

workers power

INSIDE

Number 179 June 1994

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RWANDA GENOCIDE

Tombstone of the new world order

"IT IS GENOCIDE which is being committed . . . and the international community is still discussing what ought to be done." These words of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali sum up the disgusting hypocrisy of the world's leaders. For all their talk of a "new world order" they have watched over half a million black Africans massacred in just seven weeks.

When the grotesque wealth and privileges of a tiny handful of Kuwaiti oil sheikhs were threatened, the UN, led by the USA, summoned up the most devastating array of high-tech weaponry history has ever seen. This, our rulers told us, heralded a "new world order" where peace and democracy would reign. That "order" has been finally buried in the thousands of mass graves dotted around Rwanda.

Rwanda is one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world. For over a hundred years, Rwanda's fertile soil has produced superprofits for the Western powers.

Through colonial rule, the imperialists entrenched a vicious class system of exploitation in Rwanda. Since Rwanda gained independence they have continued to make big profits from arming and training government forces. These forces have now massacred 7% of the population and forced millions more into exile.

The media and politicians have the cheek to call the fighting in Rwanda a "tribal conflict". Nobody should be fooled. This term is simply a racist cover for the West's lack of concern and ultimate responsibility.

Hutus and Tutsis have lived side by side in central Africa for centuries. They share the same language and culture. Whilst class divisions existed, it was the Belgian imperialists who systemised this, favouring the minority Tutsis and stamping the bearer's ethnic origin on every identity card. These ID cards are now being used by the pogromists to identify victims.

Every worker in Britain should call on the government to provide unconditional emergency aid for the millions of refugees who are living in grass huts on the borders of neighbouring countries. Britain should also open its borders to relieve the African states of the burden of providing for the refugees.

At the same time we should oppose UN military intervention. We can trust neither the corrupt, capitalist dictators of Africa nor the lying, murdering governments of Europe or the USA to bring a progressive end to Rwanda's torment.

Any UN force will be there to



shore up the conditions for renewed exploitation and oppression. It will be there to imprison refugees within the borders of a country that has collapsed into chaos.

Rwanda is not an aberration. It is just one of a list of countries that have collapsed towards barbarism as the imperialist order has come unstuck. Rwanda, Bosnia, Haiti, Liberia, Kurdistan . . . these are warnings to the workers of the whole world of the horrors capitalism holds in store—not in the far off future but in the closing years of the 20th Century. From decaying imperialism and collapsing Stalinism only two things can emerge: socialism or barbarism.

The terrifying glimpse of barbarism in Rwanda should renew our determination to fight for the socialist alternative. ■

● Background to the massacres – see page 11

SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

... the choice facing humanity

BY JOHN Major's standards Sunday and Olubunmi Ogunwobi should be model citizens of 90s Britain. They are both devout Christians, active in their local church. Sunday is a parent governor at their eldest daughter's school and chair of its Parent Teachers Association. The family have never relied on state benefits.

But Sunday and Olubunmi don't conform to the Home Office's vision for Britain. They are both black people from Nigeria. They also can't scrape together a cool £750,000 to purchase UK securities and shares. As a result Britain's immigration authorities want to deport the Ogunwobis along with their three London-born children.

In March Sunday sought sanctuary in an east London church. A few weeks later Olubunmi and their children joined him after carloads of im-

RACIST LAWS KEEP OUT POOR, BUT . . .

Rich can buy their way in

BY G R McCOLL

working class black people aren't welcome here.

The new rules for "persons of independent means" show the class character of Britain's immigration laws. The changes in the implementation of the 1971 Immigration Act codify existing "unwritten practice". Individuals with large sums of cash or capital have long been able to enter the UK, regardless of "any previous connections with Britain".

What is desperately needed is a national campaign which links together the resistance of countless local efforts to stop forced repatriation. Through a combination of work in existing black and immigrant communities and a sustained orientation to the labour movement such a campaign could launch a fight to scrap the whole arsenal of racist immigration controls developed by successive governments.

There should be no need for special pleading on humanitarian

grounds. Regardless of colour, country of origin or wealth people should be able to live and work where they choose, with full citizenship rights. Socialists in the unions have the task of winning them to active opposition to deportations and immigration controls in general.

Already, in Greater Manchester, the Rahman family and Florence Okolo campaigns have gained the support of UNISON branches which are organising a meeting later this month. ■

AFTER MILLWALL

No room for complacency

THE DEFEAT of Derek Beackon in Millwall stopped the fascist BNP's attempt to control the Isle of Dogs in East London. It was a victory celebrated by anti-racists all over Britain. But nobody should rest easy.

Not only did the BNP increase its vote on the Island, but it gained a total of 10,000 votes across East London. In the Globe Town and Custom House wards of Tower Hamlets the fascists polled over 20%. In Newham—scene of a coming parliamentary by-election—they gained 33% and 24% in their two target wards. Outside London, whilst both the BNP and the National Front scored poorly in the council elections, the effect of their election bid was to polarise politics around the issue of race in several areas.

Confidence

Fascist politics is not just about winning votes. It is about giving confidence to racists to go out and attack black people, and to voice their racism aloud. It is about organising previously passive racists into an active movement that tries to intimidate black people, trade unionists and the left.

That is why *Workers Power* approached the task of beating the fascists in East London with the aim of delivering a setback to their whole strategy, not just their electoral ambitions.

Giving critical support to Labour candidates, we took part in canvassing and leafletting on the Isle of Dogs. From this experience it has to be said that Labour in London is ill-equipped to challenge the fascists. Having ripped the activist heart out of the local party by purging the left wing, the Labour bureaucrats seemed to be genuinely surprised when their right wing stooges defected to the racist "East London People's Alliance". James Hunt, the Labour candidate Derek Beackon beat last September, stood as an "Independent Islander" on an openly racist ticket. Activists at the count reported up to 500 ballot papers voting for both Beackon and Hunt!

Labour bureaucrat Nick Raynsford announced after the result that the party had made Millwall "a national priority". This was news to most activists on the ground, who knew from experience that it was anti-racists and socialists—many of whom were not Labour party members or who had even been expelled from the party—who actually mobilised support on the doorsteps. La-

bour's electoral machine, and the promised "national figures" were notable by their absence.

On the doorstep *Workers Power* supporters were able to engage in discussions not just with Labour voters fed up with the party's inaction but also many wavering fascist voters. To do this we tore up the traditional rule of Labour Party canvassing—"don't argue with them". We argued all right—for militant class politics, not the pale pink Toryism of the national leadership.

We combined this electoral agitation with a campaign to stop the BNP from canvassing. The BNP, for all its cult of violence, was clearly terrified of an organised fightback by anti-fascists. At the mere sight of Labour campaigners Beackon and his thugs were ready to telephone the police.

What was needed was a mass show of force by anti-fascists. This was something the Anti Nazi League (ANL) went out of its way to avoid. The ANL effectively took turns with the BNP to leaflet the Isle of Dogs, avoiding confrontation. They never once mobilised the kind of numbers that were necessary to stop the fascists campaigning.

Workers Power, along with individual activists and anti-racist groups, formed the London Anti-Fascist Coalition with the express purpose of holding a public demonstration against the BNP on their own patch.

A small but well organised demonstration of over 100 denied the fascists access to their chosen platform—the car park of the local supermarket—on the Saturday before the election. Speakers and banners from Tower Hamlets Trades Council and local NUT groups were present.

Sectarianism

This demo could have been much bigger but for the sectarianism which is crippling the anti-fascist struggle. The ANL left the island as soon as the anti-fascist demo started. The YRE sent the merest handful to the demo. Red Action—self styled experts at physically confronting the fascists—did demonstrate . . . separately and with no prior publicity two hours before the Coalition demo. Red Action's leaflet advised local workers not to vote for Labour. Fortunately the working class spumed this advice, which would have let the fascists in. As usual Red Action rejected not only a united front to defeat fascism at the polls but any



Nazi leader Tyndall

organised action with other forces.

The third strand of our activity consisted of fighting for strike action in the event of a BNP victory. We fought for and won a commitment to industrial action from the NUT's East London Teachers Asso-

ciation and, along with other anti-racists, began the difficult job of overcoming the active sabotage of the Tower Hamlets UNISON bureaucracy and fought for council workers' strike action.

This is *Workers Power's* record in

Millwall, and we are proud to report it in detail. It shows what a revolutionary socialist organisation can do armed with the right politics. Many anti-fascist activists reject the idea of a disciplined combat party. *Workers Power's* ability to combine election work, anti-fascist agitation, propaganda for a wide range of socialist ideas and the physical struggle against the fascists on the ground was only possible because our members and supporters act together, in common discipline, around an agreed goal.

Time and again we heard from individual anti-fascists that they "could not do everything", that they could not mobilise their sympathisers to do this or that activity, either through fear or apathy or through disorganisation.

The revolutionary combat organisation is an antidote to all that. Even with our small forces *Workers Power* played a significant role in a defeat of the fascists. And we put to shame the sectarians who refused to unite in action around the goal of defeating fascism in its number one target area. ■

SHEFFIELD

Darnall youth fight back!

BLACK PEOPLE in the Darnall area of Sheffield have been subjected to repeated racist attacks. But on the last occasion the young people of the area refused to be intimidated. A large group of white youths staged a racist rampage through the area at the beginning of May. Local, mainly black, youth fought back in numbers.

As a result the police made a number of arrests—not of the racists but of those who fought back—picking up several black youths at random.

Those arrested included a young man trying to make a statement to the police about having his car trashed by racists with baseball bats. The police that were with him and who were witnesses, decided against the evidence of their own eyes and ears to back up the arresting officer! The subsequent treatment of those arrested, including one 13 year old, was designed to intimidate the whole of the community and thereby "discourage" self-defence. This "discouragement" consisted of outright racist

abuse, assault, long delays in granting phone calls, no legal representation and no food.

Eight defendants, six of them black, that refused to be bound over were kept overnight and charged with public order offences.

In response to their treatment the defendants called a local defence meeting attended by hundreds of local youth and workers. At the meeting anger was clearly expressed against the police, the press and some of the community leaders. Three top ranking police officers, having tried the usual "any complaint will be fully investigated" line, realised their mistake and made a quick exit!

A picket of the local police station on 16 May was so well attended that the main road had to be closed to traffic. Unfortunately the decision not to allow banners and paper sellers on the picket meant that the opportunity for local trade unions, socialists and Labour Party members to publicly show their support was lost.

Some charges have been dropped but as we go to press a picket has

been called for the remaining defendants at Sheffield Magistrates Court on 1 June.

The campaign is demanding the dropping of all charges, an investigation of the local station's policing and the full support of the local council. The Darnall events underline the need for properly organised self-defence with full Labour movement backing.

Though fascists have been organising on the fringes in Sheffield, they are not strong. But the Darnall black community, like many up and down the country, found themselves on the receiving end of street violence encouraged by Tory racists and by the national attention given to the BNP. ■

Messages of support/donations:

Darnall Defence Campaign
447 Redmires Road
Lodgemoor
Sheffield S10 4LF
No Justice, No Peace!

EDITORIAL

How to beat the fascists

TOWER HAMLETS 5 MAY 1994. Despite losing its one and only council seat the BNP is celebrating an increased vote on the Isle of Dogs and 10,000 votes across East London. It is preparing its European and parliamentary be-election campaigns in East London secure in the knowledge that not one big mobilisation to prevent it from campaigning and deny it a platform has been mounted throughout the entire council campaign.

BOURNEMOUTH 18 MAY 1994. The first national conference of UNISON, Britain's biggest trade union, decisively rejects affiliation to the Anti Nazi League (ANL) in favour of the Anti Racist Alliance (ARA). The forces of the left are marginalised as careerist bureaucrats from the union's black caucus denounce the ANL. The scene is set to be repeated throughout the trade union conference season.

LONDON 29 MAY 1994. Between 100,000 and 150,000 take part in the Anti-Nazi League Carnival. The ANL Carnival is three times bigger than the TUC's own anti-racist demo held in London on 19 March.

What is going on? What is the significance of the mass anti-fascist movement which is being systematically ignored, sabotaged and slandered by the Labour movement's leaders? What is the way forward for the thousands who danced and demonstrated at the ANL Carnival? How can we translate mass outrage at the growth of fascism into a fighting strategy to beat the BNP?

Anti-fascist propaganda; mass demonstrations of workers and youth, supported by the trade unions, and backed up with organised self defence groups: these are the tried and tested methods of working class struggle against fascism. The key to making them a reality is working class unity in action—a united front, where the mass organisations and every tendency in the workers movement agree to pool their efforts and resources to drive the BNP off the streets.

Measured against this approach almost every tendency in the anti-racist movement has so far failed.

The ARA is in fact an alliance of convenience between the trade union bureaucracy and a layer of self-appointed "black leaders". Their common aim is to keep control of the growing anti-racist movement and prevent it developing in a revolutionary direction. The ARA leaders denounced over 50,000 black and white youth who attempted to storm the BNP HQ in Welling on 16 October 1993 as criminals. In alliance with the trade union leaders they organised a march aimed at sabotaging unity in action—a march which thankfully mobilised only 3,000 ageing bureaucrats and pacifists.

Since then the ARA has focused its attention on the fight to marginalise every genuine active anti-fascist campaign. Its success, amongst trade union conference delegations which are made up overwhelmingly of the rank and file, should not be ignored in the euphoria following the ANL Carnival.

A few bureaucrats and careerists could not on their own convince thousands of union members to vote against the ANL and Youth Against Racism in Europe unless their opposition was based on serious material foundations. Those foundations are the reformist consciousness of millions of organised trade unionists. Reformism says that any force, even in response to a fascist movement which is meting out violence against black people on a daily basis, is wrong, "immoral", "counterproductive".

The first task of any socialist and any serious anti-fascist campaign is to take on this argument and show how mass action, which will often necessarily be violent when facing violent fascist thugs, is the only way to stop fascism.

Thousands of ANL members have been carrying out a tireless political campaign up and down the country to expose the fascist nature of the BNP. They have succeeded in drawing vast numbers into opposition to the Nazis. This is excellent. But on the key issue of the right to challenge the fascists' violence through physical methods, the record of the ANL's leaders, drawn almost exclusively from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), has to be judged as scandalous.

For two years, as local anti-fascist groups struggled to stop the rise of the BNP, the SWP abstained from the struggle, insisting that racism was on the wane. It condemned those who organised to stop Nazi gigs and demos as "squaddists"—violent macho nutters who revelled in violence and who, by implication, were little different than the fascists themselves.

When the SWP finally woke up to reality it relaunched the Anti-Nazi League, but on a basis which specifically excluded the action necessary to smash the BNP. Labour MP and ANL spokesperson Peter Hain announced, at the relaunch, that there would be "no punch up politics".

To make sure that thousands of existing, organised anti-fascists did not get a chance to influence the direction of the relaunched ANL, the SWP decreed that there would be no local

The tens of thousands of workers and youth who have turned out to demonstrate against fascism can be organised into a force that can sweep away the BNP, isolate the racists within working class communities, and begin a fightback against the social deprivation that is fuelling racism.

ANL groups set up. An SWP internal mailing informed members that the fascists had been beaten in the 1970s "without local anti-fascist groups" (a brazen lie) and that such groups would "only attract sectarians".

SWP members who now find themselves building for a conference on 11 June of "delegates from local and workplace ANL groups" should welcome the SWP's change of mind, but should question the motives of their leadership. Over the last two years they have passed up the chance to organise groups in every workplace, town and housing estate.

On the ground the ANL, which is in most places exclusively made up of SWP members, has systematically abstained from organising the action necessary to deny fascism a platform. It has inculcated a pathological opposition amongst its membership to the very idea of organised and disciplined stewards' groups, and as a result has left its paper sellers, and on 16 October 1993 a huge demo, undefended from fascist and police attack. It is a self-defeating approach, born of the notion that the ANL cannot become a mass force if it is associated with street violence.

But that idea is nonsense. The press, backed up by ARA, and the trade union leaders screamed out the message: the ANL is

a criminally violent organisation. Yet, 150,000 working class youth were prepared to turn out for an ANL Carnival.

The third strand within the anti-fascist movement consists of those who agree with the need for organised force to deny the fascists a platform. But this wing has largely succeeded in marginalising itself from the mass anti-fascist movement. Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), which Workers Power helped to refound and build, has now effectively been reduced to a front organisation for the Red Action group.

Time and again we have seen AFA raise the undoubted need for discipline and security but as an alternative to mass agitation and the fight for support from working class organisations. Under Red Action's control we have seen AFA boycott mass demonstrations, leaving anti-fascist politics to the ANL leaders and ARA.

The result has not been to strengthen the hand of those prepared to confront the fascists physically. It has been to weaken and divide them.

There is a way out of this situation and it does not need a genius to work it out.

• We have to fight for maximum unity in action of all existing anti-fascist campaigns on the basis of the clear demand: No Platform for Fascists. We have to link up with the self defence associations which already exist—formally and informally—in black communities under attack.

• We have to wage a political struggle to commit the largest anti-fascist organisation, the ANL, towards the forms of organisation and action that can stop the fascists. That means a regularly meeting ANL group in every town, with an elected and accountable leadership. It means a nationally elected ANL steering committee of delegates from local groups. It means a formal commitment to the policy of No Platform for Fascists by the ANL, even if that means a few pacifists and Labour MPs drop out of the campaign. It means the organisation of national and local ANL stewards groups able to take on and defeat the fascist thugs. Any fears of such groups developing a logic of their own, placing the physical struggle above the political, or encouraging "macho behaviour", can be quelled by placing the anti-fascist defence organisation clearly under the control of the elected leadership of the campaign.

• We have to renew the struggle for trade union support, at national and local level, for all those campaigns committed to actively fighting the fascists. The ANL, YRE and as many black community organisations as possible must launch a speaking campaign throughout the trade unions at branch level to attempt to win affiliations and support, so that next year's round of trade union conferences cannot be duped into passivity by the bureaucrats and careerists.

The tens of thousands of workers and youth who have turned out to demonstrate against fascism again and again over the last two years can be organised into a force that can sweep away the BNP, isolate the racists within working class communities, and begin a fightback against the social deprivation that is fuelling racism. All it needs is revolutionary strategy and tactics. That is what Workers Power, alone on the left, has been fighting for consistently. ■

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workers power

MEETINGS

-
- BIRMINGHAM**
- Can the Tories survive?
Monday 13 June
- The education system in crisis
Monday 27 June
- See sellers for details
-
- LEICESTER**
- Youth and revolution
Thursday 23 June 7pm
Castle Community Rooms
Tower Street/Welford Rd
- Europe after the elections
Tuesday 28 June 8pm
See sellers for venue
-
- COVENTRY**
- D-Day: the class struggle in World War Two
Wednesday 8 June
- Rwanda: socialism or barbarism?
Wednesday 29 June
- see sellers for details
-
- LONDON**
- London School of Economics
Room S419, St Clements
Building, Houghton Street
WC2
- Feminism - the path to women's liberation?
Tuesday 14 June 7.30pm
(Women only discussion meeting)
- Rwanda: the legacy of colonialism
Tuesday 28 June 7.30pm
-
- SHEFFIELD**
- Bolshie Women
- Sexuality - fixed or fluid?
Tuesday 21 June 8.00pm
- Workers Power Meeting
- D-Day: the class struggle in World War Two
Wednesday 15 June 8.00pm
- see sellers for details
- ~
- CARDIFF**
- D-Day: the class struggle in World War Two
Wednesday 22 June
see sellers for details

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WHAT SMITH REALLY STOOD FOR

THE TORY gutter press wept crocodile tears over "the best prime minister we never had". They were not always such enthusiastic admirers of John Smith.

The Sun wrote back in 1992, "He's fat, he's 53, he's had a heart attack and he's taking on a stress loaded job... He may be a leader but he can't get life insurance... he could be Britain's first Kamikaze politician."

Despite the personal tragedy of his death, socialists cannot share in the political praise that has since been heaped on him.

- As a young student he was a committed supporter of right wing Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell. At a May Day march in 1962 at which Gaitskell was barracked by a huge crowd of workers, Smith was part of a group of Labour right-wing bodyguards protecting Gaitskell. In his speech he foreshadowed a later theme, denouncing the left for distracting from the issue of winning elections with all their talk of policies and principles.

- In the 1974 Labour government he worked at the energy ministry, put there, according to Bernard Ingham "to watch Wedgie [Benn] on behalf of Harold Wilson". Subsequently he became a loyal cabinet minister in Wilson's wage-cutting government.

- In the early 1980s he defended the traitor Reg Prentice, who went over to the Tories, opposed the party's democratic reforms and acted as campaign manager in right-winger Roy Hattersley's bid for the Labour leadership.

- During the Kinnock years he supported the purges and was a key figure in ensuring Labour's general shift to the right. As shadow Chancellor, his much praised "prudence" meant a refusal to make any serious promises to rebuild the welfare state after the hammering Thatcher had given it, and his plans to tax the lower middle class and skilled workers were a key factor in Labour's 1992 defeat.

- In the run up to the 1992 election he went on his infamous "prawn cocktail offensive"—a series of lunches with business figures in the City. His job was to reassure these parasites that life under Labour would be every bit as comfortable for them as it was under the Tories.

- As Labour leader, he continued shedding Labour's working class image and weakening its link with the unions. With OMOV he succeeded in pushing union influence in the party a further step backwards. He refused to name a figure for a minimum wage, a sum for the NHS and a tax rise to hit the rich.

That is why we will not be hypocritical about John Smith. The personal tragedy suffered by his family and friends is not the political tragedy for the labour movement that the bosses' papers now claim it to be. ■

AFTER SMITH

Where is Labour going?

BY MARK HARRISON

PRIOR TO John Smith's death Labour had scored well in the local elections, notching up 41% of the total vote. In the opinion polls they enjoyed an unprecedented 44% support, compared to the Tories' 27%. To many workers, Labour seemed at last to be electable under Smith.

But Labour's optimism about their chances of forming the next government was premature. Smith was not guaranteed to be the next prime minister. Nor is his successor.

In 1990 Labour scored a similar victory in the local elections, winning 40% of the total vote. It was riding high in the polls. Neil Kinnock had his eyes on Number 10.

Two years later, with Thatcher dumped by her party and the poll tax abolished, the Tories won the general election with an increased share of the popular vote. Kinnock gave up all hope of being a prime minister and retired to the world of television talk shows.

Waiting

Today Labour is stupidly pursuing the same policy of waiting for the Tories to self-destruct. Labour is promising nothing. No specified amount of money for the NHS or other public services, no figure for the minimum wage, no promises to repeal VAT on fuel, to end privatisation—nothing.

Just after Smith's death the Labourite academic, Ben Pimlott, wrote: "Labour may no longer be loony, fractious or union dominated—and may, in consequence be 'electable'. But does it stand for anything worth fighting for?"

He couldn't come up with a definite answer. Nor can thousands upon thousands of other Labour supporters. The result is that despite optimism about Labour's electoral prospects the party has enormous problems. It lacks activists. Members have left in droves, hundreds of campaigners have been purged from the party in witch-hunts. In an election campaign this is a real problem—Labour cannot muster the troops.

Labour's further dilution of old-style reformism in favour of a vague commitment to "social justice", its attempts to distance itself from the mass of organised workers in the unions and its refusal to countenance extra-parliamentary action against the Tories are all designed to reassure the middle class and the bosses. They are not designed to win the working class majority of Britain to enthusiastic support for Labour.

Contenders

The contenders for leadership have no intention of dealing with these problems. Every one of them is committed to the Smith "do nothing" strategy. Not one of them deserves support.

The voice of big business, the *Economist* magazine, summed up the election well:

"It is not about 'modernisers' versus 'traditionalists': about 'left' versus 'right'; or even about policies or principles. Mr Smith's legacy is a party in which such divisions have atrophied into insignificance."

Just look at the record of the candidates.

Tony Blair would be the most right wing leader Labour has ever had. That is not just because seven Tory newspapers have started campaigning for him. As shadow Home Secretary he has echoed the Tories' arguments that crime is caused by "declining moral values" and demanded increased repressive powers for the police.

Blair hates the unions. He has refused to promise the repeal of any of the Tories' anti-union laws. He is embarrassed by the unions, and dreams of severing their link with the party. Whilst in the short term he is highly unlikely to pursue this beyond a brief leadership campaign, in the medium term he would far prefer a party without any organised link to trade unions and the working class. His victory could prompt a more wide-ranging debate over this in the years to come.

These "qualities" have produced the "ABB campaign" on the Labour left—"Anybody But Blair". But the other candidates are not real alternatives to him. Brown pitched his appeal to the unions with a commitment to the minimum wage and universal welfare in his speech to the Welsh Labour Party.

But this is sheer cynicism. He has never raised these ideas before. Until Smith's death he was always mentioned in the same breath as Blair as one of the "modernisers". They were indistinguishable. They remain so, which is why one of the main things being talked up at the moment is Brown's Scottish roots. It is his accent that separates him from Blair, not his policies.

Hitmen

More tempting for the left is the Cook/Prescott option, though Beckett could command some support from this quarter as well. This is a sad reflection on the state of the left. Cook was John Smith's campaign manager in his bid for leadership. He was one of Kinnock's hit men during the purges of the left in the 1980s. His policy agenda, summed up in his recent pamphlet, *Winning for Britain*, sings the praises of the City, "crucially important to the UK economy" and concentrates on tax breaks for the bosses, not reforms for the workers.

Prescott, despite his rough and tumble image and background as a steward in the seafarers' union, is the man who pioneered ideas for the privatisation of British Rail (his project for joint public-private ventures), and who, like Cook, helped Kinnock smash the left.

Most recently he is the man who backed the introduction of One Member One Vote (OMOV) in a speech that swung the last Labour conference behind Smith. OMOV was the means by which the "modernisers" wanted to seriously begin the job of dislocating Labour from the unions. Prescott was at one with them.

Beckett is a spineless renegade from the left. From being the woman

who denounced Kinnock for not supporting Tony Benn in the 1981 deputy leadership election, she became Smith's consistent ally.

The temptation for the left is to look at this bunch and decide that to stop Blair they should support Cook or Prescott. The increasingly opportunist Labour left sect *Socialist Organiser* have already announced that they will set up "Prescott committees" in the party and the unions. Anyone tempted to agree with this should consider Prescott's own statement:

"I have begun to learn there is more than just left or right. It is about trust and conviction and it comes just as much from the right as left."

Enemy

These are the words of an enemy of the left, not an advocate of it, or even a defender of its rights within the party. To set up "Prescott committees" as *Socialist Organiser* propose, is a betrayal of the left.

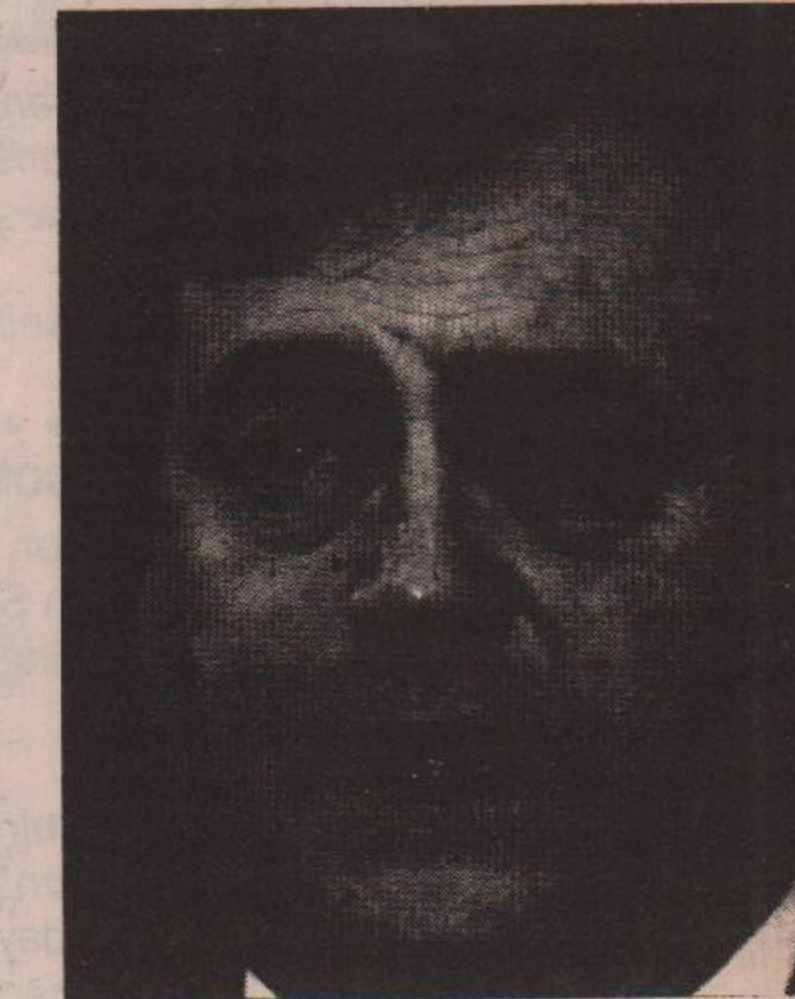
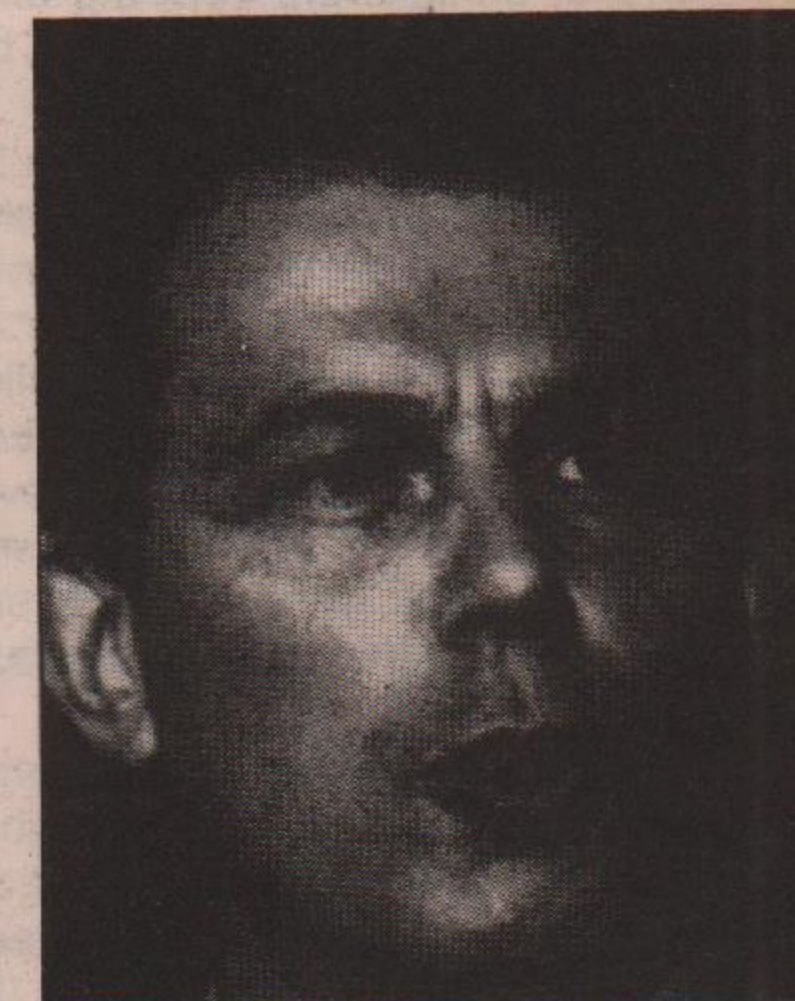
So what can socialists in the unions and party do in the election? It is rare for this paper to say anything good about a union bureaucrat, but the GMB's John Edmonds has raised eight demands on the leadership candidates—ranging from full employment, through employee control of pension funds, to the maintenance of the Labour-union link. Edmonds' demands need to be expanded, but he has at least opened a debate on policies. In so doing he has provided the left with an opening.

Rather than leaving workers with no choice in the forthcoming election, the Socialist Campaign Group should now put forward a candidate pledged to meeting Edmonds' demands, and going beyond them. No existing candidate can come near to accepting them. That fact gives the left a chance to take a campaign for the leadership around its own candidates into the unions, around pledges that can mobilise and galvanise the 4.5 million levy payers who constitute one third of the votes for the leadership. It could equally galvanise activists in the Labour membership around pledges to meet working class needs. It could bring class issues into the campaign.

Purges

The lessons of the purges of the 1980s still have to be learnt by workers hoping to transform the Labour Party. The right wing will not tolerate the growth of a powerful wing within the party committed to anything even approaching a fight for working class interests. That is why socialists must take the opportunity for political debate that the leadership contest provides in the unions to fight not only for policies like full employment, a halt to privatisation and the scrapping of the anti-union laws, but also for a party committed to carrying them out. That means a new party.

We need a revolutionary alternative that can link the fight for mass action against the Tories now to a struggle not to win over their millionaire capitalist backers in the City and industry, but to overthrow them. ■



Beckett,
Blair,
Brown,
Cook,
Prescott,
... no contest

POST OFFICE

Stop the sell-off

LAST MONTH Michael Heseltine announced plans for the last big privatisation: the Post Office. The proposals to sell off 51% of shares in the Royal Mail and Parcelforce will leave Post Office Counters facing 5,000 closures in the public sector. All workers must actively oppose this vicious attack on the working class.

Last year the Post Office made record profits of £283 million. The Tories want to turn this into private profit and at the same time make up to £2 billion from the share flotation to pay for further tax cuts for the rich. In the process the Tories will attempt to smash the militant UCW rank and file who are currently waging a wildcat fightback against their employers.

Socialists oppose privatisation, not because we think the Queen's head should be on the stamps, nor because it has been a public service for 400 years (this appears to be UCW General Secretary Alan Johnson's main concern), nor because everywhere outside Holland has a public postal service.

We oppose privatisation because it is an attack on the rights of organised workers and because profit is handed over to private capital at the expense of subsidised services for working class users.

Anyone who claims workers cannot stop privatisation does not know what is happening in the Post Office today. Faced with mass redundancies in the Counters division, local strikes in London, Romford and Oxford have now

led to a national strike ballot. Unofficial, and therefore potentially illegal, strikes and walkouts have disrupted numerous sorting offices from Bristol to Dumfries, from Southend to Liverpool. These strikes, often waged in defiance of the employers, the courts and the union bureaucracy, show the potential to stop privatisation.

The UCW leadership wants nothing of the kind. At the union's conference last month, Alan Johnson unveiled plans for a campaign for a "BBC option" of retaining public sector status but with increased commercial freedom. His pitch was somewhat marred by the fact that the BBC unions were taking strike action against this very "option" on the same day!

Johnson wants the UCW to be drawn into a rotten cross-class alliance with

respectable "allies" on the Tory backbenches. For this reason, strikes are frowned upon—even publicly disowned. His campaign will win nothing for postal workers. A similar campaign

failed to save a single pit in 1992. No one can seriously believe that Tory MPs will put their seat at risk by voting down the Government on this issue.

Johnson's useless tactics must be rejected. But, whilst the wave of local strikes reveals that a new layer of militants are prepared to stand up, and they can win immediate results, there are limitations on the action. In Liverpool, Bristol, Dumfries and Tooting partially successful strikes have led to victimisations. In Bristol, branch

secretary Kevin Slocombe and activist Dave Chapple both face the sack for "instigating" a walk-out—even though Dave doesn't even work in the Bristol office!

All the branches involved have fought the victimisations. But the danger is that the employers will regain the initiative, unless the actions can be spread and co-ordinated. The time is ripe to link up all the best activists across the union into a rank

and file network. Such a network could be used to deliver immediate solidarity action and agitate for a national strike to stop privatisation.

The SWP has called a national postal workers' rally at 1 pm on 5 June at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square in London. Workers Power urges all militants in the post to attend and call for the immediate setting up of a rank and file network to fight privatisation and job cuts. ■

Alan Johnson's useless tactics must be rejected

CIVIL SERVANTS

Reject pay insult!

WHEN IS a 1.8% pay offer worth 4.1%? When it is being recommended by Barry Reamsbottom, the right-wing General Secretary of the civil service union, the CPSA.

This year's CPSA conference plumbed new depths when the right-wing NEC ruled over 100 resolutions on pay out of order and put forward this pathetic pay deal as the only alternative. Members are now being balloted on accepting 1.8%. This is despite the fact that the Treasury's own figures show that low-paid civil servants need 13.9% just to catch up with equivalent wage levels in the private sector.

With nothing else on offer, many members will be tempted to accept. The right-wing "Moderate" grouping continues to control the CPSA. They have been able to get away with robbing the delegate conference of any sovereignty, dressing up Tory cuts and presenting them on a "take it or leave it" basis to the membership.

The Executive elections gave us another example of the right wing's anti-democratic manoeuvring. They sent out a leaflet with the election ballots warning members of the extremist nature of the left-of-centre "Unity" candidates! Twenty-four—all but two—of the seats on the NEC were won by the Moderate candidates and the "Democratic Left" on an "anti-Trotskyist" ticket.

The civil service is facing enormous cuts and attacks on pay and working conditions. Half of the service is no longer covered by central pay bargaining. Next year the vast majority of civil servants will face further devolution of bargaining on pay and conditions, the threat of privatisation, massive job cuts or a combination of all three. As a taste of things to come, the Department of Transport announced a 20% cuts package which could cost up to 3,000 jobs in the next year.

The bureaucrats who run NUCPS, the second largest civil service union, and the CPSA like to play their members off against each other. The NUCPS conference, held at the same time as the CPSA's, was told how their Executive had dragged the CPSA screaming into the united one-day national strike last November, how they had fought on the TUC public services sub-committee for a one-day strike in April. NUCPS, we were told, was responsible for 20% of all

strikes in 1993—how could we possibly ask for more?

The bureaucrats, whether openly right-wing or fake "lefts", are quite happy to see motions passed calling for "vigorous campaigns" which "must include industrial action". Just as long as these actions don't put the union's finances at risk, they are useful ways to allow the members to let off steam. Effective, all-out indefinite strike action is not even considered.

But this is the action needed to stop the attacks. Local strikes can become springboards for spreading action, but the anti-union laws will be used against us. We have no choice but to break these laws when they stand in the way of victory and that means overcoming the obstacle of the bureaucratic caste, for whom the union is a source of privileged income, not a vehicle for struggle.

Building a rank and file movement to transform the unions from top to bottom into fighting democratic organisations is not just a fine-sounding phrase. It is the only way militant activists can build a mass base capable of defeating the careerists. This is why Workers Power supporters in the civil service have launched a Civil Service Action Programme which links the fight for democratic control of the union structures to the fight for militant action to smash the Tory attacks. At the heart of this programme is the need for a network of activists throughout the offices and various unions, who can lead the day to day struggle for workers' control over every aspect of our jobs.

Unfortunately the Broad Left is more interested in winning elections. In the CPSA, the Broad Left has watered down its programme so that it can stand with non-left candidates on a "Unity" slate. Unity's candidate for General Secretary, Ann Jarvis, does not even mention strike action in her election leaflet!

In the months ahead we will have to fight to save jobs and stop privatisation. We can't wait for the next round of union elections to put things right. Civil service militants need an action programme to start from today. ■

For a copy of Workers Power's Civil Service Action Programme, write to us at BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

NATFHE STRIKES Build for action

AMIDST CLEAR signs that the union leadership are negotiating a sell out, members of the college lecturers' union Natfhe are voting for and taking strike action in defence of their working conditions.

At the end of May there were two strikes, each lasting two days, at Sheffield College. Over 600 lecturers stood on the picket lines. The employers have offered talks but further action this month is possible.

As we go to press, four results have been declared in London. All four colleges have voted to strike. It now looks likely that there will be escalating strike action in many colleges around the exams this month and there should be a good response to the National Day of Action called for 14 June.

The results of the election for a new general secretary were less encouraging. There was an appallingly low turnout of only 14% and rightwinger John Akker was elected. The low turnout may have been a result of the fact that no left-wing candidate stood. Jan Neilsen of the Socialist Workers Party had been due to stand but her candidacy was ruled out of order.

The election result and the failure to stand a left-winger shows the need for the left in the union to get organised. Results such as that gained by Workers Power supporter Stuart King in the election for National Treasurer, in which he received more than 4,000 votes, show what can be done. It is possible to gain support from the members for a determined fightback against the new contracts.

One of the reasons for the disorganisation of the left is that the SWP is totally disorientated. They honestly admit that they were caught off guard by the bureaucrats allowing the ballot for strike action. Last month the SWP were instrumental in organising a meeting in London of over 100 lecturers, who voted to set up a co-ordinating committee to organise the action in London independently of the bureaucracy. No further meeting was called!

The SWP have spent their time praising the bureaucrats for calling the ballot instead of organising to take the fight forward against them.

The strikes this month will give the left a vital opportunity to build the action. We need mass meetings on strike days to take the battle forward. Union militants should be arguing that once we take action we should stay out until we win. Indefinite strike action is the only thing that can stop the employers in their tracks. We must ensure that the strikes are co-ordinated nationally under rank and file control and not allow the employers to divide us. ■

Unison conference

THE FIRST Unison conference was an extremely large, expensive and bureaucratic affair. It confirmed in the starkest fashion the correctness of Workers Power's opposition to the three union merger that created it. The merger has consolidated the position of the bureaucracy, left the membership sectionally divided and marginalised the left.

With around 3,500 delegates and 285 resolutions the conference was packed in two senses. Only a fraction of the resolutions were discussed and the bureaucrats were able to keep tight control of the agenda.

There were signs that the membership of the three old unions, COHSE, NUPE and Nalgo, are still divided. NUPE and COHSE delegates even voted not to discuss resolutions to the Labour Party on the grounds that the old Nalgo branches had not paid the political levy.

Conference discussed pay but a proposal for a one day strike was defeated. Over the question of rule changes the right wing succeeded in defeating nearly every amendment aimed at democratising the union.

The Liverpool branch, which had

been suspended after an unofficial strike against racism, were denied the right to dispute their suspension, Alan Jinkinson claiming that the case was *sub judice*.

Disgracefully, the Birmingham Housing Benefits strikers were refused their request to address conference. The delegation of twenty strikers, who had come down specially, were told that if they wanted conference to discuss their case they should have put in a resolution—even though the deadline for resolutions was before their strike began!

Over the next five years Unison will be faced with the most savage onslaught on every sector of its membership. If the bureaucracy is to be challenged and jobs and conditions are to be protected, we will need to build a rank and file organisation. The suspended Liverpool branch promised at a fringe meeting to call a delegate conference later in the year to co-ordinate their defence against the witch-hunt and to establish a forum for rank and file activists. Unison militants should support this initiative as a step towards building a fighting union, controlled by rank and file members not by overpaid bureaucrats. ■

DAMIEN:

“When we occupied the vote was a 2-1 majority in favour of occupation. It was really strong from the beginning, all the people that voted to occupy stayed. As the occupation went on, people that had initially voted against were drawn into the occupation and actually took leading roles, some being active right to the end.

A large number of people took leadership roles and learned confidence and took that out from the college to other colleges and workplaces. People knew if we were going to be serious about winning this occupation it was no good just hanging around and having a good time and getting pissed. It actually meant deciding how we were going to win it and what we were going to do to try and win it.

I think at the heart of the occupation was the 6 o'clock meeting that we had every day—we had between 200-400 people attending.

A number of people took on various tasks such as liaising with the press, liaising with other unions within the college in particular Natfhe. Natfhe lecturers at our site seemed to be more or less behind us though we did encounter problems on a college wide basis. One of their delegates abused his position by trying to force us to end the occupation but it actually backfired and more people were drawn into the occupation because of that.

Management scheduled the exams to go ahead at our site, which meant people really had to stick together to hold our site in the event of an eviction order which eventually came through.

We were served with an injunction against six people and “persons unknown”. We went down to the high court and 65 people along with the six signed themselves in. Then a group of solicitors came down and visited the occupation and told us legally we would be able to challenge management and the court ruling. I didn't ever believe this was the way forward but I realised that we were forced into having to go to court. Unfortunately it became a problem as a lot of people in the occupation put faith in the solicitors. At the end of the day the court tactics only delayed eviction.

We decided to stay and face eviction. Then it became a question of persuading people that if we all stuck together then there was less of a chance of the police intervening in a rough and ready way. Some people wanted to walk out, others wanted to passively resist—which meant sitting on the floor and being dragged out by the police.

What happened in the end was that we persuaded all the people to stay to the end and all walk out together which was successful. So when the police finally did evict us not one person had left the occupation and we walked out with heads held high.”

JOHN:

“The occupation was as democratic as you could possibly get. I thought it was one of the most democratic forums I've ever been involved in.

I think a lot of people who would previously have thought of themselves as non-political were politicised by the experience. People who actually voted against the occupation came in and were very active in maintaining it. A lot of people who you could say are virulently anti-political and cynical became some of the greatest activists and in a

UNL OCCUPATION

When management at the University of North London announced the scrapping of two courses and a 20% cut in teaching time they thought they would get away with it. They got the shock of their lives. Hundreds of students occupied the college's Kentish Town site.

The occupation lasted seventeen days. It was a tremendous example of what can be achieved when there is the determination and the will to struggle. Even after being evicted by police, the willingness of the students to fight is still strong. As they marched from the occupation they chanted “we'll be back”.

The role of the UNL student union

president, Mark Watson, was so despicable that students in the occupation issued a letter repudiating his authority to negotiate. They took over running of their own dispute entirely.

As we go to press it seems that the occupation and the threat of further disruption has forced a management climbdown, with the reinstatement of most of the cuts in return for a promise by six leading students not to “incite occupations” in the future.

Workers Power supporters played an energetic role in the occupation. We talked to some of the activists about the experience of the struggle and the lessons for the future.

“Action is the only way forward”

SAM:

“It's the first time I've ever been involved in any action and before I came here I never really believed in collective action. I didn't think it could work. It was not until I actually got involved in it and the enthusiasm spread and the solidarity spread. It works and it can work and we did put pressure on management. Negotiations didn't particularly work at all. Collective action is the only way to do it. We proved you can do it and maybe on a bigger scale as I'm learning it could work even better. It did for the Poll Tax.

I definitely became more radical as it went on. At the beginning I didn't know a lot about it and I was swept along with the euphoria, “yeah, occupation sounds great”, but the more it went along the more serious I got about it.

From the beginning I could see that the government were trying to turn education into a privileged thing. I come from a fairly privileged background and that at the end of the day my parents could possibly find the money from somewhere but there are a lot of people who don't have that opportunity. And I have a ten year old sister and in eight years time if she wants to go to university there is no way she could afford it, or for my parents to totally fund it. So its for people like her that we have to fight. Unfortunately a lot of people at the other UNL sites did not understand that. This occupation has made me think less selfishly.

The occupation wasn't just organised by a handful of people. You had the RCP saying there was “only 400” students involved. But it was 400 active students. Even if people were just organising the canteen or the cleaning committee that was just as important. If the building wasn't running efficiently then we couldn't have done it.

You got a sense of the power we could have. The building ran so smoothly under our control and when it came to confronting the police at the end I was a bit dubious, thinking that if the police won't let us march then we can't, but we did. So it shows that if you've got the

DAVE:

“We have decided to keep an activists' organisation. This should be copied in every college and university around the country. We need to get these activists to organise both regional and national meetings to co-ordinate action. When we return next year we will see the real effects of the Tory grant cuts. The NUS cannot be relied upon to call any action. It will be up to activists to ensure that a wave of action takes place.

The level of control by the students in the occupation was very high. It was our occupation, we controlled the building and what we said went.

The security committee organised rotas for door duty. Students with ID were allowed in and they could sign in other people they knew. Sympathetic staff were also allowed into the building but staff that we were not sure about had to be escorted throughout the building.

The occupation shows that we can and must control our own student unions. At UNL all decisions must now be made at full democratic meetings of all students. We will also need to change the rules of the union so that students can remove any official that does not carry out the wishes of the majority.

Cuts in education resources and grants are not happening because the Tories have a strange hatred of students but because they need to cut public spending to make United Kingdom plc a profitable capitalist country. The government wants to make the working class pay for this crisis and this is why we need working class answers.

We got no action from the college unions but the college workers and other workers are our allies against management and the government. We should continue persuading sympathetic workers to argue for their unions to take action with us next time and we should invite those who want to do that to our activist meetings.

UNL was not the only place where students took action over the last few weeks. In the Autumn term we will have more time to argue, more time to prepare and more time to organise. At UNL we have shown you can fight. Now it is up to all students and education workers to build on what we have done and turn our spark into a raging fire.”

numbers and everyone sticks together then you can do absolutely anything.

The 6 o'clock meetings: some people complained that they went on for three hours or whatever but at every meeting we made real concrete decisions whereas it seems to take management days and days to make a decision like what to put on the new canteen menu.

But the delegation work was the best. I miss it, going out to persuade other students. It was the most effective way of reaching other students, going out and talking one-to-one with them.

Every time management did something to us we threw it right back in their face and that made me feel so good. It was our building, we were in control of it, we were running it better than management and we were proud of our building. There was a lot of respect for the building because it was our building. Even at the end everyone was in tears. It really was an emotional time. People go “my wedding was the best day of my life” but I have to say that the occupation was the best time of my life.”



Poster from occupation

way there was a revolution of thinking in their minds. That was probably the most positive aspect and it created a unity that management is going to find very hard to smash.

The lesson is that direct action is basically the only way forward. Collectively we can achieve a hell of a lot despite what's fed down from above. When we do it collectively we make management quake in their boots.

The main thing we have to do is to keep the activists here in contact with each other but also keep

in contact with the activists from other colleges particularly places like Luton and Derby where there now is a bit of a reaction and movement. Keep those activists together and create a rank and file students movement and maintain that up to September. Because in September when people get back, and they find their grants are £300 short, there is going to be a lot of anger. An activists' movement across the colleges can make that anger into action. We have to build those links and keep those links strong.”

AFTER A FURRY of activity around the British government's response to Sinn Fein's "Twenty Questions" the so-called peace process in Ireland settled into a stalemate. While the Whitehall mandarins await Sinn Fein's response, Loyalist murder gangs have gone on the rampage. In addition to a spate of sectarian killings north of the Irish border, the UVF attempted to wipe out 200 Sinn Fein supporters at a Dublin fund-raising social.

The British response to the Sinn Fein questions was not the "brush off" which many commentators predicted and expected. In the document the government accepted for the first time what revolutionary socialists and Irish freedom fighters have been saying for over twenty years: Sinn Fein and the IRA have a mass electoral mandate for their strategy and their struggle. The lie that the Republican movement is just a small, isolated bunch of hoodlums is blown away forever by one small paragraph on Foreign Office note paper.

Block

In addition to recognising the legitimacy of Sinn Fein's mandate, the document is full of concessionary phrases. It assures Sinn Fein that "no political objective could be properly excluded from the talks"—including the goal of a united Ireland. It renounced, in principle, any right of the Unionists to block the progress of peace talks. It signalled, in coded language, the dismantling of much of the repressive apparatus of the Northern Irish state if the IRA were to lay down its arms.

So what is the meaning of the document? Have the Tories changed their position on the Northern Ireland peace talks? Was the reply, as Loyalist bigot Ian Paisley suggested, "a 21 page love-letter to Gerry Adams"?

In short, no. At the very heart of the Tory reply lies a defence of the Unionist veto—not over the peace talks but over the very existence of the artificial sectarian statelet called Northern Ireland. According to both Tory minister Patrick Mayhew and Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds, the self-determination of the whole Irish people is still to be held hostage by the need for the "consent" of the Northern Ireland Loyalists.

This sounds democratic. But the Northern Ireland state itself was created to guarantee the Loyalists an in-built electoral majority. Its borders were drawn by the British with that alone in mind. The need for Loyalist consent to Irish unity effectively de-

TORIES STICK TO ORANGE VETO

No peace under British rule

BY COLIN LLOYD

denies the majority of the Irish people their own democratic right to decide whether they want their country to remain partitioned and partly occupied by a foreign, imperialist power.

Once we grasp the fact that the Downing Street declaration and Mayhew's 21 page "clarification" make no concessions on the fundamental question of Irish freedom, the tone and content of the rest of the reply make sense.

British imperialism is probably the most skilful and deceitful in the world when it comes to negotiating with national liberation movements. Undoubtedly there are some on the right of the Tory party who hoped that Mayhew would give Sinn Fein the brush off and return to a simple policy of repression. But that would be to revert to the military stalemate which every British soldier knows for a fact: the IRA cannot drive the British out by force, and the British army and the RUC cannot crush the Republican resistance.

Deceitful

The Tory leaders, and even the official Unionists, sense the possibility of a qualified victory over the Republican movement—not to be won on the streets of Belfast or the fields of Armagh but around some secluded negotiating table.

The Mayhew document should make it crystal clear to anybody who supports and has fought for the goal of a united Ireland that the British government is determined to open the road for a negotiated sell-out. The tone of Mayhew's reply, bordering on sycophancy towards a movement which the British government is still at war with, and the recent RUC swoops against the leadership of the Loyalist paramilitary groups are a statement of intent. The Tories intend

to get Sinn Fein to the negotiating table and in the process to extract a permanent ceasefire from the Republican movement.

The Republican masses, and the Irish working class as a whole, have no interest in accepting such a deal. It will guarantee British rule in Northern Ireland and strengthen the rule of the Irish capitalists and multinational companies in the Republic.

Does that mean the only way forward is a return to the Republican strategy and tactics which have manifestly failed to drive Britain out of Ireland and which have instead driven the Sinn Fein leadership to the brink of a ceasefire?

No. If the heroism shown by the

anti-Unionist masses over twenty-five years of struggle is not to be squandered, the anti-imperialist struggle has to be continued and intensified through working class methods. Crucially it has to be fused with the struggle for socialism—something the Republican leadership, for all its occasional left-wing phraseology, is quite incapable of doing.

The armed struggle must not be given up in return for a patronising British government recognition of Sinn Fein's right to speak for the anti-Unionist masses. But it must be subordinated to the mass armed defence of the anti-Unionist community against the inevitable upsurge of Loyalist violence that will accompany peace talks, or state repression should those talks break down.

The Republican movement's hallowed "truce" with the 26-county Southern Irish state must be rejected—not in order to stage futile individual acts of violence there, but to signal to the working class of the South the determination to link the struggle against British occupation and Protestant privilege in the North to the struggle against exploitation and oppression in the republic.

Reactionary

Fundamentally it is the economics of the unified European market which have brought Sinn Fein, the Irish government and the British state to the point of trying to impose a reactionary political solution.

Workers, north and south, have to reject that capitalist order—not in the name of narrow nationalism but in the name of socialism, which aims at the overthrow of a system which will continue to distort Ireland's economic development and condemn its youth to a choice between emigration and poverty stricken joblessness. ■



But the Loyalist veto is non-negotiable

REVIEW

Trials by ordeal

A NEW BOOK produced by the Irish Prisoners Support Group—aptly entitled *Trials by Ordeal*—vividly exposes the horrific injustice that Irish prisoners can expect from the British legal system. More importantly, it places the operation of the system in its political context. It demolishes the myth that cases like the Guildford Four and The Birmingham Six are merely aberrations of justice. They are the logical outcome of Britain's continued military occupation of the six north-eastern counties of Ireland.

The process starts with trial by media. Suspected IRA members are faced with having to prove themselves innocent rather than the onus being on the prosecution to prove guilt before a case even reaches committal stage.

On committal they can be tried in a court where there is no chance of

Chris Bryant

reviews

Trials by Ordeal
Irish Political Prisoners
English Law

Produced by
Irish Prisoners Support Group
BCM IPSG London WC1N 3XX
£4.99 110pp

getting a representative jury.

They may then find themselves charged under conspiracy laws, where again the burden of proof rests with the defence and no crime needs to have been committed. Charges not raised at the committal stage can be sprung on the defence within days of the start of the trial. The defendants might find themselves victims of a prosecution ploy of placing them in the dock alongside people already convicted of another of-

fence, implying guilt by association.

During the trial defendants may have to rebuff forensic evidence provided by state employees whose brief is to facilitate the prosecution rather than find out the truth. Independent analysts brought in by the defence face a prosecution barrage to discredit them. Lawyers are discouraged from taking on Irish political cases for fear of being branded IRA lawyers. In 1989 a member of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill Committee, Douglas Hogg, accused some lawyers of being "unduly sympathetic" to republican suspects. Four weeks later one of those lawyers, Pat Finucane, was murdered by a Loyalist death squad.

The jury can be faced with a chronically biased summing-up by the judge, which, as in the Birmingham Six case, can amount to a directive to the jury to return a guilty verdict.

Trials by Ordeal does not restrict itself solely to Irish prisoners. It also points to the methods used in the cases of the Tottenham Three, the Cardiff Three and the Bridgewater Four. But it does stop short of the full implications of its subject matter. Not only is British law overwhelmingly weighted against Irish people, it is weighted against the entire working class as thousands of miners, printers, anti-fascists, anti-poll tax activists and other class fighters have found to their expense.

It is not enough to call for a review of all existing convictions as the book does. We should fight for the release of all political prisoners. If the authors followed their logic through they would do the same. They recognise that the British presence in Ireland is unjust—surely then all prisoners, "guilty" and innocent, should be released.

We agree with the main conclusion of the book—Britain should withdraw from Ireland—but it is a utopian dream to think that the £3 billion saved from the costs of military occupation can be used to reform the legal system to ensure fairer

treatment for all. We need to tackle the roots of the British legal system's treatment of Irish prisoners by fighting for troop withdrawal. At the same time we have to smash the system that gives rise to such injustices: the rule of a tiny handful of capitalists who use the law against all who fight back against them. ■

CLASS STRUGGLE

Journal of the
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D-DAY

The allies' real priorities . . .

THE SECOND World War, like the First, was fought over the redivision of the world between the colonial empires of a few imperialist countries. Despite the propaganda of the Allies, democracy, fascism and dictatorship were not the issues in dispute between the Axis and Allied powers.

The British ruling class had been bolstering and supporting the fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini throughout the 1930s. This was not just the approach of a handful of "appeasers". It was also the attitude of Britain's wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.

In 1939 he wrote of his admiration for Hitler, of:

"... the courage, the perseverance, the vital force which enabled him to challenge, defy, conciliate or overcome all authorities or resistance which barred his path."

Of particular interest to Churchill and his ilk was the way in which the Nazis had succeeded in crushing the organisations of the working class which had been stirred to action in the aftermath of the First World War:

"I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war, I hoped that we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations."

This was far from being the only occasion on which he had defended fascism as a way of stopping the working class and the fight for socialism. Back in 1927 Churchill had addressed the Italian fascists in Rome, declaring that:

"Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the masses of people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison."

With "anti-fascist" credentials such as these it is hardly surprising that the true motives of Churchill and his ruling class backers were displayed time and again in the course of the war itself.

Britain's main concern, its true war aim, had nothing to do with defending democracy. Our rulers' excuse for starting the war—to defend Poland for democracy—conveniently fails to mention the fact that in 1939, at the time of the German invasion, Poland was one of the most repressive and anti-democratic dictatorships in the world.

Britain allied itself with vicious reactionary regimes—including the fascists of Salazar's Portugal and the apartheid state in South Africa. And at the end of the war, faced with a revolutionary upsurge around the world, the British imperialists displayed their "concern" for democratic rights by backing fascist forces against revolutionary movements in country after country.

In Italy the Allies first backed the regime of Marshal Badoglio in the South—a fascist general who had subjected the Ethiopian masses to slaughter during Italy's colonial expeditions. And in the working class strongholds of Northern Italy, where a strike wave in the German occupied areas led to a general strike in March 1944, the Allies actually directed their aircraft to bomb the factories and working class cities where capitalism itself was coming under threat.

In Greece the Allies' true priorities were shown even more clearly. When the Greek working class and peasantry took up arms and liberated themselves from fascist rule the British army was used to reimpose the rule of pro-fascist generals.

A 75,000 strong Communist Party led the Greek People's Liberation Army

(ELAS), the only force within the country that was really fighting the occupation. When the German army evacuated Greece in 1944, it was these forces that asserted themselves as the main power in the land. There was a clear threat that the collapse of Axis power would lead to workers' revolution.

The British army was then sent into Greece to prevent such an outcome. Churchill's orders to the troops that occupied Athens in late 1944 were unambiguous:

"... do not ... hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion was in progress."

The army was used against the people and the working class, securing the power of the Greek bosses who had collaborated with Nazi occupation.

Hoping that Germany would finish off the Soviet Union and obliterate the remaining gains of the Russian Revolution, Britain and the USA left the USSR to fight alone in Europe until 1944. Even when the Holocaust was in full swing—a fact that was known to British intelligence—no efforts were made, not a single bomb was "wasted", to disrupt the railway lines and communications links that allowed millions to be herded into the death camps. The Allies' priorities lay elsewhere.

The true war aim of Britain, as with all the imperialist powers, was to preserve and extend their colonial empires and

strategic power. That was why the British war effort focused on the struggle in North Africa and the Far East for the first years of the war.

This was no fight for democracy. The British Empire ruled from Westminster via unelected governors and brute military force, not allowing the workers and peasants of Egypt and India a shred of democracy. After "liberating" the North African states from German occupation, pro-British puppet dictatorships were reinstalled from above. No-one should be in any doubt what colonial rule really meant for the masses of the occupied countries. A British fusilier, speaking about his time in India during the war, recounts:

"When we arrived in Kalyan the overall commanding officer took the whole shipload of us and said 'Well you are now in India. Forget about your democratic ideas. This is a completely different situation here, and I'll expect you to treat these people—it was: "these wogs"—in the same way as the regulars have been treating them for hundreds of years.' When we got to India for some reason or other most of the guys seemed to take a completely different stance, as if they'd been set free in some kind of way. They became as bad as what I thought the Nazis was."

It was not an anti-fascist war or a peoples' war for democracy. From Britain's point of view it was a war to defend their colonies from Germany and Japan, and to prevent the outcome of the conflict being national liberation in the colonies and workers' power in Europe.

That is why the task of socialists was not to support Britain's war effort, not to give in to nationalism and support for the capitalists' aims, but to keep alive the spirit of internationalism, and seek to use the opportunities presented by the war to bring about the only change that could bring a final end to fascism, colonialism and the capitalist system that creates them: workers' revolution. ■

A people's war against fascism?

Trotskyists against imperialist war

THE ONLY force in the international working class movement which did not capitulate to national chauvinism during World War Two, and which attempted to make use of the revolutionary opportunities which occurred during the war itself, was the Trotskyist movement, organised in the Fourth International.

Faced with the onset of war, what did the Trotskyists say and do?

In the first place they re-affirmed the revolutionary principle that workers from different countries have no interest in killing each other in a bosses' war for world domination, the division of colonial territories and spheres of interest. In the war between the major imperialist powers the Trotskyists started from the principle of "revolutionary defeatism" which had guided the revolutionary socialist currents in the 1914-1918 war.

Revolutionary defeatism means saying that it is better to struggle against your own bosses, even if it means the bosses of your "own country" losing the war, than to win the war at the cost of a truce between the classes. It means refusing to take sides between rival imperialisms and refusing to give up the class struggle at home.

The capitalists themselves took advantage of the class truce during the war to press their advantage in every sphere. In Britain itself, once war broke out, democracy was unceremoniously put on ice. Strikes were banned and militants were thrown into jail. The rich got richer as the workers were told to tighten their belts and work flat out for the war effort. Elections were suspended except for by-elections. But

even here there was no choice. The parties signed a non-aggression pact so that workers could only vote for the party that held the seat already. Jewish refugees were interned on the Isle of Man as were socialists who fled Hitler's rule.

Unlike the official pro-Moscow Stalinists of the Communist Party, who actually broke strikes during the war and called on the Indian national liberation movement to stop fighting for independence from Britain for the duration of the conflict, the Trotskyists enthusiastically backed industrial and colonial struggles against the British ruling class.

Of course this did not mean that socialists should help Hitler win the

war. But it did mean recognising that the fight for working class power was the most effective way of stopping fascism and colonialism for good.

But revolutionary defeatism has nothing in common with pacifism. Pacifism starts out from justified revulsion at the misery, chaos and death of war. But it adopts an ultimately futile strategy against it. It condemns all wars and violent struggles, and it advocates individual, passive resistance to militarist measures like mass conscription.

For revolutionary socialists, in contrast, there can be just wars. We recognise the workers' right to resist the attacks of their "own" bosses and generals. We recognise the right of op-

THE TROTSKYISTS understood from the beginning that the outcome of the war—no matter how reactionary the effects of its outbreak were—would be revolutionary opportunities, mutinies and insurrections.

Revolutionary tactics had to involve more than proclaiming opposition to the war. The Trotskyists had to be in the midst of the mass of workers—sharing their experiences and attempting to give a lead in their struggles.

The British Trotskyists did precisely this in the wave of industrial struggles which took place in the shipyards, factories and mines. At a time when strikes were officially outlawed, and condemned by the Labour and Communist leaders as "pro-fascist" only the Trotskyists were prepared to agitate for strikes and build support for them.

But in war, when million of workers

are in uniform, the class struggle is not confined to the factory. Revolutionary socialists are duty bound to "go with their class" into uniform and into battle, not because they support the war, but to carry on the class struggle within the armed forces.

This tactic—known as the *proletarian military policy*—meant that once general mobilisations began the Trotskyists went into the army—refusing to be cut off from their fellow workers by individual resistance and "conscientious objection".

They fought to undermine the hold that the upper class officers had over the troops, campaigning for democratic and economic rights for the soldiers. They fought for trade union control over military training, for trade union-nominated officers, and for universal military training under workers' control.

pressed nations to fight back against imperialist occupation and domination. And we stand for the defence of workers' states from imperialist attack—including in the USSR where political power had been stolen from the workers by a Stalinist bureaucracy, but where the non-capitalist planned economy introduced after the revolution remained in place.

Thus in World War Two the Trotskyists had to combine a number of concrete struggles. They refused to support or take the side of any of the big imperialist powers. At the same time they stood for unconditional defence of the USSR from Germany's assault and for a Soviet military victory. They supported the national liberation movements such as those of the Chinese against Japanese imperialism or Indians against British imperialism.

And of course they supported all working class struggles whether against their employers or their governments, from the fascist occupation governments in France and Greece to the "democratic" capitalist regimes of Britain and the USA. ■

In answer to the bosses' lies that opponents of the war wanted to leave ordinary people defenceless in the face of fascism, the Trotskyists replied: if we are all in danger, let us have control over the guns, and let us decide who our true enemies are. That way the workers would not only be equipped to pursue an effective struggle against fascism, but would also quickly discover that their main enemy was at home.

Trotsky understood that, in a world war, all decisive questions are settled by those who have the guns, and that the revolutionary upsurges that the war would engender would not necessarily emerge out of a simple re-appearance of the economic struggle once hostilities were over.

They would emerge out of the war itself. ■

Mention World War I and it is easy to convince people that far from being a glorious fight for freedom it was a squalid scramble for markets, colonies and profit. The popular image of the war is not so far from the truth – a pampered and incompetent general staff drinking port in hotels while sending millions of workers to fight each other and die in the trenches for their masters from bombs, bullets and disease. Films such as “Oh What a Lovely War” strengthen this broad anti-war feeling. In short, our rulers have been unable to convince later generations that the first war was just or necessary.

Not so with the Second World War. There was widespread contempt for John Major’s attempt to “celebrate” D-Day by holding a jamboree, complete with spam-fritter frying contests and nostalgia for the “good old days”. But most people in Britain nevertheless believe that the fifty million deaths in 1939-45 were justified. This belief is not a sign of blood-thirstiness of a disregard for human life – far from it.

The reason is that the workers and soldiers who fought the war were convinced that it was a war to defend democracy, a war against the horrors of fascism, a “peoples’ war”.

This view of the war has lasted to this day. It was a lie then and it is a lie now.



American troops face slaughter on Omaha beach

THE FRENCH resistance movement was initially led by capitalist parties and generals. It was small and had little support amongst the French workers. The workers rightly distrusted a ruling class that had presided over poverty and crisis for a decade and which had then abandoned them to the advancing German armies and fled abroad.

The strategy of the “Free French” bourgeoisie was not anti-fascist. It was for the reconquest of France’s colonies and the rebuilding of French imperialism as the dominant power in Europe—both of which required the destruction of Axis imperialism.

It was only with the introduction of forced labour and transportation to Germany after 1942 that large numbers of workers flocked into the resistance, boosting the influence of the French Communist Party (PCF) within it. This in turn alarmed General De Gaulle’s “government in exile”.

In collaboration with the British government they starved the urban, communist-led, resistance groups of weapons at the same time as agitating for an allied invasion of France to counter the threat of revolution from below. In the five months before D-Day, 76,000 sub-machine guns and 28,800 pistols were dropped by British forces to the French resistance. Of these only 118 and 14 respectively were allocated to Paris!

Meanwhile General De Gaulle was assembling the regular military forces that were to impose order in France after D-Day. They came not from the ranks of the anti-fascist fighters but largely from the white French regiments in North Africa which had initially defected to the Nazi puppet government in France. The one regiment in General Le Clerc’s “Free French” division which had been anti-Nazi from the start was made up of Senegalese volunteers. But these black soldiers were never allowed to set foot in Europe during the “liberation” strug-

gle. They were forcibly repatriated and replaced by whites who had collaborated with the Nazis for three years.

De Gaulle and Le Clerc were determined that Paris would be “liberated” not by the Stalinist-led resistance militias, but by Le Clerc’s armed forces, carrying with them a ready made bourgeois political order from which all the workers’ parties were to be excluded. De Gaulle issued specific instructions to the Paris FFI (French Forces of the Interior—the umbrella name for the resistance movement) that no attempt was to be made to overthrow the German garrison as the Allied armies, fighting their way from Normandy to Paris, approached.

But mass pressure, and the determination of the Stalinist FFI leaders’ not to be out-manoeuvred, ensured that a mass insurrection did begin on 18 August 1944.

The British and American leaders of the Allied forces had their own reasons for opposing the resistance uprising. In addition to the fear of insurrection their military plans envisaged by-passing Paris completely in order to pursue and break the retreating German armies.

At this point however a split occurred in the Allied camp. Only De Gaulle’s threat to issue unilateral orders to the Le Clerc division forced US General Eisenhower to change the plan to by-pass Paris and allow De Gaulle’s troops to go on the offensive.

It was a decision motivated purely by the need to head off a developing workers’ insurrection. Police and railway workers were already on strike when, on 18 August, the Paris FFI leadership issued its call for an insurrection. A virtual general strike and a wave of factory occupations ensued as the FFI seized

SUPPORTING THE USSR in war did not mean simply backing the Allied imperialist powers that were fighting on their side. This was precisely what the official Communist Parties did. It led them into a series of scandalous U-turns and zig-zags as the Kremlin pursued its thoroughly unprincipled foreign policy.

The Stalinist bureaucrats—thinking only of defending their privileges in the USSR and abandoning the strategy of international revolution in favour of pacts and co-existence with the imperialist powers—began the war allied to Nazi Germany. During this phase, which lasted until Hitler shocked Stalin with his sudden invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the Stalinists cynically used the phraseology and slogans of revolutionary defeatism in their defence. But they also went beyond this, to spread disgraceful apologies for Stalin’s new-found allies in Berlin.

Walter Ulbricht, a German Communist Party leader in exile, who was later to become East Germany’s first Stalinist dictator, denounced working class critics of the Nazi-Soviet Pact with the words:

Stalinism and revolutionary defeatism

“The Anglo-French war policy is the more criminal because the power . . . which will decide the outcome of the war is the most reactionary force in the world. English imperialism gives another proof of its reactionary nature insofar as it refused the suggestion made by Germany and supported by the Soviet government, for the termination of the war.”

Once Hitler invaded the USSR, the Stalinists went through an overnight 180 degree change, backing the governments of the Allied imperialists to the hilt, even against the working class movement.

The Trotskyists took as their starting point not Kremlin diplomacy but the interests of the working class and the world revolution. The only permanent ally of the USSR would be another workers’ state. Without spreading the revo-

lution then ultimately Soviet Russia would be doomed to isolation, stagnation and collapse.

This did not mean, however, that it made no difference to workers whether their bosses were in an alliance with the USSR or engaged in a war against it. As Trotsky explained:

“It would be absurd and criminal in the case of war between the USSR and Japan for the American proletariat to sabotage the sending of American munitions to the USSR. But the proletariat of a country fighting the USSR would be absolutely obliged to resort to actions of this sort—strikes, sabotage etc.”

The workers of Britain and the USA had to do all in their power to defend the Soviet Union. But this had to be done by the methods of the class struggle, not by abandoning the struggle for socialism in their own countries.■

French Trotskyists and D-Day

key points in the city. Paris was in a situation of dual power between the insurgents on the one hand and the small German garrison on the other. During an uneasy truce the workers formed their own militias and clamoured for arms, eventually throwing up barricades and resuming the offensive as the Allied armies drew closer. Faced with this De Gaulle sent Le Clerc to seize the city “before we have another Commune on our hands”.

Sadly the Stalinist leaders of the FFI had no intention of creating another Paris Commune. They were satisfied with the bargaining position their strength within the resistance gave them in bourgeois post-war politics. But the Paris insurrection was a revolutionary opportunity. Everything hinged on whether the only consistent revolutionaries—the Trot-

were working class lads who hated the war as much as anyone else. In one of the most heroic episodes of the war, Trotskyists in Brest published a German language newspaper for the soldiers—*Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier). They built up a Trotskyist cell of some 12 German soldiers in the port of Brest, before both the soldiers and their French comrades were rounded up and shot.

But as the resistance gained mass support it became essential to intervene in it, directing its working class members towards revolutionary struggle and the need to build armed resistance right in the midst of the mass of the working class.

This was to be a source of fierce debate within the Trotskyist movement. The *La Seule Voie* group, later known

The line of the official Trotskyists, the PCI, was quite different from the CCI. Despite having previously made the dangerous error of declaring themselves for an alliance with French capitalists in a fight for “national liberation”, they thankfully drew back from this and never put it into practice. But they did make a principled intervention into the mass resistance movement. They put forward a series of demands based on a clear political strategy.

On the eve of the Allied landing (in May) the PCI brought out a special issue of their newspaper *La Verité* calling for a general strike, factory occupations, workers’ control over housing and food supplies, the setting-up of workers’ committees, workers’ militias and workers’ courts. It also called for fraternisation with German, British and US soldiers.

Against this one small opposition group claimed that the Resistance was nothing more than “the former French imperialist army reconstituted”.

This was, to be sure, de Gaulle’s aim. But it was not yet the case in July 1944. In a pre-revolutionary crisis, marked by occupation by three foreign armies, factory occupations by workers and the establishment of workers’ militias, it could hardly be said that French imperialism had finished the process of reconstituting its army!

Any party that had ignored the real clash of different class forces that was going on within the resistance would have been completely unable to seize the opportunities of the hour.

In the end capitalist order was maintained in Paris, by a combination of Le Clerc’s military intervention and the strategic aim of the Stalinists to prevent “national liberation” from turning into proletarian revolution.■



French Trotskyist paper *La Verité* 15 July 1944. On the eve of the Paris rising it calls for the formation of workers’ militias, oppses anti-German chauvinism, and celebrates the advance of the Red Army.

skyists—were strong enough to come to the head of it. Sadly, despite a heroic struggle, their forces were too small, their influence too limited to turn the tide.

During the first years of the war, the French Trotskyists stood aside from the small bands of bourgeois nationalists whose main occupation was killing individual German soldiers.

Rejecting the myth that all Germans were Nazis, the French Trotskyists undertook revolutionary agitation amongst the occupying soldiers, many of whom

as the CCI, rejected any participation in the resistance movement on the grounds that “today, an insurrection by ‘France’ against the German oppressor would be the insurrection of a reactionary class”.

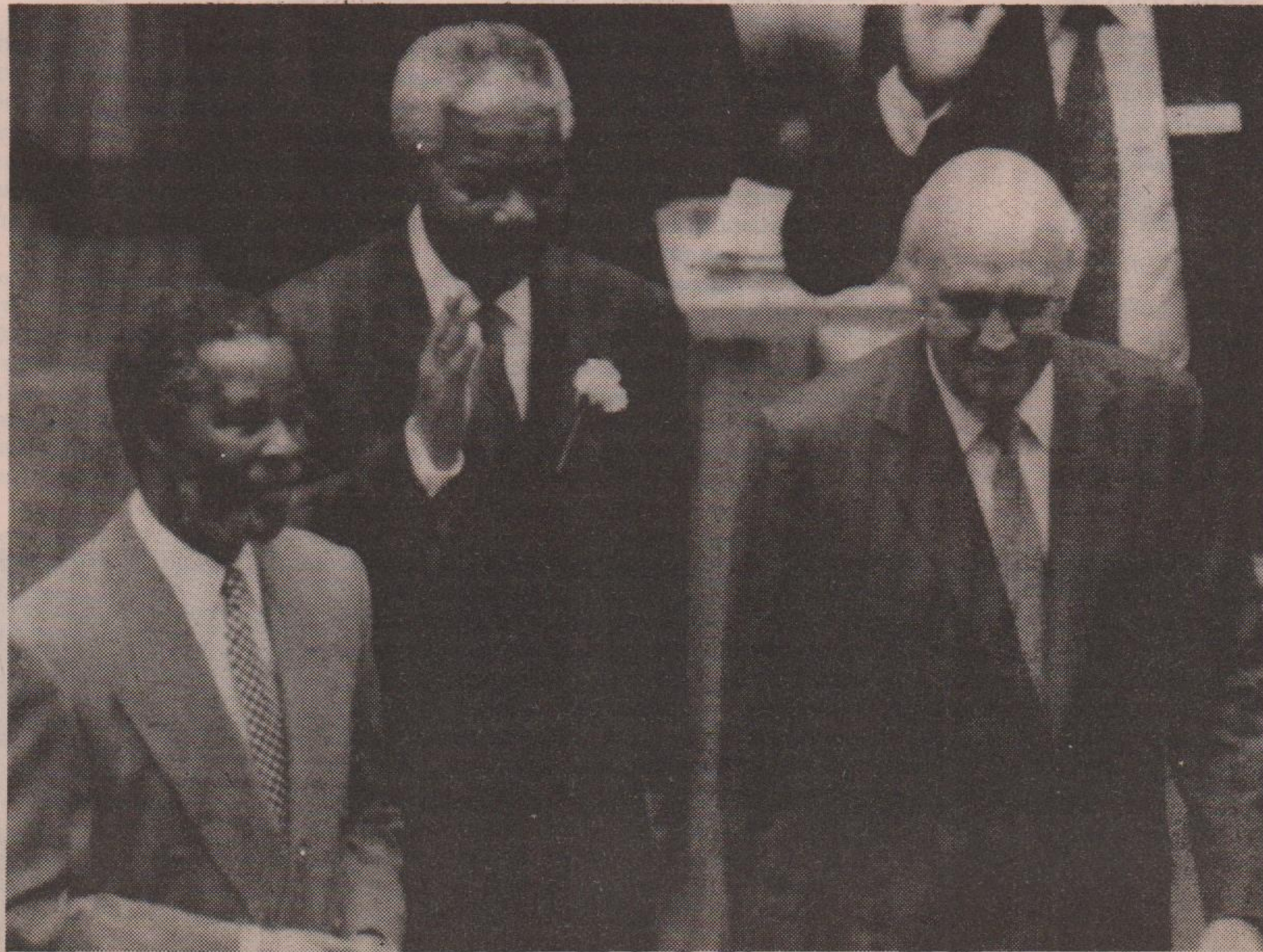
But the Paris insurrection proved this to be completely wrong.

To be able to benefit from this explosive situation, to win workers to revolutionary positions, it was necessary to participate in the movement, but without hiding the revolutionary message or withholding criticisms of the resistance movement’s nationalist politics.

SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

Anatomy of a sell out

With the euphoria of the election over, the real nature of the "new South Africa" can be seen more clearly. The elections themselves, the new government and their early policy statements all confirm that the South African settlement is a sell-out in the interests of big business, writes Lesley Day.



Mandela and de Klerk on their way to form a "Government of National Unity"

THE AFRICAN National Congress-led Alliance gained a massive victory over all other parties. It has 252 seats in the new National Assembly compared to 82 for the National Party and 43 for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). But it did not win the necessary two thirds of the vote needed to rewrite the constitution. Instead, the current power-sharing arrangements are guaranteed for another five years.

As a relieved Nelson Mandela made clear, referring to the fears of the white minority, "I am very happy that that concern... has been allayed by the fact we got 62% instead of 66% which would have enabled us to write our own constitution."

Concessions

The ANC leadership is politically committed to power sharing in the Government of National Unity. It now has the perfect excuse for the compromises it has to make. Concessions to business interests can be justified on the grounds of preserving unity and can even be blamed on the National Party.

The failure to reach 66% was probably the direct result of proven ballot rigging in Kwazulu/Natal. The final result announced by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) gave the IFP 50.32% of the vote, allowing it to control the provincial government, by a percentage point conveniently just the right side of that required by electoral law.

Despite central government controls, the IFP retains a hold on the finances of the province and can preserve the privileged position of its supporters in public appointments. It quickly signalled its intentions by trying to move the seat of government to the Inkatha stronghold of Ulundi!

Inkatha's victory resulted from the deal struck with the ANC national leadership which brought the IFP into the elections at the last minute.

Betrayal

All observers agree there was ballot box stuffing especially in the north of the province where the IFP held sway. The IEC claimed the result reflected "the proven support of the respective parties."

Whereas in the rest of the country votes for the major parties reflected earlier opinion polls, the results in Natal gave the reverse outcome. ANC officials openly acknowledged that they had taken a political decision "not to press the issue because this

would have provoked a fresh outburst of violence from Inkatha."

Regional ANC leaders and rank and file militants protested. This is the first taste of betrayal for those militants who have fought for so long against Inkatha reaction. Now worker militants and socialists in Natal will have to chart a way to fight for the democratic rights effectively denied them.

Buthelezi's promises to rein in the Inkatha gangs are worthless. Self-defence organisations will need to be strengthened. At the same time there will be a struggle over the distribution of public funds and project money. Undoubtedly the IFP will favour its supporters and areas.

Working class militants trying to break the grip of the IFP will have to

enable some minimal reforms to be enacted in the townships. In addition, the South African masses are likely to give the new government a honeymoon period. They have been told not to expect immediate and sweeping changes.

Most importantly, working class organisations have been drawn in behind the ANC. The ANC and Communist Party (SACP) leadership of the trade unions and of the township civics (action councils) were instrumental in negotiating the settlement in the first place. Now it will be used to protect the government and the ruling class from attack.

The position of that leadership has been strengthened during the transition. For instance, the local government reforms have drawn the leader-

ship of the civics into partnership with the old authorities. Already workers have been told to call off rent strikes without a guarantee of proper services.

Revolutionary socialists must fight for the leaders of workers' organisations to break with the bosses' government.

Many workers and township militants will think that having their leaders in office will act as a break on the overtly bourgeois elements in the coalition. In fact the opposite is true. These leaders will, locally and nationally, be forcing through a programme designed to protect profits and privilege, and act as a break on workers' resistance. Socialists should not only raise demands on these representatives, but also organise workers independently, building an alternative

A new workers' party, independent of the bourgeois forces, will have to be built in the struggles to come. In the fight for such a workers' party a clear revolutionary action programme is not an optional extra but a vital necessity.

etary Fund (IMF) is keeping a close watch on the inherited national debt of R200 billion. As a sign of things to come, loans made to the Transitional Executive Council were dependent on pledges of wage restraint.

The gap between the needs of the masses and what an ANC-led government can deliver is bound to generate struggle. The fact that mass struggle forced the white bosses to grant the vote, the consequent confidence of the masses, the strength of the trade union movement: all these factors will encourage further struggle.

But there are also a number of factors which can contain workers' unrest. First, the ANC government is aware of the need to deliver visible reforms, such as the maternity health care programme. The reform of local government structures should also

enable some minimal reforms to be enacted in the townships. In addition, the South African masses are likely to give the new government a honeymoon period. They have been told not to expect immediate and sweeping changes.

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ship.

Where possible, civics should retain their independence and become fighting organisations of the class. Where they are locked into the state system, workers will have to begin to build in opposition to the old leadership. Struggles around housing, childcare, basic services and transport will clash with the new local government structures. The struggles will come up against state forces and workers' defence forces will still be needed.

Land

In the countryside, black people continue to face the problems of land hunger and poor resources. The big, efficient farms will stay in the hands of the top white farmers and agribusinesses. Where there is land redistribution, the rural poor will face a struggle to ensure its fair allocation. Zimbabwe has just seen a scandal where redistributed land has fallen into the hands of... cabinet ministers and their families!

In both private and public sectors, workers will be raising renewed wage demands. Whilst the big companies will continue to make some concessions, the drive for productivity will force through new working practices leading to more job cuts despite the modest recovery. Organised workers will have to resist the ideas of the social contract. In reality, the Government of "National Unity" will not be asking them to tighten their belts for the unemployed and poor, but to put more profits into the hands of the bosses.

Party

Such struggles will renew the debate inside the trade unions over the question of a workers' party. In a number of unions—the metal workers of NUMSA in particular—a commitment to a workers' party already exists. Many supporters of the SACP will also now be watching their comrades in senior government positions.

Workers should demand SACP and COSATU leaders break from the government now. It is a government on a collision course with the organised working class.

The Workers' List Party, which revolutionary socialists should have critically voted for in the elections, clearly failed to gather mass support, having failed in advance to lever away the SACP and the unions from the ANC-led alliance. That did not negate the need to go through with the tactic of mounting working class electoral opposition to the sell out.

Now, however, the attention of all revolutionaries in South Africa must be turned towards a renewed struggle to break the workers and their organisations from the ANC-led government. A new workers' party, independent of the bourgeois forces, will have to be built in the struggles to come. In the fight for such a workers' party a clear revolutionary action programme is not an optional extra but a vital necessity.

In this programme, the struggles for basic needs in the townships, for land redistribution in the countryside and for workers rights must be linked to a renewed struggle to overthrow the system which continues to exploit South African workers—capitalism itself. ■

● See also letter on page 15

"THE GRAVES are only half full—we must complete the task ... We made the mistake thirty years ago of letting them flee into exile, this time none will escape ... When you kill the rat do not let the pregnant one escape."

This transcript from a *Radio Milles Collines* broadcast in Rwanda last month gives some indication of the genocidal terror that has gripped the central African republic. What is shocking is the enormous scale of the massacres—which have claimed between 500,000 and one million lives—and the incredible speed with which this "final solution" is being perpetrated. The massacres only began on 7 April.

The genocide has not been the spontaneous response of pent-up "tribal rivalries" as some commentators would have us believe. Reports suggest a distinct pattern to the pogroms. Civil servants and local government administrators round up all Tutsis, and all Hutus known to be sympathetic to power sharing. They herd the victims into crowded churches and unleash army fire-power on the defenceless masses. Finally, the Hutu-chauvinist youth militias, the *interahamwe*, are sent in to finish them off with machetes and knives. Government earth diggers are then used to bury the corpses, up to 5,000 at a time, in mass graves.

Mutilated

Bodies of the mutilated are thrown into rivers to serve as a warning to those further downstream. Tens of thousands of these corpses are now being fished out of Lake Victoria in Uganda, 150 miles away, threatening a cholera epidemic of enormous proportions.

How did this carnage begin? Why has Rwanda witnessed a genocide which rivals even the Nazis' holocaust in its ferocity and clinical precision, if not yet its scale?

The four year civil war between the Hutu-chauvinist government of General Juvenal Habyarimana and the predominantly Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) appeared to be edging towards a conclusion earlier this year. But President Habyarimana delayed implementing the power sharing conclusions of the *Arusha* accords. When the president was killed by a rocket attack on his plane on 6 April, the Hutu-dominated army, the presidential guard and the *interahamwe* started the killings, initially concentrating, not just on Tutsis, but on all oppositionists to power sharing between the government and the RPF. Even Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was killed.

The murder of the President was used as cover for a palace coup. However, if the forces who are determined to hold onto privileges for a Hutu elite had hoped to catch the RPF off guard, they have severely miscalculated. Although their forces are outnumbered by government troops by 40,000 to 15,000, the RPF now control two thirds of the country.

Routed

Most observers agree that the superior discipline of the RPF forces has been the deciding factor on the battlefield. The French armed and trained government forces have been routed. As RPF Captain, Emmanuel Regema put it, "We have met little resistance, because the government forces are used to killing unarmed women and babies. Most of the time, they just run away."

Whilst the initial reaction of the western media to Rwanda was to paint it up as "tribal war between savages" news reports, particularly from BBC youth journalist Andy Kershaw, are increasingly reporting the fact that the RPF represents, at least in principle, just and organised resistance to the government massacre. Socialists and internationalists

RWANDA

Truth behind the tragedy



BY JEREMY DEWAR

in Rwanda would inevitably find themselves in a military bloc with RPF forces in the struggle to defeat the current wave of massacres. But it would be wrong to give the RPF political support.

As we said in *Workers Power 178*, "it would be wrong to see the RPF as the solution to the crisis or to back its attempted seizure of power." In fact, as the RPF forged southwards towards the capital, 200,000 Hutus fled across the border into Tanzania in just 24 hours. This mass exodus reflects a real fear of retaliation or future reverse pogroms on the scale of those regularly meted out to the Hutu majority by the Tutsi-dominated army in neighbouring Burundi.

No doubt such fears have been whipped up by the government propaganda machine. Nevertheless, recent reports suggest that RPF troops have also been engaged in retaliation pogroms.

More importantly, there are clear signs that the USA is now backing the RPF as the only force that can restore capitalist order in the short to medium term.

The USA has consistently used its influence in the UN to block or delay any armed intervention. After their humiliation at the hands of General Aided in Somalia, the USA is reluctant to get involved in another African civil war where they have no strategic or economic interests. Their reluctant agreement to phase in a limited blue beret force of 2,500 at the end of May exactly matched the upper figure of UN troops the RPF said they would be prepared to work with.

The USA itself is preparing for a full scale military intervention in Haiti. Its European allies are enmeshed in Bosnia and have reacted to the Rwanda crisis with what one US newspaper described as "a tear and a helpless shrug".

Having created the ethnic power struggle in Rwanda, having armed the government to the teeth, having sucked the African continent dry, the

imperialist powers cannot help bring any progressive solution to the conflict.

Many people, not only in Rwanda but across the world, might view the UN as the best chance of stopping the killing, especially if the UN troops are drawn from the ranks of African nations. They are wrong. The UN is not an impartial world police force. It is fundamentally a tool of the big imperialist powers. Any UN force will be only as effective as the imperialist nations allow it to be. In fact, unless the USA provides the necessary logistical support, no such force can even arrive in Rwanda.

What is more, the African governments who are likely to provide the bulk of the troops—Ethiopia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria—all have rotten track records of ethnic oppression, corruption and kow-towing to the Western imperialists.

Atrocities

When a similar UN "peacekeeping" force operated in Liberia in 1992-93, the UN consistently blamed the rebel forces for government atrocities, enforced an arms embargo which unilaterally disarmed the rebel NPLF and blocked vital food and medicine supplies to rebel held areas, killing thousands of civilians in the process. All this was done to defend the commercial interests of the respective governments.

The workers and peasants of Africa do have a direct and immediate interest in stopping the killing. Sub-Saharan Africa is in a chronic state of economic collapse and political instability. Of the 57 nation states in Africa 21 of them have a per capita GDP less than it was in 1979. Total debt has more than doubled, whilst the AIDS epidemic has now assumed mass proportions. In Zaire, in particular—one of the four biggest nations in the sub-continent and home

to tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees—the state machinery has disintegrated. Cholera, AIDS and mass malnutrition are adding to the miseries of warlordism.

Africa in the 1990s proves the truth of the revolutionary slogan "socialism or barbarism". In the 1960s and 1970s, the western powers backed ethnically-based dictatorships in their bid to defuse the anti-colonial revolutions. These dictatorships were set up on the economic foundations of third world state capitalism. Multi-ethnic states were held together by the creation of a bourgeoisie based in the state-owned industries and the military. Now the neo-liberal strategy of the big capitalist powers is trying to break up these dictatorships because the multinationals want to buy up the state capitalist enterprises they control.

As the ruling elites attempt to whip up ethnic divisions in order to maintain their wealth and power, more Rwandas could follow—unless the working class and peasantry of the region impose their solution.

Just like Yugoslavia without Stalinism, Africa without state-capitalist dictatorships is on a slippery slope to further barbaric atrocities, disease and starvation. That is no reason to mourn the passing of the one-party dictatorships and the breakup of state-capitalist elites. But it underlines the truth that only socialism can develop Africa, feed its population and overcome its ethnic and national divisions.

The strategy of permanent revolution—where the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, seek to combine the struggle for democracy, land and national rights with the struggle to smash capitalism—is the only solution to the crisis in Rwanda and Africa as a whole. If revolutionary parties are not built to fight this strategy on each national terrain, more genocides, even more horrific than the one in Rwanda, will inevitably follow. ■

LETTER FROM BOLIVIA

BY PAULINE GOLDING

THE TENTH congress of the Bolivian Trade Union Congress (COB) is scheduled to take place in the first week of June. It should have started on 1 May, but preparations for it were swamped by a wave of protest against the government plans on pay and attacks on state sector industries.

On 7 April the COB launched a series of hunger strikes to press its demands. By the end of the month miners, teachers, healthworkers, students, journalists and some railworkers were on strike. By early May the peasants had joined the protest by blockading roads throughout the country provoking severe clashes with the army and the police in which two were killed.

In response to this escalation the government made concessions. COB leaders and the government signed an agreement on 6 May. The government increased its mid-April offer of 7.5% on average wages to 9%.

The recent wave of strikes was the biggest wave of defensive struggles by the Bolivian workers since 1991. In that year the unions began to shake off the traumatic defeat inflicted on them in 1985-86 by the MNR government which put an end to the revolutionary period of 1982 to 1985.

Once again the MNR is the leading force in the government and is determined to press ahead with a pro-imperialist, neo-liberal plan to revive Bolivian capitalism.

This involves a privatisation programme to divest the state of the railways, telecommunications and what is left of the state mining industry. They also aim to destroy the free and non-selective education system that exists in Bolivia right up to university level—a remaining gain from the 1952 revolution. At the same time they want to destroy the autonomy enjoyed by the governing boards of the universities (with equal representation of the students and teachers).

The tenacity of the protests surprised those in government. When the COB announced its action in early April one official of the interior ministry said that the struggle would signal "the beginning of the end of the model of trade union struggle that had emerged after the national revolution of 9 April 1952". He was to be sorely disappointed.

The government was forced to make real concessions: a 9% increase across the board for those between the minimum wage and Bs1,000 (about \$210 a month); 6% for those above; 12% for those in education and health, all backdated to January. In turn the national minimum wage was increased by 19%. In addition, the government had to add to its original guarantees about stability in employment levels in state industries and services, the promise to create 85,000 more jobs this year.

The weakness of the April movement was that it never successfully reached out to involve the key industrial sectors of the Bolivian working class—miners, textile workers, oil workers, metal workers and railworkers. These workers produce the bulk of the wealth of the country. If the government was alarmed enough to make concessions in the face of the peasants' militancy and teachers' strikes what more could have been achieved had these other sectors been drawn into battle? The movement could have gone on to realise goals much nearer to the needs of workers in Bolivia.

For example, the current minimum wage does not cover a quarter of the basic needs of an average family; for that the minimum wage would have to rise to Bs1,800 and be automatically protected against inflation—currently running at 9% in Bolivia.

Serious damage has been wrought upon the workers' movement by neo-liberalism over the last nine years. These sectors have taken the brunt of the sackings and in the case of the miners, three times as many work in the private sector now than for COMIBOL which has less than 2,000 in its pay.

Others form part of a labour aristocracy (e.g. the oil workers) whose bonuses and working conditions are tied

◆◆◆ Continued on pg 13

THE LAST six months have seen increased militancy from Chinese workers. Commentators warn darkly of rising social unrest. Government sources acknowledge that the number of disputes taken to arbitration rose by 52% to a record 12,358 cases. 2,500 of these involved strikes, picketing and the burning down of factories!

The disputes are mainly over wages and appalling working conditions: long hours, dangerous machinery and even the strip searching of workers. In March, nearly 6,900 workers at the Mabuchi Motor Company in Dalian struck for two days before winning higher wages, extra holidays and longer breaks. Strikes have also hit the Japanese-owned Canon works.

In the Shenzhen "Special Economic Zone" (SEZ), shoe production workers struck against the docking of wages and fines. In Dongguan, textile workers demonstrated over unpaid wages and physical attacks by the factory's "security guards". Even workers in MacDonalds struck. They were not being allowed to eat Chinese food at lunch time! Many workers are turning to underground trade unions and the semi-official labour organisations.

Struggle

The Chinese government is terrified of the unrest. They fear any link up between workers in struggle and political dissidents. That is why the Stalinists risked antagonising the US imperialists and put the granting of "most favoured nation status" at risk by rounding up and re-imprisoning political dissidents in March this year. But they need not have worried—at the end of May, after years of bluster about human rights, Clinton brushed the atrocities under the carpet and granted the status, rewarding the Stalinists for their moves towards capitalism.

Economic growth rates in China over the last two years were a massive 13%. This has been hailed by the bourgeois press as the economic miracle of the 1990s. To the Stalinists, this progress is a vindication of their policy of "market socialism"—introducing capitalism using, and maintaining, the control of the Chinese Communist Party.

When Hong Kong returns to China in 1997, the Chinese Stalinists claim that they will be running a mixed economy—"one country, two systems". The Chinese workers call it a "chop suey" economy—one made up of scraps and left overs. But signs are that the "miracle" economy may be in trouble.

Privatisation began in the rural areas in 1978. Farms were decollectivised and land and machinery divided up. Brigades and work teams reverted to clan and family production units. Productivity increased and peasant income rose by one third between 1988 and 1991. But there is a growing gap between rich and poor peasants. Many areas report that large landowners are behaving like the old warlords, monopolising the best land, machinery and irrigation. Estimates for underemployment and unemployment range from 250—300 million as poor peasants lose their land.

Peasants

The policy of decentralising key industries, such as processing raw materials and mining, means that there are now many rural industries. These have been privatised to form joint ventures between the new rural bourgeoisie and foreign capital, becoming "Township and Village Enterprises" (TVEs) which account for 15% of China's exports.

Since decollectivisation, peasants have to pay for all the services they used to get free from the commune—school fees, healthcare, maintenance of machinery and irrigation and so

CHINA

Workers strike back

Five years after the Tiananmen Square massacre the Chinese Stalinists maintain their repression and continue attempts to introduce elements of capitalism. **Din Wong** explains how workers, forced to pay the price for China's "economic miracle", are fighting back.



Dealing with dissent—prisoners on their way to execution

on. The burden of these extra "taxes", in reality up to 20% of a peasant's income, has led to riots in Szechuan and Hunan two years running. Peasants seized tax collectors and besieged the provincial administration buildings until central government gave way and abolished 37 of these "taxes".

1993 saw a dramatic decline in agricultural productivity as a result of uncontrolled development of the countryside and the abandonment of public irrigation and land improvement projects. As land speculation spreads from the coastal regions, vast tracts of farm land are being turned over to industrial development. Peasants are leaving in droves to seek better paid work in the cities.

Inflation

Most serious of all, there has been a fall in the prices paid for agricultural products whilst the prices for industrial goods have risen, leaving peasants to feel the pinch. Inflation in the rural areas is running at 27%, increasing the cost of items such as fertilisers. There were many incidents of unharvested fields and crop burning in 1992 and 1993.

The state industrial sector is in no better condition. It includes many of the heavy industries, steel, fuel production and transport. Over a third of these are loss making, unable to pay their creditors and workers, or having to pay their workers in kind. Another third are just about breaking even, but only with the help of state subsidies in the form of cheap credit and benefits for workers.

The most thriving sectors of the economy are in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the coast, in close proximity to overseas Chinese capital based in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South East Asia. SEZs offer low labour costs, land concessions and tax-free repatriation of profits to overseas capitalists. The SEZs produce mainly light industrial goods such as toys, textiles, shoes, electronics and plastics. Most of the industries are semi-

skilled, labour intensive and often very environmentally "unfriendly". It is here that the highest economic growth rates—between 33% and 61%, are generated. These industries employ mainly female, migrant labour from inland China. Workers are regimented and housed in overcrowded dormitories. Working hours are long and conditions are atrocious. In one factory the women work 15 hours a day with just one day off per month!

China remains a degenerate workers' state based on bureaucratically planned property relations; but the process of capitalist restoration is well advanced. Planning and public ownership still cover the main sectors of the economy. And, apart from the destruction of planning, there are many other economic tasks that the restorationists have to resolve decisively before capitalism can be re-established in China. In particular these involve structural changes in the banking sector so that money can be "freed" to act as profit-generating capital, turning labour into a commodity that can be bought and sold, and transforming the ownership of the means of production from the state to private individuals.

Bureaucratic

There is little doubt that bureaucratic planning has been deeply eroded. In 1979 production of 700 items were allocated by planning, now only 20 items are allocated. Under bureaucratic planning, one of the ways that proportions in industry are determined is through the control of credit by the state bank. There is no longer a single central bank and there are many provincial and overseas banks operating throughout China. The state is no longer able to maintain complete control over credit supply.

Nor is the state bank any longer in complete control of foreign investments. Exiled Chinese make direct investments in China, through old family and village ties. In 1993 there were \$11.16 billion investments,

mainly in-kind, made up of old machinery transplanted from factories in Hong Kong and Taiwan in search of even cheaper labour. There were real cash investments of only \$1.3 billion. These deals were done with local and provincial enterprises, by-passing the central bank.

Monopoly of foreign trade used to be maintained through the control of currency exchange. Only the state bank could convert currency at an official rate, which was held artificially high. In June 1993 currency control was relaxed and the value of the renminbi (Rmb) fell by 25% immediately, leading to a 75% fall against US dollars over the whole of last year. Provinces like Guangdong now have their own foreign exchange reserves and the "floating rate" of the Rmb draws China evermore into the world market.

Prices, too have been freed. In 1992, controls on 571 types of goods were lifted. There are only 89 items still under price control. In 1993, under the pressure of inflation, the government had to back track and reimposed price controls on staple



Tiananmen Square, June 1989

items such as grain, oil and coal.

Whilst Labour power can now legally be bought and sold, powerful obstacles remain for anyone trying to take advantage of this in the state sector. In order to sell off unprofitable enterprises, guaranteed jobs for life, known as the "iron rice bowl", have to be broken. The coal industry has already shed 280,000 workers and expects to shed another 400,000 by 1996. But in 40% of cases last year, deals to sell off state enterprises fell through because prospective buyers were unable to reach agreement with local government as to who should take on the economic responsibility for the redundant workers. Clearly the reserve army of labour, with hundreds of millions of underemployed and unemployed, is being used to discipline workers.

To regularise the transfer of ownership of public property into private hands, new legal frameworks are being drawn up. Changes are being made to the law—contracts will be made binding for business deals; bankruptcy laws will allow enterprises to be closed down and assets stripped; employment regulations will make mass redundancies easier; and anti-civil disturbance laws will be introduced to help put down workers' resistance.

Challenges

Unlike Eastern Europe, the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party is still firmly in power, in spite of heroic challenges to its rule—the Democracy Wall Movement in 1979 and the Tiananmen movement in 1989.

They keep control through the nomenklatura system which puts party apparatchiks in crucial positions in every layer of social, industrial and political organisation: street committees, factory committees and party cells in government departments.

Party members are systematically metamorphosing themselves into managers and company directors of joint and private enterprises, attempting to transform themselves into a capitalist class through nepotism and theft of state property. Most big corporations are now headed by the sons and daughters of top party cadres. Corruption is rife.

Various factions exist in the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, but they disagree only on the pace of the restoration and the degree of political liberalisation. Even the People's Liberation Army (PLA) runs private enterprises, with one unit now acting as an agency for the recruitment of migrant workers for factories in the SEZs.

Unrest

The process of restoration is far from over. It is fraught with contradictions and will provoke ever greater unrest. The working class remains the biggest obstacle to its success. The Stalinist bureaucracy is right to fear them.

It is true that currently the strikes and unrest are often focused around economic questions. But the Stalinist bureaucracy needs only look at Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR to see how such strikes can quickly become politicised.

The workers are finding out—unfortunately the hard way—that the market is not the solution to their problems. But the Stalinists will continue their attempts to introduce capitalism. The only way to really challenge the market is to fight the bureaucracy and seize political power.

The Chinese workers need a party that can link the resistance to the economic effects of capitalist restoration to the political struggle against the Stalinist dictatorship. Workers' democracy and democratic planning—not bureaucratic rule or the blind chaos of the profit system—are the only way forward to socialism in China and across the whole of Asia. ■

STALINISTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

Return of the living dead?

At first sight some might think that the recent election victories of former Communist parties would be worrying the Western commentators and entrepreneurs who had hoped that the old Eastern bloc was becoming a good place to make a fast buck. Yet their response has been remarkably calm. They recognise that the return of the Stalinists is not a threat to the process of restoring capitalism. In fact it may turn out to be its saving grace.

1989 saw the East European Communist parties swept from power. The ease with which they were removed was testimony to their political bankruptcy and the essential fragility of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste. The new forces that headed up pro-capitalist governments recognised the justified hatred of the workers for these parasites, and built new political machines, organisationally distinct from all wings of the old Stalinist parties.

Most of the old bureaucrats were able to turn themselves very rapidly into supporters of capitalist restoration. Indeed, many had begun the process whilst still in power. Some individuals joined the newly created bourgeois parties, whilst others set about using their old privileges to turn themselves into capitalists.

Across Eastern Europe there has been much talk of purging the old regime but nowhere, apart from a few isolated examples, has there been a real attempt to "bring the Stalinists to justice". One of the reasons for this is that Stalinism permeated every level of society, through the nomenklatura system and the massive use of police informers.

Once a purge was started it would be difficult to stop. In Czechoslovakia the attempt to apply a screening law to ensure that Stalinists were kept out of political power came up against an immediate problem. To be consistent it would surely have to apply to Alexander Dubcek, hero of the 1968 Prague Spring who had a symbolic walk on part in the 1989 "velvet revolution", and to Marion Calfa, the first post-Stalinist prime minister!

Change

The second reason is that reintroducing capitalism requires not only economic change but also social change. You cannot have capitalism without capitalists. The restorationists realised that the people best placed to transform themselves into the new entrepreneurs were those who have materially benefited most from the old regime—the Stalinist party bureaucrats and enterprise directors who owed their positions to the nomenklatura system. Even if it could dispense with their old parties, the restoration process needed the bureaucrats.

The Stalinist parties themselves underwent a process of disintegration and transformation into pro-market "Social Democratic" parties.

In Poland the Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Poland (SdRP) was formed at the final congress of the old Polish Communist Party (PZPR). They recognised that the PZPR had no chance of "regaining the confidence of society". This was a convenient time to form a new party so that the SdRP could inherit the assets of the PZPR.

Even the Stalinists, however, must be amazed at how quickly their new parties have been returned to power in Poland and Hungary. They cannot have expected to be forgiven so quickly for their years of dictatorship and repression.



Following last year's election victory for the ex-Stalinist party in Poland, the former ruling party of Hungary was re-elected last month. Why are the peoples of Eastern Europe voting into office those they so unceremoniously kicked out only five years ago? Sheila Phillips finds out.

The reasons for their return lie in the very real difficulties which the restoration process is encountering across Eastern Europe.

You cannot restore capitalism just by declaring yourself to be in favour of it. Despite the absence of working class democracy and control and the reactionary role of the Stalinist parasites, these were countries in which the capitalist system had been uprooted. There are real economic problems facing anyone who wants to bring back capitalism: how to create a market and capital, encourage investment, privatise industry. These lead to the dramatic social consequences of freeing prices to rise steeply, cutting subsidies, closing whole sectors of industry and sacking workers.

Attempts to restore capitalism have devastated the economies of Eastern Europe. Industrial output has plummeted, inflation is raging and unemployment has rocketed.

In Czechoslovakia industrial output fell by over 10% in 1992 and agricultural output by over 11%. In Slovakia in 1993 industrial output fell by 17%. The new Hungarian government will face a budget deficit of at least \$3.3 billion, around 8.4% of Gross Domestic Product. Prices soared in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia when the restorationists removed subsidies from basic items such as food. At the same time savings were wiped out by devaluations in currencies. And for those who lost their jobs, the social safety net that had existed under the previous regimes was being dismantled. In Slovakia inflation is running at 25%, unemployment at 17%. In Hungary unemployment has reached 13%. In Poland where price liberalisation was the most dramatic, inflation was a staggering 600% in 1990. By 1993 it had slowed to 30%. The most telling statistic is the decline in real wages, which since 1990 have fallen by 24% in Poland. In Romania they have fallen by 46%. Conditions are unlikely to improve given the weakness of the economic recovery in the European Community and the USA.

The cost of restoration has not gone unnoticed by the victims. Work-

ers are beginning to lose patience with the reformers. The 1989 events created the illusion of common purpose and national unity, but whilst the ex-bureaucrats and restorationists have been reaping profits from their shares in newly privatised enterprises and from other, semi-legal "entrepreneurial" activities, workers' illusions in capitalism and the market are being sorely tested.

A significant factor in the election of the ex-Stalinists in Poland and then in Hungary was working class people saying they had had enough. The turnout in the recent Hungarian election was 69% compared to 65% in the elections amidst the euphoria of the uprisings of 1989-90. Workers are now voting for those who say they will slow down the restoration process and curb its worst excesses.

In the 1993 Polish elections the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) gained over 20% of the votes. The leading force within the SLD is the successor to the old Polish CP, the SdRP. The SdRP were promising to protect the social security safety net and maintain subsidies to state industries, protecting jobs.

Popularity

The May election victory of the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) came after a sudden surge in its popularity. In 1990 the HSP gained only 10% of the vote. Opinion polls early in 1993 showed only 9% support. Yet in the first round of the elections on 8 May one in three Hungarians voted for them. This change in their fortunes clearly reflects the appalling state of the Hungarian economy.

Like their Polish counterparts, the HSP is promising to slow down the restoration process and to protect the social safety net. Their programme contains a mixture of warnings that "things could get worse" and promises to protect state benefits against inflation, guarantee benefits for the unemployed and pensioners and increase healthworkers' salaries.

But whilst the HSP and the SLD talk of protecting workers from the ravages of capitalism, neither is opposed to the real problem: the resto-

Cuddling up to capitalism: HSP leaders after election victory

ration process itself.

The overthrow of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and Russia between 1989 and 1991 was a missed opportunity for the working class. The "market socialist" reform project represented by Gorbachev and by the Polish and Hungarian Stalinists had failed. But in the absence of working class parties committed to genuine democratic planning and anti-bureaucratic socialism, the masses embraced the path of reintroducing capitalism as the answer to their problems.

Thatcherite

A nakedly neo-liberal, Thatcherite strategy for capitalist restoration ensued. Now that too has failed. The untrammelled market has not just been unable to improve the lives of workers. The crime, corruption and nationalist hysteria it has brought in its wake are destroying the orderly conditions the multi-nationals need if they are to pour capital into Eastern Europe. It is failing to generate the economic growth that can kick-start a real capitalist profit-generating cycle.

That is why even the Western imperialists may welcome a return to the cautious, state-led restoration process that was being slowly advanced by the Stalinist bureaucracy itself before the events of 1989—and which is being adopted in China today.

Nor do Eastern Europe's new entrepreneurs seem unduly concerned at the return of former Stalinist parties to power. One businessman interviewed after the Polish elections said, "little will change in the way that enterprises function. The electoral result will have no influence in this area... the people from the SLD are the biggest capitalists I know" (quoted in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*). It seems that a significant number of those who voted for the HSP were educated, white collar workers and some of the new entrepreneurs.

The SLD agreed a budget that won the approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Prime Minister, leader of the SLD's coalition partner the PSL, had prior to the budget been promising increases in spending on education and social welfare but very little was actually given. Polish workers have already realised that electing the Stalinists is no guarantee of job protection.

This pattern has been repeated across Eastern Europe: talk about slowing down restoration and easing its effects, but no action to upset the

IMF or stop the push towards capitalism.

The fine words and reassuring speeches are important to defuse the anger and action which restoration is provoking from the workers of Eastern Europe.

The role that the Stalinists are willing to play in this situation is a familiar one. In both Hungary and Poland the ex-Communists have links with the trade unions; in Poland the OPZZ (National Trade Union Accord) is part of the SLD. They will seek to use these links to discipline the unruly working class and ensure that the restoration process can continue, even if at a slightly slower pace.

Alexander Kwasniewski, leader of the SdRP and SLD, explained this role with total clarity in an interview with *Die Zeit*:

"I am a supporter of a pragmatic left. I must say that I have a great respect for Felipe Gonzalez, who is accused of being a right-wing social democrat. I think the right way for Poland is to have less ideology and more pragmatism. What we need now is reform with a human face."

Whether it is human or not, it is certainly a face we have seen before.

Why is the role being played by the so-called ex-Stalinists so important? Because the workers of Eastern Europe are beginning to express their anger not just through the ballot box but on the streets and in the factories.

In March there were strikes in Poland, Romania and Russia. 22,000 people in the Czech Republic demonstrated on the streets of Prague. In March there were co-ordinated strikes in Poland against wage controls, rises in energy prices and for an increase in social spending. In April miners were out on strike. In May it was the turn of state employees such as teachers and health workers.

East European workers should not fall for the old tricks of the Stalinists—whatever face they are wearing. And the signs from Poland are that they may not.

Simply slowing down the process of restoration will only prolong the agony. Workers in Eastern Europe have to reject capitalism. If they want to resist the attacks then they will need to build independent trade unions, not tied to the old bureaucrats or the new restorationists, and a revolutionary workers' party which can organise and lead the fight against both the failed bureaucratic planning and repression of Stalinism, and the chaos of the capitalist system. ■

LETTER FROM BOLIVIA

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to no-strike deals. Anti-labour laws have also badly dented the willingness to strike of many in this predominantly private sector workforce.

Only a movement controlled by the rank and file of COB could have vigorously pursued a campaign that could have persuaded these sectors to come out on strike; could have explained that they would generalise the aims of the movement to embrace issues that they too would stand to benefit from, such as the abolition of VAT and guaranteed social security for all workers. LRCI members in Bolivia put these arguments, contained in a special issue of their paper, in the COB commission in La Paz, seeking to get other sectors out on strike.

Already the government is suggesting that it may not be in a position to meet all its obligations. After all it has the external debt to pay, it has to provide the millions of dollars needed to boost the salaries of its own parliamentarians and pay for the corruption that is endemic in the Bolivian state bureaucracy and judiciary.

The COB congress must hold its leaders to account. It must ensure that the concessions are withdrawn and must elect a new leadership willing to unify all sectors under the direction of the COB for a renewed assault on the government. ■

AT THE BEGINNING of the century the Jewish population in the Russian Empire numbered five million. Denied full rights of citizenship, the vast majority lived isolated in ghetto communities, persecuted on linguistic, cultural and religious grounds. The Tsarist state officially restricted the rights of Jewish people to work in specific spheres and to live in particular areas. Brutal massacres (pogroms) were carried out regularly against Jewish ghettos and *stetls* (townships)—both by state forces and by fanatical proto-fascist gangs known as the Black Hundreds.

Jewish workers faced a double burden: exploitation at work and anti-semitic discrimination in every sphere of life. They came to the fore of working class resistance across the Empire. In the 1870s and 1880s, it was Jewish workers that took the lead in some of the most significant strikes of the century. There was an obvious need for socialists to undertake mass agitation amongst wide layers of the Jewish working class. Illegal newspapers in the Yiddish language, such as *The Jewish Worker* and *The Workers' Voice*, were smuggled into Russia and met with an enthusiastic response.

The General Union of Jewish Workers in Russia, Lithuania and Poland was formed in 1897. Throwing itself into a wave of struggles by Jewish workers, the new organisation, known as the *Bund* (Yiddish for "League" or "Union") grew rapidly despite massive repression, reaching 30,000 members by 1905.

Early in their history they recognised the importance of building self-defence groups, particularly after the experience of pogroms such as the notorious events in Kishinev. There the entire Jewish community came under sustained attack as a "reprisal" for the wounding of the governor of Vilna by a Jewish worker. Bundist agitation paid off. By 1905 they were able to organise a defence force of around 10,000 armed workers.

The formation of the Bund predated by one year the founding of the first all-Russian workers' political party, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), which was set up in 1898. The Bund not only participated in the establishment of the new party, but had demonstrated in an important sense how revolutionary ideas could be taken up by the masses. That is why Lenin, one of the leading participants in the establishment of the RSDLP, had once described the Bund as "the revolutionary vanguard of the Russian proletariat."

But differences were soon to mount between the leaders of the Bund and the rest of Russian Social Democracy. By the second RSDLP Congress in 1903, these burst into the open, resulting in the Bundists leaving the party.

Question

What was the argument about? At first sight it seemed to be little more than an organisational question about the relationship between the Bund and the Party. But in reality it was an expression of a more fundamental issue: the relationship between the Jewish working class and the working class of the whole of the Russian Empire.

Both sides of the dispute agreed that the Bund should continue to exist and that it had carried out valuable work among the Jewish working class. But the majority of the Social Democrats thought that the Bund should be a constituent component of the Party, maintaining its autonomous organisation but subject to the decisions of the Party as a whole. The Bundist leaders however demanded a *federal* relationship. The Bund, they insisted, should be the sole political representative of the Jewish working class, with exclusive rights to campaign among the Jewish

LENIN AND THE JEWISH BUND

How should a revolutionary socialist party relate to sections of the working class that suffer specific national or racial oppression and discrimination? In this article, the first of a series dealing with the history of revolutionary socialist tactics in the struggle against racism, Kate Foster looks at the debate in the Russian workers' movement early this century over the issue of organising Jewish workers.

How to unite and fight?



Jewish victim of a pogrom at Belostok

workers. In effect the Bund wished to operate as a separate Jewish socialist party, allied to the RSDLP, but not an integral part of it.

At the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, Lenin and Trotsky were among the most determined opponents of the Bund's approach. Lenin explained to the Bundists that in his view their call for federation was a "reduction to an absurdity of your fundamental error on the national question."

Oppose

The Bundist leaders believed that it was the responsibility of socialists not merely to oppose every instance of oppression and discrimination against minorities, but also to promote the culture of oppressed nations, and therefore to actively promote the "Jewish national culture" that was being persecuted under Tsarism. They attacked social-democrats like Lenin and Trotsky who opposed this view for being "assimilationists".

Today "assimilation" is a value-laden term on the left, usually associated with right wingers like Norman Tebbit, with his "cricket test"—demanding loyalty to the England cricket team from second generation immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent. The implication of this is that racism is caused by immigrants or minorities themselves, for refusing to hide their cultural differences and "fit in". But in the early 20th century there were some socialist leaders who believed assimilation was the strategic political solution to the Jewish question. Karl Kautsky, at that time on the left of the Marxist movement, wrote:

"When the non-native section of the population cease to be alien and blend with the general mass of the population, that is the only possible solution of the Jewish problem."

The best that can be said of this

position is that it was a hangover from the 19th century, based on the notion that an uninterrupted process of assimilation would cause anti-semitism to disappear. This perspective was falsified by subsequent events. However, Lenin's opposition to the Bundists did not rely on the assumption that capitalism would peacefully assimilate the Jewish minority in Europe.

His approach was based in a Marxist attitude to the national question. Lenin pointed out that every national culture has a class dimension: it has both reactionary and progressive elements.

It was this approach that Lenin and other leaders of the RSDLP applied to the Jewish question. Describing the Jews as "the most oppressed and persecuted nation", he nevertheless insisted, against the arguments of the Bundists, that "Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies."

This was not the only element in Jewish culture. Lenin also recognised "the great world-progressive features of Jewish culture... its internationalism, its identification with the advanced movements of the epoch (the percentage of Jews in the democratic and proletarian movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews among the population)."

Dominant

Nevertheless, the dominant element in any "national culture" will be that of its ruling class. Thus to put forward the slogan of "national culture" meant, in Lenin's view, to be "a supporter of all that is outmoded and connected with caste among the Jewish people..."

What did all this have to do with the issue of the relationship between the Bund and the RSDLP? Precisely because the Bundist leaders wanted to promote Jewish "national culture",

they feared and opposed the closest possible integration of Jewish and non-Jewish workers into an all-Russian party. That was what underlay their demand for federation and exclusive rights to organise the Jewish workers. It is why the Bundist leaders stigmatised the call for all workers to come together in united workers' organisations as "the old assimilation story". This implied that the opponents of federation were ignoring the very real oppression that Jews suffered in Russian and Polish society.

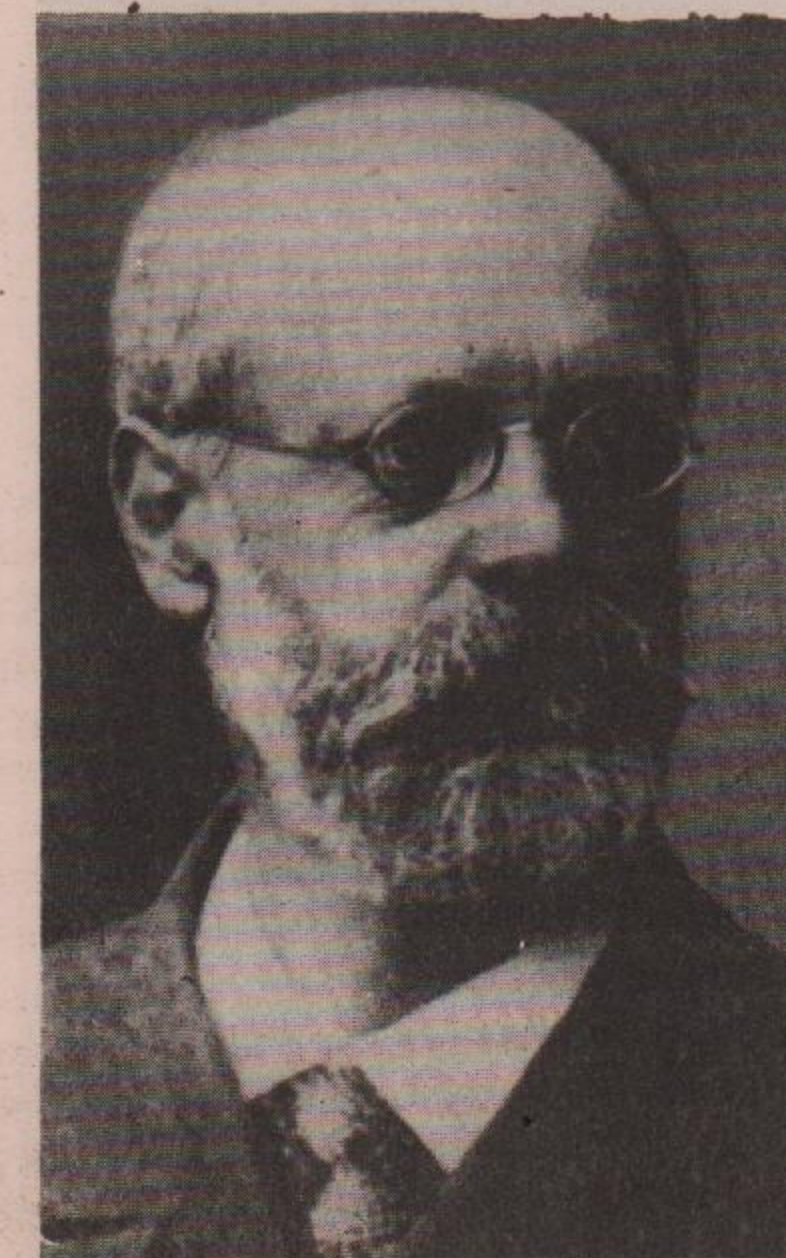
But this was a misrepresentation of the RSDLP's approach. The party's position on the national question was to fight every manifestation of national oppression. But this in no way required Marxists to actually promote any given bourgeois "national culture". Lenin argued that, as internationalists, socialists should "welcome every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege."

Process

Only in this sense was Lenin an "assimilationist". Unlike Kautsky, he did not argue that the process of assimilation would automatically solve national oppression or anti-semitism, and he opposed it where it was forced or unequal. But he criticised the cultural nationalists who were determined to oppose all forms of assimilation on principle. In the same way today Marxists have to oppose those within the black community who criticise mixed cultural events, mixed marriages etc, for "betraying" the struggle for black liberation.

What other lessons can we draw for today from the experience of the RSDLP and the Bund? First that Lenin, Trotsky and the RSDLP leaders were correct in their aim of integrating Jewish workers into the mass workers' organisations and opposing the separatist strategy of the Bund leaders.

Second that Lenin was right to



Karl Kautsky

point out that Marxists do not oppose the assimilation of culturally and nationally diverse sections of the working class. But we have to add that the twentieth century has shown that in the imperialist epoch "assimilation" is not a one way process. Highly assimilated racial and national minorities can and have become the victims of genocidal oppression—from the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, through the Nazi holocaust to today's genocidal wars against the Bosnian Muslims and the Rwandan Tutsis.

Whilst Marxists do everything in their power to build an integrated working class movement, it would be dangerous to believe that oppression will disappear of its own accord if minorities simply adopt the dominant culture of the majority. It is not the specific forms of dress, speech and behaviour of black people in Britain today which cause racism. It is the existence of a whole system based on racism: imperialist plunder of the third world, racist nationality and immigration laws, systematic discrimination in jobs and education.

Lesson

To get rid of racism we have to get rid of capitalism. And that is why the third lesson from the Bund debate has to be hammered home today. Separatism is also a dead end. We have to reject the idea of a separate black socialist party, or the idea that "only black people can make Labour movement policy on racism", which is currently being peddled in the unions by a section of black careerists and bureaucrats.

This does not mean, as some organisations try to suggest today, that all examples of independent organisation serve to foster division. Whilst maintaining his opposition to "nation-building" and separatism, Lenin was never opposed to special forms of organisation to relate to oppressed layers of the working class. In 1903, in the midst of his struggle with the Bundist leaders, he detailed some of the measures necessary for the work amongst Jewish workers, including the existence of a Jewish organisation of the RSDLP:

"Autonomy" under the Rules adopted in 1898 provides the Jewish working class movement with all its needs: propaganda and agitation in Yiddish, its own literature and congresses, the right to advance separate demands to supplement a single general Social Democratic programme and to satisfy local needs and requirements arising out of the special features of Jewish life. In everything else there must be a complete fusion with the Russian proletariat, in the interests of the struggle waged by the entire proletariat of Russia."

Black workers, Jewish workers and all those oppressed because of their supposed "ethnicity", have to organise within the workers' movement as a whole, through caucuses, sections and special conferences. That includes revolutionary socialists taking special measures to reach out and organise the oppressed.

Full support for the struggles of the oppressed, the fight for special forms of organisation within the workers' movement, combined with revolutionary integration of the workers and youth of the oppressed community into the movement and a revolutionary party. These are the principles Lenin outlined in the debate with the Bund and which revolutionary socialists can build upon today. ■

Dear Workers Power,

In the LRCI statement on South Africa (WP 177) you analysed the ANC's present policies very effectively, showing how it has not only compromised with capitalism, but is in the process of replacing the National Party as the foremost bourgeois party.

However, I am puzzled when you go on to say that workers should demand of the unions and the Communist Party (SACP) that they refuse any and all support for an ANC-NP government.

"Of the unions", of course, yes. But to demand this of the SACP would be to ignore its history since the 1920s.

Since that time it has consciously and consistently been a Stalinist party, committed to a two-stage theory, i.e. to a

Problems in South Africa

first stage of "national liberation" and "democracy" before the building of socialism; to "socialism in one country"; to the demonisation of Trotsky and all who take account of his insights.

Your caption "SACP tied to the bourgeois ANC" makes the SACP sound like the victim of some unfortunate accident. But the SACP deliberately tied itself to the ANC more than 60 years ago and, officially at least, never tried to untie the knot.

Rather than seeing the

SACP as hitched to the wagon of the ANC, I would see the SACP as the fellow traveller which helped the ANC of the 1930s to choose the wrong direction.

The consistent focus on "national liberation" of the "African nation" rather than on the victory of the whole working class has, incidentally, led directly to the problems the ANC is now having with the coloured community in the Cape, and also weakens the ANC in its opposition to Inkatha.

During the exile period, 1964 until very recently, the Central Committee and head office of the SACP were located in London (while the head office of the ANC and its National Executive Committee were based in Lusaka). Instead of using the relative freedom of the UK to promote Marxist thinking, the SACP slavishly followed the Moscow line at any given time, and actively suppressed the growth of independent unions.

The ANC included many young leaders and trade unionists of all races recently

exiled as a result of the renewed struggles of 1974-6.

Meanwhile in the exile communities of Zambia and Tanzania, the SACP took a different form. Many sincere Marxists, rank and file members and middle level cadres, struggled for a real revolutionary strategy, involving the working class struggle inside South Africa and the workers' army, the MK, then in exile. But these SACP members (who were also members of the ANC and in most cases of the MK) were operating under great difficulties, facing opposition and repression from the top leadership of the ANC, from the London leadership of the SACP, both separately and in collusion, and of course from the nationalist regimes of the host countries.

The concrete realities of the London "top level" SACP and the SACP within the MK and Africa were so different that the party could be seen as having a Stalinist leadership and a genuinely revolutionary, but impotent, membership.

In this the SACP probably resembles the communist parties of the Soviet Union and of various East European "deformed workers' states". Just as in the Soviet Union and the CPSU many, probably the vast majority, of the rank and file members and middle level cadres of the SACP were and are sincere Marxists. It is on these members and cadres that the South African workers should call, not on the SACP as an organisation. The workers should call on these numerous committed and experienced revolutionaries in the SACP to abandon the Stalinist elements in their politics and to break away *en masse*, to join with other South African revolutionaries in co-ordinating and leading the South African working class in the struggles to come. Indeed, struggles are already beginning as the local ANC leaders in KwaZulu accuse the ANC leadership of ignoring the will of the majority in Natal/KwaZulu and of making a deal with Inkatha. It is not the SACP which can help to solve this kind of problem but the massive power of the working class in Natal under a clear revolutionary leadership.

J Newbegin

• We agree that there are many sincere militants within the SACP who need to be broken away from that party and won to the project of building a Trotskyist party in South Africa. The problem is how to do it.

The very fact that this problem is posed in the first place is testimony to the scale of the illusions that SACP members have in their leaders and in the political programme of the party. That is why it is necessary to demand that the SACP leadership act consistently in the interests of the workers they claim to represent. In that way the most determined sections of the rank and file can be organised in a struggle for principled goals, and for an alternative political leadership when the SACP does not deliver.

In short, far from expressing illusions in the SACP, our call is designed to promote the same goal as J Newbegin—breaking workers from the destructive influence of the mass Stalinist party in South Africa.

Material-List?

Dear comrades,

I was very disappointed with your second review of *Schindler's List* (WP 178). Given that it was written from an Austrian perspective, it could have shed a new light on the issues explored by the film, and the reaction to them in a country that suffered under Nazi rule. Whilst there is some element of such an exploration, the review almost immediately lapsed into an extended moan about what the film did not do or seek to do.



Spielberg has "chosen the story of an employer . . . who sees the light", not one of the "thousands of resistance fighters from the working class movement". He "presents an idealist image of history", not explaining how and why the Nazis came to power. He "obviously did not want to start a debate about the role of former Nazis in the post-war Federal Republic of Germany". And that's only in the first two columns!

But *Schindler's List*, as we are told early on in the review, is a product of the capitalist film industry. True, so why spend so much time criticising it for those elements which it shares with almost every other product of that industry—idealising, focusing on individual "heroes" rather than the collective and ignoring the wider context? The film was about Schindler and what he did, not the rise to power of the Nazis, nor their influence in post-war Germany.

In this context, and despite its defects, the film showed graphically the intimate links between capitalism and fascism. It makes clear that the whole concentration camp system was supposed to be "self-financing" and was operated on business lines. Jews were

totally expendable, but nevertheless capable of producing a profit for their employer before they were worked to death. Schindler himself starts off as a willing participant in this process.

But he changes.

True, this could be seen—as the review argues—as a reflection of the born-again fundamentalist tide still rising in the USA. Personally, I doubt that Spielberg—himself Jewish and wealthy enough to do exactly what he wants and working on a project personally dear to him—would feel compelled to trim his ideas to accommodate the anti-Semitic Christian right.

In fact the film doesn't fall into the trap of showing a single event that transforms Schindler from a wide-boy capitalist entrepreneur into the saviour of 1,200 Jews. It is Schindler's *experience* that changes him. He then proceeds to change, albeit in his own individualist way, a small part of the world. Sounds suspiciously like materialism to me, and in an enormously popular Hollywood movie, too!

And finally, in the interests of accuracy, the "images of children filled with anti-Semitic hatred" are clearly not supposed to be "representative of the majority of Germans under the Nazis", since the scene in which they occur shows the clearing of the Krakow ghetto, in Poland!

In comradeship,
Chris Swan

Agree?
 Disagree?
 Got something to say?

Write in to:
Workers Power
BCM 7750
London WC1N 3XX

Fascist?

Dear Workers Power,
I was interested in your coverage of the Italian MSI (WP 178) but am left with two questions. First, is it a fascist party? Second, should Italian workers deny the MSI a platform?

Yours in Comradeship,
Joanna Mahon

• Briefly, yes, the MSI is a fascist party; so yes, Italian workers must begin the task of organising a united front to drive it out of office, off the streets and out of existence—"no platform for the MSI!"

Bob Smith 1947-1994

The Birmingham branch of Workers Power were deeply saddened to learn of the tragic and untimely death of Bob Smith, a long-standing socialist activist in the city.

Bob was well known in the Birmingham labour movement where he was active for years, particularly in the print union GPMU and the Birmingham Trades Council.

A stalwart campaigner for working class solidarity throughout his adult life, especially in the great miners' and printers' strikes of

the 1980s, Bob was also a hardy fighter against racism and fascism.

Though we often had our political disagreements, Bob being a firm supporter of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, he was always an honest and loyal opponent, as well as being a hardworking and dependable ally in joint actions and campaigns. Bob's death is without doubt a great loss to the labour and trade union movement.

We send our deepest sympathy to Bob's comrades, family and friends.

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

★ We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

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

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

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

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

★ Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

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

Workers power

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

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Major attacks homeless

The Tories and their rich supporters live in beautiful homes, spacious, elegant, equipped with every mod con. Most of them keep flats in central London as well as weekend residences in the country. They dine out in exclusive restaurants and at society dinners.

But something is disturbing their sense of well-being. Bedraggled and degraded men and women huddle in the doorways and shopfronts surrounding the clubs and restaurants of the rich. Bundles of human misery are forced to beg outside the genteel tea shops and museums of Britain's "historic cities", spoiling the tourists' view of "merrie England".

John Major has decided that something must be done. The beggars must be "swept off the streets."

Build more homes? Create more jobs? Provide more emergency provision to protect the 10,000 homeless people desperately looking for shelter in London?

Of course not. Somebody would have to pay for it. And, as we have been told time and again by every Tory politician and media apologist, the money "just isn't there." On the contrary, public spending must be cut.

Instead they persecute the homeless. They blame them for their suffering, drive them out of sight and out of mind, and hope that no-one will notice that government cuts are creating ever more homeless people.

Scrapping income support for 16 and 17 year olds six years ago forced thousands of youth to beg for their money. The withdrawal of state funding for more than 20 short-stay hostels will drive ever more onto the streets and under the railway arches.

The total of 600 people who die on the streets of London every year will rise steadily, year in, year out, for as long as this outrage is allowed to go on.

But it is not just the homeless of today that are being targeted. If you are unemployed or on a low income, your right to housing benefit is under attack.

Already benefits in Britain are among the very lowest in

We say

HOMES

FOR ALL!



Europe. But this is a luxury the Tories tell us "we" cannot afford.

Michael Portillo, a man who cannot conceal the arrogance of one who has known luxury and comfort every day of his life, thinks the housing benefit bill is too high.

The Tory answer? The poor

must find "more appropriate"—i.e. cheaper—accommodation. Why should claimants live in half-decent homes?

He is encouraging sharp rent rises coupled with withdrawal of full benefit cover for the rents of the unemployed. This will not just drive the

jobless into "cheaper housing"—it will drive them onto the streets.

The Tories scapegoat beggars in the cities and travellers in the countryside. The Criminal Justice Bill—set to become law this summer—attacks the rights of travelling people and squatters who dare to occupy some of the 800,000 homes that are standing empty.

15,000 youth marched against the Bill in May. The homeless and their supporters have been demonstrating in London.

Even the shopkeepers of central London have spoken out to say from direct experience that the homeless are not scroungers but genuine victims.

This whole episode has revealed everything that is small minded, vindictive and cynical about this government.

It is government by the rich, for the rich, with all their prejudice, callousness and cruelty.

Millions know it. They hate the Tories. We need to turn that anger into action—action for the homeless, action for the unemployed, action for every victim of this disgusting government.

There are enough empty homes to abolish homelessness overnight.

While one in four of the homeless on the streets of London are former soldiers, the Ministry of Defence has over 10,000 homes standing empty.

Everyone can point to properties in their own area that are being squandered by money-grabbing landlords, wasted resources that could be put to use now.

And there are hundreds of thousands of building workers on the dole when they could be building decent, new

homes for millions.

Working class people need to get organised. The whole trade union movement must actively support the mass youth fightback against the Criminal Justice Bill.

Our tenants' associations and trade unions must draw up their own plans based on the resources that are really available.

Empty properties should be seized and occupied by people that need them.

Mass demonstrations should demand that Labour councils freeze rents, build thousands of new homes and tax the rich to meet local peoples' needs.

Where this means breaking the Tories' spending limits, so be it.

We need a mass movement to sweep John Major out of Number 10 and into more "appropriate accommodation"—the gutter.■