

# Workers power

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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**THE SOVIET Union is dead. The spectre that haunted the capitalists for over seventy years has been laid to rest. But the bosses' politicians are trembling with fear, not celebrating.**

If the successor to the Stalinist monolith, the Commonwealth of Independent States, lasts for seventy days it will be an achievement. It stands on the brink of possible war between the feuding national bureaucracies and certain mass resistance to the austerity measures which have begun the transition back to capitalism.

The imperialists are beginning to realise that they have "won" the Cold War exactly in the way they won the Gulf War of 1991. Instead of a new world order of peace and stability they have created a bloody mess. The civil war in Georgia was a foretaste of what lies ahead. Potentially parts of the former USSR could become a giant Lebanon, with the rival factions commanding navies bigger than Britain's, as well as stockpiles of nuclear missiles and chemical weapons.

Behind the spectre of war and famine lurks another, even more frightening apparition for the imperialist bosses—the threat of genuine workers' revolution. Millions of workers will grow weary of the political puppet show being mounted by the former Stalinists who are now ruling by decree, wrangling over control of entire armies and navies, or deploying their gunmen onto the streets in power struggles.

Workers who rejected Gorbachev for his lack of speedy economic reforms and lack of democracy now find democracy curtailed. They find that there is no such thing as the ideal "social market" which provides western standard goods and jobs for all.

As the economic transition to capitalism gathers pace they will find that the glittering spectacle of life in New York and Tokyo has always masked another reality for millions under capitalism: poverty, high prices, unemployment, back breaking work, social oppression and the threat of war.

Workers who previously flocked behind nationalist oppositions, or behind demagogic nationalist bureaucrats, will find that national independence is a fig leaf for economic servitude.

Instead of a new world order the collapse of Stalinism is bringing the emergence of turmoil and disorder, and the world's capitalists are powerless to stop it.

Yeltsin's adviser, Jonathan Sachs, has estimated the west needs to pour in \$35 billion a year until 1995 just to underwrite the capitalist restoration process. The USSR's fledgling private sector and most of its inefficient mines and factories are condemned to

**USSR  
collapses**

**Price  
rise  
riots**

**Battle  
for the  
Navy**

**Empty  
shops**

# Stalinism's legacy



Carnage in Georgia

oblivion by the restoration process.

Unless the imperialists are prepared to give away tens of billions of dollars immediately, all the jewels in crown of the Stalinist economy—mainly the military industry and its hi-tech adjuncts—could go the same way, without the capitalists ever getting their hands on them.

These are only the short term problems for imperialism. Strategically world capitalism simply does not have the reserves or the dynamism to mount the equivalent of America's Marshall Plan after World War Two.

The Marshall Plan was de-

signed to stop revolutions by kick-starting an economic boom in Europe. Any possibility of a stable period of capitalist accumulation in the former USSR lies the other side of years of social upheaval and a strategic defeat of the working class.

Everything depends on the workers. Some, seeing the atomisation and passivity of the Soviet workers, their readiness to be fooled by capitalist politicians and nationalist demagogues, entrusted the defence of the nationalised and planned economy to the bureaucrats. But it is the predominant faction of the bureaucrats who are leading the rush to

capitalism.

As revolutionary Marxists have long warned, the Stalinist bureaucracy is driven to destroy the workers' state, created by a workers' revolution in 1917. Today it is trying to complete its reactionary mission, begun in the 1920s when it seized political power from the working class and continued through decades of plunder and mismanagement of the planned economy.

Only the workers can save what remains worth saving from Soviet society and put it to the use for which it was intended: the building of real socialism and the emancipation of humanity from

hunger, war and oppression.

The missing ingredient is revolutionary leadership. The western capitalists have no answers for the working class in Russia other than "stick with Yeltsin and see what happens". Yeltsin has no answers other than "swallow price rises and unemployment with no improvement promised or in sight". The armed forces, though they continue to rattle their sabres against national disintegration, have no solution other than the one offered by the short-lived Yanaev coup.

There is one solution: for the workers to form democratic delegate councils of action, strike against every austerity measure and every infringement of democratic rights, to take the arms out of the hands of the generals, the mafia chiefs and the private armies of the bureaucrats and form their own workers' militia. The workers must take power from the hands of Yeltsin, Kravchuk and co, and institute an emergency plan to feed, clothe and house the mass of the population in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

At present, building a party to fight for that in the former USSR, and supporting every partial struggle of the workers against their new masters, is the most vital task for anybody who wants to see real socialism triumph over the ruins of Bush's new world order. ■



**J**OHAN MAJOR'S "Opportunity 2000"—an initiative whereby sixty companies have set themselves targets for employing more women by the end of the decade—has been widely trumpeted as an example of the Tories' new sense of fair play.

The CBI, whilst backing "Opportunity 2000" has also brought out its own proposals "Discriminate on Ability".

Not to be left out, Labour has reshaped its old initiatives in the form of a consultation document "Putting Equality into Practice". Kinnock is also negotiating on our behalf with the likes of the big banks, ICI, British Rail and even the TUC.

The Equal Opportunity Commission too have revamped their ideas—calling for a new Equal Treatment Act as part of their "equality agenda" which they hope will influence the major parties in their coming election manifestos.

Given the Tories' thirteen year record of attacks on women "Opportunity 2000" should be treated with the utmost suspicion. It offers no new legislation, but is based on companies' inexpensive voluntary action. Commitments to career breaks, job sharing and flexible working patterns put forward in "Opportunity 2000" will come to nothing if the bosses decide that it is no longer in their interests to encourage women to join the workforce. And it means that any changes that are made will be at the expense of whole workforce, not paid for by the boss.

### Rapid

"Opportunity 2000" is primarily a publicity stunt. But the Tories have been obliged to incorporate into it certain proposals on working conditions because of changes in the labour market over the last few decades. There has been a rapid increase in the number of women in the workforce since the 1950s, with women now making up around 44% of it.

Even this figure is probably an underestimation as the workforce is officially calculated as the employed plus the claimant unemployed. Many women workers do not register as claimants; even the government admitted in 1984 that around 57% of women looking for work are not registered.

Under the Tories the number of women working has continued to rise. The fastest growing area is in part-time work—in 1989 women part-time workers alone made up 20% of workers. This growth in part-time work is linked to structural changes in the economy which has moved from a manufacturing base to a growth in services where many women have traditionally worked.

Three-quarters of working women with a child under five work part-time. And women are now spending more time in the labour market between births, with nearly 50% returning to work within nine months of having a child.

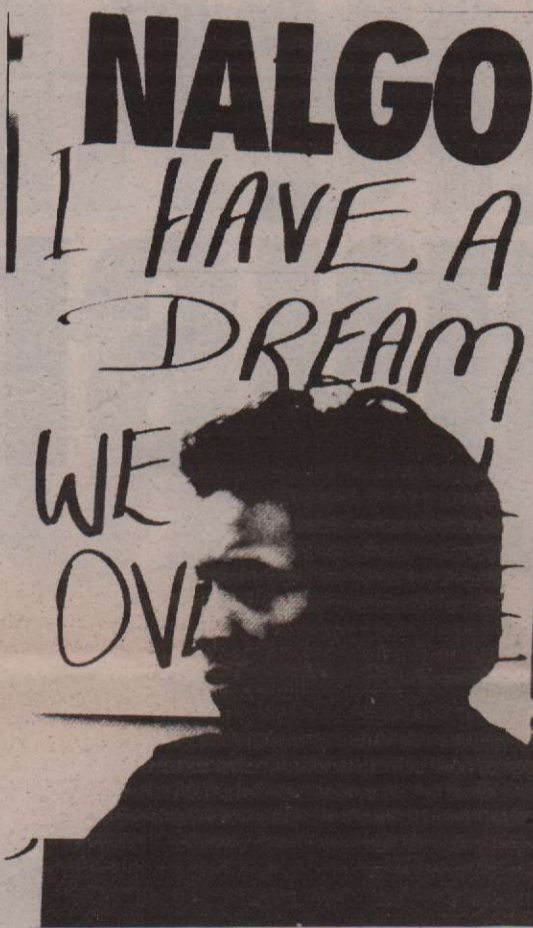
This means that the flexible working patterns, job sharing provisions etc, that are proposed in "Opportunity 2000" are vital for the efficiency of the changing capitalist economy. But they will not signal any real improvement in the pay or working conditions for the women concerned. They go nowhere near compensating for the damage done to working class women's lives by the Tories.

Local government spending cuts led directly to a decrease in childcare provision, so that now less than 5% of under-threes get state childcare. In Europe it is only Britain and Ireland that does not seriously recognise the need for state input into childcare; Germany of-

## OPPORTUNITY 2000

*Political parties, captains of industry and the Equal Opportunities Commission are all claiming that improving the lot of working women is top of their agenda for the 1990s. Lynne Buchanan warns that this sudden rush of benevolence by the capitalists will not result in liberation for women*

# No new deal for women



But her dreams won't be made real by Opportunity 2000

fers twice as many places and France three times. Although the government made workplace nurseries tax free in the 1990 budget, the lobby group "Working for Childcare" found just 62.

Other cuts in public spending such as those in the NHS and social services also hit women hardest as both workers and the majority of Britain's six million carers.

It is women who tend to get stuck in the lowest paid, least organised workplaces and the Tories' abolition of the wages councils, together with the introduction of their bogus training schemes leaves women as an even greater source of cheap and unprotected labour.

Under the Tories the number of single mothers who have the opportunity to work has fallen to less than 40%. Seventy per cent are dependent on the abysmal means-tested Income Support.

### Mainstay

They have also pushed working mothers further into poverty to such an extent that the numbers of them claiming Family Credit (paid to low-wage working families) has increased by well over 100%. In addition, the mainstay of many mother's income, Child Benefit, was frozen for three years.

Perhaps the most cynical move has been the proposal to force single mothers on benefit to name the fathers of their children so that they can be chased for maintenance

I can feel mine chuckling over my antenatal class paid time off!



payments. If the act were to be passed then women could have up to 20% of their benefit cut if they refuse to give names. If they do comply, and maintenance is extracted then the woman herself stands to gain nothing as the amount will automatically be deducted from her benefit.

Clearly any women who have suffered abuse at the hands of their children's father will not want to

divulge his identity for fear of reprisals. This will not be taken into account unless she can prove "undue harm or distress" was caused. Even worse, the government originally wanted the only exceptions to be if the child was a product of rape or incest.

This lack of concern towards abused women should come as no surprise. The Tories have consistently made life more difficult for them. The number of women's refuges has been more than halved since 1979, and the rundown and sell-off of council housing has made it virtually impossible to get rehoused. Women and their children fleeing violence are often told to go home as they have made themselves "intentionally homeless".

Changes in social security mean that emergency grants are almost non-existent as they have been largely replaced by loans. This means that for a woman trying to set up a new home the most help she will get from the DSS will be one of these loans—putting her under more financial pressure.

For all working women, the gap between their wages and those of men has barely shrunk since the Tories came to power and is now the worst in Europe. In 1979 women earned on average 62.5% of men's wages and in 1988 this had risen to just 66.5%. For women in manual work the picture is even worse; not only is the average wage substantially lower but the gap between the sexes is even greater, having

der 20 the number rose by a massive 59% between 1981 and 1988.

But whilst the Tories have not succeeded in socially engineering the family back to their Victorian ideal, neither have these changes undermined the fundamental element of the family in capitalism: woman's role as the reproducer of labour power and unpaid domestic worker.

The "new man" might do the washing up and vacuuming now and again, but the responsibility for childcare and most domestic labour still falls on women.

The Tories are faced with a dilemma; recognise and adapt to the changing needs of the capitalist economy, the shifting employment patterns of women and the inexorable demise of the "normal" family, or pursue primarily the goal of slashing social services and placing the burden of caring for the young and the sick on women driven back into the home by a "Victorian values" campaign.

### Replenish

Such a contradiction is part and parcel of capitalism—the need to increase production and bring more layers into the workforce is being done at the expense of the family itself, the very structure upon which capitalism rests and in which women's vital domestic labour is performed. Without such women to maintain and replenish labour power, capitalism is itself weakened.

If at the present time capitalism's best interests are to be served by some disruption or modification to the family norm then they will be prepared to shelve the "Victorian values" mentality.

But even in the new "enlightened" Tory vision of "Opportunity 2000" nobody questions the axiom that childcare and domestic work are a woman's task. How can they reconcile these tasks with the needs of the labour market is the only question that Tory strategists are asking.

"Opportunity 2000", and Labour's version of it, which proposes the same reforms, but backed by a legal framework, are both designed to make it easier for women to work and look after her family duties. The reforms of working practices make economic sense for the bosses and ensure that women continue to play the central role in the home and family. Both sets of reforms are designed to help women manage their double burden, not remove it. ■

## Has feminism won?

A RECENT poll commissioned by ELLE and the Guardian showed that nearly 60% of both men and women think that "feminism is good" and that it has "achieved its goals". Laughable as that may seem to many women it also reveals that Marxists were right when they pointed to the fatal flaws of feminism and the "all class" women's movement.

Some women have achieved a measure of job equality and financial independence: bourgeois and top professional women. And it is under their pressure that legal changes like the recognition of rape in marriage have been forced through and sexual harassment recognised as a problem.

Working class women remain in predominantly low paid jobs with few rights at work. Poverty, combined with social oppression in the family and the community means that all the laws in the world will not relieve thousands from domestic violence and sexual abuse.

No working class woman should be celebrating the "victory" of feminism. Working class women should guard against putting any faith in plans either the Tories or Labour have for us. Only the socialisation of housework and childcare as part of a society run to meet human needs instead of the need for profits can truly liberate all women.

As a first step towards this we need a working class women's movement based in the workplaces and the communities and as part of the wider working class movement. The working class women's movement must not only fight women's oppression from an anti-capitalist stance, but also take that struggle into the heart of the labour movement. ■



# One year after . . .

"IT'S LIKE the fireworks on the fourth of July out there". That was how the exhilarated voice of CNN's Dan Rather announced to the world that imperialism's attack on Iraq had begun on 17 January 1991. One year on every worker should look back on the carnage of that war and ask themselves—what was it really for?

The truth about that war was censored and distorted from beginning to end by a pliant media and its political controllers. The technology which gave us clinical nose-cone views of missile hits, remained strangely incapable of capturing the suffering of the Iraqi people or the murderous bungling of the US military.

The media refused to show the charred bodies of women and children in the air-raid shelter bombed by US planes. Only when the war was safely won did videos come to light of giggling US helicopter pilots blasting their own personnel carriers into pieces. And the cameras were banned as the US military bulldozed thousands of dead Iraqi soldiers into mass graves like Belsen victims.

Nor was it simply a matter of censorship. A lying propaganda machine distorted every available piece of information to suit imperialism's war drive. A year on we are told that the widely reported massacre of Kuwaiti babies by Iraqi troops never took place. Yet every newspaper in Britain and the USA cited this as one of the horrors that the troops were going in to put a stop to. It was a lie, a cynical lie, put about because it suited Bush and Major's plans.

Since the war ended, though war-porn magazines for military fantasists have churned out images of the allied victory, the attention of the masses has been purposefully diverted from those events.

The reason for this is simple. They do not want to alert people to the truth—that it was a murderous war of aggression, fought for oil and to secure imperialist domination of the Middle East. One hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers and civilians were killed to make sure a balance of power suitable to US imperialism was put into place.

Then, after calling on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam Hussein, the US imperialists were faced with the spectacle of a popular revolt against their enemy number one.

Predictably he became enemy number two. Under the gun barrels of the US tanks the Republican Guard—billed as Saddam's Waffen SS throughout the fighting—were allowed to pull out their remaining divisions to crush the Shia uprising in the south and the Kurdish rebellion in the north.

Imperialism had spent billions of dollars on "liberating" a tiny country whose mega-rich, unelected rulers hardly lived there. Democracy in Kuwait was reserved for an elite 60,000 people. The hundreds of thousands of workers there have no rights. And since the end of the war many of them, especially the Palestinians, have suffered torture, murder and imprisonment at the hands of the imperialist backed Kuwaiti government.

Yet faced with a genuine popular national revolt by millions of Kurds against the gas-bomber of Halabja imperialism preferred to see order maintained. It sent a few lightly armed troops . . . to persuade them back to the villages Saddam destroyed. The democracy of Kuwait's corrupt elite was worth a war. Democracy for the Kurds was another matter altogether. Such is imperialism's hypocrisy.

The grand alliance imperialism constructed to win the war was supposed to lay the basis for a new peace in the Middle East. But in the face of Israeli intransigence the peace talks started in Madrid last year remain stalled. Israel started 1992 by expelling twelve leading Palestinian politicians from their own country and killing nine women and children in an air raid on a Palestinian camp. The "big brother" of the Middle East, which missed its chance to join in the killing during the war, clearly has not satisfied its appetite for repression.

The only peace possible on the basis of the new balance of power in the region is a reactionary, imperialist peace which guarantees that the Palestinians will remain subject to arbitrary arrest and deporta-

## EDITORIAL

tion, policed by the Israeli army, bombed into submission by the Israeli airforce when they fight back.

All of this is why we opposed the imperialist onslaught against Iraq. Not from the point of view of mere revulsion at the violence, but because it was aimed at imposing the reactionary rule of imperialism on the region, ensuring that the vast wealth generated by its oil should line the pockets of the western bosses and their royal puppets in the Gulf rather than meet the needs of the masses.

That is why we stood unequivocally for an Iraqi victory, and for Britain and its allies' defeat.

At the same time we never for a moment gave up the struggle to oust Saddam and bring national self-determination to Kurdistan.

Workers Power was first into the fight to build workers' movement opposition on an anti-imperialist basis. Together with anti-imperialists organised in the Hands Off the Middle East committee we led the march down Whitehall on the night after the first bombs fell. When the Kurds rose up against their Iraqi oppressors Workers Power plunged straight into the fight for solidarity against the genocide.

Virtually every other party and tendency on the British left failed the test of the war. Some refused to side with Iraq. Others did so in the luxury of their internal meetings, content to appear as pacifists in front of the working class. Others still became uncritical cheerleaders for Saddam's armed forces and devoted themselves to anti-imperialist gestures and shock tactics instead of building working class support for a campaign to get imperialist troops out.

When imperialism goes to war, liberalism shoots first and asks questions only months or years later. That is what will be going on in the ritual round of documentaries and feature articles commemorating the first anniversary of the war.

As the commentators wring their hands, bring up "disturbing new evidence", as the retired officers spew forth their frank, disgusting war anecdotes, remember: Workers Power opposed the war from the start, predicted its unjust conclusion, and told the truth. ■

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## 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 worldwide.

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!

## Anti-Fascist Action

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*The elections and the fight against fascism*

7.30pm

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## RAVENSCRAIG

# Renationalise British Steel!

**B** RITISH STEEL bosses are shamefaced liars. On 8 January they announced that they were tearing up their guarantee to keep the Ravenscraig steel plant open until 1994. Instead, what is left of the works after twelve years of cutbacks in the industry will be scrapped in nine months' time. Management's promises are not worth the paper they are written on. Eighteen hundred Lanarkshire steel workers will be thrown onto the dole.

Tory fairy tales about increased investment and alternative jobs will fool nobody, least of all workers at Ravenscraig. Over the last year in Motherwell the Ravenscraig hot strip mill closed with the loss of a thousand jobs, and outside the steel industry another thousand jobs went in the area.

In the Craigneuk district of Motherwell one in four workers are unemployed. If the closure goes ahead the guts will be ripped out of the town, deepening the downward spiral of deprivation and despair that unemployment brings. In the region as a whole 13,000 jobs could be on the line as a direct result of the closure.

With the announcement coming only a matter of months before the election the Tories have been thrown into disarray by the British Steel decision. John Major informed the press that, "It is a matter of great regret, and I wish that British Steel had been able to continue at least until 1994". But there is only one victim of the closure that this hypocrite feels any real regret over: the Scottish Tory party.

The Tories are already down to nine MP's north of the border. No doubt they regret the timing of the announcement, but nothing else. That is why Scottish Secretary Ian Lang could not even claim to have asked British Steel to reconsider. Profits are down, and that is reason enough for closure according to the logic of the capitalist system.

There are countless examples of where steel is needed: the underdeveloped world, Eastern Europe, the rail network, the North Sea etc. But if the job cannot be done profitably for the bosses, then forget it. Production for greed, not need, is destroying industry in Scotland and the livelihood of thousands, wrecking whole communities in the process.

Labour have tried to take advantage of the Tories' embarrassment,

accusing them of betrayal. Shadow Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar accused the Tories of doing nothing to fight for the plant's survival. With Labour ahead in the polls, steelworkers across Britain have a right to ask in response to Dewar: "What are you

going to do about it if you win the election?"

The answer is next to nothing. In its programme for the economy, launched on the same day as the closure announcement, Labour concentrates on incentives for private investors and

tax relief for manufacturing bosses. To fight unemployment we are told that everyone on the dole would be given an individual officer to help find offers of work in the first twelve months on the dole.

There is not a word about renationalising the industry, or about state subsidies for the plant. There is no commitment to prevent job losses. There is no hard and fast guarantee to stop the closure of Ravenscraig. What is the use of giving every unemployed worker a "personal placement officer" if nothing is done to halt the destruction of real existing jobs?

Labour's policies are designed to help and encourage capitalists, not to defend workers who are facing destitution now. Scottish workers need to demand something from Labour in return for their votes: the immediate renationalisation of British Steel without compensation, and under workers' control.

The SNP has made its predictable statements about the destruction of "Scotland's" industry. But they too fail to raise concrete answers or calls to fight the closure in the here and now.

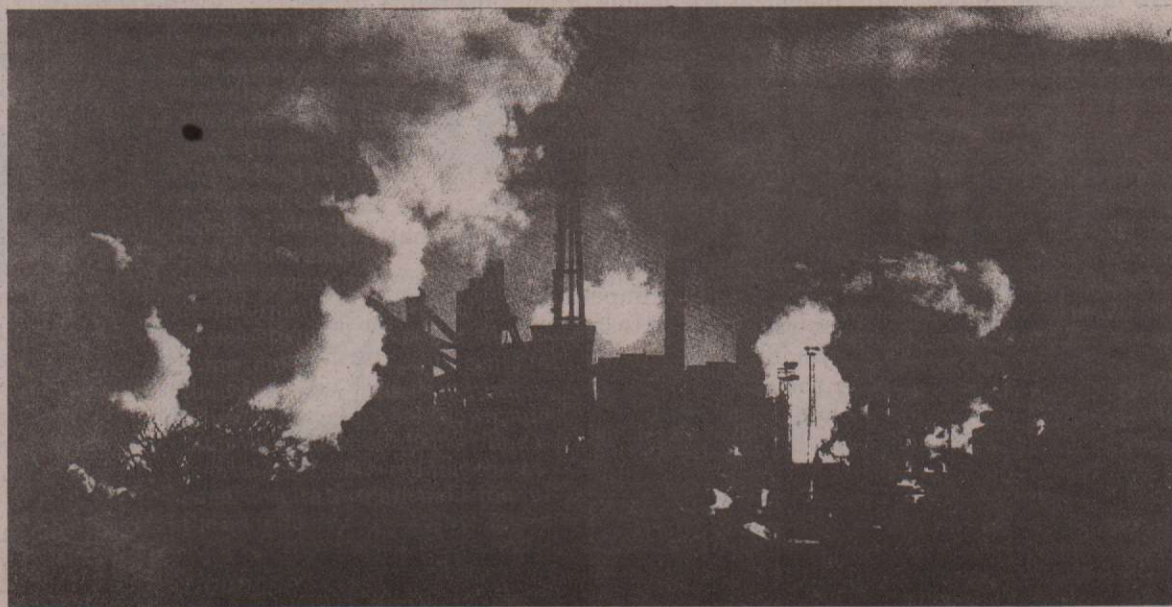
The union response has been pathetic, echoing the fatalism that has been inculcated in the workforce since the closure of the Garston finishing works in 1986. As the craft convenor George Quinn told the Morning Star, workers have been "conditioned to accept eventual closure" ever since then.

Workers at Ravenscraig do not need to accept the twisted logic of the bosses profit system, which shuts down a steel works despite the fact that there is plenty of need for steel and hundreds of thousands of workers languishing in enforced idleness. If the bosses' system doesn't work, then the bosses themselves should be made to pay.

Ravenscraig workers need a campaign now to organise an occupation of the plant. But as the lessons of the Caterpillar occupation show, isolated action will not win, no matter how determined the occupiers might be. The action will need to be spread. Contrary to the narrow-minded nationalism of the SNP this is not just a Scottish fight, but a fight for all steelworkers.

Even as the Ravenscraig closure was being announced steelworkers at Shotton and Port Talbot in South Wales were facing job cuts. In the last twelve years the steel workforce has dropped from 184,000 to less than 48,000.

Rank and file steelworkers need to begin the fight now for a national strike against closures and job cuts. That, not promises from management or Donald Dewar, is the only real way to guarantee jobs while the profit system lasts. ■



Ravenscraig steelworks: closure will devastate Lanarkshire

**I** N SOUTH Glamorgan this year two-thirds of the local health service applied to "opt out" of the NHS. If successful this would make a mockery of the idea of a united health service. It exposes the Tories' "reform" of the NHS for what it really is—an onslaught on free health provision.

Inevitably it means cuts and closures. Already three hospitals in South Glamorgan have been earmarked for closure. But resistance is possible. Last summer, a strike by cleaners at Ely Hospital successfully defended jobs and conditions against private contractors. Now health workers and working class users need to form a united front of resistance involving strikes and occupations to stop the Tories.

Hensol Hospital, the largest mental handicap hospital in Wales, is due to close over the next five years. This threatens the futures of the 300-plus people living at the hospital and the jobs of the 600-plus people who work there. Trade unionists at the hospital have set up an action committee to fight the closure. *Workers Power* talked to Philip Jones, a member of the ac-

## HENSOL HOSPITAL

# Fight the closure!

tion committee, about the prospects for the campaign.

**WP: What are the aims of the campaign?**

**PJ:** First of all to fight the closure. Even if the facility is not used for mental handicap care in the future, it could be put to other use but kept within the NHS. Secondly, we want to look after the jobs of all the employees of the hospital. We don't want anyone to suffer any loss of conditions or grading, or anything else we've fought for in the past.

**WP: Does money lie behind the proposals?**

**PJ:** Definitely. Management deny the rumours that the hospital is to

be turned into a hotel/conference centre, but this is quite believable. This is a very desirable site, complete with a castle and a large fishing lake.

**WP: How are you going to stop the closure?**

**PJ:** We'll need to fight as a group of workers united in our aim of saving the hospital. The overwhelming feeling at the recent NUPE mass meeting was that the hospital was worth saving. That's something to build on. The action committee now has to keep people informed and involved, offer leadership, keep everyone gelled together and keep the momentum of the campaign going. We will be lobbying our local Labour MP, Kim Howells, and trying to draw in residents' relatives. The bottom line is that if we have to take industrial action, we will. And we'll look to fellow trade unionists for solidarity.

**WP: What are the prospects for solidarity action?**

**PJ:** Well, we can expect support not only within the NHS but from social services workers involved in care work. The government's recent White Paper will bring pressure on to the social services. Clients moving from NHS to social services care will find themselves being pushed towards the private sector and voluntary care. So services workers—and their clients—are in the same boat as us.

**WP: The Royal College of Nurs-**

**ing (RCN) has damaged the NHS disputes in the past. What's been the involvement of the RCN so far in your campaign?**

**PJ:** So far they haven't been involved at all. They've been invited to all the meetings but haven't shown up. I don't know if they'd be a help or a hindrance, but they're leaving a lot of people unrepresented in the campaign. It's interesting that the RCN have fought for separate recognition for mental handicap nurses, but now this has happened and they've got nothing to say. Of course this is good ammunition to use to recruit people out of the RCN and into real unions.

**WP: Finally, what would you say to anyone who accused you of selfishly defending your jobs while standing in the way of a better life outside the institution?**

**PJ:** Well, first of all, fighting for jobs isn't selfish. Even if we all moved into the community, we'd want to defend the posts at the hospital. Secondly, we support care in the community, but they don't want to close the hospital to help the people in our care but to save money.

Anyway, most of us would be entitled to jobs elsewhere in the NHS under the redeployment policy. If we wanted to be selfish we'd be fighting for the best alternative employment. But instead we've chosen to save the hospital and keep the facilities in the NHS. ■

## Free the Cardiff Three!

**L** YNETTE WHITE was stabbed over fifty times and her head nearly severed. Her body was discovered in a flat in Butetown, Cardiff on 14 February 1988. On BBC's *Crimewatch* the police issued a video of a lone white man seen near the flat with blood on his hands. Nine months later, police arrested eight local black men. In November 1990, after the longest and most expensive murder trial in British legal history, Tony Parris, Yusef Abdullahi and Stephen Miller were given life sentences for Lynette's murder.

The Cardiff Three, as they are now known, were convicted despite sound alibis and without a shred of

forensic evidence: blood, saliva and clothing fibres found in the flat did not match that of any of the accused. The jury relied on often contradictory evidence given by two prostitutes, a convicted armed robber and a prison supergrass. In particular they were swayed by the taped confession of Stephen Miller, Lynette's former pimp, a man assessed as having the mental age of an eleven year old.

The trial of the Cardiff Three was a racist trial. The prosecution deliberately stigmatised Butetown as a place of vice and deceit, the "Tiger Bay" of popular prejudice. To be black, and to live there, was to be a suspect. The similarities between

this case and the Tottenham Three are blindingly obvious.

The campaign to free the Cardiff Three is gaining ground. In November last year several hundred demonstrators marched through Cardiff and met with enthusiastic support from Butetown residents.

In April the cases of Tony Parris and Yusef Abdullahi come up for appeal. The labour movement must give its full support to the campaign for the release of all three, through resolutions in union branches and Labour Party wards.

Send all resolutions and messages of support to:

56, Alice Street, Butetown, Cardiff



## STUDENTS Renew the fight!

**N**OTHING HAS changed. Students have come back from the Christmas break to the same overcrowding, the same understaffing, the same high rents and the same cost cutting by college managements. Despite the brilliant show of militancy last term when more than twenty colleges were occupied up and down the country, we have still got a long way to go to force the Tories to reverse the cuts and scrap the loan scheme.

There is a real danger that the campaign will go off the boil. We must not let that happen. Too much depends on us to allow ourselves to get complacent now. Keep up the pressure! We need to renew the fight for *occupations in every college* and to build for a massive turn out on the NUS demo on 12 February.

Last term students missed a real opportunity. NUS Conference could have raised the call for a national occupation campaign, calling on every college without exception to occupy. Given the strength of the

movement the effect of such a call would have been devastating, and could have prevented the danger of the campaign running out of steam this term.

But inactivity was exactly what the NUS leaders wanted. The self-seeking and petty-minded middle class bureaucrats who run the union see the action as a threat to their real aims: not defending students and higher education but getting themselves cushy jobs in the Labour Party, the trade union bureaucracy or broadcasting.

A serious campaign of direct action that could really force the Tories to back down would hardly look good on their CVs to BBC corporate

recruitment. So instead of raising a rousing call to battle, the NOLS (Kinnockite Labour) leadership of NUS spent most of the conference's time and nervous energy on a blatant attempt to weaken union democracy and the left.

When the leadership proposed that NUS Winter Conference be abolished, they lost the vote. So in true Kinnockite fashion they took the vote again... once they had stitched up a rotten deal to get some delegates to change their votes. Students who came to the conference expecting some action were rightly nauseated at this spectacle.

Students need a political organisation that can fight within NUS to

sweep out the NOLS bureaucrats. This can't be done just by electing an alternative set of officials on more militant policies as Left Unity and Militant seem to think. Students need to challenge the whole undemocratic structure that allows these self-important mediocrities to control our union in the first place.

All officials of NUS should be elected at UGMs and should be recallable if the students that elected them don't like what they get up to. They should be paid the average grant of the students that they represent. That is the way to break the hold of the regional and national bureaucracies in NUS.

Students need a political organi-

sation that fights for the key methods of struggle that can defeat the Tories and defend education. Socialist Worker Student Society (SWSS) for its own sectarian reasons refused to support conference amendments which called for direct action which came from Left Unity. Unlike them Workers Power Student Societies put the interests of the struggle against the Tories above its own narrow factional advantage.

Workers Power Student Societies stand for this immediate programme of action:

- occupy every college!
- build links with trade unions and workers in education to win united action!
- for a national stoppage of further and higher education!
- build democratic committees of students and college workers elected by the rank and file to organise the action!
- kick out the place-seekers—transform NUS into a real fighting union!

# Ten reasons to fight the AEU-EETPU merger

IN DECEMBER the National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) gave the go-ahead for a ballot on the proposed merger with the electricians' union, EETPU. AEU members should be mobilising across the country for a No vote, and here's why:

**1** The EETPU is a scab union. Its leaders don't just have a record of sell-out and betrayal. They actively recruited scabs to break the News International printers' strike in 1986.

**2** The EETPU is a non-TUC union. It defied the TUC call to boycott scab coal in the 1984-84 miners' strike. It was thrown out of the TUC in 1988 for refusing to abide by TUC rules. It poached members from other unions in single-union deals. It has tried to build a scab alternative to the TUC, with the UDM—the scab miners' union—and the Royal College of Nursing.

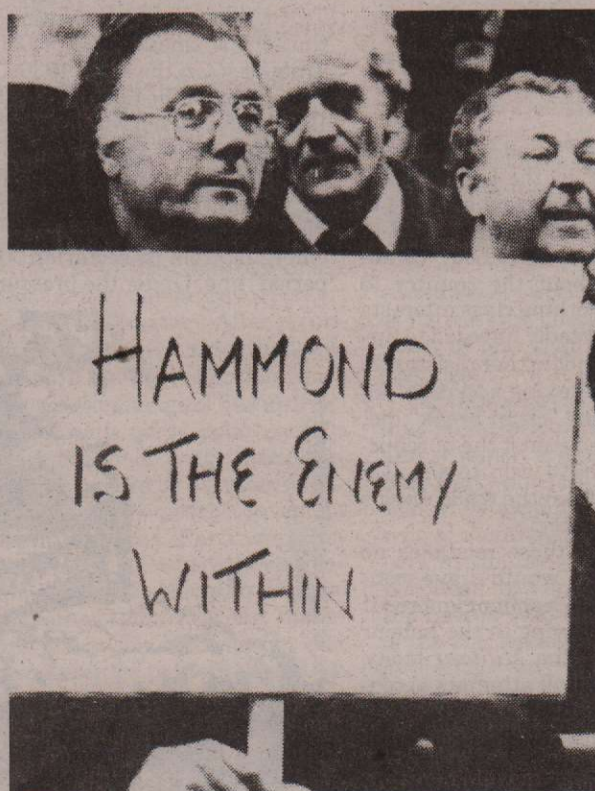
**3** But the bosses want the whole trade union movement tamed, not just its fringes. In 1993 the CSEU—the engineering and shipbuilding union confederation—is due to expel any union not in the TUC. For all these reasons EETPU wants to get back into the TUC. They don't want to abide by its rules, so they are trying to get in through the back door. That door has been opened by their obliging friends, like Jordan and

Laird, at the AEU's Peckam HQ.

**4** The EETPU is a no-strike union. It has pioneered no-strike deals that leave its members worse off and incapable of defending themselves. The building employers' paper said in September that EETPU leader Eric Hammond "has done more than any other trade union leader to forge the sort of model, moderate trade union of which Margaret Thatcher and now John Major would approve".

**5** The EETPU recruits bosses. Since its expulsion it has welcomed into its ranks: the Rolls Royce Managers' Association, the Association of Managerial Electrical Executives, the Steel and Industrial Managers' Association, the Unilever Managers' Association. It even applied to join the bosses' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). These will be your "brothers and sisters" in the merged union!

**6** A merger with EETPU will be used



Too true!

to destroy the democratic structures of the AEU. While these democratic structures haven't stopped the election of a right wing sell-out leadership they are worth defending. That's why Jordan is pleased to see them go. The elected District Committees aren't mentioned in official plans for the merged union. Power will pass from the delegate National Committee to the Na-

tional Executive, with Maggie Thatcher's favourite union leaders guaranteed at least half the places. Two hundred AEU branches will close, to be replaced by massive regional "superbranches" run by unelected full-timers.

**7** Semi-official meetings like the AEU shop-stewards' quarterlies will be abolished. Anybody trying to organise rank and file opposition to the leaders or unofficial action will be expelled or suspended under the proposed new union's rule book. They will be deemed to have "brought discredit" on the union—a way of reviving a time honoured EETPU tradition of blacklisting left wingers.

**8** The EETPU's "business unionism" hasn't proved to be good business for Hammond and co. They are £1,815,000 in debt, a figure due to reach £2 million by next year. The AEU will be expected to bail them out as the merger goes through.

**9** An alliance of EETPU's scab-herders with the right wing leaders of the engineering union will create a massive new right wing union, dominating the skilled manufacturing sector and well placed to do the bosses' bidding as the recession bites deeper. An example of what to expect is the AEU-EETPU inspired campaign against the offshore oil workers' former rank and file movement (now union) OILC. The AEU, EETPU and the GMB managed to get OILC frozen out of the TUC and signed a "hook up agreement" with the oil-rig bosses which gives away union rights and safety at work.

**10** Though prompted by a decline in membership in both unions the merger will not stop it. In 1990 the AEU lost nearly 40,000 members. Over the last decade it has lost nearly half a million. EETPU's membership has fallen from 420,000 members in 1979 to just over 300,000 today. The prime cause of that decline has been the massive attack on jobs, and consequent productivity deals, that the bosses have mounted in the manufacturing and power supply sector.

At every stage the leadership of the two unions has sabotaged resistance. Only at rank and file level in the AEU has resistance been organised. Even the successful shorter hours campaign launched by the AEU made its major breakthroughs in shop-floor organised struggles, for example at British Aerospace.

AEU members foiled their leaders' plans to foist a merger with EETPU on them last time around. It is vital that they do it again. Just say No to the merger. ■



**T**HE DISPUTE over voting against the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) had arisen because James Maxton's group of Independent Labour Party (ILP) MPs had consistently refused to vote for the MacDonald Government's proposed attacks on the unemployed. Maxton and his fellow MPs believed that after the defections and defeat the party leadership would view the ILP's case more sympathetically. They were to be quickly disillusioned.

Fenner Brockway, an ILP leader, visited both George Lansbury, then Chairman of the Labour Party, and Arthur Henderson. Henderson went straight to the point. He told Brockway that he suspected the ILP no longer believed the transition from capitalism to socialism would take place through Parliament but through a direct struggle between the working class and the possessing class. Brockway could truthfully deny this was the case, but for the Labour leaders the rhetoric of the ILP leaders was becoming too dangerous in a situation of rising class struggle.

In the autumn of 1931 massive demonstrations of the unemployed took place against the cuts in benefits introduced by the National Government. Ten thousand traditionally non-militant teachers marched in protest at 15% wage cuts and in September the Royal Navy fleet at Invergordon in Scotland "mutinied". Ten thousand ratings struck, refusing to put to sea until pay cuts were rescinded.

### Conference

The 1932 Easter conference of the ILP adopted a new Statement of Policy which pointed to the inadequacy of purely parliamentary action and called for "mass industrial action as an additional means". The statement declared that capitalism was in deep crisis and that the class struggle as "the dynamic force in social change was nearing its decisive moment".

On the question of the ongoing debate with the Labour Party leadership the conference was divided three ways. The Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC) led by Dr C K Cullen and Jack Gaster called for immediate disaffiliation from the Labour Party and negotiations with the Communist International and British Communist Party. Maxton, Buchanan and other leaders supported disaffiliation and an independent ILP. A third group led by David Kirkwood and Frank Wise were against disaffiliation.

Further negotiations took place but the Labour Party Executive showed little interest, refusing to budge on the issue of submission to PLP standing orders. The July 1932 Special Conference faced with the alternative of submission or disaffiliation voted nearly two to one in favour of leaving the Labour Party. The minority led by Kirkwood and Wise split and rejoined the Labour Party forming the Socialist League.

### Disaffiliate

Was the ILP right to "disaffiliate" from the Labour Party? In the way it was carried out after the special conference it certainly turned into a disaster. From 1932 to 1934 the ILP implemented a policy known as "the clean break".

Despite the fact that the Labour leaders had not yet moved against them it was decided that ILP branches and members would leave the local Labour Parties of their own volition and that councillors would immediately withdraw from Labour groups. It was also decided that no ILP member would act as a trade union delegate to the Labour Party and no trade union member

## INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

*In last month's paper we examined the development of the Independent Labour Party up to Labour's electoral disaster in 1931. The Independent Labour Party was down to five MPs who were not endorsed by the Labour Party because of their refusal to abide by the Parliamentary Labour Party's discipline. In this second part of the article John McKee and Keith Lawry look at the problems of the ILP's split with the Labour Party and its subsequent political evolution*

# Lessons of the split

## PART TWO

would pay the political levy to the Labour Party.

These measures not only cut the ILP members off from the Labour Party rank and file but also from Trades and Labour Councils. The "clean break" did the Labour bureaucracy's job for them, losing the ILP thousands of trade union activists in the process.

A revolutionary policy certainly would have made no concessions to the demands of the Labour leadership to "bow the knee" on the question of readmission to the PLP. It would have fought for a party that was genuinely independent of the Labour bureaucracy, both politically and organisationally. But the crucial task was to take this fight to the Labour Party and trade union rank and file. Here there was enormous sympathy for the ILP's stand against the treacherous policies of MacDonald and the Labour leadership.

### Intransigent

The ILP MPs had in fact been "disaffiliated" by the Labour leadership. An intransigent struggle to win rank and file support and to win "unendorsed" Labour candidates throughout the country to fighting for working class interests would undoubtedly have led to further purges and further resistance. Far from weakening and isolating the ILP, as the "clean break" did, this offensive against the bureaucracy would have won to the ILP wider forces from the trade unions and Labour Party.

But despite these mistakes no revolutionary would have condemned the ILP's split or ignored it in favour of staying in the Labour Party. Unlike the *Militant* today, who claim that all attempts to construct independent parties from leftward splits in mass reformist parties are doomed to result in isolation and failure, Trotsky heartily welcomed the emergence of the ILP despite all its political weaknesses.

Writing in 1933 Trotsky recognised in the ILP's evolution from left reformism to centrism a trend that was developing in several countries:

"A left wing forms within the social democratic parties, which subsequently splits off from the party and tries with its own forces to pave a revolutionary path for itself. These processes reflect on

one side the deep crisis of capitalism and of reformism, which is inseparably bound up therewith, and on the other the inability of the Comintern to group around itself revolutionary currents within the proletariat."

It was these currents that Trotsky attempted to win to the perspective of building the Fourth International. Trotsky thought that it was within these currents, as long as they were moving leftwards, that his supporters should work, to aid the development of these parties towards revolutionary communism. Only if this occurred could these parties avoid stagnation, regression to reformism or a collapse into Stalinism. It was to this struggle that Trotsky directed his attention and that of the small group of British Trotskyists in the early 1930s.

Once out of the Labour Party the ILP involved itself with the work of the Communist Party around the struggle against fascism, the fight for jobs and the rights of the unemployed. The Communist Party was emerging from its sectarian "third period" line. Under the pressure of

the catastrophe of the triumph of fascism in Germany the Comintern gradually began to shift its position on the characterisation of social democracy as being, along with fascism, the "twin evil" of capitalism.

In February 1933 a call was made to the Second and Third Internationals by seven socialist parties outside both of these organisations, including the ILP, to organise a joint conference on how to fight the fascists. The Second International refused any dealings with the Comintern leadership, whilst the latter continued the policy of the united front from below.

### Opening

However an opening had been made and in March 1933 the Communist Party (CP) issued a call for joint action to the Labour Party, the ILP, the TUC and the Co-op Party. The Labour Party still forbade its membership to involve themselves in what it termed Communist front campaigns so the CP and the ILP organised a demonstration of forty thousand at Hyde Park in March 1933 against a fascist rally of a few thousand.

However most of this work was

being carried out by the CP and the ILP in isolation from the mass of reformist-led workers. The "clean break" policy of the ILP had removed it from any lasting area of mass work. As Trotsky later commented about the ILP's situation in this period:

"Despite its name, the ILP did not become really independent but turned into sort of appendage to the Communist International. It did not pay the necessary attention to mass work, which cannot be carried on outside of the trade unions and the Labour Party."

Within the ILP itself the policy of working closely with the CP was allied to the appeals of the RPC to affiliate to the Comintern. At the annual ILP conference of 1933 the RPC put forward a motion on preparing for unification with the CP by "ascertaining how best to assist the work of the Comintern". The position of the RPC won just over half of the branches of the ILP. This turned out to be the highpoint of its influence.

The leadership of the ILP, Maxton and the other MPs, while supporting the break with the Second International as a logical step from their break with the Labour Party, had no intention of joining the



Lancashire unemployed hunger marchers



Comintern. While paying lip service to the goals of the Russian Revolution the ILP leaders remained tied to a pacifist view of the social revolution. Maxton was a long term critic of what he saw as the "mass terrorism" and "totalitarianism" which accompanied the Bolshevik Revolution.

The ILP leadership attempted to fend off the RPC and the Comintern by pushing ahead with its own international initiative. The seven left socialist parties which had appealed for unity held their own conference in Paris in August 1933 and set up an organisation known as the London Bureau.

The ILP was equally hostile to the intervention of the Trotskyists into their conference. They rejected the proposals of the International Left Opposition (ILO) to join the struggle for a new revolutionary International, the Fourth International. The leadership's friendly overtures to Trotsky himself—whose critique of Stalinism was handy for them in their struggle against the RPC—did not blind him to their vacillations, to their centrism. But it did alert him to the possibility of revolutionary intervention in this leftward moving organisation.

Trotsky and the leadership of the ILO argued that the British Trotskyists should immediately enter the ILP and fight to win the whole organisation for revolutionary communism and the Fourth International. However the British section of the ILO split over the question of entry into the ILP and it was left to the minority, the Marxist Group, consisting of the more inexperienced comrades to carry out the perspective of the ILO.

### Pillar

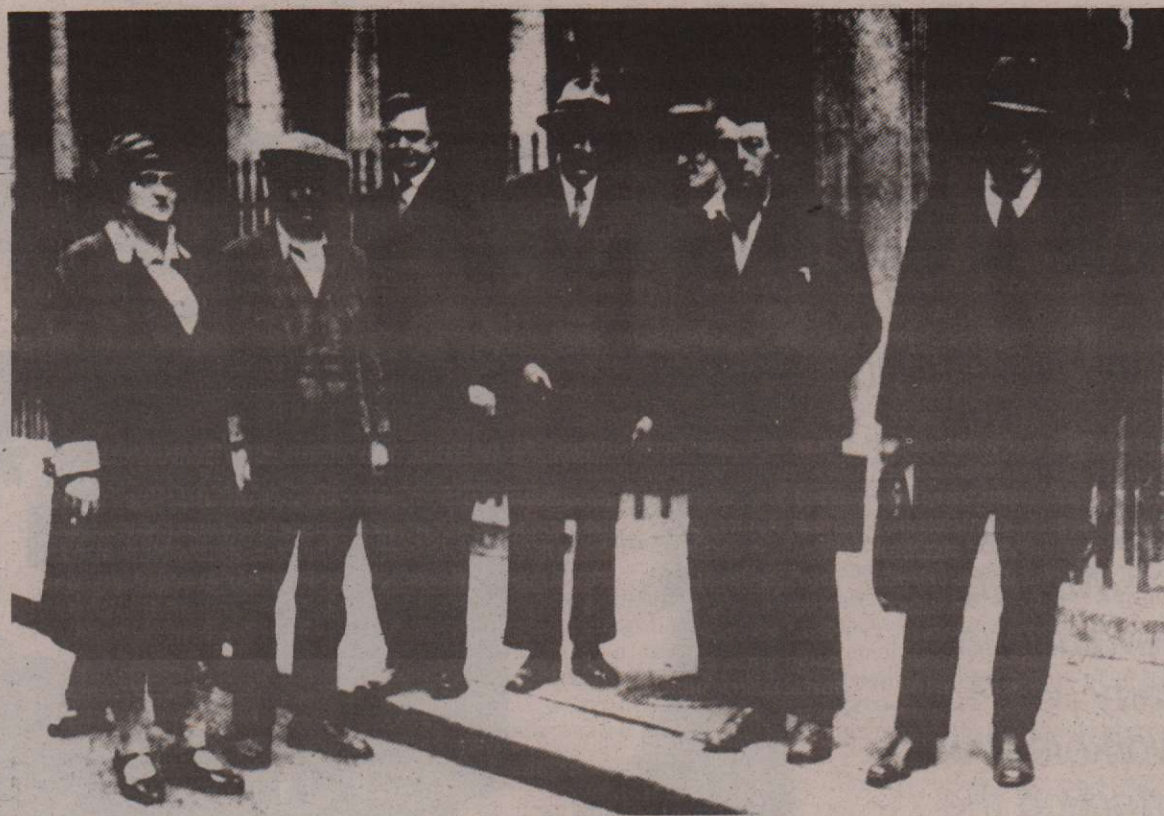
The ILP went on to become an important pillar of the London Bureau. This halfway house position between the Third International on the one side and the movement for the revolutionary Fourth International on the other, suited the ILP leaders well. It meant they could prevaricate, avoid taking a decision, continue to vacillate between reformism and revolution: the hallmark characteristics of centrism. At the same time they could justify their position by claiming to be the "facilitators" of a new international grouping via the London Bureau.

But this was a motley collection of centrist organisations of varying political standpoints, each moving in opposite directions. On the right stood the Norwegian Labour Party, on the left the Revolutionary Socialist Party of the Netherlands which signed the declaration to join the Fourth International. This unstable coalition was doomed to have a short life as it had no common programme and could not develop one.

In article after article Trotsky attacked these currents, especially the more leftward moving elements such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the ILP, calling on them to break with the London Bureau and adopt the banner and programme of the Fourth International. The ILP however continued to vacillate.

In so doing it signed its own death warrant. It lost members to both the Second and Third International. For example, the Lancashire District of the ILP supported affiliation to the Second International and left to rejoin the Labour Party in 1934. RPC supporters joined the CP. The Trotskyists of the Marxist Group, despite their inexperience and small size also grew, from a dozen members when they joined to about forty in 1934.

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October 1934 was to



Kirkwood, Maxton and others on a delegation from an unemployed march to 10 Downing Street

mark a watershed in the history of the ILP. The initial response reflected the organisation's leftward evolution and its distancing of itself from Stalinism as the Comintern turned right under the policy of the Popular Front.

The ILP, with its anti-war and pacifist traditions, launched itself into a struggle against war as British and French imperialism lined up against Italy. A series of meetings were organised throughout the country. The ILP's paper, *The New Leader*, came out clearly and forthrightly in defence of Abyssinia and for the defeat of imperialist Italy, despite the reactionary and feudal nature of the regime of the Emperor Haile Selassie in Abyssinia.

The ILP denounced the proposed League of Nations sanctions against Italy. C. L. R. James, then a leader in the Marxist Group, was allowed to write a series of articles in the *New Leader*. "Let us fight against not only Italian imperialism, but the other robbers and oppressors, French and British imperialism", he wrote. "Workers of Britain, peasants and workers of Africa, get closer for this and for other fights. But keep far from the imperialists and their Leagues and covenants and sanctions". The ILP called instead for the workers to impose sanctions against the war, calling on workers in Britain and internationally to refuse to handle munitions, oil and war materials going to Italy.

### Comintern

This position immediately clashed with that of the Comintern and the RPC. The Soviet Union had joined the League of Nations, described by Lenin as the "thieves kitchen" of the imperialists, in 1934. In 1935 the USSR signed an agreement with France, the Stalin-Laval Pact, which explicitly recognised imperialist France's right to "national defence".

James Maxton had already predicted, in 1934, what the outcome of the new Stalinist policy would be. In discussing the new turn on the ILP leadership he declared:

"The Russian government cannot become allied with the French Government without subduing the class struggle previously carried on by the French Communists. It cannot seek an alliance with the British Government without moderating the class struggle carried on by the oppressed colonial peoples against both British and French imperialisms."

The Soviet Union did indeed give

full support to the policy of imperialist sanctions against Italy while at the very same time Britain and France were offering secret deals to Mussolini to carve up Abyssinia. In the process of this debate the pro-Communist Party RPC was isolated and finally left the ILP, with somewhere between 50 and 100 members, in October 1935.

While the position on the war brought the ILP and the Trotskyists closer together, other positions of the ILP were still marked by its centrism and it became clear the party's leftward move was to be short lived. As Trotsky's criticism of the paralysis of the London Bureau hit home, Maxton and Brockway became more open in their denunciations of the Fourth International in late 1935 and 1936. Demands were also being raised in the Districts and in the leadership for the dissolution of all organised groups in the ILP, a measure aimed primarily at the Marxist Group.

The turning point came at the fourth annual conference of the ILP in April 1936. The conference had been preceded by the Inner-Executive of the ILP reversing the party's position on the Italian/Abyssinian war. In September 1935 it had taken a decision to adopt a dual defeatist position referring to the war as a conflict between "rival dictators". At the same time they dropped the campaign for workers' sanctions against Abyssinia.

The Trotskyists, led by James, fought at the conference to reassert the original position. After a furious debate James' resolution was carried. A further resolution which declared the change of line in direct conflict with party policy and "a contradiction of party discipline" was also passed by 70 votes to 57.

Maxton immediately convened a meeting of the Parliamentary Group of the ILP where they agreed unanimously to threaten resignation rather than carry out conference policy. This ultimatum was then presented to the National Administrative Council (NAC). The NAC quickly capitulated and the following morning the conference was presented with a "compromise" proposal for a referendum on the whole membership on the question in dispute. The conference was bullied into accepting the idea and the referendum was held with the Parliamentary Group holding a gun to the head of the membership. The referendum returned a three to two majority in favour of Maxton's change of policy.

Trotsky summed up the whole episode succinctly:

"The pacifist parliamentary group

of Maxton and company, which regards the party merely as a handy tool, forced it by means of a rude and brutal ultimatum back into pacifist prostration."

Earlier Trotsky had correctly stated that the parliamentary faction's motivation for the split from the Labour Party was to preserve its own independence. It now preserved that same independence, this time from the membership of the ILP!

On a whole series of other questions the ILP demonstrated that it was now firmly on a rightward trajectory. An amended resolution from the NAC was passed opposing the formation of the Fourth International as being "opposed to the interests of international unity." An attempt to amend the ILP statutes to make clear the party stood for "the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system" was also rejected. And finally a motion from the NAC was passed that declared that "the present system of organised groups be brought to an end". This was virtually an instruction for the Marxist Group to dissolve.

### Turning Point

The 1936 Conference marked a turning point for the ILP and its subsequent development was away from revolutionary communism and towards the right. By July 1936 Trotsky was arguing that the ILP was no longer a useful area for revolutionary work. It had lost most of its working class base and was down to less than four thousand members.

The Marxist Group was deeply divided on when to leave the ILP and whether to orient to the Labour Party and its youth organisation. It delayed its exit for several crucial months losing many members in the process. By 1938 the ILP itself was in discussion with the Labour leadership. A majority of the ILP leadership favoured re-affiliation even if it meant agreeing to the Labour Party's terms, once again agreeing to abide by PLP discipline, the very issue that the ILP split over in the first place!

The outbreak of war in 1939 and Labour's wholehearted support for it, put an end to these discussions as it did with the ILP's pacifist traditions. But the organisation was finished. Having passed up the opportunity to take the revolutionary path it went into terminal decline. This, and not the fact that the ILP was outside the Labour Party, is the key lesson revolutionaries today can draw from this whole experience. ■

## LRCI Congress

THE SECOND Congress of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) took place in Munich last month. At the first congress we adopted the *Trotskyist Manifesto*, the programme of the LRCI. The Second Congress was concerned primarily with discussing the balance sheet of our work, on the basis of this programme, and the tasks that lie ahead of us.

We ratified the entry of Poder Obrero (Bolivia) as a full section of the LRCI. This is a priceless gain, bringing into our ranks a second Latin American section, strengthening our work in the continent. For some time before the Bolivian comrades became full members of the League, they had worked with our section in Peru in the Liaison Committee of Andean Trotskyists (CETA). The work of that organisation will now be expanded and a Latin American Bureau of the LRCI will be established.

Likewise, we welcomed the expansion of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, through its fusion with a group of LRCI supporters in the ex-GDR. The building of a group in the ex-GDR, in the heat of the revolutionary crisis that preceded the restoration of capitalism, was proof in practice of our commitment to rebuilding a Trotskyist International.

Congress was attended by observers from our fraternal group, Workers Power New Zealand/Aotearoa and by sympathisers based in Madrid. These comrades expressed their commitment to deepening their discussions with the LRCI. In particular the delegate from WPNZ indicated the experience of the congress will bring to a rapid conclusion discussions leading to full membership of the League.

Since the First Congress the world has been turned upside down. For a young tendency like the LRCI to have maintained its programmatic coherence and unity through such a period, when so many other tendencies have split or been plunged into factional warfare, is a tremendous achievement. It is a testimony to our insistence on ensuring that programmatic and methodological agreement preceded the formal adoption of democratic centralist organisation in 1989.

Yet our insistence on clear programmatic agreement also means drawing clear lines of demarcation. And the Congress had to register a break with the US fraternal group (RTT) as a result of sharp differences in analysis and strategy towards the post-August events in the ex-USSR.

The inevitable pressure of time meant that Congress was unable to finish its work. Documents on the world situation, on Latin America and on Party Building were discussed and referred to the incoming International Executive of the LRCI for completion. But the adoption of a balance sheet of our past work and a clear perspective for the future—strengthening our Latin American work, expanding our work in Russia, intervening into the crisis of the degenerate Trotskyist fragments, strengthening all of the existing sections of the LRCI—means that the Second Congress completed its most important business.

It set an agenda for our work which will see us grow in size and influence, and ensure that we become ever stronger as an active force seeking to resolve the crisis of proletarian leadership.

As testimony to the work of the LRCI Congress received a report of sales of over 100 copies of the LRCI Russian language journal, *Rabochaya Vlast (Workers Power)* on the early January Moscow march against price rises.

Long live working class internationalism!  
Long live the LRCI!



ACCORDING to Geoff Pilling, not only does the *Trotskyist Manifesto* constitute a rejection of Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme, but also of the "basic theoretical concepts of the Fourth International". We reject neither. But we recognise the need to develop both in the light of reality.

This means not only bringing the strong points up to date and addressing new problems, but also eliminating the weak points and one-sidedness which history reveals in every programmatic and theoretical expression of Marxism. The post-war leaders of the Fourth International (FI) failed to do this and, as a result, seriously disoriented generations of militants.

A measure of this disorientation can be gauged from Pilling's central disagreement with the *Trotskyist Manifesto*. Pilling insists that Trotsky's 1938 statement "mankind's productive forces stagnate" is literally true today, has been true since it was written, and in fact characterises the whole imperialist epoch rather than any specific historical period.

For daring to disagree with this dogmatism the LRCI is accused of believing that capitalism has resolved its contradictions! Our socialism is based on utopian moralism, not science, says Pilling.

Solving a theoretical problem may have been as easy as that at Gerry Healy's College of Marxist Education. But when arguments are subjected to the test of logic and reality things become a little more complex.

The perspectival statements contained in the beginning of Trotsky's 1938 programme were conjunctural. The productive forces of humanity had run up against the absolute barrier of capitalist social relations. The world market and the world economy were stagnant. A world-wide revolutionary situation was developing in which the only alternatives were the workers' revolution or a catastrophic imperialist war.

### Hinged

The crisis of revolutionary leadership—the fact that the existing mass parties were thoroughly committed to defending capitalism—meant that a solution to the crisis of all humanity hinged on whether or not revolutionaries could win leadership of the working class.

The FI's failure to come to the head of revolutionary struggles during the war meant that the crisis was resolved in a reactionary way. Stalinism and imperialism stabilised the post-war world by resolving the most immediate and concrete manifestations of capitalism's inner contradictions: constant inter-imperialist rivalry and the threat of world revolution.

Instead of stagnation the world economy experienced two decades of unprecedented growth. Instability and revolutionary crises manifested themselves in temporary and partial outbursts, generally in the colonial and semi-colonial world, rather than predominating as key features of the entire world situation. Whilst the crisis of leadership continued to exist, and worsened with the disorientation and collapse of the post-war FI, it was no longer true that the world situation hinged, immediately, around its resolution.

Against all of this Pilling insists that fundamentally the war and the boom that followed it changed nothing. To justify this he cites Trotsky who in 1922 fixed 1913 as the year in which capitalism's productive forces began to stagnate:

"The year 1913 marks the great turning point in the evolution of European economy . . . Consequently if before 1913 we were con-

## WRP AND THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

# Marxism versus

In the November issue of *The International* Geoff Pilling, of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP—Workers Press) attacked the LRCI's programme, the *Trotskyist Manifesto*. Paul Morris replies.



ditionally correct in saying that socialism is more advantageous than capitalism, it therefore follows that since 1913 capitalism already signifies a condition of absolute stagnation and disintegration for Europe, while socialism provides the only economic salvation." (*First Five Years of the Comintern*, Vol 2 p 306)

From this Pilling concludes, again with Trotsky as his authority, that the whole imperialist epoch can be characterised by the stagnation of the productive forces.

It is not surprising that Trotsky remained convinced to the very end that literal stagnation characterised imperialism. The First World War solved none of the contradictions which caused it, and led to two decades of relative economic stagnation, fascism and renewed world war.

But, as we have pointed out before (*Permanent Revolution* 8) Trotsky's view was one-sided and therefore wrong, even as compared to the theory of imperialism synthesised by Lenin.

Lenin never identified the onset of economic crisis in 1913 with the onset of the imperialist epoch. For Lenin it was the completion of capitalism's qualitative transformation into monopoly capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century which signalled a new epoch, a moment which coincided with the start of an economic boom.

The question is not academic. Because Lenin understood the whole pre-1913 economic boom as a feature of the imperialist epoch he was able to characterise imperialism as an epoch of stagnation and decay within which periods of rapid growth were possible. In 1916 he wrote:

"It would be a mistake to believe that this tendency to decay precludes the rapid growth of capitalism. It does not. In the epoch of imperialism, certain branches of industry, certain strata of the bourgeoisie and certain countries betray, to a greater or lesser degree, now one and now another of these tendencies. On the whole capitalism is growing far more rapidly

than before." (*Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*)

Trotsky's implicit disagreement with Lenin's understanding of imperialism led him to conceive of the possibility of further extended economic growth only as a refutation of the very concept of imperialism. But the basis for correcting this one-sidedness exists in Trotsky's own writings, for example when he wrote in 1928:

"Theoretically, to be sure, even a new chapter of a general capitalist progress in the most powerful, ruling and leading countries is not excluded. But for this capitalism would first have to overcome enormous barriers of a class as well as an inter-state character."

In the light of experience—the greatest period of economic growth in human history, founded on massive defeats of the working class combined with the temporary suppression of "inter-state" imperialist rivalry under the unchallenged hegemony of the USA—who can doubt that, had he lived, Trotsky would have accepted that this "theoretical" possibility had materialised.

### Deny

The only alternative would have been to deny the boom took place, or to insist that it took place without developing the productive forces. It is precisely this that Pilling sets out to do.

Pilling tells us that the productive forces are a "decisive category" for Marxism. But in all the pages of his article he forgets to tell us what exactly he means by the productive forces and what would constitute their development.

We are warned against interpreting the productive forces simply as "things": "Such an interpretation confuses the means of production with the productive forces."

Pilling also implies that the LRCI believes that the productive forces are simply natural phenomena.

Of course it is true that, for Marxists, things embody a social relation. But conversely social relations do not exist independent of their

expression in concrete reality. As Engels put it, social relations "are always bound to things and appear as things".

Thus whilst we can agree with Pilling that the productive forces "are a social-historical category" this category is, as Marx put it, only an abstract expression of concretely existing phenomena.

What phenomena; what things? To be precise the productive forces comprise the means of production, human labour power and technique. It is even possible to find Marx and Engels defining the term more narrowly. Engels describes the new productive forces developed by the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century as "the division of labour and the combination of many detail labourers in one general factory". (*Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*) Marx himself once wrote: "The social relations of production change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces."

There is no mystery to the term beyond that.

But Pilling's whole purpose is to draw a veil of "dialectical" mystification over this "decisive category". Throughout his argument he wilfully blurs the distinction between the productive forces and the social relations of production. By doing so he absolves himself from having to consider facts at all:

"The question cannot be answered by a simple appeal to the so-called 'facts' of the matter." (p21).

Because he cannot deny the facts of economic development in the twentieth century Pilling's whole case rests on the assertion that these facts, the fate of things like old factories and new inventions, bear no relation to the development or stagnation of the productive forces.

Here he certainly has to part company with Trotsky. In considering the possibility of a new "dynamic equilibrium" for capitalism in 1925 Trotsky was clear that "such an equilibrium . . . would be equivalent to a new unfolding of the pro-

ductive forces".

The basis of our assertion that capitalism developed the productive forces after 1945 is the enormous increase in the productivity of labour made possible by the application of science and technology. This was made possible by a period of relatively crisis free accumulation of capital. According to Pilling the LRCI is:

"... guilty of confusing natural and social phenomena, a confusion that lies at the heart of bourgeois ideology. Like so many others it has fallen prey to the power of an abstractly conceived 'science and technology'."

### Abstract

The rising productivity of labour, we are told, is "a highly abstract category". Labour is the basis of human existence, therefore:

"To the extent that the improved implements of labour are employed in this process so, other things being equal, the productivity of labour is raised." (p22)

But this is precisely the point. Where the productive forces, human labour, machinery, raw materials, science and technology run up against the social form of their development, monopoly capitalism, all things are not equal. In the year before Trotsky wrote the *Transitional Programme* world steel production fell from 85% of capacity to 26%. Industrial production as a whole fell from an index of 116 (1925=100) to 83.

Not only were vast quantities of machinery and labour power lying idle, it was literally true when Trotsky wrote: "Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth."

The improved implements of labour were not being systematically employed. Industrial production was at lower than pre-1914 levels. The productivity of labour was not raised. That is what Trotsky meant by the productive forces stagnating. It was applicable in the inter-war period. But in the post-war boom improved implements and techniques were employed on a



# is Dogmatism

scale never before seen, massively raising the productivity of labour, growth rates and absolute levels of production.

According to Pilling the LRCI: "... forgets" that the relationship of humanity to nature, reflected in the 'productivity of labour' cannot be considered as a thing in itself but can be analysed only through the prism of those social relationships through which human beings actually confront nature at a particular period of history."

Here Pilling is guilty of an idealist distortion of Marxism. It is true that the productivity of labour cannot be fully understood outside of a specific system of social relations. Neither can science or technology. But unless we conceive of the productive forces precisely as "things in themselves"—concrete material phenomena—we can never understand their capacity to act differently under different historic phases of society, to be developed by a specific set of social relations and then to come into conflict with them.

It is completely false to suggest that the category "productive forces" bears no relation to the implementation of science and technology. Engels, describing the liberation of the productive forces from the fetters of late feudalism, wrote:

"Since steam, machinery, and the making of machines by machinery transformed the older manufacture into modern industry, the productive forces evolved under the guidance of the bourgeoisie developed with a rapidity and in a degree unheard of before." (*Socialism Utopian and Scientific*)

Once Pilling has succeeded in confusing the productive forces with the social relations of production he only has to prove that the latter are regressive in order to be able to discount as fictitious, or "destructive" any material advances in productivity and technique.

This is clear when Pilling attempts to explain the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, the actual source of stagnation in capitalist social relations.

With the LRCI's method, Pilling says, "it is quite impossible to grasp the real implications of an increase in the productivity of labour for capitalism in this epoch". (p23) The first of these is that the "rising organic composition of capital" involved in raising labour productivity (the need to spend more on machines than on workers' wages) leads to a tendency for the rate of profit to fall. This in turn "drives capital around the world searching for the highest rate of profit and in so doing wreaking havoc and bringing destitution in its wake". (p23)

## Recruits

Strange to say, the LRCI has in fact "grasped the implications" of this phenomenon and teaches them as ABC to its new recruits. But because we do not confuse the productive forces (machinery, labour, technique) with the social form of their development (production for profit) we do not simply equate the tendency for the rate of profit to fall with a constant and absolute stagnation in the productive forces, nor even with unmitigated havoc and destruction.

Lenin did not build the tendency

of the rate of profit to fall into his analysis of monopoly capitalism. But he certainly realised that the export of capital, with all its barbaric effects on the colonial world, was a key feature of the new epoch. And yet for almost the first two decades of that epoch Lenin pointed out that "on the whole capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before".

Pilling tries to nuance his argument with the assertion:

"When Trotsky speaks of the stagnation of the productive forces he is speaking of a law of tendency; just as when Marx dealt with the fall in the rate of profit."

This is wrong. Trotsky meant that the productive forces stagnate *absolutely* when he wrote these words on the eve of World War Two. Marx, by describing a tendency, built into his theory the possibility that the tendency could be offset for long periods. In reality, in the world of "things" and "facts" which Pilling considers so irrelevant to Marxist science, the rate and the mass of profit can increase for a period despite the *tendency* of the rate of profit to fall.

If Pilling were only saying that there is a *tendency* towards stagnation in the imperialist epoch he would be saying no more or less than Lenin, no more or less than the *Trotskyist Manifesto* in fact, and the whole debate would be a pointless exercise in semantics.

But Pilling clearly wishes to say more than this. He says:

"In the epoch of imperialism... the forces tending to destroy productive forces predominate over those leading to their development."

This statement, true at the level of the epoch, is not true at the level of every period within the epoch. If it were true for every moment of the twentieth century we should expect the productive forces to be at a lower level now than in 1898, the year Lenin identified as the birth of fully fledged monopoly capitalism.

This is more or less what Pilling asserts:

"Has the post-war 'technological revolution' led to a greater degree of control by humankind over nature, led to a raising of culture, led in short to the growth of the productive forces? The answer must be 'no.'" (p24)

The justification for this breathtaking piece of dogmatism is that, not simply as a tendency, but throughout the post-war period, the "forces of destruction" have literally predominated over the forces of production.

As evidence Pilling cites first of all the arms industry:

"Here is a classic example where the growth of productive techniques is turned against the productive forces and indeed threatens to de-

not been applied outside the sphere of warfare? Medicine and commercial aviation are just two examples of the many areas of human culture which have been advanced by such techniques.

Are the benefits of these techniques used rationally? Are they used to improve the existence of all humanity? Clearly not. But to say this is only to say that capitalism remains a relative barrier to the development of the productive forces, a fetter on them. It does not prove that they stagnate eternally.

The same problem arises with Pilling's other examples such as the "ecological crisis", "poverty, hunger and famine", the mass production of narcotics, the decay of the city etc. We do not dispute the existence of these phenomena. But it is ludicrous to take them as anything more than as examples of capitalism's one-sided development of the productive forces, the fact that their development benefits only the rich.

If the assertion "the productive forces stagnate" is to mean anything it should signify the situation Trotsky described in 1938:

"The economic prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism."

What are these economic prerequisites? The existence of the proletariat is one, and post-war capitalism massively expanded the proletariat, despite at the same time creating a semi-lumpen mass of shanty dwellers because of the one-sided and destructive character of industrialisation.

Another is the concentration and centralisation of capital. This too received a massive impetus from the post-war boom.

Crucially there is the introduction of machinery to increase the productivity of labour. Throughout Marx's *Grundrisse* runs the theme that machine production, reducing the worker to a passive supervisor

of an essentially mechanical, electrical and chemical process, is a key prerequisite for humanity's advance to socialism and communism. Automation and the introduction of information technology has massively advanced this economic prerequisite for socialism at the very same time as destroying the jobs and livelihoods of millions under capitalism. In short Trotsky's statement, in general correct as a description of the whole period of the 1930s, was one-sided as an epochal characterisation.

That one-sidedness bequeathed disorientation to the post-war FI, led by dogmatists of the Pilling variety instead of dialectical materialists capable of self-correction.

## Moralism

Does this mean, as Pilling suggests, that the whole of Marxism is refuted if we accept that imperialism can develop the productive forces, the economic pre-requisites for socialism? Does it reduce our socialism to moralism?

No. Because the predominant character and tendency of imperialism is to stagnation and decay. Once we understand that we can see the post-war boom as an exceptional product of what Trotsky himself recognised as "superstructural" determinants of the economic fortunes of capitalism. Capitalism did overcome "enormous barriers of a class as well as an inter-state character"—specifically US imperialism defeated all its rivals and in alliance with Stalinism inflicted strategic defeats on the working class. But it overcame these problems only temporarily and in a way which sowed the seeds of further crisis, if not yet absolute stagnation.

Trotsky retrospectively characterised the socialism of 1871 to 1913 as "conditionally correct" in its assertion that socialism was more advantageous than capitalism. Was he accusing Marx, Engels, Lenin and Luxemburg etc, of moralism and utopianism? No. Still less can the LRCI be accused of it. Because despite recognising the absence of a generalised world revolutionary crisis in the boom years we have recognised the continued eruption of revolutionary opportunities and spelled out the possibility of the socialist revolution in each one.

Unlike the period of class and international peace (1871 to 1898) which concluded the epoch of capitalism's relatively progressive role in human history, the period of relative class peace which followed World War Two stands in fundamental contradiction to its epoch.

## Epoch

The post-war development of the productive forces stands in the same relation to the character of the epoch as a period of increased profitability stands to the general tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Tendencies do not have to be manifest in concrete expressions of reality at all times. Once we understand this basic Marxist proposition the whole edifice of Pilling's not-so-cleverly constructed argument comes tumbling down.

We stand by the method of the *Transitional Programme*, and have done so throughout the post-war period, never abandoning it for utopianism or for a return to the maximum-minimum programme of the late nineteenth century. This is why we stand far better placed to address the coming new world revolutionary situation than Pilling and the WRP. They have indulged in decades of sterile theological defence of every word of the *Transitional Programme* while robbing it of its revolutionary content and departing from its method when confronted with "facts" and "things". ■



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Forces of destruction?



## AFTER THE USSR

## What next?

The end of the USSR was clearly on the cards from 1 December, when over 90% of the Ukraine electorate voted for independence. Gorbachev's proposed new Union Treaty was doomed by this vote. Since the August failed coup ex-Stalinist *apparatchik*, Leonid Kravchuk, stepped up the campaign for complete Ukrainian independence. Armed with a 61.5% vote Kravchuk, on 5 December, renounced the 1922 treaty which founded the USSR.

Boris Yeltsin immediately recognised the Ukraine's independence and broke finally and irrevocably from Gorbachev and his Union project which, in the months since the August failed coup, he had zig-zagged between supporting and sabotaging. Yeltsin came down on the side of the faction of his advisers which wanted to ditch all central federal authority that was separate from the economic and military hegemony of Russia itself.

On 8 December a meeting of Yeltsin, Shushkevich (Belorussia) and Kravchuk ushered into being the new "Commonwealth of Independent States" and announced the "end of the USSR as a subject of International Law". The purpose of the new confederation is clear enough. In a related Declaration on the Co-ordination of Economic Policy the leaders pledged to work for the "creation of fully fledged market mechanisms" and for the "transformation of property relations". In short, it is an alliance for the restoration of capitalism between three governments whose programmes clearly mark them out as being openly bourgeois.

But there is more to it than that. Kravchuk and Shushkevich, no less than Yeltsin, still represent a sizeable fraction of the former bureaucracy, even of the *nomenklatura*. They have used their control of the political institutions and the media to outdistance their rivals, issuing demagogic nationalist rhetoric which left the former "democratic opposition" divided and powerless. The defeat of Rukh in the Ukraine elections, the declining fortunes of the opposition to Yeltsin by the Moscow and St Petersburg mayors, Popov and Sobchak, indicate that it is not the long-standing "opposition" which seized power between August and December 1991 but that fraction of the bureaucracy that clearly and unequivocally plumped for a rapid restoration of capitalism.

### Converting

They saw that their best chance for converting their caste privileges and their accumulated plunder of the state owned means of production into fat salaries and profits under capitalism lay in a rapid Polish-style rush to the market and in arming themselves with a "democratic mandate" for their semi-Bonapartist leaders.

But the rapid-restorationists' victory over Gorbachev is not without its contradictions. While Yeltsin has resolved the duality of power which existed between the shock-restorationist bureaucrats and the old forces of the bureaucratic conservatives and the Gorbachevites, new splits and fragments in the military state machine are appearing.

The dissolution of the USSR left unresolved the question of the armed forces, totalling nearly four million. The Soviet Armed Forces (SAF)—as if to prove the Marxist dictum that the "special bodies of armed men" constitute the bedrock of the state machine—have negotiated themselves a very special status in the CIS. They remain or will remain the only "federal" institution in the new alliance.

The SAF, headed until the end of

On 25 December Mikhail Gorbachev resigned giving Russian President Boris Yeltsin his best possible Christmas present. Gorbachev's departure marked the final disintegration of the state structures of the USSR in favour of the new "Confederation of Independent States". Mike Evans looks at the implications of this



Latvians remove a sign posted at the entrance to Communist Party headquarters in Riga

November by Chief of the General Staff Vladimir Lobov, does not wish to disintegrate along republican lines. Rumours began to develop of a possible army coup. The critical moment came at a meeting on 10 and 11 December. The General Staff met first Gorbachev and then Yeltsin. Yeltsin's measures were met with widespread approval but Yeltsin had to give an assurance that the SAF would not be divided at a strategic level, either for conventional or nuclear forces.

This has unleashed a running dispute with the Ukraine. After all, if the CIS is not a state why does it need an army? If the Ukraine is an independent state why should it not have its own army, airforce and fleet, rather than a lightly armed national guard. Born-again nationalists like Kravchuk cannot afford to back down on this. They also know that if mass popular resistance to their savage economic measures breaks out on the streets it would be a disaster for them to restore order using a "soviet" or "Russian" army rather than a Ukrainian one.

And the need to restore order, may not be far away in the light of the measures that came into force on 2 January. The key question in the next months is what level of resistance can the working class of Russia, Belorussia, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan put up to the "shock therapy"?

Yeltsin himself is clearly worried. On 18 December he said:

"Following the price liberalisation, the situation will deteriorate for six months. And we are certainly worried about the problem of unrest and even rebellions."

The freeing of prices in the New Year produced an upward price spiral several times greater than that predicted, especially for food. The price of sausage meat rose to six times its previous level and pork sold for 465 roubles a pound—one month's wages for a Soviet worker. Nor does anyone except the gov-

ernment's publicists think this will be a short sharp shock.

The main author and executioner of the Polish shock, Leszek Balcerowicz says:

"In no way can living standards improve within the year. You need years for that."

But the starting point for the workers of the former USSR is much worse than that of the Poles in early 1990. Food production is at least 11% down on one year ago and the level of food imports is half that of 1990. In addition food is no longer being delivered to the state shops or via the state distribution network. In 1991 there was a 20% drop in meat deliveries and, at least in the first weeks of price liberalisation, it has not appeared on the private market in any greater quantities. Expecting a violent hyperinflationary spiral, the mafia and the "co-operative" bourgeoisie are still hoarding and still speculating on the misery and despair of the masses.

### Outbursts

Reports are beginning to emerge of outbursts in the streets. In Stavropol crowds smashed shop windows and forced the managers to reduce the newly "liberated" prices for meat and sausage. Such events are straws in the wind for the development of a growth of elemental class struggle against the attempt to "liberate" the workers, the collective farmers, the pensioners of their savings, to create millions of unemployed and to slash to ribbons the social gains that workers have made through their own labour.

Because of the stagnation and disintegration of the bureaucratically planned economy, most workers developed illusions in a utopian "market economy" which was somehow not the old capitalism and exploitation which their grandparents had ended in 1917. In 1992 they are learning first hand what the

market means: empty shopping baskets and empty plates. Soon they will learn it means closed factories and wrecked lives. When the Russian workers learn this lesson for the second time this century they will spontaneously resist, that much is certain.

The Kuzbass independent miners' union has demanded negotiations with Yeltsin for wage rises to compensate for inflation. Better still, it has threatened a strike from 15 January if these do not take place and are not satisfactory. And the Kuzbass miners have some of the strongest illusions in Yeltsin. As the inflation continues we can expect not only food riots and "disturbances" but strikes as workers seek to protect their slashed real wages. Yeltsin and Yegor Gaidar, his chief economic minister, know, and have repeatedly said, they cannot "fully compensate" workers for this. A situation can rapidly develop in which, to paraphrase Lenin, workers will be "unwilling to go on in the new way".

On top of this the Yeltsinite ruling circles are already divided. Alexander Rutskoi, his vice-president, has openly criticised the "shock therapy" on prices, preferring rapid privatisation. If the Yeltsin regime comes under serious pressure it is likely to split wide open. The SAF are not a wholly reliable instrument, disaffected as they are by the process of the break up of the USSR. The instability could easily push the democratic framework of restoration to breaking point. The candidates for a Bonaparte are multiplying. The feeble shoots of bourgeois democracy, represented by the parliaments and the city soviets, are withering in favour of semi-Bonapartist mayors and presidential rule by decree.

But if there is not much fertile soil in the states of the former USSR for capitalist democracy to flourish the conditions are developing for the emergence of the first rudimentary elements of working class de-

mocracy. Workers' democracy is born in adverse economic conditions and in the struggle against them. It is born in the strike committees and in the price-watch committees that can and must arise out of the elemental resistance.

This resistance, at first fragmented and episodic, can be generalised into a mass movement against the whole programme of restoration. At first it will be spontaneous, and not consciously aimed at the whole market deception. But this spontaneity can be transformed into consciousness by leadership. Leadership at the level of the factory and the street—a leadership that says:

"The working people must not pay. If this is the price of the market economy there must be another way."

Such a leadership must be assembled and forged from the best fighters willing to co-ordinate a general strike against the restoration measures, to bring down the Yeltsin government and indeed the whole CIS structure.

But without a clear insight as to what to replace these with, some new demagogue—perhaps even worse than Yeltsin or Rutskoi—could pick up the state power from the streets. The working class needs a new political leadership—a party which sets as its goal a workers' government, like the one the Russian workers and their soviets installed in October 1917.

It must be democratically answerable to councils of workers' delegates. It must take strong measures against the mafia, the new "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" and the pseudo co-operatives and speculators. It must arm the workers and win over the rank and file soldiers.

### Catastrophe

To meet the impending economic catastrophe it must put forward an emergency plan. The first planks of this are clear: an end to price rises, retention of subsidies and the preservation of workers' wages from the ravages of hyper-inflation. Threats of sackings and closures in the factories must be met with workers' control of hours worked. A programme of emergency works must be established to absorb the unemployed and set about addressing the chronic housing situation and the decrepit transport and distribution system.

The unemployed must be guaranteed a living income. Committees of workers and housewives must establish an audit of food supplies and, by force if necessary, confiscate the supplies that are presently hoarded by mafia and co-operative alike.

Such a plan must get discussed, modified and adopted by a congress of trade unions, workers' collectives and workers' councils. The workers themselves in the factories, the shops and warehouses can solve this crisis and start to create a democratically planned economy. Dark as the situation seems now, a revolutionary situation can develop. It can be the dawn of a new era, not only for the Russian, Ukrainian or Kazakh workers, but for humanity.■



# YUGOSLAVIA No to UN intervention

The UN peace plan for Yugoslavia has revealed deep divisions within the Federal Army and Serbia itself, writes **Richard Brenner**

**Y**UGOSLAVIA'S reactionary civil war could be set to turn into a reactionary peace if the United Nations (UN) settlement, sponsored by US envoy Cyrus Vance, is successful.

On New Year's Day Vance got the agreement of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and the Serbian government to the commitment of 10,000 UN "peacekeeping" troops in three demilitarised zones in Croatia if the current ceasefire (the 15th) holds. Croatia would settle for a formally independent but territorially diminished state. Serbia would dominate a rump Yugoslav federation. Imperialism would establish a direct military presence in the Balkans and the possibility of an increased economic role in Croatia and Slovenia.

The pro-imperialist Croatian regime, faced with the stronger Serb dominated federal army, is losing the war and is desperate to get a UN military force in place as soon as possible. This will speed the formal recognition of Croatia, enabling the regime to commence the reconstruction of the country and attempt to assimilate in excess of 500,000 refugees.

The Serbian leader Milosevic is faced with chronic shortages of raw materials and European Community (EC) sanctions, coupled with growing international isolation given the collapse of Stalinism and the clear support being given to Croatia by the major imperialist powers. A quick settlement now would enable the Yugoslav federal army to consolidate its military and territorial gains before the conflict broadens to Bosnia and before the Serbian anti-war movement can pick up further support.

Milosevic has traced a path identical to that of the leaders of numerous republics in the former USSR from Stalinism to national, revivalist chauvinism. At the start of the 15th ceasefire in early January he organised a pan-Serbian rally of Serbs from across the federation, including Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia. The aim of the rally was to win support for his project of a rump Yugoslavia of Serbia, Montenegro and the adjacent Serbian enclaves. This, he hopes, will restore a degree of stability to enable capitalist restoration to proceed without fatally undermining the power of the Bonapartist bureaucracy.

Within Serbia, however, this accommodation to the plans of Vance and the imperialists has met with serious and determined opposition. This has come not from any anti-imperialist movement but from the most virulently chauvinist and anti-Croatian sections of the army and Serb militias in the other republics, notably Croatia and Bosnia.

On 7 January, in a transparent attempt to disrupt the ongoing talks, the Federal Army shot down an EC helicopter killing the European peace monitors on board. The pro-Milosevic Defence Ministry in Belgrade stunned imperialist diplomats by the speed of its apology,

clearly indicating the depth of the divisions within the military over the peace plan.

The air force commander was suspended and subsequently, in a victory for the hardliners, the former Titoist Stalinist and pro-settlement General Kadiejevic resigned and was replaced by the nationalist General Adzic. He opposes the UN peacekeeping force and has links with Serbian nationalists in Krajina, East Croatia, Slavonia and Banja Luka in Northern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Milan Babic, the head of the self-proclaimed Serb republic in South Croatia, has announced that his forces will refuse to disarm and will defy the UN ceasefire and troop deployment. They claim that the Yugoslav Army will be abandoning them if they withdraw from Croatia. Despite being formally led by pro-Belgrade elements, the Bosnian Serbs are threatening to support Babic's stand and to defy the settlement themselves.

If the ceasefire holds and the settlement goes ahead, it will not guar-

antee the stability that imperialism seeks in order to enable a smooth restoration of capitalism and the renewed exploitation of the region.

The new Croatia that the EC seems set to recognise on 15 January would have lost a third of its territory, will have suffered the destruction of most of its industry and the devastation of its lucrative tourist business. It would be in a strategically vulnerable shape and a substantial section of its land would be under direct occupation by UN troops. This is not a recipe for peaceful reconstruction and prosperity but for poverty, exploitation and further social and national conflict.

Equally, peace would represent no more than a pyrrhic victory for Serbia. The threat of civil war between Belgrade and the more militant nationalist and Chetnik enclaves and, more dangerously, between the factions in the army is real. Milosevic has threatened "very severe" measures against Serbian hardliners in Croatia. One convenient bullet in the back of Babic's head could be enough to spur Adzic to action, even disrupting the peace process itself. Meanwhile the peace movement is growing. And, as we reported in last month's *Workers Power*, discontent is mounting

within the army itself.

Even if Milosevic succeeds in his aim of a new Serbian dominated federation, it would be deeply unstable. The Serbian economy is shattered and, as in Croatia, the civil authorities are struggling to accommodate hundreds of thousands of refugees. In short a revolutionary period has opened in Yugoslavia, which will be characterised by continuing sharp social conflicts, political crises and mass struggles.

The task of the small and isolated groups of socialists in Croatia and Serbia is to organise determined opposition to the reactionary war from within and outside the armies and militias, and to oppose the reactionary aims of the UN and EC imperialism, demanding a halt to plans for the introduction of the UN troops.

Above all, in the struggle against chauvinism, war and the reintroduction of the rapacious profit system, internationalist workers' parties must be built, defending the rights of nations to self-determination, fighting for the overthrow of the bureaucratic and bourgeois governments and their replacement with workers' council republics and a new, voluntary federation of Balkan states. ■



Soldiers in the Croatian army

## Asturian miners fight pit closures

**F**OR ALMOST ten years the government of the PSOE (Socialist Workers' Party of Spain) has pursued a neo-liberal economic policy of which the British Tories would be proud. This year the Minister of the Economy, Solchaga, and the Minister of Industry, Aranzadi, have decided to take on the miners of Asturias. The plan is to close the Asturian coal mines belonging to HUNOSA, the state mining company, by 2002. This will be achieved at first by the voluntary retirement of 6,000 on full pay in the

next two or three years—a third of the total workforce.

At the end of last year the two largest trade unions, the UGT (with links to the PSOE) and the CCOO (with traditional Stalinist links), called for a one day general strike in Asturias to head off the growing militancy in the region. The strike was a great success, with even the petit bourgeoisie, shopkeepers and small traders supporting the strike. Asturias was paralysed for a day while tens of thousands marched in support of the

regeneration of industry.

The crisis, though acute, is not limited to Asturias. In the neighbouring regions of Cantabria, the Basque Country and Galicia the crisis is similar, but it is in Asturias where the miners represent the most militant vanguard of the working class. Hence the tactic of the union bureaucracy to regionalise the struggle to prevent it getting out of their hands.

Fortunately though, the bureaucracy is losing control. For two weeks now the workers of HUNOSA in some

key mining areas of Asturias have defied their unions' recommendations and have refused to work. Every day the miners assemble at the pits and decide whether to occupy or carry out some other form of defiant action, for example, obstructing main roads. Leaders of both major trade unions in the mines, SOMA-UGT and the CCOO, now admit that their members no longer trust them. This also has clear political implications for the region with the coming elections in the spring. The United Left, a bloc which has links with the CCOO (the majority group in which is the PCE, the Spanish CP) has already expressed its fear at losing seats and has demanded the sacking of the industry minister. The leader of FSA-PSOE, the local Asturian federation, has demanded talks with the president, Felipe Gonzalez.

The future of this strike depends on the miners developing independent strike committees, spreading the strike to other sections of industry and other regions.

These government tactics have been tried throughout the world, not least in Britain, and if other workers do not respond to the attack on the Asturian miners as a general attack on the working class, their day will shortly come. ■

## Sri Lankan Trotskyist dies

**A**S WE went to press we were informed of the death of Comrade Edmund Samarakoddy in early January in Sri Lanka. Comrade Samarakoddy was a founding member and leader of the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) which was founded in the late 1930s.

From the late 1950s Comrade Samarakoddy was a leading figure in opposition to the LSSP's accommodation to the bourgeois nationalist Sri Lanka Freedom Party, an accommodation which finally led to the

LSSP entering the popular front Government led by Mrs Bandaranaike in 1964.

Comrades in Workers Power (Britain) and in other sections of the LRCI knew Comrade Samarakoddy well through a series of discussions and meetings which took place in London over a number of years when the his organisation was linked to the Italian group Voce Operaia. Despite our political differences with Comrade Edmund all the comrades who met him were impressed by his continued commitment to the revo-

lutionary class struggle, to political discussion and debate.

His willingness to impart his knowledge of the history of the LSSP and Fourth International to younger comrades was of great benefit to all of us who met him. Comrade Samarakoddy will be missed by all those who learnt from such discussions.

We express our sadness at his death and our condolences go out to his family, friends and comrades. The next issue of *Workers Power* will carry a full obituary of comrade Samarakoddy. ■



**WP: What is WOSA's attitude to the negotiations?**

**SV:** WOSA says no to the negotiations. The round table talks include leaders of bourgeois democratic parties, collaborators and ethnically based organisations (like Inkhatha and the homeland leaders). At the meeting of the Patriotic Front there was no programme of action agreed. Rather, the meeting endorsed a negotiating bloc. Instead we should rely on mass action to bring down the regime. We disagree with the ANC leadership which has led the mass movement into this trap but we are in favour of constructing a united front of the oppressed and exploited. The possibilities for this were demonstrated during the two day stayaway of 4 and 5 November.

The Peace Accord has proved another means for disarming the masses. Before the Accord, defence committees were being formed. The regime wanted to nip this in the bud. The leaders who signed the accord agreed that the names of those involved in defence committees should be given to the state forces. Not surprisingly a few days after these were handed over, the police arrived and arrested those named!

Another part of the present accommodation is the social contract idea. I think you are familiar with this over here and dubbed it the "social con-trick". It is the same idea of tying the workers' movement to the plans of the capitalists.

**WP: What is WOSA's alternative to the current strategy of the ANC?**

**SV:** The ANC strategy is to reach an agreement with the ruling class of South Africa as well as international capital and that strategy is based on negotiating with the De Klerk government. Our position is very clear. We are counterposing to negotiations the slogan "we are our own liberators"—that is we can secure liberation only through the mass activity of the majority in our country, the black working class. This must be done through organising on the ground, in trade unions and beyond that by forming industrial area committees and councils of the oppressed and exploited in a united non-sectarian way. We fight to build these committees around a programme of action, which takes forward the demands of the working class and shows how the aspirations can be met.

**WP: You lay a great deal of stress in your propaganda on the demand for the constituent assembly—for instance you argued that the two day stayaway should take up not only the fight against VAT but also for the constituent assembly. We agree this demand is important. But if you have a general strike, if you are posing the question of "who rules?" why should your slogans be limited to that of the constituent assembly?**

**SV:** If you look at how we have posed the call for the constituent assembly you can see that we are saying that there can only be a genuine constituent assembly representing the masses if these workers' organisations—industrial area committees and defence organisations—can oversee the convening of the assembly. In this way we strengthen the call for building these organisations which can take the struggle further.

**WP: You've explained that WOSA is opposed to the Accord and to the Patriotic Front. But why did your 1991 conference pass resolutions calling for those things? Wasn't it clear at the time that any peace accord or Patriotic Front that devel-**

# WOSA

# Fighting the sell out

The contours of the reactionary settlement in South Africa are becoming clearer. The ANC is moving ever closer towards a full partnership with the National Party in the negotiating block CODESA.

There are signs that the ANC will concede some sort of white veto in the new constitution alongside guarantees of property rights. If a constituent assembly is called at all it will be long after the sell-out is complete. In this situation the need for intransigent opposition to the collaborators is becoming ever more urgent.

The biggest organisation of the South African left attempting to lead that opposition is the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), formed in 1990 after South Africa lifted bans on political organisations.

Workers Power talked to Salim Vally, who toured Britain on behalf of WOSA late in 1991. He is also a leader of the Johannesburg branch of the catering and allied workers' union, SACCAWU. A full transcript of the interview will be published in a forthcoming edition of *Trotskyist International*. In the excerpt printed below Salim explains WOSA's attitude to the negotiation process and its action programme for the South African working class.

As the developing argument reveals, on a number of key issues WOSA's politics are flawed. It is a centrist organisation - its militants subjectively socialist revolutionaries, but its practice repeatedly veering in an opportunist direction.

This is the product of WOSA's origin as a coalition of forces from degenerate Trotskyism (the Cape Action League) and left nationalism from both the ANC and AZAPO (Black Consciousness) traditions.

The clarity WOSA now shows on the negotiations was not so evident in earlier propaganda. WOSA leader Neville Alexander told *New Nation* (18.1.91)

that the precondition for negotiations should be discussions between all the main liberation movements. As it turned out the ANC could concede on this and still fix a deal over the heads of the masses.

Once it became clear, in October 1991, that the ANC and PAC were stitching up a deal behind the scenes WOSA withdrew from the Patriotic Front. But for a period before this there was a real danger that WOSA would be used as left cover by the nationalists.

WOSA's propaganda on the relationship between the constituent assembly and the state has been misleading. The resolution of its first conference says that the assembly should, at a minimum, be based on "security forces disarmed and confined to barracks except for anti-crime policing".

But revolutionary Marxists recognise that the assembly could never be truly independent and sovereign as long as the state can use its security forces. And those security forces will never give up arms voluntarily. The state has to be smashed.

As Salim Vally points out, it is still dangerous to say such things in South Africa. Nevertheless WOSA's propaganda is equivocal to the point of sowing confusion.

A vital and indispensable tool for workers' revolution is the revolutionary party and the International. But Neville Alexander told the WOSA Conference in May 1991:

"The whole array of anti-capitalist forces in the world should come together on a regular basis in order to initiate and propagate an international socialist movement (not an international socialist party)."

We believe that it is precisely a world party of socialist revolution that is needed, a need that will become clearer as the betrayal in South Africa unfolds.

ground at a local, regional and national level through a programme of action based on working class demands, and excluding collaborators and capital. What happened at the Patriotic Front is that capital and their collaborators were included. There was no programme of action, the alliance was just at the level of the leadership without a mandate from their constituencies and based on negotiating with the regime.

**WP: WOSA says it has a socialist programme and socialist aims and stands for workers' democracy, workers' action, workers' control. But what I don't see reading your material is clarity on the question of how the capitalist state is to be overthrown**

**SV:** We come out of a particular process of a severely repressive situation and that repression is not ended. People are under the impression that we are in a bourgeois democracy already! But if you look at the death squads, if you look at the levels of violence, if you look at the fluidity of even the negotiations, things can change tomorrow. WOSA is a legal organisation and our propaganda is contained in those bounds.

I can say that we support the idea of self-defence committees. We support the idea that on the way forward workers must protect their own structures and their people and the working class. I can also say that those that have power and privilege will not give it up without a struggle as the history of countries like Chile shows. Also we do not believe that workers can seize power through parliamentary means.

There has been a lot of talk within the movement about workers' insurrection and a debate about the difference between workers' insurrection and the kind of guerilla strategy that has been followed which has not really even been effective from the military point of view. Its aim was always to press the regime into negotiations—that strategy we have never agreed with.

**WP: You're visiting Britain at the moment speaking at a number of meetings. What can trade unionists and students in Britain do to support the struggle for socialism in South Africa?**

**SV:** It is important to remember that we are not in a "post-apartheid" situation. Support should not be sectarian—it should be based on the actual struggles, linking the struggles of people in our country with the working class here, with black people, with women and with the struggles of the Irish people.

WOSA is the biggest left group. I don't think that our programme and positions are incompatible with most of the revolutionary left in this country. If we are defeated partly because of lack of resources then it would be a set-back for the left internationally.

There are many things that can be done by supporting grass roots organisations, by increasing the confidence of the working class in our country, through propagandising and publicising our positions and fighting in the trade unions, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement and in the Labour Party to show that there are other forces amongst the oppressed who also deserve support.

It is also important to contribute to discussions within our organisations and debate with us on issues.

Remember that despite the talk of the social contract, of negotiations, despite the attempt by the misleaders to hijack the movement—nothing can stop the class struggle. ■

Vukani Basebenzi No. 7 November 1991

**Vukani Basebenzi**


Paper of WOSA (Workers Organisation for Socialist Action)

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**ANC/PAC form Negotiation**

WOSA went to the Patriotic Front conference of the 25 - 27 October expecting to be part of the formation of an alliance of the oppressed to end the apartheid

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Above, Vukani Basebenzi, paper of WOSA; right, Mandela is leading the masses to surrender.

oped would have the character they do have. Wasn't that a rather misleading thing to do?

**SV:** Well the idea of the Peace Accord came after our conference so we didn't talk about the Peace Accord; we talked in our conference about peace. We have always said—and we've been consistent—that peace can only come about through the efforts of people on the ground. It certainly can't come through the present government and capital trying to foist a peace accord on the masses. By attending the National

Peace Accord we in no way we supported it—in fact we were very effective at the Peace Accord in opposing it. Every national liberation movement attended the conference and we were not bound by anything. We were able to expose the attempts by capital and the state to co-opt a section of the liberation movement, that is the ANC and COSATU. The PAC, AZAPO and WOSA were able to publicly reject the Accord.

Now as far as the Patriotic Front is concerned, since our inception

WOSA—and I think all revolutionaries through the world have this position—has agreed with the united front approach and we stand by that. Even the words "Patriotic Front" we oppose from an anti-sexist position, but be that as it may, our understanding of the united front has been a fighting front, an alliance of organisations on the



# Fundamentalism and nationalism in Algeria

**T**HIRTY YEARS ago Algeria stood in the vanguard of the struggle against imperialism as the masses overthrew French colonial rule. Today the FLN, the nationalist party which led the struggle for national liberation, is utterly discredited. It was decisively beaten in the first free parliamentary elections in Algeria's history.

From 1962 to 1988, Algeria was a one-party state. The right wing of the FLN consolidated its rule with the coming to power of Boudjemienne and the exile of Ben Bella in 1965. Open political debate was effectively banned in the bustling casbahs of the coastal cities and the isolated trading towns of the vast southern desert.

The FLN and its party-led army ruled with a rod of iron. The revolutionary petit bourgeois nationalists of the FLN, who had led the revolt against the French, rapidly transformed themselves into bourgeois nationalists in power and became imperialism's best agents in the country. The masses were disciplined, wages were held down, and international capitalism's fundamental interests were not threatened, despite the nationalisation of the oil industry.

## Collapse

The stability of the regime came to an end in the mid-1980s, following the catastrophic collapse in oil prices. Between 1986 and 1987 state revenues dropped by 30%. At the same time unemployment was beginning to soar, notably amongst the growing population of youth, whilst taxes on cigarettes, petrol and transport were increased.

The inevitable result was a massive explosion of popular revolt. It came in October 1988. Hungry, betrayed, with no future, the youth in all the major cities stormed FLN headquarters, fought with the police and ransacked warehouses and supermarkets. In a typically repressive reflex, the army killed over 500 protesters and installed a state of siege.

The Algerian President, FLN leader Chadli, had no option. He could not offer any material concessions to the masses: the coffers were empty, and imperialism would not help him out. Like so many other semi-colonial regimes, driven by the lash of the imperialists and IMF, Chadli was forced down the road of controlled democratisation and neo-liberal reforms.

Political parties were legalised, the press was made (relatively) free, municipal and then parliamentary elections were promised. Chadli managed to convince the FLN nationalist bureaucrats that this was the only way of saving their skins. But the FLN could not recover its prestige amongst the masses, notably amongst the youth for whom the FLN had never been the party of rebellion, only the party of repression.

The FLN opened all the valves of political life, only to discover that other forces were flooding in to fill the space left by the ruling party. The most important of these was the Islamic fundamentalist FIS, whose crude brand of populism and Sunni fundamentalism made an immediate impact.

The FLN's limited commitment to secularism and its opposition to Islamic fundamentalism was stig-

*The resignation of the Algerian President Chadli Benjedid has thrown the country into crisis. His resignation followed mobilisations by the army which was determined to block the rise to power of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The FIS was victorious in the first round of the Algerian elections in late December. As we go to press Algeria is being ruled by the unelected High Security and Constitutional Council. There has been a "constitutional" coup. A military coup is not ruled out. Emile Gallet examines the background to the crisis and argues that the working class must steer an independent course between Islamic reaction and the bourgeois nationalists currently in power.*



Tanks put a stop to the "democratic experiment".

matized as the root of all evil. The FIS won growing support, especially amongst the youth and most down-trodden, by attacking the FLN's corruption and privileges. It won control of the majority of the mosques, giving it access to hand-outs for the poor and enabling it to set up "Islamic markets" with goods at low prices. It demanded the introduction of Shari'a law, the segregation of the sexes in school, the banning of alcohol, the exclusion of the majority of women from the workplace and other reactionary measures typical of Islamic fundamentalism.

In the June 1990 municipal elections the FIS won over half the vote and took control of all the major councils. The writing was on the wall for the FLN.

A panic-stricken FLN tried to fix the parliamentary elections, then scheduled for June 1991. Having virulently opposed the widely supported general strike called by the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) against rising prices, the FIS launched an ineffective general strike and attempted a staged repeat of the October 1988 riots which failed to mobilise the masses but which did succeed in provoking the army into decreeing a state of emergency.

By autumn the state of emergency had largely been lifted and campaigning began. Despite the continued imprisonment of its two principal leaders, jailed after the June events, the FIS showed itself quite capable of mobilising hundreds of thousands in a series of rallies and marches. The growing influence of the FIS was revealed when, in October, members of its union federation swept the board in workplace elections in Médéa and at the key SVNI lorry plant at Rouiba.

The FLN hoped that the FIS's inability to deliver its promises,

made during the 1990 municipal elections, would weigh against the fundamentalists. But the FIS merely passed the buck, claiming (not entirely falsely) that central government was blocking funds to FIS councils.

The results of the 26 December elections were decisive. Despite the repression of the FIS and the attempted gerrymandering of constituencies by the government, out of 430 seats the FIS won 187 outright, getting over half the vote as against a mere 25% and a handful of seats for the FLN. The second round originally due to take place on 16 January was bound to deliver the FIS a clear majority.

The election results reveal two things: the depth of hatred felt for the FLN after thirty years of bloody dictatorship, and a relative disillusion in all forms of politics amongst significant layers of the population. For although the FIS won a clear majority of the votes cast, over 40% of the 13 million electorate did not vote and 27% of the votes cast were spoilt or blank.

## Discredited

The left in Algeria failed to counter the growth of the FIS amongst the masses. The Algerian Stalinists, while correctly calling for a boycott of the elections, was a discredited force after three decades of spineless tailing of the FLN nationalists. Their instinctive class collaboration led them to be a major force in the FLN's anti-FIS campaign and to repeatedly call for the state to ban the FIS. The tiny Workers Party (PT) connected to Pierre Lambert's Fourth International (International Centre for Reconstruction), on the other hand, flirted with the FIS and supported the FIS's general strike calls.

The Socialist Forces Front (FFS) failed to put forward a clear pro-

gramme of action which could attract the workers and youth away from the FIS. It had no realistic programme to combat the growing poverty caused by the 60% inflation, the 25% unemployment amongst the youth, the collapsing public services and state infrastructure. Despite its strong showing in the first round of the elections, gaining 25 seats, the FFS failed to break out of its minority Berber heartland of Kabylia and certain areas in and around Algiers. It had no appeal to the mass of Algerian workers and poor.

That it was possible to mobilise the masses against the FIS was shown when the FFS called a demonstration to encourage people to come out and vote against the Islamic Front in the second round of the elections. Between 300,000 and half a million joined the demonstration in Algiers. There were calls for strikes and protests to stop the second round taking place.

This was precisely what was needed to block this FIS route to power. But this was not the strategy supported by the FFS. Its leader Hocine Ait Ahmed declared "We must work legally and constitutionally to build a groundswell of support for democracy". The aim of the mobilisation he said was to reduce the margin of victory of the FIS so that if it formed a government it would be "impossible for them to step outside the constitution".

The FFS is also playing a leading role in directing the opposition to the FIS into the FLN organised popular front campaign, the "National Committee to Save Algeria". The FLN union federation, the UGTA, is affiliated to this together with large numbers of capitalists and FLN organisations. An opposition within the UGTA has denounced this class-collaboration and called for workers' mobilisations to stop the FIS.

The victorious coming to power of the FIS, either electorally or otherwise, will represent a major blow for Algerian workers, women and minorities. Its leaders have been blunt about the sort of regime they will establish. One of their imprisoned leaders Ali Benhadj has declared recently:

"I respect neither the laws nor the parties which are not based on the Koran. I trample on them. Such parties must leave the country, they must be repressed."

The FIS spokesperson for the election declared: "Our fight is between Islamic purity and democratic impurity". While differences exist between the "moderates" and the extreme right of the FIS any victory will result in immediate attack on the democratic rights of the workers and their parties.

## Independent

The workers, women and youth of Algeria have a two-fold task. They must fight the creeping *coup d'état* launched by the army and at the same time prevent the FIS coming to power. This means charting an independent and revolutionary path, not blocking with the army and the bourgeois nationalist FLN or being ensnared by the FLN's fraudulent democratic "experiment".

Any attempt by the military/FLN to hang on to power must be greeted by mass mobilisations and a general strike as should any attempt by the FIS to seize power. The workers must form councils and defence militias to organise the mobilisations and strikes, they must draw in the women workers and their organisations as well as the youth. They must appeal to the overwhelmingly conscript army to support their struggle.

The workers must reject not only the FLN's bogus electoral process, if it is ever resumed, but also its imposed constitution, with its enormous powers for the President and privileged position for the army. The masses must demand the immediate convening of a single chamber constituent assembly with full powers to decide on a new constitution. This must be fought for by the workers' organisations and they must put forward a programme for the assembly aimed at mobilising the workers and peasants around their immediate needs.

- Repudiate the IMF's "structural adjustment programme" for Algeria. Restore the food subsidies!
- Cancel the debts to the imperialists and their banks!
- Kick out the FLN bureaucrats from the state industries and place these industries under workers' control!
- Nationalise the big capitalist enterprises!
- Launch an emergency plan to deal with inflation and unemployment—for an immediate programme of public works, for decent training and jobs for the youth!
- For a sliding scale of wages to protect workers' living standards!
- No to the veil, for full and equal political and social rights for women!
- For a revolutionary solution to the land question—land to those who work it!

A revolutionary Trotskyist party has to be built in Algeria to fight for such a programme. Only a successful struggle for these demands offers the possibility of breaking the hold of Islamic fundamentalism over the masses as well as the influence of bourgeois nationalism. Only a struggle for these demands will open the way to a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government in Algeria. ■



**L**AST JANUARY the French Communist Party called on the population of Clichy-sous-Bois, near Paris, to vote for a candidate other than its own to keep out the Front National (FN).

Quite normal you may think. Yet this candidate himself had recently been expelled from the Communist Party for making vile racist remarks including: "Niggers and Arabs stand like a pack of hyenas in the stairways of the older parts of town".

The FN still scored 38% in the vote and in an area previously known as the "red belt".

There are two main factors in the rise of racism across Europe: the disintegration of Stalinism in the east and, paradoxically, the growing economic integration of the west.

### **Collapsed**

When Stalinism collapsed in Eastern Europe bourgeois politicians and journalists were celebrating the fact that the end of Stalinism would mean the flourishing of liberal democracy. But Stalinism's collapse has unleashed a tide of reactionary nationalism and chauvinism which is increasingly finding organisational form in ultra-right and fascist parties.

This is not because, as many Stalinists claim, the bureaucratic dictatorships were a force for racial harmony and internationalism. They merely suppressed public expression of racism, chauvinism and anti-semitism whilst allowing it to simmer away beneath the surface of public life, and, in the case of some bureaucrats, using it for their own factional purposes.

Now the collapse of the Stalinist economies has injected the crucial element of generalised scarcity and hardship. As long as the working class is unable to find, and fight for, revolutionary answers to the crisis the easy solutions of right wing religious, nationalist and fascist movements will gain a hearing amongst those worst affected by the rigours of capitalist restoration.

The targets of vicious hate campaigns in Eastern Europe have been Jews, Romanies and the migrant workers from third world Stalinist controlled states brought in by the bureaucracy.

### **"National identity"**

In addition, as the various would-be bourgeois classes in East Europe have discovered their "national identity" the numerous national minorities in each country have become targets for vilification and attack.

In Romania the fascist *Vatra Romanesca* (also known as the Iron Cross), which was involved in the coup attempt in June 1990, now claims 400,000 supporters and has openly called for a "bloody war" against Romanies, Jews and other national minorities. Romanian newspapers like *Europa* and *Romania Mare* have started a campaign to restore the image of the fascist leader of Romania during the war, Ion Antonescu. They continually run stories claiming that Jews have "taken over Romania".

In Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland there are variations on this pattern, but in each country far right and fascist groups have been making headway.

The re-emergence of national struggles and rivalries in Eastern Europe has also added impetus to the growth of the far right. The rise of the fascist HoS movement in Croatia is a good example. The failure of the Tudjman government and national guard to successfully prosecute its war against

Serbia allowed the military forces of the fascists to stake a claim to being the only efficient defenders of Croatia, bolstered as they were by trainloads of neo-Nazi "soldiers of fortune" from Britain, France and Germany. Though a putative fascist coup in Croatia was stopped when Tudjman jailed its leaders the fascist movement remains strong and could grow if the tide of war turns against Croatia again.

The second factor in the rise of the racist right is the growth of Fortress Europe—the new exclusive immigration and nationality laws promoted by the EC. The FN, the Vlaams Blok and other such rancid outfits have profited most from this.

The EC claims that with the relaxation of internal borders the external borders of the EC with the rest of the world will have to be strengthened. The racist fears of the ruling class were clearly spelt out by Thatcher when she said in an interview with the *Daily Mail*:

"We joined Europe to have free movement of goods . . . I did not join Europe to have free movement of terrorists, criminals, drugs, plant and animal diseases and rabies, and illegal immigrants . . . How are you going to stop anyone from Bangladesh, from any country, coming for a holiday in Greece, coming right across all borders, no controls, and settling in Britain and we would have no means of finding out?"

### **Trevi group**

The EC proposals centre around the so-called Trevi group of ministers and the Schengen treaty.

The proposals are moving in the direction of preventing the entry of people from Asia and Africa. The aim will be to harmonise policy on visa requirements, restriction of non-EC nationals travelling and working within the EC, and to get a common asylum and refugee policy.

Eight EC countries have already signed the Schengen treaty: Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Benelux countries.

The proposals in the treaty include abolition of internal frontier controls, no checks at airports for flights between Schengen countries, the right of "hot pursuit" by the police, a common policy on visas, common rules on how to deal with asylum requests and the right of EC nationals to travel freely. Inevitably this is based on rigorous external border controls.

There are presently somewhere

between 12-15 million non-EC residents in the EC and most of the countries they live in afford them few democratic, political or social rights.

In Germany migrant or guest-workers, as they are called, face a system of institutionalised discrimination. They are barred from a wide range of occupations in the public sector. They can even be refused permission to set up a business or to become self-employed.

Those who are unemployed often end up working in the "informal sector" for fear that they will be deported if they are found to be without a job. They face an extensive system of harassment through the Foreigners Law of 1965 and other measures which gives the state powers including deportation. They face limits on political activity and may not vote or stand for office. Children born to foreign parents in Germany have no right to citizenship.

With the German economy suffering under the strains of the cost of unification, and with the old GDR areas in severe economic crisis, Kohl has quickly played on nationalist sentiments. This in turn has led to a dramatic increase in racist attacks and to an upsurge in overt neo-Nazi activity.

How does the German government respond to this?

It blames the guestworkers and asylum seekers, using the classic argument that the way to deal with racism is to limit immigration.

In the same way, with a recession in process, the Tories have used the immigration issue with the Asylum Bill. As in Germany, racist attacks, already bad, have increased. Kenneth Baker has made a great play of asylum seekers being "economic migrants".

The last time that argument was used was in the 1930s when Jewish refugees tried to flee Germany due to persecution by the Nazis. Despite all the rhetoric about human rights the bosses are prepared to send back asylum seekers to certain death in their home country.

The organised far right feeds on this racism by the simple tactic of posing as the only ones prepared to speak plainly about the "problem" of immigration and offer a direct and brutal solution: second-class citizenship and repatriation combined with repression and racist attacks to keep non-white communities "in their place".

In particular the far right feeds off

*Over the last year far right and fascist parties, like the Vlaams Blok in Belgium, the Front National (FN) in France, the Republikaner Party in Germany and the Lombardy League in Northern Italy, have either grown considerably or achieved significant votes in local and national elections. Dave Beech looks at the factors underpinning these developments and explains what the workers' movement's response needs to be.*



# EUROPE The rise of the right



**Right: German fascists**  
**Centre: Le Pen**  
**Far right: French workers in action.**  
**Only a working class-led movement can smash fascism once and for all.**



the failure of the left, with its liberal appeals for racial harmony, its gestures towards equal opportunities and anti-racism which are accompanied, in Britain for example, by vicious cuts in local government jobs and services for all workers.

It feeds off national conflicts in Eastern Europe precisely by offering the most radical and direct solutions, and being able to organise a plebeian movement of fighters who show little interest in imperialist-sponsored peace processes and international law.

In this context it is important to understand the difference between fascism and far right conservatism, and their relationship to one another.

Every percentage point FN leader Le Pen scores in the French opinion polls gives respectable right wing figures like Chirac the excuse to publicly pander to racism. But at the same time the vast majority of racist far right politicians remain within the orbit of the "constitutional" parties—usually on their fringes, in organisations like the Tory Party's Monday Club.

This poses open fascist organisations and their would be *führers* with a problem.

Fascism is distinct from far right racism and conservatism because it is committed to mobilising masses of middle-class and even politically backward workers to crush the minority communities and the workers' organisations.

### Option

Historically fascism is an option the ruling class turns to only when it has exhausted every other possibility: from parliamentary democracy to presidential and military dictatorship. Thus fascist groups are condemned to a semi-legal existence, organising hard-core racist thugs in morale boosting guerrilla warfare against migrant communities and the left.

The solution to this marginalisation, clearly illustrated by the cases of the Vlaams Blok, the Republikaner Party and FN, is the creation of "front" parties that are not openly fascist, deny being fascist, and concentrate on whipping up racism through the electoral process.

These become the meeting ground between the right wing fringes of the conservative parties and the hard core fascists.

It is important to realise that whilst these front parties are openly racist, they are not openly fascist. Indeed their hard core fascist leaders have a strategy of avoiding not only fascist regalia and symbolism but also of distancing the party itself from illegal activities, like attacks on workers' and left wing meetings and on migrant communities.

Thus much of their mass base does not consist of subjective and organised fascists. But by building such a mass base the fascist core seeks to give itself both camouflage and a ready-made periphery for the moment when it decides to make the streets the main focus of its activity.

The struggle against racism and the growth of fascism has to be conducted at many levels. But the key thing is to understand that the capitalist state, in its liberal and even anti-racist guise, is no guarantee against racism and fascism. The police, the courts and parliament are all institutions which sustain and practice racism.

Any public order measures the state may enact to "combat" fascist groups will be used far more systematically against the workers and the left than against the fascists. Anyone who has ever been on an anti-fascist mobilisation in Britain will know that the police are far more concerned to protect the fascists and hammer the reds than they are to act as neutral keepers of public order.

### Defiance

Only workers' action, where necessary in defiance of the law, can stop racism and halt the rise of fascism.

Against racist and fascist attacks we need to build mass support in the workers' movement for the right of black communities for self-defence. The workers' movement should set up its own self-defence groups to protect fellow workers, migrants and to seek out and destroy the fascist gangs.

Wherever the fascists organise we must stop them, building a united front of workers to smash any attempts by them to organise or put out their propaganda. This is the meaning of the slogan "No Platform for Fascists". Under "peaceful" bourgeois democratic conditions, we are not in favour of denying these democratic rights to bourgeois parties, even far-right groups like the Monday Club. But No Platform is particularly appropriate against the fascist front parties in order to stop them realising their project of building mass fascist movements. We are for No Platforming the FN and its like: the FN's leadership is fascist, its project is fascist and to stop its realisation it has to be treated like a fascist party.

If the respectable middle class racists who take to the streets behind Le Pen, against the Arabs or against strikes, have to face the risk of ending up in hospital they will not be such a malleable force for the fascists. Likewise the pathetic dregs fascism scoops up from the ranks of working class youth only feel strong when they are dominating the streets and striking physical terror into the black communities.

### Mayhem

If the "sub-humans" of the left and the black community can repeatedly inflict casualties and mayhem against fascist marches, paper sales and public meetings then the potential of fascism as a street level force attracting discontented young workers and unemployed will be dissipated.

None of this means we can for a moment cease to wage an ideological war against fascism and racism. But only the anti-capitalist arguments

of revolutionary Marxism can do this effectively. Liberalism and social democracy, with their tokenism, their middle class appeals to the good of all humanity cut little ice amongst workers with no jobs and houses.

Stalinists and left Labourites, with their appeals to protect national industry and jobs against foreign competition, have always made poor anti-racists. The case of the French Stalinist mayor of Vitry, who led his "comrades" in the demolition of an immigrant hostel in 1980, proves just how unreliable these political currents are in the struggle against racism.

Our task is to prove to white workers and impoverished middle class people that it is capitalism that is to blame for their plight, not immigrants or ethnic and national minorities.

At the same time we have to mount a concerted fight against every aspect of state racism.

We must fight all immigration controls and laws which enable the state to harass immigrants and black people.

Just as the capitalists use immigrants for cheap labour they will use these laws to stop immigrants organising in the workplace. Bosses are happy to look the other way knowing that workers are illegally working in their factory as long as they accept low wages and poor conditions. But if they dare to combat these sweat-shop owners, one phone call can get them all arrested.

### Restrictions

We must also fight within the trade union movement against any restriction on membership rights for immigrants. For instance in Austria immigrant members cannot stand for any official positions within the trade unions. Why be in a union if you cannot control its policy? In addition unions must organise special recruitment campaigns amongst black and immigrant workers issuing leaflets and propaganda in the appropriate languages.

The working class has no interest in keeping border restrictions against our fellow workers.

We must fight against any restriction on asylum rights and for no restrictions on the right to travel freely and reside in Europe. We must fight for all who live and work in Europe to have full civil, political and welfare rights.

This variety of struggles is certain to call forth the necessity for united action at different levels, different alliances for different tasks.

The guiding principle in every case should be the construction of the broadest possible alliance of workers and black community organisations for the task in hand. That means unity based on action, not on verbal opposition to this or that measure.

But above all we need a revolutionary workers' party capable of linking every struggle, every committed militant, in the fight against the source of racism and fascism—capitalism itself. ■

## ANL MK II

### "No Platform" is the key

"THE FAR right is growing across Europe, except in Britain" *Socialist Worker* told its readers on 7 December. But within a month it had decided to relaunch the Anti-Nazi League (ANL).

Now that it has finally woken up to the need for an anti-fascist united front the SWP has reacted with a typical combination of sectarianism and opportunism.

They are sectarian in issuing the call for a new anti-fascist organisation when one already exists. Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) is a well known and non-sectarian campaign committed to building in the labour movement and amongst the black community. What are the numerous trades councils and union branches affiliated to AFA to make of the call to affiliate to a new organisation which is apparently committed to the same aim?

They are opportunist because, like the original ANL, the Mk II version is being set up with no specific commitment to the kind of action needed to stop the growth of fascism, namely the implementation of No Platform for Fascists, the mobilisation of thousands of workers to physically stop the fascists disseminating their filth.

The original ANL was set up in 1977 when many local anti-fascist campaigns had already done years of sterling work to combat the rise of the National Front. It coralled these committees into a campaign built with the aim of keeping respectable public figures on its platforms, even if that meant abandoning policies that were essential to defeat the Nazis. From Tony Benn to Miriam Carlin none of these Labour politicians and celebrities had the slightest intention of endorsing "No Platform" or mobilising their supporters to deny the fascists their democratic rights. So the ANL did not call for it.

The SWP initially hoped that it could offer its members as the footsoldiers for the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), a cross-class campaign sponsored by the Stalinists and their friends amongst the trade union bureaucracy, without having to challenge its vacuous and legalistic politics.

As with the Irish solidarity campaign Time To Go, or with the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, the SWP was prepared to stop fighting for even its most basic demands in return for a chance for its full-timers to get their feet under the table with the great and good of the bureaucracy and the Labour left.

But the ARA leadership made very clear to the SWP that they would not be allowed a place at the bureaucratic table.

Consequently the SWP leaders decided to relaunch an organisation they could make sure of controlling. SWP members who had been scorning the need for a new national anti-fascist movement found themselves having to argue for one overnight.

The Stalinist leadership of ARA immediately struck back. An article in the *Morning Star* (10 December) gleefully pointed out that:

"Calls are echoing throughout the British labour movement from people demanding 'Take my name off the list of sponsors for the ANL relaunch'."

It proceeded to list left MPs, union leaders and black militants who had dissociated themselves from the launch.

If it didn't have enough trouble from the right the SWP also faced a pressing problem to its left. How to keep the hundreds of existing anti-fascist activists, who the SWP has been condemning as "squaddists" for the last decade, out of the new ANL? It came up with a simple solution. As the SWP told its members:

"We should not set up local groups. We should learn from the success of our anti-war work. Where we avoided setting up groups the work was the most successful."

Now this will seem strange to the working class and student activists who worked alongside the SWP in committees in every town and city to mobilise for the anti-war demos.

Even stranger, for those with long enough memories, will seem the SWP's claim that the original ANL itself was not based on local groups. "These became an obstacle to activity and a focus for every sectarian under the sun" according to the SWP! In fact there were local ANL groups not only in every town but even in colleges and workplaces and nobody in the SWP complained about them at the time.

The fact is, local groups of an organisation can only hamper its ability to operate if it is to be run bureaucratically.

The vast majority of anti-fascist activists in Britain are committed to the principle of No Platform. The thousands of black and white youth we want to win to the anti-fascist struggle will be a ready audience for the message: the way to stop fascism and racist attacks is to smash every public activity of the fascists.

But to keep the assortment of Labour MPs and showbiz personalities who have signed the ANL statement in the campaign will require the SWP to fight to stop votes committing the ANL to No Platform. What should anti-racist and anti-fascist activists do in response to the SWP's launch of ANL Mk II?

There should be no question of dissolving AFA and similar local campaigns into an organisation with no internal democracy and no commitment to No Platforming fascists.

In every town or area where there is a serious fascist threat, or where the fascists are planning to stand their candidates in the election, there should be a united anti-fascist committee set up committed, at the very least to:

- a labour movement orientation
- No Platform for Fascists

AFA and other anti-fascist campaigns should call for an immediate joint conference of anti-fascist groups including ANL Mk II to launch a united democratic and fighting national organisation. We don't care what it's called, as long as it is organising to physically and ideologically confront the growth of fascism.

Workers Power will participate in every ANL-called activity which aids the fight against fascism, and we will fight against any "get off our patch" mentality amongst those for whom anti-fascism is a full-time activity. But we need a united front, not sectarian fronts or competing campaigns.

We say to all comrades in the SWP: we welcome your turn to anti-fascist work. Do not let your leaders create a bureaucratic obstacle to the necessary action. Join us in local anti-fascist groups committed to driving the Nazis off the streets and a national united anti-fascist workers' united front.

But we warn all genuine anti-fascists now: the SWP has proved once before it is willing to sacrifice the defence of black communities to the needs of a pacifist alliance with pop stars and politicians. It is setting out to repeat that experience. And at the first sign that there are more promising areas to recruit members from it will drop anti-fascism like a hot potato, leaving you and your communities once again to fend for yourselves. ■





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## INSIDE

- What have the Tories done for women?
- Ravenscraig
- Marxism and the "productive forces"

## NEW ASYLUM LAW

# SMASH THIS RACIST BILL!



**B**EING TORTURED is many people's worst nightmare. Imagine you are one of the hundreds of thousands throughout the world for whom this nightmare is a reality.

Or think what would happen to you if your town was destroyed by war, your family subject to arbitrary arrest or execution. What would you do?

If you tried to find a safer place to live you would become one of the world's twenty million refugees.

These are the people who have become the latest targets of Tory racism and the gutter press. The new Tory Asylum Bill is designed to make sure that any refugee who tries to flee to Britain will have to face a new nightmare of poverty, detention and, for the vast majority, swift deportation back to the hell-holes they have escaped from.

### Bogus

The Tories claim Britain is facing a flood of bogus refugees. But it is the Tory figures that are bogus. Home Secretary Kenneth Baker claims that 1,100 people a week are arriving to claim refugee status. In fact the figure is more like 200 a week—a mere trickle compared to the millions displaced throughout the world by famine, war and repression.

The Home Office itself admits that throughout the last decade nine out of ten applicants for asylum have passed the official tests. Its current

smear campaign against refugees as "economic migrants" is designed to lay the basis for tightening the tests and massively reducing the numbers accepted. That is what the Asylum Bill will do.

Under the Asylum Bill refugees will

- lose their right to legal aid
- face compulsory fingerprinting—the treatment reserved for criminals in Britain
- lose their right to council housing while their application is considered.

Those arriving in Britain will have only 48 hours to make an application and the new "fast track" procedure will ensure that many will be swiftly refused asylum and deported. A lot of other refugees will not get that far. Under the Asylum Bill the Tories will fine airlines £2,000 for every refugee arriving without travel documents, turning the airlines themselves into the first line of "defence" against asylum seekers.

The Tories claim that the "bogus" refugees are really "economic migrants". The phrase conjures up the racist image of wily foreign businessmen coming over here to make a fast buck. In reality such businessmen are positively welcomed under the Tories' immigration laws.

If you have over £150,000 and are prepared to employ at least two people you can buy immigration into Britain for at least a year. If you earn £15,000 a year or more from shares you can apply for a four year stay and after that

apply to live here indefinitely.

The real economic migrants are people like the starving African peasants the media likes to show pictures of to stimulate charity and compassion.

They are people faced with famines and "natural" disasters—the results of years of imperialist exploitation—who can no longer feed themselves or their families. They are people without jobs who have taken the elementary advice of ex-Tory minister Norman Tebbit to get "on their bikes" and look for work.

And we should welcome them.

### Transferred

Every year billions of pounds are transferred from the economies of the third world to the banks of London, Tokyo and New York in the form of debt repayments. This vastly outweighs the pitiful sums donated in the form of aid. And the weight of debt repayment throughout the 1980s and early 1990s has meant massive drops in living standards in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Imperialism is involved in a massive extortion racket against these countries.

Yet nobody complains about this "economic migration"—money migrating from the impoverished third world into the bank accounts of the rich financiers.

Nobody complains either about the free migration of capital around the world. Quite the opposite. Thatcher's first

act in government was to remove all restrictions on capital flowing into and out of Britain, and she spent a decade berating other governments for their slowness in following her.

But the vast majority of the world's population are workers and poor peasants. They have no vast sums of capital. Their only wealth is their power to work, and when they can't work they and their families starve.

That is why we say: if capital can roam the world market free of restrictions, so should labour. There should be no immigration controls at all. They are racist and anti-working class and should be abolished.

There is wealth enough in the world's developed countries to house, feed and employ all those who want to come here. To unlock that wealth we have to take it out of the hands of the minority of rich and powerful bosses and bankers and place it under the control of the workers who produce the wealth in the first place.

### Organising

Right now we have to start by organising to smash the Asylum Bill. Workers who have to implement it should refuse and boycott all work related to it. We should use the 18 January demonstration to build a mass protest campaign, with strike action wherever it can be won, to demand the scrapping of the new legislation. ■

**THE RISE OF THE RIGHT IN EUROPE - SEE PAGES 14-15**