

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

FIGHTING RACISM AND FASCISM IN THAMESMEAD



● SEE PAGE 2

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

AS TORIES BRING IN TWO TIER CARE . . .

Defend the NHS



THE TORIES have fought three elections on the slogan "NHS—safe in our hands". If they win a fourth the NHS is finished.

They are currently implementing what the Economist called "the biggest shake up in the NHS since its foundation in 1948".

The NHS Act has brought in Trusts to run 56 selected hospitals. In a foretaste of what this will mean for health workers and patients, the Trusts that run Guy's and Bradford hospitals declared hundreds of redundancies within weeks of achieving independent status.

The Trusts are part of a new "internal market" which has already created a two tier service. The minority of GPs who have opted to run their own budgets are getting priority treatment from both Trusts and NHS hospitals alike. The Tories hope that this will develop into a health free-for-all, setting patient against

patient, doctor against doctor, and NHS user against NHS worker. They hope it will erode the free public service from within whilst they wash their hands of the problem.

The Tories have accused Labour of lying after they claimed that Trusts were opting out of the NHS. Waldegrave claimed:

"NHS trust hospitals are, and will remain, part of the NHS. They will be run by NHS staff and will treat NHS patients just as they have done before—only better."

But those who work in the NHS, even those who manage it, know that he is talking rubbish.

BY JANE POTTER
COHSE steward, London

Trent Regional Health bosses, who the Tories appointed, stated clearly that health workers in trusts will be under a new employer. "The self governing Trust will be the actual employer", they admitted.

The NHS Support Federation and the NHS Consultants Association also confirm that "the Trusts are owned by the trust boards: the NHS is owned by the public".

It is the Tories who are liars!

Trusts can refuse to provide services that they consider insufficiently profitable, however much they may be needed. Trusts can open up new, lucrative, services however small the local need. They are accountable to no-one.

After eleven years of Tory rule

there are now one million patients on the waiting list. But as former Health Minister Kenneth Clarke said in 1989, summing up the Tories' lack of concern for the misery on the waiting lists:

"We've closed quite a lot of hospitals over the last twenty years. I think its a good thing. We haven't closed enough."

Under the new "caring", "classless" Major administration the attitude is the same. When the Guy's hospital trust announced the job cuts Waldegrave said:

"It is positive news when hospitals decide to concentrate their resources on what is demanded of them. In some cases this may mean shedding posts."

They are prepared to sack health workers and close hospitals to make their new system work. If the Tories are allowed to get away with it there won't be an NHS for the Trusts to opt in or out of.

Workers have the power to save the NHS. In the two years since the NHS White Paper was published, the union leaders and the Labour Party have kept almost silent, relying on the BMA to lead the propaganda campaigns against the proposals. But that did not stop the two tier health service being introduced.

The union leaders and the Labour

Party continue to tell us: don't act now you might rock the boat, wait for a Labour Government. So far union leaders have managed to tie the campaign against the cuts at Guy's firmly to the bandwagon of Labour press conferences and "questions in the House".

But the health workers and patients at Guy's and Bradford can't wait. We have to organise action now to stop the cuts in jobs, beds and services and to stop the introduction of the internal market altogether.

Health workers have suffered enormous attacks already. Their union leaders recently recommended acceptance of a lousy pay deal for ancillaries rather than risk a fight in an election year. But if health workers take up the fight against the Trusts there is the potential of winning thousands of workers and NHS users to this struggle.

There should be action committees set up in all hospitals, whether they are run by Trusts or not. These committees must campaign to alert local NHS users to what is happening to the health service. Organised workers inside and outside the NHS must take strike action against the cuts and occupy threatened facilities. ■

● Now turn to page 6

THAMESMEAD

Support black self-defence!

ON THE evening of 21 February a gang of racists murdered 15 year old Rolan Adams. He and his 14 year old brother were walking home from the Hawksmoor Youth Club on the Thamesmead Estate in south east London. He was surrounded by ten to fifteen youths and stabbed in the throat. A few days later Hawksmoor Youth Club was petrol bombed.

Rolan's murder shocked and angered many residents of Thamesmead, whose population is 15-20% black. But the murder also focused attention on the rising tide of racist violence in the area. According to the Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA) almost every day this year has seen at least one racist attack.

On 11 May a second young black man, 25 year old Orville Blair, was fatally stabbed outside his mother's flat in broad daylight. So far nine black households have fled the estate. At least two of them have chosen bed and breakfast accommodation over a life of constant fear on the estate.

For several months the British National Party (BNP), a fascist organisation, has sought to consolidate a base on the estate, hoping to cash in racism amongst white working class residents hit by recession and the continuing decline of a physically isolated estate. Since Orville Blair's murder, gangs of BNP-inspired thugs have roamed the estate chanting "two-nil" (a sick reference to the tally of racist murders). BNP supporters arrived at Woolwich Magistrates' Court to cheer the local resident charged with the Blair killing.

Thamesmead was supposed to be a showpiece estate, with recreation facilities and children's play areas. Instead it became a dumping ground for "problem families" and was sold off to a private company—Thamesmead Town Limited—when the Greater London Council was abolished. Rents on the estate are 50% higher than those charged by Greenwich Council. Thamesmead Town Limited made £700,000 profit from rent in 1990, while closing two adventure playgrounds.

Since 1989 when the BNP opened its "bookshop" (national headquarters) in Welling, about five miles from Thamesmead, there has been a dramatic rise in racial assaults on the estate, doubling in that year alone. GACARA's files in mid-May showed 68 racial incidents in the area since Rolan Adams died. On 25 May the BNP were hoping to raise their menacing profile still higher with a march from outside the Hawksmoor Youth Club itself, exploiting the slogan "Rights for Whites" which they have used with some success in Tower Hamlets.

Many people on the left have spent the last ten years denying that any significant fascist threat exists, while Asian families were firebombed and synagogues daubed with anti-Semitic slogans.

The single largest organisation on the British left, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), quickly intervened in the campaign launched in the aftermath of Rolan Adams' murder. But the SWP's whole method prevents addressing the key issues posed by the racist attacks and from raising clear de-

mands to meet the immediate task of the day.

On the 27 April demonstration to protest the murder of Rolan Adams, the SWP's slogans never approached the need for organised

defence of the black community against fascists and racist gangs. But if the struggle to defend the black residents of Thamesmead from attack is not addressed head on, all the SWP's calls for "unity

between black and white" is empty phrase mongering.

The vacuous sloganising of the majority of the left has angered black youth and made many receptive to black nationalist and separatist organisations. The much hyped US black leader, Rev Al Sharpton, whose trademark slogan is "No Justice, No Peace" was welcomed by Rolan Adams Family Campaign and had a high profile on the 27 April demonstration. Ironically it took Sharpton's presence to create any interest in the bosses' media in the plight of Rolan Adams and his family.

But the often radical rhetoric of organisations such as the National Black Caucus and Society of Black Lawyers belies a soft, liberal approach to the state. As *Caribbean Times* reported:

"A joint representation by the Rolan Adams Family Campaign, the National Black Caucus and the Society of Black Lawyers implored the Home Secretary to ban the fascist march and requested a meeting with a senior member of the Metropolitan police . . . to discuss the national and local problem of racial harassment."

The racists in uniform who shot down Cherry Groce and murdered Cynthia Jarrett in her own home can never be allies in a fight against the racists on the street. On every demo they are the armed blue line

which protects the BNP's thugs from getting a taste of united class justice. Even when they do ban fascist demonstrations, the police only do so as a way of preventing serious mobilisations of black and white working class youth determined to stop them for good.

The black community's steps towards organised self-defence should be supported by the labour movement and anti-fascist campaigns. The fascists on the estate must be isolated and confronted. The Wildfowler pub from which they operate has the slogan "White man's manor" daubed on its wall.

Joint black and white working class defence squads should instead make Thamesmead a no-go area for the fascists and for racist thugs so that those who oppose them, black and white, can walk the streets without fear. The Wildfowler should be closed. The left, the labour movement, the anti-fascist movement and the organisations of the oppressed, should seize the challenge to close the BNP's headquarters once and for all.

The disillusionment and deprivation felt by the white youth on estates like Thamesmead make them breeding grounds for fascism, "the socialism of idiots", which directs all their hatred and anger away from their rightful targets, the capitalists and who feed on the profits they make from the misery of the tenants.

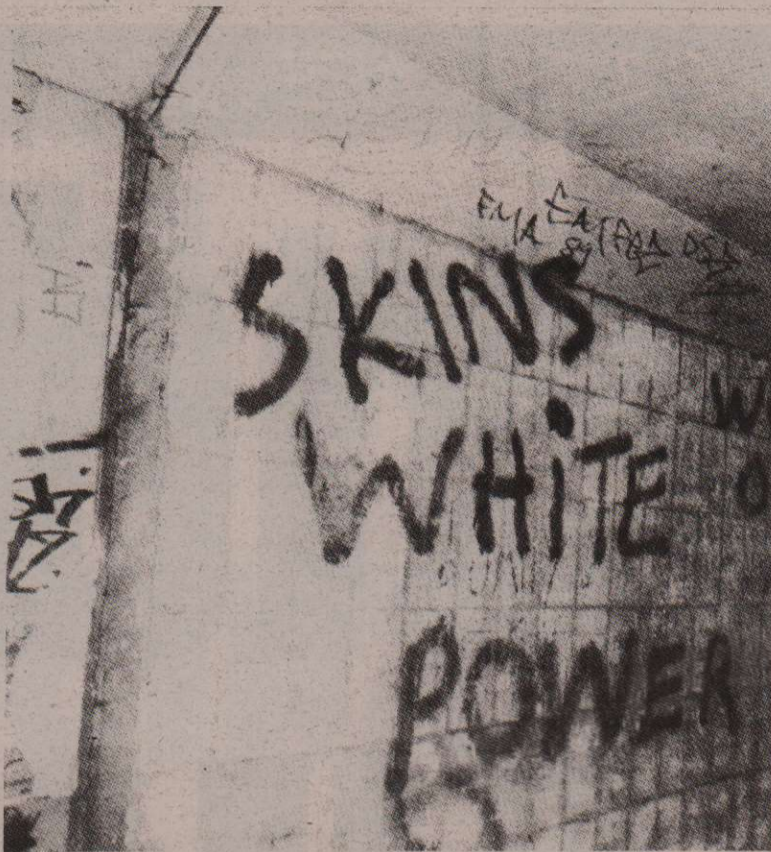
Fascism focuses their hatred against the black workers and youth and the left who should be their true allies in the fight against the real enemy.

Fascism organises what Hitler called the "little men" into a powerful movement, first of all by demonstrating it can dominate the streets and the working class communities. That is why we fight for the policy of no platform for fascists: the physical prevention of their free speech and the right to meet and march.

This cannot be done by appeals to the state. Nor can it be done by small self-selected groups of anti-fascists alone, no matter how heroic. It has to be done by organising thousands of working class people, especially the youth, in a determined fight to drive fascism and organised racists off the streets.

Above all what allows the racist poison to spread is the absence of a mass labour movement fighting on all these issues and involving black and white youth in the fight for a better future.

That is why we fight to win anti-racist youth on estates like Thamesmead away from the twin dead ends of liberalism and black nationalism, to the fight for a new revolutionary party. ■



Racist graffiti on the Thamesmead estate

25 MAY

Police protect fascist death parade

ON 25 May the BNP tried to march through the streets of Thamesmead. Billed as a protest march against Al Sharpton's presence on a previous demonstration, it was in fact an endorsement of the murders of Rolan Adams and Orville Blair. The BNP applied to march past the very spot where Rolan was murdered.

Workers Power supporters joined the Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) contingent on the Thamesmead counter-demonstration called by the Rolan Adams Family Campaign to stop the BNP.

Nearly 1,000 people arrived to oppose the planned display of fascist strength. A vile piece of cynical journalism in the same day's *Guardian* attacked the anti-racists' plans. A lengthy feature on Thamesmead wrote off the recent killings as by-products of inter-gang rivalry. The reporter played the classic card of blaming outside agitators for creating fear amongst black residents. The *Guardian* gave the BNP's second in command, Richard Edmonds, a chance to spout his doctrines of racial superiority without a single word in reply.

Many of those on the counter-demo beyond the ranks of AFA's immediate supporters were keen to make sure that Edmonds and his

thugs would have no chance to parade their Union Jacks and "rights for whites" banners.

On the day, however, poor organisation and a typical lack of political nerve on the part of the majority of the centrist left meant that the anger and energy of hundreds of youth were wasted. Workers Power supporters were virtually alone in arguing clearly for an organised physical confrontation with the BNP. The almost complete absence of co-ordinated stewarding and the unwillingness of either the SWP or the leadership of the National Black Caucus to challenge the police control led to a symbolic march to the spot where Rolan Adams died, nearly two miles from the ongoing BNP march.

Even so the fascists' plans were substantially disrupted and their 200 strong march, rerouted around the estate, did not escape a barrage of bottles and bricks from those who were not content with a "symbolic" protest against the fascists.

The result on 25 May achieved some of the counter-demo's immediate aims but also highlighted the existing limits of the campaign. It exposed the inadequate strategies of the SWP, Militant and a host of other tendencies not really prepared to deny the fascists control of the

streets.

For this strategy to succeed requires more than individual heroics. It means an unflinching fight to challenge racism within the white working class and alert the organised labour movement to the real and potential threat posed by fascism. It means actually organising disciplined teams, with the full backing of local communities and the workers' movement wherever possible, to do what anti-fascists did to Mosley and his black shirts at Cable Street in 1936—physically prevent them marching.

As the anti-fascist march dispersed police waded in with horses and riot squads, arresting ten people and demonstrating to the active racists of south east London that they will always find protection behind the cordons and riot shields of the Metropolitan Police. ■

OUT NOW!

Anti FASCIST ACTION

A new pamphlet on fascism and how to fight it by London Anti-Fascist Action. Price £1. Write to: AFA, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

Build workers' defence against racist attacks!

Labour's Tory programme

"THE LABOUR party is now, arguably, the most conservative force in British politics." This was the response of the *Financial Times* to the publication of Labour's latest programme—its draft election manifesto—*Opportunity Britain*.

This is an overstatement, but it demonstrates the extent to which the party has moved to the right over the last years. Today the bosses could live with a government headed by Neil Kinnock. Labour's recent successes in the local elections and in the Monmouth by-election mean that such a government is certainly a possibility after Major finally decides on a date for the general election.

Labour's well paid public relations staff have successfully married style and content in *Opportunity Britain*. The document has little to distinguish it from John Major's new image of caring Toryism. The similarity between the Tories and Labour is even acknowledged by Kinnock in his introduction, where he derides "the attempt of [Thatcher's] successor to imitate our policies". Actually it is a moot point as to which party is imitating which at the moment. Labour stole the title of *Opportunity Britain* from the Tories. "Mannockism", as the *Economist* called it, is the prevailing trend.

The substance of Labour's programme is a firm pledge to the bosses that it will maintain the gains that they have made over the last twelve years. In industry the programme promises help for manufacturing as the key to lifting Britain out of recession. A National Investment Bank, regional development agencies, a revamped Department of Trade and Industry, extensive training through Skills UK and a Growing Business Scheme for small businesses, are just a few of the bodies that Labour is planning to set up to honour its promises to Britain's manufacturing bosses.

Distinct

Clearly this package is distinct from Thatcher's neo-liberal economic policies. Equally it is different from previous Labour programmes in that it frames the industrial role of the government intervention in "enabling" rather than "interventionist" terms. There will be no attempts by a Labour government to control any sector of manufacturing industry. Gone is any mention of public ownership, planning agreements or even limited buy-ins such as those that took place under the auspices of the National Enterprise Board in the 1970s. Only in Telecommunications and the utilities, sectors deemed to be public interest industries or services, will there be any direct government involvement.

Even allowing that Labour's previous programmes were not socialist, the new programme is a retreat on a grand scale. It accepts without question the validity of Thatcher's privatisation drive. It promises the bosses freedom from interference from a Labour government, even if the market obliges them to sack workers, close plants and cut wages. The government's sole role in relation to industry will, according to *Opportunity Britain*, be to create the conditions in which it can flourish:

"More than ever before, British industry now needs a long term commitment from government, not in the form of indiscriminate subsidies or second guessing industry, but in the form of co-operation to meet clearly defined goals."

"No subsidies" means that Labour will not lift a finger to save jobs in firms that collapse because of capitalism's inherent economic crises. "No second guessing industry" means that Labour will leave the private capitalists to get on with their business regardless of the impact that capitalist anarchy has on the economy as a whole and on the livelihoods of working class people.

Kinnock is even more forthright in explaining that this marks a break with past Labour conceptions of the role of government. The task of the government, he told Brian Walden on TV, was:



"Not fiddling and meddling everywhere and not by being interventionist, but being there as an enabling government . . . a servant state at the disposal of the people."

Enabling capitalist industry to continue its drive for profits at the expense of workers is what he means. And in relation to the unions this is even clearer. The role of government is not to meddle, the programme tells the bosses. But the Labour government certainly will meddle if trade union action threatens the bosses. Just as privatisation is to be protected and consolidated under Labour, so too are the Tories' anti-union laws.

There is no promise to repeal them, only promises to tighten them up by establishing a special Industrial Court, ruled over by an unelected judge. The aim of Labour's modifications to the anti-union laws is to "strengthen the partnership between management, unions and individual employees" and to "create a fair balance between employers and trade unions".

Perhaps the "partnership" that Labour says generally "works well" in industry is evident in Rolls Royce and Govan Shipbuilders sacking their entire workforce, or in the imposition of pay freezes at Harrods and a host of other firms? Perhaps the "fair balance" is evident in the number of unions whose funds have been seized under the anti-union laws, in the number of workers jailed as a result of industrial disputes in the 1980s?

Breathtaking

It is breathtaking that a party based on the trade unions is going into the election, after years of the Tories attacking those unions, pledged to continuing the attacks and where necessary tying up the loose ends left by the Tories. The *Financial Times* was spot on when it observed:

"Its goals, too, appear essentially middle class—the liberation, not of the unionised worker, but of the individual citizen through prosperity and opportunity arrived at by collective endeavour."

Labour has always been a reformist party, a bosses' party based on the working class and offering it capitalism's crumbs in order to curtail the class struggle. It remains such a party. What is significant about *Opportunity Britain* is that the promised crumbs are fewer than ever, the pledges to the bosses more brazen than ever. Even on the issues where Labour has proven itself to be scoring high against the Tories, the NHS and education, the promised reforms are minimal.

Opportunity Britain does not contain a single concrete promise to meet the burning financial needs of these two vital services. It promises to increase health

EDITORIAL

funding, but won't say by how much. All will have to be decided on what the country can afford. That means what the bosses will allow. And even this promise is laced with Thatcherite language. In its section on the NHS Labour promises cash limits on health spending, rewards for hospitals that "out perform their agreed target" and watch dogs to ensure that "we get value for money". The problem is that underfunding has been so severe that unless money is pumped in the NHS will continue to be of less and less value to sick people. And Labour cannot bring itself to confront this problem head on with a clear promise.

For workers few opportunities are being offered by Labour. Tying future public spending to "wealth production" means we will have the opportunity to join a million other working class people on the NHS waiting list. We will have the opportunity to join the dole queue as market forces dictate redundancies. We will have the opportunity to send our children to sub-standard schools. Black people will have the opportunity to remain second class citizens. In short we will have the opportunity to carry on paying the cost of maintaining a tiny minority of bosses in their luxury lifestyles.

Fairer

For many young working class people it is difficult to imagine a Labour government. It is difficult for them to believe that Labour will not bring in a fairer society.

But a vision of the future under Labour can be glimpsed by looking at the Labour councils. The record of solid Kinnockite councils like Birmingham, Leicester and the official leadership of Liverpool shows where their priorities lie. They will implement cuts, slash jobs and services, pander to racism and all forms of bigotry and discrimination. Just as today the Labour council leaders use the excuse of the limits imposed by the Tory government, a Labour government in parliament will use the excuse of the world economy, the EC and the IMF to justify attacking the workers.

So why vote Labour at all? Not because of its politics—they are as always pro-boss and anti-working class. In the coming general election, where revolutionary socialists are too small in number to stand candidates Workers Power will advocate a critical vote for Labour in order to put the illusions of millions to the test of action.

Opportunity

The only real opportunity Labour offers is to bring the pressure of the organised working class to bear on a future Labour government. We must wage the fight, however difficult at the moment, to win support for demands on Labour to repeal the anti-union laws, pour funds into health and education, renationalise without compensation the privatised industries and place them under workers' control. We must fight to force it to grant a national minimum wage, not at 50% of the current average industrial take home pay but at 100% of it. And we must combine this fight with one to prevent the National Economic Assessment from becoming a means of imposing wage restraint. The bosses must bear the cost of a national minimum wage, not other workers.

But there is no point in waiting for a Labour government to fight for the things we need now. Only by fighting now, around such demands, will we prepare ourselves for the battles that will inevitably come if a Labour government is installed. Battles that are being prefigured today in Liverpool, where workers are fighting Labour's job cuts, and where party members are being witch hunted for opposing those cuts. This will happen on a national level.

The moment workers lift a finger against the Tory attacks today they are told: strikes damage Labour's chances. Wait for Kinnock in Number 10. Against this useless strategy we say: don't wait for Labour, fight now on every front—jobs, wages, conditions, the NHS, education, racist attacks and anti-gay legislation. Use these struggles to focus demands on Labour and the trade union leaders who hold the party's purse strings. And when the election comes, vote Labour . . . but organise to fight whoever wins! ■

ROLLS ROYCE plan to sack at least 6,000 workers. In itself this is nothing new. In the last decade 26,000 Rolls workers have been made redundant. But the proposed method of sacking the latest batch of workers is new. If they have to, say the bosses, the redundancies will be compulsory for the first time.

Sir Ralph Robins, Rolls Royce's £250,000 a year boss, flashed the fangs that lurk behind his paternalist smile. Not only will there be compulsory redundancies, there will be a six month pay freeze, including a freeze on all increments, as well. Rolls' management is determined to make its workforce bear the cost of the recession in both the aerospace and car manufacturing industries.

The lengths to which the bosses are prepared to go was revealed in May when the company announced that it was sacking its entire 34,000 strong workforce, ripping up all existing contracts and agreements. It would reinstate only those workers prepared to sign new contracts drawn up by the management and not subject to negotiation with the unions.

This was the reward for the loyalty the workforce had shown the company at plants like Leavesden, where concessions to boost profitability had been made again and again.

Threat

Rolls Royce have now withdrawn the sackings threat after negotiations with MSF, but the aim is still to push through the pay freeze and job losses. MSF, who threatened legal action against the blanket sackings, clearly gave the bosses a strong hint that they were prepared to negotiate on the redundancies and pay pause. After withdrawing their threat a management spokesman announced:

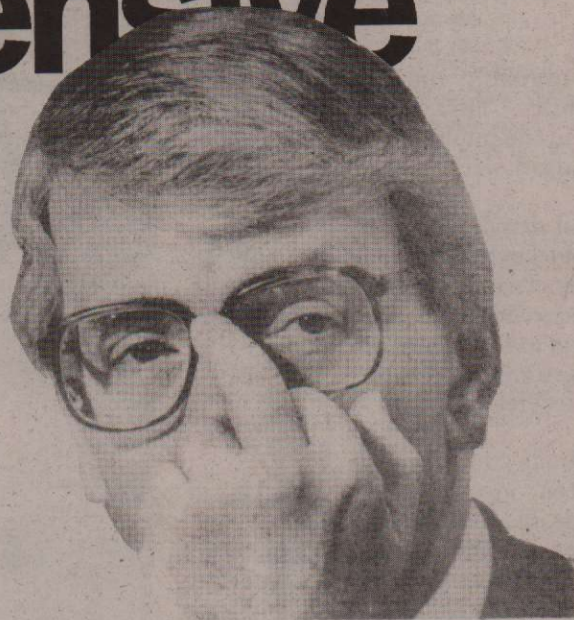
"It is still our intention to achieve a pay freeze because it is an important element in our cost-cutting exercise. If we are able to achieve that through negotiation the letters become unnecessary."

Sacking your workforce to impose new contracts is a long established union-busting ploy in the

ROLLS ROYCE

The bosses' new offensive

Sacking your workforce to impose new contracts is a long established union-busting ploy in the USA. In the face of the current recession bosses are turning to similar tough tactics in order to offload its costs onto the backs of the working class. The attack on jobs and pay at Rolls Royce is the part of a co-ordinated bosses' offensive, writes Mark Harrison.



USA. In the face of the current recession bosses are turning to similar tough tactics in order to offload its costs onto the backs of the working class. A number of other firms followed Rolls Royce's cue. In Scotland at the Kvaerner Govan shipbuilding yard the management have sacked 1,600 workers who were striking over pay and conditions. They are being offered reinstatement only if they accept contracts based on the very proposals they were striking against.

In British Rail 6,500 workers in signals and telecommunications (S&T) were told that if they didn't sign new contracts then they could stay at work but would be denied any access to promotion. And at Heathrow airport American Airlines have sacked 1,000 workers and offered to take them back only if they sign contracts which specifically exclude union recognition.

Workers on an overtime ban in Barclays Bank were suspended and threatened with the sack if they didn't agree to work normally.

Such actions are extreme examples of a definite trend in British industrial relations. The majority of the big bosses still favour getting the unions to help them carry through sackings and changes in work practices. The scale of pay freezes already agreed demonstrates the success of this method. But two things are pushing the bosses to adopt more abrasive tactics.

First there is the recession itself. After a slow start in manufacturing the latest recession has gathered pace. The car industry, the aerospace industry, construction and engineering have all witnessed significant slumps in orders and sales. No matter how hard workers in these industries have worked over the past few years, no matter what concessions they have made on productiv-

ity and pay, the bosses' profit system drives them to cut more and more jobs.

Unemployment now stands, according to official figures, at 2,175,000. In reality there are another million unemployed who have been fiddled off the register by the Tories. And in manufacturing there have been 94,000 sackings this year alone, according to a survey by the AEU.

The Building Employers' Federation puts jobs losses in construction at 78,000 since July 1989, with another 100,000 sackings to follow this year and next. The scale of the job cuts needed is forcing management to become ever more ruthless in its offensive.

The same is true of the growing trend towards pay freezes and pay cuts. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, the fabulously rich governor of the Bank of England—he has an £8 million pound mansion in Kent and got a 17% pay rise last year—joined John Major in calling for a concerted attack on wages.

The bosses are responding to these calls by imposing pay cuts or standing firm on below-inflation pay offers. For example, male printers at the *Financial Times* have had a 13.9% pay cut imposed. And in the Post Office management are digging their heels in on a 6% pay offer to the UCW.

Cowardice

The second factor encouraging the bosses to get tough is the cowardice of the unions themselves. The Thatcher decade, with its battery of anti-union laws, with the defeats inflicted on workers fighting for jobs (steel, miners, seafarers, printers), has emboldened the bosses. These developments drove the labour movement to the right.

The union leaders not only surpassed themselves in their treachery against workers in struggle, they redirected the trade unions away from militant struggle and towards an overwhelmingly "service" role that contributed to the weakening of strong workplace organisation.

Faced with such a tame union movement the bosses believed they could get away with their new tactics. Events in the aftermath of the Rolls Royce sackings proved that their calculations were right.

Tony Blair, Labour's employment spokesman, voiced the collective view of the trade union leaders

when he said of the Rolls' sackings that they showed the "tremendous problems that companies were facing because of the recession". These problems could not be resolved this side of a Labour government. This is precisely the line of the trade union leaders. They are bleating about the ill effects of the recession on their members, while not doing a thing in the here and now to combat them. In the pre-election year they are all chanting in unison, bring on Neil Kinnock.

Of course, faced with events such as those at Rolls Royce they have been obliged to protest. But the protests were confined to seeking legal advice on the sackings. When the Rolls bosses conceded on this the union claimed a victory despite the threats still hanging over the workforce. As to the pay freeze and redundancies that the sacking were designed to achieve, Rolls Royce shop stewards, under the influence of MSF and AEU officials, have limited themselves to a ballot on an overtime ban.

A ballot on strike action will be called only if the redundancies are made compulsory. The whole emphasis of the campaign, however, has been on community meetings to explain why the jobs shouldn't be cut, lobbies of shareholders' meetings and pressure on MPs.

Recession

If the full impact of the recession is to be resisted then this new realist approach has to be thrown out. The bosses' tough tactics show their determination to win the class struggle.

Our tactics must be equally determined and equally ruthless. We need to organise now, to defend the jobs that are being lost now. We need to counter the sackings—which are effectively lock-outs, with occupations of the plants with the stated goal of defending every job.

In 1971 the Govan shipyard where workers are currently locked out was the scene of the famous Clyde sit in. In the early 1980s engineers at Gardner's in Manchester showed that the bosses' attempts to make us pay for their crisis could be countered with militant tactics. The plant was occupied and the jobs were saved. This is the tradition that Rolls, Govan and other workers facing mass sackings need to look to.

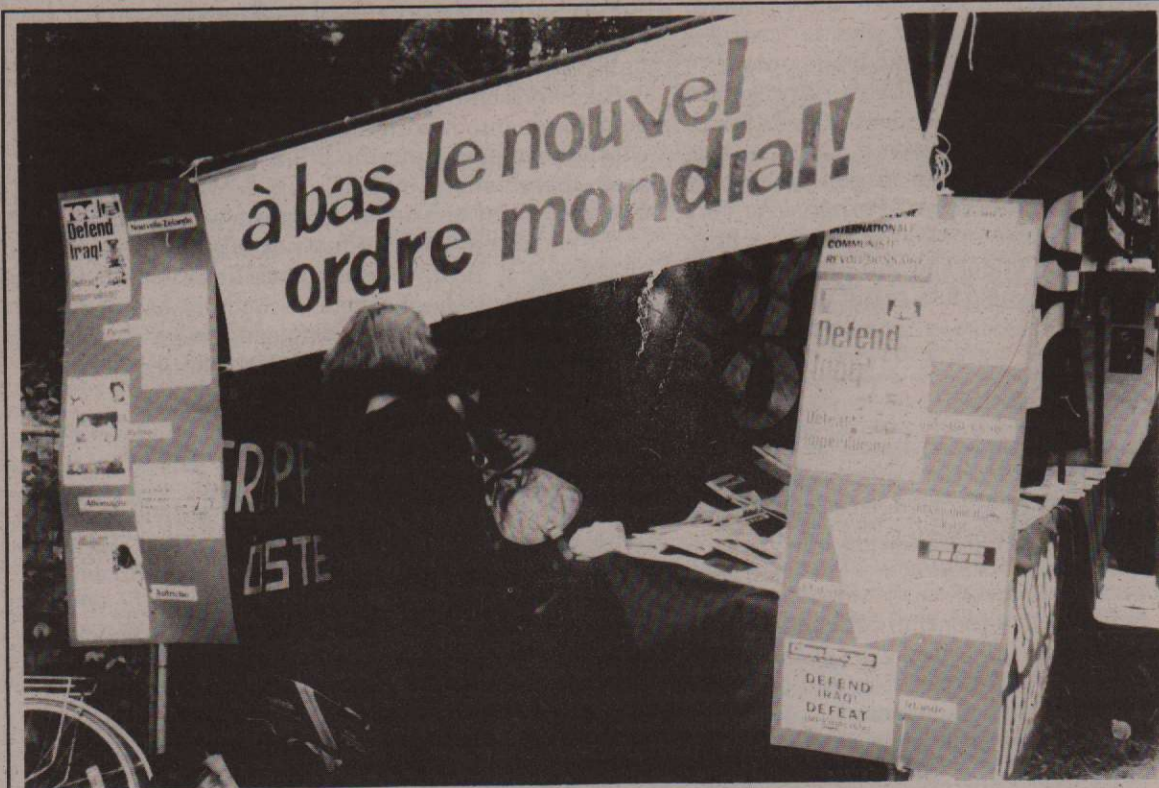
Organisation

In turn this means breaking decisively with the new realist union leaders and their calls to wait for Labour. Labour has made clear that it cannot afford to bring back any jobs destroyed in the current recession. Waiting for them simply means being on the dole a long time. In every workplace militants need to turn to the task of patiently rebuilding rank and file organisation.

Only if strong organisation is established at this level, with accountable stewards and officials, with democratically elected strike or occupation committees, with regular mass and section meetings, with a policy of fighting to defend every job, will the possibility of defeating the bosses' offensive on pay and jobs be created.

The defeats of militant trade unionism in the 1980s and the policies of the new realists today mean that rebuilding the fighting strength of rank and file workers cannot be simply a technical or organisational chore.

Militants need to understand the political tasks that face them, need to develop political answers to the current crisis—in short they need to become conscious revolutionary communists, won to a new revolutionary communist party. ■



A DELEGATION of 27 members and supporters of the LRCI attended the 20th Lutte Ouvrière Fête. This annual cultural and political event is held in wooded countryside to the north of Paris. Organised by the French centrist organisation Lutte Ouvrière it attracts thousands of French workers and youth on each of its three days over the French Whitsun holiday, and is the scene of intensive public debates between political tendencies on the international left.

The LRCI stand was the scene of constant political discussion. This year it carried a wide range of LRCI literature in English, Spanish, German, Italian and Russian as well as French. It also contained a display

of LRCI literature from nine countries during the war, demonstrating our commitment to fighting for a revolutionary defencist line, the victory of Iraq, during the Gulf war.

The LRCI organised three well attended political forums: on Britain after Thatcher, on the entry tactic in the German PDS, and a debate with the International Bolshevik Tendency on the nature of the struggles in Eastern Europe.

In addition LRCI comrades participated in debates and discussions at at least half of the 52 other forums and made a number of new contacts with groups and individuals through this intervention. ■

OBITUARY**Eric Heffer**

AS WE go to press we have heard with sadness the news of the death of Labour MP Eric Heffer.

Heffer's record as an opponent of capitalism and a battler for working class people, both before and after his election to parliament, puts him into a very select grouping of Labour MPs.

He stood head and shoulders above the trimmers and careerists who today swarm around Kinnock, and the so called lefts who oscillate in and out of Kinnock's shadow cabinet.

His main strength was as a tireless fighter for his working class constituents in Liverpool. He was a sharp critic of the Labour leadership and a defender of democracy inside the Labour Party. He was always willing to put his name, and often his physical participation, to campaigns in support of workers in struggle—not only in Britain but internationally. Indeed, in the parochial "little England" world of the Labour left he distinguished himself by his concern for international issues.

Unfortunately, the vehicle he chose—the Socialist International—betrayed the interests of the workers of the world just as much as the Labour Party betrays them in Britain.

Heffer liked to place himself in the tradition of the German revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg. He was willing to work with, and write for, far left groupings inside and outside the Labour Party. But he remained to the end a proponent of the useless strategy of transforming Labour into a "socialist" party.

He remained, too, a "parliamentarian". Not only had he mastered parliamentary routine but he was apparently drawn also into the camaraderie of the maverick back benchers of all parties.

This, and his fundamentally Christian approach to socialism, is what drew the plaudits of various right wing Tories on the morning after his death. It also brought him a personal congratulation from John Major after he battled against his fatal illness to condemn the Gulf War in parliament.

Though he could clearly see the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state as an obstacle to socialism he saw parliament as a fundamentally democratic body, able to be transformed.

Consequently his role was not only to support workers' struggles like the miners' strike and Liverpool Council's defiance of rate capping. Objectively Heffer and MPs like him played a role in containing the militant forces of workers' struggle and subordinating them to the party of Neil Kinnock.

Heffer saw Labour's true character as, fundamentally, socialist. The repeated betrayals of class interest by every Labour government in history he saw as aberrations.

It is our belief in the impossibility of transforming the Labour Party, our belief that parliament can be used not to further the struggle for socialism but as a platform to expose the crimes of the bosses, that separated us from Eric Heffer.

Nevertheless we are sad to lose an ally in the fight against exploitation, imperialism and bureaucracy.

The tragedy of MPs like Heffer is that, having renounced parliamentary careerism, having chosen to become the scourge of capitalism and the Labour leadership, they refuse to draw the logical conclusion and enter the fight for a revolutionary party and programme.

The best tribute any socialist can pay to Eric Heffer, the best way of continuing all that was positive about his fight against capitalism, is to break fundamentally with the Labour left politics which prevented him from winning that fight. ■

ON 3 May, a meeting of NALGO members working in Sheffield's residential children's homes issued a series of demands on management, in the context of the consistent underfunding of social services in Sheffield.

They demanded the reopening of two closed units, safer working practices and increased staffing levels. In addition the meeting called for the return to work of four workers who had been suspended due to allegations of child abuse, and that management should abide by previously agreed procedures to deal with such allegations.

A subsequent meeting of all NALGO members in the Family and Community Services Department backed the call for an indefinite strike of children's residential workers but failed to back a call for a strike across the whole department. This would have been the key to winning the dispute.

We began strike action on 20 May, which led to management miraculously

SHEFFIELD**Residential care strike**

In Sheffield a strike by residential children's home workers has once again raised the question of child abuse and social workers. Workers Power talked to **Simon Turner**, one of the strikers, about the problems of winning solidarity where both children's and workers' rights are at stake.

finding new funds to offer some limited concessions. But the main sticking point was the question of lifting the suspensions. Management, and the right wing of the union, have accused the strikers of demanding a "charter for child abusers". This has also been an important obstacle to winning support from other workers in the department.

The previous procedures on dealing with allegations of abuse were not

satisfactory but did give some protection to the worker as well as the child. They included a set period of suspension while an investigation of the allegations took place. This was then followed by a discussion with the union of the conclusions, leading to return to work or further suspension with the union's consent. This is the procedure that management should have followed. This time they did not.

Instead management reacted hys-

terically, suspending all four members without informing them of their reasons whilst at the same time informing the police.

This blatant disregard for the rights of workers arises as a result of an arrest at a unit that NALGO had been demanding an inquiry into for years, in the face of management indifference. As a result of this episode, and with increasing witch-hunting by the media against social workers, management now go straight to the police, without abiding even by the former inadequate procedure. This also allows the City Council to wash its hands of all responsibility.

An indication of how seriously the allegations are taken by the police is shown by the time they took to start investigations: four months in the case of two of the suspendees. In one case investigations were only precipitated by industrial action!

The right for the workforce to control suspensions is a hard won right. The loss of this will leave workers on their own with difficult and in some cases resentful children, open to allegations on only the child's word. This is a problem exacerbated by low staffing levels. This is no protection for either the child, if there is an abuser at work, or the worker.

Where police investigations are completed and no charges have been pressed we demand an immediate return to work of those workers.

Where an investigation has not been completed we demand the union has access to all the information and the return of these workers to non-sensitive areas. At all times we demand that management follows agreed procedures.

It is the workers that care for these children that take accusations of child abuse seriously, not a management that has shown blatant neglect for the children under our care. ■

RAIL SELL-OUT**Rank and file must organise**

THE LEADERS of the three main rail unions, ASLEF, TSSA and RMT, have demonstrated their abject cowardice in the face of determined efforts by the British Railways Board and the Tory Government to hold down public wage increases. At least ASLEF and TSSA had the "good grace" to not even pretend to lead a struggle for a decent pay increase, preferring instead to go to arbitration.

However, the supposedly more left wing leadership of RMT talked boldly of a determined fight for a "substantial" pay increase for its members. Early in May it turned down British Rail's (BR) "final offer" of 7% as "not acceptable" and "well below the level of inflation". A ballot of the membership for 24 hour strikes was scheduled for 23 and 24 May. This was pre-empted by BR convening the Rail Tribunal Machinery (RSNT) in record time.

The RMT leadership responded by issuing a leaflet headed "Tribunal meets but RMT ballot goes on!". Less than one week after this, RMT head Knapp and company had not only called off the ballot but had also accepted BR's new 7.75% offer. Even this could be tied to acceptance of BR's infamous restructur-



Another Knapp sell-out

ing plans if regional management gets its way (see *Workers Power* 142). This is treachery of the worst order, proving once again that the trade union bureaucrats will sell their members short rather than offend the owners and controllers of big capital.

This latest sell-out will mean yet another year of appallingly low pay and the working of 60 plus hour per week for many rail staff.

It comes in the wake of Jimmy "800 redundancies is better than 1,000 so now we have the basis for the re-opening of negotiations" Knapp's disgusting sell-out of London Underground workers who had recently voted by two to one to strike against job cuts.

The lessons of these sell-outs

need to be as clear as they are bitter. The present pack of traitors currently "leading" the rail unions were only too happy to sabotage a summer showdown with BR over pay in order to smooth the way for Neil Kinnock to swan into 10 Downing Street.

The anger and frustration that exists among rank and file railworkers must not be further squandered. It must be used to begin to organise not only against an increasingly arrogant BR board, but also to shake out the gutless, sell-out merchants who currently claim to lead our unions.

Rank and file railworkers organise! Fight to oust the traitors, build cross-union links as a step towards one industrial union for all rail workers! ■

IRELAND**Business as usual for the British state**

UNDER COVER of the farcical haggling over the venue for negotiations of the Brooke Peace Initiative the British State has continued its everyday "pacification process"—fitting up Irish freedom fighters and people uninvolved in the armed struggle alike.

Their aim is to intimidate the entire nationalist population into accepting any solution they care to dictate.

● Dessie Ellis, the first Irish person extradited from the 26 counties under the 1987 Extradition Act, was first charged with conspiring to cause explosions in Britain between January 1981 and October 1983. In February, magistrates accepted that he could not be guilty as he had not been in Britain at the time. Rather than accept that the prosecution had

failed, the magistrates imposed new charges, one under the Offences Against The Person Act and another under the Criminal Damage Act.

● In March, Kevin Barry O'Donnell was acquitted of firearms charges at the Old Bailey. He was immediately re-arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and served with an exclusion order. On his return he was told by crown forces "If we do not get you through the courts, you will be taken out by the loyalists".

After an attempt was made to frame him with possession of a RPG7 rocket launcher and rifle, he fled the Six Counties, saying "I have to get out of here because the way things are going, if I stay, I will end

up back in Crumlin Road Jail, or worse."

● In May former Sinn Fein Publicity Director, Danny Morrison was jailed for eight years along with eight others for the "false imprisonment" of RUC double agent Sandy Lynch. Lynch was being prepared for a press conference where he would have revealed his role, together with details of the RUC blackmail which led to his betrayals, when the RUC and British Army arrested Morrison at a house in Lenadoon.

In one 18 month period Lynch was paid £50,000 by the RUC. He must have earned even more for his part in the frame up of Morrison. Diplock Court Judge Brian Hutton admitted there was a "reasonable

possibility" that Morrison had been setting up a news conference, and even described Lynch as a man of "no moral worth whatsoever". Demonstrating the addage that it takes one to recognise one the judge decided to convict Morrison regardless.

The British labour movement must fight to free Danny Morrison and all those Republican fighters like him left to rot in Britain's prisons while the likes of Brooke talk of "peace" and carry out acts of war. ■

OUT NOW!**SMASH THE ACT!**

Pamphlet on the struggle against the Employment Contracts Bill in New Zealand

Produced by
Workers Power (New Zealand)
£2 inc p&p

**JUSTICE FOR DESSIE ELLIS
CAMPAIGN**
c/o Haringey IBRG,
Homsey Library, Haringey Park,
Crouch End, London N8

The Tories came to power in 1979 determined to cut public spending. Despite successive rounds of cuts in the 1980s health spending still grew. The achievement of a public health service free at the point of need is a gain that the Tories have long targetted. But precisely because of its popularity they have never dared mount a direct attack on free health care.

Faced with this dilemma during the nurses' pay dispute in 1987-88 Thatcher announced a "whirlwind review" of NHS funding. The result was the plan for an NHS "internal market" whose first stage came into operation in April.

Jane Potter looks at what is happening the the NHS under the new Tory legislation.

ENOCH POWELL, when he was a Tory health minister, once complained:

"There is virtually no limit to the amount of medical care an individual is capable of absorbing."

The internal market places a real and very familiar limit on that care: cash.

At the same time it has established a two-tier health service, where those whose GP or health authority can pay more for services will get them quicker.

The emphasis is no longer on carers and patients but on purchasers and providers. From now on as well as the question "what care is needed" health workers and managers alike will have to consider "how much does it cost?"

Budget

For the first time District Health Authorities (DHAs) have a finite budget, allocated according to number of people in their district. No one knows what is really going to happen to those who overspend, but the logic of the internal market is that the weakest go to the wall. Hospitals which do not sack enough workers or cut costs drastically enough will be threatened with closure.

Under the new system both DHAs and so called GP budget holders buy services from individual hospitals and units.

Those that are willing and able to pay above the contract price can buy preferential treatment for their local patients. This is called fast track treatment: some know it better as queue jumping.

So for between £10,000 and £25,000 above the normal price health authorities get a guarantee from Christie's Hospital in Manchester to admit non-emergency cancer patients within two weeks instead of the normal six.

Watford General Hospital has offered fast track treatment to the patients of two budget holding GPs in exchange for contracts worth £1.5 million.

Forced

At the end of the day there is less choice for patients. And the more health authorities are forced to make extra-contractual payments the quicker their budgets will run out leaving no choice for patients other than the waiting list.

Trusts are a law unto themselves. They can opt out of nationally agreed Whitley Council rates of pay, cut services that don't break even, charge what they like for those that do, de-recognise unions. We won't even know about much of this as the Trusts' business affairs are secret.

Millions have been spent on getting the bureaucratic machinery in place to price all the services, draw up contracts, issue bills. They have

spent £80 million alone on bringing in new management structures: enough for 8,000 hip replacements. Added to this they have spent £115 million setting up contracts and establishing Trusts.

Management consultants Coopers, Lybrand and Deloitte who were paid to vet all the Trust applications earned a tidy £563,000 for their troubles. Nearly enough to run three hospital wards for a year. Even then the government didn't listen to this costly advice. The consultants recommended only 14 as financially watertight out of the 56 that were actually accepted for trust status!

Chaos has reigned in the run up to 1 April which was not only the start of the market but the deadline for DHAs to have balanced their books. This was to create a "level playing field" for the market to operate on. It certainly has levelled many hospitals. It has led to over 9,000 bed closures. 3,250 have remained closed—2,000 of them in London.

Some districts had to make massive cuts in order to clear enormous debts. West Lambeth had to clear an overspend of £9.8 million. Many were unable to meet the deadline despite slashing services. This is certain to lead to even bigger cuts this year. Not only do their managers still have to clear those debts but they also have to find extra cash to finance the cost of the changes.

The effect of the changes has been a scale of redundancies unprecedented in the NHS—900 at Guy's



Tories' NHS time

and Bradford is just the start. In response the Tories say that the NHS is not there to provide jobs for workers but to provide health care for patients. They are trying to set patients against health workers.

But at Guy's Hospital the 600 redundancies have not been matched by the equivalent cut in

work expected. So health workers, already stressed and overworked, will be expected to do the work of those that are sacked. This will create dangerous situations where mistakes can be made and lives lost.

The internal market has upped the pace of privatisation in the ancillary services. One thousand domestic jobs in South Glamorgan have gone and the work has been put out to private contractors. The domestic services at University College Hospital, London—already cut to the bone—have just been privatised.

Predictably management have seen 1 April as the signal for new strong arm tactics. Royal Oldham Hospital sacked 34 medical records staff for taking strike action over regrading to get a pay rise of less than £7.

Clearly the NHS Act is already inflicting damage on the NHS. But there is still worse to come.

The government was forced to modify its original proposals in the White Paper because of the obvious chaos it would cause if implemented at a stroke. Last year East Anglia Regional Health Authority ran a three day workshop simulating the internal market. During this exercise the market crashed!

So for the first year managers have to operate what is known as the "steady state", limiting contracts to previous patterns of health provision. These modifications which restrict the market for an initial period will be removed after the first year. Then the real market will be in place and, as in all markets, it will lead to the survival of

the fittest.

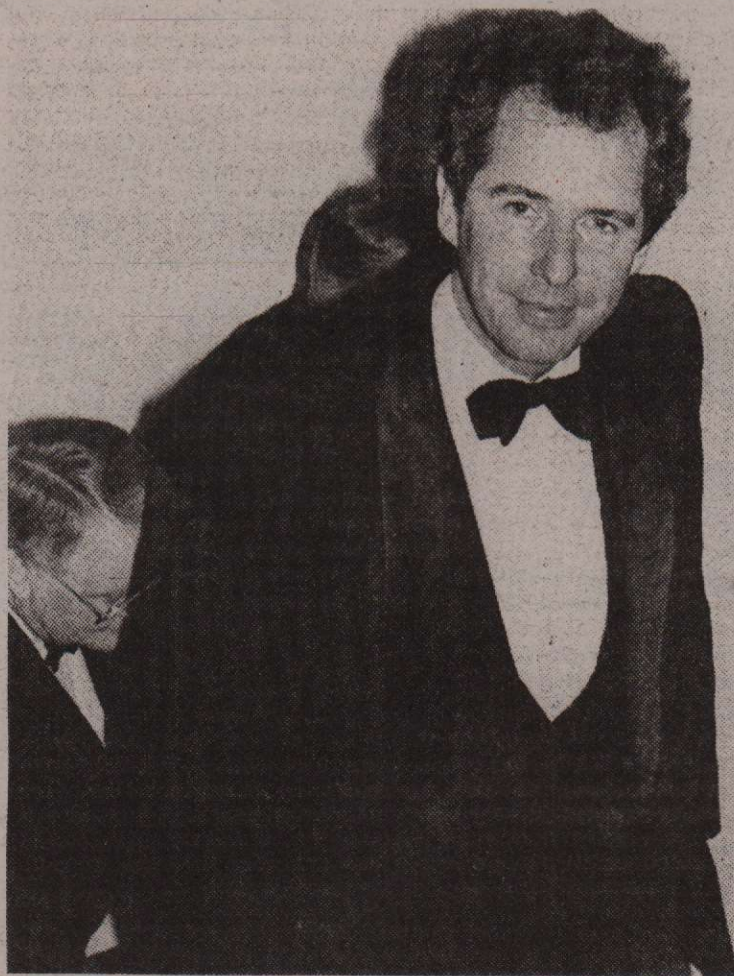
It is estimated it will take another four years before the main 250 acute hospitals will have put a price on the thousands of services they provide. After that there will still be 2,000 hospitals not linked into the computer costing of services.

"It will be a market without a price mechanism" wrote the *Guardian*. But in fact, like all markets, the NHS internal market will quickly create a price mechanism. Long before the mainframe computers have costed services the market will reveal who can provide them the cheapest. And the whole market mechanism is designed to drive to the wall those who refuse to cut costs and standards, those who refuse to attack the pay and conditions of NHS staff, those who are prepared to pay for the expensive medicines to meet the needs of individual patients.

Queues

Budget holding GPs are seen by Waldegrave as the "standard bearers" of the market. Already they are jumping the queues. He hopes that patients at non-budget holding surgeries will demand their GPs enter into the fray and get them treatment as quickly. Just as with the Poll Tax the Tories have designed their reforms to undermine services through pressure from below.

Inevitably the internal market will create the impetus for an external market. As GP's budgets are fixed they will turn to the only too willing cheapskate private clinics



How to fight the new bosses

WITH OPTING out a reality, militants in the hospitals and other health services that are now run as Trusts are faced with a choice. Should we stick with national agreements, however bad they are, or should unions go it alone at a local level?

Many in the unions see the way forward as local branches negotiating better deals within the individual Trusts. The union bureaucrats say that opting out offers a golden opportunity to improve local union organisation. But this is merely a cover for the fact that they have failed to offer any strategy to fight the Tories' NHS and Community Care Act. All they can do now is to pretend things are not as bad as they seem.

In reality they are worse.

While some well organised local unions may not immediately suffer under the Trusts, the less well organised areas will be targeted for attack with the aim of squeezing them out. Before, the stronger parts of the union—mainly in the bigger cities—could fight for a national agreement and protect the weaker areas. Now we will be fighting separately.

Trusts will now be able to de-recognise trade unions, cut wages, change working conditions and tear up existing contracts. Managers will try to introduce fixed-term contracts, e.g. six months, so that you can be discarded or victimised at the end of the term. They will try to individualise their contracts and bring in performance related pay. In addition services will be drastically hit.

Sounds far fetched? Already there

bomb

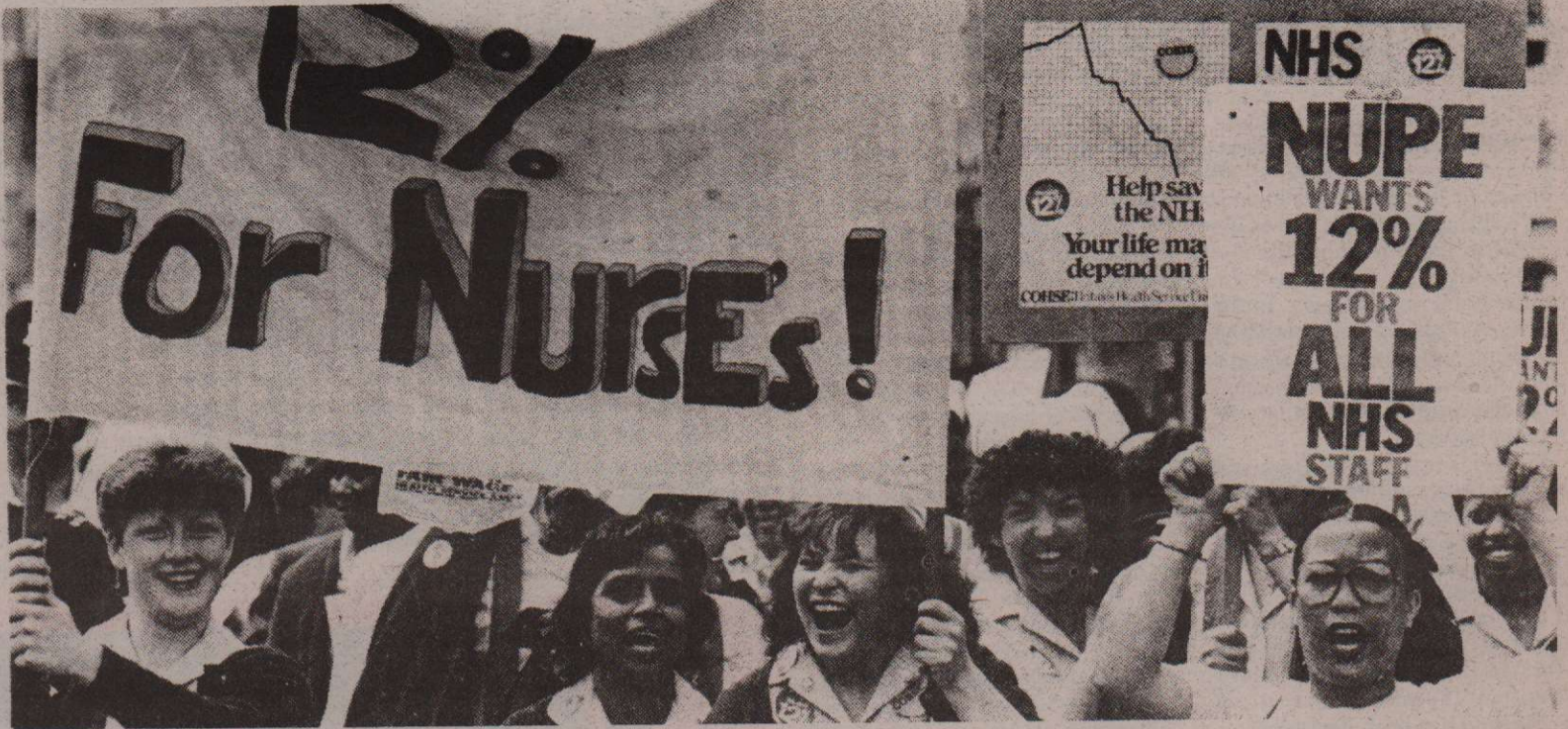
if NHS trust prices are too high. If the Trusts want to increase profits they will have to search for it from private health care and that will be at the expense of NHS patients

It is clear that under the market hospitals will drop services and narrow them down to what is profitable. All the evidence from the private sector supports the view that having a wide range of treatments is less profitable. So patients are going to have their choices cut further. They may be sent miles for the simplest of treatment because their local hospital has stopped providing it.

To the Range Rover owning upper classes this means nothing. To the masses of unemployed, elderly and low paid who rely on public transport it will mean human misery on a vast scale.

Another casualty as the free market blossoms will be the big teaching hospitals, particularly in London. They have much higher costs than most other hospitals and this will put them at a disadvantage in the market place. The cost of their general treatments will be higher and they will be forced to drop them. Some teaching hospitals will be forced to close and training of new doctors could be threatened.

As the logic of the market grips the NHS more hospitals will have to close and be turned over to the private health sector or changed into leisure centres for the rich. Then the Tories' long term aim will have been achieved: to smash up the NHS creating a private health care market for those that can afford it and a shoddy second class system for those that can't.



have been wage cuts of around £40 per month for staff in Lincolnshire Ambulance Trust. The Northumberland Ambulance Trust is considering not recognising COHSE.

The Trust managers have become paranoid about "whistle blowers"—workers or consultants who go public about bad standards of service. Many health workers have a "professional" code that obliges them to speak out if they see sub-standard care. But with the new Trusts public image takes precedence over everything. Who will but their services if there is bad publicity? So managers are gearing up to silence health workers with strict disciplinary codes and even new contracts for doctors.

It's time we organised to stop the attacks. Why wait for them to take us on Trust by Trust and hospital by hospital? We need national strike

action by all health workers to stop any more opt-outs and to smash the NHS Act. Workers in areas planning to become trusts must show the way forward by organising demonstrations, occupations and strikes to ruin their local managers' plans.

Trade unionists need to fully discuss the implications of their service opting out and hammer out a response on pay, conditions and union recognition.

Attack

By removing these services from health authority and NHS control, the managers no longer need to stick to any national agreements whatsoever. Managers will set the agenda, deciding when and where to attack working conditions. They may try to set up staff meetings to discuss with first

David Kemp, a COHSE steward in South Yorkshire, outlines an action programme for workers fighting within the new NHS trusts.

level managers. These are designed to undermine the unions, to get changes through without consultation. To counter this we must fight for ever increasing control by the workforce.

Management should not be allowed to breathe without our agreement. We need to aim for 100% trade union membership in the Trusts and recognition for all TUC unions! Unions must fight any agreement that excludes sister TUC unions. NUPE, COHSE and NALGO which propose to merge in the next few years must not agree to deals that recognise them, and not other TUC unions.

Already scab leaders of the EPTU have mooted the idea of single union

deals with the RCN representing the nurses and the EPTU the rest. There must be no single union agreements, no sweetheart deals and no recognition for scab organisations like the RCN.

We must fight for one health service union. Until then we must organise TUC-only joint stewards' committees.

Militants in the three unions that are to merge must push for any new union structure to be controlled by the rank and file and for the three unions to organise joint action. The union leaders said it would improve our union strength. Let's see them prove it now that we are under attack!

We should fight to retain national rates of pay. The unions when negotiating nationally should say they want the trusts included and should remain in dispute until every health worker is covered by national pay agreements.

Health workers will rightly point out that the union have done little on a national level to get decent pay but the way to resolve this is not to fight our own little corners but to make the health unions put in for a good claim and back it up with strike action.

The only comparison we need with industry is that of the average industrial wage. No health worker should get less than that!

Retain

In a similar vein we must retain all national disciplinary, grievance and conditions of service agreements. The unions must not allow new grades of workers to come in where their job descriptions are decided at unit level.

- No wage cuts! No job losses! The health unions must organise national action to stop the redundancies at Guy's, Bradford and any other hospital.
- If any union branch is not recognised then all unions must call immediate national all-out strike action!

Of course the union will raise the spectre of the anti-union laws and that we will contravene them. This is another clear choice: either we allow our national union structure to be weakened leading to de-unionisation of some hospitals or we prepare to take on the laws.

If our unions are attacked we should demand the TUC calls everyone out to defend us in an indefinite general strike to smash these laws. If they won't do anything, which is very likely, health workers must go straight to rank and file workers in other industries. There is a good record of solidarity action with health workers and we should not be afraid to go out and call for it ourselves. ■

The big lie behind the Tory health reforms is that the market can meet individual need. Waldegrave said about the reforms:

"Local District Health Authorities now have the responsibility for securing the health services local people need, from whichever hospital or unit can best deliver them."

From the NHS to Eastern Europe the Tories argue that the market is a better system to provide what people need than a planned system.

Facts prove the opposite:

- On 11 April a woman referred to Guys for a sterilisation by her GP was refused because her health authority would not pay for it.
- At St Mary's in London doctors are not being given firm admission dates for their patients in case the referring district has no cash. This has meant that clerical assistants are having to take decisions on which patients can be admitted as emergencies not on any clinical judgement but on the basis of hard cash.
- A woman in Manchester was refused the drugs she needed for her treatment because they were too expensive. GPs with limited budgets will now be very reluctant to take on "expensive" patients. Anyone who needs expensive drugs may find themselves without a GP.
- If a person gets ill whilst on holiday and is taken to a hospital that their own health authority does not have a contract with then the health authority where the accident takes place is not obliged to pay for non-emergencies. They could be refused treatment unless they were to pay themselves. A woman in an accident in Leeds was asked to pay for dental treatment because her own Health Authority would not

The market and the plan

pay.

So much for the market addressing the needs of the population. The market provides a service on the basis of profitability. Only a plan can actually address need.

The NHS however is a good example of a badly planned industry. It has been starved of cash for years. When it was set up in 1948 Labour Health Minister Aneurin Bevan made concessions to consultants who have tried to milk the service dry through their private work ever since. He refused to make local health boards electable, so the NHS is controlled by government appointees. It has been taken further and further away from the health workers and the patients. It is without doubt guilty of inefficiency and waste.

Immediately, as well as scrapping the NHS Act, we need to fight for a massive injection of government cash to:

- abolish waiting lists
- reverse all cuts and privatisations
- abolish low pay in the NHS

But in the long term most NHS workers and patients know that simply throwing money at the NHS

will not really ensure that all needs are catered for. The planning of health care has got to be put in the hands of those who work in the service and those that receive it.

Labour promises to abolish the market in health care and take the Trusts back into the NHS. Labour recognises that it would be taking over a health service in deep crisis. However the manifesto *A fresh start for health* stops short of promising a massive injection of funds. It is a con. Labour see the NHS as an excellent election ticket and they are cynically using it. Those electors that have been won to Labour over the NHS must demand that they provide the funds that are really necessary to provide a service that is free and available to all at the point of need.

Our answer is to plan health care through the democratic decisions of producers and consumers working together. That means workers' control and the fight for workers' management in the hospitals, ensuring proper staffing levels, the highest standards of patient care, proper wages and benefits for health workers. The health service would be accountable to community bodies elected by the working class who could really identify their local needs.

At a national level resources would have to be allocated to meet locally identified needs in full. For that to happen we would need a workers' government, a government that is prepared to put the interests of working people above all other interests. Only such a government would be prepared to put in the funds required, prepared to nationalise all the drug and supply companies that at present make huge profits out of people's misery, and to eradicate all the social causes of ill health. ■

AFRICA

The real cause of famine

TWENTY AFRICAN countries are currently "officially" affected by famine. That is a total of 29 million people across the continent. Seventeen million of those in the three countries of Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. In the Sudan one third of the population faces food shortages in what officials from the *Save the Children* campaign are calling the worst famine in living memory.

Even if emergency food aid reaches those suffering the prospects are bleak. These nations are amongst the poorest in the world. Those affected by famine have usually sold everything before arriving at a refugee camp. To add to the problems the Sahara desert has over the last century advanced more than 150 kilometres south as fertile land has been degraded.

While Princess Anne exhorts us to "Skip Lunch/Save a Life" and ageing pop stars get ready to boost their record sales with a few charity gigs the real reasons for the famine are glossed over. The reasons most commonly given are natural disasters such as the failure of the rains. Added to this are the usual human causes; corrupt government and perpetual, seemingly pointless, civil war. The role of the west in the worsening situation in Africa is for the most part conveniently ignored.

The main reason behind famine of the sort being experienced in Africa today is that the peasantry is not allowed to keep any surplus food to see them through a bad harvest. Increasing taxes, low "farm gate" prices, extortionate interest rates when money is borrowed for seeds and a poor transport network which stops easy access to markets: these are the social factors which mean that millions are unable to save anything.

In Sudan throughout the 1970s and 80s the pressure was forever increasing on the peasantry to sell food to pay off taxes and loans rather than save a portion for future consumption. Poverty led to increasing landlessness. Coupled with that was the use of best land in the country for the growing of cash crops such as castor and cotton.

During the 1984 famine food production per head was at a low level, but it had been lower twice in the previous twenty years without a famine. So even though there was enough food around, millions starved while tens of thousands of acres of the best farming land was given over to crops for the west.

While Sudan has now turned over a large part of its cash crop land to the production of dura, the staple food crop, it now faces different problems. It has recently been declared "non co-operative" by the IMF because it rejected the IMF's austerity package to get rid of its \$13 billion debt and \$7 billion arrears. Consequently the USA has refused aid, the EEC has stopped its annual aid of \$60 million and the World Bank has said "no new money".

The message is clear from the imperialists, conduct your economic affairs as we say or your people will starve. The USA even ties aid to political interests by law. In the USA Public Law 480 has a number of aims, one being to alleviate malnutrition in the world. But this is

explicitly linked to the expansion of markets for US farm products and the advance of the objectives of US foreign policy.

A Somali charity worker said recently "When the port of Berbera was considered a strategic base we really had an ace. Now no one really cares". He was referring to the \$600 million worth of aid from the USA which Somalia received during the 1980s when it was considered an important ally of the west after the Ethiopian revolution. At the same time the USA suspended all aid to Ethiopia due to the nationalisation of US companies there.

In 1986 at the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity argued that "The central issue is what the international community does in alleviating the debt-service obligations of African countries". Not surprisingly discussion of this was ruled out by the western nations led by the USA, Britain and Japan. Africans can starve as long as the imperialist bosses get their money.

On top of debt, the other main contributory factor to famine is war. Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia are all currently ravaged by civil war. Here again the west is far from blameless. The rebels fighting for an Eritrea independent from Ethiopia have been struggling for their freedom for over thirty years. The west first of all backed Haile Selassie and despite all the rhetoric against the now departed Mengistu they refused to back the rebels against his government.

The most horrific case of civil war, however, has to be in Mozambique. Here the South African backed rebels of Renamo have brought a relatively prosperous country to its knees. The vast majority of the country's two million famine victims are in the areas where the rebels have been active.

The greed of the western bosses over the debt repayments and the cynicism with which they back governments and rebels which seem sympathetic to them is matched by their tardiness in giving aid. World famine relief donations are down 4-5% since last year. Even when the bosses decide to give aid it is either late or goes via official charities which rely heavily on often repressive governments.

An EEC Audit Commission recently revealed that the average time period from first request for food till it arrives at the port of the affected country is 419 days! In 1983, thirty times more money was being sent to Ethiopia through official channels than was being sent to agencies which intervened directly in the war zones and were supported by the rebels. The International Red Cross did not want to rock the boat and so Eritreans got very little relief from them. It was left to their own Eritrean Relief Association to distribute food to those in the war zone.

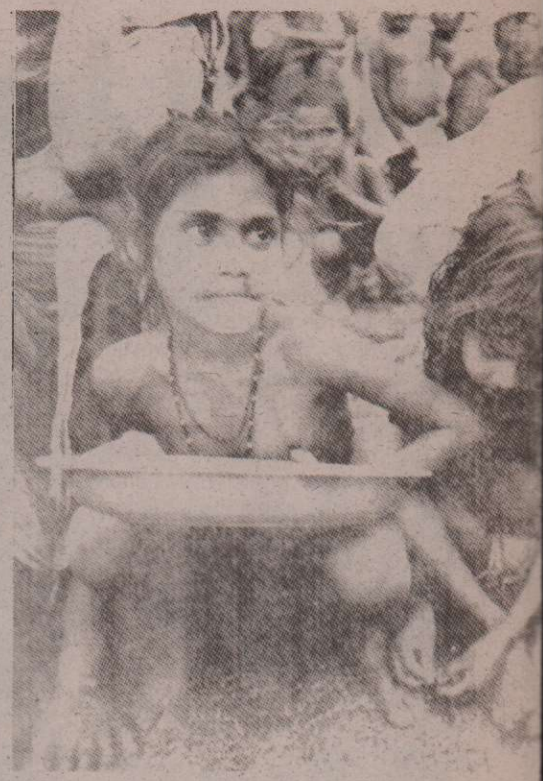
Africa has the ability to be a rich continent. A recent UN study showed that it has the potential to feed 1.5 times its projected population in the year 2000. Instead exploitation, debt burdens and war are rapidly turning the whole continent into the kind of place Michael Buerk described during the Ethiopian famine of 1984:

"This place, say the workers here, is the closest thing to hell on earth." ■

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of people have been killed this year by so called "natural disasters". Africa is once again in the grip of famine. Bangladesh has suffered a catastrophic cyclone. A massive outbreak of cholera has gripped Latin America. In every case the majority of the victims are poor people. Though floods, crop failure and disease can be the product of nature, these disasters are "man made". When the western media is not blaming the hand of God it blames the victims themselves. That is why one Tory MP suggested that the west should send not food to Bangladesh but condoms!

The hundreds of thousands dead in Africa, Asia and Latin America did not die from "natural causes". The real cause was the imperialist system which impoverishes millions, prevents balanced economic development and guarantees the power of a corrupt elite in the semi-colonial countries.

On these pages Andy Smith looks at the economic causes of the African famine. Colin Lloyd reveals the poverty and land hunger that condemn Bangladeshi peasants to the constant threat of destruction. Below Julio Prieto of the Peruvian Trotskyist group Poder Obrero, explains the class issues behind the cholera outbreak and outlines the programme of action needed to fight it.



Victims of Bangladesh cyclone

UNNATURAL

PERU

Cholera - and capitalist plague

IN RECENT years the political elite in Peru has put forward a series of packages to make Peru a "modern and prosperous country ready for the third millennium". Paradoxically it is thanks to these measures, which have impoverished the people, that cholera has been let loose—a plague more appropriate to the middle ages and to the most backward societies.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie has always refused to deal with diseases which afflict the most marginalised sections of society. Cholera is a disease that only attacks the undemourished and kills those who lack medical attention. This epidemic has affected only the tens of thousands of poor Peruvians and has not extended into the better fed sections of the population.

Figures from the health ministry show that the epidemic is only in its first phase, so it could easily affect 300,000 people and kill 9,000.

Recent economic measures have reduced real wages by at least a third, condemned 80% of Peruvians to unemployment or short time working. Those few "privileged" who have a job hardly earn more than a quarter of the minimum income for a family on the breadline.

Parliament has approved a budget where only 4% goes on health care. Ten times that amount goes to the forces of repression and to the multinational banks. The bizarre logic of capitalism means that medicine in Peru is more expensive than in more developed countries. The black market in medicine can be even more lucrative than currency speculation.

The Peruvian bourgeoisie is worried by the epidemic, but not for medical reasons. Its main concern is economic and political.

Every one of its projects is designed to bring about "re-entry into the world financial system"—in other words to open up Peru as much as possible to the imperialist capitalists. So they prioritise exports and the generation of foreign exchange to service the external debt.

But fear of cholera has meant that some \$150 million worth of agricultural and marine exports have been lost. The fishing and canning industries were amongst the few that were growing. Now they are in danger of losing outlets and markets, undermining the bourgeoisie's accumulation of foreign exchange.

The epidemic has struck while the government is pushing through austerity measures; privatisations, closure of unprofitable businesses and mass redundancies. It fears that the epidemic will feed the anger of the exploited and unleash a social upheaval.

El Cólera: OTRA PLAGA DEL CAPITALISMO

PODER OBRERO

Sección Peruana de la Liga por una Internacional Comunista Revolucionaria

Having plunged the masses into ever deeper poverty the bourgeoisie now blames the poorest sections of society for the outbreak of cholera. It is conducting a campaign to prove that the epidemic is a product of the vile personal habits of Peruvians. The minister for health declared that "we are all to blame for what has happened" and that "the people bear responsibility".

But a people's conditions of hygiene are subject to their material circumstances. It is capitalist exploitation which causes the lack of resources for the majority of Peruvians: they cannot refrigerate their food or cook it thoroughly in hygienic conditions. They lack clean water for washing and adequate medicine to prevent illness. The Peruvian masses wretched income forces them to eat produce that is cheap and of dubious quality.

Price

Doctors in Peru have made a series of recommendations on how to avoid cholera. They have told Peruvian workers to wash regularly and boil drinking water for ten minutes. But the price of energy in Peru is amongst the highest in the southern hemisphere. An average family would have a monthly electricity bill higher than the minimum wage if it boiled all drinking water for ten minutes! Gas

and kerosene prices are also sky high. And 75% of homes in Peru have no piped water or regular supply. The vast majority are obliged to drink water that has not been scientifically processed for hygiene. Most water from the state agency SEDAPAL contains bacteria and sediment.

The doctors have told us not to bathe in the sea. Amidst the heat and the expense of any other form of recreation, this deprives the poor of one of their cheapest and most favourite pastimes. If we bathe in polluted water it is because beaches are the drains for waste from the cities and from the factories.

Lima is increasingly a metropolis of filth. It creates plenty of resources which could keep it in a state of public health. But the bosses prefer to invest in the cleanliness of their own districts and neglect most of the other areas. There is a ready supply of labour for public health improvements and the construction of water supplies, but the bourgeoisie demands "rationalisation" and mass lay offs.

As far as fishing is concerned there are many problems. While the Ministry of Health recommended that Peruvians stop consuming fish the President lives on fish salad! And this call to stop eating fish is a classic example of the way in which the semi-colonial ruling class unloads the burden of the public health scandal onto the workers and small producers.



BANGLADESH

Between cyclones and land hunger

DISASTERS

Other
gue

LAGA
PITALISMO

Los ricos le echan la culpa del Colera a los pobres

ers' and poor people's inspection committees, responsible to mass meetings. This is the only way to control the retailing of food by these small producers without resorting to corruption and state repression.

Police repression is vented against the poor. But those who own the factories that destroy public health go unpunished. So do the enterprises which market low quality food, the bosses who make millions from selling mouldy rice and rotten meat.

Behind the "war against cholera" lies an economic war. Many groups of capitalists see the outbreak of cholera as a way to make a fast buck. Fish is the cheapest food and rich in nutrients. But the inability to make sure the fish is not infected has led to hundreds of tons of fish being burned in this starving country. The huge oligopolies which produce other meats were quick to raise prices. The big chicken breeders, like the Ikeda family which controls a third of the chicken trade, immediately boosted the price when the epidemic broke out.

As well as the "contamination free" food monopolies the kerosene sellers and the water sellers have made a killing during the epidemic, boosting the prices as demand increased.

When the epidemic broke out the government allocated only \$4 million to fight it. Now that fund is exhausted. Experts estimate that for every 10,000 cholera patients at least £2 million is needed. Where the disease leads to dehydration the cost of treatment increases 15 times. The extreme poverty of the Peruvian masses has led some experts to predict hundreds of thousands of patients before the epidemic runs its course, at the cost of tens of millions of dollars.

Faced with the cholera epidemic, the response of the Peruvian bosses has been a series of programmes so limited that they cannot confront the task of treating the victims or attacking the causes and spread of the disease.

Only the workers, peasants, urban poor and the small producers have the interest and ability to fight the epidemic.

The epidemic could have been halted or eradicated if medicine were socialised and food and health services nationalised under workers' control.

The workers leaderships—the United Left and the PUM—only demand technical and short term measures which in no way attack the structural causes of the epidemic. They demand more medicine, closure of polluted beaches, cheaper water and kerosene. All of these are necessary in the short term. But the public outcry about the epidemic should be

focused against its real causes: poverty, low wages, corruption, lack of development, the absence of the most basic public services.

The real guilt for the outbreak of cholera in Peru lies with the diseased system called capitalism. It is capitalism which condemns the majority to live in poverty. At moments of crisis imperialism defends its interests only by further ruining the poor. The more imperialism squeezes the debt ridden countries of Latin America, the more whole sections of the population become prey to diseases like cholera.

Poder Obrero (Peru) is fighting to force the unions and the Popular National Assembly to campaign for:

- abolition of all taxes on public utilities and fuel
- raising the living standards of the population. Raise wages to cover the minimum family budget (\$500). Instead of sackings there must be a programme of public works to put an end to unemployment. Share work amongst the population with no loss of pay.
- nationalising without compensation, under workers' control, the big companies which produce medicine and food and of all private clinics.
- workers' committees of inspection for prices, supply and quality of food and water
- a vast increase in spending on health, water and sewage disposal. Tax the rich, cancel the external debts and expropriate the capitalists!

Sacrifices

The bourgeoisie sing the praises of the "stoical people of Peru" who have put up with so many sacrifices. The truth is that these sacrifices have been forced on the working class by the leaders who have sold out struggles one after the other and who now stand impotent faced with the hammer blows of state repression.

"Christian patience" and the Pope's prayers have had their effect. The "Lord" has sent us cholera. The more we leave the bosses to carry out their attacks on the people the more we will be condemned to poverty and disease.

We need to centralise all struggles, prepare for a democratic rank and file congress of the CGTP (TUC) and Popular National Assembly, form workers' committees with delegates recallable and elected to mass meetings and prepare for a general strike. Only this will bring the hour nearer when the bourgeoisie are punished by the anger of the proletariat and their poverty—and disease-ridden system abolished for good. ■

ON MONDAY 29 April a cyclone swept up the Bay of Bengal, engulfing the coastal islands of Bangladesh in a 20 foot tidal wave. The estimated death toll ranges between 100,000 and 200,000, with tens of thousands already dead from the ensuing famine and disease.

The massive loss of life occurred despite the fact that scientist had tracked the storm for several days, and despite the fact that 21,000 trained volunteers had been sent out to give Bangladeshi peasants two days warning.

Faced with the scale of horror, and the fact that Bangladesh is sited in an area prone to cyclones, floods and famines it is all too easy to throw up one's hands in despair at such "natural" disasters.

This is the line of argument taken by most tabloid papers and swallowed by many workers in Britain: Bangladesh is an inhospitable place for humanity. There is little we can do except aid the victims, they argue. Even when aid is given it is prone to be stolen or misappropriated by the corrupt Bangladeshi regime, the papers point out.

But though there is little that can be done to prevent cyclones and tidal waves the massive death toll and human misery that results from them can be prevented. In Bangladesh the disease and hunger that followed the cyclone are really man made disasters.

Throughout the world it is the poor who suffer most from "natural" disasters, because they lack the most basic of human needs adequate shelter, transport and communications.

In Bangladesh half the population is landless, in a rural economy where land ownership and tenancy means everything. According to John Cunningham of War on Want:

"Land is the key resource in rural Bangladesh, for it not only produces income and employment but also represents the main source of security, provides the basis for access to other resources and is the prerequisite for credit."

Since 1960, despite numerous "land reform" programmes, the proportion of landless peasants in Bangladesh has risen from 35% to over 50%.

But in the Ganges Delta fertile islands form regularly from the river silt, tempting the rural poor to scrape a living on the edge of disaster. As Red Cross spokesperson Renny Nancholas explained:

"As soon as they build up people paddle out and settle them. No matter how sophisticated the warning system farmers cannot be persuaded to evacuate until they can see the cyclone coming and by then it is too late."

So it is poverty and landlessness which drives these peasants onto the land which is constantly threatened by flooding.

In the cities of the Delta the same forces are at work. After the cyclone hit Chittagong, the region's main city, middle class Bangladeshis emerged unscathed from their hilltop homes to observe masses of bodies floating in the flooded poor districts below. In a city where high ground means the difference between life and death it is no surprise to find the poor herded into slum districts on the lowest ground.

Poverty and landlessness form the backdrop to the high death tolls. Underdevelopment, class privilege and bureaucratic inefficiency exacerbate the problems.

In Bangladesh 83% of the rural population lives below the poverty line. Only 5% of villages have any form of primary health centre. The island region where the cyclones regularly hit are accessible only by air and water.

The Bangladeshi government owns only eleven helicopters, and the general impoverishment means there is

a shortage of small boats.

As a result of previous flooding disasters there are 26 embankment building projects underway in Bangladesh. But only one of them is aimed at combating the risk of coastal flooding. The others are aimed at protecting the farmlands of the rich landowners inland. And as one US agency reported:

"Embankments do not reduce floodwater but merely move it [and] . . . increase the volume and ferocity, and perhaps the depth of the flow to the sea." (*New Scientist* 18 May)

The technology required to protect those at risk from cyclones does exist. It ranges from vastly complex engineering programmes to protect and drain land, to very simple shelters, raised earth mounds and raised well mouths to protect drinking water from floods.

Bangladesh has the money for neither. In debt to the imperialist banks it depends for 80% of its development programme on aid from the imperialist countries. This aid is both minimal and tied to imports from the donor countries. Between 1971 and 1984 western aid to Bangladesh totalled \$16 billion, not enough to alleviate poverty, but just enough to give imperialism complete control. Bangladesh's dependence on aid allows the Bangladesh Assistance Group, the committee of imperialist donors, to dictate much of the country's internal economic policy.

Truth

For example it forced ex-President Ershad to return nationalised jute industries to their previous owners. It forced the government to scrap subsidies on rice, fertilisers and kerosene in response to IMF demands.

Much of the food aid given to Bangladesh is used corruptly. Ershad's government used it to supplement the income of government employees. Those holding urban ration cards, plus teachers, police soldiers etc, received nearly two-thirds of all food aid in the 1970s, according to *Inside Asia's* Larry Jagan.

The majority of "project aid" is directed to the transport, industrial and fuel infrastructure rather than to the plight of the rural poor. Between 1972 and 1982 only 17% of project funds went to the kind of rural projects that can alleviate flood damage. Only 2.7% went on health projects, and this in a country where 300,000 children die each year from diarrhoea.

Only massive land redistribution can remove the economic impetus which drives millions to farm the dangerous lands of the Ganges Delta. Only massive public spending on health, shelters, communications, and flood protection schemes can protect those at risk. But Bangladesh, systematically underdeveloped by imperialism, cannot solve these problems.

The rural and urban bourgeoisie has solved its own problems, concentrating land and capital in its own hands whilst the masses starve and drown.

Only an alliance of the working class and the rural poor can solve this cycle of death and destruction, by distributing land to those who till it, by developing Bangladesh's industrial economy to meet the needs of modernising agriculture instead of the export market to the "aid givers".

Workers everywhere have a part to play in this struggle that goes beyond occasionally digging into our own meagre wage packets to make up for the aid that imperialism will not provide.

A real struggle against poverty and destitution in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the "third world" involves a struggle against capitalism and imperialism. A united struggle between workers in the imperialist heartlands with their brothers and sisters in the semi-colonial world can end this barbaric system for ever. ■

YUGOSLAVIA EMERGED from World War Two with the Communists led by Marshall Tito in a dominant position in the state. The war had seen horrific massacres perpetrated by Serb chauvinists (Chetniks) and by Croatian fascists (the Ustasha). It has been estimated that 1.75 million Yugoslavs, 11% of the population, perished during the war and that more than half of these were killed by fellow Yugoslavs.

In fact Tito's partisans were able to wage a successful struggle against the German forces and emerge as the victors only because they renounced both Serbian and Croatian chauvinism and also because they promised to re-write the constitution, guaranteeing the rights of different national groups and religions.

The Stalinists never kept their promise and the 1946 constitution was modelled on Stalin's 1936 Constitution in the USSR, full of democratic promises but masking a centralised dictatorship established over the workers and nationalities. It was only later in the early 1970s that changes were introduced which allowed a real federal state to emerge.

One of these changes, in 1974, granted greater autonomy to two regions in Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo; an area of ethnic Albanians. A revival of Albanian self-awareness took place in Kosovo leading to growing clashes between Albanians and Serbs in the region in the 1980s.

A decisive new factor which exacerbated these tensions and added new conflicts between nationalities was the escalating economic and political crisis which hit the Yugoslav bureaucracy in the mid- and late 1980s; a local variant of the general crisis of Stalinism and the degenerate workers' states. In Yugoslavia the decentralised planned economy, the system of "workers' self-management" and "market socialism" began to move into crisis in the 1980s.

During the 1960s and 1970s it had experienced quite high growth rates and the relative growth in prosperity allied to the unifying factor of the Yugoslav League of Communists helped keep the federation together. From 1979 growth rates began to decline sharply and between that year and 1982 real personal income per worker fell by 15% after two decades of continuous improvement. By the mid-1980s the fall was continuing—14% in 1986-87 and a further 5% in 1987-88. In response the Yugoslav working class resorted again and again to strikes against this loss in real purchasing power of their wages.

Crisis

The economic decline and the revolt of the working class posed the ruling bureaucracy with an acute crisis. It turned to the only solutions that gave it hope—pro-capitalist market reforms on the one hand and nationalist demagoguery on the other. These policies are reflected respectively in the persons of the Yugoslav Federal Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, and the Serbian party leader and President, Slobodan Milosevic.

In 1987 Milosevic came to power and proceeded to carry out what he mis-called an "anti-bureaucratic revolution". Criticising "too rapid" and reckless moves towards marketisation, he mobilised the factory workers of Belgrade and other major cities, diverting the strike movement into increasingly national chauvinist directions. Using some real and some imaginary "outrages" in Kosovo, he led a campaign to restore power to Belgrade, i.e. to the Serbian party bureau-

Yugoslavia's very existence as a state looks increasingly uncertain. With growing clashes between Serbs and Croats, with the Federal Presidency blocked and apparently paralysed and with Slovenia pushing ahead to its "declaration of independence" on 26 June, Yugoslavia appears on the verge of collapse if not civil war.

Mike Evans looks at the background to the current national tensions in Yugoslavia and argues that only a revolutionary struggle aimed at a refounding Yugoslavia as a federation of workers' council republics can prevent such an outcome and avoid disaster.

Civil war or workers' revolution?



President Jovic with Milosevic

crats. For two years he was able to fend off the legalisation of opposition parties and when these were formed in 1990 he kept them from any access to the public media.

The rise of Serbian nationalism rapidly met with a reaction in the other republics, especially Croatia. With a population of 4.5 million, Croatia has a 12-15% Serbian minority. These Serbs were settled there by the Habsburgs from the 17th century as frontier guards against the Ottomans. Particularly sizeable and compact areas exist in the Dinaric Alps, near the Dalmatian coast around Knin and in four other areas along the southern border of the Croatian republic.

The nationalists are led by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), led by Franjo Tudjman, which won a two thirds majority in the Sabor (the Croatian parliament) in the Autumn 1990 elections. Tudjman is a demagogue, a Croatian nationalist as Milosevic is a Serbian one. Both have cynically whipped up nationalist hysteria. Tudjman and the HDZ call for self-determination including the right of secession for "the whole Croat nation, within its historical and natural boundaries".

Today reproducing this historical entity from the tenth century as Croatia would mean absorbing millions of Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, Slovenes etc. The Nazi puppet state of "Independent Croatia" covered a similar area. Croatia has no "natural frontiers" either. Such claims are plainly undemocratic claims to include in an independent state large regions not inhabited by them now.

The HDZ's electoral programme talks of a "social and demographic policy that will bring an end to the biological endangerment of Croatia and enable a demographic renewal of the Croat nation". Tudjman has

remarked that "In Croatia all are equal but one has to know who is the host and who is the guest". The HDZ is also firmly committed to the restoration of capitalism. Its programme, with a frankness unusual in Eastern Europe, states that: "For the abolition of social ownership, and its transformation into shareholder ownership." Its "commitment" to defending motherhood and promoting large families, indicates a deep threat to existing abortion rights and contraception in a strongly catholic Croatia.

In Serbia, Milosevic now faces rivals in Serbian chauvinism. In 1990 Milosevic led the transformation of the League of Communists into the Serbian Socialist Party (SSP). In doing so it absorbed the old popular front, the Socialist Alliance, and its considerable reserves, believed to be some \$160 million. The SSP has maintained an iron control over the media, which provoked mass student demonstrations in early March, inflamed by brutal repression from the paramilitary police.



But the leading forces in the Serbian opposition parties are also heavily tainted with Serbian chauvinism. Most prominent is the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO).

It originated in the autonomous province of Vojvodina in the Serbian Republic. Vojvodina, with a population of nearly two million, has perhaps the most mixed nationality make-up of any region. The Serbs are a majority with 56% but Hungarians constitute 22% of the population, Croats 7% and a variety of other nationalities including Germans and Romanians a further 14%.

In 1988 Milosevic encouraged a series of mass demonstrations against the autonomous province's leadership and in solidarity with the Serbs of Kosovo which was aimed at toppling the government and fully subordinating Vojvodina to the Serbian Republic. A number of independent societies were formed like the "Sava Society for the Preservation of Historical Truth, the Serbian Language, the Cyrillic Alphabet and the defence of Kosovo". It is not accidental that these Serbian ultra-nationalist organisations should have arisen in the mixed nationality "frontier" zones of Serbia.

The chief ideologist in these groups was the writer Vuk Draskovic who advocates the restoration of the borders of Serbia as they were in the pre-war period i.e. incorporating large parts of Bosnia, Croatia, the whole of Macedonia and Montenegro together with the total absorption of Kosovo (80% ethnic Albanian) and Vojvodina.

This greater Serbia would be a "democratic and multi-party state within its historical and ethnic borders". It would then form a confederation with Slovenia and Croatia and the "state" would hold a referendum on the restoration of

the monarchy or the retention of a republic. Draskovic favours a constitutional monarchy. During the election campaign in Serbia in December he announced "If I become president I will only govern for a few months because then I will hand over power to King Alexander".

His immediate followers and "bodyguard" are given to dressing up in the costume of the war-time Chetniks. Thus whilst the Serbian Renewal Movement is not a fascist movement, elements within it, around Draskovic, certainly espouse monarchist-clerical and ultra Serbian chauvinist positions. In addition armed bands of neo-Chetniks have carried out horrific attacks on Croats in the regions of mixed population.

In May twelve Croatian policemen were killed in Borosovo Selo in a Serbian region within Croatia. At a protest demonstration in Split a Macedonian soldier of the Yugoslav army was killed. Serb and Croat minorities have been driven out of villages in the areas of mixed population.

There is a severe danger that not only will capitalism be restored with all the suffering this is bringing to Eastern Europe in the form of mass unemployment but also that a bloody civil war will rip the country apart. Whilst socialists must stand unequivocally for the rights of Yugoslavia's people to self-determination, including secession from the Federation if they so desire it, this will be neither easy nor an intrinsically progressive outcome.

Not only are there substantial and geographically scattered national minorities in Croatia and Serbia but Bosnia-Herzegovina is a republic of intermixed minorities. Complete separation on the basis of capitalist restoration is a recipe for forced population transfers, pogroms and possibly full scale civil war.

Fight

Genuine revolutionary socialists must fight for a totally different solution. They must stand out against the chauvinist demagoguery of a Milosevic, a Tudjman or a Draskovic. They must fight for a working class internationalism and a political revolution that will put Yugoslav workers, Serbs, Slovenes, Croats, Albanians and Macedonians, in charge of their own destinies. To do this means fighting to overthrow the bourgeois restorationist governments in Slovenia and in Croatia and fighting to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucratic regime in Belgrade as well.

A political revolution would centre power in workers' councils, would protect and preserve state and co-operative property but take it out of the hands of the greedy and parasitic bureaucrats. It would create an economy planned by the working class with real workers' management of the factories, offices and shops.

It would grant the right of any nationality to secede providing it allowed its minorities a similar right or local autonomy, but it would try to persuade them all to refound a new federation of workers' council republics, first of all in Yugoslavia but as soon as possible, through revolutionary struggles, open to the whole of the Balkan region.

Such a socialist federation alone could settle the tangled and cruelly exploited national problems of the peninsular; Albanians, Turks, Hungarians, Rumanians and Greeks, as well as the Slavs could bury their history of oppression and antagonisms and lead the whole region to develop its natural resources, obliterating poverty and backwardness in the march to a socialist order in Europe and beyond. ■

Can India survive?

Rajiv Gandhi's assassination puts a spotlight on India's growing crisis. Arthur Merton examines the myth of a "secular" and "democratic" India held together only by the statesmanship of the Nehru dynasty.



RAJIV GANDHI was not in power nor even a member of the Indian government at the time of his death. Why has the assassination of the last of the Nehru dynasty raised doubts as to the very survival of "the world's biggest democracy"?

India was in a deep political crisis even before the assassination. The election campaign which Rajiv Gandhi was participating in when he was killed has been the most violent since India's independence. Official reports alone list hundreds of killings in the course of the campaign and on just the first day of polling more than fifty people were reported murdered.

Indeed, the entire period since Rajiv's crushing electoral defeat in November 1989 has been marked by political instability. The subsequent coalition government led by the Janata Party (JP) of V P Singh ruled with support from both the Stalinist Communist Parties and the far right wing Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) until the end of last year when it collapsed.

Singh's regime was followed by the equally weak minority government of Chandra Shekhar, the leader of a faction within the Janata Party who ruled only with the consent of the leadership of the Congress (I) Party, and in particular of Rajiv Gandhi.

At the same time India has seen an upsurge of communalist violence and the growth of national, religious and caste rivalries coupled with continuing separatist struggles in Kashmir, Assam and the Punjab. The most dangerous development has been the growth of the BJP, which plays on the discontent felt by millions of the poorer sections of the Hindu population.

The BJP defends caste and professional privilege with a heady

blend of chauvinism, anti-Muslim propaganda, religious fervour and traditionalism. The BJP made headway through its opposition to VPSingh's proposal to reserve more than 50% of all jobs in the important government service sector for members of the low castes in Indian society. It also won mass support for its campaign to demolish a 16th century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya and build a Hindu

temple on the site, supposedly the birthplace of the god Ram.

Their Hindu chauvinism is directed against a Muslim community in India of over 100 million people, and threatens other religious and national minorities with repression and domination.

In the face of these disintegrative tendencies many looked, and still look, to the Congress (I) Party as the only force capable of holding

the country together and preventing a downward spiral into civil war and a final end to the nominally secular and democratic pan-Indian state. Yet Congress (I) itself is a deeply divided and discredited party.

Years in power have led to enormous corruption in the party ranks right up to leadership level. The party, and probably the Gandhis, received millions in bribes from the Swedish arms manufacturers Bofors in the 1980s. Congress (I)'s formal commitment to India as a secular union has never prevented it from playing on regional ethnic and religious rivalries to maintain political control of India.

The political bankruptcy of the Congress (I) Party could not have been better illustrated than by their desperate attempts to draft Sonia Gandhi as President of Congress (I). Despite Sonia Gandhi's declared lack of desire for political involvement, despite her Italian Catholic origins, despite the fact that she had not even heard of any proposal to make her the leader of the party, a caucus of officials pushed her election through, behind closed doors, only to see her reject the new role just one day later. What India's political crisis reflects most clearly is the inability of its ruling capitalist class to develop the nation, to take the country forward economically, socially and culturally.

Intervention

In the years after independence, the Indian bourgeoisie sought to attain high growth rates through systematic state intervention in industry and agriculture. In terms of gross manufacturing output gains were initially registered during the years of the long boom through protective tariffs and a policy of substituting foreign imports with domestically produced goods. State capitalist planning enabled the industrial capitalists to gain in wealth and influence whilst in agriculture a land reform programme sponsored by the World Bank meant that the richest and biggest of the landowning farmers were able to benefit from irrigation schemes and the provision of credit for agricultural purposes.

The rich peasant class grew in wealth and number, fuelling regional demands for autonomy and

separation as those sections of society that were able to "enrich themselves" squabbled over the spoils. Meanwhile the chronic unevenness of India's economic development was revealed in the continuing poverty of the overwhelming majority of the population in which an estimated 250 million live below the official poverty line.

In common with other semi-colonial nations that sought to utilise a heavily interventionist strategy to stimulate development, the new period of world recessions and crisis led to growing economic stagnation by the late 1970s. Attempts at loosening the extent of state controls and encouraging foreign investment, which had been championed by Rajiv Gandhi had, however, come up against the inertia, and at times even the downright opposition of, sections within the Congress (I) Party bureaucracy.

By 1989 the economy was again in trouble and this spurred on all those seeking regional or particularist answers to economic stagnation. It also encouraged the high caste bourgeoisie to turn to more desperate measures to maintain mass support. Hence the urgent desire of Congress (I) for a suitable figurehead and the persistent use by the party, despite its secular pretensions, of racism and Hindu chauvinism.

Congress (I) has maintained the privileges of the Hindu elite and has seen them conduct bloody communalist massacres, such as the vicious killing of 3,000 Sikhs in Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. The pogrom was led by Congress (I) Party workers, and received the tacit support of Rajiv Gandhi. Today the killing of another Congress (I) leader has been met by the President of the party in the state of Tamil Nadu calling for the deportation of 200,000 Tamil refugees.

Approval

The existence of a political system which was based on the British parliamentary system, and set in place with the approval of India's former colonial rulers has given rise to the myth of India as "the world's biggest democracy". Yet this "democracy" is typical of all that capitalism can offer the semi-colonial world in the twentieth century. It is a democracy riddled with corruption, where votes are bought and sold, and where polling booths are regularly hijacked by the thugs of the party bosses, where mass illiteracy reduces voting to a choice between party symbols.

The bourgeoisie is incapable of overcoming the economic and political crisis of India, and is uncertain how even to hold it together. Only the rule of workers' and poor peasants' councils can provide a way forward for the Indian masses, planning production for the needs of the people rather than the private greed of the parasites. It would grant real democratic rights and religious freedoms to the peoples of India in the context of a truly secular state. It would grant the right of self-determination to all the oppressed nationalities whilst extending the struggle for socialism throughout the sub-continent through an appeal to the masses of the neighbouring states.

For that to become a reality, a revolutionary party of the Indian proletariat must be constructed in the intense heat generated by the nation's impending eruption. ■

ETHIOPIA

The fall of the Derg

ON 21 May, with his conscript armies collapsing and rebel forces on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, President Mengistu fled from his capital to exile in Zimbabwe. Mengistu was part of an officers' movement, the Derg, which overthrew the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. Under his leadership and with backing from the Soviet Union, Mengistu established a repressive and bloody dictatorship which eliminated all opposition forces including those who had participated in the struggle against Haile Selassie.

Promises of regional autonomy for areas such as Eritrea were soon forgotten and when the Eritreans took up arms to fight for it the Derg spared no efforts to crush them. They were backed to the hilt by the Stalinists. Soviet, East German and Cuban advisors trained up one of the largest armies in Africa, reaching 430,000 men under arms.

Ethiopia became one of Brezhnev's countries of "socialist orientation" with all the trappings of a Stalinist state, a centralised and dictatorial "Workers Party of Ethiopia", huge statues of Lenin and Stalin, and mass demonstrations complete with posters of the great leader Mengistu. The economy however remained capitalist, albeit a highly stratified and controlled capitalism.

Despite the massive military and economic aid from the Stalinists, the Derg failed to crush the Eritrean

opposition. Indeed rebellion spread to other minorities who increasingly felt the repression of the regime, the Tigreans and the Oromos. In 1988 under the leadership of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) the Eritrean forces inflicted a number of massive defeats on the discontented conscripts of the Ethiopian army.

This was the signal for the Tigreans to launch an all out offensive against the regime. By 1989 not only were the rebels on the offensive but Mengistu's major allies in the Stalinist states were deserting him. Gorbachev finally pulled the plug, cutting off arms supplies and working with the USA to try and impose a regional settlement.

Mengistu was quick to see which way the wind was blowing. In early 1988 he became a born again free market liberal! Out went the Workers Party of Ethiopia and the statues of Lenin and Stalin. In came the "Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party".

In 1989, starved of arms and advisors by the USSR, he suddenly turned to the Zionists for support, establishing diplomatic relations with Israel in November. From then on it was Israel that supplied advisors and arms to the regime to continue the war.

The bosses' press likes to paint these sordid dealings as a result of Israel's desire to bring the Ethiopian Jews to Israel, suggesting somehow that Tel Aviv was being "held to ransom" by Mengistu. In fact Israel

had every reason to back Mengistu, hoping to break what they see as "Arab hegemony in the Red Sea". For Israel defeat of the EPLF, now backed by several Arab states, was well worth fighting for. So was a potentially strategic position on the Red Sea for themselves.

By last year Washington had decided that Mengistu was a man they could do business with. After all he now called for a blockade of Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait and offered to send a contingent of troops to Saudi Arabia. His enemies in the Tigrean Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), one of the major military components of the opposition, had its origins in a pro-Albanian Stalinist grouping, which was not likely to endear them to the imperialists! Washington, along with Britain, proceeded to try and set up a deal which would end the civil war in Ethiopia and ensure a stable pro-imperialist regime. However, no deal could be struck as negotiations broke down over the question of Eritrean independence/autonomy.

The workers and peasants of Ethiopia have suffered terribly under the Mengistu dictatorship. Civil war, repression, famine have been their daily experience.

Now they face another danger. The fruits of their military victory will be frittered away at the conference table by leaderships which are only too willing to obey imperialism's orders. Already the TPLF's front organisation, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front, has embraced the marketising reforms introduced in the last months of Mengistu's regime. The supposedly socialist EPLF has declared:

"Our programme is clear; we are for multi-partyism and the market economy."

The market economy for Ethiopia means continuing starvation and exploitation by imperialism. Only by sweeping away the last remnants of the dictatorship, as well as the capitalist system it supported, can the workers and peasants of Ethiopia begin the struggle to end the poverty and exploitation which has disfigured their lives. ■

NICARAGUA

In March 1990 Nicaragua's Sandinista President Daniel Ortega was defeated at the ballot box by the pro-imperialist coalition UNO. Years of leadership compromise with imperialism took their toll on the masses who had made the Sandinista revolution. The Sandinistas threatened to lead an opposition to UNO's plans, to "govern from below" through the armed and organised Sandinista organisations. Now they are leading a headlong retreat, writes John McKee.

Sandinistas sabotage resistance

As the FSLN (Sandinista Liberation Front) approaches its Congress in July, growing tensions have appeared. The bulk of the FSLN leadership are openly repudiating its previous positions and working in a *de facto* alliance with Violeta Chamorro and her UNO government. The previous line of the leadership, that the FSLN would now "govern from below" through its control of the army, trade unions, state sector etc., was adopted to console a bewildered membership reeling from the election defeat of last year. This position has been quickly abandoned.

An influential group of leaders within the FSLN—Humberto Ortega, Victor Tirado, Sergio Ramirez, and ex-ministers from the Sandinista government—have seized on the collapse of the East European regimes and the weakening of the USSR to call for a Nicaraguan version of "new realism". This means dumping the FSLN's past and recognising that nationalisation, state intervention and land expropriations and redistributions have had their day. This group is based very much on the core of the old "Third Force" (*Tercerista*) Tendency in the FSLN. It wants to push the FSLN firmly in the direction of becoming a normal social democratic and parliamentary party.

In Nicaragua the FSLN leadership increasingly plays the role of such a party in relation to the masses and their struggles. They have given lukewarm support to a series of strikes and struggles only to use them to conclude deals at a governmental level with UNO. Then they have demobilised the struggles and pushed the leaders into accepting austerity measures and attacks on the remaining gains of the 1979 revolution.

Reversing

Violeta Chamorro came to power at the head of a right wing coalition, the UNO, committed to reversing the gains of the 1979 revolution. UNO's programme was clear:

- Stop the land reforms and then reverse them; most land to be returned to its former owners the big farmers.
- Reduce the Sandinista army massively and purge it of its political allegiance to the FSLN. Make it a reliable "professional army", an instrument for the bourgeois state to repress the workers.
- Dismantle the state sector and sell it off to the highest bidders; reintroduce private banks and abolish the state monopoly on foreign trade.
- A series of austerity programmes driving down the workers' wages and sacking tens of thousands of state employees.

Chamorro was met with immediate and militant opposition. Her attempts to impose these measures were brought to a grinding halt by two massive general strikes, in May and July of last year. In July barricades were thrown up in the major cities, protected in many cases by armed workers and FSLN militants. Chamorro had to retreat and seek an agreement with the FSLN leadership. They were only too willing to comply. A "social pact" agreed over the heads of the trade unions by the FNT—the old Sandinista trade union federation—conceded in the long term what the workers had defeated through their militant strike action.

The "Social Accord" was formally signed on 26 October 1990. By this time the FNT leadership had been pushed into line and signed along with the government, pro-UNO unions and the smaller employers'

federations. The larger COSEP refused to sign and is lined up with the right wing of the UNO under the Vice President Virgilio Godoy. The accord conceded the right of the government to privatise while "taking into account the rights gained by the workers"! It laid out plans to end state control of foreign trade and encourage private banks to set up. At a governmental level in return for "consultation" the FSLN—in the shape of the commander of the army, Humberto Ortega—agreed that army members would no longer be active in the FSLN, that it would be "professionalised" and would set about disarming the popular organisations which still had tens of thousands of weapons.

The results of this agreement soon became clear at the end of the year. The FMLN guerillas in El Salvador brought down one of the regime's US-supplied helicopter gunships with a SAM missile. The USA, with willing help from the Soviet government, quickly established that these came from the Nicaraguan army (EPS). Four Sandinista officers were promptly arrested, charged with stealing and supplying these missiles along with 11 Salvadoreans. The officers were immediately tried and sentenced to three and a half years in prison.

Not only Humberto Ortega backed this decision to the hilt but also the FSLN leadership. An act of revolutionary solidarity was declared by the EPS in the following terms:

"This small group of officers, blinded by their political passion and guided by extremist argu-

ments, have injured military honour and infringed the loyalty of the institution and its commander".

Commandante Luis Carrion for the FSLN criticised the "disloyalty" of the FMLN—that is, for daring to seek arms to protect the Salvadorean masses from the bombings and strafings of the El Salvador dictatorship's airforce!

The EPS has now been shrunk in size from 90,000 to 28,000 and a series of purges of "unreliable" officers has been carried out. Humberto Ortega pushed ahead with the disarming of the mass organisations, collecting in tens of thousands of weapons over a few months. In February of this year Ortega could proudly declare to a Nicaraguan magazine that:

"National reconciliation is gradually being established leaving the left and right extremes on the sidelines. Peace has been won and we are consolidating it through the total disarmament of the civilian population."

Dispense

Chamorro and her supporters in UNO are clearly happy with this progress for the moment. The FSLN is carrying out tasks which UNO is incapable of without provoking armed resistance from the masses. But clearly when they have finished these tasks, disarmed the masses, provided a reliable army and police force, UNO will rapidly dispense with the services of these gentlemen. Chamorro has already said as much. Pacifying UNO deputies who thought she was too soft on the army she is reported to have said:

"The removal of General Ortega is among my objectives, but it is not possible to set a date".

The FSLN leaders have been performing the same role for UNO on the political and economic front. In January of this year, pursuing their policy of co-operation and alliance with the Chamorro wing of UNO, the Sandinista deputies supported the leading ex-Contra Alfredo Cesar, helping to elect him as President of the National Assembly. Seeing this subservient policy, UNO, under its rising star Antonio Lacayo (Chamorro's son-in-law and unofficial Prime Minister), have stepped up their attacks on the masses.

1990 was a disastrous year for the Nicaraguan economy and the masses. Inflation reached 13,500%. Throwing open the country to foreign imports further damaged the collapsing Nicaraguan industrial sector. The economy shrank by nearly 6%. Forty per cent of the population is now unemployed.

Faced with this disaster at the end of last year Chamorro set off to Europe and the USA to try and persuade them to give some relief to Nicaragua's enormous debt problem. It now owes a staggering \$10 billion and was massively overdue on its interest payments by the end of last year, preventing any more development loans. Worse, of the \$540 million of aid promised by the USA after UNO's victory only \$207 million had been paid. Both the Europeans and the USA made it clear that real progress had to be made on privatisation, ending the state monopoly of trade and above all guarantee-

ing the rights of private property and a reliable army to protect it against the masses, before any generous deals were on offer.

UNO quickly complied. The so-called "Lacayo Plan" introduced in March this year was a dramatic speeding up of the attacks on the workers. Over 400 enterprises were targeted to be sold off, over 60,000 workers were to be made redundant as the plan went through. The "Gold Cordoba" was massively devalued and basic foodstuffs quadrupled overnight. The workers were offered a 200% wage increase in "compensation". Inflation is running at at least 800%!

Again the measures were met by a strike wave. Sugar workers, bank employees, electricity and health workers and many others struck. Customs officers occupied their customs posts. By the third week of March 77,000 were on strike paralysing the economy. The newly purged police force stormed the customs posts, teargassing the workers. Meanwhile the FSLN leadership called on the workers to show "moderation".

Under this pressure, and with the encouragement of the FSLN, the FNT leadership retreated and called a "two month truce" to allow the plan to work. While some FSLN leaders like Daniel Ortega blustered about the dangers of UNO breaking the social pact, others like Edmundo Jarquin, Vice President of the FSLN Parliamentary group were clear where they stood. Not only did they support the measures but as Jarquin stated "I believe moreover that if we were in government, we would be doing something similar".

Reward

The Lacayo Plan and its successful implementation was duly rewarded by the World Bank and Washington, with loans being supplied, and debts being rolled over. Lacayo could also notch up another "achievement", this time on the land. In February he was boasting to *La Prensa*, mouthpiece of the right wing of UNO, that "in Nicaragua, territory equivalent to a tenth of the Salvadorian land area has been returned to its former owners".

It is little wonder then that in this situation there is growing restlessness within the FSLN. Both the Sandinista Youth and the FNT condemned the leadership stance on the missiles supplied to the FMLN. Growing criticism is coming from the rank and file workers and peasants, not just about the current rightward drift of the leadership but about the previous policies.

Muted criticism have even come from the old Prolonged People's War tendency led by Tomas Borge. But this tendency remains hopelessly wedded to its Stalinist stages theory. This theory is based on defending capitalism as a necessary stage on the road to socialism and seeking strategic alliances with the "progressive bourgeoisie". It is this strategy that was at the root of the FSLN's debacle in government.

The only road forward for the militant industrial and rural workers in the FSLN is to break completely from the policies and practices of "Sandinism" which not only led the movement to defeat but now threaten the remaining gains won in the heroic struggles of the masses in 1979 and after. This means breaking with all forms of "stageism" and Stalinism as well as with social democracy. It means breaking from the FSLN and establishing a real revolutionary communist party, a Trotskyist party of Nicaragua which can mobilise the workers and the peasants for power. ■



The Sandinista leadership is destroying the spirit of the 1979 revolution

ARGENTINA

“A crisis of leadership”

Argentina is suffering from a renewed economic offensive by the imperialist banks and multinationals. But the Argentine left is in disarray. **Workers Power** spoke to a leading member of the Argentine PTS (Workers Party for Socialism), which produces the paper **Avanzada Socialista** (Socialist Vanguard). The PTS split from the left wing movement MAS, which is led by “Trotskyist” followers of the late Nahuel Moreno, organised as the International Workers League (LIT).

We do not share the PTS view of the MAS being basically healthy until 1988. Nor do we necessarily agree with the comrade's generalisations about the new forms of organisation sweeping the world working class. We present this interview as a first hand account of the problems of fighting popular frontism and its supporters in the centrist left.



Carlos Menem

AVANZADA SOCIALISTA
ORGANO DEL PARTIDO DE
TRABAJADORES POR
EL SOCIALISMO PTS
MIEMBRO DE LA
FRACCION
INTERNACIONALISTA DE LA LIT - CI
23 DE OCTUBRE DE 1990 - Nº 38 - A 4.000

**21 de Marzo, Telefónicos, Chubut ...
LOS TRABAJADORES LUCHAN**

asked for the strike to be called again. The government took fright and the workers got their jobs back.

This brings me to the problem of the leadership of the workers' movement. There is a major crisis within the trade union bureaucracy. We think it's rather like England when Trotsky wrote that the most important mainstay of capitalism in England was the trade union movement. In Argentina, it's the same. We have large unions with strong bureaucracies, bound by a thousand ties to the bourgeois state.

It's a right wing bureaucracy with a Peronist ideology. Yet when Menem seized power, the CGT—the equivalent of the TUC in Argentina—split into two wings, one which openly supported the government and a second which stood for limited opposition, led by Ubaldini. Ubaldini is the most important figure to emerge from the

the bosses' offensive. During the public sector general strike a co-ordinating committee was set up by railway workers. Co-ordinating committees were also established in many provinces, where public sector workers were divided by a large number of different unions. I mentioned the one in Chubut already.

The problem with these organisations is that they are only as strong as the ebb and flow of the particular struggles being prosecuted by their members, they have no permanent strength. This year, however, has witnessed an important change: co-ordinating committees of railworkers continued to exist even when the railway strike was defeated.

What is new here is that these organisations have arisen in preparation for struggle. We are witnessing them grow in strength

began again after the war. The difference as we see it is that instead of popular struggles we have workers' struggles with workers' methods (strikes) and workers' organisations (strike committees). The vanguard in this process is the Soviet working class.

WP: How would you characterise the political situation in Argentina now?

PTS: It's a pre-revolutionary situation. By this we mean, like Trotsky in *Whither France*, that it's in an intermediate, transitional situation. There are two possible outcomes: either the workers' movement will find a way of resolving the country's crisis or else the bourgeoisie and imperialism will. Revolution or counter-revolution are the two prospects.

The situation is increasingly polarised. So we find that if the

There are two possible outcomes: either the workers' movement will find a way of resolving the country's crisis or else the bourgeoisie and imperialism will. Revolution or counter-revolution are the two prospects.

Argentinian bureaucracy for ten years. Since 1982, he has called for thirteen general strikes. This “Ubaldinist” wing of the bureaucracy led (and betrayed) the most important struggles. But many vanguard workers still saw Ubaldini as someone who could be pushed and made to go further. This is an issue within the vanguard and it's a great obstacle to developing a revolutionary policy. The Ubaldinist current has disappeared now, it's broken. That's a consequence of its betrayals.

The crisis of the bureaucracy is also giving rise to new types of workers' organisation to counter

because of the crisis of the bureaucracy. Vanguard workers are discovering that they have to change too in order to organise and discuss.

We think that the situation of the Argentinian workers' movement and the emergence of new organisations of struggle is part of a worldwide trend in which the working class takes the centre stage. You can see it in the Soviet Union, with the miners' strike over the last two months; in North Africa and Greece over the last two years; in Turkey; and in Latin America, especially in Brazil. The Gulf War stopped this process for five or six months, especially in Turkey, but it

bourgeoisie wants to attack the workers' movement, it will be obliged to fight not only the unions, but all the organisations in the workers' movement, even the political ones. If the workers' movement fights back, this wing of the bourgeoisie will have to use fascist methods against it.

On the other hand, a wing of the bourgeoisie will have to prepare a popular front. We have an example of this in the United Left, the Communist Party and the big petit bourgeois parties. There's also the Centre Left Front which includes the Social Democratic Party, a left faction of the Radical Party and the

railway workers' co-ordinating committee. There are also other popular fronts being prepared.

WP: What are the parties of the left doing?

PTS: In Argentina for the last three years the Communist Party (CP) and the MAS (Moreno-ites) have been joined in a front called the United Left (Izquierda Unida) with little petit bourgeois parties. Another Trotskyist organisation, Partido Obrero (Workers Party), has since joined.

The Argentinian left is in crisis. The CP has been destroyed. Last year it split into two factions, right wing factions: one went into Peronism, the other to the Centre Left Front. They have a big apparatus, but a non-existent party. The CP in Argentina controls a large co-operative bank, but politically it's been destroyed. They have only been able to mobilise 200 or 300 people for their rallies.

The most important left party is the MAS but it is also in a deep political crisis. After we split from it they developed a right wing policy based on capitulation to the bourgeois democratic regime, to the trade union bureaucracy and to the CP. For the last three years they have declined to make any criticisms of the CP and at the beginning of last year they began to support a popular frontist policy.

The MAS newspaper announced that a new leadership was emerging for the workers' movement of Latin America: Lula and the Brazilian PT were a “revolutionary leadership”. The consequence of this very right wing policy was that a big factional struggle broke out inside the MAS. The leadership fell but the group's policies remained the same. Before this in the general strike in the railways, all of them called for a general strike. Ubaldini said this was not the right time. So the MAS refused to raise the slogan of the general strike. Indeed, inside the rail workers' co-ordinating committee they voted against the slogan.

We call on the MAS to break from the United Left and we call on both the MAS and the Partido Obrero to become a socialist pole of attraction for workers, with a revolutionary programme based on the political situation in Argentina where we think that there is no place for reformist policies. There is a new vanguard looking for new policies and so we call on them to break with the United Left—not simply to join us—and call for workers' power.

There is great confusion inside the MAS: a lot of catastrophism. But reality is making people think. The membership knows it's in the biggest crisis in its history, but thinks the problem is that it deviated from the policy it voted through in 1988, and that what's needed is a return to that policy. But in terms of concrete policies, nothing has changed.

We were a big faction in the MAS and our departure had an effect on the fracturing of the party. We were well known. This led us to think—wrongly—that we were a party. It took us some time to recognise the fact that we weren't. At our next congress we'll be discussing how to become a party, in the light of the crises in the vanguard and in the left. All of these questions are linked to our role in the construction of an International. ■

THE WORKERS International League (WIL) was one of the groups to emerge from the crisis ridden Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) after the expulsion of its leader, Gerry Healy, in 1985. What has marked the WIL out from the other fragments of the WRP was its preparedness to engage in a thorough re-evaluation of the entire political legacy of Healyism.

It correctly concluded that Healy's International Committee, along with the other sections of the post-war Fourth International, had broken with Trotskyism and collapsed into centrism. Armed with this correct analysis the WIL proved able to develop a series of healthy political positions on current political events, clearly distinguishing it from the principal centrist groups in Britain.

However, its analysis of Eastern Europe demonstrates serious weaknesses in its political evolution.

Initially it seemed that the WIL had developed an understanding of Stalinism's death agony in 1989 that was similar to our own. *Workers News*, the paper of the WIL, stated in December 1989:

"In all the deformed workers' states, particularly in Eastern Europe, workers stand at a turning point in history. Despite the Stalinists' attempts to cobble together coalition governments in order to defend their bureaucratic privileges, the future must lie down one of two roads: either the political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy, or the restoration of capitalism."

Dynamic

This was the traditional Trotskyist position—that the dynamic of the struggle between the working class and the bureaucracy in the Stalinist states would at its highest point pose the stark alternative of proletarian political revolution or bourgeois social counter-revolution, and that the outcome would be determined by the resolution or otherwise of the crisis of proletarian leadership. In recognition of this, the article ended with a "Programme of action for political revolution", advancing a Trotskyist answer to this crisis.

The article recognised that there was a political revolutionary crisis across Eastern Europe which Stalinists and capitalists alike were terrified would "turn into a working class insurrection". But during 1990, as it became clear that in the absence of a revolutionary international and Trotskyist parties the counter-revolutionary outcome was increasingly likely, the WIL revised their orthodox perspective.

Upheavals

They came to see the whole series of upheavals in Eastern Europe as instances of counter-revolution, pure and simple. Using East Germany as an example, an editorial in *Workers News* in September 1990 concluded that the masses had been mobilised from the outset on the basis of counter-revolutionary goals. The masses were marching uninterruptedly towards restorationism because of their illusions in western capitalism:

"However unpalatable these illusions are for those of the West European left who saw the events in East Germany as the unfolding of political revolution, it is pointless to deny their existence. Those who cannot distinguish between revolution and counter-revolution will not make good revolutionaries!"

It is the WIL who are unable to distinguish between a political revolutionary crisis in which the

EASTERN EUROPE Doomed from the start?

The Workers International League has joined the list of organisations who write off the East European events simply as "counter revolutions". Richard Brenner warns of the programmatic consequences.

counter-revolution. Their changed position left them with a novel analysis: the East European events were a permanent counter-revolution!

The WIL were correct in December 1989. There existed more than the one (counter-revolutionary) dynamic. If there did not then it was wrong to advance the programme of political revolution where no objective basis existed for it. What then happened in 1990?

Given the deep discredit that the crisis of bureaucratic planning and decades of repression had cast on "actually existing socialism", the anti-Stalinist movements of the late 1980s were not "socialist" or "communist" like the movements of 1956 and 1968. This crisis and the triumph of neo-liberal capitalism in the west meant that the pro-market and "anti-communist" tendencies were predominant amongst the oppositionist circles.

The bureaucracy had lost all confidence in "planning" and sought legitimisation in marketising and nationalist ideologies. The most class conscious forces were limited to a syndicalist ideology ("workers' self-management") which accepted the triumph of the market and left the terrain of politics to bourgeois democratic pluralism.

Movement

There was a profound crisis of leadership with no significant independent anti-bureaucratic forces committed to socialism or the planned economy. Yet even then only in Poland by the beginning of 1989 had a consciously counter-revolutionary leadership gained hegemony over the broad masses of the working class.

The triumph of the bourgeois democratic counter-revolution was not inevitable but to avoid it would have required intervention by revolutionary communist forces—a Trotskyist international—if a serious conscious movement for political revolution was to develop.

The case of the GDR proves this clearly. The initial hostility of the masses to the SED regime was progressive. It was rooted in the historical antagonism between the bureaucracy and the working class. When it emerged in the form of a mass movement aimed at the destruction of the bureaucracy it was not pure, not able in advance to determine what it wished to retain and what to destroy. But only a lifeless pedant would have expected the revolution to emerge as if from the pages of a textbook.

In the early phase, which we described as the opening of a political revolution, was it the case that the masses were mobilised around counter-revolutionary slogans? An end to bureaucratic privilege, special shops, the "leading role of the party", censorship and Stasi sur-



veillance, the right to vote, and freedom of travel—if these were counter-revolutionary demands then Trotskyists are counter-revolutionaries.

The proletarian democratic core of the new found rights (right to strike, to form factory committees and trade unions) were wrenched in struggle from an unwilling bureaucracy before the pro-bourgeois forces were able to establish their parliaments and give these workers' rights legal approval.

Restored capitalism retained certain of these gains within the context of bourgeois democracy. That is not evidence that the movement was simply counter-revolutionary from the outset, nor that the masses were simply passive bystanders to events, but that the revolution was not completed, not made permanent, and was thus converted into its opposite, a social counter-revolution. The absence of a revolutionary party of the German workers caused the masses to look to imperialism as their saviour. But this is very different to the WIL's later view that the masses' illusions meant that the events in East Germany were a counter-revolution from the first moment.

Destroy

In the knowledge that Moscow would not intervene, the masses were determined to destroy Stalinism while they had the chance, by whatever means. That is the real meaning of the Trotskyist assertion that in revolutionary crises the outcome is reduced to the question of the crisis of leadership of the working class.

To deny this the WIL have been obliged to deny the revolution was a revolution, and to square the cir-

cle they have had to deprecate the role of the masses in the events. Demonstrations of millions and the forcible break-up of the secret police through militant occupations in the GDR between October 1989 and January 1990 are written off by the WIL as part of the counter-revolution.

One consequence of this can be seen in the WIL's change of position on the German reunification. It was correct to oppose capitalist unification. It was also essential to advance the slogan for the revolutionary reunification of Germany. The WIL recognise the existence of a national question in Germany.

Indeed, it was obvious to Marxists that the demand for reunification would arise, whether we liked it or not. The slogan of revolutionary reunification, if it had been taken up by a determined section of the East German proletariat, could have prevented the desire for national unity from being used only by reactionaries against the working class property forms. Once again the WIL previously understood this. The article from December 1989, quoted earlier, said of the opposition grouping, Neues Forum:

"... its programme of socialism-in-half-a-country, which offers no perspective for the revolutionary reunification of Germany, fails to address sentiments among the masses for national unity and thus encourages demands for reunification on a capitalist basis."

This accurate characterisation of Neues Forum, so similar to the position advanced by the LRCI, applies with equal force to the "Draft Programme of Action" of the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency (LTT—of Belgium and Germany) of 1 March 1990. The LTT docu-

ment, which the WIL subsequently endorsed, argued only for the "maintenance of two states, so long as West Germany remains capitalist", a wholly non-transitional formulation which "fails to address" precisely those sentiments that the WIL had recognised three months earlier.

The theoretical consequences of the WIL's new position are very serious. They imply that the counter-revolutionary outcome was built into the situation from the outset, and that it was a result not of the absence of the subjective factor, but of objective conditions themselves. If so, something about the Stalinist system made bourgeois restoration inevitable. And here we come to the Stalinophobic nub of the WIL's position.

For the WIL the Stalinist bureaucracy is not simply a major force for restoration within the degenerate(d) workers' states, it is the only force. The Stalinist bureaucracy is treated as an undifferentiated whole and as an uncontradictory phenomenon. Its moves towards marketisation in order to solve its own problems are equated with the restoration of capitalism itself. In a May Day statement, published in *Workers News*, in May 1990, the WIL and LTT argued:

"Having drawn its material privileges for so long from nationalised property, Stalinism is rapidly moving to complete the counter-revolution and restore capitalism."

Now we agree that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary, an agency of imperialism in the workers' states. But to go from this to seeing the bureaucracy simply as the "main agency for the restoration of capitalism" (*Workers News*, October/November 1990) cannot explain why Ceausescu and Deng strove to cling to power. It cannot explain why Gorbachev has not chosen to reintroduce capitalism lock, stock and barrel.

It is an analysis that fails to understand the fragmented and contradictory nature of the bureaucratic caste. That is why the political revolutionary crisis is denied in the WIL's scheme of things. To them the counter-revolution did not require a political revolutionary crisis, the action of the masses to destroy the Stalinist regimes or the misleadership of those masses by openly pro-capitalist forces. All it required was the Stalinist bureaucracy itself.

Denies

This view, which denies that revolutionaries can ever form a united front with Stalinists, for example against internal counter-revolution, pogromists etc, has nothing in common with Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism. It is a revisionist departure from Trotsky's position.

It is fuelled by pessimism at the outcome of the Eastern European events. Ironically the WIL find themselves alongside a host of Stalinophile groupings, like The Leninist, the International Bolshevik Tendency and others, who believe that nothing good could have come from the crisis in Eastern Europe in 1989-90. Yet, if the comrades extended their new position back to the beginning of the crisis they could only draw one practical conclusion, a conclusion which they seek to avoid at the cost of the consistency of their own theory.

For if the crises were counter-revolutions from the start the Stalinists would have been justified in crushing the risings and demos. And Trotskyists should have supported them. This is the perverse logic of Stalinophobia. The WIL need to break from it. ■

Dear Joyce ...

Lambeth Councillor Rachael Webb is one of thirteen being witch-hunted by the Labour bureaucracy for their part in the anti-Poll Tax struggle. She sent us her reply to charges levelled by Labour's chief witch hunter, Joyce Gould.

Dear Joyce Gould,
I refer to your letter on 22 April in which you invite me to respond to the allegations against me, which the NEC considered as grounds for my suspension from Lambeth Labour

Dole figures dodgy

Dear Comrades,
In your front page article "Make the Bosses Pay" last month, you said that "the figures released in April revealed there were now over two million unemployed", and that "unemployment is set to rise once again to more than three million by 1992". I would like to point out that the figures released by the government bear very little relation to reality. The government has changed its method of calculating statistics thirty times since 1979. According to the Unemployment Unit the real April figure was 3,243,200.
Clare Roberts
Chesterfield

Greek Trotskyism and ELAS

Dear Comrades,
Whilst in general agreeing with P Morris' review of "Trotskyism and Stalinism in Greece" (WP142), it is necessary to point out additional information which is probably not known to the British reader. Pouliopoulos had already been murdered before the Greek resistance had become a mass movement, so what position he would have taken no-one knows. Whilst it is true that Karliafis' group took a political decision not to take part in the resistance, one has to explain the conditions under which this arose—to do justice to history and also to learn for future struggles.
Karliafis' group was based mainly in Athens and Piraeus and to tell them to leave the cities and head for the mountains, taking into account their small numbers, would be a retreat. Many members of Karliafis' group and many others, who had at one time or another been associated with Trotskyism, did join the resistance. Those whose background was known were murdered by the OPLA (Stalinist secret police).

Karliafis' group did carry out significant work inside the building workers' union during World War Two forming armed militias which attacked food hoarders in Athens—the Trotskyists became prominent for initiating such action (more than one third of Athens perished in

Group and Labour Party positions, pending further disciplinary action against me.

I am "guilty" of the following "offences" being considered by the NEC and state that I have nothing but contempt for any one who considers these to be disciplinary offences for which I can be suspended and possibly expelled:

31.3.89: "voted for an illegal budget" (to try to save jobs and services). May 1990: "Anti-Poll Tax advert in the *South London Press*". May 1990: "Statement supporting no cuts, non-payment, non-collection of Poll Tax": 25.6.90: "voted against Poll Tax collection". 29.3.90; Council Meeting—voted not to set a Poll Tax. 19.10.90: "letter to *South London Press* advocating non-payment and non-collection of poll tax. 17.2.91: Council Meeting "voted against use of bailiffs". 11.3.91: "voted against Group's budget proposals" (to set a budget which involved extensive service cuts and sackings—redundancies—for 600 plus workers).

If anyone considers the above to be disciplinary offences then it is they who are not fit to be in the Labour Party or the Labour Movement.

Yours sincerely,
Rachael Webb
Cllr Lambeth

Imperialism and Kurdistan

Dear Workers Power,
In what was otherwise an excellent article on the Kurdish crisis in *Workers Power* May 1991, part of resolution 5 was marginally incorrect. It was not the world acting against the impending genocide of the Kurds that exerted some pressure on imperialism itself as you then go on to say. Imperialism

wanted to intervene further all along but needed a pretext to do so, hence the widespread publicity given to the repression of the Kurds. It was not the outcry that forced the imperialists, but the imperialists that "forced" the outcry.

Yours for socialism,
M Britnell
Leicester

Winnie on trial



Dear Comrades,
The case of Winnie Mandela has been used to attack the black struggle in South Africa. But what the media leaves out of its reports is

that Winnie Mandela was sentenced by a white judge, in a white court, by apartheid justice. That court and that system has no right to try and sentence her any more than the thousands of others it has incarcerated and murdered for defying the apartheid state.

Mandela herself has been the victim of the apartheid state for three decades—subject to countless banning orders, arrests and jailings. This does not mean that she shouldn't face justice for the crimes she is alleged to have committed. There is an overwhelming case against her concerning her involvement in, and organisation of a terror campaign against, youth within the movement who defied her and her followers.

But the judgement she should face is that of the black working class of the Soweto community. Mandela had a position of privilege in Soweto—a position derived from both the prestige and finance accruing to her as an ANC leader and as a component of the Mandela legend. She used that position of privilege to build up a personal following and the now notorious "Mandela Football Team".

Those kidnapped, beaten or murdered included activists who had incurred the gang's displeasure—there is little to support the idea that they were either collaborators with the regime or perpetrators of oppression themselves. How could this happen?

It is wrong to explain the gang's actions as simply "lack of discipline" amongst the youth. The ANC line of that period, "make South Africa ungovernable" encouraged undirected violence. The ANC's strategy was to use township youth as a battering ram to force the regime into negotiations and allow the elder statesmen to negotiate themselves into power.

Youth were the backbone of the rebellion. But because the working class was unable to enforce its collective and democratic revolutionary leadership on the movement it went down to defeat. It dissipated and degenerated.

The roots of the Mandela affair were the same as the roots of the violence today—the apartheid system itself, and the wrong leadership and wrong strategy of the movement against it.

Yours fraternally,
Lesley Day

section of the KKE partisans refused to disarm (those led by Velouchiotis) Karliafis' group gave them critical support.

The "failure" of the Greek Trotskyists in World War II was not so much their sectarianism but an objective situation extremely unfavourable to them—a situation which whatever their policies they could not change.

With Stalinism disintegrating and openly siding with western imperialism, its political monopoly of the left can no longer be guaranteed. Trotskyists are no longer seen by the rapidly deteriorating Stalinist dominated left in Greece as "counter-revolutionary", fascist agents etc. On the contrary a new revolutionary crisis which led to the arming of the workers and peasants, as during the resistance movement, would surely not lead to a historic disarmament as in 1945.

Fraternally,
V N Gelis

SUBSCRIBE!

Make sure you get your copy of *Workers Power* each month. Take out a subscription now. Other English language publications of the LRCI are available on subscription too.

- I would like to subscribe to
- Workers Power** £5 for 12 issues
 - Class Struggle** £8 for 10 issues
 - Permanent Revolution** £6 for 3 issues
 - Trotskyist International** £3 for 3 issues

I would like to know more about the *Workers Power* Group and the LRCI

Make cheques payable to *Workers Power* and send to:
Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1 3XX
or: *Class Struggle*, 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin, Eire

Name:
Address:
.....
.....
..... Trade union

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!



Workers power

INSIDE

- Tories target the NHS
- Third world's unnatural disasters
- India after Rajiv

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

South Africa: Break negotiations!

Build workers' defence!

THE SOUTH African working class is faced with an impending catastrophe. The ANC leadership has demobilised the mass movement in order to enter a process of negotiation with the apartheid butchers. In return an alliance of the white far right and apartheid's stooge Buthelezi has unleashed a campaign of terror against militant black communities.

In what were the strongholds of black resistance in 1985-86, homes and fields are burning and activists are butchered in the streets as Buthelezi's armed Inkatha mobs are allowed to terrorise ANC loyal townships.

Unable to force concessions from the De Klerk government, the ANC has temporarily returned to protest politics. The ANC leadership had come under huge pressure from its rank and file and cadre increasingly unable to hold the line in favour of negotiations. Communities have been subject to horrific waves of violence with the numbers killed more than even the regular weekend toll during the 1985-86 rising. De Klerk has also refused to release hundreds of political prisoners including hunger strikers.

Even the ANC's middle class supporters have been sounding the alarm. In April, the *New Nation* warned:

"On the ground, any further compromises will be seen as just another in a long line of concessions made by the ANC that has cost the organisation and its constituency dearly in terms of loss of life."

Panic

Whether or not talks between De Klerk, the ANC and other players in the South African drama get back on course, the country's owners of capital have already started to panic. Both the mining and engineering sectors report a collapse of investment. Reserve Bank chief Stalls has predicted a "Beirut scenario" within five years if investment is not renewed. The De Klerk/ANC dream of a revived capitalist South Africa acting as the "powerhouse" (and imperialist overlord) of southern Africa is now in serious jeopardy.

Amongst the rats deserting this particular ship are the owners of

PUTCO, transporters of black labour in the apartheid system. The firm has just announced closure—a year after it paid out R81.5 million in a special dividend. The main beneficiaries will be the majority owners, the Italian Carleo family.

Other sectors have been awarding dividends and executive increases. In the engineering sector, executives have received a tidy 18% increase while the employers organisation SEIFSA is trying to hold down workers' increases to 11%. Money is being moved overseas to find safer and more profitable havens.

If the negotiating partners want to stop this drain, they must stop the violence and unrest. Yet De Klerk's regime, in particular the elements within the National Party and the defence forces and police who want to further weaken the ANC, have been fanning the flames of violence. Besides the evidence of collusion between state forces, white right wingers and Inkatha gangs, the regime's actions have strengthened the hand of the right. For instance, in response to ANC demands for the sacking of defence chief Magnus Malan and security chief Adrian Vlok, De Klerk merely ensured a shake up in the Orwellian sounding Civil Co-operation Bureau but left the chiefs in charge.

The ANC's leaders have made compromise after compromise, delaying the deadline for the government to meet its demand on talks and backtracking on its demands for ending the township violence.

But the ANC's proposals for ending the violence will leave even more power in the hands of the

state machine and will play into the hands of those, including Buthelezi, who want to turn the battle of pro-ANC forces against Inkatha into ethnic violence. In asking the apartheid state forces to disarm Zulus carrying traditional weapons the ANC is not simply pursuing a utopian strategy. It runs the risk of driving Zulu migrant workers completely into the hands of Buthelezi. Although working class and pro-ANC forces have seriously undermined the position of Inkatha in Natal over the last five years, there is clearly a danger that Buthelezi could regain the initiative, especially as the ANC leadership is disproportionately taken from Xhosa and other groups.

Militias

How should the militant townships be defended, if not by the police and armed forces? The only way to meet the violence of both the reactionaries and the state is to build effective workers' defence. The ANC talks of building militias and has told cadres from its armed wing (Umkonto we Sizwe) to "await recall".

But its demands on the state to police more effectively show that the leaders would rather rely on De Klerk than the mass movement. This is a reflection of the ANC's strategy and aims. Its intention to construct a new bourgeois government in the existing capitalist state means that it cannot afford to strengthen working class resistance that might develop into a challenge to the existing leaders.

Workers' defence—militias, defence squads for workers' action



Inkatha supporters murder one of thousands of victims. "Traditional weapons" like this sharpened rod are carried by Inkatha gangs.

and so forth—means that these forces are under the control of the workers' movement. Arms can be regularly checked and authorised. The organised militia knows it is the servant of the whole working class movement.

There is already an enormous experience of defending communities in the South African townships whether in Natal against Inkatha-inspired raids or in townships against police and vigilante attacks. This pool of skills and strength needs further training, arms and most importantly the political leadership which the ANC's leaders are refusing to give.

A militia powerful enough to resist Inkatha would pose a challenge to the state and would come

under attack from state forces. Does this mean it should not be built? On the contrary, the need to defeat the state forces is the most important reason of all for building militias.

As the country continues its downward spiral, as the asset strippers continue their robbery, the dangers of the ANC's present course become clearer. In its search for an accommodation with De Klerk it has left the working class undefended physically, and unprepared to meet the employers' offensive.

That whole strategy must now be challenged and the forces rebuilt to fight for the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid state and the capitalist system it defends. ■