

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International
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Recession, Sterling,

Workers pay the price

NEARLY three million workers are on the dole, according to Tory figures.

The truth is it's nearer four million and rising. Job losses, closures, bankruptcies and house repossessions are becoming a fact of life—and not just for the poor.

The recession is hitting the south east, skilled workers and the so-called middle class—many of whom were stupid enough to vote Tory this year in the belief that "the Tories know how to run the economy".

Millions of ordinary people are now finding out that *nobody* knows how to run the capitalist economy in a way that prevents recurrent crises, poverty, homelessness and unemployment.

Tens of millions of pounds worth of computer equipment in the City of London is devoted to following the movements of shares and currency prices. But the best computers and the highest paid experts cannot make these prices behave the way the bosses want them to.

If you are lucky enough to have a home, and unlucky enough to have a mortgage, your payments could go up this month. This in a period of prolonged recession, where bosses and Tory politicians alike have been pleading for a mortgage cut to pull the housing market out of the doldrums.

Why? Because John Major took the pound into the Exchange Rate Mecha-



Chancellor Norman Lamont; he can't make capitalism work

nism at a higher rate than the strength of the British economy justified. The intention was to make British bosses attack workers harder during the recession, to emerge "leaner and fitter", more competitive. But the Tories' plans have fallen apart.

Germany, the strongest economy in Europe, whose currency is the measure of all the others, has its own problems. It is trying to incorporate East Germany, a process which

has led to inflation, growing unemployment and social unrest. To solve its own economic problems it has raised interest rates, increasing the value of the deutschmark, decreasing the value of the pound, making it highly likely that interest rates will have to rise to counteract the effect on the money markets.

But don't blame the Germans. This is the crazy logic of capitalism. The same logic that condemns millions—

BRITISH, AMERICAN and French fighter planes are once again searching for targets over Southern Iraq.

The intrepid trio—Bush, Mitterrand and Major—are going to the "aid" of another victimised people, the Marsh Arabs of Iraq.

But hold on a minute. Wasn't the immensely costly and bloody Gulf War meant to have rendered Saddam harmless? Wasn't it George Bush who, having urged the Iraqi Shia population to rise up against Saddam, left them in the lurch to be slaughtered by Saddam's Republican Guard?

Their sufferings are a direct result of the last US intervention. The brutal fact is that none of these interventions by the policemen of the new world order are designed to protect the weak and the suffering.

They are dictated purely and exclusively by the interests of the strong and the powerful, the imperialist bosses themselves. The order they seek to defend is the ability of the multinational oil companies to exploit the Gulf region, plus their ability to prop up the kings, sultans and sheiks that help them to do this.

Despite imperialism's victory against Iraq they failed in their longer term strategy of overthrowing Saddam and bringing a pliant, pro-imperialist, military regime to power in Baghdad. Eighteen months on Saddam is still there, as large as life, and still

taking western prisoners. Indeed Saddam effectively won the stand-off with the US inspectors outside of the Agriculture Ministry. Bush, the "victor" in the Gulf, looked as if he would be out of the White House whilst Saddam would still be in power in Baghdad.

With US presidential elections looming Bush could do with the boost of Saddam being ousted from Baghdad. So Iraq is once more in the firing line.

Washington hopes that the military will dump Saddam and come to terms with the USA. The aim of the exclusion zone in the south, like the Kurdish "safe havens" in the north, is to humiliate the Iraqi military caste. The danger to the imperialist order is that it could lead to the break up of Iraq if the Shias like the Kurds are able to establish a *de facto* zone where the Iraqi regime's writ does not run.

The US does not want to see Iraq split up. But it has to scare the Iraqi generals into risking a coup.

Because an imperialist peace will help no one, not the Kurds or the Shias, nor any campaigner for democracy in the Middle East, workers in Britain must be adamantly opposed to imperialist intervention. The crocodile tears for the Shia population should fool no one.

- End all sanctions against Iraq!
- Imperialist forces out of the Gulf!
- Hands off Iraq!

in Germany as well as Britain—to the dole when there is work to be done. It condemns hundreds of thousands to NHS waiting lists when nurses are on the dole and beds lying empty. It condemns thousands to homelessness while homes lie empty.

This is the logic of the famous "market forces" that Major and Thatcher told us would solve everything, and which Labour's Smith and Brown can see no alternative to.

But there is an alternative to the profit system, whose hallmarks are chaos waste and misery.

The conscious planning of the economy to meet the needs of all would give jobs, homes and living wages to the millions without them at present. Taking the money, industry and property from the rich, placing it in the hands of a state run by and for ordinary working people, would lay the basis for economic progress, the rebuilding of industry, the provision of real education and training.

That is what socialists fight for. That is the solution which the bosses, their media and even the trade union and Labour leaders now treat like a dirty word.

It is not a utopian dream because it can be built by ordinary workers, out of their everyday struggles.

The leaders of the official labour movement are not interested in a real struggle, today, against the system which brings unemployment and the fear of homelessness.

But a real fightback, to save jobs, to protect wages and conditions, to demand decent homes, hospitals and schools is needed immediately.

- Defend every job with strike action!
- Stop every cut in health, education and local services with strikes and occupations!
- Demand the nationalisation, under workers' control, of every bankrupt company, and every firm declaring redundancies!
- Cut the hours, with no loss of pay, instead of cutting jobs!
- The state must provide low cost home loans and cheap rental schemes for all those whose homes have been repossessed.
- We need a massive programme of house building, financed by the state, to provide cheap public housing for all who want it! We need a massive programme of public works to build and repair the schools, colleges, hospitals and roads that are so badly needed.

We need to overthrow this wretched system that can only produce more crises, poverty and unemployment. ■

THE ROYAL story so far: Princess Anne has divorced her husband in order to spend more time with her boyfriend. Prince Charles, when not talking to his plants, has an intimate friendship with Mrs Camilla Parker-Bowles—she calls him Fred, he calls her Gladys.

The Duchess of York, after being romantically linked with American millionaire Steve Wyatt, has retired to a luxury villa in the south of France to "mend her marriage" to Prince Andrew with her financial adviser, American millionaire Johnny Bryan. Latest full colour pictures show her topless with Bryan sucking her toes beside a swimming pool.

Meanwhile suicidally inclined Princess Diana's telephone call to boyfriend, James Gilbey, has been broadcast to the world (23p a minute courtesy of the Sun). This reveals that she has stopped blaming herself and that she is fed up with "that f****g family" and her husband. It further reveals she believes herself to be reincarnated.

The Royals have been hard at it all summer long doing the job they are cut out for: diverting our attention from the recession and the barbaric wars and famines sweeping the world. They have become a summer silly season attraction, the kind of living "rude" postcard you used to buy on seaside holidays. With autumn the politicians will return to take on the job of numbing our minds to reality. Perhaps then the tabloid press might give the royals, whether bonking or just plain bonkers, a well-earned rest.

But the issue of the monarchy will not, and should not, go away. For the first time in decades the very survival of the House of Windsor, and with it the monarchy itself, is being discussed openly.

There is no doubt that good old capitalist greed lies behind the tabloids' ruthless exposure of the Royal

ROYAL CRISIS

"That F#@*ing family"



secrets. New items about Fergie and Diana are the weapons in a fierce circulation war between the *Mirror*, *Sun* and *Star*. They are locked into this by the logic of the market. It started innocently enough the moment they started fawning over the "fairy tale princess". But this sort of news is like a narcotic. Now to satisfy the habit, the readers need stronger stuff.

And the latest royal material could not have been scripted better if the journalists had made it up themselves. Nude Fergie for the page three brigade, her confused little daughters for agony aunts to psychologise about, Di's reincarnation for avid followers of Russell

Grant: if only Princess Anne had become a jockey instead of a showjumper that would have accounted for every section of tabloid readers' interests.

Whatever the immediate causes of the revelations, and there is good evidence to suggest a tit-for-tat gossip war going on between members of the royal family, they pose serious questions.

For all the outrage Fergie, Ann and Di have caused in the Tory backwoods, most working class people can recognise—behind the glamorous exterior—a real life situation. Men and women trapped in relationships they don't like, overbearing parents demanding they

"make a go of it" for the kids and for public appearances, bored wives daydreaming about an after life or fascinated by astrology.

The royal scandals are revealing, in a way no "fly on the wall" TV documentaries ever did, that these are only ordinary human beings after all. Filthy rich ordinary human beings, yes. But not divine rulers, not even credible heads of the Church of England, and certainly no "model" for the rest of us to copy in our family life. Yet this was the very purpose of paying for the upkeep of these parasites.

In previous decades the royals were able to fornicate their way through life with little worry as to the political consequences, because they could rely on a servile British media at the beck and call of the establishment. Ironically it is Thatcherism that undermined this, stripping away everything about "the establishment" that stood in the way of a fast buck.

It was predictable that the gutter press would one day get sick of the task of presenting this collection of loonies and crashing bores as the hereditary lynchpin of our civilisation.

The result of the revelations has been a massive drop in the popularity, not just of the royals, but of the monarchy itself.

In the past not even the Labour left could bring itself to call for the abolition of the monarchy. Even radicals like George Orwell were convinced that it played some me-

diating role, preventing a dictatorship arising from Parliament and Whitehall.

In fact the monarchy is designed to play a vital role in the propping up of capitalist rule in an emergency. The monarch is the commander of the armed forces and has the power to dissolve parliament and veto laws. In the 1970s the Queen's representative used these powers to dissolve an elected Labour government in Australia.

If "responsible" Tory and Labour politicians are now mumbling about the Queen coughing up some tax and cutting down the civil list, it is in order to preserve these essential functions.

Revolutionary socialists stand for the total abolition of the monarchy. We prefer a democratic republic, not because it is any less capitalist than a constitutional monarchy but because it creates an arena in which the two basic classes confront one another without disguises, without feudal fancy dress. All the non-elected elements of the bosses' state will be so many weapons in the bosses' hands when the workers try to bring about socialism themselves and monarchy sanctifies all these elements.

As for the sex lives of the Royal family, and Fergie's weight problem, there is a stink of hypocrisy about the condemnations issued in the pages of the gutter and quality press. These articles are written by overweight, drunken men who spend their half their time sexually harassing female co-workers and the other half cavorting with £500-a-night prostitutes of the Pamela Bordes variety.

Our hostility to Fergie and Di does not arise because they broke the rules and looked for happier sex lives than they could find with the Queen's weird offspring. We are no less hostile to the Queen and her arch-reactionary husband. Doubtless their sexual foibles will be the last to be revealed, if ever.

Nor is our opposition merely to the fact that they cost so much. If they came free they would be too dear by half! It is because the royal family exists here and now to fool us into accepting unhappy lives of exploitation and oppression, and is a weapon the bosses keep handy for whenever we try to change things fundamentally. ■

TRAVELLERS LAW

Ethnic cleansing, British style

THE TORIES are preparing a vicious assault on the democratic rights and property of travelling people. Romany communities and "New Age" travellers alike are facing a barrage of proposed laws designed to suppress and stamp out their chosen way of life.

The Tories are not content with the battery of laws already in place, which have been used to prevent free movement into designated areas and even imprison one person for leaving a message on an answer phone giving information about a travellers' festival!

The new Tory laws will make it illegal to park a caravan on land without the landowners' consent, even if that land has been lying idle for years. In the best traditions of capitalism,

the holy right to private property comes before the right to homes and security.

Under the draconian anti-traveller laws, councils will even be able to confiscate caravans and mobile homes, and yet they will be freed from their existing responsibility to provide travellers with sites on which to live.

The stage is being set for a wave of mass evictions, which will inevitably bring violent confrontations to sites across the country as during the last wave of anti-Gypsy attacks in the 1960s.

Tory minister for homelessness, Sir George Young, gave a voice to the rural squires and newly countryfied yuppies, denouncing travellers as an "intolerable nuisance" and cost to the taxpayer.

Far right MP, John Carlisle, went further in demonstrating the hatred and prejudice directed against the travellers when he wrote:

"The time has come for Gypsies to be banished to the wilderness they deserve."

The hypocrisy of these people is unbelievable. Many of the new travellers, especially the youth, have been driven onto the road by the Tories policies. Denied work, denied accommodation, they are prevented from claiming social security because they

are under 18 years and not living at home. Now the Tories want to harass them on the road as well.

Whilst Marxists reject the ideology of some New Age travellers which suggests that it is progressive to withdraw from urban society and

mass production, we nevertheless defend their right to live as they choose without state harassment.

In the 1960s Gypsies were forced to fight, often physically, against evictions carried out by bailiffs, assisted by the police. On at least one occasion, students joined the fight and stood shoulder to shoulder with Gypsies facing eviction from a site in Hillingdon, jointly fighting the bailiffs and police.

At a time when anti-Romany prejudice is sweeping Europe, encouraged by the rising far right and the nationalist movements in the East and West, socialists and the labour movement must stand firm in the fight against prejudice and intolerance and defend the democratic rights of the travelling community. ■

2,000 remember race attack victims

BY YASMIN KHAN

THE CENTRE of Rusholme is renowned in Manchester and beyond for its dozens of busy restaurants and other Asian businesses. It was brought to a standstill during a minutes' silence on Sunday 22 August as over 2,000 demonstrators remembered Sadik Dada and Mohammed Sawar, the victims of brutal racist murders.

The Memorial March then proceeded into the city centre, with the purpose of ensuring that these racist murders do not go unchallenged. The message was clear, as the marchers championed the urgency of organised community self-defence.

In the first month of 1992 Manchester witnessed the impact of the

very real increase in racist attacks throughout Britain, an impact that left the city's black communities in a state of shock.

On 23 January Sadik's body was found saturated in blood with a fractured skull. Only three days later Mohammed was dragged from his car and severely beaten until he died.

In response the Memorial Committee was established, with a commitment to challenge the threat of further attacks.

Workers Power has consistently supported this initiative. The committee is based in the black communities at the same time as posi-

tively drawing in other anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations.

The work done by Manchester Anti-Fascist Action showed to black youth AFA's commitment to the anti-racist struggle. It also enabled AFA to put forward its ideas and strategy to wider sections of black workers and youth.

To build on the work of the Memorial Committee serious work has to be done to organise community self-defence against future racist attacks.

At the same time, because capitalism perpetuates many forms of racism we have to build a national anti-racist campaign that is able to fight against immigration controls, police harassment, racist attacks. ■

CORRECTION

THE JUNE issue of *Workers Power* carried an article on the outcome of the Lambeth colleges strike which implied that Christine Davies and Doreen Cameron, members of the National Executive of NATFHE, were members of the Broad Left. They wish it to be pointed out that they are not, nor have they ever been, members of the Broad Left. ■

Yugoslavia's "peace"

BRITISH PRESS coverage of the "London Conference on Yugoslavia" was marked by a strange schizophrenia. On the one hand boastful talk about "diplomatic triumphs" and "successful statesmanship", on the other hand deep pessimism about whether any of the agreements were worth the paper they were written on.

The pessimism was easy to explain. Throughout the so-called peace conference the war in Bosnia continued unabated. Indeed it intensified. While the conference denounced "ethnic cleansing" tens of thousands more Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats were being driven from their homes. While all the parties solemnly agreed to work for the "permanent cessation of hostilities" and the "grouping of heavy weapons under international control", Serbian heavy artillery and mortars continued to rain down shells on Sarajevo. Meanwhile forces of the Bosnian Republic launched a new offensive to break the blockade of the city.

The only "diplomatic triumph" was the fact that the imperialist countries had agreed to sink their differences over strategy in the former Yugoslavia, and come to an agreement on the sort of settlement to impose.

The imperialists were clearly worried that the war in Bosnia was starting to get out of hand. German imperialism had taken the lead in encouraging the break up of Yugoslavia and in urging Bosnia-Herzegovina to vote on independence. Britain and the USA reluctantly followed. But the consequences of this policy of remorseless fragmentation led to growing fears that war would spread to Kosovo and into Macedonia.

Then the whole Balkans powder keg could go up. Albania could be drawn in to defend the Albanians of Kosovo. Bulgaria could attempt to aid Macedonia (which it claims is inhabited by "western Bulgarians"). Greece which denies Macedonia's right to exist under its chosen name, might enter the conflict. Turkey, with its pretensions to protect Balkan Muslims, its ambitions to extend its influence in the

Southern Balkans, and its sworn enmity with Greece, could easily become embroiled.

The imperialists desperately need to avoid another general Balkan war if they are to establish a stable sphere of influence and restore capitalist exploitation to the area. Their own tensions and rivalries—USA versus the EC and, within the EC, Britain versus Germany—threaten continually to upset a unified UN, NATO or EC policy. It is on these differences that the Croat, Serb and Bosnian regimes have been able to manoeuvre and continue the fighting.

Much of the conference was spent waving the big stick at the Serbs, cast as the main villains. Sanctions were to be stepped up and tightened, with ships travelling down the international waterway of the Danube being subject to stop and search.

The Western European Union (WEU), now being touted as the military arm of EC imperialism, offered several thousand troops to bolster UN forces in Bosnia. These forces, supposedly there for "humanitarian" purposes, have already been given the right to take military action against anyone who tries to obstruct them. They can potentially play the same role as the interventionist "exclusion zone" forces in Iraq, backed up by the large naval and air forces gathered in the Mediterranean.

The Serbian leaders left the conference making apparently "positive" statements. Why? To the extent that this is not simple deception it is because the imperialists did not limit themselves to the threat of military action alone. While the conference asserted the "integrity of present frontiers" the idea of a unitary state of Bosnia-Herzegovina whose independence the EC had encouraged and recognised, is now a dead letter and privately recognised as such.

The Bosnian government has lost the war and the imperialists have no intention of winning it back for them through massive military intervention. They have decided on a solution which leaves a Bosnian republic in name only. It has already been divided into three. The Serbs control 70% of the Republic, the Croats perhaps another 20%—an outcome only to be

EDITORIAL

expected given the secret agreement made between these two republics to carve up Bosnia between them.

Serbia has "generously" agreed to give back 20% of what they have taken. This of course is easier said than done for any Serb chauvinist politician like Milosevic, since it would open his flank to attack from the far right oppositionist Seselj and his extreme nationalist and fascist supporters.

The imperialists have in effect returned to their "cantonisation" plan, based on three autonomous, but now ethnically homogeneous, units. They will enter Bosnia in force as the guarantors of this settlement, playing off one group against the other to achieve a sort of stability in their own interests. Serbia is being encouraged to play ball by coded messages that if it does it can "rejoin the international community"—i.e. it can be integrated into the EC's promised associated states in the east.

Will the imperialist "peace plans" succeed? The obstacles to them are still formidable. The Serbia and Croatia have regimes of extreme crisis. Both states face catastrophic economic collapse. Both have mobilised large war-lord militia bands they scarcely control. The Croatian war was only solved by moving these desperadoes out of UN controlled buffer zones and into Bosnia. There are signs that the Seselj-Chetniks would like to turn their attentions to Kosovo. If they do then the imperialists can kiss goodbye to the "successes" of the London Conference.

The political intervention of the imperialist powers has been disastrous for the masses of the now dismembered Yugoslavia. Its initial insistence on unity on the basis of capitalist restoration, then its switch to division, both led to the present reactionary nationalist war. Its further interventions to enforce a reactionary "peace", whether military or economic, must be opposed.

- UN and imperialist troops out of the Balkans!
- No to sanctions! No to the blockade!
- For workers' action and multi-ethnic militias to stop the pogroms!
- For a Socialist Federation of the Balkans!

Eyewitness in Yugoslavia - page 14

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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, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

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 councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

The first victorious working class revolution, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, established a workers' state. But Stalin and the bureaucracy destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The corrupt, parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can

defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

Internationally Stalinist Communist Parties have consistently betrayed the working class. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist and their influence in the workers' movement must be defeated.

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 fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

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

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

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

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

workers power

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..... Trade union

BLACKPOOL'S GOLDEN Mile hosts a fair number of freak shows. The TUC delegates assembling this September, ought to enquire whether or not their general secretary, Norman Willis, can be entered in one as an exhibit—the invisible man.

Amidst the ravages of the current recession, with the real figure for unemployment reaching four million, with work for dole schemes and cuts in unemployment benefits being openly planned by the Tories, with health and other public services under further attack, Norman Willis and the TUC have kept out of sight. They have mounted not a single campaign to rally the movement for a fightback against the bosses' offensive.

Attacks

The years of Tory attacks have had far reaching effects on all trade unions. Defeats and unemployment have cut union membership, and therefore the bureaucrats' financial base, dramatically. The cowardice of the bureaucracy in the face of these attacks has led to defeats and the rise of the strategy of crawling on one's belly in the dirt—otherwise known as "new realism".

At the same time many unions have responded by moving towards ever larger "super unions", through a series of mergers. If the rumoured plans for a merger go ahead between the two general unions, TGWU and GMB, then in a few years time this and three other super unions, MSF, AEEU and Unison would comprise virtually the entire membership of the TUC.

If the bureaucrats are successful these new super unions will be constructed on the basis of new realism, enshrining class collaboration, providing a secure material base for the top level bureaucrats, cutting away at union democracy, rejecting any notion of militant class struggle unionism in favour of unions that provide "services" to their members.

Emphasis

The emphasis is on "partnership" with Britain's bosses, not on defending members' interests against them. Thus the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is a main invited speaker at this year's Congress!

These developments have called into question the role of the TUC itself. As the super unions have developed into federations of workers from different industries and services, the idea of the TUC as an organising centre has all but disappeared. Many of the new union lead-

TUC '92

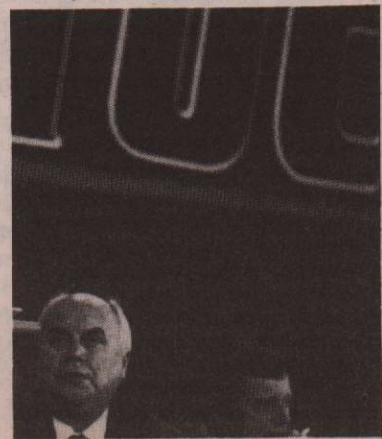
Our invisible leaders

BY ARTHUR MERTON

ers see little point in the TUC.

Leading the pack is the AEEU which has put in a motion proposing that the TUC's remaining role as an arbiter between unions be abolished on the grounds that "large unions [are] rightly self-sufficient in matters that affect their membership and organisational needs." In practice this means legitimising the role of the scabs in the AEEU electricians' section, the old EETPU, which is still suspended from the TUC for its scabbing at Wapping.

The electricians' leaders want a free hand to continue their scabbing and poaching activities. At the moment they are involved in a fierce conflict with the building workers' union, UCATT and could do with-



Norman Willis

out interference from the TUC.

Even the leaders of those unions that are not openly advocating scab unionism, like John Edmonds of the GMB, are beginning to argue that the TUC's role should be limited to a sort of research centre to help unions on matters like health and safety and the law. All agree that the TUC has no role to play as an organising centre for workers' action. They want John Monks, Willis' deputy, to replace the bumbling general secretary with the slimmed down modern image they are trying to project.

Do the workers need a TUC? Yes, but the TUC we need is a million miles away from the present set up. We need a leadership that is accountable to the members of the unions, we need a leadership that is democratically elected, not appointed by a handful of union barons.

The TUC should play a servicing role, it should service the needs of workers in struggle. It should provide those struggles with publicity, funds and above all with co-ordinated solidarity from other unions. Above all the trade union movement needs a leadership that fights, one not afraid of taking on the bosses, rather than inviting them to address its Congress. ■

NHS strike shows the way

BY JANE POTTER

LONDON HEALTH workers are on the receiving end of the biggest attack on jobs and services ever seen in the health service.

Gone are the days when a ward closure meant the nurses and ancillary staff would be guaranteed redeployment. Ward closures mean compulsory redundancies. Each nurse vacancy is now getting fifty or sixty applicants. And the situation will get a lot worse.

The Tomlinson Report, due out in September, is thought to contain proposals to shut three hospitals in London with a consequent massive loss of jobs. By April 70% of hospitals will have opted out or begun the process of opting out, giving managers a free

hand to further attack jobs, services and conditions in order to keep their hospitals profitable.

Health workers have continued to fight back. There have been several one day strikes in Middlesex, UCH and EGA hospitals in the Bloomsbury and Islington Health Authority. Riverside Health Authority MSF members came out for three days in August. Large rallies and demos have taken place around the London Hospital Trust and the Charing Cross Hospital.

All of this has been organised by the rank and file, with no help from the union bureaucracy, and even active hostility. Angry health workers

Lobby the TUC

OVER 200 trade union bodies have declared their support for the lobby of the TUC, organised by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), for 9 September under the slogan, "Start the fight now". The lobby is calling on delegates to support a TGWU motion which calls for a "major and sustained TUC campaign against unemployment" and declares:

"The continued attack upon the trade unions by the government must not be allowed to continue without a co-ordinated and planned response."

It is a safe bet to assume that the lobby will also support the resolutions from the TGWU and NALGO which call for the repeal of the Tories' anti-union laws.

It has to be said that it is ironic that the SWP has called this. They have in the past habitually refused to make demands on TUC leaders at crucial moments of the class struggle, such as during the miners', printers' and dockers' strikes. Of course there is nothing wrong with lobbying the TUC, and all trade unionists should support it. But if it is left at a one off lobby, and is not built on, it will have little purpose other than as a party building stunt.

However the claims the SWP are making for this lobby and the significance they are attaching to the TGWU resolution are laughable. Take the TGWU resolution. It is a ritual. It is the sort of empty call repeatedly made at TUC's by leaders wanting to appear in front of their members to be doing something. Yet it does not oblige anyone, from Norman Willis down to the most minor union official in the land, to do anything.

What the lobby could do, if the SWP were serious about pressuring the leaders and organising workers to act independently when

necessary, is provide a starting point for building a real rank and file movement. The task of transforming the TUC, forcing it to lead a fight on jobs, services and pay—and getting the individual union bureaucracies to do the same—will only ever happen if there is sustained pressure on them from the rank and file.

Only if they know they face the relentless challenge of an organised militant minority, threatening their leadership, fighting for union democracy and class struggle policies, organising solidarity for workers in struggle without waiting for the seal of approval from head office, leading successful struggles, defying the anti-union laws, will we stand a chance of forcing the leaders to lead. Even then the goal of our struggle is not simply to force these time servers to act—it is to overthrow them, to transform the unions from top to bottom, to build a new leadership in the unions committed to action against capitalism.

The beginnings of such a rank and file organisation can be seen in bodies like the Joint Sites Committee, the Offshore Workers' Liaison Committee, the Tube Workers' Action Group, the strike committees who have led the rash of local disputes in local government, health and education.

Building a fighting unity amongst such bodies means building a rank and file movement within and across every union. The lobby should be directed towards helping in the construction of such a movement by every honest militant who goes on it.

But these same militants should be warned: the SWP is opposed to building rank and file movements—the days lobby will be a one off party building demonstration. ■

picketed the Unison (COHSE, NUPE, NALGO) Health meeting to demand action. In response they agreed to call the latest day of action and London-wide demo, which took place on 21 August. It was a lively and militant demonstration supported by teachers, local government workers and even delegations from outside London.

There could have and should have been ten times the number who participated, but the union bureaucracy did not lift a finger to build the action. The attitude of the bureaucracy to the militant rank and file workers who took strike action and marched on 21 August was summed up when they collaborated with police to stop the march short of its objective, in a side street off Whitehall. The officials simply took down the Unison banner and abandoned the march—a fine start for the new banner of the unified public sector union!

NHS workers ignored them and after a sit down protest forced the police to allow them through to the Department of Health where an impromptu rally was held—a more promising start for the rank and file opposition in Unison.

August 21 showed what is possible. The bureaucracy were forced to call action by rank and file pressure. It was also London-wide for the first time in the current round of struggle.

In addition, a London Health Workers Co-ordinating Committee has been established to build on the action, arrange speakers to other hospitals and so on.

Faced with the tremendous unevenness of the cuts, and of mili-

tancy and organisation in the hospitals the minority of militant health workers that wants to fight must get organised.

The Co-ordinating Committee met after the day of action to discuss the way forward. Left to supporters of the SWP it would have been dissolved there and then, with activists told to go and build in their local hospitals and... support the SWP's lobby of the TUC on 9 September. According to the SWP we don't need a rank and file movement because we can all "get in touch" if necessary. This argument was defeated and the Committee established.

There is no contradiction between building strong base organisations in the hospitals and developing a rank and file organisation across London with the potential to challenge the stranglehold of the bureaucracy.

Workers Power, along with Militant supporters, are arguing for a shop stewards' conference in London to discuss and implement a fightback. Our strategy should be to build indefinite strike action to force a massive injection of funds and an end to the market system in the NHS. The way to achieve this is to build indefinite strike action in the hospitals affected by cuts and spread it from there, putting pressure on the officials for a London wide strike.

The Co-ordinating Committee can play a vital role in organising effective action and mobilising support from other workers. That way the rank and file can make sure that the latest day of action was the start, not the end of a co-ordinated fightback in London hospitals. ■

COMPANIES HOUSE

REBUILD THE FIGHT

BY A NUCPS MEMBER

FOLLOWING THE successful one day strike on 7 August at Companies House, Cardiff, against threatened job cuts, management has returned to the offensive.

The solid strike against 70-80 threatened redundancies by CPSA and NUCPS members shocked management. A mass picket and rally of 120 union members in the morning and a 30 strong picket on the previously unorganised evening shift brought the Cardiff office to a standstill. Members in the sister office in London called a short unofficial walk out in solidarity.

The unions have recruited 150 new members in the last month as workers have been attracted to a fight for their jobs.

After the strike management withdrew its original job cut plans but came back with a set of proposals that should have been rejected outright. About two thirds of the job

cuts were now to be found through "natural wastage". But most dangerously 25 workers were to be designated "surplus staff" and put into a Task Support Team (TST).

Instead of building on the militancy and success of the one day strike, which clearly rattled management, the CPSA and NUCPS branch leaderships, aided and abetted by union officials, decided not to fight this new attack on working conditions and jobs.

Within days of its introduction, however, it has become clear to ordinary members that TST is leading to a systematic abuse of conditions. CPSA and NUCPS are now reconsidering their positions and moving into opposition under the pressure of members' complaints.

It will be a hard job to rebuild the tremendous unity of action displayed

during the strike with job cuts now coming one by one. But it is essential that members start mobilising for a new fight.

Union activists must now begin the difficult job of winning the arguments for indefinite strike action to win our demands. One and two day strikes are often necessary steps to take to shake the employers and build up union organisation. But they can also dissipate militancy as the employers sit them out and few gains are made by the members who lose money. A solid indefinite strike, if it is active, mobilises the strikers and wins solidarity actions, often forces the employers to the negotiating table and to settle quickly.

These are important lessons for civil servants to learn if they are to defend jobs at Companies House and against the threat of privatisation which stands behind the current attacks. ■

SINCE THE general election the fascists, especially the British National Party (BNP), have been on the warpath. Far from disappearing after the poor showing in most areas (Tower Hamlets being an important exception) the BNP have stepped up their activities. They have held marches, meetings and stood in local by-elections.

The fascists have been busy capitalising on the roots they sunk during the election to assemble ever more bold gangs of streetfighters. In the context of the recession which the victorious Tories hoped would go away, their message of race hate is gaining a hearing amongst some desperate white working class youth who have been abandoned to their miserable fate by the official labour movement.

Racism

Official racism, whipped up by the Tories in their bid to get the Asylum Bill pushed through, has fatal consequences on the streets. It encourages race hate like that which led to a gang of 15 white youths clubbing Ruhullah Aramesh to death in Thornton Heath, South London. The fascist scum rises to the surface in such areas telling the youth that the answer to their problems lies in a "rights for whites" campaign.

In this situation the anti-fascist movement needs a clear purpose and direction. The fascist threat must be met head on by a united front of working class organisations, committed and able to ruthlessly implement "no platform for fascists", to organise defence of the workers' movement and to physically support the right of black communities to defend themselves.

Force

In short, we need a force capable of smashing the fascist threat before it is able to wreak the sort of damage it has done in Rostock or gain the kind of respectability it has in France (see pages 8,9 and 16).

Unfortunately the anti-fascist movement in Britain is gripped by the twin diseases of opportunism and sectarianism.

The Anti Nazi League (ANL) was re launched in January, after the Socialist Workers Party realised that their "fascism is no threat" line was becoming more ludicrous by the day. The ANL Mk II was modeled on the original. It was designed to be a pacifist popular front, more interested in getting endorse-



BNP in Bethnal Green, April 1992

Pacifism and sectarianism will not stop fascism

BY MARK HARRISON

Brick Lane, East London was brutally attacked by a BNP hit squad wielding iron bars. Three ANL members were reportedly hospitalised. This was after several smaller attempts to attack left paper sellers the week before.

The SWP's fear of "squadism"—replacing workers' action with isolated and clandestine hit squads—has led to them refusing to organise even the most elementary self-defence.

The ANL called a picket of a BNP election rally in nearby York Hall on the Monday after the attack in Brick Lane. The picket numbered about 250 and was completely undefended, except by the police. The ANL stewards agreed in advance to be penned behind police barriers to make their protest. Thus every protestor was allowed to be individually searched for weapons. The protest dispersed whilst the 130 fascists were still meeting.

Report

How did *Socialist Worker* report these events? Incredibly, in a story headlined "Protests humiliate British Nazis", they claimed:

"As a result of their hidings the fascists are turning to increasingly desperate tactics."

Part of the justification for this was the fact that the ANL, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and the Anti-Racist Alliance had assembled a 1,000 strong demo in Halifax two weeks before to counter a fascist threat. But it is sheer self-delusion to suggest the fascists are being humiliated, and that their terror tactics are a new phenomenon resulting from this.

cism to the forces grouped around the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). Specifically, AFA had wrongly decided to boycott demonstrations against the fascist historian David Irving, called by an ad hoc Committee.

It is clear that this was not a one-off. On 24 August London AFA refused to participate in the counter-demonstration at York Hall. Since such demonstrations are invariably organised within police-supervised cages, the argument goes, it is pointless to participate. So once again the public face of anti-fascism was dominated by the ANL and ARA.

Mistake

This was a very serious mistake. For a start, even if implementing AFA's direct action policy is sometimes physically impossible, the value of large demonstrations against fascist gatherings should not be ignored.

Obliging the police to surround a "public meeting" with barricades deters "the public" from going in. In addition demonstrations of opposition can give confidence to those opposed to fascism in the community.

It can show those at the sharp end of the fascist attacks—local black people—that they do not stand alone. That, after all, is why AFA itself organised a demonstration in East London last November.

The question for AFA is, do we let such misleaders get away with it? Do we let them present themselves as the public leaders of the anti-fascist struggle, or do we challenge them?

In these circumstances the ANL should be publicly challenged. AFA should demonstrate that it is prepared to mobilise and lead such elements. It can prove that even though direct action against the fascists meeting was impossible on that occasion—and probably on many others—it can best defend such demos in the event of fascist attack.

AFA has been built as a "non-sectarian" organisation. RA's arguments for not participating on the 24 August demo were, in essence, sectarian. As against all of the advantages AFA decided to abstain from the demo. As a result AFA gained nothing except a reputation for sectarianism. Workers' Power, along with independent AFA activists built for and attended the 24 August demo, ensuring that dissident voices were heard against the SWP's triumphalist stupidity, and that the crowd had a backbone of experienced anti-fascists in case of need.

Strategy

In the period ahead AFA will best be built by pursuing the twin track strategy originally agreed on. One track is organising to directly implement No Platform. We believe that remains the central principle of an anti-fascist united front, as against the irresponsible "protest only" politics of the ANL.

But the other track is to build AFA through open, public campaigning, both through its own initiatives, like the Unity Carnival, and through participating in the wider anti-fascist mobilisations. Without this AFA cannot claim to be trying to build a mass workers' united front.

That is the strategy Workers Power will fight for inside AFA. Where necessary we will implement it independently of AFA. We call on all committed anti-fascists to fight alongside us in order to stop sectarianism and pacifist opportunism allowing the Nazis to come out of their bolt-holes unchallenged. ■

SOHO

Lesbians and gays organise self defence

OVER SIXTY anti-fascists, mainly lesbians and gay men, mobilised to counter a fascist threat to gay bars in London's Soho on 8 August.

Following an edition of the Channel Four programme *Out*, which interviewed openly gay fascists, it was revealed that an unnamed fascist group attempted to recruit skinheads to hit the bars Comptons and The Village.

Supporters of *OutRage*, the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, Lesbians and Gay Campaign against Racism and Fascism mobilised, along with Anti-Fascist Action and ANL supporters—all at extremely short notice.

In the event, the self-proclaimed master race failed to show up. Meanwhile leaflets were distributed, and large defence groups were stationed outside the pubs concerned—a con-

sciousness raising experience for the whole lesbian and gay community in Soho.

The main weakness shown on the day was the reliance by many of the leading activists on collaboration with the police. Because the police have declined to press charges against recent *OutRage* protest stunts the illusion has arisen that we can turn to the police to protect us from fascism.

But the cops are riddled with fascist sympathisers and, even more so, anti-gay bigots. At the first sign of organised self-defence they will turn on the defenders, not the fascists.

There is only one way to deal with fascism: get organised for self-defence against them and build a working class campaign to smash them. ■

IN THE year 1842 British capitalism had been in existence for well over half a century. But conditions for the workers in the "hungry forties" were no less barbaric than in the earliest years of the industrial revolution.

Describing his family's subsistence on eight shillings a week, John Daniels, a Stockport silk weaver told Poor Law commissioners:

"We make our breakfast for seven of us of a cupful of oatmeal made into thin porridge, together with some bread: at dinner we have about six pounds of potatoes, with salt and bread, and at supper it is the same as breakfast... this and the ten pence a week we have to pay for coal makes up the eight shillings nearly."

Men women and children worked twelve and fourteen hours a day, lived in crowded slum dwellings and died young. Repeated recessions meant immediate unemployment for thousands, without any form of benefits, and wage cuts for the rest.

The general strike of 1842 began in response to such a recession. The textile and coal manufacturers of the industrial north demanded wage reductions of between ten and twenty seven percent and massive lay-offs.

But the volatility and revolutionary potential of the strike did not spring merely from the privations the bosses were attempting to force on the workers. The strike came in the midst of a period of mass agitation for political democracy by the working class.

Wrested

In 1832 the rising class of factory owners and bankers wrested a considerable chunk of political power out of the hands of the landed capitalists of the old aristocracy through the Reform Act, which gave the middle class the vote.

The Reform Act was won only after mass, insurrectionary demonstrations by the working class. But, having secured their own majority in Parliament, the bosses quickly dumped the workers. They denied them any rights to vote, banned the trade unions, set about constructing a police force and the notorious workhouse system of forced labour for the unemployed.

In response the Chartist movement sprang up. The first People's Charter was drawn up by the London Working Men's Association in 1838. The plan was to present a massive petition for democracy to parliament.

The Charter demanded votes for all adult men, a secret ballot to prevent vote rigging, annual elections, equal sized electoral districts, the payment of MPs and the abolition of the "property qualification" for MPs, so that workers could stand for parliament.

From the beginning it was clear that no bosses' parliament would ever accept the Charter. The movement immediately divided over the method of winning the Charter. The so called "moral force" Chartists, who retained a majority within the movement initially, refused to countenance any violent struggle. They limited the movement to a mass protest designed to back up radical MPs in parliament.

The "physical force" wing of Chartism, led by radical democrats like Feargus O'Connor, realised that there would have to be mass struggle and eventually violent insurrection to achieve the Charter. They were not socialists in the modern sense, but they saw working class methods of struggle, in particular the general strike, as the key to winning democracy.

When parliament rejected the Charter in 1839 the "moral force" strategy won out. Police attacked a

GENERAL STRIKE 1842

One hundred and fifty years ago the first prolonged general strike of the British working class was at its peak. Tens of thousands of workers in Lancashire, Staffordshire and Yorkshire mounted flying pickets, seized control of whole towns and organised armed militias. To the horror of the employers and aristocrats they transformed their strike from a wage struggle to a struggle for political power. **Paul Morris** tells the story of this key event in working class history.

When the bosses trembled



Strikers liberate bread from Stockport Workhouse, 1842

mass meeting at the Chartist convention in Birmingham. A half hearted call for a general strike met with a patchy response. Seizing its chance the government responded with mass repression and over 500 Chartist leaders were thrown into jail.

With the first phase of the Chartist movement over, and a class differentiation taking place amongst its battered remnants, the working class turned again to the economic struggle.

The 1842 general strike began with a walk out of coal miners in Stafford, quickly followed by a series of textile workers' walk outs in South East Lancashire, all aimed at preventing forced pay cuts by the bosses. Everywhere workers were forced to create new organisations of struggle, to become leaders themselves overnight. And in many places it was Chartist activists who took the lead.

All the basics of militant trade unionism were learned overnight by tens of thousands of workers. Democratic mass meetings involving thousands of workers adopted resolutions for a walk out by show of hands. Workers on strike marched from one factory to the next "turning out" other workers by persuasion and encouraging the few whose resolution wavered with sticks and stones.

After two weeks of sporadic walk-outs in Lancashire and Cheshire mills a mass meeting on Mottram Moor, near Stalybridge, resolved to call the general strike from Monday 8 August.

As had already happened at

smaller strike meetings, the workers' leaders linked the wages question to the question of political democracy, and the masses eagerly agreed. William Muirhouse, the chair of the Mottram Moor meeting told the thousands of workers assembled:

"I must inform you we are not here for a wage question, or for a religious question, it is a national question... at five o'clock in the morning we will proceed from factory to factory, and all hands that will not willingly come out we will turn them out. And friends, when we are out, we will remain out until the Charter, which is the only guarantee you have for your wages, becomes the law of the land."

Powerless

Throughout the next week the strike spread from the mill towns to the city of Manchester itself. Factory after factory came out. Despite mobilising special constables and cavalry regiments the authorities were powerless to stop mass demonstrations entering Manchester.

By 15 August the whole of the Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire cotton industry was on strike, along with miners from Staffordshire to Lanarkshire—some 250,000 workers in all. However, as the strike spread the army and local constabulary repeatedly fired on unarmed crowds, killing and wounding strikers.

The question of political power was being posed point blank, revealing the revolutionary potential and significance of the general

strike weapon. The workers themselves were assembling all the elements of the answer to that question. But at the decisive moments they lacked the political leadership and scientific socialist strategy to resolve it in a revolutionary way.

A National Delegate Trades Conference had been called for 15 August in Manchester, and was preceded by over 25 local public trades conferences of workers organised on a sectoral basis. These mass meetings elected delegates to the national conference. Amendments limiting the aims of the general strike to the wages question were debated and defeated, and the Conference resolved to call the whole country out on a general strike for the Charter.

One day later the political leadership of the Chartist movement met in Manchester and endorsed their call for a general strike. This was the point where the strike turned from a regional, semi-spontaneous general strike to a national political one: by the end of August half a million workers were on strike, and the movement had spread to London, producing "riotous assemblies" in all the main working class districts.

Meanwhile, the local meetings had developed into permanently sitting bodies, organising the strike and trying to feed the families of the strikers—in embryo local organs of working class power were springing up. Local strike committees authorised exemptions from the strike for essential work. Women played a full role in the strike, not merely by carrying

stones in their aprons during the battles with the military, but also through their own organisations such as the Lodge of Industrious Females.

Faced with the solidity of the strike, the bosses' first attempts to mobilise irregular forces to crush it failed. In response the government mobilised the army. As the guards marched to the railway stations from their London barracks they were surrounded by vast crowds of workers who booed and jostled them. But once in the northern industrial towns the military machine of the British Empire began to prove more than a match for the unarmed crowds of workers.

At the same time the lack of a revolutionary strategy and centralised leadership took its toll on the strike movement. Having resolved to stay out "for the Charter" workers could not see how the Charter was to be won. Meanwhile they were starving. So gradually the economic demands of the strike began to be negotiated with individual mill owners, many of whom caved in on wages to avert the threat of revolution.

As the strike petered out, the state responded with mass repression. Literally thousands of workers were arrested in September and October—not only on picketing charges, but lined up for mass conspiracy trials.

The political leadership of the strike never planned or organised for a confrontation with the state, let alone to seize the insurrectionary opportunity the strike represented. Even the "physical force" Chartists were confused and hesitant about leading the strikers into a real battle for power.

Confusion

One of the most militant leaders, McDouall, summed up the confusion. He urged peace and order on the strikers on the grounds that "when a universal holiday prevails... then of what use will bayonets be against public opinion?" The general strike, without an insurrection, he believed, would be enough to win.

Taking the strike forward to the insurrection for the seizure of power was a link that the leaders proved unable to make. The general strike poses the question of power, of who rules. But the insurrection decides the answer. Chartism in 1842 was not a sufficiently developed and homogeneous movement to understand this link.

Today school history lessons reduce the strike, and the whole physical force wing of Chartism, to the status of a doomed experiment at revolution amid a struggle for political reform. The leaders of the Labour and trade union movement tell us that violence and revolution have never been part of the British working class tradition.

This is why they won't be celebrating the anniversary of that glorious August and September of 1842, when the British working class demonstrated a revolutionary spirit and a will to act. ■

MALCOLM X

Socialism and black nationalism

THE CULT of Malcolm X is reaching fever pitch. The release date of Spike Lee's long awaited film about the black leader is approaching. Malcolm's image is emblazoned on the baseball caps and t-shirts of hundreds of black and white youth.

Everybody from Al Sharpton to orthodox muslim god-squadders claim to stand in the tradition of Malcolm X. But nobody can agree on what that tradition is.

Clearly a Marxist account of Malcolm's life and politics is long overdue. This is what Kevin Ovenden sets out to do in his recent book. As a basic Marxist account of Malcolm's life it is useful. But the weaknesses of the book reflect the politics of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which Ovenden is a member of.

Malcolm X grew up in the ghetto wanting to be a lawyer. Denied this by the racist education system, he became a small time crook and wound up in Uncle Sam's racist penal system. There he was recruited by the black muslims of the Nation of Islam. After finishing his sentence Malcolm rose to prominence as the right hand man of the muslims' leader Elijah Muhammad.

Oppressed

The muslims advocated radical, religious black nationalism. They set out to organise the most oppressed amongst the black working class—the jail population and the ghetto youth. Their movement grew into a mass force parallel with, but opposed to, the "integrationist" reform movement led by Martin Luther King.

In the early 1960s Malcolm had become enemy number one for white racism in America, because of his uncompromising advocacy of black separatism and armed resistance to racism, summed up in the slogan "By any means necessary". But his commitment to a revolutionary struggle against racism also brought him up against the limits of the Nation of Islam, which told its supporters to abstain from the growing "non-violent" mass demonstrations of black workers. This, and a personal dispute, propelled Malcolm out of the Nation of Islam in 1964, and into an intense period of political rethinking, cut short only one year later by his assassination on 21 February 1965.

Influenced

During his last year Malcolm came into contact with the anti-imperialist petit bourgeois nationalism of African liberation fighters, orthodox Sunni Islam, Stalinist "socialism" and even centrist Trotskyism. He was influenced by all of these ideologies, and his speeches and writings in 1964-65 reflect a confused but valiant attempt to supersede black nationalism with a revolutionary synthesis of black self reliance and reformist utopian socialism. (For a fuller account of Malcolm's life and politics see *Workers Power* 151, February 1992)

Kevin Ovenden's account of these events is both accurate and informative. Unlike other potted biographies it attempts to situate Malcolm's political evolution within national and

Colin Lloyd reviews
Malcolm X; Socialism and Black Nationalism
by Kevin Ovenden,
Bookmarks 1992

international developments in politics and economics. It uses quotations from Malcolm's writings and those of his opponents to spell out the key issues within the black movement of the time.

In its critique of Malcolm's later political development however, the book is neither detailed nor perceptive enough. Ovenden asserts that Malcolm was not a socialist. He backs this up with a quote where Malcolm speaks against workers' solidarity as an illusion, but then admits that later Malcolm made explicitly anti-capitalist statements.

Strangely that is where the brief section "Socialist or nationalist" ends. There is no attempt to grapple with the wrong but influential argument that Malcolm was an "unconscious revolutionary" pioneered by the centrist Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States (no relation to its British namesake). There is no critique of Malcolm's explicit programme, drawn up for the Organisation of Afro American Unity (OAAU) which he founded after his break with Elijah Muhammad.

It is easy to see the reason for these omissions. The British SWP cannot see the point of political programmes. Every year they are given a lecture by their guru, Tony Cliff, who tells them "I'd rather have a machine gun than a blueprint for a machine gun"—that is, political programmes are useless. It is not surprising that Ovenden doesn't bother to analyse Malcolm's programme.

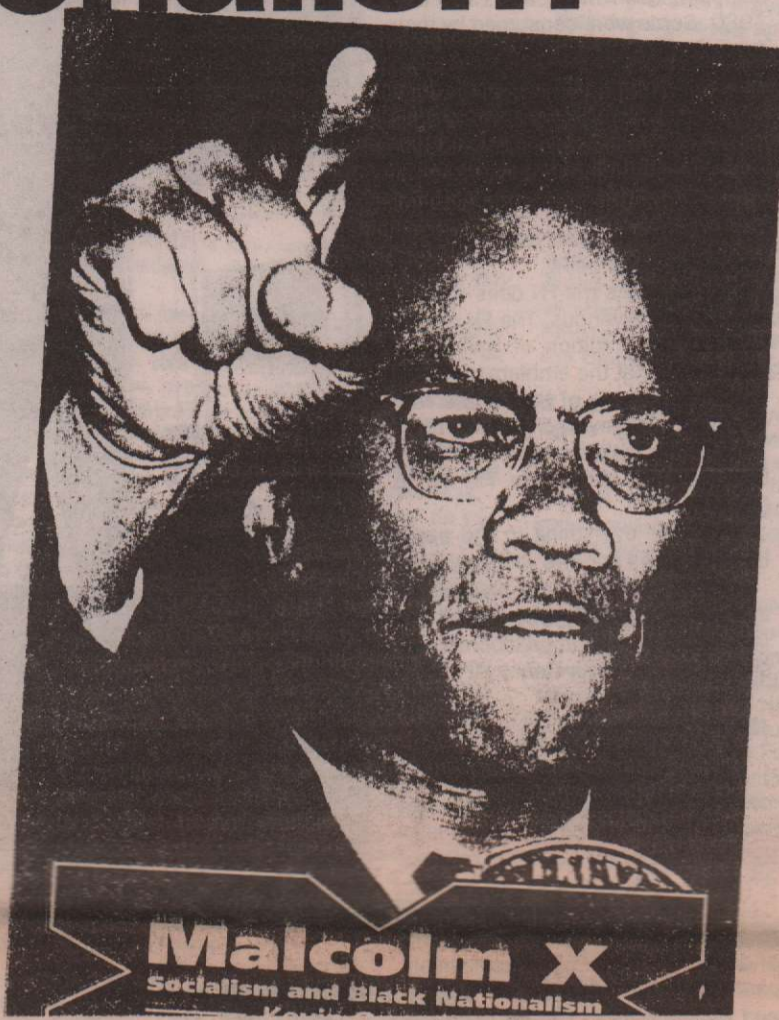
Explicit

If he did, he would have been able to prove how the explicit anti-capitalism of Malcolm's later speeches is not adequately translated into political strategy.

Malcolm's call for organised black self defence squads is very close to the transitional demands fought for by real Trotskyists—something incidentally the British SWP always refuses to fight for. On the other hand his solution to black poverty was a utopian and reformist social programme involving the training of skilled black workers and the creation of a parallel black economy servicing the needs of Africa.

It is not enough to say "Malcolm was not a socialist". It is far more accurate to say his socialism was reformist and that it was mixed up with black separatism plus revolutionary tactics on black self-defence.

The second part of Ovenden's book concerns the legacy of Malcolm X, the black movements which followed his death. Again, as a potted history it is not bad, explaining and contextualising the rise of the Panthers, Black Power and the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). However, Ovenden is particularly weak wherever he has to deal with revolutionary Marxism and centrist's attempts to relate to black national-



ism.

His account of the experience of the Communist Party and the black struggle completely leaves out the so called "Third Period" of international Stalinism. During the years 1928-33 the Comintern adopted an ultra-left policy internationally. In the USA this led them to a specific orientation to black workers, and to espouse the demand for national self-determination for blacks in the USA.

The CP's line prompted a debate within American Trotskyism, which Leon Trotsky himself participated in, arguing for the right of self-determination up to the formation of a separate black state if the black population desired this. The conditions which Trotsky envisaged for such a struggle were being rapidly undermined during the 1930s, with the migration of southern blacks to the industrial northern cities of the USA. But it was not out of the question for Trotsky to consider the possibility of revolutionaries having to support such a national struggle by blacks in the USA, even if they did not themselves advocate it as a solution.

Ovenden's failure to deal with the Marxist debates on black nationalism is not accidental. It reveals the SWP's own failure to develop a political strategy to combat racism and achieve black liberation.

The third and final part of his book is an exposition of the British SWP's explanation of racism. It is the weakest section and the one genuine fighters for black liberation and socialism should focus their arguments against in Ovenden's coming speaking tour.

Ovenden correctly sets out to show that it is not in the interest of the white working class to be racist. But the interests of workers are defined as narrowly economic: racism drives down wage levels we are told, by dividing black and white. So why are

white workers racist? Part of the answer is the racist propaganda we are surrounded by, Ovenden says. However:

"Racism can lodge in the minds of workers because it appears to correspond to *one part* of their experience of living under capitalism—the compulsion to compete in order to get by. As Karl Marx explained, competition invades all aspects of society, and 'separates individuals from one another, not only the bourgeois but still more the workers'. . . For the white worker living on a run down housing estate it can seem the solution is to take housing from black people. Racism can appear to make sense." (p75)

But another part of the workers' experience under capitalism counteracts racism: the experience of collective struggle in the workplace:

"The more workers succeed in uniting and fighting, the less relevant seem the individualism and ideas of competition which stoke racism".

This is a crass, one sided explanation, thoroughly imbued with the British SWP's central method, which revolutionary Marxists label *economism*.

Economism reduces the class struggle to the struggle in the workplace over basic economic goals. It presumes that the basic economic interests of the working class spontaneously lead to the achievement of class unity and a revolutionary consciousness, to the overcoming of racism, sexism and anti-gay bigotry, and to overcoming reformist legalism.

This is not the same as saying "workers learn in struggle". No Marxist would deny that. But economism means belittling the role of a conscious vanguard, of a clear political programme, of revolutionary transitional forms of organisation.

Using only the SWP's economism to guide him Ovenden comes up with a very inadequate explanation of rac-

ism. Clearly he doesn't want to locate racism simply in the realm of ideas. That would lead directly to the reformist schema of "race awareness training" as the solution to oppression, which the SWP rightly opposes. But locating the material roots of racism in the competition capitalism engenders amongst individual workers does not tell the whole story.

To put it simply; why, when they are indulging in this individualism and competition, do the white workers on a council estate turn against black people more than against each other? Nothing in the economics of individual competition dictate it. It has to be rooted in some other material structure. Ovenden cannot explain this.

For revolutionary Marxists it is rooted in the existence of capitalist imperialism, the degenerate form of capitalism that developed in the twentieth century. Imperialism created a world economy, an international labour market, and at the same time massively intensified the competition between capitalist nations, giving rise to virulent and exclusive modern nationalism.

Imperialism

Racism's economic advantages for the bosses go far beyond "divide and rule". Through the profits generated by plundering the globe imperialism is able to create a labour aristocracy of relatively privileged workers. At the same time it is able to utilise black workers as part of the "reserve army of labour"—super exploited workers with few rights.

We do not have to subscribe to the Maoist theory that all western white workers are labour aristocrats to see that a layer of white workers is tied through ideology and short term material interest to the racist state. But this is how the SWP caricatures the "labour aristocracy theory of racism" (see for example Alex Callinicos' "Race and Class" in *IS55*, Summer 1992).

Yet imperialism figures nowhere in Ovenden's account of racism: it is purely rooted in the existence of working class individualism.

The political consequences of the SWP's economic theory of the causes of racism are its simplistic recipes for overcoming it. Taken at face value, once workers overcome individualism they should overcome racism. But that does not explain the existence of racism amongst organised workers.

Spontaneously

And whilst struggle is the best place to overcome racism it is facile to suggest that it is overcome spontaneously "the more workers unite and fight". That is why the SWP's principal slogan against racism, "black and white unite and fight", on its own, is useless in the fight against racism and is rightly scorned by most black activists.

It is one thing for black and white workers to be standing together on the picket lines at Dagenham. It would be another thing altogether to suggest that this once and for all kills off the racism of the white workers.

Ovenden's book and speaking tour will no doubt spark off a furor amongst the self-appointed heirs of Malcolm X: the Stalinist black separatists of the Black Unity and Freedom Party, the middle class black leaders of ARA, and orthodox black muslims will no doubt hotly dispute the SWP's right to hold meetings on Malcolm X.

We will defend not only their right to do so but the general thrust of the socialist critique of Malcolm X that Ovenden's book contains. But we remain implacable opponents of the SWP's centrism and economism, both vividly illustrated in the book's analysis of racism and recipe for destroying it. ■

IN EVERY election, in street demonstrations, in attacks on immigrants and their homes, Front National (FN) supporters make their presence felt. Le Pen, the shady führer of these racist troops, has put himself on the walls, on our TV screens and in the press. His message of racial hatred with its undercurrent of fascism has spread everywhere. Le Pen has arrived.

Le Pen and his organisation threaten us all—French or immigrant workers, women, youth and black people. The better we know our enemy, the better we will be able to fight it.

The origins of this menace lie in the austerity measures carried out by the various "socialist" governments in the last decade in order to prop up capitalism. The breakthrough for the FN came at the time of the 1984 European elections. Le Pen himself announced that "Everything begins today". The FN electoral list achieved 10.95% of the vote: 2,204,961 people voted FN.

The story since then is well known. On the electoral front the FN has made steady progress. In the 1986 legislative elections, it won 9.9% of the vote and got 35 deputies in the Assembly (Parliament). On the same day, the FN entered 21 of the 22 regional councils, with 140 regional councillors overall, and 9.65% of the vote. In the 1988 presidential elections, Le Pen polled 4,375,854, totalling 14.4% of the vote.

Even though the FN didn't reach its target of 20% in the last elections—it won 13.9%—it now has a presence in every regional council, with 239 local elected representatives. Far from an end to the FN's growth, the elections show that the FN has entrenched itself at local level, bringing a credibility that Le Pen has sought for so long.

It is vital to understand that, contrary to Le Pen's declaration, everything did not begin in 1984. The FN has a history, more than twenty years of it, with its roots deep in the undergrowth of French fascism.

At the start of the 1970s, the various far-right organisations in France went through a downturn and were looking for new inspiration. The revolutionary events of May 1968 had countered the influence of fascism. In June 1971, the fascist organisation *Ordre Nouveau* (New Order), proposed the formation of a "national front".

Organisation

This project's aims were no less than the creation of a mass organisation for Nazism. On 5 October 1972, the FN was formed as a unified national federation. The Nazi sympathisers present were agreed about one thing: they had to regroup, despite ideological differences, in order to get out of their ghetto and reclaim their "rightful" place amongst the nationalists, as in the collaborationist era of Marshal Petain.

The new organisation contained a large proportion of the French fascists: *Ordre Nouveau*, the royalists, a few small groupings such as the inappropriately named "Justice and Liberty", the Party of French Unity and various other fascist militants, as well as Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The young Le Pen had become a deputy of the reactionary populist Poujadist party in the late 1950s. Known as a street brawler who gained notoriety for issuing records of Hitlerite marching songs Le Pen showed he was capable of disguising this past and sticking to the "modern" fascist method of concentrating on anti-immigrant racism. Thus after a three day conference he was elected president of the new party.

From the start, Le Pen aimed to construct a mass fascist organisation. But he also knew the need for using different tactics to build it. Like his predecessor Hitler, Le Pen has known periods in the wilderness. It was not until 1983, in a shock by-election in Dreux where the FN re-

FROM **POUVOIR OUVRIER**
Paper of the French section of the
LRCI

ceived 16.72% of the vote, that it became known at a national level.

Many organisations of the far right disappeared in the years 1970 and 1980. Some were consumed by their own sectarianism. Others were integrated, then assimilated, into the mainstream right wing parties. The FN succeeded not because of its superior abilities but because of its political strategy—building a fascist organisation on the basis of a racist, populist programme whilst hiding the Nazi flag for the time being.

The traditions the FN does refer to are many and various. The FN places itself in the tradition of the Italian MSI—note that the emblem of the FN is a straight copy of that of the MSI with the replacement of green by blue. The FN uses the old slogan of Jacques Doriot's *Parti Populaire Française* (PPF):

"You owe everything to the party, the party does not owe you anything."

More significantly, the programme of the FN is inspired by the all too familiar Vichy French collaborationist slogan "Work-Family-Country".

Preconditions

The preconditions for the FN's success aren't difficult to find: the fuse was lit by the austerity measures of the PS-PC government. All the reforms promised by Mitterrand, the PS and their PCF allies turned to ashes in the face of the orders of the IMF at the end of 1982. The reformists spinelessly carried out the dictates of the French and foreign banks. The FN used the depth of the economic crisis and the disillusion created by the government's actions to fuel an anti-immigrant offensive.

This remains at the centre of the FN's politics, the source of its popularity. Last November FN leader Bruno Megret drew up his infamous, racist "fifty propositions" on citizenship rights in France for foreigners. The author made clear that the measures "obviously do not apply to those citizens of the EC and beyond who are of our own European culture, religion and civilisation". In plain language, this means "these proposals do not apply to whites".

Once we have understood the racist card the FN is playing then there is no mystery about its politics. From the call to "combat anti-French discrimination", through the pledge of "fidelity and service to the national community", through to its challenge to French naturalisations (citizenship rights) granted since 1974: all can be summed up in the old slogan, "*Les français d'abord*"—French (whites!) first.

Absurd

Despite the absurd nature of many of the proposals in the catalogue of hate, the FN has achieved its first objective: the terms of political debate in France have changed.

We saw the spectacle presented by the right in Autumn 1991, when Chirac and Giscard—both good republicans—competed with racist speeches to recover some of the voters lost to Le Pen.

Worse still, the workers' movement has also been infected by racism.

The French Communist Party (PCF) allowed a petition against immigration to circulate clandestinely during this year's *l'Humanité* festival.

Socialist Party premier Edith Cresson bragged about her policy of



FN poster featuring Le Pen: "We love France! No to Maastricht"

The resistible Le Pen

"expulsions by charter jet".

The PS government has also given in to the "necessity" of setting up detention centres in ports and airports, using the excuse that it will lessen racism!

The ideas of Le Pen, far from being fought, are systematically echoed by politicians from the right to the so-called left. Today, immigrants are targets for them all. The way that racism has become acceptable and commonplace is terrifying; more than 40% of the population are not afraid to call themselves racist. If this situation is not reversed, there will be dangerous consequences for the whole working class.

We also need to understand that behind the anti-Arab and anti-African politics there also lies anti-semitism. If the FN does not yet openly advocate the extermination of the Jews this does not mean it will never do so.

The backdrop to all this is the frenzied nationalism of the FN. Invoking all the symbols of the traditional right—the tricolour, Joan of Arc, anti-communism—the FN unceasingly makes its appeal to "the nation".

Long before Maastricht, the FN declared:

"Europe is now in danger and there is hardly any time to stop the process which is leading us straight into a bloody racial war"

We were thus warned of the way that the FN will act if the occasion arises. We have already seen that these were not empty words, from the attack on immigrant neighbourhoods in Sonacotra and Nice, and from all the other racist attacks carried out by Le Pen's followers.

While racism has been the main element of the FN's politics, it is also based on other political positions, and always seeks to exploit the similarities of the "respectable" right and fascism.

Oppression

The "defence of the family"—that is to say the oppression of women—occupies a central role in the FN's propaganda. Like the Algerian FIS, the FN is in favour of the "family vote" and for "a special benefit for mothers of children under two who choose not to take paid work". The role of women in society is reduced to childbearing.

Consequently one of the big campaigns of the FN since 1974 has been against abortion. Their argument against the Veil law (legalised abortion) is summed up in the slogan: "Kill the infant and you kill France!".

The populist politics of the FN oscillate between the classical corporatist model, the defence of the small businessman and attempts to appeal to

Fascism is on the rise, the movement and the left is in a state of complacency. The FN has taken up the fight. In an anti-Le Pen demo on 1 May...

the less class conscious workers.

A year before the FN's foundation Le Pen was on record as saying:

"The right to strike is doubly sacred. But no more so than the rights of the public."

The next year however he was launching a campaign under the the slogans:

"Against the right to strike" and "the strike is a weapon against the workers". In this campaign he demanded that, "the right to strike should be limited... and in any case should be forbidden to state employees".

However Le Pen has not taken his anti-trade union rhetoric as far as organising systematic attacks on the unions. There are two principal reasons for this. Neither indicates any ultimate lack of intention or will.

First, the working class has been in retreat for the last fifteen years.

This retreat, despite the continuation of some struggles, started before the rise of the FN. So that even the most vicious sections of the bourgeoisie as yet have had no need of the brown shirts.

Secondly, when the workers have been able to take a step forward, as at

ANCE
ON L'AIME!

ON
RIGHT

rise of

in Europe, and the workers' responding with useless paci- LRCI's section in France has article edited from this month's Emile Gallet explains the Pen's Front National. We also Ouvrier leaflet to the abortive

the time of the RATP (Parisian rail- ways) strike in Autumn 1988, the Mitterrand government itself smashed the strike by sending in the army as scabs. The French bourgeoisie has both the workers' misleaders and the official state machine to use as weapons against the workers.

Thus the hour of a classic fascism, like that of Mussolini or Hitler, has not yet arrived. But the organisation exists and the danger is great. It is necessary to act now.

For the most part, the 15% of electors who voted for Le Pen are not themselves fascists.

The FN appeals to the insecurity and fear of the petit bourgeoisie and the unorganised or unemployed workers. These strata provide the shock troops of classical fascism. The conversion of the FN's present racist base into a mass organisation of fascism is undoubtedly possible if the social conditions continue to worsen sharply. The prolonged passivity of the workers' movement is only increasing the menace.

Like the fascist movements in Italy and Germany, the FN concentrates its intervention around a main leader, a

demagogue.

Aware of the bloody struggles in the German Nazi party, Le Pen has split the national structure in order to avoid any challenges to his power or the emergence of a serious competitor. General Secretary Karl Lang and the Delegation Generale Bruno Megret co-exist as a joint second tier of command.

Level

At a lower level the same rule predominates: there are two departmental secretaries, two regional secretaries. To be nominated by the führer one must also be reliable: think as little as possible, transmit and carry out all the president's directives, explain the different political lines decided by Le Pen. The FN's internal regime is a cross between fascism and feudalism!

Launching the FN's national electoral bid meant the creation of a real national political organisation. Karl Lang admitted, "the organisation of the movement did not exist before. We were only an electoral machine

not a politically implanted movement".

The creation of this organisation was a dangerous step towards turning the mass base of the FN into a mass fascist organisation.

"What is the real strength of the FN? It is difficult to know. Today it claims around 100,000 members as against 65,000 in 1986. Nevertheless according to one researcher in 1989, "at its base, the FN does not have more than 15,000 active members". It is true that on the FN demonstrations on 1 May 1992, it never turned out more than 30,000. But this is 30,000 too many.

The FN is a growing threat to workers. Le Pen and the leadership of the FN have been able to win the first round of their gamble: they have been able to weld together a strong organisation of tens of thousands of members and sympathisers, of which the most important sections are also convinced fascists.

Furthermore, on the basis of extreme racism it has systematically gained the votes of millions of electors, some of which came from the

mass workers parties. All this was achieved without significant opposition from the workers' movement.

The history of our century provides too many examples of political inertia in the face of fascist threats. We must not provide another.

The leaders of the PS and PCF are in danger of leading us to the abyss: by their politics at local and national level, by the way they themselves play with racism and nationalism, by their cowardly refusal to physically confront the FN on the street. Those left wing militants who refuse to unite in action against the FN bear the same responsibility.

Worse, when these forces dare to go onto the streets, it's more often to seek out a good bourgeois "anti-fascist" of the style of Tapie or Noir (liberal politicians). Of course there is a difference between Le Pen and these gentlemen. But there is also a point in common between them: the small question of class.

Noir, Tapie and Cie are only ready to combat the fascist on the basis of



pouvoir ouvrier

LE PEN has got away with it again! That makes five times that Le Pen and his Nazi scum have demonstrated in the streets of Paris on May Day. Five times that the labour movement has let them do it. Five times that these apprentice Hitlers have finished their demo with their heads held high and their confidence reinforced. Five times too many.

This year there is a united protest demonstration in the afternoon. But is it enough? Can we stop the brown plague by mere demonstrations, no matter how powerful? We don't think so.

The FN's project

The Front National (FN) is led by a group of fascists who seek to mobilise mass support on the basis of populist and racist politics. Le Pen saying that the Nazi gas chambers were "a mere detail", the attacks against trade union rights, the project of deporting all immigrants, the support for the collaborationist Vichy regime: all this clearly shows that their objective is the installation of a regime worthy of the Third Reich.

And the FN, like Hitler, will use any means necessary. They use elections, but the bedrock of their influence is on the street.

As Hitler said, the role of fascist demonstrations is to "give each human worm the impression that he is part of an enormous dragon". Thus this morning's demonstration involved de-classed workers, crazed petit bourgeois and reactionary chic types full of hatred for immigrants and workers.

They all had the impression that they were part of something bigger than themselves, that they were strong and powerful in a world in which they feel weak and powerless.

And when opponents organise against the FN, how do the fascists respond? Do they follow the rules of etiquette? Not exactly. The anti-racists and anti-fascists of Chartres know all about it. When they mobilised against FN leader Bruno Megret coming to their town, the FN stewards attacked them while the police looked on.

The FN thugs were able to disperse the anti-Le Pen demo. The mask fell; the real nature of the FN was obvious to everyone. The FN wants to crush all opposition: we must be ready to defend ourselves.

The lesson of Chartres is the lesson of virtually seven years of struggle against Le Pen. There have been massive concerts, thousands of local and national demonstrations, millions of leaflets given out.

And yet the FN continues to grow, to root itself in the communities, to consolidate. It isn't a question of a lack of anti-racist will, but of the orientation of the movement.

How to fight against the FN

Today, like every time the FN demonstrates, there should have been a massive mobilisation of workers—French and immigrants, women, youth—to oppose the FN on what, tragically, has become its own terrain: the streets of Paris.

Would that imply physical confrontation? Yes, if the fascists didn't get scared and run away.

We are not proposing isolated hit squads or mobilisations involving a handful of militants. We need to fight within the workers' and anti-racist organisations for a massive and determined mobilisation, well organised, well protected by trained stewards, to beat the fascist thugs of the Front National. And the first step is to clearly say that such a policy is absolutely necessary.

Wouldn't physical confrontation imply that we had "lost the argument"? Aren't there "democratic rights" which we should protect at any price?

But you can't argue with the FN. Their project of a bloody dictatorship is not up for debate.

They will use every "democratic" opening in order to destroy it, the better to build their fascist machine, the better to throw democratic rights onto the rubbish heap and and all who oppose them into concentration camps.

The anti-racist response

It isn't being ultra-left to say that we need to physically oppose the fascist menace. It is the only effective policy faced with the current threat. Tragically, none of the three main anti-racist organisations agrees. Faced with today's FN demonstration, they have only proposed a protest demonstration, held far away from the FN, on the other side of Paris, long after the thousands of fascists have gone home unmolested.

■ SOS-Racisme concentrates on the question of "equal rights" whilst the FN wins 14% of the votes and 40% of the population says they are racist. In itself "equality" will resolve nothing. The task of the moment is to reduce the active support of the FN, its ability to mobilise, to attract, reinforce and organise people. And that means a fight against all rights... for the fascists.

■ The "Manifesto Against the Far Right", organised by Socialist Party MP Jean-Cristophe Cambadélis, is opposed in principle to idea of stopping the fascists from demonstrating. But who—except a suicide!—would have dared defended the "democratic rights" of Hitler in Germany before 1933? Who—except a blind "democrat"—would have defended the "right to demonstrate" of the Fascist Leagues in France after 1934? And yet that's the situation. Of course, history doesn't repeat itself. But those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. And we know how it finishes. It is not pleasant.

■ The "Petition of 250" has been the clearest and most courageous organisation in fighting the FN. But even the "250" rejected the idea of calling for a determined counter-demonstration to stop Le Pen's demonstration. Some members of the 250 agree with us, but don't dare to say so, thinking that "the time isn't ripe".

But if we don't say now what we need to do, when these subtle observers reckon that the right moment has arrived, it will be too late. You need to say what you think, you need to explain what to do.

And what we need to do is stop the FN by mass physical means.

The necessary struggle against racism

Le Pen is a fascist. But he bases his support on the racist ideas which are so widespread in society. Fighting Le Pen in the street also implies fighting against racism:

■ Full rights for immigrants, including the right to vote in all elections. Even more important, immigrant workers must be integrated into the workers' organisations, and especially the unions.

■ Faced with the terrible unemployment which affects immigrant youth, we need to fight for a massive programme of public works, for decent grants for all students, and for social and cultural facilities in every suburb.

■ The immigrant communities must organise defence squads against racist attacks and police raids.

■ Down with chauvinism and calls for

"national independence" which tie the workers to the ruling class.

■ We must say clearly: unemployment is caused by the bosses, not by immigrants, illegal or not.

■ Instead of calling for immigration controls in order to protect the "national economy" (which is, of course, the bosses' economy!), we must fight for the opening of all frontiers—not only those inside Europe.

respect for bourgeois law and order. It is after all this order from which they take their profits.

They will refuse to support decisive physical action against the FN. They are useless as allies. To create a movement which depends on their participation is to condemn it to defeat from the start

On 1 May, Le Pen was able to demonstrate unhindered for the fifth year in succession. As Pouvoir Ouvrier explained in our leaflet, reproduced above, only physical confrontation will stop Le Pen. Each time that the mass organisations of the class—indeed the far left organisations—refuse to take up and lead this essential struggle, the FN takes another step towards its goal

We cannot say it too loudly or too often: Le Pen intends to create a mass fascist organisation. He has already completed the first stage. It is not too late to stop him. But for that, decisive action is necessary. Tomorrow may be too late. ■

An open letter to members of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear comrades,

less than two years after its 13th World Congress, the USFI is in deep disarray. The counter-revolutionary tide that claimed the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and brought Stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe to a full stop has seen all the USFI leaders' centrist schemas collapse. Rather than learn the lessons of their mistakes they stand poised to further demoralise thousands of subjective revolutionaries by their antics over the next year.

Only now, long after the Congress, has the press of the sections woken up to the central issues that concerned delegates at the Congress, so decentralised and disjointed is this International. Large sections of the membership are aghast at the latest developments and are looking for a revolutionary critique of the leadership's methods, tradition and programme. The League for a Revolutionary Communist International, as the USFI's most consistent critic, can provide it.

We have to go back at least to 1979 to trace the roots of the present political calamity of the USFI leadership. In 1979 at the 11th World Congress the USFI insisted that "revolution is once again knocking on the door of the imperialist mother countries." By the time of the 1985 12th Congress the leadership were in full retreat from this impressionistic perspective. But what did they replace it with?

Uncritical

By 1985 the USFI leadership had behind it six years of uncritical support for the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Despite the fact that the FSLN imprisoned Trotskyists and despite the fact that—in their own words—"the bourgeoisie... controls vital sectors of the economy of the country as a whole" the USFI dubbed the country a workers' state.

The consequences of this betrayal of Trotskyism were immense: siding with Sandinism against working class struggles. What other conclusion is possible if—as was agreed by the 13th Congress in 1991 (after the defeat of the FSLN by Chamorro)—"The Sandinista strategy for the taking of power was the only one possible in a country like Nicaragua".

It was but a short step from here to the argument that a revolutionary strategy consisted of targetting "future Sandinistas in several countries". The logical conclusion was to refuse to build Trotskyist parties or fight for the programme of permanent revolution. What was the point if "currents can emerge that no longer vacillate between reformism and revolution" and create workers' states?

Scouting short-cut victories everywhere the USFI urged the sections to push for closest possible unity with these petit bourgeois forces. In this quest, of course, "the united organisation's affiliation to the Fourth International should not constitute a principled precondition".

The sections duly obliged—and with what results! Half a dozen sections dissolved themselves in the years 1985-90. The European sections reported a drop in membership of 25%. In Peru, Bolivia and New Zealand, to all intents and purposes, the sections have collapsed, whilst the Swedish section is preparing to adopt a "minimum-maximum" programme! In Britain, entristism has led to a series of strategic political concessions to the reformists without bringing new recruits. The USFI supporters in Brazil's Workers' Party (PT) even condoned the expulsion of other Trotskyists from the PT at its last Congress!

We see the same disastrous results when we look at the USFI's reaction to the terminal crisis of Sta-

linism. All Trotskyists under-estimated the deeply reactionary effect that the rule of the Soviet bureaucracy had upon the Soviet working class and the obstacles this placed in the way of building a revolutionary socialist organisation. But the USFI leaders have compounded this difficulty by a thoroughly wrong strategy of party building. Your leaders have searched in vain for a movement to dissolve into, betting first on the intellectuals around Kagarlitsky, then sections of the CPSU around Buzgalin, before orienting to a rag-bag of born-again Mensheviks in the "Workers Party".

At the heart of these zig-zags has been a consistent refusal to raise the programme of the political revolution, preferring instead to join with these "recomposing forces" to "deepen glasnost".

The programme of political revolution—as a programme to seize state power through workers' councils—was abandoned by the USFI, to be replaced with a strategy of mass participation in the process of reform led by a wing of the bureaucracy. Consequently, as we predicted, the 13th Congress's "decision" to build a section in the USSR has led nowhere. It was a sop to the opposition, a verbal gesture which cost nothing and meant less. Now the USFI believes the socialist project has been so discredited that there is nothing to do but pander to the illusions of decentralising, semi-anarchistic, self-management projects, and to wait patiently for the tide of history to turn our way again.

This opportunism is only the latest manifestation of the liquidationist method pursued by all the major fragments of the Fourth International since the late 1940s. In 1948 Tito was seen as being a centrist, who, "under the pressure of the masses", turned Yugoslavia into a workers' state which had no need of political revolution. In Bolivia, during the 1952 revolution, the International and its section supported the bourgeois nationalist MNR government—just like Stalin, Kamenov and other "old Bolsheviks" who supported the Provisional Government before Lenin's return in 1917.

In the 1950s, in common with all the fragments of the Fourth International, the predecessors of today's USFI sections burrowed away in Stalinist, social democratic or bourgeois nationalist organisations, reducing the world public face of the International to a few dozen militants.

Opportunism

In the late 1960s this opportunism took on an ultra-left form when the USFI leaders adapted to guerrillaists in Latin America, sending hundreds of members to their deaths in a fruitless "armed struggle". A decade later the USFI's Latin American comrades were obliged to tail the Sandinistas and their brethren without a word of criticism. In Britain the section veered from ultra-left rejection of the Labour Party, when the students of '68 appeared to have rejected reformism, to a right centrist entryism when that same generation of militants moved to the right. The British section then fragmented over the question of which section of the Labour left had to be uncritically tailed.

Today's crisis shows signs of being even greater than those that have rocked the USFI in the past, at the time of Pablo's split (1965), the faction fight with the SWP-US (1969-1977) or the Moreno split (1979). Virtually every section which still has a viable internal life is in the midst of ferocious debate.

In recent months the two largest sections, the French LCR and the Mexican PRT, have shown signs of slipping into terminal crises. Such is the fragility of the USFI that the col-

USFI in crisis



Ernest Mandel

lapse of these two organisations could send the International into a political, moral and financial collapse.

With an ageing and declining membership, the LCR is preparing to dissolve itself—if given the chance—into a new nationalist, left reformist grouping to be set up next year by ex-Defence Minister Chevènement. The LCR leadership has made it clear that it is in favour of an organisation which is "programmatically non-delimited"; that is, they will not be fighting for even their centrist version of "Trotskyism".

In Mexico the 3,000-strong PRT has repeatedly toyed with the radical bourgeois nationalists and has paid

deepen its errors?

Many genuine fighters for Trotskyism in the USFI are deceived by the state of semi-permanent oppositions to the leadership, a product of the federalism and cliquishness that permeates the USFI. It seems to hold out the prospect of regeneration. After all, what alternative is there, they ask, given the rotten alternatives of Morenoism, and the IC tradition that has spawned Healy and Lambert?

But the oppositions are paper tigers. None of them go to the heart of the problem.

The Matti tendency in the French LCR have tried to don the mantle of the "orthodox" opposition. What frauds! With the support of the majority of the British section they have pursued a consistently rightist orientation, notably since the collapse of Stalinism and the bourgeoisie's ideological offensive, going so far as to argue that the revolutionary programme can be reduced to the question of "democracy".

Socialist Action (US), one of the USFI's three groups in the USA, has called for a change in the USFI leadership, and has rejected the majority argument that Nicaragua was a workers' state. But they agree that the FSLN were "practical revolutionaries" and they deliberately avoid calling for political revolution in Cuba.

At the 13th Congress a Left Tendency was organised by supporters of the International Trotskyist Committee. While making a number of correct criticisms of the USFI leadership the Left Tendency was marked by many of the weaknesses of its predecessor, the TILC. At root these involve the idea that the 1938 Transitional Programme is an adequate basis for revolutionary unity today, and that there is something unique about "Trotskyist" centrism which prevents it from passing into the camp of the class enemy. For us the Fourth International (FI) collapsed politically in 1951, and organisationally into a series of centrist international tendencies after that. But the Left Tendency believes that, "Today the FI is living, but it lives through the life of its different organisationally separated factions".

To the "deep glasnost" advocated

by Mandel and Samary, this current has counterposed the programme of political revolution. But in response to the August coup in the USSR it joined the "if only" brigade within Trotskyist centrism; if only sections of workers had allied themselves with the putsch "Trotskyists should have allied with them".

After failing to declare itself a faction before the 13th Congress, the Left Tendency boldly chose to declare one afterwards—once the opportunity to challenge Mandel and co for leadership had disappeared. The basis of the Faction was the same timeless and inadequate "Ten Points" on which the old TILC was founded. Now, however, it is reported that the Faction has become a Tendency once again—having attracted to it various and heterogeneous left critics of Mandelism.

Its major criticism of the LRCI is that it "subordinates the struggle for the FI to their national perspectives and adopts a sectarian attitude of building their own little organisations and disdaining other Trotskyist forces". In fact the opposite is true. The LRCI has subordinated the perspectives of its biggest organisations, in Britain and Austria, to the task of building and sustaining sections in Latin America and the Stalinist states. For refusing to sink ourselves into the stagnant USFI sections we make no apology. But every genuine leftward moving tendency has found the LRCI eager to discuss and clarify the possibility of revolutionary regroupment. Far from disdaining other Trotskyist forces we have built our international organisation through a painstaking regroupment process with left tendencies emerging from the centrist organisations.

Method

None of the USFI tendencies and factions represents a principled opposition to the USFI leadership. They all share the same fundamental centrist method. The leadership cannot be reformed. They made the organisation the way it is; the USFI expresses their politics. They are, of course, capable of making a "left" turn and adapting themselves to many of the criticisms of the oppositions without abandoning their essential method. Waiting for another Congress will do nothing to halt the slide. Genuine oppositionists need to fight now for a revolutionary programme. Loyalty to the USFI leadership should not be higher than the need to intervene now around a revolutionary programme in these swiftly changing times.

Where will you find this programme? In the pages of Lenin and Trotsky? That is a good start, but you will not find many direct answers to the current crisis of Stalinism in the pages of the Transitional Programme. Nobody within the USFI can offer you the answer you need. The LRCI offers those in the USFI repelled by the centrist of its leaders the chance to recommit themselves to genuine Trotskyism. Join with us in common action, put our programme to the test of struggle—enter into our ranks.■

- For a full account of the degeneration of the Fourth International after the war read: *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the tasks of Trotskyists Today*, available from Workers Power price £6 (inc P&P)

- Copies of this article are available in French, Spanish and German

Glossary:

USFI: United Secretariat of the Fourth International; created in 1963 by a fusion of Pablo and Mandel's International Secretariat with the American SWP

PRT: Revolutionary Workers' Party, Mexico, USFI section

LCR: Revolutionary Communist League, USFI section in France

FSLN: Sandinista National Liberation Front

TILC: Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, formed in 1979 by the British WSL, the Italian GBL, etc. Collapsed over differences on Malvinas War in 1982

the price. In 1989 a minority around Adolfo Gilly split to support Cuauhtemoc Cardenas in the presidential elections. Now a large part of the PRT's large peasant sector has gone over to the bourgeois nationalists, leading to a profound disorientation in the organisation.

Further crises are inevitable. Incredibly, the USFI insisted at the Congress that Nicaragua remained a workers' state because the agreement with Chamorro left the Sandinistas in control of the armed forces and thus the "revolutionary state has not been dismantled". But now this comforting illusion too is being destroyed. What conclusion will the USFI draw from this wonderful leadership voluntarily giving up real power? How will it

THE NICARAGUAN counter-revolution is at a turning point. In June the right wing of the ruling UNO party, in concert with Washington, decided to turn the screws on the Nicaraguan President, Violetta Chamorro.

The US Congress suspended around \$100 million of its aid programme and demanded a radical revision of the *concertación* (accord). This was the agreement reached two years ago between the defeated Sandinistas (FSLN) and the centre faction of the new UNO government.

Such a confrontation was predictable. It flows from an elementary Marxist understanding of the course of revolutions and counter-revolutions. In the first phase of the counter-revolutionary advance the victorious party co-opts the defeated enemy (or a faction of it) in order to consolidate itself and preempt greater opposition.

Later, the next stage of the counter-revolution, more thoroughgoing than the first, finds it necessary to discard the compromises of the first period. Discredited and weakened in the eyes of its supporters by its surrenders to the enemy, the opposition no longer has the power to mount a come back and is pushed aside.

Throughout the twentieth century this pattern has been repeated. It is being played out today in Nicaragua. In 1990 after its traumatic defeat, the FSLN gave up governmental office. It argued that it was necessary to respect the rules of bourgeois democracy, and that anyway the UNO would be forced to govern on the basis of the constitution drawn up by the FSLN when in power. This would ensure the defence of the main gains of the revolution, while the FSLN would prepare its return to power through the ballot box in 1996.

An even stronger guarantee was that the FSLN—in agreement with Chamorro—would stay in command of the police and other armed forces. It would also remain the largest political party with the strongest roots in civil society and thus be capable of regenerating civil resistance to the worst effects of UNO's policies.

Stabilisation

Nevertheless, the counter-revolution has made great advances under this arrangement, despite the FSLN's reassurances. Through what the central bank governor called "the most remarkable stabilisation in all Latin America" the UNO brought inflation down from more than 7,000% p.a. to less than 2% in the first half of 1992. The state budget is in surplus and the dollar/cordoba exchange rate has been stable for over a year. The privatisation of state enterprises has started. The reintegration of the economy into the world market has proceeded apace.

Naturally, the social costs of this "stabilisation" have been borne overwhelmingly by the workers and poorer peasants; those who brought the FSLN to power and looked to it for protection after 1990. State subsidies to industries and credit to small farmers have been withdrawn. Consequently, unemployment is in excess of 60%.

More than half of all families do not have enough money to buy basic necessities. Legal titles to land promised by UNO have not been forthcoming and factories and land have been returned to capitalist owners. Social and welfare provision, especially health care, has been radically curtailed. In short,



"Give us land and guns . . .": now the Sandinistas' land reforms are being torn up and the guns taken away

NICARAGUA

New phase of counter-revolution

BY KEITH HARVEY

the conditions of the Nicaraguan workers and poor peasants have been thrown back years if not decades.

Perhaps most decisively, the armed popular masses have to a large extent been disarmed. Many weapons have been handed in, while 20,000 FSLN army personnel have been demobbed.

Throughout this phase the FSLN has been loyal—not to its supporters but to Chamorro. It has made it clear that despite the suffering and hardship, "armed struggle can be justified to fight a dictatorship and foreign invasion, but not to demand jobs or land".

Whenever strikes or land occupations have broken out the FSLN has been sent in to mediate, conciliate and defuse. Recently, the FSLN used its power to stop a big occupation of the Pamares refinery. Its strategic aim remains as before; to negotiate with the UNO government to soften the impact of the neo-liberalist policy where possible, and to demobilise the resistance when necessary.

This spring and summer signs emerged that growing numbers of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie (and Washington) now believe that the limits of what can be achieved under the terms of the *concertación* have all but been reached.

Recession

The economy has stabilised but at the cost of recession. In the west of the country cotton production has all but collapsed. Regeneration on the basis of integration into the world capitalist market for a country like Nicaragua demands considerable foreign investment and further drastic reduction of wage costs. But here is the problem. None of this is guaranteed while the FSLN continues to exercise a monopoly of power over the armed forces.

There is no doubt that their armed power has been used to deepen capitalist exploitation in Nicaragua for the last two years. Yet while Humberto Ortega remains in charge the bosses will not

rest easy in their beds.

They realise that the army will need to be deployed more and more ruthlessly against the people protesting against unemployment, starvation wages and lack of land, even against the 26,000 "reventos" (armed mixed units of ex-contras and ex-FSLN fighters fighting in the countryside for land, credits and jobs). The instances of provincial towns being taken over for days, of highways being obstructed, of land occupations, are mounting. Conciliation and defusing them may not be enough.

Loyalty

To put the police and army into conflict with these movements the counter-revolution needs to be able to count on its utter loyalty. The head of the right wing of the UNO—Assembly President, Alfredo César—is mounting a campaign, with US support, to resolve this residual element of dual power in the state apparatus.

His first target was the popular FSLN chief of the police force, Rene Vivas. The FSLN supervised police were renowned (uniquely in Latin America) for their relative honesty. On 6 July Chamorro bowed to pressure and demanded Vivas' resignation. Daniel Ortega threatened an armed uprising if he was sacked. In early August he was sacked and no uprising happened.

This determination of the right to tear up the *concertación* has polarised opinion within the ruling cadres of the FSLN. Daniel Ortega is given to rhetorical threats against the government. Meanwhile, his brother Humberto, head of the army (and next in line for the chop), has taken the offensive; not against the UNO but against the FSLN dissidents! In June he provocatively awarded an army valor medal to an ex-contras and defended himself against the outcry by saying it was necessary to deliver an "electric shock" to the masses, to wake them up to the new realities.

The hope for pushing the UNO

offensive back lies with the organisations of workers and peasants. The 1979 revolution gave an enormous boost to the self-organisation of the workers. In 1979 only 5% of workers were organised and by 1984 this had mushroomed to 55% in 1,100 unions. Well over 90% of these were affiliated to the FSLN in six federations, the most important of which was the CTS.

But the experience of the trade unions under FSLN rule was mixed. On the one hand the FSLN gave the unions considerable legal rights, including an institutionalised role in enterprise management. They also benefitted from the literacy campaigns and the improvements in health. But on the other hand the unions were increasingly subordinated to the FSLN government and its priorities; everything was subordinated to the war against the contras.

The outcome, especially after 1985, was dire for the living standards of the masses: the buying power of wages plummeted 90% in ten years. Moreover, non-FSLN trade unions were harassed and denied recognition for most of the time.

The CTS has distanced itself somewhat from the FSLN since the elections and this is one reason that UNO has not to date been successful in destroying trade un-

ion militancy.

First of all, the six federations joined up into the National Workers Front (FNT), democracy increased within the unions and elections for new leaderships were held.

Secondly, there was an explosion of strikes to defend the gains of the revolution from UNO attack; in the two months alone between the elections and the formal hand over of power there were 188 strikes—as many as in the previous ten years!

Moreover, the unions' demands displayed a high level of political consciousness, going beyond wages and jobs to reassert their front line role in being consulted about the fate of the nation and the direction of future government policy.

In 1990 there were two big general strikes against UNO policy. The first by the UNE—the government workers' union—was for five days. The second, a month later by many different sectors, paralysed the country and brought a level of mobilisation to Managua that was reminiscent of 1979. Agreements were reached that favoured the workers, even though the unions did not win everything they struck for.

But it soon became clear that these strikes during 1990 were being used by the FSLN leadership to strengthen its position in relation to the UNO government. The *concertación* with the UNO severely weakened the unions who all agreed to a "ceasefire" on major strikes during the transition period. Yet, as one report in *Latin American Press* last month put it:

"The government continued to fire thousands in the state sector and refused to increase wages and honour collective bargaining agreements . . . The national project is proving a disaster for Nicaraguan workers." (26.3.92)

This agreement squandered the best chance the unions had for overturning the government. In recent months sugar workers, bank workers and other have been on strike and a protest march against unemployment and hunger occurred.

But the fight is at a lower level than two years ago. The demands of the strikes are defensive: for 25% of the shares in privatised industries to be given to the workers; for the right to have proper negotiations and not unilateral decisions taken over their heads; for an end to real wage erosion and so on.

The danger for the Nicaraguan workers is that they will not break politically from the FSLN leadership of these unions. Already, there are cold splits within the FSLN with more rightists and pro-UNO factions becoming bolder in their demands for an open reconciliation with the UNO. The leadership of the FSLN in the FNT is a real roadblock.

The Nicaraguan workers and peasants must transcend the politics of Sandinism and embrace the programme of Trotskyism before the counter-revolution completes its course. ■

- **Break the FSLN-UNO accord!**
- **Land to those who work it and to the landless! No return to landlords! Give legal titles to the land now! Occupy idle land! Workers' control of agribusinesses!**
- **State credits for small farmers not the agribusinesses!**
- **Share the work among those who need it! Full minimum living wage or benefits!**
- **Stop privatisation! Re-nationalise all enterprises under workers' control!**
- **For strikes and occupations of threatened enterprises! Nationalise all banks!**
- **For a workers' and poor peasants' government based on councils of action. Arm the people!**
- **For an emergency economic plan!**
- **For international solidarity aid! For an international labour movement campaign for aid without strings and for favourable commercial contracts for Nicaraguan produce!**

Qina Msebenzi

Bi-Monthly Leninist/Trotskyist Newspaper March/April 1992 No. 2. R1.00

CODESA: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?



A reply to Workers Power

THE ARTICLE in the July issue of *Workers Power* could only be described as a concoction aimed essentially at demonstrating—as is climactically asserted in the last sentence—that we definitively qualify for the label of “centrist”. It is written by someone who has not taken the trouble to read closely the publications he so scathingly dismisses. Sentences are quoted out of context, individual articles are treated as complete programmatic pieces—all in pursuit of proving our opportunism and centrism. It is hard to see how the LRCI/Workers Power leadership imagined that such a piece could have constructive results. In this response, space permits us concentrate on only three key assertions made by McKee.

“Is it the case that the struggle for a constituent assembly necessarily represents ‘the shortest route to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat?’”, he asks.

Because we apparently believe the answer to this question is “yes”, we are condemned to “use the constituent assembly slogan in a muddled and opportunist fashion”. The question itself is an attempt to distort our position. We have never argued that it “necessarily” represents the shortest route.

Route

Our view that the struggle for the constituent assembly is the shortest route to the proletarian dictatorship is consciously qualified. In the quotation that is attacked by McKee we specify that this is “at present our central political emphasis . . .”, and that a struggle “on this basis now” is the shortest route. This is to anticipate that later, in the course of actual development, our emphasis would change. In other words, the constitutional path might be superseded by an immediate struggle for power. In South Africa this is unlikely in the short to medium term, not least of all because of the absence of a revolutionary party.

Does the LRCI/Workers Power know of a shorter route?

McKee also says that our call for defence units, for the intensification of mass action and for the masses to form their own organs of power, is “left at the level of abstraction rather than integrated with democratic demands in a concrete transitional programme”. He goes on to assert that by *Qina Msebenzi* No2 (QM), “the problem [of leaving things at the level of the abstract] is resolved . . . for the worse”. We are accused of advancing a “a hybrid of the ‘workers’ control’ demands of the left of COSATU and some transitional demands gutted of their revolutionary content”.

It is only by studiously ignoring everything else written in the two issues of QM, and the other two publications he quotes from, that makes him bold enough to submit



Moses Mayekiso

the charges.

The assertion about defence units is quite extraordinary, considering that in all our publications we have addressed this question, and the first issue of QM has two pieces on the subject.

We also reject the idea that we have failed to develop an integrated programme of action. Our perspective is that the unmasking of bourgeois democracy and the demonstration of the need for soviet democracy will occur in the course of fighting for 100% democracy and a democratic constituent assembly convened by the masses. For us the fight for a constituent assembly is a fight for all the political and economic demands of the masses to be heard. The constituent assembly call is aimed at drawing the masses into full political life around these demands. The struggle for basic defence against Inkatha and the state security forces poses directly the question of what is needed to guarantee free and fair elections and who can enforce them. Rampant unemployment, food inflation, the bosses’ resistance to wage increases, deterioration of the living standards of the masses—these are all burning questions for the working class and we struggle for them to be raised in a revolutionary way as part of a campaign for the constituent assembly. In short, we put forward a system of demands—democratic, immediate economic and transitional.

Attack

In his critique of our “hybrid”, “syndicalist” and “centrist” programme, McKee also points to “the glaring omissions” which prove his charge: no call for expropriation of factories, no call for factory committees, no call for armed defence in the factories and townships, no call for “factory committees of struggle” to be linked to “soviet-type organisations”. However, this attack on the general character of our politics is derived from the scrutiny of one article on revolutionary trade unionism. The piece was not meant to be a full programme of action, though it raises the need for one, describes the method of such a pro-

Revolutionary tactics in South Africa

THE JULY issue of *Workers Power* (157) carried a review and polemic of a new South African magazine *Qina Msebenzi* (QM). In this issue we pursue the debate. Below **Ben Jordan** of QM replies to our critique and, opposite **John McKee** responds.

Since the original article was written South Africa has been rocked by a powerful general strike on 3 and 4 August. Over four million stopped work in protest at the Boipatong massacre and state sponsored violence, as part of the mass action campaign against the nationalists attempts to sabotage a genuinely democratic constituent assembly. Despite the enormous militancy shown by the black workers of South Africa, the ANC and the leadership of COSATU are well on the way to squandering the enormous sense of outrage that swept the country following Boipatong. Instead of building on the spontaneous stayaway in the Vaal region and calling for an immediate nationwide general

strike to bring down the murderous Nationalist regime, they prevaricated. They spent their time in negotiations with the employers’ organisations to get them to “support” the strike. The threatened indefinite strike to bring down the government became, predictably, a two day protest strike designed to force De Klerk to make some concessions. Already the ANC is back in discussions about putting CODESA, the formal negotiating body which the ANC withdrew from after the massacre, back on the road. The Nationalists’ cosmetic changes to the white general staff of the police force are designed to make it easier for Mandela to sell a return to CODESA to the black masses.

In these circumstances the debate on the left about slogans in relation to CODESA and negotiations, the constituent assembly slogan and the fight for a revolutionary workers’ government remain crucial.

gramme and sets out some key slogans. Other than denouncing these “omissions” we do not know what McKee thinks of the rest of the article. Is our centrist vacillation evident in one single article, or do we swing from article to article? If McKee bothered to read what he condemns he would see that every one of these “omissions” is raised in both QM 1 and QM 2.

Embryos

We plead guilty to the charge that we pose “the need for the masses to form organs of power” in an abstract way. But only because given the present stage of development we do not think this can be posed in any other way. Committees of action are embryos of such organs but nothing more. At the moment these committees do not even exist. We encourage their formation whenever the opportunity arises but we cannot jump over the actual development of the working class. At present not even the militant vanguard is ready to do what McKee implies must be done now; pose the question of the formation of “organs of power” in a concrete way. Under present circumstances to attempt to do so would be the height of sectarian foolishness and would deserve the ridicule and contempt of workers.

McKee also charges that by advocating the tactic of COSATU entering CODESA QM simply “provides a left cover for the leadership of COSATU and sows illusions in CODESA”.

The adoption of the tactic apparently stems directly from our position that the struggle for democratic rights is the “shortest route” to workers’ power. Having exposed the hollowness of McKee’s claim, the attempted amalgam falls flat on its face.

We do not think that a call for entry into CODESA was unprincipled. It is possible to argue that



but how to win it?

given the LRCI’s own analysis of the situation it believes a different tactic was necessary; but not that by definition the tactic we proposed was unprincipled and opportunist.

In South Africa, until the events of July and early August there has been a terrible political recession and disintegration within the mass movement. Organised workers in the trade unions, though undefeated, have suffered setback after setback. The ANC/SACP/COSATU leadership has gone out of its way to divorce “political” questions from “economic” ones. Discontent within the unions has grown around a number of questions. Any number of COSATU resolutions reflect the pressure of militant workers who hate capitalism and want socialism. But a bureaucratic leadership controls the unions and holds back and confuses the militant workers; identification with the ANC continues to be strong and constitutionalist illusions remain powerful.

COSATU long ago applied to participate in CODESA to present the

demands of the workers. This was opposed by the ANC and Stalinist union leaders on the grounds that the ANC and SACP could adequately do the job. The proposal was thus motivated by a certain kind of suspicion of both the ANC and the SACP. Inside CODESA the COSATU proposal was simply ignored. Meanwhile discussion in COSATU continued and was given impetus as militant workers began to see through the circus of CODESA and the ANC’s readiness to make concession after concession. Given this growing discontent and distrust on the part of a section of workers and a polarisation within COSATU between the rubber-stamping apologists for the ANC and SACP and the more critical elements, we decided to give critical support to the former. But we specified the basis for COSATU going to CODESA and reiterated our complete rejection of negotiations, our belief that CODESA was a reactionary fraud, that the ANC should break from CODESA and



De Klerk

that at this point only through a concerted and consistent struggle for a democratic constituent assembly convened by the fighting masses themselves could their aspirations be advanced.

On the question of COSATU's presence in CODESA, the leadership of COSATU itself was split. On the "left" were leaders like Moses Mayekiso who clearly were under pressure from militant rank and file workers and shop stewards. The tactic of critical support was not only aimed at opening up the fissures between ANC-SACP and COSATU and the "left" and "right" within COSATU. It was also to free workers from the faith they have in "left" leaders who want COSATU to participate in CODESA for reformist syndicalist reasons. We have no doubt that such leaders would refuse to take up the call for COSATU attendance of CODESA on the basis that we proposed; all the better to expose them before those workers who still have faith in them and their reformist politics.

The tactic involved certain dangers but Marxists are not in the business of playing safe. Our overall approach is to proceed with boldness and tactical flexibility, on the basis of sure principles and a correct programme. No ticking off on the part of the LRCI/Workers Power, whose "Bolshevik" hardness is but the reverse side of sectarian stupidity, will make us proceed otherwise.

Doubt

In conclusion, we do not doubt that some of the formulations in *QM* are insufficiently spelt out. However, we believe that the struggle for greater theoretical precision and political clarity is an ongoing one. We have not descended from heaven as saviours of humanity. The Comrades for a Workers' Government, which produces *QM*, is a young organisation (although its origins go back over a period of fifteen years) which has emerged openly in the period of De Klerk's *glasnost* and the unbanning of political organisations. It has produced but three issues of a new publication. It has constituted itself in the heat and fire of the South African class struggle. Its relatively recent relations with the LTT have been vital to its political development, especially in the embracing of a genuinely internationalist politics.

We are not frightened of criticism or polemics but we think that the LRCI/Workers Power's method is fundamentally flawed. It is born of sectarian impatience and experience of the class struggle that is confined largely to western imperialist countries. If its polemic against us is anything to go by, then we are afraid that the LRCI/Workers Power leadership will increasingly obstruct, rather than assist, the vital task of the revolutionary regroupment of Trotskyists worldwide. ■

The comrades of Qina Msebenzi (*QM*) argue that we have distorted their positions. In the July issue of *Workers Power* (*WP*) we argued that *QM* was developing its perspective—that the struggle for a revolutionary democratic constituent assembly was the "shortest route" to the dictatorship of the proletariat in South Africa—in an opportunist direction. We argued that, far from "unmasking" bourgeois democracy and demonstrating the need for soviet democracy, they were in danger of doing the opposite.

Were we unfair, as the comrades suggest, in concentrating too much on one article on "revolutionary trades unionism" and did we ignore many other articles and distort their positions?

It is true that many individual articles in *QM* correctly raise the need for self-defence squads, others develop plans of action for stopping retrenchments (redundancies), using transitional demands such as expropriation without compensation, programmes of public works etc.

We did not claim that the comrades never addressed these questions in their publications. What we said was that they were "left at the level of abstraction rather than integrated with democratic demands in a concrete transitional programme" (*WP* 157).

The importance of the article on revolutionary trade unionism was that it was the only article that attempted to develop *QM*'s full position.

It claimed to present "a fighting programme for the trade unions" which dealt not only with economic issues but the Constituent Assembly, the workers' government etc.

Burning

The development of an action programme is a burning necessity in South Africa—not just because of the immediate upsurge in the struggle. For whole periods the most militant economic struggles of the black trade unions are separated off by the union leaders from the struggle for democracy and to destroy the De Klerk regime. Often they are separated in the minds of the workers too. It is vital that Trotskyists are able to develop a programme of action that can link these struggles together strategically, into a struggle for power.

The article introduces its programme by saying just this:

"We must have a set of demands and a programme of action which take the daily struggles of the workers and unite them onto a path of revolution, what Trotsky called *transitional demands*."

If this is the case it seems a little strange that the comrades should cry "foul" when we take up weaknesses in this programme. We acknowledge that they have dealt with these issues elsewhere in a general and abstract sense, but the point is that *QM* failed to raise them, or raise them incorrectly, in their only document (up to July) that could be called an action programme.

It is not surprising that it is precisely here, where *QM* attempts to develop elements of the programme of permanent revolution for South Africa, that weaknesses in its positions are glaringly revealed.

Why? Because here it is necessary to develop a programme which relates to the immediate struggles of workers and the urban and rural masses, both economic and political, to develop both democratic and transitional demands which culminate in answering the most crucial question facing the masses: what sort of government, carrying out what kind of programme can resolve the crisis in South Africa?

It was not just that this programmatic article "left out" key demands such as the need for workers' defence squads as a means to the building of a workers' militia, expropriation of the capitalist industries, the development of factory and community based action councils as soviet-type organisations etc.

It was of course bad enough that these did not figure in a programme for the unions. Far more serious was the fact that it posed the workers' government slogan in a way that

workers power

In or out of CODESA?

failed to link it to the question of arming the workers, basing itself on soviet-type organs etc.

Instead *QM* declared, "A genuine constituent assembly is a step towards such a government". As we pointed out in our article; to use the slogan in such a way, without linking it there and then to the question of arming the workers organised in soviet-type organisations is to "confuse bourgeois democracy and the proletarian dictatorship".

The reason is plain. A workers' majority gained in any parliamentary body without being able to base itself on armed militia and soviet-type bodies will be unable to act as a revolutionary workers' government. Elected within the framework of an intact and fully armed bourgeois state such a workers' majority would immediately have to call forth revolutionary working class organisations or become a reformist, bourgeois workers' government.

If it was the case that this was just one bad article, where "some of the formulations are insufficiently spelt out", produced by a "young organisation" then we will only be too pleased to see these corrected.

Workers Power and other sections of the LRCI are not immune from producing bad or inadequate articles on occasion. Where we think we were wrong or produced an inadequate formulation we correct it and say so openly in our press. Claims to infallibility we leave to churches and political sects.

But no corrections have appeared in *QM* so we can only assume the comrades stand by the positions in that article. And *QM*'s reply remains completely silent on the erroneous formulations on the constituent assembly and workers' government. We await an answer with interest.

In defending its position of calling on COSATU to enter CODESA, *QM* only confirms another unanswered part of our criticism. In fact this question is a very important one. By adopting this very wrong position, *QM* is adapting to the reformist left in COSATU. CODESA, the body domi-

nated by the Nationalists and the ANC, is the vehicle through which the struggle of the black masses is being sold out. It is the body in which the ANC was making a series of surrenders to De Klerk. These surrenders would ensure that the black majority could not have the power to change anything fundamental in South African society. It is a body designed to hog-tie the constituent assembly with an enshrined veto held by the small white minority.

QM knows this and has always argued that the ANC should break with CODESA. But it wants to have its cake and eat it.

The "left" of COSATU, Moses Mayekiso etc, want to participate in CODESA, as the comrades of *QM* say, for "reformist syndicalist reasons". They want to show workers who are wary of what concessions the ANC are making in CODESA that "their" representatives are present. They want to allay the suspicions of these workers and lead them into the sell out.

Condemn

If we condemn the bourgeois nationalists of the ANC for entering this body and for selling out their own democratic demands (majority rule, one person one vote etc) how much more so should we oppose the entry of the millions strong workers unions from following the same path.

Far from supporting the entry revolutionaries in South Africa should be demanding that the trade unions do everything in their power to undermine it, to break it up.

In the unions and the townships revolutionaries should counterpose to CODESA a genuinely democratic constituent assembly without restrictions or vetoes. Giving "critical support" to the demands of the left of COSATU on this question is not "exposing" the left leaders but confusing workers on the nature of CODESA. It is not a "bold" tactic. It is a thoroughly dangerous one.

It also puts *QM* in the ridiculous position of arguing that the ANC

should walk out of CODESA at the same time that COSATU should walk in! *QM* attempts to square the circle by saying the only purpose of COSATU going in should be to get the ANC out! But this is worse when one knows that the reason the left in COSATU wants to go in is to participate in the sell out negotiations, not to wreck them.

Real life, with embarrassing swiftness, exposed the bankruptcy of this "bold" tactic. *QM* comrades ended up selling a journal in South Africa calling for COSATU to join CODESA when even the ANC itself had been forced to walk out (albeit only temporarily)!

And in the very next issue of *QM*, No3, the whole question just disappears without explanation or argument. In it the "terrible recession and disintegration within the mass movement" which they used to justify this position has suddenly become a "pre-revolutionary situation".

Comrade Jordan seems to take offence at the frankness of our polemic. He declares that no "ticking off" from the LRCI/Workers Power will make them proceed differently. He says that our criticisms are born of "sectarian impatience" and an experience of the class struggle "confined largely to Western imperialist countries".

Virtues

Our frankness and when necessary our sharpness are the result neither of arrogance or impatience. Our bluntness stems from taking the tactics and the strategy of the struggle in South Africa in deadly earnest. Indeed in a pre-revolutionary situation we would hardly think "patience" was the most revolutionary of virtues.

If the LRCI/Workers Power sees a new group of comrades trying to develop an organisation and programme for the South African revolution it is duty bound to make its criticisms known. Especially where it concerns a group of comrades who have had lengthy discussions with us over several years on precisely these questions.

It is, to us, the heart of real internationalism to treat a struggle in South Africa at least as seriously as one in Britain. Diplomatic internationalism, believing that only comrades from a particular country "understand its reality", has nothing in common with the Leninist or the Trotskyist attitude.

We suspect that the LRCI's experience of the class struggle in the semi-colonial world is at least as extensive as the LTT's, the organisation *QM* sympathises with. Half our sections are in semi-colonial countries. Some of our Irish and Chilean comrades have two decades of experience of the problems of relating revolutionary democratic demands to class demands, in conditions of repression, dictatorship etc.

Indeed many of the positions being argued here are a direct result of the discussions and positions developed with our Peruvian and Bolivian sections on very similar problems, the relationship between democratic and transitional demands, the use of the constituent assembly slogan, the workers' government etc.

Last but not least we did not write the article in order to label the comrades as centrists. We said that the political line of the first two issues of *QM* has "done little more than contribute to the centrist confusion on the South African left". We do not write the comrades off as hardened or inveterate centrists. We do not rush to stick labels on anybody. But we do believe that the comrades are not waging a clear or consistent struggle against centrism or left reformism and nationalism. At root we think this is demonstrated by their evasion of the task of drawing up a rounded action programme for South Africa. It is shown too in their reluctance to join in the task of re-elaborating a revolutionary transitional programme for a new Leninist-Trotskyist International. We hope the *QM* comrades will come to recognise that honest, even sharp, polemic and argument never "obstructs" the process of revolutionary regroupment. Such regroupment is impossible without it. ■



South African Stalinists will not lead fight for socialism.

“WE'D LIKE to help all the refugees, wherever they are from”, says Josip Esterhajer, of the Croatian Government's Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees. “But with our limited resources, some prioritisation needs to take place. The international media's attention has been focused on Bosnia, but we have over 265,000 Croatian displaced people to think of first. After all, this is their country.”

Esterhajer sums up the feelings of many in Croatia, although he omits to add that the Croatian government's “limited resources” have recently also been the main source of funding for Dr Franjo Tudjman's private airplane and Hungarian hunting lodge—in short, for the Croatian President's *apparatchik* lifestyle (old habits die hard). Tudjman's re-election on 2 August was preceded by a glitzy multimedia electoral campaign, allegedly costing around DM4 million, also plundered from the Croatian government's cash-starved coffers.

Quite apart from the President's expensive maintenance, the Croatian government's financial situation is dire, with the war remaining the first avowed priority. Military supplies are mainly purchased on the international arms market, with Germany at the top of the death trade league; and payment for such deals has to be made in hard currency, since the Croatian dinar devalues by around 20% every month. Under such circumstances, the various recent contradictory stories regarding the closing of Croatia's borders to Bosnian refugees appear to be little more than a centrally directed effort to highlight Croatia's financial difficulties, according to Dr Izet Aganovic, the Bosnian government's *chargé d'affaires* for refugee matters.

Official figures from the Croatian government show that on 2 July 331,700 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina were being cared for in Croatia, including those in transit to other countries. In Zagreb alone, there are more than 83,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and 65,000 Croatian displaced people (mainly from the flattened cities of Eastern Slavonia), most of whom are housed in private accommodation, either with friends and relatives or billeted by the government into Croatian homes. However, for around 7,000 people in Zagreb, “home” is the “Martinovka” sports hall, the “Spansko”, “Tempo” and “Industrogadja” workers' barracks, some makeshift accommodation inside the Croatian Army barracks or the Hotel “International”, where the contrast between the Spartan conditions endured by the refugees from Vukovar and the luxury enjoyed by the fee-paying West European and UN Protection Force guests is startling; and it is within this context that at least some of the hostility felt by many in Croatia towards the EC and the UN needs to be placed.

There is no doubt that individual

EYEWITNESS YUGOSLAVIA

Racism, slaughter and misery

Jack Duretz of Yugofax visited Croatia last month. His account reveals ethnic cleansing, violent slaughter, poverty and misery on all sides, and throws new light on the role of UN “peacekeepers”. A shorter version of this article originally appeared in Yugofax

militia leaders may have their own political reasons for discrediting the work of the UN, and a lot of anti-UN propaganda in Croatia actually originates from extreme nationalist circles. However, at a time of war and deprivation for hundreds of thousands of people, it can be maddening to see UNPROFOR soldiers and EC monitors in their smart white uniforms, lounging around Zagreb's fashionable Tkalciceva area, spending in one evening enough US dollars or German marks to feed a family of four for one month (a doctor earns around 250 German marks per month in Croatia).

There are widespread claims that UNPROFOR soldiers are heavily involved in the black market provision of alcohol, cigarettes and even drugs. Whilst it was impossible to verify such claims, UN transport vehicles filled to the roof with alcohol could be seen leaving for one of the so-called “pink zones” (i.e. UN protected areas); and when their Danish crews were asked for permission to take photographs, we were told to leave in no uncertain terms. When off-duty, UNPROFOR soldiers (out of uniform) could also be seen at night in Zagreb's central Gajeva Street, busily negotiating with some of the many teenage prostitutes from Bosnia-Herzegovina, for whom working the streets can be preferable to the extreme conditions in the refugee camps.

It is in the camps and refugee “collection” centres that the full human tragedy of this war can be witnessed most clearly. Travelling from Zagreb to the refugee facilities in Eastern Slavonia along secondary roads (avoiding the motorway, where fighting for control still occurs between the Croatian Army and Serbian forces), it is possible to view the effects of the Croatians' own brand of “ethnic cleansing”: homes that used to belong to Serbians have been blown up or burnt to the ground, their occupants forced to flee or killed in an effort to ensure the racial purity of that area.

The refugee camp at Djakovo-Gasinci, forty kilometres south east of Vukovar and around twenty kilome-



Refugees in Northern Bosnia

tres from the eastern front, is a good example of the conditions that refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina have to endure. After trekking through areas where fighting rages on, forced to move at gunpoint by gangs of Serbian irregulars with a penchant for rape, looting and random shootings of civilians, the current occupants of Gasinci have crossed the Sava river by rowing boat, swimming or through the only bridge still standing, between Bosanski Brod and Slavonski Brod. The bridge itself, as we noted in the course of our visit to the town during a brief lull in the otherwise constant shelling, has been hit several times by air attacks and artillery shells, and looks precarious to say the least.

Hungry, exhausted and bearing psychological scars that will take much longer to heal than the physical injuries, the Bosnian refugees are herded by the Croatian authorities and placed in camps such as the one in Gasinci, where 3,500 people share thirty toilets in temperatures around 35 degrees centigrade. The camp's occupants (over half of whom are children) live in military tents, in which six people share nine square metres and twelve share around 16 square metres. Precarious as this accommodation is, the real problems will start in the winter, given that (due to lack of

funds) no provisions have been made for any form of solid, permanent shelter.

Two doctors, working shifts of up to twenty hours each for no pay, are the refugees' only medical care. Vital medicines can only be distributed occasionally, if and when they arrive on aid lorries or are donated by individuals or non-governmental organisations with very limited resources. Social problems in this situation abound, as do reports of rape, theft and bullying between the refugees themselves, who have as a result formed their own armed police force within the camp. Food is scarce and most refugees have little to do but sit around talking about anything except the war and their own condition.

International visitors come to the camp regularly, but little is achieved. On the day of our visit, a delegation from the Swiss government was busily recruiting the best qualified and most skilled refugees, who were to be offered the chance of work and accommodation in Switzerland. This skills drain is clearly going to make the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina desperately difficult, although this selection practice is commonplace and (some say) often facilitated by the EC officials. In terms of safety, Gasinci is well within the range of the Serbian field artillery and gen-

eral warnings have been sounding there recently; thankfully, the camp itself has not thus far been hit, despite the fact that shells have been raining down on the surrounding area.

The cost of caring for refugees in Croatia is estimated by the Zagreb office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at around US\$50 million per month; Bosnian government sources place this figure closer to US\$80 million. One of the problems, as far as the majority of the Croatian population in the refugee areas is concerned, is the fact that despite initial assurances, little or no money has been forthcoming from central government. Instead, the greater part of the cost incurred has been borne so far by the local communities, whose funds are now exhausted.

As a result of these financial problems, the relationship between the local population and the refugees is an uneasy one. After initially welcoming Bosnian refugees with open arms, Croatian public opinion is beginning to turn against the provision of assistance to non-Croatian displaced people, a feeling which can be partially explained by observing the acute underfunding and sheer inadequacy of the help provided to Croatians in the same situation.

An example of the type of problems which such resentment could cause is given by the stories circulating among the aid workers of the refugee “collection” centre at Slavonski Pozega, near the Bosnian/Croatian border, regarding the alleged random killing of refugees in the streets of the town, shot at from passing cars; the authors of such deeds are widely believed to be drunken off-duty members of the fascist HOS militia, for whom this whole area is a power base.

This type of feeling is being capitalised upon by the likes of Dobroslav Paraga, leader of the neo-fascist Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), who has just fought the presidential election on a “Foreigners out, UNPROFOR out” ticket. Despite a relatively poor showing at the polls, the military strength of Paraga's “unofficial” armed militia, the Croatian Defence Association (HOS), enables the HSP to exert some substantial influence upon Franjo Tudjman's HDZ nationalist government. Such military strength has been amply demonstrated recently in Western Herzegovina, where HOS fighters (many of them ideological volunteers from all over Europe, North America and the Ukraine) have played a crucial role in ensuring the Croatian Army's territorial gains, especially in the capture of Mostar. This situation does not appear to concern Tudjman too much, despite the November 1991 coup attempt by the HSP, mainly due to the fact that he makes no mystery of the Croatian territorial ambitions in Herzegovina. As a black-shirted HOS member explained, the “real” Croatian border lies on the outskirts of Belgrade. ■

ON THE part of all the governments, their “official” armies and unofficial militias, the Yugoslav war remains a reactionary nationalist war.

Some socialists took the view that it was necessary to support Croatia on the grounds that it was asserting its “right to self-determination” against Serbian aggression. We recognise this right to self-determination. But we also support the right to self-determination of the large and compact Serb areas within the borders of the former Yugoslav federal republic.

The Croat government has steadfastly refused to recognise the rights of these Serbs to secede or even the right to real autonomy. Moreover it has maintained its annexationist designs on large parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbian attacks in Eastern Slavonia were also annexationist. The Serb-Croat war thus had a reactionary character on either side.

Even larger numbers of leftists sided with the Bosnian government. Didn't the referendum and the subsequent declaration of independence give Bosnia a prior and superior democratic right, one that the Serbian minority had no right to violate? Others ral-

lied to the Bosnian side as a result of the horrors of the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population, the siege of Sarajevo and other Bosnian towns. Such positions are mistaken.

There was no uncontested Bosnian nationality; rather there were three very intermixed ethnic communities. Not one of them constituted an absolute majority and the Serbs were the second largest community. To declare independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina against the wishes of one third of its people was no genuine democratic act of self-determination.

This was especially so since the Croat politicians advocated it as the first step to joining Croatia. The Muslims were pressured into it by the EC. The EC wanted to use Bosnia-Herzegovina as a buffer zone between Serbia and Croatia. We predicted the bloody

war to carve up Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia that would result.

This is in no way to exonerate the pogromist activities of the Serbian forces, led by Milosevic and Karadjic. In the sheer quantity of expulsions and destruction they are clearly the biggest criminals. They had the largest armies and weapons. But the Croats, armed by Germany, Italy and Hungary have also carried out atrocities commensurate with their military capabilities. If, as Thatcher suggests, the largely Muslim Bosnian army were to be armed with heavy artillery by NATO, then they too would be wreak the same damage.

There is nothing progressive about this horrific war except the self-defence of individual communities against pogrom and expulsion and the multi-ethnic militias that were created in Sarajevo. The only forces

for progress are those opposed to this war in all the states, those fighting to bring it to an end without annexations, with the right of all to return to their homes.

Some, however, do have hopes in the United Nations (UN). Natural as these might be for people in such desperate straits, they are illusions. The UN, controlled by the Security Council, where the USA and its allies and puppets call the shots, is in the final analysis an agency of imperialism.

Reluctant at the moment to launch an all-out war in Bosnia, the imperialists for their own reasons wish to curb Serbian expansion, humiliate and perhaps overthrow the Serbian regime and impose a peace suitable to its own plans for the region.

If UN or other imperialist forces moved from their present defensive posture into an all-out war with the Serb forces in Bosnia then the character of the war would change. Serbia (like Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia) remains a degenerated workers' state, one that consequently must be defended against imperialist attack. For the same reasons we stand today for the lifting of the UN and EC blockade on Serbia. ■

What we think

UDA ban – a sham

MORE THAN twenty years late, the British state realised that the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) was a gang of sectarian killers and banned it, on 10 August.

The ban makes no difference to the nationalist areas where the joint assault of loyalist paramilitaries and state forces goes on—through a campaign of assassinations, routine harassment and liftings.

In 1972-74 the UDA was able to marshal tens of thousands of protestant workers in a reactionary movement against power-sharing with the nationalists. Then the army openly collaborated with it.

Only now, when the UDA no longer represents any visible forces, when its leaders have been exposed as self-serving racketeers, has London found it possible to ban the UDA without drawing any significant flak from Paisley, Molyneux and the Orange Order.

Despite a long propaganda offensive by the unionists to reintroduce internment of republicans, the new Secretary of State, Patrick Mayhew, dismissed calls to simultaneously ban Sinn Féin along with the UDA.

Patently the real reason the UDA was banned was that the evidence of police, MI5 and Ulster Defence Regiment collaboration with the UDA was now too embarrassing and convincing.

The ban was announced just two weeks before more exposures came out in the book *Stone Cold*, about the loyalist paramilitary Michael Stone who used grenades to attack the funeral of IRA members ambushed in Gibraltar in 1988.

Author Martin Dillon, no friend of the republican struggle, claims in the book that Stone's cemetery attack was aided

by a covert army group.

The UDA continues to be a vicious threat to nationalist communities in the guise of the "Ulster Freedom Fighter" (UFF) murder gang. In that role it will continue to serve as a weapon of imperialist state terror in the Six Counties.

An effective system of physical defence against the UFF can only be developed out of a mass campaign against repression, subordinating the republican guerrilla campaign to its own needs and mingling it democratically accountable to the nationalist communities. ■



UDA uniformed march

ABORTION

Battle lines drawn

WHILE TAOISEACH Albert Reynolds sunned himself in Tuscany, the High Court in Dublin was busy on his behalf. It confirmed its ban on abortion information only four months before the referendum in which Reynolds promises to legalise abortion information!

SPUC took fourteen student leaders to the High Court in November 1989 and got an injunction to ban information in the colleges about abortion services, pending a European Court ruling which came back to the High Court in July.

The court confirmed its ban, despite SPUC's tactical attempt to postpone the case until

after the November referendum, re-imposing £30,000 costs against the students.

Student leaders told the media they would continue to defy the court ruling, confident that the balance of forces remain tilted against SPUC since the case of the raped fourteen year old forbidden to travel for an abortion last February.

Several of the student leaders however combined to try to prevent any political demonstration on the occasion of the court hearing. In this they were supported by the craven constitutionalist leaders of the Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign (REAC).

Openly defying them, Dublin activists of

REAC mounted a 100-strong demonstration outside the court on the first day of the hearing.

The IWG played a leading role in organising this action. The IWG speaker alone openly argued the need to go beyond the issues of information and abortion "in extreme circumstances". Nothing less than the legal provision for free abortion on demand could address the circumstances of the almost 5,000 women every year who travel to Britain for an abortion. Almost none of these women would qualify in Ireland under the proposed criterion of "substantial threat to the life of the mother".

REAC is to hold a conference to re-mobilise a fighting campaign on 3 October. The feminist leadership tried to keep it closed except to delegates from a few of organisations, most of whom have not yet lifted a finger in the abortion struggle. The IWG fought to keep the conference open to all organisations and activists who want to build the fight.

Although the Militant group actively supported the High Court picket it does not attempt to build the campaign organisation.

The SWM, in more consciously sectarian fashion, pulled out of the campaign completely, letting it be known that they would prefer to see a "broader" campaign event in the autumn, even if on the basis of dropping the demand to repeal the Eighth Amendment and concentrating only on abortion information issues.

Repeal of the Eighth Amendment, and of the 1861 Act which criminalises abortion, are demands which cannot be relegated to some other time. All the ruling class parties are determined that abortion information, when legalised after November, will be regulated almost out of existence.

The constitutional basis for such restrictions is the Eighth Amendment, which mandates the state to actively protect the unborn foetus.

But the February Supreme Court decision also puts the question of positive abortion rights on the agenda, a question to which socialists can have only one answer: free and legal abortion made available in Ireland on demand.

Whilst the feminists and centrists ignore the key issues to court "broader" support around the information issue, the right wing will be re-mobilising to prevent any implementation, not to mention extension, of the limited right to abortion handed down in February.

That is the reality which militants must address by taking the issue into the working class and building organised support for unrestricted abortion rights, especially amongst organised women workers. ■

FOR TWO years the Irish economy has bucked all the trends of international recession through continuous growth of exports and GNP. Huge increases in EC funds over the past five years should have stimulated much indigenous economic growth.

The ruling class and its economists all claim to be "puzzled" by the fact that instead of coming down, unemployment has been shooting up. It is expected to pass 295,000 this month, out of a total workforce of 1.5 million.

The main source of growth however is the relatively artificial enclave of multinational companies which inflate the reported value of their exports for tax purposes and extract billions in profits from the country.

This, plus the huge sums paid in interest to the international banks directly out of taxation on workers, adds up to imperialist economic domination. There is no puzzle: capitalism makes balanced economic development impossible in a capitalist Ireland.

The economy grew steadily while Ireland remained the only OECD country with a fall in the average rate of growth of employment throughout the 1980s. Job growth of half a percent a year in the 1990s is minimal compared to the growth of the potential workforce and the wave of former emigrants returning from recession hit Britain.

If no fightback has started yet it is principally because of the systematic collaboration of the union leaders with the state, peddling lying promises of better times to workers and the unemployed, in return for social peace.

Mid-August intensified the jobs crisis and signalled a new opportunity for a fightback, though no sign of initiative from any section of the workers' movement leadership. It was officially forecast that, bar-

ring a miracle or unprecedented emigration, unemployment is heading for 500,000 (about 30%) by the end of the decade.

In the same week a series of major industries announced job cuts, especially computer firms Wang, Digital etc, along with two of the most important big Irish companies—in aircraft maintenance and crystal. The Waterford Glass Company is shaping up to deliver the final blow to what was the strongest and most militant factory workforce in the country. It will add 500 more redundancies to the previous 1,000, slash wage levels and conditions under the threat of shifting more production to Central Europe.

Significantly, the union leaders are keeping their heads down as the bourgeoisie itself begins to panic—and the bishops move in to demongre their social concern.

An emergency cabinet meeting on the issue produced next to nothing—£100 million extra handouts for "small businesses", to be administered by the local "enterprise boards" drawing on the trade union bureaucracy. No one believes it will have any effect on the dole queues. It will be funded by privatising more of the state's shareholdings, by severely restraining public sector pay in the coming year, and most savagely by slashing local discretionary assistance to help the poorest families to

pay their electricity and gas bills.

Savings are planned also by means testing students for European Social Fund grants in the technical sector.

Never was there a more urgent need for a fighting alliance of rank and file workers, unemployed action groups, local organisations on the estates, and students. Activists and the left groups can and must take the initiative to mobilise and unite resistance on all fronts of struggle immediately.

In the campuses, the most militant students must be organised in action groups to mobilise against the cuts. Workplace action groups and town-based committees of shop stewards and activists must be built on a programme of opposition to redundancies, wage restraint and social spending cuts, linking up all groups in struggle.

Crucially, the rank and file must take up the long overdue task of building fighting organisations of the unemployed. As against all the cant of the bishops, the lies of the bosses and the treachery of the union leaders, the demand must be raised for state schemes of useful public employment, at trade union rates and under workers' control.

No other measure even begins to respond adequately to the most dangerous threat ever faced by the Irish working class. ■

Unemployment rockets

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

- NHS workers strike against cuts
- New Malcolm X book reviewed
- Sandinistas in retreat

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GERMANY

Fascism on the march

FASCIST RIOTERS besieged a migrant hostel in Rostock, egged on by parts of the local community, while police stood by. A week later 20,000 demonstrated against this outrage, but the "respectable" anti-fascists of the German media and ruling parties told the residents of Rostock to lock their doors and stay inside because of the "terror" of the left! Hans Graaf of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht reports from Rostock.

Nearly a year after the racist and fascist terror against asylum hostels in Hoyerswerda, it is another East German town, the coastal city of Rostock, which has hit the headlines.

For weeks, the hostel in the suburb Lichtenhagen has been faced with growing hostility from the local population. The hostel has been overcrowded for a long time. Many refugees, amongst them many Bulgarian Romanians, were forced to camp outside of the building because of this.

This situation was worsened by the city council's and the local government's reluctance to provide sanitary facilities for the refugees, despite repeated requests from hostel staff and the local population. This scandalous negligence assisted the growth of open hostility amongst the local population, feeding racist prejudices about "dirty foreigners".

So the attacks, which started on 22 August, were no surprise. Unhindered by the police or the local population, the hostel was besieged by a mob of youths. Stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown to shouts of "Foreigners out!" and "Germany for the Germans!" until the build-



Nazis silhouetted by the flames as refugee hostel burns

ing caught fire. At that time about 100 Vietnamese and a team of German TV reporters were still inside the house. They were only able to rescue themselves by fleeing to the roof.

The fire brigade, which arrived on time, could not help because it was not defended against the mob by the police. Most of the fascists and racists remained untouched,

whilst their victims were transported away like criminals, accompanied by the howls of the crowd.

The behaviour of the police and city council of Rostock is neither surprising nor exceptional. As in previous incidents police, the bureaucracy and the politicians proved their reluctance to combat racist and fascist terror. No wonder, because it is the fascist

mobs who do the dirty work for the "democratic" politicians who are reluctant to damage their respectable image.

Lothar Kupfer, interior minister of Mecklenberg, the regional government which oversees Rostock, is directly responsible for the inhuman conditions in the hostel and the police inactivity. His response to the attempted pogrom was to express his "concern"—not so much about the fascist attacks, but about the "overload" of asylum seekers "freighted in" from outside!

Kupfer needed to enliven the political debate about the so-called "asylum problem", a racist term in itself, by demonstrating to reluctant politicians that asylum rights should be restricted and the Constitution changed. Impressed by the evidence of Rostock, the SPD (Social Democrat) leadership has withdrawn its opposition to constitutional change—despite the fact that its last party conference explicitly rejected such a move.

The German constitution, which the SPD leadership used to defend like the ten commandments faced with criticisms from the left, is not worth a penny when it is at-

tacked from the right. Or, as the SPD representative from Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Erwin Eppler, expresses it: "In reality it is not the rule of law which is decisive, but what it possible". Presumably if it is not "possible" to defend asylum seekers from fascist mobs then they will have to be deported!

The most alarming fact is the open sympathy and support for the fascists expressed by part of the population. The racist propaganda of the media and ruling class politicians fell on fertile ground in a town which is hit extremely hard by the destruction of East German industry following re-unification. Thousands of workers once employed in shipbuilding and engineering are now on the dole.

The Warnow shipyards that before unification had 55,000 workers now employ only 5,000, and the plans of the prospective Norwegian purchaser would slash this number. About 20% of the total workforce of the 200,000 strong city of Rostock are unemployed, reaching between 30% and 50% in districts like Lichtenhagen. Housing is decaying, there are no jobs and no realistic prospects for them in unified capitalist Germany—and they know it.

Faced with the betrayals and inactivity of the official leadership of the working class movement—the trade unions, the SPD and PDS—they are looking for an alternative. And it is the fascists

and racists who are seeking to provide it.

It would be false and dangerous to see the Rostock riot as a spontaneous outbreak of violence.

The attacks had been initiated by well organised fascists from all over Germany. Organised by dozens of Nazis, the local youth only had to join in for the pogromist terror machine to be perfected. Behind the scenes it was the fascist *führer* of the "National List", Christian Worch, who co-ordinated the actions of the crowd of his more or less conscious followers.

Faced with this terror, the tiny Rostock left found itself isolated and powerless. Having failed to put itself at the head of resistance to mass unemployment and misery it was unable to challenge the fascists either. Although there were immediate pickets and protest demonstrations in Rostock and in other cities, there was no physical resistance against the fascist hordes. Once again the disorganisation, demoralisation and inactivity of the German left was revealed. It was, as usual, either unable or unwilling to really fight the fascists.

German workers can no longer afford this wretched passivity. Much time has already been lost. All those left and working class organisations who are willing to confront the fascists must unite now and actively try to win over as many of the workers' movement as possible to the task of smashing resurgent fascism. Once again the building of a workers' united front against fascism becomes a burning necessity for German workers.

But the left must also take up in a militant fashion the terrible conditions facing workers and youth in places like Rostock. Single issue anti-fascism, that refuses to address workers' crying needs is doomed to failure. German workers must turn their backs on the "official" guilt-ridden anti-fascism, which gave us slogans such as "Never again Germany!" before reunification.

Fascism can only be uprooted by a workers' movement that fights unemployment, bad housing and all the results of capitalist restoration as well as smashing the fascist gangs.■