

Workers power

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Number 173 December 1993

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

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

IRELAND - the real road to peace:

TROOPS OUT NOW!



"WE WILL never talk to terrorists." If Workers Power had a penny for every time the Tories uttered these words we'd never have to ask for your money again.

The "terrorists" in question were the IRA. From the day the Provisional wing of the Republican movement first took up arms against the British military occupation of Northern Ireland, workers were told they were murdering criminals, gangsters or lunatics who kill for sport.

Now the truth is out. The British government has been involved in "talking to terrorists", and for some time. The "forces of evil", it seems, could be negotiated with. High level links were established. Peace proposals were discussed.

The Tories are exposed as liars. Every worker should be asking themselves if they can trust a single word of the official explanations for the conflict that have been handed down over the years.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Self determination for the Irish people! For a 32 county Workers' Republic!

YRE CONFERENCE

Fight Racism! Fight for Socialism!

YOUTH AGAINST Racism in Europe (YRE) is holding its annual conference in London on 4-5 December. Hundreds of delegates, representing branches from Strathclyde to Southampton will be meeting to discuss the way forward for the campaign.

Since the YRE's European youth demonstration in Brussels last year, which saw 40,000 march against racism and fascism, the YRE has been active in the fight against the BNP in Britain. Demonstrations on 8 May and 16 October against the BNP headquarters in Welling showed that thousands of youth, black and white, are prepared to challenge the fascists head on and fight back against the police when they attack us.

Democratic

The conference provides a rare opportunity for the anti-racist movement to actually discuss and agree on a strategy for defeating the racists. Unlike the Anti-Nazi League, which does not even have local branch meetings, let alone a democratic national conference, the YRE enables young anti-racists to take part both in activity and in a discussion about the nature and aims of that activity. Instead of ideas simply being handed down from above, YRE branches can debate and plan their own policy and actions.

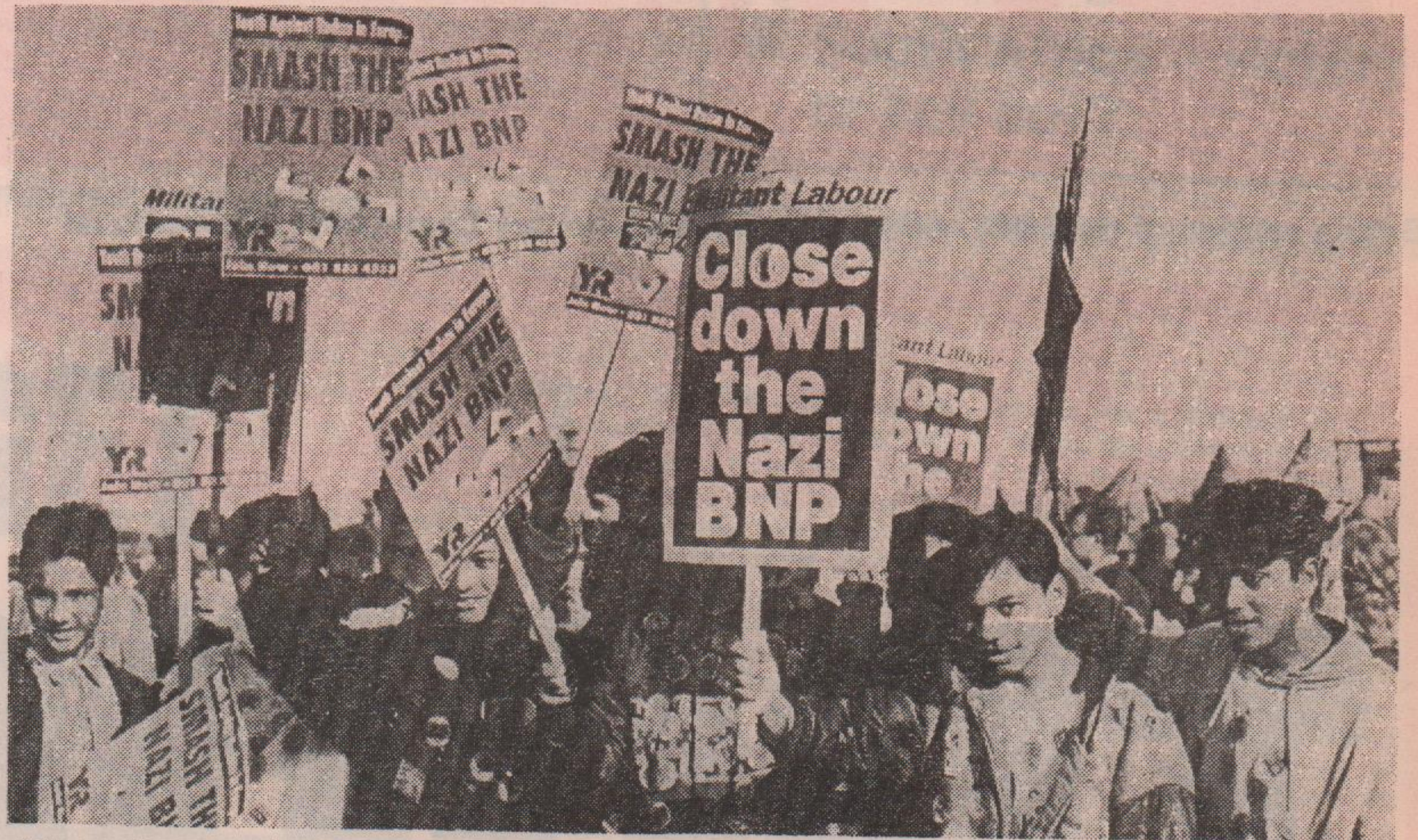
Young members and supporters of Workers Power have been participat-

ing in the YRE in a number of cities across the country—and comrades in other European sections of our international organisation, the LRCI, have also been taking part in the YRE in their own countries.

Our Austrian youth section, Internationalist Action, recently made a real impact at the YRE conference in Vienna earlier this year. They fought for the YRE to adopt the slogan "No to all Immigration Controls"—a crucial demand in view of the anti-immigrant hysteria being whipped up by the Austrian far-right—and succeeded in convincing a majority of the delegates to support the proposal, despite opposition from Austrian supporters of the newspaper *Vorwärts* (linked to Militant Labour in Britain), who opposed the slogan from the platform of the conference.

Workers Power's aim is to make a similar impact at the British YRE Conference. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of confusion from the YRE National Committee as to how the conference agenda is going to be structured. The agenda quite rightly gives over time for workshops on a range of subjects such as Ireland, the police and South Africa. But the agenda paper circulated in advance leaves almost no time for discussion of resolutions and amendments by the conference in full session.

There is an urgent need for a working conference. That is why Tower Hamlets YRE branch, on the initiative



of Workers Power members, has sent a motion to the conference calling for the second day to be given over in its entirety to debate and voting if necessary. Otherwise there is a real danger that delegates will not get a chance to hear and participate in a discussion on all of the issues in dispute.

The YRE has argued for the need to fight not only every instance of racism, but also the causes of racism, the conditions and the system that give rise to racism in the first place.

The National Committee has stated that the resolutions adopted by the conference will be used to make up a pamphlet by the YRE setting out its standpoint on a range of issues. That is why, in the absence of a draft platform circulated in advance by the YRE leadership, Workers Power is presenting to the conference a revolutionary programme, which links the fight against racism in Britain today to the struggle for socialism.

One of the most important issues facing the conference is the role and nature of the police, and how young people and the labour movement can fight back against them. The motion from Workers Power puts forward a clear position on this question:

"The police are racist to the core. They harass black demonstrations as well as workers' picket lines.

The YRE refuses to rely on the racist police to defend black people from racist or fascist attack. We reject the idea that the police force—which is an arm of the racist state—can be reformed or made accountable. The patrols organised by Bangladeshi youth in East London point the way forward.

The YRE will fight for the labour and trade union movement to actively support and assist all attempts of black people to organise their own defence. We will campaign for and initiate organised self-defence against police, racist and fascist attack. These groups must be properly trained and linked as closely as possible to the community and to the labour and trade union movement. We demand the release of all prisoners held for fighting back against racist violence and harassment."

Police

Militant Labour, the tendency which has the support of the majority of YRE members, opposes this approach. Instead its members are presenting a resolution which calls for "the democratic accountability of the police".

Some Militant Labour members say that they agree with Workers Power that the police force exists to defend the capitalists and their racist system, and that to defeat capitalism it will have to be broken up and replaced by a democratic militia made up of working class people. But, they argue, the slogan for police accountability is not in contradiction to this. It is simply a democratic demand, they claim, like the call to abolish non-jury courts or to elect the currently unaccountable judges and civil servants.

Workers Power does not oppose any single practical step that could weaken the effectiveness of the po-

lice in suppressing anti-racist or working class protest. We support all calls that extend the ability of the working class to resist the police. We oppose the Tories' intended removal of the powers that civilian local authority police committees have over the police. We argue that Labour local authorities should block funding to the police, and that police constables should have the right to organise against the upper ranks and the government.

But Militant Labour's slogan goes beyond this. It is not just a call for the extension of democratic rights: it actually holds out the dangerous idea that the police force—this police force—can be transformed into an accountable body. An article by Mike Waddington in *Militant* of 26 November 1993 dealt with the question of "democratic accountability".

Revolution

Waddington wrote, "We acknowledge the need for a police force but the question is what sort of policing we have." The answer he gave failed to mention the need to break up the police or even the very idea of the working class organising to defend its own communities. He even declares that "'dealing with the police' is a political question and not a physical one". As if you can have the one without the other! Countering the idea that it is wrong to use physical force to defend yourself against police attack—a lie which is spread by Labour and Tories alike—is a political issue.

Militant Labour members must draw the conclusions from this. The slogan of democratic accountability of the police is being used to push the idea that the police must be reformed rather than being smashed. It is a misleading slogan which the YRE should reject at the conference.

Instead delegates should learn the lessons of October 16 and the youth patrols in Tower Hamlets. The way forward is not the reform of the police, but organised defence against them, and the way to overcome racism once and for all is not to reform this rotten state, but to fight for its revolutionary overthrow.

Support Workers Power—the revolutionary wing of the YRE.

JAMES BULGER MURDER

Censorship is not the answer

JAMES BULGER died a horrible death. He was murdered by two young boys. Before killing him they subjected him to prolonged torture.

The cruelty of the two young murderers was staggering. Everywhere people are asking, "why did they do it?" The answer to this question, like the answer to the same question about the Moors murderers, about Peter Sutcliffe and many others, lies deep in the psyche of the killers themselves.

Their actions were abnormal, extremely abnormal. "Motiveless" murder is not a common crime. It is the exception. It is the product of deranged minds. It is a freak occurrence, making it all the more appalling when we read about it in the newspapers.

The horror of the case is intensified by the age of the children who killed James Bulger. Shakespeare's observation, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport", has passed into society's received wisdom about the tendency of children to be cruel.

Yet in this case we are not dealing simply with an excess of the spiteful behaviour that children can be prone to. We are dealing with an aberration, a qualitatively different viciousness that defies pat explanations.

Decay

Marxists are not oblivious to aberrations. While we recognise the increasing violence in modern society as a product of capitalism's decay, we do not believe that James Bulger's murder can be written off simply as

a result of this decay. Nor do we believe that it is the result of inadequate parenting or growing truancy. It has specific causes lodged in the disturbed psyche of its two perpetrators.

For the same reason we reject the arguments advanced by Judge Morland, and seized on by every right wing, pro-censorship, bigot in the land, that the actions of the two children can be understood because they watched a spoof horror video, *Child's Play 3*. Before passing sentence, Morland commented:

"I suspect that exposure to violent video films may in part be an explanation."

Too much sex and violence on the screen, echoed the Mary Whitehouse brigade, is causing the breakdown of society and the deaths of innocent children.

Evidence

The judge's remarks, and the support they have found on the right, are notable for one reason alone—they are not supported by a shred of evidence. The most the judge could muster was that one of the children may have seen his father's video of *Child's Play 3*. The father's evidence, that the child didn't watch the video and only watched cartoons, has been ignored.

Whether the children saw horror videos has nothing to do with this case. Millions of people, including children, watch all sorts of videos including depictions of violence. They do not go out and murder and maim after pressing the rewind button.

"Motiveless crime", of the most barbaric sort, has existed for centuries. About the only thing we can say for certain about Jack the Ripper is that he didn't watch any horror videos before committing his foul murders. The Moors murderers concocted their grisly schemes independently of what they watched.

The attempt to link this tragedy to screen violence is an attempt to find a scapegoat. Moral panics have become the modern equivalent of lynch mobs. A convenient target is blamed for evil and the bigots whip up a frenzy to get that target banned or burned.

Ignorance

Nobody is served by this ignorance except the bigots who want to restrict what we are allowed to watch and think. Certainly the Bulger family will not be comforted by a ban on video violence. Their lives have been blighted by real violence, not by a celluloid escapist version.

Besides, where is the line to be drawn? Mary Whitehouse has retired from the public stage. Sadly her ghost still haunts the world of broadcasting. For her *Tom and Jerry* encouraged violence while the Chuck Berry song *My Ding-a-Ling* encouraged mutual masturbation! The line she draws is clear—ban everything.

The moderate bigots, in both the Labour and Tory parties, are mumbling about banning some things. Why? They cannot prove that watching a horror movie, as opposed to watching *Tom and Jerry*, will provoke violent reactions. Their limited bans will be every bit as arbitrary as the Whitehouse line.

Because no line can be drawn between cause and effect here, we are against any censorship of films, videos or television screenings. The solution to murders, rape, child molestation will never be achieved by such repressive measures. ■

YRE National Conference
Saturday and Sunday 4 and 5
December 1993 South Bank
University Keyworth Street
London SE1
Delegation fees £5/£7
Nearest tube Elephant and
Castle

EDITORIAL

The real road to peace

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The official line, supported by Tories and Labour, was endlessly hammered home. The "men of violence" had to be defeated. For years this was the real goal of the British state.

No effort was spared. Thousands of troops and RUC officers on the streets of Northern Ireland subjected the supporters of the IRA to a daily routine of harassment and violence. Opponents of British rule have been interned without trial, imprisoned by non-jury courts and tortured by special interrogation units. Loyalist murder gangs have been given intelligence and weapons by the British state to conduct their wave of sectarian terror.

Republican prisoners who wanted nothing more than to be treated like any other prisoner of war, who wanted political status, used the only protest weapon available to them, the hunger strike. They were left to die, murdered in cold blood by Thatcher, with the full support of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Suspected "terrorists" have been systematically assassinated by SAS units or by RUC men operating a "shoot to kill policy". Irish people and nationalist sympathisers in Britain have suffered years of repression under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Even the voices of "terrorist" sympathisers have been banned from our television screens and radio waves.

The real issues of the war were never put before the British people. The time to redress the balance and answer the lies is long overdue.

The IRA are not "common criminals" or mindless "terrorists". They are volunteers in a guerilla army. They are waging a just war for democratic and national rights, against the occupation of their country by a foreign power. Their struggle has mass support from tens of thousands of working class anti-unionists in Northern Ireland.

British politicians and the press tell us that the IRA are fighting *against* democracy. They point out that the majority of citizens of Northern Ireland support the presence of the troops and want to remain part of the United Kingdom. But they never mention one little fact. The whole Northern Ireland state is an offence against democracy.

That state was created artificially by Britain when Ireland was partitioned. The border was fixed to guarantee a majority for the Protestants, even though historically Ulster has nine counties, not six. The whole state was set up with the aim of defending the privileges of the Protestant population, who discriminate against Catholics in jobs, housing and the provision of services. The whole Northern state is undemocratic to the core.

The Catholics are second class citizens, which is why they oppose the union with Britain in such vast numbers. They have been the victims of terror without end at the hands of the British army, which guaranteed the continued existence of the border on behalf of the Loyalist bosses and their British masters.

The IRA fought back. It was a just struggle for democracy and the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future without foreign interference. It was waged against the oldest imperialist power in the world.

But their politics were nationalist, not socialist. Their strategy was based on the foolish notion that a combination of urban guerrilla war and reformist community campaigning could dislodge the British troops. They ignored the one strategy that could have succeeded: mass working class struggle, linking the fight for national liberation and democracy to the fight for socialism.

But socialists share their aims of a united Ireland and an end

to British rule. That is why we do not criticise the IRA for struggling against British rule, but for the ineffectiveness of their chosen strategy. Our support for the IRA in their war with the British army is unconditional.

Now, after twenty five years of conflict, the British state itself is coming to the conclusion that it cannot win the war. The opposition of the anti-unionist population to its occupation remains firm. The cost of subsidising the Northern Irish economy, to ensure that Loyalist privilege and ascendancy is maintained, is enormous. The returns are slight. The cost of maintaining a military presence is a drain on funds that decrepit British capitalism can ill afford.

On the other side the IRA and Sinn Féin themselves no longer believe they can win the war. War weariness amongst their supporters has played a part in this. But most important has been the failure of their strategy. So their horizons have nar-



RUC kick and baton mourners at Republican Funeral

rowed. They are prepared to negotiate a deal short of ending the British occupation and re-uniting Ireland.

Of course there are many obstacles in the way of a peace deal between them and the British state. The Loyalist parties remain intransigently opposed to any concessions to the nationalist community. They are not willing to see the erosion of any of the marginal privileges that Protestant workers enjoy. The maintenance of the Orange block, the alliance between Protestant capitalists and workers which is key to preserving the wealth and power of the Loyalist bosses, would be threatened by such concessions.

Nor is the British state prepared to see a just peace come about. Any deal it considers will be one that preserves its key interests, at the expense of the anti-unionist masses.

But the very fact that the British government is talking to the IRA, the flurry of peace initiatives that are being debated, the declaration by Major that he wants to see a "political settlement" all point to a new situation. It may fall short of peace in the short term, but it could herald a period of peace negotiations.

The "terrorists" of yesterday will become the negotiators of today. This is not the first time the British state, obliged to reconsider its position in a foreign country, turns on its heels and sits down with its former sworn enemies.

Every worker shocked by the revelation of the current talks should take note of that. They should wake up to the fact that they have been lied to for 25 years. And they should learn never to trust their rulers again.

The beginning of that distrust must be now. Don't be fooled into believing that the historic oppressors of Ireland are about to become its liberators.

Many workers in Britain, for good reasons—wanting to see an end to a conflict that up to 1992 saw 3,000 die, and in 1993 has seen yet more deaths—will hope that a peace deal can be achieved. Stop, and ask yourself, can you trust a government that lies and cheats? Should you ask the anti-unionists who have sacrificed so much over the past 25 years, to trust Major?

The answer is self evident. This government wants peace, but only at its price. Such a settlement will never deliver a just and progressive peace in Ireland. To call on the government to solve the problem, by convening negotiations including Sinn Féin, as many workers will do and as Britain's largest left-wing organisation, the Socialist Workers Party has done, is a delusion.

Not only that, it is a diversion from the fight for a just and lasting peace. The chance for peace does not rely on the goodwill of John Major, or any other Tory. For the SWP to demand that Major should "immediately meet representatives of all sides" and bemoan the fact that he has "snubbed the one real chance of peace" is disgraceful. Major's (public) refusal to talk to the IRA is not the principal obstacle to peace any more than his (private) willingness to talk to them is the guarantee to peace.

We want peace in Northern Ireland. But we want a peace that will benefit the masses of Ireland, a peace that frees them from the age old yoke of British rule completely. John Major will not consider such a peace, because such a peace would be a defeat for British imperialism.

It would be a defeat because the conditions for such a peace would be the immediate and total withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and the right for the whole country to determine its future.

The right of the Loyalist minority to veto Irish self-determination would be abolished by such a peace. So too would the Orange block. Without the British troops to guarantee their ascendancy a differentiation of class interests in this block would rapidly develop. The conditions for genuine class unity across the communities would emerge.

That is the sort of peace we want. It is a peace that British workers can help achieve. Not by calling on John Major to open talks, but by building a mass movement to **get the British troops out now.**

Workers' action on a mass scale, by British and Irish workers—including all Protestants who can be broken from support for the sectarian state in Northern Ireland—should be mobilised against the British occupation.

Such action is a far surer path to a just peace than negotiations with John Major and his cabinet of liars, hypocrites and murderers. ■

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meetings

BIRMINGHAM

Palestine - PLO sell out?

Monday 13 December
7pm

see seller for venue

CARDIFF

Readers' group meetings

Fight for a workers' budget!

Wednesday 8 December
8pm

Cathays Community Centre
Cathays Terrace

LEICESTER

Where is Labour going?

Monday 13 December

8pm

see seller for venue

LONDON

Marxism and women's oppression

Wednesday 1 December
8pm

LSE Houghton St Room
X315

MANCHESTER

Readers' group meetings
South Africa—sellout or victory?

Wednesday 8 December
8pm

The state and revolution

Wednesday 15 December

7.30pm

see seller for venues

SHEFFIELD

Bolshie Broads—
women's discussion group

Ireland—the road to peace?

Tuesday 14 December
7.30pm

Sheffield Workers Power
Christmas Social

Saturday 18 December 8 till late

see seller for venues

OUT NOW

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN

Organ of the LRCI and the Communist Party (CP)

- News and the 1993 election campaign
- The LRCI's programme
- The CP's programme in Britain
- The LRCI's Party in Spain article
- Debate with the Labour Campaign for Communist International
- Britain, parliament, industry and the unions
- Why read for supporters of the Party? (by the LRCI)
- Jobs at the SWP: Trade union political education
- The LRCI's "New Britain" Review on New Zealand
- New Zealand and the Communist Banner
- Thanks for all articles mailed under other names
- How to get copies without charge



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AT A SERIES of meetings, including large rallies in Birmingham and Brixton, Labour MP Bernie Grant has continued his campaign for the voluntary repatriation of black people to Africa and the Caribbean.

His original call—issued at a fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party conference—met with hostility from black newspapers and anti-racist organisations. At first Grant seemed ready to retreat from his original comments (see *Workers Power* 172, November 1993). Now he has taken them up again with renewed force.

In the aftermath of the election of BNP councillor Derek Beackon on a platform calling for "repatriation" (deportation) of all black people from Britain, Grant stated that Enoch Powell had not been "entirely wrong" in his infamous speech declaring that black and white could never live together in peace. His call plays into the hands of the racists. Yet there were large numbers of black people present at Grant's rallies last month, and many supported his views. Why?

Grant dresses up his ideas in radical rhetoric. At the Brixton meeting he insisted that black people in Britain should fight back against racists and fascists, not just ignore them. He was loudly cheered for his justified scorn at groups, like the Anti Racist Alliance, which condemn black youth for resisting the police and Nazis.

But the entire tenor of the meeting was not only nationalist, but "Returnist". People arriving at the meeting found a leaflet on every seat from "Caricom International Plc" stating:

- "These are our options:
1. Live in fear of Ethnic Cleansing, Racial Attacks and Murder
 2. Wait to be deported or repatriated in shame
 3. Prepare to resettle with Pride and Dignity".

Resistance

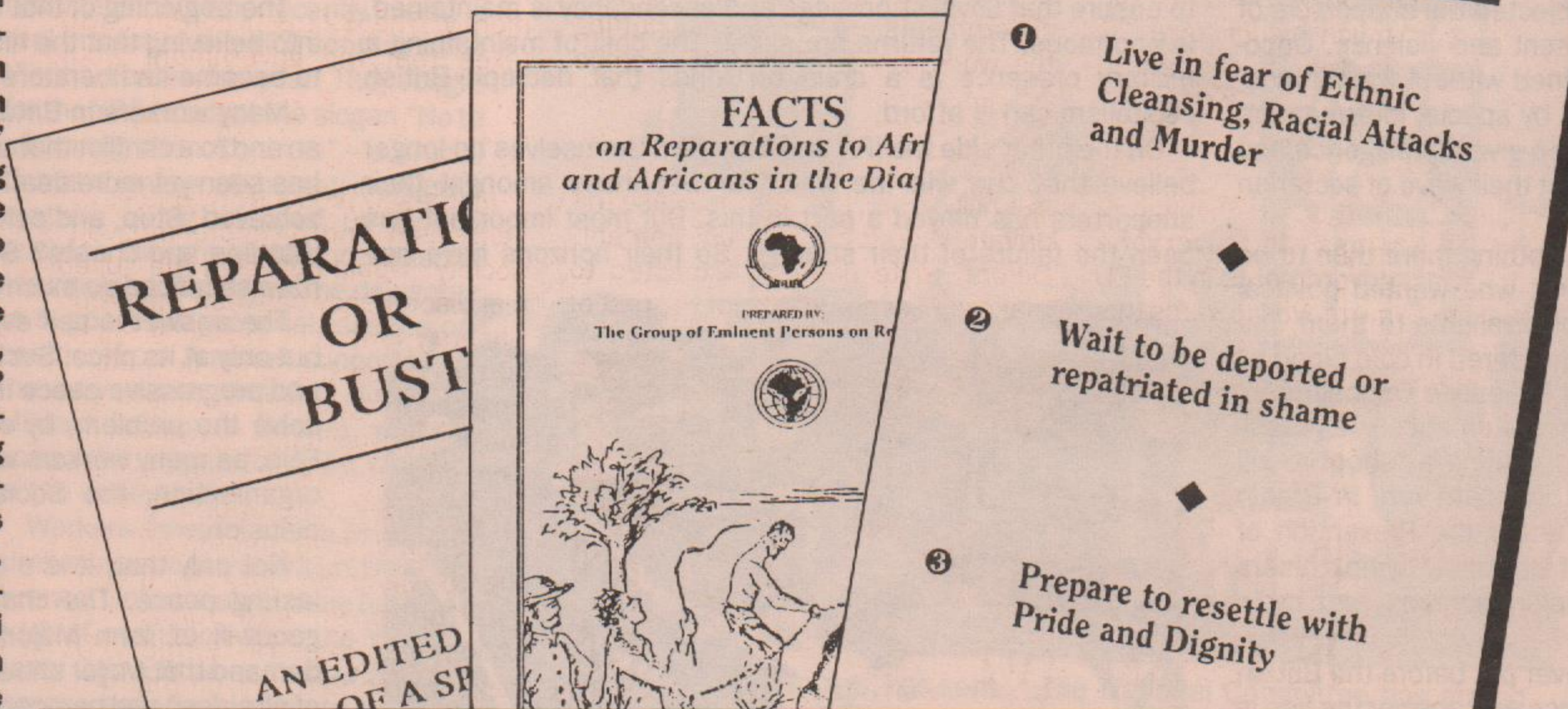
The very idea that racism can be fought, that black people's proud history of resistance to racism must be continued, that the racist state must be defeated rather than fled, is absent from this reactionary propaganda. In this way the "Returnists", including Caricom who stand to make a tidy profit from investing in resettlement programmes, rely on the strength of racism and draw succour from it to win support for their views.

These ideas were given support by Bernie Grant, who was backed by representatives of a range of religious and nationalist organisations invited to the meeting, such as the Nation of Islam and the Ethiopian World Federation.

Grant was able to play on very real fears. Some black people, after years of suffering racism, bad housing and unemployment in Britain, do want to leave. Grant dresses up his cam-

BERNIE GRANT AND REPARATIONS

A dangerous diversion



Not the only options

paigned as an appeal for rights and support for anyone wishing to do so. It is one thing to call for open borders, and for state subsidies to assist any working class people moving their residence, whether into Britain or out of Britain. It is another thing entirely to actively encourage black people to leave.

Why should they? The overwhelming majority—including those born in Britain and those born in Africa, the Caribbean or Asia—want to stay. They want equal rights and justice. They have as much right to them as anybody else.

Small wonder that Grant was able to report to the Brixton meeting how a leading Tory minister spoke to him in parliament "behind the Speakers' Chair", saying that the government are seriously considering many of his proposals. Small wonder that recent BNP leaflets tap into this with a call for repatriation "with generous grants" to help with resettlement.

Demagogy

The Nation of Islam, who were present at the Brixton meeting in force, made strident speeches declaring their intention to give physical defence and protection to Bernie Grant. But no-one should be fooled by their cynical demagogy. They never offered defence, or lifted a finger to defend the likes of Stephen Lawrence, Rolan Adams, Quddus Ali

BY RICHARD BRENNER

or any other victims of racist violence.

They have been absent from demonstrations against racial attacks and from marches against the fascists. But when Bernie Grant starts talking about black people leaving this country, they suddenly step forward with their radical talk about defence. What hypocrites!

If these reactionaries gain a hearing and a base among black youth it will not be a result of their bizarre religion. It will be because they talk tough, about self-defence and black pride. But what defence is there in running away and refusing to fight alongside the rest of the black population and the working class against racist attacks?

What pride is there in accepting the words of the "Muslim Programme" published in every issue of their paper *The Final Call*, that "intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited"? This is the policy of the most extreme and vicious white racists and fascist organisations.

What pride can there be in an organisation that spreads insane delusions, like the notion that the moon was invented by ancient Muslims and the white race was created by an evil Arab scientist? As if the true history of black people's struggle against oppression—a rich and revolutionary history which they studiously ignore—were not inspiration

enough!

But Grant's rallies have not just been playing the nationalist card on repatriation.

They have centred on the call for reparations to Africa, compensation that should be paid by Britain and the West for the historic crime of enslaving millions of African people.

Here Grant has made a clear indictment of imperialism, exposing and answering commonplace lies. His justified calls for the return of the priceless archaeological heritage stolen by the colonialists struck

a chord. But his speech revealed the utopian and diversionary character of the demand for reparations.

The call was addressed to John Major, the Queen and the United Nations to issue "an apology" for centuries of slavery and oppression. And as Grant himself admitted, what sum of money could adequately compensate for the crime of slavery? His call focused on negotiations between imperialism and bourgeois African politicians. Will money paid to pro-imperialist African regimes be put to service in the interests of the masses? What good will Grant's demand that the Crown Jewels be given to Nelson Mandela do the sixty million facing starvation in sub-Saharan Africa?

The fight for cancellation of the third world debt, which Grant has backed, is a vital one to help free Africa and the whole of the semi-colonial world from the shackles of imperialism. That cannot be achieved by negotiations with the Queen, Major or the multi-nationals and banks. It will be achieved through revolutionary working class struggle.

Obstacle

Private property in the means of production and distribution is the main obstacle to satisfying the needs of the impoverished masses in Africa. Yet private property is the one thing the nationalists will never speak out against.

No single negotiated payment or investment by imperialism can compensate for the immensity of the crime of slavery. When the masses of Africa have taken the investments and property of the imperialist banks and companies into their own hands, then the wealth of the future will be opened to them.

That is the real compensation that the working class and poor peasantry of the world must have in their sights. Bernie Grant's nationalist campaign is a dangerous diversion from that struggle. ■

Capital chaos

LONDON'S NEWSPAPER, the *Evening Standard*, had a front page banner headline: "Enough is Enough". The *Independent on Sunday* carried an editorial, "London is a disgrace".

Chaos on the London Underground got these two pillars of capitalism in a frenzy. A power failure on the Central Line in late November paralysed the capital's transport system. Passengers were trapped in crowded compartments for hours on end. Then they had to walk through tunnels to get out. Thousands of people couldn't get to work. The roads were snarled up with traffic.

The immediate cause for concern was not a one off power failure. This was just a dramatic example of the mess that is London.

London Underground—bus cutting staff and safety precautions—was told by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1991 that it needed £750 million a year subsidy to provide "an acceptably modern network". It has received a total of £532 million in three years. It is collapsing under the strain. Another tragedy, like the Kings Cross fire of 1987, is waiting to happen.

Meanwhile the entire London economy suffers because people cannot get to work on time. Transport isn't the only problem. The ambulance system is in a dangerous state of disrepair. The fire service is overstretched. The much vaunted Docklands' Development has created a wasteland. The inner city areas are starved of funds. Violent crime is soaring.

The Tory answer to this is more cuts and privatisations. It will mean more chaos.

The one thing the Tories will not consider is the reintroduction of an elected authority for London. They fear democracy. They don't want an elected authority to interfere—however slightly—with their carve up of the capital.

The furthest they are prepared to go is to appoint former minister for mad cow disease, John Gummer, as a new minister for London. It is doubtful whether this chauffeur-driven toff has ever been on public transport in his life. His scheme for London doesn't involve any democracy or any spending on working class people's real needs. It is a questionnaire, to be sent to 250,000 people in London (a fraction of the population) asking for their ideas on how to improve the capital. The questionnaire is called "Making the Best Better".

There is a simple answer to London's immediate problems—a crash programme of public spending to create jobs, repair the infrastructure, provide adequate services and produce a modern transport system that won't break down because of electric cables dating from early this century. To really meet the needs of the majority and not the profits of a few, such a programme should be under the democratic control of workers in the industries concerned and the working class communities.

Meanwhile if you live and London and get a questionnaire, send it back to Gummer with an unparliamentary reply. ■

One law for the rich

LAST MONTH Neil Kennedy hanged himself in his cell in Holme House prison, Teeside. He had been jailed for not paying a poll tax debt of £250. He was willing to pay, but the judge refused to accept the instalments he offered.

George Heron, from a working class estate in Sunderland, was cleared of the murder of a young girl after the court found that his confession followed four days of interrogation. Apart from his confession, there was not a single shred of evidence against him. George had to spend thirteen months inside on remand before he was cleared. Thousands more, many of them innocent, rot on remand.

A working class mother only es-

BY CHRIS BRYANT

caped jail for a £55 TV licence fine last month because the staff in the court had a whip round to rescue her.

Working class youth await trial, some on serious charges, for their defence of the 16 October demonstration in Welling. And the Home Office sets about building another 2,000 prison places over the next eighteen months.

Amidst all of these examples of class law at work there is at least one person who claims to be "a great believer in British justice".

It is hardly surprising. Mr Roger Levitt, a former financial services magnate, was convicted after plead-

ing guilty to fraud. When his former company collapsed with £34 million debts three years ago, the finger pointed at Levitt.

He did not spend three years on remand but the judge did ensure justice was done. Levitt's co-defendant and right hand man, a Mr Reed, was sentenced to 120 hours community service. Levitt, the multi-million pound fraudster, was sentenced to 180 hours community service.

Levitt greeted his sentence by announcing to the press that he was off to a champagne lunch to celebrate. He added that he was borrowing the money from a friend to pay for the bubbly. He has never heard of Neil Kennedy. ■

Cut the hours, not the jobs!

BRITISH WORKERS put in the longest hours in Europe, nearly 44 hours per week on average. Britain also has the highest proportion of part time workers (about 25%) in Europe.

This means many workers put in enormously long hours to maintain the dubious privilege of keeping us at the top of the hours league table. Two and a half million workers do more than 48 hours per week.

We all know about the junior doctors who put in ninety hour weeks but the problem is not restricted to health care. In manufacturing, particularly in the small and medium sized firms, ten to twelve hour days for six days a

week are commonplace. Only one third of us actually work a "normal" eight hour day and five day week.

That does not mean that everything is rosy in Europe. Despite shorter hours in other European Union (EU) countries, unemployment still blights the continent. In the EU there are, officially, 18 million on the dole. The real figure is much higher, over 20 million—one in ten of the entire workforce.

You don't need a degree in maths to see the sense in the Italian workers' slogan "lavorare meno, lavorare tutti"—"work less and everyone works". Most governments in the EU are making some moves towards this

BY CHRIS BRYANT

solution. Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission, is producing a white paper which includes the aim of cutting unemployment by half in the next six years.

This calls for some pretty drastic action. Both the French and German governments are considering cutting the working week. In 1996, France will cut the working week from a five day 39 hour week to a four day 33 hour week. They expect this to create two million new jobs and increase the private workforce by ten percent. Delors' white paper is expected to make similar proposals for the rest of

Europe.

What's this? Are the French bosses finally giving the workers "something for nothing"? Of course not. They have done their sums and worked out that these moves, tied in with at least a five percent reduction in pay, with tax cuts and incentives to encourage private companies, will actually save money. The \$21.8 billion in payroll taxes that the government would shoulder will be more than compensated for by a \$27.5 billion saving in benefit payments.

Increased productivity, a fall in absenteeism and a "more motivated society" would outweigh the superficial discrepancy between the proportionately lower cut in wages relative to the cut in the working week. Increased productivity simply means making us work harder for less money. This sort of cut in the working week will mean we will be worse off.

European governments are following the lead of "forward thinking" multinational companies like Volkswagen, based in Germany. They have presented an ultimatum to 100,000 workers: work a four day week with a 20% cut in pay or face massive job cuts.

Motive

A boss at another multinational, Hewlett Packard, told workers at the Grenoble plant, "... either change working habits or we relocate to Singapore and all the jobs will be lost". This shows the real motive behind the move towards lower hours.

The workforce is not seen as flexible enough. Only about two-thirds of European manufacturing plants work to capacity. More workers putting in shorter hours on a flexible basis allows plant and machinery to be used to its maximum capacity.

Although the European capitalists are divided on legislation restricting the working week, Delors' measures will probably go through at December's EU summit. The only major spoiler is the British government.

Fresh from sabotaging directives from EU ministers that would guarantee three month's unpaid parental leave for men and women after the birth of a child, they are getting ready for a fight on the question of working hours.

In November Britain was formally tied by European law to guaranteeing mandatory time off and a 48 hour limit on the working week. Through a ministerial manoeuvre, Britain was denied its usual veto but has still managed to win ten and seven year opt-outs from this legislation.

Reversed

David Hunt, the British Employment secretary, is now trying to get the decision reversed in the European Court. One European diplomat responded to Hunt's moves by accusing Britain of "living in the Stone Age". Another said that:

"Any kind of standards are anathema to them. It's ideology rather than content, it's the word 'social' that offends."

He is wrong. What is at stake is not a fundamental divergence of interests between Britain and the rest of Europe, but different strategies for increasing the exploitation of workers. This is what they mean when they talk about increasing productivity.

A particularly nasty editorial in the *Economist* explains the logic behind the thinking of some of the European bosses. Arguing for shorter working hours with proportional pay loss, it suggests that employment would be higher were it not for over-generous

social benefits and minimum wages. It states:

"... if shorter hours and longer holidays reduced unemployment, Europe would now enjoy the world's lowest unemployment. West Europeans work on average 10% fewer hours each year than Americans, and 20% fewer than Japanese. Yet the EC's unemployment is 11%, America's 7% and Japan's 3%... shorter hours will create new jobs only if workers accept less pay."

Logic

By this logic, because Britain has the longest working hours in Europe, no effective wage protection (John Major abolished the Wages Councils last year), and has less statutory public holidays, then surely Britain should have the lowest proportion of unemployed in Europe. It hasn't.

All of the European governments have enormous spending problems. Most believe that reducing the working week is worth it in terms of reduced benefits. The British government's strategy is to attack benefits directly and increase productivity through minimal government regulation of employment, with the obvious exception of stringent controls on the unions. This is why they have now decided to raise the pensionable age of women to 65 for a paltry saving of £3 billion.

Revolutionaries raise the call to cut the working week in the face of unemployment. Unlike the European governments and the social democratic parties we argue that this should be done with no loss of pay. Immediately the working week should be reduced across Europe to thirty-five hours.

We fight for all available work to be shared amongst the workforce, guaranteeing everybody's job, with no loss in pay.

Sliding scale

In addition we fight for a sliding scale of hours; for every increase in unemployment, the working week should be shortened so that everyone can work. The bosses claim they can't afford this. What they really mean is that they are afraid it would eat into rates of profit. We demand an end to business secrecy. We are the people who produce the wealth, we have a right to demand that business opens its books.

If it is found that any firms simply could not continue with a substantial cut in hours, they should be immediately nationalised under workers' control.

To fight for these demands we need strikes and occupations of threatened firms and factories. Workers' action, not legislation from Europe's bosses and bureaucrats, is the way to win a cut in the working week.

We link this action to the political fight to demand that Labour pledges itself to implementing the 35 hour week, with no loss of pay, if it gets into office.

Demand

John Smith supported the European social democratic manifesto calling for a watered down version of this demand. When he got back to Britain all the Tories attacked him.

Instead of fighting his corner Smith immediately backed away from the manifesto pledge, declaring that legislation on working hours was not "part of the British tradition". Really? What about the Factory Acts in the nineteenth century that cut hours and gave some protection to women and children, John? ■



Spanish Volkswagen workers repond to job cuts

CIVIL SERVICE

All out against privatisation

LAST MONTH over a quarter of a million civil servants stuck two fingers up at the government. Their 90% solid one day strike on November 5th made a mockery of the idea that British workers are unwilling or unable to take strike action. Pickets and rallies all over the country showed that public sector workers will fight back.

The successful ballots for strike action were in themselves a tremendous victory for activists on the ground. These were the first strike ballots to be held under the rules of the new Trade Union Reform and Employment Act. We had to organise a whole month of meetings and bulletin writing just to offset the atomisation caused by the postal ballot. A consistent turnout and "Yes" vote of over 60% and the militant pickets showed the reservoir of grassroots anger that could transform the civil service unions.

The strike was called against the government's market testing programme. Market testing is the new buzz word for privatisation. Already at least seven thousand civil service jobs have been lost as the most profitable chunks of government departments have been hived off to the Tories' friends or cut to the bone to make them attractive commercial packages. Ross Perot's com-

BY AN NUCPS MEMBER

puting empire, EDS, has recently won contracts for the work of the driving licence centre, DVOIT, and the Inland Revenue computing centres. In the coming months many thousands more jobs will go in the same way unless November's strike can be built on. As we came out William Waldegrave announced that another 35,000 of us are earmarked for the dole.

Militants in the civil service unions will have to hold their leaders to account and make sure last month's fireworks are not allowed to fizzle out. Nothing could be heard on November 5th from the leaders of the civil service unions about where the campaign is to go now. Only the next day did Barry Reamsbottom, the right wing General Secretary of the CPSA, mutter something about "another day of action in the spring".

This is worse than useless. It is sabotage. The stakes are high. We desperately need to oust Reamsbottom, Sheldon of the NUCPS and the other leaders who are refusing to take the fight for jobs and conditions forward. Yet the left in the unions are less organised and more divided than they have been for over a decade.

The recent conferences of the

CPSA and NUCPS Broad Lefts and the cross union Civil Service Campaign Against Market Testing have all been poorly attended and emerged with confused strategies. Workers Power supporters have been arguing consistently for all-out indefinite strike action, against market testing, the 1.5% pay limit and next year's pay freeze. This should involve putting demands on the leaderships and fighting for indefinite strike action from below.

Others, like Militant Labour, argue for a programme of selective and one day actions, sometimes linking this to the call for an indefinite strike sometime in the future.

The folly of this approach is clear. A painful six month long selective strike lost in 1981. Nine days of strike action in ten years have failed to win trade union rights at GCHQ. Most recently, leading Militant supporter, Amanda Lane is still sacked, victimised for organising solidarity strike action. A magnificent one day Bristol wide strike has not seen her re-instated.

The fight for an indefinite strike remains the key. We should not wait for national agreement on action. Successful local actions which would mean breaking the balloting laws will give a massive impetus to the fight for national indefinite action. ■

Family crisis

OVER THE past year we have seen growing hysteria over the "collapse of the family" and "moral degeneration" in society. It reached new depths at the Tory party conference.

Politicians and the press place the blame for all of society's evils, including the tragic killing of James Bulger, on this "crisis". The attack on single mothers has been the main emphasis, but families in general are, supposedly, allowing this moral collapse to happen.

Thatcher launched the crusade with her call for a return to Victorian family values. What we need is "a return to old, common sense British values", echoes John Major. But this is more than an old-fashioned populist rallying call.

There really is a crisis. It is not just financial. There is a contradiction between growing demands on women in the family to take on welfare and caring roles and the increasing role that women play as waged workers.

The Tories are trying to reduce state provision in health care and general welfare. But at the same time the "classical" method of filling the resulting gap—women doing more of that work for free at home—is in contradiction with the growth of women in the workplace.

Benefits

Essentially the Tories would like the community (families) and relatives (women) to take back responsibility for the welfare of others. State funded services would then act only as a fall back. This means abolishing universal entitlement to benefits.

Tory policy on this has been explicit and carefully carried out over the past decade. At the level of reducing public spending on welfare it has not been a great success, because the recession led to higher unemployment and lower tax revenues, pushing up state spending and public borrowing. But there have been big shifts—a central part of the Thatcher "social revolution"—in who takes responsibility for welfare.

In 1983 Thatcher's Family Policy Group discussed ways of increasing parental responsibility for the actions of children. This was later reflected in legal changes, with plans "to encourage families to resume responsibilities taken on by the state, for example responsibility for the disabled, the elderly and unemployed eighteen year olds".

They have made great "progress" on this. Sixteen to eighteen year olds have lost almost all entitlement to state benefit. They are forced to remain dependent on families or live in the most desperate and degrading poverty.

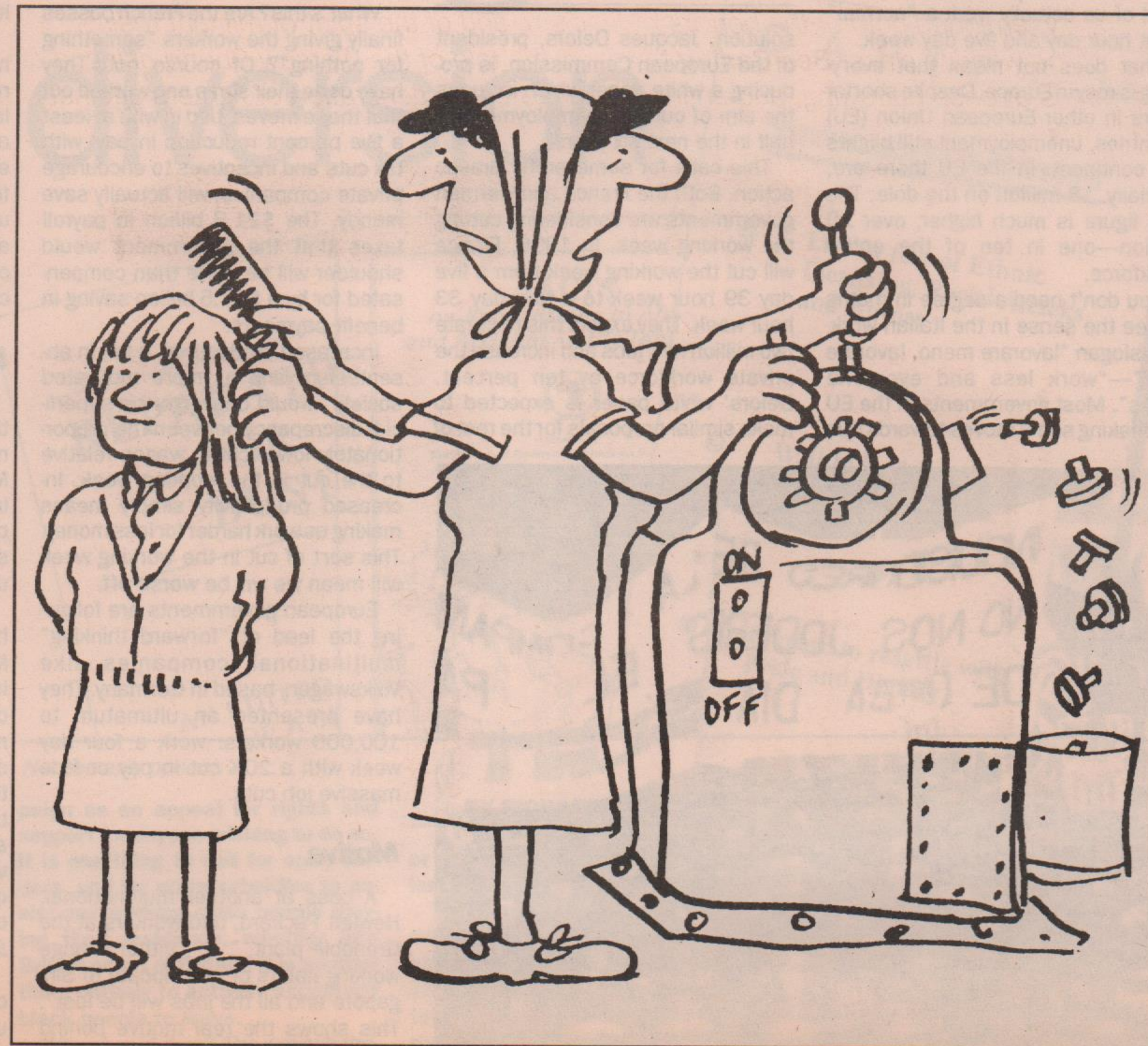
Responsibilities

A growing number of people are looking after elderly and disabled relatives at home—6.7 million last year. Childcare has become a costly responsibility for individual families. State nurseries and after-school clubs have closed, shifting a huge burden onto parents.

Parents of pre-school children pay 4.5 times as much for childcare as they did 11 years ago. Women pay an average of £1.10 towards childcare for every hour they work. Single mothers, the majority of whom earn less than £100 a week, spend £24.60 a week on childcare.

Costs for prescriptions, dental and eye care have also shifted responsibility onto individual families. Local authorities have almost stopped building new houses and millions have become home owners—responsible not only for unpredictable mortgage payments but also for all their own repairs and maintenance which would previously have been done by local authorities and private landlords.

The latest scam, the Child Support Act, is yet another way the govern-



Better a "welfare society" than a "welfare state", argued social security minister Peter Lilley. But behind that fatuous soundbite is a serious policy.

Lilley wants to make people take more "responsibility" for their own welfare—such as private pensions and insurance against sickness—so that the government can cut pensions, invalidity benefit and eventually child benefit.

But this is not just a debate about resolving a cash crisis. Underpinning it is another strategic issue for the ruling class—the role of the family, writes Helen Watson.

ment is shifting costs back onto the working class. By pursuing absent parents and making them pay towards their children the Tories are saving on their own budget, not helping the single mother or the child. The CSA has a target of chasing up £530 million from absent parents this year. The treasury will get £480 million of this, while only £50 million goes to the single mothers and their children.

The Tories plan to make an even greater shift over the next few years. They want to:

- abandon state pensions for all those currently under 40 years old
- introduce more charges for health care
- reduce state payments to employers for sickness benefits (i.e. cut sickness benefits)
- cut universal entitlement to child and invalidity benefits.

These policies, and the language used by the Tories to describe them, sound like an attempt to turn the clock back to some earlier era when children didn't go around playing truant and murdering toddlers, when violent crime was rare and we all lived in nice supportive families without child abuse or domestic violence. Aside from the fact that no such age has ever existed in capitalist society, is it possible that there could really be a reversal in the "decline" of the family?

There has been a real transformation in the family over the last two decades. More people are getting divorced and fewer are getting married. More children are born to unmarried mothers (30% last year).

Twenty per cent of families have one parent only. In families with children and married parents 63% of the mothers work. The family with Dad working and Mum staying at home to look after the kids is no longer the norm.

The most dramatic change has been the increase in women's work outside the home. Between 1971 and 1991 the proportion of married women who worked increased from 50% to 71%. This is part of a general trend that has been taking place since the post-war period; the proportion of all women working has doubled between 1951 and 1991.

There are two million more women in jobs and 2.8 million fewer men than twenty years ago. The proportion of men with full time jobs declined from 93% in 1971 to 75% in 1991. In some parts of the country, such as South Wales and South London, the rate of employment is higher for women than men.

What hasn't changed for women is the amount of domestic work or responsibility they are expected to take on within the family.

Much of the increase is due to a shift to part time and flexible working. Three million full time jobs have disappeared since 1971, and now 28% of jobs are part time, mostly done by women.

These changes are the result of many factors. Divorce, abortion and contraception were all made easier to get in the 1960s. More women have gone into further and higher education. There has been legislation on equal pay and equal opportunities, and while women have

achieved neither of these goals in reality, they have certainly seen their lives transformed compared with those of their mothers and grandmothers.

Has this transformation been an advance for women? There is no doubt that there are more opportunities for women to earn money, and for a few women to develop professional careers and relative independence. Improved contraception has allowed for better control over reproduction, and working has meant more social contact outside the home and school.

But for the majority of working class women these changes have been contradictory. Their work has not provided enough pay for them to be fully independent or allow them to choose whether to live independently. Almost all single mothers receive state benefits regardless of whether they work or not because most women's wages are not enough to survive on.

What hasn't changed for women is the amount of domestic work or responsibility they are expected to take on within the family.

Despite all the talk about the "new man" who hovers at the weekend or changes the occasional nappy, there has been hardly any increase in the number of hours men contribute to the running of the home. Going out to work when you have small children creates big problems of childcare, especially when women are expected to organise it as well as run a "happy home".

"Quite simply it seems to me that by far the most far-reaching change in modern society is that the family is

not considered to be so important as it used to be, and it is because of this that we have in our midst so many suffering, unhappy and delinquent children... legislation regulating the working hours of mothers of school age children is one of the most urgent reforms required for the creation of good homes."

That was written by a London magistrate in the 1950s, reflecting a similar panic about the family in the aftermath of the Second World War. Women were thrown out of the jobs they had taken on during the war, nurseries were closed and women urged to become "good mothers". The welfare state, as planned by Beveridge, enshrined this model. Women were seen as dependent upon a male breadwinner, and welfare was regarded as supporting, rather than in any way replacing, the family.

Exploitation

But capitalism's demand for greater exploitation of the working class, combined with a decline in traditional manufacturing, mining and other industries with predominantly male workforces, contradicted that social policy and still does. Women were employed in Thatcher's free market economy because they were and are cheaper and more flexible, often working on temporary contracts and with fewer entitlements to employment protection.

The family is now the focus of the Tory agenda. They want to bolster it as the answer to all social evils. But they are putting increased demands on the family which are in real contradiction to the role of women in society.

The German socialist Clara Zetkin wrote in 1889:

"... the natural tendency of women's work is either to reduce the working hours that every individual must render to society or to augment the wealth of society..."

She was correct, but under capitalism that increased wealth is appropriated by the ruling class, including women, who use it to employ other women to reduce their own domestic burdens. It is not used to meet the needs of the majority of the working class—women or men.

What is the answer? If women are to continue to be drawn into production and social life and have more opportunities, we need to fight for an alternative to the family for the provision of all domestic labour, from childcare through to cooking.

Provide

Of course Marxists are not fighting to take children away from their parents and force everyone to eat in soulless canteens serving tepid versions of school dinners. But we do want society to provide people with something the Tories claim to stand for but can never deliver: real choice and real opportunity.

The **socialisation of domestic labour**—under the democratic control of working class people—could free women workers from their double burden in this society, and provide quality childcare, quality education, quality leisure facilities and a good choice of cheap and varied state cafes and restaurants.

It sounds good. But how to get it? We have to start from the struggle that millions are crying out for, against Tory attacks on the welfare state, benefits and the living standards of ordinary people. The battle against the destruction of the welfare state must be developed through local committees of workers—women and men, in the factories, offices and homes—into a fight for the extension of welfare and services under our own control, not the control of unelected boards and civil servants. This means fighting for a socialist system based on planning for need, not the profit-driven chaos of capitalism. ■

AT THE beginning of 1941 the Warsaw Jewry numbered 300,000, the second largest in the world. By the end of September 1943 this community had been wiped out. The vast majority were murdered by the Nazi butchers as part of Hitler's "final solution to the Jewish problem".

It was the end of a community that had existed in Poland for hundreds of years. By 1914 it was 38% of the population of Warsaw. With the depression of the 1930s the economic and political status of the Jews went into decline: anti-semitism was growing among sections of the Polish population, as it was across Europe.

This led to a rapid political polarisation in the Jewish community. Two major wings developed: Poale Zion (the Lovers of Zion) were the left Zionists, forerunners of modern Labour Zionism. They grew at the expense of the right-wing Revisionist Zionists. There was also the Bund, then a larger tendency, secular Jewish socialists who had emerged from Russian Social-Democracy. The Bund's popularity grew to the extent that it was elected to the "Kehilla", the Jewish community leadership.

From these two wings the youth movements, which became the vanguard of the resistance to the Nazis, emerged. As German imperialism blitzkrieged Poland on 1 September 1939 these organisations could only watch helplessly. Within a few days the victorious German troops marched through the streets of Warsaw. By November the first decrees were made public to carry through Hitler's statement of January 1939:

"I wish to prophesy again today. If the international monied Jewry within Europe and beyond again succeeds in casting the peoples into a world war the result will not be the Bolshevisation of the globe and a victory for Jewry but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

Before the sealing of the Ghetto in November 1940 there were hundreds of oppressive measures imposed against the Jews. Jewish assets in excess of 2,000 zlotys were expropriated, no Jew was allowed to earn more than 500 zlotys per month, no Jew was allowed to bake bread—so it went on, all with the intention of breaking the will of the Jews.

Collective punishment for disobedience of these trivial laws would often be administered. For example, in the first days of November 1939, 53 men were taken from an apartment block and shot on the grounds that one tenant in the house had beaten up a Polish policeman.

To facilitate these measures the Nazis cynically ordered the establishment of a Jewish council of elders, known as the Judenrat, and a Jewish police force to administer their decrees and wishes. Resentment grew towards the Judenrat and those who were doing the Nazis' dirty work for them.

By March 1940 there were vicious pogroms by 1,000 Polish youth, who were being paid four zlotys a day by the German air corps to beat up Jews. For three days they rampaged unchecked, but on the fourth day the Bund militia carried out revenge actions which resulted in four pitched street battles. These were highly organised actions. Yet no other Jewish group would participate on the grounds that it would only provoke a backlash from the occupying troops. This reflected the initial reluctance to fight by many bourgeois and petit-bourgeois political groups.

By November 1940, the Germans had sealed off the Ghetto with a wall of brick and barbed wire. Conditions rapidly degenerated. The number of people concentrated in each room reached an average of 9.2. Starvation took its grisly toll. Typhus and yellow fever spread amongst the undernourished population. At one point the monthly mortality rate reached 6,000. The hospitals could not cope—

WARSAW RISING 1943

The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was an extraordinary example of working class heroism. The resistance of a few hundred poorly armed Jews against the armed might of the Waffen SS rebuts the filthy liars who tell us that the Jewish masses acquiesced in the face of Nazi oppression. Fifty years on, with anti-semitism on the rise in Europe and with openly Nazi parties winning support in Russia, Italy, Germany and Britain, we need to be constantly reminded both of the horrors of fascism, and of the spirit of militant resistance of the working class. Ben Caring takes up the tale of the Warsaw Ghetto rising, a tale that is at once harrowing, and an inspiration to a new generation of fighters against fascism.★



"I decided to destroy the entire Jewish residential area by setting every block on fire" — Himmler on the Warsaw Ghetto

Through the smoke of the ghetto

the Nazis held back supplies and medicines. Soon corpses littered the streets.

Despite these miserable conditions the community demonstrated its ingenuity and will to survive. An army of smugglers risked their lives every night crossing the fences to bring in food. Women played a particularly important role in this. Schools were set up, theatre groups established, tenants' councils repaired and maintained buildings. Soup kitchens were set up to feed the starving.

In 1941 news came that 40,000

Marek Edelman, a Bundist and commander of the Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ZOB—Jewish Fighting Organisation) describes in his book *The Ghetto Fights* how Ukrainians, hand picked for their allegiance to Hitler, rammed people into train carriages with their rifle butts, and fired indiscriminately to get people to move into the carriages.

Within two days 60,000 people were deported to Treblinka. By September 1942, after continuous deportations only 60,000 Jews remained. Conditions in the Ghetto now

The ZOB now carried out assassinations of Jewish collaborators alongside propaganda work. The assassinations were often carried out by infiltrating the Jewish police. They lifted the spirits of the Ghetto enormously.

By the end of December 1942, the ZOB received the first transport of weapons from the Polish Home Army—just 10 pistols. These enabled the ZOB to prepare its first major action for 22 January 1943. But before they could act, the Ghetto was surrounded again on the 12 January. The

"Those who were killed had done their duty to the end, to the last drop of blood that soaked into the pavements of the Warsaw Ghetto. We who did not perish leave it up to you to keep the memory of them alive for ever."

Jews from Lodz, 40,000 Jews from Pomerania and several hundred gypsies from Bessarabia had been gassed at Chelmo. The following year word came that the entire Lublin Jewish ghetto had been liquidated. Just as this news was coming in the Nazis perpetrated a massacre of political activists on the eve of the Sabbath of 12 April, 1942.

In July 1942, the Judenrat were told to instruct all unproductive Jews (all those who were unable to work excessively long hours of manual labour) to gather at the Umschlagplatz—the train station that was the gateway to Treblinka.

We can only have an inkling of the horror of the next two days' events.

were grindingly oppressive and at last in October 1942 the ZOB was finally formed. It comprised battle units from all of the youth movements; the Bund, the Communists, the left and centre Zionists. Only the Revisionist Zionists—who formed their own organisation and were wiped out in two days after the fighting began—refused to join.

The Ghetto was divided into three key areas of command. At first—astonishingly—they had only one gun between all of them, despite attempts to obtain arms of the Polish underground resistance. This proved virtually impossible due to the scant availability of arms generally, not just within the Ghetto.

second liquidation had begun.

This time the Nazis could not do as they pleased.

Four units of the ZOB dug themselves into bunkers at the corner of Mila and Zamehafa and fired on the gathering troops. After a brave battle the best part of the ZOB units were lost, although their commander, Mordechai Anielewicz, survived. They realised after this defeat that they would have to employ more partisan techniques.

One of the battle groups was captured and taken to the station to be deported. A man called Pelc addressed the group and his words were so effective that not one of the 60 people moved to the carriage. Van

Oeppen, the chief of the Treblinka death camp, shot all of them on the spot. Over the course of the events of January, 80% of the ZOB command were lost.

But the Ghetto was electrified by this defiance. People were fighting to join the ZOB. The ZOB soon commanded the Ghetto. It seized the Judenrat's finances and taxed the richer elements to raise money for the purchase of arms.

Their actions also inspired the Polish underground who soon supplied them with 50 large pistols and 55 hand grenades. The ZOB carried out sabotage actions and chased off Jewish foremen hired to tempt Jews to accept "good" working conditions in labour camps. The Nazis soon realised the only way they could take the remaining Jews would be by force. The final action against the Ghetto began on 18 April, 1943. The intention was to present Warsaw as "Judenfrei" (free of Jews) for 30 April—Hitler's birthday.

The "glorious" SS sent in the tanks. But they had underestimated the resistance of the ZOB. In the battle that ensued 200 SS soldiers were wiped out in a tremendous victory. By 2.00pm that day the Germans retreated. The partisans were jubilant. Their scant, ill-armed forces had inflicted a defeat on the "crack troops" of the German army.

Realising they could not take the Ghetto by bullets and tanks, the SS decided to set the Ghetto on fire. Thousands perished in the flames, but the ZOB carried on fighting, determined to die with dignity. Even at this time the spirit of the Bund and the ZOB ensured they never lost sight of their political ideals even though they would never live to see socialism. They issued a "Manifesto to the Poles" demonstrating solidarity and internationalism. Part of it reads:

"Through the smoke of the Ghetto, that which was set on fire, and the blood of its mercilessly killed defenders, we the slaves of the Ghetto convey heart felt greetings to all of you".

The proclamation ends: "Long live freedom! Death to the hangmen and the killer! We must continue our mutual struggle against the occupant until the very end!"

In May the end came for the resistance—but it was a heroic ending. By 8 May the HQ of the ZOB at 18 Mila Street was surrounded by German and Lithuanian detachments. The 120 fighters in the bunker were nearly all that was left of the ZOB. After bombarding "Mila 18" for 2 hours, they were still unable to take it. Then they threw a gas bomb into the bunker.

Those who did not die from the bullets or the gas committed suicide. It was inconceivable to be taken by the Nazis. A few, miraculously, managed to escape the Ghetto through the sewers, including Marek Edelman.

The fighters of the ZOB should be honoured as great heroes. They showed that even in the most adverse conditions, even when faced with death, it is better to unite and fight, to die with dignity rather than like animals.

This struggle exposes the lies of the anti-semites who say that the Jews went to the gas chambers without a struggle. But the history of the Warsaw Ghetto also shows why fascism must be ruthlessly smashed at the earliest stages of its emergence if the unrestrained barbarism that follows its victory is to be prevented.

In this tale the last word should go to Edelman:

"On the 10 May 1943, the first period of our bloody history, the story of the Warsaw Jews came to an end. The site where the buildings of the Ghetto once stood became a ragged heap of rubble three stories high. Those who were killed had done their duty to the end, to the last drop of blood that soaked into the pavements of the Warsaw Ghetto. We who did not perish leave it up to you to keep the memory of them alive for ever."■

Today there is a lot of talk about a "window of opportunity for peace" in Ireland. The revelations about the British government's links with the IRA for a just and progressive peace are not brought any nearer by the Tory/IRA talks or the Hume/Adams talks. In these articles the Irish principal centrist organisations in Ireland are failing to advance a revolutionary, working class solution to the conflict.

What price

During the last 25 years of conflict, Northern Ireland has witnessed a number of peace campaigns. The Loyalist killing in 1976 of five Catholics at Whitecross and the retaliatory murder of ten Protestants by the self-styled "South Armagh Republican Action Force", a *nomme de guerre* for the IRA, mobilised thousands of workers in genuine horror and anger at these outright sectarian murders.

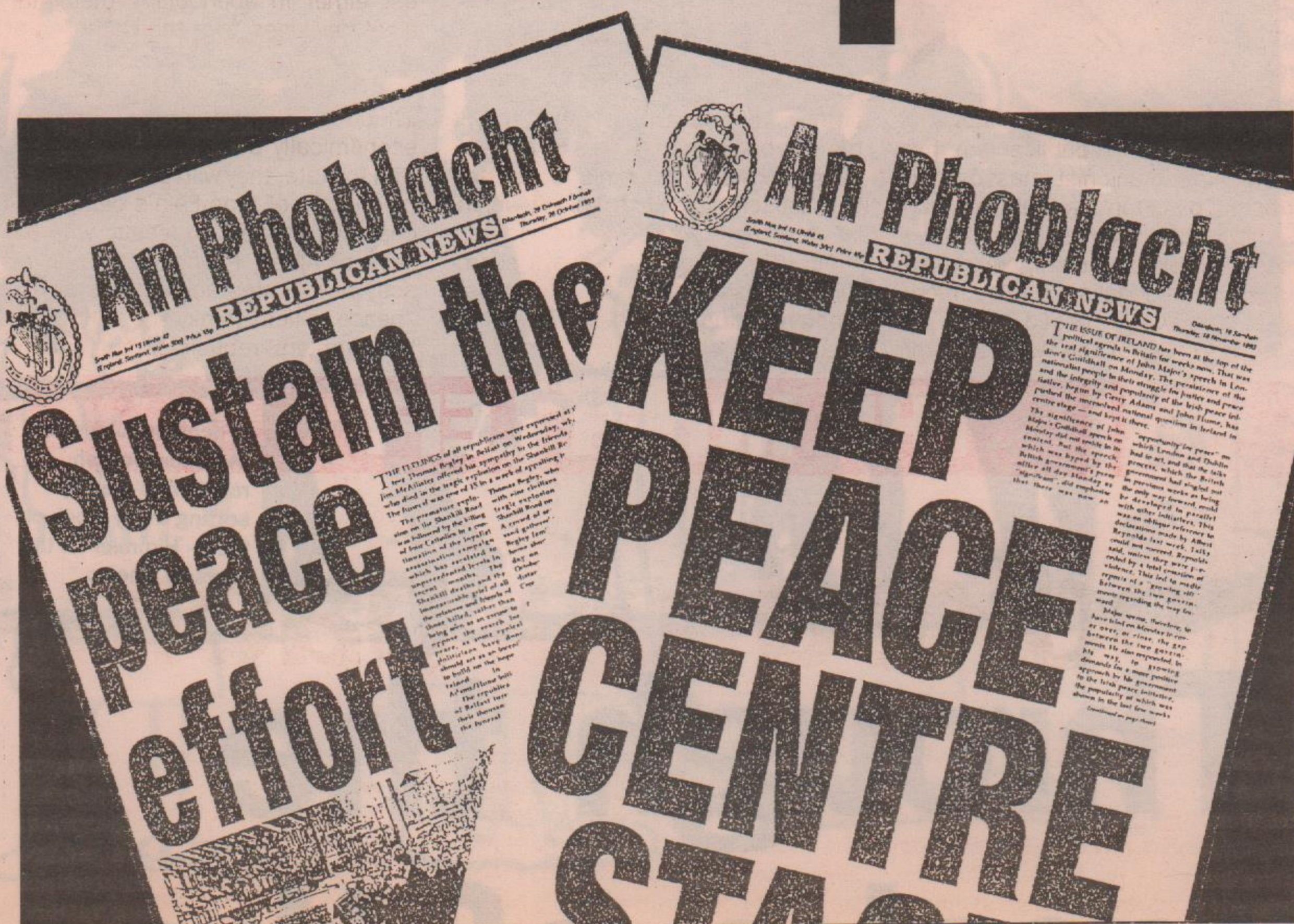
Under a banner proclaiming "A Better Life For All", mass rallies and demonstrations were organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) during the mid-1970s. But the real and barely disguised purpose of the leaders of the ICTU Northern Committee was to exploit the genuine feelings of thousands in order to undermine the armed campaign of the Republican movement, whose origins lay in the 1969 revolt of anti-Unionists against the sectarian British-created statelet of Northern Ireland.

Undermining

Within weeks the campaign for "A Better Life for All" sank without trace. It became obvious to the anti-unionist population that the campaign was a cover for undermining their revolt. It did not address any of the underlying issues of sectarian discrimination built into the Northern state which, by its very nature, denied a better life for all anti-unionists.

Today, in response to a heightened Loyalist terror campaign and the IRA's bungled attempt at retaliation, a new peace movement has got off the ground. As before, it is being orchestrated by the churches, the media and bourgeois politicians of all stripes. Its purpose is clear and single minded—to fatally weaken the anti-unionist revolt by bringing the Republican movement to the point of surrender. Once more the ICTU hypocritically dances to the tune of its masters.

There is a difference from the past. For at all the rallies, marches, pray-ins and Sunday stunts for peace, members and supporters of the Republican movement are to be found in their hundreds. Before, the Republican movement correctly and honestly exposed the peace movements and ini-



Republican movement's view of the peace talks

tiatives, as deliberately selective, as instruments directly serving the interests of the British, Unionist and Irish bourgeoisie. Now republican communities are awash with wall slogans for "peace" while longstanding republican leaders lecture us on the need to keep the "peace process" on the rails.

What Republicans are referring to, of course, is the latest instalment of "diplomatic" negotiation between John Hume of the constitutional Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin. This prolonged series of talks form the immediate background to the remarkable political gymnastics of the Republican movement.

They began after last year's Sinn Féin Ardheis had launched a "peace offensive". Sinn Féin leaders reflected upon the fact that the whole strategy of Republicanism since the hunger strikes of 1980-81 was in tatters.

Militarily, stalemate was acknowledged. The few hundred volunteers were increasingly incapable of hitting Crown Force targets. The number of

British soldiers killed in the 1990s was at a ten year low. Soft targets such as nationalist builders working for the British or bombing of Protestant town centres may have kept alive the idea that "something was being done", but the former undermined support in the anti-unionist community and the latter undercut the value of the much vaunted "outstretched hand" to the Protestant community.

Politically, Adams had sold the idea in the mid-1980s that the path to victory in the North lay via the Southern state. Sinn Féin aimed to capture more and more support in the Irish Republic. By becoming a force in southern bourgeois politics Sinn Féin hoped to use its power to press the Irish bourgeoisie into a more forceful stance against the British. A series of elections later and the miserable showing of Sinn Féin in the polls (2% or less), has held this illusion below the waterline.

In retreat, the goal of Sinn Féin's manoeuvres and the aim of the IRA bombing campaign is no longer to

force the immediate or even gradual withdrawal of troops or the dismantling of the repressive apparatus of the six county statelet. Still less is it to pursue an independent, secular "socialist" 32 county Republic. Instead, all action is aimed at getting a seat at the negotiating table alongside John Hume and Albert Reynolds and across from the Unionists and the British.

One Republican sticking point at the first round of the Adams/Hume dialogue was Sinn Féin's insistence on an all-Ireland referendum on a negotiated settlement, rather than separate referenda in the North and South which would give the loyalists a veto over Irish self-determination. Sinn Féin has abandoned this stance in the latest round.

It seems more than likely that this is connected to the fact that Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin has admitted recently that following the 1992 IRA blitz on the City of London (which coincided with the first round of the Adams/Hume talks and was the most damaging of recent IRA attacks), the British Government agreed to a prominent Tory intermediary to meet with Sinn Féin. Lord Carrington, fresh from failure in Bosnia, is rumoured to have taken this up. In turn this prompted further concessions by Adams on a separate Northern agreement to any final programme and structure under the rubric of Irish self-determination.

Certainly, there is some evidence of late that the British army has lowered its profile and tempered its harassment around a number of Republican ghettos. Rumours abound of a 60 point "agreement" for "lubricating" potential flashpoints. Such a move, and the money it could mean being pumped into the ghettos, could be very important in easing the path of any "compromise" that Sinn Féin may have hoped to sell to the mass of its anti-unionist supporters.

No doubt war weariness, endless

repression, death, pressure from prisoners' families, plus the deepening recognition that the guerilla struggle cannot bring victory, explain why there has been little opposition to date to the terms of the Adams/Hume initiative—an "honourable compromise" in the reported words of the IRA.

Unfortunately for them, that is not how it is seen by the forces of Ulster loyalism or some sections of the British establishment. Obviously Major and the British cabinet have been kept in touch with the Adams/Hume dialogue through their intermediaries. All the indications would suggest that the British government, after repeated failure in inter-party talks in Northern Ireland, were prepared to secretly explore the possibilities of the Adams/Hume initiative. They viewed the talks as a potential means of breaking the block that Ulster Unionism placed on any compromise, no matter how favourable to them. John Major may have quietly encouraged the Adams/Hume proposals in a desperate belief that a massive campaign of support in Ireland, Britain and internationally could force Unionism onto the defensive.

Adventurist

But Major's room for manoeuvre has been greatly constricted by parliamentary arithmetic. Reliance on Unionist MPs' votes for the successful passage of the Maastricht legislation forced the Cabinet first to break off links with McGuinness and then quarantine the Adams/Hume proposals. Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Irish government were left farcically "passing the parcel" before the Irish government, under British pressure, gave the Adams/Hume proposals the brush off.

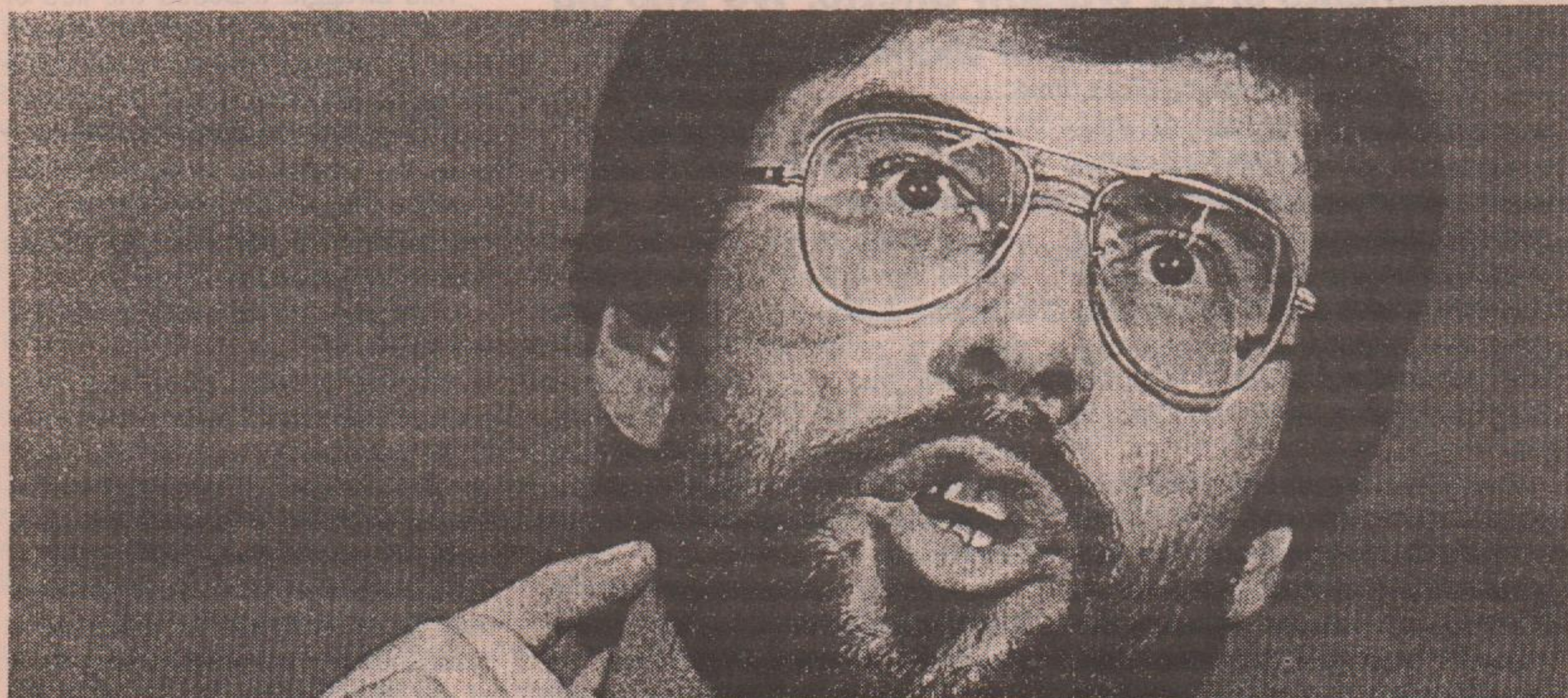
The IRA's adventurist attempt to wipe out the UDA's "high command" in Belfast returned the initiative to the loyalist camp. Paisley and Robinson of the DUP seized on Adams' role at the funeral of the IRA volunteer responsible for the attack and set about whipping the loyalist community into a frenzy of "No Surrender". They have threatened the British government with mass protests, strikes and further loyalist terror if any role for either Sinn Féin in talks, or the Irish government in any settlement, is contemplated.

Perilous

Molyneux's Ulster Unionist Party quickly got the message and fell into line. Sinn Féin must surrender unconditionally, must grass on their comrades, must expose their arms dumps, must endure five or more years of political quarantine after surrendering. These are the only "peace terms" the unionists want to discuss.

For the anti-unionist "masses" the present situation places them in a perilous condition. The Adams/Hume proposals, on which so many rest their hopes, signal how little has been actually gained after 25 years.

What kind of "peace" could they expect from an agreement that would leave the British army, RUC and loyal-



Adams wants peace at any price

with the IRA show how seriously the Tories view this opportunity. Yet the prospects of the Workers Group, the Irish section of the LRCI, explain why this is the case and why

Peace?

ist death squads with their veto? What justice can be expected from an agreement which ensures that anti-unionists will still remain over twice as likely to be on the dole because the apparatus of Orange and Masonic patronage remains intact?

The fact that tens of thousands believe there is no other way forward

starkly underlines the bankruptcy of Sinn Féin; Irish republicanism has failed the anti-unionist masses. The arrogant, blind fantasy that a few hundred guerrillas, with support from a minority of anti-unionists, could drive out British imperialism has been cruelly and painfully exposed.

Yet rejection of the Adams/Hume

framework would once more thrust the IRA back into continuing its campaign of mass bombing. State and Loyalist terror against the anti-unionist community would be stepped up.

For years Republicans have scornfully dismissed those, like the Irish Workers Group, who have consistently argued for a strategy which rested on

the clear principle that imperialist capitalism in Ireland could not be fought and defeated by a minority, no matter how brave, in one part of the island. The Northern state was part of a capitalist system on the island as a whole. Its rulers were tied to collaboration with British and world imperialism. A socialist strategy had to begin from that principle, and from the need to mobilise the Irish working class and oppressed in a fight to eliminate all aspects of exploitation and oppression. Such a perspective of mass struggle—for workers' revolution to smash both states—holds out the only chance to break important sections of Protestant workers from loyalism.

Short of this they will have no interest either in abandoning their marginal privileges over the Catholics or stopping their murderous campaign to keep them. Better a guaranteed huge British subvention to an otherwise economically devastated part of the British state, they will reason, than the pipedream of Sinn Féin's democratic capitalist republic in league with the likes of Albert Reynolds. This is exactly how Protestant workers on the "peace rallies" think. The fight for an Irish workers' republic throughout the

island can remove the fears of bourgeois-Catholic reverse discrimination against the Protestant workers. Only such a republic would eliminate the capitalist roots of some of the worst social conditions in Europe and offer a convincing possibility that all Irish workers could advance materially without sacrificing the standard of living of one section of the class.

•No to the peace without justice peddled by the oppressors and class enemies!

•No illusions in the Hume/ Adams initiative as bringing any lasting solution!

•For mass democratic committees of self-defence and political action of workers and communities against imperialist repression in Northern Ireland! All armed action to be subject to this democratic control!

•For British troops out now; disarm and disband the RUC and Royal Irish Regiment!

•For the release of all anti-imperialist and socialist fighters jailed for their opposition to the Northern State!

•For a united front of workers, socialists and republicans throughout the 32 counties to fight for these demands! ■

THE IRISH LEFT

Hooked on pacifism

THOUSANDS ENTHUSIASTICALLY supported the ICTU "peace demos" in Belfast and Derry on 3 November. Prominent among the participants were members of the Militant group and the Socialist Workers Movement, the Irish sister organisations of the British Militant Labour and Socialist Workers Party.

Militant's presence raised few eyebrows. Down the years they have been the most tireless foot soldiers of every ICTU initiative. Militant share the bureaucrats' "analysis" of the problem in the North—that workers are divided not by the existence of the sectarian Northern Ireland state, by the privileges of the Loyalists and their support for the oppression of the anti-unionist minority, but simply by "sectarianism" on both sides.

Militant's fundamental mistake is to equate Loyalist and Republican violence. In this they assist the British and their agents in the ICTU to undermine and destroy the revolt of anti-unionists, which is led by the Provisionals. They condemn equally the violence of the oppressed and the oppressor. Militant, of course, should know very well that such a view is nonsense. In the present edition of *Militant Labour* in two long articles, it is acknowledged that sectarianism's roots are the creation of the Northern state by British imperialism and the oppression of the Catholic minority within that artificial state.

"The anti-Catholic discrimination cast into the very foundations of the state was at worst encouraged, at best tolerated by the British", wrote Pete Hadden in *Militant*. Militant rightly defend the revolt in 1969 of the anti-unionist masses against the Northern State. So how do they get it so wrong? Simple.

"The leaders of the labour and trade union movement remained silent during these events . . . What was required was a fighting socialist leadership to champion the cause of civil rights and to oppose repression . . . The labour movement could have linked these struggles with the fight for full employment an end to slum housing etc. On this basis the unity of the working class could have been built in action . . . This would have isolated the bigots on both sides. Labour's failure became the Provos' opportunity."

So, the bureaucrats' refusal to fight the sectarian state—a product of their deep-seated pro-imperialism—let the "sectarian", "bigoted" Catholic nationalists step in to turn the conflict into nothing more than a

sectarian war with the Loyalists. What rubbish.

Militant leave out of account the anti-imperialist, and therefore progressive, character of the nationalists' resistance, despite its inadequate strategy. In the absence of any concrete socialist answers to the terror of the RUC and the British army, traditional Irish nationalism filled the political vacuum, offering thousands of anti-unionist workers and youth the opportunity to fight back.

Faced with this, Militant can only cry "foul" and stamp their feet in moral indignation. It's not supposed to happen that way! Reality is out of step with Militant's schema of the workers in the six counties uniting in common struggle on economic questions alone.

This has led Militant to stand aside from the anti-unionist revolt. They have failed even to participate in the anti-unionist struggle around democratic and national rights, carefully avoiding the key fight for immediate troop withdrawal. This method proved absolutely incapable of winning the anti-unionist masses away from the failed guerillaist strategy of the Provos.

Marxists do not believe the guerilla strategy can succeed. But Militant dub the guerilla campaign as "individual terrorism", a term that equates the military campaign of the IRA, which has mass support and a significant political movement behind it, with the idea of a handful of lone avengers completely isolated from any mass support. This conveniently echoes British propaganda: freedom fighters are "terrorists", while the troops that carry out systematic terror against the anti-unionist population are never described in these terms.

Time and again the policies of Militant placed it objectively on the side of imperialist repression. They refused to engage in any form of solidarity whatever with the living struggle of the anti-unionist movement, offering as an alternative a warmed up version of the bureaucrats' "peace jobs and progress" fodder.

When 100,000 marched against Thatcher's murder of Bobby Sands *Militant's* front page simply deplored the mobilisations for giving world-

wide prominence to "sectarian organisations". "We make no apology", they wrote, "for highlighting some of the class aspects of the situation which the capitalist papers have failed to notice", instancing protests against rent increases. But the mass workers' protests that were rocking Ireland at the time, including strike action in support of the hunger strikers' just demands, were not regarded as "class aspects" by Militant.

Militant's cowardly evasion of the most important revolutionary tasks in the North leaves them arguing with the bureaucrats over the best methods of getting "peace", ending "sectarianism" and "violence"—in reality demobilising the anti-unionist revolt and the Provos' campaign. In

In the absence of any concrete socialist answers to the terror of the RUC and the British army, traditional Irish nationalism filled the political vacuum, offering thousands of anti-unionist workers and youth the opportunity to fight back.

their six point programme to build on the 3 November demos, they call for "a one day general strike to stop the killings, the building of anti-sectarian committees in the workplaces, an end to all paramilitary campaigns and repression."

Nothing in these demands would even embarrass or expose the bureaucrats, let alone locate British imperialism in Ireland as the root cause of the problem. Indeed, despite the abstract call for a socialist Ireland, it doesn't even demand the withdrawal of British troops, the main guarantors of the sectarian state, the division of Ireland and the privileges of the loyalists.

The Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) have shown themselves to be

no better than Militant in the current crisis.

"Today must be the start, not the end of a strike movement throughout the country against sectarianism for peace", said the SWM leaflet on the 3 November Derry demo.

For more than twenty years the SWM has formally claimed to give unconditional support to the anti-unionist struggle, defended the IRA and the legitimacy of its struggle. Along with this it correctly criticised the previous peace movements, especially the ICTU's pro-imperialist "Better life for all" campaign. Further, it argued that trade union struggles, even if they united catholic and protestant workers, could not offer a way forward outside of a parallel struggle to destroy the Northern state.

Now, the SWM—led in Derry by Eamonn McCann, present chair of Derry Trades Council—have been centrally involved in organising a rally under the auspices of the ICTU's newly launched peace campaign. As their leaflet shows, there is no differentiation between the SWM's line and that of the ICTU bureaucrats.

Neither on the platform of speakers, nor in their leaflet, did Eamonn McCann or the SWM make reference to the dangerous illusions deliberately being sown, as they had been in the past, by such ICTU led campaigns. Instead we get this:

"The desire for peace has never been greater. As the violence continues, it is working class people who are being slaughtered. The loyalist campaign of sectarian murder and the IRA massacre on the Shankill have united most working class people in terror and grief. And there is far more to unite us than to divide us. We use the same underfunded health service. We all face the threat of VAT on fuel. We're all suffering the poverty and deprivation caused by Tory government policies. If we stand together and fight the Tories instead of each other we can marginalise the sectarian bigots who are behind the sectarian killings."

Nowhere in the leaflet is there mention of the sectarian state and its oppression of nationalists through the army, the RUC and the discriminatory mechanisms of patronage.

Will these be addressed by uniting with Protestant workers over the VAT proposals? How will the anti-unionist masses defend themselves physically against Loyalist murder gangs?

The deliberate blurring of the distinction between Loyalist murder gangs and the Provos by use of the term "sectarian bigots" leads automatically to Militant's position. Thus the back page of *Socialist Worker*—paper of the SWM—shouts, "workers unite to fight sectarianism" and "only workers unity can now defeat the sectarian tensions which are rising in Belfast and elsewhere." Hardly surprising then, that in the context of these events (whose victims are overwhelmingly Catholics!) anti-unionists continue to look to the Provos for defence. Certainly they will find nothing from SWM or Militant.

Of course, in private SWM members will still claim adherence to their positions on the legitimacy of republican violence. Thus, they imply, it doesn't really matter that they stand on ICTU platforms uttering the same poisonous pieties as Loyalist bureaucrats and churchmen. After all, like Militant, they assure us that they are calling for more workers' action unlike the bureaucrats!

The peculiar economic and syndicalist edge to the SWM's politics means that they believe that the cutting edge of their critique is the demand for strike action in order to get Sinn Féin accepted around the negotiating table, and workers' action to realise the Adams/Hume proposals. As long as the possibility of recruiting a few from the thousands exists, syndicalist mimicking of Militant's stance is considered fair game. Such is the depth of self-deception in the SWM and the awful price of opportunism.

Neither Militant nor the SWM offer a revolutionary socialist alternative to Republicanism. The Hume/Adams proposals are proof positive of the impasse republicanism has reached in its struggle with the British state. But by ignoring the legitimacy of that struggle (Militant) or by now turning their back on it (the SWM), the centrists have demonstrated their own inability to offer a socialist, anti-imperialist solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland. ■

Italy

MUSSOLINI IS back. The granddaughter of the fascist dictator, who ruled Italy until 1943, won 31.1% of the vote in Naples during the recent local elections.

"This is a victory for my family, for my grandfather", she announced. Well she might. Her fascist party, the MSI, scored similar high votes in Rome and throughout southern Italy. In the north the far right Northern League, led by the racist separatist Umberto Bossi, also did well.

A counterweight to this move to the right was the good showing by the ex-Communist Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and its allies amongst the Greens and Radicals. On a national scale they did slightly better than the fascists and the Northern League. In the run-off elections for control of the big cities, scheduled for December 5, there will be a straight choice between PDS-backed candidates and those of the right.

In Italy and throughout the world the bosses are viewing this polarisation with deep anxiety. Immediately after the election results were announced there was a spectacular collapse of the Italian stock exchange and the Lira plummeted in value.

Danger

The parties which have ruled Italy for over forty five years, principally the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialists (PSI), were slaughtered in the elections. These guarantors of capitalist stability may never recover. In the context of a severe economic crisis this is an inevitable cause of panic in the ranks of the big bosses.

Ominously, the panic has propelled Silvio Berlusconi, the controller of 75% of Italian television companies and the owner of many newspapers and publishing companies, to come out openly in support of the MSI. Big capital is beginning to take sides in the polarisation. With the decimation of their traditional parties they are bound to move towards those right wing parties which stand a chance of keeping out the left.

While there was an element of "protest voting" in support of the fascists, it would be wrong to write off their success in the elections. Fascism is a real danger in Italy today precisely because the protest vote for them is occurring amidst such a generalised crisis of Italian society.

This crisis is manifesting itself in the collapse of the existing political order. The old parties are breaking up under the weight of the corruption scandals that have rocked Italy for the past eighteen months. The revelations about the scale of corruption and the involvement of countless major politicians and their biggest industrial and financial backers has done irreparable damage to the DC and its allies.

Corruption

What these scandals expose is not just the level of corruption, but the fact that it has been going on for decades under DC rule. State intervention in all of the key sectors of the economy, combined with the hegemony of the DC-led coalition, bred patronage and corruption on a grand scale.

In the years of the long boom this system was sustainable. Moreover, for the bosses it was a price worth paying since an uninterrupted DC dominated government kept the powerful Communist Party permanently out of office.

By the early 1990s the demands of European integration were making this system of state patronage and pay-offs dysfunctional. The corrupt system was reducing the competitive-

ness of Italian capitalism. Demands for the modernisation of Italian industry grew. Something had to be done.

That is why a small section of the Italian bosses, relying on sections of the ruling elite relatively untainted by corruption—especially from the ranks of the financial technocracy and the legal system—moved against the old gang. What they didn't bargain for was the extent of the political destabilisation this would cause.

The result of this combined economic and political crisis is that Italy has a technocrat dominated government under the former governor of the Bank of Italy, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. It is committed to preparing Italy for the economic convergence required by the Maastricht Treaty, but as the recent elections reveal it has no real base in Italian society. The four parties who comprise the coalition (which still includes the DC) got 15% of the popular vote in those elections.

At best, from the bosses' point of view, Ciampi will be able to push through a tough budget, cutting state spending, reforming the tax system and privatising key sectors of the economy. At worst, it will collapse before passing this budget, paving the way for an early general election in which the fascists, the Northern League and the PDS are the only serious contenders for power.

Whichever fate befalls the caretaker Ciampi government, the class struggle in Italy has the potential to erupt into a titanic conflict. Workers are faced with redundancies at Fiat, in the state steel firm Ilva, in the petro-chemical industry and throughout the public sector. Workers in the state airline company Alitalia face pay cuts on a scale similar to those that Air France tried to impose.

Fight

Under the budget the government is looking to raise £13 billion through public spending cuts and tax rises. These cuts will further disrupt transport and local services as more and more cities follow Naples into official bankruptcy.

The Italian workers will not submit meekly to these attacks. Workers at a petro-chemical plant in Crotona occupied their plant, blockaded their town and stopped the closure of the factory. Steel workers at Tarranto chained themselves to the production line and halted the whole plant for five days. Mass demonstrations against the government's plans have been held in many major cities.

This will to fight is not matched by militancy from the union leaders. They were embarrassed by the Crotona events. They allowed the bosses to

"Workers across Europe appear to have taken strength from the spectacular victory of Air France employees . . . In Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and France employers are facing increasing militancy". This was how the *Financial Times* described the events of October.

November saw this militancy deepen with a solid general strike in Belgium, massive protest marches in Spain and further days of action in France. Spanish unions have called a general strike in December.

European workers are facing a concerted, post-Maastricht attack. Every government is working towards the goal of economic convergence by slashing public spending, imposing wage freezes, attacking trade union rights and sacking thousands of workers.

Whether they are carrying these attacks out through "social pacts" in Belgium or Spain, austerity budgets in Britain and Italy, five year plans in France, or piecemeal private sector butchery in Germany, the bosses in Europe have a common aim. The European Union, as the old European Community is

now called, is an international bosses' federation determined to make the entire working class of Europe pay for the severe economic recession gripping the continent. The spirit of defiance that workers have shown in fighting these attacks is inspiring. It raises the prospect of a different form of European unity—the unity of the working class in struggle. Building that unity is essential if we are to counter the united offensive of the bosses and the growth of fascism and the far right that has accompanied this latest political and economic crisis.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International is working to forge such unity at every level—from solidarity between workers in struggle through to the building of an international party that can overcome all national boundaries and organise the fight for world socialism. In these articles *Pouvoir Ouvrier*—the French section of the LRCI—look at the lessons of the struggles in France and Belgium, while *Mark Harrison* examines the recent surge in support for the fascists in Italy.

Europe: the workers strike back!

get rid of the *scala mobile*, which tied wage increases to inflation. They are conniving with the government to allow state firms to be privatised.

The main union federation, the CGIL, pursues this line of no resistance because it is tied to the PDS. The PDS is committed to resolving Italy's crisis in the interests of the bosses. As the largest party it is touting itself as the new saviour.

The PDS leader, Achille Occhetto, told the rulers of Italy and the world

that his party was committed to "guaranteeing the budget's approval on the appointed date." This ex-Stalinist, now social democratic, party and its supporters in the CGIL fear that working class resistance to the budget and the other attacks will upset its plans to restore capitalist stability.

Such treachery will not save a single job in Italy. It will, however, strengthen the fascists if it is allowed to triumph. That is why the Italian workers must not only spread their

militant action, but should mount a concerted and unified campaign against the CGIL and PDS traitors.

Only by challenging these leaders at a national as well as a local level can the Italian workers begin to build a revolutionary socialist alternative to fascism, separatism, corruption and austerity. Local militancy and fragmented organisations will not be enough to secure victory in the impending conflicts. The Italian workers need a revolutionary political party. The shattering of the old political establishment and the sudden emergence of new forces proves that such a party, with a clear action programme and a bold appeal to the working class, could rally mass support.

Alternative

The alternative is grim. The fascists destroyed the Italian labour movement once before. They imprisoned and murdered thousands of militants. They deprived the workers of any rights to independent organisation. They must not be allowed to do so again.

In a period when the traditional parties are thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the masses the forces of reaction are gaining more ground. But the Italian workers have not yet suffered a major defeat. They have the power to destroy the fascists and smash the austerity plans of the capitalists. To realise this power and secure victory the working class must resolve the crisis of political leadership. ■



Italian workers on the march—they can smash the fascists

France

THE FRENCH call it *déjà vu*. It is when you get the feeling that what is happening has happened to you before. The right wing RPR/UDF coalition government in France are feeling it today.

In autumn 1986, French students and workers fought back against the policies of the right-wing government.

Seven years on, the right are back in government, having trounced the discredited Socialist Party in the March parliamentary elections. And, bang on schedule, workers and students have taken to the streets in a series of strikes and demonstrations. The strike at Air France was a high point in the present round of struggle.

The massive victory of the RPR/UDF coalition in March presented the right wing with a dilemma. A parliamentary majority of over 400 put the administration under pressure to implement their reactionary programme quickly: savage cuts in public expenditure, in the health service and education; privatisation of key industries; increased state racism and police powers; new attacks on wages and living standards. Failure to act would risk boosting support for the fascist Le Pen.

What held them back from this course was the 1995 presidential election which they looked set to win. The government wanted to avoid a repetition of 1986-1988, when they destroyed their chances of winning the Presidency by failing to cope with strikes by workers and students.

The solution was to adopt a "softly-softly" approach on issues likely to provoke mass resistance, whilst pushing through a series of high-profile measures to satisfy the more rabid elements of the right's electorate.

In the weeks following the election victory the police "accidentally" killed a number of youth—most of them black (see *Workers Power* 167 May 1993). To show his concern, the Minister of the Interior, Pasqua, a right-wing populist who in the past has flirted with Le Pen, immediately extended the police's "stop and search" powers to cover anybody, anywhere, anytime!

Unemployment

Then came a racist amendment to the Nationality Law which removed the automatic right of all people born in France to French citizenship. In the Autumn, a constitutional change was introduced virtually destroying the right of asylum.

These attacks led to some protest, but in general were relatively profitable for the government: they reinforced support whilst not provoking any major resistance.

The government's plans began to go wrong at the beginning of September. Workers returned from holiday to find their wage-packets reduced following the doubling of the CSG, a flat-rate tax designed to make up for declining payments by the bosses into the health system.

Then unemployment became the big issue. The official figures say there are 3.2 million unemployed, and the government expects another 400,000 in a year's time. Since the arrival of the Balladur government, private sector bosses have sacked tens of thousands of workers. Things reached a crisis point on what became known as "Black Wednesday", when government ministers responsible for the public sector announced a series of "social plans"—official jargon for sackings.

Four thousand job losses were announced at Air France; 2,850 at Bull computers; 2,200 at Renault; 1,700 at Thomson-SKF engineering.

At the same time the government announced the imminent privatisa-



tion of a series of state-owned companies—banks, insurance companies and pharmaceuticals. They announced a new Five Year Plan which involved attacks on union rights, the abolition of legal restrictions on working hours—including Sunday working—and proposed that public sector workers should accept a 1.2% pay cut to finance "more jobs".

Strikes

The response from the labour movement was clear. On the 12 October there were strikes and demonstrations by public sector workers all over France. Certain sectors showed an unprecedented level of resistance. In the Post Office and Telecoms 75% of the workers were on strike against the threat of privatisation, a figure higher even than in May 68!

Against the background of this rise in militancy the bureaucrats of France's three trade union federations were forced to put aside their sectarian divisions. Their 30,000 strong Paris protest march was the first joint union demonstration for over a decade.

The breakthrough came ten days later, when Air France workers launched a strike against the government's proposal to cut 4,000 jobs—including over 1,000 sackings—and to savage wages by 30%. Despite the skill and responsibility of their work, Air France workers are paid pitiful wages. For example, the head of an engine maintenance workshop with 15 years' experience takes home around £800 a month.

Beginning in the freight and baggage-handling depots, the strike quickly spread to the whole of the company—hotels, check-in staff and air hostesses—and grounded the entire fleet. Workers' protests at the Paris airports were aimed at spreading the movement to other companies and shutting down all air traffic. There was an escalating series of confrontations with riot police as workers occupied the runways and even took right-wing MPs hostage for several hours.

The government's immediate response was to say that the "social plan" was essential and would never be withdrawn. But in the space of a few days, all that changed and the words "social explosion" and "May 68" were on the lips of every commentator. The government was clearly worried, and with reason. The mass resistance they feared was developing across France.

Having received a bloody nose in 1986 when the Chirac government tried to "reform" higher education, Balladur made clear that there would be no major changes in either the universities or the high schools until after 1995. In September a proposed change to the law which would allow local councils to fund private schools was quickly withdrawn in the face of a threatened teachers' and school students' demonstration.

But the government went ahead with its plan to cut students' meagre housing benefit (ALS) by 50%. In a country with nearly 2 million students, the vast majority of whom receive no grant, this attack threatened hundreds

of thousands of youth with real hardship. In less than a week nearly 70,000 signatures were collected by the student unions.

The national movement against the attack on the ALS was strengthened by occupations and protests in a number of provincial universities against the appalling conditions of overcrowding and lack of facilities and teachers. For example, in Nantes, 400 students regularly have to cram themselves into lecture theatres built for 200 students.

In the space of a few days, the government did its best to stop the situation from exploding. The attack on student housing benefit was substantially reduced. The Air France "social plan" was withdrawn and the head of the company resigned. In the short term, Balladur's damage-limitation exercise succeeded. The Air France workers gradually returned to work and the students were deprived of a national focus for their action.

Victories

Despite the fact that the government said that 4,000 jobs will still have to go and that the ALS will be reduced, these two struggles were perceived by the whole of the working class and by youth as victories: the government could be beaten. There was a major change in the mood of workers and youth.

Throughout November, there were strikes and demonstrations by students and workers. In the provincial towns school and university students took to the streets, occupied univer-

sity buildings and blocked railway lines. The government was forced to announce the dispatching of "emergency teams" which would study the situation in each university and make recommendations.

Although the movement began to weaken in the universities, school students took up the struggle with a series of demonstrations in Paris and in key provincial cities. Particularly noteworthy was the Paris demonstration of 25 November, at the end of which several hundred youth, including comrades from Pouvoir Ouvrier (our sister organisation in France), went to one of the main universities and succeeded in stopping a meeting of Action Française, a hardnut French fascist organisation.

In seeking to separate rather than unite the workers' protests, the trade union leaders have been playing Balladur's game. At the height of the Air France strike, when the whole of the working class was inspired and uplifted, the union bureaucrats announced a public sector "day of action" . . . for a month later! When the demonstrations took place on 18 November, they were preceded and followed by a series of sporadic one-day strikes, designed to prevent any all-out action.

The union leaders called strikes on the Paris Metro on the 9 and 10 November and on the internal airline, Air Inter, on 10 November. But social security workers were called out on the 15th, electricity workers a week later on the 23 November and Metro workers again on the 26th!

Organisation

Why was there no move for an all-out strike in the public sector at the same time as the Air France workers were on strike? Because the union bureaucrats wanted to keep control at all costs, and a divided movement is weaker and less likely to show signs of opposition.

The ability of the union leaders to divert workers in struggle may seem paradoxical in a country where less than 10% of workers are unionised. But this situation is the key to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the French working class, and the determination of the bureaucrats that there should be no united fightback.

Because unionisation levels are so low, there is the real possibility that the influence of the official, reformist and bureaucratic trade union leadership can be swept away by workers in action. But for this to happen, workers need to be organised and to create their own forms of workers' democracy. This was one of the key weaknesses of the Air France strike.

Despite the courage and determination of the strikers, despite their distrust of the unions, despite the fact that all key decisions were taken in mass meetings, no strike committee was elected. No permanent forms of rank and file organisation involving both unionised and non-unionised workers were set up, beyond the mass meetings. In the absence of any organised opposition the union leaders were able to retain their influence.

That was why the leaders were so determined to prevent any link between Air France strikers and other workers or the students, and why they have done their best to keep the protest movement as weak as possible. For the moment the government has gained a temporary respite. But workers and students have shown that its plans can be beaten.

In the months ahead the control of the trade union leadership must be broken. Workers must build their own democratic rank and file organisations and fight for the reform of the unions. The working class, the students and youth must beat back Balladur's radical right-wing programme and take the developing struggle towards a revolutionary socialist solution to the crisis. ■

Belgium

ON FRIDAY 26 November, a general strike paralysed Belgium. It was the culmination of a month of sporadic strikes and protests by the Belgian working class.

The rail, post office, education and public administration were completely shut. Ports, factories, radio and newspapers were shut and traffic was stopped by pickets and demonstrations. Pickets at Brussels airport were viciously attacked by the riot police.

On Monday and Wednesday before the general strike, public and private sector workers were on strike. Many workers took Thursday off as well, to spread the action over three days.

The general strike, called by both the Socialist union federation, the FGTB, and the Christian unions, the CSC, was provoked by the "Global

Plan" announced by the Christian Socialist Prime Minister, Dehaene. This austerity programme involves a wage freeze until 1996, £2 billion cuts in public expenditure, the introduction of new taxes and reductions in indexed wage increases, attacks on job security for state employees and the savaging of social security payments.

In return, the government proposes to stabilise the health system and to create 40,000 jobs!

The governmental coalition of the Socialist Party and the Christian Socialists hoped it could persuade its allies in the union bureaucracies to sell the austerity plan to the workers. In a series of negotiations, Dehaene tried to work out a "pact" with the union leaders, who were far from opposed to the idea.

But a series of spontaneous protests, notably in the Liege region,

convinced the union bureaucrats that they could not deliver. The fact that they were eventually obliged to organise a general strike against their political allies indicates the depth of the crisis.

The united action of the whole of the working class shows what can be achieved, if the determination is there. The union leaders have called another day of action for 10 December.

Workers must agitate now for an indefinite general strike and to take negotiations with government out of the hands of the trade union leaders. There must be no return to work until the austerity programme is smashed.

The general strike only took place because the rank and file were in action and threatening to fight without the union leaders. That should be a lesson to workers everywhere. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

Sell Out or Victory?

ANC NEGOTIATORS are celebrating the new constitution in South Africa, claiming that De Klerk and the National Party made big concessions in the last few days of negotiations. Right wingers are objecting to the absence of a built-in veto for minority parties, while Inkatha and the white right want more power for provincial governments.

Protests from these quarters should not mislead us. The new constitution is not a victory for the black masses. It is a sell out.

The new constitution is designed to ensure stable capitalist rule, assuring continued power and influence for the white ruling class through a guaranteed government of national unity. The National Party negotiators are now so confident of the loyalty of the ANC leadership that they feel in no need of vetoes.

The society this constitution prepares for is a far cry from the just, free and equal society which was the goal of decades of heroic struggle.

What does the new constitution mean?

- After elections next April a coalition government will rule for five years based on the interim constitution.

BY LESLEY DAY

- An executive president and two vice presidents will be appointed by parties achieving more than 20% of the vote; cabinet members will be appointed by parties achieving 55 or more seats.
- The 400 seat national assembly, together with the 90 seat senate, will adopt the final constitution.
- Nine provinces with their own legislatures will work within limits set by the national government.
- A constitutional court, appointed by the President and cabinet, will mediate between the centre and the provinces and interpret a Bill of Rights which enshrines freedom of assembly and speech but which also guarantees property rights, i.e. the rights of the super-rich.
- Various "sunset" clauses will guarantee the jobs of white civil servants.

Power

All this weighs against any radical measures of land reform or wealth distribution. Restitution of land to

South African Communist Party—tying the workers to an alliance with the bosses

former owners will be conditional and full compensation will have to be paid to the white landowning elite.

But power is not only determined by the formal clauses of a constitution. The biggest guarantor of property rights is the armed power of the state. Georg Meiring, the new head of the South African Defence Forces (SADF), has pledged that the army will be the "anchor" of the new constitution, ensuring that no radical shift of land, wealth or real power to the black masses takes place.

Anticipating explosive resistance on the part of both black workers and the far right whites, the constitution allows for the calling of a State of Emergency "if necessary to restore peace or order". This will be renew-

able after 21 days by a two thirds majority of the Assembly. This is still enough to allow the Defence Forces to get a grip on security. During the State of Emergency, any democratic rights can be suspended and there can be detention without trial.

Safeguards

Just as the constitution ensures that the white rulers will not have to hand over too much power and land, the electoral process ensures that the working class are denied independent representation. The elections for the national assembly will be held under a list system which prevents working class voters choosing which representatives they want to support

or to call their representatives to account.

The new constitution means that not even the limited demands of the old ANC Freedom Charter will be met. Although there will be universal suffrage and a unitary government—gains that result from the long years of struggle—the various "safeguards" in the constitution seriously reduce democracy and aim to restrict the fight of the black working class for socialism.

The guaranteed coalition government, backed up by the courts and the SADF, will give a perfect excuse to ANC leaders to resist demands from the working class and rural poor for measures to tackle poverty and redistribute wealth. ■



BLACK WORKERS in South Africa will be able to vote for the first time next April—but they will not have their own party.

The system of voting and the existence of the formal Alliance of the ANC, COSATU (the trade union federation), and the South African Communist Party (SACP) means that there will be no independent working class candidates—unless workers' organisations break from the Alliance.

The Alliance will not represent workers' interests, despite having wide support in the working class. The ANC itself is becoming a bourgeois political party, representing the interests of the rising black middle class. It is working towards a capitalist South Africa in which a tiny minority of blacks can join the ruling class and its own leaders can be integrated into the state bureaucracy.

This aim was enshrined recently in the Mopani Memorandum of Undertaking between the ANC and various black business organisations. This calls for a degree of restructuring of state financial institutions and "affirmative action" measures to allow black business into the higher echelons of the economy. The ANC is totally committed to the preservation of free market capitalism.

Coalition

The Alliance is fighting the elections on an explicit commitment to a coalition government with the racist National Party of De Klerk. The electoral system will make it impossible to vote only for specific candidates—i.e. for working class candidates from the trade unions or SACP, but not for bourgeois candidates. In

BREAK WITH THE ANC!

Build a Workers' Party!

these circumstances it is not in workers' interests to vote for the Alliance. COSATU's membership of the Alliance, far from ensuring that workers have greater influence, is a way of tying the workers' organisations to the intended capitalist coalition government. It goes alongside the Reconstruction Accord, a form of "social contract" which aims to build a "partnership" between business and union leaders in which workers' interests will be subordinated to the needs of the capitalists.

Many socialists in South Africa think that workers should vote for and support the ANC. "We want the biggest possible vote for the ANC", argued *Congress Militant*, the South African sister organisation of Militant Labour. They want black workers to flood into the ANC, "strengthening the power behind the ANC once it is in government". They think that there will be "a struggle for control of the ANC between those representing different class interests, particularly after the elections".

It is true that there are different

The debate has begun in South Africa

class interests at work within the Alliance—but how can the working class best assert its interests against the bourgeois forces? The ANC certainly has working class support and worker members—but it is a coalition between the workers and the nascent black bourgeoisie. The working class is trapped both in the ANC and in the ANC-led Alliance.

The key to winning class independence is not to call on workers to back the cross-class alliance, but

to raise the call as widely as possible for the unions and working class organisations to break with the bourgeoisie. This means breaking with the Alliance—the vehicle of betrayal—and setting out on the road to building an independent political party of the workers.

This is not an unrealistic demand, as recent events in South Africa show all too clearly. The East Rand local of NUMSA (the metalworkers' union, the biggest trade union in

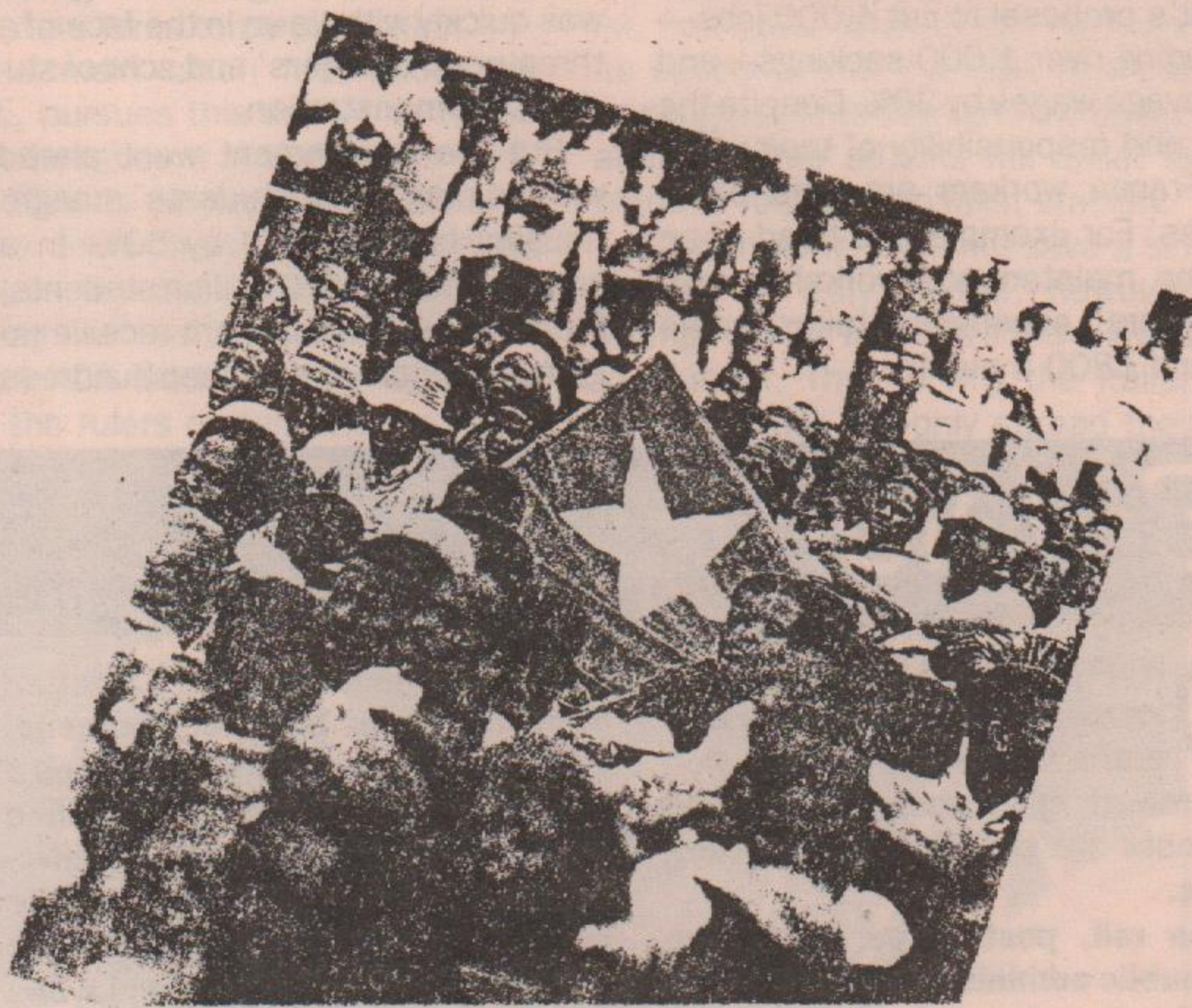
South Africa), put a proposal to the 1993 national conference of the union calling for a Workers' Party. This was forced through against the wishes of the NUMSA leadership. Although the motion was watered down before it was passed, the whole episode is positive proof that hundreds of thousands of the most militant workers are, at the very least, wary of the deal and see the need for their own party.

Accommodation

Returning from a recent visit to South Africa, which included meetings with the NUMSA leadership, Peter Taaffe, the editor of *Militant*, argued that the time is not right for the building of a workers' party. But if not now, in the midst of a sell-out at the hands of the ANC, when the slogan of a workers' party is being widely discussed across the South African labour movement, and on the eve of elections in which such a party could present itself clearly to the masses, then when?

Taaffe's argument is an accommodation to the NUMSA leaders, who are in turn accommodating to the leaders of the ANC and the future coalition against the working class. Militant Labour and their international organisation are guilty of providing a left-wing cover for the sell-out and the ANC.

The masses of South Africa urgently need to build a workers' party based on the trade unions. That party must fight for the real interests of the working class. To do that a workers' party would have to break the unions from the Alliance and adopt an action programme linking the fight for full democratic rights to the goal of socialist revolution. ■



JEFFREY SACHS is the West's main expert on the subject of restoring capitalism in Russia and eastern Europe. He has explained, for the benefit of big business, the aims of the Russian government's economic strategy. Writing in the *Independent* on 11 October 1993 he declared:

"The main idea of shock therapy is to end inflation rapidly, through tough monetary and fiscal policies to produce a sound and stable currency, and open trade policies to introduce competition in the economy. Monetary and fiscal discipline and market competition lead to an initial sharp decline in output, as uncompetitive industry is forced to close, but then to a rapid recovery as a new, competitive private sector takes hold."

If this programme had been implemented consistently between January 1992 and today, it would have led to the collapse of thousands of huge state enterprises. Tens of millions would have been thrown onto the streets. Social welfare would have collapsed. In Russia the dole is less than one fifth of the average wage and the latter scarcely covers basic subsistence. The scale of human tragedy and social chaos that this would have caused is scarcely imaginable.

Inflation

In fact Yeltsin's "shock therapy" was limited to the unleashing of a ferocious inflation (2,500% in 1992) which has reduced pensioners in particular to beggary. The rest of the programme was not implemented. Why?

The main reason was that the neo-liberals like Yeltsin who favour the "fast track" restoration of capitalism did not have control over key levers of the large scale means of production which are still nearly totally state owned. They did not control the State Bank. Nor did they control the large industrial combines. Thus they were unable to drive "unprofitable" enterprises into liquidation and privatise the potential profit makers. The industrial managers were able to continue to raise wages, to provide food by special deals between the enterprises and to avoid mass lay-offs and factory closures.

These facts in part explain the absence of any spontaneous revolt by the working class against Yeltsin. What is more, they cast light on why there is an almost total absence of any credible alternative to Yeltsin's big lie: the notion that beyond the present poverty and chaos lies the promised land of the "consumer society".

Sell off

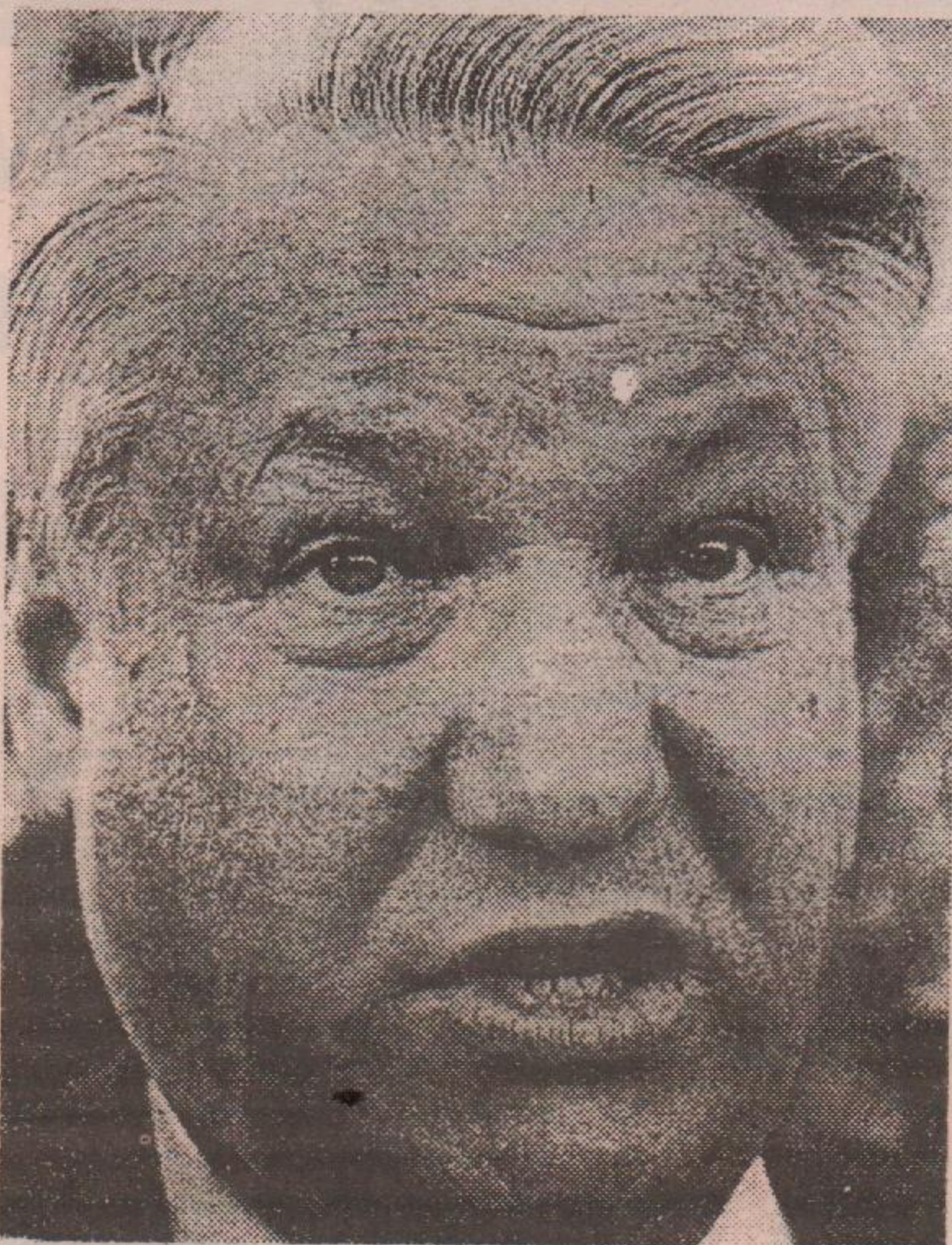
The failure of the "big bang" (the freeing of prices) to overcome the barrier of state ownership drove Yeltsin and Gaidar to the idea of a Czech-style sell off of state property. A voucher scheme, launched in August 1992, has resulted in the transformation of thousands of factories into nominal joint stock companies. Some 46,815 state enterprises were privatised in 1992, and 11,174 per month in the first few months of 1993. But the figures are misleading if they are viewed in isolation. For a true picture of the situation it is also necessary to examine the nature of the enterprises that have been sold off. Most of these were small scale enterprises, workshops, retail outlets, restaurants etc. Large scale industry is still mainly in state hands and agriculture remains almost totally collectivised.

In industry the overwhelming majority of the enterprises that have been "privatised" have not passed into the hands of outside owners at all. In nearly all cases the enterprise employees—the workers and the managers—hold between 51% and 71% of the shares. They chose a "closed subscription method" avail-

RUSSIA

Has capitalism been restored?

When Boris Yeltsin took power in August 1991 and abolished the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, many on the left decided that Russia's transition back to capitalism was complete. Workers Power was almost alone in insisting that the transition was not concluded. For us the question of the regime in Moscow was never the decisive factor in our definition of Russia as a degenerated workers' state. Indeed, from the days of Stalin the regime has



Where there's a will there's a way?

been counter-revolutionary. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1939, "the USSR minus the social structure founded by the October Revolution would be a fascist regime."

Like Trotsky's our analysis is based on the character of that social structure—the property relations. Have they yet been transformed back to capitalism? Dave Stockton examines the situation in Russia after Yeltsin's coup of October 1993, and argues that the restoration of capitalism has still not been carried out, and must be fought every inch of the way by the working class.

able under the voucher scheme. Only 2% chose the "open" method precisely because that meant a majority of shares being auctioned to outside investors (if they could be found) and an imposed restructuring programme.

But for the Yeltsin-Gaidar reformers, the whole purpose of privatisation was to force immediate corporate restructuring, involving "rationalisation", mass redundancies, recording of real profit and loss figures, a dividend to shareholders etc. Instead the workers (and management) have effectively been given a veto in the form of ownership rights. Profits are used to raise wages, not to pay dividends.

The result is that prices have risen, not productivity. In 1992 industrial production fell by 18.6% and productivity by 14.6%. According to the *Financial Times*, industrial production is likely to fall by a further 19.7% in 1993. In other words, there is no sign whatsoever of any recovery in the productive economy.

Privatisation

The real "success stories" for privatisation are in housing, shops, restaurants and services like public baths. They can be sold at market prices whilst the industrial plants are privatised at (fictional) 1991 book prices. This has produced incredible anomalies. One small St Petersburg baby food store has been sold at four times the price of the city's giant shipyard, Baltiysky Zavod.

As the *Financial Times* put it in May this year, Russia now has a dual economy:

"A state industrial sector biased

towards military production, weakened by the collapse of trade between Russia and the other republics, dependent on government subsidies for its survival, but responsible for social infrastructure and the employment of the mass of the population, and an unofficial, sometimes illegal, private economy in which most agents are based in trade and the provision of services, rather than production, and in which much of the economy's \$35-40bn annual export earnings circulate".

The real reason for the failure of the reformers' plans is that prior to Yeltsin's October 1993 coup they did not have undivided control of either the economy or the state machine

The real reason for the failure of the reformers' plans is that prior to Yeltsin's October 1993 coup they did not have undivided control of either the economy, banks and enterprises, or the state machine—the army, militia and interior ministry troops. Despite the growth of important elements of a new capitalist class, their activities remain restricted largely to the sphere of exchange. They represent a semi-criminal merchant capitalist class which is parasitic on the disintegrating state sector and the old "black economy", which has massively expanded and has been legalised.

But the old bureaucracy, minus the Communist Party bureaucrats, is still the ruling force in production. It has splintered into warring factions, as

Workers Power has noted many times. The economic directors at enterprise, combine and conglomerate level forced the continuation of state subsidies to avoid the massive bankruptcies that would occur if the paper "losses" of the state enterprises were taken into account by the banks.

The Russian State Bank, because it was independent of the president and the "fast-track" restorationist government, continued to print money leading to massive inflation. The state still extended explicit subsidies,

amounting to 20% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1992. But in addition to this the Central Bank extended a further 20% of GDP in off-budget credits to the state industries. Despite all the talk of the need for unprofitable enterprises to go into liquidation it simply has not happened. This September has seen the first set of bankruptcy proceedings, and only a dozen of them at that.

If the Bankruptcy Law of 1st March 1993 were to be implemented rigorously then the results would indeed be cataclysmic. It is estimated, for example, that in Ryazan Oblast (an administrative district south of Moscow) 70% of enterprises would go bankrupt. Not only would the workers lose their jobs but the population would lose all their social services,

which are tied to the workplaces. This fact is likely to militate against such a radical programme of bankruptcies, at least until after the elections in December.

The productive sector where there has been the greatest penetration of the market is in energy production: coal, oil and natural gas. But there are serious limits to this. In the mines for example 83% of output still has to be delivered at state prices—lower than cost. The shortfall to the coal-field combines is made up by state subsidies. Only 17% of production is left for the market and most of this is not for actual sale but for barter for consumer goods. Miners' wages are now ten times the average wage, but enterprises have to ship in foodstuffs and consumer goods for their miners to buy.

Restoration

This is why *Workers Power* argues that capitalism has not yet been restored in Russia, despite the intentions of the regime. Karl Marx understood very well that merchant capital, restricted to the sphere of circulation, cannot determine the character of the mode of production.

Despite the transformation of the central planning ministries (Gosplan, Gosbank, the State Supply Commission and the industry ministries) into the Economics Ministry and the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the dominant sector of the state economy—despite the terrible falls in production it has suffered—continues to work on an entirely "un-economic" (i.e. non-profitable) basis.

Catastrophe

The managers of the state industries would certainly like to transform themselves into the owners, or at least the managing directors, of fully private enterprises. But the wish alone is not enough. Fearing both the workers and the vast lower managerial strata, they have been obliged to continue production and preserve employment on almost any basis, to ensure the continued provision of the basic means of life and vital social services. This testifies to the resilience of the post-capitalist property relations in Russia, even though the managers hate them and seek to destroy them, and even though the working class is indifferent to their preservation and wants simply to preserve their jobs.

These property forms still act as an enormous obstacle to Yeltsin's attempts to break up the moribund mass of the old planned economy. No automatic economic process, no "hidden hand", will or can break that up by itself. This economic blockage could not be removed without resolving the political dual power situation.

That is why the neo-liberals pressed Yeltsin towards a decisive confrontation with the forces obstructing his policies in parliament. Now that Yeltsin has consolidated his power through the October coup, it is all the more urgent for the working class to defend the post-capitalist property forms. Failure will mean a historic defeat and a social catastrophe. ■

THREE MILLION people are entirely dependent on aid to prevent them freezing or starving to death. But UN officials and British politicians are playing a game of brinkmanship with these three million lives in a brutal attempt to impose a peace deal that will legitimise ethnic cleansing.

As usual, imperialist policy is a combination of the carrot and the stick. The carrot is being offered to Serbia: sanctions will be scaled down if the Bosnian Serbs give back 4% of the land they have seized. The stick is being waved at the Bosnian Muslims: unless they stop trying to evict Croat forces from their territory, the UN is threatening to suspend aid convoys.

Already UN convoys have been suspended for two weeks following the shooting of a Danish aid worker. Now David Owen is saying bluntly:

"The West in February or March is

Solidarity with Bosnian Muslims!

As winter closes in on the beleaguered victims of the war in Bosnia, UN and British imperialism are once again using aid as a political weapon.

Paul Morris reports.

going to have to make up its mind. If we can't persuade these people to negotiate a peace settlement then we may honestly have to say 'well there you are, you're on your own'."

It was no accident that this ominous threat was made on the eve of

a last ditch peace conference in Geneva, where UN negotiators were making plans to force the Bosnian government to sign away its country's right to exist.

The UN's cynical use of aid as a political weapon, and the fact that its

troops have not lifted a finger to stop ethnic cleansing, all show the urgency of a Europe-wide response from the working class.

What the Bosnian Muslims need most of all is unconditional aid and political solidarity from the working

class movements of the world.

We need a campaign for direct solidarity because that is something only socialists and working class militants can provide. Concretely we have to fight for:

• **Lift the arms embargo**

The arms embargo affects only the Bosnia-Herzegovina armed forces: Serbia and Croatia have their own arms industry, and Croatia has covert backing from German and Austrian imperialism. While the Croat HVO forces have been deploying attack helicopters in Central Bosnia under the noses of UN commanders, the Bosnian forces have to rely on pathetic supplies of small arms.

• **Asylum for all those fleeing the conflict in former Yugoslavia**

Millions sit shivering and starving within a few hours' journey of international airports that could take them to safety. Only the racist asylum wall erected around the European Union and diligent UN anti-refugee patrols prevent them fleeing.

• **UN troops out of the Balkans**

The UN troops are only the prison warders of ethnically divided Bosnia. They have never defended the victims of ethnic cleansing and never will. They will be used to turn the tap of aid on and off to force the Muslims to accept a reactionary peace.

Solution

Last month the Workers Aid for Bosnia Convoy took an important step towards an independent, working class solution to this nightmare. Sixteen lorries filled with food, clothing and medical aid reached the Bosnian border. The trucks, the aid and a considerable sum of money had been raised via trade union donations and through working class community efforts in Britain, Ireland, Sweden and Denmark.

The convoy was blocked by UN commander General Jean Cot. The UNHCR (UN High Commission on Refugees) in Croatia boycotted the Convoy because of its independent, political, nature; because it demonstrated the ability of the working class to act in solidarity with the Bosnians and highlighted the hypocrisy of the imperialists in the process.

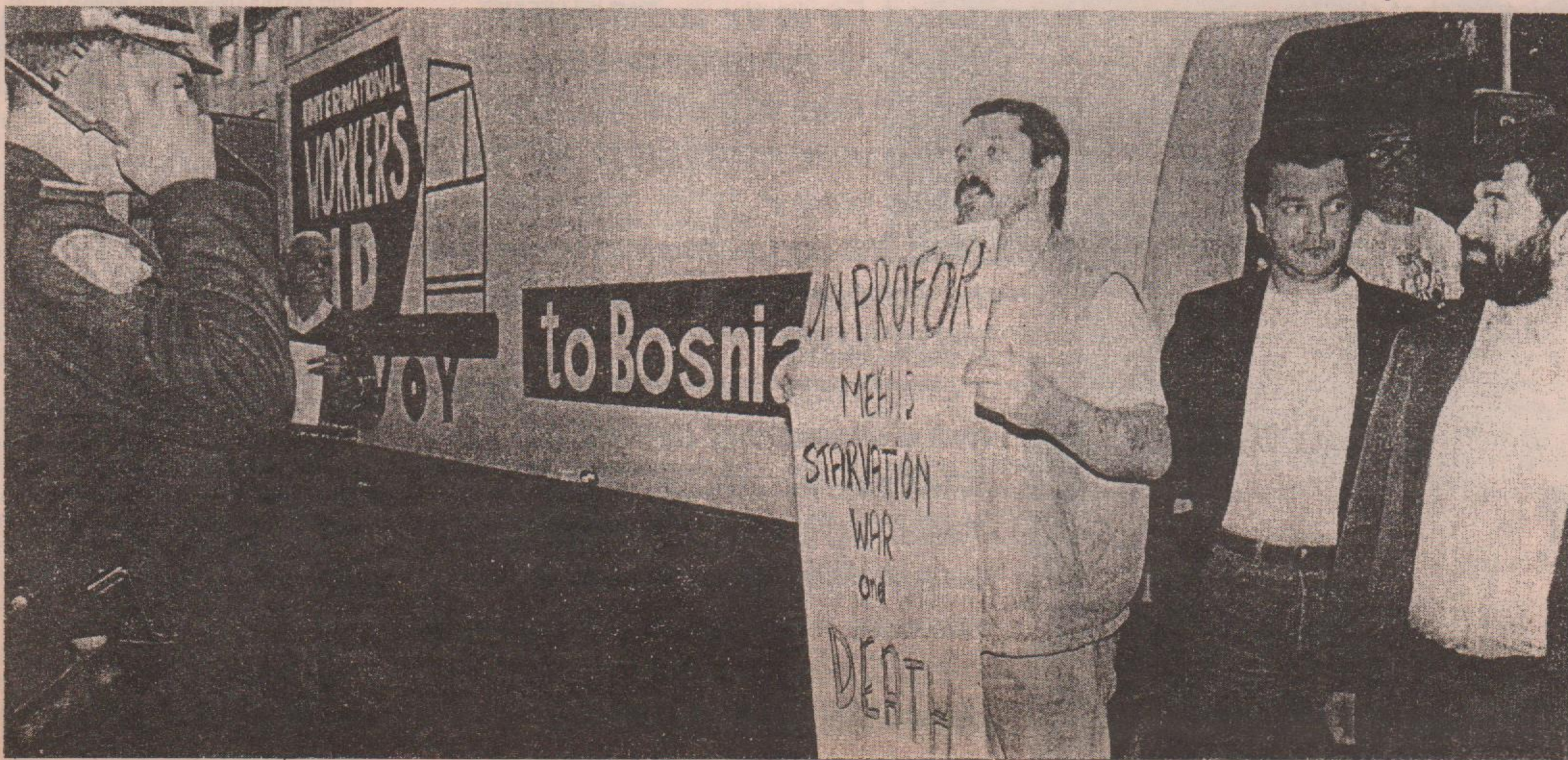
The Convoy blockaded UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force) HQ in Zagreb, demanding a UN escort. UNPROFOR were bombarded with over 100 faxes from major trade unions and union federations demanding safe passage for the Convoy, including the TGWU and AEEU in Britain, the French CGT and the Central Organisation of Swedish Workers. UN soldiers replied by putting sand in the petrol tank of one lorry.

After another failed attempt to get to Tuzla, the Convoy unloaded most of its trucks in refugee camps in Croatia. Three trucks, from Denmark, Belgium and Britain, attempted to find a way via Split and central Bosnia, but were obliged to paint out all political slogans from the truck-sides, and to make their way alone through very dangerous country.

Heroes

These trucks arrived in the multi-ethnic Bosnian city of Tuzla in the second week of November and their drivers were greeted as "heroes" by the workers' movement there. Now another convoy from Workers Aid in Sweden is attempting the same route.

It is vital that every workers' organisation in Britain heeds the call for solidarity and aid for the Bosnian Muslims. It can be done. The International Workers Aid for Bosnia Campaign has called an International Day of Action on 11 December. Organise collections, vigils and meetings in your area on that day. In London, workers should join the picket of the UN HQ demanding the opening of Tuzla airport for aid supplies. ■



THE WORKERS AID for Bosnia Convoy report-back conference on 30 October gave a classic display of the ability of centrist groups (who vacillate between revolutionary phrases and reformist practice) to turn one step forward into two steps back.

Workers Power, along with Socialist Outlook and the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe, had fought for this to be a labour movement delegate conference, placing the campaign on a sound organisational and political basis. This was effectively sabotaged by the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP-Workers Press).

Registration and voting were open to anybody who turned up. In the event over 250 people voted at the conference, but only 180 registered! Delegates were greeted with a hall bedecked with a slogan no-one had discussed or approved in the campaign before—"UN must open the Northern Route to Tuzla!"

Approach

Since the Convoy was stopped on the northern route to Tuzla in mid-October, the WRP (Workers Press) has decided to turn this demand into a mantra. According to WRP member Bob Myers, the opening of the northern route was "the key to breaking the Vance-Owen plan".

What is the problem with this approach? In the first place there is a political danger. Any aid convoy has to negotiate with the military powers in the area to pass through. It was entirely legitimate to demand the UN give permission for the WAFB Convoy to pass through the Serbian-controlled Posavina Corridor, and to place a nominal UN escort at the head of the Convoy. But what does the demand "UN open the Northern Route to Tuzla" mean in practice, as

Workers' aid sabotaged

a strategy for the WAFB campaign?

It could easily be interpreted as a call on the UN to blast its way through, effectively severing a strategic Serb supply line. At least one WRP speaker at the conference, Jack Vance, explicitly suggested this. Such a demand—a call for imperialist military intervention—flies in the face of the supposedly anti-imperialist platform of the campaign. As Paul Morris, speaking on behalf of Workers Power, pointed out: "There is one thing the UN can do even better than allowing through our convoy—it can get out of the Balkans!" Morris and others who spoke out against the WRP's strategy and their bureaucratic manoeuvres faced a barrage of heckling and even threats of physical violence.

The second problem with the slogan the WRP has chosen to foist on the campaign is that it is one-sided from a logistical point of view. The opening of Tuzla airport—at present closed only on the insistence of the UN troops—would provide a far easier way to feed the starving populations of Northern and Central Bosnia.

When the Convoy was forced to turn back short of its objective a small group, mainly comprised of supporters of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), broke away and, posing as simply humanitarian aid, managed to find a way via Split to Tuzla. This group was condemned by the WRP! Worse still, the WRP managed to mysteriously lose a fax sent to the confer-

ence from the Tuzla bound breakaway group demanding support.

Workers Press claimed this group "capitulated to the UN and broke with the purposes of Workers Aid". But wait a minute; isn't the purpose of workers' aid to get aid to workers in Tuzla? Unfortunately for the WRP the small breakaway group was the only part of the convoy which got to Tuzla.

In addition to the turn away from anti-imperialist campaigning, the conference revealed serious weaknesses in the organisation of the WAFB campaign. The conference decided not to elect a representative steering committee, leaving control in the hands of the self-appointed WRP members and their fellow travellers. The conference also refused to recognise an international delegate meeting, scheduled for the next day and planned months in advance, after the WRP claimed they had "never heard of it".

Democracy

All of this means that the WAFB campaign, with no internal democracy, no structured international links and no clear anti-imperialist policy, cannot fulfil its original purpose. Workers Power has decided to withdraw support for the campaign and to support its forthcoming activities on their merits.

But the sorry tale does not end with the 30 October Conference. The international delegate meeting

held on 31 October, once the WRP and its associates had walked out, was effectively dominated by USFI supporters. The USFI has built solidarity groups, especially in Sweden and Denmark, but often on a minimal, pacifist basis.

Thus, on the insistence of USFI leaders Catherine Samary and Dick Forsland, the International Workers Aid for Bosnia Campaign, which was constituted at that meeting, decided to exclude the two crucial demands which mark out working class solidarity from purely humanitarian aid at the present: namely "UN out of the Balkans" and "Lift the Arms Embargo".

Initiative

But on the initiative of LRCI supporters from Britain and Austria the campaign did call for an international day of action on 11 December and provisionally scheduled an international workers' movement conference, which looks set to take place in Zagreb in March.

To cap it all, these decisions were taken only "provisionally" so that USFI supporters could refer to their reformist and pacifist allies in their national campaigns before committing them to anything other than raising material aid.

The British department of this campaign has nevertheless retained a formal commitment to anti-imperialist demands. Workers Power and the LRCI will continue to fight for an international Bosnian solidarity campaign committed to political as well as aid work.

Such a campaign is essential to stop the imposition of an imperialist carve-up and the destruction of the Bosnian people. What a tragedy to see centrist "Trotskyism" sabotaging this task after only the first few steps have been taken. ■

Dear Comrades,

Your paper has a sharp eye for spotting international crises. I am surprised you haven't carried a big article on the crisis to end all others—the crisis of the English international football team.

I'll be honest. I support England in its quests for football glory and I'm fed up that the team won't be in the World Cup. You don't have to be a racist or fascist to feel like this.

That said, I think it is important for socialists to say something about the "crisis" of the national game, embodied in the resignation of Graham Taylor and the absence of volunteers stepping forward to replace him.

Taylor was a bad manager. He was never sure what his best team was, he was uncer-

Football fossils

tain in his tactical approach to key games, communicating that uncertainty to his players (the Norway debacle) and incapable of coaching the team in a way that enabled it to play to its limited strengths. But still, he only embodies the real crisis of the game. He is not the cause of it.

The real crisis of football has two components. One is the discouragement of skill as an official policy of the Football Association (FA), the game's governing body. The FA's director of coaching, Charles Hughes, favours kick and run football with the stress on physicality and fast run-

ning. Ball control, passing and skillful approach play have only a minor role in his scheme.

Gary Mabbutt's fractured skull at the hands (or rather elbows) of a Wimbledon player is an extreme example of where this leads. England's atrocious passing against San Marino's part-timers is a more typical one.

But this leads us on to the more fundamental problem, the core component of English football's crisis—the control of the game by the FA. The FA is not an elected body. It is made up of football chairmen along with representa-

tives of the military, the public schools and other solidly capitalist establishments, in regional and county associations.

It is a capitalist institution and like so many other capitalist institutions in Britain today it reeks of decay. It is thoroughly "old school", which is why it is rigidly opposed to any serious improvements in the level of skill in the game. The England team, you see, don't need skill.

They need old style blood and guts. Skill is something we leave to "johnny foreigner". (By the way, this is the very reason why the FA dodderers would never consider Brian Clough for the England job—he was too independent and put too high a premium on skill).

Behind this deep-seated conservatism in the ranks of the Fossil Association lurks hard cash. As a capitalist organisation it is concerned mainly with profit. It has engineered the Premier League for just this purpose—a television related commercial enterprise that hasn't improved English football one bit.

It needs a crammed fixture list—as do the clubs themselves (the Football League is no socialist alternative to the FA)—to make money. More matches mean more money. A lot of that money comes from working class people paying inflated prices at the turnstile.

But increasingly both the FA and the League look to make money through sponsorship deals, through televised matches, through more and more cup competitions with the names of household appliances, motor cars and soft drinks attached to them. Try singing, "just like a team that's going to win the Coca Cola Cup"!

I am not one to say that there was ever a golden age of football, free from commercial pressures. It has always been a game run by capitalists for their profit and local prestige. But it is the case that commercial considerations are taking over from all other factors in the game and are dominating it in an unprecedented fashion.

So long as this remains the case the crisis of English football, like the economic crisis of capitalism itself, will be a cyclical phenomenon. And for those of us who love football—a sickening one too.

Yours in comradeship
Arthur Merton

FROM THE MINERS OF TUZLA

We believe in your strength

Statement from Tuzla Energy Workers' Union 17 November 1993:

Tuzla miners salute the International Workers' Aid Convoy.

We are warmly grateful for the aid you have given. We are very sorry that the complete convoy has not been successful in crossing the northern corridor from Zupanja and just some of the trade unionists' representatives from Britain, Belgium and Sweden reached Tuzla. We are especially grateful to the autonomous trade union from Sweden.

Jenny from Belgium, Tim and Mick from London, Terry and Mohammed from Sweden [the Convoy members who reached Tuzla] are heroes in that they succeeded in their aim, despite a disastrous blockade. Because of that for seven and a half months nothing has been delivered to Tuzla.

We have heard with fear the news and problems of putting into practice the idea that all the miners in Europe help miners and electricity workers in Tuzla. As the information about your humanitarian mission has been arriving our fears have been turning into great pride that we belong to that big family—the family of European workers and European trades unionists.

We hope that during your stay in Tuzla, seeing our mines, our power station and our struggle that you realise that our life under blockade is extremely hard. We expect disastrous consequences this winter—freezing and starvation.

We hope that on your return home you will tell the truth about our situation and build the demonstrations on 11 December which are calling for the Tuzla airport to be opened, or any corridor for getting through food

and fuel. If any of this cannot be done the forecast is bleak.

We the miners and other workers in the energy industry are doing super-human work to get some light and heat in the houses of hundreds of thousands of people in the Tuzla district. We are helpless without food, medicines, clothes, shoes and the means to produce. We believe in you, your strength, to succeed together and help us survive. Thank you for everything you have done and want to do in the future. We will never forget it and look forward to the next meeting and we wish you every luck and success.

With all best wishes to win Good Luck!

What you can do

Already International Workers Aid for Bosnia has delivered aid to refugee camps in Croatia and a small convoy to Tuzla. A second convoy is in ex-Yugoslavia, on the way to Tuzla. We have made contact with many trade union and workers' organisations in ex-Yugoslavia and en route through Europe. There are plans for a huge convoy in February.

We need money urgently to:

- Pay for getting Convoy 1 back to Western Europe, for repairs, diesel etc
- Pay telephone expenses for the Croatian trade unions (UATUC)
- Support Convoy 2 on the

road to Tuzla

• Pay for the International Workers Aid office/logistical centre in Zagreb.

A central bank account is being organised in London—for details contact IWAFFB on 081-694 9799/071-978 8622 or via PO Box 30, London SE15 5EP.

**Picket UN HQ London
Open Tuzla Airport
Now!**

**Euro-wide day of
action!**

**1pm—3pm Saturday
11 December**

**20 Buckingham Gate
London SW1**

A great success

French and Irish sections of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) greatly enriching the discussion. Representatives of other political tendencies were able to contribute in a thoroughly democratic environment.

A comrade from the Irish Workers Group delivered a moving first hand account of the present situation in Northern Ireland. It demonstrated that there can be no genuine peace while the sectarian six county state, backed by murderous British troops, oppresses the anti-unionist population.

Racism, fascism and black liberation were the subjects of a panel discussion on the Saturday evening involving speakers from the Newham Monitoring Project, South West London Anti-Fascist Association and Manchester Anti Fascist Youth. The lively discussion did not stop until kicking out time in the bar.

At the final rally, a young woman comrade from Pouvoir Ouvrier, the French section of the LRCI, described how we were playing a leading role in the explosive student strike against poor conditions and overcrowding. The strike has

since spread and students across France are taking action. Her contribution underlined how even a small number of revolutionaries can make a real impact if they are armed with strong politics and a clear programme.

In the final session a member of the editorial board of Workers Power, explained how the crisis in British politics and the mounting radicalisation of young people presented a real opportunity for building a new revolutionary party in Britain.

It must be a party based on an unambiguous programme linking the struggles of today to the fight for revolution, on true internal democracy and discipline in action, and on the firm foundations of internationalism.■

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We promised that **Where is Britain Going?**, the two day event organised by Workers Power in November, would be "a weekend of discussion and debate devoted to explaining the changing conditions of the class struggle, and giving concrete answers to the problems facing the working class". It more than lived up to expectations.

Throughout the weekend, whether the discussion was on the Labour Party, the crisis of Stalinism, the roots of racism or women and working class struggle, the clarity and depth of Workers Power's analysis and programme shone through. It was also a thoroughly international event with comrades from the Peruvian,

Workers power

INSIDE
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- ★ South Africa - victory or sell out?

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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BUDGET BUTCHERY!



NO VAT ON FUEL!

THE WELFARE state, as we know it, is being dismantled. This is not a piece of exaggerated socialist rhetoric. It is the official agenda of the Tory party.

In the weeks leading up to the budget a co-ordinated campaign against the welfare state was launched by the government. The rat pack of Lilley, Portillo and Redwood led the way. Unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit and state pensions were all signalled as victims in the cuts package.

"Back to basics" chimed John Major, giving these proposals his blessing. The basics were individual responsibility, family values and respect for authority. These phrases are easily decoded.

They mean: pay for your own welfare through private health and pension schemes; use the unpaid work of women in the family home to replace the closed nurseries, hospitals and homes for the elderly; be ready for a law and order crackdown to deal with the social problems that these "basics" will unleash.

The package of cuts in public spending in Chancellor Clarke's budget is the first stage in the "back to basics" attack on the welfare state. But the cuts aren't enough to deal with the Tories' public spending problems. To reduce their £50 billion deficit they are hitting us through higher taxes too.

The Tories are proud to be known as the party of low taxation. Low taxation for the bosses, that is. While the Tories have cut direct tax on wages and profits, overall taxes for the majority of us have increased year on year.

The budget increases this taxation squeeze on us even further. Even the limited increase in direct taxes (paid in proportion to income) that Clarke was considering have been reduced by £1 billion. The bosses, who would have been hit by a bigger rise, told Clarke that there must be no big rise. The Institute of Directors warned, "the Conservatives were not elected to increase taxes". Clarke duly obliged them.

Yet taxes for the rest of us have been increased. The Tories do this by raising the level of indirect tax, notably the infamous VAT. This tax is not paid according to income. We all have to pay the same VAT on goods regardless of how much we earn. A millionaire will pay the VAT increase on fuel. A pensioner on less than £70 a week will pay exactly the same.

This indirect tax is unfair at the best of times. But to pay for their tax cuts on profits and wages, the Tories have repeatedly raised VAT, to 8%, 15% and now 17.5%. The working class are forced to shoulder the burden of tax cuts for the rich.

Today the richest 10% of taxpayers pay 32% of their total income in taxes. The poorest 10% pay 43%. A jobless youth, claiming £34 a week income support, pays the same flat rate as the Direct Line Insurance boss who has just received his pay

for last year: £42 million!

Clarke has already announced £6.7 billion tax increases starting next April, including £1 billion that will come from VAT on fuel. In 1990-91 nearly 60,000 people, most of them elderly, died from cold related illnesses. Age Concern puts the annual figure for such deaths at 30,000 per year. A survey by Panorama predicted that VAT on fuel would increase this by one third. But the profits made by British Gas in 1991-92 totalled exactly £1 billion. These will be sacrosanct while at least another 10,000 die in misery.

Meanwhile 100,000 rich people evade taxes every year by using offshore havens or spending part of the year out of the country and £20 billion is owed by British companies in unpaid corporation tax.

The budget marks a new stage in the Tories' attack on the welfare state. It is also a further move towards their long standing aim of shifting the tax burden more and more onto the working class.

Labour shouted their opposition to the budget in the House of Commons. They came on the TV to tell us why it was not a good budget. All well and good, but Labour's hot air won't warm a single pensioner's home. It won't stop the sackings, the closures and the misery that the cuts package will cause.

What we need is a mass campaign, rooted in the labour movement and working class communities to fight the effects of this budget now. The elderly are most at risk. They will die in their tens of thousands because of VAT on fuel.

We need to organise throughout the entire class in defence of the elderly, and the millions of others who can't afford the new rise in fuel bills, to ensure that their inability to pay the VAT on fuel does not lead to a single disconnection of their power supply. Unions in the power supply industries must pledge themselves now to a refusal to disconnect supplies.

We need to back this up by getting workers in the relevant industries to refuse to process the punitive fuel bills. We need to build a massive protest movement to take to the streets in every city under the banner: No VAT on Fuel!

To ensure the success of this struggle it needs to be linked to the whole package of cuts that we are facing. We need to organise committees of workers in every community and every workplace that are facing cuts. We need to organise the unemployed into a national movement to fight the attacks on their benefits. We need to get strikes to stop every sacking and closure.

If we can build a movement united in struggle against all of these attacks then we can make resistance to the effects of this budget the beginning of a campaign to save and extend the welfare state. And we can do something else that millions are crying out for. We can bring down this Tory government. ■