



Socialist Labour Party

SCARGILL'S SPLIT - THE WAY FORWARD?

ARTHUR SCARGILL's initiative in forming the Socialist Labour Party has attracted widespread interest and debate on the left. After a decade of trade union defeats and Labour retreats, such a call undoubtedly carries some weight with a layer of militants who see no prospect of defeating Blair and the modernisers within the Labour Party, but see the need for a political arm to defend the trade unions.

At issue is not only what is desirable - and a mass split to the left from Labourism certainly is! - but involves an assessment of where the class as a whole is, what its illusions are, and whether it is ready *under present conditions* to break with its present leaders.

To organise a mass alternative to New Labour requires a real political struggle against its existing leadership. Arthur Scargill, despite his reputation as a class fighter, has clearly failed to mount any such consistent struggle. He has also shown himself time and again - most recently in the debacle over pit closures in 1992 - to be a hopeless tactician.

Politically, Scargill has remained a left reformist, strongly influenced by the Stalinism he learned in his youth. The new party he is attempting to build is developing politics in line with this outlook: 'Old Labourism' crossed with *Morning Star*-style Stalinism. It runs the risk of having all the vices and none of the virtues of the Independent Labour Party in the 1930s. The ILP, which split in 1932, at least began with thousands of members and a parliamentary group. Scargill does not even have the allegiance of a single Labour MP, and only a handful of trade union officials have been prepared to back him.

We have no doubt that many of the trade unionists who have been drawn into the SLP are sincere in their desire to oppose Blair and to stop the steady drift to the right in the Labour movement. Whether or not we agree with their outlook, socialists should be prepared to fight alongside these comrades around a broad range of class questions - the defence of the trade unions, workers' rights and the welfare state, against racism, for the renationalisa-

tion of public utilities, etc.

But the central error made by those who have formed the SLP is to substitute their own frustrations with the present situation, and their alienation from Blair's New Labour, for the consciousness of the mass of workers. It is one thing for a few hundred battered and disillusioned activists to have 'seen through' Blair. It is another for millions who desperately want to see an end to the Tories, and who feel that finally they have a real chance at the next election, to give up on Labour before it has taken office. The fact is that many workers *do* have illusions of various kinds in New Labour - not that it will change the world, but that it will be better than the Tories. Outgrowing these illusions will be a painful process, learnt in struggle.

The danger is that if activists detach themselves from Labour, without any substantial support among workers and in advance of a Labour government being seen to betray, they will allow the Labour right wing a free run. Far from creating a pole of attraction, the project runs the risk of isolating militants from the struggles which will emerge against a Blair government. Such a government will inevitably come into conflict with the trade unions, which remain either affiliated to Labour or look to it politically, and this in turn will affect the constituency rank and file.

Revolutionaries shouldn't seek to cut themselves off from such developments. Instead, they should patiently convince the rank and file of the mass workers' organisations to fight their rotten leaders. In doing so, it is necessary to recognise that the mass of politically conscious workers will not jump ship at the first opportunity. Only when they are convinced that Labour is historically bankrupt, and that a viable alternative exists, will they break their historic allegiance.

Unlike the ILP, the SLP is not so much the product of struggle as of defeat. It is not being pushed forward by the pressure of workers from below, but by the thwarted ambitions of a marginalised wing of the trade union bureaucracy from above. Hence the secretive and undemocratic methods used by

Scargill and his small clique of followers in the meetings leading up to the proclamation of the new 'party'. As things stand, the constitution of the SLP makes it harder for groups of socialists to organise inside it than within the Labour Party. The only faction which will be allowed, it seems, will be that around the Leader himself - which tends to undermine criticism of Blair's contempt for party democracy.

All previous experience shows that such a party has little chance of significantly altering the balance of forces within the Labour movement. Behind the SLP's 'optimism' lies a pessimism that it is impossible to fight Blair and the modernisers. The experience of Militant, which exited the Labour Party in search of a mass following, but only succeeded in losing most of its own members, should serve as a warning. The fact that Militant Labour (along with some members of the Communist

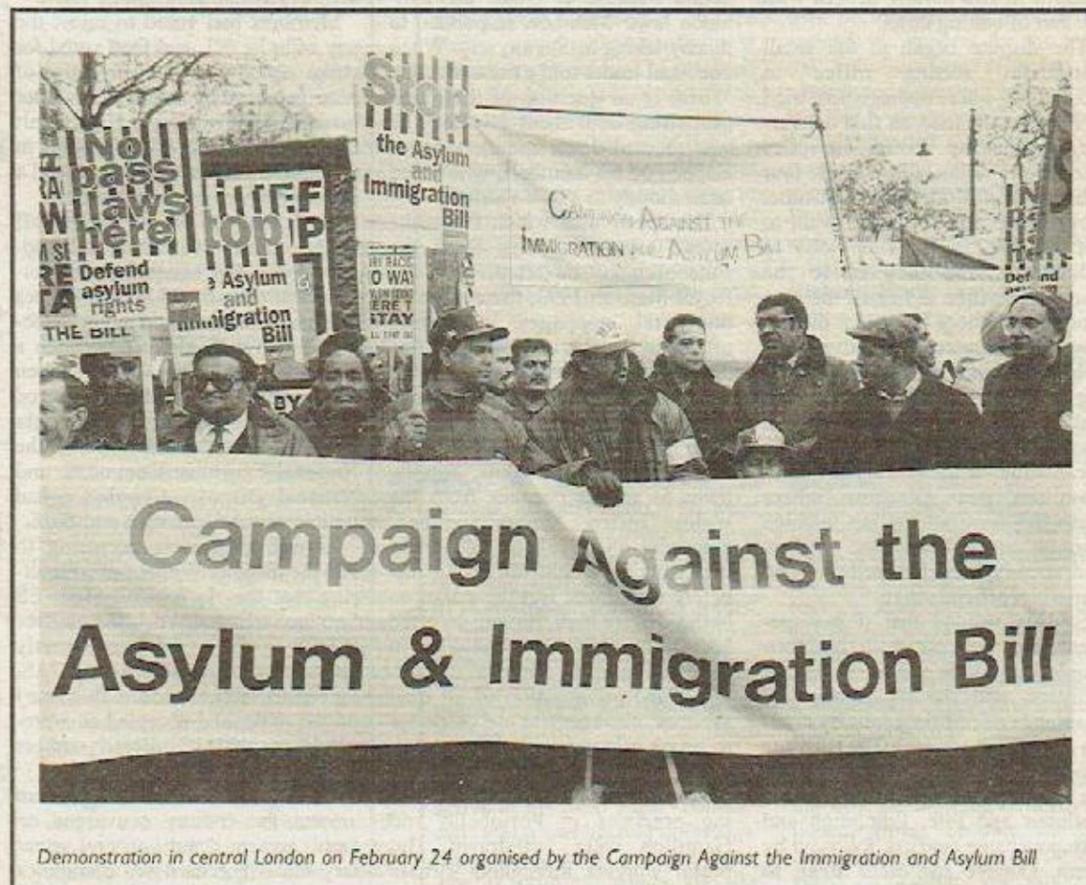
Party of Britain and a number of smaller left groups) was initially interested in the SLP is more an indication that its own project is in serious trouble than that Scargill has correctly sized up the situation.

Socialist Labour's intervention in the Hemsworth by-election on February 1 was less than mould-breaking. Even when allowances are made for the SLP's early stage of development, Brenda Nixon's 1,193 votes - less than half the figure Lesley Mahmood polled for Militant in Walton in 1991 - hardly inspired confidence that she represented a serious alternative to Labour. In an overwhelmingly Labour constituency containing thousands of ex-miners, 5.4 per cent of a low poll represented very little. Labour even managed to slightly increase its share of the vote, up to 71.9 per cent.

Of course, it is not excluded that the SLP will succeed in regrouping a few thousand activists - mainly in

the trade unions - under its banner, and that it will have some future as a small reformist party. But this will not necessarily further the struggle against the Labour right wing, particularly when the bulk of the Labour left shows no signs of defecting. If it is to attract wider layers of organised workers and Labour Party members, it will have to ditch Scargill's 'Old Labour' nostalgia, open up the party to genuine democratic debate, and adopt a fighting programme of action in opposition to right-wing reformism.

Serious militants in the SLP will also have to resist Stalinist and ultra-left calls for 'No vote to Labour', and instead fight for a united front policy. Another acid test will be whether the SLP cosies up to sympathetic bureaucrats in the hope of trade union affiliations, or whether it gears its trade union work to building rank-and-file opposition movements.



Demonstration in central London on February 24 organised by the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill

Dockers show the way!

By Jim Dye
Liverpool Trades
Council
(personal capacity)

LIVERPOOL dockers are engaged in a bitter and heroic fight to save their jobs after being sacked by ruthless port bosses who want to bring back the system of casual labour and drive down wages.

The dispute began last September when Torside, a stevedores company based in the docks, sacked several men for refusing to do overtime. When the rest of the 80-strong workforce protested, they too were sacked. The conflict rapidly escalated when dockers employed at the container terminal owned by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company refused to cross an unofficial picket line set up by the Torside workers. This magnificent show of loyalty was all MDHC needed as an excuse to sack 329 dockers and start recruiting scab labour on lower wages and worse conditions. The MDHC bosses openly admitted that they were not prepared to re-hire any stewards, union activists, or workers with higher than average sick absences.

The dockers belong to the Transport and General Workers' Union, which has refused them official backing for fear of being prosecuted under the Tory anti-union laws. Because they have been sacked the dockers cannot claim state benefits, but neither is the TGWU paying strike pay because the dispute is unofficial. Despite this, the dockers have stayed solid against threats and intimidation, and the sinister activities of Drake International, the company which has provided the scabs. They have mounted an international campaign in defence of their jobs - ships have been redirected to other ports, and dockers' unions in countries including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA and Italy have sent donations and agreed to boycott cargoes from Liverpool. Relatives and friends of the sacked men have formed a support group called Women on the Waterfront, whose activities include mounting a women's picket outside the docks once a week and sending speakers all over the country.

Both MDHC and the TGWU leadership were taken aback by the determined resistance of the dockers and the scale of the international support. MDHC's share prices tumbled and it was forced into negotia-

tions with TGWU general secretary Bill Morris, who recommended that the men accept a redundancy package which would have provided lump sum payments of £20-£25,000, full pensions and the possibility of retaining 40 jobs on worse terms than before. But the offer was decisively rejected - by 271 votes to 50 - in a postal ballot of the sacked MDHC dockers held on February 8. This was followed by

a 56 votes to six rejection by Torside workers, and a unanimous rejection by ten workers from another company working out of the docks, Nelson Freight.

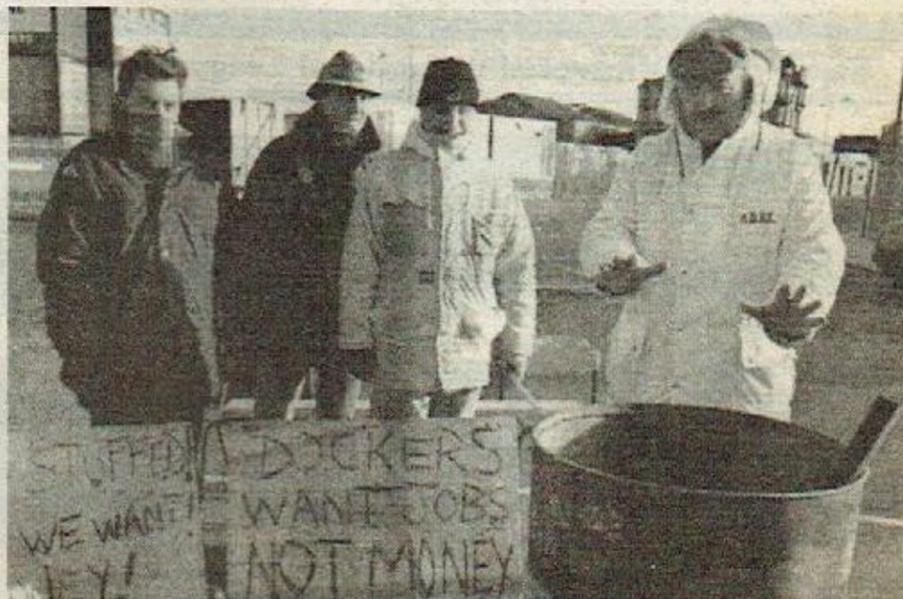
The Liverpool dockers are now in the forefront of the fight against casualisation. Victory is possible in this dispute, which has already cost MDHC £4 million in lost profits, but

the following things must be fought for:

- ☐ Solidarity actions from other dock, shipping and transport unions in Britain and internationally.
- ☐ Official backing from the TGWU, even if this breaks the anti-union laws.
- ☐ Workers' aid - the dockers must not starve!

☐ Mass pickets to stop the port operating.

● Donations and messages of solidarity should be sent to: Jimmy Davies, Secretary Port Stewards TGWU, Transport House, 37 Islington, Liverpool 3. Cheques payable to 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal Fund'.



Pickets on duty outside Liverpool docks in January

Militancy pays off for postal workers

By William Hurrell

SCOTTISH postal workers inflicted an important defeat on Royal Mail management at the end of last year by taking industrial action in defiance of the Tory anti-union laws. The week-long strike in November involved over 6,000 members of the Communication Workers Union, and was in response to an attempt by management to introduce new work patterns at two sorting offices with the aim of cutting costs.

The dispute began at the small Portobello sorting office in Edinburgh, where management tried to increase the load on first deliveries, amalgamate second deliveries into longer walks, and convert four jobs from full-time to part-time. Royal Mail area managers want to get rid of 156 full-time jobs in Edinburgh, and they chose the Portobello office to launch the new working practices because it did not have a union representative. The CWU was in the process of organising a ballot for strike action, but staff at Portobello walked out on an unofficial strike on November 20. Meanwhile, at the sorting office in Hamilton, near Glasgow, where managers were attempting to force through similar measures, workers had already been balloted and had started an official strike.

Strikers warned that if management plans were not challenged they would lead to the end of the second delivery, and the replacement of thousands of full-time jobs by casuals and part-timers. The dispute rapidly escalated, with flying pickets visiting sorting offices in the Lothians and Fife. Edinburgh and Glasgow came out first, followed by Perth, Dundee and other areas, to the point where over half of all Scottish postal workers were on unofficial strike and deliveries in the whole of central Scotland crippled. By the end of the week, members in

Inverness and Aberdeen were also taking action. Managers tried to recruit scabs from agencies with the promise of £7 an hour. They sent mail to England to be sorted, but this only succeeded in bringing out one London office in sympathy.

Postal workers had to defy many of their full-time union officials, who explained that the CWU could not help them unless they returned to work. They got a letter from the CWU's general secretary saying that the union repudiated their action because it broke the anti-union laws. Members responded to this by taking action anyway. When one local leader told a mass meeting 'There is no question of the union supporting us without a ballot', he was shouted down and slow hand-clapped by his members, who voted unanimously to stay on strike.

The speed with which the strike spread says everything about the state of industrial relations in the Royal Mail. In 1993, there were 32 unofficial stoppages in sorting offices in Britain; in 1994 the figure doubled to 65. Portobello managers went out of their way to provoke strikers by stopping their wages from the previous week from going into their bank accounts, forcing them to collect cheques from the sorting office. Across Scotland, managers miscalculated, reckoning that workers would not strike just before Christmas. But the stakes on both sides are high. Having invested heavily in computer technology in anticipation of the eventual deregulation and privatisation of all mail services, management are desperate to smash existing working practices.

The dispute ended with a definite victory for the strikers. New working practices in Portobello and Hamilton were withdrawn. But postal workers throughout Britain will have to be on their guard, and be prepared to take equally effective and swift action whenever management go back on the offensive - which they undoubtedly will.

Right wing sabotage dole strike

By a CPSA member

AFTER eleven and a half weeks on strike - which made it the sixth longest dispute in the last decade - 2,000 CPSA members in the Employment Service reluctantly returned to work on February 19.

This bitter dispute was provoked by the lowest pay offer in any part of the Civil Service, and a set of outrageous disparities arising from the performance pay system imposed by ES management. It was a struggle the right-wing leaders of the union never wanted. So successful have they been in smothering resistance in recent years that this was the first serious pay campaign since 1987.

Members had voted to reject the pay offer by 9:1, and then voted for strike action to win their claim of nine per cent by nearly 2:1. After management had won a High Court injunction on the eve of action in October, a further ballot produced a majority of nearly 3:1 for action.

The campaign finally kicked off on November 30 with a well-supported one-day national strike, followed directly by 38 benefit offices and job centres coming out on selective action with strike pay. Such a strategy could only have shaken management if it had been followed up by rapid escalation. But the right wing 'Moderates' in control of the National Executive Committee and National Disputes Committee had no intention of leading a real fight.

Instead, they were preparing to sell the dispute. Without even referring to the Left Unity-led ES Section Executive Committee (SEC), the NEC secretly approached management via ACAS, agreed to talks without any money on the table, and accepted as a precondition that it ordered strikers back to work!

On December 14, strikers from around the country converged on Leeds, where deputy general secretary Alan Churchard was attending a meeting of the SEC. After an angry confrontation, and the leaking of a circular which made it clear that management had no intention of discussing 1995 pay, but that it was

preparing disciplinary cases against leading activists, the decision to call off the dispute was reversed.

Once again, CPSA leaders promised to escalate the action, and once again they cynically failed to deliver. In place of an expected 120 offices out before Christmas, the number had only crawled past 50 by mid-January. This was the clearest indication that the Moderates had no intention of winning the strike, and were simply trying to find a means to send members back.

While the leaders dragged their feet, rank-and-file activists showed enormous initiative. In addition to picketing in extreme weather conditions, members visited hundreds of non-striking offices, carried out four demonstrations at CPSA headquarters, two visits to Leeds, occupations of management buildings and a parliamentary lobby, as well as recruiting about 2,000 members to the union. In London, seven mass pickets took place, and scabbing once more became a dirty word.

Management also pulled out all the stops. Nothing was too expensive to try to break the strike. Hundreds of casuals were employed, while permanent staff were offered sizeable bonuses for scabbing, along with unlimited overtime, detached duty payments and subsistence allowances. Even strike-breaking, however, had to submit to the rigours of the market - tough northern scabs only got £200 bonus per month; Nottingham scabs received a reported £300, while soft southern scabs got £500.

The strike was also a concentrated test for the various left factions in the union. The SEC, with a majority of Broad Left/Militant supporters, did oppose the right wing, and at least remained on side for the course of the dispute. That said, its leadership was routine and uninspired, and it failed to issue a single campaigning leaflet in nearly three months. It also failed to outline a clear way forward for the dispute, and instead placed its faith in escalation on full strike pay. By January, it had run out of ideas altogether, and was reduced to calling limply for an unpopular programme of regional

two-day strikes. The SWP, in contrast, shouted for an all-out strike, without putting forward any stepping stones towards one.

Only Socialist Caucus outlined a clear programme from the outset. Even before the action began, it called for a levy to build for wider action. It consistently argued the case for rapid escalation and a more mobile, disruptive campaign to counteract management's strike-breaking plans, for a lower rate of strike pay to enable more offices to come out, and for effective campaigning literature. Socialist Caucus members were at the forefront of most of the rank-and-file initiatives.

The right wing's final cynical act of betrayal came when it called a snap ballot for an all-out strike without strike pay. With the majority of members having seen no action at all since November 30, and with the strikers effectively isolated, the right wing knew there was no prospect of a 'yes' majority, and that they would be able to use the ballot result to send the selective offices back and call off the campaign. Only the SWP - with its usual mix of ultra-leftism and sheer stupidity - applauded the decision to call the ballot, and accused the rest of the left of 'pessimism'.

In the event, 2,903 'yes' votes as against 4,734 'no' votes was a respectable result, given the right wing's sabotage. But at the end of the day there was little to show for the campaign apart from a vague management offer to review the pay system this year.

CPSA members will need to absorb all the lessons of this struggle and build upon the organisational gains made if they are to withstand the challenges ahead. Thousands of jobs are threatened with the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance and a question mark hangs over the Employment Service itself. Above all what is needed is the removal of the Moderate fifth column in the union and the building of a powerful rank-and-file opposition. In the Employment Service section elections, we call for a vote for Broad Left and Socialist Caucus candidates.

Continuing the debate opened in the last issue of Workers News, Pat Doyle argues that socialists should advocate Scottish independence as a tactic

Discussion article

Where now for Scottish workers?

THIS ARTICLE is a response to Barry Murphy's excellent discussion article in Workers News No.55. It attempts to give a more detailed insight into current trains of thought in Scotland and where these thoughts are likely to lead. When socialism is under attack from all sides, it is important that comrades encourage discussion of issues which offer real possibilities for the left to advance. Scotland offers one such opportunity.

Scottish politics today is dominated by the Constitutional question (devolution or independence) but it is the option of independence which clearly holds the best prospects for the left. Most socialists would recognise, at least in theory, Scotland's democratic right to leave the Union. The question for Marxists is not whether we have any allegiance to a 'united' British state - we don't - but should we actively campaign for independence, what advantage, if any, it would offer Scottish workers, and what kind of Scottish state we should advocate.

There is a continuing belief within the Scottish Left that the struggle for an independent Scotland contains an inbuilt dynamic which favours the cause of socialism. The various versions of this theory rest on the perception that, since the 1950s, Scotland has been loyal to the Labour Party and socialism, while England has mainly been loyal to the Tories and capitalism.

But before we can even begin to discuss tactics towards the issue of Scottish independence, it is necessary to do battle with the semi-reformist, nationalist and Stalinist ideas on the state which continue to predominate in the Scottish Left. However favourable the social and political make-up of Scotland, there are no parliamentary roads to socialism and only the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism can succeed in installing a socialist government. Neither a Scottish Assembly, nor a constitutionally independent Scot-

land, would get round this problem. And if - by some miracle - a relatively peaceful overturn did take place in Scotland, international capitalism would not willingly co-exist with such a thorn in its side. There is no chance of a socialist 'Independence in Europe'.

Traditionally much of the left in Britain has argued either that the Scottish national question does not exist (because Scotland is not oppressed by England), or that it should not exist (because Scottish nationalism is intrinsically inward-looking and backward, and threatens the unity of the British working class). There is some truth in both these positions, in that Scottish nationalism can certainly be insular, and Scotland is not an oppressed nation in the traditional Marxist sense. However, the debate on Scotland's future is already going ahead, whether anyone likes it or not and if Labour wins the next election it is likely that a Scottish Assembly will come about. The alternative of independence is increasingly seen as a serious option, and recent opinion polls have shown support for independence at about 50 per cent and support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) at 30 per cent. Socialists outside Scotland are discussing the implications of the Scottish national question, while socialists in Scotland are discussing the possibility of a left electoral bloc and what policies to propose within the context of an Assembly. In such a situation, it would be sectarian to sit on the sidelines.

Socialists in the rest of Britain should realise that politically, at least in the eyes of many younger workers, the SNP has outflanked Blair's New Labour to the left. The SNP is the only major party with radical reformist policies (at least on paper) on the minimum wage, sexual and racial discrimination, nuclear weapons, renationalisation of the main utilities, house-building, employment and anti-poverty programmes. In short, all the policies which Old Labour used to be proud of, and New Labour has abandoned.

It is true that the SNP's MPs, councillors and activists are mainly middle class, but the left of the SNP has tended to become stronger as the SNP leadership recognises the need to appeal to workers in the Central Belt (from Strathclyde through to the Lothians and Fife), where the majority of Scots live. And this inevitably creates contradictions within the party, between the social democratic 'centre' around Salmond, the 'Tartan Tory' right, and the left.

Some on the SNP left even feel that an SNP government, post-independence, is neither likely nor desirable, and merely see support for the SNP as a tactic to achieve independence. Thereafter, such comrades would hope either for the Scottish Labour Party to secede from the British party, or for a new socialist party to be created. I have no doubt that if the Scottish Labour Party today adopted the SNP's social policy and position on independence, it would win a landslide.

One of the contradictions in those who are very 'optimistic' about the prospects for Scottish independence is that they are equally pessimistic about the future for workers in England and Wales. Part of their motivation for advocating independence flows from a belief that the Tories have England sewn up for ever more. Of course, such a position is understandable. Without the votes of Scottish workers, and without a solid block of Scottish MPs, Labour would have been a spent force at Westminster for much of the 1980s. The main reason why many Scottish workers are considering independence, even if that support does not automatically translate into votes for the SNP, is because they have felt since 1979 like a permanent opposition, unable to influence the course of events, despite voting against the Tories time after time.

The election of Tony Blair to the Labour leadership has added a new ingredient to the situation. While support for Labour in Scotland remains strong, Blair has deepened the perception that New Labour's loyalties do not lie with working class Scots, but with middle class voters in southern England. So, given the failure of what Scottish workers have traditionally seen as 'their' party to fight the Tories in any principled way, it is not surprising that some workers have become impatient and are looking for a quick fix in the form of nationalism with a left face. Although the SNP has tended to tread cautiously round the problem of the sectarian divide in Scotland, rather than confront the root of the problem in the historic oppression of Catholic workers of Irish descent, it is also a long way from being a party which advocates racism or ethnic division. However, there are no grounds for thinking that the SNP right wing would not, under certain conditions, turn to chauvinism to achieve power. Naturally, we should support the left of the SNP, such as those around the magazine *Liberation*, against such reactionaries.

Throughout the world, following the collapse of Stalinism, nationalism has been on the rise. However, even the most progressive varieties of nationalism cannot provide any ultimate solution for workers. On the other hand, the revolutionary movement is too weak simply to issue workers with ultimatums to reject all forms of nationalism and rally to the socialist revolution. It is necessary to analyse the class components of national movements, to distinguish between their progressive and reactionary sides, and to learn how to tactically orient to those sections of workers who support radical elements of the nationalist programme.

If the left is to make any impact on the present situation in Scotland, it cannot continue to be divided, with each group fighting its own little corner. At the *Where Now for Scotland?* forum, held in Glasgow in August, the Scottish left took some tentative steps towards common action. The Scottish Socialist

Movement, the Communist Party of Scotland, Scottish Militant Labour, *Liberation* and others have begun to come together on issues such as the Scottish Campaign for a Shorter Working Week, which incorporates demands for a decent minimum wage and against unemployment.

Anyway, at this point I want to respond directly to some of the points raised by Comrade Murphy in his article. The Tories did most certainly campaign on the single issue of the union with England and Wales in the Perth and Kinross by-election in May. However, they were snubbed by former Tory voters for the simple reason that the Tories no longer represent the interests of the Scottish middle class. Scottish middle class support for the Tories has been in decline for some time, the main reason being, as Comrade Murphy states, that union with England, once the passport to influence, is now a political embarrassment, especially in the light of the Tories' general unpopularity in Scotland, and the rightward shift in Tory policy.

With the deepening Tory divisions over Europe, the Major government took to wrapping itself in the Union flag, but the desperate attempt to play the English nationalist card only succeeded in alienating many middle class Scots. It is not that they cannot relate to the singing of Land of Hope and Glory at conferences, or to a golden past of warm beer and cricket on the village green. All the bleating about the loss of British (English) sovereignty to Brussels fell flat in Scotland, which saw its own demand for an Assembly ignored. At Perth and Kinross, the local gentfolk were not so much voting for Roseanna Cunningham's well-publicised republicanism, as for Scottish nationalism and against London-based government. Republicanism is still a poor second to independence in people's priorities.

Many Scottish workers see the Tories as a disease inflicted upon them by middle England, as a government they did not vote for, and which they hate for subjecting them to low wages, unemployment and experiments like the poll tax. But, what of the traditional relationship with Labour? There is no doubt that, even if Labour carries the majority of Scotland at the next election, the more conscious workers have been deeply alienated by Blair, who is seen as betraying everything Scottish working class people have

fought for. Of course, not all workers dislike Blair - he still commands the votes of the older generation. However, the youth of today are not automatically voting Labour, and their parents are beginning to reconsider their natural allegiance. This has not resulted in a mass swing to the SNP, but there is a definite shift in loyalties.

But this does not simply represent a radicalisation. It involves a lot of tactical voting. Some ex-Tory voters will vote SNP rather than Labour as a way of preserving their opposition to the traditional workers' movement. Many Labour voters will only vote SNP if they believe Labour has no chance of winning an election.

I agree with Comrade Murphy that Scotland is not an oppressed nation in the traditional sense, but also that this does not exhaust the problem. The fact remains that many Scottish workers see themselves as oppressed, and that they see this oppression, at least in part, as stemming from the connection with England. They tend to equate the exploitation they experience in their everyday lives with political oppression directed from Westminster. When the Tories talked about the economy 'overheating' during the late 1980s and many Scots were forced to leave their families to take up jobs down south rather than stay on the dole, they were not Marxists, but they knew about oppression. When so many Scottish miners, steelworkers, shipbuilders and youth have been condemned to unemployment or meagre existences on low wages, should it come as any surprise that they say they feel 'nationally' oppressed?

Is Scotland a nation and if so, is Scottish nationalism a 'good thing'? The first part of the question is redundant, as the vast majority of Scottish people identify themselves as part of a Scottish nation. What is surprising is that anyone outside Scotland is still arguing otherwise! The second part of the question is more relevant. I have no doubt that the majority of Scots reject ideological nationalism. Growing support for independence, or at least devolution, reflects their experience both socially and politically in recent decades, and their desire to exercise some measure of democratic control over their future.

In conclusion, having outlined the general position here in Scotland and, hopefully, given comrades a better understanding of what Scottish socialists face, what needs to be done? From the above, I think it is clear that revolutionaries should actively support the struggle for an independent Scotland, while opposing nationalism. They should fight against illusions in a peaceful Scottish road to socialism, and for a workers' republic. All comrades must accept that there is a Scottish national question and enter the debate - there is a lot to learn and a lot at stake. The debate must be widened to include the nationalist threat faced by the international working class today. Only in this way will those in Scotland who support nationalism truly understand the threat. All comrades must fight for closer unity in action between the left in Britain as a whole.

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol.6, No.1, Winter 1995-96

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Editorial

France – back on the streets

THE STRIKE-WAVE which swept France in November and December last year was the most powerful expression of the class struggle in that country since 1968. Despite being demobilised, it has dealt an enormous blow to the Maastricht plan to destroy the welfare states in western Europe, and has most probably scuppered attempts to establish a single European currency by 1999. Even Germany now looks unlikely to achieve the economic criteria for monetary union after resistance by workers to job losses and a programme of cuts in welfare spending.

However, Plan Juppé (and its Europe-wide counterparts) is relatively intact, despite concessions won by rail workers and others. The strike-wave began with the students and was escalated by the trade union bureaucracies in defence of their own interests, which Plan Juppé was directly threatening. By mid-December, millions of workers and students were on strike and had demonstrated on several occasions. The development of strike committees, meeting daily, was moving the situation in the direction of dual power. On demonstrations and in meetings, the call for the resignation of Chirac and Juppé was increasingly being raised. The movement was threatening to bring down the government.

But after this high point the strike-wave lost its momentum. The bureaucrats at the head of the three main trade union federations, whose only demand was for the ditching of Plan Juppé, took fright and sabotaged the movement by sectarian squabbling among themselves. More fundamentally, there was no credible governmental alternative to that of Chirac and Juppé, and no Europe-wide orientation. Revolutionaries should have demanded that the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the unions organise a general strike. With such a movement underway, the task would have been to give it clear political objectives: the downfall of the Fifth Republic, the fight for a workers' government, and for a co-ordinated battle throughout Europe to smash the Maastricht conspiracy.

Only in this way would it have been possible to take the struggle forward, expose the fraudulent 'left' turn of the Communist and Socialist parties, and begin the construction of a mass revolutionary leadership in the working class. The lack of political direction was the reason why the private sector workers did not respond to strike calls.

Lutte Ouvrière, despite the 1.6 million votes it won in last year's presidential election, lacked a clear political strategy and remained trapped in an essentially syndicalist position. It treated the struggle almost sceptically, insisting it was largely apolitical, and claimed that to talk of a European dimension was 'letting the bourgeoisie off the hook'. According to LO, it was perfectly understandable that the bureaucracy capitulated at the end of the day, since workers also wanted to give up because Christmas was coming!

Pierre Lambert's Parti des Travailleurs, buried within the Force Ouvrière trade union federation, acted merely as an arm of the bureaucracy. In many cases its members were acting in defence of their own well-paid jobs administering the social fund. The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, the French section of the United Secretariat, similarly took the bureaucracy's left turn as good coin. To cover this position it insisted, along with LO, that there was no real pressure from the working class for action – in other words, that the strike-wave was primarily a bureaucratic manoeuvre.

No significant group on the far left seems to have used the mobilisations to raise clear demands for the ending of racist immigration laws. It would appear that the low turn-out from black workers and their organisations on the demonstrations was down to this failure, and to a desire by the trade union federations not to alienate those supporters of Le Pen's National Front who took part in the struggles. However, the militancy of the rank and file tended to push the struggle well beyond the limits which the conservative trade union leaderships tried to impose.

Despite mounting economic problems, the European Union governments have not abandoned their plans for closer unity, which they see as vital for competing with the US and Japanese trading blocs. The events in France show that workers want to fight against a bosses' Europe. Given correct leadership, they can smash it.

Republican dilemma

FIRST reactions to the massive bomb which shook Canary Wharf on February 9 were that it marked either a split from the IRA or a split between the IRA and Sinn Féin. So far neither has materialised, but there are nonetheless clear tensions within the Republican movement. Seventeen months of ceasefire have brought no tangible benefits for the nationalist population of the north of Ireland.

Among Republican militants, and especially in the IRA, continual British prevarication on all-party talks has created a mood to resume the military campaign. Nationalist rivals Republican Sinn Féin and the IRSP have been winning a small but growing audience. The ending of the IRA ceasefire was not so much the product of a split, as a move to avoid a split. At the same time, reflecting the new realities, the IRA has given the resumption of hostilities no loftier goal than an all-party conference – hardly a cause to volunteer and die for.

But in contrast to the pressure from Republican activists, there is little to suggest that there is much enthusiasm for ending the ceasefire among the wider nationalist community. What is more, the leadership of Sinn Féin, its appetite whetted by acceptance at the summit of American politics, cannot look to a renewed military campaign with much conviction. It has staked its reputation on negotiations, and to be a serious player at the conference table it must be able to deliver the IRA.

Having ditched its socialist, anti-capitalist rhetoric, Sinn Féin's politics are on a par with those of the newly respectable ANC. But on the other hand a blind military campaign without significant support is no alternative. What is needed is a Republican Congress for the 1990s to draw up a programme which will link the solution of the national question to the class struggle.

By Roy Wall

IN HIS article, Brian Green talks of 'the re-integration of the economies of the degenerated workers' states back into the world economy'. The idea implied here, that the economies of the workers' states had somehow escaped the relations of the world economy, was never Trotsky's conception. In an early debate with the Stalinists, for instance, he stated in a speech at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in December 1926:

'The world economy is not an empty abstraction, comrades, but a reality which has become more and more consolidated during the last twenty to thirty years by the accelerated rate of development of backward countries and whole continents. That is a fact of fundamental importance, and precisely for this reason it is fundamentally false to consider the economic and political destiny of any single country apart from its relationship to the economic whole.'¹

Trotsky particularly had in mind the economy of the USSR. He followed Marx in seeing 'the economic structure of society' as the 'sum total' of the 'relations of production'. This economic base constitutes, according to Marx, 'the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure'.² The national state is part of this superstructure but only part because the capitalist mode of production has never been a national mode of production. In entering its imperialist stage at the turn of the present century, capitalism progressed from being an international to being a world social system. One of the two basic contradictions of capitalism is precisely the contradiction between the essentially unitary character of the world economy and the barriers to the development of the latter in the form of the non-unitary system of national states.

It was classical social democracy that established the myth of the essentially isolated national capitalist economy and its corresponding national state. This myth was repeated by Stalinism but it is also a view predominant among self-professed 'followers' of Trotsky. The late Ernest Mandel, for instance, claimed that '... the national market is ... the determinant of value'.³ This erroneous view essentially repeats the national-socialist revisionism of both the Second International and the degenerated Third International – seeing the world economy as an empty abstraction and making a fetish of national society and national economy. In contradistinction, Trotsky reminded his comrades in 1930:

'We, the International Left, consider world economy and world politics not as the simple sum of national parts. On the contrary, we consider national economy and national politics only as highly distinctive parts of an organic world totality.'⁴

Clearly, with a lower productivity of labour than that of the advanced capitalist economies, the USSR had to defend its economy by means of a state monopoly of foreign trade. A flood of goods from the outside would have been accompanied by a corresponding less obvious flood of surplus value in the opposite direction. But the relative absence of foreign trade hardly signified that the economy of the USSR had escaped from the world social system. With the absence of an adequate unfolding of the world revolution, their relatively low productivity of labour brought the USSR and other workers' states to their knees. The seemingly abstract-statistical criterion of the relative productivity of labour remained just as crucial during the Cold War as it had been in 1936 when Trotsky wrote:

'The correlation of forces at the present moment is determined not by the rate of growth, but by contrasting the entire power of the two camps as expressed in material accumulations, technique, culture and, above all, the

Debating capitalist restoration

In the last issue of Workers News, we invited a debate on the ex-Soviet Union and the states of eastern Europe in response to Brian Green's article *Money and the R Eastern Europe*

State, economic and social relations in eastern Europe

productivity of human labour.'⁵

If war is a continuation of politics by other means then the Cold War was the continuation of politics by economic means. The basic determinant of success was the relative productivity of labour. Workers in former East Germany reaped the fruits of the highly productive West German economy. When the going got tough it did not appear to these workers as being particularly important to defend state property and planned economy since the latter tended to be seen as a major cause of their problems. In essence the demise of the East German workers' state (as with the others) was ultimately determined by an indirect economic relation – one that is based on the global scope of the law of value – the relative productivity of labour.

The economies of the workers' states did not find relief in the long wave of recession of the world economy that began to first bite hard in the mid-1970s. The foreign debts of the workers' states began to accelerate from then onwards. Mandel, writing in 1977, quotes figures indicating that the USSR's Gross Foreign Debt was \$4.0bn in 1973, \$5.9bn in 1974, \$11.4bn in 1975 and \$16.0bn in 1976.⁶ In November 1991, this debt stood at \$80bn and interest alone for 1992 was \$18bn.⁷ Brian Green claims that at the end of the 1980s there was a danger that 'the market would be restored' but he forgets that money is a commodity and that the USSR was buying this commodity at an alarming rate on the world money markets from the early to mid-1970s onwards. Though billions of dollars had already poured into the economy of the USSR throughout the mid-1970s and 1980s, he points to a mysterious appearance of so-called 'real money' in the late 1980s. For Brian the relations of an actually-existing world economy are ignored as he treats the latter as an 'empty abstraction'.

A further mistake that Brian makes is not to separate out the emergence of new, characteristically bourgeois, economic relations from the emergence of states that guard and defend such relations. In both social revolutions and social counter-revolutions, a political power defending new production relations and new property relations always gains hegemony before these production and property relations have gained economic hegemony. The class nature of each of the present states of Eastern Europe, the Balkans and of those of the territory of former USSR is determined not by actually-existing production and property relations but by the relations that the state 'guards and defends' (to use Trotsky's terms), i.e., by relations that the state would like to be predominant but which, in many cases,

are not yet actually predominant. Such a conflict between economy and state – far from being a theoretical possibility – is an inevitable feature of periods of social revolution and social counter-revolution. For example, the workers' state established in October 1917 in Russia existed in conflict with the economy until autumn 1918, i.e., until the wholesale expropriations took place in the heartland of the revolution.

Doubtless many of the states of eastern Europe, etc., are committed to establishing advanced-capitalist national economies. Their prospect of achieving this is an entirely different matter. Some have been more successful than others. Elimination of the remaining extensive state property in the means of production (and the remnants of economic 'planning associated with the latter) cannot in general be achieved by privatisation but only by destruction. What is desired by these states and what is politically achievable are two quite different things.

Brian attempts to identify a significant contradiction between government and state in the process of the collapse of the former workers' states. The mistake he shares with those who, unlike him, continue to believe that workers' states exist in eastern Europe, the Balkans and the territory of former USSR, is to define the class nature of the state by what they see as the character of the actually-existing predominant production and property relations. They combine this with, on the other hand, defining the class nature of the government by the character of relations that this government desires to establish. This approach demonstrates an erroneous conception of the state.

The state can neither be equated with the economy (a 'sum total' of production relations) nor with a 'surplus total' of what Marx referred to as 'but a legal expression for the same thing – property relations. The state is 'special repressive force' of class rule that 'guards and defends' a particular combination of production and property relations. Its executive committee is the government. There can be conflict between government and state (or, more precisely, conflict between different 'committees' aspiring to be the actual government) but such conflict is quite different to the conflict between economy and state – the basic characteristic of periods of social revolution and social counter-revolution. The August 1991 coup in the USSR, for instance, demonstrated conflict between government and state but all the contending parties had no fundamental disagreements as to the character of production and property relations that they desired to guard and defend.

Manifesto

Revolutionary regroupment or self-proclamation?

Last year a debate on revolutionary regroupment took place in the pages of *Workers Power*, the paper of the British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. Below, Barry Murphy replies on behalf of the Workers International League

THE ARTICLE 'Uniting a divided left' by Mark Harrison (*Workers Power*, March 1995) exemplifies what we believe to be a wrong approach by *Workers Power* to three crucial questions – revolutionary regroupment, centrism and programme.

Harrison protests that we are wrong in accusing *Workers Power* of having abandoned a regroupment project in favour of trying to build itself as the revolutionary party in embryo. However, the article first tries to avoid the question with ambiguities such as 'We are not suggesting that we are a fully fledged revolutionary international party', and ends by stating that while regroupment is 'desirable' (!), it is 'not a substitute for building our revolutionary organisation'. The reader could be forgiven for thinking that *Workers Power* does believe itself to be the revolutionary party in embryo, and that if it picks up any other forces along the way, well, that's just a bonus.

The arguments Harrison uses are revealing. He defends *Workers Power*'s conception of party building by analogies with the party building struggles of Lenin and Trotsky. These are used in a timeless, abstract way, and yet they are applicable only in an extremely general sense to today's conditions in which there is a struggle for political clarification between a number of competing currents, all of which, formally at least, lay claim to the Lenin-Trotsky tradition. They make sense only if *Workers Power* and the LRCI are the Leninists and the Trotskyists. If this is the case (and we suspect that for some members of *Workers Power*'s leadership, it is) then it follows that regroupment as we understand it is not the LRCI's project, linear recruitment is.

In any case, we doubt whether Trotsky would recognise his own method, used so effectively in the 'French turn' into the reformist parties and in various attempts at regroupment with centrist forces, in Harrison's passive conservatism towards the USec. This is the one concrete example referred to by Harrison, and yet he contents himself with the penetrating observation: 'We say its militants should break with it. It has a sorry record.' He is right about the USec leadership. But what about the militants? They are simply advised to leave their organisation as individuals and join the LRCI, which is no way to fight for regroupment.

This method is repeated in the letter from Swedish LRCI member Per-Olof Mattsson (*Workers Power*, April 1995), who accuses us of omitting the 'concept of centrism' from the supplement on the USec in the February 1995 issue of *Workers News*. But it isn't enough just to denounce centrism. We don't think that international revolutionary regroupment can be brought about merely by propaganda, or by telling others where we think they are going wrong. It will only be achieved through hard political struggle.

Unfortunately, the comrades from *Workers Power* don't have the stomach for the fight. Take the letter from Graham Smallwood in *Workers Power* of July/August 1995, which was a reply to that of *Socialist Outlook* member Simon Deville in the June issue. Smallwood simply lists examples of the USec's liquidationism (not in dispute), and suggests that Deville regards the USec as revolutionary (which his letter shows he does not) and that his conception of regroupment might be the liquidationism of the American and Australian SWP. This is not serious. Moreover, Smallwood is an ex-*Outlook* member himself. Did he mount any kind of fight against the politics of the leadership, did he write documents and try to persuade his comrades, or did he just leave?

In so far as Harrison is in favour of regroupment at all, he says that it should be on a 'firm programmatic foundation', and cites the crisis in the USec as a result of an unprincipled fusion without such foundations. Behind this apparently uncontentious remark lies what we regard as a fundamentally wrong conception of programme, from which flows *Workers Power*'s approach to regroupment. *Workers Power* has a scholastic, abstract view of programme. It sees the programme as a key, to be used to solve any given political problem, since: 'Without solid foundations, all future growth and influence will count for nothing. Groups will fragment as unanticipated differences emerge in the course of the struggle.'

Harrison contrasts this with the foundation of the LRCI, based on a 'rounded programmatic document, the *Trotskyist Manifesto*', which had been re-elaborated 'in the light of the collapse of Stalinism'. Since the publication of Harrison's article, reality has intruded somewhat brutally on this cosy scenario. As a result of 'unanticipated differences', the LRCI has lost its Peruvian and Bolivian sections, and half of its New Zealand section, despite its 'rounded programme'.

The point about a programme is that ultimately it is only as good or as bad as the theory and perspectives which lie behind it. *Workers Power* doesn't understand this, and collapses theory and programme into each other. The fact that the splits in the LRCI are principally over Stalinism is a good illustration of what we mean. We might have little or no differences, in purely formal terms, with many of the positions on Stalinism expressed in the *Trotskyist*

Manifesto. However, behind the facade of programmatic orthodoxy lies a fundamentally flawed method of analysis of what constitutes a degenerated workers' state. The conditions for such a state's existence required 'the complete elimination of the bourgeoisie' (*The Degenerated Revolution*, *Workers Power*, 1982, p.46) and the 'negation of the law of value within the state' (K. Harvey, 'Poland's transition to capitalism', *Permanent Revolution* No.9). *Workers Power*'s schematic use of formal-logical categories leads to its insistence today that because the former Comecon states lack a fully-fledged bourgeoisie, and because the law of value does not operate as it does in western Europe, they must still be degenerated or deformed workers' states. This, in turn, leads to its over-optimistic analysis of the class struggle in eastern Europe, and the frankly bizarre debate as to whether the current situation is 'revolutionary, albeit in a counter-revolutionary phase' or 'counter-revolutionary, with revolutionary potential'.

We make this point not just to reiterate our differences on Stalinism, some of which we deal with in *In defence of Marxism* No.3, or necessarily to take sides with those groups which have left the LRCI (although we are close to the positions on Stalinism taken by the New Zealanders), but to point out that *Workers Power*'s approach to the question of programme is abstract and ultimistic. It leads *Workers Power* into a double bind – it does not insure against political or organisational difficulties caused by 'unanticipated differences', and it is used as a sectarian obstacle to any meaningful regroupment process.

Mark Harrison's article confirms what has become more and more apparent from *Workers Power*'s recent practice: that it is losing any interest it had in the regroupment of genuine revolutionary forces. When faced with an opportunity to develop the regroupment process, it demands that comrades declare their organisation to be centrist and leave to join the LRCI. This approach might work in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, but in politics it is the way to build a sect – and a sect is what *Workers Power* is becoming. It is scaling down its work in the labour movement in favour of an orientation to the SWP. Its response to a crisis caused in large part by its position on eastern Europe is not to make an honest assessment of its programme, but is to tie itself in knots with its new, fudged category of a 'moribund workers' state', and publicly vilify a leader of its former Bolivian group.

We are not saying that *Workers Power* has become a sect in the way that Healy's WRP did. We think that there is scope for *Workers Power* to reassess its political method, its perspectives and its practice. In the past few years, the LRCI and the LTT have shared many positions, and we have successfully carried out joint work. We say to *Workers Power*, you can build a sect, or you can work with the LTT and other forces for the political regeneration and reconstruction of revolutionary Marxism.

José Villa is a member of Poder Obrero (Bolivia/Peru) and until last year was an executive member of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, of which Workers Power is the British section. While we are close to a number of comrade Villa's criticisms of the LRCI, we have differences with some of his positions, for example on Bosnia. We are publishing this article to generate discussion on the issues raised, many of which lie at the heart of debates within the Trotskyist left on revolutionary regroupment

WE ARE living through a period of reactionary imperialist offensive. For the first time in history, workers' states are being replaced by capitalist regimes. Much of the left is going to the right and Trotskyists are under great pressure. The League for a Revolutionary Communist International was founded in mid-1989 with a healthy programme and structure. However, the incapacity of its leaders to understand the new events and to maintain and develop their traditional Trotskyist positions has led them to adapt to the reactionary offensive.

The LRCI impasse is reflected in the fact that its most important sections are declining, and that it no longer has any sections in the 'third world'. Since its Third Congress in August 1994, it has lost the majority of the Austrian youth, the Proletarian Faction in New Zealand, all its members and supporters in Latin America, and a few individual members in Europe. I will attempt to explain the political roots of the LRCI crisis, and I ask the LRCI's members and supporters to be open minded and to try to formulate a critical understanding of the crisis of their organisation.

Between Cliff and Trotsky

In 1975, Workers Power split from Tony Cliff's International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party). In its first five years it remained a centrist group that characterised the Degenerated Workers' States (DWS) as state capitalist. In any confrontation between these states and imperialism it advocated dual defeatism.

In 1980, Workers Power, led by Dave Hughes, made a big shift. It decided to break with third campism and to adopt Trotsky's conception of the USSR. In the Afghanistan war, Workers Power sided with the Soviet army and the left bourgeois government against the CIA-backed Mujahedin. Nevertheless, there was an opposition to that turn led by Keith Harvey and Quintin R, who openly rejected Trotsky's method. Harvey claimed that the Mujahedin was a 'national liberation movement' which revolutionaries had to support against Stalinist 'expansionism'. The two wings in Workers Power were on opposite sides of the barricades.

These positions reflected different methods. Harvey didn't want to abandon Workers Power's former Stalinophobia. He proposed a hybrid between Trotskyism and state capitalism—a position which he continues to hold today. He agrees with the state capitalists that in 1927 a bourgeois counter-revolution smashed the Soviet state, but thinks that the USSR remained a post-capitalist state for economic reasons, because the law of value had not been restored.

For Hughes, the social revolutions in China, Eastern Europe, Vietnam and Cuba smashed the bourgeois states and created new DWS's. For Harvey they remained the dictatorship of a bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie over the proletariat led by 'bourgeois bonapartism' and a fascist-type regime. Only when these states adopted five-year plans did they become DWS's. Theoretically, Harvey was travelling the same road as Tim Wohlforth. In *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* (1964), Wohlforth described a process where-

by the bourgeois states of Eastern Europe were not smashed in the late 1940s so much as purged and perfected. By 1981, Wohlforth was arguing in *Transition to the Transition* in favour of representative (ie, bourgeois) democracy. Harvey, too, argues that under certain conditions the fight for bourgeois democracy could have a progressive character inside the DWS's.

Hughes defeated Harvey in 1981. Workers Power's break with Stalinophobia was articulated in *The Degenerated Revolution*, in which Wohlforth's theory was characterised as 'revisionist' because it was based on a social democratic method which generated illusions that a capitalist state could overthrow the capitalist class. Harvey never created a tendency and Quintin left Workers Power in 1983.

In the 1980s, Workers Power became a pillar in re-elaborating orthodox Trotskyism and fighting against Stalinophilia and Stalinophobia. On that basis it was able to create links with groups in Germany, Austria, Bolivia, Peru and New Zealand and form the LRCI. It not only opposed the Spartacists who supported the Jaruzelski coup in Poland, but also the USec, Moreno, Altamira/Lora and Lambert who called for a Solidarnosc government or for a constituent assembly. It was against freedom for the KPN and other Polish bourgeois parties, for soviet democracy against Stalinism, and openly said that the restoration of bourgeois democracy would be an step backwards.

Disorientation after the collapse of Stalinism

After the events in Eastern Europe in 1989, Workers Power started to lose its compass. There was huge political pressure from 'democratic' reaction. Harvey, who had hidden his positions for a decade and accumulated administrative posts inside the organisation, started to push the League into adapting to the Western media.

The first symptoms were the tactics towards Lithuania and later the Yeltsin counter-coup. In January 1990, the LRCI had supported the Red Army intervention in Azerbaijan, arguing that it was necessary to smash the nationalists to stop them creating an independent bourgeois Muslim state. But a few months later it had a different line in Lithuania, where it sided with the bourgeois nationalist Sajudis, called for a united front with bourgeois separatists, and demanded 'that the British government recognises Lithuania and supplies goods requested by Lithuania without conditions' (*Workers Power*, May 1990). As G. Smith wrote in his resignation letter to Workers Power last October, 'placing demands on one's "own" imperialist government to recognise Lithuania (with or without conditions) is a *de facto* call on imperialism to not only pull all the diplomatic "strings", but also a plea for imperialism to "up the stakes" in the disintegration of the Soviet Union'.

In August 1991, Russia experienced two coups. First, the hardliners under Yanayev tried to stop the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In response, pro-capitalist forces carried out a successful counter-coup, and for the first time since the October

Revolution an openly capitalist regime was installed in Russia. Yeltsin dissolved the USSR, broke up what remained of the state monopoly of foreign trade, banking and centralised planning, and restored a legal system that promoted the free market and capitalist accumulation.

Back in 1981, Workers Power had opposed the Stalinist coup in Poland, but at the same time it was against any blocs with bourgeois parties and the church. In early 1990, it had critically supported the post-Ceausescu Stalinist government in Romania when it repressed students who wanted a pro-Western democracy. In August 1991, however, the LRCI advocated a united front with bourgeois parties, led by Yeltsin, to defend a bourgeois parliament and the freedom of capitalist political organisations. Every Trotskyist had to oppose Yanayev's coup, which was trying to destroy workers' rights, but it was not possible to make any kind of bloc with the social counter-revolution of Yeltsin against the political counter-revolution of Yanayev. Trotsky always said, and the LRCI's *Trotskyist Manifesto* repeated, that we are for a political revolution to smash Stalinism, but that bourgeois restoration is worse than Stalinism.

For Lenin and Trotsky, united fronts could only be made against capitalism or imperialism. For Harvey, it was possible to make united fronts with Tories, US Republicans or capitalist parties in the DWS's. Early in 1992, the LRCI's International Secretariat adopted a popular-frontist line on Algeria, which it was forced to drop after an internal battle. Instead of advocating a policy of class independence, it proposed a united front with the pro-imperialist bourgeois Socialist Forces Front to establish a 'democratic assembly', and even a united front with the Islamic Salvation Front, which includes clerical-fascist elements, to fight for the release of right-wing prisoners.

After Yeltsin took power he persecuted the Communists. The Russian CP organised demonstrations against the new capitalist regime, but the LRCI said that it would not defend them against Yeltsin's repression. It characterised the CP as the Butenko (ie, fascist) wing of the bureaucracy which was even worse than the democratic liberal wing of Yeltsin.

In mid-1992, the Great-Serb monarchist party called for the overthrow of the 'socialist' regime in Belgrade and organised a demonstration in Vienna led by people holding figures of Serb kings and Orthodox saints. No Austrian political force supported it... except the LRCI. The main speech in German from the LRCI didn't attack the monarchists, but in the end the Serb chauvinists couldn't stand the leftists and expelled them from the demonstration. In Russia the LRCI didn't want to defend the Red-Brown front against Yeltsin's capitalist repression, but in Vienna it tried to create one.

In October 1993, Yeltsin shelled the Russian parliament into submission. The LRCI adopted a resolution that I drafted which opposed the coup, called for a general strike and workers' councils, and for independent participation in any mass demonstrations against the coup. That line was different from the one applied in 1991

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because it didn't advocate united fronts with capitalist parties and didn't consider Stalinism as the main enemy. At the same time, however, Workers Power took a different position in its paper. It didn't call for a general strike and instead called for a 'democratic constitution' as the strategic alternative. A democratic 'Magna Carta' means a bourgeois legal framework—we never advocate it in a capitalist state, still less in a workers' state. Some weeks later, the LRCI decided to call for a vote for the Russian CP, which only one year before it had described as fascist.

These zigzags were the product of the pressure of the imperialist media on the LRCI and of the internal contradictions between the method of Hughes and that of Harvey.

The slide into Stalinophobia

For the December 1992 meeting of the International Executive Committee, the International Secretariat drafted a document in which it advocated an open revision of the *Trotskyist Manifesto*. The LRCI leaders said that bourgeois parliamentary institutions could play a progressive role in the DWS's. Retrospectively, they said that the League's position on German unification had been wrong because it hadn't raised the demand for a pan-German constituent assembly. In 1989, the LRCI had said that it was essential to defend the East German DWS against capitalist unification, and was against a joint constituent assembly. Through such a body, the Western bourgeoisie would impose a common regime on the East and would accelerate the absorption of the post-capitalist state into the imperialist one. The IS also advocated the same kind of joint constituent assembly for the two Chinas. The Taiwan capitalists are among the world's most exploitative and repressive. To allow them and their parties political freedom in the DWS's, and even worse to create a common legal framework, would deliver more concessions to capitalism.

Against these positions and others, all the Latin American members of the LRCI presented a Left Opposition platform in December 1992. The IEC decided to reject the proposition for common constituent assemblies in China and Germany 1989, but accepted the possibility of raising that demand in DWS's with openly capitalist parliamentary regimes.

A few months later Harvey decided to present a long document drafted from outside the group by Quintin, which said that *The Degenerated Revolution* was a 'cracked pillar', 'centrist', 'Kautskian' and 'revisionist in method, history and programme', and that the LRCI should adopt the position which Hughes's Workers Power had rejected 12 years ago. Quintin, followed by Harvey, said that it was better to have a parliamentary system in the East than Stalinist authoritarian dictatorships. Quintin said that in pre-1917 Russia it was correct to make united fronts with the liberal bourgeoisie against the Tsar and for a constituent assembly. For that reason it was correct to make the same kind of fronts with the pro-Western liberal opposition against Stalinist dictatorships.

First, in Russia the Bolsheviks never made anti-Tsar united fronts

with the liberals. Second, in a workers' state the main enemy is the expropriated bourgeoisie and imperialism, and with them we can't make any kind of fronts against the Stalinist tyranny.

Harvey tried to camouflage his right-wing revisions with an 'ultra-left' cover. He criticised the LRCI programme because it didn't demand the smashing of the Cuban or Vietnamese armies as part of the political revolution. We said that in a DWS it is possible to win layers of the officer corps who are against restoration. But Harvey and the IS also advocated that in Cuba a revolutionary government should pay the external debt (after the period of moratorium) and should not expropriate all the multinational joint-venture companies.

Behind Harvey's Stalinophobia was a pro-imperialist 'democratophilia'. He said that a bourgeois counter-revolution had taken place in the USSR in 1927 and that since then world Stalinism had been a counter-revolutionary force. Trotsky said that prior to 1934-35 the Communist International had been a centrist organisation. Harvey's position carries a clear implication. If Stalinism was a counter-revolutionary force comparable to the bourgeois workers' parties of Western Europe before 1934, then Trotsky was clearly wrong to attempt to reform it via the Left Opposition. He should have established new parties and a new international from 1927. For Harvey Trotsky was wrong when he insisted until he died that the USSR could be regenerated.

At the last LRCI congress the Latin American and New Zealand delegations unanimously rejected this 'semi-state capitalism' and managed to defeat all of Harvey's amendments on that question. Nevertheless Harvey remained as the central leader and launched an offensive against us.

Adaptation to imperialism

On the national question, the LRCI moved like the USec towards a liberal conception. In Hughes's time the LRCI said that national self-determination had to be subordinated to the defence of a DWS. Later the IS decided to promote the unconditional right of every nation or ethnic group to secede and create an independent capitalist state. In a capitalist state we don't necessarily support the right of religious or racial groups to create ethnic micro-states. Trotsky didn't side with Polish, Baltic, Finnish and Ukrainian nationalists against Stalin's invasion.

The IS claimed that the fragmentation of the multi-ethnic semi-colonies could be the starting point of the permanent revolution. While we unconditionally support the right of every oppressed nation in the capitalist world to create its own state, we don't actively promote separate states for each of the 6,000 linguistic groups in the world. The ethnic fragmentation of Liberia, Lebanon, Somalia, Rwanda, etc. has, on the contrary, prepared bloody counter-revolution.

The LRCI line in Rwanda, Haiti and Bosnia was based on an accommodation to the pressure of the imperialist media. In Rwanda, instead of advocating class independence and opposition to all sides in the reac-

Struggle in the LRCI

By José Villa

Bosnian army (*Workers Power*, September and October 1995). It justified this by saying that 'most firms that make [arms] and supply them are multinational capitalist firms and that will have to be the first port of call' (*Trotskyist Bulletin* No.7). The LRCI urged the most reactionary monarchies on the planet to back their allies: 'Many semi-colonial regimes in the Middle East are willing to provide the BiH government with money' (*ibid.*).

Workers Power claimed it was not possible to defend the Serbs against imperialist bombs because they were carrying out genocide. But even worse massacres took place under the Argentinian, Iranian and Iraqi dictatorships, which we defended against imperialism. A principle of every revolutionary inside an imperialist country is to defend every non-imperialist nation that is attacked by his or her 'own' imperialism.

Workers Power also capitulated to imperialism over the US invasion of Haiti. If Haitian soldiers had decided to launch guerrilla attacks against the US forces, revolutionaries should have critically defended them. But Workers Power advocated 'no support of any kind to the military or to any guerrilla struggle which might be launched by elements of the army and the attachés against an Aristide government and the US forces' (*Workers Power*, November 1994). This position was a qualitative departure from Hughes's *Workers Power*, which was created against Cliff and Matgama's adaptation to British imperialism on Ireland and the Malvinas war. Many former leftists, like Wohlforth, who 25 years ago demanded that the US get out of Vietnam, are now demanding that the US help democracy in Bosnia and Haiti, and Harvey is adapting to that milieu.

What kind of period?

The LRCI method is based on avoiding precise and concrete characterisations with the aim of providing ambiguous centrist phrases. According to the LRCI, seven years ago the world entered a new revolutionary period... opened by a counter-revolutionary situation! A revolutionary period is one based on the pre-eminence of revolutions; a counter-revolutionary situation is one based on the destruction of workers' organisations. Neither of these characterisations is correct for this period, and anyway the two are in complete opposition. Since 1989, instead of new social revolutions we have had social counter-revolutions in the East. Why is this period more revolutionary than the post-war one that saw the Eastern European, Asian and Cuban revolutions?

At the same time, it is clearly ridiculous to claim that countries like Poland - which for seven years have had openly capitalist regimes which have destroyed central planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade and banking, and legislated in favour of private ownership - are 'Moribund Workers States'. The New Zealand comrades who split from the LRCI said that when these states are committed to the introduction of capitalist forms they can no longer be charac-

terised as DWS's.

In the draft 'International Perspectives' document submitted prior to the 1994 Congress, the IS wrote: 'The majority of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been de-industrialised by a long-term withdrawal of imperialist investment in raw material extraction. There is a real perspective of not only continued economic decline but of the further destruction of the working class as the instrument of the socialist revolution.' This deeply pessimistic view was in complete contrast with the characterisation of the period as revolutionary. It was against reality - the world's fastest growing economies are in the Pacific Rim - and against the strategy of permanent revolution. If the majority of countries lost their working classes, it would mean that they had ceased to be capitalist and that other classes had replaced workers as the instrument of socialist revolution. I was the only member of the IS to oppose this position, which the IEC subsequently deleted from the document. The answer of the IS majority was to kick me off the committee.

The LRCI professors like to make lofty comments on political developments in every corner of the globe, without rooting themselves in their own working class and without any serious knowledge of the class struggle in those countries. One day they have a brilliant idea and the next day they change the LRCI position, while the people on the front line are obliged by discipline to dance to the same tune.

For example, Poder Obrero (Peru) had always criticised Mariátegui, the founder of Andean Marxism, as a centrist who supported Stalin against Trotsky, but the IS published an eight-page article in late 1994 proclaiming his 'revolutionary Marxist' character. Poder Obrero (Bolivia) was founded in a furious struggle against pro-reformist currents who said that Bolivian workers had suffered a historic defeat in 1986. The LRCI initially accepted our characterisation of the situation, but in 1991 the IS came out with the same line as our opponents in Bolivia, adding that this was the worst in what it called a 'decade of defeats' throughout the continent. Later, it decided that the defeat was 'strategic' rather than 'historic', comparable with that of the Paris Commune. In contrast, we saw the 1980s as the decade with the most general strikes in Latin America. We insisted that the fall of world raw material prices and the closure of mines could not be equated with the bloody destruction of the first proletarian state, but we were asked to put forward this eccentric position when the Bolivian workers went on two month-long general strikes in 1994-95.

The LRCI leaders create abstract formulae, but these only lead to zig-zags. In Northern Ireland and Namibia, they advocated a vote for nationalist parties, but in South Africa they rejected the call for a critical vote for the ANC. First they advocated abstention, later a vote for the Workers' List Party, next a blank vote and finally a vote for the WLP. They say that it is not possible to vote for centrist parties that don't have considerable mass support, but in South Africa they backed the semi-reformist WLP which only received 0.02 per cent of the vote, and in the last

Peruvian elections the reformist IU (with less than 0.5 per cent). Nevertheless, they opposed a vote for 'Trotskyist' forces with mass influence like Lutte Ouvrière in France which got 1.6 million votes (5.3 per cent) in the April 1995 presidential elections, and Militant in Coventry in the May 1995 local elections. In December 1995, Workers Power welcomed 'Arthur Scargill's call for discussions on the left to consider the establishment of a Socialist Labour Party', and wanted to promote a 'revolutionary SLP'. Within weeks, the line had changed completely and the SLP was condemned as a 'miniature left reformist party' which workers should not even vote for in its first electoral campaign.

Against democratic centralism

A healthy internal regime is based on a healthy political line. With so many contradictions, it is impossible to allow full internal democracy in the LRCI like in Hughes's time. The main leaders consider their most important programmatic book to be a centrist 'cracked pillar'. In mid-1995, the IS put forward another new position on Bosnia - that it was wrong to advocate a dual defeatist position at the beginning of the war - which was defeated in the IEC. Many comrades think that countries like Poland are no longer workers' states, and the IS tolerates some degree of internal discussion on this and other issues. But when one of the leaders feels threatened the IS closes ranks like a family. Anyone who has important disagreements is ostracised as a 'factionalist' and receives administrative sanctions. In the LRCI, loyalty is primarily built around the leaders rather than the programme.

Workers Power's National Committee, a broad body in which every member of the organisation could speak, was replaced by a small, closed leadership. The IS, which is not elected by congress and is composed almost entirely of British academics and full-timers, can overturn congress decisions, programmatic bases and even the statutes. It functions like a party inside a party.

In mid-1995, five out of 24 full and alternate members of the IEC shared a critique of the line on Bosnia. Four comrades submitted a document in Spanish, but we were denied our right to be a tendency.

Against the statutes, the comrade that wrote the document was forbidden to exercise his constitutional right to be present at the IEC, and was twice suspended. All the supporters of the document were put under explicit threat of expulsion. The LRCI intervened in the Bolivian and New Zealand sections. The leadership of the New Zealand section, elected weeks before at conference, was replaced by one which the IS could control, and the section's only full-timer was sacked for being a 'factionalist'. The first the Bolivian section knew about the LRCI statement on its suspension was from its enemies in Lora's POR, who published it in a special journal. We were not allowed to appeal at the January 1996 IEC. In place of a political discussion there were manoeuvres and insults - we were described as 'rats', 'thieves', etc.

The LRCI leadership is not interested in building a revolutionary international based on regroupments which integrate Trotskyists with different traditions and experiences. The Workers Power clique sees the international like a commonwealth of nations, in which the 'colonies' have to adjust to its zigzags. The only groups that remain in the LRCI were created by the direct intervention of Workers Power.

Inside the LRCI, I was always in favour of discussion and common work with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, International Trotskyist Committee, Internationalist Faction, International Centre of Orthodox Trotskyism and other left currents, without either making concessions or hysterical accusations, in which we had to be open-minded and try to listen and learn. But the LRCI core leadership uses opportunistic flattery to get close to a group, then launches a provocation in an attempt to produce a split. It thinks that the new international can be created around a small group in London.

The LRCI is in a very serious crisis. It has too many programmatic contradictions and its leaders have an arrogant and academic approach to the world. In more than 20 years, Workers Power and the LRCI have been incapable of building any base among workers. Only through a serious discussion and an examination of the LRCI's mistakes will it be possible to re-establish the positive aspects developed in Hughes's time and create the basis for a new revolutionary regroupment.

Appeal

Workers News has received the following financial appeal from Poder Obrero (Bolivia):

'In November, the office of Poder Obrero (Bolivia) was vandalised and more than £1,000 worth of equipment was stolen. It happened as Bolivia was being shaken by workers' and students' demonstrations and hunger strikes, and while oil workers were on strike against privatisation. Please help us to replace vital equipment by sending a donation to: POB, BCM 3213, London WC1N 3XX.'

We urge readers in Britain and internationally to support this appeal.

FINLAND – STALINISM OR SOCIALISM

THREE MONTHS have passed since the outbreak of the Second World War. Months which, while uneventful and calm on the surface, have marked an epoch in world history. September 3rd inaugurated a period of storms and cataclysms in the relations between nations and classes.

Following hot on the heels of the German invasion came the onslaught of the Red Army in the Polish Ukraine and the subjugation of the Baltic States. These dealt the world proletariat a series of staggering blows. For years the Kremlin clique and its agency, the Communist International, had deliberately confused and befuddled the workers of the entire world with the policy of 'collective security', of a 'front against the aggressor', of the fight of 'democracy' against fascism, etc. Thus the revolutionary will of the proletariat was paralysed, the struggle against war rendered innocuous and impotent, the anti-war strivings of the masses switched into the service of the war-mongers, and the ideological basis created for the imperialists to take to arms.

The Communist International has been dealt a mortal blow and the Soviet Union has lost the trust and support of the masses in all lands. Stalin, for small gains, has squandered the heritage of October. The glory of the victorious revolution has grown dim and a mood of scepticism pervades the ranks of the advanced guard of the workers.

Now, in the fourth month of the war, Stalin and the bureaucratic rulers in Moscow have dealt yet another blow to the world proletariat and the Soviet State. Completely indifferent to the opinion of the masses, they have launched an assault by land, sea and air on Finland. By the flames in the burning buildings in Helsinki is revealed the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. Stalin has joined the company of the 'aggressors'. Both the internal situation and the discrediting in recent years of the Soviet Union have brought nearer the nightmare possibility of an attack by imperialism. The bureaucracy, in its frantic search for national security and its frenzied attempts at self-preservation, has been forced to seek the road of salvation by the complete locking of the Baltic to any hostile move by the fleets of the capitalist countries. This could only be accomplished by the subjugation of Finland.

Stalin was not unaware of the moves which Britain was making for a change of government in Germany and the switching over of the war from Western Europe to the East. It was these attempts which led the Finnish capitalists in the last few weeks to resist the overtures of the Kremlin and to assume the position of vassalage of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. After a period of apparent compliance, the Finns, secretly encouraged and abetted by the imperialists of Britain and France, stiffened their resistance and refused to concede the strategic and naval bases demanded from them.

The Finns had thought that the coming of winter and the difficulty of military operations would leave

Reprinted from Workers' International News, December 1939

On November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Finland. This article, first published in the theoretical journal of the Workers' International League, addresses one of the central programmatic positions of the Trotskyist movement – the defence of the Soviet Union. It does not, as many latter-day 'Trotskyists' have, confuse this defence with tail-ending Stalinist policy and underwriting counter-productive adventures. Instead, it underlines the importance of Trotsky's dictum: '... above all it is necessary to establish clearly just what we are defending, just how we are defending it, against whom we are defending it' (*In Defence of Marxism*). If anything, it takes a more sober view than Trotsky of the probable results of Soviet intervention in Finland. In an article written at about the same time, Trotsky said that the invasion would give 'a tremendous impulse to the class struggle in its sharpest form'.

them safe till the spring when succour might possibly come from the West. But it was decisive political considerations overriding all others which compelled the Kremlin to move now while the hands of their potential opponents are tied. Having abandoned all possible support of the international working class, Stalin was forced into an attempt to crush the resistance of the Finnish bourgeoisie by force of arms.

The apologists of the Kremlin have attempted to justify their actions in three ways. First, by explaining away the invasion as an attack by Finland on Russia. Second, by describing this as a revolutionary war, an extension of the boundaries of socialism, and therefore justified as being in the interests of the Finnish people. Third, that these acts were necessary for the defence of the Soviet Union against the impending imperialist attacks.

Only the hardened sycophants of the Comintern could hope to get even their own deluded ranks to believe a story so transparently false as the first. The idea that the capitalists of Finland with a population of three million would be mad enough to provoke a nation with a population of over 180 million, without the hope of any substantial aid from outside in the immediate future, is quite fantastic. The second argument, when examined, holds even less water than the first. Stalin's acts on an international scale have consistently been directed against the outbreak of a social revolution in any country. It was precisely this that made the pact with Hitler possible. In the case of the Baltic States, Stalin found it quite easy to come to an agreement with the bourgeoisie which would leave them, although completely under the domination of Russia, undisturbed in their freedom to exploit the workers and peasants. He tried to come to such an agreement with the Finnish bourgeoisie too, but relying on the geography of their country, the Finns proved intractable and preferred to remain a puppet of Britain and America, as an 'independent state'. It was this possibility which represented a military menace to Russia, and not at all the

concern for the oppressed Finnish workers and peasants, that precipitated the Russian invasion.

The satisfaction of the bourgeois world press at this so-called 'Soviet Imperialism' represents the gain which the imperialists balance against the loss in strategic position and what, in effect, was a colonial possession or sphere of influence. Weighing them one against the other the bourgeoisie does not seem to be altogether displeased. Faced with a revolutionary Russia based on extending the power of international socialism and not the purely 'Russian' aims and interests of the bureaucracy, such a situation would have been impossible.

On the third point, the invasion, while temporarily strengthening the bureaucracy, severely weakens the defence of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. Further extensions of territory under the domination of the Kremlin cannot but accelerate the pace of degeneration. The real defence of the Soviet Union, by the strengthening of the movement of the world proletariat towards the overthrow of capitalism, is the only means whereby the workers' state could hope to survive. The fate of the Soviet Union is bound up with the fate of the workers of all Europe.

Leaving the Stalinists unwinding their hopelessly tangled skein, let us see the reactions in the imperialist camp to events in Finland. The bourgeoisie of Britain and France have denounced Stalin in stronger terms than Hitler. The technique to the last detail, they tell us, is borrowed from the Nazis. But beyond an impotent and harmless press offensive, this 'flagrant and unashamed aggression' is, for the moment at any rate, to go completely unpunished. The imperialist governments have little reason to love the regime of collective ownership which still exists in Russia. They would jump at any opportunity which offered them the possibility of mass support for its destruction. They have not taken any action because, of course, their hands are tied by the war with Germany, but this fact alone converts the ideological cover for their real aims in the present war into a farce. To add the

of the workers. But what should decide the attitude of the international proletariat is not who is the aggressor, but in whose interests the war is being fought.

The hypocritical struggle of the Finnish capitalists for national independence has rallied behind them the masses of workers and peasants, and this is the direct outcome of Stalin's methods. Such leadership, where the bourgeoisie is merely the tool of international finance capital, cannot bring a genuinely free Finland.

We call for the defence of the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Union still remains a workers' state despite the dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy. By the defence of the Soviet Union we mean the defence of the system of collective ownership, the heritage of the October Revolution. But are we not in effect defending Stalinism? we are asked. No, our method of defending the USSR is a revolutionary method. We defend the Soviet Union by intensifying our struggle against our capitalists at home, by striving for Soviet power and by fraternising with the Soviet Army. Every blow against our own capitalists is a blow against the Stalinist regime. There is no other method of fighting Stalinism.

It is now clear that the problems of the small nations and the problem of the Soviet Union are bound up with the struggle of the proletariat for power. Self-determination of nations can only be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism. We stand for an independent Soviet Finland as part of a Soviet Union which can only be achieved in the struggle against Stalin and for the Socialist United States of Europe.

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they were all restorationist. In my opinion the USSR accomplished a relatively peaceful transition from being a workers' state to being a bourgeois state under the governments of Andropov and Gorbachev.

Those who would like to accuse me of 'running backwards the film of reformism' should study Trotsky's words carefully on this matter. In 1933 he wrote: 'He who asserts that the Soviet government has been gradually changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, running backwards the film of reformism.'⁹ But in 1937 he changed the formulation: '... their error is in believing that the foundations of society can be changed without revolution or counter-revolution; they unwind the film of reformism in reverse.'¹⁰

Here Trotsky has separated out the question of changing the government from that of changing the 'foundations of society', i.e., the social basis of the state and therefore the social basis of the government. The changes that took place in the USSR between 1933 and 1937 (codified in the imposition of the new constitution in 1935-36) meant that the political counter-revolution had been all but completed. However, it had not been completed because the state still guarded and defended (it does not matter how badly) state property and planned economy - its social basis.

As we have noted, Marx saw the 'economic structure of society' as the 'sum total of ... [the] relations of production'. Finance capital subordinates other production relations within this totality and this is not limited to 'previous' production relations: petty commodity production, slavery, direct production of use-value within the family, etc. Finance capitalism, i.e., imperialism, also exhibits and subordinates elements of future production relations. As Lenin put it: 'Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order, a transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialisation.'¹¹

Imperialism is quite capable of subordinating state property to the pervasive rule of finance capital. The existence of extensive state property is, by itself, not an indicator of the existence of a workers' state (here we are considering relatively stable relations and not those of periods of social revolution or social counter-revolution). It is for this reason that Trotsky considered that the class nature of the state was determined by the 'character of the forms of property and production relations that the given state guards and defends'¹² (my emphasis). In



Striking Russian miners on February 1

essence, the USSR was a workers' state because it held at bay the dominant production relation of the world economy: finance capital.

This production relation has a peculiar composition. It is a combination, a fusion, of industrial and banking capital. It is both productive and parasitic at the same time. The development of extensive foreign debt of the workers' states from the mid-1970s onwards allowed the ingress of this production relation into the economies of the workers' states. In other words these economies became more directly part of the world economic whole. World finance capital began to extract surplus value produced within the economies of the workers' states. In Marxism this is called economic exploitation. The question is not to deliberate as to the point at which quantity turned into quality, i.e., to deliberate over when (or if) the bureaucracy inadvertently allowed finance capital to gain economic hegemony over the economies of the workers' states.

In addition, it is not of decisive importance to attempt to establish hard and fast rules as to exactly what constitutes economic restoration. It is an academic exercise to, for instance, attempt to decide whether the law of value operates within the territory of the former workers' states or when, for instance, 'real money' appeared.

Such an approach is indicative of formalism and national fetishism. Capitalism is a world social system, not an economic disease that can be caught or avoided by nations. The fundamental theoretical question is: do the countries of Eastern Europe, etc., remain what they have been throughout this century: part of a world social system that is a 'transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialisation'? The answer is: Yes! Those who desire to identify the existence or non-existence of the isolated, transitional national economy - or who deny that the huge multinationals exhibit socialisation of production - have learnt nothing about the anatomy of modern society.

The task of the proletariat is firstly a political one: it is to smash all the states that guard and defend the rule of finance capital. Though we as Trotskyists defended both the workers' states (as we defend semi-colonial states against imperialism) and the remaining social gains on which these states were based, we were nevertheless for the smashing of these states by the workers and peasants (from 1936 onwards the USSR could not be reformed; we can debate whether it was possible to reform the Cuban state before 1968).

Today we continue to defend even the new bourgeois states of eastern Europe against imperialism - that is, those that are not themselves imperialist. We also fight for the revolutionary overthrow of these states by the workers and peasants just as we did with the workers' states that they effectively replaced. Any remaining social gains of the past we continue to defend. But it is no longer simply a political revolution that is required - significant elements of social revolution are now needed. The right of inheritance must again be abolished. The new bourgeoisie must be expropriated. The debts to finance-capital usury must be renounced. Of course, first the workers and peasants must seize state power in order to enact this programme.

Despite their protracted survival, the destiny of the workers' states

An overemphasis on programme?

By Phil Walden

Brian Green's article on the USSR and Eastern Europe talks of 'popular front governments of restoration' within the framework of an analysis based on an understanding of Marx's political economy which is abstracted from world history. The phrase quoted is an attempt to avoid going beyond the view that Trotsky made a perfect definition of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state (DWS). Brian thinks the DWS governments have become cross-class entities which since 1989 are intent on restoring capitalism under the pressure of the law of value. This approach reductively subsumes dynamic developments within the political superstructure into a linear schema governed purely by the law of value. Hence the article's later admission of the primacy of the political (bourgeois governments restored currency stability) is a theory/practice inconsistency.

Forgetting Ticktin's point about the difficulties of turning concrete labour into abstract labour, Brian accommodates to commodity fetishism by giving money an independent power abstracted from changing capital/labour relations. There are historically specific factors that allowed M-C-M' (buy cheap, sell dear) to become C-M-C (the production and realisation of surplus-value through the exploitation of labour-power). Unlike Brian's scenario, the establishment of a stable commodity-based money system is immensely difficult, because the abstract labour character of money as a measure of value is the main problem for world capitalism. Hence these governments are carrying out all the classical measures to develop capitalism but the result is massive unemployment and general impoverishment, since dialectically and structurally capitalist relations of production are the main problem of capital accumulation. In contrast, Brian imposes Marx's abstract model of the capitalist mode of production onto different stages of capitalist development. So, in dialectical terms, whilst the political conditions have been created for capitalist economic restoration by

the formation of bourgeois governments, the overriding economic context is one of increasing chaos (as Ticktin and others have described) within the context of a world decline of capitalism and the problems this creates for the production of surplus-value. Trying to increase the production of relative surplus-value through computer technology, etc, doesn't offset the problems of the capital/labour process.

However, Workers Power were dogmatic in equating economic difficulties for restoring capitalism with their rigid adherence to the definition of the DWS and its changing form. They denied the dynamic role of political superstructures in this process of transition. This said, the Trotskyist Unity Group cannot agree with the LTT that Workers Power's work *The Degenerated Revolution* constitutes 'addiction to formal logical categories' which 'did not allow for the contradictions of the real world' (*In Defence of Marxism* No.3). For whilst there are many theoretical problems with the approach of Workers Power - which we have outlined before the LTT - the specific problems here are not simply Workers Power's. *In Defence of Marxism* also contains similar problems. This is because Trotskyism has not systematically tried to challenge a linear view of history based on productive forces determinism leading to the end goal of communism, a problem the Trotskyist Unity Group has elaborated in *The Second Communist Manifesto*. Thus Workers Power could not allow for open-ended developments within the stalinist states, and could only conceptualise the historical outcome as political revolution. To our knowledge, only Alex Callinicos of the reformist SWP has tried to methodically tackle such theoretical questions. In this context, we would question the LTT's call to develop a programme of action as being the main criteria to build a Trotskyist party in the former Soviet Union. After all, hasn't Workers Power's emphasis on programmatic elaboration at the expense of philosophical and historical materialist work aggravated the problems for understanding developments within stalinism.

remained governed by the following succinct general formula given by Trotsky:

'The correct policies of a workers' state are not reducible solely to national economic construction. If the revolution does not expand on the international arena along the proletarian spiral, it must immutably begin to contract along the bureaucratic spiral within the national framework. If the dictatorship of the proletariat does not become European and world-wide, it must head towards its own collapse. All of this is entirely incontestable on a wide historical perspective.'¹³

Events have now confirmed the correctness of this assertion. In the absence of such an unfolding of the world revolution, even the most correct policies for economic construction by the workers' states under the most advanced possibilities of genuine soviet democracy and political and economic union could not have resisted their otherwise inevitable demise.

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Defend Nick De Marco!

STUDENTS and trade unionists must rally to the defence of Kingsway College Student Union president Nick De Marco. In a blatantly political move, college authorities expelled him on February 21 for his alleged involvement in the paint-throwing attack on Tory party chairman Brian Mawhinney, carried out by supporters of the Movement for Justice last November. Mawhinney was targeted as part of the campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill. Two other Kingsway students face similar disciplinary proceedings and a total of five members of the Movement for Justice face prosecution for assault and threatening behaviour arising from the attack on Mawhinney.

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Marxism and the struggle for gay liberation

Part I:

Marx, Engels and the German Workers' Movement

In the first of two articles which explore the attitude taken by Marxists to the struggle for gay liberation, Brian Dempsey looks at the history of the German workers' movement from the time of Marx and Engels down to Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. In the next issue of Workers News, he will examine the role of the Bolsheviks following the October Revolution in relation to homosexuals and how that has been interpreted by historians of the gay movement.

MANY people have noted that Marx and Engels displayed homophobic attitudes in some of their writings. The main exhibits for the prosecution are letters which refer to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs¹ and Johann Baptist von Schweitzer.² Further incriminating evidence can be found in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Between 1864 and 1879, Ulrichs published a series of works under the general title of *Researches into the Riddle of Love Between Men*. For this work, Ulrichs has been recognised as one of the very earliest pioneers of the modern homosexual rights movement. Marx lent a copy of one of these pamphlets to Engels, who wrote to him in 1869: 'Here are the most unnatural revelations. . . "Guerre aux cons, paix aux trous-de-cul" [War to the cunts, peace to the ass-holes] will be the call now. It is only luck that we are personally too old to have to pay the victors bodily tribute. But the young generation!'³

It has been argued⁴ that the passage referring to pederasty is merely a series of jokes and word-plays and not a serious political position, but this is ultimately unconvincing. The letter is undoubtedly homophobic and generally in poor taste, even if 'comic'.

In 1862, Schweitzer was convicted of an indecent act with a youth in a park.⁵ He served a short prison sentence and on his release was recruited into the General German Workers' Union (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein - ADAV) by Ferdinand Lassalle.⁶ 'What Schweitzer did isn't pretty,' wrote Lassalle, 'but I hardly look upon it as a crime. . . In the long run, sexual activity is a matter of taste and ought to be left up to each person, so long as he doesn't encroach upon someone else's interests. Though I wouldn't give my daughter in marriage to such a man.'⁷ After Lassalle's death, Schweitzer was elected president of the ADAV. As John Lauritsen and David Thorstad comment: 'The German workers apparently were more impressed by Schweitzer's abilities as a working-class leader than by any past indiscretion in his personal life.'⁸

Writing to Engels on March 10, 1865, Marx described Schweitzer as a 'shitty'⁹ (or 'wretched'¹⁰) cur and suggested that they spread jokes about him among the left press of the day. Ulrichs' biographer, Hubert Kennedy, asserts that the jokes were to concern Schweitzer's homosexuality. It is at least as likely, however, that Marx is mocking Schweitzer's hypocrisy. Schweitzer had adopted a craven attitude to ensure that Marx would write for his newspaper, yet after a dispute Schweitzer was publicly condescending towards Marx.

As a Lassallean, Schweitzer was considered a political opponent by Marx and Engels, yet they tried to recruit him to the First International. In an earlier letter in which Marx

attacks Schweitzer for his 'Bismarckian' tendencies and labels him a *Realpolitiker*, he nevertheless states that he believes Schweitzer to 'have honest intentions'¹¹ - hardly evidence of hysterical homophobia on Marx's part.

In letters to Ludwig Kugelmann,¹² Marx politically dismisses another presumed homosexual, K.M. Kertbeny. However, there is no indication that Marx knew of his interest in homosexual matters. Indeed, Kertbeny's two 1869 pamphlets on the harm caused by the legal repression of homosexuality were published anonymously. It may be that Marx's rather direct and brusque comments about his political opponents in his private writings is too strong for present-day critics. Those who only read Marx's letters concerning Schweitzer err if they imagine that this was some special scorn that Marx reserved for homosexuals.

In *The Origin of the Family*, published in 1884, Engels, referring to ancient Greek society, wrote: '... but this degradation of the women [prostitution] was avenged on the men and degraded them also till they fell into the abominable practice of sodomy and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of Ganymede.'¹³ Despite attempts to explain away such statements,¹⁴ Engels is quite simply wrong, and exposes both his own prejudices and the virtual absence of evidence on the 'gay question' at the time.

It is unfortunate that Marx and Engels were not more enlightened in their attitude to homosexuality, but hardly surprising, given that they were writing years before any gay rights movement developed anywhere in the world. Furthermore, some consideration should be given to the fact that their letters were private and not always fully developed public positions. To have any credibility, those who attack Marx and Engels on this issue need to put their analysis in context. Marx and Engels were homophobic. Yet their homophobia only poses a problem for those, of both left and right, who understand Marxism to be a mere religion with the writings of Marx as dogma.

Among the generation of German Marxists who followed Marx and Engels there were examples of more enlightened attitudes. The most remarkable were the writings of Eduard Bernstein on the Oscar Wilde trials of 1895.¹⁵ Bernstein wrote two extensive articles in the SPD's prestigious magazine, *Die Neue Zeit*, which denounced the hypocrisy of the British establishment and demolished the argument that homosexuality was 'unnatural'.

On January 13, 1898, August Bebel¹⁶ spoke in the Reichstag in defence of homosexuals' rights when he introduced the petition against the anti-homosexual law, Paragraph 175 of the German penal code¹⁷. His claim to be one of the first public political speeches to defend homosexual rights. It took place nine months after the founding of the first homosexual activist organisation, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (WHK). Bebel's main thrust was against the hypocrisy of bourgeois law. Why, as the police admitted, did they not prosecute all those arrested under Paragraph 175? Why, instead of prosecuting, did the police keep lists of those 'guilty' of this crime? And why, if male homosexuality was such a threat to society and therefore illegal, was female homosexuality not also illegal?

If the thousands of men, from all stations in life, who engaged in same-sex practices were to be brought into public view, said Bebel, the scandal generated would be greater than, for example, that of the Dreyfus case. The number of people involved, and their distribution throughout society, would undermine the squalid blackmailing atmosphere enjoyed by the

police. To alleviate much misery and hypocrisy the law must be repealed. The SPD's support for repeal would be consistent and in 1929 they, the KPD and a liberal party won a Reichstag committee vote in favour of repealing Paragraph 175 - but the Reichstag failed to enact the change.¹⁸

However, the SPD's attitude on sexual matters was not uniformly 'progressive' in the modern sense. Bebel supported abstinence, while Bernstein recommended the sublimation of young people's sexual urges in trade union work and other wholesome activities. Bernstein's articles on Wilde notwithstanding, in 1897, *Die Neue Zeit* carried an article which stated: 'Certainly it [masturbation] is unnatural. For every sexual activity is unnatural which does not lead to the preservation of the species.' More reprehensible was the fact that both the SPD and the KPD were not above using the anti-homosexual scandals involving Krupp, Eulenberg and Röhm¹⁹ for their own ends.

The coming together of the gay and left movements in Germany was personified in Richard Linsert. Described variously as an anti-Stalinist, a 'keen' member of the KPD, and a Trotskyist, Linsert's political sympathies within the KPD remain unclear. The introduction to a 1982 edition of his *Marxismus und freie Liebe (Marxism and Free Love)*, cites an obituary in *Die Rote Fahne* which described Linsert as 'a functionary of the Central Committee of the KPD'.

Linsert became secretary of Germany's main gay rights organisation, the WHK, in 1923 and as such may be assumed to have been 'out' as a gay man in the KPD. His major work on sexual matters *Kabale und Liebe: Ueber Politik und Geschlechtsleben (Intrigue and Love: On Politics and Sex Love)* was published in 1931. In it, he appeals to the authority not only of Lenin, but also of Trotsky, which in 1931 could only attract criticism from the KPD bureaucracy. Yet, according to Oskar Hippe,²⁰ Linsert did not have organised links with German Left Opposition groups.

Although suffering from a fever, Linsert braved foul weather to attend a meeting of the leading KPD functionaries on January 30, 1933, to discuss the consequences of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor that same day. As a result of attending the meeting, he developed pneumonia and died on February 3, 1933.

The KPD MP Hans Kippenberger²¹ spoke at Linsert's cremation. Leading homosexual rights activist Kurt Hiller²² noted that: 'If Linsert hadn't succumbed to pneumonia, then, together with Kippenberger, he would certainly have sought asylum in the Soviet Union, where he would with equal certainty have met his death, just as Kippenberger did. If he had stayed in Germany, the Nazi scum would probably have prepared an even more terrible fate for him. . .'²³

Another significant character in the German left's relationship with the gay question was the psychoanalyst and sexual reformer, Wilhelm Reich.²⁴ As a member of the KPD in the 1920s, he publicly campaigned for the repeal of anti-homosexual legislation. But his work on the function of the orgasm, and his bitterness at his personal circumstances in the 1930s, led him to become increasingly hostile to homosexuals.

In 1934 he went so far as to write: 'The more clearly developed the natural heterosexual inclinations of a juvenile are, the more open he will be to revolutionary ideas; the stronger the homosexual tendency within him and also the more repressed his awareness of sexuality in general, the more easily he will be drawn toward the right.'²⁵ Here Reich is remarkably close to the formulation used in an article by Maxim Gorky in *Pravda* on May 11, 1934, which claimed: 'Eliminate homosexuality, and you

will make fascism disappear.'²⁶

The history of the German workers' movement's treatment of sexual questions in general and of homosexuality in particular, reflected through the writings and activities of these activists and leaders, is not straightforward. But its supportive approach to reforming or repealing hypocritical and reactionary legislation was generally well in advance of its time. This principled stance was smashed by the coming to power of fascism in Germany and by the reactionary policies of Stalinism.

1. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-95). Journalist and former civil servant.
2. Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (1833-75). Frankfurt lawyer, prominent Lassallean, president of the ADAV 1867-71.
3. Engels to Marx, June 22, 1868. Quoted in H. Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, Alyson, 1988, p.134.
4. Dimir, 'Marx and Engels on Homosexuals, Revisited' in *Women and Revolution*, No.37, p.4.
5. J.D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, Ayer, 1982, p.2.
6. Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-64). German socialist, prominent leader of the early workers' movement and founder of the ADAV.
7. Quoted in J. Lauritsen and D. Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)*, Times Change Press, 1974, p.52.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Kennedy, op cit, p.135.
10. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, Lawrence and Wishart, 1987, p.120.
11. *Ibid.*, p.104.
12. *Ibid.*, p.529; K. Marx, *Letters to Kugelmann*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1941, p.60.
13. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1972, p.128.
14. Dimir, op cit.
15. Lauritsen and Thorstad, op cit; 'The

Oscar Wilde Trial and *Die Neue Zeit*, Workers News No.54, June-July 1995.

16. August Bebel (1840-1913). Leader of the Marxist 'Eisenachers' and, after fusion with Lassalleans in 1875 until his death, of the SPD.
17. J. Lauritsen, 'The Man Who Spoke Out', *Gay News* No.136, February 9-22, 1978.
18. W.R. Dynes, ed, *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, St James Press, 1990, p.1211.
19. Friedrich Alfred Krupp (1854-1902). Industrialist and friend of Kaiser Wilhelm II, committed suicide in Capri amid rumours of his homosexuality. Prince Philipp zu Eulenberg (1847-1921). Friend and adviser to Kaiser Wilhelm II, one of the targets of the 1906-7 scandal concerning a homosexual clique around the Kaiser. Ernst Röhm (1887-1934). Leader of the Nazi SA, murdered during the Night of the Long Knives, June 29-30, 1934.
20. Quoted by Friedrich Kröhnke in introduction to R. Linsert, *Marxismus und freie Liebe*, Libertäre Assoziation, 1982, p.6.
21. Hans Kippenberger (1898-1936). Head of the KPD's military organisation, played a leading role in the Hamburg uprising of 1923, KPD deputy in the Reichstag. Escaped to Moscow in 1936 where he was accused of being an agent of the Reichswehr by Walter Ulbricht and executed.
22. Kurt Hiller (1885-1972). Lawyer and leader of the WHK.
23. Kröhnke, op cit, p.10.
24. Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Austrian psychoanalyst, member of the KPD until the early 1930s, author of numerous works including *The Function of the Orgasm* and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Emigrated to the United States, where he died in prison.
25. W. Reich, *Sex Pol*, Vintage, 1972, p.297.
26. M. Gessen, *The Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men in the Russian Federation*, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 1994, p.8.

The myth of the 'People's War'

The Struggle for Hearts and Mind
By Raymond Challinor
Bewick Press, £5.95

Review by
Richard Price

FOR THOSE who are heartily sick of efforts to capitalise on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, *The Struggle for Hearts and Minds* will come as a timely debunking of the 'People's War' myth.

Subtitled 'Essays on the Second World War', Ray Challinor's new book does not attempt a rigorous analysis of the causes and events of the 1939-45 conflict, but is rather a series of articles which examine some of its lesser known by-ways. So while those who want a full-length treatment will have to tackle one of the few serious works on the subject like Mandel's *The Making of the Second World War*, Challinor at least whets the appetite with a number of these pieces.

Challinor has a keen sense of historical irony. He shows that sections of the ruling class were much more enthusiastic about waging an anti-Soviet crusade in 1939-41 than they were about fighting Hitler's Germany; that a British merchant seaman executed after a trial in camera as a Nazi spy was in fact an ILP sympathiser, possibly influenced by Trotskyism; that British companies in Hong Kong and Shanghai continued a brisk trade with Japan during the war; and that British intelligence directly assisted Franco's revolt in 1936, while Britain officially supported non-intervention.

The quality of the various chapters is uneven. Challinor is at his

best in showing the widespread unpopularity of the war among workers, who bitterly resented the inequality of sacrifice amid all the rhetoric of 'the nation pulling together'. He shows how such bread and butter issues as the pay received by servicemen's wives and air raid protection became focal points of political discontent.

Less satisfactory is a chapter entitled 'The Origins of the Cold War', and not just because it is too brief to do justice to a complex subject. Armed with a state capitalist analysis, Challinor explains this sea-change in international relations unconvincingly as the consequence of 'the Stalinist bureaucracy's thirst for capital'. Stalin is therefore seen merely as the 'saviour' of capitalism. But for all Stalin's loyal service to peaceful co-existence in the West, the expropriated capitalist classes of eastern Europe might well dispute this description!

It is, however, a book socialists will want on their shelves - not because it provides all the answers, but because it suggests further avenues of study that Marxists should make of the Second World War. And this should not be just an academic pursuit. The British ruling class learned valuable lessons from successfully marketing an imperialist war as an anti-fascist war. From Korea to the Malvinas and the Gulf, every war fought by British imperialism has been sold as a struggle for democracy against 'communist' or semi-fascist tyranny. With the workers' movement steeped in the view that 'democratic imperialism' can play a progressive role against dictatorship, revolutionary opposition to these wars has been confined to a small minority.

● Available from Bewick Press, 132 Claremont Road, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE26 3TX.

Campaign Against Repression in Argentina

Release Horacio Panario!



CARA picket of the Argentine embassy in London on November 13, 1995

MASSIVE cutbacks in regional funding in Argentina, and in some areas the failure to pay state employees, have resulted in a wave of resistance in a number of provinces. In Zapala, in Neuquén province, a demonstration of over 500 unemployed workers demanding payment of outstanding benefits took place on October 2 last year. It was violently repressed, and local activists from Unemployed Workers Co-ordination (UWC), many of them leading leftists, were accused by the state of inciting violence.

Among those arrested was Horacio Panario, a member of Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), who was refused bail and is still being held in prison. A preliminary court hearing took place on December 1, and a further hearing is expected in March. Warrants were issued, and remain in force, for the arrest of Alcides Christiansen, also of the MAS, Héctor Etchebaster and Jorge Chiguay of Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST), and Verónica Barriga and Gustavo Sandoval of the UWC. Seven other militants from the

MAS, MST and Partido Obrero (PO) were charged with less serious offences and released on bail.

In April 1995, police attacked workers demonstrating against a factory closure in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego. They killed one worker, Victor Choque, and proceeded to charge Oscar Martínez, a metalworkers' leader and member of the MAS, with inciting violence.

After receiving reports of this witch-hunt against the left from comrades of the Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (PTS) in Argentina, the Workers International League initiated the Campaign Against Repression in Argentina (CARA) in Britain. CARA organised a 70-strong picket of the Argentine embassy on November 13, and a meeting addressed by speakers from Latin America and Britain on December 12.

CARA's three demands are: The immediate release of Horacio Panario! An end to all legal proceedings against members of the MAS, MST and PO and all class fighters! Stop the witch-hunt of the left!

To date, CARA has attracted support from Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn, Mildred Gordon and Ken Livingstone, as well as leading members of CPSA, RMT, Unison and other trade unions and trades councils. Much of the left has agreed to sponsor the campaign, including Alliance for Workers' Liberty, International Bolshevik Tendency, Labour Left Briefing, Militant Labour, RIL, Socialist Outlook, Workers Power and the WRP/Workers Press.

Internationally, the campaign to free Panario has gathered strength. Campaign committees have been formed in a number of Argentinian cities. In Buenos Aires, a 1,000-strong demonstration took place on October 24, and demands for the release of Panario were raised on the Resistance March organised by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo on December 7. In Neuquén, 300 people attended a rally on February 23. In Bolivia, the campaign has been supported by the COB trade union federation, and in Brazil, Lula and other prominent members of the Workers Party and the trade unions have signed petitions. Support has also been gained in Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Sri Lanka and France. In Canada, a campaign initiated by the Leninist-Trotskyist Group and other leftists is underway.

● For more information write to: CARA, PO Box 7268, London E10 6TX. Send letters of protest to: President Menem, c/o Argentine Embassy, 53 Hans Place, London SW1X 0LA.

Students attacked

THE ARGENTINE state has once again used extreme violence in an attempt to crush resistance to its neo-liberal policies, this time against students demonstrating in La Plata, the capital of Buenos Aires province.

On February 20, police using batons, rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons launched a vicious attack on a demonstration at the University of La Plata. Over 250 students and school youth were arrested, and many were injured.

Later in the day, a delegation which went to enquire about the prisoners was assaulted by the police. Among those injured was Hebe de Bonafini, who lectures at the university and is president of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the organisation of relatives of people who disappeared under the 1976-83 dictatorship.

The students had gathered to oppose plans to implement last year's education reform legislation. The university authorities want to increase fees, introduce sponsorship from the private sector, and cut student representation on the university council.

The attack was shown on TV and caused a storm of protest around the country. The following day, students were joined by workers in a demonstration outside the provincial government building in La Plata, and by evening all the prisoners had been released and the charges against them dropped. But while acknowledging that they had won a significant victory, students pointed out that the laws designed to create an elitist higher education system remained in force.

Ellis Hillman (1928-96)

IT IS with great regret that we learned of the death of Ellis Hillman on January 27. Ellis had been awaiting open-heart surgery with customary good humour, and had been in touch with us shortly before his death.

Ellis was drawn to Trotskyism during the Second World War. When he applied to join the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1944 he was turned down on account of his age, but was allowed to sell *Socialist Appeal*. He joined the RCP in 1946, by which time he was in the air force on national service. Although the RCP appeared a step forward for British Trotskyism, it rapidly descended into factional warfare, and by the time Ellis finished his national service the RCP had been dissolved. The RCP minority, led by Gerry Healy, had entered the Labour Party in 1947. The anti-entrism majority under Haston and Ted Grant had itself collapsed into entry in 1949, and the Fourth International placed the reunited organisation under the leadership of Healy, who proceeded to purge it of all opposition.

Ellis remained outside Healy's 'Club', and became an early member of Tony Cliff's Socialist Review Group. However, when C.L.R. James's *State Capitalism and World Revolution* appeared, he found it a more convincing analysis, and was thrown out of the group. He then participated in the Marxist Group in the Labour League of Youth, which fused with Healy's 'Group' in 1955.

Ellis remained wary of Healy's despotic qualities, but acknowledged his organising abilities. He never swallowed Healy's version of the 1953 split in the Fourth International, which he regarded as unprincipled, both because the issues had never been fought out, and because the founders of the International Committee had all voted for the decisions of the 1951 Third World Congress.

As a member of the Group's national leadership, Ellis contributed several important articles to *Labour Review*, and in 1957 wrote the document 'Suez and its Aftermath' - an analysis of the world situation which was on a different plane to much of the apocalyptic nonsense which Healy would subsequently pass off as 'perspectives'. Less well known is Ellis's role in organising a clandestine internal opposition to Healy. Together with Healy's accountant, Arthur Cooper, and Sam Bornstein, who was loyal to Pablo and Mandel's International Secretariat, Ellis was responsible for the mysterious appearance from 1955 onwards of the journal

Fourth International, which called for the unification of all Trotskyists in Britain.

In 1959, in an attempt to stabilise growing rifts within his group between the old 'entrists' on the one hand, and newer recruits from the Communist Party on the other, Healy, without reference to the Group's leadership, abruptly announced the formation of the Socialist Labour League. Ellis, by now a London County councillor, was instructed to engineer his own expulsion from the Labour Party. He declined, and was promptly expelled from the SLL - which made him, as he joked, one of the few people who had been expelled from an organisation of which he had never been a member!

He was subsequently associated for a number of years with Ted Grant's group, collaborating in the production of *Socialist Fight* and the early *Militant*. He remained convinced of the necessity of working in the Labour Party. He was for many years a GLC councillor, and in 1994-95 he served as the first Labour mayor of Barnet - in which capacity he had a bust of local MP Margaret Thatcher removed.

But Ellis was a man of many parts, some of them very funny. Who else could have combined being the founder of the Lewis Carroll Society, the secretary of the Flat Earth Society, and an in-depth knowledge of London's sewers, secularism, Judaism and the history of the Jewish workers' movement, with the personal acquaintance of Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Gerry Healy, Tony Cliff and Ted Grant!

It's true to say that there were those on the left who regarded Ellis as a bit of a rogue. But we appreciated his broad, non-sectarian approach, and enjoyed very good relations with him. We first met Ellis in 1989, after he had written to us, enthusiastic about our reappraisal of the history of the International Committee. Whenever comrades from overseas visited Britain, he would urge them to contact us. He was particularly anxious to put us in touch with veterans of the movement, many of whom he kept in contact with personally, and through his enthusiastic support for the journal *Revolutionary History*. He contributed a string of articles, letters and book reviews to *Workers News*, attended a number of our meetings, and was unfailingly generous in supplying documents from his evidently chaotic archives! He will be sadly missed - farewell old friend.

Richard Price

Carl Tomlinson (1970-95)

WORKERS NEWS sends its condolences to the family and comrades of Carl Tomlinson, an activist in the People's National Party (PNP) of Jamaica, who was murdered by gangsters in October last year. Carl was a sympathiser of Comrades for a Workers' Government (Jamaica), a group in solidarity with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. He was a postal worker at Kingston Central Sorting Office, and had been active in the PNP's youth organisation for five years. He was also active in his local ghetto community, and it was his role in organising community self-defence against criminal gangs and the police which led to his receiving death threats. By disarming Carl's self-defence group, the police bear a heavy responsibility for his

death. He was forced into hiding, but the gangsters eventually caught up with him.

Carl first met members of the LTT in September 1994, when he came across our literature stall at the PNP's annual conference. He took a keen interest in South Africa, black liberation, and in our tactics towards social democratic and populist parties. His murder is a particularly cruel blow, since he was an important link to radical members of the PNP rank and file, who he was in the process of drawing into the building of a revolutionary group. To date, the PNP has neither publicised nor investigated the killing. We salute his memory in the struggle against poverty, unemployment, criminal intimidation and state repression.

Graham Campbell

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A ROTTEN PEACE

Joint declaration on ex-Yugoslavia between the PTS of Argentina and the LTT

1 After three and a half years of civil war and the loss of over 200,000 lives, a reactionary, US-sponsored peace agreement is being imposed on Bosnia. This latest in a series of imperialist attempts to complete the carve-up of Bosnia along ethnic lines aims to establish a 'Bosnian' state composed of two client statelets - the Croat-Muslim federation and the Republika Srpska. This, in turn, would prepare the way for the eventual annexation of the Croat majority area of the federation by Croatia, and of the Republika Srpska by Serbia, with the Muslims confined to a tiny rump state.

2 The new situation has been prepared by a sequence of events since the hostage crisis in June. In July, the 'safe havens' of Srebrenica and Zepa were allowed to fall to Radovan Karadzic's militias after the UN decided not to defend them. Under the eyes of Unprofor troops, up to 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were butchered and thousands more turned into refugees. Faced with the complete collapse of the UN mission, the United States moved rapidly to take command of the situation. At the beginning of August, Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, tacitly supported by both German and US imperialism, ordered his army into the Serb-controlled area of Krajina, forcing as many as 200,000 Croatian Serbs to flee for their lives. Then on August 30, Nato/UN launched 'Operation Deliberate Force' on the pretext of raising the siege of Sarajevo. For two weeks, Nato warplanes and artillery from the Rapid Reaction Force bombarded Bosnian Serb gun positions, communications systems and ammunition dumps. While the bombing was in progress, the Croatian army advanced into Bosnia and, together with the Bosnian Croat militias and the Bosnian government army, seized large parts of western and central Bosnia from the Serbs. Again, thousands of people fled their homes, this time Bosnian Serbs heading north for the area around Banja Luka. Meanwhile, US envoy Richard Holbrooke was shuttling between Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo, promoting the new peace plan.

3 Between June and October, therefore, a significant shift in the balance of power took place. The Croat-Muslim federation, established in March 1994 under pressure from the US and Germany, was strength-

ened at the expense of the Bosnian Serbs. Abandoned by Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbs of Western Slavonia, Krajina and Bosnia found themselves no match for the US-armed Croatian army, and under Nato bombardment the Bosnian Serbs were forced to lift the siege of Sarajevo. At the same time, the strained relations between the Bosnian government of Alija Izetbegovic and imperialism were repaired, and the UN and Nato partially rehabilitated in the eyes of the Muslim population. Above all, the continued migration of populations, and the steady decline in the number of Serbs and Croats living in Bosnian government-controlled towns, acted to further undermine the project for a multi-ethnic Bosnia. With the Serbs and the Croat-Muslim federation now holding approximately the areas of Bosnia promised them in the new plan, the basis for a reactionary settlement had been achieved.

4 Workers can take no comfort from the present situation. The accord initiated by Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic in Dayton, Ohio, on November 21 is a victory for the ethnic cleansers. Although the Serb militias have suffered a series of reverses over the past few months, under the US peace plan they will be rewarded for four years of murder, rape and ethnic cleansing with half of Bosnia. The extent to which Milosevic and Tudjman are content with the division can be seen by their agreement on the reincorporation of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia, and the announcement of the resumption of normal diplomatic relations between their two countries. As for the imperialist powers, they have advanced their aim of establishing a reactionary regional order resting on a balance of power between the Serbian and Croatian regimes, which they hope will provide the necessary stability for restoring capitalism and opening the area up to imperialist exploitation. If a final agreement is reached at the London and Paris conferences, they will send 60,000 Nato troops to Bosnia to enforce the peace.

5 Since the start of the war, we have resolutely defended Bosnia's right to self-determination - to its existence as an independent multi-ethnic state over the whole territory of the former republic. We have sided militarily with the Bosnian government against the Republika Srpska, which since 1992 has carried out ethnic cleansing as its official policy. We have therefore demanded the lifting of the arms embargo and defended the right of the Bosnians to obtain weapons from wherever they choose. But while we accept that the Bosnian government has the right to seek military allies, we are opposed to its political alliance with Croatia, and to Izetbegovic's invitation to the

Croatian army to enter Bosnia. Tudjman has only one reason for assisting the Bosnian government's fight against the Serbs - to strengthen the Croatian presence in western Bosnia with the aim of eventually annexing it.

6 We condemn the Bosnian government for accepting the imperialist peace plan and abandoning the fight for a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Although a multi-ethnic Bosnia is not an end in itself, it would greatly assist the development of class politics in the region. However, our defence of the Bosnian government side in the war has not been based on its policy for a multi-ethnic Bosnia, but on the fact that the Muslim and multi-ethnic communities are oppressed. Unless Bosnian government forces start to consistently oppress other groups, we will continue to defend them for as long as the Muslim and multi-ethnic communities are threatened by Serbian and Croatian nationalism. In the event that the remaining multi-ethnic areas are 'cleansed', we would support the right of self-determination for the Muslims.

7 We have never given the slightest political support to the Izetbegovic government, which, no less than those of Milosevic and Tudjman, is restorationist. Despite its frequent differences with the UN, it is fundamentally pro-imperialist. While recognising that the primary responsibility for ethnic cleansing rests with Serb leaders like Karadzic, Mladic, Arkan, etc, we oppose all ethnic cleansing from whatever quarter, including that carried out by Bosnia's ally, Croatia, and by 'rogue' or fundamentalist Muslim units.

8 We recognise that the only lasting solution to the age-old national struggles in the Balkans is a workers' solution. What is needed is not only a policy of ethnic equality and self-determination for Bosnia as a whole, but of workers' independence from all the restorationist governments, including that of Izetbegovic. We are for the building of workers' militias, multi-ethnic wherever possible, and independent trade unions. We are for a multi-ethnic workers' republic of Bosnia, and we call on class conscious workers in Croatia and Serbia to support this demand and fight against their own reactionary leaders. Ultimately, the only way of guaranteeing the rights of all minorities in former Yugoslavia, and the entire Balkan peninsula, is within a voluntary Federation of Workers' Republics. This task requires the building of Trotskyist parties throughout the entire region.

9 We are for the withdrawal of all Nato/UN forces. We are opposed to all forms of imperialist intervention, even where these appear to benefit the beleaguered

Bosnian Muslim and multi-ethnic population, since whatever incidental 'humanitarian aid' they give, it is only to assist an ethnic carve-up of the republic. The primary intention of the Nato bombardment on the Bosnian Serbs in early September was to enforce a cease-fire, as a prelude to a reactionary peace settlement. In this as in other episodic clashes, we were for the defeat of Nato/UN forces. Despite the fact that the Bosnian Serbs continued their attempts to seize and ethnically cleanse as much of Bosnia as possible, we condemned the imperialist attacks on them and fought for the withdrawal of Nato/UN forces.

10 Since the day they were announced, we have opposed the UN sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. These were imposed rigorously by the imperialist countries and have had a devastating impact on the economy and the working class. The promise of their being lifted was a crucial factor in persuading Milosevic, the instigator of the war in Bosnia, to support the US peace plan and exclude the Bosnian Serb leadership from the Dayton talks. The UN Security Council rewarded Milosevic by suspending sanctions within 24 hours of the agreement being initiated. The effect of the sanctions has been doubly disastrous - initially tending to rally support for Milosevic and harden the resolve of the Serbs in the war, they have ultimately proved to be an important factor in dividing Bosnia and preparing the region for the restoration of capitalism.

11 Ex-Yugoslavia resembles a vast transit camp of displaced populations. An estimated three million people have been turned into refugees. All sides in the war have cynically used their own civilians to further their political ambitions, either obstructing the evacuation of refugees from front-line areas or relocating them to newly-conquered areas in order to support their territorial claims. In sharp contrast to the current US peace plan, which is based on population transfers and legitimises ethnic cleansing, we demand the right for people of all ethnic groups to return to their homes. Any 'solution' to the war which does not take this into account only lays the basis for future conflicts.

12 A central task facing workers in all the states of ex-Yugoslavia is to fight against the restoration of private ownership. The present economic chaos - which is particularly severe in Serbia and Bosnia because of the war and the UN sanctions - will lead to deeper poverty, mass unemployment and a future of wage-slavery unless it is addressed with a workers' plan. Workers must resist every attempt to privatise state property by building rank-and-file factory and local com-

mittees, with the aim of kicking out the bureaucrats and the capitalists and implementing workers' control of production. They should fight to overthrow the existing pro-capitalist regimes and replace them with workers' governments committed to reversing the restoration process.

13 The war in Bosnia proved to be a litmus test for groups claiming to be revolutionary. The Socialist Workers Party, Militant and many others have equated the nationalism of the oppressor with that of the oppressed, and have consequently refused to support self-determination for the Muslim and multi-ethnic communities. Among those who support self-determination, Workers Aid for Bosnia and International Workers Aid, organised by the Workers Revolutionary Party and the United Secretariat respectively and backed by other tendencies including the LIT, have presented a multi-ethnic Bosnia as some kind of strategic goal, refusing to stress the need for a workers' republic or for the right of the Bosnian army to receive arms. While there is nothing wrong in principle with sending aid convoys to multi-ethnic areas like Tuzla, Workers Aid has used them to develop a thoroughly opportunist relationship with supporters and representatives of the Izetbegovic government. This has led them to refuse to give prominence to the call for the withdrawal of Nato/UN forces from Bosnia for fear of alienating their new friends. In contrast to this, our support for Bosnian self-determination is not based on a liberal view of multi-ethnicity, but on the grounds that the national struggles of the oppressed are a component part of the international class struggle.

14 There can be no just peace as a result of the Dayton agreement. Some Bosnian Muslims have talked of continuing the war, but the 60,000-strong Nato Peace Implementation Force, which will include 24,000 US combat troops, is written into the deal to prevent this happening. US military chiefs have made it clear that they will use maximum force to impose partition. Before the new borders are turned into concrete and barbed wire, Bosnians of all ethnic groups who oppose partition should take advantage of the divisions in the ruling Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and demand that the Bosnian government repudiates the agreement. They should step up the struggle against the SDA's nationalist majority led by Izetbegovic, and ensure that the fight for a multi-ethnic Bosnia continues.

□ Down with the US peace plan! Nato, UN and all imperialist forces out of ex-Yugoslavia!

□ For a just peace based on a multi-ethnic, unitary Bosnian state and the right of all refugees to return to their homes and live in safety! For the right to return for Serbs expelled from Western Slavonia and Krajina!

□ Down with the political alliance between the Bosnian government and Croatia!

□ For a workers' solution to nationalism and ethnic cleansing! Build independent workers' organisations and workers' militias! For a multi-ethnic workers' republic of Bosnia!

□ For a workers' plan against the restoration of capitalism! Build factory and local committees! Kick out the capitalists! For workers' council governments!

□ For a voluntary federation of workers' republics in ex-Yugoslavia!

November 28, 1995