

Workers power

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

AFTER THE DAY OF ACTION

Unite the strikes to win

EVERY DAY the Tories and their business backers commit a new crime of violence against the working class.

Jobs are massacred by the thousand, in the pits, on the railways, in local councils and in factories up and down the country. Pay cuts are plunging workers, in the public and private sectors alike, into poverty.

Prescription charges have been raised yet again, but no matter how much we fork out for medicine, hospitals are starved of cash and forced to close. The entire welfare state is collapsing, but the Tories are planning the biggest cuts in public spending ever.

Millions of workers are angry. Thousands upon thousands have voted for action to fight back against these attacks. The mood of resistance is spreading.

Arthur Scargill called on all workers to join the 2 April day of action. The TUC refused to sanction this call. The best opportunity for a general strike, even if only limited to a day, was lost. But the 2 April action shows what can be achieved by workers linking their struggles and acting together.

Miners, railworkers and busworkers striking together against job cuts and privatisation was a powerful reminder of the strength of the working class.

Now the task is to build on that unity and spread the action.

In the public sector, Nalco and the firefighters are lodging claims that breach the 1.5% limit. On the rail, the



London buses and in the mines, strike votes underline the determination of the workers to defend their jobs.

Ford have been crippled by lightning strikes, official and unofficial. The battle at Timex is calling forth a wave of solidarity in Scotland. Workplaces as different as further education colleges and the Severn Bridge construction site are recording massive majorities for strike action.

The will to fight is there. But the leadership of the labour movement is desperately trying to sap that will, to contain it in limited protest campaigns and to prevent the struggles from linking up.

This is why Willis wouldn't call a general strike on 2 April.

It is why Fullick of ASLEF won't coincide his union's strike with fellow rail workers in the RMT. It is why the AEEU leaders are spending more time denouncing workers who support the Timex strikers than denouncing the Timex bosses.

It is why the union leaders are restricting national strikes to one day actions. And it is why nobody ever hears Labour leader John Smith say anything about the current wave of struggles.

Rank and file militants in every town and every union need to organise now against these cowardly leaders. We need to set ourselves the aim of a united, indefinite public sector wide strike to smash

the 1.5% pay norm, and all out strikes or occupations against pay and job cuts in industry.

The most effective way of achieving these objectives is to build **rank and file strike committees and councils of action**.

In each dispute, even if it is only based on one day actions, militants must fight for democratic strike committees, elected at mass meetings and accountable to them. Where a company or industry covers more than one site then strike committees need to be linked up on a regional and national basis.

Strike committees must fight to win control over negotiations. The importance of

this was shown in the Yarrows dispute. The official negotiators kept coming back to the workforce like messengers for management, leaving the strikers with no say, and eventually succeeded in demoralising them.

Councils of action, based on delegates elected from workplaces, can unite militants in a town or district, across sectional and union divisions. A council of action in Dundee, for example, would work flat out to bring the workers who service and supply the scab plant into contact with those on strike, boosting the chances of winning solidarity strikes.

Railworkers and miners would not be left guessing

what they should be doing on days of action like 2 April if they were meeting together and planning their own activity in a rank and file council of action.

These forms of organisation could lay the basis for rank and file movements in every union and across the unions to challenge the hold of the bureaucrats who want to run away from a fight with the Tories.

If militants take this up we can make 2 April just a foretaste of a much bigger wave of co-ordinated action.

The Tories are reeling from one crisis to another. They are weaker than they have ever been. They are ripe for the taking. ■

THERE IS ample evidence that the British National Party (BNP) is stepping up its campaign of race hate and attacks on the left. Panic stricken *Guardian* editors have called on the state to ban the BNP.

On the left both the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) have echoed this call. Their campaign against the BNP bunker in Bexley relies on an appeal to the Tory council and Tory government to close it down.

This is no way to deal with the fascists. But it does reflect the current sorry state of an anti-fascist movement plagued by pacifism and sectarianism. The state will always use its powers to target the left far more than the extreme right. In the 1970s, bans on National Front marches generally led to bans on the more numerous left and labour movement mobilisations.

Organise

The only adequate response to the threat posed by the likes of the BNP is to organise workers to smash them. To achieve this will mean a united front of all anti-fascist and working class organisations built through local committees determined to stop the fascists from marching, meeting engaging in other street activities—in short determined to operate the policy of “no platform” for fascists.

We need well trained and disciplined workers' defence squads, tied to such campaigns and linked to organised black community self-defence groups, to meet every intrusion of C18, or other fascist gangs, with fierce resistance. Fire must be fought with fire.

Even the existing forces of the left could deliver damaging body blows to the BNP. Unfortunately they have chosen instead to build party fronts like the SWP-controlled ANL and the Militant-dominated Youth Against Racism in Europe. To its credit, Militant has taken part in attempts to no platform the fascists but this is not a consistent strategy.

The Communist Party of Britain has thrown its lot in with careerists from the old Labour Party Black Sections in the ARA, a pacifist popular front for parliamentary lobbies. Under the SWP's leadership the ANL has shied further away from physical confrontation than in the 1970s. To the left of these campaigns stand Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and numerous local cam-

Unite against fascism

paigns like the one in Mansfield against the BNP's attempt to turn the town into a Nazi stronghold.

AFA is the most militant wing of the British anti-fascist movement in its commitment to implement the no platform policy. Workers Power, along with Red Action and the Direct Action Movement, helped build AFA into a campaign which inflicted the most serious defeat on the fascists for years at the September 1992 Battle of Waterloo.

However, a London conference in October confirmed AFA's ever more sectarian course as an isolated band of militant anti-fascist fighters. London AFA opted out of the fight to build a united mass campaign on the basis of no platform and persisted in boycotting other group's initiatives. This meant effectively leaving the best elements around the ARA and ANL to their misleaders.

This sectarianism was opposed by Workers Power. While we continue to support some AFA activities and participate in several branches we have rejected the strategies of Red Action and the Direct Action Movement. We are obliged

to take the fight for militant anti-fascism into a series of campaigns and activities in order to build the broader united front that AFA is refusing to build. But the basis of our fight remains to organise the widest working class forces to smash the fascists by direct action. The importance of this fight was highlighted in London on 13 March.

The BNP declared that they would hold a day of action in the northern boroughs of Islington and Camden, places they were driven from in the 1970s and early 1980s. In response ARA called a demonstration in East London, AFA proceeded with a planned picket of a fascist bookshop in central London and then directed its supporters to Camden and the ANL called a demo in Islington.

United

This worrying display of disunity weakened our chances to effectively confront the BNP. In the event the fascists were unable to muster the forces for a real day of action, but that was our good luck. On other occasions they will be better

organised and more numerous. If we remain divided, they will score victories.

At present we are some way from the genuine workers' united front we need. We are not about to overcome the sectarianism of the various campaigns overnight.

However, Workers Power will argue for one course of action that can take us towards a united front. Without asking any of the anti-fascist campaigns to sacrifice their party ties or independence, we propose that every time the fascists undertake an activity, the anti-fascist movement organise its response through a co-ordinating committee of campaign representatives, charged only with agreeing on where and when to strike the fascists.

Such an agreement must be based on the commitment of all involved to direct their supporters into action on the basis of no platform for fascists.

At least such co-ordination could put a stop to the fascists scoring more victories. We may even be able to take a small step towards a genuine workers' united front. ■



Fascists attempt to attack January's Bloody Sunday march

Health workers and AIDS

SHOULD PEOPLE with HIV be allowed to work as doctors, nurses or midwives? This issue has come up after a few highly publicised cases of healthworkers with HIV or AIDS and health authorities contacting patients who could possibly have been put at risk.

One case was of a midwife known to have delivered a number of babies. All women who may have been in contact with her were informed. Another was a GP who had previously worked in casualty and probably treated thousands of patients.

The gutter press decided to stoke up a panic, publicising identities after journalists had gone ferreting around hospitals and scrutinising death certificates to try and find names and personal details.

The whole discussion has been drowned in a torrent of ignorance and fear, with the result that many people are now arguing that healthworkers should have compulsory HIV testing. Presumably if found positive they should be barred from working.

This reaction is irrational, impractical and in any case would be ineffective.

It is not easy to transmit HIV infection. The only ways it can be

passed on are through sex, sharing injecting equipment, blood contact or from a mother to her baby. The worry about healthworkers comes from the remote possibility that a doctor or nurse may infect a patient through accidentally cutting or pricking themselves, drawing blood and then this coming into contact with the patient's blood. There is only one health worker who is known to have infected any patients, and that was the famous Florida dentist. No other cases have been found. So there is a theoretical risk, but it is extremely low.

Prejudice

Healthworkers themselves are also at risk from patients from similar accidents, but again very few cases of transmission of HIV from a patient have been documented.

Proper health and safety procedures would be far more beneficial in preventing even the minute chance of infection than any programme of compulsory testing.

So why all the panic? It comes from the widespread ignorance and fear of HIV, perpetuated by many media reports and from the prejudice that exists particularly against

gay men.

Public health campaigns to improve knowledge about HIV have clearly failed to tackle the fear and prejudiced attitudes which are at the root of the panic. And that has its own basis in the stigmatisation and oppression of homosexuality.

There are many healthworkers with HIV infection, just as there are many people in other industries and jobs. There are over 17,000 people who have had a positive HIV test, and since health accounts for a significant proportion of the workforce it would be expected that at least a few hundred have HIV and know their status.

In addition there are likely to be at least as many people with HIV who have never been tested and do not know they are infected.

The current recommendations are that healthworkers who know they have HIV and who are involved in “invasive” procedures (surgery, dentistry) should inform their employers and be moved to work which is non-invasive. But there is a real obstacle to even those who know they are positive telling their workmates, let alone their boss.

As soon as someone reports that they have HIV everyone either as-

sumes they are gay (if they are a man), promiscuous, a drug user or all three. They are then the target of abuse and prejudice.

Healthworkers, like other people, should be informed about HIV and the pros and cons of testing. Those who opt for a test should have their confidentiality respected and not have their picture and private lives splashed over the press. If positive, like other people they should be counselled about how to reduce the risk of passing it on to other people, including a discussion of their job.

They should then be encouraged to avoid risky procedures. But this has to remain voluntary or people will simply avoid testing even when they think they might be at risk. Compulsory testing is not necessary, and would lead to witch-hunting of healthworkers. The risks to patients are minuscule. Contrast that to the risks for healthworkers of losing their job, their privacy and possibly facing violence from organised homophobic gangs.

Alongside a campaign to overcome prejudice and discriminations against gays, healthworkers should be provided with the resources to work safely, minimising the risk of infection to themselves and their patients. They should also be provided with job security and insurance so that if they are unable to work for reasons of ill health they are not forced into poverty. ■

ANTI-FASCIST ROUND-UP

□ In Poplar, East London, a British National Party (BNP) stomping ground, racist thugs firebombed a Bangladeshi family's flat. An elderly white neighbour died as a result of this attack, through inhaling smoke fumes. Local anti-racists are using this example of racist violence as a means of promoting black and white unity against the thugs.

■ In Merthyr, South Wales, an attack by a racist gang on an Asian shop sparked a marvellous demonstration by white women and their children. Women from the estate heard the shop was under attack and quickly organised themselves into an impromptu defence squad. Their determined action scattered the cowardly members of the “master race”.

□ Evidence of the fascists' systematic campaign of violence against the left is piling up. In March the fascists attacked and smashed the front of the Sandwell Unemployed Workers' Centre in West Bromwich near Birmingham. Not long after this attack the BNP staged a big paper sale in central Birmingham for the first time in years. Any coincidence?

■ In Blackburn an Anti-Apartheid Movement public meeting was wrecked by a 20 strong BNP goon squad. And in London the anarchist bookshop and printing firm, Freedom Press, was visited by five men in balaclavas. They left behind £5000 worth of damage.

□ Many of the organised attacks on black people and the left are the work of a squad called C18 (the 1 and the 8 refer to letters of the alphabet: AH, Adolf Hitler). This outfit published the short-lived *Redwatch*, a newsletter that revealed the BNP's lack of intelligence in both senses. Supposedly published from the heart of Klan country in North Carolina it was full of wrong names and addresses of left activists and the spelling was appalling!

■ Simon Chadwick, one-time job centre employee and Chesterfield organiser for the BNP, is one welcome addition to the unemployment figures. Management at a Sheffield Job Centre finally sacked Chadwick, after a lengthy campaign by local anti-fascists and CPSA members in the Department of Employment. The bosses acted only after getting proof of his criminal record arising from BNP violence.

Predictably, trade unionists at the centre of the anti-Chadwick battle have found themselves demoted or transferred, while others face disciplinary hearings. The local CPSA has recently staged a two-day protest strike over these victimisations. Though a partial victory, the Chadwick case shows the need for an effective policy in the CPSA and across the unions to drive fascists out of workers' organisations and the workplace.

□ Bromley council submitted to pressure from the council workforce and withdrew permission for a National Front meeting on council premises. Workers' action is the key to forcing councils not to hire rooms out to the scum. But, despite the Bromley decision, the National Front will try to find somewhere else to meet. There should be no reliance on bans to deal with the fascists. Wherever and whenever they try to meet, workers must organise to stop them.

EDITORIAL

Warrington and IRA bombings

IN THE aftermath of the tragic deaths in Warrington one of the many cards laid at the spot where Johnathan Ball and Tim Parry were killed read simply, "Why?"

It is the answer to that question that the British state has been systematically concealing from people since the present conflict in the North of Ireland began.

The republicans are banned from speaking on the British media. The wording of warnings given before bombs are planted are kept secret by the police. Above all, the real causes of the Irish struggle for independence, the real causes for the bombs on the streets of Britain, are never acknowledged, let alone discussed.

The British state and media use vicious repression and hysterical press campaigns to deal with the Irish national struggle. This from a state which unleashed thousands of tons of bombs on civilian targets in Iraq during the Gulf War, and a media that cried "Gotcha" with every direct hit.

Immediately after the Warrington bombs Ken Loach's film *Hidden Agenda* was prevented from being shown on Channel Four. The official excuse, that it could have caused offence to the families of the victims, stinks of hypocrisy. The true reason for the ban was that the film dares to examine the causes of the war between the British Army and the IRA. Even the film *Angel* was not broadcast, because despite being hostile to the IRA it hints at a broader context to the struggle than the officially-sanctioned version of events.

The rulers of Britain have good reason to encourage this selective silence. If the true roots of the conflict were widely known, then Britain's historic responsibility for it would be revealed. The predictable cries of anger and frustration that greet every bombing and death in Britain would be joined by a growing chorus of calls for Britain to get out of Ireland and allow the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future.

Even the families of the dead are not spared a role in the British propaganda war. But who can recall painful interviews with the grieving relatives of the Catholic workers randomly killed by loyalist terror squads in the days after Warrington? Who can recall the names of even a few of the Catholics murdered by the Ulster Defence Association at a rate of one per week since they were banned over six months ago?

What floral tributes honoured the memories of the Irish children killed by the plastic bullets of the British Army of occupation in the six counties? The anguish of the Ball and Parry families has been used in a deeply cynical campaign to present the IRA as the only violent party in the conflict, to whitewash the role that Britain is playing in Ireland.

Ireland is Britain's oldest colony. It was forced to give up its rule over the South as a result of a bloody war of national liberation in which the British unleashed armies of hired thugs and convicts to supplement their regular forces.

In 1920-21 Ireland was partitioned, with the North remaining within the United Kingdom. But the entire Northern Ireland state was gerrymandered from the start. The province of Ulster had nine counties, within which a majority of the population favoured independence from Britain and Irish unity. The border was deliberately drawn to exclude three of those historic counties and to preserve

a formal majority in favour of the union with Britain. The oft-repeated refrain that the majority of the population of Ulster want to keep their status as part of Britain is a fraud.

The guaranteed political supremacy of the loyalists existed to guard their social supremacy. While the working class and lower middle class Protestants live in miserable and depressed conditions, they still retain important privileges over the mainly Catholic nationalists.

Discrimination exists in employment, housing and the provision of services. These differentials, as every independent report confirms, are getting wider every year. The combination of real social and economic discrimination and the denial of the national and democratic rights of the minority exploded into a mass struggle in the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s.

The British Army was sent to Northern Ireland in 1969, ostensibly to "keep the warring sides apart." They earned the undying hatred of the nationalist community who were immediately presented with the reality of British "even-handedness". Thousands of Catholic families had their doors kicked in, their fathers and sons interned without trial, their peaceful demonstrations battered by Protestant police and shot at by British paratroops.

The Provisional IRA came into being in response to this repression. It began its war against the British state when that state poured in troops to terrorise the nationalist community. It has fought to get the troops out ever since.

That is why revolutionary socialists will not be swept away by the tide of outrage that has followed the Warrington bombing and the tragic deaths it has caused. We point to the entire history of the Irish war. We insist that the demands of the IRA for the withdrawal of British troops and for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole are just.

That is why we side with the IRA in their war, whatever our criticisms of their tactics. We do not insist that the IRA's methods of prosecuting their struggle should first conform to our programme before we pledge our support. Our support is unconditional.

Unlike the numerous hypocrites and pacifists of the British Labour movement, we refuse to join in the reactionary chorus of condemnations of the IRA, of calls for them to lay down their arms whilst the British Army, the paratroop regiment, the SAS and Loyalist terror gangs continue their murderous war against Irish freedom. But from the standpoint of unshakeable support for the Irish struggle, we have the right and the duty to criticise the strategy and tactics of the IRA.

Sinn Fein, through its paper *An Phoblacht*, admits that, "The IRA has nothing to gain by deaths such as those at Warrington. It has much to lose." That is an understatement. Bombing any economic target, let alone a fast food store in a shopping centre in the middle of a working class town, will not advance the struggle for national liberation one inch.

It is an illusion to imagine that even the most effective campaign against economic targets—whether in Ireland or in Britain—will seriously damage the British economy and force a withdrawal.

Equally absurd is the notion that the bombing campaign

will "sicken" the British people so much that their mood will turn in favour of withdrawal. Far from promoting solidarity in Britain it is plain that bombing working class areas will set it back. It hands the British state, which will ignore the IRA's warnings if it suits their purpose, a massive propaganda weapon. It clouds the issue in the minds of working people in Ireland and in Britain.

In saying this we are by no means placing conditions on our support for the IRA. But because this paper has never flinched in its support for the IRA throughout the war, because our supporters will be raising the arguments for solidarity in the workplaces, in the unions and on the streets now as before, it is our duty to state openly that the tactic employed by the IRA at Warrington undermines the fight for internationalist solidarity in Britain. This is not a scruple: it is a plain fact.

The strategy of the republican movement is fundamentally flawed. The combination of reformist community politics with an attempt to force the British Army out through the determined actions of a small guerrilla army has not worked, does not work, and will not work.

Support for the IRA in the six counties is still considerable but is increasingly confined to the most deprived nationalist ghettos. The republicans' lack of a programme addressing the economic, social and political needs of the Irish working class, their failure to link these to the national struggle against imperialism, condemns them to isolation. Sinn Fein's electoral support in the South has dropped to a mere 1.7%, adding to the growing mood in the 26 counties of indifference to the plight of the nationalists in the North.

Revolutionary socialists in Ireland reject the petit-bourgeois strategy of the republicans. They fight to bring the mass of working people to the head of the national struggle by a real campaign in the workplaces and estates for action against the attacks of the bosses, North and South. They do not substitute the military struggle for the mass struggle, but subordinate it to the needs of that struggle and fight to place it under the direct control of the mass organisations of the working class.

Revolutionaries link this fight to the need for a 32 county workers' republic free from the subordination that both states endure to foreign imperialist capital. And they seek to win solidarity in Britain not by blasting their way into the headlines but by boring their way into the consciousness of the workers, to win their organisations and unions to a mass movement for the immediate withdrawal of the troops.

The victory for which so many republicans over the last two decades have made the ultimate sacrifice is not an impossible dream. It can be won and must be won. But to do that will mean breaking with the bankrupt strategy of nationalism, and turning to the class strategy of revolutionary socialism.

Published every month by the Workers Power Group:
 BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX
 ISSN 0263 - 1121
 Printed by Newsfax International Ltd:
 Unit 16, Bow Industrial Park, Carpenter's Rd, London E15

MEETINGS

MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

■ **Birmingham**
 Cuba under siege
 Tuesday 13 April, 8pm
 See seller for venue

■ **Sheffield**
 Cuba under siege
 Monday 5 April, 7.30pm
 Castle Community Rooms,
 The Grapes, Trippit Lane

PUBLIC MEETINGS

■ **Birmingham**
 The bosses' offensive and how to fight it
 Monday 5 April, 7.30pm
 Australian Bar, Hurst Street

■ **Leicester**
 Fighting the cuts
 Wednesday 7 April, 7.30pm
 Castle Community Rooms,
 Tower Street/Welford Road

LONDON PUBLIC MEETING

Uniting our struggles from below
 Steve Cushion, TGWU rep
 Clapton Garage, London Buses
 plus speakers from:
 • Lodge Committee,
 Tower NUM, South Wales
 • Birmingham RMT
 • London hospitals' struggle
 Tuesday 6 April, 7.30
 Lucas Arms, 245 Grays Inn
 Road, London WC1

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN
 Organ of the League for a Revolutionary Workers Movement • 5th April 1993

- Research directed to the political situation
- Study of the Congress of Socialist Workers
- Show us the "Yeltsin" card!
- Fighting up the new world order
- Stop the mobilisation of the British Workers!
- Cuba, Castro and capitalism
- Protest: the working class and the "international" of the left
- The issue of the 1984-85
- The struggle of the 1984-85
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- The international Workers' Opposition in the 1920s
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Strike against jobs massacre!

B RITAIN'S MINING industry remains on death row. Five months after the announcement that 31 pits were to close, after a parliamentary select committee and a prolonged protest campaign, Heseltine's new white paper has announced the closure of 31 pits.

Of course the new closure plan claims to relieve 12 of the threatened pits. This cosmetic concession bought off most of the "Tory rebels" and saved the government another parliamentary embarrassment. But the reprieve is for two years. After that British Coal's contracts with the power generating companies will oblige it to carry on closing pits.

The day after Heseltine announced the new plan a British Coal executive announced that some of the 12 pits probably would not last the year. He said:

"Even if we negotiate good supplementary deals with the generators there are severe doubts about whether all 12 can survive a year."

On top of the jobs massacre the new Heseltine plan broadens the attack on those miners left in work. It will push through fast track privatisation, increase the number of hours miners will have to work underground and introduce speed-ups. Deaths such as that of a miner at the privatised Monktonhall pit on 27 March will become routine once more.

Every miner who wants to save the industry needs to make an urgent choice: fight now or swell the ranks of the dole queue this spring, next year or in 1995. The choices are now that simple.

Back in October many miners believed that they could win by building the mass popular campaign against the closures. October's massive demonstrations, the local marches, the help the Scottish miners marching to

London received everywhere, all fed this illusion.

The decision of the October delegate conference to call a ballot was put on hold. When finally activated the ballot specified only one day actions. The strike weapon became just another part of the protest campaign, an adjunct to "people power".

When we argued that this strategy would not save jobs miners told us that Scargill knew what he was doing. His aim was to build support for a yes vote, when the time for strike action would arrive. We were told our call for an all out strike and occupations was premature.

When the government appeared to retreat it seemed to prove us wrong.

Intentions

Events since that brief U-turn have proved otherwise. We had a clear estimation of the intentions and methods of the class enemy. They never intended to save a single job. They bought time to regroup and demobilise the campaign against them. We said this as well.

At the same time the Labour Party and the TUC tops cultivated the "people power" campaign as an alternative to strike action, which they feared would lead to a new explosion of class struggle. Another miners' strike, combined with a wave of industrial action would have upset their bid to finally convince the middle classes and the bosses that they were a party of order and responsible industrial management.

The new white paper is all the proof that miners need to see that we were right. But having such predictions confirmed is no source of consolation. The burning question is what should we do now?

According to Labour's Robin Cook

MINES

BY MARK HARRISON

we should confine ourselves to lobbying and writing to Tory MPs:

"The rigged market will not save the pits, but full mailbags for Tory MPs might."

Full mailbags for Tory MPs will keep Westminster's refuse collectors busy for a week, but they won't budge members of a party that spent millions smashing the miners' strike of 1984/85 and axing 125,000 miners' jobs since that defeat.

Cook's advice is the desperate pleading of a party that fears its ruling class masters more than anything else. The TUC's cowardly Norman Willis echoes such bleating. For him the white paper is another occasion to get his gob on the telly and talk about the TUC's new role as a mobiliser of public opinion.

The solution remains all out strike action. Miners must strike. Of course, we are now in a much weaker position after five months of substituting the "people power" campaign for industrial muscle.

The winter has ended. It is no accident that the Tories delayed their

report to weaken the chances of a strike hurting power supplies during the colder months. The labour movement's leaders let them do this.

Up to 8,000 miners have taken voluntary redundancy. Even Yorkshire's vice president, Ken Capstick, admitted that these men were "demoralised after all the pit closures." They were demoralised too by the absence of any clear lead in the fight to save pits.

The responsibility for this bad situation lies at the doors of the right and left wings of the labour movement, including Scargill. For months he was a willing prisoner of the rest of the TUC bureaucracy. His failure to adopt a militant strategy at the outset gave new life to the likes of the old Stalinist George Bolton in the NUM leadership. He now opposes any sort of strike action. Five months allowed Bolton to ensure that the once militant Scottish region voted heavily against even a one day action.

Illusions

Scargill spread illusions in "people power" at a time when he should have been campaigning to win a yes vote in a strike ballot. Every militant miner should call on him to change tack now.

Despite the disadvantages of strik-

ing in the spring, a strike by the miners in defence of their jobs and the further butchery of their industry could still win. If every threatened pit is occupied and if every other miner is on strike, the action could become a focus for massive working class resistance to the Tories and the jobs' massacre.

Solidarity from power workers could bring industry to a halt. Joint action with other workers threatened by unemployment or wage cuts could generalise the struggle against the bosses and the Tories.

Victory is still possible because the Tories are still weak. Determined resistance to them could spark a new crisis for them, sooner rather than later.

But this means acting fast. It means fighting now for a new ballot for an all out strike. It means pit occupations—not camps—now. It means throwing the union's resources into a campaign for a yes vote.

And it means breaking with the traitors who lead the labour movement and appealing directly to the millions of workers who hate the Tories, who are looking for a lead in the struggle against them and who can be won to action with the miners, not just sympathy for them.

Strike to save every pit!

RAIL

BY AN RMT MEMBER

BY A DECISIVE majority RMT members on British Rail have voted to take strike action against redundancies and closures. A rolling programme of one day strikes begins on 2 April, coinciding with the miners' industrial action.

The strike call is long overdue and good news for all those keen to wage a struggle against the vicious Tory-inspired attacks. It is an important step forward. But the overall strategy of the leadership is weak. Militants will need to step up the pressure for a fighting campaign that can win.

Privatisation

The RMT leadership has steadfastly refused to place privatisation at the heart of the battle. RMT General Secretary, Jimmy Knapp, has only spoken of opposing the consequences of a sell-off. But privatisation will mean compulsory redundancies, the ending of national severance agreements and the extension of contract labour on BR.

In effect Knapp has already accepted further job losses so long as the redundancies are "voluntary". Yet there have been suggested figures of up to 25,000 redundancies.

If privatisation gets through then the rail managers will take on railworkers section by section and area by area. They will use the parcelling off of the different services like Intercity to divide and weaken any resistance to the drastic cuts in rail services. They will use the anti-union laws to prevent workers in "different" rail companies from taking joint or solidarity action.

The best way to stop all of these different attacks has to be a united and national indefinite strike of the RMT, ASLEF and TSSA against privatisation now. Why wait to treat the symptoms if you can prevent the disease?

Any leadership which had railworkers' interests as its priority would prepare such a battle plan.

But the RMT bureaucracy is more interested in using publicity gimmicks like the utterly useless "Better Rail Campaign". It would rather hide behind the celebrity-dominated "Save Our Railways" as the way to thwart privatisation. They even got railworkers to dress up as sardines to protest at overcrowding!

Most of all they want to appear reasonable and concentrate on convincing Tory MPs about the impracticalities of rail privatisation. How the Tory rebels have behaved over pit closures gives an indication of what a dangerous strategy this is.

Response

Not that the ASLEF leadership is any better. If anything, the response of their General Secretary, Derrick Fullick, has been worse. Although ASLEF's ballot appears to be in direct opposition to the Tories' privatisation plans, the last minute decision by the ASLEF leadership to ballot its members after the announcement of the RMT result is an act of bureaucratic treachery.

They have played a waiting game and are determined to avoid striking alongside the RMT. It recalls a similar trick played by ASLEF's top officials around the London Underground dispute last autumn. In both cases



A victim of Heseltine's handiwork

ASLEF's role has been to obstruct the maximum solidarity among railworkers.

And not so long ago Fullick was sounding off about preparing general strikes against the Tories. That's all well and good, but how about issuing a clear instruction to his members not to cross RMT picket lines?

Fullick's whole approach has been to find any excuse to avoid effective joint action. Now is an ideal opportunity to link the fight against privatisation to breaking through the government's 1.5% public sector pay limit. The existing pay agreements between the British Rail Board and the rail unions expire later this month. Railworkers should build rank and file committees of RMT, ASLEF and TSSA members to break down the divisions within the workforce and to fight the pay deal and privatisation. They should make direct links with other public sector workers, drawing them in to rank and file level

organisation.

Militants on the rail cannot trust the leaders one inch and will have to organise at a rank and file level to force their unions to fight.

The 2 April strike should be the springboard for further, more militant action. Local committees must demand the leaders use the union machinery to organise an indefinite strike.

Mandate

Under the anti-union laws the official mandate of the recent ballot in favour of 24 hour strikes runs out in April. The bureaucrats could well use this as an excuse for not calling any further strikes. This makes it all the more urgent that militants raise the arguments for extending the action in the here and now and forging solidarity with other public sector workers. Militants must pressure the union bureaucrats for the all out action we need to win but

must be ready to build for the unofficial strikes that may well prove necessary.

That is the only realistic way of halting privatisation and the associated closures and job losses. ■

To all RMT members

- Closures and Redundancies
- Privatisation
- Machinery of negotiation
- Low Pay
- Union Organisation

Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union

Organise the Fightback

a meeting for all RMT members
Saturday 24 April at 12.00
The Mechanics Institute
Princess St, Manchester

LONDON BUSES

For an indefinite strike!

LONDON BUSWORKERS have stiffened their resistance to management attacks on wages and conditions across the fleet. They stand to lose up to £60 a week, suffer a four hour extension to the working week and face attacks on their pension rights.

In March drivers and conductors staged two one day strikes in eight of London Buses' ten subsidiary units. In addition workers at many garages have implemented a ban on overtime and rest day working. Even in East London, where T&G members voted against strike action, workers have pursued the ban.

The first walk-out on 10 March highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of workers' organisation within the garages. The extent of scabbing also showed the damage done by weeks of delay by T&G officials and the leadership's criminal decision to recommend that busworkers sign letters accepting the bosses' imposition of the new contracts.

The second strike, a week later, showed that busworkers are prepared to struggle when given a clear idea of what is really at stake in the dispute. The Tottenham garage saw a dramatic fall in strikebreaking while some East London crews took solidarity action despite instructions to work normally.

A panic-stricken management at Willesden garage in the Metroline unit tried to operate a service itself with a £48,000 a year director for commercial operations taking to the road as a conductor and getting a good share of abuse from a travelling public less than grateful for his pathetic performance. The day



Busworkers picketing their garage

after the second strike Willesden's manager sacked a worker for spitting at a scab, provoking a still-lung strike and the promise of indefinite action in the event of any further disciplinary action.

Other garages in south London have seen similar spontaneous walk-outs in response to the bosses' bully boy tactics. Even so four drivers employed by the Leaside unit still face the threat of the sack for refusing to sign the new contracts.

In what T&G regional officer, Ken Fuller, described as a "coincidental move" busworkers will strike for 24 hours alongside the miners and RMT members on British Rail on 2 April. This action could paralyse London for a day but as with all one-day actions the bosses know that the buses will be running again the next day. With the Tory government spurring them on, unit managers are not about to concede an inch. The bureaucracy's reliance on one-day strikes and parliamentary lobbying will fritter away

busworkers' anger. The posting of the new rates, which the bosses want to operate from midnight, has also increased the temperature amongst the rank and file.

Activists have begun to build regular membership meetings in the better organised garages. Now militants must seek to build mass meetings across units and the fleet as a whole. Their aim has to be an indefinite strike, with or without the backing of the vacillating T&G officials, under the control of an elected, recallable strike committee.

The busworkers need to win solidarity up to and including industrial action from London Underground and British Rail workers, who have also begun a programme of one day strikes. Sustained, coordinated action offers a real chance of bringing London to a grinding halt, forcing the bosses to retreat and the Tories to shelve their plans for deregulation and privatisation of transport in the capital.■

MEMBERS OF the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) delivered a resounding vote for action at the end of March. In the ballot, 66% voted for strike action and an overwhelming 84% for other sanctions.

The Colleges Employers Forum (CEF) are encouraging college managements to introduce different contracts after 1 April for new and promoted staff. The new contracts increase teaching hours, reduce holidays, attack maternity leave provisions and introduce Saturday and even Sunday working.

A number of colleges announced their intention to introduce the new contracts, with some already employing new or promoted staff on them. In Birmingham this led to city wide strike action. Another strike on 10 March was joined by several colleges in the Black Country.

The employers were rattled. Despite unprecedented intimidation and threats by CEF lawyers to use the anti-union laws, the strike was solid. East Birmingham governors, who had started the dispute, held off advertising jobs under the new contract. After the second day's strike several Birmingham principals broke ranks and assured the national union that new contracts would not be issued outside of "national negotiations". Three Black Country college managements also disowned the CEF contract.

At the CEF AGM on 26 March the strike action had clearly affected the

No to new contracts

NATFHE

BY A NATFHE MEMBER

employers. The CEF leadership was forced by worried college managements to offer NATFHE national negotiations before any new contracts were implemented. A deadline for "progress" in these negotiations has been set for 30 June.

Despite this partial success the strategy followed by the leadership of NATFHE is useless. The Tories turned the colleges into hundreds of independent "corporations" from 1 April. This means under the Tory anti-union laws it is "illegal" to organise national strike action against the CEF's attacks. Every college becomes an individual employer and every action in solidarity with another college becomes illegal "secondary action".

The NATFHE leadership decided to bow down before the Tory laws. They would only authorise action in individual colleges or education authori-

ties where there was "a dispute". Rank and file pressure led to over twenty colleges starting to ballot for action in support of Birmingham or over their own disputes on 10 March.

Our leadership, renowned for its slowness in dealing with members' and branches' problems, suddenly developed the ability to react speedily. The General Secretary, Geoff Woolf, sent out letters to individual members' homes declaring that, "NATFHE has publicly repudiated and disassociated itself from the action proposed". It informed them that if they went ahead they could be sacked. As a result only Southwark College in London struck alongside Birmingham.

Even worse, having decided on a national one-day strike on 1 April, the leadership proceeded to exempt every college from strike action where the principal sent them a letter promising negotiations. By the end of March over 200 hundred colleges, out of 265 balloted had been exempted. This master strategy means the colleges with strong union organisations are exempted while the weak colleges are picked off. Obviously it is no

accident that our leadership chose April Fools' Day for this strike! The danger now is that our leaders will cancel or suspend the action during negotiations with the CEF. NATFHE branches must demand the action continues and that no negotiations take place while any CEF college employs or threatens to employ staff on the new contracts.

The CEF has set the 30 June deadline quite deliberately. All exams will be over, holidays will be looming and the possibility for action will be at its weakest. This is another reason why all sanctions must be implemented. No registers should be marked, no statistics or student numbers handed

over until the CEF has settled with NATFHE.

We must prevent our negotiators selling out our conditions, the "Silver Book". For this we need a strong and well organised rank and file organisation both at the base of the union and fighting to change its leadership. Members of the Socialist Lecturers Alliance (SLA) are standing for National Executive positions and must be supported.

A meeting of activists in Birmingham, sponsored by SLA, has called for a national conference in May to discuss strategy. We must use this conference to launch just such an organisation.■

CPSA ELECTIONS

VOTE SERWOTKA

Organise the rank and file

THIS MONTH, low-paid civil workers in the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) have the opportunity to show all sides of the road to the right wing, which has been in power since 1988. The CPSA is the largest union in the public sector and its leader, the right wing's chambers, is standing for re-election. If she is not re-elected it will cause a crisis in the right wing's ranks.

The right wing have held sway in the CPSA since 1988. They were catapulted into office as a direct result of the Broad Left's (BL) failure. At that time the BL controlled the National Executive Committee (NEC) but proved unwilling to mobilise the rank and file into an all-out offensive against the government.

Since then civil service workers have suffered a series of damaging and unnecessary defeats. The civil service itself has been broken up into semi-autonomous agencies, pay levels have been eroded, casual working has been introduced and thousands of jobs have been massacred. Most damaging of all, the traditional heart of the union, the office based branches in the Employment and Social Security departments have been undermined and in many cases destroyed.

Witch-hunts, like the one that effectively shut down Newcastle Central Office branch for a whole period, have been the Moderates' stock-in-trade. Annually Chambers presides over a farcical "conference" where all motions containing concrete proposals for action are ruled out of order.

Throughout this period, the Militant-dominated BL should have grown. There was plenty of anger with the leadership as a result of the sell outs. It has not. Despite verbal commitments it has not tried to build a rank and file movement rooted in the offices. The CPSA BL has never broken from the chronic electoralism of the Stalinist model it was based on. Time and again the BL have

BY A CIVIL SERVICE WORKER
accommodated to the right wing, leading to a series of defeats and a loss of credibility. The right wing's chambers, who has never led a strike or defied the right wing bureaucracy. His platform, agreed by and drawn up with the BL, doesn't even include the taboo word, "strike"!

Originally the SWP went along with Militant's support for Ashbury. So it looked as though militants would be denied the chance to vote for a fighting left candidate in the presidential elections. Fortunately, the Socialist Caucus grouping inside the CPSA decided to stand Mark Serwotka, a supporter of *Socialist Organiser*. Mark has a record of leading successful strikes in South Wales and of standing up to the bureaucracy during the anti-Poll Tax campaign and in the unofficial Branches Against Agencies initiative.

His platform commits him to fighting market testing (contracting out) and pay restraint with all-out national strike action. All CPSA members who want to fight for their jobs and their livelihoods should vote for Mark. Despite shortcomings in his politics (Workers Power does not agree with *Socialist Organiser's* refusal to countenance breaking anti-union laws, for example) he does represent a real break from the policies offered by all the other candidates.

Belatedly, the SWP have put their weight behind Mark's candidacy. This month's election campaign must now be used not only to win votes, but to organise the militant minority of the CPSA into an army of activists campaigning for action.■

A revival of militancy

THERE IS a great deal of speculation going on about the state of the British labour movement. In the socialist press and in the bosses' serious papers the question is being asked: are we seeing a revival of militancy after years of retreat?

The issue arose with the original outcry against the pit closure programme in October and the labour movement organised mass demonstrations. Britain's streets were filled with people marching behind union banners. Union leaders started being interviewed again. And a tangible mood of working class hostility to the Tories began to make itself felt in a rising number of industrial disputes. The rise continued into 1993.

Bear with us while we quote the bosses' assessment of all this from a *Financial Times* editorial:

"All of these actions are defensive, about job security rather than pay, and all, apart from Timex, are limited in duration, designed primarily to provide a focal point for media campaigns. Elsewhere there is no sign of a general pick-up in strike action. Indeed, at a time of very high unemployment, employers are finding it increasingly easy to push through pay freezes, especially in manufacturing." (24/3/93)

Potential

There is an element of truth in this observation. But there is no understanding of why the current wave of trade union action is taking the form that it is, and no appreciation of the enormous potential for working class action to go beyond its present limited form.

The bosses are carrying through a major offensive on three fronts: jobs, pay and conditions. In addition to this the Tory government, with its ERM-based economic strategy in ruins, is making massive cuts in its public spending plans. This spells devastating cuts in public services.

The attack on jobs flows directly from the recession. Capitalism in crisis is driven to shed jobs in order to survive. Leyland Daf cannot survive as a capitalist company unless it continues to reduce its workforce to a bare minimum. Ford is cutting over 2,000 jobs because the profitability of its British concerns can only be maintained through such butchery.

Capitalism is also driven to increase the exploitation of its workers so that in the event of a recovery British industry (or at least British-based firms) can compete on the world market. It needs to make the workers produce more and get paid less. This is what lies behind the offensive on pay and conditions.

Settlements

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reported that pay settlements have fallen to their lowest levels for 13 years, down to an average of 2.5% in manufacturing. It also reports that one in three companies have successfully imposed pay freezes since last August. In the same period productivity went up by 3.9%.

Howard Davies, the CBI's Director General welcomed this trend: "This is remarkably good news. What matters now is that we keep up the progress."

Big firms, like Rolls Royce, Pirelli and ICL, are all now pushing for freezes.

Tied to this driving down of wages and driving up of the intensity of work is the attack on conditions. Not only does this mean taking away tea breaks (one of the issues at the Yarrow shipyard and at the Peugeot Talbot plant in Coventry), but tearing up all previously negotiated agreements on working practices in favour of individual contracts (which make it easier to sack workers), flexible working practices, increased shift times and the eradication of overtime and

BY MARK HARRISON

bonus payments.

The bosses are achieving something that eluded them in the early 1980s: namely, the use of mass unemployment to make workers so fearful about their jobs that they are prepared to submit to lower pay and worse conditions.

While the public sector has been partially immune to this process the government's pay limit is clearly designed to meet similar objectives. The deal negotiated in Sheffield by Nalco's scab of the year, Paul Hudson, is a dangerous precedent. Council workers voted to accept a 3.25% cut in wages in return for keeping

The entire offensive has evoked a greater degree of militancy from the working class than either the bosses or the trade union leaders expected

their jobs. The Works Department, which voted against this "giveback", was browbeaten into accepting it.

While the *Financial Times* is right to observe this trend it is premature in drawing too much comfort from it. The entire offensive has evoked a greater degree of militancy from the working class than either the bosses or the trade union leaders expected. They were as surprised as anyone by the upsurge last autumn, and they remain fearful of the strikes against job losses that have been agreed by miners, railworkers and London busworkers.

At Ford a series of strikes against job losses by boiler workers, transport workers and white collar staff closed the plant for several days. The mere threat of a strike by production workers forced the Ford bosses to withdraw plans for 1,300 compulsory redundancies. Rolls Royce workers have agreed to ballot for action against a similar redundancy package.

The bosses and bureaucrats have been even more surprised by the outbreaks of anger that have greeted pay cuts and attacks on conditions, in a range of industries. When even bailiffs and nuclear scientists take industrial action on pay (as they did in March), you know that something is stirring in the ranks of the working class. Timex is not alone, as the *Financial Times* would have us believe.

For four weeks workers at Yarrow shipyard were on all-out strike over pay. Peugeot Talbot workers voted overwhelmingly for strike action, also over pay. North Merseyside British Rail backed down over the imposition of new work rosters when the local RMT voted unanimously for an indefinite strike.

Strikes, or threats of action, are not confined to the private sector either. The day before a strike by thousands of Nalco members, 2,000 firefighters blocked the streets around the Home Office during a lobby of

negotiations between their leaders and the government over pay. Ken Cameron, the FBU's leader, was visibly shocked by the turn out and was moved to promise:

"The numbers in which you have responded to the call for a lobby today leave us in no doubt that we will fight. We will take strike action if necessary and we will carry on until victory."

All of these examples point to the real mood of anger that exists in the working class. They point to the potential for a revival of militancy on a scale not seen in years. But translating that potential into reality is the central problem of the moment. When the *Financial Times* refers to the existing disputes being "limited in duration, designed primarily to provide a focal point for media campaigns", they are referring to the strategy of containment being pursued by the leadership of the labour movement.

The leadership, the union executives and the Labour Party, do not want a revival of militancy. They fear the Timex picket line, and what it represents, because if it spreads, if it revives widespread militant struggle, it will scupper their entire scheme of transforming the labour movement into a responsible, moderate, "new realist" partner of the bosses.

For the leadership the class struggle gets in the way of partnership. And partnership is integral to their bid to revive reformism—the management of capitalism on behalf of the bosses but with some regard to the welfare of the workers—as a viable political alternative to the Tories.

Onslaught

Trade union and political reformism (Labour) were thrown into crisis by the onslaught of the Thatcher years.

Militant trade unionism at its best (the great miners' strike) proved incapable of defeating the Tories. To defeat Thatcher and her anti-union laws a political general strike by the entire class across all sectional divisions was needed. But Scargill and the NUM finally opted to abide by the rules of "solidarity" laid down by the TUC, rather than fight amongst the rank and file for such a strike.

Meanwhile right wing trade unionism, backed by Labour, decided that it was impossible to try and resist at all.

Faced with the new bosses' offensive the labour movement's leaders have learnt all the wrong lessons from the 1980s. They cannot conceive of fighting for working class interests against capitalism.

So they are obliged to try and limit working class anger and resistance to responsible, isolated forms of protest action within the framework of the laws laid down by the Tories. This is why Norman Willis resisted every request to call for strike action by all sections of the class on 2 April. He didn't want to break the bosses' laws.

The bankruptcy of this reformism was well revealed by Bill Jordan, the AEEU's leader and on the extreme right of the labour movement. When Rolls Royce announced that it was sacking 5,000 workers, he declared:

"It looks like some companies are



Mass support for Timex strikers

using the recession as an excuse to shed jobs."

This idiocy runs right through the labour movement's leadership. Every recession results in job losses. Surely even Bill Jordan must have noticed that. And recessions are not the result of bad management. They are the result of capitalism and are an integral part of the economic system. They are not an excuse to shed jobs, they impose the iron necessity of shedding jobs if capitalist companies are to survive.

This is why it is necessary to fight capitalism itself. And the beginning of wisdom in the fight against capitalism is a determination not let the bosses make us pay, through our jobs, wages, services or conditions, for the crisis of their system. This determination expresses itself in strikes that go beyond one day protest actions.

If a strike is going to stop the

Faced with the new bosses' offensive the labour movement's leaders have learnt all the wrong lessons from the 1980s. They cannot conceive of fighting for working class interests against capitalism.

bosses it has to hurt them. It has to make all their plant useless from the point of view of making profits. You do this by an all out strike, by stopping scabs from sabotaging your effort, by winning solidarity from fellow workers to starve bosses of supplies, by taking on the bosses' laws that try to limit your struggle. You do it in the public sector by paralysing and disrupting the working of the bosses' administrative and state machine.

The current leadership are running away from this. Their approach is well illustrated by renegades like Scottish NUM leader, George Bolton. In a new pamphlet he announces:

"The problem created by those who assume that all issues facing working people can be answered by strikes, and preferably general strikes, is that such calls are made whatever the public mood may be."

He denounces the "narrow labour movement perspective of strikes and support demonstrations" in favour of public opinion campaigns.

Effective

Of course we are not saying strikes can solve every problem. Bolton caricatures his opponents because he cannot argue seriously. But we are saying that all-out strikes are a far more effective means of saving jobs and opposing wage cuts than the "colourful" campaigning that Bolton champions and that failed to save a single Scottish miner's job.

The mood for action has undeniably grown in the last period. The possibility of success is enhanced by the very weakness of the Tory government and the anxiety of the bosses that they will be unable to reap the benefits of any economic recovery. Today the limitations that the labour movement leaders have placed on the struggle against the Tories are the biggest problem we face.

We need to overthrow that leadership to be able to defeat the bosses' offensive. To overthrow that leadership we have to overthrow the influence of its reformist politics on the working class. The *Financial Times*, and its ruling class leaders, will continue to draw satisfaction from the feebleness of the union leadership's response to their attacks unless, in the course of building the resistance, we can also build a new leadership, a revolutionary party. Such a party must be committed to the fight against capitalism itself. That is the only means of ending the cycle of unemployment, poverty and insecurity that every worker in Britain faces today. ■

LAST YEAR Hollywood discovered that audiences were willing to pay for something more than escapist comedy and low-brow action movies.

In late 1992 US cinemagoers queued for another overtly political film biography in addition to Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. The subject of this portrait is Jimmy Hoffa, a flamboyant, controversial trade union bureaucrat, whose name became virtually synonymous with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, North America's largest workers' organisation.

This fascinating film is a must for revolutionaries and trade union militants. As a well known US film critic put it:

"Hoffa charts the tragic arc of the American labor movement from the picket line to the country club golf course—at least for the leaders."

The movie opens its account of Hoffa's career on what was probably the last day of his life, in July 1975. Through the eyes of an invented character, Bobby Ciaro, played by director Danny DeVito, we witness Hoffa's transformation from a brave and ferocious union organiser into a ruthless union bureaucrat and Mafia operative. The film illustrates the strengths and terrible limits of militant trade unionism when divorced from socialist politics.

Bitter

DeVito soon immerses the audience in the arena of bitter class struggle, against the background of Detroit in the Great Depression. This is the period which gave a bloody birth to industrial unionism in the USA.

Prior to the 1930s the Teamsters had sided with the craft-based, labour aristocratic American Federation of Labour (AFL). Hoffa's job

HOFFA

From class fighter to mobster

G R McColl reviews
Hoffa
directed by Danny DeVito
now on general release

was to change the composition and character of the union. The film accurately depicts Hoffa as an irrepressible organiser, recruiting amongst the long distance truckers, food warehouse and rail terminal drivers, workers who the then Teamsters' president, Daniel Tobin, labelled "riff-raff".

The film reveals nothing of Jimmy's early training as a Teamster militant. By his own account he was a disciple of Farrell Dobbs, an early member and later national secretary of the then Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (US) and a key figure in the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters' dispute which sparked a city-wide general strike. Even when Hoffa became a virulent anti-communist bureaucrat he would speak fondly of Dobbs, once offering him a post in the union's bureaucracy in the 1950s.

The film's most powerful scene takes place in the midst of a bitter recognition strike against the Railway Transport Agency. Hoffa, defying pressure from the Teamsters' head office and President Franklin D Roosevelt to call off the strike, physically leads a rank and file march. The march comes under brutal attack by a small army of hired thugs and police, leaving eight strikers dead (in fact 11 died during the course of this strike).

Mob

Where the movie falls down is in its explanation of Hoffa's initial links with the mob. Admittedly, this is murky and ill-documented territory. The film suggests that Hoffa first struck an alliance with a Detroit Mafia family to win a difficult dispute with a food distribution boss.

Then, however, the plot grows ever more implausible with a fictional mobster jotting down the details of a scheme to siphon money



out of the union's pension fund on the back of a hunting license. This turns up as evidence in court more than 15 years later!

The truth was that by the 1950s the Teamsters were entangled in a thick web of corruption. Hoffa had become a powerful regional official, retaining a high degree of rank and file support. His ends, while cloaked in the rhetoric of "justice for the working man", had become ever more unclear and his means seemed only to serve the pursuit of absolute power within the union.

As Teamsters' president, Hoffa was the living embodiment of US business unionism, signing sweetheart deals, recruiting within the

ranks of the police and riding roughshod over internal democracy. Yet he could honestly claim some credit for a dramatic rise in members' living standards, working conditions and job security. The post-war boom was an important factor but the Teamsters' industrial muscle and Hoffa's willingness to flex it were decisive.

The body of evidence also suggests that despite his liking for smart suits and big cars Hoffa was not lining his own pockets. His bloated salary was strictly above board. His teetotal, non-smoking, monogamous existence was ascetic in contrast to that of his bureaucratic cronies who come across as dim-witted parasites and booze-addled groopers of Las Vegas show-girls. More and more the Teamsters' leaders were coming to be a mirror image of the class enemy, reflected in glitzy vulgarity.

The film regains its thread in its account of Hoffa's testimony to a US Senate committee, whose chief investigator was Bobby Kennedy, JFK's younger brother. Given his father's illicit rum-running and his brother's dealing with mobsters, Bobby's commitment to nailing Hoffa seems more than ironic. And Jack Nicholson's Jimmy bristles with contempt for the Harvard-educated "rich kid".

Intimidation

The movie shows something of the intimidation meted out by Hoffa or his lieutenants to opponents in the capitalist press. What it does not examine is the developing regime of terror within the Teamsters for which Hoffa must bear much of the blame.

Dedicated trade unionists, who dared to openly challenge the Teamsters' bureaucracy, faced the prospect of harassment, beatings and even death. Worse than alleged or real abuse of union funds, Hoffa's part in strangling any opposition was his greatest crime—one for which he, of course, never faced a day in court or jail.

Twenty five years after Hoffa's forced resignation from the union's presidency the struggle to restore a semblance of democracy has made some gains, but it is far from over. The progress has come at the cost of a loss of autonomy from the state.

The film speculates, probably rightly, that Jimmy was a victim of rough justice, murdered by the very mobsters who had helped pave his path to bureaucratic power. Hoffa is ultimately soft on its anti-hero. As cinema, however, it is gripping. ■

Screening violence

BY RICHARD BRENNER

MANY TERRIBLE and violent things go on in the world. The Gulf War left thousands of Iraqis dead, thousands more scarred for life or maimed. The war in the Balkans is producing a catalogue of atrocities that defy the imagination. On a smaller scale, but no less tragic for the victims, local and national newspapers relentlessly report violent crime, sexual abuse and murder.

Bereft of a single original idea or insight and trained to lie in the service of their ruling class masters, the British press, in concert with Tory and Labour politicians alike, tell us that much of this violence stems from too many of us watching too many violent films and television programmes on the big and small screens.

The *Daily Mirror* shocks its working class audience with the story of the young girl who watched *Silence of the Lambs* hundreds of times. This is supposed to be the source of violence in society. The fact that the girl was neither a murderer herself, nor knew any murderers amongst her circle of friends was overlooked. The "sensation" of her story was designed to stir up a sensation amongst the masses against the threat of screen violence.

For the posher end of the British public the colour supplements are filled with angst-ridden articles about the effects of screen violence. Film critics, who have seen countless acts of barbarism on the screen but have resisted the urge to inflict anything more dangerous on us than their opinions, tell us that an excess of

explicit maimings, killings and torturings on our screens somehow underlies the very real increase of violence in society.

You know things are getting out of hand when Clint Eastwood adds his drawl to the chorus for "more responsible" Hollywood attitudes to violence. The former Mayor of Carmel has, after all, piled up a mountain of on-screen corpses in his illustrious career. Doubtless he owes his pained expression to deep moral deliberation before despatching his victims to the cemetery. Behind the sensationalism and the posturing there is something serious going on. Sections of the cultural and political establishment are trying to get film producers and broadcasters, from Hollywood to the BBC, to censor themselves with even more gusto.

Amorality

Prime moral bleater of the year (so far) has been the American "critic" Michael Medved. In a book going by the understated title of *Hollywood v America*, he insists that the violence, sex and "amorality" of the screen world are encouraging the accelerated decline of US society. As he puts it:

"The ominous view of the world conveyed by popular culture contributes powerfully to the insecurity and paranoia that in turn facilitates (sic) increased levels of criminal activity."

This has always been the core of the moral reactionaries' argument. Show people a murder, and they'll

go out and murder. Show them a rape, and you'll be encouraging rape. Ideas create reality, rather than reflecting it. The conclusion: less violence and sex on our screens, and more wholesome images of stable marriages and contented families. Happy endings; happy viewers; happy society.

This, of course, is utter rubbish. Note that Medved, a thoroughbred New Right bigot and philistine, does not quite have the courage of his convictions when he says that the screen's "ominous" world view "contributes powerfully" rather than causes the increased paranoia of the bloated American middle class. What really causes it is as obvious as what is causing the deep insecurity gripping Britain: the reality all around us.

Ideas, film, TV and art, in short the entire culture of any society in general reflect rather than create the reality of that society. Middle America is increasingly paranoid because its oases of opulence are surrounded by vast urban wastelands of chronic structural unemployment. Drugs, crime and prostitution are seen as the only way out for hundreds of thousands. There is an ever intensifying rage at the injustice of blatant social inequality and an anger ready to explode at any time, capable of reducing the second city of the world's leading power to rubble overnight. As a critic of rather greater stature than Medved once put it:

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social be-

ing that determines their consciousness." (Marx)

Working people need to see through the moral panics of hypocrites such as Medved. Everyone knows why this type of panic is latched onto by the likes of John Major: to deflect attention from the mass unemployment, declining facilities and rotten housing that really lead to crime.

Destruction

In the month that the Tories announced the destruction of thousands of miners' jobs, a real obscenity if ever there was one, they decided to protect us by banning consenting adults from watching Red Hot Television, a porno channel you can only get on satellite with a special decoder and a hefty subscription. What was the point of that? Moral censorship, that's what.

Doubtless there are many reflections in culture, whether popular or otherwise, of the terrible distortions to which the human personality is subject in a society torn apart by class division. The problem won't be changed by letting the ideologues of capital parade nothing but platitudes and pretty pictures before our eyes. If you don't like the realities of capitalism, the censor's blindfold won't sweeten your life one bit.

It is for working class people not to endure the world, but to change it. That is why we need untrammelled access to whatever "ominous views" the film makers and artists may have of a system that is ominous in every sense.

BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS

THE ENGLISH revolution was the first of the great bourgeois revolutions. It shattered feudalism and cleared the way for the English capitalists to dominate the world. The English civil war broke out in 1642. It followed a prolonged crisis of feudal rule. This crisis arose directly out of the development of the capitalist mode of production within feudalism.

By 1640 English capitalism was the most advanced in the world. Under the Tudors the rising bourgeoisie used the Absolutist state for its own ends. The monarch and Parliament developed an alliance which temporarily suited both their interests. Through Parliament the gentry and wealthy capitalist merchants were able to exert influence over the court. They had no legislative power but attempted to use the monarch's ever growing need to raise new taxes and loans to gain concessions over policy and greater political power.

The English bourgeoisie needed a strong and centralised state to establish uniform trading conditions for the internal market and to protect its investments and trading ventures abroad. The Absolutist monarchs, in return, stuffed their codpieces with a share of the capitalist entrepreneurs' growing wealth. But the very measures the Absolutist monarchs undertook to ensure their rule undermined their authority.

The dissolution of the monasteries allowed Henry VIII to marry Anne Boleyn but it also weakened the established church. It hastened the development of the nation state by the split with Rome and allowed the growing capitalist merchant class to buy up the former church lands. The privateers that seized the Spanish gold enriched the monarchy but also provided a source of capital and money for trade. The defeat of the Spanish Armada protected Queen Elizabeth's rule, but it also meant the English Navy could support English merchants abroad and removed the fear of papal restoration from abroad.

Capitalism was able to develop with the support of the Absolutist monarchy, but as it did so the bourgeois merchants and manufacturers that it spawned increasingly developed distinctive interests of their own. Feudalism was the economic system on which the monarchy was based and which, despite its compromises with the capitalists, it defended. This system, based on chronic localism and subsistence agriculture, on taxes and tolls benefiting a parasitic aristocracy and on the restriction of free labour, became an increasing fetter on the accumulation process.

Crisis

The very basis of the feudal state was progressively undermined by the dynamic development of capitalism. Monetary relations replaced payments in kind and labour services on the land. Inflation caused by the influx of gold from the Americas meant that the value of feudal rents, fixed by tradition but now paid in money, progressively diminished as the wealth of the capitalists increased. The King became ever more dependent on loans from the City of London, undermining his independence and status. Charles I, of the Stuart dynasty, came to power when the compromise that had prevailed under the Tudors was strained to breaking point.

In an attempt to restore his position and maintain feudalism, the King dissolved Parliament in 1629 and declared his personal rule. He revived feudal rights, and extended them to new areas.

Monopolies, the sale to a particular individual of exclusive rights of production and/or sale of a particular commodity (or the exclusive right to trade in a particular overseas market), were the means by which the Crown tried to bring industry and trade under control and guarantee a reliable income. Monopolies were extended to butter, herrings, salt, beer and soap, and caused a reduction in trade and a rise in prices. They ensured the monarchy would be hated by the poor as much as the bourgeoisie.

On every side the developing bourgeoisie was hemmed in by a political system which could no longer be recon-

ciled with the mode of production that it was tied to and which was inherently driven towards expansion. The economic struggle against feudalism became enmeshed with a political one as the capitalists attempted to remove the barriers to their own wealth and power.

By 1637 Charles' personal rule had exhausted its life. In a final bid to reassert his independence from the bourgeoisie, particularly the powerful capitalist merchants of the City of London, he announced the establishment of a new tax, Ship Money.

John Hampden, a leading merchant, was tried for his refusal to pay. Following his example the bourgeoisie went on tax strike. Charles attempted to exert his authority. He used repression against his reformist opponents. Three leading merchant reformers were tried and physically mutilated for their attacks on the established church. John Lilburne, the future leader of the Levellers, was sent to the tower.

This repression coincided with a severe economic crisis and an invasion of northern England by the armies of the Scottish nobility. Opposition to the King grew and became ever more united, accelerating the revolutionary crisis. By 1640 Charles was economically bankrupt and politically isolated.

Bourgeoisie

He further outraged the bourgeoisie by seizing bullion deposited in the Tower, and threatened to debase the currency. The recall of Parliament to deal with this crisis was inevitable. Charles hoped to achieve a compromise with the capitalists. But he dismissed the Short Parliament after only three weeks. In November 1640 the Long Parliament finally met and the crisis came to a head.

The bourgeois opposition led by Pym and Hampden had ensured, through a successful election campaign, that the bourgeoisie had its highest ever representation in Parliament. But Parliament did not simply represent the bourgeoisie. It contained representatives of the declining aristocracy, the monopolist merchants who depended on the court's largesse as well as lawyers and the capitalist merchant class. Furthermore the divisions between these categories were by no means clear.

Rich merchants had bought peerages, declining aristocrats had become capitalist farmers and manufacturers. Capitalists frequently relied upon relics of feudalism for part of their wealth. In a period before the development of an established working class, it would be a mistake to view the bourgeoisie as a fully established homogeneous class. Only after the revolution, and the destruction of feudalism as a whole, did the capitalists clearly become a class in and for themselves.

Throughout the revolution the bourgeoisie was prevented from adopting a consistently revolutionary programme by its past ties to feudalism, and its future fear of the poor and the propertyless whom it recognised as an emerging threat to its own private property in the means of production. Upon entering the Long Parliament the bourgeoisie's first demand was for the King's false advi-

ers—in particular Lord Stafford—to be brought to justice. It did not yet attach any blame to the King himself for his misrule.

While all the opposition shared illusions in the King, the split in the opposition between the bourgeoisie in Parliament and their supporters amongst the urban and rural poor and the developing petit-bourgeoisie was apparent from the outset of the revolution. The petit-bourgeoisie immediately adopted a more radical position than their bourgeois leaders, and were prepared to take direct action to achieve it.

Led by the religious sects a petition of 15,000 signatories demanding the root and branch abolition of the episcopacy was quickly followed by a petition of 30,000 demanding justice against Stafford. These manifestations of mass discontent were combined with regular demonstrations of the London apprentices, petit-bourgeoisie and poor. These actions were a forceful pressure point on the bourgeoisie holding it back from retreating before the King and pushing it further along the road of conflict than it originally intended to go.

On 12 May 1641 Stafford was executed and the King's ability to maintain his authority waned rapidly. He left London in an attempt to rally his supporters against Parliament. Widespread fears of a "papish plot" swept the country since the King was known to be favourably disposed towards Catholicism and had support from the Catholic absolute monarch in France. These fears were intensified when the news of a revolt in Catholic Ireland reached England.

Parliament was determined to keep the first English colony as much as the King, but it could not trust him with command of an army to reconquer it. Realising that through mobilising popular support they could exert pressure upon the King to achieve their demands, Parliament proposed the Grand Remonstrance. It restated Parliament's grievances, and addressed itself to the people to gain popular support.

This move destroyed Parliamentary unity, driving the more conservative elements of the bourgeoisie, as well as the representatives of the old order, firmly into the King's camp. One such renegade against parliament declared his fear of Parliament's "populism" because:

... the necessitous people [the poor] of the whole kingdom will presently rise in mighty numbers; and whosoever they pretend for at first, within a while they will set up for themselves, to the utter ruin of all the nobility and gentry of the kingdom."

A party of order based upon the bishops, feudal aristocrats and monopolists in Parliament combined with the King who returned to London and attempted to organise a coup d'etat against Parliament in January 1642. Five members of Parliament were charged with high treason. The five fled to the City of London. When Charles accompanied by eighty men at arms went to arrest them he was met by what amounted to a general strike in the City. Faced with the armed populace he had no option but to withdraw. The five returned in triumph to Parliament and the crowd jeered "what was become of the king and his cavaliers?" The civil war had begun.



In May 1660 the English Parliament recalled Charles II to the throne. His father, Charles I, had been overthrown by a mass revolution that engulfed Britain for twenty years. But from 1660 to today the British bourgeoisie have been at pains to deny that the civil war that secured their rule was any sort of revolution.

At school, the "great rebellion" or "interregnum" (they even fear the word revolution) is taught as a purely religious or constitutional conflict, an exception to the pattern of peaceful gradualism that is supposed to mark Britain out from all other countries. It was an aberrant twenty years when the English went mad and forgot their true national character.

Over the past few years learned historians have attacked the Marxist interpretation of the civil war as a conflict of classes. These revisionist historians insist that class struggle was secondary to a range of other factors, such as locally bred antagonisms, conflicts arising from

When re swept E

THE CIVIL WAR

The King immediately gathered an army. It was based on the feudal aristocrats, monopolist merchants and officer corps of the old royalist army. Its troops were raised on the basis of the old feudal levy system. It was strongest in the undeveloped north.

The Parliamentary forces were strongest in the south east and in the larger towns, those areas where capitalism and trade were most widespread and developed. Parliament now represented the bourgeoisie. The twelve monopolists amongst the London merchants elected to the House of Commons were expelled. Of the remaining nineteen merchants all but one supported Parliament.

Army

Amongst the most enthusiastic supporters of Parliament were the rural bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie, or yeomanry, the urban bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie and apprentices; the "middle sort of people" as they were generally labelled. The class divide within the Parliamentary camp became increasingly strained as the first phase of the civil war developed.

While all sections of the Parliamentary forces were united in the belief that they were fighting the war to separate the King from his evil advisers, two different strategies for the conduct of the war quickly became apparent. Rather than mobilise their support amongst the "middle sort of people", the Parliamentary majority led by the Earl of Essex and Earl of Manchester relied on the same feudal levy to establish their army as the royalists. They pursued a conciliatory policy towards the King designed to limit the Parliamentary victory to one which would achieve some minor reforms but retain the King in power.

This strategy would have been fatal had it been pursued throughout the civil war. The Parliamentary cause was only saved from defeat by the decisive action of the masses who, at Turnham Green, drove Charles from London and then in the battles of Birmingham and Manchester showed their determination to fight to the finish. The entry of the masses into the conflict ensured the King's defeat.

Yet despite the Parliamentary victo-

ries in 1644 at Marston Moor and in the relief of York, Essex refused to inflict a crushing defeat upon the King, and at Lostwithiel in Cornwall he surrendered his infantry without a fight. It was apparent to Oliver Cromwell, and those in Parliament who saw the need for "absolute victory" over the King, that a closer alliance with the petit-bourgeoisie was necessary if a lasting victory was to be achieved.

Cromwell championed the masses' widespread demand for the reform of the Parliamentary army. He said:

"I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for and loves what he knows, than that which you call 'a gentleman' and is nothing else."

He promoted the most committed fighters into responsible positions, and discriminated in favour of the "godly". Cromwell was initially not in favour of the overthrow of the monarchy, but un-

"Against the king, the law company of poor tradesmen, citizens, deluded and pious rude rabble that knew not together, . . . tailors, shoemakers on the king's side . . . all the deans, prebends and universities; all the princes, the earls and lords except knights and gentlemen in a score of sectarian

A seventeenth century country parson

derstood that in order to bring it under Parliament's control it had to be defeated first.

In 1645 the split with the conciliators came to a head. The Self Denying Ordinance was the means by which Cromwell's war party purged the army of its conciliatory leadership and allowed its reorganisation into a New Model Army. It stated that members of Parliament could not hold any civil or military

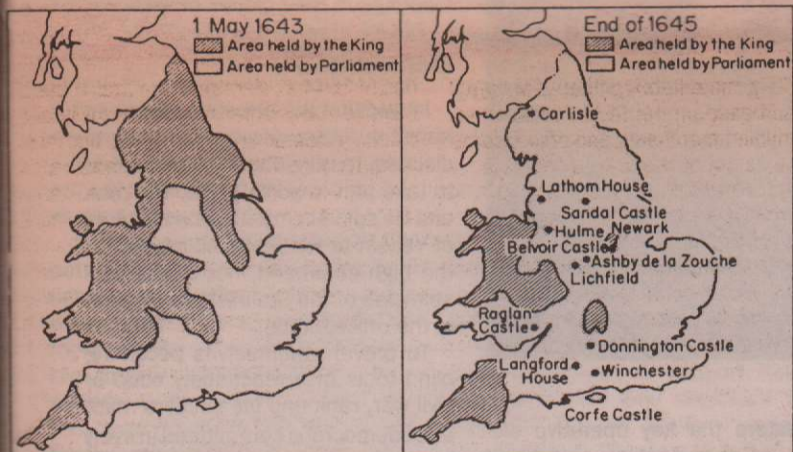
religious beliefs, conflicts within the gentry, etc.

In both its school text book and academic treatise form, the denial of the class basis of the English revolution is designed to obscure the reality of British history. It is designed to dupe people into the belief that the British class system is part of the natural order, immune from revolutions and class struggle. It is also an expression of the bourgeoisie's fear of the revolution.

So fearful are they, that when the present Queen opens Parliament each year the nearby statue of Oliver Cromwell, the great leader of the revolution, is covered so that she need not be reminded of the man who chopped the head off her seventeenth century forefather.

Below Bill Jenkins refutes the bourgeois liars and the intellectual revisionists by explaining the class basis of the English revolution. Bill's analysis is based on the arguments developed by the great Marxist historian of the revolution, Christopher Hill.

Evolution England



posts. It was directed in particular against Essex and Manchester, and charged them with "averseness" in prosecuting the war.

Across the country revolutionary committees, set up to run the war and largely made up of the radical petit-bourgeoisie, were unified, centralised

... and religion, were a broken and decayed... wherefore they were got makers, linkboys, etc.;... the bishops of the land, all learned men; both the dukes, marquises; all two or three;... all the three nations, except and atheists."

observations on the class conflict

and subordinated to Parliament. Parliament had now established the means to destroy the royalist forces. The creation of the New Model Army was the decisive turning point in the English revolution. It represented an alliance between the most radical section of the bourgeoisie and its most radical allies amongst the petit-bourgeoisie.

The rank and file of the army and lower sections of the officer corps came

from "the middle sort of people". Its most revolutionary sections were the cavalry, who had to provide their own horses and equipment—predominantly rich farmers and urban petit-bourgeois. Its strength was that it was a volunteer army, unlike the pressed forces which made up the royalist and early Parliamentary armies. It allowed open debate in the ranks and relied on self-discipline born of loyalty to the Parliamentary cause to achieve its goals.

The New Model Army challenged the very basis of feudal society. It did not discriminate against its members on the grounds of birth, but elected officers on the strength of their abilities. It did not demand that its members accept a particular religious faith; the most radical religious beliefs, such as Anabaptism, were widespread in its ranks. It appreciated the need to win the broad population to its support through argument and debate.

One of its opponents described it: "There was an order and discipline and a face of gravity and piety among them that amazed all people. Most of them were Independents and Anabaptists. They were all gifted men."

The New Model Army quickly proved its worth. At the battle of Naseby in 1645 it smashed the King's army and for the first time routed his cavalry. Showing superb organisation and a commitment to total victory, the revolutionary army, fighting for its ideals, routed the royalist rabble.

The rest of the war consisted of mopping up operations. In 1646 at Oxford the royalist forces surrendered. King Charles had given himself up to the Scots, who sold him to Parliament!

THE REVOLUTION TRIUMPHS

The Presbyterian majority in Parliament had been prepared to reluctantly accept the New Model Army as a necessary evil to destroy the royal power. But they were only too aware that it also posed a danger to their own rule. While they took advantage of the victory it had won for them, by expropriating the church lands and sequestering and fining their royalist opponents, they had no intention of granting the wider demands of the religious radicals or the rapidly growing Leveller party.

The Levellers were the party of the revolutionary petit-bourgeoisie. Their leader was John Lilburne. In 1646 he published, "The Liberty of the Freeborn Englishman, Conferred on him by the House of Lords, June 1646". This pamphlet outlined the main demands which were to dominate the Leveller programme. He proclaimed the sovereignty of the people and rejected the monarchy and the House of Lords.

In December 1646 a petition from the Presbyterians deplored the prevalence of heresy and demanded the suppression and exemplary punishment of heretics, the disbanding of the army and the pacification of Ireland. In particular it called for the dismissal of all officers disaffected with the church government established by Parliament. In March 1647 the Long Parliament decided to act on the petition. The Presbyterian bourgeoisie hoped to destroy the New Model Army and the threat it posed from the left, and to ensure the acquisition of the 2,500,000 acres they were promised in Ireland.

The ranks of the New Model Army were aware of the dangers posed in the Presbyterian petition. Although they had defeated the King, they had a number of outstanding grievances. They were owed over a year's pay, pay which was necessary to repay the costs they had endured during the campaign. They had not been guaranteed immunity from prosecution for acts carried out in the war and in Yorkshire 14 soldiers were hanged for horse stealing. There was no compensation for relatives of troops who had died in battle. The soldiers knew that without their presence Parliament would not fulfil their wider demands for religious toleration.

Following the example of the civilian Levellers the rank and file of the army drew up a petition addressed to Parliament, expressing their grievances. Parliament responded by condemning the Army and arrested Colonel Robert Lilburne and other officers on a charge that they had obstructed the Irish expedition. The attitude of the high command was very different from the ranks. General Fairfax assured the Commons that the officers "would acquiesce in whatsoever... you should judge reasonable to grant on their behalf."

The ranks were not so reasonable. In April regiments elected delegates called "Agitators" to form a council of action. By May the council could speak for all 16 regiments. In June the officers followed suit.

The Agitators first appearance was as accused men standing before Parliament. They delivered a letter addressed to Fairfax, which repeated their demands and asked:

"Can this Irish expedition be anything else but a design to ruin and break this Army to pieces?"

Agitators

In May the Agitators demanded that the officers join them. But the high command of Fairfax and Cromwell still wished to act in concert with Parliament. Parliament promised to pay their arrears, granted them indemnity from prosecution but continued in its demand for disbandment, setting a day for its commencement.

As the day approached Fairfax summoned a council of war. In a petition the Agitators demanded Fairfax call a rendezvous until all their grievances were met, failing which "we shall be necessitated... to do such things ourselves." Fairfax yielded to this demand and in a

letter to Parliament explained he had done so "to keep the Army from disorder or worse inconveniences."

The Agitators then took steps to consolidate their power. The King was captured from Parliament, and the entire artillery was seized. At the Newmarket rendezvous Cromwell joined with them. They then swore a solemn "Engagement" not to divide until the liberties of England were secure. A dual power regime now existed between Parliament and the Army. Fairfax and Cromwell, representing the most radical sections of the bourgeoisie, had been forced by the revolutionary determination of the petit-bourgeois Agitators to desert from the Parliamentary camp. But they wanted to limit the movement from below which now threatened Parliament's existence from a new quarter.

It was the continued pressure of the petit-bourgeoisie which shaped the next period. After some vacillation, the Army acceded to the demands of the Agitators for a march on London. At Putney the army council debated their programme.

"For really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he; and therefore, truly, Sir, I think it's clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government."

The Leveller leader was Colonel Rainsborough. He was opposed by Cromwell, Fairfax and Ireton, the bourgeois high command.

Rainsborough rejected the Heads of Proposals presented by Fairfax which called for negotiations with the King. Instead he presented the Agreement of the People, the Leveller programme supported by the Agitators. It demanded the complete abolition of tithes, the decentralisation and simplification of the law, and manhood suffrage.

The high command understood that to grant manhood suffrage posed a direct threat to their rule. If it were attained it would mean they would have no control over the representatives elected, and would not be able to limit the revolution's course. Rainsborough's demand for thoroughgoing bourgeois democracy was simple and direct:

"For really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he; and therefore, truly, Sir, I think it's clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government."

When Ireton replied that without a property qualification property itself could be overthrown Rainsborough replied:

"Sir I see that it is impossible to have liberty but all property must be taken away... if you say it, it must be so."

A compromise shaped by Cromwell was agreed between the two sides. Cromwell then moved to ensure that the New Model Army was unable to pose a united threat again. Against Agitator demands that a new rendezvous should be held to adopt the Agreement of the People, Cromwell demanded the Agitators disperse to their regiments. He banned discussion of the King's powers. A rendezvous was organised but it split the army and weakened the Agitators' position.

As an alternative to the Agreement Cromwell presented a Remonstrance drafted by the Officers. This ignored the Levellers' most radical demands, provoking two regiments to mutiny. Cromwell was able to restore control and a Private Richard Arnold was executed for treason. Lilburne was arrested and sent to the tower.

While the bourgeoisie was guarding against the threat from the left the King attempted to recover his power. War once again broke out. The second civil war demonstrated that the King was not prepared to enter into any real negotiations to limit his power. Although the New Model Army was depleted, and many of Parliament's supporters had been alienated as their demands were not met, the King's forces were crushed again.

The second civil war finally lost Charles his support amongst the radical bourgeoisie, including Cromwell and the army command. Cromwell and Fairfax finally supported the Leveller demand for the execution of the King, the purging or abolition of the Commons and the dissolution of the House of Lords.

Throughout 1648 the Levellers mounted widespread agitation for the execution of the King, the dissolution of Parliament and its replacement by a constituent assembly to adopt the Agreement of the People. In August they presented a petition signed by 10,000 demanding Lilburne's release. Regiments across England sent petitions endorsing the Agreement, and demanding the King's execution.

This agreement laid the basis for the final short-lived alliance between the radical bourgeoisie and revolutionary petit-bourgeoisie represented by the Levellers. But while the radical bourgeois were prepared to adopt elements of the Levellers' programme they did so only in order to consolidate their own rule.

Pride's Purge expelled the Presbyterians from Parliament. It left the minority of members, the Rump, who supported Cromwell's programme.

The execution of the King and dissolution of the House of Lords quickly followed. Both measures were carried through under the close supervision of the high command in order to exclude the masses from participation. These actions represented the consummation of the revolution against feudalism.

The consolidation of the radical bourgeoisie in power enabled it to limit the revolution to its own programme. The tithes and the established church remained, there was no decentralisation of power, manhood suffrage was not introduced. The alliance with the petit-bourgeoisie no longer had any purpose.

Levellers

For three months following Pride's Purge the Levellers were silent as they watched events unfold. Only in January 1649 did they launch a new campaign against Cromwell's consolidation of power. A petition campaign was started in the Army. Fairfax immediately responded by limiting the soldiers' right to petition. Eight troopers who supported Lilburne were arrested and court-martialed. Lilburne's pamphlet "The Second Part of England's New Chains Discovered", which supported democratic rights within the Army and called on it to act against Cromwell, was condemned as treasonable. He was then arrested with the other Leveller leaders.

Like the Presbyterians before them, the Cromwellian faction used an expedition to Ireland to destroy the New Model Army. The Levellers responded by opposing the expedition not only because it would destroy the revolutionary army, but also because they defended Ireland's right to self-determination.

As before, mutiny developed within the army. Again the question of pay and democratic rights were to the fore. On this occasion however, Cromwell was able to divide the mutinous regiments and isolate their leaders. Using his personal authority, and by ensuring that the Agitators were unable to meet to coordinate the revolt, he brought the Army back under control. Finally at Burford the mutinous regiments met Cromwell's overwhelming forces. They were defeated and three of their leaders executed.

The defeat of the New Model Army at Burford meant that the Levellers and their supporters were broken. The defeat of the Levellers meant that the English revolution was limited to the programme of the radical bourgeoisie around Cromwell. It laid the basis for Cromwell's personal rule, and after his death, the royalist restoration in 1660 by a Parliament now certain that it could control the monarchy and use it for its own purpose: establishing England as a realm safe for the development of capitalism.

By 1660 feudalism had been destroyed in England. The first great bourgeois revolution had been accomplished. A class war had destroyed the power of the old ruling class, and allowed the massive expansion of capitalism to begin. ■

RUSSIA

The "compromise" agreed between Boris Yeltsin and his opponents in the Congress of People's Deputies on 28 March ended Yeltsin's third attempt in four months to resolve the deep crisis of political power afflicting Russia. This political crisis in turn reflects the deep economic crisis which confronts the project of restoring capitalism in Russia, as Dave Stockton explains.

Yeltsin versus Congress

DESPITE AN annual inflation rate of 3,000%, a 17% drop in production and the halving of real incomes over the last year, the process of replacing the shattered planned economy by one ruled by the market has been on "hold" for over six months. The reason? There is no single, united executive power, with control over the coercive, administrative and economic arms of the state machine, willing and able to force through the necessary counter-revolutionary measures.

When Boris Yeltsin went on television on 20 March to announce his third *coup d'état* in less than two years he was aiming to smash the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. This was because of the obstacle they present to his programme of a rapid privatisation of industry and agriculture, with mass factory closures and unemployment.

The rush by Clinton and the EC leaders to support Yeltsin indicates just how serious this crisis is and how important their agent in Russia is to them.

Restore

From April 1992 the Congress, which had given Yeltsin emergency powers for one year, began to whittle them away. At the December 1992 session Yeltsin tried to restore and extend those powers. But the Congress majority under its speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov inflicted a serious defeat on Yeltsin.

Yeltsin was forced to dismiss his premier, Yegor Gaidar, replacing him with Viktor Chernomyrdin who was a member of Civic Union, the largest political bloc in the Congress. The Congress refused to extend Yeltsin's emergency powers and reclaimed the right to cancel his decrees. It refused to give him or his government control over the Central Bank. Without this Yeltsin cannot impose hard credit controls that will force 60% of Russian enterprises into bankruptcy.

Yeltsin's abortive presidential coup on 20 March was his attempt to stop the erosion of his powers. He hoped that he could sideline the Congress by calling a national referendum as a vote of confidence, declaring that in the interim he would rule by decree. But as in November 1992, Yeltsin was unable to gain the active support of the armed forces and the internal security ministry (the former KGB). Again they proclaimed their neutrality.

The real bedrock of the state machine, the "special bodies of armed men" and the fragmented—but still ruling—bureaucracy in the regions, were not united on who to support and who to recognise as the legitimate power in the event of a final clash.

But if Yeltsin's attempt to grab real power failed, the counter-strokes of Khasbulatov were unable to topple Yeltsin. The failure of a majority of the Congress of People's Deputies to support the impeachment of Yeltsin, and the new agreement that there will be combined parliamentary and presidential elections in the autumn, have only postponed the day of reckoning.

The present struggle is a desperate attempt to resolve the chronic split in the state power which has been afflicting the Russian Federation in various forms since 1989-90. In reality it has demonstrated the inability of each side to settle accounts with the other. The present situation is one of chronic dual powerlessness.

The armed forces have to maintain a formal neutrality because below its surface unity the army itself is dividing into warring camps reflecting the main political forces.

Yeltsin accuses the hardliners of organising armed groups and of political agitation aimed at a coup within the Moscow garrison. Grachev warns of civil war if the army is dragged into



Stalinist demonstrators demand Yeltsin's resignation

politics. Yeltsin himself tries to turn the Kremlin troops into his own Praetorian Guard. The potential for civil war is real and growing.

Yeltsin brazenly acts for the imperialist multinationals, for the still small and semi-criminal capitalist class within Russia and for those fractions of the bureaucracy who are content to share the spoils with them and act as their agents. That is what the programme of shock therapy and neoliberalism represents. Yeltsin, as a typical Bonapartist demagogue, has always sought to remain above parties. Consequently his supporters in the Congress do not number more than 200.

Nationalist

The Stalinist, nationalist and fascist block of deputies—the "Russian Unity" faction—are seeking to destroy Yeltsin at every opportunity. Their principal representative is Sergei Baburin. They aim to restore the Great State, which means the USSR or a Great Russia, within its former borders. They want a strong centralised economic and military power. But they control only about 300 deputies in the Congress.

The centre ground is occupied by the large and heterogeneous faction, Civic Union, supported by up to 500 deputies. Ruslan Khasbulatov and the Civic Union deputies do not differ with Yeltsin at all on the fundamental objective of capitalist restoration. But they do they take issue with the method, the tempo and who is to be

the main beneficiary of it.

Civic Union represents the majority of the managerial and administrative bureaucracy which is not (yet) willing to go bankrupt in the service of Wall Street. Their "patriotism" is that of a would-be imperialist, capitalist class. They emphasise the maintenance of large scale industrial concerns firmly in Russian hands, a large and unified Russian state and the restoration of its hegemony over the other CIS republics. They insist on maintaining the strength of the former Soviet Army to carry out these objectives.

The heterogeneity of the Civic Union has been demonstrated by the different attitude its various parties and factions took to Yeltsin over the last weeks. Some of them supported his abortive presidential coup—as long as it did not go too far. Others opposed it—as long as their opposition did not lead to civil war.

The majority desperately wanted to avoid making a choice. If Yeltsin and the presidential power were to collapse they would face the daunting task of carrying out their own economic programme; state capitalist restoration, slow track privatisation by the local and regional *nomenklatura*, but with reduced or non-existent imperialist support.

Hyperinflation, a huge budget deficit, withdrawal of imperialist aid and credits would rapidly force them to make fundamental decisions. Either they would have to adopt the very measures that brought down Gaidar in December, or they would have to roll the restoration process backwards

and restore the key operative elements of the central command economy; administrative prices and the central allocation of resources. To do either decisively would split Civic Union as a parliamentary bloc.

To carry through either programme they too would need to create a strong man, a Bonapartist presidency. At the moment Rutskoi is the best candidate because of his popular election and his support within the army. But if they took this course all Khasbulatov's parliamentarism and the constitutional division of powers would come to nothing.

Fragmented

And for the moment at least this parliamentarism has a function for the fragmented bureaucratic caste that still rules most of Russia. With the destruction of the CPSU and the consequent alienation of the Stalinist minority, the opportunist majority of the bureaucracy had no other way of organising and expressing their power except via the huge and unwieldy Congress.

The Congress is incapable of effective executive actions. Yet it can veto the unpopular measures of the openly bourgeois-restorationist executive. Neither Yeltsin, Khasbulatov or Baburin can offer anything progressive to the workers and collective farmers, the intelligentsia and the minority nationalities of the Russian Federation.

But this does not mean that the working class should remain passive

bystanders in the present conflict. While the working class must establish its absolute political independence, it must use the current conflict to defend its own democratic space to organise and mobilise its forces. It must prevent the establishment of a dictatorship by any of the bureaucrats.

On the issue of the constitution Russian workers must oppose any strengthening of presidential powers. They must oppose the attempt to manoeuvre into place a constitution which establishes private ownership of land and industry, transport and distribution.

They must equally oppose a constitution that creates a two chamber parliamentary system with deputies elected only every four or five years and not answerable or recallable by their constituents. They must oppose a parliamentary system which ignores the workplace collectivity, which alone can be an effective basis for such accountability.

In short the Russian proletariat needs a system like the original soviets of 1905 and 1917, bodies which united legislative and executive functions. They alone can combine the "strong government" necessary to resolve the crisis with the "democratic government" necessary to reduce bureaucracy to a minimum.

There is one consistently democratic way to test the democratic pretensions of the bureaucratic factions: the immediate calling of nationwide elections to a sovereign Constituent Assembly. Let everyone put their concrete constitutional proposals and their economic programmes to the people. The delegates to an All Russian Constituent Assembly should be obliged to present their programmes to the electors at mass meetings in their places of work.

Democratic

In addition the armed forces must have the fullest democratic rights to discuss, to question the candidates, to take part in political life. The rank and file soldiers must not be the tools of Yeltsin or Rutskoi's supporters in the high command, nor of the conspiracies of the Stalinists or fascists in the officer corps.

To prevent themselves becoming blind tools of a reactionary coup or civil war, rank and file soldiers must elect democratic committees in every barracks, airforce and naval base. Officers and commanders at every level must be elected. A militia of workers must be armed and trained. But there is no guarantee that any Constituent Assembly, even one elected in the most democratic fashion with no prior restrictions, would in and of itself take decisions in the interests of the workers and collective farmers. Such guarantees lie in the predominance in society of strong and democratic organisations of the working class itself.

All attempts to prevent coups or reactionary plots will fail unless the working class escapes the passivity and atomisation which result from almost three quarters of a century of Stalinist tyranny.

The starting point for creating a new independent class movement of the Russian proletariat is the creation of a revolutionary party based on an action programme of political revolution. Such a party—a Leninist-Trotskyist party—must fight for a rebuilding of the workers' movement from the base upwards, from the works' collectives. Factory councils must be elected with recallable delegates to prevent all bureaucratisation and corruption. These councils must combine on a city and regional basis.

Only this way can real soviets be rebuilt, soviets which are not parliamentary talking shops but real fighting bodies. Only this way can Yeltsin or any of his successors be overthrown and working class power be established in Russia. ■

The roots of corruption

THE ANTI-CORRUPTION crack-down by Italy's top magistrates is causing a serious political crisis for the ruling class. It coincides with an important referendum about the country's system of parliamentary elections.

Scandal has now tainted all of Italy's major cities and bourgeois political parties. The last Friday in March saw the magistrates cast their net across the poverty-stricken southern city of Naples. Among those accused in the latest swoop is Paolo Pomicino, until last autumn the country's budget minister and chief aide to former premier Giulio Andreotti.

Foundations

Italy's political parties and corporations are hardly unique: most capitalist political systems are riddled with fraud and bribery. But to understand the sheer extent of corruption in Italy, and to answer the question why it is being exposed now, means going back to the roots of the present system of government created after the war.

In the latter stages of World War Two Mussolini's regime collapsed. It was initially replaced by direct German occupation. In northern Italy a revolutionary crisis developed in 1943. In addition to a growing partisan movement, led by an alliance of Stalinists and bourgeois liberals, a powerful strike wave developed threatening not just the German occupation but capitalism itself.

The Communist Party (CP), led by Togliatti, revived its mass base but played its classic role in demobilising the struggle. By encouraging the masses to give up their arms to the allies as they advanced from Southern Italy, the CP offset the threat of working class power.

In return for its part in defusing the potentially explosive situation, the allies and the Italian capitalist parties allowed the CP to co-exist in government with them for two years. During that time they put together the foundations of the present political system dominated by the nominally anti-fascist mainstream bosses' party, Christian Democracy (DC).

Patronage

To bolster the DC the imperialists poured millions of dollars into the economy via the Marshall Plan. The massive infusion of US aid shored up a reactionary social base of rural workers and the urban middle classes. This ensured the DC won the first post-war election. It has remained Italy's single largest party ever since.

The DC was obliged to govern through a series of short-lived coalitions with various smaller bosses' parties and the Socialist Party. This introduced an element of instability into bourgeois politics, but for the Italian bosses it was a price worth paying to keep the CP out of office. Throughout the Cold War the CP continued to grow. It became the largest CP in western Europe even as it retained its anti-capitalist rhetoric and its formal loyalty to Moscow. In return the CP received millions of dollars from the Kremlin bureaucracy.

At the same time the structure of Italian capitalism continued to feature a high degree of state ownership. Relatively big state subsidies have continued to a whole range of industrial sectors despite repeated austerity drives by the ruling class.

The bosses' parties came to rely on an extensive network of patronage to retain the allegiance of the middle classes and sections of urban and rural workers. A politician's ability to secure contracts for small business



Italian Senate becomes more than just a talking shop

ITALY

Italy's prisons are filling up with politicians and businessmen as one corruption scandal after another rocks the Italian ruling class. Antonio Gramsci was only the best known of the many revolutionaries left to rot in Italian capitalism's jails this century. So it is good for once to see the rich and powerful being led away to hell-holes like Milan's San Vittorio prison. Paul Morris looks at the background to the current scandals

men and government grants kept him in office, lined his pockets and topped up the party's coffers. Corruption was endemic in the system.

Parties competed with each other to be able to buy up support. Italian capitalism has long displayed dramatically different levels of regional development. The deeply rooted ruling classes of the various regions indulged in fierce competition for central government money, while the Mafia families thrived in this atmosphere.

In 1992 the Italian state spent \$5 billion on various projects and festivals to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas. In the run up to the 1990 World Cup it managed to sink a staggering \$7.5 billion into construction projects.

Debt

All this from a state which loses about \$180 billion every year from tax dodging and which transfers 10% of its income to government debt holders in the form of interest payments!

Clearly there was a need for Italian capitalism to clean up its act. But why has a section of the Italian bosses decided to blow the whistle now?

The underlying cause is economic. Italy has a massive state debt, despite a decade of cuts and closures in the public sector. Its bosses are enthusiastic supporters of Maastricht, because of the subsidies and other rake-offs European integration provides, but they have no chance of meeting the Maastricht "convergence criteria" for the lira.

The weakness of Italy's economy was demonstrated in the recent ERM collapse, when the lira was heavily devalued against the German mark. If the European bosses are to make

their post-Maastricht Europe competitive with North America and Japan on a world scale they have to attack the relatively high level of state spending, especially on social welfare and workers' incomes.

The period since the Maastricht treaty has seen a full scale assault on workers' wages. It also signals the end of the system of rule by pervasive, openly tolerated corruption. A bourgeoisie gearing up for a Thatcher-style assault on the workers and state subsidised bosses cannot tolerate such blatant examples of restrictive

The systematic corruption was obviously dysfunctional for a capitalism desperate to modernise itself. It had also begun to alienate the petit-bourgeois mass base of the traditional bosses' parties.

business practice as the "most favoured firms list". This has simply allowed the major building contractors to divide up government contracts between themselves.

Political parties receive massive state funding. In addition they are allowed to receive private donations. Many of those on trial today are accused of openly abusing this system to gain direct pay-offs from firms in return for political favours.

The systematic corruption was obviously dysfunctional for a capitalism desperate to modernise itself. It had also begun to alienate the petit-bourgeois mass base of the traditional bosses' parties.

The far right Northern Leagues have harvested an electoral windfall from the growing middle class discontent. Its demagogues have tapped into popular racism and chauvinism against the "lazy Southerners" of the economically backward Mezzogiorno.

One other key factor explains the timing of the current explosion of the political system. The bosses' lingering fear of the one-time CP has vanished with its transformation into the PDS, an explicitly non-socialist party.

Cohabitation

During the 1970s and early 1980s the Italian CP began to change into a party that pledged open allegiance to Italian capitalism. In the past it had acted to prop up the system according to the perceived interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. These were the years of Eurocommunism and the "historic compromise", with the CP giving its blessing to a wave of state repression against not only the Red Brigades but a whole range of left groups.

In 1976 the bosses found a use for the CP once again in demobilising a major strike wave. Its reward was another period of cohabitation with a DC-led government. Within months the DC stripped them of their few token ministries. All this made a mockery of the idea that this new model CP, led by technocrats and small bosses, could somehow "hegemonise" Italian society and lead it down some peaceful road to socialism.

The combined weight of little electoral success and the collapse of

east European Stalinism in the late 1980s triggered the Occhetto leadership of the party to dissolve it into the PDS.

The subsequent split by old-guard Stalinists to form the Rifondazione Comunista, an organisation with a mass base among trade unionists, all but eliminated working class grass roots pressure on the PDS, leaving Occhetto to pursue his strategy of achieving office through electoral reform. He also sought the creation of a strong presidency, an office for himself to occupy.

Crisis

However important the clean sweep of Italian politics may be as a prelude to the break up of state-subsidised monopolies and privatisation the process may be out of control.

In addition to seeing figures like the head of ENI, the world's fifth largest oil company thrown in jail, along with the top executives of giant firms like FIAT, AGIP and Enimont, hundreds of government officials have been arrested and are starting to confess.

In response Giuliano Amato's government attempted to pass a law decriminalising most of the offences of corruption. The state president, Scalfaro, refused to sign it, precipitating a constitutional crisis which saw Amato telling parliament that after the election he would be returning to his job as a law lecturer!

Clearly the Italian bosses now face the difficult task of implementing their counter-reforms and attacking the workers at a time when mass confidence in their mainstream parties has never been lower.

The whole process, however, opens up a danger from the extreme right. In addition to the racist Northern Leagues, some of whom even argue for deporting Southern Italians from Northern cities, the openly fascist MSI is trying to place itself at the head of the anti-corruption sentiment and solidify its small base of support.

While workers showed their ability to struggle in defiance of their traitorous union and Stalinist party leaders last autumn, the working class has not yet managed to stamp its own authority onto the bosses' governmental crisis. The betrayals of the autumn led to the growth of varying forms of opposition to the bureaucracy within and outside the unions. These have included the parallel rank and file committees (Cobas), the broad left-style opposition (*Essere Sindacato*) within the Stalinist led CGIL and the rise of factory-based unions outside the established federations.

Several of the top union bureaucrats are themselves fearful of a knock on the door from the investigating magistrates. Others are simply afraid of rocking the Italian ship of state any further even in the midst of ongoing attacks on miners and working class living standards generally.

Exciting

What remains to be seen is whether the Rifondazione Comunista with its still substantial support among worker militants can take advantage of the bosses' disarray. The new electoral arrangements which will replace the PR list system might serve to marginalise the Rifondazione.

For revolutionaries these remain exciting but dangerous times in Italy. A failure to seize the opportunities opened up by the still unresolved political turmoil will allow either an eventual regroupment of the bosses' parties or more space for the growth of the far right and fascism. ■

French Elections

Socialists open door to the Right

BY EMILE GALLET

FOR ONCE, the opinion polls got it right. The crushing defeat of the French Socialist Party (PS) minority government had been predicted long before the final blow was struck in the two-round parliamentary elections at the end of March.

In the first round, the PS got less than 20% of the votes—down from 37% in 1988—whilst the right wing RPR-UDF alliance got just under 40%.

France has now entered into a period of "cohabitation" between a right-wing government with a massive parliamentary majority and the "socialist" president, Mitterrand.

This period will end with the 1995 Presidential elections. Mitterrand is not going to stand, and there is much jockeying for position for the *après-Mitterrand*.

A similar period of cohabitation took place between 1986 and 1988. Then, the nakedly pro-big business government made a series of provocative decisions which led to increasing social unrest, including the mass student upsurge of 1986. Boosting his position "above the fray" by a series of manoeuvres, Mitterrand was able to glide to victory in the 1988 Presidential elections.

This time round things are unlikely to be the same. The right is more wary about the electoral effects of being in power. They will want to reserve some of their most savage attacks until after 1995, while at the same time showing that they are able to act decisively enough to resuscitate French capitalism.

In addition the complete collapse in the PS vote, and the lack of any credible alternative, severely weakens the hand of the "left". While



Chirac, a key leader of the right

Mitterrand wants to stay on, with the hope of salvaging something for the PS in 1995, elements of the right are so confident that they will try to force him to resign earlier.

Their confidence, following the electoral landslide, is entirely due to the catastrophic collapse in support for the PS. The right's share of the vote has barely changed over the last five years.

Why have people turned away from the PS? Quite simply because its period of office has been disastrous for working people and for the party's already meagre "socialist" credentials. The tragedy is that the French left have been unable to mobilise workers in struggle against the various Mitterrand gov-

ernments, so that the left could profit from the *débâcle*, and not the right! Mitterrand came to power in 1981, attacking the right for having let unemployment touch 1 million. Today there are over 3 million officially unemployed in France. As in Britain, the real figure is perhaps 5 million. For those in work, real wages have been slashed, especially in the public sector.

In the meantime the French bosses have done very nicely. Inflation is less than 3% and there has been little working class resistance to the various austerity programmes. In part this was because they were carried out by a government which claims to be acting in the interests of the workers!

This is nothing but the usual reformist lie. At home and abroad, the PS have shown themselves again and again to be loyal servants of French capitalism. Troops have regularly been dispatched to Africa to side with various French pawns in imperialism's cynical global chess game. And the French contribution to the Gulf War was second only to Britain and the US.

At the same time the PS immersed itself in the murky waters of French *affaires*. Whilst not on an Italian scale, they are certainly scandalous for any party which claims to represent the interests of ordinary people. For example:

- In 1985 French spies, under orders from the PS Defence Minister, blew up the Greenpeace boat Rainbow Warrior—killing one person—in order to prevent interference in French nuclear testing.

- In the mid-1980s Mitterrand's personal secret police unit framed up Irish people living in France as "IRA terrorists" and made a series of illegal phone taps against radical journalists and lawyers.

- In 1985, the government knowingly allowed HIV-contaminated blood products to be given to haemophiliacs, as part of a seedy battle with the US government over patent rights for HIV testing kits. The Prime Minister and the Health Minister of the time are currently being tried for their part in the affair.

- In 1988 a PS-inspired bill was passed by parliament giving an amnesty to all deputies under suspicion of corrupt dealings in the interest of their political parties! This still didn't curtail the PS: the whole party apparatus is under investigation for corrupt funding. Whilst in government, the party has done its best to prevent these crimes being investigated.

Far from presenting any kind of radical alternative, the PS has merged in completely with the low-life of the state apparatus.

Realising that crushing electoral defeat was imminent, PS leader Rocard managed to liven up an

otherwise dull election campaign by calling for the dissolution of the PS and the creation of a new party, even further to the right, in what he termed a "Big Bang".

Unfortunately for him, and perhaps for his Presidential pretensions, his chosen political partners, the two main ecology parties limped home with a mere 7% of the vote, instead of the projected 20%. The "Big Bang" looks like it will disappear into a black hole.

The most worrying part of the election result was the 12.8% for the racist Front National (FN) and their fascist leader, Le Pen. That means one in eight voted FN. Opinion polls revealed that over half the population consider themselves racist. The victorious right-wing alliance tried to steal the FN's votes by running a high-profile anti-immigrant election campaign, but they merely stoked up the increasingly racist atmosphere.

There is a real threat that as the main parties of both right and left show themselves to be corrupt and incapable of dealing with unemployment, the FN will grow further and advance its project of building a mass fascist party. Neither the PS nor the ailing Communist Party (PCF), whose vote dropped by another 2% to 8%, can offer any way forward. Both parties are inextricably linked to the interests of French capitalism and to the electoral system. To fight back against all austerity programmes, wherever they come from, a radical break is necessary with the policies and politically corrupting effect of both major working class parties.

"Cohabitation" will inevitably bring with it increased class struggle. The task of French revolutionaries is to ensure that the lessons of 1986 to 1988 are learned. This time round the basis must be laid for the construction of a revolutionary working class party, capable of honestly taking up the PS's cynical 1981 promise of "a radical break with capitalism"; not through the ballot box, but through the class struggle and working class action. ■

ABORTION RIGHTS

Smash Rescue America

BY GEN ROBERTS

ON 11 MARCH, Michael Griffin, a fervent Christian and anti-abortionist, shot and killed Dr David Gunn. The doctor was shot three times in the back as he walked past a picket of his abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida.

This murder was part of a campaign of increasingly violent threats and physical attacks by "pro-life" organisations. Reported incidents of vandalism against abortion clinics doubled in 1992. Staff from eight clinics in the San Diego area were hospitalised after an acid attack.

The week before Dr Gunn's murder, Randall Terry, the leader of Operation Rescue, a prominent anti-abortion group, told a rally that the key to stopping terminations was to harass the "weak link", the doctors: "We're going to expose them; we're going to humiliate them."

Before Dr Gunn was killed anti-abortion groups distributed his itinerary, phone number and addresses and issued "wanted" posters saying, "to defenceless unborn babies, Gunn is heavily armed and very dangerous."

Gunn had asked for police help

but got none. Even when the town of Pensacola was plastered with the "wanted" posters, the police said they saw no "conspiracy, only the act of one disturbed man".

The posters obviously implied that Dr Gunn was wanted by the anti-abortionists "dead or alive" and Michael Griffin carried out his "sentence" on behalf of all anti-abortionists who seek to criminalise terminations.

Rescue America, which had organised the protest at the clinic where the murder occurred said, "while Dr Gunn's death is unfortunate, it's also true that quite a number of babies' lives will be saved."

Griffin has said he will base his defence on the Bible, using it in court as a legal document.

This murder was not just the action of an individual religious fanatic. It flows from the arguments of the "pro-life" organisations—that the rights of the foetus are paramount, not the woman's and not the medical staff who carry out the pregnant woman's wish for a termination. For the pro-life organisations the murder of an adult doctor is preferable to the "murder" of a foetus.

How can clinics and healthworkers be defended in the face of these attacks? Some clinics are hiring armed guards, but without state funding this is a serious drain on their finances and it cannot protect healthworkers all the time.

Local communities and

healthworkers should train and arm themselves to defend the clinics. Trade unions need to be won to policies which fight for a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child. The starting point for this is that they organise the physical defence of the healthworkers and clinics who make this choice a real possibility.

The murder of Dr Gunn raises the stakes in the struggle against the anti-abortion campaigns. Now those, like Operation Rescue and Rescue America, whose campaign tactics involve physical attempts to stop women from having abortions and who condone the murder of healthworkers must be physically smashed.

We have to combat anti-abortion

ideas in the labour movement through democratic discussion of the issues. Many workers hold such views but they are not organising to prevent abortions through a movement that will physically close down clinics. Those like SPUC and the Catholic church, whose campaigns are based on propaganda and demos, must be defeated through arguments and campaigns.

But the physical force wing of the anti-abortion movement must be met with physical force. They must be denied the right to any platform for their ideas and any right to organise their harassment of women and healthworkers.

Winning workers to such action in the US is crucial. And British workers must follow the same course. Rescue America held a conference over the weekend of 27/28 March in London. They now hope to spread their vile campaign throughout Britain.

The labour movement must be mobilised to crush groups like Rescue America before they gain a foothold here; and must go on to win free abortion on demand. ■

WHEN THE world's second biggest computer corporation decided to close its major European manufacturing plant at Galway, a fit of panic seized the Irish political establishment.

News of this jobs massacre followed hot on the heels of the devaluation crisis and at a moment of major job threats elsewhere in the economy. Widespread cynicism at reliance on foreign capital was voiced from every quarter. All the direst predictions of Irish economic vulnerability in the newly opened "Single European Market" seemed to be coming true.

The Irish government has been through a six month ordeal, debating with their backers the place of Ireland within Europe. Their battle to protect the Irish pound and to maintain their place in the inner circle seeking monetary union shows in the most dramatic way what is at stake for the Irish bourgeoisie.

The British decision to leave the ERM and devalue Sterling left them disorientated, illuminating the real dependent role of Irish society and its political and economic institutions. For the last twenty years their strategy has been to reduce dependence on the UK by attempts to align the Irish economy with the German one and finally to integrate early into "European Monetary Union".

Recession

The Maastricht crisis and international recession have heightened the conflicts. The British government's role in bribing Digital to transfer production facilities to Ayr rubbished the notion that the EC is about providing a level playing field. The £400 million sweetener of government public contracts undoubtedly constituted a breach of competition law, not that anybody, least of all the European Commission, will notice.

"You keep the Social Chapter, and we'll keep the jobs", is the unmistakable message coming from Major's Britain. Digital's move to Scotland, like Hoover's from France, is favourable for the bosses because workers will have less protection and worse wages.

A mere 300 software jobs are to be retained at Digital from a total workforce of 1,100. The direct loss of 800 manufacturing jobs, while not huge by international standards, represents an enormous blow to the city of Galway. Upwards of 40 companies in the Galway region had contracts with Digital for the supply of various items, from cable harnesses to computer manuals, and as many as 2,000 other jobs could be lost. This comes on top of Digital's closure of its Clonmel plant less than two years ago with the loss of 250 jobs.

Digital had long been advertised as one of the jewels in the crown of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and of the Irish state policy of industrialisation

DIGITAL CLOSURE

At the mercy of the Multinationals

through foreign investment.

The news sent the Labour Party Minister for Employment and Enterprise, Ruairi Quinn, on a begging mission to Digital headquarters in Boston. But his package of new incentives failed to impress the corporate bosses when compared to Britain's reported offer of contracts worth up to £400 million.

Digital's demise is a feature of recession in the computer industry. Demand has shifted away from minicomputer and mainframe production towards personal computers, particularly the cheaper "clones" produced in Asia. The industry is undergoing a radical overhaul and rationalisation worldwide. Both Wang and IBM, who along with Digital are the major recipients of IDA grant aid, have announced redundancy packages within the last two years.

Meanwhile unemployment continues to spiral upwards. It is predicted that it will reach 30% by the year 2000, assuming current job creation levels are also kept up.

These crises highlight sharply the underdeveloped and distorted nature of Irish economic development. Profound dependence on imperialism has not been overcome. While economic development has progressed since the formation of the state, much of it is fed by dependency relationships which leave the overall performance

of the economy linked to the fortunes of its imperialist masters.

In 1957 the Irish bourgeoisie, having dismally failed to industrialise under De Valera's protectionist policies, turned to foreign industry as its saviour. Large inflows of investment followed, especially US capital, decimating uncompetitive indigenous firms.

A conscious move away from dependence on Britain was made with Ireland's entry into the EEC in 1973, when it was hoped that significant revenue transfers into the country would speed up the rate of development and sustain indigenous sectors. The policy had some success. Less than a third of Irish exports now go to Britain. However, none of these changes have released Ireland from the vice-grip of imperialist domination. It remains a subservient semi-colonial country. The form of dependence has changed, but not its content.

In the 1980s there was a net outflow of £16 billion in trading and investment income from the Republic. More goes into the coffers of US and German multinationals than previously, less to British ones. And the haemorrhage continues, condemning the Republic to the status of a semi-colony which, though advanced in many ways, is still totally at the mercy of decisions made

in the boardrooms of the giant corporations abroad.

Digital itself is a good example. In the last 20 years it has made billions of dollars of profit in Ireland and repatriated the lion's share of it back to its home base to enrich its US owners. In doing so, Digital has even subordinated the local university and Regional College facilities to its needs.

Digital pioneered the swindle of "transfer pricing" in the Republic. By artificially reducing "purchase" prices from "foreign branches" of the same multinational, and inflating "sale" prices, it maximises profits reported in Ireland, grossly distorts the meaning of Irish export statistics and maximises its exemption from taxation on profits. This is because Ireland's taxation rate is especially low for foreign capital which exports goods from Ireland—10% compared with 33% in the UK.

But suddenly the UK bribes, greater proximity to larger markets and increasingly favourable conditions for exploitation in Britain were seen to outweigh many of the advantages that the Irish bourgeoisie had offered.

In the context of international recession, Digital is driving a hard bargain. It is blackmailing and playing off every country against every other across the globe even more than before—to go where it can make the fastest and biggest buck. It has sacked 25,000 workers worldwide in the process. The policy of industrialisation, through foreign investment, makes a sick joke of the formal independence of the South which was won over centuries of struggle. ■



Down the road at Digital

No union, no job

NEWs OF the loss of 800 jobs at Digital should have seen an angry and militant response from the workforce in Galway and the labour movement generally. But the workforce is not unionised and has responded passively. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has done nothing to promote a fight—quite the reverse.

Profits reaped by the major corporations have enabled them to pay sections of their workforce better than the average rate of pay. Many Digital workers earned a minimum of £20,000 gross each year.

On top of this they received many extra perks. This has turned the majority of them into a labour aristocratic workforce, insulated by their relatively privileged status. The price which Digital extracts for such benevolence is its refusal to countenance unionisation at its plants. Trade unions were kept out for 20 years; not that the Irish trade unions made any serious drive to organise such workforces.

On the day following the closure announcement, IWG members turned up to leaflet factory workers and were surrounded by a police squad called in by these paternalistic employers.

The passivity of the Digital workforce reflects this situation. Not in a union, no history of links with other workers—they see little chance of successful action with solidarity from the rest of the labour movement. Further, they fear that if they take militant action Digital will penalise them by cutting back on lump sums for redundancy and by shifting the software development elsewhere.

The ICTU failed to give a lead in resisting these redundancies, preferring to praise Digital as a "good employer" in the desperate hope of persuading them to stay. That will surprise no one, least of all those who have witnessed three decades of trade union collaboration with the multinationals. The results have been bureaucratic pre-employment unionisation agreements in other multinational plants, on conditions

favourable to the bosses.

That's why the ICTU laid no stress on the fact the Digital workers were not unionised, nor even on the need to unionise them! That would only make sense if some kind of fightback were envisaged and nothing could be further from their minds.

For all its rhetoric about European trade union unity the ICTU was rendered impotent by the Digital closure. It was reduced instead to calling for a special task force, made up of the "social partners" to seek out replacement foreign industries.

But like the Labour Party, the ICTU also genuflects in the direction of the Culliton Report, with all its emphasis on developing an indigenous industry. The ICTU's promotion of "Buy Irish" campaigns—especially its postering blitz over Christmas—make its occasional rhetoric about the need for a united European labour movement ring rather hollow. Workers must draw the lessons of recent events. A rank and file response is required. Unionisation and organisation at a local and national level are essential, and multi-national firms must be targeted by the labour movement for unionisation. But to build up the power to resist these bosses rank and file workers must also build international links. Each

transnational combine should have a fighting workers' organisation.

When individual plants are earmarked for closure, the necessary strike action, solidarity and occupations would be more effective if international solidarity could be organised through such links. With the bosses bent on dividing the workers through shifting plants to lower wage areas this solidarity is ever more crucial.

It is equally important for militants to resist the economic nationalism which is commonly advanced as an alternative to reliance on foreign capital. This road leads to "sacrifices" in the "national interest" but will do nothing for the poor or the working class. It will bring not development but lower wages. It will also mean the export of surplus capital by large indigenous companies unwilling and unable to undertake industrial development in Ireland in competition with much larger international companies.

Only a perspective of independent organisation and action by the working class, and the building of an internationalist party to lead it, can chart a course towards abolishing the international capitalist system. A system which divides workers in order to ever more deeply exploit them. ■

MILITANT LABOUR

At the end of March, after decades of working to turn the Labour Party into a vehicle for the socialist transformation of society, supporters of the Militant newspaper launched an open political organisation. They intend to stand against Labour in local and national elections. **Richard Brenner** looks at the politics and perspectives of Militant Labour, and argues that the new organisation is not the type of party that can lead the working class to socialism.

Independent but not revolutionary

FOR NEARLY thirty years, the Militant Tendency argued that the main task of socialists was to fight for the transformation of the Labour Party. There were three main foundations to this position.

First, they argued that when the working class moved into struggle, workers would necessarily flood into the Labour Party, pushing it to the left. Second, Militant maintained that in such circumstances Marxists could transform the Labour Party from top to bottom, winning it to socialist policies and to the perspective of overthrowing capitalism in Britain.

Thirdly, from these premises Militant drew the conclusion that the task of socialists was to build influence in the Labour Party in preparation for the inevitable development of a mass left wing. Under no circumstances should Marxists undertake an organisational break from Labour or adopt any tactics that would facilitate their exclusion from the party.

They were wrong on all three counts. The subsequent development of Militant into an open organisation has confirmed this more conclusively than any written critique ever could. They are now contradicting much of what they said and did for the last thirty years. But Militant have still not learnt the lessons of their past political mistakes.

It was never true that workers would inevitably join the Labour Party in periods of mass struggle. A quick glance at the history of the British workers' movement shows that sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a surge of new left wing activists joining the party determined to ensure that there would "never again" be a right wing Labour government like the Wilson-Callaghan administration of 1974-79. But history also shows that thousands of workers can be won to alternatives organised independently of Labour.

Reformists

In the aftermath of the war, with heightened expectations of a serious change for the better in working people's lives, electoral support for Labour soared. Yet at the same time the Communist Party grew massively in the unions and the working class. In the 1960s, during Harold Wilson's right wing government, thousands of radicalised students and workers, especially from the shop stewards' movement, were won to a variety of far-left organisations outside the Labour Party.

As Militant became acutely aware, in the late 1980s the mass movement against the Poll Tax took place alongside not a flood of left wing workers into Labour, but a growing exodus of socialists and activists from the party.

The idea that the advance of the left in the Labour Party was inevitable was based not just on a misreading of the situation but on a false understanding of the very nature of the Labour Party itself.

In the 1980s, even after the victory of the Kinnock and Hattersley "dream ticket" for the party leadership and the ever wider purge of left wingers, Militant believed that "the old Labour right is finished because, in an historical sense, their role is played out." They thought this because they saw the role of the right wing as delivering reforms to the workers, crumbs from the bosses' table. They concluded that the right would wither away because the long years of economic boom after the war had come to an end.

In reality, the right wing reformists do not collapse the moment that an economic crisis means they can no longer deliver reforms. They continue to reveal their true role—together with the trade union leaders—of ideological, organisational and political domination of the labour movement. From this position of leadership they seek to contain workers' struggles and promote the ideas of the bosses in the name of "realism", "loyalty" or "unity". In other words, they help the bosses to defend capitalism.

Despite the worsening economic conditions for British capitalism, Kinnock succeeded in marginalising the left and winning Labour to the most right wing policies in decades. The con-

sequences of this have been a succession of electoral defeats and a complete collapse of individual party membership to only 90,000 in 1993.

"When a period of struggle on an industrial level fails to lead to a fundamental transformation of the situation, workers will draw political conclusions again, first of all seeking the return of a Labour government but at a later stage in more actively participating in the party itself."

This fundamental tenet of Militant's strategy has now been exposed as a one-sided schema, not an inviolable law of the class struggle, as Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe had argued for years.

When the right wing took the offensive against the left in a mounting purge aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at Militant supporters, Militant completely underestimated its significance. They wrote:

"Whatever action is taken, the right wing will fail. If they witch-hunt us we will gain influence. If they do not witch-hunt us we will gain more influence."

But the right wing were making it increasingly difficult for the left to defend and extend its gains within the party without open defiance of the leadership. Militant were determined that no matter how brazenly the right wing breached even the constitution of the party through deselections of locally elected candidates, through expulsions and through attacks on the party youth organisation, the left should avoid any open defiance of the witch-hunt because it would necessarily pose the question of independence.

Militant allowed the Labour Party Young Socialists to be effectively shut down by the right wing. They lost influence over hundreds of branches and thousands of working class youth who could have been mobilised in an independent youth movement. But that would have meant a split with Labour.

Similarly in 1985, Derek Hatton, the Deputy Leader of Liverpool council and then a Militant supporter, raised the prospect of a split of the district party (DLP) from Labour. He believed this could have won up to 10,000 local party members. But the Militant Editorial Board opposed this course of action, arguing:

"An 'independent' DLP would undoubtedly meet with initial success... but would have undermined the long

term struggle to transform the Labour Party in a leftward direction."

This long term strategy meant that Militant were unable to lead a break from Labour when it could have taken workers' struggles forward. Instead they stuck to their gameplan and as a result allowed thousands of workers and youth to be demobilised in the face of the right wing offensive.

The fact that thousands of Poll Tax activists did not flood into the Labour Party finally alerted the Militant to the dangers of missing out on a whole layer of recruits if they continued to stick so slavishly to their schema. Having argued for years against standing witch-hunted candidates against official Labour ones, they finally switched. Under the banner of the Liverpool Broad Left expelled councillors successfully stood against imposed official candidates and retained their seats.

Militant decided to put themselves at the head of this movement and stood Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election. This led directly to the deselection of MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist. It then led Militant to establish an open organisation, first in Scotland and now throughout the country, leading to an acrimonious split. Their former ideological leader Ted Grant was expelled and formed *Socialist Appeal*, which remains wedded to the old "stay in at all costs" perspective.

So is the new Militant Labour an advance on their former politics? Clearly it is a step in the right direction that Militant are now prepared to defy the witch-hunters and advocate that local Labour parties should not back down if their properly selected left candidates are bureaucratically removed from above. But the politics of Militant Labour, and its current tactics, show how their fundamental approach remains unchanged.

Despite the lessons of the past decade Militant continue to foster the illusion that it will, in the future, be possible to transform the Labour Party lock, stock and barrel into a socialist party. That is why their leaders have been so evasive when asked if Militant Labour will be a party in its own right. Peter Taaffe, interviewed on Radio 4, was asked if Militant Labour would be a party. He refused to say more than it would be "an independent organisa-

tion".

It may well be the case that Labour could move left in the future, and in such circumstances revolutionaries would orient towards the party membership and work within its local branches. But this is not an inevitable stage in the building of a revolutionary party, and in any case would remain a tactic for revolutionaries in the struggle to break workers away from Labourism. In other words it would be a way of splitting Labour. But Militant remain convinced that the British working class will have to go through this stage, and that they could then transform the Labour Party.

This remains at the heart of their centrism, their inability to argue a revolutionary line and their constant concessions to reformism. The turn to building an independent organisation is not based on a revolutionary platform nor are workers being asked to join with the aim of seizing power and destroying reformism. Rather, as Taaffe argued, it is seen as a way of continuing "Labour's socialist traditions", traditions which the right under Kinnock and Smith have "abandoned". He continues to peddle this downright falsification of Labour's history, which served the Tendency's opportunistic policy in the past.

Lenin

Labour was never a socialist party, no matter how radical the rhetoric of its leaders has been from time to time under the pressure of events. Even the much vaunted Clause IV part 4 of the party constitution, which was introduced in 1918, is an ambiguous, reformist formulation. Its commitment to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" has been used to mean anything from the state capitalist nationalisations of the Attlee government through to the "social ownership" and wider share ownership schemes of the Kinnockites.

As Lenin pointed out, the formula "to secure for the workers" the full fruits of their labour, holds out the illusion that the action of Labour in parliament can end the exploitation of the working class, that Labour can do the job "for" the workers, rather than the working class emancipating itself through revolutionary struggle. Lenin

was not engaging in mere word-play here. He was pointing out the difference between utopian schemes for the reform of capitalism, and the need for revolution.

But Militant compromised on this fundamental question, adapting themselves to the reformist milieu. They held out the fatal illusion that capitalism could be overthrown by a left Labour government introducing an Enabling Act for the nationalisation of the top monopolies.

Marxists recognise that in order to introduce socialist economic planning, the resistance of the bosses will have to be broken. No class ever leaves the stage of history without a fight. The repressive power of the capitalists—their state machine—will have to be broken up, smashed, by the working class. The police, army, unelected civil service and judiciary, will have to be dissolved by the power of the armed workers organised into workers' councils. Yet in Peter Taaffe's words, Militant "proclaimed hundreds, if not thousands of times that armed with a clear programme and perspective the labour movement in Britain could effect a peaceful socialist transformation."

Despite the reformist illusions that Militant peddle, many Militant supporters agree with the need for a violent revolution. But the signs are that the independent Militant Labour will continue to peddle reformist arguments to the working class. In its numerous election campaigns, both in Scotland and England, Militant's candidates have stuck to a left wing version of the reformist programme of reformism.

• The Scottish Militant Labour (SML) candidate in the Ardler by-election in January was described in *Scottish Militant's* edition of 19 March as having been simply against council cuts and water privatisation.

• Steve Nally, Militant Labour candidate in the March by-election in Bishop's Ward, Lambeth, stood simply on the basis of no cuts, job losses or rent rises.

• Gary Freeman, Bulwell Militant Labour candidate in the Nottingham County Council elections on 6 May, stands for permanent contracts for all council staff, opposition to the cuts and job losses and calls for a local anti-cuts campaign.

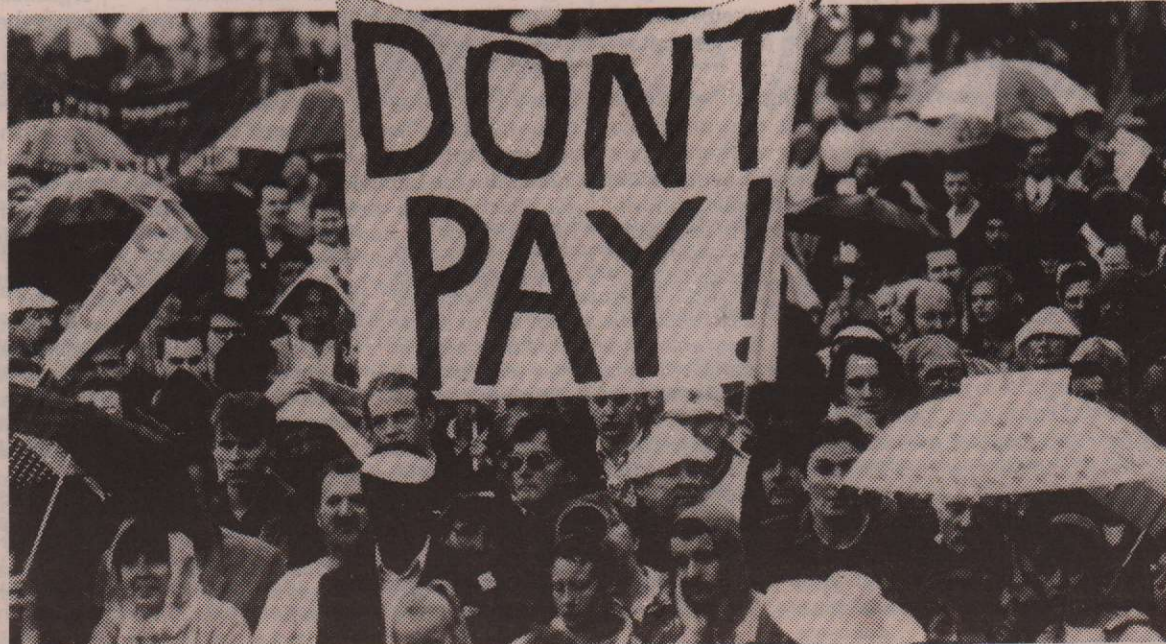
All of these are of course important and necessary demands. But a revolutionary candidate has to go beyond such calls. They would have to explain the limitations of local government and the need for workers not to rely on left councils to lead the fight on their behalf. They would have to explain the inevitability of a conflict with central government that such policies would involve.

They would have to point out that any "People's Budget" to meet local needs would be a deficit budget bringing the local working class into battle with the Tories and the state. And yes, they would have to use the platform provided by an election campaign to explain the need for revolution, not leaving this in the abstract, but always linking it up with the demands of the day, by fighting for delegate based action committees to co-ordinate action against the cuts and job losses, and for generalised strike action against the Tories.

So what attitude should revolutionary socialists take to Militant Labour candidates? Their programme is not revolutionary and therefore does not answer the needs of the working class. Revolutionaries cannot support them as a "socialist alternative" to Labour, because they are not offering such an alternative.

But there are situations where revolutionaries argue for a vote for a "left alternative" to Labour, even where they do not have a revolutionary programme. When they are standing at the head of a real struggle of the working class, and have the support of the most militant sections of the class, such candidates should be given critical support in order to further develop the break from Labour by workers in struggle.

Lesley Mahmood, Terry Fields, Dave Nellist and Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow clearly stood at the head of strong local movements and should have been supported. But not all Militant candidates are in this situation.



Masses on the move... but not into the Labour Party



Obstacles on Militant's peaceful road to socialism.

Steve Nally in Lambeth, for example, did not stand at the head of an anti-cuts struggle. Revolutionaries had no obligation to support Nally, any more than to support the candidates of any one of the numerous far-left groups that stand candidates against Labour. Where critical support is given, the question is not one of endorsing the false programme of such candidates, but of going through an important experience with a serious section of workers, testing out their illusions in struggle.

Endorsement

Doubtless Militant supporters campaigned energetically for Nally, but no serious attempts were made to win endorsement for his candidature from the local labour movement. At the Lambeth Borough Conference prior to the by-election, there was no attempt to commit representatives of the local movement to endorsing Nally as a general candidate against the cuts.

His candidacy was simply announced in a small fringe meeting. Similarly, the whole question of endorsing Militant's candidates was only raised in a fringe meeting at the Public Sector Alliance conference in Stoke last month.

If Militant Labour was seriously fighting to break support away from the existing Labour and trade union movement, they would have used the experience of Liverpool and Coventry at the time of the general election to build for a democratic conference of all local parties, wards and constituencies in conflict with the official leadership and union branches that were in conflict with Labour controlled authorities with the aim of launching a new party. Genuine Marxists would then have fought to commit such a party to a clear revolutionary programme.

The adaptations of Militant to Labourism are now being supplemented by an adaptation to Scottish nationalism. Marxists support the right of the Scottish nation to separate from Britain if Scots decide for it in their majority. But we do not advocate separation, which would undermine the unity of the working class movement in Britain. Militant used to recognise this, yet now positively advocate the need for a Scottish Assembly.

In December 1991 Militant went so far as to call for "a boycott of Westminster by Labour and SNP MPs" and to approve the call for them to "break

away from Westminster and form a breakaway parliament." It is quite plain what is happening here. Just as the Militant adapted to the Labourite consciousness of the masses, so now it is accommodating in an unprincipled way to the support for the middle class nationalists that has grown among Scottish youth.

The very formation of a separate Scottish organisation was itself a concession to nationalism. Militant's perspectives in 1979 rightly pointed out that, "it would be utterly reactionary to form 'Scottish Marxism' or 'Welsh Marxism' ". The role of Marxists is not to promote "national" consciousness or culture, but to fight against these bourgeois ideas in favour of an internationalist outlook.

What is more, a Marxist organisation exists to fight and overthrow the state. The Scottish workers face the same state as their brothers and sisters in England and Wales. They need a united class organisation to oppose the apparatus of the bosses.

Now that Militant Labour has been established throughout Britain, the excuse of a separate Scottish turn to open work has been removed. If SML continues to exist as a separate group the only reason can be that nationalism has already taken hold in the organisation, and that still further concessions to nationalism will follow.

On the question of Scotland, for once, Ted Grant has correctly criticised the trajectory of the organisation he once led. But the alternative he presents to an accommodation to nationalism is the bankrupt perspective of a strategic accommodation to Labour.

The launch of Militant Labour must be the occasion for a thoroughgoing reassessment of Militant's current and past politics. The present turn, half-hearted in its execution, and without a coherent perspective and programme, is a recipe for disaster. The last thing that the British working class needs is another reformist party.

It does urgently need a party that can counterpose to the reformists and nationalists a genuinely revolutionary programme, which links the struggles of today to the need for the overthrow of the capitalist system. Unless they undertake a serious discussion of the unfalsified Trotskyism advanced by Workers Power and the LRCI, Militant Labour will only contribute confusion to the vital task of building a revolutionary party. ■

Malcolm X and nationalism

Dear Comrades,

I recently saw a TV discussion of the legacy of Malcolm X. On it there was a black Tory who claimed to stand in his tradition.

This was absolute rubbish, and the studio audience realised it.

But the programme did show that Malcolm X's political legacy was so ambiguous that everyone from Muslims through to socialists are trying to claim him as their own.

The review of the Malcolm X film in the last issue of Workers Power warned that it will encourage people to "revere Malcolm rather than learn from him." I would now like to see Workers Power examine some of Malcolm's political writings in more detail to see just what people who take up that advice will be learning.

Malcolm X's outspoken support of the right to black self-defence, his rejection of the pacifist approach of the leaders of civil rights' movement and his increasing preparedness to struggle jointly with white workers have all been rightly emphasised by the left. So too has his developing break with the scandalous policy of the Black Muslims who refused to get involved in the mass democratic struggles against segregation in the sixties and who even opposed integration.

But he remained a Muslim and a nationalist. Surely much of Malcolm's writings on black history only encourage the ideas of separatism, nation-building and creating a layer of black businessmen which are a dead end in the fight for black liberation. Socialists need to carry on a persistent argument against simply revering symbols of past struggles, and address the black youth and fighters of today with a balanced Marxist criticism of the ideas of nationalism and separatism.

In comradeship,
David Cohen

SHEFFIELD 1 FA 0

Dear comrades,

Graham Kelly, the most hapless Football Association (FA) secretary ever, had to back down after a fierce reaction and mass protest from fans in Sheffield. He retreated from his insistence on playing the all Sheffield semi-final at Leeds' Elland Road ground and announced that the game would be played at Wembley.

Apart from the sheer arrogance of the FA the whole incident shows once again the contempt for working class football fans by those who run the game. They were quite prepared to try to cram in all the Sheffield fans into Elland Road despite all the safety risks of overcrowding. Kelly was only interested in saving money.

At the same time after the Manchester City-Spurs game where there was a minor pitch invasion that got turned into a major "riot" by the tabloid hacks, the idea of re-erecting perimeter fencing was raised. Have these people forgotten the Hillsborough disaster, or do they care more about their precious turf than people's lives?

The reaction of fans in Sheffield showed how to change the minds of the FA but as long as football teams are privately owned and run to make a profit for a few businessmen, fans and their safety will always come way down the list of priorities.

In comradeship,
Dave Ellis

Why the 43 Group succeeded

Dear Comrades,

Phil Griffiths' review of *The 43 Group* by Morris Beckman inspired me to read what is unquestionably an excellent book. Unfortunately the review fails to explain why, despite its weaknesses on the questions of state bans and its "failure to extend its organisation into the wider working class movement", the Group was still successful.

The period 1946-1949 saw an enormous shift to the left in British reformism and the birth of post-war welfarism. Reformist ideas flourished amongst the working class and the middle classes, who provide the backbone of fascism, were pulled in behind it. In addition, many workers who considered they had just come through a war against fascism were easily turned away (often with the help of a bloody nose or a broken jaw) from the crypto-fascist groupings when their true colours were revealed.

This explains why a small organisation with military experience was adequate to crush the fascists in London. Over the space of a few years the fascists had their base pulled from under them.

The heroism and military tactical brilliance of the 43 Group should not stop us from rigorously criticising their errors. Rather than building a mass campaign against the fascists, they actually turned hundreds of would be recruits away. There would be nothing wrong with turning people away from a militia which had clear links to a broader united front. Military discipline inevitably requires a degree of selectivity, but that broader united front did not exist. No attempts were made to forge a united front with the Trotskyists, Stalinists and reformists active in the fight against fascism.

We have to be very clear that a similar approach will not and cannot work in the Britain of the nineties. There is only one sure way to destroy the fascists today. The building of the sort of anti-fascist united front repeatedly described in the pages of *Workers Power* and the building of a party of "revolutionary hope" as Trotsky put it, in opposition to the "party of counter-revolutionary despair".

Communist Greetings,
Chris Bryant

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 revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Workers power

INSIDE

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

SMASH THE ANTI-UNION LAWS!

Timex strike must win

MORE THAN 300 strikers in Dundee have entered the third month of what has become the most bitter trade union struggle of the 1990s in Britain.

The women and men, sacked by the US-based multinational, Timex, have waged a courageous struggle which should be an inspiration to all workers faced with the bosses' attacks on pay, conditions and trade union organisation.

Their determined fight has faced police violence on the picket line, repeated attempts by Timex management to use the bosses' courts and a concerted effort by top bureaucrats of their own union, the AEEU, to stitch up a deal at any price.

The struggle has become a battle with the Tories' whole battery of anti-union laws. As Charlie Malone, speaking for the Timex strikers at the end of March, put it:

"At the heart of the Timex dispute is the anti-trade union legislation."

The walk-out by AEEU members at the plant began in late January. The workforce gave a resounding no to managing director Peter Hall's attempt to tear up the previous lay-off agreement. Hall, who had presided over two engineering firms in Surrey both of which are now bankrupt, made it plain that he wanted to purge the workforce of several shop stewards.

The Dundee workforce has a history of struggle, staging a six week

occupation of the plant in 1983 to resist 2,000 redundancies. But the Timex AEEU branch was on the brink of ending a three week strike when Hall dramatically upped the stakes.

The decision to sack all production workers, including 17 who had broken the initial strike, and replace them with scab labour changed the whole character of the dispute. The company's top bosses flew in from Connecticut to give their full backing to Hall.

The bosses' organisation, the Engineering Employers Federation, now sees Timex as a crucial test case. Victory for Hall's brand of management will give the green light to more widespread attacks on union organisation, not only in Scotland but throughout Britain. For that reason alone the outcome of this dispute should matter to every class conscious worker nationwide.

Timex management have also banked on the arsenal of anti-union laws in the hope of tying the AEEU in knots. The plant convenor and deputy have both faced the threat of jail for their role in organising allegedly illegal picketing.

To date Lord Cullen has ruled in the strikers' favour at Edinburgh's Court of Session. He even awarded court costs against Timex. These



Anger on the Timex picket line

rulings signal that at the moment the judiciary does not want to turn convenor, John Kydd, and his deputy, Willie Lesslie, into martyrs and risk further inflaming the dispute. But this won't last if the action needed to win the dispute is stepped up.

The actions of the AEEU bureaucrats indicate that they have no intention of transforming this strike into the class wide battle it needs to be to ensure victory. The AEEU has already dropped financial support for the branch's legal expenses in order to avoid sequestration. The militancy of this fight makes the bureaucrats very uncomfortable. They would much rather be signing away hard won terms and conditions as they did at Hoover, Cambuslang.

AEEU leaders and a host of Labour politicians joined the Tories in a chorus of condemnation against so-called "outside agitators from the far left" after picket line clashes resulted in 14 arrests on 22 March.

The overwhelming majority of the pickets, trying to halt the double deckers ferrying scabs into the plant, were either Timex strikers or local trade unionists. The strikers themselves welcomed the presence of socialists from the outside in bolstering the picket. The convenors

have expressed their support for regular Monday morning mass pickets whatever the regional and national bureaucrats may say.

Strikers should make no apologies for picket line violence. They have every right to oppose, by whatever means, the violence and ruthlessness of the bosses and their police. Activists in Dundee should build the largest possible pickets and organise workers' defence squads against police attacks. But the experiences of the 1984-5 miners' strike and the struggle at Wapping showed that mass picketing, however vital, cannot win on its own.

The key to securing victory will be solidarity action. As well as asking for much needed financial support, the strikers must call on all workers not to touch one single Timex product. They must appeal to workers involved in servicing the factory to have no dealings with it. This means no post should be delivered, all delivery workers should refuse to handle Timex goods and every worker should refuse to cross the Timex picket lines.

The strikers should call on both the rank and file of the AEEU and other trade unions for solidarity strike action to smash this attempt at

union busting. Every one of these actions will be in defiance of the anti-union laws. If the laws are used against them then the whole trade union movement should strike in their defence.

Scottish TUC General Secretary, Campbell Christie, said:

"We recognise the importance of this dispute... Whatever needs to be done to win this dispute we will make sure it is done."

These are fine words but he will not translate his fighting talk into action. Worse, he has told people not to attend the Timex mass pickets, has denounced those arrested for supporting the Timex workers and has not lifted a finger to build fighting unity between Timex and other disputes in Scotland.

Every channel should be used to maximise the pressure on the STUC to organise action up to and including a general strike across Scotland. Such a strike should not be a mere national day of protest but an indefinite stoppage until the Timex strikers have won back their jobs and their other basic demands. ■

Messages of support, donations and requests for speakers, etc:
Timex Strike, c/o AEEU Office
2 Union Street, Dundee
Tel: 0382 222406