

Workers power

INSIDE

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

Price 50p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

GAS

British Gas boss
Cedric Brown's
pay up 75% to
£475,000

Your gas bills
go up by 8%



WATER

Yorkshire Water boss Sir
Gordon Jones'
pay up 169%
to £156,000

Your bills set to
rise by inflation
plus 4% by
2004



POWER

Midland Electricity boss
Bryan
Townsend's
pay up by 50%
to £290,000

Electricity bills
go up by 6%



The great Tory

RIP OFF!

Gas, Water, Electricity: what do these three industries have in common?

- They were all privatised by the Tories.
- They have all launched attacks on their workforces.
- They have all brought in price rises for working class consumers, along with service and safety cuts.
- They have all given their top managers obscene

pay rises.

That is what Tory privatisation is all about: breaking up state-owned industry to help the rich get richer at our expense. All the propaganda about giving state industries "back to the people" was pure lies. Privatisation has left workers and consumers without any control over

basic services—services that are essential to our lives. Privatisation has granted the new private monopolies a licence to rob us blind.

Sell off

No wonder privatisation is so unpopular. Major had to drop the Post Office sell-off. Now the Railway sell off—with fare increases and timetable cuts set to

make life miserable for millions—threatens to blow up in Major's face as well.

So why won't Tony Blair and the Labour Party commit themselves to reversing Tory privatisations?

Instead of tailoring their policies to fit the needs of the City and big business, Labour should be standing up for working class people. Services should be run for public need, not

private greed. We have a right to cheap, efficient supplies of gas, water and electricity. To guarantee that right:

- All the privatised industries should be re-nationalised, without a penny of compensation for the privateers and the parasites.

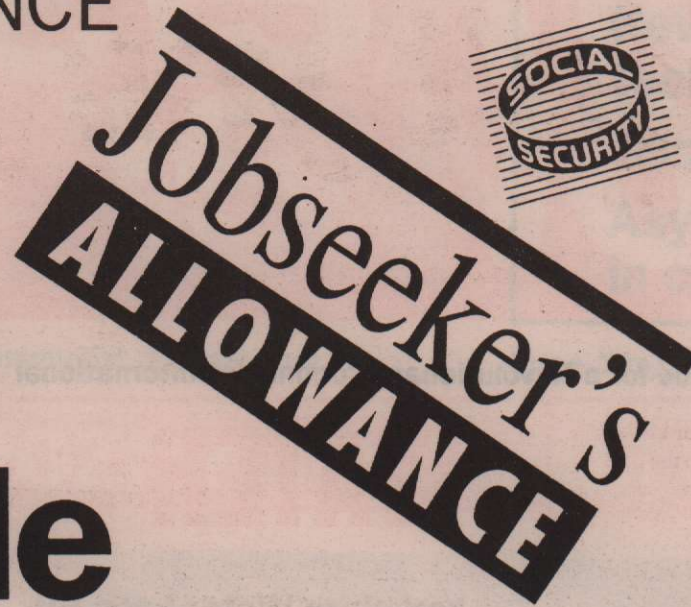
- They should be put under the control of the workers themselves, not overpaid executives or corrupt and unelected management boards

- Prices should be set so that no household has to worry about the cost of heat, light and running water.

● **The logic of the profit system: turn to page three**

JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE

Forcing claimants off the dole



THE JOBSEEKERS'S Allowance (JSA) is a plan to force unemployed workers into low-paid drudgery, using the threat of benefit suspension and a tougher regime at the dole offices. It does not officially take effect until April 1996. But already Employment Service staff are under mounting pressure to deduct penalties from claimants and force them off the unemployment register altogether.

The stated objective of the JSA is to fuse Unemployment Benefit and Income Support into one programme. Claimants with sufficient National Insurance contributions will be eligible for a flat rate payment for six months, as opposed to the current twelve.

Those with adult dependants lose their right to a dependant allowance and will be means-tested. People aged 18-24 will receive a lower rate of benefit because Income Support rates will apply.

In the words of Peter Lilley, the JSA should spur people on the dole to pursue a "solid programme of action directed to getting work". In reality, the JSA is just another weapon designed to slash the benefits bill and force people to work for miserly rates of pay and under squalid conditions.

Recent studies by the Unemployment Unit highlight the draconian system which the Tories have already imposed.

More than 40,000 Income Sup-

port recipients suffered benefit penalties of up to 40% for failing to attend or complete compulsory programmes between April and September 1994. This marks a 250% increase over the number penalised during the same period in 1993! Under the provisions of the Workwise scheme, which is now compulsory for all 18-24 year olds who have been jobless for more than a year, one in seven have had weekly payments reduced to less than £22 for up to four weeks.

All this takes place against the background of "market testing" of the Benefits Agency as a prelude to privatisation. The introduction of performance-related pay has pressurised

agency workers to achieve "positive outcomes" from Restart interviews and to push more and more claimants onto compulsory programmes. Increasingly, "doubtful" claims are being submitted to adjudication. A report from the National Association of Citizen Advice Bureaux estimates that in 1993/94 more than 180,000 people with perfectly legitimate claims are faced with payment cuts of 40%—and in many instances no benefit at all.

An overriding objective of the Tory schemes is to massage the jobless figures for propaganda purposes and cut the cost to the Treasury. The "training" on programmes like Workwise is minimal. Many of the

schemes associated with the notorious Youth Training initiative have been incentives for the bosses to take on cheap labour.

The main advantage for the bosses is savings on recruitment costs, since the benefits agencies screen the potential workers. Despite Clarke's budget speech about the need for state intervention in the labour market, the Tories are actually cutting Portillo's Employment Department budget by 7% this year.

At the same time, Portillo talks of a dramatic increase in the number of trainees moving into jobs. This can only mean turning the screw still tighter on claimants. According to the Unemployment Unit, the government's own figures suggest that it "aims to double the rate of participation of unemployed young adults on compulsory programmes" even before JSA comes into effect. The Unit notes that "The steepest rise in disqualification has occurred for those referred . . . for not actively seeking employment". The JSA can only accelerate this trend. It paves the way for the introduction of US-style welfare schemes, under which claimants can lose *all* benefits indefinitely for refusing to take a job.

The TUC issued a statement criticising the JSA White Paper as "massively irrelevant", accusing the Tories of "completely missing the point". But the TUC bureaucracy is blind to the Tories' real aim of bullying jobless people off the unemployment register. With the further shredding of an already inadequate welfare safety net, the collective bargaining power of those already in work, especially those labelled unskilled, will inevitably decline.

The failure of the TUC executive to launch any meaningful fight in support of the unemployed is an abysmal indictment in a society where even the fiddled figures show 2.5 million people without work.

The impending introduction of JSA, along with the current routine harassment of claimants, emphasises the urgency of building a **fighting unemployed workers' movement** and, in the here and now, battling to win trade unionists in the Civil Service to a total boycott of all work associated with the JSA. This, of course, will mean breaking the Tories' laws. But the alternative is to drive hundreds of thousands of ordinary people into absolute poverty. ■

HOUSING BENEFIT

"You're too poor to live here"

THE TORIES have decided that hundreds of thousands of benefit claimants are living in houses too good for them. And they have come up with a solution.

Under new rules introduced in November's budget, housing benefit claimants will no longer receive the full cost of their rent in housing benefit. They will face the choice: move to a cheaper house or flat—or meet the shortfall out of £44 a week income support or the old age pension.

Between 1988 and 1994, the bill for housing benefit trebled. The current cost to the Treasury stands at £3.9 billion and is projected to rise to £5.5 billion by 1996/7. For a government ideologically wedded to the market and desperate to slash public sector spending, housing benefit is an obvious target.

Housing benefit is paid to the unemployed and those on low incomes, and can usually cover the full rent of an average home or flat. The reasons the bill has soared are entirely of the Tories making.

In the first place private landlords have taken advantage of freedoms granted by the Tories to massively hike the rents on overcrowded, barely furnished rooms let out to the unemployed and homeless. They regularly charge the unemployed far more than working private tenants, secure in the knowledge that the housing benefit system will foot the bill.

In addition the massive council housing sector has seen rents double and treble under the impact of council cuts. In some inner city areas the majority of council tenants are unemployed, disabled or retired. This has allowed councils to respond to budget cuts with rent increases way above inflation, secure in the knowledge that central government has to foot the bill for the increased housing benefit claims that result.

Jonathan Aitken, multi-millionaire, mansion owner, Ritz diner and treasury minister, has decided that, for the poor and homeless, enough is enough.

Tenants are living in houses which are too large for them, Aitken claims, with no hint of irony. Instead of limiting the rights of swindling landlords to put up rents at will, Aitken has targeted the tenants.

Under the new rules only those tenants paying rents at the average level for the area and type of property will still be eligible for 100% housing benefit. For properties above the average level, claimants will get only 50% of the difference between the average and the real market rent. This will eventually save the government £200 million from the annual cost of rent allowances and will hit around a quarter of all private tenants.

The exact effect of these changes depends upon what is considered the average rent. At present, rent officers from the DSS fix determined rents for particular types of properties. In London, the mean determined rent for a three-bedroomed, furnished dwelling was £109 per week. The maximum determined rent is £336. Under the new system, a tenant paying such a rent will have to find £113.50 per week themselves. Difficult, if you're poor enough to qualify for benefit in the first place!

This measure will clearly restrict tenants to living in the cheapest and worst accommodation available. It is an all too real prospect for thousands of working class people who have seen Thatcher's dream of home ownership turn into the nightmare of re-possession, homelessness and rack-rented slum accommodation.

Council workers in the benefit offices should adopt a policy of complete non-cooperation with the changes. But we also need a posi-

tive plan for reversing the damage wrought by the Tories' policies.

We have to force Labour to pledge the reintroduction of all the tenants' rights withdrawn by the Tories since 1979, and the nationalisation without compensation of properties owned by large-scale private landlords.

There is also an urgent need for a

massive programme of council house building.

We do not need some new "equilibrium" between public and private sectors in the housing market. We need to eliminate market forces in housing altogether, by providing cheap, well designed and built council accommodation for all who want it. ■

NHS WAITING LISTS

Tory lies exposed

TORY HEALTH Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, say NHS waiting lists have been dramatically reduced. She is a bare-faced liar.

An analysis for the consumer magazine *Which?* reveals the Tories' cynical abuse of official statistics. *Which?* reports that thousands of patients are waiting two and sometimes three years before even seeing a consultant, yet the government calculates waiting lists only after someone has already seen a consultant.

While the overall number of patients receiving NHS treatment has reached an historic high, this figure conceals the relentless growth of waiting lists for hospital admission. In 1991, there were just over one million people awaiting admission throughout Britain.

By late 1994, the figure stood at more than 1,063,000 for England alone. Contrary to the Tories' claims, there are no accurate figures for how long people are waiting, though *Which?* estimates that more than 14,000 general and 15,000 orthopaedic patients have waited over a

year for treatment.

The report also highlights how the Tories' fundholding schemes for GPs, a key element in the NHS "reforms", have encouraged a two-tier service. The vastly different experiences of a father and son, who had coincidentally suffered similar knee injuries, illustrate the point.

The son's GP was a fundholder and he received hospital treatment

within six weeks.

His father, registered with a non-fundholder, waited two-and-a-half years!

Coming in the same week as news of a threat to axe 8,000 long-stay beds in Scotland, the report should encourage NHS patients and workers to treat any Tory promise of NHS improvement with the contempt it deserves. ■

Trust bosses get richer

One fact not in dispute is that the bosses running the NHS trusts—the other main plank of the Tories' "reforms"—are doing very nicely, thank you.

A new study by the Labour Research Department (LRD) finds that the total pay of NHS trust directors will reach £141 million this year – an average of £293,000 for each trust board. According to the LRD, combined salaries of the trust directors equal average earnings for some 11,000 nurses. At Southampton University Hospitals Trust, the bosses seem bent on adding insult to injury: they gave £5 Boots gift vouchers to nurses for achieving productivity increases. Chief executive David Moss got a rather more substantial bonus: his salary nearly doubled—to £100,000 a year.

EDITORIAL

Wouldn't you just love being in control?

WHEN YOU turn on the tap at your kitchen sink you are pouring money into the bank accounts of the handful of rich and unaccountable bosses who own and run the water industry. When you light a gas cooker, or turn on your living room lights, every turn of the meter clocks up more money for the owners and managers of the private gas and electricity companies.

Take National Power, the biggest private electricity company. It made a cool £677 million profit last year. That came out of the household electricity bills we pay. The work done to generate that profit was done by National Power's workforce, not its owners and top managers.

Yet it was the managers and the big shareholders who creamed off millions in the form of share dividends. National Power boss Brian Birkenhead made a personal profit of £380,487 by exercising options to buy and sell new shares.

The same company has sacked over 5,000 of its workers on "efficiency" grounds since privatisation.

What gives a few rich bosses the right to make millions out of the bills we pay for essential services like water, gas and electricity? Private ownership, that's what.

The Tories have privatised every major industry and utility possible. The rationale, they claimed, was that state-owned industries were inefficient. The "market"—according to Tory dogma, the only rational force regulating economic affairs—would introduce better services and, through competition, actually make them cheaper.

Today we can see this as the big lie it always was. Last year British Gas made a loss: £365 million to be exact. That didn't stop it awarding its chief executive Cedric Brown a 75% pay rise, taking him to a salary of £475,000 a year. Somebody else had to pay for that loss. First in line were British Gas workers. The company cut the pay and holidays of all its showroom staff, and now plans to sack over half of the 3,300 showroom workforce.

Next came the consumers. From this month there will be no advice or complaints and no bill payment services at local Gas showrooms. Complaints will have to be made by telephone, at the consumer's cost. Meanwhile customers who pay by gas keys—cash in advance—will be penalised in the firm's new pricing structure.

What is more, recent studies suggest that privatisation has done little or nothing to improve efficiency for the consumer. The job cuts, the anti-union productivity deals, the management whip cracking to make fewer workers work harder for longer hours—this has been mainly for the benefit of private shareholders and top executives.

Private ownership and the removal of state subsidies to services and utilities means this: if it is profitable, it will be provided—at a price that fewer people can afford. If it is not profitable, or it can't be paid for, whether it's the water we need to wash in or the gas to cook our food, it simply will not be provided.

This is no scare story. Water disconnections have rocketed, with tens of thousands of working class homes

having their mains pipes cut and sealed.

Socialism, we are told, is an idea out of date—a relic from the past that didn't work. But how should we describe a system that cuts off the water of single parent families, leaving them at risk of malnutrition and disease? Is that system working? Is that "progress"?

No. It is a symptom of this system's sickness. And there is an alternative.

Socialism says that everybody has the right to a decent life: to cheap efficient services—from gas and water to public transport, TV and telecommunications. These are not luxuries but the essentials of life for all in the late twentieth century. To guarantee them would not be hard. It would mean diverting society's resources from the goal of creating profits for Brian Birkenhead and Cedric Brown towards providing services for millions of working class people.

Where would the money come from? The Tory parasites, with their bank accounts bursting with the plunder of privatised industries, should die from sheer embarrassment when they ask this question. The *Financial Times* recently described National Power as "awash with cash". Not a bad description for a firm that's made £677 million in twelve months.

The money should come from the profits of the rich. The cost of providing cheap heat and light for all should be met by running industry and services to meet the needs of the consumers.

Where this means an industry needs subsidies, the money should be raised by a huge wealth tax on the rich and the confiscation of the major industries and banks, whose wealth and profits exceed what most people can imagine.

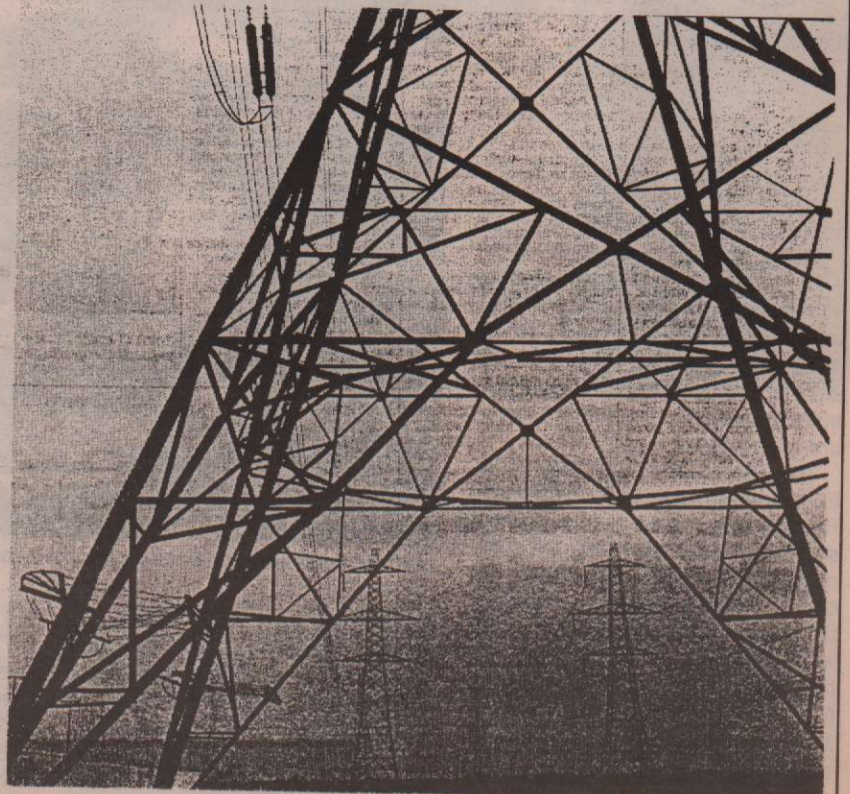
Aren't nationalised industries inevitably corrupt, bureaucratic and inefficient? That's the question many people ask, especially those who can remember the many failures in the services provided by the Gas, Water and Electricity boards before Thatcherism.

The answer is, under capitalism, yes. The old nationalised industries were capitalist to the core. Neither the workers nor the consumers had any say in their running, their price structures or their priorities. Inevitably they were run by bureaucrats, and their workforces were often alienated not only from the managers but also from the consumers.

But under workers' control, and as part of a democratically decided national economic plan, state ownership of industry and services could be a massively dynamic and positive factor.

Just by re-orienting existing resources, water, gas and electricity bills could be reduced to negligible amounts. A socialist pipe dream? Ask your parents what their water bill was twenty years ago—it was so small as to be insignificant.

At present the Labour Party is debating a replacement for its old "Clause Four"—the part of its Constitution which committed the party to the "common ownership of the means of production". Whatever the final outcome, we can be sure that Tony Blair's "new Labour" is moving as far as possible from any concrete commitment to re-nationalising the services and industries sold off under the Tories.



National Power is "awash with cash"—yours!

That's because Labour is, in the final analysis, a bosses' party. Its working class membership and history trouble the bosses and always make it third choice as their preferred party of government. But its politics, priorities and commitments serve the interests of the bosses. And the bosses of the private utilities are raking it in, with every litre, kilowatt and therm we use.

Blair's popularity with the Rupert Murdochs of this world relies on his refusal to reverse a single one of Thatcher's privatisations. Even on rail privatisation, which will destroy what's left of our railway services and enrage millions of commuters, Blair will not commit Labour to re-nationalise and rid the industry of market madness. Not unless he is forced to.

If the working class passively waits for Blair to win the 1997 election on his own chosen near-Tory programme we will have only ourselves to blame when he actually carries it out. We can and we must win millions of Labour supporters, over the next few years, to a renewed commitment to the nationalisation of both industry and the public services, with not a penny of compensation to the bosses and under the control of workers and consumers themselves.

Every Labour supporter and every trade unionist should be fighting to stop Blair ditching Clause Four and, more importantly, to force Labour to take every single one of the private industries and utilities back into state ownership.

And in the course of this struggle, revolutionary socialists can make clear to Labour supporters not only the need for a new leadership but a new kind of party too. One that is organised around a programme for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a democratic system of socialist planning. ■

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workers power

£3000 FUND DRIVE: £1372!

AFTER ONLY two months of our £3,000 fund drive we're nearly half way there. A big effort by Workers Power branches, members and supporters has taken the fighting fund to £1,372. We need this money to upgrade and refurbish the equipment we use to produce *Workers Power*, *Trotskyist International*, and countless leaflets, pamphlets and bulletins. A big thank you this month to our regular standing order payers whose pledges guarantee the fighting fund a steady £50 a month income. If you are a regular reader of *Workers Power*, and an occasional donator of funds, why not take out a standing order for £10 or more a month. For

forms, write to the address below. As usual, donations have been large and small, and every little helps. Particular thanks go out this month to a reader in Australia who gave us £250 and a South London reader who donated £200.

We hope our readers will soon start to see the fruits of their generosity in a redesigned *Workers Power* and *Trotskyist International*, with better quality pictures. In the meantime please keep the money rolling in.

Send cheques, payable to Workers Power,
to: BCM Box 7750
London WC1N 3XX

MEETINGS

CARDIFF

Is Chechenya right to fight?

7.30 Wed 25 January
See seller for details

BIRMINGHAM

Is Chechenya right to fight?

7.30 Mon 23 January
Union Club, 723
Pershore Road, Sell
Park

FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER!

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

I would like to subscribe to:

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

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

Name:

Address:

Telephone: Trade union:

LABOUR'S EDUCATION POLICY

Going Private

TONY BLAIR is determined to put as much clear blue water as he can between himself and "old fashioned Labourism". This feverish pursuit of southern, middle class, former Tory voters can be seen at its clearest when it comes to education policy. Blair is out to make New Labour's policies as much like the old Tory ones as possible.

The Tories want tests—so does Labour. The Tories back league tables—so does Labour. The Tories support opted-out Grant Maintained schools—so Blair spurns the comprehensives of Islington and sends his son to the London Oratory, a Catholic opted-out school.

But surely on a question like tax subsidies for private education there would be a difference? Well, there was... almost.

On 1 January Labour Education spokesman David Blunkett announced that Labour was considering closing the tax loophole which allows private schools, unlike state schools, to avoid paying VAT. This was hardly a measure that would bring the ivy covered towers of Britain's public schools crashing down, but it did involve at least a tiny measure of fairness.

This was too much for Blair. Indignant protests rang out from Eton and Harrow. They received an immediate sympathetic ear from Tony Blair who rushed to the defence of "parental choice" for those parents rich enough to afford private school fees. The whole idea had to be dropped. Labour Party policy to put VAT on school fees, outlined by Blair himself back in June, was changed in the space of an afternoon.

Nurseries

It is estimated that VAT on private school fees would raise about £100 million, money which could be spent on state nurseries, smaller class sizes and renovating run-down schools. But Blair thinks it is more important to mollify parents who can't afford an extra 8% on the average £10,000 a year which they spend on schools fees!

Gillian Shepherd, Tory Education Secretary, declared that Blunkett's plan was the true face of Labour: envious of the middle class who "scrimp and save" to send their kids to private school, willing to grab their hard earned savings but scared to see it through when the Tories set up a hue and cry. The Tories knew that these arguments would touch Blair to the quick. The Tories know that this is one issue where the Labour leader's views and those of most Labour sup-



State Schools pay the cost as private schools go tax free



porters radically diverge. This is because education is a key class issue, one on which everyone must take sides. It reveals very clearly which class interests you are out to serve.

For the Tories that is no problem. They want private schools for the very privileged few, extra funding for opted out schools for the professional middle class and an underfunded state education system for the rest of us. To meet the needs of the bosses you need plenty of selection and labelling of kids, so that you have a well-structured, flexible workforce for the future. The second rate education system for working class kids is supposed to be as cheap as possible. The Tories plan to cut another £800 million from the already massively underfunded state education service this year.

For socialists there is also no problem. We want no privileges for anyone, a high quality education for all. Private schools should be abolished and free state education guaranteed. It should be properly funded by taxing the rich. Testing and assessment should take place to identify needs and help students to make progress, not to select a few for top jobs in

BY SHEILA PHILLIPS

business and the professions, preparing the rest only to be exploited in factories, shops and offices.

But for Tony Blair there is a problem. He is the leader of a party which is rooted in the working class and the trade unions. But he wants to win the next election by wooing the conservative middle classes and those skilled workers who voted for Thatcher in 1979 and stayed with the Tories up to 1992. He actually wants to be seen sending his son to a posh religious school miles away from where he lives, just like reactionary middle class voters do or would like to do.

This will supposedly reassure them that he can be trusted with their kids' future and their tax bills. He does not want to upset his new found supporters in the CBI by opposing testing. After all, what would his mate Rupert Murdoch think? This aping of the Tories inevitably sets up tensions in a party such as Labour which counts many teachers in the state sector amongst its most active supporters. Roy Hattersley, no left winger, stated: "It is intolerable that Eton should have the same public assistance as

Oxfam". He went on to make clear the link between private education and the lack of resources in state education:

"The real choice is making the public sector better and that will never happen while a percentage of the population opt out and say it doesn't matter how bad the rest of the schools are as long as we privileged parents can do something special for our kids."

This has happened before, in the late 1950s. When Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, supported by the young Hattersley, tried to dump Clause Four he offered, instead of nationalisation, the abolition of the eleven plus, the end of the public schools, and the achievement of social equality by offering every child an equal start in life. Today this seems like the reddest socialism to the advocates of New Labour. Blair wants to abolish Clause Four but at the same time to offer the middle classes "liberation" from the comprehensive system: the right to pursue inequality!

Blunkett, made to look ridiculous by the climbdown forced on him by his leader, then wrote a pathetic and ponderous article in *The Guardian*

calling for a "wider debate" about privilege.

"Private education will remain—but public policy should reflect new priorities for a new century."

In short, leave private education for the rich and indulge in empty talk about a bright but far distant future where a decent education might become a possibility for all.

Working class parents, Labour Party activists, trade unionists—especially those in education—and school students must put a spoke in Blair's wheel. We must fight his promotion of privilege, his concessions to the super-rich and his betrayal of state education and working class children.

But we must also show what a real socialist education policy would be. It would meet the needs of all children, not just a tiny minority. It would promote the values of social equality and freedom from all forms of racial, sexual and class oppression and exploitation. Such a policy can never be finally triumphant until capitalism itself is uprooted by the class rule of the workers. And we know that at every step of the way Tony Blair will be on the wrong side of the battle lines. ■

Stop the Tory Tests

DOUG MCAVOY, leader of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) announced a ballot last month to call off the union's boycott of National Curriculum tests. Yet boycotting the Tory tests has been the most popular action taken by teachers in years. Teachers, parents and school students hate the tests. In October, in a ballot of NUT members, 92.6% voted to continue the boycott.

The boycott in 1993 was one of the first defeats inflicted on the Major government. It spelled the end for hapless Education Secretary John Patten. Since then the boycott has been maintained by the NUT, despite the fact that other teachers' unions called off their action. It has been such a political embarrassment for the Tories that it is now the one area of education they are prepared to throw money at.

So why is McAvoiy determined to

end the boycott? In fact he never wanted the boycott in the first place. The union leadership was only forced into it a few weeks before the 1993 tests because the other large teachers union, the NAS/UWT, were boycotting and looked to be recruiting angry NUT members. An unofficial boycott was already underway by rank and file NUT members, particularly organised by English teachers through the National Association of Teachers of English (NATE).

Another major factor in McAvoiy's distaste for the boycott is the Labour Party's support for the tests. The Labour leadership has consistently refused to support the boycott and their shadow Education Secretary David Blunkett recently restated the intention of the next Labour government to continue with the tests. Since Blair's election as Labour leader and its soaring opinion poll ratings, McAvoiy

has been increasingly desperate about embarrassing the party on this issue.

It is vital that NUT members maintain the boycott, voting No to McAvoiy's pathetic climbdown in this month's ballot.

He has done everything to ensure a low turnout, announcing the ballot just before the Christmas holidays and giving a very short period for voting. The ballot form itself is wilfully misleading. The question is a convoluted sentence asking you to agree how important it is for teachers to make their views clear to the government and then sneaking in the call-off of the boycott in a tiny sub-clause at the end.

Only the Tories have anything to gain from the tests. No matter how many external examiners are appointed they will inevitably involve classroom teachers in more work.

Schemes of work will have to be totally rewritten as we will be forced to teach to the tests. With the publication of results, classroom teachers will be told to concentrate on getting the students through the tests. They could also be a convenient way to introduce performance-related pay.

For students the tests serve no purpose whatsoever—apart from piling on extra pressure. They will not help to assess students' progress or needs. They are very crude and will take time away from far more useful forms of teaching, learning and assessment.

The tests will take even more control away from students and teachers and give it directly to the Department for Education and the government. Those who control the tests will be those who already control much of what is taught in the classroom. If Major thinks history is about the glo-

ries of the British Empire, and literature about reading more Kipling and Trollope, then that is what we will be forced to do. It will become increasingly difficult for teachers to provide a meaningful and relevant curriculum in schools. Teachers, parents and students must get organised to defeat the tests. We must ensure a huge No vote in the ballot. NUT members need to pass resolutions to put pressure on the National Executive to continue the boycott.

But resolutions, petitions and leaflets may not be enough. McAvoiy may attempt to call off the boycott anyway, so we must prepare for a massive campaign against the tests. We need to call meetings in all schools with parents and students to organise against the tests. School NUT groups and associations should meet and vote to boycott the tests, unofficially if need be. ■

Lobby the NUT National Executive
Wednesday 25 January
4-5.30
Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London WC1

SINCE 1989 half of the main post offices have been closed. Plans exist to close another 400 over the next four years, with massive job losses. So last month more than 3,500 post office counters workers took one day strike action against the closures.

Twenty-one areas voted for the action and 122 post offices were on strike. Rallies were held in London, Liverpool and Glasgow. Strikers reported a high level of public support on the picket lines.

Management of course declared the strike a fiasco. They were so desperate to break the strike that they launched a vast scabbing operation. They even flew strike-breakers into Scotland from offices in the Northern Ireland! But UCW officials reported that there was 95% support for the strike from those called out.

The strike followed the government's abandonment of privatisation, faced with rebellion by their own backbenchers and the public humiliation of Michael Heseltine. The media presented this as a victory for the Tory rebels and for so-called "new-style" campaigning, focused on public opinion rather than strike action.

But the dangers of relying on Tories and "public opinion" were shown last month in Dartford. When Royal Mail announced their intention to run down the local sorting office in preparation for closure, 400 workers struck. Until then local Tories and businessmen had given verbal support to the campaign against closure of the office. But as soon as the workers took action, they withdrew support. If the Dartford workers had put all their reliance on retaining "public" support, they would not have carried on. But by continuing with four days of action and winning solidarity from other trade unionists the Dartford strikers forced management concessions.

The abandonment of open privatisation is far from the end of the struggle. Post office management—as at Dartford—quickly launched a counter-attack. They are continuing to attack pay and conditions, and are calling for more commercial "freedom" to run various parts of the post office. They want to raise money on capital markets and go into joint ventures with private businesses. This would mean the wholesale scrapping of national agreements and the imposition of far worse working conditions for the majority of post office workers. It would be privatisation by the back door.

The fight back against the new wave of attacks has already begun. Throughout December there were numerous walk outs, strike ballots and strikes taking place across the country.

Successful strike action in Bradford, East London and Ayr forced management to back down. In other areas the union was able to force concessions from management—such as Bristol and Bridgewater. In other places such as Oxford and throughout Scotland, where they wanted to force everyone to work a bank holiday, the threat of action alone was enough to get management to retreat.

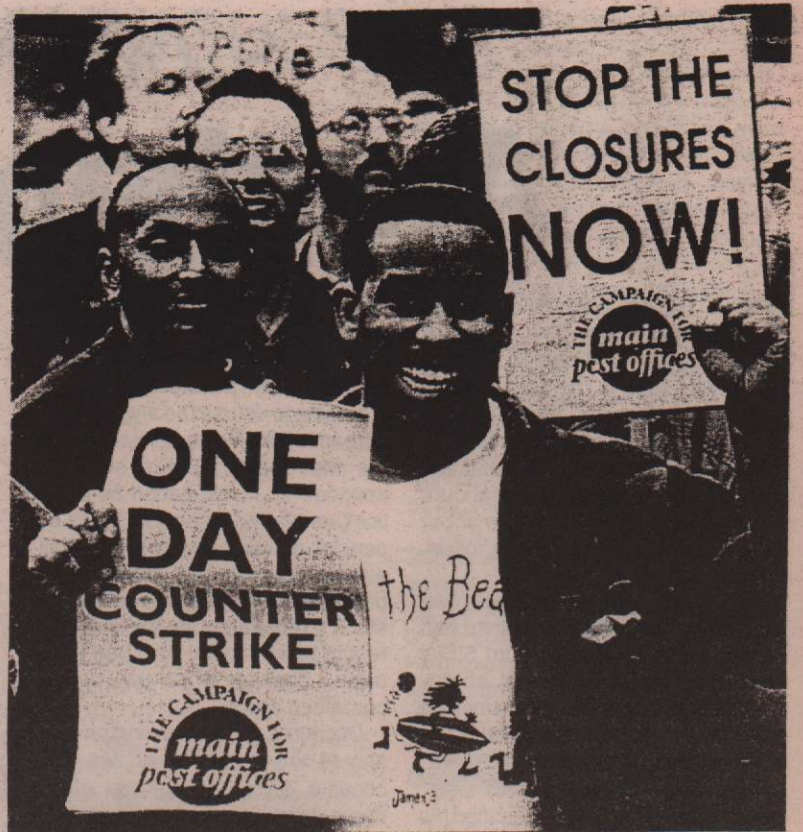
Resistance is continuing into the new year. Escalating and uniting these actions will prove vital if postal workers want to inflict a decisive defeat on the management onslaught. Those counter staff who did not vote to strike in December must be persuaded that, if they don't back future action, the closures will not be stopped.

Managers are trying to divide postal workers by imposing widely different local working conditions. That is why an active campaign for united national action is vital. With anger simmering across the post office against closure threats, victimisations and other management provocations, a decisive showdown is well-nigh inevitable.

POST Unite the struggles to win!

The road to unity for postal workers is a national strike against all closures and victimisations, and against the break-up of the business into competing local commercial units. But UCW leader Alan Johnson has already supported the Post Office Board's call for more commercial free-

dom, making it clear which side he is on. Action will have to be built by postal workers themselves, who above all need to organise joint strike committees and a rank and file movement of union members to unite the struggles and take control from the hands of the union bureaucrats. ■



COLLEGE LECTURERS Union leaders threaten sell-out

TRADER UNIONISTS in Further Education are facing another sell-out attempt from the NATFHE leadership. National negotiations in the contracts dispute, due midway through January, threaten to derail action once again. Last September strike action was called off by the national leadership in return for what militants predicted would be fruitless talks. That disastrous retreat will be turned into a total rout if the leaders get their way this year.

This time the situation is more complex but just as dangerous. A series of short local strikes in the autumn showed union members' willingness to fight. But the absence of national co-ordination left many feeling isolated. Now the promise of talks will be used by officials to downplay

the need for action. Members who are unenthusiastic about further strikes with no results will be tempted to follow the officials lead. This will allow the employers to press home their attacks.

The left in the union, the Fight the Contracts Now campaign, has recognised these dangers. They have taken a number of steps to restart action. The campaign is calling for the maximum strike action possible on 25 January. Groups of branches in the North West, Yorkshire, Wales and London are mobilising for this. The campaign will continue to fight for nationally co-ordinated strike action, a policy agreed by the Further Education sector conference.

Supporters of the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance on the union's NEC are

pressing for the implementation of this policy. They have successfully reversed a decision to drop it. The next opportunity to push for concrete plans for a strike will come at the meeting of the Further Education Industrial Relations Committee on 20 January, which meets just after the first national negotiations on 18 January.

These negotiations may be short lived. Last time the College Employers' Forum (CEF) raised such outrageous demands that it was clear the employers did not want a national deal. They wanted to press ahead with the introduction of new contracts at local level. Now more employers favour a national settlement.

But a deal struck at Peterlee College, run by the Chair of the CEF,

Gordon Scott, gives a flavour of what the employers want. The NAS/UWT, which organises part of the staff there, has struck a deal with the Corporation involving 920 annual teaching hours and related increases in the working year and week.

If this—or anything like it—is the CEF's offer, then activists will have to mobilise for immediate rejection and a turn to campaigning for national indefinite strike action.

An alternative development might be protracted negotiations for a "framework" deal. "Moderate" General Secretary John Akker is desperate to deliver this sort of result. Even if this is what happens activists must keep up the pressure for strike action. The only alternative would be a serious and long-lasting defeat. ■

UNISON Organise the rank and file!

THE CAMPAIGN for a Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) held its founding conference in Leeds on 3 December 1994. Some 120 delegates from Unison branches across the country debated a statement of aims presented by the conference organisers. In sharp contrast to September's Sefton conference, where the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) shamelessly manipulated the agenda and vetted speakers, the CFDU conference was remarkably open and democratic.

The CFDU represents those on the left within Unison who recognise the need to establish a national rank and file organisation now. The size of the conference, comparable to that at Sefton, demonstrates the potential for uniting the rank and file against both the bureaucracy and attacks from the Tories and Labour-controlled local authorities. The conference commitment to establishing a rank and file organisation was all the more impressive given the opposition of the SWP, far and away the largest left

group, to any such proposal at Sefton.

The SWP has argued that the time is not right to build any national organisation, and that rank and file movements would be counterposed to building in the branches. Ironically, the SWP's own membership exposed this untenable position when only thirty people attended the national launch of the SWP-controlled Start the Fightback Now campaign in Sheffield the previous week. Even so, the CFDU must try to bring the SWP into any rank and file body. The current split on the left dramatically weakens the ability to respond effectively to the Unison bureaucracy and the bosses' attacks on the membership.

In this respect, the politics of the CFDU will be crucial. The conference clearly remained under the sway of the old broad left notion that the central task of any rank and file movement is to elect a new "class struggle" leadership to oust the rotten right-wingers. This approach will never be enough to transform Unison into a union that can really defend its mem-

bers' interests. It will not establish real accountability of the leadership and prevent elected officials from selling out.

The founding statement of the CFDU limited itself to the lowest common denominator, glossing over essential differences. Unity built on such a basis is doomed to collapse at the first hurdle.

While the statement does call for national strike action against redundancies and for a decent pay rise, the current formulation does not challenge the bureaucrats' strategy of limiting action to one-day or rolling strikes.

In the context of mounting attacks on Unison's membership, and another year of the government-imposed pay freeze, limited action is no answer. It stands less chance of winning support from the membership than a clear call to fight for all-out, indefinite action in response to the threat of privatisation and the reality of pay cuts.

The founding statement was also

ambiguous on the issue of the use of the courts in doing battle with the bureaucracy. Last year, the Liverpool branch lost its court case against the national leadership. But even a different outcome would not have strengthened the hand of the rank and file against the likes of General Secretary Alan Jinkinson, who has simply used court actions as an excuse for barring discussion of the issues raised.

The founding statement said nothing about international solidarity and contained only one paragraph on fighting racism and sexism, and that was open to widely differing interpretations.

Representatives of the Hackney branch highlighted the importance of this question in their explanation of how local officials had manipulated the existing system of proportionality to block any elections to the newly unified local branch executive.

While the conference featured good discussions, there were no concrete amendments to the founding statement, indicating the disorientation of militants who appreciate the need for rank and file organisation, but lack any understanding of the political clarity which will be crucial to building such an organisation.

Although the CFDU is currently the best forum for debating these questions, it should not be a barrier to participating in the Start the Fightback Now, assuming the SWP leadership allows the involvement of other organised tendencies. Meanwhile, the Unison rank and file still need a united, national organisation around a clear, fighting programme. ■

STOKE NEWINGTON POLICE

Another racist murder

ON FRIDAY EVENING, 16 December 1994 Shiji Lapite, a 34-year-old Nigerian, walked out of his house in the East London borough of Hackney, after a minor argument with his wife, Olamide. He never returned. The first word Olamide had of her husband's whereabouts came when friends phoned her about a television news bulletin the following day.

After an alleged struggle with two plain-clothes officers, Shiji Lapite had collapsed in a police van from Stoke Newington station and died shortly after arrival at Hackney's Homerton Hospital. According to the coroner, the initial autopsy proved "inconclusive" and he has authorised further tests. But Shiji's aunt, who first identified his

corpse in the hospital mortuary, was shocked to see obvious head and facial injuries and extensive bruising, consistent with a brutal beating.

Hoping to defuse the anger as news spread of Shiji's suspicious death, the Metropolitan Police swiftly announced an investigation by the Police Complaints Authority and the suspension of two cops involved in Shiji's arrest, pending the outcome. The police, however, also rehearsed their stock explanation for the violent arrest of black males: Shiji had thrown away a package which they believed contained crack.

Of course, Stoke Newington police should know a thing or two about cocaine, given that several of their number have been implicated in drug

dealing and the routine planting of crack on suspects. Two officers have actually faced criminal charges, while in November a local minicab driver won £70,000 in damages for alleged assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution. Local cops have also acquired a reputation for mysterious deaths of and serious injuries to people held in their custody.

Shiji Lapite was the fifth person to die in the custody of Stoke Newington police since 1971. In addition, a young Asian woman died in the station's domestic violence unit at the hands of her husband in 1993, and the late Trevor Monerville suffered brain damage and temporary paralysis after an encounter with local police in December 1986.

Ironically, Shiji and Olamide, who had two young children, came to Britain from Nigeria in 1991 as political asylum seekers. They had been active opponents of the military dictatorship in Lagos and feared for their lives. Many members of the Nigerian community in Hackney have rallied to the banner of the Shiji Lapite Campaign, which staged a militant, 200-strong picket of Stoke Newington police station in freezing weather on 23 December. The campaign is demanding a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Shiji's death. ■

The campaign can currently be contacted c/o PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7.

■ In what may be a related development, the Colin Roach Centre (named after another victim of Stoke Newington police) fell prey to a mysterious burglary on 22 December, the night before the Shiji Lapite demonstration.

The centre houses the Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA), which has been key to exposing police brutality in the borough and blew the lid off the corruption scandal at Stoke Newington station.

The culprits left easily available cash behind, yet took tapes of a conversation with a Sinn Fein councillor from Derry and rifled through HCDA's files. ■

LANSBURY WARD, in Tower Hamlets, East London, seemed the ideal place for the Nazi BNP to stage a comeback. After Derek Beackon's electoral defeat on the Isle of Dogs in May, the fascists have been looking for another area to build an electoral base, from which to co-ordinate their terror campaign against black people and the left.

Lansbury Ward is a densely populated triangle, filled with high rise and walk-up flats, with few amenities and a great deal of poverty, it sits in the shadow of the obscenely luxurious office blocks and wine bars of Canary Wharf. It is one of the places Labour intends to do nothing to improve—and which the recently deposed Liberal administration in the Borough left to rot.

Rebuff

But the BNP suffered a rebuff. Despite throwing considerable resources into the Lansbury campaign, and standing their "local hero" Beackon as a candidate, the BNP polled only 562 votes—19% of votes cast. Whilst this remains a worrying indication of the BNP's core support in the East End it is also much less than the BNP hoped for.

It is the result of systematic campaigning by local anti-fascists and trade unionists, not least by Workers Power comrades in East London.

Every night the BNP turned out 30 or 40 canvassers to go door knocking in the area—a process which involved thinly veiled intimidation of the ward's 25% of black voters. It remains a disgrace that the trade union movement and the left does not even set out to prevent such intimidation.

The Anti Nazi League, which could mobilise hundreds and even thousands if it chose to, contented itself with a token campaign of leafletting and canvassing—making no commitment, either verbal or practical, to drive fascist canvassers out of the area. This was despite the fact that the fascists showed no compunction about attacking ANL leafletters and flyposters.

Absence

As for the various self-styled anti-fascist "activist" groups in London, they were notable by their absence from the campaign. A self-defeating mentality, that the East End is "fascist territory" has grown up amongst many activists, leading to their repeated refusal to organise the necessary actions to deny the fascists the right to campaign.

Workers Power supporters in the area showed that it is possible to combine mass, socialist agitation

ANTI-FASCISTS SAY ...

"We are the real East Enders"



Former BNP councillor Derek Beackon with his Nazi thugs

against the fascists, and critical support for Labour at the polls, whilst at the same time organising to deny the fascists a public platform.

In St Paul's Way school, on the edge of the ward and with a large number of black students, teachers organised to leaflet pupils, parents and—going door to door—many of the local housing estates. Their message was that the BNP are Nazis and should not be tolerated. The NUT group sponsored a meeting of students, teachers and parents to discuss ways of opposing the Nazis, protecting black students from racist attack on the way to school, and mobilising to defeat the Nazis on the day of the election.

On polling day a group of local teachers marched straight out of the school to the polling station, sending the Nazis scurrying for police protection.

Early in the campaign a local Chinese nurse was subjected to a racist attack in Christ Street Market, the local shopping centre. Over twenty health workers turned out to petition residents against the BNP in Christ Street.

Workers Power produced a special election leaflet, distributed to thousands of shoppers and door-to-door—explaining the Nazi menace behind the BNP's campaign and calling for organised self-defence to drive them off the streets. For two weeks running the local shopping centre was made a centre of anti-fascist campaigning, as Workers Power supporters, with local trade unionists and youth, made sure that Christ Street Market became a no-go area for the Nazis.

Response

Time and again the response came, from local residents—black and white—"thanks for coming, it's about time somebody did something about the BNP".

On the night of the election count a lively demonstration of ANL, YRE and local trade unionists was prevented from physically confronting a motley band of fascists only by the intervention of SWP leaders—who screamed and raged at their own members for trying to smash the fascists rather than merely name-calling them.

So much more could have been done if the ANL leaders were prepared to initiate and build a real

How to beat the Nazis

THE BNP is a fascist party. It is committed to violent attacks against black people, to forced repatriation, to banning the unions and dismantling the NHS. It is a bosses' party, despite its rhetoric about standing up for "ordinary" white workers. Because the BNP is committed to destroying the workers' movement by force, we have to fight it by denying it the right to organise.

We need a workers' united front to smash the fascists. That means mass action to deny them the right to campaign in public: to stop their meetings, their paper sales, their intimidatory mass canvass tactics. Because behind this "legal" facade the BNP carries out a terror campaign of beatings, petrol bombings, assaults and harassment against black people and organised anti-rac-

unity and anti-fascist organisations.

Unfortunately, East End anti-fascists cannot rest content with Beackon's latest defeat. Two local council by-elections are scheduled, with the first, in Newham's South Ward on 26 January, lying in another traditional fascist target area. This ward is adjacent to the three wards where the BNP came within 64 votes of beating Labour last May, and where the Tories stood explicitly on a platform "against Labour's unfair ethnic policies".

East End workers have showed they are not gullible: the vast majority are not taken in by Nazi lies. Faced with determined anti-fascist campaigning—by ordinary local workers and trade unionists—they can be mobilised to reject the BNP.

Beackon's Isle of Dogs defeat last May was not the "turning point" in the anti-fascist fight. His vote actually increased and his defeat came largely through the mobilisation of hundreds of new black voters.

Commitment

In Lansbury Ward—without much media coverage, but through the sheer commitment of local anti-fascists—Beackon was defeated by the votes of hundreds of white workers as well as black workers.

If we build on the positive side of the Lansbury campaign, making sure the BNP is marginalised and defeated where it matters—in the pubs, schools and workplaces of the East End—we can make this the real turning point in the fight to throw the BNP out of the East End for good. ■

ists. An essential part of the anti-fascist campaign has to be organised self-defence. The BNP has trained thugs defending its activities and perpetrating its attacks. Even the biggest mass working class campaign will not be able to take them on without its own defence groups, organised and accountable to the mass organisations.

But as well as united action workers need political answers to the problems fascism feeds on. We need a workers' answer to Tory cuts, poor housing and crime—answers Labour will not provide.

That is why an essential part of defeating the fascists is to fight for revolutionary socialist politics and a revolutionary party that can take those politics into the heart of working class communities like the East End. ■

From massacre

In the winter of 1904, the Russian autocracy faced an acute political crisis. Tsar Nicholas II faced defeat after defeat in a war with Japan. On December 20, Port Arthur, the chief Russian naval base in the Far East, surrendered to the Japanese.

The crisis of Tsarism strengthened all the long-suppressed currents of opposition to the tyrannical regime. The liberal bourgeoisie mobilised a campaign of protest meetings calling for a democratic constitution. The regime was faced with peasant disorder, mutinies in the army and navy and an upsurge of strikes.

At the huge Putilov metallurgical works, a strike over the dismissal of workers who had joined a semi-legal workers' society spread rapidly. The group to which they belonged was led by the priest Father Gapon and had been founded with the approval of the police chief Zubatov. In other words, it was expected to be a pressure valve, to let off steam from the working class but not to secure lasting or fundamental improvements.

Thus, the strike focused on economic demands: the eight hour day, a new wage scale agreed by the workers' own representatives, a minimum wage for unskilled and women workers, nurseries in the factory, abolition of searches and fines for lateness, and so on. It was not expected to stray onto "political" questions.

The pressure of the strike forced Father Gapon to mobilise a huge demonstration for 9 January 1905. He gave it the form of a procession to petition the Tsar, the "little father", for the redress of grievances.

But the demands the workers' meetings put into the petition went far beyond what Gapon envisaged: they called for an amnesty for political prisoners; freedom of speech, press and assembly; separation of church and state; an end to the war and a constituent assembly.

Some 200,000 took part in the processions to the Winter Palace but, when they arrived, the massed rifles of the guards poured volley after volley into the unarmed people. Hundreds were killed on "Bloody Sunday" and thousands wounded. Those volleys shattered the illusions of St Petersburg's workers in Tsarism. They also fatally undermined the police-sponsored workers' organisations, opening up the mass of workers to socialist influence.

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was split into two factions—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Between the organised factions stood prominent individuals like Leon Trotsky who did not fit into either camp.

The Bolsheviks stood for a professional, disciplined body of revolutionaries. They opposed the Mensheviks' attempts to loosen and dilute the party organisation. After the St Petersburg massacre they emphasised the need to overthrow Tsardom. Lenin, writing in the official Bolshevik paper *Vperyod* noted:

"The lessons of bloody Sunday cannot pass without some influence on the masses. Now the demand for the constituent assembly has become the main slogan of all Russian workers. And the practical programme of the day must be to supply the population with arms and to organise armed revolutionary action, in order to destroy the existing ruling power and all its institutions."

The initial effect of Bloody Sunday, however, was a nationwide increase in strikes over economic issues. A massive railway strike at Saratov on the Volga on 12 January won the nine hour day and consolidated the railway work-

Ninety years ago this month Tsarist Russia was plunged into revolutionary crisis, with the Bloody Sunday massacre in St Petersburg. In the months that followed, the Russian workers stopped petitioning the Tsar for limited constitutional reforms and started fighting for working class power. Their weapons were the general strike, the workers' council (or soviet) and the revolutionary party—key weapons in the working class struggle for power even today. **Mark Harrison and Jon Blake** spell out the lessons of Russia's 1905 revolution.

ers' union, an important factor in the coming year as it potentially put the key communications in the workers' hands. At Ivanovo-Voznessensk, a huge textile town, 50,000 workers stayed out for two months. Their city-wide strike committee was, in fact, the first soviet (council) of workers' deputies.

Though these strikes often incorporated political questions into their lists of demands, the Bolsheviks initially criticised them as anarchistic. Lunacharsky, in May 1905, described "a spontaneous strike over economic demands" as the weapon of a "still backward proletariat". The Moscow Bolsheviks, he said, were quite right to be actively "discouraging disorganised striking at present". To such actions he flatly counterposed "a political mass strike" and even then, "we can conceive of it only in conjunction with an armed uprising". Lunacharsky's sectarian ultimatum was typical of the immaturity of the Bolsheviks in Russia at the time.



Trotsky

The Bolsheviks were correct to point out that Tsarism could only be smashed by an armed uprising. However, they failed at this time to recognise the potential of the mass strikes for mobilising, educating and organising the masses. Without the consciousness gained in struggle—beginning often from basic economic demands—the need to overthrow the autocracy would never have become a mass demand. The development of workers' democracy through strike committees and soviets was essential in bringing workers closer to the ideas of the party vanguard.

The Mensheviks had no inhibitions about linking up with the masses—or, indeed, dissolving themselves into the masses.

For them the question of armed insurrection remained a distant one. The Bolsheviks' views, in the words of Axelrod, a main theoretician of Menshevism, were a

"conspiratorial-insurrectionary mixture of anarchist and Blanquist tendencies, dressed up in the terminology of Marxism or social democracy".

Whilst Axelrod recognised that a rising or risings might become necessary,

"the party as such, as a political unit, can and should prepare itself and the working class for that battle by political means and not military, tech-

nical or conspiratorial ones."

Against the Bolsheviks, Axelrod argued for an "all-Russian workers' congress". Martov, another leading Menshevik, was arguing for the formation of "organs of proletarian self-government".

The Menshevik leaders were guided by two ideas. First, the Russian revolution was a bourgeois revolution which would transfer political power to the bourgeoisie: therefore the working class was to play a supportive role, while maintaining its own class independence and organisations. Second, for both Axelrod and Martov, the "normal" form of party was a mass West European social democratic party, like the German Social Democracy, bound up with mass trade unions and legality. The soviets, in their view, could act as a basis for transforming the illegal RSDLP into a mass, legal Labour Party.

Lenin, on the other hand, believed that social democracy must lead the insurrection and take governmental power, but not alone. The petit bourgeois revolutionary democracy, representing the peasants, must share the power. Furthermore, the workers' party, in government, could not entertain the thought of socialist measures. Its programme had to be limited to establishing the broadest democratic freedoms. Lenin labelled this the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry".

Trotsky agreed wholly with neither the Bolsheviks nor the Mensheviks. With the Bolsheviks he believed that the liberal bourgeoisie could not lead the revolution. Moreover, "apart from social democracy, there is nobody on the battlefield of the revolution" capable of giving that leadership. But Trotsky did not share Lenin's vision of a worker-peasant government limiting itself to democratic tasks. To the astonishment of most social democrats, he adopted the view, first developed in a pamphlet with Parvus in 1904, that, "the revolutionary provisional Government of Russia will be the government of a workers' democracy... [it] will be social democratic."

Trotsky held that any workers' and peasants' government would inevitably be faced with sabotage and lock-outs by the capitalists and landlords. Such a government would be forced to violate the rights of private property and confiscate factories. Inevitably, therefore, it would pass on to socialist, not merely "democratic" tasks.

But Trotsky differed most sharply from Lenin and the Bolsheviks on the question of the party. Here he was influenced by the Mensheviks and by Rosa Luxemburg's stress on the spontaneous organising capabilities of the proletariat—which justified a looser party with less responsibility for leadership. Thus, he saw the passing over from democratic to socialist tasks as a spontaneous process, not something which revolutionaries had to worry about in advance of the seizure of power itself.

Trotsky's tactical flexibility concerning workers' initiatives, coupled with his belief in the possibility of working class power, allowed him to play a prominent role in the climax of the

revolution. From this experience he drew the most systematic understanding of the general strike and its organisational expression—the workers' council, seeing in these the basis for armed insurrection to achieve a workers' government. Experience also showed, however, that, without a Bolshevik-type vanguard party, even a brilliant revolutionary tribune like Trotsky could not, at crucial moments, lead or mobilise the masses for a decisive victory.

The strike wave abated in the summer, but burst out on a new and massive scale in October. Started by the railway workers after the arrest of a meeting of their delegates, it spread from one major centre to another, reaching general strike proportions. By 10 October, Moscow was at a standstill. By the 13th St Petersburg was in the grip of the strike.

The strike centred on political demands: the right to organise, freedom of assembly and of the press, and a constituent assembly to draw up a constitution.

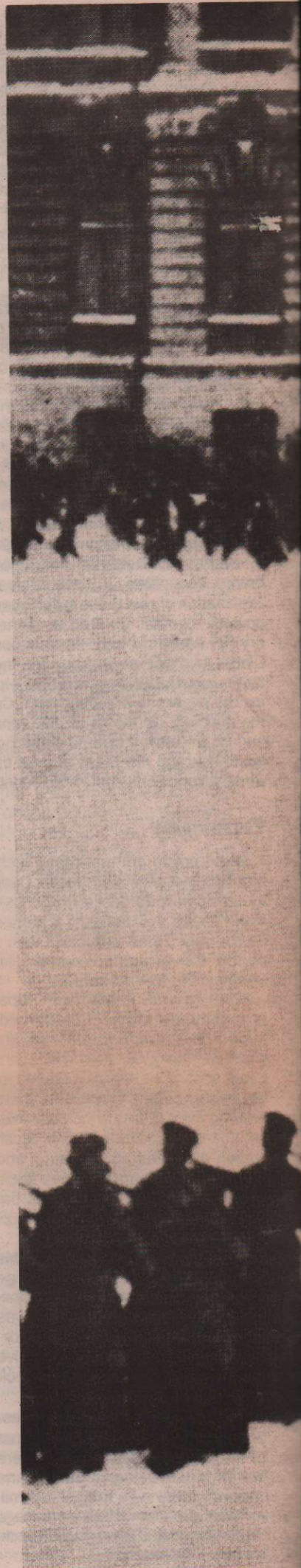
It won support from the middle class: shops closed in protest. Some employers even compensated their employees for time lost by the strike. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets)—the major party of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie—declared their support for the strike. Nicholas II found himself isolated in his palace. The huge repressive apparatus of the Tsarist state was paralysed.

In these circumstances, it was essential to co-ordinate strike action in order to make it total. Transport, telegraph links and newspapers had to be denied to the state forces and mobilised for the purposes of the strikers.

A St Petersburg strike committee was duly set up on the initiative of the Mensheviks. Delegates were elected in the plants (one per 500 workers), and on 13 October, forty deputies met—St Petersburg's first soviet.

The next day its size had more than doubled whilst, on the third, it numbered 226 representatives from 96 factories and five trade unions in addition to three representatives each from the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (a peasant based left wing party).

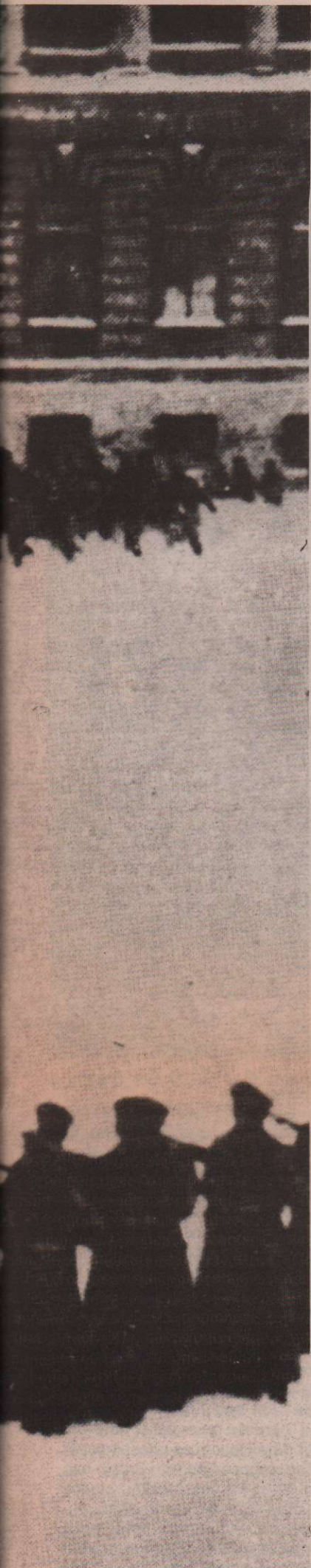
On 17 October, it took the name Soviet Rabochi Deputatov (Council of



R U S S I A

1905

to insurrection



Workers' Deputies), elected an executive committee of 22 and agreed to publish a daily paper, *Izvestia* (News).

On that same day, Tsar Nicholas was finally forced to make concessions. At first these appeared significant. In a "Manifesto" he promised:

"to grant the people the immutable foundations of civil liberty—inviolability of the person and freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and union."

Furthermore, he promised a State Duma (parliament) with full legislative powers.

The Soviet recognised this statement as a confession of the Tsar's weakness. But it warned the proletariat:

"We have been given freedom of assembly, but our assemblies are encircled by troops. We have been given freedom of speech, but censorship remains inviolate. We have been given personal immunity but the prisons are filled to overflowing with prisoners."

Rejecting the Tsar's manifesto, the Soviet demanded a total and immediate amnesty for political prisoners, the withdrawal of all troops from the city, and the dismissal of the notorious police chief Trepov. Total lack of confidence was expressed in the new government headed by Count Witte.

Nevertheless, the bourgeois Kadet party now withdrew its support for the strike, and many strikers returned to work. The strike was finally terminated on 22 October, with huge funeral rallies in honour of strikers killed by soldiers.

The Soviet was right to be cynical about the "good faith" of the Tsar and his court clique. The Tsar's police now went about stirring up the reactionary gangs known as the "Black Hundreds", recruited, in Trotsky's words, from:

"the petty shop keeper, the beggar, the publican and his perennial clients, the janitor and the police spy, the professional thief and the amateur house breaker, the small artisans and the brothel door keeper."

This rabble was encouraged to organise pogroms against the Jews and to assault strikers, trade unionists and the socialist press: in short, to carry out many of the functions fascism was to perform in "advanced" Western Europe after the First World War.

Throughout Russia, some three to four thousand perished in these pogroms. In St Petersburg, however, no pogrom took place. The soviet's armed fighting detachments, some 6,000 strong, broke up the reactionary bands before a pogrom could be organised. Regular night patrols were instituted and the working class press was guarded.

The Soviet naturally became the main forum for political debate as workers discussed the way forward. Inevitably, it was the views of the

organised socialists—Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and individual RSDLP members—which came to the fore.

The Bolsheviks understood more sharply than anyone else that the Tsar's regime—its police and military apparatus—had to be overthrown by armed insurrection.

They were, however, suspicious of the soviet, even hostile towards it. Krasikov warned agitators against "this new intrigue by the Mensheviks... a non-party Zubatovite [i.e. police provocateur] committee".

Bogdanov—then the leading Bolshevik in Russia—saw it as the nucleus of an anti-socialist Labour party and, therefore, decided that the Bolsheviks must force it to accept the party's full revolutionary programme and the tactical guidance of the party's central committee. The soviet should "ultimately dissolve into the party", and, if it refused, then the Bolsheviks should walk out and "expose its anti-proletarian character before the proletarian masses". This ultimatum was submitted on 29 October. The Soviet declined even to debate it. Abashed, the Bolsheviks kept their seats.

Trotsky, meanwhile, was widely recognised as the ideological leader of the soviet. He gave it the political perspective of developing links with the mutineers in the army and navy, and of support for Polish resistance to martial law. He repeatedly explained and politically prepared for the armed insurrection. But the soviet was of limited use for this purpose, since its affairs were public. Secrecy and conspiratorial methods are vital to the technical and organisational preparation of an armed insurrection. And a party, with deep organisational roots in the working class, is vital for standing against the ebb and flow of mass consciousness. Trotsky's essentially Menshevik views on the party at this time prevented him from organising such a party.

Though the soviet leadership's links with the masses were sufficient for a direct revolutionary advance, any difficult manoeuvres (including retreats) could only be undertaken under the leadership of a party which had disciplined cadres, known and respected, in every workshop. No party—including the Bolsheviks—had this in 1905. Lenin, however, was bending all the energies of the Bolshevik cadres in this direction.

Though the workers returned to work after the General Strike had won the Tsar's concessions, they did not cease struggling. They decided to implement the eight hour day "from below". Workers simply stopped work when their eight hours were up. The employers replied by lock-outs. After two weeks, the workers were exhausted once again and the soviet had to order a retreat.

Parallel to the lock out struggle, the Soviet called a six-day general strike to protest against the imposition of martial law in Poland (then part of the Russian empire) and the government's threat to execute naval mutineers at Kronstadt. Again, the strike began with impressive militancy, but exhaustion set in and a retreat was ordered when the government made a half-concession which spared the sailors' lives and announced the future end of martial law.

Sensing that the time was right to put an end to the divided authority in the capital, the government struck at the soviet on November 26, arresting its chairman Krustalev-Nosar.

Trotsky—long the most militant figure—succeeded him, but the Soviet's days were numbered. On 3 December the whole executive committee, plus two hundred deputies, were

arrested. The strike which followed petered out—this time after only a few days. Deprived of its leadership, the St Petersburg proletariat were incapable of maintaining a general strike or transforming it into a rising.

The situation in Moscow differed considerably from that in St Petersburg. The ancient capital's factories were smaller than the mighty works in Petersburg (where Putilov alone had 30,000 workers). District soviets existed before a central Moscow soviet and this body—when it came into being—was indirectly elected, its members being delegates from the district bodies.

Bolshevik influence was considerable in Moscow. Their view of the soviet, together with its less direct relationship to the factories, meant that the Moscow soviet was far weaker



Lenin

than its St Petersburg counterpart and lacked a record of fighting the authorities for control of the city.

However, the Bolsheviks, as a party, were impressively organised in Moscow. The party had its own militia of some thousand members and a "technical group" charged with preparing the insurrection. The army garrison, moreover, was considerably more disaffected than in St Petersburg.

Unfortunately, the key mutiny broke out just before the Bolsheviks and the soviet were ready. The Rostovsky Guards mutinied on 2 December and elected a twenty man soldiers' committee. Their mutiny was suppressed on the 4th. Just two days later came the appeal for a general strike from St Petersburg.

The Moscow soviet immediately launched the strike and barricades sprang up in response to the Bolsheviks' call for insurrection. The main coordinating body (consisting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) was arrested on the 8th. Thereafter, the rising lost coordination and the fighting became fragmented. The soviet handed over conduct of the rising to the district soviets. Even then, the fighting went on until December 18, only being finally crushed when the Semyonovsky Guards arrived by rail from St Petersburg.

In assessing the political significance of the mass strikes of 1905, Trotsky extended the analysis that had been developed by the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg.

She recognised the potential of the mass strike to break the stultifying trade union and electoral routinism of the West European labour movement. She saw it as a tactic that could put the masses on the road to the socialist revolution. Trotsky made this general perspective concrete in a fully developed revolutionary situation. He saw that the mobilisation of the masses for direct economic and political action necessitated a particular form of organisation and the soviet, the council of workers' representatives, was just that. In his book *1905*, Trotsky stressed that:

"The principal method of struggle used by the soviet was the political general strike. The revolutionary strength of such strikes consists in the fact that acting over the head of capital, they disorganise state power. The greater, the more complete, the 'anarchy' caused by the strike, the nearer the strike is to victory. But on one condition only: the anarchy must not be created by anarchic means. The class which, by simultaneous cessation of work, paralyses the production apparatus and with it the apparatus of power, isolating parts of the country from one another and sowing general confusion, must itself be sufficiently organised not to become the first victim of the anarchy it has created. The more completely a strike renders the state organisation obsolete, the more the organisation of the strike is obliged to assume state functions. These conditions for a general strike as a proletarian method of struggle were, at the same time, the conditions for the immense significance of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies."

The significance of the soviet was, as Trotsky explained, that it was "the organised power of the mass itself over its separate parts. It constitutes authentic democracy, without an upper and lower chamber, without a professional bureaucracy, but with the voters' right to recall their deputies at any moment".

This element of direct democracy was a facet that Lenin was not to recognise fully until the autumn of 1917 when, in his book *State and Revolution*, he explained how the soviet as a working class organ of struggle must go on to become the basis of the workers' state itself: the new kind of state which, for the first time in history, would allow the mass of the people to directly govern themselves, and prepare for the dissolution of the state altogether.

The general strike could mobilise the masses for the decisive contest—the seizure of power—but it could not, as the anarchists and syndicalists (militant trade unionists) thought, resolve that contest itself. As Trotsky concluded:

"The power has still to be snatched from the hands of the old rulers and handed over to the revolution. That is the fundamental task. A general strike only creates the necessary conditions; it is quite inadequate to the task itself."

In 1905, in St Petersburg and Moscow, the political general strike "completed its mission by putting the opponents face to face" it "brings the army of the revolution to its feet" wrote Trotsky. If, to use Trotsky's phrase, "the Soviet was a workers' government in embryo", its birth as a real government had to be the seizure of power.

In 1905, however, Trotsky still underestimated the role the party had to play as a political leadership with organised roots in the masses. Firstly, to point the way from the spontaneous economic mass strike to the political general strike which sets itself clear definite goals. Secondly, to transform this strike at the decisive moment into the insurrection. Thirdly, to provide the technical planning and backbone of trained activists for the insurrection itself.

It was not the party's role to dissolve the soviets into the party; nor to do the opposite and dissolve the party into the soviets. It was to fight within the soviets for a majority for its slogans, its tactics and its strategy for power. This was the method of the Bolsheviks in 1917, when Trotsky and Lenin finally united to bring about a successful workers' revolution. ■

RUSSIA

1905



BOSNIA

1995 started with yet another truce in the Bosnian war. Brokered by former US President Jimmy Carter, the four month truce will allow the opening of aid routes and the stabilisation of new front lines established after recent offensives. But the four month truce is not "just another cease-fire". Its terms are the clearest indication yet of the UN's preparedness to let Serbia keep hold of the 70% of Bosnia it now controls. Carter is believed to have offered the Bosnian Serbs 60% of the territory—11% more than envisaged in the official peace plan drawn up by the "Contact Group" last year. The Serbian leadership greeted the truce with jubilation: UN forces breathed a sigh of relief. Serbian premier Milosevic even announced that it meant a "permanent peace for Bosnia in 1995". But all the parties know that, once the snow melts and the truce runs out, 1995 could mean war on a bigger scale than before—not just for Bosnia but throughout the wider Balkans. In this article, based on a resolution from the LRCI's International Secretariat on 15 December, **Dave Stockton** surveys the damage done to the imperialist powers' international alliances by splits over the Bosnian war, and looks at revolutionary strategy and tactics in the light of the NATO air strikes, the threatened UN pull out and the latest plans to dismember Bosnia.

Bloody price of the "new world order"

THE FIGHTING in Bosnia in November and December threatened the whole United Nations and NATO intervention in the region with collapse. The differences between the imperialist powers split the European Union, left the US Congress obstructing the policy of the White House and left British, American, French and Russian representatives blaming each other in the harshest language heard since the end of the Cold War.

The heads of government of the countries making up the UN Security Council postponed their December meeting on policing the New World Order because they could not agree over Bosnia. UN and NATO representatives publicly abused one another for the catastrophe in Bihac. Britain and France are making contingency plans for getting their beleaguered "peacekeepers" out of Bosnia altogether.

The new world order arrogantly proclaimed at the end of the Gulf War is becoming a complete fiasco. Former British Defence Secretary John Nott expressed his panic when he said: "The rift between the British and the Americans is a catastrophe for the world". Bob Dole the new leader of the US Senate has talked of the "complete collapse of the Atlantic Alliance". At December's CSCE conference in Budapest when Clinton proposed that NATO expand to the frontiers of the former USSR. His European allies were seen nodding in agreement with Yeltsin's angry protests.

The UN and NATO claim their presence in Bosnia is to protect the victims of ethnic cleansing and to broker a peace deal. After the last major Serbian offensive they pledged themselves to protect the population of a series of "safe areas" including Bihac.

This cruel deception has been completely exposed by their failure to protect the civilian population of Bihac, a city with 70,000 residents, facing a ferocious Serbian heavy artillery bombardment.

The reasons for the paralysis of both the NATO high command and the UN Security Council lie in the split between the USA, which demanded the bombing of Serb military positions, and Britain and France who insisted that nothing should be done lest the Serbs attack their "peacekeepers". NATO carried on with the first (and perhaps the last) active campaign in its history, cratering the



Muslim prisoners, Bihac

runway of a Serbian airfield—damage that all military experts agree could be put right in about forty-eight hours. No Serb planes were targeted, no Serb military personnel injured. In response the Serb forces used napalm and cluster bombs in the Bihac enclave and took 1,500 UN "peacekeepers" hostage.

The US and the main European imperialist military powers were divided over whether to take token actions against the Serbs or no actions at all. In addition Bob Dole, head of the new Republican dominated Senate, and Newt Gingrich, head of the House of Representatives, denounced Clinton's policy and demanded the immediate arming of Bosnia and full scale bombing of the Bosnian Serbs. They attacked Boutros-Ghali and the UN and savagely criticised the British and French and their military commanders in Bosnia. However, these threats should not be taken to mean a major change of US policy as yet, especially since for all their bluster the Republicans do not control the execution of US foreign policy.

The Pentagon and the European armed forces, know that an exclusively aerial war in Bosnia is impossible. Such an attack would rupture already strained relations with Russia, probably involving it actively on the Serb side. For all these reasons Clinton moved immediately to support the reformulation of the "Contact Group" plan for the partition of Bosnia.

Already favourable to the Serbs,

the plan was to be made even more favourable to them. The US and EU imperialists are now placing all their hopes on getting Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic to pressure a majority of the Bosnian Serbs into backing this deal. Clinton dare not break with the British and the French, especially since he knows that the "Vietnam syndrome" prevents him from sending US marines into the Balkans in a combat role.

Karadjic and the Bosnian Serb leaders sense that they can squeeze even more out of the divided imperialists. They know that Britain, France and Russia in the UN Security Council—and Britain in NATO—can and will block any serious action against them. They can take the "peacekeepers" hostage whenever they want. Despite the fact that their forces are numerically weaker than those of the Bosnian government and its Croat allies, they are vastly better armed and can still rely on the arms embargo stopping all but light weapons getting to their victims.

Nevertheless the US ruling class are terrified that their prestige as "policemen of the new world order" will be deflated by the likes of Karadjic. The US's key allies in the Muslim world, the pro-imperialist regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, will be exposed and humiliated and the forces of anti-Western radical Islamism will gain strength. Thus the vital oil resources of imperialism as well as its gendarmes in the region could be put at risk. Worse still, some

of them, particularly Turkey, might be tempted to intervene, sending "volunteers" to fight in Bosnia. Kosovo and Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria could be dragged into a pan-Balkan conflict that could lead to war between NATO members Greece and Turkey. Hence the largely token air strikes and the sending of marines to the Adriatic in case the French, British, Ukrainian and Bangladeshi "peacekeepers" need to be rescued.

At the same time the US Congress threatens to actively lift the arms embargo, i.e. to supply arms to the Bosnian government. Clearly some weapons and arms training have already been given either by the USA or by the Turks, with the USA's blessing. Extreme instability is imported into US policy by the clashes between the new Republican dominated Senate and House of Representatives and the lame duck Clinton Administration, attempting to outmanoeuvre and discredit one another not only on home affairs but in the field of foreign policy. The US political elite of both parties is still divided over whether to pursue an isolationist policy in Europe, leaving the mess in the Balkans to the EU, or whether to regard intervention as essential to the geo-strategic concerns of the US.

In the period before the collapse of the Stalinist States in Eastern Europe, one power, the USA, acted as imperialist hegemon, not only in the semi-colonial world, but also in Europe. Now however a complex pattern of rivalry has emerged. Bosnia is the first clear demonstration of this. The USA is not the sole or the main danger to the Balkan peoples. The EU powers, Britain, France and Germany, and even Yeltsin's Russia all play roles that the USA cannot override. British and German imperialism have pursued consistent, though totally opposed, policies. Germany (via the EU, and for a period with French support) has sought to dismember the Yugoslav federation. It believes that a relatively economically developed Slovenia and Croatia could be ab-

sorbed into the EU as new capitalist states. Bosnia Herzegovina could act as a buffer zone and Serbia could be left to restore capitalism at as slow a pace as the Milosevic bureaucracy desires.

Britain, on the other hand, sought to preserve the Yugoslav Federation, under Serb hegemony, as long as it could—seeing it as the principal agent of stability in the Balkans. France and Britain, as the imperialist powers with troops on the ground in Bosnia, have a powerful veto on US actions since if they withdrew the US would be restricted to high tech bombing which could never decide the outcome of such a conflict. Britain and France want a partition of Bosnia which will leave the Serb gains in the civil war largely intact.

The USA and France have vacillated between one policy and another. Now France, as a result of her military cooperation with Britain has abandoned the "pro-Muslim" stance that took Mitterrand to Sarajevo.

The USA, in contrast, moved to an ever more anti-Serb position as a result of the failure of the partition plans and the deteriorating relations with Russia. Under pressure from Congress Clinton was forced to threaten to lift the arms embargo and supply the Bosnians with \$8 billion of arms and training. His aim is neither a full scale US intervention nor to act as arms dealer in a pan-Balkan war. Rather it is to force the Serbs to make more concessions so that Washington can claim some sort of success for "their" world order, and avoid an Islamic jihad against them and their stooges in the Arab and Islamic world.

The tensions with the United States' European allies, even with the slavishly pro-US government of John Major, have revealed that in the medium term, if not before, NATO is doomed to wither and decay. The US has already refused to share satellite intelligence with the European forces.

Whilst the USA does not intend to toss a lighted match into the Balkan powder keg it could very easily end up doing so since it exerts very little real



Budapest, December: Kohl, Delors and Clinton ponder NATO's divisions

control over its imperialist allies, their semi-colonial agents let alone the unstable nationalist regimes of the region.

Should revolutionaries take sides in Bosnia? The Serbs are under direct attack by the US and NATO, however feeble that attack may be. Revolutionaries completely condemn all imperialist military intervention and recognise the right of those attacked to fight back.

US imperialism, however hypocritically, is expressing support for the Bosnian government and even arming it to a limited degree. Does this mean that revolutionaries should now side with the Serbs against the Bosnians, that they should abandon critical support for the Bosnians fight for survival?

Nine times out of ten revolutionaries can safely conclude that a force supported by the world's hegemonic imperialist power must be a reactionary one. However Trotsky once warned that it would be the political method of simpletons always to put a minus wherever the bourgeoisie puts a plus.

Whilst Lenin held that in the imperialist epoch national wars tended to become subordinated to the manoeuvring of the imperialist powers he did not reduce national and democratic struggles to puppet plays staged by these powers. The war in Bosnia is not such a puppet play.

The Serbs are not an anti-imperialist force defending either their national existence, or the remains of their degenerate workers' state, against a US attempt to destroy them. Nor are the Bosnians primarily a tool of the US for accomplishing this. The savage national struggles in the Balkans have their own origins in the region itself.

The Balkan crisis stems from the effects of the breakdown of the Yugoslav degenerate workers state, from

the process of restoring capitalism undertaken by the transformed bureaucracies of the former republics, and from the conflicting interventions pursued by the US, British, French and German imperialist powers and the restorationist bourgeois government of Boris Yeltsin.

The nationalist regimes in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Pale and Belgrade have their own objectives. It is necessary for revolutionaries to assess their goals. These ex-Stalinist, nationalist politicians, Milosevic, Tudjman, Izetbegovic and Karadjic are leading their respective peoples into a horrific ethnic war in which the workers and peasants are the victims and the businessmen, bureaucrats, gangsters and generals are the only winners.

Only if the Croat, ethnic-Muslim, Serb and "Yugoslav" workers break away from these leaders, unite and impose a peace based on working class power, the expulsion of all NATO and UNPROFOR troops and a halt to the restoration of capitalism, can the warfare be ended in a settlement which respects the wishes of all these peoples and communities.

But this does not absolve us from estimating who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed at any one time. Revolutionaries have to advance tactics to defend the one and defeat the other.

The Bosnian government was wrong to yield to the pressure of the EU and declare Bosnia independent when 38% of its population had boycotted the referendum and the Bosnian Croats were clearly voting yes as a step to re-integration with Croatia. Despite this, the ethnic Muslims rapidly became the victims of national oppression.

The reason for this was simple. The Bosnian Serbs had all the resources of the Yugoslav federal army, and the backing of Milosevic and the Serb republic. The Bosnian govern-

ment had little more than an armed police force. The Serbs launched an unprovoked war to seize large tracts of territory inhabited predominantly by ethnic Muslims, Croats, or "Yugoslav", i.e. mixed population. To clear it they expelled hundreds of thousands with the most brutal methods: pogroms, rape, the creation of concentration camps. The principal aggressors throughout have been the Bosnian Serbs. They have succeeded in seizing 70% and more of Bosnia, driving hundreds of thousands from their homes in a wave of ethnic cleansing which is repeated with every new offensive.

The great majority of ethnic Muslims and the multi-ethnic populations of Sarajevo, Tuzla etc. want to maintain a unitary, multi-ethnic Bosnia and not their own 'Muslim' state. Despite this they have suffered the most direct form of national oppression—the denial of their right to self-determination.

The ethnic mixing of Bosnia's communities means that none of them can exercise this right *unilaterally*, i.e. without consulting the others. But it does not mean that these elementary democratic rights do not exist. They do and must be defended by revolutionaries.

This does not mean that ethnic Muslims and Croats have not committed crimes such as driving villagers out of their homes, rapes, murders etc. But the Serbs transgressions of elementary democracy when it comes to national rights is both quantitatively and qualitatively different to the crimes of the other two communities. Why?

Certainly not because Serbs are inherently barbarous or backward as the imperialist media has suggested at various points. Many Serbs are opposed to the war. And neither is it because the Muslims or Croat leaders and their militias are themselves incapable of pogroms and ethnic cleansing. Rather it is because the legacy of Serb military domination of Tito's Stalinist Yugoslavia and the actions of the imperialist powers have combined to give them the opportunity to try to create a Greater Serbia: by uniting scattered Serb territories and by driving other ethnic communities out of the economically and strategically necessary territory for the realisation of this project.

This has left only the forces of the Bosnian republic defending the right to any form of state existence for the multi-ethnic population of central Bosnia and in the disarmed enclaves of southern Bosnia.

In the north, after an offensive, the Bosnian forces in the Bihac enclave came under heavy attack and now face at best a fate like the population of Gorazde or at worst being ethnically cleansed by horrific methods. Their fight to preserve their right to existence as Bosnians, ethnic Muslims, Croats, Serbs, and self-identified Yugoslavs is a justified and progressive one.

This fact is not altered simply because, for its own reasons, the USA castigates the Serbs as aggressors and ethnic cleansers, or even by the fact that it bombs their airfields or heavy artillery emplacements.

Workers everywhere should take an active stand in defence of the multi-ethnic and "Muslim" forces.



UN Commander Michael Rose

They have a fundamental right to defend themselves from genocide and all consistent democrats let alone revolutionary communists have a duty to help them.

The Bosnian Serbs are fighting a naked war of national oppression. The defenders of Bihac are fighting for the very existence of their communities and families, as were the defenders of Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia during the earlier offensive by the Bosnian Serb armies.

In the UN Security Council all the imperialist powers have repeatedly combined with Yeltsin's pro-capitalist regime and the Chinese Stalinists to deny Bosnia the elementary right to defend its national existence.

From the outbreak of the war they strait-jacketed the Bosnians with an arms embargo, whilst the numerically stronger and better armed Serbian forces ethnically cleansed Bosnia, displacing hundreds of thousands. No help can be expected from the UN Security Council which again is revealed as a thieves' kitchen of the imperialists and their semi-colonial and Stalinist lackeys. The conference of Islamic states will likewise prove a broken reed if the Bosnians place any reliance on it.

If the US or the UN were to intervene with ground troops on the Bosnian side—in reality the *least likely outcome* unless they themselves come under serious attacks from the Serbs—they would rapidly subordinate the justified Bosnian struggle to their own interests and their "order" in the Balkans.

This results of this would be reactionary through and through and a catastrophe for Muslims, Croats and Serbs alike. These fundamentally changed conditions would then require revolutionaries to side with the forces fighting to drive the imperialists out of the Balkans, even if these were the national oppressors of the preceding period, i.e. the advocates of a Greater Serbia.

Today however our task is to defend the victims of national oppression, to lift the arms embargo that hampers their self-defence, whilst fighting to prevent any further imperialist intervention and to get their troops out. Only the international working class can render disinterested and effective aid to multi-ethnic Bosnia.

What form can the aid of the working class to Bosnia take? Should it involve support for a US military intervention in Bosnia? No.

On the contrary we should oppose all attacks be it by US or Anglo-French airforces and any attempt to bring in the US troops. Indeed we should fight to get all the existing imperialist and UN troops out of Bosnia now. Whether they are wearing the UNPROFOR blue beret or the NATO silver star they can and will do nothing to protect the citizens of the safe areas.

In fact they merely keep them disarmed and restrict their military actions the moment they achieve any success.

A working class solution, whilst recognising the Bosnians' right to defend their national existence, must also emphasise the need to appeal to the Serb and Croat workers. Some Serb and Croat organisations—like trade unions—have protested against the genocide and fought against their own governments' nationalist policies.

All workers and peasants should be allowed to return to the homes from which they have been driven. There they should protect themselves by creating multi-ethnic militias.

All military units or individuals accused of ethnic cleansing, murder or rape should be disarmed and brought before multi-ethnic tribunals.

The European and North American powers that have stirred the cauldron of ethnic hatred must pay in full for

the economic restoration of Bosnia. All such aid must be without strings and placed directly into the hands of representatives of the workers and peasants of Bosnia. Will the imperialists do this willingly? Certainly not! But workers must demand that the reformist workers' parties and the trade unions fight for this, and expose all the secret diplomacy and the alliances of the imperialists.

The only real solution is the creation of a multi-ethnic workers' state in Bosnia, united in a federation with the other workers' states of former Yugoslavia and indeed of the Balkans as a whole.

The crimes committed in the name of nationality do not make internationalism impossible. The rural and urban working class, in Serbia, in Croatia as well as in Bosnia, is yearning for an end to the chaos brought by the national chauvinism of their rulers.

The policy of the working class must be to reject and reverse all the "gains" won by ethnic cleansing, to bring to working class' justice the torturers, rapists and executioners on all sides.

Once the fruits of national oppression have been renounced the representatives of the working people of Bosnia should work out a state structure, whether unitary, federal or confederal, which meets the aspirations of the various ethnic groups, their aspirations for open borders with Serbia or Croatia.

It must be a structure that protects the full and equal rights of minorities. Working class action throughout Europe, and above all in Belgrade and Zagreb, can avert the horror of a Balkan war. The alternative—continued imperialist interference—spells disaster.

The tragedy in Bosnia shows that imperialism can impose no lasting or just order there.

It would either be an order based on Serb and Croat domination and the ethnic redivision of Bosnia, or—in the unlikely event of a strategic US intervention—the creation of a Croat-Muslim state based on oppression of the Serbs.

Either "solution", even if it could be imposed, will leave national hatreds smouldering on, waiting to burst into flame at the next opportunity. The imperialists will have created another Palestinian question.

The only progressive solution will be *anti-imperialist*, based on the struggle for a Socialist Federation of all the Balkan peoples and an end to national oppression.

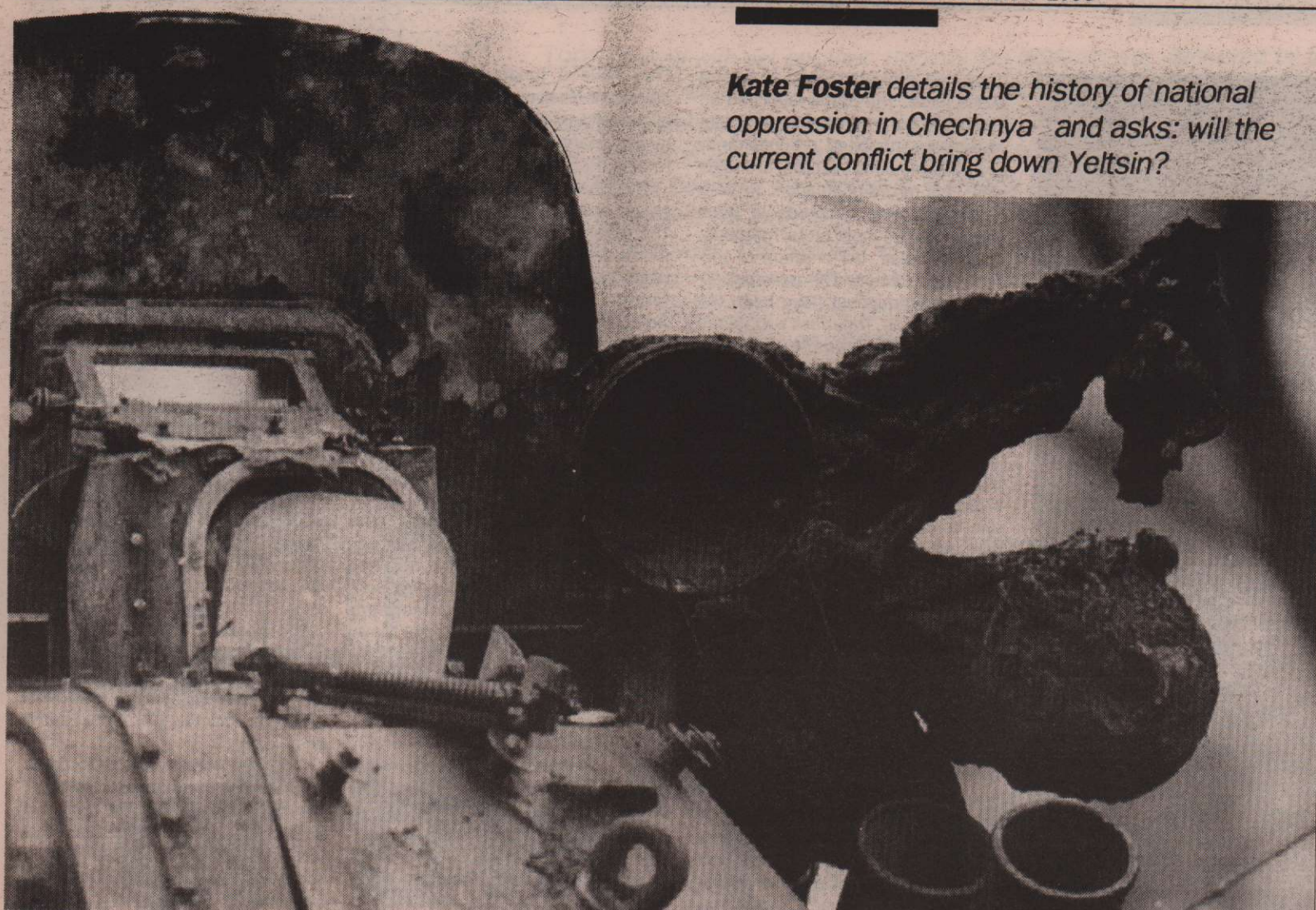
The imperialist troops can do nothing progressive. They should get out now. They should leave their weapons and supplies to the defenders of Bosnian Muslim and multi-ethnic communities. The arms embargo should be scrapped at once.

But so too should be the cruel economic embargo on Serbia which hits the workers and the poor and gives Milosevic the pretext for maintaining a Stalinist-style regime whilst pressing stolidly on with the restoration of capitalism.

Workers' organisations must campaign for arms and aid without strings to all those fighting to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia. They must advise the Bosnian fighters that any reliance on the US, any deal with it will spell doom for their struggle.

- Down with all NATO air attacks
- Defend multi-ethnic Bosnia against Serb-chauvinist aggression
- End the Arms Embargo and the blockade of Serbia
- All NATO and UN troops out of Bosnia
- For a working class solution to the national and ethnic conflict
- For a multi-ethnic workers' state of Bosnia
- For working class power in all the republics of former Yugoslavia
- For a Socialist United States of the Balkans. ■

Kate Foster details the history of national oppression in Chechnya and asks: will the current conflict bring down Yeltsin?



Charred body of a Russian soldier, Grozny

CHECHNYA

Yeltsin's graveyard?

WHY DID Boris Yeltsin launch his ill-fated war against the Chechens in the closing months of 1994? Yeltsin's excuse is that Chechnya has been taken over by gangsters, the same gangsters who are running amok in the streets of Moscow and other large Russian cities. The crackdown on crime leads logically to a crackdown on the biggest bandit chief of all—Dzhokar Dudayev, president of the Chechen republic—according to Yeltsin.

Dudayev, a former Soviet general, is indeed little more than a gangster, reportedly guilty of wholesale corruption, siphoning off his country's resources to amass a huge personal fortune. But in this he is little different to any other of Russia's new rulers. Three years of Kremlin efforts to topple Dudayev have only succeeded in turning him into a national leader. Whether he triumphs or perishes in Grozny, he will be a national hero.

Chauvinism

In fact it is not Dudayev but Russian chauvinism and oppression which have finally united the Chechen people, otherwise divided into traditional clans, many of which are bitter enemies of Dudayev. A *Guardian* correspondent reported this telling comment from a Chechen health worker after the bombing of Grozny began:

"We're not fighting for Dudayev... we're fed up with them [the Russians], 300 years of deportation and colonialism. This is an anti-colonial war, a war of liberation."

The annexation of the Caucasus mountains by the Tsarist empire was not completed until 1864. The fiercest resistance from its largely Islamic peoples came from the Chechens, who subsequently revolted several times. This century, the Stalinists systematically divided the many nationalities or language communities of the region (forty-one!), denying them real self-determination or a federation free from Russian domination.

In 1944 Stalin deported 400,000 people to Kazakhstan and Western Siberia—almost the entire population of Chechnya. He did this as a collective punishment for the Chechen nationalist rising two years previously, when German forces entered the northern Caucasus. Only in 1958 after riots in Grozny did Krushchev allow the exiled Chechens to return home.

Discrimination

Throughout the Stalinist years, racism against the peoples of the Caucasus ran riot amongst ethnic Russians. Caucasians continue to be referred to as "blacks" within Russia. They suffer discrimination in education, housing and jobs. Chechens are indeed involved in crime in Russia, but this is not—as the Russian racists would have us believe—because Chechens are inherently dishonest and violent. It is because for many crime is the only way to survive.

Chechnya's independence was snatched during the hardliners' attempted coup in August 1991. Like Yeltsin, Dudayev took the opportunity of the coup's collapse to seize power. Dudayev earned Yeltsin's enmity by refusing to sign the new Russian Federative treaty on 31 March 1992. Since then Yeltsin has been trying to oust Dudayev by sponsoring an opposition based on an alliance of clans disadvantaged by Dudayev's rise to power. He has bankrolled this opposition and supervised Russian secret service operations.

In October and November these forces launched an offensive with "covert" Russian army support to topple Dudayev. It failed. Yeltsin had either to admit defeat—and face the encouragement that this would give to more important rebellious republics like Tatarstan on the Volga—or send in the troops.

As a tyrannical figure, with collapsing popular support, and with no majority in the parliament, he was dependent on the high command of

the army, or rather on the dominant faction within it. This faction, headed by defence minister Pavel Grachev, is itself fighting for its life within the army elite.

Chechnya, lying on the northern face of the Caucasus mountain range, has tremendous economic and strategic importance for Russia. It does not possess huge oil reserves; there is a relatively small field around Grozny. But it does have large refinery complexes which produce aviation fuel for Russia and the other CIS states. In addition the pipeline which links Russia to the enormous oil fields of Azerbaijan crosses Chechen territory. The Azeris have been threatened by Yeltsin only recently, for striking a deal with western oil companies and for daring to consider exporting oil via Turkey or Iran, rather than Russia.

Russia's rulers see the whole region as a part of their "near abroad", somewhere they must dominate if not rule directly. They fear that if Chechnya goes, others may follow and the entire region could slip out of Russian control. Tatarstan for example has a strong independence movement.

The 1993 reorganisation of the Russian military, initiated by Grachev himself, concentrated forces returning from Eastern Europe in the Caucasus region, which was designated the key frontline district. New, more mobile, rapid reaction forces were created, pointing to a recognition of their new role in quelling internal dissent rather than external threats.

Policeman

Yeltsin was initially encouraged to intervene in Chechnya by the benevolent attitude shown by his Western allies. They were willing enough to see him as the local policeman of the New World Order amongst the "barbaric" peoples of the former Soviet Union. Needing Russia's support to pressure the Serbs into a deal in Bosnia, the imperialist powers effec-

tively signalled to Yeltsin. If he wanted to sort out his "internal" problems then he could go ahead. The US State Department sympathetically declared that they understood his problem—a fact that the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean can testify to!

Since the invasion became bogged down in the bloody battles of Grozny, criticism from Kohl and Clinton has emerged. They are worried not by the piles of Chechen dead, but that Yeltsin might fall if the invasion proves a complete fiasco. Even if it is a success it may mark Yeltsin's absorption into the most aggressive, would-be imperialist, faction of the army and the secret police. Russia could become a "military threat" once more. In addition they are terrified that a prolonged war with a Muslim nation may ultimately embroil others, both in the Caucasus and beyond.

But whilst imperialism's support and understanding are important, internal pressures are the determining factor in the timing of the Russian invasion.

Restoration

Yeltsin is facing an increasing political and economic crisis on the road to capitalist restoration. The break up of the old Soviet Union has seen a massive increase in immigration into Russia. The economy is ill-equipped to deal with the situation. Because of economic and political instability, over the next two years 400,000 are expected to flood into Russia from the Caucasus alone.

Already Russia is having problems coping with the military forces returning from Eastern Europe. forty per cent of the officers returning to Russia have no homes provided. The potential political dynamite is such statistics is clear to everyone.

The extreme right is thriving on anti-immigrant racism. In the autumn local elections in the southern regions close to the Caucasus, Russian nationalists swept the liberal

reformers from power. Across the board politicians are using the electoral successes of the right as an excuse to increase their own use of nationalism and racism.

Many Russian cities stage frequent crackdowns on immigrants, arresting and deporting thousands. Those who are allowed to stay are forced to pay a fee for the privilege. In Moscow this is around 10% of the minimum wage.

The Russian economy is disintegrating. Attempts to restore capitalism may have created a few rouble millionaires but for the vast majority of Russians it has meant pauperisation, for some starvation. Inflation is still raging. Recent figures calculated that just to buy the most basic food to survive, a Russian needs three times the minimum wage. Life expectancy continues to fall.

Russian industry is crippled by inter-enterprise debts, where enterprises cannot afford to pay each other for power, raw materials or finished goods. This year it is expected that industrial output will fall by 40%.

But not only are the enterprises not paying each other, they are not paying their own workers. There have been a series of strikes, not over how much workers should be paid, but simply to get any wages at all. One shipyard owed the equivalent of \$112 million in wages alone.

Russia's capitalist restoration process is in deep crisis. Yeltsin's answer is an increasingly dictatorial government, using his autocratic powers to rule, appealing to nationalist feelings, scapegoating the Chechens and drawing attention away from his own miserable failings. Yeltsin and Grachev call the Chechens "bandits", but the real bandits are in Moscow sitting around the table—Yeltsin's unelected security council.

The war has provoked some opposition. There have been street protests, some involving veterans of the Afghan war and mothers of conscripts. But there are few signs yet that hatred of Yeltsin (75% in opinion polls register opposition to the president) is being translated into mass action against him.

Clearly, however, Yeltsin is worried that this opposition could grow rapidly if it becomes clear that the Chechen war is a disaster. Hence his increasingly hostile attitude towards the press.

Anyone in the press who is critical of Yeltsin is accused of being funded by the Chechen mafia. Yeltsin is threatening to remove key figures in Russian television over critical coverage of the war. Reporters and photographers have been fired on by Russian troops and aircraft.

Nationalist

But the most immediate danger to Yeltsin comes from opposition within the military. Extreme nationalist generals such as Gromov and Lebed are opposed to the war, not because they support Chechen self-determination but because they want increased spending on the military for a crackdown within Russia itself.

Workers in Russia who are opposed to Yeltsin and his bloody war need to be alert to the dangers of a serious strengthening of autocratic power. This could come either through Yeltsin giving himself ever greater powers or by a section of the military seizing power from him in a coup. Indeed such a coup becomes more and more likely if the present crisis is prolonged.

It is vital that workers defend and extend the limited democracy they gained after the disintegration of the Stalinist regime. Alongside defence of their political rights is the vital task of defending jobs, wages and living conditions against the ravages of the restoration process.

Defending the Chechens' right to self-determination and refusing to be fooled by the poison of Russian nationalism, are crucial if Russian workers are to achieve these tasks. ■

IRELAND

Sinn Fein retreat continues

WHEN THE IRA Army Council called off their campaign last August, they stressed that the ceasefire would be total but refused time and again to call it permanent. The formal reason was that the Army Council had no power to call a permanent ceasefire—only an Army Convention could do that—but a more substantial reason was that a third of the Army Council opposed the ceasefire and threatened a split if the leaders did not exert maximum caution.

The result was that a decision on a permanent ceasefire was deferred until April 1995. The proximity of this date, coupled with the delay caused by the government crisis in the South, explains why Gerry Adams is ever more strident in his stress on, "urgency" and the need to "speed up the peace process". It was also what lay behind Sinn Fein's support for the corrupt, lying and thoroughly disgraced Reynolds' government—right up to its final collapse.

Crisis

Despite the crisis and the change of government in the South, talks have begun between the British government and both Sinn Fein/IRA and Loyalist paramilitaries. Little is known about the content of these talks. One of the big issues, certainly, has been Britain's demand for the decommissioning of the arms held by both sides. Neither Sinn Fein/IRA nor the Loyalists are willing to make concessions on this at the moment. Both, no doubt, intend to use a promise to disarm as a counter in future negotiations. In return, the Loyalists will want their prisoners released and the copper-fastening of changes to the South's constitutional claims over the North. As well as a deal on their prisoners, Sinn Fein will be looking for concessions on a radical reform of the RUC. Although, in public, they

BY THE IRISH WORKERS GROUP

still call for the disbandment of the force, their objective is the "regionalisation" of the RUC and a promise of jobs for their volunteers in the "new" police for the Catholic districts. Just as much weight can be given to their demand for a British declaration of intent to leave Ireland, which no one takes for real, least of all the Sinn Fein guerillas turned diplomats.

Involvement

The participation of Sinn Fein in the South's "Forum for Reconciliation and Peace", like their involvement in talks with the British government, is meant to clinch the ceasefire by showing the rank and file that they will be listened to if they permanently give up violence. The same tactic can be seen in Britain's talks with the Loyalist paramilitaries.

Behind those talks, however, loom the far more important ones between the Irish and British governments which are aimed at agreeing a new framework which will consolidate the peace process at a general level. These talks are at an advanced stage. After many delays, there is now a real chance that a framework document will be published by the end of January. This could be the most important political document since the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the Treaty (1922) through which British imperialism enforced the partition of Ireland.

A number of the main features of this framework document have already been leaked. For the North, there will be a proposal for an Assembly, elected by proportional representation, which will include structures for the sharing of powers that will gradually be devolved from Westminster. Although this resembles the

model of the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, this time around there is unlikely to be any suggestion of a "Council of Ireland", which was the big concession to the Nationalists at that time. This expresses the changed balance of forces; this time the IRA is seen to have led the anti-Unionist struggle to defeat and is assumed to have surrendered. London has also learnt the lesson of the Loyalist general strike which destroyed the Sunningdale initiative and for which the Council of Ireland was the main target. What the proposals will retain will be various sops to the SDLP and Sinn Fein such as an extension of the "inter-parliamentary tier" of committees, presently made up of Dublin TD's and Westminster MP's, to include members of the new Northern Ireland Assembly.

Diluted

Similarly, four new all-Ireland economic agencies with executive powers are envisaged. They will deal with trade, tourism, investment and agriculture. Any Loyalist opposition to these will be diluted by their linkage into European institutions, especially

as regards financial subsidies. Such bodies will build upon developments that have already taken place; an All-Ireland Tourism promotion body is already up and running and the market for Irish agriculture is already effectively all-Ireland in its operation.

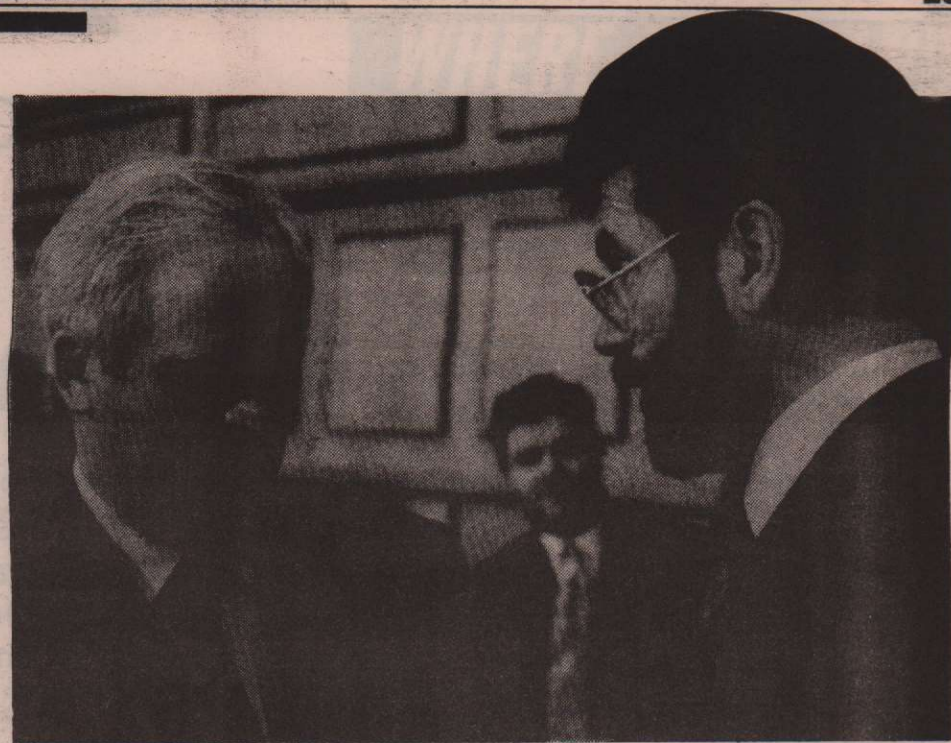
The Framework Document is also likely to propose a Bill of Rights, in effect a constitution, for the North. This Bill will spell out an array of formal equal rights for Catholics and Protestants with regard to culture, rights of assembly, with a new flags and emblems section, and even jobs and education, although the latter two are likely to remain largely paper rights, given the deeply sectarian nature of the Northern state and the existing distribution of resources.

Finally, the Framework Document will include the repeal of Article Three and, perhaps, Article Two, of the South's Constitution, the articles which embody the claim to all-Ireland sovereignty. This will be presented as the *quid pro quo* for Britain's repeal of the Government of Ireland Act but the concessions are all on one side since the essential content of the 1920 Act is also contained within the 1973 Agreement and the Anglo-Irish

Agreement. However, so strong is the sentiment for peace in the South at present, largely due to the bankruptcy of the politics of Sinn Fein and the IRA's counter-productive guerillaism, that a referendum to change these articles would stand a real chance of being carried.

Opposition

Although opposition to any form of cooperation between North and South, even on the economic issues outlined above, can be expected from Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), this is likely to be easily marginalised. At present, there is no prospect of any determined opposition, much less mobilisation, from the Official Unionists or the main body of Protestant workers. However, matters would be very different if the Framework Document were to include anything like a Council of Ireland or Joint Authority over the North by the South and Britain. That could, indeed, provoke a level of Loyalist opposition not only from Paisley and the DUP but also from the Official Unionists and the paramilitaries which Britain could still find difficult to defeat. ■



Adams and the new Taoiseach Bruton

Irish Workers Group—Republican Sinn Fein debate

THE IWG took the initiative in organising a well-attended public debate with Republican Sinn Fein (RSF, traditionalist Republicans who split with Sinn Fein in 1986 over taking seats in the Southern parliament) in Dublin in early December. The topic was, "After the Ceasefire, What Now?"

As well as the main speakers, Rauri Og O Bradaigh for RSF and Jim Larragy for the IWG, comrades from the Irish Committee for the Marxist Programme, Red Action and Class War spoke from the floor.

O Bradaigh focused on exposing the Provos' ceasefire as a betrayal of republicanism and on giving an outline of the RSF programme, *Eire Nua*. Larragy counterposed to this the Trotskyist programme of

Permanent Revolution. He also showed why any RSF guerilla campaign would fail as surely as had the IRA's. Guerillaism, he argued, "gets everything the wrong way around" by subordinating the mobilisation of mass action to the inevitably clandestine operations of the guerilla force.

In the course of the debate, IWG also attacked *Eire Nua* as both utopian and reactionary in its illusion that, "small is beautiful" and its orientation towards co-ops and a pre-industrial form of capitalism. In addition, RSF's programme for a nine county Ulster state, *Dail Uladh*, would be a massive concession to Loyalism and the idea of a federal Ireland a charter for local-yokel politicians throughout the 32 counties. ■

FRANCE

Bigots attack abortion clinics

TWENTY YEARS ago, abortion was legalised in France in the teeth of a reactionary campaign about the "right to life" and the need to "defend" France's falling birth rate. Ever since, the church and the far right have waged war against abortion, using increasingly violent tactics copied from the American far right. "Commando" attacks on abortion clinics have become commonplace.

The latest attack took place in Nantes, in the west of France, at the beginning of December. Eleven Catholic fundamentalists burst into the Saint Jacques abortion clinic, hoping to chain themselves to equip-

STÉPHANE CERISIER

ment in the operating theatre. Thanks to the prompt action of the staff, they had to make do with chaining themselves up in a corridor.

Nevertheless, the anti-abortionists did partly achieve their aim: helped by the police's lack of interest, it was over six hours before they were finally removed from the clinic. Several women were unable to have the operations they needed.

This was not the first attack in the Nantes region. At the end of October, women in another clinic were victims of a similar attack. Comrades of Pouvoir Ouvrier, sister or-

ganisation of Workers Power in France, raised the alarm, calling an emergency meeting of the local Comité de Vigilance, a united front group involving unions and organisations defending abortion and contraception rights. Under the leadership of a member of the LCR (sister organisation of *Socialist Outlook*), the Comité de Vigilance decided to call a meeting . . . two months later! Unfortunately, the women-hating fundamentalists didn't wait two months.

Following the second attack, our comrades argued at the Comité de Vigilance for the creation of groups able to defend the clinics at short notice. We declared no confidence

in the police or the courts and called for demonstrations and meetings to defend the right to abortion. These should be built for in the unions and workplaces. The majority of the organisations present had learned nothing from the attacks. They rejected our proposals on the grounds that they were "illegal" and argued instead that everyone should send postcards to the Health Minister, who was also the drafter of the original bill legalising abortion in 1975!

At a time when the fundamentalist right is growing in confidence, going so far in the USA as to kill both clinic workers and women patients, abortion rights campaigners must

learn the lessons of the past decades of struggle.

In many developed countries, the legal right to abortion has been won. The task now is to turn that formal right into a reality. Health cuts, new legal restrictions and anti-abortion commandos all represent real threats to a woman's right to choose whether to have a child or not. We must place no confidence in the ability of the state to defend womens' rights. In Nantes, as elsewhere, postcards and similar tactics will do nothing to stop the anti-abortion commandos. Pro-choice campaigners must mobilise the labour movement now to actively defend the clinics. ■

EVERY BROTHER ON A ROOFTOP CAN QUOTE . . .

WHEN PROMINENT leaders and eloquent voices come to the fore in the struggle for liberation, there is no shortage of movements, parties and schools of thought determined to claim them as their own.

Like Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon has been claimed by socialists, black nationalists, pan-Africanists, post-modernist academics and even the government of Algeria.

The purpose of this article is neither to claim Fanon's legacy nor to dismiss his life and work, but to assess his ideas from a revolutionary socialist perspective. Only in this way can a new generation of anti-racists learn from the strengths and the weaknesses of those who have come before us.

Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique in the Caribbean in 1925, and was educated both there and subsequently in France. In 1944, he volunteered for service in the Free French Army, and after the war he remained in France to study medicine and psychiatry.

While still in France he published his first major indictment and analysis of racism, *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952.

After qualifying, he moved to Algeria where he took up a post in a psychiatric hospital, and had been there a year when the revolutionary struggle for Algerian independence from France began in 1954. Throwing himself into the struggle for national liberation, he worked closely with the National Liberation Front (FLN), serving as a writer on their newspaper and as their representative in Ghana. In 1959, he suffered extensive injuries in a landmine explosion. A year later, he developed leukaemia, dying in 1961 at the age of 36. His book *The Wretched of the Earth*, published that year, was a denunciation of colonial brutality and an appeal for revolutionary struggle across the Third World.

The first stage in Fanon's political development was from an innovative psychologist to a theorist of black liberation.

Originally intended for submission as his medical dissertation, *Black Skin, White Masks* used the methods of psychoanalysis as developed by Freud, Adler and Lacan to examine—from a committed anti-racist perspective—the themes of race and blackness in dreams, myth, literature and the experiences of everyday life in the French Antilles, Madagascar and Europe.

Racism

The book identified and analysed racism and presumptions of black inferiority not only in their most brazen forms, but also in their more subtle everyday manifestations: the widespread tendency of the French whites to address all blacks in a form of pidgin-French; the treatment of blacks as near-children; the deep-seated fears of African "savagery" right through to the white man's neurotic sexual fear and jealousy of the black man.

Fanon wanted to expose not only obvious and crude expressions of hatred for black people but also "this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivising him, de-civilising him".

Nor was the psychology of black people themselves exempt from his analysis. As the name of the book suggests, Fanon probed deeply into the manner in which the myth of black inferiority had been implicitly accepted by millions of black people in Europe and the Third World.

But Fanon resolutely refused to restrict his terrain to the sphere of clinical psychology. He was profoundly

A famous phrase from the Chicago Riots of 1967 was "every brother on a rooftop can quote Fanon". Why has Frantz Fanon been such an inspiration to generations of fighters against racism? Richard Brenner examines the life, thought and struggle of Frantz Fanon: psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary anti-colonial fighter and advocate of black liberation.



French repression in Algeria—Fanon fought back

influenced by French existentialist writers, who one-sidedly stressed the centrality of the individual and freedom of action. Nevertheless, he recognised that racism and its distorting effects on the human personality are rooted in the super-exploitation and oppression of the colonial world.

He rooted the alienation of black people from themselves in social conditions as a whole. He insisted that there was nothing progressive to be achieved by black people treating their colour as a flaw and attempting "from within" to "seek admittance to the white sanctuary".

At the same time, he was convinced of the futility of any attempt to create a general and unified "black culture" or to promote consciousness of the achievements of past black civilisations as an answer to the racist propaganda of black inferiority.

"In the absolute", he insisted, "the black is no more to be loved than the Czech".

Against the ideas of the Négritude movement and the precursors of modern-day cultural nationalism, Fanon declared that:

"I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this fact would change anything in the lives of the eight year old children who labour in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe".

Fanon declared "... another solution is possible. It implies a restructuring of the world."

In 1954 Fanon found himself amid a revolutionary upsurge capable of achieving just that.

As a doctor and psychiatrist, Fanon

was exposed directly to the results of the brutal suppression that the French colonial regime meted out against the Algerian masses and the national liberation movement.

Fanon recorded the physical and mental effects of savage torture on victim and perpetrator alike. But he also observed that the supposed neutrality of the medical profession was a fraud: French colonial doctors were collaborating with and assisting the torturers.

Realising that this flowed directly from social and political conditions—French rule in Algeria—he observed that "every Frenchman in Algeria is obliged to behave like a torturer".

It was only when French people rendered practical solidarity to the Arabs fighting for independence that "the barriers of blood and race-prejudice are broken down on both sides".

It was time to take sides. Fanon joined the liberation movement.

Disgraceful

In so doing, Fanon put the majority of the French working class movement and radical intelligentsia to shame. The French Socialist Party came to power in 1957 and continued the bloody war of repression. But most disgraceful was the role of the French Communist Party (PCF), which had the allegiance of many of Fanon's intellectual fellow-thinkers in Paris and beyond.

The PCF was a powerful force, regularly securing over five million votes from workers and poor peasants, with its prestige still bolstered by its role in the wartime resistance. Yet despite their hard-line reputation, the Stalinists of the PCF showed their true chauvinist colours.

The PCF called for peace, but refused to back the Algerians in the war or to state their support for Algerian

independence clearly and unequivocally. The PCF even voted in parliament in favour of the emergency powers that allowed the French military to commit atrocities under cover of the law.

Fanon was excoriating in his criticism of the PCF and the cowardly intellectuals whose careers and public standing in France took precedence over their principles. Only a few—among them Jean-Paul Sartre—stood with him in defence of the Algerian revolt.

But Fanon—because of his position at an Algerian hospital—was able to offer more than mere literary support. He actively assisted the FLN's guerrilla forces, helping in the training of nurses, providing safe accommodation for Algerian fighters and—reportedly—teaching guerrilla's how to control their reactions when setting a bomb and how to hold themselves together psychologically under torture.

He took the risks and—in the landmine explosion, which very nearly killed him—he paid the price.

Fanon's most famous work is *The Wretched of the Earth*. The book's lasting appeal stems from its passionate defence of the rights of the oppressed to strike back at their oppressor by violent means, and its contempt for pacifist hypocrisy and compromise. But despite Fanon's personal heroism and the inspiring insights that the book provides into the Algerian War and the psychology of mass resistance, *The Wretched of the Earth* promotes a dangerously inadequate political strategy.

In his treatment of violence, Fanon goes well beyond the Marxist attitude which regards it as a necessary means to an end in the struggle to overthrow the class enemy.

With a heavy debt to idealistic and mystical philosophers such as

Bergson and Sorel, Fanon looks at the effect of violence from the standpoint of the individual and praises its redemptive force, a means by which the individual can find him or herself and become whole.

Here, the obsessions of the psychologist and the existentialist with the individual merge with the political prejudices of the guerrillaist FLN, who were perfectly prepared to use counterproductive terror against civilians and even against their political opponents within the liberation movement.

Fanon was rightly critical of the native bourgeoisie of the colonial countries, correctly pointing out their weakness and treachery, and insisting that it was unnecessary and undesirable for post-colonial societies to go through a capitalist stage. He argued that:

"in underdeveloped countries, the bourgeoisie should not be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and growth."

But the betrayal of the PCF and the FLN's petit bourgeois nationalist approach caused Fanon to conclude that in the struggle against colonialism, the Marxists were wrong to focus on the leading role of the working class. In its stead he embraced a romantic Third Worldism, seeing the forces on which the FLN based itself—the peasantry, the middle class and the lumpen-proletarian poor of the cities—as being the central axis of the revolution.

This was flawed in two vital respects. Fanon died of leukaemia in 1961, aged 36, before the overthrow of French rule in Algeria. If he had lived he might have accounted for the tremendous role of the Algerian working class in bringing the struggle to a victorious conclusion through a general strike.

And, indeed by 1968, the French working class—which Fanon had written off altogether because of the crimes of its political leaders—shook Europe and the world in the biggest general strike in history.

Secondly, the failure of the Algerian working class to build an independent political party that could have led the independence struggles, left the bourgeois nationalist FLN leaders in control.

Refusing to guarantee genuine democratic rights for the masses, the FLN government presided over three years of faction fighting and opened the way for the army coup of 1965 which put General Boumedienne's one-party dictatorship in power.

Servitude

Today, Algeria enjoys formal political independence from imperialism combined with continued economic servitude. The resentment of the masses is being channelled into the reactionary Islamism of the FIS.

Frantz Fanon is a heroic figure and an inspiration for today. Unlike contemporary icons such as Malcolm X, Fanon not only had the opportunity to genuinely immerse himself in mass struggle, but he was not prone to be duped by the bourgeois leaders of African states.

As David Caute has pointed out, Malcolm praised parasitic rulers such as Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Kofi Baako of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah: "men who represented a ruling caste that Fanon detested".

Moreover, for Fanon, liberation was not a question of reconstructing or reasserting a mythical black past, but building a new future for the whole of humanity—creating "the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth".

Fanon was so outraged by the treason of the reformist workers' movement of France that he failed to see that there is only one class that can bring the new humanity to birth in a world free from racism and the alienating system of private property and class division: the working class. ■

Workers power

INSIDE

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YELTSIN BLASTS GROZNY TO RUBBLE . . .



Chechen volunteers have extracted a high price from Russian invaders

Russia out of Chechnya!

BORIS YELTSIN has turned the full might of the Russian military machine against the tiny republic of Chechnya. With ground troops meeting fierce opposition, Yeltsin has decided to bomb Chechnya to hell.

Most of Grozny has been reduced to rubble. Outlying towns and villages have been blown off the face of the earth. Thousands of civilians have been killed or injured.

Sixty thousand desperate refugees have fled the capital. Journalists report that the only civilians left in Grozny are ethnic Russians with no friends and family in the countryside to flee to.

Yeltsin has condemned hundreds of Russian conscript soldiers to death and injury in the fight for the city. The ruling caste of former Soviet generals has been prepared to squander the lives of Russian teenagers, secure in the knowledge that their military blunders can be put right by throwing a few thousand more conscripts into the killing fields of Chechnya.

What have the Chechen people done to provoke this onslaught? They have demanded the right to self-determination and independence, rejecting centuries of Moscow's rule under the Tsars and then under Stalinism.

Foul nationalism dominated Yeltsin's arrogant New Year address. In a clear warning—not just to the Chechens but to all peoples who are unwilling captives in the Russian prison house—he declared:

"Russian soldiers are [in Chechnya] to defend Russian unity . . . Not a single territory has the right to withdraw from Russia."

The heroism of the Chechen people since the invasion began has been inspiring. It is fuelled by the strength of their desire to fight national oppression and to gain control of their own country.

Shortly after the invasion, unarmed civilians, many of

them women, stood in the way of Russian tanks and troops.

The courage and conviction of Chechens halted an entire column of the Russian army. Russian soldiers, listening to the arguments of the Chechens and neighbouring Ingushetians, were convinced of their right to break away from the Russian federation. They mutinied and refused to continue with the invasion.

Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to argue with a Russian pilot and impossible to persuade rockets and bombs not to kill.

Yeltsin and his murderous generals know that very well. That is why they have stepped

up the bombing raids and artillery barrages.

The poorly armed Chechen fighters simply do not have the weapons to defend themselves. Their only hope will come from international support, not from the likes of Clinton or Major, who are tacitly supporting Yeltsin, but from workers, particularly in Russia itself, who are also suffering under the rule of Yeltsin and co.

The Chechen fighters, the Russian workers, and the ordinary Russian soldiers themselves have the power to turn Yeltsin's probable military victory in Grozny into a huge political defeat.

They have the power to use the crisis in Chechnya to drive Yeltsin and his warmongers from office.

Workers everywhere must support the right of the Chechen people in their struggle against Russian domination and oppression, despite the fact that the Chechen leadership—under renegade Soviet general Dudayev, is made up of gangsters and murderers. It is not the job of Moscow's own gangsters and murderers to drive out Dudayev and his thugs. Only the Chechen workers and peasants can do that. ■

Why Yeltsin sent the troops in: turn to page 12.

STOP THE BOMBING! SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE CHECHEN PEOPLE!