

COMBAT FASCISM

NOVEMBER 1976
10p.



**IT
COULD
HAPPEN
HERE**

IN ITALY

In this pamphlet we print separately the introduction to the CL publication "Revisionism in Italy - Part 1 : to 1922".

The report covers the history of Italy, from the standpoint of the working class, from the beginning of the national-democratic revolution in the 1840's to the installation of the fascist government, headed by Benito Mussolini, in 1922.

"It is our glory and our pride that we prevented the outbreak of the revolution which the extremists desired".
(Ludovico D' Aragona, Secretary of the Italian General Confederation of Labour, 1922, cited in: Gaetano Salvemini: "The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy"; London 1928; p.30-31).

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The Nature of Fascism

For many years Marxist-Leninists accepted the definition of fascism made by the 13th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in December 1933:

"Fascism is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital. Fascism tries to secure a mass basis for monopolist capital among the petty bourgeoisie, . . . also trying to penetrate the working class".

(Theses on Fascism, the War Danger and the Tasks of the Communist Parties, 13th Plenum ECCI, in J. Degras (Ed.): "The Communist International: 1919-1943; Documents", Volume 3; Oxford, 1965; p. 296).

This definition is of value in distinguishing a fascist dictatorship from a military dictatorship representing the interests of the same reactionary class or classes, in that a fascist dictatorship makes use of an organised social base, particularly among the petty bourgeoisie.

At the same time, it must be remembered that this definition was made at a time when the Communist International was already dominated by concealed revisionist elements pursuing a left-sectarian tactical line, and was confirmed by the 7th Congress of the CI in 1935, by which time the revisionist leaders had partially thrown off their mask.

In considering this definition when drawing up its Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front in late 1974, the Communist League was forced to note that fascist dictatorships had been installed not only in countries, such as Italy and Germany, where finance capitalism (imperialism) dominated, but also in certain countries, such as Spain and Portugal, where finance capitalism did not yet exist, where the capitalist revolution had not yet been completed where political power lay in the hands of large landowners and comprador capitalists, and where the dictatorship was directed as much against the national capitalists and their revolutionary movement as against the working class.

For this reason the Communist League defined fascism more broadly than had been done by the ECCI, as

". . . the open terrorist dictatorship of a reactionary ruling class, exercised through a fascist political party having a mass base. . .

Fascism seeks to build its mass base primarily among the petty-bourgeoisie and lumpen-proletariat, but extended as far as possible into the working class proper and its organisations".

(Communist League: Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front, in: "COMbat" March 1975; p. 30).

Even, however, when finance capitalist (imperialist) countries alone are considered, this definition differs from that of the ECCI. The latter presents fascism as the dictatorship of "certain elements" of finance capital, namely,

". . . the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital".

From the ECCI definition, therefore, it would follow that there are "other elements" of finance capital — "less reactionary, less chauvinist and less imperialist" elements — whose interests are not represented by the fascist dictatorship and who form a social base objectively opposed to fascism.

But the attempt to impose a fascist dictatorship is made -- as will be discussed later -- when the "parliamentary democratic" form of monopoly capitalist state can no longer function in the interests of monopoly capital. At this time, therefore, the replacement of "parliamentary democracy" by a fascist dictatorship is, objectively in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

2.

Indeed, if "parliamentary democracy" can no longer function in the interests of monopoly capital, once this had developed, it can no longer make capitalist society itself operate effectively. Although there are contradictions between monopoly capital and non-monopoly capital, non-monopoly capitalists have a common interest with monopoly capitalists in maintaining the effective operation of capitalist society. At this time, therefore, the replacement of "parliamentary democracy" by a fascist dictatorship is, objectively, in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

Of course, there are different levels of political consciousness among capitalists, as there are among workers -- although the differentials are far less among the former than among the latter. Naturally, the more politically perceptive capitalists will realize the need, for them, for a fascist dictatorship earlier than their less perceptive colleagues, who may cling to faith in "parliamentary democracy" after the former have become well aware that their objective interests require its abolition. Certainly, it is necessary for the anti-fascist movement to take advantage tactically of any "anti-fascist" sentiments among capitalists for as long as these sentiments persist. But sooner or later reality forces subjective illusions to be cast off, and it would be the height of foolishness for the anti-fascist movement to base its strategy on capitalists whose subjective political consciousness lags temporarily behind their real interests. Strategically, the basis of an anti-fascist united front must be those classes whose objective interests are adversely affected by fascism: the working class, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, and elements of social classes belonging to racial and national minorities.

Of course, in a monopoly capitalist country the state -- whether it takes the form of "parliamentary democracy" or a fascist dictatorship -- represents the interests of the monopoly capitalist class, rather than those of the capitalist class as a whole. But it does not represent the interests only of "certain elements" within monopoly capital, as the ECCI definition would have it.

Hence, the Communist League defines fascism as

... the open terrorist dictatorship of a reactionary ruling class".

and, in the case of a monopoly capitalist country, this is the monopoly capitalist class as a whole.

Resistance to Fascism in Italy

The resistance of the Italian working class to fascism was made especially difficult by a number of factors:

Firstly, fascism in 1920-22 was a new international phenomenon and many people were deceived by its demagogic "anti-capitalist" propaganda into believing its claims to be a "revolutionary" movement -- claims which were lent colour to by the adherence to fascism of many "revolutionary" anarcho-syndicalists.

Secondly, there existed no Marxist-Leninist party, following a scientific strategy and tactics and with mass influence among the working class, which could mobilise the class forces, against whose interests fascism was directed, into the only channel capable of successfully resisting the fascist offensive -- the anti-fascist united front.

The open and concealed reformist leaders of the Italian Socialist Party advised the party's members and supporters not to participate in organised resistance to fascism, but to "ignore" it -- advice repeated almost word for word by the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany in the early 1930's and by the leaders of the British Labour Party today.

The Communist Party of Italy was formed only in January 1921 and had been unable to win significant mass influence among the working class before the coup of October 1922. Although urged by the Communist International, of which the party was a section, to form a united front against fascism, the party was led at this time by a left-sectarian group headed by Amadeo Bordigha which categorically rejected these correct tactics. To the leadership of the CPI:

1) "parliamentary democracy" and fascism were both forms of the dictatorship of monopoly capital, and a revolutionary party had "no interest" in defending the democratic rights and liberties possessed by the working class under the former; the task of a revolutionary party was "not to defend but to destroy", parliamentary democracy;

2) social-democracy, as manifested in the organisations of the Italian Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour, was "the main enemy" of the working class, and fascism should be resisted by directing the working class against social-democracy;

3) united front tactics were "opportunist" and to be strongly opposed as a "diversion" from the struggle for socialist revolution;

4) where an organisation of resistance to fascism based on united front tactics sprang up spontaneously (like the "People's Commandos" formed in July 1921), this must be denounced as a "non-revolutionary" organisation and members of the party forbidden to join it.

In the circumstances pertaining in Italy in 1921-22, it is clear that successful resistance to fascism by the working class was impossible.

The circumstances in which the attempt by German monopoly to impose a fascist dictatorship ten years later was similarly successful will be dealt with in a separate report. What must be noted here, however, is that by this time the leadership of the Communist International was in the hands of concealed revisionists who imposed on the Communist Party of Germany precisely those left-sectarian tactics which had been adopted by the Communist Party of Italy in 1921-22 and which had contributed to the victory of fascism in Italy at that time.

The Motives for the Imposition of Fascism

Marxism-Leninism holds that the "normal" form of state in a capitalist country is that of "parliamentary democracy":

"The logical form of bourgeois domination is precisely the democratic republic".

(F. Engels: Letter to Edward Bernstein, March 24th., 1884, in: K. Marx & F. Engels: "Selected Correspondence"; London; 1934; p.435).

The Communist League's Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front, therefore, correctly declare that, in a monopoly capitalist country,

". . . the attempt by monopoly capital to impose a fascist dictatorship will be made at a time when . . . "parliamentary democracy" . . . (has become) an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital".

The Theses imply, however, that "parliamentary democracy" becomes an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital as a result of

". . . the development of the movement for socialist revolution, led by a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class".

The report which follows makes it clear that this formulation is only partly correct, makes it clear that "parliamentary democracy" may become an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital for reasons other than the development of the revolutionary socialist movement.

4.

The theory that fascism was brought to power in Italy as a "preventive measure" directed against the "threat" of socialist revolution was a feature of fascist propaganda. One of the earliest books on Italian fascism, by Luigi Fabbri (Bologna; 1922) was entitled "La contro-rivoluzione preventiva" (The Preventive Counter-Revolution). Even before the fascist coup of October 1922, Librero Tancredi told an election meeting in Turin on April 15th., 1921 that the fascist "Combat Groups" had arisen because of

". . . the violence of the Socialist and Communist Parties, which wished to destroy the values of the victorious nation and provoke revolution".
(L. Tancredi: Speech of April 15th., 1921, cited in: M. Clark: "The Failure of Revolution in Italy: 1919-1920"; Reading; 1973; p. 26).

This theory was repeated by right-wing social-democrats. In a speech in Milan on September 10th., 1922, Camillo Prampolini

". . . concluded that if the activity of himself and of his comrades had failed to prevent the onset of bourgeois reaction, the responsibility lies only with the supporters of revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

(C. Prampolini : Speech of September 10th., 1922, cited in : M. Clark : p. 26).

The large-scale backing of the fascist movement by Italian Big Business and its state began in October 1920. The process of bringing to power a fascist government was accomplished in three stages:

firstly, using the fascist apparatus of force -- with arms and officers provided by the army, and with the connivance of the police -- to weaken the organisations of the working class and peasantry;

secondly, transforming the fascist movement into a "respectable" political party and bringing it -- through membership of the "National Bloc" headed by Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, the "Old Fox" -- into the framework of "parliamentary democracy" and

thirdly, through a combination of the processes of stages one and two, bringing about, through the "March on Rome" of October 1922, the establishment of a government dominated by the fascists which would proceed to replace "parliamentary democracy" by an open totalitarian dictatorship.

Was this large-scale backing of the fascist movement by Italian Big Business in October 1920 - October 1922 the result of a "threat" of socialist revolution?

In answering this question it must be noted :

Firstly, that the large-scale backing of the fascist movement by Italian Big Business began (in October 1920) after the Italian working class had suffered a serious defeat (the sell-out of the occupation of the factories, in September 1920) which had left the whole working class significantly demoralised:

"The workers' movement emerged from the struggle enervated and disillusioned"
(G. de Rosa : "Storia del partito popolare" (History of the Popular Party); Bari; 1958; p. 144).

Secondly, the defeat was followed by a serious decline in the strength of all workers' organisations.

Thirdly, the trade union movement continued to be led by objectively counter-revolutionary elements;

Fourthly, the Italian Socialist Party continued to be led by objectively counter-revolutionary elements; and

Fifthly, the Communist Party of Italy -- which might have been the vanguard

party of the working class -- was formed only in 1921 ; its influence within the working class was small; and it was led by left-sectarian elements, headed by Amadeo Bordiga, incapable of winning for the party mass influence among the working class.

Clearly, if "parliamentary democracy" could no longer function in Italy in 1920-22 in the interests of monopoly capital, it was not because of the "threat" of socialist revolution.

Mussolini himself admits this. Already in December 1920 he was writing of:

" . . . the death-rattle of Italian bolshevism, which is mortally stricken".
(B. Mussolini: Article in "The People of Italy", December 31st., 1920, cited in: C. Seton-Watson : "Italy from Liberalism to Fascism: 1870-1925"; London; 1967; p. 576).

On July 2nd., 1921 he wrote

"To maintain that the bolshevik danger still exists in Italy is to mistake fear for reality. Bolshevism has been conquered".
(B. Mussolini: Article in "The People of Italy", July 2nd., 1921, cited in: *ibid.*; p. 576).

And on July 12-13th., 1921 he told the National Council of the fascist "Combat Groups":

"It is ridiculous at the present time to talk as if the Italian working class were heading for bolshevism. You all know that the state of mind of the working classes is fundamentally different from what it was two years ago".
(B. Mussolini: Address to National Council, Combat Groups, July 12-13th., 1921, cited in : "A. Rossi" (A. Tasca): "The Rise of Italian Fascism: 1918-1922"; London; 1938; p. 142).

Perhaps, therefore, the large-scale backing of the fascist movement by Italian Big Business in 1920-22 was not because "parliamentary democracy" could no longer function in the interests of monopoly capital. Perhaps its motives were purely psychological -- as Angelo Tasca suggests:

"The occupation of the factories gave the bourgeoisie a psychological shock, which explains their fury and guided their successive steps. The sense of property and the authority of the industrialists was hit; evicted from their factories, they saw work going on, for better or for worse, in their absence.

. . . After a few days of bitterness and uncertainty, during which their chief feeling was a deep grudge against Giolitti, who had failed to back them up' and had forced control of their industries on them by decree, their reaction took the form of a fight to the death against the working class and the 'liberal' state. . .

The factories were haunted by evil spirits which must be exorcised. The evil spirits were to be exorcised by direct and violent action; the hour of fascism had come. . .

The industrialists and landowners were livid with rage and ready for anything, willing to sell their souls for revenge. The bloodshed and the fires which were to destroy the offices of hundreds of working-class and socialist organisations and the homes of 'red' and even 'white' workers seemed to them the ritual of an atonement ceremony, necessary to purify the violated temple of property".

(A. Rossi" (A. Tasca): "The Rise of Italian Fascism: 1918-1922"; London; 1938; p. 80,81,82).

But Marxist-Leninists understand that the ideas which motivate people to take a certain course of action do not arise by chance, out of the thin air; these ideas reflect reality. And when members of the monopoly capitalist class have ideas sufficiently in common to motivate them to try to change the whole super-structure of society, then these ideas reflect, not a mere whim, but a conviction that their fundamental interests require such a change.

Tasca, in the passage cited above, hints at this when he refers to the anger of the monopoly capitalists that, during the occupation of the factories, the "parliamentary democratic" state had failed to protect their property.

But anger, and thirst for revenge, are sentiments which are soon dissipated. To carry through the carefully planned, long-term process of replacing "parliamentary democracy" (the "normal" form of state under capitalism) by a fascist dictatorship, the decisive strata of monopoly capital had to be convinced that this failure was not an isolated occurrence, unlikely to be repeated, but was likely to be an intolerable feature of Italian society for a long time to come.

"Parliamentary democracy" can function effectively in the interests of monopoly capital only when:

firstly, the trade union bureaucrats can control the mass of the workers, can damp down militancy and prevent this from manifesting itself in ways which seriously affect the profitability of monopoly capital; and

secondly, when political parties serving the interests of monopoly capital and operating within the framework of "parliamentary democracy" retain the support of the masses of working people.

Both these conditions had ceased to operate in Italy in 1920, and their failure to operate increased over 1920-22.

Firstly, the reformist bureaucrats in the leadership of the trade union movement had failed to prevent the militancy of the workers from manifesting itself in September 1920 in a large-scale occupation of the factories which had caused very significant loss of profits to monopoly capital. True, these same bureaucrats — in conjunction with the leaders of the Italian Socialist Party — has succeeded in selling out the occupation and in securing a return to normal working with only minor concessions from the industrialists. But this sell-out itself had gravely weakened the trade union structure appropriate to "parliamentary democracy". Sooner or later the workers would throw off their dispiritedness, and then these trade union leaders would be even less likely than in 1920 to be able to damp down this militancy.

Secondly, the Italian Socialist Party, the principal party representing the interests of monopoly capital with mass influence among the working class, was in process of disintegration. Its open and concealed reformist leaders had participated in the sell-out of the occupation of the factories, and so had shared in the loss of confidence among the workers suffered by the trade union bureaucrats. And after the breakaway of the left-wing to form the Communist Party of Italy in 1921, the party which they led was little more than a discredited rump, declining rapidly in membership and influence.

As Antonio Gramsci, who later became leader of the Communist Party of Italy, pointed out in October 1920:

"We are already seeing the decomposition of the Popular Party. . .

Day by day, with devastating speed, the Socialist Party disintegrates and collapses".

(A. Gramsci: "The Communist Party" in: "The New Order", October 9th., 1920; in: "Letters from Prison, Political History and Conference Papers", Part 2; Edinburgh; 1974; p. 113, 114).

From this he drew the conclusion that

"Capitalism . . . no longer has a political party whose ideology . . . secures the continuance of a legal state on a broad base. . . ."

7.

"The political power of capitalism can realize itself today only in a military coup d' etat and the attempt to rivet an iron nationalist dictatorship".

(A. Gramsci: *ibid.*; p. 113).

Gramsci's analysis was confirmed in a statement by the Prefect of Florence in May 1921:

"There is such a continuous breakaway from the parties that both the PSI and the communists, and the unions, will lose 90% of their members, and will be left with such a small number that they will no longer be able to do anything".

(The Prefect of Florence: Statement of March 1921, cited in M.N. Clark:

"The Failure of Revolution in Italy: 1919-20"; Reading; 1973; p.24).

Today, of course, the revisionist Italian Communist Party has effectively replaced the Italian Socialist Party as a party objectively serving the interests of monopoly capital, appealing to and supported by the mass of the working class. But this development was, in 1920-22, too far in the future to be of use to monopoly capital.

In the circumstances existing in Italy in 1920-22, the decisive strata of Italian monopoly capital were correct in drawing the conclusion that "parliamentary democracy" could no longer be operated effectively in their interests, and that they must therefore try to replace it by what Gramsci calls "an iron nationalist dictatorship".

The Italian experience of 1920-22 bears out the Communist League's Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front when they state that, in a monopoly capitalist country,

"... the attempt by monopoly capital to impose a fascist dictatorship will be made at a time when ... 'parliamentary democracy' ... (has become) an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital".

It does not, however, bear out the implication made in the Theses that "parliamentary democracy" becomes an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital only as a result of

"... the development of the movement for socialist revolution, led by a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class".

It establishes that "parliamentary democracy" may become an unsuitable form of state power for monopoly capital for reasons other than the "threat" of socialist revolution.

It establishes that, in this respect, the Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front require revision.

The Threat of Fascism in Britain

The conclusion of the last paragraph has important implications for the British working class.

There is no "threat" of socialist revolution in Britain in the near future.

No matter what the level of spontaneous militancy which might develop in the British working class in the next period, this could not develop into a "threat" of socialist revolution in the absence of a vanguard Marxist-Leninist Party. Such a party will be built, but its construction cannot be brought about overnight.

Basing itself on the implication made in the Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front that "parliamentary democracy" becomes an unsuitable form of state power for

monopoly capital only as a result of

". . . the development of the movement for socialist revolution, led by a Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class",
(Communist League: "Theses on the Anti-Fascist United Front".)

the Communist League has tended to assume that there was little likelihood of British finance capital promoting backing on a large-scale fascist movement in the near future, with the aim of replacing "parliamentary democracy" in Britain by a fascist dictatorship.

The research embodied in the study of the Italian experience of 1920-22 makes it necessary, as has been said, to revise this implication of the Theses, and so to revise the assumption that there is little danger of a serious fascist offensive in Britain in the near future.

In this connection it must be noted that the reformists in the leadership of the trade union movement were unable to damp down the militancy of a section of the working class in 1974 which defeated the attempt of the Conservative Government to impose wage restraint.

The Labour Government was brought into office, through the manipulation of "parliamentary democracy" by monopoly capital, and has succeeded, in cooperation with the reactionary leadership of the Trade Union Congress, in, for the moment, duping a majority of the workers into accepting wage restraint under the false cloak of "combatting inflation".

But the economic weakness of British monopoly capitalism, and its need to combat the real cause of inflation -- namely, massive state deficit financing by the creation annually of huge quantities of new money -- have compelled the Labour Government to begin the imposition of a programme of slashing state expenditure in fields which are not detrimental to monopoly capital, that is, particularly in the fields of the social services (although these will continue to be paid for by the working class). And they are supported in this programme, in the name of the infamous "social contract", by those same reactionary leaders of the trade union movement.

This sell-out by the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions must, of course, in the long run seriously undermine the confidence which the mass of workers have, up to the present, retained in these leaders as "representatives of their interests" -- just as the sell-out of the occupation of the factories in Italy in 1920 seriously undermined the confidence of the mass of the Italian workers in the leaders of the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labour.

One temporary solution for British monopoly capital's problem in this respect would be the formation of a new "left-wing" social-democratic party -- based on the revisionist Communist Party of Great Britain, broadened, perhaps, by the inclusion of the "left-wing" of the labour party and some sections of the trotskyite movement -- which could replace the discredited Labour Party within the framework of "parliamentary democracy", just as the revisionist Italian Communist Party has replaced the discredited Italian Socialist Party within the framework of Italian "parliamentary democracy".

But already -- and particularly since March of this year -- certain sections of monopoly capital are backing an alternative solution: the fascist movement.

The rise in unemployment and the cuts already made in the social services have increased the possibility of building up already inculcated racial prejudices among the white majority of the population into an organised movement to lay the blame for the growing evils of decaying capitalism at the door of the black minority of the population.

9.

Already in February the BBC screened a film made by the "British Campaign to Stop Immigration" (a cover for the fascist National Front) which was, in violation of the race relations act, nothing more than a tirade of racist filth which openly boosted the National Front. And despite widespread protests and action in the courts, they insisted on screening the film a second time.

On May 4th. the "yellow" press gave front-page prominence to the story of a homeless immigrant family who, at no wish of their own, had been accommodated by the local welfare authority in a luxury hotel. "SCANDAL OF THE £600-A-WEEK IMMIGRANTS", screamed the headlines of "The Sun", following this up next day with "ROW GROWS OVER £600 HOTEL BILLS: ANOTHER 4,000 ON THE WAY", and on May 6th. with "ANOTHER 20,000 ASIANS ARE ON THE WAY: A STORM OVER TWO-WIFE MIGRANTS". The "Daily Mail" joined in the campaign with the headline: "WE WANT MORE MONEY", SAY THE £600-A-WEEK ASIANS", the "Daily Telegraph" with "MIGRANTS 'HERE JUST FOR THE WELFARE HANDOUTS'".

But racially prejudiced reporting of the "case" was not confined to the "yellow" press. When, having served their purpose, the bewildered family was bundled out of the hotel into a reception centre made out of a converted work-house and were attacked by white residents of the centre, "The Guardian" of May 9th, featured the story under the headline "ASIANS RILED NEIGHBOURS".

It is worthy of note that the presence of the family in the hotel had been known to the press for five weeks before the story was featured -- two days before the local elections took place on May 6th. In those elections the fascist National Party (a breakaway from the older National Front seeking to divorce itself from the nazi associations of the latter) polled in Blackburn 8,315 votes (11% of the poll in those wards where they stood candidates) and gained two seats on the council.

On May 23rd. 1,000 anti-fascist demonstrators were greeted with abuse by large numbers of Blackburn people, while a smaller National Party demonstration which followed was applauded and cheered. As Bill Ward, North-West Organiser of the Communist Party, expressed it:

"The atmosphere in the town is terrifying. Blackburn is fast becoming the Alabama of this country".

(B.Ward. Statement reported in "Morning Star", May 24th., 1976;p.3).

On May 24th. Enoch Powell followed up his earlier "rivers of blood" speeches by a new tirade in which he spoke of areas where white people "lived in terror" of "black criminals", and "warned" that "the spectre of guns" would soon make Belfast "an enviable place" in which to live.

The press gave "due" prominence to Powell's speech under the headlines of "ENOCH'S SHOCKER" ("The Sun"), "IMMIGRANTS -- HOW BRITAIN IS DECIEVED" (Daily Mail) and "IMMIGRANT RACKET LEAK" (Daily Express)

A spokesman for the National Front was more than justified in saying that

"... newspaper publicity was probably its greatest ally".

(National Front spokesman, cited in: "The Observer", July 17th., 1976;p3)

On June 24th. a parliamentary by-election took place in Rotherham, where until the National Front began its election campaign 5,000 black immigrants had lived peacefully with their 80,000 white neighbours. When the campaign commenced the NF had only two members in Rotherham; but with the aid of coachloads of fascists brought in from other areas, and of the post office who duly delivered 30,000 racist leaflets for the party free of charge, the NF polled 1,696 votes (6% of the poll), while the Labour vote dropped from 25,874 in October 1974 to 14,351.

On July 1st. a council by-election took place in the Deptford ward of the London borough of Lewisham. Here the National Party and the National Front both stood candidates, who between them obtained 44.5% of the poll -- compared with the Labour Party's 43.5%.

The organised campaign to stimulate racism -- as a preparation for the organised rise of fascism -- has been accompanied, of course, by outbreaks of racial violence. In the two weeks of the National Party's local election campaign in Blackburn in April/May, there were more than 30 attacks on black people or their property. In May two Asian students were the victims of racial murder in East London, and in June a young asian in Southall.

There could, of course, be no more dangerous illusion than to believe that, once decisive strata of monopoly capital have opted for fascism, that the state -- the instrument of monopoly capital -- could provide some form of resistance to fascism.

On June 20th. the TV programme "This Week" revealed that members of the fascist para-military organisation "Column 88" had been allowed officially to become a unit of the territorial army, and were receiving military training in the use of sophisticated weapons.

In the past ten years, despite the upsurge of racist propaganda, there have been no more than a dozen prosecutions under the existing legislation, and most of these were dismissed by the courts. Even in the most blatant case yet of defiance of the Race Relations Act, that of the Leamington fanatic Robert Relf, who was sent to prison for refusing to take down a racist notice in his garden, the press attempted to present him as a "martyr" and "the victim of bureaucratic intolerance", and he was released from prison after a few weeks, without "purging his contempt", on "health grounds".

The new "strengthened" Race Relations Bill now passing through Parliament prohibits the refusal of membership in clubs to people on account of their colour, but it rejects, in the name of "freedom of expression", the prohibition of written incitements to racist violence.

On June 24th. Home Secretary Roy Jenkins rejected demands for the banning of the fascist National Front in the name of

". . . free speech and civil liberties"!

(R.Jenkins:Statement of June 24th.,1976,in:"Morning Star",June 25th.)

And on July 27th. he appealed on TV to people to "ignore" fascist provocations -- his call being followed on the BBC by the allotment of 5 minutes peak viewing time to National Front leader John Tyndall to call for the deportation of black residents from Britain!

Conclusion

A section of British monopoly capital -- as yet, only a section -- has reached the conclusion that, by reason of the factors outlined in the previous section, "parliamentary democracy" is likely, in the next few years, to become inoperable in Britain in the interests of monopoly capital.

The threat of an attempt by monopoly capital to impose a fascist dictatorship is not, therefore, one which will become a reality only when the revolutionary socialist movement in Britain, led by a Marxist-Leninist Party, has become a "threat" to monopoly capital.

The task of building an anti-fascist united front, which alone can defeat the attempt to impose a fascist dictatorship, is thus an urgent one. It is one which must be carried out now, alongside that of building a new Marxist-Leninist Party.