

Workers News

Paper of the Workers International League

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Lift the arms embargo – UN out!

DEFEND BOSNIA!

THE UNITED Nations plan to concede Srebrenica and Zepa to the Bosnian Serbs has gone ahead. There never was any intention of protecting them, since the UN's aim is not to defend the Bosnians from rape, murder and ethnic cleansing, but to allow Serbian forces to seize most of the territory they claim. Western governments see ethnic partition as the best route to ending the war, stabilising the region, and allowing the restoration of capitalism to proceed.

Nobody should be fooled by the displays of anger by Western leaders which took place *after* thousands of Bosnian Muslims were ejected from their homes and forced to flee to Tuzla. This was just a face-saving exercise, designed to deflect the growing criticism of the UN around the world.

After emergency discussions in London on July 21, foreign ministers and military chiefs agreed not to reinforce Gorazde, the last 'safe area' in eastern Bosnia, but to deploy artillery and troops from the hastily formed Rapid Reaction Force on Mount Igman - supposedly to keep the road open for UN aid convoys bound for Sarajevo. The aim is to engage in a form of barter with the Bosnian Serbs: in return for eastern Bosnia, let the UN fulfil its 'peacekeeping' role in central Bosnia and Sarajevo. In this way, the UN and the Western governments hope to retain some semblance of credibility.

At no stage has there been a progressive side to the UN's role in ex-Yugoslavia. The imperialists want to integrate the region into the capitalist world market, and humanitarian considerations don't count for very much. Once it became clear that the old Yugoslav Federation was breaking up in 1991, they tried to bring the newly emerging states of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia into their orbit. But alongside this policy, they tacitly supported the project of a Greater Serbia to create a balance of power within the region.

However, in the face of worldwide condemnation of the appalling massacres and ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Bosnian Serb army, it was impossible to be seen to support this.

UNPROFOR's role has been to undermine Bosnian resistance. It disarmed Bosnian forces in the 'safe areas', in the full knowledge that these enclaves would not be defended by UN troops. Contrary to much opinion on the left, NATO air strikes on Serb positions do not herald an all-out onslaught against Serbia. They are partly a message

to the Serbs to keep in line, partly a cynical public relations exercise. Their main result has been to convince the Serbs that the UN won't stand in their way, and to encourage them to step up their attacks on predominantly Muslim populations.

The arms embargo on Bosnia was designed to allow the UN to co-operate with the Bosnian Serbs in the ethnic partition of the country. None of the imperialists has any intention of defending any legitimate rights to self-determination. The corpses of thousands of massacred Muslims, and the fact that hundreds of thousands have been ethnically cleansed, count for

as possible for a Greater Serbia. Hundreds of thousands of Bosnian civilians have been driven from their homes in a ferocious Serb campaign involving summary execution, torture and rape. Hardly anybody - except regrettably some 'Trotskyists', in company with a motley crew of Little Englander Labour MPs, and Russian and Greek nationalists - bothers to deny this. And the fact that some imperialist powers had interests of their own in recognising Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia does not give the Serbian Chetniks 'anti-imperialist' credentials. Indeed, it was the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, who coined the

sure on Bosnia, and the Bihac enclave in particular, a Croatian victory will only be accomplished through large-scale ethnic cleansing of Krajinan Serbs. For this reason, socialists should support neither Croatia nor Krajina. The problem of the Krajina Serbs can only be solved within the context of a general settlement based upon national equality.

The main 'ethnic cleansers' on the Bosnian side are the Ninth Army which acts against government policy in a semi-autonomous manner. But the Bosnian army has prosecuted some of those responsible, in sharp distinction to the official policy of the Serb and Croat ar-

of Serbian generals like Ratko Mladic succeeds, and Bosnia's remaining multi-ethnic communities are destroyed, we would support the right of the Bosnian Muslims to self-determination.

What about the Bosnian Serbs? Don't they have rights to self-determination? So long as the exercise of this 'right' means the oppression and ethnic cleansing of others, we say no.

Most Bosnian Muslims have lost confidence in UNPROFOR, and many are now calling for it to leave. Bosnian army units should now seize the UN's heavy weapons before it withdraws or sabotages them, as happened in Zepa. However, we must warn Bosnian workers that their government is likely to betray them and accept the division of the country. They should insist that it calls on UN forces to leave and impounds their weapons.

While socialists must support the military victory of the Bosnian government forces, they should wherever possible support aid, money and weapons being channelled through workers' organisations in Bosnia. Ethnic cleansing must be opposed from whatever quarter, and the building of multi-ethnic workers' militias supported in communities which have not been ethnically cleansed.

A workers' solution to the bloody conflict can only happen if a class alliance is built between workers in Bosnia and in other parts of ex-Yugoslavia. This must include those progressive sections of workers and intellectuals in Serbia which are opposed to the war.

The international working class must demand the lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia and the economic sanctions on Serbia. The persecuted Bosnian Muslims and their allies have a right to obtain weapons wherever they can. Such a call has nothing in common with the Republican-led campaign in the United States, or Margaret Thatcher's demagoguery, which is aimed at appeasing reactionary allies like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, while playing up to domestic isolationism.

- ✘ Withdraw all UN forces!
- ✘ End the arms embargo on Bosnia and the sanctions on Serbia!
- ✘ For the military defeat of the Bosnian Serb army!
- ✘ For international workers' solidarity with Bosnia!
- ✘ For Bosnian self-determination!
- ✘ For a multi-ethnic Bosnian workers' republic!



A Bosnian refugee with her child at Tuzla airport

nothing when compared to the profits the imperialists hope to extract from the region after the war.

Some on the left, like the SWP and Militant, have adopted a neutral position on the war. They claim that all sides are equally reactionary, and have all carried out atrocities. The Serbs, they argue, have only carried out more because they have generally had the upper hand. This is to ignore the nature of the conflict and the dynamic of Serbian nationalism.

The character of the war remains basically unchanged. It was the Bosnian Serb militias, inspired, staffed and armed by Belgrade, who started the war in Bosnia with the aim of seizing as much territory

term 'ethnic cleansing' for the policy his troops were carrying out.

On the other hand, the majority of Bosnian Muslims, together with many ethnic Serbs and Croats living alongside them in cities such as Sarajevo and Tuzla, have never wanted anything more than to continue living in a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

The Croatian army, currently an uneasy ally of the Bosnian government, has certainly carried out atrocities against both Muslims and Serbs. It originally agreed to partition Bosnia in alliance with the Serb militias, to build a greater Croatia. In relation to the current Croatian offensive against Serb-held Krajina, while it relieves pres-

mies, who give medals for mass murder.

To label multi-ethnic Bosnia as 'fundamentalist' is equally wrong. Only a small minority of 'Muslims' regularly attend the mosque and observe traditional Muslim customs. If there is something of an Islamic revival today in the face of ethnic cleansing, it is scarcely surprising, and no more of a key to the conflict than the religious affiliation of nationalists in the north of Ireland.

We therefore continue to support the struggle for an independent, multi-ethnic Bosnia, and we are for the victory of the Bosnian government forces over the Serbian militias. If the appalling logic

Whatever happened to the Summer of Discontent?

By an RMT member

THE SUMMER of discontent much of the left was hoping for, and the Tories feared, has failed to materialise. Instead of challenging the government's pay policy and further privatisations, large sections of public sector workers have been sacrificed on the altar of Blairism.

Train drivers, London Underground staff and health service workers were all stitched up, as the Labour and trade union bureaucracies decided that the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election was far more

important than public ownership and the wages and working conditions of millions of public employees.

There probably wouldn't have been any strikes at all if the trade union bureaucracy wasn't so worried about its own future. For instance, Lew Adams, the general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF, used two one-day strikes to secure a deal that would have any bureaucrat drooling, but which does virtually nothing for the drivers.

Accepting the principle of British Rail privatisation and its break-up into scores of separate train operating units, Adams won a concession from BR which would make ASLEF

a sort of employment agency for drivers, thereby securing, at least temporarily, the future of the ASLEF bureaucracy, but waving goodbye forever to the far more precious achievement of national bargaining on pay and conditions.

Meanwhile, Tube workers were cynically held in reserve as a stage army to assist negotiations – as they were at the end of last year's 'signalworkers' strikes – but the transport union leaderships showed they have no intention of allowing workers the luxury of unity in action. The capitulation to the court injunction forbidding the July 26-27 strike was further confirmation of the bureaucrats' subservience to any and every legal trap set by the Tories and the judiciary. Underground workers, after all, have a history of firmly and imaginatively defying the law.

In the health service, despite all the bluster and stunts, like the partial dropping of the RCN's no-strike clause, it looks as though the right of individual Trusts to determine pay and conditions has been ceded, whilst the remnants of the national machinery have been transformed into a sort of rest home for tired bureaucrats.

Blair and Co were said to be furious at the prospect of a combined rail and Underground strike scheduled for the day of the by-election, reasoning that it would alienate middle class voters. Having secured a capitulation from the trade union leaders on the question of breaching the public sector pay freeze and getting the strikes called off, the Labour Party's National Executive immediately voted overwhelmingly to reduce the trade union block vote from 70 per cent down to 50 per cent.

Blair cannot seriously believe that the middle class will sleep easier because of this blatant attack on the political rights of the trade unions. After all, 16 years of undermining the trade unions hasn't stopped the Tories from becoming deeply unpopular. In any case, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that middle class commuters are, if for reasons of self-interest alone, far from happy with rail privatisation. All the efforts of the Tories to provoke a backlash against signalworkers last year failed to produce much result. Compared with regular delays and cancellations, transport strikes are now treated quite philosophically – many people see it as a chance for a few days' holiday! And, as those who collected money for the signalworkers found, almost anyone taking action against the Tories is guaranteed a high level of working class sympathy.

If there is a reluctance to strike, despite widespread discontent over pay after three years of wage restraint, it reflects the deep insecurity many workers feel in the current environment. What is more, the failure of the RMT leadership to mount a serious campaign around the signalworkers' strikes undoubtedly contributed to the sceptical mood reflected in the railworkers' ballot result this time around.

Nothing that Blair has done in transforming the Labour Party into 'New Labour' has made it any more electable. Simply by being in opposition to the crumbling Tory government guarantees a healthy position in the polls for Labour. In fact, watering down Labour's opposition to Tory policies is the only thing that can now save Major.

Blair's real agenda it to ensure that, should the hated Tories be kicked out of office and Labour come to power on a landslide, no one will be under any illusion that a Labour government will do anything to reverse the crimes of the last 16 years. Even those sections of the middle class who are facing house repossessions and redundancies, and whom Blair claims to want to represent, can only expect the promise of long-term solutions to their very immediate problems.

By opposing all attempts to commit the Labour Party to a minimum wage of even the miserly level of £4.15 per hour, Blair wants to make it clear that a future Labour government does not intend to be subjected to any pressure from the working class. And just in case significant opposition arises, Blair is rapidly centralising power within the party to his personal office and the think-tank which services it. He is attempting to close off all the avenues through which pressure can be brought to bear.

The right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions have given a graphic illustration this summer of what Marxists mean when they describe them as the policemen of the working class. Those workers in the public sector who have yet to settle this year's pay round must reckon with this, while building on the very real discontent which continues to exist. Only by creating rank-and-file strike committees, responsible directly to the membership, and committed to mobilising its full strength, can the sell-outs already seen this summer be avoided.



Beating the retreat – RMT leader Jimmy Knapp (centre)

COMMENT Fighting back against Blairism

WITH THE Tory party deeply divided over both Europe and domestic policy, Labour's victory in the next general election seems all but guaranteed. But with up to two years before the election, Labour leader Tony Blair is continuing with his plans to change the nature of the party, distancing it more and more from its traditional working class base, warning the unions not to expect any special treatment, and making overtures to Euro-friendly bosses.

Blair is wooing sections of the ruling class with a pro-market and anti-working class programme. He has torn up not only Clause Four, but a host of other Labour Party policies and commitments. He is actively encouraging a reduction of expectations, refusing to set the level of a minimum wage until he has talked to the bosses, refusing to re-nationalise services and industries privatised by the Tories, and promoting most of their anti-union laws.

Yet despite this, the majority of workers will continue to have expectations of a Labour government. After so many years of Tory rule they will expect things to get better. And they will become increasingly frustrated and disappointed if they don't.

The likely scenario, therefore, is of a Labour government taking office amid widespread expectations but failing to deliver, and rapidly alienating its own base. All this points to an upturn in the class struggle. The election of a Labour government will initially give rise to sentiments that it must be 'given a chance'. But workers who see it as 'their' government will also begin to advance their own demands. And when Blair fails to concede anything worthwhile, many will come to the conclusion that they will have to fight for these demands themselves. The Labour bureaucrats will find themselves under pressure from all sides. At this point, a genuine battle could emerge within the Labour Party. But the basis for this struggle will come from the more militant workers in the trade unions.

In light of this, the Socialist Policies for a Labour Government conference, held on June 17 in Birmingham, was a missed opportunity. The chance was there to form a fighting Labour left, based on taking the struggles of the trade unions into the Labour Party. As it was, the conference concentrated on formulating a watered down mini-

programme for a future Labour government, based on a trawl through recent party conference motions with any positive content.

As Workers News stated in the last issue, *Socialist Organiser* and *Labour Briefing* must take chief responsibility for this. Both mistakenly see the Labour left as the vanguard of the class struggle. Our analysis of the developing political situation is quite different. The Labour Party left is extremely weak. As the class struggle steps up a gear, it is much more likely to be in the unions that the most important developments occur. Socialists must take these struggles into the Labour Party as part of an overall struggle against the right wing.

The 'Socialist Policies' campaign is suffering from serious illusions if it believes it can convince the Labour leadership of the need for its minimum programme. It will be deeds rather than words which will alter the present relationship of forces in the labour movement.

Important conflicts with the unions have already emerged. Bill Morris is hardly a left leader, but many union bureaucrats like him are feeling the pinch of Blairism. And through Morris's opponent in the leadership election, Jack Dromey, Blair showed that he was prepared to directly intervene into the Transport and General Workers' Union against anyone who dares to raise even timid opposition to his rightwards trajectory.

The most important task for the Labour left is to link up with, and build support for, class struggle politics in the unions. It is only the working class in struggle which can have an impact on the next Labour government. Unfortunately, the Birmingham conference mistakenly took the view that the main fight is the one inside the Labour Party for some sort of left programme. Yet the real situation inside the Labour Party has already forced much of the Labour left to water down its campaigning demands.

Take, for example, the farcical call for defence spending to be reduced to the European Union average. 'Average imperialism' – now there's a cause to fire the imagination! An amendment proposed by Workers News supporters calling simply for a reduction in defence spending (which would leave the field free to develop a discussion through-

out the labour movement on how much) and for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and Bosnia was defeated. Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* managed to vote three ways – for, against and abstaining.

On the question of anti-union laws, however, the *Organiser/Briefing* platform was exposed. While it called vaguely for the Blairite position of extending trade union rights, an *Outlook*-sponsored amendment calling for the abolition of all anti-union laws was carried overwhelmingly.

Another lesson from the Birmingham conference is the need for elementary democracy. It really is no use to denounce Blair for holding rallies rather than democratic decision-making conferences if the left practices the same thing in its own back yard. A conference which devoted two out of three sessions to interminable speeches from the platform, and the third to woolly non-policy making workshops, is hardly an advert for democratic debate.

One thing is certain. The approach of the 'Socialist Policies' campaign cannot provide an adequate focus for the anger and frustrations of many rank-and-file members. A slight reduction in arms spending here, a £4 per hour minimum wage and a vague demand for increased public spending there, might seem to be a start, but they are hardly radical, and certainly not 'socialist' demands. The next conference of the campaign will not be held until after the Labour Party conference. The danger is that by then much of the impetus of the Clause Four campaign could already have been lost.

For a labour movement-oriented campaign against the right wing to succeed, it must clearly spell out the way forward, not in the language of the shrivelled, traditional Labour left, but in that of the class struggle. Inside the party, not only must every element of collective and delegate democracy which exists be defended, but there must be a primary focus on the need to take up the demands of the trade union activists – rather than simply seeking a bloc with a few left-talking union bureaucrats. At the end of the day, it is not the speeches of Campaign Group MPs which will count, but the intervention of tens of thousands of workers.

SOUTH AFRICA

No to the Labour Relations Bill!

In its quest to create a regularised framework of 'partnership' between capital, labour and government in the 'new' South Africa, the ANC-led government brought forward the Labour Relations Bill. Below, we print a leaflet issued by **Comrades for a Workers' Government** on a huge demonstration against the bill in Johannesburg on June 6 which was attended by 90,000 workers. In an attempt to divert attention from their own role, ANC leaders addressed the rally, with deputy secretary-general, Cheryl Carolus claiming: 'We are not going to allow the bosses of this country to trample on workers' rights.'

Further mass actions took place across the country on June 19, with several hundred thousand workers participating. Cosatu even threatened a general strike for August. But, behind the scenes, ANC, SACP and Cosatu leaders worked overtime to produce a rotten compromise in mid-July. In defiance of the tradition of accountability, the substance of the negotiations remained secret - even from senior trade union activists. The new draft retains substantial powers for the Commission for Conciliation and Arbitration, limits the right to strike, and protects employers from having to reveal confidential information if they claim that it would cause them 'substantial harm'. The new bill has been referred to the cabinet, which will shortly table legislation.

THE NEW Labour Bill is one of the first tests for the ANC in government. Many workers who voted ANC thought it would be 'their' government. Instead, it has proved to be the friend of the bosses. Now it has come up with a bill that makes life easier for them.

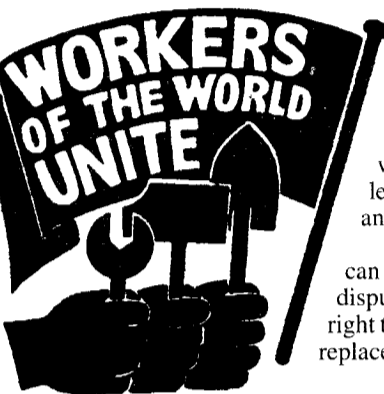
Most workers are really angry about the new bill. Vavi, Cosatu's assistant general secretary, reported that he was 'shocked' at the militancy of the 1,500 shop stewards who attended the Wits Regional Shop Stewards Council two weeks ago. We as workers will make sure that the bosses do not take away our hard-won rights.

The issue at stake is not only centralised bargaining, as the government is emphasising. It is about:

A genuine right to strike!

This is our most important right - it is the real power of workers. Without striking, workers are wasting time just talking to the bosses. The bill favours the bosses because its main aim is to try to prevent strikes altogether.

Instead of the struggle of class against class, the basic line of the bill is to get workers and their exploiters to work together, as if they are friends and not bitter enemies. The government wants sweetheart unions.



The bill limits the issues on which workers may legally strike. For example, workers cannot strike at all against interpretations of agree-

ments or against retrenchments. Any such disputes must go to compulsory mediation, and then arbitration.

If this bill is passed as law, workers will be unable to defend their right to work and their job security. Overtime bans are also regarded as illegal strikes. We as workers must decide which issues we want to strike on.

Workers on strike may be dismissed if their strike causes economic 'hardship' to the rich bloodsuckers. What about our hardships which are a permanent part of our lives? How else will the bosses be taught a lesson if they do not lose money and production?

Under the new bill, bosses can employ scabs during a legal dispute. It is useless to have the right to strike if you can be quickly replaced by scabs.

A duty on the bosses to bargain!

We are back to the bad old days of recognition disputes. Bosses do not have to recognise unions for bargaining purposes. So, although they do have to give unions access and organising rights, they are not compelled to negotiate wages etc. Workers can strike legally - and get dismissed legally.

Centralised bargaining!

Bosses refuse to bargain with a union even if it has 100 per cent membership at company or industry level. Their aim is to divide and rule, and to prevent big national strikes by having decentralised or plant-level bargaining.

Workers' power!

Workers reject workplace forums outright as undermining our unions. Why don't bosses

disclose information in their meetings with shop stewards, instead of choosing to use forums where the union can be outvoted? They prefer forums because they are not compelled to negotiate, but only consult. We want the bosses to be forced to negotiate! Down with co-determination! Long live workers' control of the economy!

No lock-outs!

The leadership talks of having the bosses' right to lock out removed from the constitution and placed in the bill. Vavi was told by workers that we don't want the bosses to have an equal weapon to us. There is no such thing as a 'democratic lock-out'!

Cosatu: Break with the ANC Alliance!

We cannot allow workers' loyalty to the ANC to place restrictions on us. The ANC-led government wants to please both bosses and workers. But economic growth under capitalism happens through the exploitation of workers. Workers cannot be both happy and exploited! The government is weak and vacillating. It is unwilling to spend money improving workers' lives by building thousands of decent houses. It will not allow a genuine, popular and sovereign Constituent Assembly. Instead, we are tied to power-sharing.

Trade unionists must show the working class and youth a way out of gray train politics. We must urgently discuss how to build a new organisation that will be independent of the capitalists, and fight consistently for workers' interests and socialism.

Comrades for a Workers' Government calls on workers and youth to take up the challenge of forming a Workers' Party based on a revolutionary working class programme.

- Build a Workers' Party now!
- For a Workers' Government!

Pakistan: Workers' rights under attack

By Lizzy Ali

THE PAKISTAN Trade Union Defence Campaign was established earlier this year, after the brutal murder on January 19 of a leading Pakistani trade unionist by hired assassins.

Arif Shah was the president of the Punjab Labour Federation. Although only 44, he had been a trade union activist for 27 years. He had campaigned against privatisation, for a minimum wage and for the abolition of contract and child labour. Workers protested by blocking the main road from Lahore to Karachi, and 20,000 people attended his funeral.

In the week before Arif's murder, trade unionists had established an independent union at the Ittefaq Foundry in Lahore, in opposition to the bosses and their company union. The president and general secretary of the steelworkers' union, the PRU, at the plant, Mahmood Butt and Ghulam Miran Shah, were attacked and beaten by hired thugs. The foundry is owned by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In April, Iqbal Mashih, a 12-year-old boy famous for his role in the struggle against the brutal conditions in which children are forced to work in the carpet manufacturing industry, was murdered.

These attacks take place against the background of grinding exploitation of workers, women and children throughout Pakistan. Over one million children work in the carpet industry, another million are employed as domestics and over 300,000 work as bonded labourers in brick kilns. Families have little choice but to sell their children into virtual slavery. Food prices are constantly rising; inflation is over 25 per cent; unemploy-

ment is estimated at ten million and is growing by ten per cent each year. Pakistan has no state benefits, the literacy rate is a mere 14 per cent, while mortality rates for children and for women in child birth are among the highest in the world.

Because of his record in fighting both the bosses and the state, Arif Shah was a militant trusted by many workers. He had played an important role in getting the Pakistan People's Party government to abandon plans to introduce a clause in the new labour legislation upholding the employers' right to hire and fire. The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign has been set up by the Punjab Labour Federation, and is also backed by the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers' Alliance, the Railway Workers' Union, and the National Union of Postal Employees.

The demands of the campaign include:

- Defence of our trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers! Defend our right to organise!
- Stop the privatisation and plunder of state industries!
- For a minimum wage for all!
- The abolition of child labour!
- The abolition of draconian fundamentalist laws against women! Equal rights for women!

For such a programme to be carried out, however, it requires more than a militant trade union campaign; it must mean a political break with the bourgeois Pakistan People's Party, and the building of a new workers' party, based on the trade unions.

To contact the campaign, write to: Shahida Jabeen, Secretary, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN.

Support the right of asylum

By Philip Marchant

On June 24, about 200 people protested outside Harmondsworth Detention Centre, near Heathrow airport, as part of a day of action around the country calling for an end to the detention and deportation of asylum seekers. Some 650 refugees are currently being held in prisons and detention centres as the Home Office attempts to deport them back to countries where their lives would be in danger. Official figures show that, in January this year, 16 had been locked up for a year or more and 64 for over six months. They receive no written explanation of why they are being held, and have no right to contest the decision in court. The day of action was part of a continuing campaign against the British government's racist and inhuman treatment of refugees.

For more information, contact the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign, c/o 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 4DW.



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EDITORIAL

The legacy of Hiroshima

On August 6, 1945, the Atomic Age opened with the incineration of 200,000 people in the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, a further 100,000 people died in Nagasaki. Thus ended the 'war for democracy'.

Historians now have ample evidence to show that American intelligence knew that Japan was on the brink of surrender before the atom bombs were dropped, and that the chief motivation for the United States was not to hasten the end of the war, but to demonstrate who was boss to its Soviet 'ally', and forestall any expansion in Asia.

Few in 1945 could grasp the full implications of what had taken place. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atom bomb, was one of a number of scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, who were gripped by doubt. 'If atomic bombs are to be added to the arsenals of a warring world, or to the arsenals of nations preparing for war', he said in October that year, 'then the time will come when mankind will curse the name of Los Alamos and Hiroshima. The peoples of this world must unite, or they will perish.'

The Trotskyist journal *Fourth International* warned in August, 1945: 'Let the cataclysmic horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serve as a clarion call to the working class! ... Today the fight for socialism is a fight to prevent the annihilation of the human race. Mankind must now exterminate the capitalist system - or be exterminated.'

Such a perspective was not far-fetched. The imperialist claim that 'mutually assured destruction' guaranteed world peace has been exposed again and again. Throughout the Cold War, the leaders of the 'Free World' contemplated razing the spectre of communism to the ground in a hail of nuclear weapons - and, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, came close to doing so.

For its part, Stalinism conducted the defence of the Soviet Union and the so-called struggle for peace using a combination of limited support and cynical betrayal of third world liberation movements, back-stage deals with imperialism and an ever-growing stockpile of nuclear warheads - none of which could inspire much confidence in the Western working class. The abandonment of the international struggle for socialism, together with the ever-present threat of war, served to cement class relations in the West.

Nuclear power was justified by the threat of the communist bogey and marketed on the promise of inexhaustible, cheap energy. Meanwhile the nuclear industries, both military and civilian, conducted experiments every bit as ghoulish as those of Dr Josef Mengele. Thousands of servicemen, civilians and even pregnant women and babies were used as unsuspecting human guinea pigs, and exposed to various forms of radiation by all the Western nuclear powers. Nuclear accidents, like that at Windscale in 1957, were hushed up.

Even if the collapse of Stalinism has meant that the threat of war between west and east has receded, the nightmare which began in Hiroshima is far from over. The fragmentation of the ex-Soviet Union has created the potential for nuclear war between former Soviet republics. Their disintegrating economies mean that even elementary safety standards have been abandoned at nuclear installations. Dozens of Chernobyls are waiting to happen, while the seas to the north of Russia will be polluted for centuries to come by abandoned nuclear submarine reactor cores.

With France poised to resume weapons testing in the Pacific and the Tories promoting Britain as a nuclear dustbin, the working class will have to reckon with the consequences of nuclear power in all its manifestations for many generations. As to whether nuclear fission or fusion could be safely developed under socialism, no final answer can be given. At the very least, it would require enormous advances in science and technique. For the conceivable future, the first duty of a workers' government will be to launch an emergency programme of waste management and decommissioning. Socialism can only be built on the basis of the control of nature, not on its destruction.

Farewell to welfare?

LABOUR MP Frank Field's new book, *Making Welfare Work: Reconstructing Welfare for the Millennium*, has been making waves. It spells out many of New Labour's thoughts on 'welfarism', which were previously not possible to broach. It is rumoured that Tony Blair is so taken by the book that there is a possibility of a seat in a future Labour cabinet for Field.

Until recently, Field was widely seen as an eccentric right-winger, who proposed changes to the welfare state which even Tories shrank from. But when he was de-selected from his seat in Birkenhead, the Labour right wing recognised him as one of their own, rigged the selection procedure, and had him reinstated. Now he finds himself the centre of attention as part of Blair's 'new', 'radical' agenda. From *The Guardian* to the *Sun*, the press is lost in admiration for his boldness.

The fact that Field waxes indignant about the attacks made by the Tories on universal benefits and their preference for means-testing, seems to have impressed Alan Gilbert, reviewing the book in *New Left*, who describes Field's denunciation of the Tories as 'angry, well-informed and devastating'. What seems to have escaped Gilbert is that Field is proposing nothing less than the total destruction of the welfare state.

Field's blueprint includes plans for:

□ A new National Insurance scheme run by a private company with the government topping it up in so that the jobless, sick and those with disabilities can receive benefits without making contributions.

□ Introducing mandatory private pension schemes in addition to state contributions.

□ Putting increased pressure on Income Support claimants to get them into work.

It is no accident that Field has found some unexpected wind in his sails. Labour's long and agonised review of social policy has produced a consensus within much of the leadership that the key to winning office is to divorce the party from its image of 'tax and spend' welfarism. And right down the line, whether it is the barbarities of community care, the reduction of geriatric beds, the closure of hospitals and cuts in social services provision, New Labour thinking is more and more in tune with the Tories, with a few ideas of its own up its sleeve. Arise, Sir Frank!

**MONEY AND THE RE
CAPITALISM IN EAST**

This article by a former member of Workers Power focuses on the role of money in the process of restoring capitalism on the ruins of the former workers' states of eastern Europe. Although it differs in some respects from our analysis of the collapse of these states - seeing their downfall as the consequence, rather than the cause, of the 'big bangs' which the restorationist governments pushed through between 1990 and 1992 - it also covers much common ground. We are publishing this article with the aim of stimulating discussion on the fate of eastern Europe, whose collapse remains a watershed in the development of the international political situation, and which continues to divide many on the left.

By Brian Green

MONEY was never abolished in the former degenerated workers' states, but its role was reduced to a means of payment for consumer goods. It never assumed the role that it does under capitalism, where it can be used to purchase all the factors of production - land, means of production and labour power. Money was not capital capable of buying labour power, setting it to work and thereby becoming capital.

The study of money in Eastern Europe is the study of the changes that have occurred there since 1989, which in sum represents the greatest tragedy in the history of the modern working class. Money never was and never will be simply a thing, a piece of paper. It represents definite social relations for which it acts merely as a symbol. To understand the changes in Eastern Europe we need first to understand money itself - a task which at first sight appears simple, but which took Karl Marx years to master, rather than the weeks he first thought necessary.

The role of money in history

Money emerges in societies in which production for exchange assumes a degree of importance. Prior to this, it is unknown. After all, if people produce for their own consumption they do not need to buy back what they have produced. All this changes when individuals start producing for each other. Without specialisation, and therefore skill forming, there can be no growth in the diversity of products and thereby improvements in productivity. At the same time, this growing specialisation means each individual produces less and less of his own needs and becomes more dependent on the rest of society for life and its wants.

The first form of production for exchange is barter. Barter is direct exchange, where the buyer and seller swap each other's products directly. But this breaks down so soon as the variety of products increases, making it no longer practical to match buyers and sellers. It is replaced by indirect exchange, where one commodity - money - is set aside to exchange for all the other commodities. Now the seller exchanges the goods he produces for money and then uses it to exchange for the goods he wants to consume. Money now stands between production and consumption. Unless the producer sells his goods and obtains money he can no longer consume and will starve, for his own goods are now too narrow to satisfy his means of subsistence. Little wonder money seems to assume such powerful properties.

And powerful it is. For money overcomes the contradiction between individual production and social consumption. Through the act of selling, the products of the individual seller join those produced by the rest of society. With the money received the seller can now purchase some of these products.

Money is therefore the golden bridge over which pass goods from individuals entering the storehouses of society and goods leaving these storehouses back to individuals. It represents the labour of society, the means by which individuals are able to produce for others and consume part of the labour of others.

Accordingly, money represents damnation or salvation: damnation to those who cannot sell, salvation to those who can, particularly the middlemen who can make money by both buying and selling. Little wonder it took thousands of years after the advent of money for an economy to emerge based on cash itself - capitalism. Only with capitalism, where production is dominated by production for exchange, does money become fully established, capable of buying everything and capable of adding to itself.

What distinguished capitalism from all previous modes of production was that all the factors of production were now reduced to commodities that could be bought and sold by the owners of money - the capitalists. And for this to happen, these factors had first to be separated from their traditional owners: land from the peasants, means of production from the producers and, above all, labour power from its bearers. Now the maelstrom was set free, in which a minority set the majority to work producing for society's needs through the market.

Some were to call it the end of history, but to Marxists it represented a crisis-ridden necessary condition for the development of production - a mode of production that today increasingly promises ruin rather than salvation for growing numbers on this planet as they are squeezed out of the cash economy. Unfortunately, the Stalinists in Eastern Europe, having ruined the potential of planned economy, have sought to lead their societies into this world with tragic consequences for their populations.

The re-introduction of real money in the states of Eastern Europe

By the end of the 1980s, the economies of Eastern Europe were in ruins. The bureaucracy had by then introduced market forms to try and prop up planned economy. They failed, serving only to disorganise production even further. It was clear a decisive stage had been reached. Either workers were to purge the economy of bureaucratic misdirection or the market would be restored. Unfortunately, no decisive section of society opposed the market, and the fate of the workers' states was sealed.

Within months, bourgeois governments were in place, advised and supported by the rest of the capitalist world, their purpose to introduce the market and ensure that it served not the majority of society, but a minority. Many on the left saw the installation of these governments as the end of the workers' states. In fact, these popular front governments of restoration were the easy part. Implementing the foundations of a capitalist

economy was to be more difficult.

Politics, as Lenin said, is 'concentrated economics'. It was the collapse of planned economy that led to the emergence of these new governments and not the other way round. In turn, the purpose of these governments was to remove obstacles to the accelerated expansion of capitalist market forms. Governments are therefore catalysts: they speed up or delay economic developments. In the case of China, old governmental institutions have not prevented the growth of capitalist forms of production. In fact, China is the fastest growing economy on the planet and all that growth is from the private sector. It is therefore wrong and un-Marxist to declare society has changed simply because the government has.

The real change that occurs, that rip apart the fabric of the planned society that makes nationalised property irrelevant, that dissolves the monopoly of foreign trade, is the re-introduction of real money. This act is fundamental and one which puts these new governments at risk.

The re-introduction of money is not simply a question of changing the name of the currency or the faces that appear on it. Modern money is non-metallic money, symbolic money backed by the state with the resources of society. To function as money it must be stable, and for it to be stable the state has to be financially disciplined. The state must live within its means. It must print and distribute currency not for the purpose of covering its own debts, but of furthering production and exchange in the economy itself. The smaller the budget deficit, the greater the ability of the state to act as the currency's backer.

This is easier said than done. Prior to 1989, the state had invested on behalf of society. Without that investment, production began to break down. At the same time, sources of revenue collapsed as state industry became unprofitable and no tax structure was in place to tax the increasingly profitable and dynamic private sector. The state was caught in a scissors. Tax revenues collapsed while the demands on the public purse increased. These were real pressures.

Naturally the Western media made it appear that these demands were optional, the result of greedy bureaucrats trying to maintain personal fiefdoms in a manner reminiscent of the days when state credits were bountiful. They also tended to ignore one of the biggest problems facing these new states as they sought to implement a new hard currency, and that was the foreign debt. The attempt to service foreign debt was a major obstacle because it deprived governments of the foreign currency they needed to help back their new currencies.

Creating the fiscal conditions for backing a new currency was therefore nightmarish. But the new currency was not an end in itself. Like primitive societies thousands of years ago, these new governments had set money aside in order to make possible the efficient circulation of commodities. Hence the simultaneous act of these governments was to convert goods into commodities by abolishing price controls, by expanding the range of goods that could be bought and sold, and by allowing the owners of goods to freely buy and sell them. This process was crystallised and condensed most clearly in the Big Bang in Poland in the first half of 1990. Within six months the zloty became real money and the circulation of commodities was established.

RESTORATION OF WESTERN EUROPE

Inflation: the price of real money

In the run-up to the various Big Bangs, or lesser measures to turn goods into commodities, inflation began to shoot up. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, because price controls were already breaking down. In the run-up to the liberalisation of prices and supply chains a great deal of hoarding began to take place. Products already in short supply almost disappeared as holders of goods awaited the opportunity of selling at prices which the market could bear.

Secondly, because most production lay in the hands of giant enterprises which were intent on maximising their cash income. In this new free for all, they aimed to sell at the highest price in order to increase the cash they received. While they were being decried by bourgeois theorists for their monopolistic practices, they were in fact acting as any capitalist would, that is by cutting back on production and raising prices.

Finally, and a point always overlooked, was the re-integration of the economies of the ex-degenerated workers' states back into the world economy. Until then, state use of credits and the monopoly of foreign trade had obscured the low productivity of these economies. The result was an exchange rate far higher than would have been the case had normal demand and supply relations existed with these currencies. But once the currencies had been made convertible, they collapsed against the international currencies.

It was this re-integration back into the world economy, made possible by the re-introduction of real money – money capable of freely circulating – that was the most decisive factor in the longer term chain of inflation. With the law of value now re-established in key parts of the economy, the economy now became devalued. These societies experienced a real loss of wealth as international competition wiped out the value of production.

Of course it was the workers who would bear the loss. Wages and pensions were left to fall behind price rises. When the inflationary dust settled down, the living standards of the majority had collapsed, while only the minority of intelligentsia and bureaucrats who had managed to accumulate money and engage in trade was better off.

Unfortunately, in the absence of mass working class resistance, the new bourgeois governments were able to stabilise the currency, establishing it as a means of payment and above all a store of value. This laid the basis for the accumulation of money and capital. No longer would money simply circulate, it would begin to concentrate in fewer and fewer hands. The polarisation of society had begun. While the state propped up industries incapable of being immediately privatised and disciplined work-

ers, the introduction of a cash economy created the conditions for the emergence of a capitalist class and a market based on this class.

Once a cash-based economy had been established, it could no longer be said that any aspect of the workers' state economy was left. Any remnants of planning were now swept away by the chase for the highest price. Evidence of this was not long in coming: within months of the establishment of a cash-based economy, scarcity gave way to glut. Whereas in the past we saw long queues of shoppers chasing few goods in the shops, we now saw few shoppers and shops bulging with unsold goods. Overproduction, that curse of the market, had broken out, confirming that we now had a separation of production and consumption. We were no longer dealing with a planned economy, but one in the grip of the market.

The response of the left

As has been pointed out above, many groups on the left took the change in governments to mark the end of the workers' states. This was wrong. It was putting the intention before the deed. It was not a foregone conclusion that these new governments could re-introduce the market. They had to do so in the face of enormous problems and against a possible revolt from their workers. However, once they had been able to re-introduce real money, thereby re-integrating their economies back into the world capitalist economy, they had established functioning capitalist states. They had managed to transform the base of society in their own image.

The measures the new governments introduced were irreversible, for through them the foundations of the workers' states were uprooted. Alas, yet other groups, like the United Secretariat and Workers Power, still cling to the hope that the degenerated workers' states exist. For them, capitalism is only restored when we have a viable capitalist economy. This is formal logic, not dialectics.

The introduction of a cash-based economy, which makes possible the growth of commodity production and the systematic accumulation of capital, is the beginning of the process of capitalist restoration. It should be correctly termed the phase of state capitalism, given the absence of a crystallised capitalist class and the dependency of the process on the state.

Those who cling to the view that capitalism was restored merely by a change in government, or that it is not yet restored, make it difficult for us to defend the theory of the degenerated workers' states. This is particularly true when faced by the SWP, which always characterised these states as state capitalist as far back as the 1920s. For them, the events since 1989 merely mark the transition from state capitalism to private capitalism. We doubt that the workers of the East, faced with such momentous changes, would agree.

The capitalist economies proved to be more dynamic than the bureaucratised workers' states. But this is more a reflection of just how decrepit the Stalinist states were than of how dynamic capitalism is. These ex-workers' states are being integrated into a capitalist world that is increasingly unable to satisfy the needs of its own peoples, never mind the peoples of these countries. It will take only a short time for the workers of the old workers' states to appreciate that the money in their pockets is nothing more than fool's gold.

Defend Chinese activists!

The following appeal is from April Fifth Action, an organisation based in Hong Kong which supports the Chinese Democracy Movement

IN THE aftermath of the June 4 commemoration of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, we would like to make an appeal to the international community to denounce the assaults made by the Chinese government against political activists, especially workers, in China.

Activists in China have put up a heroic fight in the last couple of months. There have been workers' protests, petitions and press conferences. These are signs that the Chinese Democracy Movement has made important progress since the June 4 crack-down six years ago. Because of this, the Chinese government has stepped up its repression, for fear that the movement might present a serious threat. Social discontent and unrest have been building up for the last two to three years. Dozens of organisers have already been arrested in the past few months, among whom are Wei Jin-sang, Wong Dan, Lau Nin-chun and Chan Chi-ming, just to name a few prominent ones.

The Chinese government has been especially brutal to workers who organise union activities. Three workers in Shencheng, just across the border from Hong Kong, were arrested last year for organising unions and distributing handbills. Unconfirmed reports said that they were sentenced to long prison terms.

We appeal to you all to send messages of protest to the Chinese government to demand the release of these activists, who have done nothing but exercise the freedom of speech and the right to associate. Please send letters or messages of protest to: The Standing Committee, National People's Congress, Beijing, China. We would very much appreciate it if you could pass the message to other labour organisations.



Student activists removing the wounded from Tiananmen Square in 1989

Lutte Ouvrière Fête

A new workers' party?

THE ANNUAL Lutte Ouvrière Fête, held this year on the first weekend in June, was given added interest for many socialists throughout Europe after LO's best-ever score in the French presidential elections in April. At 5.35 per cent and 1.6 million votes, Arlette Laguiller polled nearly three times better than in 1990.

Although it drizzled almost non-stop for three days, the attendance at the fête was still high, with thousands of workers and youth making the short trip from the suburbs of Paris. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency's stall sold a record amount of literature – £325.00 – and two forums were given by the LTT, one on the democracy movement in Nigeria, another on the Labour Party after Blair's victory over Clause Four.

Among the most heated debates was that between LO and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (the French section of the USec). Once the largest organisation on the far left in France, these days the LCR is in a state

of bad disrepair. With no less than four positions in its leading committee on the election, its intervention was a shambles. Its refusal to support Laguiller in the first round of the presidential campaign drew an angry response from LO's rank and file.

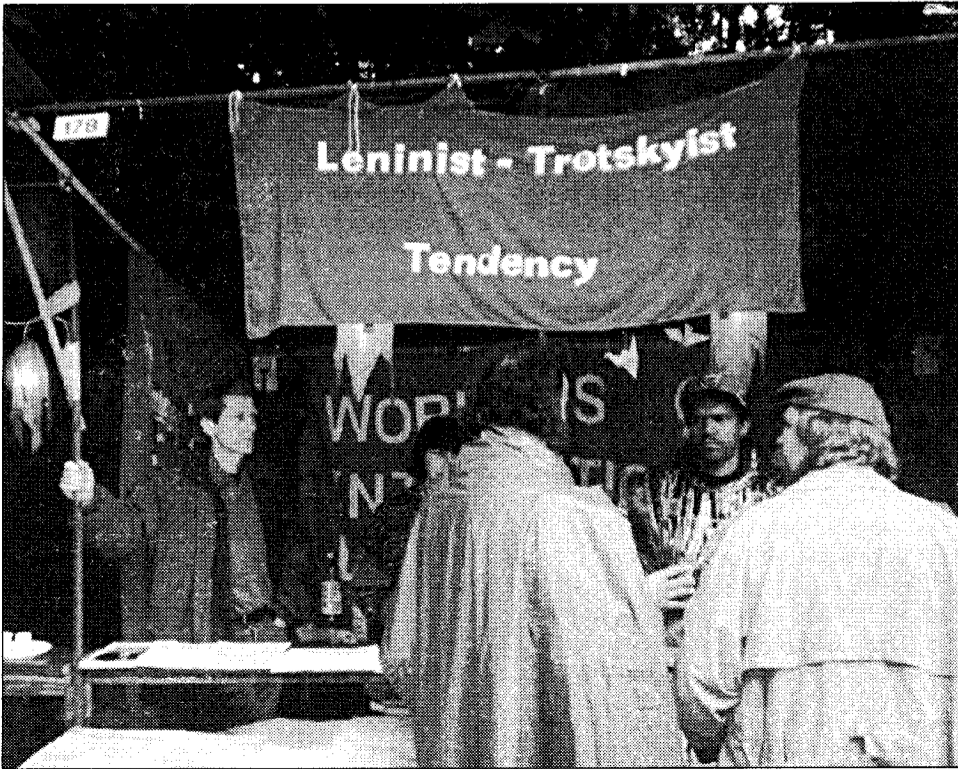
Smaller groups like Pouvoir Ouvrier (French section of the LRCI), which refused to call for a vote for LO on the grounds that it lacks a significant working class base and that it failed to prioritise anti-racism, also clearly made a serious mistake. LO's workerist, semi-syndicalist politics don't alter the fact that it has far more respect in the French working class than, say, the SWP in Britain, towards which PO's sister organisation Workers Power has a 'primary orientation'. A campaign of critical support would have enabled revolutionaries to engage in common work with LO's rank and file, while maintaining a critical attitude to its centrist politics.

As for LO, it is evidently unsure what to do with its success. Although

it calls for a new workers' party to be built, it is clearly worried what effect this would have upon its highly centralist, secretive methods of party building. Hence its British publication, *Class Struggle*, takes caution to extremes: '... the significance of Arlette Laguiller's vote should not be overestimated. An election is merely a thermometer which may, within certain limits depending on circumstances, give revolutionaries a means to measure the social temperature – but only provided it is used with all due caution. After all, voters only express an opinion in a poll and the only obvious indication, initially in any case, was the fact that 1.6 million voters had identified in some way with the radical programme developed by Arlette Laguiller. Though this did indicate a change of opinion in the electorate, it may or may not indicate a change in its consciousness. On the other hand, this score is still too small to be in itself a significant political event.'

But, even if a sober assessment is

made, the fact remains that a proportion of this 1.6 million are looking for a revolutionary solution. It is also significant that this increase in LO's vote came in response to a campaign which, despite manifest weaknesses on questions such as racism, was less concerned than on previous occasions to project Arlette's 'personality' than to put forward an 'Emergency Programme' containing a number of transitional demands. Compared with the petty-bourgeois, semi-liberal mess that is the LCR, or the sectarian and semi-reformist politics of the Lambertist Workers Party (PT), this development should remain a central focus for those attempting to construct a genuinely revolutionary party in France.



LTT stall at the Lutte Ouvrière Fête

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Discussion article

Marxism and the Scottish national question

By Barry Murphy

IN THE Perth and Kinross by-election in May, the Tories campaigned on one issue only: the preservation of the union with England. Despite this, the voters deserted them in droves for the 'socialist republican' Roseanna Cunningham of the Scottish National Party. While this does not mean that the gentfolk of Perth and Kinross want an independent Scottish republic, it does tell us that the Tories are even more unpopular in Scotland than in England, and that there is widespread and growing disaffection in both the middle class and – increasingly – in the working class, with the union with England. What does this mean for revolutionary Marxists? How should we intervene in Scotland? This article, without trying to provide all the answers or to impose a blueprint, attempts to address a number of questions.



To begin with, is there a Scottish national question at all? To many Scots, this may seem a pointless question with an obvious answer. However, there is still an argument to be had. In the labour movement there are many, in England and in Scotland, who say that the Scottish national question does not exist because Scotland is not oppressed by England, or should not exist because Scottish nationalism is intrinsically inward-looking and backward, and poses a threat to the unity of the British working class.

Scotland is a distinct *nation*, in the final analysis, because of a political choice made, over time, by the majority of Scots to regard it as such. Paradoxically, this must have included many who favoured some form of union with England. It was a choice based on obvious objective factors – a defined and separate geographical area – as well as subjective historical, political, social and cultural factors. This sense of 'Scottishness' survived in spite of cultural differences between the Highlands and Lowlands, and the lack of a 'national' language. Before the union with England in 1707, Scotland was an independent state. It had its own bourgeois revolution, closely related to that which took place in England. It has retained its own legal

and educational system.

But Scotland does not fit neatly into the pigeon holes of 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' nations developed by 'classical' Marxism. Scotland is clearly not oppressed in the same way as countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It does not have a ruling class which is oppressed by international finance capital. The majority of the Scottish ruling class agreed to union with England in the eighteenth century because it wanted a share in the profits of English colonial policy, which it saw as the fast track to an economic place in the sun.

The astonishing growth of Glasgow as the second city of the Empire, initially from the slave trade and subsequently as a result of colonial markets, bears this out. There is no evidence that the Scottish bourgeoisie was anything other than a willing partner in the Union. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Scotland's overseas commerce grew by 300 per cent (compared with 200 per cent in England). In the same period 60 Scots became MPs for English and Welsh constituencies. Members of the Scottish ruling class rapidly became well represented in commerce, the armed forces and intellectual life. They inter-married with the English aristocracy, and jointly participated in the genocidal Highland Clearances.



In the nineteenth century, when political and cultural nationalism was all the rage among the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie in the 'small' nations of Europe, Scottish nationalism, or rather a caricature of it, was represented by the empty shell of Walter Scott and 'tartanry'. The Scottish ruling class saw no need for a nationalist *movement* – it was doing very well as part of the United Kingdom. Today, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to speak of a purely Scottish ruling class, as distinct from the English, so intertwined have they become. There has therefore, out of colonial exploitation and plunder, developed a *British* ruling class.

Joint English-Welsh-Scottish industrial development meant, of course, that the working class and its organisations have also developed on an all-British basis. Trade and craft differentials and sectional considerations have proved to be far more of an obstacle to effective solidarity

than national differences. For example, in the miners' strikes of 1921, 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984-85, miners fought on an all-British basis, and were betrayed by the leadership of the *British* TUC. On the other hand, the conservative and chauvinist tendencies prevalent in the British working class, and exemplified by its bureaucratic leadership, have a material basis in Britain's position at the centre of a huge Empire, and the continuing importance of *British* finance capital. Without ceasing to regard themselves as Scottish or Welsh, workers have also developed a *British* identity, which has both progressive and reactionary implications.

Scotland's joint participation in

remained *in general* the preserve of the middle class and the 'Tartan Tories', although the SNP made sporadic attempts to turn to the left and cultivate a working class base. While the Scottish Labour Party had a brief existence in the 1970s, a substantial majority of Scottish workers continued to support the Labour Party. In the 1979 referendum there were insufficient 'yes' votes to set up a Scottish assembly.

However, the coming to power of Thatcher and the change in economic policy pursued by the Tories marked a definite watershed, persuading many Scots, including many workers, that while Scotland might not be oppressed by England, the relation-

pendence in Europe' sees a niche within the European Union, with Brussels as the underwriter of a future independent Scotland.

At the same time, what has happened to those British organisations which commanded the allegiance of the Scottish workers? The Labour Party is moving even further to the right. The Communist Party, which although numerically small always had a significant base in Scotland, particularly in the trade union bureaucracy, has collapsed. The crisis of leadership has become acute. The SNP has shifted to the left, trying to create a base for itself among workers. To some extent it has succeeded, with some workers, particularly younger ones, seeing it as a radical, campaigning party, much better at looking after their interests, and Scotland's, than an inert Labour Party obsessed with gaining English marginal seats. And while there have been no mass defections to the SNP from Labour, as was shown by Jim Sillars's short-lived tenure of Govan, the situation remains fluid.

While most workers still support Labour, they are, if the opinion polls are to be believed, prepared to go well beyond Labour's officially modest proposals for a Scottish assembly. Some opinion polls have shown as many as 50 per cent wanting Scottish independence – a figure which must include many thousands of Labour supporters.

The Scottish national question has become a question for workers, and for this reason revolutionary Marxists can and should intervene. But how? Firstly, we must recognise that Scotland has a right to self-determination, up to and including secession from the Union. While defending that right, we do not necessarily advocate it. An independent *capitalist* Scotland is not a solution for the Scottish working class. Despite Alex Salmond's left rhetoric, the logic of nationalist politics is a utopian project to unite Scots of all classes. And what would Salmond do about the US, Japanese and other multinationals which would remain after political separation from England? Just how 'independent' would a capitalist Scotland be?

But this does not mean that we are sectarian towards the Scottish national struggle. We fight to draw out its class dynamics, and for the independent interests of the workers. We say: if there is to be an independent Scotland, which class will rule? Whose interests will be defended? If the SNP puts forward on paper a more radical programme than Labour, then it must be put to the test in the eyes of those who support it, by demanding that it actively supports workers' actions to defend jobs, living standards, social services, etc.



The relationship with England should be a matter for the workers of Scotland to decide. We should certainly oppose at this stage the fragmentation of the British workers' movement. But we would not shed any tears over the break-up of the political creation that is Great Britain. What is worth saving is the unity between workers throughout Britain, and it is to preserve that unity that we fight for a voluntary socialist federation.

The editorial board welcomes correspondence on this article, particularly from Scottish socialists.



SNP's Kay Ullrich running Labour close in the Monklands East by-election in 1994

the development of British mercantile, industrial and finance capital means that we cannot regard it as a typically oppressed nation. While Scotland's specific circumstances are unique, its anomalous situation is not, even on a European scale. Catalonia, the Basque country (Euzkadi) and Bohemia have all been oppressed, despite enjoying a generally higher level of economic development than the states of which they were a part.



British imperialism was seriously weakened by the First World War, but the working class militancy which began before the war and continued until the General Strike of 1926 – and had one of its main bases on Red Clydeside – generally assumed an all-British character, in which the break-up of the British state, as distinct from Home Rule, was not posed. Workers in Scotland related to the Labour Party (and particularly to its ILP component) and after 1920 to the Communist Party. The main exception was the current led by the Scottish revolutionary John Maclean, although his advocacy of a Scottish Workers' Republic appears to have been based less on any systematic analysis of Scotland as being an oppressed nation than on pragmatic considerations: his belief that Scotland was the 'storm centre' of the coming revolution and his antagonism towards leading members of the newly-formed CPGB. After all, until 1920 he had been for many years a member of the *British* Socialist Party, and supported working within the all-British Labour Party.

The response of the middle class was somewhat different. The Scottish Literary Renaissance of the 1920s around the nationalist writer Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve) emerged, and the forerunner of the SNP, the National Party of Scotland, was founded in 1928.

Until the 1980s, the SNP, and Scottish nationalism as a whole, re-

ship was not exactly equal either. The Tories' industrial policy (if it can be called such) signalled the collapse or contraction of most of the industries which had traditionally underpinned the Scottish economy: shipbuilding, coal, steel, engineering and textiles. This was also the case in other parts of Britain, but, unlike recession-hit Liverpool and the North East, in Scotland it elicited a specifically *national* response, to the effect that the Tories 'had it in for Scotland'. This feeling was heightened by the squandering of the North Sea oil bonanza – seen as a Scottish national resource – on riding out two recessions and subsidising a short-term credit and consumer boom which mainly benefited southern England, and by Scotland's use as a testing ground for the hated poll tax.



As a result, the Tories have been reduced to a rump in Scotland – in the 1950s they had 50 per cent of the Scottish vote – and have largely become an English party, and a southern English party at that. With the relative decline of manufacturing industry over the past 15 years, Scotland has become much less important to London-based finance capital. Preserving Scottish industry does not, on the whole, fit in with the Tories' economic strategy. Scottish workers have increasingly come to see Scotland as an 'oppressed' nation, whose economic interests are ultimately subordinated to those of England, and whose political status is unequal.

It is also easy to see why sections of the middle class have lost faith in the union with England. Looking over the Tweed they see Tory domination, corruption and economic ruin. Just as in the past there was a definite material basis for support for the union, now there is a growing material basis for opposition. Union with England, once the passport to influence, is now a political embarrassment. The SNP, with its slogan of 'Inde-

Workers International League

The WIL is the British section of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. Together with comrades in South Africa, Belgium, Germany, Canada and Sri Lanka, we fight to rebuild Trotsky's Fourth International. We are for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with a worldwide federation of workers' states, based on workers' democracy and planned economy. Only by workers taking power can the unemployment, poverty, starvation and war bred by capitalism be ended.

In Britain, it is necessary for revolutionaries to fight within the mass organisations of the labour movement, as well as participate in the struggles of all those oppressed by capitalism. We aim to build rank-and-file opposition to the trade union and Labour bureaucrats who stand in the way of any serious struggle to defeat the Tories. Only in this way will a genuine revolutionary party, rather than a sect, be built.

We support all struggles against imperialism, without endorsing the politics of any nationalist leaderships. In wars waged by imperialist powers such as Britain against oppressed countries, and in inter-imperialist wars, we are for the defeat of our own ruling class.

In the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which are no longer deformed/degenerated workers' states, we are for the defence of those gains of the working class that still exist. The remaining deformed workers' states in Cuba and Asia must be defended against imperialism, and the Stalinist bureaucracies overthrown before they too open the door to capitalist restoration.

For more information about the Workers International League and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, write to: WIL, PO Box 7268, London E10 6TX

The Bolsheviks in their own words

**In Defence of the Russian Revolution:
A Selection of Bolshevik Writings, 1917-1923**

Edited by Al Richardson

Porcupine Press, 1995; £12.99; 287pp

Review by Richard Price

Editor Al Richardson and his co-workers from Socialist Platform are to be congratulated on this first book from the Porcupine stable. It brings together a fascinating selection of previously untranslated and rare writings by Bolshevik leaders. Almost all of the contributions by Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Radek, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Tukachevsky extend our knowledge of the problems and challenges faced by the world's first workers' state, and how its leaders sought to overcome them.

But this volume is not mere hagiography; it includes such unattractive items as Trotsky's contributions to the trade union debate in 1920, and a eulogy to Lenin by Radek, which can't be read without the teeth grating: 'A great class, itself needing absolute truth, loves with its whole heart a leader who is himself a truth-loving human being, one who tells the truth about himself.' (p.80) -ugh!

But this warts and all approach pays dividends for those who aren't content with myths and legends, but who want to examine the Bolshevik experience from the standpoint of learning something. And if the Bolsheviks emerge from this volume as less than superhuman, it does not diminish their revolutionary stature overall. The flood of detractors who rushed to kick the Russian Revolution in the teeth once Stalinism had collapsed were generally more keen to catalogue Lenin and Trotsky's mistakes than they were to propose an alternative course of action for a besieged revolution in a backward country.

In these pages we can read how the Bolsheviks grappled with problems like the nature of proletarian

dictatorship, how to rebuild the economy and the army, and what role the trade unions should play - without the benefit of 75 years hindsight.

This is a book which all socialists concerned to defend and develop the Russian revolutionary experience should possess. And it contains some real gems, including Radek's writings on permanent revolution, (previously only available in French), Lenin's political report to the 9th conference concerning the war with Poland in 1920, which remained under wraps until 1992, and a short article by Trotsky on the national question, written in the form of a dialogue.

Other reviewers in the left press have taken great exception to Al Richardson's polemical introduction to the book. Duncan Chapple, writing in *Socialist Outlook* describes it as 'slandorous', *Trotskyist Interna-*

tional warns readers to 'discard the pretentious introduction', while *Socialist Appeal*, more reassuringly, advises: 'Don't worry about the introduction'.

But if this chorus tells us anything, it is how easily some Trotskyists' feathers are ruffled when their particular brand of 'orthodoxy' is challenged. The virtue of Al Richardson's contribution is that it casts a sceptical eye over the theories which many Trotskyists maintained over decades, and finds them wanting.

And while there are certainly some statements with which we would certainly take issue - for instance, the idea that nobody with the exception of *Critique* foresaw the demise of the Soviet Union - a number of very important points are made, alongside Al's inimitable put-downs of some of the main 'Trotskyist' currents. Most importantly, he attempts to revive some of Engels' most interesting ideas on the state and 'state capitalism', and to renovate Lenin's notion of the transitional regime as 'a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie' - a concept Trotsky returned to in a crucial but much neglected section of *Revolution Betrayed*. Far from ignoring the introduction, it should be read - critically by all means - by those seeking to test their theory against the reality of Stalinism's debacle.



Lenin in 1918, shortly before he was shot by Dora Kaplan

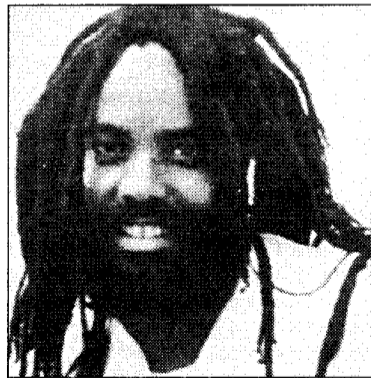
Mumia Abu-Jamal - Stop the legal lynching!

As we go to press, the life of former Black Panther, Mumia Abu-Jamal, hangs in the balance. Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania has signed Jamal's death warrant, and he is due to be executed on August 17, in spite of an international defence campaign. Jamal, framed for killing a police officer in 1982, is being held in complete isolation on death row, in an attempt to silence his voice for ever.

Meanwhile, attempts by Jamal's defence team and supporters to fight the case in the courts have run into the most outrageous obstruction from hanging judge Sabo, who presided at Jamal's original trial in 1982. On August 2, Judge Sabo imprisoned

one of Jamal's defence counsels, Rachel Wolkenstein, for contempt. He has dismissed every defence objection and motion, and ordered guards to arrest demonstrators outside the court in Philadelphia.

Sabo's behaviour, which as Jamal's attorney Len Weinglass said, lacks even 'the appearance of fairness', has moved mainstream US politicians to question the conduct of the case. In addition to widespread support from trade unionists, socialists and black organisations internationally, representatives of the German and Belgian governments, and even Pope Paul, have urged clemency. There has been sympathetic



coverage in *The New York Times*, *CBS News* and *The Guardian*.

We urge all those concerned to stop this racist lynch party to bombard Governor Ridge's office with demands to save Mumia Abu-Jamal. Messages of support and cheques (marked 'Jamal Legal Defence' on the back) can be sent to: Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX.

Briefly

Bus drivers betrayed

THE SEVEN-month-long Badgerline dispute in Chelmsford has been sold out. Without a perspective for winning, the 105 sacked bus drivers reluctantly accepted a redundancy package in June. It only amounts to £400 per year of service, with the longest serving only getting £12,000. So much for a dispute which Bill Morris described as a 'watershed'.

In fact, despite all the big talk about being prepared to 'sell Transport House' to get the drivers reinstated, the T&G leadership never intended an all-out battle right from the beginning. Running a free bus service became a substitute for struggle. Useful as it might have been in getting the support of the public, it was totally inadequate to defeat Badgerline.

As we pointed out at the beginning of the dispute, only massive solidarity action could have defeated such a ruthless employer. The T&G leaders did not fight for this option, and indeed relied on right-wing lay officials to contain the dispute locally.

Busworkers desperately need a real rank-and-file movement to begin to organise the solidarity action needed in disputes like this. Without such a fight within the union to defy the anti-union laws and immediately mobilise wider support when necessary, the steady flow of members out of the union could become an exodus.

A broad church . . .

IN JUNE, the independent unionist Robert McCartney was elected MP for North Down. The constituency has a history of electing independent-minded mavericks. But the interesting thing about this one is that he is seen as Labour-friendly. There was even talk of McCartney taking the Labour whip.

Kate Hoey, the Labour MP for Vauxhall, campaigned for him. Hoey is the leading figure in Democracy Now, which fights for Labour to organise in the six counties, and to abandon any recognition of Ireland's right to self-determination. During the campaign, the former Irish Labour Party minister, Conor Cruise O'Brien, travelled north from his luxury home in Howth, Co Dublin, to lend a hand. Meanwhile, Ian Paisley urged his followers in North Down to vote for McCartney. Hoey introduced McCartney to the House of Commons; Frank Field had originally been mooted as seconder but Tory MP John Biffin was deemed more suitable for the job.

What Hoey, O'Brien, Paisley and McCartney have in common is that they, in alliance with some of the most reactionary sections of the British bourgeoisie, prefer the unchallenged rule of the Unionists to the 'peace process', which involves some cosmetic concessions to the nationalist community. These strange goings-on in North Down may well herald the Labour leadership ditching even the party's paper commitment to Irish unity by consent.

. . . but not too broad!

THE SELECTION of Islington councillor Liz Davies as the Labour parliamentary candidate for Leeds North East has provoked a howl of outrage from Walworth Road.

Although Liz successfully cleared all the hurdles of the selection procedure comfortably, and emerged the clear winner on a postal ballot from an all-women shortlist, her face still doesn't fit. Her candidacy has been challenged by the NEC, which voted 17-6 against endorsing her and summoned her to appear before the disputes committee.

Her crimes include refusing to pay the poll tax, defending lesbian and gay rights, supporting Winston Silcott and voting against cuts in nursery places and adventure playgrounds.

This latest attack on rank-and-file democracy must be defeated, and the Leeds North East party must stand absolutely firm in insisting on its right to determine its own candidate.

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Ernest Mandel

The death of Ernest Mandel at the age of 72 on July 20 has removed one of most prominent figures in Trotskyist movement over the past five decades. A prolific author, Mandel joined the Belgian section of the movement in 1939, and was a leader successively of the Fourth International, the International Secretariat (after the 1953 split), and of the United Secretariat from 1963 until his death. A full appreciation of his life and work will appear in the next issue of Workers News.

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NIGERIA

The working class and the democracy movement

In 1993 and again in 1994, the Nigerian military government was shaken by general strikes. In an article based on a forum given at the Lutte Ouvrière fête in June, **Graham Campbell** outlines the road forward to remove this hated dictatorship

WITH 100 million people and a significant industrial base, Nigeria is second only to South Africa in its strategic importance on the African continent. A workers' victory in Nigeria would have enormous implications throughout Africa and the rest of the world.

General Sani Abacha's brutal regime, which came to power in the coup of November 1993, is the most hated in modern Nigerian history. Even sections of the bourgeoisie and former army officers have fled abroad to oppose him. His survival is due to three main factors: the continued support of imperialist governments, the fear of the democratic bourgeois opposition of mobilising the power of the working class, and the absence of a strong revolutionary leadership.

At present, Abacha has a firm grip on power, having arrested all the trade union leaders, sent in military administrators to govern the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and jailed opposition leaders. He has no intention of giving way to the civilian puppet body, the National Constitutional Convention, until he has defeated the working class and fully imposed the IMF structural adjustment programme which guarantees imperialist control of the oil industry.

The elections of June 12, 1993, were fraudulent. Only Chief Moshood Abiola's now defunct Social-Democratic Party and the pro-junta National Republican Convention were allowed to stand. Abiola's victory was annulled by the then military leader General Ibrahim Babangida. The same month, students' and lecturers' unions began an academic strike which was to last more than a year, and the universities were sealed off by the military who opened fire on students. On August 9-11 there was a workers' stayaway, and on August 26 Babangida appointed an interim government to rule on his behalf. A political general strike aimed specifically at installing Abiola started on August 27, but it was called off by the leaders of the NLC after three days.

The masses marched and were shot at, and despite the fact that the majority of the soldiers had voted for Abiola, he made no call for them to disobey orders. He was as afraid of the masses as he was

of the military and fled the country for Switzerland, leaving the mass movement leaderless.

Although Abiola is a multi-millionaire media tycoon with previously close links to Babangida, he was not the chosen candidate of the military bureaucrats, who live off kickbacks from the multi-nationals. His popularity among the masses rested on his image as an honest, self-made man, who had stayed out of politics doing Islamic welfare work and was not part of the enormous federal and state government corruption. In the absence of a working class party, workers voted for Abiola to express their opposition to the military.

Historically the Igbo and Yoruba workers of Lagos have been the staunchest supporters of movements for democracy. Hausa workers in Kano, the Hausa-Fulani capital in the north, have generally been more conservative, bought off by tribal-national links with managers of factories. As recent migrants to the cities, they have tended to have a less developed working class consciousness. Igbo workers have generally played the role of organisers and educators in trade unions in Kano.

Intellectuals and workers

For much of its history, the Nigerian left was based mainly on university campuses such as Ibadan, Ahmedu Bello and Ife-Ife. It was adversely influenced by Stalinism, Pan-African 'socialism' and the home-grown nationalism of the Zikist movement. Socialist and radical intellectuals like Wole Soyinka, Claude Ake and Edwin Madunagu played a significant role in motivating student protests against the military in 1982, 1986-87 and 1988-89. Students only began to look to the strength of the working class during the 1988-89 struggles against Babangida.

During this period, the NLC, under its moderate president Paschal Bafyau, attempted to form the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP), after NLC leaders Hassan Sonmu and Wahab Goodluck – also leaders of the pro-Moscow Socialist Working People's Party (SWPP) – were removed by the military. Bafyau wanted the NLP recognised by the military and put forward a programme which was no threat to capitalist rule. But the regime refused to register the NLP and cancelled the 1990 elections. The NLC leaders were not prepared to build the NLP illegally and many of the existing 'old left' parties decided instead to form what later became the Campaign for Democracy (CD) in November 1991.

The CD was established as a left-wing popular front and was influenced by the SWPP strategy of two-stage revolution. It was intent only on delivering the first, 'democratic', stage, and its programme did not include any references to social-

ism or revolution. However, one of its more important demands was to call for a National Conference (the popular term for a Constituent Assembly), based on workers' and peasants' 'popular democracy'. Despite the limitations of the CD, this demand struck a real chord. The illusions that Nigerian workers have in 'democracy' are the natural product of the fact that only ten of Nigeria's 35 years of independence have been under democratic rule.

In 1994, the oil workers' trade unions led an eight-week general strike for the instalment of Abiola as president, the abandonment of the IMF programme to sell off the oil industry and a halt to price rises. Abacha responded by sending the troops in. During the subsequent chaos, many soldiers refused to obey orders, but no calls were made to them either to remain in their barracks, or to come over to the workers' side by turning their guns on their officers. Had this happened, workers would have won the general strike and Abiola would be in office. This time, Abiola stayed, having lost credibility in 1993, and was put under house arrest and later tried for treason.

The role of the NLC leadership has been wretched. Bafyau, not content with betraying the oil workers whose leaders such as Frank Kokori and Waribi Agamene remain in jail, has capitulated to the takeover of the trade unions by the military. As a result, the name 'Labour' has become highly discredited. The Campaign for Independent Unionism (CIU) was formed in February 1995 in response to attempts by Abacha to legitimise his control of the NLC unions through fake elections in which real workers' candidates were excluded. The CIU is a rank-and-file campaign and could play an important role in future struggles for a workers' party. Among its demands are the release of Abiola, and imprisoned trade union leaders and activists; the removal of the military from the trade unions; a democratic and accountable trade union leadership and structure; and an end to the IMF structural adjustment programme.

The National Conscience Party

The National Conscience Party (NCP) was formed in illegality as a 'declaration of war' on the military junta by the prominent human rights lawyer Chief Gani Fawehinmi. His radical-sounding rhetoric has recently included calls to 'overthrow the regime' and references to the NCP as a 'revolutionary party' which is opposed to social-democracy, 'military statism' and the IMF, while defending nationalisation. Although Gani has a long record of defying the military, there are limits to his radicalism as can be seen in the 'Declaration of National Conscience' – the party's programme. Its calls for 'actualising June 12', for a 'break with the past', 'for the right to an enduring and true democracy based on the abolition of poverty' and for 'people-orientated programmes and policies for sound economic growth

and development' are reminiscent of the ANC's old Freedom Charter.

This is a minimum programme, which doesn't spell out the means to achieve its goals, nor the kind of system needed to implement them. The CD has been superseded by the spectacular growth of the NCP, which now claims 500,000 members. It is clear that Gani listens carefully to both left and right in the NCP, and is a pragmatist who will not openly call for a working class party but instead for 'national unity'. In practice, this means that anyone, short of proven collaborators of the military, can join the NCP.

The only significant left group with its own paper in Nigeria is Militant Labour's sister organisation, Nigerian Labour Militant (NLM). Like Congress Militant's attitude to the ANC in South Africa, it has big illusions both in the NCP's ability to be transformed into a workers' party, and in Chief Gani as a popular leader whom it can influence. NLM raises the slogan 'Build the National Conscience Party', but without a clear and critical estimate of its leadership. This is based on a false estimate of the NCP's radicalism.

NLM's left reformist version of a parliamentary road to socialism gives left cover to the NCP programme. There is no doubt that the NCP has genuine support among workers and peasants, but it is not a workers' party. NLM's tactics seem to be to act as the loyal left wing of the NCP, rather than openly stating the need for an independent working class party. NLM also fails to raise the demand for a National Conference, or pose the question of trade union affiliation to the NCP. If the NCP succeeded in becoming an ANC-style liberation movement – by bringing the unions on board – under its present leadership and programme, it would only betray the working class.

It is highly unlikely that the NCP can become a workers' party. But it is possible that workers' demands could dominate the party on the ground, and to this extent there are legitimate reasons for revolutionaries to work in the NCP, fighting for their own programme.

With over 100 ethnic groups, Nigeria is not really a nation but a multinational state. A patchwork of 30 ethni-

cally-based administrative regions encourages tribal discrimination against minorities and the formation of minority 'bantustan' elites. In the name of 'national unity', the Stalinist and nationalist 'left' has frequently capitulated to the chauvinism of the federal military government, the worst example being their opposition to Igbo self-determination in the Biafra war of 1966-70 in which millions were killed.

Needed – a workers' party

A programme of transitional demands must be developed in order to build in struggle the kind of leadership needed to break the mass movement from its bourgeois-reformist leaders and carry out the Nigerian socialist revolution. This means building a workers' party capable of taking the power – the absence of such a party was a key factor in the defeat of the strike waves of 1993-94. Workers must fight to win the support of peasants and other oppressed sections of society with the aim of expropriating the capitalists.

- End poverty – tax the rich.
- Stop privatisation. For workers' control of production in state industries.
- Down with corruption. Open the books of the state and all major companies.
- For full and free healthcare, education and social welfare.
- Release workers' leaders and all political prisoners.
- Full equality and the right of self-determination for all oppressed nationalities. For a federal workers' republic.
- Build a revolutionary socialist caucus in the National Conscience Party and in the trade unions. Build the Campaign for Independent Unionism. Build a workers' party.
- For a Revolutionary National Conference to be convened now by the unions, the NCP and all other popular organisations opposed to the military.

The Campaign for Independent Unionism can be contacted c/o the civil servants' union, NUPCE, at 272 Ikorodu Road, Lagos, Nigeria.

Liberation!

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