

# workers POWER

*Compassion for the victims  
of torture not their torturer*

# Don't free Pinochet!

**General Pinochet is a butcher: he killed, at a conservative estimate, 4,000 Chilean oppositionists and tortured tens of thousands of workers and young people.**

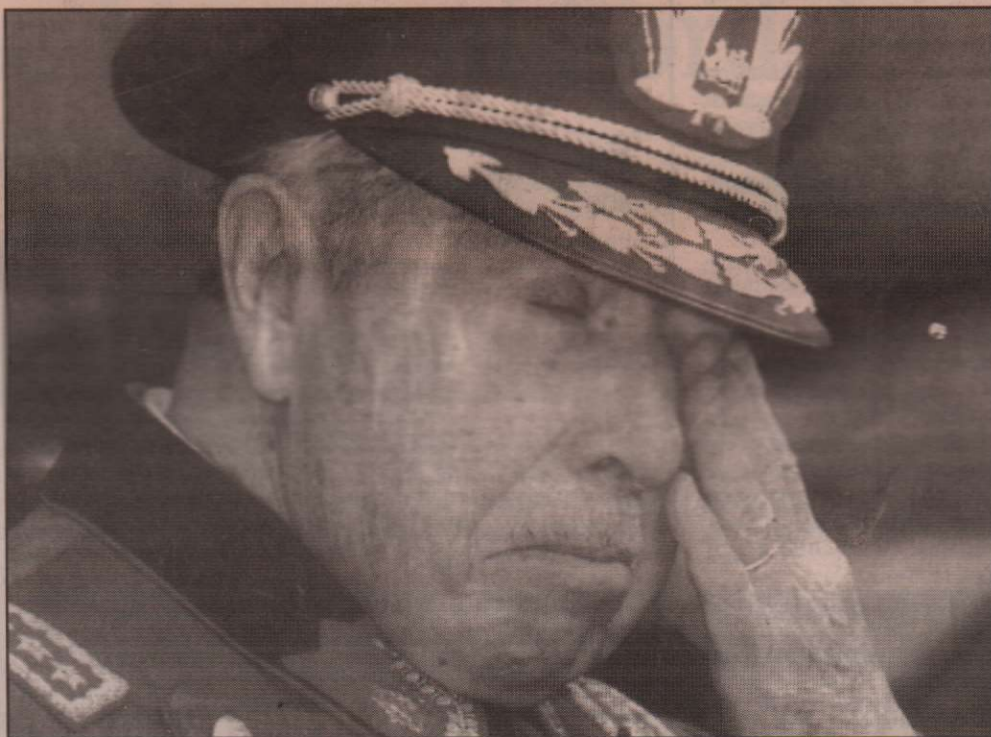
Friends and lovers were electrocuted together on two tier racks to ensure mental torture accompanied physical agony. Thousands of people disappeared under Pinochet. Their families are crowded around embassies across the globe with pictures of the missing loved ones – but everybody knows they are in unmarked graves.

That is why literally millions of people around the world leapt for joy when Pinochet was arrested in October – and why they celebrated again at the Law Lords' shock decision to uphold Spain's right to extradition.

The press is reporting a secret deal between the Labour government and Chilean foreign minister José Miguel Insulza. This involves the latter promising that Pinochet would face trial in Chile and home secretary Jack Straw releasing him from custody "on compassionate grounds".

This cynical manoeuvre must be stopped. Chile's constitution, dictated by Pinochet himself in 1978, specifically accords him diplomatic immunity. Moreover military officers can only be tried by military tribunals not by civil courts. So instead of a jury of ordinary Chileans, he would face a tribunal of fellow torturers and mass murderers.

In Chile today there is no chance of a guilty verdict. All talk of "compassion" or forgiveness for the old brute is a massive insult to those who died in the months and



Pinochet tortured tens of thousands for the "crime" of trade union membership

years following his bloody coup.

It is no surprise that William Hague, Michael Howard and Margaret Thatcher have been queuing up to plead for his release. Under the 1970-74 Tory government, the British armed forces and secret service were undoubtedly complicit with the Chilean military coup.

So too was the British ambassador. Many foreign embassies took pity on those facing torture or the firing squad, helping them climb the walls into the diplomatic compounds. In contrast the British embassy, while the killing was at its height, refused to let a single victim seek asylum

within its walls.

The wife of the British ambassador said: "I was at the hairdressers and I came out and saw our Hawker Hunters (planes sold to the Chilean airforce) circling in the sky over Santiago, and I just felt so happy and proud!"

Those planes were bombing the palace of the elected president of Chile and strafing defenceless working class neighbourhoods. Where was British "compassion" then?

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STOP THE STEEL JOBS MASSACRE! Join the demo against steel plant closures on 5 December, Herringthorpe Playing Fields, Rotherham

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HEALTH

Ill-health caused by poverty

FROM LUNG cancer to heart disease, stunted growth to mental illness, there is a class divide in the nation's health and it is getting wider.

Eighteen years ago the government-commissioned Black Report pointed to the links between poverty and ill health. It was buried by the Tory government...

Acheson does not just show that poverty is rising, and that in every category unskilled workers get sicker and die younger: he has called for a massive shift in spending priorities...

This puts the Labour government in a cleft stick. It has been determined to keep the lid on all forms of public spending, including the NHS.

Labour, however, also has another overriding priority: to maintain the wealth and privileges of the rich and upper middle classes.

As Peter Mandelson told bosses: "We are seriously relaxed about people getting filthy rich." That means keeping taxes low and government spending down.

But Acheson calls for: all policies - including taxation and spending - to be assessed against their impact on health, and to favour the less well-off; the health of younger women, expectant mothers and young children to be a priority, and; action to reduce income inequalities and to improve household living standards for the poor.

Blair and Health Secretary Frank Dobson told Acheson to make recommendations that took account of the government's spending priorities.

increased benefits for mothers, children and elderly people; high-quality, cheap childcare to allow parents to work; pre-school education for poor children and free school food;

- job creation; better and cheaper council and housing association homes; high-quality, cheap public transport; and a "review" of private medicine, with the aim of improving access to NHS services for those who can't afford it.

The usual game in these circumstances is to make a couple of small, carefully costed recommendations, leaving the rest to vague hopes for the future.

Acheson refused to play by the rules. Immediately the whole army of well-paid health "experts" came out to accuse him of irresponsibility, because he refused to cost his recommendations.

The Acheson report reveals the level of unmet need in Britain. A family living on income support gets between 67 and 90 per cent of the absolute minimum for an adequate standard of living.

Malnutrition in childhood leaves a lifelong legacy of ill health. And the hidden injuries of social class are not only physical. Young working class men suffer the highest rates of suicide, and working class people suffer more mental illness than the affluent.

But the government has no plans to increase welfare benefits for the unemployed, to provide cheap childcare, to create jobs or rein in private medical practice.

New Labour wants to cut access to benefits for the long-term unemployed, single parents and disabled people. It wants older people to pay for their own benefits in the form of private pensions.

Acheson's recommendations, despite the furore they have caused, remain at the level of general ideas. So what should we do about it?

To address family poverty we need a minimum wage of £6 an hour and benefits set at a minimum of the weekly equivalent - £240 for a single person, with housing benefit extra.

To address poor nutrition there should be a government subsidy on healthy foodstuffs: fresh bread, pasta, rice, fruit and vegetables should be cheaper than their processed equivalents, not dearer.

To end the scandal of slum housing there should be a massive programme for new social housing, and the state should pay the fuel and water bills of all unemployed people.

To deliver better health services

means health workers and the local population taking control of setting and monitoring priorities. Right now the government is "pioneering" new ways of prioritising local health services - the so-called Primary Care Groups.

The poor, the sick and the elderly are not represented on such committees. There is just one lay person, appointed by the local health authority.

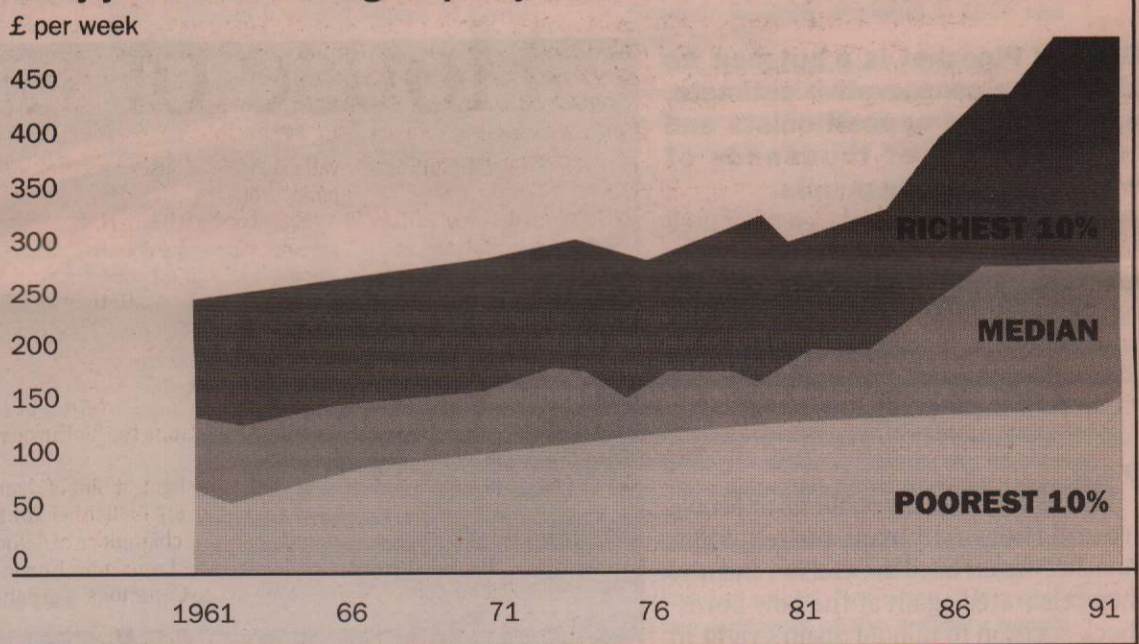
We need a new form of local control of health provision: elected and recallable committees of health workers and service users.

But most of all we need to prise the cap off health and welfare spending. Gordon Brown recently promised an extra £21 billion for the NHS.

The real answer is to tax the rich - their bloated incomes, their profits and dividends and their accumulated wealth.

We need decent jobs on living wages, time to relax, a stress-free transport system, enough money to spend on healthy food and drink, access to the knowledge that helps us keep ourselves and our children healthy.

Thirty years of hurt: rising inequality in Britain



BENEFITS

From the unthinkable to the indefensible

FRANK FIELD, long gone from the government front bench, was asked to "think the unthinkable" on benefits. Now, social security minister Alistair Darling is set to do the indefensible.

The new benefit laws, outlined in the Queen's Speech last month, will introduce means testing for disability benefits for the first time.

By driving people into deeper poverty Labour hopes to save £1.7 billion from the benefits bill.

As always with New Labour, the spending cuts are sugared with a coat-

ing of new "rights" for the victims. Disabled people will get a Disability Rights Commission - but Incapacity Allowance will be cut if you haven't got enough National Insurance stamps...

Likewise, the widow's pension will be extended to cover widowers - but bereaved people over 45 with no kids will not get the pension at all.

Meanwhile, Darling has also been asked to do some of his own "thinking" about the unthinkable.

The government knows that radical pension reform is dynamite: state pensions do not give people enough to live on, but the majority of workers cannot afford private pensions.

But Darling's job is to soften up the opposition so that, by the next election, Labour can include some form of compulsory second pension in the manifesto.

The scandal is not just that all these measures increase poverty: they are literally theft. We have paid for our pen-

sions, our unemployment benefit and our disability benefits with National Insurance contributions. That is where about £15 of your wages goes each week.

Labour's welfare reform policy is in direct contradiction with the Acheson Report on improving health (see above). Labour is, step by step, shrinking the welfare state to a safety net for the very poorest people.

# Jenkins opts for safety

EVERY SUMMER for the last 40 years, thousands of A-level politics students have been asked to "explain the arguments for and against electoral reform in the UK". The topic is a favourite because the answer is as predictable as the question: the existing system creates stable government by exaggerating the strength of one of the main parties, but is rather undemocratic because it under-represents the main "third party". On the other hand, a truly proportional system would be a recipe for chronically unstable government.

Lord Jenkins and his team had more than a year to answer essentially the same question. They listened to hundreds of experts, investigated other countries' systems and after all their work and, (given Jenkins' preferences, several cases of fine claret) they came up with essentially the same answers. In itself, this is hardly surprising.

What does need explanation is why Tony Blair, on record as being "not at all convinced of the arguments for reform", should now indicate that he might be persuaded. Why should a Prime Minister with the biggest majority of modern times consider changing the system that gave him such an advantage? The answer is that Blair knows that his policies could result in the break-up of his present electoral base.

The Labour Party relies on working class votes and trade union finance, but whenever it has been in power its commitment to the interests of British capital has led it into conflict with its voters and the unions. The present government will undoubtedly provoke such a conflict, though the timing is difficult to predict. Blair knows that electoral

reform could provide an alternative electoral base, the so-called "moderate centre".

Jenkins came to a similar conclusion by a different route. He has been a loyal servant of capital for more than 30 years: Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1960s, European Commissioner in the 1970s and architect of the SDP split from Labour that guaranteed Thatcher's supremacy in the 1980s. But the fate of the SDP revealed his limitations as a tactician. He had imagined the possibility of assembling a credible "third force" to topple Thatcher without conceding influence to the unions and, behind them, the working class in general.

The failure of this plan led Jenkins to see the need for electoral reform. Under the current system it is virtually impossible for a third party to make any headway unless it can concentrate its support in the way that Labour has long done in Scotland and Wales.

By the late 1980s, it was becoming clear to sections of big business that their own party, the Conservative Party, was becoming dysfunctional. Based as it was on the electoral support of the "middle class" and politically backward sections of the working class, it was an obstacle to the move towards European integration. Jenkins, acutely aware of this issue's importance, developed a new strategy designed to ensure that all future governments would be more responsive to capitalist interests.

Of course, the first problem was to get rid of the Tories but this was achieved relatively easily through an unspoken but well-orchestrated electoral alliance between the Liberal Democrats and Labour. Jenkins' proposals are calculated to ensure that the exaggerated

swing of the electoral pendulum, seen in 1997, never occurs again.

Jenkins presents his proposals as a democratic advance and insists that "fairness to voters is the first essential" that guided his commission. Nonetheless, his entire package is quite clearly designed to ensure that the voters produce the answers he wants.

Jenkins' aim has been to alter the existing system only slightly. This divides the population up into 650 constituencies, each designed to provide a mix of social classes so diluting the working class vote. At the same time, he wants to ensure that successful candidates have to win an absolute majority within these constituencies. This is to be done by introducing the "Alternative Vote" system, in which the voter indicates first and second preferences, and a candidate has to win either 50% of first preferences

or a total of 50% made up of first and second preferences to win the seat.

Although such a system might well encourage the "moderate" politics Jenkins obviously prefers, it would not, by itself, do very much to change the overall balance between the parties. To overcome this, he proposes that constituencies be grouped together on a city or county basis into what he calls "top-up areas".

Within these, the total of second preference votes for all parties would be added up and used to allocate a "top-up candidate" to the party that had polled the most second preferences. In the country as a whole, this would account for some 80 MPs and would have the effect of increasing proportionality, thereby greatly decreasing the chances of any party gaining a large majority.

According to projections made for the Jenkins' commission, such an arrangement would not make single-party governments impossible, but would considerably increase the likelihood of coalitions. Naturally, that is the situation that would most benefit the Liberal Democrats, but it is also a prospect that could prove attractive to a Labour Party that cannot hope to hang on to its present majority and could well see its electoral base fragment.

What attitude should revolutionaries take to these proposals? Our starting point must be that as long as we live in a parliamentary democracy, we are in favour of the most radical system of representation. That would mean a system in which parties gained seats in direct proportion to their support within the country as a whole. This can only be achieved by the "list system", with votes counted on a regional basis so that the precise pattern of political support is absolutely transparent for all to see.

The Jenkins commission did not even consider the list system for Britain, rightly believing that long-term, stable bourgeois government would be unlikely under such a consistently democratic system.

In the absence of a list system, we should support all reforms that tend to give parties seats in proportion to their support, including the present proposals if they are ever put to a referendum. Unlike Jenkins, however, we do not think this will help consolidate "the centre" of British politics, but will help to break up parties along class lines. One result could be a split in the Labour Party, which would open up opportunities for posing a revolutionary solution.

## OPEN AND CLOSED LISTS

**THE ISSUE** at the heart of the confrontation between the Commons and the Lords, centres on whether next summer's elections to the (completely powerless) European Parliament should be by "closed" or "open" party lists.

If a revolutionary party were standing the question would be largely irrelevant since the list would be decided democratically within the party and every candidate elected would be under the party's discipline. But the Labour Party is neither revolutionary nor especially democratic, as highlighted by the lengths the party

leadership went to in order to block Rhodri Morgan in Wales or Ken Livingstone in London.

In a "closed list" election Labour voters would have no choice but to support the leadership's selection and prioritisation of candidates, in which left candidates who had managed to squeeze on to the list would be located at the very bottom, thereby losing any chance of winning.

Consequently, Workers Power supports an "open list" system by which voters could register support for their party while voting for opponents of its leadership.

## THE OTHER PLACE

# Abolish the House of Lords!

THE STATE opening of parliament: the pomp, the ceremony, the peacock parade of Her Majesty's loyal appendages walking backwards in ill-fitting costumes from a long gone age. Nobody does it quite like the British.

Where else in the world, other than Freedonia or Ruritania, would you find a second legislative chamber that was not only wholly unelected but full of the products of countless generations of aristocratic inbreeding?

But despite appearances, the House of Lords is no joke. It is one of the bastions of reaction within the British state. The upcoming legislation that would strip nearly 750 hereditary peers of their "right" to vote in the House of Lords has already provoked these dinosaurs into a last ditch fight to retain their undemocratic powers. Their Tory leaders have made it plain that they will not go gently into the night.

Blair's extremely modest proposals for reform of the Lords make up a key part of his drive to modernise bourgeois democracy in Britain generally. At this stage, Blair does not have an alternative to offer, though he has made it clear that he intends to retain a second chamber of some type.

He has not, however, even stated whether this tier of the legislature should be largely elected or appointed. His decision to opt for a Royal Commission to propose an alternative to the present-day Lords has left him open to charges of "timidity" from his new mate Paddy Ashdown, and of wanting to create a "House of Cronies" from Hague.

There is every possibility that those who have inherited their places in the Lords will retain their right to make virtually unlimited use of the Palace of

Westminster's extensive dining and dining facilities.

Of course, the Lords did provide Blair and Home Secretary Jack Straw with a convenient excuse to prevaricate on their promise to allow a free vote on the equalisation of the age of consent for gay sex. So while, the House of Lords is dysfunctional for a New Labour regime's modernisation plans, the existence of a second chamber performs the useful function of deflecting popular attention away from Blair's broken promises and betrayals.

And by staking a radical claim in the battle for reform, Blair can also divert attention from his own deeply conser-

vative agenda on just about every other policy front.

Egged on by William Hague, the Tory hereditary peers are determined to wage a dogged rearguard action against the Government. After all, they had successfully flexed their muscle in the week preceding the Queen's speech by obstructing Blair's preferred option for proportional representation at the upcoming elections to the European parliament.

Without the slightest hint of shame, a number of their lordships subsequently posed as champions of democracy. In turn, the Lords' rejection for a fifth time of the Commons' legislation

provided Tony Blair with the rare opportunity to posture as the defender of the sovereignty of the "will of the people" as expressed by the elected House of Commons. Blair is now threatening them with a terrible fate - having to give up some of their three week Christmas holidays.

The hereditary peers have already proved that they are an anti-democratic bloc. The government has hinted it may have to put the bill abolishing the hereditary seats at the end of the parliamentary session so that the Lords cannot delay other legislation in their campaign to maintain their privileges.

Far from putting the relevant bill to the back of the queue the government should immediately respond by abolishing the House of Lords completely. Even within the limited terms of democracy that any parliamentary system provides, such an institution is totally undemocratic, an affront to every voter and a serious obstacle to any major reform.

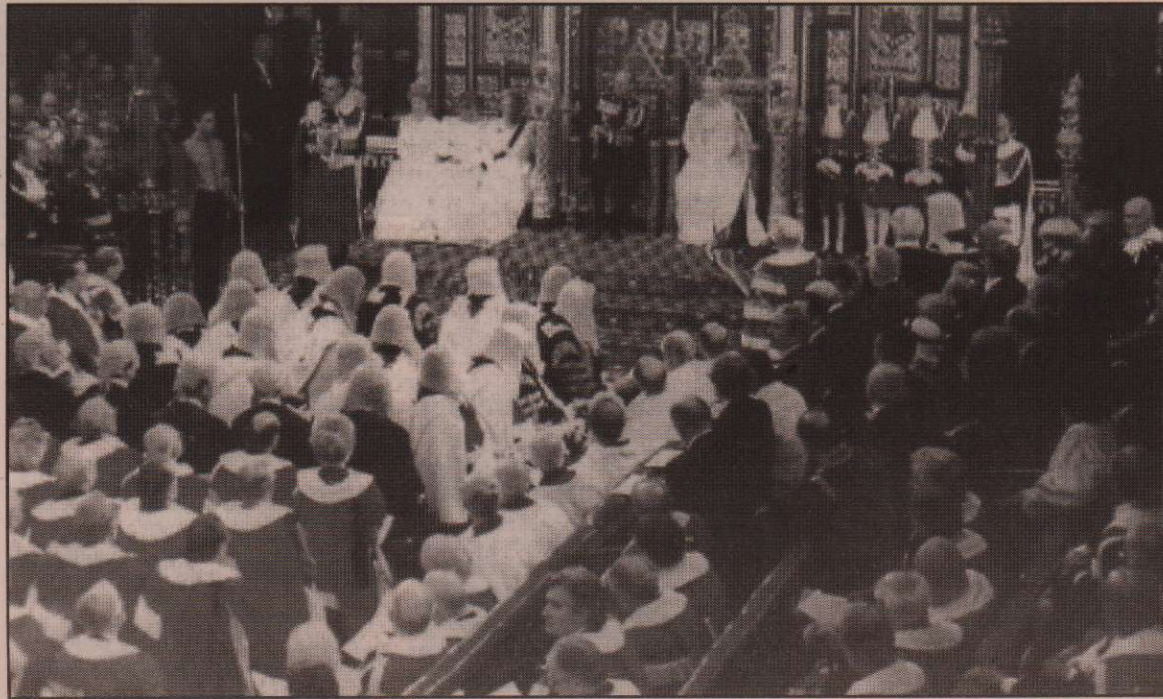
There should be an annually elected legislature with a single chamber, based on proportional representation, with all those aged 16 and older eligible to vote.

There is no democratic reason to have a second chamber whatsoever. The purpose of a second chamber has always been to frustrate the democratic wishes of the people, to temper the power of the main elected assembly. Its role is to limit radical changes and therefore protect the status quo.

And given that the Lords enjoy their titles and political privileges courtesy of the wealth and land - wealth and land that their forebears brutally stole from peasants - we should strip each and everyone of them of their titles, their estates and their stately homes.

The monarchy, which like the Lords enjoys vast unaccountable constitutional powers in Britain, must also be abolished.

Labour won't follow this course. It is only prepared to "modernise" to the degree that the wealth, privilege and political power of the ruling class is not threatened. But real socialists, as part of our fight for a different form of democracy altogether, workers' democracy, will abolish every single unelected political institution in Britain.



EDUCATION

BY KATE FOSTER

# Labour's class credentials exposed

NEW LABOUR'S promises on education ring more hollow as each week passes. Far from finding money to reduce class sizes, pay teachers a decent wage and give schools more resources, New Labour is busy closing schools or selling them off.

Blair is determined to transform education, not to ensure that working class kids get a better education but so that schools make a good profit for business.

In London, Pimlico School is top of the menu to be gobbled up by the privateers. Home secretary Jack Straw is on the school's governing body and has been the prime mover behind a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project which, if it proceeds, will lead to a lucrative money-spinner for a private company.

The PFI plan includes the construction of 160 luxury flats worth £20 million on the school grounds. On the day that Westminster Council gave the scheme the green light, more than 200 Pimlico pupils walked out. Many joined parents protesting outside Westminster City Hall.

Elsewhere in the capital, Lambeth's Labour-controlled council is planning to close seven primary schools. They claim that there are too many empty places and the closures are necessary to raise standards.

Class sizes, at 26, are already high for primary school children. How many

working class parents imagined that when they voted for New Labour on the basis of their promise of class sizes not exceeding 30 it would mean increasing class sizes to 30?

Lambeth Council's plans are not about raising standards but about raising money. A few years ago parents of children at Dick Sheppard school scraped together the money to build a swimming pool. It was a slow process with parents literally paying for it brick by brick.

The school has since been sold off to private developers, for conversion into flats, which are expected to fetch a good price on the basis of (you guessed it) a swimming pool as part of the complex. Flats at Ashby Mill, another ex-Lambeth school, also with a swimming pool, are expected to start at around £120,000.

The response of parents and children in Lambeth to the recent round of closures has been angry and determined. Many children are facing the second closure of their brief academic careers as Lambeth closed three primary schools just 18 months ago.

Seventy protesters from one of the primary schools tried to lobby the council. The police were called and they were escorted away from the building. Hundreds of parents attended a lively demo in Brixton and children formed a continuous "crocodile" to halt traffic in another protest in late November.

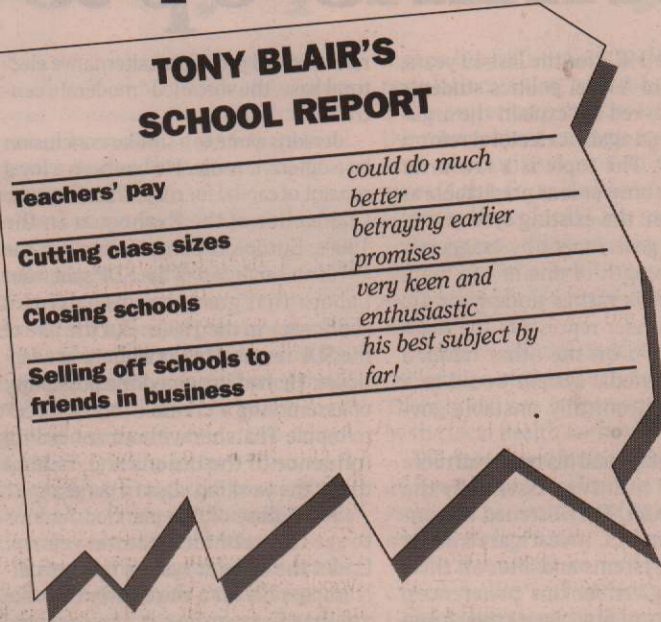
In addition to Lambeth, education authorities have proposed school closures and provoked resistance in Northampton, Nottingham, Bristol, Salford and Manchester.

Meanwhile, in Hackney, East London, 140 teachers are awaiting redundancy notices. They are employed as Section 11 teachers, supporting children who do not speak English as their first language. The government decided to devolve money to individual schools rather than maintaining such teachers as part of a team employed by the local education authorities.

Hackney LEA has concluded that this means they are no longer responsible for these teachers and will attempt to sack all 140. Hackney NUT members are planning action to defend these jobs.

On teachers' pay the government will issue a Green Paper in December which will rule out decent pay for all teachers. Instead, they claim they only have the money to pay a few "good" teachers – their pretext for introducing performance related pay. Faced with a severe shortage of qualified teachers who are leaving teaching in disgust at lousy pay, New Labour plans to employ more unqualified, untrained (and cheap) classroom assistants. So much for raising standards!

Parents, teachers and pupils have to stop New Labour's attacks on education. Lambeth parents have shown



that campaigns can be built, uniting the community against New Labour's attacks. We need a militant campaign, including strikes and occupations, to win the following demands:

- Stop all school closures; tax the rich to build new schools and properly resource them!
- For an immediate £2,000 flat-rate pay increase for all teachers
- No to performance related pay
- No redundancies, no job losses
- No to school privatisations, no to

PFI! No to the Education Action Zones!

■ Yes to a fully comprehensive, state funded education system controlled by teachers', students and parents!

### SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

Mass Lobby of Lambeth's Education Committee  
Lambeth Town Hall  
Acre Lane, London SW2  
Monday 14 December

## MINIMUM WAGE

### Protest targets "Ministry for Low Pay"



THE COPS and security guards outside the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) were not amused. But the young people on the pavement cheered loudly when protesters unfurled a banner from the DTI rooftop, proclaiming it the "Ministry for Low Pay". Equalize!, the campaign for an equal minimum wage for all with no exemptions, called the 25 November demonstration at Peter Mandelson's head office in Westminster. It was a big success. Equalize! plans to continue the campaign with independent actions and to force the unions to take the issue seriously.

## ACTION PROGRAMME

### Build a fighting alternative to job losses

UNION BRANCHES across Britain are debating the way forward in the fight against cuts, privatisation and job losses, sparked by an initiative from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which issued an Action Programme of immediate demands that is going forward to union branches and conferences.

Workers Power backs this move and our members and supporters are trying to beef up the programme's demands – and to defend it against the union bureaucracy's attempts to keep

socialist politics out of the unions.

The Action Programme is clearly not a full revolutionary one: it is a call for unity in action around key issues facing the working class. But our answers on these issues have to be revolutionary. Will nationalisation be just a rerun of the past with fat compensation for the Richard Bransons of this world, or will it rip the heart out of the profit system and put the workers in control? Will the national minimum wage be a living wage set at European decency standards – or

will it be the TUC's pathetic compromise of £4.61?

To make sure the working class is united around demands that really advance our interests in the struggle, Workers Power is arguing for a series of amendments (outlined below) to the SWP's Action Programme. The words in italics are our amendments, which have been won, for instance, in Derbyshire County Unison. We urge trade unionists to add these to the substantive motions submitted by the SWP.

### PASS THIS RESOLUTION

- Stop all closures – nationalise all companies laying off workers without compensation and under workers' control, to save jobs not profits
- Create jobs by cutting hours – for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay
- For wealth redistribution to the poor – £6 per hour minimum wage for all. Tax the rich with a wealth tax, a steeply progressive income tax and a massive rise in corporation tax.
- Not a penny for the armed services; millions for welfare. For a massive programme of state funded useful public works, planned and controlled by local committees of delegates from the trade unions, other working class organisations and communities.
- End the Tory policy of privatisation. Renationalise the privatised services

and industries without compensation and place them under workers' control. End all PFI, Best Value and other "backdoor" privatisation schemes.

- Full union rights – repeal all anti-union laws
- State control of international trade and finance to combat speculation. *Nationalise the banks and finance institutions, merge them into a single state bank and subject it to workers' inspection and control.*
- We have a right to work – create jobs on full pay to boost demand. We call on our union leaders to organise national and local demonstrations against job losses. We demand they challenge Tory policies being enacted by this government. We believe British workers should learn from South Korean workers who, when the bosses tried to shut down their car factories,

occupied and won. Workers in France, South Korea and the US have shown direct action works. *We urge all workers under threat to organise strike and occupation committees and take direct action to defend jobs and services. We call on our union leaders to support all workers' action.*

We resolve to communicate these points directly to our national leadership and to the prime minister. Further we undertake to distribute the Action Programme among our members and to publicise it, as part of a campaign to organise rank and file workers into a movement that can spearhead the fightback and transform our unions into fighting unions democratically controlled by their members.

■ Let Workers Power know if your union branch passes this resolution.

## Continued from page 1

What has come as a surprise to many Labour supporters is that Tony Blair and Jack Straw have been working overtime to find a way to release the butcher. They have a little problem: how to avoid incurring the hatred and contempt not only of the labour movement – for which they personally care little – but of democratic governments and politicians worldwide.

Labour foreign secretary Robin Cook claims to be pursuing an "ethical foreign policy. For New Labour to release Pinochet would finally expose such talk

as the hypocritical charade it really is.

It would be better by far for Pinochet to face a jury of Chilean workers: we should put no illusions in the ability of courts in either Britain or Spain to bring torturers to justice: Britain tortured Irish prisoners of war and was slammed by international human rights organisations – but nobody was punished. Spain operated death squads against Basque nationalists for years.

Of course we condemn such double standards by imperialism and by its reformist servants. We point to their hypocrisy – starkly revealed by the five-star treatment Pinochet is getting in

Britain while awaiting extradition compared to the horrific treatment meted out by the British state to Roisin McAliskey.

**ACTION AGAINST PINOCHET**  
Picket Downing Street every week day 1pm – 10.00pm

**DEMONSTRATE!**  
2pm Saturday 5 December  
Trafalgar Square, Central London

Demand Straw proceeds with extradition. Write to Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1N 9AT or Fax 0171 273 3965

Wanted for extradition by Germany she was imprisoned and, since she was pregnant, effectively tortured while extradition proceedings went ahead. Pinochet is in a splendid clinic, enjoying fine food and hasn't seen so much as a handcuff since his arrest.

But to simply denounce this hypocrisy and not demand that the imperialist government act against Pinochet would be folly. It would let them off the hook that they have got themselves caught on.

Today Pinochet's return to Chile now means his release! We must unite across Europe and Latin America to expose

Pinochet's crimes and build solidarity with those fighting for a real return to democracy not the sham "military democracy" in Chile today.

Last but not least we must expose what no bourgeois court will allow: the collusion of the British and US multi-nationals and governments in Pinochet's coup and others like it.

Our immediate task is to force Jack Straw to hear the voices of the bereaved, the tortured and the exiled: we want compassion for them, not Pinochet. There are plenty of new prisons in Blair and Straw's New Britain. We say: let the monster rot in one.

# BMW use closure threat to blackmail workers into accepting job cuts

THE BMW management and the unions, with the support of Peter Mandelson, have put Rover workers under immense pressure to sign up for a deal which will seriously worsen their working conditions. The threat of the Longbridge plant closure is the key factor making it likely that the management will succeed in getting what they want.

Some 2,500 redundancies have been demanded by the company. Increased productivity is expected for which many workers will be rewarded with a substantial pay cut. Despite the sweetener of the new working time agreement – a cut in basic hours to a 35-hour, four-day week – the deal hands over massively increased control to management and means the loss of overtime and shift premiums. One estimate is that workers on some shifts could lose up to 20% of their take-home pay.

Resistance to this package is expected in the Solihull and Oxford plants. But the demoralisation among workers in the massive Longbridge complex because it could be shut down altogether, means the union negotiators will probably get the vote for the agreement they are looking for.

The working time agreement means that Rover workers will be at the bosses' beck and call. Saturday is treated as a normal working day and so may be included as one of the four nine-hour days. But this is not the whole story. When demand is high, workers can be asked to work longer hours, and these are then banked, to be taken off at a later date when production is slacker. On top of this, the company is entitled to interchange workers between factories as well as between sections.

"This flexibility", says a BMW management document, "forms part of a complex mobility, which in broad terms could be expressed as an open frame of mind, an open attitude to necessary changes". A Rover worker put it rather differently to Workers Power: "Workers will be working now to be laid off later. You will work when they want you to and holiday when they want you to."

On top of the redundancies the company is demanding unions co-operate in finding a further £150 million savings annually for the next three years. Union negotiators, led by TGWU official Tony Woodley, have argued that there is no alternative to this deal.

Woodley's argument is that the crisis of overcapacity in the car industry means that Longbridge could not survive without conceding to the bulk of BMW's demands. Throughout the negotiations, however, only the very senior negotiators have had access to BMW's figures. BMW has "opened the books", but only to a select few. So while the threat to close Longbridge was undoubtedly used to blackmail the workforce, most Longbridge workers have not been prepared to gamble that the BMW bosses were bluffing.

The bosses have been adept at playing on both fears of competition and divisions between sites. At Rover Solihull, where the workforce is in a relatively stronger position and stands to lose out more through loss of overtime, many workers are insisting that they will not vote for a pay cut. Longbridge workers view such attitudes with suspicion: Solihull workers, rather than BMW, become the focus of resentment because they may threaten the deal.

But Landrover workers themselves have been put under pressure. Midway

through the negotiations a threat to move 4x4 production to the US was plastered all over the Birmingham papers.

A Solihull worker explained to Workers Power that some workers at the plant felt it was necessary to vote for the deal both to defend Longbridge and because the fear of closures affected them as well. The management and chief union negotiators have played on these fears. The lack of legal protection in Britain compounds the anxiety, and Woodley has effectively used the argument that BMW will find it easier to sack British workers than German ones.

In the current world climate, every car company is being pushed into more and more cut-throat competition. The answer is not to agree to a never-ending string of concessions. If the companies realise they can continually push car workers into a corner with threats of rationalisation, redundancy and closure then they will push for more and more.

Despite the good intentions of those workers at Solihull who are thinking of voting for the deal to save Longbridge, they will not be doing themselves or their brothers and sisters at Longbridge any favours. To accept the logic of the

*To accept the logic of the Rover management's plans and to believe the union leaders' arguments is self defeating. It will lead to a series of needless retreats.*

Rover management's plans and to believe the union leaders' arguments is self defeating. It will lead to a series of needless retreats and it certainly won't stop thousands of car workers being forced onto the dole.

Precisely because all leading car makers are preparing to attack their workforces it gives us the opportunity to turn the situation around. Car workers need to fight for common goals, for demands that deal with the key threats to their jobs, pay and working conditions whatever company they work for or whatever plant they are in.

If the bosses claim that too many cars are being produced, the answer should not be to sack workers. There



should be a cross-industry demand for an immediate cut in hours but with no loss of pay. When work slackens off car workers should decide how the work is shared out.

Rolls Royce bosses threaten to shut up shop in Britain and move to the USA to circumvent European Union labour regulation. Ford and Vauxhall have been watching the progress of the Rover negotiations and planning their next round of attacks on conditions. As the bosses watch and borrow tactics from each other, the only answer is to build strong links between workers both within and across the different companies, both nationally and internationally, so that one set of workers cannot be played off against another.

This can be done by building genuine rank and file links at shop steward level, with real pledges for joint action and joint demands. Furthermore, car workers need a different sort of politics, not centred on the supposed "national interest" as the Labour Party and trade union leaders argue, but based instead on the common interests that workers have internationally.

This doesn't mean letting governments in individual countries off the hook though. Labour and the social democratic parties across Europe were elected by workers who at least expected "their" governments to intervene against the worst ravages of capitalist competition. We should demand Labour does so.

Peter Mandelson played a close hand while the Rover negotiations dragged on. But he was particularly careful not to offer state aid while BMW was still trying to put the frighteners on the workforce. Now, the offer of regional development funds becomes part of the package.

This sort of "intervention" is for the benefit of the bosses and their profits, not the working class. Instead of sweeteners for the multinationals, workers should demand that Labour nationalises any firm that threatens redundancies or closure without a penny compensation, to be run not under the control of Mandelson's appointees but under democratic workers' control.

If a deal at Rover is accepted it will not be the end of the matter. New attacks will follow. That is why militants need to learn the lessons of what has happened and begin to rebuild shop floor organisation, which in Longbridge was once the envy of militants everywhere. That way we will be in a much better position to force our demands on the bosses and government and stop them forcing misery on us.

# workers POWER

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COMMENT

## Gay baiting in Britain

Ron Davies' resignation from the cabinet unleashed more than just a torrent of speculation. Homophobia – the fear and loathing of homosexuals – ran riot in the British media and political establishment for almost a month.

Another cabinet minister, Peter Mandelson, was "outed" on *Newsnight* by ex-MP turned columnist, Matthew Parris. This prompted responses from both the BBC, instructing all its staff not to discuss Mandelson's sexuality, and from *The Sun*, which sacked Parris for his remarks.

The press then began an investigation into the sexuality of the rest of the cabinet, prompted by *The Sun's* homophobic headline: "Are we being run by a gay mafia?". It did not take long before another cabinet minister was forced to disclose his homosexuality or risk being outed by an ex-lover in another Murdoch rag, *The News of the World*.

Political columnists claimed to be confused about what was going on. After all, there was already an openly gay cabinet minister, Chris Smith. Blair seemed comfortable with that, so why had Ron Davies been allowed to resign? Meanwhile, *The Sun*, after sacking Parris for outing Mandelson, pleaded with Mandelson to out himself, while characterising Davies and Brown as "fat poofs".

There is no real reason for confusion. The explanation is simple. Tony Blair, the liberal press and even (ho, ho) the *Sun* may protest their acceptance of homosexuality, but the whole tempest was blatantly homophobic.

Why did Ron Davies have to resign? Because he was caught out looking for homosexual sex and yet he was married?

Why did Nick Brown have to declare his sexual preference? Because he is homosexual and some slimy journalist was about to publish this in a sorry excuse for a newspaper.

No confusion, just blatant, nasty, pernicious homophobia. Homophobia runs like a poisoned vein through the heart of British politics and the bourgeois media. It oozes from every pore of the body politic.

Even the language conveys the message. Gay social venues suddenly become "notorious gay haunts". When was the last time you heard of a "notoriously heterosexual haunt"? The existence of gay politicians leads to charges of a "gay mafia". Ever heard of a "straight mafia" being branded as a threat to the cabinet's integrity?

The liberal press likes to think itself above all this. The *New Statesman* printed a list of famous politicians who were gay (surprise, surprise). But Simon Heffer's article, which seeks to explain "why gays become politicians", maintains that in the Tory party you get to hang around with late middle-aged women and can get away with "back biting" and other "feminine" activities.

This stereotyping reinforces ignorance, prejudice and homophobia. Indeed, the premise of the article is both disgusting and absurd. After all, why are there no articles on "why gays become doctors, teachers, factory workers, local government workers, journalists etc.?"

Gays, like straights, exist in every social class and occupation, and in every type of community. The only difference is their sexuality – and the crucial fact that this sexuality makes them the target for systematic oppression, discrimination, abuse, violence and even death at the hands of "queer bashers".

This is, of course, a vital difference, but it's ignored by the liberal press. And it is a difference openly celebrated in the tabloid "fat poofs" brand of journalism.

Homophobia must be fought by targeting and tearing out its roots. Homophobia was not created by capitalism, but it is bound up with it. Capitalism needs to "defend" the family. It plays an important part in saving the bosses money by ensuring women are forced into domestic slavery – including washing, cleaning, cooking and looking after the sick and aged. At an ideological level, it emphasises the individual above the collective, conformity rather than sexual freedom. The family is part of the oppression of women and of lesbians and gay men.

It is no surprise to see Blair, who defends capitalism as an economic system, also prepared to defend capitalism by supporting the traditional family unit as the ideal. The government launched a consultation on family policy just one week after Ron Davies resigned. We were presented the prescription for a two-parent couple – one man, one woman, preferably married – as the ideal for bringing up children.

The working class has an answer to homophobia – an answer which is collective, rather than individual. Homophobia can be fought through organising a working class movement of lesbians and gay men, a movement which can fight lesbian and gay oppression and alongside the rest of the working class can smash the system which perpetuates it – capitalism. No confusion, just clear battle lines.

# Trench war in the history books

**Keith Spencer** looks at the historians who want to praise the generals and blame the soldiers of 1914-18

NOVEMBER SAW the eightieth anniversary of the end of the First World War. Newspapers and TV coverage were given over to interviews with the few remaining survivors of the fighting. Their testimony, often moving, reinforced the waste and futility of the mass slaughter of the war.

However, the popular view of the 1914-18 war as a waste of millions of human lives by imperialist politicians and incompetent generals is under attack. A whole set of military historians are trying to blame the common soldiers for the slaughter and exonerate the generals: instead of "lions led by donkeys", the new historians of the 1914 war depict the British generals as tactical geniuses – and books on the First World War have taken over from *Bravo Two Zero* and its ilk on the best seller list.

The generals in the First World War were responsible for the deaths of 9 million soldiers. Out of the 65 million who fought, a further 21 million were wounded. British and Commonwealth forces lost 900,000 dead. France lost 1,400,000 – a blow so heavy that in 1940 the French population was still smaller than it had been in 1913. Germany lost 1,800,000 dead and Russia about the same.

Hundreds of thousands of lives were squandered in single bloody days of fighting, with little or no ground gained to show for it. And because all sides called up soldiers in community based units – with a whole town or workplace joining a single regiment – the losses had a massive and immediate impact on working class consciousness.

There were revolutions in Russia, Hungary and Germany, mutinies in France and massive radicalisation in Britain at the end of the war. Even politicians like Prime Minister Lloyd George publicly condemned the military stupidity of the generals, in adopting a strategy of "attrition" in the face of weapons like the machine gun and high explosive shells.

Thus it passed into popular bour-

geois consciousness that the First World War was a reactionary, wasteful carnage.

But in the last few years revisionist historians have argued that the death and destruction was a vital part of the learning process that produced Britain's final victory. Peter Simkins, for example, senior historian at the Imperial War Museum, says that the huge advances made by the British Army in August 1918 against the Germans were a product of the military insight of General Haig, who had learned from his previous "mistakes" of sending fully laden workers in uniform and pack at walking pace into the teeth of enemy machine gun fire.

The whole argument relies on the notion that the First World War produced a totally new experience of fighting on land. This is rubbish. The two Balkan Wars of 1912-13 saw conditions very similar to those on the Western Front in 1914-18. The whole history of wars between the American Civil War (1861-65) and 1914 is the story of the development of trench warfare, automatic fire, chemical weapons and lethal artillery fire that made any attack by infantry with small arms a virtual suicide mission. All this was known in 1914.

In fact Haig's success in August 1918, which broke the four-year deadlock in Belgium, came after a series of disastrous German offensives, which saw half a million German soldiers wounded, 95,000 killed and – in the context of near starvation at home – contributed to a massive collapse in morale that ultimately led to the revolutionary uprisings of September - November 1918. General Ludendorff, the strategic commander of the German forces, described his army in autumn 1918:

"Whole bodies of our men had surrendered to single troops or isolated squadrons. Retiring troops, meeting a fresh division going into action, had shouted things like 'strikebreaker' and 'you're prolonging the war'." Haig's finest hour was prepared not by military genius but by an army

wracked by war-weariness and revolt and permeated with the ideas of Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

War, they argued, is the continuation of politics by other means. Not only do nation states and classes resolve their conflicts through violence: the class nature of the society at war is reflected in the way wars are fought.

The armies of 1914-18 were led by the old ruling classes of Europe, represented by generals such as Haig and Kitchener in Britain, Ludendorff and Hindenburg in Germany, Joffre and Foch in France. Beneath them came the officer class: privately educated landowners and the sons of bankers and big capitalists. In war, as in peacetime, they had their privileges: servants, better living quarters, more leave, and more

freedom to speak out. At the bottom were the common soldiers, the workers in uniform. They were badly educated, unhealthy, ill-fed and treated like cattle in the trenches just as they were in the factories and mines in peacetime.

In the British Army, Haig ordered that no man from the ranks should ever be made an officer, to prevent working class men issuing orders to their "social betters". In the German Army there was a three class system: officers, NCOs and privates had different bars, restaurants, sleeping quarters and brothels.

Furthermore, there was martial law. Of the 349 men executed in the British Army only three were officers: and this figure is only for the white soldiers. When non-European troops and workmen are included, more than 3,000 were executed, including 300 Indian soldiers after a rebellion in Singapore in 1915. The slaughter in the trenches took place because of the class hatred the officers on all sides had for the sol-

diers, and the racism of the ruling class towards soldiers from the colonies.

The second aspect of revisionism concerns Oxford historian Niall Ferguson's latest book, *The Pity of War*, which argues that one of the reasons the war lasted so long was because the common soldier became "inured to the business of killing".

If this is so, why did the Russian army rebel and the French mutiny in 1917? Why did the German army collapse in 1918? As a result of the French mutiny, soldiers refused to go on the offensive for a year. More than 100,000 were court-martialled and 23,000 found guilty. Up to 75 were executed. Very little is known about mutinies in the British Army because the government still keeps all relevant information under lock and key. However, in 1942 the Adjutant General stated that there had been 115,005 cases of desertion during 1914-18. At least 115,005 were not inured to the killing.

We also know from other military studies that, in combat, only 15 per cent of troops actually fired their weapons. Furthermore, memoirs and literature from the war show a rank and file hostility towards those who expressed a love of killing.

Ferguson's argument is part of a general shift in the writing of history over the past decade. In the past, historians tended towards elitist theories where events were caused by "good" and "bad" leadership. The First World War, the Russian Revolution, the Treaty of Versailles, the Depression, Hitler... the whole historical sequence was avoidable: the result of poor decisions by bad leaders.

Meanwhile, the "good" events – like the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War Two – were the product of "great

leaders" like Churchill and Montgomery. However in the past few years historians have warmed to the idea of blaming all the bad events in history on the masses.

Orlando Figes' bestseller on the Russian Revolution *A People's Tragedy* explains the rise of Stalinism in terms of the Russian people's innate cruelty and barbarism. If the British Tommies were "inured to killing", the Russian workers were "inured to dictatorship" goes the argument. Meanwhile Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* blames the holocaust on the deep-seated racism of the entire German people. They too are seen as "inured" to slaughter.

No one can deny that barbaric events produce barbaric people. But the hundreds of thousands of German socialists and trade unionists who perished in the concentration camps, the millions of the oppositionists who died in Stalin's Gulag – as well as the soldiers who survived the First World War and translated their anger into six years of revolutionary struggle between 1917 and 1923 in Europe – prove that barbarism also produces resistance. Neither the "great leaders" nor the "dumb masses" view of history does justice to the real causes of slaughter in 1914-18.

The war was a product of imperialist capitalism's need to redivide the colonial markets and territories. What stopped it was the Russian Revolution. It was fought with 19th century tactics against 20th century weapons because there was no need to innovate – tactically or technologically – when working class lives were so cheap.

The move to re-interest us in the tactics and technologies of the First World War is not mere history. We are being prepared for more Bosnias and Kosovos, more Somalias and Congos. The ruling classes know that the wars of the 21st century will involve mass slaughter on all sides, not the hi-tech bloodless fighting of the computer game. And the new historians are there to soften up our minds for it.

*The war was a product of imperialism's need to redivide the colonial markets*

## MEGAPHONE

■ Joy MacFarlane reviews *My Name is Joe*

### *Loach gives us the resilient life of an ordinary Joe*

*My Name is Joe*, socialist director Ken Loach's latest film, is an intensely realistic look at life on Glasgow's peripheral housing schemes. It is a world apart from the "regenerated" city centre of Armani and Versace shops, trendy coffee bars and gourmet eateries.

In one sense this is familiar Loach territory, which he has visited time and again over the last three decades from *Cathy Come Home* (1966) to *Raining Stones* (1993). In *My Name is Joe* Loach and writer Paul Laverty focus on decent people, their lives blighted by poverty, battling to maintain their dignity and pursue their modest dreams. It is not relentless social realism: the film is laced with dollops of verbal and visual humour.

The film opens with Joe (compellingly played by Peter Mullan) at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting talking passionately about his experiences as a street drinker. His fight against alcoholism has become the focal point of his fight with his past as a whole.

Joe is a product of the schemes –

working class estates – drifting between the dole and unskilled jobs on building sites. Throughout the film, you see the living conditions in the schemes, graphically illustrating the ghettoisation of the urban poor. Run-down, boarded-up, burnt-out flats scar the landscape. Bored youth hang on street corners. Unemployment is rife, along with drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. DSS snoopers squirm outside the windows with cameras, while gangsters run the smack trade and vie for control over the whole lively black market economy.

We catch periodic glimpses of Joe's perception of himself when he is still on the booze: the constant search for the next drink, oblivious to the future, escaping from the past and present – and capable of horrific, mindless violence. His former

circumstances find a parallel in the lives of Liam and Sabine, a young couple with a child who are heroin-

Run-down, boarded-up, burnt-out flats scar the landscape. Bored youth hang on street corners

dependent. Liam, who is trying hard to stay clean, is one of the players in a hapless Sunday league side that Joe manages. They serve as his surrogate family. Joe risks everything to try and shield Liam from the ruthless predators of the local mob. It is the most

dramatic act of selfless generosity in a film where people really do look after each other, even against the background of an atomised, fragmented community.

Ironically, through his relationship with Liam, Joe meets and falls in love with Sarah (Louise Goodall), who embodies a stable, white collar existence. She is a health visitor with her own car and flat, whose daily existence is in sharp contrast to Joe's. In a moment of self-pity, Joe groans,

"Fuck all! Thirty-seven and I got fuck all."

In several of his films this decade, including *Riff Raff* and *Carla's Song*, Loach's work has explored the tensions in personal relationships. This film marks the most intimate and successful attempt so far to chart the collision between lovers whose values have been shaped by very different experiences.

When Joe and Sarah's relationship hits trouble he tells her: "Some people don't live in this tidy wee world of yours. Some can't just go to the police. Some can't go to the bank to get a loan. Some can't just fuck off out of this place. Some of us don't have a choice."

The plot moves inexorably towards tragedy, driving Joe back to the vodka bottle. This is a film at odds with Hollywood conventions, so there is no neat and sentimental resolution. At the same time, however, Loach's cinema does not plunge us into despair. Though there are casualties, there is still hope, fuelled by the remarkable resilience of working class people.

# marxism THE BASICS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

## Where did Marxism come from?

**Paul Morris and Jeremy Dewar** look at the three strands of thinking that make up scientific socialism

SOCIALISM HAS been around for thousands of years. When you are starving and at the mercy of someone rich it is not hard to dream of a society where everybody is equal, where there is enough food and shelter, where everyone has access to knowledge and a say in how things are run. The problem is that, until 200 years ago, socialism had to remain just that: a dream.

It was only the creation of the industrial, urban working class that brought into existence the force that could make the socialist dream come true.

Marxists say that revolutionary socialism is "scientific" because, unlike the utopian socialism of earlier centuries, it is based not just on the desire for justice but on a theory that understands capitalist society and on a class force that can overcome it. Marxism was a synthesis of three strands of critical thought in the early 19th century, within philosophy, economics and socialism.

### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

As a student, Karl Marx, like many of his generation, was attracted to the philosophy of Georg Hegel. Hegel rediscovered and developed the understanding of dialectics. Unlike previous Western philosophers, who saw the world as a perfectly ordered machine, he grasped the idea that the world is in a constant process of change: that change is the only constant in the universe. Dialectics is the science of motion which tries to discover the general laws of why and how things change.

Every entity is a unity of opposites, said Hegel. Every organism contains the seeds of its own destruction and transformation – indeed is in the process of destruction and transformation. Change takes place in a process of small steps that add up to something bigger, producing a qualitative change – as for example when the gradual rise in the temperature of water towards 100°C produces a change in form of the water molecules to produce steam.

Out of Hegel's philosophy two were formed. Marx and a whole generation of young intellectuals in the 1820s and 1830s were beginning to question the god-given right of the kings to rule Europe. Dialectics suggested that this state of affairs – reactionary monarchy – contained the seeds of its own destruction.

But Hegel's right-wing followers denied this, claiming instead that, for example, late-feudal Prussia had solved all social contradictions. For them history was the unfolding of a great idea, that had just come to its end. The left wing or "young" Hegelians thought otherwise. They used dialectics as a radical critique of society and looked to earlier materialist philosophers for arguments to back them up.

Materialism was interested in the relationship between ideas and experience. Its basic premise was that "we are the products of our circumstances". The materialists used this to explain why the massive social degradation brought about by city life, for example, was not the result of "moral collapse": the city and the factory were imposing new types of behaviour and thought on people – creating new types of individual.

But mechanical materialism also suggested that the mass of people could have no control over their own destiny. Ludwig Feuerbach was one of the key proponents of mechanical materialism. He argued – as did many early socialists – that the solution lay with individuals who could raise themselves beyond the immediate influence of their circumstances. Marx criticised this aspect of materialism, but saw how, if it used dialectics instead of mechanistic explanations of the relationship between our existence and our ideas, the problem could be solved.

Marx synthesised left materialism and dialectics to assert that our social being determines our consciousness; that our consciousness changes through interaction with the world – through social struggle. The rising capitalist society that was bound to supplant feudalism would not be the end of history. It would intensify class

### IN BRIEF

■ **Before the industrial working class socialism was "utopian" because no powerful social force existed whose material interest required the introduction of socialism.**

■ **Marx fused together three forms of critical thinking in the early 19th century: the economic insights of Adam Smith and his followers; the dialectical view of the German philosopher Georg Hegel about the laws of motion of history; and the early forms of socialism that had emerged in the workers' movement.**

■ **Marxism is not a closed system of thought but a way of analysing society. As society changes it throws up new challenges that are best met, not by relying on academic "specialists", but on the collective intervention and debate of working class socialists themselves.**

**Further reading:**  
F Engels *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*  
K Marx *The German Ideology (Part I)*

V I Lenin *Karl Marx All pamphlets available from the address on page 16*

antagonisms and create the most alienated, yet most combative and selfless social class in human history, the working class.

Capitalism would create the ultimate contradiction: it would for the first time create the possibility of wealth and knowledge for all, but deny it systematically to millions. In creating an army of wage slaves it was creating its own gravediggers. It would be the explosion of capitalism and the triumph of the workers that would really put an end to the contradictions of class society. Would this, then, be the end of history? No, wrote Marx, the abolition of class society was when real human history could begin.

Marx was not the first materialist, but his understanding of dialectics enabled him to give a truly scientific explanation of history. He showed that human society did not evolve gradually but sporadically, by leaps and bounds – by revolutions. These revolutions were the result of the tensions between society's potential to produce wealth and the social form in which production takes place.

What humanity produces includes all the forces of production – the raw materials, factories, offices, transport systems. How we produce involves the division of society into separate classes with different and opposed interests – historically, slave-owner and slave, feudal lord and serf, capitalist and wage-worker (or proletarian). These Marx called the relations of production.

As the forces of production develop within a given form of class society, these relations of production start to hinder production. The class struggle, which is an unavoidable fact of class society, is the motor force which can and must revolutionise the relations of production, freeing up human society for further development.

Feudalism had put the brake on human progress and the capitalists were in the process of demolishing it. But capitalism too must put the brake on progress, with its repeated crises and mass unemployment.

This realisation turned Marx from a natural sympathy with the working class to the quest to become part of it: to be no longer a philosopher but a socialist. Paradoxically, that led him into the study of capitalist economics.

### POLITICAL ECONOMY

Many liberal critics of Marxism claim that Marx lost his humanism when he devoted decades to studying capitalist economics. But as Lenin pointed out:

"Where bourgeois economists saw a relation of things (the exchange of one commodity for another) Marx revealed a relation of men... a relation between persons expressed as a relation between things."

Marx took as his starting point the most developed theories – in this case those of the British economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo. He used dialectical materialism to create new solutions to old problems.

In all previous class societies the ruling class openly exploited the other classes, for example, slavery. But how did the capitalist make a profit out of the worker? Naturally, the early capitalists were quite interested in this.

All the "classical" political economists, like Smith and Ricardo, were agreed that human labour is the source of all value. And they insisted that, against the theory of supply and demand, ultimately commodities were being exchanged at their true value. So where did profit come from?

Marx went beyond the partial and inadequate answers of Smith and Ricardo and reasoned that, in order to extract surplus value from this system, the capitalist must find in the market "a commodity whose use-value (i.e. its usefulness) possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value." That commodity is human labour power.

Like all other commodities, labour power is sold at its value – the amount of labour time needed to sustain the worker. The boss buys this labour power through

the wages system and sets the worker to work, say for eight hours a day. After four hours though, the worker has produced goods sufficient to cover the cost of his or her maintenance (i.e. wages).

But the worker does not stop working – there remain another four hours of "surplus" labour time which produces "surplus value" which the capitalist takes as his own! The class struggle between the capitalist and the worker is the struggle for this surplus value: a "fair day's pay for a fair day's work" is in fact impossible under the profit system.

Marx used the insights of Smith and Ricardo – both of whom spent their lives wringing their hands about falling profit rates – to show why capitalism is a crisis-racked system. Workers' labour is the only source of profit. But, driven by the logic of competition, the capitalists replace living labour with what Marx called the "dead labour" locked up in machines, thus driving out the source of the system's vitality.

Capitalism then is a system full of contradictions and wracked by crisis, containing in the massive revolution in productive technique both the prerequisites for socialism and the seeds of its own downfall.

### SOCIALISM

Marx started out as a critic of working class socialism. Socialism, in its utopian forms, had tended to be either mechanically materialist or hopelessly idealist (See "Marxism the Basics Part 1", WP 224, July 1998). But Marx's experience of real revolution showed him that socialism was possible, that it had to be based on working class struggle, and that it would need a revolution to achieve it.

To get that revolution socialism had to be put on a scientific basis, so that every class conscious worker would know what was wrong with relying on just the battle of ideas, or on education, or on enlightened friends in the capitalist class, or with opting out to form your own commune. Every working class militant needed a guide to action, a path to power.

That was what Marx and Engels attempted to provide in the Communist Manifesto. By the time it was printed its authors were on a train to Paris where the red flag was flying and workers were celebrating – albeit temporarily – victory on the barricades.

Pro-capitalist pundits claim that only the market can allow individual freedom, that communism will crush the individual with an oppressive uniformity. Marx brilliantly refuted this by exposing how class society forces humans to relate to each other from their class standpoint, independent of and often against their individual will.

In class society, "individuals belonged only as average individuals, only insofar as they lived within the conditions of existence of their class – a relation in which they participated not as individuals but as members of a class. With the community of revolutionary proletarians, on the other hand, who take their conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control, it is just the reverse; it is as individuals that the individuals participate in it."

Marx put human activity at the centre of human history and human liberation. Marxism is not a system of ideas to sit back and contemplate, it is a weapon in the fight for freedom – and a constantly evolving system.

Karl Marx's own motto was "doubt everything": that did not mean he rejected the idea of objective truth and science, as many "post-modernists" do today. It meant for him constantly looking below the surface of phenomena to discover their inner movements and contradictions – including the ideas of Marxism itself.

But, as Marx realised from the moment of his break with left-wing German philosophy, humanity does not need a just method of analysis:

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point is to change it."

## WYE RIVER AGREEMENT

*Peace process offers nothing to region's workers and peasants*

# Another carve-up of the Palestinians

THE 19 month deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian "peace process" was broken on 23 October. A memorandum, dictated by the US State Department, was reluctantly signed by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority (PA) chairman Yasser Arafat.

The deal, the Wye River Agreement, stipulates:

- the release of 3,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel in three stages by the end of January 1999;
- a security plan, supervised by the CIA, including a timetable for the PA to arrest alleged terrorists and confiscate weapons. In return Israel agreed that some suspects could be tried by PA courts, dropping its insistence that they should be extradited to Israel;
- the withdrawal of Israeli troops from an additional thirteen per cent of the West Bank, which Israel grabbed from Jordan in the June 1967 war;
- the establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian committee to discuss further troop withdrawals rather than any commitment on the scope or date for future withdrawals;

- the much-delayed opening of an international airport in Gaza, albeit with 'discreet' Israeli joint control;
- a timetable for the right to unimpeded passage for Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank. Israeli blockades, imposed after every major "terrorist incident" mean that students from Gaza are prevented from pursuing their studies at Bir Zeit university in the West Bank, families are divided and migrant workers lose their wages and even their jobs.

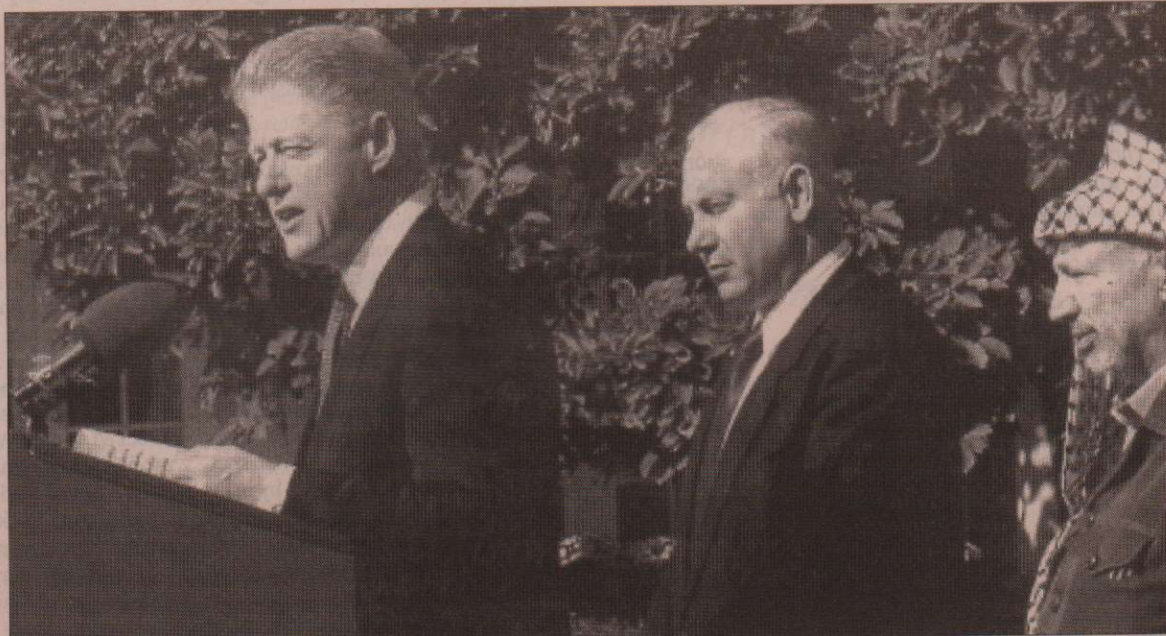
The ink was scarcely dry on the agreement before the Israelis suspended it with a view to renegotiation. Netanyahu used a failed bomb attack in Jerusalem to delay ratification by the cabinet and parliament.

When the cabinet finally ratified the agreement on 11 November it imposed supplementary conditions: it demanded the Palestinian National Council, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's "parliament-in-exile", delete the parts of its National Covenant supposedly calling for the destruction of Israel.

To appease the far right settlers and their parties, which play a crucial role in Netanyahu's coalition, the government further rubbed Arafat's face in the dust. The plans to build Jewish-only homes for settlers in Jabal Abu Ghneim (called Har Homa by the Israelis), in occupied Arab East Jerusalem was given the go-ahead. These settlements are openly aimed at making Palestinians a minority in east Jerusalem which the Palestinians regard as their future capital and which UN resolutions describe as occupied territory.

On 17 November, the Israeli Knesset voted to approve the agreement. This majority was secured mainly by the votes of opposition Labour members. Most of Netanyahu's Likud party failed to vote for the agreement.

Israel did everything it could to enrage and humiliate the Palestinians. The first batch of Palestinian prisoners



Clinton, Netanyahu and Arafat announcing the Wye River Agreement

released were mainly criminals not political detainees. In Jenin in November Palestinian students demanding the release of political prisoners were attacked by Israeli troops. Israeli settlers, opposed to the Wye River deal, have taken to occupying hilltops in a bid to "create facts" by setting up even more settlements.

The idea that these wretched and grudging concessions could be the basis of peace is laughable. Netanyahu hardly bothers to suggest that they are anything but a delaying mechanism and a provocation that will allow the Zionists to seize ever more Palestinian land and make a state for them unviable.

Clinton and Blair are sheer cynics. Israel has broken more UN resolutions and has more weapons of mass destruction than Saddam Hussein could dream of, yet Netanyahu is allowed to tear up or rewrite agreements with total impunity.

When the Oslo Accords were signed, Netanyahu, then in opposition, denounced them as a betrayal. Indeed so ferocious were his attacks on Labour leader Yitzhak Rabin for signing the accords, that most observers believe they created an atmosphere which led to Rabin's assassination. When the Likud-dominated coalition was elected in 1996 Netanyahu promised to roll back as many of the Oslo concessions as possible. His strategy was to demand that the PLA act as the policeman for Israel's security as a precondition for fulfilling the accords.

At the same time he made concession after concession to his ultra right-wing coalition parties. In September 1996 a new Intifada was narrowly averted after a tunnel was provocatively opened under a Muslim shrine in Jerusalem and Netanyahu gave a green light to more settlements on Arab land. He has repeatedly sealed off Palestinian population centres, starving the towns and villages of food and essential services, and preventing migrant workers from going to work in different parts of the left bank and in Israel.

After 18 months of inaction the USA – squaring up for the bombing of Iraq – decided that to protect their main stooges in the Arab world (Egypt and Saudi Arabia) they had to be seen putting some pressure on Israel to move forward. Otherwise there was a risk that Arafat and the PA would be completely discredited and Hamas would launch a new round of mass and military resistance to the whole Oslo charade.

Events have shown how totally hollow the Oslo Accords were since they have no mechanism to make the Israelis carry out their formal obligations.

In short, Arafat betrayed the Palestinian struggle for an independent state, sovereign and free from Israeli interference. He accepted a series of scattered bits of territory in Gaza and the West Bank upon which to erect the PA flag and upon which the new PA police force could swagger up and down displaying their small arms – for the most part directed at Arafat's opponents in the Palestinian community.

Even the "self-rule" by the PA in Arab towns left Israel in charge of security and most economic resources. It is turning into a sort of permanent Gulag Archipelago to control the Palestinians while the Zionists continue to expand.

The CIA has been given an unprecedented public role in enforcing the Wye River Agreement. It will mediate in disputes over the arrest of suspected terrorists and the management of border checkpoints.

Further Israeli redeployment from the Occupied Territories is promised, but this will be in instalments and is subject to the PA fulfilling Israeli security conditions: the confiscation of unauthorised weapons; ensuring that weapons are not manufactured in areas under PA control; the reduction in the size of Arafat's police force; the arrest of those on Israel's wanted list under CIA supervision and verification; the muzzling of the press and opposition activities ("incitement"); and the destruction of Hamas ("dismantling the terror support structure"). If Arafat really tries

to implement these latter two conditions, it will lead to civil war within Palestinian society.

The failure of Oslo to make any meaningful difference to the social and economic lives of most Palestinians has led to widespread disillusionment with the "peace process". Arafat's cronyism, corruption and repression against dissidents has led to increased support for "Oslo rejectionists" such as Hamas.

Despite its attacks on Israeli troops and settlers Hamas has so far refrained from attacks on PA institutions. It is wary of being accused of threatening "national unity". But this may soon change. The PA has placed Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, under house arrest in Gaza and seized up to 400 other Hamas militants.

On 1 November Hamas stated that the arrests could lead some "to direct their war and guns, out of necessity, against the authority's security apparatus." It went on to state that, "Arafat and his oppressive security apparatus have committed the utmost in betrayal, complete subordination and absolute loyalty to Israel."

Later, in Damascus, Musa Abu Marzuq, the former head of Hamas' political bureau, officially denied any intention to cause an "internal confrontation" and stated that Hamas had not abandoned its policy of coexistence with the PA, but the possibility remains that a section of Hamas' armed wing may be so angered by Arafat's repression that they are no longer under the control of their official leadership.

Arafat has betrayed the Palestinian people. In Palestine, where he still retains the majority support of the Palestinian bourgeoisie and landowners, his popular base amongst workers and peasants is rapidly being eroded. He could not maintain his position without the political and financial support of the pro-Zionist imperialist governments and the reactionary coalition of Egypt and the Arab monarchies of the surrounding region. These powers want stability before justice and freedom for the Palestinians. Inside his "mini-state"

he secures compliance through a mixture of bribery and police repression.

A new Intifada for the Palestinian right to self-determination needs to start with a complete rejection of the Oslo Accords. No viable Palestinian state could be created without at least defeating Israel's plans to hold on to the West Bank. In the first place all Jewish settlements must be stopped and existing ones driven out. Since 1992 the number of settlers has risen 50 per cent to 300,000, all armed to the teeth.

This could not be done without forcing the withdrawal of Israeli troops and security personnel. Statehood is a mockery if Israeli troops are allowed to determine its limits and operation. But such military successes for the Palestinians are improbable, if not impossible, without mass struggle – on the West Bank, in Gaza and in Israel. Hamas-style individual terrorism will only bring more and bloodier repression and disorient the majority. This struggle will also need the mobilisation of the Palestinian diaspora too, linking up with the oppressed masses in the other Arab states.

And if the Palestinians restrain from indiscriminate bombings and shootings in the Israeli cities it should be possible to drive a wedge between the Israeli population working class and the overtly racist settlers who wish to drive all Palestinians beyond the Jordan.

The Palestinian national revolution will only be finally victorious to the extent that it becomes a struggle against imperialism and all its stooges in the region, Arab as well as Israeli. The condition for this is that the working class raises the banner of a secular, bi-national workers' state, part of socialist united states of the Middle East as the goal of the struggle.

A new political party is urgently needed to organise the fight for this strategy, a revolutionary working class organisation that can unite the members of the trade unions, the unemployed of the camps with the students and women's organisations and forge a bond between the cities and countryside.

Such a party could ensure that a new Intifada would not be a series of heroic but isolated and uncoordinated assaults on Israeli troops; rather it would begin as a Palestine-wide general strike that could draw in Arab workers and progressive Jewish anti-Zionist workers inside Israel. This could help paralyse the political will of Israel – a bitterly divided society – to continue to endure the sacrifices needed to repress the Palestinian people.

■ Down with the Oslo Accords and the Wye River Agreement!

■ All Israeli troops out of the West Bank and Gaza!

■ End all Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza!

■ For the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including the right to secede on sovereign and integral national territory!

■ For a workers' republic in the whole of Palestine!

■ For a socialist federation of workers' republics in the Middle East!

**workersPOWER**



The November mid-term elections in the United States were seen by many as a blow to the right wing in American politics but, as **G.R. McColl** explains, the far right has stepped up its violent campaign on the question of abortion.

# Organised defence is the answer to anti-abortion terror campaign

THE MID-TERM elections were seen as a personal triumph for the "come-back kid", Bill Clinton, rescuing his presidency from the mire of the Lewinsky sex scandal.

There can be little doubt that a wide spectrum of the electorate was heartily sick and tired of the Republicans' obsession with the minutiae of Clinton's sex life and their wider crusade for Victorian morality. This appears to have been especially true among women, who supported Democratic candidates by a margin of 55 per cent to 45 per cent.

Newt Gingrich, the author of the viciously reactionary "Contract with America" in 1994 and the architect of this autumn's Republican campaign, was the obvious fall guy for the party's disappointing show at the polls.

But Gingrich's deputy, Dick Armey, remains in place. This sophisticated wit referred to Massachusetts representative Barney Frank, who is openly gay, as "Barney Fag" at a Washington press conference.

The Republican leader in the Senate, Trent Lott, spearheaded opposition to Clinton's nominee as ambassador to Luxembourg on the sole basis that James Hormel – a multi-millionaire – had given some of his fortune to backing lesbian and gay organisations. For Lott, homosexuality remains a disease like "alcoholism or kleptomania".

And there is more evidence that the American right is far from being "down and out". Only ten days before the mid-term elections, a 52 year old gynaecologist lay dead in his kitchen in a suburb of Buffalo, New York – the victim of a single bullet from a sniper's rifle.

Dr Barnett Slepian, who had maintained the only clinic to provide abortions in a city of more than 300,000, became the most high-profile casualty this year in an ongoing "war" against women's reproductive rights.

Other doctors performing terminations had either left the area or ceased providing abortion services after "Operation Rescue" mobilised large-scale

*A gynaecologist lay dead in his kitchen in a suburb of Buffalo, New York – the victim of a single bullet from a sniper's rifle.*

pickets to intimidate patients and staff at Buffalo clinics in 1992.

Though shocked, few of Slepian's family and friends were surprised by his violent death. Throughout the 1990s anti-abortion fanatics had besieged both Slepian's clinic and his home, shouting abuse and harassing his children. He had received numerous death threats by phone and fax in the past five years, having once confronted anti-choice demonstrators with a baseball bat.

Police investigating Slepian's murder indicated that it was probably linked to four other shootings of abortion providers in upstate New York and southern Ontario, Canada – all of which had occurred in the run-up to "Remembrance Sunday", dubbed by some anti-choice militants as "Remember the Unborn Child Day".

The reaction to the Slepian killing by religious leaders spoke volumes. New York City's Cardinal John O'Connor deplored the murder, only to add that "abortionists too must also be regarded as murderers". The head of Pro-Life Vir-

ginia, the Reverend Donald Spitz, was unequivocal, declaring, "the shooter is a hero". Spitz added that Dr Slepian had "reaped what he sowed".

Within a day of Slepian's death a "hit list" appeared on the website of the Creator's Rights Party, a previously obscure sect headquartered in Georgia. The list featured the names of abortion providers, with Slepian's own crossed out and an image of blood dripping from the letters.

The organisation claims it wants clinic staff to face "Nuremberg Trials" for terminating pregnancies and has publicly endorsed violence against providers.

The level of terrorist activity (see box) in many parts of the country, combined with draconian cuts in federal funding for abortions on the Medicaid programmes for women on low incomes, have rendered the 1973 US Supreme Court decision in the Roe v Wade case virtually irrelevant.

A quarter of a century after this ambiguous ruling had supposedly established the constitutional right to abortion, the Christian right has failed to win decisively in the courts, but is winning the battle in the streets and state legislatures instead.

Recent research suggests that the majority of women would now have to travel 250 miles to find a clinic that offers termination services – and then at a cost. In many parts of the US it is all but impossible to obtain a legal abortion, even in cases where the pregnancy is the result of rape, or the woman's own health is jeopardised by carrying on with the pregnancy.

The largest concentration of the most rabid fundamentalist groups is in the "Deep South", but as the Slepian murder illustrates their reach extends much further. It would be wrong and dangerous to dismiss groups such as the Army of God as just a collection of red-neck Bible-bashers.

This year, the Army of God has been strongly linked to three bomb blasts at clinics and an arson attack on a gay club in Atlanta, Georgia. There are several

other organisations that are better-funded and better-armed, though their active memberships are tiny.

The success of the anti-abortion fanatics and their allies, ranging from the established churches to overtly fascist groups, stems in large measure from the reliance of liberal feminist organisations – above all the National Organisation for Women (NOW) – on Bill Clinton and the Democrats to defend the very limited gains of the early 1970s. While legislation adopted in 1994 was supposed to curtail harassment of clinic staff and users by anti-abortion demonstrators, this measure has proved utterly useless in practice.

The failure of NOW and similar organisations to organise the physical defence of clinics has left patients, premises and healthcare workers as vulnerable targets at the hands of the anti-choice terrorists.

Countless women seeking terminations have been deterred by thugish intimidation or have turned in

desperation to backstreet "practitioners".

Individual doctors and nurses have, of course, taken defensive measures but this has clearly not been sufficient. While there have been isolated examples of the successful defence of clinics, socialists in the USA must make a bold, widespread push for organised and armed clinic defence.

The organised working class must support unconditionally and fight for a woman's right to choose – a right that can only be realised when abortion and all gynaecological services are freely available on demand throughout the 50 states.

Some fear that calls for clinic defence and free abortion on demand will alienate trade unionists with religious beliefs, but the point cannot be understated: the right wing is on the march and many of those responsible for attacks on clinics today will have no hesitation in smashing the labour movement in the future.

## 1993 – 98 A catalogue of terror

**10 March 1993 – Christian anti-abortion fanatic Michael Griffin shoots dead Dr David Gunn outside a clinic in Pensacola, Florida.**

**19 August 1993 – Dr George Tiller suffers gunshot wounds at the hands of "Operation Rescue" activist Rachelle Shannon as he leaves a clinic car park in Wichita, Kansas.**

**29 July 1994 – An ex-minister guns down Dr John Britton and volunteer guard, James Barrett, outside a Florida clinic. June Barrett survives serious wounds.**

**30 December 1994 – Armed with a high-powered rifle and claiming divine inspiration, John Salvi storms into two clinics in the Boston area and kills two clinic workers, while wounding five others.**

**16 January 1997 – Two separate bombs rocked a clinic in Atlanta, injuring seven.**

**28 October 1997 – A doctor in upstate New York suffers injuries in his house when shot at by an abortion opponent.**

**29 January 1998 – A bomb blast rips through a Birmingham, Alabama clinic, killing an off-duty police officer and leaving a nurse critically injured. This attack is linked to the Atlanta bombings and the obscure Army of God grouping.**

**23 October 1998 – Murder of Dr Barnett Slepian by a sniper outside his home near Buffalo, New York.**

# US protests against gay student murder

Comrades,

The murder of Matthew Shepherd, a 21 year old gay student, has led to the largest expression of outrage against homophobia in America since the 1960s. The recent events in America could be as significant for gay politics as the Stonewall riots.

On 6 October Matthew Shepherd was approached by two men, claiming to be gay, while he was drinking in a student bar in Wyoming. They convinced him to go for a ride with them in their truck. But once in the truck they told him they weren't gay and proceeded to beat him up. They took him out of town and tied him spread eagle to a fence where

they continued to beat him and burn him.

The police said that a blunt instrument had fractured his skull and that this was one of the most vicious hate crimes they had ever seen. Matt remained tied to the fence for up to 18 hours in near freezing weather before a passing biker notified the police. Matt died in hospital, six days later, never having regained consciousness.

Two hundred and fifty people turned up to the funeral including a group of 15 anti-gay protesters holding placards saying "god hates fags" and "fag Matt in Hell".

In response to this horrific murder

gay groups around the country called vigils and marches against gay hate attacks with thousands marching in many of America's big cities. In New York a march of over 5,000 turned into a full scale riot with the NYPD and there were over 120 arrests. The riot has already been nicknamed "Stonewall II".

The evening began with 200 people gathering outside the Plaza Hotel holding candles. The protest grew as it travelled down Fifth Avenue, people joined with placards saying "Where's your rage?" and "Matthew Shepherd killed by homophobia".

The police called in 1,600 officers in riot gear to deal with the protest. They

pened in the protest leaving it nowhere to go and then began attacking people with billy clubs and pepper spray. The protesters hit back with rocks and bottles chanting "racist, sexist, anti-gay, NYPD go away".

It seems that the police beat up and arrested the organisers of the march first, then beat up and arrested the legal observers who were documenting the events. Organisers say they have video tape evidence of police brutality. Those arrested were held in jail over night and for many hours were not given food, water or legal advice and suffered anti-gay verbal abuse. Men with AIDS had their much needed medication confis-

cated. One spoke to the New York Times while being given fluids from a drip to compensate for the dehydration suffered while in jail.

Since then other events have occurred. There have been calls for two more demonstrations in December and January. Also, a new organisation called the Gay Defence League has been set up which argues it will fight homophobia "by any means necessary".

I am sure all our sympathies are with the family of Matthew Shepherd. In solidarity,  
Sandy Timewell  
Lesbian Liberation Secretary  
Manchester Uni Students Union

AFTER SUHARTO

# Indonesia: Still in the grip of revolution

THE CONVENING of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) led to an explosion of anger on Jakarta's streets and in cities throughout Indonesia. It is little wonder.

This "assembly" is stuffed full of people appointed by deposed president Suharto and representatives of the armed forces. Yet this is the body that newly installed president Habibie has said will oversee the "democratisation" of the country and elect the next President.

In the week leading up to the MPR's four day session of 10-13 November, tens of thousands of students demonstrated. By the last day of the MPR meeting, hundreds of thousands were on the streets. The army opened fire on the demonstrators killing at least 12 and injuring 400 others.

Habibie's regime is lurching from crisis to crisis. There is no let-up in the economic catastrophe in the country with inflation reaching 80 per cent and living standards plummeting. The revolutionary situation that opened in May, when students and the urban poor forced Suharto to resign, shows no sign of ending.

Since the May events there have been demonstrations and riots against corrupt officials of the old order, combined with land occupations in many areas. In East Timor the army has launched a new wave of repression in the face of mass demonstrations in favour of independence and renewed guerrilla activity.

The MPR meeting focused the democratic movement once again on the task of breaking the power of the military-backed Habibie regime. The demands centred on ending the role of the military in running the country – its so-called "dual-function" – the prosecution of Suharto and his cronies, and replacing the MPR with a democratically elected parliament.

All the major opposition forces are excluded from the MPR which is made up of only three parties that were legal under Suharto: GOLKAR, the PPP and a small rump of the "official" PDI which drove out its popular leader Megawati Sukarnoputri at Suharto's behest (see *Trotskyist International* 25). The rest of the MPR is made up of military delegates and appointees of Habibie and Suharto. Habibie was promising elections for the lower house or parliament which makes up only half of the MPR, for June next year, with the whole MPR "electing" the President sometime after that.

The student organisations rejected this fraud. They are loosely organised, university by university, with a plethora of organisations representing various political, cultural and ethnic/religious organisations. But the students united around the campaign against the MPR.

The aim of the student demonstrations was to repeat their success in May where the occupation of the parliament led to the downfall of the government. Politically, the students have taken a giant step forward since May. Then, their leaders rejected support from the workers and urban poor for their occupation. Now many student groups have forged links with the workers' organisations and the leadership of the student alliance that led the demonstrations against the MPR actively sought support from the workers and the urban poor of Jakarta.

These developments have terrified the bourgeois opposition to Habibie. Amien Rais, leader of Muhammadiyah one of the two largest Muslim organi-



sations in the country and head of the recently formed National Mandate Party (PAN), quickly distanced himself from the students' strategy. On 5 November he issued a statement saying that PAN would not join the students trying to halt the special MPR session. "My protest is not to foil the session but to warn members to make decrees in the interests of the people," he said.

The following day 50,000 students rallied at the University of Indonesia, while 10,000 held a silent vigil outside the parliament. The military swamped Jakarta with troops. Thirty thousand were drafted in, headed by the hated Kostrad – the strategic reserve used to suppress demonstrations in the past. Habibie was taking no chances against the unarmed demonstrators: six warships moved into Jakarta's harbour. General Wiranto, the head of the armed forces, declared that they would "get tough" with those trying to disrupt the parliament.

The Habibie regime knew it was fighting for its life and tried to mobilise supporters of the old regime. A "civil security" organisation was formed and it was claimed 120,000 civilians would be mobilised to help the army deal with the students. In fact only a few thousand thugs were organised through Habibie's state-sponsored Muslim organisation ICMI and from other reactionary Muslim groups. Bussed in from the surrounding rural areas and armed with sharpened bamboo staves, the thugs' attempts to occupy key squares and attack the students quickly backfired.

There was a sharp reaction from the urban poor when these thugs entered their neighbourhoods and at least six of the "civil security" members were killed in clashes. Their leaders were quickly forced to withdraw these lumpen gangs.

With the demonstrations growing every day and tens of thousands on the streets, an attempt was made by sections of the student leadership to force the bourgeois opposition to declare itself a "transitional government" and to convene a "people's assembly" to replace the

MPR. Amien Rais and Megawati Sukarnoputri were virtually kidnapped and brought to a meeting with two other major opposition figures: long time opponent of Suharto, Abdurahman Wahid, head of the biggest Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the reformist governor of Yogyakarta. But the meeting refused to throw its weight behind the students and instead issued a manifesto of demands on the MPR including early elections and a "phasing out of the role of the military".

This predictable act of cowardice left the students alone to lead the struggle against the MPR.



Megawati Sukarnoputri

The following day the first clashes started between troops and students trying to force their way through to parliament. On 11 and 12 November students were joined by workers and people from the poorer districts of Jakarta. Hundreds of thousands took over the streets.

On the afternoon of 13 November General Wiranto kept his promise to "get tough". Attempts to breach the troops' lines on Semangi Bridge led to the army opening fire. Lead coated rubber bullets were fired at point blank range into the heads and necks of demonstrators, and reportedly live ammunition as well. Throughout the

afternoon and evening, troops attacked demonstrators and stormed one of the universities. At least six students were killed in these incidents.

Outrage greeted these events. Mass demonstrations took place in 16 major cities. In Medan, for example, the airport was occupied by 5,000 students. In Jakarta, after the shock, demonstrations continued. The government was forced to withdraw Kostrad forces from Jakarta and resorted to bringing in Marines to patrol the streets. The Marines remain popular with the masses and are seen as an "oppositionist" force within the army. Many showed clear sympathy with the students when "escorting" their marches.

The government remains unrepentant at the killings. Habibie issued a statement shortly after the violence, declaring that the "demonstrations were an attempt to overthrow the government". The regime, thanks to the treachery of the bourgeois opposition, had achieved its aim. The special session laid plans for a slow move to a heavily restricted democracy. As a concession the military presence in the MPR is to be reduced from 75 to 55 members! Suharto was "named" in a resolution on investigating corruption.

But Habibie has not come out of this crisis any stronger. He is now more dependent than ever on General Wiranto, who has been touted by GOLKAR as the next president. GOLKAR, meanwhile, has split into many factions under the impact of the crisis. The military itself is far from united.

One purged faction of GOLKAR is involved in the National Front, an alliance of parties and organisations that includes a number of retired, high-ranking military officers. This Front called for the establishment of a "provisional government" in the middle of the November crisis and a number of its leaders have been arrested since for "conspiracy to overthrow the government".

The democratic movement has suffered a blow but is unbowed. Demon-

strations in the capital and other cities continue. As the revolutionary crisis continues so the masses will come to recognise who the intransigent fighters for their interests are. In May sections of the opposition saw Wiranto as a "liberal" opponent of Suharto. Today he is seen as the butcher of the students.

Rais, Sukarnoputri, Wahid and the other "opposition leaders" are also losing credibility among the activists in the struggle because of their timidity and failure to support the students at every crucial juncture. But these bourgeois politicians, who are relying on the coming elections to raise them to power, will try to head off any rising that looks like successfully challenging the regime.

This is why militant organisations like the People's Democratic Party (PRD), which have played a leading role in the student movement and on the streets in mobilising to oust Habibie, are making a major mistake in trying to pressurise these figures into leading a "transitional government". The PRD correctly opposed these leaders' tactics toward the MPR as "out of step with the people's demands"; but it remains wedded to the idea that the bourgeois opposition leaders must be involved in the "democratic stage" of the revolution.

In fact, the key task of a revolutionary organisation in Indonesia is to help the masses draw the clear conclusions from the acts of treachery of the bourgeois leaders: to build working class unity in struggle and put no trust in the bourgeois "democrats" who stand idly by while young people are gunned down.

The demand for a revolutionary constituent assembly, convened by the organisations of the workers, students, rural and urban poor, and defended by an armed people's militia, should be made central to the struggle against the MPR. A constituent assembly could address the economic crisis with an emergency programme, taking as its starting point the repudiation of the IMF "adjustment" package, the cancellation of all debts to the imperialists, the seizure and redistribution of the major landholdings to the peasants and rural workers, the expropriation of Suharto and his cronies' industrial and commercial conglomerates and putting major industries under workers' control. In short only a workers' revolution can achieve real democracy in Indonesia.

The key question, as the November crisis showed, is how to undermine and break up the mainstay of the regime – the army. All revolutions put enormous strains on the discipline of the rank and file troops: they are not immune from the effects of the crisis. As the masses on the streets instinctively recognised, fraternisation, patient argument and propaganda are one way of getting the ordinary soldier to disobey orders and join the struggle, with their arms.

Equally important is for the revolutionary organisations and the masses to show to the troops that they are determined, even at the cost of great sacrifice, to confront and bring down the regime; to arm themselves in preparation for a fight to the finish with the elite forces.

The current leaders of the workers, students and urban poor need to be won away from the false strategy of a democratic alliance with the bourgeoisie, towards a new revolutionary workers' party and a new strategy for a socialist revolution in Indonesia.

**workersPOWER**

# Strikes and protests greet Jospin's betrayals

**Mathieu Roux**, of our French sister organisation Pouvoir Ouvrier explains the background to school student protest and rail strikes in France

FRENCH RAILWAY workers joined forces with others from across the EU in a Euro-strike against privatisation. The British press likes to present France as a political dinosaur; led by a socialist government still hooked on state solutions to market problems and paralysed by waves of strikes.

It is true that over the past years there have been far more strikes in France than in Britain. The recent school students movement (see WP 227) shows how volatile the situation can be. But the idea that Lionel Jospin's government is fundamentally different from Tony Blair's is an illusion. They just have different ways of getting to the same capitalist solution.

Take the 35 hour week. Earlier this year Jospin's "plural left" government (Socialists, Communists, Greens plus a semi-fictional left liberal party) adopted a law on the reduction of the working week to 35 hours, with the promise of creating tens of thousands of jobs by sharing the work.

But as well as giving substantial state hands-out to those bosses who create jobs at the same time as reducing the working week, the law in fact can be used to force workers to work longer and more flexible hours.

The 35 hour week becomes the annual average, with the boss able to increase work-time up to 40 hours as it suits him, without paying a penny in overtime. And the number of hours overtime that can be legally required by the boss has more than tripled.

So, while many bosses have embraced the increased flexibility, few have created any jobs. Nearly 3 million workers are now subject to such agreements, but in return only 3,160 jobs have been created.

After a series of agreements in the private sector, the state sector is now beginning negotiations, including workers in energy, Air France, the post and the railways. Given the strength of the unions in the public sector, things will not all go the bosses' way. At the beginning of December two of the post office unions have called for a day's strike action against management's refusal to create jobs.

It seems likely that among the rail workers the 35 hour week will be a massive bone of contention. Having led the strike-wave of November-December 1995, the railway workers have recently been showing that their militancy and self-organisation remain intact. Over the last two months there have been a series of local strikes – including a successful ten day strike in the

Marseilles region – over security problems and staffing levels.

Then at the end of November there were two national strikes: one over jobs and pay, the other a Euro-strike organised by a series of European unions against the EU policy of creating two structures: one in charge of the track, the other in charge of operations.

The union realised that, faced with

an EU-wide attack launched by the neo-liberal European Commission, there needed to be a Euro-wide response. Unfortunately the strike was neither long enough – only 24 hours – nor democratic enough – there was no rank and file involvement in calling and organising the strike.

In case anyone had any doubts, the Jospin government – and its Communist transport minister – is enthusiastically putting the EU's programme to work.

And this is not only true for the railways: despite promising that there would be a halt to privatisations, in its first 15 months in office the Jospin government has privatised more than the previous right-wing government did in its two years in office.

Even on the vexed question of the "sans-papiers" – the illegal immigrants who are fighting for legal recognition – the government has back-tracked on its promises and is tailing the right-wing section of the electorate's racist prejudices.

The school students' movement which exploded onto the streets in October with 500,000 demanding more teachers and smaller classes shows both potential and dangers.

The spontaneity of the French working class and youth is brilliant. But its lack of mass organisation – unionisation levels are at a historic low of around 7 per cent – means that mass movements have to overcome massive obstacles in order to impose anything like their full demands. In the face of this revolutionary socialists fight for the creation of new, democratic organisations under rank and file control. But in the absence of such structures, struggles can dissipate almost as quickly as they arise – especially faced with a wily reformist government that offers minor concessions rather than provoking confrontation.

French workers and youth will have to use all the weapons in their arsenal – from mass demonstrations to the general strike – to make sure that the Jospin government does not succeed where the divided and weakened right failed.



## Lafontaine: the new bogeyman?

ON 25 NOVEMBER the front page of the *Sun* shouted: "Is this the most dangerous man in Europe?" To make its point it printed the front page in German too – perhaps for its numerous German speaking readers. The following day the *Daily Telegraph* pompously editorialised on "The German Menace". Other papers ran headlines such as "The Gauleiters of Europe who want to rule our lives" – gauleiter being the Nazi term for regional governor. Who were they talking about?

The answer was Oskar Lafontaine. What had the finance minister in the new German Green-Social Democratic government done to deserve this vilification? Such comments are the stock in trade of the Thatcherite undead like John Redwood: "Europe is after our Money" was this cadaver's explanation. But when Tories start talking about OUR money the wary ask – whose money?

The EU has long had the objective of tax harmonisation. Countries like Britain have low direct tax levels compared to most EU countries, especially when it comes to corporation tax and taxes on the rich. The EU, particularly the German government, sees Britain's low business tax regime as part of the unlevel playing field that gives British firms an advantage and attracts foreign direct investment from outside the EU.

So pampered and protected are "our" bosses that they let out cries of pain and rage at the very suggestion that they should pay a bit more. "Our money" in Redwood's phrase means the money of the City bankers, the industrialists and the great landowners.

They also fear "tax harmonisation" because it might suggest to British workers the idea of harmonising wages and social benefits too. British workers might ask for their wages to be raised by the one third needed to reach German levels. They might demand that unemployment and sickness benefits rise to 70 per cent of previous earnings: in Germany that is the norm. Unfortunately Oskar Lafontaine is not likely to force the British bosses to cough up. And Gordon Brown has promised to veto any such proposal. New Labour, he insisted, remains a government "friendly to business".

## Arbetarmakt/Marxist Left form a new Swedish revolutionary organisation

WORKERS POWER'S sister organisation in Sweden, Arbetarmakt, took an important step forward in mid-November when it fused with the Marxist Left (Marxistisk Vänster).

The process of discussion and collaboration between the groups which led to fusion could serve as a model of how groups, originating in different traditions, can establish a principled basis for unity.

Arbetarmakt (AM) itself originated in an opposition within the Socialist Party (the Swedish section of USFI). It split from that organisation and joined the LRCI in 1994. Since then it has concentrated on establishing itself as a propaganda group around its journal, newsletter and pamphlets.

This work brought the group into contact with comrades in the Arbetar Förbundet Offensiv (AFO, the Swedish section of CWI/Militant, now the Social-

ist Party in Britain) who were increasingly critical of both the internal regime and the political line of their organisation. When AFO followed Militant's line and declared the Swedish Social Democracy no longer a bourgeois workers' party, these comrades, including two full time organisers of AFO, split to form MV.

After the split they decided to invite all organisations which considered themselves within the Trotskyist tradition to respond to their initial programmatic statements.

It was in this context that discussions with AM were begun. It was agreed to begin a more systematic examination of key issues, ranging from the origins of the degeneration of the Fourth International to the analysis of the mass reformist parties and tactics towards them and the position of revolutionaries regarding the European Union.

Substantial progress on these issues made it clear that the potential existed for fusion. However, both groups were aware that this would require more than just agreement on theoretical questions. They began to turn their attention towards the more immediate questions facing revolutionaries in Sweden. This work included a review of Arbetarmakt's Action Programme and collaboration around joint interventions, for example, against fascist mobilisations.

Parallel to developments in Sweden, MV also participated in the LRCI's Fourth Congress in 1997 as observers. From there it was agreed that the two groups should test the viability of fusion by collaborating around the forthcoming Swedish general election.

This necessitated not only reaching agreement on the issues raised in the election but also on the more practical tasks of organisation, propaganda pro-

duction and intervention in the campaign itself. This process of programmatic discussions, joint interventions and, finally, common propaganda, established very firm foundations for the new, fused organisation.

The fusion has taken place at a very important point in the development of the class struggle in Sweden. Since the 1930s, Swedish capital has managed to maintain a very profitable role as a supposedly neutral economy between, first of all, Nazi-dominated Europe and the "free world" and, later, between the Cold War powers. That role is coming to an end and with it will disappear many of the internal political arrangements. Above all the highly integrated role of the official labour movement, which underpinned the so-called "Swedish model" of a high tech, high wage, high tax, high welfare economy, is under threat.

Already the changes in Swedish capital's orientation are having an impact. In September's general election, the Social Democrats suffered enormous losses as voters registered their opposition to the prospect of privatisations together with cuts in services and benefits. Most of the votes lost went to the ex-Stalinists, the Left Party, whose leaders are now helping to keep the Social Democrats in office.

The impact of both the Asian economic crisis and the looming international recession on the export-based Swedish economy will create enormous pressures on the existing coalition and will put all political tendencies to the test. The new Arbetarmakt, having made sure of its own political foundations, is eager to take up the challenge of the next stage in building a revolutionary socialist party – not only in Sweden but across Scandinavia.

# Chile 1973: The reform

Pinochet came to power by overthrowing the popularly-elected reformist government of Salvador Allende.

**John Mckee** and **Jenny Scott** examine the mistakes of Allende and the events leading up to the coup

**G**ENERAL PINOCHET'S arrest in Britain has sparked much more than just a legal controversy. In Chile it has blown apart the rotten consensus that was established when the dictator ceded power to a new "democratic" regime.

In the late 1980s, the regime and the open ruling class parties, principally the Christian Democrats, conspired with the reformists to cover up the murderous legacy of Pinochet's regime. This deal, which effectively gave Pinochet and his henchmen immunity for life, was framed in order to block any class polarisation and class struggle in the aftermath of the dictatorship.

The deal made Pinochet a senator and guaranteed his control over the armed forces, was sold to the masses as the necessary price to pay for the restoration of democracy. This was a brazen lie.

The dictatorship was reeling from crisis to crisis after 1983. It faced a working class that was recovering from the terrible defeat it suffered after the original coup by Pinochet in September 1973. It could have been overthrown, but the reformists, in exchange for influence in the new regime, helped block a revolution and saved Pinochet from destruction.

Today the consensus is visibly breaking down. Masses of workers and youth have come out onto the streets of Chile's cities demanding justice for the victims of the military junta. They have been met with water cannon and baton charges, but their struggle will not go away. The forces of progress, the working class, which Pinochet believed he had eradicated during his reign of terror, are fighting back.

In Europe, Chilean exiles have taken to the streets. The posh clinic where Pinochet has been "under arrest" has been picketed day and night. Chilean embassies have been beset by protests. These actions have found support from the workers and youth in Europe, and especially in Britain.

It is vital that this opportunity for renewed struggle in Chile and around the question of justice for the victims of the Chilean dictatorship, is taken up. But it is equally vital that the lessons of the struggle that led to Pinochet's bloody coup in 1973 are learnt by everyone. They are amongst the most important lessons for the international working class in the 20th century.

The "Chilean experiment" of introducing socialism according to the reformist model – within the framework of capitalist legality and through the vehicle of parliamentary institutions – was hailed by social democratic and Stalinist reformists across the world as the new model for workers to follow. The peaceful road to socialism worked and Chile proved it, they claimed.

Within three years of travelling only a few yards along that road it was brutally exposed as a dead end for the working class. The experiment by the Chilean reformists cost the lives of thousands. The flower of the Chilean proletariat was ruthlessly murdered, tortured and imprisoned. The defeat encouraged aspiring dictators across Latin America, and beyond, to launch their own attacks on the workers' movements. Chile was plunged into the long, dark night of Pinochet's dictatorship.

Today the apologists for Pinochet – the Tory Party foremost among them – claim that Pinochet did a lot of good for Chile, that he introduced economic stability and that he saved the country from civil war and a left wing dictatorship. For good measure that grotesque gargoyle, Margaret Thatcher, added that he helped Britain kill lots of Argentinians during the Falklands/Malvinas war and deserved not only freedom but tea, sympathy and a hamper full of luxuries.

Not only do these hypocrites merrily gloss over his human rights record – a record that should disgust any human being – they lie about what he really did for the Chilean economy and the Chilean people. During his rule he followed Thatcherite monetarist dogma to the letter, certainly for the first ten years. Under the influence of the "Chicago boys", devout followers of the guru of monetarism, Milton Friedman, Pinochet turned Chile into what one of the monetarist economists in the US called "a show-

case of what supply-side economics can do". Too true.

In those ten years, with lashings of aid from the US, who had helped Pinochet seize power in the first place, the economic stability that was promised after the downfall of Allende, never came. Unemployment, at 4.3 per cent in 1973, rose to 22 per cent by 1983. The number of Chileans living in absolute poverty, according to official figures, rose from 20 per cent in 1970 to 40 per cent at the end of his reign in 1990.

This economic chaos and misery for millions was the real consequence of letting the market rip, and by 1982-83 Chile was experiencing a far worse economic crisis than at the time of the coup, with GDP falling by 19 per cent. And the working class – who had been legally robbed of union negotiating rights and minimum wage protection by the dictator – showed that his "final solution" of 1973 had failed. They took to the streets and fought against Pinochet's troops, actually winning back the minimum wage and some bargaining rights.

Chile wasn't an economic miracle under Pinochet. It was an economic disaster zone, underwritten by US imperialism and Britain in return for the lucrative favours that it bestowed on their multinational corporations operating in the country.

The workers paid twofold for the failed experiment of the reformists: they paid with their lives and lost freedom and they paid with their jobs and living standards. This was the fate of a powerful working class with a rich tradition in struggle. How could it have happened?

Without in any way trying to deflect blame from Pinochet and his junta for the crimes they committed against the Chilean people we have to say that he was able to get away with those crimes because the reformist experiment in Chile was actually a betrayal of the working class, one that delivered them, bound hand and foot, into the hands of reaction. By learning the lessons of the disaster in Chile we can arm a new generation of militants and prevent any repetition of that disaster.

**O**N 4 November 1970, Salvador Allende became the President of Chile. At the head of the Popular Unity coalition (UP), he won 36.3 per cent of the popular vote. The rival Radical Democrat-National Party (RD-NP) and Christian Democrat (CD) party gained 34.9 and 27.8 per cent of the vote respectively. The disunity of the main bourgeois parties stemmed from the failures of Eduardo Frei's "reform" government from 1964-70, and was a mark of Chile's deep crisis.

Popular Unity brought together the two main parties of Chilean working class, the Communist and Socialist parties (CP and SP), with three small bourgeois parties – the Radical Party, the Social Democrats and the Independent Popular Action (AP). The three small parties were based mainly on smaller, nationally based industrialists, businessmen and professionals. The Radical Party had once been the major "liberal reform party" of the Chilean bourgeoisie but had been ousted from this role by the Christian Democrats. A small petit bourgeois party, the Movement for United Popular Action (MAPU) was also in the UP coalition.

Of the main left parties in Chile at the time only the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (the MIR) – an unstable, centrist organisation influenced by Che Guevara's guerrillarist politics – stayed out of the cross class government.

This was not Chile's first experience of a cross class popular front. Allende himself had been minister of health in just such a government in 1938-41. Popular Unity's programme was, as Allende told the *New York Times*, "not a communist programme, nor a socialist programme", but "a convergence of opinion". Popular Unity, he made clear was not going to launch an attack on the capitalist system in Chile. How could it with three parties that openly defended capitalist property within its ranks?

The CP, under Luis Corvalan, held to a 40 year old commitment to the "revolution by stages". It agreed with the SP that the immediate tasks were not socialist but centred instead on the struggle for national economic sovereignty. To complete this stage an alliance with the patriotic national bourgeoisie was necessary. Together, the working class and the progressive bosses, would limit the "revolution" to breaking the power of the old landed oligarchy, who ran a semi-feudal and profoundly inefficient agrarian system, the monopolists in Chile and their allies in the US corporations who bled the country dry of its rich natural resources, in particular copper.

There was one drawback to this strategy. The decisive sections of the Chilean ruling class were precisely the oligarchs and monopolists. No distinct significant national bourgeoisie existed that was capable of independent action against the US. The impotence of the bourgeois parties which joined Popular Unity reflected just this. These parties were really nothing more than the "shadow of the bourgeoisie", as Trotsky had labelled similar outfits in the popular fronts of the 1930s.

To overcome this problem both Allende and the CP attempted to coax the Christian Democrats into playing the role of the progressive "national bourgeoisie". On no account were they to be frightened by radical or socialist talk. This would merely drive them into hardened opposition to the government.

Likewise, Allende wooed the military. They were appealed to on explicitly nationalist grounds and promised a role in running the country. The UP programme declared that:

"The People's state will concern itself closely to make it possible for the Armed Forces to assist in the country's economic development."

Three years later this promise was fulfilled, but not by the UP government!

The programme also outlined a series of reforms to answer the problems facing an ailing and stagnating Chilean capitalism: the unresolved land problem, with huge inefficient estates ("latifundia") and a land-hungry peasantry; the exploitation of Chile's major source of wealth – copper – by US imperialism; and the limited scope for national-based capital because of the country's dependency on imperialism and limited internal market.

The country's mines were largely controlled by two US corporations, Anaconda and Kennecott. Their super profits, boosted by selling Chilean copper to their US based plants at half the world market prices, ranged between 20 per cent and 80 per cent on their Chilean operations. Copper represented the decisive grip which US, and to a lesser extent, European imperialism, had on the Chilean economy.

Frei's feeble attempt to alleviate this had been a dismal failure. Chile's economic growth rate remained lower than most other Latin American countries, its national debt had risen by the end of Frei's term to the highest per capita in the world. The failure of land reform was leading to rural disturbances.

In this situation Popular Unity seemed to offer a programme of dynamic reforms – redistribution of the land, nationalisation of US copper and the use of an expanded state and "mixed sector" to promote economic growth and industrial development. Why then was the victory of Popular Unity greeted with such trepidation by the most important sections of the Chilean ruling class?

It was not primarily because they feared Allende's claimed adherence to "Marxism". He was widely regarded as a loyal parliamentarian. The defeated Christian Democrat candidate, Radomiro Tomic, had said of Allende:

"My best wishes for success go to the new president of Chile, whose long and proven democratic convictions, reflected in attitudes of constant respect for the constitution and the laws, are well known."

Their real fear was that a Popular Unity victory would raise expectations amongst the workers and peasants, that his victory would

# mist road to disaster



Allende's message of social reform appealed to the poor workers and peasants in the shanty towns and villages (left); Pinochet supporters, however, celebrate his elevation to the post of life senator in March 1988 by flying the swastika - symbol of fascist Germany

unleash an offensive by them on capital.

A hard line reactionary section of the ruling class, around sections of the military and the fascists wanted to stop Allende from actually taking office.

An attempted coup in October led to the murder of the Commander in Chief of the Army, Rene Schneider, who had refused to support it. This gave Allende his first chance to rouse the masses to vigilance, to promise that he would, at the very least, curb the power of the army. Had he been a real Marxist it could have been used as the beginning of a struggle to arm the workers and build a real people's militia in defence of the new government.

Instead of this, Allende insisted:

"The Chilean Army's honour and prestige is at stake here . . . We shall not allow his [Schneider's] death to be quietly forgotten. The Commander in Chief was the representative of the tradition of the armed forces."

He neglected to add that this "tradition" involved numerous cases of massacring striking workers as recently as 1957 and being used to attack workers and break miners' strikes during the period of the Frei government. In other words, Allende was prepared to delude workers about the progressive potential of army, just as he did about the potential of the national bourgeoisie, in the interests of keeping the bosses and generals sweet.

Despite the coup attempt the more farsighted sections, in particular the majority of the Christian Democratic Party, decided that the best course of action would be to use the crisis of the coup attempt to tie Allende's hands in advance. They negotiated the "Statute of Guarantees" with Allende.

Under this Statute Allende gave a binding promise that his government would not introduce any changes in the size of the armed forces or its general staff, that there would be no "interference" with the judiciary, schools, press, radio or church and that no "private" militias would be set up by the government. The Statute strengthened the opposition dominated Congress against the president.

Allende had started as he meant to go on: by meeting the bosses' threats to his government with concessions to them.

**T**HE VICTORY of Popular Unity was followed by a massive upsurge in working class struggle and confidence. It saw an expansion of trade union membership - the Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT) reached 800,000 members by 1972 (25 per cent of the economically active population). The Socialist Party and

*On the land the victory of Popular Unity was accompanied by an intense class war between the peasants and the landowners*

Communist Party both grew dramatically.

On the land the victory of Popular Unity was accompanied by an intense class war between the campesinos (rural workers and poor peasants) and landowners. In the last full year of Frei's term there had been 148 land take-overs by the campesinos. In 1971, the government registered 1,278 such seizures.

Popular Unity did implement a series of wage increases, averaging 35 per cent. Social welfare measures were introduced, such as increased family allowances and free school milk. The decree for the nationalisation of the big US copper mines was passed unanimously through Congress, with even the National Party voting for it. The predominantly US-owned banks were treated generously with the government buying up stock to bring them into the state sector.

This first year was the honeymoon period for UP. But already the limits of its programme were being exposed. The Agrarian Reform, taken over from Frei, was an extremely weak one. It gave considerable compensation to the landowners. It allowed them to keep 80 hectares of land of their choice plus buildings, machinery, animals and equipment.

This arrangement allowed them to continue to dominate many rural areas, because the campesinos, with small plots of land and no machinery of their own or access to credit found themselves still dependent on the old oligarchy before they could begin to put their land under cultivation.

The reform was further hampered because the government lacked funds to pay the generous compensation. It only accelerated when the peasants and landless labourers began to take action themselves, often led by the MIR.

The reactions of the Socialist and Communist Party leaders to the campesinos pushing beyond their reformist programme, and thus threatening the alliance with the bourgeoisie, was to be repeated again and again with other sections of the labouring masses. On 13 February 1971, after meeting with the National Farm Owners' Organisation, Allende announced special legislation to punish those who instigated land seizures. Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Chilean CP declared:

"We do not approve of land occupations because we have an obligation to the country, and because we are going to carry out agricultural development within the limits of the law."

The law and the constitution - means of defending capitalist property - were elevated by UP above the action and interests of the masses themselves. For all their talk of "people's power" the UP government were terrified of any real manifestations of it.

In the urban areas the class struggle like-

wise forced the government's hand. In the face of employers' sabotage, workers struck back. Throughout 1971 the government made use of Decree Law No. 520, passed in 1932 and never repealed, which allowed the government to "intervene" in industries threatened with bankruptcy or social conflict.

During 1971 seventy industrial enterprises were "intervened", a measure short of outright nationalisation and certainly with no measure of workers' control. But nevertheless, these interventions were seen as victories by the workers in the "intervened" textile, metallurgical, cement, fishing and domestic electrical enterprises.

These plants, together with the nationalised copper, nitrate, iron and coal concerns, the banks and the initial state sector, now made up the so-called "Social Production Sector" which, by 1972 accounted for around 20 per cent of production.

On the back of these advances for the workers and poor peasants, the municipal elections of April 1971 saw Popular Unity increase its percentage of the vote to 51 per cent.

**A**LARMED AT the gains won by the workers and peasants, the bourgeoisie began their counter-offensive against the Popular Unity government in the summer of 1971. US imperialism had already been "softening up" the government with measures designed to damage the economy. Loans, credits and investments from international agencies were either blocked, delayed or tied to stringent conditions.

The big US copper companies attempted to put an embargo on Chilean copper shipments through the international courts. These measures, combined with internal economic sabotage and an unfavourable world copper price, seriously weakened the economy. In 1970 there was a \$91 million balance of payments surplus. By 1971 it had become a \$311 million deficit. Inflation soared and unemployment in Greater Santiago was the highest for ten years.

In these circumstances the bosses began to use the legal and parliamentary apparatus to halt the workers' advance. The "Comptroller of the Republic", who had the role of reviewing the constitutionality of decrees, began to declare various "interventions" illegal. In June 1971 he ordered the return of one of the largest textile manufacturers to its owners. Over the next year the Comptroller, a life appointee, together with the reactionary judiciary, which Allende had agreed to leave untouched, used every "constitutional" avenue to obstruct the Popular Unity programme. The opposition dominated Congress used its power to veto legislation and remove gov-



Troops take to the streets in Chile on 11 September 1973 arresting and shooting anyone who stood in their way

Continued from page 12

ernment ministers.

In December 1971 the Christian Democrats gave their backing to a predominantly middle class housewives' "March of the pots and pans" protesting at shortages and the high cost of living. The march was "protected" by the now openly active fascist youth of *Patria Y Libertad*, resulting in widespread street clashes with Popular Unity supporters.

By April 1972 the Popular Unity leadership was in full retreat in the face of this pressure from the bosses and the middle classes. In this month Allende opened negotiations with the Christian Democrats despite protests from the left of the Socialist Party.

The SP and CP leaders faced a stark choice. They could have led the workers' and peasants' organisations against the bourgeois opposition, nationalising the land and factories with no compensation, breaking the power of the state bureaucracy and the judiciary, introducing the election of all ranks into the armed forces, granting soldiers the right to form their own councils – thereby destabilising the power of the officer caste – and mobilising a workers' and peasants' militia to enforce these measures.

This is exactly what a revolutionary workers' government would do faced with bourgeois opposition. But the parliamentary road dictated an opposite course of action for Allende and the UP government. Allende really believed that bourgeois legality was his best defence. He argued:

"We have acted within the laws of Chile, within the constitution. It is for this reason that I have maintained that victory through the polling booth was the way to pre-empt any such policy [sabotage by the bosses and imperialism], because this way their hands are tied."

The only people whose hands were tied by this approach were the workers. And they weren't helped by the CP. Faced with the bosses' sabotage Corvalan announced in June 1972 that:

"We think that no possibility exists today, at the moment, to modify this legality, this institutionality – not by any means, neither by legal means nor by extra legal means."

This was the beginning of the end for the UP government. The bosses prodded the reformists and the reformists ran away yelping. They signalled in advance their cowardice. Instead of looking to the workers and peasants the government attempted to broaden its alliance by bringing in more decisive sections of the bourgeoisie through concessions. The workers and peasants were exhorted to observe discipline, make sacrifices, join a "battle for production" to solve the economic crisis provoked by imperialism and the bourgeoisie. This line was pushed home at the Popular Unity meeting at Lo Curro.

A leading Stalinist, Orlando Millas, was brought in as Minister of Finance to lead the "battle for production". Despite Popular Unity's efforts, the negotiations with the Christian Democrats failed, although Millas proceeded to carry out policies designed to keep open this dialogue with Christian Democracy. The workers themselves

were spontaneously groping towards an alternative course. At the end of 1971 the Linares Province Campesino Council together with the Popular Unity and MIR regional committees called for the "immediate elimination of latifundia. Expropriation of entailed estates. Reduction from eighty to forty hectares of the limit of non-expropriable land. Expropriated land not to be compensated. Build campesino councils."

In Concepcion in July 1972 the Socialist Party regional committee held a "people's Assembly" which denounced the strategy of government submission to the demands of the bourgeoisie. The National Popular Unity parties, in the face of outrage from the right and Congress, quickly repudiated their regional committees' decisions. Most importantly in June 1972 the first Cordones Industrial (Industrial Area Committee) was born. An industrial dispute over wages at the Perlak canning plant in Cerrillos resulted in a workers' occupation and demands for the firm to be "intervened". The occupation was denounced by the Communist Minister of Labour, Mireya Baltra and the courts ordered the police to restore the plants to its owners.

The workers of Cerrillos responded by setting up an area committee and blocking all roads around the industrial area of Maipu, forcing the government to concede their demands. The Cordones were to spread rapidly during the bosses strike in October.

**I**N THE summer and autumn of 1972 the bosses stepped up their offensive. August saw pitched battles in Santiago between high school students supporting the opposition and members of Popular Unity. Hoarding and speculation by distributors and shop owners caused widespread shortages. Inflation hit almost 100 per cent in September 1972.

In October the opposition, now united in the "Democratic" Federation, declared the government of Allende to be "illegitimate". A bosses' strike was organised for 9 October, starting with the Truck Owners' Federation, who, amply financed with CIA funds, declared an indefinite general stoppage. Over half Chile's fuel, raw materials and foodstuffs depended on road transport, so an effective strike could have quickly strangled the economy.

On 10 October the Democratic Federation brought 100,000 onto the streets of Santiago and three days later the retail trade associations joined the strike. SOFOFA, the employers' association of medium sized and big industry, declared a lock-out.

The government responded with appeals for "legality" and turned to the military for help, placing 13 provinces under martial law. The fact that the generals were in league with the bosses and the right was ignored by Allende. He was desperate for allies from within the bourgeoisie.

In contrast the workers took matters into their own hands, meeting the bosses' strike with a wave of occupations of closed factories, and commandeering transport.

The JAPs, committees of housewives which

had sprung up in response to shortages and hoarding, expanded from a handful to 2,080. All over Chile they requisitioned food supplies and forced the re-opening of closed shops by militant action – fixing the prices for the goods sold.

The Cordones Industriales spread through all the major industrial centres – five emerged in Santiago alone – linking industrial units with a directly elected workers' committee. They took on the tasks of mobilising the workers, organising defence, transport and the distribution of materials and finished products. Direct liaison between the Cordones and the neighbourhood committees – particularly in the militant "poblaciones" – shanty towns. By the end of October all sections of the bourgeoisie were clamouring for negotiations with the government faced with this resilient working class response.

The Popular Unity government managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Having failed to bring wider sections of the bourgeoisie into the government it brought in the military. The presence of the military – General Carlos Prats as Interior Minister, Rear Admiral Ismael Huerta at Public Works, and Airforce Brigadier General Claudio Sepelverda as Minister of Mines – was the government's pledge to the bosses that there would be a restoration of bourgeois order.

The Socialist and Communist Party leadership had always peddled the illusion that the Chilean army, unlike those of the other Latin American states, was "constitutional", "professional" and pledged to support a democratically elected government. Luis Corvalan had declared before the election of Popular Unity that the CP was opposed to proposals to arm the masses as this would be "equivalent to showing distrust in the army".

The Socialist Party Minister of Agriculture justified their entry into government in the magazine *Chile Hoy* as follows:

"The armed forces . . . enter the cabinet to preserve the institutional system which the hottest heads in the opposition wish to destroy. In this way they help assure the conditions for the program to advance."

Indeed, the armed forces had a long and "distinguished" record of "preserving the institutional system" – but the system was capitalism. In its defence they had committed a whole series of massacres of workers struggling against the employing class.

Like every other Latin American army their officer caste was drawn from, and closely integrated into, the ruling classes of Chile. It was trained by the USA, most of its officers passing through that "school for counter-revolution", the US Army School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone. Such was the "ally" that Popular Unity called on in November 1972.

If Allende and Corvalan insisted on disarming the Chilean working class in the face of counter revolution, then their left critics failed to provide any real alternative leadership for the workers and peasants.

The left of the Socialist Party for all its declarations of "Marxism-Leninism" and in favour of "uninterrupted revolution" was fatally ambig-

ous on the nature of the army. The Party Secretary and leader of the left wing declared in the weekly *Marcha* on 17 November that:

"The Socialist Party has never objected to the presence of uniformed men in the cabinet. That is the prerogative of the President."

The same problem of political leadership was present within the Cordones which, in the absence of an alternative strategy to that of the government, went into decline after November. With the Socialists often the most important focus, the Cordones were relegated to giving "support" to Popular Unity and defending the gains of the government.

Worse, the CP sent in its cadre to denounce them as "parallel unions", break them up and demand loyalty to the CUT. The idea of developing the Cordones into real workers' and peasants' councils – soviets – was anathema to the bureaucratic leaders of the UP government.

The MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) offered no political alternative either. Organisationally it counterposed its "own" organisations, the Comandos Comunales, to the Cordones. Politically it flipped from boycotting the 1970 elections to giving "critical support" to the government. It too vacillated on the nature and role of the army.

On the one hand it denounced "some bad officers", on the other hand it referred to the "true patriotic and democratic role" it had to play alongside the people and even briefly called for a "democratic dictatorship of the people and the army"!

The left failed to tackle the crucial tasks facing the Chilean working class in the winter of 1972 – that of politically arming the Cordones around the fight to force the SP and CP leaderships to ditch the bourgeois parties and kick the military out of the government, and around a series of demands on the CP and SP that met the urgent needs of the workers and peasants.

These would have included the expropriation of the big farms and industries under workers' control, the cancellation of the foreign debt and expropriation of the imperialist interests, the formation of workers' militias for defence against the fascists, an urgent campaign amongst the rank and file sailors and soldiers against the coup-mongers and for full democratic rights amongst the ranks, with the aim of drawing them into the Cordones.

The struggle around these demands would not only have met the bourgeois offensive, but offered the possibility of breaking the rank and file of the Socialist and Communist Parties from the fatal popular frontism of their leaders and rallying them to a revolutionary communist alternative.

Instead the government was able to proceed with its strategy of reassuring the bourgeoisie – a strategy which had as its price demobilising the working class. In January 1973 the notorious "Millas Plan" was put forward in which this "communist" minister proposed to return 123 occupied enterprises to their former owners. The plan was only blocked by working class resistance led by the Cordones and sections of the socialist left.

This convinced the bourgeoisie that while it had little to fear from Allende, he could not control the workers when it came to grabbing back their gains. It was this threat from the workers that made the bosses and the generals even more determined to get rid of Allende.

Having failed to gain a two thirds majority within the Congress in the March 1973 elections – a figure necessary to impeach Allende (Popular Unity's vote, in fact, increased in these elections) the bourgeoisie turned more and more to the army.

Under the Law of Arms Control of October 1972 passed by Allende, the army could act almost autonomously in raids searching for "arms". Of course these powers were increasingly used to intimidate the workers' organisations. In May the army raided the Socialist Party headquarters in the city of Rancagua. The raid was approved by the acting Commander in Chief Pinochet.

In June there was an attempted coup by the Second Armoured Regiment, put down by troops loyal to General Prats. The army was increasingly divided between those officers favouring a coup and the dwindling number of "constitutionalists".

July offered the last chance for Allende to mobilise the workers against the impending coup. The month opened with a series of raids, by all three branches of the armed forces, against factories, union offices and campuses, which left behind a trail of dead and imprisoned workers and students.

In early August a group of sailors and petty

**Sue Thornton** reviews the *Marxism Today* Special Issue, November/December 1998. £3.50

## A rave from the grave



Once in power Pinochet was a loyal servant of capitalism: here he declares martial law in 1983

officers, supporters of UP, were arrested and tortured. They had opposed coup preparations and informed Popular Unity parties. The High Command accused the left of the Socialist Party, MAPU and the MIR of incitement to mutiny.

Allende not only refused to support or release these sailors but denounced the "attempt by ultra-left sailors to organise cells in ships of the national fleet". Allende had dug his own grave and with it those of thousands of working class militants. He was giving more and more power and influence to the military.

The ranks of the armed forces realised they would receive no support if they disobeyed the coup orders from their officers. Moreover, they knew that Allende – who had considerable access to arms himself – was absolutely determined to ensure that the workers never got hold of them. Armed workers would pose no threat to the soldiers in the event of a showdown – thanks to the reformist government. It was therefore only a matter of time until the military struck.

On 11 September 1973 the coup came. Organised with US assistance, Pinochet declared Allende overthrown and installed a military junta to rule the country. Hours before he was killed Allende was still appealing to workers to stay calm and await the arrival of loyal troops. Those troops were by now a figment of his imagination.

With all of the advantage of having been in the cabinet, the army leaders knew exactly who to target in the hours and days that followed the coup. They had lists of every UP member. They rounded them up, took them to concentration camps and tortured and killed them.

Pinochet gave the order to his troops that any workers who resisted arrest should be summarily shot. This order was carried out to the letter. Thousands of workers did engage in heroic resistance, even though they lacked arms and leadership. The brutality of Pinochet – the man who the Tories are now supporting on "compassionate" grounds – meant that these heroes joined the long list of the "disappeared ones". And even those who did not resist but who were known to support UP were killed or tortured.

Allende himself died in the Moneda Palace, the seat of Chile's constitutional democracy. So ended the "Chilean experiment". The illusion of a democratic alliance with the bourgeoisie and of the "peaceful road to socialism" had once again delivered a working class into the hands of murderous capitalist reaction.

The working class must learn from this. Pinochet must face not only justice, but a working class in Chile determined to destroy capitalism by the only means available to it – socialist revolution.

**YOU WOULD** think that they could at least have managed a mumbled apology. After all, *Marxism Today* (MT), in its original incarnation, as the journal of the decaying Communist Party of Great Britain, gleefully abandoned socialist ideas of working class collective action and a planned society.

Editor Martin Jacques, a favourite at the cocktail parties of the ruling class, together with regular contributors such as Stuart Hall and Eric Hobsbawm, were so confounded by the collapse of what they saw as "actually existing socialism" and so dismayed by the failure of Labourism in the face of Thatcher's rise to power, that they succumbed to the ideological pressures of the neo-liberalism of the 1980s – the Thatcher/Reagan decade.

In the 1980s, MT provided both a platform and an ideological cover for the "modernisers" in the leadership of the British unions and Labour Party, and their apologists in the university seminar rooms. Charting the rise of individualism and consumerism, and the decline of old "Fordist" forms of mass production, MT concluded that the left could only renew itself by embracing the "New Times".

This meant an acceptance of the basic framework of capitalist society and adaptation to the new values. "Social solidarity" would take the place of socialism. Nationalisations were old hat; better to concede the dominance of the market and try and make it work a bit more fairly.

And of course these second rate thinkers reserved particular venom for such unfashionable things as strikes, pickets, demonstrations and just about every other form of workers' action. Such methods of struggle were "economistic" or "macho" (words MT used to describe the heroic miners' strike of 1984/85).

Sounds familiar? The Blairites shared much of this rhetoric and used it in their drive to the right. Indeed, regular MT contributor Geoff Mulgan is now part of Blair's team of advisers, and happily defends his role in this special issue. The Demos think tank, once headed by Mulgan and a fount of Blairite ideas, was originally Martin Jacques' brain child.

Despite their sorry role in the rise of Blair's New Labour, the front cover of the one-off MT has the headline "Wrong" plastered across a picture of Tony Blair. It turns out this is not a refreshingly honest admission of error on the part of MT. Far from it. Instead, it is a shameless attempt to distance themselves from the results of their scramble to dump socialism.

The New Labour government, it seems, is not what they had in mind. Rather late to realise this, though. *New Musical Express* and most "Cool Britannia" bands said much the same thing, nearly a year ago when they ran a strikingly similar front page.

In fact much of the content of this special MT is hardly novel, either reproducing old ideas or regurgitating material that has been appearing in liberal journals and newspapers for some months. For instance, Jonathan Freedland explains why he's a fan of US style "libertarian anti-statism" and "communal self-reliance". Helen Wilkinson thinks women's issues have been marginalised and that patriarchy is alive and well in the Blair government, although she manages all this without any mention of the cut in single parent benefit.

Psychiatrist Oliver James tells us that capitalism makes us sad, while therapist Susie Orbach takes two pages to explain our feelings of disappointment in the Labour government. A sentence including the words "job losses" and "friends of business" might have done just as well. But her aim is to soothe the guilty consciences of the middle class not-so-radicals, not help those who remain exploited and downtrodden in Blair's Britain.

More serious are the pieces from the likes of Eric

Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall which attack the Blair government for its failure to tackle issues of inequality and its supine acquiescence in the face of the global economy.

Stuart Hall rips into the "Third Way", beloved of Blair and his new academic guru Anthony Giddens. Hall points out that all the talk of "abolishing adversarial politics" ignores the fact that there are real conflicts and differences between, for instance, a genuinely ethical foreign policy and the practice of selling arms to Indonesia. He also attacks the obvious failings and contradictions in the Blairite programme: tying welfare to work while refusing to intervene to create jobs; giving the family more and more roles and responsibilities while insisting that everyone joins the labour market.

But how to take up the fight for genuine reform? Here the contributors are largely silent. A common theme is a plea for government intervention in the national and international economy. Hobsbawm and David Held make the now familiar argument that the global economy can and must be controlled through the use of state and supra-national institutions.

They repeat the thesis – printed weekly in Will Hutton's *Observer* columns – that the era of the neo-liberal consensus has had its day. At the same time, however, there can be no going back to the days of the mixed economy or of "state planned socialism". By this Hobsbawm means the Stalinist, bureaucratically planned economies of the old Soviet bloc, which he once defended.

But Hobsbawm and company can do little more than plead for a different government approach. They lay themselves wide open to attack from Geoff Mulgan, who defends New Labour pragmatism against this "ill-defined and fuzzy" big picture. The MT writers, he argues, have little concrete to propose. All their programme adds up to is "a bit more Keynesianism, a bit more redistribution, a bit less capitalism". He's right, if a little generous in attributing such coherence to the rag bag of ideas contained within MT.

This MT Special carries on a less than noble tradition. For all its self-promotion as "radical and innovative" in the 1980s, MT was swimming with, not against, the ideological stream. The Communist Party intellectuals and fellow travellers who ran it were repackaging their old reformist, Stalinised ideas for a new post-Cold War world. Now, they have discovered that capitalism's triumph has lasted less than a decade, and they hasten to add their voices to those who urge economic reforms. They speak for the "left wing" of the bourgeoisie that realises the need for controls on the global economy and is alarmed by the social consequences of growing inequality.

A number of contributors refer to the "unexpected" relevance of the *Communist Manifesto* in the year of its 150th anniversary. They should read it again, but this time more closely. Then they might just realise that while capitalism may stave off disaster this time round, the contradictions and stored-up crises within the capitalist economy are more than can be dealt with by any set of national or international controls. The relevance of the *Communist Manifesto* is that it points the way to the overthrow of the profit system, not its preservation.

When *Marxism Today* packed in we gave a hearty cheer. Its pages reeked of surrender masquerading as new thinking. Its one off revival caused a frisson of excitement in the liberal sections of the media, giving the journos something to chatter about in their columns and on their radio shows. It hasn't added anything to organising the fight against Blair and there isn't a shred of Marxism in it. But we cheered again when we learnt that it was really just a one off. No more, brother Jacques, please.

# workers POWER

## WHERE WE STAND

**CAPITALISM** is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

**THE TRADE UNIONS** must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

**OCTOBER 1917** The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

**SOCIAL OPPRESSION** is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

**IMPERIALISM** is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

**WORKERS POWER** is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary international (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

On Wall Street \$3.5 billion is given to bail out hedge fund; in Central America \$100 million to help 1.9 million homeless

# Hurricane Mitch misery: a man-made disaster

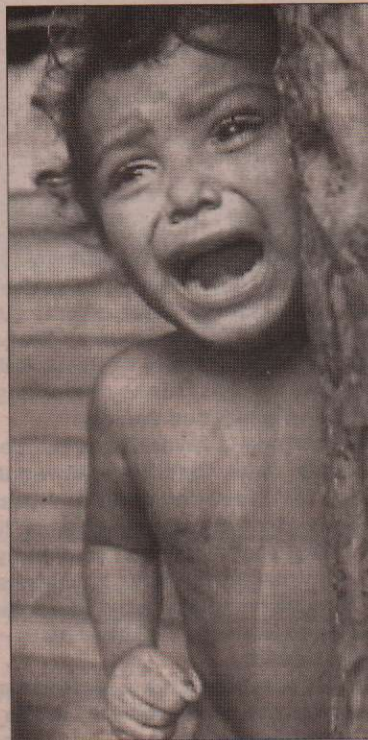
**H**URRICANE MITCH cut a swathe of death and destruction across Central America. Over 10,000 people died. Towns and villages, roads and bridges, hospitals and schools, were destroyed. An estimated 1.9 million are homeless.

The hurricane was widely reported as a natural disaster. But the scale of the loss of life was man-made. It is directly related to the vast numbers living in badly built homes in dangerous locations.

This is not, as some western journalists had the impudence to suggest, the fault of the poor themselves nor even the result of "third world corruption". It is the result of the cruel exploitation of these countries by the multinationals and the bankers. In rich regions, like the Caribbean coast of the USA, hurricanes cause far less damage and loss of life.

Imperialism builds infrastructures that suits its needs. In Central America, as in so many of the semi-colonies that imperialism exploits, the infrastructure is geared towards servicing its investments, not the needs or lives of the semi-colonial masses.

Honduras and Nicaragua are economically dependent on a few agricultural crops—produced for US multinationals. Banana and coffee plantations have been utterly destroyed. It will take years before they can produce again. Due



to low wages there was already a chronic lack of decent housing, water and sanitation. Unemployment and underemployment were rife and the majority of the population had no access to basic education and health services.

Despite the crying needs of the pop-

ulation before the hurricane, the lion's share of the region's wealth was not going towards improving this situation. The profits made in agriculture and industry ended up in the bank accounts of US and other Western multinational. On top of this, Nicaragua and Honduras were paying back foreign debt at the rate of \$1.3 million every day. This is what imperialism means to the daily life of the workers, peasants and the unemployed of the shanty towns.

It soon became obvious to all compassionate people that Nicaragua and Honduras could not dream of rebuilding after the disaster as long as they had to spend most of the region's wealth on debt payments. France and Spain unilaterally wrote off their debts but the US and Britain were much more prudent, offering only a short term suspension.

New Labour showed its true colours at once. Clare Short capped her remarks on the refugees from the volcanic eruption on Montserrat—"they will be asking for gold elephants next!"—snapping that debt relief was "an irrelevance".

Having recently bludgeoned the governments of Central America into austerity programmes the IMF will only let up on payments until the question goes out of the news again.

That is why the workers'

movement world-wide should demand a total and unconditional cancellation of all the debts immediately. More than this, a massive package of capital aid should be sent to these countries. When the hedge fund LTCM was threatened with bankruptcy a \$3.5 billion aid package was organised to rescue it. If the imperialists can find that sort of money to save the skins of a handful of profiteers, they can find a lot more to help rebuild the homes and lives of the thousands of victims of Hurricane Mitch.

Scientific and technical experts and skilled workers should be sent to help in the reconstruction, and improvement of the region's infrastructure. And it can all be paid for by confiscating the profits of those banks and firms who have benefited from the exploitation of Central America over the years.

Most importantly the workers and poor of the region must demand that their industry and agriculture no longer results in the wealth flowing to Wall Street or the City of London. They should force their governments to expropriate the main foreign companies that operate there. They should get rid of local rulers who collude with imperialism and establish workers' and peasants' governments that can really lift the masses from poverty and misery.

## CENTRAL AMERICA — A HISTORY OF REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

Throughout the twentieth century Central America has been dominated by the United States and its agricultural corporations like United Fruit.

Most of the wealth in the region has never been seen by the workers and peasants. Whenever the people resisted they faced fierce repression. The US has been swift to use force, either directly or indirectly. US politicians brazenly refer to Central America as their backyard.

One US officer, Major Smedley T Butler, memorably explained in 1935:

"I spent 33 years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military forces—the Marine Corps. And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short I was a racketeer for capitalism. Thus I helped make Mexico... safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank Boys to collect revenues in... I

helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American fruit companies in 1903... Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was operate his racket in three city districts. We marines operated on three continents."

This naked oppression was met with resistance. In Nicaragua a guerrilla army, led by Augusto Sandino, denied US troops an outright victory and, with increasing opposition at home, the US government decided to withdraw. It realised that another strategy was needed. The US State Department promoted local politicians and generals friendly to the US. Their security forces were given military aid and their officers received training in the US and in Panama.

The US established military bases in the region that could be used at any time. The CIA worked to destabilise governments "dangerous" to stability and was still

willing to invade if need be: occupying Grenada in 1983, Panama in 1989 and Haiti in 1994.

In 1979 Sandinista revolution overthrew the US-backed Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua. Washington was fearful that its business interests would be hit. It opposed any reforms that would lead to land and wealth redistribution. It was terrified that the civil wars in the neighbouring countries of El Salvador and Guatemala could lead to a further weakening of US influence and power in the region.

The Reagan government set about destroying Nicaragua. The poverty that the Nicaraguan people today suffer is a direct legacy of this. The US poured in funds to El Salvador in order to defeat the offensive by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Army.

When money is needed for such purposes it can be mobilised with lightning speed. But when it is a question of the suffering of the ordinary people then it is a very different story.

## FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 0181 981 0602

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### FUND DRIVE

Christmas is coming but the fund isn't getting fat. This month we only raised £163.50, taking our total to £1763.50. If we are to reach our £3000 target—which is the minimum needed to buy new technology—then donations are urgently needed. Use Christmas to hold fund raising parties and send us the proceeds—by cheque payable to Workers Power and marked fund on the back—to the address on the left.

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