

Workers power

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How India fought for independence

Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

No 213 July/August 1997 ★ 50p



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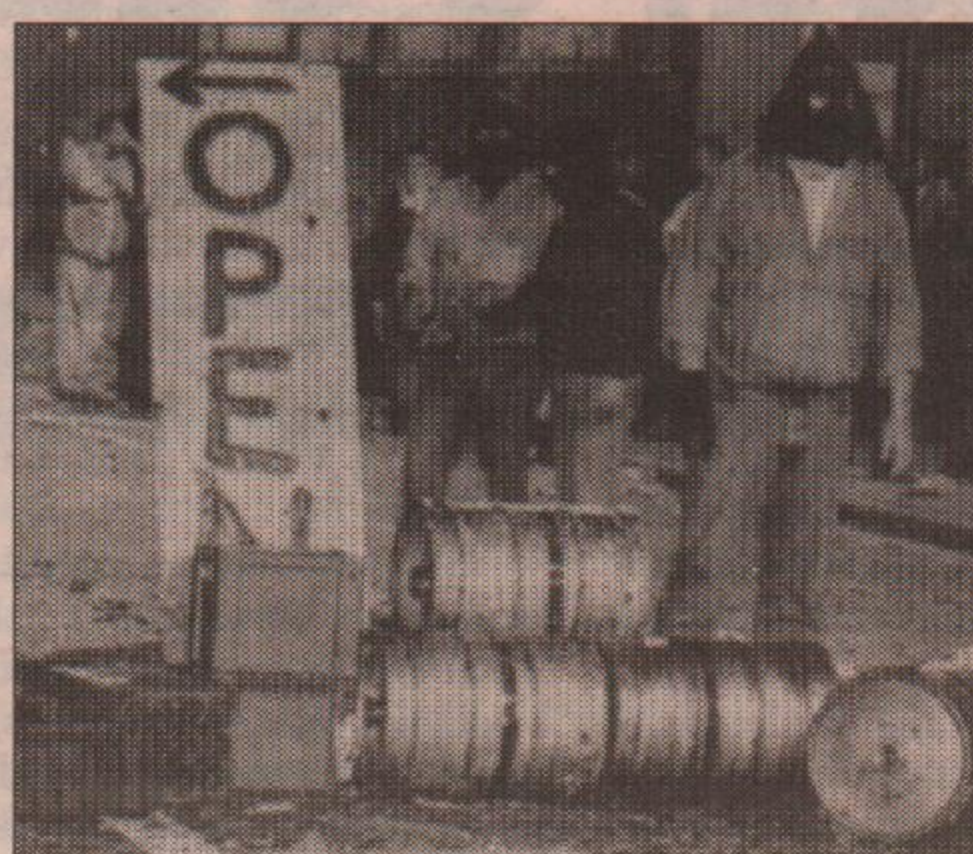
As Orange bigots march

GET BRITAIN

OUT OF

IRELAND

NOW!



“WE WILL not be talking to anyone ever, and I mean anyone. I will be going to Drumcree Church with Portadown District and I will be coming out of church and going down Garvaghy Road and that's it.”

With these words, Portadown Orange Grand Master, Harold Gracey, summed up the Loyalists' approach to dialogue and peace in Northern Ireland: entrenched bigotry in defence of their sectarian supremacy.

And yet, we are constantly told by the British government and media that it is the Republicans who are the obstacle to the peace.

For the third year running, the Orange parade from Drumcree to Portadown is set to spark off an orgy of sectarian violence. In 1995, nationalist protesters were baton-charged by RUC riot police. These police were protecting the Orangemen's right to stage their parades of hate through nationalist districts.

Last year, the violence escalated with hundreds of nationalist families driven from their homes and two Catholics murdered.

And yet, we are told it is the Republicans who are the terrorists.

The British government established the sectarian state of Northern Ireland. They maintain the privileges of the Loyalist community with a garrison of 18,000 troops.

And yet, we are told Britain is neutral between the two sides in the North.

Three lies: three lies which will be repeated over and over again this summer, when the sectarian killings of Catholics continue and the Orange bigots terrorise nationalist communities. Lies that will be used by the British to exclude Sinn Fein from the peace talks. Lies that will be used to protect Protestant privileges in housing and employment.

Peace will come to the North only through justice and an end to oppression. British rule offers neither. British troops cannot provide the solution, they are part of the problem.

The marching season is a celebration of Protestant supremacy and sectarianism and an excuse to reinforce this with arbitrary violence. Meanwhile, the 95% Protestant RUC stand by or even join in.

Socialists, Republicans and democrats must stand four-square with the anti-unionist communities of Northern Ireland under threat from the Orange marches in fighting to stop the parades going through their areas and in defending those areas by any means necessary.

Stop the Orange bigots!

Down with the sectarian state!

Troops out now!

TURN TO PAGE 3

SLP: Scargill bans all criticism

Fight this witch-hunt

WHEN ARTHUR Scargill launched Socialist Labour on May Day 1995, many on the left were full of hopes that it could become a vibrant left wing party opposed to Labour's sell outs. Today the SLP is small, shrinking and mired in a foul-smelling Stalinist purge.

For months the main theme at SLP meetings has not been opposition to Tony Blair – it has been opposition to revolutionaries within the SLP. Last month those fighting for democracy inside the SLP, against the leadership-imposed party constitution, met under the auspices of the Campaign for Democracy in the SLP (CDSLSP). Those attending the meeting were issued with a statement from the party's NEC:

"Conferences and meetings have been convened with the clear aim of co-ordinating campaigns to challenge the Party's constitution . . . Any member who attends a 'faction', or meeting convened by any such grouping/organisation or any individual(s) will be acting in contravention of the Socialist Labour Party's constitution . . . Such meetings will not be tolerated by the party."

So if you want to campaign against

the bureaucratic constitution – which has never been endorsed by party members – then you are . . . in breach of the constitution!

There are two ways that members can respond to these threats from the NEC. They can run and hide or stand up and fight and refuse to be intimidated. Those who attended the CDSLSP conference on 14 June chose to fight Scargill's constitution and launched a campaign up to the party's Congress to campaign for a democratic constitution and the reinstatement of all expelled/voided members.

However, there are a number of members on the left of the party, particularly those around the Marxist Bulletin (ex-members of the International Bolshevik Tendency), who have taken it upon themselves to denounce comrades who refuse to be silenced by Scargill's anti-democratic diktats. They turned up with a leaflet headlined, "Don't support this anti-SLP lash up!"

They argue that because expelled members like myself and others have dared to criticise Scargill for his bureaucratic expulsions in public, we are anti-

**KIRSTIE PATON,
VAUXHALL SOCIALIST
LABOUR PARTY**

SLP and splitters! These actions are typical of a tendency so desperate to stay within the SLP that it is prepared to sacrifice the truth for "manoeuvres" and "tactics" within the party in the hope that Scargill will tolerate them. Their leaflet provided left cover for the witch-hunt. That is where this "opposition" is going.

Well comrades, there is nowhere to hide. Scargill has made it clear that he will not tolerate any opposition. He is determined to rid the party of all forces to the left of Stalinism and he will continue with his purge.

At the same time, he is happy to welcome organisations like the Harpal Brar's super-Stalinist Indian Workers Association and trample over members' basic democratic rights to secure that organisation's influence in the party. Last month in the Ealing Southall Constituency, the existing officers of the branch were manoeuvred out of office and a new leadership was put in place

under the command of Brar.

If the left in the party is to mount an effective opposition, then we have to build a campaign that refuses to be bullied into submission. We must continue to organise public meetings, speak at branches, issue leaflets and publicise the CDSLSP as widely and openly as possible.

Unfortunately the Conference on 14 June spent very little of its time discussing the practical means of building the CDSLSP and fighting the witch-hunt. Instead, it devoted most of its time to debating the issue of whether the CDSLSP should launch "an open campaign for democracy in the SLP and socialism in the working class movement".

This project has little to do with the political fight within the SLP and lots to do with the pet project of the CPGB and its paper, *Weekly Worker*, of constructing a loose socialist grouping, a "rapprochement" of the left.

Much time and energy was wasted discussing an "open publication" which would both campaign for democracy and "debate issues of the broader workers' movement". The Campaign for

Democracy is a united front to fight Scargill's purges, reinstate those expelled and throw off the bureaucratic constitution imposed on the party. It supporters come from many political traditions and none. They have little agreement on the issues facing the "broader workers' movement".

There are any number of publications inside and outside of the SLP which will publish their views. Why start another one? Unless, like the CPGB, you view the CDSLSP not as a fighting bloc within the party but as a vehicle for "rapprochement" on the left. To impose this project on the CDSLSP will just hamper its immediate tasks in fighting the purges.

Socialist Labour Action – a group of SLP members in political sympathy with Workers Power – will continue to produce its bulletin inside the SLP and fight for a revolutionary perspective for the party. We will continue to support any initiative that challenges Scargill's bureaucratic rule. However, we see no point in endorsing a confused regroupment tactic of the CPGB which does nothing to clarify differences or forge real unity on the left. ■

No hiding place for BP!



Concert-goers arriving at London's Barbican Centre on 25 June were greeted by a rousing chorus of "BP kills for oil". Members of the Coalition against BP in Colombia demonstrated outside the BP-sponsored winners' gala of the Cardiff Singer of the World concert. The vast majority of music lovers were happy to take leaflets outlining BP's murderous role in the Casanare region of Colombia where it has paid military death squads to "police" the activities of trade unionists, human rights and environmental activists.

Many of them expressed support for what we were doing. The only people put out when members of the youth organisation, REVOLUTION, unfurled a banner inside the Barbican Centre denouncing BP were the security guards.

The demonstration at the Barbican followed a similar, well-received protest on 19 June at the finals of the Singer of the World at Cardiff's St David's Centre.

The Coalition is now set to step up its campaign against BP over the next few weeks, with a strategy meeting at London's Conway Hall on:

Friday 4 July at 7.30pm. (Nearest tube: Holborn, Central and Piccadilly lines).

The coalition can be contacted at: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

Boycott Labour's education hit squads

YOU CAN'T breathe in a school in Hackney without being inspected. Management inspect you, the LEA inspects you, Ofsted inspects you and now the government is sending in a hit-squad to inspect the inspections.

Will this improve education in Hackney? No. Is it designed to improve education in Hackney? No.

There are problems in Hackney. Despite the fact that exam results have been steadily improving, much more could be done for Hackney children. The local Labour Party is in an appalling state. No Director of Education has

been appointed for over a year.

The decision to close Hackney Downs has led to a severe shortage of places for boys in secondary education and millions may now have to be spent reopening the school.

There is a need for the management of education in Hackney to be scrutinised and held accountable. But a government hit-squad is not what we need.

Inspection under the Tories, and now under Labour, is not about supporting teachers and improving standards. It is about putting the blame onto teachers for the appalling state of

education after years of underfunding and mismanagement. If Blair and Blunkett were serious about giving inner-city children a decent education, then why not allow local parents and trade unionists to inspect the schools and report on what is needed to improve standards?

They will not do this because they know they wouldn't like the results. What Hackney schools need is money: money for books, computers, staff training, more teachers and smaller classes; money to repair leaking roofs and crumbling buildings. But this is not on offer from Labour.

Teachers and parents are beginning to fight back, refusing to have their local schools rubbished in the press. NUT members, supported by parents, at Islington Green School are refusing to accept an Ofsted report which labels them as a failing school.

The 18 named schools on Blunkett's hit-list are working together, joining with Islington Green in a campaign against "naming and shaming". NUT members in Hackney are preparing a policy of non-co-operation.

To resist any victimisation of teachers resulting from the LEA inspection or the refusal to co-operate, strike action

will be needed.

September will see the start of a new school year and the renewal of the battle over education. Teachers will be organising a demonstration against Ofsted. It is important that this demonstration is successful. If there is to be any "blaming and shaming", then let's finger the real villains – the government.

It is unlikely that public pressure on its own will be enough. We need the support of parents and other workers but we also need a campaign of defiance. The most effective way to stop the inspections is a national boycott of Ofsted. ■

in this issue



Euromarch and Eurosummit

As Europe's capitalist leaders assembled in Amsterdam on 14 June 40,000 unemployed and trade unionists protested against poverty and social exclusion. Full report - pages 12-13



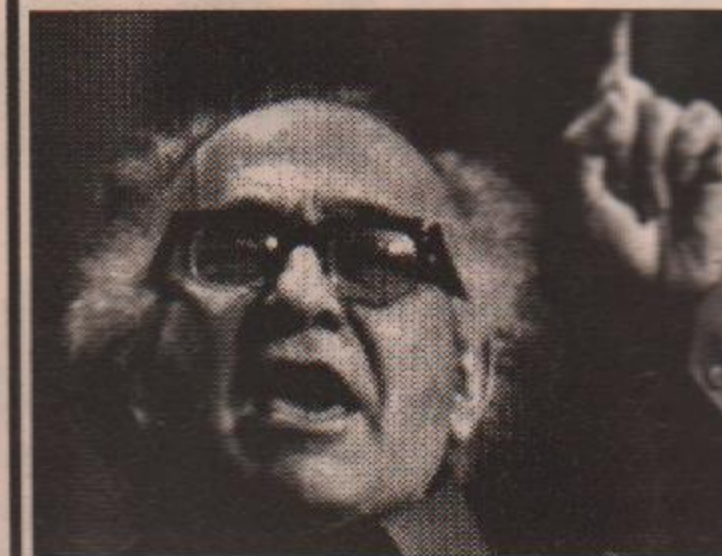
Independence Day

Fifty years after India won independence from Britain, Richard Brenner examines the class struggles that helped shape modern India - pages 8-9



Argentina erupts

Mass struggles and barricades against unemployment have gripped northern Argentina, throwing up direct delegate committees. Special report from the PTS in Argentina - page 11



What kind of programme

Jeremy Dewar examines the SWP's new programme. Debate - page 14

Note: The next issue of Workers Power will be published at the beginning of September

EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 213 JULY/AUGUST 1997



NORTHERN IRELAND

Blair's hypocrisy

ON 16 JUNE, the IRA shot dead two RUC officers just outside Lurgan police station in County Armagh. David Johnston and John Graham were the first RUC officers to be killed by the IRA since the ceasefire ended in February 1996.

Headlines swiftly followed declaring the Irish peace process in tatters. Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and John Bruton were all on hand to denounce this "brutal, callous murder" and call on Sinn Fein to condemn the action.

The fact that a loyalist mob kicked to death an RUC officer in Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, on 1 June was quietly forgotten. Where were the demands on the loyalist organisations sitting at the "peace talks" to condemn this action? Why are there no calls for the 130,000 firearms "legally" in loyalist hands to be decommissioned?

IRA actions are greeted with condemnation while loyalist terror is swept under the carpet and ignored.

David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, called the shootings "a deliberate act by the IRA to try and provoke violence from the loyalists."

In fact, it is the nationalists who have been continually provoked by loyalist violence and RUC indifference.

Over the last couple of months, in preparation for the marching season and in revenge for the nationalist community's support for Sinn Fein at the polls, loyalist terror gangs and death squads have been stepping up their actions.

Catholic churches, such as the one in Harryville, have been picketed by baying mobs. Schools in nationalist areas have been burned down or smashed up with breeze blocks. Dozens of Catholic families have been forced to abandon their homes as a result of terror campaigns. At least three prominent Sinn Fein members have been shot since May, while

Michael McGoldrick and Robert Hamill have died at the hands of loyalist thugs for no other reason than their religion.

All attempts by community groups in the nationalist areas to negotiate the routing of the marches have fallen on deaf ears. Unionist leaders, David Trimble and Ian Paisley, have stood by while splinter groups like "The Spirit of Drumcree" have intrinsigently declared their intention to march on Catholic areas. Both are prepared to place themselves at the head of any clash with nationalist residents - just as they did in 1996.

The Parades Commission is meant to bring the two communities together and achieve less threatening marches. It is a waste of time. Everyone knows what the Orange parades are about. As long ago as the last century a parliamentary select committee said their purpose was, "to make the Protestant the enemy of the Catholic and the Catholic the enemy of the Protestant by processions on particular days to incite breaches of the peace and bloodshed".

Labour's Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam and the Parades Commission refuse to recognise the real purpose of these marches. Mowlam even went so far as to say that Breandan MacCionnaith, a councillor elected from the Garvagh Road Residents' Coalition, "was part of the difficulty we face". The Commission will not protect nationalist communities because Britain will not challenge the Unionist supremacists.

Alongside this indifference to nationalist safety, the British government has, with the full support of the US and Irish

governments, outlined a six-point plan to re-launch the peace process. The talks will re-commence in September and be open to all parties that agree with the Mitchell principles. Sinn Fein would be allowed in six weeks after an IRA ceasefire, so long as the IRA immediately start to hand over their weapons to an independent monitoring body.

What the British government and ex-Senator Mitchell demand is that the nationalist community progressively gives up its arms before any of its demands have been met or any settlement reached. What would have been the response of the ANC to the apartheid regime if it had demanded that its fighters started surrendering their weapons before a settlement was even reached? But Sinn Fein's immediate response was positive. Pat Docherty said, "The British government have removed the decommissioning obstacle for our entry into all-party negotiations". Yet in substance this offer is no different to John Major's proposals in the immediate aftermath of the May 1996 elections for the peace process Forum. Blair's demands deserve to meet the same fate.

Clearly, Mowlam knows restarting the talks is a big gamble, which is why she is already blaming Sinn Fein should it go wrong: "The settlement train is leaving with or without Sinn Fein." This is sheer nonsense since without Sinn Fein, her train won't be going anywhere.

The Labour government knows that it cannot ignore Sinn Fein's increased vote in the local elections and in the British and Southern Irish general elections. It

is true that many in the nationalist community are tired of the killings, but they recognise that Blair will not protect them from loyalist bigotry; he is implicated in it. Years of national oppression, of troops terrorising nationalists, mean that the idea that somehow the British government can be a neutral arbiter, dealing fairly with both sides in the North is ludicrous.

Sinn Fein have to be invited to the all-party talks. But at the same time, Blair and Mowlam want the Republicans to pay a very high price for their seat at the negotiating table.

Significantly, to make the start of the talks in September, the IRA will have to implement a new ceasefire in mid-July - in the middle of the marching season. Meanwhile Trimble has been told that the Garvagh Road route through Portadown will be granted if the Unionists go along with the decommissioning plans.

Whether the peace process is successfully relaunched or not, socialists should make it clear to Mowlam and Blair that we know who is to blame for the violence in Northern Ireland. Like them, we are not neutral on this question. Unlike them, we stand with the Irish people against British oppression and the occupation of the North of Ireland. The only way to a just peace in Northern Ireland is by withdrawing British troops now and allowing the Irish people as a whole to decide on their future free of the partition imposed by British imperialism.

The Orange Order has no right to march, to terrorise Catholics, to parade its supremacy in a sectarian statelet. We are in favour of resistance, of direct action to keep the loyalists and their RUC protectors out of nationalist areas. The Bogside Residents' Group have announced their plans to hold counter-demonstrations on every day between 6 and 12 July. We stand with them and against the Orange bigots. ■

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WORKERS POWER

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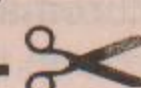
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British Airways

Testing Blair's mettle

THE FIRST major industrial battle under the new Labour government could be fought out at British Airways (BA), barring an eleventh hour deal between national union officials and Bob Ayling, chief executive of BA and a frequent dinner guest of Tony Blair's.

BA is preparing a massive strike-breaking operation. Ayling recently declared that BA would "not be held back by 1970s-style trade unionism."

BA is using the Manpower and Pertemps agencies to recruit up to 600 scabs. In addition the airline has, since January, been training some 3,000 managers to check-in passengers,

handle baggage and serve in-flight drinks, in anticipation of a decisive showdown with the unions.

The company has sent letters to all 12,000 cabin staff – including members of the management-sponsored scab outfit Cabin Crew 89 – in the hope of intimidating the workforce. BA has threatened to block promotion and withdraw cheap travel concessions for anyone who strikes.

Response

The TGWU affiliate, BASSA, representing some 9,000 of the cabin crew announced a massive 3-1 majority for strike action on a 75% turnout in

response to swingeing attacks on basic pay rates. BA's bosses are trying to slash the starting rate by 19% to just £8,000 a year.

BA also plans to contract out certain services. First in the firing line are catering staff who, along with ground crews in the TGWU and GMB, look certain to back industrial action. BA are out to save £1 billion a year by the millennium by axing 5,000 jobs, increasing the length of the working week and cutting real pay.

Ayling's aim is to either completely neuter the unions or get rid of them once and for all. This New Labour boss has already made thinly veiled threats

of law suits against the TGWU and GMB and even against individual strikers.

Chance

This dispute gives the government an ideal opportunity to display its anti-union, pro-boss credentials. Equally, it gives socialists, trade unionists and Labour Party members a great chance to spoil Blair's and Ayling's next dinner party.

As Bill Morris, TGWU General Secretary has commented, "Tony Blair will not be able to sit on the fence if BA continues to act in a brutal way reminiscent of the worst excesses of man-

agement in the eighties. The climate has changed. Those tactics are no longer acceptable."

The stakes at BA are high. Union members have a real chance to scupper the bosses' attacks through all-out, indefinite action under strikers' control. This is especially true if action hits BA when it hurts – at the peak of the summer holidays.

A determined fight at BA will send a clear message to Tony Blair that millions of workers did not vote Labour on 1 May just to see a continuation of the Tories' draconian anti-unions laws and a free hand for bullying management. ■

Southwark College

Lecturers return to work

THE STRIKE by lecturers at Southwark College in south London ended in defeat. The strike lasted from April to the end of June. It was against demands by management that workers at the college foot the bill for a £1.5 million budget shortfall.

Senior lecturers were to be forced on to new contracts or demoted. Part-time staff employed by the college were to be replaced by agency lecturers on worse conditions and pay.

Several weeks into the strike, the lecturers were issued with an ultimatum: "Sign new contracts or be sacked". The majority signed "under duress", but remained on strike. A senior lecturer who refused to sign, Chris Ryan, was sacked. Management, seeing the strike was solid, started employing scab agency staff to do lecturers' work.

At the end of June the Principal issued a letter to all strikers saying if they did not return by 10am on Friday 27 June, they would be sacked. The day before the deadline, strikers met and voted 64 to 34 to return to work.

The management offer, recommended by a negotiating team, made up mainly of national and regional officers, meant that Chris Ryan remained sacked while agency staff would be employed in a "pilot study".

The strikers faced a very difficult decision. The lecturers' union,



The strikes at Southwark College were supported by demos and collections but they did not build solidarity action among rank and file NATFHE members.

NATFHE, had stopped strike pay two weeks before, saying the national sustentation fund had run out of money. This was despite the national conference of the union voting to increase strike pay a few weeks before.

Action

The lack of a strong rank and file organisation in NATFHE and the failure to win solidarity action across Lon-

don were the major reasons that the strike went down to defeat.

The most influential force in the strike leadership was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). They were crucial in achieving very large collections and building demonstrations and lobbies. No one could fault the SWP members for their activity in support of the strike.

But the SWP's politics prevented its

militants from being able to chart a way forward in this and other struggles in the colleges. The SWP is against organising independent rank and file networks in the unions because it believes that this can only be done during periods of upsurge in the class struggle. Instead it relies on its party organisation, its "network of socialists".

In NATFHE it was pushed into launching "Fight the Contracts Now"

when the employers started forcing through new contracts. This organisation was quickly dropped when NATFHE failed to fight back nationally. The links made were squandered.

It was clear in London, especially after other colleges like Kingsway settled their own disputes, that Southwark was in danger of being isolated. Even then, the SWP rejected calls to seek to organise cross-London rank and file meetings to try and fight for solidarity action. The argument was, "the mood isn't there".

Mood

Possibly "the mood" was not there, but revolutionaries try and change moods by their actions. At worst, such an attempt to organise the rank and file would have pushed forward the fight for levies and collections. At best, it could have linked up colleges and built London-wide co-ordinated action. What prevented the SWP leadership at Southwark was not "the mood", but its party's wrong political line on the rank and file movement.

The defeat at Southwark raises another key task for militants. We must campaign in the labour movement to reverse the Tories' destruction of democratically accountable colleges and governing bodies.

We must demand that Labour sweeps away the non-elected, business-dominated quangos that now run Further Education (FE) and place colleges under the control of elected local authorities.

We must argue for democratic governing bodies representing students, teachers and community organisations which will fight against cuts in education and for decent training and conditions in FE. ■

Project Aerospace

Fighting talk from the picket line

WORKERS AT Project Aerospace were locked out last December, just two weeks before Christmas. They have been picketing the Coventry plant ever since. Workers Power spoke to three of the workers on the picket line about the dispute.

Workers Power (WP): What led to the lock-out?

P: We asked for a 4.5% pay rise, but we were also concerned about the asbestos and other health and safety issues. We also wanted the removal of diesel fork lifts because of health risks. We were pushing for adequate machine guards and negotiations for a pension scheme. Also a new sick pay scheme. Management offered us a 3% pay rise and would not negotiate anything else.

We went to a ballot for an overtime ban, with a majority in favour. This was official. The day the union officials were to commence talks with the management, we were locked out and dismissed just two hours prior to that meeting.

WP: What has been the response of members of your union, MSF?

P: The local union members, "the tinnies" (sheet metal workers), have been very supportive. The "tinnies" have had a levy from the beginning.

The union officials seemed apprehensive at first, but once they realised we weren't going anywhere they backed us. They have put us in contact with other branches and regions. They've got us in to speak and take collections.

When the Euromarchers arrived in Coventry they came to the picket line

in solidarity. They then proceeded to occupy the firm's car park for a while. It lifted our spirits a lot!

At the MSF conference in Brighton recently, we sent a delegation including our shop steward, Hughie Paine. He got a great response, three standing ovations for saying we will never give in until we are re-instated.

We also received a substantial amount of donations and the support of the delegates was 100%. Locally, we had a demo on Saturday 21 June which raised the profile of the dispute. We also received local press and TV coverage. It did its job by catching the public's attention.

On Friday 4 July in Birmingham six of us have our industrial tribunal test case for unfair dismissal.

We think this is one tactic to achieve justice.

WP: What is needed to win the dispute?

P: We think that continued picketing and the solidarity of other workers will sustain the pressure on the company. They seem to think that by starving us they will force us back on lower conditions and with our caps in hand.

WP: What links have been made with other workers in struggle?

P: We are all after the same thing, that is reinstatement, the right to work under acceptable conditions, proper health and safety, pension rights, sick pay and a better working environment. Some of us have been on the Liverpool dockers' March for Social Justice in London.

We are in regular contact with all the present disputes. We have also spo-

ken on the same platform and demanded the same rights and justice on many occasions.

WP: What should Labour be doing now that they are in government?

P: Give the unions more power. We should have union rights without victimisation at the start of all employment. If the majority of the workforce wants union representation then employers must be forced to accept it.

The Labour government should say to employers who victimise employees who have democratically voted for union recognition that they must be re-instated. All of us out in dispute at present: Liverpool, Hillingdon and Magnet should immediately be re-instated on full rights and improved conditions. ■

T&G Conference

Support the Liverpool dockers

TWENTY TWO months into the Liverpool docks dispute, the July Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) of the Transport and General Workers Union will be the first chance that T&G members have had to challenge our leadership over their attitude to the dockers' struggle.

The dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) is only the latest episode in a long history of T&G leaderships selling-out dockers. In 1989 the dockers were one of the strongest and best organised sections of the T&G. When the Tories went onto the offensive, abolishing the National Dock Labour Scheme, thousands of dockers immediately walked out.

But Ron Todd, then T&G general secretary, frittered the opportunity away by taking the dispute through the courts for three months. When an official strike finally materialised, secondary action was not organised. T&G members in transport were keeping the ports working (as they are now in Liverpool). The dockers were defeated. This defeat affected every T&G member. From a high point of 2.5 million, T&G membership has plummeted to 900,000 today.

Guarantee

The Liverpool dockers stayed out the longest in 1989 and their militancy won them a guarantee from MDHC that casual labour would not be employed on the Liverpool docks.

The T&G leadership collaborated with MDHC, which recognised T&G officials but derecognised the direct representatives of the dockers, the Mersey Docks Shop Stewards. In 1993 the T&G leaders stated, jointly with MDHC, that they would refuse to

recognise any elected shop steward who would not sign an "accreditation" form. These had been drawn up to severely limit the influence of the shop stewards. This was in breach of T&G rules.

This treachery, coupled with a relentless drive by MDHC to shed jobs and casualise its workforce, severely weakened the Liverpool dockers.

In September 1995 MDHC went for the final showdown. Torside, a small docks company controlled by MDHC, sacked without warning all 80 of its young workers over a dispute about casual workers. The 329 MDHC dockers and some from other small docks companies refused to cross their picket line and were sacked.

This strike could have been won outright in the first few weeks if the T&G had backed a boycott of the port. Instead the national executive hid behind the alibi of the anti-trade union laws, stressing the "illegality" of the dockers' initial action, in refusing to cross the Torside picket line, and arguing that the courts will sequester union funds.

On several occasions they have entered into secret negotiations with MDHC, making deals that ignored the dockers' own core demand: full reinstatement of all 500 sacked dockers.

To force through these sell-outs Morris has imposed postal ballots in an attempt to erode the strikers' cohesion. But they've thrown out every offer so far with overwhelming majorities.

Now Morris has joined with MDHC to commission a study on the feasibility of a dock labour co-operative. KPMG Peat Marwick, the company our subs have paid to do this, regularly acts on behalf of MDHC! The report is com-

pleted and looks like it will be another unacceptable offer – probably the same pay-off as before: £25,000 and 70 jobs, not 500.

Impose

We can be sure Morris intends to impose this deal, and probably by balloting sometime around the BDC. This is a disgrace. But now we have the chance to turn our anger into action. The dockers can still win, but to do that this conference will have to see a drastic change of strategy.

Delegates should:

- Vote for all motions supporting the dockers, but fight especially hard around motions 424/425. These motions would make the dispute official, and commit the union to building secondary action to close the port.
- Use the conference to build action. The Liverpool dockers will have their own fringe meeting and be attending the others. A national meeting can be organised by activists at the conference to plan and coordinate action.
- Fight for mass meetings to decide on all deals proposed, not postal ballots controlled by the leadership.

In the fight ahead, if the T&G is forced to make the dispute official, it will try to use its power to take over the negotiations and then force the dockers to settle on a bad deal. Negotiations must be open and in the full control of the shop stewards' committee.

The dockers can win. Let's make this conference a real working conference, and build the action to give them the backing they need and deserve. Shut down the Mersey Port! Victory to the Liverpool Dockers! ■

Sheffield Unison

Unofficial action could have won

A BALLOT of Unison members in Sheffield City Council for strike action against compulsory redundancies was lost in June. The margin was fewer than 400 votes, but more than 50% of the 7,500-strong branch membership did not vote.

The turnout of 3,200 in the postal ballot compared badly with the 2,000 members who had staged an unofficial walkout on 28 May in response to the Labour-controlled authority issuing a redundancy notice to a finance worker in a local school. At a mass meeting of strikers roughly a third indicated that they were prepared to stay out until at least 2 June, in defiance of Unison regional officials who urged an immediate return to work.

Stewards from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) – the single biggest left force and a key element in the branch leadership – did not argue for indefinite action.

Their failure was a key factor in the meeting's decision not to press on with the strike. This followed their previous reliance on departmental ballots as opposed to a clear call for a council-wide fight.

Demobilising

In its explanation of the lost vote Socialist Worker pointed to the need "for more members and an increase in the number of shop stewards". While true this analysis conveniently ignores the SWP's own role in demobilising the

hundreds of members whose commitment could have won thousands more to join the fight at the time.

Council bosses are certain to see the ballot defeat as a green light to press ahead with another 150 redundancies this financial year and continued attacks on jobs, terms and conditions.

The urgent task now is to hold a meeting open to all branch militants with the aim of building a democratic, rank and file organisation capable of revitalising the branch after an undeniable setback.

At the same time, it will be crucial to defend and build on indefinite action by clerical staff at Ann's Grove School where the Council declared the first redundancy. ■



Hillingdon betrayed

A Unison steward reflects on this year's Unison Conference in Brighton and argues that the left urgently need to find a way forward.

THE MOST important issue at Unison conference was the one issue the leadership did not want to discuss – the Hillingdon strike.

I remember last year's conference in Bournemouth and the standing ovation given to Malkiat Bilku, leader of the Hillingdon Hospital strikers. Rodney Bickerstaffe, Unison's General Secretary, pledged to fully support the 53 sacked Asian women in their fight for reinstatement.

This year we had moved along the coast to Brighton, but the leadership's attitude towards this key dispute had moved much further. The strike is no longer official. Unison's leadership has withdrawn its support. All motions condemning the betrayal were defeated. Even the vote simply to hear Malkiat speak was lost.

Despite a lobby of the Brighton Conference Centre on the Tuesday morning, and fringe meetings linking up with the Liverpool Dockers and other strikers, the NEC won over the majority of delegates with its excuses that the strike was unwinnable and that little support had come in from other branches or from other Pall Mall workers.

Last year the predominant mood at conference was "wait for Labour", this year it was, "give Labour a chance". And there was little sign that the left were able to challenge illusions in Blair or Bickerstaffe.

The NEC did lose some key arguments. A motion they had drawn up, called "Unequal Britain", focusing on Social Security, was amended by conference to include a call for the restoration of benefits to 16-18 year-olds and the restoration of the link between pensions and earnings.

A motion was also passed calling for the return to public ownership of the privatised utilities, ending of CCT, the Private Finance Initiative and NHS Trusts and for the restoration to public control of all privatised services – despite the NEC's calls for "realism".

Lacking

But paper policies are all very well. What was lacking at this year's conference was a co-ordinated campaign by the left to clearly articulate a strategy for getting policies put into practice.

Hillingdon is a prime example. Last year the leadership was instructed by conference to build support for the dispute by organising a national demo, a meeting of shop stewards in Pall Mall and a national speaking tour of the strikers. They didn't build the demo and, as a result, it attracted under 2000. They waited until December, 14 months into the strike, to call the stewards' meeting. Only half a dozen turned up aside from those from Hillingdon. They didn't even bother with the speaking tour.

The methods of class struggle, necessary for taking on a right wing Labour government and their mates in the Unison leadership, needed spelling out at Unison conference. But the left was silent. A vote to make the

Regional Secretaries of the union electable was lost, showing that bureaucratic control over our disputes and our funds is set to continue.

Arguments around defeating the anti-union laws and the need for rank and file control of disputes and of the union were lost amid the limited agendas and irrelevant politics of most of the left.

The SWP did their best to ignore the "give them a chance" mood. They also ignored everyone else on the left. It was a case of party profile (fair enough) at the cost of effective united action against the leadership (sectarian stupidity). So desperate were they to speak on anything and everything that they seemed to have forgotten that sometimes it makes a difference what you actually say!

Debate

This approach led them to make a serious error in the debate over the minimum wage. The composite they backed criticised the Low Pay Commission Labour have set up, but in their anxiety not to appear "ultra-left" they plugged again and again the demand for £4.26 an hour. The NEC-backed composite called for £4.42.

Opposing the NEC composite because it contained some vague wording on when the minimum wage should be increased to around two-thirds of male median earnings (currently around £6 an hour), the SWP fell into the trap of appearing to be to the right of the leadership!

The other left force within Unison, the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Unison (CFDU), has the potential for pulling together the left in united front initiatives that could be the basis for building a rank and file organisation in the union. But this year the CFDU's forces were weaker and clearly disorientated. In December the CFDU's conference adopted the position of not calling for a vote for Labour.

This sectarian position, inspired by the Socialist Party (formerly Militant), has left them isolated and disoriented. It has weakened the CFDU's ability to challenge the reformist ideas of the vast majority of the delegates, let alone the reformist actions of the leadership.

Neither of these left organisations were clear about how to transform the union or how to put demands on the Labour government.

There was a standing ovation for striking Unison workers at this year's conference. Forty workers at Ravensbourne College in the South London borough of Bromley took three days strike action against privatisation. Sounds familiar? Let's make sure that in the future, disputes like this aren't used again as an excuse for left posturing, but instead play a part in building a real fighting union. ■

Hillingdon Strikers Support Committee Emergency Conference
Sunday 13 July 11.00am
Uxbridge Civic Centre, London
Nearest Tube: Uxbridge
(Metropolitan and Piccadilly line)

The 1937 Trinidad general strike

Class war in Trinidad

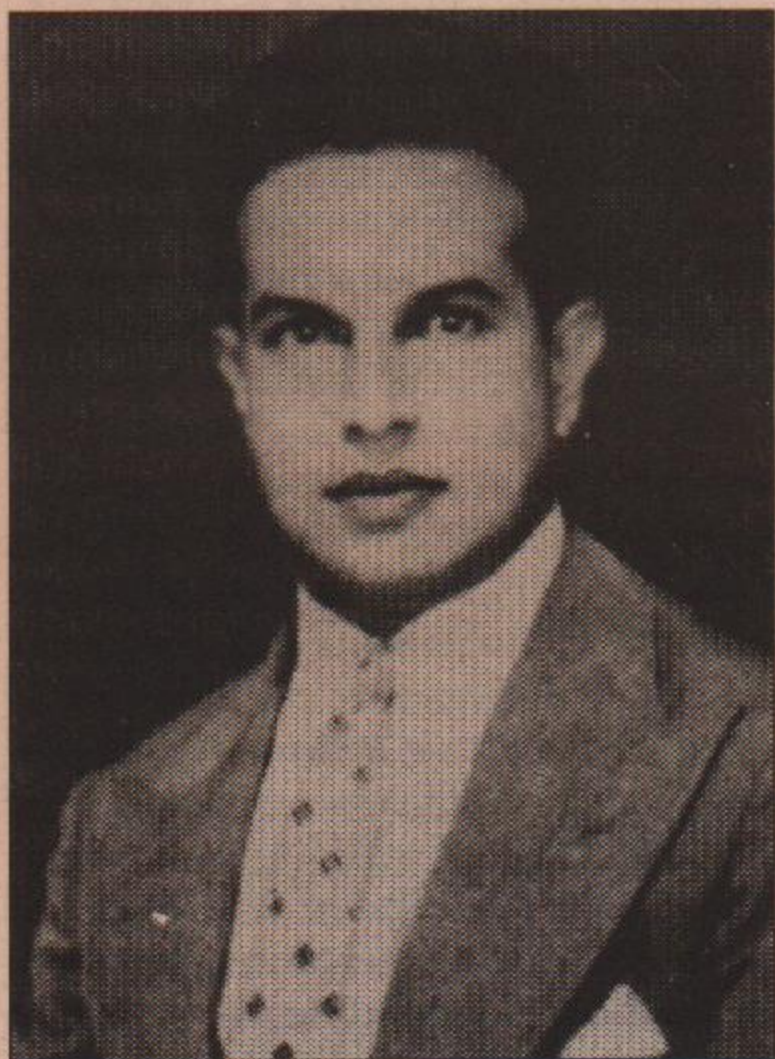
Sixty years ago, workers in the Caribbean rose up against their colonial overlords. **Dave Ellis** looks back at this great chapter of black working class history.

AT MIDNIGHT on 18 June 1937, oil workers on the island of Trinidad began a sit-down strike. The strike was against low wages, terrible working conditions and the refusal of the oil companies to recognise workers' representation.

Despite massive profits in the oil industry, workers suffered a decline in real wages since the 1920s. They often had the choice of either walking up to eight miles to get to work or accepting the barracks accommodation offered by the companies. The black and Asian workforce was subject to a racist dictatorial regime from the mainly white managers who regarded the workers as slaves.

A worker with twenty years service at an oil company could be sacked on the spot without any compensation. Then there was the "Red Book", the work record of an employee. No worker could get another job without presenting the "Red Book" to their future employer. Any worker sacked for organising could expect to remain unemployed.

The companies also levied a series of fines for late arrival at work, damage to property or loss of tools. These were all arbitrarily imposed by the managers. Above all, there was the absolute refusal of the companies to recognise any trade unions.



Adrian Cola Rienzi

Although the strike started with economic demands it rapidly grew into a direct challenge to the British state. Immediately, the oil companies pushed for the Governor of the island, Sir Murchison Fletcher, to arrest the workers' leader, Tubal Uriah Butler.

The colonial authorities sent police detachments into the oil fields with a warrant accusing Butler of having used violent language and of incitement to breach the peace. They found him addressing a rally of oil workers in Fyzabad. The crowd resisted the police when they tried to arrest Butler. Corporal King of the police was caught by a group from the crowd and received summary justice, being doused in petrol and burned to death.

Butler escaped and police reinforcements were repelled, with one officer shot dead. When the Governor was informed of the situation he immediately sent in more police detachments and telegraphed the British naval force in Bermuda requesting the dispatch of a cruiser.

Revolt

Within days, the oil workers' dispute was transformed into a revolt across the island. More oil workers struck and they were joined by agricultural labourers. Company buildings were attacked, rioting spread throughout the south of the island, police units were fired on and telephone wires were cut to ensure that the police could not communicate.

The unrest reached the capital, Port of Spain. Members of the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA) led demonstrations through the city. The police fired on the demonstrators. In another incident the police killed five strikers and injured twenty who were trying to take over a railway station used by sugar plantations.

The strike spread among sugar workers, waterfront workers and those employed by the Government's Public Works Department. Within days, two British warships arrived, HMS Ajax and HMS Exeter. The police and volunteer units of the state were exhausted and on the point of retreat. Hundreds of Royal Marines were sent into the oil field regions carrying out house-to-house searches and arresting suspects. But even this was not enough to defeat the strikes.

The British colonial authorities, ever prepared to use whatever repression they deemed necessary, realised that this alone was not sufficient to maintain their rule over Trinidad and their other Caribbean colonies. Above all, the British understood Trinidad's strategic importance. World war was on the horizon.

The Royal Navy and Air Force needed the high-octane fuel that was pro-

duced from Trinidad. Earl Fortescue, on behalf of the Colonial Office, stated:

"In 1936 Trinidad produced over 60% of the oil produced from British Empire sources... on account of its quality and its geographical position, it is of very real significance to the Empire as a whole... It is important to us all that good relations between capital and labour in the Trinidad oil field should be built up and maintained."

With this in mind, a section of the British rulers saw the need to start negotiations with the strikers. One of the

Hundreds of Royal Marines were sent into the oil field regions carrying out house-to-house searches and arresting suspects. But even this was not enough to defeat the strikes

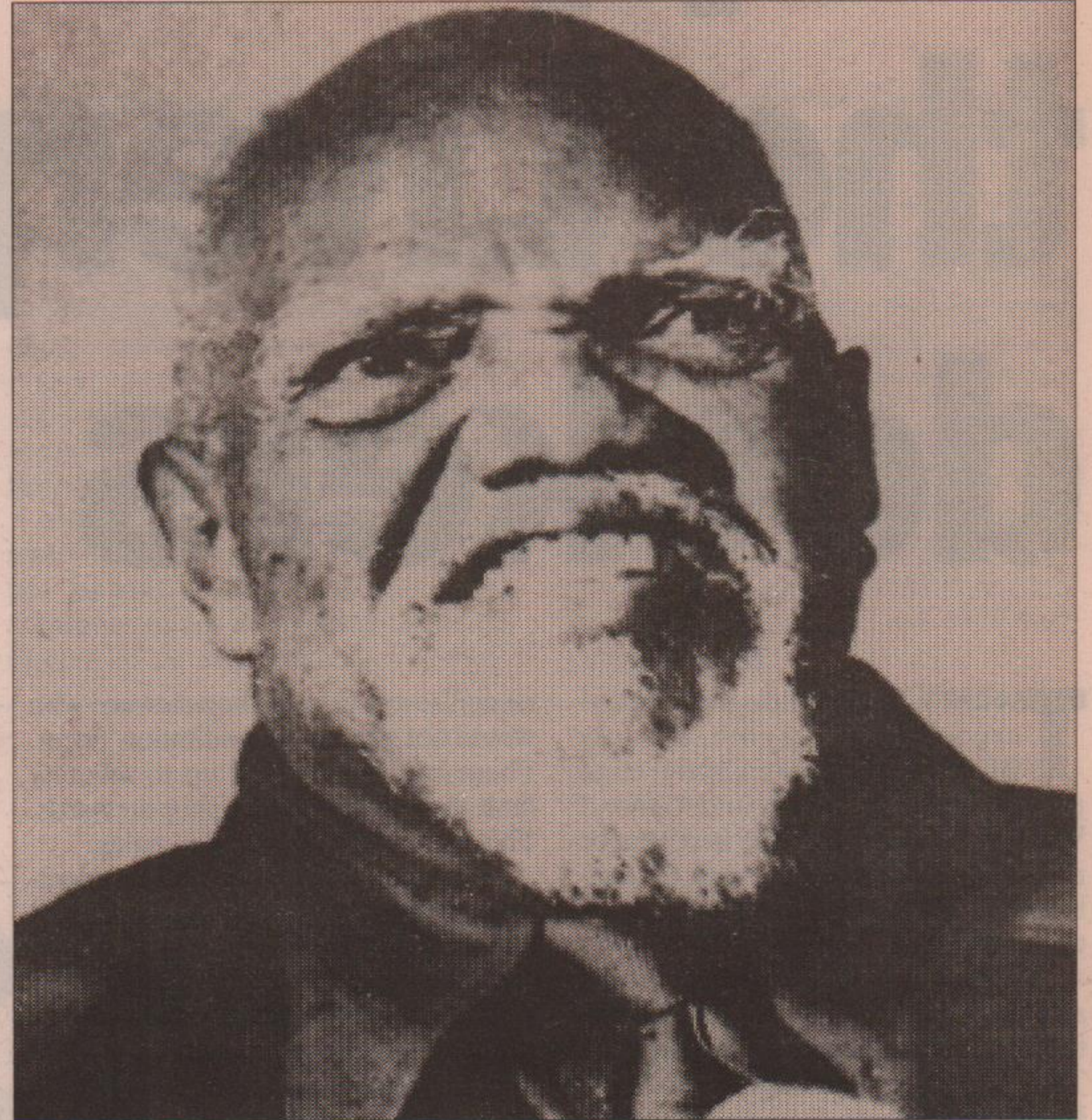
most important demands in the strike was the representation of workers in the oil and sugar industries. The capitalists had refused any such recognition.

The Governor had been more sympathetic to the idea of trade unions, fearing exactly the kind of uprising that occurred without a moderate leadership organising and negotiating for the workers. The Acting Colonial Secretary, Howard Nankivell, also spoke out against some of the workers' conditions. However, both of these servants of imperialism supported only those reforms that would preserve Britain's political and economic rule. Neither of them batted an eyelid when it came to implementing repression and sending troops into the oil fields.

Sacked

Yet, even these loyal servants were sacked after a government inquiry on the grounds that the Governor had not acted swiftly enough to detain Butler and that Nankivell had committed a crime by speaking out against appalling living conditions while the strikes persisted.

It was the combination of negotiations and a promise to raise wages and sort out other injustices, along with selective repression, that eventually managed to split the strikes and bring them to an end. Rienzi, a young lawyer, had been asked by Butler to lead the negotiations. He met the Colonial Government's "mediation committee". He



Tubal Uriah Butler - Trinidad workers' leader jailed for sedition

handed the committee the names of ten men nominated to represent the workers. In return the colonial authorities insisted on the immediate cessation of the strikes.

Butler replied with a note saying he was not in a position to call off the strikes and that the workers were disposed to put up a "last-ditch" fight. Once again the Governor used widespread repression. Three platoons were sent to Fyzabad. Five of the nominated representatives were arrested, three of whom were charged with murder.

Later, in the Legislative Council, Fletcher and Nankivell showed the extent of their hypocrisy. Despite his brutal role before and during the strikes, Fletcher denounced the malnutrition and poverty, spoke of the racism of the employers and attacked the government and the companies for not implementing a minimum wage. He declared himself to be, like Butler, "an agitator" who "stirs things up". Nankivell complained about the companies repatriating profits rather than paying fair wages. He said:

"In the past we have had to salve our consciences with humbug and we have had to satisfy labour with platitudes."

The immediate effect of these speeches was to lull the workers into thinking that they had a sympathetic ear inside the colonial regime. By July the strike movement was on the wane and the colonial authorities were back

in undisputed control of the island. Some concessions were won. Oil workers got a pay rise, a limited pension and sick pay scheme was introduced and the "Red Book" was finally withdrawn.

Within the month there was further unrest, inspired by the Trinidad events, in Barbados. A year later, the Jamaican workers and peasants led a full-scale rebellion.

A Royal Commission (the Moyné Commission) was set up to look into the grievances of the Caribbean population. The Commission finished its report in 1940, cataloguing a situation in the Caribbean colonies of poverty, social deprivation, malnutrition and lack of any real rights for the working class.

The British government refused to publish this report until 1945 on the grounds that the Axis powers would use it as propaganda among British colonial subjects. For good measure the British imprisoned Butler without trial from 1939 until 1945.

The mass strikes of 1937 stand as a powerful example of the militant fighting spirit of the oppressed black workers of the Caribbean. The wage slaves fought their capitalist oppressors with courage and determination, just as their slave ancestors had fought the slave owners. That spirit will be revived in the struggles of black workers today, in Britain and the Caribbean, against racism, capitalism and imperialism. ■

A history of resisting colonial rule

THE EMPLOYERS and the state could only explain the explosion of anger in 1937 by blaming communists and outside agitators. They were blind to the deep felt anger of a downtrodden people fighting back against their terrible conditions.

The people of the Caribbean have a long history of resistance. In the years of slavery revolts had shaken the foundations of colonial rule. Even with its eventual abolition, and the introduction of indentureship, ex-slave peasants and labourers continued to resist exploitation and repression by the British colonial masters and the sugar plantocracy.

Many of the new agricultural indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent also began to organise against

the atrocious conditions in the sugar industry. They brought with them a strong anti-colonial sentiment. This was coupled with the growing influence of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in the region. After the first world war there numerous revolts and risings.

The 1930s saw a massive increase in the political and economic action of the working class. The economic slump at the end of the 1920s caused mass unemployment. Militant hunger marches were held which united both black and Asian workers and organised them into the National Unemployed Movement.

Socialism

The ideas of socialism spread along with

anti-fascist and anti-imperialist sentiments. Leaders of the NWCSA, like Elma Francois, spoke out openly on the question of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and distributed the Ethiopian Times, edited by Sylvia Pankhurst. There were huge rallies and demonstrations against the invasion. Black consciousness resulting from the Garveyite movement and the Ethiopian war grew in strength and militancy. Trinidadians avidly followed the fights of Joe Louis. Years later many homes still had portraits of Joe Louis and Haile Selassie.

In 1937 demonstrations and rallies were held in solidarity with the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. It was also no accident that the initial strike of the Trinidad oil workers was a sit-down strike. Reports of workers

from the United States and France occupying their factories and had a major impact on Butler and other organisers.

Butler, the leader of the strikes, was a preacher not a revolutionary socialist. He had broken from the Trinidad Labour Party, which had become a tool of British rule and the island's employers. In June 1936 he launched the British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party, which campaigned for wage increases, unemployment relief, an end to sackings without notice and worker representation.

Home rule

It also campaigned for home rule for the colonies within the British Empire. Much of Butler's agitation was cloaked in the idea of loyalty to the Empire and

the British Constitution. Indeed, one secret police report described how a meeting led by Butler was closed with the singing of "God Save the King" and the hymn "Oh Lord our God arise, scatter thine enemies and make them fall". But his belief in home rule made the British state determined to crack down on his movement.

Despite constant efforts to arrest him during the strike the authorities were never successful. An enormous reward was offered for information leading to his capture. The fact that this was not successful shows the degree of solidarity that existed among the workers. It was not until September, when Butler gave himself up, that he was finally arrested and jailed for two years for sedition. ■

SLAVERY: New book tells hidden history of

Capitalism's savage birth

Bill Jenkins reviews *The Making of New World Slavery - from the baroque to the modern 1492-1800* by Robin Blackburn, Verso 1997, £25 (hardback)

ROBIN BLACKBURN is one of the foremost writers on the barbarism of slavery - the most horrible chapter in the history of capitalism. His latest book deals with the rise of slavery during the three centuries before industrial capitalism emerged.

It provides a wealth of information and many insights into slavery's development. But it does not unambiguously root slavery as an inevitable result of capitalism's emergence from feudalism. Instead, Blackburn considers it to be part of the rise of "modernity" and "civil society", and in the process sees it almost as a "mistake" by the early capitalists.

Blackburn's method is not consistently Marxist, but a mix of different left, Marxist and bourgeois economic theories. He tends to separate the development of slavery from the rise of capitalism.

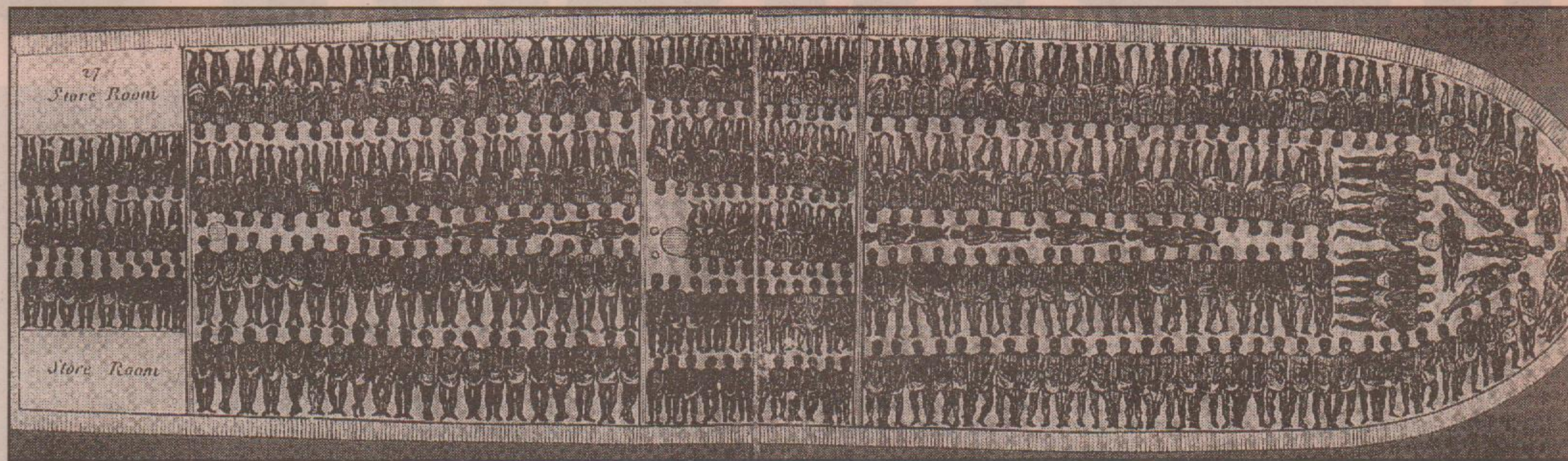
In fact, slavery was both crucial to the rise of capitalism and crucial to underpinning the new capitalist ideology of race and nation. Despite this, Blackburn still provides the evidence of how slavery was essential to the newly arising capitalist mode of production, and how racism became the new systematic ideological justification for this development. Marxists can draw on this work to bolster their understanding of the historic role of slavery.

By the 15th century the feudal form of slavery in Western Europe had very nearly died out. Feudalism, which exploited a tied peasantry, had no need for outright slavery. Ancient societies like Greece, Rome and Byzantium had collapsed precisely because the slave basis of production was inefficient and undynamic.

Modern slavery resurfaced as the late feudal absolutist monarchies sought new sources of revenue abroad to bolster their regimes. Portugal, under Henry the Navigator, sponsored expeditions from the 1440s onwards. These colonised the Canary Islands and the Azores, explored the African coast and discovered the Americas. They established plantations with slave labour on the Atlantic islands, used slaves to mine Brazilian silver and they traded in slaves of all colours along the African coast.

Spain quickly joined Portugal as an early colonial power in the Americas. By 1620 Spanish *conquistadores* had destroyed the Incan empire and South America immediately became a crucial source of revenue for the Spanish monarchy.

The first victims were the native Indians, as the conquest led to a catastrophic decline in the indigenous pop-



Plan of a slave ship: Such ships could carry 600 slaves. However, many would die of disease during the voyage

ulation through European diseases, the destruction of their traditional mode of production, and the introduction of slavery in agriculture and gold mining.

The South American Indian population collapsed from approximately 50 million in 1500 to about 8 million by 1600. So, from the mid-16th century the Spaniards turned to Africa to supply the slaves for their newly established plantations and silver mines. From 1550 to 1595, some 36,300 slaves were transported from Africa, rising to 268,600 between 1595-1640. These official figures do not include the illegal transport of slaves by English, French, Portuguese and Spanish traders.

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The final element in the consolidation of slave plantation society - and of racism as an ideology - followed, with the incorporation of the poor white, formerly bonded, labourers into the plantation state

production. In contrast, by 1640 the Brazilian sugar trade accounted for 40% of the Portuguese treasury's income.

The qualitative development of the Brazilian sugar industry transformed the Portuguese trading posts on the African coast. Portuguese traders bought 10,000-15,000 African slaves a year, mainly supplied by African states who in turn received arms and equipment from the Portuguese.

From the 1620s onwards the English and French began to establish colonies in the Americas. In this period the English monarchy licensed colonisation projects, but gave them no material support. So from the outset they were controlled by the new capitalist merchant class. And black slavery was built into the very foundations of the capitalist system.

The spur to the expansion of slavery

numbered by 20,000 slaves.

The mid-17th century was the critical period in the systematisation of slave plantation society and racism as the ideology to justify it.

English lawmakers, like Sir Edward Coke, justified slavery by the "law of nations". The clergy added that it was also God's law. Clergyman R. Wilkin-son commented that, "the accursed seed of Ham . . . had for a stampe of their fathers sinne, the colour of hell set upon their faces", clearly identifying both slavery and innate "evil" with skin colour.

In north American colonies where slavery was not widespread, such as Massachusetts and Rhode Island, there was opposition to slavery and its racial basis. In 1652 the colonists of Rhode Island "decreed that black mankind or white were not to be held for more than ten years in servitude". In gener-

al, however, the opposition to the development of plantation slavery was weak. The declining number of indentured servants after the English Civil War spurred the growth of the slave trade.

The restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 gave a new impetus to capitalist development in Britain and brought the legal codification of colonial slavery. The Virginian Assembly recognised slavery in 1661, and in 1667 the English Parliament passed the "Act to Regulate Negroes on the Plantations", declaring they should be controlled with the "strictest severity". That same year the Virginian Assembly decreed that a master who killed a slave was not guilty of murder.

The final element in the consolidation of slave plantation society - and of racism as an ideology - followed, with the incorporation of the poor white, formerly bonded, labourers into the plantation state.

In 1676 Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia involved both freedmen and slaves and convinced the capitalist plantation owners of indentured labour's destabilising effects on plantation society. The colonial authorities responded by concessions to the freedmen and strengthened the racial barriers between them and the slave population.

Slaves could receive thirty lashes for raising a hand to a Christian. Later acts prohibited the marriage of whites and blacks. Whites responsible for the birth of "mulatto" children would be fined £15. In the last quarter of the century 173,800 slaves were imported. The French colonies mirrored the English experience, albeit on a smaller scale.

Blackburn attempts to summarise these developments in the book's key chapter, "Racial slavery and the rise of the plantation". He argues that plantations were founded on the basis of unfree labour, and that slaves replaced indentured servants for economic reasons.

Plantations required a large and concentrated labour force to produce their returns. Free wage labour was expensive or unavailable because settlers could seize Indian land and farm it themselves.

Only in the English colonies, as a result of the development of capitalist relations in English agriculture, did the emigration of peasants provide anything like a sufficient labour force.

But indentured servants became less manageable than slaves, as they could abscond more easily into the free population and demanded more rights of their masters.

The possibility of a joint revolt of servants and slaves, as in Barbados in the 1650s and Virginia in the 1670s, significantly threatened to destabilise the whole of planter society. Racism served to justify slavery, as it separated servants from slaves, tying the former to their white masters.

Notions of freedom did not apply to the black slaves. It made escape more difficult as skin colour became synonymous with slavery and justified the most oppressive treatment.

The triangle trade in slaves

SLAVE PLANTATIONS were a central part of the massive development of capitalist production throughout the 18th and much of the 19th century. The slave trade grew alongside capitalist commodity production. In the 16th century 370,000 people had been enslaved from Africa; in the 17th century 1.9 million; in the 18th century 6.2 million. In America, the slave population grew from 330,000 in 1700 to over three million in 1800.

Slave production was not capitalist in so far as it does not depend on the exploitation of wage labour, but it was integrated into the capitalist system and produced commodities directly for the capitalist market.

Planters ran their estates to maximise profits.

The constant demand for new supplies of slave labour testifies to their ability to extract exhaustive amounts of labour from their slave crews despite the constant malnutrition and terrible conditions they endured. In the Caribbean, where the production of sugar was especially demanding, for each slave birth there were six deaths.

The so-called triangular trade - which saw the export of commodities from England, in exchange for raw materials from America - was essential to the early accumulation of capital.

Capitalist development, particularly in the countryside, created the necessary preconditions for the industrial revolution, through providing surplus food for an urban proletariat, through freeing peasants from the land, and by creating an internal market.

But the triangular trade, through its massive demand for commodities, ever expanding production of raw materials and comparatively high rates of profit provided a massive impulse to capitalist development and the industrial revolution.

Capitalism, as Karl Marx said, was born dripping with blood. The blood of millions of black people stains the hands of the big capitalist families who, even today, own Britain's big estates, merchant banks and high class property.

Capitalism clawed its way into existence via piracy, slavery and the wholesale theft of peasant lands. Then it turned around to the masses and told them to keep their hands off "private property". ■

Did capitalism need slavery?

BLACKBURN EXPLICITLY rejects what he calls the "Marxist argument": that slavery was a "wasteful and inflexible form of labour".

He points to the attempts of the West Indian planters to prolong the harvest, so maximising the exploitation of their slaves, their readiness to introduce new techniques, and their ability to efficiently organise their slave gangs.

But his critique totally misses the point. Slavery was inefficient compared with free labour once the separation of the labourer from the means of production had taken place, but not before it.

Blackburn forgets that the problems accompanying slave production could not outweigh the benefits to capitalist planters because the preconditions for "free" wage labour did not exist.

For a proletariat to exist, it must be "free" in the double sense: "free" from the ownership of the means of production (i.e. penniless) and free to sell its labour power - not "indentured" to the same boss for five years at a time.

This meant that slavery was the only possible alternative for the plantation owners, even though slavery led to chronically low productivity and the

inability to effectively apply new technology across the board. It was still the most profitable method of production under the prevailing circumstances.

Blackburn's attempt to provide an alternative to slavery as a path for capitalist development after the fact, ignores the very realities he details elsewhere.

Indentured labour consistently gave way to slave labour wherever plantation owners could choose between the two. In short, slavery was an inevitable and necessary phase for capitalist development. ■

Congress and the birth of India

MIDNIGHT'S HA

NEHRU'S SPEECH to India's first Constituent Assembly at midnight on 14 August 1947 was a masterpiece of political rhetoric. Though communalist massacres raged across India and the reality of partition had cast other Congress leaders into deep despair, the prime minister's oration not only expressed the masses' pride after years of self-sacrificing struggle, but held out the prospect of an end to centuries of suffering:

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom . . . the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now. That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity."

Congress was to serve badly "the millions who suffer" in India. But it served well the large landowners and millionaire capitalists who were, and are, the real beneficiaries of Indian independence. The seeds of this development were present from Congress' inception.

By the mid-19th century the British effectively ran the whole of India, ruling 60% of the territory directly through successive London-appointed Viceroy's. The remainder of India was ruled by client princes, including large states such as Hyderabad, Mysore and Kashmir.

Integrated

With the sub-continent newly integrated by an extensive railway network, an indigenous Indian capitalist class developed in the cities, alongside the older feudal classes on the land. The Indian civil service, unlike the army, involved a relatively small number of British expatriates and relied on a mass of officials drawn from among the higher caste Hindus and privileged classes.

The education system that provided the administration also created a significant intelligentsia, which faced the routine humiliation of British chauvinism, Christian arrogance and racism. The Congress movement found a ready-made cadre among this stratum.

The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885. Its leaders were moderates who pressured the British administration for social reforms. They did not even envisage Home Rule let alone independence. Only a minority, led by B G Tilak, favoured street agitation. The mass movement of non-co-operation with the British, that characterised much of Congress activity in the 20th century, was popularised by Mahatma Gandhi.

Ghandi

Gandhi trained as a lawyer in Britain and then built up considerable respect within Congress for his role as a leading representative of Indians living in South Africa. Gandhi returned to India and became involved in Congress as an advocate of the policy of satyagraha - mass non-violent non-co-operation with the Raj. Gandhi's personal asceticism, his tireless promotion of educational and artisanal works, and his particular brand of rationalist Hinduism struck a chord among the masses, who quickly gave him the honorific title of Mahatma, meaning "great soul".

In 1917 Home Rule Leagues were launched by Tilak and Annie Besant, an English radical resident in India. The

14 August marks the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. **Richard Brenner** examines how the British Raj met its end, not through some enlightened decision to "give India self-government" but through the actions of the mass movement against foreign rule, led by the Indian National Congress and its foremost representatives, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

movement, modelled on the Irish Home Rule leagues, caught British imperialism in a weakened state. Promises of reform were made but by 1918 Britain felt strong enough to offer Congress little. Congress' rejection of the British proposals led to the introduction of more repressive legislation.

Congress organised a campaign of protest meetings. The British reply was swift. In Amritsar in the Punjab, General Dyer banned all assemblies. When an unarmed demonstration assembled, Dyer ordered his troops to fire on the crowd, including his children. After ten minutes hundreds lay dead.

The Amritsar massacre led Congress, under Gandhi's influence, to launch its first all-India campaign of mass action. Congress was reorganised as a modern political nationalist movement with a small executive Working Committee and a broader representative All-India Committee. From now on, the movement's aim was to be Swaraj, or self-rule.

In January 1921 Gandhi began a

nationwide speaking tour attracting mass audiences backing a comprehensive boycott of the colonial administration. Boycotts of the educational and legal institutions were followed by a spectacular campaign, much influenced by capitalists in the native textile industries, for a boycott of foreign cloth. Mass burnings of cloth and picketing of shops ensued, together with militant boycotts of foreign-controlled liquor shops.

Boycott

In November 1921 a mass boycott of the Prince of Wales' Indian tour sparked a nationwide one-day general strike which brought 1,400,000 workers to the streets of Bombay alone. The involvement of the workers in the movement brought a clear class dimension to the national movement. As an illiterate textile worker explained:

"We workers understood the demand for Swaraj to be only this: that our indebtedness would disappear, the oppression of the moneylender would

stop, our wages would increase, and the oppression of the owner on the worker, the kicks and blows with which they belabour us, would stop."

A boycott of the army and police led to the establishment of a Congress militia, the Congress Volunteer Corps. Labourers on the tea plantations of Assam went on strike. Fanned by the young radical nationalist, Jawaharlal Nehru, peasant associations in the United Provinces staged mass rebellions against the local landlords who were in the pockets of the British.

Gandhi's policy of non-violence was not uniformly observed by the masses, especially in the face of the ruthless repression meted out by the Raj authorities and the landlords. When the police fired on a march in Chauri Chaura in February 1922, the demonstrators drove the police back in to their station, set fire to it, and hacked to pieces those who tried to escape.

This provoked Gandhi to call off the satyagraha campaign altogether in the name of preserving non-violence.

This reaction would often be repeated in the years ahead and consistently marred the development of the national democratic revolution. His avowed aim was to conserve the energy of the masses, but in the meantime the Viceroy had not agreed to Congress' central demands, including the release of political prisoners and the granting of basic civil liberties.

The period from the end of non-co-operation in 1922 until 1927 saw the movement plunged into internal conflict and stagnation. Renewal of the mass satyagraha was provoked by the British decision in November 1927 to establish a commission to investigate whether India was "ready" for constitutional reform and "greater" liberties.

The all-white commission under Sir John Simon provoked popular outrage that led to a renewed mass boycott. Jawaharlal Nehru even succeeded in winning Congress to a demand for complete independence, not just self-rule or dominion status.

Simon arrived in India in February 1928 to be greeted by a general strike and mass demonstrations. Young people came to the fore in organising militant and ingenious protests, including driving a car alongside the route of Simon's train and barracking him for the whole journey! New student and youth leagues mushroomed, impelling the entire movement leftwards.

Independence

When the new Labour government of 1929 failed to discuss proposals for limited home rule, Congress settled on a new mass movement for complete independence. Jawaharlal Nehru took over the leadership, with Gandhi's blessing, and a Declaration of Independence was announced.

The new upsurge began around a campaign against the government's tax on salt. Although only a fraction of government revenues, this tax galvanised an all-India opposition. Gandhi gave the signal for satyagraha to begin by marching 240 miles to the coast and "illegally" collecting salt.

Similar marches and anti-tax campaigns occurred across India. The British were paralysed by indecision: repression would provoke the masses, inaction would appear like weakness. Eventually, too late to prevent Gandhi's inspiring a national movement, the authorities arrested him. The masses



Protest against the Simon Commission

The Communist Party of India

THE CONGRESS leadership's constant vacillations and betrayals during the struggle for independence caused outrage among the most militant sections of the movement, especially the workers and peasants. But the parties that claimed to represent their interests were as politically bankrupt as the Congress.

Under the influence of the Russian Revolution communist and socialist ideas spread widely among the youth and intelligentsia in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Support

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in 1925 and initially attracted significant support within Congress and in local work-

ers' and peasants' initiatives.

However, in 1928-29 the Communist International moved into its ultra-left "Third Period". The socialists and social democrats were denounced as "social fascists", while any form of anti-imperialist united front with non-proletarian forces fighting imperialism was denounced as heresy. The CPI was isolated from the anti-imperialist movement. Its potential influence in the crucial 1930-31 resistance was squandered.

While the earlier CPI had isolated itself from the mass movement by its sectarianism, its political somersault in the mid-1930s guaranteed it could never lead a struggle against the vacillations of Gandhi and co. With the adoption of the "popular front" line,

far from denouncing leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru as agents of the bourgeoisie within the anti-imperialist movement, the CPI not only embraced united action with the Congress, but consciously ceded to the bourgeois forces the role of leading the national and democratic revolution.

Blocked

The "Dutt-Bradley Thesis" afforded to Congress "a great . . . and a foremost part in the work of realising the anti-imperialist people's front."

If the "Third Period" had prevented the party taking advantage of the mass agitation of 1930-31, the Peoples' Front policy blocked it from exposing or criticising Congress precisely at the point where substantial sections of the masses

began to see the real danger of putting a bourgeois led Congress in power.

The failure of the CPI to advance an independent revolutionary strategy - one that fought for working class leadership of the national revolution so as to consummate its victory through a workers' revolution and the creation of a socialist India - was not an oversight. It was a conscious rejection of the Trotskyist strategy of permanent revolution.

The price of rejecting that strategy was that working class independence and unity was undermined by the Congress leadership. India's independence, therefore, came with capitalism intact, with the subordination of the country to imperialism and with a legacy of communalism as a result of partition. ■

RVEST



Gahndi

responded with white-hot anger. In Sholapur textile workers struck, armed themselves and attacked all government buildings, setting up a rival government that was only smashed weeks later by troops.

In other towns mass demonstrations attacked salt works; boycotts began of foreign liquor stores and peasants went on rent strike against landlords who continued to pay tax to the government. Thousands of Congress activists, including Nehru, were thrown into jail.

Once again Gandhi compromised. He feared the actions of the masses would undermine the pacifist satyagraha. He opened talks with the British in 1931 and signed a peace "pact" with the Viceroy. Gandhi's moderation demobilised and split the movement. Even Nehru, who talked left, but constantly compromised with the Gandhi leadership was dismayed.

Such moderation was not matched by the British. The "Round Table Talks" in London got nowhere. When Congress tried to relaunch the satyagraha, the British suspended all civil liberties, outlawed Congress and all its allies and re-arrested Congress leaders including Gandhi himself.

By the 1930s the British knew they could not suppress the mass Congress movement by force alone. Under the new Government of India Act 1935 the British aimed at incorporating a section of the national movement into government while maintaining imperialist domination. The Act offered participation in state assemblies on the basis of a restricted franchise. The "princely states" were unaffected and there were to be separate elections for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, a divide and rule policy introduced by the British in 1906 and accepted by Congress.

Poll

In the poll Congress won majorities in six of the 11 provincial assemblies, forming ministries in Bombay, Central Provinces, Orissa, Bihar, United Provinces and Madras. A tremendous wave of popular enthusiasm greeted this development. Certain important reforms were passed, including the release of prisoners in some provinces, and the return of confiscated lands to former owners. But Congress ministries quickly revealed a deep-seated tendency to accommodate to the property-owning classes and the British.

In Bengal rights were curbed and prisoners detained despite protests and hunger strikes. As early as October 1937, the Madras ministry prose-

months. Students toured the villages with the slogan "Burn the Police Stations!" and "Englishmen have Fled!"

The British only contained the revolt by severe repression, including firing on unarmed demonstrations, machine gunning crowds from fighter planes and arresting over 60,000 militants.

The CPI (see box) played a scandalous role during this agitation. Its popular front with the "democratic anti-fascist" imperialist powers led it to actively oppose the Quit India movement and advocate the suspension of the independence struggle until after the war.

Peace saw the release of the Congress leaders in July 1945. Widespread expectation of change in the new world order led to further mobilisations against the British. The movement demanded amnesty for those arrested in 1942-43 upsurge and for the release of Indian soldiers who had joined the Indian National Army to fight alongside the Japanese against Britain.

Mutiny

In February 1946 a mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy and a general strike in Bombay presented the most dramatic threat to colonial rule. It was a sure sign that a revolutionary crisis was approaching.

Congress leaders, fully backed by the CPI, worked overtime to defuse the situation. In Karachi, they called for an end to the naval revolt. They called on the people of Calcutta to suspend strikes and return to their homes. Relying entirely on a strategy of negotiations, they feared above all a breakdown in the key institutions of bourgeois rule, particularly the armed forces, which would have weakened or made impossible the emergence of a stable capitalist India.

Gandhi argued that the mutineers were "thoughtless and ignorant, if they believed that by their might they would deliver India from foreign domination... Swaraj is not going to be obtained by what is going on now in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi."

By restraining the movement, Congress' bourgeois leadership allowed communalists to fuel religious antagonism. Congress, while having always opposed communalism as a dead-end, had also pursued a strategy of alliance and negotiation with Muslim communalist leaders, rather than challenging them head on.

The British had consciously fostered religious communalism. While Congress was regularly outlawed, the Muslim League and its reactionary Hindu counterpart, the RSS, were looked on benignly. The last British Viceroy, Mountbatten, had every interest in weakening and dividing the independence movement and the states that would come out of it. An Indian sub-continent united by a mass movement which had just driven the British out could have posed a real threat to imperialism's regional interests.

Reactionary

The stage was set for the Muslim League to rally mass forces to a reactionary anti-Hindu campaign, playing on unfounded fears that Muslims would be massacred in the new "Congress Raj". The communalist leader of the Muslim League, Jinnah, even declared that Muslims would meet the same fate as the Jews in Nazi Germany, and stepped up agitation for a separate Islamic state: the "land of the pure" - Pakistan.

When Britain finally recognised defeat in 1947 and conceded independence Congress leaders accepted partition as part of the settlement. The border was drawn with typical British cynicism to maximise conflict. Areas were divided that had been closely economically and culturally linked. Over one million people were killed in an orgy of violence, resettlement and communal "cleansing".

Whatever policies the new Indian government was to pursue in the name of economic independence, partition was the price for preserving the rule of capital and its representatives. Ultimately, India's subordination to the imperialist world system was secured. So too, at midnight on 14 August, was the fate of the sub-continent's people for the next half-century. ■

W

The A to Z of Marxism

is for War

BY MARK HARRISON

WAR IS a bloody and brutal business. Our rulers deliberately air-brush the images we get of the wars they are involved in. The Gulf war against Iraq in 1991, was presented by the media as a computer choreographed fireworks show in aid of "democracy". Later, the pictures of hundreds of mangled and charred bodies on the road to Basra came to light. Iraqis had been wantonly slaughtered by the US, British and other forces.

War does not just kill the innocent. It brutalises the fighters - a fact revealed in every new blood-and-gore paperback from an ex-SAS man.

Unlike our rulers Marxists never try to prettify war in order to justify it. We tell the truth. Part of that truth is that war is an inevitable product of a class divided society and a world divided into competing nations. It is also a necessary part of the struggle to overthrow class society.

Unlike pacifists - who reject all wars - socialists oppose some wars, support others and will be prepared to wage war against the capitalist enemy. Our aim is to create a world free of national divisions and in which classes have been abolished: world socialism. Only such a world can get rid of war altogether and to get it we will have to fight, arms in hand.

Clausewitz, a nineteenth century German soldier and philosopher, provided an important insight into wars when he wrote,

"We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means."

Politics

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all took Clausewitz's insistence that war was not something separate from politics as their starting point for analysing wars. They went on to analyse the class character of each particular war. Writing during the carnage of the First World War, Lenin noted that the key questions were, "what caused that war, what classes are waging it, and what historico-economic conditions gave rise to it."

By posing these questions Lenin drew the conclusion that there were both just and unjust wars. In the former category he included wars fought by nations oppressed by imperialism - Ireland's war for independence for example. In the latter category he pointed to the war then being waged between the major imperialist powers. He recognised that beneath the superficial question of "who fired the first shot?", lay the important fact that those powers were fighting each other in order to divide the world between themselves.

Today, despite the repulsive tyranny of Saddam Hussein, Iraq is a semi-colony oppressed by imperialism. The Gulf war was fought by the imperialist-led coalition to keep Iraq in this subordinate state and end any threat to their exploitation of the area.

The imperialists' claim that they were fighting for democracy against a cruel dictator was a lie. Kuwait - the country invaded by Iraq and "liberated" by imperialism - was a vile dictatorship in which workers and peasants were denied any democratic rights whatsoever. Its royal family, restored by the "liberation" set about reinforcing its dictatorship

under the protection of the USA and Britain.

The importance of this example is that it demonstrates why Marxists were not simply against the war in the Gulf. We were against imperialism's war on Iraq, a war waged for oil and political control of the Gulf region. But we supported Iraq's war against imperialism. This was a just war - even though it was being waged under a leadership which we want to see destroyed by the workers and peasants of Iraq.

Class

Only by a class analysis, an understanding of the politics of each war, can we understand why some wars are just and some are unjust and only thus can we determine whose side we are on, if any.

This method has proved vital for revolutionaries in many wars, but none more so than the two world wars of this century. Both, despite the so called "anti-fascist" character of the Allied war effort in the Second World War, were unjust wars as far as Britain, the USA, France, Germany, Japan and the other imperialist states were concerned.

Neither world war was fought to preserve democracy. Both were fought in order to redivide the world for exploitation between the imperialist powers. They were unjust, imperialist wars.

As Lenin put it with regard to the First World War:

"Picture to yourselves a slave owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave owner who owned 200 slaves for a more 'just' distribution of slaves. Clearly, the application of the term 'defensive' war, or 'war for the defence of the fatherland', in such a case would be historically false, and in practice would be sheer deception of the common people... Precisely in this way are the present day imperialist bourgeoisie deceiving the peoples by means of 'national' ideology and the term 'defence of the fatherland' in the present war between slave owners for fortifying and strengthening slavery."

Lenin formulated a policy for Marxists that went beyond simply analysing the class character of wars and supporting or opposing them. He developed the policy of revolutionary defeatism - waging the class struggle in your own country against your own bourgeoisie even at the cost of it being defeated in war - as a means of creating the conditions under which imperialist war could be transformed into a civil war, a war by workers on their own ruling class.

Marxists stand for revolution. Revolution will be resisted by capitalists who stand to lose their fortunes, their privileges and their political rule. Always and everywhere they will fight arms in hand to defeat workers' revolution. Civil war to defeat them will be necessary. It is a stage towards the creation of a world free from war, and such an objective justifies the use of warlike means to achieve it.

That is also why Marxists are not pacifists. We know we cannot defeat a powerful enemy other than by revolution and civil war. As Engels put it: "If the working class was to overcome the bourgeoisie it would first have to master the art and strategy of war." To say otherwise is a deception, one that will result in wars without end. ■

personal view

JOHN MCKEE

Let's bury Lenin

ADMIT IT: I have a small bust of Lenin sitting on my mantelpiece. But when that detestable reactionary Boris Yeltsin proposed that the embalmed body of Lenin should be buried my immediate reaction was, "about time too".

My little statue is a revolutionary souvenir. But the embalming of a revolutionary leader and putting him on show in a mausoleum is grotesque. It is like religious icon worship. And it certainly isn't what Lenin wanted.

He was absolutely opposed to hero worship. Angelica Balabanoff, who worked closely with Lenin from 1915 and became the first secretary of the Communist International, remembered how, "he avoided everything that might either lead or seem to lead toward the establishment of a personality cult. He communicated this attitude so well that those who approached him never tried to flatter him or to show servility in his presence."

Personality

In 1920, on the occasion of his 50th birthday, Lenin found himself the subject of many adulatory speeches and articles. At a commemorative meeting held by the party's Moscow committee, where many leading members including Kamenev and Stalin delivered speeches in his honour, he conspicuously absented himself from the proceedings. Arriving later, Lenin expressed the hope that the party would find more appropriate ways to celebrate anniversaries.

He recognised the importance of using posters, films and statues of Bolshevik leaders to reach the masses on both a political and personal level. After a sculptor had observed him eighteen times to make a model of his head he declared, "I submit to this because I consider it useful, even necessary. Our peasants are suspicious: they don't read, they must see in order to believe. If they see my likeness, they are persuaded that Lenin exists."

Weapon

But all this was a far cry from the "cult of personality" that mushroomed after his death. Its origins lay not in the backwardness of the peasants, nor in the enormous sense of loss felt by the party and working class at Lenin's death, although both these were harnessed by the leadership faction under Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. The cult of Lenin was created as a weapon against Trotsky.

The opening of the battle "against Trotskyism" occurred in 1923. Lenin had sought a bloc with Trotsky against Stalin's growing bureaucratism, but a stroke had eliminated him from the battle. Late 1923 had seen the call by 46 leading Bolsheviks for the restoration of inner party democracy, suspended during the civil war period. Trotsky was denounced at the party conference for failing to distance himself from the opposition.

Lenin's death, a few days after the conference, was used to launch the Lenin cult. Trotsky, ill and suffering from depression, was in the Caucasus recuperating and failed to return for the funeral. Stalin's speech shortly after the funeral set the tone, praising Lenin and declaring an oath

to fulfil Lenin's "wishes", to guard "the unity of the party as the apple of our eye". Lenin was recast as the advocate of the monolithic party. "The party must be of one piece, a party of steel, monolithic," as Zinoviev put it in his attacks on Trotsky.

Because of Trotsky's prominence, as organiser of the insurrection and leader of the Red Army, Lenin's corpse had to be used against Trotsky. With every word of Lenin's canonised as holy writ, the triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev dredged up all the pre-1917 attacks by Lenin on Trotsky.

It was in these political circumstances that the unthinkable happened. Lenin, who had asked to be cremated and buried next to his mother in a St Petersburg graveyard, was embalmed. Against the wishes of his sister and his wife, the funeral commission, at the behest of the party's executive committee, transformed itself into an "Immortalisation Commission" committed to preserving the body forever.

Krupskaya protested. In a veiled attack on the decision, she wrote a letter to Pravda calling on workers and peasants not to "allow your grief to express itself in external veneration of his person. Do not build memorials to him, palaces named after him, do not hold magnificent celebrations in his memory etc. All of this meant so little to him in his lifetime; he found it all so trying."

Her protests were to no avail. The emerging bureaucracy ensured the cult of Lenin triumphed. Streets by the thousand and even cities were renamed. Lenin corners were obligatory in every workplace with regulations as to what should be exhibited. No town was complete without a Lenin museum; a committee was formed to authorise "correct" images of the great leader. Posters and busts were churned out by the million, poems and essay competitions about Lenin flooded the press. At the centre of it all lay the embalmed Lenin and the tens of thousands filing past his body each month.

The cult was a cover for a bureaucracy that was trampling on everything Lenin ever stood for, while shouting at the top of its voice, "Lenin lives!"

Trotsky summed up the significance of the embalming of Lenin in his book *My Life*: "The attitude toward Lenin as a revolutionary leader gave way to an attitude like that towards the head of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Against my protests a mausoleum was built on Red Square, a monument unbecoming and offensive to revolutionary consciousness. The official books about Lenin evolved into similar mausoleums. His ideas were cut up into quotations for hypocritical sermons. His embalmed corpse used as a weapon against the living Lenin - and against Trotsky."

That is why I think we should bury Lenin and should turn his funeral into an international revolutionary demonstration to bury Stalinism forever and revive genuine Leninist internationalism.

But I'll still keep my bust of Lenin. And I've just found a place that sells very good busts of Marx. Anyone interested? ■

We should bury Lenin and should turn his funeral into an international revolutionary demonstration to bury Stalinism forever and revive genuine Leninist internationalism.

IRELAND: Finna Fail back in office

Why Labour collapsed

In Britain and France conservative governments have been thrown out of office, marking a shift to the left in Europe. Ireland appeared to buck this trend, with the recent defeat of the "rainbow coalition" and the collapse of the Labour Party and Democratic Left's vote. The Irish Workers Group (IWG) explains this new development.



Bertie Ahern, Ireland's new premier

THE NEW Irish government is a Fianna Fail-led coalition, with Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach (prime minister) and the right wing Progressive Democrats as coalition partners. Fianna Fail barely increased its 1992 share of the vote, but managed to increase its number of seats through an effective appeal for second and third preferences from the other parties. Fianna Fail's main green Tory rival, Fine Gael, increased its vote by 3%. But, given Labour's collapse, it could not make up the numbers to sustain its coalition government.

There was no endorsement for the new government partners, the Progressive Democrats. This party lost half its seats. Its promise to axe 25,000 jobs in the public sector certainly did it no good in a country that is supposed to be booming. Its proposal to re-introduce water charges and introduce water metering was also clearly rejected.

At the same time, Sinn Fein increased its vote in the South from 1.6% to 2.5% winning a TD in the Cavan/Monaghan border area. The Greens doubled their vote and won an extra seat. Joe Higgins of the Socialist Party and a leading anti-water charges campaigner won a Dublin seat, justifying the IWG's support for him as a class struggle candidate.

Despite the election of four independents with right wing positions on key questions such as abortion rights, the results do not mark a dramatic rightward shift in Irish politics. The bourgeois parties have not been endorsed by any landslide. Unstable coalitions remain the order of the day.

However, the reformist workers' parties - Labour and the Democratic Left - did suffer a major setback.

Democratic Left's vote fell from a low base of 2.8% in 1992 to 2.5%. Their leader only scraped through on the preferences given to him by Fine Gael.

The collapse in the Labour vote was more dramatic. The 33 seats it won in 1992 plunged to 17. The party's percentage share of the first preference vote fell to 10%, from 19% in 1992.

In Dublin, Labour lost eight seats, leaving only three Labour TDs in the capital - the country's electoral cockpit. Four Labour ministers lost their seats. In Cork - the second biggest city - Labour lost all its seats to the open bourgeois parties.

Why did this happen?

The Labour Party in the South of Ireland has always been a stunted party. It holds a partitionist position on the North, historically leaving the bourgeois populist Fianna Fail to act as the champions of the nationalist cause.

As a result, Fianna Fail always gained the big majority of working class votes in the South. From 1922 up to the early 1960s Labour never got more than 14% of the vote. In 1968, amid a widespread social radicalisation and a new mood of liberalism emerged, championed by a new brand of Labour TD, and Labour's share rose to 17%. The civil rights movements, in the North and globally, caused Labour to campaign under the slogan that "the 1970s would be socialist".

Labour did not bring socialism in Ireland a step nearer. Instead, it opted to increase its influence through a pact with Fine Gael. After the "discrediting" of Fianna Fail in 1970 during the Arms Trial, when leaders of that party were implicated in gun-running to the embattled Republicans in the North, Labour jumped into the breach. Its coalition with Fine Gael created a credible and stable alternative to Fianna Fail for Ireland's capitalists.

After a succession of coalitions with Fine Gael in the 1970s and 1980s - coalitions marked by constant attacks on the wages and living standards of the workers - Labour's vote slumped to 6% in 1987.

The rise in Labour's fortunes in 1992 owed much to the generalised revulsion at the blatant corruption of the Fianna Fail government - very effectively exposed by Labour leader Dick Spring - and to the health cuts that Labour promised to oppose. In 1992 they enjoyed an unprecedented increase in support, in particular from white collar workers in Dublin.

The recent vote against them is a direct result of their total betrayal of their supporters. Having campaigned against Fianna Fail on an anti-corruption ticket in 1992, Labour immediately went into coalition with that same Fianna Fail. A year later when this coalition collapsed, they jumped back into bed with Fine Gael, which in turn had to sack ministers for corruption.

Not surprisingly, Labour has been tainted by its opportunist choice of partners. It is branded not only with their corruption but also by its own willingness to junk its pledges and principles in pursuit of government office. It has paid the price.

Another factor behind Labour's collapse is that, unlike their French counterparts, Southern Irish workers have not been threatened with big welfare cuts to meet the Maastricht criteria. Neither have they suffered the scale of Thatcherite attacks endured by British workers.

The phenomenal economic growth that has transformed Ireland into a "Celtic Tiger" has meant such attacks have not yet been necessary. But the nature of that growth, courtesy of EU handouts and imperialist multinational investment, has not benefited everyone. One third of the population lives below the poverty line, low pay is rife and well over a quarter of a million are unemployed. Labour, however, held little appeal for these sections of the class.

Labour's electoral fortunes have frequently fluctuated. This does not invalidate the tactic used by the Irish Workers Group of calling for a critical vote as a means of fighting to break it from coalitionism and putting it to the test in front of its working class supporters in the trade unions affiliated to the party. But its poor showing demonstrates the urgent need to build a revolutionary working class alternative to Labour, a new party based on a clear revolutionary programme.

That party will be essential in the fights to come: to defeat the wage cutting policies enshrined in the Partnership 2000 pact between the unions and the government; to defend and extend abortion rights; to rally support for the revolutionary unification of the island of Ireland, a unification based on a working class-led struggle, north and south, to drive out British imperialism and smash the Orange statelet.

Building that party in the months and years to come will be the best way of preventing Labour from refurbishing reformism's credentials through a period in opposition and re-entering the electoral roundabout of broken promises and dashed hopes. ■

ARGENTINA: new mass organisations formed

The unemployed fight back



Repelling the police attacks



The masses demand dignity, jobs and decent pay

Unemployed protests have rocked Argentina, with mass pickets bringing whole regions to a standstill and delegate action committees being formed. **Mario Cruz** of the Argentine Workers Party for Socialism explains the significance of the new wave of struggles.

ON TUESDAY 20 May unemployed workers in Jujuy, Argentina, sparked off violent protests which shattered this Northern province of the country. Three hundred sacked sugar refinery workers demanded an end to misery and decent jobs for all. They blockaded roads in the town of Ledesma. The local governor sent in the police to repress the protest.

But the attempted crackdown backfired. Large sections of the population supported the unemployed, fighting back with catapults and stones. They eventually forced the police to retreat.

The protest spread swiftly across the province, with at least ten blockades being set up which paralysed transport and eventually cut off the provincial capital, San Salvador.

The governor retreated, announcing on the radio that he had ordered the forces to leave the province. The workers, the unemployed and the people were jubilant. They had fought back and won.

The unemployed set up a province-wide committee made up of 60 delegates. It was this Co-ordinating Committee of the Unemployed and the Pickets ("piqueteros") that voiced their demands. The notorious leader of the FGE, the local state unions' front, Carlos "Perro" ("the dog") Santillán, was part of the negotiating team, and initially put forward a programme for job creation.

The national press branded this body as "an organ of direct democracy", "something unseen in Argentina in last twenty years". They were quite right. It showed that the struggle in Jujuy had taken a major step forward. A co-ordinating body with democratically elected and accountable delegates of the poorest section of the population, springing out of a violent fight against the powers that be, is not something you see every day.

The suffering of the people of Jujuy had reached a critical point. In recent years unemployment has rocketed, as state-owned companies were privatised in what was already a relatively poor

province. Metal works, oil companies and other manufacturing industries have all seen sackings. Since there is no social security system or unemployment benefit, those who are thrown out of work face the prospect of misery and virtual starvation.

This type of unemployment has not been around for decades, and the local workers have not yet become accustomed to "structural unemployment". Many of them are the sons and daughters of workers, and they cannot simply accept the fact of facing a life without being able to earn a living.

Wave of struggles

The battle in Jujuy is only the most militant of a number of resistance struggles. Last April witnessed the opening up of a wave of struggles which swept the hinterland of Argentina. This started in the province of Neuquén, in Central Co and Plaza Huincul, two towns badly hit by privatisation. A revolt erupted around demands for jobs, while a massive strike of teachers forced the local government to abandon a plan of 20% wage cuts and one thousand sackings.

The people of Neuquén developed a new way of fighting: road blockades, the setting up of local assemblies to convey the most pressing demands of the poor to the provincial authorities, and the local people temporarily seizing control of their towns through the setting-up of pickets. These seizures took place following the defeat of the repressive forces in fierce battles.

Tartagal, a town in the northern province Salta, followed suit. Ten thousand people blockaded the roads for ten days at the beginning of May. The governor – a member of the ruling Peronist party – could only bring this to an end through a combination of threats of repression and the compromise of creating five thousand jobs. The local bishop played a major role in convincing people to defuse the protest in order to "avoid blood-letting".

Then came Cruz del Eje, a town in Córdoba, where people rose up to pick-

et the road. Then came the massive struggle in Jujuy.

Clearly, the unemployed have been the vanguard of these fights. Women and youth have also played a key role in the picketing. Fearlessly facing tear gas, rubber bullets and batons, they were determined to fight for their dignity.

In the words of one picket: "There he was, this kid who went up to the commander, and told him: 'Stop messing around with us, because I am going to pull out a gun and shoot down 60 of you.' So the commander shouted to him: 'Get back!', and when the kid turned around the commander shot at him sticking 3 or 4 rubber bullets in his back. So the kid turns around, pulls out the gun and opened fire, and all the gendarmes were lying on the floor. You know the guts you need to do that? Then there were these chieftains, these old Indians walking in the middle of the clouds of tear gas, wandering around as if they were immune to them, gathering stones."

The protesters have won some subsidies, and been granted temporary jobs. But the pickets throughout the country all echoed to a single demand:

"We do not want charity! We want a decent job!"

For a Workers' Emergency Plan!

While the struggle was under way in Jujuy, our comrades in *Palabra Obrera* (Workers Word) issued thousands of leaflets outlining the main tasks of the moment.

We raised the demand for Santillán and his "State Sector Unions Front" to call a province-wide general strike to oust Ferraro, the Peronist governor responsible for the bloody repression. At the same time we called on the pickets to co-ordinate themselves to strengthen their combat units and defeat the provincial police, wherever they tried to crush the protest.

Since public workers were on strike, we called for the co-ordination of the pickets with the unions involved in the fight. Unfortunately, Santillán, for all his "red" rhetoric, prevented this from happening.

We made a sharp intervention around the need for a Workers' Emergency Plan, spelling out a straightforward solution for the unemployed. We called for the sharing out of all available work among all the workers, and for a salary that cov-

ers all the basic needs.

The people clearly felt that the mass sackings by the big companies of the province were responsible for the social crisis. Therefore we demanded the immediate expropriation of the huge Ledesma sugar refining complex to make it work in the workers' interests, as well as the renationalisation of all privatised enterprises, without any compensation, and under workers' control.

Finally we posed the need for a nation-wide active general strike to bring down President Menem and his IMF-sponsored plan, since the only realistic and long-lasting solution can be achieved through the cancellation of the external debt and the ending of repayments.

Lessons of the struggle

One of the main features of the pickets, not only in Jujuy, has been their "anti-party" mood. This is because they think that politicians are all alike and untrustworthy, simply liars. This reflects the weariness of the people with mainstream parties, and their endless cycle of failed promises, demagogic flattery, deceit and corruption.

This situation has led to a high-profile intervention of the church, with bishops and priests taking sides with the struggles, thus filling a potentially dangerous political "vacuum". They proved very helpful when it came to "taming" and "pacifying" the pickets, making them accept the offerings of the governor.

The Co-ordination Committee in Jujuy rejected the first two offers from the governor. The first a promise to create 2,000 jobs and the second to create 5,000. The Committee thought that at least 15,000 jobs were needed.

Eventually, after almost two weeks of road blockades, an agreement was reached, and some partial progress was made, including cash subsidies and some jobs. The pickets were demobilised, but the Co-ordination Com-

mittee has continued.

It was only union leader Santillán's conciliatory line that enabled the governor to remain in office. Santillán's policy was to pursue the governor's impeachment in the local Parliament, rather than lead any direct action to overthrow him.

Secondly, he withdrew the unions' programme for the unemployed, in favour of the one presented by the Church, which was made up of charity gestures. Furthermore, he called off the strike of the Jujuy public workers when it was necessary to step up the fight, in what he declared to be "a gesture of good will."

The result of his policy was to separate the organised working class from their jobless brothers and sisters.

The union bureaucrats leave the workers to fight alone

The policy of the three main trade union federations, the Menemist CGT, and the "oppositionists" of the CTA and MTA, can be summed up in one word: betrayal.

As the unemployed and the workers are fighting courageously in the poorest regions of the country, these leaders have not lifted a finger to deliver support of any kind, let alone made a call for a nationwide general strike.

In response to the turmoil, the CGT even joined a so-called "Commission for the Monitoring of Social Conflict", along with the Home Secretary, the very person responsible for sending in the Gendarmerie that killed a worker in the violent crackdown in Neuquén!

At the same time they continued negotiations with President Menem on legislation to make the labour market "more flexible". Clearly, developing the struggle against unemployment and the other attacks of the government and the bosses means at the same time developing the struggle against this treacherous bureaucracy. ■

Next issue of Revolutionary History out soon

BLOWS AGAINST THE EMPIRE

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AMSTERDAM EURO-SUMMIT

The workers

Last month the European heads of state assembled in Amsterdam to map out the way to a single currency. More than 40,000 workers and young people demonstrated against them, in one of the biggest ever shows of international solidarity. **Colin Lloyd** draws the lessons of the Euromarch. Below young members of the LRCI from France and Britain tell their own stories of the Euromarch. **Peter Main** draws a balance sheet of the Euro-bosses disagreements

THE EUROMARCH in Amsterdam on 14 June brought together more than 40,000 workers from across Europe. The culmination of two months of feeder marches and campaigns against unemployment and social exclusion. It provided a snapshot of the state of the European workers' movement and the left and showed both the problems and possibilities of turning internationalist words into action.

The vast majority of those who turned out for the Euromarch were organised workers and youth. Despite attempts to make the Euromarch appeal to middle class and "left bourgeois" parties by limiting it to calls for "a different Europe", the only real international response was from the workers' organisations.

The ETUC and many national trade union federations – including the British TUC – opposed the march on the grounds that it was "anti-European". Some unions, like the French CGT supported it in name only. Others, like the French SUD group of unions, mobilised large contingents of hundreds. But none really pulled out the stops.

Only weeks before the Euromarch, the French unions had shown what was possible with a 40,000 strong demo against unemployment in Paris. Workers from the threatened Renault plant at Vilvoorde had contributed many hundreds to this demo. But at Amsterdam, though the Vilvoorde contingent was highly visible and well received, there were only perhaps two or three coach

loads. If the workers' leaders had not sabotaged and ignored the march, there could have been half a million in Amsterdam, not 40,000.

Nevertheless, Amsterdam shows that the European labour movement can organise to be more than the sum of its parts. It was a good beginning, a point-

inclusion of effective anti-capitalist demands. It claims to be anti-Maastricht – but it is holding up a coalition government that is effectively implementing Maastricht.

In return for the political compromise with Rifondazione (which the LRCI opposed in Brussels) the Euromarch

What did Amsterdam tell us about the European far left? First, that the space for a real revolutionary answer to capitalist austerity is growing. Second, that none of the left Stalinist and centrist forces are capable of occupying it.

er to what can be built in the future.

To go forward we have to confront the central problem of nationally-based, often nationally-isolated, and nationally-centred left wing leaderships. Noticeable on the demo were contingents from the Communist-led unions in Spain, the PDS which is the German ex-Communist Party, the Italian Rifondazione Comunista and the Greek KKE.

All these organisations are hampered by a chronically national-centred and reformist opposition to Maastricht, combined with the reformist impulse to get into government and rule on behalf of the capitalists.

Rifondazione had exercised an effective veto on the political slogans of the Euromarch at the Brussels organising conference in March, stopping the

organisers got a couple of hundred Rifondazione members and a few red flags on the demo. Rifondazione has 130,000 members. The Amsterdam demo, served as a left gesture of internationalism for the Rifondazione leadership, much as it did for the other Stalinist and left reformist parties represented.

What did Amsterdam tell us about the European far left? First of all that the space for a real revolutionary answer to capitalist austerity is growing. The demo was organised by a coalition of revolutionary, centrist and Stalinist organisations, the most central of which was the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI – represented in Britain by Socialist Outlook), in the teeth of bureaucratic sabotage from many

union leaderships.

The two biggest and best known left wing organisations in Europe boycotted the demonstration: the SWP from Britain and Lutte Ouvrier from France had no presence. This was despite the SWP's decision to formally support the march, and despite the participation of comrades from the SWP's smaller satellite groups in France and Germany.

The absence of the British SWP was no accident. It has long peddled the idea that the revolutionary international can only be built once "strong parties" exist on the national terrain. Presumably its leaders were too busy on Saturday 14 June building a "strong party" in Britain to send even a token contingent on the six coaches that went from this country.

The politics on offer from the main force at Amsterdam, the USFI, and many other self-styled revolutionary organisations on the European left, are woefully inadequate. The USFI's bankrupt centrist politics left its mark on the demo and the marches leading up to it.

The British feeder march, like many others, was a damp squib. While a useful idea if you have the backing of the mass organisations, long feeder marches through endless towns and villages are not the main form of struggle needed today.

The key should always have been building the Amsterdam demo – an aim which the USFI frankly lost sight of in its determination to substitute itself for the mass organisations to make the feeder marches work.

"We need union support"

CHRISTOPHE, a member of Workers Power's French sister organisation, Pouvoir Ouvrier, spoke to us about his experiences on one of the feeder marches to Amsterdam.

Christophe: I joined the march at Rennes – where I live, in the west of France – in April and finished at Amsterdam, in June. That's a lot of walking! For most of the Western leg there were about 15 of us on the march. We'd arrive in a little town, be greeted by the mayor, and then we'd have a meeting and be put up for the night by the local people. They were all very kind, but we didn't meet many unemployed people or many workers.

WP: When did things start to get better?

When we got near some factories! As the march went on, we began to do meetings outside factories to explain what the Euromarch was about. Near Le Havre we visited two Renault plants shortly after the closure of Vilvoorde had been announced. The management did everything they could to make the visit a failure. Two thousand workers were bussed past our demonstration in the space of five minutes! The company security guards were all over the place, dressed up like riot police. The workers were all trooped into the factory like something out of the film *Metropolis*. But we managed to talk to some workers, we gave out hundreds of leaflets together with the local CGT trade union, and we held a kind of mini-meeting.

WP: How did the unions respond to the march?

C: That depended very much on the town we were in. For example, the CGT supported the march nationally. But that didn't mean anything really, and some-

times the local officials tried to sabotage the march. For example, at Lorient the local CGT held a rival unemployment demo the day we arrived, only 200 metres away from our meeting!

WP: What was the attitude to politics on the march?

C: A number of the marchers started out with the idea that there should be no political parties or unions on the march. I explained I was a Trotskyist and a member of Pouvoir Ouvrier and why it was important that all the workers' organisations should be involved in the march without trying to control it. They ended up agreeing, so much so that when we came to work out our demands towards the end of the march, they agreed we had to fight not only for a 32 hour week, but also against the whole of the profit system. All this was a result of our regular discussions in the march meetings, and my interventions in the public meetings along the way.

WP: What was the worst moment on the march?

C: When the police attacked us at the Hague, in the Netherlands. People think the Dutch police are nice because they have long hair and let people smoke dope. They're not. We decided to organise a "free public transport" event. For some reason the Dutch were very wary of this. At the Hague there were about 80 unemployed waiting on the platform for the train. When it pulled in and the doors opened, we got on. But it was full of riot police! They shut the doors and started hitting people with truncheons. I went to try and help someone and got hit and thrown onto the tracks! I landed on my back. The cop who attacked me jumped down onto the lines after me and tried to attack me

again! Luckily I was saved by some of the other marchers. In the end they called the cops off and we were able to receive first aid. I had to go to hospital, but I wasn't seriously hurt. Apparently the organisers are trying to sue the Dutch police.

WP: What do you think is the lesson of the march?

C: That the unemployed can organise and fight back. This was really impor-



tant for a lot of the unemployed people who were on the march. But that fight must take place together with the whole of the working class. In France we needed more support from the trade unions, and they should have fought to put the Euromarch centre stage during the election campaign, rather than letting it be sidelined.

Finally, we need a clear action programme to unite workers across Europe against the bosses' plans. The problem isn't Europe – the problem is capitalism. And we can put an end to that if we are strong enough. ■

"A great beginning"

LEE, a member of REVOLUTION youth group from North London, went on the Euromarch. REVOLUTION, the independent youth group allied to Workers Power, organised and filled a youth coach to the march in Amsterdam.

On the march banners from the LRCI's sections and red REVOLUTION flags flew high and proud. We learned chants in each others' lan-

and offered a way forward.

When the march finally got moving the displays of solidarity and comradeship between the different contingents became apparent, the way forward became clear: we need more international actions and we need to learn from each others' struggles.

After the demo the REVOLUTION contingent made its way to the famous coffee bars of Amsterdam and after that to the big, outdoor all-night Techno party thrown by "Legalise" – a coalition for the legalisation of drugs. Six sound systems, hundreds of young people from different countries and no hassle from the drugs squads. What more could we ask for?

On Sunday Legalise organised a demo and street party. We all marched behind trucks with sound systems. The best part of this demo was when it stopped outside the Summit.

This was policed far more heavily than the main Euromarch on Saturday. The police were in riot gear and blocked our access to all side roads along the route. Every now and then they charged into the demo but were met by a barrage of stones and cans. But for the most part the demo was peaceful.

The whole weekend was a big success. It was an excellent demonstration of international solidarity in action. We sold lots of copies of REVO and had hours and hours of political discussions with young people from all over Europe. It was a great beginning. ■

guages and sang the Internationale in many languages simultaneously.

The crowd assembled at midday and we heard two and a half hours worth of speeches. And they were basically all saying the same thing! We sang the Internationale between each speaker: the longer it dragged on, the more people joined in across Dam Square.

It was great that the speakers were left wingers and socialists from all over Europe, great that they were all talking about internationalism and solidarity. But none of them went further

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united...



In Amsterdam itself the USFI-dominated platform was long on rhetoric and very short on concrete answers. Forty thousand people were assembled and made to listen to an opening ceremony of meaningless speeches, a dire folk choir and James Last-style jazz band lasting two and a half hours! It brought to mind the Eurovision Song Contest in a bad year – not a militant gathering to smash European capitalism.

And at the end? Despite rousing speeches from Liverpool Dockers and Vilvoorde car workers no concrete plans, no mass alternative IGC, no way of hammering out concrete action together, no commitments from the assembled bureaucrats of the Stalinist parties. Only words about internationalism . . . and still more words.

The Amsterdam demo showed that the European left can mobilise on a cross-border basis.

But what it needs is a concrete transitional action programme, a commitment to international co-ordination, and most of all a revolutionary communist international to bring together and lead the struggles.

That is why the LRCI sought to build the demo as a militant, internationalist, fighting march among workers and youth. And though we have a long way to go, our ability to mobilise a sizeable contingent on the demo and generate widespread interest in our ideas shows that, unlike the USFI, we are going in the right direction. ■



The bosses divided

THE MAJORITY of European big business wants a single currency. To get it they need to hold down public spending, inflation and government debt. To get that, in modern capitalist conditions, they need to hold back economic growth, deepen poverty, cut benefits and increase unemployment. They need to make the working class pay for the single currency.

As Europe's rulers met in Amsterdam last month they faced growing working class protests at the costs of monetary union. Peter Main reviews the outcome of Amsterdam, while LRCI correspondents in Paris and Berlin outline the political response to the summit in France and Germany.

EUROPEAN CAPITALISM'S drive for a single currency stalled in Amsterdam. Outside the summit thousands of workers and young people demonstrated their opposition to Euro-austerity. Inside the security compound, Europe's most powerful countries clashed with each other as the winners and losers from the single currency became clearer.

Despite two years of negotiations following on from the Maastricht Treaty, the member states were unable to agree on a series of reforms designed to speed up decision-making and prepare the EU for expansion into Eastern Europe. If adopted, the key proposals would have greatly increased the policy-making powers of European institutions at the expense of member states.

The inability of the summit to reach agreement on any of these points illustrates the contradictions that jeopardise further European integration. Under

ISSUES AT THE IGC

What they wanted:

- Extend majority voting in the Council of Ministers
- Strengthen the powers of the Euro-parliament
- Establish a unified foreign and security policy
- Bring Justice and Home Affairs under European control
- Reform the European Commission to ease entry of East Europeans
- Merge the Western European Union and EU
- Ratify the terms of the "Stability Pact" agreed at the Dublin summit last year

What they got:

- Limited extension of majority voting, all states retain veto on key areas
- Euro-parliament gains "consultative" powers
- No common Foreign and Security policy – but they agreed to an EU civil servant "co-ordinating" policies
- Agreed to common policies on immigration, visas, asylum and divorce law in the future
- Deferred decisions on reform of Commission, "until one year before enlargement beyond twenty members"
- No merger of WEU and EU
- Ratified Stability Pact

existing rules, such decisions have to be unanimous, so each country has a veto. Although all can see advantages to integration in some areas, they differ over which. Consequently, the only thing they can reach unanimity on is . . . no extension to majority voting.

Root

The root of the problem is that each government represents a national capitalist class whose first priority is to use European institutions to its own advantage. As yet, there is no "pan-national" European bourgeoisie as such: the nearest to this are capitalists whose opera-

tions have outgrown their national framework and would operate most efficiently on a European scale. But even these have national bases.

Delays

As a result, the Amsterdam Treaty drawn up at the summit was a series of compromises and delays (see box). Nevertheless the summit marks a very important point in the EU's development. Potential expansion makes the need for substantial reform more urgent and failure to carry it through increases the tensions between the states. More importantly, the Amsterdam negotia-

tions took place in the shadow of major class struggles, especially within the two key states, France and Germany.

For the first time, the heads of government were not only negotiating for national advantage but having to take into account the real possibility of failing to carry through agreed policies at home. The heads of state were effectively sealed off from the Euromarchers, but the reverberations of the French Socialist election victory and the French and German strikes against austerity were heard loud and clear in the conference centre.

What was agreed at Amsterdam was the overriding need to press ahead with the economic austerity policies decided at Maastricht, even if political integration has to proceed more slowly. Working class resistance has shaken the confidence of the bourgeoisie across Europe but it has not forced them into full retreat. This can only mean a renewed offensive, perhaps using different tactics to force through essentially the same policies.

The key to defeating this lies in an extension of the mobilisations that defeated the last bosses' offensives in Germany and France. Although the battles so far have been fought on national terrain, they are part of an international strategy. All the workers of the EU will be affected by the outcome of the next round, in whichever country it begins. There can be no question of national solutions. Events in Germany and France have already shown that the effects of victories, or defeats, are rapidly felt across the continent.

The lessons of the last two years need to be drawn by every worker in Europe.

We are facing, essentially, a common enemy. The European capitalists may have their difficulties in agreeing strategy across the continent but the working class, as yet, has no means of even discussing its strategy.

The official parties and unions have the necessary resources to organise on a pan-European basis but, even where they recognise the need to go beyond national boundaries, they remain tied to a political strategy of integration into the existing institutions. On the international, as on the national, level this is a recipe for defeat.

Link

At the trade union level, some links already exist between plants in different countries belonging to the same multinational corporations. The most glaring need is for an extension of such links into the public sector, nationalised industries as well as services, which is the immediate target of government policy in all countries. But, necessary as it is, militant trade union organisation will not be enough at the international level, any more than it has been at national.

The only fundamental alternative to the bosses' plans for Europe is a workers' plan for Europe. The capitalists want to integrate Europe in order to give them a powerful and profitable basis from which to compete with the USA and Japan for the right to exploit the rest of the world.

Their success can only be achieved at the cost of workers' rights and living standards around the globe. To fight every step towards this needs a fight against the whole strategy, a political struggle for a workers' Europe. ■

Zaire/Congo

What about inter-imperialist rivalry?

Dear Workers Power,

Your article on Zaire in last month's paper stated that the economic disintegration of Zaire is due to the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the imperialists. This is not true. Zaire has not implemented any major liberal reforms of its economy. Because of the highly parasitic nature of the Mobutu clique, the USA wanted them out, to fully open the riches of Zaire to US imperialist exploitation. Hence its support for Kabila.

However, the imperialists are indeed to blame for the ruination of this potentially wealthy part of sub-Saharan Africa. For more than three decades they sanctioned Mobutu's parasitic regime whose only concern was to line its own pockets whilst allowing the economy to fall into ruin.

Zaire's economic disintegration has been particularly spectacular. Official exploitation of Zaire's vast mineral resources has more or less collapsed whilst the black market has flourished. Mobutu's clique, as well as his imperialist backers in Paris, profited financially from the widespread corruption that characterised the regime.

All this may seem secondary, but it is important, for two reasons. Firstly, Mobutu, once an important ally for imperialism in preventing the spread of Stalinist-influenced national movements, was increasingly perceived by the US as being an obstacle to its project of liberalising Africa's economies.

It is also important because it explains the current inter-imperialist rivalry over Africa, something which the article ignores.

Far from the imperialists in general "realigning" themselves and giving a "cautious welcome" to Kabila, a diplomatic war was fought between the USA and France throughout Kabila's march across Zaire. The active encouragement of corruption in French-speaking Africa has always been a central part of French neo-colonial policy.

France was desperate to cling on to Mobutu, even in the face of obvious defeat, because his fall represents a serious blow to French imperialism's presence in Africa.

So far as the US is concerned, the end of the Cold War has also signalled the end of France's role as "gendarme" of Africa. Mobutu's fall has more far-

reaching consequences than the fate of the now Democratic Republic of Congo. It is the icing on the cake for a process which began with the devaluation of the CFA and included the overthrow of the francophone government in Rwanda in 1994. French imperialism is all too aware of this which is why it has consistently accused Kabila's ADFL of atrocities with regards to the Hutu refugees, in order to provoke an imperialist intervention on the pretext of defending the refugees.

The overthrow of Mobutu, while being a victory for all those who have suffered at the hands of his regime, including the oppressed Tutsi population in the East (whose fight against the Hutu militias was the spark that lit Kabila's flame), also represents a change in the balance of imperialist forces in Africa. It severely weakens French imperialism. Whether it will permanently strengthen US imperialism's influence will depend upon the workers and peasants of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Yours in comradeship,
Christina Duval
Paris

Privatisation scandal

Dear Comrades,

One of the many things that didn't change with the election is the plan to privatise a million council homes in what are called "Large Scale Voluntary Transfers" (LSVTs) to Housing Associations or Local Housing Companies. The very limited release of the £5 billion from council house sales under the Tories will make little difference to these plans. Before the election, the Labour spokesperson for housing supported LSVTs, albeit without the Tories' planned fines for councils which did not carry them out.

For tenants, these transfers mean getting the repairs that they have been waiting 20 or more years for. But the price to pay is very heavy. Big rent rises are planned - up to and over 50% - with more to come after the five year rent guarantee period. Service charges will be levied - which will not be covered by housing benefit. Secure Tenancies will be lost, allowing evictions for rent arrears - i.e. poverty - far more easily.

In other words, millions of working class tenants, waged and unwaged, will be forced to pay for the repairs that many

of them have already paid for in their rents for decades.

Existing Housing Association tenants are paying higher rents to provide the surpluses to fund these schemes and having their homes re-mortgaged to provide security for the loans. At the same time, housing association bureaucrats are paying themselves private sector wages, and cutting cleaning and maintenance staff wages to the same "competitive" private sector rates.

These transfers are "voluntary" only in name. Small armies of housing association bureaucrats are used to sell the scheme to tenants. So-called "independent" Tenant's Friends have refused to work with tenants who oppose the schemes.

In Hackney, where 7,000 flats could be privatised by next year, tenants have been organising alongside council workers against these plans. We can offer support to tenants elsewhere who need information or someone to compare experiences with. But we need information about how these LSVTs are being carried out elsewhere in the country.

We also need information on hous-

ing associations - rent rises, evictions, expulsion of tenants' representatives etc. Our attempts to get such information through "official" channels are being hampered at every turn.

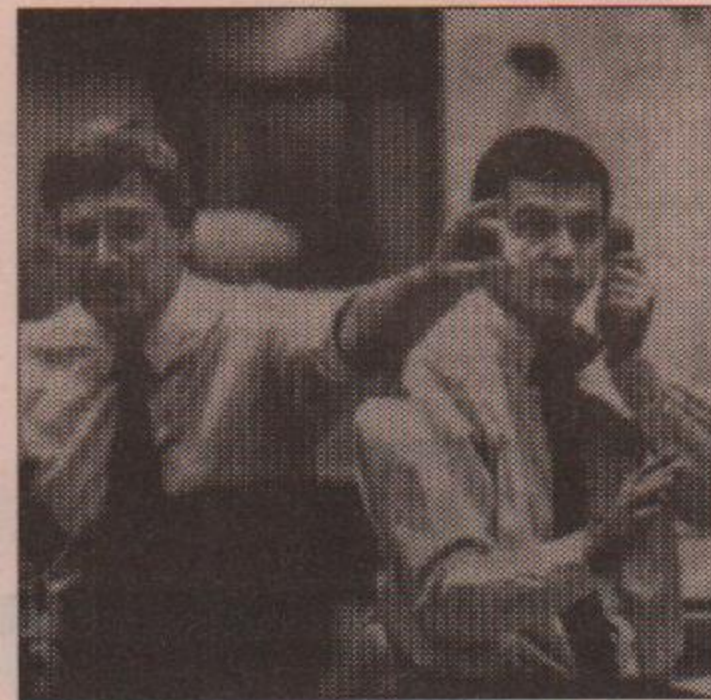
•Tenants Against Privatisation can be contacted at 56 Clarence Rd, London E5. Assistance with translating for Urdu, Bengali, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Cantonese is also needed.

In solidarity,
George Birch, Alison Jones and Nick Strauss
Haggerston Tenants' Association
(in a personal capacity)

WORKERS POWER

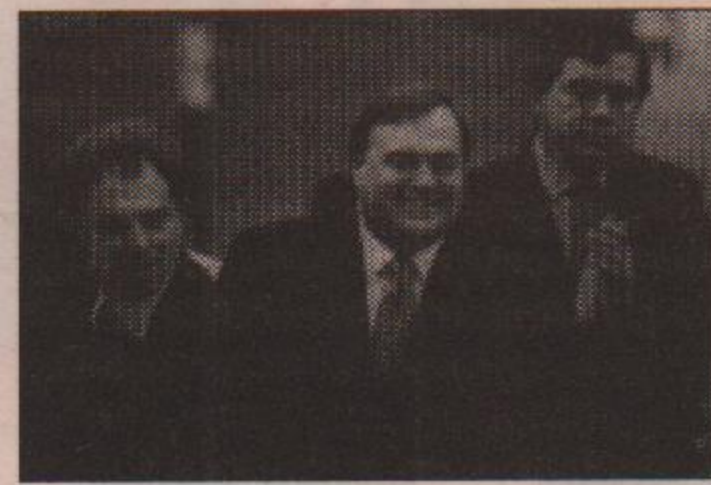
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WHERE WE STAND



Capitalism

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



The Labour Party

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



The Trade Unions

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



October 1917

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



Social Oppression

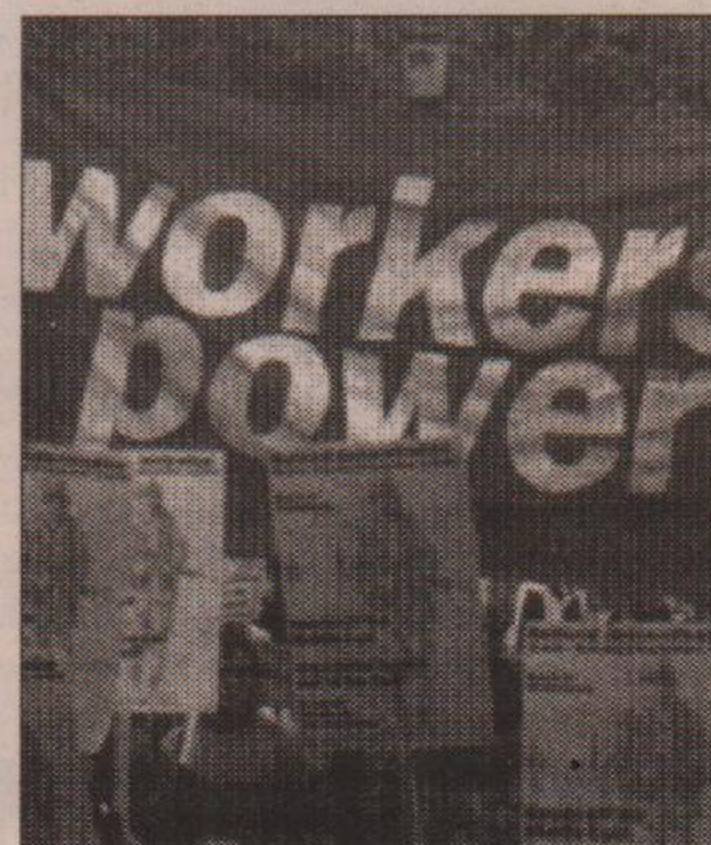
is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed.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



Imperialism

is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and

exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.



Workers Power

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

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We need schools, hospitals, jobs and services...

MAKE THE RICH PAY!

NEW LABOUR is repaying the goodwill of the millions of workers who voted it into office with steadily increasing attacks on their living standards.

Gordon Brown's first budget was a bosses' budget. The "iron chancellor" started as he means to go on - the super rich and corporations are hardly touched, while the rest of us pay more.

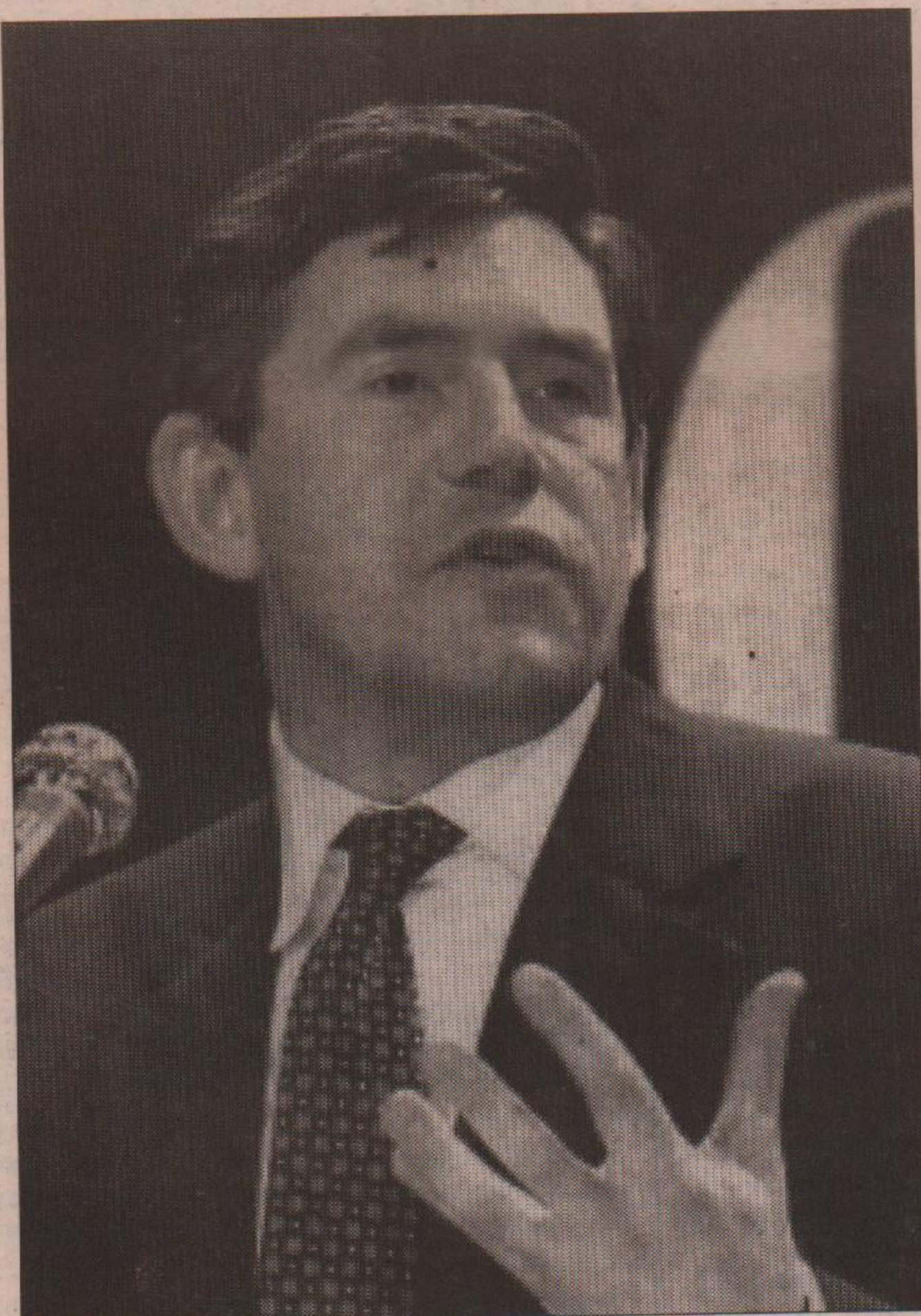
Much has been made of the "windfall" tax to help get 250,000 off the dole, but this is a drop in the ocean, given that all independent surveys show that nearly four million workers are out of work.

NHS Trust managers say that massive cuts will be required because Labour is sticking to the Tory spending limits. These allowed for a 1.6% rise in state spending when official inflation is rising to 3%. Instead of massively increasing money spent on health, Labour's Frank Dobson is cutting it in real terms.

Teachers' pay increases are not being fully funded, yet over a billion pounds needs to be spent on basic repairs like leaking roofs not to mention new equipment and books.

Workers are being told not to count on their state pensions for the new millennium. Having had SERPS deducted from our pay packets for decades, we are now told we will only receive a pittance. Labour's solution? For us to pay extra for a decent pension in old age.

When challenged to start taking measures to remedy these injustices, New Labour simply repeats its mantra, "the money



Millions voted for an end to health cuts. Brown will not reverse the Tory health spending limits

is not there and we cannot raise taxes". The fact is, there is plenty of money. Britain is an extremely wealthy society. The problem is only a tiny section of the population owns and controls that wealth.

The richest thousand people in Britain have combined assets estimated at a staggering £1,000

billion. How does this compare with the few billion that Gordon Brown took off the monopoly utilities? Their bosses fumed for the television cameras, but know only too well their license rip off the rest of us is intact.

These companies were sold at knock-down prices, often billions less than their potential

market value. Not only did their directors and large shareholders make hundreds of millions at a stroke, but they have since spent their time sacking employees to produce even fatter profits.

We can find plenty of money to tackle poverty, low pay, and underfunded health and education systems even if Gordon

Brown can't. Labour should:

- tax unearned wealth and make sure that billions cannot be passed on to the children of the rich
- impose a steeply progressive income tax so those on huge salaries pay through the nose while the poorest pay no tax at all

abolish VAT, a regressive tax where everyone pays the same, regardless of wealth. Such a tax system, which will conscript the wealth of society for the good of the majority, could start to finance some of our needs. To tackle unemployment we should reject Labour's recycling of the windfall tax as a subsidy to the bosses to pay poverty wages to "trainees".

Instead we demand that the government finances a massive programme of public works to start to tackle the real problems the Tories have left in their wake. We should take workers off the dole and provide decent training at union rates of pay and under union control. We could start by:

- introducing a massive programme of school building and repair
- pouring resources into a rationalised integrated public transport system: more buses, trains, the renovation of London underground, and subsidies to bring down fares for all local public transport networks
- undertaking a massive programme of council house building and renovation of existing housing stock.

Labour should stop sacking teachers and train thousands more to reduce class sizes and improve education.

Labour's talk of introducing service charges in the NHS as a way of averting impending financial crisis must stop now. It must allocate money for the NHS to meet workers' demands for free health care at the time of need and pay all healthworkers a decent wage. It should abolish private medicine which leeches off the NHS and nationalise the drug companies that make billions in profit out of the NHS.

We can also stop the bosses laying off workers to up their hefty profits. Industry and services are becoming more productive all the time. Everyone knows new technology and machinery can produce more in less time.

Instead of throwing workers on the dole we should work fewer hours without loss of pay - starting with Labour introducing a 35 hour week now. Any company making redundancies or declaring itself bankrupt should be immediately taken into state ownership and placed under workers' control.

New Labour will claim that such demands strike at the very heart of a free enterprise economy. They do. And if the profit system cannot answer the most basic needs of the great majority, we must fight to get rid of it.

That means fighting against a Labour government and building a new party which will put need before greed - a revolutionary socialist party. ■

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