

# Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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## UNION LEADERS BLOCK ACTION

# Organise the rank and file!

**OUR NEW YEAR MESSAGE: if the working class movement does not act swiftly and decisively the Tories will survive their worst ever crisis.**

Every aspect of Major's plan to make the workers' pay for the recession is still in place. He intends to:

- push ahead with the closure of pits
  - cut local government services to the bone
  - close London's major hospitals
  - carry on with his privatisation programme
  - impose a 1.5% pay freeze on public sector workers
  - pass a new round of anti-union laws in Parliament
- In the autumn Major's government was reeling. The collapse of his economic strategy and mass opposition to the pit closure plan made him one of the most unpopular prime ministers ever. He was ripe for destruction.

But he's still in office. The pressure on the Tories is easing. And this is due to the leadership of the working class movement.

Last autumn we saw the potential for a working class revolt against the Tories on every front. With the announcement of the pit closure programme anger boiled over. Demonstrations numbering hundreds of thousands were organised in a matter of days. Rank and file militants proposed strike action on 21 October to support the miners, and in workplaces all over the country they won it—often to their own surprise.

All that was needed was a clear call from the union leaderships, beginning with the NUM itself, to turn the anger

into action, strike action. If the TUC had called a general strike, it would have met with a tremendous response, smashing the Tory offensive, leaving Major's government in tatters.

Instead the union leaders used the marches to let off steam, not to build for strike action. The NUM, with Scargill's support, postponed their strike ballot and loyally endorsed the perspective of a passive protest campaign—ludicrously christened "people's power" to make it sound left wing.

Instead of December being a month of action it became a month of farce. The TUC's "Day of Recovery" was a shambles. The Scottish miners' march to London was

prevented from becoming the focus for a solidarity demonstration, let alone a strike. As for the mass switch off of lights called by the TUC: well, the bureaucrats always like to keep their members in the dark.

Arthur Scargill issued a call for action on 19 January. But he fudged it by calling for a "stayaway". A stayaway is not a strike. It is a call on individuals not to turn up to work. This is divisive and leaves militants open to victimisation. It is no substitute for collective strike action. But even this has been called off. Scargill has fallen in line behind the TUC's plans for no more than an extended protest campaign in the run up to the March budget.

The trade union leaders derailed the movement and demobilised the anger, confusing and demoralising militants. With each day that passes the chances of united class wide action recedes.

That is what these leaders want. They fear the prospect of a serious fight with the Tories more than they fear the Tories themselves.

But all is not lost. The Tories still have not solved their fundamental problems. They are still weak. Mass action can still destroy their plans. There is still a chance that workers can be rallied for a fight.

**The one condition for this is that the rank and file of the working class gets organised, and quick.**

In every town and city militant workers need to make links, co-ordinate existing struggles, plan local campaigns of action. Councils of action are the best means of making these links, of breaking down the isolation that leads to hesitancy in the face of the bosses' attacks. They are the best means of organising the rank and file for action and challenging our misleaders.

Every effort must be directed to organising such councils and mobilising all those workers facing job cuts, pay cuts and attacks on services, all those who are languishing on the dole, all those prepared to fight back.

This course of action is vital. But it is only being fought for by revolutionaries, because only revolutionaries are prepared to speak out against the false leaders, even the left leaders like Scargill. Only revolutionaries are prepared to tell the truth and say that the protest campaign is going nowhere. And that is why we need to expand the number of revolutionaries, and organise them into a revolutionary party.

**Workers Power is the nucleus of that party. The sooner you join us, the sooner we'll become a revolutionary party capable of challenging and replacing the misleaders who are letting the Tories off the hook.■**

## STRIKE TO DEFEND JOBS AND SERVICES

## DRUGS, GUNS, GANGLAND KILLINGS . . .

## Fighting the inner city blues

FOURTEEN YEAR old Benji Stanley was shot three times with a single barrelled pump action shotgun, once in the leg, then again in the upper chest. As he lay helpless on the floor he was finally blasted fatally through his heart. His masked assailants sped off in a silver coloured car as people on the street looked on in shock and fear.

You could be forgiven for mistaking this for a scene out of *Boyz 'n the Hood* or *New Jack City*. Tragically this was not a hyped up film, but real life in January outside a West Indian takeaway near the notorious Alexander Park Estate, Moss Side. Shootings are not an uncommon occurrence in Moss Side, one of Manchester's most impoverished inner-city areas, where 80% of black youth have no job or any prospects of getting one.

## Stigma

Employers operate a "post-code prejudice" against Moss Side residents—which means you are doubly stigmatised as undesirable if you are black and from Moss Side. The plight of the unemployed here is made even worse by the near total lack of recreational facilities and the overall grimness of housing estates that receive next to no maintenance from the city council.

It is in this climate that the shark drug bosses are able to breed a whole culture of "business chains" servicing hopeless addicts and

BY BEN WILLIAMSON

bored teenagers at exorbitant prices. Many of them are then forced to steal and mug to sustain their habits. Youngsters aged ten and upwards are in the employ of the main dealers. Tempted by large amounts of money and prestige, the kids act as couriers by trafficking large quantities of hash, "E's", smack, coke and crack across the estate. Riding on their mountain bikes they are inconspicuous and are able to transport the drugs

through the back streets quicker than anyone in a car.

Practically everyone in Moss Side, save the police, knows or knows of someone who knows who the gangsters are. They hardly conceal themselves, going around as they do in flash cars and flash clothes, with the inevitable portaphones in hand ready to call out to a big buyer or seller at a minute's notice to negotiate an order.

No wonder, then, that few locals believe police claims that Benji's

killing was a result of a dispute over a stolen mountain bike. While Benji's mum is understandably desperate to try to distance him from involvement in drugs, it would seem that the police are putting this forward as a possible motive as an attempt to cover up their total inability and unwillingness to confront the drug bosses. The local press has run stories with quotes from a wide range of community leaders all saying the same thing—"people trust the police less than they do the dealers". This is no surprise—the police are no friends of the local community. The police harass local youths and families who have no connection with the

creches and nurseries, free for parents to use and controlled by the parents and workers in them would free women from the burden of perpetual childcare.

Improving housing and facilities cannot be left to the councils whose first priority is to make their books balance for the bankers and bosses—local residents and council workers should decide plans for housing, and recreation facilities and demand funding from the government.

## Profits

While drugs remain illegal, dealers will always be able to make extortionate profits from the pockets of those who can ill afford them by selling impure drugs, adulterated with crap like strychnine, chalk, talcum powder and sand. In depressed communities drugs are a reality that will not go away. Youth faced with overwhelming inner-city blues can escape for a while by getting out of their heads.

The answer to this is not to hunt down and turn all these kids into criminals, but to make the supply of drugs legal—this would pull the rug from underneath the drug bosses. It would mean regulation of the supply and quality of drugs would be taken out of the hands of the profiteering gangsters. The supply of drugs could be accompanied by better services and support for those with drug related problems. It would stop addicts stealing from their own class and killing themselves off.

The community must come together now to drive the drug bosses and their evil ilk out. We need to police our own communities—we know who the dealers are—we are the only ones who can collectively confront them. To this end we need to set up community defence squads. We cannot rely on the police; they are the major perpetrators of violence against our communities rather than our protectors. Local defence squads need to be based on community organisations on the estates, including youth, women's and black organisations. These groups should link up to organise armed defence—pacifist "neighbourhood watch" schemes are useless against armed racketeers and police—but at the same time take up a political struggle to transform the lives of people on the estates through links with the organised workers locally.

## Defence

To provide effective local defence the gun laws must be reformed to allow working class people to carry guns. In the sixties Bobby Seale, Huey P Newton and the Panthers were able to close down the drug racketeers in many impoverished inner-city black ghettos, but only by exploiting the liberal American gun laws and by organising themselves into disciplined squads and confronting the police.

We need to learn from such lessons of what can be achieved by working class people. Such aims and actions will not be easily realised, but with the strength, decency and solidarity local inner-city communities are forced to engender—through struggle together—we can beat the inner-city blues. ■



14 year old Benji Stanley, murder victim

**We need to police our own communities—we know who the dealers are—we are the only ones who can collectively confront them**

dealers at the top, being suspects in the police's eyes because they are black. Local Asians are ignored by police when their shops are stoned by racists or even when they are physically attacked.

The police have promised protection for anyone coming forward with information about the murder, but no-one trusts a force who have in the past only made a few tokenistic busts on small fry middle level dealers. One of their suggested tactics of setting up a special unit on mountain bikes to apprehend the couriers would be laughable were it not so pathetically inadequate. They are incapable of getting to grips with the real racketeers.

## Inadequate

Meanwhile the council is planning to spend £6 million on run-down estates in south Manchester to provide security systems for houses and to clear up the litter and rubbish on the streets. This is totally inadequate—an attempt to put a plaster over a gaping wound.

Moss Side is typical of hundreds of inner city areas across Britain; in the capitalist society we live in the poor and oppressed in the big cities are kept in the ghetto, sectioned off from more "respectable" areas and ground down by poverty and state harassment. In these areas there can never be any "effective policing" by the state. The problems we face are caused by capitalism and its state. The problems will never go away unless tackled with working class answers. There needs to be a massive programme of public works, with people from the community employed for the community to build decent houses, to build and run playgrounds, skate parks, youth and social clubs and sports centres.

Women, as single parents, unemployed or part time workers are isolated on these estates with few opportunities to take part in social life or recreation. Women need access to secure jobs with good wages, and decent benefits for times when they can't work. Providing

## SHETLAND DISASTER

LOCAL COMMUNITIES in the Shetland Islands will suffer for years as a result of the oil slick that poured from the stricken *Braer* and was swept onto their shores. Wildlife and farmed fish alike have been destroyed on an horrific scale.

The British government has been deliberately obstructing the imposition of certain safety rules in shipping, and the owners of the *Braer* had been warned before by experts and previous captains that their route was not recommended in bad weather.

But why do such disasters keep happening and how can they be avoided in the future?

The socialist answer to environmental questions—from "disasters" like the *Braer* to the on-going destruction of the rain forests—is to alter the whole basis of production, ownership and control in society. This will be regarded by many as a utopian solution. But who are the real utopians?

## Control

Campaigners such as Greenpeace argue that dangerous processes should be stopped. The people who profit from these processes—the oil merchants, the bosses who depend on nuclear power, the shipping companies who take the quickest route, the airline and ferry companies who skimp on safety—all these people are in control of safety.

Protection of the environment and of workers in industry costs money. It erodes the profits of the bosses. The state can and does intervene to impose rules and regulations on individual companies, determining "safe" levels of radiation or of the discharge of pollutants into the atmosphere.

But the state is run by people whose fundamental commitment is

## The socialist answer

BY HELEN WATSON

to defend capitalism and production for profit. Their controls always avoid disrupting the profit-making process.

We live in a world of international markets and international capital. When regulations become too tight in one area, a company will move processing to another part of the world where regulations are non-existent. The last two decades of exploitation of Asia, Latin America and Africa have seen just such a shift in hazardous production processes involving dangerous chemicals for example. The registration of British or US owned tankers under Liberian, Panamanian or other flags of convenience is another way of avoiding regulations.

It is utopian to suggest that any campaign can save the environment without challenging the very basis of private ownership and production for profit.

## Struggle

But the fight for socialism is not an alternative to fighting against environmental destruction in the here and now. We fight alongside the environmental campaigners who want stricter laws, but we link this to a broader struggle. At work we fight for unions or workplace com-

mittees to veto dangerous practices and to force the introduction of safer technology and conditions.

Where the danger extends beyond the workplace we fight for direct action involving the workers and the local community to force the government to impose the use of safer methods and materials. If the bosses deny the danger we call for the opening of all records to inspection by the workers and community.

We support legal safeguards against pollution of the sea and air, and we fight for these through working class methods. But in the final analysis all these demands can only be permanently won by taking over political and economic control from the capitalists and establishing a democratic plan of international production. ■

## The Trotskyist Manifesto

Read the LRCI's positions on defence of the environment in our manifesto for the 1990s

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# EDITORIAL

# Socialists and IRA bombs

CHRISTMAS 1992 will be remembered by many British workers for the wave of IRA bombings that hit shops in Manchester and London. These attacks were directed at disrupting commerce in one of the busiest trading periods of the year. They succeeded to a considerable extent.

As always when the Irish struggle appears on mainland Britain there was a barrage of anti-Irish propaganda. In addition the attacks were used as an excuse by the British state to set up surveillance of the civilian population. Road blocks and armed police in both cities were used extensively to stop and harass black people.

We support the IRA in its fight, and call on all workers to place the blame for any injuries and disruption where it really lies—with the British government.

The IRA are fighting a war against an army of occupation which terrorises the nationalist community and ensures the continued division of Ireland. In this war we must side with the IRA as their's is a just war of national liberation. In this war, the nationalists face not only the British army and the RUC, but also the armed loyalist gangs who operate in collusion with the state. Last year the loyalist gangs were responsible for 38 deaths. This terror campaign against the nationalist community continued relentlessly as the new year began.

A loyalist terror gang, the Red Hand Commandos, shot two men on the streets of Belfast on New Year's Day, just a short distance from a betting shop that had been attacked the day before. The customers had managed to escape attack when the gun jammed.

The bombing campaign of the IRA both in the north and on the mainland has turned increasingly to commercial rather than military targets. This in part reflects their frustration in their efforts to hit mili-

tary targets as the counter-insurgency methods of the British have proved more effective.

In addition it reflects their strategy which is to force concessions rather than militarily or even politically defeating the British. In this context, the IRA see commercial targets as a way of increasing pressure from business on the government to agree to talks.

We do not agree with the strategy of the IRA. It is bankrupt and can never win freedom for the Irish from imperialist domination. The way to defeat the British in Ireland is to build mass action of the working class, linked across the whole 32 counties, fighting for the withdrawal of the troops.

Socialists fight for such a movement to take up a struggle against all imperialist exploitation—economic as well as military. This requires the involvement of all workers in the nationalist community of the North, not just a handful of activists in a guerilla army. The IRA strategy only links its military campaign to the masses through elections, a process which leaves the masses effectively passive.

The bombing campaigns in the North and on the mainland are part of this wrong strategy. We are critical of both the tactics and strategy of the IRA, but this does not mean that we withdraw our support. When it comes to a war of national liberation socialists and the labour movement must stand fully behind the oppressed and against "our" state which is the oppressor.

Both the British government and the Republicans are looking for a way out of the current impasse. The British government openly admits that the IRA will not be beaten militarily, and are trying to achieve a settlement through talks which include as many sections of the nationalist community as possible, except the Republicans. Their aim is to isolate Sinn

Fein and the IRA.

To do this they refuse to admit that the Republicans represent anybody. But they do. They have continuing mass support. To undercut this support the British are doing their best to promote the SDLP as the true representatives who can negotiate on behalf of the nationalist population.

The answer of the IRA and Sinn Fein to the impasse is on the one hand to step up the bombing campaign to increase pressure on the British and Irish governments and the SDLP, and on the other to try and get in on negotiations. Gerry Adams has indicated that he would like to see all-party talks without any preconditions set. In saying this he is trying to demonstrate that it is the British, not the Republicans, who are intransigent. He is also signalling Sinn Fein's willingness to consider some form of compromise, a deal that could leave Ireland divided and the national question unresolved.

The Republicans will not adopt a strategy of permanent revolution, based on mobilising the working class and poor farmers. Instead they look to the outcome of other petit bourgeois guerilla struggles and see settlement after settlement from South Africa to El Salvador.

The British government are unlikely to accept negotiations with the Republicans without a considerable retreat by the IRA and Sinn Fein. Along that road lies further oppression for the nationalist community, unless a revolutionary leadership is built that can lead the struggle for permanent revolution in Ireland. ■

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workers power

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- SMASH THE ASYLUM BILL!**
- BOLSHIE WOMAN**

**MANCHESTER**  
*Guns and Drugs: What do Socialists say?*  
2 pm, Wed 13 Jan, Students Union, Manchester Metro University

**LEICESTER**  
*Trade Unions and the Fight for a Rank and File Movement*  
7.30 pm, Wed 20 Jan, Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street, near Welford Road Prison

**BIRMINGHAM**  
*Is there a Revolutionary Situation in Britain?*  
7.30pm, Tues 19 Jan (see sellers for venue)

Marxist Discussion Groups

**LONDON**  
*Yugoslavia: do Marxists have an Answer?*  
7.30pm, Wed 20 Jan, London School of Economics Room 419, St Clement's Building, Houghton Street, WC2

**CARDIFF**  
*Somalia-US Troops Out!* 8.30 pm, Wed 20 Jan  
*Marxism and the Language Question* 8.30pm, Thurs, 4 Feb (see sellers for both venues)

### FIGHTING FUND

Workers Power's fighting fund is nearly half way to its £3000 target. But if we're to reach it by the end of March as planned, we need all our members, supporters, readers and sympathisers to make a real effort. Last month we received £100 from a reader in Australia, £75 from a supporter in North London, £260 from a Cardiff comrade, together with hundreds of pounds raised by members around the country. So far the total has reached £1323.96 . . . but we urgently need to complete the fund drive if we're to bring out our planned series of pamphlets. So keep the money coming in!

**£1,324**

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## SOCIALIST MOVEMENT TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

# A wasted opportunity



TRADE UNIONISTS arrived at the "Solidarity with the Miners National Conference" in Sheffield on 9 January expecting a day of discussion to map out a strategy for the movement that has built up in support of the miners. They were to be sorely disappointed.

The conference was officially sponsored by the NUM and organised by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Campaign. Despite being called at short notice, over 500 delegates turned up from trade union branches, miners support committees, and trades councils from across the country.

The call to attend the Conference had been issued when the NUM leaders declared that they were calling for a national day of action, "a stayaway", on 19 January. This call had already gained considerable support, especially in the North East where important trade union organisations were won to action with the backing of the North East NUM.

Even before the conference started, rumours spread that the NUM was backing off, preparing to drop the call for action on 19 January, leaving unions already committed to action in the lurch. Worse it rapidly became clear that the main organisers of the conference were determined to prevent any real discussion of this, or any of the important issues facing the campaign.

## Bureaucratic

The organisers declared that there would be no provision for resolutions being discussed and voted on at the conference. This was despite the fact that five resolutions had been sent to the conference by trade union branches and support committees.

These included calls for support for action on 19 January, and for a democratic national organisation to be established. A resolution from the Cardiff DTI branch of the NUCPS called for action committees to be set up to build for wider struggle, and pointed to the need for general strike action as the way to force the Tories to back down on all the pit closures.

But instead of a full and democratic debate, the organisers presented delegates with a statement that had been "agreed with NUM officials" and which "could not be amended". The agenda had been rigged to ensure that a full plenary debate and voting would not take place. The day was to start with five platform speakers, followed by two blocks of "workshops" for the

respective regions and trade unions, to end with a plenary session with yet another five speakers from various struggles.

This is a tried and tested tactic of the left bureaucracy. The aim was to stifle debate and prevent any criticism of the way the NUM is leading the struggle. And who was at the heart of all this bureaucratic manoeuvring? None other than Caroline Sikorski, a supporter of the "revolutionary" paper *Socialist Outlook*!

This was too much for the conference delegates. Even other *Socialist Outlook* supporters had to protest about the lack of democracy imposed by their own comrades. When left MP Jeremy Corbyn put the organisers' proposals to the conference at the end of the first session they were rejected overwhelmingly. But this turned out to be a pyrrhic victory.

BY STUART KING

After the workshops in the afternoon, delegates returned to a final 90 minute plenary faced with five more platform speakers. Only the last 40 minutes were given over to debate the many amendments and resolutions, and delegates were given only 30 seconds each to support or oppose them!

In the workshops there was overwhelming opposition to the idea of calling for "stayaways". Speaker after speaker pointed out this was no use for workers facing disciplinary action if they individually failed to turn up to work. It was clear that this call was a complete cop out by the Scargill-led leadership of the campaign. It aims to avoid falling foul of the trade union laws, while expecting rank and file trade unionists to take illegal secondary action themselves in soli-

arity with the miners. If the ordinary trade union members can risk being disciplined or even sacked, we have the absolute right to demand that the trade union leaders do the same.

Dave Douglass of Hatfield NUM, long a darling of the left, led the attack on any proposals that committed the conference to action. He attacked motions motivated by Workers Power members which called on the NUM and TUC to build for action on 19 January. He reported from an NUM caucus (only half a dozen miners had been sent to this NUM-sponsored conference) that the conference statement should not be amended.

Douglass insisted that 19 January was "not on", and that even the alternative date of 15 February was no more than a possibility. Faced with this the conference dutifully voted against amending the statement, against action on 19 January, and against proposals to build committees of action in the localities.

The Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) played their usual role in all this. They talked left at the conference, but covered up the real role of Dave Douglass, who writes a regular column in their paper, the *Daily (sic) Worker*. They are all in favour of "councils of action" and "preparing" for a general strike. But they refuse to link the call for a general strike to anything concrete—like the moment the government review announces the closure of ten or more pits.

What does the slogan "prepare the general strike" mean? If it is a call on the bureaucracy to "prepare" then it lets them off the hook. Every miserable retreat they make, every glossy poster campaign they finance can be classified as "preparation". Preparation becomes a means of avoiding taking action in the here and now. Any slogan sanctifying this is little more than a cover for the left wing of the bureaucracy.

For instance, Derrick Fullick has

said that ASLEF has asked that the TUC prepare generalised strike action. Yet when it comes to organising action on the rail against privatisation and job losses, the same Mr Fullick turns around and says that nothing can be done until the TUC organises co-ordinated action.

How do we prepare for a general strike? By winning more and more militants to accept the need for a general strike, by building the rank and file organisations to fight for and run a general strike, by unremittingly demanding that the union leaders put their money where their mouths are and call a general strike. All this is preparation, real preparation, because it mobilises the forces that can make a general strike a reality.

To counterpose to this the slogan "prepare the general strike" as the left Stalinists of *The Leninist* do, is vacuous and cowardly. Vacuous because it ties nobody to any action, cowardly because it avoids trying to commit anybody to any action.

## Vague

Douglass is all in favour of *The Leninist's* policy, and with good reason. It is vague enough to let him sound very left wing while at the same time he takes every opportunity to head off any actual strike action which could develop the struggle towards the goal of a general strike. We look forward to reading the *Daily Worker's* criticism of the role their regular columnist played at the conference.

Trade unionists and activists must draw the bitter lessons of this conference. It is worse than useless to tail behind the NUM leadership, or to regard every criticism of Scargill and the NUM leaders as "treason". The NUM leadership has consistently backed off giving any focus for industrial action in support of the miners. To refuse to face up to this fact or to maintain a diplomatic silence will do nothing to help rank and file miners fighting to save their jobs.

The role of the TUC and other trade union leaderships in sabotaging the action is no excuse for fatalism or inactivity. It is necessary to address the rank and file of the unions, to mobilise them for strike action, and to ally with them against their own leaderships. Of course the NUM leadership will not do this. Indeed Scargill would not do this even in 1984-85. His refusal to break the unity of the very bureaucracy which sabotaged the strike cost the miners dear.

## Demobilising

But this is not 1984-85. The miners are not taking action. In failing to use the strikes and demonstrations in October to launch a campaign for a ballot on national strike action, for pit-head occupations backed by the local communities, for solidarity strike action from other workers, the NUM leaders have played into the Tories' hands. They have played their part in demobilising the struggle as surely as Norman Willis and the TUC. The Sheffield conference was just one more episode in this sorry saga.

Miners and other trade unionists must draw the lessons. They cannot rely on the existing left leaders, even those like Scargill, whose days of fighting—it has to be said—lie in the past. Instead they have to organise themselves in a genuine communist organisation which can successfully rebuild our movement and provide it with a new revolutionary leadership. That is the task Workers Power has set itself. Join us! ■

# Nalgo Broad Left

IN SPITE of a rash of disputes and a large increase in Nalgo membership, only 150 attended the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Nalgo's Broad Left. This shows the weakness of rank and file organisation in the union.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who lead the Broad Left, mobilised only a small fraction of their Nalgo members. Militant supporters boycotted the event entirely.

The weakness of the Broad Left was not simply demonstrated by the sparse attendance. The day was distinguished by a series of undemocratic manoeuvres and mistakes by the SWP leadership.

A new platform for the Broad Left was discussed. It was not distributed in advance, no speaking time was allocated to discuss it, and no amendments were allowed to it. Except, that is, from the movers of the platform themselves! They announced that their failure to include the demand for a minimum wage

BY BILL JENKINS

was "an oversight because the platform was drafted in a rush".

This was a piece of bureaucratic chicanery that the TUC itself would be proud of.

It is all too clear that the SWP are not seriously committed to building the Broad Left as an alternative rank and file leadership within the union.

The SWP rightly put demands on the leadership of Nalgo in order to pressurise it into leading a fight. But, as should be obvious by now, this is far from enough.

The Broad Left fails to combine its demands on the bureaucrats with a clear set of proposals aimed at leading the rank and file of the union independently. For example, the Broad Left called on the TUC to call a general strike, but was silent on what to do if—perish the thought—the TUC refused.

When Workers Power proposed

building rank and file action we were denounced by the SWP for "ignoring the bureaucracy"! In fact, as a nurse from University College Hospital and a striker from Newham pointed out when addressing the meeting, in their experience unofficial rank and file action is the only really effective way of pressurising the officials into supporting strikes.

The AGM was livened up by the emergence of the Campaign for a Real Broad Left (CRBL). This is a combination of various opposition forces in Nalgo. It was able to challenge the SWP on questions of democracy.

The CRBL can play a part in organising a serious opposition to the SWP within the Broad Left. To do so it needs a principled programme to gather round it those militants who have had enough of both the bureaucracy's retreat and the SWP's empty phrases—those militants who want to organise a real fightback now. ■

**WHATEVER HAPPENED** to the decision of the NUM's national delegate conference to call a ballot for industrial action against the pit closures?

It seems a long time ago, but when the Tories announced their decision to close 31 pits the NUM called its delegates together and voted overwhelmingly to call the ballot. That was the conference's one major decision. Unfortunately it added a rider: the NUM executive was given complete control over the timing of such a ballot.

It is now clear that the executive wanted this control over when the ballot was called for one reason—they had no intention of calling it.

The NUM executive shifted sharply to the right after the Great Strike of 1984-85. Stalinists like George Bolton allied themselves with open right wingers arguing that the lesson of 1984-85 was that strike action was outmoded and ineffective, that a broad people's alliance based on mobilising public opinion was necessary to save the industry. Their conclusion was "never again" to allow an all out battle like the Great Strike.

For years Scargill appeared to stand out against this brand of new realism. His was a lone voice arguing repeatedly that "only industrial action can stop pit closures". His speech against new realism was printed as a pamphlet, *New Realism: The Politics of Fear*, by Merthyr Tydfil Trades Council, not the NUM. It was a polemic against the majority of his executive, arguing: "Only direct action—including industrial action—can halt the utter destruction of those basic institutions such as the National Health Service or, indeed, the coal industry... The battle for socialism will not be won by the philosophy of 'new realism'—it will only be won in the workplaces and on the streets of Britain."

But that was in 1987. In late 1992 and 1993 Scargill moved to the right, and his views on industrial action have come closer to those of Bolton and co. This is clear in his attitude to today's fight against pit closures. Not once have we heard him making speeches that emphasise his old position that only direct action, industrial action, can win. Instead he has unceasingly stressed the importance of a campaign of "people power", of winning the support of the British people, of demonstrations and protests alone.

In his one strong base of support within the executive, Yorkshire, there is not a whiff of opposition to this new realist approach to the fight. The *Yorkshire Miner* is at the forefront of the campaign of people power. The centrepiece of its strategy to save the pits is "to make the country as a whole aware of what this government's disastrous actions will mean for all of us". To

# NUM leaders in retreat

BY MARK HARRISON

this end it turns over nearly a whole page of the paper to... the Bishop of Wakefield.

Even Scargill's call for a "stay-away", dropped as a result of TUC pressure, avoided calling on workers to organise collective industrial action. In place of industrial action we have had demos. But instead of using the demos to build support for industrial action they are treated as an end in themselves.

We have also had the struggle in the courts. Now it was certainly a tremendous propaganda victory to get the High Court to find the government and British Coal guilty of "unlawful and irrational" action. But instead of using this to rally workers for a fight, Scargill and the NUM executive are actively peddling illusions in the courts. The same courts that hounded the NUM for the final five months of the Great Strike are now being presented as true reflections of, even guardians of, public opinion.

Victories in the bosses' courts can have tactical advantages for the working class. But to suggest that we should rely on them is false. At best the High Court decision was an attempt to buy time for the ruling class to get its act together. At

worst it was a cynical attempt to demobilise the movement against the pit closures.

All that the court decided was that the ten pits threatened with immediate closure should go into the colliery review procedure. The NUM executive has a duty to every one of its members to point out that every single pit that has gone into this review since the 1984-85 strike has been closed. But because each closure went through the review, NUM members had been demobilised in advance from fighting to save the pits, from strikes and occupations. This is the danger today in every one of the 31 pits that British Coal and the Tories want to close.

As for the latest twist in the campaign—the setting up of camps outside threatened pits by the Women Against Pit Closures campaign (led and controlled by the Scargillites)—the best that can be said is that it is a misguided publicity stunt. It is modelled on the middle class pantomime staged by the Greenham Common women. It is a purely symbolic and deeply passive gesture of opposition.

At Greenham the women were stopped from occupying the US missile base by armed troops. The threatened pits have no such guards. They could be occupied by the miners who work at them and their supporters in Women Against Pit Closures. That is what the women of Armthorpe did in December. That is what should be done now.

An occupation would be a lot more than a passive gesture—it would be a means of holding to ransom the expensive machinery in the threatened pits. It would be a means of ensuring that workers controlled the maintenance of the pits, preventing the bosses from running them down in preparation for closure.

But Scargill and the NUM executive are not calling for such action. At every stage they are using gimmicks, stunts and limited protest actions as alternatives to industrial action. They have buried their conference mandate to call a ballot for industrial action in the hope that it need never be exhumed.

At the very beginning of the dispute many miners accepted the idea that it would be wrong to call an immediate ballot. They said it was

necessary to build up support so that when a strike took place the miners would not be isolated.

Tactically, it is perfectly logical to postpone a ballot until you believe you can win it and win wider support for your action. Tactically, it was sensible to wait until after the great demonstrations in October before naming the date of the ballot. Tactically, it was a complete disaster not to have called the ballot last year.

Every miner who criticised us in November when we argued for the ballot to be called immediately must answer this question: are we now any nearer getting successful strike action? The honest answer is that we are further away from this today than we were in early November.

More and more miners have taken voluntary redundancy. More and more illusions have grown in the idea that the people's power campaign is an alternative to industrial action. It is not. It will not stop this government pushing the closures through by one means or another, even if they have to wait for a while.

Worst of all, the mood of mass anger that posed the real possibility of uniting a whole range of struggles behind the miners' fight is being deliberately eroded by the union leaders. This means that if the miners' executive, against the odds, decided to call a ballot, the risk of the miners being isolated is greater now than it was two months ago.

The confusion surrounding the call for a "stay-away" is an illustration of this. Some workers, at the Longbridge car factory and in Birmingham Nalگو for example, agreed to take some form of action on 19 January. Now this has been called off. These workers, and quite a few others, have been left high and dry. They have been marched to the top of the hill, only to be marched back down again. You cannot go on doing this without confusing and demoralising the marchers. You undercut support by such tactics.

Rank and file miners need to think through all of these arguments and organise themselves to fight the executive, including Scargill, if their jobs are to be saved. They need to break from Scargill's wrong strategy.

Saying this openly usually earns you a sharp rebuke. Many militants, remembering Scargill's positive role in previous disputes, treat him as above criticism. This is a dangerous attitude. No leader is above criticism. Criticism is the lifeblood of democracy in the workers' movement. Only bureaucrats who regard their position as leaders as more important than their members' interests can be afraid of free and open criticism.

Rank and file miners need to cut through the mystique that surrounds Scargill. As long as he supports the executive's delaying tactics he is guilty of obstructing the fight against pit closures. Militants should recognise this, say it and act on it. They need to begin a campaign now to demand that the ballot for action be called immediately. Every day they fail to do this will be a day's grace to British Coal and the Tories. ■



## Will Unison fight?

**UNISON HAS** arrived. The merger between Nalگو, Nupe and Cohse and the creation of the new super-union was overwhelmingly endorsed by the 35% of members who voted in the ballot.

The result was proclaimed as "magnificent" by Alan Jkinson of Nalگو, "the best possible news" by Hector Mackenzie and "good news" by Rodney Bickerstaffe. It seems that an overwhelming majority of the entire membership is only required when the ballot is for strike action!

Unison is the bureaucracy's response to the savage attacks facing public sector workers. Although Nalگو has grown over the last year, the bureaucracy are very concerned

at the possibility of a catastrophic decline in membership as compulsory competitive tendering, the internal market and privatisation begin to bite.

Many of the members who voted for Unison may have understood the need for unity in action to stop these attacks, but the bureaucracy supported unity as the best possible way of protecting their own jobs and salaries.

Democracy in the new union is severely curtailed:

- strike action can only be made official by the NEC or General Secretary and then only after a ballot
- all subscriptions will be paid directly to headquarters and

branches will not be able to keep local strike funds

- the General Secretary is unelected. Alan Jkinson has been appointed with Rodney Bickerstaffe to take over in two years
  - the rule book will not be approved by conference
  - a special conference may be called only if it is supported by branches representing 25% of the membership inside two months (approximately 850 branches)
- Workers Power has consistently opposed the merger. Despite the officials' claim that it will strengthen the trade unions in the public sector, they have refused to lead the kind of action that really will give the trade unions strength.

The rank and file in Nalگو, Nupe and Cohse must get organised to break the bureaucratic stranglehold. We must fight for joint union committees to be formed at a rank and file level. These joint committees must include other TUC unions like the TGWU and GMB, to ensure there is complete unity in action at workplace level.

The Broad Left and other rank and file bodies must call a joint conference to initiate the fight for a rank and file movement which will aim to transform the union into one which really fights to defend its members against the attacks on jobs, services and pay.

Despite all the bluster of the bureaucrats that Unison would mean greater trade union unity, large sections of public sector workers remain divided in different unions. That is why we have argued all along that we need to build industrial unions and not the bureaucrats' beloved general unions. ■

## RUSSIA

## Restoration stalled

**T**HE FALL of Gaidar is not the first sharp turn in the Russian class struggle, nor will it be the last. We are witnessing the prolonged death agony of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In its majority it has embraced the idea of capitalist restoration.

But it is unwilling to confront the fact that to make this idea a reality, the bureaucratic caste must be destroyed, leaving only a minority of former bureaucrats to become capitalists. This basic dilemma forms the background to the emergence of an opposition block in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies which, in December 1992, drastically altered the balance of forces within the Russian government.

Before the Congress the Western and Russian media were predicting that Yeltsin would launch a "constitutional coup"—suspending the constitution, dissolving the Congress and ruling by decree. Supporters of Gaidar's neo-liberal government were in a minority at the Congress.

The powerful industrial bureaucracy, organised in the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, had already managed to slow down or prevent many of Gaidar's more draconian economic measures. Yeltsin toured the banquetting halls of the capitalist world warning the imperialists that the slowdown could be coming.

Yet immediately before the Congress it became clear that Yeltsin had negotiated a secret deal with the leader of the industrialists' faction, Arkady Vol'sky. In return for keeping Gaidar and a formal commitment to the fast track process, Vol'sky and the industrialists—organised in the Russian Congress as the "Civic Union" faction—would gain some cabinet posts and the slowing down of Gaidar's reforms.

During the Congress this deal disintegrated. First Yeltsin threatened his constitutional coup. Then he made even more serious concessions to Vol'sky to save Gaidar. Following this he led a walk out to make the Congress inquorate—but only 150 deputies followed him.

When the ministers of defence and the interior stayed in their seats—a clear signal that they would refuse to back any dissolution of the Congress—Gaidar's fate was sealed. He was replaced by Civic Union nominee Chernomyrdin as the Russian premier. Yeltsin, shorn of his "special powers", began to look more and more like Gorbachev during his lame duck presidency after August 1991.

## Transformation

Yeltsin managed to save some pro-western ministers in the Chernomyrdin cabinet, but only by hastily cutting short his visit to China in December. Clearly a further transformation of the government in favour of the Civic Union is possible in the period leading up to the projected referendum on a new constitution scheduled for April.

What was the character of the opposition block which toppled Gaidar in December? The block itself consisted of two powerful factions within the disintegrating bureaucracy: Civic Union and the so-called *Russkii Edinstvo* (Russian Unity) group. Though both sets of



*One year ago, Boris Yeltsin unleashed Russian prices as the first step on the planned "fast track" to capitalism in Russia. His Prime Minister, Yegor Gaidar, promised the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce inflation to single figures and drastically cut Russia's budget deficit.*

*Now Gaidar has gone, inflation stands at 2000%, price controls on basic commodities are about to be introduced and Boris Yeltsin's presidential power and influence have been severely curtailed. As Paul Morris explains, the restoration process has been stalled.*

deputies posed as defenders of the workers and the poor against Gaidar's imperialist-backed reforms, neither has a programme that can defend the workers' interests.

Civic Union was founded in June 1992, bringing together industrial bureaucrats with high-ranking state and military officials. Originally this stratum of the bureaucracy was fully committed to Gaidar's plan, hoping to transform itself into a new class of big capitalists. They applauded when their traditional enemies, the central state planners, were despatched by Yeltsin and Gaidar.

But they ignored the fact that on the road to large scale capitalism "one capitalist kills many". The emergence of this stratum's opposition to Gaidar is the embodiment of a historic contradiction between the aspirations of the bureaucracy and their practical fulfilment. When Gaidar threatened to close loss-making enterprises—an essential precondition for the restoration of capitalism—the Civic Union faction began to consolidate around a different strategy.

## Evolved

Far from defending the remains of the post-capitalist property relations of the Russian degenerated workers' state, Civic Union is committed to the reintroduction of capitalism. But it has evolved a "slow-track" plan for restoration, based on state-capitalist economic management, state ownership of basic

industries and infrastructure, and a gradual privatisation process which would allow the fledgling industrialists and entrepreneurs to begin making their factories profitable without seeing them destroyed in a Thatcherite closure wave.

Thus the Civic Union emphasises a strong Russian state combined with "social guarantees" to maintain order during the transition. It is allied to the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unionists (the misleading title of the former state-run unions). Together they present themselves as defenders of jobs and wages. Though they tend to talk of a "third way" between unbridled capitalism and socialism, the Civic Union in fact represents only a new version of Gorbachev's "market socialism", recast with a clearer goal.

Russian Unity, the other half of the anti-Yeltsin alliance, is itself a block between hard-line Stalinist remnants of the bureaucracy and ex-Stalinists who have become monarchists and proto-fascists.

Russian Unity is rooted in the remains of the bureaucratically planned economy and the bureaucratic military-state machine which defended it. Without any programme to revitalise the property relations of the workers' state, it partially obstructs their demolition.

The social core of Russian Unity is the remaining Brezhnevite-Stalinist faction of the bureaucracy. It opposes privatisation of industry and agriculture and openly calls for the restoration of command planning. But these are subordi-

nated to its foremost demand for the restoration of a Great Russian state within the borders of the former Soviet Union.

Though it has relatively little mass support, this layer of the bureaucracy still controls vast regions of Russia at the administrative level, heads important industries and has powerful allies in the army and the secret police.

## Wing

In the process of disintegration, the Russian chauvinist supporters of centralised planning within the bureaucracy have adopted many ideologies, old and new. It is from this wing that the fascist and proto-fascist parties (such as Pamyat, Nashi, the Liberal Democrats) have emerged. Likewise, chauvinist monarchists have emerged like Sergei Barburin, Russian Unity's chief spokesperson.

Outside parliament these forces have come together with a panoply of neo-Stalinist parties (like the Russian Party of Communists, Russian Communist Workers Party etc) in a variety of campaigning blocks: first *Trudovaya Rossiya* (Labouring Russia) which organised the red-brown street demonstrations with fascist and monarchist flags mingling with red banners and portraits of Lenin and Stalin, and then the National Salvation Front, in reality the extra-parliamentary mobilising force of Russian Unity, which found itself subject to a state ban by Yeltsin.

In order to save itself, and its

system of medals, privileges and informers, this stratum of the bureaucracy may want to restore the Brezhnevite bureaucratic command planning mechanism. But it could only do so through attacking the democratic rights won by workers in the last five years, and even then could only inaugurate a short-lived regime of crisis. At the same time it would launch Russia into a series of expansionist racist wars and place in power elements of a real fascist wing of the bureaucracy dedicated to pogroming Jews and ethnic minorities, and to the atomisation of the working class.

The forces of state capitalist restoration, chauvinism and bureaucratic planning combined to defeat Yeltsin in December. But the project of a new draft constitution and a referendum in spring means that these factions will continue to struggle against each other.

## Dominated

Whatever short term successes the Civic Union dominated government might have, mainly as a result of their better grip on the levers of control in the Russian economy, they will face an acute budget crisis and an escalation of inflation. Rising inter-enterprise debt and soft state credit is the very bedrock of their programme.

The US\$3 billion they will spend on bread subsidies alone this year is testimony to the fact that there is no real "slow track" restoration process, only a stalling operation prior to the inevitable attack on jobs, real wages and social benefits.

The Civic Union's incoherent programme must sooner or later resolve itself either in the direction of Yeltsin and Gaidar's "Democratic Russia" or that of Russian Unity. Either they will be forced to patch together the broken remains of bureaucratic planning or return to a policy of privatisation and the closure of unprofitable enterprises.

When the Civic Union government inevitably fragments a number of possibilities arise. The Civic Union leaders may attempt to renew the slow-track restoration process under the cover of an all-inclusive dictatorial regime. The return to a neo-liberal strategy is a distinct possibility, this time backed by dictatorial powers and geared up for an assault on the working class.

Neither can it be ruled out that amidst the chaos of a disintegrating economy and derailed restoration process a neo-Stalinist government could come to power, riding on a wave of unfocused opposition to restoration, or on a wave of national chauvinism.

What is certain is that none of these solutions would be progressive. None of them form the basis for working class resistance. Despite their roots in the bureaucratic planning process a strategic alliance between the workers and the neo-Stalinist/fascist bloc would be just as much a noose round the neck of the working class as an alliance with Yeltsin or Vol'sky.

The workers need desperately to form their own organisations committed to an independent programme of resistance to capitalist restoration, and an emergency plan to meet the burning needs of millions.

The workers must seize the factories, offices and means of distribution from the bosses, old and new, and take control of the army and the militia through elected officers' and soldiers' committees. Russia's crisis can only be resolved in a progressive way through the overthrow of the bourgeois government and of the bureaucrats of every stripe, and their replacement by a new government of workers' councils. ■

# Hitler's rise to power

ON 30 January 1933 President Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party, as Chancellor of Germany. Installed under the cover of constitutional legality Hitler wasted no time in using his position to consolidate the Nazi dictatorship. Within months the strongest and best organised working class in the world suffered a catastrophic and historic defeat.

Political and trade union organisations numbering millions, which had grown up over seventy years of class struggle, were to be obliterated over the coming months, almost without a fight.

The largest Communist Party outside the USSR, the KPD, was outlawed and smashed. The reformist

Social Democratic Party (SPD) was proscribed. The SPD led trade unions, numbering over four million members in 1931, were liquidated on 2 May 1933. Working class activists of every political stripe were rounded up, tortured, imprisoned in concentration camps or beheaded.

Even the bourgeois, liberal and nationalist opposition to the Nazis was banned by the Hitler dictatorship.

German national life was transformed into a nightmare of repression under the state police, the Gestapo. Anti-Semitic pogroms, formerly the illegal work of Hitler's storm troopers, were sanctioned and perpetrated by the Nazi regime, leading eventually to the

unspeakable barbarism of Hitler's "final solution", the slaughter of six million Jews in the Holocaust.

The rise of the fascist regime also served to sharpen and accelerate the conflicts between the major rival imperial powers in Europe. Within six years of Hitler becoming Chancellor the conflict reached breaking point, plunging the world into a further devastating and fratricidal war, dwarfing even the carnage of 1914-18 in its scale and intensity.

One Nazi activist described his party's celebrations on 30 January 1933:

"The torches were lit, and the throngs set out on the march into German history. An indescribable burst of joy awaited us as we

marched through the Brandenburg Gate."

On 30 January this year, Nazis will again be marching to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, in celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany, and as a demonstration of their renewed confidence and strength. *Richard Brenner* examines the background to the victory of National Socialism in 1933 and the lessons of that tragic period for workers in today's struggle against fascism (see also centre pages).

If we learn those lessons and act on them then the only outburst that will greet the Nazis at the Gate will be the vengeful anger of an anti-fascist workers' united front. ■

**T**HE ORIGINS of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP—Nazis) were not so humble as is often suggested by bourgeois historians. Although the organisation was very small when Hitler joined it, he was a paid political officer of the German army.

Hitler had demonstrated his worth in betraying mutinous or pro-Bolshevik detachments after the war and in the 1918 revolution. By 1923 his movement was able to hold rallies of 50,000 in Munich, and the failed Nazi *putsch* that year was distinguished by the involvement of General Ludendorff, of the war time High Command.

After Munich, Hitler synthesised the lessons of the past strategies of German reaction into a coherent and far-sighted plan of action. Under the banner of German nationalism he aimed at the total elimination of "Marxism", meaning the SPD, the Social Democratic unions and the KPD.

From the failure of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law in the nineteenth century, he concluded that police methods alone were insufficient to uproot and dissolve a mass workers' movement. From the failure of the rightist Kapp *putsch* in 1920 he learnt the need to build mass support across Germany in the form of a political party. From the successes of the Viennese anti-Semitic reactionary Dr Karl Lügner's Christian Social Party, he learnt the need to develop a mass movement, which would not only utilise the existing institutions of power but which, "laid the greatest stress . . . on winning over the classes whose existence was threatened and therefore tended to spur rather than paralyse the will to fight". (*Mein Kampf*)

Winning over the petit bourgeoisie, the class squeezed between the two major classes in society, the workers and the bosses, was central to Hitler's project. He identified the source of their fear and sought to transform it into an active opposition to the working class movement:

"The reason for this hostility [of the petit bourgeoisie for the workers] . . . lies in the fear of a social group, which has but recently raised itself above the level of the manual worker, that it will sink back into the old despised class, or at least become identified with it . . . the petit bourgeois' own position in society, however insignificant it may be, makes any contact

with this outgrown stage of life and culture intolerable."

Hitler's formative experiences of the strength, militancy and political education of the Austrian workers had impressed upon him the need for a mass counter-revolutionary movement. After watching a vast Social Democratic march, he had concluded:

"The masses love a commander more than a petitioner and feel inwardly more satisfied by a doctrine, tolerating no other besides itself . . . If Social Democracy is opposed by a doctrine of greater truth, but equal brutality of methods, the latter will conquer, though this may require the bitterest struggle." (*Mein Kampf*)

National Socialism developed under Hitler's leadership with a

movement without such a populist edge to their rhetoric.

None of this made the Nazis an anti-capitalist party. Quite the reverse. The Nazi party was designed to protect capitalism from the working class in periods of acute crisis when the normal means of bourgeois rule were insufficient, when big capital required the physical smashing of the working class movement. The NSDAP was a predominantly petit bourgeois mass movement in the service of finance capital.

Indeed its record in power shows that there was nothing "socialist" about this party. In smashing the workers' movement the Nazis were able to increase the employers' share of Germany's national income in interest and industrial

parasitic, supposedly "Jewish", interest-bearing capital, which they demagogically claimed to oppose.

And behind the scenes, throughout the 1920s, Hitler held regular closed meetings with industrialists, particularly those from the heavy industries such as mining, iron and steel, where profit margins were tighter than in the finished goods industries and where far less tolerance could be shown towards working class organisation. Support was initially slow in coming, with Thyssen being his main bourgeois support from the outset.

Hitler's theme was always the same:

"If we have grasped the fact that our fate is to be decided by

the destruction of Marxism, then any means are justified to bring it about . . . a movement which turns to the broad masses, to those among whom the Marxists themselves work. One can only get rid of poison with an antidote."

This speech to an assembly of industrialists and national politicians at the Hamburg National Club on 28 February 1926 was greeted with tumultuous applause. But until the deepening of the economic crisis after 1929 only a minority of the bourgeoisie seriously favoured the dangerous option of war to the death with the mighty German working class.

Hitler's value to the big capitalists lay in the specific character of the movement. It was qualitatively different to other forms of bourgeois reaction because of its commitment to the physical struggle against the working class with the objective of the smashing of all independent working class organisations. It defended capitalism by using the petit bourgeoisie and sections of backward workers or lumpenproletarians as a mass counter-revolutionary army. The value of such an army became apparent in the crisis-wracked years of the early 1930s.

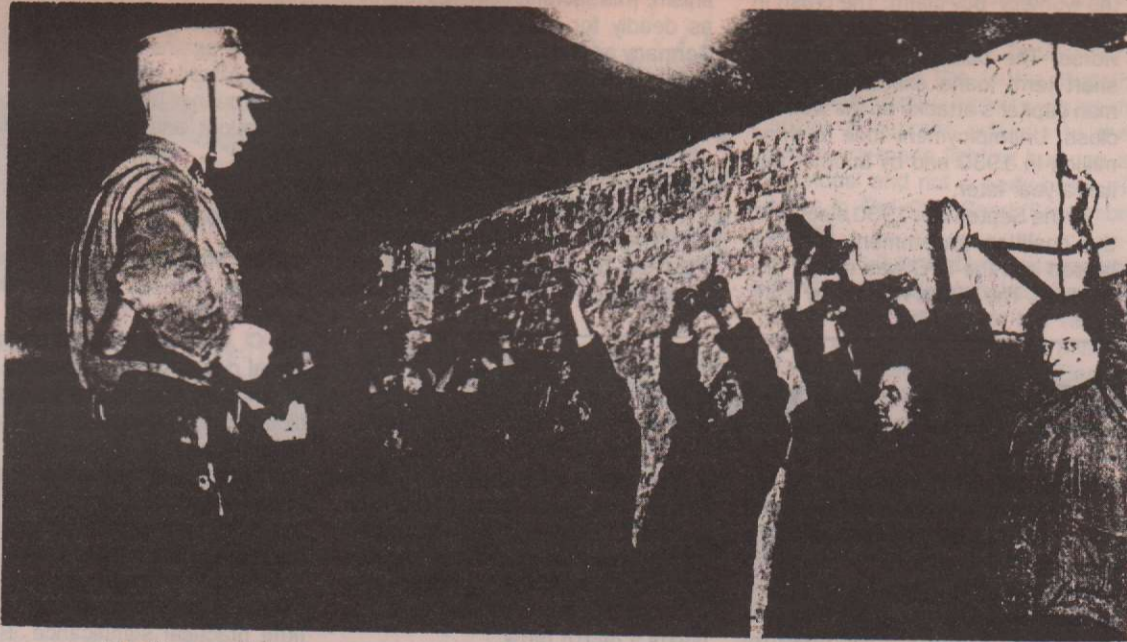
By 1932 the collapse of German industry had placed a staggering five million workers on the dole. Industrial production slumped by 40%. The petit bourgeoisie saw their small businesses ground into dust. The whole of society was sharply polarised.

The Nazis took full advantage of the chaos. At the end of 1931 their membership had more than doubled to 800,000. Hitler won the favour of more and more big industrialists and became a force to be negotiated with by the established bourgeois parties.

In the presidential elections in March 1932 the SPD campaigned for the existing President, General Hindenburg, who they thought was best placed to keep Hitler out. Hindenburg won, but the Nazis' vote had doubled in less than 18 months. Their 11.5 million votes gave them the support of a third of Germany's entire electorate.

The election campaigns were important for Hitler's "legal" strategy, but more important was the battle for the streets. Here the SA were determined to clear the path to Nazi rule by beating the working class into submission. Chancellor Brüning, of the Centre Party, had banned the SA, but after his resignation, at the end of May 1932, the storm troopers began to operate in many areas with police protection. A state of localised civil war developed in a whole number of German towns. The Berlin chief of police reported 461 battles in which 82 people were killed and 400 seriously injured between 1 June and 31 July 1932.

While the criminal misleadership of the SDP and KPD allowed Hitler to assume power without a civil war, the heroism of the German working class should never be forgotten. The Nazis' favoured tactic was to stage provocative marches through working class districts. On 17 July the Nazis attempted to march through Altona, near Hamburg. It was a Red area. The Nazi column was met by a hail of bullets from the Red Front fighters. The march was



"A false political theory bears within itself its own punishment" – Trotsky

conscious project of mobilising the enraged petit bourgeois masses around a programme of unremitting hostility to the working class movement. The membership of the National Socialists was predominantly petit bourgeois, but also incorporated many backward workers in its period of growth.

In a country with such a highly developed labour movement, in which the aspiration of the overwhelming majority of the workers, whether social democratic or communist, was for a socialist society, the Nazis cynically accepted the need for left rhetoric. Fascist "anti-capitalism" reflected the antagonism of the middle classes to the big corporations and the banks and made possible the winning of sections of workers disenchanted with the SPD. The Nazis could not hope to become a mass

and commercial profits by 9.2% between 1932 and 1938. The largest of the companies increased their share of total capital by 11.5% between Hitler's rise to power and the highpoint of German military success in 1942. Meanwhile the workers were subjected to a near pay freeze throughout this period, despite the chronic labour shortage.

During the struggle for power the "left" Nazis, led by the Strasser brothers, were kept firmly under control (and then liquidated after Hitler's seizure of power). The sanctity of private property was firmly established as a tenet of Nazism at Bamberg in 1926. Drawing on the bogus economic "theories" of Gottfried Feder, the Nazis distinguished between patriotic, national "productive" capitalists, whom they supported, and

the destruction of Marxism, then any means are justified to bring it about . . . a movement which turns to the broad masses, to those among whom the Marxists themselves work. One can only get rid of poison with an antidote."

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Hitler's value to the big capitalists lay in the specific character of the movement. It was qualitatively different to other forms of bourgeois reaction because of its commitment to the physical struggle

Continued overleaf

ONE OF the most pernicious myths about Hitler's rise to power is that his Nazi project reflected something specifically authoritarian about the German national character. This piece of nonsense ignores the origins of fascism (which developed in Italy), the brutality of non-German fascist movements, and the complicity of upstanding British citizens in Hitler's Holocaust in the Channel Islands, deliberately covered up for years by the British government.

Most importantly, it ignores the opposition to the Nazis from the millions of German workers who supported the SPD and the KPD. The German workers' movement loathed the fascists and fought many brave battles to rid the streets of the SA squads. The activists who were beheaded in Hitler's prison camps were every bit as German as their Nazi executioners. But they served a different class to the Hitlerites.

The Nazi movement fitted the needs of the German ruling class at a specific point in history. There was nothing inevitable about their rise to power as a result of the German national character. They could have been stopped by a workers' united front. The threat they posed could have been vanquished by a workers' revolution. As the German Marxist Clara Zetkin noted:

"Fascism is the punishment inflicted on the proletariat for not having continued the revolution begun in Russia."

The real reason for the rise and victory of the Nazi movement was the disastrous strategy used by the main workers' organisations to counter the fascist threat. The KPD and SPD secured the support of almost 14 million workers on the eve of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. But they proved incapable of using this support to vanquish Hitler.

### Upturn

From 1926 there was a sharp upturn in working class militancy which propelled the SPD into government after the election of May 1928. Between them the SPD and the KPD won a massive 40.4% of the poll, while the Nazis got a mere 2.6%, some 800,000 votes. But the SPD's coalition with the bourgeois Peoples' Party was unable to satisfy either the bosses or the working class. It antagonised the bosses by initially op-

**Prolet, wie lange noch?  
Wirf ab das Hakenjoch!**



**Keine  
Stimme**

**den Faschisten oder Stinnessozialisten.  
Kämpfe mit den Kommunisten!**

### KPD election poster equating Social Democracy with fascism

posing a warship building programme. Then it backed down under pressure to the dismay of its working class followers.

More significantly, its social programme, involving house building, welfare provision and the building of feeding centres for children, was thrown into reverse by the end of 1928 as a result of the drying up of US investment and loans. The industrialists declared war on state spending and on wage levels and pushed the bourgeois parties to the right.

A crucial lockout in the iron industry in the Ruhr was betrayed by the SPD referring the dispute to binding arbitration and then declaring against the workers' pay claim. The crash in the following autumn made matters worse. The calling in of America's short term loans exacerbated German capital's attacks on the working class. Unemployment rose to three million in 1930 and by another million a year later.

By the September 1930 elections, the coalition government had collapsed and the SPD was deeply discredited. The SPD's vote fell by 5.3%

to 24.5%, whilst the KPD went from 10.6 to 13.1% of the vote.

This gain for the far left was dwarfed by the catastrophic rise in support for the Nazis. They rocketed from 800,000 votes in 1928 to over six million, becoming the second largest party after the SPD. This was primarily the responsibility of the SPD in losing the confidence of the masses, repelling the middle class through their weakness and apparent responsibility for falling living standards.

The KPD grew, but by nowhere near as much as it should have. The possibility of winning social democratic workers to communism had been impeded by the party's sectarianism. This sectarianism was to prove as deadly for the working class of Germany as the SPD's opportunism.

The roots of KPD's sectarianism lay in both its own origins in the German revolution of 1918/19 and the policies of the Communist International (CI). The KPD began life as the Spartakists. In 1919 the SPD, which had already betrayed the working class by supporting the German imperialist war effort in 1914, be-

# The tragic German movement

came the party of counter-revolution.

Under Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann the SPD established the Freikorps. This motley band of ex-soldiers, many of whom went on to become leaders of Hitler's SA, drowned the German revolution in blood. With the blessing of the SPD they murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and launched a reign of terror against the Spartakists.

In the stormy years that followed the revolution the SPD, frequently the party of national or state government, policed the working class and persecuted the communists. All of this, not surprisingly, created bad feelings between the two parties. But woe betide the revolutionary politician who bases tactics on bad feelings alone.

Early in its life the KPD developed the position that the SPD's counter-revolutionary role was the same as that of the fascists. This sectarian premise guided the KPD's politics throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1923 the KPD issued a document declaring "Social Democracy as accomplice of fascism". In 1924 the Red Front was set up "to organise and mobilise the great masses against the republican indoctrination of workers by the Reichsbanner [the SPD's military organisation] and against the fascist menace".

### Equation

This constant equation of the SPD with the fascists influenced the CI itself. At its Fifth Congress in 1924 the CI declared that "fascism and social democracy are the two sides of a single instrument of capitalist dictatorship", while Stalin penned his famous line that fascism and social democracy are "not antipodes, they are twins", adding for good measure that social democracy "is objectively the moderate wing of fascism".

During the boom years of the 1920s these sectarian positions had little practical significance. But the turn in the world situation after 1929 and the turn in the CI, now under Stalin's sole domination, towards the ultra-left "third period", exposed the grave dangers inherent in the KPD's policies towards the SPD.

Stalin decreed the "third period" as one in which the final battle with capitalism would be fought and in which the social democrats were now the greatest enemy of the working class. They were "social fascists", far more dangerous than the Hitler fascists because of their influence in the working class. The central task for the KPD was to smash the social fascists. After that they could turn to dealing with Hitler.

This new policy from Moscow sat neatly with the KPD's own traditions. That millions of workers could swallow this sectarianism was due to the mass character of the KPD and its use of the SPD's old methods of turning the party into a separate and



Red Front fighters—lions led by donkeys

sealed world of its own. If you were a party member you read its newspapers, attended its cultural organisations, lived in districts dominated by it, enjoyed your leisure time at its facilities and made your politics via party front organisations and unions.

Despite the enormous advantages of being a mass party and enjoying the various benefits that such a self-contained world can provide, especially for the many poor and unemployed workers in the party's ranks, it frequently had the disadvantage of sealing workers off from those grouped in that other world within a world, the SPD.

These factors partly explain why the CI was able to get away with imposing its disastrous rejection of the united front. And this fatally flawed response of the workers' parties to the massive growth of the fascist threat proved crucial in Hitler's rise to power.

The SPD supported the government of the bourgeois Brüning on the basis that he represented a lesser evil than Hitler. They continued their policy of assuming responsibility for the deepening crisis of German capitalism. The Nazis were therefore able to capitalise on mounting hostility to the regime.

The Stalinist KPD, on the other hand, declared that fascism was already in power! So the KPD refused

## Hitler's rise to power

Continued from page 7

put to flight and the SA was left mourning its dead and treating its wounded.

After Brüning's resignation Hindenburg installed Von Papen as Chancellor. Von Papen was a classic Bonaparte, standing "above parties" and "above the classes", but strengthening the powers of the state and paving the way for fascism. He rescinded the ban on the SA and repressed the left. He authorised the march on Altona and used the battle that ensued as an excuse to abolish the SPD government of Prussia, appointing himself in its place and decreeing a series of draconian anti-working class measures.

Despite its formal commitment to defend democratic liberties, the SPD leaders capitulated in the face of even this gross attack. The KPD's call for a general strike was correct. But it was greeted by the workers with understandable scepticism. After all, the KPD had until recently been campaigning alongside the Nazis against the Prussian government and the SPD.

Von Papen's Bonapartist rule

emboldened Hitler to step up the campaign of terror. On the one hand he wanted to use his control of the streets to try and pressurise Hindenburg into appointing him Chancellor. On the other he was obliged, due to the mass pressure from the Nazi rank and file, to let the SA off the leash.

A wave of violence culminated in the murder of a communist miner in Silesia. It was a microcosm of the reign of terror to come. Five Nazis kicked Pietrzuch, a KPD member, to death while his mother looked on, helpless against the thugs. Hitler then publicly backed the five Nazis, praising them as courageous warriors.

This, together with the public exposure of an SA plan for a *putsch* and the rejection of Hitler's bid for the Chancellorship in mid-August, created a crisis in the Nazi party's ranks. Sections of the bourgeois press began to accuse the party of being gangsters. Sections of the inner ruling class circles grew distrustful of Hitler's refusal to brook any coalition with the Centre Party and other right wing parties. Industrialists withdrew support and

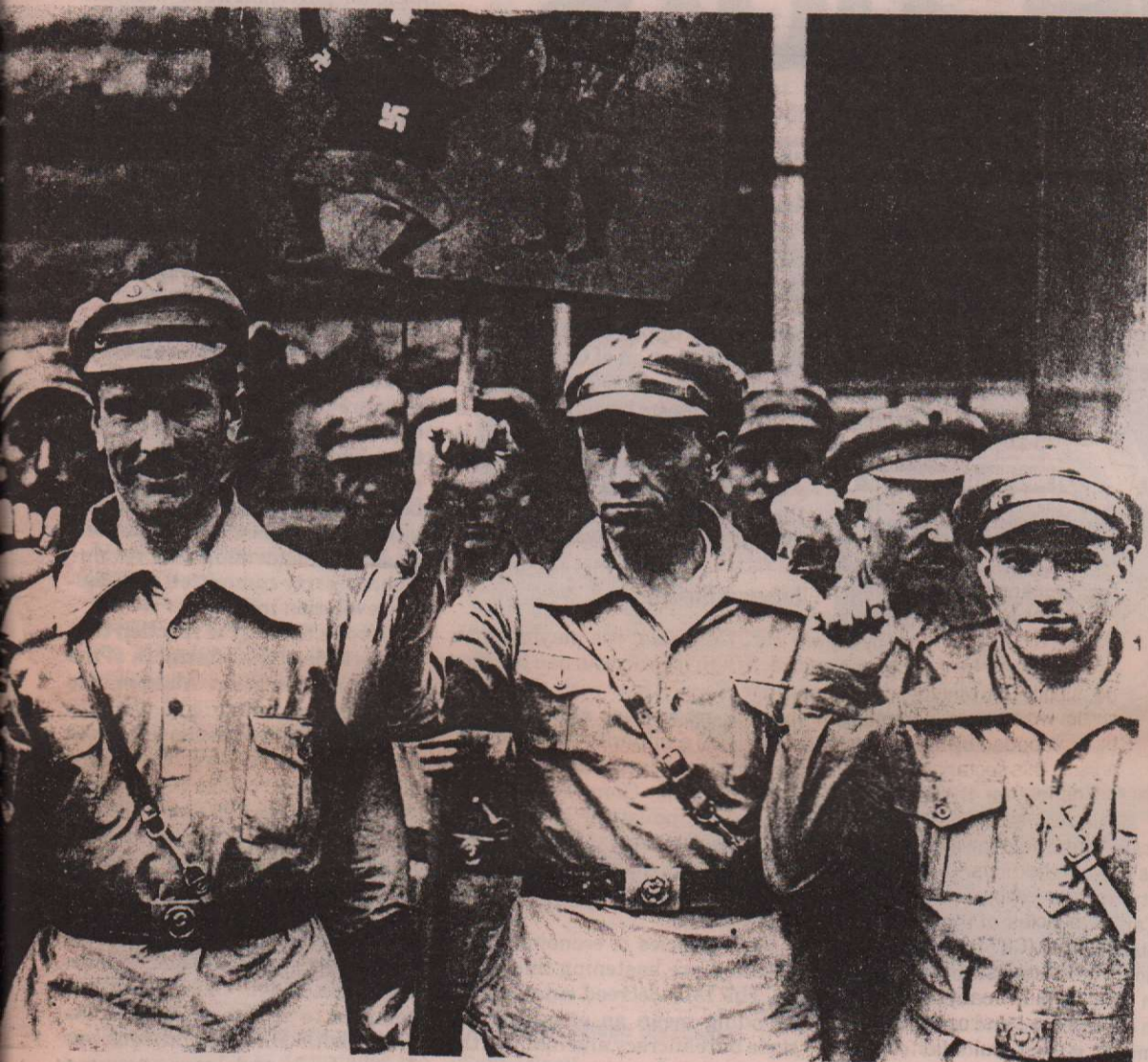
a cash crisis hit the party. Victory seemed far away for the would-be dictator. That Hitler triumphed within a matter of months was due to the failure of the working class to seize the moment and deal the Nazis a death blow.

In the elections in November the Nazis lost two million votes and were smaller than the combined total of the votes cast for the workers' parties. In the July election their vote had been almost 14 million, just higher than the combined SPD and KPD vote. But the failure of the November election to create a stable government or promise an economic climate more suitable for exploitation and profit making pushed the big bosses back towards the Hitler camp.

A short-lived regime, under General Schleicher, attempted to avert both Nazi rule and a KPD rising by enlisting the support of the army, the trade unions and even the "left" Nazis. It was doomed to failure. On 30 January 1933, Hindenburg, President courtesy of the votes of the SPD and its supporters, had nowhere left to turn. He appointed Hitler as Chancellor.■



# Tragedy of the workers' front



any possibility of seeking an alliance with the SPD to crush the fascists. Instead, the KPD leader Thälmann, argued as late as 1932, for a "revolutionary united front policy—that means relentless struggle against the social fascists of every hue, above all against the most dangerous 'left' forms of social fascism". The left forms he referred to included left social democrats and expelled communists (including the Trotskyists).

Any united front against the fascists, Thälmann insisted, must be built *only from below*, without any agreements being struck between the SPD and KPD leaderships at national, regional or local level. As he put it, in a textbook example of sectarianism, because of "differences in principle shown to exist between the KPD and the SPD we reject negotiations from the top with the SPD".

The only figure in the international workers' movement able to both correctly appraise the nature of the fascist threat and to develop a programme for its defeat was Leon Trotsky. The International Left Opposition aimed to reform the KPD and the Communist International, and to win the millions of subjectively revolutionary workers in the KPD to the need for a workers' united front against fascism.

For Trotsky this was far from being a call for the KPD and the SPD to put

aside their differences. Indeed Trotsky stressed that the true alternatives as a result of the crisis were fascism or workers' revolution. It was therefore vital for the communists to win the majority of the working class away from the reformist SPD if the unfolding revolutionary crisis was to be resolved by the workers taking power. The point was how to do it.

Nazi propaganda chief Josef Göbbels explained in 1934 that:

"If our opponents had been clever, considering that political weapons were so unevenly distributed, they could undoubtedly have found ways and opportunities to make our success impossible."

He was clear what these "ways" were, declaring:

"If the enemy had known how weak we were, it would probably have reduced us to jelly. It would have crushed in blood the very beginning of our work."

Trotsky was one of the few who recognised this. Together the military organisations of the SPD and the KPD, the Reichsbanner and the Red Front Fighters, could have destroyed the SA stormtroopers and have scattered the fascist gangs. But the SPD leaders' cowardice and the false tactics of the KPD prevented any such alliance from being firmly established.

Nonetheless the scale of the fascist threat, the wave of attacks on

leftists and meetings and the continuing campaign of Nazi street provocations meant that the social democratic workers became increasingly aware of the need for defensive action. In late 1931 the SPD leaders established a campaign called the Iron Front to give an appearance of action whilst keeping activity strictly within the bounds of legality. Trotsky accurately characterised the main problem with this:

"The 'Iron Front' is essentially a bloc of numerically powerful social democratic trade unions with impotent groups of bourgeois 'republicans' . . . When it comes to fighting, cadavers are worthless, but they come in handy to keep the living from fighting. Their bourgeois allies serve the social democratic leaders as a bride around the necks of the workers' organisations."

Yet at the same time SPD members were acutely conscious of the need to fight. Many Iron Front activists fought the fascists and even procured arms. The KPD newspaper quoted the words of one Reichsbanner commander that the will to a united front existed among the masses and that if necessary he would establish it "over the heads of the leaders".

But the KPD's refusal to propose common action with the SPD gave the reformist leaders every excuse they needed to avoid action. When

leading SPD member Breitscheid had issued an equivocal and mealy-mouthed appeal to the KPD for joint action, the KPD responded with an indignant campaign of denunciation and an outright rejection of a united front "from above". This allowed the SPD to argue that the KPD was unserious about fighting fascism, and to immunise their members against the influence of the communists.

If Breitscheid's offer had been met by the KPD with a concrete proposal for action, for collaboration between their organisations of a corresponding level from local committees right up to the leadership, the SPD leaders would have been hard pressed to refuse. If they had it would have lowered their prestige and boosted respect for the Communists among their supporters.

In accordance with the official line that to beat the fascists it was first necessary to defeat the SPD, certain local KPD leaders even expressed their preference for the Nazis over the SPD. The leader of the KPD's Chemnitz-Erzgebirge District declared, "Bolshevism and fascism share a common goal; the destruction of capitalism and of the Social Democratic Party".

Yet such comments were an exception, never endorsed by the KPD leadership. It would be wrong to say that the KPD did not engage in any fight against the fascists. Red Front Fighters and members of the KPD's front organisation Anti-fascist Action (Antifa) fought bravely in regular street battles with the Nazis. But the Antifa, despite the deceptive claims of the KPD that it was a non-party organisation, was no replacement for the united front with the SPD.

## Counterposed

In a pamphlet purporting to record a dialogue with social democratic workers, Thälmann insisted that SPD members could join the Antifa without leaving their party. But this was counterposed to common action through the united front with the SPD from above and below. Trotsky mercilessly mocked the notion that the KPD could simply hope to attract the social democratic activists to their own ready-made fighting body on an individual and not a party basis. He wrote in *The Only Road* (September 1932):

"How is it possible not to put the question of relations between parties when that is just where the very essence of the question lies? Millions of workers follow the Social Democracy. Other millions—the Communist Party. To the social democratic workers who ask how we shall achieve joint actions between your party and ours against fascism, Thälmann answers: stream toward us by the millions 'on a class and not a party basis'. Isn't this the most wretched bombast?"

The worst example of the practical consequences of the KPD's sectarianism came in 1931. In the late spring and early summer of that year the Nazis launched a campaign for a referendum to oust the government of the Prussian state, which had long been an SPD stronghold, and where the SPD headed the coalition government and dominated the police force. The Stalinists initially opposed the referendum, but in July they made a sudden criminal zigzag, declaring that unless the SPD made an immediate united front with the KPD, they would support the referendum!

It would have been impossible to combine more tactical and principled errors in one manoeuvre. Not only was this switch away from outright rejection of the united front unexplained and inexplicable, but the SPD's refusal was entirely to be expected: they could easily demonstrate to their members that the KPD's offer was made in bad faith, and was a threat rather than a practical pro-

posal for desperately needed common struggle.

So the workers were treated to the sickening and demoralising sight of the KPD and the Nazis both campaigning for a yes vote in the referendum against an SPD-led government. Instead of realising the need to block with the SPD, and even with their bourgeois government in Prussia against the Nazis, the KPD's ultra-left tactic could only confuse the class and demobilise potential opposition to the fascists. It was impossible even for the KPD to assess how many of the 9.8 million yes votes were communist, and how many were fascist.

Errors such as this were crucial to Hitler's success. The working class, the prime victim of his dark crusade, was prevented from uniting to smash him by the policies of its reformist and Stalinist leaders. Even after his appointment the leaders proved resolute only in their irresolution, sophisticated only in their justifications for avoiding a fight. The brief time between Hitler's appointment and the consolidation of his dictatorship was squandered by the leaders of both parties.

## Loyal

The SPD, loyal to the capitalists' democracy to the last, insisted that Hitler's appointment was technically constitutional and opposed taking action against the Nazis. Already their leaders were thinking of how they could be accommodated as a loyal opposition under Hitler. The KPD, incredibly, still insisted that the SPD were the main danger, yet violated all logic by fighting for a general strike.

Then suddenly in March came a change of line from above. The Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) addressed an appeal for the united front to the leaderships of the social democratic parties "internationally". Incapable of a principled position, they even insisted that communists should "abandon all attacks against the social democratic organisations during the joint action." The principle of the Comintern under Lenin, that it was necessary to "march separately and strike together" remained a closed book to the Stalinists.

Too late they recognised the need for joint action, but only at the price of preventing the KPD from attacking the treachery of the SPD. Yet even this line was not to last. On 7 April the ECCI announced that through all the contradictions, the wild swings of policy and the incoherent tactics, despite the banning of the KPD and Thälmann being held under arrest, despite the ruin of the German workers' movement and the imminent destruction of the unions:

"The political line . . . of the Central Committee, with Thälmann at its head, was completely correct up to and during Hitler's *coup d'état*."

## Lessons

On the sixtieth anniversary of Hitler's assumption of power, Trotskyists must again point to the lessons of the German tragedy, lessons learnt through the bitterest historic experience. The specific nature of fascism—the mobilisation of the petit bourgeoisie to destroy all vestiges of working class organisation—demands a specific response. The entire working class must unite in action to liquidate the fascist bands whenever they raise their heads.

And when capitalism enters into a period of crisis and decay, millions will look for a way out. If mass hostility to the system is not channelled into support for a workers' party and a struggle for working class power, if the leadership of the working class fails to live up to its historic tasks, the punishment for the workers and for all humanity will be severe indeed. ■

**T**HE ATTACK on the Babri Mosque on 6 December was not a spontaneous outburst of Hindu anger. It was part of a continuing campaign by the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to terrorise India's Muslim population and lay the basis for a Hindu state.

At the end of 1990 the BJP orchestrated a series of pogroms against Muslims. The target then was also the Babri Mosque, the site, say the BJP, of the birthplace of the Hindu deity, Lord Ram. Two years on, the BJP called a demonstration at the site of the Mosque. Over 200,000 Hindu chauvinists responded to the call and, using sledge hammers, iron bars and even their bare hands, they tore down the Mosque.

The BJP, who control the state government in Uttar Pradesh where the Mosque is located, had ordered the police to allow the demonstration to do exactly what it liked. Spurred on by activists from Hindu fascist outfits, like the Vishwas Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which nestle behind the BJP's right wing Hindu front, the demonstrators took advantage of what was in effect police protection.

### Riots

The destruction of the Babri Mosque led to riots and massacres throughout India. Around 80% of the casualties were victims of police bullets. There are many reports of the police deliberately firing at crowds of protesting Muslims. One report from a child in Bombay describes how the police were reacting:

"I saw a policeman shove a revolver into a boy's stomach, 'Run!', the policeman said. The boy refused. 'If I run you'll kill me anyway', the boy said. Then the policeman shot him in the stomach."

The much vaunted "largest democracy in the world" has once again exhibited its fragile nature. It is being held together by a combination of military repression and the rule by decree of the Congress government in Delhi. Once again tensions between the many different national and religious groupings in the sub-continent are exploding to the surface.

India has a long history of communal strife. In 1947, when the British imperialists partitioned India and Pakistan, some eight million people were made homeless and as many as 200,000 died. Since then India has witnessed repeated outbreaks of communalist and nationalist violence, between Hindus and Muslims, between Sikh, Kashmiri and Assamese separatists and the central state.

### Conflict

The rise of the BJP is a further chapter in this history of conflict. This rabid Hindu chauvinist party fought its first general election in 1984 and won only two seats in the federal parliament. In 1991, after the first round of anti-Muslim pogroms, it won 119 seats and became the main opposition to the Congress Party's minority government. It had taken one in every three Hindu votes and became the ruling state government in four of India's 25 states.

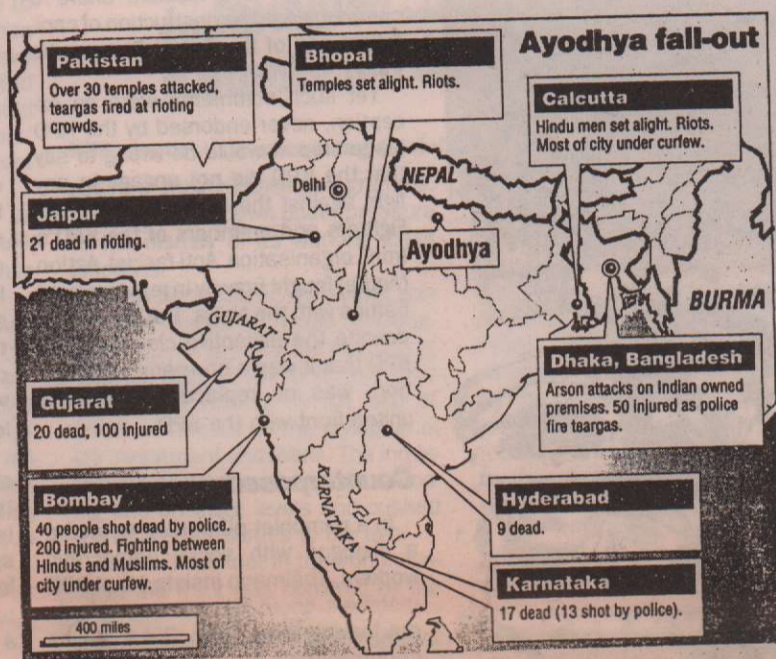
The growth of Hindu chauvinism, and with it the BJP, is a reflection of Indian capitalism's deep crisis. After independence the development of India's economy, under the Congress Party dynasty, led many on the left and right to use it as a refutation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Without a workers' revolution the Indian bourgeoisie appeared to

## INDIA

Last month India witnessed a new round of communalist violence. Hindu chauvinists destroyed the Muslim mosque at Ayodhya in northern India. Riots followed throughout India, and violence spread to Indian communities across the world. Over one thousand died and many more were injured. **Dave Beech** explains the background to these events

# The roots of the riots



Map showing the widespread scale of the rioting across India

have solved the great democratic questions: it was governed by a parliament; the land question was "settled" through the Green Revolution and the national question through the system of state governments; industrial development took place under a national bourgeoisie backed by the state, protected by a degree of economic "autarchy" and helped by "friendship treaties" with the USSR.

But appearances can be deceptive. India's development confirmed with a vengeance Trotsky's theory that only a workers' revolution could progressively resolve these questions. The Congress Party survived for decades as a ruling party under "democracy", with a single family at its head until the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, courtesy of draconian powers and occasional spells of unbridled dictatorship.

The Green Revolution "settled" the land question by creating a class of rich peasants in the north, farming the best land, alongside a massive class of poor or landless peasants eking out a miserable existence.

### Exploitation

Industrial development was based on super-exploitation. Its inability to sustain itself undermined its national character. Today Gandhi's successor, Prime Minister Rao, is busy privatising the economy and opening the door to massive foreign investment. Even in its heyday of "autarky", India was deeply in debt to the imperialist powers.

As for the national question, the wars in the Punjab, in Kashmir and Assam, together with the increasing conflict between the Hin-

du and Muslims, show the hollowness of the Indian bourgeoisie's "stability" in this sphere.

Far from being an exception to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, India is a striking confirmation of it. It is a textbook illustration of combined and uneven development, a semi-colonial country that combines space age technology with the bride price, splendid universities with one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world, fabulous wealth alongside the unbelievable poverty of the slums of Calcutta and Bombay.

In the late 1980s Congress shifted its economic policy to rescue itself from severe crisis. Instead it has deepened India's semi-colonial servitude. The level of debt that India faces is \$70 billion and 70% of its new loans are used to service this debt. Unemployment is officially 35 million with at least 50 million more unregistered. In Bombay alone registered youth unemployment has risen by 250% in the last decade.

In addition India has been unable to break from the outmoded caste system. The lower castes, such as the Untouchables, suffer appalling poverty. Attempts to remedy this through actions like reserving jobs have met with vicious reaction from the higher castes like those seen over the past month.

During its brief spell in office the Janata Dal Party, under V P Singh, introduced quotas for employment of the lower castes by the government. This followed the recommendations of the Mandal report which called for a system of reservations for certain areas of public sector hiring. This was designed to benefit a large part of the country's lower castes not already covered by

such legislation.

The BJP demonstrated against these measures, and the Congress Party, seeing an opportunity to revive its electoral fortunes, was happy to placate the BJP. Both the BJP and Congress led anti-Mandal protests by upper caste students. To the satisfaction of Congress the Ayodhya riots of 1990 and the anti-Mandal protests brought down the Janata Dal government. When it suited Congress it was happy to work alongside the BJP and use the caste system and Hindu chauvinism to its own advantage.

### Liberalisation

But Congress was playing with fire. When it was returned to office under Rao it was with the slimmest of majorities, and it has to survive as a minority government. The traditional secular alliance that underpinned Congress' power base—the industrial bourgeoisie, the richer farmers, the civil service bureaucracy—has started to break up under the impact of India's economic crisis.

Rao's policies of economic liberalisation are hastening this break up. His IMF-decreed cuts in state spending mean an attack on the state bureaucracy and many of the protected industries. And this is tantamount to a declaration of war on the privileges of many of Congress' supporters.

Another dramatic change in Indian life is the number of people leaving the countryside and moving to slums on the environs of the major cities. Outside Bombay there exists Dhavaria, the largest slum in Asia. The expansion of a desperate layer of urban poor and lumpenproletarians that this is creating provides fertile recruiting grounds for the Hindu chauvinists.

### Undermined

All of these factors have undermined Congress and boosted the fortunes of the BJP. Its simple message of a Hindu state to benefit Hindu people and its militant anti-Muslim actions are winning it support. From the slums it is winning a hard core of activists. From the higher castes and from the state bureaucracy, whose privileges are threatened, it is winning "respectable" national backers.

Faced with this Congress decided to act against the BJP after the recent riots. Rao suspended the state government of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. It drafted in 40,000 soldiers to secure the town of Ayodhya. There was a dusk-to-dawn curfew in parts of ten Indian states. The government has banned the VHP and RSS and another

group called Bayrang Dal. Two Muslim groups were also banned, Jamait-e-Islami and Islamic Sevak Sangh.

At first the leadership of the BJP reacted by admitting responsibility and both the leader of the BJP in the federal parliament, Lal Krishna Advani, and the party's president, Murli Manohar Joshi, resigned. These two leaders were among five Hindu politicians arrested on 8 December. They responded defiantly, calling an India-wide strike to protest against their arrest.

### Fascist

On 15 December Rao sacked the BJP state governments of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. All the sacked ministers belonged to the fascist RSS. The national government of the Congress Party declared that all of these provinces will be run by direct presidential rule.

But Congress' action against the BJP is self-serving, and no workers in India, no Muslims under threat from pogroms, should believe that Congress is their friend. It will act just as ruthlessly against the workers and poor if it feels its liberalisation plans are in any way threatened by their struggles.

The workers, peasants and poor of India will need to act on Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution if they are to end the cycle of super-exploitation and communal strife that blights their country. They need to find a fighting unity against both Congress and the Hindu chauvinists. They need to be organised under the leadership of a revolutionary party committed to socialist revolution in India.

Despite the orgy of reaction that characterised the aftermath of the attack on the Babri Mosque, the perspective of working class unity and socialist revolution is a real one for India. During the recent riots a group called Shev Sena, which originated in the 1960s in Bombay as an anti-communist organisation with the specific aim of attacking the relatively strong unions in the transport, banking, and public sector, organised a squad to go into the slums and attack Muslims. But when these thugs attempted to set fire to parts of the slum, both Hindus and Muslims fought back and later organised street patrols.

### Resistance

Although many Muslims eventually fled the slum, the residents were right to resist and not to rely on the forces of the state. The key to defeating the bigots next time will be preparing defence organisations now. The resident workers and unemployed of these slums must demand better living conditions through a state funded public programme of works, under workers' control, for housing, schooling and proper water and sewage systems.

Many within the working class actively oppose the communalist violence, and the trade unions and communist parties called for a general strike against the actions of the BJP, VHP and RSS. This was supported by the Janata Dal Party and reluctantly by the Congress Party.

This strike was actually more effective than the reactionary strike called by the BJP and shows the relative power of sections of the working class such as transport and communication workers.

More action like this will need to be organised to stop the BJP and to smash the progromists before they are able to take further advantage of the crisis of Indian society and turn their reactionary vision into reality. ■

# Israel expels Islamic activists

**A**S WE go to press the 415 Islamic activists expelled by Israel are still languishing in no-man's-land between Israel's South Lebanon "security zone" and Lebanese army positions. This brutality is Israel's reprisal for the abduction and killing of one of its border policemen.

The deportees, some sick, some injured after being fired on by Israeli troops and their Christian South Lebanon Army allies, are living on melted snow and some food smuggled from nearby villages. That is the only food they have. There are no homes and no medical supplies: the men are denied all

BY ANTONY ADLER

contact with their families.

The deportations were intended as a deterrent to the rising level of attacks on Israeli security forces, especially by the increasingly audacious Islamic organisation, Hamas.

However, the plight of the exiles, reminiscent of the trials of the faithful in Quranic legend, has only served to inflame feeling against the continued national oppression suffered by Palestinians at the hands of Israel. In the immediate aftermath eight were shot dead by Israeli forces during rioting in the

Gaza area.

The blatant injustice of Israel's collective punishment of the 415 even drew condemnation from the UN and the EC. US president-elect Clinton remarked that the deportations "may go too far and imperil the peace talks".

The events have pushed Hamas into the foreground. Only last summer vicious fighting took place between Hamas and the PLO's leading faction, Yasser Arafat's Fatah. Now negotiations are taking place over the admittance of Hamas to the PLO and the "Unified National Leadership of the Uprising" in the Occupied Territories.

How has Hamas achieved this meteoric rise? The main reason is frustration at five years of the Intifada (uprising) and a year of deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace talks. Initially, some faith in negotiations appears to have been prevalent among the Palestinian population and a decline in Intifada activity took place. But as the talks ground on Israeli repression continued.

The Palestinian negotiators' lack of progress has fuelled the frustration, as have their limited aims. The negotiations only cover the 1967 Occupied Territories, encompassing a minority of the Palestinian people.

A deal on this basis would leave over 700,000 Palestinians living in the state of Israel as second class citizens in the specifically Jewish confessional state.

Hamas has profited from this frustration, earning increased support for its seemingly uncompromising goal of establishing an Islamic state in the whole of Israel and the Occupied Territories. Simi-

larly its willingness to engage in militant confrontation with the Israeli state has won it support and respect amongst the Palestinians.

A boost to the Islamicists has also undoubtedly come from the activity and success of their militant co-religionists in Algeria, Egypt and Jordan. Ironically, Israel initially encouraged the Islamicists as a counter-weight to the PLO in the 1980s.

In the context of imperialism's desire to shape its "new world order" after the collapse of Stalinism, the failure of the existing bourgeois organisations such as the PLO and the weakness of the workers' movement has created fertile ground for the upsurge of radical reactionary solutions such as militant Islam.

What does all this mean for revolutionaries? Uncompromising opposition to Zionism must continue. Revolutionaries should side unconditionally with the Palestinians in the face of Israeli repression and in the fight for democratic rights.

The Zionist state is undemocratic and racist. It bases itself on the systematic denial of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian Arabs. The Zionists are incapable of abandoning this reactionary core of their project, because if rights of employment, housing and, crucially, immigration and citizenship were extended equally to Jew and Arab alike the specifically Jewish character of the state would rapidly disappear.

In the fight against the Israeli state it is vital to address the youth whom the Islamicists influence. The growing support for Hamas' radical campaign against the Israeli state is testimony to the fighting spirit and intransigence of many Palestinians, particularly the youth, who are not prepared to see the sacrifices made in the Intifada frittered away for an elusive and partial settlement.

But Hamas is fundamentally an anti-democratic, anti-working class organisation. Its religious ideology and strategic aims are reactionary. An Islamic state would be no solution for the Christian minority of Palestinians, still less for Palestinian women. Least of all would a capitalist Islamic state represent genuine liberation for the Palestinian workers: on the contrary, Islamic regimes from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia through to Iran itself have severely curtailed workers' organisations and democratic liberties.

These regimes are perfectly capable of establishing a *modus vivendi* with imperialism, using pseudo-radical and anti-imperialist rhetoric to divert attention from their accommodation to imperialist domination of the economic and political life of the region.

While fighting for the overthrow of the Zionist state, alongside Hamas wherever necessary and possible, it is obligatory for communists to combat its reactionary ideas. It would not be permissible to support actions with reactionary aims such as the setting up of an Islamic state, let alone to give political support to its programme.

The only progressive solution for the Palestinian masses is for the working class to come to the head of the struggle for national and democratic rights. A working class party must be built, based on a programme that combines democratic and anti-capitalist demands, and links them to the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the Zionist state and the construction of a workers' republic.

Only in this way, by elaborating a concrete programme based on the method of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, can a solution to the Palestinian question, and the crushing poverty and oppression of the whole region, be found. ■

## Bosnia: no UN solution

**G**EORGE BUSH has been talking tough on Bosnia after acting tough in Somalia.

US options range from the enforcement of a no-fly zone to direct military assaults on Serbian positions. The EC has sponsored peace talks. Needless to say, none of these plans will provide any security for the peoples of the Balkans against continued war, hunger and cold.

The EC, UN and the USA want to avert a war in Kosovo and Macedonia which would seriously destabilise the region. The plans put forward by Cyrus Vance and David Owen are for the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten autonomous provinces, largely self-ruling but unable to form international agreements.

The Bosnian Serbs are opposed to this settlement as it would dramatically reduce the territory they control after ethnic cleansing. A clause in the agreement would prevent them carrying through their ultimate war aim of integrating majority Serb areas into a Greater Serbia. Their proposed alternative is for a Bosnian Confederation of three independent states—Serbian, Croatian and Muslim controlled.

The Bosnian Muslims are opposed to the deal because it concedes too much territory and leaves them with a weak, divided state squeezed between expansionist Serbia and Croatia.

The present imperialist drive for a settlement does not represent a decisive shift towards military intervention. John Major continues to express reservations even about the minimal action of enforcing a no-fly zone, although NATO has agreed to do this with the backing of France. Before they will commit troops, the USA would like UN backing for any necessary action, including direct attacks on



Victims of ethnic cleansing

Serbia itself.

It would not be easy for the UN, the USA or NATO to intervene and impose a rapid settlement. In the first place, they are not agreed on the objectives of such an intervention, and secondly they would face military difficulties in a prolonged land confrontation. The "Iraq option" of bombing Serbia into submission is not one that would find widespread support inside Europe.

The EC's objective since August 1992 has been to tolerate the Serbian and Croatian carve-up of Bosnia as the best option for stabilising the region for the restoration of capital-

BY CLARE HEATH

ism. They had banked on the victory of Panic in the recent Serbian elections, counting on him as a reliable restorationist.

The victory of Milosevic in the December elections created a less favourable situation for the EC. They now have to replace their deals with Panic with an approach to Milosevic himself. This Serbian nationalist who was last year described as "the new Hitler of the region" is now regarded as the key to finding a peace settlement in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Muslims and their allies continue to be bombed, forcibly relocated, raped and terrorised. The proposed peace settlement does nothing to protect them from this and offers them an agreement which confirms many of the bloody gains of the Serbs and Croats.

The UN peacekeepers are not defending the Bosnian Muslims at all, as the assassination of the Bosnian deputy Prime Minister Hakija Turajlic showed. He was travelling on a UN convoy when Serbian troops set up a road block, hauled him out and shot him seven times in front of the UN forces.

The present peace talks may arrive at a settlement, with or without direct military intervention by UN or US troops. But this will not reverse the defeats suffered by the Bosnian people. Their predominantly Muslim armed militias need to draw in as many of the other peoples as possible to lay the basis for a real multinational defence against the pogromists. They deserve the financial and political support of the international labour movement.

- No imperialist intervention
- No to UN/EC sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro
- No to UN or EC "peacekeeping" forces in Bosnia, Croatia and elsewhere
- Build links between independent workers' organisations in former Yugoslavia and the European and international working class movement

## Rape as a military weapon

**TENS OF thousands of Bosnian Muslim women have been raped in the course of the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing and the creation of a Greater Serbia.**

Rape frequently occurs in war, but it is the vast scale in this case which has drawn so much attention. Between 30,000 to 50,000 Muslim women and girls have been raped, many repeatedly and some then murdered. Others have been left pregnant and forced to continue with the pregnancy, to give birth to "Serbian" babies, another part of the terror campaign which seeks to deny the continued existence of the Muslim people in Bosnia.

These harrowing reports reveal more graphically than anything else the brutalising effects of the civil

war. Serbian soldiers have been forced during the course of the fighting to regard their neighbours and fellow workers as the enemy. They have also been fed an ideology which makes the Muslims inferior, inhuman, to justify ethnic cleansing. Rape, like torture and summary executions, is a way of putting this ideology into practice.

Rape is a particularly degrading form of violence. It is regarded not only as a violation of a woman, but also of her family. This widespread view is part of an ideology which perpetuates women's subordinate position in society. But it maximises the social effects of rape as a planned and systematic policy of terror in the Bosnian war.

But while we recognise that rape is a frequent tactic of terror, we do

not accept it as a legitimate weapon in any war, and no army or soldiers who commit it can be absolved from responsibility. The international agencies call for war crime trials, but this will not protect women now.

It is essential that militias defending the Bosnian communities should not only be multi-ethnic but also include women. Women must be armed and trained to defend themselves from whoever the aggressors are.

Within the Serbian forces carrying out the rapes soldiers report being encouraged and even forced to do so by officers. The soldiers must form committees to resist this control by officers, to operate discipline to prevent rape and to punish those who carry it out. ■

# SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY CONFERENCE

# Britain on the verge of revolution?

**T**HE SOCIALIST Workers Party (SWP) argues that the governmental crisis that erupted with the devaluation of the pound, the enforced exit from the ERM, the mass pit-closure protest and the open warfare in the Tory Party over Maastricht is a crisis "of historic proportions" (Autumn 1992 Conference Report).

It is the culmination of a long drawn out period of economic decline stretching back 30 years if not longer. Today it has come to an "explosive" head because of the European and world economic crisis:

"It reflects a triple crisis of British, European and world capitalism."

The world recession is "worse than any since the thirties". There is "no sign of a sustained recovery". In Europe "German capitalism is debilitated", its economic "influenza equals pneumonia for weaker capitalisms". The crisis afflicts both East and West and there appears to be no way out. According to the Conference Report:

"There is a crisis of state capitalism and market capitalism. All the old remedies within the system fail. Hence the ideological and political crisis at the centre of every government."

Lindsey German's article "Can there be a revolution in Britain?", in *International Socialism* (No 57), adds another argument. So deep is the crisis that Britain is on the verge of entering into a revolutionary period! For German, Britain is "the weak link of the major western capitalisms". She explains that a revolutionary situation in Britain might last "many years rather than months", but declares:

"Many of the negative features which mark the beginning of the path towards revolution - disaffection from government and the ruling class, disillusion with most of the alternatives on offer from society, a deep economic and social crisis - are in place."

## Synchronised

This whole perspective is deeply "catastrophic". It is marked by a profound one-sidedness and impressionism.

Certainly world capitalism is passing through a serious economic recession. While it has been longer than the synchronised recessions of 1973-76 and 1979-83, it has also been shallower. "Debilitated Germany" was still growing, if slowing down, in 1991 by 3.1% and in 1992 by 1.3%. Predictions for 1993 are zero growth, not a fall in production. The USA is now coming out of recession with a 1992 growth rate of 1.8% and 1993 expected at 2.5%. What is certainly true is that the "debt overhang" means recovery will be slow and growth rates low.

But this recession is not "the worst since the thirties" as the SWP would have us believe. Even in Britain, which has had the longest and deepest contraction of all the major industrialised countries in this recession, it is not as bad as the recession of the early 1980s. In the 1990-92 period Britain's output fell by 4.1%, but in 1979-81 it fell by 6.2%.

And we must keep these recent recessions in perspective when comparing with them with the 1930s. Between 1929 and 1933 US real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by 30%, and Germany's fell by 24% in roughly the same period. So the current world recession is not only shallower than the previous two but is of a different order to the great slump of the 1930s.

What about the "ideological and political crisis at the centre of every government"? Is this really true of the USA, Germany, Japan, and France? Surely the collapse of the USSR has made the USA and the

*The Socialist Workers Party is in the middle of a dramatic turn. The leadership has declared war on a section of its longstanding members. These people are "scarred by the 1980s" and "a conservative block" to building the party, according to the 1992 annual conference report.*

*The leadership believes the organisation is on the verge of a breakthrough in terms of numbers and influence. The party is being "re-organised" to meet a class struggle situation that, according to the January Socialist Review, has been transformed into one where the ruling class and its government is "hanging on by a thread".*

*John Mckee argues that while the Socialist Workers Party is grappling with important questions about the character of the present economic crisis and the state of working class organisation, its perspective is one-sided and false. It is a perspective that has more to do with the leadership's desire to "make the breakthrough" than with the reality of the class struggle.*

EC powers more confident and aggressive, not less. They are now more willing to intervene militarily, either on their own or with a UN figleaf, in Somalia, in the former Yugoslavia, in Iraq, in Cambodia.

Of course we are not claiming that everything in the imperialist garden is rosy. Far from it. But the relationship between the collapse of the "old world order", the world economic recession and the strength of the various capitalist powers has to be viewed in all its contradictions.

The SWP leadership is incapable of doing this because it wants to present its members and potential recruits with an increasingly one-sided view of the world: "the revolutionary crisis is round the corner". Such a perspective is aimed at keeping the members in a frenzy of activity and recruitment. This is a well worn path on the British left, one pioneered by Gerry Healy and the Workers Revolutionary Party in the 1970s, and previously lampooned by SWP leaders.

Nowhere is this one-sidedness more apparent than when the SWP comes to assess the state of the working class and its organisations today. Any estimation of the present period in Britain, be it a period of defensive struggles, a pre-revolutionary or even a revolutionary period, depends not just on the weakness and divisions within the ruling class but also on the strength of our own organisations and on the policies and strength of their leaderships.

Throughout the 1980s the SWP argued that the working class movement was plagued by "the downturn". To justify their new perspective this analysis is dumped in favour of an equally one-sided assessment of the class struggle. Now, they claim, we are entering "the upturn". History is merrily re-written by the SWP's theoreticians to explain this apparent shift in the balance of class forces.

According to the "downturn theory", the imposition of the wage-cutting Social Contract by the Labour Government in 1975 began a process of undermining both the militancy of the working class and its capacity to generalise its struggles beyond narrow sectional interests. The shop stewards' movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s had been irrevocably bought off or bureaucratised by Labour. Struggles that did take place in this pe-

riod were, according to the SWP, doomed to bureaucratic strangulation and defeat.

This analysis certainly scarred the SWP cadre in the 1980s. They became deeply pessimistic soothsayers, greeting every proposal for organising rank and file workers, for spreading strike action and for a strategy that could win with predictions of the inevitable defeat that lay around the corner.

The party restructured its organisation to steel its members against the corrosive effects of the downturn. Branch meetings, Student Society meetings and the entire activity of the party focussed narrowly on education in the politics of the SWP. This sealing off of the organisation was reflected in rank and file organisations in the unions being abandoned. Members gave up their union positions for fear of becoming part of the bureaucracy.

## Downturn

As a result the SWP was ill-prepared for the miners' strike of 1984-85. For the first six months it ignored the Miners' Support Committee movement. When it finally joined it the "downturn" was still uppermost in SWP members' minds. As it became clear that the miners' strike would go down to defeat unless it was turned into a generalised offensive against the Tories, through winning a general strike, the SWP stood firmly against

this strategy. Even when dockers struck alongside the miners the SWP argued against building on this to spread the action. Mass picketing by miners was posed as "the way to win", and we were told that collections and support from other workplaces was the most that could be won from other workers by the Support Committees because of the "downturn".

After all, what more could you achieve if, as the SWP's leader Tony Cliff, claimed:

"The miners strike is an extreme example of what we in the Socialist Workers Party have called the 'downturn' in the movement".

After the defeat of the miners' titanic struggle, a defeat that was far from inevitable, the SWP nodded their heads knowingly and blamed it all on "the downturn".

The "downturn theory" was useless as a guide to action. It expressed the real difficulties that workers faced in the period after the Labour government. A process of incorporation amongst shop stewards had taken place. Solidarity proved more difficult to organise. Strikes became more difficult to win.

But the roots of these difficulties lay in the field of politics, not in a "downturn". Insofar as there was a downturn in militancy it was a consequence of the crisis of political leadership in the ranks of the working class. Workers, including the rank and file militants who had spearheaded the class battles of

the early 1970s, had no political alternative to Labour, and this undermined their networks and their ability to fight.

To deal with this it was necessary to fight for a political strategy that could re-arm the militants for the tasks posed by the new period of crisis. The SWP had no such strategy. Their whole political method was based on the idea that the economic militancy of the working class would spontaneously develop into a socialist struggle. All that was necessary was to generalise this militancy and "glue it together". The party was to act as the glue.

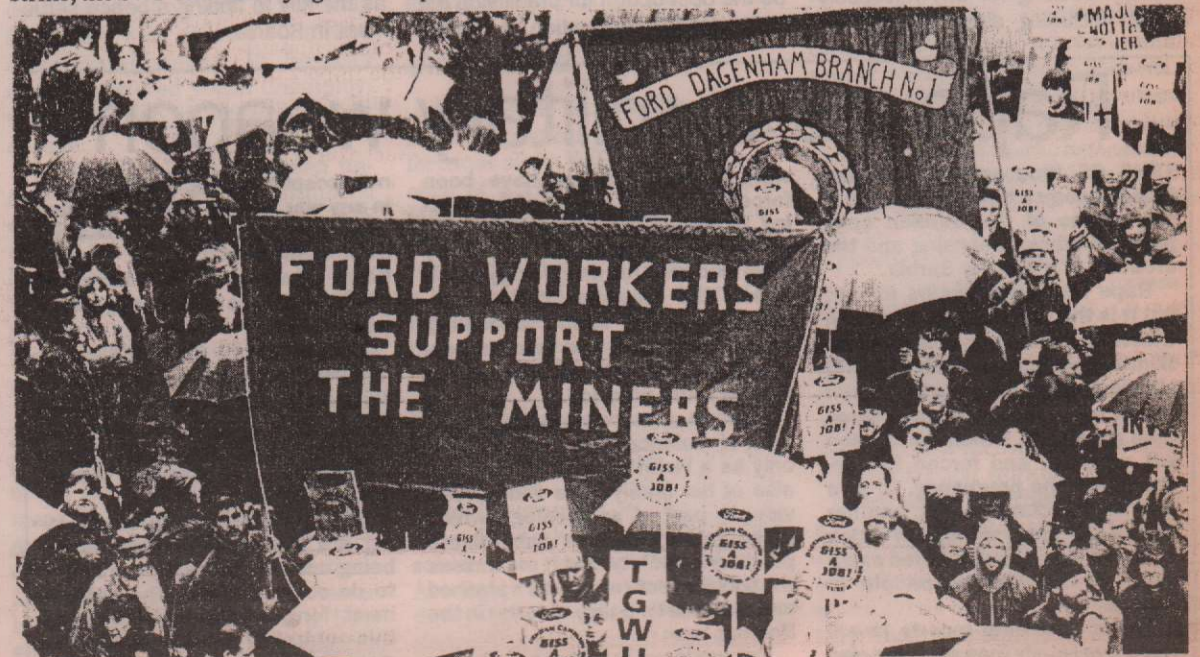
This method is wrong. It ignores the political role of the revolutionary party in breaking workers from their allegiance to reformism, in providing a strategy that can overcome the limits of spontaneous economic militancy and transform the class struggle into a conscious, political, socialist struggle. It is a method that revolutionary socialists call "economism".

## Militancy

The "downturn theory" was a perfect expression of economism. Because the economic struggle was both more difficult and less militant, little or nothing could be done beyond preserving the SWP and sealing the members off from the influences of the downturn. The SWP absolved itself of the task of overcoming the crisis of leadership in the ranks of the working class with a political programme, because little or nothing could be done.

The possibility of working class advance was posed again and again during the supposed downturn. Militancy on an unprecedented scale erupted in the public sector during the 1978-79 "Winter of Discontent". Steel workers, who hadn't been on strike for over 60 years, fought the first major battle against Thatcher. Teachers, civil servants, health workers, the miners, the printers, the seafarers and the dockers all went into action against the Tories during the downturn.

In each of these disputes, militants faced the treachery of the



October 1992: "The Uptum"

bureaucracy and could have been organised into a conscious force against them. Some of these disputes posed sharply both the need for and the possibility of class wide general strike action. Every one of these disputes raised the possibility of turning the tide on the Tories, reversing the retreat and creating the conditions for decisive victories for the working class.

What was missing was not "the upturn", but the necessary political leadership. The SWP refused to recognise this. Instead it took refuge in "the downturn", turning the ebbs and flows of the class struggle into a disembodied process determined by mood swings in the ranks of the working class.

The miners' strike was a watershed during this period. The defeat of the most powerful and militant section of the British working class, followed by the massacre of jobs in the pits, was a strategic defeat for the class. It produced a dramatic ebb in the fighting confidence of the workers. This, combined with mass unemployment, the triumph of "new realism" in the leadership of the trade unions and the sharp drop in the size of the trade union movement, all pointed to a working class very much on the defensive.

Is it the case, as the SWP claim, that this situation has been suddenly reversed by the autumn government crisis and the upsurge of working class anger around the pit closure programme? Or even in its most extreme form, that we now stand on the verge of a revolutionary period in Britain?

The SWP leadership clearly think it has. The December *Socialist Review* carried a series of articles reflecting the "new line". An article called "1992: the year the tide turned" set the tone:

"The general crisis at the top of society with economic and political disasters for the ruling class at every turn" had led to the crumbling of the ideological certainties among workers and "large sections of the middle class as well".

### Monarchy

This, it argued, was reflected in disillusion with the monarchy, the discrediting of the police and the courts, the growing mood against privatisation and above all by the outburst of anger at the pit closures and growing unemployment. Because the pit closures had "inspired millions" and "galvanised hundreds of thousands in struggle" the article argues:

"The slogan of the general strike fits the mood of many workers in a way that it has not done for decades."

According to the SWP this "mood of anger" is much sharper and class based than the popular rebellion around the Poll Tax of three years ago. The protest we are told is also broader, "it has ceased to be narrowly focused on the government, and has become less defensive and sectional".

Ironically, the new line has obliged the SWP to be economic with the truth when dealing with the years of the "downturn". Another article in the December *Socialist Review*, entitled "An Unbroken Stream" by Dave Beecham, one of the architects of the "downturn theory", provides a survey of the class struggle under Thatcherism that fails to even mention the "downturn".

Instead we have a re-written history in which, as the title suggests, there is an unbroken and undifferentiated period of struggles by the workers from 1958 to today. Certainly, he says, the 1980s were marked by a series of defeated struggles, but even these have taken their toll on the Tories. These struggles, of the civil servants, coun-

cil workers, teachers etc., "sapped the government's ability to go on an all out offensive", and:

"Above all the miners' strike drained the government's resolve. It cost the government £6000 million and, more importantly, set back their plans for a year. Even after her landslide 1987 election victory Thatcher did not care to take on the miners again."

Is this man serious? Did he not notice that following the miners' defeat Thatcher's government and British Coal repeatedly "took on the miners" reducing their numbers from 162,000 at the end of the great strike to 55,000 at the beginning of 1992? Ask any miner about the attacks on working conditions, on the decline in safety standards, the productivity drives and the sackings of militants that were the norm in the years following the defeat. They will tell you how the government took them on.

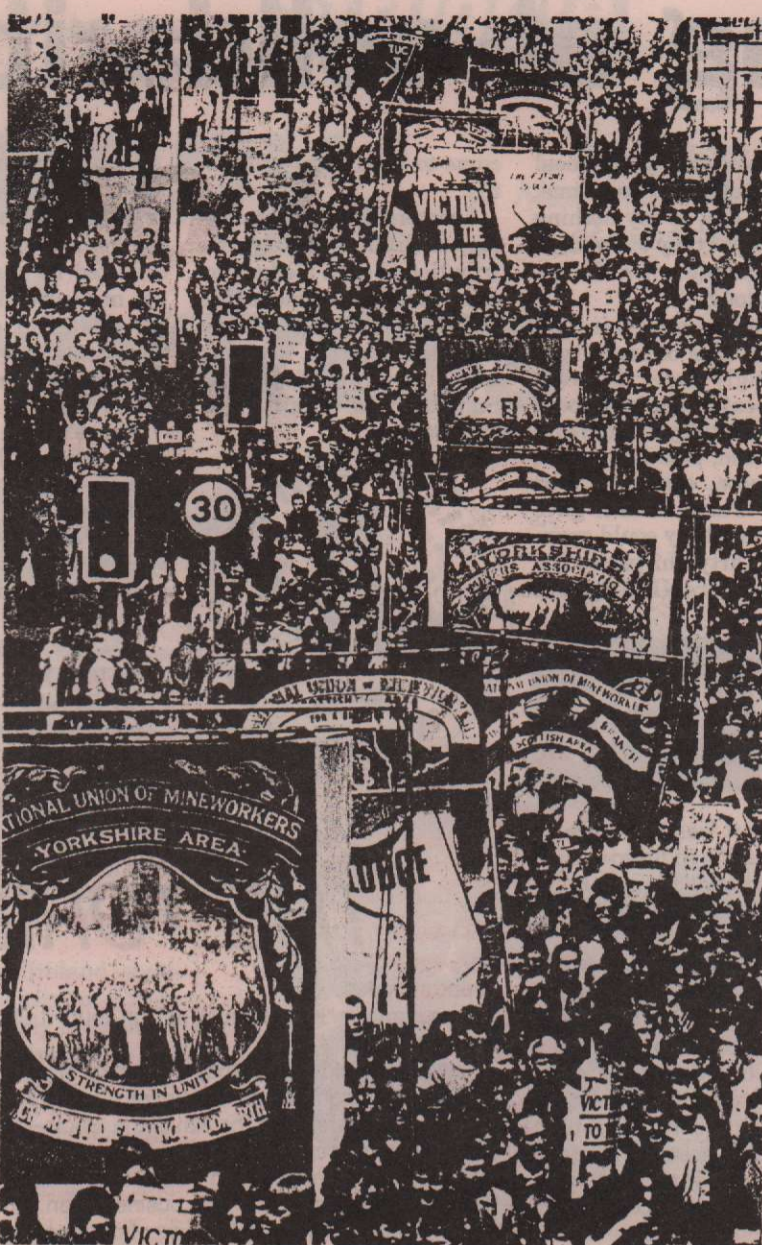
Glossing over this is all part of the new line. Just as every struggle during the "downturn perspective" was supposedly doomed, so now all struggles, even defeats, have to be fitted into the new perspective of "upturn". In both cases it is economism that guides the SWP's perspective.

The 1980s are no longer the series of unrelieved defeats portrayed by the "downturn theory". They are now painted in the colours of heroic "trench warfare with bitter fighting, which stopped the [working] class from making too great an advance" (January *Socialist Review*).

If only the working class would now look over the parapet they would see "the enemy is in total disarray". Now of course the working class should aim to seize the opportunity posed by each and every division in the ranks of the ruling class. But what is left out of the SWP's scenario is that our side is pretty battered and shell-shocked and that our leaders are waving the white flag or sounding the retreat!

How, for example, does the SWP deal with the awkward fact that shortly after the mass demonstrations in October, the RMT and ASLEF leadership in London managed to demobilise a struggle against 5,000 redundancies and re-written contracts of employment, despite an overwhelming ballot for strike action? But we need not worry about such awkward blips in the "upturn".

"When Jimmy Knapp sold the



May 1984: "The Downturn"

ers and seafarers. Trade union membership is down from 13.2 million in 1979 to less than eight million today. Strike figures in 1991 were at their lowest level since 1940 and trade union density continues to fall. In reply the SWP directs its fire on those who think the trade union movement is in "terminal decline", the Kinnockites and former *Marxism Today* crowd who want a new Democratic Party. These are easy targets.

But quoting the significant number of shop stewards still in place (250,000), the number of combine committees and so on, does not get over the problem of the real reluctance of the rank and file when it comes to taking on the bosses and its government, nor the crucial

Dave Beecham puts it:

"Union organisation is obviously weaker in many ways... But there is a higher level of political generalisation."

Lindsey German suggests in "Can there be a revolution in Britain?" that this points the way forward:

"The growth of workers' confidence and organisation is much more likely to develop in such times through sudden explosions and outbursts of anger and organisation which are totally unexpected."

What we have here, predictably enough given the history and politics of the SWP, is the reliance on the "spontaneous militancy" the "sudden explosion" to take the struggle forward. Outbursts of eco-

**Just as every struggle during the "downturn perspective" was supposedly doomed, so now all struggles, even defeats, have to be fitted into the new perspective of "upturn". In both cases it is economism that guides the SWP's perspective.**

London tube workers down the river, at least a minority drew the conclusion that what was needed was a general strike."

That's all right then!

But what about the impact of losing 5,000 jobs? What does this tell us about the mood of mass anger, the state of trade union organisation and about the continued strength and role of the trade union bureaucracy?

The SWP cannot actually deny that trade union organisation has been weakened under the Thatcherite onslaught. What they can do is to downplay and underestimate the continuing impact of those defeats. Again a re-write of history is called for. In the spring 1984 issue of *International Socialism*, Dave Beecham was telling us:

"If one word describes workers' organisation it is 'atrophy'; as the dictionary describes it: 'a wasting away of the body, or any part of it through lack of nourishment'."

Since then we have had the defeat of the miners, printers, dock-

question of its rotten leadership. As before, the SWP ignores the crisis of political leadership that exists. The mood of anger over the pit closures has whetted their economic appetite. But they relegate the importance of the leadership's ability to derail that anger.

Even the SWP cannot avoid the fact that trade unionists are just not chomping at the bit to take on the bosses, let alone tear the head off capitalism. As their Conference Report puts it:

"The lack of confidence is shown by the general reliance on the trade union bureaucracy, and the failure of workers to act on strike action when the union bureaucrats blocked action."

So how does the Party leadership square these awkward facts with a perspective that sees a revolutionary crisis on the horizon?

Only by suggesting that weakness and lack of confidence in the trade unions is somehow compensated for by a growing politicisation and anger on the shop floor. As

economic militancy will generalise and politicise the class struggle. The party needs to be built rapidly so that it can ride the tide of this militancy. The results of this method were clearly seen around the events of the autumn crisis.

There was, as the SWP says, a deep governmental crisis. The Tories were reeling under the collapse of their economic policy, the devaluation of the pound, the withdrawal from the ERM. The Tory Party, deeply split over Europe, was now in disarray. Whole sections of the bourgeoisie, especially manufacturers, were deeply disaffected and demanding a U-turn on interest rates and a programme of state sponsored investment and expansion. The announcement of massive pit-closures and 31,000 more job losses focussed the opposition of all who wanted a change of course.

But, as the SWP rightly points out, despite the fact that the protest was an "all class" movement, encouraged by most of the bour-

geois press and many employers, it rapidly became a focus for working class anger. Tens of thousand took strike action for the national demonstration called by the NUM - at first billed as a "March on Parliament". Two hundred thousand marched on the TUC demo "for jobs and recovery".

The general strike slogan raised by the SWP was absolutely correct. But how to get it? Only by consciously directing the tens of thousands of working class militants into committees of action in every locality which could build for such a strike. Only by organising those militants and others into a militant minority, a rank and file movement, in their unions to oust the bureaucrats who were organising to sabotage any such action.

### Failed

Of course the balance of forces is against any campaign to organise the rank and file succeeding in overcoming the bureaucracy's hostility to general strike action. But even an ultimately failed attempt would be better than no attempt at all. The militants grouped around such efforts would learn the lessons about the role of the bureaucracy, the need for revolutionary organisation, and they would learn in practice, in the struggle. They would not be left isolated in their workplaces wondering why the movement has evaporated.

The SWP opposed this course of action. And it is easy to see why. Their whole perspective for a general strike, for an "explosion of anger", relies on the spontaneity of the class, not on conscious revolutionary intervention to turn that spontaneous anger into organised and revolutionary action.

By reducing the general strike slogan to a demand on the TUC alone, which of course had no intention of calling a one minute strike let alone an indefinite general one, the SWP were guilty of passive propagandism. If you think it is impossible to build for a general strike from below, that the workers cannot challenge the hold of the bureaucrats, then that is all you are left with.

The fact that this passive propagandism was radical sounding served the SWP's recruitment drive. But it did little to realise the possibilities for working class action and advance that were objectively lodged in the Autumn crisis.

The TUC was able to ride out the spontaneous anger of October. The NUM leadership, including Arthur Scargill, made no moves to break from this and contributed to the progressive demobilisation of the movement. He refused to fight for a strike and occupations of threatened pits. He relied on the TUC, who in turn relied on their "all class" public opinion campaign to shift the Tories.

It has to be said that the SWP has also played its part. In failing to put forward a strategy to mobilise independently of the bureaucrats, they as the largest group on the left bear at least part of the responsibility for this lost opportunity. This demonstrates that despite their claims to be the revolutionary party, they are bereft of a revolutionary strategy.

Their new line and their war on their "conservative members" won't change that. It is a new zigzag in a long line of centrist zigzags, that will leave a layer of people who genuinely want a revolution in Britain demoralised and possibly out of politics.

To those SWP members who do want a revolution in Britain our message is, join the organisation with a revolutionary strategy and the will to fight for it. Join Workers Power. ■

# Sneering at solidarity?

Dear Sirs,

Your front page of the November issue (WP 161) contained reference to the support committees during the miners' strike of 1984-85. I quote: "the worst were sympathy centres where collecting bean tins became a substitute for solidarity action". They were no such thing.

Consisting mainly of miners' wives, families and friends who stood four square behind their menfolk, they were a source of inspiration as the fight went on. They were highly organised on a

rota basis and a hot meal could be had at any time, night or day, to say nothing of the spirit they showed, so lifting morale when the going got tough.

In my Leicestershire village the "tins of beans" you sneeringly refer to were boxes containing just about every foodstuff you could care to mention, plus toilet rolls, toothpaste, soap etc. Our Labour Party branch gave everything they could spare as the "Dirty Thirty" (as the Leicestershire NUM strikers

came to be known) will testify.

I personally toured my village to obtain a weekly contribution of cash pledged by every member—some sent to the NUM HQ and some to the "Dirty Thirty". It wasn't a lot, but it was given willingly by hard working men and women.



In addition, at Christmas time, every member of my branch contributed a *new toy* to join the mountain that was collected for distribution to the miners' children. Multiply this effort on a nationwide scale and you will appreciate the heartening effect it had.

There's an old saying, "man does not live by bread alone"—neither does he wish to live on a total diet of strike action. As any good army general would tell you—"strike only when the time is right".

Yours

Marjorie Warwick  
Secretary,  
Anstey Labour Party,  
Leicestershire

## Stalin and Italy

Dear Comrades

In the last issue of *Workers Power* Paul Morris explained the significance of the Battle of Stalingrad and alluded to the bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism in Eastern Europe after World War Two. He quite rightly pointed to the heroism of the Soviet workers. But it is also important to understand the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in Western Europe after the war, Italy being a prime example.

In 1944 in the north of Italy anti-fascist committees (CNLs) organised militias and a massive strike wave. This took power in the factories from the German occupiers and their collaborators in all the major urban areas. Workers, led by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), were in the forefront of this action. It involved 300,000 armed partisans. However, the Moscow trained PCI leader, Togliatti, stated that the order of the day was not "the imposition of political and social transformations in the socialist or communist sense. Its aim is national liberation and the destruction of fascism".

This approach enabled the allies to enter the north and take power away from the CNLs. Criminally, the USSR made no objections to this counter-revolutionary action.

In the south Stalinism assigned itself the role of keeping order behind Allied lines. Before Togliatti's return both the PCI and the Socialist Party opposed the monarchy and Badoglio's right wing government.

However, upon entering Italy Togliatti took a ministerial post in the government and said that the abolition of the monarchy could not be raised until a Constituent Assembly had been elected. Instead of building upon the distrust that the masses felt for the government, the PCI leader lent that government legitimacy.

This capitulation to the allies and the Italian bourgeoisie was a consequence of the PCI's reformist strategy of forging an anti-fascist bloc, across classes, committed to national unity. This entailed subordinating the needs of workers to the demands of the bosses. The Communists' strength in the unions was

used (as it was in France as well) to stifle industrial militancy so that the capitalist economy could be rebuilt on a profitable basis.

What underlay this whole strategy was the USSR's agreement with the allies that Western Europe was a sphere of influence that belonged exclusively to Anglo/US imperialism. In return the USSR secured Eastern Europe as a series of "buffer states" under its control.

For Stalin this reactionary deal was meant to further his aim of building "socialism in one country". But its real result was to enlist the western Communist parties into saving capitalism so that it could continue to oppress and exploit the working class of Western Europe.

Yours fraternally

Ian Duncan, Leicester

## CHEERING THE TORIES?

Dear Comrades,

In your article "Kick them all out" in your Pit Closure Special, you wrote:

"In Chesterfield on Saturday thousands of workers cheered a Tory businessman who pledged opposition to Major."

Now while I agree with the aim of the article—that is, warning of the dangers of cross-class alliances—I think you exaggerate. I was at the demonstration you referred to and I heard no "thousands cheering" the Tory businessman. On the contrary, such was the hostility to the speaker from a section of the crowd that hecklers were only quietened following veiled threats from an NUM bureaucrat on the platform. The conclusion of the Tory's speech was greeted with only half-hearted "polite" applause.

I write this to help correct what could be a misleading impression: the Chesterfield (and therefore possibly wider) working class is perhaps not so imbued with popular front politics as you imply. When demonstrated this ought to be recognised for, surely, it is an encouraging sign!

Yours

S Foster  
Chesterfield

## Putting Europe on rations

Dear Comrades,

An analysis of world trade presented by Colin Lloyd in *Workers Power* 162 depicts a picture of an imminent trade war at the same time as the EEC agreed with the USA over GATT!

Nor do the workers of Europe, we are told, "have an interest in the maintenance of small and medium sized capitalist farming". Presumably they don't have an interest in maintaining a small or medium sized capitalist coal industry in Britain.

Looking at other EEC member states such as Greece, the resolution of the GATT talks will devastate its agriculture (28% of its GNP). This logically does not interest revolutionaries as after all its continuation is a sign of "nationalist protectionism".

But this is precisely the point: neither Mitterrand's government in France, which not so long ago was attacked by the same farmers, or the Mitsotakis' government in Greece, which was also attacked by farmers in Iraklion, Crete, are keen to preserve agricultural subsidies. On the contrary, they are for the national sell-out of any post-war gains for the sake of multinational monopolies.

Not only does Colin Lloyd forget the post-war history of economic developments in the imperialist west, but they are ignored. Germany and Japan were rebuilt on the basis of US loans. The western world has been united under the rule of multinational companies led by the USA's politico-economic and military strength.

To negate what is new in the world economy and being set in the framework of the 1930s cannot explain the five decades of inter-imperialist "peace", will also have dramatic consequences in terms of revolutionary policy as it will perpetuate the myth that the French or the Greek government will preserve national sectors: be they defence, industry, agriculture, health, education and so on.

Instead of warning people and preparing them for the big battles ahead it will tie them behind their respective governments.

Trotsky in an article in 1924 entitled, "Perspectives of World Development", under the sub-heading, "The plan to place Europe on rations", wrote:

"What does American capitalism want? What is it seek-

ing? . . . It wants to establish an American imperialist autocracy over our planet. This is what it wants. . .

It will divide up the market into sectors; it will regulate the activity of the European financiers and industrialists. If we wish to give a clear and precise answer to the question of what American capitalism wants we must say: it wants to put capitalist Europe on rations. This means that it will specify just how many tonnes, litres and kilograms and just what materials Europe has a right to buy and sell."

Bush's Free Trade Pact and Maastricht are not the signs of an imminent trade war but instead of the tendency towards the surpassing of the nation state. A greater globalisation of the world economy is having disastrous consequences already and worse is yet to come. The occupation of Coca Cola and the barricades outside McDonalds in France are the signs of things to come. It would be good if *Workers Power* actually commented on such important events instead of just ignoring them.

Fraternally  
V N Gelis

## 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!

# A semi-colony in Fortress Europe

**T**HE EDINBURGH summit of European Community (EC) Heads of State has put the Maastricht Treaty back on the rails again. The Irish bourgeoisie were ecstatic over the Edinburgh outcome—small wonder since Ireland is due to get £8 billion over the next seven years. It is also to receive extra Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding which is of vital importance to the strong agricultural sector.

Why should the richer EC powers be so "generous" to Ireland? The net revenue transfers from the EC are intended to "even out" income distribution. But these transfers need to be weighed against the outflows of Irish value into the coffers of imperialism.

In 1991 profit repatriation alone was over £3 billion—double the amount of revenue transfers, and this is only one fraction of the outflow. The imperialist bourgeoisie suck out billions more every year from imperialised Ireland than the European bosses pay back in the form of net revenue transfers. This is money paid back by the EC to ease the pain of semi-colonial dependency.

But it is true that the net revenue transfer is more "generous" than usual. This is because of the general integrative tendencies of capitalist development in the EC which have found expression in the Maastricht Treaty.

In the 1980s the EC bourgeoisie recognised that it would have to hang together if it did not want to hang separately. The EC is the biggest trading bloc in the world. But it is also the weakest of the three basic regional economic blocs that divide the world—the EC, the USA and Japan. Its growth rates were less than the global average throughout the 1980s.

The USA and Japan in the 1970s and 1980s were growing increasingly competitive at Europe's expense. The Reagan years saw further deregulation and the lowering of unit labour costs and costs of inter-state trade inside the USA. Meanwhile in whole sectors of European industry—power generation, railways, telecommunications, defence—there was virtually no intra-EC trade or competition. The relative competitive position of the EC was thus deteriorating all the time. In order to justify the ever larger outlays on fixed capital and research and development, each national capital needed access to a larger market. The European bourgeoisie, and especially its leading duo—Germany and France—saw clearly that they would fall further behind the US and Japanese blocs in the 1990s unless they pulled out all the stops to achieve a new stage of EC integration.

The driving aim behind Maastricht in the short term is the creation of a single domestic market for the goods of member states. In the longer term, if it succeeds, Maastricht would lead to a confederation of capitalist states, rather looser than the United States of America. This gives rise to an intensification of uneven and combined development across the EC and within each of its countries. As for the EC as a whole, the unevenness is well illustrated by the development of a handful of areas of concentrated economic development. Paris, Baden-Wurtemberg, Lombardy and Madrid stand out in contrast to vast regions of rural decay and backwardness.

Compensatory mechanisms have to exist so as to prevent total ruination of these areas, combined with the export of all their contradictions to other countries through mass emigration.

Ireland is no exception to this process of combined and uneven development. But its economy is profoundly marked by its semi-colonial status—albeit a semi-colony of a highly developed form. No part of Ireland, North or South, comes anywhere near to containing a nodal point of heavy industrial concentration, even of the second rank,

such as Valencia. Nevertheless, uneven and combined development in Ireland is expressed in the ever more rapid and feverish pivoting of economic life around a handful of cities such as Galway, some of which have doubled in size in the last twenty years on the basis of light engineering, EC transfers, a flow of wealth from booming agriculture to the towns, burgeoning tourism and some new indigenous business. Rural decay and depopulation is the norm in the rest of the country.

In the twenty years since Ireland joined the EC whole reaches of industry and business have vanished, especially indigenous business that was a hangover from De Valera's protectionist era. Most of these were swept away as the full blast of EC competition was let loose. This included most of the British ones too, most notably British car assembly, confectionery, and cigarettes.

They were replaced by an inflow of foreign direct investment from Europe, but even more dynamically from the USA. This was in the area of engineering, light office equipment, computers, electronics, light pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and medical supplies. The box on this page briefly outlines what has happened to Irish industry.

One testimony to Ireland's semi colonial status is the fact that it has the highest unemployment rate in the EC (21%), well over twice the EC average. GDP reaches only 70% of the European average. Over one third of its people live below the poverty line. Ireland has the highest per capita emigration in the EC, the lowest wage rates and the highest profit rates in Europe for foreign firms.

The EC bourgeoisie can brook no real interference with their project of making Fortress Europe a match for the USA and Japan. This dictates a number of moves which will affect the South greatly. The first is the necessity to limit the ability of the US and Japan to jump the EC wall of protection by directly investing inside the community and acting as a fifth column against the emerging European champions.

This will directly hit the most dynamic source of investment in the Republic in the last twenty years—the USA. The second is the necessity to move EC investment eastwards to utilise low-cost skilled workforces and to prevent a massive flow of refugees to the West. This will be a necessity above all for Germany—Ireland's second most dynamic source of investment. But in the shorter term, continued US and non-EC investment will remain important.

The pan-European state envisaged by Maastricht is still the music of the future. It will develop, if at all, in conflict and in cooperation with the already established nation states of Europe and beyond. And this will hold for the Republic and for Ireland as a whole.

What we face is a continuation of the Republic's role as a semi-colony of Fortress Europe—but a semi-colony buffeted by EC disinvestment, growing EC obstruction of US investment and mass emigration of its poorest and youngest. There is a real chance, therefore, that the high point of the South's "open door" policy of "industrialisation" through foreign investment has already been reached. ■

*The Irish bourgeoisie are vigorously pro-Maastricht. They receive billions of pounds of subsidies and see integration as the only way forward. However, as a hard look at the reality of this EC "generosity" shows, Ireland remains a semi-colony.*



## Irish capitalism

- In agribusiness, the twenty years since Ireland joined the EC has seen a rapid process of mergers and acquisitions. It was pared down in the process to a handful of meat, dairy and food plants which have some chance of surviving in a post-Maastricht Europe. Their survival in most cases will be in the form of joint ventures or outright acquisitions by a handful of EC giant enterprises—in which the Irish sections will function as primary processors.
- Capitalist farmers—the most stable fraction of the Irish semi-colonial bourgeoisie—have modernised production in the areas of cattle, milk and cereals in terms of capital equipment, modern breeds and scientific inputs. The small farm sector correctly senses that the "golden age" of CAP is drawing to a close. What they saw as its main virtue—subsidised monopoly prices for their produce—is being jettisoned by an EC bourgeoisie determined to drive down prices and wages, all the better to meet US and Japanese competition.
- Some indigenous industry and business has done well out of the wave of foreign investment. This includes companies such as Smurfit and Cement Roadstone who have since become small Irish multinational corporations.
- Newly organised or wholly new groupings of commercial capitalists—whose richest fraction is the supermarket owners—have prospered. The latter are the target of growing fury from sections of the small town petit-bourgeoisie who face certain ruin as the bigger outfits begin to negotiate links with their European counterparts.
- The burgeoning tourism industry has grown by 50% in the last five years. With a turnover of £1.5 billion in 1991, it is the South's single biggest employer.
- Last but not least is the role of Irish banks and finance houses. This sector has the lion's share of the wealth—their assets in 1992 adding up to £80 billion. They are the dominant stratum of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie—second in command to none but the foreign finance capitalists. The Irish bourgeoisie, having tried out economic nationalism under De Valera, and having failed dismally, see their future as a junior partner to imperialist finance capital—and most directly to EC finance capital. They see no future for themselves as a class except as junior partner exploiters of Irish cheap labour, rich natural resources, and excellent educational and infrastructural facilities.

# Workers power

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## USA INVADES SOMALIA

# Oppressors not saviours

ONCE AGAIN the Horn of Africa is the target of a massive imperialist military intervention. Under the guise of a United Nations' sponsored mercy mission, "Operation Restore Hope", the USA aims to restore its ability to dictate the future of this region.

The carefully orchestrated media campaign tells us that Somalia is a country where hundreds of thousands are either dead or dying from starvation, where local "warlords" are engaged in a senseless conflict, controlling troops high on narcotic roots, looting and stealing food aid. The constant message is that Somalia would face certain doom without the US military intervention. "This is the Desert Storm way of dealing with things", stated President Bush.

The truth, as ever, is somewhat different. The USA must carry responsibility for the situation faced by the Somali workers and peasants, one they will continue to face for as long as imperialism is allowed to interfere in the politics of the region.

The USA has strategic interests in this area—in Africa as a whole and the oil producing Gulf states. Militarily it requires bases from which to launch attacks on troublesome regimes in the Middle East and North and East Africa. Economically it has backed the exploitation of the region for its natural resources and destroyed local food subsistence through its backing of export-orientated crop production.

Over the past two decades US intervention has included the propping up of the brutal Somali regime led by Barre to the tune of \$900 million, the use of a "Rapid Deployment Force" in the northern port of Berbera and military support to quash internal resistance to the Barre regime.

By the time Barre was eventually toppled, in 1991, the country was ravaged. Farmers were forced off the land, food production was massively reduced, famine ensued and food became a vital commodity that factions fought to control as people starved to death.

Certainly no one can deny that the thousands starving in Somalia require help. But it would be wrong to support the sending of US troops or to view the intervention as primarily "humanitarian".

The International Committee of the Red Cross, whilst welcoming the military presence, pointed out that the worst of the starvation was already over. Why? Because when food aid was really needed it did not arrive, leaving tens of thousands to die. Prior to the USA intervening with force they had supplied only

17,000 tonnes of food, enough to feed Mogadishu for just under one month. So much for the humanitarian regime in Washington. The Red Cross itself was feeding around 1.5 million people every day in 900 feeding stations. Since January 1991 appeals for more aid had gone unheeded, allowing tens of thousands to die. Finally, when corn had begun to grow in the Shabelle valley, and, according to reports of the aid agencies, the worst of the famine was over, the marines went in and Bush told the world that he cared!

This "care" is camouflage for the US intervention to restore its local influence. The tens of millions spent on their armed expedition could have fed Somalia for years. Or they could have cancelled the foreign debt which Somalia, like countless other semi-colonial countries, is forced to divert resources towards paying off.

Already it is becoming clear from rumblings within both the Bush administration and the Clinton camp that the "humanitarian" mission has deeper and more long term objectives than simply feeding Somalis. *The Economist* reported that the USA did not intend to disarm any of the Somali militias. But on the morning of 7 December US marines attacked a militia base and proceeded to disarm it. Prior to this the US marines had set up roadblocks to search cars and carried out house-to-house searches.

The \$900 million previously invested in the Barre regime is testament to the desire of the USA to maintain its strategic influence in the Horn of Africa. US troops in Somalia have no restrictions on their length of stay, no preset goals to fulfil, and no target number of hungry Somalis to feed before withdrawing. Through "Operation Restore Hope" the USA has given itself the ideal opportunity to consolidate its influence. Whether this be through establishing a pro-imperialist regime in Somalia, occupying its previous military bases in the north or continuing direct military control through its armed forces, it is clear that the USA aims to "Restore Hope" not to the workers and peasants in the region, but to the imperialist bankers whose semi-colonies they police.

That is why workers should reject the hypocritical media campaign and demand the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Somalia. We must oppose the racist immigration controls which keep out Somali refugees. Against the military occupation we call for call for food and military aid without strings to the people of Somalia, and the cancelling of the foreign debts. ■



Restoring hope US-style

## The real role of the UN

THE MEDIA presents an image of the United Nations (UN) as the champion of law and order, "keeping the peace" in all the trouble-spots of the world. US marines land on the beach at Mogadishu to a press corps reception. We see blue berets in Yugoslavia "keeping the warring factions apart". Soldiers of the UN are now well established in strife-torn Cambodia.

All of this serves to sustain the myth that the UN is a force for peace, ushering in a stable "new world order".

Nothing could be further from the truth. The aggressive reality of US foreign policy needs a cloak of respectability. In the current world situation the UN is the ideal screen behind which to pursue these im-

perialist interests, with the blessing of the "international community". The collapse of Stalinism means that the USA can more easily use the UN to pursue its own aim of preserving and extending its global economic and military influence.

Operation Desert Storm set the precedent, assembling a military alliance to "bomb Iraq into the stone age". As a result the USA is asserting direct control in the Middle East, and can now impose no-fly zones on Iraq under the pretext of protecting the Kurds and Sunni Muslims from Saddam.

Behind the facade of altruistic "peace-keeping" stands straight forward, calculated, imperialist realpolitik. Whatever the claimed justification—resisting ethnic

cleansing in former Yugoslavia, preventing pogroms against the Vietnamese in Cambodia, stopping the warlords from commandeering food in Somalia—UN solutions in fact reinforce the root causes of these problems in the first place.

The deep-seated problems of national strife, dependency and economic backwardness from the Balkans to the Middle East, Indochina and Africa, are a direct consequence of the imperialists' stranglehold of super-exploitation and crippling debt.

This is why workers should oppose UN "peacekeeping". Far from being the impartial instrument of the international community, the UN is a prop of imperialism, a global system of economic slavery, hunger and bloody war. ■