



Smith, Brown, Beckett and Blair . . .

IT'S HARDLY controversial these days to say that the performance of the Labour leadership since the last election has been pathetic. Even by its own reformist standards it has failed to provide a credible parliamentary opposition.

Throughout the autumn, the Tories stumbled from one crisis to another, from Black Wednesday and pit closures to Threshergate and Norman Lamont's legal costs. Behind this lay a grinding recession well into its third year with the destruction of the much-vaunted economic miracle of the late Eighties, and the ever-present Tory splits over Europe. Add to this an unprecedented collapse in the image of that supremely Tory institution, the royal family, and there can have been few better opportunities for Labour in decades to expose a discredited government and organise against it.

Instead we have arrived at a situation where even the liberal *Guardian* feels obliged to call on Labour to get its act together. Of course, it's not for a moment thinking of industrial action. It's more that the parliamentary game, if it's not to be discredited, must be seen to be played competently and the John Smith team are scarcely an ideal vehicle for *Guardian*-style neo-Keynesianism.

But for workers facing the threat of redundancy, and for the millions already unemployed, it's not a question of some fine tuning of exchange and interest rates, or a bit more panache at the dispatch box. Attacks continue to rain in on all sides – slashing cuts in local government, public-sector wage controls, the erosion of working conditions, homelessness and new rounds of privatisation.

Against this, Smith and his counterparts at the TUC have refused to mount any meaningful resistance, most graphically illustrated by the case of the miners. Without underestimating the acute political crisis which faced the Tories in the autumn, Workers News refused to be swept along by the mood of mindless euphoria which gripped most of the left. In our view, the working class could not simply overcome its experiences of the seven years since the

defeat of the miners' strike overnight.

Neither general strike posturing (based on a one-sided estimate of 'objective conditions') nor tail-ending the left wing of the bureaucracy – or both in the case of the SWP – could answer the situation. It was necessary to show the steps needed to move towards mass action. From the outset, we warned against the popular frontist character of the movement that developed, and that only a political struggle against the bureaucracies of the Labour Party and the trade unions could give the necessary direction to the wave of protests.

In addition, we warned against the economic nationalism of the Labour left. Rumours of a reprieve for 15 of the threatened 31 pits in no way vindicate the Labour and

By Richard Price

TUC leaders' determination to restrict all action to a battle for hearts and minds without strikes – or for that matter Arthur Scargill's call for 'people power'. If anything, the U-turn reflects the fears of the Tories' own electoral base for the future of manufacturing industry. What is more, the four months since the announcement of pit closures have enabled Major, temporarily at least, to stabilise the Tories' internal crisis, reassure the middle class by lowering interest rates, and paper over the cracks in his European policy.

Labour's leaders have concentrated their fire not upon the Tories' attacks on workers

CLEAR THEM OUT!

but on their supposed betrayal of the national interest and lack of leadership. They have fully supported the bombing of Iraq and called for more vigorous intervention in the Balkans.

Internally, the Labour leadership is still suffering from post-election traumatic shock and is deeply divided between various factions each competing for John Smith's attention with their own pet schemes for 'modernising' the party. Jeff Rooker, supported by Neil Kinnock and a number of the new intake of Labour MPs, is pressing for the adoption of proportional representation. Margaret Beckett and Roy Hattersley are opposed to PR, while Smith, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair are undecided, preferring to wait for the report of the Plant Committee.

Then there is Jack Straw, backed up by the engineers' union, pushing for Labour to ditch Clause 4 from its constitution. There are also supporters of the idea of 'Clintonising' the party – bringing it more into line with the US Democrat party – and there have already been exchange visits by Democrat aides and Labour officials.

John Smith, who on other issues has been accused of presiding over 'policy drift', has indicated his support for demoting the trade union block vote. Meanwhile, there is growing support in the leadership for an attack on social security benefits along the lines of American 'workfare' schemes supported by Clinton. In January, two senior election advisers, Patricia Hewitt and Phillip Gould, weighed in against 'something for nothing' welfarism. The task, they argue, should be to appeal to the majority, not to minorities; to uphold the 'national interest', not 'special interests'.

This frenzied shopping in the bargain basement of SDP 'social market' policies has absolutely nothing to do with the real needs of workers under attack on all sides.

It has everything to do with an attempt to transform Labour to the point where it ceases to be a workers' party of any sort. Such opposition as there has been in senior circles from John Prescott and Clare Short has been aimed at slowing down the rate of 'modernisation' and has not challenged its fundamental political trajectory.

Should socialists stand aside from what is taking place – or should they fight the right wing trench by trench? The SWP, and now Militant, argue that the Labour Party is an empty shell and have effectively washed their hands of the whole business.

In our view, this is light-minded to say the least under conditions in which Labour still commands millions of voters and the entire 'revolutionary left' numbers perhaps 10,000. A victory for the 'modernisers', a transformation of Labour into a party on the lines of the Democrats in the United States, would represent a historic blow to the working class. So long as that has not been accomplished, and a viable revolutionary party has not been built, there remains a battle which must be fought.

Labour's leadership is the single biggest obstacle to the development of real class action against the Tories. As it plunges further to the right, it can only lead defeat after defeat. In the words of Hill Street Blues: 'Let's do it to them, before they do it to us.'



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EDITORIAL

The rape of Bosnia

POSSESSION, as the old saying goes, is nine-tenths of the law. That strangely elastic concept 'international law' works in much the same way. The UN mediation team in Geneva, headed by Cyrus Vance and David 'Dr Death' Owen, has effectively legitimised Serbian ethnic cleansing by proposing a settlement to the Bosnian civil war under which Serbs would control half the republic.

Serbs – only 31 per cent of the population – have conquered around 70 per cent of the republic. While the Vance-Owen plan for the cantonisation of Bosnia fails to meet the original demand of the Bosnian Serb leadership headed by Radovan Karadzic for a state within a state, its acceptance by the Bosnian Serb 'parliament' shows that it is not far short.

Bosnia's Muslims, who made up 44 per cent of the population before the civil war, are set to control only a quarter of its territory. They have been presented with a fait accompli. The object of much hypocritical sympathy from Western governments, they find themselves caught between two more powerful neighbours, Serbia and Croatia. The division of Bosnia into one mixed and nine ethnic provinces sets its seal on the racist policy of pogroms and forced removals. Far from resolving national rivalries, it will be the seed bed for new ones.

Those on the left who attempted to explain the break-up of Yugoslavia in terms of a US (or US-Islamic) conspiracy against Serbia have been confounded. For us, the qualified support in the Vance-Owen plan for a Greater Serbia comes as no surprise. In fact, it is the logic of imperialist policy in the Balkans to attempt to create a balance of power between Serbia and Croatia, with Bosnia as a weakened buffer zone between them.

At the outset of the Yugoslavian civil war, the imperialist powers were split, the United States and Britain favouring a unitary state in order to facilitate the process of capitalist restoration, with Germany and Austria to the fore in supporting the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. As the war progressed, all sides, from the imperialists to the Serbians themselves, recognised that the break-up of Yugoslavia was definitive. The United States, closely followed by Britain, adjusted its policy to suit the new situation. UN sanctions were introduced to restrain Serbia; at the same time, lines were kept open to Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbian leadership who showed a growing readiness to get round the table once their territorial objectives had been secured.

And while Western governments paraded their concern for 'human rights' by condemning the policy of ethnic cleansing, and an army of journalists and photographers reported it, US forces did nothing to prevent it. Indeed, a UN moratorium barred Bosnia from buying weapons to defend itself.

The most depraved act of the Serbian armies has been the systematic rape of Muslim women, confirmed by the accounts both of hundreds of victims and of Serbian soldiers. Intended to humiliate, terrorise and degrade, this fascistic policy sums up Serbian intentions towards Bosnia as a whole. It should be food for thought for those on the left who have portrayed Serbia as fighting a progressive war 'against imperialism' and discovered in the Serbian irregulars the embryo of a new proletarian movement.

The only ultimate solution to the Yugoslav tragedy lies in a Balkan federation of workers' states, based on the principles of national equality and self-determination. But this strategic aim must not blind us to the realities of the present situation. Socialists have a duty to rally to the military struggle of the Bosnian Muslims, whilst at the same time demanding the withdrawal of all UN forces. To the Serbian workers we say: In the war against the Bosnian Muslims, your main enemy is at home!

Defend Iraq!

AS WE go the press, an uneasy truce seems to be holding over Iraq. Sanctioned by America's allies and Russian president Boris Yeltsin, the punitive air strikes by US, British and French planes are designed to lure the Iraqi leadership into a second instalment of the Gulf war, or at least to remind it who is boss.

The justification for this latest in a long series of provocations – Iraq's defiance of UN decisions – cannot be taken seriously. Israel, America's favourite client state, routinely flouts UN resolutions in its treatment of Palestinians. The real reason is not Saddam Hussein's cat-and-mouse games with missile batteries and incursions just over the desert border with Kuwait, but in the complicated impasse that US imperialism and its allies have got themselves into ever since their victory in the Gulf war. The only state in the region whose sovereignty is currently threatened is Iraq itself. Large parts of the country north of the 36th parallel and south of the 32nd parallel are designated as no-fly zones, while UN sanctions have led to acute shortages of food and medicines, and rampant inflation. None of these measures, of course, hurts the Ba'athist leadership one iota; it is ordinary Iraqis who suffer.

Although Washington would dearly like to see the back of Saddam Hussein, the last thing it wants is a popular rebellion, which would fuel anti-imperialist sentiments. That is why at the end of the Gulf war the allied armies halted at the Iraqi border to allow Saddam to put down the uprising in the south of the country.

What the imperialists hope to encourage is a palace coup within the Ba'athist party and the army top brass which would produce a settlement with the West, while preserving the unity of the country by force if necessary. By then encouraging a deal with the conservative Kurdish leaders in the north, the West would aim to head off any struggle for a united independent Kurdistan, which would necessarily threaten its trusted ally Turkey.

Those in the labour movement who argue that Iraq is an exception to the general rule of opposition to imperialist intervention are as misguided as a Scud missile. It is up to the Iraqi working class to deal with Saddam. The fight to defend Iraq and to force the imperialists out of the Gulf is as valid now as it was two years ago.

Defeat the Tory plans for two-tier schooling

By Terry McGinity

THE LATEST Education Bill deepens the Tory attack on comprehensive education. The white paper which preceded it last summer was entitled 'Choice and Diversity', no doubt to disguise its aim to obliterate both. In its introduction, John Major states that 'I am not prepared to see children in some parts of this country having to settle for second class education'. What he means is that education must be ruled by the market, and that children in *all* parts of the country will have to settle for a second-class education unless their parents are rich.

This is what lies behind Education Secretary John Patten's promotion of streaming and 'traditional methods' in primary schools. Together with testing at the age of 11, this is designed to ensure a return to the two-tier system of public education.

An essential part of the Tory programme is to destroy the power of local education authorities (LEAs) through local management of schools and opting-out of LEA control. The latter has virtually come to a halt, with only a derisory 341 out of 26,000 schools in England and Wales having opted out so far.

The new Bill aims to speed up the process of schools opting out, but as with every other aspect of Tory education policy, the stated aim conceals the opposite. Far from giving parents more control of education, opting out will allow the government to tighten its grip via new Funding Agencies. The introduction of these agencies will be triggered by schools representing as few as 10 per cent of places in an LEA voting to opt out.

The government is offering extra money to those schools which opt out soon, and its 1993-94 budget cuts will no doubt encourage some

embattled schools to consider opting out as a desperate attempt to keep going. Any school which has tried to opt out and failed to get a majority in favour will be required to go through yet another vote.

In a grotesque comparison with the stock market, the Tories would have us believe that the publication of examination result league tables will serve to identify ineffective schools and lead to the withdrawal of 'investment' in the shape of pupils and funding. From this year, all state and private schools will have to publish their results.

But a moment's thought will show that results in and of themselves mean absolutely nothing – they merely record the outcome of the educational process. They say nothing about the process itself, the state of the schools, nor the difficulties of the students. Since it is well established that working class pupils are disadvantaged by comparison with middle class pupils, it is hardly surprising that this is reflected in examination results. League tables must therefore be seen as a particularly blunt weapon aimed at the working class.

Given the scope of the Tories' objectives in education, they have been forced to take great pains to weaken opposition. A key obstacle has been the schools inspectorate, so by next September it will have been replaced by privatised teams trained and accredited by a government agency called OFSTED, the Office of Standards in Education, and hired by schools themselves to carry out inspections! This bizarre set-up has recently prompted a letter from top inspectors to the head

of OFSTED professing a complete lack of confidence in the future plans.

The most strenuous opposition comes in relation to testing. The Association for Science Education has described the tests at 14 in science, planned for June, as 'damaging'. English tests are meeting a barrage of opposition including unprecedented proposals for a boycott from some Tory boroughs. The aim must be for England and Wales to follow the lead of Scotland where testing was abandoned due to an almost 80 per cent boycott by parents and students.

To crown all these attacks, swinging cuts in funding continue. A Camden head teacher recently wrote: 'In my own large school the implications of the proposed budget would mean cutting at least six teachers. . . . Children would barely be taught to minimum legal levels.'

In contrast to the Tories' determination to change the face of state education, the Parliamentary Labour Party has waged a purely rearguard campaign, made concession after concession, and has no fighting programme to offer workers. A flavour of its approach is given by an amendment to increase the 10 per cent Funding Agency trigger to 25 per cent. Needless to say, Labour lost the vote.

In spite of the widespread damage inflicted by the Tories on schools and on teachers' unions, there is a massive body of opposition. Teachers, education officers, parents and unions must unite to defeat the Tory education plans, restore full comprehensive education, abolish grammar and private schools once and for all, and demand the right to the best education for all in a single-tier system.

Fight the rail sell-off!

THE PLAN for rail privatisation, long-delayed but finally published in January in the Railways Bill, looks set to give yet another twist to the continuing Tory crisis.

It includes ingredients calculated to incur the wrath of just about every section of Tory support except for the various millionaires itching to get their hands on a profitable route or two. These 'entrepreneurs' have been sweetened by a new concept in Tory policy-making – the built-in U-turn. Just two days before the bill was published, Transport Secretary John MacGregor announced that proposals to introduce competition over the same stretches of track would be dropped.

The aim of the Bill is to complete the transformation of the railways from a key socially and industrially necessary service into a lucrative business with a profit rate of at least 8 per cent, the target set for Railtrack, the designated name for the new track authority.

Commuters will be hit by the higher fares set without restraint by private operators determined to prolong the life of already deteriorating rolling stock. Off-peak travel will be cut to the bone and unprofitable routes axed. Rail freight costs will rise and the resulting increases in road traffic will further choke the motorways and cities. In the rush for profit, safety considerations – already under considerable pressure – will be cast aside. Rail workers' jobs will disappear like the dried remains of Jimmy Knapp's militancy. With the

network divided between private monopolies, there will be no guarantee of through ticketing or concessionary fares. That, at least, is the plan.

Since the whole process is scheduled to take 12 years, there is plenty of scope for things to go awry and, more importantly, for effective opposition to be mounted by rail workers. However, the leadership of RMT, the biggest union, under its general secretary Jimmy Knapp, is refusing adamantly to mobilise resistance. Indeed, it is doing precisely the opposite. Last August, in a step to ease the way to the removal of unions from the scene under privatisation, the management of British Rail replaced, with Knapp's agreement, the national negotiating machinery established in 1956 with new streamlined procedures. In October, when the Tory attack on the pits posed a threat to the jobs of up to 5,000 rail workers, no attempt was made to lead a struggle. Even the call from ASLEF leader Derrick Fullick for a one-day general strike found no echo in the RMT leadership.

It is clear, therefore, that rail workers' opposition to privatisation must begin with them organising themselves, through rank-and-file action committees, to prepare a programme of industrial action to frustrate the plans of BR management, the Tory government and the would-be proprietors of the private railways. Alongside this must be elaborated the demand for a fully integrated and properly funded national transport system. The lead-



RMT leader Jimmy Knapp

ership of RMT must be forced to step aside and give way to those who are prepared to fight.

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A return to Keynes?

THE TORY 'economic miracle' of the 1980s now stands revealed as the fraud that it always was. And the 'free market' economics on which it was supposedly based have been largely discredited, even among former enthusiasts. With the recession steadily deepening, and the long-predicted upturn nowhere in sight, *laissez faire* no longer carries much conviction. Even the most fervent supporters of capitalism find it necessary to call on the government to do something to improve the economic situation. The idea that state intervention in the economy is not only legitimate but necessary has once again become respectable.

Symptomatic of this shift was the appearance in September of an editorial in *The Economist* entitled 'The case for central planning!'. There was a tongue-in-cheek element to this, for the editorial restricted itself to calling for more government spending on infrastructure, in co-operation with the private sector. But it was indicative of how mainstream bourgeois economic opinion is moving away from the extreme marketising ideology of Thatcherism. The name of John Maynard Keynes, whom the monetarists once believed they had consigned to the dustbin of history, is now regularly invoked in order to scotch the notion that the capitalist economy is a self-adjusting system. *The Guardian* went so far as to publish a large picture of Keynes on the front of its tabloid supplement, accompanied by the headline: 'Is this the only

One effect of the recession has been to produce renewed enthusiasm for the interventionist policies of economist John Maynard Keynes. **Martin Sullivan** explains why Keynes is not the answer for the working class and spells out the need for a transitional economic programme

man who can save us now?'

As for the Major government, it too has beaten a partial retreat from the dogmatic anti-interventionism of the Thatcher era. However, as Chancellor Norman Lamont's Autumn Statement on November 12 demonstrated, this doesn't amount to the adoption of some Tory version of the 'social market'. With the imposition of a government pay policy on the public sector, Lamont may have junked a central plank of Thatcherite economic policy, but this won't come as much of a consolation to low-paid public employees faced with wage 'rises' below the level of inflation. Lamont's acceptance of the need for state intervention in the housing market similarly represented a break from Thatcherite orthodoxy, but will do little to alleviate the present homelessness crisis. Overall, the Tories' economic programme involves increasing public spending in some areas only at the expense of cut-backs in others. Commentators were unanimous in recognising that Lamont's package failed to offer any real boost to the economy.

What Lamont did succeed in doing was undermining the Labour leadership's economic programme. Several of his proposals – a cut in interest rates, tax breaks for industrial investment, the release of receipts from sales of council housing – figured prominently in the policy statement *Labour's Campaign for Recovery*, which had been unveiled only a few days earlier. Shadow chancellor Gordon Brown was left visibly floundering. 'It will do Labour's credibility on the economy no good at all,' *Tribune* commented editorially, 'if it appears that all the party can say about most of the government's economic policy is that it would do the same only more so.' The editorial concluded that 'Labour desperately needs an injection of radical new ideas'. What these ideas might be, however, *Tribune* didn't bother to tell us.

Ken Livingstone is the leading spokesperson for those in the party who do claim to have a radical alternative to official policy. Behind him stands a loose alliance of Labour lefts, ex-Stalinists and 'Trotskyists' like Livingstone's alter ego, John Ross of

Socialist Action. Their proposals were summarised in 'Labour and the Economy: A Programme for Action', a joint statement issued in 1991 by Ross's *Socialist Economic Bulletin* and the authors of the book *Beyond the Casino Economy*. Its central demands were: expansion of training; a return to free collective bargaining and the establishment of a minimum wage; a reduction in military spending to the European average; the 'creation of a new core of publicly-owned companies in finance and the industrial centres of the future', with compensation for any nationalised companies; the imposition of exchange controls, a cut in interest rates and devaluation of sterling.

It is self-evident that this is in no sense an anti-capitalist programme. Two of its demands – for devaluation and a cut in interest rates – have since been implemented by the Tories themselves, who are also cutting back on defence spending. What is being proposed in the programme is in fact a 'modernising' strategy for British capitalism. The problem is not identified as capitalism as such, but rather the specific weaknesses of its British variant, which is adversely contrasted with successful post-war imperialist economies like Germany and Japan. The solution, it is argued, is to put an end to the parasitism, short-termism and failure to invest in domestic manufacturing industry which has characterised Britain's City-dominated economy. Because the major section of the bourgeoisie is unable or unwilling to carry out this rational restructuring of capitalism, the task falls on the Labour movement, in a cross-class alliance with a variety of 'anti-monopoly' forces.

Although *Beyond the Casino Economy* does outline an extensive programme of nationalisation, it is conceded that the outcome would be an economy which, albeit with a large state sector, would remain firmly capitalist. Yet even this scenario is apparently regarded as ultra-left by Livingstone/Ross. Recently two of *Casino Economy's* authors, Seumas Milne and Jonathan Michie, wrote in to *Socialist Campaign Group News* complaining that Livingstone's exposition of the left's economic alternative completely ignored the necessity for an extension of public ownership. This dispute cannot disguise a fundamental agreement on perspective, however. Both sides hold that the initial objective of the labour movement is to get British capitalism back on its feet, and only then can we begin to consider the possibility of a transition to socialism. Yet it is precisely the inability of capitalism to answer the economic needs of the mass of workers which provides the objective necessity for its overthrow.

A similarly stage-ist conception can be found on the 'revolutionary' left. *Socialist Outlook*, for example, tells us that 'socialists should press the case for Keynes', on the grounds that 'a serious

Keynesian package could now boost employment – and with it, working class combativity'. While it is accepted that only the replacement of capitalism with 'conscious democratic economic planning, based on production for use and not for profit' can prevent the recurrence of slumps, the implication is that, at least in the short to medium term, state intervention can pull capitalism out of recession and promote an economic recovery. Thus *Outlook* supporter Dave Osler, writing in *Tribune*, asserts that the proto-Keynesian New Deal 'revitalised slump-hit thirties America'. Presumably, therefore, a similar programme could do the same for Britain today.

The truth is that the idea that Keynesian policies were responsible for the post-war boom is simply a myth (in Britain, deficit financing played virtually no part at all), while the New Deal proved to be a failure. What 'revitalised' a slump-hit US economy was not Roosevelt but a second world imperialist war. What is more, the view that a 'Keynesian package' would serve the interests of the workers ignores the fact that most Keynesian economists are firm advocates of state pay controls. An economic crisis always contains the possibility of demoralisation and defeat for the working class, but this cannot be overcome by rallying workers behind a capitalist economic programme.

Does this mean that revolutionaries should confine themselves to making propaganda for a revolutionary government which will expropriate the big bourgeoisie and establish a planned socialist economy? Not at all. What is required is a *transitional* programme which mobilises workers in a struggle over their immediate problems, and carries this beyond the boundaries of capitalism. We fight for transitional economic policies both as a means of focusing the struggle of workers against the Tories and the employers, and so that workers have definite demands to place on an incoming Labour government.

Workers News calls for the occupation of all workplaces threatened with closure, mass action by the working class to bring down the Tories, and the election of a Labour government to implement the following policies:

- The nationalisation, without compensation to major shareholders, of all companies announcing closures or redundancies; of the industries privatised since 1979; of all building and development land; and of the major building societies, banks and finance houses;
- State control over the export of capital;
- The immediate launching of a programme of public works to build and renovate houses, hospitals, schools, transport systems, and arts and sports facilities;
- Income tax threshold to be raised and punitive taxation of the rich introduced. Council tax to be abolished and replaced with a property tax aimed at the wealthy;
- A statutory minimum wage equivalent to the present average wage, and a sliding scale of wages and hours. Equal pay for equal work. State benefits to be not less than the minimum wage;
- Repeal of the Tory anti-union laws and an end to all state interference in the running of trade unions.

Only workers' action can defend pit jobs

COMMENT

FOLLOWING the December 21 High Court ruling that the decision to close 31 pits without consultation was illegal, the Tories are divided over how best to pursue the rationalisation of the coal industry.

Trade and Industry Secretary Michael Heseltine now appears to favour government intervention to enlarge the coal market by forcing the electricity generators to buy a greater tonnage from BC. This is also the recommendation of the Commons trade and industry select committee. But while the Tories have been forced to make a tactical retreat from their original plan, the alternative is scarcely less of an attack on the jobs and conditions of miners.

In the first place, many of the threatened pits will close even if the new plan goes ahead. The four reports commissioned by Heseltine only looked at 21 collieries, and the report considered by the government to be most authoritative, that of US mining consultants John T. Boyd, found that closing all 21 was justified, but that between six and 13 could be profitable if the market were bigger.

If 20 of the pits were kept open, average savings of 15 per cent in their running costs would be needed. The Boyd report suggests this would require compulsory redundancies at all levels and major changes in working practices, including the introduction of flexible working and an increase in the length of shifts.

Even if the government decides to subsidise pits in this manner, it will do so on condition that they become 'competitive' over the next few years. At best, some miners in some pits will have won a reprieve, but with no guarantees for the future and at the expense of harsher working conditions and a renewed attack on their unions.



Miners on the 250,000-strong march through London on October 25, 1992

Despite the angry response to the pit closure programme by millions of workers, the TUC leaders have refused to lead any kind of principled, militant campaign. When the potential emerged for building a mass movement which could remove the Tories from office, they demobilised it in favour of their own feeble Campaign for Jobs and Recovery.

The same pressures have affected NUM president Arthur Scargill, who pointedly dropped the call for industrial action during the mass demonstrations in October, only to make a limited call for action once the broad front with Tories and Liberals had clearly failed. Meanwhile, the NUM executive and the miners themselves were left in the dark, with no clear strategy to fight the closures.

The TUC has called a day of action on February 18, and five unions organising coal and rail workers are balloting their members on March 5 for a rolling programme of one-day strikes. The opportunity to organise around these events must not be lost. Rank-and-file strike committees must be organised in every workplace

threatened with job losses or closure, and a fighting alliance of public-sector workers established at every level. Pit closures, along with every other attack, can only be halted by the independent mobilisation of rank-and-file workers, combined with a sharp criticism of the union leaders for their failure to act. Build for mass action to defeat the Tories!

CWG and LTT fuse

The founding congress of Comrades for a Workers Government, the South African Trotskyist organisation which produces the journal *Qina Msebenzi*, took place in January. At the congress, the CWG took the decision to fuse with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, of which the WIL is the British section. A full report will appear in the next issue of *Workers News*.



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Leveller leader John Lilburne

The Levellers and

In 1649, opposition inside the army to being disbanded and sent to Ireland before 'the liberties of England were secured' became a small-scale uprising which Cromwell put down by force. **Jim Dye** looks at the part played by the Levellers in leading this revolt

THE ENGLISH Revolution of 1640-1660 was the world's first bourgeois revolution, a class struggle with the reactionary forces of the feudal aristocracy, the established Church, the large merchant monopolists and Charles I on one side, and the bulk of the House of Commons, the gentry, the emerging bourgeoisie and the masses on the other. But beneath this division, the opposition to the King was split from the beginning.

Initially, aristocrats such as the Earls of Essex and Manchester led the armies of Parliament, with support from the conservative Parliamentarians and London merchants who all

wanted a compromise with the Royalist forces. They were opposed by the more radical Puritan 'Independents' in the army and Parliament – typified by Oliver Cromwell who effectively reorganised the Parliamentary forces so that they were led by men of ability and ideological commitment rather than those of noble birth or high status. The first civil war began in 1642, and by 1645 Cromwell had established the 'New Model Army' whose famous 'Ironsides' – disciplined cavalry made up of committed volunteers from the lower gentry and others of the 'middling sort' – were key to victory a year later. The end of

the first civil war brought to power the large 'Presbyterian' faction in Parliament who represented the powerful merchants in London and were supported by the independent Scottish Presbyterian forces to whom Charles had surrendered.

Whilst the revolution had been developing in England, the Irish clans had taken advantage of the division among their English rulers and staged a rebellion in 1641, driving out many of the Protestant settlers who had taken over their lands. From the beginning the Irish Rebellion and the English Revolution were dialectically interlinked. However, the situation in Ireland was even more divided than that in England. Only the clans, le

How ran Ireland

Spring to push for further concessions to London

THE FIRST-EVER coalition between Fianna Fail and the Labour Party was formed on January 12, with Albert Reynolds retaining his post as prime minister and Labour leader Dick Spring becoming deputy prime minister and foreign minister. Nine members of the cabinet are from Fianna Fail and six from the Labour Party.

The swing to Labour in the November 25 elections is a continuation of the movement that elected Mary Robinson as president and reflects a contradictory shift to the left by sections of the middle and working classes. While there is a move to the right on the national question, there is also growing opposition to attacks on the working class and the oppressed, and a liberalisation of social attitudes. Labour doubled its seats to 33 and its share of the vote went up to 19.3 per cent (26.1 per cent in Dublin), its highest level ever. Due to the ideological disarray of Fine Gael, it was Labour who benefited from attempts by sections of the establishment to distance themselves from the corruption of Fianna Fail. Spring, his own standing enhanced in the eyes of the ruling class by his purge of the left, made good use of the constant stream of leaks to attack Fianna Fail in the Dail.

Ironically, the main adversaries in the 26th Dail are now the new coalition partners in the 27th. Fianna Fail

By Dan Gallagher

is a type of 'Irish Peronism', a capitalist party with a strong working class and small farmer base, which was held together by cross-class demagoguery on the national question combined with social democratic concessions to the trade unions. Under millionaire Charles Haughey it became massively corrupt, increasingly capitulated to British imperialism and launched vicious attacks on the trade unions. Only with the assistance of Labour could this offensive continue – hence the coalition. But while the coalition is acceptable to the trade union bureaucracy, it will be regarded as a betrayal by the left activists who fought Fianna Fail attacks in the past.

In Ireland, as in all oppressed colonial and semi-colonial countries, pro-imperialist leftism is a fraud, and the election was full of this kind of fraud. At the very outset of the campaign, Albert Reynolds, feeling the election slipping away from him, referred to Fine Gael leader John Bruton as 'John Unionist', with the result that all the main parties condemned him for bringing the question of the North into the election. One of the sticking points in the failed negotiations between the Labour Party and Democratic Left (the split from the Workers Party) was the latter's insistence that Sections 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitu-

tion, which claim sovereignty over the entire island, be scrapped unilaterally. The agreed Labour-Fianna Fail position is that they be negotiated away.

The conservative, religious, working class base of Fianna Fail, which held firm, has a strong nationalist content, whereas the liberal/democratic middle class (many of them ex-Fine Gael) and sections of the working class Labour voters are far more conciliatory to British imperialism. Ignoring this contradiction, various left groups from Socialist Militant to the Socialist Workers Movement are ideologically strengthening the very forces of imperialist domination by uncritically hailing the election result as a big 'left turn'. Attracted by 'liberal' attitudes, they fail to see that Ireland's stunted national development adds to the impoverishment of the masses and helps develop the conditions for the growth of reactionary religious anti-abortion groups like the Youth Defence League.

The three referenda on abortion yielded about two-thirds in favour of the right to information and travel, but the same against the substantive question. Both the 'Pro-Life' and the 'Pro-Choice' camps opposed the substantive issue, Pro-Life because it allowed abortion in some circumstances (for example, if the life of the mother were in danger!) and Pro-

Choice because the wording of the Fianna Fail amendment was actually a restriction on the current position arising from the Supreme Court ruling in the 'X' case, where the threat of suicide was deemed to be sufficient grounds to allow an abortion. The four biggest 'no' votes were in Donegal South West and Cork North West, following clerical advice, and in the Dublin suburb of Dun Laoghaire and Dublin South Central for opposite, liberal democratic reasons. Like the election as a whole, it was neither a victory for reaction nor 'a bloody nose for the bigots', as the Socialist Workers Movement put it, but progress with a fudge, leaving all the battles – on divorce, abortion and lesbian and gay liberation – still to be fought.

Labour's programme was more left than the one which lost Neil Kinnock the election in Britain, containing commitments to more spending in certain areas than Fianna Fail, Fine Gael or the Progressive Democrats, and strongly opposing their programme of privatisation of the semi-state sector. However, Spring has made it clear that he is committed to 'the market', the 'spending requirements of Maastricht' and the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) which ties the pay of the working class to the performance of Irish capitalism. Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats (a right-wing split from Fianna Fail several years ago) would abandon PESP; employers, meanwhile, are using the diffusion of militancy it has caused to press their advantage in the class struggle. Fianna Fail has agreed to most of Labour's demands over PESP, reasoning that Spring will take the brunt of attacks for the inevitable failures.

British imperialism would undoubtedly have preferred the 'Rainbow Coalition' of Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and the Labour Party (editorials in both *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* agreed on this point), as it might be expected to concede whatever was required on the North, but the Irish ruling class had different needs and a long-abused working class to keep in check.

Sinn Fein, the only party raising the national question, increased its share of the vote by only 0.5 per cent, to 1.7 per cent. Its programme was a further indication of its rightward move. There was no mention of socialism, no anti-capitalist measures proposed whatsoever and no hint of where the resources would come from to solve the 'poverty crisis' which 'now affects one-third of the population in the 26 counties'. It defended articles 2 and 3



Dick Spring

and demanded British withdrawal but had no defence of the armed struggle and merely referred to a document 'Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland' which looks to the United Nations to guarantee peace (after the Gulf war!).

There is talk of Ireland finally evolving a right-left political divide. Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats are the opposition and the bulk of the Irish working class will have cast their votes for the new Fianna Fail-Labour Party coalition. There will be a certain healing of the rift in the Irish working class, which may have important implications for the future of Irish politics. But where are the forces which will provide the ideological basis for this unity, to make it bear fruit in a fight against the terrible economic deprivations facing the working class? The Trotskyist Theory of Permanent Revolution is the only basis for such a struggle. This rejects the nationalist/Stalinist theory of 'stages' and assigns to the working class the leading role in completing the tasks of the national revolution in the struggle for the socialist revolution. It is a task which can only be completed successfully on the international arena.

Labour sizes up the North

THE CAMPAIGN for Labour Representation in Northern Ireland (CLR) has existed since the 1970s but has only started to make advances in latter years. Its basic argument is that workers there pay taxes to Westminster but have no opportunity to vote for any of the parties capable of forming a government. Democracy is therefore denied, it claims.

With the Tories already standing candidates, 'Democracy Now' (DN), led by the Labour MP for Vauxhall, Kate Hoey, has begun to target the Protestant working class vote. ('British people are entitled to join the Labour Party', DN argued at the last party conference.) The demand is supported by trade unions like the AEEU, which organises mainly Loyalist workers in the Six Counties.

The CLR and DN are opposed at Labour Party conferences by the Kinnockite Labour Committee on Ireland and the Labour Party Irish Sections, who argue that the SDLP is Labour's fraternal party in Ireland, and that to move into the Six Counties would be an attack on it. In opposition to the position of its founder, James Connolly, the Irish Labour Party does not organise in the North.

Whatever the intentions of individuals in the CLR, some of whom argue that representation would be only a temporary measure until the reunification of Ireland, this campaign strengthens the domination of imperialism over the North, as the appearance of the pro-

unionist DN proves.

Socialists who fight for this hark back to the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), which appealed directly to working class interests across the 'sectarian divide' and reached a high point of 100,000 votes in 1970. However, the NILP 'flew the green flag in the Falls Road, the orange flag in the Shankill and the red flag in the centre' and adopted a pro-unionist stance in 1949.

Within the NILP nestled the 'Irish section' of the British Socialist Labour League, which had a fudged position on partition. When internment and Bloody Sunday posed point blank the issue of the border and the need to overthrow the artificial statelet, both reformist Labourism and pseudo-Marxist demagoguery were blown away by the surge forward of the masses. Today, the Socialist Workers Movement, and Socialist Militant in a grosser form, repeat the same capitulation to British imperialism, carrying headlines in their papers demanding 'Kick out the Tories' (from government in Britain, not from occupation of Ireland).

The alliance between British Labour leaders and Orange reaction, based on the defence of the booty of empire, must be broken – both to defend Ireland's right to self-determination and to enable the British working class to defeat its own ruling class. Socialists must oppose all calls for the Labour Party to establish itself in the Six Counties.

Irish freedom

Radicals fought against the reconquest of Ireland during the English Revolution

by Owen Roe O'Neill, had a consistent policy and any unity. Both the King and Parliament denounced the rising, but both were too occupied by domestic matters to come to the aid of the Protestant settlers.

In Ireland, the English forces were split down the middle with those loyal to Charles holding Dublin and the 'Pale', whilst Parliament supporters held Derry city and part of the surrounding area. A force under Lord Inchiquin (Murrrough O'Brien) held Cork, and regularly switched sides during the course of the rising. The clans, together with others in the Catholic Confederation (formed in 1642), held the rest of the territory. Even the religious divide was often a confused picture, with some Presbyterian settlers joining the rising due to their own oppression by the Anglican Church of Ireland. The Royalist forces contained many Catholics as well as Protestants, and many of the Catholic Anglo-Irish gentry had allied uneasily with the rebels. Treaties were constantly made and broken between all the sides until O'Neill, disgusted by the intrigue, broke with the Catholic Confederation over their deals with the Royalists and Inchiquin, and took the field with an independent Irish army.

In England, one of the main concerns of the Presbyterian conservatives was to disband the New Model Army, which they rightly believed was a dangerous centre of political and religious radicalism. But there was an added problem - Ireland still had to be reconquered. This was not simply a matter of aiding fellow Protestants; shortly after the start of the rising many merchants and gentry (including Cromwell) had loaned large sums of money for the purpose of suppressing the rebels, and the return of this investment was to be confiscated Irish land. In 1647, Parliament moved to disband the New Model Army, offering a fraction of what was owed to soldiers whose pay was months in arrears, and called for volunteers for Ireland.

These actions were resisted by the army for a number of reasons - the pay offered was an insult; most thought they would be used as mercenaries rather than as fighters for liberty; and Baptists and other Puritans feared Presbyterian intolerance. Soldiers' councils were formed by many regiments and 'Agitators' elected. The junior officers followed the lead of their troops and elected their own representatives. The senior officers, known as the 'Grandees', feared this movement, but they feared the Presbyterian Parliament more. Cromwell and the Grandees moved to take control of the Agitators in an effort to use them against the Presbyterians, whilst at the same time moderating them.

However, the radicalism was not confined to the army. The group known as the 'Levellers' had grown rapidly, becoming in effect the first organised political party. Their leaders included the popular John Lilburne, who was politically on the right of the group and a defender of private property, and the early communist, William Walwyn. The Levellers drew up a radical programme that included demands for the separation of Church and state, together with a religious toleration that would include Catholics, Jews and atheists (remarkable for its day), annual elections, universal male suffrage and a redistribution of wealth. The Levellers were the left wing of the English Revolution, but they were also a contradictory phenomenon. Whilst

they fought against all the remnants of feudalism, they also resisted the effects of the rise of capitalism. They represented artisans and others from the middle layers of society, although they also had a large following among the London poor. They rested on the social groups that were being torn apart by the transition to capitalism, some of whom would become capitalist producers and farmers, whilst the rest would be forced into the ranks of the propertyless proletariat.

The political programme of the Levellers was argued over at the famous 'Putney Debates' in October and November 1647 between the assembled soldiers and their officers. Shortly afterwards, a Leveller-inspired mutiny at Ware was put down by Cromwell. Further actions of the Levellers were postponed, however, by the outbreak of the second civil war in 1648, when Charles headed a Scottish Presbyterian army. The fighting was quickly over, and two things resulted; the victorious Cromwell initiated a purge of Parliament that removed the Presbyterians and put the Independents in power, and, in 1649, Charles was executed and a republic proclaimed.

Now in power, Cromwell and the Independents sought to carry out the plans for Ireland's reconquest, and for similar reasons to the Presbyterians. After the defeat of the conservatives to his right, Cromwell moved against the radicals to his left. The four main Leveller leaders, Lilburne, Walwyn, Richard Overton and Thomas Prince were arrested and held in the Tower of London for treason. In a bid to pacify the army, three months' back pay was granted, but on condition that the troops go to Ireland. It was not enough. In 1647, the soldiers' councils had agreed not to disband until the liberties for which they had fought the King had been secured. Now, two years later, calls went out to elect new Agitators, but this time the army was split along class lines and the radicals had to confront Cromwell, their formerly popular general, directly. The Levellers already viewed Cromwell as a new dictator and Parliament as part of the oppression of the people. In *The Bloody Project*, written in 1648, Walwyn wrote:

'The King, Parliament, great men in the City and Army, have made you but the stairs by which they

have mounted to honour, wealth and power. The only quarrel that hath been, and at present is but this, namely, whose slaves the people shall be.'

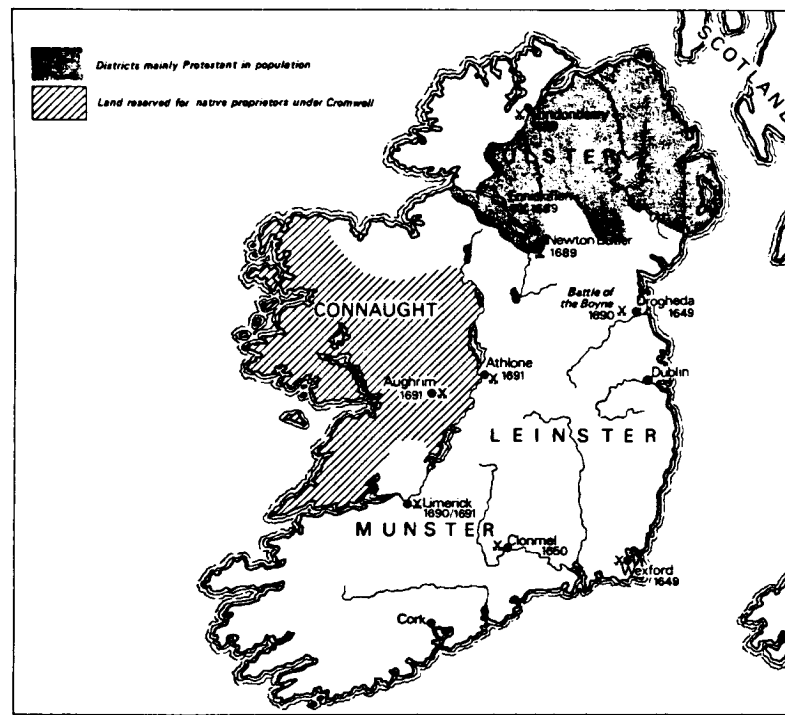
In 1649, opposition to Ireland's reconquest began to take the form of political solidarity with the Irish rebels, rather than a dispute over pay that characterised the 1647 opposition. In *The English Soldiers' Standard*, probably written by Walwyn in the Tower, English liberty and Irish freedom became combined:

'For consider, as things now stand, to what end you should hazard your lives for the Irish: have you not been fighting these seven years in England for rights and liberties, that you are yet deluded of? And that too, when as none can hinder you of them but your own officers, under whom you have fought? And will you go on still to kill, slay and murder men, to make them as absolute lords and masters over Ireland as you have made them over England? Or is it your ambition to reduce the Irish to the happiness of tithes upon treble damages, to excise, customs, and monopolies in trades? Or to fill their prisons with poor disabled prisoners, to fill their land with swarms of beggars...? Or if you intend not this, or would be sorry to see no better effects of your undertakings, it certainly concerns you in the first place, and before you go, to see these evils reformed here; that when occasion shall justly invite you thither, you may carry a good platform in your hands, such a one as possibly they will never fight against.'

This passage is remarkable. Against the arguments of Parliament that Ireland would remain a dangerous threat as a possible base for a Royalist or foreign invasion unless it was reconquered, the Levellers believed it was possible to make Ireland a free, independent and friendly neighbour on the condition that England was free from its own internal oppression. On the one hand, this showed an ignorance of Irish society; the lower level of economic development meant that the emergence of 'Irish Levellers' was not possible as those social groups did not exist. However, it was not entirely without basis; in Ireland, O'Neill had made it clear that he mistrusted the Royalists, and had made a truce with the English Parliamentary forces under General



The execution of Charles I on January 30, 1649, as depicted in a contemporary broadsheet.



Ireland in the seventeenth century

Monck. Monck's superiors in England ordered the truce to be broken; any possibility of the Irish rebels and English radicals finding common cause had to be removed, and in any case the leaders of the army and Parliament wanted the Irish lands for themselves.

The Levellers' arguments were well received by the troops about to leave for Ireland. On May Day, 1649, a regiment of cavalry in Salisbury refused to proceed and elected Agitators. When the officers fled, the men elected their own to replace them. They were quickly joined by other regiments, and published their views in a remarkable tract called *The Soldiers' Demand*. Many of the complaints were similar to those of 1647, but now something new appeared:

'What have we to do in Ireland, to fight and murder a people and nation (for indeed they [the Grandees] are set upon cruelty and murdering poor people, which is all they glory in) which have done us no harm...? We have waded too far in that crimson stream already of innocent and Christian blood.'

In Oxfordshire later the same month, another body of Leveller-inspired troops made preparations to march on London. However, Cromwell moved quickly, and with loyal troops (many of whom were ex-Royalists) he surrounded the insurgents at Burford and defeated them. The Levellers had been defeated where it mattered most - in the army, where the power of the English state resided. The ruling class had been saved by Cromwell, and they were well aware of it: the Royalists at Oxford University gave him an honorary degree, Parliament gave him a fortune in money and land, and the City oligarchy lavishly entertained him at a thanks-giving banquet.

The revolt was a serious threat, but it only affected a minority of the army - perhaps a few thousand active rebels, with many thousands more deserting rather than fight in Ireland. The majority of the New Model Army remained cautious and passive. Many in the army, of course, were not unwilling to go to Ireland in what they saw as the rescue of their fellow Protestants, and of those that took up arms to resist the Irish reconquest not all had a clear political and moral objection. Nevertheless, for a time the vanguard of Levellers inside and outside the army held sway over the rest, and pointed to a radical alternative to the Cromwellian Settlement.

The army was purged of its most outspoken radicals and the rest were bullied into submission, although not before further localised revolts had taken place. By September, Cromwell had managed to land a force of 10,000 troops in Ireland. The rest, as they say, is history. Cromwell ordered the massacres at the Drogheda and Wexford garrisons and the Irish rebels were subdued with great cruelty, whilst the English troops were paid in Irish land.

History is often a contradictory process. What Cromwell achieved by his dictatorship over the English state until his death in 1658 was a country made safe for capitalist development, so that the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, or the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, could not turn the clock back - the basic social gains of the bourgeois revolution remained intact. In the 1640s, the productive forces of society were such that they could not provide a firm basis for the kind of society the Levellers wanted. Only the brutal exploitation of capitalism that greatly built up the productive forces could one day provide the material basis of a society free from poverty and hunger: a socialist society. The colonial policies initiated by Cromwell in Ireland and the West Indies were intimately connected with the rise of capitalism; the trading profits that were made from sugar, tobacco, slaves and other commodities created in part the capital that would be needed for the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century. It was this latter capitalist economic revolution, a revolution made possible by the events of 1640-60, that created not only the material wealth necessary for socialism, but also the tool to achieve it - the proletariat, capitalism's own grave-digger. Therefore, paradoxically, the defeat of the radicals in 1649 has made possible the victory of socialist revolutionaries today.

In Ireland today, British troops still hold on to six of the 32 counties. The events since the Cromwellian conquest have often hidden from view the necessary link between Irish freedom and British workers, a link recognised by the Levellers. Today that link must be reforged, and necessarily so, for in Ireland, both North and South, there exists a powerful working class that has been artificially divided. Only a struggle that is based on the goals of socialism can unite Irish workers, both amongst themselves, and with those in England, Scotland, Wales and the rest of the world against our common enemies - the capitalists.

The present British ruling class gained its position not by gradual reform but by a revolution which was defended by force of arms. Today, the working class will only be sure of obtaining a socialist society, free from violence and exploitation, if it is prepared to follow its rulers' example. As Trotsky said in 1925:

'The English bourgeoisie has erased even the memory of the revolution of the seventeenth century, and recasts its entire past in the form of "gradual changes". The vanguard of the English workers should discover the English Revolution and should find in it, under its ecclesiastical garment, the powerful conflict of social forces. Cromwell was by no means a "pioneer of labour", but in the drama of the seventeenth century, the English proletariat may find great precedents for revolutionary action.'

An assessment of the political career of the former WRP leader by Bob Pitt

PART NINETEEN

IF A DETAILED account of Gerry Healy's political career has a justification, it lies mainly in the period up until the late 1960s. For two decades before that, the organisation led by Healy was the only significant political grouping in Britain to the left of the Communist Party, and any study of British 'Trotskyism' during those years would necessarily concentrate on the Healyite movement. By the early 1970s, however, there were some much more positive developments than the SLL on the far left. Tony Cliff's International Socialists were by then engaged in building rank-and-file movements in the trade unions, while Ted Grant's Militant tendency was beginning to make some headway with its entryism in the Labour Party. The International Marxist Group, for its part, was pursuing its orientation towards the students' and women's movements and Irish solidarity campaigns.

Healy's 'orthodoxy' (which was in fact characterised by ignorance of, and contempt for, the political positions of Leninism and Trotskyism) offered no revolutionary alternative to those he dismissed as 'revisionists'. Healy could attack the IS's intervention in industry for its syndicalism and economism, but the SLL made no attempt to organise a real opposition to the bureaucracy inside the unions. And while Healy could deride Militant's aim of transforming the Labour Party, the SLL failed to carry out even the most minimal fraction work in the party which still held the political allegiance of the working class. As for the IMG, its uncritical attitude to the IRA and its turn away from the labour movement in search of 'new vanguards' were lambasted by the SLL. However, Healy's response to the Irish liberation struggle was to denounce 'the reactionary, indiscriminate violence of the Provisionals' (while engaging in a short flirtation with Official Sinn Fein) and to hold the occasional SLL public meeting when Ireland hit the headlines. No serious activity was carried out by the YS among students, and the SLL's position on the women's movement was distinguished by downright political backwardness.

Not that Healy ignored the post-1968 politicisation of a layer of the petty-bourgeoisie. With his eye for the main chance, he was not averse to recruiting from among the very 'middle class radicals' who were otherwise the object of the SLL's scorn. From the end of the 1960s, Healy began holding classes with a group of producers, directors, playwrights and actors who had been drawn towards Trotskyism.² As he had with the dissident intellectuals from the CP back in the 1950s, Healy approached these potential recruits with a degree of subtlety. 'There was always give and take at these meetings, much more so than at regular party events,' Tim Wohlforth writes of Healy's classes. 'The cultural people received special kid gloves treatment from Healy who spent many, many hours with each

of the key people in this milieu carefully nurturing their development'.³ Healy's intervention in this milieu was preserved for posterity in Trevor Griffiths's play *The Party*, in which the Healy character (named John Tagg) was played by Sir Laurence Olivier!

For some of these artists, Wohlforth observes, involvement with the SLL allowed them to enjoy a vicarious identification with the struggles of the working class while maintaining their own comfortable existences. For others, notably two of Healy's most celebrated recruits from the theatrical world, Corin and Vanessa Redgrave, their commitment was much more serious. 'Corin impressed me,' Wohlforth recalls. 'He seemed extremely interested in Marxist theory and quite willing to do everything other members did. He would go out at five in the morning to sell papers at plant gates and deliver papers door to door in working class neighbourhoods. It was Corin who brought his more famous sister around the organisation. I met Vanessa on several occasions and she seemed equally as serious as her brother and more than willing to carry out any party task she was asked to do. . . . Clearly, I told myself, these two can make a real contribution to the movement'.⁴

At its most cynical level, Healy's turn to the radical middle classes was motivated by the straightforward pursuit of cash. According to one perhaps apocryphal story, Healy's response to the recruitment of C. Redgrave was 'It's the big one I'm interested in, the one with the money' - namely Corin's wealthy sister.⁵ Another probable motive on Healy's part was that such recruits, who had no real background in the workers' movement and were won to the SLL mainly on the basis of admiration for Healy the individual, were a useful source of uncritical political support. This would seem to be the only explanation for the immediate elevation to leadership positions of the Redgraves - and others such as Alex Mitchell, a former *Sunday Times* journalist who became editor of *Workers Press* in 1971.⁶ The consequence was to encourage in these people a combination of arrogance and ignorance which destroyed any potential they had as revolutionaries.⁷

The rise of political competitors like the IS and IMG did not mean that the SLL went into decline; on the contrary, the early 1970s were the years in which Healy's organisation enjoyed its most spectacular growth. For this was a period marked by the most intense industrial conflicts in Britain since the pre-1914 'Great Unrest'. And although the predominant form of these struggles was wage militancy, the attempts by Edward Heath's Tory government to shackle the unions through its state pay laws and National Industrial Relations Court gave these industrial battles an extremely sharp political character. Tens of thousands of workers were radicalised by their experiences,

The rise and fall of Gerry Healy



Healy addressing an ATUA conference at Belle Vue, Manchester, July 1973

and the SLL and YS intervened energetically among them.

On the face of it, Healy's successes in this period were very impressive, at least so far as the SLL's ability to win a mass audience for its politics was concerned. A rally at the Empire Pool Wembley in March 1972, which marked the culmination of a YS national Right-to-Work march, drew a crowd of over 8,000 (though some of them were no doubt there partly for a concert featuring such attractions as the rock group Slade).⁸ A year later at the same venue, a 'Pageant of Working Class History', in which the SLL's playwrights and actors collaborated with trade unionists and youth to stage large-scale dramatisations of earlier workers' struggles, was attended by 10,000 people.⁹ During Healy's speech at this event, which the SLL hailed as 'the greatest day in the history of British Trotskyism', a forty-foot high enlargement of the great leader was projected onto a screen in front of the assembled multitude!¹⁰

To Healy, who had spent the best part of his political career in small revolutionary groups, it must have seemed that he had finally cracked it. Yet these rallies were more a tribute to Healy's talents as a political showman than a reflection of the SLL's real influence in the working class. Indeed, for Healy such mass spectacles became a substitute for the real fight to establish a solid political base in the mass movement. As his then loyal lieutenant Mike Banda would later comment, Healy came to suffer the delusion 'that by marches, pageants, pop concerts and various other politically exotic devices . . . he could replace historical experience and the long arduous struggle of the party and persuade thousands of workers to abandon social democracy and become Trotskyists'.¹¹

The essentially sectarian relationship which Healy developed between the SLL and the mass struggles of the working class seems to have been based on a particularly dogmatic reading of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*, with its one-sided, and ultimately false, emphasis on revolutionary consciousness being brought into the workers' movement 'from without'.¹² Thus *Workers Press*, despite being a daily, remained essentially a propaganda organ which gave little agitational guidance to militant workers. Healy's line was that trade unionists

should be left to get on with the practical details of industrial struggles, while the SLL's role was to argue for the general strategic line of bringing down the Tory government and electing a Labour government 'pledged to carry out socialist policies'. This meant that leading trade unionists in the SLL were often allowed to behave in a thoroughly opportunist fashion in their union work.¹³ It also produced the familiar sight of SLL members intervening at labour movement meetings in a woodenly propagandist manner which failed to address any of the immediate issues under discussion.

Nor was Healy capable of providing the working class with a Marxist analysis of the economic and political developments underlying the class struggle. When Nixon broke the dollar's link with gold in August 1971, Healy asserted that this had provoked an economic crisis which was 'the worst in the history of capitalism'¹⁴ and was driving the system towards complete collapse.¹⁵ The Tories' response to this ever-deepening economic crisis, according to Healy, was to try and establish through its industrial relations legislation a corporate state along the lines of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, in which independent trade unions would be destroyed. And in this project, bizarrely enough, the Tories supposedly had the support of the right wing of the union bureaucracy, who Healy claimed were 'getting ready to accept the government's laws and join the corporate state'.¹⁶

Predictions of imminent economic catastrophe and incipient right-wing dictatorship were of course nothing new for Healy. He had been saying this sort of thing as far back as 1945-46.¹⁷ But whereas at that time Healy had employed such arguments to advocate total entry into the Labour Party, he now drew precisely the opposite conclusion - that reformism was finished and that it was necessary to set up an independent revolutionary party. The result, in November 1973, was the 'transformation' of the SLL into the Workers Revolutionary Party. As was often the case with Healy, ultra-left bombast went hand in hand with opportunist practice. The fantasy that Heath was intent on imposing a 'Bonapartist dictatorship, in preparation for massive state repressions against the working class and the Marxist movement'¹⁸ was used to

justify a programmatic emphasis on the defence of democratic rights. The perspectives document for the new party, which appeared as a central committee statement in February 1973, was based on the 'Charter of Basic Rights' from 1970, and had a predominantly reformist character.¹⁹ 'In its content and underlying conception,' it has been rightly pointed out, 'the programme on which the WRP was founded had nothing to do with Trotskyism'.²⁰

The WRP's founding conference, which was attended by 3,000 'delegates and visitors', should have indicated to Healy that, for all the gains of the previous few years, he was still a long way short of creating a truly mass revolutionary party of the working class. But Healy's head was filled with visions of an imminent struggle for power. 'We say the pre-conditions for the social revolution are maturing rapidly,' he assured the conference. 'There is no middle road - either we defeat this government and smash its state apparatus or they will destroy us. The conflict ahead in fact poses this question of dual power. . . .²¹ The problem of the continuing hold of social democracy over the labour movement was easily disposed of. 'Workers know,' the first statement by the new WRP central committee blithely asserted, 'that what is posed today is . . . a revolutionary political confrontation in which the whole question of power is posed.'²² Subsequent political developments were to deal a harsh blow to such illusions.

To be continued

NOTES

- Workers Press*, February 24, 1972.
- Interestingly, this group also held discussions with Tony Cliff, but were more impressed with Healy's 'revolutionary' hardness than with an IS which had then only just emerged from its libertarian phase to adopt a formal Leninism. (Interview with Robin Blick, August 14, 1992.)
- Tim Wohlforth, *Memoirs*, unpublished draft.
- Ibid.
- Tasks of the Fourth International*, May 1980.
- These points are made in D. North, *Gerry Healy and His Place in the History of the Fourth International*, Labor Publications, Detroit, pp.54-57. North, however, apparently holds the anti-Marxist view that it was impermissible in principle for Healy to recruit from this petty-bourgeois milieu.
- 'I was shocked when I next met them,' Wohlforth writes of the Redgraves. 'It was at an International Committee meeting held in 1973 and Corin and Vanessa were the SLL's delegates to the conference! This seemed unreal to me as Vanessa had been in the movement barely a year and Corin only a couple of years basically as a rank and file. They had become Healy's special pets, the mask of humility was being dropped, and a kind of arrogance emerging. Both made rather lengthy and totally hollow presentations to the meeting asserting - as if they had just discovered something - the critical importance of the revolutionary party and theory in the next period of the capitalist crisis, etc. etc. etc.'
- Workers Press*, March 13, 1972.
- Ibid., March 12, 1973.
- D. Widgey, *The Left in Britain*, Peregrine 1976, pp.499-50.
- Workers Press*, February 7, 1986.
- Trotsky never accepted that Lenin's formulation was correct. See his *Stalin*, MacGibbon and Key, 1968, p.58; also P. Pomper, ed., *Trotsky's Notebooks, 1933-35*, Columbia University Press, 1986, p.84.
- See the comments in *Workers Socialist League, The Battle for Trotskyism*, Folrore, 1976, pp.78-80.
- Workers Press*, October 20, 1971.
- 'A US Treasury prediction of "another 1929" could be the understatement of the year,' one editorial stated. (Ibid., March 31, 1973.)
- Ibid., February 20, 1973. For an analysis of Healy's stupid and incoherent positions on 'corporatism', see R. Black, *Fascism in Germany*, Steyne Publications, 1975, pp.1088ff.
- See part 3 of this series.
- Workers Press*, January 20, 1973.
- Draft Perspectives to Transform the SLL into the Revolutionary Party*, SLL pamphlet, 1973.
- Fourth International*, Summer 1986.
- Workers Press*, November 5, 1973. (Healy's speech to the WRP founding conference has been published by the Redgraves in their *Marxist Monthly*, December 1992/January 1993. Strangely enough, none of his barmier predictions concerning the imminence of dual power, of the struggle to smash the capitalist state, etc. appear in this version.)
- Ibid., November 12, 1973.

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Malcolm X

Freedom road

Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America

By Bruce Perry; Station Hill Press; £9.95

Review by Eugene Ludlow

THIS comprehensive biography of Malcolm X is the product of 20 years of research. Based on interviews with over 400 people, all of whom knew Malcolm in one way or another, it represents the most complete account so far of the man whose militant stand for black equality acted as a necessary antidote to the pacifism that characterised much of the civil rights movement.

In addition to the interviews, the book draws on prison and police records, commentaries, articles and speeches, making it a veritable tour de force in investigative journalism. It is particularly welcome at a time when a serious understanding of Malcolm's politics is threatened by the welter of publicity material being churned out by Warner Brothers to accompany the Spike Lee film.

However, Perry tends to lay greater emphasis on the psychological, rather than the political, analysis, which leads him at times to advance some pretty reactionary explanations for Malcolm's actions. For example, he seems to think that if Malcolm's parents had done a better job at bringing him up, things might have been different. But this doesn't square with information presented in the book.

According to Perry, Earl Little, Malcolm's father, was a hustler and a womaniser, a self-appointed preacher incapable of practising what he preached, who beat his wife and children mercilessly, didn't help around the house and failed dismally as a breadwinner. But as Perry himself points out, conditions for the white

working class in the United States during the Depression were terrible, and therefore nothing short of catastrophic for black workers. On top of the economic hardships, black workers had to endure the racism of state and white workers alike.

On one occasion, the Little family were driven out of a white neighbourhood by a stone-throwing mob; on another, they were evicted from their farmhouse in Lansing, Michigan, because there was a clause in the contract to the effect that only whites could rent, lease or buy the property. (Earl burnt down the farmhouse in sheer frustration.) Events like these were not exceptional for working class blacks; they certainly weren't, as Perry implies, an example of Earl's 'bad luck'.

Since Perry is writing without an adequate political compass, the huge volume of empirical information about Malcolm and the world he knew is presented in a somewhat complex way and is difficult to wade through at times. In its favour, it fills in many of the blanks, not least the ones created by Malcolm himself in his 'autobiography', ghost-written by Alex Haley, which contains a large amount of disinformation, the reasons for which become clear when you read Perry's account.

A talented school student, Malcolm's ambition to be a lawyer was crudely dismissed by his English teacher: 'A lawyer - that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you *can* be. You're good with your hands... why don't you plan on carpentry?'

It wasn't carpentry, but a life of crime that followed - dope dealer, pimp and burglar - culminating in a prison sentence of almost seven years. Malcolm used this time to study philosophy, religion and history, spending up to 15 hours at a stretch devouring books. He converted to Islam while still in prison.

In 1954, his days as a gangster behind him, Malcolm was made chief minister at the Nation of Islam's temple number seven in Harlem. In the course of ten years he managed to swell the ranks of the faithful from a few hundred to several thousand, spread across the whole of the northern United States from east to west. His rapid development into an accomplished speaker on the subject of racism brought invitations to address meetings from all sides.

But he broke with the Nation of Islam over the corrupt practices of its leadership centred on Elijah Muhammad. Feted on university campuses at home and abroad, Malcolm now began a series of lectures under the auspices of the Militant Labor Forum run by the Socialist Workers Party. He was to speak on this platform on three occasions during the last year of his life, the first being in April 1964. If the SWP saw in Malcolm a route to recruiting thousands of black workers, for his part, Malcolm was glad to have access to a working class audience via the SWP's paper, *The Militant*.

But while to some extent he played the SWP at its own game, there is no doubt that he was moving to the left. He began to identify the source of contemporary racism as the capitalist system, to organise his speeches along purely secular lines and to attack political rather than religious targets. His Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which he formed with other ex-members of the Nation of Islam, had a charter which called for black self-organisation and militant action to combat racism. He came to embody the idea of 'black revolution'.

On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X walked on to the platform at the Audubon ballroom in New York to address an OAAU rally. Attempts on his life had already been made by the Nation of Islam, which had also systematically fingered his followers to the police with the result that many had been disarmed. But the offer of police protection was unthinkable to the OAAU. After Malcolm greeted the audience, three Nation of Islam hit men rose from seats at the front and fired at him with pistols and with both barrels of a sawn-off shotgun, killing him almost instantly.

That Malcolm X stood as a beacon in the fight to smash racism throughout most of his adult life, and that his work inspired many others, is well attested to by Perry's book. In late 1964, Malcolm offered the following advice to black students from Mississippi visiting Harlem:

'You'll get freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it. When you get that kind of attitude, they'll label you as a "crazy Negro", or they'll call you a "crazy nigger" - they don't say Negro. Or they'll call you an extremist or a subversive, or seditious, or a red or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough and get enough people to be like you, you'll get your freedom.'

Still crazy after all these years

Dear comrades,

When I was in London for the Christmas period, I happened to pick up copies of the papers of the two WRPs, *Workers Press* and *NewsLine*, and was struck by a strange similarity between them. Both have held on to that apocalyptic 'onward and upward' quality so beloved of Healyism.

So for *Workers Press* (December 19, 1992):

'The coming year will be decisive for the world working class and its struggle for socialism.' Not only the working class, it seems: 'For the Workers Revolutionary Party the coming year will be decisive.' Needless to say, the economic crisis is 'increasingly severe' (when wasn't it?) and the answer is 'to fight for the unity of all these struggles', 'to go on the offensive', etc, etc. There is no advice as to how struggles can be united, but who cares?

NewsLine has obviously gone completely crackers. In its January 2 edition, 1993 is billed as - surprise, surprise - 'year for revolution'. Now that's really decisive! Recession in Japan is leading to 'revolutionary consequences' which are 'obvious'. The North American Free Trade Agreement will bring 'the greatest class

struggles yet seen to the United States'. The American ruling class 'is faced with fighting a civil war in the US and three or four (!) imperialist wars at the same time'.

Germany, meanwhile, has been 'shattered by the slump' and the German working class is 'faced with taking power'. 'France, Italy and especially Britain (!) face economic catastrophe in 1993 and

social revolution.' This year 'will see Major, or another Tory leader, serving in a John Smith-led govern-

ment'. Why? Because '1993 will be a year of wars and revolutions in which the weakness of imperialism and the socialist revolution will dominate'. Naturally, the British working class will be faced with taking power, along with its Japanese, American, German, French and Italian counterparts.

Conclusions:

- 1) Looks like a busy year ahead.
- 2) Things have never been better for workers or worse for capitalists.
- 3) Come back Nostradamus, all is forgiven.

Yours in comradeship,
Paul Lomax

Correspondence

Prinkipo Press

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IN LATE November last year, the Bush administration finally decided to subject Somalia to a dose of its 'new world order'. Unlike the Gulf war in which the economic factor was a major consideration, this time the US acted for purely political-strategic objectives. Continued civil war in Somalia has the potential of spilling over into countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan and engulfing the whole 'Horn of Africa' in turmoil.

The US ruling class is directly responsible for the present crisis in Somalia, and consequently for the untold suffering and the loss of so many lives. It was the Americans who propped up the reactionary Siyaad Barre dictatorship between 1977 and 1991. Having failed to ensure the victory of their puppet over the opposition, they dumped Somalia to escape the blame for any disaster that might follow. Now they are back on a 'holy' mission to save the masses from famine!

It should also be remembered that the other enthusiasts for this 'humanitarian' mission - Britain, France and Italy - are the very same imperialist powers that divided Somalia among themselves in the nineteenth century. Those who carved up the country and contributed to the consolidation of 'clan' identity are now back preaching unity!

Since the downfall of Siyaad Barre, independent aid agencies have frequently warned Western governments and the United Nations of an emerging famine in Somalia. By mid-1992, urgent reports were appearing in the media of famine in parts of the country. But when the West finally decided to act, it was in pursuit of its own interests. Even liberals engaged in relief work in Somalia could see that this was imperialist arrogance and aggression.

The basis for the present crisis was laid by Somalia's post-independence politics. The Union Constitution of 1960 was a disaster with its lack of sensitivity to the legacy of clan identity and its incorrect approach to the question of unity between the former British and Italian Somalilands. It could hardly be otherwise if, as reported, it was drafted by Italian and American 'experts', one of whom boasted that the whole thing was sorted out in an Italian hotel over a bottle of whisky!

Within a year, the north voted to reject the constitution and, in December 1961, northern army officers launched an abortive secessionist coup. A period of degeneration into clan politics followed, the result of which was the formation of clan-based parties. Conflicts with Ethiopia over the fate of Somalis under Haile Selassie's rule aggravated the problems, despite the ex-

By Jabu Masilela

istence of a huge army built with Soviet support. Then, on October 21, 1969, there was a successful coup led by Mohamed Siyaad Barre, the commander of the Somali National Army.

But Siyaad only deepened the crisis by poisoning clan relations. The regime more and more rested on particular clans such as the Aarod, at the expense of others like the Isaaq and the Hawiye. From 1978-80 onwards, it even fomented armed conflicts between various clans for the sake of its own self-preservation. This was in stark contrast to its initial policies, which included fighting illiteracy, expanding health and education services, resettling drought victims and establishing self-help community projects.

The opposition also became clan-based. The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) drew most of its armed men from the Majerteen clans. However, Siyaad won over these fighters by appealing to the blood ties between the Majerteen and the Aarod, and proceeded to use them against the Isaaq and the Hawiye. By 1990, the SSDF was moribund.

The Somali National Movement, based among the Isaaq, was launched in 1981. More democratic than the SSDF, it held regular congresses to decide policies and elect a leadership, and tried to resolve disputes in its ranks peacefully. In 1989, it played an indirect role in the formation of the United Somali Congress (USC), an armed movement based among the Hawiye.

The 'Manifesto Group' was formed during the last year of Siyaad's regime when its military power was declining. Though conceived as a 'loyal opposition', it facilitated the successes of the USC, which started an armed revolt and kicked Siyaad out of the capital in January 1991. But it lacked a coherent political programme, and its loose organisational structure allowed 'clanism' to develop.

The clan-based politics of the Siyaad regime and the inability of the opposition groupings, chiefly the USC, to break from clanism led to the present civil war. The leaders of the various groups became 'warlords' after the overthrow of Siyaad and the collapse of central government, indicating the extent to which Somali petty-bourgeois nationalism has degenerated since it conducted an anti-colonial struggle against the British and the Italians. Both during and after the independence struggle, the petty-bourgeoisie was incapable of forging a really revolutionary-national movement that could move beyond narrow clan

UN TROOPS OUT OF SOMALIA!



A US soldier in Mogadishu searches a local resident for weapons

interests.

Revolutionary socialists would have critically supported the opposition, despite its petty-bourgeois and clan character, in so far as it fought an oppressive, clan-based bourgeois state backed by imperialism. But they would have exposed the inability of petty-bourgeois nationalism in general to be consistently democratic, and that of Somalia to break from clanism.

However, since the fall of Siyaad there is nothing progressive about this opposition. The internal divisions and warlordism among USC factions are one indication of this. Their fight is no longer to achieve democratic rights for the clans persecuted by the Siyaad regime. Rather, each warlord is actively pursuing a clan, or sub-clan, war without any consideration for the democratic rights of the Somali masses. All factions are equally reactionary, controlling a particular territory and using it to launch raids on others, including on agricultural communities previously not involved.

It is only among the masses of the areas occupied or besieged by the armed marauders that serious work to combat the warlords can and should be conducted. According to reports from the affected communities, the gangs are hated by the masses and in some areas armed militias have been formed to ward off attacks.

The pretext for the UN decision to send troops to Somalia was to protect the distribution of humanitarian aid. This has been thoroughly exposed by independent relief agencies such as MSC-France, ICRC and the Save the Children Fund, who say that confiscation of food aid by bandits is only between two and ten per cent, not 80 per cent as claimed

by the UN. These agencies totally opposed the deployment of troops. Only agencies linked to the UN who fail to consult the local power structures get serious problems, and it is therefore no surprise that they welcomed the arrival of around 30,000 US troops.

In Mogadishu, the troops were met with demonstrations by angry Somalis. Many reports testify to the fact that there is a deep hatred among the masses for imperialism. Even the warlords say that it is difficult to convince their fighters of the need for the UN presence, the more so now that a number of Somalis have been killed. By December, the US began to reveal its true intentions when it stated that its troops would take the lead in securing 'law and order', establishing an interim UN administration until a 'viable' government could be created. In short, the goal is to set up another pro-Western puppet regime.

The Western media continue to justify all this by referring to famine, but relief workers who have been in Somalia since the start of the civil war point out that about three-quarters of the country has a well-functioning economy. Vast amounts of grain are still being grown in the Jannale farmlands, but the farmers are over-stressing the security problem in an attempt to increase their profits. And while people were dying of hunger last year in Mogadishu and other cities, the shops and markets were full of food which they couldn't afford.

Even the question of violence has been dismissed as a minor factor by aid workers. Reliable sources say that the violence is mainly confined to the south-west, and that most of the country is relatively peaceful with functioning community struc-

tures.

It is clear that the successful distribution of aid cannot be accomplished by the UN. The work of independent relief agencies should continue to take place in co-operation with Somali community structures. At present, these structures are based on the traditional moral authority of the clan elders. They should be broadened to include youth and should forge links across clan lines. Attempts must be made to develop ties with the armed militias resisting warlord terror. Workers and peasants in the part of the country which is still relatively calm should demand that employers and farmers provide free supplies to 'famine'-hit areas.

Through such work and the building of a united armed militia to combat the warlords, real steps could be made towards reorganising a mass worker-peasant alliance that could take power and lead the Somalis out of civil war. The success of such efforts also depends on the links the workers and peasants of Somalia establish with their brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa. While fighting for maximum unity, Somali workers should guarantee the democratic right of the masses of the Republic of Somaliland, established in February 1991, to self-determination up to and including maintaining their present separate state if they so wish. Clearly their scepticism in relation to the recent Addis Ababa conferences on Somali reconciliation is justified after what the Siyaad regime did to them. Any unity between the two Somalias should be voluntary.

- UN out of Somalia now!
- Aid under the control of Somali community structures!
- Forward to the socialist states of the Horn of Africa!

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