the Child Support Act and taking the campaign into the Labour and trade union movement. It also means rejecting the reactionary ideas peddled by groups like Families Need Fathers who argue against the Act on the basis of "men's rights". We must fight for the repeal of the Act. But, if we are to ensure that all parents are able to bring up their children as they see fit, without being forced to seek or pay large maintenance payments, we will need to fight for measures

which provide a way out of the poverty trap.

This means fighting for free, 24 hour childcare facilities both at work and in the community so all parents can work if they wish to. We need jobs for all and a legal minimum wage of £1,200 a month to allow parents to

bring up their children in comfort. Those who choose to stay at home to bring up their children need equivalent benefits to meet their needs.

In this way we can build a powerful movement which can defeat the Child Support Act and put the interests of children before the profits of the rich. ■



**EDITORIAL**

# Peace on Britain's terms?

THE SINN Féin *Ard Fheis* (conference) came and went without any declaration of ceasefire by the IRA. The response from Ulster Loyalism and the right wing press was predictable. They want repression stepped up, internment without trial, and control of Britain's Northern Irish colony passed over to a House of Commons Select Committee stuffed with Orange bigots.

Many Working class people in Britain and Ireland, whilst unmoved by Loyalist rhetoric, were probably dismayed by the apparent failure of the "peace process".

A BBC/*Sunday Independent* poll, for example, claims 94% of Southern Irish people want Sinn Féin to accept the Downing Street declaration, while 74%, North and South, favour a security crackdown against the Republican movement if the peace deal is rejected. This is probably a gross exaggeration. But it nevertheless reveals the war-weariness of many Northern anti-unionists, and the continued passivity of the Southern Irish working class over the national question in the North.

Clearly the "peace process" is not over, despite the wishes of the Loyalists. Gerry Adams told the *Ard Fheis* that "the door remains open to a cease-fire" on the basis of any proposal embracing the main principles of the Hume-Adams initiative. He also expressed satisfaction with the "clarification" of the Downing Street Declaration given by Albert Reynolds' Dublin government, and implied that the only obstacle to a cease-fire and talks was a similar British clarification.

The situation in Northern Ireland is balanced between two possible reactionary solutions.

If the peace process fails, the outcome which the Loyalists and a significant section of the Tory party are playing for, then Northern Irish anti-unionists can expect a massive crackdown by the British Army and the RUC, aided and abetted by Loyalist murder squads.

But if the Republican movement declares a ceasefire on the basis of a "clarified" Downing Street agreement it will be a defeat for the anti-unionist struggle. Neither the Downing Street deal, nor the Hume-Adams initiative, guarantee what the Republican movement, and revolutionary socialists, have fought for: self-determination in the whole of Ireland with no Loyalist veto, and the withdrawal of British troops.

Neither the Hume-Adams nor the Major-Reynolds declarations provide the basis for a progressive peace in Northern Ireland. Neither guarantees self-determination and Irish independence. A Republican ceasefire on either basis, and the

resultant invitation to Sinn Féin to join the Nationalist establishment in Ireland, would still leave the anti-unionist population the victims of systematic discrimination. It would leave hundreds of anti-imperialist fighters rotting in the H-Blocks and in British jails. It would not free the whole of Ireland from the domination of the multi-nationals, from chronic unemployment North and South.

What it would do is mark a defeat of the anti-unionist challenge to imperialist rule. Revolutionary socialists are not nationalists. But we recognise the real social basis of national oppression in Ireland which has driven two generations of anti-unionist youth into a heroic and self sacrificing struggle against British imperialism, a struggle which has been expressed through the petit-

**British rule condemns Ireland to stagnation and massively hampers the class struggle in this country. And a peace on Britain's terms will perpetuate that situation.**

bourgeois nationalism of Sinn Féin and the IRA. Imperialist rule in Ireland is founded on cheap labour, unemployment, social and political discrimination, vicious repression. The effects of this reverberate far beyond the shores of Ireland.

The British state has used Northern Ireland as a laboratory for every repressive measure it has thrown at the left, the trade union movement and black people in Britain over the last twenty years. The riot squads, the surveillance techniques, the road blocks which prevented effective picketing during the miners' and printers' strikes—all these were perfected in Northern Ireland. And throughout the world British veterans from the Irish war act as highly prized experts and "advisers" in imperialism's dirty wars against workers and peasants resisting exploitation and oppression.

British rule in Ireland pollutes the whole legal system with gross injustices and corruption. It legitimises measures like the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which allows the Special Branch to trawl the Irish community in Britain, gathering intelligence from randomly selected "suspects" whose normal rights in custody are suspended.

In short, British rule condemns Ireland to stagnation and massively hampers the class struggle in this country. And a

peace on Britain's terms will perpetuate that situation.

So what is the answer? While revolutionary socialists in Ireland unequivocally side with the Irish resistance against the British state, we do not advocate a return to the bankrupt strategy which brought the Republican movement to its current impasse. That strategy—the bullet and the ballot—relegated the anti-unionist working class to a passive stage army in the struggle for liberation. Its combination of the guerilla struggle with community based reformism was never a recipe for victory. It could not even adequately defend the anti-unionist population against repression and Loyalist terror.

The way forward is through mass action, based in the working class, North and South; action aimed at ending not only imperialist rule but also capitalist exploitation in the whole of Ireland. Mass action—strikes and demonstrations, rent strikes and occupations—have always been met with the full force of imperialist repression. That is why armed, organised self-defence would continue to be a vital component of the struggle against British rule. But instead of a military campaign by an elite guerilla force, or, still worse, a surrender and the handing over of arms to the state, arms should be put at the disposal of democratic defence committees of the anti-unionist masses. That way the struggle against British occupation and against Loyalist pogroms could assume a form that can win. For this, the anti-unionist masses need a sharp turn to a revolutionary socialist strategy.

That is what Workers Power's sister organisation in Ireland, the Irish Workers' Group, is fighting for.

In Britain we fight for what has been necessary since the troops went in: a mass movement, based in the working class, to force the troops out now and let the Irish people determine their own future, independent of imperialist interference. In the face of the crackdown that will surely come—either against the whole Republican movement or against any section of it which resists a ceasefire—we offer unconditional but critical support to all those fighting imperialist rule, and all those imprisoned for doing so in the past. ■

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**MEETINGS**

- .....  
**BIRMINGHAM**  
 • *State and revolution*  
 Monday 14 March 7.30pm  
  
 • *Which way forward for Black liberation?*  
 Monday 28 March 7.30pm  
  
 See sellers for venues
- .....  
**CARDIFF**  
 • *Wales: nationalism or socialism?*  
 Thursday 10 March 8.30pm  
  
 • *Should there be an age of consent?*  
 Thursday 24 March 8.30pm  
  
 See sellers for venues
- .....  
**COVENTRY**  
 • *How to fight fascism*  
 Wednesday 23 March 7.30pm  
  
 See sellers for venue
- .....  
**LEICESTER**  
 • *Race and class*  
 Wednesday 2 March 8pm  
  
 Women's Discussion Group  
 • *The fight for women's liberation*  
 Tuesday 22 March 8pm  
  
 See sellers for venues
- .....  
**LONDON**  
 • *What are the roots of racism?*  
 Tuesday 8 March 7.30pm
- .....  
 London School of Economics  
 Room S419, St Clements Building,  
 Houghton Street WC2  
  
 • *Fighting fascism in the 1930s - the failure of the popular front*  
 Tuesday 22 March 7.30pm  
 London School of Economics  
 Room C121, Clare Market Building,  
 Clare Market WC2
- .....  
**MANCHESTER**  
 • *Is there a "drugs problem"?*  
 Wednesday 16 March 7.30pm  
 Manchester Metropolitan University  
 Students Union  
  
 • *The Middle East peace deal*  
 Wednesday 30 March 7.30pm  
 Manchester Metropolitan University  
 Students Union
- .....  
**SHEFFIELD**  
 Public meeting:  
 • *How to beat the cuts*  
 Tuesday 8 March 7.30pm  
 SCCAU West Street
- .....  
 Women's Discussion Group  
 • *Do we need an age of consent?*  
 Tuesday 15 March 8pm  
  
 Workers Power Readers' meetings  
 • *Where are the trade unions going?*  
 Tuesday 22 March 8pm  
  
 • *Why we say Vote Labour but organise to fight*  
 Tuesday 5 April 8pm  
  
 See sellers for venues

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- ★ How long can capitalism survive?
- ★ The rise and fall of the welfare state
- ★ Eastern Europe—has capitalism triumphed?
- ★ Marxism and art
- ★ Bread and roses—women's struggles in the USA
- ★ Women in the US Civil Rights movement

**SUNDAY**

- ★ Political correctness and the labour movement
- ★ The family in crisis
- ★ Did the Bolsheviks liberate women?
- ★ The fight for political revolution in China
- ★ Women and the fight for a revolutionary party

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## COUNCIL CUTS

# For workers' budgets!

**T**HE TORY offensive on workers' living standards is being stepped up. Cabinet ministers hope to get Labour councils to carry out savage cuts in the forthcoming round of local budgets.

The Tories won't meet much resistance from the reformist Labour council leaders. They have become experts in closing schools, old peoples' homes and libraries and in making pay cuts and redundancies. No matter how "unwilling" these councillors claim to be, they make the cuts and don't much care who suffers.

Each year unions and councils shape up for a round of brinkmanship and shadow boxing. The cuts, however, have always gone through in the end. We need to learn the lessons of these "nearly battles" if we are to stop the rot this year.

The councillors' tactics are often to leak budget information in advance in order to scare the unions. Strathclyde announced it could offer no pay rise for its 104,000 employees, then suggested a 2% rise could be met by £27 million in cuts. Sheffield council announced that they needed to make cuts totalling £31 million and then proceeded to spell out what this could mean: 13 school closures with the loss of 299 jobs, ending school swimming lessons, halving the youth service budget and so on.

BY A SHEFFIELD COUNCIL WORKER

The councils' aim in each case is to set service users against service providers and draw the unions into proposing their own set of cuts. Workers are told that if they want to protect jobs or pay then cuts elsewhere are inevitable. This is a lie!

The way to respond to these tactics is to demand that the council opens its books. Let council workers and the working class electorate see where the money goes and why cuts are "necessary". When workers see how much is wasted on keeping council houses empty and paying millions to the banks in debt-servicing fees, they can decide if the money should be channelled into jobs and services or the pockets of the super-rich bankers.

Council unions should call mass meetings and, with tenants associations and other workers' organisations, they should draw up a *workers' budget* to meet workers' needs.

If this means demanding extra money from the Tories, then demonstrations and city-wide strikes should be organised. There is no better time to launch such a campaign than now when council elections are coming up. Unions affiliated to the Labour



Council workers must fight back now

Party should fight for Labour to go into the elections on a programme of budgets based on need, not the bosses' profits.

Council unions must lead the way. They should prepare action to defend jobs, pay and services. Sheffield's three council Unison branches have already begun the fight. As we go to press, they are balloting for a one day city-wide strike on the council's budget day and for further indefinite departmental strikes.

The employers will try to draw out negotiations in order to delay strikes. They will try to push negotiations down to departmental level so as to divide section against section. Union

members should resist both ploys.

It is more difficult to resist cuts if they have been partially implemented and sectional strikes are far less effective than branch-wide and cross-union action. Ask Newham poll tax workers and Camden social workers who took year-long strike action but lost because the employers were happy to sit out the strike while the rest of the workforce continued working.

It's not just the chief executives who prefer delayed and sectionalised strikes. So do the union chiefs. All out strikes are expensive and risky for them. Officials don't like to see "their" funds squandered on strike

pay. Neither do they enjoy the idea of angry strikers actively forcing them to confront the bosses.

Sheffield Unison members have voted to ensure that no strikes can be called off without strikers' consent. This is a good start. But strikers will also need to elect accountable strike committees to control all negotiations, spread the action when necessary and react to the manoeuvres of the bosses and the bureaucrats.

Strike committees will have to take control of the balloting process. Officials cannot even be trusted to send out the ballot papers! Many bureaucrats will be using the recent court ruling over the NATFHE ballot (see page 5) as an excuse to cancel members' actions. Sandwell NUT have already been told their ballot has been cancelled for this reason.

The anti-union laws are a trap for trade unionists. It is necessary for militants to argue for *breaking* the laws whenever they interfere with effective action.

Union lawyers should be there to get us out of trouble when we fight back, not to proscribe our every action!

- No cuts in jobs, pay or services!
- Open the council books! For a workers' budget!
- All out strikes to stop the cuts! Break the anti-union laws!

## SO FAREWELL THEN BRYAN GOULD....

**B**RYAN GOULD, former Labour leadership contender, is on his way back to a cushy job in Waikato, New Zealand.

Gould's departure demonstrates the effect that changes in British capitalism have had on the thinking of the Labour Party.

His political history seems bizarre at first glance. In the 1970s he was an anti-European in the mainstream of the party. In the mid-1980s he was the first Labour frontbencher to suggest abandoning the party's commitment to nationalisation, replacing it with the goal of "wider share ownership". As Kinnock's campaign director in 1987 he set the ball rolling in the so-called "modernisation" process.

But after the 1992 election defeat, Gould was prepared to stand, along with former left winger David Blunkett, against the leadership of John Smith and Margaret Beckett. He won backing from much of the party's left. Advocating that Britain should leave the ERM while both Major and John Smith affirmed their commitment to it, Gould had a broad smile on his face in September 1992 as Major's (and Smith's) ERM policy collapsed.

### Keynes

What explains this political trajectory? Did Gould move left? No. What is remarkable is Gould's consistent adherence to a political and economic philosophy best summed up as *national Keynesianism*.

This approach is named after the liberal economist J.M. Keynes. Throughout the post-war boom Keynesianism guided the economic policies of both Labour and Tory governments. Its goal was full employment and its method was state intervention into the economy, to stimulate demand through government borrowing and spending.

Two processes dethroned

# Yesterday's man – yesterday's policies

BY COLIN LLOYD

Keynesianism from its sovereign position in British capitalist politics.

The first was the growing determination of the bosses to launch an offensive against the post-war social and economic gains of the working class. The NHS, education system, local government services, subsidised travel and state owned heavy industry were the means Keynesianism used to secure full employment and dampen down the class struggle. Thatcherism ripped that up in favour of *neo-liberalism*, the economic and political policy of letting unemployment "find its own level", a level that was to be measured in millions.

The second process was the increasing internationalisation and deregulation of the world economy. The rise of the European Community and the liberalisation of trade within Europe does not rule out a return to Keynesian forms of economic management. But these would have to be agreed and imposed *internationally*. In practice the single market and the Maastricht Treaty were founded with the participating states sharing neo-liberal goals and methods.

### Gains

Left reformists thought the only means of defending the social gains granted to the workers during the post war boom was by preventing the internationalisation of economic activity. The Labour left, together

with Labour right figures like Peter Shore, argued against entering Europe and against any measures to deepen economic integration in Europe. With the EC on a neo-liberal track, these people could see no other means of defending public services and nationalisation other than retreat behind national economic barriers. Workers' action against privatisation and cuts was the last thing figures like Gould wanted to be associated with.

### Policies

Gould argued that to end unemployment Britain should ignore EC directives on production quotas. Gould also argued for exchange rates to be managed in the interests of national competitiveness and for interest rates low enough to stimulate a resurgence of Britain's industrial base. All this meant ignoring common EC policies. Gould created the Full Employment Institute. But his flight was half hearted and ineffectual after 1992, reflecting the exhaustion of Keynesianism as a realistic solution for the capitalists.

Gould quit the Parliamentary Labour Party once it was clear that even the traumatic experience of the ERM collapse had not shaken Smith's team from their commitment both to the ERM and to a pale pink version of neo-liberal economics.

Economic nationalism is no pro-

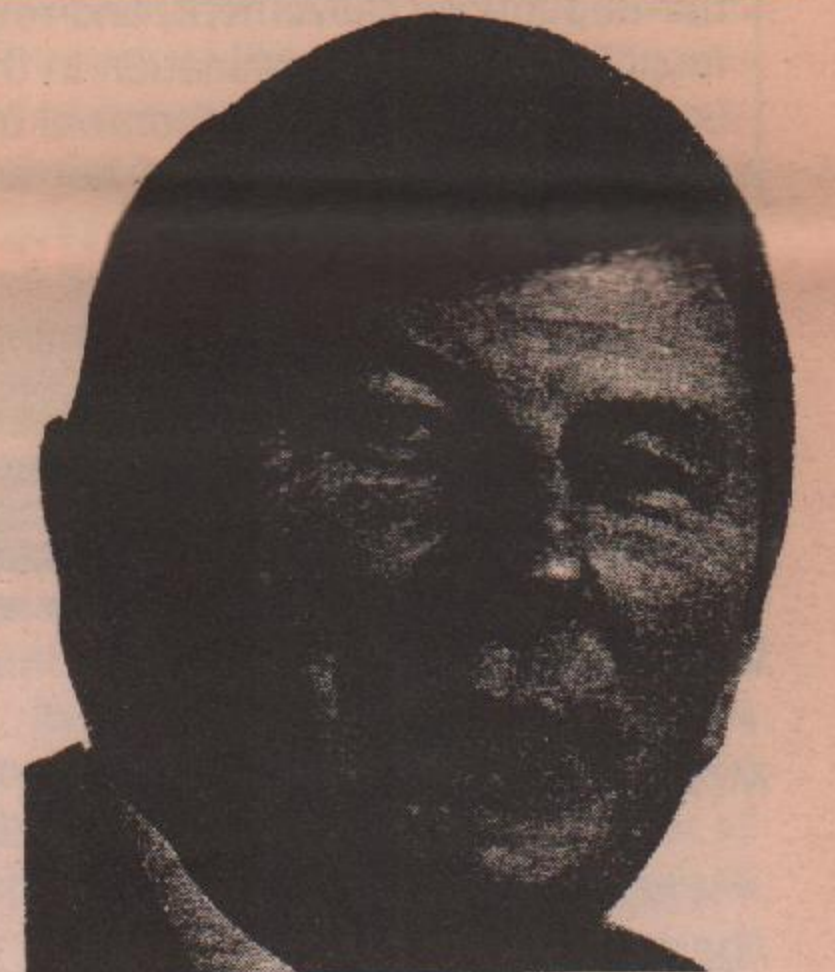
gressive alternative to neo-liberalism, even if many of its supporters in the ranks of the movement have the best of motives. It is a dead end for the working class. In an international economy, any attempt to defend reforms and improvements in living standards within the limits of a protected national capitalist economy will simply lead to stagnation. As the history of the the Soviet Union under Stalinism shows, this is doubly true of any attempt to build socialism in one country.

It is not Britain's commitment to the EC or Maastricht which is guaranteeing economic decline and high unemployment, it is the dynamic of the capitalist system and the needs of the capitalists themselves. Outside of the ERM the British bosses have still been obliged to launch a pay freeze, massive tax increases and huge public spending cuts.

### Outmoded

Gould appealed to the Labour left for two reasons. First he was the only leader still committed to the outmoded capitalist economic doctrine which the Labour left had made its own.

Secondly he made telling criticisms of the Smith leadership at the level of tactics and presentation. Gould insisted that Smith's strategy of adopting pale-pink Toryism and waiting for the Tories to destroy themselves could fail yet again to deliver victory. It is a feeling even many



Gould riddance

loyal Smith supporters share. Gould called for the Labour Party to go to the electorate with its own specific plans and conduct a positive campaign for rebuilding British industry behind nationally protected barriers.

Whilst a positive, campaigning Labour Party is exactly what many workers and Labour supporters want, the policies Gould advocated were bankrupt.

What the working class lacks is a party that will organise and fight at the grass roots level for action that can turn around the Tories' attacks and put the workers back on the offensive, refusing to align the workers with either the pro- or anti-European wings of the capitalist class. This was not quite what Gould had in mind! He wanted a strategy to hawk around the corridors of power and wealth. But there were few takers.

The capitalists already have an anti-European, economic nationalist alternative on the right wing of the Tory party. As *Workers Power* has often pointed out, it is the lack of a consistently pro-European, pro-integrationist political leadership for the bourgeoisie which is at the very root of the continuing political crisis in Britain.

Gould was the wrong man at the wrong time, for the British bosses and the reformist leaders of the working class alike. ■

Students are angry. The Tories may have backed down over their proposals to limit the powers of student unions, but they are pressing ahead with the most serious attack on student living standards yet.

Not content with reducing many students to dire poverty, they are pushing for a 30% grant cut over the next two years. They want to bring in a "graduate tax", which will force students to pay back their loans out of their pay when they leave college. They are even planning to make students pay college fees themselves.

This is designed to save the bosses money, cutting back on the right to an education so that the rich don't have to pay higher taxes. If the Tories get their way, working class youth will be denied an education, while rich kids will be the only ones who can afford to go to university.

The turn out of 10,000 on the demonstration on 23 February shows that there is a real mood among students to fight back.

But the leaders of NUS did everything in their power to stop the march going ahead, let alone succeeding. The NUS leaders are firmly opposed to any action. They put their personal well-being above defending the living standards of the students they were elected to represent. Their suggestions for a fightback are pathetic: letting off balloons, wearing red clothes for a day, writing to MPs.

But the Tories won't be beaten by rag week antics or begging letters. There is only one way to force the Tories to back down—a mass campaign of occupations across the country, linking up with college workers in action against the entire attack on education.

Activists' groups should be set up in every college. They can plan the



## Students and workers unite!

most effective campaigning action and organise it without the say-so of the bureaucrats. Every student should join and work flat out to build these groups.

But we need to go further. A National Activists' Meeting called by the Socialist Workers Students' Society (SWSS) on 4 February which rallied about 800 shows the potential for drawing student activists together in

a new national activists' organisation.

This is common sense. But there are two arguments that are often raised against it. The first is often heard from representatives of SWSS. They claim that their own organisation can play this role of drawing together activists nationally, and that no other permanent campaigning body is necessary.

This is a serious mistake. Of course there is nothing wrong with them wanting to build their own political organisation. But there are thousands of students around the country who want to fight but do not necessarily agree with the politics of SWSS.

A national activists' organisation which was not a part of any one party could draw them all into action. Proposals for action could then be democratically debated and carried out. Far from being an obstacle to building a socialist voice for students, this would be a tremendous arena in which the real value of the politics of different groupings could be tested in practice.

The need for this approach was been proved in the run-up to the 23 February demo. The steering committee set up by the National Activists' Meeting was made up of students from different political groups, which helped build broad support for the demo. Now we need to make sure that we take the next logical step: a democratic national activists' organisation to build for occupations in the colleges. A national conference should be called by the Steering Committee set up at the meeting and by every students' union that backed the demo without delay.

Another argument sometimes heard against this is that it diverts attention away from the campaign to

turn NUS into a union that fights. This is wrong. Of course we should not just ignore NUS—for as long as NUS is run by right wingers they will be putting up obstacles to action, opposing occupations, militant marches and so on.

But a national activists' organisation would be able to combine the fight to transform our union with the ability to organise direct action without the leaders' agreement. It could be a model of how student unionism should be organised, with all local leaders elected from general meetings and subject to recall, and with no officials getting more than the average grant, so that they have a real interest in fighting student poverty.

Linking up with college workers is not an optional extra. It is the way to win. Occupations are vitally important, but on their own they can often peter out without forcing the Tories to back down. But combined with workers' action, they can bring the colleges to a standstill.

Joint action committees of students and workers should be set up in every college to win the backing of college workers for our struggle, and to build student action in support of workers' resistance to job and course cuts, attacks on conditions and pay.

A campaign of occupations linked to strike action by college workers can force the Tories to back down.■

### DIVISION AND CHAOS ON 23 FEBRUARY

The march in London on 23 of February was marred by the serious in-fighting that has been taking place on the left of the student movement. SWSS wanted the demonstration to march on Parliament. Left Unity, led by supporters of Socialist Organiser, to their shame argued against this on the grounds that it would lead to a violent police attack on the march, which "could very well snuff out the campaigns against cuts in grants".

There is nothing wrong with marching on Parliament and letting the Tories feel students' anger. After all, only two days before, it was the anger and determination of lesbians and gays lobbying Parliament for an equal age of consent that struck fear into the hearts of the bigots.

Student demonstrations in the past have faced the same threat from the police that all militant marches face. The police will be prepared to use violence against any action that threatens to be effective. SWSS—and the thousands of students that support

them—were not wrong to want to march on Parliament. But Socialist Organiser provided self-appointed stewards for the march who worked overtime not at defending the march from police attack, but at trying to stop students attempting to get through the police lines to Parliament.

Nevertheless, SWSS demonstrated on the day that their call for a march on Parliament was not backed up by any serious planning. They expected that a spontaneous surge would be enough to carry it out, and even declared in a leaflet that this would be enough to "bring the government down".

So they provided no stewards of their own, and made no attempt to build proper trained defence groups that could have challenged the police ban. If there is a threat of police attack on a march to stop us reaching our goal, then we need organised self-defence of the demonstration. That was what was needed on the Unity Demonstration against the BNP, and then as now the SWP organisers failed to prepare it.■

## COLLEGES

# Anti-union laws must be broken

The college lecturers' union, NATFHE, found itself pushed to the forefront of the struggle against the Tories' anti-union laws at the end of last month.

A few days before the planned one day national strike on 1 March against imposition of new contracts, a high court judge granted an injunction against the strike.

The College Employers Forum (CEF) had, through one of its constituent colleges, sought to stop the strike on the grounds that NATFHE had failed to obey all the provisions of the 1992 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act.

They argued that under the new law it was necessary for trade unions to hand over the names of all indi-

vidual union members being balloted and called upon to take action.

Mr Justice Morrison and the Appeal Court, surprise, surprise, agreed with the employers. If these rulings hold it means every union must hand over its membership list to the employers before it enters onto any course of industrial action!

The NATFHE leadership immediately called off the action, which was to be the first in a series of strikes aimed at defeating the new contracts being introduced at many colleges. An attempt was made to try and get the union to call protest action on 1 March at the union's Sector Conference but it was defeated.

The ruling is a very serious blow, not just to the current NATFHE dis-

pute but to trade unionists in general. It is a further restriction on the right to strike, adding yet another hoop that trade unionists have to jump through to remain within the law. It gives further rights to the employers, this time to vet trade union ballots and come up with spurious reasons to challenge them in the courts. The rule that names of trade unionists have to be handed over to employers is obviously designed to intimidate union members, and prevent new workers from joining trade unions for fear of victimisation.

Rank and file militants in NATFHE must argue for the action to continue unofficially if necessary, despite the action having been declared "unlawful". What is at stake is the right to

strike to defend our conditions. Branches must demand that the NATFHE leadership immediately launches a joint campaign against these anti-union laws with other unions.

Many ballots and plans to ballot have now been frozen by the union leaders. We must demand that they take joint action, including strike action, against this latest attack—NOW.

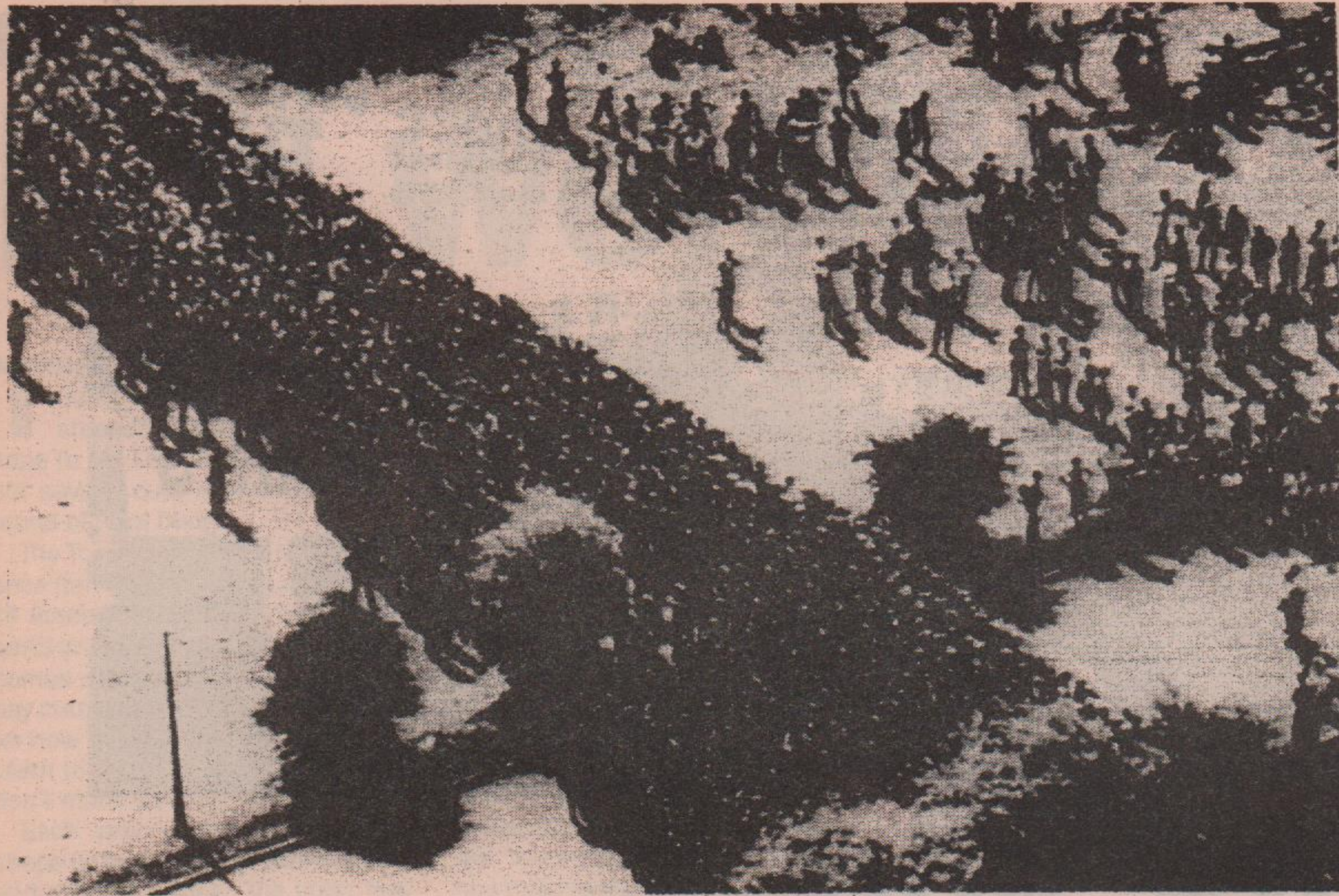
At a local level NATFHE branches should try to initiate, through trades councils, union action committees and so on, local campaigns based on winning strike action, starting with those unions most immediately affected—NATFHE, NUT, RMT.

The left in NATFHE, around the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance, argued

from the start of this dispute that the slavish adherence to the anti-union laws by our leadership would prevent any effective fightback. Last March the union sent out hundreds of threatening letters to members trying to prevent solidarity action with Birmingham colleges because it was "against the law".

Every retreat has encouraged our employers to take a harder line. Only where our members have stood up to management, as in Birmingham and more recently at Bath College, have the employers been forced into partial retreats.

The members want to fight. Given decent leadership the employers can still be beaten.■



## THE GREAT STRIKE

# When miners took on the state

*It is 10 years since the start of the greatest strike in post-war British history. Jeremy Dewar looks at the miners' strike of 1984-85, a battle which could have been won.*

“AS THEY contemptuously announced 25 pit closures—five of them immediately—with a loss of over 25,000 jobs, we knew in our hearts that our union had no real choice. To the eternal credit of this union, we took strike action. Let me say, unequivocally, that in defending our policies, our jobs, communities and industries, we had no alternative—and history will vindicate us.”

With these words, Arthur Scargill addressed the 1985 conference of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) four months after the end of the Great Strike. He was right. Ten years after the start of the year long strike every class-conscious worker must remember that struggle and salute the men and women who chose to stand up and fight against tremendous odds.

The price that thousands of miners and their families were forced to pay was dear. A total of 11,471 miners and their supporters were arrested and about 200 of them imprisoned. 966 miners were sacked during the strike; hundreds more were victimised on their return to work. £16 a week was deducted from strikers' Social Security payments and millions of pounds were stolen from the NUM's funds by the courts. In 1984 there were 184,000 miners. Today, a mere 17 pits and 12,000 miners remain.

### Offensive

The ruling class offensive experienced by the miners in the Great Strike was unprecedented. The Tories spent an estimated £8 billion—over twice as much as they spent on the Falklands War—to defeat the miners' resistance. The offensive had been planned by Nicholas Ridley in a Tory Party policy document as far back as 1977. Ridley correctly identified the NUM as the key union which the government needed to take on and crush if the legacy of industrial militancy stretching back to the 1960s and 1970s was to be finally broken.

Taming the unions was central to the Thatcherite project of returning British capitalism to profitability. The government's role was to lead by example and “behead” the working class movement. Anti-union laws were introduced and tested out. The police force was re-equipped to take on picket lines and the “flying picket” in particular. By March 1984, the Tories were ready to implement the Ridley Plan.

The strike was started by two NCB announcements in early March: the first to close Cortonwood colliery immediately on the grounds that it was “uneconomic”, the second to announce 25 pit closures making 25,000 miners redundant.

### Battle

On Sunday 4 March 1984 Cortonwood NUM voted for strike action. Within days flying pickets had pulled out miners in Yorkshire, Scotland, Kent and South Wales. Even the supposedly moderate areas of Lancashire and Nottinghamshire were affected. The great national miners' strike had begun.

From the first day it was clear that this was a battle that involved the whole of the British working class. As Workers Power said at the time: “This strike will now end in a major victory for one class or another. That is beyond a shadow of a doubt. We must strain every nerve and muscle to make sure it is the millions of workers rather than the handful of parasites who win. *Into battle, shoulder to shoulder with the miners!*” (*Workers Power* 52 March 1984)

The eventual defeat of the miners' strike was not inevitable. A massive reservoir of sympathy and support existed throughout the working class, as can be seen from the fund raising collections that helped ensure the miners were not starved back to work and the spontaneous solidarity actions that continually showed the potential for a class-wide response. Thousands of militant workers, organised in miners' support groups

and miners' wives' groups did “strain every nerve and muscle” for victory.

Yet the working class lost the battle. It is our duty to remember why that defeat came about and how it could have been avoided. Only by learning from our own mistakes can we ensure that we start the next decisive battle better equipped and able to secure the final victory.

The first problem that miners and their supporters encountered in prosecuting their strike was effective picketing. The police were, from a very early stage, organising an onslaught against pickets, co-ordinated through the National Reporting Centre. Notts and Lancs areas were effectively occupied by the state forces in an attempt to break the strike along regional lines.

Michael Havers, the Attorney General, outlined their strategy to prevent flying pickets from entering their no-go zones: “Police have the power to stop their (pickets') vehicles on the road and turn them away. Anyone not complying would be committing a criminal offence.” Seventy per cent of all charges brought against strikers were for “obstruction”.

In late May and early June, a key turning point in the strike came with the Battle of Orgreave. Orgreave coking plant in Sheffield became a national focus for picketing. If the police had been defeated here and the plant shut down, it could have signalled to thousands of militants that it was possible to win solidarity action and the strike could be spread. However, on 18 June the biggest picket of the strike was broken up by a police riot, which forced the pickets to take cover in the nearby woods. Scargill himself was arrested.

After the battle of Orgreave, the NUM toned down the picketing throughout the coalfields. Under pressure, not only from the bosses' government and media but also from the likes of Labour leader Neil Kinnock, the lesson drawn by the NUM executive (unofficially) was that mass picketing could not win against a militarised police force.

### Left: The battle of Orgreave

This was the wrong conclusion. Faced with police strike breaking we needed trained and disciplined picket defence teams—armed to the level needed to stop scabbing. Such teams would produce howls of outrage from the reformist leaders of the workers' movement. But the mass of workers would judge such actions on their results.

The second reason Orgreave failed was because, unlike the Saltley Gate picket of 1974 which effectively decided the outcome of the previous miners' strike, mass solidarity strike action was not fought for and won.

How could the miners bring other key sections of workers into battle alongside them? Scargill was, and remains, a left wing bureaucrat. Whilst he stood shoulder to shoulder with the pickets at Orgreave and defended the political nature of the strike, he never broke from the bureaucratic code of conduct that united him with the right wing. In particular, he never called for solidarity action over the heads of the other union leaders or for a general strike. Scargill preferred bureaucratic intrigue.

### Dockers

For the first six months of the strike, Scargill told his supporters that left trade union leaders in the T&G, ASLEF and the NUR were working on stopping the movement of scab coal and opening up a second front of strike action against the Tories. Except for isolated incidents on the rail, organised from below by local militants, the blacking of coal never materialised, nor were any union members disciplined for moving scab coal.

Even worse, instead of joining battle alongside the miners, the NUR and ASLEF's “left” leaders accepted pay deals linked to productivity, which were below the rate of inflation. Scargill never criticised them.

It was the dockers in the T&G who came closest to striking alongside the miners. On 9 July the T&G called a national dock strike on the pretext of a breach of the Dock Labour Scheme. In fact, the real issue was the importing of scab coal. The Tories were extremely worried by this development, as Thatcher herself admits in her memoirs:

“We mobilised the Civil Contingencies Unit to prepare to meet the crisis but avoided proclaiming a state of emergency, which might have meant the use of troops. Any sign of over-reaction to the dock strike would have given the miners and other union militants new heart. Our strategy had to be to end the dock strike as quickly as possible, so that the coal dispute could be played out as long as was necessary.” (*The Downing Street Years*)

### Solidarity

Scargill played into Thatcher's hands when he claimed that “the dockers' strike is the dockers' strike and the miners' strike is the miners' strike.” When the docks strike was settled, the NUM leadership saw their best chance of spreading the strike disappear without attempting to rally rank and file dockers to continue their struggle together with the miners.

Similarly, Scargill never asked the TUC to organise generalised solidarity action. Even at the TUC Congress of 1984 the NUM agreed to water down their resolution omitting all reference to specific actions like instructing all TUC affiliates not to cross picket lines. As a result, the TUC took their opportunity to “intervene” into the strike to pressurise the NUM to settle on the NCB's terms, but failed to deliver an ounce of real physical support to win the strike!

Instead of behind-the-scenes manoeuvres, the NUM should have placed clear demands on other union leaders to instruct their members not

to cross picket lines and not to touch scab coal. Most importantly, at key points in the strike, such as at the Battle of Orgreave, or when the NUM's assets were seized, the demand for a general strike should have been raised.

Crucially, these demands should not have rested with the totally untrustworthy union leaders—left or right wing—but should have been taken directly to the rank and file of those unions. The rank and file militants of the NUM were not organised to do this and they lacked the political independence necessary to begin this task in the face of their left leadership's opposition to rank and file organisation. That was the third and decisive problem facing the strikers.

### Political

Hundreds of thousands of activists were involved in organising support for the miners. They were not only NUM members, but working class women from the coalfields in the Women's Support Groups and socialists and militants in the hundreds of Miners' Support Groups that sprang up in every town and city.

If these workers, who were the backbone of support for the strike, had been organised into action councils to spread a boycott of scab coal and to generalise the strike to other sections of workers, starting with those industries closely related to coal mining, the strike could have been won.

But that was a political task. It meant organising militants into a new political party that could carry the fight for the sort of action necessary to win into every section of the labour movement. It meant miner militants and their supporters breaking from Scargill's particular brand of left reformist syndicalism. As the pickets were wound down, and the various support groups took on the tasks of food collections and fund raising—essential tasks but not strike winning tasks—the massive pool of support outside the NUM was left helpless, without a clear way forward.

Meanwhile, the TUC and the right-wing of the NUM bureaucracy, especially in South Wales and Scotland, were moving in to kill the strike.

### Price

The price of this failure to transcend militant trade unionism is still being felt in the coalfields today. The review procedure, which was the only “victory” scored by the strike, has failed in 10 years to save a single pit. The final blows to the coal mining industry were delivered in 1992, with the announcement of 31 closures. 35 pits have closed since then and the militant rhetoric of Arthur Scargill has been replaced by appeals to “public opinion” and “people power”.

The NUM itself is a withered husk, a shadow of its former self. The National Executive is dominated by officials from areas where there are not even working pits remaining. Over the next few months up to half the remaining pits are expected to close. British Coal managers are keen to close as many pits as possible before privatisation begins in May, so that they can organise cut-price buy-outs!

The human price of the collapse of the British coal industry is immense. So is the political price. Where once pit villages were dominated by working class institutions, now they are wastelands of despair. It is no coincidence that the fascist BNP has targeted South Wales and East Midlands coalfields as areas of potential growth.

Ten years on, our task is to ensure that the Great Strike of 1984-85 was not in vain. The road to working class power is paved with defeats as well as victories. But only if the lessons of past defeats are learned can future victories be assured. ■

# Never forget! Never forgive!

**A** SUAVE BUSINESSMAN sits at a posh restaurant table. The year is 1942, the place, Krakow, Poland. "I have at my command 350 shop floor workers with one purpose", he boasts to his wife. "To make pots and pans?" she asks. "To make money for me" he replies. The reply is Oskar Schindler's. The cynical sophisticate emerges as an unlikely hero from the ineffable horror of the holocaust. Schindler appears as the central character of a remarkable film by Hollywood's box office king, Steven Spielberg. While some critics may find that Spielberg's film suffers in comparison with documentaries like Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, it is still a work of undeniable power and significance, not least because it will reach a mass audience.

The film begins just after the Nazis' 1939 conquest of Poland with the initial registration by the German authorities of all Krakow's Jews. Soon we meet Schindler, who arrives in Krakow on the prowl for easy money as a wartime profiteer.

Schindler understands all too well that large and regular bribes grease the wheels of the Third Reich. As the German forces and their collaborators herd the Jewish population into Krakow's ghetto, a mere 16 square blocks for tens of thousands of people, we see something of the virulent spread of anti-Semitic poison when a young girl shrieks "Good-bye Jews", over and over again, her face contorted with hatred.

By this time Schindler has wined and dined his way into a position to buy a Jewish-owned enamelware factory, forced into liquidation by the Nazis. With the help of a Jewish accountant, Schindler amasses an enormous fortune from slave labour in the Krakow ghetto.



The horror of the holocaust—Belsen, 1945

For many months he remains utterly detached. Slowly and unevenly, the dehumanisation of the Jews stirs some essential human decency in Schindler. His motives remain mixed. After all, an aged Jewish machinist, lying dead in the blood-stained snow, means "lost production". But as he witnesses the expulsion of the Krakow ghetto in stunned silence, he knows beyond any doubt that the system which made him so very rich is moving inexorably to exterminate the "scapegoats" who had generated his wealth.

After the raising of the Krakow ghetto, Schindler's factory remains open as more profit rolls in. Day by day, however, trains carry more and more to the death camps of Chujowa Gorka and Auschwitz. Schindler finds

*Schindler's List* is a remarkable film by Hollywood's box office king, Steven Spielberg. **GR McColl** finds this welcome addition to a body of nearly 200 works of cinema and television dealing with the Nazis' murderous "Final Solution" a timely reminder of the horrors inflicted by fascism in power.

himself briefly imprisoned for the crime of kissing a Jewish girl. Time is running out and Schindler draws up a list of 1,100 "essential workers", Jews whose bare survival he buys with an enormous kickback to a Nazi official. Schindler's motive has ceased to be profit.

With the Germans' unconditional surrender, Schindler prepares to flee the prospect of prosecution as a war

criminal and departs from his former workers a radically transformed man. This emotionally charged scene is not, however, the simple end of a Hollywood voyage of self-discovery and redemption. We are reminded that Poland is now home to only 4,000 Jews while 6,000 descendants of Schindler's workers are alive today.

Some socialists might object that the film depicts Schindler—a capitalist—as the individual hero and the Jews largely as passive victims. *Schindler's List* offers little evidence of collective resistance on a large scale, and events such as the Warsaw Uprising in the Spring of 1943 which involved mass struggle by the Jewish population do not get a look in. But this would be too much to expect from a big commercial film

which raises the issue of the Holocaust to a mass audience at a vital time.

Spielberg's compelling if deeply painful movie cannot explain the origins of the Holocaust in the chronic crisis of German capitalism. Fascism temporarily "solved" that crisis by smashing working class organisations and subjecting Jews to slave labour and genocide. The task of explaining that falls not to Hollywood directors but to revolutionary socialists. But *Schindler's List* will give strength to all opponents of fascism who are presently struggling to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are not denied, sidelined or forgotten. One of the prime responsibilities of socialists in Britain is to expose the unmentioned guilt of the "democratic" imperialists, not least Britain and the United States, whose governments never lowered the barriers to Jewish immigrants, even in the face of overwhelming proof of the Nazis' anti-Semitic persecution by the autumn of 1938. The liberation of those Jews who survived the camps was far down the list of Allied war priorities.

*Schindler's List* opens at a crucial time in Europe which systematically denies asylum to Third World immigrants, where the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen can enter the mainstream of French politics despite his dismissal of the Holocaust as "a minor detail of history" and a fascist like Zhirinovskiy can garner more than 20% of Russian votes.

To prevent a return to a new global barbarism will mean crushing the rising fascist menace today and working towards the overthrow of the system which breeds it. Through its recreation of the terrible reality of fifty years ago, *Schindler's List*, for all its faults, can serve as a spark of inspiration in the struggles ahead. ■

**T**HIS ANTHOLOGY looks at the history of the homosexual experience. It is extremely useful for socialists and all enemies of oppression and discrimination. Focusing on male homosexual history, the book is a valuable addition to existing studies. It shows that, far from being "unnatural" as claimed by bigots throughout history, homosexuality is an enduring feature of human society.

A historical approach also helps to prove something else, of vital importance to the fight for freedom: the specific form in which homosexuality is repressed and attacked in capitalist society is not an eternal phenomenon. Just as attitudes to homosexuality and sexual mores have changed under different forms of society, so the oppression of homosexuals can be overcome in the future, if the society that fosters that oppression is consigned to the history books.

The first chapter deals with antiquity, examining attitudes to homosexuality in the ancient Greek and Roman cultures. Higgins examines classical sources such as Plato's *Symposium* to illustrate the very different values that existed in the ancient world.

The ancient world was not exactly a homosexual heaven on earth, as some utopians like to claim. Although it is true that homosexual love was presented in some instances as superior to heterosexual love, there were well defined limits. Greek society promoted relationships between younger and older men, as part of a socialisation process. However, the older man was always expected to be the active partner in such a relationship. As Plato put it, "Such persons are devoted to lovers in boyhood and themselves lovers of boys

in manhood".

The evidence from the Roman era suggests that homosexual relations were very common. Even emperors of Rome were homosexual or bisexual. The empire also had flourishing homosexual sub-cultures. In Pompeii archaeologists discovered graffiti from the remains of a bathhouse, which read:

"Phoebus the perfume maker fucks excellently. I want to be fucked by a male. Autus fucked Quintus here."

Higgins' evidence of homosexual sub-culture in the Middle Ages illustrates that, contrary to popular belief, homosexual activity was common. But we also see the influence of Christian ideology during the 12th and 13th centuries which led to the wholesale persecution of men who engaged in homosexual sex. At the same time many religious orders were hotbeds of homosexuality. Christian condemnation of homosexuality was a weapon of social coercion, used to terrorise and control the peasant masses and to impose a norm stressing reproduction as the sole purpose of sex.

Higgins explains why, in the 17th and 18th centuries, much more evidence of activity is available: the emergence of one of the greatest enemies of the homosexual—the

## Gay sex through the ages

Ian Harvey  
reviews  
*A Queer Reader*  
Edited by Patrick Higgins  
Fourth Estate, 1993  
373pp, £14.99 pb

policeman! The other factor creating the illusion of more gay sex was the rise of another great menace to the homosexual—the newspaper. 18th century journalists soon discovered that sensational sexual tales sold papers. It is in this period that the stereotype of the homosexual was created, fostering popular fears that remain today.

The section on the 19th century provides much documentary evidence to illustrate a further hardening of attitudes.

As one writer observed in 1891, "The accomplished languages of Europe in the nineteenth century supply no terms for this persistent feature of human psychology without imparting some implication of disgust, disgrace, vituperation."

The weakness in Higgins' analysis here, as with all his commentary, is that he fails to link these developments to class society. It was in the period of the 19th century that the nuclear family was promoted to the

mass of the working class as the only decent way to live. Homosexuals were the most clearly identifiable deviants from the bourgeoisie's "natural order". An 1885 law on indecency codified these attitudes. One of the first, and most famous transgressors of this new law was Oscar Wilde. Wilde chose to defend the right to homosexual love itself in court—an act of bravery even by modern standards.

Higgins devotes a specific section to Germany, where the strength of Marxism among the working class led to the first properly organised movement for homosexual rights. With the creation in 1897 of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, its leading figure—Hirschfeld—hoped to win support for the repeal of paragraph 175 of the Prussian penal code, which criminalised homosexual acts.

He sent 3,000 questionnaires to male students at a Prussian college and in February 1904 he sent 5,000 to metal workers. They were asked if they were attracted to women only, men only or both genders. There was a huge outcry. Six of the students took Hirschfeld to court for "propagating obscene inquiries and pamphlets". He was fined DM200. As a result the metal workers wrote to Hirschfeld, "Our cadre of workers

has understood the question of your inquiry in the way it should be understood—namely, as scientific research."

Higgins also documents a scandal involving Fritz Krupp. It mirrors similar hypocritical scandals today. Krupp was the owner of one of the biggest enterprises in Germany and a close friend of the Kaiser. For years his homosexual activities had been known within the highest circles of the state. But his class position protected him from prosecution.

His activities were eventually exposed by the Italian Socialist Movement's paper *Avanti*. So confident was Krupp of his own privileged position he had allowed himself to be featured in pictorial representations of group orgies with young boys! It was not long before the story appeared in the German Marxist paper *Vorwärts*.

Krupp issued a libel writ against the paper and the whole apparatus of the state was launched against those who had unleashed the scandal. Krupp committed suicide a few days later. There was a huge cover up, and the Kaiser led the mourners at his funeral.

Then, as now, class was a crucial factor in the ability of homosexuals to live without harassment. The stench of hypocrisy from the highest circles remains today.

*A Queer Reader* is a fascinating insight into the development of homosexual sub-culture and its oppression through the ages. Despite the underdevelopment of a class analysis it should be read by anyone eager for ammunition against those who assert that homosexuality is a recent phenomenon of "decadent civilisation" and those who deny the importance of homosexuals in making history. ■

# Smash the BNP!

EVERYBODY MARCHING on the TUC demonstration on 19 March will be united by anger and hatred of the BNP. But there is something else that every worker and every anti-racist should be furious about.

The Labour and trade union leaders have left the initiative in the hands of the Nazis. The TUC, which stands at the head of millions of organised workers, has taken next to no steps to combat the growing menace of fascism. The 19 March demonstration is a start, but even then the bureaucrats have had to be dragged unwillingly—by rank and file pressure—into anything more than a token mobilisation.

Last October, when 60,000 marched against the BNP headquarters in Welling, the union leaders opposed the demonstration and instead backed a pathetic 3,000-strong alternative march through central London.

The BNP has little more than 2,000 paper members. The labour movement could crush the them almost overnight if a determined lead were given and the correct tactics used. Every day that goes by without a united and militant campaign gives the Nazis more time to organise. Beackon's thugs have been "on the knocker" building up a base in East London and encouraging the growth of racist attacks.

Fascism is distinct from other forms of right-wing and racist politics because it organises its own squads to control the streets and carry out physical attacks on its opponents. It aims to mobilise the most desperate sections of the middle class and the most disorganised, least class-conscious and collective sections of the working class to violently repress black people, socialists and the working class movement.

There is no reasoning with fascists. They will use any public platform we allow them, to preach their message of violence against black people and the left. They have to be crushed.

The Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) has been responsible for much of the disunity in the anti-fascist movement. It called the split demonstration last October. It defended the police when they attacked the Unity march. It has refused to act with other forces such as the Anti-Nazi League. Instead, it focuses its campaign on the call for the state to ban the BNP.

This strategy is worse than useless. It is a dangerous diversion from the fight to smash the BNP. It places reliance on the state which has shown its determination to defend the BNP with thousands of police at every opportunity.

History shows that the state would only ban the BNP in order to stop anti-racists from scoring a real victory against them. In 1936 the National Government introduced the Public Order Act, which was used to suppress mass anti-fascist demonstrations. Any repressive legislation would be used

against the left, because the bosses regard the working class as their real enemies and the Nazis as a minor irritation by comparison.

When fascism came to power in Italy and Germany, it was as a weapon of last resort by the capitalists to defend their system by crushing the workers' organisations—the unions, Socialists and Communists—completely. Spreading false hopes that the capitalists and their state machine are the force that can beat the Nazis serves one purpose only. It diverts attention away from the fact that to beat the Nazis, the working class will have to do the job itself.

## FIGHT THE BNP:

### Build a Workers' United Front!

The entire labour and anti-racist movement, every union branch, Labour Party ward, black organisation, the Anti-Nazi League, ARA, Youth against Racism in Europe and all of the left-wing parties and groups must unite in action to deprive the BNP of any platform for their views. They have to be physically prevented from carrying out any paper sales, any election canvassing, any public meetings, rallies or marches.

The rank and file of each organisation must pressure their leaders to build the united front if they won't do it, then activists should go ahead and set up joint committees at local level to plan direct action.

Many people say that this can't be done, and give up the fight for unity in action in advance. We know otherwise. Despite sustained opposition from a number of quarters, Workers Power branches succeeded in setting up joint Unity Committees in several areas to build for the march last October.

### Organise the youth!

There is a mass, popular anti-racist culture amongst youth. We need to activate this tremendous anti-racist and anti-fascist feeling. That is why Workers Power supports and builds Youth Against Racism in Europe and fights to commit it to revolutionary policies.

In every area, every college or school, there should be a YRE group. The 19 March demo and the coming ANL Carnival on 23 April will be important focal points for organising local anti-racist youth groups. But the youth must not be left simply marching or raving against the Nazis. Youth groups should set up self-defence squads and organise regular training. They must demand resources and support for this from the labour movement.

### Stop the fascists campaigning!

Anti-fascists must pool their knowledge of the local fascists' goals and targets and systematically plan to stop them. In the coming elections every BNP attempt to canvass or hold an

election rally must be stopped.

Workers in TV and radio should pull the plugs when Nazi leaders try to incite racial violence over the air waves. Journalists and printers should take direct action to prevent publication of any interviews or articles which let the Nazis put their views across. Postal workers should plan ways and means to stop the BNP's mailshots finding their way through the letter boxes.

### Build Anti-Fascist Defence Squads!

The Nazis have their own organised squads to mete out violence against their opponents. Anti-fascists encountering these squads of Nazis will find them ready for violent action. That is why we need anti-fascist defence squads.

They can and must be organised out of groups of workers and youth who can train and prepare together to teach the Nazis a lesson they will never forget. That way we can ensure that anti-fascist and union meetings, pickets and campaigns are defended. We can also go onto the offensive and physically prevent the Nazis polluting working class areas with their propaganda.

The biggest anti-fascist campaign, the Anti-Nazi League, is hampered by its refusal to support the building of defence squads. The ANL is controlled by the SWP, many of whose members are themselves committed anti-fascist fighters. But in the name of maintaining a "broad alliance" with Labour MPs and celebrity figures the ANL refuses to call for No Platform for Fascists or organise to implement it. 60,000 people have reportedly joined the ANL in the past months. But because it fears a challenge to its strategy over defence squads and No Platform, the SWP has refused to allow any democratic structures in the ANL. The scandalous result is to leave 60,000 potential activists without any way of planning activity themselves.

The SWP argue that defence squads would divide the anti-fascist movement and hive off the fighters who would operate outside the control of the mass of the movement. It is not inevitable that defence squads should be separate from the mass movement, or out of its control. They should be linked to and under the control of a mass movement. One sure-fire way of guaranteeing that they will be isolated is if the large campaigns like the ANL oppose them.

We need a campaign to convince every anti-racist group and the entire working class movement of the need for a co-ordinated network of defence organisations. The BNP are at war with black people, with Jews, with the whole of our class and its organisations. They are preparing for the day when they can stop denying that the Holocaust happened and start putting on a repeat performance. We must show them no mercy.■

## AS RACIST ATTA

# Organise se

THE WAVE of vicious racial attacks in East London is growing. February saw brutal assaults on black people by racist gangs on an almost daily basis. The most sickening and cowardly of these was the frenzied beating of Muktar Ahmed. A group of 25 racists smashed in his skull for no other reason than he happened to be walking down a street in Bethnal Green. Muktar was rushed into intensive care in the same hospital where Quddus Ali lay for months in a coma, after a similar attack.

These attacks are obviously organised. When groups of men leap out of vans and attack black youths, or drag black men from cars and club them senseless, there is a planned offensive taking place. Increasingly these attacks are taking place in the heart of predominantly Asian areas.

Racism is not the sole preserve of the fascists. Attacks take place in areas where the BNP Nazis have little or no support. But the BNP encourage and promote racial attacks. It is no accident that these sickening crimes are on the increase, especially in East London, at a time when the Nazi BNP is stepping up its drive to win seats in the local council elections in May. The area of South London around Welling saw a massive escalation of racist violence, and the fatal attacks on Rolan Adams, Stephen Lawrence and Rohit Duggal, after the BNP moved its headquarters there. The BNP is a party of thugs and killers. Violence and intimidation is fundamental to their means of organisation.

The time for words and stirring speeches is long since past. The workers' movement must declare war on racism and fascism in all their forms.

The TUC has called a mass demonstration in East London. We have to use that opportunity to set the tremendous power of the organised labour movement into action.

What should be done? Labour politicians call for more police and better policing. Many workers accept that this is the most realistic answer.

But The police have not lifted a fin-



Muktar Ahmed—victim of East End racism

ger to defend black people from racial attacks. Their ranks are riddled with racists. On the estates of Tower Hamlets you can wait for hours for the police to turn up if you report a racist attack and then they deny that the attack is racially motivated.

When Bengali youth demonstrated last year outside the London Hospital where Quddus Ali was in intensive care, police attacked them with truncheons and arrested nine young demonstrators. The night after the arrest of the Tower Hamlets Nine police "monitored" a large group of BNP supporters marching towards Brick Lane, the centre of

THE WORKING class has a common interest in fighting racism. Only the organised working class has the strength to defeat it. But the Labour and trade union movement are saturated with racist ideas and practices. Racism has to be purged from the workers' movement if we are to fight racism effectively.

The poisonous effect of racism in the Labour Party has been demonstrated in Tower Hamlets. It is well known that the Liberals pandered to racism for years in Tower Hamlets, paving the way for the election of the Nazi Derek Beackon. But Labour too has pandered to racism and harboured racists.

Local Labour leaflets in Millwall attacked the Liberals not for their racism, but for failing to implement their racist policies consistently. One leaflet pointed out that while the Liberals argued, "Island Homes for Island People", in fact they had instructed the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood to "give 40% of its lettings to homeless families or else".

The "homeless families" local Labour racists didn't like were the Asians who are already getting second class treatment in the allocation of housing.

"The Liberals tell us which homeless to house—why can't we decide

## LABOUR M Root out

our own priorities and decide for ourselves?" asked Labour's leaflet. Millwall's Labour's leaders started a campaign to house the "hidden homeless . . . your children who have to sleep on the couch, your brothers and sisters who want a place of their own, your grandchildren without space to grow up in".

Though the Labour leaflets said not a word about colour or nationality, the message to white workers on the Isle of Dogs was clear: Labour's policy was preferential treatment for local whites over black "outsiders" from other parts of the borough.

Nobody should underestimate the dire housing needs of working class people in Tower Hamlets, black and white. The hidden homeless do exist and they need housing desperately. But instead of blaming the Tories and the Liberals for their housing cuts and divisive policies, Labour turned the justified anger of white workers living in crowded housing against black





**CKS INCREASE**

**Self-defence!**



attack.

Tower Hamlets' Asian community. But as the BNP ran riot, smashing shops and breaking heads, no police were to be seen.

Instead of hunting down the perpetrators of racial attacks, they have launched a massive witch-hunt in the pages of the press against the working class youths who defended last October's Unity Demo against the BNP, when it came under attack . . . from the police.

All the efforts of the police have been directed towards defending the "rights" of the Nazis. To rely on the police, is to support the force which is

harassing Asian youth and protecting the Nazis.

The TUC demo on 19 March presents every worker, socialist, trade unionist and anti-racist with two choices:

We could all turn out, banners flying and brass bands playing, listen to some stirring speeches, then board our coaches—most of us thanking our lucky stars that we don't have to make our way home through the racist streets of Millwall and Stepney.

Or we can begin to organise effective action to support those fighting back against racist attacks.

Immediately that means organised **self-defence against racist and fascist attacks**. The patrols organised by Bengali youth last October point the way forward. Self defence groups are already being organised.

Community based organisation needs support from the mass organisations of the working class movement, black and white. We need a campaign—in the first place within the trade unions—to provide financial, political and physical support to these initiatives. We must be prepared to defend those who are arrested. Unions should get speakers from groups like the Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign and pledge support for black self-defence. The aim must be to build joint defence patrols and well-prepared defence squads composed of black and white workers and youth.

Extreme? Maybe. But look at the photo of Muktar Ahmed. Are black people not already facing an extreme situation? Extreme attacks require extreme answers. Even to go canvassing for Labour in the forthcoming local council elections we will need organised self-defence in parts of East London. Black youth in Tower Hamlets know already that just to live their lives they need organised self-defence.

Organised self-defence is vital. That way we can take a serious step forward in making the streets safe and driving the sick perpetrators of racist attacks back into the sewers where they belong. ■

**MOVEMENT racism!**

workers, the very people who are their only real allies in the fight for better housing.

And how did this racist bunch get control of the Millwall Labour Party? Through the Labour leadership's purge, which saw eleven Militant supporters expelled from the Bow and Poplar Constituency Labour Party and left wing councillor Yve Armor de-selected in favour of closet racist James Hunt.

The trade unions have also shown themselves capable of pandering to racism. Although Afro-Caribbean workers are more likely than any other racial group to be members of a union (the last set of figures showed 53%, 10% higher than for whites) they are still systematically under-represented within the movement at all levels.

Racism was used by right-wing opponents of Bill Morris when he stood for General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union in 1991. Leaflets were circulated around factories and branches carrying vile racist

abuse. Morris remains the only black union leader and under-representation is rife throughout union structures.

Even today the leaders of the National Union of Teachers are refusing to fight against Tory attacks on funding for the education of kids whose first language is not English ("Section 11 money"). They claim that just by backing the TUC demo on 19 March they are doing all they can to fight racism!

We need an uncompromising fight against all forms of racism in the working class movement.

- Any racist official at any level should be removed from their post immediately.
- Proven members of fascist groups should be expelled from the unions and driven out of the workplace by direct action.
- Black workers should have the right to organise their own caucuses inside the unions and a Black Section in the Labour Party with the same status as youth and women's sections.

Far from undermining unity between black and white workers, this type of black self-organisation can help to build unity by giving black workers the chance to meet together, to identify and challenge instances of racism, whether from employers or from within the movement. ■

**Scrap all immigration laws!**

**T**HE TORIES, Liberals and Labour all say they are against racism. But the political establishment has no doubt who to blame for the rise of racism—black people. Time and again they stress that "good race relations" depend on "strict control of immigration".

This is a line which runs from the Tory centre to the Labour left. It is what they claim differentiates them from the far right racists on the Tory fringes and the fascists. But the logic of their arguments is the same.

"Limiting the number of black people to those already present limits racism", say the establishment politicians. "Deporting black people would improve race relations even more", say the fascists.

At root they all share the idea that it is the presence of black people which causes racism.

So it is no accident that the Tories have used the rise of racist violence on the streets to step up the state's own racist offensive—through deportations, the detention of refugees and ever stricter laws designed to exclude black people from Britain.

Last Christmas fifty-seven Jamaicans visiting relatives and friends in Britain were denied entry. They were detained at the notorious Campfield Centre in Oxfordshire and then deported. Hundreds of their relatives were kept waiting for 16 hours and then moved from Gatwick airport at gunpoint.

The lengths to which the state is prepared to go in dehumanising "illegal" immigrants was shown by the killing of Joy Gardner last year. Though she was gagged, harnessed and beaten by the Metropolitan Police special anti-immigration squad, the police pathologists still cannot agree on which of these violent assaults was ultimately responsible for Joy's death. The official report on Joy's death has still not been produced! Meanwhile her killers walk free.

This savage and degrading treatment is exclusively reserved for black people. Would American, Australian or white South African visitors or immigrants have been treated in this way? The idea is absurd. A recent survey showed that over 400,000 young workers from the "white" commonwealth are working in Britain—legally and il-



Prakash Chavrimootoo (right) and her son Prem (centre), threatened with deportation because she left her violent husband.

legally—without any systematic checks or harassment.

The fact is that Britain's immigration laws are racist. Any law which denies people the right to work in Britain on the grounds of "nationality" is bound to be. One million white South Africans can claim at least British grandparent. Each could legitimately come here tomorrow. But millions of British passport holders from Africa, the West Indies or the Indian sub continent are denied that right.

The labour movement must mobilise its forces for a massive campaign against the immigration laws and their barbaric effects. This means protest action against each and every deportation, a campaign for the abolition of the special deportation squad SO1(3), and for the immediate closure of all immigration detention centres.

In cases like that of Joy Gardner the labour movement should organise its own inquiries, in collaboration with victims' families, campaigners and independent medical experts. That is the only way we will be able to publicise the truth, expose the actions of the police and the legal system, and ensure that there are no cover ups.

But what about the immigration laws themselves? Many Labour supporters oppose the discriminatory effect of laws like the Asylum Act and the Nationality Act, but accept the argument that some immigra-

tion controls are necessary. Many say, there is "not enough room" for unlimited entry into Britain. Many argue that there are already not enough jobs, a housing shortage and massive queues for hospital beds. Wouldn't more immigration just make the situation worse?

No. Black people are not responsible for this situation. The bosses will always try to blame others for the problems their system—capitalism—causes.

Unemployment and the housing shortage are not caused by too many workers, whatever the colour of their skin. They are caused by the capitalist profit system, which allows chronic shortages in housing to exist alongside mass unemployment for building workers. Production is only for profit, not to meet the needs of ordinary people.

The working class movement should not allow the bosses to restrict the movement of labour, or use immigration and nationality laws to divide us. Workers whose countries have been plundered by the multi-nationals and Western banks should be allowed to live and work wherever they choose. We can't trust the bosses to decide who can and who cannot enter the country.

Every trade union and Labour Party member should take up the fight to **scrap all immigration controls**, to open the borders of Britain and the European Union to all who want to live or work here. ■

**Capitalism causes racism**

**R**acism and fascism are not just problems that can be overcome by a change of attitudes. They are deeply embedded in the capitalist system.

Capitalism—production for profit rather than human need—is the root cause of all the ills in this society, from unemployment and bad housing through to racism and fascism. The capitalists use racism for two reasons. The first is to justify the relative wealth of advanced countries like Britain that have grown rich by exploiting the workers and peasants of black nations in the third world. Their excuse for imperialism is the lie that black people are inferior, lazy or just incapable of running their own economies without "help" from the thieving magnates of the multi-nationals and western banks.

The second reason is to divide us, to stop black and white workers fighting back together against the capitalists who exploit us all and to set British workers against workers in other countries, even though our

fundamental interests are the same.

In Britain today the major political parties have no answers. They are discredited. But there is growing anger, a mood of desperation and a strengthening of the extreme poles of the political spectrum. The Nazis are trying to use this to build up their strength. They give radical but lying solutions to the problems of unemployment and housing, turning white against black.

There is an alternative to this. It must base itself not in the human trash that the Nazis organise, but in the most determined, most class-conscious, most militant fighters for the interests of working class people, black and white. It means organising a fight for jobs for all and decent housing for everyone. If the capitalists cannot make a profit from this, then that is their problem. It shows that the system has to go. We must fight to tax the rich to pay for jobs and services, and to put industry and services under the ownership and control of the mass of the

working class so that production can be planned to meet our needs.

The capitalists will defend their property and their power by all the means at their disposal. If they were prepared to smash the heads of anti-racist marchers last October, just think what they would be prepared to do to protect the source of their power and privileges. That is why it will take a revolution—a violent uprising by the working class—to overthrow their state and replace it with a socialist system based on democratic workers' councils, a workers' militia and a democratically planned economy.

We need a new political party to fight for the only solution that can rip up racism and fascism at their roots—a socialist revolution. That is what Workers Power is fighting for, not just in Britain, but around the world through our international organisation, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. That is a goal worth fighting for. Join us! ■

## VIETNAM TWO DECADES ON

# Once more the dollar is God

**W**AR HAS broken out again in Indochina. This time the protagonists are not opposing armies but two great symbols of United States commercialism, Coke and Pepsi. Their flashing neon signs will compete with those of Philips and Sony for the attention of the new breed of cell-phone toting Vietnamese Yuppies who prowl the streets of Ho Chi Minh City.

Visitors who knew the city before 1975 are quick to comment on the similarities between the Saigon of General Thieu's crumbling, corrupt regime and today's Ho Chi Minh City, as the Stalinists renamed it after the war. The dollar is God again. It can buy you anything: the body of one of tens of thousands of prostitutes, a slice of one of the old state industries or rights to the estimated 2.5 billion barrels of oil that lie under the Tonkin Gulf.

The defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam in 1975 was a great victory for the working class internationally. But the fact that it was led by a Stalinist bureaucracy that did not allow the working class and the peasantry even a hint of political power was a terrible defeat. Unless the bureaucracy is overthrown by a revolution in which the working class leads the peasantry to seize power, all the gains of 1975 are doomed to destruction.

### Assimilate

When the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) entered Saigon in 1975, they were greeted by a celebratory general strike. But the Stalinists stuck to the letter of the "stages theory" of revolution which dogmatically insists that all anti-imperialist struggles must lead to a capitalist stage of development. They argued that while the North was in a phase of "socialist construction", the South needed to complete its "national democratic" revolution. Thus, initially, they had no plans to end capitalist exploitation in the South. They hoped in this way to secure the \$3.25 billion aid promised by France and the US.

But there is one thing that is more dear to Stalinism than any of their pseudo-Marxist phraseology and that is maintaining power. It was only when the aid failed to arrive and a tight embargo was erected around the country that they finally began to move against capitalism.

In the summer of 1975 all Southern banks were nationalised and all but small scale industry was taken into state hands. In 1976 with no aid forthcoming apart from a paltry irrigation loan from the IMF, they were forced to assimilate the South into the North and impose the Northern planning system through a unified five year plan. These measures were followed by the signing of aid deals with both China and the USSR placing unified Vietnam firmly in the Stalinist "camp".

Faced with the tasks of reconstructing a war-torn economy, it was essential that the enormous potential of the Vietnamese working class and peasantry were drawn into a democratic planning process. But this, too, would have threatened the monopoly of power enjoyed by the Vietnamese CP.

Instead, the Stalinists relied on an incentive scheme that offered no real incentive to the masses at all. Worse, it was prone to corruption. As a result the black market was strengthened and the speculators and commercial

*The Vietnamese Communist Party swept victoriously into Saigon nearly twenty years ago. Brought to power in a mass, revolutionary war would the Stalinist regime escape the fate of its Russian and East European backers? Twenty years on the answer is clearly no. Chris Bryant examines the Vietnamese bureaucracy's journey from anti-imperialist victory to an attempt at capitalist restoration.*

capitalists flourished.

To counteract this threat, currency union was imposed making hoards of southern money useless against the new dong (Vietnamese currency). Currency union was also carried through with no regard for real price differences between North and South. It sparked an inflationary spiral which by the mid 1980s reached 700%.

In 1978 the VCP moved decisively against ethnic Chinese merchants whose hoarding was causing chronic shortages. China saw the expropriation of these Hoa merchants as a violation of their citizens' national rights. Egged on by the USA, China used the crackdown on the Hoa and a territorial dispute over the Spratly and Paracel Islands as a pretext for breaking off relations with Vietnam. It was only a matter of time before war broke out.

As Trotsky had predicted 40 years earlier, Stalinism, which conceives the construction of socialist society as proceeding along national lines, will inevitably break up along those national lines. This is what happened with bloody and tragic consequences in South East Asia.

On the Southwest border, a territorial dispute with Kampuchea, now firmly allied with China, escalated into all out war. In December 1978 Vietnam invaded and set up a friendly government in Phnom Penh. China responded by invading Vietnam which, although quickly repulsed, left some key provincial capitals devastated.

**Those enterprises that remained firmly in the hands of the state were allowed to buy on the open market. Enterprises could now go bust and bosses were given the right to sack workers. Local and regional planning bodies are no longer subject to central planning restrictions**

Between 1979 and 1985 the bureaucracy wrestled with the legacy of imperialist occupation, continuing war, its own incompetence and the slow strangulation of the US-led embargo. While some successes were made, the price was an increased dependence on the Comecon countries where the \$5 billion national debt was concentrated. Thus the VCP ended up slavishly tailing Gorbachev in the opening phases of the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. When Gorbachev embarked on his project of *perestroika*, the VCP launched its own programme of *doi moi* (renovation).

The sixth congress of the VCP in 1986 abandoned the immediate goal of socialist construction for that of developing state industry to make a profit. Party secretary Truong Chinh summed up the new position:

"... we laid stress on changing the ownership of the means of production, but overlooked the settlement

of problems relating to management organisation and the system of distribution. We often resorted to campaigns like coercive measures, running after quantity but neglecting quality and efficiency".

Without realising it, he was identifying one of the inherent weaknesses of bureaucratic planning. Because Stalinist planning is done by the bureaucracy and without the democratic control of the mass of consumers it invariably runs after quantity and neglects quality.

Because Truong Chinh was himself a Stalinist apparatchik, terrified of direct control by the producers, he was willing to argue that changing the ownership of the means of production was secondary to "quality and efficiency". In the absence of workers' democracy which could provide a real social incentive for high quality goods these things could only be brought about by market competition.

The 1986 congress was a turning point from the reluctant use of market forces—which even a healthy workers state would have to consider if it was isolated—to a wholesale attempt to unleash market forces in the Vietnamese economy. The turn was accompanied by a purge of the old hardliners, including the vice-premier in charge of the economy, who saw their interests lying in the heavy industrial side of the Stalinist plan.

The election victory of Solidarnosc in Poland in 1989, combined with



What shelter from the free market?

allowed to buy on the open market. Enterprises could now go bust and bosses were given the right to sack workers. Local and regional planning bodies are no longer subject to central planning restrictions. Instead of state procurement, a capitalist taxation system is now in place. A vicious austerity programme has thrown 3.5 million state employees out of work in order to cut back on spending.

In agriculture the changes were even more radical. In 1988 the collectives and co-operatives were freed from regional control. The following year private land ownership was effectively re-introduced. Although the state remains the legal owner of the land, many co-operatives have been allocated land on long-term leases to families. These families agree their own contracts with the state for which ever crops they choose to cultivate, unhindered by the old quota system. Crucially, the leases can now be inherited.

A new landlord class will soon develop out of the richer peasants, many of them Communist Party cadres. As early as 1989 western observers were reporting that poor peasants were starving in the countryside as a result of government policies.

### Kampuchea

The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe pushed the VCP firmly towards the West as trading partners. But their continued backing for the People's Republic of Kampuchea was a central obstacle to getting the embargo lifted. In September 1990, Vietnamese troops were withdrawn from Kampuchea. Political and economic self-interest far outweighed any supposed internationalist obligation.

From 1991, relations with China and regional capitalist states were normalised. Singapore and Vietnam granted each other "most favoured nation" status. Japan began back-

door trading with Vietnam in the late 1980s and granted a \$395 million commodity loan at the end of 1992 which gave the green light to the Japanese multi-nationals to begin open trading. European firms have been negotiating with Vietnam since at least 1990.

The USA still insisted on pushing the issue of the US soldiers "missing in action"—the 1,200 still unaccounted for since the war. But, as non-US multi-nationals increasingly breached the embargo, the US Senate's resolve crumbled. Representatives of US firms, who for the last four years have been visiting Vietnam posing as tourists, finally got what they were waiting for.

While Vietnamese street traders wonder what to do with their unsold stocks of "lift the embargo now" T-shirts, the Stalinists have bigger things to worry about. The free market demands that they either open up politically to bourgeois opposition forces or expand the bureaucracy so that it can represent the interests of the new competing sections of capitalism, eventually transforming itself into a comprador state-capitalist class.

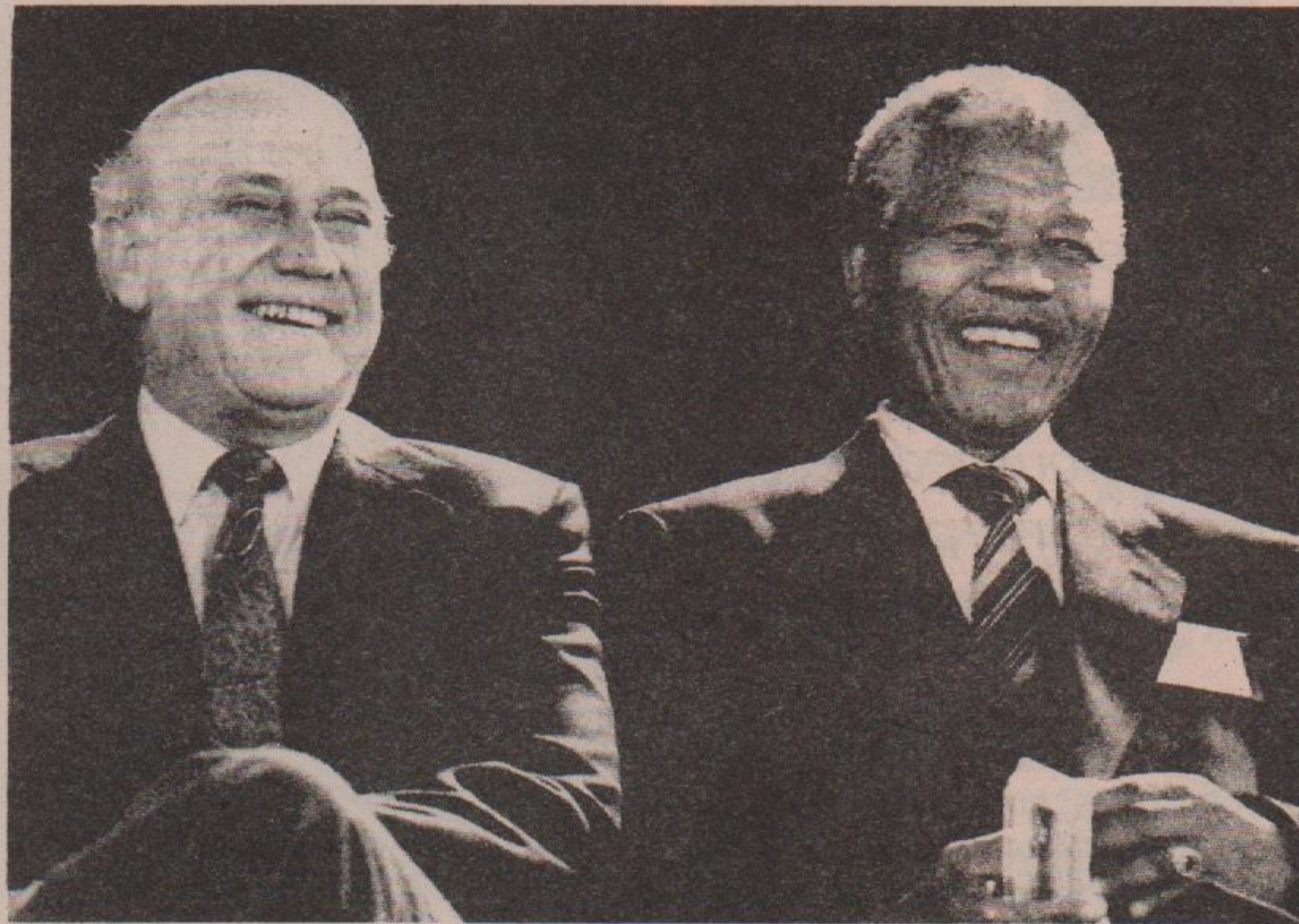
Moves have been made towards this second course. Last year the CP increased its membership by one third and more of the conservative elements have been purged from both the party and the government.

While the people of Vietnam have an average income of \$220 per year, the Asian Development Bank praises the country for its growth rates of 7-8% per annum. A small section of society is benefiting from the reintroduction of capitalism: the careerists, racketeers and bureaucrats.

The millions of Vietnamese workers and peasants who were the backbone of forty years of war against the imperialists, face only poverty and starvation as their rulers welcome in the old enemy. ■

## SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITALISM

# Safe in Mandela's hands



**S**OUTH AFRICA is a country of dramatic contrasts. Its powerful economy, four times larger than its nine African neighbours combined, is dominated by a few huge capitalist combines such as Anglo American/De Beers, Rembrandt/Richemont and Sanlam. These companies control the key industries in South Africa: mining and quarrying, diamonds and gold, food processing, insurance and other service industries.

Their huge capital reserves and profits have been squeezed from generations of a black workforce held in the iron grip of the apartheid system. Today 90% of South Africa's publicly listed companies are owned by just six of these conglomerates.

The wealth of South Africa is reflected in the fine houses, swimming pools and family servants of the well-to-do suburbs. But this luxury is largely restricted to the white population. After forty years of apartheid whites, who form just 14% of the population, own over 90% of the country's land and 90% of all established businesses.

Meanwhile the great majority of blacks live in poverty. Only 50% of the black population have jobs in the "formal" sector of the economy. Another 25% scrape a living as servants, hawkers or in other jobs in the "informal" sector where basic employment rights, such as health and safety controls, are non-existent. Unemployment, especially among township youth, is massive.

While white education received generous funding under the apartheid system, black schools were neglected and starved of funds. Over 30% of South Africans cannot read or write. Fourteen thousand new classrooms are needed just to implement the ANC's policy of universal education up to the age of 15.

Seven million out of a population of 30 million live in "informal housing", 12 million do not have access to clean drinking water and 21 million have inadequate toilet and refuse facilities. Two thirds of households in South Africa have no electricity.

## Struggle

It was this reality, the economic facts of apartheid, that fuelled the massive struggles of the 1980s. This was a movement that focused around democratic demands: the ending of the discriminatory system of apartheid and votes for all regardless of colour. But winning the vote and smashing apartheid was above all seen as a means of transforming the economic plight of the black masses.

The great wave of mass struggle and general strikes of the mid-1980s convinced South Africa's rulers that apartheid would have to go in order to save the capitalist system. Not for the first time a ruling class conceded reform in order to avoid revolution.

The ANC has been the main beneficiary of this movement. Opinion polls predict that it will gain between 60% and 70% of all the votes cast on 27 April. The black masses look to the ANC to transform their lives, to give them their just rewards for decades of bloody struggle.

The ANC has presented its vision for a new South Africa in its "Reconstruction and Development Plan", its programme for government. This plan has been developed and endorsed by the "Tripartite Alliance" of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the 1.3 million strong trade union federation COSATU. The plan, together with agreements made on the constitution, reveals just how many compromises the ANC's Alliance has made to become a government "acceptable" to big business.

The keystone of any real change in South Africa in the interests of the working masses would have to be a massive redistribution of wealth. It would involve the expropriation of the super-rich capitalists—the Ruperts,

Oppenheimers, Gordons, Menells and Hersovs who control whole swathes of the South African economy. It would mean nationalising their massive conglomerates, without compensation, and using democratic workers' control of the key industries to develop the economy in the interests of the masses, not the capitalists.

In contrast, the rights of private property have been enshrined in the constitution agreed by the ANC. As Nelson Mandela told a recent ANC Youth League conference, "We have guaranteed investors against confiscation of their property".

The ANC has even retreated from the commitment in its "Freedom Charter", the historic programme of the ANC, to nationalise the key mining industries. Now this just remains "a policy option". Even a timid commitment to end private ownership of mineral rights was quickly abandoned in the face of an outcry from mining interests.

While the "Reconstruction Plan" recognises the need for a massive programme of public works to provide houses, water, electricity, health clinics and schools, it provides no answers as to where the money will

## **The Reconstruction and Development Plan, together with agreements made on the constitution, reveals just how many compromises the ANC's Alliance has made to become a government "acceptable" to big business**

come from. This is not surprising as ANC economic spokesman, Trevor Manuel, has already gone on record to rule out a wealth tax. He prefers a voluntary "reconstruction bond" and seeking loans and aid internationally.

The Reconstruction Plan suggests that these public works can be financed without a big increase in taxation. It claims that savings can be made in the education and health budgets where large sums are presently squandered in bureaucracy and corruption. This is pie in the sky. Certainly the apartheid system was inefficient but sums saved will be small, especially as the "sunset clauses" in the constitution guaran-

*The African National Congress (ANC) looks set to win an overwhelming victory in the April elections. This is despite threats from the right wing Freedom Alliance to provoke a bloodbath in South Africa and the recent massacre by the reactionary Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party of 15 young ANC election workers in southern Natal. With many British trade unions throwing their weight behind the ANC through the "Votes for Freedom" campaign, John McKee looks at what an ANC government will offer the working masses of South Africa.*

tee the white bureaucrats' jobs. And what about the new black administrators who will be essential to end the white monopoly in the civil service? Who will pay for them?

Increased public borrowing is ruled out because the ANC has already agreed with the International Monetary Fund that it will reduce Government borrowing from the current 7% of Gross Domestic Product to 6%. The most likely source of funding is

the working class itself. Here lies the real danger of the "Tripartite Alliance".

Already ANC leaders are talking about the need for wage restraint in the public sector in 1994. COSATU will be expected to play its part in "national reconstruction". It is already being suggested that organised workers should accept wage rises substantially below the 9% inflation rate to enable "uplifting programmes" elsewhere. This is a familiar story. Those who can least afford it are expected to make the sacrifices while the multi-millionaire capitalists have to be protected as the "wealth producers" of society.

The fact that the leaders of COSATU

are tied into the Alliance is already having its effect. In November there was outrage in the trade unions when the "Bill of Rights" agreed by the ANC enshrined not just the unions' right to strike but also the employers' "right" to lock out their workers! A one day general strike called by COSATU in protest was quickly called off after a meeting of the Alliance. The right to lock out remained.

Amongst the rank and file of the unions there is evidence of growing concern about the impact of the Alliance. NUMSA, the metal workers union and the second largest affiliate to COSATU, has called for an end to it. It has even re-raised the possibility of forming a new "working class party".

At the same time there is growing discontent at the bureaucratisation of the unions. The leaders spend more time discussing "co-determination" plans with the employers than leading the fight against redundancies. Many of the big unions are heavily involved in joint discussions with the employers on "restructuring" industry. As Sam Shilowa, the new General Secretary of COSATU, put it in a recent interview with the *Financial Times*,

"We want to be involved in industrial restructuring. To improve productivity one has to feel a sense of ownership".

The illusory "feeling" of ownership is not all the workers will get under the new participation schemes. They will also get productivity drives and harder work for less money, all in the name of "national reconstruction".

The most enthusiastic supporter of the continuance of the Alliance and of "National Reconstruction" is of course the SACP. The SACP is highly influential within the leadership of the trade unions. Sam Shilowa and many other union leaders are members.

The SACP is completely integrated into the ANC leadership and has been the driving force behind many of the compromises made with the racist government such as the "sunset clauses" which guarantee a coalition with the National Party until the end of the century.

For the SACP, the coming to power of the ANC—even in coalition with the racist National Party—is a necessary part of the "National Democratic Revolution". They argue that the left, including the trade unions, must be at the heart of this "democratic transformation" in order to proceed, at a later stage, to socialism. As a recent editorial in the *African Communist* put it:

"Are we reforming capitalism? Yes, in a sense we are, but not with the intention of rescuing it, or giving it a better name. In the reforms we seek to implement, we must continually seek to deepen the people's capacity to make socialism."

## Coalition

To form a "workers' party" outside the ANC-led Alliance, it tells its supporters, would be to abandon the struggle for the "life and soul of the ANC".

But far from deepening workers' "capacity to make socialism", the SACP is doing quite the opposite. It is tying the working class to a capitalist-led government, a popular front between the workers and the capitalists in which the latter will call all the shots. An ANC government, in or out of coalition with the National Party, will be a bosses' government committed to the "mixed economy" and the defence of capitalism in South Africa.

The role of the SACP within that government will be to control the working class and the trade unions; to ensure that the workers will make sacrifices for "national reconstruction"; to justify the regime's attacks on the workers and to head off any militant response. Having performed that role for the bourgeoisie, the SACP will then be spat out of the coalition. This has been the fate of countless Stalinist parties once they have performed this service for imperialism.

## Challenge

Revolutionaries and militant workers in South Africa must take a different path. They must point out to the masses that an ANC government will do nothing to challenge the real roots of the oppression and grinding poverty of the black urban and rural workers.

They must say clearly that because the ANC are committed to defending rather than overthrowing the existing capitalist system, they will not even be able to deliver lasting reforms to the mass of the population. They should argue against a vote for the ANC and for the building of a new workers' party on a revolutionary socialist programme.

Of course, there will be blacks who benefit under the regime, who improve their lot, who will be given the opportunity to join the capitalists at the top table. But they will be rising out of their class, not with their class. For the masses, poverty and exploitation will continue.

To avoid this the South African workers need a party of their own. They need a revolutionary workers' party committed to destroying the system that bred apartheid: capitalism. It is a system that, unless it is overthrown, will continue its super-exploitation and bloody violence, whichever party is in government. ■

# BOSNIA

The threat of NATO air-strikes, and the Russian-brokered peace deal which averted them, have brought a reactionary peace settlement in Bosnia one step closer. At the same time the battle lines for an even bloodier future war have been drawn around Sarajevo. Millions of starving and wounded people are being used as pawns in a power game played out by imperialism and moribund Stalinism, writes **Paul Morris**.

**H**ALF A MILLION people have died in the Bosnian civil war. The slaughter of sixty-eight people in the Sarajevo market in January outraged the world only because it made the headlines. The everyday misery and killing is all too often sidelined in favour of the latest Tory sex scandal or the exploits of Torvill and Dean.

But it was not public outrage which spurred the NATO powers to give their air-strike ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs. It was cold calculation.

In the last two years the imperialist powers have bickered over the details of their solutions for Bosnia, but they have been united by two basic aims:

- to stop the Bosnian conflict spreading into the surrounding states of ex-Yugoslavia and the wider Balkan region

- to enforce a peace on the Bosnian Muslims which leaves them with nothing more than an unviable rump state and which leaves the Serb and Croat governments in charge of securing a reactionary, pro-Western order in ex-Yugoslavia.

Numerous peace plans have failed because the Bosnian Muslim people, and their allies in the remaining multi-ethnic towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina, have refused to accept that fate.

In the face of an arms embargo by the United Nations which disarms only the Bosnian government forces, they have fought back against Serb and Croat-sponsored ethnic cleansing. Despite the unimaginable hardship of an 22 month siege, the multi-ethnic working class of Sarajevo has refused to give in to Serbian attempts to partition the city.

But now it is UN troops who are overseeing the effective partition of Sarajevo. They are acceding to Bosnian Serb demands for a separate police and administrative system in a UN-controlled Sarajevo.

The main reason the Vance-Owen plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serb and Croat militias was that it prevented the fusion of their conquered areas with the Serbian and Croatian "motherlands". In place of the Vance-Owen plan, the imperialists are offering a new version of the

same deal. The latest plan does not allow Bosnia to survive as a state in any sense of the word. It will have no common currency, judiciary or army. It forces 44% of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina onto less than one third of the land. In addition it envisages a deal between the Croatian and Bosnian governments which will create a "unified" Muslim and Croat government in the territories held by the two militias—clearly designed as a pro-Western bulwark against a Russian-backed Serbia.

Even if air strikes had taken place, and if they take place in the coming weeks, their aim at the outset is to force the Bosnian Serb and Croat militias to accept the generous portion of Bosnia they have already been guaranteed, and to get the Bosnia-Herzegovina government's signature on a treaty of partition.

US imperialism was determined to achieve its goal of a reactionary peace in the Balkans without committing ground combat troops. British and French imperialism for once agreed that in addition to the "carrot" they had dangled in front of the Bosnian Serbs—a peace which legitimised ethnic cleansing—they needed the "stick" of threatened air strikes to force them to accept it.

The threat of air strikes by NATO meant by-passing Russia and China on the UN Security Council. But at the last minute Russia pulled off a diplomatic coup. With the backing of Serbia and Greece—the latter an EC and NATO member—Russia moved 400 paratroops to Sarajevo to "police" the Bosnian Serb withdrawal. As television pictures quickly showed, the Russian troops were welcomed as long lost allies by the Bosnian Serb militias.

At a stroke the Russian government negated any threat of air strikes and placed itself back at the centre of the "peace process". Whilst the West tried to paint the Russian intervention as support for NATO threats, it is clear that the Russian action was designed to neuter them.

In a simultaneous move the Greek government, with Russian backing and Serb compliance, imposed unilateral economic sanctions on the ex-

Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. The Russian move was not in any sense the "return to Stalinist expansionism" portrayed by the Western media. In fact Stalinist Russia abandoned Yugoslavia and Albania as a direct military sphere of influence, leaving them as a non-aligned "no-man's-land" during the cold war. It should come as no surprise that a pro-capitalist restorationist government should seek to stake its claim in the Balkans alongside the imperialists, especially a government threatened by the virulent nationalism of the fascist Zhirinovskiy. With NATO prepared to draw a "line in the snow" around Sarajevo, Russia found it necessary to put its toes to that line to avoid the wholesale loss of regional influence in the rest of the Balkans.

The Russian gambit has stacked up powerful opposing pieces on the Balkan chessboard. NATO cannot bomb the Serbs without attacking Russia by proxy. Greece is lined up alongside Serbia against Macedonia and its current allies Bulgaria and Albania.



## UN troops out now!

Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

This conflict is not only over Macedonia. The border between Albania and Greece was closed last year over the mutual repression by each state of their respective ethnic minorities. Turkey has military advisers in Albania. The USA has a symbolic military presence in Macedonia. The battle lines of a future regional war are being clearly drawn.

The British, French and other troops are not there to protect the Bosnian people from genocide. They are there as the jailers of the Bosnians. The Russian troops are there to reassert Russia's claim to a seat at the imperialist negotiating table.

The workers in Sarajevo and Tuzla must form their own independent militias and try to build links with the Serbian and Croatian workers in the enemy camp. This is possible. In the uprisings in Banja Luka and Prijedor in September/October 1993 Serbian soldiers and workers denounced Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic as a reactionary racist who destroyed multinational communities.

Workers and peasants must get rid of the reactionary Izetbegovic regime and replace it by a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. Only that can save Bosnia as a multinational workers' state. ■

## Down with the Izetbegovic regime!

**B**OSNIAN WORKERS cannot rely on the Izetbegovic government to bring a progressive peace to their country. The pro-capitalist Izetbegovic government is itself preparing for partition. Last autumn the government was willing to accept the UN partition plan, but the parliament forced it to retreat. The Izetbegovic government has purged the ranks of the army of oppositional elements and is striving for its own place in an imperialist Balkan order.

But there are still multinational army units and communities which revolutionary socialists could build upon.

The UN "safe havens" of Srebrenica, Gorazde, Zepa, Tuzla and Sarajevo are nothing more than prisons for the Bosnian people. Europe's anti-asylum laws prevent any escape to the west. Those who try to escape are turned back by UN troops. Those who try to resist are disarmed under UN agreements and shackled by a UN imposed arms embargo.

Even if the "success" of the Sarajevo peace deal is repeated in Tuzla, Mostar and Srebrenica it will remain a reactionary peace. It will ease the starvation and bombardment but it will cement a reactionary partition of Bosnia.

Whilst the threat of air strikes has receded since the Russian troops went in, they are still a possibility, either in response to isolated "violations" of the Sarajevo accord, or as a result of an extension of this approach to other UN "safe areas".

If air strikes take place the workers' movement internationally should denounce them, step up the fight for UN/NATO troop withdrawal and support the Bosnian Serbs right to resist the imperialist armed forces. But such air strikes would not change the character of the Serbs' war against the Bosnian Muslims, and workers should continue to give support to the Bosnian Muslim-led resistance.

In all eventualities the priority of the international workers' movement should remain a campaign to force imperialist and UN troop withdrawal and the provision of workers' aid. To this end we have to campaign for the lifting of all economic and military sanctions in the area. Economic sanctions are economic war. Just as we oppose imperialist military intervention we oppose imperialist economic

force against Serbia. That is why we oppose sanctions against Serbia. We also oppose the UN arms embargo which leaves the Bosnian Muslims without the arms to defend themselves.

The working class is the only force that can bring about a progressive peace in the Balkans. In the months to come it is vital that the workers' movements of the Balkans forge real international, anti-militarist solidarity. Whilst supporting the right of oppressed nationalities to defend themselves against oppression and genocide there are no national solutions to the Balkan conflicts.

Workers Power has said from the very beginning of the Bosnian conflict that the UN troops could play no progressive role in Bosnia. They are there to impose a reactionary peace settlement, and that is what they are doing. Only a Socialist Federation of the Balkans can guarantee self-determination to every nationality whilst avoiding the break-up of the region into rival, economically unviable mini-states and the continuation of mass slaughter and misery.

- All UN/NATO troops, including Russian troops, out of the Balkans!
- Lift the arms blockade against the Bosnian Muslims!
- Victory to the Bosnian Muslims and their allies against the Serb-Croat war of national genocide!
- For international workers' aid to Bosnia!
- Food and medical aid to be placed under local workers' control.
- Open the borders of the EC to refugees from all sides of the Bosnian war!

## Hands off Macedonia!

**T**HE GREEK government's campaign against the Macedonian republic's right to use the Macedonian name and flag have been ridiculed as a piece of "Mediterranean irrationality" in the British media. In reality it is a reactionary campaign designed to deny the Macedonians the right to state independence. This is no more and no less irrational than any other bourgeois national ideology, including the nationalism which has written a tacit claim on Greek territory into the constitution of the Macedonian state.

The Greek working class has no interest whatsoever in supporting Greek capitalism's economic campaign against Macedonia. Neither the Greek masses, nor the Macedonian masses—many of whom

form part of the oppressed Albanian nationality in Macedonia—have any interest in supporting their own governments in this dispute over borders, constitutions and names. Still less have they any interest in preparing for a bloodbath drawing in their working class brothers and sisters from Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria and former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless the people of the Macedonian Republic have expressed their desire for an independent state. We support their right to independence unconditionally.

The Greek blockade of Macedonia must be broken by the action of the working class. Greek workers must fight for the immediate recognition of the Macedonian republic.

## GERMANY

## Crisis and class struggle

**B**RITISH WORKERS are repeatedly told that the German industrial powerhouse is a model to follow. It has been held up as an example of how capitalism can be made to work if the workers only tighten their belts.

But the deep-seated political and economic crisis of the world capitalist system is deeply affecting Germany as well.

Industrial production declined by a massive 7.5% in 1993, the steepest fall of all the major imperialist countries. Export from one of Germany's key industries, the car sector, declined last year by a fifth. Germany faces the worst recession since World War Two.

This is not just another of capitalism's periodic slumps. The current recession also shows the structural problems facing the German capitalist class. Despite popular belief, Germany has actually lost ground to its major competitors in the modern technology sector of the world market.

In 1980 it lagged behind the USA but in front of Japan in the registration of new patents, but in 1990 it fell behind Japan and even further behind the USA. Even in its traditional stronghold, the machine tool industry, it lost its dominant position to Japan in 1993.

**Downtum**

While the bosses have been able to push the growth of real wages well below the growth of profits, labour costs are still much higher than in other imperialist countries. The reunification with East Germany added to these problems. Public debt rocketed to 50.8% of Gross Domestic Product, forcing up interest rates. This makes it very difficult for the bosses to offset the effect of the economic downturn through state investment.

All this shows that the German bourgeoisie has been unable to use the last decade to increase its competitiveness by carrying through huge attacks on the working class. They have not been able to build a strong political leadership able to overcome the obstacles to Germany assuming a political role commensurate with its economic power.

**Attack**

Unlike most capitalist countries, and despite the spinelessness of the trade union bureaucracy, the German working class has been able to raise real wages slightly over the last few years. In the public service sector in 1992 and the East German metal industry in 1993 workers succeeded in resisting some of the more brutal of the bosses' attacks.

What is more, it has taken the bosses much longer than they had hoped to shake off the political consequences of their defeat in World War Two. Until now no change in the constitution has taken place to permit German imperialism to send troops abroad.

The current proposed amendment, which is likely to get a majority, would still only allow such an intervention with the permission of the United Nations. This prevented Germany from implementing its political plans in the Balkans and left the initiative with its US and French competitors.

The bosses are now determined to switch from salami tactics to an all-out attack on workers' post-wargains. The main elements of this offensive will sound familiar to British readers:

*The possibility of a mass strike by IG Metall, the massive German metalworkers' union, shows that 1994 will be a decisive year for the German labour movement. It will determine the balance of class forces for the rest of the decade, writes*

**Michael Gatter.**

- the break up of national collective bargaining
- sacking tens of thousands of workers
- reducing labour costs
- increasing worker flexibility
- extending working hours
- worsening working conditions
- reducing welfare services
- increasing taxes on the mass of the population.

Under the pressure of declining competitiveness, the bosses plan to make a breakthrough in negotiations over pay, hours and conditions this year. Moreover the capitalists are demanding a rigid course of further deregulation and privatisation and a stiff austerity programme with huge

at the expense of the CDU/CSU. Generally these parties can be divided into two categories. On the one hand there are middle-class bourgeois populist parties like the STATT party, which split from the CDU and is now in a coalition government with the SPD in Hamburg. Manfred Brunner's newly established "Civic Movement", which has good connections with the Austrian right-wing politician Haider and is pushing an anti-Maastricht line is another example. The core of these parties are politically confused middle class people who are not necessarily threatened by social decline.

On the other hand, there are parties like the Republikaner or the Deutsche Volksunion which are ex-

"Will there be an alternative at the elections?" They give no answer.

As one bourgeois commentator has pointed out, "The biggest advantage for the CDU/CSU could be the weakness of the Social Democracy." Indeed, despite their lead in the polls, the SPD are facing a deep crisis. After ten years of electoral defeat the reformist bureaucracy, under their new leader Rudolf Scharping, is trying to convince the bourgeoisie of their submissiveness by putting forward an extreme pro-market economic programme.

Even Keynesianism has been rejected. Their new, Clintonite, slogans are: reduction of the budget deficit, reduction of taxes on the capitalists,

flexibility of hours and wages, agreement to mass sackings and the reduction of real and actual wages.

Massive class anger has forced the IG Metall bureaucrats to organise and channel this protest. There will be balloting from 1 to 4 March on whether or not to go on strike. If there is a yes vote, which is likely even though the law demands more than 75% in favour, the strike would start on 7 March. The element of uncertainty is not the readiness for battle of more than three million members of the union; no, the danger is the readiness of the union bureaucrats to sell the strike out or even to stop it before it has started.

The IG Metall leadership has already dropped its demand for a wage increase of 6%. Every day they tell the bosses that they want to avoid a strike. They fixed the date of the vote weeks after it became clear that the employers would not give in. And they chose a small region, Lower Saxony, as the first focus for the strikes. This is completely counterproductive.

**Strike**

In Lower Saxony there are just 90,000 metalworkers and no significant firms will be on strike. Compare it with one million in Baden-Württemberg! But the trade union leaders brazenly declare, "In order to keep the conflict within boundaries, we will at first call strikes at companies where there will be no knock-on effect in the metal and electrical industries."

The agreement already adopted with the Volkswagen management and a series of smaller businesses shows that the IG-Metall leadership is ready to accept flexible working conditions and wage reductions. The only obstacle to such a sell out is the militancy of the rank and file, which the bureaucrats want to control rather than let loose in a spontaneous wildcat strike. This struggle has a real chance of changing the balance of class forces, and putting the bosses on the defensive.

The German working class has shown more than once in the past years that it can fight. It must be freed from reformist influence to bring its struggle to the necessary solution: a socialist revolution. Our German section, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, will use this battle to challenge bureaucratic control with the aim of building a revolutionary party to lead the way to the emancipation of the most powerful working class in Europe. ■



East German metalworkers march against austerity

**The capitalists are demanding a rigid course of further deregulation and privatisation and a stiff austerity programme with huge numbers of dismissals in the public sector to reduce the public debt**

numbers of dismissals in the public sector to reduce the public debt.

The other line of attack is on social and political rights. Last year's abolition of the right of asylum and the horrific wave of racist attacks threatens an important section of the working class. The curtailment of abortion rights for East German women was a direct consequence of the destruction of the degenerate workers' state. Christian Democrat parliamentary leader Schaubele provoked a public outcry by considering the possibility of deploying the army against "internal unrest".

**Crisis**

Up to now the bourgeoisie has been unable to solve its crisis of leadership—to work out a consistent battle plan, to convince a majority of its class and to build a dominant political bloc around it. The bourgeois camp is in crisis.

After more than ten years in office and a series of broken promises, the Christian Democrat-Liberal government has lost a lot of popular support, particularly in the East where it previously won the votes it needed to secure victory in the 1990 elections. In the regional elections in Brandenburg three months ago their vote fell by more than one third, leaving them in third place behind the reformist SPD and the ex-Stalinist PDS. In Hamburg their vote fell by 26%.

Particularly in West Germany, populist and right-wing parties are growing

treme right wing nationalist-populists who get a lot of support from unemployed, unskilled workers and middle class elements threatened by the economic crisis. While the STATT party recruits mainly in prosperous CDU districts, the Republikaner and the DVU—who together got 7.6%—gained most in traditional SPD areas.

At the same time leading sections of the bourgeoisie are highly critical of the CDU/CSU. Their mouthpiece, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), remarked that "the CDU has lost interest in a consistent economic policy in the past years."

The underlying problem is the contradiction between a stiff Thatcherite austerity programme and the necessity for the conservative parties to win the national elections in October. In the polls the conservative parties are getting only 35% compared with 41% for the SPD. They are trying to cope with the erosion of their base in the countryside, and among the petty-bourgeoisie, higher civil servants and white collar employees, all of whom are being hit harder by this recession than the last in 1980-82.

Like most conservative parties in such situations, the CDU/CSU are trying the "Back to Basics" line. But this won't solve their deep-seated problems. Differences are mounting over Maastricht. The leadership of the CSU (Bavarian Tories), in contrast to Chancellor Kohl, openly reject the goal of a federal European state, and even monetary union. Instead they favour a "Deutschmark block". Faced with this confusion the FAZ asks,

deregulation, investment in infrastructure and new technology and so on.

This programme is deliberately aiming at a "Grand Coalition" with the conservatives. As the weekly paper of the SPD's right wing, *Die Zeit* admitted, "A Grand Coalition would be the lesser evil." Many leftists are shocked by this open right wing shift but for Marxists it is only the logical conclusion of their reformist politics. The bureaucrats have no other chance of becoming accepted negotiation partners with the bosses.

The goal of the SPD leaders in the next period will be on one hand to get into government and on the other hand to maintain their control over the working class through the trade union bureaucracy. They could succeed as long as there is no real alternative, no revolutionary-socialist party rooted in the vanguard of advanced industrial workers.

**Resistance**

The coming months will present real possibilities for successful resistance to the bosses' attack, for challenging reformist control, for building a revolutionary alternative—but also for serious betrayal and defeat. The fierce capitalist offensive in the well-organised metal and printing industries has provoked a mass wave of class resistance. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated and participated in token strikes. The bosses want to shake up the existing system for wages hours and working conditions. They are demanding increased

## ITALIAN ELECTIONS

# Populist/Fascist alliance set to win?

A coalition of far right populists and neo-fascists, the Freedom Alliance, threatens to sweep to power in the Italian general elections this month.

The Freedom Alliance—led by Silvio Berlusconi, TV magnate and AC Milan owner—consists of three main forces. First there is the Northern League, a right-wing populist party based on eradicating the “burden” placed on north Italian industrial capitalism by the underdeveloped south. In the past the Northern League has not only called for repatriation of immigrants but for forcible deportations of workers back to the south!

Secondly there is Italy's established fascist party, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), led by Giancarlo Fini but with Mussolini's grand-daughter, Allesandra, as a prominent leader.

Finally there is Berlusconi's own Forza Italia (Come on, Italy). This is not an established party at all but a collection of bourgeois figures and right wing celebrities committed at all costs to preventing a left wing victory. The fact that Forza Italia has no party apparatus has not stopped them from rocketing to a lead in the polls which would leave the Freedom Alliance only six seats short of a majority in the Italian parliament.

The traditional right wing parties which governed Italy in a series of coalitions since the war have all but disappeared. The Christian Democrats (DC)—synonymous with Italian capitalism for forty years—have split. What is left is now called the Italian Popular Party—only it is not so popular, with current polls giving it less than 10% of the vote.

## System

Italy's post war political system was grounded in the certainties of the Cold War. It was designed to do one thing: to keep the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the major party of the Italian working class, out of power. The pre-condition for this was a virtual non-aggression pact between various sectors of the bourgeoisie,

mainly represented by the DC and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI).

One by-product of this system was endemic corruption. Corruption occurs in all capitalist economies, but where rivalries are suppressed in the parliamentary field, corruption becomes a party political activity. All the major bourgeois parties were implicated in a system of unofficial donations to party funds in return for state contracts.

## Threat

Two factors called that system into question at the start of the 1990s.

First, the end of the Cold War removed any rational threat the Italian bosses felt from the PCI. The PCI split, with the largest faction, led by Achille Occhetto, forming the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and trying to recast itself as a bourgeois liberal party. The smaller Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) maintained its links with Stalinism. The PRC contains many working class militants, but commands only 6 to 10% of the vote.

Secondly, the European integration process and the rigours of international competition called for an end not just to corruption, which represented a massive drain on Italian capital, but also to the high degree of state investment and social spend-

ing which went alongside it.

The Italian bosses could not find a leadership to carry out this programme from within the ranks of the traditional political elite. Unwilling to trust the PDS with power, they initiated a wide ranging shake up of the political system.

The first phase involved the prosecution, exposure and jailing of corrupt industrialists and officials. Alongside this came a renewed drive by the Italian state machine against the various mafia organisations in the South. This exposed the long term collaboration between organised crime and top figures in the DC and PSI.

The second phase involved a campaign to reform Italy's electoral system in advance of any victory by the centre left alliance of the PDS, the anti-mafia party La Rete, and the Greens.

This new electoral system is now in place. Instead of a relatively democratic system of proportional representation, there is a system where 75% of seats would be elected by a first past the post system, and where the rights of smaller parties to representation were effectively removed.

The third phase is to stabilise bourgeois politics around a new force which can push through a radical programme: privatising health, pensions and state industries, deregulating the labour market, intro-

ducing a new tax system making workers pay more, and a savage austerity programme designed to reduce Italy's public debt, which is currently 100% of its Gross National Product.

This new force is Berlusconi's Forza Italia. The majority on the Forza Italia list are “new to politics”, managers, celebrities, even footballers are standing.

## Party

But Forza Italia lacks a party apparatus and must rely on the two existing far right bourgeois parties, the Northern Leagues and the MSI. The Leagues and the MSI both represent sections of the local bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, in the North and South respectively, who did not get their snouts deep in the trough of corruption. Both are trying to shed any connection with “street level” fascism, posing as respectable, purely parliamentary parties of the far right.

If it comes to power, the Freedom Alliance will certainly fragment—everyone admits it is an alliance of convenience to defeat the left. The Progressive Alliance, led by the PDS, could still win, especially if the far right pact unravels before the vote takes place. But it will be a victory won at the expense of a cross class coalition between the PDS, the Greens and La Rete and in places the

PRC. The PDS itself is thoroughly committed to the bosses' planned austerity programme and hopes to prove itself a trustworthy government for the bosses. The PDS-led alliance may even form a pact in parliament with the rump of the Socialists and Christian Democrats to “keep out the right”.

Whoever wins the Italian elections, the working class needs to be prepared to fight. ■



Former stalinist leader Occhetto: can his PDS-led alliance stop the rise of the right?

## RED ACTION

# Splits, Slanders and Sectarianism

THE LEFT wing organisation Red Action has been specifically targeted by the police and media witch-hunt following the 16 October Demonstration in Welling. Workers Power stands in defence of all the marchers and all the groups facing repression for fighting back against the BNP.

So it is a strange situation when Red Action chooses not to fight for maximum unity in action to smash the BNP, but to launch a witch-hunt of their own inside the anti-fascist movement.

Red Action supporters have recently tried to sabotage the building of Cardiff Anti-Fascist Action by expelling Workers Power! They have failed.

Anti-fascists in South Wales are faced with an upsurge in fascist activity. This has provoked a response, with a wider layer of trade unionists, socialist activists and youth getting involved in campaigns against them. Cardiff Anti-Fascist Action is the only united campaign in the city committed to denying the Nazis a platform. The obvious task was for AFA to orient to these newly active forces, putting pressure on other campaigns for unity in action to smash the fascists.

Instead of addressing these developments, Red Action supporters attempted to expel Workers Power

members from Cardiff AFA on the grounds that we do not sell the London AFA magazine *Fighting Talk* because we do not agree with its line. Many AFA members, including the branch in Leeds, do not sell the magazine. Are they to be expelled? Fortunately the majority of AFA members at the meeting treated this with the contempt it deserved and voted against our expulsion. Red Action's members stormed out in a state of emotional distress.

Cardiff Red Action then resorted to that well-known democratic procedure of convening a secret meeting of their own supporters which then agreed our expulsion and declared themselves to be the real Cardiff AFA!

Red Action, who always resisted Workers Power's fight for AFA to become a national, democratically led organisation oriented to the labour movement, carried out this manoeuvre claiming that the “national leadership of AFA” had sanctioned it. But there is no such national leadership.

This sectarian wrecking tactic should be condemned by all serious anti-fascists.

The reason for it lies in Red Action's whole approach to the anti-fascist struggle. They have decided, in advance, that it will be impossible to build the workers' united front we

need to smash the BNP. This counsel of despair leads to the notion that the few scores of activists in Red Action and AFA have to soldier on alone against the BNP. So AFA should ignore other campaigns, they say, because of their pacifist leaderships, and it should boycott their events, rather than fighting for common militant action.

To justify this sectarian view, Red Action simply spreads lies. In their Manchester bulletin of October 1993 they slandered Workers Power's initiative to build a broad united front in the city—the Unity Committee—as simply an “attempt to promote Workers Power”.

In fact the Unity Committee drew in the YRE, other left groups, several black community and youth organisations, trade unions militants and even the ANL. Manchester AFA and Red Action stood totally apart from the Unity Committee, because it spent the majority of the period before 16 October looking for excuses not to build the Unity Demo itself.

They also claimed that the No Platform Contingent which Workers Power built for 16 October would be a diversion that would achieve nothing. They implied the contingent was an empty gesture because of the material difficulty in reaching and destroying the BNP HQ. In fact it was stewards from the No Platform

Contingent who were among the best organised forces on the day. Along with the YRE they led the initial defence of the demo. And the No Platform Contingent served a vital political purpose of giving a voice to those who wanted to march, but not under the banner of a call for state bans against the BNP.

Though they attended the Unity Demo, Red Action were absent from all attempts to build it. They were absent from the fight to force the national Unity Committee into proper stewarding to defend the march from police attack and get to the BNP HQ.

It appears that Red Action is taking the same pathetic attitude to the TUC demonstration on 19 March. In East London AFA they have argued, again unsuccessfully, that such demos “do not form part of AFA's agenda”.

Red Action's vented spleen against Workers Power is driven by the knowledge that it is *our* organisation, alone amongst all of those who joined together to relaunch AFA in the late 1980s, which has combined the physical tasks of No Platform for Fascists with the *political* task of fighting for a mass united front.

It was our inability to convince London AFA to make a turn to such work which forced Workers Power

to end our sponsorship of the London-wide AFA group. Despite this we have continued to work within East London AFA. We have played a leading role in Birmingham AFA. We will continue to build Cardiff AFA, in collaboration with Red Action if possible, around a perspective of agitation for a mass campaign to smash the BNP and an orientation to the labour movement.

We have collaborated practically at every opportunity with the business of smashing the fascists—as every honest member of Red Action knows well. We will continue to do this.

But we will not leave tens of thousands of young workers under the unchallenged leadership of the SWP and the reformists in the anti-fascist struggle.

We will fight for political leadership, not cower in tiny, self satisfied groups of activists or try to preserve control of campaigns through bureaucratic manoeuvres. ■

Last month we promised an article summing up the controversy over the Bulger case. This article has been held over until next month and the correspondence continues, see opposite.

# Armed struggle and the Downing Street declaration

Dear Workers Power,

In Workers Power 174 (January 1994) you criticised the Socialist Workers Party and its sister organisation in Ireland over their response to the Major-Reynolds deal. You wrote:

"If socialists are to be consistent in their criticisms of the politics which have brought Gerry Adams so close to this sell out, then they must draw the logical conclusion and demand rejection of the deal offered by Major. Neither the SWP nor its sister organisation in Ireland—the Socialist Workers Movement—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."

This is inaccurate. Whilst, as you correctly describe, the SWP "welcomed the possibility of peace whilst remaining sceptical of the Major-Reynolds deal", the SWM has been clear in its rejection of the deal.

A recent SWM leaflet in Northern Ireland carried the headline "Say no to the joint declaration". It also rejects any peace based on the continued separation of Protestant and Catholic workers.

However that doesn't mean the SWM has broken from the method it shares with the SWP. While it rejects the Major-Reynolds peace deal it condemns the armed struggle as "futile" and "counter-productive". This is not just a legitimate criticism of the IRA's failed strategy of guerilla warfare. The leaflet puts forward no concrete proposals for organising armed defence of the anti-unionist community. While they dare not come out and say it, the SWM is effectively calling for an unconditional ceasefire by the IRA—one of the key aims of the Major-



Civil Rights demonstrators being attacked by Loyalists en route to Derry, 1969.

Reynolds accord itself.

Instead of the armed struggle the SWM proposes "a return to the type of mass struggles that won real reforms during the early days of the Civil Rights Movement". This approach is bankrupt on two counts. First, whilst revolutionary socialists remain critical of the guerilla strategy we reject a republican ceasefire under present conditions. It would be a surrender to imperialism. We demand that the republican movement refuses to hand over its guns to the British or the sectarian Northern Irish state. Instead arms should be put at the disposal of the anti-unionist masses to enable mass self-defence of the nationalist ghettos to be organised, under the democratic control of working class communities. That is necessary now, and will become doubly necessary if and when the peace process fails.

Secondly, the idea that we need a return to the "early days of the Civil Rights Movement" is an admission of political bankruptcy. Imperialism granted reforms only as long

as the Civil Rights Movement did not fundamentally challenge loyalist ascendancy. When it did mount that challenge, the loyalists and the sectarian state met it with the full force of repression. It was precisely then that armed mass self-defence became necessary.

Because the Civil Rights leaders failed to provide answers in this situation they were eclipsed by the Republican movement, which at the start of the mass struggle had been on the sidelines. History had moved on.

The SWM's solution is not to put forward a strategy that can win, but to try and turn back the clock to the 1960s. This is laughable.

The national question presented the Irish left with a crisis of leadership that it could not solve. The SWM's *economism* always leads to the utopian wish that the national question would simply go away, leaving the way clear for the "class struggle". *Economism* always forgets Trotsky's argument that the national struggle is *part of the*

class struggle. Our task is to give a revolutionary working class answer to that struggle, not to wish it away.

The SWM claims it wants to unite Catholic and Protestant workers in a "general fightback against Tory policies". But all they list as examples of these policies are exclusively economic attacks, like the VAT rise and the pay freeze.

One of the first tasks in the six counties of a "general fightback against Tory policies" *must* be the fight to drive imperialist troops out of Ireland. Their harassment and repression is aimed primarily at the Catholic working class areas. The Civil Rights Movement may have won "real reforms" but to sweep away national oppression in Ireland will need a *revolution*. Any call for a "generalised fightback" which ignores British rule is certain to drive young anti-unionist workers into the arms of the most militant republican opposition to a peace deal, repeating the tragedy of the early 1970s once again.

In comradeship,  
Nick Matthews, London

Dear Comrades,

Apart from Colin Lloyd, the correspondents dealing with the Bulger case have all missed the point of your original article. Gerry Downing, Quentin Rudland and Bill Jenkins all proceed from a wrong interpretation of that article. They all argue, with varying degrees of vehemence, that the article denied there could be a materialist explanation for the behaviour of the two young murderers. The article did no such thing.

It did deny that there could be a crude, vulgar materialist explanation. That was why it discounted pat explanations, typical of bourgeois sociologists, that the actions of the two boys who killed James Bulger could be put down to the general squalid conditions that the children grew up in. It was right to discount these since it is obvious that there were, and must have been, specific factors that made these particular children act in the way they did, while millions of children facing similar (or worse) social conditions do not carry out murders.

But to acknowledge this, and to accept that the spe-

## Psychology and vulgar Marxism

cific causes for their actions lay in their disturbed psyches, is not to depart from historical materialism, as Rudland, Downing and Jenkins suggest. Nowhere does the article imply that the human psyche is inexplicable from a materialist standpoint. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky frequently refer to the "human spirit". Just as frequently they fail to insert parentheses stating that this spirit is shaped by social relations, by material reality. But nobody reading their works jumps to the conclusion that their use of the term "human spirit" is a departure from materialism.

The same is true for your paper's use of the term "psyche". There are no grounds for assuming that by using this term you are suggesting that the human psyche, any more than the "human spirit", cannot be understood in ma-

terialist terms. What you were right to recognise was that without exploring the psyches of the two boys it would be wrong to ascribe a specific materialist cause for the "disturbance" that led to the murder. If what Rudland, Jenkins and Downing want is an insertion after "disturbed psyches" which reads, "which were obviously caused by material factors", then fair enough. But it wouldn't have got your analysis very far. It would have read like a mantra, warding off the evil spirits of idealism. Who needs this sort of thing in a revolutionary paper? Lapsed idealists perhaps.

Rudland does advance a specific cause, namely child abuse. The problem is that, as he says, his insight stems from his reading of the younger Freud. Very erudite, but from the facts of the actual case of the two boys, as yet unproved.

Rudland makes an assumption and proceeds from that assumption to provide a materialist analysis. Materialist evidence is unfortunately missing.

The Bulger case, as Colin Lloyd points out, requires analysis and the use of psychology (examining the psyches of the boys) to enable us to find out more. When we find out more we may be able to pinpoint the material cause of the disturbance that led the boys to act in the way they did. The fulminations of Rudland, Jenkins and Downing do not take us a step nearer to this goal. They remind me of Engels' comments in a letter to Conrad Schmidt about the vulgar materialists of his day: "... too many of the younger Germans simply make use of the phrase historical materialism (and everything can be turned into a phrase) only in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge... constructed into a neat system as quickly as possible, and they then fancy that they have achieved something tremendous."

In comradeship,  
Arthur Merton

## WHERE WE STAND

### WORKERS POWER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

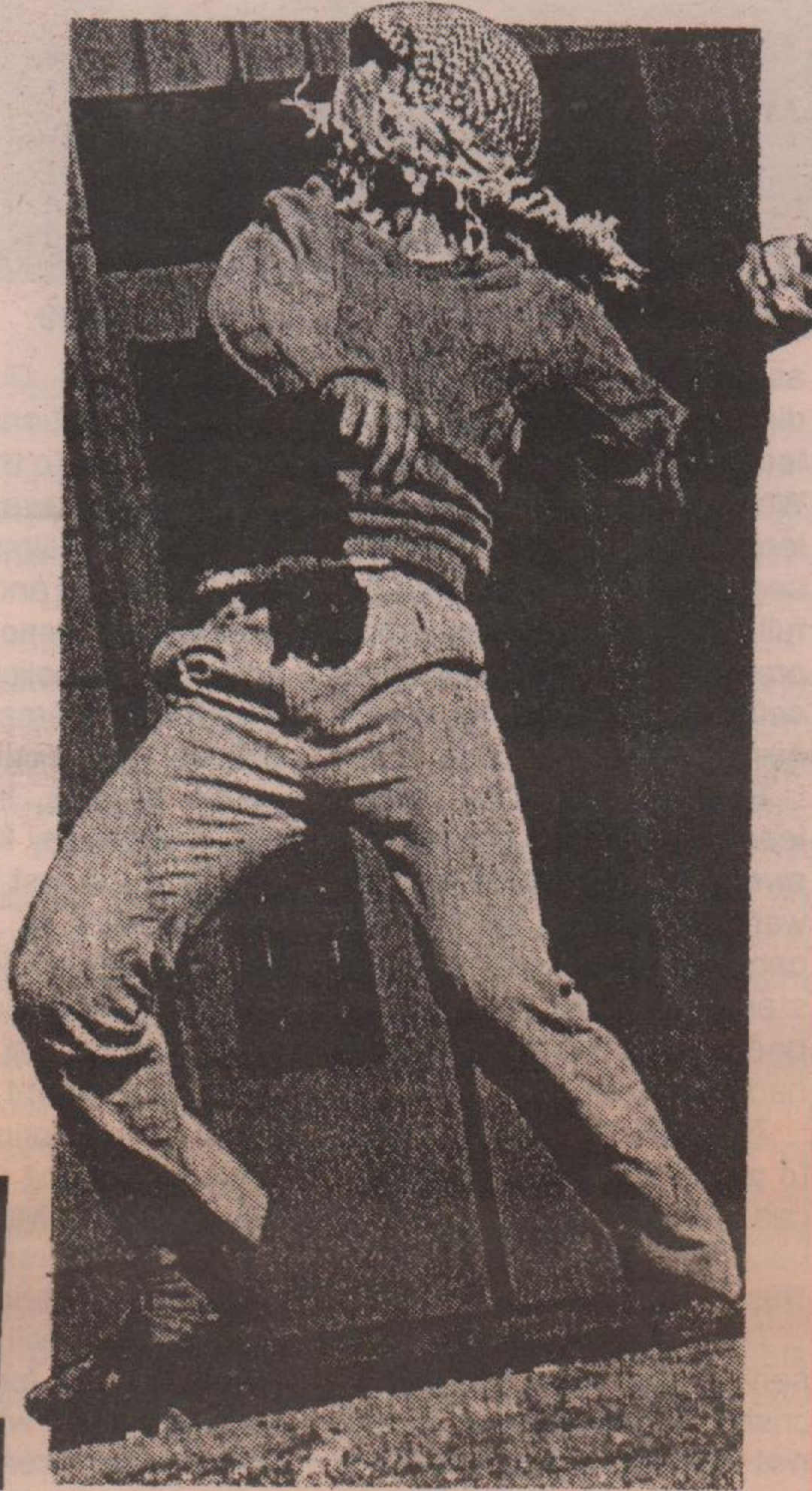
If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

# Workers power

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

## WEST BANK MASSACRE

# No peace with Zionism!



**IT WAS SHEER bloody murder. Fifty-eight worshippers in a Hebron mosque on the occupied West Bank were gunned down in a cold blood by a fanatical fascist settler. But the killer Baruch Goldstein was no isolated lunatic. The Israeli Defence Force, the army of occupation that metes out routine terror against Palestinians, was outside the mosque throughout the attack. As desperate Arabs overpowered Goldstein and flooded out of the building, the soldiers opened fire, adding to the death toll.**

Jewish settlers from nearby Kiryat Arba rejoiced when they heard the news of the butchery. On TV and radio their spokesmen welcomed the murderous attack, refused to condemn its perpetrator, and declared that this would "teach the Arabs a lesson".

The slaughter is a direct result of Zionist settlement on the West Bank. The settlers' overt aim is to conquer Arab land and extend the State of Israel to its biblical borders.

Baruch Goldstein was a member of the fascist Kach movement, which has won support among settlers for its policy of forcibly deporting all Arabs from the West Bank. He once wrote that if a Jewish state were to be preserved in Palestine:

"Israelis will soon have to choose between a Jewish state and a democratic one".

Repression, deportation, the denial of Arab rights and bloody murder all flow directly from the settlers' project of forcibly colonising Arab land.

The Israeli government

has shed crocodile tears over the attack. Their motives are cynical. They want to hold together the peace deal struck with the PLO.

But apart from restricting the movements of a few dozen settlers, they have done nothing. The settlers—already armed to the teeth—will retain both arms and the determination to use them again and again.

These events have thrown the Arab world into turmoil. Under pressure from the mass indignation which has brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets of the Middle East, the PLO has recalled its negotiators.

But the cry of "traitor Arafat" that is on the lips of demonstrators from Jaffa through Jordan and North Africa to beyond, is more than an emotional response to the carnage.

Arafat is a traitor to the Palestinian masses. He has recognised the legitimacy of the State of Israel, a state that was founded through exactly the same methods that are being used in the

settlement of the West Bank today: occupation, land theft, racism and murder.

While socialists recognise the right of Jews to live together with Arabs in Palestine, there can be no acceptance of the right to a state which systematically discriminates against Arabs in order to retain its artificial Jewish majority.

The choice has always been between a specifically Jewish state and a democratic one. That is why the Jewish state excludes millions of Arabs from its borders, why it keeps them disarmed while Jewish settlers can carry out racist atrocities with impunity.

Arafat's only answer to the Hebron massacre has been to call for a UN peacekeeping force. This is pathetic—just look at Bosnia for where that leads.

The force that can stop these outrages is the same force that has been conducting a heroic and self-sacrificing struggle against the Zionist occupation for the last seven years—the Palestinian

masses themselves.

While Arafat prepares to transform the fighters of his Fatah movement into a police force that will work hand in glove with the occupying forces, revolutionaries should be agitating on the West Bank for the PLO to hand its guns over to mass-based defence committees, to build a popular militia.

That way the struggle can be mounted not only to defend Arabs against random slaughter, but to dissolve the settlements themselves, to drive these nests of racist colonists out of the West Bank altogether using the only language the settlers themselves understand—armed force.

That way the mass struggle can be resumed, to provide not only the armed defence that the Palestinian people so desperately need, but to take the offensive against the racist State of Israel itself. Only when that state is overthrown and replaced by a socialist republic will Jews and Arabs be able to live together in peace. ■

## AGE OF CONSENT

# EQUAL RIGHTS NOW!

**FIVE THOUSAND** lesbian and gay rights activists exploded with anger when Parliament voted against equalisation of the age of consent for gay men last month by 307 votes to 280. For a few brief moments bigoted MPs got a taste of what it's like to be hounded by protesters swarmed around the "democratic" chamber.

Young gays will continue to be denied the basic democratic right to consensual sex. Despite the eventual reduction of the gay age of consent from 21 to 18, Britain still has the highest age limit of any European country. Even countries where the arch-reactionary Catholic church is strong, like Ireland and Spain, have an equal age of consent, at 17 and 12 respectively.

Not surprisingly, backbench Tory bigots led the reactionary onslaught against equal rights. They were fully supported by Tory leaders John Major and Michael Howard who said, "we need to protect young men from activities which their lack of maturity might cause them to regret".

What hypocrisy! As Home Secretary, Howard thinks 16 year old men are mature enough to fight and die for "their" country, but he'll be damned if "their" country will allow them to choose who they can have sex with.

Not only should the age be equalised. The whole idea of an arbitrary age at which young people are deemed responsible to decide on their own sexuality should be scrapped.

The state should have no right to dictate what we can or cannot do in our private lives. Decent sex education, legal rights for children and strong laws against rape—in and outside the family—are all that is needed to protect young people from unwanted advances.

### Vigorously

The police have already indicated that they will enforce the new law vigorously. The new age of consent will continue to be used, as it was at 21, to harass the gay community.

To its eternal shame, the Labour Party has done nothing to expose and challenge this blatant discrimination and oppression. An incredible 35 Labour MPs voted against equalisation, including shadow cabinet members Ann Taylor and David Blunkett. They should be de-selected by their CLPs and forced to stand down at once.

The labour movement should have taken the lead in the fight against repressive anti-gay laws, instead

of leaving it to a "broad-minded" member of the Tory Party.

Edwina Currie cannot lead the fight for lesbian and gay liberation. Oppression of lesbians and gays goes far beyond the age of consent laws.

Lesbians and gays can be sacked or refused jobs on the grounds of their sexuality. They are systematically denied equal housing and custody rights. Many live in constant fear of being "outed", physically attacked or even murdered. Currie will not lead the fight to challenge these facts because she is committed to maintaining the capitalist system. It is this system which demands the division of the working class along lines of sex, race and sexual orientation. It is this system which promotes the family as a sacrosanct institution.

Above all else, Currie despises the idea of lesbian and gay workers fighting for their own rights. She even blamed the demonstration outside for losing the vote inside the House.

### Piecemeal

The two leading gay rights campaigns, Stonewall and OutRage, may not be opposed to mass mobilisations in the same way, but they do share Currie's the belief that piecemeal reforms are the way forward. Stonewall plans to take a test case to the European Court of Human Rights this month. OutRage promises more publicity stunts. Whilst both tactics may have their place, they are not going to end lesbian and gay oppression.

We need a mass working class lesbian and gay movement. Such a movement can combine pressure for legal changes with direct action. It could stop victimisations of gays at work by strike action. It could fight to stop housing discrimination by forcing the unions and Labour councils to fight for a programme of decent housing for all. It could fight for open defiance of anti-gay restrictions in education and local government provision. It could show thousands of young lesbians and gay men that there is an alternative to pressure group politics and reliance on soft Tory allies.

Above all, a lesbian and gay movement based in the working class can tear down the walls of ignorance and prejudice that cause widespread homophobia in the working class and fight for working class unity in the struggle for socialism and lesbian and gay liberation! ■

**BOSNIAN CRISIS - SEE PAGE 12**