

Workers News



Paper of the Workers International League

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Gorbachev boosts private farming

THE DECISION of the March 15-16 Soviet Central Committee plenum to scrap the giant Gosagroprom planning bureau shows the scale of the crisis gripping Soviet agriculture.

Gosagroprom was established in 1986 through the fusion of six ministries with the aim of directing the *perestroika* programme in rural Russia. It employs two million officials.

It is self-evident that the advances claimed in agricultural production in Gorbachev's first two years have ground to a halt. Official figures claimed a 5 per cent rise in 1986 compared with 1985. Yields for 1987 stagnated, while 1988 saw a net import of 36 million tons of grain.

It is also conceded that 20 per cent of all crops, including half the potato crop, are lost between harvesting and the customer through mismanagement, inadequate storage, transport and processing facilities. Chronic shortages of basic foodstuffs continue. Optimistic plans to increase agricultural production by 14.4 per cent during the 1986-90 five-year plan have been shelved, and all talk is now of improving output in the course of the 1991-95 plan.

In his speech to the plenum, Gorbachev revealed that since 1962, despite an investment in the farm sector of £780 billion, 22 million hectares had been lost to cultivation. Overall, even the official statistics add up to an indictment of bureaucratic planning. The measures adopted by the bureaucracy, however, without attacking the root cause of the problem, serve further to undermine state property in the countryside.

The plenum meeting was preceded by an officially-inspired press campaign in *Pravda* attacking the Stalinist collectivisation programme of the early 1930s. In doing so, the concern is not to draw an honest balance sheet of history, but to pave the way for Gorbachev's frequently-repeated intention of restoring the farmer as 'the real master of the land'.

At the CC plenum in July 1988, Gorbachev outlined a system of leasing collective farm land to individuals and families for up to fifty years, under which leaseholders would be able to buy machinery and hire seasonal labour. The decisions made last month add little more of substance, although it appears that leases may extend for longer than 50 years, and may be passed on to surviving relatives. Family farms will also be established on virgin lands, and greater price flexibility in perishable goods such as fruit and vegetables will be introduced in 1990. Gorbachev gave an indication of working class resistance to the bureaucracy's plans for wide-ranging price reforms when he stated that basic foodstuffs would continue at stable prices for two to three years (at present, food subsidies consume

almost one-eighth of the state budget).

It is clear that the measures adopted will not solve the Soviet agricultural crisis – they will have the effect of deepening the contradictions both between the cities and the countryside, and between the wealthier and the poorer collective farmers. Although all land remains in theory state property, leaseholding, and the ability to 'inherit' leases, is now a grey area. Without satisfying it, Gorbachev has whetted the appetite for private ownership.

Only a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy, re-establish Soviet democracy and implement a drastic revision of economic planning can reforge a unity between the working class and the poorer collective farmers.



DOWN WITH THE TORY POLL TAX!

A demonstration in north London on March 11. The following weekend, thousands marched in Glasgow.

Training turned over to bosses

IN MARCH, the Tory government unveiled its proposals for aligning the established 'training' schemes for the unemployed with the needs of employers.

Speaking in Newcastle on March 10, Thatcher announced plans for the privatisation of the Training Commission, which is responsible for organising cheap-labour schemes such as YTS and ET. Two days later, Employment Secretary Norman Fowler informed the House of Commons that the Skills Training Agency was also to be privatised – through a management buy-out.

The attacks are timed to take maximum advantage of retreats by TUC and Labour Party leaders who have consistently refused to organise a campaign against the government's ten-year attack on the unemployed. Their recent statements confirming that they would co-operate with training schemes, and not seek their abolition under a future Labour government, have given the Tories a green light to bring forward the new attacks.

By taking advantage of the large number of unemployed, the Tories intend to undermine any long-term rise in basic pay rates. To this end, they are handing over control of the Training Agency to employers such as construction industry giants Laing and Wimpey and a number of High Street retail chains, including Sainsbury's and Dixons.

The new 'training initiative' complements those changes already being introduced in education which give employers a direct hand in setting the curriculum in local schools. Employers will not only be able to determine the range and standard of subjects taught, they will also control cheap-labour training schemes for school-leavers.

Revamped cheap-labour schemes signal new attack on unemployed

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

In place of the Training Agency, 100 local companies will be set up throughout the country to oversee training programmes such as YTS and ET. The boards of the companies, or Training Enterprise Councils as they are to be known, will consist of two-thirds representatives supplied by employers – with the remaining seats filled by nominees from local authorities, trade unions and bodies such as the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. NACRO is currently the largest single national managing agent for cheap-labour schemes, recruiting directly from prisons.

Each of the 100 TECs will have responsibility for an average of 25,000 unemployed people, and a budget of £20 million provided by the government. They will be staffed by current civil servants whose jobs will be 'privatised' as part of the £3 billion scheme. The government is offering performance

truth is that conscription on to the US-style work-for-benefits schemes has been treated with justifiable contempt by the working class.

It is this resistance, especially among young people, to super-exploitation, together with the feeling by some employers that the schemes up to now haven't had anything to offer them, which is currently obliging Norman Fowler to consider ways of making ET more attractive. Those employers who wish to use the scheme in order to train skilled workers are aware that the time spent on ET is not sufficient for such a purpose. They are pushing for a scheme which would provide all the benefits of an old-style apprenticeship – without the expense.

Fowler is currently looking at proposals for improving the quality of training given by ET and the level of benefits. But those in the trade unions and Labour Party who think that the

Tories can be pressurised into 'improving' ET are in for a rude awakening. If employers are holding out on the Tory schemes, it isn't because they feel that the unemployed and school-leavers deserve a better deal, but that they are looking for a better deal for themselves.

The British economy has managed to keep its head above water in the 1980s largely by increasing the rate of exploitation of labour. This has been accomplished, not by massive investment in new plant and machinery, but through speed-up, unemployment, the removal of rights and conditions won over decades and the steady decline of real income for a growing proportion of the working class. Faced with a huge trade deficit and rising inflation, the Tories will not resolve the problems of ET and YTS by making them more 'attractive' to the unemployed, but by introducing further legislation to make attendance on the schemes compulsory.

The new proposals must be met with a stepping-up of the struggle within the trade union and labour movement to force the leaders to break off all collaboration with the schemes.

Stab in the back for anti-fascist marchers

ABOUT 150 trade unionists supported Camden Trades Council's call to demonstrate on February 18 against the increasing number of racially-motivated attacks in the King's Cross area of London.

The so-called 'Blood and Honour' group of fascists, who have set up a base near the main line railway station, have singled out members of minority communities, women's groups and gay people for a series of vicious attacks.

The first action of its kind to be organised by the trade unions in the area, the demonstration marked the beginning of a campaign to unite the labour movement with the minority communities, who have long been left to face racist attacks on their own. The right wing of the Labour-controlled Camden Council demonstrated their hostility to the action by withdrawing permission at the last minute for a rally to be held in the Arlington Road depot.

The rally went ahead with marchers penned up on the pavement outside the depot by the police. Nick Whitaker, secretary of Camden Trades Council and a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was joined by Adrian States, a Labour councillor opposed to the cuts being implemented by the right-wing majority, and Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington North, in condemning the councillors' attack on the march.

Notable for his absence was MP for Holborn and St

Pancras and Labour front-bencher Frank Dobson. Dobson's constituency covers the area where many of the attacks have occurred and he was written to twice, asking him to speak at the rally or support the demonstration. 'Fearless Frank', who played up to the law and order lobby by calling on the police to drive prostitutes off the streets in the Argyle Square neighbourhood of King's Cross, was not prepared to associate himself with a fight to drive organised fascists out of the same area, and refused to reply.

Dobson was not alone: the SWP, RCP and supporters of *Militant* in the Labour Party also boycotted the demonstration.

A proposal to take forward the day's action was made by Ian Harrison, chair of Bloomsbury Health District Joint Trade Union Committee and a member of the Workers International League. Addressing the rally, he said: 'The struggle to defeat and smash racists must not be left to the minority communities alone. It calls for the mobilisation of the trade unions and working class organisations because the only deterrents understood by fascists are mass actions embracing the widest sections of the working class and, in particular, the trade unions and ethnic minorities.'

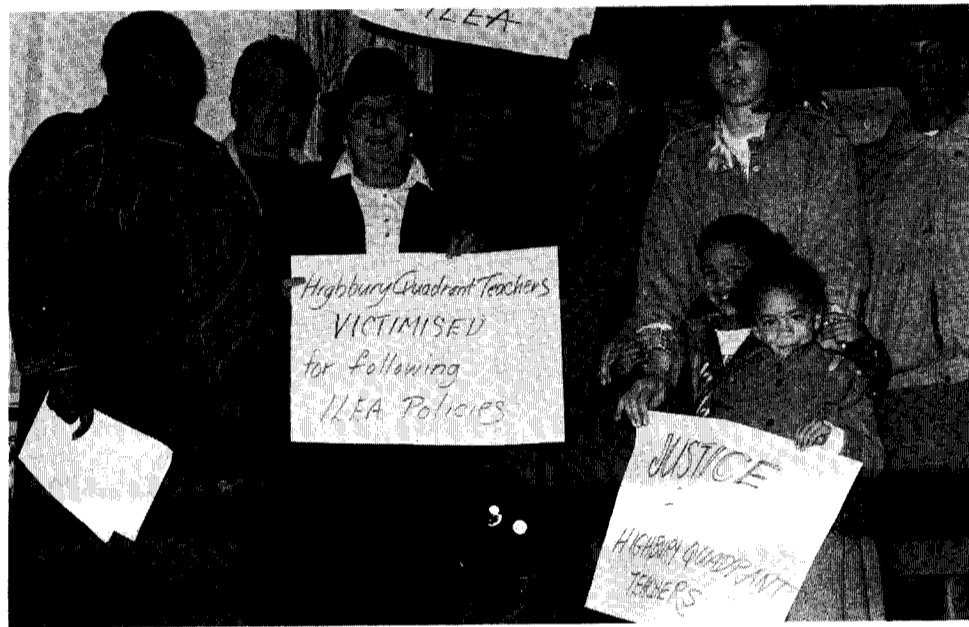
'As a matter of urgency, a conference must be organised in the area with the aim of establishing an ad-hoc committee to mobilise the working class for a fight to defeat the fascists.'

Harrison also condemned the Camden Campaign Against Racial Harassment recently launched by the council and the police. 'It is the grossest form of illusion and deception to propose - as some Labour councillors do - that the police, or for that matter the Tories, are allies of the working class in the fight to defeat fascism,' he said.

At the February meeting of the trades council, following the demonstration, delegates agreed to proceed with preparatory work for a conference to be held jointly with representatives of the minority communities.



The Camden Trades Council demonstration against racism and fascism on February 18



Highbury Quadrant teachers and their supporters lobby Islington Council on February 21

Highbury teachers fight on

By Terry McGinity

A LOBBY of Islington's Labour council on February 21 called for the reinstatement of the victimised teachers from Highbury Quadrant school, and pressed the council to support a public enquiry into the affair.

Seven teachers at the north London primary school were singled out for 're-deployment' last December by David Mallen, the Chief Education Officer of the Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority, following an assembly held at the school in July to celebrate the 70th birthday of Nelson Mandela. Responding to a press witch-hunt against the teachers, Mallen accused them of failing to present a 'balanced' view of the jailed ANC leader.

The teachers have all played a prominent role in anti-racist work at the school. As well as working to undermine racist ideas through the curriculum, they also escorted Bangladeshi children to and from school for 18 months until finally persuading ILEA to provide a paid escort for them, and campaigned successfully for the appointment of a Bangladeshi home-school liaison worker.

Following their attack on the Highbury Quadrant teachers, ILEA officers indicated to the press that they had a 'hit list' of other schools where the same policy was likely to be implemented.

At the Islington Council meeting, Labour leader Margaret Hodge side-stepped questions on the agenda criticising the council for its lack of support for the teachers, saying 'Islington Council is not the employer - it is the ILEA'. She refused point-blank to answer a question calling for a public enquiry and when challenged, got up to leave the council chamber.

In fact, Hodge's reticence is further proof that the former 'left' Labour council, which takes over responsibility for the borough's schools when ILEA is abolished, will co-operate fully with the Tory government in imposing the rigid national curriculum required by last year's Education Reform Act.

Tories tighten grip on media

FEBRUARY 5 saw the start of Rupert Murdoch's Sky Television satellite network amidst claims that it would raise and modernise the standards of the BBC and ITV.

Those able to afford the expense of buying and installing a satellite dish will be able to tune into four channels offering a diet of imported news programmes, sport, third-rate movies and pulp entertainment at present rejected by other companies.

In fact, far from offering greater choice to the viewer,

Murdoch's new venture marks a growing monopolisation of the media by open supporters of the Tory government. Along with the rival British Satellite Broadcasting, its arrival heralds a period of intense competition which will see a drop in the quality of programmes and increasing attacks on workers throughout the industry.

Murdoch's News International empire, which includes the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun* and the *News of the World*, has the largest slice of

By Susan Keepence

the British newspaper market. His vast holdings in Britain, Australia and the United States - where his interests include a film studio, a television network and a magazine chain - make Murdoch's operation the second largest of its kind in the world.

He started his career in Australia in the 1950s, inheriting two newspapers. Other papers were steadily acquired, and in the 1960s he bought his way into the Australian television market. In 1975, Murdoch's papers played a key role in the destabilisation campaign which led to the sacking of the Gough Whitlam Labour government by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr. Today, he owns two-thirds of the Australian newspaper industry.

In 1969 Murdoch entered the British newspaper market like a bull in a china shop. He picked up the *News of the World* and the *Sun* (formerly a right-wing Labour paper) for knock-down prices. Using a mixture of soft porn, scandal-mongering and anti-socialist populism, the *Sun* was transformed into the largest-selling daily newspaper in the country. From 1979 onwards, Murdoch swung his papers firmly behind Thatcher's reactionary policies, openly promoting attacks on the trade unions and spe-

cialising in witch-hunts against Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone. During the Falklands/Malvinas War in 1982, the *Sun* acted as the flagship of Thatcher's propaganda war, pouring out a stream of filthy anti-Argentinian chauvinism.

Throughout the 1984-85 miners' strike, Murdoch's papers once more led the attack on trade unions. Early in 1986, Murdoch sacked 5,000 printers employed by News International, precipitating the year-long Wapping struggle. He has also used his papers to attack teachers, health service workers, striking seafarers and many other groups of workers, whilst promoting EETPU leader Eric Hammond and the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Murdoch's move into satellite TV sets the pace for the ending of 'public service broadcasting'. Forthcoming Tory legislation will place the BBC on a semi-commercial footing - the White Paper on broadcasting proposes the ending of the link between the licence fee and the Retail Price Index in 1991 - and the ITV franchises will be au-

tioned off to the highest bidders, with little or no regard for the educational and artistic merit of programming.

Following the Wapping and TV-am disputes, the drive is on to smash union agreements throughout the press and entertainments industry - which the Tories describe as 'the last bastion of restrictive practices'. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has been encouraged by Thatcher to investigate the closed shop and other agreements in film and television for any sign that they constitute a 'restraint on trade'.

The boast that Britain enjoys the freest press and broadcasting media in the world has a more and more hollow ring to it. In the hands of magnates like Murdoch, and with increasing restrictions on reporting, they have become direct tools of the state. Lenin's definition of the 'freedom of the press' as the freedom of capitalists to control and make profits out of their newspapers is powerfully confirmed in the age of satellite communications.

IF YOU ARE still trying to figure out what is meant by the current buzz-phrase of the Labour Party right wing: 'supply-side socialism', read on.

A concept thought to have emerged fully-formed from Bryan Gould's filofax, its implications for the working

class have been deliberately obscured. Now, rising star of the new Labour right Gordon Brown has revealed all.

According to Brown, it means 'concentrating on investment in people as individuals, investment in research and development and co-operation'.

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By Ian Harrison

ENCOURAGED by a series of retreats on the part of trade union and Labour Party leaders, the Thatcher government has brought forward plans for the destruction of the National Health Service. The White Paper cynically entitled 'Working for Patients' lays out the stages for the break-up of the NHS by the year 1991.

The central thrust of the Tory attack builds on changes already introduced in the NHS in the period after the defeat of the health workers' strikes in 1982. Health authorities were forced to privatise ancillary services, a measure aimed at undermining the trade unions NUPE, COHSE and the GMB; new 'hardline' management was encouraged which ignored the existing machinery for policy-making with its vestiges of 'democratic accountability'; arbitrary financial ceilings on expenditure were announced which obliged authorities to sell 'underused' premises to the private sector; and central government funding was made available to transfer patients from long waiting lists to private hospitals for their treatment.

During the same period,

Health service on the road to privatisation

the Tories applied increasing pressure on the NHS to cut the cost of dispensing drugs, while allowing the pharmaceutical monopolies to reap record profits.

The plans have been carefully drafted to draw attention away from the government's attack on the services provided by the NHS and place responsibility for success or failure on health service managers. By taking account of managers' demands for greater freedom of control - the power to make decisions at local level - the Tories have opened up divisions between health service professionals. The effect of this has been to shift the focus from the struggle to defend jobs, wages and conditions and the right to the best health care, provided free, to an argument over the pros and cons of local control.

The White Paper envisages the largest NHS hospitals, or groups of smaller

hospitals, opting out of health authority control and becoming independent of all national planning. They will be able to accumulate funds chiefly by sacking health workers and selling services to the private sector. During the first stage of the process they will continue to receive government funding, whilst driving down labour costs by setting their own local rates of pay, but will have to pay interest on government funds at the market rate for borrowing. Those hospitals which treat the most patients as cheaply as possible will survive to the final stage and be allowed to retain accumulated funds. A similar process will apply to GPs in large practice groups.

To ensure that the major hospitals and practice groups carry out the proposals, the government will apply the stick of financial penalties. The existing internal audit, together with its thousands of staff, will be transferred to

the Audit Commission (responsible for penalising local authorities which overspend). Where health service managers resist opting out, so-called 'local interest groups' such as Leagues of Friends will be able to force hospitals to do so by applying to the Minister of Health. Hospitals which fail to meet government-imposed standards will be wound up, while their assets and properties will be seized by the Exchequer.

Remaining NHS hospitals, general practitioner groups and newly-independent hospital trusts will be obliged to buy in services from the mushrooming private sector, in effect setting the pace for forced integration. Once this takes hold, the private sector will set the tempo for the final stages of the break-up, at the same time gaining from the availability of cheap resources, government funds and NHS-trained staff.

Fully aware of the strength of the doctors' lobby, the government has offered special inducements to the

medical profession. It will not be subject to the same audit procedures but will instead have its own secret audit conducted by senior consultants and academics. A further incentive is contained within proposals for creating 100 new consultant posts to exploit opportunities for private practice in the revamped NHS.

The future course for the NHS outlined in the White Paper is the result of a year-long review by the Tories which has taken into account the determination of the working class and a substantial section of the middle class to maintain a free health service. Unwilling to risk losing electoral support by mounting a head-on attack, the Tories have chosen a more cautious route to NHS privatisation. But as one leading consultant who welcomed the White Paper proposals said in a radio interview: 'What's the difference between a self-financing hospital, freed from health authority control, and privatisation?'

Record homeless figures

A FURTHER increase in the number of homeless people was announced in mid-March. The 1988 total for England was 116,060 households, a jump of 3 per cent on the 1987 figure and the highest level ever recorded. The worst rises were in the North West (13 per cent), West Midlands (17 per cent) and outer London (16 per cent).

However, the official statistics conceal the real growth of homelessness since they only include households 'accepted as homeless' by local authorities. Homelessness amongst single people, and especially single young people, is rising at a much faster rate, although such people are not recognised by councils as homeless.

A measure of the impact of the Tory policy of reducing council housing can be seen from the huge rise in the number of families placed in temporary accommodation. Last year's figure of 30,100 was a 22-per-cent increase on 1987.



THE MURDER of 13 unarmed civilians in Derry in 1972 by British paratroopers was commemorated by 2,500 people joining the annual Bloody Sunday march through north-west London on January 28.

Meanwhile, new reports have highlighted the continued use of a 'shoot-to-kill' policy in the north of Ireland. On February 12, prominent Belfast civil rights lawyer Pat Finucane was gunned down. On March 9, Home Secretary Douglas Hurd stated that the only way to fight the IRA was to wipe it off the face of the earth. 'They just have to be extirpated,' he

said. Five days later, eighteen RUC officers implicated in the Stalker shoot-to-kill enquiry were let off with reprimands for their part in killing six people in 1982.

Spanish sources confirmed on March 15 that British intelligence had known in advance that the three IRA volunteers shot in Gibraltar in March 1988 were unarmed and were not carrying explosives.

Kinnock rewards one of his own

By Daniel Evans

AS LABOUR's victory in the Pontypridd by-election on February 23 was announced, the successful candidate, Dr Kim Howells, pronounced that the time for 'left speak, conference speak and labourist googly speak' had gone.

In other words, the working class must temper its demands and subordinate its interests to the greater cause of winning middle class voters away from the SDP, SLD and even the Tory party, so that Labour can get more MPs like himself elected and form the next government. Any form of militancy which could jeopardise this vital task must be checked at all cost. 'The fact is,' said Howells, 'we've been seen as the political wing of the trade union movement rather than a national party which represents all sections of society.'

As a radical student in the late 1960s, Howells led a sit-in at Hornsey College of Art. He later joined the Communist Party, which he left after four years in 1981 to join Labour, but not before learning the fine art of class collaboration. He is now an unabashed and outspoken supporter of the Kinnock right wing, often setting the pace in declaring the end of this or that Labour policy - for instance, the trade union block vote and unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Howells' selection as candidate in the Pontypridd election was his reward for helping to stab the 1984-85 miners' strike in the back on behalf of 'all sections of society'. As a research officer with the South Wales NUM, Howells began a poisonous propaganda campaign in the mining communities, claiming that the strike was lost. He pushed for a 'return to work with

heads held high', leaving sacked miners outside the gates - and this in an area which remained virtually solid to the very end of the strike.

The trade union bureaucracy latched on to this formulation and, aided by a massive media campaign which highlighted a steady drift back to work, used all its influence to force miners to accept it as their only option.

The first pit in South Wales was sunk in Pontypridd in 1760; today there is not a single colliery remaining in the Rhondda valley, the last having been closed down after the strike. Unemployment is widespread, whilst the remains of the economy is based on high-productivity, low-wage factories without unions or, increasingly, with no-strike deals, and unreliable jobs in the service industries. Howells bears a responsibility for this state of affairs, as well as for the wholesale destruction of mining jobs and communities in other parts of Britain, the victimisation of militant miners during and since the strike and British Coal's ability to impose arduous new working practices in the mines.

The end of the strike strengthened all conciliationist elements within the labour movement, particularly the Kinnock/Willis right wing of the bureaucracy whose 'new realism' was given a major boost. It has since been used to undermine a whole string of working class struggles against the Tories in the interests of 'waiting for a Labour government'.

Though NUM President

Arthur Scargill attempted to block his selection as the candidate for Pontypridd and the two are described as enemies. Howells' 'return to work' formula only found success because the majority of miners could see, and were offered, no alternative after a year's bitter struggle. Scargill was incapable of developing the strike, proposing only 'more of the same' (more picketing, more donations from other workers who should, however, remain at work) and refusing to take up a serious struggle against the TUC leaders who were working might and main to keep the miners isolated.

Howells bent over backwards to win the votes of Plaid Cymru supporters, not by exposing its reactionary, anti-working class leadership and the dangers to the labour movement inherent in separatism, but by pledging Labour to a policy of devolution. Nationalism only gets a sympathetic ear in the British working class because of the complete refusal of the Labour Party to lead a principled struggle against the Tories. It nevertheless reflects a degree of political backwardness which has to be firmly opposed - the opportunist vote-seeker Howells only compounds the confusion.

The working class of South Wales has a tradition of trade union loyalty, militancy and solidarity which is second to none. Generations of Labour MPs have cynically used this to provide them with a meal ticket at Westminster, but Howells represents a new low on the scale of class collaboration. A struggle against the ideas he represents must be the starting point for building the Trotskyist movement in South Wales.

FUNDS

With this edition, Workers News celebrates its second anniversary. It was launched on the most slender means and its continued production has depended upon a loyal and expanding readership in the working class.

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Silver handshake

TWO FREEMASONS jailed in 1980 for their part in the armed robbery of £3.5 million in silver bullion are to be allowed to retain their membership following a ruling by the United Grand Lodge. Mr L. Gibson, the Worshipful Master of the Waterways Lodge in north London at the time of the robbery, and his accomplice, Mr R. Aguda, a member of the Ilford Lodge, told an inquiry that they had 'paid their debt to society'.

Commenting on the ruling, the secretary of the United Grand Lodge, retired naval commander Michael Higham, said: 'Although we hope our people follow high standards, if they fall, are punished, then make good, we should be sympathetic. Quite right too! Isn't it time armed robbers took their rightful place alongside members of the royal family, police chiefs, consultants, senior hospital managers, property developers, sections of the trade union bureaucracy and other devotees of the craft?'

Israeli Labour rift over the 'iron fist'

By Ian Harrison

THE LIKUD-Labour government in Israel has unleashed a battery of attacks on Jewish and Arab workers in a bid to revive the crisis-wracked economy. The central role in carrying out these attacks is being taken by the Labour wing of the coalition.

Since taking office in December, Shimon Peres, leader of the Labour Party and Finance Minister in the coalition, has devalued the shekel by 13 per cent and cut inflation-linked wage increases for workers by 12 per cent. In exchange for calling off a threatened strike against the latter measure, the leaders of the Histadrut were rewarded with substantial loans to bail out their bankrupt organisation. The Histadrut, which poses as a genuine labour and trade union federation, is in reality Israel's largest single business concern, engaged in building new settlements on Arab land occupied by the Zionist government. Before they called off the strike and agreed to what amount to substantial cuts in real wages, the Histadrut leaders took the precaution of postponing their annual elections for one year.

For Palestinian workers living under military siege in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the devaluation of the shekel comes on top of a 45 per cent devaluation of the Jordanian dinar, driving them further into poverty. Labour's Yitzhak Rabin, Minister of Defence in the coalition government, has stepped up the military campaign in the Occupied Territories. In his first month of office, 42 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army and over 1,000 injured, the highest monthly total since March 1988. Israeli soldiers armed with a new type of plastic bullet are now being allowed to shoot indiscriminately at demonstrators without specific orders from their officers. There are also reports of Israeli death squads in action in the area of the West Bank town of Nablus, singling out young Palestinian activists as their targets.

The majority of the Palestinians killed in the new assault were aged between 14 and 26 and came from areas with strong trade union organisations - Nablus, Tulkarm, Hebron and Ramallah. Leading trade union activists have been rounded up and either imprisoned or deported to Lebanon in a concerted attempt to smash trade union influence. Army snatch squads have arrested children for alleged 'stone throwing activities' and forced their fathers, already burdened with debt, to pay heavy fines before releasing them. As well as continuing with its policy of blowing up the houses of Palestinians who resist the occupation,



House in Bitta demolished by Israeli soldiers in 1988

the Zionist authorities have closed down schools, colleges and trade union offices throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

In January, the newly-formed Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians revealed that the government had reduced access to hospitals and increased medical fees for West Bank Palestinians - permits for children requiring cancer treatment and kidney dialysis in Israel were withdrawn. These measures have been described as 'collective medical punishment' against the whole civilian population in the Occupied Territories.

The increasing harshness of the economic and military policies of Peres and Rabin, together with their rejection of talks with the PLO, has provoked a struggle against their leadership in the Labour Party. In January, general secretary Uzi Baram resigned, along with other members of the Central Committee, stating that he could no longer bear responsibility now that the leadership had abandoned the opportunity for 'peace'.

According to a report in the *Guardian* of December 29, 1988, 'underground leaders of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip' have 'floated the idea of declaring a conditional truce' in exchange for the release of detainees and free municipal elections.

Seizing on such reports as providing the possibility of quelling the growing revolt in his own party, as well as splitting the Arab population, Rabin offered the carrot of 'free municipal elections' in the Occupied Territories. He ordered the release of Faisal Hussein, a leading spokesman for the Palestinians. Hussein told an Israeli television interviewer that 'there are changes for the better among many Israelis, including even

ministers'. Rabin gave permission for Hussein to travel abroad on condition that he canvassed support from Arab leaders, including the PLO, for the so-called 'free elections'. An indication of the right turn of leaders such as Hussein, considered close to the PLO, is the statement made after his release condemning the killing of an Israeli soldier by Arabs in Jerusalem. The PLO leaders have yet to respond publicly to Rabin's offer; they have, however, postponed the announcement of a provisional government which was expected in February.

It is clear that a section of Arab leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who a year ago used the development of the Intifadah to recognise Israel and call for an 'independent' Palestinian state, are preparing a new betrayal. Their aim is to secure a base for an aspiring Arab bourgeoisie in a Palestinian statelet - at the expense of the working class.

The immediate tasks of Jewish and Arab workers must be to unite in a campaign demanding an end to the arrest and deportation of trade unionists and calling for the withdrawal of all troops from the Occupied Territories.

In the struggle to defend their jobs and wages against the government's austerity measures, Jewish workers must forge an alliance with the Palestinian workers currently engaged in strikes in the construction and agricultural sectors.

Jewish workers must openly declare their solidarity with the Palestinians oppressed by the Zionist regime; they must call for the release of all Arab detainees, demand the re-opening of schools, health centres and trade union centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and fight for the bringing down of the Likud-Labour coalition government.

Manley's pledge to the bankers

IN THE first contested parliamentary election since 1980, Michael Manley's People's National Party (PNP) was swept back to power in Jamaica on February 9, winning 44 out of 60 seats. The last general election was not contested by the PNP, which alleged that the outcome was rigged in advance.

Manley is not, however, planning any major changes in the policies inherited from Edward Seaga's defeated Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) government. No sooner had the PNP won the election than Manley confirmed his intention of seeking good relations with US President Bush, the Thatcher government, the IMF and the World Bank.

Shorn of the populist rhetoric of his two terms of office in the 1970s, Manley has spent recent years touring the world, ingratiating himself with bankers and businessmen and writing a book on cricket. The close diplomatic and economic ties with Cuba, which Manley established and Seaga broke, will not be resumed.

During the last PNP government, US aid was cut off; under Seaga, Jamaica became the second highest per capita recipient of US aid. Manley is desperate to hang

on to this support and has produced the policies to match: 'We have realised,' he stated during the election campaign, 'that to succeed you have to maximise your productive capacity and release the spirit of enterprise. We were young and inexperienced. We are wiser now and wisdom brings you to pragmatism.'

No improvements in the atrocious conditions of housing and health care are envisaged, and wages will be kept down. Nor have any firm commitments been given to abolish the death penalty - 200 Jamaicans are currently awaiting execution.

The incoming PNP government faces a \$4 billion foreign debt (one of the highest per capita figures in the world). Repayments currently consume 45 per cent of export earnings - a position exacerbated by the low level of bauxite prices on the world market.

While the election campaign generated fierce passions - ten people died and over 100 were injured - the PNP and JLP leaders are in agreement on all fundamental questions. Manley's programme of 'developing Jamaica's productive capacity' will be paid for out of the pockets of the working class.

Iran-Contra: the cover-up goes on

AFTER a three-week delay, the trial of former Marine colonel and White House aide Oliver North finally started in Washington on February 21. It promises to be one of the most expensive and elaborate cover-ups in the history of American politics.

By David Lewis

North faces 12 charges which include lying to Congress, illegally conducting a war in Central America, destroying official documents and accepting gifts, in particular a security system for his home. More serious charges of conspiracy and theft of government property were dismissed in January by the judge, Gerhard Gesell, at the request of special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, who had spent 25 months and \$13 million investigating North.

Walsh insisted on the dropping of these charges after being squeezed between a security review board set up by Ronald Reagan which claimed that documents supporting the charges would, if disclosed, harm national security, and Gesell who insisted that the documents had to be read out in court if North was to receive a fair trial. This was one of a series of legal manoeuvres aimed at obscuring the true nature of North's activities and the involvement in them of the political leaders of the US ruling class.

The selection of the jury was the occasion for a piece of pure farce as the court attempted to find 12 residents of Washington who

knew nothing about the North case - despite the extensive TV coverage given to the Congressional hearings in 1987. Gesell threatened ABC television with an action for contempt of court for re-showing part of the hearings, calling it 'a deliberate effort to obstruct [the selection of] a jury'. One potential juror was disqualified on the grounds that, since she worked in a TV store, she would have unconsciously absorbed parts of North's testimony and thus be prejudiced.

The charges against North arise out of the key role he played in the Iran-Contra affair, in which the proceeds from the sale of arms to Iran were used to finance illegally the right-wing Nicaraguan Contras. North's lawyer, Brendan Sullivan, claims that secret documents show that members of the Reagan administration, including Reagan himself, Secretary of State George Shultz, Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger, National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, CIA Director William Casey and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Vasey, were directly involved in providing aid to the Contras when the US Congress had banned it. In other words, the top layers of the US government conspired to overthrow the Sandinista regime.

The North trial is an attempt to conceal the lengths to which the US ruling class will go to pursue its interests. The divisions between the judiciary, in the shape of Judge Gesell, and the government are more apparent than real. While the government would like to stop the trial and has made three separate attempts to do so, Gesell is operating on a basis which can only lead to a cover-up. Though it appears to be in conflict with the wishes of the Bush administration, his insistence on the presentation of classified documents in evidence is, in fact, a sophisticated form of collusion with the government, designed to lead to the dismissing of all charges against North.

North himself is totally unrepentant and maintains that what he did was not only in accordance with the wishes of the president but was also a patriotic duty. The Iran-Contra affair was only one aspect of his activities - he sees the working class as the main enemy and his other duties included the preparation of contingency plans for the arrest of 'subversives' in the event of a 'national emergency'.

North was hailed as a national hero by Reagan and is likely to emerge from the trial with his reputation intact. More importantly from the standpoint of the US ruling class, North's other secret activities and the role of leading figures in the Reagan administration in the Iran-Contra affair will remain shrouded in mystery.

Machinists fight back against union-buster

THE STRIKE by Eastern Airlines workers in the United States represents a major challenge to the economic and fiscal policies pursued by the Reagan, and now the Bush, administrations.

By Philip Marchant

When 8,500 maintenance engineers and baggage handlers, members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, struck on March 4 against the imposition of a 15 per cent pay cut, they were declaring 'enough is enough'.

Eastern's owner and chairman, Frank Lorenzo, is the archetypal union-buster and asset-stripper, who has turned the small crop-spraying Texas Air - now Eastern's parent company - into the second largest airline group in the world, after Aeroflot. When he bought the ailing company in 1972, he shut down its operations for more than four months until he had forced ground staff to concede to his demands.

With the ending of government control over ticket pricing and route allocation in 1978, Lorenzo's aggressively anti-union stance came into its own as airlines scrambled to reduce labour costs in order to compete for the choicest share of the market. In 1982, he bought Continental Airlines and immediately introduced a draconian cost-cutting exercise. When this provoked resistance from the workforce, he had the company declared bankrupt - a tactic which, at the time, enabled him to tear up contracts and set up a non-union shop. With a much reduced staff, Continental was able to lead the way in cutting fares; today it has the lowest-paid workers of any US airline.

Lorenzo bought the loss-making, Miami-based Eastern for a song in 1986, hoping to turn its fortunes round using the same methods he had employed at Continental. He started syphoning off the airline's assets to the non-union Continental and Texas Air and put the profitable Boston-New York-Washington shuttle service up for sale. He called for contract conces-

sions amounting to \$150 million, and succeeded in forcing most of the employees to accept wage cuts of up to 15 per cent.

The machinists and baggage handlers, however, refused to play ball with Lorenzo, countered with a demand of their own for \$50 million in pay rises and, after six months of deadlocked negotiations, went on strike.

Lorenzo then looked to the pilots to stick with him whilst he drafted in scabs, but they had also been asked to make substantial contract concessions and were furious at the asset-stripping operation. Along with flight attendants, they decided not to cross the machinists' picket lines and succeeded in grounding all but 100 of Eastern's 1,100 daily flights.

As other transport workers indicated their willingness to support the dispute, a Federal judge put a temporary ban on secondary picketing at commuter rail terminals, though this didn't stop the Airline Pilots' Association from working to rule in all other US airlines except American. Showing his contempt for the leaders of the AFL-CIO trade union federation, President Bush rejected their pleas for him to intervene and impose a 60-day cooling-off period, and instead threw his weight behind Lorenzo who is a substantial contributor to Republican funds. Bush and his Transportation Secretary, Samuel Skinner, gave notice that they intended to make secondary picketing illegal.

Six days into the strike, Lorenzo filed for bankruptcy protection against the airline's creditors. Under the US Bankruptcy Code, this provides Eastern, which lost \$335 million last year, with a legal umbrella while it 'reorganises' - a move which would probably mean the



Striking Eastern Airlines workers on the picket line at Miami airport.

sacking of all its 31,000 employees.

The union leaders have been forced to support the strike, first and foremost because of the intransigent stand taken by the machinists and baggage handlers. Since refusing to mobilise the labour movement in 1981 when Reagan sacked the striking air traffic controllers and disbanded their union, PATCO, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy has stood aside whilst a succession of union-busting employers have isolated militant groups of workers and unilaterally imposed new contracts. Union membership has fallen from 23 per cent of all waged and salaried employees in 1980 to under 17 per cent in 1988.

But the AFL-CIO's support for the Eastern strikers is limited to a sophisticated public relations campaign which, though it has succeeded in attracting liberal

politicians and public figures like Jesse Jackson and Ed Asner on to the picket lines, is completely opposed to extending industrial action. A detailed analysis of Eastern's finances and a careful inspection of its books has been carried out - not in order to make out a case for nationalisation, but to swing 'public opinion' and Democrat leaders behind the union case with revelations about Lorenzo's financial chicanery.

Most damningly, the union bosses have been negotiating secretly with Wall Street's so-called 'takeover artists' for a 'friendly' buy-out of Eastern by TWA chairman Carl Icahn, in which the trade unions would own a piece of the company. It isn't difficult to see that the future for the workforce under such a scheme would be union-sanctioned wage-cutting!

Thus, behind the rhetoric of AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland and his colleagues

about reversing an eight-year period of anti-unionism is revealed an accommodation to the capitalist state unprecedented even for this right-wing bureaucracy. The Eastern Airlines workers must place no confidence in their leadership's ability to defend jobs, wages and conditions of work. They must demand that it break off all discussions on takeovers and immediately extend the strike throughout the transportation industry.

Venezuelan workers reject IMF terms

EARLY IN March, widespread rioting in Venezuela forced the government to make a tactical retreat from unloading the burden of a deal with the International Monetary Fund on to the working class.

The protests, which included a general strike by transport workers, began on February 27 after a 90 per cent rise in the price of petrol and a 30 per cent rise in fares. The recently-elected president, Carlos Andres Perez, responded by imposing a curfew and suspending the freedom of speech, assembly and movement within and out of the country.

The uprising was brutally put down by the army which killed more than 200 in the capital, Caracas, and at least 100 in the rest of the country.

By Martin Sullivan

Police raided the offices of workers' organisations and rounded up political activists.

As the rioting was being suppressed, the government announced an across-the-board pay rise of £30 a month in the private sector, a 32 per cent rise in the substantial public sector and a freeze on prices, including fares. However, the pay rise had been planned for some time and fares were fixed at their new levels.

At the same time, details were released of the letter of intent which the government had signed with the IMF, providing for additional loans up to 1991 in return for a

continued commitment to austerity programmes. The IMF loans are intended to ease the debt burden, currently more than £20 billion, incurred over the last decade by Venezuela as the oil production-based economy has been increasingly hit by falling world prices.

Perez's re-election was partly due to the popularity of the measures he was able to bring in during his first period as president from 1973 to 1978. The large income from oil exports allowed him to introduce subsidies and welfare programmes, keep fuel prices down and encourage borrowing. His immediate move to dismantle past reforms and implement the IMF demands lies behind the powerful upsurge of the Venezuelan working class.

Sadiq agrees to talks

By Eugene Ludlow

THE SUDANESE Prime Minister, Sadiq al-Mahdi, relented under pressure from opposition parties, the armed forces and the trade unions in early March and announced the formation of a new government committed to peace talks with the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

The SPLA, headed by John Garang and backed by Ethiopia, Kenya and Israel, has been fighting a guerrilla war against the government since 1983. Its demands are for regional autonomy and a better economic deal for the south, and a secular Sudan.

The majority of Sudan's 20 million inhabitants are black Africans living in the rural south. What little industry exists within Sudan is concentrated in the Arab north of the country. The government based in Khartoum is a coalition of the UMMA party of Sadiq al-Mahdi and the National Islamic Front (NIF) - a Muslim fundamentalist party headed by Sadiq's brother-in-law, Hassan el-Tourabi.

On November 16 last year, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) - then part of the ruling coalition - signed an accord with the SPLA in

the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. Intended as the basis for the end of the civil war, the accord called for a cease-fire, a freeze on plans to re-introduce Islamic sharia laws and the cancellation of economic and military agreements with Egypt and Libya. Under pressure from the NIF, Sadiq al-Mahdi refused to ratify this agreement and, as a result, the DUP left the coalition in December.

The Sudanese army, whose presence in the south has been confined to garrisoned towns, has gradually been starved of supplies by the SPLA. On February 22 the Commander-in-Chief of the Sudanese army, Fahti Ahmed Ali, gave Sadiq one week to agree to negotiate the end of the six-year-old civil war in the south. The ultimatum, which was a thinly-disguised threat of a military coup, was made in the light of massive desertions to the SPLA, swelling its forces from 40,000 to 55,000. An indication of the depth of the crisis in the

regime is the fact that these new recruits to the SPLA are mainly Nuer people - traditionally hostile to the Dinka who dominate the SPLA.

Sadiq's desire to impose Koranic rule via the sharia laws is an attempt to revive the repressive measures practised by the deposed dictator Jafaa Nimeiri which sparked the struggle in the south for autonomy. The resignation of the DUP from Sadiq's coalition only strengthened the influence of the NIF, with two new members elected to his cabinet in February. However, the disagreement between the DUP and the UMMA/NIF coalition is between different sections of the capitalist class. The DUP represents the larger, Western-orientated businesses and industries, whilst the existence of powerful fundamentalist parties reflects the predominance in the northern economy of small-scale capitalist enterprises.

With the success of the SPLA campaign against the government, Garang has now decided to set his sights higher than 'regional autonomy' and is manoeuvring for a place for the SPLA in a national coalition.

EDITORIAL

Sinn Fein's right turn

THE MAIN call from the annual Sinn Fein *ard fheis* (conference), held in Dublin at the end of January, was for the setting up of a 'broad anti-imperialist front', to include Fianna Fail in the south and the SDLP in the north.

A few days later, it was revealed that the SDLP had been conducting secret talks in Germany with the two northern loyalist parties over a number of months, with the aim of establishing a framework for formal ongoing negotiations. The basis for such negotiations is the willingness of the SDLP to step up its co-operation at all levels with the army, the RUC and the northern bourgeoisie to defeat the IRA and subordinate the Catholic working class to British imperialism.

Seen in this light, the turn made at the *ard fheis* towards a bloc with the SDLP and Fianna Fail must serve to warn Irish workers of the limitations of republicanism. In effect, the Sinn Fein leaders are suggesting that a complete about-face is possible by the southern ruling class – which made its peace with British imperialism between 1921 and 1927 when it accepted partition into the 26-county 'Irish Free State' and the six-county 'Northern Ireland' – and by the bourgeois-reformist SDLP – which was founded in 1970 to divert the anger of the Catholic working class in the north into safe parliamentary channels.

Fianna Fail was set up by Eamon de Valera in 1926 specifically to reconcile the more radical nationalists with the Free State parliament – which, under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, required deputies to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown. In 1927, the majority of Sinn Fein followed de Valera into Fianna Fail and, in August, de Valera led the 44 deputies elected to the Dail in that year's election in taking the oath.

As one of the three main parties representing the southern capitalists, Fianna Fail's history has been one of repressing the republican movement. In 1936, a Fianna Fail government under de Valera banned the IRA and, whilst it has found it useful from time to time to parade its 'nationalist' credentials by refusing demands placed on it by Westminster, Fianna Fail has acted for over 60 years as the defender of private property and privilege in the 32 counties.

After the occupation of the north by British troops in 1969, the Fianna Fail government of Jack Lynch stepped up its war on the IRA, introducing an amendment to the Offences Against the State Act – Section 30 – in 1972, which sanctioned the arbitrary detention of republicans and five-year prison sentences for those identified as members of 'illegal organisations' by a senior police officer. There were 14,000 arrests under Section 30 between 1975 and 1985. Today's generation of Fianna Fail leaders – under the incumbent Prime Minister, Charles Haughey – are no less subservient to British imperialism than their predecessors.

Since it was formed by six Stormont MPs in August 1970, the Social Democratic and Labour Party has co-operated with every attempt by British imperialism to subordinate the struggle for national self-determination to an internal six-county 'solution'. Established with the support of the British Labour Party leadership, its brief was to fill the vacuum left by the break-up of the discredited Northern Ireland Labour Party, and block the nationalist working class from supporting the IRA by promoting the idea of a negotiated settlement.

In practice, this has meant condoning, and indeed encouraging, violations of the democratic rights of the working class in the cause of eradicating 'terrorism'. Whilst drawing back from open support for the 'shoot-to-kill' policy, the SDLP is in favour of stepping-up the security force presence, allowing army snatch squads to cross the border, the use of SAS assassination units and the exchange of intelligence information between north and south. When one of its own members was suspected of concealing weapons and had his house pulled apart by the RUC recently, the SDLP protested loudly – not because it was opposed to such outrages on principle, but because the police had blundered in selecting the house of an SDLP councillor who had always made clear his opposition to the IRA!

James Connolly insisted at the beginning of this century, 'only the working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland'. When Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams states that the leaders of Fianna Fail and the SDLP can be forced to take a stand against British imperialism, he is helping to perpetuate a utopian and reactionary illusion. As the history of Fianna Fail and the SDLP shows, they have unfailingly supported the interests of the capitalist class over the working class: to call for a 'broad front' with such parties is to bind workers to the very class which keeps them in chains.

The Irish bourgeoisie and the reformist servants of imperialism are utterly incapable of carrying through the struggle for national liberation. The task of creating a united Ireland falls squarely on the shoulders of the only revolutionary force in society – the working class.

Vital to this task is the building of a Trotskyist party in Ireland, based on the theory of permanent revolution, which will fight to mobilise Catholic and Protestant workers on a revolutionary socialist programme, with the support of the small farmers, to defeat British imperialism.

By Philip Marchant

WORKERS NEWS condemns the call by the Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, for the assassination of Salman Rushdie, and puts on record its complete support for *The Satanic Verses* to be published, sold and stocked in libraries free from threats to the author's personal safety.

Khomeini's *fatwa*, or religious edict, declaring that Rushdie had committed a blasphemy against Islam and demanding his execution, was made on February 14, five months after the first objections to the novel were raised by Muslim leaders around the world, and in the immediate wake of protests in Islamabad and Kashmir in which six died.

That a challenge to the basic assumptions of Islam should meet with opposition among the clerics is not unexpected, but the scale of the demonstrations, the banning of the novel in Pakistan, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere and the anger expressed by ordinary Muslims merits some examination.

Islam is one of the religions of what today is the semi-colonial world – those countries which are oppressed and economically exploited by imperialism, and whose development even into modern capitalist states is prohibited. Where poverty and starvation are endemic, and the advances of scientific technique are denied to the mass of the people, religion, with its false hope of a better 'after life', holds a powerful attraction.

Under such conditions, religion can temporarily be utilised by the ruling class of the semi-colonial country to obscure its own exploitation of the masses and present the fiction of a 'nation united by religion'. The advantage of this is twofold: in countries which don't have a developed bureaucracy in the labour movement, it is an alternative route to class collaboration; and it is a useful, sometimes vital, factor in the national bourgeoisie's conflict with the imperialist countries. This is what happened in Iran leading up to the overthrow of the pro-imperialist Shah in 1979. In the absence of a revolutionary socialist leadership, and with all meetings except those in the mosques outlawed, the Islamic clergy was able to take the leadership of the anti-Shah movement on behalf of the small capitalists.

Khomeini's order for Rushdie to be put to death has an equally down-to-earth purpose. The furore over *The Satanic Verses*, whipped up by Muslim leaders in Britain and elsewhere who are anxious to wall off the younger members of their communities from the class struggle, comes at a time when the Iranian regime is seriously weakened, both economically and politically, by the war with Iraq. Since the cease-fire in August, a struggle for power has been raging between those who favour restoring ties with imperialism and opening up the country to foreign capital – led by Parliamentary Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani – and those led by Prime Minister Hussein Moussavi who consider that the smaller Iranian capitalists would be better served by maintaining state control over much of the economy.

Reflecting the instability of the regime, the power

Khomeini's unholy war

Behind the accusations that Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, is blasphemous lie the strictly secular manoeuvrings of the Islamic clergy inside and outside Iran. Workers News reports on the background to Khomeini's call for the author's execution and exposes those on the British left who support the banning of his book.

struggle has been accompanied by the murder of thousands of oppositionists. Most of the victims have been members of working class political parties, the Fedayeen groups and the Mojahedin, or Kurdish nationalists, although over 30 clerics, supporters of Moussavi and Ayatollah Montazeri, Khomeini's appointed successor, were executed in November. Many thousands more have been jailed.

Khomeini's aim in issuing his *fatwa* is to re-establish an equilibrium between the con-

tending wings of the national bourgeoisie, whose differences threaten the very existence of the Islamic republic, and artificially create the 'siege' conditions necessary to justify the continued repression of the working class. His motives are entirely secular, have nothing whatsoever to do with any 'insult to Islam', and though dissenting clergy may find it safer to walk the streets of Tehran, the purge of left-wing opponents will continue.

The response to the affair by the governments of Bri-

tain, the European countries and the United States has been tuned to the particular requirements of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The initial feeling of the Tories was to soft-pedal the whole business in the interests of regaining an economic foothold in Iran. That they have been obliged to condemn the death threat and perform certain ritual diplomatic expulsions is merely evidence that there is a conflict of interests between the capitalist classes of the imperialist and the semi-colonial nations, and in no way indicates a willingness to defend artistic freedom.

Indeed, the list of Tories, Tory supporters and their co-thinkers abroad who have used the opportunity to attack Rushdie is legion: Thatcher, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Teddy Taylor, the Chief Rabbi, the Vatican, Jimmy Carter, Dan Quayle, Auberger Waugh, Roald Dahl and scores of others have been quick to point out how 'offensive' Rushdie's

THE SOCIALIST

Zealots of the Labour left

THREE Labour MPs, Bernie Grant, Max Madden and Keith Vaz, have publicly identified themselves with the campaign to ban Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*.

Grant and Madden are members of the Campaign Group of 'left' Labour MPs. Ironically, for people who claim that socialism will be achieved through the gradual 'extension of democracy', they have championed a restriction of democratic rights by sponsoring a parliamentary motion calling for the extension of the medieval blasphemy laws to cover religions other than the Church of England.

Not only is the criticism of religion the prerequisite for the development of a scientific, materialist and socialist consciousness – Marx's political development began with his attack upon religious dogma – but the lampooning of the religious hierarchy has a long history in the progressive bourgeois thought of earlier periods.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. Prominent among the demands of the bourgeois revolutionaries of 1789 was the separation of church and state. Turning the clock back, our gallant 'left' Labourites want to cement the relationship. How correct Trotsky was when he said that beneath the skulls of British reformists lay the refuse of centuries!

Any socialist worthy of the name would fight for the abolition of the blasphemy

laws. An extension of these laws would not only allow every reactionary zealot to use the courts to prosecute intellectuals and socialists, with the judges acting as arbiters of literary taste, it would potentially categorise works of Marxism and even bourgeois rationalism as blasphemous.

By calling for the banning of the book, Grant, Madden and Vaz are assisting the Tories at a time when they are seeking to extend censorship throughout the media, the arts and the press.

The motives of these three MPs are thoroughly opportunist: by ingratiating themselves with the community and religious leaders who have whipped up the anti-Rushdie campaign, they hope to hold on to the 'Asian vote'. These same 'leaders', who frequently represent the most privileged and 'respectable' layer of the Asian community, are being drafted into many Labour councils in urban areas to give a 'multi-cultural' seal of approval to policies which attack workers, whether Asian, black or white.

For the fundamentalists, the anti-Rushdie campaign provides a timely opportunity to reassert their authority, particularly over the younger generation of Asian workers, and to head off the development of class consciousness. Far from strengthening and uniting the working class, the 'multi-culturalist' politics of Grant, Madden and Vaz only serve to drive Asian workers back into a spiritual ghetto.

News Line's insult to Trotskyism

Still more politically criminal and repulsive – because it

comes in the guise of Trotskyism – are the views of that fragment of the Workers Revolutionary Party led by Sheila Torrance which publishes *News Line*.

Two editorials written by Steve Colling on February 11 and 21 offer up their undying devotion to the Khomeini regime. The second seeks to justify and render more profound Khomeini's call for Salman Rushdie's execution.

Colling is a special case of political cynicism and ignorance mixed in equal doses. He apparently joined the WRP in 1972, but his first 13 years of membership have left little trace. From 1985-86, he acted as a spy in the *Workers Press* organisation, and has subsequently been elevated into chief hack on Iran in the Torrance group.

Not content with describing Rushdie as a literary scribe of imperialism, Colling (who certainly cannot be accused of being literary himself) makes *The Satanic Verses* out to be at the centre of an imperialist plot directed against Iran.

There have been no shortage of provocations against Iran, especially on the part of US and British imperialism, and it is the duty of Marxists to fight unconditionally for the defeat of their 'own' ruling class under such circumstances. But to drag in Rushdie by the ears beggars belief.

The Satanic Verses doesn't confine itself to satirising Islamic fundamentalism – its main purpose is to expose the fraud of religious (and political) philosophies which claim to be fixed for all time, to show how they are, in fact, changed according to external pressures and the requirements of the ruling class, and to show that gods are created to serve the needs of men, not the other



Demonstration in Tehran in 1987

novel is. But the most cowardly attack of all on Rushdie, and on the freedom of all artists to deal with the subject matter of their choice, is from those who have said nothing. Kinno, Willis and the rest of the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions have kept their minds on winning

votes and their mouths shut. The working class in Britain, and particularly those workers who are part of the Muslim community, must denounce the actions of the mullahs for what they are – an attempt to alleviate the crisis of the small capitalist and entrepreneur at the expense of the wage-worker.

They must firmly oppose any call by the Tories for sanctions or military provocations against Iran, demand that the Labour and trade union leaders defend Rushdie and campaign for an end to the imprisonment, torture and execution of the opponents of the Khomeini regime.

BOOKBURNERS

way round. Rushdie's widely-acclaimed *Midnight's Children* was directed against the partition of India and the legacy of British imperialism; and *Shame* lampooned the ruling class in Pakistan where the fundamentalist mullahs provided a vital prop for the vicious military regime of General Zia ul-Haq – although Benazir Bhutto (for whom *News Line* has a sneaking regard) doesn't escape criticism, lest it be thought that Rushdie confines himself to easy targets. He is also the author of a book favourable to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Rushdie is not a revolutionary, but this is hardly the background of a 'scribe of imperialism'.

Having endorsed Khomeini's edict against Rushdie, Colling proceeds to misuse a famous quotation from the Manifesto of the Second Congress of the Communist International, in which Trotsky justly denounced 'socialists' in the imperialist countries who refused to support uprisings in the colonies. They deserved, he wrote, 'to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet'. Colling stands things on their head by calling for the same penalty for socialists who have condemned the execution of trade unionists, members of workers' political parties and Kurdish nationalists in Iran. Colling is too cowardly to mention by name who he considers to be 'Union Jack and State Department socialists', but we can safely assume he means the WIL, as well as the organisations affiliated to the Committee Against the Massacres in Iran and Iraq.

Colling produces this quotation, which his group regularly presses into service when it has run out of arguments to defend the

mullahs against the Iranian working class. What he doesn't seem to have noticed is that a mere nine lines above it, the manifesto calls for a struggle within the movement of oppressed peoples against the influence of the clergy.

Not that Colling denies outright that workers are being imprisoned and executed; he merely sidesteps the issue by claiming, without substantiation, that the reports from many different sources of thousands executed are 'extravagant'. Really, Mr Colling? What are your sources?

Colling writes like the hacks who covered up the extent of the Stalinist purges, with this difference – that they were whitewashing a degenerated proletarian revolution, whereas he is glorifying an aborted bourgeois revolution. Those who call for the overthrow of the Khomeini regime by the working class are, he claims, doing Thatcher's work. Full marks for chopped logic! The Tories will somehow greet with acclamation a socialist revolution in Iran! This is the same 'common sense' that says that attacks on Kinno only assist the Tories; that branded Trotskyists as 'fascist agents' because they dared to demand a political revolution to overthrow the Stalin bureaucracy; and that demanded the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to Chiang Kai-shek in the interests of a struggle against imperialism.

Why be satisfied with a string of slanders when you can go for the Big Lie? *News Line* tops it off by accusing those demanding an end to the execution and imprisonment of workers in Iran of supporting similar practices in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates!

When Colling states that 'the revolution lives in Iran', he is again lying. Khomeini's Bonapartist regime was built on the blood and bones of the working class, the destruction of all workers' organisations and the sacrifice of thousands of children. Colling is so ignorant of the class struggle within Iran that he doesn't know that the action taken by a section of the 'radicals' to expose Rafsanjani's dealings with US imperialism and the Israeli Zionists – the so-called Iran-Contra scandal – led these same 'radicals' to the gallows. He writes that 'the Iranians . . . kicked out' former premier Bazargan. In fact, Bazargan today runs the only legal opposition group which is, needless to say, a conservative bourgeois party.

Finally, it is necessary to deal summarily with the attempt to invoke Trotsky's authority in supporting the suppression of Rushdie's novel. Trotsky was, not least, a passionate defender of artistic freedom against bans, edicts and proscriptions of all kinds. 'The free choice of . . . themes,' he wrote, 'and the absence of all restrictions on the range of his exploitations – these are the possessions which the artist has a right to claim as inalienable. In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape from all constraint and must under no pretext allow itself to be placed under bonds. To those who urge us, whether for today or for tomorrow, to consent that art should submit to a discipline which we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula *complete freedom of art*.'

A regime divided

With the economy in ruins after the eight-year war with Iraq, the Iranian regime has itself become a battleground. The struggle over how best to restore profitability and control the working class has led to sharp differences which have resulted in thousands of executions. The statements which follow, some justifying the reign of terror, others calling for moderation, illustrate the depth of the crisis.

August 20, 1988 Cease-fire in war with Iraq.

October-November Reports begin to emerge of mass executions of left-wing political prisoners, Kurdish nationalists and 'radical' mullahs since the cease-fire by the Rafsanjani-led wing of the regime. India, Pakistan, Egypt and other countries with large Muslim populations ban Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

December A review of *The Satanic Verses* appears in an Iranian literary magazine, accusing Rushdie of 'artistic and moral degradation' and approving the ban in India.

January 1989 Protests in Britain over Rushdie's novel lead to it being publicly burned in the streets of Bradford.

February 12 Police open fire on 2,000 anti-Rushdie demonstrators in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing five. Ayatollah Montazeri calls for Iran to erase its image as a nation of killers and appeals for the rehabilitation of oppositionists.

February 13 Anti-Rushdie riots spread to Kashmir, northern India.

February 14 Ayatollah Khomeini issues an order for the execution of Rushdie on the grounds that he has committed a blasphemy against Islam.

'If it is established that a prisoner is an opponent of the regime, that is sufficient cause for his execution. Ask each and every one's opinion on the Mojahedin and the National Liberation Army. If the prisoner supports them, refrains from comment, evades the question, or says he must think about it, then execute him.'

AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI

From an order issued to Moussavi Ardebili, Minister of Justice, following the cease-fire in August 1988.

'Since the cease-fire, 12,000 political prisoners have been executed: 6,400 of them have been executed in Evin, Qezel-Hesar and Gohardasht prisons. The executions have been carried out in groups of 100 on consecutive days.'

From a report of the Supreme Judicial Council to Khomeini.

'It is the arbitrary arrests and torturing of people which has now resulted in our political isolation among the international community. Islam is based on principles of forgiveness and compassion, but we have yet to learn this from the Prophet's noble legacy.'

AYATOLLAH MONTAZERI

November 1, 1988: an attack on the policies of Prime Minister Moussavi by Khomeini's designated successor as spiritual leader.

'A number of pseudo-clergymen, involved in various political, moral, corruption and common law charges, were arrested, tried and executed.'

HOJATOLESLAM REYSHAHRI

November 28, 1988. Reyshahri is Minister for State Information and Security.

'[By executing some] guilty clergymen, we have proven that no one is above the law of the Koran and Islam, even the ammah (turban) cannot save sinners, whoever they are, regardless of their political, religious or military positions.'

HOJATOLESLAM KHAMENEI

Khamenei is President of Iran.

'[The] execution of some people, [the] silence of the responsible authorities and officials, [the] censorship of the news in the national media, its publication abroad, then

[the] confirmation of the news without providing any convincing, coherent or clear reasons and evidence . . . The roots of most rumours lie in not giving the news in time and in a clear and convincing manner. One can no longer explain away the people's firm trust in the foreign media and their apathy and distrust for the national one with cliches such as "once again the criminal hand of Great Satan came out of internal agents' sleeves".'

From an article in *Soroush*, the monthly publication of the Iranian Radio and Television Organisation, whose Director General is Mohammed Hashemi, brother of Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani.

'It appears that in most cases those executed have been serving short prison sentences for minor political offences . . . I declare my opposition to these sentences and I am sure there are a good number of people in this country who would share this with me . . . If these executions have been carried out in the name of observing the retribution law, then where are the members of the families of those victims in whose name an act of revenge has been authorised? . . . For what valid reasons or on what basis has our judiciary approved these executions, which can result in nothing but damaging the face of our revolution and the system.'

AYATOLLAH MONTAZERI

January 12, 1989: Open letter addressed to Khomeini.

'Don't think if you commit a crime today, you will stay in prison for two years. You should realise that there will be a maximum of ten days between the date of your crime and your execution.'

MOUSSAVI ARDEBILI

January 20, 1989: Friday prayer sermon, Tehran.

'Injustice and trampling the weak are at a height in this system . . . The people are in uproar about such injustice. Is it not a disgrace that some people set themselves ablaze at the Ministry of Justice to protest injustice? If something is not done . . . the people will despair and give up on the revolution. This would pose a serious danger to the state.'

DASHTESTAN

January 16, 1989. Dashtestan is a parliamentary deputy.

'Recently when it was reported to the Imam that carrying out God's law takes time, he issued a new order. The new order was so good and produced such great results that I am going to give you a brief report on it . . . Verdicts were issued within 24 hours: four were executed, there were two amputations, three persons were sentenced to seven, eight and nine years respectively.'

MOUSSAVI ARDEBILI

'I pray to Almighty God to show them the path of guidance and honesty.'

AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI

February 1, 1989: announcing an 'amnesty' for political prisoners on the 10th anniversary of the Islamic revolution.

'This is another malicious propaganda against us.'

RAFSANJANI

February 13, 1989: denying reports of mass executions and the existence of a power struggle within the Iranian leadership.

After the split

As we have already argued, the failure to break from the Third World Congress built a variant of Pabloism into the foundations of the IC. Indeed, the sections of the IC continued to uphold the decisions of 1951, arguing that they had been misinterpreted by Pablo.

This left the SWP in particular in a tricky position, since it clearly implied that the differences with the International Secretariat majority were only tactical – a weakness the IS leaders did not fail to spot. George Breitman, writing in a semi-official capacity to Ernest Mandel shortly after the split, clearly expressed the pragmatic attitude of the SWP leadership: 'About our sincerity and the principled character of our support of the general line of the 3WC, [Third World Congress] there never was any doubt . . . Try to get it clear, Ernest: this is not a fight over the 3WC . . . A WC is only a WC – it's not for all time . . . To us the 3WC documents as written contain no support for liquidationism or conciliation – not when they were written, not now.'⁵²

In Britain, Healy and the majority leadership adopted a similar line, claiming to be loyal defenders of international decisions against Pablo: 'Revolutionary parties can be constructed only on the basis of great principles. These are embodied in the teaching of Comrade Trotsky, in the founding conferences of our movement and in the 2nd and 3rd conferences . . . In the name of the FI. Pablo and his clique expel leading members without explanation, violate the statutes and then, in company with centrists, support a public attack on the comrades defending the line of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Congresses.'⁵³

North attempts (p.251) to make much of Cannon's call for 'merciless polemics against the Pabloites' in a letter to Breitman dated March 1, 1954. What he doesn't tell the reader is that six weeks later Cannon was arguing that the public polemic against Pablo should be wound down – on the grounds that American workers wouldn't understand it: 'The public ideological and political fight against revisionism should be continued – but in a somewhat different form. It should no longer present the public appearance of a campaign against "Pablo", with Pablo's name in the headline of every article we write. This can impress the average reader as an exotic business. We will never be able to get the American workers excited about it.'⁵⁴

North does admit that the degeneration of the SWP was rapid after the split. He writes that: 'Despite the expulsion of the Cochranite faction in the autumn of 1953, the political crisis inside the Socialist Workers Party had not been resolved' (p.263); 'The SWP's incorrect assessment of McCarthy in 1954 was a symptom of a deep-rooted political crisis which assumed a more dangerous form the following year' (p.276); 'The political crisis within the Socialist Workers Party had assumed extremely dangerous proportions by 1956' (p.289). This being said, the growing crisis is put down almost entirely to domestic pressures – among them the boom, McCarthyism, an adaptation

to American radicalism and an ageing party leadership. All these factors were present, but they cannot, in and of themselves, explain the rapid descent of the SWP.

North ridicules Banda's remark that the McCarthy episode saw the ditching of the 'American Theses' by claiming that the two questions belong to entirely different decades. This is in fact misleading. The 'American Theses' were eight years old by the time the SWP defined McCarthyism as 'a nascent fascist movement' in 1954. But what North misses out is that Cannon had made strenuous efforts to revive the 1946 perspectives in 1952-53, believing that they needed little alteration.

There was a connection between the errors of 1952 and those of 1954 – one that North is unable to establish. In 1952, Cannon still held to the perspective of imminent revolutionary prospects. In 1954, the SWP leadership thought it saw a rising tide of fascism. These were the optimistic and pessimistic sides of the same coin, underpinned by a similar economic prognosis – the spectre of a 1929-39 economic catastrophe.

But even substantial errors of perspective were only able to play such a ruinous role under conditions where the SWP leadership failed to make, and was highly resistant to making, a re-examination of the origins of the post-war crisis of the Fourth International.

From deeper entry to open work

The entrism practised by the Healy 'Group' in the decade after 1947 had almost nothing in common with the 'French turn' advocated by Trotsky in 1934.

Readers of *Socialist Outlook* could have been forgiven for not knowing that the split in the Fourth International in 1953 had taken place – it was not even reported! Anyone who still believes that the split prompted a fierce public struggle in Britain for the Trotskyist programme and the Fourth International should be disabused. If anything, for two years after *Socialist Outlook* was bankrupted by a legal action in 1954, 'deep entry' into social democracy became 'even deeper entry'.

Healy's perspective for Labour Party work was based upon the false premise that there could be an unrestricted growth of the left wing, leading to the formation of a mass centrist current which would lead to a split. The task of the Trotskyists was to build up the 'left' in a bloc with the left-reformist Bevanites, who were cast in the role of 'centrists'.

Given the subsequent evolution of the entire Bevanite leadership, this perspective looks laughable today. Even without the benefit of hindsight, such a policy ran directly counter to Trotsky's insistence upon a rigorous struggle to unmask the genuinely centrist trend led by Marceau Pivert in the French Socialist Party.

For over two years the Group busied itself with selling *Tribune*, building up *Tribune* readers' groups, 'permeating' its letters columns with 'Trotskyist' ideas and maintaining friendly relations with the likes of Michael Foot.

Various explanations of this deep entry work have been advanced down the

The revisionism North defends

The concluding part of a review by Richard Price of 'The Heritage We Defend' – ICFI leader David North's attempt to mount an 'orthodox' defence of the 35-year history of the International Committee of the Fourth International

years from the 'nature of the period' to financial difficulties or the allegedly 'unique structure' of the Labour Party. Cannon, despite his own experience of revolutionary entry work in the Socialist Party of America, believed no other activity was possible. Writing in 1954, Cannon recognised that what he called 'creeping liquidationism' had already reached an advanced stage in Britain by the time of the split. Cannon's cure was internal discussion since the British were 'obliged by circumstances to follow a policy of "deep entry"'.⁵⁵

One exchange on the Group's entrism was published in its internal bulletin for February 1957. An article by 'C. Maxwell', whilst opposing Labour Party work from a sectarian position, is nonetheless revealing: 'Despite the propagation of the idea of a split within the Labour Party I cannot see this as practical. Last year Burns [Healy] was quoted as saying it would come about within six months. RS said he thought a year. RS knows from a discussion we had that I firmly rejected this. Events proved me correct. The ability of the opportunist leaders to adapt themselves was not understood. Either that, or this is opportunist thinking.'



Bevan

'... *Tribune* is certainly at this stage the most influential paper in the movement today. It owes this position and its increases [in] circulation in no small measure to our people. In effect, we are feeding mass illusions to the workers by the mass sale of reformist literature. We become part of this in order to get a dubious cover. The organisation of *Tribune* groups is thrown on to the backs of our comrades. The contacts made are of no significance. The letters we write are not given preference to the reformist politics. We are serving the opportunist reformist leaders.'⁵⁶

Healy replied by arguing that: 'The struggle between

Gaitskell and Bevan is not a struggle of personalities but a struggle between representatives of the collaborationist and potentially socialist wings of the Labour Party . . . Although confused over some things (the role of the UN for instance), this left wing has succeeded in pushing Bevan and more particularly *Tribune* further to the left than they expected to go . . . Bevan has been forced further and further leftward since that event [1951] . . . Our task is to keep alive the demand for socialist leadership . . . Our attitude to Bevanism must be one of nurturing it [!], developing it, and educating its best elements. We must push *Tribune* particularly in the factories for industrial matters will be to the fore as Macmillan's policy takes effect.'⁵⁷

Healy's illusions in Bevanism were rudely shattered when, only seven months later, Bevan made his infamous capitulation to the right wing at the Labour Party conference in Brighton – ironically directed against a unilateralist motion moved by Norwood delegate and Group member, Vivienne Mendelson.⁵⁸

In the meantime, however, the double impact of Khrushchev's secret speech and the butchery of the

These advances, combined with the SWP's overtures to Pablo in 1957, led the Group's leadership to begin to address the failure to analyse the history of the Fourth International, particularly between 1948 and 1953. Healy's correspondence from 1957 (much of it significantly not included in 'Trotskyism versus Revisionism') questions the nature of the hurried split carried out in 1953; it describes the Third World Congress as 'thoroughly revisionist' in character, and lays plans for a history of the Fourth International to be written.

This period of relatively 'open' Trotskyist propaganda brought the wrath of the Labour bureaucracy upon the Group, which had for several years been left alone – a commentary on its previous practice.

That the early promise of *Labour Review* and the *Newsletter* (which were to become organs of the Socialist Labour League, founded in 1959) remained unfulfilled had much to do with the failure to carry through the necessary theoretical rearming broached in 1957. Healy's centrist positions on the role of the International, Maoism, Algeria and the failure to check the rotten politics of Moreno were compounded by the developing crisis in the ICFI surrounding the nature of the Cuban revolution, which raised in a new form all the unresolved questions of 1948-51.

The ICFI and Maoism

In North's schema of IC history, the Healy group 'defended proletarian internationalism' from 1953-66 and 'turned away' from it after this point. In order to buttress this tendentious account, North cites (Chapter 31) various articles by Banda from 1967-68 eulogizing Mao Tse-tung's 'Cultural Revolution' and Ho Chi Minh. (It must be said that in doing so, North's great work of 'excavation' has uncovered nothing that the Spartacist League did not raise at the time).

But if this is the 'evidence', then all it does is raise more questions than it answers, since all the methodological revisions embodied in Banda's position were present and uncorrected throughout the IC's history. Indeed, if there is a 'continuity' in the IC's attitude to Maoism, then it is a continuity with the erroneous positions of the Bleibtreu-Lambert group in 1951.

The SWP, confronted by the events in China after 1949, uneasily straddled two positions: that the CCP was a

Stalinist movement and that it had established a 'revolutionary government'.⁵⁹ Although its 'Open Letter' defended the Chinese Trotskyists against Pablo, the SWP founded the IC in company with the French majority which considered the refusal of the Chinese Trotskyists to enter the CCP 'sectarian'. At the time of the 1953 split, the *Militant* published several articles denouncing the arrest of hundreds of Chinese Trotskyists in 1952-53.⁶⁰ As the Mao regime proceeded to expropriate the national bourgeoisie, it simultaneously strangled workers' democracy, murdering and incarcerating its revolutionary opponents.⁶¹

Following a discussion in which Joseph Hansen proposed a state capitalist position, the SWP adopted a resolution at its 1955 convention which defined China as a deformed workers' state ruled by a Stalinist bureaucracy.⁶² It arrived at this definition empirically, without reopening the books on the Yugoslav events.

The British section of the IC stood consistently to the right of this position. Despite opposition within the Group and the occasional sally to the left by Healy, Banda was allowed periodically to propagate his own pro-Maoist line. In April and May 1957, Healy wrote two letters to the SWP attacking the LSSP's capitulation to Chinese Stalinism.⁶³ Bill Hunter's document 'Under a Stolen Flag', published in May 1957, was the first and most serious attempt by the British section to get to grips with Pabloite theories of bureaucratic 'self-reform'. Even here, however, a nod is made in the direction of Mao's 'Hundred Flowers' campaign.⁶⁴ But in an article published in July 1957,⁶⁵ Banda characterised the leadership of the Chinese Stalinist party as many things – 'backward', 'pragmatic', 'eclectic', as 'implicitly challenging Stalinist orthodoxy', as departing from Soviet methods of industrialisation – but never as counter-revolutionary. He wrote not as a Trotskyist, but as a would-be adviser to the Peking bureaucracy. In place of calling for its overthrow, Banda called upon it to recognise and legalise Trotskyism. This would, he wrote with unconscious irony, be the 'acid test' of its policy of letting 'all flowers bloom'.

Replying in the following edition of *Labour Review*,⁶⁶ Ellis Hillman was – correctly – sharply critical: 'The principal weakness is to be found in the author's comments on the Chinese bureaucracy. He makes the surprising comment that "potentially the most sinister and evil phenomenon in China today is the prolific growth of bureaucracy in the State and party apparatus" (My emphasis – E.S.H.). . . If, as Michael Banda suggests, the growth of bureaucracy is still potential, then he is in fact comparing Mao's China with Lenin's Russia in the early heroic phase (1917-23). That this is the author's view is



Chinese Communist Party troops entering Shanghai, May 1949

lent support by the sentences which follow. He writes: "The further growth of this cancerous formation threatens [!] to separate the party and the State from the people. Such a state of affairs would inevitably lead to a new Hungary on a much vaster scale."

An article by George Kane in *Labour Review* in 1961 began the task of analysing the significance of Stalinist collectivisation policy and the growth of 'people's communes'. Although he wrote of the need to establish 'a working-class party with an internationalist strategy', the tasks of such a party are not clearly defined as centring on the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Indeed, Kane argued: 'China has a great need to develop economically if working-class rule is to be strengthened.'

The development of the Sino-Soviet split compounded the SLL's dangerous confusion on the nature of the Peking regime. At the height of the dispute, the SLL National Executive Committee threw its weight - 'critically', of course - behind Mao. Pervading a statement dated February 28, 1963, is the position that despite their 'naivety', 'ignorance of political economy', their 'empirical' break with Stalinism, the 'Chinese Communists' (as it politely calls them) are a quasi-revolutionary alternative to the Kremlin: 'The Chinese Communist Party has raised a number of important fundamental issues. We unconditionally defend their right to propagate their views and we shall give them every assistance to do so [!]. But we do not identify ourselves with Maoism - nor do we apologise for its crimes and blunders . . . The Chinese Communist Party makes a contribution by opening the necessary discussion, but it is not a decisive one [!]. . . the Chinese are correct [!] on most points against Krushchev and Togliatti . . . We affirm that the task of British Marxists is not to worship the accomplished fact, or to abstain in serious disputes - but to accept what is good and historically correct and reject what is bad, unscientific and reactionary in the theory and practice of the Chinese revolution.'

In presenting Stalinism as having a 'good' and a 'bad' side, the SLL leadership was only transferring Pablo's method to Chinese soil. Nor was this a temporary aberration

- on the contrary it flowed from the IC sections' entire appraisal of the origin of deformed workers' states. Yugoslavia and China (and later Vietnam) were seen as polar opposites to Eastern Europe. Tito and Mao were credited with leading legitimate socialist revolutions, and the local formations they established in the course of civil war designated retrospectively as soviet-type bodies. Instead of developing Trotsky's prognosis that the Stalinist bureaucracy would fissure along national lines, each break from Moscow produced an adaptation. Viewed in this context, Banda's 'lyrical tributes' in 1967-68 to Ho Chi Minh and Mao were the outcome of a long process.

Democratic centralism or federalism?

Although North believes that the International Committee was constituted as a 'world party' in 1953, there is ample evidence to show that its founders considered it to be a *faction* of the world Trotskyist movement.

As such, it was established as a loose grouping of co-thinkers. It issued very few collective statements. (Peng Shu-tse claimed in 1961 that only one resolution on important world events had been issued in the previous seven years.⁶⁹) In its first decade, it held one international conference.

Healy's views on international organisation at this time are contained in a letter of May 10, 1957, to James P. Cannon.⁷⁰ They are a combination of legitimate hatred of Pablo's bureaucratic methods laced with a dose of national independence. 'We are completely opposed to a return to the old Pablo conception of international organisation: the draining of national sections' resources so that some globe trotter could stiffen up Pablo's faction in some small group thousands of miles away; the constant spate of meetings in Paris which meant sections raising funds to send representatives . . . Our international work must be organised on a realistic basis in line with the resources of sections and not along lines which tend to imitate the old Comintern.'

The Leeds Conference of

the IC in June 1958 (which Healy had attempted to bill as the 'Fourth World Congress of the Fourth International') adopted two thoroughly ambiguous organisational resolutions.⁷¹ Under the heading 'Functions of the International Committee' it was agreed that: 'The International Committee does not have the right to intervene in the life of the sections. In any discussion on the national policies of the sections it shall act in loyal collaboration with the established national leaderships.' The statement 'Reorganization of the Fourth International' resolved: 'The Conference rejects all centrist conceptions of international organisation. A world party worthy of the name cannot be constructed along the lines of a loose



Fidel Castro (centre) with Raoul Castro, Che Guevara and other guerrilla leaders, Cuba: June 1957

federation of autonomous national parties. It must base its structure and its methods of functioning on the Leninist concepts of democratic centralism . . . In applying the concepts of democratic centralism, the leadership must act in conformity with the present stage of development of the Fourth International. The leadership's role must be primarily to give ideological guidance to the movement rather than be excessively preoccupied with organisational interventions.'

Simultaneously rejecting national autonomy and denying the right of international leadership to intervene in sections, the IC was engaged in an uneasy balancing act between the SWP (pushing for reunification with the Pabloites) and the PCI (strongly opposed for its own reasons to reunification). The result was essentially a federal set-up in which each trend in the IC could find support for its concept of 'democratic centralism'.

The Third Conference of

the IC, held in April 1966, redefined the tasks of the IC as 'rebuilding' and 'reconstructing' the Fourth International. In doing so, it amended its own draft resolution for the Conference, which had declared: 'Petty-bourgeois opportunism, in the shape of a hardened revisionist tendency penetrating all sections of the Trotskyist movement has destroyed the Fourth International . . .'⁷² In place of this formulation, an amendment was passed declaring that 'The Fourth International has successfully resisted and defeated the attempts of petty-bourgeois opportunism, in the shape of a hardened revisionist tendency which penetrated all sections of the Trotskyist movement, to destroy it politically and organisationally.'⁷³

In declaring in the same breath that the Fourth International *did* after all exist, but that it had to be 'rebuilt', a diplomatic formula was found to hold together the SLL-OCI bloc. The adoption of a 'unanimity rule', whereby IC business could not proceed without unanimous agreement, enabled the IC to continue on a federal basis, with the SLL and the OCI both operating in their own spheres of influence: 'At the present stage, the decision [sic] of the IC can only be taken by unanimous vote. At this stage, the IC is not proclaiming itself the centralized leadership of the Fourth International which must still be constructed.'⁷⁴ Healy's unwritten maxim became 'federalism abroad, bureaucratic centralism at home'.

After the split with the OCI in 1971, the SLL/WRP leadership increasingly transformed the remaining small sections of the IC into satellites of its Clapham HQ, and imposed its own brand of thuggish centralism upon

them. With its perspectives firmly trained upon cementing 'alliances' with the Arab bourgeoisie, the IC downgraded its own status. Its 8th Congress in 1979 spoke in the future tense of the 'fight to transform the International Committee into the genuine nucleus of the world party of socialist revolution . . .'⁷⁵

The 10th Congress of the IC in January 1985 voted unanimously to terminate 'the old International Committee's political ties to the period of the inflationary boom', declaring that the International Committee 'now develops its theory from its collective practise [sic] throughout the world'.⁷⁶

Behind this series of ever-changing, contradictory and sometimes bizarre formulations defining the role of the IC and its internal regime, democratic centralism as practised by Lenin, Trotsky and the early Fourth International and inseparable from Bolshevik internationalism was never established. In its place, federalism gave way to bureaucratic centralism.

Unanswered questions

Two chapters on Cuba underline that North is trapped in a web of theoretical confusion. He regurgitates the positions taken by the SLL in 1961-63, evidently convinced that they represent the last word on the nature of the Cuban state. To do otherwise would of course further undermine the specious 'continuity' of the ICFI.

The SWP's designation of Cuba as a *healthy* workers' state was indeed a ramp for unprincipled reunification with the International Secretariat and a corresponding liquidation into middle class protest movements and the petty-bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist milieu. But this in no way necessitates Trotskyists defining Cuba as a capitalist state. So slipshod are North's own 'sociological' criteria for such a designation that they scarcely merit discussion, and serve merely to emphasise that he has not even begun to think about the theoretical problems involved. North's criteria are those which Trotskyists would apply to a *healthy* workers' state. For instance, he writes (p.363) that 'without the liberation of Cuba from the domination of a monoculture economy based on sugar cane, scientific planning has been impossible'. Does this mean that 'scientific planning' exists in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China and Vietnam? Does it on the other hand mean that Trotskyists would by now have built 'socialism' on the island of Cuba? Further he argues that 'the seizure of power was in no way associated with the existence of any identifiable organs of proletarian power' (p.353). Does this mean that legitimate soviets arose in any of the deformed workers' states? Having swallowed the Pabloite assertion that Stalinist parties led revolutions in Yugoslavia and China which placed workers in power (despite the odd bureaucratic deformity here and there), North argues the polar opposite on Cuba. Ulli Rippert, a leader of the West German section of the ICFI, has recently argued for the continued existence of a capitalist state in Cuba on the grounds that 'even the formation of independent unions was suppressed by Castro'.⁷⁷ On these grounds, the Soviet Union should be regarded as a capitalist state!

North's confusion between 'healthy' and deformed workers' states is compounded by his deliberate avoidance of any reference to the other contributions to the Cuba question. He doesn't refer to the principal contribution of the SWP minority tendency around Wohlforth, which was to become the Workers League,⁷⁸ nor to more recent material by Westoby⁷⁹ and Lister⁸⁰ (from whom North still hasn't lifted the slander of being an 'FBI attorney').

From 1964 onwards, as the problems of defending IC 'continuity' pile up, the narrative breaks down into a series of selectively drawn incidents leading up to the present. No analysis is made of the IC split of 1971; no account of the tortuous history of the Greek section of the ICFI, or of the sabotage of the Irish section by the WRP leadership; and there is no record of IC history at all between 1975 and 1985. Although North has publicly

repudiated the 10th World Congress of the ICFI, he gives no clues as to where he stands on its predecessors. Despite frequent references in the IC's press to the 'historic' and 'integrated' programme of the IC we are not told what this consists of, or when it was committed to print. Please show us the documents, Mr North!

After the 1985 WRP split, Slaughter developed the theory that, despite the 'near fascist' Healy, and the 'degeneration of Healy's IC', Trotskyism had survived 'underground' in the WRP. North offers essentially a mirror-image of this 'golden thread' theory, according to which the 'continuity' of the IC is a kind of relay race: Cannon takes up the baton in 1953; begins to expire by the mid-50s just in time to hand over to Healy; he in turn begins to falter in 1966, but don't worry, North takes up the running . . . sixteen years later. Such a 'theory' enables North to avoid having to characterise the IC, its congresses, resolutions and decisions as representing a centrist tendency. Instead, we are asked to believe that the real IC has been in a sort of 'exile' for the better part of two decades.

Those militants who have broken with the WRP and its rotten traditions and are fighting for the rebuilding of the Fourth International will have as little use for North's apologetics as they will have for Slaughter's sophistries. The reason so many opportunist tendencies on an international scale lay claim to this or that aspect of IC history is because it is riddled with such manifest inconsistencies.

Like many others who came before, the WIL began its existence defending what it considered correct in the early ICFI against the gross betrayals of later years. Serious study of these historical questions cannot support such a position. Only on the basis of a thorough-going criticism of the entire history of the ICFI, particularly its failure to resolve the 1948-53 crisis, can the Fourth International be rebuilt on Trotskyist foundations.

Our sharp criticism of David North's 'The Heritage We Defend' is also therefore a self-criticism. 'By analysing the errors of yesterday, we learn to avoid errors today and tomorrow.'⁸¹

NOTES

- 52 IC Documents, Vol.4, SWP, 1974, pp.199-200.
- 53 IC Documents, Vol.3, SWP, 1974, p.175.
- 54 IC Documents, Vol.4, SWP, 1974, p.232.
- 55 Ibid, p.219.
- 56 *Forum*, February 1957, pp.8-9.
- 57 Ibid, p.10.
- 58 M. Foot: 'Aneurin Bevan, Vol.2, 1945-60', Granada 1979, pp.67-68 and 570-1.
- 59 James P. Cannon: 'America's Road to Socialism', Pathfinder, 1975, p.32.
- 60 Li Fu-jen and Peng Shu-tse: 'Revolutionaries in Mao's Prisons', Pathfinder, 1974.
- 61 See Wang Fan-Hsi: 'Chinese Revolutionary', Oxford, 1980, Chapter 12.
- 62 'The Chinese Revolution and its Development', SWP, 1976, pp.3-10.
- 63 'The Struggle to Reunify the Fourth International', Vol.3, SWP, 1978, pp.31-3.
- 64 Ibid, p.44.
- 65 M. Banda: 'Three Speeches', *Labour Review*, July-August 1957.
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In defence of the theory of permanent revolution

PART 11

By Richard Price

FOR OVER five years following 1917, the controversy surrounding permanent revolution lay dormant and appeared to have been relegated to the domain of history. Not only were Trotsky's pre-revolutionary writings, including '1905' and 'Results and Prospects', republished in large quantities, but his prestige as the central figure of the October insurrection was unassailable.

The period between the onset of Lenin's serious illness in December 1921 and his death in January 1924 – which Trotsky described as the 'interregnum' – saw the preparation of a vicious factional struggle within the Bolshevik leadership waged by Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin and their supporters against Trotsky. Cloaked in a whispering campaign of insinuations and personal innuendo alleging that Trotsky had an 'arrogant' and 'haughty' nature, and that he was an outsider and a newcomer to the circle of 'Old Bolsheviks', the factional struggle was rooted not in personalities but in the clash of definite tendencies: a petty-bourgeois centrist tendency and a proletarian internationalist one.

The history of Lenin's 'last struggle', jointly conducted with Trotsky against bureaucratism, in defence of the rights of minority nationalities and in defence of the monopoly of foreign trade, is well known and lies outside the scope of this article (see M. Lewin: 'Lenin's Last Struggle', Pluto; and 'Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism', Pathfinder). It culminated in Lenin breaking off relations with Stalin and the drafting of his 'testament', in which he called for Stalin's removal from the post of General Secretary.

Thousands of Bolshevik worker-cadres had died in the civil war; their places had been taken by post-revolutionary 'converts' to Bolshevism. Among such elements, and extending throughout a wide section of the party hierarchy, the predominant mood, following the civil war and the necessary retreat to the New Economic Policy, was in

favour of a breathing space, a period of consolidation and a turn away from the struggle for world socialist revolution. Trotsky sums it up admirably: 'The sentiment of "Not all and always for the revolution, but something for oneself as well", was translated as "Down with permanent revolution"'. The revolt against the exacting theoretical demands of Marxism and the exacting political demands of the revolution gradually assumed, in the eyes of these people, the form of a struggle against "Trotskyism".' ('My Life', Penguin, pp.526-7)

In a reciprocal fashion, conservative layers within the party leadership found a social base, not only in the prolific growth of bureaucracy, but in the petty-bourgeois elements in the towns and the countryside which NEP had revived. The growing army of functionaries enmeshed in the apparatus of state and party found a political expression for its desire for peace, stability and privilege in the conservatism of the party leadership.

The ebb of the international revolution after 1921 lent vigour to these trends, while the growing economic problems, centring on what Trotsky termed the 'scissors crisis' – the rising cost of industrial goods and the fall of agricultural prices – threatened to bring the workers' state and the peasantry into direct collision.

With Lenin completely incapacitated in March 1923, the campaign against Trotsky took a more open form. In raking up long-buried disputes from the pre-revolutionary period, the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin were not primarily engaged at this stage in a historical dispute concerning the nature of the Russian revolution. They were implicitly directing their fire against what Trotsky was to term the 'third aspect' of the theory of

permanent revolution, namely the international character of socialist revolution as a permanent process in the imperialist epoch. Trotsky later readily admitted that the full scope of the approaching Thermidor was not apparent at the outset of the struggle of the Left Opposition.

In the course of 1923, a sea-change began to take place in the policy of the Communist International, heralding a growing orientation towards bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces internationally, correlated to the alarming growth of bureaucracy at home.

Already, in 1922, the youthful Chinese Communist Party had been prevailed upon by the Zinoviev-led Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI), and against the wishes of its entire leadership, to enter the national bourgeois party, the Kuomintang. Trotsky opposed the affiliation when it was discussed on the Soviet politburo. On January 12, 1923, the ECCI formulated this policy and saddled the CCP with thoroughly ambiguous instructions. Firstly, it defined the Kuomintang not as a national bourgeois party, but as a 'national revolutionary group... based partly on the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, partly on the intelligentsia'. In doing so, it anticipated the subsequent line of 'two-class' parties for the east, and implied that the mutually antagonistic class interests of worker, peasant and capitalist could be expressed by a single party.

Secondly, the CCP was instructed to maintain its own independent organisation, within the Kuomintang – a policy which would prove not only impossible but ruinous in practice. Two weeks later, a 'joint manifesto', issued on Stalin's orders under the signatures of Soviet diplomat A.A. Joffe and Sun Yat-sen, declared that conditions for the Soviet system in China were not present and pledged side-by-side to complete the fight for national unification and independence. (See J. Degras (ed): 'The Communist International', Vol.2, Oxford, pp.5-6; and Peng Shu-tse: Introduction to 'Leon Trotsky on China', Pathfinder, p.39)

A further poisonous dose of verbal radicalism combined with Menshevik politics was injected into the CCP in the following months. In May, the ECCI sent further instructions to the forthcoming Third Congress of the CCP, outlining its chief task as 'steadily [to] push the Kuomintang on to the side of agrarian revolution', whilst maintaining that 'it goes without saying that leadership must belong to the working class' (Degras, pp.25-7). The Third Con-



Red Week, 1924; (left to right) Voroshilov, Trotsky and Kalinin

gress, in June, then proceeded to adopt a resolution inspired by the Comintern leadership declaring that 'the KMT [Kuomintang] should be the central force of the national revolution and should assume its leadership'. (Peng, p.40)

In October 1923, at the initiative of the ECCI, a 'Peasant International' (the Krestintern) was established. Communist Parties were subsequently obliged to foster the development of 'peasant' parties in order to secure their affiliation to this strange creation. Trotsky later commented: '... the peasant is less capable in the imperialist epoch of independent political action on a national, let alone international scale, than he was in the epoch of industrial capitalism... In the revolutions of the East the peasantry will still play a decisive role, but once again, this role will be neither leading nor independent. The poor peasants of Hupeh, Kwangtung, or Bengal can play a role not only on a national but on an international scale, but only if they support the workers of Shanghai, Canton, Hankow and Calcutta. This is the only way out for the revolutionary peasant on an international road. It is hopeless to attempt to forge a direct link between the peasant of Galicia or Dobrudja, the Egyptian fellah and the American farmer.' ('The Third International After Lenin', New Park, pp.172-3)

The second half of 1923 saw two crushing reverses for the Comintern under Zinoviev's and Stalin's leadership, in Bulgaria and Poland. Most importantly, the German Communist Party (KPD) – the largest outside the Soviet Union – ignominiously withdrew from a favourable revolutionary situation in October, without offering battle. Only the Hamburg Communists, who

failed to receive orders cancelling the insurrection, rose, and were defeated after a week of hopeless but heroic barricade fighting.

These events served to escalate considerably the sharp tensions within the leadership of the Soviet party. The triumvirate sought to make scapegoats out of the German leadership of Brandler and Thalheimer; at the same time attempting in the most deceitful manner to bracket Trotsky with them. Trotsky, although sharply critical of the vacillation of the KPD leaders, demanded a thorough discussion over the German debacle rather than an organisational manoeuvre.

The response of the triumvirate was to extend the anti-Trotsky campaign throughout the Comintern. Between late 1923 and the opening of the Fifth Comintern Congress in June 1924, the leaderships of many of the most important sections were reorganised around the axis of 'for or against Trotsky' by demotions, promotions and expulsions. The emerging Left Opposition counter-attacked in October with two letters by Trotsky to the Central Committee and the 'Platform of the 46' Old Bolsheviks: three documents which demanded a democratic party discussion, attacked the growth of bureaucracy and demanded urgent measures to meet the growing economic crisis.

The support generated by this counter-attack in the ranks of the party forced the triumvirate temporarily onto the retreat. Compelled in November to open up the pages of *Pravda* and the party organisations to a wide-ranging discussion, the strength of support for Trotsky, particularly in Moscow, in the military party cells and among the student and communist youth, prompted the Politburo to adopt a resolution on December 5 conde-

mnoring bureaucratism and formally upholding workers' democracy – even incorporating amendments drafted by Trotsky.

Trotsky did not let the matter rest at that. He began publishing, at the same time, the series of articles which was to form the bulk of his short book 'The New Course', as well as issuing an open letter to party meetings on December 8. His carefully worded suggestion that the Bolshevik 'Old Guard' contained the potential within itself to become 'the most finished expression of the bureaucratism of the apparatus' produced an explosive reaction from Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev and Bukharin and their supporters. They seized upon such formulations to launch a stampede within the party, on the pretext that Trotsky had violated the resolution on party democracy. Trotsky was accused, simultaneously, of being a representative of both 'rightist' and 'leftist' 'deviations' as well as an opponent of the 'disciples of Lenin' (M. Eastman: 'Since Lenin Died', chapters 5 and 6). A wild attack upon permanent revolution was agreed between his opponents, under the general heading 'underestimation of the peasantry'.

The questions of bureaucratism, party democracy, economic policy and internationalism were united. Stung by the opposition's attack upon its retreat in Germany, the ruling group veered to the 'left', announcing that, far from having suffered a string of defeats, the main battles of the international working class lay 'in front'. With Lenin close to death, bogus 'left' perspectives were combined with a right-centrist onslaught upon permanent revolution.

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John Wheatley

JOHN WHEATLEY's name is associated with the Clydeside group of MPs who during the 1920s constituted the main opposition within the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Ramsay MacDonald leadership.

He is also well known for his Housing Bill of 1924 which considerably expanded the provision of council housing - virtually the only major reform which the working class gained from the first Labour government.

As the first published biography of Wheatley, John Hannan's book provides a welcome account of the earlier period of Wheatley's life, from his arrival in Scotland as a seven-year-old Irish immigrant in 1876, through his political activities in the Irish Catholic community, leading to his conversion to socialism in 1905 at the late age of 36. Hannan gives prominence to important but neglected aspects of Wheatley's subsequent work in the labour movement, notably his part in building up the Independent Labour Party organisation which came to dominate the politics of Glasgow, and his role behind the scenes in the city's famous rent strike of 1915.

John Wheatley: the politics of left-reformism

The Life of John Wheatley
by John Hannan
Spokesman £5.95

Review by Bob Pitt

Hannan's study would have been better served had his publisher's budget run to compiling an index or employing a competent proof-reader - John Maclean appears throughout as 'McLean', Ramsay MacDonald as 'McDonald', while Helen Crawford becomes 'Crawford'.

A more serious defect, however, is the author's own political perspective. In com-

mon with recent biographies of Wheatley's comrades James Maxton and Arthur Cook, this book is written from a position to the right of its subject. Take Hannan's treatment of Wheatley's actions in 1923, when he was suspended from the House of Commons after joining Maxton in denouncing the Tories, whose policies were responsible for the appalling level of infant mortality in Glasgow, as 'murderers'. Hannan complains that Wheatley's refusal to be browbeaten by the party leaders into an immediate apology was 'a mistake', which placed MacDonald 'in an invidious position'. From this standpoint, no constructive criticism of Wheatley's record of resistance to the pro-capitalist Labour Party leadership is possible. Indeed, Hannan plainly regards this struggle, which reached its high point in the Cook-Maxton campaign of 1928, as entirely counter-productive.

Nor does Hannan attempt a serious examination of the immense theoretical confusion which underpinned the politics of this most extreme

of Labour lefts. Wheatley took his socialism not from Marx but from Robert Blatchford, his economics from the underconsumptionist theories of the Liberal economist J.A. Hobson, and his morals from the Catholic Church, of which he remained a pious member up to his death in 1930. Wheatley's political outlook was also distinguished by a nationalism which often took on an explicitly racist character. His attack on the power of international finance contained an anti-Semitic reference to the exploiting role of 'the Jew', and he was a vigorous proponent of import controls to put an end to the situation in which 'the Coolies are busy, the Britishers are at the Buroo'.

In contrast to some present-day 'Trotskyists', who assure the working class that Benn and Heffer will take us 'forward to socialism', Trotsky himself was emphatic that lefts like Wheatley offered no adequate alternative to the right wing. 'Their radicalism,' he wrote in 'Where Is Britain Going?', 'is constrained by democracy and religion and poisoned by the national arrogance that ties them spiritually to the British bourgeoisie. The working class will in all probability have to renew its leadership several times before it creates a party really answering the historical situation and the tasks of the British proletariat.' This is no less true today.

Miró's opposition to Franco left unexplored

PICASSO's 'Guernica' was not the only work specially commissioned from a Spanish artist for Spain's Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition. Joan Miró (1893-1983), a Barcelona artist resident in Paris, also contributed.

Miró's 'Reaper', or 'Catalan Peasant in Revolt', was a huge mural symbolising Catalan resistance to fascism. Sometime after the Exposition, Miró's picture disappeared and has not been seen since.

Miró was no revolutionary. His opposition to fascism was authentic, but it never went beyond his providing occasional propaganda. It was grounded in empathy, not action. Since 1919, Miró had been spending about half of each year in Paris. During the 1920s, when his friends included Picasso and Ernest Hemingway, he was for a time closely involved with the Surrealists, whose work his

Joan Miró: Paintings and Drawings, 1929-41
Whitechapel Art Gallery, London E1
Until April 23

Review by Robert Williams

own in some ways resembles. But he fought shy of the active political involvement demanded by the Surrealists' leading spokesman, André Breton (who later supported Trotsky against Stalin). Miró's struggle was with art only: 'I shall break their guitar,' he said, in a reference to one of the favourite devices of Cubist imagery.

Following the increasing intensity of the Civil War in Spain, from 1936 to 1940 Miró remained in self-imposed exile in France. In 1937, in addition to his lost contribution to the Exposition, he produced 'Aidez Espagne' - a pro-Republican

propaganda poster. Two years later he began his 'Barcelona series', a set of lithographs that are in part a commentary on events in Spain.

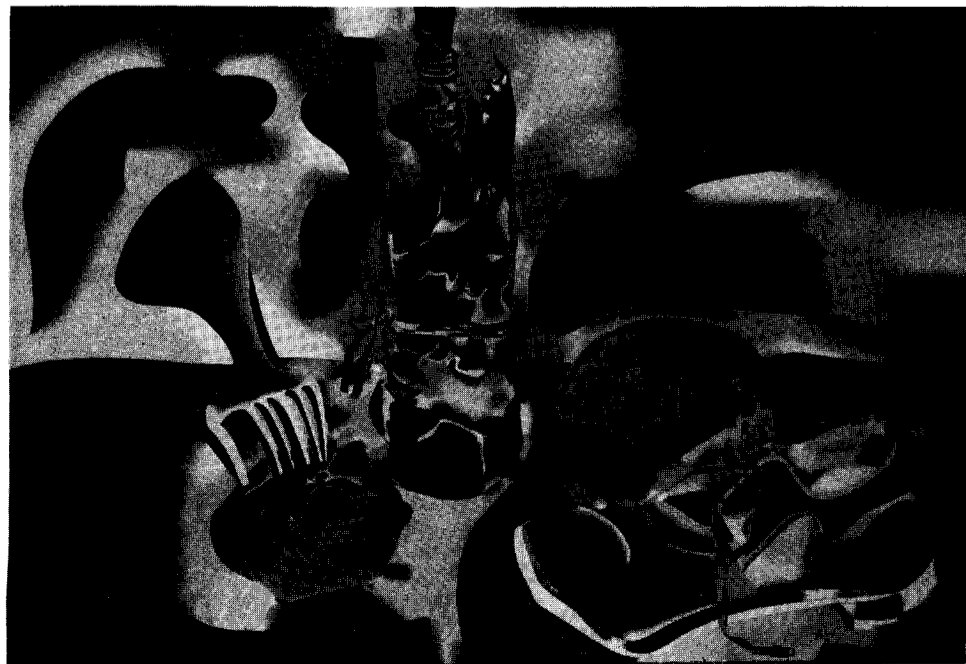
None of this (albeit soft) Republicanism is included in the Whitechapel exhibition. This is curious, since the catalogue authors seem to find in that catastrophic conflict a ready-made explanation for Miró's own bouts of pessimism, as well as a reason for some of the more disturbing features to be discerned in his work. But their unwillingness to explore further any connections whatsoever between art

and politics in the work of a Spanish artist during the 1930s is an appalling dereliction. All that is offered is the artist as hero, voyaging through seas unknown.

Miró's preferred sea was the subconscious imagination; inevitably, his art between 1929 and 1941 remained esoteric. His subconscious provided initial provocation - an impulse, a mood - which he translated via marks, lines or washes of paint on to a working surface. This ground was then subjected to an extended and deeply personal symbolism: paint was added to make bloated or ruptured forms, both of persons and everyday objects, marks and doodlings. He worked with black, white and primary colours to produce bizarre distortions of reality, partly influenced by the designs and forms of prehistoric cave paintings, naive art and Surrealism.

By the end of the 1930s, having established himself at Varengeville-sur-Mer on the Normandy coast, he began on a series entitled 'Constellations', each a tracery of extended lines linking stars, birds, suns and other symbols to form patterned firmaments of pleasing designs, but of uncertain meaning.

The most accessible of Miró's paintings at the Whitechapel is 'Still Life with an Old Shoe'. Painted in 1937 in an unusually uncomplicated representational manner, it is Miró's pessimistic prediction of the likely outcome of the Civil War. The religious symbolism of bread and wine (here in a bottle) has been joined by the discarded boot of a Catalan peasant. A fork (snatched from a Cubist table?) spears the bread/body of Everyman as the black shapes of fascism converge upon the scene. Any consideration of Miró and the Spanish Civil War could justifiably begin here.



'Still Life with an Old Shoe' (1937)

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The way to fight the Tory loans

THE DETERMINATION of the Tory government to press ahead with plans to introduce loans instead of grants has produced a mass response from students. At the same time it has shown the absence of a programme of action to fight loans, both on the part of the right-wing Labour leaders of the National Union of Students and the pseudo-revolutionary opposition within the NUS.

By Lizzy Ali

On February 25, over 25,000 students joined a march through London from Embankment to Kennington Park organised by the London NUS. The large turn-out took place in spite of repeated attempts by NUS leaders to sabotage the anti-loans campaign.

London student leaders had previously withdrawn support from the day of action called for February 1. Phil Woodford, NUS London general secretary, announced in advance that: 'NUS London will no longer support the demonstration because various ultra-leftist factions are likely to cause confrontation with the police. Therefore we cannot encourage our members to

join the demonstration. As far as NUS London is concerned, the demonstration is cancelled.'

Woodford's remarks followed a 40,000-strong demonstration last November, during which a section of students attempted to break through police lines in an effort to march to parliament.

Workers News condemns this witch-hunt within the student movement. It also warns, however, that revisionist-inspired stunts such as trying to storm parliament are based on the illusion of putting pressure on the Tories and create divisions among students which the NUS leadership



Students on the national demonstration against loans in London on February 25

can exploit.

Having withdrawn support for the February 1 action, NUS leaders proceeded to arrange an 'education shut-down' and the national demonstration of February 25, knowing very well that this period coincided with half-term in many schools and further education colleges and a reading week in many polytechnics and universities.

Opposition to the right-wing NUS leadership, calling for a more vigorous campaign against student loans, has come from the SWP, *Militant* and the RCP, but none of these groups has proved capable of building a

revolutionary alternative.

Whilst criticising the NUS leadership for seeking parliamentary sympathy through 'low-key respectable events', the SWP's horizon is to pressurise the Tories: 'In these circumstances an angry mass mobilization of students, on the streets or in the colleges, is the last thing they want. Such a movement can force them to back down.' (*Socialist Worker*, February 25). Behind its demagogic and meaningless slogan of 'stuff the loans', the SWP is not saying anything qualitatively different from the Labour majority. The difference between the perspective of 'forcing the Tories to back

down' and that of appealing for parliamentary support is a matter of degree, not of principle.

Although *Militant* correctly calls for students to link the anti-loans campaign to the fight of trade unionists throughout education, it is from the same standpoint as the SWP. A *Militant* student leaflet argues: 'The Tories have made it clear that it is not public opinion they're interested in - but the profits of big business. It is only when these profits are threatened by strike action or the prospect of a mass movement of organised workers that they are prepared to back down. This was shown by the victory of the health workers last year.'

By holding up the example of the 1988 hospital workers' struggle as a 'victory', *Militant* are dangerously misleading students. Far from 'backing down', the Tories have escalated their attacks on the health service through the recently published White Paper 'Working for Patients', under conditions in which the trade union leaders are in full retreat. (See story page 3)

The RCP, following its usual bizarre mixture of ultra-leftism and reformism, produced its Charter for Independent Student Unionism in the February 10 issue of the *Next Step*. In an accompanying article, Linda Ryan argues against compulsory membership of the NUS on the grounds that the majority of students are too

apathetic. Such an argument used in the trade unions would lead to the voluntary surrender of the closed shop without a shot being fired. Similarly, strident denunciations of 'bureaucratism' in the NUS are linked to strong hints that the RCP supports some form of breakaway 'Red' student union.

The NUS leaders must be forced to mobilise students nationally in the fight against loans and education cuts

In practice, attempts to ignore or bypass the labour right wing in the NUS leadership play into its hands and cannot rally a majority of students against it. Far from ignoring it, the task is to raise the demand in every college, polytechnic and university that the NUS leaders be forced to mobilise students nationally in the fight against loans and education cuts.

Such a campaign must include the occupation of all colleges threatened with cuts or closure. Action committees should be established on site, elected from students, lecturers, ancillary workers and other trade unionists. The fight to defeat loans and defend education poses the struggle to bring down the Tory government, to force Labour into office and to demand that it restore all cuts in education and in students' living standards.

Angels create climate for strengthening police

By Graham Fenwick

BY THE end of April, the new London 'chapter' of the Guardian Angels, the vigilante group from the United States, will be 'declaring war on crime' on the London Underground.

The Angels, led by Curtis Sliwa, an ex-Green Beret (the US army's elite corps), originated in cities such as New York and Los Angeles and currently have a membership of 7,000. Their growth is a symptom of the deepening economic crisis which has widened the gap between rich and poor and led to an increase in the level of crime, and is an unofficial response to the rising clamour in the middle class for more 'law and order'.

The US has a history of relying on 'official' vigilantes - deputies sworn in at a moment's notice to form a posse. Running parallel to this, and inspired by it, have been the racist lynch mobs of the Ku Klux Klan and the strike-breaking goons hired by the big companies. The common thread is the defence of private property and privilege against the most

oppressed sections of the working class, particularly the youth.

Though the ruling class and their middle class supporters may have misgivings about handing over policing duties to vigilantes - in Britain, the reception given to the Angels by the right wing has been mixed - such groups only take root when there is a definite threat to the continued maintenance of political control. Whether or not the Angels build their operation in Britain, they will have served the Tories well by creating the climate for strengthening the police.

The British press summed up this contradictory attitude towards the Angels. Whilst the *Evening Standard* declared its opposition - 'They are not welcome here. In this country, responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in public places is the job of the police, who are trained for it' - the *Star* was enthusiastic - 'Let's give the Guardian Angels a chance to rid our railways of vicious

scum.'

The Young Conservatives pronounced themselves in favour. As one speaker at their February conference said, the Angels should be 'welcomed with open arms'. The response of the police was originally one of outright opposition, but they later changed their position, declaring themselves prepared to take on Angels as Special Constables. Their second thoughts came when they recognised that the Angels could boost the image of the police amongst some young people and provide a useful recruiting ground.

Workers and youth must see the Guardian Angels as a threat. They pose as 'good guys' who will sort out the 'baddies', bringing to life the fantasies portrayed in films like 'Death Wish'. In fact, they will encourage racist fanatics like Bernhard Goetz, who gunned down a group of black youths on the New York subway. Sliwa points to another 'positive' aspect of the Angels - he

says they recruit from black working class youth who might just as easily be 'muggers' and 'rapists'. In making this claim, he reveals his own acceptance of the racist outlook of the ruling class.

Whatever his intentions, he is acting as a recruiting sergeant for anti-working class forces. As the social tensions brought about by the deepening crisis of capitalism increase, the Guardian Angels will be one of the training grounds for setting up an organisation of scabs - it's only one step from policing a train to taking over the jobs of striking London Transport workers!

● The city council in Washington DC voted to impose an 11.00pm curfew on all under-18s on March 15. Any subsequent violation of the curfew will mean the parents of the 'offender' paying a heavy fine. The councillors claim that this highly repressive measure is needed to tackle the wave of violence which has given Washington the worst per capita murder rate in the USA.

'Big Mac' critics silenced

THE GIANT US fast food chain McDonalds, with annual profits of £4 billion, has forced a small grant-funded research group to close down following an 11-month legal battle.

The London-based Transnationals Information Centre (TIC) must now issue an apology to McDonalds for publishing a report called 'Working for Big Mac'.

TIC has been ordered to destroy all remaining copies of the report which gives a detailed account of the employment policies practised by the company, both in the United States and in Europe.

The report finds that McDonalds' huge profits are based on low wages, dependence on part-time workers and the vetting of all staff for trade union sympathies.