

# Workers power

**INSIDE**

Number 181 September 1994

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

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## RAIL STRIKES

# SOLIDARITY



**T**he rail strikes began over signal workers' pay. They have become a trial of strength between the Tories and the trade union movement.

If the signal workers are beaten it will allow Railtrack and British Rail to impose low pay and lousy conditions on every other section of their workforce. The transport workers' union—the RMT—will be severely weakened.

As a prelude to the complete privatisation of the rail industry, victory over the RMT will be a great advantage to management and the Tories. The scavengers lurking in the stock exchange will be attracted by the smell of fresh blood. Share prices will rise as wage rates fall.

John Major and the rail bosses are at one on this. Privatisation of the railways is one of his government's most important aims. And he wants to make sure his 2.5% pay norm for the public sector is made to stick. Beating a strong section of workers, like the signal staff, will help him impose the pay ceiling on less well organised public sector workers.

And what wouldn't Major give for a victory over a union? His bedraggled government could claim to have stood firm in the face of an "enemy within", just like Thatcher did against the miners.

**That is why the signal workers must win.**

The bosses are concentrat-

ing their resources against the signal workers. The press, which at the beginning of the strike carried mildly flattering profiles of RMT leader Jimmy Knapp, is now turning on the strikers with increased ferocity.

The Tories have set up a special cabinet committee to plan the strike breaking operation. The pretence of government impartiality is over. A disgruntled Railtrack manager admitted:

"No 10 is dictating the dispute and we have to go along with it."

The Tories are behind British Rail's latest move—the widespread recruitment of scabs to operate signal boxes on strike days.

**The government and Rail-track claim that there is no money to pay the signal workers. Yet they are reportedly offering bribes of up to £800 to scab on the strikes.**

The Tories and the bosses are out to break the union. We must not let this happen.

The strike is still solid, despite all the threats, despite all the attempts to break it, despite all the bosses' and the Tories' manoeuvres. The strike is hurting the bosses. An estimated £140 million in revenue had been lost by the end of August. We can and must build on this pressure.

The call for ballots on the London Underground by the RMT and the drivers' union, ASLEF, is a welcome start. A co-ordinated strike by signal workers and underground workers would sharpen the pain felt

by the bosses.

Scabbing needs to be met with more action, not less. Every RMT member must be called out. The action must become an all-out indefinite strike to shut down the entire rail network.

Beyond the railways other workers can and must play their part. Rail support groups have been set up in a number of towns. These should be delegate-based labour movement centres for building solidarity—collecting money, organising speaking tours for strikers, ensuring wide support for mass pickets, calling demonstrations and, in the face of any legal attack on the RMT, launching solidarity strike action. The Tories have their cabinet committee to break the strike. The labour movement needs its own war cabinet to win the strike.

In every union branch militants should be pushing for such active solidarity. TUC General Secretary Monks should come out of hiding and pledge 100% support for the strike.

A high ranking official in Whitehall has suggested that ministers see the strike as a chance to "break the RMT". Such are Major's hopes. But Major is weak. His government is divided and trailing in the polls. The signal workers' cause is popular. The RMT strike is an opportunity for us to win. And in winning we can help finish off the Tories altogether. That is well worth fighting for.

**Solidarity with the signal workers!**

# with the Signal Workers

ALL OUT ACTION CAN BEAT THE TORIES

SEE  
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## CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

The right to remain silent under police questioning is a basic human right. The Tories are abolishing it. The entire working class movement must link up with the tens of thousands of youth who are already taking action to defeat the most serious attack on civil liberties for years, writes **Richard Brenner**.

# Anything you don't say. . .

The right to silence has been part of British law since 1898. Courts, juries and judges are not supposed to draw any conclusions from a defendant's silence unless they are unfortunate enough to be detained as "terrorist suspects".

If Tory Home secretary Michael Howard gets his way, this will change. If you keep quiet under police questioning or in court, the prosecution will be able to suggest that this is proof of guilt.

The old police caution states "you do not have to say anything." The new caution that Howard wants to introduce will go on to say, ". . . if you do not mention now something which you may later use in your defence, the court may decide that your failure to mention it now strengthens the case against you." Translated into plain English, this means that any suspect who wants to talk to a solicitor or just regain their composure before talking to the police, or anyone who refuses to be pressured into blurting out a confession to burly officers in a cell, will be at a disadvantage in court.

Howard and the Tories claim that the innocent have "nothing to fear" from this change. After all, they say, only somebody with something to hide would want to remain silent in the first place. Many people accept this idea. But it is false to the core.

It ignores the experience of all those who have been pressured, bullied and beaten into making "confessions" in police cells. It ignores the fact that British law is class law, and that the whole weight of the state can be

wielded against any section of workers who threaten the bosses' interests. The removal of the right to silence will mean more Guildford Fours, more Birmingham Sixes, more confessions forced from terrified "suspects" by police desperate for a conviction, wherever it comes from.

Even privileged lawyers can see through it. The chairman of the Criminal Bar Association denounced the new caution to the press:

"It starts off by saying 'You do not have to say anything' and then goes on to say 'If you do not . . . The right to silence has been effectively abolished."

As a spokesman for the civil liberties group Liberty put it, ". . . if you don't say anything, you've had it."

This has got to be stopped. The Tories are desperate to raise the rate of crimes "solved" by the police, to redress the widespread recognition that it is their policies—mass unemployment and cuts in social services—that have led to the soaring crime rate.

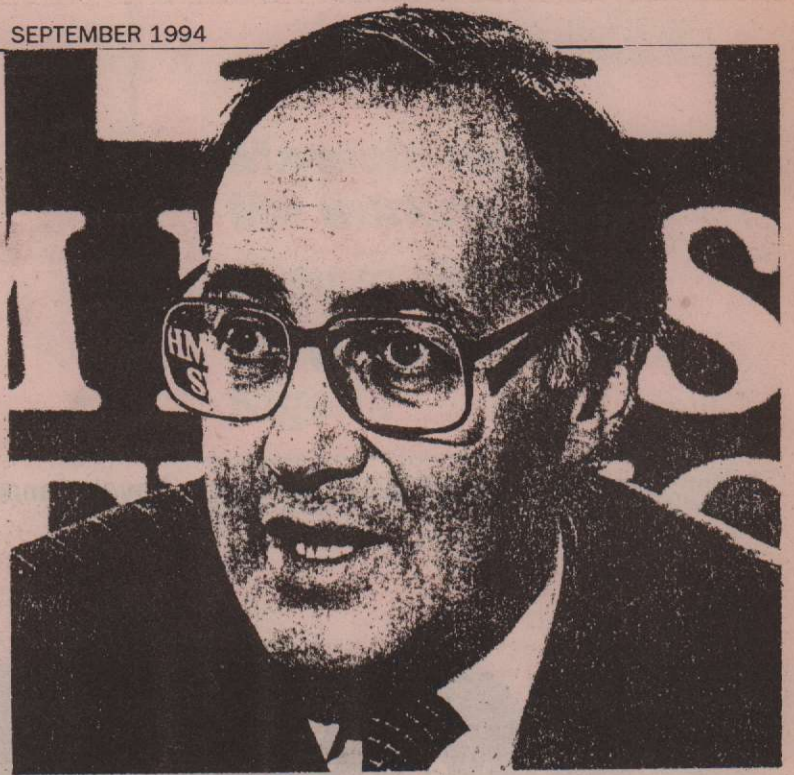
This new attack comes alongside a barrage of restrictions on basic freedoms. Howard wants to bring in a national database of DNA profiles of anyone arrested for any offence, even if they are acquitted. He wants to phase in an ID card system under the pretext of new style driving licences complete with photographs. The state will be able to hold ever more detailed personal information on file.

The Tory proposals amount to a massive strengthening of state controls over individuals.

Meanwhile, the other proposals

contained in the Criminal Justice Bill are meeting with widespread opposition. The CJB prevents homeless people occupying empty properties, allows ten year old children to be locked up for 14 years, persecutes travellers, bans raves, and allows the police to stop and search people on the streets as they see fit. Protests and picket lines could be banned by the police at will. College and workplace occupations will be outlawed.

The real reason for this whole package is nothing to do with protecting ordinary people from crime. The aim is to prevent youth and working class people from fighting back against the bosses' attacks on our living standards. If we do resist, the state will be able to keep closer tabs on us. ■



Michael Howard — architect of the CJB

### BUILD THE DEMONSTRATION

The Coalition Against the Criminal Justice Bill has called a mass demonstration in London on 9 October. This follows July's march which attracted a huge turnout of 60,000. At the time the police claimed that there were only 30,000 present. But they have since refused the march organisers their preferred route because the last demo "attracted 60,000"!

So far the campaign against the Bill has been mainly backed by youth.

This proves that there is a growing radicalisation of young people, and that there is a real potential for a revolutionary youth movement to be built. But we need to broaden support for the movement, bringing in trade unionists and workers in ever greater numbers. Get your school, college or union branch to back the demo and bring their banners.

This time we need over 100,000 on the streets of London!

## Press, gangs and "Race wars"

Richard Everitt was stabbed to death in a gang fight in Somers Town, North London. Richard was white, his assailants were Asian.

Despite the police finding "no racial motive", the next day's papers were in no doubt. "Knifed to death for being white", "Killed for being white", "White boy killed by race mob", screamed banner headlines in the *Sun*, the *Star* and the *Mail*.

In the week after the killing, a gang of six white men rampaged through the nearby Bengali community of Drummond Street. An Asian shop was firebombed. Gangs of white youth gathered at nightfall on streets virtually deserted by local Asians. None of this made the headlines. Neither did any of the proven racist attacks in London over recent years, such as the killings of Rolan Adams and Stephen Lawrence, or the beating that left Quddus Ali in a coma last year. The last time the tabloid front pages covered an attack on a black person was when PC Turner got in the way of anti-fascist demonstrators marching against the BNP's headquarters in Welling last October.

These racist double standards explain why the sorrow felt by local Asians at Richard's tragic death has quickly turned to anger. Even the "quality" press and TV have been full of stories about Asian gangs "targeting" white youth.

### Attacks

The truth is that out of 117 "racial incidents" recorded by police in Somers Town since the start of 1994 only seven involved attacks on white people. That means on average there is a racist attack on a black person once every two days. This is in an area of barely a square mile. No wonder one sixteen year old asked the press, "where were all you reporters when all the Asians were getting their heads kicked in?"

Black and white workers live side by side in Somers Town. But there has been a growing self-segregation. This is most evident among the youth, who are choosing different youth clubs and different areas to

hang out.

Like all poverty-stricken inner city areas, Somers Town has bred youth gangs. Some have been involved in territorial clashes and petty crime, leading to complaints from all sections of the community. But there is another impulse at work amongst the Asian youth who have joined the gangs: straightforward self-defence.

Last year four Asian youths who defended Drummond Street from tooled-up white racists found themselves on trial whilst the racists walked free. The Drummond Street Four were only acquitted after a long legal case culminating in a trial at which a jury accepted their plea of self-defence.

### Racism

The press racism is not just the product of the sick minds of Murdoch journalists. It reflected a real racist sentiment amongst some white workers. The comment in many workplaces and pubs was: "there'll be no protests because it was a white kid." A poem pinned up near the spot where Richard was killed echoed this unreal notion that it is whites who are somehow victims:

"Racism causes uproar when it hams the Asians and the blacks, But when a white boy is attacked, everybody turns their backs."

This topsy-turvy view of the world has to be challenged. The plain facts have to be quoted to show how black youth are being targeted up and down the country, how their cases are ignored and trivialised by the media, how black youth face police harassment and violence when they fight back. Racist white residents have to be shown that far from "everybody turning their backs", the press seize on isolated incidents like Richard's death to whip up and encourage the very "race war" they claim to be condemning.

To counter the racist myths and arguments, socialists also need to be clear on the question of gangs

and draw some vital distinctions. Criminal gangs, black, white or mixed, should be driven out of our communities by working class people themselves. But gangs organised to defend "territory" against racists and to frighten away potential racist attackers are a justified response to a real threat.

The problem with gangs—even those set up with the most justified of aims—is that they are limited, exclusive, defining themselves on cultural lines, such as dress and territory, that exclude other young people from being part of their fight. And they are constantly prey to the attentions of organised crime.

### Organisation

To build real political self-defence organisation, gang divisions have to be overcome. That is what Youth Connections began to do last autumn in Tower Hamlets, when it brought together Asian youth from a number of different gangs to carry out anti-racist patrols in Brick Lane.

To be transformed into real self defence organisations, even anti-racist gangs will have to transcend their limitations and become accountable to the entire community, and, where possible, made up of black and white residents. Initiatives like these should get full material backing from the labour movement.

Inter-racial solidarity in areas like Somers Town has to be built from below. It can start by renewing a common struggle against council cuts, hospital closures, unemployment and poor housing and the racism that divides and weakens that struggle.

Revitalising the organisations of the workers' movement—trade unions, Labour Party branches, tenants associations—is essential. But crucially, a new, revolutionary socialist organisation and multi-racial youth movement must be built, so that the workers of Somers Town are not two "communities" but one class, opposed to racism, poverty, non-political gang violence, and the system that breeds these evils. ■

## MARK HARRIS

# Police cover up

On Saturday 20 August over one hundred people marched on Trinity Road police station, Bristol. They were expressing their anger and grief at the death of Mark Harris in police custody on 10 July.

Mark, a black man from Cardiff, was taken to the station following a routine check by traffic police. He was never charged with an offence. According to police Mark hanged himself by attaching a belt to an air duct.

Apart from the fact that belts are routinely removed in custody, the duct was barely higher than Mark himself. This is one of many inconsistencies in the police story. They add up to an inescapable conclusion: it was the police who killed Mark Harris.

Mark's family have refused to accept the cover-up. They are exploring all legal channels to bring the murderers to justice. Justice however does not come cheap. The Mark Harris Truth and Justice Campaign will need funds to launch a private prosecution.

The support of local Labour MPs would strengthen the case for an independent inquiry. But with the Labour Party trying to appear more pro-police than the Tories, local MPs such as Alan Michael are reluctant to become involved. This has also proved

a problem for the local Anti-Racist Alliance whose entire political strategy hinges on parliamentary pressure.

The campaign should continue to demand that Labour MPs give open support. But this is no substitute for the active involvement of the black community and the labour movement. The case of Mark Harris and of all black people murdered by the police, should be taken up in workplaces and union branches throughout the country. The demonstration must be just the start of a campaign against the murdering racist police.

Send donations and messages of support to:

### Mark Harris Truth and Justice Campaign

45 Allerton Street  
Grangetown  
Cardiff  
Tel 0222 811178

### PUBLIC MEETING

British Justice—No Justice

7.30pm Tuesday 18 October

Malcolm X Centre,  
Bristol.

Speakers: George Silcott, Mark Harris Campaign, Marlon Thomas Campaign, Irish Solidarity.

# EDITORIAL

# Ireland: what price peace?

AS WE go to press rumours are rife of a Provisional IRA ceasefire, brokered by the recent Irish-American delegation and designed to unblock the Northern Ireland "peace process".

It has also been leaked that an autumn Anglo-Irish conference will discuss plans for Westminster to renounce its claim to "supreme sovereignty" over the six counties of Northern Ireland in return for Dublin calling a referendum to remove the Republic's constitutional claim to the territory.

Whether this proves to be just one more instance of bluff and double bluff, or whether a unilateral IRA ceasefire takes place, all informed observers now agree that, behind the scenes, the conditions are being created for a cessation of the Republicans' armed struggle.

The ceasefire that is being mooted could fall short of the unconditional and permanent ceasefire officially demanded by the British government. But it would remain a highly significant step. It will signal a renewed round of manoeuvring, in which the British will aim for a strategic renunciation of armed struggle by the Republicans, and in which Sinn Féin and the IRA will aim for British concessions significant enough for them to claim a qualified victory to their supporters.

The initial problem facing any deal will be the response of hard line reactionary forces, the Loyalist murder squads of the UVF and UFF. At present "constitutional" Loyalist politicians are going out of their way to urge the squads to "refrain from hasty actions". Even the UVF has suggested that, faced with an unconditional IRA ceasefire, it too would lay down its arms.

Nevertheless, a combination of Major's proposed compromise over Northern Ireland sovereignty, the sight of Sinn Féin being allowed to the negotiating table, and the threatened loss of up to 60,000 jobs in, or related to, the "security services", may all prove too much for a section of the Loyalist population and the murder gangs they support.

Another obstacle may be a split within the Republican movement itself. Whilst it suits pro-British journalists and politicians to speculate about a "split in the IRA Army Council", it is clearly proving difficult for Sinn Féin leaders, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, to convince their rank and file that the "deal" worked out in the Hume-Adams agreement is worth giving up 25 years of struggle for. Hence the Republican paper *An Phoblacht* pleads for "understanding" about the recent Sinn Féin *Ard Féis* in July, which decisively rejected the Downing Street Declaration, and their complaint that, "Sinn Féin's national internal conference in July was deliberately misunderstood..." (25 August 1994).

So how should it have been understood? With a nod and a wink, on the understanding that it was a symbolic gesture to appease the rank and file before the Adams leadership could get down to serious talks with Britain?

Socialists have to take an unambiguous attitude to the current talk of peace and the prospect of an IRA ceasefire. Our starting point is clear. There can be no just peace, no democratic settlement, while British rule continues in the North of Ireland.

The Northern Ireland statelet is not a democratic formation. Established against the will of the majority of the Irish people, it never could be. When British and Loyalist politicians speak of the "democratically expressed wish of the majority in Northern Ireland" to remain part of Britain, they are engaged in an out-and-out con-trick.

The entire state is artificial, its borders drawn up in 1920-21



warfare conducted by an armed minority against the state forces—has failed. It is the exhaustion of that strategy, and the war-weariness of the anti-unionist population, that is the greatest single factor impelling the Republicans towards compromise and settlement.

Revolutionary socialists have never supported this strategy, not out of misplaced moral considerations or pacifism, but because we believe it to be ineffective. The Republicans' combination of guerrilla struggle with reformist community politics has failed to dislodge the troops militarily. Equally it cannot mobilise a movement capable of bringing the masses into action against partition, discrimination and poverty. Today the anti-unionist masses play virtually no role in the struggle against the British state.

The starting point for mass struggle exists. While Sinn Féin puts ANC MPs on its platforms and lauds the similarities between the settlement in South Africa and the peace process in Ireland, another parallel will not be lost on sections of the Republican rank and file. Was it not Nelson Mandela who told his followers to "embrace" the Inkatha murder squads, to refrain from active self defence against the death squads in the name of the peace process?

If the IRA takes a similar stance as a result of any peace deal, it will give the UVF and UFF a free hand. The Republican movement's strategy for defending the community against Loyalist attack—selective reprisal and assassination of the Loyalist paramilitaries—was always inadequate. Under a unilateral ceasefire it will be inoperative.

Amidst all the suggestions of a ceasefire, Adams and McGuinness are not proposing to shift armed units and military resources into a defensive role allied to a new offensive political campaign based on the masses. That is why anti-unionist communities need to be preparing now the mass self defence organisations—the only means of effective defence against the death squads—if further disasters like the World Cup massacre in Loughinisland are to be avoided.

Mass direct action on the streets of Northern Ireland for democratic rights, national self determination, jobs, homes and services: that is our alternative to the "peace process".

A mass working class movement, combining demands for better living standards for all workers—Protestant and Catholic—with an uncompromising fight against discrimination, Loyalist privilege and partition would have the power both to break the Protestant workers from their alliance with the Unionist bosses and to force a British withdrawal.

It is this strategy of *permanent revolution*—bringing the workers to the head of the struggle for democratic and national rights—that can end the occupation and open the road to national unity, socialism and real liberation. ■

with no historical or geographical justification other than guaranteeing a Loyalist majority. Far from assuring democratic rights, partition serves no end other than the obstruction, by a minority, of Irish independence and national unity. That is what Sinn Féin mean when they speak of the "Unionist Veto". It is why they have been right to oppose it from the outset.

Any peace deal that leaves the border intact will preserve this undemocratic veto. It will leave in place a state which systematically discriminates against Catholics, in jobs, in the provision and quality of housing, in services, in opportunities. It is this state—and the armed forces that defend it—that the IRA have been fighting.

That is why we do not welcome the recent suggestion of an IRA ceasefire. Such a step could all too easily pave the way for further moves towards the abandonment of the struggle against partition altogether, in favour of a few sweeteners for the anti-unionist community as part of a deal falling well short of Irish national unity and British withdrawal.

But our opposition to a ceasefire on the present terms does not mean that revolutionary socialists simply call for more of the same, for continuation of the strategy that the Republicans have been using for the last 22 years. That strategy—permanent guerrilla

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## MEETINGS

### BIRMINGHAM

Monday 12 September  
 7.30pm  
*The Criminal Justice Bill: what it is and how to fight it*  
 • see seller for venue

### LEICESTER

Wednesday 14 September  
 8.00pm  
*Why we should oppose all immigration controls*  
 • see seller for venue

### COVENTRY

Wednesday 21 September  
 7.30pm  
*South Africa: Mandela's first 100 days*  
 • see seller for venue

### LONDON

Tuesday 13 September  
 7.30pm  
*Cuba in crisis: can Castro survive?*

Tuesday 27 September  
 7.30pm  
*The Criminal Justice Bill: what it is and how to fight it*  
 LSE St Clements Building, Houghton Street WC2

### SHEFFIELD

Tuesday 13 September  
*Bolshie Women (women only): The women's liberation movement for beginners*

Tuesday 20 September  
*The Criminal Justice Bill: what it is and how to fight it*  
 • see seller for venues

### MANCHESTER

Wednesday 14 September  
*Which way forward in the signal workers' dispute?*

Wednesday 21 September  
*Cuba in crisis: can Castro survive?*  
 • see seller for venues

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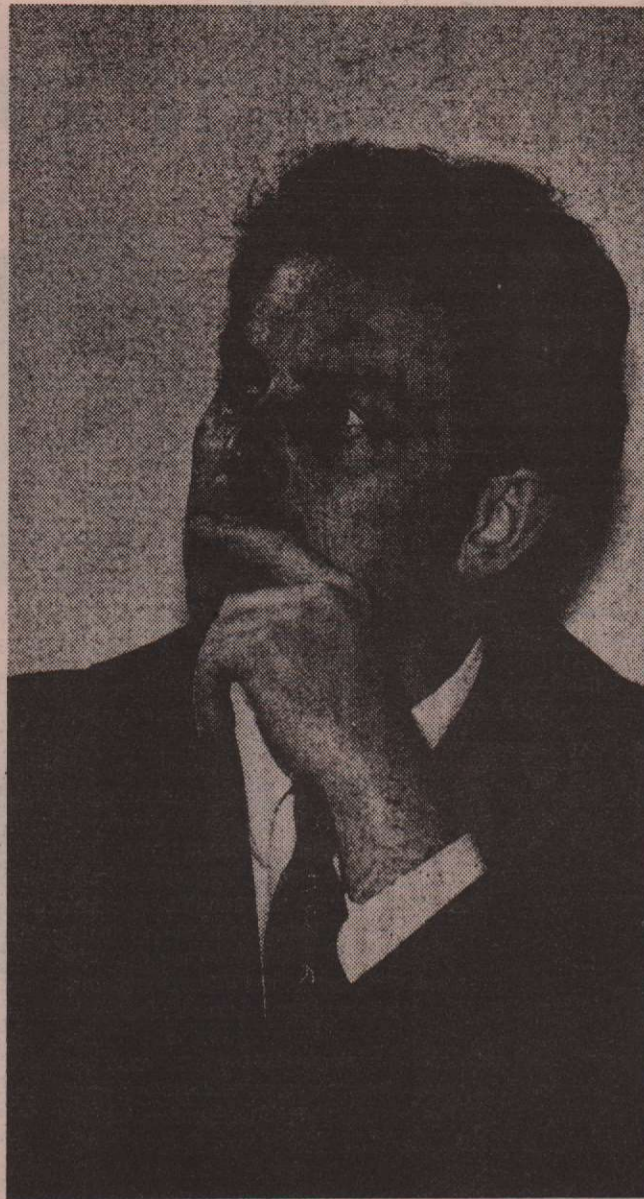
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# BLAIR FEVER and how to cure it

*Tony Blair has quickly become the most popular politician in Britain. He has won backing from some unlikely sources, such as Rupert Murdoch, millionaire owner of the Sun. Why is this? And what can Labour's millions of working class supporters expect from Blair?*

**Mark Harrison** gives some direct answers.



work. And on Europe, apart from continuing with John Smith's pro-Hurd/Major line, Blair stated "we rule nothing in and we rule nothing out at this stage". How decisive.

Even in his own terms, this vagueness on economic questions is Blair's greatest weakness. The bosses need to resolve the long running divisions over Europe and the economy. Yet because Labour is so scared of promising anything that may frighten off any of the bosses, they cannot provide a positive alternative to the Tories in this decisive sphere. That is why the bosses' magazine the *Economist* ruefully commented that "the gap between Tory and Labour seems to be narrowing, not widening".

If this remains the case Labour could still lose the next election. In promising the working class so little it may not be able to dynamise it into ensuring a landslide at the polls. Nor will it offer the middle classes and the bosses enough to tempt them from their ingrained habit of voting Tory or Liberal Democrat. A 1992-style election "accident" could still occur in 1996.

Workers will vote Labour in millions regardless. So what should socialists and the most determined, fighting sections of workers do? The task is twofold. Inside the Labour Party itself every individual member and every affiliated trade unionist needs to act now to make life uncomfortable for Blair.

To begin with members should vote for the Campaign Group slate for the National Executive elections. An NEC opposed to Blair will not beat him. But it will tarnish the happy family image he is keen to portray.

Against his promises to attack us, we must fight to commit the party, through conference, to unambiguous pledges to create full employment, pour millions into the NHS, extend benefits and pensions, re-nationalise privatised industries, repeal the anti-union laws and impose swingeing taxes on the rich.

## Canvass

Outside the Labour Party we need to prepare for the general election. For us this does not mean compiling canvass return forms and printing election posters. It means pursuing the fight against the Tories and the bosses by means of direct class struggle action. Any temptation to hold back struggles and wait for Labour must be firmly resisted.

This means building solidarity with the rail workers. It means striking against every attack on us between now and the election. It means taking to the streets again and again to smash the Criminal Justice Bill. It means mass defiance of that Bill, if it becomes law, and of any future attempts to use the anti-union laws.

Above all, it means generalising all the lessons of these struggles and of Labour's refusal to back them. We need to organise the most committed and determined fighters, in the unions and the new layer of youth that is coming forward, into a well organised, working class, socialist organisation.

Such an organisation must be committed to a clear programme, linking every one of our struggles to the fight to beat not only the Tories, but the entire system of class privilege and exploitation that they represent. Only in this way can we lay the basis for a new revolutionary party, capable of challenging Labour's hold over the working class and ultimately replacing it.

The best way to stop Blair running the most conservative Labour government yet is to build the fighting confidence of the working class now. That confidence will probably result in a clear victory for Labour in a general election. It will also mean that Blair will have a much harder time betraying the goals that a fighting working class has set for itself. ■

**B**LAIR FEVER is sweeping the country. Not even Conservative Central Office is immune. With characteristic courage they have chosen to attack deputy leader Prescott instead, and leave Saint Tony alone.

The old SDP traitors, Bill Rodgers and Roy Jenkins, want Blair to be the next prime minister. Their millionaire paymaster, David Sainsbury, gave £5,000 to the Blair leadership campaign fund.

Marks and Spencer's are talking about donating money to the Labour Party. Rupert Murdoch hinted that his *Sun* will shine on Blair. Even the toffs' house journal, *Harpers and Queen*, has announced that its readership "can now vote Labour knowing that it has absolutely nothing to fear."

The boy done well. But with all the wrong people. That alone should make every working class Labour voter stop and think. Why is it that people who make a living attacking the unions and the left have embraced "Bambi" as one of their own?

The answer is obvious. The public school educated barrister is one of their own. He could win the next election. Blair is making clear that a Labour government under his leadership will leave the wealth and privileges of Britain's rich elite intact. It will do little to improve the lives of millions of working class Labour supporters.

## Reformist

Neil Kinnock dropped the word "socialism" from Labour's vocabulary. He had to. This was because he began life as a reformist socialist. Before becoming leader he used to speak of using parliament to effect a fundamental change in the distribution of wealth in favour of working people. As leader he had to prove that he'd abandoned this youthful folly for good.

Blair has no such problems. He has reintroduced "socialism" into Labour's vocabulary. He could do this satisfied in the knowledge that his "ethical" version of it is perfectly acceptable to the employers.

His pamphlet on the subject, *Socialism*, runs to a monumental seven

pages (price £3.50!). The nub of his argument is that socialism has nothing to do with the economy. Class is no longer a useful term. Equality has given way to "opportunity", and solidarity has been replaced by individualism. This is accompanied by pledges to wage a "national crusade", to work for "national renewal" and to restore the "common bonds of purpose" that can make Britain "one nation".

These high sounding phrases are pure froth. They may have fooled gullible juries in Blair's days as a barrister. They should not fool workers interested in defending their jobs and wages or saving the railways, the health service or the education system.

On these questions Blair is less poetic. Unlike his deputy, Prescott, Blair has given no commitment to ensuring that a future Labour government will set full employment as a goal. The market bedlam that currently prevails in the NHS will not be stopped if Blair gets to No. 10. Nor will the welfare state be safe in his hands. Labour's Social Justice Commission favours consolidating the Tories' benefit "reforms" and has even suggested abolishing universal child benefit.

Labour's historic link with the trade unions is to take a further battering. John Smith undermined this link before he died. Blair is leaving the constitution alone. But the day after he won the leadership contest he revealed his plans for the unions. They will receive no favours from a Labour government.

The Labour Party was created by the unions. It survives courtesy of union money. Its election machine relies on the resources of local union offices up and down the country. Its canvassers are trade unionists, not *Harpers and Queen* subscribers.

For Blair none of this matters. In his very first policy announcement he

explained:

"Trade unions will have no special and privileged place. They will have the same access as the other side of industry. In other words they will be listened to... But we are not running the next Labour government for anything other than the people of this country."

All this is meant to sound very fair and even-handed. But who are "the people of this country" that Blair's government is going to serve? The people fall into two main categories, two major "interest groups".

On the one hand is the majority—the millions of people who have no private property capable of generating an income, who have the ability to

work for wages and no other private wealth. They face constant attacks from the Tories—attacks on pay, on conditions at work, on their jobs, on the public services they rely on. Over seven million of them are organised in trade unions to defend their interests.

But they are not the only "people of this country". There are others—the 10% of the population who in 1988 owned over half the country's wealth. Of these, the richest one percent own nearly a fifth. It is these people's drive to increase their profits that is the real reason for the declining living standards of the majority.

In short, no matter how much verbiage Blair may use to deny it, the "people" are divided into two classes, classes whose interests are not only different, but which contradict each other. That is what is so disgraceful about Blair's claim to stand up for "the other side of industry"—the very people who fund the Tory party, sack workers and cut their pay, take unions to court and steal their funds. Blair wants to run the country for them.

A few years ago Tony Blair persuaded the TUC to drop its demand

for the repeal of the Tories' anti-union laws. We can see why he did it. Behind all the even-handed rhetoric he is anti-union to the marrow of his bones. Even before he has won a general election he is distancing himself from the unions, trying to "put them in their place".

In every other policy sphere the Blair regime is pursuing a similar line. In education the teacher's unions are to be by-passed by the setting up of a General Teacher's Council. A "home-school" contract is to be established, making parents responsible for their kids' behaviour and performance at school. Businessmen are to be welcomed into the classrooms to teach children exactly what will be expected

of them once they become subservient workers.

The vindictive campaign against single parents was a centrepiece of John Major's failed "back to basics" campaign. Blair has warmed to the theme. Telling thousands of people who choose to be single parents that they are wrong, Blair declared:

"It is a matter of good common sense that it is best for children, if you can achieve it, that they end up in a stable family environment with their parents."

He went on to announce that Labour would teach children "good parenting" in schools. The concept is chilling. Who judges what a "good parent" is? What will happen to "bad parents" under Labour? The implications for single parents claiming benefits are grim. There will be no let up in the campaign against them if Labour is elected.

On the economy Blair has been less specific. He has stressed Labour's commitment to the market. Nothing will ever be nationalised again so long as he is the leader. The state will play a purely enabling role in industry—enabling the bosses to make maximum profits out of our

**N**EIL FLANAGAN and Martin Murphy are the branch secretary and chair of Sefton No. 1 Unison branch. On 28 June they led an illegal, but extremely effective, strike of their 1,200 members against the "externalisation" (i.e. privatisation) of council services.

The strike was illegal because it took place without a ballot and after an injunction had been granted to Sefton Council (a hung council) outlawing the action. The strike was effective because on the day that it took place the council voted to withdraw the threat of privatisation for fear of a "summer of discontent".

By consciously breaking the Tory anti-trade union laws Martin and Nigel placed themselves in contempt of court. They faced imprisonment or a possible fine of up to £100,000. They rightly, and courageously, placed the defence of their members' jobs and conditions above the Tory laws.

As Martin explained:  
"There's a time when you always have to break the law. That's always been the history of workers' struggles."

It is a history that the Unison national leadership has forgotten. Any illegal strike jeopardises Unison's funds. It places the hefty salaries and expense accounts of the national and regional officials at risk. Alan Jinkinson, Unison's General Secretary, had already written to the branch on 10 June instructing them not to strike. This instruction and the court order were treated with the contempt they deserved by a mass meeting of the membership on the day before the strike.

### Solidarity

On the day of the court hearing Unison used union funds to employ barristers to dissociate itself from the strike action. In the words of Martin and Nigel the union paid lawyers to, "argue for the punishment of two branch officials (including impris-

## SEFTON TWO Organise the rank and file

BY BILL JENKINS

not for members under attack.

Like the unfolding battle at Companies House, this is another example of why we urgently need a rank and file movement in the unions. Militant action against the bosses is now frequently against the law. This has given the union bureaucrats an added weapon against such action, and against rank and file militants who

take it. At every turn we are up against the bosses, the courts and our own leaders.

We need to meet this with a strong united organisation committed to the democratic transformation of the unions and to policies that put the members' interests first. The case of the Sefton Two shows that such an organisation can be built in Unison.

Already this year, Liverpool Unison branch has been suspended for hold-

ing unofficial strike action, and five of its leading branch and lay officials are currently under investigation by the national Unison leadership. Alan Jinkinson is now preparing similar disciplinary action and a full scale witch-hunt against the Sefton Two.

In a letter written to branch secretaries about the Sefton strike Jinkinson finishes by stating that:

"The industrial action and court proceedings raise a number of issues requiring examination and reports will be made to the National Executive Council and Industrial Action Committee."

Jinkinson and the NEC will not be scared off if Sefton are left to fight alone. Unison members travelled from all over the country to support Nigel and Martin. Numerous other trade union banners were represented on the demonstrations. The good turn out was largely due to the work of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which is strong within Unison.

But the SWP alone cannot organise all the trade union members prepared to fight back. At this year's national conference of Unison the SWP were only one component of the left. Others, from Militant, Workers Power and the non-aligned, together outnumbered the SWP's total number of delegates. The point this proves is that a lot more could be done if the SWP, along with other militants, agreed to organise a rank a file movement embracing all those committed to a militant fight back.

While taking nothing away from the work the SWP have done around the Sefton Two, the demonstrations could have been even bigger if a national movement within Unison existed and was campaigning in their defence.

The anti-trade union laws will be confronted by every Unison branch when they attempt to fight the Tory onslaught on local government and public services. It cannot be left to individual branches to fight. A coordinated national fightback is desperately needed to prevent the isolation of the most militant branches, and to generalise what action does occur.

The conference called by Sefton No 1 branch on 17 September must be supported by all Unison militants, because it could provide the starting point for a fightback and the launch pad for a rank and file movement. The conference should not remain at the level of simply exhorting other branches to follow Sefton's example. It should help other branches organise to do this across the national union, confident that they will get widespread rank and file support.

### Unity

Nor should the conference remain at the level of swapping experiences, after which everybody goes home—with congratulations ringing in their ears if they have won a dispute, commiseration comforting them if they have lost. Swapping experience is important. But its purpose must be to build fighting unity.

A rank and file movement can build such unity. It must aim to smash the hold of the trade union bureaucracy and rule book over Unison. It must directly challenge the bureaucrats at all levels, and kick out the entire leadership, replacing it with one that will fight.

Unlike the old Broad Lefts, however, it must not rest content with replacing right wing bureaucrats with their "left" counterparts. It will need to fight to transform the union and put it on a war footing.

It must recognise that only rank and file action, organised independently of the officials—against them where necessary, with them where possible—can provide the basis for defending the immediate interests of Unison members, and leading national action. This is the best way of turning back the Tory offensive and halting privatisation in its tracks. ■

## Unison fightback conference

All Unison militants who want to build the fightback should get delegated to the conference called by Sefton No. 1 branch on Saturday 17 September. Details of the conference are available from the branch at 38 Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 4QQ. Telephone: 051 920 6140.

The conference will be debating resolutions and we urge all Unison members to adopt the following resolution in their branches and shop stewards' committees and submit it for discussion at the conference.

1. This conference agrees that all delegates will campaign in Unison to raise money to help pay the fines of the Sefton Two and to defend the Sefton Two against Jinkinson's witch-hunt.
2. Conference agrees that all delegates will additionally campaign against other witch-hunts of militants by the bureaucracy (e.g. the suspension of the Liverpool branch).
3. To co-ordinate such activity conference resolves to elect a steering committee today.
4. This steering committee should be charged with expanding the campaign against witch-hunts into a Unison wide campaign for strike action against privatisation, cuts, low pay and the anti-union laws. It should publish a newsletter to publicise this campaign.
5. Any steering committee elected, and any campaign agreed today, can only be provisional. But it represents the commitment of this conference to begin building a national rank and file movement within Unison. To this end conference charges the steering committee with building a further delegate based conference, no later than December 1994, open to resolutions from Unison branches and stewards' committees, under the title: "Unison Rank and File Movement—Start the Fightback Now!"

## CIVIL SERVICE Managers sabotage strike

**T**HE CIVIL Service White Paper was greeted with headlines about "mandarins" losing their "posts". Its real purpose was to step up the privatisation of the civil service and cut the jobs of civil service workers.

The privatisation of 95% of the work carried out at Companies House in Cardiff, an agency of the Department of Trade and Industry, is part of this attack. On 19 July, Heseltine announced that consultants were to be appointed to draw up contracts for the work.

Privatisation will mean the sacking of at least 500 workers (almost half of the workforce) within three years. The cuts will be written into the new contract. They are just a foretaste of attacks to come.

The two unions at Companies House, the CPSA and the NUCPS, responded swiftly to the announcement. On 20 July a joint mass meeting was called. After a full debate the vote was 355 to 10 in favour of an immediate ballot for an overtime ban and a series of one day strikes, starting on 30 September.

An amendment, for a campaign short of industrial action, proposed from some of the management grades, was lost, getting a mere dozen votes. An amendment from a Workers Power supporter, for an indefinite strike, did slightly better, winning the support of about 30 workers.

Despite the drawbacks of one day actions, a clause in the motion that was finally agreed pledged escalation of the action when the new contract is announced. This fighting

BY JEREMY DRINKALL

*NUCPS Acting Branch Secretary,  
Companies House  
(in a personal capacity)*

stance, however, was sabotaged by a clique of managers and bureaucrats who have hijacked the NUCPS branch committee.

Without consulting the members, and in complete breach of the union's own constitution, four management grades (SEOs) were co-opted onto the branch committee. At their first meeting they voted to delay any ballot until after the contracts have been put out to tender. They agreed to tie the union to a campaign designed to prove to the "business community" that it will not disrupt their service.

CPSA and NUCPS rank and file members were gobsmacked at this turn of events. But the management clique struck their blow at just the right time to prevent the ballot being held in time to meet the legal requirements. Reluctantly, the CPSA postponed their own ballot for the sake of unity with the NUCPS, which organises about half the workforce.

This coup was staged while I (the acting branch secretary) was on holiday! It was a cynical manoeuvre against the planned action and against basic workers' democracy. It demonstrates the importance of throwing managers out of the NUCPS. For years they scomed the union and its low paid members, even scabbing on strikes. Now, when they need to sabotage a workers' fightback, they use their position to overturn democratic decisions.

I immediately tried get the branch committee to call a full members' meeting so that the issue could be put to a vote and to announce elections for the positions on the committee currently held by unelected managers. When this was blocked I issued an open letter explaining the situation to all union members.

This action helped bring together a group of rank and file militants who, in alliance with the fighting minority on the branch committee, are now at war with the management clique. These militants meet regularly to discuss tactics and put pressure on the CPSA to stand firm against the blackmail of the managers.

### Witch-hunt

The branch chair has now filed an official complaint against me. The national union bureaucracy has been brought in, and past experience suggests that they will "resolve" the dispute in favour of the managers and against the interests of the rank and file. We are not waiting for them to do this via a long drawn out tribunal. We are fighting back now.

As we go to press, a mass meeting is planned to discuss the timing of strike action and plans for escalation once the contract is announced. We must win a massive vote for immediate action and preparation for an indefinite strike against the contract and the job cuts. This, not a public relations exercise to woo the bosses, is the way to save jobs.

Any witch-hunt against me will meet with firm resistance. If NUCPS

militants cannot dislodge the bureaucrats and managers then we say to the CPSA, "strike on your own! If you do one hundred NUCPS members will strike with you. We only ask that you will strike in our defence if we are victimised as a result."

The whole affair illustrates the importance of building rank and file organisations in the unions. In Companies House, organised unity between militants in the CPSA and the NUCPS is essential. A strong rank and file movement could organise to block the sort of sabotage we have seen.

Such a movement is needed nationally. We have seen the leadership of the CPSA and NUCPS squander militancy and betray strikes all too often. We know full well that they consider militants more dangerous to them than the bosses.

We have to fight them. We have to build a strong rank and file movement that can do this, that can formulate and fight for class struggle policies in the union and that can oust the bureaucrats from office, giving the union a fighting leadership nationally as well as locally.

- No reliance on publicity campaigns!
- Strike action can stop privatisation!
- Make all representatives accountable and recallable!
- Kick the managers out of the union!

For copies of Workers Power's Civil Service Action programme, write to Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

## RAIL

# All out to stop union busting!

**S**TRIKING SIGNAL workers now face their biggest challenge. British Rail and Railtrack are planning a massive scabbing operation to break the strike.

The RMT leadership responded to previous attempts to break the strike by calling 48 hour stoppages. Faced with Railtrack's use of untrained supervisors to run an ineffective, but nevertheless dangerous service on strike days, Jimmy Knapp thought this limited extension of the action would be enough.

It isn't. It has hardened the stance of Railtrack and the Tories. They are sticking firmly to their "final offer"—a package that really only amounts to a 3% rise. This which will leave 30% of signal workers worse off than they are now. The Tories want to maintain their public sector pay limit and soften the workforce up before privatisation. This is fuelling management's determination. Together, these mo-

tives have shaped Railtrack's and the government's strategy—to break the strike so as to break the RMT itself. The future viability of the union as an organisation capable of defending its members' interests is now at stake. That must be understood by every rail worker in the country—not just the signal workers.

## Escalation

To meet and defeat this threat requires the immediate escalation of the action. Having lost the supervisors' ballot for action, the RMT leaders are wary of doing this. They should not be. It was only their unforgivable delay in calling this ballot in the first place that gave the bosses time to scare the supervisors into voting against action.

Now a greater sense of purpose is needed. For every supervisor who voted no, there are thousands of rail

workers who will vote yes to all out indefinite strike action. But only if the leadership explains to them that every job is now at stake, that their pay will be cut if privatisation goes ahead, that life on the railways will be unbearable for workers if the current strike is defeated.

An all out indefinite RMT strike will break the bosses' plans to scab. With the entire network shut down, with mass pickets and with the industry losing millions of pounds every day, we will soon have the bosses pleading for mercy. A handful of scab supervisors cannot run the service faced with an all out strike.

A resolute response from the RMT will bring the other unions over to action as well. Faced with the management's announcement about recruiting scabs, the drivers' union, ASLEF, consulted its lawyers. It should have consulted its members instead. The lawyers say a driver need not

run a train if they feel there is a threat to safety. If the RMT were on all out strike, the majority of ASLEF members would say "we will not scab on the RMT no matter what".

Even the white collar TSSA would be forced to take sides if the conflict was escalated in this way. And there would be every possibility that this traditional weak link in union organisation on the network could be firmed up if the other unions proved they were serious about winning. The opportunity to win—to break the government's pay policy and, given the high stakes, possibly even the government itself—is there for the taking. The decision by ASLEF and the RMT to ballot their members on London Underground over pay strengthens this opportunity. A co-ordinated all out strike that shut down the rail network and the capital's key transport system would devastate the bosses. Howls of anguish would come from every boss whose workers couldn't make it to work, whose goods couldn't be transported, whose business meetings were disrupted.

## Leadership

If the RMT leadership were as determined to win as the bosses and government, they would have announced an all out strike by now. Knapp wants to secure a compromise on the signal workers' 11% pay claim. But he is scared of the action that can win the claim outright and save the railways from privatisation.

Rail workers must push Knapp to step up the action. But they must not rely on him to do so. Rank and file

strikers themselves should seize the initiative. Strike committees should be built immediately. All rail workers, not just signal workers, should be drawn into these committees to plan scab-busting operations, solidarity action and an all-out rail strike. In London such committees should also draw in Underground workers.

## Links

Links between strike committees should be built across the country. This can help build the pressure for an all-out strike and ensure that any weaker areas are targeted with delegations, speakers and pickets.

Immediately, plans for mass pickets should be drawn up to combat the planned scabbing. Mobile picket teams should be organised and co-ordinated to get to any signal boxes being run by scabs. Money from the strike fund should be allocated to this operation, as well as to ensuring that no strikers suffer hardship.

For too long Knapp has kept this dispute polite. He has refrained from even using the word scab. RMT officials have denounced people who have justifiably expressed their anger at the scabs.

The rank and file must inject a different tone into this dispute. The Tories have said openly that they want to do to the rail workers what they did to the miners in 1984. They want to smash them. You don't stop this with good manners and politeness. You do it with the harsh language of class struggle that the bosses understand only too well. You do it with an all out indefinite strike. ■

# Smash all immigration controls!

**O**FFICIALLY THERE is no apartheid in Britain. But at Britain's ports and airports apartheid is alive and well.

If you passed through Heathrow, Dover or Manchester Ringway this year you may have seen it in operation. Huge queues of black people waiting to be interrogated by immigration officers while white passport holders slide through with barely a glance. It is the sharp end of a humiliating and inhuman system of racist immigration laws which systematically discriminate against black people.

Bit by bit the Immigration laws passed in 1962, 1968 and 1971 withdrew the rights of Commonwealth citizens to live and work in Britain.

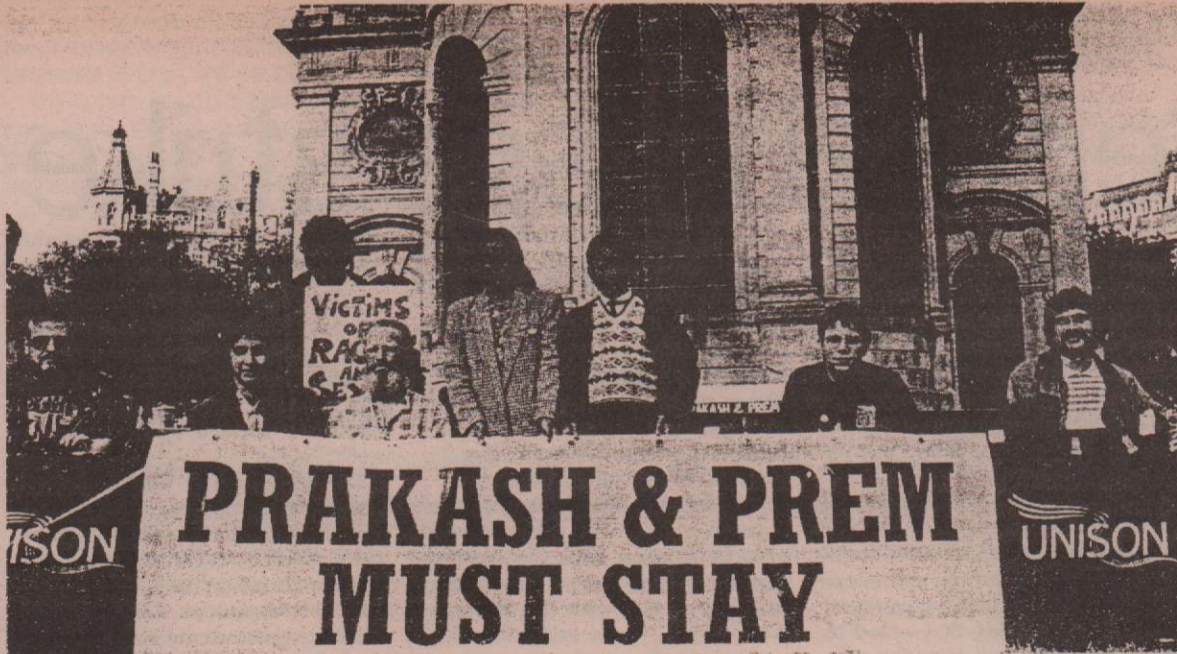
The 1981 Nationality Act divided British citizens along racial lines. It removed the automatic right to British citizenship of all those who had settled here before 1973.

The 1988 Immigration Act removed the right of black people already settled in Britain to bring their families to join them, and hardened the appeal procedure against deportation.

The 1993 Asylum Act drastically reduced the chances of asylum seekers escaping from war, torture and starvation being given refugee status.

This is backed up by a racist immigration policing system. The notorious Campsfield detention centre houses hundreds of asylum seekers and those who have fallen foul of the immigration laws. Earlier this year inmates at Campsfield rioted against the degrading treatment they receive—treatment far worse than in prisons for convicted criminals. Their protest was smashed by police and prison riot squads. In April police and immigration officials swooped on Southwark council offices arresting seventy black workers suspected of illegal immigration.

Last year Joy Gardner was killed



Prakash and Prem Chavrimootoo live in daily fear of deportation

by police and immigration officers who gagged and bound her in the process of deportation.

Meanwhile young whites from Australia and New Zealand have few problems getting work permits and visas. One million white South Africans have the right to "return" to Britain, where most of them have never lived, on the grounds that they have one British grandparent.

The Tories, Liberals and Labour claim these laws are not racist. It is sheer hypocrisy. Labour's Roy Hattersley argues that "without limitation integration is impossible". Margaret Thatcher, in her 1979 election bid, sympathised with those who saw Britain being "swamped by an alien culture".

Whatever the establishment politicians claim, there is a clear link between race and immigration control. Nobody worries about the "integration" of white commonwealth citizens and therefore no-one tries to limit them. It is the myth that the

presence of black people causes racism which underlies Britain's racist immigration laws.

Immigration does not cause racism. The imperialist system which divides the world into nation states and describes migrants and black people as "alien" to national culture—that is what causes racism.

The capitalists consciously stir up racism to divide the working class. Immigration controls, backed up by the regular deportation of family after family, are a constant spur to racism, a constantly repeated message that undesirable "aliens" will not be tolerated.

That is why socialists fight all immigration controls. The bosses' money has the power to travel the world in search of greater profits. Their wealth sloshes around from tax free banks in the Cayman Islands, to secret accounts in Switzerland, to the stock markets of London, Wall Street and Hong Kong. And for those with money there are few closed borders. Anyone

with £150,000 can come and live in Britain, regardless of colour, citizenship or nationality. We say that if the bosses can travel freely, if their money can roam the world market in search of profit, then every worker should be able to travel freely and live in the country of their choosing, not in search of profit but in the search for work, a decent living, a home, safety from hunger and repression.

We demand **open borders**. Those who say this is impossible, that it would lead to the swamping of Britain, that our economy "could not cope", are swallowing the bosses' lies. In 1945 hundreds of millions of Commonwealth citizens were given the right to live in Britain. Was Britain "swamped" then? No. Only when Tory ministers went out of their way to recruit black workers from India and the Caribbean to meet a labour shortage in Britain did mass immigration begin.

Across the country there are many individuals and families fighting de-

portation. The vast majority have been able to win support from their local working class communities, black and white. **Florence Okolo**, facing deportation in Manchester, has won the support of her children's school, local unions and churches. Local residents turned out in their hundreds to support a demo in support of **Helen Aladasanwe**, another Nigerian woman facing deportation in Manchester.

**Prakash and Prem Chavrimootoo**, whose appeal has been lost and who now live in daily fear of deportation, have won support throughout the labour movement.

The **Rahman Family**, from Bolton, have turned to the labour movement and to black community organisations nationally in an appeal for "solidarity not sympathy" (see page 16).

And they are just the best known cases. What is vitally needed is a united anti-deportation campaign, which is able to link the fight, share the lessons, resources and experience, and take the battle out of the realms of individual casework and into the political battle against all immigration laws.

The campaign to close down Campsfield, the campaigns around individual deportation and asylum cases are all part of the same fight. It is a scandal that the biggest anti-racist campaign supported by the labour movement—the Anti-Racist Alliance—has done virtually nothing to bring these fights together. It will not fight against all immigration controls because it is tied to the racist Labour Party and trade union officials. Because its strategy is the legal reform of the racist state, it can never launch or back such a fight.

The coming round of appeals, the threatened deportations, the Labour and TUC conferences, must provide a focus for a concerted effort to found a national anti-deportation campaign, fully supported by the labour movement and fully committed to the struggle against all immigration controls. ■

# HARRY RATNER

# Reluctant revolutionary

Harry Ratner was active in the Trotskyist movement for forty years. Paul Morris reviews his recently published autobiography. Below we print an extract from an LRCI account of the Fourth International during the war, throwing light on debates referred to in Ratner's book.

Harry Ratner became a Trotskyist in 1936, when he was only sixteen.

Events pitched him immediately into the street level struggle against Mosley's fascists and into the faction fighting within the Trotskyist movement. In 1938 he moved to Paris to live with his French mother and plunged into the turbulent agitation and factionalism, of Raymond Molinier's Parti Communiste Internationaliste.

As the German invasion of France began Harry was instructed to return to Britain to look after Molinier and French Trotskyist Pierre Frank, who had already fled there. He caught the last boat out of Le Havre, evading Gestapo patrols who ransacked his flat within days of the occupation of Paris.

Back in "democratic" Britain, he was convicted of "harbouring" Molinier and Frank; the latter was interned for the war's duration as a political prisoner.

By far the most interesting section of the book concerns the period of the Second World War. Ratner gives a vivid account of how it took mass protests to force the authorities to open up the London Underground as air raid shelters. Ratner himself, along with other Trotskyists, helped organise a conference which tried to link shelterers' committees across London.

Ratner soon moved from the "civilian" to the military sphere of the class struggle. Following the Fourth International's policy that revolutionaries should "go with their class" to the battlefield, rejecting pacifism and conscientious objection, he went out of his way to get conscripted.

He was posted in the Pioneer Corps, a military formation which is described even in its own official history as a dumping ground for misfits, foreigners and the medically infirm. Other conscripts included half the London district committee of the

*Reluctant Revolutionary:  
Memoirs of a Trotskyist 1936—  
1960,*  
by Harry Ratner.  
Published by Socialist Platform  
BCM 7646 London WC1N 3XX,  
price £5.95

Communist Party and an entire company of former Spanish Republican soldiers exiled after the Civil War—an environment bitterly hostile to Trotskyism!

The most interesting chapters of Ratner's book are the ones detailing his individual attempts to make revolutionary propaganda: playing snooker with black GIs to the fury of their white counterparts; using the Army Bureau of Current Affairs lectures and news sheets to stimulate discussions about politics; waging a constant individual propaganda campaign against national chauvinism.

Ratner covers the argument within



the Trotskyist movement over the relationship between revolutionary defeatism and the "proletarian military policy"—demanding full rights and workers' control within the armed forces and demanding military training of workers under the control of the workers.

Through opposition to the imperialist war, seeking to turn it into a civil war combined with actively fighting for militarisation of the working class on *their own terms*, workers would be better prepared for the expected revolutionary upheavals.

Unfortunately the debate is dealt with fairly superficially, and it is clear that Ratner, like many British

Trotskyists, was a supporter of James P. Cannon's opportunist interpretation of the tactic.

Having participated in the landings at Sicily in 1943, he came face to face with the reality behind the bosses' propaganda about an "anti-fascist war":

"The British arrested a few Fascist officials for show and let them go after two or three days... The mayor had been a strong fascist. He and the others were still running the administration for their new American masters."

One local rail worker told Ratner, "if I was paid one lira for every fascist still walking free in Catania I would be a rich man".

His accounts of both Sicily and later the D-Day landings reveal the growing left-wing mood among working class soldiers, culminating in a series of political struggles within the army in the last days of the war and in the immediate aftermath of peace.

Like a whole generation of Trotskyists, Harry Ratner had to confront the fact that the perspective of world-wide revolutionary upheaval after the war was proved wrong. He was not a leader but a living participant in the disorientation and degeneration of the Fourth International which resulted from the failure of its perspectives.

After the war Harry became an industrial militant, bluffing his way into an engineering factory, to start a career which saw him leading strikes, shop stewards' movements and playing a key role in the industrial intervention of the main British Trotskyist organisation at the time, Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL).

The post-war years of non-revolutionary struggle daily falsified the Healy Group's perspectives. Yet this group, clinging to the idea of imminent revolution, became ever more sectarian and ultimatum towards the working class.

The contradiction eventually took its toll and Harry, dismayed as well as the corrupt and bureaucratic regime inside the SLL, left active politics in 1960. He eventually concluded that "Marx was wrong" and that the working class, short of absolutely dire circumstances, would always try to reform the existing system.

Despite these conclusions Harry Ratner's autobiography brings to life key characters and events in the history of Trotskyism. But it should not only be of interest to students of that history.

A new generation of revolutionary socialist militants can learn a lot from the successes and failures described in this book. More than they will learn from any of the grey eminences of the left who repeat only jargon and empty phrases and put the interests of their sects before the interests of the working class. ■

In the USA the Socialist Workers Party (SWP—US section of the Fourth International) distorted the proletarian military policy when faced with the actual entry of the US into the war in late 1941. The SWP placed their entire emphasis on the tactical compromise involved in this policy—acceptance of bourgeois militarisation programmes, but combined with a fight to place them under workers' control. They obscured the strategic context that Trotsky always set this policy within—that is a clear and unambiguous struggle for the policy of revolutionary defeatism.

Using the argument that it was necessary to defend the SWP's legality, their key leader, James Cannon, delayed the issuing of a clear defeatist statement on the outbreak of war with Japan on 7 December 1941. Only under criticism from other Trotskyists did the SWP issue a statement. It was published in *Fourth International*, the theoretical organ of the party, but not in the party's weekly newspaper, *The Militant*, despite the far wider circulation of the paper.

The statement made clear the SWP's opposition to the war and characterised it as an imperialist one. However, it did not spell out at any point that American Marxists regarded the defeat of the American bourgeoisie as a lesser evil. It was an internationalist anti-war statement, but it was not a revolutionary defeatist statement.

Cannon and the SWP also suggested on a number of occasions that fascism, not their own government, was the American workers' main enemy. The *Transitional Programme* had laid down the guiding principles for the FI in the imperialist countries:

"In this struggle the basic principle is 'the chief enemy is in your own country' or 'the defeat of your own (imperialist) government is the lesser evil'."

The FI's Manifesto on War issued in 1940 had stated:

"The Fourth International builds its policy not on the military fortunes of the capitalist states but on the transformation of the imperialist war into a war of the workers against the capitalists."

Indeed, Trotsky earlier had occasion to denounce his Palestinian co-thinkers for deviating from this line. He insisted, "all the fundamental rules of proletarian 'defeatist' policy in relation to imperialist war retain their full force today". What this policy is he

The Fourth International was founded in 1938. This young organisation—devastated by brutal murders of its cadre by the secret police of the imperialists and of Stalin—confronted the enormous test of world war with a revolutionary programme and perspective.

The murder of Trotsky in 1940 robbed the Fourth International of its most experienced leader. The war itself disrupted and disorganised the International's leadership.

When it came to the tactical application of one of the key elements of the revolutionary programme, the proletarian military policy, the problems of leadership and experience began to be sharply felt. Harry Ratner's book touches on the disputes that existed over this policy within the British Trotskyists. These disputes related to the way in which the largest and most experienced section of the Fourth International, the US section, applied the policy.

We reprint here extracts from an article, recently published in Russian by the LRCI, based on our book on the Fourth International—*The Death Agony of the Fourth International*—which deal with these questions. They shed light on the rights and wrongs of the dispute and put Ratner's own work within the army in perspective. ■

## Cannon and the "proletarian military policy"

repeated in the clearest terms:

"Defeatism is the class policy of the proletariat, which even during the war sees the main enemy at home, within its particular imperialist country. Patriotism on the other hand, is a policy that locates the main enemy outside one's own country. The idea of defeatism signifies in reality the following: conducting an irreconcilable revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie as the main enemy, without being deterred by the fact that this struggle may result in the defeat of one's own government."

Against the argument that there could be a fundamental distinction between fascist and democratic countries, Trotsky replies:

"It is naturally easier to begin the struggle in those countries where the workers' organisations have not yet been destroyed. But the struggle must be begun against the main enemy, who remains as hitherto, at home."

On 15 July 1941, 28 of the most prominent SWP leaders were indicted on charges of sedition. During the trial, though making clear their opposition to the war, Cannon and his fellow defendants boycotted the FI's revolutionary defeatist position:

"Q: Is it true that the party is as equally opposed to Hitler as it is to the capitalist claims of the United States?"

A: That is unanswerable. We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy of mankind. We want to wipe it off the face of the earth. The reason we do not support a declaration of war by American arms is because we do not believe the American capitalists can defeat Hitler and fascism. We think Hitlerism can be destroyed only by conducting a war under the leadership of the workers."

There are serious centrist concessions in this short exchange:

(1) Hitler, not the US bourgeoisie, is characterised as the US workers' greatest enemy;

(2) Cannon proposes a war—culminating in an invasion of Germany—as the way of defeating Hitler. Trotsky, on the other hand rightly told the Palestinian Trotskyist group:

"No, in this way we shall not help the German workers to rouse themselves from their stupor. We must show them in action that revolutionary politics consists in a simultaneous struggle against the respective imperialist governments in all the warring countries. This 'simultaneity' must not of course be taken mechanically. For Hitler and Mussolini the success of a socialist revolution in any one of the advanced countries is infinitely more terrible than the combined armaments of all the imperialist 'democracies'."

(3) Cannon talks merely of the "leadership" of the workers. Elsewhere Cannon did talk about a workers' government. But he does not make clear that the SWP's task was to turn the imperialist war into a civil war, i.e. a struggle for power by the American workers no matter what effect this has on the capacity of the United States to wage the war. They transformed the revolutionary defeatist slogan into the evasive democratic slogan, "the real solution is to transform the imperialist war into a war against fascism." This slogan was raised by the SWP even before the entry of the US into the war.

What is entirely missing is the element of the revolutionary class struggle during the war and the party's agitation for it. Such agitation, such actions taken by workers would inevitably obstruct the war effort; they would in this sense "sabotage" it. ■

Fifty delegates from the eight national sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) met near Prague in early August. The LRCI's Third Congress, which took place over eight days, marked an important development for the LRCI. It showed that on the major political issues which have dominated the last period, and in particular those related to the historic collapse of Stalinism, the LRCI is unified around a common method of analysis. We are united on the practical conclusions of this analysis for our perspectives and the practical work of the sections.

This was a major advance. The Second Congress, held in December 1991, had not shown such a degree of unity. Important differences were revealed on the tactics adopted by the League during the Yanaev coup in August 1991. A "fraternal" group of the League (the RTT of the United States) had launched a factional attack on the leadership of the League in the months before the Congress and had worked for a split.

### Differences

Furthermore, important differences had been revealed both within and between the sections over exactly how democratic centralism should function at an international level, and what it meant in practice to have an international leadership. The Second Congress was only able to adopt two documents (a balance sheet of our work and perspectives for the next period) and to elect an international leadership.

Nevertheless, the Second Congress did set the goal of further uniting and politically homogenising the League. We had to analyse and develop a programmatic response to the restoration process and the ascendancy of neo-liberalism, develop a common understanding of party building under very different national conditions, and reach a common approach to the tactic of the united front. We were determined to do so by the Third Congress. The results of the Third Congress have amply justified our commitment to these tasks.

All the documents and issues on the agenda of the Third Congress were completed.

On the previously contentious issue of the democratic centralist structures of the LRCI, enormous progress was registered. A new constitution was adopted with near unanimity. The new International Executive Committee and International Secretariat of the League can now turn to the new tasks that face us, tasks accurately pinpointed by the Congress itself.

This does not mean that there are no differences within our tendency—this could and should not be the case in a genuinely democratic and developing organisation. A series of debates at the Congress revealed minorities of varying sizes on a number of questions.

### Stalinism

The Congress passed a new Chapter 5 of the *Trotskyist Manifesto*, the LRCI's international programme, replacing the previous section, which dealt with the struggle against Stalinism, with a new section outlining the LRCI's action programme and tactics for the degenerated workers' states in the process of capitalist restoration. A small minority of delegates registered differences on the changes and developments to our programme on the national question, the use of democratic demands and tactical attitudes to restorationist forces.

A larger minority registered their opposition to the LRCI's analysis of the character of the bureaucratic-military state machine in the degenerate workers' states, whether the state form in the workers' states

## LRCI THIRD CONGRESS

# Building the LRCI

Fifty delegates from eight countries, spanning three continents, met near Prague last month at the Third Congress of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. Dave Stockton reports on the Congress and below we print a summary of the International Political and Economic Perspectives passed by the Congress.

could be called bourgeois and needs to be smashed by the proletariat in the political revolution. This was the culmination of an extensive debate in the ten or so internal bulletins produced throughout the pre-congress discussion period. It produced a clear majority reaffirming the existing position embodied in the *Degenerated Revolution* (published by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group in 1982).

The new Chapter 5 of the *Trotskyist Manifesto* will appear shortly in the seven languages in which the *Manifesto* has already been published.

Another debate took place around the exact formulation of the LRCI's slogan calling for a new International. A small minority were of the view that this meant the re-foundation of the Fourth International, and a larger minority considered this meant fighting for the foundation of a fifth International. A substantial majority however voted to maintain our existing call for a new Leninist-Trotskyist International, in which the final "number" will be decided in struggle.

The Congress passed an extensive *International Perspectives* document, a summary of whose conclusions is printed here.

### Fascism

The Third Congress also adopted a resolution on *The growth of fascism and the far right in Europe*. Differences had been revealed on the exact nature of certain far-right parties in Europe that are not overtly fascist or which lack some of the classic features of fascism. The debate over these differences led to the adoption of the term "fascist front parties" for those organisations like the German DVU and the French FN with an inner core of fascist cadres and leaders but which for the time being concentrate heavily on electoralism based on racist and anti-immigration themes.

In the aftermath of the Congress, a small minority of members of the Austrian section have resigned from the LRCI. Their differences lie with the international political perspectives of the League and the tasks it has set itself. These comrades combined pessimism about the perspectives for the class struggle with a passive propagandist approach to party building.

Their resignation is in addition a retreat into national isolation. It is a pity to lose these comrades, who had shown considerable talent in the youth work of the League. But the Austrian section, the *Gruppe ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt* (Workers' Standpoint), is determined to maintain this work and to show that theoretical and propaganda tasks can only be properly carried out in an organisation that takes advantage of every avenue to put its theory into practice.

Finally Congress passed both a self-critical *Balance Sheet* of the LRCI's work over the last three years and a plan of work for the coming period. This document, *Perspectives for Building the League*, outlines an

ambitious but realistic set of tasks.

The Congress set the goal of significant growth over the next few years by means of an orientation to new layers of youth being drawn into struggle. These are being mobilised by the growing discrediting and bankruptcy of neo-liberalism, against the rise of racist and reactionary forces. Meanwhile the leaderships of the official labour movement fail to launch a fightback to recover ground lost in the late eighties and early nineties. The LRCI must also take advantage of the crisis of the larger of the centrist organisations with claims to

Trotskyism, winning serious cadres who are beginning to question the political and organisational degeneration of their tendencies.

### Tasks

The League has set itself major theoretical tasks over the next period, particularly in the field of political and organisational degeneration of their tendencies. We will continue and intensify major work on the nature of the latest phase of imperialist development. We will have to develop an in-depth theory of capitalist crisis, examining the nature of the major

imperialist blocks and their rivalry. We will attempt to analyse more thoroughly the economic crisis of the degenerate workers' states which led to their downfall, the nature of bureaucratic planning and the implications of the whole Stalinist experience for the democratic planning of a healthy workers' state.

The Congress elected a new International Executive Committee and appointed international commissions to co-ordinate the LRCI's interventions into Latin America and Eastern Europe, work amongst women and youth, and work in the trade unions.

## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The collapse of the USSR and its satellite regimes in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 marked a historic turning point, similar in magnitude to the events of 1948-51 that originally established the bipolar world order.

A whole new, extended period in world politics is opening. The character of this new period will, we believe, be more not less revolutionary than the post-war decades because of:

- the weakening of capitalism economically,
- the growth of inter-imperialist rivalry,
- the spread of profound political instability and crisis to the imperialist countries themselves and to the moribund degenerate workers' states,
- the growth of the proletariat in key semi-colonies.

But the revolutionary character of this new extended period is as yet obscured by the results of the severe, if temporary, defeats that the proletariat suffered after the upheavals of 1989.

### Initial

After the initial revolutionary events, and the lost opportunities they presented for the political revolution, a counter-revolutionary reaction set in as pro-capitalist forces came to the fore and seized power. This has given the general world situation over the past three or four years a reactionary character.

The three years ahead will have a combined, transitional character. They will be infused with aspects of the post-1990 counter-revolutionary phase. The social counter-revolution will continue to develop within the moribund workers' states and spread to those where, as yet, the bureaucracy rules unchallenged. The Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Korean Stalinist bureaucracies will either experience splits or step up their capitulations to imperialism. The harder and more inflexible the regime, the greater will be the explosion when it finally comes. Unless there is a massive, spontaneous, upsurge of proletarian alarm and resistance in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, then the Rubicon of capitalist restoration will be reached, if not crossed.

# The world a historic turn

In the semi-colonial world, despite possible temporary breakdowns, mainly caused by ultra-reactionary forces and resistance from the masses, the pro-imperialist settlements will continue due to the capitulationist leadership of the "national liberation" forces from Ireland to Palestine. The collapse and social-democratisation of the Stalinist parties and the rightward move of social democracy, Labourism, and petit-bourgeois nationalism will continue to be a general trend.

But over the next few years a counter-tendency will begin to emerge. This will be fuelled by at best the sluggish recovery, at worst the outright stagnation, of the world economy. It will be fuelled by the increasingly apparent necessity to fight back against the forces of reaction rather than place hopes in the benign results of market forces or bourgeois democracy. New forces of resistance will begin to emerge. These could take on a mass class-form in certain semi-colonial countries or those undergoing a profound or prolonged revolutionary crisis such as South Africa and in certain of the degenerate workers' states.

### Struggle

In the imperialist countries, waves of class struggle and a more prolonged radicalisation of the youth are already developing and will continue to do so.

The first attempts by the German and Japanese bourgeoisie to put their workers on rations will provide the basis for the reawakening of militant layers within the working class. In the former Stalinist states the terrible suffering which capitalist restoration brings—long term unemployment and plummeting real wages, together with

the neo-liberal demolition of the cumulative social gains of the working class—will spur the growth of reactionary forces such as fascism and religious fundamentalism. They will, step by step, undermine the prestige



Youth are the future of the revolution.





The conduct and outcome of the Third Congress proved that our quest for fundamental homogeneity as an international organisation, overcoming the different national traditions inherited from the various centrist organisations from which our sections originated, has been successful.

This has been achieved without creating political monolithism or weakening democratic debate.

The Congress itself was testimony to the vitality of our international tendency. Delegates from three continents, working on documents and

**THE LRCI: WORKERS POWER/ BRITAIN • WORKERS POWER/ NEW ZEALAND - AOTEAROA • GRUPPE ARBEITERINNENSTANDPUNKT/ AUSTRIA • GRUPPE ARBEITERMACHT/ GERMANY • PODER OBRERO/ PERU • PODER OBRERO/ BOLIVIA • POUVOIR OUVRIER/ FRANCE • IRISH WORKERS GROUP ■**

amendments in four languages and drawing on widely differing experiences in the class struggle, managed to complete their work, enriching their own political culture and that of the entire organisation.

The LRCI is determined to go forward, despite the defeats and re-

treats suffered by the workers' movements in many of the countries where our comrades are active. The Congress leaves us better equipped, programmatically and organisationally, to fulfil our goal of building a new Revolutionary Communist International.■

# at a turning point



of bourgeois democracy and the market economy. But they will also provide the spur for new genuinely anti-capitalist forces to emerge.

The major problem facing the world working class remains, as it has been

since the collapse of the Third and Fourth Internationals, the absence of a world wide revolutionary leadership standing as an organised political alternative to disintegrating Stalinism, to bourgeoisifying social democracy and to petit-bourgeois nationalism.

The absence of a revolutionary leadership, even one at the stage of small combat parties, in central and eastern Europe and in a number of semi-colonial countries, has already greatly magnified the effect of the defeats of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This is not just a Trotskyist cliché. Parties with a few thousand members, providing they had the correct programme, well trained cadres and roots in the mass organisations of working class and the oppressed, could have either prevented defeat, or—by hammering home the lessons of defeat—could have undergone a great qualitative and quantitative transformation, becoming real parties of the proletarian vanguard.

Above all the absence of a democratic centralist revolutionary International means that the working class has to repeatedly learn from defeats. At the moment these defeats—from Nicaragua to Russia to Palestine—are at the hands of the democratic counter-revolution. That the counter-revolution is "democratic" is not due to the benign character of the imperialist or semi-colonial bourgeoisie but first and foremost to the considerable remaining strength of the world workers' movement, to the bastions which this and previous generations of workers' struggles have erected within a capitalist world.

The historic but disfigured conquests of the proletarian revolution during the twentieth century are being undermined or destroyed under the banner of democracy and with the promise of

providing the necessities for a decent life. Already in Russia the hollowness of this promise has begun to be revealed. A military and police Bonapartism or a highly militarised "democracy" will be needed to see through the final savage assault on nationalised property.

That we stand at a historic turning point is testified to not only by the re-ordering of the world and the crash and fragmentation of mighty states but also by the "cunning of history", the sudden and unexpected reversals which these events have unleashed.

The slogans of democracy, of national freedom, of human rights have been so many weapons in the hands of the exploiters over the past years. But capitalism in its imperialist, its semi-colonial and its restorationist form is not able for long to extend these rights to the mass of the exploited. These slogans will turn from being instruments of deceit into partial means for exposing capitalism and mobilising for its overthrow. But they will do so only on one condition: that a revolutionary party is built.

### Period

In the present period—marked by sharp turns from revolutionary to counter-revolutionary situations, by the fragmentation of states along national and ethnic lines, by constitutional crises in the old imperialist countries—there is an urgent need to use in a skilful way the revolutionary democratic slogans which Marxism has never renounced.

They must be used not to present a reformist perspective of gradual growth from political to social and economic democracy, but rather to expose the fraud of parliamentarism, the "rule of law" and presidential rule. In the com-

ing few years it will be necessary to use electoral tactics, demands on the mass reformist workers' parties where they exist, and campaigns for the unions and other workers' organisations to create a workers' party where they do not exist, or where the unions are tied to a popular front alliance with bourgeois forces.

The tremendous damage done to Trotskyism by the centrists has been seen during the crisis of the degenerate workers' states. The larger centrist formations (Militant/CWI, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International [USFI] and the British SWP's International Socialist Tendency) have provided no focus for the building even of the first nuclei of revolutionary parties.

Groups like the Spartacists have terribly discredited Trotskyism and soiled its banner by confusing it with Stalinism in the eyes of the workers of Eastern Europe. None of the centrist currents have been able to orient the world workers' movement correctly on the restoration process.

The British SWP, as anyone could have predicted, failed absolutely to defend the historic gains because of its economistic and capitulationist theory of "state capitalism". Others like the Militant shadowed the Stalinist chauvinists. The Morenoite current, the International Workers' League (LIT) one-sidedly analysed the democratic upheavals in 1989-90 in Eastern Europe as simply part of the process of proletarian political revolution, and were blind to the dangers of capitalist restoration.

The centrist "Fourth Internationals" are mostly in decline or outright fragmentation. When the USFI was created thirty years ago it regrouped about three quarters of all subjective Trotskyists in the world. Now it is no longer the largest "Trotskyist" international. Moreover, it is in a state of constant factional strife as its leaders adapt to the Greens, tail the anti-imperialists as they move rightwards, and imitate the social democratic left.

It is probable that they will eventually abandon the claim to the "Fourth International" in favour of creating an international with small scale reformist forces.

The Healyites have not recovered from their fissure into several competing sects in 1985-87. After expelling the PTS-led Internationalist Faction the LIT is divided into four factions. At its latest congress (1994) the Colombian PST-led Bolshevik faction was also in the process of splitting.

### Weakened

Only the SWP-led tendency, the International Socialists, is growing on a world scale, although outside of Britain the Militant is experiencing certain success with its YRE campaign. The Lambertists are extremely weakened with the disappearance of the youth organisation of the French parent section, and a crisis in their Spanish section. However, in the framework of their "open conferences" they maintain many links with the flowering labour movements in the imperialised countries.

The fight against centrism is an integral part of the struggle to build a revolutionary party. Wherever the centrists are moving leftwards or where they are growing and deepening their roots in the youth, the oppressed or the working class, revolutionaries must combine accurate and sharp political criticism of them with various forms of the united front tactic, aimed at exposing in practice their failure to measure up to the real tasks of the class struggle. With regard to the disintegrating centrist currents the task is to rescue the best cadres, those least demoralised by their centrist miseducation.

Youth will play a key role in the coming radicalisation since they are less scarred by the defeats of the last decade, less awed by the old workers' parties and the officialdom of the trade unions. Their experience is that of a

boastful world bourgeoisie vaunting itself over the fallen Stalinist bureaucracy, trumpeting the end of history and the eternity of the market economy. But they are also now witnessing a slide into economic stagnation, the outbreak of genocidal national wars and imperialism's bloody "peacekeeping missions" in the Gulf and Somalia.

These young people, trained and educated in ever greater numbers by capitalism itself, yet faced with unemployment or the harshest forms of exploitation in the "informal economy", are increasingly willing to fight. They are prepared to fight not only for themselves but for all the oppressed and exploited: against racism and fascism in the imperialist countries, against dictatorship and the death squads in the "third world", against the old bureaucrats or the new rich in the collapsing workers' states. To organise the youth is a central task in the revitalisation, the reconstruction of a mass revolutionary workers' movement.

### Unions

The trade unions and workplace organisations are the bedrock of the world workers' movement. They are the womb of class consciousness, repeatedly giving birth to it no matter how many defeats are inflicted on the workers' political struggles. In the present phase of the collapse or withering of "workers' parties" revolutionaries must turn to the workers in the workplaces; in the factories, the mines, the shops and the offices. Yet the existing trade unions in countries with both low and high levels of trade union struggle, whether over a century old or formed in the past decade, face a common enemy within—the trade union bureaucracy. Thus the central task for revolutionaries is to be the foremost fighters for the creation of fighting democratic workplace organisations that can take control of their national unions and oust this bureaucracy.

Among the urban poor and rural poor peasants, new popular organisations of resistance are created, smashed and recreated time and time again as a necessity for day to day survival. Here brave, self-sacrificing leaders are needed from the outset to withstand the paramilitary assassination squads and the landlords' murder gangs. Corruption and incorporation into a privileged conservative layer is here less a threat than a failure to raise the political horizon of the oppressed. The working class vanguard must overcome the masses' fear and their unwillingness to consciously generalise all the piecemeal struggles for survival. It must mould them into an irresistible fist to smash the capitalist state—the organising centre of their suffering.

Taking into account these areas of struggle and the opportunities they present for building revolutionary parties and a new Leninist and Trotskyist International the LRCI advances as its key slogans in the coming period:

Defend every last barricade of the planned and statified property in the degenerate workers' states.

Defend democratic rights against the forces of the bourgeoisie, against imperialism, against fascism, with revolutionary methods.

Defend the gains of the workers and poor peasants within capitalist society with mass direct action: for transitional demands and workers' control in the spheres of jobs, land, social welfare and wages.

Defend the semi-colonial countries against the plunder of the IMF and the "peacemakers" of the USA and the United Nations.

Young people, especially young workers, are the future: they will build new revolutionary parties and a new, Leninist-Trotskyist International.

Prepare for a new wave of intensified class struggle, for deep revolutionary crises and fight for the resurgence of a genuine, revolutionary Marxism!■



On 3 October the first round of the Brazilian Presidential and Congressional elections will take place. For most of the last year the leading contender in the race for the President has been Luis Inácio da Silva, better known as Lula. He is a founding member and leader of the Workers' Party. (PT).

While he is unlikely to win an absolute majority in the first round, he certainly has a strong chance of victory in November's run-off. Then Lula will probably be in a straight fight against Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who, as the ex-Finance Minister and architect of recent government economic policy, is the best chance the Brazilian bosses have of averting the "dangerous experiment" of a Lula Presidency.

A Lula victory would be blow against Brazil's bosses and against the hopes and ambitions of the IMF and World Bank. As the largest country and economy in South America (bigger than the whole of eastern Europe put together), Brazil has been in the rear-guard of the neo-liberal economic counter-revolution of the last fifteen years. While all around the continent conservative governments have been rushing to privatise state industries putting them in the hands of imperialist multi-nationals and savaging state budgets to gain more money for paying off the foreign debt, Brazil has been dragging its feet.

Successive right-wing governments, elected since the 1982-85 transition from military dictatorship, have attacked the working class and massively increased poverty and unemployment. These same governments have acted to protect the interests of the large state monopoly sector of the Brazilian capitalist class. The opening up of the huge internal market to unfettered competition from foreign capitalists is the aim of all neo-liberals, now presently gaining ground inside the ruling class.

The bosses do not want Lula as President. They fear he would deter foreign investors because the PT is committed to restricting payments to international creditors. In addition, some 43% of Brazilian businessmen surveyed in July said that they would cut investment plans too if he were to win.

### Attitude

But there is a marked difference between the bosses' attitude to Lula now and their attitude during the last elections in 1989.

In a July survey of Brazil's bosses 78% agreed that a Lula victory would be bad for the country. But unlike in 1989 they did not think it would be "catastrophic" or that there would be a massive flight of capital from Brazil.

One bourgeois daily, *Jornal do Brasil*, noted on 15 May that unlike 1989, businessmen, "are now preparing to adapt themselves for life with a Lula government". The US merchant bankers, Solomon Brothers, noted that: "Over time, Lula's views have evolved, and he has adopted more moderate positions on a number of issues."

Unfortunately, Solomon Brothers are right. The truth is that ever since it was created as a centrist party Lula's PT has undergone an evolution to the right to a point whereby in the 1990s the PT has become a mass reformist workers' party.

The PT was formed in 1979 as a small party of around 300 activists. It was a centrist party, that is, it combined in a confused manner aspects of the revolutionary and reformist programmes for power. It insisted on the need for the working class to become the leading class in the state machine, that elections were only "isolated moments" in the march towards power which could not be seen as the decisive part of the class struggle.

Its programme rejected the undemocratic Presidential system, and counterposed a system of "popular

## BRAZIL

# Workers' Party — a socialist alternative?



power". The PT and Lula argued for a total renunciation of the external debt, a debt through which imperialist governments exercised control over the development of the country. The PT, as an outgrowth of the mass workers' and popular struggles of the late 1970s, was unequivocal in its support for these struggles in the first half of the 1980s against central government and local administrations.

In its internal life the PT originally was a chaotic collection of interest groups. PT activists were drawn from the trade unions and the popular movements (around housing struggles, around land occupations, for women's rights). In the early years there was no significant layer of bureaucracy in the party. In the first half of the 1980s congresses of the membership could decide policy and have confidence that this would be implemented by the leading committees.

But by the early 1990s this too had changed. The main factor in this change was the experience of running local administrations in increasing number of cities and departments after 1986.

### Strengthen

Lacking a Marxist programme for the destruction of the capitalist state machine or an understanding of how to use local office to strengthen the class struggle, the PT gradually succumbed to representing "the people" (i.e. all classes) against the claims and demands of one part of the people—the working class. Strikes that used to be backed were then ignored, later resisted and finally broken by PT mayors and local councils.

This growing layer of office holders

in the PT gradually came to be the most decisive sector in directing the PT's practice. The left were more and more confined to meaningless majorities for radical sounding "statements of principles" in party congresses. With the defeat of Lula in the 1989 contest against Fernando Collor, Lula himself moved decisively away from his centre ground position in PT debates and determined to help shift the PT to the right before the 1994 contest.

Since April 1993, Lula has been touring the country drumming up support, seeking to extend the PT into a truly national force, one that can break new electoral ground in the massive interior. For most of that time Lula has consistently registered 36-40% in the opinion polls. He has benefited from the endless series of scandals that have dogged all the main parties and many office holders since Collor was forced to resign over corruption charges in late 1992.

Indeed, one of the main sources of appeal for the PT in the last few years has been the idea that *only* the PT has been left largely untainted by corruption and, as its experience in local government has proven, the PT can be relied upon to deliver "clean government", a transparent system of political representation that "all classes" in Brazil would benefit from.

Lula has spent much of the last year seeking to moderate the PT's electoral programme. Successive congresses, conferences and leading committees of the PT have watered down and filtered out the more radical proposals for a PT government.

In its annual conference this May, Lula and the moderate leaders suc-

ceeded in getting the PT to drop the main remaining radical elements from its election platform. Lula was in the forefront of the opposition to the proposal for an immediate moratorium on foreign debt repayment. Instead the conference agreed to get a PT government to try and negotiate existing accords and only suspend payments as a final step in the face of creditors' intransigence. Lula subsequently further "clarified" the position, saying that any administration he led would honour the Brady agreement (on debt) since the Senate had approved it, and that he would only seek to renegotiate other types of debt (e.g. informal public sector debt) not covered by this agreement. Existing demands to curb the scope and freedom of foreign investment inside Brazil were also dumped.

In addition, Lula persuaded the conference in May to drop the PT proposal to introduce a US\$100 minimum wage and overturned the PT's commitment to fully legalise and fund abortion, as a way of placating opposition from the Catholic hierarchy.

### Strategy

Since May, however, Lula's carefully planned strategy of moderation and alliance-building has begun to unravel. Lula has taken for granted a core of support from the workers and dispossessed in Brazil. He calculates that they will vote for him despite his spurning of their most pressing needs. He has been wooing the middle class and beyond. But to them he has to prove that he is trustworthy and efficient and can manage capitalism. More, by playing this game he sends out the signal that this is an important, indeed vital, aspect of government. He thereby runs the danger that others can prove that they will play this game better than Lula.

Enter Fernando Cardoso, candidate of the PSDB (a social democratic/liberal party). He is already the chosen and preferred candidate of all major anti-Lula forces in Brazil. He is also the man who oversaw the end of the recession in the economy this year and is associated with its strong growth for most of this year. In July his new anti-inflationary package was implemented. This involved the introduction of a new currency (the *real*). At a stroke it has brought monthly inflation down from around 40% earlier this year to about 6% now. This is a feat that carries enormous political

implications. Inflation in Brazil in 1992-93 reached over 2,000% a year. It has been the greatest source of economic instability and has been the main mechanism for eroding the living standards of the masses.

While wages are being pegged and prices are not, the fact remains that Cardoso is set to benefit from any economic stabilisation in the run up to the elections. Already Lula has been thrown off-course by the results of the currency stabilisation plan, at first denouncing it as a fraud and later changing tack and welcoming its results while criticising the unequal burden of the sacrifices.

From 1 August the election struggle has exploded onto the TV screens. The mass media is heavily weighted against Lula and for Cardoso. In addition, screen time devoted to each candidate is in proportion to their support from the Congressional parties. Here Cardoso is backed by 33% of deputies and PT by only 10%—another in-built disadvantage.

Consequently Cardoso has risen in the opinion polls. On 10 August Lula was behind, polling only 28% to Cardoso's 32% for the first time. The projection is that Cardoso would beat Lula by 51% to 37% in a November run-off.

The significance of a Lula and PT victory in, by no means guaranteed as it first seemed to many, lies not so much in the measures that Lula or a PT Congress is committed to taking. Lula is now firmly committed to moderation and caution this leads in the direction of a clash with the working class supporters of PT sooner or later.

A Lula victory would send a signal to millions of poor and working class people, who may be largely ignorant of the details or recent evolution of Lula's programme, that they now have their government in office.

### Encouragement

At the very least this would encourage millions of rural landless labourers to seize more land, and incite millions of workers to press for higher wages and better working conditions. They would expect "their" government, their leader to back them or at least not to deploy the forces of reaction against them while they confront their enemies.

The inevitable disillusion with the PT will force the party's rank and file and the base of the trade unions to fight to restore the radical demands and not consign them to rhetorical flourishes in speeches by party leaders. For this reason all socialists and class conscious workers should give critical support to Lula and the PT. The best prospect for the rapid maturation of the revolutionary consciousness of the Brazilian workers lies in this direction and beyond it. ■

**Lacking a Marxist programme for the destruction of the capitalist state machine or an understanding of how to use local office to strengthen the class struggle, the PT gradually succumbed to representing "the people" against the claims and demands of one part of the people —the working class.**

**N**ELSON MANDELA'S Government of National Unity celebrated its first hundred days in office last month. But what is there for the South African workers and rural poor to celebrate?

In its first few months of office, the ANC-led government has:

- allowed police to attack striking retail workers
- left key figures from the apartheid regime in top government, economic and military posts
- tailored the budget to fit the demands of the banks and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- asked workers to tighten their belts while ministers and MPs live it up.

The centrepiece of the ANC's programme is the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This sets certain targets—building one million new homes, redistributing a proportion of farmland, bringing fresh water and electricity to large numbers of homes over a five year period. The ANC claims success in winning all-party and business support for this programme.

Yet the RDP targets go nowhere near addressing the real needs of the South African masses for housing, jobs and services. There is doubt as to whether they can deliver on even these pledges because of other, contradictory promises made to the IMF and big business.

### Taxes

A recent study by the National Institute for Economic Policy has suggested that the real cost of these measures will be in the region of R135 billion not the R39 billion estimated by the ANC in its election manifesto. The government has promised to keep state borrowing strictly in check. At the same time it has promised not to introduce any substantial taxes on wealth or profits. Nationalisation was dropped from the ANC's programme some time ago. So resources for the RDP will have to be found from within existing budgets or created by economic growth.

This is bad news for the workers. The first budget presented by Finance Minister, Derek Keys, showed the direction of the new government. Despite promises before the election to remove VAT on food—which hits the poor hardest—the tax was maintained. Anglo-American, the biggest South African monopoly, has just posted up a 23% increase in profits. Meanwhile company tax was reduced! When Keys resigned another banker, Christo Liebenberg, was appointed.

Former workers' leaders have been drafted in to help push through belt-tightening policies. The *Financial Times* recently described Jay Naidoo, the former leader of the COSATU trade union federation who is now minister in charge of the RDP, as talking "like a missionary from the World Bank".

Alec Erwin, once a key figure in the metal workers union NUMSA and now the deputy Finance Minister, rushed to reassure business after Keys' resignation that there would be no change:

### Attacks

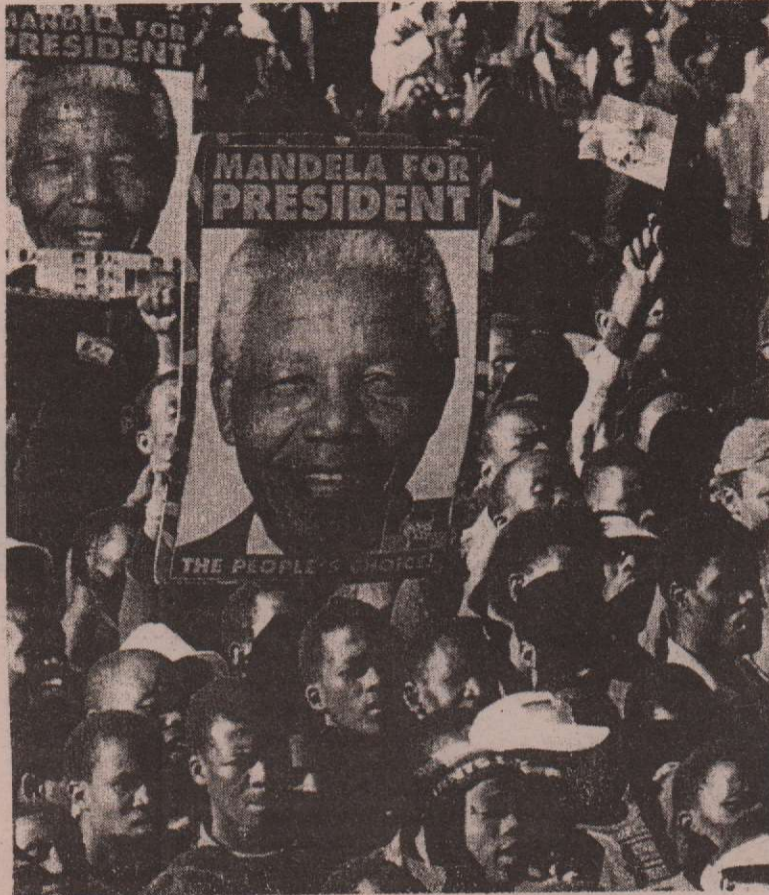
"What is remarkable in our circumstances is how quickly a common strategy on the key socio-economic area has emerged".

This strategy requires that the programme be implemented at a snail's pace, and aims to persuade workers to restrain wage demands in the interests of encouraging investment.

Reconstruction will involve the working class itself paying the costs—through "do-it-yourself" projects and through being forced to pay local taxes, rents and charges, while at the same time facing a drive to keep wage costs down to increase the bosses' profits.

Many are unwilling to wait. The homeless are acting for themselves with land occupations and squatting—

# SOUTH AFRICA Mandela —



# the first hundred days

only to find themselves under attack from state forces and the government.

Johannesburg City Council caused an outcry when they bulldozed one of the many squatter camps on the outskirts of the city on the coldest night of the year. The provincial premier, Tokyo Sexwale of the ANC, hastened to condemn the action against the squatters. But neither the provincial nor national government have any solutions to offer.

Indeed, the Minister for Housing, Communist Party leader Joe Slovo, has said that land invasions are not acceptable and that workers' families must wait their turn for housing. He even suggested that the squatters were being manipulated by "outside forces". We remember a time not so long ago when comrade Slovo was himself being condemned by the apartheid government as an "outside force".

While the workers are told to be patient, no such waiting has been necessary for the ANC leaders elected to national and regional parliaments by those very same workers. The massive wage rises and perks they have given themselves have scandalised the movement. Even Bishop Tutu felt the need to speak out against what has come to be called "the gravy train". While Mandela earns R784,350, a Cabinet Minister R470,000 and an MP R193,200, a labourer for Anglo American earns just over R8,000 a year.

ANC leaders have been quick to start behaving like their former opponents. In June, Defence Minister Joe Modise used censorship laws established by the old regime to prevent

the *Weekly Mail* publishing material on covert military operations. The story threatened to expose former links between high-ranking ANC officials and the Apartheid security forces.

Both Modise and the former head of the ANC guerrilla army, Ronnie Kasrils, are now reported to be "hawks" on the question of maintaining high defence spending and building up the South African National Defence Force (the Army). While Min-

number of strike days lost since 1987. Strikes normally rise at this time of year—the annual wage round. What has been significant is the nature and militancy of the strikes, and the response from the employers and government.

Many of the strikes have been caused by resentment at continuing racial discrimination and racist behaviour from bosses and supervisors. Strikers have demanded an end to racist bullying and privileges, such as in the "hoisting" disputes in the mines. Black workers have to queue for hours for the mineshaft lifts to the surface, while white supervisors are allowed to jump the queue.

In the most militant of the recent strikes, in the "Pick 'n Pay" retail chain, workers were demanding a wage increase. But that was not all. They also attacked management's racist practices, which have continued despite the company's reputation as a "progressive" employer. That reputation is now in tatters after the company tried to get the strike declared illegal. The "new" police force launched a very old fashioned attack on the strikers using dogs, stun grenades and rubber bullets. Hundreds were arrested. Strikers responded in militant fashion, defending their picket lines, occupying company offices and destroying goods.

The bosses' newspapers started ringing the alarm bells. They demanded that the government step in to ensure the unions did not "overstep the bounds of acceptable action". Mandela quickly responded, attacking those who "failed to see the need to move from the politics of resistance to nation building". He suggested that the strikes were threatening to put off foreign investors.

### Strains

These developments have caused the first strains to appear in the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance. There is growing criticism from the rank and file that ANC government ministers were losing touch with the mass movement. COSATU has been equally concerned about attacks on "irresponsible trade unions" at a time when new labour laws are being discussed. Pressure on Mandela led to a joint statement with COSATU chief Sam Shilowa, which called on employers to take responsibility for creating "healthy industrial relations".

At the same time the unions distanced themselves from the militant tactics of the "Pick 'n Pay" workers. Enoch Godongwana of NUMSA launched a defence of the right to strike, but stressed that he was for "orderly strikes" such as those being conducted on traditional lines in the auto industry, with "normal" bargain-

blocks across the country to pursue their demands.

Under pressure from the strike wave, even the SACP has been forced to distance itself from the Mandela leadership. In its first public criticism of the ANC for thirty years, it accused them of "demobilising mass participation and dampening popular expectations". This is a clear indicator of the pressure on the SACP from the grass roots. A recent SACP Central Committee meeting reasserted the need for a "mass driven RDP", and chided the ANC leadership for not realising the importance of maintaining a mass movement outside parliament.

But the party has a problem. Not only did it play a leading role in the sell-out settlement, it is now in government and must take responsibility for that government's actions, including the attacks on strikers.

### Opposition

At the same time as "talking left" the SACP has quickly dealt with any opposition that threatens its alliance with the ANC. The sharpest clash has been with "hard liner" Harry Gwala of the Natal region. Gwala, an old-style Stalinist who is critical of the Slovo leadership and the constitutional settlement, was tolerated in the Party until the elections were over. But when he posed an obstacle to the deal stitched up by the ANC and SACP with Inkatha in Natal/KwaZulu, he was quickly dumped.

The deal involved fixing the election result so that Inkatha got a majority in Natal, legitimising its massive electoral fraud and constructing a power-sharing Provincial Government. SACP and former guerrilla cadres on the ground felt betrayed. Gwala expressed their anger. He found himself suspended from the Party for "organisational indiscipline". Rumours were spread about his control of "hit squads" supposedly aimed at fellow ANC members.

While the action has left the SACP with serious problems in Natal, the disciplinary measures are mainly designed as a warning to other dissidents. Even so, there are reports of unease in the party ranks over the direction of the government. This may well be reflected at its next Congress.

The ANC government's first hundred days has shown it is firmly on the side of the bosses. Far from tackling the wealth and privilege accrued under the old apartheid regime, the Government of National Unity has acted as defender of the existing class system. Its leading members are shamelessly integrating themselves into the top echelons of bourgeois society.

### Class

The actions of the ANC/SACP government prove that *Workers Power*—unlike almost every other left-wing newspaper—was absolutely correct to refuse to endorse a vote for the ANC's electoral alliance in the April election. Increasing numbers of workers and rank and file SACP members will come to realise the class nature of this government in the coming period. While a few concessions may well be thrown to the black masses, any serious challenge to the bourgeois order will be dealt with as ruthlessly as the "Pick 'n Pay" strike pickets were.

Workers and trade union militants must demand that COSATU and the SACP immediately break with this government and enter onto the road of struggle for a real workers' government. Only a government based on mass organisations of working class democracy—workers' and township councils and militias—can meet the burning needs of the workers in South Africa for housing, jobs and land, by destroying the system of wealth and privilege—capitalism—that condemns millions to grinding poverty.

**S AFRICA**  
**Did we vote for this?**

A MAJOR strike in South Africa shows how little the bosses and the police have changed since the elections which saw apartheid ended. Around 15,000 workers at the country's major supermarket chain, Pick 'n Pay, voted three to one to strike.

**An article about South Africa in Socialist Worker of 23 July points out how little has changed since the election. It is headed "Did we vote for this?"**

**Answer: yes, they did! Aware of the popularity of the ANC, SW did not have the courage to stand against the stream. They – and their co-thinkers in South Africa – called for a vote for the coalition.**

isters explained why RDP targets had to be kept in check, the "security" budget—which includes the armed forces—was increased by 10%! At R2.5 billion it equals the entire budget set aside for the RDP.

Sections of workers have to take advantage of the fact that the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) are now in government. The first half of this year saw the largest

ing to resolve them. This was a thinly veiled criticism of the militant tactics at "Pick 'n Pay".

The government intervened in the strike as a "mediator" and shortly afterwards a deal was struck falling far short of the strikers' original wage demands. Fortunately South African workers are keeping up their militant tactics. A current truckers' strike has involved workers setting up road

The flood of refugees to Miami and the tightening of the US blockade against Cuba has highlighted the deep crisis developing in one of the world's last Stalinist states. In the following articles **Stuart McKee** examines the situation. He argues that while socialists internationally must rally to the defence of Cuba against the US economic blockade, if the restoration of capitalism is to be prevented in Cuba, the workers and peasants will have to overthrow the Castro regime in a political revolution. In addition we interview an eyewitness to the developing social and economic crisis.

## TO STOP THE MARKET . . . Cuban workers must fight for power

This year, for the first time since the 1959 revolution, May Day celebrations were cancelled in Cuba. Instead the government called an emergency session of the National Assembly to discuss the growing budget deficit.

The Assembly adopted a series of measures which only added to the misery of the Cuban masses. A series of price rises were announced: cigarettes up 600%, rum, petrol, rail and long distance bus fares all up substantially. Services traditionally provided free in Cuba, like water, were now to be charged for. Subsidies for the workers' canteens were to be withdrawn.

These measures reflected the crisis of the Cuban economy and the policy that the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) is pursuing to overcome it. Official figures show that the economy has contracted by over 30% since 1991. Exports fell by an incredible 80%. This reflected the dramatic impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Cuba's main source of aid and trade.

Power cuts of eight hours a day—ten hours on Saturdays and Sundays—are now regular. In April this year 50% of the country's generating capacity was out of action. Its Czech and Russian power plants have been without spare parts since 1990. Cuban citizens exist on the most basic rations. Much of their time is spent in a struggle for goods no longer available in state shops.

Faced with the sudden collapse of their economy, the Cuban Stalinists have been reassessing their future. Emergency measures like rationing have gradually been supplemented with a long term plan to reinsert Cuba into the world capitalist market.

### Dependent

Cuba faces special problems compared to the other Stalinist states. It is a small island of just under 11 million people. Its economy is still overwhelmingly dependent on sugar—a crop that used to be bought in bulk by the USSR. It has inadequate natural resources for power supplies, and is completely dependent on other industrial economies for machinery, spare parts and mining expertise.

Worst of all it is sitting next to the strongest imperialist power in the world, one which is determined to use every means at its disposal to bring down the Castro government. The USA has imposed a trade and investment embargo for over thirty years. It tightened it two years ago with the so-called Cuban Democracy Act.

In common with other Stalinist regimes struggling for survival, Fidel Castro's government has adopted the approach of opening up the economy to the free market. The most dramatic move in this direction was the legalisation of holding and trading in dollars and other hard currencies

adopted last August. This has led to the "dollarisation" of whole sectors of the economy.

At the same time the Castroites launched a drive to bring foreign capital into virtually all sectors of the economy. Half the Cuban telecommunications industry was recently sold to a Spanish company. Important mineral producing areas, rich in nickel, gold, or zinc, have been parcelled up with concessions being granted to foreign investors. Canadian mining companies have invested in a big way. Tourism has become a major priority for resources with Spanish capitalists being the main beneficiaries. Castro has agreed a deal with the Madrid government to pay compensation to Spanish property owners who were expropriated in the revolution of 1959-61.

Recently the planning ministry was scrapped along with the commission which dealt with statistics. Four new super ministries have been formed, one of the most important being Tourism.

### Blockade

Is the Cuban government simply acting in justified self-defence, as many Stalinists would argue? After all, even a workers' state which had a revolutionary workers' democracy, especially one as small as Cuba, would have to make compromises with imperialism in order to survive. Even a country as large and well-endowed with natural resources as Russia had to make such compromises. The young Soviet Republic under Lenin had to break the imperialist blockade and enter joint ventures with capitalists to develop the economy, using "state capitalism" to develop out of backwardness.

But there is a big difference with the Cuban strategy.

The Cuban Stalinists are not using "the market" and joint ventures as a subordinate means of survival—as the Bolsheviks did—while they fight to mobilise the world working class in the struggle for socialism. Far from it. Just as they were committed to the Stalinist utopia of "socialism in one country", now they are determined to seek the survival of their own national bureaucratic caste by developing the market. This will destroy every gain of the Cuban masses and will, if the working class does not stop it, guarantee the triumph of capitalism.

There is another big difference. The Soviet Republic was a workers' state in which the workers took the decisions, through their soviets and through a democratic working class party, the Communist Party. The Cuban state exercises a dictatorship over the working class, brooking no dissent within the party or without. It has five different police and security services to secure its control of the streets and the media.

Castro is fundamentally no different to the Stalinists of Russia and Eastern Europe. His supporters know

the writing is on the wall for their system, with its hopeless bureaucratic planning and dictatorship over the working class. They intend to survive, if they can, as the new rulers of a "mixed economy", a capitalist Cuba.

It is the workers who are paying the price for these "reforms". Those without access to dollars, to the tourist industry, to the special shops for top party functionaries, suffer the miseries of shortages and declining living standards. Those who dare to protest are harassed and rounded up. Small wonder that for many youth the lure of the United States is so strong.

### Defend

Socialists must defend the gains of the Cuban revolution—the remnants of state ownership and planning which prevent the capitalist market from acting as the main determinant in economic life. Those who refuse to do so—like the Socialist Workers Party in Britain—show a contemptible indifference to the fate of the Cuban and Latin American masses. We must fight tooth and nail against US imperialism and the rich Cuban exiles who are attempting to install their own puppet regime. Should the present crisis result in any military clash with US imperialism, revolutionaries must unconditionally support the Cuban army and militias.

But for Trotskyists, defence of degenerate workers' states such as Cuba in no way means supporting the Stalinist dictatorship. Quite the opposite. The Cuban Communist Party is the grave digger of the revolution. To save the gains of the revolution, it is essential for the Cuban workers to struggle against Castro and the CCP's dictatorship, to fight for democracy in the unions, the workplaces and the CCP itself, and for the establishment of urban and rural workers' councils to govern Cuba.

The workers must be able to decide for themselves which parties or individuals best represent their interests. The press, radio and TV must be open to all parties not engaged in organising to bring in the US and exiled Cuban bourgeoisie.

### Freedom

Once the masses have experienced workers' democracy and freedom of speech, once this freedom is a reality for the ordinary worker and farmer, they will not be deluded by Washington's calls for a democracy of the millionaires.

Once the workers and farmers have taken control of production out of the hands of the privileged bureaucrats, they will not easily be conned into handing them over to the US multinationals or the Miami mafia. In short a political revolution in the coming months or years is the only answer to economic collapse and social counter-revolution. ■

# "Castro is not

**WP**—Can you tell us something about conditions—the standard of living, food supplies and so on?

**CMc**: Basically the staple diet is rice and beans seven days a week, available on a ration book issued to every family. All food is obtained through the ration book. Vegetables are available sometimes once or twice a week, but are of very poor quality. If no milk is available then powdered milk is substituted for children under five.

**WP**: What about clothes?

**CMc**: There is absolutely nothing in the state shops. The quality is so appalling, with shoes for example, that people do not fight to take up their one pair a year ration. They compare them with what is available in the dollar shops which are much better quality.

**WP**: What is the situation in the factories at the moment in terms of production?

**CMc**: Speaking to people who know what is going on nationally, academics and economists, they estimate that between 50% and 70% of factories are not producing any significant output. The primary problem is lack of raw materials. Cuba itself does not have sufficient basic industry to make spare parts or machinery, so it is dependent on imports to keep its factories going. It was extremely dependent on the Comecon countries of Eastern Europe, and this source has dried up completely.

There is the problem of broken machinery which is difficult to repair now, the lack of raw materials like rubber, oil and so on, which were previously imported, and the lack of markets. Even if they could produce, their old trading links with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have been broken and they have nowhere to sell what they produce. The quality is often too poor to sell on the open capitalist market.

**WP**: So what do the workers do when there is no work in the factories?

**CMc**: The majority of workers still turn up for work. The main reason is that there is food available in the workers' canteens, although recent Government decrees mean that they are now being charged for it. In other factories such as pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, work is prioritised so inputs are obtained and there are no power cuts. This is because they can sell these products for dollars on the world market.

**WP**: You mentioned the "Dollar Shops". How do people survive if the rations are so poor?

**CMc**: The ironic thing in Cuba at the moment is that people are called "luchadores", fighters or strugglers in English, not for being militants in defence of the revolution but for being best at fighting and haggling and exchanging on the streets! The "luchadores" are the people who can go out, have a lot of contacts, a lot of friends, who can exchange something for something else they need, to find the cooking oil, alcohol for cooking if there is no gas, or a piece of meat for someone who is sick in the family. People spend hours and hours every day doing this, it occupies a large part of their day. It contributes to large scale absenteeism from the factories, where of course there is little to do.

**WP**: So if you have dollars you can buy most things?

**CMc**: Yes. Of course things are sold on the black market in pesos, but there are 100 pesos to the dollar.

Workers Power interviewed Colin McKenzie, who has recently spent several months in Cuba, studying and living in old Havana. He left shortly before the refugee crisis erupted.



The average wage—about 200 pesos a month—is virtually worthless against the prices of these things. Before I left the price of six bananas was one dollar—two weeks' wages!

The other way people use dollars is in the dollar shops. These are state run. Foreigners have immediate access to them. Cubans have to queue up, often for hours, to get in. Inside they sell beer, soft drinks, tinned meat, powdered milk. Also shoes, clothes and other "luxury" items.

**WP**: So where does the average Cuban get hold of the dollars?

**CMc**: Mostly from abroad, sent as remittances by relatives, from Miami. Or they get them from tourists, by people working in the tourist industry or doing business with tourists. Working illegally, selling cigars, rum, being friendly to them and showing them round the city.

**WP**: What is the current situation in the tourist industry and other joint ventures? Clearly the Cuban government is very keen to encourage these joint ventures as a means of getting investment from the capitalist world.

**CMc**: Well there is a quite a lot of interest in these joint ventures from Europe, Latin America, Canada and Mexico at the moment. Especially in building new hotels, not so much in Havana but Valadero in particular.

**WP**: Why is there so much interest given that the US embargo means few tourists from the United States?

**CMc**: It's true, the natural market for Cuban tourism is the United States and until North Americans are allowed to come to Cuba no-one is going to make a lot of money out of tourism. But speaking to Europeans working in the hotel industry, they are very positive about the future from their point of view.

They are investing on the basis that at some point in the future, be it in two or five years, the blockade will be lifted, and Americans will come. They think they will have a head start over North American capital having leased the prime sites, built the hotels and so on.

**WP**: So how is the opening up of Cuba to foreign capitalism, the joint ventures, being justified in terms of Castro's constantly declared aims of defending socialism and being

# supplying them with answers"

against capitalism in Cuba?

**CMc:** Well I think there has been a shift. Raul Castro will still say "long live socialism" at the end of state speeches, but when you listen to other people in the party, to Fidel Castro's speeches, he mentions social justice much more than socialism. In fact he sounds to me like many social democrats in Europe.

The party does not talk about establishing capitalism as such, but they talk about the need to establish "a market" while defending hospitals, the health service, education etc.

**WP:** So how do they see the joint ventures developing, what role will they play? How do they function at the moment?

**CMc:** Well for a start it is not just in the tourism industry, everything is open to joint ventures; the cement industry, oil industry, mining. The only thing that does not seem to be touched so far is the sugar industry.

**WP:** What does it mean to have a joint venture?

**CMc:** Well supposedly the Cubans are meant to have 50% control, but from what I observed the input on the Cuban side is purely supplying a disciplined labour force. The foreign capitalists determine everything else.

**WP:** Shortly after you left there were serious riots in old Havana, the worst for decades. Do you know what happened there and have you any insights into the causes?

**CMc:** What happened was that a couple of days beforehand, some Cubans had hijacked ferries that cross the bay of Havana and the rumour had spread around old Havana that the same thing was going to happen again.

A big crowd gathered by word of mouth at the docks and the police and organised workers' security squads dispersed them. The crowd made its way back into old Havana, away from the docks. It grew as it went, up to two thousand or more. Their route would have taken them past crowded local swimming areas on a Friday afternoon. From there they went along the Malecon, the main street along the sea.

For me the most interesting thing is the shops and buildings that were attacked. They attacked the Deauville Hotel, which is the only joint venture hotel along there, and away from the sea they attacked dollar shops. They were crying "Libertad, Libertad" the whole time, which is the slogan of the Cuban exiles in Miami. But at the same time they were attacking symbols of capitalism, the dollar shops, the hotels, the heart of growing inequality amongst the Cubans.

**WP:** Who do you think the rioters were?

**CMc:** Well if it was people from old Havana it is the poorest area of Havana, where the people are

predominantly black and it's the toughest area to live. Very few of the houses in that area even have a water supply. They have to go with buckets to a communal tap.

**WP:** Thinking about the current economic crisis, the riots and the new exodus to the United States, what was your impression about the attitude of the masses to the Castro regime, does it vary from one section of workers to another?

**CMc:** There is probably a good 10 or 15% who are completely against the revolution and Castro. They will tell you that they have been against the revolution from day one.

On the other hand there is a good solid 10% who are "Fidelista" to the core, mainly moved by ideological concerns rather than material concerns, who in my opinion really will fight to the end to defend the existing system. In the middle, the majority I would say, still support Castro himself, but the regime and the party around him is something else. Which means for me that if Castro died tomorrow, 70% of the population would be out on the streets protesting and calling for the end of the regime.

**WP:** Why do you think the party and the regime are so unpopular? Are they blamed for the economic shortages, the scarcity?

**CMc:** That's part of it. I think people blame them for the shortages, the mismanagement, the corruption. But the Cuban people are told day after day by the leadership that the only way to survive is to become more productive, to work harder, to learn the ways of the market i.e. of capitalism. So they must think, why do they need this old archaic regime that collapsed all over the world five years ago if they are to adopt capitalist ways?

**WP:** What is the attitude of the youth to the government?

**CMc:** The thing that I really noticed was an attitude of "wait and see" with young people. There is complete fear of standing up and criticising the regime. They know they will just be taken away. Now they "wait and see", continue being members of the Young Communists but not being active members.

For young people, the only way they can solve their problems of housing, of food, of relationships, is through getting dollars somehow. Castro, "socialism", "communism" is not supplying them with any answers. People are really looking for individual solutions to these problems, which means getting a job in a joint-venture, in business.

**WP:** So what do you think is likely to happen now, given that Clinton has cut off the possibility of people fleeing to the United States and has restricted the sending back of dollar remittances to Cuba?

**CMc:** The stopping of dollars is going to be the most telling meas-

ure against Cuba. The measure designed to prevent Cubans leaving is just not going to stop the exodus, because the struggle for food, living with power cuts up to ten hours a day, water available sometimes for only an hour a day, gas cuts six hours a day, is just unbearable for Cubans used to a much better life than that only three years ago. So the flow of Cubans will continue.

It is important to say however that perhaps the slump has now

bottomed out to some extent. Certainly this year, bad as it is, is better than the Summer of 1993 in terms of power cuts and food shortages.

**WP:** Why is that? Have they adapted their economy?

**CMc:** The break up of the Comecon trading block came as a big shock and it took them a year or two years to sort out new trading patterns. To develop barter deals, like oil for sugar with Iran and the Russian

Republic, but still oil supplies are well below what is required. Castro speaks of a "ten years war", which in Cuba is a very emotive image, because the first war of independence is called the Ten Years War. And increasingly, especially when I was there, this was the line from the top, that this was a decade long struggle.

**WP:** Do you think the regime will last ten years?

**CMc:** No.



The refugees are fleeing an economic crisis the USA is doing all it can to deepen

## US hands off Cuba!

**L**AST MONTH thousands of Cubans headed for the coast of Florida on boats and makeshift rafts. US President Clinton responded by saying, "The Cuban government will not dictate American immigration policy".

This latest piece of doublespeak comes from a government that for the last 30 years lauded Cubans leaving the country as "heroes" fleeing a brutal dictatorship. Overnight the same Cubans became unwanted immigrants. They were shipped off to join 15,000 Haitian refugees held in camps at the US Guantanamo naval base in Cuba.

Since 1962 every Cuban reaching North America has been automatically granted a "green card" and the right to stay in the USA. The problem for the Clinton administration is that their attempts to strangle Cuba through tightening the trade embargo—at the same time as the collapse of the Soviet Union has crippled the Cuban economy—has led to increasing misery and desperation.

US officials watched in horror as the regular trickle of Cuban boat people turned into a flood. In the whole of 1993, 3,600 Cubans were granted rights to stay. In the first half of 1994, over 5,000 had arrived. It was clear tens of thousands more were determined to risk the perilous journey. With elections looming in November, the Democratic governor of Florida demanded action.

Castro had carried out his threat to put no obstacles in the way of Cubans setting out for the USA. He even invited Miami exiles to bring their boats to "come and look for their relatives".

This was enough for Clinton. He set up camps for the Cubans and declared the 28 year old policy of granting asylum at an end.

This was not just another example of the US government's racism, its determination to keep out blacks and Latinos. The administration intends to use the current crisis to try and achieve its long term goal—

bringing down the Castro regime.

Washington never forgave the leaders of the Cuban revolution of 1959-61 for confiscating the property of the US capitalists who dominated the Cuban economy. The example of Cuba, its defiance for over three decades of the northern colossus 90 miles across the Straits of Florida, encouraged movements of resistance and revolt throughout Latin America and beyond. Washington is determined to destroy Castro's regime and return Cuba to the status of semi-colonial dependence on the USA.

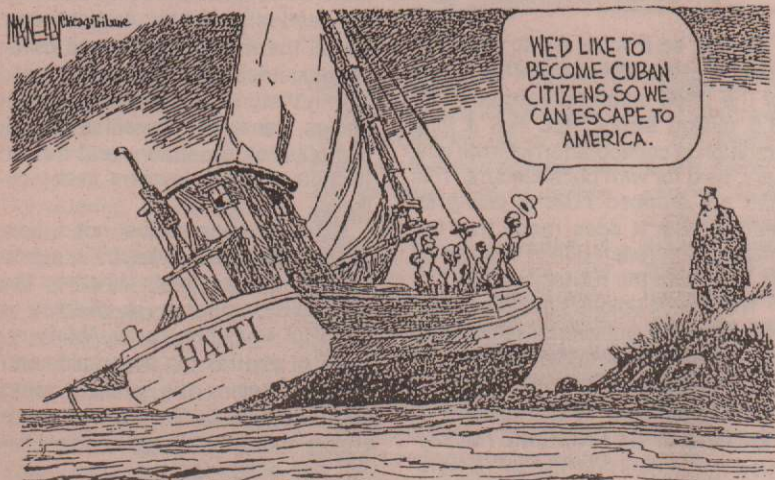
Clinton will go still further in his campaign against Cuba. This hypocrite, who happily grants "most favoured nation status" to the butchers of Tiananmen Square, declares that the 31 year old embargo on Cuba will stay until there is "open democracy". At the same time he has taken further measures to increase the misery of the Cuban masses, banning relatives in the United States from sending back dollar remittances to their families. For many this is the only source of basic goods like cooking oil and clothes.

With "Operation Distant Shore" already underway, the US administration is talking about a "naval blockade", supposedly to stop US boats going in and Cubans coming out. If Washington has its way the whole of Cuba will become one vast concentration camp until they force Castro out.

That is why every socialist, every fighter against imperialism and exploitation, should come to the defence of Cuba. The task of overthrowing the Stalinist Castro regime belongs to the Cuban workers and peasants themselves, not to false friends in Washington and Miami.

Socialists demand the immediate lifting of the trade embargo, the release of all Cuban refugees and their immediate resettlement to the country of their choice. To end the stranglehold on Cuba, workers around the world must fight for immediate economic aid with no strings attached. ■

**Lift the trade embargo—Break the naval blockade**



US hypocrisy over refugees

**"The government now considers it expedient to relax on the wholesale ban on politics" Nigeria's military regime announced on 17 August. "Individuals or groups may henceforth canvass political ideas" continued the communiqué.**

**But the government's generosity was a little late. Two million workers are on strike; barricades, demonstrations and street clashes with the army are occurring daily. Millions of workers have taken to the streets to "canvass the political idea" of overthrowing the military regime of General Sani Abacha.**

For over eight weeks the oil industry—which accounts for 90% of Nigeria's exports and 81% of government earnings—has been on strike. Production has fallen to less than 20% of the normal 2 million barrels a day.

Now the normally "non-political" Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has been forced to call general strike action, bringing banks, transport, factories and agriculture to a standstill.

Last year General Babangida called the first parliamentary elections for 24 years. But as voting day approached he banned the 13 political parties which had been set up, disqualified their leaders from standing, and created two government stooge parties to contest the elections. Their manifestos were drawn up by government officials.

Into this farce stepped Moshood Abiola. A long time associate of Babangida, a millionaire middleman for the multinational ITT, a newspaper magnate and airline owner, Abiola won 58% of the vote in June 1993. But the election was annulled by a frightened military. Babangida gave way to General Abacha, and Abiola fled to a suite at London's Savoy Hotel.

### Arrest

When he returned to Nigeria earlier this year and declared himself the rightful president he was arrested for treason.

It was Abiola's arrest which split Nigerian ruling circles and prompted the start of the oil workers' strike. Abacha's regime responded with ever more repressive measures. Strikers have been sacked. All strikes have been declared illegal. The Nigerian Labour Congress has been dissolved. The leadership of the two oil unions were removed from office and arrested.

Abacha has also moved against critics within the ruling class—replacing army and navy generals suspected of being too soft on the strikers and, at the end of August, sacking the heads of all state companies.

This, in turn, escalated the strike wave. It also caused rifts in the judiciary, with Abiola's trial judge resigning, and a court of appeal overturning the sackings of the union chiefs.

The main demands of the strike are the unconditional release of Abiola and his assumption of presidential power as part of the democratisation of Nigeria. But as the working class has flexed its muscles it has also begun to raise demands for better wages and living standards, and for increased investment in the oil industry. The average manual wage in Nigeria is £10 a week. Demands now include the reversal of all repressive measures against the unions, and an end to censorship.

Nigeria is at a crossroads. Its military regime is thrashing around in its death agony. At the root of the present turmoil is the crisis of underdevelopment and debt gripping Africa, and the end of the road for the system of "state capitalist", one party or military regimes which have ruled much of the continent since de-colonisation.

Nigeria is a country rich in oil, the basic natural resource of modern capitalism. It produces 2 million barrels of oil per day, most of which is exported to Europe and the USA. The

BY LAURA WATKINS

industry is jointly owned by the Nigerian state oil company and the big multinationals, Shell, Mobil and Chevron. These companies take \$1 profit from every barrel sold. Added to this are their "operating costs" which together with those of the state oil company eat up over half the oil revenue.

The remaining \$4 billion oil revenue that goes to the Nigerian state is not enough to cover the country's annual repayments on its \$28 billion external debt to the "Paris Club" of international banks.

In short the world system of imperialism sucks the Nigerian economy dry. What little of the oil revenue finds its way into the Nigerian economy does so via the corrupt state bureaucracy. This acts as the guarantor and beneficiary of imperialist economic domination of Nigeria.

But this system is in crisis. The regime suspended its external debt repayments in 1992 and has now run up \$7 billion arrears. Its current budget is based on hopelessly optimistic debt relief and production revenues. The rest of the economy was already in recession before the strike wave began.

The long term imperialist answer is to "structurally adjust" the semi-colonial economy, privatising the oil and other major industries, "deregulating" the labour market, and in return alleviating some of the debt burden. Politically this has led to imperialist sponsorship for the reform of one-party rule throughout Africa and for the introduction of limited forms of parliamentary democracy in which the growing non-state bourgeoisie can exercise political power.

In the process, however, the imperialists risk destroying Nigeria as a unitary state and plunging the country into a fratricidal ethnic breakup. Whilst the military regime is dominated by the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria the state bureaucratic system in general works to ensure that the elites of all three major ethnic groups, Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo, get a share of the loot.

### Division

The emergence of regional private bourgeoisies, and their attempts to enter Nigerian politics, inevitably raises the spectre of ethnic division as the regional ruling classes compete for primacy.

Abiola represents, for the imperialists, a man who can straddle both camps—military and civilian bourgeois. His book *Legend of our time: the thoughts of MKO Abiola* outlines his support for privatisation and agricultural diversification in line with the plans of the IMF and OECD. He is a prominent Yoruba private capitalist but like the dominant Hausa people is a Muslim.

A recent *Financial Times* editorial called for Abiola and Abacha to form an interim coalition government and hand over the state industries to "technocrats" under strict IMF supervision. In return the IMF would re-schedule the external debt.

For the *FT* the alternative was "too ghastly to contemplate".

And what is the alternative? In fact there are two, the same two which confront the entire African continent: socialism or barbarism in the form of

# NIGERIA Oil workers shake military



Workers must break from millionaire Abiola

ethnic civil war. The Biafran war of 1967, when the Ibo people attempted to secede from Nigeria, led to over 1 million deaths. With the unified military state doomed to destruction, a return to "private" capitalism in Nigeria signifies the inevitable growth of ethnic rivalry.

But there is another alternative. The workers, who have shown they have the power to bring Nigeria's economy to a standstill, also have the power to revive it, using the billions of dollars in oil revenues to meet the needs of the Nigerian masses. That is what the Nigerian army, Abiola and the oil multinationals all fear.

The entry of the working class into the pro-Abiola revolt has already transformed the situation from a gentleman's disagreement between factions of the ruling class into a major struggle between the classes.

The task the workers now face is to combine the struggle for political democracy with the struggle for their immediate economic and social needs, to transform the struggle into one which can break imperialism's economic stranglehold on Nigeria.

To head off the democratic demands of the masses Abacha has initiated a Constitutional Conference. This body is supposed to meet for four months until October and to decide the future constitution of the country. It should come as no surprise that the delegates were not elected. Instead they were carefully hand-picked by a group of so-called people's representatives.

In place of this the working class must demand nothing less than a sovereign constituent assembly elected by all over the age of 16. Through such an assembly the interests and the democratic goals of the Nigerian masses could take centre stage in the current drama.

At present the struggle is being channelled towards a compromise solution by the two major bourgeois opposition groups—the Movement for

Unity and Progress (MUP) in the north and the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) in the south, both made up of elder statesmen and key ex-military leaders.

The only way to guarantee and satisfy the demand for political democracy is for the masses to develop their own organs of struggle and democratic representation. For that they must build workers' and peasants' councils, in the cities and the countryside, and build a workers' militia based on these councils to protect them from the attacks that the armed forces are meting out against the trade unions.

Such bodies are the only ones that can ensure the complete overthrow of the military and prevent the thwarting of the masses' democratic aspirations. At the same time they alone can lay the basis for working class power and socialism in Nigeria.

### As the working class has flexed its muscles it has also begun to raise demands for better wages and living standards

A first step must be to take the running of the strikes out of the hands of the trade union bureaucrats. The 3.5 million strong NLC has a long tradition of collaboration with the military, paid for with backhanders. This has not stopped Abacha jailing its leaders. But it does mean that the major union federation is crippled by its links with the military state.

The two oil unions have proved far more militant, but even here the leaders represent sectional interests in the bourgeoisie.

A key demand of the leaders of PENGASSAN and NUPENG (respectively the clerical and manual oil workers' unions) has been for the govern-

ment to repay \$800 million it owes the oil multinationals in unpaid operating costs. In retaliation for the state's default on these costs the oil multinationals have cut back production and investment in the past two years, and made large scale redundancies.

The hopes of the oil workers' leaders that the oil multinationals will reward this gesture of goodwill severely weakens the workers' attempts to introduce demands for better wages and conditions in the oilfields.

Despite this weakness, one of the great strengths of the oil workers' dispute has been its ability to overcome ethnic divisions. Many of the oil workers are migrants from different ethnic backgrounds, thrown together in the same workplace. Thus while the NLC's national strike call has been poorly implemented in the Hausa north, the oil workers' strike has taken root there.

It is vital that the Nigerian working class begins to express its political independence from the various capitalist opposition groups.

Only the working class has an interest in maintaining and transforming state owned industry in Nigeria. Only the working class has an interest in, and the ability to deliver, national unity without discriminating against one or other ethnic group. Only the working class, through democratic planning, workers' control, state ownership and control of foreign trade can begin to use Nigeria's natural resources to the benefit of the masses.

### Pressure

Politicians like Abiola may be relying on workers' action now to help him into office, but if that leads to the working class sensing and using its power and independence there will be even greater pressure to "leave the political struggle to the politicians".

The workers must break from Abiola and the NADECO/MUP opposition and launch its own political party based on unions, strike committees and other working class community organisations. It must build a party committed to workers' power and international socialism.

The striking workers must take a lead in fusing the fight for democracy with the demands necessary to satisfy the immediate social needs of the masses. They must fight to repudiate the foreign debt, including the government's debt to the multinational oil conglomerates. In fact they will need to go further and nationalise all the multinationals and other key industries with no compensation.

Only that, not placating the oil companies, can really guarantee the resumption of investment and the reduction of unemployment in the oilfields.

Nigerian workers must not squander the opportunity. Abacha's regime cannot last for long. Whether the imperialists manage to oversee a peaceful transition to an Abiola regime, or whether the army splits and civil war begins the workers must enter the next period determined to ensure that this struggle, which began with a fight for democracy, ends with workers' power. ■

# Animal lib? No thanks!

Dear comrades,

With the leaders of the workers' movement determined to carry on retreating, it is no surprise that many youth who want to fight the system come into struggle, initially, over issues like the environment, the right to party, the M11 campaign.

In all of these campaigns, socialists have to draw a class line, advancing revolutionary socialist answers on transport, pollution, civil rights etc, and cutting across the tendency to all-class pressure campaigns.

But what should be our attitude to the "animal rights" campaign? This ranges from tweedy Tory do-gooders through to the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Animal Rights Militia (ARM). In addition to carrying out individual attacks on shops, laboratories and cancer research charities these organisations have endangered the life and limb of teachers, health workers, shop workers and research workers in the name of "liberating" ani-

mals used for experimentation—even school gerbils!

The activities of such organisations are no joke. They have caused over £5 million worth of damage this year—not something socialists would normally cry about, but when linked to attacks on workers simply doing their jobs, this is something which demands a concrete response.

Revolutionary socialists have to distance themselves

✓ Agree  
 ✗ Disagree?  
 ! Got something to say?  
 Write in to:  
 Workers Power  
 BCM 7750  
 London WC1N 3XX

completely from all forms of "animal liberationism". We are for "human liberation"—something the ALF would stigmatise



ALF spokesperson Robin Webb

as "species-ism". Yes we are species-ist, because only one species on the planet has genetically evolved fully conscious behaviour and a dynamic society capable of bringing socialism.

We should say to hunt saboteurs and others involved in genuine political activism over animal rights, many of whom are good activists in the anti-fascist movement, that the most important fight is for working class power.

Those like the ARM and the "Justice Department" involved in acts of violence against workers in the health service, education and pharmaceuticals industry should be condemned by the workers' movement and

not defended against the state.

This might lose us a few friends in the "radical" youth milieu, but just as we are not frightened to say that an anarchist is a "liberal with a gun" we should not be afraid to tell the truth about the ALF.

They are tweedy-Tories with letter bombs, they are a target for fascist infiltration, and they are a bunch of sad individuals as well.

Yours  
 Colin Lloyd,  
 London

• We invite our readers to send in their views on this and related subjects

## Organising rank and file civil servants

Dear comrades,

In your article on Civil Servants (*WP* 179) you correctly state that:

"Building a rank and file movement to transform the unions from top to bottom into fighting democratic organisations is not just a fine sounding phrase. It is the only way militant activists can build a mass base capable of defeating the careerists".

We in the Socialist Caucus, an independent rank and file grouping within the CPSA (and also some members of NUCPS) completely agree with you. We are in fact attempting to build what you call for as being at the heart of your Civil Service Action Programme, i.e. "the need for a network of activists throughout the offices and various unions who can lead the day to day struggle for workers' control over every aspect of our jobs".

Considering these agreements that we have and the role that the Socialist Caucus plays in the Civil Service unions it was disappointing that your article made no mention of the Socialist Caucus but merely criticised the electoralism of the Militant Labour dominated Broad Left. It is very easy to be critical of the Broad Left, but it would be both more difficult and more

constructive to make a serious criticism of the attempts of Socialist Caucus to build a rank and file organisation.

To have sent some copies of your Civil Service Action Programme would indeed have been a constructive and comradely act.

We would very much like to

hear your reasons for WP not seeing a role for the Socialist Caucus.

Though the Broad Left is several times our size, our influence is growing and remains more than your own at present.

In conclusion you have in the past attended Socialist Caucus meetings and also

supported our candidates in elections. Why therefore do you not join with us and help to build that network of left-wing activists that is desperately needed?

In comradeship,  
 National Secretary of the Socialist Caucus

## BNP in Shadwell election bid

Dear comrades,

Once again the BNP is making a by-election bid in Tower Hamlets. Not this time on the Isle of Dogs, but in nearby Shadwell.

The BNP candidate is Gordon Callow, an old Mosleyite who has several convictions for racist and anti-Semitic violence and who was part of the NF's paramilitary Honour Guard in the 1970s.

Workers Power supporters in East London have been campaigning, alongside the Labour Party and individual anti-fascists, for a massive vote for

Labour and to keep the Nazis off the streets.

This being the time of year when many Nazis go off to play at soldiers in "training camps" organised by Swedish and German fascist groups, the BNP's campaign has so far been low key. That provides an excellent opportunity for the workers' movement and the left to do what it failed to do in Millwall—stop the Nazis campaigning altogether.

While many activists breathed a sigh of relief at Beackon's defeat in Millwall,

nobody should forget that Beackon's vote increased and that in South Newham the Nazis came close to victory.

Every fascist attending a meeting, paper sale or canvass should get the same treatment as Beackon's thugs received on election night in May—namely a quick journey to the local accident and emergency facility.

In comradeship,  
 Graham Alexander,  
 Tower Hamlets

## 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

**INSIDE**

Number 181 September 1994

- ★ **Mandela versus the workers**
- ★ *Right to silence*
- ★ **Oil workers shake Nigeria**

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

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

## RAHMAN FAMILY FIGHT DEPORTATION

# “We want solidarity, not pity!”



**N**EARLY TWO years ago we started our campaign to stop me and my family from being deported.

My wife Rosemina came here on holiday in 1991. It was discovered that she had a rare form of cancer and so she stayed for treatment. She was so ill that the doctors feared she might die, so they sent for me and my two daughters from Djibouti.

With the support of the NHS she lived but she is still very ill from the side effects of chemotherapy. She is worried about what will happen to her and to our daughter Shabana who is multiply handicapped with serious learning difficulties and who has been attending Firwood Special School in Bolton.

We live in Bolton, and the racist Tory government are trying to deport us in spite of the many medical reports and

**BY AZIZ RAHMAN**

the support we have had. I want to be allowed to stay in the country because otherwise I fear for the life of my wife and daughters. We applied to stay in Britain permanently on the basis of "compassionate grounds". That was when I discovered that the word compassion does not exist in British law.

### SMASH ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!

There is no humanitarianism for families facing the threat of deportations like Florence Okolo, Helen Aladasanwe and family, Prakash and Prem Chavrimootoo. And there is still no justice for our brothers and sisters who are faced with frame ups, like Winston Silcott, the M25 Campaign and the families of vic-

tims of racist attacks.

For that reason our campaign extends its support and solidarity to all different organisations, trade unions and other groups fighting all forms of racism and fascism.

Our struggle is the struggle of all black people against racist immigration laws and all forms of racism. We cannot separate our fight against immigration laws from work-

ing class struggle.

Recently our campaign was on the demonstration outside Manchester Crown Court in support of the Sefton 2. The people on that demonstration wanted to fight the anti-union laws, they wanted to fight racism: that's why we can't separate the struggle against racism from the work-

ing class struggle as a whole.

Rosemina and I are from Africa, but our grandparents came from India. We know how the British, the French and all the imperialist bosses kept us divided and fighting against each other so that they could rule over us for centuries.

We have to learn from history and not be divided again. That is why our campaign has supported all working class struggles like the Burnsalls strike, the miners, the signal workers and many others.

Our appeal against deportation will be heard on 7 September at Aldine House Immigration Appeal Court in Salford.

On 6 September we are holding a public meeting and

an all night vigil. I am calling for workers' organisations all over the country to send delegations to the meeting, the vigil and the rally to break the isolation that black people in struggle feel. Bring your banners, sleeping bags and some music!

We want support, not on the basis of pity, but on the basis of solidarity against racist immigration laws and for the right of all black people to enter and remain in the U.

Our campaign is determined to move on from its initial starting point. We now need a national campaign organised around the general issue of fighting racism and fascism. The only way to go forward is to link up the many campaigns against deporta-

### What you can do

- ★ Write to the Home Secretary in support of the family. Send letters to:  
*The Home Secretary,  
Home Office,  
Queen Anne's Gate,  
London  
SW1H 9AT*  
quoting reference R311805.
- ★ Send copies of your letter to the defence campaign and to the family's MP  
*David Young MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1*
- ★ Send a donation to the Rahman Family Defence Campaign
- ★ Invite a campaign speaker to your organisation.
- ★ Buy the campaign video, *Solidarity not Sympathy*, and arrange a showing at your union branch, workplace, social club etc. It costs £10 from the address below.
- ★ Contact:  
*The Rahman Family  
Defence Campaign  
Socialist Club  
16 Wood Street  
(off Bradshawgate)  
Bolton  
BL1 1DY*

### CAMPAIGN DIARY

**Tuesday 6 Sep:**  
Public Meeting - Trade unionists speak out against deportations!  
Manchester Town Hall 7.30pm

**Tuesday 6 Sep:**  
All night vigil at Immigration Appeal Court, Aldine House, New Bailey Street, Salford, from 9.30pm

**Wednesday 7 Sep:**  
Mass Picket of Immigration Appeal Court, 9am - 10am:  
Lunchtime Rally 1pm - 2.00pm

tion and racist injustice and demand the labour movement gives them all full backing. We need an organisation that is capable of fighting all immigration controls, not just individual cases.■

**NOW TURN TO PAGE 6**