

Workers power

British section of the LRCI - League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

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4-page
pull-out for
Marxism '94

- ★ State capitalism
- ★ Race and class

Workers Power takes on the
politics of the SWP

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Stop the Criminal Justice Bill!

**KILL
THE
BILL**

How to
kill the bill:
page 6

The police will be given even more powers to break up demos



The Criminal Justice Bill
will soon be law. It must be stopped!
Just look at how the law
removes basic civil
liberties.

- **No home—no rights**
The homeless will be treated as criminals if they occupy one of the hundreds of thousands of properties standing empty.
- **No right to party**
Raves, or loud music involving "rapid beats", will be illegal.
- **Locking children away**
Ten year olds can be locked up for 14 years. 12 year olds can be sent to "Secure Training Units" even before they are found guilty.
- **Persecuting travellers**
Camp sites set up by travellers can be broken up by the police. Councils will no longer have to provide them with caravan sites.
- **Routine harassment**
The police will have new "stop and search" powers covering any area they see fit for as long as they see fit.
- **No right to silence**
If you refuse to answer a question judges and juries can assume you are guilty
- **Guilty until proven innocent**
Anyone accused of "terrorist" activities will be assumed guilty unless they can prove otherwise.
- **Banning protest**
The police will be able to ban marches and stop people they think are on their way to them.

This Bill will affect us all. It attacks not just "new age travellers" and young people, but workers fighting back against closures and job losses, students campaigning for higher grants, and anyone who wants to march against the rise of racial attacks and fascism.

This Bill is a ruling class law. The Tories are playing to the prejudices of upper class rural England to impose these deeply repressive measures on the rest of us. But the Tories are weak. The recent elections show just how deeply they are hated the length and breadth of the country.

The demonstration on 24 July should become the biggest protest against the Tories since the Poll Tax. If workers and youth act together, we can smash this Bill and preserve vital freedoms for all.

How to survive in Tory Britain

Since the Tories came to power it has become more and more difficult to avoid living in poverty. While we have been getting poorer the rich have been getting richer. That's what the government's latest survey of *Social Trends* reveals. So how can you avoid the poverty trap? Here Sharon Prior gives some suggestions:

1. DON'T HAVE CHILDREN

As it is virtually impossible to get free childcare, you may have to give up work. Don't expect too much in the way of local services—they all been cut.

From 1987 to 1990 Child Benefit was frozen, the resulting loss in benefit being 3% for your eldest child and 22% for subsequent kids. The real value of child support for a standard tax-paying family is worth less now than 30 years ago.

Only one set of people are benefiting from these cuts—the government. They saved £145 million in 1992-93, by not increasing child benefit in line with prices.

If you are a single mother on benefit and you refuse to name the father of your child then you will be punished by having your benefit cut by 20%.

2. DON'T GET SICK

You can expect to be targeted by snoopers determined to stop you getting sickness benefit.

If you take time off work through illness, Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley will suspect you of shaming. Statutory sick pay, if you qualify for it, has been frozen for the past three years, condemning those who are off work through no fault of their own to a downward spiral of poverty.

3. DON'T BE DISABLED

If you are, you are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed.

If you do get a job you are likely to earn just 80% of able-bodied male earnings. The disabled account for 34% of adults living in poverty compared to 23% in the population generally.

Incapacity Pension in 1979 was 20.4% of average male earnings; in 1992 it had gone down to 17.8%.

4. DON'T BE YOUNG . . .

Since 1986, 16 and 17 year olds only qualify for Income Support if they are on a Training Scheme. But there are thousands of young people unable to find places on these schemes and unable to find a college place. There are lower rates of benefits for 18 to 24 years old.

The number of children living in poverty has increased to more than three million. In 1989, 76% of kids in lone parent families were living in poverty.

A survey of low income families showed that one in five parents and one in ten children had gone without food at some time in the previous month because they could not afford to eat.

Between 1979 and 1989, the number of children living in poverty doubled from 11% to 22%.

5. . . . BUT DON'T GET OLD

Since 1980 pensions have been linked to prices alone rather than both prices and earnings, which ever is the greater. Without this rule pensions would now be £19.35 higher for a single person and £30.65 for a couple.

Pensions have fallen as a percent-



age of average earnings from 20% in 1979, to 17% in 1992.

6. DON'T LOSE YOUR JOB

Under the Tories unemployment benefit has been consistently cut. As a percentage of average male earnings in 1971 it stood at 17.5%; in 1979 it was 16.2% and by 1992 it had fallen to 14.2%. This is lower than virtually every other country in Europe.

There is no guarantee that you will get this benefit. Workers are disqualified when they make themselves "voluntarily unemployed". The period of

disqualification was increased from six weeks to six months in 1988.

7. WORK FOR PEANUTS . . .

In 1993 Wages Councils were abolished. These covered pay and conditions for 2.5 million workers. The lowest paid workers now have no legal protection of pay or the maximum amount of hours they can be forced to work.

Between 1984 and 1991, while the overall number of full time employees went up by 4%, part time workers went up by 17%. Permanent

workers have increased by 9%, but temporary workers have risen by 11%. 96% of full time workers have access to sick pay, but only 40% of temporary workers get it.

One in three full time workers are living on low pay. The figures are based on the Council of Europe's Decency Threshold of £5.72 per hour. 77% of the part time workforce earn below this figure.

8. . . . BUT AVOID POVERTY

The European Commission defines the poverty line as an income which, after housing costs, is less than half of the average wage. One in four of us are currently living in poverty.

Poverty leads to sickness. The past few years have seen the return of TB to many inner cities. In Tower Hamlets reported cases have risen by 40% in just three years.

It leads to mental illness as well. Reports show that those living in deprived areas are three times more likely to be admitted to a mental hospital.

It kills. In middle class mid-Surrey the infant mortality rate is 4.1 per thousand births; in West Birmingham it is 11.6.

This is the Britain we live in. It is a land of poverty and squalor created by the greed of the handful of bosses who own all the wealth. Unless we get rid of them and their system things will only get worse. That is why, because workers can't avoid sickness and disability, having kids, losing their job, being young or old, there is only one rule that matters: don't get mad, get even. ■

Labour and unemployment - page 4

ANL CONFERENCE Declare war on fascism!

THE ANTI-NAZI League (ANL) was relaunched in 1992 based on a cross-class appeal to TV personalities and non-labour movement politicians. The leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) made it clear that there should be no local ANL groups with the right to run their own activity.

The ANL became the main national anti-fascist organisation, mobilising 150,000 for their Carnival in June—three times more than the TUC's anti-racist demo in March. But, facing vicious opposition from the anti-racist cross class movement, the Anti Racist Alliance (ARA), the ANL has found it difficult to win support in the official trade union movement, let alone from liberals and celebrities. The argument used again and again by the careerists of ARA against the ANL has been the lack of internal democracy.

Last month's ANL conference was the SWP's response. It was not an attempt to get the youth mobilised at the Carnival into some kind of organised relationship to the ANL. The Conference was called at two weeks notice, it was not built for and there was a £35 delegation fee. Three hundred people attended, overwhelmingly individual members, not delegates from affiliated organisations.

Workers Power members at the conference supported a resolution from Manchester Metropolitan University UNISON, calling for the setting up of local and workplace ANL groups, a democratic structure, a clear com-

mitment to "no platform for fascists", physical opposition to the fascists and no reliance on state bans.

Most aspects of the resolution were agreed by the conference but the SWP leadership opposed "no reliance on state bans" and proposals on the kind of workers' democracy needed inside the ANL.

The steering committee was a carve up between the SWP, the Indian Workers Association (IWA) and the few Labour MPs who support the ANL. The ANL's commitment to "physical and ideological" confrontations with the fascists is intended to remain a dead letter as far as organised defence squads are concerned. The conference was treated to the SWP's ritual denunciation of defence squads, even if linked to and under the control of the ANL, as "substitutionist", "macho" and "squaddist".

Despite these drawbacks, in the aftermath of the conference, the ANL, the biggest national anti-fascist campaign, is formally committed to no platform. It is nominally democratic, enabling principled anti-fascists to fight for the full position on state bans and defence squads within the ANL, and to start organising such activities in the localities.

London Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), and a number of other AFA groups which have been turned into Red Action front organisations, have failed to use their commitment to physical confrontation, and their head start in the fight to organise an anti-fascist united front, to combat the influence

of the ANL's pacifist and legalist leaders. They have stood aside from the mass movement on the ludicrous grounds that this is necessary in order to carry out the "sharp end" of the struggle.

Local AFAs, town and regional based anti-fascist networks must affiliate to the ANL. They should not give up their existing organisations, but join in the fight for a big, active,

"physical force" wing of the ANL, which can organise the smashing up of fascist meetings, marches and paper sales—whether the Labour MPs and the SWP like it or not!

In every town existing anti-fascist groups and individual activists should join the ANL, demand a meeting to elect a local steering committee and plan a series of regular activities. In every town there should be an ANL defence squad formed.

We must attempt to win over the tens of thousands of workers and youth who at present identify with the ANL's pacifist strategy. By working alongside SWP members and individuals within the ANL who do not yet see the need for defence squads, or

what is wrong with calling on the state to ban fascism, we can convince them in action that their present strategy is ineffective.

Workers Power is determined not to allow the ANL leaders to mislead tens of thousands of youth who are coming into the struggle against racism and fascism. We urge all existing anti-fascists to join the ANL and force them to declare war on the fascists. ■

Join the ANL!
Ring 071 924 0333
Affiliation fees: £5 individuals, £1 concessions, £25 local groups, £50 national organisations.
Cheques payable to Anti Nazi League.

SOCCER ASSASSINATION The real Colombia...

BY SAM LOWRY

THE PRICE of failure in football can be high. But no British football fan could have imagined the fate which awaited Colombia's Andres Escobar on his return home. His own goal during the World Cup match against the United States earned him twelve bullets at point blank range on the streets of Medellin.

Rumours abound concerning the team Pelé had tipped to win the Cup. The coach and several players received death threats before and during the tournament. One resigned from the team. Many team members were from Medellin, home of the late drug cartel leader Pablo Escobar (no relation). The now dominant Cali cartel was probably responsible for these threats and maybe even Andres' death.

In the recent past drug traffickers sparked a national football referees' strike after they assassinated several referees for giving decisions against its preferred teams. The Cali cartel has also been exposed as funding Liberal and Conservative candidates to the tune of millions of dollars in last month's presidential elections. Ten percent of all the world's murders take place in Colombia. But it is wrong to imagine that the daily routine of violence is simply caused by drug-traffickers out of control. Drug related violence is a small part of the total. Since 1986 at least 20,000 people have been killed for political reasons, the vast majority by military death squads.

No military personnel have ever been punished for their well-documented complicity in these atrocities. Victims include left wing activists, trade unionists, peasant organisers, teachers, lawyers, journalists, homeless children, gay men and prostitutes.

The violence which permeates Colombian life is the result of a ruthless struggle against the workers and poor peasants carried out by the Colombian ruling class to defend its profits, whether from drugs or "legitimate" commerce. The only reason it can maintain its brutal rule is the unquestioning support it receives from the USA, Britain and other imperialist powers.

Andres Escobar's death shows that no one is safe until the Colombian ruling class and its imperialist backers have been defeated. ■

EDITORIAL

Abolish the monarchy!

In Britain we are told that the monarchy is above politics. According to the media, the sovereign stands as a vital corrective to the confrontation and strife of the party-political system. Free from partisan considerations, the monarch is supposed to speak for us all, to represent the whole nation.

If this were true, the events of last few weeks would be inexplicable. For behind all his pronouncements on the role of the monarchy, its relationship with the Church of England, the state of the nation and the details of his personal life, the heir to throne has a clear political agenda. Prince Charles is running for office.

In "normal times" this would be a contradiction in terms. Why should the constitutionally guaranteed Heir to the Throne need to campaign at all? The post is, after all, unelected. But the royals have received a hammering in the last two years. A wave of scandals have lowered their prestige as a model for conventional family life. They have made a humiliating climbdown over the Queen's immunity from tax. Popular respect for the whole institution of the monarchy has plummeted.

Charles is determined to rescue its image. He has launched a co-ordinated public relations exercise designed to guarantee his inheritance.

The main thrust of this campaign is to present Charles as up-to-date, liberal and in tune with the realities of modern Britain. Hence his suggestion that the constitutional relationship between the monarchy and the Church of England should be reviewed.

Church attendance is falling across the board. The C of E, its bishops and its priests, are seen by many for what they are: out of touch, out of favour and—in the case of its evangelical "happy clappy" wing—out of their minds.

The recent schism over women priests drew attention to a deeply reactionary wing of the clergy unable to cope with the modern world. Many in this wing, including two High Tory cabinet ministers, have defected to Roman Catholicism, and there is an unmistakable pro RC mood stalking the country houses of Tory England.

That is why the Prince now hints at at some form of disestablishment of the Cof E. He suggests that the sovereign should be called Defender of Faith rather than Defender of the Faith. The clergy of minority religions have leapt forward to welcome this as an end to constitutional discrimination in favour of their established rival. And for Charles it has the added advantage that he could divorce Diana and still become King.

But the whole affair raises, more penetrating questions.

What is being defended? Why does it need defending? And why does it need an unelected King or Queen to do it?

When it comes to religion, there is only one thing that needs to be defended, and that is the democratic right of believers to practice their religion without fear of persecution or discrimination. In Britain today, Anglicanism needs no such defence. Nor do other brands of Christianity—with the exception of Northern Ireland where Protestant supremacy and discrimination rage unabated.

In Britain itself the days of priest holes and the burning of heretics are over. The only religions that face any form of persecution or discrimination are those practiced mainly by the victims of racism. But to stop racist white residents blocking planning applications for mosques in East London, to overcome the courts' scandalous refusal to recognise Rastafarianism as a "real" religion, to put an end to job discrimination in the Six Counties, no royal defender is needed. A simple, constitutional guarantee of the democratic right to practice religion would suffice.

The Church of England should be disestablished, its link to the state broken for good. In its place there should be no state religion.

The "right" of religious organisations to indoctrinate children from an early age through compulsory religious education should be scrapped. That goes for all "faiths". Education should be secular in every school.

Whether the state and its unelected figurehead pose as defenders of all religions or one, the aim will be the same. Religions preach obedience to earthly authority in the present, with the reward of bliss in the hereafter. They direct attention away from the real material and social causes for society's ills, promoting "moral" solutions that are generally as reactionary as they are ineffectual. An emphasis on the "superiority" of the nuclear family, on monogamy, against homosexuality and the true liberation of women, and against the benefits of modern science in the sphere of reproductive rights such as abortion and embryo research are common to all the major religions.

One bishop recently commented that if the Church is disestablished then the whole position of the monarchy in the constitution could be unravelled.

So it should be. The monarchy is not just an expensive but harmless figurehead or tourist attraction. It is an undemocratic safeguard for the ruling class. The monarch has the right to block laws, by refusing the royal assent. The Queen can sack elected governments, and actually did so in 1975 when the Labour government in Australia was dismissed by Royal Decree.



And the existence of the Royal Prerogative allows unelected civil servants enormous powers, signing treaties, declaring war, changing interest rates, making appointments to public positions, and even passing "delegated" legislation, all without parliamentary approval. When the working class makes a serious attempt to alter the distribution of power and wealth in its favour, the monarchy will be there, concentrating in its hands vast powers in order to stop it. Significantly every soldier in the British Army swears an oath of loyalty not to parliament but to the Monarch, and pledges to fight her enemies "without and within".

That is why socialists are not indifferent to the fate of the monarchy. If it is discredited, we want to discredit it more. The low standing of royalty in the opinion of wide sections of the population as a whole is a great opportunity to raise the clear democratic demands: abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords, separate church and state, and get religion out of our schools.■

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workers power

RAHMAN FAMILY Fight all deportations!

FOR OVER a year the Rahman family in Bolton have been living under the threat of deportation.

In 1991 Rosmina Rahman was in Britain on a visit. Whilst here she was diagnosed as suffering from cancer. She began treatment for this disease and her husband and family came over from Djibouti to be with her.

Now the whole family is threatened with deportation. Their case is due to be heard by the immigration appeal court in September.

From the beginning of their fight to stay in Britain the Rahman family have argued that they don't want sympathy or pity, but support and solidarity for their right to stay. They have particular reasons for needing to stay: Rosmina's continuing treatment, and one of their daughters has multiple learning difficulties and attends a local special school.

But they argue that every one who fights against deportation has their own particular reasons for wanting to stay. Saying some are more important than others is playing into the hands of the Home Office and their racist immigration laws.

The family have supported two other anti-deportation cam-

paigns in the local area. Helen Aladesanwe is facing deportation this month and Florence Okolo is also under threat. A national anti-deportation campaign is vital to co-ordinate activity.

The Rahman family has received strong local support. A Rahman Family Defence Campaign was established and they have organised petitioning, meetings and a successful demo in Bolton. The campaign has taken up the broader fight against racism, organising "Communities of Resistance", a day of meetings in April where, deportations and police frame-ups, the need for defence of black communities and the fight against fascism were all discussed.

The campaign is being supported by the Bolton and District Trades Council. Local unions supporting the campaign include both Manchester and Salford Unison. But we need to ensure that even more trade unionists get involved. And we need to win a commitment from workers to take action, including strike action if necessary, to prevent the deportation.

On the day before their appeal, 6 September, there will be a public meeting in Manchester Town Hall. This will be followed by an all night vigil

and a mass picket the next morning between 9 and 10am. The vigil and picket will be at Aldine House, New Bailey Street, Salford. All anti-racists and trade unionists should attend to show our determination to resist the deportation of the family.■

Messages of support and further information from:
 The Rahman Family Defence Campaign,
 16 Wood Street, Bolton,
 BL1 1DY.

FIGHT FOR WORKERS POWER!

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 I want to join Workers Power

I would like to subscribe to:

<input type="checkbox"/> Workers Power	£7 for 12 issues
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<input type="checkbox"/> Trotskyist Bulletin	£5 for 3 issues

Make cheques payable to Workers Power and send to:
 Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Name:

Address:

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.....

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Telephone: Trade union:

MEETINGS

BIRMINGHAM
 Monday 11 July 7.30 pm
Rwanda - socialism or barbarism?
 See seller for venue

COVENTRY
 Thursday 21 July 7.30pm
Criminal Justice Bill - how to stop it
 See seller for venue

WORKERS POWER SUMMER SCHOOL
 22-24 July
Race Class and Imperialism, Trotsky and the Fourth International
 See page 15 for details

LONDON PUBLIC MEETING
Understanding Stalinism - State Capitalism versus Trotskyism

Tuesday 12 July 7pm
 Room G59
 School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
 University of London, Malet Street, London

Tubes: Russell Square or Goodge Street
 Meeting sponsored by SOAS Politics Society

OUT NOW

Trotskyist International

DOUBLE ISSUE 13/14

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LABOUR PARTY POLICY

Is full employment possible?

OVER THE PAST year the idea of full employment has come back into fashion. Suddenly everyone from Jacques Delors to John Major is in favour of it. This fact alone should make socialists wary of Labour Party leadership candidates declaring their commitment to "returning" Britain to full employment.

There are currently over 3.6 million unemployed (13% of the working population) as calculated on the old, pre-Thatcher basis. One in thirteen people of working age are unemployed in the advanced countries. This is both

an advantage and a disadvantage for the capitalists. On the one hand it drives down wages and undermines union organisation. But it also acts as a drain on profits through taxes used to fund benefits. And at present it has failed to drive down wages enough to affect the enormous drain on profits represented by the benefit system. That is why last year the Group of Seven major countries held a conference in Tokyo to discuss ways of reducing unemployment.

The Tories' answer to this is predictable enough. Clarke, Lilley and

BY JEREMY DEWAR

Hunt are currently working on a "reform" package for the November budget which includes cutting unemployment benefit from one year to six months and cutting all benefits for those who do not take up low-paid jobs. They "attack unemployment" by trying to drive people off the unemployment register.

But where do Blair, Beckett and Prescott stand?

All three have an appalling record. The goal of full employment last appeared in a Labour Party manifesto in 1983. By 1987, this "commitment" had been whittled down to one million jobs in two years, and by 1992 no target at all! All three candidates were involved in this dumping of the jobless. It was only at last year's Party conference that John Smith remembered this pledge—not surprisingly a few months after the Tokyo summit made it a respectable slogan again.

When it comes to spelling out how full employment might be achieved, all three candidates start to waffle in the "Standard Walworth Road English" that has characterised Labour's leaders in the 1990s. "No-one is suggesting that there is a quick fix; that you can wave a magic wand; that it's possible to get back to full employment overnight", grins Tony Blair.

Margaret Beckett displayed her despatch box skills when she promised, "Of course the next Labour government will have to take account of growth, our balance of payments, inflation, the state of our public finances,

the exchange rate and interest rates. But there must be a bias towards full employment." Phew!

When asked by the *New Statesman* "Is full employment possible?" John Prescott replied, "A revolution in social attitudes is needed, so we can all make a contribution to returning people to work. Here it gets controversial... about whether there's any trade-off between inflation and unemployment." "Are you saying that inflation is a price worth paying?" "No, I'm saying that the politicians won't even discuss whether there's a possible trade-off." Well, there you have it.

The truth is that Labour has never been able to deliver full employment. Every one of the seven Labour governments has left office with more people on the dole than when it was elected. The reason is that in modern capitalism it is impossible to achieve full employment without challenging the basis of capitalism itself. And this Labour will never do.

The question that always stumps Labour leaders when asked for detailed policies is, "Where's the money to come from?" Since all three candidates are busy trying to win the support of the City financiers, they are unable to give the obvious answer—from the rich.

If the bosses were forced to pay higher taxes, they would withdraw their capital and seek a more profit-friendly environment abroad or in speculation. That is the reason for the evasion as the contenders vie for trade unionists' and party members' votes.

In reality, the Labour Party has two methods of funding new jobs. The first is to increase taxes. Tony Blair has so far offered the freeing of local government revenue from the sale of council houses and forcing rich tax dodgers to pay 20% of their income in tax. Since the average worker pays 21.9% income tax (after allowances) this is hardly designed to squeeze the rich until the pips squeak! Neither measure will make a noticeable dent in the jobless total.

The second method is to make the workers pay through a mixture of wage restraint and inflation. This exploded in the last Labour government's face. With inflation running at 20%, a 5% ceiling on public sector pay rises was smashed by workers' action. Prescott is edging in this direction.

His problem is that union leaders like John Edmonds and Bill Morris want a minimum wage to copper-bottom any such deal. A study showed that the bottom 10% of wage earners were on £3.64 an hour, in 1978. Today the figure is just £2.95 an hour! A minimum wage, even at the paltry figure of £3.60 an hour would cost jobs, as the Tories claim, unless capitalists were prevented from closing down their sweatshops in retaliation.

Marxists have a solution to mass unemployment. All available work should be shared out by introducing a 35-hour week and a ban on overtime—with no loss of pay. A minimum wage of £1,200 a month is needed to end low pay. Any employer failing to comply or claiming bankruptcy should open their books to workers' inspection. The truly bankrupt should be nationalised under workers' control with no compensation.

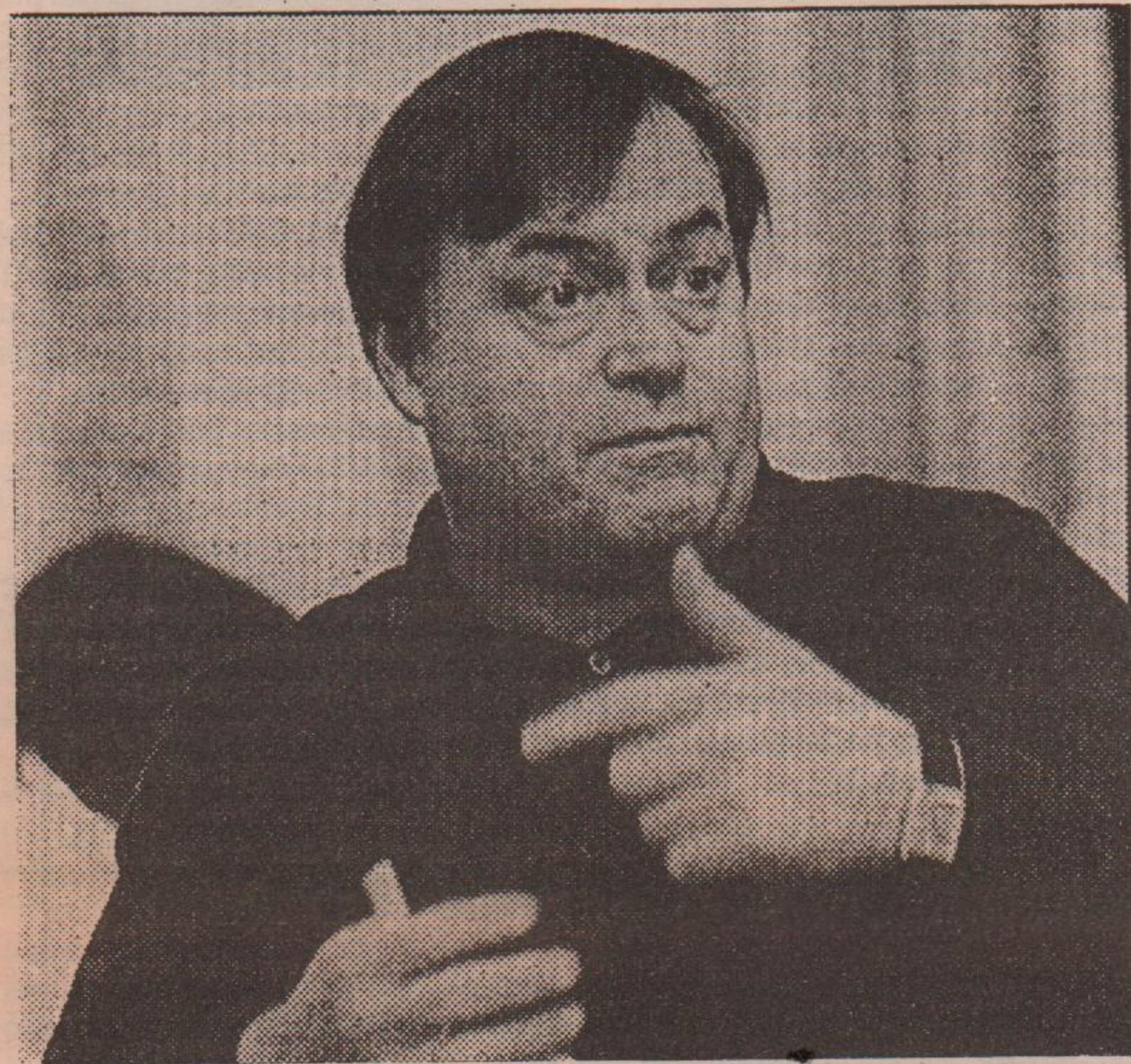
The rich should be taxed sufficiently to fund a massive programme of state spending designed to mop up the unemployed and rebuild the run-down estates, cities and infrastructure. When the capitalist class tries to sabotage this, as they inevitably will, their assets should be confiscated, taken into state ownership and the banks nationalised to ensure the finances are available.

This plan is not utopian. It is the only way the scourge of unemployment can be wiped out. It will challenge capitalism, which can only provide jobs if there is a profit in it. All the more reason to get rid of this system and replace it with a socialist planned economy, producing for public need, not private greed.

Socialists must do two things in the coming months. First, we must demand in union branches and Labour Parties that each candidate should pledge him or herself to carry out real measures against unemployment.

Secondly and more importantly, we should set the agenda for the debate on full employment by demanding action now. All job cuts should be met by strike action; all closures by occupation. The unemployed—especially the youth, many of whom have never had a job or been in a trade union—should be organised into a movement to fight for jobs.

Tower NUM has recently shown how this can be done by calling on local unemployed youth to join them in occupying the Job Centre in protest at mass unemployment. This is a small but important start. This sort of action, uniting employed and unemployed workers, is more important than a million evasive promises from the Labour leaders. ■



WITHOUT A real left wing candidate, trade unionists and party members have a choice between Beckett, Prescott and Blair. Many feel that Blair has to be kept out at all costs because of his "modernising" aims that would sever the link between the party and the unions. Let's look at what Blair's rivals have to offer.

Margaret Beckett still claims left wing credentials. But she has moved consistently to the right. She was 100% loyal to Smith as deputy. She never opposed the expulsions of the left. She supported sending troops into the Gulf. She said that she is in favour of "reviewing" all the Tory anti-trade union laws. But when asked if she would support the right of workers to picket other workplaces, she refused to do so.

What about Prescott? He appears to be getting support on the grounds that he doesn't have a middle class accent and he has some experience of being in a trade union. Paul Foot neatly summed up this position in his column in *Socialist Worker*:

"If I had a vote, by the way, I would vote for John Prescott in preference to Blair and Beckett, certainly not for his worthless pledges on unemployment but because as far as I know he's the only candidate who's ever been on strike and fought hard against an employer."

Hasn't he ever heard of Ernest Bevin, the dockers' leader who made his name defending the workers against the bosses and then went on to be one of the most reactionary British foreign ministers this century?

Still at least Paul Foot is clear, which is more than can be said for

his organisation, the SWP. In *Socialist Worker* one week we were told that the leadership contest is very important but were not told who to vote for, only that we should vote against Blair.

Then two weeks later the SWP appeared to favour Beckett but only in the deputy leadership election:

"The more votes against Blair for leader, and for Beckett in the deputy leadership contest, the better."

If you can work this out, please write in and tell us. In the meantime shouldn't somebody let Paul Foot know?

Others on the left are clearer about who they are supporting, but very confused about why. A prime example of this is *Socialist Organiser*.

"The left's least bad option will probably be critical support for John Prescott."

And Carlsberg is probably the best lager in the world. This ringing endorsement is made on the grounds that he is "seen as the candidate in this contest closest to the working class and the trade unions". Seen by Paul Foot, but who else?

The fact is that both Beckett and Prescott have their supporters in the unions. Since all three candidates are standing "on Labour Party policy", the contest between Beckett and Prescott that is raging within the closed world of the union bureaucracy must be about something else. And so it is.

It is about a scramble for favours, for influence, the calling in of promises given and the dispensation of nods and winks for the future. Beckett and Prescott

Blair, Prescott or Beckett, who should workers vote for? Sheila Phillips tells a tale of confusion on the left.

Vote Prescott, . . . no, Beckett, . . . er, Prescott, . . . probably

occasionally let slip the odd "left" comment to gain the edge in this or that union conference against the other. There are no principled differences.

The left who initially dived in to support Prescott on the grounds of his working class links now find some of the "left" bureaucrats throwing their weight behind Beckett and are forced into an embarrassing change of tack.

The bosses see things more clearly than the opportunist left. Their magazine, *The Economist*, got it right:

"On substance it would be hard to slide a cigarette paper between the candidates".

A Beckett or Prescott victory would not be a sure way of stopping any future attempt to

sever the union link to the party. At present Blair is content to leave it there in its reduced form. Who helped him reduce it? Prescott and Beckett.

Workers should demand mass meetings in all major towns where the candidates can be grilled by Labour supporters and trades unionists. They should organise workplace meetings to discuss the election and the issues raised in it. But because there are no principled differences between the candidates, workers should spoil their ballot papers.

The defeat of Blair would thwart the ambitions of a thoroughly repulsive middle class hanger on in the workers' movement, but that's about all. It is not worth voting for Beckett or Prescott just for that. ■

JIMMY KNAPP has recently said on national television that the RMT was not taking on the government. The government, however, is taking on the RMT. It has made it abundantly clear that it will intervene against any agreement between Railtrack and the RMT which involves more than a 2.5% increase for signal workers. So much for a government that opposes "state intervention"! And whatever happened to the 5.7% figure that Railtrack had originally been prepared to offer?

This dispute is a result of British Rail failing to address the grievances of signal workers for at least seven years. Since April this year, the matter has been handed over to Railtrack to sort out.

As a railway body still nominally under "public ownership", Railtrack is being told by the Tories that they will veto any agreement they do not like.

The Tories are urging Railtrack management to undermine and break what has so far been a solid strike by the signal workers.

In a cynical ploy, Railtrack management changed their own safety guidelines only 48 hours before 22 June strike so that they and some Area Movement Inspectors (supervisors) were able to operate strikebound power signal boxes, even though many of them are currently "out of practice" and not qualified to do so.

In Scotland some AMIs were so

RAIL WORKERS

The way to win

unhappy with this that they refused to scab the following week and may now be balloted to join in the dispute.

However, as the one day strikes go on, the signal workers face the prospect of an uninspiring war of attrition. Already, Railtrack have begun a media-hyped "back to work" campaign, claiming that three, seven and then ten per cent of trains ran on the first three strike days.

Although such figures are clearly bogus, Railtrack's Bob Horton has shown his intention to sit it out by offering a 3.5% package based on further productivity increases—less than the original 5.7%. Tory MP, Harry Greenway, has gone further and suggested all signal workers who do not settle be sacked.

Activists in the union, not least those involved in the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union inside the RMT, must ensure that union general secretary Jimmy Knapp and his senior assistant Vernon Hince are told that one strike a week is not enough.

Each strike is costing Railtrack £10 million in lost revenue. To settle the

11% claim in full would only cost them £8.9 million.

Whilst escalation to two strike days a week would be welcome, it is unlikely to shift Horton. Too much is at stake. The Tories and Railtrack need to win to protect their public sector pay policy and to ensure the privatisation process is unfettered by a militant and confident union rank and file.

Delegates to the recent AGM of ASLEF (train drivers union) voted to reject the insulting public sector pay ceiling (2.5%). This is a good start but it must be acted upon. Now is the time for all railway workers to organise against pay restraint, strike-breaking and rail privatisation.

To begin with, railway workers are not well paid unless they put in about half as many hours again in overtime on top of their normal weekly turn. In contrast, Railtrack chairman Robert Horton, newly installed following a golden handshake pay-off from British Petroleum, is paid around £120,000 a year for being available three days a week!

Now is the time for all railway workers to table the sort of pay increases that meet their own needs—increases that will inevitably smash through the Tories' public sector pay ceiling.

This must include fighting for the full 11% increase for the signalling grades as, under the onset of modern signalling technology, their productivity levels (number of trains moved) have increased dramatically with at least 4,200 signalling grades jobs going under the Promotion, Transfer, Redundancy and Redeployment agreement over the past seven years.

However, if signal workers believe that Knapp and Hince will remain resolute, they should remember the role played by these same men when they stitched up 8,000 Signal and Telecoms (S&T) workers by accepting the infamous restructuring package only two years ago.

The recent RMT AGM was cynically denied access to details of Railtrack's latest offer to ensure that all control of the dispute remained in the hands

of the clique on the National Executive Council. Rank and file RMT activists must strive to hold the leadership to account.

The time has come for rank and file rail workers from all grades to draw up their own programme of action. What is needed is a real fight for a significant pay increase for all other rail workers, to be fought alongside the signal workers' 11% restructuring claim, plus the immediate introduction of a 35 hour week.

Already, the one-day strikes have been enthusiastically supported by other workers. An all out strike across the rail would stop the scabbing and give a further four million public sector workers the confidence to fight for decent wages and conditions.

It would also force the government onto the defensive on the question of privatisation.

A complete shutdown of the whole railway network with an all out strike run by properly elected strike committees could deliver another hammer blow against this discredited government. ■

LECTURERS

Indefinite strike action in September!

A SERIES OF strikes in June showed that college teachers are still prepared to resist the employers' offensive on new contracts. About 100 Natfhe branches were involved in one, two or three day strikes following branch-by-branch ballots. The strike wave was most successful where there was strong co-ordination and leadership at a regional level, in Wales, the West Midlands and Inner London.

The employers' strategy involves trying to bribe and bully lecturers onto new contracts. The union leadership gave them a helping hand when it abandoned national action on 1 March, following a High Court ruling against the strike, and retreated to college-by-college bargaining. But continued militancy among Natfhe members means the employers have a much tougher fight than expected.

Nevertheless the employers still have the cards stacked in their favour. The Tories are withholding funds from colleges until new contracts are signed. The College Employers' Forum (CEF) is using the courts whenever possible and has a much tighter national co-ordination than the union side.

Thus the current state of the struggle is extremely uneven. Alongside areas where successful action was delivered there are others where it has yet to begin. Worse, there are colleges where staff have now signed new contracts because there was no fight from the local union. Elsewhere a proportion of the lecturers have gone over, weakening the ability of local branches to hold the line. In a few areas discussions with local managers have opened up on new contracts which are not based on the CEF model but nevertheless represent some worsening of conditions. The dangers of the current strug-

gle have been vividly illustrated in Sheffield. Solid strike action, with 500 lecturers involved on the picket lines over four days, forced the employers to the negotiating table. But what the lecturers won on the picket line is being thrown away in the talks. A bad deal was put to the membership in a ballot and opposed by the most militant branches. The

acceptance of the deal by a 3-2 majority, even though the actual contract was not available to the members, was a real setback.

The left in Natfhe have always recognised that to defend the Silver Book—the nationally agreed contract—and defeat the CEF we need sustained national strike action leading to an all out strike. At present

we have partial action in the most militant areas. To turn the tide we need to return to bring out all the colleges.

While we fight for this policy there remains a vital task to build on the existing level of struggle. In such a situation rank and file co-ordination is vital. The bureaucracy has sabotaged every attempt to unite the membership against the anti-union laws and for all-out action. At the same time they have no alternative strategy. The result is virtual paralysis at the union HQ.

To provide an alternative leadership the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance initiated a rank and file conference in early July. This agreed to try to escalate the strike action planned for September—at present three days of strike action in the first fortnight of term. The conference

set up a steering committee and agreed to re-convene in London on 24 September. The conference also agreed to mobilise against any national sell out which might emerge over the summer.

The conference was marked by an apparent change of line by the SWP. Their willingness to participate appeared related to their analysis of a change of "mood" in the working class as a whole and their belief that the struggle in the colleges is about to enter a new upsurge of militancy.

While their new found willingness to work alongside other militants and socialists in Natfhe must be welcomed, their underestimation of the impact of the setbacks in the dispute and the unevenness of the struggles could yet see another "mood swing" by the SWP. Natfhe activists are encouraged to watch this space. ■

EAST LONDON SCHOOL ATTACK

No NUT money to gag anti-racists

THE HOMES of over twenty Bengali youths in Tower Hamlets were invaded last month. The early morning police raids were designed to teach a lesson to all black youth who fight back against racism.

The round-up was the police response to an attack on a well-known local racist. Whilst the murderers of Stephen Lawrence and Rolan Adams continue to walk free, the Met found no problems finding suspects to round up when a racist was attacked. Four of the youths have subsequently been charged with causing GBH.

These events have revealed the inadequate nature of the anti-racism espoused by the main teachers' union, the NUT, including the "left" leadership of the local Tower Hamlets branch, East London Teachers Asso-

ciation (ELTA).

The headteacher of Langdon Park School, where the racist and the twenty Bengalis are students, supplied the police with addresses, together with the school's photograph album. It was this information which led to the dawn raids.

Community Defence, a local anti-racist organisation, publicly protested against the head's actions and called for his removal.

The head responded by seeking an injunction preventing both the distribution of the leaflet and demonstrations outside the school. His action was supported by the Labour-controlled local authority. The head, an NUT member, also sought union support and funds to mount legal action. At a branch meeting of ELTA, a resolution was put condemning the head's ac-

tion. Scandalously, this was amended by the Secretary of ELTA (a member of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance) to delete a demand that union funds should not be used to mount legal action against anti-racists. The amendment also limited support to campaigns in defence of the victimised youth to those that might be run by the Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee or Youth Connections. This was a sectarian attempt to block support for the activities of Community Defence.

Even more worryingly, several SWP members actually voted for this amendment. There can be no excuse for this. The funds of workers' organisations should not be used to call on the courts and the police to censor anti-racists, whatever the rights and wrongs of the case. The same courts,

which recently let BNP second in command, Richard Edmonds walk free after being found guilty of an unprovoked racist attack, must not be allowed to intervene in our movement. To do so only reinforces the belief prevalent among some black activists that the "white" left cannot be trusted.

We call on all readers, through their local workers' and anti-racist organisations, to support the campaign in defence of the accused youths. ■

Letters of support to:
Community Defence
Kingsway College Student Union
Kingsway College
Sidmouth Street
Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1H 8JB

WORKERS AND YOUTH: Unite to kill the bill!

BY STEVE CLAYTON

The Tories are in crisis: the lowest election results since the war, an unpopular leader and a deep split over Europe. But on one question they are united: the struggle to impose ever more harsh restrictions on the civil rights of working class people.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (CJB)—soon to become law—is evidence that when backed into a corner the bosses will come out fighting. This Bill is there for one reason: to increase the rights of the property owning classes whilst removing more of even the most basic democratic rights from the rest of us. It extends police powers to harass, intimidate, arrest and detain, as well as increasing and centralising the powers of the Secretary of State over "public order" matters.

The CJB covers many areas. It brings in restrictions on groups as diverse as hunt saboteurs, ravers, New Age travellers and ticket touts. It increases police rights to imprison young people. It allows the police to physically violate any "suspect" they choose in their hunt for evidence, and it means they no longer have to destroy this evidence if a suspect with a previous conviction is proved innocent.

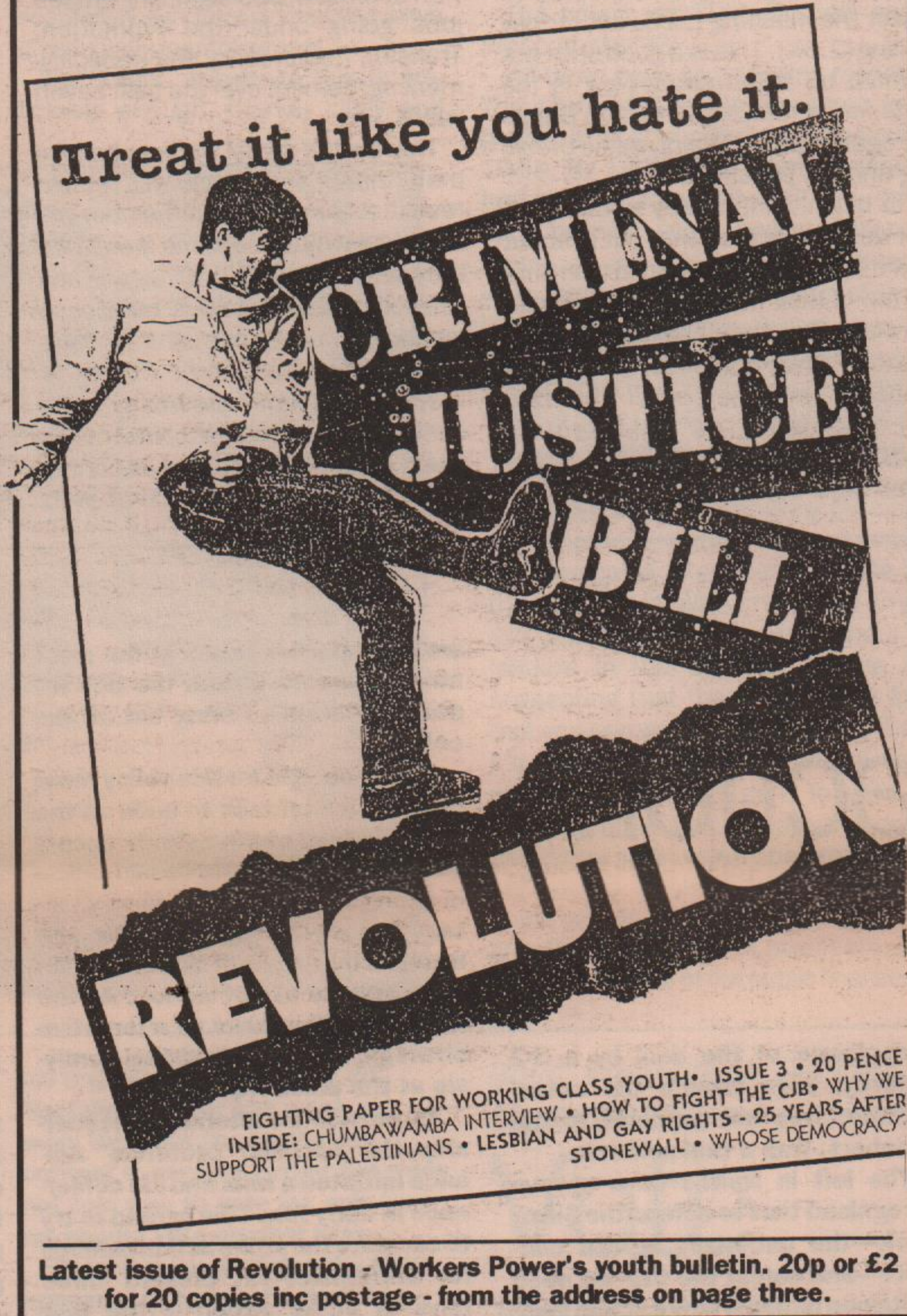
The Bill also contains dangerous provisions for the extension of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, a new category of "Offences Against Public Security", and a particular favourite of the government—more private prisons.

The Tories have focused many of the attacks contained within the Bill on youth, both directly and indirectly. They are determined to put a stop to "sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats."—i.e. dance music! Raves—"A gathering on land in open air of 100 or more persons"—are to become illegal.

Police will have the right to stop people travelling to a suspected rave. They will have the right of entry (without a warrant) to private land where they think a rave might be going on—even if the owner objects to their entry! If, when on the land, there are ten or more people there, then the police, having taken "reasonable steps" to communicate the order to leave, can forcibly move people on, seizing vehicles and equipment which they can later sell through the courts, destroy or keep and then charge for the "inconvenience"! If this were not enough, the police can then re-arrest you if you return to the site within seven days "without reasonable cause". A hefty fine and three months sentence can result.

The police can also introduce virtual martial law. New "stop and search" laws can be invoked covering as large or as small an area as the police see fit. Although limited in the first instance to 28 days, this period can be extended as they want. This will mean an increasingly paramilitary police force can stop any "person or thing" and search it. Failing to stop or obstructing a police officer will mean six months imprisonment and a fine.

OUT NOW:



Other sections aim to "protect" the bosses in their country retreats. They give the state the power to prevent travellers finding a place to stop, they can stop disruption of fox hunts, and even rambles will be unable to assert public rights to access.

It will become an offence for a group of people to appear to be preparing to trespass for whatever reason. If the "trespass" is a planned event, then the Secretary of State can issue a banning order covering a five mile radius lasting up to four days. This banning order affects not just those attempting to get access to the land on the day—police can arrest anyone organising or publicising the event.

This law will not just be used against travellers, ravers or hunt sabs. It could also hit workers planning to occupy workplaces or carry out regular picketing. Pit camps could have been banned, as could the protest camp outside Campsfield Refugee prison.

Property owners' rights are further reinforced by the sections dealing with squatters. Interim Possession Orders will make legal eviction easier. Squatters will be legally required to leave if asked by a "protected intending occupier of premises... residential occupier or anyone the landlord chooses to nominate for that purpose". Again police powers will be increased to arrest those believed to have committed an offence or those who return to the property.

Once these new laws have got

youth and "misfits" into the courts, their rights will be greatly diminished there as well.

The section on "Prevention of Terrorism and Offences Against Public Security" marks a huge shift in the legal process. Under these regulations the police and courts no longer have to prove the accused's guilt—the accused has to prove his or her innocence. Suspects can be arrested "in circumstances giving rise to reasonable suspicion that articles in their possession are for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of Terrorism". It will also be an offence for a person to collect or record any information which is likely to be useful to terrorists, or have in their possession such information, without "reasonable excuse". In both these cases the courts are instructed by the Bill to assume they are guilty until proven innocent.

The right to silence when questioned by police has been a thorn in the side of the criminal justice system for many years. Throughout 1993 leading Tory bigots, like Lord Chief Justice Taylor, made loud and public pronouncements of their opposition to this right. Some, like Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the RUC, went so far as to argue that failure to answer police questions should be a crime in itself.

The attempt to remove the right of silence in this Bill failed in the House of Lords, but the rest of the Bill more

than makes up for it. Courts will soon be able to "draw inferences" from an accused exercising the right to silence, both during police interrogation or during a trial. In plain language this means some barrister giving a slimy speech to the jury along the lines of "Why would any innocent person refuse to answer police questions?"

But the whole litany of "miscarriages of justice"—from the Guildford Four to the Tottenham Three—has featured police fabrication of "confessions" from the fragmentary statements of suspects under interrogation. It is and should remain the legal right of every citizen to remain silent under police questioning and to give their testimony in court, should they so wish.

Once found guilty—or having failed to prove innocence—more draconian sentences will be meted out, especially to youth. Courts will have their powers to imprison fifteen year olds increased from one year to two years. Twelve year olds can now be kept in police cells and ten year olds locked up for fourteen years under Section 16 of the Bill. New "Secure Training Units" will be established for those over twelve.

The Secretary of State will have powers to send young offenders to any place he sees fit: not necessarily a local authority, "voluntary" or registered children's home. During and following detention, young people will be subject to strict "Supervision Orders" controlled by the Secretary of State. These orders will obviously be subject to the political needs of the Tory party at any given time.

Breaking these orders could mean further imprisonment, a fine or both. Secure remand orders from the courts will condemn accused youth to imprisonment even before they have been found guilty. It is clear that these new rules aim to terrorise young people and parents. The Tories have no other solution to the increasing frustration, isolation, poverty and lack of hope that cause youth crime.

The whole Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is full of clauses that give the police the right to arrest on suspicion, stop and search, detain, impose bail conditions. It is an attack on democratic rights. It will be used by the state to attack us all. It will be invoked at the slightest pretext and used to smash any organised demonstration of resistance or voice of opposition against the bosses and their rotten system.

It can and should be resisted. Like the Tories' last piece of "popular" legislation, the Poll Tax, all resistance will be condemned by the Labour Party leaders. But the struggle against this Bill provides us with an opportunity to unite in action all those who are the Tories' potential targets.

So far the youth, amongst the hardest hit by the Bill, have led this fight. A recent demonstration against the Bill in London brought twenty thousand youth onto the streets. But the fight to defeat the CJB must mobilise all of those affected by it.

This means taking the fight into the workplace, the dole queues, onto the estates and—vitaly—into the labour movement. We must mobilise work-

ers and youth, trade unionists and the unemployed, hunt saboteurs, squatters and the homeless on a scale not seen since the anti-Poll Tax Demo of March 1990. All those affected will need to organise in a democratic, co-ordinated campaign, locally and nationally. We need a political campaign to both resist and break this new law.

Like the anti-poll tax movement, the campaign will need to organise town by town, street by street. Every effort must be made to make the leaders of the trades union and labour movement join this fight. But youth and workers cannot afford to sit back and wait: we do not have the comfortable salaries and comfortable houses of these mis-leaders. If they won't fight with us—we will fight without them and where necessary against them.

Once the Bill becomes law the danger is that the campaign will dissipate. Despite the militancy of the youth demos against the Bill, many believe the Bill has to be beaten in Parliament.

No. Parliament has failed. It has stopped some of the Tories' plans but left most of them intact. Every major attempt to use the provisions of the CJB—banning raves, smashing up demos and squats, opening up new private youth detention centres—has to be met with a campaign of direct action:

- mass resistance and non-co-operation with the law, including organised occupations of empty properties
- organised self defence of our marches and direct actions—do not go up against the baton wielding boys in blue without your organised defence groups well prepared and equipped to resist attack
- strike action and workplace occupations—the most powerful weapons the working class can wield—must be built in response to any attempt to use the Bill against workers' organisations.

The Tories are calculating that the real fear of crime that stalks many working class communities will push the majority of people into supporting the Bill. The bosses' press is working overtime to present the usual list of stereotypes who are meant to be the cause of crime. But the Bill itself will do nothing to alleviate the criminalisation of working class communities.

The very same police who will be chasing hunt saboteurs all over the south of England are the ones who have just declared they won't answer 999 calls for car break-ins and minor burglaries. The juveniles who are rounded up and interned under the "Secure Unit" schemes will not come out less prone to harassing and thieving from members of their own working class community—they will come out even more hardened criminals. The wide-boys raking money in from the semi-legal rave scene will go "legit" and move upmarket—but thousands of youth will be left without the basic right to enjoy themselves outside of the bleak world of mainstream "discos" and church-run youth clubs.

Workers have every interest in fighting for the resources needed to tackle the real causes of anti-social crime: decent housing, full benefits, proper leisure facilities under the control of the youth, jobs for all. But whenever workers launch a serious struggle for such improvements or in defence of existing jobs and services, they will find the full provisions of the CJB will be wielded against them. The great miners' strike of 1984-85 showed that the bosses' state machine is never more vicious than when directed against the workers' movement. That it is because the bosses know that the working class has the power to destroy its rule once and for all. It is also why the workers and the youth can and must unite to smash this Bill! ■

DEMO SUNDAY 24 JULY

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a four page supplement explaining the Trotskyist critique of the SWP on two key questions: Race and Class and the Theory of State Capitalism • 10p if sold separately

THE SWP AND BLACK OPPRESSION

What are the roots of racism?

EXPLAINING THE causes of racism is not just a theoretical problem for socialists. It has direct practical consequences for the way we fight racism, and for our criticism of various false strategies for defeating it.

Opponents of racism have different explanations of its root causes. Some believe that racism is essentially no more than a set of unpleasant ideas. Their solution is more education and race-awareness training. Others stress that racism is promoted by a series of institutions. Their solution is to reform them, promoting more black policemen and teachers, equal opportunities and various forms of positive action.

On the other hand, many black separatists and nationalists believe that racism is a permanent feature of "white society" which cannot be changed. Their solutions vary, from building up a parallel black capitalism within white society, to a separate black struggle against capitalism.

Revolutionary socialists reject all of these explanations and the strategies which flow from them. We believe that racism and capitalism are inextricably linked, and that we cannot end racism without overthrowing the system that causes it. This does not mean that we reject a struggle against racism in the here and now, but we fight to link these struggles to the fight for socialism. In other words, we do not separate the struggle against racism off from the struggle against capitalism.

To convince youth and workers who are influenced by the ideas of reformism and black nationalism of this approach, Marxists need to offer a credible alternative explanation of the roots of racism. This is something the SWP has struggled to do over the last few years. It has failed.

Kevin Ovenden's book, *Malcolm X—Socialism and Black Nationalism*, was read by thousands of youth. Unfortunately, on the question of the causes of racism, its critique of black nationalism was thoroughly unconvincing.

Ovenden shows that it is not in the interests of workers to be racist. His explanation of why, despite this, many white workers are racist, is based on two points. The first, which no socialist would deny, is the conscious use of racism by the ruling class to divide the workers. The bosses' media, history books and politicians are an unending source of racist ideas. But Ovenden realises that this is not enough. For Marxists, ideas are determined by social reality. So his second point is that a material basis for racism can be found in the experience of the working class:

"Racism can lodge in the minds of the workers because it appears to correspond to one part of their experience of living under capitalism—the compulsion to compete in order to get by".

According to Ovenden, capitalism also provides the solution to this problem by continually bringing black and white workers together in factories, estates and common struggles, where they can overcome the tendency to compete with each other.

But while it is true that workers are forced to compete with each other, and that common struggles provide an opportunity for socialists to overcome this, these facts alone do not constitute a Marxist explanation of racism.

Looking at a place like the Isle of Dogs, where there is competition for inadequate housing and resources, we are left with an unanswered question. Why is it the black workers who are being targeted as "competition" by white workers? Why aren't the white workers fighting each other? If the cause of racism can be reduced to competition and the effects of the bosses' propaganda, this leaves us with

no material reason why such competition should take place on specifically "racial" lines.

Competition between workers for scarce resources is not the material root of racism under capitalism. And even where workers come together in common struggles over wages, housing and living standards, this alone does not automatically remove the basis of racism.

In short, Ovenden's position is a piece of crude economism. It reduces the whole question of racism to a phenomenon that originates within the economic struggle—workers' resistance to the employers over pay, jobs and living conditions—and can be overcome on the basis of that struggle alone.

Don't take our word for it. Alex Callinicos of the SWP, without overtly mentioning Ovenden's book, wrote in *International Socialism Journal* (ISJ) number 52, soon after the book was published:

"The mere fact of economic competition between different groups of workers is not enough to explain racial antagonisms."

So much for Ovenden's analysis. But what then is the root cause of racism? If we are not to be left with the crude view that workers are racist simply because of the bosses' propaganda we must look for the real material roots of racism in capitalist society.

Callinicos develops his position in "Race and Class", an article in ISJ 55. The article includes a critique of black nationalism and reformism, much of which we would agree with.

For example, Callinicos is right to insist that racism is not a mere "ideological hangover" from past material conditions, as Peter Fryer has argued, but thrives on the material conditions of modern capitalism.

He also correctly rejects the view, held by many black nationalist theorists, that racism has always existed. For Marxists systematic racism, as opposed to ignorance and xenophobia, began with the rise of capitalism. It took different forms, materially and ideologically, in different epochs of capitalist development: from outright slavery, through colonialism to the pseudo-scientific racism of the imperialist epoch.

But just what is it that perpetuates racism in modern capitalism? Here Callinicos gets into difficulty. He tries to distil three factors from Karl Marx's description of the English attitude to the Irish in the nineteenth century:

- (i) Economic competition between workers . . .
- (ii) The appeal of racist ideology to white workers . . .

(iii) The efforts of the capitalist class to establish and maintain racial divisions among workers."

Looked at closely, points (i) and (iii) are similar to those raised by Ovenden. We are left with point (ii). But why does racist ideology appeal to white workers?

Here Callinicos and the SWP have to confront the existence of systematic social oppression. When we look at the position of women in class society we can see that the ideology of sexism is rooted in a material, social relation—women's oppression. So it is with the systematic oppression of "racial minorities" in capitalist society. The ideology of racism is a product of racial oppression.

This distinction does not appear in Ovenden's book. But Callinicos does speak of, "oppression, of systematic inequalities in power and life chances stemming from an exploitative social structure". (emphasis in original).

The problem is that Callinicos provides us with no explanation of just how and why capitalism spontaneously generates this racial oppression. He produces a critique of the black nationalist explana-

tion, but no positive explanation of his own.

He correctly identifies the time and place of the emergence of modern racism as being:

"... in the advanced capitalist countries . . . in the late nineteenth century, as part of the process through which the European ruling classes sought to incorporate newly enfranchised, increasingly organised workers within the same community. Against a background of growing competition among the imperialist powers, workers were encouraged to identify their interests with those of 'their' ruling classes."

The question arises: by what means other than propaganda did the bosses "encourage" organised workers to identify with their own imperialist ruling class?

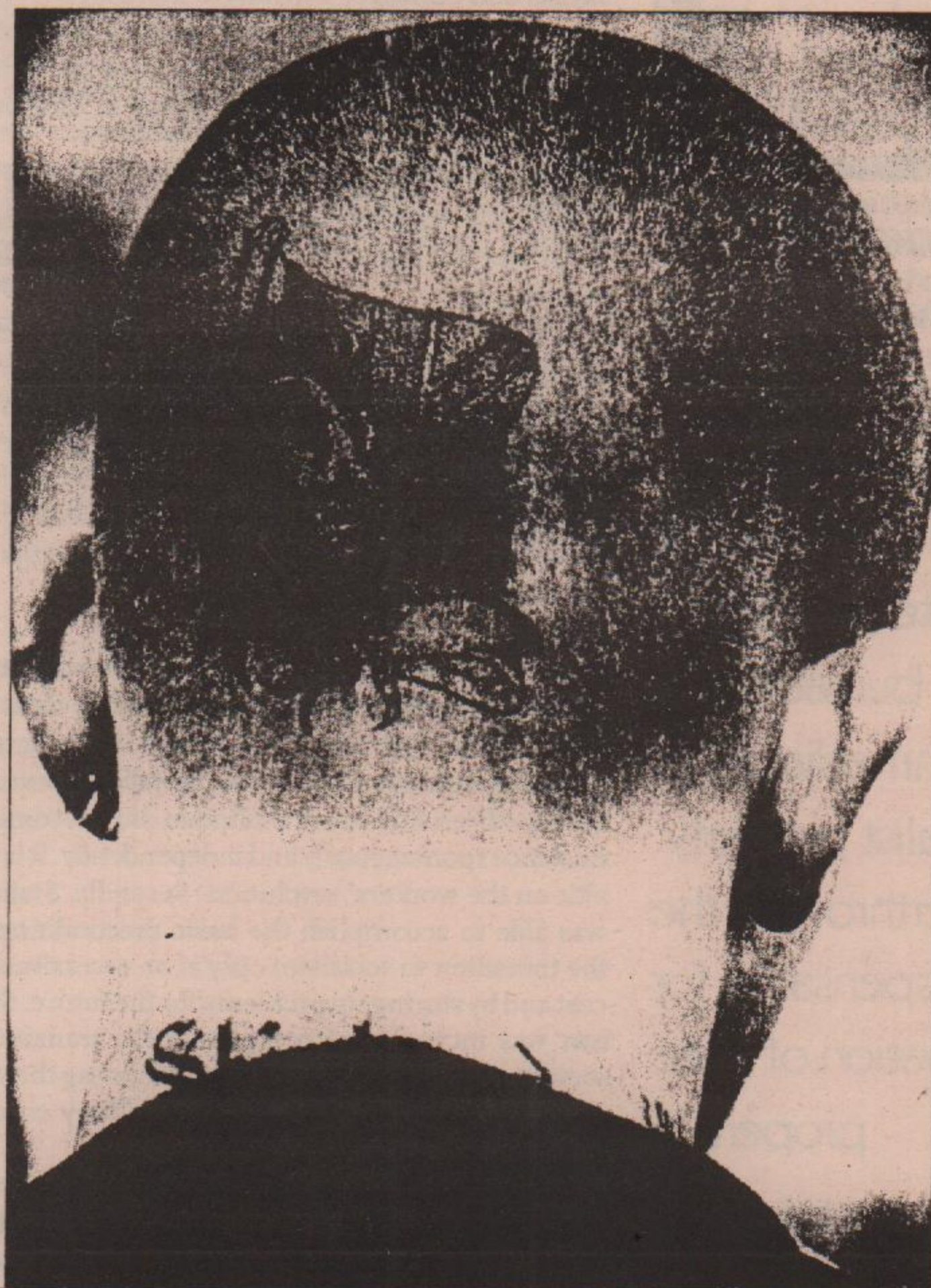
Lenin gave an unequivocal answer to this question: it happened through the creation a "labour aristocracy" of relatively privileged workers, through which bourgeois ideas, specifically national chauvinism and reformism, could be spread amongst the mass of workers.

But Callinicos refuses to link the rise of racism to the material privileges of a stratum of British workers. He does so because he is obliged to reject the idea that white workers benefit from racism. He writes:

"Perhaps the single most important difference between Marxists and black nationalists is that the latter believe that white workers materially benefit from racism."

Callinicos goes on to attack, correctly, the widespread view, shared by Maoists and "Third Worldists" as well as black nationalists, that all white or western workers form "a privileged labour aristocracy benefiting from the imperialist super-profits extracted from Third World toilers". Against their claims that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



If racism is not all in the mind, what are its material roots?

"White workers do not benefit from racial oppression." This idea is fundamental to the SWP's politics on the question of black liberation.

While all workers share a common interest in fighting racial oppression, socialists should not be afraid to recognise that white workers have certain material privileges.

Paul Morris argues that to recognise this is not a concession to black nationalism or separatism. It is fundamental to a Marxist understanding of racism, imperialism and oppression.

For Marxists, understanding how a system works is essential to guide our fight against it. This is as true for the fight against the Stalinist regimes in the East as it is for the struggle in the West.

The theory of state capitalism lies at the heart of the SWP's politics. It argues that the Stalinist states were a form of capitalism and that they are currently in transition from one form of capitalism to another. The SWP claim that this theory has made them the only force on the left capable of fighting consistently against Stalinism.

We disagree. State capitalism is not only a false and inconsistent theory, but a poor guide to action for the working class.

Unfortunately the debate about state capitalism as a theory is often clouded by distortions and simple misunderstandings of the Trotskyist position. In this article **Richard Brenner** answers some of the most common questions and objections to the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism.

UNDERSTANDING STALINISM

State Capitalism or T



"What do we defend in the USSR? Not that in which it resembles the capitalist countries but precisely that in which it differs from them. In Germany also we advocate an uprising against the ruling bureaucracy, but only in order immediately to overthrow capitalist property. In the USSR the overthrow of the bureaucracy is indispensable for the preservation of state property."

Leon Trotsky, September 1939

You say you disagree with the idea that Russia and Eastern Europe were state capitalist. So you think it was some kind of socialism.

No. Russia was never socialist. From the day the working class took power Russia was a workers' state, in transition from capitalism to socialism. But the revolution remained isolated. You can't build socialism in one country. The resulting economic backwardness allowed the bureaucracy under Stalin to take power. Stalinism blocked the transition to socialism and eventually threw it into reverse creating what Trotsky called a degenerated workers' state.

But Stalin and the bureaucracy abolished every trace of workers' control over society. How can you call it a workers' state when the workers have no political power?

The Stalinist regime was the counter-revolutionary dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the workers. As it gathered more and more privileges for itself it grew ever more afraid of the working class and crushed it. It drove the working class out of any position of political power or control, and it sabotaged revolutions in other countries that could have allowed the Russian Revolution to break out of its isolation. Trotskyists don't disagree with any of these facts. Trotsky, who had first hand experience of the effects of Stalin's dictatorship, continued to call Russia a workers' state without entertaining the tiniest of illusions in Stalinism.

While they obliterated independent working class activity, the Stalinists did not succeed in obliterating all of the changes brought about by the Russian Revolution.

In the years after the revolution, private ownership of industry and the land was abolished. The ownership of the entire economy passed into the hands of the state. Instead of the economy being based on production for profit and competition between private capitalists, it was based on a vast central plan of production. The capitalist system and the capitalist class were abolished.

So you are saying that Stalinism can accomplish the revolutionary tasks of the working class?

No. In the first place, if the mass of workers had not independently overthrown capitalism there could not have been Stalinism. Stalinism did not come into existence spontaneously and independently. It is parasitic on the workers' revolution. Secondly, Stalinism was able to accomplish the basic preconditions for the transition to socialism only at an excessive social cost and by storing up problems for the future. Stalinism was incapable of completing the transition to socialism and ultimately even of defending the workers' states against economic and military competition from the imperialists.

Soviet Russia was a workers' state because of the working class property relations that were installed after 1917 and deepened in the 1920s. It was a workers' state in the economic sense.

This also explains why, although the Stalinists

overturned the capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe after World War Two, they did not emancipate the working class. Only the working class itself can do that.

A workers' state not run by workers? That's a flat contradiction!

There is a contradiction—but it is not in our heads, it exists in reality. There was a contradiction between the Stalinist regime and the economy on which it rested. But history has been full of institutions, organisations, systems and states which have contradictions lodged deep within them.

Before 1917 Russia had a capitalist economy but a government that was based on the pre-capitalist, feudal aristocracy. The regime was in contradiction to the economic system.

France under Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1851-71) was a capitalist state in which the capitalists were excluded from power by a dictator who nevertheless acted in the interests and defence of capitalism. Trotsky, by analogy with this situation, called Stalinism a form of bonapartism.

Closer to home, the trade unions and the Labour Party are working class organisations—but they are not run or controlled by workers. They are completely under the domination of bureaucrats, many of whom, like John Monks and Tony Blair, have never done a day's work in their lives. The pro-capitalist leadership is in contradiction to its working class base.

Marxism derives its strength from the ability to recognise rather than deny the real contradictions at work in society. That is why we are able to recognise the phenomenon of a workers' state caught up in a process of degeneration, leading back towards capitalism. The rise of Stalinism represented a stage in that process, but not its final completion.

How could anyone call the economy of the former USSR "working class property relations"? You have already admitted that the workers had no control over their factories and workplaces and that they lived a terrible life of hard labour, under appalling conditions and for low pay. The economy may have belonged to the state, but there was nothing "working class" about the state.

To be honest the workers had little control over the state and lived in appalling poverty long before the rise of Stalinism. Lenin called Soviet Russia in the early 1920s a "workers state with severe bureaucratic deformations".

If you start off from the ideal norm of a perfect workers' state and compare Stalinist Russia to that norm you can easily prove Russia is not a workers' state. But Marxists cannot rest content with that method.

The Stalinist economy was distorted by the bureaucracy, but it was based on centralised state planning. A planned economy not only stops the capitalist market and production for profit from being the guiding principle of the economy: it will be absolutely essential for any future workers' state if it wants to

build socialism. That is why, whatever distortions the Stalinists introduced, the fundamental character of the economy was not capitalist, but working class.

When you focus on planning you are ignoring the way that every economy, from a socialist one right through to modern British capitalism, uses planning to a greater or a lesser extent. During the war the British government introduced widespread nationalisation to make the war effort run smoothly. Was Britain a "workers' state" in 1944 then?

First, it is not planning alone but a combination of planning, state ownership and the state monopoly of foreign trade which made the Stalinist economies capable of repressing and decisively counteracting the capitalist "law of value".

The capitalists introduce elements of planning and state ownership, but they do it as part of their drive for profits and a greater share of the market. Sometimes they literally abolish the operation of the law of value in one sector of the economy, but only in order to guarantee the continued working of capitalism as a whole. When they nationalise they pay huge compensation. When they plan on a scale comparable with a workers' state it is in time of extreme crisis and as a temporary measure.

In short, capitalist planning is subordinated to the dictates of the market and profit.

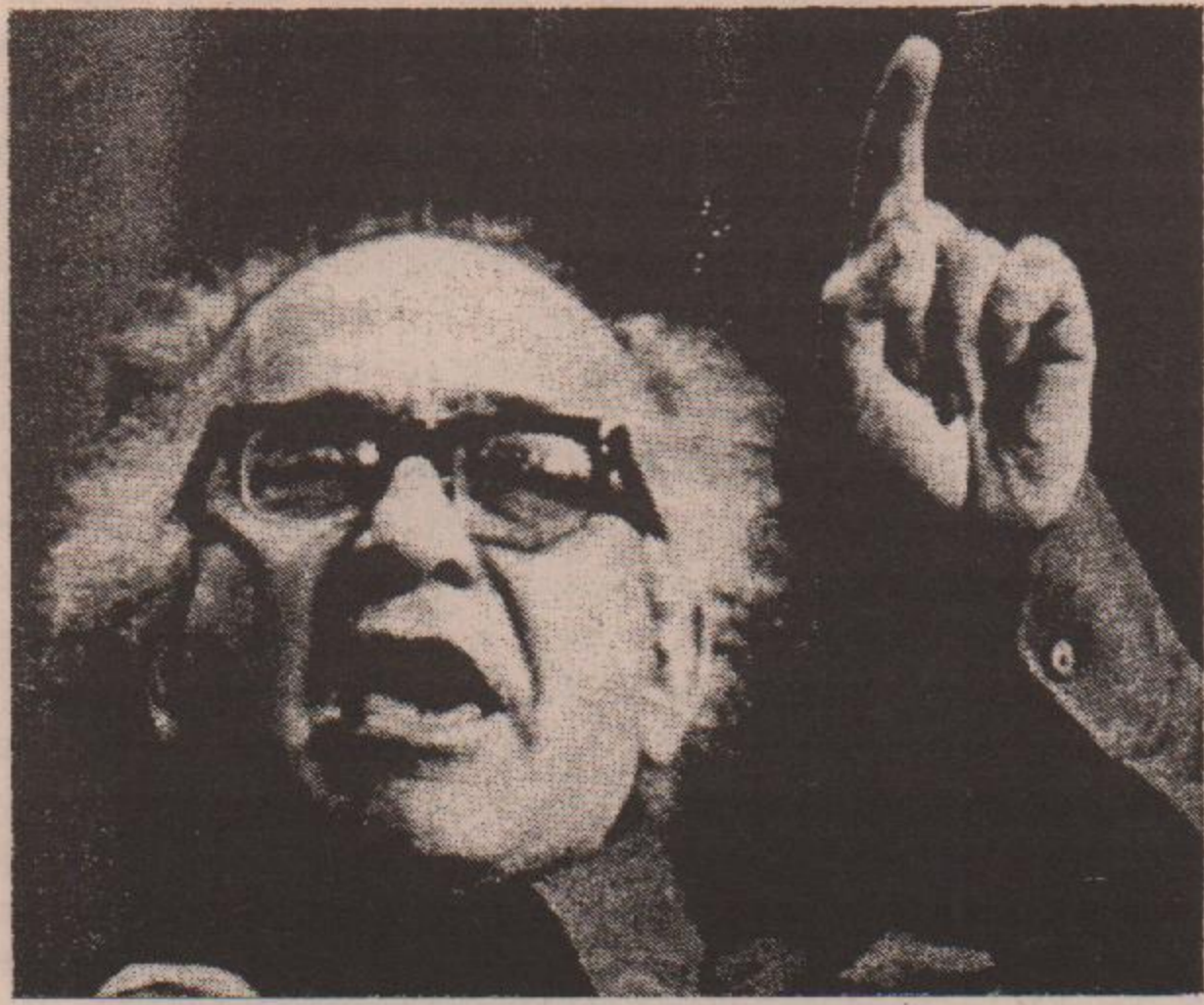
In a workers' state—even a degenerated one—it is the other way round. When the soviet republic first started nationalising the main industries in Russia in 1918, it was because the factory committees were demanding it in the face of sabotage by the former capitalist owners and the need to co-ordinate production between the different enterprises under workers' control. The former owners received no compensation whatsoever. Their grandchildren are still screaming blue murder about it now.

The Stalinists slowly wrecked the planned economy by suppressing democratic workers' control. Only the masses could really know what could be produced, what was needed, in what quantities and where.

Blind planning by an elite produced shoddy rubbish for the masses. Even totally useless items were produced by some plants which just had to meet a quota fixed from above, irrespective of quality. This was chaotic and wasteful—but it was certainly not production for profit.

Even if planning in Russia was different from planning in the West, that still doesn't prove your argument. After all, we have never said that state capitalism was exactly the same as other forms of capitalism. Surely the most important point is that the bureaucracy acted as a collective capitalist. The state owned the property and the bureaucracy owned the state.

But they did not own state property. They controlled it, but within limits. Those limits were imposed by the non-capitalist basis of the whole economy.



Tony Cliff, theorist of state capitalism

trotskyism?

State ownership and central planning meant that there were real legal barriers to the bureaucracy treating the factories and resources of the USSR as its own private property. Whilst the bureaucrats *plundered* the state and secured all sorts of privileges for themselves, they could not do it legally. Crucially, they were denied the "freedom" to deal with state property as they wished.

In the capitalist system the ruling class has precisely such freedom. They can buy and sell shares. They can freely employ or sack the workers. They can invest their capital as they see fit.

But in a degenerate workers' state, the system just does not work that way. Ownership of the key levers of the economy was fixed in the hands of the state. Prices were not "free" to rise and fall in accordance with market pressures or the amount of labour embodied in each product. And workers' jobs were subject to certain guarantees. That is why, while the workers faced terrible conditions at work, nevertheless unemployment in East Germany for example was practically nil up to 1990.

Today the whole strategy of ruling parties in Eastern Europe and the former USSR is to restore the capitalist system. That is why they have been forced to dismantle those elements of the old system that acted as obstacles to capitalist ownership. They have "freed" prices leading to runaway inflation, abolished job guarantees allowing unemployment to rocket, and have removed obstacles to private ownership, resulting in sell-offs of state property, factory closures and a burgeoning black market.

That may be a neat "theoretical" distinction, but surely the reality was the same. For the bureaucracy it was more important for the state to accumulate wealth than it was to meet the needs of the masses. Consumption was subordinated to accumulation. Surely that is a feature specific to capitalism. As Marx said, for the capitalists "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets." What workers' state would do that?

Certainly the state accumulated, and consumption by the masses took second place to this in the plans of the bureaucrats. But while accumulation is a feature of capitalism, it is not *specific* to capitalism.

Karl Marx recognised that even a healthy workers' state would have to accumulate and use the accumulated surplus to build up the economy. It would not hand back the "full value of the workers' labour" to the workers—Marx criticised this as utopian.

The state capitalist theory uses a conjuring trick when it comes to accumulation. It says the Stalinists built factories, railways and canals at huge human cost, so did early industrial capitalism, therefore Stalinism carried out the accumulation of capital.

But capital is a social relation, not a factory. What tells us the social character of the factory is who paid for it, whether it generates profit for a boss, whether its goods go to the market or are transferred to another part of the industrial complex without payment, as part of planned production.

Capitalism is based on the generalised production of *commodities*. A commodity is not just a product, not just something that has a use. It has value as an item of exchange. This goes for all the commodities produced under capitalism, including the only commodity that the working class have to sell: labour-power, the ability to work. It is the unpaid value of labour power that is the source of the capitalists' profit.

Under centralised state planning, this commodity production was not the main principle of the economy. Labour power did not operate as a commodity in the way it does in the West. The Stalinists did not draw profits from this source. Even Tony Cliff has accepted this. He wrote in his book *State Capitalism in Russia* that "if one examines the relations within the Russian economy, one is bound to conclude that the source of the law of value [the sale of the commodity labour-power] is not to be found within it."

But consumption was subordinated to production in the USSR.

If the simple fact that consumption is subordinated to accumulation makes a society capitalist, then why not take your theory one step further?

The Soviet Republic must have been state capitalist in 1920 when, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, consumption had to be cut back to concentrate on producing weapons and supplies for the Red Army in the civil war against the Whites.

If the workers come to power in any backward country they are going to have to subordinate consumption to production. They are going to have to build roads, railways, power grids, basic industries and they may have to put off building factories to produce high quality consumer goods. It depends on the relative isolation of the revolution and the relationship with the wider global economy.

The USSR acted like one big company. It competed with the West, in particular during the arms race. All the Stalinists' decisions were based on the pressures of the world economy and competition. So even if the law of value didn't exist in the USSR it was capitalist because it carried out capitalist competition.

Certainly there was military competition, but that is not necessarily a sign of capitalism. It could just be a sign of an isolated workers' state encircled by hostile capitalist powers.

The accumulation of stockpiles of weapons is not necessarily capitalist. It has taken place under every social system. In a workers' state, it is an accumulation of use-values rather than exchange values, of *products* rather than *commodities*. If military competition is a sign of capitalism, then woe betide any workers' state, bureaucratic or not, that builds up its military strength to defend itself. According to your theory, that fact alone would make the state capitalist.

Marx himself realised that competition, while being a feature of capitalism, was by no means the element that creates the inner laws of the capitalist

system. He wrote that "competition executes the inner laws of capital . . . but it does not invent them. It realises them. To try to explain them as results of competition therefore means to concede that one does not understand them."

That is the mistake the SWP makes. Because all capitalist societies involve competition, it assumes that all competition is a sign of capitalism. It just doesn't follow. Worse, it would mean that every human society since the dawn of history would have to be described as capitalist, because they all involved competition in one form or another, especially military competition. By this logic the Marxist idea of capitalism as a distinct historic system disappears.

Orthodox Trotskyists call for a political revolution in the Stalinist states. Why call the revolution "political"? Isn't this just a dishonest way of arguing for reforming the bureaucratic apparatus? The theory of state capitalism allows us to be unambiguously revolutionary. Your theory stops you calling for a real workers' revolution, a social revolution.

The term "political revolution" means that the workers have to overthrow the bureaucracy's repressive apparatus. There is not a hint of reformism in this. We fight for the building of workers' councils, the exclusion of the bureaucrats from the workers' councils, the arming of the working class, the violent overthrow of the Stalinist apparatus and the building of new revolutionary parties with the aim of establishing workers' power and socialism. What does your theory add to this?

A *political* revolution would overthrow a regime and its apparatus of repression, whereas a *social* revolution would also overthrow the entire basis of the economic system. We want to overthrow the Stalinists, using revolutionary not reformist methods. At the same time we want to defend, democratise and develop the economic basis of the workers' state.

But what on earth was there to defend in these terrible systems? Plans that leave the masses queuing up for hours for shoddy goods? Long working hours? Food shortages? Cramped living conditions, privileges for the bureaucrats, pollution . . . the list is endless. That was and is the reality of the economic system for the workers in your "workers' states".

Of course these are not the "gains" we are defending. Only the Stalinists, who thought it was possible to build socialism in one country, ever peddled the lie that the living standards of the workers in Eastern Europe and the USSR were higher than workers in the West.

The gains we *do* defend are those elements of the economy that were introduced as a result of the revolution and which any workers' state will need if it is to make a transition from capitalism to socialism. These are state ownership, central planning, and the state monopoly over foreign trade. We would not leave these things as they are—they would be transformed by workers' democracy and control.

Where state planning has been uprooted and replaced with the market, the workers will simply have to re-establish it in a democratic form after a revolution. But where they still exist, the task of a successful workers' revolution is not to abolish them, but to preserve and democratise them, to make them serve the mass of the population.

But defending the Stalinist planned property against capitalism leads you into an alliance with the main enemy, the Stalinist bureaucrats. Surely the main thing is not to defend the planned property but to organise the workers, whoever owns the factory.

You can defend the NHS or British Rail against privatisation without calling it "socialist". Why in Russia would that be "siding with your own bosses"? This position completely disarms revolutionary socialists in the former Stalinist countries. Your group in Russia rejects the idea that workers should oppose the dismantling of planning mechanisms. Because

you view the sell-off of state property as merely a transfer from one set of capitalists to another, you cannot even oppose privatisation of state industries. Defending state property is not counterposed to defending workers' living standards and wages. As many workers in the East are finding out, it is part of the same struggle.

But you don't just defend the property, you defend the entire state. You see the world as two rival "camps"—Washington versus Moscow—and the working class struggle as only an adjunct of the "Moscow camp".

No—it's the other way round: we see the class struggle between the workers and the bosses, including the bosses' agents within the working class, as the main division in the world. Many Trotskyists made the mistake you describe, but Trotsky himself didn't and neither do the real Trotskyists today. Defence of the workers' state is subordinate to the world revolution and the best way to defend the workers' state is to overthrow the bureaucracy.

That is why, as revolutionary defencists, we do not support calling off the class struggle in order to defend the Stalinist states. On the contrary, we would use a war situation to fight for revolutionary methods to win the war.

The SWP's refusal to defend the Stalinist countries against imperialist aggression has led to outrageous twists and turns of position. In the 1960s, when the USA was at war with Vietnam the SWP backed Vietnam. Good. But in the 1950s when the USA invaded Korea, and China backed the North Korean forces, the SWP remained neutral on the grounds that this was an "inter-imperialist war". Whatever your position you have to agree that the whole attitude towards defending Stalinist countries has been more guided by public opinion than by consistent theory.

Look at what has happened in Eastern Europe since 1989. The workers' didn't defend "their" property relations at all. On the contrary they wanted rid of them as quickly as possible. How can you explain that without making a mockery of your whole theory?

It is not at all surprising that the workers did not defend the planned economy. Decades of bureaucratic control, with all the shortages and stagnation it involved, convinced the workers that the entire system did not work. They fell for the idea that the market was the answer to their problems. In short, they became alienated not only from bureaucratic control, but from the very idea of state property and planning.

The workers did not defend the planned economy. But you do. That can only mean that you would defend it against the workers. We have seen what that means time and again over the last decades in Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1980-81, and Tiananmen Square in 1989—bloody Stalinist repression.

That is definitely not where our argument leads—quite the contrary. There is only one force that can build socialism—it is the working class. To support the suppression of the workers, to crush their unions, organisations, marches and rights has nothing to do with socialism.

There are some sects that supported Stalinist repression of the workers. But the fact that some of them call themselves Trotskyists is no more significant than the fact that the Stalinists called themselves Marxists. It is these people who are demoralised by the collapse of Stalinism, not genuine Trotskyists who have always fought with the workers against the Stalinist bureaucrats.

If the workers—having successfully won the right to organise—nevertheless do not defend planned property relations, there is no other force that can do it for them. That is why, as Trotsky put it, when we defend the economic basis of the workers' state, we do it exclusively through the methods of the class struggle—in a fight for workers' control and against the Stalinists.■

For those who want to know more about the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism two vital books are Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* and *In Defence of Marxism*. In Workers Power's new pamphlet *The Politics of the SWP—a Trotskyist Critique* you will find all the basic arguments against state capitalist theory. *Permanent Revolution Issue 9* contains "The crisis of Stalinism and the theory of State Capitalism", a comprehensive critique not only of Cliff's book but also the various additions, amendments to and attacks on Cliff's theory made by SWP theorists like Binns and Haynes, Hallas, Callinicos and Harman.

the whole of Lenin's analysis of reformism". (Neither Washington Nor Moscow 1982).

Callinicos, Cliff and most SWP theoreticians reject Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy because it implies that some workers have a short term interest in the maintenance of capitalism, and that some white workers do benefit from colonialism. With the same arguments the SWP leaders reject the idea that men benefit in any way from women's oppression.

So do white workers benefit from racism in any way? Let us look at Callinicos' own attempt to define oppression: "systematic inequalities of power and life chances". Every black working class person knows what this means in practice. It means preferential treatment for white schoolmates, white job

tion they should remember the dockers' march to support Enoch Powell in the 1960s—a march by the same dockers who later brought down Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

Of course not all white workers consciously collaborate with racism. Quite the opposite. The vast majority of organised workers think of themselves as anti-racist. In the course of struggle itself and with effective propaganda by a socialist party the mass of the working class can and will see through the false and reactionary ideas which capitalist schools, churches, newspapers and media have taught them.

Both Ovenden and Callinicos bring forward figures from US sociologists (V Perlo, A Szymanski) to support the idea that, in the long run, white workers have no interest in racism. At the level of wage earnings Szymanski found that "the greater the discrimination against [blacks and Hispanics] the higher the inequality amongst whites". Conversely, where black earnings were higher, white workers earnings were higher too.

What does this evidence really tell us? It tells us that where the bosses use racism successfully to divide the working class, they weaken the entire working class, black and white. It is a pattern borne out for example in Northern Ireland, between Catholics and Protestants.

But even Szymanski's conclusion—that white inequality was higher where blacks were most oppressed—does not disprove the assertion that some white workers benefit, through preferential access to education, housing, health care and employment, from the oppression of black people.

Callinicos is unable to find a material answer to the question: why does racist ideology appeal to white workers? This leads him off in the direction of an idealist explanation for racism, one that is not rooted in material reality but in ideology alone. For all Callinicos' hostility to the "black radical" tradition which has attempted to fuse Marxism and black separatism, he is eager to take on board one of its main theories—that of the "psychological wage".

W E Du Bois' assertion that, in the southern USA, white workers received "a sort of public and psychological wage" in return for their actual low wages is taken up by Callinicos as a "better explanation" than the materialist theory of the labour aristocracy. By this Du Bois meant that white workers are comforted by the belief that they are superior to blacks, that they are part of the dominant group even if they don't personally receive any material advantage.

Desperate to find an alternative theoretical basis to Lenin's theory, Callinicos even tries to draw in Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism as an "imagined community". Despite Anderson's own wish to distinguish between racism and nationalism, Callinicos claims that Anderson's description of nationalism—"a deep horizontal comradeship transcending actual inequality and exploitation" is applicable to modern racism.

It might well be—but only as a description of ideas, as a tool for understanding the psychology of modern racism. But neither Anderson's theory, nor the idea of a "psychological wage" provides a materialist explanation of the roots of white workers' racism. It is an explanation which says ideas determine material reality, not the other way round.

However there is a germ of truth within Du Bois' theory of the "public and psychological wage" and, when we examine it, it supports the Leninist view of the labour aristocracy and the material roots of racism.

The "psychological wage" could not stick if it was mere trickery. There has to be some material basis

for it. This presumably is what Du Bois means by the "public" wage for poor whites in the southern USA. This "public" wage is described over and over again in the books, films and music of black Americans. White workers could visit bars, public baths, use public transport and cinemas from which black workers were barred.

To say that white workers' wages are depressed by class divisions is not the same as to say they do not derive immediate material privileges from those divisions. It is precisely the threat to those short-term privileges which winds up racist workers and drives them into the arms of open racist politicians—from Alabama to the Isle of Dogs.

The benefits we are talking about are relative and temporary: white workers receive better wages but that is no use when you lose your job; white workers are more likely to get jobs, but as unemployment rises they too lose their jobs. The differences are of course not as great as the differences between the working class and the ruling class. But they do produce divisions between white workers and black workers, just as they do between men and women, and they are based in a real, material stratification of the working class, not only on ideas that the bosses put in our heads.

These relative privileges, these temporary benefits do not alter the fact that it is in the material interest of all workers to fight all forms of oppression. But simply to assert that without first recognising the differential effects of that oppression is crude and abstract, denying the real experience of black and white workers.

SWP members, when they hear Cliff and Callinicos assert "we are the real Marxists, the real Leninists", should reflect on the implications of the SWP's theory of racial oppression.

The SWP want to deny that some white workers gain short term benefits from racism, just as they deny that some male workers gain from the oppression of women.

Ultimately we are left with the assertion that there is no material reason for workers' racism other than "competition". This leads them a step further—if we abandon Lenin's idea of a labour aristocracy based on crumbs from the table of imperialist super-profits, then we are left with no material reason for reformism either.

Racism thrives on the nationalist poison generated by imperialism. The international system, which drags millions of workers from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean to work in the imperialist heartlands, also creates their systematic oppression within those heartlands. White working class racism is perpetuated, yes, by a "public and psychological wage", but that in turn is rooted in real short term advantages for some white workers. It is perpetuated by today's labour aristocrats and "petit-bourgeoisified" sections of the working class, such as well paid City office workers.

But the working class has no strategic interest in racism. The workers of the Isle of Dogs have been weakened in their ability to fight their real enemies, the bosses, by the racism which has flourished there. As long as they remain divided, housing, employment and education will get worse for all—not better.

Revolutionary socialists have to build a united party and a united fight, involving black and white workers. But we have to do so using a strategy based on a correct understanding of reality. If we understand racism's roots in imperialism, national chauvinism and reformist opportunism, we can do it and we will win. But if we reject that Leninist theory out of hand, we will be turning our backs on reality, and we will fail. ■

Somebody benefits from systematic inequality, and it is not only the perpetrators of it, the bosses. There is nothing anti-Marxist or "nationalist" about the statement that some white workers benefit from racial oppression. Yet Callinicos and the SWP leaders reject the idea altogether. Why?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Lenin supported such a view, Callinicos points out that Lenin's theory "was an attempt to explain reformism by arguing that it reflected the material interests of a layer of the western working class." But despite clarifying this, Callinicos goes on to reject Lenin's entire theory of the labour aristocracy as a basis for understanding racism.

Lenin's theory refers to a materially privileged stratum of workers and union officials. It is crucial to an understanding of the material roots of racism within modern capitalism.

At the heart of modern capitalism, imperialism, lies the contradiction between an international economy and the political form of its development, the nation state. The system of competing nation states strangles the potential of the world economy and repeatedly plunges humanity into barbaric acts of war, destruction and genocide.

At the very dawn of this epoch, Lenin grasped the interlinked character of reformism, racism and national chauvinism. :

"It is perfectly obvious that social chauvinism's basic ideological and political content fully coincides with the foundations of opportunism [i.e. reformism—WP]. It is one and the same tendency."

For Lenin, the source of these phenomena was the relative privileges which the bosses in the imperialist countries were able to grant to a layer of workers. They could do this because of the super-profits that the imperialist powers accrued through their domination of the world market and their exploitation of the colonies.

Callinicos is extremely coy when it comes to revealing his attitude to Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy. He states that it is a "poor guide" to the behaviour of skilled workers in the West during the years of revolutionary upheaval in the early twentieth century. He refers to "flaws in its economic arguments".

If he were honest he should say clearly, as SWP members Kevin Corr and Andy Brown did in ISJ 59, that Lenin's theory is "fatally flawed"—i.e. wrong—and that this, as Tony Cliff has written, "invalidates

applicants, white criminal suspects. It means huge differences in the rate of unemployment, even in areas of high white working class unemployment. In Britain in 1991 black unemployment was nearly twice the rate of white unemployment—15% compared to 8%.

Somebody benefits from systematic inequality, and it is not only the perpetrators of it, the bosses. There is nothing anti-Marxist or "nationalist" about the statement that some white workers benefit from racial oppression. Yet Callinicos and the SWP leaders reject the idea altogether. Why?

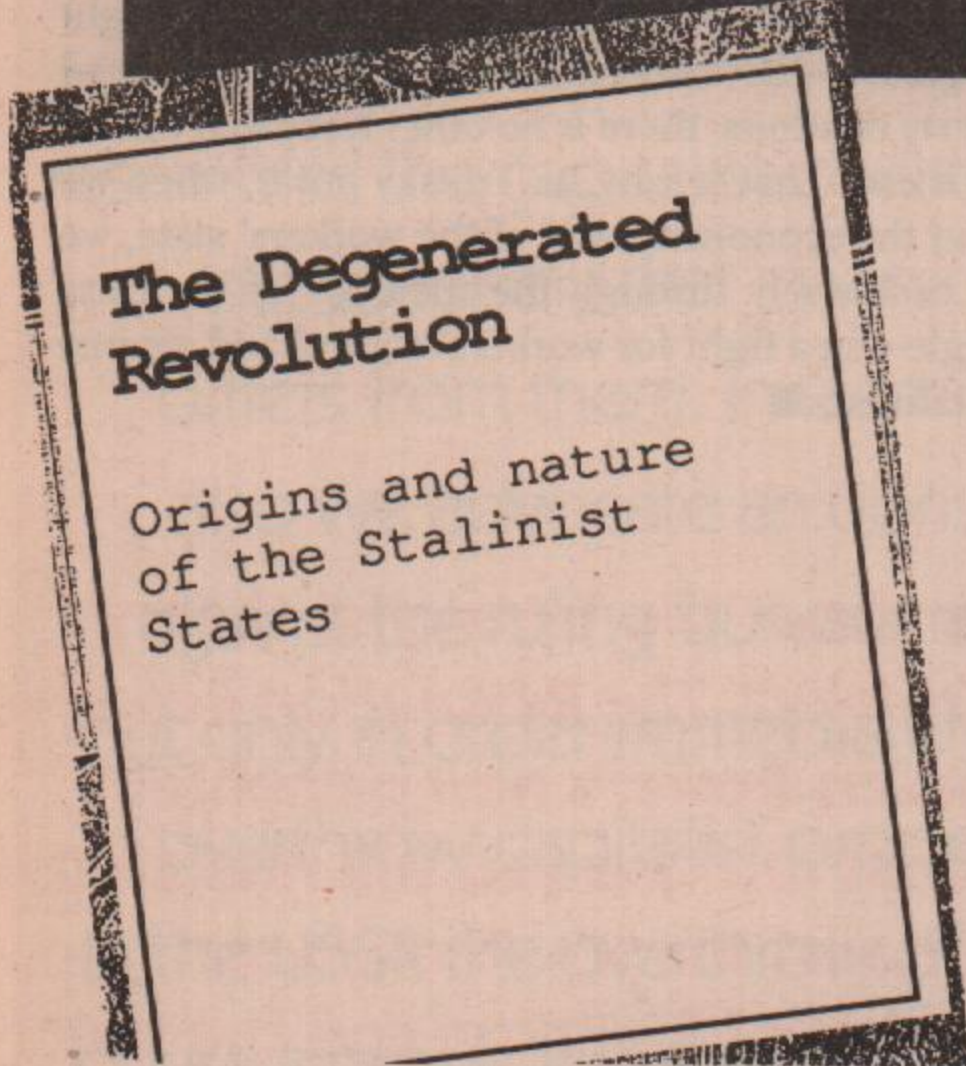
The reason is that they fear that even to recognise such short-term interests must lead to separatism on the question of black oppression and feminism on the question of women's oppression. But there is no reason why it should. It certainly did not as far as Lenin and Trotsky were concerned and it need not do so for revolutionary Marxists today. It simply means that a revolutionary party has to fight the sectional ideas that arise from the experience of such privileges and win the working class to a programme that expresses our common historic interests.

The SWP however, rejects this. They believe that the working class develops revolutionary socialist consciousness spontaneously. That is why they have to deny the very existence of benefits which generate the opposite kind of consciousness—reactionary ideas such as racism and sexism. To preserve their *spontaneist* theory, they have to deny the very existence of material privileges that are common knowledge to every black person discriminated against at a job interview and every woman who has to cook the whole family's tea after a hard day's work.

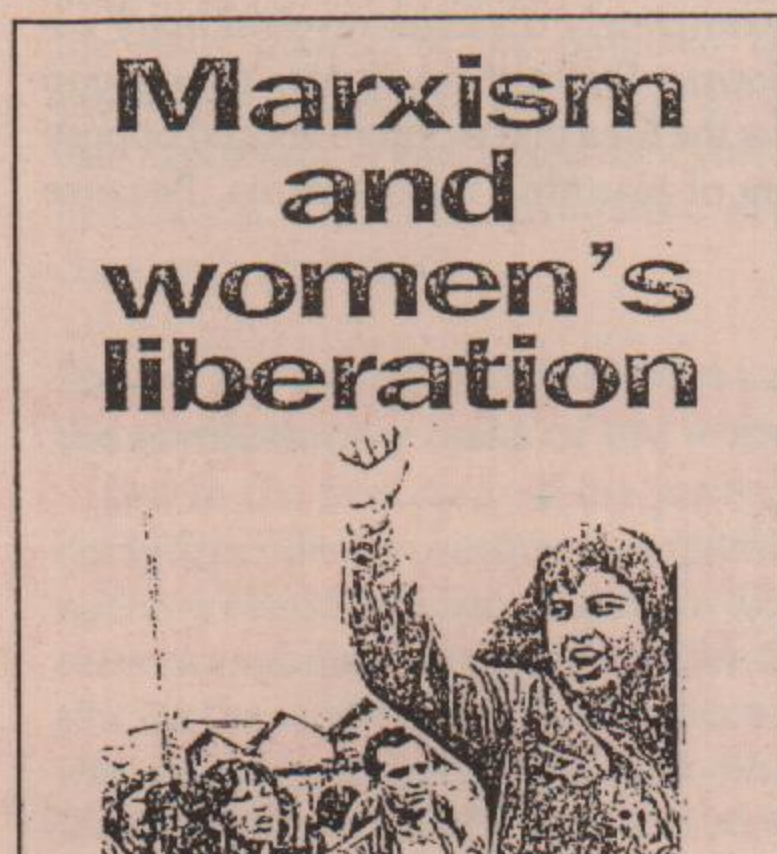
Does this mean that white workers themselves become the oppressors, as the nationalists claim? No—in the first place because the entire capitalist system is the fundamental cause of this oppression. Secondly however, we have to say that white workers, at certain times and places, participate in the bosses' oppression of black people.

If SWP members recoil in horror at this sugges-

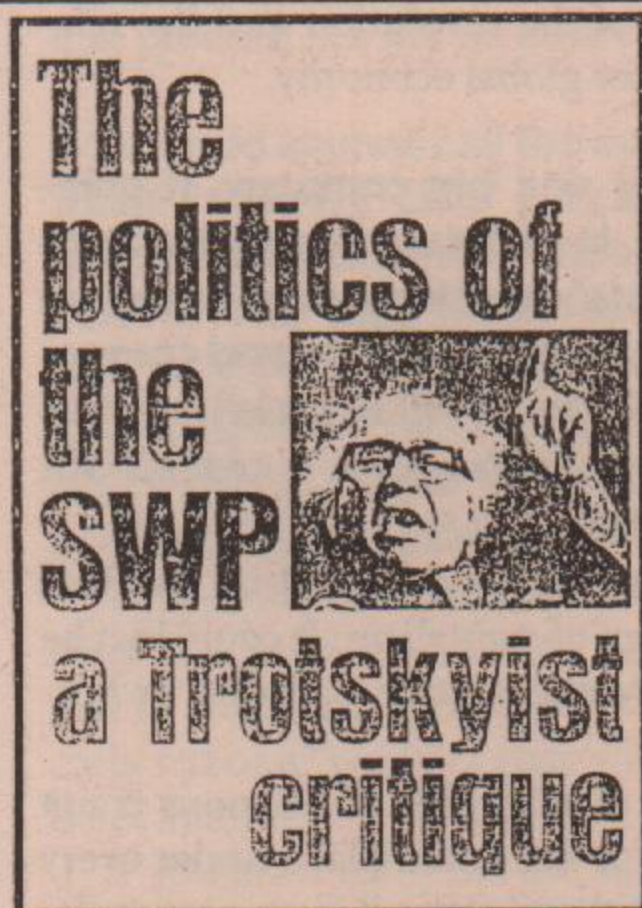
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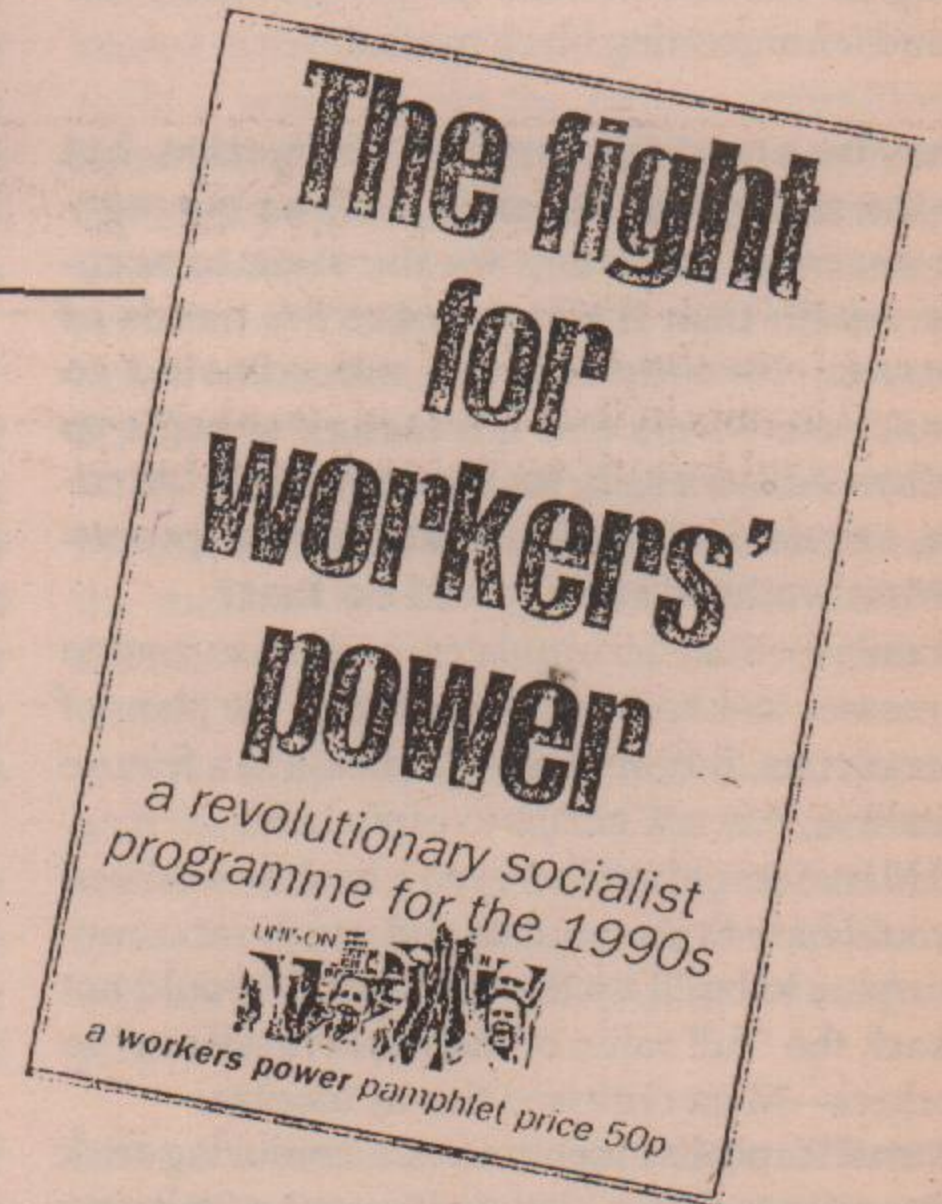
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WORLD CUP MASSACRE

Blood on British hands

The slaughter of six unarmed Catholics watching Ireland's World Cup match against Italy in a bar in Loughinisland has sickened millions of people. As the news came through there was genuine outrage, not just among the anti-unionist community in Northern Ireland, but in pubs and workplaces all over Britain.

With many British football fans rooting for the Republic of Ireland, the inevitable comment was "but for a short stretch of the Irish sea it could have been us."

For the Ulster Volunteer Force, the sectarian organisation which carried out the massacre, it was business as usual. There was no claim they were attacking active Republicans, and for the UVF none was necessary. The loyalist death squads target Catholics indiscriminately. Their aim is to terrorise the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland to the point where it cannot meet, march or protest, where even the simple act of supporting the Republic of Ireland's football team means risking life and limb.

The British government and its press and media, eager to quell any "undue" sympathy for the Catholic victims, were quick to explain the killing as part of "a rising spiral of tit for tat killings".

But a cursory look at the events surrounding the Loughinisland massacre proves this to be pure propaganda. The week before the shooting a Catholic worker at the Harland and Wolff shipyard was murdered by the



O'Toole's bar in Loughinisland - Loyalist death squads were armed and trained by British Intelligence

UVF. On 16 June Catholic shop owner Brendan McAuley was gunned down and seriously wounded by the UVF near the Falls Road.

Later that day the Irish National Liberation Army shot four known UVF members, killing two known commanders of the UVF—Colin Craig and Davy Hamilton.

The next day Loyalist gunmen attacked Catholic and Protestant building workers in a tea hut, killing a Protestant, but clearly aiming to terrorise the mainly Catholic workforce. The same day the UVF shot dead Catholic taxi driver Gerard Brady.

Then, on Saturday 18 June they

marched into O'Toole's Bar, Loughinisland and gunned down six.

All of the UVF's victims were civilians, shot because they were Catholic or because they mixed with Catholics. If you knew who the perpetrators were, and saw them walking free under the noses of the Protestant dominated RUC, what would you do?

What the INLA did, quite legitimately, was to take them out.

This was not an act of "sectarian, tit for tat" violence. When we look at the response of the main Republican organisation, Sinn Fein, which called for "calm and restraint", and the complete absence of any military response

from the IRA, it is even harder to justify calling such a claim.

The leading loyalist gunmen are known to British intelligence forces. They did not have to do a great deal of James Bond style undercover work—the British secret service has for years armed and controlled the loyalist death squads.

But with the prospect of a peace deal with the Republican movement they now want to appear "impartial". They set up a "sting" against the UVF and proudly showed off an arms shipment they seized on Teeside. The only problem is, nobody got "stung". None of the UVF leaders involved

have been arrested.

The real truth about the security forces' "impartiality" is revealed by a less well publicised event this month: the arrest of several soldiers in the Royal Irish Regiment for suspected involvement in a spate of UVF attacks in the Armagh area.

In another revealing incident RUC officers mounted an operation to tear down Irish tricolour flags being flown by the Catholic community of Cookstown, on the grounds that they could "cause a breach of the peace". This is despite the repeal of the notorious Flags and Emblems Act which until a few years ago banned the Irish tricolour altogether.

Workers in Britain, where many streets and pubs are awash with tricolour T-shirts, worn by Irish and British football fans alike, should open their eyes to what the British presence in Northern Ireland really means.

It means that sectarian gangs murder with impunity. It means the police and army are riddled with sympathisers for the death squads. It means police harassment for wearing or flying the Irish colours, and the fear of death whilst watching your team play football on a pub satellite screen.

That, in short, is national oppression. It is why socialists say Britain should get out of Ireland, and why we support those who—under whatever political flag—wage a genuine struggle against the loyalist death squads and the British state which backs them. ■

AER LINGUS - The need for rank and file control

The workforce in Aer Lingus has already been decimated with over 1000 redundancies. Now management has announced that in the company's maintenance division—TEAM—nearly half of the 1,900 workers are to go.

Craft workers and members of the general union SIPTU have decided in favour of industrial action. Strike action and solidarity from other sections of workers are needed urgently if the Coalition government's attacks on jobs and conditions are to be stopped.

It is not just Fianna Fail's transport minister Brian Cowen and management that TEAM workers have to contend with. Their own union leaders and the leadership of the Irish Con-

gress of Trade Unions have prepared the way for this jobs massacre. ICTU head Peter Cassells, along with the rest of the union top dogs, assured us that they were against "privatisation", but that the unions would cooperate with "commercialisation"—just a different word for making the workers pay for higher profits—which is bound to pave the way for privatisation.

SIPTU leaders instantly accepted that the bosses could go for any number of redundancies they liked as long as they were dressed up as

"voluntary". They sabotaged any chance of a fight right from the start. They gave the green light for rationalisation in TEAM.

The same has happened wherever union leaders have peacefully negotiated away jobs "for the sake of survival". In Waterford Glass where redundancies were accepted on this basis the bosses came back for more a second and a third time.

The union leaders are so deep in the mire of industrial "peacemaking" that even the "impartial" conciliation agency, the Labour Relations Com-

mission, feels it can humiliate the unions by dishing up the employers' case as an "independent" recommendation and then refusing to let the workers even read the full text!

What is needed now right across the public sector is a fighting alliance of activists and shop stewards who are prepared to lead direct action.

We can begin to turn the unions into a fighting movement by linking up workers confronting redundancies in TEAM, Aer Lingus, and in other forms like Irish Steel, B&I, and anywhere that resistance is on the agenda, such as the 550 SIPTU workers at Trinity College Dublin where a big majority has voted for strike action if necessary to stop the redundancies.

Shop stewards and activists must build an unofficial committee to link them all up now.

By creating a rank and file movement in the unions, against unemployment, redundancies, and cuts, the Irish working class can begin to turn the tide against the coalition of capitalists, labour and trade union leaders who are boosting profits at our expense.

Aer Lingus and TEAM workers should look to the action of the Air France workers. Last year they blocked the runways rather than negotiate redundancies. The government in Paris backed down.

The air industry is by its very nature an international affair. Irish air industry workers should link up with the workers in Air France and elsewhere: an international alliance of air workers could strengthen solidarity and prevent the airlines from using "competition with our rivals" to play workers off against each other. ■

Force Labour Out of the Coalition Government!

Some of the new Labour TD's (Irish MP's) know they will lose their jobs in the next election if they stay quiet while Labour employment minister Ruairi Quinn works hand in hand with Brian Cowen to axe jobs and wages.

Four backbenchers have had the labour whip withdrawn for voting against the government over the TEAM redundancies. But such demonstrations of protest are not enough. These conscience stricken TD's should openly break with the Coalition government and fight for Labour to break its alliance with the parties of the capitalist class.

Workers should demand they vote against the government on the TEAM, Aer Lingus and Irish Steel rationalisations. They should support and call for all-out industrial action by all workers threatened by job cuts. In this way the real nature of the Labour Party and of its backbench "left-wingers" can be exposed. Even though it was founded and is maintained by the trade unions, the Labour Party is no champion of the Irish working class. We need a new kind of working class party, one that is really under the control of the most active and committed fighters against exploitation, for the right to work, for equality for women, against repression and against this rotten capitalist system of production for profit rather than for need. ■

Open the Books and Occupy now!

Irish business is rife with scandal and corruption. The results of the longest sitting judicial inquiry in the history of the state is just about to be published, on corruption in the beef industry. Greencore, the recently privatised sugar company, has been rocked by scandals. The Labour Party has been doing its best in the coalition government to defend its partner Fianna Fail from allegations that it sold Irish citizenship rights to businessmen in return for loans and investments in Irish business, including in a pet food company partly owned by the prime minister!

The national airline Aer Lingus and its aircraft maintenance subsidiary TEAM are also enveloped in the scandal. The papers have recently disclosed that Aer Lingus paid way above the market price for a whole range of goods. The suspicion is that businesses bribed management to pick up these plumb prices at the expense of tax paying workers. In TEAM itself allegations are widespread that spare parts, including rotors, have repeatedly gone missing. And whatever the truth, TEAM has had to implement a £16.5 million write off on the value of its stock of spare parts.

On top of this corruption there has been mis-

management on a truly criminal scale. Aer Lingus management lost £44 million in share speculation in 1992 alone!

The shredder has been busy in Aer Lingus, TEAM and the ministries connected to them. This is so much the case that the TEAM workers tried to get a court injunction to stop the shredding in TEAM's top offices. Of course they didn't succeed. But their attempt to get a stooge of the bosses, a judge, to stop the cover-up poses the issue of how the workers should deal with the swindles and the cover-ups.

We say the workers should not trust any of the institutions of the bosses. They should rely on nothing but their own independent action. In TEAM this means a fight to open the books to workers' inspection as a first step in smashing through the veils of business secrecy in Aer Lingus, Irish Steel and the whole public sector.

The best way to get physical control over TEAM's offices and books is through a mass occupation now, which could be the launch pad for a trade union exposure of TEAM, Aer Lingus and the government's dirty linen before the whole Irish working class.

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Socialism – the only solution

THE SCALE of the current conflict is horrific. Massacres of civilians have assumed genocidal proportions. Between 250,000 and 500,000 people have been killed. Two million have fled the country—250,000 flooding into a refugee camp in Tanzania in one day. Taken together, those killed and displaced account for over a quarter of Rwanda's population.

Television pictures of corpses and rivers turned red with blood have been beamed into homes world wide. Western propaganda depicts the carnage as an example of how "uncivilised" black Africans are and how nothing can be done to "help" them escape from their "natural" propensity to "tribal" conflict. The bigger the lie, the more likely it is to be believed, reason the world's most powerful rulers in Washington, London, Paris etc.

No amount of horror should blind us to the real causes of the conflict. It is a direct product of two things—the history of colonial rule in Rwanda, and continued imperialist exploitation of the country in the aftermath of direct colonial rule.

From 1899 to 1916, Rwanda was part of German East Africa. Then it was ruled directly by Belgium until three years of risings by poor farmers won independence in 1962. Under German and Belgian rule, the Western imperialists maintained control by exploiting ethnic differences.

Ethnic divisions had existed before, although the two peoples had come to share the same language. The primary division between the groups had been social. Hutu, the majority (about 85%) means "servant", while Tutsi means "rich". There was a social division between the cattle owning Tutsi overlords and the poorer Hutu farmers.

The imperialists gave the Tutsi minority extra privileges—Western education and appointments as administrators in the colonial government. Identity cards were introduced specifying which ethnic group a person belonged to. It was a classic example of divide and rule, sharpening the divisions.

The social conflicts of pre-colonial society were preserved rather than overcome because imperialism had no interest in promoting the economic development of Rwanda. It was happy to milk the country by basing itself on the pre-colonial Tutsi elite.

With the end of European colonialism at the end of the 1950s these contradictions led to massive inter-ethnic strife. Then, unlike today, it had a social, class content. In Rwanda in 1959 the Hutus rose up against the Tutsi elite and overthrew them, massacring some 100,000 and driving hundreds of thousands of others into Uganda, Zaire and Congo. These Tutsi exiles were to become elite military forces in Uganda, allied to Yoweri Museveni's guerrilla war against Idi Amin and Milton Obote.

The RPF is a creation of this milieu, closely allied to Museveni's military regime. Museveni wants to install a pro-Ugandan regime in Rwanda and resettle Tutsi exiles, relieving the chronic land hunger in Uganda. That is why he sponsored an invasion of Rwanda in 1990 which began the chain of events leading to the present carnage.

The pogroms cannot be understood without considering the situation in neighbouring Burundi. Here the Tutsi elite never lost power. When Hutu based parties won the elections of 1964 the Tutsi King annulled them. In 1972 an abortive coup by Hutu officers and soldiers was met with a horrific massacre. Again in Burundi only six months ago after the assassination of former president Pierre Ndadaye 100,000 mainly Hutu oppositionists were brutally massacred.

These massacres of Hutus in Burundi by Tutsi armed forces deeply affected the Rwandan Hutus. The



Young RPF soldier

The current conflict in Rwanda is partly an extension of the civil war that raged from 1990 to August 1993. That war, between the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the Hutu dominated government of President Habayarimana, ended in August 1993 with the Arusha accords. These promised a multi-ethnic government and the reduction of the army's role in political life. The RPF was in the process of demobilising its forces when the president's aircraft was shot down

and Habayarimana was killed on 6 April 1994. Fighting resumed. The RPF denied responsibility for the shooting. It is highly probable that it was in fact shot down by pro-Hutu forces opposed to the accords and to any concessions to the Tutsi population. These events changed the character of the civil war. The government now aims for ethnic cleansing of the Tutsi, and the killing of any Hutu who supports them, writes Mark Harrison.

fear of a Tutsi dominated regime arouses terrible fears. These were played on by the chauvinists and pogromists in the army and the Coalition of the Defence of the Republic. In the wake of the genocide of Tutsis and the present offensive by the RPF, hundreds of thousands of Hutus have fled across the borders.

This bloody cycle of inter ethnic or communal slaughter is not based on ineradicable "racial", "tribal" or "national" hatreds. Despite imperialism's role in stoking up the conflict, they were unable to completely destroy the pattern of co-existence between the two groupings.

The possibility of superseding ethnic conflict is shown by the co-operation that exists between Tutsi and Hutu within the RPF. The chair of the RPF is himself Hutu, as are a minority of the RPF troops. That is why massacres have been carried out of sections of the Hutu population who favour an accord with the RPF. Hutu and Tutsi refugees co-exist peacefully in the camps in Tanzania.

Nor is the conflict today some kind of class struggle by the Hutu poor peasants against their former overlords, along the lines of the 1959 conflict. It is now over thirty years since the Tutsi were a privileged section in Rwandan society. Tutsi privilege was destroyed as a result of those massacres and subsequent conflicts in the 1960s.

By 1973 a Hutu dictatorship had been installed. Many Tutsi had been deprived of their wealth or driven out of the country altogether. The high command of the army was firmly in the hands of Hutu officers. The present violence against them cannot be explained as primarily a manifestation of Hutu resentment against their privileged position.

Of course, none of this is to deny that there is an element of ethnic conflict lodged in the present war. But it can be superseded if the social problems that imperialism has brought to Rwanda are addressed. Ethnic divisions are reinforced and worsened by the poverty that imperialist super-exploitation has created.

Rwanda is a terribly poor country, with an average income of just £3 per week. Traditional patterns of farming were broken up by imperialism and replaced by the production of cash crops—coffee—for export.

The collapse of coffee prices on the world market plunged Rwanda into an economic crisis. The fight over a diminishing share of national income inflamed the ethnic division that imperialism had encouraged. There is massive overcrowding on the land, with millions crammed onto tiny plots. Hence one of the "rational" objectives of the genocide is to ease this problem for the Hutu majority by exterminating the Tutsis, taking their land and possessions.

Only the expropriation of capitalist landed property can solve this problem. The land must be given to those who work it. Committees of peasants and rural workers must allocate land and use it in the interests of the mass of the people.

For many years imperialism was happy to prop up the Hutu dominated dictatorship of Habayarimana. The South African state arms company Armscor supplied it with weapons. The French trained the army. But with the undermining of dictatorships across the continent as Africa sank into ever worsening poverty, famine and economic backwardness the imperialists sponsored the Arusha accords and sent in 2,500 troops to oversee the peace deal.

With the renewed outbreak of conflict the UN, proving beyond any doubt that it is merely the plaything of imperialism, pulled out its force and only promised to send in a new one if it was made up of black African troops. Clinton, Major and Mitterrand did not want any whites getting shot. The lesson is clear—imperialism is neither willing nor able to solve conflicts like Rwanda, any more than it has the capacity to solve similar ones in Liberia or Somalia. When they intervene, they do so only to defend their own interests.

In the present conflict there is no socialist force. Nevertheless, socialists cannot be neutral. Whatever the

RPF's own guilt in perpetrating some of the massacres, it is the government, army and army-sponsored gangs that are carrying through the genocide. While we condemn any massacres perpetrated by RPF forces and call for organised resistance by workers' and peasants' militia to all of the pogroms, the predominant character of the conflict is a war of genocide by the government and army. It is on this basis, and only on this basis, that we now support workers and peasants organising to fight in a military bloc with the RPF to defeat the government, as the best means of stopping the genocide. But we would give no political support to any RPF government that might be installed as a result of such a victory. Indeed we would oppose the RPF establishing a government against the will of the majority of the population.

The RPF is in no sense a socialist organisation. It aims to establish a bourgeois government, albeit based on the compromise power sharing solution agreed in the Arusha accords of 1993. This would almost certainly be a military dictatorship. Its international backers, Uganda and US imperialism, have no interest in political freedom for all Rwandans. The hostility and fear which the majority of Hutus show towards it ensure that it will not base itself on democratic rights and liberties for the majority.

The RPF is predominantly led by and made up of Tutsis, a small minority and previously privileged section of the population. The "historically accumulated privileges", maintained in exile, education, military training all make it likely that the installation of the RPF in power will mean the restoration of the Tutsi to a position of political privilege, control of the army and the state bureaucracy, if not a position from which to wreak bloody revenge on the Hutu majority.

Therefore despite the RPF's claims to multi-ethnicity, socialists cannot place any reliance on them. The RPF should not be allowed to install a new dictatorship on the back of any military victory. It should be forced to relinquish power immediately to a democratic constituent assembly.

The way for the masses to ensure that this happens is for them to form workers' and peasants' committees in Kigali, in every town and village and in the refugee camps, open to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. We argue that the road out of the present nightmare in Rwanda lies in the development of a socialist programme and a socialist leadership, capable of building a multi-ethnic workers' state.

The key elements of such a programme are:

- Stop the government sponsored genocide. Critical support for the RPF's war to destroy all government forces involved in the genocide. Bring the killers to justice. For workers and peasants tribunals to root out those those responsible including those hiding in refugee camps.
- For a people's militia, under the control of workers' and peasants' councils, to combat all pogroms.
- For a sovereign constituent assembly, convened by workers' and peasants' committees.
- For equal political and social rights for all ethnic groups.
- No UN troops in Rwanda; no imperialist intervention and no intervention by the forces of African regimes on behalf of imperialism.
- For working class action to force the granting of aid to Rwanda with no strings attached; for aid from the international workers' movement.
- For the cancellation of all debts to imperialism.
- For a workers' and peasants' government in Rwanda, based on democratic workers' and peasants' committees and defended by a workers' and peasants' militia
- For a socialist federation of the African continent.

ITALY

The crisis is only beginning

IN JUNE Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia movement reinforced its national election victory by scooping the majority of Italian seats in the European Parliament, with an increased share of the vote.

But despite the razzamatazz surrounding Berlusconi's triumph, the structural crisis of Italian capitalism has not gone away. In fact it is set to intensify as Berlusconi takes the first steps down the Thatcherite road of privatisation, spending cuts and class confrontation.

The tasks facing any capitalist government in Italy are spelled out in the latest survey of the country's economy by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). State debt rose from 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1980 to 114% in 1993. It is vital for the Italian bosses that this debt is drastically reduced.

Spiralling state debt has destabilised the currency, leading to the *lire* being forced out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1992. Because of this interest rates are high, limiting profitable capital investment. Added to this the Maastricht Treaty requires Italy to reduce state borrowing to 40% of GDP. The OECD is recommending drastic cuts in public spending, attacking welfare services and cutting the wages of state employees.

The Italian bourgeoisie, unable to fully implement a Thatcherite programme in the 1980s, now has to catch up and overtake countries like Britain, where the attack on public services has been under way for over fifteen years. In Berlusconi they have found a political leader willing to take

BY MARCO ROSSO

on this task. But is he capable of it?

Berlusconi faces two problems: the weakness of his political alliance and the potential resistance of the Italian working class.

The political crisis in Italy is rooted in the increasing contradiction between the post war political system and the needs of modern Italian capitalism. Faced with the biggest Communist Party in western Europe, the Italian bosses put together a centre-right coalition which was kept in power after 1945 by a succession of electoral agreements and coalitions. But it led to massive corruption, with an estimated 5 to 10% of the value of all contracts ending up in the pockets of the professional politicians. On top of this state services proved costly and inefficient, even for the bosses, and the huge state sector of industry was denying individual capitalists the possibility of raking in profits.

With the collapse of Stalinism, the Communist Party (PCI) moved rapidly to the right, jettisoning its Stalinist political baggage and transforming itself into the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). It presented itself as the party which could break the political logjam and sell the neo-liberal economic programme of cuts and privatisation to the Italian working class. The leader of the PDS, Achille Occhetto, hoped that as the old political order crumbled he would be called in to save Italian capitalism. The offer was rejected.

Instead the Italian bosses, faced with the collapse of the last old-style coalition government and the introduction of a new, first past the post

election system, decided to re-forge the bourgeois right wing of Italian politics. Berlusconi created Forza Italia, almost overnight. The miraculous rise of this "party" has little to do with Berlusconi's political wizardry and everything to do with the barely concealed re-composition of existing political parties and local political "machines" under the banner of Forza.

But Forza Italia alone was not big enough to keep Occhetto's PDS out of power. For this Berlusconi had to make an electoral pact with the right wing populist Lega Nord (Northern Leagues) and the fascist MSI.

It is the instability of this alliance which constitutes the first threat to

The MSI, strong in the relatively underdeveloped south of Italy, fiercely supports national unity. The Lega Nord was founded on the desire of a large section of the northern Italian middle class to stop its taxes being spent on the "indolence and corruption" of the south

Berlusconi's project. Both the Lega Nord and the MSI have radically different political projects, and to an extent different social bases from Berlusconi.

The MSI, strong in the relatively underdeveloped south of Italy, fiercely supports national unity. The Lega Nord was founded on the desire of a large section of the northern Italian middle class to stop its taxes being spent on the "indolence and corruption" of the south. The Lega's stated aims are to break Italy up into three autonomous regions, encouraging the faster integration of the north into the European economy and leaving the south to rot.

The MSI's leadership clearly envisages the alliance with Berlusconi as a tactical stage on the road to power. It will use the respectability given to it by ministerial office to strengthen its support in the army, police and judiciary. Meanwhile it will pose as the party resisting Berlusconi's most Thatcherite neo-liberal measures. Sooner or later it must break with the ruling coalition and advance the pro-street fighting violence which has been a component of the MSI since its birth.

The Lega Nord is on a different trajectory. It has already seen up to one third of its supporters going over to Forza Italia—in Milan its vote fell from 40% to 16%.

Growing as a protest vote against the old system in the late 1980s, the Lega's base was the northern middle class and unorganised workers. Its real remaining difference with Berlusconi, apart from the question of regional autonomy, is over which class will pay most for the neo-liberal economic programme—the small producers or the big multinationals. Ulti-

IL CANTIERE DEVE VIVERE



"Dockers have to live"

mately, unless Berlusconi attacks the northern middle class, driving it back into the hands of the Lega Nord, the Lega is destined to lose influence.

Despite these differences the ruling coalition remains united around a large part of Berlusconi's programme: privatisation, the attack on the welfare state, and the attack on workers' first phase Berlusconi plans to privatise the health service and the public insurance system, give financial backing for private schools and raise fees in higher education. In the state sector Berlusconi has promised to get rid of "jobs for life", impose flexible working and cut real wages. The government is set to bring in an Italian equivalent of British YTS and US workfare schemes. All this is backed up by tighter immigration controls, racist laws against immigrant workers and virulent nationalist rhetoric.

Berlusconi has played the nationalist card within the EU, echoing Major's stance on Maastricht. He has vetoed the Slovenia's application to join the EU and reopened the question of Slovenia's border with Italy, as

colluding with the employers to make sure the vote was conducted while the plant was closed, without mass meetings and with some militants prevented from voting. As with the 1992 wave of resistance a major problem is the localised, plant by plant, nature of the movement.

The existing political leadership of the Italian workers' movement is incapable of organising and leading the fight.

The PDS reacted to Berlusconi's election victory in a way which clearly demonstrated their Stalinist past: they proposed to join him in a constitutional coalition government. With that offer inevitably rejected, two wings have emerged within the party. The right wing wants to fuse with its electoral allies (the Greens, the "left" of the former Christian Democrats, the anti-mafia network) and complete the transformation of the PDS into a bourgeois liberal party. The amorphous majority wants to remain with Occhetto's project, which at present seems a dead end. Occhetto himself has resigned following the election defeats.

Rifondazione Comunista—the left wing split from the PDS based in the old hard line Stalinist bureaucracy of the party and the unions—is currently involved in an old Stalinist tactic: building an "anti-fascist" alliance between the workers and the progressive bourgeoisie. This project was the rationale for its support and participation in the PDS electoral bloc.

What is desperately needed is a fighting, independent working class party with a revolutionary action programme aimed at transforming the trade union resistance to Berlusconi into a movement that can drive him from office and fight for working class power.

Berlusconi, despite his apparent electoral invincibility, remains weak. He has no majority in the Italian Senate, where the remains of the old Christian Democrat/Socialist coalition has the power to block or dilute his programme. The Lega is pushing hard to carry out aspects of its regionalist programme before its electoral base is reduced further. It is even possible that, if Berlusconi's electoral bloc breaks up, the Lega will attempt to stitch up a coalition with the PDS. Such a coalition would be even more unstable than the present one.

The other alternative is for Berlusconi to turn Forza Italia from a media hyped movement into a real political party with an activist base. This will be difficult given the divergent social interests of the existing base of Forza Italia. If Berlusconi's mass base cannot be stabilised then there remains the option for him to "rise above" politics in classic Bonapartist fashion, attempting to construct a base for himself within the state machine and reducing the powers of the legislature at all levels. The need to keep this option open explains Berlusconi's continued reliance on the MSI. The MSI has a national party structure, links with the military and the political experience to provide the shock troops of any Bonapartist crackdown against the workers' movement and the left.

Italy's crisis is just beginning and a working class answer to that crisis is needed now more than ever. ■



Alfa workers protest at employers' onslaught

Last month's *Workers Power* carried an article about the debate in the Russian socialist movement early this century over the issue of organising Jewish workers. Below **David Rosenberg** of the Jewish Socialist Group challenges our defence of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. **Richard Brenner** replies for *Workers Power*.

Dear Comrades,

It was a pity that Kate Foster's informative article about Lenin and the Bund (WP 179) stopped at 1905. You can only do justice to the Bund's broader critique of Leninism on issues of national minorities, culture and assimilation, and its contribution to socialist theory and practice, by analysing what actually happened once the Bolsheviks took power and also by looking at Poland in the 1930s where the Bund became the leading force within Europe's largest Jewish working class.

If the Bund was mistaken in claiming the *sole* right to organise amongst Jewish workers, its demand reflected the experience of a workforce segregated by government-decreed social and economic discrimination, and acutely aware that the general workers' movement was failing to respond adequately to anti-semitic terror.

Trotsky's casual dismissal of the horrific Kishinev pogrom as a reflection of "the general unconsciousness of the masses" typified this failure. When the RSDLP's assimilated Jewish Marxists defended their plans for organising Jewish workers, Bundist

delegates interjected, with justification, "among whom you have never worked!"

Lenin tried to label the Bund as "separatist" but this accusation is belied by the fact that from its inception the Bund allied with other socialist parties—first in the RSDLP, then with the Mensheviks after the 1903 split, and later with the left wing of the Polish Socialist Party and socialist parties of other national minorities in Poland in the 1930s. In contrast to separatist movements, the Bund was fiercely anti-nationalist. Its principles declared:

"Against one's own and foreign nationalism".

Historians of the Soviet Union often ascribe the repression of Jewish life to Stalinism but it began earlier and flowed from the Bolsheviks' restricted view of Jewish culture, which, in turn, borrowed unconsciously from pre-revolutionary views about Jews. Once on power the Bolsheviks outlawed anti-semitism and recognised in practice the Jewish nationality that they denied in theory, but they simultaneously created a Jewish section of the party to confine Jewish cultural

expression within narrow "approved" channels.

Kate Foster defends Lenin's position on assimilation as being an improvement on Kautsky's. Nevertheless in supporting assimilation Lenin never questioned exactly what Jewish workers were assimilating into; as if Russian working class culture was somehow immune to cultural influences including reactionary nationalist and religious ones. His assimilationism also made a negative statement about the culture in which Jewish workers located significant aspects of their identity. Lenin may have opposed "forced" assimilation but he apparently ignored the more subtle processes which devalue minority cultures and encourage assimilation into a supposedly superior culture. This factor continues to create mistrust and resentment between minorities and the Left today. A frank admission that Lenin may have been wrong on this question might make the Left a more welcoming place for socialists within minority communities!

Lenin's disparaging comments about "Jewish national culture" as being that of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie merely reveal the extent to

which he misunderstood the Bundist view. In promoting "national cultural autonomy" the Bund supported the broadest cultural development in Jewish life knowing that this would provide a basis for Jewish working class culture to flourish. It strengthened rather than weakened the Jewish workers in their struggles against their bosses and religious leaders. The seriousness with which the Bund treated culture meant that in 1930s Poland they had a mass movement of literate, self-confident and self-educated workers in a population where

few received formal education beyond the age of 10 or 11.

That mass movement was decimated by Nazism while, ironically, its leaders were being executed on Stalin's orders. The Bund exists in a much diminished form today but the legacy it has bequeathed is a vision of a socialism enriched by cultural diversity and a conception of nationality that does not rest on territory or the nation state. In a period of nationalist division and "ethnic cleansing" it is a vision worth recalling and fighting for. ■



Trotsky and young Russian Social Democrats, 1897

Bundism or Leninism?

We think the Bund's demand for the sole right to organise Jewish workers was profoundly mistaken. Whatever the Bund's principles may have declared, it represented an adaptation to nationalism.

Is it true that "the general workers' movement was failing to respond adequately to anti-semitic terror"? David Rosenberg gives two examples.

The first is Trotsky's remark about the Kishinev pogrom. We cannot see how anyone could view this as a casual dismissal. He merely points out that any section of the working class that participates in bloody pogroms is not conscious of its class interests. The party saw its role as being precisely to combat this "general unconsciousness" and to imbue in all workers a spirit of the utmost hostility to anti-semitism and pogromism. That is why the 1903 Congress (at which the sharp debate on the role of the Bund took place) adopted the following resolution:

"... the Congress recommends comrades to use all means in their power to combat such movements and to explain to the proletariat the reactionary and class inspiration of anti-semitic and all other national-chauvinist incitements."

To justify the claim that the rest of the RSDLP made no efforts to organise among the Jewish workers, David Rosenberg takes as good coin the statements and insinuations made by the Bundist leaders during the 1903 debate. But many delegates from across the Russian Empire pointed out that this claim was simply not true. One delegate pointed to events in Ekaterinoslav, where social-democratic activity among Jewish workers was recorded as early as 1896. The Bund subsequently sent agitators into the area claiming exclusive rights to organise the Jewish workers—even though no Bund organisation existed in the town! Why would the Bundist leaders have demanded *sole* rights to organise if no

other sections of the party were undertaking this work?

David quotes the famous heckle from one Bundist leader (Lieber) at the 1903 Congress, accusing one Jewish member of the party (Trotsky) of not having worked among the Jewish proletariat. Why take Lieber's word for it? The minutes of the Congress show that this accusation was made directly after Trotsky had pointed out something that the Bundist leaders found deeply embarrassing: the motion opposing the Bund's claim for sole rights to organise Jewish workers was signed by Jewish party members.

Later in the debate Trotsky contested Lieber's accusation:

"Many comrades who have worked and are working among the Jewish workers do not belong to the Bund,

a "restricted" view of Jewish culture, and even that Lenin's comments on Jewish national culture were "disparaging".

This is nonsense. Far from having a restricted view of national culture, of all the tendencies within the Marxist movement it was the Bolsheviks who developed the most balanced, historical and dialectical understanding of it. David Rosenberg chooses only to quote Lenin's comment that "Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie". He leaves out the *other side* of Jewish national culture that Lenin referred to, "the great world-progressive features of Jewish culture... its internationalism, its identification with the advanced movements of the epoch".

movement", we take from each national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of each nation." (Lenin's emphasis)

So much for Lenin's one-sidedness. He was merely pointing out which class forces stood to gain from agitation for national culture—the clergy in the backward stels and ghettos who relied on the power of religious illusions, and the bourgeoisie in the towns who wanted the Jewish workers to see them as national allies rather than as class enemies. This "disparaging" attitude he applied to all bourgeois national cultures (not just Jewish culture), alongside a most determined and consistent defence

internationalism to sheer nationalism, to fight not for freedom but for bourgeois and in some cases pre-bourgeois institutions and traditions.

As for the idea that Lenin regarded Russian working class culture as "immune to cultural influences including nationalist and religious ones", it is laughable. Lenin fought for the whole of his political life against every manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism and national oppression. His last struggle was against the growing threat of Russian chauvinism being promoted by Stalin and Ordzhonikidze through the Commissariat of Nationalities. Lenin's aim was not to force small or oppressed nations to undergo a process of "Russification", but to allow the most free integration of the working masses, welcoming each and every development that drew them closer together.

It is revolutionary, *working class* integrationism (the integration of workers of all nationalities and ethnic groups into a common class movement and socialist culture) combined with a resolute defence of all nationalities from every form of persecution, that will make the Left a more welcoming place for socialists from minority communities.

Special organisations and special forms of work directed at oppressed sections of the working class are vital tools in this fight, provided they have the aim of building a really united, really integrated class movement.

If each national community within the workers of a particular country retain sole rights to determine their policy, if the workers' party remains a mere federation of different sections of the class rather than a centralised and integrated whole, then there can be no common class policy and no common class action.

Precisely in a period of exacerbated national antagonisms, of an intellectual "retreat from class", and of rising racism and anti-semitism across Europe and the world, it is *this* lesson we must recall. ■

If the workers' party remains a federation of different sections of the class rather than a centralised and integrated whole, then there can be no common class policy and no common class action.

and yet regard themselves as being, for all that, no less representatives of the Jewish proletariat, as a proletariat. I mentioned that these comrades are Jews. Why? So as to block the favourite argument of Bund publicists—a poverty-stricken argument—that opponents of the Bund's position know nothing about the psychology of the "Jewish proletariat".

The Bund's claim for sole rights to represent Jewish workers, and their proposal that "other sections of the Party have the right to address the Jewish proletariat only with the assent of the Central Committee of the Bund", militated against a genuinely All-Russian party able to take decisions based on the interests of the working class as a whole across the Russian Empire. The reason for this, as the article in WP 179 pointed out, was the Bundists' *fear* of assimilation.

David clearly thinks this fear was justified. He says the Bolsheviks had

Lenin recognised that every nation, from the most privileged to the most oppressed, is made up of antagonistic classes. There are therefore two discrete components of every "national culture". The dominant element will be that associated with the class that is in power:

"The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well), in the form, not merely of "elements", but of the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the general "national culture" is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie... In advancing the slogan of "the international culture of democracy and of the world working class

of national self-determination and cultural freedom against all forms of violence and oppression.

Similarly, it is downright false to claim that Lenin "never questioned" what Jewish workers were assimilating into.

He referred consistently to the international culture of democracy and the working class movement. That is a common progressive element in every national culture. Only an assimilation of national cultures that takes place without force, oppression and privilege, from the most violent to "insidious" forms of petty persecution, can strengthen this progressive element. Any element of a national culture that is being persecuted must be defended. But if, in the absence of any coercion, elements of a bourgeois national culture—dress or dietary habits, language, religion—are voluntarily abandoned by the masses, are Marxists to campaign positively for their maintenance? This is to reduce

Anti-fascist unity

Dear Workers Power,

We are writing in response to your editorial "How to beat the Fascists" in issue 179. In this editorial you state that the organisation Anti-Fascist Action has become a front organisation for the Red Action grouping. This is completely untrue, although London AFA, is dominated by Red Action and its members are involved in Cardiff and Manchester AFA these are the exceptions not the rule. The northern network (a large grouping of AFA groups) is one of the main groups combatting fascism. In your editorial you also state that AFA under Red

Action's control has boycotted mass demonstrations, again this is not true. AFA groups and members played a significant part in building for the 16 October Unity Demo where they were able to work with other forces such as YRE and socialist organisations.

It was also the case that members of AFA were prepared to work with other groups in building for the TUC demo, e.g. in Leeds, 15-20 AFA activists turned out weekly to leaflet for the march along with other organisations. This hardly amounts to a boycott of mass demonstrations. Whilst this

may be the attitude of Red Action they do not speak for the rest of Anti-Fascist Action as Workers Power should know.

As the editorial points out if we are going to win the fight against the BNP we need unity in action of all organisations. Members of AFA would fully support such unity and certainly in Leeds have been fully supportive in joint activities unlike certain other organisations such as the ANL. It is sad that Workers Power, which has had by far the best approach and analysis in relation to building a mass anti-fascist movement has generalised the ex-

perience in London to the whole of AFA.

Yours sincerely
Steve Cox,
Leeds

It's a fair cop. We clearly overstated the dominance of Red Action within AFA nationally in our editorial. We are pleased to hear that in Leeds AFA and elsewhere there are activists who remain committed to no platform for fascists and who also recognise the need for unity amongst anti-fascist forces. We look forward to continuing to work with the comrades in the future.

Dear comrades,

In the last two issues of your paper you published some articles on Rwanda in which your line was to block militarily with the RPF, on the basis that the RPF is multi-ethnic and could stop the genocide. But the situation is much more complicated. The RPF doesn't defend any oppressed nationality.

In reality the RPF has become and is now a branch of the army of Uganda's pro-IMF right wing dictatorship which is trying to restore the privileges of the old Tutsi aristocracy that for centuries crushed the majority Hutu population.

While the Rwandan government was backed originally

by French and Belgium imperialism, the RPF is linked with the British and US-backed puppet dictatorship of Uganda. The RPF is openly against a multi-party democracy.

It is not true that the RPF defends a broadly multi-ethnic solution. Hutus, fearful of the restoration of the old Tutsi

privileges and revenge killings, have fled from the advancing RPF. One million Hutus have tried to escape to Zaire and Tanzania.

We should be against the military forces of the pro-imperialist and Ugandan-backed RPF. Only the workers and toilers from the whole region can avoid inter-ethnic rival-

ries and can open up a road of progress and democracy under a socialist programme, breaking with the IMF and imperialists and expropriating the properties of the big landowners and capitalists.

In comradeship,
Tony Fisher

● See article page 12

Bloc with the RPF?

SUMMER SCHOOL 1994

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Summer School 94 is a weekend of revolutionary socialist study, discussion and debate.

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Summer School 94 is held at a residential venue in the Midlands. The registration fee of £30 waged, £20 unwaged, includes attendance, course materials, two nights accommodation and full breakfast. There will be an on-site creche, bar and social events and there is access for disabled people. Registration costs for non-residential participants is £10 waged/£5 unwaged.

To register please fill in the form and send to Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX with a cheque or postal order made payable to Workers Power.

Trotsky's fight for the 4th International

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Please send me _____ tickets for Summer School 1994

I enclose _____ (£30 waged/£20 unwaged -

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Race, Class and Imperialism

Trotsky and the Fourth International

(Background materials will be sent on registration)

Please state any special needs or requests:

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WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER

is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

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

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

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

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

We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Workers power

Issue 180 July 1994 Price 40p

RAIL WORKERS TAKE ON THE TORIES

Why won't Labour back the strikes?

John Major and the Tories claim that strikes are an outdated way of settling disputes. The rail workers are proving them wrong.

As we go to press, the campaign of one-day strikes for a signal workers' pay rise is continuing. It has had more effect than any number of supposedly more "modern" ways of campaigning. Far from alienating public opinion, there has been broad sympathy for the signal workers.

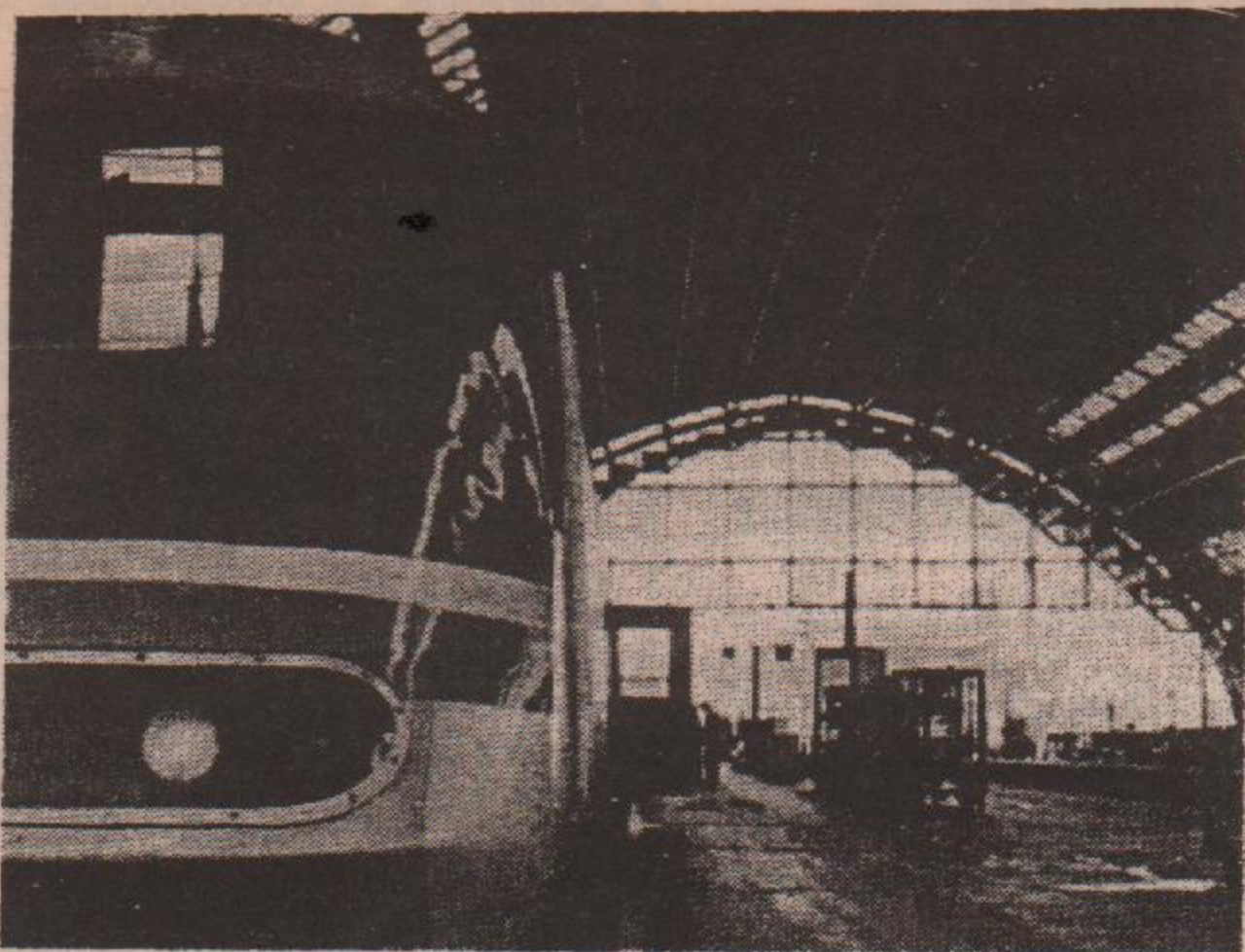
Millions of workers and commuters know from their own experience how the Tories have been running down the rail network. There are fewer trains, longer delays and more overcrowding than ever before. Railtrack's failure to give the signal workers a decent pay rise is just part of this whole process.

Commuters struggling in to work during days of strike action know that the Tories' claims of non-interference are a total sham. When Railtrack management offered the signal workers a 5.7% pay rise, Major's government stepped in to veto the offer.

That is why there has been strong public sympathy for the strikers. The Tory media claims this is only because tens of thousands were able to have a few days off in the sunshine. In fact it is because millions of workers could see how just the demands of the strikers are, and how badly the workers and the whole rail system have been treated by the employers and the government.

So why won't any of Labour's would-be leaders come out clearly and support the rail strike?

The fact that Labour is funded and supported by the unions and millions of work-



ing class people has stopped Tony Blair and the "modernisers" from condemning the strikes out of hand. But they will not openly support them. Neither will Margaret Beckett, who carefully avoided backing the action when pressed by Major in parliament. Nor will John Prescott, despite his claim to be the voice of Labour's working class roots.

The Labour leaders have been arguing for years that to be associated with strikes and trade unionism will make them "unelectable". They think millions will blame the unions for disruption, so they try to keep their distance.

But if they really stood up for working class people, they would have no qualms about throwing the Tories' accusations of disruption straight back in Major's face. They would say what commuters and workers can already see—that the real "disruption" is being caused by cuts in the transport system, privatisation and government pay restraint. To bring that to an end means not opposing the strikes, but supporting the signal workers' claim. That way the action can be brought to a swift conclusion in the

best possible way—by the signal workers winning their demands, and proving to the Tories that their attacks on our pay and the running down of the railways will not go unchallenged.

If the Labour leaders had the courage to stand four square on the side of the workers, then millions would support them. They might lose the support of some anti-union diehards in the middle class—but in return they would win the respect of many more who already blame the Tories. And most important of all, they would be basing themselves on the most powerful force for change in society—the organised working class in action.

Labour sits on the fence in order to win the backing of the big financiers and millionaire speculators in the City; to prove that if Labour get into office, the bosses' profits will be safe. While strike action is a basic right and necessity for workers, it is a threat to the bosses' profits.

A strike hits the employers where it hurts—in their pockets. The signalworkers' strikes shows how a few thousand workers can cost the

bosses millions of pounds in lost revenue. That is why for workers they are an indispensable weapon. At the end of the day, what other options have workers got if the employers are determined to cut jobs or hold down wages?

If the Labour leadership stood for the interests of their working class supporters there would be no hesitation and no fudging. They would back the strikes and call for the broadest possible solidarity action from other trade unions.

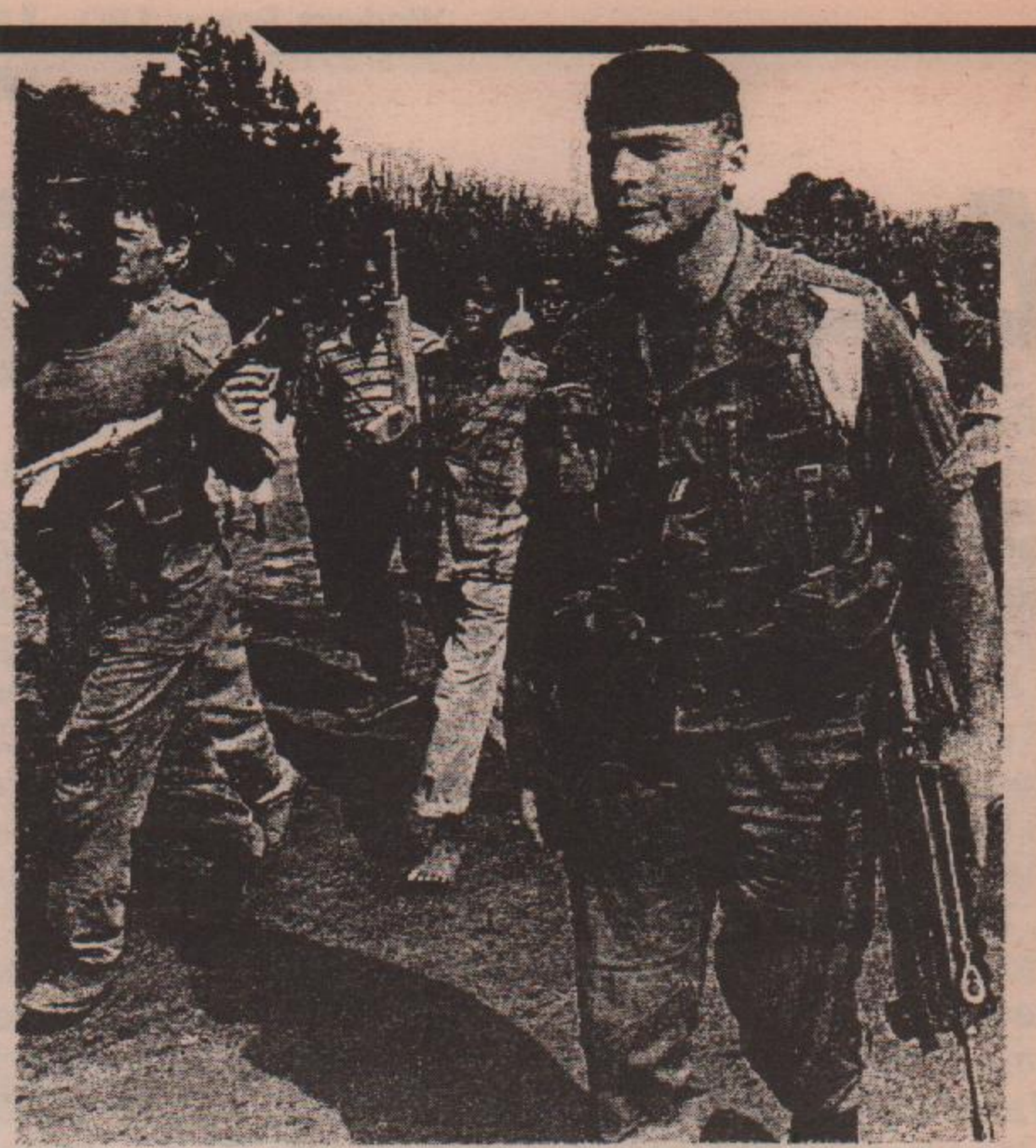
They would commit themselves to scrapping all the Tory anti-union laws. They would come out with a real plan to rebuild not just the railways but the entire crumbling infrastructure of the country, paid for by taxing the wealth of the self-same millionaires that they are trying to reassure.

But they will not do it. That is why we need to build a political alternative to Labour—a revolutionary socialist party that has no hesitation in backing workers, that bases itself on struggle against the employers and their government.

We need a party with a programme that does not try to appease the City parasites and the employers, but links every workers' struggle to a fight against the profit system and for socialism.

As millions of trade union members are being asked to choose between three "leaders" who all refuse to give a lead, we need to step up support for the railworkers, and turn the mood of anger into a wave of active resistance that can stop the cuts and the pay freeze, and break this rotten government altogether.■

• The way to win page 5



RWANDA French troops out now!

FRENCH TROOPS have entered Rwanda, supposedly on a humanitarian mission to stop the killing. But they are there to prop up the government that has organised the killing, the very same government they armed, trained and financed in the face of shameless human rights violations for years.

The Rwandan Popular Front (RPF), which is leading and winning the fight against the genocidal rule of the Hutu *interahamwe* militias, has declared its willingness to drive the French out. Every worker in Britain and across Europe should share that aim.

The French troops are there to shore up France's faltering prestige as an imperialist nation, and to shore up the rule of the multinational bosses in central Africa. Driven out of Vietnam in the 1950s, kicked out of Algeria in the 1960s, reduced to blowing up Greenpeace ships in the 1980s, French imperialism's military fortunes have gone from bad to worse. The new centre-right government needs a military adventure to bolster its standing at home and inside the UN.

It has sent in its murderous mercenaries, the Foreign Legion, to provide "safe havens" for Rwandan refugees. But these safe havens are to be sited in the very region to which the government has retreated. Camped just 15 kilometres behind the front line, the French have declared they will fire on any forces that attack them. Given that they are actually training with the Hutu-chauvinist militias, this can only be understood as notice of their intention to prevent an outright RPF victory through military force.

Aid workers report that the scale of the massacres has been so great that there are very few of Rwanda's one million Tutsis left for the French to "save". Meanwhile the government militias drive round in jeeps decorated with the French tricolour and cheer the arrival of the French commandos. Well they might.

One month into the killing French troops and officials stood by while a huge French arms shipment was delivered to the government troops via Zaire.

The ministers and generals who organised the killings are being reappointed as prefects and mayors of French-controlled territory. The French have made no attempt to disarm the slaughterers. They have simply made polite requests that the government-controlled radio station stops its nightly broadcasts which call for more Tutsi blood. Meanwhile, their commander, Colonel Thibault, has been publicly doubting government involvement in the pogroms and denying the extent of the massacre. This is not "neutrality" or humanitarian intervention. It is recolonisation.

French imperialism, or any other intervention force acting alone or on behalf of the UN, can do nothing progressive in Rwanda. Cynically, the USA is tacitly backing the French, having ordered all its state officials not to call the pogroms a "genocide" since that would force the Americans constitutionally to intervene on the other side! As in Somalia the Western forces are there to impose an imperialist order on a semi-colonial sphere of influence where years of poverty and underdevelopment have led to barbaric civil war.

The French must be forced to quit Rwanda, by massive protests at home and abroad. If, as seems inevitable, the military advance of the RPF leads to clashes with French troops, workers all over the world must give solidarity and support to the RPF.■

• Background to the Rwandan conflict—page 12