Tories vs. the postal workers

Who holds the future?

POSTAL workers have shown determination to win their dispute with Royal Mail.

The new management deal proposed was rejected by the strike committee. Further strike action has been organised over the next month, rather than continuing fruitless negotiations.

This decision should be strongly applauded throughout the union. The decision to re-instate the industrial action followed a national meeting of branch secretaries and the union leadership. This meeting made it clear that any settlement could not include Royal Mail’s proposals on team working and the second delivery.

The consultation process has made the negotiators more accountable and clearly has been a great strength within the dispute, leading to three successful one-day strikes.

Royal Mail have mishandled the mood of postal workers again. The new deal aimed to divide the workforce by linking an agreement to team working with a one-off lump sum payment of £550 to Postman Higher Grade and £150 to Postwomen and Postmen. They then tried to mislead the indoor staff by saying the only outstanding issue was protection of the second delivery. Once again they failed to divide postal workers, with well over 95 per cent on strike.

The issues that divide the two sides are vast. The negotiations at ACAS can only lead to a quick settlement if one side compromises. ACAS could at some point give the CWU negotiators a deal they find acceptable.

CWU branches should ensure that the leadership remains accountable and that no agreement is given without full consultation with the branches. Industrial action should not be suspended without this.

The government has made it crystal clear that it expects the Post Office board not to give any ground to the union.

Headline’s statement that the next Tory government would privatise Royal Mail, splitting it into eleven regions, turns the heat on both the employers and the union.

Tory threats to ban strikes in the public sector and Blair’s noises about binding arbitration also raise the stakes.

The threat to suspend the Post Office monopoly for one month has the clear aim of putting pressure on the union to settle the dispute, although European regulations imposing VAT on non-monopoly suppliers make it difficult to see how this could happen.

Royal Mail is likely to escalate the dispute by trying to provoke unofficial strikes to force a lock-out.

The national leadership should not allow a situation to develop where CWU branches are locked out. A national indefinite strike must be the response.

The dispute is likely to take a number of twists over the next few weeks as Royal Mail and the government try to defeat the Postal workers. Solidarity should be organised throughout the labour movement.

CWU members working for BT should invite a postal worker to branch meetings, and be prepared to levy their members if the dispute becomes an indefinite walkout.

Trades Councils and Labour Parties should help CWU branches organise public meetings to build support for the dispute.

The disputes across the public sector offer a focus for labour movement solidarity activity. The best way to sink these plans will be a series of successful disputes in the public sector this summer.
No smooth ride for Socialist Alliance in Manchester

Chris Jones

GREATER Manchester Socialist Alliance agreed a founding charter at its July 13 conference. About 60 people attended—including visitors from Scottish, Coventry and Liverpool alliances and the Walsall Democratic Labour Party. Militant Labour made up over a quarter of those attending and about half were former members. A handful were Labour party members. Five SLP members attended, though mainly as independents.

It is reported that Manchester SLP agreed to affiliate, but never implemented the decision and was then broken up into smaller branches amid factional in-fighting.

The two most contentious items on the agenda were on Ireland and electoral strategy. Neither resolved to a satisfactory outcome. Militant Labour's position was either carried or incorporated on both points.

On the first, the motion passed, therefore, the alliance is in favour both of troops out and organising a peace force to defend the British-imposed boundaries of the Northern Ireland state.

On the elections, the proposal that all local socialist candidates should unite under a Socialist Alliance banner for the general elections was agreed. It was however agreed to link up with other socialists—whether effectively means to support Militant Labour and possibly SLP candidates. In all probability these two organisations will be standing against each other.

There is no mention of support in the election of a Labour government.

Fortunatelly most people agreed that it was not the contents of the charter, but the campaigning activity of the alliance which would determine whether or not it had any role to play in the election of socialist alliance in October.

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Defend and extend the welfare state

Gleny Morris

A MARCH in defence of the welfare state has been organised for the autumn which will demand the forthcoming Labour government defend and extend all aspects of the welfare state.

The Tories have privatised services, closed hospitals and reduced funding in education. But Labour needs to be pushed to oppose these attacks — both now and when they are in government.

The march will begin in Hull and end at Labour Party conference.

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Post-Dayton double-dealing

Geoff Ryan

RADOJAN KARADZIC has been forced to give up all his political posts in a deal struck between Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and US envoy Rich- ard Holbrooke. This move is not about rebuilding a united Bosnia—it continues the divisive and embittered in the Dayton peace accord, its replacement as President of the Bosnian Serbs, his former deputy Biljana Plavsic, is an even more hard-line Serb nationalist and a central figure in the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale.

Karadzic's removal is designed to allow elections scheduled for September to go ahead—whether or not it will lead to his arrest for war crimes remains to be seen. These elections will tend to confirm ethnic divisions within Bosnia, reinforcing those in favour of partition.

Ms Plavsic's stated position in the Dayton accord may strengthen her hand as a supporter of partition, but she will also be faced with opposition from forces loyal to Milosevic.

For Milosevic the most immediate issue is ending sanctions against Serbia, without whose chances of re-election are slim. For two years he has been organizing branches of his own Socialist Party in Banja Luka, the largest city in the newly and encouraged activities of the Western Yugoslav Left (JU) associated with Mijana Markovic, his JU, has attempted to portray itself as an anti-nationalist party committed to peace, Mijana Markovic's hatred of the Pale clique is undoubtable real—the once compared Biljana Plavsic to Dr. Margaret.

September's elections will show how Ms Plavsic's strategy has worked.

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Crown vs East Timor Freedom

Adam Hartman

THE TRIAL of four peace activists, Louis Kriekard, Andrew Neave, Joanna Wilson and Angie Zetler, opened at Liverpool Crown Court on July 22. Charged with "cooperating in a conspiracy to commit criminal damage, and actual damage, in the 1970s" in East Timor, the tiny, isolated island 10 miles to the west of Singapore.

The four were found guilty in 1979 of possessing a firearm. The evidence was kept secret for 20 years, but it became known as the East Timorese civilians and freedom fighters.

At least 200,000 East Timorese have died since 1975 as a result of Indonesia's occupation. The British government should also be in the dock for licensing RLC's current main claim to the civilised world.

The defendants have assembled a formidable array of expert witnesses, including John Pilger, who are testifying to the genocide in East Timor and the offensive use of Hawks sold as "trainers."

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A bridge from today's struggles to the fight for a Labour victory

The anti-union laws have criminalised workers' defence against management attacks. 

The welfare state is under constant attack. Hospitals have been privatised and closed. Parents have to pay for books and other basics for their children's education. Those on benefits live in real poverty. The homeless sleep under bridges. 

When it seems it cannot get worse, it does. 

MP vote themselves massive pay hikes and a further public sector pay freeze looms. The Tories amend the Asylum and Immigration Bill to make sure that thousands of refugees are denied benefit. Major presides over a victory that puts the national community in the six counties. 

Hostile posturing by the Tory Manifesto will bring us to Royal Mail's monopoly. Kenneth Clarke's immigration laws will open the door to the welfare state. 

The Tory Manifesto is catastrophic. A further term would lead to further devastation of working people's rights and living standards.

WORKING PEOPLE have suffered blow after blow during 17 years of Tory rule. Unemployment has soared. Those in work are pushed to breaking point.

It will be particularly timely if, as is likely, it co-ordinates with the general election campaign. This first Labour march in defence of the welfare state can be an important launch of the European campaign.

Labour's initiatives are real. So too is solidarity with post-war workers, the Liverpool dockers and other workers on strike: but they are not enough. Something is missing.

It is necessary to build a bridge between the crucial work around these issues and the fight to elect a Labour government.

This is why the Socialists Campaign Group (supporters' network) has called for a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SLCV). The left must have its independent voice in calling for a Labour vote. Support for some elections and campaigns must not be narrowed in electoral frenzy. The political focus the election will bring must be used to bring new people into action.

This is why Socialist Outlook wholeheartedly supports a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

New Labour whimsy

IT COMES as no surprise to find that many of the proposals in the "New Labour" manifesto have had an airing already.

Behind Tony and his political gofers is a growing number of liberal academics and journalists keen on part of the New Labour project. Professor David Marquand, Oxforddon John Gray, economist John Kay and Observer editor Will Hutton are the best known names.

Many of the Labour leader's favourite buzz words originate in their writings. 

They share a deep hostility to the Thatcherite market philosophy of the 1980s. 

They want politicians to use the state to intervene on the national interest. Business cannot be left on its own to deliver the good life for all the state's citizens. 

After the social dislocation of the last decade "the task is instead to construct a new form of capitalism".


They characterise Blairism as democratic socialists, "giving renewed expression to the party's founding beliefs".

Marxism is the heresy here, not social democratic politics. The attempts of Ed-ward Bernstein to reform the spirit of the German SPD in 1899 are described as "astonishingly relevant today".

We are told that Blair's notion of "strong communities" in which all have individual rights alongside individual responsibilities has its origins in an ethical socialism which draws on the ideas of Ruskin and Tawney. 

The family is portrayed as the given absolute, the institution which needs to exist in order to create the strong society and the strong community. It is the place where individuals learn their sense of right and wrong. Christian morality underpins the whole arrangement.

Mandelson and Liddle talk about how the present "social security system un- intentionally encourages cause, not com- mitted acts" by giving benefits to young women. Furthermore, "the left of cen- tre's commitment to racial and sexual equality" has given the appearance of a Labour party indifferent "to the family and individual responsibility".

The universal welfare state - that great banner of Labourism - comes in for serious criticism. It needs to be substan- tially overhauled and a new emphasis placed on family responsibility rather than the safety net of state provision.

Some and daughters should receive financial in- ducements to save for their par- ent's old age. 

Jack Straw's concerns over young people are a facet of this right wing social agenda.

There will be no wholesale increase in public spending, no job creation schemes and no new taxation of the rich and better off. The only new taxes to be introduced will be on inheritance and a once-only tax imposition on privatised utilities. Work schemes will provide a "carve-out for youth unemployment and eventually eradicate long-term unem- ployment".

It is only enough to fund the grandiose training and education schemes which are to create new pros- pects for the future. 

It is the highest order. 

And as the nationalised trade of the boys in the backroom, the reality of the New Labour project is a continuation of the reactionary social policies we have had knocked down our throats for the last twenty years. Even the targets are the same - miscreant teenagers, young women who get pregnant without marrying, the poor in general.

So too are the policies. The elements of big business outreach all other interests. There is nothing at all that new here.

If the conventional reform of the liberal political classes has favoured for the last decade or two is now being quietly dropped.

For all the hull and puff of the ide- ologues Blair is finding it very difficult to distinguish New Labour from mainstream British conservatism.

Aidan Day

Seminar discusses Ernest Mandel's open Marxism

Ernest Mandel died last year on July 20 after a year and a half of seriously deteriorating health. The first anniver- sary of his death was commemorated by the first seminar organised by the Ernest Mandel Study Centre in Amsterdam from July 4 to July 6.

The seminar was intended as a tribute to a man who has been remembered as one of the great intellects of this century. 

It was also an occasion for a critical examination of Mandel's work.

In doing so, the organisers were faithful to Mandel's legacy: his conception of democracy applied to the ranks of the movement he led, which can be singled out within organised Marxism for the high toler- ance for debate and divergence that it exhibits.

The best tribute to the democracy and example set by Er- nest Mandel is perhaps the first time that any key leader and thero- rician of a political movement is not sanctified by his fol- lowers and co-workers right after his death.

Instead, his im- portant intellectual achievement was ap- preciated and discussed in a truly critical manner.

For Marxism, this is the only real way of grasping and testing the validity of political theory.

The seminar gathered scholars with common interests in the many issues in Marxist thought to which Mandel made a lasting contribution. The participants represented the Fourth International, former members and non-members alike, gathered in the packed conference room of the International Institute of Research and Education in Amsterdam.

Over two-and-a-half days, they listened to eight presentations: two written and six oral. Among the topics discussed was in a way which, on the whole, achieved a delicate balance between the academic approach and the participat- ing of political activists.

The major contrib- utions to this semi- nar will be collected in book form, along- with some lesser- known texts by Ernest Mandel, which will be pub- lished in several lan- guages.

The success of this first seminar convinced the direc- tors of the Ernest Mandel Study Centre to organise an an- nual seminar on similar topics. 

Future seminars will deal with specific topics. Two de- bates are in preparation: the transition to so- cialism and the long waves of capitalist development.

In this way, the Ernest Mandel Study Centre is trying to carry forward the huge task of reviving Marxism that Mandel undertook in his lifetime.

Seminar contributors:

Michael Löwy, Mandel's revolutionary humanism; Robin Blackburn, Mandel's politics and Late Capitalism; Jesús Albarracín, Pedro Montes, Mandel's interpretation of contemporary capitalism; Francisco Louca, Mandel and the pulsation of history; Alan Freeman, Mandel's contribution to economic dynamics; Catherine Samory, the transition to socialism; Chomsky, Mandel and the theory of bureaucracy; Norman Geras, Trotsky, Deutscher and Mandel: marxists before the Holocaust.

Aidan Day
Ireland at centre of politics

IRLAND IS back at the centre of British politics over the events of the last couple of weeks. Major sanctioned the brutal assault on the nationalist community partly as a result of pressure from the unionists. His majority is in hock to sectarian loyalty. But the Tories keen to reassert their identity as the Conservative and Unionist Party. In their view, too many concessions have been made to the nationalists in the ‘peace process’. The strategy of the ‘peace process’, for a settlement in the north, with Dublin’s agreement, was an attempt to stabilise the situation and modernise both parts of a partitioned Ireland.

Europe and America are not happy with the unravelling of the peace process – and by and large blame Britain. The facade of a neutral state has once again been dramatically destroyed. The sectarian state in the six counties has been unveiled in all its horror.

The future is Orange?

POSSIBLY the angriest person in Ireland last week, even angrier perhaps, than nationalist politicians along the Garvaghy Road, was ballstotch John Bronte.

“John Unionist” was not mainly troubled by the hearing of nationalists out of the way of Orange marches through the Garvaghy and Lowry Street roads, nor the mere firing of 9,000 plastic bullets fired by the RUC at nationalists.

Even Unionist leader David Trimble’s orchestration of the Orange rises with the UVF, the same UVF which had just hired a Catholic taxi-driver, was not his main concern.

No, what upset John was that the British had turned up the carefully constructed joint approach to Northern Ireland opened by both governments since the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement and embodied in the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document.

The reason for Bronte’s fury is that Dublin’s strategy has been totally flawed. It was for long based on acceptance of the Unionist veto and attempting to undercut support for Republicans by modest reforms of the 6 County statute – reforms guaranteed by Dublin.

This led for example to the Inter-governmental Secretariat at Maryville in Belfast staffed by British and Irish Civil Servants. This direct link was meant to allow Dublin to “advise” the British government on sensitive issues like the behaviour of the RUC or the routes of marches.

Dublin was not informed of the change of policy at Drumcree – the British claimed it was an operational decision which it left to the RUC Chief Constable.

This is a clear indication to Dublin that they are no longer to be allowed even this minor role in the North. The British it would appear, have changed their minds.

John Major now describes Northern Ireland as “part of the United Kingdom just like Surrey”. The line of Times and The Telegraph is that too many concessions have been made to nationalism and that what is necessary is to restore Northern Ireland to its proper place within the UK.

The original Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed on a reluctant Thatcher government in 1985. Dublin was afraid that the rise in Sinn Fein support after the Irish elections would bring with the economic crisis to destabilise the South.

They attempted to boast John Hume’s Social Democratic and Labour Party by seeking to persuade the British to make minor concessions to the Nationalists in order to woo them away from the Republicans.

Hume carried this further in his talks with Gerry Adams. He couldn’t do a deal with the British which left the Republic outside. They represent 40 per cent of the nationalist vote. So he persuaded Adams that the British had no “softish, strategic or economic interest” in Ireland and that the only obstacle to Irish unity was the Unionists, who had to be persuaded of the benefits of a united Ireland.

Both Adams and Hume accepted this was kind of settlement was to be built in the meantime. The Unionists opposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement but were faced down by Thatcher. John Major however, can’t deliver even the token gestures which would satisfy Dublin.

Unionist leader David Trimble has been able to exploit Major’s political weaknesses, constantly raising obstacles so talking to Sinn Fein, persuading Major to hold elections and wasting endless hours in procedural wrangling at the “peacemaker”.

Drumcree (and the Lower Ormeau Road) shows that everything has changed. The RUC forced loyalist marches through Nationalist areas in a brazenly partisan way, with razor charges, plastic bullets and by putting white areas under curfew.

Any hopes that Nationalists had of negotiating a settlement have been shattered. No talks can say that they will forever be second-class citizens in the Orange bastle, free their spirits at the Torries and their Labour camp followers.

The ground has been completely cut from under John Hume. The “Irish Peace Initiative” begun with the Hume Adams talks. It was based on an approach which has its origins in the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

But Drumcree was the climactic demonstration of the Ulster’s strike brought down the 1974 Power Sharing Executive that the Unionists will not concede an inch and that the British will back them.

The position is even more acute for Republicans. The British, far from being “permissive” for Irish unity as demanded by the Republicans, have gone back to their “as British as Fishwives” line. Why do Sinn Fein still demand to be allowed into talks? What could possibly be the point of taking part in this farce? If reforms are no longer on the table, what is the point of the “Irish Peace Initiative”?

Socialist Outlook has always argued that the 6 County statute cannot be reformed. We backed Bernadette McAliskey’s call for Republicans to withdraw from this process well before the latest displays of Orange reaction.

It is clear that even the mildest of demands by nationalists will bring a murderous response from the loyalist death squads and their British backers. It would be suicidal for the IRA to disarm: the weapons are needed to defend nationalist areas.

The return to an offensive strategy is also wrong: the other lesson of the past 25 years is that the IRA cannot militarily defeat the British. What is needed is a political strategy which unites the working class North and South and which can begin to drive loyalist workers away from Orangeism.

Otherwise the future is Orange.

David Coen

A Programme for the Irish Revolution

Two years in the writing, adopted at the foundation of Socialist Democracy, the Irish section of the Fourth International, this is the most extensive Marxist analysis of Ireland since the forties.

We are offering a special pre-publication price of just £4.50. Send Postal Order, or cheque, payable to Socialist Outlook Fund, to: PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
Major sanctions pogram

Flanagan

DIMBLEBY: Were you dismayed too by the reaction of the political leaders of the Ulster Unionists at Drumcree?

MAYHEW: It depends which particular actions you have in mind. I was delighted that they urged people to be restrained. I was delighted that the political leaders all urged the loyalists not to respond.

NOT only did Major refuse to condemn the actions of the political leaders of the Ulster Unionists at Drumcree, he refused to call the Protestant political leaders to "rise above these relatively minor matters." His interview is without doubt the most decentful and the most offensive piece of tripe that I have heard since the north of Ireland.

Major at the start of the暴乱 on the Garvaghy Road he said: "The Orange Lodge were wrong in seeking to process as they did, and I think the Garvaghy Road residents were unreasonable to refuse to discuss and to compromise for a long time on how a peaceful Orange march parade could have passed through the estate.

Last year the residents, perhaps naively, thought the march could go through on the basis that the march not be turned into a sectarian victory parade. This concession was put back in their faces. The year independent mandarins said to them that they made attempts on behalf of the residents to get the Lodge organised in talks to find long-term solutions - the Lodge would have none of it. Dimbleby also asked Major: "Did the Chief Constable not ask for advice?" Major replied: "He didn't ask for advice - the Chief Constable gave us clear advice." He claims that no pressure was put on the Chief Constable to take any decision.

But he has yet to explain how Trembley's phraseology which led to the saturation of the Orangemen that they would be walking in a procession and that the right to face on the decision was made public.

Major pretended that the unionists the decision would be changed when he met them a few hours before they flew off to Drumcree to pass on the good news. The events were a political trial of strength on the part of the Prime Minister, but about the future of the peace process.

The Unionists chose the moment to get out of the way of the grass roots before substantive tactics had got under way. The message is loud and clear - the unionists want to be left alone. An important political victory has been won. The Loyalists know it. Major knows it.

Major would prefer the Unionists to trust him; and to be a little less reactionist.

But he is quite prepared to accommodate to their gangsterism. He has the nerve to say that the victims of sectarian aggression are more or less to blame for their own misfortune. He crosses his views on the League of moderates and moderation. He is an arch reactor, leading an increasingly reactionary government. The sooner the British workers get rid of him and his party the better.

Ban plastic bullets

THE UNITED Campaign Against Plastic Bullets has called for a major campaign to demand the British government end the firing of plastic bullets.

Only in the north of Ireland are these lethal weapons used by the police. Whenever a disturbance breaks out in any part of Britain the weapon is not used to quell the trouble. Yet in the North of Ireland they are brought out for every occasion, including the slightest problem at a football game.

A group of human rights legal activists has called for a major campaign to demand that over 6,000 plastic bullets were fired in the past week. It is believed that the unofficial count is a lot higher.

Mrs Reilly (UCAPB) said that the inadequate rules limiting in theory the use of the weapon are being routinely and openly flouted, especially this past week.

Quoted in local newspapers, she said: "Dozens of people have been badly injured this week, several are critically ill in hospital. What we have seen is plastic bullets being fired at point blank range, and being routinely fired above waist height. All this is supposed to be against the rules of engagement and yet not a word is said about it."

What is being reported by many foreign journalists, but left unreported by British newspaper reporters, was that almost all the plastic bullets were fired at people against the orders of their superiors.

Using RUC figures, 163 plastic bullets were fired at loyalist protesters on both sides of the border for the nationalists. The RUC admit it has never been revealed to the nationalist organisations in One in a day. The inquiry count in the Derry hospital is a long one.

Lewis Creme was shot in the head by a plastic bullet; the non-lethal weapon shattered his jaw and ripped the flesh from his shoulder and Smith was shot in the head. He remains in intensive care with a fractured skull and broken ribs. John Travers was shot twice; once in the head and once in the side.

In the night in Derry 41 people were kept in hospital for plastic bullet wounds. Thankfully nobody has been killed, though some victims remain in a critical condition. Socialists in Britain would demand that this version of the truth be shouted down by a future Labour government.
Yeltsin re-elected with 54 per cent but...

Russia's crisis continues

Boris Yeltsin's election victory shows that
Here DAVE PACKER explains how the project of capitalist restoration, pursued in different ways by all the main contenders in the Presidential elections, is in deep crisis.

This crisis and the political paralysis cannot continue indefinitely. Unfortunately the crisis of the pro-bourgeois forces within the bureaucracy is matched by the continued absence of an independent working-class political voice despite growing working-class struggles.

An independent working-class party could begin to challenge the bureaucracy's adventurism and create for genuine democratic socialism. Such a party is desperately needed.

Yeltsin's sudden electoral resurgence came with the help of $1 billion in Western loans. He was helped by supporters in the tightly controlled television and media who fervently promoted an apocalyptic vision of his opponent as the glib. Bribes were rampant. Costs promises, including back payment of wages on a huge scale, were made as if the IMF did not exist! The Western agencies and banks, it seems, were all looking the other way at the time. It was hardly democratic.

Now President Yeltsin constructs his new government cocktail in the wake of his easy victory in the second round. The workers should be preparing for the worst. A sharp economic crisis, a continuing catastrophic drop in production (3 per cent of GDP in first quarter of 1996) and huge budget deficits undercut the situation. The crisis is predicted to continue for at least the autumn. It is the result of market reforms which failed to bring about the economic recovery by workers. At the same time, state planning and investment mechanisms are not working.

The Soviet Union used to produce eleven million TVs a year. Now production has collapsed to a mere 700,000. The huge Russian car and engineering factories in the 1980s employed 60,000 workers. Today it still has 40,000 workers but produces only 3 per cent of what it did a decade ago. These figures illustrate both the scale of the crisis and the non-capitalist nature of the society.

Capitalism cannot sustain this for more than a few weeks. The continued employment of 40,000 workers at Izmash and in hundreds of factories like it is proof of the absence of the rule of law and the collapse of value which characterise a capitalist society.

The crisis could propel some sectors of the ruling bureaucracy into seeking an authoritarian solution. Confronted with the IMF's demand to write off the various components of the bureaucracy's foreign debt. Capital flight is a not too distant bonapartism. A deal with Zvyagin and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRP) might be in the offing.

although some of Yeltsin's advisors are opposed to this 'I'm sure' he said, "that there will be room in the new team for all those in whom you (the electorate) placed your trust." (The Observer, July 7 1996).

The ücret is away from the aggressively 'liberal bonapartism' of a fading Yeltsin, towards an increased authoritarianism. The world of the 'Iron Fist', may not be far over the horizon! At the centre of power today stands the grim-faced General Alexander Lebed. However, there may be other candidates representing different corporate social forces.

The background: bureaucracy spawned pro-capitalist parties

Before December's Duma elections, Yeltsin had to temporarily pull back from his most extreme liberal policies. He introduced measures to marginally improve the conditions of those most affected by the privatisations and cuts because of a growing wave of discontent. They failed to stop the reconstituted CPFR from making dramatic gains.

Yeltsin also sacked those ministers most associated with the failed market reforms. The new men were more cautious. They wanted to postpone the Presidential elections in order to build a new coalition with the opposition. One of the new oppositions, the CPFR. The latter was of course more than willing. However, Yeltsin's vote in June was better than some expected. Seizing the momentum of the CPFR's success, Within 48 hours he moved to co-opt his second main opponent, the ultra-nationalist General Pavel Grachev.

Lebed immediately secured the defection of all those ministers opposed to him, most notably defence minister General Pavel Grachev and several other generals.

It was a typical Yeltsin manoeuvre to use size of Lebed's vote to his own advantage by bringing him into the government. However, Yeltsin was more interested in his rival's link with the armed forces: this was the real basis for his move. This new alliance has strengthened the President's hand.

Lebed's twist reflects the precariousness of the present situation.

The presidion deal is not at all clear. It may signal a renewed "neo-liberal" i.e. capitalist, drive combined with strong government.

On July 17 Lebed got his way. Yeltsin's new President was appointed Lebed's side-kick General Igor Rodionov as his new defence minister. This both underlines the policy of strong government and greatly strengthens Lebed's position as potential heir to Yeltsin.

General Lebed is noted for his military service in Afghanistan and the most expensive former general, Radionov is remembered for brutally dispersing pro-independence demonstrations in Georgia in 1989 with the loss of 10 lives.

Lebed will undoubtedly use his brief to "crack down on crime" to strengthen and professionalise sections of the police and military apparatus.

This will go hand in hand with Rodionov's brief to strengthen the military apparatus. The two are likely to be unacceptable to the generals.

The multi-millioned middle and factory managerial sectors of the bureaucracy found their most reliable champion in the CPFR. They have close links to the military-industrial complex. Their corporate interests are not at all secured by the uncontrolled laxity of the market proposed by the ultra-liberal CPFR narrative.

They want a controlled and planned market, more selective privatisation, cheap raw materials, some protectionism, order, and the "restoration" of the Great Russian Empire. This would not bode well for Chechenya or other nationalities.

The future: capitalism requires a military crackdown

LEBED recently said that his powers are enough for the moment. This brutal soldier and Great Russian chauvinist, supported by Rodionov, will surely reinforce his position within the government and would be more than effective if he hark Yeltsin. However, the same snoop that pulled in Lebed also bought in previously expelled free marketeers like Anatoly Chubais, now the Moscow VTB’s Deputy Finance Minister. Ex-Moscow, he is a man of the people. This 48-year-old economist has not yet been caught. But Yeltsin has said that he's not. He therefore, as a career arms exporter to Russia, and as a man of the people, he should not simply look to the power struggles around the throne. If the economic situation deteriorates quickly, Yeltsin himself may need to rely on the Lebed-Rodionov axis and its base in the armed forces.

All the main political expressions of the bureaucracy from the ultra-liberal Yabloko, through to the Yeltsin bloc, General Lebed, Zvyagin and the CPFR-led alliance, are based on an illusion over who is going to get the spoils and whose corporate and sectoral interests are being promoted in the scramble to accumulate private property.

The whole bureaucracy is intent on retaining capitalism although there are deep and often bitter divisions about how to do so. This has led to tactics on the streets on more than one occasion. For over six years the vast bureaucratic apparatus of the state and party has been divided politically and disintegrating into corporate power structures and gangs. Now a profound economic crisis is reaching the limits of social stability.

A primary cause of the paralysis of the pro-bourgeois forces however is fear of the working class, as Trotsky explained so well in The Revolution Betrayed (1936). Unfortunately the working class, faced with economic and political catastrophes, still has no independent political expression or coherent alternative policy. Although in social, economic and political maturity is still evident in the main it is still tied to the various wings of the bureaucracy. The genuinely socialist left organised in currents like the Democratic Left remains a small and marginal force.

The traditional corporate dependency of workers on their employer managers for work, housing and all kinds of necessities has helped mobilise many workers behind the CPFR. Today this is breaking down representing a growing and independent of the working class. A lot of people voted against all the candidates in the first round. In the second round Yeltsin managed to win majorities in many cities within the industrial belts of the Urals where Zvyagin was strong. The Workers' miners did not believe in any of the ephemeral promises and went on strike during the voting. These contradictions and divisions within the working class can only be overcome by struggle.

Here lies the importance of the strike waves over back pay and the anger at Yeltsin's failure to fulfil his promises. The tasks today are to convince the workers to fight but also to build a new organisation extending the struggles in defence of socialised property, a defence of all democratic and national rights and for international solidarity.

The increasingly bitter power struggle against all the wings of the bureaucracy fear the full carry of the working class into the political arena.

Against this potential danger, like a ruling class, they unite in terror. At the same time their fear of working-class resistance highlights their inability to reconstitute capitalism without violence or even with the workers. Without a military regime that will physically crush the resistance of the workers, full restoration of capitalism is beyond their reach.
Discovering women's history

MARIAN BRAIN reviews Women's Work: the First 20,000 Years, edited by Elizabeth Wayland Barber. Published Norton, New York, $13.

As a feminist active from the late 1960s onwards, I found uncovering the women's role in the way we are living today to be an important insight into the working of society and women's role in the development of society. They have not merely been the cooks, they have also been the creators of intellectual and material wealth. It is remarkable that such a progressive book should come out of the American university system given the back-lash against analysing women's role in pre-class societies. Books like this are important in fighting for equal rights.

Marx and Engels drew on the work of early anthropologists like Robert H. Lowie and Ed- ward B. Tylor. Through their research, they concluded that during the first 20,000 years, they found remnants of societies in different parts of the world where gender equality existed between women and men. Through reading this book, it is clear that the founders of the communist movement were wrong. While the life of women is still heavily dependent on the state and class, the social norms that govern the lives of women have changed. Early anthropologists were unable to account for the development of progressive and scientific ideas; they considered the development of scientific ideas to be a product of the development of society and economics. The book is written by Wayland Barber. It is, therefore, a product of the development of progressive and scientific ideas; it is, therefore, a product of the development of society and economics.

EARLY DEVELOPPMENT OF CAPTIVE WOMEN

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Build support for dock strike

Greg Tucker

Supporters of striking Liverpool dockers, meeting on July 20, launched a national campaign to raise “£1 a week per worker” levies to keep the dispute alive. After hearing that the major mass picket in Liverpool they will be taking place to the strike by a lobby on September 9. Thedock users, including having being locked out the Liverpool dockers remain steadfast. They have built an impressive base of support in Liverpool and among dockers worldwide. A very effective action has seen Mersey Docks’ share price drop 28 per cent, wiping million pounds of its value. Such has been the level of international solidarity that one major port user, ACL, has now pulled out of Liverpool. The dockers are now focusing on a Canadian company, CAST. Signifying the start of this campaign, Liverpool dockers occupied dockside gantries in Montreal stopping the loading of a CAST vessel.

But despite having addressed over 4000 meetings the weak point in the campaign remains the patchy support for the British labour movement. A National Solidarity Committee has now been set up to co-ordinate activity so we can work together to build effective action in Britain. The T&G delegates representing Superferry workers met last weekend to plan a way ahead. They decided to organise a major demonstration by unions such as the CWU and RMT, unprecedented support for “union action” by the Scottish TUC. There had also been problems. The CPSA national executive refused to honour donations agreed by their Annual Conference. The T&G dragged its feet in meeting commitments support the dockers. Even against a media black-out it was clear that dockers have been able to reach out to workers. Support has been overwhelming. Despite all sort of warm words, action by union leadership has been slow to appear. In many areas everybody was working together. But in some places sectarianism by some organisations was hampering progress. The dockers themselves urged everyone to work through representative local support groups and not “do their own thing”.

In response, the meeting adopted a three point plan of action: to launch the national solidarity campaign to organise national support for a major mass picket in Liverpool; and to lobby the TUC on September 9. While collections at meetings and donations from organisations’ funds are welcome what is needed is regular commitments. Already some workplaces, such as AC Delco in Kirkby and Rolls Royce in Coventry have committed themselves to weekly levies. The need now is for this to spread. What was seen as automatic a decade ago for the miners will not be so easy this time round. Traditional methods of organising have proved hard to sustain in the face of the bosses’ offensive. But the meeting was confident that workers will respond. Mass pickets have been an important feature of the dispute, gaining a good response from across the country. The plan is now to organise a well-publicised day of action. The International Transport Federation has promised a world-wide day of protest and the dockers are to discuss setting a date tied in with this.

A lobby of the TUC on September 9, in support of a clear policy on the minimum wage, is already being planned by UNISON. It is hoped to maximise support by building a dockers’ lobby at the same time. The dockers are demanding to be allowed to address the TUC. Whether or not they succeed, a major lobby can help to break down the wall of silence that has kept many ignorant of the dockers’ campaign.

The meeting was a major step forward in setting clear realisable targets, moving away from abstraction of demands for general strikes. It is vital that broad-based support is built in every locality. Speakers from the dockers to the TUC come and address meetings and good publicity material is available. The dockers are providing the ammunition we need. The TUC is still in their general meeting to contact Liverpool Dockers Shop Stewards Committee c/o 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L4 4AS or ‘phone 0151 207 3388.

Unions united on Underground

Why we are stopping the trains

By an LUL train operator

It was an amazing stunt: both Leo Adams, the general secretary of ASLEF and the RMT, sharing a platform at pre-strike rallies. The mass meetings enthusiastically applauded calls for unity in the fight with London Underground Limited (LUL) management. They promised the two unions would strike together and “go back together”.

This is a complete contrast to the normal divisions in dealing with LUL.

Two days later the result of that unity was apparent. There was a near 100 per cent stoppage of underground trains across London. There were more people volunteering for picket duty and less scabbing.

It is a good feeling. We know that as long as we keep it that way we can win. Management has always profited from the division of the unions. But this time their “understanding” with ASLEF leaders has broken down under pressure from rank-and-file train operators and guards.

At 4.30am there were nine workers on our picket line looking up and down the road for any signs to come into sight. A couple of hours later only two had turned up and one went home again.

No trains running. A few hours more and we are bored enough to clue in the cops sent to watch us. But nothing can lower our spirits.

Tony Blair’s ‘散文’ call for us to end our strike pending arbitration has not been a subject of interest. The only people to talk about him are reporters. Did we feel “betrayed” by Tony Blair? Answer: “No, the geezer never supported us in the first place.” Distressed, the reporter wandered off to interview members of the public.

What seems to upset a lot of the establishment is that workers are actually going on the offensive. Calls for strikes to be banned in the public sector shows us that we are on the right track.

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The media and LUL are trying to undermine support for our strike by constant exaggerated references to so-called high pay. There is no doubt that they would be much happier if we were worse paid, but our pay is not the issue. We want a reduction in stress levels and the best way to achieve that is a shorter working week.

More and more train operators are in with stress, simply because management restructuring has intensified work load—especially the switch to one person operations and the forced introduction of the Company Plan.

Teams of consultants have designed ways of working us harder. Flexible rostering, remote booking on and off for work at different locations and unpaid meal relief mean that our working days are longer, even though our contractual 38.5 hours per week are shorter than they used to be.

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