

Workers power

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Socialism, Internationalism, Revolution

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Education is a right not a privilege

TUITION FEES NO WAY

“LET’S NOT shed tears for those who are going to earn a great deal more because of the degree they get”, said the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, in a recent radio interview.

He was justifying Labour’s decision to scrap the student grant and introduce £1,000 a year tuition fees for university students – a move that will see students leave college with debts of up to £20,000.

But Blunkett was justifying it the “New Labour” way. The proposal was really about opening up “new opportunities and a new chance for literally hundreds of thousands of men and women”, he told the Labour Party Conference. It was about attacking “privileged full-time students” who were funded at the expense of millions of Further Education students, according to Blunkett.

This man is a hypocrite.

There are now more than a million students in Higher Education. The majority struggle to make ends meet on a grant that has been systematically

reduced to a pittance and start working life, if they can get a job, up to their ears in debt from having to take out the top-up loans.

New Labour now wants students to pay for their education, to pay for the “privilege” of learning and living in poverty for several years. Blunkett’s measures are expected to raise £1.7 billion a year for the Treasury by 2017 when the loans are being paid off.

He is cynically diverting an argument about who should fund higher education into setting one group of students against another.

Far from opening up “new opportunities”, Blunkett is closing them down. The less well off will be excluded by the prospect of taking on a minimum £10,000 debt. This is obvious to all except Blunkett and the fawning Labour Party conference who cheered his “passionate attack” on student privilege.

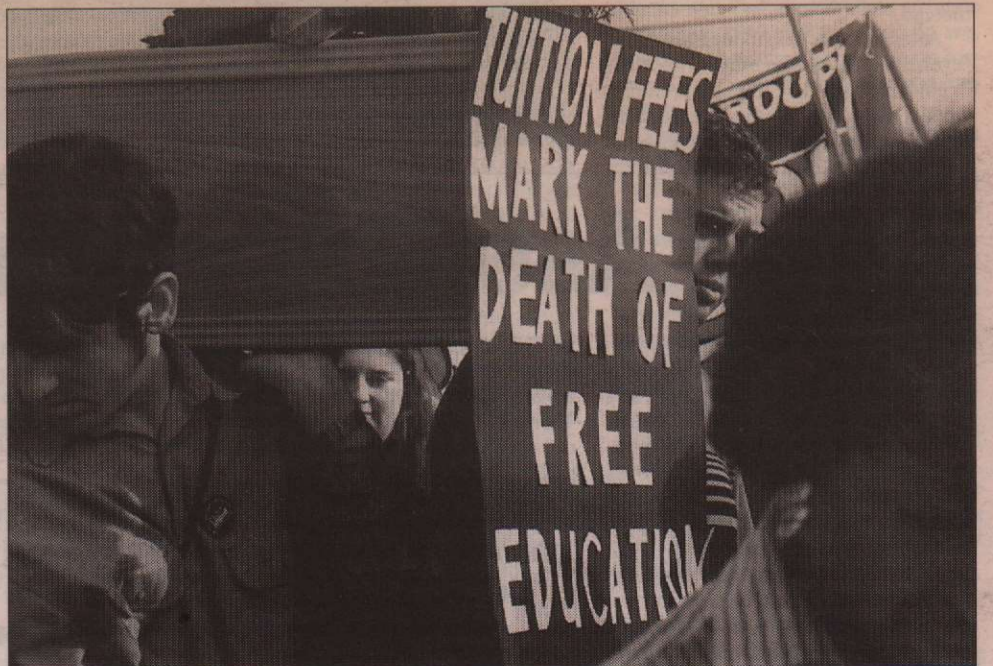
Blunkett claims his new system will be “fairer” than the existing loan system. He claims those who end up earning little will pay little back while those

who earn a lot will pay more of their loans back. “It’s a pretty basic principle of fair taxation”, declared Blunkett to the conference.

No it is not. It’s like saying that someone who has a heart bypass which allows them to continue working should contribute to the cost of it. Just as we have a free health system, we used to have a free education system paid for out of taxes. Now Labour wants to make the users pay.

Where should the money come from to expand access to Higher Education and make it a real right for all rather than the privilege for the rich that it will become under Labour’s proposals?

The answer is simple. It should come from really “fair taxation”: a wealth tax on the rich. Margaret Thatcher cut the top rate of income tax for the high earners from 83% to 40%. Thanks to the Tories anyone earning £100,000 a year is taking home much more money than before. No wonder there is no money for Further and High-

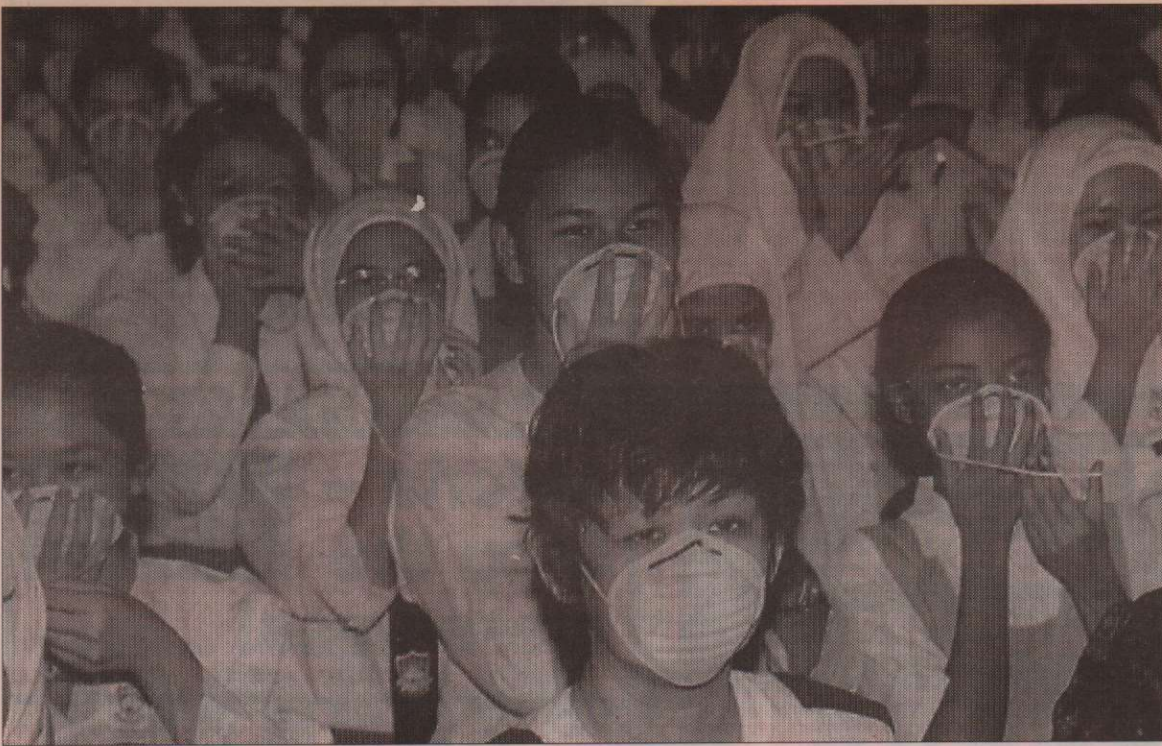


er Education! Labour should tax the rich, not just their income, but their shares, property and all their private wealth. But of course they will not even reverse Tory tax

cuts. They would rather make the students pay while the privileged laugh all the way to the bank. This is the real meaning of Labour’s “compassion with a

hard edge”. We get the hard edge while the rich get the compassion. It’s not on. We have to fight Labour’s plans all the way. ■
Now turn to page 2

Stop Blunkett’s attack on students!



Choking for profit

LAST MONTH THE air pollution index reached 839 in Indonesia. The scale usually ends at 500; above 300 is considered highly dangerous.

Forest fires, burning out of control, have spread a pall of smoke and smog across South East Asia, affecting 70 million people in six countries. Nearly 100,000 are being treated for smog-related illnesses. The death toll has yet to be calculated but hundreds have already died.

The extent of the environmental damage is enormous. A million hectares of forest is on fire. The fires burn in peat up to 20 metres below ground.

Environmentalists predict entire species will be wiped out.

The smoke will increase carbon dioxide levels in the world's atmosphere, further depleting the ozone layer. This completes a vicious environmental circle, since a drought led

to the fires spreading so rapidly.

The fires are a man-made disaster, caused by international capitalism's mad grab at quick profits. The Indonesian government has been handing out lucrative contracts to logging companies, who move in and strip whole swathes of forest.

Then the plantation owners arrive, eager to make their own profits from palm oil production. They could clear the scrub and tree stumps with bulldozers, but fire is quicker and cheaper – and more deadly.

Government, loggers and plantation owners make quick profits. A million hectares of forest is set alight. The cost – in human health and environmental damage – is incalculable.

The fires and the smog cloud are dramatic indictments of the greed and the destructive power of capitalism. ■

STUDENTS: As NUS bureaucrats sabotage the fight

Unite to stop the fees!

ANYONE WHO thought that opponents of tuition fees would stand up and fight at Labour Party conference must have been sorely disillusioned. A couple of speeches were allowed against and the only hostile motion on fees was quickly "remitted" to the shredder at Labour's Millbank headquarters.

Students should quickly learn the lesson. Blunkett's proposals can only be stopped by a massive wave of protest on the campuses, in the FE colleges and sixth forms. Then, and only then, might we see the Labour MPs who say they oppose this attack come out in the open.

It is obvious from the first few weeks of the college term that a militant fightback is possible.

Thousands of students have signed petitions and started to organise against the fees. Everything in the next period must be directed to building a massive campaign uniting all students against the fees and against the abolition of the grant.

The National Union of Students (NUS) is committed to opposing fees – on paper – but has already capitulated over the abolition of the grant, being in favour of a graduate tax instead.

After the vote at Labour Party Conference, Douglas Trainer, the NUS President, quickly declared that it would now "work with the government" to negotiate improvements.

What is there to negotiate? As far as Trainer is concerned the struggle is over because the Labour Party Conference has spoken! The NUS leadership is in the pocket of New Labour.

Trainer can't wait to be rewarded with a seat in Parliament like at least

four of his predecessors. He and his cronies from the National Organisation of Labour Students will do everything they can to undermine and sabotage a struggle against the fees.

But what about the left in the NUS? Instead of coming together to thrash

out a strategy that can defeat the NUS bureaucrats and the government attacks, instead of building a united front of militant students and colleges; they are dividing the movement into their party front organisations.

The Socialist Workers Student

Society (SWSS) has launched the "Stop the Fees Campaign" and is busy doling out membership cards faster than they give away SWP membership cards!

Not to be outdone, the Socialist Party (formerly Militant Labour) quickly pulled out of the Campaign for Free Education (CFE) and set up its own campaign, "Save free Education", complete – you guessed it – with membership cards.

Add to this the grouping of northern universities around "Real Solutions" and we already have four competing organisations all doing their own thing. The NUS leadership will be laughing contentedly at these divisions.

What is needed is a united campaign that is democratically organised and led and can, therefore, respond to the Labour government and NUS leadership manoeuvres. The only thing that stops this is the sectarianism of organisations like the SWP and Socialist Party, which put the building of their own party before the interests of the student struggle as a whole.

This is not a demand to "sink all our differences" and unite. Of course every left group should have the right to sell its papers, put forward its strategy to take the struggle forward and try and win recruits. But without a democratic and united campaign the opposition to Blunkett will be hopelessly divided. ■

How to fight Blunkett...

ACTIVISTS AT every college, university and school should organise a mass meeting to debate and pass a resolution against Blunkett's plans to make students pay for their education. Pull out the stops to get beyond the activists and mobilise every student, from every department and every hall.

Student Unions must be committed to opposing the policy. And the campaign needs to be built among everyone who will suffer from this attack – parents, other campus workers and the working class in general. Student unions need to get speakers to as many trade union and Labour Party meetings, community groups, schools and parent organisations as they can.

We should fight for delegate based campaign action committees against the fees. We must make sure that students are not isolated by Labour's divide and rule tactics.

We should build for the 1 Novem-

ber regional demonstrations called by the NUS and fight against any attempt by the NUS bureaucracy to call them off or sabotage them by inaction. If local NUS leaders refuse to organise, unofficial action committees linking all the local colleges and universities must take the lead. We should mobilise for one united national demonstration before the end of November.

We should demand University and College authorities oppose the scheme and build for occupations and strikes involving all education workers as the measures come before parliament.

There should be a united conference of all the campaigns against New Labour's plans, with delegates from student unions, action committees, schools and FE colleges.

The campaign can be united around a policy that rejects the idea that there is no money to pay for education and demands that the rich be taxed to pay for the Tory cuts and to expand

higher educational provision on the basis of it being free for all. Grants should be paid at the level of a minimum wage. All existing debts from the student loan schemes should be cancelled and paid for out of taxation.

Nor should we ignore the NUS. Douglas Trainer and the other NUS bureaucrats are able to trample on student demands because they are unaccountable – all NUS leaders should be subject to recall and replacement and should earn the average income of their members, their fellow students. All local student union officials should be elected at mass meetings and replaced if they fail to lead. And all campaigns should be controlled by delegate based action committees not by the NUS leaders.

This way we can defeat Blunkett and New Labour and transform the NUS into an organisation that fights for students rather than one that sells them out. ■

Welsh Assembly: what the vote revealed

THE RESULT OF the Welsh Assembly referendum was not the overwhelming victory the Labour Party hoped for. The vote for a Welsh Assembly was won by the narrowest of margins – 6,000 or 0.6% of the votes cast. Nearly 50% cent of the population did not vote and few were passionate about the outcome.

In the closing stages of the campaign the Labour Party had focused on the slogan "Don't let Wales get left behind". Following the "Yes" vote in Scotland the week before, Labour wanted an endorsement of its policy for regional assemblies throughout Britain. In fact the narrow victory has buried plans for other regional assemblies.

The strongest "No" vote was returned in the urban areas of North East and South East Wales. Workers in Cardiff, Newport and Wrexham had no enthusiasm for a Welsh Assembly. Only in the South Wales valleys did the call for a "Yes" vote turn out the Labour

loyal voters. Indeed Labour MPs like Peter Hain had to desperately argue that a vote "No" was just a vote for the Tories in order to squeeze a majority out of Welsh workers.

Workers in Wales remain deeply sceptical that an Assembly will provide anything but "more jobs for the boys". There will be no more money for the services needed.

Workers Power's campaign for a "No" vote (see *Workers Power* 214) was totally vindicated. We argued that the Assembly offered little for the working class in Wales, and that all its promises to get rid of quangos, to allow Welsh people to discuss issues that affected them could be achieved without an Assembly.

Unlike Scotland, the people of Wales had resoundingly rejected an Assembly

in 1979, showing that nationalism was a minority ideology. Even in this referendum with all the main parties, except the Tories, arguing for a "Yes" vote and with New Labour intimidating those in

its ranks who dared oppose it, the same point was proved.

Workers in Wales remain deeply sceptical that an Assembly will provide anything but "more jobs for the boys". They recognised that there would be no more money for the services needed. Indeed the cost of establishing and maintaining an Assembly became a real issue on the doorstep.

Young people were the most enthu-

siastic about the Assembly, largely due to what they saw as 18 years of Tory misrule from London.

The increased democracy anticipated by the most optimistic proponents will prove to be increased bureaucracy at best. At worst the Assembly may prove a diversion from the struggle to demand Labour meets our needs now. We can't afford to wait for the Assembly in 1999. We need jobs, a decent health service, a properly funded education system now.

Immediately the final result was in, Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, conceded that they would have to take serious note of the views of the "No" voters. If Labour uses this as an excuse to take away even some of the limited powers the Assembly currently has, it will merely strengthen the nationalists' call for autonomy and separation.

Socialists must use the opposite approach to undermine the national-

ist arguments and use the Assembly as part of a struggle for working class demands across Britain.

Now the Welsh people have voted for an Assembly, however narrow the majority, Workers Power in Wales will fight for it to have sovereign powers. It is up to the Assembly itself to decide what powers it wants, not Westminster.

Workers must fight to use the Assembly to abolish all the quangos, strengthen local democracy and fight for a programme that can tax the rich to provide the resources that can address the real problems of Wales, unemployment, poor housing, lack of money for schools and health services.

If the Assembly is now to be of any use at all to workers it must – as must the parliament in Scotland – be turned into a site of struggle for workers' demands, as part of the battle for a revolutionary socialist Britain. ■

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Thirty years after the death of the Cuban revolutionary **Keith Harvey** and **Gregory Turner** survey his legacy
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Women workers

Why flexible working means double drudgery
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A new dawn for humanity

A four page special section featuring the **Manifesto** issued by the Fourth Congress of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International
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EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 215 OCTOBER 1997

New Labour's hard edge

“A GOVERNMENT of high ideals and hard choices; not popular for one time but remembered for all time.” That is how Tony Blair, in his leader's speech to the Labour Party conference, described New Labour's aims.

A high wire fence surrounded the conference centre, keeping out thousands of trade unionists demonstrating against Labour's attacks on health and education. Inside the building, an inner ring of Group 4 security heavies policed the venue for the leader's speech, with only the great, the good and trusted nonentities allowed to remain within heckling distance of Labour's visionary.

The fence symbolised the historical legacy Blair intends to bequeath. He wants to build a permanent fence between the demands and pressures of Labour's working class base and its leadership. He wants to strengthen the barriers that prevent the redistribution of the rich minority's wealth to meet the needs of the many.

He wants to keep all working class protest hemmed in behind the barriers of anti-union legislation. He wants the poor, the socially excluded and the dispossessed to remember New Labour as the government of the high wire fence, the security camera and the electronic tag.

Happily sheltering behind the Brighton fence was not just the Labour hierarchy but a vast collection of the British ruling class establishment. Rarely, if ever outside of wartime, has the bosses' media been so slavish in its adulation of a prime minister.

Saatchi ad-man Steve Hilton, who devised the Tories' "demon eyes" election poster, was there - together with a clutch of former Tory ministerial advisers. Another Labour convert, the union-bashing editor of the *Sun*, was also there. The day following Blair's speech the once ardently Tory tabloid spent five pages of newsprint singing Tony's praises. Celebrities who previously fawned over John Major trekked to Brighton to fawn over Blair.

Blair's speech was a sustained warning to the working class of the attacks to come. The phrase "hard choices" featured no fewer than nine times; Britishness was invoked on a staggering 53 occasions. At the other end of New Labour's vocabulary, unions were mentioned twice, equality once and socialism not at all.

Two themes emerged from Blair's oration: neither of them new but both central to the struggle Labour faces with the working class people who voted it into office. The first was modernisation.



"I am a modern man leading a modern country and this is a modern crisis," Blair told delegates. He went on to spell out clearly what modernisation means; so clearly that not even the most dim union bureaucrat could fail to understand:

"Our new society will have the same values as ever. It should be a compassionate society, but it is compassion with a hard edge. A strong society cannot be built on soft choices. It means fundamental reform of our welfare state, of the deal between citizen and society."

big business and to make the working class pay.

That is the real meaning of Blair's mantra, "the giving society": the working class must give back the remaining hard-won gains of decades so that business profits remain healthy and the bosses' bank balances fatter than ever.

But rhetoric can only go so far in masking this intention. And that is where the other great theme of Blair's speech kicks in. New Labour will offer "compassion with a hard edge".

Those whose lives are blighted will get no choices whatsoever. The key choice has already been made; New Labour will rule in the interests of big business

Blair is going to do what Tories could only have contemplated: scrap the welfare state. The "hard choices" Blair will impose on the working class include: an end to state pensions and their replacement with compulsory private pensions; an end to unemployment benefits and their replacement with a work-for-dole scheme; an end to the current benefit entitlements of single mothers and a regime of compulsion to force them and even those now deemed unfit for work to join the massed ranks of those employed for £2.50 an hour stacking shelves at B&Q or measuring out french fries at MacDonalds.

As always the rhetoric is designed to mask reality. Who will make the "hard choices"? The people for whom they won't be hard! Labour's well-paid "working peers" and politicians, egged on by Chablis-swilling columnists, will choose to end universal benefits for the unemployed, the elderly, the sick and single parents.

Those whose lives are blighted will get no choices whatsoever. The key choice has already been made above their heads: to rule in the interests of

The hard edge will literally be the heel of a policeman's boot applied to the neck of any working class person who resists "hard choices".

Blair received his loudest cheer for this:

"To those who say it's all a threat to our civil liberties I say the threat to civil liberties is of women afraid to go out and pensioners afraid to stay at home because of crime and the fear of crime and we're going to help them."

This is not just authoritarian populism for the middle classes of Middle England. It is an age-old reformist strategy of divide and rule, turning the "respectable" section of the working class against the "undeserving" poor and blaming the latter for failing to turn themselves by hard work and frugality from Waynes and Waynetas into Tonys and Cheries. It's tough on crime but it does nothing whatsoever about the causes of crime.

To back up the new crackdown on youth crime Blair has pledged to shore up "family life". Listed among the symptoms of Britain's "modern crisis" were: "100,000 teenage pregnancies;

elderly people with whom families cannot cope; children growing up without role models they can respect and learn from; more and deeper poverty; more crime; more truancy; more neglect of educational opportunities and above all more unhappiness."

But Blair will not offer a penny to solve this crisis unless it comes out of the pockets of the victims themselves: increased tuition fees and grant cuts to "help" education; benefit cuts to "help" single mothers; secure detention units so that unruly kids can use baton-swinging screws as role models.

The fact that Blair seems to carry all before him is not, however, simply due to the overwhelming support he enjoys from the bosses' hacks and vacuous celebrities. Blair and his Millbank acolytes have built New Labour's temple on the ashes of the Labour left.

Despite some consolation for the dwindling band of old constituency party activists in the election of Ken Livingstone to the National Executive over the despised Peter Mandelson, the week's events in Brighton revealed time and again the weakness of the left. On every question of potential conflict between the top table and the membership, the left and union bureaucracy either caved in without a vote or was soundly defeated.

At the moment it is only a minority who oppose Blair and recognise what he is really planning for the working class. That minority can make itself heard, as it did on the demonstration on the first day of the conference. But for the moment Blair is revelling in the support not merely of the media but also of the majority of the working class.

This situation will not last. Dashed hopes will produce resistance. New attacks will lead workers into struggle with Blair. He knows, and so do we, that the honeymoon cannot go on forever. So he intends to take us on and beat us.

Those who joked that Blair's speech could have been made and lauded to the skies at any Tory conference missed the real point. When the Tories vilified single mothers, scroungers and truants on the conference floor, and extolled the value of the family, it remained - for the most part - ideological chaff. With Blair it embodies a deadly serious class struggle objective.

Blair's New Labour aims to be remembered as the government that scrapped the welfare state. We've got to fight him on every front: education, health, crime and union rights to make sure that his regime is remembered as the one that took on the working class and lost. ■

WORKERS POWER

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THE WHITE PAPER is full of stirring phrases: "zero tolerance", "fresh starts" and "standards not structures". Only they don't really mean much. It is also full of unsubstantiated assertions: mixed ability teaching is "not capable of building" on a child's strengths and setting (partial segregation by ability) is "proving effective". No evidence given, none cited.

There are some positive elements in it: the scrapping of the nursery voucher scheme and a commitment to review an unwieldy and unpopular National Curriculum. Labour Party conference also heard that a schools Internet service would be available to all by 2002 and that Section 11 funding for the teaching of pupils for whom English is their second language will be retained. But, overall, the thrust of Labour's policy on education is reactionary.

Beneath the rhetoric and bold assertions of this White Paper lies a vicious attack on teachers and working class parents and an assault on the existing limited local democratic control of education.

In some respects, the White Paper signals Labour's intention to continue with the Tories' agenda. The Government plans to retain league tables and external testing. In fact they will now even test five-year-olds when they arrive at primary school (baseline testing). Tests and league tables will be used to set targets, increase competition between schools and label many children "failures".

Local Management of Schools (LMS), where budgets are delegated to individual schools, will be maintained and extended, a further sign that Labour won't be investing in education. LMS was used by the Tories to ensure individual schools were forced to push through cuts. School governors can't decide whether there will or won't be cuts, but get to identify where they can be made.

Grant Maintained Schools will not be returned to LEA control, but simply renamed Foundation Schools. The extent of Labour's supposed opposition to selection can be seen in the proposals that such schools should not select on "academic ability", though "schools with a specialism will continue to be able to give priority to children who demonstrate the relevant aptitude". Priority is selection in another guise. And as for grammar schools, they can carry on explicitly selecting pupils.

Evidence

The White Paper makes clear the intention to retain OFSTED. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, it laughably refers to "high quality" inspections provided by OFSTED. OFSTED is run by a right-wing ideologue and staffed by poorly qualified inspectors. All teachers' unions are opposed to OFSTED and some have called for the sacking of Chief Inspector, Chris Woodhead. But Labour's retention of OFSTED is not surprising. It will prove an invaluable tool in the Blairites' attacks on Local Education Authorities (LEAs), teachers, and progressive education.

The White Paper, however, represents much more than a simple re-hash of Tory ideas.

Blair and Blunkett intend to use their policy of "zero tolerance of failure" to allow the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to take much

SCHOOLS: Labour's White Paper

Comprehensive education under attack

The Labour Government's education White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, is currently out for consultation. Teacher and union activist **Kate Foster** fires back a sharp reply to its proposals for restructuring education.



Labour promises hit squads, not money, for underfunded schools.

greater control, particularly in inner city schools. They plan to use legislation to allow them to take control of individual schools or entire LEAs. In effect, this will undermine the limited check local working class communities exercise over education policies. The White Paper sets out Labour's plans to send in unaccountable hit squads to sort out problem schools or LEAs.

LEAs are to play no role in local control of education only a purely supportive and target setting role. And unlike business, which has a guaranteed part to play, the LEAs will have to earn their place in the "partnership" of education.

Teachers, pupils and parents should remember the case of Hackney Downs School in London (see below). Teachers, parents and the pupils forced the Council to keep the school open. Then the Tories sent in a hit squad (accountable only to the Secretary of State) which defied local wishes and shut the school.

An alternative approach, specifically targeted on inner cities, would be

forcing schools to opt out of local control and into Education Action Zones (EAZs). Groups of schools would be brought together to share resources, teachers and possibly management - a clear means to make cuts and run down provision even further in working class areas.

The White Paper spells out the government's contempt for mixed ability teaching. It simply asserts that mixed ability teaching has failed. Conveniently, it makes no reference to the fact that mixed ability teaching demands smaller class sizes and therefore greater resources.

Setting will become the norm. Children will be put into classes according to their ability in any particular subject. This is an attack on comprehensive education and will mean the introduction of selection - through streaming within schools themselves.

Taken alongside two other proposals, the impact of streaming for many working class children, particularly boys, will be significant. All 16-year-olds are to be forced to remain at school

until after all the exams have finished. Ironically, under Labour you will have to stay in school to take GCSEs but you won't be able to afford to go to university. Stick and no carrot. Labour also plan to introduce greater vocational training - for some:

"By the age of 14, too many young people, especially boys, have become disaffected with the school system and a traditional curriculum. Work-related learning can help re-motivate these young people."

The assumption is that disaffection is not caused by a lack of teachers to support particularly needy children or a lack of motivation because you can't afford to go to college and there aren't any jobs, just rubbish training schemes. Instead they assume that working class kids fail because they are not clever enough to cope with academic subjects.

Under Labour, many working class children will be discouraged from pursuing so-called academic subjects and will instead get a second rate vocational education, directing them towards low skilled jobs.

There is only one financial commitment in the White Paper. The Government will reduce class sizes to 30 for all five-to-seven-year-olds. The money for additional teachers will be found by scrapping the assisted places scheme.

This will have an impact in primary schools, though less so in the inner cities where class sizes tend to be lower. It will be particularly popular with middle class parents in the shire counties, the base of the anti-Tory protests in 1995. However, the Government is saying it is acceptable to teach all other ages in classes larger than 30.

Absent

Despite acknowledging the dilapidated state of school buildings, the White Paper pledges no increase in capital funding and instead looks toward the private sector to provide money. Indeed, this is the hoped for source of the £2 billion Blair promised at Labour's conference for school repairs and equipment. Otherwise, any discussion of money and resources is wholly absent from the White Paper. No link is made between problems in education and the years of Tory budget cutting. Instead,

we are told that "low performance is due to low expectations".

Labour know that teachers, parents and school students, at the sharp end of these attacks, will resist. That is why the White Paper includes measures aimed at blunting any fightback, insinuating that those involved in school education on a daily basis are part of the problem. When Blunkett claimed he wanted to sack bad teachers, "because we value good teachers" he was lying. He fears teachers.

The White Paper attacks teachers as workers and trade unionists. Unlike the Tories, Blair and Blunkett want to undermine teachers' basic unified conditions. They do not intend to restore teachers' negotiating rights.

Precursor

They intend to use appraisal and OFSTED inspections, where you may be seen teaching for as little as 20 minutes, to label teachers good, bad or satisfactory. "Good" teachers will be awarded the title Advanced Skills teacher, a clear precursor to performance-related pay. Anyone considered bad by inspectors, governors or head teachers could be "fast tracked" out of their job. Within the EAZs it is likely that more "flexible working" will be introduced with additional, compulsory hours.

And parents will not get off lightly either. The White Paper is in line with many of Jack Straw's proposals on tackling youth crime: "lock up your children, or we will lock you up". Parents already face court if their child bunks school. Now if your child is found in town without a "city pass", you will face unspecified legal sanctions. And responsibilities don't stop with just getting your child to school, you are also to blame if they don't do their homework.

In response to the White Paper we should demand:

- Tax the rich to pay for repairs to schools, a massive increase in funding - more teachers and more resources!
- Fight for real local control of education involving pupils, teachers and parents; no hit squads. No to caps on LEA spending!
- Nationalise all private schools!
- No to selection, no to streaming!
- Abolish OFSTED!
- Restore teachers' negotiating rights!
- No to performance-related pay, no to fast track sackings!

Working class parents, pupils and teaching union militants must begin to fight for control of education and to secure the funding we need for a high quality service for all. When Labour and OFSTED seek to blame teachers and parents for the problems in education, the working class should establish its own inspection teams to investigate the real reasons behind "underperformance".

Such an initiative has already begun in Hackney, the most recent target of Blair and Blunkett's blame and shame tactic. Where the Government attempts to bureaucratically seize control of schools or impose cuts, local action committees should be formed. Such committees should defend schools through a campaign of demonstrations, occupations and strikes. ■

Hackney

Hitting back at the hit squads

HACKNEY CONTINUES to be the unfortunate "test bed" for many of New Labour's education reforms. Two of Hackney's primary schools were "named and shamed", and the headteacher at Rams Episcopal School is attempting to use new procedures to fast track teachers they consider unsuitable out of their jobs. Blunkett blames the school, the head blames the teachers.

The LEA inspection, ordered by Blunkett, to investigate the appalling state of education in Hackney has produced an interim report. It doesn't name the schools but those who suspected that the inspection was targeting the schools have been right.

the LEA. The report said nothing of the years of cuts and underfunding in education. It produced reams of statistics on the level of deprivation in the borough, but somehow couldn't find the budget figures for the last few years.

The report criticises the local council and LEA for mismanagement of education. In response, the DfEE have sent in a hit squad to investigate further. Schools' Minister, Stephen Byers, made it clear that if the White Paper's legislation had been in place, he would have seized control of education in Hackney immediately. The hit squad will report in January, by which time Byers hopes to have that leg-

islation in place.

New Labour's hit squad is headed by millionaire businessman, Richard Painter, the man who led the Tory hit squad which closed down Hackney Downs Boys School. It is ironic that this school closure in 1995 led to one of the major problems in the borough: a serious lack of places in local schools for boys.

Parents, teachers and school students have launched a campaign to protect education in Hackney from Blairite diktat. The campaign is determined to defend and extend local democratic control of education and fight for a massive increase in funding. ■

SURVEY: Flexible working

The bosses' dream: a nightmare for women

ALMOST HALF the workforce are women (44.8%). But many work in low status, part time and temporary jobs. Of the total number of women in employment, 44% work part time, compared with only 8% of men. Over 8% of women workers are in temporary posts compared to 6% of men.

Women's role in the family has been exploited by employers who have often preferred to recruit women, paying them lower wages and having lower fixed costs due to their ability to restrict women to part-time working.

Capitalist analysts and New Labour women politicians tell us that women prefer flexible working in order to spend more time with their families:

"Many women with family responsibilities find part time work more convenient . . . as with the shift to part-time working, the move towards temporary work has opened up more job opportunities to women who were already more accustomed to these work patterns than men." (*Labour Market Trends*)

Do women choose to work "flexibly"? Are they the pioneers of Tony Blair's crusade for a totally flexible workforce? Or are they simply denied any

BY ALISON HUDSON

other option but to be flexible workers?

A recent report by the Office of National Statistics pointed out that while the number of dual earner households has gone up by 12% in the last 10 years and that 37% of mothers now return to work after their first child, on average mothers spend three hours a day on housework and cooking compared to only 45 minutes by fathers.

The most important factor in women choosing part time or temporary work is lack of childcare. Government figures reveal that only 2% of employers in the UK have a workplace nursery and only 9% provide any kind of assistance for employees with children.

Yet low-paid women workers can be faced with childminding bills of over £100 per week per child.

Part-time and temporary work mean low wages and bad conditions. Such jobs have low entitlements to holiday pay, sick pay and pensions.

Average hourly earnings of part-time employees are approximately two thirds of full-time earnings.

With contracting out of services in the public sector many women workers have seen their conditions and pay wors-

en dramatically. This has affected black women disproportionately as Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) has especially hit catering and cleaning where black women workers are concentrated. Such a situation caused the Hillingdon Hospital strikers to begin their fight two years ago. In the privatised services workers can earn as little as £2 an hour.

Flexibility affects women's income in retirement - currently £20 a week less than that of men and likely to get worse. In September the TUC highlighted the fact that low pay, part-time jobs and temporary contracts mean that women often cannot afford a personal pension and are excluded from company schemes. This means many women are dependent on the basic state pension, the one that has been cut back over the last period and could face abolition if Frank Field gets his way.

Flexibility may mean being able to fit in housework after completing your night shift, but it doesn't let you choose your line of work. Work is still heavily segregated.

Fifty-two per cent of working women are in clerical or secretarial work, services (nursing/care assistants, catering and hairdressing), or sales (excluding reps and brokers but including cleaners and catering assistants). Women are rarely employed in engineering; only 3% of machine operatives or drivers are women.

Where women and men do work in the same sector the jobs remain differentiated, with women usually concentrated in lower paid, lower skill posts.

In the NHS men account for a quarter of the workforce but are over half of general and senior managers. In contrast 85% of the clerical and administrative staff and two thirds of ancillary staff are women.

Flexible labour is what the bosses want; creating a two-tier labour market with a widening gap in pay and conditions between workers with relatively secure and well-paid full-time jobs and workers with low paid, insecure and part-time jobs.



Low pay, no pension, short contract, long hours: women pay the price of flexible working

The lower wages and worse conditions of many jobs held by women are what the bosses want to force everyone to accept. This is what "flexibility" really means.

A study produced by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1994 stated that "most part time jobs pay less than subsistence wages" and "income from part-time work rarely covers fully a person's living support." Far from actively choosing part-time or temporary work, as New Labour would have us believe, many working class women are taking on two or more part time jobs to keep their families afloat.

The OECD report goes on to state that "an increasing proportion of those working part time claim it to be involuntary" - i.e. they have no choice. The pressure to work more hours, combined with the continual destruction of those parts of the welfare state that did pro-

vide working women with some support, could prove to be explosive.

It is crucial that the labour movement addresses these issues. Unions need to change if they are to recruit and organise women workers and part timers. Meetings need to be in work time, with childcare facilities. Women members should be able, if they wish, to have their own meetings.

Unions should be fighting to stop the bosses who, alongside Blair, are savaging welfare. They must fight for a level of welfare provision that can begin to socialise domestic labour: 24-hour creche facilities, a massive expansion of health-care, good quality state run homes for those who require permanent care.

Taking up these demands and using militant methods to fight for equal wages, job security and equal pensions, women workers can start a fightback. Then we can shatter the bosses' dream of a highly flexible, highly exploited workforce. ■

Rolling back our gains

THE POST-WAR boom and the construction of the welfare state had a big impact on women's employment. There was a massive expansion of work for women.

The extension of the NHS, the raising of the school-leaving age, limited care for the elderly and pre-school children plus benefits such as family allowance, allowed women who wanted, or needed to work, to do so more easily.

Married women were, however, still expected to be dependent on their husbands and act primarily as mothers and housewives.

This meant a trend for women to work part-time and in lower paid jobs.

Women did want to work. By the 1970s non-working mothers were a minority, despite women having to combine work with domestic responsibilities.

Since the end of the 1980s this trend has been consolidated as part of the bosses' drive to deregulate labour markets and attack trade union organisation, welfare provision and unemployment benefits, in order to reduce wages and bolster their sinking post-boom profits.

ABORTION: Anniversary of 1967 Act

No return to backstreet abortions

BY HELEN WATSON

THIRTY YEARS ago this month abortion law was transformed in the UK by the 1967 Abortion Act. Whilst this was a major gain for women after decades of struggle, it was still only a partial victory.

"It is for women to choose whether they will have children or not; and if so, how many, at what intervals, and with whom."

These words are from Stella Browne, one of many women in the labour movement in the 1920s who fought for abortion rights. She set up the Worker's Birth Control group in 1924 which tried to commit the first Labour Government to at least set up birth control clinics.

Many people within the labour movement argued that birth control and abortion were demands of the bosses trying to stop the reproduction of the working class. Others saw them as part of a reactionary attempt to only allow certain type of people to breed.

But by the 1950s support for abortion rights had become widespread in the working class and the wrong

positions of the past were being eclipsed. In 1956 a *Sunday Mirror* survey found that 75% favoured abortion rights - two thirds thought it should be on request, one third on medical grounds.

Before 1967 we have no idea how many abortions were performed each year. The Birkett Committee on maternal mortality in the 1930s estimated that up to 150,000 abortions were being done each year with 600 women dying as a result. Official figures showed the numbers carried out on the NHS rose from 2,300 in 1961 to 9,700 by 1967.

Abortion was generally illegal except where the doctor thought the life of the woman was at risk. A further 10,000 women were known to have paid for private abortions each year.

For working class women the only option was an illegal abortion. Estimates for illegal abortions in the 1960s range from 20,000 to 100,000 a year. These "backstreet" abortions were often performed by local women using dangerous

and often ineffective techniques.

The Abortion Act of 1967 started out as a Private Member's Bill. The Labour Government refused to bring forward its own legislation, continuing a disgraceful record on women's issues.

It was left to Liberal MP David Steel to introduce the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill in 1966, the first Private Member's Bill not to be defeated because the government showed "benevolent neutrality" and allowed time.

The introduction of the Act was a major step forward for women, particularly working class women. But it has deliberate limitations. David Steel was not proposing that women be given the right to choose. He argued:

"It is not the intention of the promoters of the bill to leave a wide door open for abortion on request".

The Act therefore included the requirement that two doctors agree to the need for an abortion, that it be justified on medical grounds and allowed only up to the time the foetus was presumed to be viable.

Although the medical indications were broad, and could be liberally interpreted by progressive doctors, the abortion still remained the decision of the doctors, not the woman. Many women had to convince two doctors they needed an abortion. If a GP was hostile it was difficult to find a sympathetic doctor.

The other weakness of the law was that no additional facilities were made available to meet the demand created. The NHS probably greatly underestimated demand for abortions, which rose rapidly to 170,000 in 1973. The inequalities that characterised the situation pre-1967 continued - in some parts of the country reactionary obstetricians refused to set up abortion services. This meant that in Dudley, for example, 97% of women had to pay for their abortions, whereas in North Devon 94% of women had abortions on the NHS.

This situation has changed over recent years and improved in some areas, with health authorities planning their abortion provision, but with recent spending cuts more areas have introduced explic-

it rationing for NHS abortions.

After 1967 one of the most energetic campaigns of the women's movement was to defend and extend abortion provision. The National Abortion Campaign was formed in the fight to defeat a private member's bill from James White. A 20,000 strong demonstration was held. In 1979, the TUC called a demonstration against John Corrie's anti-abortion bill. Fifty thousand marched through London - the biggest ever show of labour movement support for a women's issue in the UK.

There is no doubt that the 1967 Act was a major gain for women, despite its limitations. It was a gain because it has saved thousands of women's lives through ending backstreet abortions, and because it has given many, though not all, women the ability to end an unwanted pregnancy.

We must defend the gains of the 1967 Act, while at the same time fighting to fully decriminalise abortion and finally win the right for women, not the doctors, courts or priests, to choose. ■

ROYALTY: After the Diana hysteria

Bury the Monarchy



THE MOURNING has abated. The sobbing has been drowned out by the sound of the cash tills raking it in from the sale of Diana memorabilia. The legal battles are also raging as Buckingham Palace and the Spencers try to ban a book that reveals both Diana's impassioned hatred for the family she married into and the unhappiness of her childhood with her "blood family".

The mass mourning in September was real enough for one section of the population, though there were probably as many, if not more, who deliberately kept their distance from the licensed orgy of emotion. The liberal *Guardian* journalists have responded to the mass hysteria with a thesis about "people power versus the House of Windsor": people power will reshape the nation into a caring, hugging, charitable place. They are well wide of the mark.

What actually happened in September was the careful manipulation of a torrent of displaced and misplaced grief. A section of the ruling class used Diana, in death as in life, as the spearhead of their campaign to transform the monarchy, not the nation.

The monarchy's popularity has been in decline. Royal marriage scandals, the exposure of the wealth and jetsetting of the royal parasites, their tax dodging combined with demands for state hand-outs when Windsor Palace burned down – all this contributed to a growing public unease about the monarchy.

A public opinion poll a few weeks before Diana's death showed support for the monarchy below 50% for the first time ever. This was dangerous for the British ruling class.

While the Tories tried to rehabilitate Charles as a traditional but enlightened prince, Diana and her advisers attacked the Windsors in order to protect the future of the monarchy. She recognised that the entire institution needed to be overhauled, that medieval protocol had to be ditched, that the monarchy had to be seen to "care" and had to place itself "close" to the people and their everyday concerns via the media.

If it failed to become this new populist type monarchy, Diana and her supporters reasoned, the institution would be threatened with extinction. And as the mother of the potential future king Diana feared this demise of royal power.

That is why, after her divorce, she engaged in a fight with the House of Windsor, using the press and television to stake her claim as the "Queen of Hearts" against Elizabeth Windsor, the heartless Queen. It is also why the Windsors were so hostile to Diana.

After the death of Diana Spencer, Princess of Wales, there was a short but intense bout of mourning. **Mark Harrison** argues that the grief was manipulated to serve a purpose – the "modernisation" of the monarchy.

They recognised they were in a faction fight and they used the well-oiled Palace machine to attack her. Even after her death they allowed their hostility to get the better of them, using "protocol" as an excuse for keeping their distance from the mass mourning.

Tony Blair quickly recognised a chance both to protect the monarchy and boost his own popularity. In a meeting with Diana before her death he had promised her an ambassadorial role; immediately after her death he was the first to use the term "people's princess", underlining his belief in the need for a modernised "people's monarchy".

Blair openly used Diana's death and the mass mourning to pressurise the monarchy – forcing the Windsors to go along with the "people's funeral, for the people's princess" and forcing the Queen to speak to the nation. Thus he saved them from one possible consequence of their anti-Diana stance: the transformation of mass hostility to the Windsors into mass hostility to the monarchy itself.

As the US magazine *Time* observed: "In death, Diana may have taught the Windsors how to survive." And for the ruling class the survival of the monarchy is a vital part of their own survival plan.

The working class can take advantage of the divisions in the ruling class over the future of the monarchy but only if it takes a decisively republican stance. We need to cut through the smoke-screen of "debate" launched around the death of Diana and explain why it is in the interest of every working person to fight for the abolition of the monarchy.

Diana herself was a hypocritical member of the ruling class. She was worth millions of pounds: millions piled up at the expense of those to whom she dispensed charity. Charity comes cheap when all you have to do is sell off some dresses from a wardrobe whose total value could have equipped and staffed several hospital wards.

Charity comes cheap when you don't have to worry, for a single moment of your life, about paying bills, keeping

your children fed and clothed, being able to afford a holiday. Charity comes cheap when it is carried out not as a selfless sacrifice (Diana never had to sacrifice anything) but to enhance her public image.

That is why socialists did not mourn. It was why we were not fooled by Diana's caring image. We want a society that cares for all, not a well-heeled rich patron who takes time off from her hectic social whirl to cuddle someone here and raise a few thousand pounds there. And we were not alone. In every workplace there was spontaneous revulsion at the media

Yet that is precisely what we have – an unelected head of state. Royalist constitutionalists will soothe you with reminders about the monarchy's lack of power, that it is above politics, that its function is purely symbolic and of its value as a unifier of the nation.

But if the monarchy is so powerless, why does the establishment need it? The truth is that the monarchy is a bastion of ruling class power. It may not have to be used in current circumstances. But the power is there if need be.

When Australia elected a government Britain didn't approve of – Gough Whitlam's Labour government – it was dissolved by the Queen's representative and replaced with a Tory administration. This was not in the dim and distant past. It was in 1978.

In 1963 Tory leader Harold Macmillan wrote of the "Royal Prerogative", as the monarch's array of constitutional powers are called:

"I was determined at all costs to preserve the prerogative which had been so useful in the past and which might be so valuable in the future."

The monarch is head of state and has the power to dissolve Parliament, to appoint or dismiss a prime minister, veto acts of Parliament and declare war. The monarch is the commander in chief of the armed forces. Troops swear a loyalty oath to the monarch, not Parliament – and they swear to fight Her Majesty's "enemies within" as well as those in other countries.

The monarch appoints the Privy Council, an unelected executive body with enormous powers. This body is formally more powerful than Parliament, able to issue laws by decree, so called "Orders in Council"; laws that are not voted on by anyone and become the law of the land should parliament be dissolved by the monarch.

This is yet another useful "constitutional" weapon in the hands of the ruling class in times of crisis, though even in "normal" times the Privy Council exercises real power over the judiciary, the running of Britain's remaining colonies and dominions, and is the body that appoints the governor of the BBC.

Moreover, the monarch's power and influence exists by virtue of its wealth. The Queen is one of the richest capi-

talists in the world. She is paid in part out of public expenditure – the Civil List – and her ten year pay deal with John Major, untouched by Labour, is for a cool £98 million. The Queen, along with the other members of her supremely parasitic clan, are also wealthy land and property owners, raking in money from rents and investments.

Fortune magazine, in 1988, estimated the Queen's cash wealth (leaving aside jewellery, art treasures, houses and racehorses etc) at £5 billion, making her the fourth richest person on the planet. Bear in mind this wealth is all tax free!

The point is that the monarchy, with its wealth and formal constitutional power, can use both against the working class in times of crisis. Hence the importance of its symbolic role. It may only be acting head of state at the moment, but in times of crisis – faced with the threat of workers' revolution or even a parliamentary crisis stemming from a working class upsurge – that symbolic role can and will be transformed into an active unelected head of state: a symbol of the "people's will" versus the real will of the working class, a concentration of the forces of non-parliamentary armed might against the workers.

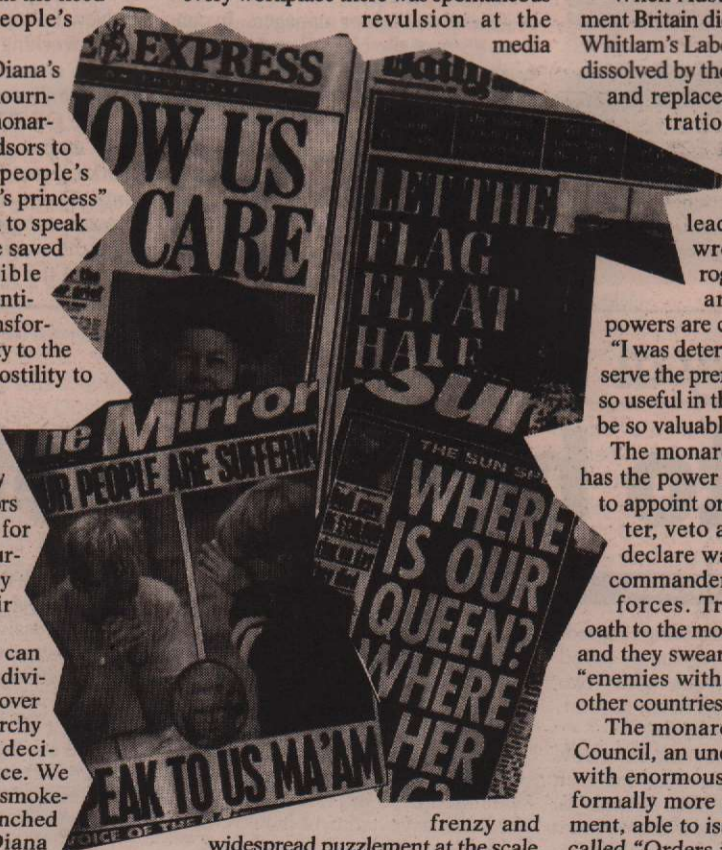
The monarchy, it is argued, rises above the classes and politics and rules on behalf of all. Where have we heard that before? In every dictatorship, in every country with an unelected head of state, in every revolution in which the masses have fought back against the classes who rule, fool and exploit them.

If Labour are so concerned about the hereditary principle in the House of Lords – a principle they have promised to abolish – why not apply the same to the monarchy?

Or rather, why doesn't Labour implement the only democratic solution to both the House of Lords and the monarchy and abolish them altogether on the grounds that no person or institution should hold any office of state unless they are accountable to the electorate?

The answer is that Labour is as much a party of the ruling class – despite its working class base – as the Tories and is every bit as craven in its attitude to the monarchy as them. It sees its value as an emergency constitutional weapon against the working class in times of crisis. It sees its value as an institution binding the classes – provided it is modernised in the Diana-style – and therefore as a weapon promoting class collaboration in the here and now.

That is why we should fight to abolish the Monarchy altogether. ■



frenzy and widespread puzzlement at the scale of public grief.

Millions refused to be fooled by the Diana cult, or by the Labour Party's grovelling worship of that cult. But it is not enough. The monarchy needs to be abolished not modernised.

The reasons for this are plain to anybody committed to consistent democracy. Even Anthony Holden, a columnist for the royalist *Express*, is enough of a democrat to ask:

"How on earth can you have somebody being head of state by the virtue of birth? What is this country? Is it Ruritania?"

A new dawn for humanity

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International held its fourth congress in August. It has issued this Manifesto as a summary of the world political and economic situation and a call to regroup in a new international world party of socialist revolution to revolutionaries across the globe

THE 20TH CENTURY draws to a close amid mounting turmoil. Throughout the world there are powerful signs of a revival of class struggle.

In South Korea a mass strike movement resisted attempts to make East Asian labour more "flexible" for multinational capital. In Albania the masses resorted to armed insurrection in protest at the agonies of capitalist restoration. In Serbia three months of daily demonstrations forced the Stalinist dictator Milosevic to reverse his electoral fraud.

In Latin America mass demonstrations and general strikes have greeted attempts to impose IMF austerity packages. In the United States the all out strike by 185,000 Teamsters working for UPS bears witness to a revival of organised labour in the heartland of imperialism.

In Europe, strikes, blockades of the ports and roads, and massive demonstrations have answered attempts to make the workers pay the cost of monetary union for the EMU. For two years running, French workers have forced the government and the employers into humiliating climbdowns. In Germany industrial workers inflicted a stunning defeat on their employers' first serious attempt to slash pension rights. In Greece and Belgium workers have taken to the streets and to fight budget and job cuts. In Britain the long strike of the Liverpool dockers has attracted solidarity action from around the globe.

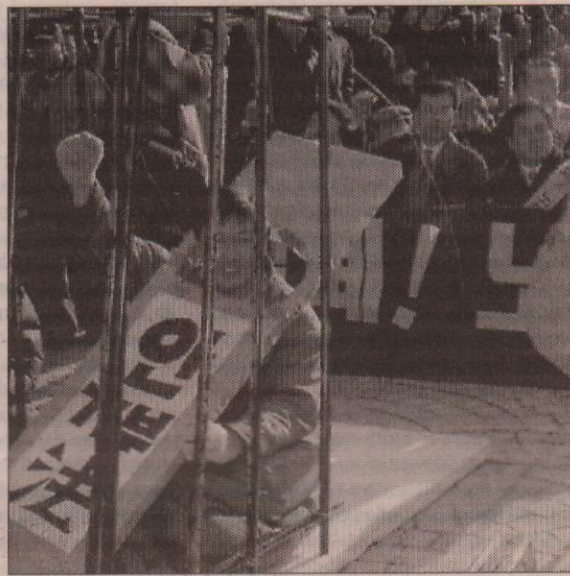
The propagandists of pessimism, who said that the collapse of the Stalinist dictatorships represented "the end of socialism" and that the class struggle was an outmoded concept, are now having to eat their words.

Capitalism cannot ensure a decent economic existence for the majority of the population nor tolerate expansive trade union and democratic rights, even in "wealthy" Western Europe. Capitalism has repeatedly demonstrated this quality in the Third World. Now it is being shown in all its horrors to the workers of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

This basic fact is what generates class struggles – and will do so again and again until the working class puts an end to capitalism itself. But until the working class creates a leadership that can direct its struggles towards the overthrow of the states and military machines that perpetuate inequality and injustice, defeats are likely.

This can be seen in the fate of the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe and the USSR after 1989. The final decade of the 20th century began with millions of workers and students on the streets of the capital cities of Eastern Europe and the USSR. These movements brought an end to decades of Stalinist dictatorship. All genuine revolutionaries rejoiced at the downfall of these bureaucratic, totalitarian monstrosities.

Yet in less than a year governments were in power committed to restoring



A WORLD TO WIN (clockwise): French workers strike to defend pensions. Korean workers fight for union rights. Brazilian peasants march to occupy the land. UPS strikers in the USA fight police.

capitalism. Sometimes, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia, these regimes were headed by former dissidents; elsewhere, as in the Balkans, they were dominated by sections of the old bureaucracy.

The state planning system and the state monopoly of foreign trade were rapidly dismantled. Factories, shops and banks were privatised leading by different paths to private ownership in the hands of a few of large financial houses or imperialist multinationals.

They promised that the pain would be short and the gains enormous. But this proved a gigantic lie.

The process of capitalist restoration has produced economic slumps as bad or

worse than slump of the 1930s. Hyperinflation quickly eroded wages, reducing them to levels last seen in the 1950s; a lifetime's savings were destroyed in months. The systems of full employment, free social welfare, healthcare, nurseries and education were brutally wrecked. Thus the capitalist economic "cure" for the horrors of Stalinism has proved even worse than the disease.

These are not the only onslaughts that the world's workers have suffered in the past period. By the mid-1970s the governments of some imperialist states had begun to attack working class gains.

The post-war boom had come to an end and so the economic basis of rising con-

frontations between imperialist blocks was laid. In the 1980s the first governments openly committed to deregulation and a reduction of state intervention came to power. During the first five years of the 1990s many governments won office on tax-cutting and de-regulating programmes.

In the Third World the IMF dictated savage structural adjustment programmes, ending all measures that sought to protect national industry or limit investment and repatriation of profits by the great multinational corporations.

In many imperialist countries neo-liberal governments attacked trade union organisation and union rights. They

coerced whole industries into bankruptcy or "downsizing". They shifted production to areas where wage levels were lower and union traditions weaker or non-existent.

By the mid-1990s they had achieved a global shift in the balance from wages to profits and inflicted serious defeats on the world's organised working class. Mass unemployment now infects all sectors of the world economy. Many of the countries which had powerful trade union organisations saw them decline after decades of apparently unstoppable growth.

Taken together, the collapse of Stalinism and the political or trade union setbacks elsewhere, have led the hired hacks of the bourgeoisie to proclaim "the end of history". They have proclaimed a "New World Order": permanent social and international peace based on capitalism, bourgeois democracy and the unrivalled leadership of the United States.

They thought the spectre of class struggle and communism had been exorcised for ever. They were aided in this by the chorus of agreement from the leaders of the mass reformist parties – Stalinist and Social Democratic – as well as the trade union bureaucracies.

The official Communist parties in the west rapidly abandoned most of the trappings of communism for "democratic socialism" (i.e. Social Democracy). The Social Democratic and Labour parties also moved to the right, affirming their fidelity to the market, renouncing nationalisation and state intervention, and offering themselves as agents of counter-reform of the "bloated" welfare systems.

The shards and fragments of the Fourth International have also shown their capacity to "swim with the stream", obliterating the distinction between reform and revolution, abandoning Marxist and class terms for the deceitful language of human rights and classless democracy.

Was it the socialist project which perished in 1989? Is the replacement of the market with a planned economy a utopia? Are nationalisation, free health and education services, decent pensions and wages, a lifetime's job security unrealisable dreams? Is global capitalism untameable? Must communists now pose as populists, as classless democrats or ecologists to win a hearing from the workers?

To all these questions the LRCI answers with a clear and confident No! The real but temporary victories of capitalism are built on sand; the foundations of the new world order are already shifting and subsiding. New eruptions are being prepared even now.

Revolutionaries have but a short time to prepare themselves for the eruption of the new period of wars and revolutions signalled by the collapse of Stalinism in 1989. The genuine legacy of the October

...continued page 8

A new dawn for humanity

Manifesto of the Fourth Congress of the LRCI

...continued

revolution provides us with the indispensable tools for this task

Why did the Stalinist states collapse?

The states in which the great revolutionary movement of 1989 and 1990 unfolded claimed to be socialist societies – a claim which the imperialists were happy enough to endorse. It was a lie. They were degenerated workers states where the socialised means of production were in fundamental conflict with a parasitic, totalitarian bureaucracy.

They lacked the fundamental features of socialism: a semi-state based on democratic workers' councils and the armed population and where social equality was growing. States that were truly socialist would have aided the workers' struggle internationally, not subordinated the workers' movements of other countries to defending these states and their bureaucracies.

In complete contrast to workers' democracy an all-powerful bureaucracy prevented any attempt at democratic self-government by the masses. Enormous privileges, scandalous corruption and incredible economic mismanagement, meant that the road to socialism in these countries had long been blocked.

The historic defeat which the restoration of capitalism in the 1990s represents did not begin in 1989 but between 1923 and 1927. A bureaucratic caste engendered by Russia's social backwardness carried out a political counter-revolution in the 1920s. By the mid-1930s only a violent overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship could restore the working class to political power: a political revolution.

Bureaucratic command planning, despite its successes in the earliest stages of industrialisation or reconstruction after wartime devastation, was inherently incapable of undermining social inequality. The bureaucracy gave absolute priority to maintaining its own privileges, together with those of a labour aristocracy of skilled and administrative workers and a huge repressive apparatus.

In preventing workers' control over planning the Stalinists doomed the planned economies to ultimate stagnation and collapse. From 1975-85 the situation became critical. The majority of the Stalinist bureaucrats became convinced that they had no alternative but to make a strategic retreat before the victorious "market forces". They sought only to preserve their rule and privileges.

The limited and controlled freedoms of the Glasnost era (1985-89) only succeeded in stimulating the thirst for full political rights: to form parties, to have access to the media, to demonstrate, indeed to choose the government in free multi-party elections. So did the desire for social, cultural and economic freedoms, especially amongst the young: to listen to rock music, to travel abroad, to have access to good quality consumer goods without rationing and queuing. These demands became the "bread and butter" which Stalinism ultimately could not grant.

Yet the mass upheavals of 1989-90 were not, as Stalinism's mourners claim, counter-revolutions from the outset. If they were then these apologists have to explain why the working class of such socialist paradises overthrew their "own" states? Were they simply tempted by the fleshpots of consumer capitalism? Were they witless dupes of a CIA conspiracy? By resorting to this explanation the remnants of Stalinism plumb new depths of contempt for the working class.

The workers of these states had every reason to rise up against their bureaucratic oppressors. The one-party dictatorships, chronic economic shortages and shoddy products could not convince workers that they lived in a progressive system. Yet the triumph of govern-



Serbian riot police smash ethnic Albanian student demo in Kosovo

ments pledged to social counter-revolution was not the only possible outcome. A victorious political revolution by the working class could have transformed the planned economies into instruments for building socialism. But – as Lenin recognised – without the presence of the subjective revolutionary factor a revolutionary situation will be transformed into a counter-revolutionary one.

Why did this favourable alternative not materialise? Because it was not an objective historic process independent of the struggles of classes and parties. Economic and social events, revolutionary crises could present the opportunities and actually did so: in 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, 1980, and 1989. But human beings, classes, and above all parties had to seize those opportunities and shape history – as Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

Tragically, the working classes of these states, despite important struggles in every decade since the war, were unable to create a political alternative to both Stalinism and to bourgeois democracy and capitalism. This was in equal measure the fault of the workers' movement in the

counter-revolution was not the same thing as the completion of the restoration of capitalism. The planned economy continued in a declining moribund form. The old enterprises, their suppliers and customers continued production in fulfilment of orders for which no payment was made. Loans from the state bank were extended without hope of repayment or interest in order to prevent collapse and social upheaval.

Even now in the Balkans and the non-Russian CIS states a stable, weak semi-colonial capitalism has yet to emerge from the economic wreckage. The same is true for Russia itself but here it cannot be completely excluded that a weak imperialist state might be the result of the restoration process.

In Cuba, China, Vietnam and North Korea the Stalinist dictatorships still jealously guard their monopoly of political power. Here the programme political revolution retains all its vitality and urgency if the gains of revolutions against imperialism are to be preserved and the final overthrow of the planned economy is to be prevented.

demise has created the conditions for a revival of independent class action.

This can be seen in the case of Albania which witnessed an uprising against the corrupt Berisha regime. In a short time state power was so shattered that the regime had to ask imperialism to intervene to restore order. The Albanian masses wanted more than reforms or the withdrawal of this or that measure. They wanted to end the corrupt and dictatorial political system. A vital lesson of the Albanian revolution, whatever its fate, is that the masses were able in the course of struggle to rediscover organisations similar to soviets, to arm themselves and to establish dual power without first having to be conscious "communists", "socialists" or even "anti-capitalists". This is a clear answer to those who claim that because of the supposed disappearance of a mass socialist consciousness the ruling classes can get away with anything they like.

But the Albanian uprising was politically blind in that it lacked a clear idea of what to replace the Berisha regime with. In short it lacked a combined programme for social and political revolu-

tion against the boundaries of nation states, at the same time capitalism seeks to erect new, enlarged, barriers to trade and investment in the form of regional blocs (NAFTA, the EU, Japan and the Pacific Rim) – all of which have seen trade and investment grow more quickly within them than between them. In turn these prefigure future trade, diplomatic and even military conflicts.

The more open world economy has also increased the vulnerability of all states to the rapid transmission of shocks from one part of the system to another, further exacerbating regional and national contradictions in the process. Neither the combined resources of international agencies (the IMF and World Bank) nor the reserves of the major imperialist economies are sufficient to prevent this.

Future global industrial slumps and financial crashes are guaranteed, bringing in their wake pre-revolutionary and revolutionary crisis similar in scale and frequency to those of the first half or the twentieth century. This prospect also massively increases the threat of conflict between the imperialist blocs.

In the next few years it is the struggle to form these blocs that will hold centre stage. Friction leading to war will have a surrogate form – between the dependent regimes and gendarmes of the imperialist powers in the Third World.

In the 1990s, semi-colonial development has been characterised by two processes: collectively the third world has fallen further behind the imperialist nations while, on the other hand, there has been a massive and growing unevenness between Third World regimes. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is almost completely marginalised from global economic activity even as the Pacific Rim economies are tied more tightly into its structures.

Latin America has experienced 15 years of neo-liberal economic policies based on a reorientation to exports, savage budget-cuts, tax-reduction, and general deflation. The result for the masses has been huge social inequality, a big rise in absolute poverty and an overall decline in global competitiveness and market share of investment and industry.

Semi-colonial bourgeois regimes like Iraq and Libya, which have rejected total imperialist control over their economic affairs, have been subjected to overwhelming shows of military strength or intimidation and boycott.

Only in China and a handful of East and South Asian states has multinational capitalism led to feverish if lopsided economic growth, mopping up the vast bulk of the relatively small levels of investment made available to semi-colonies by imperialism. Sooner or later the limits of this form of growth are reached, as shown in the collapse of the Malaysian currency and the knock-on effects throughout Asia. These countries' growth has been constrained by their lack of access to the most

The key features of the New World Order are growing inter-imperialist frictions, the fracture of multi-national states, war threats between semi-colonial powers and the growth of reactionary religious fundamentalist and racist movements

countries of democratic imperialism. When the borders opened, when the walls fell what forces and what programme could the mass movements in the "east" find to hand?

The labour movements of Western Europe were dominated by right wing Social Democratic and Eurocommunist advocates of the market economy and the eternity of bourgeois democracy and the capitalist state. They were ideologically in shameful prostration before Gorbachev's market socialism at best. Many had actually accommodated to Reagan and Thatcher's neo-liberalism.

Even those who called themselves "Trotskyists" were calling not for a proletarian political revolution based on restored workers' councils as their founder had demanded but for the "deepening of Glasnost" or the introduction of a classless (and therefore bourgeois) democracy.

Thus, instead of workers' democracy, counter-revolutionary governments came to power implementing a variety of programmes from the so-called "big bang" to the alternative of slow privatisation with a degree of state capitalism.

The return to a "market economy" was at first regarded as inevitable, if not actually desirable, even if fierce partial struggles proved that workers were ready to resist piecemeal some of the consequences of the new market.

By its nature, however, the transitional form of a moribund workers' state can not last forever. After four years or more capitalism has finally been restored, against the dogged but politically blind resistance of the working class in the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. This represents a historic defeat for the working class: the workers in these countries must once again abolish capitalist private property and establish centralised planning agencies and a state monopoly of foreign trade – without which the transition to socialism is impossible.

But the roots of this defeat in turn lay in the 1920s when Stalinism imposed its own historic defeat on the workers of the USSR. Through a series of "minor civil wars" (Trotsky) against the left wing of the CPSU, the soviets and trade unions the vanguard was murdered, imprisoned or exiled, and by this process the independent class consciousness of the workers was destroyed for a generation or more. But the paradox of the historic defeat represented by the triumph of capitalism in these states is that it coincides, after a time, with the revival of independent organisation and action of the workers in the ex-Stalinist states. If Stalinism ensured that for the most part the workers put up no conscious resistance to the proclaimed final goal of the restorationist governments, then its

tion and a leadership that could utilise that programme consciously.

Capitalism's fatal contradictions

Despite all the victories won by neo-liberalism over the last two decades capitalism has been unable to escape from the long period of mass unemployment, low productivity, and substantially lowered profit rates which first appeared with the breakdown of the post-war boom in 1973. This is despite massive waves of technological renewal and the opening up of semi-colonial markets and labour to the multinationals.

Imperialism's search for a long-term solution to its crisis of growth and profitability has accelerated the "globalisation" of capitalism. These developments include the continued growth of giant multinationals relative to the economies of nation states; mergers between them; a massive expansion of foreign direct investment; and the surge of speculation on financial and currency markets.

But this intensified globalisation is not a new phenomenon; nor does it indicate capitalism has somehow overcome its contradictions. Indeed, it is an expression of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in the imperialist epoch. While, the productive forces continue to

modern technologies which in turn guarantees the reproduction of their subordinate position.

But the long term structural crisis of the accumulation process on a world scale can only be resolved in favour of the capitalist classes if defeats of a strategic or even historic character are inflicted on the working class in the imperialist countries and the developed semi-colonies. This would have to be accompanied by the revolutionising of production itself and the reordering of the international economic and political balance between the major capitalist nations. Short of this no way out of the current world disorder is possible.

A mounting crisis of bourgeois strategy and leadership is exacerbating the problems faced by the capitalist class. In most of continental Europe as well as in Japan and Korea post-war institutionalised class collaboration has left a legacy of political parties, industrial relations and constitutions unsuited to inflict strategic defeats on the working class. Moreover, in the countries where neo-liberalism first triumphed – the UK and the USA – its flagship parties are in deep crisis and its economic gurus publicly discredited.

The break up of the "New World Order"

The New World Order is in fact a state of far greater disorder than the Cold War system of 1945-89.

Its key political features are growing inter-imperialist frictions, the fracture of multinational or ethnically heterogeneous states, war threats between semi-colonial powers and the growth of reactionary religious fundamentalist and racist movements.

US imperialism won the Cold War and inherited its spoils. Its present goal is to consolidate its hegemony over the other great powers and prevent rivals from emerging. It has used its enhanced status to further coerce Cuba and to break any remaining resistance in the Mexican and South American ruling classes to regional economic integration via NAFTA and Mercosur – economic alliances whose main beneficiaries are the US multinationals.

It has used the collapse of the USSR to deepen its control over the United Nations, advancing its imperial ambitions behind the facade of this world agency and an expanding NATO. It has taken advantage of the EU powers' internal divisions to impose its chosen foreign policy goals in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East often against Europe. In the Pacific theatre, the USA forces Japan to finance an occupying army, thus preventing a rival imperialist army from emerging while guarding its Pacific interests against China, which is rapidly emerging as a key military force in the region.

By military force and diplomatic pressure the US has sought to stabilise and neutralise anti-imperialist challenges to imperialist domination. The Gulf War was the greatest victory for the US; coming as it did in the first flush of the New World Order (1991) the US found no obstacles in its path. It crushed Saddam Hussein's regional ambitions, secured strategic oil supplies, bound the conservative Arab states to the US and made its allies foot the bill for the US victory – a victory all socialists and anti-imperialists sought to prevent by seeking the victory of Iraq in the clash with US, UN and NATO.

In Palestine the virulently pro-Zionist administration of Clinton brokered the surrender of the PLO to a Zionist "solution" (i.e. denial) to the national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The break up of the USSR and Warsaw Pact has revealed many national questions, which bureaucratic dictatorship could suppress but not resolve. With the fragmentation of the bureaucracies, the new regional and local elites have resorted to fomenting national resentments, real and imagined.

In the Balkan Wars between 1991 and 1995 the main victims of this genocidal war were the Muslims of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their allies among the Serb and Croatian communities who sought to maintain a distinctly multi-ethnic character to Bosnia. The legitimate defence of the Bosnian population against the attempts of Serbia and Croatia to destroy them as a community and divide the former republic

between them provoked widespread sympathy from the international labour movement and active solidarity from its vanguard. Increasingly abandoning the multi-ethnic stance of Bosnia for Islamism, the leadership of the Bosnian Muslims sought to resist (in reality betray) the genocide of the Serbs and Croats via help from US imperialism.

In Chechnya Russian chauvinism was given full vent. Yeltsin, no less than Gorbachev in the Baltic Republics and Armenia, proved an enemy of national freedom and a supporter of great Russian chauvinism. The legitimate fight to get Russian troops out of non-Russian republics and pursue self-determination while fighting any hint of discrimination and oppression against other minority groups justly attracted solidarity from revolutionaries around the world.

Elsewhere, Cold War alliances between imperialism and semi-colonial dictators have been undermined by the New World Order. This has given rise, in the absence of revolutionary leadership, to ethnic wars, to a challenge by oppressed peoples to arbitrary drawn national boundaries against a background of continued economic stagnation and marginalisation.

The US sponsored New World Order can, as in the Gulf War, "create devastation and call it peace". But it cannot bring justice.

This would require deep-going economic social and political improvements for humanity which late 20th century imperialism cannot grant. A series of alliances with reactionary regimes are needed to loot the raw materials and exploit the "cheap" labour of the semi-colonies. To prop up these regimes means fomenting divisions between peoples, fragmenting nations, smashing labour movements.

Hence, the New World Order is chronically unstable and under constant challenge from below. For this reason the US could not press home its victory against Saddam Hussein to bring about his downfall since this would have given the opportunity to the mass democratic movement of the Kurds to seek unity and independence against other imperialist client states in the region.

The wars, invasions, and genocides which have marked the last five years will continue and even intensify. Only the working class, providing it is true to its revolutionary mission, can provide a consistently democratic solution to national, racial and sexual oppression. Its semi-states of workers' councils can and will grant autonomy or independence to oppressed nationalities, redress for historic oppression and discrimination to those who suffer it.

The crisis of working class leadership

The defeats and retreats that the working class and anti-imperialist movements have endured over the last decade were not inevitable. They were directly attributable to the deliberately missed opportunities, to the sowing of divisions, to the outright betrayals inflicted on the working class by its official leaders.

The collapse of Stalinism, and Social Democracy's accelerated bourgeoisification, are reducing the power and prestige of the bourgeoisie's main agents within

the labour movements of the world. This has created a profound crisis of strategy, tactics and organisation which is becoming obvious to millions.

Nevertheless, it would be premature to proclaim the death of Stalinism, let alone of Social Democracy. With or without mutation towards Social Democracy, Stalinist parties remain strong in countries as varied as Japan, Turkey, the Indian sub-continent and Russia. Despite their more militant rhetoric (and sometimes actions) they remain utterly reformist parties seeking power by electoral means. Despite their dictatorial internal regimes and their links to the crimes of the bureaucracies of the degenerate workers' states they are not in essence different to the Social Democratic parties. They are, in Lenin's phrase, bourgeois workers' parties.

Social Democratic governments have recently come to power in Britain and France as a result of the bankruptcy of the open bourgeois parties. The experience of these parties, which in office act as completely loyal servants of capitalism and imperialism, will inevitably bring disillusionment to millions of their working class supporters.

But if this is to lead to a break by substantial layers of their working class supporters from reformism itself, then it will require active interventions by revolutionaries; intervention which combines the sharpest denunciations of the reformists for their anti-working class policies, with slavish loyalty to imperialism, with pressure on them to carry out the demands placed on them by workers in struggle. Thus their treachery will be exposed to an aroused and mobilised mass base which can break from their leaders and turn towards those who have warned and presented an alternative strategy, based on the struggle for real workers power, not ministerial office in the service of the bourgeoisie.

In many semi-colonial countries waves of poor and landless peasants flooded to the cities, fuelling the growth of new semi-proletarian or sub-proletarian urban masses, as open to reactionary as to progressive ideologies and parties. Populist demagogues have prospered in this environment as have religious fundamentalist parties. But these forces will not be able forever to deceive the impoverished population which remains a mighty explosive charge in the very centres of semi-colonial capitalism. Recent rebellions and spontaneous insurrections in Latin America and Africa testify to this.

Despite the seriousness of the defeats of recent years the first signs of a new and powerful wave of resistance is already visible on most continents. In Korea, in Argentina and in France, workers have launched mass strikes against the IMF-dictated austerity measures and the threat of privatisation.

The countries of East and South Asia have experienced a different history over the past fifteen years. They entered the 1980s with dictatorial regimes committed to dramatic capitalist development based on low wages and imported technology. Dramatic growth rates ensued.

But capitalist development always creates its own gravedigger. A numerically strong industrial working class is growing rapidly in all these countries.

In Korea in the mid and late 1980s a

mass democracy movement, led by students', coalesced with a workers' movement. They forced the retreat from power of the military and won democratic freedoms. A militant independent union movement came into existence which already the bourgeoisie is seeking to strangle, provoking a powerful strike movement in 1996-97.

Throughout the region new workers' organisations are being created in semi-legal or illegal conditions. In Indonesia a trade union movement independent of the senile bonapartism of Suharto is struggling to be born.

The conditions for the prolonged development of non-political trade unionism or reformist workers' parties scarcely exist. Revolutionary struggles will be needed to smash the despotic regimes such as China and Indonesia even to open the field for "free trade unions".

The European bourgeoisie faces a highly organised working class, defending largely intact social and economic gains. But growing inter-bloc competition obliges the European bourgeoisies towards a decisive showdown with the working class over its higher costs of labour and the welfare state.

In the USA a more bitter and prolonged battle has opened up by the unions, who are currently buoyed up by the USA's economic growth. Some of the struggles, such as at General Motors in 1996 and at UPS in 1997 signal the end of "business unionism", as does the strengthening of the "new directions" as oppositional movements in the trade unions and the open support of some of the trade unions for the formation of a Labor Party.

Set against these progressive trends, the old and new vanguards are increasingly having to develop a strategy and tactics to fight the rise of racist and fascist political parties in the imperialist countries. The reactionary policies of bourgeois governments – mass unemployment, destruction of welfare programmes – have created a mass reservoir of lumpenised workers and enraged middle classes in the major urban centres.

In the 1990s, strict immigration controls, police brutality against black workers, the attacks on asylum seekers and the state hounding of migrant workers have led to the legitimisation of anti-black racist violence by far right parties and the growth in electoral support for them – for example the growth of the Front National in France. Unconditional and active support for self-defence against racist violence by all these sectors is obligatory for revolutionaries. So too is a struggle for militant anti-racist policies inside the "white" labour movements of the imperialist countries – including direct action to prevent the propaganda and intimidatory activities of the fascists and organised racists.

Across the globe both nationalist and "communist" guerrilla movements have abandoned armed struggle, proclaiming peaceful strategies and the need for dialogue. The Mexican EZLN has been held up as a "new" model of such an approach. It has gained little beyond admiring media coverage.

In the semi-colonies "peace processes" have not meant any substantive concessions by imperialist-backed local oligarchies to the guerrilla forces. The guerrillas have eagerly plunged into them even when they were little more than a cover for complete physical and ideological capitulation; the PLO, IRA, UNRG, FMLN have taken this path. Moreover, these betrayals have gone largely unchallenged from within these traditions.

The ANC led the mass movement against apartheid down a similar path, diverting the revolutionary struggle of the black workers and the township masses into a negotiated settlement. The South African bourgeoisie and its US and European backers were relieved enough to protect capitalism and thus willingly sacrificed apartheid in order to allow South African imperialism's regional economic power and political hegemony to develop. While the masses' hopes have been dashed a tiny sector of the old black resistance leadership is being incorporated into a new post-apartheid ruling class.

Stalinism's perception of its own future ranged across a short spectrum: from mutation into social democracy or liberalism to sheer dissolution. A few former Stalinist parties – the Italian Rifondazione Comunista and the German PDS – are shamefaced versions of their former

selves. They have been social democratised to the extent that they are now prepared to ally with centrist forces, to seek regroupment. But they retain a commitment to "socialism" for which they have no coherent explanation.

Thus they have survived to form a pole of attraction on the left, usually commensurate with the strength of the Stalinist parties during the Cold War (weak in Britain, regionally significant in Germany, stronger in Italy and Spain). Major shifts in the organic relations between the reformist parties and the trade unions, breaks with key traditions of the national labour movements, will produce similar splits in the years ahead.

In the context of a revival of spontaneous mass struggles against exploitation and oppression around the world, indicating the beginning of a recovery of militancy and consciousness, there exists the real possibility of recreating a revolutionary workers' movement purged of Social Democracy, Stalinism and bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism.

This trend has, however, also encouraged left-reformists and right-centrists to promote the foundation of such parties to fill the reformist vacuum. Most of these "alternatives" have copied all of the vices of reformism (electoralism, nationalism, bureaucratism, subordination to the trade union officialdom) without the one reason that makes the latter important – its mass organic links with the working class.

For most of their existence, the reformist parties and trade union bureaucracies have neglected, and even rejected from their ranks, the mass of the socially oppressed within capitalist society: women, young people, racial and national minorities, as well as gay men and lesbians. The reformist parties and unions have often refused to support, let alone lead, the justified struggles of the oppressed against violence, discrimination, racism, super-exploitation, inequality and homophobia. As a result of this hostility and neglect petit bourgeois ideologies came to dominate the movements of the oppressed during the post-war decades.

Like all genuine struggles against oppression generated by capitalism and class society, these ideologies (e.g. feminism, black nationalism) contain a progressive element: the demand for equality within capitalism, the fight for self-organisation, and the fight to challenge and overcome prejudice, including that which exists inside the workers' movement. These ideas led to mass movements of the oppressed in the 1960s and 1970s in many imperialist countries and a number of semi-colonies.

Yet these movements have declined in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of their failure to link their struggles to the goal of the proletarian revolution – the abolition of capitalism. In a period of social decay and crisis for metropolitan capitalism, the rejection of such an orientation meant a failure to tackle the very foundation and cause of oppression. As the movements declined and degenerated fragments of them were incorporated into the official parties and the national or municipal governments. Other fragments depoliticised and consciously ghettoised themselves, seeking to ignore or avoid rather than to fight their oppression.

This decline has resulted in the revival of backward and reactionary prejudices within bourgeois society and within the labour movements. While some reforms were entrenched as a result of the movements (e.g. an increased proportion of women in the workforce, equal pay for equal work in some occupations, liberalisation of abortion legislation, removal of openly discriminatory legislation) others were not. The renewed acceptability of sexist culture, backlash against feminism, the fight against "political correctness" are all the product of the absence of a mass movement challenging prejudice.

The answer, however, is not to reinvent these radical petit bourgeois ideologies of the oppressed, but to build mass working class movements of the socially oppressed. Such movements must necessarily challenge the existing reformist leaderships. They must intervene in the existing organisations of the labour movement to fight for the legitimate rights of the oppressed and victims of discrimination. The aim must be to give all

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EZLN guerrillas on the march in Mexico

A new dawn for humanity

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Manifesto of the Fourth Congress of the LRCI

...continued

these struggles a revolutionary direction aimed at smashing capitalism.

The central political task of revolutionaries is, without any sectarian posturing, to enter each and every mass movement towards militancy and class independence and against oppression in an attempt to win them to a revolutionary programme and the centralised and disciplined structure needed to lead the struggle for power.

Centrism

Centrism – the politics of revolution in words but reformism in deeds – remains a major roadblock to developing a new revolutionary leadership. The defeats suffered by the working class and popular forces over the past period and the rightward shift of the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies, led most centrists to jettison the greater part of their revolutionary rhetoric as so much useless baggage.

Because they had adapted to Stalinism in one or other of its varieties, the major international currents claiming to be Trotskyist were thrown into crisis by 1989. Two opposed perspectives, one blithely optimistic (“the international February revolution has begun”), the other deeply pessimistic (“the era of October is over”) both lead to the same conclusion; that the collapse of Stalinism and the rightward turn of Social Democracy dictate a strategic retreat to the building broad parties embracing both “revolutionaries” and reformists.

Despite dishonest pretences about returning to the model of the First International, in reality this is a return to the model of the Second. The Lambertists, Morenoites, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), the CWI, and the remnants of Healyism have all floated such projects over the last five years. Various fragments of the USFI are trying to realise it in practice by enmeshing in left Stalinist and left socialist parties like Rifondazione Comunista in Italy and the Socialist Labour Party in Britain.

The task of revolutionaries is not to collude with former Stalinist “theoreticians” in writing off Bolshevism and the legacy of the October Revolution. But this does not necessitate sectarian self-isolation. We have to outline our own route to the recomposition of the vanguard, taking full cognisance of the changed situation.

The USFI, perhaps the most numerous and well-known of the “Fourth Internationals”, suffered a heavy blow to its schemas. The inability of any wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy to lead a fight to defend the planned property relations destroyed their perspectives. The USFI's initial dogged refusal to see the real possibility of capitalist restoration soon gave way to massive pessimism at its 14th World Congress about the prospects for socialism.

The USFI has insisted that the collapse of Stalinism makes the old demarcation lines between revolution and reform redundant; that the epoch of 1917 is over.

The opportunist conclusions are clear: organic fusion with whatever reformist forces in the labour bureaucracy they can. In its internal life the USFI remains a parrot house of permanent factionalism, institutionalised indiscipline and every latest petit bourgeois fad and fashion.

The crisis of the LIT – the international created by the late Nahuel Moreno – while predating the collapse of Stalinism, was sharpened by the subsequent events. Deep pessimism pervades its outlook too leading to gross right opportunism towards the established leaders of the reformist workers' movement.

Meanwhile, a myriad of small Stalinophile sects have clung onto the coat tails of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the last, in the process discrediting themselves in the eyes those who rushed to tear down



Democracy protesters battle with Indonesian police

the monstrous edifice of repression. They defended the unsuccessful great Russian repression of the nationalities in 1990 (the Spartacist ICL), platonically taking up arms with the Stalinist behemoths in August 1991 (the IBT, CBI), or rushing to defend Serbia in the Bosnia wars in the name of anti-imperialism or socialism (the LCCI).

The CWI, the international current historically associated with Militant Labour in Britain, has in the 1990s been completely disoriented by the evolution of the major bourgeois workers' parties in the imperialist centres. Seeing their own perspective utterly falsified, these disillusioned opportunists have become impatient sectarians with regard to the major bourgeois workers' parties, seeing in them nothing but open and unmasked parties of the ruling class.

Meanwhile they have transferred their opportunism towards left social democratic and ex-Stalinist parties or even reinvented themselves as reformist parties as in the UK where no other option exists. This disorientation has naturally affected all those who to one degree or another invested hope in the socialist or democratic character of Stalinism (or reforming factions of it) – either as ruling parties or as parties of the left in the imperialist heartlands.

Those who to some degree immunised

or chronic tailing of trade union struggle, stands condemned by history.

Only those trends that break courageously with the past 40 years and more, returning to Trotsky and Lenin's method and creatively applying it to the tasks of the period ahead, will be able to attract to their ranks the increasingly radicalised youth and a renewed militant vanguard of the working class.

The key tests of tendencies that can overcome the deadly legacy of post war Trotskyist centrism is a willingness to discuss and clarify, with the greatest urgency, the basis of a new programme, combined with common action in the class struggle, particularly promoting its active internationalisation.

Last but not least is the willingness – on the firm foundations of programmatic agreement – to take concrete steps towards international democratic centralism. All “regroupment” projects based on diplomatic agreements to differ, on national “autonomy” are doomed to failure. Indeed they are an obstacle to real internationalism.

But the acid test posed to all tendencies, including the LRCI, over the next period is the ability to rally new forces – youth and militant workers – to the revolutionary movement, forces which already exist and are growing but which must not fall victim to single issue cam-

struggle to win the vanguard fighters of the working class and the movements of the oppressed movement to it. Our task is to demonstrate to these militants what a real working class policy consists of in contrast to the unprincipled manoeuvres of centrist forces.

Our method is clear and straightforward. We analyse and learn from the historic struggles of the working class worldwide; we formulate tactics on the basis of these lessons: we intervene in the ongoing class struggle showing how to achieve victory. Out of this work in the coming years must come parties of the vanguard, national sections of a new revolutionary international, bound by Leninist methods of organisation.

The raw material for such parties exists in plentiful supply. The European workers fighting the costs of a common currency, the Latin American workers rising up against discredited populists and IMF policies, the combative South Korean trade unionists, those workers fighting the effects of the process of restoring capitalism from Albania to China.

They are also to be found in the ranks of those who have been attracted to the “new” reformist and post-Stalinist parties such as the US Labor Party, Izquierda Unida of Spain or Rifondazione Comunista in Italy.

Here the task is to win these work-

The old bureaucratic leaderships of the working class are directly responsible for the heavy defeats of the last decade or more. Their prestige, which in the boom years rested on solid gains for the working class in all sectors of the world, is now shattered. They could not defend these gains which they did not win but rather acted as parasites upon.

They have abandoned all pretence of fighting to replace capitalism with an alternative world order—socialism. Yet the need to struggle, to fight back, is more urgent than ever. Spontaneity and improvisation will not be enough in the years ahead. The mounting struggles lack centralisation, lack consciousness of the fact that their common resolution resides in the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism.

Only a new world party of socialist revolution can bring this centralisation and consciousness. The fear that all centralism must be bureaucratic will have to be set aside if effective co-ordinated combat parties are to be built. In the new millennium if these struggles are to attain lasting success, if their partial gains are to endure, if one victory is not to be set against defeat elsewhere, then today's vanguard must become the steered cadre of a new world party of revolution.

This new international will have to be built on the firm programmatic and organisational foundations laid down by Lenin and Trotsky. None of the events of the past eight years invalidate the principles of either the Transitional Programme or the Leninist vanguard party. There is no need to confuse reform and revolution in sickly utopian rhetoric and limp pleadings.

Revolutionary communists have no need to conceal their aims nor to seek strategic blocs with reformist or petit bourgeois forces. They still stand for the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions – for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only road to a classless and stateless world order.

Stalinism has fallen never to rise again. But the workers of Russia and Eastern Europe, of China, Vietnam and Cuba will rise again. The workers in struggle from France to Korea can and will learn the lessons of Stalinism – how to fight bureaucratisation within the workers' organisations and the workers' states. Even in those countries where Stalinism has a brief upswing it will not be able to return to its old strength. With the downfall of its political “country of origin” the perspective for a stable degenerate workers' state has been removed.

It is the task of revolutionary communists to learn these lessons, to embody them in a new programme and tactics. If we do there will be no more bureaucratically degenerate workers' states but in the 21st century there will be democratic workers' republics marching towards world communism.

If all those class fighters willing to fearlessly advocate communism and world revolution come together into a new democratic centralist international then opening decades of the new millennium can truly be the dawn of a new era for humanity. ■

The ruling class will be unable to blame “the legacy of communism” any longer. The root cause of poverty, insecurity, war, disease and environmental destruction will be seen by ever wider layers as capitalism—stripped naked of its social democratic, nationalist and democratic coverings

themselves against this virus (the SWP-led International Socialists and the international current led by Lutte Ouvrier) have grown in size, number of sections or electoral success. This at least is proof that is not the collapse of Stalinism that impedes growth of the left but a false political perspective that banked all on favourable developments from within Stalinism.

The SWP in Britain is still inoculated against any serious Marxist reanalysis by the belief that its state capitalist theory has been confirmed by the collapse of Stalinism and by its economic wait for the next upturn in the trade union struggle.

However, some of the satellite sections of the IS have undergone disorientation, crises and splits over the last period, often inflamed by the intervention of the British “mother party”. But all the splits from Cliffism have so far proved sterile – moving, if anything, to the right and taking positions worse than those of their political parent.

A new international will not be forged by those cast out of the existing Trotskyist currents who vainly try to return to the “original truth” of their traditions – in short to an earlier version of post-1951 degenerate Trotskyism. This tradition, with its worship of the objective process, imitation of the latest trend in reformism

paigns, revived left reformism, neo-Stalinism, anarchism and centrism.

Tendencies which are growing with healthy new forces, which are enriching themselves with the practical lessons of the new period of revolutionary opportunities, will be best placed to overcome the obstacles to international revolutionary unity.

The revolutionary forces capable of creatively applying Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism to a new historic period are as yet very small. Their tasks are first and foremost to unite into a democratic international tendency on the basis of agreement with a revolutionary action programme addressed to the burning tasks ahead. There can be no firm and lasting international fusions that are not based upon solid programmatic agreement.

All diplomatic agreements or adherence to exclusively historic programmes or abstract principles will blow apart at the first serious test. Equally futile is the practice of building “strong” national sections and leaderships first and then setting out to unify them into an international. This is only a disguise for national centredness in programme and party building. The building of national and international programmes and leaderships are parallel tasks.

Alongside this goes the fight to root the revolutionary programme in the class

ers to the building of revolutionary factions fighting the betrayals of the reformist leaderships.

A new world party of world revolution

The remaining years of the twentieth century will be ones of sharpening class struggle in Europe, East Asia and Latin America, politically revolutionary crises in the remaining degenerate workers' states, explosive rearguard actions in the moribund workers' states and the first struggles of a revived workers' movement in the newly emerging semi-colonies of Central Europe. The potential exists for bloody wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Aegean, the Indian subcontinent and East Asia which can create revolutionary situations as the crimes and incompetence of the ruling classes are exposed to view.

The ruling class will be unable to blame “the legacy of communism” any longer. The root cause of poverty, insecurity, war, disease and environmental destruction will be seen by ever wider layers as capitalism—stripped naked of its social democratic, nationalist and democratic coverings. This will create an appetite, especially amongst young people, for genuine revolutionary working class politics.

CHE GUEVARA: Executed thirty years ago this month

What Che really stood for

ERNESTO "CHE" Guevara did not, as he had hoped, die in a battle with a gun in his hand. In the early afternoon of 9 October 1967, in a small village school room in Bolivia, he was executed with a burst of machine gun fire.

It had been little more than ten years since he had set sail from Mexico with Fidel Castro and 80 others on *Granma* to begin the guerrilla war in the mountains of Cuba. Within two years of arriving on Cuba's shores in late 1956 Castro's group had forged a 3,000 strong army that overthrew the US-backed dictator, General Batista.

During the war Che displayed the personal qualities for which he became famous: bravery in battle, an iron will to overcome the disabling effect of chronic asthma and ruthless discipline, necessary to shape an effective fighting machine.

He was also chief propagandist among the guerrillas, selecting and educating recruits in his vision of socialism and anti-imperialism, knowing that the best fighters were those who married physical courage with political conviction.

Che's reputation would have diminished with time if, like Castro, he had become an entrenched member of the privileged Cuban Stalinist ruling bureaucracy in the years that followed the overthrow of Batista in 1959. But this was not to happen.

His personal reputation for hard work, living on an average salary, refusing the perks of office was part of the reason for this. But the main reason was the nature of his political ideology. Two antagonistic, yet deeply held, aspects of his politics sat uneasily with each other over the remaining seven years of his life.

On the one hand, Guevara was a revolutionary anti-imperialist. He advocated the armed overthrow of the local ruling capitalist elites. This did not make him a proletarian revolutionary. He did not base his strategy on the working class and its organisations but rather on the peasantry. He was in this sense a petit bourgeois revolutionist.

Nor did he rest content with the national liberation of Cuba alone from US domination. In 1965 he left Cuba to lead similar struggles, first in the Congo and finally in Bolivia. His guiding vision was to develop a generalised struggle against imperialism and its local agents.

As Cuba prepares to entomb Che Guevara's remains in a Havana mausoleum this month, **Mark Abram** and **Gregory Turner** assess his life and struggles.



The execution of Che

It was his fidelity to this cause that brought him into conflict, after 1962, with the Stalinist bureaucrats of the USSR who provided the economic and political support for Cuba. Che rejected in principle the idea – one at the very centre of Stalinist ideology – of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism.

This conservative and reactionary concept enshrined the idea that there were legitimate spheres of influence and control in which imperialism and capitalism could and should hold sway; that is, countries in which socialists and revolutionaries should not fight to overthrow the system. After 1964 Castro came to accept this idea too.

The Kremlin was opposed to a generalised method of revolutionary wars in Latin America, which they accepted was the USA's backyard. It was for this rea-

son that Che renounced his Cuban citizenship in 1965, together with all his positions in government, to pursue his alternative strategy. He was not one to swap his fatigues for the comforts and rewards of office.

At the same time, despite this dispute with the Kremlin over internationalism, Guevara's vision of national, social and political change was entirely at one with Stalinism.

From the very outset of the guerrilla war in Cuba Guevara was absolutely clear that military victory was only a stepping stone to fundamental social change: radical land reform and nationalisation of foreign and major Cuban capital, for example. For most of the war he was in a minority on these issues, far outweighed by the pro-capitalist and even pro-landlord elements within the Castro-led coal-

ition, the "July 26 Movement", who merely wanted to overthrow the Batista dictatorship, not Cuban capitalism.

But Guevara's "socialism" was intensely bureaucratic, shaped by Stalinism, not Bolshevism. Being undemocratic it could not, therefore, be a model for the transition to socialism at all. This bureaucratism was at the core of his political and military ideology – guerrillism.

Che firmly believed in the primacy of the armed struggle of the "foco", the nucleus of self-selected warriors. Their role was to grab events by the scruff of the neck and frog march them to the desired outcome. By their bravery, self-sacrifice and victories they earned the right to lead and be followed. Wider politics was subordinated to the development of the armed struggle in the countryside, working class self-organisation

subordinated to the development of the guerrilla band.

By its very nature such a strategy, which depends upon clandestinity and unthinking obedience, leaves no room for self-organisation, democracy and open debate among those in whose name the struggle is fought.

But guerrillism in power transforms itself quite naturally and inevitably into a bureaucratic, even if initially popular, regime. Power rests with the military elite. A ruling party is constructed from the top down in its image. Dissent and debate is channelled or repressed. The working class becomes an object in whose name the revolution is made by others; it is not the subject of its own destiny.

This was true of Cuba after 1960 under Che's guidance and was not a function of the Cuban revolution being taken over by Kremlin apparatchiks. Che opposed workers' control of production and workers' management of the planned economy. He was against elections to government posts by the workers and peasants; for all his own personal example and denunciation of privilege, Guevara was against any real accountability of the state apparatus to the people.

In such circumstances socialism is impossible since it depends upon educated and informed decisions about economic choices being made by the workers who produce and consume. All Che could offer was his own example and moral exhortation. Che's gradual and sincere disillusionment with the Soviet economic model and his disgust at the open display of bureaucratic privilege amid the poverty of Russian workers does not change the fact that he had no answer to it.

Instead he turned his back on it as it began to consolidate in Cuba and sought to begin again elsewhere. Without abandoning his guerrilla strategy and replacing it with the fight for working class power based on democratic self-organisation, his final struggles, even if successful, could only have ever led from petit bourgeois anti-imperialism to degenerate workers' states, ruled by elites not by the self-organised working class.

Che's inspirational bravery and consistent anti-imperialism should not blind us to the profound bankruptcy of his brand of "socialism". ■

Guevara and the Cuban Trotskyists

TROTSKYISM IN Cuba had a long tradition stretching back to the early 1930s. The Oposicion Comunista de Cuba had been formed in 1932 in opposition to the sectarian line of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC). With a record of fierce revolutionary struggle during the revolution of 1932-33 and a membership peaking at around 500, Trotskyism established roots in the Cuban labour movement.

Suffering decline after the major defeats following 1933, it was only the revolutionary wave of 1959 which led to the re-founding of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR). The POR naturally supported the overthrow of Batista and the expropriation of Cuban and US wealth and property. But they criticised the Stalinist bureaucratisation of the revolution.

They argued for the freedom of expression and action for all revolutionary, working class tendencies which were committed to the unconditional defence of the Cuban Workers' State against imperialism. They wrote:

"The formation of tendencies and their struggle inside the workers' state and its political and trade union organisations is nothing more than the expression of the heterogeneity of the working

class, and within this working class of the various interests and layers within which are expressed different solutions for resolving the problems of the transition to socialism. To try to smother these tendencies with the dogmatic and sectarian argument about an imposed supposed 'unity', with the absolute monolithism of an 'official line' dictated from above, would be to want to turn back the wheel of history so as to return to the conditions that gave rise to the dark stage of Stalinist repressions already condemned and transcended by the communist workers' movement." (*Voz Proletaria* (Havana), No. 11, October 1962, p. 6)

The Trotskyists, however, were to be targeted by the Cuban Stalinists. Using the slanderous pretext that the Trotskyists were somehow linked with the Mujalistas, Batista's official unionism during his dictatorship of the 1950s, and that they were acting as provocateurs by agitating for an assault on the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo, the members of the POR were, at intervals, arbitrarily arrested, removed from their workplaces and transferred to other more isolated centres, while their newspaper and publications were intermittently censored. From 1961 Guevara openly sup-

ported the repression of other revolutionary tendencies, including the Trotskyists who criticised Stalinism from the left. As he said:

"You cannot be for the revolution and be against the Cuban Communist Party. The Revolution and the Communist Party march together."

The systematic arrests and imprisoning of POR militants began on 18 August 1962 with the detention of Idalberto and Juan Leon Ferrera Ram' rez after distributing a leaflet at the Congress of Sugar Cane Co-operatives. Later that month the police banned a meeting in Guantánamo to commemorate the 22nd anniversary of Leon Trotsky's assassination. In March 1963, the Trotskyists endured a further series of arrests, which the POR rightly denounced as bureaucratic terrorism.

In August 1963 the POR, in a letter to visiting North American students, explained that to justify the repression against the Trotskyists, Che Guevara had repeated some old Stalinist inventions about the Trotskyists' role as provocateurs and as agents of imperialism.

The suspensions from work and the arrests and threats continued during 1964 culminating in early 1965 with the prosecution of a group of POR militants

in Guantánamo on the grounds of adopting a Yankee imperialist orientation and of publishing falsifications and defamations in their press.

However, it was during this period that Che modified his attitude towards them as he personally became disillusioned with the Soviet bureaucracy and its ever more direct grip on the Cuban state apparatus, economic programme and foreign policy.

It was Che's personal intervention that won the immediate freedom of a number of comrades. Guevara, for example, visited Roberto Tejera in La Cabana prison after he had been sentenced to a number of years imprisonment and had him released the following day. Likewise, it was Che who intervened to save Angel Fanjul, an Argentinian envoy from the Posadist Fourth International, from a death sentence.

Furthermore, in Che's office in the Ministry of Industry, Roberto Acosta Hechavarr'a, a member of the POR's Political Bureau, held the post of Director de Normas y Metrolog'a. Acosta never appeared publicly as a member of the POR. Che knew about Acosta's ideas but they maintained a tacit agreement not to discuss them. This however did not prevent Acosta's eventual arrest.

After Che's departure from Cuba in 1965 the Stalinists finally put a halt to the public activities of the Cuban Trotskyists. The security services put it to Acosta and the other imprisoned Trotskyists that they could be released only if they agreed to stop functioning as a party and give up publishing manifestos and their newspaper. Idalberto and Ferrera Ram' rez formally agreed to give up their propaganda and activities as a party and all but two of the POR's militants were released.

Disgracefully, the POR comrades were abandoned by the recently reunited Fourth International. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International considered the Cuban CP to be "non-Stalinist" and lined themselves up as Castroite cheerleaders. One of its leaders, Joseph Hansen, wrote:

"The meaning of the attacks on the Cuban Trotskyists is exaggerated and placed at the wrong door."

Compared with "Trotskyists" like these, Che's growing tolerance of the POR reveals a much better understanding of the real nature of Castro's Cuba. ■

For more on Che read
Trotskyist International 22

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ALGERIA: On the edge of barbarism

Stop the reign of terror

Two hundred villagers having their throats slit or being burnt alive; 11 school teachers massacred in front of their pupils; hundreds of ordinary workers and peasants killed every month. This is the reality of Algeria today. It is teetering on the edge of barbarism.

Philippe Martin of Pouvoir Ouvrier, the French section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, explains the background to the bloodbath and the way to stop it.



Recent victims of the carnage

OVER 100,000 people have been killed in the bloody civil war between the military government and the Islamist groups which has been going on since 1991.

The war has seen an unending series of car-bombs, assassinations, horrific massacres and state repression and torture. Even the leaders of the regime have not been immune: in 1992 the President himself was killed by his bodyguard – a closet Islamist – during a public meeting.

The latest outrages have been claimed by the GIA (Armed Islamic Groups), the most extreme wing of the Islamists who split from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1992 and who proclaimed the slaughter of children and rape and murder of women "God's work".

The intensification of this brutal conflict came in the aftermath of the military coup in 1992 which was aimed at preventing the FIS from taking power in elections they were bound to win. Since then the military has been pursuing a dual strategy: using all its resources to crush the Islamic guerrillas while attempting to woo the more moderate elements of the FIS to do a deal with the government.

The government came out of June's parliamentary elections, which the major opposition parties boycotted, with its hand strengthened by integrating moderate Islamic parties into the government. It felt confident enough to release two historic leaders of the FIS – Abassi Madani and Abdelkader Hadani.

Since then, secret negotiations between a faction of the ruling RND party and the armed wing of the FIS, the AIS (Islamic Army of Salvation) have taken place, culminating in the AIS condemning the recent atrocities and calling for a cease-fire. The conditions are being laid for the legalisation, in one form or another, of the FIS.

There are several factors that explain this development. In 1994, the Algerian economy, crushed by the weight of its debt repayments, was in such a dire state that the government was obliged to accept an IMF structural adjustment programme involving the usual mixture of restrictions on state spending, reduction of workers' living standards and a massive rise in unemployment, now running at 30%.

From the point of view of the imperialists the military government has followed the goods. Supported up by its general enemy, Algeria now has a

positive balance of payments of \$4 billion and inflation has fallen from 29% in 1995 to 8% this year. The next step, argue the imperialists, is a wave of privatisation of both the oil industry and the most fertile agricultural regions.

To achieve this the imperialists need to promote a stable government and an end to the civil war. Having previously flirted with the idea of a FIS government, the Clinton administration and its minions in the IMF and the World Bank have come round to the idea of encouraging the reforming wing of the army and the moderate wing of the FIS to work together.

This was the only solution to a "no-win" situation in which President Zéroual could not eradicate the armed Islamists and the Islamists, in turn, could not rock a government which, at root, cares little if its population is massacred, if babies have their throats slit as an "offering" to Allah, or if young women are kidnapped to become the perpetual rape victims of the guerrilla bands.

There is little sign that the GIA – responsible for the majority of the horrific massacres – has any popular support among the masses. With close financial and military links to the mullahs of Tehran, the GIA are above all a military force, controlling important parts of the Algerian countryside. Like the "Taliban" in Afghanistan, they are a completely reactionary force claiming that the answers to all political problems can be found in their warped and medieval interpretation of the Koran.

The working class and peasants, far from supporting the GIA in their war, are deeply hostile both to the "barbus" ("the bearded ones") and the army, who have systematically failed to protect the general population. Indeed, they are the principal victims of the GIA. Far from aiming its attacks against key figures in the regime, the GIA's main activity is to round up unarmed villagers in the middle of the night and then slit their throats in a macabre public ceremony.

Despite the pressure from the imperialists, the Algerian army is deeply divided over how to respond to the current situation. The majority line – expressed in the coalition government and the secret negotiations with the FIS – has as its aim undermining the undoubtedly strong support for the FIS in the population as a whole.

By building up the more moderate parties and using a mixture of the car-

rot and the stick with the FIS, the main forces in the government hope to put an end to the war by isolating and neutralising the GIA.

Other tendencies in the military, however, maintain their "eradicationist" orientation. The second in command, General Lamari, supported by the key directors of nationalised industry who want to maintain their state privileges, is determined to put a violent end to the Islamist military threat and return Algeria to a pre-1991 situation when the army and the state bureaucracy could exploit the country in peace and grow fat on the proceeds of their parasitism and corruption.

According to the argument to be heard in working class districts of Algiers, this explains why massacres such as the 200 murdered in the town of Bentalha could take place without any intervention from the army barracks close by.

Revolutionaries have to say clearly that they do not give an ounce of support either to the Islamist opposition or the military dominated government.

Lamari hopes that the rising tide of horror will push the Algerian population into supporting a decisive crack-down against the Islamist guerrilla gangs. Hence the occasional spectacular attack on deserted villages allegedly occupied by the GIA and, more decisively, the systematic oppression and brutality meted out to the population. In this respect, the "ninjas" (the masked army assassins) do not care whether they kill a supporter of the GIA, an innocent peasant farmer or a militant trade unionist. All are seen as a threat to the regime.

The Algerian working class has, since independence in 1962, been dominated by the state trade union, the UGTA. Recently there has been a series of strikes, demonstrations and occupations against enterprise closures, sackings and budget restrictions in

the public services. At the beginning of May, 30,000 workers went on strike in Skikda against closures. This was followed by a protest strike in the industrial region of Rouiba "against the IMF diktat", and by strikes in the oil, steel and textile industries as well as in the hospitals, universities and the building industry.

With the UGTA leadership openly supporting the government – six out of nine members of the leading committee are ruling party parliamentary deputies – there is the real possibility of breaking the mass of the working class from the crushing influence of the UGTA bureaucracy. In most of the recent strikes and protests the initiative came from the rank and file, with the bureaucrats jumping in at the last moment and trying to head off the movement.

In these circumstances, the key question for working class militants in Algeria is to create their own organisations – strike and factory committees, neighbourhood and village defence squads – that can respond to both the economic and military threats by organising militant working class action, organisations which aim to defend the mass of the population against the murderous attacks of the Islamists and the state forces.

The question of self-defence is clearly posed by the government itself. In order to create a power base for itself in the countryside the army has taken to handing out weapons to trusted members of the population... often after an attack has taken place. Those weapons must be put in the hands of defence squads, organised in the village, enterprise or neighbourhood, responsible to a local leadership elected in democratic assemblies.

Such a development would clearly draw the fire of both Islamists and the government. The Islamists have never been in two minds about working class militants – many of their victims have been socialists, communists or trade unionists, their most spectacular victim being Abdelhak Behamouda, the leader of the UGTA. Indeed the FIS, when it was a functioning political party at the beginning of the decade, had clear clerical-fascist leanings as shown by its attempts to break strikes and to attack working class militants.

Revolutionaries have to say clearly that they do not give an ounce of support either to the Islamist opposition or the military dominated government.

Unfortunately, most of the Algerian

left fall into one error or the other. For example, what remains of the Communist Party ("Ettahadi") continues to tail the military hard-liners, thus – literally – digging the graves of its own members.

The Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party), linked to Pierre Lambert's supposedly "Trotskyist" international organisation, falls into the opposite error. Led by the only woman at the forefront of the Algerian political stage, Louisa Hanoun, the PT got 200,000 votes in the recent parliamentary elections and now has four deputies.

The PT has played a rotten and dangerous role in misleading the vanguard in periods of crisis. It has systematically supported the FIS and the Islamists against the government, to the extent of signing the Rome Accords in 1995, when all the bourgeois opposition parties – and the FIS – agreed on the need for a united front against the army's coup.

Today it calls for "peace", the "legalisation of the FIS" and "the preservation of the unity and integrity of the Algerian nation", while opposing calls for arming the masses. The PT is unable to chart an independent road for the workers and peasants, and effectively ties them to the FIS Islamists.

The depth of the current crisis, and the terrible threat of more massacres to come, require a decisive intervention by revolutionaries, around an action programme focused on the key questions of self-defence, resisting the planned privatisations by workers' action, and creating the necessary organs of workers' democracy – strike committees, mass meetings, defence squads – that can take the struggle forward.

Only by putting forward revolutionary solutions capable of meeting the needs of the masses, especially the unemployed youth, in the spheres of jobs, housing, health and education, can the influence of the Islamists of the FIS be undermined.

The working class in the imperialist countries must demand that their governments open their borders to all refugees from Algeria, organise opposition to their use of the international economic institutions to impose even greater austerity on the Algerian masses and fight for the cancellation of all debts "owed" to the imperialist banks and the IMF. Real working class solidarity with the Algerian masses can help them fight back against the reign of terror they face today. ■

PALESTINE: PNA bows to US pressure

Anger at Arafat's retreat

ON 29 SEPTEMBER Madeline Albright, US Secretary of State, charged with the task of sorting out the latest breakdown in the Middle East peace process, cautiously announced that talks between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) were back on track.

She suggested some sort of freeze on the expansion of Zionist settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The next day Israeli premier Netanyahu boasted to journalists, "You know we are building in the settlements, and I don't intend to change our policy." The Mayor of Jerusalem added that Jewish settlements in the Arab area of East Jerusalem would continue whatever happened at the negotiating table.

All that is up for negotiation is how much more of the miniature Palestinian national "entity" the Israelis will claw back. After the Oslo peace accords in 1993, Palestinian hopes rose that at least a "mini-state" comprising the entire West Bank, with a capital in East Jerusalem, was a real possibility.

The PNA, established after the Oslo accords, was an archipelago of unconnected towns between Jericho in the east and the overcrowded Gaza Strip in the west, totally underdeveloped and with 75% of its population living in refugee camps.

All the camps are surrounded by Israeli army checkpoints and encampments. In March Netanyahu offered to vacate a mere 2% of the occupied West Bank areas – to date no troops have been redeployed.

Israel halts all movement between these areas at will. Heavily-armed Zionist settlements have mushroomed, with house-building projects designed to make a cohesive Palestinian state totally unviable. Many have been founded on land that the Oslo accords implied would be part of a future Palestinian state.

The number of Jewish settlers has risen by 50% since 1992, when the



Palestinian resistance grows against new Israeli settlements

USA first began to back a "peace process", and there are now more than 300,000 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem alone. They are armed to the teeth.

The PNA, even in its tiny territo-

ry, is under the thumb of the Zionist state. Israeli troops make regular incursions. The Israeli state collects the taxes and distributes the revenue back to the PNA.

Thus it can cut off funding at will.

BY ANDY YORK

In fact, the PNA's only role has been to line the pockets of its own corrupt officials, while repressing Hamas and other Palestinian fighters at the diktat of the Israeli state.

In 1996 the newly elected Likud government went on the offensive. March 1996 saw a spate of new settlements, beginning with Har-Homa in East Jerusalem, the city's last large Arab enclave.

Then in September 1996, Netanyahu gave the go-ahead to open a tunnel under the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem's Arab Old City, the most holy Muslim site in Palestine. This deliberate provocation led to fierce clashes between Israeli troops and unarmed Palestinian students. Some Palestinian police were pressured into returning Israeli fire.

After a year without bombing, the Islamist organisation Hamas returned to suicide attacks in the markets in July and early September. These have been widely greeted by Palestinians.

If Netanyahu had any apprehensions that Albright's "package of ideas" might oblige the Zionists to make some concessions to restore confidence in the peace process, he seized on the latest bombing to justify more repression.

He has also used it to initiate yet more settlements in East Jerusalem, with 50 settlers occupying three houses in the village of Ras-as-Amud, where 11,000 Palestinians and almost no Jews live. It connects the Old City of Jerusalem to the rest of East Jerusalem, a key link between these two majority-Palestinian areas and one the Zionists want to sever as a prelude to forcing Palestinians out of the old city.

US imperialism has done nothing to stop the Likud government offensive. The cycle has grown more familiar with each passing year since Oslo. Either an absence of Israeli concessions or blatant provocation sparks an explo-

sion of Palestinian anger. This is then used to justify more repression by the Israelis and continued defaulting on the peace accords. The US has never put serious pressure on its regional gendarme.

Bleating from Albright that building a new settlement was not a "positive gesture" has been blithely ignored. Arafat vowed not to resume discussions until there was a freeze on settlements. In fact, Albright's pressure was applied solely on Arafat and it worked. On 29 September he agreed to talks, backing down over Ras-as-Amud.

Netanyahu could not restrain himself from crowing, "We are building in Judea and Samaria. You don't need binoculars. You can stand here outside and see what is happening."

Ordinary Palestinians certainly do not need binoculars to see more and more clearly Arafat's cowardly and treacherous role. Despite a steady diet of humiliation, Arafat has fulfilled his side of the bargain by rounding up scores of Hamas activists in the last couple of weeks and shutting down 16 of its charitable organisations.

Thus the cycle of revolt and repression goes on. But it is remorselessly destroying Arafat and indeed the PLO's credibility. His repression of Hamas has only served to elevate it to the leadership of the Palestinian national struggle.

Resistance will intensify. The Israeli army is already predicting a second Intifada, led by Hamas. The triumph of the Islamists will not, however, advance the struggle for Palestinian national liberation and would be a tragedy for the hitherto most secular of Arab peoples.

What is desperately needed is a revolutionary working class organisation able to unite the membership of the trade unions, the student and women's organisations and the unemployed of the camps, the countryside and the cities into a mass uprising against the Zionist occupiers. ■

CHINA: Communist Party Congress

Purges and privatisations

THE CHINESE Communist Party celebrated its fifteenth congress in September by sacking 103 central committee members. Among the heads to roll were Qiao Shi, number three in the leadership and chairman of the National People's Congress and Liu Huaqing, head of the military. Both were members of the seven person Standing Committee of the Politburo – the highest leadership body.

The clear victor in the secret inner-party factional conflict which preceded the congress was Jiang Zemin, who combines the state presidency with his position as party chief.

The fact that the Congress was brought forward from its scheduled date in November suggests that Jiang's factional victory needed rapid consolidation. But the scale of the purge and the status of its victims presages continued instability within the bureaucracy as a whole.

The opening of the Congress was marked by the publication of a policy document calling for the accelerated reform of China's state enterprises. Western commentators welcomed this news and triumphantly predicted the imminent privatisation of the 370,000 firms that make up the state sector.

If true, this sits strangely with the

purging of precisely those leaders generally identified with an even more radical pro-capitalist policy than Jiang.

In fact, the faction fighting is not so much about the scale and speed of privatisation as about who among the bureaucrats will enjoy the spoils. The sheer number of firms in the state sector makes it obvious that the overwhelming majority are small-scale enterprises, many of them workshops rather than factories.

It is these smaller and medium-sized plants that are to be transferred from state ownership – not directly into the private sector but into the deliberately obscure category of "public ownership". This probably covers everything from "management buy-outs" to public sales of shares, incorporation into larger state corporations or transformation into "joint enterprises" with foreign or local private capital.

As *Workers Power* reported last month, the regime has pursued this policy since the beginning of the year, triggering serious class struggle as sacked workers fought to keep factories open.

Current policy is to transform these into a series of giant industrial conglomerate corporations, still technically owned by the state, but operating under the managerial control of a trust and acting as independent capitals

BY PETER MAIN

nationally and internationally.

In theory, such a reorganisation of the nationalised industries and the destruction of the planned distribution of products and resources between them would mark the final demise of post-capitalist property relations in China in favour of a "mixed" system of state and private capitalism. But the continued power of the bureaucracy as the ruling caste creates a structural obstacle to this transformation.

Central policy is to stop using credits and taxation to subsidise loss-making plants. According to the latest figures that means over half of all plants in the state sector. When this funding stops, managers are supposed to start cutting costs, shedding labour, looking for capitalist investors, improving efficiency – and earning profits.

Not all these managers or their enterprises will survive this process. Yet they still have a huge slice of political power. Thus, they continue to use their party positions to obtain unauthorised loans from local and provincial banks or are simply running up their debts to other state enterprises. According to the State Statistical Bureau, this inter-enterprise debt shot up to \$120 billion last year. As long as this continues, both pro-

duction and investment will continue to be subordinated to political considerations rather than to capitalist market criteria.

The divisions within the upper layer of the bureaucracy are almost certainly over how to solve this problem. Whether to continue with the bureaucratically controlled state capitalist restoration policy, which least disrupts the social and political cohesion of the bureaucracy, or to go for broke with a wholesale privatisation drive – this is the dilemma now confronting the party leadership.

The latter would split the bureaucracy and probably lead to a massive explosion from the working class. Jiang's victory means, for the moment, a continuation of existing policy, based on the priority of maintaining bureaucratic rule.

Nonetheless, Beijing cannot simply ignore the soaring enterprise debts or the constant unauthorised drain on state resources. Consequently, the privatisation of the smaller plants will be accelerated while attempts to restructure the major enterprises under state ownership will intensify.

The real possibility of such a scenario is underlined by the recent success of the already "corporatised" state oil company, Sinopec, in clinching a

deal worth \$9.5 billion with Kazakhstan. This should bring China eight million tons of oil per year by 2002.

But the Chinese state lacks the capital resources to repeat such investments across the entire economy. Thus, the bureaucracy's dilemma will persist and so will its divisions. Indeed, they will deepen. The bonapartist clique around Jiang will not be able to straddle the divide indefinitely. When the bureaucracy has to take its conflicts into society at large the workers' discontent in both the state and private sectors could detonate a social explosion.

At the very least, this would create the possibility of re-establishing an independent labour movement. Its political character will then decide the fate of China. It is in the interests not only of the tens of millions of Chinese proletarians but of the working class internationally, that this movement is committed to turning the struggle for jobs and better conditions into one that can overthrow both the new capitalists and the bureaucracy. ■

See *Trotskyist International* 22 for a detailed analysis of China's economic development since the 1970s

COLOMBIA: Interview with Freddy Pulecio

Trade unionists against BP

WORKERS POWER (WP): Can you tell us what is happening in Colombia today?

Freddy Pulecio (FP): The main international oil companies are very interested in the exploitation of oil in Colombia. USO is opposed to the handing over of these natural resources to the transnationals through agreements that do not reflect the national interest and are very favourable for the multinationals. The USO opposes the government's policy and, in the last few days, there has been an alarming paramilitary, military, judicial and media offensive against the USO, that has forced us to declare a strike.

In Casanare where British Petroleum (BP) operates – the most aggressive of the companies against the workers and peasants – the President of USO, Hernando Hernandez, received a call from someone who identified himself as a paramilitary in Casanare. Hernando was threatened that if the USO organises in the area, he will be assassinated. Moreover, in Piedemonte Llanero – close to Casanare, in Arauca where Occidental [another oil multinational] operates – the military has openly said that they will not allow the USO to organise.

Four regional leaders of the USO had to go underground and leave their work. Where the main oil refinery is – and the heart of the USO – the paramilitaries threaten oil workers with taking over where they live and work. When the paramilitaries do this, it is to massacre them. The President of the USO has also been found on a list of future targets of the paramilitaries.

There is also a judicial offensive. In the last two weeks around twenty people have been detained in Tibu, where there is an oil field run by Ecopetrol [Colombia's state oil company], among them the former president of the USO, Cesar Carrillo, on top of another 40 arrests, also of USO leaders.

At the same time the trials of 17 existing USO prisoners have been speeded up under the method of justice we call "justice without a face". This exists in Colombia supposedly to combat drug trafficking but many international human rights organisations have demanded the government stops using this process, with its hidden

The world's 20 most powerful oil multinationals operate in Colombia. All have close ties with the paramilitaries. Now the oil workers' union, Union Sindical Obrera (USO) is about to launch a strike against paramilitary threats made against the union. Their representative, Freddy Pulecio, is in Britain to build solidarity. *Workers Power* spoke with him.



Freddy Pulecio

judges, secret witnesses and secret proof. This is used against unions, particularly the USO, and is a method of justice that complements the military and paramilitary offensive of President Samper's government.

There is also the pressure of the media, particularly the magazine *Semana*, which about three weeks ago published an article where they connected me with the insurgent movement in Colombia. Already this magazine has accused me of being a guerrilla commander without allowing me the right to defend myself. But by all accounts this has provided the pretext for a

military offensive in the country.

The paramilitary groups in Colombia get a lot of support from the Colombian army and drug traffickers. Companies like BP are supporting the Colombian Army, which is linked to the paramilitaries.

Therefore the USO has no other alternative except to organise a strike with the sole aim of defending the life of the union organisation and its members, because Ecopetrol along with the transnationals have organised for over 10 years a security apparatus, which is now called the Corporate Division of Security.

This Division has 10,000 soldiers. In these 10 years there have been 83 assassinations, 134 displaced workers [workers who have to leave their jobs and go underground because of death threats], 17 detainees and two people in exile.

WP: Has the government sent more soldiers into the oil regions? Has it said anything about the threats against the USO?

FP: There has been an increase in the number of soldiers in both the oil and the mining areas. It is now creating another division of the Army connected with the exploitation of coal. The Colombian government has not tried to stop the paramilitary offensive against the USO. On the contrary, the international human rights organisations are aware that these paramilitary groups exist and the government turns a blind eye to their operations.

Although there is no direct support from the army, what we see very clearly is that the Colombian government is behind the offensive, using its "justice without a face" procedures to reinforce the army. It is the justice of a dictatorship, sentencing oil workers to 40-60 years for union activity. In Colombia the giant oil transnationals of the world are there: BP, Occidental, Texas, Shell, Amoco, Total.

WP: So the oil industry accounts for a large part of Colombia's wealth?

FP: It is a country extremely rich in oil and very well placed strategically. Therefore, it is in the joint interest of the transnationals to strike a blow at the union. In Colombia, there are human rights organisations that do not get involved in the conflicts. They speak out about the activity of the military, the paramilitaries and the "justice without a face" – and for this they are persecuted. They have had many people assassinated, like Mario Calderón of the CINEP, an important human rights organisation in Colombia.

WP: Can you say how union activists are threatened?

FP: It starts with a threat. If there is a particular person in one area who has an important role in the union, this person is threatened initially. If this person continues activity or doesn't leave the area they kill him or her. This is to stop us, to constrain our union activity even though it is legally sanctioned. It is written in the constitution that unions have legal rights but in reality they do not. This much is written with bullets and blood.

WP: One BP spokesperson, Russel Seal, wrote to the *Guardian* here claiming that BP workers have the right to join unions. What do have to say about that?

FP: I would like to speak to this person so that he can tell us that BP will allow the USO to enter Casanare. BP is behind the threats of the paramilitaries, which it finances in Casanare.

WP: What can we do here in Britain?

FP: I repeat that this is the home of the most aggressive oil company in Colombia, BP. If the British people demand of BP, here in its heartland, that it stops this policy in Colombia, it is cer-

tain that we can stop many things. But also Amnesty International, the most important human rights organisation, is based in Britain. It is watching Colombia and is particularly interested in BP.

Greenpeace is also here and has been aware of what is happening in ecological matters, like the example of the Uwa tribe who are threatening collective suicide, because of ecological damage by Occidental. Greenpeace could also be very important because in other parts of Europe it has demonstrated against the oil companies.

In general, if the British people support us, at least it will undermine the lie that it is a battle between guerrillas – or as they are also called "terrorists" – against defenceless transnational companies, when it is totally the opposite: terrorist oil transnationals against a union heroically fighting so that the Colombian people can enjoy the fruits of the wealth produced. After 70 years of oil industry development, for example in Barrancabermeja, the drinking water contains human effluence!

WP: What can trade unionists do here?

FP: There are many things we can do. We can look at the example of the campaign in Europe against Shell, after what happened in Nigeria: letters to the embassy, demonstrations in front of the embassy, a boycott against Shell, militant demonstrations demanding the end of violence against the workers.

Equally, we need financial resources so that we can support this conflict. The union has been in trouble economically. There have been constant economic attacks against us; sometimes we can hardly work. And we are not just looking for the support of British workers.

We are also looking for solidarity from the workers in, for example, Germany, Norway and France. With the different American companies, Occidental, Texaco etc. we will look for support in Canada and the United States. We can't fight alone against the 20 most powerful oil companies in the world. If we are left isolated, they will massacre us.

If you would like more information of Freddy's tour or would like Freddy to speak to your union/organisation, write to: Coalition Against BP in Colombia, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX, or phone: 0171 557 0588. Copies of the Coalition's newsletter, *Mobilise*, are also available for 20p or £2 for 20 copies.

**Coalition against BP
in Colombia**

Public Meeting with
Freddy Pulecio

**BP: Blood and profits in
Colombia – trade unions
against Britain's
biggest company**

Friday, 24 October 7.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
Holborn, London

Pass this resolution

This branch recognises that:

(i) A suppressed Colombian government report leaked to Richard Howitt MEP in 1996 reveals that oil multinational British Petroleum has been collaborating with military death squads in Colombia. In the report six local campaigners against BP are named. Each one of them was abducted by the military and later found murdered.

(ii) BP handed photographs and video recordings of trade unionists, environmental campaigners and peasant activists to the Colombian military. Many have since been murdered, tortured or subjected to systematic intimidation.

(iii) BP have used the military to break strikes by workers in the industry. In the town of Barrancabermeja, workers from the local refinery have had their union smashed and driven under-

ground. Twenty-six members of the Union Sindical Obrera have been assassinated and 200 forced into exile.

(iv) BP funds the Colombian military to the tune of millions. It claims that it is required to do so by Colombian law. Yet this year the company signed an agreement to provide additional sums of £39 million, to establish a new, 650-strong crack military unit to defend its interests. BP has paid £375,000 specifically to the 16th Brigade which stands accused of massacring civilians, execution without trial, kidnap, torture and rape.

The branch resolves to:

(i) affiliate to the Coalition Against BP in Colombia;

(ii) invite a speaker to the branch to explain the situation in Colombia and what members can do to help;

(iii) ask the head office to accept an

article/interview from the Coalition on the role of BP in Colombia and the intimidation faced by trade unionists;

(iv) support the Coalition's attempts to:

- end BP's war tax and sponsorship of death squads;
- bring those responsible for the deaths of community activists and trade unionists to trial
- gain recognition of trade union rights in BP installations and granting of permanent contracts for those employed
- extract compensation for environmental damage done to the rivers and land of Casanare by BP operations;

(v) in addition, we demand that the Labour Party implements its "human rights oriented foreign policy" with respect to BP; establishes an enquiry into the role of BP in Casanare and sacks David Simon from the government.

TROTSKYIST FRACTION/LRCI

Which way forward for regroupment?

Dave Stockton, International Secretary of the LRCI, reports on the latest developments in the LRCI's regroupment discussions with the Trotskyist Fraction, the international current led by the PTS of Argentina

LAST MONTH we reported on the League for a Revolutionary Communist International's (LRCI) Fourth Congress. That report concentrated on the discussions that took place within the LRCI itself, but a significant addition needs to be made on the discussions at the Congress with the Trotskyist Fraction (TF) – an international tendency based in Latin America whose largest section is the PTS in Argentina.

Three representatives of the TF attended the congress – a considerable sacrifice in terms of resources – for which we were very grateful. At it they made a proposal to the LRCI, which could have an important effect on the development of relations between the two international tendencies.

The TF called on the LRCI to issue a joint appeal for an "Open Liaison Committee with the objective of principled regroupment". They submitted to the congress a draft declaration as a basis for it.

In summary this draft, starting from the common statements made by the TF and the LRCI on the French events of December 1995 on the Russian invasion of Chechnya, the Albanian revolution, and on Zaire, goes on to outline a series of basic revolutionary principles which are counterposed to the major centrist currents which call themselves Trotskyist and which have failed the acid tests of these struggles.

Events since 1989, have repeatedly demonstrated the inability of these currents to address, let alone solve, the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat.

The draft stresses the centrality of the struggle for soviet-type bodies in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations, the opposition to all reactionary and bonapartist institutions like the British and Spanish monarchies, the French presidency etc.

Denouncing

It also emphasises the importance of denouncing the new social democratic governments (Blair and Jospin) for their defence of these institutions—as well as for their austerity offensive against their own workers and their bolstering of imperialist exploitation of the semi-colonial world.

In addition the draft stresses the necessity for struggling in the unions against all wings of the bureaucracy, the struggle to organise the most exploited and oppressed sectors of the proletariat, the unemployed etc. and to create a revolutionary leadership in the unions.

Furthermore it includes the need to struggle against imperialism, even when it assumes the "humanitarian" or

"democratic" cover of the UN, the need to support the semi-colonial resistance to this with an intransigent defeatism in the imperialist countries.

The LRCI could naturally agree to all these principles. Nevertheless it has not yet agreed to this joint declaration. Why? Firstly we believe that these principles have too general a character and that it would be quite possible that a range of sectarian and opportunist critics of the main Trotskyist currents could go along with such general characterisations.

Secondly, we have specific differences with, for example, formulations on the new reformist governments in Britain and France. The draft declaration rejects what it calls "the opportunist policy of supporting the progressive measures of these governments

We believe the correct policy is to fight for the social democratic governments to meet the demands of the workers while maintaining total opposition to their overall anti-working class and pro-imperialist character

and rejecting the reactionary ones."

We believe the correct policy is to fight for the social democratic governments to meet the demands of the workers while maintaining total opposition to their overall anti-working class and pro-imperialist character.

But the mass of the working class voted for them expecting reforms in the interests of the workers and we have to utilise this by placing demands on them to "break with the bourgeoisie" as Trotsky advised. This does mean "supporting progressive measures" and "opposing reactionary ones".

We have to do this on issues of domestic policy – on restoring trade union rights, health and welfare, democratic rights, including abolishing the monarchy and the House of Lords in Britain. We must also do it on their arch-imperialist foreign policy – the Irish "peace process", supporting BP in Colombia etc.

By mobilising reformist workers who support Labour in Britain or the Socialist Party in France against "their

own" governments, we will be able to persuade them by their own experience that in reality these are governments of the City of London or the Paris Bourse. We will be fighting reformism, not merely denouncing it from the sidelines.

The LRCI, in order to clarify and hopefully resolve the differences on reformism, has suggested several amendments to this declaration.

Envisaged

In addition, we believe that an "open liaison committee" on the general principles of the present draft would be step back from the one envisaged in the agreement between the LRCI and the TF in December 1995.

A further important difference of analysis has developed around the completion of the restoration process in Eastern Europe. The LRCI believes that capitalism has been restored in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and other former degenerate workers' states. The TF believes it has not.

For us, addressing these programmatic differences is central. The project of a broader discussion, of an open liaison committee with forces with whom we have much more fundamental differences, seems to us the wrong move at the wrong time. We believe that it is with the comrades of the TF that we must seek a principled fusion upon a re-elaborated transitional programme.

The TF on the other hand think that important new opportunities exist which justify their suggested approach because of the deepening crises within a number of the major currents of centrist "Trotskyism". The TF fears that the LRCI's negative response to their proposal may indicate a sectarian approach on our part, effectively saying to these forces: "join us". This is not so.

Fusion

We are well aware that the fusion we seek with the TF comrades cannot be achieved in a few weeks or months. It may take years. In no way do we think that this is a matter of the TF, a larger tendency than ourselves, "joining the LRCI". What we are seeking to achieve today is a practical agreement, an organised structure for getting down to the business of programmatic discussion with the leadership of the TF. This, we believe, will attract all healthy and sincere elements within the "Trotskyist movement" towards us.

We hope ongoing discussions with the TF will resolve these differences. Future issues of *Workers Power*, *Trotskyist Bulletin* and *Trotskyist International* will publish translations of the TF positions in full. ■

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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- Palestine: anger at Arafat's betrayal
- Unions shame BP over death squad link

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No 215 October 1997 ★ 50p

Inquest verdict on asylum seeker:

Police murdered Ibrahim Sey

ON 2 OCTOBER, an East London inquest jury returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" in the case of 29-year-old Ibrahim Sey. Sey, an asylum seeker from Gambia, died in police custody in the early hours of 16 March 1996 after WPCs Claire Philips and Jackie Channon had sprayed CS gas in his face.

In addition to Channon and Philips, at least six other police were involved in a brutal struggle with Ibrahim outside Ilford police station. Earlier, he had peacefully surrendered to police who had been called to a domestic dispute.

Obstructed

Ibrahim's friend Pa Ndimbalan, who had accompanied him to the station but was then forcibly separated from him, told the inquest that officers had obstructed his view as Ibrahim cried out, "see what they are doing to me."

Paramedics arrived to find Ibrahim in a police cell, face down and handcuffed, with his arms behind his back.

The police's own guidelines on dealing with prisoners sub-



Sey's death sparked angry protests

jected to CS gas specifically advise against leaving a person in a prone position.

Coroner Harold Price was highly critical of police conduct in his summing up to the

jury. But for the police from Ilford and Forest Gate police stations, this was just another black man's expendable life.

The jury's decision marks the third time in two years that an

inquest has found Metropolitan Police officers directly responsible for deaths in custody. Ibrahim Sey and Shije Lapite, who was killed by police from Stoke Newington, were both

black Africans seeking asylum in Britain.

The third victim, murdered by police in south east London, was Richard O'Brien, an Irishman.

The Sey verdict had a swift impact. In the wake of the jury's finding police forces in Scotland have suspended – for the time being – the trial use of CS spray, while the Metropolitan Police have announced a review of the use of CS. But anti-racist activists and the labour movement must press on for its immediate and permanent withdrawal.

Prosecution

Piara Powar, a spokesperson for the Ibrahim Sey Memorial Campaign, told *Workers Power* that the campaign would be pushing for an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons calling for the prosecution of the police responsible for Sey's death.

He added that the campaign would apply "as much pressure as possible on the Director of Public Prosecutions to take action". The Sey family are demanding a meeting with Tony

Blair to voice their anger.

The cops in the Sey case should be tried for murder, but anti-racists and workers must also recognise that the courts cannot be relied on to deliver justice to the Sey family. The courts did nothing to give justice to the families of Joy Gardner, Mark Harris, Brian Douglas and Wayne Douglas – all black people killed by police.

Expose

These tragic deaths in custody highlight the need for a national campaign to expose and fight police brutality and racism. The realities of police practice, starkly revealed by the Sey inquest, also show the need for labour movement and community-controlled monitoring of police activities.

But above all, this latest example of police racism, points to the urgent need to organise self-defence against racist violence from whatever source. ■

Further information from:
The Ibrahim Sey Memorial Campaign, c/o PO Box 275,
Forest Gate, London E7
SNW: Tel: 0181 555 8151.

Stop the rail union busters

A PRIVATISED rail firm has launched an onslaught on trade union recognition that could be a test case for the whole rail industry.

Connex South Central, which took over routes out of London Bridge and Victoria stations in London in 1996, is trying to impose individual contracts on new employees and some current drivers. The contracts effectively abolish collective bargaining rights.

This is the most serious attack on trade union organisation since the Tories hived off the railways to private opera-

tors. Connex has been embroiled in a long-running dispute with the main train drivers' union, ASLEF, over job grades and working conditions.

The story of rail privatisation has ranged from the tragedy of the 19 September crash of a Great Western train, which claimed seven lives and injured 150, to the farce of Connex cancelling dozens of trains for want of staff after it encouraged hundreds of workers to take redundancy.

Passengers on Connex South Central are already sick of the private company's terrible

record of delays and cancellations. Derecognising the unions and forcing drivers to work more flexibly will worsen the service, not improve it: it will also raise the chances of further accidents.

Reality

Drivers on the Great Western line filed dozens of reports warning of the inadequacies of safety controls. Railtrack and Great Western, though, were more concerned with protecting their profit margins than passengers. That is the stark reality of privatisation and why

independent trade unions are the next target.

The other two dozen rail companies will be watching developments at Connex South Central closely. The privateers are looking to boost their profits; and slashing their labour costs is their preferred option. Ultimately, this will require the abolition of the agreements on pay and conditions negotiated with the rail unions.

As we go to press, the ASLEF executive was due to meet to discuss its response. There is only one adequate reply to the threat of derecognition:

an immediate ballot for indefinite industrial action, backed by a campaign to win a massive "yes" vote.

Activists from both the RMT and ASLEF need to organise joint action committees to break down the self-defeating rivalry between the unions, which the bosses and bureaucrats have exploited in the past.

If Connex refuses to back down, activists should spread the fight to shut down the rest of the network, defying the anti-union laws forbidding solidarity action.

Determined resistance to the

Connex attack, led by rank and file members, could beat back the rail bosses and send a clear message to Blair and Prescott that railworkers are prepared to make the anti-union laws inoperable.

- For an all-out strike at Connex South Central until the new contracts are withdrawn
- Spread the action across the network
- Defy the anti-union laws
- For an integrated, renationalised rail network under workers' control with no compensation to the privateers.