

# Workers power

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## Support the Palestinian struggle



**FORTY YEARS ago this month the state of Israel was founded. It was the culmination of the search by the Zionist leadership of the Jewish diaspora for a 'land without people for a people without land'. Except the land to be taken was peopled—in the majority by Palestinian Arabs.**

**This 'problem' was overcome by a campaign of terror launched against the Arabs. Their villages were terrorised and their people driven out, or as in the case of Dier Yassin, simply massacred.**

So began the Palestinian diaspora and with it the herding of its people into refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. For them it has meant forty years of grinding poverty and oppression and, since 1967, Israeli military occupation. Content to exploit the super-abundant and cheap labour corralled in the occupied territories and to use it as a captive market for its own produce, Israel has to date refused to recognise the legitimate right of the Palestinians to their own homeland in any form.

But the 800,000 refugees, mostly in the camps, have never accepted their fate. They have never ceased to struggle for their own state. In 1985 the Israeli government, faced with this unbroken spirit, sanctioned the 'iron fist'

policy of deportations, detentions and the closure of Arab institutions. Yet this too has backfired. In due course it has only served to provoke the uprising of December last year which continues to this day.

Over 150 unarmed Palestinians to date have been shot or beaten to death. More than 3,000 have been arrested, dozens deported. The Defence Minister, Labour's Rabin, promised in January that they would crush all resistance even if it goes on 'for weeks or months'. This turned out an idle boast. Not bullets or 'punishment beatings'; neither the banning of foreign aid to the camps nor the sealing of the West Bank and Gaza from the outside world; even spreading disinformation in the camps and the Mossad assassination

of Abu Jihad, the head of the PLO's committee for the occupied territories in Tunis—none of this has crushed the resistance.

On the contrary. As the months have passed the uprising has become more co-ordinated and unified. The Unified National Command has brought together all PLO factions and the Islamic fundamentalists. They have issued over ten leaflets to guide the uprising. *The Voice of Jerusalem* continues to give information over the radio waves.

The Palestinians have deepened the uprising. Arab collaborators, such as the local police, have been forced to resign. The boycotting of Israeli goods and the strikes of workers and shopkeepers is disrupting sectors of the Zionist economy.

But the Palestinian resistance cannot indefinitely endure the might of Israel's war machine at this level of struggle without help from outside, and a different strategy to that adopted by the PLO. If the Palestinian uprising is merely used as a bargaining counter in relation to the imperialist search for a

'peace settlement' the current heroic Palestinian struggle will have been squandered.

The role that any imperialist sponsored peace settlement will play is clear. It will aim to enshrine Israeli dominance over the Palestinians and the region as a whole. The USA's actions in the past pe-

At the Easter conference of the Movement For A Revolutionary Communist International a unanimously adopted resolution of solidarity outlined the essential tasks that can do this:

'Workers must demand of the leadership of the social democratic and Stalinist parties and unions that they organise mass national demonstrations and fact finding trade union delegations to the occupied territories to report back to rank and file meetings. In organising these the labour movement must provide itself with the means to refute the Zionist claim that anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism are the same. The working class must be won

to an internationalist campaign of working class solidarity aimed clearly against imperialism and not to a humanitarian pacifist movement of protest which condemns the violence on both sides. We must fight for:

While the European imperialists within the EC unanimously passed a resolution which 'deeply deplored' the 'repressive measures' of Israel and adopted some minor trade sanctions, they too 'even

handedly' condemn the Palestinians for daring to resist their oppressors. While the Europeans, given their economic interests in the surrounding Arab states, might like to appear to distance themselves from US policy they continue to recognise its hegemony in the region.

The only reliable aid for the rising in the occupied territories comes from two sources. First, from the Arabs within Israel itself, who have shown their support for their Palestinian brothers and sisters across the Green Line by supporting general strikes and demonstrations called by the Unified Command. Their action has been an unexpected and demoralising blow to the Zionists.

But secondly in Europe and the USA we also must stir the labour movement from its complicity and passivity.

to an internationalist campaign of working class solidarity aimed clearly against imperialism and not to a humanitarian pacifist movement of protest which condemns the violence on both sides. We must fight for:

- End the beatings, the murders, the jailings.
- For the right of return of all Palestinians.
- Down with the internal borders and all restrictions on movement between Israel, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem.
- For free elections for all municipal authorities and the legalisation of all political parties including the PLO and its constituent organisations.

- Repeal repressive/emergency regulations and release all political prisoners.

- Israeli troops out of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon.

- Defend the right of all Palestinians to armed resistance inside and outside the Occupied Territories.

- For free trade unions in the Occupied Territories. No bans on political parties and their propaganda. No censorship.

- For full recognition by imperialism and Zionism to the chosen representatives of the Palestinian people. For the right of the Palestinians to self-determination.

## HOW TO FIGHT POLL TAX

THATCHER HAS described the Poll Tax as her 'flag ship legislation' of this parliamentary term. While Michael Mates' amendment and the grumbling of some Tory backbenchers, who are fearful of losing their seats, may give her momentary embarrassment, they are not going to make her change course.

Nor unfortunately is the growing campaign against the Poll Tax that is feeding on the wave of anger on the housing estates in Glasgow, Strathclyde and all over Scotland.

To date the large public meetings being called to establish 'anti-Poll Tax' unions are asking the right questions 'What are we going to do? How can we fight this?'. Unfortunately they are not giving the right answers.

The Scottish Labour Party is Kinnockite. Accordingly the main thrust of its campaign has been legal challenges to the registration process. Not surprisingly that has brought little success. Public meetings have been firmly told that 'non-payment is not on the agenda' even when workers have made it clear 'we have no choice, we just can't pay the tax'.

### MPs' response

The response to calls for Labour MPs and councillors to lead a campaign to defy the law has been to pass the buck dishonestly back to the 'community'.

The Scottish TUC conference voted unanimously to 'consider every possible means of obstructing and defeating the legislation'. Yet at the moment this amounts to calling on 'hundreds of thousands of people' to return tax registration forms unfilled. At the same time all the Labour controlled councils have done everything the Tories have asked of them. Some have done even more.

In Strathclyde the council is so fearful that people will refuse to co-operate that they are trying to bully people into returning forms within three days despite being legally entitled to twenty one. The council has employed hundreds of staff to bully people into complying—paying them 40p per form. No wonder, given the growing reports of groups of people chasing collectors out of the estates and burning forms.

The Poll Tax represents a major attack on the whole working class. It demands a class wide response. In deciding to introduce the changes in Scotland first the Tories are aiming at taking on the Scottish labour movement in isolation.

They must not be allowed to pick the Scottish workers off. A national campaign must be built in opposition to the imposition of the tax in Scotland. Its main aim is to demolish the last remnants of control over spending by locally elected councils. Local residents will bear the major part of the cost of local services while businesses will pay a rate determined by central government.

### Discourage

The Tories hope this will discourage voters from electing councils which promise improved service. Labour councils must be forced to lead the fight for non-compliance. District and borough council workers must be won now to non-co-operation with its implementation. This means boycotting any work related to the setting up of the register and the machinery for collecting the tax. Council workers must oppose the employment of 'casual labour' to harass and intimidate people into filling out the forms.

They must be prepared for strike action should the councils go over the heads of the workers and bring in scabs. Any threat of victimisation of council workers must be met with calls for mass strike action by local workers to force the council to back down.

Community groups and tenants' association must also be brought into active involvement in the campaign. So must unemployed workers. The Labour Party and the trade unions must go into the communities and organise meetings and local action to build a campaign committed to non-compliance with the tax.

We must build councils of action to link up the fight against the Poll Tax. Next time the Bill comes before Parliament it must be greeted by a one day general strike as a means of mobilising mass protest demonstrations. On its own however a one day general strike cannot and will not ensure the defeat of the Poll Tax. Opposition to its implementation must be developed into a national refusal to pay backed by industrial action until all of the Poll Tax proposals are withdrawn from Parliament. *The class wide nature of this attack demands a class wide response!*

IN THE present contest for the leadership and deputy leadership of the Labour Party every socialist in the party and every class conscious trade unionist must actively campaign for a vote for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer.

David Blunkett has recently announced that he is 'sick of being forced to choose between one group and another' (*Tribune* 12 April 1988). A socialist who is tired of choices is tired of political life! The choice between Benn and Heffer on the one hand and Kinnock and Hattersley on the other is between the opportunity to fight 'new realism' and the guarantee of defeat by it. Blunkett's sickness has defeated him—he stands by Neil Kinnock.

Kinnock and Hattersley are determined to 'modernise the party' and equip it to 'meet the realities of the 1990s'. Decoded this means making the Labour Party fit to govern in the interests of capitalism. 'Market Socialism', another term from Kinnock's dictionary of buzz words, is being used to argue against the renationalisation of British Telecom, British Gas and a lot of other privatised gifts from the Tories to the City.

In this leadership contest moving away from 'old left fundamentalism' means being opposed to anyone in the party who stands for working class action now to resist the Tories, or who is prepared to defend the remnants of left policies within Labour's programme. Kinnock's project means reducing the party's link with the trade unions to a minimum, so as not to alienate would-be Labour supporters from amongst Britain's bosses and yuppies.

It is here that the disagreements that have once again prompted Prescott to throw his hat into the ring can be located. He represents a layer of trade union bureaucrats who are worried about just how far Kin-

by Julian Scholefield

nock will go in his drive to eliminate overt union influence on the party leadership. His much quoted differences with Hattersley over 'style'—truly Tweedledum versus Tweedledee!—are simply a cover for his attempt to re-assert the role of his bureaucratic caste in running the party. Not much choice here for the likes of poor David Blunkett!

Neither is Prescott any choice for workers—the so called 'electable' left alternative to Hattersley. Since Prescott nominated Kinnock for leader in 1983 he has sided with him or remained silent on every key political question. When Kinnock denounced miners' violence against the police in the Great Strike Prescott's silence made him complicit in that treacherous denunciation.

When Liverpool City Council was condemned for trying to defend jobs and services, Prescott backed Kinnock's disgraceful attacks. Despite his occasional left rhetoric in the past, a victory for Prescott would offer no way out of the camp of new realism.

### Vigorous campaign

A vigorous campaign for Benn and Heffer offers the only chance in this election contest to break out of the circle of doom, defeat and demoralisation that the leadership is trying to foist on the party. That means taking the campaign to every ward and constituency, every union branch and conference, every picket line and struggle of the oppressed—not confining it to a few petty union bureaucrats and constituency hacks who can 'swing the vote'.

Meetings must be organised in every town, every large workplace and every constituency. Benn and Heffer should be invited to speak—

and to listen! Local 'Support Benn/Heffer' groups should be set up to organise and co-ordinate a campaign that can start to turn the tide. The key is to turn the campaign out to the class and its struggles, and to bring the class war back into the party. Force Benn and Heffer to adopt the demands of workers in struggle and fight for them within the party.

In the unions affiliated to the Labour Party the campaign must be used to open up a fight for elements of workers' democracy. Union branches should discuss the election, and mandate conference delegates on that basis. All leadership/deputy leadership candidates should be heard at conferences and votes taken there too.

Union delegations to Labour Party conference should then cast their votes not as a single block, but in proportion to the votes recorded at their own conference. That, not some sham postal 'consultation', is how union members can really ensure that the rank and file have a say in the election—and pave the way for the democratisation of their own bureaucratic structures.

Benn and Heffer are not revolutionary socialists. We do not endorse their political programme. We will criticise it openly. And we will warn every worker who does support them of the danger that, as in 1982, they will strike a truce with the right if the fight gets too rough.

Nevertheless, in the present context they have openly identified with workers in struggle. They have chosen to support those prepared to fight now and oppose those new realists do-nothing merchants around Kinnock and backstabbers in the TUC. We have no hesitation, therefore, in saying to workers:

- Organise a mass campaign!
- Vote Benn and Heffer!

EVERY NOW and then the House of Commons puts aside party divisions and speaks with a single, solemn voice. Elder statesmen are afforded dignified silence as they speak for the 'nation'. The normal parliamentary fare of order paper waving and constant heckling is temporarily dispensed with.

Normally these happenings are the result of a war or the death of a ruling class bigwig. Events in the House in April gave the parliamentarians a new cause for unity. Ron Brown, Labour MP for Leith dropped the Mace. He then refused to apologise for this outrage. Labour and Tory, Kinnock and Thatcher, rose as one to condemn him, suspend him and, in Labour's case, withdraw the whip from him for three months.

The Mace is one of those useless pieces of mediaeval memorabilia that symbolise Parliament's authority. Michael Heseltine once picked it up and waved it about his head during a debate. Clearly believing that he could follow in Tarzan's footsteps, Ron Brown broke the sacred bauble during a debate on social security benefits.

To be honest Ron Brown's actions have done little to organise a fight against the Tory swindlers. Much more

## The class struggle and Parliament

by Arthur Merton

significant was *Militant* supporter Dave Nellist's attack on John Moore the previous week. For repeatedly posing the question about benefits to professional thief, John Moore, the Coventry Labour MP was suspended by the Speaker for five days.

Both incidents speak volumes about the hypocritical veneration for 'Commons procedure' that the parliamentarians of both parties insist upon and about the uselessness of Labour's strategy for opposing the Tories' attacks on the poor.

Nellist interrupted Moore and got a five day suspension because he spoke out for the people who would be affected by the DHSS robber's reforms. Fifteen Tory MPs carried out a series of

organised interruptions during the speech of a Tory Poll-Tax rebel. The speaker turned a blind eye.

In other words 'Commons procedure'—the rules by which the talk-show organises itself—is happily ignored nine times out of ten. But if the voice of working class anger so much as barely makes itself heard above the empty chattering the rules are immediately invoked.

As for the Labour Party leadership's condemnation of Nellist and Brown, it is based on the idea that the way to deal with the Tories is to make sober and erudite speeches from the despatch box. The media-obsessed PR men in Labour's leadership also hate any intrusion of working class anger into their world of clever speech-making. The truth is that no matter how cleverly Robin Cook can outspoke John Moore, pensioners, claimants and the mass of the unemployed will not be one penny better off.

Only mass action outside of Parliament can put paid to the Tory onslaught. The job of any MP who claims to represent the working class is to give voice to the demands of the class struggle from the parliamentary platform, not to gag those who try to do so. ■

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### Fund Appeal

This month we have raised a total of £1654.33. This takes our grand total to £3,388.79 so we now have to raise £1,611.21 in the next month to meet our June target. Get the money in quick. Our thanks to readers and supporters in: North London—£130, South London—£705, Sheffield—£40, a miner in North Derbyshire—£8, health workers in Leicester—£6.53, others in Leicester—£1.80, central London—£350, East London—£53, Coventry—£260, Birmingham—£100.



## TRAINING

by Sue Thomas

**IN A spirited demonstration unemployed workers in Liverpool, along with local trade unionists, broke up a conference called to propagandise for the government's latest bogus training scheme.**

This latest con, the Adult Training Scheme (ATS), is an attempt to extend US-style workfare—work for dole—along the model of the existing Youth Training Scheme (YTS). The demonstrators made the point by storming the platform and lobbing stink bombs: the whole scheme stinks, and can only be beaten by actions, not words.

Rank and file resistance from trade unionists and the unemployed can defeat the Tories' proposals. The TUC's original 'qualified' support for the benefit-plus scheme, which will replace rate-for-the-job Community Programmes (CPs), has been challenged by developing pressure in the major unions, especially the GMB and TGWU.

# HAMMERING THE POOR

Newly unionised CP workers, notably in the north west, have surprised union officials with their combativity and determined opposition to the new scheme. Together with unemployed organisations they have launched lobbies, strikes and demonstrations against the workfare principles of ATS. Government assurances that the new scheme will not be compulsory are rightly met with complete disbelief.

Other trade unionists have also realised that if workfare is allowed a foothold the way would be open for massive job substitution. This mounting pressure could well force the TUC General Council to deny its support for the scheme. But what-

ever the outcome, the tasks facing activists in the relevant unions and unemployed organisations will still be considerable.

Employment Secretary Norman Fowler has announced his intention to go ahead with the new scheme whatever the TUC decides. So the trade union movement cannot be content with stating its opposition to the scheme. It ought to be organising a boycott of it. This means a refusal to agree to ATS in the workplace, declaring that unions will strike if ATS is brought in, refusing to run ATS training in colleges and ensuring that local authorities do not run ATS schemes. Such a boycott is entirely possible, and if the General Council will not organise it then action committees, with delegates from the trade unions and unemployed, must be formed at all levels to do so.

But boycotting the scheme is not the end of the story. Many existing CP workers are now showing their loyalty to the trade union movement by supporting a boycott of the scheme even though their own jobs are on the line. For instance, GMB community workers voted at their conference in March for wholesale opposition to

ATS. Other trade unionists must now be won to the fight for CP workers' jobs. The Manpower Services Commission intends to cut off funds immediately at the end of official CP schemes on 31 August unless the Community Programme agencies agree to participate in the new scheme.

These agencies, many of them local authorities, then have a choice: either take on and fund the jobs of those workers, or sack them. The trade union movement must force the councils to do the former.

Many councils will protest that they have no funds available. Already in some areas local trade union leaders are arguing that money 'diverted' to taking on CP workers permanently and full-time would be putting other council workers' jobs at risk. These dangers of division make it all the more important to point out that those councils' difficulties result from their continuing subservience to the Tories and the bosses. If the Labour authorities combined to refuse to carry out the Tories' dirty work, if they refused to implement the cuts, if they cancelled the huge interest repayments diverted to the

City financiers—then they would not be sacking workers and cutting desperately needed services.

Pressure must be kept up on the councils. There is a danger that fixed-term contracts which over-run the August deadline will be ditched and redundancy notices issued to CP workers. In the face of this threat, all trade unionists should be fighting to ensure that both CP supervisors and workers are taken onto the permanent staff. Not only are the jobs vital for the working class, but the services—whether caring for the elderly or improving housing estates—are all needed.

These are just some of the difficulties facing a campaign to boycott ATS. Such problems show the need for delegate committees which bring the unemployed, CP workers and other trade unionists together to thrash out strategy. Rank and file pressure has so far forced the pace, now the rank and file must run the campaign. The TUC's conference on training in June must be transformed from a talking shop for the trade union tops into a conference which organises action.

It should also ensure that the union movement does not stop short at defeating workfare for adults. From next September, thousands more young people will be conscripts on YTS now that benefit is completely denied to the majority of school leavers. It is a matter of the deepest shame that the British trade unions have allowed this to happen. The campaign to defeat ATS must go on to fight to restore the rights of young workers and organise the unemployed. ■

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

by Chris Ramsey

**ONE OF the Tories' strategic aims in office has been to destroy local government as an agency capable of softening the blows of the bosses' attacks on the working class. Municipal provision of housing, services, transport, employment and some small measure of equal opportunities paid for by a graduated local tax were, and are, poison to the Tories and their paymasters. They are all now under the axe.**

Privatisation, rate-capping, the Poll Tax, successive local government bills, the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority, the GLC and other metropolitan councils demonstrate the lengths to which the Tories will go to stifle local government. Thatcher's ideal local council is said to be the one somewhere in the United States that meets only once a year to hand out the contracts for the few privatised services it is obliged to offer, and then disperses to allow its members to get back to the important business of making money.

In the context of this drive to destroy what remains of local barriers to profit-making, this month's round of local elections cannot be treated as a mere side-show. The Tories will doubtless see any fall in Labour's support as an endorsement for their policies, and an invitation to drive the knife in even deeper. Against the bosses and the Tories, their open agents, we call on workers to give a class vote, a vote for Labour.

### Critical

Just voting for Labour, however, is not enough. We are critical in our electoral support for Labour. Left to their own devices the Labour Party leadership, national and local, will not defend that which the Tories are attacking. Why is this?

The Labour Party was created by the trade unions to represent their views in Parliament. It still has manifold links with most TUC affiliated unions. It has the support of thousands of activists and millions of voters.

Yet when in office Labour will not, and indeed cannot, defend the most minimal working class gains against Tory attacks. The feeble resistance to cuts in local authority spending, the eventual willingness to carry out major cuts and the refusal to consider waging a really effective action-based campaign against the introduction of the Poll Tax in Scotland

demonstrate this quite clearly.

It is the project of the Labour Party that is to blame for this record of betrayal and cowardice. The task of managing local capitalism and trying to service—albeit in a limited way—the interests of workers, black people, women and lesbians and gays is impossible. The interests of capitalism and those it oppresses and exploits are diametrically opposed. Labour cannot square this circle.

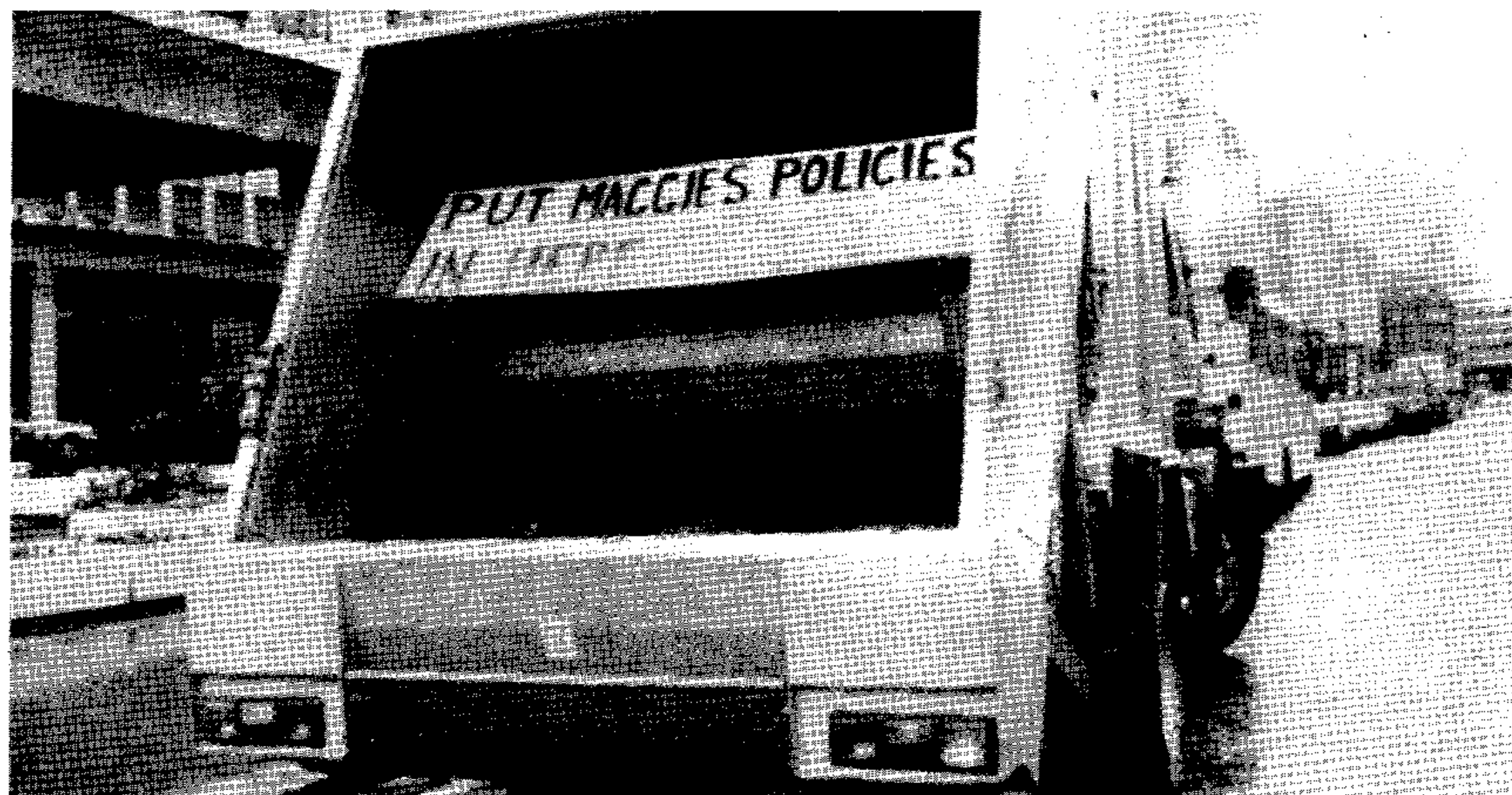
### Contradiction

Labour in opposition can always gloss over this contradiction with talk of what they would do if only they were in power. The left can excuse past betrayals as the work of individual traitors. The right can develop new ways of selling out, claiming that only thus will the working class be helped next time. Both systematically miseducate new layers of the working class, sow fresh illusions and refurbish Labour's image as a viable alternative.

We say that with Labour in office actions will speak louder than words. Labour will betray again. To those many workers who do not believe us and who think that Labour can be forced to defend the working class rather than the capitalist system we propose a united front. Vote Labour, not just as an act of solidarity against the open enemies of the working class—the Tories, Liberals, SDP, LSD and all the rest of the hallucinogenic fringe—but as a means of putting Labour to the test of office. Demand that they act in the interests of the working class and resist any attempts to make the bosses' cuts for them.

Putting Labour to the test is not simply a matter of voting them in and then standing aside waiting for them to 'betray'. Workers must use the opportunity to organise themselves—both to formulate and place their demands on Labour councils and councillors, and to resist attacks on their living standards, their estates and their organisations that will come as the Tories attempt to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of workers. Labour's success or failure can only be measured in terms of how well they can respond to and defend the needs of workers, which is why we say:

**Vote Labour,  
but organise to fight!**



**THE TORIES' hatred of the working class has no limits. Hard on the heels of Lawson's rich man's budget when billions of pounds were given away to the rich, the new Social Security Act proposes to cut nearly a billion from the Social Security budget.**

These so called 'reforms' threaten the already meagre living standard of millions of claimants. They clearly expose the Tories' contempt for the poor, the old, the sick and the disabled. Rhodes Boyson best summed up his party's attitude towards welfare benefits as:

'Taking money from the energetic, successful and thrifty to give to the idle, the failures and the feckless.'

Yet Thatcher has little to fear from the limp protest that has so far greeted the new cuts.

An outraged clergy condemned the changes as 'profoundly immoral and destructive'. This will cut no ice with thieving Thatcher and her hatchet-men in the Cabinet. Nor will the Labour Party's pleading with her to 'think again' bring about a reversal of these savage cuts. They are part of Thatcher's plan to cut public spending and intensify divisions within the working class. The Social Fund will divide claimants into priority and non-priority

## BENEFITS

by Breda Concannon

groups—the deserving and the undeserving poor. It will have a knock-on effect in terms of forcing people off the dole and into low paid jobs. It will increase employers' confidence to cut wages and attack workers' rights.

The savagery of these attacks is becoming ever more clear. Even the government's own appointed watchdog—the Social Security Advisory Committee—admits that there will be more losers than winners. Their conservative estimates predict that 43% will be worse off as opposed to 38% who will be better off. And in the Conservative controlled London Borough of Wandsworth, council sponsored research discovered that as many as 59% of the borough's claimants will lose out. This is in a situation where 1.5 million Londoners already live on or below the poverty line and where 30,000 became homeless last year.

The claimants are not the Government's only target. In the civil service 7,000 jobs in local benefit offices are to be cut to coincide with the new benefits' system. Given the present level of understaffing this can only lead to

even longer delays for claimants before they get any payment as well as a higher percentage of inaccurate assessment of claims. Misery for claimants and the exhaustion of staff will result.

Yet the union leaders did nothing to organise opposition to the new Act becoming law. The Action for Benefits Campaign, which is a broad based campaign in defence of welfare benefits comprising trade union, claimants and pressure groups, limited its activities to leafletting the public after the Act came into force. Action which has taken place has been restricted to individual offices with no national co-ordination.

This situation must be changed immediately. The unemployed must not be left hidden from view by the organised labour movement. They need to become a visible fighting force through pickets, demonstrations and meetings. The scandal of the new poverty line benefits must be exposed in every town and city.

An unemployed workers' union must be built. It must organise a mass campaign on the benefits issue. And it needs to link up with civil service workers in action committees to co-ordinate the struggle against the Tories' organised robbery of the poor. ■

# In Khomeini's camp?

Stuart King looks at the SWP's recent change of position on the Iran/Iraq war and explains why they are wrong

SEVEN AND a half years ago the armies of Iraq moved into Iran. Months of border skirmishes gave way to a full-scale invasion. At the time most of the British left argued that socialists should be for the defeat of both regimes. The British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was one of the principal proponents of this view.

At the end of last year, however, the SWP abruptly changed its position on the Iran/Iraq war:

'The war is no longer just a conflict between two ruling classes fighting for domination of the region... The war now is one in which Iran faces the world's mightiest imperial power (the USA—WP) and its European and Arab allies. Under these circumstances socialists are not neutral... We are with the Iranians—for the defeat of the whole coalition of forces, including Iraq, that is ranged against them.' (Socialist Worker Review December 1987).

This is not merely a confused position. It is extremely dangerous. If socialists in Iran followed through the logic of this position in practice they would be going well beyond the legitimate defence of Iran against imperialism. They would actually find themselves endorsing Iran's war aims—the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the imposition of a puppet Islamic regime in Iraq. This is what the SWP's call for an Iranian victory in the war against Iraq means.

In September 1980 when the armies of Saddam Hussein swept into Iran Workers Power argued that it was necessary to defend Iran. Neither country was an imperialist power. Both were semi-colonial regimes, suffering domination and exploitation by imperialism. However, there was an important difference between the two regimes. Iraq had been distancing itself from its putative ally, the USSR, and courting US and French imperialism. Iran, on the other hand, had just been through a mighty popular revolution which had overthrown US imperialism's trusted ally and regional gendarme, the Shah.

Khomeini was, throughout 1980, struggling to consolidate his Islamic dictatorship. But the task of defeating him in this project belonged to the Iranian masses. Saddam's invasion was a deliberate attempt to usurp this task, establish a pro-imperialist regime in Iran and, as a reward, receive the nomination from imperialism as new regional power.

In these circumstances neutrality in the conflict meant refusing to defend the gains of the Iranian revolution—which Khomeini had not then completely eradicated—against an Iraq covertly backed by western imperialism. The revolutionary position was to call for a military united front to defend Iran against the external threat and to develop the class struggle in Iran to defeat the internal threat.

Thus our defence of Iran in 1980 did not mean giving any political support to Khomeini

or withdrawing the call for his overthrow.

The SWP refused to defend Iran against the Iraqi attack in 1980. Instead it took a position of generalised defeatism. In the words of Alex Callinicos summing up their past position:

'The war became a war of attrition between two middle sized capitalist powers, two "sub-imperialisms".' ('Conference Report' SW 29 September 1987).

This analysis tells us nothing about the character of the war in 1980—'attrition' is a military adjective not a political characterisation. Was there a coalition against Iran similar to the one the SWP claims exists today? Yes. Did the SWP oppose this coalition then? No! Nor are we informed as to exactly what a sub-imperialism is.

Moreover the term 'sub-imperialism' is never explained. Sub-imperialisms of whom? The USA? The USSR? Or do they mean that Iran and Iraq are minor imperialisms in their own right? No doubt the SWP theoreticians will enlighten their members one day.

In the summer of 1982 the political character of the war changed, and with it so did the attitude of communists.

The reasons for taking a defeatist position in Iran no longer held. Saddam Hussein's troops had been repulsed, Iraq was desperately seeking peace, and the Khomeini regime had turned the war into a crusade to impose its own regime on Iraq. Further the war was kept going not only as a war of conquest but as a means of distracting the population from the growing social crisis at home. In these circumstances Workers Power recognised that it was



now necessary to adopt a defeatist position with regard to the war on both sides. Defence of the Iranian revolution was no longer at stake.

Throughout this period the SWP maintained their business as usual defeatism. It was only during the present stage of the war—imperialism's direct military involvement in the Gulf—that the SWP decided to change their position.

The intervention of the USA in the Gulf suddenly turned the war into a just one on behalf of Iran! To support this change of line the SWP leadership had to argue that the Iran/Iraq war and the US-provoked clashes in the Gulf were one and the same thing. In the words of Phil Marshall in the conference debate:

'Reagan has now mobilised the whole of western imperialism behind Iraq. The war is now one war—on the battlefield and in the Gulf.' (SW 28 November 1987).

This is wrong. The war on the mainland is, clearly, not the same as the one in the Gulf. The war on the battlefield is being deliberately maintained by Khomeini, against the will of increasing numbers of workers and poor in Iran. The conflict in the Gulf with the US navy, on the other hand is—despite its recent escalation—one that the Iranian leadership generally wish to contain and if possible resolve peaceably. This remains so despite the regime's flourishes of anti-US rhetoric.

Also, imperialism's objectives in the Gulf are no longer straightforwardly pro-Iraq. After Saddam failed to topple Khomeini quickly imperialism began to keep its options open by playing both regimes off against each other. The US ruling class in particular has consistently kept an open mind as to how it will achieve a more pliant regime in Tehran. 'Iran-gate' showed it was quite willing to attempt to bolster what it believed was a moderate faction in the regime around Rafsanjani, supplying arms to fight the Iraqis. Its support for Iraq now and its attacks on Iran's fighting capabilities are certainly designed to exacerbate the problems for the Khomeini-ite so-called hard-line faction but there is no evidence that the US imperialists intend to join Iraq in an all-out invasion of Iran, a policy they know could seriously backfire given the hostility to US imperialism amongst the Iranian masses.

Does this mean that we, as revolutionaries, should be neutral on the imperialist intervention in the Gulf? Absolutely not. We have a duty to defend Iran, a semi-colonial country, against the attacks made upon it by the

world's most powerful imperialist country (see article on p10).

It is clear then, that the positions of the SWP have been wrong at every stage. When military defence of the Iranian revolution was posed the SWP declared themselves neutral. In 1982 they failed to register the fact that the Iran/Iraq war had become a reactionary one. In 1987/88 they have confused that war with the conflict between Iran and imperialism in the Gulf.

The import of their new position is a capitulation to the reactionary Islamic regime. At precisely the time when war-weariness is mounting amongst the masses in Iran as a result of the continuing of the mass slaughter, the SWP wants to argue against strikes or other actions aimed at the war which could mobilise workers against Khomeini. At the SWP conference Tony Cliff argued: 'If you give no support to Iran it means you support every strike.' He was actually advocating a partial cessation of the class struggle against Khomeini. Well we do support every strike directed at the Iranian war effort against Iraq (and every strike in Iraq directed against its war effort). This is an important weapon to re-arm and re-organise the labour movement in struggle against the Khomeini dictatorship.

Finally perhaps the SWP leadership will now explain to its membership why it does not reverse its position on the Malvinas War. Surely this was a clear-cut case of offering 'military support against imperialism'. Or was Galtieri's dictatorship somehow qualitatively worse than Khomeini's? Or is Thatcher's imperialism somehow 'better' than Reagan's?

The SWP leaders are unlikely to answer such questions. Without a clear Leninist understanding of revolutionary defeatism, or imperialism and anti-imperialism, the SWP will continue to lurch from abstention in real conflicts against imperialism (Britain versus Argentina) to lending support for the reactionary war aims of supposedly anti-imperialist regimes like Khomeini's Iran.

They do not have to bear the consequences of such centrist zig-zags. Iranian revolutionaries do. Yet, when called upon by Iranian exiles in the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) to discuss the war and their change of position, they refused to send anyone to the planning meeting to organise such a debate. To comrades who could have been enlisted in Khomeini's army of martyrs as a result of the SWP's new tactic, the SWP leadership won't give the time of day. ■

## LCI

by Bernie McAdam

THE RECENT events in Ireland have shown once again the desperate need for a mass Irish solidarity movement in Britain. Yet at the very time when a clear call to get the Troops Out Now and for Self-Determination for the Irish people is needed, the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI), was deciding at its conference on 9-10 April, to embark on a 'Year of Action' to culminate in August 1989 with a march and festival.

At a time when the British establishment has been able to escape criticism over the Gibraltar murders and its collusion in the Milltown cemetery killings, yet cynically exploit the execution of two of its undercover agents, the LCI is busy dumping its principled positions on Troops Out Now and Self-Determination in favour of 'a charter of withdrawal'. Its main focus is the 1989 Labour Party conference.

This continuing stampede away from clear anti-imperialist demands is the culmination of the LCI's strategy of tailing leading lefts such as Benn and Livingstone.

This 'new realist' strategy for Ireland assumes that what is needed to make Britain withdraw from Ireland is to convince a future British government (presumably a Labour one) that withdrawal is the most just thing to do.

This political strategy for withdrawal excludes the need to bring the working class front stage in building class-wide action to inflict a defeat upon British imperialism and open the road for real self-determination in Ireland. The trade unions are reduced to simply voting fodder at Labour Party conference and sponsors for liberal campaigns against employment discrimination such as the MacBride Principles.

In every union caucuses must be built to win rank and file support against every aspect of British rule in Ireland. Starting from Troops Out Now and Self-Determination demands, they can build solidarity with Irish workers in struggle against imperialism and their ruling classes north and south.

This work needs to be co-ordinated via a national trade union bulletin organised by these caucuses. Activists should raise demands in their trade unions to win them to effective action against repression and Britain's role in Ireland. Unfortunately, this is not the road the LCI plans to take. ■

## NUS

by Liz Wood

NUS CONFERENCE took place in Blackpool this month. The fact that students are facing the most massive attack on education, grants and their right to organise, seemed largely to pass conference by.

The government has threatened to dissolve the National Union by making it illegal for student unions to affiliate to it. In response the NUS executive could only put forward a strategy of passive campaigning against these moves. The lack of a fighting perspective was further reflected in conference's refusal to allow a P&O striker to make a statement about their dispute.

The SWP and *Militant*, rather than challenge the Democratic Left's (DL) stranglehold, in fact provided them with the perfect left cover. They argued for a first preference vote for the DL for those positions where they were not themselves standing.

Workers Power stood candidates for the positions of President, Treasurer and executive committee member (ECM). In the first two cases we called for a transfer vote for Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN), a left opposition to the DL dominated by the politics of *Socialist Organiser*.

## CONFERENCE

For ECM we called for a transfer to Further Education Labour Students (FELS), a left opposition in NOLS dominated by the politics of the *Militant Tendency*. They only stood for ECM positions.

The SWP and *Militant*'s arguments for not voting for SSIN were that they were the real 'right wing'. They justified this on the basis of SSIN's appalling position on the question of imperialism in Ireland and Palestine. Yet these same organisations are backing Benn and Heffer in the Labour leadership elections despite their disagreement with them on questions such as Zionism and Ireland.

The real reason they would not call for a vote/transfer to SSIN was that they feared that if SSIN did well in the election, it would boost their credibility and therefore make it harder for the SWP and *Militant* to get a foothold in NUS. They are more interested in building their own sects than in defending students' interests. The real need was to try and break the stranglehold of the witch-hunting Kinnockites of the DL over the NUS. This *Militant* and the SWP were not willing to do.

Likewise the SWP also voted with the

DL in opposing parity for FE students. Presently the thousands of FE students are allowed proportionally fewer delegates to conference because they are technically on part-time courses and therefore cannot be counted as real students.

The majority of FE students are working class. Many are on YTS schemes. Yet the SWP's rationale for voting against parity was on the spurious grounds that a 'fighting base' could only be built in the higher education and not the FE Colleges. Do the SWP write off the potential of working class youth to struggle against the attacks they are facing? More likely it can be explained by the fact that they, like the DL, do not have a base in the FE colleges.

Rather than take on the challenge of organising working class youth they would prefer to join with the DL in bureaucratically controlling their influence in the NUS. This does not bode well for the fight to win students to united action against the attacks.

Workers Power however will continue to argue, as we did at conference, for a strategy of direct action by students linked to strike action by campus workers. ■



# SINGLE UNION DOUBLE DEALING

Against the single union dealers, Steve MacSweeney argues that we need industrial, class fighting unions to beat the bosses

IN TWO years time some 500 workers at a joint Coca Cola and Schweppes bottling plant in Wakefield, Yorkshire will have the opportunity to be represented at work by the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). This is the latest 'single union deal' to be announced by Bill Jordan (President) and Gavin Laird (General Secretary). It sums up perfectly everything that is wrong with these deals.

The workers, whoever they are, have no say in the matter. The factory won't even be built for another two years but, already, it has been decided that 'working practices will provide total flexibility' as the Coca Cola representative put it. Trade unionism has been reduced to negotiating a franchise. The union barons no longer try to recruit workers—they try to recruit bosses!

The bosses, of course, can see the advantages (for them). Coca Cola reckons that, 'a single union deal is the best way of ensuring . . . standards are maintained'. You can see what they mean by looking at another deal which Jordan and Laird have signed with the General Motors subsidiary AC Delco at Dunstable. The *Guardian* described the deal as: 'Outside nationally agreed rates and provides for wages substantially lower than those paid in the rest of the country by General Motors'. (April 18)

Having ensured that no other union can organise on the plant the role of the AEU will be to make sure that the workforce keeps to the terms of the deal.

Jordan and Laird believe that such deals are a life line for the union. They argue that they have helped to

stop the decline in union membership that began ten years ago. Laird says they are, 'having a positive effect on the perception of our union'. Leaving aside the typical bureaucrat's inability to say anything in plain English what does this actually mean? Since no one has asked the future members of the AEU what they think, it can only mean that the bosses now like the look of (sorry, have a positive perception of) the AEU.

The bureaucrats are wrong. In the short term their sweetheart deals may bring in some money to finance the apparatus of the unions but, in the long run, they won't save even the machinery of trade unionism, never mind its principles. The famous pathbreaking single union deal with Nissan shows what effect their methods have. After four years there are just 300 members out of a workforce of 1,200. In a single union car plant! These new realists, however, have learnt nothing—their answer to low recruitment was to beg management to allow them to send letters to the other 900! And to hail as a major concession management's permission to do so!

Although the likes of Laird and Jordan, or Eric Hammond of the EETPU, have gained the most notoriety they are not alone in their treachery. *Socialist Worker* (16 April) is very wide of the mark in suggesting that Ron Todd of the T&G is making the running against the single union dealers. Their criticism that, 'Todd would have done better to say more, sooner' about the Dundee Ford deal, appears to say that Todd and company are just a bit too slow off the mark. This is downright wrong. The fact of the matter is that the T&G has been trying to win the



very Coca Cola/Schweppes deal that the AEU won.

There are some differences between the union leaders—but in the absence of consistent and mobilised pressure from their members there is more that unites them. They are all agreed that they have to move with the tides of capitalist fortune. When the alternative is mobilising their memberships in action that would threaten not only the capitalists' chosen government but, also their very economic system, then they are all agreed that the way forward is to fit in with capitalist plans.

As a group, the trade union leaders are accurately represented by the

TUC, with Norman Willis at its head. Its role, unless it is stopped, will be to work out some system whereby all of these swine get their snouts in the trough without there having to be a public brawl over each new deal.

In opposing the plans of Laird, Willis, Hammond and company it will be impossible simply to defend the existing unions and their traditional areas of demarcation. The greatest strength of the new realists is precisely the backwardness of British trade unionism.

Where the new realists want single union deals that are efficient for the capitalists, Marxists fight for single unions that are even more efficient—from the point of view of

the working class. What are needed are industrial unions, that is to say, one organisation for all the workers in each sector of the economy, no matter what particular jobs they do.

That form of organisation would not only emphasise the common interests of all the workers in one industry but would maximise their power in the continuing battles over pay, jobs and conditions. During disputes the possibility of transferring production to unaffected plants would be reduced while in the more fundamental social conflict such unions would be powerful weapons in the overthrow of capitalist power.

The need for organisations that overcome trade and craft divisions has been recognised in many well organised plants and industries. joint shop stewards' committees and combine committees, for example, are grass roots answers to match up to the increased centralisation of the capitalists. Important as the building of such committees was, however, it left intact the old pattern of national organisations inherited from the 19th century. Now, with many plant based organisations at least weakened, the rationalisation of union organisations is going through under the control of business-minded union bosses, not militant-minded shop stewards.

In the bitter class battles that lie ahead of the British working class, shopfloor and plant based organisation will surely be revitalised as it has been in the past. Next time, however, communists must take the lead in arguing for these bodies to transform themselves into industry-wide organisations committed not only to the most effective methods of fighting capital but to defeating it once and for all. ■

## ROUND-UP



John Harris/IFL

## TEACHERS

by Adrian Swaine

THIS YEAR'S NUT conference at Scarborough saw the most concerted attempt yet by the 'Broad Left' dominated National Executive to try and commit the union to a strategy of 'new realism'. Speaker after speaker from the platform told the delegates that we could not ignore the election result and would have to tailor our policies to suit the mood of the country. This from the very same people who called off our action before the election so as not to help Thatcher win!

Such grovelling to 'public opinion' and the allied tactic of lobbying the House of Lords has been shown to be completely bankrupt. The independent pay body award of 4.75% shows that when you get on your knees to the bosses all you can expect is a kick in the teeth! Clearly an alternative to the Executive's strategy is needed and indeed many of the delegates voted against the Executive and for 'left' Association resolutions, mainly inspired by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA). In fact the 'left' vote was maintained at around 40% of the total and on the cover issue an amendment to implement no cover action in primary schools was defeated by less than 2,000 votes.

The vote to take action in defence of

victimised lesbian and gay teachers was unanimous. There was also considerable support for a motion calling for the active promotion of lesbian and gay rights despite the Executive ruling it out of order.

However these figures give a misleading impression. Nationwide the union in on the retreat, even ILTA, the Inner London Teachers' Association have called off their no cover action, (aided and abetted by the SWP who have their own version of 'new realism'—called the downturn). In fact what has happened is that as grass roots activity has fallen away more and more activists have opted to 'capture' position at Association and Divisional level. This has been possible because many ordinary NUT members are angry with the way they have been sold out by the Executive and their supporters and have therefore supported left candidates. But without real rank and file activity this new leadership is still incapable of seriously challenging the Executive's strategy.

However even these limited gains for the left are too much for the Executive. Hence the attempt to 'restructure' the union. Under the guise of making the union more efficient and

responsive to the needs of the membership they are in fact trying to remove the last vestiges of local Association autonomy. Not content with attempting to stop annual conferences and taking control of local Association funds they are trying to replace the power of local leadership with a new tier of regional officials.

This flagrant attempt to centralise power was too much for the vast majority of delegates. However the left, instead of arguing for outright rejection, played tactics and wasted the best chance of the conference to mobilise against the leadership. The Executive will now go to a one day conference in June.

In order to rally support against the Executive the STA has organised a conference in Coventry on 7 May. Workers Power urges all teachers who want to fight for union democracy to attend and especially to get delegated from their Association.

However, it is vital that the conference is seen not just as an attempt to thwart the Executives' plans but as the start of a fightback. It must set itself the task of rebuilding a rank and file movement based on delegations from schools and Associations. Such a movement must set about wresting control of the union from the time servers that run it at the minute and turn it into a democratic class struggle organisation pledged to really defend members' interests. ■

# Stalinists the day . . .

MORE THAN a student revolt but less than a workers' revolution. The events of twenty years ago in France have been summarised in this way. But this hardly begins to capture the richness of those weeks in May; a 'festival of the oppressed', with the students hurling themselves at the brutal riot police (CRS), cobblestones in hand, defending the barricades night after night in the Latin Quarter of Paris; the workers in the factories, taking their cue from the students, occupying the plants and drawing ten million behind them in the biggest general strike in the history of a major imperialist power.

How did it happen? How much of a threat did it pose to the rule of the French bosses and what prevented it going further? Keith Hassell looks at the defeat of the French working class in 1968.

The Sunday colour supplements and the TV shows confront the student leaders of the time with their fiery rhetoric of twenty years ago and extract slightly embarrassed confessions of the 'utopianism' of the May movement. The more cynical are dragged before the TV screen to blame the workers for not taking their chance to dump de Gaulle and with him French capitalism.

Yet such confessions and cynicism are out of place. What was revealed to be 'utopian' was the semi-anarchist strategies of the student leaders. Moreover, no-one has the right to be cynical about the French workers' determination to take control over their own lives. The fact that they failed to find the road to working class power is above all due to the role played by French Stalinism in rescuing the bosses from their difficulties.



The student 'detonator'

At the start of 1968 France had 550,000 students, with well over a third in Paris. Their numbers had nearly tripled since 1960. This spectacular growth was a reflection of the changing needs of French capitalism which had undergone a feverish technological renewal in the ten years following de Gaulle's election as President in 1958. But campus conditions had barely expanded to accommodate this feverish growth. There was mass discontent with this and the petty restrictions imposed on the youth by the university authorities. Nanterre in the Paris suburbs was the centre of this disaffection.

A smaller core of student activists who identified with the anti-Vietnam war mobilisations internationally provided the political vanguard of this movement. They had formed the 22 March Movement whose charismatic spokesman was Dany Cohn-Bendit, a German Jew, as the right wing media never failed to point out. It was their actions which triggered the dramatic events of May. A one day protest occupation against segregation of the sexes in halls of residence had led the university to close parts of the campus and then to the discipline of key activists. Sit-in protests against this action led in turn to the police entering the Sorbonne on 3 May to clear it of students and close it down.

The savage beatings the police handed out served to ignite the anger of the mass of students. Demonstrations in Paris throughout the week of 6-10 May culminated in similar actions throughout France and a high school strike on 10 May led to a huge confrontation in the evening between the students and riot police, the CRS. The 'night of the barricades' witnessed the heaviest fighting, but it was successful enough to force the police to back off from the Sorbonne.



Workers take the stage

Throughout that first week the sympathy of the workers and middle class of Paris for the students grew. Over 90% of the students were middle class and their families were horrified by the brutality of the police. The workers could identify with the courage of the students but they could also sense the possibilities for reversing the defeats they had suffered at the hands of the government and the employers over the previous years which had included a series of lock-outs in 1966/67. Under de Gaulle's authoritarian Fifth Republic the cost of modernising French capitalism had been exacted from the working class. By 1966 they had the lowest wages, the longest hours and highest taxes in the EEC. In addition key sections of French industry, such as the shipyards were facing major structural crises with the threat of severe attacks on jobs.

In 1958 the French bourgeoisie had used the impasse of the colonial war in Algeria and the paralysis of the parliamentary Fourth Republic to at last acquire a 'strong state' for themselves. Before 1958 the political life of the Republic was like a game of musical chairs. Every few months the multiplicity of parties in the National Assembly recombined to eject one set of ministers and replace them with another. Consequently the executive was weak.

DeGaulle replaced this with a powerful executive Presidency, elected for seven year terms and able to by-pass the Assembly with plebiscites whose questions and timing he controlled. Its advantages were illustrated by the swiftness with which de Gaulle extracted France from Algeria and aided state directed modernisation.

The radio and TV were slavish mouthpieces of the government. Dissent was stifled and while the United States, Britain and Germany were alive with new cultural and political ideas, France—on the official surface at least—was kept in a stuffy conservatism. This was an exceptionally dangerous thing to do to the most politically conscious people of Europe.

Moreover, the parties of the French working class had either withered on the vine (like the Socialist Party) or had been excluded from office for decades like the larger Communist Party (PCF). All of this intensified the alienation of the French working class from the French state.

Pressure for action alongside the students grew to such an extent that during 'the night of the barricades' the CP-controlled CGT trade union Federation called a 24-hour general strike for Monday 13 May. That day saw the biggest demonstration in Paris since 1945 with over half a million on the streets. Although it passed off peace-

fully, thousands of workers returned to work throughout France the next day keen to retain the initiative. On 14/15 May local actions over local grievances led to occupations at Renault plants in Rouen and Paris (Billancourt) together with one at Sud Aviation in Nantes.

During the next week the strikes and occupations spread like wildfire. All of Renault, the aerospace and metal industries were occupied, as were the shipyards and railways. Strikes were generalised throughout industry, banks, shops and printing. By 22 May between nine and ten million were on strike or in occupation! French society was paralysed.

So was the French bourgeoisie. Indecision had characterised the actions of the government after the students had repulsed the CRS on the night of 10 May. The university had backed down over the charges against the students, the occupation was left alone. Now they faced something much more serious—a general strike. President de Gaulle lectured the nation on 24 May in his usual patriarchal manner, but it had no effect at all. Five days later while another half million strong demonstration called for an end to his government de Gaulle actually fled the country without consulting anyone.

At the end of May the situation looked bleak for the ruling class. Their leader was in West Germany with the French armed forces. The general strike was solid and the movement of the workers had passed beyond demands relating to wages, hours, conditions of work or the brutality of the police, to take up demands for 'a government of the democratic left with communist participation'. Yet within a fortnight de Gaulle had regained control; organisations to the left of the PCF had been banned and their leaders arrested, most workers were back at work with several occupations having been broken up by the CRS. The Latin Quarter was once more in the hands of the police. By the morning of 24 June de Gaulle was not only back in France but his government reinstalled in office having secured an absolute majority of the votes in the elections for the Assembly the previous day. How could the workers have let the advantage slip?



The role of the PCF

The real tragedy of May 1968 was that the French workers were not able to shake off the influence of the PCF. This influence was exercised in several ways, in the first place through their control of the CGT with its half a million members. On a day to day basis during 'normal' times this relatively small number of unionised workers was sufficient to control and direct the mass of workers. During the mass upheaval of May, however, it



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was the majority of non-unionised workers who provided the pressure on the CGT and pushed it further than it would have liked to go. This too was reminiscent of June 1936. Then, however, there were only two million on strike. In 1968 there were five times that number. But the forces of the revolutionary and centrist left were too small and marginalised to wrest leadership from the PCF during this month. Consequently the PCF handed the movement over to de Gaulle. This was inevitable given the PCF's reformist strategy. Georges Séguy, the Secretary-General of the CGT, said during May

'To tell the truth, the question of whether this is the moment for the working class to seize power has never been raised by the CGT...at the present time it is a question of the struggle of the working class to gain concessions from the capitalist government and firms, a struggle that responds to deep democratic expectations.'

Speaking of the growing wave of strikes, PCF Politburo member Jaques Duclos argued:

'Though they expressed a general aspiration towards change, they were primarily strikes for stated demands. The situation was not therefore revolutionary, as the leftist groups and the bosses of the PSU alleged.'

These statements were in keeping with the role of the PCF in the May/June 1936 strike wave. Then *L'Humanité* (the PCF's daily paper)

had insisted that the strikes were not political but were merely aimed at achieving 'more humane conditions of work'. In short the Stalinists were mortally afraid of the revolutionary spontaneity of the French workers and students and worked desperately to contain and limit the scope of their actions.

This began from the first demonstrations of the students which *L'Humanité* denounced as 'irresponsible' and the work of 'ultra-lefts'. Only after several days fighting and the evident sympathy shown towards the students by young workers did the PCF begin to criticise the police and the government. Even then the PCF and the CGT did what they could to prevent students speaking directly to workers in the factories and shipyards, often resorting to threats of violence and spreading lies among the workers. In one Renault plant the PCF put up a huge wall poster which warned:

'In any period of social crisis there are always agents of the bosses who operate as ultra-lefts and provocateurs—and you can be almost certain that the students who come to the factories are themselves the ones to be most wary of.'

When the CGT bureaucracy realised the scope of the movement during the night of the barricades they called the 24 hour general strike in order to gain control of the mass mobilisations and pacify it. The authoritarian stew-



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against the bosses' state, and a direct challenge to it.

But the general strike (which the PCF/CGT refused to call for, rather preferring to recognise it as an 'accomplished fact') did pose the question of which class rules even if the seizure of power by the working class never became, during May, an immediate task of the day. The task objectively posed during the second half of May was to generalise the strike committees throughout all sectors, make them truly democratic and build councils of action that could link up all the exploited and oppressed and effectively challenge the legislative and executive powers of the government thus taking the political initiative away from de Gaulle.

Waldeck-Rochet, the Secretary-General of the PCF, saw it all differently:

'In reality, the choice to be made in May was the following: either to act in such a way that the strike would permit the essential demands of the workers to be satisfied, and to pursue at the same time, on the political plane, a policy aimed at making necessary democratic changes by constitutional means; this was our Party's position; or else quite simply to provoke a trial of strength, in other words move towards an insurrection: this would include a recourse to armed struggle aimed at overthrowing the regime by force. This was the adventurist position of certain ultra-left groups.'

This dishonest appraisal of the alternatives is the stock in trade of all reformists. Either a struggle of ten million workers who have kicked the bosses out of their plants have to settle and limit themselves to the minimum programme of giving the plants back in return for a few francs in the wage packet or they have to launch themselves into a premature adventure of an insurrection for the maximum programme. What an alternative!

If all the workers wanted was a pay increase why did they launch a wave of factory occupations? Why did the workers of Nantes set up committees to control the traffic, block the entrances to the town with barricades and issue credit tokens acceptable to the local shopkeepers? Why did the Vitry workers try to set up direct trade relations with the local farmers? Why? Because the working class was spontaneously moving in the direction of taking control of its whole way of life.

The real task in those weeks was to bridge the gap between the struggle for immediate demands and the desire for a different government. In other words the key to the situation was the fight for transitional demands that could develop and strengthen the movement for workers' control in the factories and to develop an alternative political power. The central demands were a massive unionisation drive; extending control over the determination of wage levels and hours of work, rather than just allowing the CGT bureaucracy to do it for the workers; defence of the occupation from the CRS by training the workers in the arts of self-defence.

In addition it was vital to broaden the mass movement to other layers beyond the industrial working class. The latter could only have been done by agitation and propaganda, first of all directed at the mass of poorer farmers and secondly at the lower levels of the police and army. As it was, progress was made on both fronts during May. Peasant organisations in the west declared support for the struggles of the workers and students. The police (not the CRS) had suffered a blow to their morale by being blamed for the repression and felt increasingly alienated and disowned by the government. In the confusion in mid-May the Interfederal Police Union threatened a strike itself. All this was fertile ground for revolutionary agitation.

Last but not least there was an

important place for far reaching democratic demands. Not only should de Gaulle go but so should the whole Bonapartist paraphernalia of the Fifth Republic. A constituent assembly should be elected by universal suffrage of all over the age of 16. Without demobilising the general strike, this demand could have helped rally to the workers side the petit bourgeoisie of town and country. It would have opened up a political interregnum where Gaullism would have been discredited, the reformist workers' parties put on the spot and where revolutionaries could have fought for workers to take the only way out—the road to power.

This is the answer to the PCF claim that a revolution was not possible because a majority were not in favour of it and because the repressive apparatus remained intact. The absolute and total shift in the balance of class forces that the PCF desired before it would endorse 'revolutionary change' would only have emerged as a result of such agitation and propaganda aimed at securing the desired end. The fact was, however, the Stalinists did not desire this end. They were in fact totally reconciled to the Fifth Republic and all of its institutions. Through their subservience to the Kremlin bureaucracy they were even tied to de Gaulle since the USSR saw in him an anti-USA ally to be preserved at all costs.



#### De Gaulle regains the initiative

After de Gaulle's flop of a speech on 24 May failed to derail the strikes, Prime Minister Georges Pompidou brought together the unions and the employers to negotiate an agreement and a return to work. By the end of the weekend they had put together the Grenelle Agreement, announced on Sunday 26 May. It allowed for a 35% increase in the minimum wage and a further 7% on all other wages.

The next day the CGT and PCF began the process of selling the package to the French workers. But they were not in the mood to buy it. At mass meeting after mass meeting the agreement was rejected or accepted only on condition that the strikes and occupations continued in order to get more concessions at a local level.

It was at this point that the movement reached out for political answers. Workers banners carried the slogans 'Ten Years Is Enough!', 'Workers Power' among others. Then the PCF—which had avoided making any governmental slogans up until 27 May—felt compelled to call for a new government, again in order to channel the sentiment of the workers into the least threatening alternative.

In this the PCF were at last successful. They were able to constrain the mass movement sufficiently well until de Gaulle and the French bourgeoisie regained its nerve and allowed the PCF a way out. The day after de Gaulle fled Paris he was back at the helm. His visit to his trusted Generals in Baden Baden had stiffened his resolve. On 30 May he went on TV as his supporters were mobilising a large demonstration. He threw down a challenge to the strike leaders: either it shall be civil war or new elections. Which was it to be Messieurs les Communistes?

Naturally, thorough-paced re-

formists that they were, the PCF jumped at the chance of new elections as a way of demobilising the general strike. Of course, they tried to suggest that such elections represented a blow to de Gaulle. They intoned:

'...the June 23 elections may signify the undoing of the Gaullist regime in France, its definitive failure.'

The PCF hoped that its 'sense of responsibility' shown during the strike (i.e. its craven legalism) would reap dividends in the elections. In this sense it believed that it would benefit from the mass radicalisation by an expansion of its popular base that would prepare for an eventual electoral coalition with the other left parties (ie the socialists and the liberal bourgeoisie).

To ensure that the elections took place in a calm atmosphere the PCF began to rapidly agitate for a return to work. Within the first few days of June they convinced a majority of workplaces to settle for the Grenelle Agreement and the new elections. By 23 June—the day of the elections—the last car plants had gone back to work. Once it became clear to the French bourgeoisie that the movement was decisively demoralised they moved onto the offensive. On 5 June the CRS attacked occupations and the students. For the next two weeks de Gaulle stigmatised the PCF as the source of all evil and laid the blame for the anarchy and turmoil at its door. Having played their part in saving De Gaulle, the Stalinists were now to be attacked in turn.

The election results were a slap in the face for the PCF. In the 1967 elections they had increased their share of seats from 41 to 73 (out of 486). In the new elections they went down to 34. The Gaullists got 55% of the popular vote and were back in power.

The PCF could have foreseen this. To begin with there were many abstentions by young workers who were cynical about fundamental change by the parliamentary road. Then there was the undemocratic electoral system which prevented those under 21 (ie the mass of radical youth) from voting. There were also over 300,000 young people over 21 who were denied a vote by the refusal of the authorities to update the register. Finally, an electoral solution would throw into the scales on an equal basis the mass of Gaullist supporters who had been atomised, passive and helpless during the strike wave.

May 68 did not develop into a full scale revolutionary situation; but like June 1936 it was certainly a pre-revolutionary one. The PCF and the CGT succeeded not so much in violently derailing the strike movement as in diverting into a siding and letting it come peacefully to rest. The height of the spontaneous movement was the securing of significant economic gains and a desire for a major political change. The promise of new elections for the majority of workers, who were still reformist in their political consciousness, channelled that hope. It could only have been transended if a revolutionary party had existed sufficiently implanted in the class to contest the PCF and develop a working class alternative to the snare of bourgeois parliamentarism.

The fact is that after 1968 even the centrist 'Trotskyist' groups (PCI/JCR, La Voix Ouvrier etc) were able to grow by drawing some of these lessons. On the other hand, the role played by the PCF ensured that it lost all credibility among the youth, especially the students and a process set in of an accelerated decline in its membership and popular vote, which would be halved over the next ten to fifteen years. It even managed the impossible in raising the French Socialist Party from the grave and helping it displace the PCF as the party of the French working class. In such a way does history continue to repay Stalinism for its treachery in May 1968.■

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After nearly 11 years of Zia's dictatorship, the Pakistani People's Party, under Benazir Zardari (née Bhutto) is raising its political profile. Andy Banister looks at Pakistan's recent past and what lies in store for workers in the future.

# SNARE FOR WORKERS AND PEASANTS

GENERAL ZIA UL HAQ of Pakistan is one of US and British imperialism's most trusted allies. His military bonapartist regime plays host to three million Afghan refugees. He funnels western aid and arms to the Afghan rebels and, in return gets plenty of aid and investment from the imperialists.

They are happy to ignore Zia's rotten 'human rights' record. They brush aside the fact that he came to power through a military coup in 1977. Where fat profits and the possibility of striking a military blow at the USSR by proxy are concerned the western imperialists soon forget their democratic scruples.

All is not rosy in Zia's garden, however. The impending deal on Afghanistan will cut off funds to the regime. The scourge of unemployment throughout the Gulf and the west is strangling Pakistan's major source of foreign currency—money sent home by Pakistani workers abroad. And the looming threat of world recession is a constant reminder to Pakistan of its fragile economy. A series of good harvests of cotton and rice together with high prices for both commodities on the world market have helped Pakistan's economy remain buoyant for the last three years. But as the collapse of Bolivia's tin industry revealed, an economy based on one, or even two, primary products can be devastated by price fluctuation on the world market.

## Drain

In no sense is Pakistan's economy in a state to weather the coming storm. It is saddled with a major debt burden of \$11 billion. This is a drain, to the tune of 22%, on all of its export earnings. On top of this the government is teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. Last year despite an overall growth in its GDP, Pakistan had a budget deficit of \$2.27 billion. The World Bank is currently tying all aid to Pakistan to an austerity package, which will mean massive attacks on the working class. There is every reason to believe that the workers will struggle against these attacks.

On the political front too, the regime faces problems. It has alienated large sections of the western-orientated middle class through its policies of Islamicisation. According to one of Zia's ideologues:

'In the modern state of Pakistan the will of Allah will be sovereign, and all decisions will have to be subjected to the divine revelation.'

In practice this means that Zia enforces all the barbaric and reactionary rules laid down in the Koran.

The alienation of the middle classes could well make itself felt in the elections scheduled for 1990. The elections are designed to prettify the dictatorship. If they go ahead, however, they could ignite a major crisis. Opposing Zia's Muslim League in these elections is the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The MRD is a coalition of parties, the most significant of which is the Pakistani People's Party (PPP) whose leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by Zia in 1977 and executed by him in 1979. The PPP commands widespread support amongst the Pakistani masses. Its mobilisation two years ago—held to greet its leader, and Bhutto's daughter, back from ex-

ile—revealed this. Since then, however, it has been kept very much backstage by Benazir Zardari (née Bhutto).

Despite the Bhutto dynasty turning the PPP into its mere appendage the years of Zia's dictatorship have instilled illusions amongst the masses, in the PPP's ability to lead a democratic and even socialist transformation in Pakistan. The fight to dispel these illusions is central to a revolutionary strategy in Pakistan. It is all the more vital given that a supposedly 'Marxist' wing inside the PPP gives credence to Benazir's demagogic claims to be a socialist.

The Pakistani workers and poor peasants need to be reminded of the PPP's role in government from 1971 to 1977.

Ali Bhutto came to power after a series of violent mass uprisings in 1968-69 overthrew the military regime of General Ayub. The bourgeoisie in Pakistan demobilised the rising with the promise of elections. These were held in December 1970 and the PPP won them hands down. It did so because despite only being formed in 1967 it identified with the risings and outflanked the previously influential Combined Opposition Parties.

This victory was greeted by the postponement of the convocation of the New Assembly by the military authorities. This ignited a further wave of protests in East Pakistan and directly led to civil war and the eventual creation of Bangladesh. The defeat of Pakistan's army by Bengali guerrillas completely undermined the senile military dictatorship. Bhutto—who had won 75% of the seats in the West and who had supported the suppression of the Bengali rising—was handed power on 20 December 1971.

## Illusions

For many workers and peasants the PPP government seemed a just reward for their sacrifices in the struggle against Ayub. When Bhutto immediately confiscated the passports of Pakistan's top 22 capitalist families the masses' illusions in him were further strengthened. However, Bhutto was no socialist. He described his economic programme as a 'happy blend of public and private sectors.' He declared:

The economy we envisage is a



General Zia ul Haq

'mixed' one, in which private enterprise is neither crippled nor allowed to appropriate the nation's wealth for the benefit of the few.'

This mixed economy was brought about through a rapid nationalisation programme. Thirty one large firms in ten basic industries were nationalised including iron and steel, basic metals, heavy engineering, cars and tractors, chemicals, cement and public utilities. This process consisted of the government appointing managers and establishing workers' committees to help them run the firms. However, neither the managers, nor the workers' committees had 'financial control' of any of the nationalised firms. This remained with the big capitalists who, within a year had had their passports returned.

Moreover, the industries nationalised in the heavy industrial sector accounted for only 12.8% of the GDP and employed only 3.4% of the labour force by 1974. In addition, Pakistan's cotton and textile industry—the country's biggest industry—was left in private hands. Imperialism was also kept happy with the promise that no firms in which there were foreign holdings would be touched by nationalisation.

The 'happy blend' made the bosses a lot happier. At the same time the left of the PPP was claiming success for its 'socialist' programme of nationalisations. But this co-existence soon ended as the economy foundered and the bosses turned against

Bhutto.

Bhutto's land reform was, likewise, tailored to pacify the landowners. Thus, despite the reforms of 1972 90% of all farms—occupying 59% of all cultivatable land—are smaller than ten hectares. The big landowners retained their lucrative control over cotton and rice growing.

The result of the reforms was disaster for workers and peasants. Foreign reserves fell, prices and unemployment rose and jute exports (the main source of income for the small peasant) slumped. With the Karachi stock exchange plummeting and the cost of the war against Bangladesh beginning to register, the economy began to spiral towards the position where the foreign debt totalled \$9,164.8 million (50% of GNP) and the local bourgeoisie tried to survive on the profits of cheap exported labour.

These policies of conciliation and pandering to the bourgeoisie were not for one minute reflected in the PPP's attitude towards workers who chose to fight its betrayals. In June 1972 (supposedly when the left was in its ascendancy in the party) an unspecified number of workers were shot at the Feroz Sultan textile mills where a strike had been staged against the government.

In October machine-tool workers in the Landhi Korangi industrial belt came out on strike in the government owned industry. The PPP responded by declaring the strike illegal and arresting its leaders. Other workers came out for two days. Two mills nearby were then occupied. On 18 October 1972 police and paramilitary units attacked the mills and killed four workers injuring hundreds. The entire industrial estate was paralysed by the angry strike that followed. On 22 October the police launched another offensive and killed two more workers. The hill on which they died became known as Red Hill. The strike remained solid for several weeks before being betrayed by the trade union leaders.

Following this strike wave Bhutto began to consolidate his personal control of the PPP and establish himself as a semi-dictator. The left were expelled from the cabinet. The army was bolstered. Half of the national budget was allocated for defence—against the workers in Karachi and Lahore where martial law was the norm. The media was used to boost Bhutto into a cult figure. The 'Defence of Pakistan' Ordinance and the 'Suppression of Terrorist Activities' Act both served to undermine the vestiges of bourgeois democracy

in the country.

Despite all of these measures General Zia ul Haq was able to oust Bhutto on 5 July 1977 notwithstanding the PPP's victory in the elections (extensively rigged) held earlier that year. The truth was that Bhutto's government had alienated all sections of its social base. The world economic crisis of the mid-1970s prevented Bhutto's mixed economy from generating sufficient profits to satisfy the bourgeoisie or the middle classes. The peasantry were still forced to eke out a living on tiny plots of land. The workers had borne the brunt of the PPP's repression. Thus, when the coup came Bhutto had little to offer in the way of resistance.

Following Bhutto's execution in 1979, Zia has consolidated a vicious Islamic dictatorship. In this context the PPP's popularity, under Benazir, has to some extent revived. Her strategy is to woo Zia. Despite a formal position of boycotting Zia's elections she ordered participation by the PPP in the November 1987 local elections. Along with the MRD she is pinning her hopes on victory in the planned 1990 elections. To this end she is busy eradicating the PPP's remaining claims to radicalism. *India Today* observed:

'In tune with a world-wide shift in political opinions, Benazir has moved her party to the centre' (15.1.88). Her programme repeats all of the treacherous phrases that her father used to deploy. She describes herself as a socialist and argues:

'A mixed economy informed with an egalitarian spirit is the inevitable need. That is all.' (*Pakistan—The Gathering Storm*)

In practice this means attacks on the workers and peasants at the behest of those who benefit most from economic 'mixing'—the capitalist class. No Pakistani workers should be deceived into thinking the PPP is 'their party'. It is a party of the state capitalist leaning wing of the Pakistani bourgeoisie. Its 'left wing', has no organic links with the Pakistani working class. Nor do the mass of poor peasants have anything to gain from allegiance to the PPP. The party proved, in practice, its unwillingness to break with the powerful Pakistani landowners.

## Popular front

The PPP represents an attempt by the state capitalist wing of the bourgeoisie to tie the workers and small peasants to a popular front party, and a popular front government. This is the purpose of its socialist demagoguery. Its repeatedly declared adherence to Islam, on the other hand, reassures the Muslim influenced peasants and traders.

And its insistent commitment to the 'mixed' economy is its calling card with the Pakistani ruling class.

Increasingly the PPP has become the private fiefdom of Benazir. Tensions are opening up. For the Pakistani masses the key task—in preparation for the potential clashes around the elections—is to break from the PPP altogether. Only the road of working class independence can lead to the liberation of the Pakistani masses. Along this road we can lay the basis for the building of a true party of the workers and peasants with a programme of action linking the immediate demands of the oppressed to the struggle for permanent revolution in Pakistan and a socialist federation of South Asia. ■



Benazir Zardari



Twenty years on from the revolutionary upheavals in France, the final stages of the first round of the presidential elections demonstrated the chronic weaknesses of the candidates of the 'extreme left'.

Traditionally candidates to the left of the French Communist Party (PCF) have taken 2-5% of the vote between them. In the first round of this year's presidential election, three candidates of the 'extreme left' stood. Two of these, Arlette Laguiller and Pierre Lambert, are self proclaimed 'Trotskyists'. The third, Pierre Juquin, was a PCF member who claimed to be standing as a 'revolutionary' and leader of the 'Renovateur' movement.

Arlette Laguiller was the candidate of Lutte Ouvrière (L.O). This is an organisation of around twelve hundred members, with an implantation in the French working class of some significance. Laguiller's campaign reflected the politics of LO, which is incapable of offering any strategic or programmatic answers to French workers faced with a bosses' offensive. LO's paper is rather like a cross section between *Socialist Worker* and the *Militant* in Britain. It cheers on uncritically the workers in struggle, whilst abstractly invoking the glories of 'socialism' as the way ahead.

Laguiller presented herself as the 'candidate of anger', through whom the working class could express its dissatisfaction with the last seven years of class collaboration. Yet 'anger' on its own or even the other theme of the LO campaign 'struggle will pay', offered little way forward for French workers. For example, LO raised the demand for across the board salary rises of 1,500 francs for all workers. This is a demand that has been the focus for a number of important trade union struggles in the final weeks of the campaign. LO linked this with the need to form strike committees.

Yet left at this, it offers no strategy to French workers as to how to break the hold of the trade union bureaucracy which was successful in selling out so many struggles under Chirac. This requires a programme for the transformation of the trade unions into real fighting bodies, a massive campaign of unionisation and the formation of a revolutionary rank and file movement dedicated to this task. LO never raises such demands. For these purblind syndicalists, the ongoing 'struggle' is sufficient.

Even worse was LO's response to the threat posed by Le Pen's neo-fascist movement, the Front National (FN). The FN has been gaining ground in all the opinion polls with its racist message of repatriating all immigrants. Its predicted 11% of the vote has led to widely rumoured negotiations between Chirac's RPR and Le Pen over transfers of votes and government posts for the FN.

Instead of taking on this threat,

# THE FRENCH LEFT ALL AT SEA

the 'extreme left' in France has allowed Le Pen to organise and march his street thugs at will. It has been left to the PCF to organise the only demonstration against the FN. LO has consistently downplayed the significance of Le Pen's movement, claiming that:

'There is no big difference between the classic right and the extreme right, between the RPR and UDF [of Raymond Barre] on the one side, and the Front National on the other.' (*Lutte de Classe* No 15, p15.)

This analysis is extremely dangerous and represents an important accommodation to some of the more backward elements in the working

supported and which Chirac and Le Pen denounced. In a classic evasion of this vital issue Laguiller at her pre-election Paris meeting declared:

'whether or not the bourgeoisie grant this demand, immigrant workers will still be full citizens of the labour movement'.

All very well when the 'labour movement' will control the state, but meanwhile, longstanding immigrants are denied the right to vote, and LO refuses to support this demand.

The other major candidate on the far left—Pierre Juquin—offers little better. For 35 years Juquin was a PCF hatchet man and one of its main

the party in 1987. They claim to have around four thousand members, although a large number of them are concentrated in a few areas, notably in the east and west. Their representation in the traditional working class strongholds of the PCF is weak.

It was not long before the Renovateurs caught the eye of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire, the French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), which quickly declared the organisation a revolutionary current with an 'anti-capitalist dynamic'. For these veteran centrists of the French left, the Renovateurs provided yet another potential short cut to 'recon-

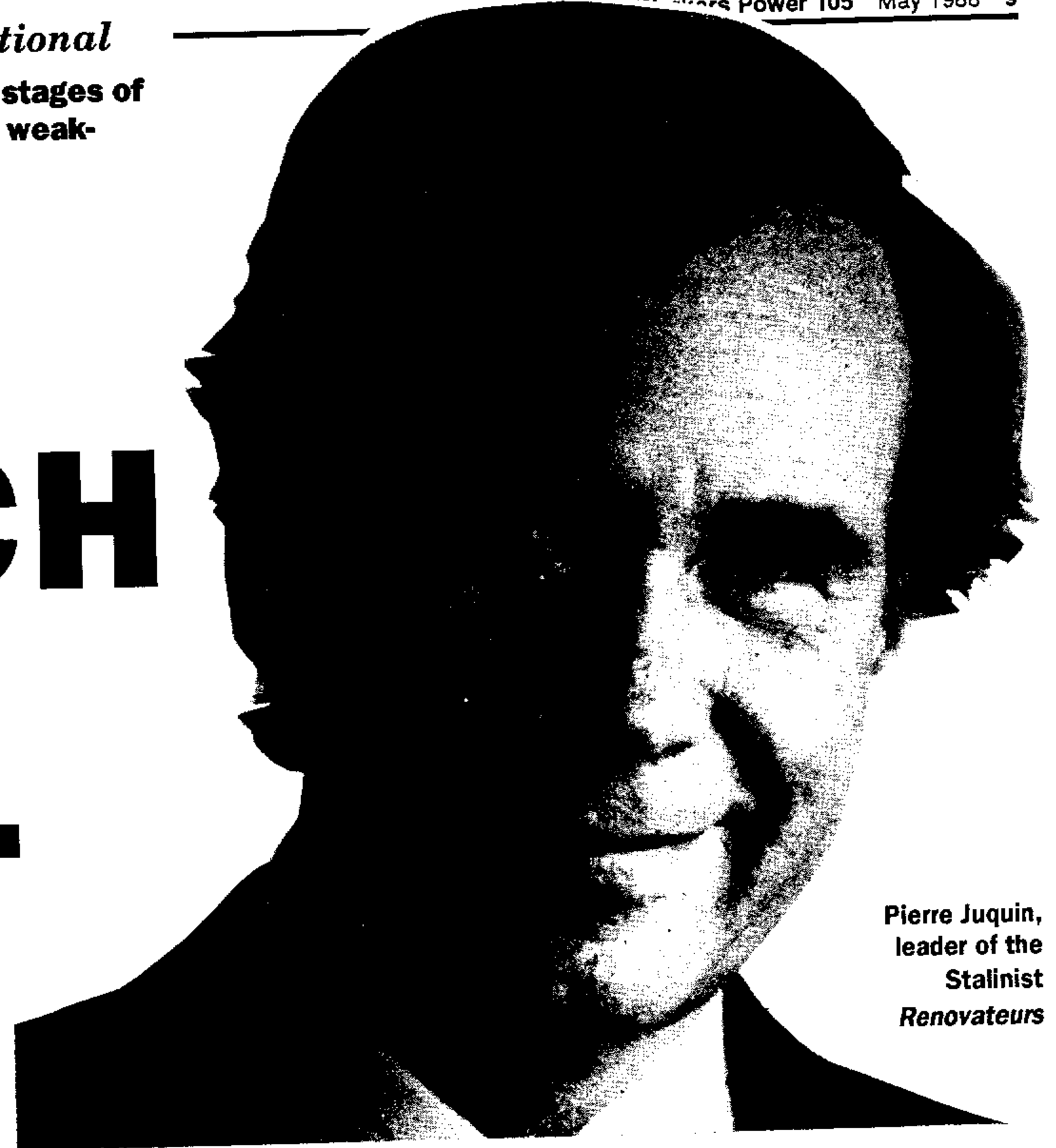
what type of 'revolution' Juquin was talking about.

Socialism it proclaimed, would be achieved through the 'democratic and pacifist revolution that France needs'. It maintained the Stalinist line of support for the 'defence' of ir... rialist France and raised the gan 'produce French' as a major way of combatting the crisis in the French economy. Internationally it allied itself firmly on the side of the Gorbachev wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

When interviewed on a major TV programme about his politics, Juquin never once spoke about the working class, about the need to fight against the bosses' attacks. Instead he chose to support his demand for the 35 hour week by saying that it would improve French capitalism's competitiveness in the international market!

The LCR hoped that its usual opportunist use of the 'united front' tactic would garner the forces drawn in by the 'Juquin dynamic'. In fact there was very little evidence of any such dynamic. Even the hundreds of support committees around the country were largely composed of LCR members. Juquin made clear at the biggest meeting of the campaign that he was against forming any sort of party, preferring to remain unrestricted head of a 'movement'. When asked on TV whether he would accept a ministerial post under Mitterrand he declined to give a straight answer, obviously keeping his options open. This was the candidate that the LCR put forward as a 'revolutionary alternative to French workers'!

The 'invisible man' of the campaign was Pierre Lambert standing under his real surname, Bousset. Despite being a 'Trotskyist' for 50 years, Lambert stood as the candidate of the reformist and semi-mythical Movement for a Workers' Party (MPPT), set up around three years ago by Lambert's organisation the PCI. Lambert's campaign went down like a lead balloon. Ignored by the media, registering 0% in the opinion polls, Lambert got what he deserved. His 'democratic' campaign against the Vth Republic, against the attack on the social security system, against the PS/PC 'betrayal of their mandate' and for 'unity', was devoid of all revolutionary content and incapable of mobilising any important section of workers. ■



Pierre Juquin, leader of the Stalinist Renovateurs

**It is clear from both the manifesto and Juquin's statements during the campaign that the LCR supported uncritically, a left reformist campaign with more than a hint of Stalinism. The manifesto, *The Revolution, Comrades*, leaves no doubt as to what type of 'revolution' Juquin was talking about.**

class. There is a qualitative difference between the FN and RPR/UDF, and the working class needs to be warned of this and organised accordingly. The way to reduce its support is to mobilise to physically smash the FN's street demonstrations, to stop its meetings, its paper sales and its organised attacks on immigrants.

LO's accommodation was further demonstrated in its refusal to support the demand for equal electoral rights for non-French citizens, which Mitterrand claimed he personally

spokespersons. With the failing electoral fortunes of the PCF in 1984, Juquin and a number of local councillors who feared for their seats, moved into opposition. They argued for a greater democratisation of inner-party life, and for a reconsideration of some of the key elements of the party's programme which effectively meant a turn towards social-democracy.

Increasingly marginalised by the PC machine, Juquin and the Renovateurs left or were thrown out of

stituting the revolutionary movement' in France. The LCR rapidly became the uncritical foot soldiers for Juquin's campaign, printing the Renovateur's manifesto and withdrawing their own candidate Alain Krivine in favour of Juquin.

It is clear from both the manifesto and Juquin's statements during the campaign that the LCR supported uncritically, a left reformist campaign with more than a hint of Stalinism. The manifesto, *The Revolution, Comrades*, leaves no doubt as to

## ELECTION RESULTS

In the first round of the French Presidential elections the combined vote for the right (Chirac, Barre and the fascist Le Pen) was 50.5%.

The results were:

Mitterrand (PS)	34.5%
Chirac (RPR)	19.5%
Barre (UDF)	16.5%
Le Pen (FN)	14.5%
Lajoinie (PCF)	7%
Juquin (R)	2%
Arleite (LO)	2%
Bousset (LCI)	0.3%
Ecologists	3.7%

## MRCI Conference

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) held one of its regular delegate meetings for four days over Easter. An important item on the agenda was the question of Afghanistan and the implications of the impending Soviet withdrawal. A resolution on this question was agreed and passed.

The Austrian section of the MRCI presented a resolution on the 'Austrian working class and the European Community' an issue raised by the desire of a great bulk of the Austrian bourgeoisie to secure Austria's admission to the EC before 1992.

The MRCI agreed a resolution on this question embodying an abstentionist position in any referendum or parliamentary vote based on the rec-

ognition that in or out of the European Community Austrian workers would face capitalist attacks on their living standards and conditions.

Both these resolutions together with a resolution in solidarity with the Palestinian uprising against Israel's oppression of their national rights will be published this month in the new English language journal of the MRCI—*Trotskyist International*. As well as reports from the sections and a report of the Latin American work of the MRCI, the delegate meeting discussed draft theses on the Woman Question and on Zionism. Both these sets of theses were timetabled for further discussion at future MRCI meetings along with work on the programmatic manifesto of the MRCI. ■

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WINNING THE 1988 US presidential election ought to be a cinch for the Democratic Party. The Reagan administration is beset with difficulties. The revelations of skullduggery in the Iran/Contra affair continue. And now it has come to pass that the Attorney General—the man in charge of law and order—Edwin Meese is wrapped up in some pretty shoddy deals involving an Israeli protection racket and an Iraqi pipeline scam.

Reagan's whole government stinks of corruption. What is more, the economic recovery in the US is clearly faltering. Reaganomics could not stave off last year's Wall Street crash. Since then Wall Street has not recovered.

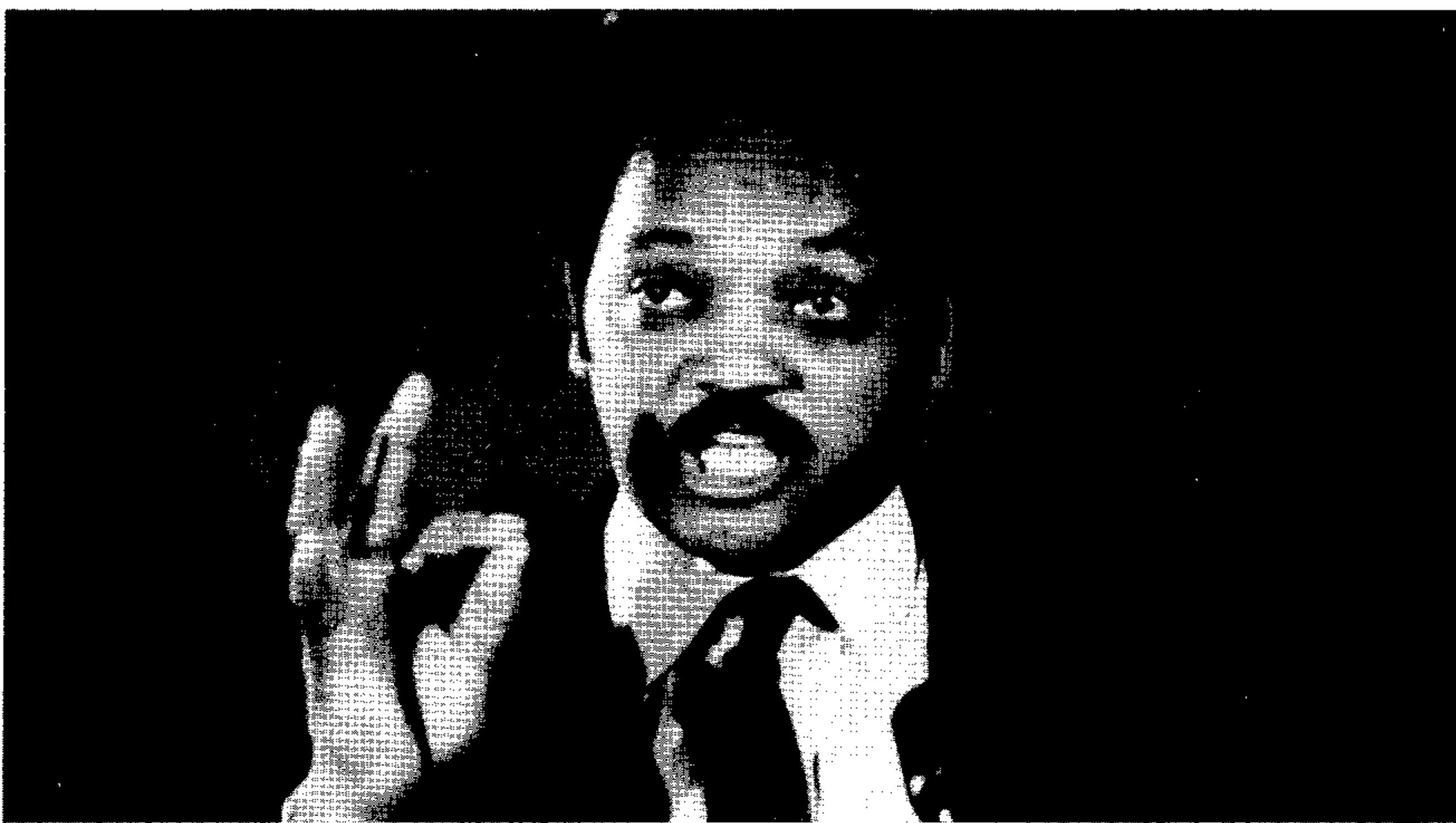
So, the rules of political logic point clearly towards a Democrat moving into the White House after November's election. In reality the chances of this happening are slim.

Why is it that Republican candidate George Bush—the political equivalent of a giant sloth—stands such a good chance of winning in November? He will claim it is because the successes of Reagan, in particular the deals with Gorbachev on arms limitation and on Afghanistan, outweigh the scandals. Like so many in Reagan's cabinet Bush will not be telling the whole truth. The principal reason for his likely win is the Democratic Party's inability to find a candidate who can beat him.

### Claim

The new front runner for the Democratic nomination is Michael Dukakis. He is the governor of Massachusetts and stakes his claim to the nomination in his 'economic miracle' there. This state has benefited from the US economic recovery, particularly in the field of arms manufacture. But this had more to do with Reagan's defence budget—which Dukakis is pledged to cut—than to Dukakis' governorship. What is clear is that his preparedness to savage social programmes in Massachusetts for the sake of boosting industry's projects would be repeated on a nationwide scale if he did beat Bush.

The problem that the top capitalists who run the Democratic Party



Stefano Cagnoni/Report

## NO FRIEND OF LABOR

have with Dukakis is that he is, if anything, even more of a colourless candidate than Bush. And in the looming battle of non-entities the minority of the population who bother to vote will probably go for the non-entity they know best—Bush.

Dukakis' paper commitment to a more liberal foreign policy and reversal of some of Reagan's welfare cuts gives the ruling elite of US bosses even less reason for boosting his lacklustre candidacy. The continuation of Reaganomics via Bush is the preferred option of the majority of the US ruling class.

Dukakis' lack of true appeal to any section of the Democratic party is clear. Even in demagogic terms he cannot rouse the party's worker, black or Hispanic supporters. To the party's southern supporters his 'liberal' foreign policy (criticism of the invasion of Grenada, for example) and his Greek background both make him an unattractive bet. And his origins leave him outside the charmed circle of Northern Anglo-Saxon plutocrats who control the party machines in the big cities.

Why then is he winning the race for the nomination? The answer is easy—Jesse Jackson.

In 1984 Jackson was a maverick

candidate in the primaries. In 1988 he has become a serious contender. *Newsweek* summed up the problem posed by Jackson's campaigns: 'A spreading populist fever could pose a dilemma for his party: he would almost surely lose to Bush—but could he be denied nomination?'

Following the New York primary, which Dukakis won, the answer is now yes. Despite a lack of faith in Dukakis the stringpullers in the Democratic Party rallied around him in a covert 'stop Jackson' manoeuvre. It succeeded and, in key primaries to come like Ohio and New Jersey, is likely to continue to do so. Even if this campaign failed, the safety net of 646 unelected 'super-delegates' at the convention—all top congressmen and officials of the party—will guarantee that Dukakis is nominated.

The reason for the secret 'stop Jackson' campaign is straightforward. The former party of the slave owners is part and parcel of the US racist political establishment. A black man cannot be given the nomination.

In the New York primary the Mayor of New York City, Ed Koch's radio broadcasts on behalf of Albert Gore (who has now dropped out of the race and whose delegates will transfer to Dukakis) were unashamedly racist.

Ordinarily there would be no need for a 'stop Jackson' campaign. Racism would previously have confirmed Jackson's support to blacks within the party. After eight years of Reaganism, however, Jackson's populism has struck a chord with far wider layers of the Democratic electorate.

Jackson has been on a picket line at Hormel in Minnesota, at the Pittsburgh scab steel mill and at the Chicanos cannery in Watsonville, California. He was the only candidate to attend the 200,000 strong march for lesbian and gay rights. He has championed the causes not only of the black population, but of all of the US ethnic minorities. And, despite the vicious 'blacks versus Jews' conflict in the New York primary, Jackson apologised for his 1984 remarks about 'Hymietown' (New York).

The themes of Jackson's campaign also reveal his attempt at a broader appeal. His denunciations of 'economic violence' and the heartlessness of the corporations has earned him white worker and family farmer support—the so called 'limousine liberals'—white, middle class and fashion conscious voters—have also rallied to Jackson.

As the momentum of his campaign built up, victories and sizeable minority votes were recorded in predominantly white states. This process culminated in his shock trouncing of Dukakis in Michigan, thanks

to extensive white support. Earlier in the South, Super Tuesday revealed that his base in the most conservative part of the country had widened well beyond the black population. As he became more of a threat so the Democratic Council of (white) Elders conspired to stop him.

In all probability Jackson will win the position of power-broker, not nominee. He would be guaranteed a place and a degree of influence in a Democratic administration—a prize he would probably prefer to being an also-ran as Vice-President.

In this context many on the left are beginning to wonder about Jackson. There is a growing temptation to offer some kind of support. This is most clearly expressed by *Militant* and its US sister paper, *Labor Militant*. In a recent two page spread on Jackson *Militant* did not offer a single word of criticism of him. Instead his candidacy was hailed as showing 'the potential for a Labor party' and he was politely asked to break from the bourgeoisie:

'Jesse Jackson and the forces he inspires should turn away from the Democratic party and involve themselves with building this alternative... Jesse Jackson could continue his fight for the Presidential nomination as the candidate of labour, not the Democrats.' (15 April 1988)

This approach to Jackson is wrong.

For a start Jackson is a bourgeois politician in a thoroughly bourgeois party. Sure he is posing as a friend of 'labor'—so have countless Democrats before him. None of them have ever broken from the Democrats for the simple reason that they had no organic connections whatsoever with the working class. They were, on the other hand, tied by a thousand threads to the Democrat's political machine. So is Jackson.

### Disillusioned

The machine provides rewards to those who deliver votes. Jackson will deliver a lot of votes—blacks and now many formerly disillusioned white workers and liberal petit bourgeois—to this big business party. And unlike 1984, Jackson has proved his total loyalty to this bosses' party in advance—he has pledged to campaign for whichever ticket is put forward by the convention. For this he will get a reasonable reward.

Thus to call on a bourgeois politician to break from the bourgeoisie—and to suggest that such a bourgeois politician can be a candidate of labour to boot—is the worst kind of misleadership. It will strengthen illusions in Jackson and weaken the fight for an independent working class party based on the unions.

Nor does Jackson's left sounding populist programme change the real nature of his policies. Far from it. As he has grown in popularity so his populism has been diluted. He can turn on the demagogy for the right audience. But his real message is increasingly pro-imperialist and pro-big business. His new Middle East policy is based on the promise that: 'Our first obligation ought to be to assure Israel's security'. (*Economist* 16 April 1988)

On capitalism he is clear that: '... the long term interest of American business and the American people are mutual and inseparable'. (quoted in *Labor Militant* April-June 1988)

His message on jobs—keep jobs in the US—appeals to nationalist and protectionist sentiments. He has increasingly turned his commitment to the defence of the US against the USSR.

Jackson's colour means we are obliged to defend him against the filthy racist attacks that rain down on him daily in the US. His populism and appeal to sections of the working class mean that we do need to intervene in his meetings to put forward a communist message that can appeal to the working class audience he is attracting. But doesn't mean we should support him in the election or call on him to cease being what he is—a deceitful bourgeois politician whose job is to refurbish the Democrat's credentials with disillusioned or formerly disenfranchised sections of the electorate. What message should revolutionaries put at the Jackson rallies? These elections should be used to develop widespread agitation around the call for an independent party of labour, based on the unions. This means that we are obliged to remind Jackson's followers, in the clearest and sharpest terms, that the Democratic Party and all who sail in it, are proven enemies of labour once they are in government.

### Invoked

This party under Kennedy stepped up the Vietnam War. This party was in office when the anti-union Taft-Hartley laws were passed. Despite years in office since then it has never repealed them. Indeed Carter invoked them in 1978 against the miners. And this party, despite its formal support of the civil rights movement in 1960, helped in the brutal crushing of the militant black nationalists, like the Panthers, who emerged out of that movement.

Revolutionaries need to point out to the working class that Jackson's policies—like his almost Reaganite moral crusade on drugs—will lead to similar results. Such a campaign will be difficult. It won't win overnight popularity. But it will enable new recruits to be assembled in the struggle to break the US working class and their unions from the bosses.

In fighting for such a break, revolutionaries must simultaneously fight to win any workers' party that emerges to a revolutionary programme of action. The US workers—languishing under the impact of mass unemployment and years of 'givebacks', and terribly divided by racism and sexism—need a reformist labor party like a hole in the head. Whilst revolutionaries would not make acceptance of our programme a condition of a unified fight for a workers' party, we must make clear that the only programme which addresses the needs of the US workers, family farmers and oppressed is one which links today's struggles with the struggle for socialism.

- For a workers' party based on the unions!
- No votes for Jackson—break with the Democrats!

## DEFEND IRAN DEFEAT IMPERIALISM

US IMPERIALISM HAS demonstrated the real purpose of its 'peacekeeping' task force in the Gulf. On 18 April its ships and helicopters opened fire on the Iranian navy. At the end of the fighting forty Iranians were dead. Six of Iran's ships were crippled. The USA lost a helicopter.

Reagan deliberately stepped up his attacks on Iran on the pretext of minor damage done to the *Samuel B Roberts* as a result of hitting a mine near Dubai. Timed to coincide with Iraq's offensive to recapture the Faw Peninsula, the task force set alight two unprotected Iranian oil platforms. This strike was at a commercial not a military target. It was deliberately provocative. It led to an entirely justified attack by the Iranian navy on the US task force.

Following the engagement Reagan warned that the US navy was:

'...prepared to take any additional action necessary to protect themselves, US flag vessels and US lives.'

In other words, the task force has a license to kill.

Workers in Europe and the USA must understand that so long as the navies of their rulers remain in the Gulf there is every chance of further mili-

tary engagements. The working class of Europe has no interest in the victory of their rulers in such engagements.

The reason the US task force and the auxiliary ships from Britain, Italy etc, are in the Gulf is to protect imperialism's oil supply and browbeat Iran. Despite its reactionary Islamic regime Iran remains a thorn in the west's side. It will not automatically submit to imperialism's will. And workers here have no reason to hope that it will. A defeat for 'our' imperialism, or any imperialist power, is a victory for us for two reasons.

First, it strengthens the resolve of all those forces in the semi-colonial world fighting imperialism. It proves that the armies and navies of the west are not invincible. In encouraging such struggles it can create the best conditions for the workers and peasants of countries like Iran to defeat internal reaction.

Secondly, a defeat for the US or British navies weakens and demoralises our ruling class. That is good news for every worker in their own battles against Reagan or Thatcher.

This is why we say:

- Imperialism out of the Gulf!
- Hands of Iran!



# The politics of black separatism

Laura Williams reviews  
**The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain**  
 by Ron Ramdin  
 (Wildwood House 1987 £8.95  
 626pp)

**IN A period of increased racial attacks, loss of citizenship rights and outspoken Tory bigotry, this timely book traces the history of black workers in Britain from the 1550s to the present.**

It reveals a history of struggle against racism and super-exploitation, and a history of shame for the leadership of the British labour movement. But behind its 'Marxist' terminology the book offers no new political answers to the black working class fighters of today, other than the blind alley of separatism.

Ramdin outlines in great detail the rise and expansion of capitalism, through colonial plunder, settlement and annexation. He shows how black slavery and black indentured labour were essential to the process of capitalism's early development. He then examines in detail the impetus given to the growth of a black working class in Britain by the development of imperialism. In particular, Ramdin deals with the luring of large numbers of black workers to Britain from its colonial and semi-colonial possessions, resulting in their systematic integration into the workforce on the one hand and systematic racial aggression and segregation within society.

The book chronicles the racism of the official labour movement. The TUC's sanctimonious condemnation of racism after the Notting Hill riots in 1958 did not stop its member unions from rallying support for the most reactionary policies and quota systems on the grounds of preventing cheap labour.

The racism of the labour movement not only left all workers open to divisive attacks by the bosses. In leaving blacks as isolated and vulnerable targets for racist and fascist attacks it gave the impetus to the various black separatist strategies that have emerged alongside black self organisation.

It is these strategies which Ramdin sees as the answer in today's black struggles. In fact the latter part of the book is dedicated to the virtues of black autonomy and separatism.

For underlying this account is the whole question of whether the black working class is distinct and sepa-

rate from the rest of the working class in Britain. The author argues that black workers are part of the British working class, however he makes clear that this is not because of any shared common oppression and exploitation of workers, but that: 'they [black workers] are forced to be so because of immigration laws restricting them to this small amount'. This kind of definition of class, places Ramdin well outside the method of Marxist analysis. He goes on to develop the notion of black workers relations to the rest of the working class in terms of a 'fraction' or 'sub-class'.

It is true that black workers in Britain are a small, oppressed and super-exploited stratum of the working class suffering, as they do, the special oppression of racism on top of the oppression that the capitalist system inflicts on the whole of the working class. It is also true, that given the overall record of the British labour movement and its consistent failure to seriously challenge and fight racism in all its forms, that blacks workers in sheer exasperation feel that somehow white workers can be ignored or even isolated while blacks fight racism alone.

Two things render that strategy doomed to failure. Firstly the black population is a very small proportion of the British population. Secondly where black workers' struggles have erupted, as at Grunwick's in North London, and countless others in the 'sweat shop' environment of small industries, the success of these struggles would have been speedily guaranteed if the whole weight of the trade union movement had been deployed in their favour. The Grunwick's union recognition dispute did draw on significant support from white workers and it showed that black workers in struggle have more in common with white workers than their black bosses.

We are surely being asked to accept the argument that white workers are irredeemably racist and therefore separatism for black workers is justified. Yet time and time again this has proven not to be the case.

Ramdin justifies this assertion by calling white workers (that is all white workers) a 'labour aristocracy'. This is dangerously wrong because it underestimates the real integrative process that has gone on over the years. Black and white workers have begun to actively challenge racism at work and in the unions. One instance of this was demonstrated by British Leyland workers. These workers

went on strike for days for the reinstatement of Zedekiah Mills, after he was sacked for hitting out at a supervisor who called him a 'black bastard'.

It is also wrong in that it equates the class generally with the reformist bureaucracy. Yes, white workers have shown a capacity for ugly racism, but they have also shown how they can change in struggle. The 1984/5 miners' strike shows many good examples of how a largely white workforce could be won to black workers' struggles. For example, Lea Hall and Birch Coppice miners stood shoulder to shoulder with black workers on the Kewal's picket line in Handsworth and behind their union banner on an anti-deportation demonstration. That potential for change is ignored by lumping the white working class and the Labour and trade union leadership into one whole group with a common interest because they are white.

Ramdin refers to black workers' organisations as a fact, when in reality they cover a minority of black workers. The cleavage is not as all pervasive as Ramdin suggests. The fact is that black workers have become part of the British working class despite the attempts at racial exclusion in the 1950s and 1960s. Black workers have demonstrated, from the early days, not only their capacity to resist such treatment but also their willingness to be active participants in the various organs of the labour movement. According to *Black and White in Britain* (1984) 56% of Asian and Afro-Caribbean employees were union members, compared with 47% of white employees. That is borne out by the evidence of black workers to be seen on picket lines, many of whom are COHSE members as in the NHS dispute, and the number of stewards at Ford Dagenham, etc.

The connivance of the Labour and trade union leaders in racism, and in particular the absence of a political party committed to generalising and strengthening sporadic unity in action between black and white workers, has left black workers—in particular black youth—with no option but to organise their own defence. Revolutionaries, far from condemning such action, participate in it and fight for labour movement support.

But we do not confuse the need for black self defence, black caucuses in the unions and fighting for black sections in the Labour Party with the strategy for separatism.

Because this is Ramdin's mistake

he fails to find in the enormous detailed history of black workers struggles a guide to action for today, and for the momentous struggles of tomorrow blacks will face. The traditional support of black workers in the Labour Party is not dealt with at all, nor is there a balance sheet of Black Sections. This is all the more important given the rise of four black Labour MPs and the current crisis of

leadership within Black Sections themselves.

Though worth reading, no one should hold the illusion that this book does justice to the 'real' making of the black working class in Britain which will only be realised when they assume their rightful position as leading fighters for their class against the bosses and their racist system. ■

## Life of a Bolshevik Woman

Paul Mason reviews  
**Larissa Reisner**  
 by Cathy Porter  
 (Virago Pioneers £5.50)

**Larissa Reisner was a Bolshevik woman, a Red Army Commissar, a front line fighter in the Civil War and later a Soviet journalist and diplomat. She died from typhoid, aged 30, in Moscow.**

But unlike Alexander Kollontai—the subject of Cathy Porter's last political biography—Reisner was not primarily a fighter for women. Her aristocratic and literary background enabled her to command authority and respect in what was still largely a man's world of revolutionary politics. An atypical person in an atypical situation, she was nevertheless held up in later periods as the 'model Soviet woman'. But her political and sexual independence was a goal denied most working class and peasant women, even in the healthiest period of the revolution.

Because of this, Porter's biography remains ambivalent about Reisner. She is implicitly judged against the figure of Kollontai, whose fight for women's rights and a women's section of the Bolshevik Party Porter documented. Despite this the book makes compelling reading.

Like John Reed, Reisner was a writer who became a revolutionary fighter. Like the film *Reds* therefore the first quarter of the book drags along through a series of romantic and literary episodes. Then it bursts into life as war, revolution and civil war shatter the world of the literary cafés forever.

Drawing on contemporary accounts, Porter paints a vivid picture of Reisner's life at the front. Between 1918 and 1920 she fought with the Red Army's Volga flotilla, commanded by F F Raskolnikov, her

husband. Here she had to confront both the sexism of the sailors and their mistrust of a patently upper class woman. This she did in several ways; more than once offenders were drenched in hot tea. Primarily she met the soldiers' sexism by military example. No account of her exploits fails to mention her skill and bravery. An accomplished rider she converted a platoon of sceptical sailors into cavalry in three not-so-easy lessons. She was captured, interrogated and escaped behind enemy lines in Kazan.

The book sets all this within a brief but clear account of the civil war, showing how its outcome was shaped by the small nucleus of revolutionary commanders of which Reisner was a part. This is a useful antidote to the popular conception of the civil war, largely drawn from the work of Reisner's contemporary, Boris Pasternak, who described it as a chaotic, meaningless carnage.

Later Reisner went with Raskolnikov as ambassador to Afghanistan. On her return she re-entered Soviet literary life and established a relationship with the Bolshevik leader Karl Radek. In the years 1923-26 she produced her best writing, a unique fusion of journalistic and literary style typified in *Hamburg at the Barricades* (Pluto 1977).

Reisner's life and writings remain an inspiration to any woman or man committed to destroying exploitation and oppression. Porter's book provides a clear and largely sympathetic account, more readable today than the ponderous obituaries written by her contemporaries. And the rediscovery of Reisner by a new generation is timely. In Raskolnikov's account of his own role in the same events—*Tales of Sub-Lieutenant Ilyin* (New Park 1982)—Reisner's name appears four times in a footnote by the editor. Her one-time comrade and companion mentions her not once. ■



write to:  
 Workers Power  
 BM Box 7750  
 London WC1 3XX

### Single Union Deals

Comrades

I would like to add another point against the arguments used by the left bureaucrats against the single union deals which your article in WP 104 fails to mention.

My own union, the MSF, was against the Dundee deal. It recently put out a statement to its membership which began 'our basic line was to protect our members' interests and avoid a new

Taiwan in Scotland'. This statement signed by the joint General Secretaries of the new union, Ken Gill and Clive Jenkins, simply panders to the chauvinism of many British workers over so-called 'foreign' working practices. Stalinists like Ken Gill refuse to confront this chauvinism by challenging the role of British imperialism in extracting super-profits from workers in the developing world.

Likewise Gill's public 'opposition' to the terms of the deal in reality meant doing nothing to lead any struggle against the AEU's scabbing. This is presumably what he means by the 'modern approach to trade union issues'!

We must not forget that left talkers like Ken Gill are in practice equally adept at grovelling to the bosses and selling out workers' interests.

Yours fraternally  
 Pete Ashley  
 Cardiff.

## OBITUARY

### DANIEL GUERIN 19 May 1904—14 April 1988

ON 23 April Daniel Guerin was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris after a ceremony at the Mur des Fédérés—the Communards Wall—where many prominent figures of the French labour movement are buried. Comrade Guerin is best known in the international workers' movement as the author of important works on German fascism, the French Popular Front, the great French Revolution and the United States labour movement.

He came from a Dreyfusard bourgeois family. In 1930 he became active in working class politics, becoming a close collaborator of Marceau Pivert the leader of the centrist 'Gauche Revolutionnaire' of the SFIO. He came into contact with Leon

Trotsky in this period and the latter urged him to co-operate with him theoretically in the field of economics and the French labour movement. Guerin, occupied at the time with his work on fascism and big business refused. Guerin indeed never became a Trotskyist although he did actively fight for the entry of the French Trotskyists into Pivert's PSOP in 1939 and opposed their subsequent expulsion. Guerin remained within the orbit of the centrist London Bureau throughout the war.

After the war he continued to defend progressive causes. He was an active defender of the FSLN against French imperialism in the 1950s. In the 1960s he became a prominent champion of gay rights.

Politically however Guerin moved in the direction of anarchism believing that Marxism had to be bathed in libertarianism to wash away its authoritarianism. He devoted not a few pages to identifying Leninism and Trotskyism with Stalinism. In his later years he founded the Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires.

His abiding contribution to the workers' movement remains his books which as well as being an invaluable contribution to the education of future generations of Marxists, all breathe a deep and abiding love for and confidence in the international working class and its historic task of liberation for all exploited and oppressed humanity. ■

# Workers power

## AFTER NURSES PAY RISE

# NHS still in danger

THE RCN claimed the nurses pay award as 'a victory for no strike campaigning'. NUPE leader Rodney Bickerstaffe hailed it as 'a victory for nurses who were prepared to take responsible action'. But before arguing about whose victory it was nurses should beware. If the pay award succeeds in buying off nurses from fighting to defend the NHS, it could pave the way for a gigantic defeat.

While the £750 million represents a major concession to nurses, the union's participation in the Pay Review Body (PRB) means it is a concession structured and implemented on the employers terms.

### The pay increase divides nurses

It replaces the old pay scale based on qualifications with a nine grade scale. Nurses with the same qualification will be divided into areas of 'high level' and 'low level' nursing. This will not only increase differentials and competition between nurses. It will be implemented on a regional basis allowing managers to victimise nurses and twist the interpretation of the new grades to meet their own short term staffing needs.

By dividing SENs into two grades it allows management to push ahead with the creation of a permanent pool of semi-skilled low paid nurses, by lumping the majority into the bottom grade.

### The increase does not abolish low pay

Learner nurses are excluded from the regrading and their increase was a miserly 7.8%. On a maximum of £5,575 after three years this leaves learners as a highly exploited section of the workforce. And of course the increase will be whittled away immediately by residence fee increases.

### Special Duty payments are still threatened

The PRB urged more negotiations over unsocial hours payments. It also set a £12,500 ceiling on the payments. Above this the 30%—60% rate will stand still.

### The award divides all health workers

While technicians and doctors have been given smaller rises, but still above inflation, the Tories are determined to hold down ancillary pay to a minimum. This is in line with their strategy of dividing the NHS work force into a 'core' of skilled workers and a large 'periphery' of unskilled, low paid workers with no employment rights working for private contractors.

When the *Sun* cheered the award ('Loads a money for our super nurses') it betrayed the Tories aim. If they can create the ingrained, Tory voting, scab mentality of Harry Enfield's TV character among nurses they can recoup billions of pounds by attacking free health care without

resistance.

Despite all this the award remains a limited victory for nurses. There is no doubt at all that it is a victory for those who took strike action, not just against the will of the RCN but also against the NUPE and COHSE leaders as well. Their willingness to break with RCN style passivity and Kinnockite 'popular protest' frightened the Tories. If they are to successfully dismantle NHS funding they have to squash that militancy or buy it off.

The dispute in the NHS was never simply over nurses pay, even though this may have been uppermost in many nurses' minds. It has been, and will continue to be, over funding for the NHS, conditions of work and the defence of a state health service. The Tories hope that by removing the militancy of nurses over pay they can demobilise the whole struggle in the NHS. They are encouraged by the leaders of the Labour Party and health service unions who see 'defence of the NHS' as a popular protest issue, not one for industrial action. This divide and rule tactic must not succeed.

Right now John Moore is spear-heading a review of NHS funding. He will be encouraged by the NUPE leaders' stunningly naive acceptance 'in principle' of the NHS internal market and hospital franchises for shops and banks. By summer he will report, possibly with a plan for wholesale NHS charges and compulsory private insurance.

How can this be stopped? In the same week as the pay award, Labour's tactics of passive protest and an alliance with the Tory wets failed to stop the new charges for eye and dental treatment. The answer lies in campaigning for all out strike action by all health workers backed up with solidarity action from other workers in defence of the NHS.

Whether or not the increase turns out to be 'loads a money' for some nurses, it is nothing compared to the tax cuts given to the rich. And it is to pay for these tax cuts that the NHS is still being starved of the funds it needs.

The level of union organisation is still weak in the hospitals. Inter-union joint shop stewards committees are needed in every hospital to organise fighting solidarity for all NHS workers. Nurses should prepare to strike with ancillary workers if their claim is not met in full. They should commit their unions to fight now for a national minimum wage of £185 per week, to abolish low pay in the NHS.

The regrading process in nursing and the proposed regional variations in pay should be monitored by rank and file nurses' committees committed to fighting victimisations and downgrading of staff. Links must be built between regions to resist the break up of national pay norms.

Most of all they should prepare to fight to save the NHS itself. The strike committees, including the National Health Stewards Steering Committee should be kept going in readiness for Moore's plans. Before nurses get a penny in back pay the

NHS could be fighting for its life.

The labour movement must not be lulled by the press hoorays for Thatcher. The health service is still under threat. Every union branch and stewards committee must commit itself to action to defend it against the Tories. They must support every action taken by health workers. And, they must organise to make sure that the TUC's planned NHS day on 5 July is a day of mass strike action against the Tories' attacks on workers health. ■

by Jane Bruton



## NUPE Conference

# NEW REALISM - NO WAY!

RANK AND file delegates at this month's NUPE conference must confront and defeat the 'new realism' of the union leaders. The Tory attacks on health, education and local government place NUPE's 700,000 members at the centre of any strategy of resistance. Bickerstaffe and Sawyer's strategy consists of passive protest, 'appeals to reason' and a total ban on effective industrial action. If they succeed in getting the conference to rule out direct action against low pay, cuts and privatisation they will set a powerful precedent for the coming round of public sector union conferences.

Since Labour's election defeat the NUPE leaders have been key advocates of 'new realism'. On the industrial front this has meant actively sabotaging health workers' attempts to use strike action in defence of pay and NHS funding.

As nurses and ancillaries stood on the picket lines Bickerstaffe was per-

fecting the art of dishing out roses on the wards. Meanwhile Sawyer was advertising the 'power of love' against the power of strike action.

On the political front, the NUPE bureaucracy has played a vital role in Kinnock's right wing offensive within the Labour Party. Sawyer has progressed from witch-hunter, via closure of the LPYS conference, to the architect of the 'Policy Review'. Under this 'review' Sawyer and fellow Kinnockites in the bureaucracy will ensure that Labour enters the 1992 election with a pale pink reflection of Thatcherism as party policy.

There has never been a time when a fighting rank and file movement was more needed in the union. The conference must become a rallying point for militant branches, stewards committees and individuals to unite and fight Sawyer and Bickerstaffe. The NUPE Broad Left is nowhere near adequate for this task. It played no visible role in the NHS days of action. It is controlled

by *Militant* who are still reeling from the shock of seeing 'Labour left' Sawyer turn into the chief witch-hunter.

The conference must commit the Executive to action on pay, jobs, cuts and privatisation. It must commit the union to defiance and non-compliance with the poll tax, Local Government Bill, Clause 28 and the Education Bill. It must focus the fight against 'new realism' by mandating the Executive to organise mass meetings in every locality to vote in the Labour leadership contest, and cast the union's block vote proportionately according to majority and minority voting. It should mandate the Executive to nominate and recommend a vote for Benn and Heffer.

NUPE members committed to this course of action should use the conference to organise the nucleus of a rank and file campaign to fight new realism and oust Bickerstaffe, with or without the Broad Left. ■

## P & O

# Close every port

THE STRIKE at P&O is now in a critical phase. In order to impose their job slashing package the P&O bosses are engaged in a major scabbing operation. P&O boss Sir Jeffrey Sterling hopes to 'do a Wapping' by recruiting scabs from amongst the 2,300 strikers and running eleven ships.

The stakes in the dispute are high. The immediate issue is the new conditions—the so-called 'Red Book' agreement—that P&O want to impose. For the workers these conditions will mean wage rates at £600 per year less than the rate set by the National Maritime Board. That will mean that an extra 122 twenty-four hour shifts have to be worked. They will mean 483 redundancies.

The impact of the 'Red Book' conditions on the working lives of seafarers will be drastic. In turn, fewer staff, with the ones left working exhausting shift patterns, will mean more Zeebrugge disasters. Let no one forget that the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, a P&O ship, could have been averted if the company had not put profits before safety.

Like all capitalists, the quick buck is far more important to them than either workers' lives or livelihoods.

Even more than this is at stake. P&O successfully used the laws to stop the NUS calling a national strike. The cowardly McCluskie abided by a court decision that rendered his union powerless as a national force against the shipping magnates. Now P&O are going for broke. By organising scabbing they aim to finish the NUS off, destroy its influence in the industry altogether. The bosses' paper, the *Financial Times* observed:

'Certainly P&O appears prepared to challenge an industrial relations structure that has dominated much of British shipping for the past 40 years.' (23 April 88)

We must not let them succeed.

In the face of the scabberding operation, mass picketing, together with the solidarity promised by dockers and portworkers in Britain, France and Belgium must be used to close the ports where the ships come in. But stopping the scabs is not enough to break P&O.

Victory in the strike is now tied up

with the fight for the very survival of the NUS as a national union. This means fighting throughout the union for a national strike. Every ship run by NUS members should be docked. Dockers and portworkers must ensure that all other shipping, ferries and cargo, is stopped from entering or leaving Britain. Decisive action like this can turn the tide on the P&O bosses. But before they give up they will use the courts and the anti-union laws. When they do the whole trade union movement must rally to the NUS, for trade unionism itself will be in the dock. A general strike must be launched to defend the right of a national union to hold a national strike.

P&O managing director, Graeme Dunlop recently declared: 'We are rostering our ships. We are going back to sea.'

We can and must stop him and his cronies. The solid determination of the Dover strikers has surprised the bosses and the backsliding NUS leaders. It is testimony to the rank and file's will to victory, and proof of their capacity to thwart the bosses' scabberding plans. This determination must be built on in the weeks ahead.

● For a national seafarers strike!  
by Mark Hoskisson