

# The LENINIST

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# Earth Summit A world to win!

Our world is not safe in the hands of the capitalist class

**T**HE Earth Summit, or rather the *idea* of it, has captured the imagination of millions of people the world over.

Who could fail to be concerned at the accelerating pace of the ecological destruction of the Earth? Our rulers are despoiling this planet that rightly belongs to us without a thought for the future. While workers should be wary of being caught up in bourgeois orchestrated scares over the environment, complacency is criminal. Something must be done - but what?

The Earth Summit farce - from June 3 to June 14 in Rio - is not part of the answer: the collection of prime ministers, presidents, dictators and their hangers on gathered at this jamboree are in fact part of the *problem*. This hot air convention is actually a grand display of crass hypocrisy by the representatives of the very people who are ruining the world - the capitalist class.

This is true of all of them. We should have no sympathy with the argument that somehow the United States, despite its prevarication and obstructiveness in the lead up to the summit, is uniquely responsible for the problems of the world. 'Brace yourself for disappointment' the *Financial Times* told any of its readers foolish enough to believe that the Summit would "mark something of a watershed in human history" (June 2 1992). True, but the problem is not this or that country, nor the antagonism and tensions that have surfaced between the "developed and developing nations".

The problem is capitalism. Every person who is genuinely concerned about the ruination of the world must understand this basic fact. Until the working class gets rid of capitalism and takes the running of society into its own hands, the spiral of waste and despoliation will continue.

The Americans, wary of the effects of the agreements originally proposed at the summit on sectors like the US biochemical industry, did succeed in watering down the pre-summit agenda to practically nothing substantial. They are not alone. Western nations have been generally wary, in the words of *New Scientist* (May 30), of any result coming out of Rio that was "too democratic". Their right to *collectively* rape the world is not up for discussion.

Yet in a narrow, hypocritical way, Green 'radicals' like Jonathon Porritt have made plenty of money pointing the finger at the US, in effect lining up with various 'Third World' reactionaries like the rulers of Brazil, the "developing country" that is hosting this jamboree.

Mr Jose Goldemberg, Brazil's interim environment minister, is reported in the above quoted issue of the *Financial Times* boasting that his government



has "halved the rate of deforestation in the Amazon to 10,000 sq km a year" thus buying a little bit more time for all those nice endangered species. Pat on the head for Mr Goldemberg and Brazil, then?

Well no, actually. In Mr Goldemberg's Brazil and the other 'developing' nations that Mr Porritt lines up with, *people* are the endangered species. In 1990, only 13% of Brazilian children completed their compulsory 8 years state education. Child labour is endemic. Two thirds of these working children earn half the minimum wage of £5 for a 58 hour week.

The economic strains that this obscene poverty imposes on the family units of the working class of Brazil means that many simply unravel. In Rio itself, a report of the Brazilian Roman Catholic Church estimated in 1990 that 100 children under three years old were abandoned to the streets every month.

Here they become the prey for pimps, drug pushers or the informal genocide operations of the Brazilian state, who simply exterminate these children as if they were vermin. Yet Brazil in fact has one of the 'better' records on human rights of the 'developing' countries present in Rio. Others are even less savoury.

The 'poor' countries in Rio have used the lead up to the summit to argue

that the bill for environmental action - estimated by the UN secretariat for the Rio conference to be in the region of \$125bn - should be entirely additional to existing aid budgets. This is what has rattled deficit-strapped countries like the US, and explains why John Major as the representative of shaky old British capitalism is against "high expectations" of the Summit. As the *Financial Times* succinctly put it:

"Many Third World countries will be attending Rio in the hope of securing fresh commitments or debt relief. But the industrial countries are equally determined to prevent the familiar aid debate being dressed up in a new and fashionable green garb."

This bosses' paper has a point when it says that "poverty is a threat to the environment". But is anyone seriously suggesting that the way to break the so-called 'Third World' out of the 'poverty trap' is imperialist aid?

Aid to some tin pot dictatorship normally goes to line the pockets of the ruling clique, their families and their lackeys. The CIA's very own General Noriega and that delightful couple, Mr and Mrs Marcos of the Philippines are only the most notorious examples of what is a general phenomenon. Aid to despicable capitalist dictatorships in the 'developing world' is used to pay for the obscene lifestyles of the cliques that

rule these places. The only thing the ordinary working people ever have to do with the transaction is picking up the tab - paying debts off with their blood, sweat and tears.

But while the Earth Summit is a crass affair, we should not simply dismiss it. Within it, there is a truth, something we need to seize for ourselves, the working class. The world has been made one. Thus, despite the protests of imperialist countries like the US and Britain, they are having to address the problem, to pretend some concern.

Our point that human beings are the 'endangered species' with which we should be primarily concerned is not a flip one. By resolving the contradictions of *human* society, we start to solve the problems that threaten our environment.

From the moment we appeared as human beings as opposed to apes, we 'interfered' with the environment. What distinguishes the human species is the nature of its productive activity. Humanity, through its work, transforms nature, whether this takes the form of clearing space in a forest for the rudimentary beginnings of agriculture or the intricate world of genetic engineering. By engaging in this activity, we transform our environment *and ourselves*.

As humans, we are engaged in an unending struggle to *master* nature. The destruction of the environment is hardly

an example of this. In fact, it decisively shows that capitalism has become a definitive block to our increasing control over nature. *Crashing* a car is hardly evidence that one is gaining mastery over the laws that govern it.

Under capitalism, humanity's most basic activity - our ability to labour, to produce our social life from the raw material that nature provides us with - is alienated from us. Work - its direction, purpose and end result - lies outside the control of the vast majority of the world's population. It is something that is imposed on us from outside as an economic necessity, for the benefit of small groups of people who have nothing in common with us - the ruling class.

As we wrote when it seemed that everyone but communists were going 'green': "Only by making humanity's social power *directly* social, not the alienated property of the few, can we properly control our environment, by mastering it. And that takes a revolution" (*The Leninist* December 23 1988).

Our earth itself is being pillaged and ruined by the robber class, the bourgeoisie. This is the basic question we must solve. Moral gestures are futile. Boycotting Botswana beef may salve the conscience of the odd liberal, but it will not save the world. We must take the running of our planet into our own hands, otherwise we face the precipice.

"Most of the world's environmental problems stem from excess" the bosses would like us to believe (editorial *Financial Times* June 1 1992). What it means is that we, the working class - the class that produces all the wealth of modern society and then has it systematically taken from it - that we have to take a cut in our already pathetic living standards.

When - or rather, if - the various parties at the Earth Summit actually manage to put their names to any agreements at the end of their "cocktail party with a prearranged outcome", as the EC environment commissioner described it, what will it matter to the fight to protect Earth's environment?

Yet in a way, by condoning the continued existence of the world system of robbery that produces these environmental horrors in the first place, these scum will be signing the death warrant for millions of people. Presumably, as long as they use recycled paper, the likes of the Green Porritt are likely to be at least partially pacified.

The working class, on the other hand, should view the whole farce with nothing but contempt. When the time comes, ladies and gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, we will be consigning you to one particular rubbish heap, the rubbish heap of history.

Mark Fischer



Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

THE LABOUR PARTY National Executive Committee voted on May 27 to ditch the union block vote in the selection of parliamentary candidates and introduce one member, one vote.

This is another rightward shift in the Labour Party. It was accompanied by a great hullabaloo about 'democratising' Labour. Clare Short, former *enfant terrible* of the 'hard left', said that the rule changes meant that Labour had "modernised its links with unions". Of course, all class conscious workers know what she really means: Labour is dancing to the tune dictated by the capitalist class and its media.

Frankly we are neither surprised nor upset. *The Morning Star* is different. It sobs that the rule change "is a big step forward in the rightwing campaign to break the links between the Labour Party and the trade unions" (May 28 1992). Also it imagines that the rule changes are part of a sinister plot to prevent "the people" from fighting back in the future, as the right wing "knows that it may not be able to resist the leftward move in the unions which normally accompanies a high level of mass struggle on the issues" (*Ibid*).

Is this true? Is the Labour Party going to *totally* sever its links with the trade unions and transform itself into a full blown bourgeois party? Are we as others say witnessing the 'Americanisation' of British politics?

No, of course not. The right wing may rule supreme *now* but it is in the very nature of Labour to swing from the left to the right, and then, given the exigencies of the class struggle, back again very rapidly. The right *needs* the left, as Richard Crossman noted, "to do the work of organising the constituencies", while at the same time it constantly persecutes and blames that left for all its problems. Even when the right wing needs the left wing, it always begrudges it and never loses an opportunity to pour hate on it.

The right wing also requires the trade unions. It could not exist without them, hardly astonishing considering that the Labour Party "grew out of the bowels" (Ernest Bevin) of the trade union movement. The trade unions give the Labour Party stability and real roots in society, "they provide the party with some kind of grip on reality" (*The Independent* June 4 1992).

Contrary to the myths peddled in the *Morning Star*, the right also requires the union block vote to secure its position. Neil Kinnock ruthlessly used the union-controlled National Executive Committee and the block vote after the 1987 election defeat to ditch unilateral disarmament and nationalisation, two of the most precious jewels in the crown of the 'hard left'.

Of course, this is not an absolute. During the late 1970s and early 80s, the union block vote swung Labour to the left. Nevertheless during Labour's historically zig-zagging course the trade union bureaucracy proved to be the solid body which prevented the party both going 'too far' to the left or 'too far' to the right.

So, ironically the Labour leadership could well be storing up trouble for itself by its decision to travel lighter. Lessening the weight of the union block vote could open up the possibility of Labour going 'too far' to the left in the future (though it has to be emphasised that this could only be in terms of left reformism).

The rightwing is making its rule changes on the assumption that the individual party member is a moderate, law-abiding, responsible citizen. At the moment that is true in general. Long gone are the days when they were all Bennites.

But there is no reason to think that moderation, ie pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist politics, in the workers' movement will remain dominant forever. When the class struggle escalates in the future, as it must, where will it find its first expression? In all probability in the trade unions *and* the Labour Party. Given the bureaucratic nature of the official trade union machine it will only move relatively slowly under such conditions. A one member, one vote Labour Party could prove another matter.

All of this is of secondary importance. Nevertheless we have to guard ourselves against the current round of hysteria, the shrieking about the "end" of the Labour Party as any sort of a workers' party. Let us calmly state that Labour has deep roots in the working class and its institutions. It is not about to constitute itself a minor capitalist party, an "SDP mark two" (Dennis Skinner). Only the most profound movement in society will uproot the Labour Party, either through the trade unions (its natural base) being smashed by counterrevolution, or through revolution: the Communist Party replacing it as the natural party of the working class.

The Labour Party has changed and will continue to change. But news of its death is certainly much exaggerated.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### On the road

Just a brief note to congratulate Hands Off Ireland! for its annual commemoration of the Easter 1916 Rising.

The Rising is an inspiration to all liberation movements which face the onslaught of a violent and intransigent oppressor. In particular in South Africa where, despite the ongoing negotiations, the people face an unremitting incidence of state inspired violence that has killed thousands and is still killing people every day, the Rising provides a lesson which the masses are having to learn.

Please consider me as a sponsor for any similar event of HOI! in the future.  
David Kitson  
Zimbabwe

### International Marxists

Many thanks for covering the successful Camden conference of the International Marxist Convention in the last issue of your paper. Unfortunately, you missed out a paragraph which outlined the Convention's main conclusions.

The meeting concluded by reaffirming conviction in the ultimate victory of communism, and by calling for communist movements to be strengthened, or if necessary reforged throughout the world.

The Secretariat has been charged with promoting these objectives. Interested organisations and individuals are requested to contact it through 081-597 4417.

B Banerji  
Secretary to the steering committee

### 'Rude' Leninists?

Neil Brown's letter (*The Leninist* No119) is a little hard to understand. He calls on us to participate in a "disciplined and open debate" with amongst others I presume his organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Group.

The same notion appears in the editorial of the latest issue of this group's paper where communists are urged to take part in an "open, sincere and principled debate".

If this is indeed "sincere" then this turn-about by the RCG is to be welcomed. In the past, this organisation has refused to reply to our articles analysing their political positions. This nervous silence of their's has in fact been going on since 1982, when *The Leninist* No3 offered them and other groups 1,000 words in our pages to outline their political platform. Some of their supporters in those days actually told us that "the reply is in the post". It never arrived, of course.

The only 'substantial' rejoinder to any of our criticisms came in their paper - *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, No102 (August/September 1991) - when they "reluctantly decided to respond" to the "lying and conscious falsehood" that we had written about them.

Leaving aside the *content* of their reply, the tone needs commenting on. The RCG verbally informed us that it would not respond to our criticisms, our (unprinted) letters to their press, etc, because we were "rude"! We are hardly going to complain - we are

Leninists and are used to rough and tumble polemic, even amongst ourselves. But isn't this a little two-faced, comrades?

This organisation has studiously refused to respond to our 'open, disciplined and principled' criticism in the past. Comrade Sherriff is of course right to be polite to Brown. Given their record however, I suggest that this 'open' rhetoric is designed for foreign consumption - to be read by groups and movements around the world that the RCG is trying to woo.

Until I see a mature, communist response to any of the telling criticisms this paper has made of the RCG over the years, I will reserve judgement.  
Mark Fischer  
London

### Connolly

The annual march and rally to commemorate the greatest socialist Edinburgh has ever produced, James Connolly, which was due to take place on Saturday May 30, was banned by the Labour council.

The actions of the police on the day, in stopping coaches coming from Glasgow and establishing a heavy presence to prevent even a gathering at Connolly's commemoration shows the council's intention to present Edinburgh to the world as a struggle-free zone.

When the heads of Europe arrive in Edinburgh in December, we should remember Connolly's words: "The great only appear great because we are on our knees - let us rise!"

Tam Dean Burn  
Glasgow

### Dictatorship

Allan Merrick was bang on with his criticism of Rahe Kargar. Surely they must know that if they accept the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, then changing the word will not fool anyone but themselves.

The dictatorship which was set up in the former Soviet Union was initiated by Bolsheviks who were a different set of individuals to those who betrayed the workers and also brought about the demise of both party and state. The real problem facing the working class therefore is to ensure that both the party and future states based on the proletarian dictatorship remain loyal to the working class until the ultimate goal of communism is attained.

Ted Rowlands  
Newcastle

### Bigger and Better?

I occasionally see and buy a copy of *The Leninist* from time to time, but I am surprised to see your organisation going on alone in restarting the 'Communist Party of Great Britain'. Is it not possible you may gain support from ex-members and present members if you were to form better links for future amalgamation with the NCP/RCP/CPB who are still functioning as minor political parties at the present time?

Of course, other groups do exist in smaller numbers but I feel many communists would desperately want to see *one* united party in Britain which could include various groups and factions.

Could you ever see your group being part of a wider, but more organised CP?

How about your paper converting to become *Communist News* or *Communist Weekly* in the near future to be a useful tool for all CP members and future members.

Andrew Melville  
Leicester

### China

The latest issue of the Revolutionary Communist Party's *Living Marxism* contains a truly silly article on the Chinese revolution from a Mark Wu. We fired off a letter of reply, but secure in the knowledge that the RCP will never print a critical letter from communists as opposed to liberals or Greens, we will give the letters page of *The Leninist* a synopsis.

Wu 'boldly' asserts that "the Chinese Communist Party" (the Communist Party of China actually, Mark) "has the unenviable distinction of not having a single Marxist among its founder members." Similarly, he sweepingly suggests that "the Chinese Communist Party never produced a single pamphlet of worthwhile Marxist literature." How can anyone who has read 'On Practice', 'Talks from the Yanan Forum on literature and art', 'On contradiction' or 'On guerilla warfare' should be able to come to such an absurd conclusion. More than a wiff of Eurocentric chauvinism wafts around Wu's 'analysis'.

They castigate Mao for his correct statement that "it was not possible to eliminate capitalism at an early date, as this did not fit with China's national condition" (incidentally, they do not supply any references for this 'quote' so who knows what the context is exactly). Given the semi-feudal nature of China's productive forces it is the height of idealist folly to suggest that China could make a rapid transition to socialism, in the sense of a political-economic system which is superior to the most advanced capitalist state, let alone communism (which as a prerequisite requires a condition of abundance). This would clearly have been impossible, regardless of who was in control of the CPC whether they be Maoist, 'Stalinist', Trotskyist or whoever.

Also, their sly implication that the heroic Long March was somehow 'voluntarist' (they did it purely for fun, we presume) is symptomatic of the RCP's arrogantly sectarian dismissal of past working class struggles, victories and gains; this organisation turns the USSR, the world's first socialist state, into an "enemy of the working class", condemns the glorious 1978 Afghan Revolution as a "Stalinist coup", opposes the closed shop, and so on almost endlessly.

In this China 'review', as elsewhere, the RCP attempts to give a leftist veneer to what is, in essence, an anti-communist world outlook.

This is an inevitable consequence of the fact that the RCP is a student-based organisation, thus very vulnerable to current bourgeois prejudices and is devoted to the production of chic commentary and idle gossip, rather than serious Marxist-Leninist analysis (hence the grossly mis-named *Living Marxism*, which is in reality the bastard son of *Marxism Today*).

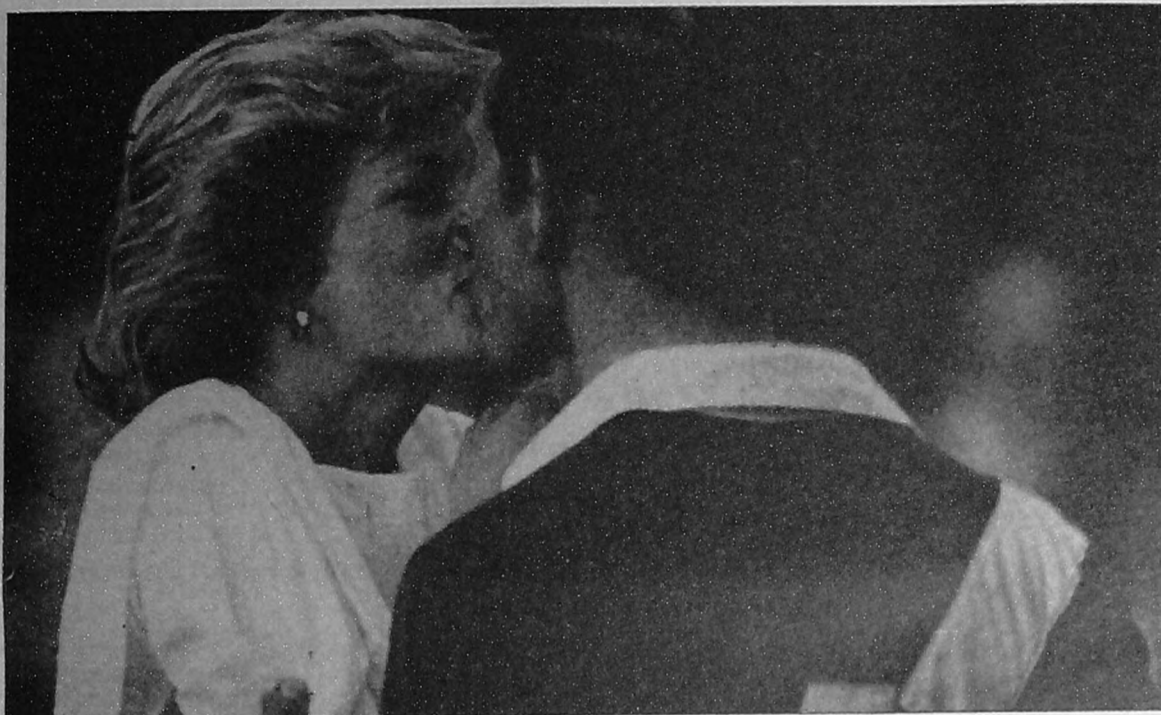
Tim Fletcher & Eddie Ford  
London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

To reply to letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*.  
WRITE to The Editor,  
BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.  
PHONE us on 071-431 3135 or  
FAX us on 081-459 5905.

# Off with their heads!

Clearly there are some problems with the institution of the British monarchy



●Happier days, but at our expense

ALL of the media-orchestrated excitement over the soon to be published *Diana, her true story* and the rumoured 'problems' in the royal marriage is a real bore, of course. The Wales' marriage is probably no worse or no better than anyone else's. Most extended pair bondings go through ups and downs over the years. The difference with this particular pair is that where other couples have to retire to different parts of the house not to talk to each other, this duo can 'repair' to different parts of the world and grumpily refuse each other lifts in their jets. Poor loves.

The crass nature of the British tabloid press has been well illustrated by the current round of royal watching. On June 5, the *Daily Mail* headlined that Diana "tried to take her own life". This was in fact simply a spoiler, a preemptive strike against the *Sunday Times* serialisation of *Diana*, which began on June 7.

There is no evidence that the woman tried to top herself, of course. But that has not stopped the speculation presented as fact in the pages of both ends of the bourgeois media, the 'quality' and the 'pulp'. We can afford to dismiss the hype. But clearly there are problems with the institution of the British monarchy. As *The Guardian* leader noted, the royal family "has had its ups and downs through history; and this is one of the downs. A particular conjunction of young royals and rocky marriages - ballooned into a real-life version of *Dynasty* - has lowered respect, esteem and a public readiness to go on funding the show" (June 6 1992).

Looking at the whole sordid pantomime, many class conscious workers will simply say - "So what? What has it got to do with us?" Put in a more sophisticated form, the June issue of *Living Marxism* tells us that "the culture of deference centred on the monarchy is a relic of the past that distorts the future."

Not true. While the origins of the monarchy do indeed lie in the dim mists of time - with the elected leaders of tribes, the gentile social organisations of pre-history - today it is a thoroughly modern affair, not simply some anachronism or 'irrational' relic. It plays a useful role in consolidating a very contemporary and 'relevant' form of class rule, capitalist society itself.

Our rulers have buried all evidence that they came into the world as a revolutionary class, chopping heads off monarchs in the process. This is be-

cause as it consolidated its grip on society, it created its own gravediggers - the modern proletariat.

To avoid its working class nemesis, it set about a conscious piece of social engineering. It created a bourgeois layer in the working class (the trade union and labour bureaucracy) and, importantly, a *bourgeois monarchy*. The constitutional monarchy of the restoration and then the Hanoverians were skilfully used by the British bourgeoisie as a means of cementing an alliance with the landowning classes and the heirs of the aristocracy. They wanted a quiet life with the forces of the *ancien regime*, in other words.

At the same time the myth of the politically neutral monarchy was cultivated for the working class. The capitalist state carried the monarchy along with it. Today the institution of the monarchy is completely woven into the British bourgeois state and its unwritten constitution.

The official handbook on Britain, published by the government's Central Office of Information, states that the United Kingdom, is governed by Her Majesty's Government *in the name of the queen*. As the head of state she has the power to declare war and make peace. The queen is our *sovereign* - we are her *subjects*. Power is transferred to parliament from her, not 'the people'. The supreme legislative authority is the queen in parliament, that is, the queen and the two houses of parliament. Theoretically, she has the authority to dissolve any elected parliament and appoint any minister to form a cabinet.

Then there is Her Majesty's Privy Council, an assembly of past and present cabinet ministers, there for life. This has the power to make orders in council which have complete executive authority under powers delegated by acts passed in parliament. This is a perfect mechanism for the replacement of bourgeois democracy with naked dictatorship.

The constitutional role of the monarchy is significant. Perhaps even more important has been the ideological role it has played for the bourgeoisie, however. The modern monarchy in particular has played a useful stabilising role. The 'royal family' are daily reported on TV and in the press in order to divert attention away from the serious questions in society. It has been carefully projected as the family of the one nation, part of the establishment but above day to day politics.

The Natural Law Party, the bobbing yogis who stood 400 candidates in the 1992 election, actually supported the

monarchy as part of 'the natural order of things.' The monarchy is indeed projected as a god-given, 'natural' phenomenon. The historical continuity associated with the monarchy reinforces a deep rooted conservatism in British society. The world, as it is currently organised, is perceived as permanent and immutable.

The image of the royal family as an ahistorical institution receives blows when the individual members of it have affairs, get bored with partners or behave in less than idealised ways - that is, when they act like the rest of the society they inhabit.

Royal marriages are opportunities for a barrage of conservative pro-family propaganda. The fact that the royals can subsequently have problems, go off the rails and start chasing a little bit of trouser on the side, as the horrendous Fergie has done, punctures the carefully inflated fantasy bubble that the royals are an idealised form of family life we all must aspire to.

In fact, it would be a surprise if the royals did not reflect, even if in an indirect way, the type of social tensions that are fraying the bourgeois family unit in wider society. In recent years, the number of divorces in Britain has increased to 160,000 a year. Divorce annually affects directly or indirectly some 600,000 people. Increasing numbers of these proceedings are instigated by women and 95% of them are undefended.

About 80% of them cite adultery as grounds, although this can often be a 'flag of convenience' for an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. The stable bourgeois nuclear family unit is simply not a reality for the majority of people in modern society. The royal family, while it may not have the same sort of corrosive economic pressures on it as the working class, is hardly immune.

The personal problems of the insipid air-head Diana Windsor and young fogey Charles should hardly bother us. But the institution to which they belong is *not* irrelevant to us in our fight to make the British proletarian revolution. It is an integral part of the capitalist state machine that we must smash by revolution and, at the same time, an important ideological weapon in the hands of that state. As we wrote in *The Leninist* No29 "when our revolution comes we will as well as finishing the bourgeoisie, at last finish the job the bourgeoisie started in 1642" (April 1986).

Off with their heads, we say.

Alec Long

There is trouble brewing once again in the health industry. Management in London hospitals have proposed swingeing job and service cuts in the post election scramble for trust status. In others, newly qualified nurses are facing the dole and at Charing Cross hospital, on June 5 the bosses announced 500 proposed job cuts. The rank and file of the industry have already shown they are willing to fight such attacks, in contrast to the cowardly leaderships of their unions. Student nurses at the Middlesex and University College hospitals staged two one day strikes last month. Health workers must learn creatively from the last time they were involved in action against the Tories if they are to win the next round, however. Some left papers are saying that "no nurse that cares about the NHS should be in the RCN" - forgetting the fact that that is in fact by far the largest union in the industry and the place where you will find most nurses. Inter-union rank and file fightback committees, uniting all workers in the industry regardless of union affiliations, are urgently needed. With these established, health workers have the basis to reach out to other sectors of the class and start to tap the huge sea of sympathy they command. They can secure what is needed to win the fight in their industry - solidarity action. MF

Some 2,000 people marched on the Scotland United demonstration in Edinburgh on June 6. The Communist Party leafleted the march with a specially produced leaflet. Our paper sellers report a reasonably brisk trade, distributing an average of nine papers each. The march had a relatively large turn out from the organised working class with quite a few trade union banners on show. The SWP turned out a big contingent for the day, just beating Scottish Militant Labour into second place. Our comrades found no real mass popular enthusiasm for a Scottish nationalist project. Far more typical was the response given to us by one young militant - "I'm not really that fussed about Scotland United, but with the Tories back in, what else is there?". Our leaflet addressed precisely this type of demoralisation. "The Tories are undeniably the enemies of the

●Scotland actually needs some clean, sharp divisions

"But they are not the only ones. Others also benefit from the system the Tories defend. Not least the MPs, STUC chiefs and media politicians who lead Scotland United". We pointed out that in fact Scotland was divided - like every other country - along class lines and what was needed was "a party that can bring together the best fighters for our class Britain wide". While the tide at the moment is against us, this is a message that can strike a chord with the historically militant working class of Scotland. AL



The hunger strike by Turkish and Kurdish workers, in protest at the government's refusal to allow the families of refugees to enter the country, ended after a magnificent 36 days. A certain amount of success has already been achieved through the hunger strike: 12 people have been given permission for their families to join them. All refusal cases have been reopened and a report on the cases of all 62 hunger strikes was given on May 29. The hunger strikers now await a debate in the House of Commons. Some 52 Labour MPs have signed a motion put forward by Jeremy Corbyn for the reunion of the families. The results are awaited from the House of Commons debate and from further action by the Home Office. If positive moves do not develop the Turkish and Kurdish workers will have to consider what further action to take. The working class movement must start to seriously take up the question of defence of refugees - political and economic. The re-election of the Tories means that legislation like the Asylum Bill, which was knocked off the agenda to clear the decks in the lead up to the April election, will be looming again. The government will be anxious to play to rightwing, xenophobic sections of the Tory Party to sweeten any new moves on Europe integration. The Asylum Bill, either in its original form, or something that looks very much like it, will be making a reappearance. We must be ready to fight it. LB

## No gold, no silver



The new capitalist market economy in Russia is in trouble. Workers are not being paid because of a "cash shortage". Yeltsin thinks he has a solution though. He has accepted a £27 million credit from South Africa, and wants the apartheid state to help him develop Russia's gold and diamond mines. We too have a "cash shortage". The main fighting fund was well down on the £600 we need. We cannot make good the shortfall by not paying the wages, communist work is done gratis and we don't have access to precious metals, above or below ground. So dig deep (no pun intended) for *The Leninist!*

Vernon Douglas  
Fund Organiser

# Rethinking our

## Workers will only be able to go on to the offensive if we learn how to organise retreat

**L**AST MONTH'S successful industrial action in Germany saw British revolutionary groups like the Socialist Workers Party telling us in one breath that the German workers were "giving us a lesson" (*Socialist Worker* May 2), and in the next calling for "immediate strikes" (*Socialist Worker* May 9) in defence of the threatened Armthorpe colliery.

In fact, isolated, ill-prepared and poorly financed kamikaze actions by individual groups of workers are ill-advised given the current balance of forces in the class struggle. Below we survey the massive barrage of laws, backed up of course by the military might of the state 'beefed up' by the Tories, to make such action ineffective.

The first, the most important lesson, of the German events is surely to take cognisance of the battle plans of your enemy. The 'right to strike' in Britain has undergone more than 13 years of legal attack. Should "immediate strikes" - in the here and now - necessarily be the first point on our agenda?

Since the Tories' election in 1979, attacks on the organised working class have taken three main forms: ●A barrage of "individual rights" have been invented to allow individuals to undermine the collective discipline of organised actions. The Employment Act 1988 for example gave trade union members the right "not to be unjustifiably disciplined by that union" for failing to take part in or give support to industrial action, even if that action is itself supported by a ballot. This understandably earned the Act the title the 'scabs charter' as it gave trade unions no power to prevent strike breaking.

●An attack on all closed shop arrangements. The 1980 Employment Act was relatively mild in comparison with what was to come. But the intention was clear. Under it, the ability of trade unionists to put pressure on employers to dismiss non-members was severely curtailed when the basis for claiming unfair dismissal for expulsion from a closed shop was widened to include "deeply held personal objection". Furthermore, all closed shop agreements were made subject to a secret ballot, and all immunities were withdrawn from any act committed by the workers of one employer to compel the workers of another employer to join a particular trade union. This action on behalf of the government was most likely an attempt to curtail the activities of trade unionists in strikes such as Grunwick 1977-78, where thousands were mobilised in defence of striking workers who had been dismissed for attempting to join a trade union. Today, legislation is in place which means that no industrial action can be called to protect closed shop arrangements, even if the employer chooses to opt out unilaterally.

●Outlawing secondary action. The most recent legislation is the 1990 Employment Act which put the final nail in the coffin of the closed shop. It made illegal any recruitment which stipulated membership of a union. It also came down hard on any unofficial action, making unions responsible for the actions of union officials, whether employed or not or whether acting in accordance with the union rule book. The only way that unions can avoid liability is to go through a very complex process of repudiation. This in turn allows trade union members to be dismissed for taking part in unofficial action. A catalogue of specified persons must be listed on the ballot paper and the action will only be regarded as official if called by one of those persons. This creates a ridiculous situation, whereby either a long list (including shop stewards) is included on the ballot paper, leaving unions reluctantly responsible for the acts of their more militant members, or, on the other hand, a very short list is included which may easily lead to charges that an unauthorised person made the call for action - perhaps by an 'unwise' television interview by an angry militant. This measure was almost certainly provoked by the spate of unofficial action in 1989: the Docks Dispute and the British Rail and London Underground disputes, where shop stewards themselves took the lead in strikes. So if a union actually wants to support its members' actions without becoming immediately liable it finds itself in a very difficult situation, even if it has the political will. The only form of secondary action still lawful is peaceful picketing at the workplace in dispute, but even that is constrained enormously. A Government Code of Practice on picketing limits the numbers which can stand outside a workplace entrance to six. This means that the picket, traditionally one of the main ways in which striking workers could make their views known, is now virtually neutralised.

The re-election of the Tories ensures that they will move on their Green Paper, *Industrial Relations in the 1990s*. Proposals outlined include: making unions give seven days written notice before action; stipulating that all industrial action ballots of more than 50 workers have to be conducted by post; and making unions give specific information about the ballot to employers, to enable them to anticipate the union approach, and plan their response.

How should we fight back? Is the class struggle impossible under these conditions? Hardly. All laws can be circumvented in the short term while the class struggle remains at a low ebb: smashed altogether in the longer term when the militant mood rises again.

We believe that there are four main questions that workers have to address to make their actions effective, however. Broadly, these are:

●Hearts and minds. Leaping into precipitative action on the narrowest of ballot majorities must be resisted. The engineers' fight over hours is a positive example of the type of solidarity that can be achieved when the overwhelming majority of workers in the industry (not just the union) are won for the cause. The narrowness of the margins (even of those who actually voted, let alone the majority of the membership) in the recent London tube ballot over changes in working practices and proposed drastic job cuts should mean that activists approach the next round of the fight very carefully.

Similarly, the fact that the Yorkshire miners voted to support men at the threatened Markham Main colliery (see Dave Douglas interview) is a tribute to them. But the fact that the ballot split the ones that actually voted 5,131 to 4,984 - ie a majority of just 147 - should underline that we still have a huge education job to do.

●Anti-trade union laws. Clearly, disputes can be fought and won without falling foul of the law ... but only just. Scargill's May Day call for a campaign against the Tories' anti-trade union crusade is quite correct. But to sanguinely tell workers that "they have to defy the Tory government's legislation. If that lands us in jail, so be it" is just not good enough (quoted in *The Guardian* May 2 1992). Too many of our best fighters from the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 were banged up. The question is how to organise in such a way that we avoid the state trawling our ranks for hostages in the first place?

●Money. Part of the preparation for any dispute should be adequate financial provision. As our interview with comrades involved in the engineer battle over hours shows, this is an important element of securing a solid response to any strike calls. Activists in the JSC will tell you that one of the problems that they have, in even holding on to men already involved in disputes is the fact that they lose money hand over fist for standing up for their principles. Martyrs are an unfortunate consequence of the weakness of our movement: we should not try to consciously create them by refusing to take note of the current balance of class forces and launching ourselves at the bosses like militant lemmings.

●Industrial unionism. One union per industry, that should be our approach. One of the reasons that the German workers were able to achieve such an impressive level of unity in their ranks stems from the fact that they have precisely this form of organisation. True, this was imposed on them in the aftermath of Germany's defeat in World War II for the convenience of the bourgeoisie, but so what?

We argued that the division in the mining industry between the NUM and UDM was crippling. That is why we raised the possible tactic of the militant NUM rump in Nottinghamshire actually entering the scab UDM - to heal the breach in their own, principled manner.

Clearly, miners need to break out of the shrinking perimeters of the mining industry and the besieged NUM. They need to start to lay the basis for an energy workers' union, uniting all miners and power workers if they are to put up more than token resistance - Scargill's rhetoric is no substitute for an intelligent fighting strategy.

Unity in the hours dispute (see interviews) - even with the EETPU 'pariah' - was key to winning the dispute. That type of practical unity in action should be built on by works committees made up of elected, recallable delegates of all unions, paving the way for one, fighting union in the industry.

Brian Pemberton, the MSF Works Convenor in Preston BEA interviewed in this issue, is right. We should put on our thinking caps and dump our 'cloth caps'!

## Miners: Hold the line

Recent disputes over the Markham Main and Armthorpe collieries in the Yorkshire coalfield have exposed the fact that the leadership of the NUM have no realistic strategy for fighting the attacks of the bosses. Dave Douglass, a leading miner in the area (pictured), gives us the background to the dispute and his views on how to take the fight forward.



■Dave Douglass: Hatfield Main colliery

The strike at Markham was not about contractors in the abstract, but about the fact that contractors had been brought in without any consent from the men involved and under the worst possible terms.

The major thing that worked in their favour was the fact that the contractors themselves when they turned up to work on these jobs refused to work at Markham while there was a dispute on. They refused to scab on the Markham men. When threatened with the sack, they stood firm. That blocked the management.

The contractors to their credit did that. Some left papers tried to make the issue out to be about the contractors. It was very important strategically that we maintained the link with the contractors in the union. British Coal would love to have all of the contractors non union: we have 10,000 contractors now, out of an industry with just 40,000 people in it.

Having been blocked, the Area Director decided the pit would shut. So this became a new issue. We had balloted the whole Area and by a slim majority agreed to take industrial action about the imposition of contractors.

This came as a surprise to many people who didn't think we would get a positive result in the current climate.

Once British Coal had decided that the contractors would come out we had effectively won that issue. The issue then became one of fighting to keep the pit.

We passed a resolution to go to the NEC that we should call for European wide action, not only on Markham but on the whole question of European closures. It is affecting the Germans, the Spaniards and the French and we should have mounted a Europe-wide campaign.

After all, we see these middle class farmers in France demonstrating over subsidies, why shouldn't the miners in Europe demonstrate for their jobs on a European scale?

No one seems to have done anything about that, but we still think it is important, particularly given the period we are living in.

Most of the men feel that simply saying "we'll strike" is giving British Coal what they want. They simply lock the gates, say thanks very much and get out of paying redundancy.

Look at *The Miners' Next Step*, which was written in a period when the miners had faced a succession of very heavy defeats. The pamphlet was written by militants who wanted industrial action, but wanted it intelligently used.

They felt that just squandering the energy and the militancy of the men was not good enough. It wasn't calling for less action, it was calling for more action, but better directed.

At that particular time they were calling for work-to-rules, overtime bans and things like that. Now obviously, the class struggle is a dynamic, the tactics change according to the strengths and weaknesses of the employers.

The employers have actually got more going for them now than when *The Miners' Next Step* was written, at least in terms of legislation. We tackle this subject intelligently.

Just calling for unlimited strike action, while it sounds fiery, does not address itself to the actual level of morale, the strength of the men, and the fact that British Coal is actually doing everything it can to maximise the number of closures in the lead up to privatisation.

Part of the answer is that the whole thing must be taken onto a European level. It is very hard to hold morale for people now. People can see that whoever owns the pits, the question is whether there is going to be a market for coal.

Since 1985 the miners have been in continuous dispute in one form or another. There has been a

pattern starting with the Frickley dispute that stopped the coalfield, fights at Selby, Bentley, Hatfield, again at Frickley over disciplinary procedures, the Markham dispute, we had a fight at Maltby - continuous, bitter struggle.

So when certain of our leaders, who are otherwise much respected, say to us "get off your knees" we regard that as insulting because we have never been on our bloody knees. We've our backs to the wall, but people are kicking like fury.

The scale of the task is so big, it requires not a retreat from the fight as the TUC advocates. Now they are going cap in hand to the Labour Party and worrying about them distancing themselves from the organised working class. Really, what does it matter to us? Who needs them?

They have done nothing for us. Even if you think that we needed a Labour victory, how can you have illusions about them?

We've heard nothing from the TUC, nothing about how we fight. We need a long term, thought out class perspective, there's no doubt about it.

## Beginning anew



Workers in the building industry have their backs to the wall. The slump in the sector has meant builders watching their pay packets dwindle. This desperate situation has sparked the rise of the Joint Sites Committee once again. Previous JSCs existed in the 1950s and 60s in

London, the organisation ebbing and flowing with booms and slumps in the construction industry. Today's JSC is a network of rank and file activists, responding quickly to disputes in the capital in a militant and imaginative way. Some left papers have exaggerated the successes of the JSC. The truth is more prosaic, but is still an inspiration to other workers. John, an activist with JSC, spoke to us in an individual capacity on a picket line in central London.

■John, Joint Sites Committee:

The strikes that have happened have been mostly defensive. There is no way that a man can live on £150 a week, which is being offered to some labourers.

What the subbies are doing, and some of the agencies are doing it as well, is setting rates so low because they expect men to be signing on at the same time, 'doing the double'.

Some of the subcontractors have formalised it so much that they are giving men a morning off a fortnight to sign on. Others have actually laid on minibuses to drop people and minimise the disruption to the working day!

Union membership is dropping in all the unions. It has got to the point where there are very few organised sites in the capital. And what union organisation there is, often isn't very effective.

Where the JSC has been involved in disputes, there has been little if any union organisation. The JSC has been involved in defending victimised stewards, obviously. The rest have been picked up via the grapevine of rank and file building workers.

In fact, some union officials have mentioned disputes to us that they can't do anything about. Union officials are willing for us to be involved when we are fighting on some of the sites or backing some of the lads who are out the gate, but that's about as far as they will go.

What all the union leaderships are doing is trying to protect themselves and union assets against Tory anti-trade union laws. The point that needs to be made however is that there isn't going to be any union if they don't fight.

There is a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the unions to be seen to be involved. That presupposes that we are strong enough to do the fighting at a rank and file level.

At present we are certainly building up the strength, but we would expect to get at least some money and a commitment on the part of the union to say that they are supporting the lads fighting, even if they are not prepared to make the dispute official. They have to find a form of words that doesn't encourage drivers to cross picket lines.

What is happening at the minute is that there is a whole new generation of people who haven't really

# tactics

been involved before, who aren't blacklisted because they haven't done anything before, but are now being pushed to the point where they are fighting.

It is not the heroes from the last 20 years who are actually doing the business, it is a new fighting generation of ordinary building workers making the links with other rank and file building workers across the sites.

We have to break the law to win strikes. What needs to be done is to widen the political battle. The law is a blunt instrument on us because we've got fuck all to lose. The official leaderships on the other hand have got their pension funds, investments, property and so on.

I think what Sam McCluskie said during the seafarers dispute when P&O were after the union's assets is right.

He said that if the bosses took everything away from the union, then they were only back to the position where they were when they were first getting organised, they couldn't destroy the union by taking its property off it. They would still have the raw anger against injustice that built it in the first place.

Of course, McCluskie's bottle went shortly after and he sold them out. But what he was saying was right at the time. If the union loses everything, how are we worse off than we are at the moment? Unless they fight, they will go to the wall because people will just think they are irrelevant.

Where do we go next? We have no illusions about who does the fighting. It is always the rank and file, not the fulltimers.

So we will organise independently. We have to organise the sites. That is where the strength is. We are prepared to fight the employers independently if the union does not actually do the business.

The only strategy that all the leaderships of the unions seemed to have was to get a Labour government into power. So on April 10, they didn't have a strategy left anymore.

## Positive lessons

When the struggle to reduce the working week from 39 to 35 hours with no loss of pay by the country's engineering workers broke out in 1989, this paper said it was of the "utmost significance".

Via the Unemployed Workers Charter we raised money for the striking engineers.

Despite the rightwing leadership of the AEEU, there are many lessons to be learned. We spoke to two leading activists from the British Aerospace site in Preston:



■Neil Shehan, AEEU, Secretary of the Works Committee, BAe Preston:

It must be said that the leadership was reluctant to take the employers on over this issue.

In April 1989 we were in London to lobby Jordan and the leadership when they went to see the employers. What was on the cards then was a 37½ hour package, but rather than strings attached there were ropes.

So we lobbied them and partly due to that - there were about 400 hundred of us out there - the leadership felt they had to make it an issue.

The activists won the ballots in the individual factories around the country. They produced the newsletters, the steady stream of propaganda that ensured that the votes were won.

Our factory at Preston was one of the factories chosen for the dispute. We were out for 18 weeks. Kingston, our sister factory was out for 23 weeks. But at the end of the day, we won. We secured at Preston for example a 37 hour, four day working week. It has been a fantastic achievement.

Despite other criticisms of them, once it was off the ground the leadership were intent on making sure that it did not fail.

The management's campaign was unbelievable. They used threats of men losing jobs and so on. It was a very hard task we were presented with.

It is to people's credit that they stood firm and we won the ballot and then the dispute.

We had a real problem here in Preston because we have three sites to cover in very close proximity to each other. We were the only site chosen, with the two other BAe sites picked to take action being Chester and Kingston.

The management attempted to break the strike by

bussing people in from the other two sites. A few came in. But at one stage there were 800 laid off because they refused.

We had hard problems, but the 800 wouldn't budge because the justice of the case had been proved to them.

The 'technical' back up for the strike was good, decisive in some ways. Take strike pay.

We got £150 a week at the start. OK, after six weeks it went down to about £85 because the levies and the money weren't coming in like they should have been. But we were being financed well. But that notwithstanding, it was a tremendous achievement by the rank and file of the union.

■Brian Pemberton, MSF, Works Manual Convener and lead convener for three BAe sites in the area:

One of the main reasons for the success of the campaign on hours - that is why it is not correct to call it simply an AEU campaign - is that all the unions worked together.

Even the EETPU were involved - about the only credible thing they have done.

In this place, we're not on committees with the EETPU or anything, but they did play an honourable part for most of this dispute we are talking about. They balloted, they came out with us and everybody was solid together.

British Aerospace was chosen because the management were particularly hard, particular reactionary. If they could be beaten, then it would be a lesson for the rest of the employers.

It was a dispute that united unions in the industry. It was probably a few activists with the Manual Combine - from different unions - who spearheaded the campaign from the grass roots up.

To be fair to Jordan, he worked very hard in the campaign, particularly as he was coming up for election. He was in a position where he couldn't lose either way.

If it had lost, he could have turned to the activists and said 'There you are, you buggers - you said you could deliver and you haven't'. If it won, he had the glory of leading the fight.

That solidarity - with even the EETPU coming out with us in Preston - was done with our publicity machine. Neil was outstanding in directing that, shown by the fact that while white collar workers didn't support it in other areas, Apex people were with us here.

We really set out to win hearts and minds in a publicity campaign.

Add to that the money, the strike pay. That was a vital factor. Any lower, and the strike would not have got off the ground. Once that level of money was on offer, however, then we could deliver.

The companies' big mistake was to let us collect. We were actually collecting in their time! Why the hell they didn't stop that, I don't know. If they had, it definitely would have been a problem.

From the management's point of view, I don't think they really believed it. Hours had never been a major issue. It was unusual. Mostly, the members' minds never get away from money.

Yet it was an incredible success. There were only six people out of about 3,000 not paying the levy money here.

There are people around who say that with the anti-trade union laws, it is impossible to do anything. I disagree. I think if the unions sit down and put their thinking caps on instead of their cloth caps, then we can win. We pinched the idea from the Germans on the money question: they have a huge pool of money that they can pay their members when they are on strike. So being starved back to work is not on the agenda.

That's what happened here in 1986. We did eight or nine weeks on strike, then we were forced back to work through economic pressure. People had mortgages and families and understandably, they capitulated. In the hours dispute, despite the fact that the money dropped, people could manage.

That is vital. All the unions should have some financial plan for industrial action. They must make it clear to the members that this is what it is going to be used for, it's not for anything else. It is a reserve fund for winning strikes. People don't want to be martyrs, to starve.

That was the lesson of the dispute. It is a lesson that comes both out of our dispute and also of the recent disputes that the German working class have been involved in. So, yes it is true to say that the hours dispute was the biggest victory in engineering that I can remember, but if we sit down and work out a real intelligent fighting strategy we can improve on even that.

# A tale of two countries ...

"Our movement needs a Labour government if it is to revive." John McIlroy, writing in *Trade Union News*, November/December 1991



●Workers in Germany: On strike for 35 hours April 1990, voting 'Tory' December 1990, shaking German capitalism April '92. What next ...?

JOHN McIlroy is expressing an idea that has unfortunately gained ground in the workers' movement over the last 10 years or so.

Every new defeat - and centrally the rout of the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 - has added impetus to the idea that nothing can be done until we have the Tories off our backs and the Labour Party in the saddle. This totally false idea leads some, like the Socialist Workers Party, to declare the Tory victory in the recent general election in this country as a "disaster" for the working class.

The inspiring events in Germany have killed that argument dead! The strike wave in this country at the core of European capitalism has underlined just how right we in the Communist Party were when we said that "Labour's defeat was not a defeat for the working class" (see *The Leninist* April 24).

●Both countries have seen long tenures of government by the Conservatives, the open parties of the bosses of Germany and Britain.

●On December 2 1990, the German 'Tories' under Helmut Kohl reaped the reward for urging full steam ahead with the democratic counterrevolution in the former GDR. His Christian Democratic Union and their coalition allies took around 55% of the votes cast in this first all German election since 1933.

●Also 'depressing' - if you are of the school that thinks that elections and not class struggle are the motor of history - was the fact that this election saw the CDU take 57.1% of the votes cast in the working class district of Dresden and their coalition partners the FDP took another 10.4%.

●Even more 'disastrously', the SDP - Germany's 'Labour Party' - slumped to 35%, its worst showing since the Cold War 1950s.

But what have we seen in the last few months? The same people who in late 1990 voted in their millions for the bosses' party, today have produced the largest strike wave in Germany since 1933 when the country was in the grip of organic crisis, a revolutionary situation.

That statistical fact should place into context the Tory gloating that has greeted the news that strike figures in Britain are the "lowest in 100 years". Just look at how quickly class struggle has engulfed the social peace of the 'model capitalism' of Germany. Who can say that it could not happen in this country just as quickly, just as dramatically?

But it also underlines how wrong the argument is that we can do nothing until the Labour Party is in

power, that workers can only pressurise a social democratic party.

In fact, the bosses in Germany recognise that the exact opposite just might be the case. The floated idea of a 'super coalition' raised by some - a sort of 'Tory'/Labour crisis government, leaving out Genscher's FDP - illustrates this. The German bosses were toying with the idea of bringing their 'Labour Party' into government precisely to confuse and demobilise the working class. Would the scenario be any different in this country if workers have illusions in the Labour Party as the lesser of two evils, that is if they swallow the nonsense peddled by most of the British left? We think not.

In fact, the mass movement of the workers of Germany had the bosses - in the form of the 'Tory' Kohl - suing for peace quickly enough, did it not? The question is not which capitalist government is imposing the attacks on us (and who would seriously suggest that a Labour government would not be a party of capitalism?). No, as we wrote in the aftermath of Labour's defeat in the 1987 election:

"We must make it crystal clear that the working class is strong when it is engaged in collective struggle, not when the Labourites have a majority in the mother of parliaments.

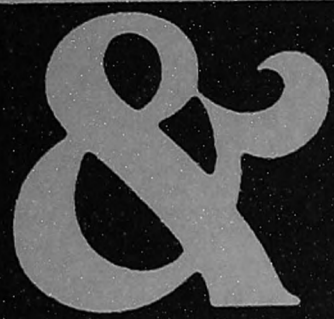
"We must also explain that Labour governments may result from working class strength, as when the miners forced Heath to go to the country in February 1974 asking 'who rules?' But once ensconced in plush Whitehall offices Labour's ministers do all in their power to defuse militancy in the working class" (*The Leninist*, July 17 1987).

That is why the Leninists of the Communist Party have as our slogan in the elections under the Tories - "Fight Whoever Wins!" It does not matter to the working class which capitalist party - Tory or Labour - is trying to force through its attacks on us: what matters is the state of combativity of our organisations and class. Are they ready to take on the government, any government, and win?

Now, our point has been made brilliantly for us by the working class of Germany. So when the SWP tell us in one breath that the general election result is a "disaster", then in another to "learn German" in the class struggle, workers should point out to them the contradiction.

As shown by the workers of Germany, the two statements just do not fit together.

Ian Mahoney



## OUR HISTORY

# Further communist unity

### The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

Here we go, wrap your thinking gear round this one - "Modernity", then, plays a peculiar dual role as a category of historical periodisation: it designates the contemporaneity of an epoch to the time of its classification, but it registers this contemporaneity in terms of a qualitatively new, self-transcending temporality, which has the simultaneous effect of distancing the present from even that most recent past with which it is thus identified." This model of lucidity is taken from a New Left Review piece called 'Understanding Modernity' - which we thought we did until we read the article ...

Forget the antics of the erstwhile 'loony left' councils like Brent. Santa Cruz, 75 miles south of San Francisco, is clearly the place for the politically 'right on'. A law enacted by its city council early this month bans discrimination ... against people who are ugly. The catch is, of course, that you have to complain - and who is going to admit to being a pugface just to jump a few places in the welfare line? We can see the placards now - 'Out, Ugly and Proud!'. Be honest, would you hold one?

Signs of the Times: Part 104. After forty years, Problems of Communism, the CIA funded front journal, has decided to cease publication. But don't pawn those PCs just yet, kids. We promise to supply you with a few more 'problems' to write about in the not too distant future.

We have an apology to make. We withdraw any charges we have made against certain leftists in Scotland that their tailing of the Scottish Nationalist Party and Scotland United was chauvinist and anti-internationalist. A recent recruiting leaflet for SU given out in Glasgow has on one side its usual reactionary, anti-working class garbage, yes. Flip it over however, and on the reverse we have an advert for an Indian restaurant. 'Workers of the World Unite ... and Eat at Khan's Curry Hut? Currying favour, comrades?'

"For the vast majority of people, life is surely better ... It is no use regretting the underclass: the left has to establish links with, and gain support from, the most dynamic sections of society." Good old Martin Jacques again, quoted in The Guardian recently. Some time ago, we predicted a future for this man. We neglected to say - in the Tory Party.

While the 1st Congress of the CPGB brought together the British Socialist Party, the Communist Unity Group from the Socialist Labour Party, the South Wales Communist Council and others, the job of forging a single Communist Party in Britain was only half completed.

Outside the Party were various revolutionary groupings which declared loyalty to the Communist International but were reluctant to lose their separate identity. The Comintern would have none of this sectarianism and demanded the calling of a second unity congress, a further opportunity to weld the strongest possible party.

The following item from *The Communist* illustrates the CPGB's constructive attitude towards the renewed unity efforts.

### Thoughts on unity

Why does the EC of the Communist International insist on a new unity conference?

Because, in the first place it is devoting its energies at present to the realisation in every country of the world of the principle laid down at the 2nd Congress - that one powerful Communist Party, or rather one section of the Communist International, and one only, should exist in each country. Its efforts are causing at present a radical cleansing of the Italian Socialist Party; they are driving the French Socialist Party towards a definite break with its ambiguous and opportunist past; they have split the great Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany from top to bottom, and have created, with one hammer blow, the largest Communist Party in the world. It is obvious that where the Party allegiance of hundreds of thousands is being thrown into the melting pot elsewhere, the comrades at the centre of the International are justifiably impatient at what appear to them to be the petty squabbles, petty bickerings, petty regards for prestige, which keep the British Communists divided into several groups.

Secondly, while they recognise that, all things taken into consideration, our Communist Party is the "orthodox" organisation for Britain, they insist that no stone must be left unturned, even at the expense of our own self-love, to bring onto the right track other elements that are not so orthodox, but none the less are sincere revolutionaries and genuinely devoted to the cause of Communism.

To quote Zinoviev: "We have to fight against both Right and Left; but not at all in the same way or with the same methods." The first are our class enemies, with whom there can be no compromise; the second are "Communists of tomorrow," who only mistakenly call themselves "Left" because they do not understand that nothing can be more "Left" than Communism.

In Bukharin's words: "If there are only thirty of them and you bring them in, it will be worth while." In this respect, of course, we at any rate are under no illusions as to the numbers in question. The problem, however, is one not of numbers, but of principles.

*The Communist*, November 25 1920

In *The Leninist* No119 we examined the leftist politics of the Workers Socialist Federation by Sylvia Pankhurst, which set up the "Communist Party - British Section of the Third International" in opposition to the CPGB. The CP-BSTI comrades eventually accepted the position of

the Comintern EC and joined in the new party at the second unity congress, which took place in Leeds at the end of January 1921. Pankhurst's scheme for a 'left' block within the Party, with a separate organisation and newspaper, was not taken on board.

In September 1920 in Scotland the Communist Labour Party was set up by a number of shop stewards and various revolutionary groups, including members of the Socialist Labour Party rump which had previously refused to join the CPGB. Just back from the 2nd Congress of the Comintern and his talks with Lenin, Willie Gallacher was able to win the majority of the CLP to back unity negotiations with the CPGB, and they too joined the enlarged Party at the Leeds congress. A small number refused, either from the left position of rejecting any use of parliament, or like John McLean, putting Scottish nationalism above the need for communist unity.

The National Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement took part in preparations for Leeds and in the congress itself. Born out of industrial struggles during World War I, when the official trade union leaders backed the bosses and their imperialist war, the SS and WC went on to take a lead in the Hands Off Russia campaign. Its leaders joined the CPGB, bringing it considerable influence among the militant workers.

The 'Left Wing' grouping within the Independent Labour Party also took part in the congress, though they did not join the Party right away. Their tactic of staying in the ILP and fighting for the communist position is still employed today by those comrades in other left organisations won to the discipline of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee.

This report of the congress, with its fraternal address, appeared in the Party's weekly paper.

### Leeds Unity Conference

(Report of the Leeds Unity Conference. "The Communist parties are dead: long live the Communist Party!")

One hundred and seventy delegates representing the branches of the Communist Party of Great Britain (BSTI), and various independent Communist groups assembled at the Victory Hotel, Leeds, on Saturday and Sunday, with the object of merging the various organisations into a united Communist Party. Jack Tanner (SS and WC) was voted to the chair.

Certain preliminary matters, such as the appointment of a Standing Orders Committee, having been disposed of the Chairman briefly addressed the delegates, telling them they were assembled to carry out the first duty to the international Communist movement, and to the working class of Britain in particular. They were proposing to bring about a united Communist Party. The work of the conference was to construct a machine, and there should be no question in the mind of any delegate as to what the purpose of that machine was. It must be constructed to carry on an intensive and ruthless fight against capitalism and reaction wherever they manifested themselves. This was probably the most important task that the revolutionary movement in this country had yet to face, and he trusted delegates would concentrate as never before their efforts on the task before them. The Confer-

ence would be an index from which comrades in all parts of the world would be able to judge the earnestness, determination and understanding of the Communist movement in this country.

J V Leckie (CLP) moved the adoption of the Unity Committee's report, taking the occasion to speak of the position of the Communist Labour Party.

T Watkins (CPBSTI) seconded the resolution. As representative of his Party he would say they had been actuated throughout with the spirit of unity that was necessary to make the conference a success.

A MacManus (CPGB) supported the resolution. He said that his Party had to all intents and purposes wound up its affairs; its members would be party to any decisions arrived at by the present Conference.

The resolution was then put and carried, and, on the suggestion of the Chairman, certain other matters of a rather formal nature were included in it.

G H Brown (fraternal delegate from the Left Wing of the ILP) then conveyed hearty greetings from the Communists he represented to the Conference. He said that a fortnight or three weeks ago the National Committee of the Unity Convention Arrangements Committee had carried a resolution that the Left Wing should continue to work inside the Labour Party until Easter, and that if then the Communists lost on the floor of the Conference at Southport, they should come for advice to the Executive Committee of the United Communist Party. If that advice should be to the effect that the Left Wing should leave the ILP and come into the Communist Party, he along with a great many others were determined to take that advice.

J T Murphy (fraternal delegate from the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committees) said that he wanted to do more than merely welcome the Congress, he wanted this to be the introduction to the practical task which the Communist Party had before it in relation to the rest of the movement in this country. The NAC of the Shop Stewards' movement had played an important part in the negotiations which had culminated in the present Conference, yet the movement itself was not in the same category as a political party, but embraced workers who were not Communists. The fact that the NAC of the Shop Stewards had played the part it had done with regard to the development of the Communist Party arose out of the fact that the movement had come into being as a result of the revolutionary impulses which had been given to the industrial movement. Revolutionists had dominated the situation throughout, and now practically every member of the National Committee of the Shop Stewards was a member of some Communist Party. It was because the National Committee was of the character it was that it was possible for it to play the part it had done in helping on the negotiations for the development of a united Communist Party. It would stress the necessity for its active members to join the Communist Party, and reciprocally would expect all industrial workers who were members of the Communist Party to participate in the work of the Shop Stewards' movement. Many people who did not understand Communism were being impelled to move in that direction, and it was our duty, while clearly organising our own party, to see that we harmonised on every point we could all those tendencies in a revolutionary direction which manifested themselves inside the workshop ...

When the congress reassembled in the afternoon, the first business before it was the resolution to merge the Com-

munist Party of Great Britain, the Communist Labour Party, the Communist Party (BSTI) and the independent Communist groups represented at the Congress into a United Communist Party.

William Gallagher (CLP) moved this resolution. He said there had been numerous delegates from Britain at the Moscow Conference, but the British Communists there had not made a creditable display. Each section had seemed more anxious to impress the congress with its own revolutionary fervour than to get together with the other sections and do something really valuable. Thus, the unfortunate position had been arrived at, where the Executive Committee of the Communist International had been obliged to take matters out of the hands of the British delegation, and make arrangements for bringing the Communists of this country together and getting a definite and well-organised party started. We had failed in the past because so many of us had been too concerned with personalities rather than with principles; but from now onwards the one thing that must count was the world movement.

William Paul (CPGB) seconded the resolution, saying that at that Conference we had forged a weapon which we were going to use in the near future in order to upset and eliminate the capitalist class. We thanked our comrades in Moscow for showing us that not only could communists fight successfully in the industrial battlefield, but for showing mental courage in the realms of international policy and social reconstruction. On the battlefield the Russian Communist had shown a heroism outshining that of any army ever raised in the past.

A lengthy discussion was naturally anticipated by some, but the general feeling of the Congress was that further speech upon this resolution was unnecessary. It was agreed that the vote be taken at once; the whole assembly rose, sang the "International", and cheered, and the vote then being formally taken the resolution was carried unanimously with renewed applause.

...[then] came the most dramatic moment of the conference. From the Chair it was announced that Comrade Friis, a fraternal delegate from the Executive of the Third International and representing also the Norwegian comrades had arrived in Leeds despite the fact that a passport had been refused him.

Friis immediately mounted the platform and was greeted by a volley of cheers and the singing of the International, then after he had spoken in terse, effective sentences of admirable English he left the hall, and, by the way he came, set out again to Norway.

He said: "I come here in a double capacity. First at the instruction of the Executive of the Communist International. From it, I carry hearty greetings and congratulations. I come also as a delegate from the Norwegian party to offer fraternal salutations.

"The fact that I'm here is a proof of our determination to defy, and our ability to overcome bourgeois laws and regulations. This movement of ours has friends at every frontier, comrades on every ship, helpers at every station.

"By your resolution you have become a living link with the revolutionary movement all over the World - with Moscow and Norway ..."

As he left the hall, at the end of his speech Friis was again given an ovation, and again the "International" was sung.

*The Communist* February 5 1921

Compiled by Doug Hulme

# REVIEWS

## Gravy Train

Chantal Mouffe (ed), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, Verso Press 1992, pp254, £11.95

WORKERS OF the world - get a large dictionary quick. Verso Press have a new series of books planned, called *Phronesis* (that is right, it is not in my big dictionary either), of which the above is the first title.

The thrust of this book - or its *sine qua non*, as Chantal Mouffe would say - is extremely easy to understand, and the various authors (all, you will be astonished to hear, are highly placed academics) are totally open and unashamed about their political 'project': "Rather than reject the liberal tradition, they argue, the aim should be to radicalise it" (back cover).

Or, more specific, Sheldon Wolin argues that the 'left' should look to "John Locke, not Karl Marx" (p249). It is painfully clear that we are not dealing here with academic 'Marxism', but with academic ex-'Marxism'.

Interestingly, I think you can discern four general phases in the history, or gangrenous decay, of academic 'Marxism' since the last world war. Firstly, academic 'Marxism' proper, in the sense that it claimed Karl Marx as its inspiration and adheres formally to Marxist methodology (at a push). Secondly, post-'Marxism', which nibbled away hungrily at all the main tenets of Marxism, under the dishonest guise of 'updating' it. Thirdly, ex post-'Marxism', which 'creatively' repudiates Marxism verbatim, yet still likes to strike up a phoney 'left' pose. Fourthly, out and out anti-Marxism, anti-communism, which is pathetically desperate to make its final peace with bourgeois democracy, and never loses a chance to viciously attack "totalitarianism" (ie bureaucratic socialism and communism in general).

This book represents the rapid transition to the fourth phase, propelled forward by the counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union. The 'respectable' academic mask slips sometimes and we are

treated to gutter press anti-communism; violent socialist revolution is "plainly pathological under contemporary conditions of interdependency" (p249).

Like the vast majority of academic works today with any degree of 'radical' pretensions, it oscillates between crass generalisations or obvious truths - delivered with the air of someone discovering something truly profound - and the downright bizarre.

Almost every other sentence of this book is ripe with silliness, such as "Defending and valuing the political form of society specific to liberal democracy does not commit one to the capitalist economic system" (p2). And talk about having your political cake and eating it, "capitalism without capitalism" (p204). Yet the intention is crystal clear: capitalism is here to stay forever, and you better get used to it.

Chantal Mouffe herself almost seems to revel in her own pessimism and fatalism - which is the familiar trademark of academics both 'left' and 'right' these days - when she throws up her hands in despair and exclaims: "Our understanding of radical democracy, on the contrary, postulates the very impossibility of a final realization of democracy" (our emphasis, p13).

The various authors of this waste of recycled paper devote their energies to concocting the most fantastic, and tortuous, 'radical' utopias, displaying during the book a disturbing unawareness of their obvious irrelevance. Their hair-brained schemes and plans are manifestly unrealisable, and surely they are aware of it.

The whole book is an elaborate academic charade, with all the assorted actors carefully donning their respective masks - which are then casually tossed in the trash-can afterwards, as they dutifully step forward to collect their cushy lectureship/research pay cheques from their ruling class paymasters. Such is the *sine qua non* of 'radical' bourgeois academics.

Eddie Ford

## Waving Flags

Laibach, 'Kapital'. Test Dept, 'Pax Britannica'

LAIBACH'S mix of military drumming, brass punctuation and electronically processed sound and sampling place them stylistically close to bands such as Cabaret Voltaire, Test-Department, SPK and Einsturzende Neubatteh.

Applying volume, symmetry and a minimal movement which is very powerful and conveyed with discipline might lead one to identify Laibach as extremely rightwing. Indeed from my position in the 'gods' at the Astoria, I saw Nazi salutes from members of the audience below. However none of these were returned by the band. Laibach plays a cunning game; teasing the appetites of both left and right.

One has to dig deeper to find Laibach's political motivations. On the cover to their new album *Kapital* we get the following information, in small print: "Laibach is part of 'Neue Slowenische Kunst/New Slovan Art'. Co-founded in 1984 in Ljubljana by Irwin and 'Cosmokinetic Cabinet (Noordung)'."

So they are Slovenian nationalists and many details point towards an upholding of fascism and nihilism. Under a paragraph titled "essence" we get a defence of capitalism: "It is simply the natural ambition of any organisation to plan all its actions. In other words [Capitalism is a means - TF] to minimise unknown quantities." What 'unknown quantities'? Communism? The struggles of the working class? The future? Progress?

This double album is of epic proportions and is daubed with Wagnerian titles such as 'Germania' (incidentally a registered trademark of NSK), 'The hunters' funeral procession - from the wunderhorn trilogy' and 'Hymn to the sun'. Dodgy.

The somewhat seductive drum pat-

tern at the forefront to 'White law' is accompanied by the chorus: "White law, injecting pure gold. White law, projecting white will. White law, keep your eyes wide. White law, the chance will come again." Very dodgy, in fact.

The listener is battered with a fusion of Latin, English and German lyrics set to a backdrop of hip-hop and techno beats that are injected with a Gregorian/slave galley chant.

Laibach, dressed to thrill in customised uniforms, complete with blonde hair and symmetrical formation, emerged from the 'Burundi' intro-tape with a volume and delivery speed worthy of the term 'blitzkrieg'. Nietzschean overtones were emphasised with the lead singer's officers uniform, strange head-dress (Slovenian national costume, the Dalai Lama's hat or brain receptacle of a Star Trek alien?) and back projections that moved from monochrome scenes of conflict (were those soldiers depicted as Russians terrorising Slovenians?) to 'pure' elements of 'fire', 'air', 'water', 'earth' and 'nudity'.

Laibach is a futurist symmetry machine. Their conscious affiliation and collaboration with other politicised artistic groups forms a co-ordinated and disciplined cultural wing to the emerging coca-cola swilling neo-fascism of 'Young Europa'. This has to be met with equal discipline and determination, politically and artistically. Collectively we might then flush the bastards out of the woodwork.

In contrast, Test Department's latest work entitled "Pax Britannica" reflects the dominant ideology as a means of constructing opposition. *Pax Britannica* is an oratorio in five movements. Oratorios are usually composed around religious themes. Theology is dispensed with here, the work focussing on British history's state propaganda. Test Department has produced a collage of manipulated texts. This is set within a sonic fabric of Celtic strains and pastoral sections reminiscent of Vaughan Williams.

Listening to the web of sampled speech one can discover fragments of luminaries like Kenneth Baker, Chur-

chill, Thatcher, Heseltine, Vera Lynn, Kinnock, Major and Bush. Interwoven are reworkings of 'Jerusalem', stanzas from Coleridge and Shelley and shards of Oscar Wilde and Rudyard Kipling.

Unlike Laibach this album not only reflects things that can be seen in everyday life on the streets and through the media, it also declares dissent. The seemingly endless roll of honour is disrupted as Millwall FC supporters chant "Who the fucking, who the fucking, who the fucking hell are you?" and Brixton proclaims "Can't pay, won't pay. Break the law, not the poor". The accompanying text on the inner sleeve (JH Plumb, *The death of the past*) reinforces Test Department's political motivation: "The past has only served the few; perhaps history may serve the multitude".

*Pax Britannica* is no dancefloor rave. This may not be good for sales figures in our free market economy. Nevertheless, Test Department is interesting. They have made a serious attempt to disturb their audience's preconceptions of nationalist imperial history. They take what is already there and reappropriates it. By upholding an image of positive struggle against the weight of historical exploitation, Test Department retains a critical realism. In comparison Laibach's offerings remain opportunist and reactionary flagwaving.

Over the years Test Department has recorded a series of LP's which have been used to support proletarian causes such as the miners' Great Strike ('Shoulder to Shoulder' 1984) and the poll tax (various benefit gigs). Their earliest performances were in disused railway sidings and arches and since then their work as part of 'Ministry of Power' has taken them into Brechtian epic theatre (like 'Gododdin' with Brith Gof in 1988, 'The Second Coming' at Rolex's disused premises in Glasgow and 'Demonomania' at Valladollid Theatre Festival in 1987).

Despite being non-committal as to their exact political position they continue, via art, to promote working class politics in a well choreographed and accessible manner.

Tim Fletcher

# ACTION

## Communist Party Seminars

London: Every Sunday, 5pm central London. On Sunday June 14 we start a new seven seminar course on 'Historical Materialism'.

●Sunday June 14: Progress - is there such a thing as historical progress? What causes society to develop - the productive forces or the class struggle? What is a mode of production?

●Sunday June 21: Base and superstructure - If people make history, why do things often turn out to be so different to what they were fighting for?

●Sunday June 28: Primitive socio-economic formations: - What was primitive communism? What is the difference between human society and animal community?

●Sunday July 5: Slavery: - How did slave societies emerge? What caused slave society to decay?

●Sunday July 12: Feudalism: - What was feudalism? Were the peasants always revolting?

●Sunday July 19: Capitalism: - What is economic and non-economic coercion? What allowed capitalism to emerge as the dominant mode of production?

●Sunday July 26: Dynamism and stagnation - Does capitalism still allow the forces of production to advance? Is it still progressive?

●Sunday August 9: Other societies and roads - What was the Asiatic mode of production? Do all societies have to follow the 'European' 'ladder of progress'?

Seminars are divided into two, with the theoretical opening in the first half and discussion on current questions in the second. Registration for this series of seminars is £5 waged, £2 unwaged. Details from the usual address/telephone number or from sellers of *The Leninist*.

Glasgow: Our series of seminars in Scotland continues on Sunday June 7 with 'The experience of the Soviet Union'. Subsequent seminars will outline the communist approach on the women's question, imperialism and the miners' Great Strike of 1984/85. For further information, please phone 071-431 3135.

## ●European Conference

December 10-11, Edinburgh.

Have the Danes killed off the Maastricht treaty? In their recent referendum on the agreement, the voters of that country rejected the deal. "Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen", sang the retired club 'turn' Dennis Skinner - Tory right wingers could just as well have joined in on the chorus. Both - from their different angles - have essentially narrow, national projects. The convergence of the reformist left and the right of Tories should not therefore surprise us.

The Danish vote is no blow for internationalism and solidarity. It is a backward, reactionary result that we certainly should not celebrate. If the Irish - swayed by arguments against abortion - vote on June 18 against Maasticht, should workers celebrate? Hardly.

While these minor problems may slow the process, the integration of Europe into a more cohesive whole will continue. The 'Little Englander' reformists of *Militant* can fool themselves that a "capitalist unification of Europe is an illusion" (*Militant* June 5), but history marches on.

All of this adds urgency to the fight to build the CPGB hosted conference of workers' organisations from across Europe timed to coincide with the EC heads of government summit. Workshops and plenary sessions in the conference will look at the current state of the class struggle across Europe, how we can learn from each other and how we can start to link our fight politically and organisationally. Registration for the event is £25. For more details of the agenda, accommodation and other information contact Anne Murphy at our usual address.

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# Yugosllaughter!

Is the bloodshed in ex-Yugoslavia the result of ancient hatreds?

**T**HE NATIONS which used to constitute Yugoslavia are descending, seemingly inexorably, into a maelstrom of barbarism, massacres and pogroms - with the distinct possibility that because of events in Sarajevo the imperialists of the European Community will eventually intervene militarily. Ominous historical precedents reverberate.

The United Nations, carrying through its imperialist set agenda has dutifully imposed sweeping sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, with only China and Zimbabwe voting against. In tandem, EC officials have already approved a wide-ranging package of sanctions, which entail the severing of all air links to EC countries, a freeze on credit facilities and, crucially, a trade embargo which includes oil.

Despite the splits this has caused in the Serbian body politic a defiant General Bozidar Stevanic, the chief of the joint Serbian and Montenegrin air force, responded by saying that "If anyone moves against Belgrade, he will get a real welcome" (*The Independent* June 2 1992). Clearly, UN and EC sanctions are the threshold of a widening of the whole bloody conflict.

Serbia has been cast in the role of the devil by the bourgeois press. We are supposed to believe that it was entirely the diabolical machinations of the federal army (which is in effect the Serbian army) and the Serbian irregulars which created the carnage now erupting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Trotskyite *Socialist Outlook* supplies a perfect 'left' echo to this view and lays the blame for the conflict fair and square on "the very deliberate policies of the Milosevic leadership in Belgrade" (May 30 1992).

Rattling the imperialist sabre *The Independent* demands military intervention immediately and offers the following bit of chilling advice: "It would be easy and safe for western air forces to destroy the artillery that has been bombarding Sarajevo, Dubrovnik and other cities ... this is a risk worth taking" (editorial June 1 1992). The hundred thousand or more Iraqis killed in the US-led Gulf War slaughter would probably disagree with *The Independent's* armchair strategic schemes.

Revoltingly, the left Labourist *Tribune* is even more cravenly pro-imperialist. Imperialism should *already* have intervened: "Western refusal, until now, even to contemplate limited military action to re-open Sarajevo airport and clear the artillery off the hills surrounding the city, has been strange indeed" (May 29 1992). Showing its true colours *Tribune* not only fervently advocates sanctions, it calls for "Western military relief for Sarajevo" (*ibid*). In case we cannot starve 'em into submission we can always shoot 'em, says *Tribune*.

The only way to understand the savage processes evolving in ex-Yugoslavia is to view the situation in its historic and current international context. We can then see that the root of the conflict does not lie in the head of Slobodan Milosevic, dubbed by one commentator as "Mussolini with a hair-piece", vile opportunist and chauvinist though he may be.

At the beginning of the 20th century all the nationalities in the Balkan, the 'tinderbox of Europe' as all our school textbooks said, were constantly at each others throats and permanently at the mercy of the larger predatory powers that surrounded them. Inter-communal savagery and pogroms were endemic,



● Barbarism, massacres and pogroms: the counterrevolution unfolds in ex-Yugoslavia

with the Serbs no better or no worse than anybody else.

What we have in ex-Yugoslavia is a replica of the tensions bubbling to the surface in the ex-USSR, only on a more heightened scale - a huge Nagorny Karabakh, on the EC doorstep. Class politics have been subsumed by national politics. There is virtually no sense of class consciousness or unity with fellow workers, except for unity on the most fundamental level you can have: unity on the level of nationality and language. In other words, an *exclusive* unity.

The fires of national antagonisms are being stoked up furiously by the proto-bourgeoisies in the old states, whether they be Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian or Croatian. However, this does not mean that they are strong. Exactly the opposite. It means that the proto-bourgeoisies, emerging mole-like to face the harsh though alluring capitalist sunlight, are weak, feel extremely insecure. But they are fully aware of the fact that if they are to be elevated to the status of a strong bourgeoisie, they require a stable home market.

This is plainly not the situation at the moment. Capitalism exists on a very rudimentary level, in a mafiosi form. Unsurprisingly, this means that there is nothing to keep the potential bourgeoisies together, as they have no cohesive identity. Why should a future member of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie look to unity with a member of the Russian bourgeoisie? At the moment no reason at all, of course. The proto-bourgeoisies may be able to unite the economy, but only in terms of crudely carving out their own markets, their own parcel of land so to speak, which can only be done negatively.

Unlike their role models in the advanced capitalist states, there is every reason for the proto-bourgeoisies to break apart. This is what we are witnessing in ex-Yugoslavia. The capitalist creed of every man for himself is spreading like a deadly cancer and ripping the fabric of the region to pieces.

Butchery, massacre, pogrom, intimidation, are the new game. The proto-bourgeoisies are deliberately fostering national hatreds and *all sides are equally guilty and equally responsible*. It must be remembered that ordinary people lived side by side when the

Communist Party of Yugoslavia was in power. There might have been subdued national rivalries, but they never came to the surface, massacres were unknown. It is only since the break up of bureaucratic socialism that unbridled hatred and ethnic killings have become endemic.

Communists have to emphasise that it is not the atavistic hatred of ordinary people suddenly being inflamed. We treat with contempt such theories, peddled by agonised liberals. This is the working out of counterrevolution: *it is the form counterrevolution is taking in such countries where the soil for capitalism is thin.*

If you have any doubt look at the ex-GDR, where there is 40% unemployment, whole industries lie destroyed and the GNP has experienced a huge drop. Yet you will not see Protestants turning savagely on Catholics, or taking part in state sponsored pogroms against immigrant workers. The obvious reason for this is that Federal Germany is pumping money and capital into the east. It is not in the interests of the bourgeoisie to stoke up national hatreds. The German ruling class might persecute communists - but it is *not* going to plunge Germany into civil war and urge mobs on to the streets. The bourgeoisie is strong, stable and expecting to successfully unite the economy.

On the other hand, Poland is closer to the 'Yugoslavian scenario'. There is no immediate prospect of imperialist capital pouring in to save the day for the proto-bourgeoisie, no immediate chance of a secure capitalist order. It is very likely that the Lech Walesa regime will point the damning finger at ex-communists (as there are few national minorities, Jews, etc, left) and launch mobs onto the streets, in order to secure a degree of loyalty from the masses.

Of course, counterrevolution takes different forms in different countries. Contrary to what many on the British left, especially Trotskyites, seem to believe, there is no 'identikit' counterrevolution. In Yugoslavia, as in the Caucasus, we are spectators to counterrevolution in its most barbaric form.

Engels, in his much maligned writings on the South Slav question (Yugoslavia literally means 'South Slav'), categorised the peoples of this area as

"non-historic peoples", or "counter-revolutionary peoples", who in the context of the 1848 revolutions looked towards the Tsar and reaction. He emphasised the point that these peoples were divided into innumerable, warring groupings and could never achieve anything unless they came together or were 'wiped out' culturally - not in the Hitlerian sense, but by being absorbed into German/Austrian culture: "These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under foot in the course of history, as Hegel says, these residual fragments of peoples always become fanatical standard-bearers of counterrevolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution" (CW Vol 8 p234).

We can see that Engels was, in essence, correct. Although the South Slavs were bought together after World War I, under the weight of counterrevolution they are again falling behind the march of history, in danger of being consigned to a historical backwater.

The recent frantic huffing and puffing, squeals of outrage and moral condemnation by the imperialist powers are, of course, monumental displays of hypocrisy. They do not give a damn about the people of this area and any tears they shed are crocodile tears.

What bothers the imperialist powers is the instability created by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the possibility of any spill over into neighbouring countries. Already ex-Yugoslavia is the focus for the tensions between Turkey and Greece, both Nato members. Greece, in particular, is deeply worried that the break up of Yugoslavia could be the herald for the break up of Greece, namely its Macedonian northern region.

A recent issue of the *Financial Times* carried a large back page advert from the Greek Tourist Board. The advert was not designed to win more visitors. It was a piece of Greek propaganda, which used every device to claim that Macedonia (which straddles both Greece and ex-Yugoslavia, and in its ex-Yugoslavian form is set on the road to statehood) is Hellenic, part

of Greek civilisation, that it was the birthplace of Aristotle and Alexander the Great, who were *Greeks*, and so on. Why make such a song and dance?

Both the Greek ruling class and the Serbian proto-bourgeoisie are worried that the northern Macedonians might want to unite with their southern kin in Greece. Hence Greece has been opposed to the idea of sanctions and is relatively pro-Serbian.

On the other hand, Turkey is interested in expanding its influence, both east towards the Turkic nations in the ex-USSR but also west towards the nations that once made up the Ottoman Empire, such as Bulgaria (which has a substantial Turkish minority) and ex-Yugoslavia. Turkey will be keen to act as the champion of their 'brother' Muslims in Bosnia, who are oppressed by the 'evil' Serbs (though we all know that Turkey really wants to exploit their 'brother' Muslims).

Given the potential danger, the UN wants to contain the problem in Bosnia, Croatia and elsewhere. Even though it is a minute conflict on one level (hardly up there with the Korean or Gulf War), it does have the capacity to suck in other powers and exacerbate tensions. More importantly, it can stir things up, not just between the proto-imperialist powers, such as Greece and Turkey, but between the major imperialist powers, like Germany, France, the US and Japan. This sort of bloody process can happen. It has happened before.

This is the *real* significance of the events unfolding in ex-Yugoslavia. It is not the fact that a bread queue gets shelled by mortars, or that ancient hatreds are being rekindled. It is that this region is experiencing *counterrevolution* and, this is the crucial point to comprehend, experiencing counterrevolution not when the world bourgeoisie is being brought together by a *dominant* power, ie the United States after World War II, but during a period of pre-general crisis when the world bourgeoisie is being drawn apart and organised into rival *antagonistic* blocs.

Undeniably it is one of history's ironies that the imperialist triumph over bureaucratic socialism has created the conditions whereby imperialism will tear itself apart.

Eddie Ford